

# The Refugee of My Enemy Is My Friend: Rivalry Type and Refugee Admission

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## Abstract

Why do states accept refugees? While there are a number of factors that influence a state's decision to accept refugees, interstate relations play an important yet understudied role in refugee flows. In this paper, we build on previous work that has suggested that states with an adversarial relationship will be more likely to accept refugees. We incorporate existing conceptualization and theory from the rivalry literature and extend this logic to state strategy of refugee acceptance to provide one of the first empirical evaluations of refugee acceptance by states. Specifically, we argue that the issues rivals are contending over will change the incentives and disincentives for admitting a rival's refugees. We anticipate that rivals disputing over ideology will be more likely to accept their rival's refugees than rivals contending over other rivalry types. We test and find evidence for our arguments using a data set of all directed dyads from 1960 to 2006.

## Keywords

refugees, interstate rivalry, international conflict, civil conflict, repression

Why do states agree to admit refugees into their country? On August 7, 1953, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower said in his signing of the 1953 Refugee Relief Act that

in enacting this legislation, we are giving a new chance in life to 214,000 fellow humans. This action demonstrates again America's traditional concern for the homeless, the persecuted and the less fortunate of other lands. It is a dramatic contrast to the tragic events taking place in East Germany and in other captive nations. (American Presidency Project)<sup>1</sup>

President Eisenhower was contrasting the United States' humanitarianism with the Soviet Union's mistreatment of its citizens, as well as citizens in countries that the Soviets controlled.

In recent years, the war-ravaged countries of Somalia, Afghanistan, and Syria, among others, have produced an unprecedented number of refugees seeking admission into countries throughout the world. The response of the countries to which these refugees have appealed for refugee status has varied widely, with some countries being much more willing than others to grant refugee status (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). Scholars studying the role of interstate politics in decisions to grant refugee status have suggested that states that share an adversarial relationship are more likely to accept each other's refugees than those that do not (Loescher 1994; Teitelbaum 1984; Weiner 1992). Although this theoretical

argument has been around for more than thirty years, it has only been subjected to limited empirical scrutiny.

We provide one of the first attempts to empirically test these arguments. Furthermore, we argue that it is not merely the presence of severe antagonism, or interstate rivalry, which leads states to admit refugees who are fleeing an adversarial regime. We argue and provide evidence to show that the specific issue being disputed is what drives states to decide to admit refugees from their opponent into their country. When refugees flee a state locked into an ideological rivalry, that state's opponent, who has likely been asserting its own ideological and/or moral superiority over its opponent, is now incentivized to admit the refugees to uphold the legitimacy of their claim. For example, the United States could not continue to tell the world that it was a regime of humanitarianism and that the USSR was a regime of oppression while refusing to extend a humanitarian hand to the victims of the Soviets. Key to our argument are the costs of refusing refugee admission by ideological rivals: while *any* state takes on costs when it chooses to accept refugees, and

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most states therefore do not host them, ideological rivalry reduces the net costs of refugee admission by providing a unique incentive to accept the refugees. In other words, for ideological rivals, taking in refugees allows the state to bolster its claim of superiority over its rival.

Our research has direct implications for a difficult policy question: how can the international community convince more states to host refugees, rather than leaving the burden on relatively few states? Refugee protection is a public good, and policymakers have struggled to overcome the free rider problem of convincing states to voluntarily take in refugees (Betts 2009). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) offers some financial support to states hosting refugees in an attempt to offset the economic costs of hosting refugees, but usually not enough to cover the entirety of the costs, especially when the refugees remain in the host countries permanently or for many years, and the economic assistance does not help to offset costs associated with domestic pressures such as rapid changes in demographics or public opposition to hosting refugees. Selective incentives are needed to convince countries to voluntarily host refugees. Some states, such as Sweden, use their permissive refugee admission policy to enhance their international reputation, amounting to a selective incentive that allows them to take in refugees (Bevelander, Hagstrom, and Ronnqvist 2009). We propose that ideological rivalry should be viewed as conducive to another type of selective incentive. By taking in refugees from an ideological rival, a host sends a signal to its own population, as well as the international community, that its system of government or cultural climate is indeed superior, supporting its claim in the ideological dispute. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) concerned with refugee protection should focus their limited resources on pressuring the sending state's enemy to take in the refugees.

## Interstate Politics and Refugees

The existing scholarship on international relations and refugee flows has largely focused on the strategic calculus of refugees, finding that refugees are more likely to go to places where they are safe and have economic opportunities or where they face little risk of further violence (Melander and Öberg 2006; Moore and Shellman 2006, 2007; Moore and Shellman 2004). This means that while asylum seekers are fleeing their homes due to circumstances beyond their control, they are still making conscious decisions about which states to seek refuge in, mostly from a choice set defined by contiguity. Refugees tend to settle in contiguous states, but among the set of states that border the asylum seekers' home state, refugees make a cost-benefit calculation and travel to a state

where they will be relatively safe. In this paper, we look at the opposite side of the refugee equation. More specifically, we attempt to understand the interstate factors that drive a state's decision to grant refugee status to those seeking refuge within its borders.

Scholars have generally argued that the costs of admitting refugees are higher than the benefits, and these costs come from a number of mechanisms. If the refugees are fleeing armed conflicts, they may have connections to armed rebel groups. This could provide them access to weapons and resources that could spread the conflict within the receiving state's borders, leading to an increased chance of terrorism and civil war (Choi and Salehyan 2013; Loescher 1992; Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006). Refugees also increase the likelihood that the receiving state will be involved in an international conflict, as they are likely to be seen as a threat to the state of origin even after they have left, or the refugees' home country may pursue them across international boundaries (Salehyan 2008).

Aside from the security risks of admitting refugees, domestic political costs for the host can also be steep, contributing to the high costs of accepting refugees. In some cases, taking in refugees will be unpopular with the general population. This lack of domestic popularity often stems from factors beyond simply xenophobia, as refugees will place a strain on the state's welfare system, at least into the near future (McCarty 2013). Even if refugees are allowed to work in the host state, they may introduce new, sudden competition for low-wage laborers (Collier 2013).

In light of the high costs attached to refugee admission, scholars who have studied the role of interstate politics in refugee flows have previously suggested that adversarial states are more likely to take in their opponent's refugees than those coming from states that are not adversaries. In cases where an adversarial relationship between the receiving and sending state is not present, there will not be offsetting benefits at the interstate level to make up for the costs paid domestically (Loescher 1986; Rosenblum and Salehyan 2004). These scholars have suggested that states can use refugee admissions as means of discrediting and de-legitimizing an adversary's regime. More specifically, the state can use the public nature of refugee flows to highlight their adversary's poor treatment of their own citizens and highlight the failures of its regime (Loescher 1994; Newland 1995; Teitelbaum 1984; Weiner 1992; Zolberg 1995).

The previous literature, while providing scholars with a solid foundation to move forward, can be improved on by incorporating insights and theorization from the rivalry research agenda. Rivalries are "relationships in which states have singled out other states as distinctive competitors and enemies posing some actual or potential military

threat” (Colaresi et al. 2009). Essentially, states that are rivals share a strong adversarial relationship due to a disagreement over a contentious issue(s) that has endured over an extended period of time (Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson 2008; Goertz and Diehl 2000; Vasquez 2009). Moorthy and Brathwaite (2016) provide a quantitative evaluation of the nature of rivalry and the average number of refugees admitted into a country, but we focus here on the decision to admit refugees in the first place, rather than what factors lead to relatively many or few refugees coming into a country. To empirically evaluate the arguments made in previous literature, we test the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** All else being equal, states accept greater numbers of refugees from rivals than from nonrival states.

## Rivalry Type and Refugees

We argue that previous explanations of why rivals accept refugees from their opponent are flawed. States may be rivals for several different reasons, as we discuss below, and the issue that rivals are disputing (different rivalry types) will have an effect on their decision to grant refugee status to individuals fleeing the opponent’s regime. To disaggregate rivalry type, we employ the typology developed by Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson (2008) and Thompson and Dreyer (2012). The authors argue that rivalries can be divided into three types according to the issues that motivate them: *spatial rivalries*, in which states contend over the exclusive control of territory; *positional rivalries*, in which states are seeking to gain influence or prestige within the regional or international system; and, as its name implies, *ideological rivalries*, in which states “contest the relative virtues of different belief systems in relation to political, economic, societal, or religious phenomena” (Thompson and Dreyer 2012, 21). Each of these rivalry types is associated with unique strategic decisions made with that state’s rival in mind and, therefore, present divergent incentives to grant admission to the rival’s refugees.

### Ideological Rivalry

Ideological rivals claim that their system of government is ideologically or morally superior to their rival’s system of government, religious orientation, cultural values, or economic system, and they consider each other an enemy because their regime types/ideologies are incompatible and competitive.<sup>2</sup> The repeated disputes between Guatemala and El Salvador in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in which each state repeatedly tried to influence the regime type of the other along Liberal versus

Conservative lines, is an example of ideological rivalry.<sup>3</sup> Probably the most well-known ideological rivalry was between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Other examples of ideological rivalries include Burkina Faso–Mali, Guyana–Venezuela, and Zimbabwe–Mozambique.

Rivalries can occur across multiple dimensions. States that are ideological rivals may also be spatial or positional rivals. Some rivalries even occur across all three dimensions.<sup>4</sup> This raises the question of whether states that are only ideological rivals behave differently than states that are ideological rivals and positional and/or spatial rivals. We argue that they will not—the incentives to accept or reject refugees is a function of *whether or not the states are ideological enemies*, and is not tied to whether any other issues are present. The reason for this is straightforward and much discussed in previous scholarship on issue salience and strategic rivalry. Put briefly, some issues are more salient than others. The most salient issues are symbolic issues (Hensel et al. 2008), and ideological rivalry amounts to a dispute over symbolic (intangible) issues. States view symbolic (intangible) issues with higher salience (Diehl 1992; Mansbach and Vasquez 1981), so when these issues are present, they will take precedence in shaping how these rivals interact.

When states are fighting over ideological issues, the incentives to publicly criticize and shame a rival over the malpractice of governance or mistreatment of its own citizens will be strongest. In these cases, the states are fighting over the relative merits of their belief systems to attract new ideological adherents abroad and strengthen ideological support at home. To attract new adherents to the state’s ideological persuasion, the state must make their ideology appear to be socially, economically, culturally, morally, and/or politically superior to its rival’s. To do so, they will attempt to show that their own population is content with the treatment they receive at the hands of their government and that they are better off than their competitor’s citizens.

The state’s desire to present the image of an appealing domestic climate, relative to its competitors, incentivizes it to undermine its competitor’s narrative. One way to do this is for the state to provide an alternate narrative by publicly shaming the state’s rival over their human rights abuses. Shaming a state for its human rights abuses imposes direct costs on a state, and in most cases, shaming imposes few costs on the sender (Blanton and Blanton 2007; Hafner-Burton 2005; Richards, Gellenny, and Sacko 2001; Thörn 2006). Aside from human rights shaming, ideological rivals may shame each other across numerous other dimensions. Indonesia and Malaysia’s ideological rivalry was largely connected to each of their perceptions that the other was not fulfilling the expectations of fraternity that states often fulfill when they share much cultural

history, and the states contended and shamed each other over this issue (Lowi 2005). In the early years of North and South Korea's ideological rivalry, both states were committing human rights abuses, and the two states actually competed mostly over an economic dimension, with each claiming that their economic system was superior.

States, even ideological rivals, would prefer to accept few (if any) refugees. Admitting refugees is costly and generally presents few benefits. However, ideological rivalry allows for a unique type of benefit to accepting refugees—the ability for states to publicly shame or embarrass their opponent by showing that their enemy's citizens prefer the host state's system of government. Because the system of government is the very issue being disputed in ideological rivalries, and because the admission of refugees from the opponent can serve as a very public and highly internationalized signal that the host state's regime is superior, states should be more willing to pay the costs of hosting refugees from their ideological rival. An example of this can be seen in the East Germany–West Germany ideological rivalry. Although West Germany did not have the high level of state capacity that would be conducive to hosting thousands of refugees, West Germany took on extraordinary costs and accepted nearly all refugees from East Germany because they wanted to show that they were morally superior to the East (Limbach 2011). As a final example, consider the U.S. policy of admitting any Cuban citizen who arrived on U.S. soil as a refugee, no matter how many Cubans arrived and how big a strain they were on the United States' economic welfare system, while at the same time the United States was admitting relatively few Guatemalan and Salvadorian refugees. From 1988 to 2002, Cuba, Guatemala, and El Salvador all had asylum seekers fleeing their respective countries in large numbers, but the proportion of those from Guatemala and El Salvador who were admitted as refugees into the United States was quite low, often less than 10 percent and in some years less than 1 percent. In the same time period, as much as 99 percent of Cuban asylum seekers were granted refugee status in the United States.

Of course, all of the preceding discussion of ideological rivalries involves voluntary refugee admission. Most asylum seekers acquire refugee status in a neighboring country. Signatories to the 1951 Convention on the Status and Protocol of Refugees are obligated to grant refugee status to individuals who cross into their country and are determined by the UNHCR to have a reasonable fear of persecution and physical security risk (UNHCR 1951). Thus, while all refugee admission is voluntary in the sense that many countries have signed the Convention on the Status and Protocol of Refugees, much refugee admission is involuntary in the sense that it becomes very difficult for states to deny refugee status to asylum seekers who

have crossed into their country en masse. Contiguity is, therefore, an important factor that influences how many refugees a given state will take in (Moore and Shellman 2007; Moorthy and Brathwaite 2016), and contiguity represents a less voluntary form of refugee acceptance. Geography dictates where most refugees reside (UNHCR). However, some states clearly admit refugees for reasons other than contiguity and pressure from the international community. We argue that ideological rivalry serves as one of those reasons. We account for the less voluntary process of refugee admission in our statistical analysis to ensure that we are properly examining what leads states to voluntarily accept refugees.

**Hypothesis 2 (H2):** All else being equal, states will accept higher numbers of refugees from their ideological rivals than from nonideological rivals.

### *Positional Rivalry*

States involved in positional rivalries are contending over relative influence within the global or regional system (Thompson and Dreyer 2012, 21). Since economic and military power are the most important drivers of relative position within the international system, states will attempt to impose costs on their rival along these dimensions. The issues under contention will lead the states involved in the rivalry to attempt to impose costs on each other to limit their rival's ability to leverage their power internationally.

Unlike ideological rivalries, positional rivalries are usually closely tied to the rivals' relative power and prestige. Thus, the actions these states take to enhance their relative position will most often be actions that they expect to give them a relative power advantage. Accepting refugees is not a power-enhancing strategy, so in this context, positional rivals should not expect to improve their position in the rivalry by taking in their opponent's refugees.

Some states do attempt to enhance their prestige via methods not directly tied to power. For example, Norway has acted as a mediator in international disputes in the past because they value their reputation as a regime committed to international cooperation, and mediating international disputes has effectively increased their prestige in the international arena. Norway and Sweden use their willingness to host refugees from all over the world as a credible signal of their humanitarian values, and in lieu of having large militaries and exercising power, they take on the costs of refugees to enhance their international reputation.

However, this strategy of using refugee acceptance to enhance influence and reputation is not common, and the Scandinavian countries are not involved in any rivalries. Although it is theoretically possible that a state could accept refugees from its positional rival in an attempt to

enhance its relative position in the region for which they are competing, we do not observe any clear examples of this actually occurring. Looking at activity between positional rivals, it immediately becomes clear that these rivals often use military power, threats, and other coercive measures to try and enhance their position over their rival. Although some states accept refugees or provide unbiased mediation because taking on the costs of these collective action problems generally enhances their reputation, rival states should be hesitant to take on costs and expend resources on policies that do not directly affect their opponent, leaving them to carry on their rivalry via coercive strategies.

In this context of competing over relative influence, it is not clear why states should accept their rival's refugees any more readily than they should accept refugees from any other state. The refugees will still come with the same costs—economic strains, potentially unwanted demography shifts, conflict risks—but the incentives to accept the refugees present in the context of an ideological rivalry are not present in a positional rivalry context. While it is true that rivals in general are willing to pay high costs to continue their struggle (Bapat 2012), positional rivals tend to choose foreign policy decisions that enhance their own relative *power*. Accepting refugees fleeing from a positional rival is disconnected from and would have little or no impact on the issue at stake.

### *Spatial Rivalry*

Spatial rivals dispute territory, most commonly a land boundary (Thompson and Dreyer 2011). Rivals over territory have an incentive to impose costs on their rival as they try to coerce their opponent into conceding the issue. As with positional rivals, we argue that accepting a spatial rival's refugees will not effectively contribute to their ability to win the contested issues.

Territorial issues are the most likely to lead to war, and states involved in these rivalries tend to engage in arms races and other forms of military defense to leverage their claim on the disputed territory (Vasquez 2009, 2012). Spatial rivals are, therefore, likely to focus on coercive foreign policies to advance their territorial claim, as opposed to other methods such as refugee acceptance. Accepting a spatial rival's refugees can actually divert resources away from efforts to improve a state's relative power over its opponent, as hosting refugees requires the state to spend some portion of finite resources caring for them.

Spatial rivals generally do not consider their opponent's or their own reputation (beyond a reputation for willingness to fight) as an important dimension of the dispute. Thus, the incentive present in ideological rivalries to accept refugees—maintaining the legitimacy of one's own claim of ideological superiority while undermining

the opponent's—is not present in spatial rivalries.<sup>5</sup> We, therefore, expect that the incentives for rivals to accept refugees from their opponent are unique to ideological rivals.

### **Research Design**

Our data comprise all dyads from 1960 to 2006.<sup>6</sup> We focus on directed dyad years, which is necessary to examine the directional flow of refugees—who the senders are and who the receivers are. To test our hypotheses, we first account for the presence of structural zeroes in our data.

Refugee acceptance is a rare event; in more than 95 percent of the observations, there were no refugees accepted. Most states, in most years, do not accept refugees from most other states. Furthermore, most states in most years do not produce any refugees that any other state could accept. Thus, the zero observations in the dependent variable (whether or not a given state accepted refugees in a given year) actually represent one of two distinct phenomena: either a state did not accept refugees from a particular sender (0 observed), or there were no refugees to accept from that sender in the first place (0 observed). These different types of zeroes must be accounted for to avoid biased estimation.

The most common way that quantitative refugee scholars have previously accounted for this is to use a zero-inflated negative binomial or a Heckman selection model (Moore and Shellman 2006, 2007; Moorthy and Brathwaite 2016). These approaches account for the structural zeroes by identifying the conditions under which refugees may be generated, and then down-weighting observations in which a receiving state could not have conceivably accepted refugees from a given sending state. After using this procedure to down-weight structural zeroes in the data, these models use a separate stage to evaluate the impact that the predictors of interest have on the number of refugees admitted. More specifically, these previous approaches have used the first stage of their models to reduce the impact that states who experienced no civil violence, conflict, or repression have in model results, because states without violence or repression cannot generate conflict refugees.

We follow this approach and employ zero-inflated negative binomial models in our main analyses, since we have an overdispersed count-dependent variable with structural zeroes in the dependent variable.<sup>7</sup> This approach requires that we accurately model which factors create refugee flows to account for the structural zeroes, and we draw on previous quantitative studies of refugee flows to determine these (Moore and Shellman 2006, 2007; Moorthy and Brathwaite 2016; Salehyan 2008).

The zero-inflated binomial model is a two-stage model and is appropriate for accounting for the structural zeroes

in the first stage while evaluating our hypotheses in the second stage. In the first stage, or inflation stage, we include the factors that create refugees—conflict and repression. This accounts for the bias that could be present in the data arising from the fact that many states will not accept refugees because there are no refugees to accept. The second (count) stage of the model evaluates our expectations of the factors that affect the number of refugees accepted by a state, and includes our predictors of interest and the control variables that we expect to affect refugee admission. Because basic count models assume that no overdispersion is present in the dependent variable, and our data show evidence of overdispersion with respect to the conditional variance and mean of the count of refugees admitted, the negative binomial adjustment is necessary.

### Dependent Variable

Our dependent variable is the count of refugees<sup>8</sup> accepted by a receiver in a given year (UNHCR).<sup>9</sup> The UNHCR keeps yearly records of the number of refugees, which countries they come from, and the countries in which they settle. Broadly called “populations of concern,” the UNHCR data comprise seven categories. Refugees include people who flee in large groups across state borders due to legitimate personal security issues resulting from widespread violence, so economic migrants and other people who leave their country for nonsecurity reasons are not considered to be refugees. Asylum seekers, individuals who have sought external protection but have not been granted refugee status, are also a separate category. The remaining categories include returned refugees (refugees returning to their home state), returned Internally Displaced Persons, stateless persons (individuals not considered citizens of any recognized state), and Others of Concern (individuals receiving UNHCR assistance but who do not fall into the above categories). We only include refugees in our analysis, as this is the only category that includes individuals who have crossed state borders and have been confirmed by the receiving state as refugees, providing the clearest signal of the accepting state’s policy decision.

### Independent Variables

If states that have conflicting interests will accept refugees from each other, then rivals, who have conflicting interests by definition, should tend to accept each other’s refugees more than nonrivals. In model 1, we use Thompson’s (2001) Strategic Rivalry data for a binary indicator of *rivalry* and evaluate H1. States are considered rivals if they view each other as competitors, as potential or realized threats, and as enemies (Thompson 2001, 560).

*Rivalry* is coded 1 if the states in the dyad are coded as rivals of any type (ideological, positional, or spatial), and 0 otherwise.

In model 2, we use Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson’s (2008) strategic rivalry data to analyze the types of rivalry and their impact on refugee acceptance. The rivalry variables in model 2 are *ideological*, *positional*, and *spatial* rivalry, and are all dichotomous indicators. Recall that in the baseline *rivalry* models, we investigated whether receiving states tend to accept more refugees from a rival state, irrespective of rivalry type. In model 2, we disaggregate rivalry types and test our expectation (H2) that the presence of ideological rivalry in particular should make states accept higher numbers of refugees.

We expect that because ideological rivals are asserting the ideological superiority of their own government, they commit themselves to accepting refugees from their rival, lest they undermine their claim that their opponent is morally or ideologically bankrupt by refusing to grant protection to the victims of that regime. *Ideological*, *spatial*, and *positional* rivalry are each coded 1 for directed dyad years in which the states are engaged in a specific rivalry type, and coded 0 otherwise.

### Controls

We include *contiguity* as a binary indicator, coded 1 when countries have a contiguous border, have a border defined by an inland river, or are separated by twelve or fewer miles of water (COW Codebook v3.2). Controlling for contiguity accounts for the involuntary nature of refugee admission, wherein states are essentially obligated to grant refugee status to those fleeing persecution in a neighboring state. We expect that the presence of ideological rivalry will have a positive impact on the number of refugees admitted by a state, independent of the effect of *contiguity*.<sup>10</sup>

We also include control variables for structural conditions within states that are associated with the likelihood of civil violence. Regime type is coded for each country within the directed dyads, *receiver democracy* and *sender democracy*, taken from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data (Coppedge et al. 2017). The authors code a continuous measure of democracy, ranging from 0 to 1, that factors in freedom of expression, freedom of association, fair elections, an elected executive, and the extent of suffrage in a given country to create their variable *polyarchy*, which we rename *democracy* for ease of interpretation. Values closer to 1 indicate higher levels of democracy.<sup>11</sup>

We include natural logs of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and population. GDP has been consistently shown to be negatively associated with civil conflict, and population is regularly positively associated with civil

conflict (Hill and Jones 2014). Data for GDP and population is taken from World Bank data.

We include variables for civil and interstate conflict to capture the effect of ongoing conflicts in both sending and receiving states: *sender civil conflict*, *sender interstate conflict*, *receiver civil conflict*, and *receiver international conflict*. Refugees flee their homes due to civil and international conflicts placing them in immediate danger. States are more likely to be a sending state (refugees coming from that state) when they are experiencing conflict, making potential receiving states more likely to receive refugees when a conflict is occurring in the sending state. In other words, the likelihood that a state sends refugees increases when that state is experiencing conflict, and the likelihood that a potential receiving state actually takes in refugees increases when the sending state is experiencing conflict. Indicators for international and civil conflict presence is taken from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) dyadic data set (Harbom, Melander, and Wallensteen 2008; Themner and Wallensteen 2011).

The presence of civil conflict means that at least one rebel group is involved in a campaign of mutual violence against the government, but refugees may also flee because of repressive conditions in their country, or because of mass violence against civilians committed by the government or rebel groups. We use the CIRI Human Rights Data Project measures of *torture*, *extra-judicial killing*, *political imprisonments*, and *disappearances* in each country (Cingranelli, Richards, and Clay 2014), and a binary indicator for the presence of *genocide* in each country (Farris 2014) to capture the presence of large-scale violence against civilians in a given country.

We include a dummy variable for *post-cold war* to insure that our posited mechanisms are not simply a function of the Cold War environment. To capture the effect that former colonial ties (Hensel 2014) or being a signatory to the UNHCR 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR) may have on refugee acceptance, we include variables for *colony* and *signatory*, respectively. We also include a binary indicator for whether the countries share *transnational ethnic kin* (TEK), coded 1 if any ethnic group exists in both of the countries in the dyad, and taken from Ruegger and Bohnet (2015). If members of an ethnic group that already exists in the state's borders are fleeing a neighboring state, a state may be more willing to accept higher numbers of those refugees because the refugees are less likely to meaningfully alter existing demographics, or because members of the ethnic group that already reside in the country may become angry if the state refuses to protect their ethnic kin. Finally, to account for the fact that having multiple rivalry types may affect state behavior on refugee admission, we include a variable for *multiple rivalries*, coded 1 if the dyad is a rivalry dyad

and the state are disputing multiple issues (some combination of ideological rivalry, spatial rivalry, and positional rivalry).

## Statistical Analysis

Table 1 displays the results of models 1 and 2, which test H1 and H2, respectively. Model 1 is consistent with previous arguments about states accepting refugees from antagonistic states. We find that states accept significantly more refugees into their homeland when the refugees are fleeing a rival, providing support for H1. This result also makes sense in light of previous empirical findings that show that, in a particular subset of states, rivalry is associated with higher numbers of refugees coming into a given state.

However, recall that we expect in H2 that the issue rivals are disputing over matters, and that looking only at the general presence of rivalry is insufficient to explain why states admit refugees. In model 2, we examine the distinct rivalry types and find support for H2.<sup>12</sup> When we disaggregate rivalry types and consider why the sending and receiving states have become such fierce opponents in the first place, we find that the issue does indeed matter: states are more willing to accept refugees from their ideological rival than from a nonrival state. This makes sense in light of our theoretical mechanism—ideological rivals, who have been condemning their opponent's regime for many years, have been constrained by their own rhetoric and accept refugees from their opponent to avoid undermining their own claims of ideological superiority.

We find no evidence that *positional* or *spatial* rivalry has a significant effect on the propensity of states accepting refugees. This further supports our assertion that it only makes theoretical sense for ideological rivals, as opposed to rivals who are disputing territory or relative influence, to take on the burden of accepting refugees. While *rivalry* is significant in model 1, it appears that ideological rivalry is driving the results in that model. Here, we find no compelling empirical evidence to support claims that rivalry itself, rather than the particular issue being disputed, leads states to take on the burden of accepting refugees.<sup>13</sup>

The control variables in both models perform as expected and in line with previous research, and we briefly discuss them here. First, *contiguity* is positive and significant, indicating that neighboring states are more likely to exchange refugees than non-neighboring states. This makes sense given the “any port in a storm” argument that claims that refugees will tend to flee a country bordering their home country. It also makes sense given the fact that the UN attempts to settle refugees as close to their home country as possible, and neighboring

**Table 1.** Effect of Rivalry (Type) on Refugee Acceptance, ZINB Regression.

	Rivals	Rivalry Type
Count stage		
Rivalry	4.398*** (0.867)	
Ideological rivalry		5.221*** (0.800)
Positional rivalry		0.961 (1.282)
Spatial rivalry		-0.734 (0.878)
Contiguity	4.640*** (0.426)	5.155*** (0.456)
Multiple rivalries	-3.433* (1.363)	-2.909 (1.593)
Receiver democracy	2.036** (0.645)	2.048** (0.647)
Receiver civil conflict	0.317 (0.195)	0.393* (0.191)
Receiver international conflict	1.464*** (0.443)	1.466** (0.449)
Sender population (log)	-0.058 (0.100)	-0.050 (0.100)
Receiver population (log)	0.723*** (0.104)	0.731*** (0.103)
Sender GDP per cap (log)	-1.514*** (0.100)	-1.511*** (0.100)
Receiver GDP per cap (log)	0.875*** (0.078)	0.873*** (0.079)
Post-Cold War	-0.273 (0.393)	-0.271 (0.388)
Receiver torture	0.124 (0.142)	0.113 (0.144)
Receiver killing	0.004 (0.151)	0.023 (0.152)
Receiver disappearances	0.007 (0.138)	0.013 (0.137)
Receiver political imprisonments	-0.294* (0.128)	-0.306* (0.128)
TEK	4.492*** (0.708)	4.523*** (0.716)
Receiver UNHCR signatory	1.675*** (0.317)	1.716*** (0.318)
Sender former colony	-3.751*** (0.648)	-3.811*** (0.670)
Constant	-6.388* (2.767)	-6.720* (2.768)
Inflation stage		
Sender democracy	-1.813*** (0.331)	-1.799*** (0.331)
Sender civil conflict	-0.504** (0.176)	-0.506** (0.176)
Sender international conflict	-0.937*** (0.253)	-0.937*** (0.253)
Sender genocide	0.652* (0.264)	0.651* (0.264)
Sender torture	1.308*** (0.068)	1.306*** (0.068)
Sender killing	0.516*** (0.068)	0.515*** (0.068)
Sender disappearances	0.230* (0.094)	0.229* (0.094)
Sender political imprisonments	0.530*** (0.070)	0.529*** (0.070)
Constant	-2.472*** (0.206)	-2.469*** (0.206)
ln(alpha)	3.842*** (0.040)	3.840*** (0.040)
Observations	437607	437607
AIC	595808.8	595771.9

Standard errors clustered by dyad in parentheses. AIC = Akaike information criterion.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ , two-tailed test.

countries face pressure from the international community to accept refugees.

*TEK* is positive and significant as well, suggesting that states tend to take on the burden of hosting refugees who share ethnicity with a group already within the host's borders. Unsurprisingly, a state being a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR) is associated with an increased propensity for that state to accept refugees. The state capacity variables perform as expected: states with higher populations and higher levels of GDP per capita host more refugees, most likely because the refugees will place a relatively lower strain on their economies and social welfare systems and will affect their demographics

less. *Multiple rivalries* is insignificant, suggesting that there is little reason to believe that disputing multiple issues, rather than just one issue, affects state behavior differently. *Receiver democracy* is positive and significant, indicating that democracies are more likely to accept refugees than nondemocracies.

Recall that the inflation stage is designed to evaluate the conditions that give rise to the structural zeroes in the data, and here, we see results consistent with previous scholarship on the generation of refugees. *Sender democracy* is negative and significant, suggesting that democracies tend to not send refugees at all, which is unsurprising given previous research findings that democracies are

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Number refugees accepted	245.581	15122.910	0	3,272,290
Rivals	0.004	0.064	0	1
Ideological rivals	0.001	0.038	0	1
Positional rivals	0.002	0.047	0	1
Spatial rivals	0.003	0.051	0	1
Contiguity	0.020	0.142	0	1
Multiple rivalries	0.002	0.046	0	1
Democracy	0.434	0.289	0.015	0.943
Civil conflict	0.127	0.333	0	1
International conflict	0.041	0.199	0	1
Torture	0.798	0.749	0	2
Extrajudicial killing	1.330	0.771	0	2
Disappearances	1.662	0.643	0	2
Political imprisonments	1.121	0.850	0	2
Sender genocide	0.034	0.180	0	1
TEK	0.048	0.214	0	1
UNHCR signatory	0.569	0.495	0	1
Sender former colony	0.001	0.029	0	1
Post–Cold War	0.496	0.500	0	1
Population (log)	15.484	2.011	9.150	20.994
GDP/pc (log)	7.304	1.616	3.625	11.818

negatively associated with state repression (Hill 2016; Hill and Jones 2014; Mason and Mitchell 2016). *Sender civil conflict* and *sender international conflict* are positive and significant, suggesting that if the sending state in a directed dyad is currently involved in a civil or international conflict or war, the receiving state is more likely to accept refugees in that year. This is also intuitive, as conflict often generates refugees. Finally, the controls for state violence perform as expected in our models. When sending states have higher levels of violence or political repression, a potential receiver is more likely to accept refugees.<sup>14</sup> Generally, states with lower levels of violence/repression are more likely to accept these refugees. Overall, we find robust support for our claims regarding state decisions to accept refugees.

## Conclusion

In this article, we argue that states' decisions to accept or not accept refugees does not occur without considerable strategic calculation. Accepting refugees carries inherent risk. A large and sudden influx of refugees risks a strain on the economy of a state, and the ideological distribution of the population may shift if the refugees come from a state that is, on average, more conservative in its social policy preferences. Furthermore, refugees may be a mechanism for the well-documented diffusion of civil conflict, and states risk an influx of arms and grievances by accepting

refugees in large numbers. However, as Vasquez (2009) discusses, rivalry drives states to direct their foreign policies toward each other in a unique way. States do not make policy cost-benefit calculations toward their ideological rivals in the same manner as they do elsewhere; they are more aggressive and are willing to take costlier, riskier behavior (Bapat 2012). Deciding to accept refugees is one example of ideological rivals engaging in this type of behavior.

We contribute to both the rivalry and the refugee literature by demonstrating that interstate relations play a role in whether or not a state will choose to admit refugees into its borders. States do not simply decide whether to accept refugees; they decide whether to accept refugees *from a particular sending state*. To our knowledge, we put forward one of the first quantitative assessments with refugee admission as the variable of interest, and we go further in our investigation of rivalrous relationships by explaining which rivalry contexts have the most explanatory power on refugee acceptance. When states are engaged in an ideological rivalry, they have likely been condemning their rival's domestic policies, signaling to their own domestic population and to the world that their regime is superior. When the state's ideological enemy begins to produce refugees, it presents an opportunity for the potential host to send a highly visible and credible signal that people from the sending state would rather live under the host's system of government or political/social culture, which is a powerful signal since

the superiority of the opponents' government and/or cultural systems is the very thing being disputed.

Besides helping to fill in the surprisingly underexplored quantitative international relations literature on refugees, our study has direct policy implications. Refugees pose a difficult collective action problem, as most states have few incentives to take on the costs of hosting them. We suggest that when refugees begin to flee, ideological rivals have a role to play. If the refugees are fleeing from a country that is engaged in an ideological rivalry, the UNHCR and other concerned actors may have a relatively easy task in finding a home for them. States that have been the biggest critics of the sending state's regime could possibly be leaned on to put their money where their mouth is and provide shelter for the victims of the opponent's regime. This is why the United States admitted hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing Communist regimes during the Cold War, and, in the case of Cuban refugees, even awarded them citizenship.

Our findings have the potential to help design a more efficient regime for the admission and hosting of refugees. By identifying a condition that leads states to be more willing to host refugees, the international community may have more success lobbying countries to reduce the unevenly distributed burden of hosting refugees that is taken on by states neighboring conflict zones. In essence, admitting refugees from an ideological rival can provide a selective incentive to overcome the free rider problem associated with hosting refugees; because ideological rivals dispute the superiority of their cultures, systems of government, etc., admitting the enemy's refugees signals that even the enemy's own citizens would rather live in the host state, reinforcing the state's claim of superiority.

Furthermore, our findings raise a question that we explore in future research: do host states treat the refugees that fled from the host's ideological rival better, on average? Refugees do not always flee into a safe host, but our findings suggest that ideological rivals, beyond being willing to host refugees from their enemy, should avoid repressing those refugees for much the same reason as admitting them in the first place.

### Authors' Note

Order of author names is reversed and equal authorship is implied.

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### Notes

1. All replication materials available at <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi%3A10.7910%2FDVN%2F2RUYRK>
2. See Online Appendix B for a full list of all rivalries in our sample.
3. Rivalry types are not mutually exclusive. The United States and USSR during the Cold War were both ideological and positional rivals, as they competed over the morality of their systems of government and over relative global influence.
4. There are a total of 106 rivalries in our sample. Fifty-seven of these dispute a single issue, and forty-nine dispute at least two issues at some point in their rivalry. Six dyads involve a rivalry across all three issues.
5. Salehyan (2009) demonstrates that contiguous rivals often allow rebel groups fighting within the rival state to set up eternal bases, or "safe havens," in their territory so that the rebels can attack and damage the host state's rival. Although it is possible that states allow rebels to come into their territory by not enforcing the border, which could facilitate refugees coming into the country, we do not believe this significantly affects the likelihood of refugee acceptance in spatial rivalries for two reasons. First, we empirically account for the fact that some states cannot stop refugees from neighboring countries from coming into their territory due to a lack of border control capacity. Second, traveling across a border does not make one a refugee in these data; asylum seekers must be granted refugee status and approved by the host state. Allowing rebels to operate on the border, or even interfering in a neighboring country's civil war, does not obligate a state to host refugees.
6. This year range is determined by availability of data for all of our variables of interest.
7. Another way to eliminate the structural zeroes is to restrict the sample to dyads in which one state sent refugees in a given year. Clark and Nordstrom (2003) argue that approaches that include the structural zeroes in the analysis risk bias from unmodeled treatment effects, making a restricted sample a better option. We argue that the zero-inflated is the better approach, but we include the method of eliminating structural zeroes in the online appendix models. Substantive results do not change.
8. In separate analyses, we use logistic regression over a more restricted sample and set a threshold of thousand refugees accepted in a given year as a criterion for the observation to be coded 1. Countries tend to take in many refugees

- once they decide to accept; the mean number of refugees accepted by receivers is just under four thousand, and more than 75 percent of receivers accept more than thousand refugees. Results do not differ from our main analyses.
9. The unconditional probability of any state accepting any refugees from a sending state is .064. For ideological rivals, the probability of accepting refugees who are fleeing an ideological rival is .352. There are a total of thirty-nine ideological rivalry dyads, twenty-three of which involve refugee admission at some point during the rivalry. During the period that our data set spans (1960–2006), there were 174,423,812 refugees; of these 1,755,192, or 1 percent, were accepted by ideological rivals.
  10. We also estimate models in which we interact *contiguity* with *ideological rivalry*, but we find no meaningful interactive effect. Separately, we exclude contiguous dyads and estimate our models across only noncontiguous dyads, and our substantive results remain unaffected.
  11. In alternate model specifications, we use Alvarez et al.'s (1996) *ACLP* indicator for democracy, recoded and extended by Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010); a dichotomous measure of democracy created by transforming the Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers 2006) data's polity score for a given country, in which a democracy score of 6 or greater is coded as 1 for *democracy* and 0 otherwise; and the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) measure of judicial constraints (Coppedge et al. 2017). Results do not change with alternate measures of democracy.
  12. In the online appendix, we estimate models in which the United States and (separately) all major powers are removed from the sample to ensure that results are not being driven by few states involved in ideological rivalries accepting many refugees. Our substantive results are unaffected.
  13. In a robustness check, we eliminate all overlapping rivalry types and test our hypotheses only on rivalries that do not include multiple issues being disputed. Results are unaffected.
  14. The CIRI indicators for repression and violence (*killing, political imprisonments, torture, and disappearances*) are ordinal and coded 0 to 2, with 0 being higher levels of repression. Thus, negative coefficients actually mean higher levels of repression.
- Supplemental Materials**
- Supplemental materials for this article are available with the manuscript on the *Political Research Quarterly (PRQ)* website.
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