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Special Issue:

Addressing the Impacts of Forced Migration

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Introduction—Peacebuilding Responses to Forced Migration

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INTRODUCTION— PEACEBUILDING RESPONSES TO FORCED MIGRATION

An unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes due to persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2017, p. 2). The 22.5 million global refugee population is the highest on record (UNCHR, 2017, p. 13), and 11.6 million of these individuals are in protracted refugee situations, having been in exile from their countries of origin for at least five years (UNHCR, 2017, p. 22). 2.8 million asylum-seekers have claimed refugee status from their receiving states and are awaiting final determination on their status (UNHCR, 2017, p. 2). Another 40.3 million people, known as internally displaced persons (IDPs), have been similarly displaced by conflict and violence but are not counted among the refugees because they have not crossed an internationally recognized border (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2017). The UNHCR further estimates that at least 10 million people are stateless or at risk of statelessness (UNHCR, 2017, p. 48). Stateless people are not recognized as nationals under the laws of any state, leaving them vulnerable, marginalized and “invisible.”

This unparalleled forced migration crisis has a variety of impacts on the displaced populations. Forced migrants are especially vulnerable to human rights abuses, malnutrition and disease (Lori & Boyle, 2015; Thomas & Thomas, 2004). They are highly susceptible to acts of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence (UNCHR 2003). According to one study, at least one in five displaced women in complex humanitarian settings have experienced sexual violence, which is likely an underestimation given the significant barriers to disclosure (Vu et al., 2014). Displaced children and adolescents are especially vulnerable (Katsberg, 2002; United Nations

General Assembly, 2016), making them easy targets for recruitment by unscrupulous governmental and rebel armed groups (Achvarina & Reich, 2006). Because most forced migrants find themselves in developing regions with weak economies and few job opportunities (UNHCR, 2017), they face many obstacles to legal employment (Achiume, 2014; Arnold-Fernández & Pollock, 2013) leading to poor labor market outcomes and depressed incomes for the displaced (Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2013). Forced migrants also often face discrimination in education (Bourgonje, 2010), housing (Montemurro & Walicki, 2010) and healthcare (Achiume, 2014; Thomas & Thomas, 2004).

Forced migration also can also have significant impacts on the communities where they take refuge. The overwhelming majority of forced migrants both originate from and stay in the Global South. Developing regions host 84% of the world's refugees under the UNHCR's mandate, with the least developed countries providing asylum to approximately 28% (UNHCR, 2017). Unlike the wealthier OECD countries, where immigration actually creates positive long-term effects on local economies, large flows of displaced persons to these poor regions place enormous strain on already fragile public services and infrastructure (Dadush & Niebuhr, 2016). Because South-South migration flows are often composed of a high share of unskilled, low-education workers moving into communities which are likewise composed of a predominantly unskilled labor force, the increased competition at the low-skill end of the income distribution results in downward pressure on already low wages (Dadush & Niebuhr, 2016; Ruis & Vargas-Silva, 2013). The sudden inflow of forced migrants may also create in the host community a sense of "demographic shock" leading to increasing social tensions surrounding not just material well-being but also concerns about maintaining the political balance, preserving local traditions and culture, and protecting national security (Dadush & Niebuhr, 2016). In some cases, forced migration can pose a threat to the security of the host state (Mogire, 2011), the security of the sending state (Adelman, 2002; Lischer, 2006), or even regional security (Milner, 2009).

Voluntary repatriation is promoted as the preferred durable solution for forced migrants and for the international community (UNHCR, 2006), but it is clear that certain essential conditions must be in place to ensure the dignity and safety of the returnees (Crisp & Long, 2016). Given the protracted nature of much displacement today, the two alternative durable solutions – full integration into the community of asylum or resettlement to a third country – must be increasingly employed. Unfortunately, as forced migrants spend longer periods in exile, host communities increasingly perceive the displaced populations to be a burden and a security concern (Milner, 2011). Moreover, there is a growing recognition that unresolved refugee situations may undermine peace processes in sending states (Milner, 2011). This has resulted in a growing call to incorporate forced migrants more thoroughly into peacebuilding processes while still in exile in order to begin developing capacities for contribution to peace and reconciliation processes once repatriation occurs (Milner, 2011; Sharpe & Cordova, 2009).

This special issue contributes to the conversation about peacebuilding responses to forced migration. Each of the authors examine the structural obstacles impeding the successful resolution of some particular case of forced migration before suggesting the use of a peacebuilding approach to address the matter. Chiara Ligouri explains the tensions which underlie discrimination against Haitian immigrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic, arguing in order to achieve a durable and positive peace, a peacebuilding perspective must be adopted to complement the more confrontational human-rights approach. By carefully analyzing the factors

that divide or connect the Haitian and Dominican communities, Ligouri argues, programs may be designed to facilitate mutual understanding and demolish prejudices. Linda de Veen examines the interplay between perceived threat and the framing of refugees in Dutch news coverage. After demonstrating how even so-called neutral reporting can result in a dangerously distorted public image of refugees, de Veen proposes a solution known as constructive journalism. Rather than simply mirroring society, constructive journalism aims to move society by offering greater context, engaging in structural analysis and proposing concrete solutions when reporting on social problems. Dakota Porter argues that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Morocco provide platforms for refugee women from Sub-Saharan countries to actively contribute to peace in Moroccan communities. By facilitating healing through artistic self-expression and providing crucial support systems for the refugees, NGOs empower these women to tear down the structural barriers to their participation. Fred Bidandi traces the root causes of the political violence and forced migration crisis in the Great Lakes region to the legacy left behind by colonialism and its present-day consequences. Finding the key issues to be primarily structural, Bidandi advances focused and intentional dialogue as a peacebuilding mechanism to deal with the political violence in the Great Lakes region.

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Discrimination against Dominicans of Haitian Descent in the Dominican Republic: Both a Human Rights and a Peace-Building Issue

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Abstract

Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the same island but are different in cultural, demographic, economic and political terms. Economic disparities, adverse environmental conditions, and political instability have traditionally prompted Haitians to migrate to the DR.

Haitian migrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent have long suffered discrimination in the DR. In September 2013, the Dominican Constitutional Court judgment retroactively deprived people born in the DR to irregular migrants of their nationality, rendering most of them stateless.

Discrimination and statelessness are manifestations of profound tensions between Haitians and Dominicans. This article shows the benefits of approaching the issue from a peace-building perspective. After identifying “connectors and dividers” and reviewing initiatives aimed at promoting understanding between Haitians and Dominicans, it concludes that the efforts of those acting as “connectors” should be doubled, enhanced and supported in order to overcome the logic of confrontation and prejudice which causes discrimination and human rights violations.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST DOMINICANS OF HAITIAN DESCENT IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: BOTH A HUMAN RIGHTS AND A PEACE-BUILDING ISSUE

Migration from Haiti to the Dominican Republic is well-rooted in history, as the consequence of economic, environmental and political differences between the two neighboring countries.

For decades, the Dominican economy has heavily relied on Haitian migrants. They were first used as a cheap workforce in sugar-cane plantations and later employed in other emerging agricultural sectors, as well as in construction, tourism and domestic service.

However, this invaluable contribution is not adequately recognized by Dominican authorities and by the public in general. Haitian migrants often suffer incidents of discrimination, are at times attacked in reprisal when a Haitian is suspected of committing a crime against a Dominican, and often exposed to deportation on the basis of race-profiling with no respect for due process.

The children and descendants of Haitian migrants are not exempt from discrimination. Although they generally consider themselves Dominicans, and many of them were also officially recognized as such at birth, in the last three decades they have become more and more the target of discriminatory policies aimed at restricting their access to Dominican nationality and identity documents.

What follows is an explanation of the historical context in which this situation has come to life, as well as an analysis of the different approaches used so far to tackle this problem. In particular, this article looks at the benefits of complementing a human rights-based angle with a peace-building one in order to better address the complexities of the problem.

Historical context

Haiti and the Dominican Republic are two countries which share the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. Their differences go back to the colonial era, when the western part of the island (now Haiti) was colonized by France and the eastern part (now the Dominican Republic) by Spain. Spain ceded its part of the island to France in 1795. Following a revolution led by former slaves, Haiti became independent from France in 1804 and abolished slavery. In 1808-09, the French were expelled from the eastern part after a pro-Spanish rebellion. By 1822, Haiti had established control of the whole island and it held it until the two sides separated in 1844.

Despite a common history of slavery, the Dominican Republic and Haiti have evolved differently in demographic, economic and political terms. Demographically speaking, while the vast majority of Haiti's people identify as "black", the majority of Dominicans consider themselves to be "mixed race" (Torres-Saillant, 1998; Gates, 2011). Economically, the Dominican Republic ranks 99th in the 2016 Human Development Index and is classified as a middle-income country by the World Bank, while Haiti ranks 163rd (UNDP, 2017) and is widely considered the poorest country in the Western hemisphere. Politically, although both countries have faced a succession of rebellions, coups and dictatorships, in the last two decades the Dominican Republic has enjoyed a relatively higher level of political stability than Haiti (for a brief historical overview of the relationship between the two countries see *The Economist*, 2016, or for a more detailed account Wucker, 2000).

Such different evolutions are without doubt rooted in the colonial era. For example, Haiti was penalized by France's imposition of a heavy indemnity in return for the loss of gains resulting from its independence (see, for example, Dubois, 2012) Moreover, colonial approaches, combined with environmental differences between the two parts of the island, also played a role. In particular, French colonizers developed a richer agricultural economy in Haiti despite that part of the island having a less favorable climate than the Dominican Republic (Diamond, 2006). In the long term,

this resulted in severe damage to the “environmental capital of forests and soils” (Diamond, 2006, p. 339). Moreover, “the combination of higher population density and lower rainfall was the main factor behind the more rapid deforestation and loss of soil fertility on the Haitian side” (Diamond, 2006, p. 340). The above-mentioned environmental factors make Haiti more exposed to natural disasters, in particular hurricanes and floods, than the Dominican Republic.

As a consequence, natural disasters, environmental scarcity, political instability and widespread poverty have been important migration drivers in Haiti, both internally (mainly from rural to urban areas) and externally. As it is the only country to share a terrestrial border with Haiti, the Dominican Republic has become the main migration destination for impoverished Haitians (Ferguson, 2015).

The Dominican Republic has long taken advantage of the arrival of Haitian migrants. In particular, from the 1920s to the 1980s Dominican authorities encouraged the migration of Haitian workers as seasonal workforce for the sugarcane industry. Even when employment opportunities in the sugarcane sector declined due to the fall in sugar prices, Haitians continued to migrate and to find jobs in the agricultural, construction and tourism sectors, all of which were expanding at that time (Riveros, 2014).

However, Dominican politicians have, at different times, exploited the historical and demographic differences between the two countries to stoke a fear of a “peaceful invasion” of Haitians in order to serve their political purposes. As Hintzen (2015) details, the Dominican dictator Trujillo “used an anti-Haitian ideology to rally Dominicans around his dictatorship by claiming his strict rule was needed to protect the nation from the new threat of ‘passive’ invasion by Haitian immigrants”. In 1937, he ordered a massacre of around 20,000 Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent living at the border. Trujillo and subsequent Dominican leaders encouraged the construction of a Dominican national and racial identity based on opposition to Haitian identity.

From the 1980s onwards, some nationalist groups in the Dominican Republic revived the rhetoric of the “passive invasion” of Haitians and of the “Haitianization” of the Dominican Republic. Since that time, such discriminatory discourse has dominated the public and political agenda with regard to Haitian immigration (Amnesty International, 2015).

Dominican discriminatory policies against Dominicans of Haitian descent

As a consequence of the increasingly xenophobic rhetoric, over the last 25 years Dominican-born children of Haitian migrants have been subject to a series of administrative, legislative and judicial decisions which aim to restrict their access to Dominican identity papers and to Dominican nationality (Amnesty International, 2015). The culmination of this process was the adoption of a Constitutional Court judgment in 2013 which stated that children born in the Dominican Republic to foreign parents who did not have regular migration status had never been entitled to Dominican nationality. The judgment was applied retrospectively to people born since 1929 and it is discriminatory since it disproportionately affects Dominicans of Haitian descent.

With no automatic access to Haitian nationality, tens of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent were left stateless, *i.e.* not recognized as nationals by either the Dominican Republic or Haiti (UNHCR, 2013). Stateless people are prevented from accessing basic services such as higher

education and adequate healthcare, cannot access formal employment and have limitations which prevent them from participating fully in society (Amnesty International, 2015; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2016).

The 2013 ruling exacerbated already tense relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and sparked a series of incidents of communal violence. For example, in early 2015 the Dominican Republic temporarily closed its consulates in Haiti following a number of incidents motivated by apparent mistreatment of Haitians, among other causes. In February 2015, a Haitian man was found hanging by a tree in a park in the second biggest town of the Dominican Republic, his body beaten and his hands and feet bound by rope. While the subsequent investigation has still to produce any conclusions, the incident raised suspicions that it could have been a xenophobic attack.

In May 2014, the Dominican government issued a law aimed at mitigating the harshest effects of the 2013 ruling, but the results have been inadequate and tens of thousands of people of Haitian descent remain stateless, according to the UNHCR, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and several international human rights organizations. Dominican authorities deny that affected people are stateless and insist that Haiti also has a responsibility to grant them citizenship. However, Haitian authorities have repeatedly referred to them as “stateless” and have not clarified whether Dominican-born children of Haitian migrants could qualify for Haitian nationality (Amnesty International, 2015).

In June 2015, following an 18-months moratorium, Dominican authorities resumed deportations of irregular Haitian migrants. Even though Dominicans of Haitian descent were not directly targeted by the deportation operations, over 2000 cases of expulsions were recorded by the end of 2016 among Dominican-born people who were still without identity documents (IOM, 2016) and mostly as the result of the Dominican authorities’ failure to respect due process in the deportation procedures (Amnesty International, 2016).

The existence of mutual prejudices

If the Dominican authorities have been able to adopt such overt discriminatory measures against Haitian migrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent, it is because media and politicians have fueled a number of grievances and prejudices within Dominican public opinion.

Even though many Dominicans live in close contact with communities of Haitian migrants and people of Haitian descent, the average Dominican tends to nurture prejudices and stereotypes towards Haitian migrants and their Dominican-born children. These are nowadays collectively known by the term ‘antihaitianismo’. Many share the view that Haitians are different, ‘more primitive’ and that they come to the Dominican Republic to exploit Dominican public services. There is widespread concern about the country being swamped by Haitian migrants. Nationalist groups have successfully spread the idea that the “peaceful invasion” of Haitians could result in fundamental changes in Dominican national identity and negatively impact on the availability of jobs and public services for Dominicans (see, for example, Sagas, 2000).

On the other side of the border, decades of exploitation and discrimination towards Haitian migrants and their descendants in the Dominican Republic have nurtured a sentiment of suspicion

and resentment amongst many Haitians, especially those who have not migrated to the neighboring country.

In the Dominican Republic, Dominicans of Haitian descent feel a strong attachment to the Dominican Republic, which they consider their country. Even though many speak Haitian Creole within their families and communities and are proud of their ancestors' origins, the majority of Dominican-born children of Haitian descent consider themselves Dominican and want to make positive contributions to Dominican society. However, they feel discriminated against and treated as second-class citizens, especially as a consequence of the denial of identity documents and the deprivation of Dominican nationality. Their sense of exclusion is fueled by the fact that without identity documents they cannot access other services and opportunities that would enable them to live a fully productive and dignified life.

Human rights-based initiatives against discrimination

So far, local and international NGOs have assessed such instances of discrimination of Dominicans of Haitian descent mainly through a human rights lens.

A human rights approach is based on the premise that human rights are inherent to the human being, inalienable, universal, interdependent and indivisible. Human rights can be considered natural rights or "ethical demands" (Sen, 2004, p. 319), but their recognition ultimately entails "positive enactments of the law of the society of States" (Alston, 2011, p. 151). In other words, human rights are considered to exist separately from the State but in practice their recognition and enforcement is dependent on States' action through the adoption and implementation of legislation. As Donnelly illustrates (2014, p. 229), while States have adopted and generally ratified a wealth of international human rights conventions since World War II, they have maintained a "system of exclusively national implementation of international human rights" which ultimately makes few or no concessions at all to the limitation of national sovereignty that the recognition of human rights should entail.

Given the centrality of the State in the human rights system, a human rights-based approach looks on the one hand at individual and collective rights and on the other at State's obligations, as "there are, in these matters, no rights of the individual except as a counterpart and a product of the duties of the State" (Alston, 2011, p. 154). A human rights-based analysis therefore focuses on identifying violations of human rights and holding the State accountable for them, albeit through a limited range of essentially weak mechanisms. Although other actors, such as corporations and international organizations, are duty-bearers under international human rights law, the State remains the primary one due to its obligation to protect people from human rights harm by third parties.

Tackling an issue as a human rights matter intrinsically entails adopting a legalistic and principled approach, which some also see as confrontational. It means facing the State's reaction which in the vast majority of cases will be denial or justification and in some cases even counteroffensives or retaliation (Cohen, 1996).

In the context of the entrenched discrimination of Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic, since the early 1990s the adoption of a human rights approach has involved local civil

society organizations working on behalf of migrants' rights making use of different human rights mechanisms at international and regional level to expose the Dominican Republic's blatant failure to uphold its human rights obligations.

For example, UN human rights treaty bodies have systematically expressed concerns and formulated recommendations on this issue in their reviews of the Dominican Republic's periodic reports (see Amnesty International, 2015, p. 15-16). In particular they have highlighted how Dominican laws and policies on nationality, access to birth registration and to identity documents could represent a breach to a number of human rights, including the right to liberty of movement within the State's territory (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights - ICCPR, art. 12), the right to acquire a nationality (Convention on the Rights of the Child - CRC, art. 7), the right to equality and non-discrimination (ICCPR, art. 2.1; International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 2.2; CRC, art. 2, Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, art. 2; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, art. 2).

The Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, which has held numerous thematic hearings on the topic at the request of local NGOs, carried out a visit in 2013 and published a very critical report in 2016. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued two judgements respectively in 2005 (*The Girls Yean and Bosico v Dominican Republic*) and 2014 (*Expelled Dominicans and Haitians v the Dominican Republic*) condemning the Dominican Republic for adopting policies of on-birth registration and identity documents which were in violation of human rights law. Moreover, numerous international human rights NGOs published damning reports on this issue and engaged in lengthy advocacy and campaigning efforts to promote change.

Such efforts have proved to be crucial in shedding light on the impact of the Dominican policies on people's rights and lives and in deterring the authorities from implementing even harsher measures. For example, in recent years international attention and activism has significantly contributed to preventing the intentional and systematic expulsion of undocumented Dominicans of Haitian descent. They were also instrumental in persuading Dominican authorities to adopt the above-mentioned 2014 law that enabled a part of the affected population to re-access identity documents and citizen rights.

While local and international human rights-based actions are essential and should be continued, it is undeniable that they fail to sufficiently address the root causes of those discriminatory policies. They also polarize public opinion and entrench authorities and politicians in official hardline discourses for domestic consumption which seek to avoid being seen as too weak in the face of international pressure. As a consequence, allegations of racial or ethnic discrimination, as well as of statelessness, are vehemently denied, while arguments based on sovereignty in the matters of migration and nationality laws are repeatedly used to justify the policies of exclusion of Dominicans of Haitian descent from Dominican nationality.

The need for a stronger peace-building perspective

In this section I will argue that the issue of discrimination towards Dominicans of Haitian descent would also benefit from being tackled through a peace-building perspective.

The term "peace-building" has a variety of definitions and uses in academia, at policy level and

among field practitioners. As distinct from the human rights system, the peace-building tradition is not based on legal norms “but on a commitment to moral principles with political and sometimes personal implications” (Gunner and Nordquist, 2011).

Contemporary peace-building approaches reflect the thinking of key figures in the field of peace studies such as John Galtung and John Paul Lederach. Galtung’s concept of “structural violence” as a set of systemic or institutional conditions that may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs has inspired awareness among peace-building scholars and practitioners about the importance of going beyond “negative peace”, defined by Galtung as the cessation of direct violence, and of tackling “the contradictions which lie at the root of the conflict” in order to build a “positive” or durable peace. As explained in Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2011, p. 44), Galtung’s thinking has been instrumental in promoting the “study of the conditions for peaceful relations between the dominant and the exploited, rulers and ruled, men and women, western and non-western cultures, humankind and nature” within peace research.

Equally, through his visually impactful “multi-level triangle,” Lederach has raised awareness of the importance of including different interventions in the peace-building project involving a variety of different voices, not only high-level political personalities, but also grass-root leaders, groups and activists, as well as middle-level actors such as respected leaders, academics, professionals and NGOs officers. Lederach’s idea of “moral imagination” as a means of conflict transformation has also been influential in inspiring peace-building approaches based on “the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies” (Lederach, 2005, p. 5), as well as on the capacity to embrace creativity and taking risks in the name of peace.

Tackling the question of discrimination and statelessness of Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic from a peace-building perspective allows us to analyze the complexities of the situation and to identify measures to mitigate the problem, thus complementing the human rights focus. In particular, it facilitates looking back at the relationship between Dominicans and Haitians, their mutual prejudices and how clear but not insuperable differences have been exploited by manipulative politicians from both sides. It also permits analyzing the role that different actors can play in overcoming this situation and identifying processes of “change from negative to positive relations, behavior, attitudes and structure” (Lederach as quoted in Peacebuilding Initiatives).

A key tool of peace-building studies is conflict analysis. This allows practitioners: a) to conduct a thorough study of the stakeholders in the conflict, as well as of their interests and stated positions, attitudes and resources; b) to unpack each primary party’s grievances and their capacity to act as mobilizers of tensions; c) to analyze dividers and connectors, or the forces that can either worsen or contribute to solve a conflict; d) to assess the trends and trajectories of the conflict in order to try to make informed predictions of where it could be heading to; e) to craft very specific recommendations for those interested in making positive contributions to the conflict.

What follows is an attempt to focus on one specific aspect of such a conflict analysis, *i.e.* the assessment of dividers and connectors, as a mean of showing the opportunities provided by such an approach.

Dividers and connectors analysis

Dividers are sources of tensions between groups, factors that “can be exploited by confrontational actors to separate ‘us’ from ‘them’” (Buxton, I., Melander, E., Bengtsson, M., Kratt, P., 2004, p. 31). According to the “Do no harm” framework (Collaborative for Development Action, Inc. and CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2004), dividers “may be rooted in deep-seated, historical injustice (root causes) while others may be recent, short-lived or manipulated by subgroup leaders (proximate causes)”.

The following are some identified dividers in the context which produces discrimination against Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic.

1. Economic disparity between Haiti and the Dominican Republic Given that Haitian migrants are generally poorer and unskilled workers, many Dominicans look down on them and consider them inferior. This attitude often extends to the Dominican-born children of Haitian migrants.
2. Segregation of Haitian migrants and their families For some time Haitian migrants have been held in settlements around the sugar plantations (so-called “bateyes”). These settlements are in remote areas with poor access to basic services. Although sugar-cane cultivation plays a much lesser role in today’s economy, many Haitians and their families continue living in those communities. This system does not facilitate the integration of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican society and contributes to their marginalization.
3. Exploitation of Haitian migrants Haitian migrants generally work as builders, farmers, housekeepers, and in other unskilled positions. The Dominican economy and society is built upon Haitian cheap labor. This represents an incentive for many Dominicans for wanting to continue marginalizing Haitian migrants and their families.
4. Ultra-nationalist groups Although politically such organizations constitute a minority, they are quite influential, especially because of the economic power of some of the leaders. They spread xenophobic messages and influence public opinion and mainstream politicians.
5. Mainstream media Due to either a lack of professionalism or excessive control by influential groups, the mainstream media is most often the vehicle for the spreading of nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric.

Connectors are defined as those factors that continue to connect people amidst the differences and that “therefore can have a positive impact on a conflict situation because they strengthen adversaries’ common identities or interests” (Buxton, I., Melander, E., Bengtsson, M., Kratt, P., 2004, p. 31). Connectors are also the individuals, groups and institutions which positively operate to maintain or promote intergroup peace (Collaborative for Development Action, Inc. and CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2004).

In relation to the issue of discrimination towards Dominicans of Haitian descent, these are some of the identified connectors:

1. Shared history of slavery and colonialism Despite the different colonial history, both Dominicans and Haitians share the traumatic experience of colonization and slavery. The common Afro-descendants roots could also represent a connector. The fight for the abolition of slavery in both countries is also a shared historical experience, as some historians point out.
2. Dominican and Haitian diaspora Dominicans and Haitians who have migrated to another country can help building bridges between the two populations, since they are familiar with what migration and integration in another society entail.
3. Dominican pro-rights intellectuals Since the 2013 ruling, more and more opinion-makers and professionals have spoken out in favor of respecting the rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent. Their voices have been crucial in showing solidarity to the affected people and in trying to influence public opinion.
4. Cross-island alliances of civil society organizations (CSOs) CSOs from both countries are often establishing alliances and different forms of coordination. The most promising one is the CCHD (Committee for the Haitian-Dominican collaboration) bringing together CSOs from both countries working on migration and nationality issues.
5. Cross-island artistic projects Artists from both countries have initiated joint projects aimed at promoting understanding between the people of the two countries and demolishing prejudice around Dominicans of Haitian descent.
6. Independent media and/or journalists in both countries Although there are not many and they are mostly limited to online editions, there are a few outlets trying to convey balanced messages. In the Dominican Republic, they highlight the contributions that Dominicans of Haitian descent and Haitian migrants make to Dominican society and try to demolish myths around cultural diversity and “Haitian peaceful invasion”. In Haiti, they try not to fuel the anti-Dominican sentiment that the recent Dominican policies have spread in the Haitian public opinion.

Case study: initiatives of connectors in the fields of communication and the arts

Journalists have promoted a number of initiatives aimed at building bridges between the two countries. One was the establishment of a two-year training program in the Dominican Republic for journalists of both countries. Funded by the European Union and implemented between 2011 and 2013 by the UNESCO Chair for Communication, Democracy and Governance of the University “Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra” (PUCMM), the project involved training 33 journalists from both countries on investigative journalism methodologies and on reporting on migration and other bi-national issues. Journalists were also given a grant to carry out an investigation into issues of common interest for the two countries, the results of which were published by their own outlets and in the Chair’s website. Similar trainings were organized also for students in journalism and communication. Moreover, the conversations held through a series of webinars and interactions via social media on issues related to peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding between Dominicans and Haitians led to the compilation of reflections and recommendations which were shared with Dominican authorities. The project ended a few months

before the Dominican Constitutional Court issued the infamous ruling that deprived hundreds of thousands of people of their nationality. Following the judgement and the reactions that it sparked, the majority of Dominican media adopted very radical positions in defense of the ruling and of Dominican “sovereignty.”

This situation inspired a group of journalists, some of whom had taken part to the above-mentioned training program, to organize an official visit to Haiti to meet a group of Haitian journalists in May 2015 in the attempt to reiterate their intention to work for better understanding between the people of the two countries. The visit resulted in a joint declaration in which journalists from both countries stressed the common interests and connecting factors between the two people, condemned the manifestations of intolerance and incitement to hatred and recognized the importance of acknowledging the contributions of migrants and of promoting respect of their rights (Acento, 2015). While the meeting and the declaration raised a great deal of hope in the possibility of continuing such bi-national collaboration, the difficult political context in Haiti and different priorities in both countries meant that little has come out as follow-up to that initiative.

Another sector which has promoted constructive bi-national initiatives is the arts. In particular, in August 2015 a group of Haitian and Dominican artists met on the river of Lake Azueï, located at the border between the two countries, and created a movement which they named Azueï after the lake. By promoting bi-national artistic initiatives, the members of Azueï are determined “to dismantle the predominant rhetoric and all sorts of prejudices, and to highlight the richness of our island heritage and the affinity of our respective cultures” (as stated in their Facebook page). The movement is still active and growing, with over 50 current members and scores interested in taking part, and initiatives spanning from plastic arts to music including audio-visual features. The projects have received quite high level of interest from the public and support from authorities of both countries, as proved by the fact that embassies have provided those involved with free visa entries for one year. Currently funded by very discreet donors, Azueï aims at achieving financial independence by generating enough income from certain initiatives in order to sponsor others.

Although the impact of both the journalists’ and the artists’ initiatives still needs to be fully assessed, it is clear that they provide for a positive and refreshing approach to tackling the differences between Haiti and the Dominican Republic that have enabled the discriminatory policies against Dominicans of Haitian descent.

Conclusions

The issue of discrimination against Dominicans of Haitian descent and its ultimate manifestation resulting in statelessness are human rights issues which the Dominican Republic must address. However, they are also the symptom of a tense relation between the vast majority of the Dominican population and Dominicans of Haitian descent, which in turn reflects the complex and often contradictory relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

There is no doubt that human rights organizations need to continue pressuring the Dominican authorities to adopt measures that will enable Dominicans of Haitian descent to acquire full citizenship rights and will tackle the issue of racial discrimination. However, there is an urgent need to approach the issue also from a peace-building perspective.

This article has shown the advantages of carrying out a full conflict analysis of the issue, as this would enable us to unpack the root causes of the problem, the attitudes and interests of the main parties, as well as the factors acting as dividers and connectors. In particular, by focusing on the dividers and connectors analysis in this specific context, this article has highlighted the benefits of identifying both those forces that can aggravate the conflict and those which have the potential to contribute to its resolution. The presentation of initiatives of connectors in two different fields (communication and the arts) proves that the adoption of a peace-building approach helps to focus and support positive and constructive projects that could ultimately go very far in addressing the problem of discrimination of Dominicans of Haitian descent.

Therefore, it is recommended that Dominican, Haitian and international actors interested in protecting the rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent invest more efforts in analysing the issue from a peace-building perspective in order to formulate, fund and/or implement programs that will facilitate mutual understanding between Haitians and Dominicans and demolish the prejudices against Dominicans of Haitian descent.

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No Refuge? Dutch News Coverage of Refugees and Perceived Threat in Public Opinion

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Abstract

Since the refugee crisis started, public concerns about immigration have been relatively high in The Netherlands. This article aims to shed light on the interplay between perceived threat and framing of refugees in news coverage. It is argued that ostensibly neutral reports on refugees can create a distorted image, even without being overtly negative in tone. This is most profoundly illustrated through the overestimation of the number and potential risk of refugees arriving. In addition, this article aims to shed light on the institutionalization of this framing, which suggests a need to reexamine journalistic habits. It is proposed to take constructive journalism into account as a way to address this.

NO REFUGE? DUTCH NEWS COVERAGE OF REFUGEES AND PERCEIVED THREAT IN PUBLIC OPINION

In the northern outskirts of the country, between the meadows that characterize The Netherlands, lies the small village of Onnen. It is a quiet place to live with only few facilities like a community center and a church. With around 500 inhabitants, it is one of those few places where everyone still knows (almost) everyone.

So when the municipality announced in May 2014 that Onnen would host 480 refugees, almost doubling the number of inhabitants, it stirred up the community. Marion Oosterveld, whose house is 150 meters from the asylum seeker center (ASC), recalls she felt “uneasy” when she heard the news. “I felt angry and powerless. Why did this ASC have to be put in our backyard? I feared I would not be safe out on the streets at night or in my house when my husband was on nightshift. I

was also concerned for the safety of my child and our possessions” (personal communication, April 2017 – my translation).

Marion Oosterveld’s words seem to illustrate a broader trend. The quarterly reports of The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (*Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau* or SCP) on citizen perspectives show that as refugees flocked to Europe, public concerns about integration and immigration rose (Den Ridder et al., 2016a, p. 3-9; Dekker et al., 2017, p. 4; Den Ridder et al., 2017, p. 1). The number of respondents spontaneously mentioning immigration as the most pressing social problem of that moment increased from 15%-25% in 2008-2014 to over 30% in mid-2015 onto almost 65% at the end of that year. Although this number then declined to just over 40% in early 2017, it remains the top priority of respondents (see: Den Ridder et al., 2017 for the latest numbers).

Another survey by Pew Research Center conducted in Spring 2016 found that 75% of the randomly sampled Dutch respondents (N=999) considered refugees some sort of threat to their country – and 36% even considered them a major threat (Stokes et al., 2016, p. 41). Although this data should be seen in its context – the survey found similarly high levels of concern about climate change and cyberattacks – it is interesting to see what respondents indicated as the main reason for their concerns about refugees. These were the increased likelihood of terrorism and potential negative effects on the economy as well as concerns about personal and social safety. Yet there appears to be little statistical evidence to back these claims up. This raises the question why so many people in The Netherlands perceive the arrival of refugees as a pressing concern or even threat.

Conceptual Issues

Before setting out to answer this question it is needed to address some important conceptual issues.

First of all: it is difficult to analyze and compare surveys on this matter. There is the importance of timing, the selection of the sample and the use of different types of questions, concepts and language. Some caution is therefore needed. It is not easy to grasp something as complex as fear, especially in relation to refugees or immigration in general. Concerns about immigration could also indicate people’s concern about negative consequences for refugees, rather than the Dutch people themselves. This appears to be a rather small group, however, while there is a large middle group struggling with the subject (Den Ridder et al., 2016b). This indicates the importance of this (small scale) study, despite its limitations. Overall, this article aims to shed light on a sense of concern that has been especially significant since mid-2015, which is generally considered the beginning of what is known as the ‘refugee crisis’.

This introduces a second point of attention. What pertains the refugee crisis? There is no universal definition, but it is generally understood to have started in 2015, when an unforeseen number of asylum applications were filed in the European Union (EU) with many asylum seekers arriving on European shores by boat. At its peak, 10,000 persons attempted to reach Greece from Turkey in a day (European Commission, 2017, p. 3). The start of the refugee crisis seems to have coincided with increased media attention and public debate – more on this below.

It is also needed to specify what is meant here when talking about refugees. The intertwined use of ‘refugee’, ‘migrant’ and ‘asylum seeker’, also common practice in some Dutch news media

outlets, is confusing as not all migrants are refugees, both could qualify as asylum seekers and the title they hold mirrors their legal status. This article will focus specifically on refugees (in Dutch: “*vluchtelingen*”) and follows the definition set by the United Nations Refugee Agency: “Refugees are persons who are fleeing from armed conflict or persecution” (UNHCR, 2016). Thus, when referring to asylum applicants, this includes both refugees and other types of migrants. It is important to realize, nonetheless, that the fluidity of these concepts, in both media coverage and the minds of the public, makes this topic particularly complex.

Finally: why it is worth asking this question? Simply put, fear towards refugees *could* influence people’s willingness to take in refugees, especially in the home country. If people feel like their personal or social safety is at stake, they might object to the arrival of new refugees even if they pity them (see also: Boelhouwer et al., 2016, p. 29). Surely this relation is not as simple as proposed here and willingness is related to much more than just feelings of unease or fear, but it is striking that, as of 2016, the majority of the Dutch public thought it was their moral duty to admit refugees fleeing war and persecution, while a similar number did not want to take in any more refugees (Den Ridder et al., 2016b, p. 33). This contradiction could suggest that when public concerns are addressed, the willingness to accept incoming refugees increases.

Theoretical Framework

This article will specifically focus on the interplay between perceived concerns about (the arrival of) refugees and their framing in news coverage. Framing is an analytical tool that is increasingly used in academics, in areas as diverse as psychology, political science and linguistics. It “consistently offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text”, as Robert Entman graciously put it (1993, p. 51). In media studies framing is generally used to study how media content influences its recipients. There is, however, no dominant strategy applied in the field. Rather than going into detail about the academic debate around framing (see: Scheufele, 1999; D’Angelo & Kuyper, 2010) relevant theoretical elements will be outlined in the running text, strengthened by examples from Dutch news (see ‘method’ below).

This paper will draw extensively on the framework set out by Claes H. de Vreese in his work ‘News Framing: Theory and Typology’ (2005). De Vreese’s framework is particularly useful as it focuses on both how frames are constructed and their effects – framing is seen as a process (2005, p. 51). After all, the area of interest here is not only the interplay between framing and public perception, but also how these frames are institutionalized. De Vreese therefore distinguishes between frame-building and frame-setting.

Frame-building identifies how structures allow frames to come into being, while frame-setting refers to how these frames relate to the receptive audience (p. 52). Frame-building differentiates between internal and external factors, as both journalists and news organizations themselves (internal) as well as societal factors (external) influence which frames are used (ibidem). Here, the focus will be on *internal* news values on the one hand – specifically what journalists believe good journalism is and what is generally considered news – and *external* factors influencing the media landscape they operate in on the other hand, most notably commercialization and digitalization. This influences how refugees are reported on in mainstream Dutch media.

Frame-setting, then, is concerned with the consequences of these frames. De Vreese identifies how frames can influence the audience's understanding of a particular issue and further distinguishes between information processing, attitudinal and behavioral effects (2005, p. 52). In this essay, the emphasis is on attitudinal effects specifically, namely perceived fear for and concerns about refugees rather than behavioral effects (*e.g.* how this relates to public demonstrations or support for particular political parties). In sum: this article will make use of De Vreese's 'integrated process model of framing' to discuss how frames used in reports of refugees in Dutch mainstream media may help explain the public perception towards this group, and how these frames in themselves are related to the broader media environment. Although not exhaustive, it aims to illustrate the framing process in place. See figure 1.

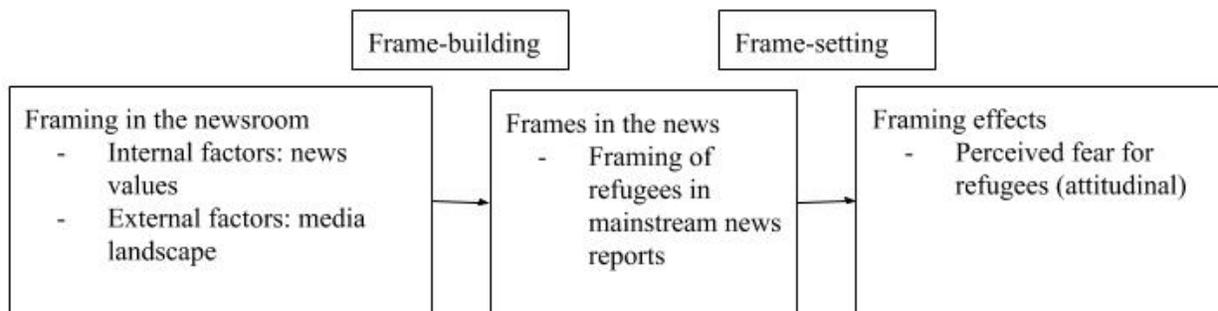


Figure 1. Based on Claes de Vreese (2005): integrated process model of framing (p. 52) in: De Vreese, C.H. (2005) News framing: Theory and typology, *Information Design Journal + Document Design* 13 (1), 51-62.

Methodology

A few words on the methodology are also needed. Perhaps first and foremost the use of sources. Originally written as a feature, there are two interviews conducted by the author in Dutch and then translated into English. These were semi-structured and conducted via Skype and email. The interviews are used as an illustration of the discussed cases, statistics and theories. They are not necessarily generalizable to a larger population. Thus this article relies heavily on articles, theories and surveys conducted by others. The reason for that is twofold.

On the one hand, it was beyond its scope to conduct large N-studies into people's perception of news, number of frames in newspapers or institutionalized media practice in The Netherlands. Naturally there are differences in news consumption as well as news reports per outlet that are taken for granted here. A detailed analysis of what De Vreese (p. 52) calls 'framing in the newsroom', 'frames in the news' and 'framing effects' is therefore missing. It is not denied that this can be regarded a limitation. On the other hand, De Vreese outlined the importance of an integrated approach between the construction and effect of frames (*ibidem*). Thus the strength of this article is the way it connects these separate issues. Its focus is on frame-building and frame-setting as such, using examples from researchers that have analyzed particular parts of the puzzle in detail as well as the most prominent practices from a variety of Dutch mainstream news outlets (mainly online news platforms, newspapers and newsmagazines). These examples are by no means exhaustive and serve solely to give the reader an impression of common practice in written news reports on refugees. Above all, this article hopes to give incentive for future academic research into this area.

Outline of the Paper

This paper will start out to discuss frame-setting, or the relation between perceived fear of refugees and news frames about them. To contextualize, the framing effect is fleshed out and three examples of refugee frames in the news will be highlighted. The second part, then, will focus on frame-building and consider how these frames relate to the structure of the Dutch media landscape and news (journalism) values. It will end with a conclusion and recommendation in which constructive journalism will be proposed as a potential way to tackle this issue.

The Framing Effect: The Logic behind Illogical Fear

It is worth noting that feelings of fear do not simply arise naturally. It is believed that the human being has only a handful of innate fears, mostly to secure its own survival, but the majority of fears are actually constructed. People thus ‘learn’ to fear particular things. This is sometimes traced back to psychology – e.g. trauma – but fear can also be a social product. Despite a lack of direct encounter, some fears can still persist (Rachman, 2002, p. 125). Simply put: fear is an emotion related to a feeling of control. Therefore, people become anxious when they perceive a situation to be out of (their) control. This is not always a rational realization. Damiaan Denys, professor in psychiatry and specialized in anxiety disorders, described it as follows: “We are terrified of terrorism while chances to die from that are about a million times smaller than the chance to die from a car accident. It is a matter of imagination” (in: Lo Galbo, 2014 – my translation).

The perceived feeling of threat related to refugees could be similar. Although it may stem from an instinct to fear the ‘unknown’, it is also often ungrounded. In line with Denys’ thoughts, this means that many more people see the arrival of refugees as a threat than have actually lost their job to one or have been directly affected by a terrorist attack. Thus, the belief that there are terrorists among refugees can create feelings of fear, even if the chances to be affected are minimal. Research into perceptions of Dutch citizens on migration for instance shows that the public image of refugees is distorted at least to some extent. When asked to roughly estimate the number of refugees coming to The Netherlands in 2013-4, only 38% of the respondents were able to give the correct answer (Boonstoppel et al., 2015, p. 15). As many as 30% significantly overestimated the amount of applications and 22% ticked the box “don’t know” (ibidem).

This overestimation was even greater when the same people were asked to compare the intake of The Netherlands to other European countries. Although The Netherlands took in less people than neighboring Germany, Belgium and France that year – even when taking country population into account – three out of four respondents believed it was either (much) more (38%) or the same amount (35%). Only 18% thought it to be (much) less (ibidem). Other large-scale surveys have indicated that 61% of the Dutch respondents agree that refugees will enhance the likelihood of terrorism, 44% believes them to be ‘a burden’ as they will take jobs and social benefits (Stokes et al., 2016, p. 4) and 63% holds the view that many refugees flee because of economic reasons (Den Ridder et al, 2016b, p. 35). In practice, most first-time applicants seeking asylum in The Netherlands flee war torn or extremely repressive regimes. In the past five years, the majority came from Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea and Syria (Vluchtelingenwerk, 2013; 2016).

The overestimation of the number and danger of refugees matters because it can relate to people’s negative perception of refugees (Boonstoppel et al., 2015). After all, the bigger the group, the more

threatening it appears. The question remains however: how did this distorted image come into being?

Frame-setting: Watching Out

Like fear, the image one has of refugees is constructed. It can be based on personal experiences with refugees, stories heard from close contacts or media consumption amongst other things. Although it is difficult to estimate how many Dutch citizens directly interact with refugees specifically, the number of natives interacting with migrants can give us an indication. The latest statistics available (Huijnk & Dagevos, 2012, p. 63) suggest that as much as 56% of the respondents stated they (almost) never interacted with migrants. Another 11% stated to have contact with migrants only a few times a year (ibidem). These numbers had not changed much since 1994.

The relevance of this estimation lies therein that people, when they lack experiences with migrants in general, or refugees in particular, tend to base their attitude on what they see and read in the media (see similar research by Van Dijk (1989) on racism). It thus matters how refugees are portrayed and how often. As sociologist Daniel Herda pointed out: the increased attention in the media for a minority group can make the native population more aware of their presence, affecting judgment on the size of the group and influencing what he calls 'innumeracy' (2010, p. 677). Research by the Glasgow University Media Group in 2011 on the media coverage of disability in the United Kingdom seems to support this. They found that as disabled people were covered more negatively in news coverage, public attitude towards them also became more negative. This relation was especially strong for people who had no direct experience or interaction with this group (see: Happer & Philo, 2013, p. 326-7).

Thus when people lack experience with refugees, they could be more susceptible to base their opinion on what is presented by the media which in turn could create or enhance feelings of unease. Marion Oosterveld, for instance, who had no direct positive or negative experiences with refugees before the ASC was announced said: "My worries were mostly based on media coverage and – what I now know were – prejudices." Perception is thus not only based on media coverage; it interacts with many other things amongst which personal experiences and hear-say. But it is an important part of this complex puzzle.

As SCP-research shows: media attention given to refugees appears to correlate with the amount of people concerned about this group (Den Ridder et al., 2016b). When at the end of 2015 the media coverage in six main Dutch newspapers increased from slightly over 1,000 mentions of the word 'refugee' in the third quarter (2015/3) to almost 4,500 mentions in the fourth quarter (2015/4), the amount of people perceiving refugees to be the most stressing social problem increased with 5 to 30% (Den Ridder et al., 2016b, p. 33). Thus it appears that the more something is 'in the news', the more likely it is to influence public opinion. When asked specifically about the role of the media on her perception of refugees, Oosterveld said: "The media gave me the idea I had to watch out for 'the refugee', who had different norms and values than ours."

Frames in The News: Painting the Picture

So, people's opinion is influenced by media coverage, at least to some extent. Why, then, does this matter? Mainly because – as many other scholars have pointed out – media coverage is never innocent, despite acclaimed notions of objectivity and neutrality. This is not something to hold against the journalist necessarily, but a mere given. Journalists do not simply describe: they interpret and reconstruct. And they have to. Not only to make the reader want to read their stories, but also to help the public make sense of the complex world around them (see: Norris, 2003). So regardless of their best intentions, journalists always have a particular lens through which they present information, also known as a 'frame'. In the words of Entman (1993, p. 52): "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient."

Yet frames are not merely out there; they guide the reader. To paraphrase Entman: frames direct our attention to certain elements of reality, and at the same time drive our attention away from other aspects (1993, p. 53). News presented to us through mass media can influence how we – the audience – understand certain events. Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011) illustrate this particularly well. Their research showed that when people read about crime framed as a virus they are more often proponents of a defensive policy aimed to prevent further "infection", whereas when they read about crime as an aggressive animal, they are more often proponents of an offensive policy aimed to "hunt" the aggressor down (p. 6). It therefore matters how refugees are framed in Dutch mainstream media if feelings of perceived fear are to be understood.

It is worth noting that some frames raise more awareness than others. When in early 2017 the most-read Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* compared asylum seekers to a plague (Navis, 2017), it was quickly accused of reducing humans to insects. But we should realize that other frames may not stir the public debate as much. They have become institutionalized in a way that our mind has stopped questioning its use. This relates to what Dennis Mumby and Carole Spitzack (1983, p. 164) call metaphoric entrapment: our understanding of the issue has become so attached to a particular structure that other descriptions are pushed to the background. Because of their institutionalization, these frames are particularly worth exploring. In the following section, three of these practices apparent in the framing of refugees in news reports will therefore be highlighted: the crisis-frame (1), the water-metaphor (2) and the use of numbers (3).

A Country in Crisis

One of the most prominent practices in Dutch newspapers and online written media appears to be the frequent description of the arrival of refugees as a 'crisis'. On NOS.nl, which is one of the most read online news websites in the country and the digital platform of the public broadcaster, the search "*vluchtelingencrisis*" [refugee crisis] in itself gives 278 hits in 2015 and 295 in 2016. This is respectively 13% and 15% of all articles with the word "*vluchteling*" [refugee] in it, excluding articles where the concept is used using two separate words (although including duplicates). The crisis-frame is troubling because, as David L. Altheide already argued in his 1997 article on the subject, it "promotes a discourse of fear" (p. 648). It gives people the understanding that danger is lurking in their proximity.

In addition, the word itself has the connotation of an emergency situation in which society is heavily disrupted. It is questionable whether the arrival of refugees in The Netherlands really can

be considered a crisis. Firstly, the country has faced similar situations in which large amounts of refugees arrived. Secondly, the total number of refugees in the country accounts for only a fraction of the population. The number of refugees in The Netherlands is estimated between 200,000 and 250,000 according to the Dutch Council for Refugees [*Vluchtelingenwerk*], on a population of roughly 17 million. In comparison, the majority of the refugees that are part of the ‘crisis’ are going to other countries. 95% of all Syrian refugees, for instance, are hosted in neighboring countries like Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan (*Vluchtelingenwerk*, 2016, p. 39).

The Flood

Another frame that appears to be integrated into the news discourse is that of the water metaphor. Analysis of newspapers content in both MA-theses of De Vogel (2016) and Huisman (2016) indicate this, as well as a quick look at some news headlines: “Flow of refugees barely dries up” (NOS, 2016), “NATO supports Europe in effort to dam flow of refugees” (Elshout, 2016), “Refugees flood station Budapest” (De Telegraaf, 2015 – all translations mine). As Van Gorp (2003) outlined in relation to the Belgian media: the water metaphor is troubling because it evokes a feeling of threat, without knowing exactly how big this threat is. It gives the perception of being flooded, as if an ongoing stream of people will eventually drown others out. It thus gives the impression that the incoming refugees will ultimately outnumber the locals (*ibidem*).

As such, it misses the context that the Dutch policy is actually a selective admission process where only a number of individuals are granted permission to stay indefinitely. As Huisman found: refugees are particularly often labeled as large quantities (*e.g.* a mass) (2016, p. 38). Such an ‘organized’ group could appear much more impendent.

The Numbers Game

This relates to the third and final point of discussion here: that of numbers. Or rather, the difficulty of using numbers related to refugees. The issue is twofold. On the one hand, the numbers presented by the two main organizations keeping track – the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (*Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers* or COA) and Immigration and Naturalisation Service (*Immigratie- en Naturalisatie Dienst* or IND) – are confusing. They consist of both first- and second-time applicants, plus applicants wanting to reunite their families. This means that not all applications equal one person. Someone can do a first-time request and when it gets denied, do another. In this way (s)he can end up in more than one category. When newspapers refer to the total number of applications, they are thus likely overestimating the actual amount. According to Flip van Dyke, a retired civil servant turned blogger who fact checks migration reports and their use in Dutch media, the number of applicants/people may be about 1.7 times lower than that of applications/paper forms (see: Van Dyke 2015; Keulemans, 2015).

The problem, however, lies not only in presenting a higher number than probable, but also in (accepting) bold prognoses. When news outlets simply accept figures presented to them by institutions or politicians without scrutinizing them, this could stir feelings of unease, as the number of refugees arriving could seem bigger than is actually the case. Although there are outlets that give space to migration experts to contextualize (*e.g.* Lucassen, 2015), others simply leave the numbers in a vacuum (*e.g.* NOS, 2015; Trouw, 2016). To quote Marion Oosterveld once more to illustrate: “The media coverage of refugees made me feel as if it was an unending flow of people

that would come and go. I had the impression that if such a large group of people would come, they could terrorize things. After all, they are with so many!”

Frame-Building

The three issues touched upon all relate to something similar: a distorted image of the refugee situation in The Netherlands. This could – at least partly – explain the struggle to estimate the number of refugees arriving and feelings of unease. In order to shed light on how these frames came into being it is needed to look at the way news is produced through mass media as a structure (frame building). This broadly falls into two categories: internal and external factors (see: De Vreese, 2005). On the one hand, it matters what is considered news and how news should be made according to journalists (internal), while on the other hand the media landscape in which they work is influencing their practice (external). While the first seem to have remained rather static in the past years, the second have been changing to a certain extent. This particular combination seems to have added to the negative framing of refugees.

Framing in the Newsroom: Internal Factors

The use of metaphors, the lack of contextualizing numbers or naming it a ‘refugee crisis’: it is not new. Van Dijk’s research (1988) on the Dutch newspaper coverage of incoming Tamil refugees in the 1980s showed that the water metaphor and problem frame were already extensively used back then. And in 1994 opinion magazine *HP/de Tijd* reported on the fluctuating number of incoming refugees used by different Dutch newspapers, differing from 100,000 estimated by *De Telegraaf*, to 60,000 by *De Volkskrant* to 50,000 by *NRC Handelsblad* – all based on the same information from the IND (Vasteman, 1994). Four years later, newsmagazine *De Groene Amsterdammer* warned that the ‘wild prognoses that the IND presents to society’ could crumble public support to take in refugees and seemed haphazard (Vermaas, 1998 – my translation).

Thus we cannot simply say this is a sign of our times. Rather, there seems to be a more structural issue at stake, related to the *internal* factors of news practice itself. An explanation could lie in the values of news journalism, that appear to be rather static. A survey amongst 1,016 journalists to profile the average Dutch journalist showed a strong tendency to highlight traditional values such as neutrality, objectivity and independence from third parties (Hermans et al., 2012). The consequence is that although problems are reported from different angles in an effort to be impartial, solutions for the highlighted issues are rarely presented. After all, the reader should make up his own mind about the issue.

In addition, news is generally considered newsworthy when it is about exceptions and extremes, which often leads to negative rather than positive reporting (see: Wijnberg, 2015). Or, as Dutch journalist Diane Romashuk put it: “Like we sometimes say in journalism: when a plane lands safely, it is no news” (personal communication, April 2017). Romashuk reported with colleague Chris Klomp on the situation in Onnen and although not their intention, their reports turned out to be mainly positive. She rightly points out that attention for the extreme can work both ways – the extreme positive *and* negative is highlighted. It is hard to deny, however, that problems regarding immigration and the arrival of refugees are more commonly reported than success stories. This relates to what is known as the media’s ‘negativity bias’: editors tend to pick bad news over good news and give negative news stories a more prominent place (Combs & Slovic, 1979).

If this is the case and news tends to be about exceptions, the negative can thus be amplified. Not that journalists are necessarily biased in their reports, but repetitively highlighting separate negative events in short bullets can create an image that the exception has become the rule. This is further enhanced by the fact that many mainstream Dutch news outlets report on the same issues. Former *NRC.next* editor-in-chief Rob Wijnberg has dubbed this ‘the news factory’. In his eponymous book, he argues: “News is often not *new* at all. News is in many ways extremely repetitive” (2015, p. 21; emphasis in original; my translation).

Framing in the Newsroom: External Factors

Although news values as such may not have changed much and the frames discussed are not new, it must be considered that a changing media landscape could have played its part. The overall environment in which the journalist does his or her work – the *external* factors of frame building – have changed significantly. Without going into too much detail, it is crucial for our understanding about framing to highlight two closely related developments: digitalization and commercialization.

Digitalization, and most prominently the arrival of the internet, can be considered both a curse and a blessing for the average journalist. On the one hand, it provides journalists with a multiplicity of information and potential sources. Because of the internet, a blogger such as Van Dyke can transform into an authority on migration figures. On the other hand, it has made news instantly available and almost non-stop. There seems to be an increase of news coming to us. *NOS.nl* for instance had 1,952 articles with the word ‘refugee’ in it in 2016. That is an average of five articles a day. Not unimportant considering the frames discussed above. Also: the more often a particular frame is repeated, the more credible it becomes and the less likely its use is questioned. This is called ‘frame resonance’ (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 619-620).

The commercialization of the media market due to the secularization of the Dutch society should also be taken into account. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to go into detail (see: Deuze, 2004 for an overview), it suffices to say that news has increasingly become an industry in which media outlets are commercial companies, aiming to make profit and attach the reader to their stories. This could increase competition for scoops and audience clicks between newsrooms. Analysis of web content of five Dutch mainstream newspapers illustrated this through a striking paradox: although all editors “denied or strongly nuanced” that audience clicks influenced their selection of news, in practice these clicks did influence which stories they were more likely to pick to be followed up (Welbers et al., 2016, p. 1047).

Thus both internal and external factors influence how refugees are reported in the news. As bad news is said to trigger the reader, this may result in a disproportional interest in negative, dramatic refugee stories. Growing focus on selling news to the audience may only enhance that. More research is needed, however, to substantiate that claim.

The Process of Framing: Conclusion

This paper has set out to investigate public concerns about the influx of refugees in The Netherlands, which proved to be particularly high at the peak of the so-called refugee crisis in 2015. It illustrated the potential role of the media as part of the explanation, through a closer examination of frames used in news reports on refugees in Dutch mainstream news media outlets.

Through an adaptation of De Vreese's process model of framing, it was illustrated that the perceived unease with the arrival of refugees (*framing effect*) could be related to a distorted image of refugees in the mainstream news (*frames in the news*). This is the process of *frame setting* and seems particularly strong when people have no direct experiences with refugees.

Additionally, this article addressed *frame building* and illustrated that it is worth further investigating these refugee *frames in the news* as an institutionalized practice, which has its roots in both static news values and the changing media environment (*framing in the newsroom*). As the number of news items on refugees seems to correlate with public worries, it is worth investigating the issue for a longer period of time – especially considering the lower influx of refugees to The Netherlands in 2017.

If one thing should be clear from this article, however, it is that context and nuance is key. It is not claimed that there are no positive or well contextualized stories about refugees out there. Neither that this perceived fear or unease is solely caused by media coverage or that negative news naturally leads to fearful attitudes. It goes without saying that both trends are influenced by many other factors. It rather aims to stress that it is important to consider that media reports on refugees, especially those that appear so 'natural' to us, are a part of the puzzle. Again, this article is not meant to make exhaustive claims, but rather hopes to inspire future research into this particular subject.

Recommendation

Perhaps as unlikely in academics as in the news is asking the question: what now? Outlining the problems within the current state of journalism (regarding refugees) is one thing, but what could be proposed to tackle this issue? Proposed here is a rather new strand of journalism, called constructive journalism.

One of the pioneers of constructive journalism, Cathrine Glydensted, argues – in line with this paper – that journalists are not mirroring society, as is often thought, they *move* society (2015, p. 5). Constructive journalists would argue 'what now?' is precisely the question to ask, as it aims to include solutions within journalistic practice. It does not equal positive news, however. It still addresses serious social problems, yet it focuses on fleshing out the broader structures and mechanisms behind these problems (Glydensted, 2015; Haagerup, 2014). Instead of leaving it to the reader to decide what to make of an – often complex – issue, the author outlines different stances and thus gives space for public debate (Glydensted, p. 158).

Constructively covering the topic of refugees would entail providing more context to stories, focusing on the long term instead of singling out incidents, and illustrating to the reader what the arrival of refugees in practice means. Additionally, attention would be given to what is being done to address what is happening. An example is the article by Rutger Bregman on Dutch online media platform *De Correspondent* in which he answers 15 questions about the refugee crisis (2015). In this article, he addresses issues many readers probably wondered about. By providing answers to questions such as "How big is the problem truly?" and "Aren't many of these refugees coming for economic reasons?" (ibidem – all translations mine) while contextualizing numbers and figures, the reader could feel less 'out of control' and eventually feel less concerned about the arrival of refugees.

(Preliminary) research related to the field of positive psychology shows that respondents that consume this type of journalism indicated their feelings of anxiety indeed decreased because they were more aware of the possibilities in the world, rather than the absence of these (Jackson, 2016, p. 25). Additionally, McIntyre & Sobel (2017) found that solution based stories may engage readers to read up on similar stories. However, they did not find evidence that these stories increased feelings of empathy or generated more understanding. As research on (the effects of) constructive journalism is still in its infancy, closer examination is needed to substantiate if and how constructive journalism relates to public opinion and personal attitudes.

And in Onnen?

Soon after the municipality announced their arrival, the first new inhabitants came. Marion Oosterveld recalls that, despite difficulties at the start, her fears wore down as time passed. People try to greet her in their best Dutch when they pass by and meeting some of them also helped to reduce her anxiety. In any case, the “never ending stream of people” did not turn out such a nuisance. “Of course there are groups of refugees walking outside when the weather is good. But now I think: ‘Wouldn’t I do the same?’”

Notes

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Peacebuilding Platforms? NGO Advocacy and Female Sub-Saharan Refugees in Morocco

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Abstract

Morocco's recent transition from an emigration country to an immigration country has ignited a conversation amongst activists and academics about the roles and rights of migrant populations in Morocco. This research analyzes the current cultural and political climate in Morocco for female Sub-Saharan refugees and how nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) assist these women to actively contribute to peace in Moroccan communities. In seeking to understand peacebuilding processes and the shifting migration patterns which confront many states and groups today, this research uses the context of Morocco to demonstrate that NGO advocacy can create a platform by which female Sub-Saharan refugees can build more peaceful communities.

PEACEBUILDING PLATFORMS? NGO ADVOCACY AND FEMALE SUB-SAHARAN REFUGEES IN MOROCCO

Historically a country with majority emigration patterns, due to more restrictive European Union immigration policies in the last several decades, Morocco has been transformed into a transit and immigration country. Many immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa seeking refuge in Europe are settling in Morocco due to increased restrictions in E.U. immigration and refugee policy (Arrach, n.d.). In March 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were 6,187 persons of concern, including 4,277 refugees and 1,910 persons seeking asylum in Morocco (UNHCR, 2016). Comparatively, Tunisia hosted 729 persons of concern in 2016 (UNHCR, 2016). This transformation of Morocco from a country of emigration to a transit and immigration country has initiated responses from the Moroccan government, nongovernmental organizations and international actors.

Amidst this shift, political and cultural movements in Morocco have ushered in a conversation on peacebuilding. Post-Arab Spring, Morocco and other North African countries have attempted to articulate what peacebuilding will look like. Moves toward democratization, diversification and inclusiveness have increased, but the role of immigrants in these peacebuilding processes has remained undefined. Additionally, the responsibilities for building peace in Morocco have largely been shouldered by civil society, due to a lack of direct government action, especially after the October 2016 elections (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016; The Economist, 2017).

As countries like Morocco attempt to articulate what peacebuilding looks like and adapt to new migration patterns, the roles of refugees in civil and cultural movements demand greater attention. This research focuses specifically on the roles of female Sub-Saharan refugees in order to narrow the context and implications of this discussion. Any further reference to “women” or “refugees” in this paper refers to this specific demographic.

Because civil and cultural movements in Morocco which seek to build peace and understand refugee roles have largely been shouldered by NGOs and civil society, this merits a discussion on the position of NGOs in facilitating peacebuilding by refugees. Amidst scholarship which attempts to understand the roles of governments and NGOs dealing with refugees, this essay will investigate the increasingly relevant NGO response to a growing refugee presence in Morocco. Although most scholarship on peacebuilding in Morocco does not draw explicit connections to the experiences of refugees, this research focuses directly on that connection. This analysis will be useful in fostering a bridge between existing scholarship on peacebuilding in Morocco and scholarship on the experiences of female refugees. I argue that NGOs in Morocco contribute to and advocate for a platform by which female Sub-Saharan refugees can participate in peacebuilding efforts. This essay presents support for this idea by first providing context and background information--on peacebuilding in Morocco and the challenges female Sub-Saharan refugees face which cause them to seek NGO assistance--followed by a theoretical discussion on peacebuilding tools and examples of this phenomenon in Morocco. Finally, the paper will conclude with a discussion on the challenges of representation and questions for further research.

Background

The multicultural and political environment of Morocco make it difficult to analyze issues and events there without considering the prevalence of peacebuilding. Because Morocco is linguistically and culturally diverse and because of the political trends of the last decade--a push for democratization during the Arab Spring and growing demonstrations protesting for greater equality and rights--Morocco is an ideal case study for the growth of peace movements (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016; Ennaji, 2010). To analyze Moroccan identity is to analyze peacebuilding because the ways in which Moroccans are answering social, cultural, political and economic questions are becoming more inclusive (more democratic) and thus less structurally violent. Morocco's aspiration for positive peace, which I will explain as a concept later, is what makes Morocco, the role of NGOs and the rights of refugees so crucial to discussions on peacebuilding and migration.

In attempting to understand the role of the refugee in building peaceful communities, NGOs become a focal point of the discussion. Although many national governments are able to shoulder

the responsibility of helping refugees adjust, because the rights of refugees are often vulnerable and there are limited government mechanisms for refugees, NGOs respond in many situations as well. Many states, in fact, may rely on NGOs due to a lack of federal funding or institutions. In Morocco specifically, where there is limited government clarity on the roles and rights of refugees and institutional abuses of human rights of refugees occur often, NGOs have become a crucial defender and advocate for the rights of refugees (Human Rights Watch, 2014; Rueda, 2008, p. 18).

It is important to note as well that this research focuses on female Sub-Saharan refugees specifically. This was intentional for several reasons: first, women face greater opposition to participation in the public sphere because of gender discrimination. Although feminist movements are at different stages in different countries, the rights of women, globally and historically, have been less valued and represented than the rights of men. Therefore, in an analysis on what it means to build positive peace, it is crucial to consider women, who suffer the most from the oppressions of structurally violent institutions such as sexism. Second, migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa settle in Morocco because they are often fleeing political violence and human rights violations. However, migration from Sub-Saharan Africa is much more complex than this simplistic narrative. What is more important to note is the unique form of racial discrimination Sub-Saharans face in Morocco. The racialization of their identity, much like being women, makes them susceptible to forms of institutional discrimination. Third, refugees are the focus of this essay (as opposed to migrants or internally displaced persons for example) because of the current global refugee crisis. Although this crisis and its implications for Morocco are outside the scope of this research, it is important to understand how narratives and responses to refugee mobility have shaped peace movements and transformed the roles of NGOs.

To understand the role of NGOs and refugees in peacebuilding in Morocco, it is imperative to understand the nature of peacebuilding as a discipline and as it is situated in the context of Morocco. In peace studies, there are two ways to discuss peace: positive peace and negative peace. Barash (2000) posits that while negative peace is the idea that peace exists in the absence of war, positive peace focuses on the elimination of structural violence in addition to the eradication of war. In analyzing peacebuilding in Morocco, I employ a positive peace lens. Peacebuilding is significant to Morocco in particular because of the questions of political, cultural, economic and national identity which arose during the Arab Spring. For the purposes of this analysis, the Arab Spring is relevant inasmuch as it raised awareness of structural issues and democratization processes. Both of these are crucial elements of positive peace as defined by Barash (2000). The questions raised as a result of the Arab Spring (questions of political, cultural, economic and national identity) are questions which must be analyzed through an interdisciplinary lens with the goal of positive peace in mind. Peacebuilding attempts to do this. In seeking transformation in Morocco, NGOs, refugees and Moroccan activists use economic, political and cultural means to reshape and share peaceful narratives with the hope of building more peaceful and inclusive communities.

In addition to the questions of political, cultural and economic identity raised by the Arab Spring, Morocco's unique multicultural environment makes it a diverse state susceptible to peacebuilding movements. In "Multiculturalism, Gender and Political Participation in Morocco," Moha Ennaji writes on Morocco's multiculturalism.

In a context of openness Morocco has always been a place where cultures and civilizations mixed. The fact that throughout its history the country has several times been colonized and conquered (by Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Vandals, Arabs, French, Spanish) explains its multiculturalism, multilingualism and tolerance towards other cultures (Ennaji, 2000, p. 46).

Positive peace scholarship suggests that, as communities diversify, multicultural narratives are shared, leading to greater representation of voices and a diminishing of the structural violence which silences them. As they participate in peacebuilding, migrants bring their narratives with them. A focus on female Sub-Saharan refugees is an attempt to highlight the structural violence which inhibits the sharing of their narratives. Because many of the challenges these women face are forms of racial and gender-based discrimination, their attempts to contribute to peace are a response to structural issues and therefore should be understood as attempts at *positive* peace.

I argue that, because of this, female Sub-Saharan refugees play a vital role in peacebuilding processes in Morocco. Despite their importance, refugee women face numerous challenges in their attempts to participate in peacebuilding. In her essay on multiculturalism, gender and political participation in Morocco, Ennaji writes:

[Despite feminist movements]...women are faced with some grave challenges: the society remains fundamentally divided by sex and hierarchically, illiteracy affects women more than men and the system is harsher towards them. They are more subject to social sanctions and the prime victims of fundamentalist trends, remaining too often excluded from decision-making. But it is clear that economic, social, political and cultural rights in post-colonial societies will not be achieved without their genuine participation in the public sphere (Ennaji, 2000, p. 56).

Because of structural inequalities such as sexism, NGOs can help to build a supportive foundation – a platform – for these women to participate in peacebuilding processes despite these challenges. When NGOs create platforms for female refugees to participate in the cultivation of political and cultural narratives, these processes become more inclusive and thus, more positively peaceful. Various examples and models of this process will be discussed further in the explanation of case studies.

The Current Situation

Participating in peacebuilding activities is both an act of contribution and of healing. In *Building Peace from Within*, Maphosa, DeLuca and Keasley (2014) distinguish between different types of social capital necessary to form community relationships which lead to peace. They explain that through the assistance of organizations like NGOs, victims of physical and/or structural violence (e.g. refugees) strengthen, heal and eventually build trust to build peace (Maphosa, DeLuca, Keasley, 2014). In making this connection, the authors point out that peacebuilding is not only an act of input, but it is also an act of self-healing.

This implies also that building trust and healing from forms of violence is an essential component to being able to build peaceful communities. Therefore, in order to understand how these women function as peacebuilders with the assistance of NGOs, it is also imperative to understand the

challenges they are forced to overcome and heal from. I argue that the majority of the challenges female Sub-Saharan refugees face in their attempts to heal from violence and to participate in peacebuilding take the form of racial and gender-based discrimination. In addition to fleeing various forms of physical violence as refugees, female Sub-Saharan refugees are confronted with unique forms of discrimination which target their gender and race.

Much of the literature on refugees in Morocco points to these forms of discrimination which have led to human rights abuses. In a research study from 2008, “Chaque Femme A Son Histoire” (“Every Woman Has Her Story”), Silvana Rueda documents the lives of fourteen female Sub-Saharan refugees in Morocco through interviews. Although most of the violent experiences documented in this research took place in Morocco due to racial and gender-based stigmas as refugees, Rueda also documents the violence experienced by women refugees as they traveled to Morocco. She writes, using a pseudonym for her interviewee:

Christine claimed to know of various Nigerian women who had been forced to come to Morocco as prostitutes or domestic workers *en route* to Europe. Furthermore, women traveling to Morocco are the targets of severe physical and sexual violence from the Moroccan and Algerian authorities, as well as coyotes and human traffickers (Rueda, 2008, p. 12).

The harsh reality of the journey to Morocco for many female refugees frames their experiences, contributions to community-building and search for peace upon arrival. Refugee experiences with violence preceding their arrival in a host country contribute to their desire to heal through the various forms of peacebuilding they participate in such as art and storytelling.

Once Sub-Saharan refugees arrive in Morocco, they face forms of racism as well. Rueda writes about the racist violence which refugees experience. One woman explains the racially-charged violence she encountered:

Say you're on the road. [Moroccans] will start abuse, spitting sometimes, spitting saliva at you, calling you *azzi*. It means black. I don't know what is wrong with black. We are all born the same way, how they were born. But if they see you, they start laughing at you. At times they will say to you, 'go back to your country, we don't want you here.' You see, and they are forgetting that this country is part of Africa (Rueda, 2008, p. 16).

Not only does this race-based violence require healing processes such as peacebuilding via art and storytelling; it also points to an obstacle which these women experience in attempting to participate in peacebuilding efforts. Because racial discrimination exists, a support mechanism such as an NGO is helpful in amplifying the voices of the women for whom they advocate. Any NGOs involved in advocacy work serve as an example for this mechanism. Particularly the work of organizations such as Caritas—a Catholic NGO for refugee assistance in Morocco which will return to the discussion later—comes to mind.

NGOs like Caritas have become involved with refugees because the violence and discrimination refugees face has been affected very little by reforms aimed at protecting refugee rights in Morocco. Human Rights Watch exposed the human rights abuses of refugees despite legislative reforms in a 2014 report. According to the report, recent reforms include granting legal residency

to persons deemed “refugees” by the UNHCR and a process for renewable regularization for undocumented migrants (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Despite these reforms, many refugees point to difficult encounters with Moroccan authorities and institutions. Human Rights Watch interviewed several undocumented migrants and refugees, using pseudonyms to document their experiences. Aside from the structural violence refugees experience from lack of support and government aid, several refugees shared experiences of the physical violence committed by authorities. The author (Human Rights Watch, 2014) writes:

“Nicolas,” 39, from Cameroon, described being shoved toward Algeria as security forces yelled “Yallah! [Let’s go!].” “They treated me really badly, they kicked me so much that I am peeing blood as a result,” he said.

These and other experiences like it continue to be described by the Moroccan government as “lawful returns to the border” despite blatant human rights abuses in violation of international human rights law (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

Refugees also face these structural challenges in Moroccan institutions which, in theory, exist to assist them. Rueda writes that several women she interviewed expressed having distrust of Moroccan healthcare systems. One woman said, “If you went to a Moroccan hospital, they will not care about you even if you are dying.” (Rueda, 2008, p. 18) Another refugee speaks of how this treatment requires them to seek NGO assistance to be treated in hospitals:

...in Morocco, it is not easy. [We must] call Caritas and the Catholic Church. If we get sick, then [Caritas] will take us to the Moroccan hospital. [If] you alone go, [the hospital workers] don’t treat you well (Rueda, 2008, p. 18).

When distrust of and inefficiencies in institutions arise, refugees are placed in positions to seek support from nongovernmental organizations for the challenges of daily living. The assistance and advocacy they receive from these NGOs help them to first heal from the structurally violent nature of these challenges and also provide the refugees with a platform to have their voices heard and thus, to participate in building positive peace.

On Representation

There are, however, several challenges which NGOs face as they attempt to create platforms for refugee participation and contribute to more peaceful communities in Morocco. The biggest of these challenges is a matter of representation. There is a fine line between advocacy and eliminating agency which advocates and the NGOs they work with must constantly walk. Although international refugee law prescribes to a fairly narrow definition of agency, here I employ a Marxist definition which rejects notions of commodification: “Men make their own history, but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen but under the given and inherited circumstances with which they are directly confronted.” (Behrman, 2014, p.255; Marx, 1973, p. 146). For refugees, they have to both perform this narrow legal definition of agency in order to claim asylum or exercise certain rights, and simultaneously reject commodification to achieve “free will” given their circumstances (Behram, 2014, p. 256). In advocating for the rights of refugees, NGOs and allies must be cautious to respect the agency and voices of the refugees. There are obvious challenges which prevent refugees from participating

and leading as citizens do. However, advocates such as NGOs which claim to carve out space for the voices of the silenced (in this case, refugees) are sometimes responsible for diminishing their agency and voices.

For example, the language we tie to identities has a profound effect in reinforcing or deconstructing a person's agency. Farbotko and Lazrus (2012) argue that the word "refugee" alone has connotations of lacking decision-making power in contrast with the term "migrant" (Farbotko and Lazrus, 2012, p. 1). "Migrant" implies a choice while "refugee" implies a lack of agency in moving to a new place. In their research on climate refugees in Tuvalu, Carol Farbotko and Heather Lazrus explore this word choice and its implications on agency.

Farbotko and Lazrus (2012) discuss how the characterization of Tuvaluans as "climate refugees" ignores a history of migration patterns created by agentive decision-making by Tuvaluans (Farbotko and Lazrus, 2012, p. 1). This mischaracterization of the migration patterns in Tuvalu both oversimplifies Tuvaluans and their history and simultaneously makes them not people but objects – pawns in the battle to prove the validity of global climate change (Tuvaluans are often exploited for this purpose because Tuvalu is one of the few places in the world which shows visible side effects of climate change). Similarly, in Morocco, female Sub-Saharan refugees may be mischaracterized by the term "refugee." While many flee violent conflicts and political instability in Sub-Saharan nations, their decisions to migrate for greater economic opportunity or to be closer to family in Europe, for example, may be ignored because of the violent context which they are fleeing. In rushing to label these women as "refugees," perhaps NGOs eliminate the agency these women utilized in choosing to migrate in the first place.

Even as organizations and academics strive to amplify refugee voices, they amplify those which appeal to them or their projects and silence those voices which they are unable to or choose not to hear. In "Refugee Voices: Tragedy, Ghosts and the Anthropology of Not Knowing," on refugee representation in Greece, Heath Cabot writes:

...ethnographers who care about migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, and who work closely with or even as advocates, also circumscribe, silence, or amplify particular refugee voices in our own projects of representation. I argue that even in cases when advocates and ethnographers alike seek to incorporate or write the voices of refugees in ways that make them legible as active subjects, "ghosts" persistently haunt these representations (Cabot, 2016, p.648).

He explains further what he means by "ghosts" with a reference to French philosopher Jacques Derrida:

Derrida suggests that writing and representation can act as "ghosts," merely miming lived experience but haunting us into thinking that they are "truth reality, living flesh." Through attempting to render the world knowable, we displace "real" knowledge, producing "ghosts" in its stead (Cabot, 2016, p. 648).

In striving to represent and advocate, because there is always an element of making the experiences and voices of the represented palatable or understandable to certain audiences, the possibility of turning lived experiences into a misrepresentation always exists.

For NGOs in Morocco, and advocates everywhere, this is an obstacle. In attempting to create a stage for refugees to participate in peacebuilding, I argue it is difficult to avoid the pitfalls of representation. This challenge is one which is arduous to measure because it requires an analysis of the *efficiency* of NGO advocacy – how accurately and openly are NGOs making the voices of refugees heard? To understand the accuracy of NGO representations of refugees, one must understand that which they are representing – refugees – and because of the vulnerability of these populations, refugee identity becomes complicated. However, the explicit lack of refugee voices in advocacy by Moroccan NGOs leads to the conclusion that perhaps this is an issue many of them face.

Theory

Both NGOs and female Sub-Saharan refugees face challenges in their attempts to forge positive peace. Nevertheless, in recognizing these challenges, they approach peacebuilding with an understanding that expression and support for refugees can contribute to more peaceful communities. Theory and scholarship on the connections between expression/support and peacebuilding support this conclusion. As healing from violence takes place, peace can be forged, and this happens on both an individual and communal level. Because self-healing is an essential aspect of strengthening a person's sense of self and trust of a community, self-healing is the first step for refugees to participate in peacebuilding processes in their community. In the case of female Sub-Saharan refugees in Morocco, this participation often takes the form of expression--when a refugee expresses themselves and their culture/experiences via art, theater or narrative, they increase their visibility and participation in the community. Thus, they are breaking barriers created by structural violence which are a direct obstacle to positive peace.

In her essay, "Art as Peacebuilding," Laurie Marshall (2014) discusses how art can positively transform violence and begin healing and peacebuilding. An art educator, she discusses this transformation in three realms: the individual, the school and the larger community. She argues that expression of violent experiences not only amplifies the voice of the person expressing their experiences, but it transforms pain and grief into beauty. She writes:

Through a deep, natural process, we heal. Art is intrinsically healing. It turns sorrow into a shared story. The destructive force of life is changed into the creative force in art. Pain, grief, loss, alienation, and confusion get handled, shaped, painted, sculpted, released, communicated, and transformed into beauty (Marshall 2014, p. 37).

When a refugee seeks to heal individually and they do this through art – and many of the projects analyzed in this research utilize peacebuilding and healing through art – they both break down structurally violent barriers to their participation by expressing their voice through their art and simultaneously transform violence into beauty.

This transformation of violence into beauty is a crucial component of community peacebuilding as well. When community members strive to take the violence they experience and transform it into beauty and peaceful expression, they build more peaceful communities. In regard to art as community peacebuilding, Marshall writes of the importance of *sharing* art. The sharing of art is what differentiates art as individual healing from art as community peacebuilding. After an individual takes steps to heal from violence by creating art (transforming their violence into

beauty), they can then share this art with the broader community to facilitate conversations on these experiences and foster openness and joy. Marshall explains it:

We can take art to the libraries, malls, nursing homes, hospitals, prisons, airports, bus stops, abandoned storefronts, construction fences, and billboards. By doing so, we add joy to our communities, which helps lead to peaceful communities (Marshall, 2014, p. 41).

Here, she draws a direct connection between joy in communities and peace. All of these components created by art – diminishing structural barriers to participation, transformation of violence into beauty and contributing joy and conversation to communities – serve as tools for individuals to heal and then participate in building positive peace. This process is explicitly evident in the projects of NGOs in Morocco as they assist and advocate for refugee women and thus create more peaceful communities.

Aside from facilitating projects focused on art as individual healing and community peacebuilding, NGOs also serve as vital support systems for female Sub-Saharan refugees. In offering basic assistance and advocating for the rights of refugees, they provide a sense of stability for refugees to participate in peacebuilding efforts in their community. Furthermore, the outcomes of NGO involvement prove that there is a direct correlation between refugee assistance and long-term development and peacebuilding (UNHCR, 2000). In a discussion among the High Commissioner for Refugees and a panel of development experts documented by the UNHCR, the participants expanded on several themes which correlate the success of refugee assistance with long-term development and peacebuilding. In seeking solutions to refugee peacebuilding and assistance, the panel recognized that, "...creating an environment for the peaceful coexistence of divided communities requires a combination of measures by governments, international agencies and NGOs." (UNHCR, 2000). By placing significant responsibility on NGOs to foster sustainable development and peacebuilding for refugees, the panel focused on the unique "grassroots perspective" of NGOs which allows for aid with greater cultural sensitivity and thus more efficient support for recipients of this aid, such as refugees. The role of NGO support for refugees as recognized by the UNHCR is a vital component in creating specific and creative solutions for peacebuilding and sustainable development when international actors and governments may fail to utilize a grassroots perspective.

This bottom-up approach to peacebuilding is a common perspective in literature on the role of NGOs in facilitating peacebuilding. In *Peacebuilding from Within*, Maphosa, DeLuca and Keasley (2014) discuss the importance of a grassroots approach to peacebuilding. While recognizing the importance of national and international actors in creating community-organized peace, they place significant value on the role of NGOs in "promoting participatory leadership and governance" (Maphosa, DeLuca, Keasley 2014, p. 58). It is through this participation which refugees and recipients of aid from NGOs increase their social capital, thus eliminating structurally violent barriers to expression and promoting peaceful communities. These two elements – community-based perspectives to development and aid and promotion of social capital to remove structurally violent barriers – are contributions by NGOs which actively assist refugees in their participation in peacebuilding. They are interdependent elements and each can contribute to the other.

Case Studies

To demonstrate these theoretical connections, several case studies provide examples. First, there is the case of the E.U. and Med Culture-sponsored Mix City, a group of refugees who do street performances in Casablanca on themes of diversity and equality. One play in particular, *B7al, B7al* (“All Equal”), “...tells the story about the ordeals that migrants are usually confronted with concerning administrative procedures, and housing, etc. and more specifically integration” (Med Culture English, 2017). The author of an article about the play on Med Culture’s website writes, “The idea is to invite Moroccan passers-by to get closer to the performers and help break the existing prejudices and stereotypes within the Moroccan society vis-à-vis migrants” (Med Culture English, 2017). The play is mostly performed by Sub-Saharan refugees (Al-Mousawi, 2016).

There are other theater groups of Sub-Saharan refugees which perform plays written about the struggles of refugee life in Morocco, diversity, equality and culture. Another example is an anti-racist group called GADEM (*Le groupe antiraciste de défense et d'accompagnement des étrangers et migrants*/The anti-racist group defending and accompanying foreigners and migrants) which uses theater as a platform to condemn the human rights abuses of refugees committed by authorities in Morocco. GADEM often sponsors plays written and produced by refugee women in Morocco (Al-Mousawi, 2016). A spokesperson for GADEM, Bilal al-Jouhari, told Al Jazeera, “We believe that culture is the key for a common ground of understanding between people from different backgrounds. A theatre play can spread more empathy and unity than political speeches” (Al-Mousawi, 2016).

The works of Mix City and GADEM are exemplary of the theoretical connections between art and peacebuilding. The setting of the street for *B7al B7al* is particularly beneficial as a platform for sharing the challenges and culture of Sub-Saharan refugees in Morocco. As refugees perform these plays, they first have their voices heard, thus breaking structurally violent barriers to their community participation. Second, they transform the violence they experience into something of beauty (theater), sharing a model for how violence can be turned into peaceful expression. Third, they contribute joy and beauty to the community, thus adding to peace movements (Marshall, 2014, p. 41). Through these actions, refugees use the sponsorship they receive from NGOs like Mix City and GADEM as a platform to contribute to and participate in the formation of peace in their communities.

The support which NGOs provide to refugees is a vital component in the creation of platforms for refugees to participate in peacebuilding. The organization Caritas is one example of an NGO in Morocco offering aid which leads to peacebuilding. Caritas is a Catholic NGO which strives “to serve the poor and to promote charity and justice throughout the world” (Caritas Internationalis, 2016). One Sub-Saharan refugee writes in a blog on the Caritas website:

I travelled to Rabat and went to Caritas. They gave me some clothes and medication and they paid for a place for me to live. They took me to another hospital where the doctors said I needed to have an operation on my foot and that I had to do it in Nador hospital but I could not since they do not care for black sick people there. Caritas supported me for two years until I could be operated on (Caritas Internationalis, 2016).

The support which refugees receive from organizations like Caritas is helpful in navigating institutions in Morocco which may discriminate against female Sub-Saharan refugees. In better

navigating these institutions, refugees eliminate structurally violent barriers to their equality and help to build a more positively peaceful community.

The UNHCR is also active in offering support and advocacy for female Sub-Saharan refugees in Morocco. Certain projects sponsored by the UNHCR focus directly on Sub-Saharan refugee women, specifically the “Women Leading for Livelihood” initiatives in Morocco. For example, through this sponsorship, the *Fondation Orient-Occident* (a Moroccan NGO which focuses on immigrant adjustment and education) established the Community Center for Refugee Women and Children in Morocco. The center provides refugee women with vocational training courses, weekly counseling services, sex education, childcare and recreational activities with the aspirations to improve self-reliance and mental health of refugee women and their families (UNHCR, n.d.). Many of the services the Center for Refugee Women and Children provides are to assist women and their families in adjusting to life in Morocco. However, in their support and assistance in adjustment, the Center for Refugee Women and Children also provides refugee women with the tools they need to participate in their community and in peacebuilding: vocational skills, individual healing, and recreational means of expression.

The UNHCR’s and Caritas’s international statuses place them in an advantageous position to sponsor and establish local NGOs which offer aid that is contextualized to specific communities. These two examples bridge the gap between what the UNHCR panel discussion on aid and peacebuilding distinguished as distinct categories: international actors and grassroots NGOs. The establishment of organizations such as Caritas Maroc by Caritas Internationalis and the Center for Refugee Women and Children by the UNHCR are evidence that international NGOs believe firmly that grassroots support is a catalyst for sustainable development for refugees and peacebuilding. I argue that this is true. These NGOs not only offer support for refugees which leads to greater participation in peacebuilding, they also offer networks and, in the case of the Center for Refugee Women and Children, a space for refugees to build communities of support amongst themselves (Rueda, 2008, p. 20).

These examples have been concerned with either sharing narrative and culture through artistic expression or with NGO support and advocacy as means to participate in peacebuilding. However, these two – expression and support – are not mutually exclusive. Often times, they work simultaneously. For example, in Tangier, Morocco, a city with high concentrations of refugees seeking to enter Europe, Chabaka is an NGO which advocates for human rights of refugees, focusing mostly on the rights of girls and women (Jacobs, 2013). Each year Chabaka organizes a peaceful protest for and commemoration of refugees who lost their lives to human rights abuses as they tried to cross into Morocco in 2005.

As Chabaka creates a space for remembrance of those refugees by organizing annual protests for refugees to participate in, they accomplish several objectives which lead to refugee participation in peacebuilding. In organizing and facilitating this annual event, Chabaka creates a space for refugees to join and commemorate the violent experiences of their community in a peaceful way. These annual protests make the public aware of the history of violence against refugees in Morocco, thus increasing the prevalence of the refugee narrative in society and overcoming the structural violence which prohibits this narrative from being heard. This yearly time of honor and protest provides Moroccans with a model for peaceful remembrance of the past and protest for greater progress toward equality and human rights. Through Chabaka’s facilitation and support,

refugees participate in activities of remembrance, sharing and protest, which chisel away at structural violence in the communities where these protests take place.

Through these two channels – artistic expression and aid/advocacy – NGOs in Morocco provide female Sub-Saharan refugees with the opportunities to participate in peacebuilding. Self-healing through art, sharing narratives of culture and violence via art, contributing beauty and diverse ideas to communities, creating refugee communities and protesting historical violence against refugees are the ways in which refugees participate in building more peaceful communities in Morocco. Through the projects, tools and aid provided by NGOs, refugee women are better equipped to pursue these goals.

Conclusions

Although NGO advocacy has important pros and cons, its salience to peacebuilding in a world of constant migration merits its consideration. NGO actors and their contributions to refugee peacebuilding are part of an ongoing discussion on central issues of our time: peacebuilding, migration and the roles and responsibilities of governments and NGOs. Morocco has been transformed from an emigration country into an immigration and transit country in recent decades for many reasons. As countries articulate what it means to build peace in their communities, because of changing migration patterns, it is crucial that the role of migrants and refugees be understood.

Through this analysis, I argue that NGOs in Morocco can create a platform for expression and participation for female Sub-Saharan refugees. This expression and participation can then lead to peacebuilding in communities. By healing individually, sharing experiences and culture and having their voices amplified, refugee women add diversity and inclusivity to communities and tear down structurally violent barriers which previously barred their participation and, therefore, the community's progress towards positive peace. NGOs are crucial promoters and catalysts of this process, providing aid, tools of expression and advocacy for refugee women to contribute in important ways to peace movements in Morocco.

In regard to future research, this analysis hints at several of the challenges of this process, one of which is the issue of representation. Although it seems likely that the challenges of representation are at work against NGOs in Morocco, further research is necessary to accurately portray this disconnect between refugee realities and how they are presented by NGOs. In addition, as refugees attempt to increase the prevalence of their narratives through artistic expression, does the burden of leading cultural education and peacebuilding suppress them? To forge positive peace, a diminishing of structural violence must occur. However, it is quite possible that in placing the burden of decreasing this structural violence on those who are oppressed (female Sub-Saharan refugees), Moroccans only contribute to refugee isolation and reinforce power structures. Further research is necessary to understand how refugees negotiate this border between healing individually and feeling pressured to share their narratives to build positive peace. When considering these questions in the context of peacebuilding, a significant irony must not go unnoticed: to what extent can support and advocacy build peace if misrepresentation and a reinforcement of power structures may occur in an attempt to foster that peace? Perhaps a closer look is needed to answer these questions.

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Geopolitics, Political Violence, and Identity: Perspectives on the Great Lakes Region in East Africa

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Abstract

Thousands of refugees who left their countries because of political violence are humiliated by being told that they do not belong to the only place they ever called home. These refugees wonder why they are obliged to leave their countries and live in camps or urban centres of foreign countries where they sincerely struggle to integrate. Drawing from the researcher's experience, the Great Lakes region countries of Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have since independence experienced violence more than any other region in Africa. Hence the Great Lakes constitute the largest refugee producing region in recent times on the African continent. This could be attributed to military suppression of the geopolitical space, leadership, colonial notion of indirect rule, and ethnic identities which cut across nations, among other issues. This paper argues that the manifestation of violence in the Great Lakes region is related to internal and external constraints as well limitations on or absence of peace mechanisms such as dialogue.

In this study, I argue that the violence that has engulfed the Great Lakes since independence is two-sided, that is, refugees fighting the regime back home and incumbent governments who assume that refugees are a threat to national security. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to advance dialogue as a mechanism to deal with violence in the Great Lakes region. This is a qualitative study which focuses on refugees from these four countries who live in camps (Nakivale in Uganda, Kiziba in DRC and Mahama in Rwanda as well as Cape Town in South Africa). A survey was used to collect data as well as in-depth interviews with selected refugees.

GEOPOLITICS, POLITICAL VIOLENCE, AND IDENTITY: PERSPECTIVES ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION IN EAST AFRICA

Since the struggle for independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, many African states have been engulfed in political violence to attain self-rule. Soon after independence many of these newly created states had problems of forming inclusive governments due to ethnic diversity, resource allocation and indirect colonial rule. Moreover, colonial masters favored some categories over others as I will explain later in the text. Thus, this produced unprecedented political violence as a result of issues such as marginalization, inadequate political representation, resource allocation, sectarianism and ethnicity. Unlike other regions in Africa, the Great Lakes region countries of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi continue to experience political violence resulting from ethnic identity or sectarianism, a foundation laid by colonialism. Scholars locate political violence in this part of the world to ethnic identity, colonialism, leadership, geopolitics and elite dominance to name but five causes (Lugard, 1926; Usman, 2006; Schmelz, 2008; Shyaka, 2008).

Given the political history of the region and the struggle for independence, power became a contested issue and categories of people who felt marginalized, oppressed or whose rights were violated were forced into exile and became refugees. While in exile, refugees appear to be a forgotten category, and yet they belong or remain connected to the spaces called 'state' or the 'nation' they come from. Kunz's (1973) kinetic model, which uses the push migration model, takes into account how refugees leave their countries of origin against their will to settle in new environments, but they keep everything on hold, depending on whether the solution to their flight is found or not. The situation in the Great Lakes region has shown that refugees contribute to violence which is a dramatic case in point and this is usually as a result of connection with their country of origin. However, the majority of refugees fear injustices and persecution and therefore cannot travel back home unless there are guarantees that all elements that caused their departures in the first place have been addressed. Studies have shown that post-conflict countries in the region do not encourage their citizens to return home after the conflict has ended, and do not include them in dialogue and reconciliation processes (Shyaka, 2008; Kitenge, 2016; Otunnu, 2017). Ogata (1997) argues that the refugee connection with home causes enormous complications, the risk of violence and insecurity being exported to neighboring countries and of domestic conflict being internationalized. Moreover, the failure of asylum countries and the international community to separate the former military and people who committed genocide from the innocent refugees in the Rwandan refugee camps, for example, has contributed considerably to the spreading of conflict in DRC. The same could be said of Uganda and Burundi. While the Great Lakes countries under investigation share an identical history, they have had no peaceful political transition. To understand the trajectories of political violence and solutions to minimize it, I'm compelled to locate dialogue as a solution to the refugee crisis. This is not to argue that dialogue as a framework for peace building is sufficient to counter political violence, but simply to highlight the ways in which refugee relations with their country of origin might serve to bring both parties together amidst the struggles that escalate violence. In this study, I argue that since refugees are a contributing factor to violence in the Great Lakes region, dialogue should be an ultimate approach to their flight and crisis. I will therefore begin with a brief description of the refugee concept, dialogue and Kunz's refugee theory. I will then proceed to discuss the colonial effect on violence, geopolitics, elite dominance, leadership and governance, all of which will be supplemented by

responses from a survey conducted between December 2016 and January 2017 with refugees encamped in Uganda, Rwanda and DRC.

Theoretical framework

The study utilized Kunz's refugee theory in which he postulates that refugees are individuals who constitute unequal social relations in which some are more marginalized than others towards families which they have left behind. Moreover, he asserts that in the resettlement phase of their new environment in exile, they still trace their roots back home with emotional links depending on their identification with their home country as an important element (Kunz, 1981). However, the rationale for political violence in the Great Lakes region is based on the hypothesis that theories which have been developed to underpin forced migration provide an explanation why and how people seek asylum in other countries (Kunz, 1981). Furthermore, they also proffer a theoretical basis that can help elucidate factors that underlie the contemporary and historical state of political violence in the Great Lakes region. This assumption is based on the argument that forced migration is influenced by political and social events at home, while at the same time refugees have emotional challenges in the countries where they seek asylum, especially when the local host communities force them to go home.

Kunz classifies refugees into three distinct categories towards their displacement: Those who are opposed to political and social events, those who leave because of active participation in politics or those who leave for being part of a social group outlawed in the country of origin (usually because they have problems with the government in power). In his work, Kunz does not specifically address the problems associated with violence, but it can be suggested that the majority of refugees would wish to return home if conditions that led to their displacement had changed. Refugees who retain a strong attachment to the country of origin and the absence of favorable conditions to return are most likely to use violent means to go home given the evidence from the Great Lakes.

Kunz notes that "... refugees identify themselves enthusiastically with the nationality, but not with its government." (Kunz, 1981, p.43). In contrast, refugees from DRC in the early 1990s, Uganda in the 1970s to 1990s, Rwanda in 1959 and 1994 and Burundi in the 1960s to date all fled their countries because of the effects of identity, geopolitics and political violence. These refugees, however, did not altogether abandon their nationalities but rather remained actively participating in the struggle to remove the oppressive governments in power. The case in point is Rwanda in 1994 and DRC in 1996 (Ogata, 1997). Once the liberation occurs, they anxiously return home to resume their former lives, but what remains a challenge is that those who lose power fear retaliation from the incoming refugees and likewise go into exile, thus creating a vicious cycle of violence.

Some more recent refugee migrations in the Great Lakes tend to fit into Kunz's thoughts. For example, refugees who have been subjected to discrimination and often outright violence feel that they are unsafe and unwanted by their hosts. After becoming refugees, the desire to return home can be aroused only where there is dialogue or substantial change at home. Politics and ethnicity often lead to the creation of events related to refugees in the Great Lakes region of Africa. An example of this type of migration is Burundi and Rwandan displacing each other's population. The majority of these refugees were displaced by the ethnic conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi. Before the recent upheaval in these two states in 1994, little hope was seen for the thousands of refugees

who had fled Burundi and Rwanda. However, the current political environment in the Great Lakes region does not provide genuine grounds for most refugees to return home, where they have been able to participate actively in their countries' nation building. Based on this argument, the study reviewed Kunz's theory with a view to understanding its relevance to the empirical realities of refugee problem in the Great Lakes region.

Refugee concept

The term 'refugee' applies to any person 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" (Shacknove, 1985; UNHCR, 2004).

The concept of dialogue

Romney (2005) defines dialogue as a focused conversation, engaged with the intention of increasing understanding, addressing problems, and questioning actions. This definition distinguishes normal and everyday communication from dialogue, because dialogue is qualified through the use of focus and intention. However, this definition does not recognize or hint at the power that the players have. From this definition, it recognizes that dialogue may take place between political factions that have a history of conflict. It introduces the concept of debate with the purpose of engaging in an informed exchange of views. Romney disagrees with the concept of debate because the nature of dialogue is to enable the parties to engage with an open mind to modify deeply held convictions (Romney, 2005).

Bohm (2013) defined dialogue as a free flow of meaning among all the participants. This is an indication that dialogue as a concept requires the parties to it to respect and appreciate each other with regard to the meaning of the conversation that informs the dialogue. This becomes a complex issue if one party, especially a political group, adopts a given stand, which is in utter disregard of the other party's position. This instance tends to arise where one party wields power over the other. For purposes of this paper, 'dialogue' refers to a focused conversation or debate, where individuals, parties or groups with divergent views on a given issue collectively engage with the intention of increasing understanding, addressing problems, and questioning actions in an atmosphere that allows a free flow of meaning among the participants. It's at a deeper level that dialogue may address "violent drivers and foster reconciliation, build a greater national consensus and social cohesion, and define a shared vision of the future" (Odendaal, 2011, p. 10). Based on the above definitions, the study described dialogue as a tool for refugee sending countries to understand the plight of citizens rather than using violent means against them and vice versa.

Colonial effects on violence in the Great Lakes region

As it was elsewhere on the African continent, colonialism in the Great Lakes has been characterized by colonial rulers selecting parts of the population that were given a privileged position in the new colonial power structure and governance (Shillington, 2012). This means that individuals were considered for positions, depending on the criteria that best suited the colonialists.

For example, the British used mostly ethnicity-based selection which was aligned with the western superiority thinking and habitually overlapped with local superiority traditions.

The consequence of this approach is that after independence and particularly in the 1990s, ethnic based forms of violence and genocide occurred due to the exclusionary measures leaders adopted from colonialism (Shillington, 2012). However, indirect rule was generally the option which colonial powers chose when organizing the governmental structures in their colonies. Moreover, though this option was a mechanism to prevent unified opposition against the colonial power based on ethnicity, today leaders in the Great Lakes region use the same strategy as the bulk of government job placements are based on ethnicity. Davison (1989) clarifies that colonial imposition of boundaries drawn at the Berlin Conference of 1884 by different colonial powers provided a total disregard for ethnic identities, contributing to numerous violent inter-tribal wars and displacements experienced today in many parts of the African continent. Lugard's (1926, p.7) explanation of "ruling native races" is not in vain as it continues to provide structures for the control of commercial interests in the former colonies. The structures established in the colonial era are a basis for violence as they are tied to the economic importance of countries in the Great Lakes region (Schmelz, 2008). So, the Great Lakes region continues to change the course of history, particularly the swapping of allegiances in the case of Rwanda from France's union to Britain's commonwealth. Consequently, it is important that we understand the past in order to comprehend the contemporary situation better and possibly the future. Thus, the violence that has engulfed Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo can be traced to the colonial era. The study carried out by Shyaka (2008) indicated that, though much has been written about the emergence of separate ethnic identities, the colonial governance structures before and after independence, in the case of DRC (1960), Rwanda (1961), Uganda (1962) and Burundi (1962), continue to act within the bounds of segregation and are a tool for indirect rule.

However, the departure of the Belgians from Rwanda in 1959 and 1961 led to the formation of a Hutu dominated government established to replace the colonial government which had ruled through a Tutsi royal family (Preben, 2006). The new government under the leadership of the Hutus disfranchised Tutsis and as a result violence broke out and led to over 300,000 of them fleeing the country to seek refuge in neighboring Uganda and further afield (ibid).

Nonetheless, the opposition against the Hutus by the Tutsi government in neighboring Burundi incited violence against the Tutsis in Rwanda in 1973, resulting in even more refugees, and further escalating the asylum seeker population in Uganda (Beben, 2006). During the 1970s and early 1990s, Rwandan refugees in neighboring Uganda formed political and military alliances to return home by means of violence forcing yet again many Hutus into exile in the Democratic Republic of Congo and other parts of the world (ibid).

According to Otunnu (2016) Tutsi returnees heightened ethnic tensions and millions of Hutus are now living in camps in neighboring countries and cities with no explicit solution in sight for their return. Instead of offering dialogue and possibly amnesty, the governments of Uganda and Rwanda chose to attack refugees who were encamped in DRC under the illusion of cracking Hutu militias. This exhibited a notion of peace making on one hand, yet on the other perpetuating violence. This, in other words, shows lack of character, a sad situation which would continuously lead to an escalating refugee population in the region. Mamdani (2009) argues that the modern political sensibility is violence and that does not make sense. What makes sense then? Living in

exile, camps or dialoguing for peace? The silent voices from the ruling elite and the international community do not seem to provide any tangible solutions to circumstances leading to displacement. Malkki (1996) explains that the contemporary political tragedy in the Great Lakes region should not be left to international policy scholarship, but involve scholars from across disciplines, perhaps in order to examine the persistent political violence in the Great Lakes region.

Malkki (1995) conceptualizes the social and political circumstances of refugees in camps and how they produce themselves as a collective subject who rethink about their belonging and identity. Malkki's explanation provides a general description of the refugee situation in the Great Lakes region, whether people are living in camps or cities. Moreover, Malkki's view demonstrates how displaced people do attach significance to exile but always envision a collective return to the homeland which in a sense makes them think of using violence as early indicated.

Each country in the Great Lakes is unique and beneficial to ruling elites and foreign interest, thus making it difficult to deal with violence. I posit that the ruling elites in the Great Lakes region have used the opportunity of divide and rule to develop their power base at the expense of maintaining the status quo with both the local co-operative groups and external actors. The general assumptions from the survey conducted with refugees in Uganda, DRC, Burundi and Rwanda indicates that:

The great part of colonialists used indirect rule to support small co-operative groups to rule the majority. To a less extent, it is over 50 years countries in the great lakes have been independent. We cannot blame the colonialists forever. Our leaders are responsible for the political violence. Leaders have thirst for power in its naked form and they believe intensely in violence as a means to govern as well as holding power. The method of conducting public affairs is a combination of violence. They prefer the use of violent approach in the resolution of problems (Interviews Jan. 7, 2017).

The above findings indicate that refugees are mostly victims of violence. Ogata (1997) holds the view that refugees living in camps in the Great Lakes region experience human rights abuses and political exclusion, and are often a common supporting factor leading to political tension. Moreover, the Great Lakes region has entrenched itself in the politics of violence through small groups of people supporting the ruling elites to stay in power and suppress those that oppose them, be it in exile or at home. This includes the support from western colonial capitalists interested in nothing to do with violence but exploitation of resources. In support of the above narrative, Walton (2016) affirms that the history of capitalism is built on brutal violence, subjugation and annihilation of non-capitalist ways of life. This means that there is little to care about refugees as long as the incumbents make business deals with their western colonial powers.

In context, this involves excluding those who oppose them and who are popularly labelled as rebels or terrorists. The language applied by these elites does not provide solutions for peace with refugees but rather uses violence which, in turn, encourages them to use violence as a means for self-defense and preservation. Points of reference are, for example, the 1979 ouster of Idi Amin by Ugandan refugees exiled in Tanzania, in 1994 the Rwandese in Uganda and DRC in 1996, all of whom used violence to return home. Generally, the excerpt from a Great Lakes refugee below indicates that:

Violence is the only language that government back home would understand. The use of violence is not because we want to use it. Rather it is a measure of last resort. From our experience, violence produces more refugees than resolving the problem; therefore, it is not the best solution but we have no any other alternative (Interview Jan. 7, 2017).

The above findings indicate that if dialogue with refugees is not initiated, violence will continue to escalate into unforeseeable future, especially in the post-cold war era, where group identity along ethnic lines has become more evident to the point of one community pitching against the other in order to create space for survival. Two approaches are existent in Africa that have been widely used to solve conflicts. While they are not defined as dialogue, they seem to point to conflict resolution. Murithi (2008) refers to these two approaches as the indigenous and the endogenous approaches. Mutisi (2009) describes the endogenous approach as a system of external factors that is used for the resolution of conflicts within a specific cultural setting for conflict resolution. This is an indication that a traditional setting, which is culturally appreciated by the people in the community, is a key aspect to the success of the approach. Another significant perspective of this approach is that it works in a particular context within a given traditional or cultural setting. Examples of some of the endogenous approaches in the Great Lakes region include the *Gacaca* in Rwanda and *Mato Oput* in Uganda (Mutisi, 2009). The indigenous approach, on the other hand, refers to the internal, inherent, innate and instinctive approaches that may be used to resolve the conflicts that arise in a particular country or community (Murithi, 2008). It is a recognised method of conflict resolution which is built on traditions in a society for long periods. This is consistent with Kunz's (1981) theory in which he postulates that refugees often use outright violence when they are unsafe or unwanted by their hosts; consequently, the desire to return home is aroused which in other words requires some form of dialogue. This is also consistent with Fanon (1961) who argues that violent regimes should be fought with violence. It is extremely worrying when new patterns of violence arise in countries where state structures have unraveled and violence seems to be an end in itself.

As a scholar interested in political violence and the flight of refugees, I was increasingly perturbed by the ways in which refugees in the Great Lakes region, particularly, have become warlords making profits through their factions involved in cross-border incursions. Having said that, blaming violence on our colonial past is an issue that we know very well continues to make us remain divided, but what other ways should we develop in order to side-line the past and look to the future? We should think through the past in a positive light in order to have a future that unites us. In fact, it remains difficult for leaders in the Great Lakes to adjudicate dialogue since they are perpetrators of violence themselves. In response, one side has to show the goodwill, possibly the ones in power.

Fanon (1961) in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, presents two trajectories about violence: firstly, he argues that it is only through violence that people can free themselves from repression and, secondly, he describes non-violence as a means to settle political problems without violence. Though he does not explicitly explain how the two trajectories are achieved, he discusses in detail the need for violent operations against the violent system. Furthermore, he does not explain in detail how such operations can be applied as an instrument for peace. Otunnu (2016, p. 3) describes political violence in the Great Lakes as "an abbreviated method employed to revenge or used as a means for conflict resolution." However, the current political situation in the Great Lakes region based on responses from participants does not provide the grounds for negotiation. This gives

goods reason as to why Fanon justifies violence especially when he bases it on his examination of the European indirect rule, characterized as inherently violent. In fact, one would conclude that violence is ultimately an inevitable part of the struggle to freedom, but dialogue must be given a chance.

Hannah Arendt (1971), whose book, *On Violence*, devotes a great deal of time to refuting what she describes as an undeniable glorification of violence, recognizes the merits of violence which, in context, is premised on three trajectories: firstly, failure by ruling elites to recognize the security threat refugees might pose, secondly, forgetting that they are not nationalities of host governments and, thirdly, that there are military elements among them. Engaging with this question will contribute to three related areas of Great Lakes scholarship. The first one constitutes a body of geopolitical and military literature that examines the ways in which cross border identity categories have been shaped by colonial encounters.

Its second contribution is linked to security concerns and the powers of the Great Lakes elite who have tied themselves to military governance engaging in what Kirui & Mwaruvie (2012) have termed as 'militarism'. This means that military elements among refugees may cause cross-border incursions, consequently causing problems with the host countries. This is evident between Rwanda and DRC, Uganda and DRC as well as Burundi and Rwanda. Kitenge (2016) argues that, despite the security threats, refugees also poison relations between the state of origin and the state providing asylum. The poisoned relations in this situation advance to violence between the countries involved if not cautiously addressed. For example, relations between Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi were strained between 1994 and 1995 when Tanzania hosted thousands of refugees fleeing the genocide in Rwanda and violence in Burundi (Kitenge, 2016). Uganda's relationship with Tanzania in 1972 and with DRC in 1988 was strained and tension developed because of trans-border attacks by rebels intending to ouster Idi Amin and later Yoweri Museveni (Osmańczyk & Mango, 2003; Lansford, 2013). This narrative provides synopses of how refugees in the Great Lakes region have over the years contributed to violence between states.

In efforts to address violence, the United High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR, 2004, Mutisi, 2009) provides voluntary repatriation on individual merit but the organization in principle does not promote return to countries of origin due to adverse circumstances. The main challenge to voluntary repatriation remains the absence of conditions conducive to return which, in some way, justifies the return with violence as Fanon argues. Refugees who assimilate themselves in an urban setting and have crafted identities in response to the practical circumstances of their day-to-day lives similarly envision returning home. In this light, Malkki (2009) reveals how such things as national identity, historical consciousness, and the social imagination of enemies get constructed in the process of everyday life. The notion of enmity is exercised by both parties as the group in power hardly subscribes to the demands of the refugees which creates room for contestation. Malkki's analysis on the recent violence between the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi shows how the movement of large refugee populations across national borders shapes patterns of violence in the region.

The situation in Rwanda and Burundi appears a replica of what is taking place in Uganda and DRC. Uganda has experienced extended periods of internal violence, similar to that found in Rwanda and Burundi. Brett (2006) and Otunnu (2016) sum up the post-independence political situation in Uganda in which they argue that the country has seen more "bullets rather than ballots".

The violent political conditions in Uganda led to the removal of two governments by coups, that is, Obote I-1971 and Obote II-1985, one by foreign invasion (1979, Tanzania-Uganda National Liberation Front invasion) and another by armed rebellion by NRA and Museveni in 1981-85 that culminated in the overthrow of Tito Okello. All of these were influenced by refugees who were externally displaced or exiled. While there is some relative political quietness, Uganda's situation remains in a state of political-military strife, as one insurgent group or another rises to challenge the ruling National Resistance Movement government in Kampala. All such insurgent groups have been militarily organized and equipped in their challenge to the central government. Mudoola (1998) notes that violence in the Great Lakes region is as a result of one ethnic group trying to impose its policies over others, while other political groups fight back to access state power and resources. Arendt (1970:8) asserts that "violence is nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power." Mills (2000) affirms that all politics is a struggle for power and the ultimate power is violence. This pronouncement echoes Max Weber's definition of the state as "the rule of men over men based on the means of legitimacy that is allegedly legitimate violence" (Silos, 2003:5). This describes the entrenched paradigm of power. For a long period of history power has been described as the rule of an individual, group, or state over others, a replica of the situation in the Great Lakes region. If this is the way we think of power, then it makes sense to claim that the ultimate kind of power is violence. Arendt's conception of power goes to her political thinking that, where power reigns, there is persuasion, not violence, and when violence reigns, it destroys power. If this is the case, then humanity should re-examine modalities of addressing issues of power and tangible solutions to end violence and allow displaced people to return through mutual understanding of each other's social, political and economic needs.

Burundi endured the same brunt of violence between the years 1972 and 2005 and the cause of this is less similar to that of Rwanda. In 1972 the Tutsi led government of President Micombero, together with paratroopers from DRC (then Zaire), led a wholesale genocide on any Hutu civilians who could not escape. It is estimated that between 200,000 and 300,000 fled the country. This act cemented power for the Tutsi-Hima ethnic groups. Similar violence broke out in 1988 ending with the death of about 3,000 Tutsi and around 20,000 Hutu people (Brett, 2006). The same kind of ethnic violence, spurred on by the fear of the other ethnic group acting first, happened in 1991 and 1993 as well, although on a much smaller scale with hundreds dead (ibid).

The Democratic Republic of Congo has equally experienced a brutal colonial history. Following an upsurge in nationalist sentiment and growing demands for independence, Belgium accepted Congo's independence in June 1960. In 1965 the United States and Belgium ousted President Kasavubu and replaced him with Mobutu Sese Seko (Brett, 2006). In 1971, Mobutu changed the name of the country to Zaire and systematically used the country's mineral wealth to co-opt potential rivals as well as to enrich himself and his allies through a patronage system with a government whose principal aim was to loot public goods. Following the Rwandan genocide in 1994, Mobutu provided shelter and protection not only to the two million Rwandan refugees who had fled to eastern Congo, but also to the Rwandan Hutu army and militias that directed the genocide. This provoked Rwanda and Uganda to invade Congo in July 1996 in pursuit of Hutu military forces. Rwanda and Uganda re-invaded Congo, supporting rebel proxies against Kabila. While Rwandan forces had previously focused primarily on pursuing the Hutus who committed the genocide, both Rwandan and Ugandan forces increasingly became interested in controlling and exploiting the mineral-rich eastern provinces of Congo under the pretext of fighting rebels threatening peace in the region (Lischer, 2005).

In the course of Rwanda and Uganda's intervention into DRC, many Congolese - particularly from the east - were driven into exile as refugees. The situation for civilians on the ground, especially women, has remained dire as violence as a military tactic has continued against refugees opposing the ruling elites (Lischer, 2005). The end result of this military tactic would see exiled groups fight back for self-defense and as such escalating violence on both sides. Ugandan, Rwanda, Burundi and DRC political elites have consequently worked out political formulae, not as a means through which violence can be resolved for the ultimate good of the political system, but as a strategy for containment (Osmańczyk & Mango, 2003). Osmańczyk and Mango provide a reflection of how, for example, Uganda avoided directly addressing the refugee problem that strained the relationship with her neighbors as earlier indicated, but instead signed the East African Treaty in 2001 for economic integration as an alternative to dialogue for peace building. The signing of treaties cannot translate into a solution for negotiating refugee issues but rather escalates violence through military means. Generally, discussion from the survey indicates that:

Not they know of, we know of dialogue, but by the international community, with states that are willing to integrate us or resettle some of us. There has been no dialogue with home governments. (Interview Jan. 8, 2017).

From this extract, there is no indication of the use of dialogue in the Great Lakes region. This also shows that while the East African Community has no specific mode of dealing with refugee issues, it does not have any framework that would, as a consequence, use dialogue. Kitenge (2016) points out that Rwanda and Uganda are more concerned about controlling border areas between their own countries and DRC has done the same to prevent rebellions organized by refugees from penetrating. Kitenge (ibid) argues that Great Lakes countries opt to have refugees kept thousands of kilometers away from the borders under the supervision of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission. Meanwhile, the African Union and International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, among other issues, proposes the promotion of inclusion of refugee issues in mediation and work on the peaceful resolution of conflicts between and within member states but does not explain the process.

However, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration encourages voluntary repatriation of refugees who want to return, but hesitate or are forced by their fellow countrymen to remain in the host countries; the case of the Democratic forces for Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) in the DRC is a case in point (Murithi, 2009; UNHCR, 2014). Moreover, they encourage local integration in countries that are willing to grant permanent residency or citizenship status to refugees who fear persecution if they return to their countries of birth. This justifies my position on dialogue as an alternative to the refugee crisis in the Great Lakes region. But the question is, who should initiate dialogue? I would be tempted to say that the states concerned need to discuss the plight of refugees, offer incentives to enable their return, identify the problem, and consider suggestions. Moreover, political violence needs to be discussed from both the geopolitical and military point of view. The analysis above reveals that though refugees are resettled in the new environment in exile, they still trace their roots back home with emotional links depending on their identification with their home country as an important element (Kunz, 1981).

Geopolitical effects of violence

Walton (2016) in his work, *How the West Came to Rule*, provides an important statement in which he argues that geopolitics has its origins in capitalism and its characteristics are violence, subjugation and negation of those who opposes the ideology. He goes ahead to explain how capitalism is filled with blood and dirt. Walton's arguments are a replica of what is taking place in the Great Lakes region as the violence is multifaceted, with different actors scrambling for resources but not concerned with the plight of refugees.

The multifaceted violence and difficulties in making peace in the Great Lakes region can be located in the geopolitical space, ethnicity and the economic interface between states on the one hand and external actors on the other. Kanyangara (2016) postulates that the shared central problems of violence emanate from post-colonial challenges to state building and the geographical boundaries that extend beyond the nation state due to ethnic identities that cut across regional states. For example, Uganda's military intervention in Rwanda in the 1990s and DRC in 1996 is premised on ethnic identity which cuts across these countries and as a result Rwanda often justifies its presence in DRC in part as an effort to protect the Banyamulenge people (Snow, 2005). Meanwhile, Uganda claims to be fighting Allied Democratic Forces and Lord's Resistance Movement rebels wanting to topple Museveni's regime. Looking at events from a different perspective, however, these countries have a population with similar identities which obviously could be the reason to protect Banyamulenge in DRC causing ethnic tension with refugees who fled violence.

Violence in the Great Lakes region is partly related to the complex ethnic politics that has involved multiple regional and international actors. Literature indicates that violence in the Great Lakes region is funded by western global capitalists who have no regard for peace but to make money (Walton, 2016). A report by Snow (2005) reveals that Rwanda and Uganda continue to benefit from high-level military arrangements with external actors such as the United States and the Canadian mining firm Barrick Gold, Heritage Oil & Gas exploiting mining opportunities in DRC. Heritage has secured contracts for the vast oil reserves of the Semliki basin, beneath Lake Albert, on both the Congolese and Ugandan sides of the border. Moreover, the nature of violence in this region has common features relating to governance issues, identity division, exploitation and access to natural resources, all which are prominently present (Snow, 2005; Kanyangara, 2016). The inability of the ruling elites to manage multi-ethnic societies by ensuring political inclusion creates a ripe context for violence, since they play on ethnic divisions and prevailing stereotypes. Based on the survey carried out with a group of refugees (camps) from the DRC, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi in January 2017, the general view is that the political leadership is responsible for violence:

Rwandese refugees claim that political violence is instigated by politicians who want to get power and sustain it along ethnic lines. What is worrisome the dubious relations among regional governments taking sides with some ethnic groups to fight others. The local communities are used as tools. Because, not all communities that have the ethnic group mentioned in their ID book are involved in violence such as the one known in Rwanda (Interview Jan. 7, 2017).

Ugandans have the same feelings that:

The political leadership is causing violence. While the violence is experienced by the masses, it is caused by the state. Sectarianism, ethnic identity, and resource allocation are just symptoms of the failed political system, not violence (Interview Jan. 20, 2017).

This idea is also supported by the Congolese who argue that:

it is not a secret that violence experienced in DRC is fuelled by multinational forms in search of minerals. They create a language of ethnicity so as to benefit from violence (Interview Jan. 7, 2017).

Meanwhile, Burundians indicated that:

violence in their country is driven by ethnic divide of local minority groups, neighbouring Rwanda, political power among the ruling elites, regional influence on the country's political direction and resource exploitation driven by external actors (Interview Jan. 7, 2017).

From these interviews, the general feeling of the respondents is that violence is exacerbated by multidimensional factors, that is, the state on the one hand and on the other by ethnicity and resource exploitation driven by both regional and external actors. Being in the field, I observed that many refugees wish to return to their countries of origin, but the conditions that made them leave have not improved and, worse still, they are viewed as a security problem. The above findings are strongly in support of Kunz (1981) who pointed out that forced migration is influenced by political and social events that have emotional challenges in countries where refugees seek asylum, especially when the local host communities force them to go home.

The findings also underscore what Kitenga (2016) alludes to: despite political conditions that caused their mass displacement, governments violently attack them even while in exile, making them understand that violence could possibly be the only weapon they have at their disposal for their return. In support of Kitenge's argument, Fanon (1961:9) writes that:

Not only violence is a tool to be utilised in the struggle for political freedom, but it is also a means by which people free themselves from exploitation. In this case violence becomes an inevitable part of the struggle for freedom given the nature of the system it attempts to overthrow

Though the influx of refugees threatens regional stability, it is important to note that their being outside their homes as a result of war is a humanitarian problem; therefore, a political solution could be achieved through dialogue as a tool between countries to maintain sustainable peace in the four countries currently experiencing conflict in the Great Lakes region as a whole (Kitenge, 2016).

Besides, as Mandala (1990) argues, to address challenges of violence, there is need to understand the problems of various ethnic groups in exile within the context of state policies, though they have been weakened by violence. Unlike other countries and regions in Africa, violence in these four countries has also been motivated by ideology but also by ethnicity or political elites' ability to provoke ethnic violence for their own interests. To understand the regional dimension of ethnicity in the Great Lakes region, one first has to understand that the ethnic distribution of Hutus and

Tutsis is not confined within political boundaries. More than two million Hutus and Tutsis are located across the boundaries of Rwanda and Burundi in neighbouring Uganda and DRC. Some trace their ancestry to both the DRC's North Kivu province and western Uganda. Thus, once a conflict with an ethnic factor erupts in Rwanda, Burundi or eastern DRC, it is very easy for politicians and other elites who have direct interests to manipulate and exploit these ethnic ties to create alliances, regardless of the boundaries of these countries.

The complex ethnic identity presupposes geopolitical problems in the Great Lakes region which allow countries to interfere in each other's affairs without regard to their national sovereignty (Rietzke & Robertson, 2012). In other words, this provides difficult conditions for refugees, particularly those living in camps.

Elite dominance

As literature has indicated, elite dominance is about individuals who occupy important positions in national or state-level political parties or those who do not hold any formal positions in political parties but are still considered as persons of great political prestige and power because they control power-exercisers (Hayward, 1996). Though different definitions exist, Mills (1956) has used the term 'elite' for the political elite who monopolize power and rule the country based on ethnicity or class. I have used the term 'elite dominance' for them in my own empirical work on political elite in the Great Lakes region. I describe elite dominance as those who control the functional groupings within the structure of the state and how they use power in a coercive and manipulative way and adduce themselves to the electorate. Mills (1956:230) has described them as "those who are able to realize their will even if others resist". I describe the elite as a dominant group which controls power through coercion and manipulation. Below I discuss how elites entrench themselves in the political discourse in the Great Lakes region.

Nonetheless, since Belgium and Britain took over the Great Lakes region in the 1880s, manipulation and coercive methods were used to gain support from diverse ethnic categories. This in turn culminated in violence as colonial masters were not able to politically satisfy all these categories due to their diversity and needs. What happened then is that some categories were favored over others and as such marginalized groups became violent as a means to demand their political and social rights (North, Wallis and Weingast, 2013; Otunnu, 2017). Since independence in the early sixties, no leader in the Great Lakes region has handed over power peacefully. The elites either manipulate the electoral process or simply remain in control of the state by means of the gun. Guns have been in charge of the region's countries and as such give the elites power to deny their citizens the same right of expression, freedom of speech or even rights of assembly as we have witnessed in these countries (Mpangala, 2004). I posit that political elites in the Great Lakes region are practically accompanied by state violence which gradually has become a legitimate method of silencing critics, especially those who oppose their actions. Concerns have been voiced over restrictions on the activities of rival political forces and which, in other words, send those who feel oppressed into exile (Mumbi, 2013). Refugees interviewed during the survey based their responses on the trajectories below:

Uganda's leadership is drawn from the Bahima who constitute (9.6% of the national population) in the country and the Tutsi (14% of the national population) in Rwanda. This presents a somber mood as to how they keep in power. The use of the gun is key to power

transfer. For instance, Uganda has never had a peaceful change of power since independence. This may be said of Rwanda, DRC and Burundi (Interview Jan. 20, 2017).

From this extract, it is clearly demonstrated that individuals who occupy important political positions in the Great Lakes region come from the ruling party's ethnic community. It is against this background that I question how the fabric of the majority of society is kept calm amidst this rather unfortunate trajectory. The outcome of such trajectories is that people resort to violence as a response to make their voices heard. Questions that engage this status quo are crucial in aiding us to arrive at a logical conclusion regarding this precarious state of affairs. I have observed that countries in the Great Lakes region are composed of a patron-client type of organization, a system based on hierarchical elite relations in whom state power is centered. In this respect, North, Wallis and Weingast (2013) postulate that the ruling elites sit at the top but are also entrenched in patronage networks that extend down to the rest of society, particularly to those who support top leadership. There is a general assumption that these networks not only structure the creation and distribution of political power among supporters of the ruling elites, but they also organize violence to consolidate themselves, which obviously leads to forced migration and eventually potential violence as highlighted in the next section (*ibid*).

It is typical among the elites in the Great Lakes region to use threats and violence when their power is threatened (North, Wallis, Webb & Weingast, 2013). The use of violence by political elites on those who oppose them reinforces the desire of oppressed groups to fight back, hence the vicious cycle of violence and more forced displacement. Presumably, the ruling elites in these countries (DRC, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi) do not seem to understand the word 'freedom'. To them anybody with an opposing view is an enemy to their domination, and violence could probably be the only language they understand. To be precise, Rwandan President Paul Kagame told the United Nations Observer Mission in DRC (MONUC) that "you have to make war to have peace" (Storey, 2012; Snow, 2005). This means that those unhappy with the ruling elites should be violent in order to come to terms with each other's demands. Moreover, Uganda and Rwanda refugees continue to cause violence in eastern DRC because the decision to use violence to solve violence is an approach leading to further escalation of violence (Clark, 2001). The unwillingness by the ruling elites to accept the needs of those who have fled the country is yet another recipe for violence in the Great Lakes region. For example, Rwanda's idea of attempting to deny its citizen a dignified return in the early 1990s resulted in the 1994 genocide. The same can be said of Democratic Republic of Congo in 1996 (Snow, 2005).

North et al. (2013) assert that addressing problems of political violence and forced displacement requires a shared belief that emphasizes various forms of inclusion and equality among each country's diverse ethnic categories. Essentially, we should have an understanding of citizens' needs through a series of public goods and services that open opportunities to a large proportion of the community, especially access to social economic opportunities, infrastructure and access to the political realm that might have limited their ability to access state resources. North et al. (2013) in addition elucidate that refraining from violence requires that the state should provide stability through political inclusion, social, economic and other activities, subject to general rules applied objectively. Nonetheless, the political elites view power as essential to their political and economic reproduction and therefore any approach for diminution would be seen as a threat. Tangible solutions for reconciliation with displaced citizens (refugees) in the Great Lakes is a necessary

undertaking since it would help to understand the demands of those exiled and possibly forge a durable solution.

Since there is limited room for peaceful negotiations, the elites have chained themselves to the difficult task of sustaining their hold on power, and limiting the ability to engage in any types of redevelopment that could reinforce dialogue and political popularity (North et al., 2009). Important to note, political elites in the Great Lakes region are connected to parties and political movements and they use their connections to increase hegemony over communities. According to North, Wallis, Web and Weingast (2013), elites in the Great Lakes use state resources to play a dominant role in coercing communities that share the same ethnic identity, which in some way leads to violence if they are not satisfied with the regime (Otunnu, 2017). Mamdani (2009) argues that if ethnic identities propelled through violence are drawn from the outside, we need to denaturalize these identities by outlining their history and revealing their links with organized forms that would ensure that the elites' interests are not aligned with economic power but operate through the structure of political parties that help us to understand the scope of leadership and specify the role they have in sustaining stability and management of violence.

Leadership and the management of violence

The post-colonial Great Lakes region portrays an image of dictatorships, uncertainty and violence (Anastase, 2008). According to Chazan (1999), the colonial legacy is partly a source of violence and is still essentially problematic as leadership models are rooted in colonial administration. Prejudice, exclusion, injustice, unfair political grounds (vote rigging, intimidation, threats and arbitrary arrests), corruption and unequal distribution of national resources as well as power appear to be the primary indicators of the category of leadership found in these countries. Bad leadership has led to different types of violence not only in the Great Lakes region but on the African continent as a whole. Chazan (1999) classifies the types of violence as elite conflicts, factional conflicts, communal conflicts and mass conflicts, all of which have been and continue to be experienced in Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and DRC at different times. Violent conflicts in the Great Lakes region are both internal and trans-national based on the following types of regime forms that have dominated: hegemonic, populist, personal, coercive and regime breakdown (Chazan, 1999; Anastase, 2008). It has been observed that all the four countries under investigation have experienced total or partial regime breakdown, for example, DRC in the 1990s, Uganda in the 1970s, 1981 and 1986, Burundi between 1993 and 1996 and Rwanda in 1994 (Anastase, 2008). Many years of political violence and leaders' failure to reflect on their own history provide some valuable insights into this legacy of bad leadership. Jeong (2000) points out that violence in the Great Lakes region is embedded in an inequitable social and economic system, reflecting prolonged exploitation supported by coercion and manipulation. Moreover, political space in the four countries does not meet the concerns of diverse groups of people and has led to social and economic erosion which, in other words, has become the cause of violence (Anastase, 2008).

However, the impasse of violence and questions around refugees in the Great Lakes region need to be addressed by leaders who can either choose to make peace or violence, depending on the circumstances under which they view their displaced population. The ongoing conflict in Eastern Congo, for example, the tension in Burundi, the strained relationship between Uganda and Rwanda are all concerns related to leadership as they have made it difficult to pave the way for dialogue (peace building) and refugee return (McCormick, 2015; Kanyakara, 2016). In this light, the lack

of coordination and the inability of regional leaders to evaluate the impact of refugee problems requires a bottom-up perspective given the categories of violence. The classic categorization of violence as interstate in the Great Lakes region seems irrelevant, since violence tends to expand geographically, shifts from one situation to another (peace and violence) and provides a complex ground for a tangible solution as regional leaders fail to look at the refugee problem from a broader perspective. A perspective that focuses on the historical factors of violence, root causes, interventions taken and possibly failures is needed (Adedeji, 1999; Ewald, 2006). Violence in the Great Lakes region is dynamic and complex, since it involves multiple and interlocking regional and international actors. It is argued, therefore, that violence in the Great Lakes region has common features, particularly issues relating to governance, identity, division, exploitation and access to natural resources, which are obviously present (Khadiagala, 2004). A general response from the interviews indicates that:

Congolese refugees claim that identity is a language of the creators and benefiteres of violence. It is not a secret that the violent experiences in DRC are fueled by the search for minerals. The multinationals are the ones creating a false flag in order to exploit minerals (Interviews 7, Jan. 2017).

Ugandans had a different view:

The current government may come for the dialogue with a set of laws or rules to govern the dialogue. We believe that cease to be a dialogue which in other words is violence in itself (Interviews 7, Jan. 2017).

Refugees from Burundi assert that:

the military support for rebels and the dictatorship by regional and foreign powers on the democratization direction of the country is root cause for violence (Interviews 7, Jan. 2017).

Rwandese pointed out that:

violence in their country is instigated by leaders who want to stay in power (Interviews 7, Jan. 2017).

The findings reveal that violence in the Great Lakes region is on the one hand engineered by multinationals, while on the other by some regional governments. Findings also reveal that violence is instigated by leaders who want to stay in power. Based on the researcher's observations while in DRC, refugees alleged that some aid agencies train rebels for their protection, while the common population are the ones paying the price! This consequently creates anxiety among the local population and refugees as pointed out by Kanyankore (2016). The analysis of leadership and violence revealed by the findings indicate the current conditions do not encourage political inclusion and as such create a ripe context for violence, since political elites play on ethnic divisions and prevailing labelling of displaced persons as 'rebels' or 'dissidents'.

The language of labelling citizens makes it difficult to address basic needs for various ethnic groups within the context of state policies that have so far deteriorated as a result of violence. The ability to guarantee the security of life and property of its citizens is thus weakened.

Kanyankara (2016) argues that violence in the Great Lakes region has always been interconnected and tends to be related to transnational ethnic identities, an element ignored by regional leaders. This means that violence has often spread to destabilize the whole region as armed groups sponsored by both local and internal actors are coerced and driven across borders to fight. The question is: Who is arming whom, and for what purpose? Ewald (2006) elucidates that the security threat posed by Rwandan refugees and Uganda dissidents in eastern Congo has been a pretext to exploit resources in the Congo, which raises questions about the political survival of the ruling elites in these countries. According to Kanyankara (2016) the region is both one of the largest refugee-producing regions as well as one of the largest refugee-hosting regions. But, given the refugee presence and the enormous impact it has on the host country's limited resources, the ruling elites need to recognize the plight of refugees and not neglect to address the problem whose background they share.

Summary

This paper examined the contemporary state of the political violence and refugee crisis in the Great Lakes region of East Africa. The paper captures the underlying factors and explains violence and its implications on migration in the context of geopolitical space in the Great Lakes countries of Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo, which have been engulfed in violence for decades. The paper traces the root causes of political violence back to the colonial states in the 1960s, and how it manifests in today's political discourse and production of refugees. The study advances dialogue as a mechanism to deal with violence in the Great Lakes region. Moreover, the study utilized Kunz's kinetic theory to underpin the study.

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