

ABSTRACT

The Refugee Dilemma from 1945-2008: Challenges for the
UNHCR and International Community

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Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a preponderance of violent conflict initiating the flight of refugees. The issue of refugees has become a salient international issue and as the number of refugees worldwide has increased dramatically, it is a significant policy issue at both the national and international level. At present, of the many global issues that increasingly engage the attention of international political decision-makers, the world's refugee problem is perhaps the most complex. It can be considered a humanitarian and moral issue, a security issue, a development issue, and to a growing extent, an environmental issue. The UNHCR has found itself increasingly confronted with an escalation of refugee situations as a result of intra-state conflicts in Iraq, Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda and Darfur. The UNHCR's response to these conflicts has demonstrated that the organization that exists today is inadequate for the task of fulfilling the needs of refugees.

This thesis argues that the mandate of the UNHCR should be amended and the 1951 Refugee Convention updated in order to remedy the inadequacies of the current regime. This has implications for the international community whose refugee policies must firstly address and accommodate peace-building, human security and integrate domestic interests with international responsibility.

The case studies (Tanzanian, European Union and United States) in this research demonstrate the discordance between a state's domestic policy and international commitment towards refugees and the role of extraterritorial interests such as terrorism, human security, humanitarian intervention and structural violence, and their impact on refugee policy.

Keywords: Ramona B Shah; Refugees; UNHCR; Galtung; Structural Violence; Imperialism; Humanitarian Intervention; Refugee Convention.