



# Refugees, Development, Debt, Austerity: A Selected History

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## Executive Summary

There is a consensus among global policymakers that the challenges facing refugees today arise, in no small part, from the treatment of forced displacement as predominately a short-term humanitarian problem and the consequent exclusion of refugees from long-term development assistance. This paper agrees that refugees — a majority of whom spend years, a large number decades, some lifetimes in exile — constitute a development challenge, not only a humanitarian one. But it departs from the prevailing consensus which has tended to underemphasize the historical role of certain development policies in contributing to the status quo of refugee poverty in the first place. The paper places particular emphasis in that regard on policies of austerity and of laissez-faire. In their stead, it argues in favor of approaches to development that are proactively egalitarian and redistributive.

## Introduction

There is a consensus among global policymakers that the challenges facing refugees today arise, in no small part, from the treatment of forced displacement as predominately a short-term humanitarian problem and the consequent exclusion of refugees from long-term development assistance. This paper agrees that refugees constitute a development challenge, not only a humanitarian one. But it departs from the prevailing consensus which has tended to underemphasize the historical role of certain development policies in contributing to the status quo of refugee poverty in the first place. The paper particularly examines the policies of austerity and of laissez-faire.

That is by no means to deny the vital importance of development assistance. Nearly 85 percent of refugees live in the Global South; most reside in just a handful of developing countries. Among its other recommendations, this paper calls for a massive increase in the amount of aid provided to those countries, precisely because such aid is essential (and because it is owed to host countries due to the global public good they provide). But, as the paper also underscores, issues surrounding development assistance are more than just quantitative. Despite commitments to combat poverty and inequality, the policies and

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preferences of the major donor countries<sup>2</sup> have often privileged the global market instead of the global poor, and have conditioned aid on reforms that promote (big) business first and foremost.

To demonstrate as much, this paper surveys certain strands of the political economy of development and refugee assistance that policy discussions have tended to overlook. It begins by tracing the bifurcation of the modern aid regime along North-South lines. In postwar Europe, it shows, both development and refugee policy took as their starting points the centrality of the role of the modern welfare state. Where laissez-faire liberalism had ended in a Great Depression, the Marshall Plan ushered in a new development paradigm — one premised on progressive taxation, universal public benefits, full employment, robust labor rights, controls on foreign capital flows, and state-led industrialization. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (“the Refugee Convention”) pushed in the same direction. It sought to protect refugees from the harsher effects of the market by vesting them with economic and social rights — not only rights to work but to public benefits, housing, education, and more.

By contrast, when the focus of the international aid system shifted from Europe to the South beginning in the 1950s, the meaning of “development” changed. To be sure, Southern countries faced distinct and varied challenges that differed from those afflicting postwar Europe. But the nature and extent of the shift is difficult to explain with reference only to endogenous problems on the ground. As this paper argues, good intentions and vested interests on the part of donor countries combined to produce a kind of ersatz developmentalism.<sup>3</sup> Suddenly, the focus was less on aiding developing countries to intervene in or protect against global market forces, than on encouraging policy changes that aimed to liberate global capital from local political restraints. Refugee settlements provided both an entry point and a testing ground for this new development orthodoxy.

The paper then explores efforts by host governments to adopt a more robust, welfarist approach to refugees and development, and the resistance to those efforts on the part of certain donor countries. That resistance reached a zenith in the 1980s, when twin refugee and development crises engulfed the South. These crises owed to events and policies internal to Southern host countries. But they also had external roots: refugees were displaced by liberation struggles and by proxy wars between Cold War powers; and the sovereign debt crisis was precipitated in no small part by excessive lending by private Northern banks, coupled with an unprecedented hike in interest rates on the part of the US Federal Reserve.

2 Although the United Nations has a number of development organizations, the vast majority of development aid (roughly 90 percent) is provided bilaterally or through multilateral lending institutions such as the World Bank. (See below, Section III, noting the decision taken by the United States in the 1960s to minimize the United Nations’ role in development financing and oversight.) For that reason, this paper focuses mainly on the Northern donor countries (especially the United States) and the international financial institutions.

3 The term “ersatz development” also appears in Chang (2010). There it refers to the diminution of development from a project of structural transformation (particularly in the productive sphere) to one focused on satisfying “basic needs” within a broader strategy of status quo maintenance. In using this term, the paper means something similar: a paradigm that favors unregulated markets and trickle-down policies at the macro-level, and targeted, temporary safety nets at the micro-level, rather than the sorts of proactive regulations and protections — labor laws, progressive taxes, capital controls, welfare entitlements — that proved so successful in reducing poverty and inequality during the “golden age” of capitalism after World War II.

Those crises — and particularly the debt crisis — gave the gatekeepers of international trade and finance the leverage to take ersatz development to new extremes. In exchange for access to liquidity, Southern countries — including those experiencing major refugee situations — were encouraged or obliged to lift capital controls, unilaterally eliminate tariffs, privatize public lands and resources, deregulate industry and banking, export instead of process raw materials, slash public benefits, eliminate food and other subsidies, levy consumption instead of corporate taxes, impose user fees, suppress wages, and loosen labor protections. In exchange for enacting these reforms, Southern states received a considerable amount of aid and a far greater amount of additional debt.

Proponents of these “structural adjustments” believed that transferring economic power from governments to markets so as to “get prices right” would spur investment and growth. But global markets proved uncooperative. In addition to the debt crisis, the early 1980s saw a worldwide recession, an unprecedented fall in commodity prices, skyrocketing interest rates, reverse private capital flows, and growing financial volatility. For much of the global poor, including refugees, increased exposure to these elements proved “calamitous” (UNECA 1988, para. 6). Poverty increased, in some cases precipitously,<sup>4</sup> while inequality began to skyrocket. As economic conditions worsened, UN agencies and others campaigned vigorously for “adjustment with a human face” (UNICEF 1987). But the Reagan-Thatcher revolution had begun to give rise to a perception that there was “no alternative” to adjustment and austerity.

In addition to its direct toll, the advent of austerity helped put an end to the solidarity with which many Southern countries had greeted refugees in the past. Forced to cut the services they provided to their own citizens, and obliged to spend upwards of 40 percent of their budgets on debt servicing alone, host governments came to see refugees as one burden too many. Borders began to close. Encampment policies became a default response to influxes. Restrictions on access to labor markets and to public services became routine. Meanwhile, rather than provide host states with macroeconomic relief as inducement to reverse course, the international community tended to shift the costs of international protection further onto refugees: by containing them in a handful of struggling states; by underfunding humanitarian programs; by defining the goal of refugee development as independence from aid rather than freedom from want.

The final section welcomes the growing (re)emphasis on equality, welfare, and redistribution that has emerged in recent years. Policymakers have increasingly affirmed the need to strengthen and expand the welfare systems in host countries, not only for the good of refugees but also of host communities. Policies to end encampment and to foster mobility have returned economic rights to the front and center. Calls for macroeconomic relief to be provided to host states are mounting. National ownership has become a *sine qua non* of development aid, leading to a relaxation of economic conditionality among some lenders. More broadly, both the global refugee crisis and the Great Recession have refocused attention on the external causes of hardship and poverty. Together, these and other shifts could well prove transformative. But, the paper concludes, progress on the ground remains ad hoc and far from assured.

4 Notably, this was not true in countries such as China and India that continued to embrace state-led development strategies. Global poverty and growth trends in the 1980s and 1990s look quite different depending on whether one controls for these countries. See e.g., World Bank (2000a, 3).

The paper ends with, among others, the following recommendations:

- Development assistance to host states should be seen chiefly as compensation for a global public good and as a step toward global economic justice. Such assistance should not be a secret subsidy for donor countries or private banks. It should come chiefly in the form of grants, not loans. It should not come with harsh or excessive conditions, especially austerity, privatization, and deregulation requirements.
- No effort should be spared to staunch and reverse net outflows of public and private resources from host states. Debt relief — including, in the near-term, a moratorium on repayments to official creditors — should be pursued, as should efforts to minimize capital flight and to return evaded taxes to host states.
- Approaches to development that were crucial to the development of donor countries (such as capital controls, progressive taxes, and universal public entitlements) should not be regarded as heterodox when employed by host countries.
- The privatization of essential public services, or the imposition of user fees on those services, should be discouraged.
- Efforts to enable self-reliance should not be used as a pretext to shift the costs of international protection onto refugees and host communities. Refugees should not be made to subsidize economic production via poverty wages or other forms of deprivation. Economic and social rights — not just the right to work but also refugees' labor and welfare rights — should form the basis of all development programming.
- When it comes to the private sector, the focus should be on supporting host countries' small- and medium-sized enterprises, including by raising rather than lowering taxes on multinationals.
- The overwhelming majority of refugees should not be confined to a handful of struggling countries in the first place.

## **I. The Postwar Development Approach to Refugees**

It has long been conventional wisdom within policy circles that, while “[t]he international community has not ignored the twin problems of refugee aid and development assistance . . . it has tended in the past to treat them as largely separate and distinct activities” (Gorman 1987, 10).

It is not difficult to find evidence for that proposition. By the time governments created the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950, they considered the postwar refugees remaining in Europe to be a temporary problem. Thus they gave UNHCR an initial mandate of just three years and a budget of only \$300,000 (in contrast to the \$150 million budget of UNHCR's predecessor, the International Refugee Organization).<sup>5</sup> They further discouraged UNHCR from engaging in development work, even if it could raise the funds

<sup>5</sup> For overviews of the creation of the postwar refugee regime, see e.g., Holborn (1975), UNHCR (2000), and Loescher (2001).

to do so. Instead, the international system divided refugee protection and development assistance between separate entities, entrusting the former to UNHCR and the latter to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (part of the World Bank) and the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (a precursor to the UN Development Programme [UNDP]).<sup>6</sup>

But the restrictions placed on UNHCR, and the divisions of labor those restrictions sought to maintain, quickly gave way to a broader understanding of refugee assistance. In a series of remarks to the General Assembly, UNHCR's inaugural High Commissioner, Gerrit J. Goedhart, challenged the exclusion of refugees from broader reconstruction efforts.<sup>7</sup> Referring to refugees in Austria, he reported: "There is, in my opinion, something very radically wrong in a situation in which so much money . . . has been expended . . . to revive the economic capacity of the country, while so little attention has been paid to the needs of refugees" (UNHCR 1953, para. 59). He further noted: "I have already drawn the attention of . . . the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to this problem. International [development] agencies can certainly contribute towards the solution" (ibid.).

The General Assembly concurred. In a resolution issued in February, 1952, it urged

all States directly affected by the refugee problem, as well as the appropriate specialized agencies and other inter-governmental agencies concerned, to pay special attention to this problem when drawing up and executing programmes of economic reconstruction and development.<sup>8</sup>

It further "request[ed] the High Commissioner to contribute to the promotion of activities in this field."<sup>9</sup>

Two years later, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees entered into force. The text of the Convention<sup>10</sup> was notably silent as to the role of international development assistance in refugee response. But it was — and is — unmistakably development-*friendly*. Instead of camps, it demanded freedom of movement. More than a regime of short-term aid, its provisions called for the productive inclusion of refugees into host economies and societies.

The decision to begin incorporating refugees into postwar development efforts benefitted more than just the displaced themselves. Reconstruction in Europe had created a substantial demand for workers (Gorman and Kibreab 1997, 40). In addition to their labor, refugees in Germany,

6 Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other governments made similar administrative distinctions within their donor agencies (Gorman 1987, 11; see also Crisp 2001).

7 See e.g., UNHCR (1952, paras 24-25).

8 G.A. Res. 538 (VI), ¶ B2, (Feb. 2, 1952).

9 *Id.* The link between refugees and development was affirmed in other resolutions as well. For instance, in December 1952, the UN General Assembly invited UNHCR to collaborate with the World Bank to explore the role of "international funds" in the "successful execution of long-term projects for the assimilation of refugees." See G.A. Res. 638 (VII), at preamble (Dec. 20, 1952).

10 The full text of the Refugee Convention can be found [here](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/3b66c2aa10): <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/3b66c2aa10>.

although arriving penniless to the Bund, still brought invaluable assets with them from their old homelands. Among these were their enterprising spirit, their individual imaginations, their special skills and their vocational backgrounds.

(Paikert 1962, 36, quoted in Gorman and Kibreab 1997, 40)

Similarly, refugees in Austria represented “one of the most valuable potential economic assets of the country” (UNHCR 1953, para. 59).

Those economic advantages only increased as the Cold War ignited. With the Iron Curtain in place, the difficulties of escaping the Soviet Union ensured that those who did so tended to be not only enterprising but educated and skilled (Toft 2007, 143). As symbols of Soviet aggression, moreover, they were welcome for political, as well as economic, reasons.

Indeed, in addition to its economic advantages, the inclusion of refugees in development made sound ideological sense. Development initiatives such as the Marshall Plan aimed not only to reconstruct Western Europe but to stop the spread of communism. Nor were their chief architects coy about this fact. The subtitle to Walt Rostow’s (1960) seminal treatise, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, made the connection especially clear: *A Non-Communist Manifesto*.

## II. The Origins of Ersatz Developmentalism

Despite such anti-communist origins, both refugee and development policy in the postwar West took as their starting points the centrality of the role of the modern welfare state. Thus, the Refugee Convention aimed to *protect* refugees from the harsher effects of the market by entrusting them with economic and social rights. It granted them access not only to private labor markets but to an ensemble of public welfare entitlements. Indeed, Chapter IV of the Convention is entitled, simply, “Welfare.” It covers such topics as housing (Article 21); public education (Article 22); public relief (Article 23); and labor legislation and social security (Article 24). This welfarist orientation is further underscored by the Convention’s construal of asylum as almost exclusively the prerogative of national governments, in contrast to the private, “charitable” humanitarianism of the interwar period.<sup>11</sup>

Prevailing theories of “modernization” likewise defined development in terms of state intervention *into* the economy. As Mark Mazower (2000, 298) puts it: the “‘unexpectedly dazzling’ revival of capitalism [in postwar Europe] took place, of course, in a world where the extension of state power was accepted not only in the economic sphere itself, but also in the area of social welfare.” Where laissez-faire liberalism had ended in a worldwide depression, the Marshall Plan, in particular, ushered in a new development paradigm — one premised on state-led industrial policy, progressive taxation, strong labor rights, and greater provision of public services.<sup>12</sup> For refugees and citizens alike, it was Western Europe’s “New Deal.”

11 For an exploration of the transformation of assistance from charity- to welfare-based, see e.g., Bortgwardt (2005) and Cohen (2008).

12 For an overview of the Marshall Plan, including its progressive and statist orientation, see e.g., Judt (2006).

Tellingly, both the Refugee Convention and the Marshall Plan were limited to Europe(ans). As US President Harry Truman announced in January 1949, a “bold new program” would be created to spur the development of the Global South.<sup>13</sup> As in Western Europe, a primary motivation for the program was ideological.<sup>14</sup> But communism was not the only threat that it sought to contain. The anticolonial struggle was rapidly giving rise to calls for a “third way” premised on non-alignment, self-determination, and local control over natural resources.<sup>15</sup> Facing shortages of raw materials and surpluses of processed goods, the United States saw development as a means not only to win allies or to improve living standards, but also as a tool to preempt such “third way” proposals and thereby to ensure its access to the resources and markets of existing and soon-to-be former colonies (see e.g., Hagen and Ruttan 1987, 21-22; UNCTAD 2006, 11).

Hence the ambitions and modalities of development assistance, including to refugees, changed markedly when the focus of US aid shifted from Europe to the South. Where economic and social policies among Marshall Plan recipients sought (however imperfectly) to manage and *temper* global market forces, the goal of the “bold new program,” and of the development paradigm to which it gave rise, was to *liberate* global capitalism from local political restraints.<sup>16</sup> As former US Undersecretary of State George Ball put it to Congress in 1967: “We will never be able to put the world’s resources to use with full efficiency so long as business decisions are frustrated by a multiplicity of different restrictions by relatively small nation states that are based on parochial considerations” (Congressional Record, quoted in Ellis 2014).<sup>17</sup>

Casting restrictions on Western access to Southern resources as “parochial” and anti-developmental helped both to obscure the external causes of Southern poverty and to frame (continued) foreign intervention as the only solution to it. As the logic went, underdevelopment in the South resulted not from centuries of imperialism and foreign domination. The problem was endogenous. People in developing countries were “backward and tradition bound”; “despite many years of contact with more advanced societies, [they

13 The full text of Truman’s famous address — including Point IV — can be found at: [https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr\\_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm](https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm).

14 For a review of official Executive and Congressional statements and rationales concerning US foreign aid programs in the 1950s and 1960s, see Hagen and Ruttan (1987).

15 Those calls culminated in 1955 with a conference of Southern governments in Bandung, Indonesia that caused considerable alarm in Northern capitals, as well as a series of resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly on self-determination. See Mazower (2013) and Benjamin (2015). The Final Communiqué of the Bandung conference can be found here: [http://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/final\\_communique\\_of\\_the\\_asian\\_african\\_conference\\_of\\_bandung\\_24\\_april\\_1955-en-676237bd-72f7-471f-949a-88b6ae513585.html](http://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/final_communique_of_the_asian_african_conference_of_bandung_24_april_1955-en-676237bd-72f7-471f-949a-88b6ae513585.html).

16 This was not equally true of all donors. Sweden, for instance, advocated for “balanced modernization” (see Sluga 2016). Indeed, the Swedish economist and diplomat Gunnar Myrdal remained a forceful advocate of state-led development in developing and developed countries, much to the chagrin of others (see Bauer (1966).

17 He continued: “to fulfill its full potential the multinational corporation must be able to operate with little regard for national boundaries — or, in other words, for restrictions imposed by individual national governments” (Congressional Record quoted in Ellis 2014).

had] not developed within themselves the skills which make economic development feasible” (Axilrod 1953, 3).<sup>18</sup>

Far from being excluded from such logic, refugees in developing countries became test cases and entry points for this new development orthodoxy. This was especially true in Africa, where donor governments and international agencies began implementing refugee development schemes beginning in the 1960s.

### III. Refugees and Development in the Global South

By 1963, refugees from Rwanda posed the “most critical problem” facing a rapidly expanding refugee regime (UNHCR 1964, para. 132). Roughly 150,000 Rwandans had fled to Burundi, Tanganyika (now Tanzania), Uganda, and Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo). More than half were receiving humanitarian assistance from UNHCR. But the refugee agency constituted only one player in what it described as a “joint operation” that “represented a truly international effort” (ibid., para. 149).

That effort, like those in postwar Europe, belies the notion that refugees became a development concern only recently. To the contrary, the initiatives undertaken on behalf of Rwandans in the 1960s placed development at the heart of refugee assistance. As but one example, in Burundi, refugees were incorporated into “integrated zonal development” programs. According to UNHCR, the goal was “not only to enable these refugees to support themselves on a subsistence level, but [to] give them a chance to improve their living conditions within the development of the country of asylum” (quoted in Goetz 2003, 4-5). Encouraged by events in Burundi and elsewhere, UNHCR and its partners convened a conference in Addis Ababa in October 1967 to consider “the role of refugees in economic and social development and their utilization as human resources” (UNHCR 1969, para. 8). Soon enough, the zonal development model became a regular response to refugees in Africa, with more than 100 settlements being established between 1966 and 1982 (Stein and Clark 1990; Easton-Calabria 2015).

Crucially, though, the zeal to create new settlements took hold just as the original settlements had begun to unravel (Goetz 2003, 2). While the latter’s decline owed to political and environmental conditions within host countries, it also reflected deep problems within the ersatz-development ethos itself. The assumption that Southern governments and peoples lacked the capacity to manage development effectively,<sup>19</sup> for instance, ensured that decisions regarding development often rested with those unaccustomed to the contexts, aspirations,

18 Or as Bauer put it, “comprehensive and detailed control over the economy . . . [was] more likely to retard than to promote material advance” because “[t]he peoples of underdeveloped countries . . . [lack] the human qualities, attitudes and motivations which have made these material living standards [in the West] possible. It is the differences in these qualities and motivations which largely explain differences in economic performance and in living standards” (Bauer 1966, 746-47).

19 As a World Bank official put it at the time:

technical ministries, departments and aid agencies in most [Southern] countries do not have the staffs qualified to (a) identify, evaluate and prepare good projects, (b) fix project priorities in accordance with well devised time tables, and (c) operate completed projects efficiently.

(quoted in Rondinelli 2013, 53-54)

and traditions of local populations. Thus, at the global level, responsibility for coordinating development programs was entrusted first and foremost to the World Bank, where Southern governments had much less of a voice than at the United Nations.<sup>20</sup> When it came to refugees specifically, decision-making frequently rested with foreign officials unfamiliar with local political, social, and economic conditions or with the skills, backgrounds, “felt needs and actual living conditions of the people” (Betts 1984, 11; see also, Easton-Calabria 2015, 425). That social distance had consequences. For instance, the locations of at least some settlements were chosen “[w]ithout any adequate investigation of the potentiality of the site” (Betts 1984, 11). Only too late would it be discovered that the land was not fertile enough to sustain long-term farming activities.

The settlements may have fallen short in meeting the needs of refugees and host populations. But they succeeded, at least in part, in serving ulterior purposes. The issue of food is especially illustrative in this regard.

Rather than purchase food locally, thereby contributing to indigenous development while dramatically reducing the costs of procurement, host states and aid agencies frequently found their funding conditional on the purchase and shipment of food from the North. Indeed, the US government regarded food aid as a “surplus disposal program” (Hagen and Ruttan 1987, 22). As early as 1953, the US Mutual Security Act mandated that foreign aid funds be used to purchase US farm goods and that at least 50 percent of aid (by tonnage) be transported by the US shipping industry (*ibid.*, 21, 25). Not only did such requirements divert much-needed funds away from refugees toward American agribusiness, they also sapped demand for developing-country produce, leaving farmers in developing countries to watch as foreign food was shipped in, at great expense, while their harvests went spoiled and unsold.<sup>21</sup>

Nor was it only donors’ preference for “tied aid” and surplus disposal — both of which remain prevalent features of development financing to this day (see e.g., Oxfam 2016) — that undermined the efficacy of foreign assistance. In contrast to the Marshall Plan, transfers to developing countries mostly took the form of loans (see e.g., Hughes 1979). Because they had to be repaid in foreign currencies, the loans exposed host countries to the risk of hard currency appreciation. They also put enormous pressure on Southern countries to orient more and more of their economies towards exports so as to earn foreign exchange, including by producing cash crops for sale abroad instead of food for local consumption (Khatkhate 1966, 224).

20 Just as European recipients of the Marshall Plan helped administer those funds through the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (the precursor to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]), Southern governments had called for development aid to be coordinated by the United Nations — specifically, the Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development (SUNFED) — where their ranks and influence were growing (Benjamin 2015, 41-42). Instead, the United States insisted that a new agency — the International Development Agency (IDA) — be established within the World Bank. As Burke Knapp, a senior official at the Bank at the time, explained: the United States “decided to go for an agency under the management of the World Bank rather than one under the management of the United Nations” because “an agency administered under the United Nations would presumably be dominated by underdeveloped countries” (quoted in Benjamin 2015, 42).

21 For an interesting geostrategic discussion of this dynamic, see CIA (1974).

Not coincidentally, development initiatives aimed at refugees often pushed in the same direction: that is, they “reflected the demands more of the resource-extraction economy, and were aimed primarily at deepening commoditization” (Daley 1989, 63). The earliest refugee settlements proved a case in point. “‘Self-sufficient’ refugee settlements were to be fostered through viable refugee livelihoods — mainly the strictly regulated cultivation of cash crops for national exportation. This was primarily achieved through block, monoculture farming, which created both social and practical problems” (Easton-Calabria 2015, 424). Indeed, even after it became clear that the land was unsuitable, and that refugees were going hungry, development officials in some settlements continued to promote cash crops such as tobacco (ibid., 425).

Compounding these problems was a growing preoccupation with weaning refugees off of direct assistance. That preoccupation arose within a context where expatriate staff themselves often consumed a lion’s share of available funding in the form of salaries and lodging.<sup>22</sup> But scarcities of funding do not fully explain the drive to withhold rations. That drive also reflected the view among at least some officials that — unlike in Northern countries, where welfare benefits and labor laws were cornerstones of economic and refugee policy, not to mention guarantors of human rights — the provision of aid to Southern refugees was “dependency-inducing” (see Waldron 1987). Thus, in the early settlements in Burundi, a proposal emerged that food rations should be denied to refugees except as compensation for the cultivation of unused (and in many cases unusable) land (Goetz 2003, 6-7). Although, as the International Labour Organization (ILO) pointed out, the proposal likely violated the International Convention on Payment of Wages, the idea soon went into effect (ibid., 7). Nor was the withdrawal of food aid the only punishment meted out against refugees who pursued “uneconomic” livelihoods strategies such as fishing. In at least one settlement, “*refugees [were] put into prison if they fail[ed] to provide expected labour requirements for projects* such as the establishment . . . of 400 acres of block farms to grow more rice, beans and cassava” (Trappe 1971, 10, quoted in Easton-Calabria 2015, 427; emphasis in original).

No amount of refugee labor could force poor soil to grow crops. By the late 1970s, all but a few of the 100 settlements had failed (Stein and Clark 1990; Easton-Calabria 2015, 427). But several dangerous ideas had taken root. Among them: that development aid could be used to induce host countries to purchase and produce what foreign markets wanted rather than what host communities and refugees needed; and that refugees themselves could be utilized as suppliers of labor to whom international refugee, labor, and human rights standards evidently did not need to apply.

22 According to a study conducted in 1971:

In retrospect, it does appear that a large amount of the settlements’ infrastructure and therefore the “cost” of settling the refugees, can be primarily explained in terms of the capital support needed to maintain project staff. Their limited expertise and their limited access to technical information available locally has meant that there have been few long term benefits from such expenditures.

(quoted in Easton-Calabria 2015, 425)

#### IV. The Rise and Fall of an Alternative Vision

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, host countries in the developing world treated refugees with a marked degree of solidarity — though not, perhaps, as much as is sometimes suggested (see Kibreab 1986). Most refugees had fled nearby struggles for liberation from foreign colonial domination. They sought, and found, refuge in neighboring, newly decolonized states until such time as their own countries gained independence, if not permanently (Stein 1986, 265). Before long, more than 40 new states had claimed their place on the world stage.<sup>23</sup> Along with decolonization, the era witnessed the emergence of pan-Africanism and Third Worldism, opening up space for fresh thinking about refugees and their role in postcolonial development.

Among host states, Tanzania supplied much of the intellectual basis for such thinking (see Chaulia 2003; Milner 2013).<sup>24</sup> Responsible for tens of thousands of refugees from throughout Africa, the Tanzanian government saw promise in incorporating refugees into broader projects of national development, which it understood in terms of *ujamaa na kujitegemea* (“socialism and self-reliance”).<sup>25</sup> Together with pan-Africanism and Third Worldism, these concepts guided Tanzania’s approach to refugees. As Yefime Zarjevski, a UNHCR staff member, explained, *ujamaa* reflected “[t]he belief that the main wealth of a country is in its people” and this “led to the acceptance of refugees” and to “the determination to devote the same efforts to them as to nationals” (quoted in Mahiga 1997). From that starting point, the Tanzanian government played a proactive role in refugee settlement. It endeavored to provide refugees not only with safety but with land, employment opportunities, free education and health care, and even, ultimately, citizenship.<sup>26</sup>

In certain ways, *ujamaa* did not differ markedly from the postwar European ideal of progress: the construction of a national welfare state through government-led development planning. A major component of the national development policy involved forcibly, violently, replacing traditional social systems with “modern” ones.<sup>27</sup> Yet what eventually caused consternation among donors was not so much the vigor with which Tanzania set about to transform its economy.<sup>28</sup> Instead, it was its intention to redistribute the surpluses generated thereby via “uneconomic” subsidies, welfare, and social services. Thus, while Tanzania set about creating a free, universal education system for citizens and refugees alike, donors came to “believe[] that there was a surplus of literary and general skills” in

23 A chart indicating growth in UN membership by year can be found here: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/growth-united-nations-membership-1945-present/index.html>.

24 In recognition of his influence, UNHCR awarded Tanzania’s president, Julius Nyerere, the Nansen medal in 1983.

25 The government’s platform was formally articulated in the Arusha Declaration of 1967, excerpts of which can be read in Minogue and Molloy (1974).

26 At the time, most refugees in Africa were “self-settled” rather than being part of one of the formal zonal development settlements (Stein 1986).

27 For a discussion of “villagerization” and its impact on refugees, see Chaulia (2003).

28 On that score, Tanzania received a significant amount of support from donors — at least for a time. As Michael Cernea and Chris McDowell (2000, 71) have noted: “As implemented by the World Bank and other donors who were determined to modernize Africa, the main method was the introduction of integrated rural agricultural capital-intensive development projects. The underlying assumption behind this approach to the promotion of planned settlements adopted by the World Bank was that uprooting, whether forced or not, is actually good for people: displacement makes people more susceptible to new change.”

the developing world (Heynemen 2003, 318), and began conditioning their lending on promises to make education “more practical and relevant by re-orienting the content away from academic and toward vocational purposes” (World Bank quoted in Heynemen 2003, 318).

Soon enough, development came to be seen as a process requiring host countries not only to orient their productive systems toward foreign rather than domestic markets, but also to insulate their social spending from welfarist and redistributive concerns. In a preview of what would soon be known as “neoliberalism,” a mission sent by the World Bank to Kenya, for instance, recommended that the government eliminate external tariff, “which encourages the uneconomic use of resources”; and abolish “the political constraints to foreign use of land” as well as “the increasing range of controls and regulations which irritate businessmen” (World Bank 1974, 39, 40, 43). The mission further made clear that such policies would need to be accompanied by de-investments in welfare and efforts to address “the dangers of rising urban wages” (*ibid.*, 39). According to this model, development required the creation not only of an open export economy but of a “cheap labour export economy” (Chossudovsky 1991, 2527): “increasing wage rates . . . would be likely to make matters worse” (World Bank 1974, 32).

Of these two visions, many developing countries opted for Tanzania’s approach. When it came to refugees, host governments in Sierra Leone and elsewhere even began refusing international assistance altogether, opting instead to assist refugees directly (Voutira and Harrell-Bond 2000, 69). A similar stance soon extended to development aid more broadly. In 1970, in Lusaka, a conference of the Non-Aligned countries formally committed to a strategy of “collective self-reliance.”<sup>29</sup> The strategy sought both to foster sustainable, indigenous development and strong domestic markets at the national level and to bring about an economically autonomous Global South internationally. The latter objective culminated in 1974 with the adoption by the General Assembly of a Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO), which took as its point of departure that genuine development could not occur within a system that overwhelmingly privileged the major Northern countries and their multinational corporations.<sup>30</sup> Only an economically independent South could see all of its inhabitants, including its refugees, prosper.

## V. The Advent of Adjustment and Austerity

Rather than prosperity, the late 1970s ushered in an era of profound deprivation. Internal mismanagement combined with external shocks — worldwide recession, energy crises, the collapse of non-oil commodity prices, drought — to wreak havoc across the South. Non-alignment declined as a potent geopolitical force. The “Third World” all but disappeared as a united front with a shared vision of the future.<sup>31</sup> Its demand for greater equality

29 See UN (1971, 215-19).

30 G.A. Res. 3201 (S-VI) (May 1, 1974).

31 For instance a division opened up between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and “NOPEC” (i.e., countries with and without oil). Such fragmentation suited the Northern donor countries, “which had every interest in separate negotiations rather than having to face the collective strength of a united bloc” (Rist 2009, 153).

and independence in world economic affairs went unanswered. Instead, a powerful new development discourse emerged. The neoliberal era had arrived.

At the same time, conflicts and proxy wars in the developing world produced new refugee movements from Afghanistan to Zaire. Despite their roles as belligerents, the major Northern countries decided that these “new waves” of refugees should continue to remain in their regions of origin (see e.g., Stein 1986; Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989). The decade saw the emergence of a remarkable array of policies designed to keep refugees from traveling north: visa restrictions; carrier sanctions; imprisonment at the border; deportation to “safe” third countries; interdiction; and so on.<sup>32</sup> Nor did the developed countries compensate Southern host countries for the burden-shifting results of such containment policies. To the contrary, “donors offered very limited ‘additionality’” (Betts 2009, 7).

When it came to the economic crises roiling the South, host countries did receive additional aid. But it came with conditions. Donors regarded such crises as primarily the result of domestic policies and problems.<sup>33</sup> In particular, they identified Southern states’ restrictions on the free movement of capital and goods — though not people — as the main culprit.<sup>34</sup> In exchange for international financing, they began to require that Southern countries undertake a series of “structural adjustments”: deregulation, privatization, retrenchment, currency devaluation, unilateral trade and investment liberalization, raw material exportation, and corporate tax concessions. On the social policy side, they required the elimination of subsidies on food and other essentials, the introduction of user fees and cost-recovery programs, wage suppression, loosening of labor protections, and sweeping cuts to welfare and social services.<sup>35</sup>

Although intended to be applied “judiciously, not mechanistically,” these adjustments coalesced into a policy consensus — known as the “Washington Consensus” — that “quickly took on a life of its own” (World Bank 2005a, xi). Together with changes in international trade, monetary, and investment frameworks, adjustment helped usher in what Mark Mazower (2013) has aptly called the “real new international economic order.” To be sure, countries that could afford to maintain their state-led development strategies,

32 These and other policies — including the externalization of borders, interdiction, and so on — would come to be known as the “non-entrée regime” (see e.g., Frelick, Kysel, and Podkul 2016; Gammeltoft-Hansen and Tan 2017).

33 As Alfredo Saad-Filho (2010, 3) puts it: “In development economics, concerns about rent-seeking and corruption became increasingly prominent, and the responsibility for persistent poverty was placed on the poor countries themselves, in particular their unwillingness to follow the ‘correct’ economic theory and policies prescribed from the West.”

34 The World Bank’s “Berg report” provided a basis for this diagnosis and the prescriptions that followed, known as “structural adjustment” (see World Bank 1981).

35 In addition to these economic prescriptions:

Neoliberalism also brought about socio-cultural changes of a more diffuse, but equally important character [including] devaluation of organized labor and protected industry as ‘rental havens’ inimical to economic efficiency . . . support of foreign investment as necessary for sustained growth . . . renewed faith in the market, via trickle-down effects, for the reduction of social inequality . . . and reorientation of the sources of national pride away from resistance to foreign hegemony and toward skilled reinsertion into the circles of global trade.

(Portes 1997, 238)

such as the East Asian “tigers,” did so — with historic success. Those that could not — over 100 countries in all, including most of the countries in which refugees struggle to survive — were subjected, in the name of development and stability, to years or decades of “shock treatment” (World Bank 2005a, 7).

As the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) (2003, 43) Independent Evaluation Office would later allow, utilizing a series of worldwide crises to privatize and deregulate Southern economies was “ill-advised”: “crisis should not be used as an opportunity to seek a long agenda of reforms just because leverage is high.”<sup>36</sup>

## **VI. Reverse Aid in the Countries and Regions that Host the World’s Refugees**

Following a dramatic increase in lending to developing countries in the 1970s, Wall Street banks had by the early 1980s become dangerously overexposed (see e.g., Sachs 1989, 1; World Bank 1989, 16-17; Ferraro and Rosser 1994). When the US Federal Reserve hiked interest rates to unprecedented levels, countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, especially, could no longer afford to repay their loans. Fearing a financial meltdown within the banking sector, the US government poured money into multilateral lending institutions, which in turn lent to debtor governments, on the condition that the latter prioritize debt servicing and austerity above all other goals (see e.g., Godlee 1993, 1369).<sup>37</sup> Indeed, as Karin Lissakers (1983), who would become the US representative to the IMF Executive Board during the 1990s, wrote in 1983, the IMF became an “enforcer of the banks’ loan contracts,” urging austerity in debtor countries so as to “free foreign exchange in order to service debts.”<sup>38</sup>

The combination of that enforcement with skyrocketing interest bills saw developing countries repay \$700 billion to foreign creditors from 1982 to 1987, only to see their debt liabilities more than double, from \$568 billion to \$1,190 billion (Singer and Sharma 1989, xix). Host countries were by no means spared. Zambia’s interest bill alone reached 40 percent of the government’s revenue in 1986, up from 15 percent in 1980 (Clark and Allison 1989, 12). By the end of the decade, the World Bank reported: “[b]efore 1982, the highly indebted countries received about two percent of GNP a year in resources from abroad; since then they have transferred roughly three percent of GNP a year in the opposite direction”

36 As quoted in Human Rights Council (2015, 7).

37 Or as Walden Bello (1989, 139) noted, “debt repayment replaced development as the *raison d’être* of economic growth.” Southern governments were even compelled to repay nonguaranteed debt incurred privately. In Latin America, for instance, the socialization of private liabilities raised public sector debt burdens by between 15 and 20 percent (UNCTAD 1989, 88). See also, SAPRIN (2002, 183-184), noting that “foreign debt has provided a mechanism by which the international financial institutions have applied external pressure” and that “public resources have been used not just to service public debt, but also to rescue private corporations and banks that have not been able to meet their obligations.”

38 An ILO report on the situation in Somalia is also revealing: the IMF “is helping to finance an adjustment programme one of whose major goals is to repay the IMF itself . . . [S]hould the structural adjustment programme prove unsuccessful in correcting the balance of payments situation (not a remote possibility), the Somali government would be left with little to show for its efforts other than an increase in debt on ‘hard’ terms . . . It is possible for the IMF to relieve the Somali government’s debt servicing burden in a dramatic way, for nothing in the IMF charter precludes a re-scheduling agreement” (ILO 1989, 16).

(World Bank 1989, 17). According to the World Bank's chief economist, "heavily indebted developing countries have been transferring real resources of close to 5 percent of their income to the developed creditor countries" (Fischer 1989, 359-60; see also Ferraro and Rosser 1994). That financial hemorrhage increased in the 1990s, when "the burden of debt repayment and servicing [became] so great for many countries that it cripple[d] their ability to make advances in human development or inroads in eradicating poverty" (UNDP 1998, 37). Across Africa, debt service consumed, on average, four times more revenue than did health and education combined (Speth 1999, 14).

Nor was debt repayment the only source of development-in-reverse to exacerbate poverty and inequality in host countries. However well intentioned, the singular and simultaneous emphasis on export-led growth precipitated such a glut of commodities on the world market that prices — already depressed due to recession in the North — plummeted to their lowest point since 1932 (Bush and Szeftel 2007). For developing countries, "[t]he cumulative cost of the decline in terms of trade (and hence in the volume of resources available for domestic distribution and use) was, on average, about six percent of GDP, and over 10 percent in many countries" (UNCTAD 1989, 77). In Malawi, which saw an influx of roughly one million refugees from Mozambique in the 1980s, the commodity shock cost the equivalent of 65 percent of the country's 1979 GDP (IMF 1998, 73).<sup>39</sup>

Other central features of the real new international economic order tended in the same direction. Privatization enabled foreign corporations to buy up, often at fire-sale prices,<sup>40</sup> huge portions of developing countries' lands and assets.<sup>41</sup> Tax competition and financial liberalization permitted those same corporations to repatriate rather than reinvest (or pay taxes on) the profits they earned. Statutory tax rates fell precipitously. The advent of "special economic zones" and other schemes saw effective rates fall even further. The idea behind such reductions was to boost capital inflows by creating a more "foreign investor friendly" environment in developing countries. Yet between 1982 and 1989, multinationals remitted roughly \$280 billion in profits and interest payments from Latin America alone (Petras and Vieux 1992, 26). Countries in the region experienced net *outflows* of \$25 billion per year during that period, in contrast to a net inflow of roughly \$13 billion at the beginning of the decade (UN DESA 2017b, 62).

Nor was the problem limited to outflows. The deregulation of capital became "a key source of fragility" and "helps to explain many of the crises in the 1990s," with countries that maintained controls, such as China and India, "far[ing] much better than those that opened themselves to external liquidity surges" (World Bank 2005a, 17). Financial crises became

39 Other host countries saw enormous losses as well. For instance, by 1990, Ecuador had to export five times the value of its 1980 exports simply to cover the same volume of imports (SAPRIN 2002, 41). And while Thailand boosted rice exports by 31 percent in 1985, the combined value of those exports *fell* by eight percent (Roodman 2001, 145).

40 As the *Harvard Business Review* put it, "host countries are often granting concessions [to foreign investors] that would have been unthinkable even five years earlier" (quoted in Bello 1989, 141).

41 By 1994, foreign multinationals had acquired access to, e.g., "86 percent of the world's land that is cultivated for export crops" (Kolodner 1994, 1). Meanwhile, "the anticipated creation of a strong property-owning middle class through privatization has not occurred. Overall, wealth has become more concentrated" (SAPRIN 2002, 108). As the World Bank (2005a, 10) later allowed, "State enterprises were privatized without much attention to the operation of the markets in which they would function."

endemic, with more than 100 occurring since the 1980s (Stiglitz 2013). The real economy and the public sector bore the costs. As one example: after Ecuador liberalized its financial sector, “the amount of funds transferred from productive enterprises to the financial system . . . plus the amount of public funds used to bail out the banking system” approximated “the country’s total foreign-debt burden” (SAPRIN 2002, 62).

Meanwhile, liberalization in the South met with strategic protectionism in the North. Rather than “free” trade, global markets became “most hostile to the products the world’s poor produce — agricultural products, textiles, and labor-intensive manufactures” and global trade rules “systematically den[ied] the poor market access and skew[ed] incentives against adding value in poor countries” (World Bank 2005a, 19). Heavy agricultural subsidies in the North, in particular, discouraged private investment just as adjustment programs were requiring Southern governments to eliminate their own agricultural subsidies and price controls (De Schutter 2014). Small-scale farming — the main development solution offered to refugees — became unviable in large swaths of the South, precipitating a great migration from the countryside to the city (*ibid.*). Formerly food self-sufficient countries and communities became dependent on imports and food aid. Over the course of two decades, poor countries went from boasting net agricultural *surpluses* ranging from \$1-2 billion to net *deficits* of \$4.4 billion (*ibid.*, note 83).

Asymmetric burdens occurred at the domestic level as well. As one contemporaneous analysis found, “the single most consistent effect the IMF seems to have is the redistribution of income away from workers” (Pastor 1987, 89, quoted in Vreeland 2000, 5).<sup>42</sup> IMF economists themselves have noted that the era of austerity and adjustment has not precipitated an increase in the labor share. Instead, “the share of national income paid to workers has been falling since the 1980s” (Dao et al. 2017). The pressure to attract foreign investment, in particular, compelled Southern countries to suppress wages, as well as loosen or eliminate worker protections, which served to reduce corporations’ wage bills at the expense of workers’ rights.<sup>43</sup> Once again, the countries to which refugees fled — and in which so many continue to struggle — were at the forefront of these trends.<sup>44</sup> Nor did lower wages and more precarious working conditions translate into higher employment. To the

42 Far from a free market, that is, “[r]eal wages, in almost every case, were kept low and generally below productivity increases” (Stein 1995, 11).

43 See e.g., Human Rights Council (2016, para. 32), describing an examination of 131 developing countries that covered a period from 1981 to 2003, which found that the longer a country was subjected to an adjustment program, the less it protected labor rights in its territory; and a separate analysis of 123 countries that identified an inverse relationship between adjustment and respect for collective labor rights.

44 For instance, in Tanzania, which began adjusting in 1986, the real minimum wage plummeted by 33 percent by 1988 (Stein 1995, 25). Similarly, in Turkey, the purchasing power of workers’ wages declined by 45 percent from 1979-1985 (Roodman 2001, 148). Mexico’s minimum wage declined by 75 percent from 1982 to 2000 (SAPRIN 2001, 10). Meanwhile, across the South, temporary and hourly contracts became widespread; firing practices were deregulated; minimum hour laws were overturned; and restrictions were imposed on collective bargaining and direct action (SAPRIN 2001, 9).

contrary, according to a study of several “adjusting” countries, unemployment increased “across the board” (SAPRIN 2001, 11).<sup>45</sup>

Each of these trends occurred alongside sweeping cuts to the social services and subsidies central to the realization of refugees’ and host communities’ welfare rights. Thus, in Jordan, which began adjusting in 1989, unemployment reached 28 percent by 1997 (Baylouny 2008, 296). Meanwhile, the requisite withdrawal of state subsidies pushed food prices up by 80 percent between 1989 and 1992; by 1997, the price of food, education, rent, and health care had doubled (*ibid.*). In Zambia, the removal of food subsidies in the 1980s saw the price of maize, the staple food, increase by 500 percent (Logie and Woodroffe 1993, 43). In Tanzania, a country that had put free, universal education at the forefront of its development strategy, adjustment after 1986 coincided with a 73 percent decline in spending on education (Stein 1995, 157). Among sub-Saharan African countries as a whole, real per capita healthcare spending fell by 42 percent between 1980 and 1987, while education spending per student fell from \$32 to \$15 (Stein 1995, 7). So complete was this “rolling back” of the developmental state that, according to one estimate, the only portion of sub-Saharan African government expenditure that cumulatively rose during the 1980s was expenditures on interest payments (*ibid.*, 157).<sup>46</sup>

Far from temporary departures on the road to growth and prosperity, these trends saw growth stagnate or turn negative for two “lost decades” in many host countries (see e.g., UNECA 1988; UNDP 1998; World Bank 2000b, 1; SAPRIN 2001; Weisbrot et al. 2001; Chang 2003; World Bank 2005; UNCTAD 2006). Poverty and inequality increased, in many cases precipitously.<sup>47</sup> Incomes in sub-Saharan African countries cratered to such an extent that by 2000 they were still 10 percent lower than the level achieved in 1980 (UNCTAD 2002, 3). In fact, according to the World Bank (2000b, 1, emphasis added), “[a]verage income per capita [in sub-Saharan Africa in 2000] is lower than at the end of the 1960s.” Similarly, in Latin America, annual incomes grew just 0.6 percent from 1980 to 1999, compared to 3.1 percent in the prior two decades (Chang 2003, 6). In the Middle East and North Africa, per capita income growth averaged minus 0.2 percent from 1980 to 1999, down from +2.5 percent from 1960 to 1980 (*ibid.*). As one example, among Jordanians, per capita income fell from \$1,500 in the mid-1980s to \$850 in 1998 (Baylouny 2008, 296). “Estimated in the mid-1980s by the World Bank to have been effectively eliminated, poverty reached 20% in 1991, and 30% in 2000” (*ibid.*, 295).

45 Aid conditionalities called for dramatic reductions in the size of the public sector workforce, leading to mass layoffs of workers at a time when local private firms, facing sudden competition from imports and foreign companies, were themselves struggling. The subsequent loss of local and public employment exceeded growth in the export sector, “which tended to be concentrated in a few hands, often benefitting transnational companies” (SAPRIN 2001, 6; UNCTAD 2006).

46 On the other hand, a welfare state of a different sort emerged, as “powerful economic groups . . . continued to receive de facto subsidies in the form of financial bailouts, currency devaluations, credit guarantees, tax incentives, and other such measures” (SAPRIN 2002, 168).

47 As Ha-Joon Chang (2003, 6), among others, has noted, the notion that global poverty stayed flat or decreased from 1980-2000 depends on the inclusion of high-growth countries like China — i.e., “countries that ha[d] definitely *not* followed the neoliberal recipe.” See also, World Bank (2000a, 3; 2005a, 17).

## VII. Adjustment with a Human Face

It is not a coincidence that the adjustment era saw an end to the solidarity with which host governments had treated refugees in the past. Struggling to provide for their own citizens, and obliged to spend enormous portions of their revenues on unending debt service, governments across the developing world came to see the presence of refugees on their territories as a burden.<sup>48</sup> Borders began to close (see e.g., Kilgour 1990, 641). Encampment policies became a default response to influxes.<sup>49</sup> Restrictions on refugees' access to labor markets and state services became commonplace (see e.g., UNHCR 1987). Endless humanitarian "care and maintenance" became necessary as a result.

The causes of this restrictionist turn were by no means lost on the aid world. Aid agencies voiced their concern for the social dimension of adjustment programs, and advocated for "adjustment with a human face," a term coined by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in a landmark 1987 report (UNICEF 1987). UNHCR (1983, para. 41) began to sound the alarm regarding the increasing lack of respect for refugees' economic and social rights, noting that "[w]idespread recessionary trends have exacerbated these difficulties." But UN agencies lacked the resources to make up for cuts in state spending or to address the other underlying causes of refugee poverty. They also depended for funding on the same donors that prescribed austerity and adjustment to host countries in the first place.<sup>50</sup>

Adjustment with a human face, in other words, did not precipitate a radical departure from the prevailing neoliberal ethos.<sup>51</sup> To the contrary, replacing Walt Rostow's *A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Charles Peters' (1983, 9) *A Neoliberal's Manifesto* incorporated a human face into the doctrine itself: "We still believe in liberty and justice and a fair chance for all, in mercy for the afflicted and help for the down and out. But we no longer automatically favor unions and big government or oppose the military and big business." Instead of the traditional ways of empowering the "down and out" — labor protections, minimum wage laws, universal welfare schemes, environmental protections — the poor would be invited to support themselves, through wage labor if possible or, better yet, by becoming "risk-taking entrepreneurs" (ibid. 10).

In the refugee context, stimulating entrepreneurial self-reliance appeared to offer an alternative — seemingly the only alternative — to the growing scandal of refugee encampment and endless emergency relief, on the one hand, and rising formal-sector and

48 As the Organization for African Unity (1994, para. 13) put it in 1994: "the system of refugee protection [is] under tremendous stress . . . The large number of refugees seeking asylum in countries already themselves experiencing tremendous social and economic hardships, has brought into question the very capacity of nations to cope with refugees."

49 Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s most refugees were self-settled, in the 1980s, "the lot of many refugees is temporary asylum in camps with care and maintenance assistance and no durable solution in sight" (Stein 1986, 274). For instance, "Tanzania, pioneer of a compassionate and long-term solution to African refugee problems, hence reverted after 1985 to geographically isolated and socially segregated makeshift camps" (Chaulia 2003, 161).

50 For the aid industry as a whole, meanwhile, ersatz development proved good business, since it entailed more funding as donors bypassed state structures and forced host governments to cut or privatize service provision (see e.g., UNCTAD 2006, 47).

51 That is not to say that radical departures were not called for. In addition to UNICEF (1987), see e.g., UNECA (1990).

agricultural unemployment, on the other. Thus, under the auspices of a new neologism — “refugee aid and development” (RAD) — the aid community provided vocational training, microcredit, and livelihoods support to refugee workers and would-be entrepreneurs in China, Ethiopia, Iran, Malawi, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire, and elsewhere (UNHCR 1997, para. 19). Of these, the most ambitious involved a three-phase income-generating project undertaken in Pakistan over the course of 12 years and at a total cost of nearly \$87 million. By the end of the 1980s, the RAD project had generated tens of millions of work-days of employment for refugees and local residents alike (UNHCR 1997, para. 21; Gorman 1987, 17; UNHCR 1987, paras. 104-06; Crisp 2001, 3).

But just as the aid community was supporting livelihoods for refugees and residents at the local level, donors were engineering a major retrenchment of the national public sector in Pakistan. Even the most generously-resourced RAD project could not compensate for the privations wrought by that adjustment. “[N]ot only the absolute poverty incidence but also the intensity and severity of poverty increased significantly by all poverty lines and poverty measures over the period of adjustment” (Anwar 1996, 911). Despite the rhetoric of development discourse, entrepreneurialism proved no antidote: “Poverty also increased unambiguously among self-employed (smallholders in the informal sector)” (ibid.).

This dynamic was not unique to Pakistan. In country after country, refugee development projects sought to foster self-reliance at the local level just as national economies and social systems were coming undone.<sup>52</sup> In Cote d’Ivoire, for instance, which received 300,000 Liberian refugees between 1990-1991 alone, UNHCR and its partners engaged in a variety of livelihoods and self-reliance activities (see e.g., UNHCR 1993). Meanwhile, by the mid-1990s, per capita GDP had declined by 15 percent, both the incidence and intensity of poverty had doubled, and the number of people earning less than \$1 per day had ballooned from 18 percent of the population to 37 percent (Naiman and Watkins 1999). As for public services, “adjusting” entailed a 35 percent reduction in per capita spending on education between 1990 and 1995; and the introduction of user fees into the public healthcare system, which coincided with an increase in the prevalence of stunted growth among children from 20 to 35 percent by 1995 (ibid.).

Again, the direness of the situation hardly escaped notice. As UNHCR (1987, para. 32) noted with reference to education: “Many asylum countries do not have enough educational institutions to meet the needs of their own nationals and therefore cannot offer educational opportunities to refugees.” Similarly: “The fact that the majority of the world’s refugee population remains concentrated in poorer countries with extremely high levels of underemployment or unemployment is a major impediment to efforts by refugees to become economically self-supporting” (UNHCR 1985, para. 46). Nevertheless, the response to refugee poverty remained focused on the local level, obscuring the extent to which the problem was structural<sup>53</sup>; and on “self-support,” as if the goal of refugee

<sup>52</sup> See Section VI.

<sup>53</sup> Mention of “structural adjustment” remained noticeably limited within the refugee discourse. One exception is a UNHCR (1998, para. 9) Executive Committee Conclusion stating “[t]he financial costs [of hosting large refugee populations] should be seen in the context of structural adjustment programmes simultaneously being implemented in some developing countries, and against the backdrop of recession, inflation and unemployment in many of the industrialized countries.”

development was independence from aid rather than freedom from want. Indeed, as in the 1960s, development interventions sought to “reduce[] the dependency syndrome often associated with refugee situations by encouraging refugees to assume responsibility over as much of their daily lives as possible” (UNHCR 1983, para. 82).

While individuals will continue to receive relief based on specific needs, the local community (refugees and the host population) must be helped to take care of these persons with a minimum of outside assistance. Such assistance must therefore be tailored to assessed needs and will be limited in time.

(UNHCR 1994, 2)

Even such targeted, time-bound assistance could prove too much for some donors. Despite mass impoverishment in Cote d’Ivoire, noted above, “[d]onors believed that many refugees, particularly those who arrived in Cote d’Ivoire prior to mid-1994, were self-sufficient or would rapidly become self-sufficient if forced to fend for themselves” (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants 1997). They instructed UNHCR to offer aid only to the most needy (*ibid.*).<sup>54</sup> As the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRIN) (2002, 167)<sup>55</sup> put it about targeting more broadly, “the policy of targeting is rendered unviable when the majority of the population is poor and becoming poorer.”

Given the sheer scale of the economic obstacles facing refugees, it is not altogether surprising that, by the mid-1990s, “the refugee aid and development approach was in many ways moribund” (UNHCR 1997, para. 24). But the basic pattern persisted even as the rhetoric changed<sup>56</sup>: lenders continued to impose macro-austerity, while aid agencies endeavored to alleviate the plight of the worst off through a succession of micro-solutions that, while vital, had little macro-effect. Thus, when the new Rwandan government requested assistance to help resettle three million returning refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 1995, UNHCR and UNDP endeavored to ease the latter’s return through a range of “quick impact” projects (see UNHCR and UNDP 1997). Donors, meanwhile, held Rwanda to the debts incurred by its ousted predecessor, such that one-fourth of the revenue — and 10 times the national health budget — of a country emerging from genocide went to debt service (Allen 1999; Oxfam 1999, 3). Donors further conditioned their support for refugee returnee programs on Rwanda’s “adoption of a comprehensive and transparent privatization policy; a private sector freed of unnecessary regulations . . . ; and a liberal trade and exchange rate regime” (Gasarasi 1996, 10).

54 Similarly, in Tanzania, as elsewhere, a 1986 IMF agreement obliged the government to eliminate price controls, withdraw support to family farmers, raise energy prices, among other adjustments (Daley 1989, 69). Despite those conditions, the international assistance budget for refugees in Tanzania was cut in 1986 (see UNHCR 1986), while a UNHCR consultant report concluded that “refugees should no longer rely on the state or foreign donors” for basic services (quoted in Chaulia 2003, 160). At the time, workers earning the minimum wage “could only purchase 1.3 kilogrammes of maize meal/day while totally exhausting their monthly income” (Daley 1989, 69).

55 The SAPRIN study, also cited several times above, was based on the results of a three-year review conducted in a range of “adjusting” countries (including major refugee host countries like Bangladesh, Ecuador, Mexico, and Uganda) in collaboration with the World Bank, NGOs, and governments.

56 Both the IMF and the World Bank stopped using the term “structural adjustment” in the late 1990s and spoke increasingly of “poverty reduction strategies,” “good governance,” and the importance of the social sector. Observers began to speak of a “post-Washington Consensus.”

As the SAPRIN (2001, 24) study concluded more broadly, the effects of such austerity and laissez-faire policies, “particularly on the poor, are so profound and pervasive that no amount of targeted social investments can begin to address the social crises that they have engendered.”

## Conclusion

In a June 2016 issue of the IMF’s quarterly magazine *Finance & Development*, economists at the IMF conceded that the “benefits of some policies that are an important part of the neoliberal agenda appear to have been somewhat overplayed” (Ostry, Loungani, and Furceri 2016). In examining two aspects of that agenda (capital account liberalization and austerity), the researchers came to several “disquieting conclusions”: neoliberal policies produce “little benefit in growth”; such policies increase inequality; and this “increased inequality in turn hurts the level of sustainability of growth” (ibid.). In addition, the study concluded that “austerity policies not only generate substantial welfare costs . . . they also hurt demand — and thus worsen employment and unemployment” (ibid.). As for policy solutions, the researchers suggested that the “evidence of economic damage from inequality suggests that policymakers should be more open to redistribution than they are” (ibid.). In addition, “[c]apital controls are a viable, and sometimes the only, option” (ibid.).

These conclusions represent a real departure from the notion that development requires the unfettered flow of global capital. They reflect the growing emphasis on equity, social protection, redistribution, and re-regulation that has emerged since the 2008 financial crisis put global capitalism on the defensive. Social protection floors, the decent work agenda, universal healthcare — these and other centerpieces of development have returned from the margins of the global discourse closer to its center. A similar reorientation has emerged within the refugee regime: alternatives to camps, cash assistance, rights to work, freedom of movement, and more. Indeed, there is by now a common understanding that the parallel provision of services to refugees, and the exclusion of refugees from national and local systems and development plans, traps refugees into situations of protracted deprivation.

But, for now, the broader global context remains an impoverishing one. Poor countries continue to host the overwhelming majority of refugees. Poor countries continue to subsidize rich ones — to the tune of (-)500 billion in 2016 (UN DESA 2017a).<sup>57</sup> Pressure on host governments to lower corporate taxes and to reduce social spending persists.<sup>58</sup>

57 Similarly, in 2011, developing countries received \$340 billion in new loans but paid \$500 billion in capital and interest on their debts that year. They also lost \$630 billion in illicit financial flows. The equivalent of nine out of every 10 dollars they received in foreign direct investment left as profit repatriations (Griffiths et al. 2014). For an overview of capital flight, another crucial source of net outflows, in sub-Saharan Africa, see, Boyce and Ndikumana (2012).

58 For instance: “[income] transfer schemes cannot be an answer in the long term” (Ianchovichina and Gable 2012, 147). Another example: The 2017 edition of the World Bank’s (2017) immensely influential *Doing Business Report* praises, *inter alia*, Jordan for reducing corporate tax burdens while lamenting that Tanzania introduced a workers’ compensation tariff paid by employers.

Global trade rules continue to privilege the powerful.<sup>59</sup> Conditionalities and instruments such as tied aid and surplus disposal remain commonplace.<sup>60</sup> The confusion of privatization with development continues.<sup>61</sup> The imposition of user fees remains a major impediment to refugee rights.<sup>62</sup> Debt and austerity remain routine.<sup>63</sup>

Indeed, just as some of the IMF's own economists were concluding that "austerity policies not only generate substantial welfare costs," but they also "worsen employment" (Ostry, Loungani, and Furceri 2016; see also Ball, Leigh, and Loungani 2011), the IMF itself began negotiating a financial agreement with the government of Jordan. Under the program, the IMF will provide more than \$700 million to the Jordanian Central Bank. But rather than enable Jordan to engage in counter-cyclical policymaking or to expand its public services to accommodate refugees, the agreement requires that Jordan implement a series of "fiscal consolidations," such as spending cuts and increases on value-added taxes (VATs), so that it can pay down its debt by 17 percent by 2021 (Ghazal 2016).

Conditions such as these have proved calamitous in the past. Nor are today's refugees better equipped to withstand the onslaught of austerity. In Jordan, despite years of refugee development interventions, more than 80 percent of Syrian refugees are living below the poverty line; nine out of 10 refugee households are in debt; daily expenses *already* exceed 25 percent of average income (CARE 2017). On the other hand, "[t]he [Jordanian] government has found, what it believes, to be the answer: put Syrians to work" (Luck 2016). To that end, Jordan has agreed to incorporate refugees into "special economic

59 As but one example: 100-billion-dollar subsidies to American agribusiness remain permissible but much smaller subsidies for poor Indian farmers are at risk of being deemed an unfair trade practice.

The act — which aims to stave off hunger for 840 million people and which can play a pivotal role in the UN agenda to end hunger everywhere — is being challenged because it raises India's direct food subsidy bill from roughly \$15 billion a year to \$21 billion. In comparison, the United States increased its agricultural domestic support from \$60 billion in 1995 to \$140 billion in 2013.

(UNDP 2016, 142)

60 In 2014, the Managing Director of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, stated: "Structural adjustments? That was before my time. I have no idea what it is. We do not do that anymore." Yet a study of the 55,465 policy conditions included in all IMF programs from 1985-2014 found that little had changed beyond rhetoric since the 1980s and 1990s (see Kentikelenis, Stubbs, and King 2016). As an example of surplus disposal, Oxfam America (2016) recently noted that while the World Food Programme has been procuring peanuts from Haitian farmers to provide to malnourished Haitian children, the United States "is planning to dump 500 metric tons of packaged, dry-roasted peanuts on Haiti as part of its 'Stocks for Food' program."

61 Meanwhile, a new scramble for Africa has begun: foreign investors and speculators bought some 29 million hectares (roughly two-thirds the size of California) of African farmland within just the first year after the 2008 food price spike reminded the world of impending scarcity (Deininger et al. 2010, xxxii).

62 Recent studies of Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon indicate that many are foregoing medical treatment because they cannot afford the fees. See e.g., UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP (2016).

63 As one example: Moody's (2016, 8-11) credit analysis of Lebanon reports: "Historically, public resources have primarily been deployed towards servicing the cost of debt. . . . [P]ayments consumed around 47% of the government's total revenues in 2015, higher than the 41% recorded on average in 2010-14 . . . and crowded out more productive forms of public expenditures."

zones.”<sup>64</sup> Such zones exist to exempt corporations from tax laws while giving them access to cheap, precarious labor (see e.g., ILO 2008).<sup>65</sup>

On this last score, then, a final set of figures bears noting. Over the last several decades, the incomes of humanity’s poorest populations have grown at an average rate of just 1.29 percent per year (Woodward 2015; Hickel 2015). At that rate, and only using the wildly unrealistic assumption that no more economic crises or external shocks occur, it will take more than a century for the global poor to earn their way out of \$1.25/day poverty and more than two centuries to eradicate poverty at the \$5/day line; global per capita income will have to exceed \$1.3 million just so the poorest two-thirds of the world can subsist on \$5 per day; and a world already facing ecological devastation will need to mine, produce, and consume 175 times more commodities than it currently does (ibid.). Again, that is in the absence of any crisis or shock. And even then, 90 million people will remain in poverty (ibid.). Refugees will surely be among them.

As Wolfgang Sachs (1992, 3) said, perhaps “[i]t is not the failure of development which has to be feared, but its success.” At the very least, any approach designed to further tether refugees to an inequitable, unsustainable economic model is a troubling one.

## Recommendations

*There is an urgent need for macroeconomic relief, including budget support, to be provided to host countries. Current levels of assistance are dangerously insufficient.*

*Approaches to development that were crucial to the development of donor countries should not be regarded as heterodox when employed by host countries.* Much of the logic undergirding development assistance to refugees in the Global South has reflected a kind of ersatz developmentalism in which state retrenchment and a self-regulating private sector, from which wealth is assumed to trickle down, are the keys to development. Such theories are the source of intense political contestation within donor countries and should not be treated as unproblematic when it comes to developing countries.

*Additional support to host countries should be “untied” and should come in the form of grants, not loans.* Just a handful of host governments are home to a majority of the world’s refugees. Support for them should therefore be seen chiefly as compensation for a global public good and as a step toward global economic justice. It should not be a secret

64 In search of foreign investment, Jordan established a series of special economic zones in the 1990s. “In addition to poor working conditions and no job security, the [workers] were paid below minimum wage, only 50-60 JD per month. The zones were effectively exempt from labor laws and social insurance payments” (Baylouny 2008, 300). Even then, they produced few jobs (ibid.).

65 As for the benefits they bring: as Kenya’s Parliamentary Budget Office (2010) concluded of its special economic zones in 2010, “the [tax] scheme appears to be more costly to revenue performance compared to the overall economic gains accruing from the EPZs [export processing zones].” Or as the IMF (2014, 21) itself has noted, “a race to the bottom has become evident among special regimes — most notably in Africa where tax burdens under these regimes have fallen to almost zero.” These regimes deprive host countries of billions every year (see e.g., ActionAid 2016b). Even then, they create few jobs. While they make up an enormous proportion of global trade, special economic zones account for a tiny percentage — perhaps as little as 0.2 percent — of global employment, and even where they account for a higher percentage, evidence that such employment is additional is wanting (see e.g., ILO 2008, 10).

subsidy for donors or their banks. It should not leave host countries more indebted than they already are.

*International support should focus on lifting global economic constraints on host country development.* As the World Bank (2005b, 68) has noted, “developing countries face massive challenges in influencing the global rules and processes that determine outcomes.” Far from being unrelated to displacement, those challenges — including unsustainable debt, unequal trade regimes, structural adjustment, tax avoidance, and inequality between North and South — help to create the conditions within which refugees and host communities too often struggle to survive.

*Internally, the focus of the aid community should be on strengthening the economies and welfare systems in which refugees live in ways that reduce inequality and stimulate demand,* including by assisting host governments to expand national and local services and social protection programs, to eliminate user fees, to strengthen labor and environmental laws, to redistribute wealth toward the poor, and to create quality employment and livelihoods opportunities the primary benefits of which accrue locally.

*Development interventions should always be designed to ensure that refugees enjoy the rights to which all human beings are entitled,* including rights to work and to free movement *but also* “welfare” rights to education and healthcare, social protection, and more. Enshrined in the Refugee Convention (among many other international instruments), these rights constitute the central pillars of international protection. For good reason: development interventions that do not prioritize welfare and labor rights too often see refugees and host communities subsidizing economic production through poverty wages and other forms of exploitation.

*Respect for rights and inclusion in national development plans should constitute the main policy conditionalities attached to refugee assistance to host countries.* Host governments cannot be said to “own” their plans to develop refugee-hosting areas if they are compelled via conditionalities to adopt the policy preferences of their lenders. Moreover, those policy preferences, while more nuanced than in prior decades, still reflect an approach to growth and the private sector that is often anti-developmental, as leading IMF economists recently conceded (Ostry, Loungani, and Furceri 2016).

*Debt cancellation should be extended to host governments that agree to include refugees in the economic and social life of their countries.* Many poorer countries have paid far more servicing external debts than they have received in foreign aid. That reverse-subsidization not only denies host governments the resources they need to incorporate refugees into the economic and social life of their countries. It also reinforces some of the basic asymmetries of world order that help produce the status quo of refugee poverty in the first place.

*Tax treaties between donors and host governments should be revised.* Host governments lose hundreds of millions and sometimes billions of dollars in revenue each year due to treaties that restrict their right to tax corporate earnings. As but one example: in Uganda, a treaty signed with the Netherlands removes the government’s right to tax certain earnings of Dutch-based owners of Ugandan corporations. Not coincidentally, “as much as half of

Uganda's foreign investment is owned from the Netherlands, at least on paper" (ActionAid 2016a, 3).

*Donors, aid agencies, and host governments should refrain from partnering with corporations that engage in aggressive tax avoidance or other harmful business practices. Instead, the former should commit to assisting host governments to improve tax collection and to prevent capital flight. They should also develop common criteria for assessing corporate track records in achieving pro-poor development outcomes and in meeting human rights standards. When it comes to providing support to the private sector, the focus should be on host countries' small and medium-sized enterprises, which account for the bulk of employment.*

*Stopping illicit financial outflows from host governments should be a top priority. A recent study has found that, "for every dollar of development assistance received by developing countries, more than ten dollars disappear from those countries" (Global Financial Integrity 2015, 3).*

*The vast majority of refugees should not be confined indefinitely to a handful of struggling countries in the first place.*

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