

# **Rivalry, Ethnicity, and Asylum Admissions Worldwide**

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Why do countries welcome some refugees and treat others poorly? Existing explanations suggest that the assistance refugees receive is a reflection of countries' wealth or compassion. However, statistical analysis of a global dataset on asylum admissions shows that states' approaches to refugees are shaped by foreign policy and ethnic politics. States admit refugees from adversaries in order to weaken those regimes, but they are reluctant to accept refugees from friendly states. At the same time, policymakers favor refugee groups who share their ethnic identity. Aside from addressing a puzzling real-world phenomenon, this article adds insights to the literature on the politics of migration and asylum.

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In the US, asylum policies favor Cubans over Haitians. Jordanian borders were largely open to Syrians fleeing violence, but Palestinians were turned back. Rohingya refugees in India complain they are treated worse than other ethnic groups escaping Burma. Almost every country in the world hosts refugees – examples of bias, discrimination, and double standards abound.

In the face of globalized trade and investment, regulating migration is often portrayed as the last bastion of state sovereignty (Dauvergne 2008, 47). But these examples show that countries do not always jealously guard their borders. While some forced migrants are shut out, others get a ‘free pass.’ Why would a country welcome some refugees and treat others poorly? More specifically, why do countries accept some asylum applications and reject others?

The existing literature suggests that the assistance refugees receive is a reflection of countries’ wealth or compassion. Instead, I argue that states’ approaches to refugees are shaped by foreign policy and ethnic politics. Although previous work has hinted at these dynamics separately, I combine them into a two-part framework and identify the specific incentives that operate at international and domestic levels. Interstate rivalry and affinity with coethnics lead to generous asylum policies, while refugees from allies who lack ethnic ties receive harsh treatment. Going beyond the existing empirical literature’s focus on the US and other Western countries, I find support for this theory with statistical analysis showing that global asylum admissions are negatively correlated with the friendliness of relations between states, and positively correlated with refugee ethnic affinity. This paper’s contribution is, thus, threefold: 1) it combines foreign policy and ethnic politics in a single framework; 2) it provides a theoretical argument that is more well-developed than existing work, by theorizing the specific causal mechanisms that would lead countries to welcome refugees from rivals and ethnic kin; and 3) it enlarges the scope of the analysis beyond the US to cover worldwide patterns.

Since worldwide displacement is at an all-time high, and the situations of refugees are often so dire, understanding the sources of asylum decisions is important in its own right. However, this study also contributes to two growing bodies of research. First, it adds to the literature on the politics of migration and asylum (for surveys of this literature, see, e.g., Cornelius and Rosenblum (2005); FitzGerald and Arar (2018); Malkki (1995)). Second, it is relevant to research on the international sources of domestic politics (Gourevitch 1978; Putnam 1988; Moravcsik 1993; Keohane and Milner 1996; Gourevitch 2002; Milner 1997; Müller and Risse-Kappen 1993; Zürn 1993). A country's response to refugees is a domestic policy issue, as Jacobsen (1996, 662) reminds us, but one that is very likely to be impacted by international influences.

There were nearly 26 million refugees by the end of 2018, of which more than 6 million were stuck in protracted situations. Refugee crises in Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria, and elsewhere were ongoing at the time of writing. Exploring when and why the rights of these vulnerable populations are respected or abused has enormous normative and policy importance.

## **Review of the Literature**

The question of why countries might accept or reject asylum applications remains understudied. Many studies of refugees in international relations have instead focused on conflict as a cause or consequence of refugee flows, while others have sought to analyze international cooperation in the global refugee regime. Meanwhile, the literature on asylum policymaking by receiving countries has tended to be narrow in geographic scope or otherwise limited analytically and empirically. This section reviews this existing research, establishing the need for a theoretically-grounded set of hypotheses regarding refugee responses, that are tested more broadly and systematically across multiple countries and regions.

Most work on refugees and international relations has tended to concentrate on security and conflict, rather than asylum policymaking. Some studies have emphasized the onset of war as a trigger for refugee flows (Weiner 1996; Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989), and quantitative studies have corroborated this intuition (Moore and Shellman 2004; Schmeidl 1997; Melander and Oberg 2006). Other research, like Dowty and Loescher (1996); Posen (1996); Roberts (2010); Salehyan (2008); Weiner (1993); and Weiner (1995); Choi and Salehyan (2013); Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006); Stedman and Tanner (2003); Lischer (2005), has reversed the causal arrow to examine the role of refugee flows in generating violence. Drawing on the Copenhagen School's securitization theory (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998), others have examined the social construction of asylum as a security issue, particularly after 9/11 (Hammerstad 2011; Brouwer 2002; Huysmans 2006; Guild 2003). Although this literature has shed light on the links between refugee flows and security, it has not examined the implications of international security for asylum policymaking in the host state.

Meanwhile, scholarship on international cooperation in the global refugee regime (e.g., Thielemann 2003; Betts 2009b) approaches refugee protection as a public good and seeks to examine the roots of collective action failure and burden-sharing, often in the context of specific refugee crises. More recently, Dreher, Fuchs, and Langlotz (2019) have examined whether foreign aid reduces refugee outflows. This literature tends to focus on interactions between different states as well as international organizations, but does not offer generalizable theories regarding the determinants of individual states' refugee policies.

To be sure, a number of scholars have examined asylum policy in the US; an important case of course, though hardly representative of refugee-receiving countries. Many of these studies emphasize what Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo (1989, 273) have termed the 'Haitian-

Cuban syndrome’. During the 1980s, the US was willing to define Cuban asylum-seekers as refugees since they were coming from an unfriendly communist country. However, similar treatment was not extended to Haitian asylum-seekers. The influence of ideological competition during the Cold War is documented along similar lines by Teitelbaum (1984, 430), Loescher and Scanlan (1986), Adamson (2006, 190), Gabaccia (2015, 205), Rudolph (2006, 47-54), Totten (2017), and Toft (2007, 143). Authors who have extended their analysis into the post-Cold War period have reported similar findings: Rosenblum and Salehyan (2004) assert that instrumental concerns (along with normative factors) shape US asylum enforcement, while Rottman, Fariss, and Poe (2009) contend that 9/11 has increased the influence of political interests on asylum decisions in the US. However, whether these strategic dynamics are widely generalizable beyond the US has not been established.

Indeed, much of the existing scholarship on states’ refugee policies has been narrow in geographic scope. For example, Freeman (2006) applies a single theoretical framework to permanent residence visas, labour visas, non-permanent visas, and asylum, though this is only intended to apply to Western liberal democracies. The limited quantitative work on relevant topics has also focused on Western countries. For instance, Holzer, Schneider, and Widmer (2000a) examine the influence of decentralization and discretion on Swiss cantons’ treatment of individual asylum applications. For his part, Neumayer (2005, 44) concludes that asylum recognition rates in Western European are ‘fairly sensitive with respect to the likely merit of the asylum claim’ though it is worth noting that his analysis does not include instrumental or interest-based variables like those discussed above. Others (like Thielemann 2006; Hatton 2009; Vink and Meijerink 2003; Keogh 2013; Toshkov 2014; Weber 2018; Neumayer 2004; Brekke, Røed, and Schøne 2017; Barthel and Neumayer 2015; Hatton 2016; Holzer, Schneider, and

Widmer 2000b; Vogler and Rotte 2000) investigate the determinants of asylum arrivals and the impact of Western countries' deterrent policies. The prevailing focus on Western countries in the literature, even while most of the world's refugees reside elsewhere, limits our ability to draw generalizable conclusions about refugee treatment.

Meanwhile, research on asylum policies outside Western countries has tended to be descriptive rather than theoretical (Basok 1990; Ferris 1985; Veney 2007). For example, Milner (2009) explores the evolution over time of state responses to refugees in Africa. Relying on qualitative case studies of Kenya, Tanzania, and Guinea, he documents how asylum policies were shaped by historical factors, the size of refugee flows, donor states and international assistance, security concerns, domestic public opinion, and regional politics. Though this work provides a rich descriptive account of asylum politics, it has not developed generalizable theoretical explanations.

Importantly, Jacobsen (1996) provides list of factors that might shape least developed countries' responses to mass influxes. She emphasizes four sets of factors, providing some examples of each: 1) the allocation of legal-bureaucratic of responsibility for refugees, 2) international relations, including the global refugee regime and the refugee-sending country; 3) the local host community's economic absorption capacity and social receptiveness; and 4) national security considerations. Jacobsen's focus is on generating a comprehensive listing, but her discussion calls for greater elaboration and rigorous testing. For example, she asserts that 'host governments can adopt policies toward refugees that are intended to embarrass or pressure unfriendly sending countries ... [because t]he bestowal of refugee status upon asylum seekers implies that the sending government persecutes its people' (665). However, she does not specify the mechanisms that underlie this dynamic (as I do in the following section). Similarly, she notes

that ‘ethnic affinity appears to be a strong predictor of acceptance’ (669), but does not break down why that would be the case (as I do in the following section). Jacobsen also relies primarily anecdotal evidence, leaving open the question of whether and to what extent these causal relationships hold around the world.

A small number of studies have adopted a global, cross-national approach to examine the strategic use of refugees to achieve foreign policy or domestic goals, but these do not fully answer the question of why countries accept or reject asylum applications. For instance, Greenhill (2010) examines sending states’ use of refugee flows as an instrument of coercion. However, this work does not shed light on refugee flows that are not deliberately created and that may originate from friendly (i.e. non-concession-seeking) states. In a more recent study, Moorthy and Brathwaite (2016, 11-3) report the surprising finding that interstate rivalry and alliance are **both** correlated with hosting larger numbers of refugees. Unfortunately, their reliance on refugee population size data does not allow them to distinguish between government decisions to welcome or reject refugees on the one hand, and destination choice on the part of those refugees on the other. In short, the literature lacks a well-developed theoretical argument for why countries accept or reject asylum applications that has been tested across countries and regions. The following sections build on, and go beyond, existing research in order to fill that gap.

### **Explaining Generosity and Rejection**

Refugees undoubtedly entangle international relations and domestic politics. On the one hand, refugees are citizens of one country who cross international borders to seek the protection of another state. Their rights are enshrined in international law, and their plight often attracts international attention. On the other hand, refugees feature in domestic debates about identity

and nationalism, and sometimes figure prominently in politicians' campaign rhetoric. Refugee flows can put strains on the economy and infrastructure and foment domestic resentment or political instability.

I combine international and domestic mechanisms to explain the variation in states' asylum policies. I argue that leaders can use refugees to reassure international allies and exert pressure on rivals. At the same time, they have domestic political incentives to favour refugee groups who share their ethnic identity.

I define 'asylum policy' as a set of measures adopted by a national government to regulate the entry, exit, and conditions of residence of foreign asylum-seekers and refugees. This definition includes both laws or regulations and their implementation. Asylum policy varies within any single country, both over time and across refugee groups.

A 'refugee' is a person who seeks refuge outside her country of origin or nationality due to a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, social group membership, or political opinion. Alternatively, the refugee may have fled her country due to foreign intervention, interstate war, internal turbulence, or other events seriously disturbing the public order. This definition matches the usage of the term in the relevant international agreements: the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.<sup>1</sup> An

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<sup>1</sup> While the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol only cover individuals subject to persecution, the OAU Convention expands the definition to accommodate situations of mass flight. (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (entered into force April 22, 1954); Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (entered into force Oct. 4, 1967); OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (entered into force June 20, 1974)).



‘asylum-seeker’ is an individual who asserts that she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated.

These definitions distinguish refugees from voluntary migrants and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Whereas forced migration is conceptualized as flight from persecution or conflict, voluntary migration is assumed to arise from economic motives. In practice, of course, elements of coercion and volition are often implicated in both forced and voluntary migration (Betts 2009a, 4-5). Refugee status also requires that an international border be crossed, thereby excluding individuals who flee their homes but remain within the territory of their country.

I use the terms ‘sending country’ and ‘country of origin’ interchangeably to mean the country of the refugee’s nationality. Meanwhile, ‘receiving country,’ ‘host country,’ or ‘country of refuge’ mean the country where the refugee seeks refuge.

Throughout the discussion below, I use the terms policymaker, leader, and central decision-maker to refer to the receiving country’s head of government.

### ***Refugees, Foreign Policy, and Ethnic Identity***

To explain variation in asylum policy, I combine foreign policy and ethnic identity in a two-part theory summarized in Table 1. I hypothesize that, *ceteris paribus*, policymakers will adopt generous policies when refugees are fleeing a hostile state and share the policymaker’s ethnic identity. They will adopt restrictive policies when refugees are fleeing a friendly state and do not share the policymaker’s ethnic identity.

**TABLE 1. Theoretical predictions**

		<i>Sending Country Relations</i>	
		<b>Hostile</b>	<b>Friendly</b>
<i>Affinity with Refugee Group</i>	<b>Co-Ethnic</b>	Generous Asylum Policy	Intermediate Asylum Policy
	<b>No Ethnic Tie</b>	Intermediate Asylum Policy	Restrictive Asylum Policy

Both parts of the theory rely on the idea of competitive relations. Internationally, strategic competition between rivals motivates generous asylum policies. Domestically, competition between ethnic groups will result in generous or restrictive asylum policies depending on whether refugees are ethnic kin of the group in power. In deciding how to treat refugees, the policymaker is concerned with political survival at each level. At the same time, both sets of mechanisms have to do with the identity of refugees: nationality at the international level and ethnicity at the domestic level.

The first part of the theory deals with foreign policy, and more specifically international political competition between the sending and receiving countries. The intuition derives from an assumption that the decision to grant formal refugee status to individuals usually implies condemnation of their sending government. Granting refugee status is an acknowledgement that individuals have a legitimate fear of persecution, thus implicitly reproaching their country of origin for engaging in (or failing to prevent) said persecution. Conversely, when the receiving country supports the sending country it might mistreat refugees who are political dissidents, militant opponents, or class enemies of the sending government.

There are many historical examples of this dynamic. In January 1990, there was a debate over whether Chinese students should be allowed to remain in the US after graduation because

they feared persecution in China. President George H. W. Bush argued in favour of extending their visas, while many congressional representatives wanted to extend formal asylum status in order to condemn China. In another famous case, when the US permitted the Shah of Iran to enter the US for medical reasons, ‘many Iranians regarded it as a form of asylum and [Iranian revolutionaries] used it as an occasion for taking American hostages’ (Weiner 1993, 106-7).

A policymaker’s choice of asylum policy is shaped, I argue, by three interrelated factors that lead them to treat refugees from rivals generously, while cracking down on refugees from allies. First, a receiving country’s asylum policy can undermine or bolster the sending government. Adopting a generous asylum policy is assumed to encourage citizens of the sending country to flee, with consequences for the sending government’s stability. On the other hand, a restrictive policy may dissuade them: asylum-seekers may be deterred if there is a low chance of their asylum claim being accepted (Neumayer 2005, 49). As the East German case demonstrates, a mass exodus can even stimulate regime collapse (Naimark 1992; Hirschman 1993; Torpey 1992; Mueller 1999; Pfaff 2006).

Second, asylum policies can serve to embarrass or commend the sending country (Jacobsen 1996). The flight of citizens can be used as evidence that people are ‘voting with their feet’ in an ideological or other conflict. This can serve to discredit an unfriendly sending country in the eyes of the world as well as its own people. The receiving country will not want to impose these reputational (or public relations) costs on friendly countries, however. There are many examples of this dynamic from the Cold War. For example, a 1953 National Security document states that it is US policy to ‘encourage defection of all USSR nationals’, because defection ‘inflicts a psychological blow to Communism’ and ‘counters Communist propaganda in the Free

World' (qtd. in Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1986, 155).<sup>2</sup> Most recently, the Lebanese government refused to recognize those fleeing friendly Syria as refugees, calling them 'those fleeing the unrest'. According to Syrian activists, some asylum-seekers entering Lebanon through the Beka'a valley were arrested by the Lebanese army (Doyle 2012). For its part, the Syrian government has prevented individuals from crossing its border into Jordan and laid landmines along escape routes into Lebanon and Turkey ("Jordan-Syria" 2012; "Syria Laying Landmines" 2012).

Third, asylum policies can be used to promote external activities opposing the sending government. Host countries can allow or deny refugees the ability to speak out against their country of origin, send money back home in support of the opposition, or engage in cross-border guerrilla activities. For instance, the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 was launched using Cuban exiles.

The second part of the theory deals with ethnic identity and domestic political competition between ethnic groups. Following Wimmer (2008), ethnic boundaries are taken to be the result of long-term interaction and negotiation processes in a society. They may be linguistic, racial, and/or religious.

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, from 1952 to 1980 American law defined a refugee as a person fleeing "from a Communist-dominated country or area, or from any country within the general area of the Middle East." Immigration and Nationality Act, Section 203(a)(7) (qtd. in Teitelbaum 1984, 430). Teitelbaum (1984) also cites as an example of this argument a 1982 memo from the Central American Refugee Center in Washington: "... granting political asylum to Salvadorans communicates world-wide that the government of El Salvador violates the human rights of its citizens. Since the US aids and supports the government of El Salvador, it does not want to communicate this message..." (qtd. in Teitelbaum 1984, 439).

Consider a stylized example in which there are two or more ethnic groups in the receiving country. One group is in power while the others are excluded from power. Any of these groups may constitute the majority, or they may be balanced numerically. The central decision-maker is assumed to belong to the ethnic group in power. He wants to retain political power, but the regime type of the receiving country may be democratic or not.

Here, the policymaker will have three incentives to extend favourable treatment to ethnic kin and unfavourable treatment to ethnic others, I argue. First, the policymaker has a better chance of maintaining his hold on power if he accommodates his constituency's desires. Domestic publics generally sympathize with refugees who share with them a common identity, while they might regard ethnic others as a threat (Weiner 1993, 10, 105). For example, support for the predominantly Sunni Syrian asylum-seekers in Lebanon is divided along sectarian lines. Lebanese Sunnis rallied to assist the asylum-seekers, as did Lebanese Prime Minister Sa'ad al-Hariri's Future Movement. In contrast, the Maronite Christian patriarch declared that Syria's regime was the closest to democracy in the Arab world (Doyle 2012).

Second, the policymaker prefers to increase or at least preserve the relative size of his constituency to ensure his political survival. Recall that the policymaker is assumed to belong to the ethnic group in power, but there are other ethnic groups that are excluded from power. Generous asylum policies towards his ethnic kin can increase the size of the leader's constituency, while restrictive policies towards his ethnic others can ensure that the constituency's relative size is maintained. For example, refugees fleeing the 1999 Kosovo crisis were welcomed by their kin in Albania. In contrast, Kosovar refugees were shunned by Macedonia for fears they would disrupt that country's ethnic balance and tip the scales in favour of its ethnic Albanian minority (see Williams and Zeager 2004). In a democracy, this is

particularly the case if there is a possibility of refugees acquiring voting rights. Indeed, Sadiq (2009) has shown that even illegal immigrants can acquire documents that enable them to exercise suffrage in developing countries. Even without voting, refugees can form a bloc that could be mobilized, for example, in situations of ethnic conflict. In short, the leader can use asylum policies to ensure that the domestic ethnic balance changes only in favour of his support coalition.

And third, asylum policies can help foster in-group favouritism. Building on instrumentalist accounts of ethnic conflict, as in Barth (1969); Bates (1983); Fearon and Laitin (1996); Hardin (1995, 2010); and Waters (1990), leaders may use refugees as part of their efforts to encourage ethnic mobilization. To remain in power, leaders may foster in-group bias (the tendency to favour one's own group, described by Tajfel (1981); and Tajfel and Turner (1986)) amongst their constituents. Supporting ethnic kin (and cracking down on ethnic others) fosters in-group cohesion and favouritism. These tendencies can then help maintain domestically-based political coalitions.

The theory yields a number of observable implications. For a snapshot of a host country at a single point in time, we should observe differences in policy across refugee groups. Holding time constant, this variation in policy across refugee groups should be explained by relations with the sending country and ethnic affinity, all else equal. Looking at a single host country over time, we should expect major shifts in asylum policy to coincide with breakpoints or discontinuities in either or both relations with the sending country and ethnic affinity. Although we may not expect the ethnic identity of a refugee group to shift over short periods of time, changes in the receiving country's leadership may alter the **relevant** ethnic identity. Though it cannot expose a policymaker's subjective intentions, a correlation between a country's refugee

policies on the one hand, and sending country relations and ethnic affinity on the other, would be consistent with the theory described above.

Overall, the theory does not require restrictive scope conditions. In other words, the influence of foreign policy and ethnic politics should apply across a broad range of countries and over time. I expect that where ethnic cleavages are not politically salient, the leader will not face domestic pressures, and the logic of international competition will apply alone. Alternatively, policymakers can focus solely on domestic mechanisms if there is state failure in the sending country, such that the central government is so weak or ineffective as to be unable to project power and exert unrivalled authority on its territory (Zartman 1995). Since state failure precludes the possibility of strategic relations between the failed state and countries that are receiving its refugees, the international mechanisms become unimportant.

### *Alternative Explanations*

Two main factors are often advanced to explain state responses to refugees: resources and humanitarianism. Hosting refugees entails material costs and can therefore be more demanding during economic downturns. As a result, public opinion on asylum policy may be shaped by economic concerns.<sup>3</sup> Refugees increase competition for jobs and social services like housing, education, and health. In developed countries, the welfare state may have to provide for them. And in developing countries, refugees' use of firewood, consumption of water, and grazing of livestock can result in ecological strain (Weiner 1993; Jacobsen 1996; Loescher 1989). Host

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<sup>3</sup> Some research on individual attitudes towards immigration points to the importance of labor market competition and/or the fiscal burden on public services (Mayda 2006; Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Facchini and Mayda 2009; Hanson, Scheve, and Slaughter 2007; Dolmas and Huffman 2004). Still, several studies cast doubt on these economic self-interest arguments (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010; Citrin et al. 1997).

countries are often vocal about these concerns, citing them to justify actions like border closures and refugee encampment. Kibreab (1989) cites economic factors to defend keeping refugees in spatially segregated sites in Africa. Meanwhile, Whitaker (2008) argues that international funding shortages contributed to a shift in Tanzania's refugee policies.

According to this explanation, economic capacity should determine a state's ability to deal with the resource demands imposed by refugee inflows. Countries that have low economic absorption capacity should regard refugee inflows as economically and socially destabilizing (Weiner 1993, 10). Further, receptiveness of refugees should rise and fall with a country's economic performance.

Alternatively, states may fashion their policies to reflect 'principled beliefs' that align with international human rights norms (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Sikkink 1993; Goldstein and Keohane 1993). Though largely absent from the literature on the politics of human rights, refugees often flee their countries due to human rights violations. Moreover, displaced individuals are entitled to certain universal rights and freedoms in the country that receives them. Indeed, refugee law is considered part of the international human rights regime. The 'responsibility to protect' doctrine may be relevant to refugee protection as well (Rimmer 2010; Barbour and Gorlick 2008; Martin 2010). States may conform with norms like *non-refoulement* (which forbids returning a refugee to a country where she might face persecution) out of genuine altruism and empathy or because they seek international legitimacy and national esteem (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). This account can also be linked to solidarist and cosmopolitan conceptions of international society, which stress Kant's principle of universal hospitality (Hurrell 2011; Benhabib 2004).



If humanitarianism influences asylum policies, then countries ought to prioritize those individuals who are most vulnerable. In other words, states would be more generous to refugee groups who are fleeing more pervasive persecution or danger (e.g. widespread human rights violations, deadly violence, or large-scale natural disaster).

A final possibility is evoked by the title of an important book, ‘Refugee Roulette’ (Ramji-Nogales, Schoenholtz, and Schrag 2009). Perhaps asylum policies are arbitrary, determined by the idiosyncratic characteristics and decisions of low-level government employees. When a receiving country’s refugee population is small, there may be few reasons for central decision-makers to concern themselves with formulating a consistent asylum policy. If this is the case, then there should be no discernible patterns in the treatment of various refugee groups.

### **Asylum Admissions Worldwide**

To test my theoretical expectations against these competing explanations, I examine why countries accept or reject asylum applications. Granting entry to asylum-seekers is often the most visible and highly publicized aspect of countries’ asylum policies. Analysing admission rates is also more suitable in this context than looking at laws or regulations. Various refugee-receiving countries lack domestic legislation on refugees altogether. Even for those countries that have adopted specific asylum legislation, implementation gaps may exist.

Specifically, I investigate admission decisions undertaken at the level of the individual asylum-seeker and exclude situations where members of a large-scale influx are collectively accorded *prima facie* refugee status. Governments vary in their capacity to control their borders, and many receiving countries have porous and inadequately policed borders (Weiner 1993, 5,

22).<sup>4</sup> Unlike *prima facie* refugee status (and, perhaps, the total number of asylum applications lodged), individual asylum decisions should not depend on the government's ability to police the border or ease of access for refugees.

Individual asylum decisions are not generally high-stakes events involving top-ranking government officials. Instead, refugee status determination procedures involve numerous day-to-day decisions by individual bureaucrats, officers, and/or judges. Investigating whether leaders' concerns related to foreign policy and ethnic politics percolate down to influence such micro-level decisions constitutes a 'hard test' of my argument. Rosenblum and Salehyan (2004) similarly rely on asylum recognition rates to test hypotheses related to macro-level interests and norms in the US. Further, (Miller, Camp Keith, and Holmes 2015) have shown that high-level national interests can shape low-level decision-making by immigration judges in the US.

There is, to be sure, more to refugee policy than acceptance of asylum applications. However, decision-making around asylum applications tends to be closely related to other aspects of refugee policy, including admission at the border, freedom to reside outside camps, and access to the labour market (Abdelaaty 2014).

## ***Data***

To examine why countries accept some asylum applications and reject others, my unit of observation is the directed dyad-year (an example of a directed dyad-year is Rwanda-to-Tanzania in 1996). My argument expects a given host country to treat differently refugee groups from different origin countries, making the directed dyad-year the most appropriate unit of

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<sup>4</sup> Although Veney (2007, 65) argues that "even in poor countries the state is more than able to exercise sovereignty by deciding who to let in, who to keep out, how to treat those who are let in, and who to kick out when they are no longer wanted."

observation. In using this unit of observation, I also follow previous quantitative studies of asylum decision-making (e.g., Neumayer 2005).

The dependent variable is the receiving country's 'recognition rate' for asylum-seekers from the sending country under the terms of the 1951 Refugee Convention.<sup>5</sup> The recognition rate reflects the proportion of asylum applications approved in any one year, and is reported in the 'UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database' (UNHCR n.d.).<sup>6</sup> Higher recognition rates are considered more generous, while lower rates are considered more restrictive.

The analysis here is restricted only to those directed dyad-years in which there was some positive number of applications and the receiving country's government (not the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR) was responsible for refugee status determination. Most states conduct this process themselves for some portion of their application caseload: 112 receiving countries had a government-run status determination procedure for individual asylum applications in 2018.

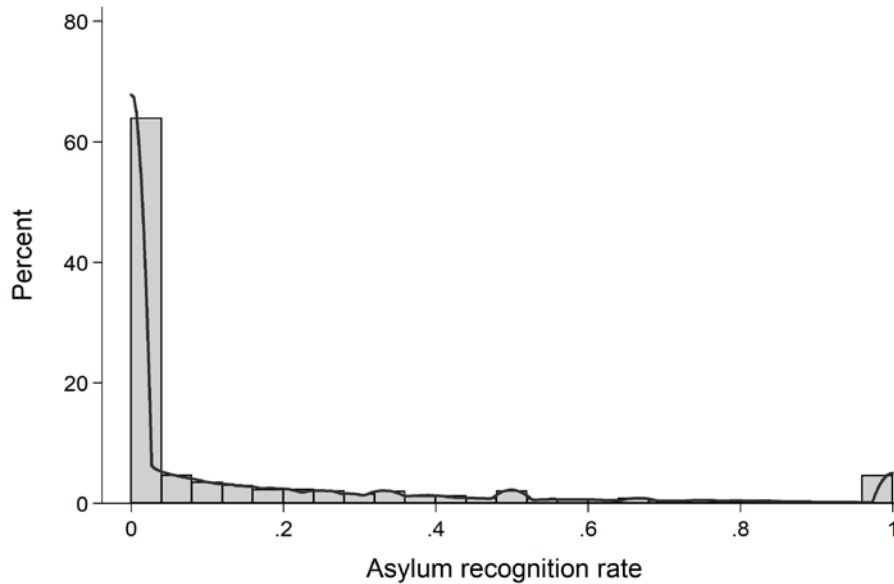
Figure 1 shows the distribution of the dependent variable.

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<sup>5</sup> The "UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database" reports two types of recognition rates, refugee recognition rates and total recognition rates. The latter includes individuals who have been accorded complementary protection status. Receiving states may recognize an individual as a 1951 Convention refugee or grant them complementary protection status. The latter is generally used for individuals who, though not eligible for Convention refugee status, may still have sound reasons for not wishing to return to their home country. The two statuses usually entail different rights and entitlements for the asylum-seeker, with complementary protection often considered a subsidiary or temporary form of protection. My analysis covers only refugee recognition rates.

<sup>6</sup> More precisely, UNHCR calculates the recognition rate as the number of decisions recognizing asylum claims in any one year, relative to the number of claims decided upon (UNHCR 2010).

**FIGURE 1.** *Histogram and kernel density for asylum recognition rate*



*Note:* This graph includes 58,265 directed dyad-year observations. The Epanechnikov function was used to produce the kernel density estimate.

In order to measure relations between sending and receiving countries, I use the ideal point estimates derived by Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten (2017) from roll-call votes in the UN General Assembly. Since the ideal point measure is not dyadic, I compute absolute distances between the ideal points of pairs of countries; the absolute distances range between 0 and 4.713. Larger values on the *Sending Country Relations* variable indicate less similar interests, while smaller values suggest more similar interests. Using this proxy assumes that UN voting is closely correlated with underlying foreign policy interests and political ties between countries. This is a fairly reasonable assumption, even if UN votes are symbolic (a similar argument is made by, among others, Alesina and Dollar (2000)). If my theory is correct, then higher recognition rates should be associated with higher values of this variable.

An ideal ethnic affinity variable would capture the ethnic composition of refugee flows between countries. Though valuable, a recently released Ethnicity of Refugees dataset (Rüegger and Bohnet 2018) identifies only the three largest refugee groups residing in each country while also limiting itself to refugee movements between neighbouring countries (it is incorporated as a robustness check below). Instead, a proxy was coded to capture whether, for each directed dyad-year, an ethnic group is in power in the receiving country but excluded from power in the sending country. The Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset (Cederman, Min, and Wimmer 2009) identifies access to power for politically relevant ethnic groups in each country, but it identifies transnational ethnic linkages only across contiguous countries (Vogt et al. 2015). The Minorities at Risk (MAR) dataset (Minorities at Risk Project 2009) uses consistent codes for communal groups living in multiple countries, but efforts to expand its scope beyond at-risk groups are still at an early stage (Birnie et al. 2015). In combination with secondary sources, the two datasets were used to code a dichotomous variable that indicates whether there was an ethnic group in power in the receiving country but excluded from power in the sending country; this proxy takes the value 0 (no ethnic tie) or 1 (co-ethnic). For example, the Azerbaijan-Armenia directed dyad receives a score of 1, because ethnic Armenians are in power in the receiving country (Armenia) but excluded from power in the sending country (Azerbaijan). Use of this proxy assumes that most refugees are members of a minority community in their country of origin. If my theory is correct, then higher recognition rates should be associated with the non-zero value of this variable.

The resources alternative explanation expects that economic capacity will determine receptivity to refugees. To capture this logic, *ln GDP per capita* denotes the natural log of real

GDP per capita in 2010 constant US dollars, as obtained from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI) dataset (World Bank 2019).

The humanitarianism alternative explanation suggests that conditions in the sending country, or the potential causes of refugee flows, may affect the asylum policy of the receiving country. The natural log of real GDP per capita in the sending country was taken from the WDI dataset (World Bank 2019). In addition, the Political Terror Scale (Gibney et al. 2019) reflects government human rights violations.<sup>7</sup> Information on domestic violence or war was collected from the Major Episodes of Political Violence (MEPV) dataset (Marshall 1999). To indicate whether the receiving country was involved in interstate violence or war in any given year, I also use the MEPV dataset. In addition, the scaled annual number of deaths from genocide/politicide was taken from the Political Instability Task Force (PITF) State Failure Problem Set (Marshall, Gurr, and Harff 2019).

Finally, I control for distance between sending and receiving countries by taking the natural log of kilometres between their capitals, from the CEPII Distances dataset (Mayer and Zignago 2011).

The full dataset spans the years 2000-2018 and includes 58,265 observations for 7,374 directed dyads. Table 2 provides descriptive statistics.

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<sup>7</sup> In years in which both the Amnesty International and US State Department derived-ratings were present, their simple average was taken. Where one of the two ratings was missing, the other was used instead.

**TABLE 2. Descriptive statistics**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Asylum Recognition Rate	0.142	0.264	0	1
Sending Country Relations	1.342	0.859	1.19e-7	4.713
Affinity with Refugee Group	0.013	0.112	0	1
ln GDP per capita	9.992	1.218	5.272	11.595
Origin's ln GDP per capita	7.842	1.318	5.272	11.585
Origin's Political Terror	3.033	1.029	1	5
Origin's Domestic Violence/War	0.253	0.435	0	1
Origin's Interstate Violence/War	0.016	0.125	0	1
Origin's Genocide/Politicide	0.039	0.329	0	4.5
ln Distance	8.361	0.866	2.349	9.889

For ease in interpreting results, I estimate ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models. Cross-sectional dependence and serial correlation are not likely to be a problem, because the data covers a large number of directed dyads over a small number of time periods ( $N > T$ ). Still, models with robust standard errors are reported below to control for autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity.

## **Results**

Table 3 reports the results from linear regressions. The dependent variable is the asylum recognition rate and the unit of analysis is the directed dyad-year. Model 1 presents the baseline model without fixed-effects. Model 2 includes destination-specific year fixed-effects and origin fixed-effects. Model 3 includes origin-specific year fixed-effects and destination fixed-effects. Model 4 combines origin-specific year fixed-effects with destination-specific year fixed-effects. Finally, Model 5 includes origin-destination (or directed dyad) fixed-effects as well as year fixed effects.<sup>8</sup> For each model, coefficient estimates and robust standard errors are reported.

<sup>8</sup> Fixed effects estimation was implemented via the “reghdfe” package in Stata (Correia 2017).

**TABLE 3. OLS regression for asylum recognition rates**

<i>DV: Asylum Recognition Rate</i>	(1) <i>Baseline Model</i>	(2) <i>Dest-Year &amp; Orig FEs</i>	(3) <i>Orig-Year &amp; Dest FEs</i>	(4) <i>Orig-Year &amp; Dest- Year FEs</i>	(5) <i>Orig-Dest &amp; Year FEs</i>
Sending Country Relations	0.026*** (0.001)	0.022*** (0.003)	0.009** (0.004)	0.021*** (0.004)	0.009** (0.004)
Refugee Group Affinity	0.025** (0.010)	0.020** (0.008)	0.030*** (0.010)	0.020** (0.009)	0.023 (0.022)
ln GDP per capita	-0.038*** (0.001)		-0.099*** (0.015)		-0.090*** (0.016)
Origin's ln GDP per capita	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.031*** (0.008)			-0.035*** (0.008)
Origin's Political Terror	0.018*** (0.002)	0.015*** (0.002)			0.016*** (0.002)
Origin's Domestic Violence/War	0.011*** (0.004)	0.019*** (0.004)			0.023*** (0.004)
Origin's Interstate Violence/War	0.033*** (0.010)	-0.010 (0.010)			0.002 (0.010)
Origin's Genocide/Politicide	0.017*** (0.004)	-0.006 (0.004)			0.002 (0.005)
ln Distance	0.030*** (0.001)	0.004** (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	0.004** (0.002)	
Constant	0.230*** (0.019)	0.270*** (0.062)	1.123*** (0.152)	-0.083*** (0.016)	1.245*** (0.164)
<i>N</i>	58265	58265	58265	58265	58265
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.061	0.404	0.322	0.444	0.486

Note: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. \* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$ .

As expected, the coefficient on *Sending Country Relations* is positive and statistically significant across all models. In Model 1, a one-point improvement in *Sending Country Relations* decreases the asylum recognition rate by 2.6 per cent. The coefficients for *Refugee Group Affinity* are also positive and statistically significant in four out of five models. In Model 1, a shift from no ethnic tie to co-ethnicity raises the asylum recognition rate by 2.5 per cent. Further, a likelihood ratio (LR) test for Model 1 demonstrates that adding these two variables results in a statistically significant improvement in model fit with  $\chi^2(2)=333.93$  and  $p=0.000$ . Although *Refugee Group Affinity* is not statistically significant in Model 5, this result probably

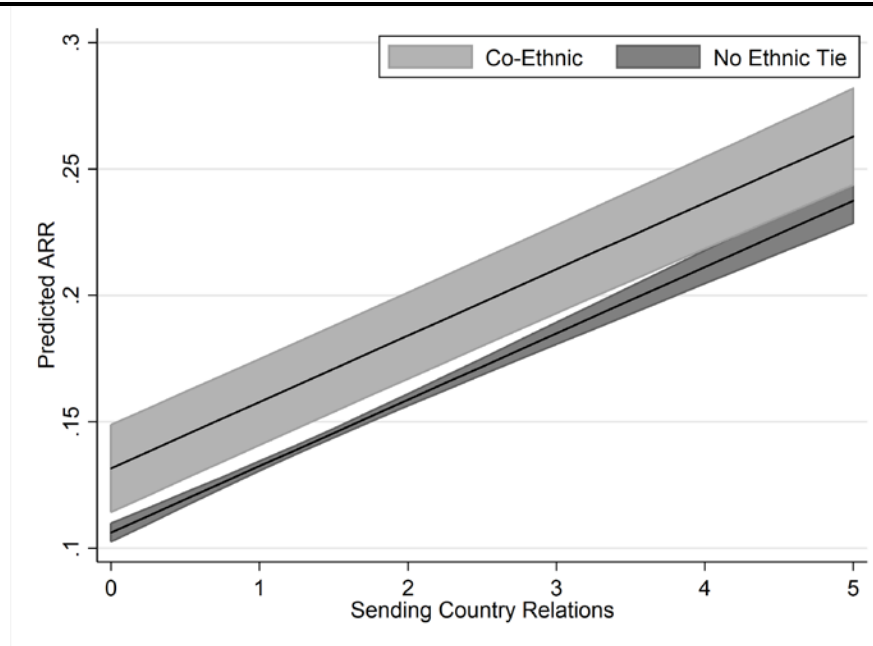


reflects the fact that this variable exhibits more variation across directed dyads (between variation) than over time (within variation). Indeed, 99.9% of directed dyads with a 0 on this variable in one year remain a 0 in the following year, and 91% of directed dyads with 1 one on this variable in one year remain a 1 in the following year.

The receiving country's *ln GDP per capita* is statistically significant throughout, and it has a negative sign in four out of five models. This indicates that wealthier countries are less likely to grant entry to refugees, contrary to the resources alternative hypothesis. The results lend some support to the humanitarianism explanation, but the effects associated with it vary somewhat across the estimated models. *Origin's ln GDP per capita* is negative and statistically significant in three of the models, positive and statistically significant in Model 3, and not statistically significant in Model 4. *Origin's Political Terror* and *Origin's Domestic Violence/War* have positive signs throughout, but they lose statistical significance in Models 3 and 4. Finally, the coefficient estimates for *Origin's Interstate Violence/War* and *Origin's Genocide/Politicide* are only positive and statistically significant in the baseline model without any fixed effects. These results suggest that as conditions in the sending country worsen, receiving countries may accept more refugees.

Figure 2 plots the average predicted asylum recognition rate for different values of the two key independent variables *Sending Country Relations* and *Affinity with Refugee Group*. According to my theory, co-ethnics from a hostile country will be treated most generously, while refugees who lack an ethnic tie and come from a friendly country will face the most restrictive treatment. Model 1 predicts that the former group will have a 26 per cent asylum recognition rate, while the latter will only receive an 11 per cent recognition rate. The difference between these two categories is greater than 15 per cent.

**FIGURE 2.** *Average predicted asylum recognition rate*



*Note:* Model 1 was used to predict asylum recognition rates. Shaded areas represent 90% delta method confidence intervals. Sending Country Relations reflects the absolute distance between the ideal points of a pair of countries; larger values on this variable indicate less similar interests.

In short, the results lend support to my theory. The material resources alternative explanation receives little support, while there is mixed support for the humanitarianism argument.

Of course, asylees select the destination countries to which they will apply for asylum. Some scholars view refugees as, in essence, utility maximizers who weigh the costs and benefits of selecting particular destinations (see Moore and Shellman 2007; Barthel and Neumayer 2015). To what extent do individuals with stronger asylum claims apply to destination countries that share a similar ethnic identity and a different political outlook? While it is difficult to exclude the possibility of self-selection entirely, interviews have shown that asylum-seekers lack the detailed knowledge of asylum policies necessary to make an informed choice (Robinson and Segrott

2002). Qualitative evidence indicates, rather, that asylum-seekers select their destination based primarily on social networks (Havinga and Böcker 1999).

There are some instances where refugee groups have been excluded from the asylum process altogether, such that they are unable to submit applications for asylum. For example, Chechens who fled to Turkey starting 1999 were uniformly excluded from refugee status determination procedures (Kirişci 1996, 296). However, there is no evidence that such practices are sufficiently widespread and systematic as to bias my statistical findings. As shown above, sending country relations and refugee group affinity both vary widely within my dataset, indicating that refugees from a variety of sending countries (hostile and friendly) and a range of ethnic identities (kin and non-kin) were able to lodge asylum applications.

### ***Robustness Checks***

Interpolating missing values for the dependent variable adds 7,485 observations but otherwise does not change the results significantly (the Online Supplement reports results for the robustness checks described in this section). Restricting the analysis to a minimum number of applications submitted during the year (10 or 100) did not alter the results. The results are robust to running a fractional logit regression, which captures the fact that the dependent variable is a proportion (Papke and Wooldridge 1996). Transforming the dependent variable into a four-level ordinal variable and running an ordered logit regression also yielded the same results. To allow for the possibility of error correlation over time within each directed dyad, I estimated a population-averaged model with an autoregressive correlation structure of order 1; the coefficients on *Sending Country Relations* and *Refugee Group Affinity* remain positive and statistically significant. Findings are also robust to adding a variable that captures the origin country's Revised Combined Polity score from the Polity IV Project (Marshall, Gurr, and

Jagers 2019). Results were robust to including additional socioeconomic variables for the receiving country, such as real GDP per capita growth from the PWT dataset (Heston, Summers, and Aten 2009), unemployment, or the percentage of the population aged 65 and above from the World Development Indicators (World Bank 2019). Controlling for left-right ideology in the receiving country using the Manifesto Project Dataset (Volkens et al. 2019) did not substantially change the results either, nor did adding a variable for the lagged number of asylum applications from the origin country.<sup>9</sup>

The results reported above are also robust to a number of different operationalisations of the independent variables. When I substituted peace scale data (Diehl, Goertz, and Gallegos 2019) for *Sending Country Relations* and a variable constructed from the Ethnicity of Refugees dataset (Rüegger and Bohnet 2018) for *Refugee Group Affinity*, these variables behaved as expected.<sup>10</sup> Regressions were run with summed societal and interstate magnitude scores from the Major Episodes of Political Violence dataset, as well as the intensity level and cumulative intensity of internal and interstate war from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Pettersson, Högladh, and Öberg 2019; Gleditsch et al. 2002). Scaled deaths from genocide/politicide were also replaced with incidence of genocide/politicide from the PITF State Failure dataset. In all cases, results remained largely the same.

When the sample is split by geographic region, the results are somewhat mixed. The coefficients for *Sending Country Relations* and *Refugee Group Affinity* behave as expected for

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<sup>9</sup> This statement holds whether the mean left-right position weighted by parties' vote share in parliament (rile\_wmean), or left-right polarization of the party system (rile\_polarization), is used. Both of these variables were derived using the Manifesto Project Election Level do-file.

<sup>10</sup> The Ethnicity of Refugees dataset was used in combination with the EPR dataset to indicate whether a refugee group shared the same ethnicity as the group in power in the receiving country.

destination countries in Europe and the Asia-Pacific. However, only *Sending Country Relations* is statistically significant for sub-Saharan Africa, and neither variable has a statistically significant coefficient in the Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, *Sending Country Relations* and *Refugee Group Affinity* behave as expected for the Americas only when the US is excluded. These results suggest that that impact of geopolitical considerations and ethnicity may vary by region. Caution should be taken when interpreting these findings, however, given the comparatively smaller sample sizes.

## **Conclusions**

This study strongly suggests that foreign policy and ethnic politics exert significant impact on states' policies toward refugees. Governments discriminate among refugees in deciding whether to grant asylum, taking into account both their ethnicity and political relations between states. The worse these bilateral relations are, the more welcoming receiving states are likely to be: subjects of adversaries are treated better than citizens of friendly states.

Unlike previous work that has hinted at these dynamics, the analysis above combines foreign policy and ethnic identity in a two-part framework. Moreover, it identifies the specific incentives that operate at international and domestic levels. Namely, refugees fleeing a rival country offer an opportunity to undermine that country's stability, saddle it with reputation costs, and engage in guerrilla-style cross-border attacks. Welcoming refugees who are ethnic kin can satisfy domestic constituencies, enlarge the policymaker's support group, and encourage mobilization along ethnic lines. Finally, this article goes beyond existing research by widening its empirical scope beyond the US and other Western countries.

These findings enable us to forecast the receptiveness of states to asylum claims and therefore the types of situations that will generate crises in which migrants cannot gain access to

neighbouring countries. My theory can therefore inform the activities of UN agencies and NGOs and can help policymakers devise strategies to generate additional incentives to encourage more welcoming policies.

Of course, the correlations presented above can only hint at policymakers' reasoning. While the statistical results are consistent with my theoretical argument, future research may be able to provide additional systematic cross-country evidence of the specific mechanisms I have outlined. Moreover, micro-level demographic and other information about individual asylum-seekers is currently unavailable cross-nationally. Should such data become available, an analysis would be able to examine whether individual characteristics (such as age, labour skills, or other attributes) shape the likelihood of successfully obtaining refugee status.

The puzzle of differential treatment of refugees points to a gap in the academic literature, but it also has significance for the lives of tens of millions of refugees around the world. The scholarly and policy communities lack a coherent and clearly-articulated account of how and why countries respond to refugee movements. My theory provides a plausible account, and one that can inform our responses to new and continuing refugee crises around the world.

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## Online Appendix: Rivalry, Ethnicity, and Asylum Admissions Worldwide

**Table S1.** *Regressions with interpolation, restricted samples, and alternative functional forms*

<i>DV: Asylum Recognition Rate</i>	(1) <i>Intrpl DV</i>	(2) <i>≥10 Apps</i>	(3) <i>≥100 Apps</i>	(4) <i>Fractional Logit</i>	(5) <i>Ordinal Logit</i>	(6) <i>PFGLS with AR(1)</i>
Sending Country Relations	0.023*** (0.001)	0.038*** (0.002)	0.047*** (0.002)	0.272*** (0.017)	0.377*** (0.014)	0.031*** (0.003)
Refugee Group Affinity	0.020** (0.010)	0.045*** (0.014)	0.044** (0.021)	0.282*** (0.104)	0.383*** (0.096)	0.039* (0.022)
ln GDP per capita	-0.037*** (0.001)	-0.057*** (0.002)	-0.080*** (0.003)	-0.324*** (0.011)	-0.359*** (0.011)	-0.031*** (0.003)
Origin's ln GDP per capita	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	0.008*** (0.002)	-0.077*** (0.010)	-0.077*** (0.010)	0.004* (0.002)
Origin's Political Terror	0.018*** (0.001)	0.018*** (0.002)	0.026*** (0.003)	0.191*** (0.018)	0.213*** (0.016)	0.009*** (0.002)
Origin's Domestic Violence/War	0.011*** (0.003)	0.005 (0.004)	0.002 (0.006)	0.029 (0.036)	0.036 (0.032)	0.021*** (0.005)
Origin's Interstate Violence/War	0.042*** (0.010)	0.065*** (0.013)	0.059*** (0.018)	0.216** (0.087)	0.253*** (0.079)	0.031*** (0.011)
Origin's Genocide/Politicide	0.017*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.007)	0.053* (0.030)	0.070*** (0.027)	0.014*** (0.005)
ln Distance	0.030*** (0.001)	0.041*** (0.002)	0.053*** (0.004)	0.322*** (0.018)	0.404*** (0.018)	0.055*** (0.004)
Constant	0.222*** (0.017)	0.297*** (0.029)	0.335*** (0.047)	-1.733*** (0.186)		-0.120*** (0.044)
<i>N</i>	65750	28550	11483	58265	58265	24408
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.061	0.105	0.167			

*Note:* Models 1, 2, and 3 all use OLS. Models 2 and 3 restrict the analysis to a minimum number of applications submitted during the year. In Model 5, the dependent variable was transformed into a four-level ordinal variable. Model 6 is a population-averaged model with an autoregressive correlation structure of order 1. Standard errors are in parentheses. \* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table S2. OLS regressions with additional independent variables**

<i>DV: Asylum Recognition Rate</i>	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
Sending Country Relations	0.014*** (0.002)	0.027*** (0.001)	0.034*** (0.002)	0.038*** (0.001)	0.042*** (0.001)	0.045*** (0.001)	0.030*** (0.002)
Refugee Group Affinity	0.023** (0.010)	0.027*** (0.010)	0.032*** (0.011)	0.030*** (0.010)	0.042*** (0.009)	0.046*** (0.009)	0.027** (0.011)
ln GDP per capita	-0.034*** (0.001)	-0.039*** (0.001)	-0.021*** (0.002)	0.002 (0.001)	0.014*** (0.001)	0.013*** (0.001)	-0.045*** (0.001)
Origin's ln GDP per capita	-0.005*** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)	-0.006*** (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Origin's Political Terror	0.008*** (0.002)	0.018*** (0.002)	0.017*** (0.002)	0.020*** (0.002)	0.017*** (0.001)	0.015*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.002)
Origin's Domestic Violence/War	0.030*** (0.004)	0.012*** (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)	0.013*** (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.011*** (0.004)
Origin's Interstate Violence/War	0.027** (0.011)	0.034*** (0.010)	0.028** (0.011)	0.023** (0.010)	0.011 (0.009)	0.013 (0.009)	0.018* (0.011)
Origin's Genocide/Politicide	0.012*** (0.004)	0.017*** (0.004)	0.018*** (0.005)	0.012*** (0.004)	0.006* (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)	0.016*** (0.005)
ln Distance	0.030*** (0.001)	0.029*** (0.001)	0.034*** (0.002)	0.016*** (0.001)	0.031*** (0.001)	0.031*** (0.001)	0.040*** (0.002)
Origin's Polity Score	-0.005*** (0.000)						
GDP per capita Growth		-0.003*** (0.000)					
Unemployment			-0.002*** (0.000)				
Aging Population				-0.014*** (0.000)			
Left-Right Position					0.001*** (0.000)		
Left-Right Polarization						0.000 (0.001)	
ln Asylum Applications ( <i>t</i> -1)							0.011*** (0.001)
Constant	0.232*** (0.019)	0.251*** (0.020)	0.000 (0.024)	0.117*** (0.019)	-0.398*** (0.019)	-0.398*** (0.019)	0.158*** (0.022)
<i>N</i>	56263	58265	46920	58229	49727	49727	46947
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.073	0.062	0.056	0.096	0.077	0.075	0.073

*Note:* Model 11 includes the mean left-right position weighted by parties' vote share in parliament, while Model 12 includes left-right polarization of the party system. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. \* $p < .1$ ,

\*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table S3. OLS regressions with alternative operationalizations**

<i>DV: Asylum Recognition Rate</i>	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)
Dyadic Peace Scale	-0.073*** (0.014)					
Ethnicity of Refugees	0.058* (0.031)					
Sending Country Relations		0.024*** (0.001)	0.026*** (0.001)	0.026*** (0.001)	0.026*** (0.001)	0.026*** (0.001)
Refugee Group Affinity		0.026** (0.010)	0.025** (0.010)	0.025** (0.010)	0.025** (0.010)	0.026** (0.010)
ln GDP per capita	-0.023*** (0.003)	-0.038*** (0.001)	-0.038*** (0.001)	-0.038*** (0.001)	-0.038*** (0.001)	-0.038*** (0.001)
Origin's ln GDP per capita	-0.037*** (0.003)	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)
Origin's Political Terror	0.021*** (0.004)	0.022*** (0.001)	0.019*** (0.001)	0.018*** (0.001)	0.017*** (0.001)	0.018*** (0.002)
Origin's Domestic Violence/War	0.037*** (0.010)					0.010*** (0.004)
Origin's Interstate Violence/War	-0.026* (0.016)					0.034*** (0.010)
Origin's Societal MEPV Magnitude Score		-0.000 (0.001)				
Origin's Interstate MEPV Magnitude Score		0.011*** (0.003)				
Origin's UCDP/PRIO Internal War			0.014*** (0.003)			
Origin's UCDP/PRIO Interstate War			-0.055*** (0.008)			
Origin's UCDP/PRIO Internal Intensity				0.011*** (0.002)		
Origin's UCDP/PRIO Interstate Intensity				-0.038*** (0.008)		
Origin's UCDP/PRIO Cum. Internal Intensity					0.024*** (0.003)	
Origin's UCDP/PRIO Cum. Interstate Intensity					-0.073*** (0.008)	
Origin's Genocide/Politicide	0.028** (0.012)	0.018*** (0.004)	0.015*** (0.004)	0.014*** (0.004)	0.014*** (0.004)	
Origin's Genocide/Politicide Incidence						0.068*** (0.010)
ln Distance	0.045*** (0.003)	0.030*** (0.001)	0.030*** (0.001)	0.030*** (0.001)	0.031*** (0.001)	0.030*** (0.001)
Constant	0.345*** (0.037)	0.218*** (0.019)	0.222*** (0.019)	0.225*** (0.019)	0.228*** (0.019)	0.230*** (0.019)
<i>N</i>	10083	57645	58265	58265	58265	58265
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.171	0.062	0.062	0.062	0.063	0.062

Note: Robust standard errors are in parentheses. \* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table S4. OLS regressions by region**

<i>DV: Asylum Recognition Rate</i>	(20) <i>Americas</i>	(21) <i>Asia-Pacific</i>	(22) <i>Europe</i>	(23) <i>Middle East &amp; N. Africa</i>	(24) <i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>
Sending Country Relations	-0.001 (0.003)	0.087*** (0.008)	0.033*** (0.002)	0.028 (0.023)	0.027* (0.016)
Refugee Group Affinity	-0.035 (0.033)	0.274*** (0.075)	0.029*** (0.010)	0.070 (0.063)	0.034 (0.033)
ln GDP per capita	0.065*** (0.004)	-0.058*** (0.008)	0.006*** (0.001)	-0.065*** (0.019)	-0.059*** (0.005)
Origin's ln GDP per capita	-0.037*** (0.003)	0.001 (0.004)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.043*** (0.012)	-0.036*** (0.006)
Origin's Political Terror	0.058*** (0.004)	0.032*** (0.006)	0.022*** (0.001)	0.027 (0.025)	0.059*** (0.008)
Origin's Domestic Violence/War	0.010 (0.011)	0.021 (0.014)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.064 (0.054)	0.021 (0.017)
Origin's Interstate Violence/War	0.087*** (0.028)	0.023 (0.042)	0.008 (0.009)	-0.046 (0.102)	0.199*** (0.048)
Origin's Genocide/Politicide	0.063*** (0.013)	-0.003 (0.014)	0.002 (0.003)	-0.029 (0.024)	0.023* (0.012)
ln Distance	-0.003 (0.005)	0.085*** (0.008)	-0.006*** (0.001)	-0.027 (0.020)	-0.006 (0.006)
Constant	-0.202*** (0.065)	-0.225*** (0.098)	-0.023 (0.019)	1.155*** (0.261)	0.786*** (0.067)
<i>N</i>	10262	4278	39667	384	4866
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.109	0.100	0.035	0.120	0.092

*Note:* Region is coded according to the UN Refugee Agency's (UNHCR) regional designation of each destination country. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. \*p<.1, \*\*p<.05, \*\*\*p<.01.