

Conflicts in Africa, and particularly the West African sub-region, are becoming increasingly regionalized in nature. With the presence of cross-border rebel groups and hostile neighboring states these “civil wars” are very much inter-state affairs. Refugees play a major and complicated role in the regionalization of these conflicts. By their very nature, refugees bring the effects of war across borders. They are victims of war and hostile reception from host communities and states. But beyond this refugees can also become perpetrators of violence in their host communities and state—bringing along with them the violence from which they are fleeing. Recent conflicts in Africa provide us with numerous examples of refugees participating in the destabilization of the social, political, economic, and security systems of their host countries. The case of Hutu refugee camps of Eastern Congo who exploited humanitarian assistance to revive their war machine and the exportation of the Liberian civil war to Sierra Leone through fleeing refugees are fresh in the minds of humanitarian actors.

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