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1

Understanding the State and Asylum in Africa

The plight of refugees in Africa has been one of the most visible consequences of the conflicts that have plagued the continent for the past fifty years. Images of refugees pouring across borders to escape persecution, mass human rights violations and conflict, huddled in camps and surrounded by the flags of international aid agencies, have put a human face on issues as complex and abstract as the collapse of a state. This was especially true in the 1990s, as millions of African refugees fled conflict and state failure in many regions of the continent. The world looked on as scores of refugees fled conflicts in Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Somalia, to name but five of the more notorious. Shocked by the scale of human suffering, there were demands for action. In response, Western governments gave hundreds of millions of dollars to humanitarian agencies like the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and dozens of other international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

But interest in these refugee situations soon faded, and international attention shifted to conflicts and humanitarian challenges elsewhere. Dozens of refugee situations were left unresolved, and millions of refugees trapped in camps across Africa. By 2004, there were some two million refugees living in camps across the continent, some of whom had been in exile for decades. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, one of the more iconic images of African refugees was that of a refugee mother, recently arrived in a camp, trying to feed her child. Many of those children have grown up in refugee camps and are still in exile. There is a lost generation in Africa, living in limbo in dozens of camps spread across the continent.

In the absence of sustained and effective action to resolve the conflicts and human rights violations that forced these refugees to flee, it may seem inevitable that refugees will continue to languish in camps.

2 *Refugees, the State and the Politics of Asylum in Africa*

Such pessimism, however, overlooks the fact that African refugees have not always been treated as they are today. During the 1960s and 1970s, the vast majority of African refugees did not live in camps, but lived in rural settlements, were provided with agricultural tools and training, and encouraged to be self-reliant. Many refugee settlements produced surplus crops, thereby contributing to local markets and regional development. During this time, the hosting of refugees was a source of pride for African states, and refugees were seen to bring many benefits to the communities that hosted them.

By the end of the 1990s, however, the perception of refugees by African states was profoundly different. African states hosted a third of the world's refugees in 2000 (UNHCR, 2007c). Many of these refugee populations were large and protracted, received dwindling donor assistance, and were seen to be the cause of a range of security concerns. In response to the scale of these challenges, and in stark contrast to the treatment of African refugees in the 1960s and 1970s, a significant number of host countries across the continent placed restrictions on the asylum they offered to refugees. Some states limited the *quantity* of asylum they offered by closing their borders to new asylum seekers, promoting early repatriations, and, in exceptional cases, carrying out mass expulsions. Other states limited the *quality* of asylum they provided by denying refugees a range of basic social and economic rights and containing them in isolated and insecure camps, on the periphery of the state and cut off from local communities.

African states have generally pointed to three justifications for adopting these restrictive asylum policies. First, they highlight the scale and enduring nature of the problem. They argue that the sheer number of refugees on their territory makes the problem simply too big for their limited resources and state capacity. States also point to the prolonged stay of many refugee populations, stretching into decades for many groups, and argue that they are unable to cope with such a protracted problem. Second, many African states have pointed to a perceived lack of assistance from the international donor community, so-called burden sharing, as a justification. They argue that the mass arrival and prolonged presence of refugees has placed a strain on the environment, economy and public services in refugee-populated areas, and that they have carried this burden for too long. Coupled with declining support from donor countries to fund assistance programmes across Africa, states now feel justified in geographically isolating refugee populations until a solution can be found outside of their country. Third, states claim that the presence of refugees has resulted in a number of security concerns for the host

state. These concerns include the presence of armed groups within the refugee population, the spillover of conflict, and crime and insecurity in refugee-populated areas. Given their limited capacity to resolve such security concerns, a number of states have responded by attempting to 'contain' the refugee 'problem' in remote border areas, on the periphery of the state, and far from the core of political power in the capital city.

This response further exacerbates the challenge of asylum in Africa. UNHCR estimates that, by 2004, there were over 2.3 million refugees in Africa who had been in exile for five or more years, typically contained in geographically isolated camps or segregated settlements (UNHCR, ExCom, 2004b, 10). According to UNHCR, 'the consequences of having so many human beings in a static state include wasted lives, squandered resources and increased threats to security' (UNHCR, ExCom, 2004b, 2). Given the interplay of these human rights, development and security implications, the global pressures on asylum, and the significant share of the global refugee burden borne by Africa, the pressing need to develop a more rigorous understanding of asylum in Africa becomes more apparent.

Asylum and the state

In contrast with their more open approach to refugees in the 1960s and 1970s, events of the 1990s suggest that African states have generally become more reluctant to host refugees. The objectives of this book are to ask why, to critically examine the factors cited by host states in Africa as a justification for limiting asylum, and to develop a more rigorous understanding of the range of factors that shape the asylum policies of major African host states. Drawing on the cases of Kenya, Tanzania and Guinea, this book considers three related questions. First, how have African states responded to the mass arrival and prolonged stay of refugees? Second, which factors have played the most significant role in determining the state's response to refugees? Third, how have these factors and responses changed over time?

Contrary to the rhetoric of many African states, this book argues that a state's asylum policy is only partially the result of factors such as numbers, the responsiveness of the donor community and a range of security concerns perceived to be associated with the presence of refugees. Crucially, asylum policies are also the result of a number of factors unrelated to the presence of refugees, but stemming from broader changes in the African political landscape since the 1980s. These changes have resulted in new internal and external constraints on the state in Africa,

including democratization, economic liberalization, and the increased imbalance in power relations between African states and the international donor community. It is a combination of these factors, both related to and separate from the presence of refugees, which motivates African states to adopt particular asylum policies.

Any examination of asylum policies in Africa should consequently be rooted in an approach that recognizes the politics of asylum in Africa. Taking Africa's perceived place on the periphery of the international system as its point of departure (Ayoob, 1995; and Clapham, 1996), such an approach illustrates how many regimes in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa have a prevailing sense of vulnerability to external and internal challenges. This sense of vulnerability, in turn, leads many regimes to view the arrival and presence of refugees as a potential threat to their survival. Facing such threats, but under pressure from the international donor community to provide asylum to refugees from neighbouring conflicts, African states balance a number of often contradictory priorities when formulating their asylum policies.

Recent commentators on asylum in Africa have not given sufficient consideration to the relationship between the restrictive asylum policies adopted by states during the 1990s and broader political forces in Africa. In fact, there has been very limited consideration of the state and factors motivating their asylum policies. As argued by Jacobsen (1996, 656), 'much of the refugee literature... focuses on the refugees themselves, rather than the effects of refugee movements on host countries and communities.' Indeed, the predominant perspective of the literature on refugees in Africa in the past decade has been to examine the causes of refugee movements, catalogue violations of refugee protection standards and examine specific aspects of particular refugee populations. This literature has made important contributions to the debate on root causes and prevention, advocacy efforts on behalf of refugees, and understandings of the realities and dynamics of the refugee experience. Such approaches, however, are limited in their analytical utility when trying to explain the response of states to refugee movements.

Two decades ago, Loescher (1989, 4) highlighted how 'less than adequate treatment... has been accorded to the process of refugee policy-making at the national or international level.' Instead, he argued that additional attention needed to be paid to 'national interest, domestic and foreign policy constraints, and ideological concerns of states which must be taken into account together with legal and humanitarian principles in order to understand both the reasons for and the response of states to refugee crises' (1989, 5). While Loescher's appeal has been

followed by a number of works on individual asylum countries, with the case of Tanzania being especially well represented in the literature, such factors have rarely been considered in a comparative perspective. Indeed, with the exception of recent work by Asres (2007), Crisp (2000), Rutinwa (1999) and Veney (2007), no scholarly work in the past decade has attempted a comparative analysis from the specific perspective of African host states. As argued by Harrell-Bond (1986, 13), this lack of engagement with the host state may be due either to the assumption that host government institutions are too weak to be a determining factor in the response to refugees or to the belief that the 'main business [of the state is] to oppress and exploit the poor within their own societies', and that engagement with the state should consequently be avoided. Either way, researchers have, by accident or design, generally avoided engagement with the host state when considering the problem of refugees in Africa.

As illustrated by the cases of Kenya, Tanzania and Guinea, however, host states have played a significant role in determining asylum policies on their territory. This book consequently focuses on the African state and its response to the arrival and prolonged presence of significant refugee populations and develops a more critical understanding of the range of factors that affect the asylum policies of African states. While criticisms of the African state as a social construct persist (Asres, 2007, 33–64), it would be highly problematic to exclude it entirely from our understanding of asylum and refugee protection. As Veney (2007, 65) highlights, 'even in poor countries the state is more than able to exercise sovereignty by deciding who to let in, who to keep out, how to treat those who are let in, and who to kick out when they are no longer wanted.' In considering the asylum policies of Western states, Gibney (2004, 13) argues that 'how much any state – or to be more specific, any *government* – can do for refugees will be determined largely by the possibilities afforded by its domestic political environment, and that environment will be shaped by a changing array of social, institutional and economic forces, both domestic and international in origin.' A similar approach is required to understand asylum policies in Africa.

This focus on the perspective of host states is not, however, intended to excuse state behaviour or to justify restrictive policies. Instead, at the core of this approach is a belief that a more critical understanding of state behaviour can not only help reveal the interests behind the rhetoric of African states, but also contribute to more effective responses to the plight of refugees in Africa. As argued throughout this book, states play a central role in the formulation and implementation of particular asylum

policies. These actions, in turn, are motivated by the interests and priorities of states. Engaging with state interests does not necessarily mean agreeing with state action. Instead, a more critical engagement with the interests of states could provide the basis for encouraging a shift back to the more open asylum policies of the 1960s and 1970s. As outlined in Chapter 2 of this book, a number of key host states in Africa have recently taken tentative steps towards adopting more open asylum policies. States like Guinea, Uganda, Zambia, and, most recently, Tanzania, have demonstrated a willingness to pursue more open asylum policies that could lead to a solution for refugees through naturalization and local integration. While these developments present a potentially exciting opportunity to find solutions for many refugees in Africa, this willingness can best be encouraged and replicated in other states by engaging with the interests of host states in Africa, and expanding the space within which more open asylum policies may be formulated and implemented. In this way, a more critical understanding of the actions and interests of African states could contribute to a solution for African refugees.

Key concepts: Refugees, asylum policy and the African state

Given the objectives of this book, it is important to begin by explaining how the terms 'refugee', 'asylum policy' and 'African state' are employed. Arguably the most influential definition of 'refugee' is contained in Article 1(A)2 of the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951 Convention), which applies the term 'refugee' to any person who

[a]s a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country ...

This definition was developed specifically in response to the refugee situation in Europe after World War II, and 'from the outset, it was recognized that, given its various limitations, the Convention definition would not cover every refugee' (Goodwin-Gill, 1996, 19). It was not until the adoption of the *1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees* (1967 Protocol) that the temporal and geographic limitations of the definition were removed, making the definition more universally applicable.

A central feature of this definition remained, however, its exclusive reference to individualized persecution. According to the 1951 Convention definition, only persons who could demonstrate that they were individually the victims of persecution could be recognized as a refugee. This raised two particular concerns for newly independent African states in the 1960s. First, as outlined in Chapter 2, the majority of refugees in Africa at the time were not fleeing individualized persecution, but generalized violence, either as a result of the ongoing wars of national liberation or as a result of conflicts in newly independent states. Second, application of the 1951 Convention requires individual refugee status determination procedures. Even given the number of refugees in Africa in the 1960s, such procedures were found to be too resource- and time-intensive for many African states.

In response to these and other concerns, and in response to a number of political concerns outlined in Chapter 2, African states adopted an additional refugee definition under the auspices of the Organization for African Unity (OAU). The OAU's *1969 Convention on the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* (1969 OAU Convention) contains two definitions of the term 'refugee'. The first, in Article I(1), is identical to the definition in Article 1(A)2 of the 1951 Convention. Article I(2) of the 1969 OAU Convention, however, states that,

The term 'refugee' shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.

Through this definition, the 1969 OAU Convention introduced two important innovations. First, the term 'refugee' in the African context now applies to individuals fleeing both persecution and generalized violence. Second, by making refugee status contingent on generalized situations in the refugee's country of origin, the 1969 OAU Convention allows states to recognize entire groups of individuals as refugees on the basis of shared characteristics and common cause of flight. This procedure, known as *prima facie* refugee status determination (Rutinwa, 2002b), is the basis upon which the vast majority of refugees in Africa are recognized today. In fact, of the 2.7 million refugees in Africa at the start of 2006, 2.1 million (77 per cent) were recognized on a *prima facie* basis (UNHCR, 2007c, 181).

With the arrival of individuals or groups of individuals claiming to be refugees, states must decide how to respond to these claims and how to accommodate refugees for the duration of their exile. Taken together, this response is the state's 'asylum policy'. As outlined by Jacobsen (1996), states receiving refugees, called 'host states', must adopt policy responses to three sets of questions. The first set relates to what Jacobsen terms 'the legal-bureaucratic response', involving the position states take on the legal status of those individuals seeking asylum, the adoption of procedures to determine refugee status on a group or individual basis, and the allocation of responsibility for the refugees within the state bureaucracy. The second set of questions relates to the nature and level of cooperation between the host state and the international donor and humanitarian community.¹ The third set of questions relate to the 'admission and treatment of refugees'. In this way, the host state's asylum policy will determine whether refugees are allowed to enter the state's territory, where and in what manner they are allowed to settle, what rights they are afforded while in exile, and the division of responsibility between the host state and international actors such as UNHCR.

If a host state applies international and regional refugee protection standards, allows access to and cooperates with international organizations, and grants refugees the full range of social, economic and political rights contained in international refugee law, such as freedom of movement and the right to seek employment, they may be said to have adopted an *open asylum policy*. If, by contrast, a state prevents or frustrates the arrival of refugees, does not apply international and regional refugee protection standards, does not cooperate with international organizations, and denies refugees the rights they are afforded by the 1951 Convention, they may be said to have adopted a *restrictive asylum policy*. As Chapter 2 will illustrate, the position of African states on these questions has changed considerably in the past fifty years, moving from a 'very generous attitude towards refugees' in the 1960s and 1970s to a marked decrease in their commitment to asylum in the 1980s and 1990s (Rutinwa, 1999, 1). Explaining this shift is a core objective of this book.

While there is general agreement on the legal definition of 'refugee', notwithstanding its potential conceptual and operational limitations (Zetter, 1991), there is significant debate on the definition of the 'state', and particular debate on the meaning of 'the African state'. The objective of this section is not to resolve these debates, but to present a general overview of the origins and evolution of the African state. While recognizing that the post-colonial experiences of individual states have

been very different, it is possible, and indeed important, to emphasize those characteristics shared by the majority of post-colonial states in sub-Saharan Africa. It should, however, be emphasized that the argument of this book is limited to sub-Saharan Africa, and excludes the question of refugee movements in North African states bordering the Mediterranean.

From the early uses of the term 'state' by Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see: Gibney, 2004, 198–201), to characterizations developed by Migdal (1988) and Weber (1994), a 'state' has generally been taken to consist of a territory, a population that inhabits that territory, and an authority that governs that population and which has a monopoly over the use of force to exercise its authority. To these domestic characteristics must be added the international characteristics of the state, namely recognition by other states and sovereignty. As such, understandings of the state should include both domestic and international characteristics, with a conceptualization broad enough 'to encompass not only the relationships between the internal dynamics of individual territory-government-society packages, but also the larger systemic dynamic of the way in which these packages relate to each other' (Buzan, 1991, 60). Such a conceptualization of the state is particularly important in the context of refugee movements, which are, by their very nature, both domestic and international events.

To this end, Buzan (1991) proposes a conceptualization of the state based on three components. The first is the physical basis of the state, including its population, territory and resources. The second is the institutional expression of the state, comprising 'the entire machinery of government, including its executive, legislative, administrative and judicial bodies, and the laws, procedures and norms by which they operate' (Buzan, 1991, 83). The final component is the idea of the state, rooted both in the nation, especially in those rare instances where the territory of nation and the state coincide, and in organizing ideologies, which can take for form of 'some fairly general principles, like Islam, or democracy, or some more specific doctrine, like republicanism or communism' (Buzan, 1991, 79).

As Chapter 2 will argue, pan-Africanism and solidarity with liberation movements were central elements of the idea of many African states in the 1960s and 1970s. This idea of the state contributed to open asylum policies for refugees fleeing wars of national liberation, even when such policies resulted in retaliation by the colonial power and attacks on the host state. Buzan's characterization of the state helps explain this

willingness to host refugees, despite attacks on the physical base of the state. As Buzan (1991, 95) argues, 'since the state ultimately rests on its physical base, the protection of territory and population must count as fundamental national security concerns, though they may be sacrificed in considerable measure to protect the other two components of the state.' As Chapter 6 will argue, for example, this helps explain Tanzania's willingness to host refugees from Mozambique in the late 1960s and early 1970s despite attacks by the Portuguese Air Force: the hosting of refugees was seen as a tangible expression of the idea of the pan-Africanist Tanzanian state under the regime of Julius Nyerere.

In this way, it is also important to understand the difference between the 'state' and the 'regime'. According to Job (1992, 15), the term regime 'refers to the small set of persons who hold the highest offices in the state and/or are the elite that effectively command the machinery, especially the coercive forces, of the state.' While Buzan incorporates the regime into his conceptualization of the institutional expression of the state, he notes that the 'state' and 'regime' are not always the same. In fact, regimes 'can be assumed to have their own interests, both organizational and individual, apart from the state interests which they represent' (Buzan, 1991, 89). As illustrated in the case studies, differentiating between the interests of the state and the governing regime is 'both possible and necessary' in the African context (Harbeson and Rothchild, 2000, 7).

Underlining Buzan's three components of the state is sovereignty. States are, by definition, sovereign, and in the post-1945 international order enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, all sovereign states are equal. To paraphrase Orwell, however, while all states are equal, some are more equal than others. Accordingly, it is important to consider the nature of weaker states in the international system, which Jackson (1990) refers to as 'quasi-states'. Jackson argues that the rapid process of decolonization following the end of World War II brought into existence a significant number of states. These states came into being in an international system that both guaranteed their existence and bestowed upon them sovereign equality. In reality, however, these states were far from equal with other states in their capacity to provide the 'concrete benefits which have historically justified... sovereign statehood' (Jackson, 1990, 21). Jackson consequently argues that while these states may have juridical statehood, their empirical statehood was not yet fully established, making them 'quasi-states'.

While Jackson argues that this juridical statehood has ensured the survival of many otherwise weak states, especially in Africa (Jackson

and Rosberg, 1982), Ayoob (1995) argues that the 'negative sovereignty' conferred upon weak states has not made them more secure, but is at the core of their 'insecurity predicament'. Ayoob believes that many 'Third World'² states share a common predicament stemming from their late or delayed state-making and their late entry into the international system. As a result of these pressures, Ayoob argues that Third World states can be characterized by their weakness and vulnerability. This view is echoed by Krasner (1985, 58), who has argued that 'the international and domestic weaknesses of Third World states make them vulnerable to systemic shocks, which they cannot control.' As a result, the primary objective of these states, and the regimes that govern them, is to 'reduce the deep sense of insecurity from which Third World states suffer domestically and internationally' (Ayoob, 1995, 2–3). While the concept of vulnerability will be central to the examination of the relationship between refugee movements and security in Chapter 4, it is also useful for understanding the nature of the state in Africa.

While recognizing the tremendous diversity of African politics (Chazan et al., 1999, 5–13), it has been argued that 'to talk about politics in Africa is virtually to talk about the state' (Chabal, 1994, 68). Domestically, the post-colonial African state has been characterized as 'weak in foundations, structurally deficient, without deep legitimacy and generally lacking the political means of its putative power over civil society' (Chabal, 1994, 74). Internationally, the African state is 'at the bottom of any conventional ordering of global power, importance and prestige' (Clapham, 1996, 3). To this characterization of the African state must be added the artificiality of its borders, which were drawn mostly in the late nineteenth century by European colonial powers with little or no regard for local particularities. As argued by Davidson (1992, 163), 'the colonial partition...inserted the continent into a framework of purely artificial and often positively harmful frontiers.'

Notwithstanding the weakness and artificiality of the African state, gaining control of the state and preserving it were the twin priorities of African nationalist leaders, both in the run-up to independence and in the early post-colonial period. Leaders subsequently agreed not to revisit the colonial boundaries, a principle enshrined in the Charter of the OAU, signed in 1963. It is also significant that African independence was achieved in the early phases of the Cold War, during which 'diplomatic, economic and military support was often given to individual African leaders who allied themselves (sometimes interchangeably) with either the United States or the Soviet Union' (Taylor and Williams, 2004, 6). While the dynamics of the Cold War will be discussed in

greater detail in Chapter 2, it is important to note here that a number of African leaders were able to use superpower rivalry to 'fend off political opponents at home' (Taylor and Williams, 2004, 7).

The assurance of sovereignty did not, however, ensure domestic stability and security. The weight of expectations at independence, coupled with the scarcity of resources available to the newly independent state, created fierce domestic competition over the authority to allocate those scarce resources. Regimes in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s became increasingly centralized either around a single political party or the military, and domestic opposition was either constrained or eliminated (see: Clapham, 1996, 56–62). This centralization of power allowed a number of regimes to pursue ambitious state-led development programmes, such as those in Tanzania (Chapter 6) and Guinea (Chapter 7). It also allowed several regimes to pursue refugee policies irrespective of domestic support, especially in the context of refugees fleeing Cold War proxy conflicts (Chapter 2). These models of governance did not, however, prove sustainable and 'by the late 1970s and early 1980s most, if not all, African states were undergoing an organizational crisis' (Chazan et al., 1999, 65). This crisis was characterized by deteriorating relations between the state and society, high levels of graft and corruption, and the collapse of many basic services.

This organizational crisis was mirrored by an economic crisis. Declining growth, coupled with population increases, resulted in a significant reduction in *per capita* income in Africa through the 1980s. At the same time, Africa's terms of trade were drastically affected by the declining value of the continent's main exports – such as cocoa, coffee and cotton – relative to the cost of imports, leading to a decline in real terms by about a third between 1980 and 1987. In response, African states borrowed heavily, with total African debt climbing from about US\$16 billion in 1970, to US\$58 billion in 1980, to US\$144 billion in 1987. By 1985, foreign debt equalled 43 per cent of Africa's total gross domestic product (GDP), causing a balance of payments crisis. While a number of regimes tried to fend off the crisis through a range of short-term measures, the implementation of structural adjustment programmes guided by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) became increasingly unavoidable. While the nature and implementation of these programmes will not be addressed here, recognizing that 'few issues in contemporary African development have been as contentious as the role of these international financial institutions (IFIs) over the past two decades' (Chazan et al., 1999, 334), it is important to emphasize that the vulnerability of the recipient countries gave

the IFIs and donor countries tremendous leverage over the policies and priorities of African states.

In reflecting on this period, Clapham (1996, 187) notes that 'whereas the domestic economies of African states were heavily penetrated by external forces which limited the power of the state, African governments were to a very large extent left free to manage politics as they wished.' Domestic human rights records went unchallenged and governance unquestioned by donor states. In the geopolitical context of the Cold War, 'Western states did not want to risk the imposition on Africa of principles of human rights or democracy which would be applicable to their allies as well as to their adversaries, and which would tend to push African leaders into the less demanding arms of the Soviet Union' (Clapham, 1996, 191–2). This rationale led to Western support for regimes with poor human rights and governance records, such as those in Zaire, South Africa, Kenya and Ethiopia.

The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, however, resulted in a profound and sudden set of changes in Africa. One of the most striking features of this transformation was democratization, with the overwhelming majority of African states committing themselves to some level of democratic reform in the early 1990s. This change was the result of domestic and international pressures which 'made it extremely difficult for [African leaders] to cling to their previous insistence on unfettered sovereignty in the international arena combined with monopoly statehood in the internal one' (Clapham, 1996, 193). For their part, the 'victory' of capitalist and neo-liberal ideology in the Cold War emboldened Western states to seek universal application of, and adherence to, these principles through the formulation of the 'Washington Consensus'. Without the Soviet Union as a counter-balance, African regimes lost one of the main bargaining chips that they 'had been able to use to protect their domestic political hegemony from external attack' (Clapham, 1996, 194). Dependent on Western donor states to provide continued support for their ailing economies, carrying significant debt, and lacking alternatives, African states had little choice but to accept the new terms of their relationship with the West. Given the centrality of political and economic liberalization, compounded by the power imbalance between African states and donor governments and institutions, African states became subject to 'a comprehensive superstructure of international accountability' (Young, 1999, 34–5).

Taken together, these changes in the political and economic landscape in Africa since the mid-1980s have resulted in a number of internal and external constraints on the African state today. Internally, African

states have been constrained by the effects of demoncratization and economic liberalization. Externally Africa states face the constraints imposed by the neo-liberal consensus, a lack of policy alternatives and an imbalance of power relations between African states and donor states.

Book outline

These external and internal pressures faced by African states play a predominant role in the formulation of asylum policies. To support this argument, this book has three sections. The first section sets a historical and conceptual context for the book by tracing the history and nature of the crisis of asylum in Africa and efforts to address two of the most often articulated concerns of host states on the continent, namely burden sharing and state security. Section 2 is comprised of three case study chapters, examining how each state has responded to the mass arrival and prolonged presence of key refugee populations since the early 1990s. Section 3 then presents a framework for understanding the politics of asylum in Africa by examining the interplay between factors relating to the presence of refugees, such as the dependability of international assistance and the security implications of refugee movements, and factors unrelated to the presence of refugees, such as democratization, economic liberalization and the sense of vulnerability derived from the peripheral place occupied by African states in the international system.

Chapter 2 traces the history of state response to refugee movements in Africa from the early 1960s, through the wars of national liberation in Southern Africa, post-colonial conflict in independent Africa, and the Cold War, to the emergence of the crisis of asylum in Africa in the 1990s. The chapter examines refugee movements and state responses during this period to illustrate how burden sharing and refugee-related insecurity have been concerns for African host states for many years, and how failures to address these concerns came to be cited by governments as justifications for placing restrictions on asylum from the mid-1990s. The chapter will also draw from the political history of the African state outlined above to argue that broader political factors have also had an impact on the asylum policies of African states.

Chapter 3 critically examines the principle and practice of burden sharing with African states. The chapter begins by defining the principle and outlining its foundations before examining its rising

significance in Africa, the challenges of quantifying Africa's refugee burden, and the various mechanisms through which this burden has been shared by other states. By contrasting the African burden sharing experience with the history of burden sharing in other regions, the chapter will argue that African states have been largely unable to alter the level and nature of burden sharing, due partially to the nature of their relationship with the international donor community. While a significant amount of burden sharing with African states does occur, and the presence of refugees may constitute a benefit for host states, the chapter argues that the scope, scale, sustainability and dependability of burden sharing with African states is largely determined by the interests of donor states.

Chapter 4 examines the relationship between refugee movements and security, with a particular focus on Africa. The chapter first highlights the importance of the relationship and outlines the security implications of refugee movements during and after the Cold War. The chapter then considers changing understandings of security since the end of the Cold War and reviews the early scholarly literature on refugees and security. After considering the applicability of this literature to the contemporary security concerns of host states in Africa, the chapter develops an understanding of 'security' appropriate to African states. Finally, the chapter presents a framework for understanding the nature and causes of the refugee-related security concerns of host states in Africa.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 apply these understandings of burden sharing and security to the cases of Kenya, Tanzania and Guinea. These three countries were selected for this comparative study for a number of reasons. First, they have hosted large and protracted refugee populations from three dominant refugee-producing regions (the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, and the Mano River region of West Africa) and from prominent examples of so-called failed states in Africa (Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone). Second, these countries hosted the largest refugee populations in Africa at various times during the 1990s. Third, all three states are post-colonial sub-Saharan African states that have acceded to both the 1951 Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention, thereby providing a sufficient conceptual and legal basis for comparison of their asylum policies.

The study is not only comparative between countries, but also over time. As outlined in each case study chapter, each case study considers the state's response to hosting refugees from the arrival of the

significant refugee populations to the end of 2007. The Kenya study focuses on the response to the mass arrival of Somali refugees from 1991. The Tanzania study considers the treatment of refugees since the early 1960s, while focusing specifically on the treatment of Burundian refugees in Northwestern Tanzania since 1993. The Guinea chapter examines the case of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees who began to arrive in 1990. While it would be problematic to generalize from these cases to the continent of Africa as a whole, such a comparative analysis does illustrate how common political dynamics have led to the formulation of the particular asylum policies of each of these three states.

While the study began with desk research on the themes of the project and individual case studies, the primary source of information for the case study chapters was fieldwork in Kenya, Tanzania and Guinea, in addition to several related visits to UNHCR's Headquarters in Geneva, between 1999 and 2008. During each field visit, interviews were conducted in the capital city and in the refugee-populated areas³ with representatives of the host government, UNHCR, donor governments, international and national NGOs, civil society and refugee groups. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the interests, perceptions and priorities of key state and non-state actors engaged with the refugee programme, and how these interests changed over time.

Each case study chapter outlines the arrival of a particular refugee population before considering the state response to the initial arrival of that population and subsequent policy changes. In all three cases, concerns relating to burden sharing and security were identified by government representatives as justification for adopting a particular asylum policy. By applying the frameworks developed in Chapters 3 and 4, however, the case studies argue that such concerns do not sufficiently account for the nature of asylum policies adopted by host states. Drawing on the political history of the African state presented above, the case studies argue that the asylum policies of each host state are more fully understood by considering the significance of broader historical and political factors and by understanding the politics of asylum in each case.

Taken together, the case studies argue that Kenya's approach to Somali refugees, Tanzania's approach to Burundian and Rwandan refugees and Guinea's approach to Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees, while different in substance, are the product of a common logic. While these three states have chosen different strategies, the approach taken is best understood only partially in the context of issues relating to the presence of refugees, such as the increase in numbers, failures of burden

sharing and security concerns. More generally, these cases illustrate how states typically interpret the implications of the arrival and protracted presence of refugees according to factors unrelated to the presence of refugees. In Kenya, the presence of Somali refugees was tolerated to placate the donor community, but a history of conflict between the Kenyan state and Somali irredentists led to the securitization of the Somali refugee population and their relegation to the political and geographic periphery of the state. In Tanzania, economic liberalization and democratization have placed pressures on the governing regime, which has used the presence of refugees to its domestic political advantage while seeking to extract additional resources from the donor community. In Guinea, the state has used the presence of refugees to pursue regional priorities and as part of its effort to leverage support from an otherwise restrictive donor community.

Based on this analysis, Chapter 8 develops a framework for understanding the politics of asylum in Africa, highlighting the full range of factors that influence the formulation of asylum policies of African states. The chapter argues that political factors unrelated to the presence of refugees tend to play a predominant role in the asylum policies of states like Kenya, Tanzania and Guinea, and that these states typically incorporate decisions on asylum into their broader political calculus. In this way, the chapter argues that while the presence of refugees may constitute a burden and a security concern in certain circumstances, approaches to such concerns are more often the result of pressures and factors unrelated to the presence of refugees.

Such an approach leads to important lessons not only for the study of asylum in Africa, but also for the wider study of African politics and international relations and the future of the refugee protection regime in Africa. While part of the solution to the challenge of asylum surely lies in addressing concerns relating to numbers, burden sharing and security, part of the solution also lies in engaging in broader political and economic forces that influence a state's asylum policies. African host states do not approach the arrival and prolonged presence of refugees in a historical or political vacuum. If the scholarly understanding of refugees in Africa is to more effectively identify solutions for refugees, it must also adopt such an approach.

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