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Refugees and Risk of Conflict in Host Countries:
Case Studies of Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea

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PROBLEM

The spread of conflicts, wars and natural disasters engenders millions of refugees all over the world. The situation is particularly critical in African countries where no sustainable solution has been found yet to civil wars; 3,002,000 refugees out of 14,921,000 refugees worldwide.1 Those refugees fleeing violence do not often escape totally.

In Africa, according to the old tradition of hospitality, each person who flees his country, for whatever reason, is first of all welcomed, given a shelter, and allowed to share with his hosts the resources that are often insignificant. After the end of the situation that made him leave his country, the stranger may either return back or choose to integrate the host community. In the middle of the last century, with the massive arrivals of different

waves of African people, victims of independence wars, apartheid or the fight for democracy, that tradition took on another dimension.

The independence war of Algeria on the eve of 1960's, the liberation fights of ex Portuguese colonies and the collapse of the apartheid regime in South Africa contribute in a large scale to sensitize African leaders on the refugee problems and aware them on the new challenges of the phenomenon. Moreover, the countries that provide so kindly their hospitality are not often better than the sending countries, in term of economical, social and even political development. In fact, most of those receiving countries already face economical and social difficulties. The arrival of strangers become thus problematic especially when they should stay for a long time.

The statistics of the UNHCR show how important is the number of refugees in Africa. Burundi owns the sad record of being the most important sending country of the continent, followed by Sudan (490,000), Angola (470,000) and Somalia (440,000). On the other hand, with his 1,200,000 refugees, the region of great lakes sheltered the most important number of refugees of the continent. In West Africa, in spite of the mass return of refugees from Sierra Leone last year, Guinea is still the most important receiving country in West Africa (about 180,000 during mid April 2002), followed by Cote d'Ivoire (126,000 refugees).2

The numbers are eloquent enough. When such populations settle themselves on a territory, it is obvious that conflicts as defined by Dahrendorf can occur between them and host populations. This author uses the word conflict to designate " protests, rivalries, quarrels or tensions as well as manifest clashes between social forces."3 Those conflicts can occur due to the lack of resources for all, or due to cultural differences. They can also be contained in the policies of those organizations that deal with refugees as well as in the policies of receiving countries.

Defined that way, the conflict occurred less from the willingness of the actors than from the influence of the structures. Nevertheless, conflict is not always defined that way. Some authors prefer to focus on the intentional character of actors in conflict. For Julien Freund, the actors would run into conflict because of a right that they think is violated and to maintain, express or reestablish it some try to break the resistance of the others and eventually by the use of violence.4

These two conceptions of the conflict are interesting in the way that they are complements and allow better understanding the origin but also the manifestations of conflicts. When taking into account the first conception, social structures are put in the foreground and we can better understand the structural causes of the conflict, factors that influence the Responses of host communities. On the contrary, if the actors were placed foreground, the manifestations of the conflict would be seen. One would better understand the different actions taken, the attitudes and reactions of different actors. This last approach to conflict is even well illustrated by A. Touraine when he presents conflict as a dimension of social relations.5 For him the conflict is inherent in the cooperation. Individuals are as if there were placed into a system where they have to cooperate necessarily, and the conflict is then raised by the inequality of parties and instituted by the rules that organize the participation. Thus conflict should be perceived as the process by which each actor tries to improve his position and his control of the stakes, while insuring at the same time the necessary cooperation. Conflict is not then synonym of break and does not imply necessarily a high degree of physical, economic or moral violence.

However, in spite of the diversity of sociological conflict theories, it is sad to see that those theories are not often taken into account in the understanding of the social dynamic that comes with the settlement of refugees on host countries; in particular the risk of conflict between those two populations. That could be partly explained by the fact that in spite of the great number of research on refugees, most of them tend to be what Robert Chambers (1986) 6 called "refugee-centric". That means those research focuses on refugees themselves rather on the impact of refugees' movements on host countries and on their local populations. They focus on the impact on host government's politics, on the economy and services and not on groups and populations that receive. And this is the gap we want to fill trough this research.

But for the research to be more interesting, we need to concentrate on certain countries in order to do some case studies. While trying to understand the refugee phenomenon in Africa, we will concentrate on West African refugees. The general perspective of migrations and that of the sociology of action elaborated by A. Touraine 7

seem to be adequate as a general frame of reflection. In the other hand, a study on refugees as we wanted to conduct it, would not be valuable if it did not take into account the different categorizations already made by authors. As far as we are concerned, we will use the one made by S. Licher 8. Looking for the processes by which internal conflicts become internationals, S. Licher interested herself to refugees' phenomenon and elaborated a categorization that tends to show a propensity of a certain type of refugees to commit violent actions against the sending States' governments more than other types of refugees.

She drew up three categories and named them as follows: situational refugees, persecuted refugees and state in exile refugees. The Situational Refugees category contains those people who become refugees due to their unlucky situation in a war zone, rather than because of their political opinions or communal affiliations. They flee the intolerable conditions and general destruction created by civil war, and their villages often become the front lines in a civil war. They are not usually the targets of combatants because they do not have any political characteristic. Situational Refugees usually do not exhibit a natural cohesion based on shared experience of injustice or political opinions. While the refugees may share the same ethnicity or religion, the shared characteristic did not directly cause their exile, and thus is less easily politicized. The willingness of Situational refugees to return home depends on a cessation of the war rather than any specific political or military outcome.

Persecuted Refugees are those people who flee to escape ethnic cleansing, genocide, or other violent policies that target them because of ethnic, religious, language, or political affiliation. Typically, persecuted refugees leave their homes as a result of direct threats based their political characteristics. The experience of persecution helps create politically cohesive refugees groups that are more easily organized for military activity.

These refugees have a greater propensity for involvement in political violence than do situational refugees. For persecuted refugees, the political outcome of the conflict bears directly on their willingness to return home. The goals of persecuted refugees often include political change, including power sharing or other credible guarantees that their group will not be persecuted if it returns home. In addition to violence perpetrated by refugees, persecuted refugees face a higher probability of cross-border attacks by the sending state than do situational refugees.

The third and last group in this categorization is the State-in-exile Refugees. Of the three categories of refugee groups, state-in-exile refugees are the most likely to instigate an attack against the sending state. Indeed, the leaders often intend that the exile facilitate offensive military action. They may graft themselves on to the refugee population in order to use the refugees as a political and military resource. Such leaders hold aggressive goals, which might include a radical change in the government of the sending state. State-in-exile refugees usually return home either in victory or due to forced repatriation, rejecting power sharing or amnesty offers from the sending state.

Sarah Licher utilizes it to show how much refugees can constitute a threat for the sending countries, but this categorization could also be utilized while examining conflicts between refugees and host country's populations. It would also be interesting to examine the role of each refugee category in the conflict's process. Does the Situational Refugees-whose goals are to earn a livelihood and return to their previous life as much as possible-have more harmonious relationships with local populations? Persecuted Refugees fled the countries because of their belonging to an ethnic or religious group and could be settled in a territory occupied by a population that shared the same ethnicity or religion of their persecutors. Is that fact of nature a means to accommodate their relationship with that host population? In the case of The State-in-exile Refugees, could the way leaders organize the other refugees and the circulation of weapon that derives be seen as favorable for good cohabitation with local populations?

In short, identifying the types of refugees that are settled in the receiving countries will enhance our understanding of refugee phenomenon. Before moving forward, it is convenient to ask here the questions that come in mind when reading the subject and that will lead this research. What is the extent- considering that not all conflict are yet open- of conflicts between refugees and host countries' populations? What are the factors that are likely to create those conflicts? Does the concept of Refugee include some cultural realities that were neglected or ignored, and liable to engender conflict between our two populations? What role can international actors as well as national governments and civil societies play in to preventing such conflicts?

OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to assess the risk of internal conflicts as well as international conflicts raised by the presence of refugees.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To identify germs of conflict linked to the actions of organizations in charge of the refugees.
- To analyze the refugee policies of the receiving countries.
- To define the relationships between refugees and host populations.

HYPOTHESES

Factors	No Conflict	Conflict
Feeling of locals of being Ignored by their government/HCR/NGOs		Yes
Straight economic advantages for locals	Yes	
Cultural differences		Yes
Food security	Yes	
Strong feeling of belongingness to a community and not to the other		Yes
The interest of host government (present locals as victims and extract benefit from international NGOs)		Yes
The removal of refugee camps from villages	Yes	
Utilization of camps as rear basis		Yes

METHODOLOGY

I. INVESTIGATION SITES AND POPULATIONS

I-1. INVESTIGATION SITES

There are two main reasons for the choices of Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea as investigation areas. The first reason is the great number of refugees in those countries and the promiscuity of their sites. Indeed and as mentioned before, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea are the countries in the sub west African region with the great numbers of refugees (mainly from Liberia and Sierra Leone). In addition, the fact that Cote d'Ivoire is our country of residence that we really know, and Guinea a Francophone border country, could constitute notable advantages for this research.

The second reason is linked to the nature of the sites. While in Guinea, except for some cases, refugees are settled traditionally that is to say in camps, in Cote d'Ivoire it is different. Most of the refugees live integrated in the community. Thus, for refugees living in Cote d'Ivoire, we will study the regions of Danane, Tabou and Guiglo. We will also have a look at those refugees living in Abidjan. As for refugees that found shelters in Guinea, we will concentrate our efforts on the Kissidougou and Gueckedou regions. Those regions have more than ten camps.

I-2. INVESTIGATION POPULATIONS

The population of this study is divided into four sub populations. There are Refugees, host countries populations, humanitarian organizations and governmental organizations dealing with refugees' issues.

II. SAMPLING

II-1. TECHNIQUES OF SAMPLING

We will opt for a cluster sampling's technique. This technique consists of selecting randomly a group of elements of a population instead of choosing elements individually. The cluster sampling is convenient for our study as the individuals of the refugee's population are naturally altogether although some can be dispersed. The same technique will be used for the host populations. We will draw of randomly some samples of refugee's camps within the targeted areas and some samples of host families. We could then within those samples, select randomly the desired number of people. As for the humanitarian's and the governmental organizations, interview guides will be sufficient.

II-2. SIZE OF SAMPLES

The study will cover all the organizations of the two countries including humanitarian and governmental organizations. For refugees and host populations, the size of the samples will be 1/3 of the population in the selected sites.

III. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

III-1. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The methods that will be use for this study are the direct observation, the investigation and the documentary's study.

1. The direct observation

Our presence on the fields will allow detecting some aspect of the studying question that may be hidden or not obviously raised by the investigation populations. This technique is a good way to pay attention to behaviors of different actors, when they occur.

2. The investigation

Here, we will use questionnaires' techniques that will be address to refugees and to host populations. We will also use surveys and interviews for all sub populations.

3. The documentary study

We will refer to all means of information including texts related to refugees' law, the different reports of humanitarian's organizations as well as governmental organizations, particularly those of the two selected countries. We will also have a look at others research on the field of refugees, newspapers, texts from colloquiums and seminars etc.

III-2. METHOD OF GATHERING DATA

The gathered information will be put together, dealt with and summarized for interpretation. Adequate software will be used for that process. As for closed questions, response frequencies will be established; we will make additions and calculate percentages. For open questions, following the content analysis, different categories of responds will also be established before looking for the frequencies. It will be the same process for the

interviews' analysis. Data set from interviews and questionnaires will be confronted to those from the direct observation.

III-3. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

For this study, two types of paradigm will be used: the phenomenology and the structural functionalism.

1. The phenomenological analysis

The phenomenology is a paradigm that seeks the essential; it privileges the viewpoint of the actor and attaches importance to interpretations that the individual gives to the events that he lives. In this study, we want to focus on the attitudes and opinions of the social actors that are refugees and host populations. By doing so, we will attach importance to their interpretations of each event.

2. The structural functionalism analysis

This is a determinist paradigm. It allows understanding the social group in its totality with its functioning rules. Understanding the functioning rules of host populations will certainly be useful for the interpretation of action or the reaction of host populations as a respond to a stimuli from the refugees' populations or even the humanitarian and governmental organizations. Moreover, such a paradigm will allow a better understanding of different refugees' policies, their functioning, and the way they could affect good relationships between refugees and host populations.

ENDNOTES:

1. Refugees and asylum seekers world wide (as of December 31,2001), http://www.refugees.org/world/statistics.

2. UNHCR statistics, mid-April 2002, http://www.refugees.org/world/statistics.

3. Dahrendorf, *Classes et conflits de classe dans les societes industrielles*, quoted by N'da Paul in *Sociologie du conflit*, 1999.

4. Freund (J), *Sociologie du conflit*, quoted by N'da Paul in *Sociologie du conflit*, 1999.

5. Touraine (A), *Production de la societe*, Paris, seuil, 1973.

6. Chambers (R), "Hidden Losers? The impact of rural refugees and refugee programs on poorer host," *International Migration Review*, 20(2): 245-263, 1986.

7. Touraine (A), opc.

8. Licher (S), *Catalysts of Conflict: How refugee Crises Lead to the Spread of Civil War*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, September 2002.