

MEASURING GROSS NATIONAL REFUGEE PRODUCT

A Framework for the Classification of Refugee Source Countries

By Firdaus Kharas

Recently a leader of the Indian community in Canada voiced bitter resentment against the refugee determination process. Why, he demanded to know, was Canada rejecting every refugee claim from India, while encouraging refugees from Poland?

Claims from India have been found to be manifestly unfounded. The practical consequence of claims being classified as manifestly unfounded is that members of the Refugee Status Advisory Committee (RSAC) do not review the entire transcript of the claimant's interview with an immigration officer and other information relevant to the claim. Instead, they read a summary of the materials prepared by a member of the RSAC secretariat. The effect, therefore, is to treat such claims differently from other claims.

Whether particular claims were well-founded or not is not at issue here. There is no doubt that the four hundred claims from India rejected by the RSAC in 1980 were spurious. The charge of political persecution based on secessionist activity to create a separate State of "Khalistan" is simply a fabrication.

What is open for discussion is whether or not certain refugee claims should receive less consideration than other claims. And if such a system is to be retained, what should the distinction be based on?

Whether or not a claim can be classified as manifestly unfounded must rest largely on the political situation in the country from which the claim arises. For example, a claimant from India might recount political involvement, yet in light of information on his country, his claim could be considered manifestly unfounded. On the other hand, a claimant from Iran might explicitly deny any political involvement, yet, particularly in light of the new guidelines for the RSAC, under which a person may hold no political opinion and still be a political refugee, no claim from Iran could presently be considered manifestly unfounded, although some might of course be found to be invalid.

In principle it is difficult to defend a system of classifying refugee claims from certain countries as manifestly unfounded. Such a system assumes that there are certain countries from

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which no valid refugee claim could arise. No such country really exists.

Such a country would have to be truly democratic, have no political conflict and have no suppression of human rights. The closest the world has to this ideal are countries that may be called liberal democracies, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, Belgium, or the Netherlands, for example. Yet during World War II Canada incarcerated and confiscated the property of Canadian citizens of Japanese descent and in 1970 made mass arrests in Quebec under the War Measures Act. In 1972 the United Kingdom was taken before the European Commission on Human

ORAL HEARINGS

"With the changes I have already implemented and others I will be announcing in the next few weeks, we will have moved a great distance toward a truly fair and humane system for refugee determination. Saying that, there is, obviously, always room for improvement.

Some changes, such as the right to an oral hearing before the RSAC, require legislative amendments and will have significant cost and administrative implications. Nevertheless, such changes should not be dismissed on these grounds alone if they are deemed necessary to ensure fairness in the process; I think that was one of the conclusions from the symposium. I will therefore authorize that a study be conducted specifically on the question of oral hearings."

—Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Employment and Immigration; before the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration, April 1, 1982, discussing changes effected in the refugee determination process.

Rights where it openly admitted, and offered its own justification for, the use of torture in Northern Ireland. In Belgium, political violence between the French and Flemish sections of the population continues to erupt periodically. In the Netherlands, the late 1970's saw increased terrorist activity, including the hijacking of trains, by Dutch-born South Moluccans. Thus there is at least the possibility, no matter how small, that there may be a valid British, Belgian, or Dutch refugee claim. If there exists such a possibility from liberal democracies, there surely exists such a possibility from every country of the world.

Such a theoretical argument, however, does not ease the backlog of illegitimate refugee claims now awaiting

processing. Taking the avenue of expediency to deal with such claims may be a necessary evil, at least until other measures are implemented to prevent abuse of the system. And as long as any kind of screening of manifestly unfounded claims exists, then country information must be taken into account in the screening process and therefore must be dealt with systematically.

Until recently, the claims that were screened were those coming from countries considered to be "democracies". Now it is claims from countries from which no valid claim has arisen since the establishment of the RSAC in 1978. I would like to propose that for the purpose of screening manifestly unfounded claims, refugee source countries should be classified along a continuum; and to suggest one possible framework of inquiry for such a classification.

Political refugees are usually displaced from their native land for one of two reasons: political instability, in the form of inter-State wars, revolutions, coups d'état, and so on; or the suppression of human rights through arrests, the use of torture, etc. These are separate causes, although a relationship may exist between the two.

A classification of refugee source countries, therefore, must allow for ranges along these two variables. The level of coerciveness in a country, and hence the likelihood of its producing refugees, can thus be given a measurable dimension.

The following is a simple, five-point classification based on these two factors.

(1) **Uncoercive** Civil and political rights are always protected by the State, and laws and institutions are available for redress. There is virtually no political violence except occasional legal demonstrations and strikes. Political power is not concentrated, and regular changes in leadership occur. Balances are maintained throughout the system through free courts and media.

(2) **Occasionally Coercive** Some infringements of human rights and/or isolated political violence like terrorist activity by a tiny percentage of the population has occurred, especially in periods of real or perceived crisis.

(3) **Routinely Coercive** The rights of minorities may be infringed, while the rights of the majority are upheld. Some political opposition may exist, but the

leadership may have significant powers. Balances of the courts and the media may be present but ineffective. Large-scale arrests do not occur, but a few political leaders may be jailed. Low-level political violence may be present throughout the system.

(4) Broadly Coercive The State suppresses a large section of the population, employing arbitrary arrests, torture and imprisonment. Or, high-level political violence may be present, including riots, assassinations, terrorism, guerrilla or civil wars, revolutions or inter-State wars.

(5) Very Coercive Neighbors live in fear of each other. The smallest act of dissent can mean a jail term or even execution. No political opposition is tolerated. There is only one party, and only one candidate for each election. No significant balances exist, and leaders have absolute powers. Or, widespread political violence is present, with hundreds if not thousands of people dying as a result.

To classify countries within these categories, possible components of each of the two variables must be listed. For example, political instability may consist of: changes in leaders, laws and attitudes; coups d'état; strikes, demonstrations; riots; arrests; executions; local revolts; political crises; terrorism; civil wars; guerrilla wars; revolutions; border clashes; invasions; inter-State wars; etc. A similar list pertaining to human rights violations must be developed.

Using a check-list approach, individual countries are investigated and evaluated. Because of space constraints detailed check-lists and their applications cannot be presented here; but results for 156 major countries of the world, based on data such as world surveys of human rights and cross-national studies of political instability, that were correct as of January 1, 1982, are contained in the chart below.

It is important to bear in mind that the classification is not static. Countries need to be constantly re-evaluated and reclassified according to the latest available data. Also, the methods of classification can always be refined to suit the purpose. For example, the system proposed here classifies whole countries only, not political sections or groups within countries. Also, it excludes political forecasting or incorporation of a time lag which could take into account the short-term nature of some refugee problems, as when in the early 1970's most refugees from Bangladesh returned to their country as soon as political conflict in the area ceased.

Under this scheme, the political situation in uncoercive and occasionally coercive countries would suggest

that most citizens of these countries would not have a valid claim. There is a greater possibility of a valid claim from routinely coercive and broadly coercive countries, based on the particular situation of the individual. And in very coercive countries, political conditions suggest that there is only a slim chance of a truly unfounded claim. Thus, claims from uncoercive and occasionally coercive countries could be dismissed as manifestly unfounded unless very extraordinary circumstances were related in the interview. A rare valid claim might, for example, arise from a particular segment of the population in an occasionally coercive country; or a description of a particular political event might have to be checked out before the claim could be classified. In contrast, some claims from very coercive countries might even be found to be justified without extensive consideration of individual circumstances. These would tend to be the countries for which various special measures sometimes prove the most sensible way to deal with refugees.

Such a classification of countries is

not, of course, intended to be used to determine the validity of individual claims, except in the case of manifestly unfounded, and possibly manifestly well-founded claims. Thereafter, country information becomes background information, and the particular situation of the claimant is of prime importance.

However, it is interesting to note that the small role that such classification need play is something of a luxury that Canada can enjoy in light of the relatively small number of claims made here. For example, in West Germany, where over 150,000 people sought asylum in 1980 and where abuse of the asylum policy is common, country information is extremely important in the refugee determination process. Each asylum-seeker is quizzed by officials on his knowledge of the political situation in the country from which he is fleeing, and claimants are encouraged to provide documentation of the political situation in their country. Although West Germany has no procedures for treating claims differently according to where they



VISA COUNTRIES

• Nationals of these countries are not required to have a visa to come to Canada for a temporary stay. Visas are also not required for citizens of the following countries not classified here: Fiji, Gambia, Kiribati, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Nauru, San Marino, Tonga, Tuvalu; nor for citizens of the United Kingdom's colonies who derive their citizenship through birth, descent, registration or naturalization in one of the British dependent territories of Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St. Helena, Turks and Caicos Islands or in one of the West Indies Associated States of Antigua or St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla.

come from, country information figures largely in decisions on individual claims. West Germany maintains an internal system of classifying countries.

By reducing a large amount of research to a single page summary, a classification system also offers an easy reference for people who may not have knowledge about political situations in every country but who may have to deal with refugees. For example, a lawyer in Canada or a Canadian immigration officer in Singapore may suddenly be confronted with a refugee claimant from Vanuatu. This classification can give the lawyer or the immigration officer a fairly accurate idea, although admittedly a cursory one, of the political situation in Vanuatu that pertains directly to refugee claims; and can at least serve as a starting point for further research.

As long as it is necessary to screen manifestly unfounded claims there are several benefits to doing it through a country classification system. As a system of information-processing, the classification ensures that a country information specialist will examine every aspect of political situations that impact on the refugee determination process.

Moreover, although the system does not eliminate judgment, it is fair to the extent of evaluating all countries according to the same method and data. The decision-maker who is screening claims is using a uniform system that is applied to every claim, regardless of where that claim is coming from.

And the next time an Indian or anyone else charges racism or discrimination in the refugee determination process, the answer can be objectively justified and demonstrated. □

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Southeast Asian Women Should Have Their Immunity To Rubella Tested

Out of 300 Southeast Asian women between 12 and 40 years of age screened, one in four was susceptible to rubella (German measles), according to a recent study jointly sponsored by the Manitoba Minister of Health and the Manitoba Joint Refugee Coordinating Committee. Most Canadian women, by contrast, have been immunized before they reach child-bearing age. The Manitoba Minister of Health is encouraging Indochinese women to have their immunity tested and to be vaccinated if necessary, provided they are not pregnant.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NEWFOUNDLAND/CANADA AGREEMENT ON "SPECIAL NEEDS" REFUGEES

Newfoundland and Canada have signed a federal-provincial agreement to assist refugees who would normally be excluded from Canada on the grounds that they might place excessive demands on health and social services; for example, unaccompanied minors, the mentally or physically handicapped, people from radically different cultures, people with tuberculosis, etc.

The agreement, which is similar to an agreement signed with Manitoba in September 1981, establishes a Special Program for Assisting Refugees (SPAR). Under the program, a joint federal-provincial committee will review individual cases to assess the refugees' needs, identify the availability of the special services that would be required, and consider whether, given special assistance, the refugee(s) could eventually be successfully established in Canada, normally within two years.

The committee is responsible for deciding, within one month of receiving all necessary information, the conditions for admission or refusal of such refugees. If the committee does not recommend admission of a refugee and the request was identified by a private group, the committee must give the private group written reasons for its decision. If the committee does recommend admission, it must also plan and follow up on the delivery of whatever services it deems necessary to ensure the refugee's(s)' successful settlement.

The agreement includes a list of which services it is the responsibility of the federal government to provide if required, which the provincial government and which the private group if one is involved. For instance, basic living allowances, dental care and temporary medical assistance are the responsibility of Canada; provincial medical insurance, funds for non-insurable health costs incurred once the refugees are in Newfoundland, and certain forms of social assistance are the responsibility of Newfoundland.

If a special needs case comes to the attention of the committee after the refugees are already in Newfoundland, the case may still be dealt with under the program.

The number of refugees to be admitted to Newfoundland under the program will be negotiated each year by the committee. Since 1979 Canada has resettled around 1,311 cases of special needs refugees. Of these, 829 have been people with tuberculosis, 437

unaccompanied minors, and 45 handicapped people. Newfoundland, which takes .5% of the refugees who come to Canada, has resettled three tuberculosis cases, one handicapped case, and 18 unaccompanied minors.

AID TO MISKITO INDIANS IN HONDURAS

In May 1982 Canada pledged \$250,000 to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for its program of assistance to Miskito Indians in Honduras.

Some 8,500 Miskito Indians who have fled Nicaragua are living in a refugee camp at Mocoron, about 50 km from the Honduras-Nicaragua border. According to the Canadian International Development Agency, rudimentary facilities at the camp are under strain because of the continuing influx of refugees. Food and medicine must be transported over 83 km of sand and clay road, taking several days to reach the camp, and upkeep of the road is required to ensure that basic supplies can be furnished during the rainy season. Canada's contribution will be used toward the leasing of aircraft required to fly in road grading equipment, spare parts and other supplies.

There are also an estimated 23,000 Salvadoran refugees in Honduras (out of a total of around 300,000 in northern Latin America), of whom around 15,000 are assisted by UNHCR at the request of the Honduran government; and at least 1,000 Guatemalans.

CANADA'S REFUGEE QUOTA FOR POLAND

A Canadian government task force that visited Austria in January recommended that there be no increase in Canada's quota for government-assisted Polish refugees.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are 47,000 Polish asylum-seekers in Europe, of whom most are in Austria and other countries as follows:

Austria	30,000
Federal Republic of Germany	11,000
Sweden	1,500
France	1,000
Italy	1,000
United Kingdom	500

In addition, an estimated 90,000 Poles are in Europe on extended visitor's visas or residence permits, having not registered for asylum, possibly in order to wait and see what happens in Poland.

A few Poles in Asia, Africa and Latin America - for example, sailors or technicians who were working abroad - have also requested asylum.

Third countries have allocated resettlement places to Poles as follows.

Estimated portions of ongoing settlement programs for Eastern European refugees	
Australia	4,500
Canada	3,500 (not including family and group sponsorships)
U.S.A.	5,500
Special allocations	
Iceland	25
Luxembourg	75
The Netherlands	100
New Zealand	100
Switzerland	1,000

A further 800 Poles have been resettled in other countries for special reasons.

Around 5,000 Poles have indicated that they would like to remain permanently in Austria, and UNHCR has given Austria U.S. \$2 million to facilitate this. In 1981 the Austrian government spent over U.S. \$50 million on assistance to the Poles.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR SETTLEMENT SERVICES

The federal government has allocated an additional \$17.7 million for providing assistance for refugees and immigrants to adapt to life in Canada. The funds will go to the Adjustment Assistance Program (AAP) which provides basic living allowances for government-assisted refugees, and to the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), which funds voluntary organizations across Canada to provide direct settlement services to immigrants, such as reception, counselling, interpretation and translation.

The additional funds will not only increase the total allocations for fiscal year 1982-83 for these programs; the

new levels of funding for this year will also be guaranteed for 1983-84. Previously, both programs had been operating from year to year with only very low levels of funding being guaranteed from year to year. These levels had been set prior to the start of the Indochinese Refugee Program.

In recent years, therefore, the bulk of the funding for these programs has had to be negotiated later in the fiscal year through "Supplementary Estimates." Last year, for example, the guaranteed level of funding ("A" base) for AAP was \$2.8 million and several increases later, the estimated accrued expenditures for the program totalled \$20 million.

	AAP	ISAP
1981-82 Approximate Expenditures	20.0	2.8
1982-83 "A" Base	2.8	1.8
1982-83 Supplementary Estimates	16.6	1.1
1982-83 TOTAL	19.4	2.9
1983-84 "A" Base	19.4	2.9

RESOURCE EXCHANGE

CULTURAL PROFILES FOR EL SALVADOR AND POLAND

Cultural profiles to assist sponsors of refugees from El Salvador and from Poland will be available shortly to supplement the *Guide to Private Sponsorship of Refugees in Canada*.

The guide, produced cooperatively by many voluntary and government agencies across Canada, offers comprehensive, practical information on how to sponsor. It includes directories of local services for each province except Quebec, and cultural profiles on refugees from Argentina, Cambodia, Chile, Laos, Uruguay, and Vietnam, in addition to the two new ones. Orders for the guide should specify which province and nationality(ies) information is required for and should be sent to:

Canadian Foundation for Refugees
P.O. Box 50,000
Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4B6

SETTLEMENT INFORMATION

The Indochina Refugee Action Centre (IRAC) in Washington, D.C., has published seven documents resulting from a Practitioner Workshop held last year:

- Refugee Orientation
- Health-Related Services
- Social Adjustment Services
- Vocational Training and Skills Recertification
- Manpower/Employment Services
- Outreach, Information and Referral
- Refugee Resettlement Services

This series is available free of charge to non-profit organizations involved with refugee assistance; and at a cost of \$35 to others.

Canadian Foundation for Refugees
P.O. Box 50,000
Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4B6

REFUGEE CAMP HEALTH CARE: SELECTED ANNOTATED REFERENCES

This 52-page annotated bibliography lists books and published papers on refugee health care and relevant technical issues and includes a country bibliography. The publisher of this book, the Ross Institute of Tropical Hygiene, also offers an annual course on health care in refugee camps in conjunction with the World Health Organization and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This year it will be held in London from June 28 - July 2, 1982.

Ross Institute of Tropical Hygiene
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Keppel Street (Gower Street)
London WC1E 7HT

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT: ABSTRACTS

The International Refugee Integration Resource Centre (IRIRC), a new joint project of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the

International Council of Voluntary Agencies, and the International Committee for Migration, has published its first issue of *Refugee Abstracts*, a quarterly providing summaries of significant books, journals, reports and projects dealing with refugee resettlement worldwide.

IRIRC
13, rue Gautier
1201 Geneva
Switzerland

"A FUTURE FOR US ALL"

A resource guide for refugee women's program development.

Centre for Applied Linguistics
3520 Prospect St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007
U.S.A.

CONFERENCE

THE STANDING CONFERENCE OF CANADIAN ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED FOR REFUGEES

1982 Refugee Consultation
Friday, June 18 - Sunday, June 20, 1982
Redemptionist Centre
Aylmer, Quebec (near Ottawa)

For more information contact:
The Standing Conference of Canadian Organizations Concerned for Refugees

1857 de Maisonneuve Ouest
Montreal, Quebec H3H 1J9
(514) 937-5351

STATISTICAL SURVEY

CANADIAN GOVERNMENT INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES FISCAL YEAR 1981-82

Canada contributed \$26,700,000 to humanitarian and emergency relief efforts in the fiscal year ending March 31, 1982. Funds amounting to \$7,775,000 were provided as annual contributions to United Nations humanitarian organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The balance of \$18,926,000 was granted in response to emergency situations caused by natural or man-made disasters, or civil strife; and to alleviate the hardships of millions of refugees. The major portion of the budget was devoted to refugee assistance, as follows.

DATE	DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	AMOUNT
I. Annual Contributions			
April 21, 1981	General Program	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	400,000 **
May 27, 1981	General Program	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	4,000,000
May 27, 1981	General Program	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)	2,900,000
August 26, 1981	General Program	United Nations Education and Training Program for Southern Africa (UNETPSA)	300,000 **
August 26, 1981	General Program	United Nations Fund for Namibia (UNFN)	175,000 **
II. Disaster Relief Fund			
Africa			
June 1, 1981	Medical Team for Djibouti	League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS)	82,000 *
June 2, 1981	Uganda emergency	UNICEF	300,000 **
July 20, 1981	Refugees in Angola	UNHCR	600,000 *
July 20, 1981	Refugees in Zaire	UNHCR	500,000 *
July 22, 1981	Refugees in Chad	UNHCR	300,000 *
July 22, 1981	Returnees in Ethiopia	UNHCR	160,000 *
July 22, 1981	Refugees in Djibouti	UNHCR	100,000 *
November 12, 1981	Medical team for Djibouti	LRCS	158,000 *
November 13, 1981	Refugees in Sudan	UNHCR	1,600,000 *
November 27, 1981	All-Africa appeal #7 (1981)	ICRC	1,600,000 **
January 16, 1982	Drought and conflict in Chad	LRCS	80,000 **
March 14, 1982	All-Africa appeal #8 (1982)	ICRC	1,000,000 **
March 16, 1982	Returnees to Chad	UNHCR	750,000
March 22, 1982	Refugees in Somalia	UNHCR	1,500,000 **
March 25, 1982	Africa Programs (1982)	LRCS	450,000 **
Asia			
August 12, 1981	Afghan refugees in Pakistan	LRCS	150,000
August 12, 1981	Afghan refugees in Pakistan	ICRC	150,000
November 2, 1981	Afghan refugees in Pakistan	UNHCR	3,000,000
December 1, 1981	Kampuchea - Thailand refugee relief	UNICEF	300,000
December 1, 1981	Kampuchea - Thailand refugee relief	UNHCR	300,000
December 1, 1981	Kampuchea - Thailand refugee relief	ICRC	375,000
December 1, 1981	Kampuchea - Thailand refugee relief	World Food Program (WFP)	900,000
Central America			
July 9, 1981	Salvadoran refugees in Central America	UNHCR	500,000
III. Special Allocation made through the Department of External Affairs			
February 26, 1982	Thailand - anti-piracy task force	UNHCR	150,000 **

* Commitment made at International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, April 1981, Geneva.

** It is of course difficult to separate refugee relief from relief in general; these contributions did assist refugees, but not exclusively.

N.B. These figures do not include contributions made to assist internally displaced persons in Iran, El Salvador, Angola and other countries.

Source for figures: Canadian International Development Agency

CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSLETTER ON REFUGEES

REFUGE

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