

The Politics of Refugee Hosting in Tanzania: From Open Door to Unsustainability, Insecurity and Receding Receptivity

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With the aim of understanding continuity and change in Tanzania's refugee hosting policy, the first part of the paper examines the ideological, economic and political underpinnings of German–British attitudes to immigrants. Pointers are provided as to which of these tendencies were transformed and which carried over in the asylum and refugee policy of the postcolonial state. The burden of history on independent Tanzania's outlook towards refugees is highlighted. The second part discusses the impact on asylum seekers of Pan-Africanism, Julius Nyerere's humanist philosophy and the remoulding of Tanzanian state ideology after African socialism, and considers the debate whether refugees are economically exploited in the postcolonial setting. In the third part, Tanzania's abandonment of its Open Door policy in the 1990s is analysed and linked to the economic liberalization measures that have had a negative impact on the ability and willingness of the state to host refugees. Finally, recommendations are made for reversing the alarming trend of Tanzanian 'hosting fatigue' and significant conclusions drawn from the broad historical survey conducted throughout the essay.

Introduction

Since independence in 1961, Tanzania has played host to populations displaced from nearly one dozen countries,¹ earning a reputation in international forums for being a receptive host to fleeing Africans and a regional pioneer in effective refugee settlement. Recognizing its sizeable contribution over the years and praising his country's 'exemplary record', UNHCR awarded Tanzania's Father of the Nation, Julius Nyerere, the Nansen Medal in 1983 and Refugees International showered accolades on Tanzania for 'exceptional hospitality'. For more than three decades, Tanzania was regarded as a beacon of hope and a model host by the humanitarian world and Africa. In contrast to this pedigree is the current-day lament that Tanzania has joined several others in the list of 'fatigued host countries' (Mahiga 1997). As of 31 December 2000, the United Republic of Tanzania hosted more refugees than any other country on the African continent, a total of 543,000, one-sixth of all African refugees and

one twenty-sixth of the world's refugees (USCR 2001: 2). If the Tanzanian government's figures regarding 470,000 Burundi who arrived in previous decades are accepted, then the total number of refugees and refugee-like persons it hosted is nearer to one million, which made the ratio of refugees to host-country population 1:35. The size of influxes has grown in the last seven years (see Table 1) as a consequence of intensifying wars, insurgencies, repression, civil unrest and natural calamities in Tanzania's neighbourhood. Thus, in the 32 years between 1961 and 1993, Tanzania hosted about 400,000 refugees spread over 20 settlements throughout the country, and in the seven years between 1993 and 2000, it received 1,500,000 refugees, almost all concentrated in two regions (Kagera and Kigoma). The explosion in numbers engendered serious rethinking, critical questioning and even outright repudiation of the basis of the entire refugee policy system in what used to be a highly generous asylum country. This essay discusses the changing face of asylum in postcolonial Tanzania, with specific emphasis on state ideology and economic policy. The first part examines the bases of colonial policy towards immigration and their legacy. The second part expatiates upon the evolution of independent Tanzania's 'open door' policy in relation to the foundational ethics of the postcolonial state and the continuities and changes from colonial practices. The third part describes the transformed attitudes since the early 1990s in conjunction with economic reforms and liberalization, and makes some recommendations to redress the steady decline in Tanzanian receptivity while staying within the framework of new development paradigms.

Pre-History of Tanzania's Refugee Policy

In 1899, thousands of Africans living in Portuguese Mozambique and Zambezia fled harsh and enslaving colonial labour decrees, crossing the

Table 1

Tanzania's Refugee Influxes from 1993 with Principal Sources of Influx

Year	Number of Refugees	Percentage Change from Previous Year	Principal Source Countries
1993	257,800		Burundi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Zaire
1994	479,500	+85	Burundi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Zaire
1995	752,000	+56	Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique, Zaire
1996	703,000	-6	Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Mozambique
1997	335,000	-52	Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire
1998	295,000	-11	Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo
1999	290,000	-1	Burundi, DRC, Rwanda
2000	413,000	+42	Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Somalia
2001	543,000	+31	Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Somalia

Source: World Refugee Survey Statistics, 1993-2000.

Ruvuma river to Deutsch Ostafrika (modern Tanzania), where they were warmly welcomed, despite German orders not to accept the inflows. After the First World War, more north Mozambican peoples of the Makua, Makonde and Anguru tribes fled draconian bonded labour laws, famines and epidemics to southeastern Tanganyika Territory. Although British Governors wanted to prohibit the inflow, Tanzanians disregarded the wishes of their new European masters and absorbed these uprooted Africans too (Kibreab 1983: 90–91). Imperial attitudes of discouragement and proscription of population movements sprang partly from anxiety that exploitative modes of production and coercive labour *within* Tanganyika might likewise prompt local communities to seek refuge in neighbouring empires, and partly from fear of losing administrative control and predictability over the neatly carved-up and delimited African continent. Any attempt by farm labour to escape was branded as ‘desertion’ and treated as a criminal offence liable to severe whippings and imprisonment by the Germans. The British inherited German practices, although ‘pacification’ was sugarcoated as ‘administrative persuasion’ (Kaniki 1979: 128, 134).

Spontaneous intra-Tanganyikan movement and migration, abetted and inspired by immigration from without, was a nightmare for the state because of its economic and fiscal implications. Absenteeism from homelands severely impaired the state’s ‘Grow More Crops’ campaigns, attempts to expand the area of production and increase cash crop output despite unremunerative prices before and after the Great Depression. The laws that were enacted compelling villagers to grow particular crops could be undermined by the process of free labour movement. To quote a government sociologist, ‘the very fact that a man can go abroad to work and earn money thereby lessens his desire and efforts at home’. There was also ‘a distinct loss to Native Authority revenue due to the constant absence of so many men who do not pay their tax at home’ (Gulliver 1955: 34, 42). Unregulated ‘distance labour’ flows threatened the political economy of empire by striking at the roots of the extractive and exploitative system whereby Tanganyika was to be made a self-sufficient unit that did not burden the British taxpayer. In other words, controlling migration had bearings upon the profitability of the colonial project itself.

Having divided the people of Tanganyika into conveniently distinguishable ethnic groups and tribes (see Mafeje 1971), the British were always eager to maintain this simplified classification and tried to mark identifiable barriers between Tanganyikans and those from neighbouring territories. The possibility of confusing resident Barundi and Banyarwanda tribes with immigrants from Belgian-controlled regions was ever-present, especially in the western borderlands, and this challenge to imperial perimeters and social engineering was a constant concern of administrators and census-takers, who suspected that ‘Belgian authorities encouraged emigration (into British areas) to relieve population pressure’ (Daley 1989: 169). Long-distance migrants were also viewed as carriers of ‘seditious notions’ because of their propensity to form ethnic unions and political associations, the best known of which were those of

the Nyamwezi, Baganda and Wanyasa peoples, each describing itself as representative of its 'nation' and each having cross-empire affiliations (Iliffe 1979: 307, 389). Insecurities over immigration reached a high point after the Second World War, when British Trusteeship authorities promulgated the Defence War Evacuees Regulations Act (1946) that empowered Governors to expel refugees, and the Refugee Control Ordinance (1949) that stressed 'the proper control of certain persons who have been permitted to enter the territory during the war without observance of the immigration laws' (Daley 1989: 111). The view of unauthorized immigration as a threat to territorial security bore important consequences for post-independence Tanzania, whose refugee policy reflected attitudes bequeathed by the British. The perceived and real impact of immigrants possessing close ethnic or cultural links with the host population on domestic politics and national security of the receiving country derive greatly from Tanzania's colonial past. Closely monitored restrictions on immigration were not only an important component of maintaining 'law and order' but also of limiting the outbreak of diseases, which offered fertile ground for superstitions and thus negated reform efforts of Governors like Horace Byatt (1918–1924) (Dumbaya 1995). Colonial officials constantly dreaded 'serious crises owing to the resources of the Territory being overstrained by a flood of semi-starving and frequently diseased immigrants' (Orde-Browne 1946: 14). The physical condition of workers coming from Ruanda-Urundi and Portuguese Africa was a special concern; they were described as 'miserably poor and responsible for spreading sleeping sickness' and other 'impurities' into the host labour force (Daley 1989: 170).

The ideals of Pax Britannica also need to be considered for a holistic understanding of colonial attitudes towards refugees. By comparison with other European powers, the British considered themselves the most liberal, humane and enlightened empire-builders, who were helping the natives attain self-governance through indirect rule and delegation of local authority to natives, as opposed to the Belgians and the French who were only interested in exploitation. This claim is partially true; at independence, British colonies in Africa and Asia had more native elites in leadership positions than was the case in Portuguese, French, Dutch or Belgian territories. A leitmotif of Westminster's paternalism and liberalism in Africa was the need to pursue policies that would not 'de-Africanize the African' and force his institutions into alien European mould. Jan Smuts, member of the British war cabinet and Prime Minister of South Africa, summarized this line in 1929:

The British Empire does not stand for the assimilation of its peoples into a common type, it does not stand for standardization, but for the fullest freest development of its peoples along their own specific lines... We will preserve Africa's unity with her own past and build her future progress and civilization on specifically African foundations (Mamdani 1996: 5).

Smuts reasoned that the only way to preserve native institutions was to check the proliferation of 'urbanized or detribalized natives' in an industrializing age.

Migrant labour leads to a snapping of the 'tribal bond', 'detachment of the native from his tribal connexion' and a decay of traditional African forms of jurisdiction and organization. Ergo, 'it is the migration of the native family to the farms and the towns which should be prevented' (Mamdani 1996: 6). 'Prevented' was too strong a word, for despite Smuts' diagnosis of the problem, by the 1930s urbanization and immigration to meet the requirements of a growing plantation and factory-based economy had gone too far to be reversed. What Smuts was really suggesting was not a complete ban on movement of labour to distant lands but rather a supervised immigration that would 'preserve native institutions' and yet not affect the supply of working hands. The *family* should not be allowed to relocate to the white man's farms and the towns, but the able-bodied males must go alone in order to keep the wheels of the colonial economy oiled.

Colonial immigration policies in Tanganyika were thus predicated upon remote-controlled inflows and outflows. Population influxes, if managed and redistributed like transferable commodities to suit agricultural need, were the panacea to perennial labour shortages. Calculated channelling of immigrants for economic purposes began via the newly inaugurated ad-hoc Labour Recruitment Department in 1926 and continued well into the years after the Second World War. As early as 1907, Government agents had pursued labour recruitment in Rukwa for work on caravans and railway construction, but from the 1920s the Department spread out contractors on a more systematic basis, especially in the western provinces bordering the overpopulated Belgian territories of Ruanda-Urundi. In 1957, the population density of Ruanda-Urundi was 228.6 persons per square mile while Tanganyika's was merely 25.4 persons per square mile. Throughout the colonial period, Tanganyika's population density remained comparatively low and slow in growth rate (Table 2) (Kuczynski 1949: 339). Peasants in Burundi preferred waged labour in Tanganyika to bonded labour under the Belgians and despite official complaints that the Belgians were 'dumping' their surplus population, there is evidence that British agents dangled the carrot of wages, however low, to attract workforce across borders. The development of Western Tanganyika as a 'labour reserve' owed significantly to the effect of waged labour on immigration. Rigorous application of poll and hut taxes, payable only in cash, on immigrants and natives further ensured that peasants would 'sell themselves for wages' and thus remain wedded to the occupations for which they were recruited in the first place. The strategy was often referred to in administrative lingo as 'developing the money sense of the African'. By 1946, demand for migrant labour on the sisal and rubber estates and government projects far exceeded the 157,000 existing workers from Belgian Africa, prompting the Labour Adviser of the British Colonial Office to recommend not only continued conscription to meet 'urgent requirement of certain crops' but also organized refugee reception camps with attached common kitchens, hospitals and bachelors' quarters, 'fairly near the international border and sited as far as possible to cover the immigration routes'. Such a 'conditioning

Table 2

Total Population and Density of Population over Censuses in Colonial Tanzania

Year ¹	Total Population	Density (population per square mile) ²
1913	4,069,000	11.3
1921	4,107,000	11.4
1928	4,740,706	13.1
1931	5,022,640	13.9
1948	7,410,269	20.5
1957	8,665,336	24.07

¹Censuses up to and including 1931 were rough estimates, while subsequent censuses were more exhaustive and reliable (*Tanganyika African Census Report, 1957*, Dar-es-Salaam, 1963).

²Density has been calculated with the figure of 360,000 square miles as the base land area in 1957. Zanzibar and Pemba, two densely populated areas, did not become part of Tanzania until 1964 and were not included in the Tanganyika censuses.

camp system' would ensure that the 'wandering hordes, at present dispersed over numerous tracks will be concentrated into a well defined channel'. An extensive transport and road-building network was also mooted to 'route the traffic' and 'for the return of travellers who prove to be permanently unfit for any employment' (Orde-Browne 1946: 49). The British also created the post of Labour Officer to supervise these camps and act as general ombudsman who could watch over new possibilities of inducing immigration and discipline and regulate labour flows by arrangements with employer associations. Labour Officers operated in virtually every district of Tanganyika, not just along the international border, and while the hinterland Officers dealt largely with the official aim of protecting workers against employer excesses, the ones posted to reception camps performed additional tasks of managing immigration quality and numbers. As will be demonstrated later, independent Tanzania's ubiquitous refugee Settlement Commandants share the controlling traits of the Labour Officers of yore, albeit with modified functions and a quasi-military purpose.

Host Populations and Refugees in the Colonial Era: Hospitality or Expedience?

Why did Tanganyikans often disregard colonial injunctions against spontaneous refugee influxes and absorb migrants with open arms? The foremost reason was silent resistance to 'the curse of the nation-state' (Davidson 1993: introduction). African state frontiers drawn up by the Europeans were artificial and bore no relation to clan and tribal ties of the natives. Elements such as kinship relations, common language, similar cultural, religious and dietary practices, have been considered as the basis for forming modern European nation-states but the same standards (or the standards of the pre-colonial Great African States) were not the foundations of the Berlin Conference of 1885 that partitioned Africa. Instead, African nation-state borders were

drafted on the basis of conquest and legitimization of occupied lands. These boundaries, being largely political and military, failed to separate age-old bonds at the grass roots. Barundi farmers migrating to Tanganyika for more than a hundred years, for example, easily dispersed and integrated among the Waha people due to their commonalities of lineage, physique, inter-marriage, ethno-linguistic history and production techniques, making it extremely difficult for the authorities to segregate them as 'Barundi' distinguishable from the host population. Similarly, the historical alignment of Banyarwanda with their kinsfolk in Kivu in the Belgian Congo and Ngara in Tanganyika defied borders. Mozambican Makonde too found 'ndugus' (relatives, brothers) for shelter and hospitality in the Mtwara and Ruvuma regions of southern Tanganyika. Thus, whenever refugees simply crossed over into Tanganyika, they were naturally accorded sanctuary and sympathy by kith and kin and assimilated into the local setting like fish taking to familiar water.

Many scholars and historians of African refugee movements have argued that hospitality of the host populations in colonial (and post-colonial) Africa was not so much a function of philanthropy and humanitarianism but rather one of expedience. Tribal chiefs often sought refugees as followers in order to widen their constituencies and win areas of suzerainty over rival claimants. The Washubi heads in Kagera were motivated to be receptive by the thought that 'the refugees would boost their numbers and subsequently their representation on local councils, and help to eradicate the tsetse fly' (Daley 1989: 174). Extensive immigration from Burundi in the inter-war years helped reactionary Batutsi headmen of the Bugufi region to extract larger tributes from their subjects, suppress wages and also fortify their dominant position vis-à-vis older migrants like the Wahangaza tenants. Throughout the period of British indirect rule, chiefs were reported to be exploiting immigrant labour (especially those who did not belong to their own ethnic group) for assigned government tasks like road construction, and pocketing the wages meant for workers. That refugees were victims of colonial brutality 'aroused neither the wrath nor the sympathy of the African chiefs', whose only perception was that 'they were slaves who availed themselves for no other remuneration but food'. Economic interest was, ergo, the 'underlying motive of the Africans in receiving refugees' (Kibreab 1983: 91).² While this may be too categorical and generalized a conclusion to describe motives of all African hosts, altruism and hospitality as motives were definitely absent in cases where immigrants were attracted by European farm owners and labour-hunting plantation organizations like SILABU (Sisal Growers Association), i.e. the non-native local population or settlers. It was much easier for plantation owners to view migrants recruited in an organized fashion as 'foreigners' than for natives who had blood connections with them to do so, and consequently it was much easier to exploit them ruthlessly on the 'White Man's farms' with draconian *kipande* assignments. In the sisal heartlands of Tanga, places like Korogwe were notorious for ill treatment of 'foreigners', who comprised more than 30 per cent of the workforce by 1956. These historical precedents of host government

and populations closely ‘associating incorporation of refugees with the demands of the labour market’ was another colonial legacy carried over, *mutatis mutandis*, to the post-independence era (Daley 1993: 17).

Nyerere’s Tanzania: Humanism, Pan-Africanism and the Evolution of ‘Open Door’

The imprint of Julius Nyerere’s personality and ideals on the postcolonial state’s refugee policy is overwhelming. President of the Republic from 1962 to 1985, Nyerere set Tanzania on a path of openness to refugees that earned world respect and contributed to the perception of Tanzania as an exceptional country (Mazrui 1967: 20). The underlying theme that Nyerere advanced in support of a liberal asylum policy was founded on the principles of humanism: ‘practical acceptance of human equality and every man’s equal right to a decent life’ (Nyerere 1968: 103). *Utu* (humanity) and *ndugu*, traditions of hospitality, fairness and compassion for relatives and brothers from far and near, coupled with an emphasis on human dignity, were promoted by the state as civic virtues in educating Tanzanians for citizenship and national integration. Although described by some as a metaphysical notion existing in mythology and the heads of poets, Nyerere strove in his nation-building efforts to convert *utu* into a practical policy through the pithy catchphrase ‘I am, because you are’, a live and let-live ethic that contributed greatly to the receptivity of the state and its citizens to refugees and displaced persons (Solomon 1999: 1). Nyerere brought home the linkage between his humanism and refugee policy lucidly:

Our resources are very limited and the demands made upon us are very large. But I do not believe that dealing with the problems of 3.5 million people [African refugees] and giving them a chance to *rebuild their dignity and their lives* is an impossible task for 46 nations and their 350 million inhabitants (Nyerere 1979: 1; emphasis added).

One UNHCR official described this connection between state ideology and refugee policy as follows: ‘the belief that the main wealth of a country is in its people...led to the acceptance of refugees and to...the determination to devote the same efforts to them as to nationals’ (Zarjevski 1988: 137). Propagation of such an ‘anthropocentric social philosophy believing in the centrality of man in all social activity’ (Kariuki 1979: 7), thus not only aided the peaceful assimilation of nearly 134 different ethnic identities into one nation but also guided state attitudes toward non-citizens. Official characterization of refugees as ‘resident guests’ by the home ministry in Dar-es-Salaam was a refreshing departure from German and British vilification of the category of fleeing immigrants as ‘plague carriers’ and unwanted burdens.

Pan-Africanism was the other main ideal upon which refugee hosting in Nyerere’s Tanzania rested. *Utu* was not only a conscious nationalist rejection of the dehumanizing effects of slavery and colonial exactions, but also

a pan-Africanist beckoning to a partly imagined and partly real precolonial golden age when the tyranny of politically designed borders did not constrain population movements, concern for fellow Africans knew no geographical limits and all of Africa was culturally united (Diop 1989). Tanzanian foreign policy in the post-independence era was dedicated to this continent-wide vision and, in practical terms, embraced without reserve the newly constituted OAU's aim of a 'final assault on colonialism'. In 1958, TANU hosted in Mwanza the preparatory meeting to the Pan-African Freedom Movement for East and Central Africa. Nyerere was among the leading lights endorsing the proposal at the 1963 Addis Ababa conference that the independence of one state had to be linked to the total liberation of Africa from the clutches of European imperialism. The OAU Liberation Committee had its headquarters in Dar-es-Salaam, and Tanzania, along with the other 'radical' states at the inaugural OAU summit, pledged to contribute one per cent of its national income to the OAU Liberation Fund, avowing 'we shall never be really free and secure while some parts of our continent are still enslaved' (Nyerere 1967: 9). Not even Nkrumah, *bête noire* of the west, could match Nyerere's unequivocal decision not to join the Commonwealth in 1961 unless South Africa ceased to be a member. In the succeeding years, Tanzania outdid Ghana, Guinea, the United Arab Republic and Mali in materially assisting and hosting nationalist rebel movements of surrounding countries fighting for the overthrow of European rule and minority racist oppression. Freedom fighters from Zimbabwe (ZANU and ZAPU), South Africa (ANC, APDUSA and PAC), Namibia (SWAPO), Angola (MPLA) and Mozambique (FRELIMO and COREMO),³ found refuge in Tanzania, which gained a reputation as the securest base for oppressed people from all over Africa (Mathews and Mushi 1983). In the pursuit of what Nyerere laid down as 'primary objectives of our Party and our Government—total African liberation and total African Unity' (Nyerere 1967: 8), Tanzania even broke diplomatic relations with Britain in 1965 over the Rhodesian demand for independence. Nnoli (1978) notes the significance of geography in Tanzania's assumption of the role of crusader for African independence. Its location as well as its early freedom gave it the opportunity to become a safe haven for patriots. However, Malawi had a similar geography and political situation, but abdicated all responsibility to freedom fighters; the difference is explained by 'the primacy of human dignity in Nyerere's ideas' (Nnoli 1978: 81).⁴ While stressing the pan-Africanist ethos motivating the leadership, it must also be noted that Tanzanians at all levels assimilated TANU's line on liberation movements and spontaneously sheltered guerillas and donated money to promote *uhuru* (freedom).

As a result of these pan-African policy preferences and Tanzania's image as the leading Front Line State and rear base, the very concept of 'refugee' underwent redefinition and expansion. The OAU's 1969 definition of refugees as not only those who have a well-founded fear of persecution in their home countries but also those who flee 'external aggression, occupation and foreign domination' was adopted wholeheartedly by Nyerere, and freedom fighters of

southern Africa were accorded a slightly different and more exalted refugee status than those from other territories. Owing to their important political function of challenging injustices of empire and apartheid, they were exempted from various restrictive measures taken against refugees in general. The rationale for this distinction was explained by Vice President Rashid Kawawa as follows:

Tanzania's government is convinced that her independence is incomplete before the whole of Africa becomes free. We shall neither give up nor lag behind in supporting the refugees... We cannot help those who run away to seek a luxurious life. We will help those who want to free their countries (Daley 1989: 114).

Since the purpose of granting refuge to guerilla movements was stated unambiguously, asylum seekers from countries under white-minority rule were often channelled to respective liberation fronts and the offer of refuge was dependent on their acceptance within the fighting ranks. With a special premium placed on freedom fighting refugees, those who emigrated from South Africa and Zimbabwe without membership of recognized movements were often reported to be subject to harassment or forced repatriation, although it was generally easier for them to find admission than refugees belonging to already independent states (Chol 1985). No organized estimate of inflows of refugees from the freedom fighter category into Tanzania is available, but numbers varied according to the ebbs and flows of the wars for independence, e.g. from 7,000 Mozambicans in 1964 to 50,000 in the early seventies when FRELIMO raised the tempo of the crusade against Portuguese rule. South African and Namibian rebels were the longest resident guests of Tanzania, since they were the last in the region to achieve majority rule.

Ujamaa and the Economics of Rural Refugee Resettlement

If Tanzania's Open Door to refugees from colonies in the area was based on Nyerere's famous dictum, 'I train freedom fighters' (1978: 22), refugees from independent African states had to contend with a completely separate and more conventional rationale for acceptance. The expectations of the Tanzanian state regarding refugees from Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Zambia and Malawi were a continuation of many of the previously described colonial propensities. Nyerere's humanism was indeed a novelty compared to British times, but there was no denial by the postcolonial state that refugees were welcome largely due to their potential as a useful labour force. 'Utilization of refugee labour was intentionally part of Tanzanian development strategy', i.e. *ujamaa* (Daley 1989: 79). Arguably, development policies of a freely administered nationalistic government were quite different from crude extraction and transfer of wealth under the colonial yoke, but the utilitarian intentions of hosting immigrant labour were more or less consonant with those of the pre-independence era. Despite the philanthropic renown associated with Nyerere's outlook towards

refugees, 'a very common mixture of altruism and self-interest has motivated Tanzanian refugee policy in practice' (Landau 2001). *Ujamaa* was an attempt to restructure the country's rural periphery through concentration of citizenry in planned villages, thereby capitalizing on the productive potential of the hitherto underdeveloped countryside. The 90,000 Barundi refugees who poured in after the 1972 genocide fitted well into Nyerere's 'villagization' and spatial reorganization plans because at independence, rural population density in the western regions bordering Rwanda and Burundi was the lowest in Tanzania. Kigoma, Rukwa, Ulyankulu and Karagwe were fallow marshy woodlands, notorious for the tsetse fly and difficult to settle. Interestingly, western Tanzania was a haven for immigration in the precolonial period due to certain favourable ecological and demographic factors, but by 1961 it was a sparsely populated swamp that lost even more inhabitants with the onset of *ujamaa*'s Pioneer Settlement displacements. The Mishamo district of Rukwa, for example, was vacated in entirety by the few native Tanzanians as part of the state's social engineering blueprint, and thus left space for incoming Barundi refugees in the early seventies. It was also a grossly uncultivated and underdeveloped area; land was there for the taking and most Barundi received grants of as much as 5–10 hectares per head to bring into cultivation. As Gasarasi points out, 'the availability of arable land can be cited as one of the factors that backed up Tanzania's goodwill towards refugees' (1984: 50). UNHCR and other donors were also forthcoming to contribute for the maintenance of the settlements, reasoning that collective farms were a far more humane and durable solution to the problem of refugees than *ad hoc* camps. Thus began a colonization of virgin lands by the innovative mechanism of rural refugee settlement and integration into the host country's economy. A similar development unfolded on a smaller scale in the under-populated southern borderlands (Rutamba and Muhukuru), with Mozambican refugees who stayed on after the liberation war billeting in *ujamaa* villages, clearing jungles and converting them into crop-yielding patches.

Refugees under *ujamaa* were indubitably 'vehicles for the exploitation of peripheral areas' (Daley 1989: 79), but it is less certain whether they were themselves exploited, as some authors have postulated. The contribution of refugees as cheap agricultural labour to commodity production was considerable, and despite the impossibility of charting an index of total gains and losses, it is not far fetched to contend that the aggregate economic effects of hosting the first wave of Barundi were more positive than negative. Thanks to refugees, tobacco, beans, cassava, maize, cotton etc. of exportable quality and quantity appeared in parts of the country where there used to be an acute shortage of staple foods and zero production of cash crops. Barundi 'substantially boosted the agricultural output of the whole of Rukwa region' (Malkki 1995: 41). The question observers have posed regards the human price. Wage rates fell in Rukwa from Tsh.5 to Tsh.2 per day after the Barundi influx. In Katumba, wages dropped following the settlement of refugees from Tsh.5 to Tsh.1.5. Many field studies of living conditions of farm refugees have

documented Barundi and Rwandan resentment of the production quotas set under *ujamaa* to meet the requirements of the National Milling Corporation and Tobacco Authority of Tanzania. One set of complaints by Bahutu in Mishamo reads like a convincing account of state exploitation:

We left Burundi for this? Nothing has changed... we are the granaries of the Tanzanians. If we have a sack of beans, we cannot sell it to our friend. The government says to us that it is to be sold at two and a half shillings to the cooperative shop of the village. We are qualified workers and they know it. They are savage... they do not want us to leave their country. We cultivate a lot, they eat a lot. We feed all the poor regions of Tanzania (Malkki 1995: 119).

However, two clarifications should be made. Firstly, the wage depression is explained by demand and supply, and the fact that there were very few agricultural labourers in western Tanzania before the refugees arrived. Allegations that 'exploitation of refugees connotes exploitation of the poor section of the local population' and that refugees actually underdeveloped areas where they settled (Kibreab 1983: 96), while tenable in some African countries like Sudan, were nullified by the peculiar demographics of Tanzania and the trend of locals returning to western Tanzania to benefit from economic activities initiated by refugees. Escaping bitter ethnic and social conflict or natural disasters, most refugees came with nothing, and found shelter and land that were not easy to secure in their densely populated home countries. Compared to their economic circumstances in Rwanda and Burundi, the wages they earned in Tanzania were an improvement, and very much in 'happy coincidence with the general objectives of UNHCR' of making immigrants self-sufficient income earners (Zarjevski 1988: 137). Secondly, researchers have also noted a tacit acceptance by refugees of a *quid pro quo*: a place to live in exchange for their labour. Mistrust of government officials and procurement agencies coexisted with a deep sense of gratitude towards the Tanzanian government and people for providing refuge from violent civil wars and crimes against humanity. The enviable degree of social cohesion and peaceful coexistence among multiethnic groups that Nyerere had forged in Tanzania was a magnet and boon for refugees that is not quantifiable.

Refugees as 'Subversives': The Control Facet in Settlement Administration

Refugees from independent African countries, while contributing to the economy, gave rise to some delicate questions of regional security. For all Nyerere's pan-Africanism, the OAU charter and Tanzania's own foreign policy rested on an acceptance of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of free African nation-states. The OAU's 1969 Convention on Refugees exhorted signatories to 'prohibit refugees residing in their respective territories from attacking any State Member of the OAU, by any activity likely to cause tension between Member States' and to ensure that 'such subversive elements are discouraged from inciting friction among states' (Human Rights Library

n.d.). Disputes between Rwanda and Burundi over insurgent Batutsi refugees, and between Congo-Brazzaville and Zaire over immigrant groups working to overthrow Mobutu, presented a threat to Nyerere's 'good neighbourliness' policy and negated his patient endeavours to promote a confederation of east and southern African states on the march to full African union. Tanzania's 1966 Refugees (Control) Act was enacted partly as an answer to Rwandan refugees' reluctance to accept solutions posed by the host government and its negative repercussions on relations between Dar-es-Salaam and Kigali. The presence of pro-Milton Obote militias in Tanzania during Idi Amin's reign in Uganda exacerbated tensions and led Tanzania to fight its first and last war in 1979. Following this, pacts on disarming, confining and constricting propaganda activities by refugees in settlements were signed by Tanzania with Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. In a throwback to the Labour Officers of British times, settlement commandants and 'competent authorities' from the government were given extraordinary powers to restrict refugee movements and to forcibly extradite fugitives and other 'wanted' immigrants to their home countries. By the late eighties, commandants were seen by researchers as representing 'an almost military leadership structure', constantly harassing and spying on suspected subversives (Armstrong 1988). Bahutu refugees in Mishamo ironically used the term 'camp' instead of official terminology's 'settlement' as a mark of silent protest against the commandant's totalitarian control over every activity:

This is a camp which has a Tanzanian Commandant. It is he who controls what happens in the camp. It is he who—in the name of the government—controls cultural, economic and political affairs. It is the Commandant who decides. So, in our opinion, this is a camp. But UNHCR and TCRS do not want to say *camp* because the word has bad connotations . . . army and all that. They always want to say *settlement* (Malkki 1995: 117).

Likewise, a collective letter from Kimuli refugees in 1973 refers to the Commandant's mandate as 'neocolonial rule' (Gasarasi 1984: 51). Such sentiments need to be qualified by comparison with far more stringent controls in Kenya and Uganda, two countries that earned notoriety for government-condoned police beatings of innocent refugees throughout the seventies and eighties. Refugees in Nyerere's time did enjoy a relatively freer life than in many contemporary African host countries, and complaints of victimization were often not confirmed by UNHCR or TCRS (Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service), the government's partners. Moreover, as settlements became permanent features of the Tanzanian landscape, the government began granting *en masse* naturalization to refugees, terminating Commandant control. Tanzania was one of the first African nations to extend citizenship to entire refugee groups, a measure that was applauded by the international community, OAU and UNHCR. Real problems of camp insecurity and Tanzanian infringement of refugee rights did not emerge until the 1990s. Some refugees may have been viewed in official quarters as 'subversives' and 'threats

to regional security’, but the day when immigrants were christened ‘threats to national security’ had not dawned in Nyerere’s Tanzania.

Tanzanian Refugee Policy After Nyerere: The Side-Effects of Liberalization

Admitting failure of *ujamaa* and voluntarily resigning from the post of President in 1985, Julius Nyerere made history in a continent where gerontocratic nationalist leaders clung to power against growing odds of unpopularity and failed domestic policies. Two decades of villagization and import substitution had landed Tanzania in a debt crisis⁵ and it was left to Nyerere’s successors to dismantle government controls and public sector dominance over the economy and to embrace an open market system prescribed by the IMF and the World Bank. Unfortunately, even though the transition from African socialism to privatization helped boost food production and exports, open market economics led to unexpected repercussions on the open door to refugees. There began a ‘renegotiation of the state’s obligation to and contact with displaced populations’ and a supplantation of ‘charity and compassion of relief’ by distancing and alienating formulas (Hyndman 2000: 182). The Tanzanian state embraced the doctrine of ‘small government’ by withdrawing from the major economic spheres and limiting its functions to maintaining law and order, defence and essential services, thus narrowing the scope of public good compared to Nyerere’s welfare state. ‘Development’, as a paradigm, went out of fashion with a decline in public funding for income-generation and self-sufficiency activities in refugee settlements. Stringent lending conditions of the Washington Consensus and the insistence of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) on freezing development schemes and social spending if they were not in line with fiscal realities further reduced the role of the ‘post-welfare state’ and eventually ended the integrative rural resettlement strategy. From the late eighties, donors began to criticize continued inflow of scarce foreign exchange to settlements, with one UNHCR consultant report of 1987 advising that ‘refugees should no longer rely on the state or foreign donors’ for basic services (Daley 1992: 139). Further, IMF-prescribed controls on inflation and improvement in rural terms of trade led to ‘increased extraeconomic pressure on refugees (and locals) to grow the designated cash crop’ for export. Evidence from one settlement in Katumba reveals that tobacco, maize, beans and cassava output of refugee farmers was made to double in the first few years of reforms without price incentives, fertilizer inputs from the government or freedom to sell in the open market. ‘The economic welfare of refugees is threatened by the liberalization process’ (Daley 1992: 144) and the effect of the latter in discouraging immigration to Tanzania should not be underemphasized. Secondly, post-1985 reforms reduced the importance of agriculture in Tanzania’s economy⁶ and thus removed the utilitarian motive for welcoming Rwandan and Barundi refugee farmers. Refugees had been incorporated as an integral part of the national agricultural system during the sixties and seventies, and *a priori*,

structural changes in state investment and pricing patterns in agriculture affected openness to refugees. Tanzania, pioneer of a compassionate and long-term solution to African refugee problems, hence reverted after 1985 to geographically isolated and socially segregated makeshift camps, evoking from critics the oxymoronic label, 'displaced assistance' (Hyndman 2000: 37). Camps providing only the most basic human needs, shielded from local citizenry and fed by international humanitarian assistance were cheaper and, in the new anti-dirigisme language, fiscally more sustainable than *ujamaa* villages, which the state had to subsidize by providing health, education, agricultural tools and basic production infrastructure.

Shutting the Door: The Great Lakes Refugee Crisis

Tanzania's shift from a refugee policy oriented to permanent solutions, to that of providing relief in camps prior to repatriation, was not solely a byproduct of economic liberalization. The early nineties witnessed a proliferation of conflicts in the Great Lakes region, causing massive influxes into Tanzania and transforming the arithmetic of hosting refugees. Nearly 300,000 Barundi had fled into Tanzania between October and November 1993 but quickly returned, leaving a false sense of relief in Dar-es-Salaam. The storm came in 1994, when Rwanda's genocide produced the single largest refugee exodus in the shortest period, forcing Tanzania to adopt a hardnosed and unwelcoming attitude to this sea of humanity. For all the past intakes into the bordering region, it was only now that western Tanzania experienced 'the first humanitarian influx of sufficient magnitude to potentially reformulate the region's political economy' (Landau 2001). A complete shift away from settlements in favour of temporary camps supervened, quenching the embers of the pre-liberalization era. Confirming the great divide between pre-1994 and post-1994 policy, Dar-es-Salaam started using the phrase 'new caseload' in official documents for post-genocide Bahutu refugees. President Ali Mwinyi offered a hard choice to the new caseload: repatriate, or transfer to a newly established 'refugee settlement' (euphemism for UNHCR plastic tents dependent on daily rations). This 'settlement' was situated within walking distance from the border with Rwanda and Burundi in contravention of OAU refugee agreements,⁷ but in accord with UNHCR and the government's desire to give the refugees no chance to linger or escape into Tanzanian society.

In December 1996, Benjamin Mkapa's government issued an ultimatum to the half million Rwandan refugees to return home by the end of the month, in contravention of international refugee law. House to house 'round-ups', confinements and refolement of Barundi refugees by the Tanzanian army took place in 1997, 1999 and 2001, drawing into their ambit even some Barundi who were settlers from the sixties awaiting Tanzanian citizenship.⁸ Following the Great Lakes influx, harsh treatment slowly became a norm applicable to all future refugees, be they in 'sustainable' numbers or not. One interesting factor in increasing hostility to refugees is the transition to multi-party democracy

and use of refugees as an electoral issue. Politicians like Mkapa made trips to the refugee camps and, against Nyerere's wishes expressed in retirement, promised to send refugees back if voted to power, both before the 1995 election and in the most recent 2000 polls. The passage of a new Refugee Act in 1998, superseding the 1966 Refugees (Control) Act, on paper curbed the sweeping powers of camp commanders and local authorities in administration and status determination of refugees, but in practice had enough reservations to allow restrictionism to mount. The ending of the Open Door policy may be seen as a cumulative process, sparked off by the Rwandan crisis of 1994 but continuing under its own momentum.

'Refugees as Bullets': Camp Security, National Security and Regional Security

Intractability of warfare in the Great Lakes region counts as another major cause of the shutting Tanzanian door. The home ministry today calls refugees 'threats to national security' who have 'caused incalculable damage to this country' (Government of Tanzania n.d.). UNHCR considers Dar-es-Salaam's growing insecurity as '*perceived* to be caused by refugees' and has gone on record that the real insecurity is to camp residents rather than to the Tanzanian state:

Both within and outside the refugee camps, the refugees' safety is threatened mainly by criminal and/or politically motivated elements within the refugee community, resulting in serious injury and, in some cases, death (UNHCR 2000).

However, this does not take into account legitimate fears of criminalization of areas surrounding the camps and a reported increase in 'killings, thefts and other ills committed by some refugees causing social disorder and flight of peace from among Tanzania citizens' (Government of Tanzania n.d.). Press reportage in Tanzania has focused on rising tensions between locals and refugees on account of constructed or real pictures of refugee violence, kidnapping and profiteering. The most sensational case of refugees spreading militarism into Tanzanian society came to light in 1993, when the ANC admitted that it had beaten and tortured detained prisoners at Mazimbu and Dakawa camps, employing local hoodlums. UNHCR insistence that camp security is the main cause for concern also underestimates the volatility of the regional conflict that has stoked Tanzanian irritation and anxiety regarding refugees. Since 1993, Burundi has been accusing Tanzania of housing Bahutu FDD rebels and providing them with a safe zone to attack their home country, charges which have become increasingly vitriolic. Mkapa's response was that 'he was fed up of perennial accusations that his country was harbouring rebels from Burundi', and that if international assistance in separating refugees from militias were not forthcoming, he would refole the entire immigrant community from Burundi (East African 2001: 1). Foreign Minister Kikwete has similarly expressed disquiet at how owing to refugees, 'Burundi has been portraying Tanzania as an enemy'. At the root of these pronouncements are

Dar-es-Salaam's fears that the so-called 'Great African War' in the Congo and Burundi could be imported via refugees into thus far peaceful Tanzania. The imagery of 'refugees as bullets' piercing the integrity and socio-ethnic fabric of the host country (Borneman 1986) has finally reached the Tanzanian corridors of power, where the dominant strain of thought now seems to be that 'support to migrants and refugees incurs military retaliation and draws asylum countries into the turmoil' (Loescher 1992: 50).

Into the Future: Recommendations for Refugee Welfare and Protection

How can this trend of Tanzanian alienation from refugees be arrested and turned back to approximate the accommodating attitude of the Nyerere years? To begin with, hospitality is governed by state calculations of resource availability. In the words of home minister Mohammad Khatib, 'the burden is too heavy to carry' unless the international community extends more material and financial support to Tanzania (*Xinhua News* 2001). With African socialism irretrievably lost and Tanzania remaining a Least Developed Country (LDC), the route of increased international relief remains the most feasible. Burden-sharing plans within the OAU have existed on paper since 1969,⁹ but in practice none of the visionary ideals of a 'United States of Africa' assisting in complete integration of refugees into host countries have materialized. Tanzania was still able to grant entry to thousands of refugees in the post-independence decades, but as refugee-producing conflicts bloat to unmanageable proportions, a regionally or internationally constituted common-pool refugee relief fund is a crying necessity. 'Donor fatigue syndrome' has already shifted the emphasis from medium and long-term development assistance to emergency relief and it is critical that funding within the short-term rehabilitation rubric does not dry up.¹⁰

Pan-Africanists and humanists view increased international funding for refugee relief as only a transient sop to a structural and historical problem of artificial national boundaries across Africa. Their proposal, included in the draft text of the African Economic Community and the new African Union, for 'free movement of peoples and factors of production' all over the continent attempts to strike at the root causes of refugee problems, which are inadequately understood as merely conflicts and natural disasters. The vision of a borderless Africa that does not curtail people's 'right' to migrate within it, along the lines of the European Union, is a revolutionary one. However, the OAU's change into the African Union is largely a superficial metamorphosis on paper and it remains to be seen how this 'structural' solution to refugee hosting fatigue can be implemented in Tanzania and elsewhere.

Deteriorating camp security is another primary concern of Tanzania and humanitarian agencies. Having first surfaced in the refugee camps of eastern Zaire and western Tanzania, militarization and criminalization of camps have become ubiquitous, combining with other developments to exacerbate hosting fatigue. Deployment of police or the military in Tanzanian camps incurred

widespread criticism for human rights abuses and yet, the government is faced with the need to contain camp politics and infighting, and prevent their offshoots from spreading into Tanzanian society. To adopt more fanciful recommendations like disseminating human rights education and establishing special courts to deal with camp crimes (UNHCR 1997: 5–6), Dar-es-Salaam would require further assistance from donors. One innovative solution favoured by the Tanzanian government is the US proposal, made in Arusha in 1996, for an Africa Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) to organize and train forces for policing of humanitarian and refugee relief, as well as peacekeeping. It is hoped that the ACRI, which UNHCR expects to disarm border-crossing populations once they move under international protection, will remove one major objection to refugee hosting. As far as reassuring local host populations is concerned, the Tanzanian government must live up to the foundations laid by Nyerere and improve the content of ‘education for citizenship’ that crucially affects empathy and cognition of the predicament of displaced people. Once again, however, this would depend upon sufficient financial aid that softens the state’s asylum policy and recreates the values motivating Open Door.

Conclusion

Historical exposition of Tanzania’s refugee hosting has thrown light on the intrinsic nexus between foundational ethics of the extant political order and attitudes towards immigrants. German and British thought patterns and the socio-economic facts of empire determined an exploitative and controlling hosting regime. Refugees needed to be able-bodied male distance labourers who could keep the economic train of colonialism chugging and who would steer clear of sedition. Both these strains were bequeathed as legacies to the postcolonial state. It is, however, wrong to ignore the Pan-Africanist and humanist changes to asylum governance introduced by Julius Nyerere and his brand of African socialism. Generalizations that ignore the history of humane and praiseworthy refugee hosting in the first two post-independence decades and pronounce that Tanzania’s refugee policy has always been driven in large part by material concerns and exploitation need heavy qualification. To return Tanzania to at least a semblance of Open Door, knowledge of the dignifying and integrative aspects of immigration in the past is essential. However, the refugee problem faced by Nyerere’s Tanzania is in no way comparable to the enormous scale of population displacements in east and southern Africa since 1993 and it is wishful thinking to imagine restoration of the *status quo ante* merely in terms of a renaissance of lost ethics. Nor is it practical to sidestep the winds of political and economic change that have swept Tanzania since the failure of Nyerere’s domestic agenda and altered the dynamics of refugee hosting in recent times. The path for reopening Tanzania’s closed door to refugees begins with enhanced material and monetary assistance by the international and donor community to a state beleaguered by poverty and unable to bear the burden of new influxes. Simultaneously, as exemplified by

our Tanzanian case study, a re-examination of the regressive global shift in paradigms from long-term welfare to transient day-to-day sustenance of refugees is called for.

1. In no chronological order of arrival, they are Rwanda, Burundi, Congo-Kinshasa, Mozambique, South Africa, Somalia, Sudan, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Zambia and Malawi.
2. A similar conclusion is reached by Chambers (1979).
3. Zimbabwe African National Union; Zimbabwe African People's Union; African National Congress; African People's Democratic Union of South Africa; Pan-African Congress; South West African People's Organization; Movimento Popular da Liberação de Angola; Frente de Liberação de Moçambique; Comité Revolucionário de Moçambique.
4. For an account of Malawi's post-independence elites, their attitudes towards African liberation and their controversial decision to deal with apartheid South Africa, see Short (1974); McMaster (1974).
5. In GDP per capita terms, Tanzania in the mid-eighties was also rated the world's second poorest country by the IBRD.
6. From a near monopolistic high of 85 per cent of GDP in 1985, agriculture now accounts for only 50 per cent of GDP. Tanzania Government Figures, <http://www.tanzania.go.tz/economyf.html>
7. A 50 mile or kilometre limit from the concerned border required to be maintained for camp location.
8. UNHCR noted with consternation that 122 Barundi refugees forcibly repatriated by Tanzania in January 1997 were killed by the Barundi military, 'UNHCR Condemns Killing of Barundi Refugees', Press Release, 15 January 1997 www.unhcr.ch
9. Article 2 reads, 'Other Member States shall, in the spirit of African solidarity and international co-operation, take appropriate measures to lighten the burden of the Member State granting asylum'. The 1979 Arusha Conference on African refugees even mooted 'establishment of a fund to defray the various costs involved in the acceptance of refugees by first asylum countries'.
10. These points were first raised at the OAU's Seventh Extraordinary Session on Africa's Refugee Crisis in Khartoum, September 1990.

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