Agency and Subjectivity in Refugee Camps: The Case of Bududuram Refugee Camp

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Inception

This paper was written in Dr. Silvius' "Global Politics and Migration" seminar in the Department of Political Science.

Abstract

Since the 20th century, refugee camps have become the predominant means for dealing with the mass migration of refugees. The structure of these camps serves to depoliticize and de-individuate refugees. Thus, it would appear as though Agamben's (1998) understanding of camps as a place of "bare life" and Arendt's (1976) notion of the right-less refugee are true. However, by analyzing the Bududuram refugee camp in Ghana, I find that refugee camps are a space of political contestation in which refugees exercise their agency and shape their subjectivity. Despite this, these aspects are constrained by humanitarian and statist notions about refugees' political agency and subjectivity.

Introduction

The mass migration of refugees has been characterized by the proliferation of refugee camps as a means to contain refugees. These camps are often places of extreme deprivation and insecurity. These conditions are compounded by the fact that refugee camps, and humanitarianism more broadly, serve to depoliticize refugees. Thus, it would seem as if Agamben's (1998) understanding of camps as a place of 'bare life' and Arendt's (1976) notion of the right-less

refugee are true. The systems described by these thinkers treat refugees as either apolitical, or incapable of exercising political agency. However, the reality is much more complex. In this paper, I will argue that refugee camps are a space of political contestation in which refugees exercise their agency and shape their subjectivity. However, these aspects are constrained by humanitarian and statist notions about refugees' political agency and subjectivity.

The questions guiding this research are as follows: How do refugees exercise political agency in refugee camps? To what extent do refugee camps shape the political subjectivity of refugees? What types of constraints and factors influence refugees' political activity in refugee camps? How does the state perceive of and respond to political action in refugee camps? These questions will help provide a clearer image of refugees as distinct political agents. I will begin by explaining the systems that produce refugees and refugee camps. I will then outline the depoliticizing functions of these systems and camps. Following this, I will describe the theoretical framework used to analyze expressions of agency and subjectivity in Buduburam refugee camp in Ghana. This will be followed by a description of the history and politics of Buduburam. Using this case study, I will analyze how refugees asserted their political agency and subjectivity in relation to the camp and camp structures. Finally, I will analyze the state and humanitarian responses to the refugees' expressions of their agency. I will then make some general inferences from this case study and make my conclusions.

Refugee Camps: Background and Literature

Much of the scholarly work on refugee camps responds to Agamben's (1998) study of the "camp." Agamben defines sovereignty as the capacity for deciding on what constitutes an exception to the normal juridical-political order. This "state of exception" is a fundamental by-product of sovereignty and is simultaneously included and excluded from the juridical-political

order (pp. 21-27). For Agamben, this "state of exception" is materially embodied in the "camp" as a place that is excluded from, yet intrinsic to, the sovereign order (p. 123). By functionally removing inhabitants from the juridical-political order, the camp reduces humans to "bare life," or pure biological existence (Agamben, 1998, p. 120). To this end, the camp is fundamentally biopolitical, as it reduces individuals to their biological existence by stripping them of a self-constituted political existence through control and containment.

This argument relies heavily on Arendt's (1976) understanding of the connection between sovereignty, citizenship, and rights. Arendt argues that human rights are inextricably bound to membership in a political community. Consequently, when this membership is severed or revoked, individuals can no longer make claims based on "inalienable human rights" (p. 293). This is vitally important, as it allows for the construction of places of "exception," like camps, as theorized by Agamben. Because of this, refugees are the fundamental by-product of sovereignty, in that they are the "exception" to the sovereignty-citizenship dynamic. Notably, Agamben (1995) argues that despite being an intrinsic element of sovereignty, the refugee also presents a significant threat to sovereign order (p. 117). This is because "the refugee throws into crisis the original fiction of sovereignty" (Agamben, 1995, p. 117). As the living example of the fictional linkages between nation, citizenship, and sovereignty, the refugee shows how untenable these connections are. Ultimately, these elements combine to facilitate the creation of refugee camps, in which refugees exist outside a normal juridical-political order but need to be contained so as to maintain the tenuous status of sovereignty. These camps fundamentally remove political agency from refugees by virtue of reducing their subjectivity to that of a "refugee." As recognized by these thinkers, this subjectivity itself is a fundamental result of sovereignty and the citizenship-based order.

The subjectivity of a refugee is integral to the ways in which refugee camps function to remove refugees' agency. Notably, the humanitarian discourse revolving around refugees and refugee camps relies on the refugees' status as victims. Humanitarian aid, and the logic it produces, is contingent on refugees being absolute victims of their circumstances. As victims, refugees are supposed to abide by the rules of the refugee camp. Any subversion would be treated as political activity, which is strictly forbidden for refugees to engage in, insofar as they are victims removed from their original political community (Lecadet, 2016, p. 201). As Werker (2007) notes, the majority of humanitarian aid is reserved for those residing in refugee camps (p. 472). Thus, to accept humanitarian assistance is to give up one's political agency.

While Arendt and Agamben's analyses present a variety of valuable insights into the systems that produce refugees and refugee camps, neither fully engages with the concrete operations of refugee camps. This omission reifies the camp's ability to remove political agency and subjectivity from refugees, thus necessitating an analysis of how refugees may engage in political activity contrary to the camp's intended purpose of upholding the sovereignty and citizenship-based order. For example, Agamben's notion of "bare life" envisions the camp as successfully stripping refugees of any socio-political agency and subjectivity. In essence, it reduces refugees to deindividuated biological existence. Further, Arendt's examination of refugees implicitly accepts the depoliticization of refugees produced by their formal and legal removal from the political community.

The images presented by these thinkers and humanitarian discourse depict a similar vision of refugees and refugee camps. Refugees, being removed from their political community, are relegated to a subject position in which they are apolitical. Because of this, their political agency and subjectivity are constrained, if not entirely removed. However, this is not a purely discursive process. Refugee camps serve this depoliticizing function in a variety of

concrete ways. Jaji (2011) argues that refugee camps are a social technology constructed to control refugees (p. 224). Primarily, they physically contain refugees to keep them from disturbing the "national order of things" by engaging in the political life of the host country (Turner, 2015, p. 140). More subtly, the rules and regulations of the refugee camp serve to keep refugees in the position of receiving humanitarian aid and not expressing political opinions about the aid being received (Lecadet, 2016, p. 201). Importantly, Omata (2017) argues that depoliticization, by removing "traditional power structures" amongst the refugees, is used by humanitarian organizations to produce security in the refugee camp (p. 114). In sum, the influence of these forces is aimed at reproducing refugees as humanitarian victims and not active political subjects.

The depoliticizing function of refugee camps is well-recognized by scholars of refugees and refugee camps (Agier, 2010; Holzer, 2012; Lecadet, 2016; Omata, 2017; & Turner, 2015). However, there is a sharp disconnect between the total lack of agency and subjectivity typically seen to be characteristic of refugees and the reality described by the academic literature. Both Bradley (2014) and Oesch (2017) argue that the citizenship status of refugees is often more complex than the simplistic exclusion from the political community envisioned by Agamben and Arendt. Further, Holzer (2012) and Omata (2017) argue that the depoliticization of refugees in camps often precipitates resistance by refugees. Moreover, Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska (2017) contends that refugee camps can be an environment in which refugees make claims to national governments and international organizations. Similarly, Dzeamesi (2008) sees refugees as stakeholders, alongside international organizations and governments, in the development of refugee camps. Finally, Werker (2007) recognizes that refugee camps produce economies that are intertwined with the host society, thus making refugees unique political and economic subjects. As such, refugee camps are highly nuanced political spaces. Thus, an

understanding of refugees as distinct political agents and subjects vis-à-vis the exclusionary and depoliticizing functions of the camp is necessary.

The analysis required to contest the idea of refugees in camps as monolithic and apolitical subjects is based on multiple premises. Primarily, Agamben is correct in seeing the camp as a biopolitical space in which refugees' physical existence is governed and controlled in order to remove them from the political order. However, this paper will show that the camp is not wholly successful in this function. Alongside this, Arendt's understanding of the connections between the state, citizenship, and human rights is accepted. However, her approach does not accurately depict the reality of all refugee situations, thus making her conclusions about the depoliticization of refugees untenable. As such, it is accepted that refugee camps, and the systems that produce them, intend to depoliticize refugees by removing their agency and subjectivity. However, the completion and success of this process is questioned and rebuked.

The analytical framework employed in this paper relies on multiple foundations. Mainly, Turner's (2015) understanding of "hyper-politicization" is used to understand the effects of depoliticization. Turner argues that the forced depoliticization of refugees in camps removes traditional political strictures that formerly constrained refugees, thus opening new avenues for political agency and activity. For example, new identities and modes of social organization may be formed in refugee camps (p. 145). Relatedly, an understanding of agency and subjectivity is required to analyze how these concepts operate in refugee camps. Omata (2017) defines agency as "people's capacity to define their own choices, to devise strategies and to take initiatives to accomplish their objectives, even in the face of opposition from others" (p. 114). This definition of agency is useful because it reflects the fact that agency is never unadulterated and is always constrained. Allen (2002)

provides a useful formulation for understanding the intersection between agency, power, and subjectivity. According to Allen, individual subject positions are produced by power and social relations. However, individual agents are not simply the passive results of this process. Instead, as agents act, they are also acted upon (pp. 135-137). For our purposes, the refugee camp can thus be viewed as a biopolitical structure that influences the agency and subjectivity of refugees. However, refugees are actively involved in this process by shaping their own agency and subjectivity. This is the framework that will be used to analyze the politics of the Buduburam refugee camp in Ghana.

In what follows, I will examine how Ghana's Buduburam refugee camp, far from being functionally depoliticized, is a highly political environment. The idea that refugees in camps are fundamentally reduced to a status devoid of political agency and subjectivity will be contested. To do so, I will examine how Liberian refugees in Buduburam refugee camp exercised and asserted a distinct political agency and subjectivity in relation to their life in the camp. I will also analyze how the camp itself shaped this agency and subjectivity, and how the state responded to the refugees' assertion of political agency.

The Case of Buduburam Refugee Camp, Ghana

While a survey of a variety of refugee camps is desirable, it is outside the scope of this research paper. Because of this, the focus will be on Ghana's Buduburam refugee camp and its Liberian inhabitants. This camp was chosen because it exemplified a multitude of political dynamics. The camp's history is characterized by electoral politics, humanitarian politics, resource conflict, and resistance. It was also chosen because it has been the subject of diverse academic study including ethnographic, political, and legal analysis. Consequently, this case study provides an overview of the multiplicity of political

outcomes that can occur in refugee camps as a result of the complex assertions of refugees' agency and subjectivity.

There are multiple factors that shape Buduburam's particularity. Primarily, Ghana is often perceived to be a benevolent host state for refugees. For example, Ghana permits the free movement of refugees in the country (Holzer, 2012, p. 258). This standard cannot be applied to all states, especially those in which refugee encampment is required by law. Further, the close relationship resulting from the historical connections between Liberia and the United States augmented the general conditions of the camp. For example, Liberian refugees initially had increased access to resettlement programs, relative to other refugees in West Africa. As well as this, Ghana is the regional hub of the UNHCR (Holzer, 2012, p. 258). These aspects distinguish Buduburam from other refugee camps.

Despite these distinct characteristics, Buduburam serves as a useful analytical example for multiple reasons. Primarily, it exemplifies the "protracted refugee situation" in which two-thirds of UNHCR mandate refugees live (UNHCR, 2016, p. 22). As such, Buduburam provides a point of reference for camps that are in similar situations. Further, the camp was the site of multiple UNHCR repatriation schemes (Holzer, 2012, p. 262). Considering that repatriation is UNHCR's main "durable solution," Buduburam is a valuable example of the administration and outcomes of repatriation programs (UNHCR, 2016, p. 24). Moreover, at various points in its existence, Buduburam had formal refugee political representation, as well as informal political activity (Holzer, 2012). Because of this, the camp provides insight into the possible political outcomes in refugee camps. While Buduburam is a highly contextual case, its similarities with other camps make it a useful example of refugee camp politics.

History of the Bududuram Refugee Camp

The Bududuram refugee camp was created by Ghana in 1990, following the beginning of the First Liberian Civil War in 1989 (Omata, 2017, p. 116). An important factor in the war was the role of ethnicity. Liberia was established by freed American slaves, who dominated the country's politics until Samuel Doe, an indigenous Liberian, staged a coup in 1980. Doe remained in power until he was deposed in 1989 by Charles Taylor, an Americo-Liberian, thus beginning the war (Omata, 2017, p. 115). From 1989 to the 2003 ceasefire, many Liberians sought refuge in Ghana's Bududuram refugee camp. The population of the camp peaked at 42 000 people in 2003 and was reduced to 18 000 by 2008 (Omata, 2017, p. 116).

The 2003 peace agreement in Liberia shifted international aid and attention away from humanitarian assistance towards ensuring Liberia's recovery (Omata, 2017, p. 116). Between 2004 and 2007, the UNHCR operated a repatriation program for Liberian refugees. However, uptake on the program was slow and insignificant. This caused the UNHCR to prioritize the local integration of Liberian refugees. However, this was largely unsuccessful. As humanitarian aid dwindled, the camp conditions deteriorated accordingly (Omata, 2017, p. 117). This culminated in a series of protests that occurred between November 2007 and April 2008, which were concerned with camp resources and durable solutions (Holzer, 2012, p. 258). Eventually, the protests were put down and an agreement between Liberia, Ghana, and UNHCR calling for the repatriation of all Liberian refugees was concluded (Holzer, 2013, p. 854). However, this agreement never fully materialized. Despite being continually threatened, the camp still exists as of late 2017 (Ghanaweb, 2017). Bududuram camp's history, and the multiple attempts to close it, are integral to understanding the politics of the camp.

Bududuram Camp Politics

Authority over Bududuram refugee camp was divided between the UNHCR and the Ghanaian government (Holzer, 2012, p. 258). The camp was formally controlled by the Ghana Refugee Board, which created a Camp Management Team to oversee the camp's daily operations. This body was made up of the camp manager and several ministerial employees, all of whom were Ghanaian nationals. To help the management team perform its duties, a board of Liberian refugees called the Liberian Refugee Welfare Council (LRWC) was formed. The LRWC was composed of an executive board, administrative zone representatives from the camp, and a variety of departments ranging from education to sports (Omata, 2017, p. 118). Crucially, the executive of the LRWC was only democratically elected by camp inhabitants for four years during the camp's inception. Afterwards, the executive was appointed by the camp administration. The refugees themselves formed a variety of organizations, such as a Muslims' Council and an Elders' Council (Holzer, 2012, p. 261). In 2006, a group of representatives from each of Liberia's fifteen counties formed, calling themselves the "Heads of County." This group acted as an unofficial opposition to the LRWC (Omata, 2017, p. 123). As such, the political institutions in the camp were comprised of a variety of bodies that differed in their levels of formality and representativeness.

Initially, the UNHCR had presented refugees with a choice between repatriation, local integration, and resettlement. However, in 2007, the UNHCR began to reduce its involvement in the camp, thus making local integration the main option for refugees in Bududuram (Holzer, 2012, p. 263). However, this policy change precipitated protests in the camp (Essuman-Johnson, 2011, p. 120). Specifically, a group called "Refugee Women with Refugee Concerns" (Concerned Women) organized themselves to express their desire for resettlement or a strong repatriation package and to resist the shift to local integration (Holzer, 2012, p. 258). In November 2007,

these women were under the impression that they were to be involved in a public meeting with UNHCR and camp authorities to discuss durable solutions. However, the meeting never materialized, and the women used this as an opportunity for a formal protest (Holzer, 2012, p. 265).

In February 2008, the UNHCR revealed that resettlement programs were no longer taking place, and food aid for "'most vulnerable persons'" was to end within a month. In response to this, the women began a sit-down protest in the camp, which eventually resulted in the protesters' boycott of camp schools and the food aid program (Holzer, 2012, p. 266). The "Heads of County" and multiple refugee groups supported the protesters. The UNHCR invited the Concerned Women and other refugee groups to meet in Accra. The protesters developed a platform to bring to this meeting. However, upon arrival, they realized the meeting was with the Ghanaian Interior Minister, who lambasted and threatened the protesters. Eventually, police raided the camp and arrested more than 600 women and children who were subsequently relocated to a detention camp. However, the protests continued, and the police raided the camp again. This time, many men were arrested and sixteen were deported (Omata, 2017, p. 125). This resulted in the Liberian government formally complaining to the Ghanaian government over the treatment of the protesters. Finally, Liberia, Ghana, and the UNHCR concluded an agreement which stipulated that all Liberian refugees were to leave Ghana (Holzer, 2012, p. 269). Clearly, the prevalence of formal and informal political actors created a highly contested environment in Buduburam refugee camp.

Analysis

Refugees, Political Agency, and Subjectivity

In many refugee camps, the exercise of political agency by refugees is often a response to the depoliticizing function of refugee camps. In Bududuram, the depoliticization of Liberian refugees was a highly concrete process. Formally, refugees were precluded from selecting their representatives in the Liberian Refugee Welfare Council. Instead, their representatives were chosen by the camp administration (Holzer, 2012, p. 261). However, the LRWC was notoriously unpopular amongst refugees. This was because the LRWC formed a patrimonial relationship with the camp administration, in which the executive board was perceived by refugees to be focused on pleasing camp authorities rather than advocating on behalf of camp inhabitants (Omata, 2017, p. 121). Refugees expressed anger towards the LRWC because of its withholding of additional revenue and privileged information concerning resettlement (Omata, 2017, p. 122). As such, the formal sphere of politics within Bududuram was constrained to the point of being nonexistent. However, this depoliticization caused indignation amongst the refugees.

In response to the failure of formal political involvement, the refugees organized themselves collectively. One example of this was the “Heads of County” organization. This organization was composed of representatives from each of the Liberian counties. This informal organization brought together the various Liberian ethnic groups, in stark contrast to the ethnic divisions that made the Liberian Civil War so violent and intransigent (Holzer, 2012, p. 261). This example shows how forced depoliticization opens new possibilities for political activity in refugee camps. To understand the significance of this, it must be noted that the camp administration’s reason for ending LRWC elections was to minimize ethnic tensions in the camp (Omata, 2017, p. 119). By denying refugees formal political agency through elections, the camp administration

inadvertently facilitated the exercise of agency through other means, namely informal political activity.

The significance of the Heads of County as an expression of political agency is not only that it made demands and claims to LRWC, UNHCR, and the Ghanaian government on behalf of refugees, but that it transcended Liberia's ethnic conflict. This strongly reflects Turner's (2015) contention that the depoliticization that occurs in camps removes or alters existing identities, as well as forms of hierarchy and organization, thus producing a space of "hyper-politicization" (p. 145). In Buduburam, the Liberian refugees saw the ability to collectively improve their situation through self-organization. In doing so, they show that the depoliticization of refugee camps and the "bare life" purportedly produced by camps is not a given result. Instead, the Liberian refugees of Buduburam actively contested these aspects of living in a refugee camp. As such, the Heads of County's collective self-organization problematizes the success of the depoliticization of refugee camps and the image of the apolitical refugee.

The refugee as a monolithic subject position produced by the international state system is also undermined by the self-organization of Liberians in the Heads of County. Discursive portrayals rarely go beyond describing refugees as more than victims or humanitarian subjects, thus removing their self-made subjectivities. In Buduburam, the refugees' subject-making was linked to their status as outsiders in Ghana. As Jaji (2011) argues, exclusion is an integral part of the depoliticizing function of refugee camps (p. 223). Notably, Buduburam was situated in close proximity to Ghanaian communities (Tanle, 2013, p. 870). According to Tanle (2013), this often resulted in resource conflicts and cultural shock between Liberian refugees and Ghanaian citizens (pp. 869-876). Crucially, the Liberian refugees did not simply shed their identities upon arrival in Ghana. This reflects the identity aspect of the hyper-politicization that occurs in refugee camps. Rather than losing their

identities, the Liberian refugees reshaped their self-perception and became more entrenched in their identity as Liberians, rather than as specific ethnicities, in response to the pressures they faced in Ghana. To this end, the coalition between Liberian ethnic groups in the Heads of County is both an expression of political agency and subjectivity, resulting from the depoliticization of Buduburam refugee camp.

The Heads of County represented only a fraction of the informal political activity that occurred in Buduburam. At the time of the 2007-2008 protests, the Concerned Women emerged as the main representative political force for Liberian refugees. Like the Heads of County, the Concerned Women represent a highly complex example of agency and subjectivity. Naturally, there are a variety of gendered dimensions to the protests, considering that they revolved around the women of the camp. As Holzer (2012) argues, it is no coincidence that the protests were led by women. Following the Liberian Civil War, Liberian men were viewed as disproportionately violent and bellicose due to the atrocities of the conflict. Because of this, the refugee organizations participating in the protests actively limited male involvement in the protests, so as to better the movement's chances of success (Holzer, 2012, p. 261). Holzer primarily attributes this decision to matriarchal political traditions in Liberia that gave women great sway in the movement's leadership. However, she also emphasizes the importance of UNHCR's promotion of gender equality in the camp (p. 262). The predominance of women in the movement demonstrates how all aspects of political life become contested in a refugee camp.

The Concerned Women's decision to preserve female leadership in the protests reflects refugees' political agency in multiple ways. Mainly, it shows that the Liberian protesters reflected on the probability of outcomes in their situation. They recognized that Liberian men were perceived unfavourably and knew that their protest would be immediately put down if it were seen as a threat

(Holzer, 2012, p. 261). This decision-making shows how the female protesters calculated the likelihood of the success of their protests and strategized accordingly. The depoliticization of male refugees through negative stereotypes served as a way for female protesters to capitalize on their gender and thus increase the chances of their demands being heard.

While a clear example of agency, the female leadership of the protests also reflects complex patterns of political subject-making. As noted by Lecadet (2016), the UNHCR often depicts women as especially vulnerable refugees (p. 202). While this categorization may be true in certain situations, the political events at Buduburam show that this categorization must be problematized. Agier (2010) argues that the humanitarian categories that divide refugees between levels of vulnerability underpin the biopolitical function of the refugee camp (p. 39). The Concerned Women's experience in Buduburam directly contests this typical humanitarian notion. In response to the UNHCR's decision to end resettlement programs and a food program targeted at highly vulnerable refugees, the Concerned Women boycotted multiple camp institutions, including schools and food distribution (Holzer, 2012, p. 266). This is notable, as the protesters used their humanitarian aid as a point of contestation. Considering that humanitarian aid is the material embodiment of the refugees' status as apolitical victims, this protest represents a challenge to the conventional understanding of refugees as purely humanitarian wards. The women, rather than acquiescing to this status, used their humanitarian status to make claims to Ghana, Liberia, and the international community.

By making claims for their future, the Liberian refugees distinctly exercised their agency vis-à-vis the depoliticization of their camp, while simultaneously constructing various subjectivities. Examining the demands made by the refugees, and to whom they were made provides insight into this process. Considering the protracted status of the conflict, Buduburam did not resemble the temporary ideal that

characterizes most understandings of refugee camps. As depicted by Dzeamesi (2008), the Bududuram camp had developed into a highly complex built environment following the onset of the Liberian Civil War (p. 31). This is one reason why voluntary repatriation programs for Liberian refugees were largely ignored. Once resettlement programs were ended, the Liberians began to protest for better terms for repatriation. In April 2008, Liberian refugees were offered $100 USD to return to Liberia (Addo, 2016, p. 428). However, many refugees expected protection, skills training, work opportunities, and even free temporary accommodations upon arrival in Liberia (Addo, 2016, p. 432). As such, the repatriation package fell far short of the Liberian refugees' expectations.

This repatriation program partially precipitated the 2008 protests in the camp. One of the demands made by protesters was to raise cash compensation for repatriation to $1000 USD per person (Holzer, 2012, p. 271). Refugees noted that insecurity and poor economic prospects in Liberia made them hesitant to return without being financially stable (Addo, 2016, p. 432). These demands made during the protest depict a clear exercise of agency by the Liberian refugees. As Bradley (2014) argues, repatriation schemes provide refugees the capacity to renegotiate their connection to their original state and international organizations (p. 117). In this case, the Liberian refugees weighed the possible benefits and consequences of repatriation and decided that their return would be contingent on multiple concessions from Liberia and the UNHCR. To receive these concessions, the refugees protested the UNHCR-proposed repatriation package. This is a clear example of refugees exercising agency within the camp and outside the normal juridical-political framework. Interestingly, the refugees addressed their claims not only to Liberia and Ghana, but to Geneva as well (Holzer, 2013, p. 863). This is an important point, because it portrays the refugees making rights claims based on their status as citizens and international subjects. This reflects Oesch's (2017) contention that multiple subjectivities exist in refugee camps. Despite their

attempted depoliticization, the refugees exerted considerable agency while simultaneously participating in their own subject-making by making these claims through organized protest.

The subject-making demonstrated by the refugees addressing their claims to their national government and the broader international community depicts the underlying problems with the depoliticization that occurs in camps. As recognized by Oesch (2017) and Bradley (2014), refugees are not necessarily deprived of their legal status as citizens and are therefore not entirely removed from a discernable political community. To this end, the refugees' demands for greater rights in exchange for repatriation depicts the renegotiation that occurs between refugees and the state during the repatriation process, as identified by Bradley (p. 117). As such, the protests in Buduburam reflect the refugees reconstituting themselves as rights-bearing Liberians, rather than simply humanitarian victims.

Notably, the protesters did utilize their status as humanitarian subjects in another example of complex subject-making. As has been mentioned, the refugees addressed their claims directly to Geneva, the location of UNHCR headquarters. This shows that the refugees saw themselves not only as Liberian citizens, but as international human rights-bearing subjects as well. According to Holzer (2013), this is a result of UNHCR programs in Buduburam that taught refugees to view themselves as international legal subjects (p. 854). There are multiple reasons as to why the refugees accepted their status as international subjects. Primarily, the Liberian refugees in Buduburam conceived of law as being intrinsically linked to citizenship. Notably, they felt unserved by Ghanaian law and thus addressed their claims directly to the international community (Holzer, 2013, p. 859). Moreover, the protection of human rights in Buduburam was largely delegated to refugees themselves (Sagy, 2014, p. 222). While self-regulation is one of the many disciplinary functions of the camp, it provided the refugees with humanitarian language through which they could

communicate their rights claims. Because of this, Holzer argues that the Liberian refugees viewed themselves not only as the bearers of human rights, but also as the "keepers" of international law (p. 866). To this end, the Liberian refugees used their humanitarian status, bestowed upon them by the camp, to convey their demands for positive rights. Consequently, the Bududuram protests were as much about receiving rights as they were about protecting these rights.

These examples depict a nuanced reality of agency and subjectivity in refugee camps. The camp, rather than entirely reducing refugees to 'bare life' and being the sole factor in the production of refugees' subjectivity, is part of a process that involves refugees themselves. The depoliticization of the camp is certainly a structural constraint on the exercise of refugee agency and subject-making. However, as these examples have shown, the Liberian refugees responded to these structural factors through political resistance and self-organization. This reflects a significant level of agency and subject-making that is left unanalyzed in an examination of the refugee camp based on the assumption that the camp is an uninhibited structural force that shapes refugees' lives. The case of Bududuram dispels some of the discursive representations of refugees as purely passive actors, incapable of exercising agency and constructing their own subjectivity. However, the UNHCR and Ghanaian government's response to the refugees' protests and demands affirms the relationship between the sovereignty and citizenship-based political order, camps, and humanitarianism.

The UNHCR and Ghanaian response to the refugees' protests demonstrates how refugees are perceived as a threat to the host society. Ghana had been widely viewed as a benevolent host country for refugees (Dzeamesi, 2008, p. 38). However, this hospitality lasted insofar as the Liberian refugees remained apolitical victims of their situations. During the protests, the refugees rebuked UNHCR's durable solutions of local integration or a voluntary

repatriation package. Instead, they preferred resettlement to a third country or an improved repatriation package. The refugees dismissed local integration because of the discriminatory employment practices, cultural shocks, and feelings of inferiority they faced in Ghana (Tanle, 2013, pp. 876-877). However, the Ghanaian interior minister described the refugees' distaste for local integration as an "insult" and an expression of "ingratitude to a country that has protected, fed and given their children free education" (Essuman-Johnson, 2011, p. 121). This specific response to the refugees' demands perfectly summarizes the state's humanitarian position towards the Liberian refugees. The government preferred refugees as humanitarian subjects capable of only receiving assistance, rather than as agents capable of making decisions and claims about their future.

The Ghanaian interior minister's statement reflects how the state is involved in producing refugees as apolitical subjects. The Ghanaian government was also actively involved in curtailing the refugees' political agency by stopping the protests and taking punitive measures towards the protesters. The Ghanaian interior minister had publicly argued that the use of physical force to put down the protests would be justifiable on the basis that the protests were led by Liberian men (Holzer, 2012, p. 268). To justify a crackdown, the Ghanaian government characterized the protests as a "threat to the security of the state" (Omata, 2017, p. 125). This claim is demonstrably false, and it relied on stereotypes about Liberian men that served to render their political agency illegitimate. Further, the UNHCR implored the government to intervene in the protests to end the refugees' boycott of the food program (Holzer, 2012, p. 266). These positions were used to justify the arrest of 600 women and children in Buduburam by the Ghanaian police (Holzer, 2012, p. 268). That women were arrested, and not men, proves that the Ghanaian government knew the real source of the protests and relied on prejudices against Liberian refugees to further depoliticize them. This example reflects Jaji's (2011) contention that refugee

camps serve to protect the host society by containing and depoliticizing refugees (p. 222). To this end, the Liberian refugees were constructed as both ungrateful humanitarian subjects and threats. This, then, was the state response to the Liberian refugees exercising agency by making claims that reflected their subjectivity as refugees, citizens, and international subjects.

These examples of refugee agency and subjectivity, as well as the factors that constrain their expression, demonstrate the complex relationship between refugees and refugee camps. The experience of Liberian refugees in Buduburam reflects Turner's (2015) contention that depoliticization, rather than entirely precluding political activity, opens different channels through which politics can take place (p. 145). Specifically, the camp administration's decision to end LRWC elections resulted in the self-organization of refugees in various forms. This shows that depoliticization, rather than removing refugees' agency, forced the refugees to express their political agency through other means. The refugees' protests and demands provide insight into how camps, rather than inherently stripping refugees of subjectivity, are places of intricate subject-making activities. However, the refugees' expressions of agency and subjectivity were limited by the UNHCR and Ghana's ideas about the proper subject-position for refugees. Specifically, the refugees were seen as ungrateful and threatening in their demands for resources and better durable solutions. Ghana and the UNHCR's response to the protest reifies the typical representation of refugees as apolitical and incapable of exercising their agency because of their status as victims. Thus, Buduburam demonstrates the complex web of agency, power, and subjectivity present in refugee camps.

The case of Buduburam shows that refugee camps are a space of political contestation in which refugees shape their political agency and subjectivity. However, these aspects are also constrained by humanitarian and statist notions about refugees' political agency and subjectivity. Rather than being places purely of exclusion and

bare life, refugee camps represent a complex intersection between state imperatives, humanitarian logic, and refugee agency. Bududuram depicts how refugee agency is neither wholly uninhibited nor entirely absent. The attempted depoliticization of Liberian refugees resulted in the emergence of informal political activity aimed at improving the refugees' future. As such, the camp is an intrinsically political space in which refugees exercise their agency in relation to the camp's depoliticizing function. The Liberian refugees self-organized to contest their lack of representation within the camp administration, as well as UNHCR and Ghana's insistence on unfavourable durable solutions. Further, the unique subjectivities produced by the Liberian refugees exemplify how refugee camps and their inhabitants are not monolithic entities that can be depicted entirely through humanitarian language. However, the case also shows how the refugees' expressions of agency and subjectivity are constrained by statist and humanitarian ideas about 'proper' activities and subjectivities for refugees. These ideas are materialized in the refugee camp, and thus act as the main constraint on refugees' exercise of agency and subject-making.

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