

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CROSS-
BORDER EFFECT OF RWANDESE
REFUGEES ON POLITICAL
CONFLICTS IN THE GREAT
LAKES REGION (1959-2000)**

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PROJECT PAPER SUBMITTED AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF NAIROBI, INSTITUTE OF DIPLOMACY AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF A MASTERS DEGREE IN
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES.

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION

OCTOBER 2006

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts in Africa have resulted to mass flow of refugees. Refugees have been viewed as victims of conflicts who should be protected and assisted. However, while protection of refugees has been important, refugees have protracted, internationalized and generated conflicts. They get involved in the politics of the host country to protect their interest. Regimes in host countries have utilized refugees for their political ends. Refugees have involved themselves in subversive activities across the border to their home government. At times refugees form movements and organizations that contend power in their home country. Such activities have resulted to cross-border political conflicts.

While refugee protection has been an attempt to protect human lives and minimize refugee generated conflicts, refugees have turned out to be a significant contributor to cross-border political conflicts. This has been possible by the fact that refugees get involved in the politics of the host country, carrying out subversive activities to their home government or even yet to another third country. Refugees have also made governments and regimes perceive each other as enemies, hence adopting competitive foreign policies. Refugees protract and internationalize internal conflicts making management efforts complex. Therefore, conflict management efforts should not only concentrate in refugee protection and assistance but should attempt to address the causes of refugee flow if at all they seek to achieve success in conflict management. Therefore, the presence of refugee precipitates to cross-border political conflicts. As long as the Great Lakes region will continue to have high refugee population cross-border political conflicts will persist or even escalate with the diminishing environmental resources.