Refugee crisis, valuation of life and violent crime

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The common belief is that an inflow of refugees causes an increase in the number of violent crimes and terror in the recipient country. According to a recent survey by PEW, almost one in three Europeans felt that "refugees are more to blame for crime than other groups", while the percentage of Europeans who felt that "refugees will increase the likelihood of terrorism" was almost double of that (Wike et al., 2016: 3; See also, Pickering, 2008). Cole and Pickering have shown that this explicit association between refugees and crime is also part of the official rhetoric of states (Cole, 2003; Pickering, 2005).

While criminological scholarship has suggested several reasons why migrants could be more likely to conduct crimes, empirical evidence of the relationship between the number of homicides and migrants is inconclusive (Martinez and Lee, 2000). Additionally, studies focus more on the problem of crime among migrants rather than supporting the popular belief according to which liberal immigration policies will increase violence and crime. Yet, much of the scholarship and the public debate focuses on a specific causal path from migration to crime. The focus is on the likely opportunities and motives of migrants to commit violent crime, and the effect of this on the overall development of crime.

This article will reconstruct the causal path differently. It will consider the variation of both the number of refugees as a logical proxy of the culture of appreciation of life in a host country and studies the variation in the occurrence of homicides as causally conditioned by the culture of respect for life.

Existing literature

The study of the association between the number of refugees, on the one hand, and the extent of violence, on the other hand, often looks at the direct contribution of refugees to violence. According to Salehyan and Gleditsch, countries that host refugees from neighbouring states are more likely to experience civil wars as the divisions that fuel civil wars countries can spread with refugees to neighbouring countries (Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006). Furthermore, forced displacement of populations are often linked to an increased risk of non-state armed violence, i.e. violence in which the state does not participate as a conflicting party (Böhmelt et al., 2019). This study focuses on North American and European countries where the likelihood of non-state conflict or civil war is very low. Yet, these findings could be considered relevant for some of the East European countries, if they hosted large numbers of migrants. Ukraine, the only country with an intra-state conflict within its territory, is, however, one of the countries with smallest numbers of refugees per population. In general, problems of intra-state and non-state conflicts tend to be pertinent in countries more fragile than those in Europe or North America. Therefore, most of the literature on refugees and violence in developed countries is related to violent crime.

Literature that focuses on refugees and violent crime often focuses on the opportunity structure as an explanation. Refugees tend to settle in poor neighbourhoods where legitimate opportunities are scarce (Hagan and Palloni, 1998; Handlin, 1959), and where the elevation of social status might require sub-cultural mobilization in ethnic gangs (Gans, 1992). This has contributed to the increase of violent crime among refugees and migrants.

Other studies on the relationship between crime and refugees focus on demographics of forced migration. Among criminologists it is a widely recognised fact that the overwhelming majority of acts of violent crime are committed by young men (Neapolitan, 1997). This is in

line with more general patterns of violence: the expansion of the group of young men increases the likelihood of violence (Urdal, 2006). Most immigrants and refugees are young men, too, and thus it is natural that a disproportionate share of murderers are migrants (Gurr, 1989).

In addition to opportunity structures and demographics, the relationship between violent crime and refugee flows has been explained with references to cultural gaps and normative systems. Refugees naturally import their own norms and values from their countries of origin, and this may in some cases create a clash between the normative systems of host countries and countries of origin. In extreme cases it can lead to behaviour that is not considered criminal in the country of the refugee's origin but is in the recipient country (Sutherland and Cressey, 1960). With regards to violence, honour killings are probably the most extreme case of this type of behaviour.

Another explanation related to normative systems is related to the possibility of a disruption of social norms in the confusion between norms of the refugees and local people. Migration can challenge local values, while migrants, especially second-generation migrants, may have lost their own institutions and values while still not committing themselves to local norms and normative institutions. As a result violent crime is more likely (Bursik, 1988).

According to some scholars, the cultural and normative clash does not merely cause violence by refugees, but also by those opposed to migration. Looking at terrorist violence, McAlexander shows that in Germany, numbers of Muslim refugees has not increased the overall level of terrorism significantly, but instead, it has been associated with the increase of Islamophobic terror (McAlexander, 2019). This finding leads us from causal paths that focus on refugees to those that focus on the causal powers of dominant discourses.

Despite all the study of direct relationship between refugees and crime, the association between the influx of refugees and the development of crime statistics is weak. While individual refugees might have incentives and opportunities for crimes, waves of refugees have not been found to increase the number of crimes in the host country. Bell and others study two waves of refugees in the UK, and find that neither increased the number of violent crimes, while the first was associated with increased and the latter with decreased number of crimes. (Bell et al., 2012) These findings focused on effects of refugees in a given host community without allowing comparison between host communities open and closed for refugees. Thus, the study does not focus on the effect of the host community, and the variation in the attitudes and values of the host community that could affect crimes and the numbers of refugees. This is the omission that refugee studies, so far, have not focused on. Yet, investigation of whether host communities should take an open or a closed approach to refugees in order to fight crime, should not only focus on the approach through the number of refugees to the number of crimes. It should also focus on whether the approach itself has effects on the number of crime. This is what this study will do: it will look at how an approach and values behind the approach of the host community could be associated both to the willingness to accept refugees and to the likelihood of violent crime.

The argument

If the dominant understanding of the causal path from migration to crime was supported by positive associations between the two, it would be possible to conclude that the political debate on refugees could be based on correct premises. Naturally, it would still be an ethical issue whether only a few violent crimes committed by refugees in their new homelands could justify policies that condemn them to violence and deaths in tens of thousands in their countries of origins, if refugee policies were tightened. Yet, if the finding in terrorism studies is that flows of Muslim refugees is associated with anti-Muslim terror, rather than Muslim

terror, as McAlexander has found, then the political simplistic assumption that we can avoid violence by taking a negative stand on refugees and migration is counter-productive, even if the association between refugee flows and violence was positive. However, if there was a negative association between the number of refugees a country allows refuge, and violence, the argument against refugees referring to security consideration, would be impossible to support.

This study will show that there is a negative association between the number of refugees a country gives refuge to, and the amount of violence. It will explain this association by focusing on dominant culture rather than conditions let alone "characteristics" of refugees. If there is a humane culture that values the life of its citizens, then this is likely to hinder the citizens from resorting to homicide while at the same time being interested in rescuing refugees from wars and prosecution. As such, this could be considered a logical component of a culture of respect for life. Due to the fact that in most countries the share of refugees of the entire population is very small, the nature of refugees themselves do not substantially affect crime statistics. Even in the most liberal countries the share of refugees hardly ever reaches 5% of the total population. Thus, in order to have a similar contribution to homicides, the propensity to homicide among refugees would need to vary 20 times more than the similar propensity of the main population, in order to have the same effect. There is no evidence that such differences between refugees and locals exist. The local culture, local values and the local, dominant approaches to the value of life will always remain a dominant determinant in the causal path to violent crime. The willingness to accept refugees, which in democracies is reflected in the number of refugees is but a proxy of the overall valuation of life. Instead of looking at the path from accepting migrants to crime, this study will look at the effect of the valuation of life on violent crime and uses the willingness to accept migrants as a proxy of such a valuation of life. Refugee inflows are not an independent variable, but a

proxy of an independent variable, culture of respect for life, while the extent of violent crime is a dependent variable of such a culture. The variable with causal powers is the local humanistic appreciation of life, which is expressed in the appreciation of a refugee's life. A country cannot be indifferent towards refugees that are escaping war, and drowning into the Mediterranean Sea in the process, if it respects life and this causes its citizens not to commit violent crimes. By focusing on the reflection of the dominant culture in asylum policies and its effect on crime, this study will reveal why the relationship between migration and crime has received so many explanations that suggest that motives of and opportunities for crime lead to criminality, while still empirical evidence of the association between crime and migration is mixed (Martinez and Lee, 2000; Bell et al., 2012). The reason for this is that investigation of the relationship has neglected a focus on the dominant culture, and it has falsely assumed that migration is an independent rather than a logical proxy of the dependent variable in the explanation of the relationship.

To emphasize this neglected causal path, the focus of this study will be on refugee flows rather than flows of immigrants in general. The overall humanitarian respect for life is not as much reflected on decisions to allow the entry for people whose life is not threatened by something if they are not accepted to a country, whereas such a threat is part of the definition of a refugee. The comparison will be between countries rather looking at timeseries and comparing periods of time in the same country. Political culture rarely changes very rapidly, whereas there are clear differences between countries in the way life is appreciated.

The investigation will use simple descriptive statistics to establish the negative association between refugee flows and crime in developed European and North American countries.

If we compare countries that take refugees with those that do not, we can see how the overall disregard of the sanctity of life affects homicide rates. In such an investigation the focus is

not on the immediate effects of refugees, but rather on the level of humanistic value of life as a characteristic of the dominant culture. This study will argue that the willingness to rescue refugees from wars and oppression is an indicator of a popular culture that respects life. This way, the burden caused by refugees on population, the economy and population density, can be seen both as an "proxy for respect for life" in our model of explanation, and as a direct "cause for violence" in the existing models that suggest a positive relationship between refugee flows and violent crime.

Our study will show that the share of refugees of total population, as well as the number of refugees divided by the total area of the country, and total GDP, is negatively, rather than positively associated with the level of homicides per population. Whatever the direct effect of possible propensity to crime of refugees on the overall levels of homicides, the effect of host populations valuation of life is greater.

This way the turning of attention from the immediate effects of refugee flows to both the dominant culture's values that affect refugee flows, and violence, can achieve two things in the literature on refugees and violence. On the one hand, it can reconcile the disparity between associations and explanations. We can identify plausible causal mechanisms that could make a positive association between the relative number of refugees and violent crime intelligible. These explanations could easily be integrated in more general theories of aggression: opportunities, demography and psychology of refugees could suggest that they are more prone to violence. Yet we still do not have the positive correlative association between relative number of refugees and crime. On the other hand, it can offer more straightforward prescriptions to asylum policies. If refugees elevated the number of homicides in their host countries, this would suggest that countries should have stricter refugee policies. At the same time receiving them may reduce violence in the countries of origin of refugees. This leads to two contradictory prescriptions. However, if the lack of

respect for human life that anti-refugee policies demonstrate is powerfully linked with the rise of violent crime and if the conditions that expose refugees to the life in crime is not, then our conclusions can offer non-conflicting prescriptions. If greater number of refugees is associated with lower levels of homicides, then surely this offers arguments for more liberal refugee policies.

Variables

The system of international protection is based upon the 1951 Refugee Convention, which covered European refugees in the aftermath of WW2, and the 1967 Protocol, which expanded the geographical and time restraints of the 1951 convention to provide safety for all people. The international protection system also works in conjunction with international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law. Non-refoulment is a core tenant of the international protection system, contained in Article 33(1) of the 1951 Convention. It says that States cannot expel or return a refugee (directly or indirectly) to the territories where their life or freedom would be threatened under refugee law.

In reality, refugee policies and practices of countries often make the implementation of the international law on refugee difficult by using two kinds of discursive strategies that hide the disrespect for life and the safety of refugees. These strategies or discourses are the discourse of securitization and the discourse of bureaucracy (Polkey, 2017).

On the one hand, national policies often securitize migration, i.e. they consider immigration a security issue and thus apply the strict, confidential and often non-democratic rules that apply to matters of existential threat. Yet, if we look at the risk to life by considering fatality statistics involved in migration by refugees from conflict areas, refugees are naturally exposed to a vastly greater risk to life than the citizens of the hosting countries. Focusing on abstract matters of state security often hide the concrete risk to life and makes the willingness to accept the loss of life of refugees invisible. For example, when leaders of many European

countries spoke about the protection of their countries from the prospect of forced or covert entry of refugees to their countries as a security measure, the only people whose concrete safety was really threatened were blocked from safety by these "security measures."

Another discursive strategy that hides disrespect of life and safety of refugees is related to the procedures of bureaucracy. Instead of explicitly revealing willingness to sacrifice the lives of refugees, or their willingness to contradict the international conventions on refugees, Alex Polkey has revealed, by studying South African cases of appeals to a refugee status, how such willingness is hidden behind the wall of bureaucracy. Norms related to refugees are adhered to, in principle, but processes of application of refugee status are made impossible for refugees in situations where they have to make their risky journeys from a dangerous, violent nation to a new homeland (Polkey, 2017). Refugees do not have the luxury of planning their escapes to host countries, so they almost always lack the required documentation for refugee applications. They may have spent years in refugee camps and have traded documentation for resources. They may have fled homes in the middle of the night, or they may have been unable to acquire documents from the government because of political persecution. If then the asylum policies of the intended host state consider that paperless refugees are trying to enter the system/state without legal means (travel visa, passport, etc) and deem them "illegal", this could be interpreted as a proxy for their lack of appreciation for human life.

If the mechanism of refusing refugees is discursive, using secrecy of security affairs and processes of complicated bureaucracy, it would not be possible compare countries' commitment to saving lives by comparing secret and unique asylum practices. Instead, the assumption here is that such willingness is reflected in outcomes of asylum policies, i.e. in numbers of refugees accepted. When measuring such numbers, we will be using the terms outlined in the UNHCR'S Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees as our variables. We have chosen to use data from the UNHCR because, under the 1951 Convention

and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, the UNHCR must oversee the application of the 1951 Convention by State members. This also means that States are required to both cooperate with and provide statistical data to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951). More than 140 countries are signed on to the 1951 Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and the UNHCR is on the ground in over 130 countries. Therefore, it is the most complete source of data on refugee trends in the world.

As refugees we have counted both convention and non-convention refugees. The former category of people includes persons who fall under the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees. The term refugee, under the convention, is a person who:

"owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951: 14, Chapter 1, Article 1).

The UNHCR's operations conduct interviews and determination processes with individuals to determine whether they fit in to this definition, then, refugees can be resettled into host countries through the UNHCR and its member States. In the case of irregular border crossings from asylum seekers, an individual state's asylum processes may also determine if someone fits the definition criteria.

Non-convention refugees refer to people who may not meet the Convention definition or have not had a Convention assessment done but are still in situations which require protection from States. For example, during mass movements of people as a result of conflict or violence, such as Syrian or Rohingya populations, individual interviews or assessments by the UNHCR or individual governments may not be possible or even deemed necessary to determine Convention refugee status. This category is referred to as prima facie refugees. During the refugee crisis of 2015, many people were simply accepted without formal interviews, especially in countries that prioritized the protection of life, rather than bureaucratic procedures, so we consider both convention and non-convention refugees in our calculation of number of refugees. Yet, we will produce alternative values for convention refugees only, and compare them with homicide statistics. This is to avoid a suspicion that the number of refugees reflects more a lacking ability to prevent their entry than willingness to accept refugees.

Granting asylum for refugees reflects very different political orientations and different levels of humanitarian commitments in countries that cannot prevent refugee flows, and in those who leave the management of the refugee population to international organizations, rather than in countries that manage the refugee population themselves. Consequently, we will have to select a sample of countries to whom asylum policies will mean roughly the same thing. This study will therefore focus on Europe and North America, and it will compare 38 countries with their capital cities in Europe, leaving out Russia, whose refugee policy is dominated by an anomaly related to Ukrainian and Georgian refugees that Russia cannot turn back because they are also Russian citizens. Colonial territories of nations were not included in any of data (area, population, GDP, homicides, refugees) used in this study, while the data on Norway and Denmark do not include Jan Mayen, Svalbard or Greenland. The data on Spain does include the Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla, while the data on Serbia did not

include Kosovo, which most countries has been recognized as independent by the time of our time of observation (2014-17).

Since we want to see acceptance of refugees as a reflection of life-respecting culture, we will look at the time period of the 2014-2017 refugee crisis and count together the numbers from each of these years. This is because of the fact that this period of refugee crisis can be considered as a time when the masses of refugees could be considered either as a threat to some abstract security values, or as an opportunity to save lives. At the time, there were no doubts about the danger refugees were in, during the authoritarian violence and massive bombings by great powers in Syria and Iraq, and during the most intensive terrorist operations by international terrorist groups, such as Al Qaeda and the ISIS. The statistics of drownings in the Mediterranean Sea told the same story. In this time and era, the lack of information of the danger to refugees could not have been the reason for variation between countries, the crucial difference between countries was related to their culture of respect for life.

It would be possible to say that valuation of life can be measured in many ways other than observing the willingness to accept of refugees at a time when there is no doubt that their life is in danger unless they are given an asylum. It would be possible to look at contributions to humanitarian aid, budgets of life-saving health care, concentration on road safety etc. However, this article aims to contribute to the political debate on refugees and thus, its operationalisation of valuation of life focuses on the kind of respect for life that affects refugee policies. Only this way can we offer evidence on the effect of approaches to refugees on violent crime.

While the intention of this article is not to explain what causes violent crime, but simply to look at the relationship between approaches to refugees and crime, there is a need to control a

the variables that could affect somehow systematically the association between refugees and the number of homicides per population. There are other reasons why a nation would welcome refugees such as an international (1951 Refugee Convention and the1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees) and domestic legal obligation to do so. While the domestic legal obligations we could consider as reflections of the valuation of life as we defined it, countries may join international legal regimes in order to be part of an international group of nations, improve their international image or trading opportunities. However, the international commitments of the countries in our study are the same with all the countries committed to the1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, and all of the countries signed onto the 1951 Convention, with the exception of the USA, which is only signed onto the 1967 Protocol. Thus, differing international commitments cannot affect that association between crime and the number of refugees.

However, the size of the economy, population and the area need to be controlled when measuring commitment to the valuation of life. Comparing the absolute number of refugees in Luxembourg with the absolute number of refugees in the United States would not reveal the commitment of these countries to saving lives. It is natural that small nations cannot absorb as many refugees as big countries. Without an adjustment in our measurement of the valuation of life, we would easily be measuring the association between the size of the country and violent crime. Thus, we will have to adjust the absolute number of refugees to the ability of a country to receive them. This must be done somehow so that the adjustment would help us measure the willingness to sacrifice for the protection of life. This way we could test our theory that claims that willingness to sacrifice for the protection of life indicates respect for life, which, then causes people in that culture to refuse violent crime. If we adjust the absolute number of refugees also so, that the sacrifice could reflect the risks that refugees pose to peacefulness of the host society, we could also test the alternative,

challenging hypothesis according to which the burden of refugees on host society increases the risk of violent crime.

We will first look at the number of refugees as a percentage of the total population in the host country. In the analysis section, we will reveal how this relates to our theory and the challenging theory. On the basis of this adjustment we can now map the commitments to rescuing life of refugees in Europe and North America and divide countries into four categories according to their level of humanism of culture as reflected in the number of refugees per population. The data for population in each country was taken from the appropriate UN source, the Population Division of UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs(Population Division of UN DESA, 2019), which bases its data on 236 population and housing censuses for 235 countries since 2010, vital registration of births and deaths from 163 countries or areas, 2,700 surveys, including demographic and health surveys, conducted in 235 countries or areas, among which 540 were administered in 2010 or later as well as on official statistics reported to the Demographic Yearbook of the United Nations and population registers and other administrative sources on international migration statistics. While this data source is the most used in demographic studies, the data on the countries in article do not tend to vary much from data source to another. Since the refugee data is from the period of 2014-17, it is natural that the population data is from 2017.

In Table 1, the first group is the one with least commitment, and thus least refugees per population, while Group 4 is the one with greatest commitment and number of refugees per population:

Table 1: Commitment to protecting life of refugees as measured by the number of refugees per population

Secondly, we will look at economic commitment and sacrifice. A poor country that sets aside resources to accept refugees must be considered as more humane and willing to protect refugees than a rich country that accepts the same number of refugees. We will therefore also view commitment to saving lives as something that statistics of the number of refugees per GDP reflects. GDP data is from the IMF Economic Outlook (International Monetary Fund, 2019), which is the most used source for GDP data. We have used nominal GDP in current US Dollars, but since this is done for each of the countries, and since the comparison is between countries rather than in time, the changes in the values of currency do not affect the indicator. The use of nominal GDP rather than purchasing parity values generally undermines the economic sacrifice of poor countries (with low prices) compared to rich countries, even though nominal values are less speculative and more accurate than PPP values. However, since we are studying countries with a relatively similar level of income, the difference between purchasing power parity and nominal values is minimal. Again, we have chosen to focus on GDP values in 2017 to allow comparison with the number of numbers of refugees in 2014-2017.

Finally, we will also adjust the number of refugees with the area of the host country. Sharing a small territory with refugees seems indicates greater commitment than sharing a great territory with the same number of refugees. The data on area of European and North American countries is from the dataset of the CIA World Factbook, which is one of the used datasets for areas (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019). There is little controversy about the areas of European states as they are seen also by the statistics of homicides and refugee destinations, and thus, the source of this data is not controversial.

When investigating homicide rates, we focus on the crime category of "intentional homicide." The definition of the offence of intentional homicide is "unlawful death inflicted upon a person with the intent to cause death or serious injury." (United Nations Office on

Drugs and Crime, 2015: 17). We use data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, various years), which is the most used data on homicides in scientific studies. Even though it lacks too many years to allow convincing time series analysis on the development of homicides in a single country, the data does afford the comparison of homicides between countries. Due to the missing data, we have chosen to use the latest data on homicide (until 2017). While some of the countries had data on year 2017, some had data from the years within the four years of our investigation. While the data on homicides may changes from year to another, there is no reason to suspect that comparative trends would be affected by the unavailability of the data from exactly the same years. Looking at all years from 2014 to 2017 and comparing developments within countries would neither be optimal for the testing of the causal effect of national culture of respect for human life, as it is reflected in asylum policies, on the number of homicides.

Analysis

If we look at the big picture of crime, we can see that in European and North American countries the average number of homicides per 100,000 people is about 1.6. Standard deviation is 1.4, while the highest level of homicide is 6.34 (Ukraine), and the lowest is 0.3 (Iceland).

Shapiro-Wilk W test for normal data distribution was conducted to see whether the variables used were normally distributed. All variables under investigation were found not normally distributed, which complicates the analysis and forces the statistical analysis to non-parametric measurements of associations between variables. Furthermore, the comparison is based on 38 countries only, which means that even non-parametric correlations cannot be considered completely reliable. Thus, descriptive statistics remain in a crucial role in the analysis.

The effect of refugees could be related to the size of the economy. Refugees pose a short-term economic burden, even though there is evidence that in the long run aging Western countries will benefit from an injection of labour force from outside the country (OECD, 2013). On the one hand, the theories of incentive structures could suggest that the more refugee flows drain the economy, the less is left for the proper integration of refugees, which again increases the likelihood of violence (Gans, 1992; Hagan and Palloni, 1998; Handlin, 1959). This could put the refugees into a situation in which there is a scarcity of legitimate economic opportunities for refugees and thus more temptation for crime including violence. At the same time, the share that refugees get from the scarce economic resources could provoke anger and perhaps violence in the anti-migrant groups, as McAlexander has shown in the study on migrants and terrorism (McAlexander, 2019). Finally, it would be possible that the large influx of refugees with economic needs would create relative deprivation, the decrease of the economic position of both the refugees and the main population. Relative deprivation, again, has been shown to be associated with increased violence; criminal and conflict-related (Gurr, 1970; Gurr, 1989; Runciman, 1966). All these explanations suggest that the number of refugees per GDP and the number of homicides per population should have a positive correlation.

Our theory suggests the opposite. The more the main population of a nation is willing to accept economic hardship to rescue people who escape war or prosecution, the more one could assume it is motivated by respect for life. This cultural inclination should then affect negatively the number of homicides. This theory based on the commitment of the dominant local culture to the protection of life would then predict a negative association between homicides per population and refugees per GDP.

A scatterplot (Graph 1) reveals that there is a negative rather than positive association between the two. To make the graphical presentation even more explicit, we will add a

Lowess (Locally Weighted Scatterplot Smoothing) curve into the graph. Such a technique is used especially in non-parametric strategies for fitting a smooth curve to data points. Since none of the variables used in this study are normally distributed, using the Lowess curve for our descriptive statistics is appropriate.

The effect of the humanism of the dominant local culture trumps over the direct effects of refugee flows on the economy.

Graph 1.

The non-parametric correlation between the refugees per GDP and homicides per population is negative, but not in a statistically significant manner. If one looks at the association between convention refugees and homicides the negative association is clearer, but still weak and not systematic enough to be statistically significant. Yet, what can be seen from the scatterplot and the Lowess curve, is clearly, that the burden of refugees from the economy to criminal violence cannot be used as an argument against liberal asylum policies. All the countries with serious problem with homicide, are countries that have low level of refugees per GDP. Even in absence of statistically significant negative correlations, it is possible to falsify the claim that refugee flows cause economic hardship that then is reflected in the increase of violent crime. This is clearly not the case.

Yet, the small number of cases leaves uncertainties to our conclusions. Furthermore, while there is a negative correlative association between economic burden of refugees and the number of homicides per population, the relationship is clearly not linear. Countries that accept only a very minor or no economic burden from refugees seem to be on average much more murderous. This does not apply to all these countries, but there still seems to be a clear general tendency towards greater acceptance of violence in societies that are also willing to

accept the violence to refugees without interfering to it by accepting more refugees. There may be also be a small increase in the number of homicides as we get closer to the nations that accept the greatest short-term economic burden from refugees. Malta, the country with the greatest economic burden, with 0.94 murders per 100,000 people, Sweden (1.08), Bulgaria (1.14) and Germany (1.18) are still much less murderous than the average European and North American countries (with 1.6 murders per 100,000), but these three of these four countries (Sweden, Germany and Bulgaria) with the highest economic burden do have a higher murder rate than the countries with next highest burden. Thus, we cannot entirely rule out the possibility that in the high end of economic burden the number of refugees is not associated with lower levels of homicides. Yet, the evidence we have presented that willingness to accept economic hardship as an attitude of the local population clearly, generally, eclipses the causal effect of the possible negative effects of refugees on violence among most countries possibly excluding three of the four countries with greatest willingness to accept economic costs in order to rescue refugees.

Secondly, we will look at the effect from refugee flows to population and violent crime. There the theories of social disruption would, again, suggest that the more population pressures refugees create, the more there will be cultural clashes between refugees and the legal order. The number of refugees affect the share of the population that will be removed from the normative institutions they have been socialized in. As a result, clashes result as more people recognize norms different from the ones the host country enforces as legitimate (Sutherland and Cressey, 1960). Furthermore, the more alien norms challenge the safety of local communities, the more this leads to resistance and violence against refugees (McAlexander, 2019). These explanations would suggest that there is a positive non-parametric association between the number of refugees and homicides per population.

However, if we look at the commitment to the protection of life in the dominant host community, we could assume that the more people are willing to accept refugees to represent the total population, the more there is commitment to their rescue. Thus, the argument based on humanitarian commitment of the host community would suggest, in opposition to the other theories, that the association between the number of homicides and refugees per population would be negative.

The scatterplot and Lowess curve in Graph 2 shows a relatively consistent declining trend in homicides per population when we move towards countries with higher per capita intake of refugees. This time the association is statistically significant even if not very strong (-0.3305, n=38, p=0.0427). If one looks at convention refugees only, the negative association is slightly stronger (-0.3386, n=38, p=0.0376).

Graph 2:

It seems clear that a serious problem with homicides exists only in countries that are not willing to receive refugees and have thus low levels of accepted refugees per population (Ukraine, Albania, Baltic states, USA). Again, however, we can see that despite the averages and the overall negative association between refugees per population and homicides per population, countries such as Poland, Portugal and the Czech Republic, with only very few refugees have managed to stay very non-violent. Two of the three most willing countries to invite large numbers of refugees (as a percentage of the total population) are slightly more violent than countries with slightly less refugees. Sweden and Germany are also in this case the two countries with slightly higher murder rates than in countries with slightly smaller numbers of refugees per population. As above, we can see that both Sweden and Germany are still much more peaceful than average European or North American countries.

All in all, the investigation of the number of refugees per population points to the same direction as the investigation of the number of refugees per GDP. It seems clear that multiple other variables than the number of refugees per population affect violence in states, and thus, the number of refugees explains only a small fraction of the variation in murders. Yet, since our intention has not been to investigate the causes of homicides but instead the effect of refugee flows on violence, the strength of the correlation and the degree of how much this variable explains variation in homicides per 100,000 is sufficient.

Finally, it would be possible to look at the Malthusian pressures that migration causes, by looking at the area available in a country in comparison with the number of refugees these countries have accepted. It would be possible to assume that the cultural clashes between alien groups that have been socialised to a different set of norms would be more severe in countries where the area is scarce forcing different groups closer to one another (Sutherland and Cressey, 1960). While a large country could allow pockets to emerge, where migrant and local communities could live more segregated lives, a large number of refugees in smaller countries would force communities with different values into interaction. Within the logic of the theory of cultural clashes, it could then be assumed that this could increase the intensity of violence on both sides of the foreign-local divide. Similarly, the scarcity of land could be assumed to create incentive structures that fuel competition and violence between communities.

Again, the willingness to rescue refugees from war despite the scarcity of land could be seen an indicator of humanitarian respect for life. Thus, again, the humanitarian commitment explanation would suggest that the association between homicides per population and refugees per land area would be negative, unlike in the case of the other theories.

The distribution of countries on a two-way (refugees per area – homicides per population) scatterplot does not reveal the relationship very accurately. The Lowess curve makes the picture only slightly clearer. The first reason for this is Malta as an outlier with a very high refugee density. Malta has 6.3 times more refugees per square meter than the country with the second highest refugee density (Germany). Furthermore, there seems to be a lot of countries with very different levels of homicides per population at the low end of refugee density. Scatterplot and Lowess curve in Graph 3 will present the relationship between refugee density and homicides per population without Malta, the outlier. Before taking Malta out of the consideration, we must remember that this outlier with greatest willingness to share its territory with refugees has an exceptionally low level of homicides per population (0.94 per 100,000 people).

Graph 3:

Again, the graph reveals that the main homicide problem is with countries that do not want to share their territory with refugees, but also that there are also very peaceful countries with very low refugee density. Regardless of whether the outlier, Malta is considered, the non-parametric correlation between refugee density and homicides per population is negative, moderate and statistically significant. With Malta included, the Spearman correlation is moderate, negative and statistically significant: -0.3846 (n=38, p=0.0171) Without Malta the correlation is marginally weaker, yet still moderate, negative and significant: -0.3827 (n=37, p=0.0194). If we look at convention refugees only (and include Malta), the negative correlation is still moderate and statistically significant (-0.3346, n=38, p=0.0400).

Here, however, we can, again, see that while Malta, the country most densely populated with refugees has managed to stay very non-violent, the second (Sweden) and especially the third

most densely refugee populated country (Belgium, with 1.95 homicides per 100,000) has a greater number of homicides per 100,000 people than in countries with slightly smaller refugee density. Of all the top hosts of refugees, Belgium is the only one with a higher number of homicides per population than the average in the rest of the countries in Europe and North America. Again, this may suggest that the number of refugees could, at the highest level, have negative effects, too. Yet, all the three ways of investigating the matter seem to suggest that the political argument that suggests that we could leave refugees to drown in the Mediterranean Sea rather than accepting them to our countries, is counterproductive for the very reason our politicians make the argument. Promoting disregard to life by suggesting that we do not need to help refugees promotes a culture that increases violent crime more than refugees could ever do.

Italia, Greece and Malta are all economically weak, socially fragile countries with massive number of refugees. Each of these countries could be considered as those in which young male refugees would have opportunities for violent crime, and where the local and immigrant cultures and normative systems could clash. At the same time the fact that these countries still accept the numbers of refugees they do, demonstrates commitment to humanism and valuation of life. They all have a homicide per 100,000 people levels under 1. Compared to the 5.35 of the United States, which has assumed a rather strict immigration policies despite wealth, large land area and large population, or to the 6.34 of Ukraine, with one of the lowest per capita/area absorption of refugees in Europe, the level of violence in these frontline states of European refugee crisis, is very low. Also, all these liberal front line states have done better in terms of preventing homicidal violence than the relatively closed frontline states Serbia (with homicide per 100,000 at 1.39), Romania (1.25), North Macedonia (1.59), Albania (2.7) and Hungary (2.07). Only Slovenia with a relatively closed asylum policies and

very successful prevention of violence is an exception of the front-line countries of European refugee crisis.

Conclusions

The relationship between open arms and homicide is not linear or very strong, and given the small number of cases, the positive conclusions cannot be considered statistically very strong. Thus, the more robust conclusion of evidence presented in this article is negative: the political argument that emphasises security from violent crime, against liberal asylum policies, does not have the support of empirical evidence. On the contrary, it seems that humanism that justifies economic, demographic and social costs caused by accommodating refugees, also prevents homicides. Evidence shows that the countries with the highest numbers of homicides are all very unwilling to accept refugees. It shows also, that regardless of the type of burden a country will accept to rescue refugees, this willingness is associated with lower levels of homicide. Thus, in developed countries of Europe and North America, it seems clear that security from violent crime cannot be an argument against humane refugee policies.

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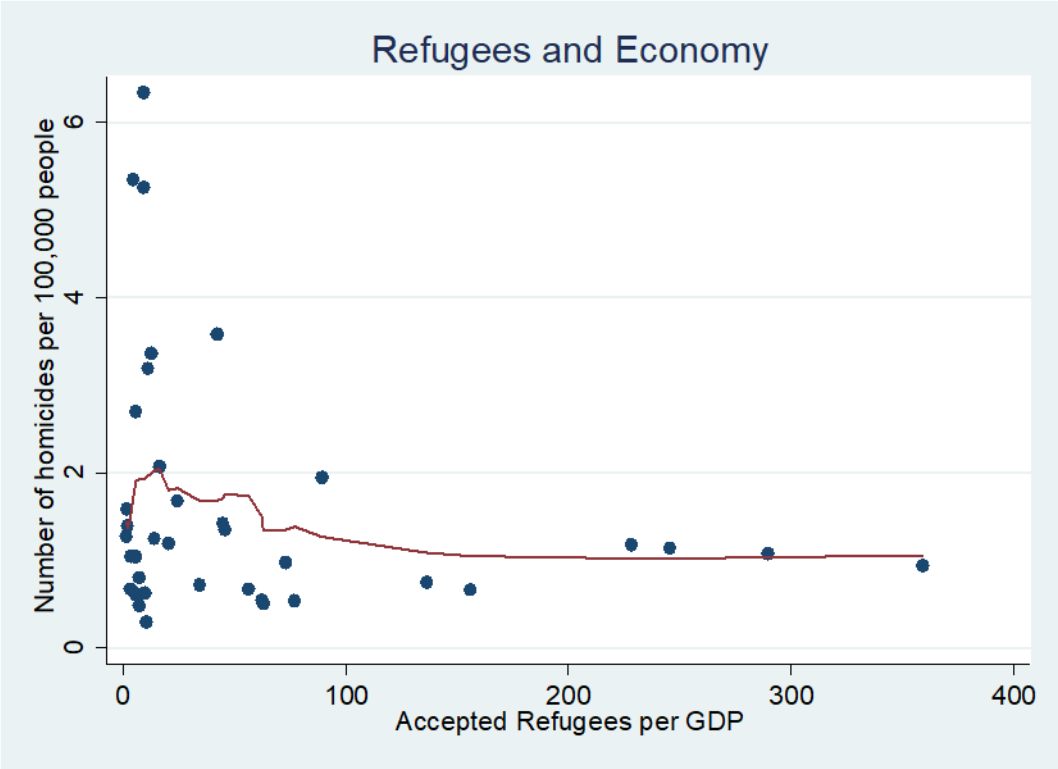
Graphs and tables

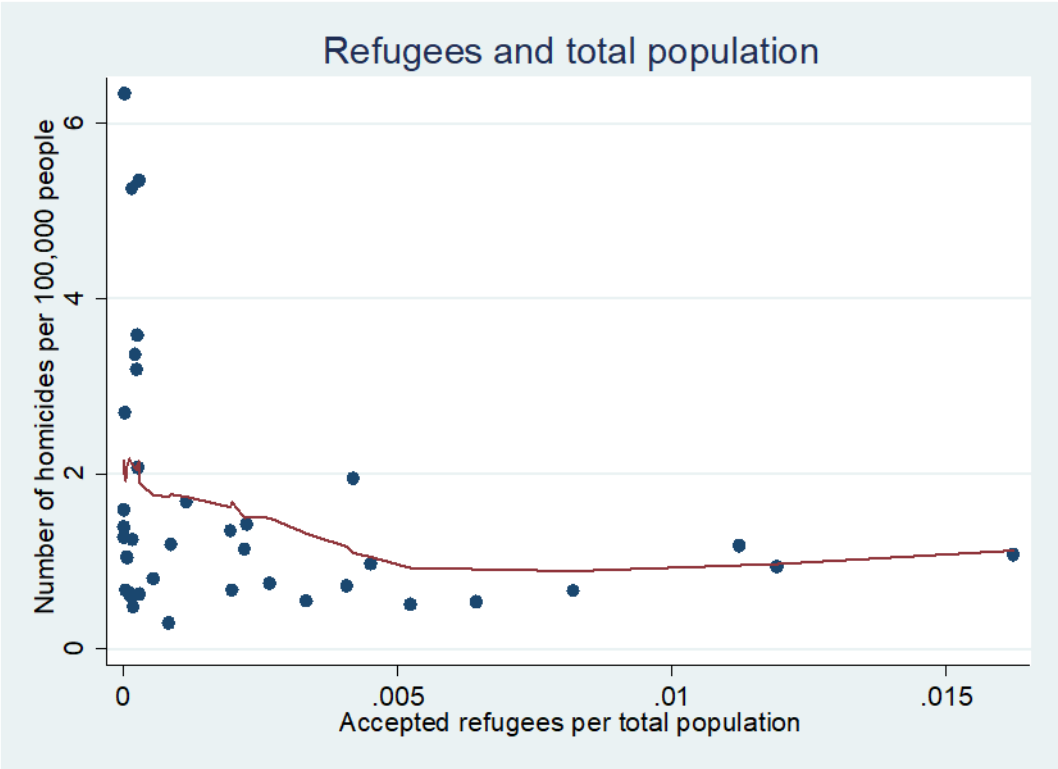
Table 1

Group 1 (least refugees per population)	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4 (most refugees per population)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Lithuania	Iceland	Luxembourg
North Macedonia	Romania	United Kingdom	Belgium
Serbia	Slovenia	Canada	Denmark
Ukraine	Latvia	France	Norway
Albania	Estonia	Italy	Switzerland
Poland	Belarus	Bulgaria	Austria
Slovakia	Hungary	Finland	Germany
Croatia	United States of America	Greece	Malta
Portugal	Spain	Netherlands	Sweden
Czech Republic	Ireland		

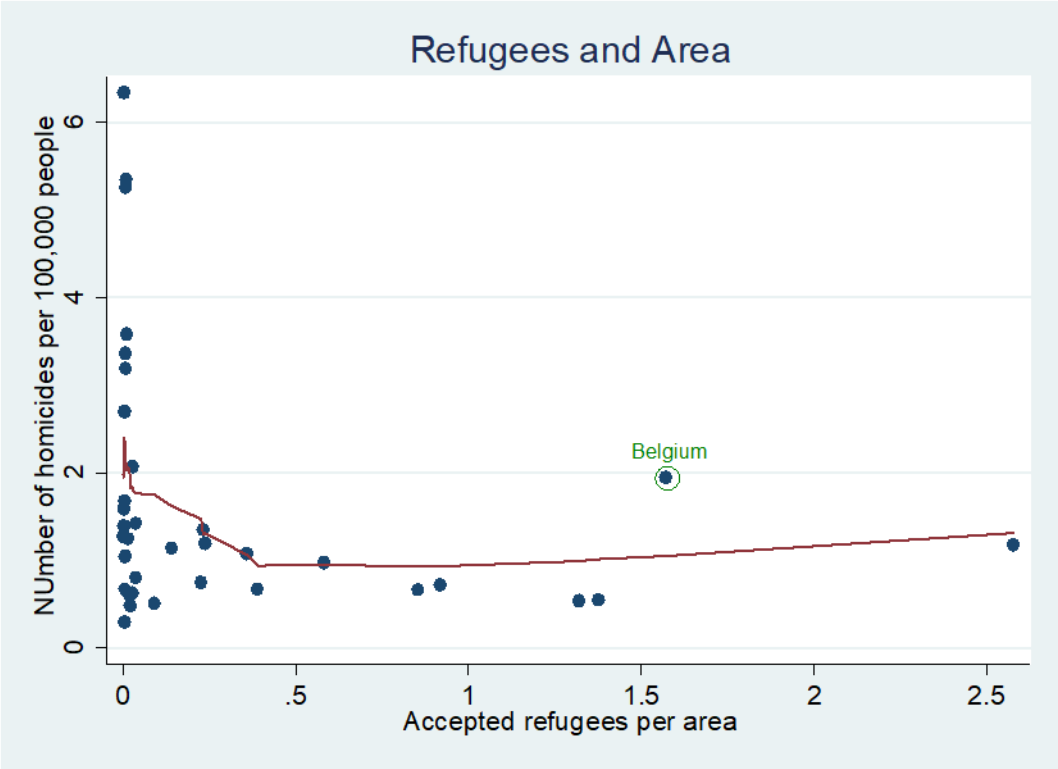
Graph 1



Graph 2



Graph 3


Refugees and Area
NUmber of homicides per 100,000 people
0
2
4
6
Belgium
0
.5
1
1.5
2
2.5
Accepted refugees per area