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Fighting Their Way Home: The Militarization of the Rwandan '59ers

by Alexa Heming (HMNALE002)

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the reward of
the degree of masters in international relations.

Supervisor: John Akokpari
Department of Political Studies
University of Cape Town
2007

Declaration:

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this dissertation, from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my friend Maurice Nyaruhira.

University of Cape Town

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Abstract

This thesis examines the first wave of Rwandan refugees, specifically those who formed an army and invaded Rwanda some thirty years after they fled the country. This thesis attempts to understand the motivations behind this militarization of refugees and their subsequent invasion of Rwanda. Through an examination of the policies of such international organizations as the UNHCR and the OAU toward refugees, as well as through an examination of the policies and practices of those neighboring states which, as host states, bore the brunt of refugees, this thesis demonstrates that a lack of permanent resolution to the protracted refugee situation could have motivated this particular group of refugees to seek their own resolution through military action. This thesis considers other conditions and factors that may also have contributed to this particular political phenomenon, such as the acceptance of refugees by local populations, the changing political climate in host states, in particular in Uganda, and a growing sense of nationalism in the refugee diaspora. Furthermore, this thesis examines the significance of the concepts of citizenship and belonging to the stability and security of refugees living in protracted exile situation.

1.0 Introduction

*"To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul."*¹

In 1990, an army of highly trained, well armed guerrilla fighters invaded Rwanda from the Ugandan border, beginning what would become more than a three year war with the Rwandan government.² What makes this war of particular interest is the unusual composition of the invading army: the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). This army, the military component of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), was chiefly comprised of Rwandan refugees who had been living in exile from Rwanda (mostly in Uganda) for the preceding thirty years.³ From the militarization of these refugees, a question arises: why did these refugees, some thirty years after their exodus from Rwanda, mobilize, militarize, and invade their country of origin? Specifically, what motivated this militarization; what motivated these refugees to force their right to return home?

Explaining the causes of a political phenomenon, such as the formation and militarization of the RPF and its subsequent military invasion of Rwanda, is not a simple task with a provable answer; thus, explaining why this phenomenon occurred will not be attempted. Instead, this thesis will merely to try and understand this phenomenon through an analysis of the events, conditions and policies relating to the action in question.

From this aforementioned analysis, this thesis will suggest that the failure of hosting states to create conditions that would enable refugees to establish a future in these

¹ Weil, Simone, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Toward Mankind*, (New York: Ark, 1987 [1952]), 41

² Uvin, Peter, "Ethnicity and Power in Burundi and Rwanda: Different Paths to Mass Violence," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (Apr., 1999), 259

³ Reed, Cyrus, "Exile, Reform, and the Rise of the Rwandan Patriotic Front," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol.34, No.3, (Sep., 1996), 479. Prunier, Gérard, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*, (London: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2002), 93

states – to establish a home, might subsequently have led to the militarization of Rwandan refugees and the invasion of Rwanda in 1990. The failure to effectively respond to the refugee situation, the failure to create stable and secure conditions that not only addressed immediate concerns about physical security, but also considered the long term security and well-being of refugees, can be argued as motivating factors behind the militarization of these refugees. As is concisely summarized in the quote by Simone Weil that opens this thesis, the Rwandan refugees militarized and forced their right to return to Rwanda because of the basic human need to be rooted – to belong somewhere.

A lack of citizenship, a sense of not-belonging, and limited, if any, opportunities for a future (in terms of employment, health, education and opportunities for their children's futures), as well as fervent xenophobia by local populations in the hosting states, can be argued to have influenced the decision to militarize. These experiences shaped the identities of these refugees, and the identities of these refugees, as refugees, is material in understanding their eventual militarization.

This thesis will look specifically at those refugees who, beginning in 1959, fled from Rwanda to Uganda where they resided until the invasion of Rwanda in 1990.⁴ These refugees were a part of the first wave of refugees who fled the fear of ethnically based persecution as the colonial rule of the Belgians came to an end and the Hutu Republic

⁴This group is called the '59ers, referring to the first wave of refugees that fled Rwanda from 1959 into the early 1960s. It was these refugees and the children of these refugees that later founded the RPF. This thesis will focus on this group of refugees. This is not to claim that later refugees (from the second or third waves) could not have been, and were not involved in the RPF, simply that it was from the '59ers that the RPF was born and predominantly comprised. Jones, Bruce D., "Civil War, the Peace Process and Genocide in Rwanda," in *Civil Wars in Africa: Roots and Resolution*, (eds.) Taisier M. Ali and Robert O. Matthews, (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 58. Lemarchand, René, "Exclusion, Marginalization and Political Mobilization: The Road to Hell in the Great Lakes," *Centre for Development Research (ZEF Bonn): Facing Ethnic Conflicts*, (14-16 December 2000), 4

commenced.⁵ This thesis will look in general at the conditions and policies of other hosting states in the Great Lakes region (Burundi, Tanzania and Zaire – what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)); however, as it is from these refugees in particular that the RPF was formed, this thesis will focus on the conditions and policies affecting the refugees in Uganda.⁶

An analysis of the historical power dynamics specific to the rule of Rwanda, the timing of the militarization, and the refugees' military training, experience, and access to arms, will be examined as possible contributing motivational factors which led to the militarization of the RPF. In addition, this thesis will consider the significance of an arguably growing sense of nationalism among refugee communities.

Although (as mentioned above) it will explore other possible understandings as to why the Rwandan refugees militarized and chose to force their right to return 'home', this thesis will not attempt to analyze every possible motivation. It will remain primarily limited to analyzing and understanding the conditions and policies of host-states toward the refugees, the ensuing formation of these refugees' identities, and the relevance of refugee identity in understanding why these Rwandan refugees militarized.

Methodology

This thesis was researched qualitatively, using library sources as a basis of information. Inclusive of these library sources are books, journal articles, government publications, and academic Internet resources.

⁵ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 48

⁶ Reed, Cyrus, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front: Politics and Development in Rwanda," in *A Journal of Opinion*, Vol.23, No.2, Rwanda, (1995), 49

Limitations

As this thesis is based on secondary sources, it will have a several limitations. To begin with, this thesis will be limited by the basis of the literature being predominantly of Western authors and consequently from an external perspective, thus cannot be taken as the only truth but rather as one interpretive perspective. Second, although all measures have been taken to avoid it, this research may be limited by possible personal biases. Third, as mentioned above, although it will explore other possible understandings as to why the Rwandan refugees militarized and chose to force their right to return 'home', this research will not attempt to analyze *all* possible motivations. It will remain primarily limited to analyzing and understanding the conditions and policies of host-states toward the refugees, the ensuing formation of these refugees' identities, and the relevance of refugee identity in understanding why Rwandan refugees militarized. This paper will not conceit to *explain* why this phenomenon occurred, nor will it attempt to assert explanations for why refugees in general militarize. This paper proposes merely to attempt an *understanding* of this phenomenon through an examination of the events and circumstances, policies and conditions leading up to 1990 and the RPF invasion of Rwanda.

1.1 Defining a Refugee

As this thesis aims to analyze the identity of a refugee, as a refugee, in the context of the militarization of Rwandan refugees, who qualifies as a refugee must first be defined. In Article 1 of the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) defines a refugee as anyone, who:

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.⁷

Further defined by the Organization of the African Union (OAU) in the *Convention on Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* (1974), in addition to the definition provided by the OHCHR (and subsequently the United Nations):

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.⁸

A refugee can be defined as a displaced person, who, for the reasons outlined above, has crossed international borders and is seeking protection from the threats compelling them to leave their place of origin. This is not to be confused with an internally displaced person (IDP), who for most of the same reasons as a refugee was driven to leave their home, but has remained within the borders of their country,

⁷ “Convention relating to the Status of Refugees,” *Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights* website, http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_c_ref.htm, (accessed 10/11/06)

⁸ *OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*, (Geneva: Public Information Section, UNHCR, June 1974), 3

displaced in terms of having left their place of origin, but without crossing international boundaries.⁹

For the purpose of this thesis, unless otherwise highlighted, the Rwandan people who lived outside the borders of their home country, who fled, or whose parents fled Rwanda for reasons outlined above, will herein be referred to as refugees. This thesis will focus, in particular, on the first wave of refugees (as well as their children, of whom many were born into exile), who fled Rwanda between 1959 and 1963 to neighboring countries, most specifically to Uganda.¹⁰

Refugees have been defined as “a political form” of migration, as opposed to immigrants, who constitute “an economic form of migration.”¹¹ And in the case of this group of Rwandan refugees, whose flight was in response to changing political conditions and the subsequent persecution of a politicized ethnic group, this definition is not unfitting. However, as “the term refugees denotes an objectively self-delimiting field of study,” it is important not to presume all refugees to be of the same sociological and historical background.¹² For the purpose of this thesis, and resultant of its restricted length and scope, however, the refugees in question will be analyzed from a limited perspective, as a group and not as individuals.

⁹ Crisp, Jeff, “Africa’s Refugees: Patterns, Problems and Policy Challenges,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 18, 2, (2000), 157-158

¹⁰ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 51

¹¹ Malkki, Liisa H., “Refugees and Exile: From ‘Refugee Studies’ to the National Order of Things,” in *Annual Reviews of Anthropology*, Vol. 24, (1995), 496

¹² *Ibid.*

Refugee Identity

“[R]esolving their international statelessness became the defining characteristic of the lives of Rwanda’s exiles.”¹³ For the purpose of this thesis it is important to have a clear understanding of what is meant by a refugee identity. A refugee identity is defined by a persons’ status as living outside of their home state for fear of persecution, without citizenship, and without the protection of their home state.

What creates a political refugee identity is...not just poverty, which refugees share with many of the surrounding populations, but a mix of low status limited opportunity, vulnerability and thwarted national identity. Even when ... [they] have adopted the nationality of a host country, theirs is a lesser citizenship.¹⁴

They are in essence “lost, ‘in limbo’ and helpless.”¹⁵ The identity of a refugee is shaped by their experiences as a refugee, leaving them vulnerable to the efforts and considerations (or lack there of) of host states, local populations, and international organizations.

How refugees are received and the conditions in which they are ‘hosted’ can either augment or diminish this identity. If host states and their local populations poorly receive refugees, if these refugees experience intolerance, violence, discrimination and xenophobia, their identity as refugees, and some construction of their historical identity, will intensify in response. For example, Rwandan refugees living in Zaire experienced xenophobia and other forms of abuse by local populations, amplifying their identity as Rwandan (or an idea of what Rwandan is), as well as their identity as refugees.¹⁶

¹³ Reed, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” 49

¹⁴ Sayigh, Rosemary, “Dis/Solving the ‘Refugee Problem,” *Middle East Report*, No.207, Who Paid the Price? 50 Years of Israel, (Summer, 1998), 20

¹⁵ Rajaram, Prem Kumar, “Humanitarianism and Representations of the Refugee,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (2002), 248

¹⁶ Van der Meeren, Rachel, “Three Decades in Exile: Rwandan Refugees 1960-1990,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, (1996), 262

Alternatively, it can be argued, that positive experiences might encourage the integration (and possibly, eventual assimilation) of refugees. Should refugees be offered opportunities of a future by hosting states, such as citizenship, employment, education and health care, or if there were a greater prevalence of toleration and acceptance by local populations, it could be argued that the refugee identity would lessen. It is thus arguable, that without the motivation of insecurity and not-belonging driving them to find a home, and under conditions which could facilitate a future in the hosting state, refugees would be more likely to settle – to plant new roots.

One study shows that refugees living in a camp type situation “were continually engaged in an impassioned construction and reconstruction of their history as ‘a people,’” forming narratives about their nationalism and the ‘homeland.’¹⁷ The study was held in comparison with refugees who were dispersed and integrated with local communities, where they “had not constructed such a categorically distinct, collective identity.”¹⁸ Instead “they tended to seek ways of assimilating and of manipulating multiple identities.”¹⁹ From this study, it could be argued that conditions that further alienate refugees result in their need to feel like they belong. They therefore construct and reconstruct their history and identity as both refugees and as (in the case in question) some exceptional form of Rwandans. This historical and identity manipulation acts as a unifying force, linking the refugees to each other, with nowhere else.

It must not go unconsidered, however, the determinedness of refugees to protect their identity and their status as refugees “as a sign of the ultimate temporariness of exile

¹⁷ Malkki, Liisa, “National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees,” *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference, (Feb., 1992), 35

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 36

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

and the refusal to become naturalized, to put down roots in a place which one did not belong.”²⁰ It is suggested that the first wave of refugees believed the arrival of Rwandan independence would quell the struggle for political power, which would enable their repatriation. Consequently, these refugees remained determined not to integrate with host societies, nor be dispersed from refugee camps: “The refugees...had vested interests in remaining together in a camp-type concentration, both for physical and psychological security.”²¹ This decision, it could be determined, compounded their identities as refugees and their belief in the narratives constructed about their history.

Attempts at the dispersal of refugees by hosting states within their territories, were most often met with complete failure.²² In Tanzania, for example, where it is suggested that refugees were initially well received by the hosting government, “refugees refused to move [when told to disperse] and finally fled to Burundi when threatened with force.”²³ Experiences such as these can clearly be seen as contributory to the construction of the Rwandan refugee identity, arguable unifying the group against the common threat of constant insecurity, displacement, and not- belonging.

It must not be presumed, however, that the initial determination of refugees to stay together and maintain their temporary status, is alone an argument as to the formation of their identities as refugees, and consequently responsible for their statelessness.²⁴ The insensitivity of hosting state policies toward the needs, both physical

²⁰ Ibid., 35

²¹ Van der Meeren “Three Decades in Exile,” 259

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Statelessness in this context will be understood as being without citizenship of any country. A person is stateless when, “situations where the nationality of particular ethnic or religious groups has been the subject of political controversy.” The group of ethnically Tutsi refugees from Rwanda were not allowed, or unwilling to return home, and were later stated by the Rwandan President, Habyarimana, to not exist, thus putting into question their nationality. “Stateless Persons and Prevention of Statelessness,” *Africa*

and psychological, of the refugees, must be taken in to consideration. Uprooting the uprooted, hosting states such as in the case of Tanzania, failed to create the conditions in which refugees could establish a home.

Citizenship and Not-Belonging

“[T]he rise of the modern state saw the appropriation of the concept ‘citizen’ to demarcate those who belong to a political formation or community and those who do not.”²⁵ This notion links the concepts of citizenship and belonging to that of identity. Specifically, the identity of a citizen is linked to the state of which they belong.²⁶ “Conventionally, citizenship refers to a person’s bonafide membership in a state.”²⁷ This membership suggests some form of agreement between state and citizen, where the citizen is responsible to the state (by abiding the law) and the state is responsible to the citizen (by protecting the basic rights of the citizen).

As refugees are characterized by their lack of protection by the state, they are by definition without citizenship. Being without citizenship reduces a person to a “second-class” status, where rights and opportunities are limited or are non-existent, and where their identity is characterized, not by the state, but by their statelessness.²⁸

Protection Directions: UNHCR (Africa Bureau), (June 2005), 29. Reed, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” 49. Mamdani, Mahmood, “African states, citizenship and war: a case-study,” *International Affairs*, 78, 3, (2002), 496

²⁵ Ranchod, Kirty, “Citizenship and identity, brain drain and forced migration: The Zimbabwe case,” *Policy: issues & actors*, Vol. 18, No. 5, (Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, July 2005), 2

²⁶ Ranchod, Kirty, “Citizenship and identity, brain drain and forced migration: The Zimbabwe case,” *Policy: issues & actors*, Vol. 18, No. 5, (Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, July 2005), 2

²⁷ Akokpari, John, “‘You Don’t Belong Here’: Citizenship, the State and Africa’s Conflicts – reflections on Ivory Coast,” paper prepared for presentation at the *International Conference on African Conflicts: Management, Resolution and Post-Conflict Recovery and Development*, (UN Conference Centre, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 29 November- 1 December 2004), 4

²⁸ Akokpari, “‘You Don’t Belong Here’,” 7

“[I]t is the consciousness of the denial of citizenship rights by a people which usually facilitates the transformation of sectarian groups like racial and ethnic groups from being ‘groups in themselves’ into ‘groups for themselves’.”²⁹ The intensification of the identity of refugees as not-belonging could be argued to be rooted in this lack of citizenship. When looking at the case of the ethnically Tutsi Rwandan refugees living in Uganda, it is plausible to conclude that their denial of citizenship in 1990 (as well as prior to this date under Milton Obote’s regime) consolidated this group as a group, as refugees not-belonging, and as Rwandan (psychologically if not physically).³⁰

Citizenship, as is argued by Liisa Malkki, is crucial to the identity of an individual.³¹ Without such security, it is not unfounded that the individual will look elsewhere for a sense of belonging and the protection of a group. For refugees sharing a common ethnicity, such as the ‘59ers, resorting to the safety of the group (for instance the RPF) is a seemingly logical conclusion.

Furthermore, it is not illogical to conclude that the identity of a group of refugees, shaped by their lack of citizenship, could lead to the need for a place to belong. The term citizenship is rooted in the word “city”, a specific place where a state and citizen relationship can be established, and a sense of belonging can be found.³² In this manner, it could be suggested that not-belonging and lack of citizenship may have been motivational to the RPF’s invasion of Rwanda in 1990. Without anywhere to call home, it is consistent that the refugees would begin to look at alternative ways to plant their roots. “[T]he refugee experience denies internalised notions of belonging and protection which

²⁹ Adejumobi, S., “Citizenship, Rights and the Problem of Conflicts and Civil Wars in Africa,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, 23:1, (2001), 156

³⁰ Akokpari, “‘You Don’t Belong Here’,” 7

³¹ Malkki, “National Geographic,” 24

³² Akokpari, “‘You Don’t Belong Here’,” 4

are associated with the idea of being a citizen: refugees are no longer able to identify with the sense of membership, participation and security that are normally provided through citizenship.”³³ Thus it is probable to deduct, that refugees, denied the conditions of citizenship, would seek to find it elsewhere, or seek to create the conditions in a state where citizenship could be afforded to them. It will be argued in this thesis that this lack of citizenship and belonging, specifically the denial of citizenship by hosting states, motivated the forced return of the Rwandan ‘59ers in 1990.

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³³ Pittaway, Eileen & Emma Pittaway, “‘Refugee Woman’: a dangerous label,” *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 20, (2004), <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AJHR/2004/20.html#Heading25>, (accessed 21 Dec., 2006)

2.0 History and Background

This chapter will aim to provide a background and history to the militarization of Rwandan refugees as the RPA, and their subsequent invasion of Rwanda in 1990. The background will set up the question being asked: what motivated the militarization of Rwandan refugees, and their subsequent invasion of Rwanda in 1990? The historical overview will assist in the later analysis of events and policies, conditions and circumstances which lead to the phenomenon in question. Only once a strong understanding of the history has been established, will it be possible to attempt to understand what motivated the '59er refugees to force their right to return home.

Background

“In the wake of post-1945 decolonization movements, [emergent Hutu elites] began to use Tutsi dominance as a focal point for generating political support...[and] positioning themselves to take over from the Belgians when decolonization occurred in 1959-61.”³⁴ This process provoked two crucial reactions. The first reaction was the politicization of Hutuness which was used to gain majority support during the decolonization movement in 1959. This led to the perpetuation of the myth of difference between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda. It further became the platform from which Juvénal Habyarimana’s regime and Hutu hardliners propagated their anti-Tutsi fervor in the early 1990s. The politicization of ethnicity generated fear and resentment among Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, a fear that would later be manipulated into support for the 1994

³⁴ Jones, “Civil War,” 58

genocide.³⁵ Second, and of particular note, the process of decolonization and emergent Hutuness resulted in a series of violent years primarily directed toward the oppression and destruction of Tutsi Rwandans.

The destructive and oppressive nature of the newly decolonized Rwandan regime triggered a “mass exodus of Tutsis, particularly to Uganda” and other neighboring states within the Great Lakes region.³⁶ From this first group of refugees, the ‘59ers, were the future members of the RPF born. It was this group of refugees, who eventually resorted “to violence to force their right of return” to Rwanda.³⁷ It will be argued that the experiences of these refugees, and the conditions within which they lived in host states, leading up to the invasion of Rwanda in 1990, shaped their identities and motivated their eventual militarization.

In the thirty years or so that these refugees spent in exile, the protection and reception (or lack thereof) provided by hosting states inevitably contributed to the creation of their identities. Their experiences, in particular those of the refugees in Uganda, who were recruited into Yoweri Museveni’s guerrillas and played a key role in the overthrow of the then president, Milton Obote, shaped their knowledge and perception of revolution, battle, liberation, and perhaps most importantly, they shaped their perception of possibility. “The realities of...Rwandese political life, the pervasiveness of the Hutu racial ideology, the problem of the Tutsi image as

³⁵ It is important to note that ethnic differences did exist in Rwanda between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, prior to colonization; however, it was the colonial influence, through racial stratification, which made these differences important in Rwandan political life. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5

³⁶ Jones “Civil War,” 58

³⁷ Ibid.

reconstructed by that same ideology – all these obstacles to their dream of an eventual return were blithely ignored”³⁸ by these refugees.

With a strong sense of Rwandan identity and identity as a refugee, which was preserved in the refugee communities, these refugees had cause to fight for a home. Furthermore, political changes in Uganda changed the status of Rwandese refugees from integrated members of Museveni’s military and government, to “hated and despised foreigners.”³⁹ Dislocated and with no further prospects of a future in Uganda, or in the other hosting state, which were also changing their policies from ‘open’ to ‘closed’ in the 1980s, Rwandese refugees formed the RPF, and saw the time fit to return ‘home’ to Rwanda.⁴⁰

2.1 Pre-Colonial Rwanda and the Three Groups

Unlike in other regions in Africa, pre-colonial Rwanda was comprised of three groups of people who not only shared a common language, Kinyarwanda, but a common religion and culture as well.⁴¹ “Disagreement exists on the nature of the distinction between [these groups] Hutu, Tutsi and Twa,” who some specialists would argue, were theoretically distinguishable by occupation: cultivators, cattle-herders, and hunter-gatherers respectively.⁴² These distinctions, while not static, most certainly existed. Although the groups “were neither similar nor equal,”⁴³ they were living side-by-side

³⁸ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5. Gourevitch, Philip, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*, (Basingstoke and Oxford: Picador, 2000), 66-67

³⁹ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5. Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*, 70

⁴⁰ Jones, “Civil War,” 59

⁴¹ The word ‘group’ is used here, instead of ‘tribe,’ as tribe is misleading and suggests they are “micro-nations,” which the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa people are not. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5. Uvin, Peter, “Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide in Rwanda,” *African Studies Review*, Vol. 40, No. 2, (Sept., 1997), 92

⁴² Uvin, “Prejudice, Crisis,” 92

⁴³ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5

and sharing a common culture; as such, debates arise on whether or not they were really ethnically distinct.⁴⁴

Well integrated through intermarriage, “Individuals could and did move between the categories Hutu and Tutsi as their fortunes rose and fell.”⁴⁵ Seemingly based more on “class or caste” than ethnicity, the groups (‘Tutsi’ referring to the upper or ruling class, and ‘Hutu’ referring to the peasantry), it is argued, were not distinguished as racial or ethnic until the arrival of the first colonialists, the Germans in 1897.⁴⁶

Structured as a kingdom since the late 1800s, and under the leadership of King Rwabugiri, Rwanda had a political system, centralized by the *mwami* (the king).⁴⁷ Rwanda’s population was disproportionately divided among its three groups. The Twa group (the small pygmy grouping in Rwanda), by far the smallest of the three, made up less than one percent of the population.⁴⁸ Due to their size, and marginalized by the Hutu and Tutsi groups, the Twa found themselves dependent on the political elite.⁴⁹ Although the Tutsi and Hutu groups “were less sharply distinct,” and “a fusion of Tutsi and Hutu” comprised the political institutions of the kingdom, there was an apparent difference between the groups.⁵⁰ The Hutu group was vastly greater in numbers to that of the Tutsi, making up the eighty-five percent of the population. Although they were great in

⁴⁴ Mamdani, “African states,” 498

⁴⁵ *Rwanda: Death Despair and Defiance*, Revised Edition, (London: African Rights, August 1995 [first edition September 1994]), 3. Millwood, David (ed), “The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience,” *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, (March 1996), 23

⁴⁶ Jones, Bruce D., *Peacemaking in Rwanda: The Dynamics of Failure*, (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2001), 17. Uvin, “Prejudice, Crisis,” 92

⁴⁷ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 9. *Rwanda: Death*, 17

⁴⁸ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5

⁴⁹ *Rwanda: Death*, 3

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 2&3

numbers, the Hutu (in general) were not the elite. The Rwandan elite was comprised of privileged Tutsis, who came from the remaining fourteen percent of the population.⁵¹

2.2 Colonialism and the 'Theories' of John Hanning Speke

The politicization of the identities of the Rwandan people came with colonialism and its "almost obsessive preoccupation with 'race' in late nineteenth-century."⁵² The political ordering of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa by the colonial rulers institutionalized the concept of racial or ethnic difference in Rwanda.⁵³

With the Berlin Conference of 1885, Africa was divided up into colonies by the leading European super-states. The land referred to as the "pearl of Africa," Rwanda, was acquired by Germany.⁵⁴ When the German colonialists arrived in Rwanda, they were few in numbers and elected to govern the territory by "indirect rule."⁵⁵ As was the tendency of European colonialists at the time, some sort of hierarchy of races was imposed on the Rwandan people in order "to justify European comprador (intermediary) arrangements with some of those groups."⁵⁶

Categories were formed along the lines of what the colonialists viewed as distinguishable ethnic differences. These differences were determined primarily from physiological criteria.⁵⁷ As such, the previously different, but fluid social groups, became

⁵¹ Newbury, Catharine, "Background to Genocide: Rwanda," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, Vol.23, No.2, Rwanda (1995), 12. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5

⁵² Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5. Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*, 49. Mamdani, Mahmood, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, (Oxford: James Currey Ltd., 2001), 32

⁵³ Clapham, Christopher, "Rwanda: The Perils of Peacemaking," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 2, March 1998, 197-197

⁵⁴ Melvern, Linda R., *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide*, (London, New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2000), 7

⁵⁵ *Rwanda: Death*, 5

⁵⁶ Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda*, 17

⁵⁷ The descriptions used to classify or distinguish between the different ethnic groups, as determined by the colonialists are as follows: Hutus are described as having Bantu features, wider, flatter noses, darker skin,

distinguished not by only class or caste, but by physical appearance – discerned by the Germans (and later by the Belgians, who took control of the territory after the First World War) as race.

The distinction between Hutu and Tutsi as ethnically different is the manifestation of the colonial preoccupation with the notion of race, and its incessant need to create a ‘pecking order.’ Hutu became politically and socially subordinate to Tutsi and both to their colonial superiors. In this light, ‘historical’ and ‘anthropological’ constructions about the origins of the ‘superior’ Tutsi race were constructed by colonialists, conveniently justifying their racial stratification of Rwandan society.

Hutu identity developed in response to the imported notion that Tutsis were ‘foreigners’ who came from the north and invaded Rwanda. This version of Rwandan history claims that Tutsis “gradually, due to their sophisticated organization, managed to install a system of centuries of oppression and exploitation”⁵⁸ on the “indigenous”⁵⁹ Hutu people.

One legend on the origins of the Tutsi people, as suggested by “the famous Nile explorer,”⁶⁰ John Hanning Speke, is that they are “a Caucasoid tribe of Ethiopian origin, descended from the biblical King David, and therefore a superior race to the native Negroids.”⁶¹ This tribe then conquered the inferior Hutu race in Rwanda.⁶²

and shorter in height, “thick-set with a big head, a jovial expression...and enormous lips.” Tutsis are described as having lighter skin and angular features, being tall and slender. The Twa people are described as being small, “chunky, muscular, and very hairy...With a monkey-like flat face and a huge nose.”

Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 6.

⁵⁸ Uvin, “Prejudice, Crisis,” 93

⁵⁹ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 34

⁶⁰ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 7

⁶¹ Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*, 51

⁶² Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 9

Known as the Hamitic thesis, it was believed that the Tutsis were “cousins” of the Europeans; they were Europeans who just happen to have black skin.⁶³ Belief in this thesis enabled the colonialists to link “physical characteristics with mental capacity” and subsequently justify their favoritism of Tutsis in their racial stratification of Rwanda, and facilitate their “colonial policy of divide-and-rule.”⁶⁴

These theories of “conquest of inferior by superior races” effected, not only the political structuring of colonial Rwanda, but the identity of the Rwandan people themselves.⁶⁵ It is these myths about the origins of Hutus and Tutsis – as natives and aliens respectively – that were later manipulated and misrepresented by the post-colonial Hutu governments, as anti-Tutsi propaganda.⁶⁶

Under the indirect rule of the Germans, and later under the more “direct rule” of the Belgians, Rwandan racial stratification was institutionalized.⁶⁷ Tutsis were given an elite status over the Hutu peasantry (as well as over the Twa), which effectively froze “the caste-like divisions and [carried] them over into the changing contexts of the modernizing state.”⁶⁸

As a result, these fabrications of ethnic difference between the three groups began to penetrate the natives’ identities. Intensified by the death of the Tutsi king Rwabugiri, and the ensuing fight for succession, ethnicity became politically relevant:

The political structure that resulted is often described as a “dual colonialism,” in which Tutsi elites exploited the protection and license extended by the Germans to pursue their internal feuds and to further their hegemony over the Hutus. By the time the League of Nations turned Rwanda over to the Belgians as a

⁶³ Millwood, “The International Response to Conflict and Genocide”

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 9

⁶⁶ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 34

⁶⁷ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 10

⁶⁸ Van der Meeren “Three Decades in Exile,” 253

spoil of World War I, the terms Hutu and Tutsi had become clearly defined as opposing “ethnic” identities, and the Belgians made this polarization the cornerstone of their colonial policy.⁶⁹

““You whip the Hutu or we will whip you.””⁷⁰ The Belgian colonial administration widened the divide between Tutsi and Hutu, pitting the one against the other, and breeding the resentment of Hutus toward the favored Tutsi minority: “Tutsis enjoyed a monopoly on administrative and political jobs, while Hutus watched their already limited opportunities for advancement shrink.”⁷¹ Whether from ego, or because of coercion, the Tutsi elite took advantage of their positions of privilege and aided in the oppression of the Hutu people; in doing so, the Tutsi elite essentially affirmed the ‘theories’ about their superiority and about their exploitation and oppression of the Hutu people.⁷² This would later be used against them in anti-Tutsi propaganda: first, at the rise of Hutu political power during the decolonization movement, then, throughout the Kayibanda regime, and finally, as Habyarimana’s regime struggled to stay in power and the extremists implemented the genocide in 1994.

2.3 Decolonization and the Hutu Revolution

Following the end of the Second World War, decolonization movements started to take place throughout Africa and around the world, marking a global change in the attitudes toward colonization and the beginning of the end of the era of European imperial rule. By force or by permission, independence was sought by natives from their

⁶⁹ Gourevitch, *We wish to inform*, 54

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 57

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² It is important to note that not all Tutsis were privileged by the colonial system, and there were exceptions of privileged Hutus. Uvin, “Prejudice, Crisis,” 95

colonial rulers. Popularist revolutions, communist ideology, and mass movements answered the strict and oppressive nature of colonial regimes.⁷³

In Rwanda, as is suggested by Rachel Van der Meeren, “[t]he political struggle for power preceding independence saw the Mwami and leading Tutsi canvassing the UN for early independence, while they still controlled the reins of power.”⁷⁴ In opposition of the installation of Tutsi governance in post-colonial Rwanda, Hutu activists, seeking major political and social change from the injustice and inequality of the colonial regimes, began to rally a revolution.⁷⁵

“[F]aced with the end of colonial rule and with pressure from the United Nations, which supervised the administration of Rwanda under the trusteeship system, the colonial administrators began to increase possibilities for Hutu to participate in public life.”⁷⁶ Encouraged by Flemish priests, who identified with the plight of the Hutu people (as like the Hutus, they too had endured the rule of an elite minority in Belgium), Hutu elites began the political struggle for power. Although painted as a “social revolution”⁷⁷, “the political struggle in Rwanda was never really a quest for equality; the issue was only who would dominate the ethnically bipolar state.”⁷⁸

Confusion and violence characterized the devolution of colonial power and Tutsi elitism in Rwanda. Tensions were high in 1959, and violence was spurred by an attack on a Hutu sub-chief, a PARMEHUTU (Parti du Mouvement et de l’Emancipation Hutu) supporter, by members of an opposing political party, the conservative, monarchist

⁷³ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 42

⁷⁴ Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 254

⁷⁵ Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*, 58

⁷⁶ “Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda,” *Human Rights Watch Publications*, (April 1, 2004), http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/Geno1-3-09.htm#P233_103259, (accessed Nov. 29, 2006)

⁷⁷ Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*, 58

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

UNAR (Union Nationale Rwandaise).⁷⁹ Ensuing violence broke out in response, and indiscriminate Hutu attacks on Tutsis triggered further retaliation and more violence by the opposition.⁸⁰

In the two weeks it took to restore some sort of order, 300 people were killed and over a thousand arrested by the Belgian authorities.⁸¹ In spite of the 'cease-fire', the ball had been set in motion for what would become, not a social revolution so much as a struggle for "racial superiority."⁸² This movement was now supported by the Belgian authorities, who emphasized "the congruence between [a] demographic majority and democracy" in the spirit of the 'the rule of the majority,' which was becoming popular in the post-WWII era.⁸³ They claimed that "Because of the force of circumstances, [they had] to take sides," and consequently withdrew their support of the Tutsi elites and transferred it to the emerging Hutu revolutionaries.

Newly appointed, after the transfer of Belgian support, Hutu chiefs began to hunt down and persecute Tutsis (in particular, those living in the North).⁸⁴ "[M]anipulated for political advantage,"⁸⁵ anti-Tutsi rhetoric bridged with the colonial myths of racial ideology, compounded the perception of the Tutsi as the foreign oppressor, and fueled support for the movement and the escalation of violence against them.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 48

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 49

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 50

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 58

⁸⁴ As well as the Hutu – Tutsi divide, Rwanda was also faced with a North – South divide. Being the last to come under the rule of the Mwami, and having the smallest Tutsi population, the North had a more extreme anti-Tutsi reaction. Later this divide played a significant role in the political struggle and clan-based discrimination that characterized the late 1980s in Rwanda. In particular, Habyarimana and his wife's family came from the North and favoured this region, and the Hutus from this region in the policies and administration of his regime. *Ibid.*, 51&87

⁸⁵ Lemarchand, René, "The Apocalypse in Rwanda. Ethnic Conflict: The New World Order," *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, Issue 18.2, (1994)

⁸⁶ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 50

2.4 Violence and the '59ers

As the anarchy of the revolution persisted, the Great Lakes region became flooded with Rwandan refugees seeking asylum from persecution. Following the “suspicious” death of the Tutsi Mwami, King Mutara III Rudahigwa, violence and uncertainty began to plague the Tutsi population.⁸⁷ Many fled in mass exoduses that continued in parallel with the violence of 1959 and over the four years that followed.⁸⁸ “While opening the way for the enthronement of the representatives of the Hutu, an estimated 200,000 Tutsi were forced into exile in neighboring and other countries between 1959 and 1963 – approximately 70,000 to Uganda, 25,000 to the Congo and 50,000 to Burundi.”⁸⁹

“In 1960 [alone], in the pre-independence Hutu revolution in Rwanda, around 100,000 Tutsi became refugees in the four neighboring countries: Tanganyika [now Tanzania], Uganda, Burundi and the Congo [the DRC].”⁹⁰ With abolition of the monarchy and empowerment of the Parmehutu party under the leadership of Grégoire Kayibanda following the 1961 elections, the new king, Kigeli V, fled the country, and Rwanda saw the number of refugees escalate dramatically.⁹¹ By 1962, approximately 135,000 refugees were in exile in neighboring states, and the numbers continued to gain: “on average, 1,000 people were crossing into Uganda every week.”⁹²

Initially, the Tutsi refugees believed that with the onset of Rwandan independence, which became official on the 1 July 1962, the violence would subside and they would be able to return to a newly established, perhaps more equal, post-colonial

⁸⁷ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 14

⁸⁸ *Rwanda: Death*, 11

⁸⁹ Lemarchand, “Exclusion, Marginalization and Political Mobilization,” 3

⁹⁰ Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 252

⁹¹ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 15

⁹² *Ibid.*

Rwandan state:

[T]he refugees were waiting for Rwandan independence and the withdrawal of Belgian administrators and troops, Rwanda having been under military rule following the riots in November 1959, and for the crucial debates in the United Nations on the question of repatriation of the refugees and the future of the Mwami. All these dates finally came and went without any solution to the refugee situation.⁹³ As was determined by a special UN Commission sent to assess the situation in Rwanda in 1962, racially based discrimination and repression had become a very concerning reality, to the detriment of the Tutsi population: “the Tutsi ethnic minority had been brutally expelled from the social and political scene.”⁹⁴

For refugees, concerns about the future were reflected in their subsequent response to their confirmed refugee status. Between 1961 and 1966, attempts were made by small guerrilla groups or “Tutsi commandos”, known as cockroaches or *Inyenzi*, who, wanting an immediate solution to their situation as refugees, tried to force their right to return home to Rwanda.⁹⁵ These attempts were in the form of border raids and small-scale attacks launched from the neighboring host states.

“[C]onstantly divided by personal quarrels, by politics, by their disagreements on tactical military choices, and by the attitudes they felt should be followed *vis-à-vis* the new Hutu government in Rwanda,” the guerrilla groups were often ideologically opposing and poorly organized.⁹⁶ Not only were the attacks that were launched by the *Inyenzi* ineffective, but the new Rwandan government responded to them through increased violence toward the Tutsi population still living in Rwanda.⁹⁷

⁹³ Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 256

⁹⁴ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 16

⁹⁵ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 54&382

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 55

⁹⁷ Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 257. Reed, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” 48

In November 1963, one attack managed to raid a military camp and steal weapons, but was soon “overwhelmed with the superior fire-power” of the Gendarmerie Nationale Rwandaise, on route to Kigali.⁹⁸ In December of that year, a poorly organized and seemingly desperate attack was launched on Bugesera, but again defeat brought about a devastating response with violent repercussions: “They were quickly beaten back and the government used the occasion to launch a massive wave of repression in which an estimated 10,000 Tutsi were slaughtered between December 1963 and January 1964.”⁹⁹ As described by British philosopher, Lord Bertrand Russell, “it was the most horrible and systematic extermination of a ‘people’ since the Nazi’s extermination of the Jews.”¹⁰⁰ Somewhere “between 140,000 and 250,000, 40 to 70 percent of the survivors, fled Rwanda.”¹⁰¹

As a result, “[r]epatriation was not considered a possible option for the Tutsi refugees between 1960-1990, nor was resettlement in a second host country, except for a small minority elite, considering the large numbers involved.”¹⁰² Subsequently, the refugees were faced with the reality of their situation as refugees, and the conditions in which they were to live in their hosting states. It is arguable that this reality played a role in the development of the refugee identities of these people, and that the characteristics of these identities encouraged their eventual decision to militarize and invade Rwanda as the RPA in 1990.

⁹⁸ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 17

⁹⁹ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 56

¹⁰⁰ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 17

¹⁰¹ Uvin, “Ethnicity and Power in Burundi and Rwanda,” 256

¹⁰² Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 266

2.5 The Time in Between (1963-1990)

After the first wave of refugees had left Rwanda and the new government had firmly established a hold on power, the ethnically focused violence subsided: “Rwanda was supposedly stable.”¹⁰³ This is not to say that the authoritarian rule of President Kayibanda did not marginalize and oppress the Tutsi people still living in the country, and “[t]o deflect criticism...mount ferocious anti-Tutsi campaigns, simply that the violence decreased as the new regime strengthened its authority.”¹⁰⁴ Post-independence Rwanda saw the Tutsi people still living in the country discriminated against and excluded from educational and employment opportunities as well as from political life.¹⁰⁵ It saw them go from positions of privilege, as the favoured elite under the rule of the Belgian colonialists, to an openly repressed, racial minority.¹⁰⁶

1972 and 1973 brought about the demise of Kayibanda’s regime, as the paranoia and vigilantism that characterised his regime, and the poor economic performance, clientship and corruption that accompanied it, began to wear even on the elites.¹⁰⁷ In a final and desperate attempt to regain political support, a “hate campaign” was launched in an effort to resurrect “the atmosphere of unanimity which had accompanied the *Inyenzi* threat” of the 1960s.¹⁰⁸ These campaigns were insignificant in size, but in terms of a psychological and sociological effect, they prompted yet another mass exodus of Tutsi

¹⁰³ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 20

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 19&20

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 20

¹⁰⁶ It is important to note that the not all Tutsi people were members of the elite “who had benefited from the ancien regime,” some were regular rural people, for example. *Rwanda: Death*, 12. Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 20. Under the Kayibanda regime, Mahmood Mamdani refers to the divisiveness of Rwandan society in terms of race, rather than ethnicity. It is under the Habyarimana regime that Mamdani suggests the differences between Hutu and Tutsi are not racial but ethnic. Mamdani, “African states, citizenship and war,” 500

¹⁰⁷ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 60. *Rwanda: Death*, 13

¹⁰⁸ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 60-61

refugees.¹⁰⁹

In the wake of this political debacle, and with promises of reform and even protection for the Tutsi people from repression, Major-General Juvénal Habyarimana seized power in a non-violent coup on the 5 July 1973, restoring order to the ethnically polarized state.¹¹⁰ Habyarimana's regime was initially well received by the "urbanized" Hutu and Tutsi alike.¹¹¹ Strong policy reforms stabilized the ethnic violence of the Kayibanda years, and focused "on the need for economic development."¹¹²

In spite of these progressive reforms, "institutional discrimination" against Tutsis persisted.¹¹³ Discrimination against "southern" Hutu arose as well, expanding inequality and changing the dynamics of the power struggle in Rwanda.¹¹⁴

Habyarimana and his party, the Movement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRND), ran the Rwandan state in a fashion that was "somewhat reminiscent of eighteenth century European theories of 'benevolent despotism'."¹¹⁵ Assuming total control and responsibility for the political well-being of the state, Habyarimana 'freed' his subjects to "devote themselves entirely to the business of agriculture," a tactic that did realise some benefits in the shape of economic development.¹¹⁶

In order to maintain the façade of stability which had been so welcomed by Rwandans in 1973, Habyarimana and his MRND party implemented tight controls over

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 61

¹¹⁰ Ibid. *Rwanda: Death*, 13

¹¹¹ The peasantry was relatively indifferent to the change in leadership. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 75. *Rwanda: Death*, 13

¹¹² *Rwanda: Death*, 13

¹¹³ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 76.

¹¹⁴ Habyarimana came from the northwest region of Rwanda, and as such favoured this so-called "blessed region" above, and to the deprivation of, everyone else. *Rwanda: Death*, 14

¹¹⁵ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 77

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

all of the countries' regions.¹¹⁷ Seemingly random massacres, and murders of former Kayibanda dignitaries by the then chief of security, and the murder of the potential vice-president, Colonel Stanislas Mayuya, are illustrative of the actual instability of the regime: "The Habyarimana regime adopted increasingly harsh measures against its political opponents...and the late 1980s saw a rash of political assassinations."¹¹⁸ Kept discreetly from the view of international donors, these bouts of violence contributed to a growing culture of impunity that would later have a devastating impact on the country as it moved toward genocide in 1994.¹¹⁹

As coffee and tin prices consecutively collapsed, Rwanda's economy, and consequently the 'stability' of the regime, began to crumble.¹²⁰ In an effort to appease foreign donors and gain economic assistance, and under the advice of President Mitterrand of France, Habyarimana changed the one-party system that had characterized his regime (where staged elections saw that he and his party 'won' with a sweeping 99% of the vote in 1988) to a multi party system, that would aesthetically appeal to the international community, whether or not it was truly credible.¹²¹

As conditions worsened, and the Habyarimana's control became more fragile, the MRND became more extreme in its policies and ideology. Tightening up social administration, the government sought to compensate or detract for its failings in other faculties: "The government was trying to make up through moralistic hypocrisy for what

¹¹⁷ Forced work days and restrictions about changing address are examples of the rigid administration of the Habyarimana regime. (For further details see Prunier, (2002) pgs. 74-92) Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 77-79

¹¹⁸ Newbury, "Background to Genocide," 13

¹¹⁹ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 82

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 84

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 78

it had lost in terms of blood and financial scandals.”¹²²

Progressively escalating, as they years came closer to the genocide, “social and political tension in Rwanda precipitated by economic decline and exacerbated by intersecting international pressures” weakened Habyarimana’s regime.¹²³ As the insecurity grew threatening the regime’s confidence, so too did the propagation and manipulation of Hutu and Tutsi ideology, stirring up ethnic resentment, suspicion and fear.¹²⁴

2.6 Origins of the RPF and the Invasion in 1990

The RPF was a “politico-military” organization, formed in 1987 by Tutsi refugees living in Uganda.¹²⁵ Using the Rwandan Alliance for National Unity (RANU) as a platform to build on, the RPF actively lobbied the international community (in particular, the US and Europe) to support the right of Rwandan refugees to return home.

In October 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), the armed wing of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), entered Rwanda from Uganda, where most of its members had been living as refugees since the overthrow of the king and the subsequent events of the late 1950s and the early 1960s.¹²⁶

Since their exodus from Rwanda, between 1959 and the early 1960s, refugees living in Uganda had committed themselves to the land, and made a solid effort to recreate a ‘home’ in their hosting state: “Of all refugees, those in Uganda had expressed the fullest commitment to the land of their residence; their commitment, after all, extended to willingness to shed blood for the land they now defined as their home.”¹²⁷

¹²² Ibid., 88

¹²³ Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda*, 28

¹²⁴ Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*, 86-87. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 82

¹²⁵ Lemarchand, “Exclusion, Marginalization and Political Mobilization,” 11

¹²⁶ Reed, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” 48

¹²⁷ Mamdani “African states, citizenship and war,” 497-498

Although conditions were never encouraging for refugees in Uganda, especially during the two periods in which Milton Obote ruled, the '59ers worked hard at developing Uganda into a place where opportunity and citizenship would provide them and their children with more than just a place to live, but a future.¹²⁸ So committed were they (particularly the younger generation of refugees – either born into exile, or having spent the majority of their lives in exile) that a number joined Museveni's guerrilla movement in opposition to the oppressive Obote regime. Giving their blood to the cause, these Rwandan refugees substantially contributed to the liberation of Uganda.¹²⁹

It is argued by Cyrus Reed, that “[b]y 1990, pressures emanating from both Uganda and Rwanda forced the RPF to act.”¹³⁰ As the conditions for Rwandan refugees in hosting countries worsened in the 1980s, and discrimination against non-nationals intensified, most refugees “sought to blend into host societies by obtaining forged documents which permitted access to educational and employment opportunities in neighboring countries.”¹³¹ The conditions for Rwandan refugees in Uganda specifically, although never stable, “reached new lows in 1982, with the return of President Milton Obote. He attacked them as supporters of both the [Idi] Amin regime and the rebel National Resistance Movement.”¹³² Reviving his anti-refugee sentiments from the 1960s, Obote agreed to allow “a free hand” to local thugs to attack refugee communities.¹³³ Bursts of violence, harassment, and evictions were sporadically disturbing the Rwandan

¹²⁸ Reed, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” 49. Mamdani, “African states, citizenship and war,” 497

¹²⁹ Mamdani, “African states, citizenship and war,” 497-498

¹³⁰ Reed, “Exile, Reform,” 486

¹³¹ Reed, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” 49

¹³² Ibid. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 70

¹³³ The 1980s were Milton Obote's second term in office, interrupted by the rule of Idi Amin. During his first term, Obote had engaged in anti-Rwandan refugee hostility, as, being Catholic themselves, “they had sympathized with the opposition,” not the “Protestant-dominated” party. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 69

population living in Uganda, indiscriminate of whether they were actually refugees, or were old migrants or shepherds.¹³⁴

Rwandans in Uganda suddenly found themselves despised, and treated as hated foreigners, whether or not they were refugees.¹³⁵ Tensions were on the rise with the governmentally approved persecution of refugees in Uganda. Unable to return to Rwanda and many being expelled from their places of residence in Uganda, refugees moved to old camps along the border.¹³⁶ Some crossed back into Rwanda, where they were confined to camps, while a number became trapped between Rwanda and Uganda, not able to move forward or back. Here, “They rotted...slowly dying of despair or diseases.”¹³⁷

Motivated by circumstance, many of the children of the ‘59ers in Uganda, began to join the ranks of the guerrilla leader Yoweri Museveni, in support of his quest to overthrow Obote.¹³⁸ By 1986, with the successful seizure of the capital, approximately 20% of Museveni’s National Resistance Army (NRA) was Rwandan.¹³⁹ Among these were Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame, who would later lead the RPF in their invasion of Rwanda.

From the discriminative and violent conditions of the Obote II regime and compounded by their inability to return to Rwanda, as “Habyarimana’s government argued ... [that Rwandan refugees] no longer existed because they had re-settled in neighboring countries,” the RANU was formed.¹⁴⁰ Initially intended to “foster a sense of national identity among the Rwandan exile community...RANU focused its attention

¹³⁴ Ibid., 70

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Reed, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” 49

upon the return of the refugees.”¹⁴¹ RANU was the starting place from which the much broader based, political “front,” the RPF, was born.¹⁴²

Changing from a “strictly anti-monarchist stance,” and in the wake of the successful liberation of Uganda by Museveni’s NRA, “in 1986, RANU decided to attempt to broaden its [membership] base by changing its political stance and its name to the Rwandan Patriotic Front.”¹⁴³ With the “training and first hand experience in the conduct of guerilla warfare,” received while fighting in the NRA, the attitude began to spread, that ‘if the National Resistance Movement (NRM) was successful in Uganda, why should the RPF not be successful in Rwanda.’¹⁴⁴ It was only when the NRM revoked their promises of citizenship and future in Uganda, however, did the RPF’s bark find its bite.

A Crisis of Citizenship

Initially, on the subject of citizenship, Uganda had bestowed such rights only on “those indigenous to the land.”¹⁴⁵ As key to the “pan-Africanist” mandate and the recruitment scheme of the NRA, however, Museveni postured that citizenship would be determined not by indigenusness, but by residence; citizenship would be granted to “those resident in the village.”¹⁴⁶ This would allow the right of citizenship to the Rwandans living in refugee in Uganda, and consequently provide them with the

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ The NRA was fully supported by RANU. Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Reed, “Exile, Reform,” 485. Reed, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” 49

¹⁴⁵ Mamdani, “African states, citizenship and war,” 496

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

opportunities and conditions that would enable them to have a future and a home in their hosting state.

In August 1990, after a special three day session in parliament, Museveni and the NRM recanted on his promise of citizenship rights based on residence, essentially betraying his loyal and committed Banyarwanda supporters, and brothers and sisters in arms: “The citizenship requirement was changed from ten years’ residence back to ancestry; under the new constitution you could claim citizenship of Uganda only if at least one of your grandparents was born in the land colonized by the British as Uganda.”¹⁴⁷

The change in the criteria for citizenship of Uganda: “affected both the elite and ordinary persons, among the Banyarwanda.”¹⁴⁸ It disqualified Rwandans from land distribution and resulted in the persecution of Rwandan members of the NRA.¹⁴⁹ Empty promises of citizenship and a home once again left the Rwandan refugees in Uganda displaced, vulnerable, and not-belonging. Thus, “the RPA’s crossing of the border [from Uganda into Rwanda] – signified a meeting point of citizenship crises on both sides of the border, the Ugandan and the Rwandan.”¹⁵⁰

Contrary to this argument, Mahmood Mamdani, in his book *When Victims Become Killers*, argues that the RPF invasion was in actuality “power-hungry” and perhaps unwarranted:

On the 28 September 1990, only three days before the RPF invasion, President Juvenal Habyarimana addressed the UN General Assembly in New York and announced two key concessions to

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 497

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 497-498

refugees: Rwanda would grant citizenship and travel documents to those who did not desire naturalization in their countries of asylum, and it would repatriate many of those who wished to return.¹⁵¹

It is arguable that this gesture, as Linda Melvern suggests, “was too little too late.”¹⁵² The campaign of the RPF went beyond the repatriation of refugees; it demanded structural and social change in Rwanda:

The RPF published an eight-point programme that included an end to Rwanda’s ethnic divide and the system of compulsory identity cards. The RPF wanted democracy for Rwanda, a self-sustaining economy, an end to the misuse of public offices, the establishment of social services, democratization of the security forces, a progressive foreign policy and the elimination of a ‘system the which generates refugees.’ The RPF was a multi-ethnic movement seeking to depose a corrupt regime.¹⁵³

Habyarimana, arguing that most would not want to return, hoped that the bare minimum gesture of repatriation would resolve the refugee problem.¹⁵⁴

The Second Republic under Habyarimana “had nothing to offer Tutsi who had left Rwanda as refugees during the crises of 1959-63 and 1973. It is precisely for this reason that Banyarwanda refugees were open to joining the struggle in the countries where they were resident.”¹⁵⁵ Taking experience and momentum from Museveni’s guerilla war, and faced not only with the dire conditions of the Obote regime, but the disappointment and betrayal of the NRM after the inauguration of Museveni, the RPF mobilized. The unwelcoming conditions of the host state and the exhaustion of fruitless lobbying for political support of a peaceful repatriation, the RPF turned to a military solution.

¹⁵¹ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 159

¹⁵² Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 26-27

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 29

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 26-27

¹⁵⁵ Mamdani, “African states, citizenship and war,” 497-498

3.0 International Policies toward Refugees

International standards for the protection and assistance of refugees in the 1950s and 1960s were influenced greatly by the challenges created by the massive number of refugees displaced by the Second World War.¹⁵⁶ In the case of Rwandan refugees, it is argued that international policies failed. This chapter will explore the policies, standards, effectiveness and failures of the policies and actions of the international community and international organizations at both the global and regional level.

3.1 International standards and the UNHCR

Formally established in 1945, following the end of the Second World War, fifty-one states (Poland signing last to be the 51st state) organized to form the United Nations (UN).¹⁵⁷ Working toward the greater goal of world peace, this organization has many agencies.¹⁵⁸ One such agency, “[t]he United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established by the U.N. General Assembly in 1950, one of several attempts by the international community during the 20th century to provide protection and assistance to refugees.”¹⁵⁹ The UNHCR aims to achieve lasting solutions for refugees.¹⁶⁰ “As a humanitarian, non-political organization, UNHCR has two basic and closely related aims – to protect refugees and to seek ways to help them restart their lives in a normal

¹⁵⁶ Whitaker, Beth Elise, “Changing priorities in refugee protection: the Rwandan repatriation from Tanzania,” *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper No.53, (Washington DC: George Washington University, Feb., 2002), 4. Chimni, B.S., “The Geopolitics of Refugee Studies: A View from the South,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.11, No.4, (1998), 350

¹⁵⁷ “About the United Nations/History,” *United Nations website*, <http://www.un.org/aboutun/history.htm>, (accessed 17 Dec 2006)

¹⁵⁸ Loescher, Gil, “UNHCR at Fifty: Refugee Protection and World Politics,” *Problems of Protection: The Unhcr, Refugees, and Human Rights*,” (eds.) Niklaus Steiner, Gil Loescher, Mark Gibney, Nicholas Royle, (UK: Routledge, 2003), 3

¹⁵⁹ “Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: 1945 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate,” *UNHCR website*, <http://www.selected-directories.com/unhcr.html>, (accessed 18 Dec 2006)

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

environment.”¹⁶¹

The UNHCR is a unique agency where values and principles are the basis of its mandate.¹⁶² Over the last fifty-odd years, the UNHCR has become the “centrepiece of the international refugee regime,” through which the international community channels its assistance.¹⁶³ As such a dynamic and focal agency in the protection and assistance of refugees, it bears a certain degree of responsibility.

“The outbreak of conflict and genocide in the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa in the early 1990s serves as a clear example of the potential implications of not finding solutions for long-standing refugee populations.”¹⁶⁴ It is in the failure of the UNHCR agency to live up to the responsibility of finding lasting solutions to the protracted refugee situation of the ‘59ers, that one can begin to understand the motivation of these refugees to take matters into their own hands (in the form of the 1990 RPA invasion of Rwanda). “According to UNHCR, ‘the failure to address the problems of the Rwandan refugees in the 1960s contributed substantially to the cataclysmic violence of the 1990s.’”¹⁶⁵

Although it claims that the protection and rights of the refugee “cornerstone” its organization, in practice the UNHCR is challenged to live up to this assertion.¹⁶⁶

[The] UNHCR is not just an advocacy organization; it also exists to facilitate state policies toward refugees. States did not establish UNHCR from purely altruistic motives, but also from a desire to promote regional and international stability and to serve the interests of governments. Governments created the Office to help them resolve problems related to refugees who were perceived to create domestic instability,

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Loescher, “UNHCR at Fifty,” 4

¹⁶³ Ibid., 3

¹⁶⁴ Milner, James, “Protracted Refugee Situations: Human rights, political implications and the search for practical solutions,” *Paper for the Canadian Council for Refugees*, Fall Consultations, 17-19 Nov 2005 (London, ON, 31 Oct 2005), 16

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 17

¹⁶⁶ “Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,” *UNHCR website*

to generate inter-state tensions, and to threaten international security...Thus, UNHCR often walks a tightrope, maintaining a perilous balance between the protection of refugees and the sovereign prerogatives and interests of states.”¹⁶⁷

Particularly of concern to the understanding of the conditions which characterized the lives of Rwandan refugees during the thirty-odd years before the invasion of Rwanda by the RPA, the allegiance of the UNHCR to state governments instead of refugees, played a revealing role. “[B]ecause UNHCR possessed specialized knowledge and expertise about refugee law, states often deferred to the Office on asylum matters” prior to the 1980s.¹⁶⁸ The resettlement and integration of refugees in host states was monopolized by the UNHCR, thus leaving the security and protection of refugee in the hands of this agency.¹⁶⁹

The UNHCR “enjoyed maximum legitimacy [prior to the 1980s] as it simultaneously tried to define the refugee issue for states, to convince governments that refugee problems were soluble, to prescribe solutions, and to monitor their implementation.”¹⁷⁰ The agency’s failure to find such lasting solutions for the Rwandan refugees from the 1960s is illustrative of the shortcomings of the agency’s legitimacy.

As “organizations such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International have argued ... [the] UNHCR has itself been a party to the decline in protection standards.”¹⁷¹ With the “disappearance of refugee repatriation from the international agenda,” and the failure to support the safe return of refugees to Rwanda after the decolonization movement and the Hutu Revolution in the early 1960s, the

¹⁶⁷ Loescher, “UNHCR at Fifty,” 4

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 5

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Crisp, “Africa’s Refugees,” 165

actions of the UNHCR appear to contradict their own mandate, or at least bring into question the applicability of their support in general to refugees.¹⁷² It is thus perceivable, that the UNHCR acts in the interests of those refugees where the governments of states do not object or take a special interest. In this case the UNHCR is selectively assisting refugees on the basis of state approval, and consequently, perhaps due to a lack of international state approval, failed the Rwandan '59ers. By omitting to respond, the international community supported the newly installed Hutu government, and failed to address the concerns and needs of the thousands of refugees displaced as a result of this same regime.

The failure of the international community and the UNHCR to address the concerns of the Rwandan refugees continued through-out the 30 years they remained in exile.

Starting in the mid-1980s...resettlement and integration became less desirable as attitudes toward refugees changed and the magnitude of refugee flows increased. During this period, UNHCR "transmogrified from the international community's lead agency for protecting refugees into its spearhead for containing or reversing refugee flows."¹⁷³

As such Rwandan refugees, who had successfully managed to integrate into host societies, as well as those already living in refugee camps, were newly threatened with the insecurity and instability of not-belonging and of once again, being up-rooted.

In Uganda, for example, it is arguable that this change in policy gave some legitimacy to the Obote regime, which at the time was rounding up Rwandan refugees and migrants and implementing mass expulsions or relocations of these people to border camps.¹⁷⁴ Problematic, however, was not only that the Rwandan border was closed to

¹⁷² Van der Meeren, "Three Decades in Exile," 257-258

¹⁷³ Whitaker, "Changing priorities in refugee protection," 4

¹⁷⁴ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 70

their return, and the refugees were left in limbo, with nowhere to go, but the ‘containment of these refugees’ and the ‘reversal of their influx’ came 30 years too late.

The UNHCR and international community failed to respond to this violation of the rights of these refugees, as declared in Articles 32 and 33 of the 1951 Convention.¹⁷⁵ Regardless of the political lobbying by RANU and later the RPF, for the support of the international community to assist in the safe return of Rwandan refugees to Rwanda, the refugees were left unassisted and in freshly volatile conditions.¹⁷⁶

The international standards surrounding refugees are supposed to be upheld by the one organization which advocates the protection of refugees, the UNCHR.

In recent decades, [however] as a result of states developing their own immigration and refugee machinery and as a result of increasing restrictionism on the parts of states, UNHCR has lost its monopoly on information and expertise. Consequently, its authority and legitimacy in the realm of asylum has declined.¹⁷⁷

Unable or unwilling to protect the Rwandan ‘59ers, the UNHCR and the international community contributed to the motivation of these refugees to find a different course of action.

It is arguable that the UN and its agencies did assist, or try to assist the ‘59ers at stages during their exile by sending commissions to Rwanda in the 1960s to assess the political situation, and by warning President Kayibanda “of the vital importance which the international community attached to human rights.”¹⁷⁸ The UNHCR set up refugee camps in the region, in particular six camps in Uganda, where freedom of movement was

¹⁷⁵ Article 32 on Expulsion, and Article 33 on the Prohibition of Expulsion or Return (Refoulement). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugee*, 32

¹⁷⁶ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 70

¹⁷⁷ Loescher, “UNHCR at Fifty,” 5

¹⁷⁸ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 16

largely permitted.¹⁷⁹ They held talks in the fall of the 1990s (just prior to the invasion), in an attempt to negotiate some form of repatriation for the refugees, as some vain attempt to respond to the rising tensions in the region.¹⁸⁰ Never committing to the support of the Rwandan refugees of the 1960s, the efforts of the international community and the UNHCR were never enough, and in the end “too little too late.”¹⁸¹

Not simply a matter of allegiance to states over refugees, the failure of the UNHCR to provide protection for refugees could be argued to be a result of a lack of resources:

The UNHCR suffers from continual funding problems and the High Commissioner frequently raises the questions of more equitable burden sharing between the developed and the developing world in annual executive committee meetings in Geneva. Developing countries lack resources to host refugees, and international aid agencies suffer from funding crisis and increasing demands, plus the phenomena referred to a ‘donor fatigue’ which often means that only the most urgent demands for food, clean water and basic medical services can be provided.¹⁸²

As a result of the protracted refugee situation with Rwandan refugees from the 1960s, it is not unfounded to presume that ‘donor fatigue’ could have played a significant role in the lack of protection Rwandan refugees received. Thirty plus years is a long time to keep the public eye, and without the ‘CNN’ factor, so to speak, funding of services beyond the bare essentials is limited if possible.

¹⁷⁹ Smith, Charles, David, “The Geopolitics of Rwandan Resettlement: Uganda and Tanzania,” *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, Vol.23, No.2, Rwanda (1995), 54

¹⁸⁰ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 27

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² Pittaway, “‘Refugee Woman’”

3.2 The 'Golden Age,' Regional Standards and the Organization of African Unity (OAU)

The decolonization period in Africa gave refugees seeking asylum on the continent a theoretically “golden” reception.¹⁸³ As presented by James Milner, up until the 1980s, conditions were favorable and receptive for refugees seeking asylum in neighboring African states.¹⁸⁴ High standards were upheld to support and protect those Africans displaced by revolution during this period of pan-African independence movements. Reason for this receptiveness, can be found in the political and social changes taking place during this period on the continent: “[f]rom the early 1960s until the late 1970s, many of Africa’s refugees were the product of independence struggles and wars of national liberation.”¹⁸⁵ Milner suggests that this post-colonial, liberation-movement era, created a sort of brotherhood between Africans and African states, which coupled with relatively stable economic situations of African states at the time, encouraged a sort of “Golden Age” for refugees seeking asylum.¹⁸⁶

Institutionalized in the *OAU Refugee Convention*, the definition and rights of the refugee were clearly articulated, recognizing, affirming and adding to the Protocols set out in the 1951 *UN Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, providing a more comprehensive definition of a refugee and their rights in Africa.¹⁸⁷ As such, it could be argued that (at least until the end of the Golden Age) refugees in Africa had extensive protection and support from the region:

¹⁸³ Milner, James, “Golden Age? What Golden Age? A Critical History of African Asylum Policy,” paper presented to the *Centre for Refugee Studies*, (York University, 28 January, 2004), 9

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2

¹⁸⁵ Crisp, “Africa’s Refugees,” 161

¹⁸⁶ Milner, “Golden Age?,” 9. Crisp, “Africa’s Refugees,” 160

¹⁸⁷ OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, (Geneva: Public Information Section, UNHCR, June 1974), 2-10

The newly independent states of Africa readily acceded to the main international refugee instruments, and in 1969 established a regional refugee convention which introduced a more inclusive definition of the refugee concept than that which applied in other parts of the world. At the same time, the OAU Refugee Convention of 1969 – unlike the 1951 UN Refugee Convention – unambiguously states that the repatriation of refugees to their country of origin should take place on a voluntary basis, ... [establishing] new and improved legal standards for the treatment of exiled populations.¹⁸⁸

It is said that Africa has a “tradition of hospitality.”¹⁸⁹ This tradition is used to explain the “relatively liberal refugee policies pursued by the states of Africa during the first 20 years of independence.”¹⁹⁰ However, if it is hospitality that opened the doors to African state for asylum seekers, what closed them? Starting in the late 1970s, and of particular note in the 1980s, the tradition of hospitality which made the independence-era so golden, seemed to wear out. It is argued by Jeff Crisp that this ‘hospitality’ was in fact, not so much in place because of tradition and generosity, but was enabled by “the relative prosperity of many African states in the early years of independence and the modest size of the refugee movements.”¹⁹¹ As economies began to struggle and political stability became fragile, refugee movements in Africa swelled in size and numbers, and countries were no longer able “to shoulder the economic burden imposed by the presence of refugees from neighbouring and nearby states.”¹⁹² Following the lead of the West, African states began to close their doors, and the regions golden policy toward refugees changed.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Crisp, “Africa’s Refugees,” 160

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 161

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 162

In the late 1970s, challenges and problems within African states began to surface, and the shared anti-colonialism and struggle for independence that bonded African states, and fostered their hospitality, began to fade.¹⁹⁴

International refugee law, it is often forgotten, has a dual purpose. On one hand, instruments such as the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention were established to protect people who were forced to leave their own country as a result of persecution, armed conflict and human rights violations. On the other hand, such conventions were established and ratified by states (not, it should be noted by UNHCR, by non-governmental organizations or by the human rights community!) with the specific intention of protecting their national interests and addressing their own security concerns.¹⁹⁵

Although, according to the conventions on refugees, “[p]ermanent or long term settlement was held to be the best solution [for refugees seeking asylum]...the international community did not provide sufficient funds to make this viable.”¹⁹⁶ Lack of funding and protection for refugees by the international community, and by the hosting states, left refugees in a difficult position, where malnutrition and health problems became prevalent, and vulnerability to violence – either in the form of rape and attacks by locals over the scarcity of resources, or in the form of guerrilla or military recruitment.¹⁹⁷

As the Golden Age came to an end in Africa, Rwandan refugees living in neighboring host states began to face the repercussions of the changing policies and attitudes toward refugees: “states began to retreat from the fundamental principles of

¹⁹⁴ Challenges and problems of independent states include power struggles, corruption, weak economic management, poor economies, poverty, etc.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 168

¹⁹⁶ Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 266

¹⁹⁷ Refugee children are particularly vulnerable to recruitment or abduction into rebel forces, especially those who are unaccompanied. Without the proper security means to protect them, refugee camps, including those of the UNHCR are targets for this sort of activity. Singer, Peter W., *Children at War*, (New York: Pantheon Books, Toronto: Random House of Canada Limited, 2005), 59. Crisp, “Africa’s Refugees,” 166

international refugee law.”¹⁹⁸ For the Rwandan ‘59ers living in Uganda, this change in attitude, arguably spurred the decision of young refugees to join the NRM. The regional standards of the “OAU Refugee Convention clearly states that ‘for reasons of security, countries of asylum shall, as far as possible, settle refugees at a reasonable distance from the frontier of their country of origin.’”¹⁹⁹ In the early 1980s, the Ugandan government began trying to forcibly return refugees to the borders of Rwanda.²⁰⁰ In response to this expulsion and to the violence and discrimination led by the youth members of President Obote’s Uganda People’s Congress, Rwandan refugees joined the resistance movement, where they would learn the skills that would enable their invasion of Rwanda in 1990.²⁰¹

3.3 Failure of host states to adhere to international standards

As mentioned in the previous section, host states of Rwandan refugees failed to adhere to international standards for the protection and rights of refugees. This was particularly true in Uganda, where state policy became the antithesis of adherence during both periods of in which Obote controlled the country (1969 and the early 1980s).²⁰²

While in power, Obote used the Rwandan refugees as political pawns in his effort to rally support for his regime: “Obote was looking for a public enemy against whom to unite his party, the (Protestant) Uganda Peoples Congress. He found one in the Rwandans in Ankole, who were mainly Catholic supporters of the opposing Democratic Party.”²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ Rutinwa, Bonaventure, “The end of asylum? The changing nature of refugee policies in Africa,” *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper No. 5, Geneva, UNHCR, (May 1999), 8

¹⁹⁹ Crisp, “Africa’s Refugees,” 169

²⁰⁰ Smith, “The Geopolitics of Rwandan Resettlement,” 54

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 261

²⁰³ Ibid.

In the 1980s, Obote's regime implemented repressive and discriminative policies that victimized and killed approximately 60,000 Rwandan refugees and other (migrant) Rwandans living in Uganda.²⁰⁴ "Obote publicly identified Museveni with the Rwandans as of similar Hima/Tutsi origin. By doing so he encouraged Rwandans to join Museveni's National Resistance Army to rid themselves of their oppressor."²⁰⁵

African host states were faced with the challenges of xenophobia and local hostility to refugee populations, the insecurity of their borders to insurgencies and growing influxes of displaced people, the fiscal responsibility to support the incoming refugees, and the long-term costs, problems of protracted refugee situations. Such challenges were responded to by host states, in their self-interested policies and sub-standard protection of refugees.

Tanzania is a supposed example of a host state with an exceptional record of being receptive and generous to the refugees seeking asylum within its borders. Tanzania failed the Rwandan '59ers, however, more from a lack of experience as a refugee host, then for lack of effort or compliance to international law. Although it is arguable that some of the policies of the Tanzanian government, throughout the thirty years the refugees were hosted, were far from hospitable.²⁰⁶

In an effort to make the Rwandan refugees self-sufficient and to diffuse some of the domestic tensions that were threatening stability, Tanzania tried to disperse refugees as settlers on pieces of land throughout different regions of the country:

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Educational opportunities of refugees were nearly non-existent and opportunities for naturalization were not yet on offer. In 1974, in the Keregwé District, "a resolution [was passed] that refugees employed in the government, parastatal and private sectors be dismissed." (See Gasarasi, 1990, 96 for further details) Gasarasi, Charles, P., "The Mass Naturalization and Further Integration of Rwandese Refugees in Tanzania: Process, Problems and Prospects," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.3, No.2, (1990), 96

The Tanzanian authorities... had interests in their dispersal, for reasons of border security, economy and land development. To this was added specific political interests at the local district level. The 8,000-10,000 Tutsi refugees upset the local political, ethnic and sub-district balance and posed a threat to the newly appointed TANU Area Commissioner.²⁰⁷

The results of this experiment were not what the government had hoped for. Many of the refugees, feeling threatened for their security or their live, fled to Burundi, replicating their situation of displacement, and reinforcing their refugee identity.²⁰⁸

The failure of states to adhere to the standards and protocols articulated in the UNHCR and OAU conventions of the protection of refugees, created the conditions within which Rwandan refugees lived and were treated in their hosting states. These conditions, arguably contributed to the growing sense of not-belonging which characterized the identity of these refugees. Furthermore, instability and continual uprootedness, lack of opportunities and the threat of violence, all exacerbated this identity, which engrained of sort of hopelessness into their situations. Without the support of the international community, host states' policies toward refugees were not held accountable. The security and protection of the '59ers was thus left to the mercy of host governments, local populations, and later, with the creation of the RPF, their own initiative.

²⁰⁷ Van der Meeren, "Three Decades in Exile," 259

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

4.0 Host States', Home State and the Response of the Refugees

“The politicisation and mobilisation of those in exile occurs in response to changes not only at the international level but also within their host country and from where they fled.”²⁰⁹ The mobilization and militarization of Rwandan refugees as the RPF can be understood in these terms. Changing political and social climates in Uganda in the 1980s, as well as in the other neighbouring host countries, and the lack of change in the policies of the Habyarimana regime in Rwanda, were responded too by Rwandan refugees through their politicization as RANU, their involvement with the NRM and NRA, and finally their mobilization and militarization as the RPF and the RPA respectively. This chapter will look at the conditions and policies of Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and the DRC that effected the integration, security and rights of the '59er refugees. It will examine how these conditions changed and the response of the refugees to these changes.

4.1 Host State's Policies toward Refugees: Changes from the 'Golden Age'

Instability and insecurity, and later the declaration by Habyarimana that Rwanda was 'full', meant for the refugees that there was no returning home – or at least not conventionally.²¹⁰ Habyarimana argued that because of the supposed “overpopulation” of Rwanda, “there was simply no room for refugees to return home”²¹¹ As a result, the refugees were made vulnerable to the receptiveness of their hosting states, of the local populations of these states, and any assistance provided by the international community.

²⁰⁹ Reed, “Exile, Reform,” 479

²¹⁰ The refugees would later, ‘unconventionally’, repatriate by force, when they militarized and invaded Rwanda from the Ugandan border.

²¹¹ *Rwanda: Death*, 16-17

Although some travelled as far as countries like France and Canada, in the case of most of the Rwandan refugees, their hosting states were those surrounding Rwanda in the Great Lakes region: Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, and the DRC.²¹²

The unconventional repatriation of Rwandan refugees in 1990, in the form of the invasion of Rwanda by the RPA forces, was action taken in response to their refugee identities, which had been exacerbated by the conditions and policies of host states, and the failure of the international community and the Rwandan government to secure their safe return. What makes the RPA's invasion of Rwanda unique is not the actual act of forcing their own repatriation, but the composition of the army's ranks and the extended period of time that passed between their exodus and their return.

Refugees and the children of refugees, who had fled Rwanda more than thirty years earlier, founded and comprised the RPF and its military branch. Two questions arise from this phenomenon: why did these refugees wait three decades before trying to return? And what changed the refugee situation that could have motivated such a phenomenon?

The answers to these questions lie in the policies toward these refugees of the UNHCR, the international community and the OAU, as discussed in chapter 3, and, as will be discussed in this chapter, the policies of hosting states and the conditions created by these states and their local populations.

The lack of protection and sensitivity provided by these states can be argued to have contributed to the lasting identity of these refugees as a group of unwelcome foreigners, not-belonging to any state and, as such, vulnerable and unprotected. This

²¹² Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 62&66

identity was solidified in the 1980s and early 1990s when policy and attitude changes stripped these refugees of any potential for a future outside of Rwanda:

Identity is not a fixed, static entity; rather, it is a dynamic process resulting from our engagement with our social environment; it is a 'social product located in time and space'. As such, identities are always temporary, fragmented, unstable and at times contradictory: the effects of shifting relations between individuals or groups.²¹³ As the host states 'shifted their relations' with the refugees to suite their ever self-interested purposes, the identity of the '59er refugees as refugees deepened.

The necessity of citizenship and need for the long-term conditions that would enable the possibility of a future, are requisite to solving the challenges of not belonging faced by refugees.²¹⁴ The rights and protection offered by membership to a state - by citizenship - are intrinsic to the plight of the refugee:²¹⁵

As refugees, their vulnerability is greatly compounded by their lack of legal-political protection. The subliminal association between 'refugee' and 'non-citizen' creates almost absolute legal impunity for those who exploit or assault refugees...Despite the international endorsement of human rights law, it has very little power to police or to prosecute. The legal machinations for the upholding of human rights are still very much the domain of sovereign states, which choose to what extent human rights law is reflected in the rights of their citizens. In the case of refugees, violations of their human rights carry little or no risk of legal consequence.²¹⁶

Being a citizen not only provides the psychological security that being a part of a group ensures, but it provides the physical conditions that secure the long-term needs of a person: employment, the right to vote, education, health care, and as discussed above, protection under the law. Thus, when the possibility of becoming a citizen or actual citizenship is revoked due to the changing refugee policy of the state, as in the case of the

²¹³ Pittaway, "'Refugee Woman'"

²¹⁴ Akokpari, "'You Don't Belong Here'," 4

²¹⁵ Mamdani, "African states, citizenship and war," 493

²¹⁶ Pittaway, "'Refugee Woman'"

DRC in the early 1980s for example, it becomes an “increasingly acute political issue.”²¹⁷

In 1972, naturalization was accorded to all old Rwandan settlers who had lived in Zaire for ten years or more, excluding the 1960s refugees. In 1981, more restrictive naturalization laws were passed. Rwandans had to have been settled in Zaire for three generations.²¹⁸

Involved in “civil strife” in Zaire, Rwandan refugees resisted the authorities, facing “even from the earliest days in the 1960s, harassment...on ethnic grounds...far greater than in the other three host territories.”²¹⁹ It is argued that state policy toward refugees exacerbated their vulnerability and was thus responded to in the form of guerrilla resistance: “In Zaire, government policy was to define all Rwandans...as foreigners, thereby depriving them of political rights and heightening ethnic tensions.”²²⁰ Denying the possibility of citizenship, denies hope, and in consequence, the identity of the refugee as not-belonging develops in response. By removing hope from the refugees living the DRC, the host government essentially sentenced them to despair or to challenge the authorities that oppress them. As demonstrated by their association and involvement with the guerrilla activities in the Congo, a number of refugees chose resistance.²²¹

On the other hand, the DRC implemented “highly successful” rural resettlement schemes, aimed at creating self-sufficiency for the Rwandan refugees.²²² “Despite their efforts, however, the overall ethnic hostility made permanent integration in Kivu extremely difficult.”²²³ The lacking of a long-term solution to the situation of the ‘59ers, the highly volatile relationship between the refugees and the local populations as well as

²¹⁷ Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 263

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Reed, “Exile, Reform,” 483

²²¹ Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 262

²²² Ibid., 263

²²³ Ibid.

the refugees and the local authorities, and the changing discriminatory citizenship policies, it can be argued, were paramount to the formation of '59ers' refugee identity.

With the exception perhaps of Tanzania, and in spite of the so-called Golden Age for asylum seekers in Africa at the time, hosting states were hostile and reluctant to naturalize the Rwandan refugees from the 1960s.²²⁴ Seemingly open to their initial reception as fellow anti-colonialists, the longer the refugees remained in exile from Rwanda and in refuge within their borders, the more strained and reluctant host states' reception and protection become. Changing policies in host states created "increasing uncertainty [for Rwandans] in exile."²²⁵

Initial receptiveness by host states, faith in the international community and the United Nations to assist and support their safe return, and the early *Inyenzi* attempts at forcing their right to return, reflected the commonly held belief in the temporariness of their condition as refugees. The failure of *Inyenzi* raids, the inaction of the international community and the United Nations, the discouraging return to exile of refugees who had self-repatriated after Rwandan independence, left the '59ers to face the permanency of their condition. Subsequently, their dependence on integration and opportunities available to them in their hosting states increased: "the first-hand experiences of self-repatriated refugees who had returned again to Tanzania, exacerbated the refugees' loss of hope in the possibility of their eventual repatriation, thus making many of them gravitate toward the naturalization option."²²⁶

Tanzania did make the offer of citizenship to Rwandan refugees from the 1960s in

²²⁴ (See Van der Meeren, (1996), 259-264 for further details), (on Tanzania, see Gasarasi, (1990), 89-97) Van der Meeren, "Three Decades in Exile." Gasarasi, "The Mass Naturalization and Further Integration of Rwandese Refugees in Tanzania"

²²⁵ Reed, "Exile, Reform," 484

²²⁶ Gasarasi, "The Mass Naturalization and Further Integration of Rwandese Refugees in Tanzania," 95

the 1980s, however this offer, although surrounded by “mass euphoria,” was practically unattainable:

In spite of Tanzania’s official policy, obtaining citizenship there proved to be virtually impossible because of ‘implementational ineptitude’. Moreover, the laws passed in 1973 and 1974 prohibited illegal residents and refugees from working in the states and parastatal sectors, just as Tanzania’s brand of socialism was eliminating the private sector.²²⁷

Thus, opportunities were, in essence eliminated, from the grasps of refugees and, taunted by the offer of citizenship but (for most refugees) unable to actually obtain such rights, the changing policies and conditions in Tanzania, can be argued to have compounded the identity of refugees as insecure and hopeless.

The conditions and policies in Burundi, though perhaps not as foreboding as those in Zaire or Uganda (as will be examined further on in this section), were not welcoming to Rwandan refugees. Although Rwandan refugees from the 1960s “were able to acquire official documents which permitted them access to education and employment...these were obtained through ‘informal channels’.”²²⁸ While the Tutsi controlled Burundian state created a more politically sympathetic environment for the Rwandan Tutsi refugees to live in,

Tutsi had remained in political control and in control of the army in Burundi, and Tutsi Rwandan refugees were largely welcomed by them as a reserve force against Hutu insurrection...On the other hand, Burundi was as overpopulated as Rwanda and Rwandan Tutsis could be unwelcome competitors for scarce land and resources.²²⁹

In Uganda, refugees responded to the oppressive nature of the Ugandan state under Obote, and later to the betrayal by Museveni, after his installation as the President in 1986. Rwandan refugees were subjected to Ugandan policy changes in the 1980s,

²²⁷ Reed, “Exile, Reform,” 483

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 263

which limited the opportunities of, oppressed, and even expelled the Rwandans living in the country. It is argued that:

The 1982 expulsion of refugees from Uganda seems to have had repercussions throughout the refugee diaspora, not least among a new generation of educated Rwandans in various countries. Fearing also for their own career security as stateless persons, without citizenship rights and exposed to jealousy among their hosts, they took up the issue of the refugees' inalienable right to repatriation and the responsibility of Rwanda to solve the problems of its citizens in exile.²³⁰

Motivated by the insecurity created by the unwelcoming policies of host states toward them, it could be argued that the Rwandan refugees in Uganda resorted to their skills learned while serving in the ranks of Museveni's NRA. It could be suggested that the refugees used these skills to militarize and commence the fight for the right to return 'home' to Rwanda.

The need to *force* their right to return to Rwanda was resultant of "Habyarimana's policy toward refugees [which] was ... [that] Rwanda was 'full up' and that those who had fled should make their permanent homes elsewhere."²³¹ With an overpopulated territory and limited available land, declining economic conditions and a growing north-south clan-based divide in Rwanda,

Habyarimana's dilemma was that he had no future to offer to the Tutsi political diaspora, the refugees of 1959 spread around the region. He thus turned the post-1959 Tutsi refugees into the Jews of Africa... the identity 'Jew' [is used] here as a metaphor for the politically homeless – those adrift in a world of nation-states where all nations must have states, and in a world of indirect-rule former colonies where all ethnic groups must have a home area. From this point of view, October 1990 represented a meeting point of two failures on both sides of the border: of Habyarimana leadership in Rwanda and of the Museveni leadership in Uganda. The October 1990 invasion of Rwanda by the RPA was testimony to the citizenship crisis on both sides of the border.²³²

²³⁰ Ibid., 264

²³¹ Reed, "Exile, Reform," 482-483

²³² Mamdani, "African states, citizenship and war," 500

Without the support of the international community of their desire to repatriate, and the dismissal of the Rwandan refugee situation from the international agenda²³³ all together, “the prospects of imminent return seemed increasingly distant, the struggle for personal survival increased, and the governments of host countries permitted refugees less and less room for political organization.”²³⁴ Changing and repressive host state policies confined refugees to their insecure positions as refugees. “By the mid-1980s, the strategy of blending into host societies began to collapse, and the realities of statelessness again became the dominant theme in the diaspora.”²³⁵ Integration was limited, their ineligibility of refugees for citizenship rights inflated their refugee identity, and the prolonged and un-resolved condition as refugees arguably motivated their determination to take matters into their own hands and force a change.

4.2 Lack of protection and sensitivity (self-interest of host states)

The policy decisions of the Tanzanian authorities toward the ‘59ers, are examples of the insensitivity of host states to the refugee situation, and of the ultimately selfish motives of their actions as hosts. Tanzania, unlike other host states, initially received the 1960s Rwandan refugees with open arms. Welcomed as potential settlers, in a time of relative economic security, Tanzania provided land and opportunity for refugees to embrace.²³⁶ For this reason, it is argued that Tanzania’s policies and the conditions created by the host state for these refugees were exceptional.

²³³ Gasarasi, “The Mass Naturalization and Further Integration of Rwandese Refugees in Tanzania,” 94

²³⁴ Reed, “Exile, Reform,” 482-483

²³⁵ Ibid., 483

²³⁶ Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 259

Although on the surface in compliance with the conventions on refugee rights and protection, and perhaps offering more than other African states and thus seemingly better by comparison, it must not be overlooked, that these policies and conditions were not always in the best interests of the refugees, but rather in the best interests of the hosting state. Initially,

[t]he refugees, and particularly their leaders, both moderate and militarist, had vested interests in remaining together in a camp-type concentration, both for physical and psychological security and for easier access to food, clothing, health and education. The Tanzanian authorities, however, had interests in their dispersal, for reasons of border security, economy and land development.²³⁷

When the refugees resisted their dispersal, the Tanzanian authorities threatened them by force, causing a mass exodus of Rwandan refugees from Tanzania to Burundi.²³⁸ Unable to cross into Burundi (as they were stopped by Burundian border guards), the refugees were forced to return to Tanzania and submit, against their will, to the demands of the Tanzanian authorities.²³⁹

This example is demonstrative of the insensitivity of host states to the needs of refugees. In forcing the dispersal of the Rwandan refugees from the 1960s, the Tanzanian authorities increased their insecurity and removed their sense of belonging (belonging to the group of refugees). It is therefore arguable that the insensitivity of state policies toward the reception and support of refugees inflamed their refugee identity.

It is argued that the resettlement program in Tanzania was by far the most successful, integrating the refugees into Tanzanian society and eventually offering them

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

citizenship.²⁴⁰ As has been discussed in the previous section, however, the Tanzanian policy was flawed, and although admirable in theory and in those instances of success, overall the refugees succumbed to their situation as refugees and accepted and fought for whatever rights and opportunities were made available to them, in the hopes of establishing some sort of future.²⁴¹ For most Rwandan refugees, however, citizenship was unattainable, and the opportunities for those without it became more and more limited as Tanzanian 'socialism' grew.²⁴²

4.3 Refugee camps

Refugee camps serve as an interim measure, where refugees can be taken assisted and protected upon arrival in a host state. They can be a source of security for refugees, as they concentrate the group (if there is a group) seeking asylum, and provide the immediate necessities for survival (for example, food, medical attention, shelter, etc).²⁴³ Commonly run by non-governmental organizations, or the UNHCR, refugee camps are temporary settlements for refugees until more permanent solutions or safe repatriation can be arranged.²⁴⁴

Refugee camps can also be the source of insecurity. Intended to be temporary, and often financed with skeletal funds, refugee camps cannot offer refugees the long-term opportunities or conditions that would enable them to remain there for very long. Also, due to lack of resources, and the conditions and locations of the camps, it is often difficult

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Gasarasi, "The Mass Naturalization and Further Integration of Rwandese Refugees in Tanzania," 88&94

²⁴² Reed, "Exile, Reform," 483

²⁴³ Malkki, "National Geographic," 35

²⁴⁴ Whitaker, "Changing priorities in refugee protection," 4

for NGOs or the UNHCR, or even host state authorities to protect refugees from physical and psychological abuse.

Refugee camps are sites of social disintegration, lacking the resources, infrastructure, social cohesion and legal authority necessary to build a political community. Refugees are therefore denied the protection offered by political empowerment. In camp situations, refugees experience the ongoing denial of their citizenship. Although the host country may honour minimum international obligations, it has no such obligation to provide refugees with citizenship status. Refugees in camps are stateless, not belonging to the community and denied political participation and the protection it affords. To be identified as a refugee is to be, by definition, a *non-citizen*. Refugees in camps therefore live in a situation of extreme legal-political vulnerability, lacking state and legal protection as well as political power and agency. The very identity label 'refugee' confers powerlessness upon an individual.²⁴⁵

For the Rwandan refugees from the 1960s, refugee camps were instrument to the intensification of their refugee identity. Shaped by their experiences living in these camps, the refugee identity was more than just one of displacement and not-belonging, but one of hopelessness and insecurity. In addition of the threat of military incursions by local guerrilla groups, militias, or even local governments, "non-military security threats, involving different forms of violence, coercion, intimidation and criminal activity" characterized the protracted refugee experience.²⁴⁶

Not limited to the experiences of the Rwandan refugees living in camps in Africa, the types of "security threats which confront refugees in their daily lives [include,]

As well as domestic and sexual violence, those threats include rape and armed robbery; conscription into militia forces; abductions for the purpose of forced marriage; arbitrary arrest and punishment by refugee community leaders and members of the local security forces; violence between refugees and members of the local population; fighting between different clans and sub-tribes within the same refugee community; and armed confrontations between refugees of different nationalities.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Pittaway, "Refugee Woman"

²⁴⁶ Crisp, "Africa's Refugees," 166

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

Although at first refugees in Tanzania wanted to remain in camp-type settlements for reasons of security, access to assistance, and their belief in the temporariness of their situation, as it became clear that their situation as refugees was more permanent than had been anticipated, the needs of the refugees changed.²⁴⁸ No longer trying to stay in a group for the sake of security and morale, refugees began to require a permanent solution to what was becoming a protracted situation of displacement. The refugees began to need opportunities for employment, education, health care and the possibility of citizenship, long-term needs that refugee camps are far from equipped to provide. Instead of responding to these needs, states, which had initially allowed and encouraged the settlement of land and the integration of refugees, began to change their attitudes.²⁴⁹

As integration was no longer of interest to most host states because it involved costly concessions, which the struggling economies of these states could no longer support. As the 1980s approached, and backed by the changing position of the UNHCR, the reversal of refugee movements and the concentration of refugees into camps became a more desirable option for host states.²⁵⁰ Refugees were used as political scapegoats by governments to rally support for their regimes (as was the case with Obote in Uganda).²⁵¹ Refugees were blamed for those same regimes' own failings, be they economic or political.

Under Obote in the early 1980s, Rwandans (both refugees and settled migrants) were persecuted, rounded up and either expelled or forced back to old refugee camps near

²⁴⁸ Malkki, "National Geographic," 35

²⁴⁹ Whitaker, "Changing priorities in refugee protection," 4. Crisp, "Africa's Refugees," 160

²⁵⁰ Whitaker, "Changing priorities in refugee protection," 4

²⁵¹ Van der Meeren, "Three Decades in Exile," 252&262

the Rwandan border.²⁵² The injustice and challenges of these experiences can be argued to have shaped the refugees' identities in such a way that their involvement with the NRM and later the RPF are not unfounded. The conditions which the Rwandan '59ers were subject to, effected their identities, and as such, in reaction, produced the need to change their circumstances.

4.4 Obote to Museveni: Betrayal and the Final Straw

It could be argued that the reason for the Rwandan refugees' decision to force their right to return 'home' to Rwanda was a result of the events of the 1980s in Uganda. To begin with, the return of Milton Obote to power in the early part of the decade, brought with it a resurgence of anti-Rwandan refugee sentiment, propagated by the government itself.²⁵³ Using anti-refugee rhetoric to drum-up support for the government, Obote resurrected the discrimination and persecution of refugees that had been characteristic of his previous regime.²⁵⁴ Endorsing harassment and violence toward Rwandans living in Uganda (carried out by the youth supporters of his party), Obote ordered a mass expulsion of these refugees in 1982.²⁵⁵

In response to the oppressive actions of the Obote regime toward refugees, and as a reaction to the expulsion of refugees in the early 1980s, the second generation of Rwandan '59ers joined the National Resistance Movement and its guerrilla leader, Yoweri Museveni in his effort to overthrow the government.²⁵⁶ Seeking to change the repression and discrimination of the Obote government and install a system in Uganda

²⁵² Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 262

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 69

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Reed, "Exile, Reform," 483

²⁵⁵ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 69-70. Reed, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," 49

²⁵⁶ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 70

which would be inclusive to Rwandan refugees, and enable them to establish a future there, thousands of refugees, supported by RANU fought the Ugandan government, and replaced Obote with Museveni.²⁵⁷

Part of their reasoning for their support and efforts to install Museveni and the NRM in power in Uganda, were the policies and attitudes that the movement had for Rwandan refugees. Promising a change in the definition of citizenship, from an ancestral to a residential basis, would have enabled Rwandan '59ers and their children rights as citizens of Uganda.²⁵⁸ Citizenship and the sense of belonging, rights and opportunities that accompany it, would have, it could be argued, changed the identities of these refugees from their powerless, stateless and insecure, to belonging. However, once in power, the Ugandan parliament pressured the return of rights to citizenship to be redefined by ancestry.²⁵⁹ When Museveni agreed to this reversal of his promise, betrayed Rwandan refugees were once again rejected and lost.²⁶⁰ This decision effected the redistribution of land, which under the new laws, Rwandans were no longer eligible to attain.²⁶¹

Reconstructing the refugee identity after the deception of the NRM, Rwandan refugees began to seek an alternative for themselves. Belonging nowhere, and having nowhere to go, the betrayal by Museveni was the last straw, so to speak. Refugees began to question why they could not return to Rwanda. If the Ugandan resistance movement could be successful in replacing the oppressive Obote regime, what was to stop the

²⁵⁷ Mamdani, "African states, citizenship and war," 497-498

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 496

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5. Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*, 70

²⁶¹ Mamdani, "African states, citizenship and war," 497

Rwandan refugees and the newly founded RPF from forcing their right to return to Rwanda and replace the oppressive Habyarimana regime?²⁶²

Having exhausted political avenues, and receiving minimal if any response, the RPF, equipped and trained by the NRA, invaded Rwanda in October 1990.²⁶³ The lack of citizenship and subsequent effect that had on the identities of Rwandan refugees, compounded by discrimination, persecution, insecurity, vulnerability, and betrayal, were responded to in the militarization of the RPA and the invasion of Rwanda.²⁶⁴

4.5 Integration, Xenophobia and Local Intolerance

Integration into their host societies, for the '59ers, was not an entirely successful endeavor.²⁶⁵ Although some success stories exist, where refugees were welcomed, provided with opportunity, and desirous of those opportunities, for most Rwandan refugees the receptiveness of host societies was tense.²⁶⁶ Often met with xenophobia from the local populations, whether because of competition over scarcity of resources, jealousy over preferential treatment by the host government or aid organizations, or because of general ethnic discrimination, the '59ers struggled to find secure host conditions.²⁶⁷

Victims of violence, persecution, and general bullying, local populations in host states were not always as open to refugees as their governments (supposedly were). For

²⁶² Reed, "Exile, Reform," 485. Reed, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," 49. Lemarchand, "Exclusion, Marginalization and Political Mobilization," 11.

²⁶³ Reed, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," 48

²⁶⁴ Reed, "Exile, Reform," 486. Jones, "Civil War," 59

²⁶⁵ Van der Meeren, "Three Decades in Exile," 252

²⁶⁶ Ibid. Gasarasi, "The Mass Naturalization and Further Integration of Rwandese Refugees in Tanzania,"

97

²⁶⁷ Van der Meeren, "Three Decades in Exile," 252

example, in what is now the DRC, “[r]efugees were harassed and intimidated, robbed and physically attacked by the local Hunde population and the police alike.”²⁶⁸

Societal conditions created by this intolerance influenced the shape of these refugees’ identities. It can therefore be argued that the effects of local intolerance, xenophobia and a lack of integration (compounded by the policies of host states), motivated refugees to find somewhere or some way to belong. In a number of cases in host states, Rwandan refugees were involved in guerrilla or civil wars, fighting for change, or supporting local revolutionaries.²⁶⁹

In Uganda, Rwandan refugees joined the fight, and were intricately involved in the establishment of the Museveni regime. However, after the installation of Museveni in Uganda, the refugees that had supported him were betrayed, and conditions turned unfavourable, once again.²⁷⁰ As a result, through their invasion of Rwanda, the refugees sought to change the conditions in their home country that were preventing their repatriation. The rationale behind this action could be argued to be founded in the refugees’ need for citizenship; ridding Rwanda of the oppressive MRND regime and installing a new government, would theoretically allow refugees their rights to citizenship where they could not be revoked because of ancestry.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 262

²⁶⁹ Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 263

²⁷⁰ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5. Gourevitch, *We wish to inform you*, 70

5.0 Other Components to the Militarization of the '59ers

It could be argued that the identity of the refugees and their concerns about citizenship have very little to do with what motivated the '59ers to militarize and invade Rwanda in 1990. Instead, it could be argued that one or a combination of other factors motivated this phenomenon, and while the identity of refugees is important to understanding their experiences as refugees, it is factors such as timing, circumstance, and the pursuit of power that actually motivated the refugee militarization.

This chapter will examine other components that may have motivated or contributed to the motivation of the militarization of Rwandan refugees from the 1960s. This chapter will consider the availability of arms and military prowess of refugees living in Uganda, as influential in the decision to militarize. It will look at a sense of Rwandan nationalism kept alive in the refugee diaspora, and how such nationalism might motivate repatriation. This chapter will consider the timing of the invasion, and propose an answer as to why the refugees did not militarize earlier? Finally, this chapter will analyze the cyclical nature of the power dynamics in Rwanda. Looking at the shift from Tutsi domination, to Hutu domination, then back to Tutsi domination after the invasion, this chapter will acknowledge the possibility of an ethnic-based power struggle pattern, as a possible motivation for the military invasion by the RPF.

5.1 Means: military experience and access to arms

The experience of Rwandan refugees as guerrilla fighters in Museveni's NRA provided the refugees with military and guerrilla warfare skills.²⁷¹ With these skills and the access members of the NRA had to arms, it is arguable the RPF was able to militarize and invade Rwanda. It could be argued that without these skills and weapons, the RPF would not have been able to launch such a successful military campaign. It could also be determined that the experience of the refugees in the NRA, not only provided them with the "ideological and strategic guidance," but the encouragement to force their right to return to Rwanda.²⁷²

Experience and Access to Arms

In the past, Rwandan insurgencies had been highly unsuccessful, small in scale, and poorly organized. As *Inyenzi* fighters in the years following independence, little was achieved by their border raids, and attempts to force their right to return.²⁷³

From the initial exodus in 1959-1963, political groups formed and lobbied governments and the international community for support of their right to return to Rwanda, but without success.²⁷⁴ One group, the *Imburamajo*, tried to "separate the issue of the return of refugees from the return of the monarchy," however, this movement was "blocked" by the *Mwami* supporter in Uganda, Idi Amin.²⁷⁵

²⁷¹ Reed, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," 49

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 48

²⁷⁴ Reed, "Exile, Reform," 482

²⁷⁵ Reed, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," 48-49

These groups, often divided by factionalism, came and went throughout the thirty years the refugees were in exile.²⁷⁶ However, in the 1980s, with RANU as a foundation, the RPF was able to form a broad-based, influential “front” that sought change, be it through political efforts or military.²⁷⁷

The means for the RPF to seek change militarily were provided by the training, experience and weapons of the NRA.²⁷⁸ The RPA armed themselves with weapons that they took with them after defecting from the NRA: “The invading forces had taken with them a fair amount of equipment including heavy machine-guns, mortars, BM-21 multiple rocket-launchers, recoilless rifles and Russian ZUG light automatic cannons.”²⁷⁹ The invading army was properly equipped to fight a war against the government forces in Rwanda.

Without the training and experience provided by their involvement in the NRA, the refugees’ attempt to force their right to return would probably have reflected the earlier *inyenzi* attempts. As discussed by John A. Marcum in his work on the exile condition, “A guerrilla force needs expert and intensive training...effective only among those who have a high frustration tolerance and steeled purposefulness.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 48

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 49

²⁷⁸ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 93. Lemarchand, “Exclusion, Marginalization and Political Mobilization,” 13. Mamdani, “African states, citizenship and war,” 496

²⁷⁹ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 93

²⁸⁰ Marcum, John A., “The Exile Condition and Revolutionary Effectiveness: Southern African Liberation Movements,” in *Southern Africa in Perspective: Essays in Regional Politics*, (eds) Christian P. Potholm & Richard Dale, (New York: The Free Press – A division of the Macmillan Company & Toronto: Collier-Macmillan Canada Ltd., 1972), 273

Motivation

The impact of the victory of the NRM in Uganda cannot be underestimated. For here, a small group of fighters who relied solely upon their own resources, the support they received from the population, and their belief that their cause was 'right,' had defeated an internationally recognized government with received extensive external military and financial support.²⁸¹

Although sentiments were rising about the possibility of a forced return, in the wake of the Ugandan success, should conditions in Uganda improved for the refugees, it is arguable the RPF would have continued its political lobbying, but forcing their right to return through an invasion, may not have been viewed as necessary. The conditions in Uganda were, however, no longer hospitable, and the support by Museveni's government of the RPF invasion was said to be less out of support for fellow comrades in arms in a similar struggle for liberation from oppression, but instead, support in the 'don't come back' sense.²⁸²

It is arguable, however, that if the NRM and Museveni had not gone back on their promises of citizenship rights, which recreated hopeless and restrictive conditions for Rwandan refugees in Uganda, the RPA would not have had the motivation to invade Rwanda.²⁸³ With the rights provided by citizenship, including, for example, the entitlement to own land, the sense of not belonging which accompanies the refugee identity, would have arguably faded.

The "refugee experience" is "often viewed (by refugees and refugee agencies) as 'temporary and unique...'" and is dealt with as such.²⁸⁴ The refugee experience of the

²⁸¹ Reed, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," 49

²⁸² Mamdani, "African states, citizenship and war," 497

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Malkki, "Refugees and Exile," 511

'59ers was long and drawn out over decades, compounding the associated insecurities of being a refugee into the identity of this group.

The fear of insecurity, the need for citizenship and the conditions that would allow these refugees opportunities for a future, drove their political campaigns throughout the thirty years they were in exile. As such, it is not improbable that the removal of these threats, or the refugee identity (which would be possible through affording refugees the rights of citizenship, thus naturalizing them, and changing their status and subsequently their identity, from refugee to citizen), would 'take the wind out of the sails' so-to-speak of the military campaign to force their right to return.

The need to force their right to return, is arguably derivative of the hopelessness of the refugee situation (in Uganda), as it roots in the desire to belong. Although initially stemming from the post-independence movement assumption that repatriation would naturally come into affect after the Belgian colonialists departed, as time passed and repatriation was not an option, the desire to return became more about the precariousness of being a refugee. Security, stability, the need to put down roots, and the right to belong, arguably motivated the Rwandan refugees from the 1960s to mobilize throughout the exile years. Once the realisation of their protracted situation as refugees set in (after official independence in Rwanda) the need to belong, to settle, and to not be refugees anymore motivated their efforts in host states to change the oppressive and exclusive status quo.

5.2 Nationalism

The political lobbyist organization RANU and later the RPF rallied support from the Rwandan refugees in the diaspora. RANU initially formed to encourage a sense of national identity among the Rwandan exiles.²⁸⁵ The importance of this national identity was that it in turn supported the refugee organizations (particularly, the RPF) in their efforts to gain the right to repatriate. Extending beyond the recruitment of soldiers, The RPF was organized and by the time it invaded Rwanda, “its recruitment net extended to Tutsi exile communities in Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania and eastern Congo, infusing further strength into its ranks,” the rallying of a sense of nationalism among the Rwandan refugee diaspora,

provided a coherent organizational frame for mobilizing support within and outside Uganda, collecting funds, coordinating cultural activities, reaching out to the international community, and lobbying for their right to return to Rwanda.²⁸⁶

Unifying the refugees in the diaspora, by building up a sense of nationalism – a sense of being Rwandese – gave hope to refugees, who over the last thirty years were without hope. Nationalism can be argued to have played a motivational role in the armed return of Rwandan refugees, because it encouraged the refugees to believe in their inherent right to return.²⁸⁷ While being without the security of citizenship and a sense of belonging in most of their host states, the promise of return, and the unifying comfort of Rwandese nationalism can be argued to have encouraged the refugees to support the RPF in their military campaign.

²⁸⁵ Reed, “The Rwandan Patriotic Front,” 49

²⁸⁶ Lemarchand, “Exclusion, Marginalization and Political Mobilization,” 11

²⁸⁷ Van der Meeren, “Three Decades in Exile,” 264

Had the conditions in Uganda in 1990 been different, had Museveni and the NRM kept their promise of citizenship rights, and Rwandan refugees in Uganda been able to plant roots in the country, as is argued in the previous section, it is possible that the RPF would not have been motivated to launch their military campaign. However, because of the refugee organization had rallied nationalistic support from Rwandan refugees in other host countries, the campaign became more than just about the conditions in which refugees in Uganda lived, and more about the encompassing injustice of the condition of protracted exile, and the right of these refugees to their 'home'.²⁸⁸

5.3 Historical power dynamics in Rwanda: a cyclical power struggle

It is arguable that the motivation for the invasion of Rwanda by the RPF in 1990 was rooted in the historical power dynamics of the competing ethnic groups, Hutu and Tutsi. This argument would suggest that the competition for power in Rwanda is characteristically cyclical, thus meaning the Tutsi-dominated RPF invaded Rwanda to reclaim their position of ethnic dominance over the Hutu.

This competition for power stems back to the favouritism and elite domination of the Tutsis over the Hutus during colonialism (arguably starting before colonialism under the rule of the Tutsi *mwami*). As colonialism came to an end with the rise of the Hutu Revolution in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the struggle for change was less of a socialist movement for equality and democracy, and more a struggle for Hutu domination and power.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 159

²⁸⁹ Gourevitch, *We wish to inform*, 58

“[O]n either side of the Hutu-Tutsi divide there developed mutually exclusionary discourses based on the competing claims of entitlement and injury.”²⁹⁰ Rooted in the reconstructed understanding of identity through ethnicity, which “the Belgians had made...the defining feature of Rwandese existence,” it could be argued that the struggle for ethnic domination re-emerged in the 1990s when the Rwandan government and the RPF came to heads.²⁹¹

In this light, that “the doctrine of racial superiority and inferiority” drove the Tutsi dominated RPF to invade Rwanda, and dispose of the Hutu regime, thus re-establishing their superior position over the Hutus.²⁹² Based on the oppression, exclusion and discrimination of a particular ethnic group, first the oppression of the Hutu during colonialism, and later the oppression of the Tutsi during between the 1960s and the 1990s, it could be argued that the struggle for power would inevitably be in terms of ethnicity.

This argument, however, does not consider the regional dynamics of the RPF invasion, nor does it take into account the fact that, although Tutsi dominated, the RPF was in fact headed by a Hutu and had a broad base of support and members.²⁹³ Although it is possible that the circulation of power may have contributed to motivation of the RPF to depose of the Hutu regime, it is more likely that it is a consequence of the RPF invasion and not the cause.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 57

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 159&175

5.4 Timing: Why they didn't militarize earlier

There are two things to consider about the timing of the RPA invasion of Rwanda: the need to act immediately before political changes by Habyarimana took the 'reason' behind the invasion away, by changing policy about the return and citizenship rights of Rwandan refugees, and why it took thirty years before the refugees were organized and motivated to force their right to return.

Why Thirty Years?

As discussed in earlier sections of this thesis, the timing of the RPA invasion, some thirty years after the first wave of refugees fled the political changes in Rwanda, was in some part due to the initial belief that the conditions that forced them to leave would stabilize after independence, and that their condition as refugees would only be temporary.²⁹⁴ As a result, refugees put their faith in the United Nations and the international community to assist or support their safe return, post-independence. This belief that the refugees held, the belief that independence would bring their safe return to Rwanda, and that the ethnic-based repression that caused their exodus was a result of the revolutionary movement, encouraged refugees to patiently await imminent political change. It discouraged the need to take drastic immediate measures to repatriate, confident that their status as refugees was temporary.

In addition, the supposedly 'golden' conditions for asylum seekers in Africa at the time, could be argued to have made the early years in exile tolerable, and that refugees were not resented so much as foreigners and strains on the economy, but were viewed as African brothers, fellow victims of colonialism, the by-products of the struggle for

²⁹⁴ Van der Meeren, "Three Decades in Exile," 259

liberation.²⁹⁵ Because of the receptiveness of host states in the early years of their exile, it could be argued that the '59ers had little incentive to try and force their right to return. For example, Tanzania gave land settlements to refugees, and encouraged their integration into Tanzanian society.

Rwandan refugees did attempt to force their right to return to Rwanda earlier than 1990; however, the attempts were small-scale, poorly organized, and highly unsuccessful.²⁹⁶ These groups of refugees, called *inyenzi*, attacked the Rwandan borders from neighbouring host states. These groups hoped to force the right of Tutsi refugees to return to Rwanda. Divided by differing ideologies and tactical opinions, these groups were not strong enough to achieve any change. In fact, the attacks by *inyenzi* only acted to increase the numbers of Tutsi Rwandans in exile, as in response to the attacks, the new Rwandan government increased repression and anti-Tutsi campaigns.²⁹⁷ Thus, attempts to force their right to return were counter-productive and discouraging. The new Rwandan government was hostile to refugees and to Tutsis, but was supported by the international community as a post-colonialist empowerment of the majority.

As the economic and political stability of the region began to waver in the later 1970s, and refugee flows from elsewhere in Africa began to swell, states and local populations began to look for somewhere to point their finger. Rwandan refugees, who at this stage had been refugees for a number of years and were beginning to look for opportunities of naturalization in their host states, were suddenly met with hostility, and closed doors. What had initially been on offer by host states was now unavailable, and instead, intolerance, and policy changes led to discrimination and repression of refugees.

²⁹⁵ Crisp, "Africa's Refugees," 161

²⁹⁶ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 54&382

²⁹⁷ Van der Meer, "Three Decades in Exile," 257. Reed, "The Rwandan Patriotic Front," 48

Increasingly, the Rwandan refugees began to need the conditions afforded by citizenship, and increasingly these opportunities were made scarce. Involving themselves in movements in their host states, where, by help local groups in the dispose of repressive regimes, it could be argued that the refugees may have hopped for reward (maybe citizenship) from the new governments for their efforts. In Uganda the second generation of '59ers involved themselves with the NRM, making up a quarter of the army that overthrew Milton Obote in 1986.

Incited by promises of becoming eligible for citizenship, the refugees and RANU supported Museveni and his movement. It could be argued that only after the realisation that the NRM was to go back on their promises of change and opportunity for Rwandans in Uganda, did the refugees see fit the time to try and force their right to return to Rwanda again. Armed with experience, organization, and support from the refugee diaspora, the RPA was finally able to launch a successful invasion of Rwanda, and force their right to return after almost thirty years.

On the other hand, as Mahmood Mamdani argues, the 1990 invasion of Rwanda was less about the opportunity to return to Rwanda, and a result of the NRA exporting the crisis about citizenship to Rwandan.²⁹⁸ The marginalization of the Tutsi refugees in the “conflict about entitlement that followed the victory of the [NRA] guerrillas” was at the root of the invasion.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 160

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

On the Brink of Change

The RPF launched their military invasion of Rwanda just three days after Habyarimana, acting under pressure, made the decision to allow certain concessions toward the 1959 refugees in terms of their return: “The source of that pressure was not the internal opposition in Rwanda, but the knowledge that a section of the Tutsi political diaspora – that within Uganda – had, even more so than in 1959-1963, come to constitute a significant armed and political force.”³⁰⁰ It is argued by Mahmood Mamdani that the refugees went ahead with the attack, although the MRND party was beginning to make changes and negotiate with regard to the return and citizenship of many Rwandans in exile: the “invasion of October 1990 occurred at a time of internal reform – and not repression – in Rwanda.”³⁰¹ Thus, the question arises, why did the refugees attack Rwanda, knowing that policy changes would begin to allow the refugees to repatriate?

While opponents of the RPF argue that their invasion was a “power-hungry” and “diabolical,”³⁰² and that refugees could have achieved repatriation “without fighting”³⁰³ it could be argued that the reason why the 1959 refugees invaded Rwanda regardless of the concessions being made by Habyarimana, was because the crisis of citizenship in Uganda.³⁰⁴ This crisis left the Rwandan members of the NRA frustrated and once again, not-belonging: “Once [Rwandan] guerrillas returned to society from the bush, they returned to a world of citizens and refugees, a world they thought they had forever left behind.”³⁰⁵ Discrimination and conflict over the redistribution of land in Uganda, ruled

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 159

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 91

³⁰⁴ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 159

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 174

out any apprehension about an armed return to Rwanda: “The immediate consequence of the squatter uprising was to swing the balance of opinion, among both refugee commoners and refugee leaders, decisively against naturalization in the countries of their residence and tilt it in favour of an armed return to Rwanda.”³⁰⁶

The timing of the events in Uganda effected the decision to invade Rwanda more than the loosening up of policies toward refugees in Rwanda. Convinced “that they did not have a bright future in Uganda,” the Rwandan refugees in the form of the RPA decided to “invade Rwanda to regain their rights in their country of origin.”³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 182

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 182-183

6.0 Conclusions

Understanding what motivated the '59ers, some thirty years after leaving Rwanda, to mobilize, militarize, and invade their country of origin, is multifold. There were a series of events that took place in Uganda, leading up to the invasion, which can be argued to have triggered the decision to take military action and force the return of the refugees.³⁰⁸ The revival of oppression and harassment of Rwandans living under the Obote II regime (in the early 1980s) stirred up ethnic hatred and turned formerly integrated Rwandans into "hated and despised foreigners."³⁰⁹ Furthermore, the betrayal of Rwandan refugees – the "comrades-in-arms" – by Museveni and his NRM, over their entitlement to citizenship in Uganda, could arguably be the catalyst that later led to the RPA invasion of Rwanda.³¹⁰

Hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees lived in "limbo" in host states at the mercy of local communities and authorities, and without the protection of the international community.³¹¹ Shaped by their experiences as refugees in foreign states, the identity of the '59ers was both insecure and powerless, conditions that arguably could have been reversed or avoided entirely by a single privilege: citizenship.³¹² Thus, given the opportunity to invoke change, the refugees involved themselves in the civil wars and guerrilla movements in their host states, in an effort to achieve this innate human need.

Defined by their condition as refugees, being unwilling or unable to return to Rwanda, the '59ers were left to the protection of host states, the international community and the UNHCR. The changing conditions and policies of host states, the failure of these

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 176

³⁰⁹ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5.

³¹⁰ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 175

³¹¹ Rajaram, "Humanitarianism," 248

³¹² Pittaway, "'Refugee Woman'"

policies, and of the conditions and policies of the international community and the UNHCR, did not provide adequate protection for the refugees. Although requisite of protracted refugee situations, no long-term solution was found in this case. Motivated by the insecurity and instability that these failures, this generation of refugees sought to affect their own resolution in the form of armed repatriation.

The crisis over citizenship, which characterized the Rwandan refugee experience, shaped the identity of this group of refugees as refugees. From the first exodus of refugees in 1959, this group of exiled Rwandans struggled without success to belong. The incessant need to plant roots, to establish a home and a future, inclusive in the other problems they faced during their protracted exile (i.e. xenophobia, violence), were all contributory to the motivation for militarization and the invasion of Rwanda.

Future Policy Suggestions

Although this thesis is merely an exploration of the motivations behind the militarization of specific Rwandan refugees, the findings of this thesis allow the opportunity of making future refugee policy suggestions. These suggestions will be limited in their detail and specificity, however, they will address the concerns and issues discussed in this thesis, in particular the failures of policymakers and implementers.

In addressing large-scale refugee situations (as in the case of the Rwandan '59ers), host states and international policy must initially take into consideration the sensitivity of refugees to their specific situations. Forced relocation and disbursement is not advisable upon initial arrival of refugees to a hosting state. Refugees require security

and familiarity, in order to maintain a sense of belonging, which is most often found in refugee camps.

It must be noted that each instance of refugees is different. For example, refugee from the fourth exodus (from the genocide) will have different expectations and experiences to refugees from the first and second waves. As a result, the different refugee situations must be addressed accordingly. In some cases (as with the initial exodus of refugees from Rwanda) refugees believe in the possibility of almost immediate return. To grant citizenship rights and disperse and integrate refugees under these conditions is not advisable (as was attempted by the government of Tanzania), as refugees are not facing (or do not believe they are facing) a protracted situation.

Under these conditions protection in the form of security and counseling should be provided, as well as education, health and temporary assistance or employment opportunities (for example, temporary work visas could be granted by host states). Disarmament is essential, however, protection needs to be provided in refugee camp situations, as child soldier and guerrilla recruitment and violence are common trends in camps, particularly located near to unstable zones or borders.

Furthermore, if the refugee situation is protracted, long-term settlement in refugee camps is ill advisable. Protracted refugee situations need to be address with long-term solutions, stability and opportunity. Maintaining camp-like circumstances for a long period of time can lead to vulnerability of refugees to aggressive external actors and environments, and dependence on host states and international agencies for survival and subsistence.

Furthermore, long-term refugee camps lend themselves to conditioning a refugee identity. In the short term this is avoidable, because refugees believe in the temporary condition of their situation as they believe in the potential for return. In the long term, however, refugee camps can isolate large groups of people and keep them in limbo between states, never belonging anywhere. Without citizenship rights and the “contract” between states and subject, refugees are susceptible to refugee identities, which can lead to heightened uncertainty and insecurity. It is the formation of the refugee identity that can result in refugee involvement in and exploration of alternative ways to belong (as in the case of Rwandan refugees joining liberation and rebel movements in host states).

Understandably not all host states have the means or flexibility to allow for large-scale citizenship and integration of refugees, however, it is advisable to award citizenship rights to children of refugees born into host states. Opportunities for education, health care and employment should be made available, as well as the opportunity to purchase and own land. Furthermore, some sort of graduated citizenship system could be negotiated for refugees settling in host states for the long term. For example, related to the number of years lived in the host state, current and potential employment situation, etc, citizenship rights could be granted.

The militarization of Rwandese refugees (in the form of the RPF), which led to their subsequent invasion of Rwanda in 1990, was in response to the failure of, primarily but not limited to, hosting states to create the conditions that would enable refugees to

establish a future in the host states – to establish a home. Without the provisions allowed by citizenship, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for a future (in terms of jobs, health, education and opportunities for their children’s futures), and in spite of the extended period of time these refugees were in exile, their condition was treated as temporary at best. Compounded by this group’s history³¹³ and experiences in exile, their identities as refugees motivated their eventual militarization.

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³¹³ The term *history* is used here in reference to section 1.1 of this thesis. Historical identities of refugees are often emphasized when refugee experiences are negative, or when refugees are trying to find a sense of belonging. In this case, the refugees remember themselves as Rwandans and teach their children that they are Rwandan, regardless of place of residence or place of birth.

List of Abbreviations

RPA – Rwandan Patriotic Army

RPF – Rwandan Patriotic Front

DRC – Democratic Republic of the Congo

OHCHR – Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights

OAU – Organization of the Africa Union

IDP – Internally Displaced Person

UN – United Nations

PARMEHUTU – Parti du Mouvement et de l'Emancipation Hutu

UNAR – Union National Rwandaise

MRND – Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement

RANU – Rwandan Alliance for National Unity

NRA – National Resistance Army

NRM – National Resistance Movement

UNHCR – United Nations High Commission for Refugees

HRW – Human Rights Watch

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

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