

# Is Solidarity a Long Way Off? Explaining Divergent National Positions towards Refugee-Sharing in the Midst of the EU's Refugee Crisis\*

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## Abstract

When negotiating a refugee-sharing scheme in 2015, some EU (European Union) member states supported it but others opposed it. Which factors encouraged or discouraged the member states to support the refugee-sharing scheme? Our aim in this paper is to statistically test a wide range of possible factors, each of which is related to 1) party politics; 2) institutional capacity; 3) socio-ethnic composition; 4) labor market conditions; 5) social norms; and 6) security concerns. Our analysis finds that three factors, namely, the party politics, the institutional capacity and the socio-ethnic composition, had statistically significant effects on the government support for or opposition to the EU's refugee-sharing scheme.

## Introduction

From the early to the mid-2010s, the political upheavals in the Middle East and North Africa impelled an unprecedented number of people to flee to Europe. As part of its reaction, the EU (European Union) proposed in September 2015 a Europe-wide refugee-sharing scheme in an attempt to relocate to other EU states the asylum-seekers concentrated in Greece and Italy. Many states agreed on the scheme, but others were unenthusiastic or even hostile to it. Eventually the scheme was approved by a qualified majority vote; while many states voted for it, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia voted against. Even after the adoption of the scheme, Hungary and Slovakia continued to oppose it by calling, albeit without success, for the decision to be annulled by the Court of Justice of the EU.

One question which is worth investigating is what factors made national governments willing

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or unwilling to share refugees? We can point out a wide range of domestic factors which are presumably involved in the decision-making of national governments to support or oppose a refugee-sharing scheme: 1) party politics; 2) institutional capacity; 3) socio-ethnic composition; 4) labor market conditions; 5) social norms; and 6) security concerns. The purpose of this article is to analyze which of the above were relevant to the formation of national positions, with an empirical focus on the EU's refugee-sharing decisions. Looking at the various positions taken by the member states, we statistically test the various factors against each other. This empirical investigation makes a normatively and practically important contribution by illuminating the conditions that are needed to encourage states to foster solidarity by opening an opportunity of protection to as many actual refugees as possible.

Our multivariate regression analysis finds three factors relevant to the shaping of the national position: first, right-wing governments tended to hesitate to support the scheme at a time when they were competing against other rightist parties not in government, especially radical right-wing parties; second, states which have only limited experience of protecting refugees and capacity for doing so became less willing to support schemes for sharing refugees; third, any state with a low Muslim population also tended to be unwilling to embark on such schemes.

This article proceeds as follows. To start with, we review the literature on refugee-sharing and formulate hypotheses on the domestic factors that affect national positions vis-à-vis refugee-sharing. Next, we provide a brief empirical background for the EU's decision to relocate refugees. Then, after presenting our research design, we show the results of the statistical analysis. Finally, in light of our findings, we discuss the general feasibility of refugee-sharing across states.

### **1. How is solidarity in refugee-sharing created?**

In a refugee crisis, it is necessary to give protection to refugees and forced migrants who flee from their countries of origin to other countries. But when great numbers of asylum seekers are forced to flee to only a few countries, the burdens on these countries exceed the limits of their capacity, leading to disastrous situations in which many asylum-seekers cannot get access to adequate protection and assistance. In such crises, states are expected to stand together to share asylum-seekers (Thieleman 2003a). Admittedly, some asylum-seekers will not want to be relocated to another state. In practice, however, refugee-sharing schemes are desperately needed, since to share refugees allows more people to be offered protection and at the same time alleviates the burden on countries faced with a massive inflow of asylum-seekers. This is the case in particular when the root causes of the crisis, for example, wars, civil conflicts or large-scale persecutions cannot for the time be resolved and it is not desirable to repatriate those who have left their countries (Schuck 1997: 260-1).

Despite such desirability, it is widely recognized in the literature on refugee burden-sharing that states all too often become unenthusiastic or even hostile at the prospect of any refugee-sharing scheme, apart from the states that expect the scheme will lighten their burden of accepting refugees (Noll 2000: 273-5; Suhrke 1998). This is not surprising, since various costs and perceived risks accrue to the states receiving refugees, ranging from the administrative burdens, the fiscal costs, the social risk of heightening social tensions, the political risk of anti-refugee forces gaining popularity, and the perceived security concerns (Huysmans 2000; Waever et al 1993).

Given these risks and costs, states become prone to close their borders and keep refugees out of their territories, without participating in international refugee-sharing schemes. Furthermore, in the context of the European Union where people can in principle

move freely within internal borders, it becomes possible for secondary movements into other states to ensue if some states admit large numbers of refugees. Mindful of this possibility, some EU states expect the EU to function as a “Fortress Europe”, calling for other states, in particular those with external borders, to tighten their border controls and deny large-scale entry into their countries (Noll 1997: 428).

Fully understanding the difficulty, a series of studies considered possible ways to make states cooperate with each other when refugees are relocated. One of the mechanisms, which often appear in the literature, is explicit or implicit issue-linkage (Betts 2009). In this view, states can positively cooperate with other states in sharing refugees when they expect to gain enough material benefits in other issue-areas from doing so, which will outweigh the costs of receiving refugees. The benefits are, for instance, security guarantees, trade benefits or financial assistance. Another view of the search for cooperation focuses on an “insurance logic”. According to this view, states are led to participate in refugee-sharing schemes, when they foresee the risk that they may also be faced with massive refugee inflow in future and would then have to find other states to share this burden with them (Schuck 1997: 249-250, 273). A trading system of refugee quotas has also been proposed in the literature, which allows the states that are reluctant to receive refugees to pay money to other states which can accept more refugees on their behalf (Schuck 1997). Furthermore, some studies draw attention to the division of labor in which many states cooperate to solve a refugee crisis by allocating various tasks to each state according to its specific capabilities, such as military or humanitarian intervention, financial assistance, receiving refugees (Betts 2003; Thielemann & Dewan 2006).

What all these studies have in common is their underlying assumption that national governments have a reluctant preference to protect refugees.

Starting from this assumption, those studies set out possible ways or mechanisms for the states to overcome their reluctance and attain a substantial level of refugee-sharing. Due to this assumption, however, these studies overlook one important point. This is that some countries, even without linking any other issues, the logic of insurance, the trading system, or the division of labor, can agree to participate in a relocation scheme and under it, to receive refugees. One such case is found in the European Union, which decided to set up a relocation scheme in 2015; many states agreed to it and only a few opposed it. It seems that, in the literature on burden-sharing, which concentrated on the mechanisms that can overcome national reluctance, it is less clear what factors are likely to encourage states to accept and support a refugee-sharing scheme and which discourage them. Given such uncertainty in the literature, this article aims to examine several possible domestic factors that might encourage national governments to support a refugee-sharing scheme.

## **2. Hypotheses**

Although the burden-sharing literature generally tells little about the sources of a nation’s position on refugee-sharing, we can envisage a wide array of possible factors which might encourage national governments to approach refugee-sharing positively, drawing upon a broad spectrum of theoretical reasoning, empirical insights, and practical proposals that current studies or reports in various disciplines have presented. Here we sort them out into six categories of hypothesis, focusing in turn on party politics, institutional capacity, socio-ethnic composition, labor market conditions, social norms and security concerns.

### **2.1. Party politics**

The ideologies and related electoral strategies of the parties in office may affect the choice of national governments to support or oppose an international

scheme of refugee-sharing. Generally it is right-wing parties that view immigration and refugee issues in a negative light (Alonso & da Fonseca 2012). That is, in line with their conservative or nationalistic beliefs, rightist parties usually take a tough stance on foreign-origin immigrants and refugees within their societies, seeing them as unwanted others who they suspect may disturb their traditional values and lifestyles. With a view to elections, they also strategically consider that their tough stance on immigrants can win many votes from those with conservative or ethno-centric values. Leftist parties, for their part, traditionally tend to be immigrant-friendly, with their social democratic traditions favoring the disadvantaged or the weak. Given such a left-right party difference, we can expect that:

H1a: When rightist parties are in government, these governments are likely to oppose an international refugee-sharing scheme.

The above discussion focuses on the impact of the partisan element of government. Let us now turn to the possible influence on the government's position of specific opposition parties, namely, radical right-wing parties. Of particular relevance is what political scientists have referred to as "the contagion effect" of radical right-wing opposition parties on parties in power (Akkerman 2015; Norris 2005: 264-272; Van Spanje 2010). What "contagion" means in this context is that radical right-wing parties cause other parties to imitate the specific policies or ideas that they advocate. Since radical right-wing parties usually advocate blocking the entry of immigrants and refugees, it may elicit a contagion effect to make governing parties shift their policies to be more restrictive by tightening border controls and the criteria for asylum recognition. When, in fact, does the radical right have such an effect? One possible pathway is through national elections. Having seen how well radical

right-wing parties did in the last national elections, governing parties decide whether or not to make their immigration policy more restrictive. If the radical right wins a great many seats in the elections, the governing parties will consider that a strong public concern over immigration has led to the electoral success of the radical right. Originally, this contagion logic was studied with reference to the broad category of immigration. A similar logic might also be applied to refugee issues as well. So the electoral success of the anti-immigrant radical right might lead parties in power to become more restrictive towards the entry of refugees and also more reluctant to support a refugee-sharing scheme. From this reasoning, we can formulate the following hypothesis:

H1b: In states where radical right-wing parties win many seats in the last national elections, the governments are likely to oppose a refugee-sharing scheme.

We can conceive, too, of a second possible pathway for a contagion effect. This pathway is more conditional, and here it is considered that the effect comes into play only when right-wing governments are pitted against other right-wing opposition parties (Immerzeel, Lubbers & Coffé 2016: 825; Van Spanje 2010: 567). On the one hand, leftist parties are considered less susceptible to the contagion effect of the radical right. This is partly because leftist governments generally feel it awkward to take a hardline approach to immigrants and refugees, owing to their traditionally pro-immigration stance, and partly also because there is usually little overlap in the electoral support base between the leftist and radical right-wing parties. On the other, rightist parties feel more vulnerable to the rise of the radical right, since right-wing parties usually compete with each other for conservative or nationalist votes. In view of their ideological closeness, when the radical right enjoys

popularity, center-right or moderate right-wing parties will consider shifting their policies to more restrictive ones vis-à-vis immigrants and refugees, in order to regain from the radical right-wing opposition the votes of people with conservative beliefs. Hence, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H1c: In states where rightist parties are in government and radical right-wing parties are in opposition, the governments are likely to oppose a refugee-sharing scheme.

## 2.2. Institutional capacity

Historical institutionalism considers that institutions become increasingly stable over time by producing path-dependent or self-reinforcing effects (Steinmo, Thelen & Longstreth 1992; Pierson 1996; Pierson & Skocpol 2002). In this theoretical view, the domestic institutions, which states have long been constructing, have a general tendency to allow at most for incremental change and thereby make it difficult to produce a systemic change in ways which depart significantly from the long-standing institutional practices.

Various mechanisms are thought to underlie this stabilizing effect of institutions (Hall 2016: 42-44; Zürn 2016: 205-211). First, huge setup costs inhibit governments from switching to alternative institutional paths that differ substantially from the current ones. Second, a large-scale reform is also unlikely, since those who are benefiting from the existing ones will oppose or veto it. Third, policy expertise and information are also a source of stability, since many actors involved in the current institutions, such as politicians, government officers or policy experts, have adjusted themselves to the existing systems by accumulating the practical know-how and information necessary to carry out the existing policies.

Over the decades, different states have long

developed different asylum systems, along with their own historical experiences and policy considerations. When governments consider whether to support or oppose a proposal for refugee-sharing, varying levels of institutional capacity across states carry more or less weight in their considerations. In order to accept a large number of refugees, states need to have sufficient capacity in terms of, for instance, administrative staff, budget and infrastructure. They also need practical expertise to integrate recognized refugees into their societies and labor markets.

It is considered that the more a state has accepted refugees, the more it can expand their capacity with more resources, expertise and infrastructure. When called upon to accept refugees and asylum-seekers as part of a refugee-sharing scheme, those with developed capacity can be in favor, with confidence in their experience and capacity. Conversely, it will pose a great challenge to less-experienced states, since they are less prepared to receive them, knowing the shortage of accommodation, administrative resources, and financial resources. With such burdens and concerns in mind, inexperienced countries will be reluctant to receive refugees and asylum-seekers in their territories. On the basis of this reasoning, we can formulate the following hypothesis:

H2: States with extensive experience and capacity in refugee protection are likely to support a refugee-sharing scheme.

## 2.3. Socio-ethnic composition

Building on the theoretical insights that have developed in the fields of social psychology and sociology, various studies have examined public attitudes to immigrants. To start with, those studies draw attention to the general propensity of people to distinguish individuals who belong to the same groups as theirs (ingroups) and those who belong to other groups (outgroups) (Sherif et al 1961). The ingroup/outgroup

perception, underlying which cognitive (Tajfel 1982) and/or evolutionary mechanisms (Kurzman & Leary 2001; Park 2012) seem to be at work, develops biased attitudes, mostly favoring ingroup members and devaluing outgroup members.

Attitudes to immigration are associated with this kind of group demarcation along ethnic and religious lines (Fetzer 2012). Some members of majority groups have a negative attitude to immigrants. In Europe, for example, Muslim people are a common target of such anti-immigrant sentiments. But even in Europe, this kind of exclusive attitude is not always widespread in a society and the public attitude to immigrants can be volatile. When there are anti-immigrant attitudes widespread or dwindling in a society? In this respect, group threat theory predicts that most people will strengthen their anti-immigrant attitudes as the immigrant population expands (Quillan 1995). The underlying logic is that when the size of the immigrant group expands in relation to the majority group, the latter group increasingly perceives threats to its opportunities or resources, such as job opportunities and access to public services. Public attitudes can often bring pressure to bear on national governments. When faced with widespread public concern about the consequences of the growing immigrant population, national governments may respond by restricting immigration and for similar reasons, they may also limit access to asylum-seekers as well. The hypothesis deriving from this reasoning is the following:

H3a: When a country already has a large population with the same ethnic and religious background as that of refugees and asylum-seekers, its government is likely to oppose a refugee-sharing scheme.

In contrast to this prediction of group threat theory, another theoretical view argues the opposite. The opposite view, most famously put forth by the “contact

thesis” presented in social psychology (Allport 1954), considers that an increase in the immigrant population will lead most citizens of a nation to become tolerant and even friendly towards the immigrants. It is true that when states begin to accept large numbers of immigrants, some native people may react negatively. This thesis, however, argues that as the majority increasingly shares its social life with the immigrants, their initial aversive attitudes moderate and they eventually come to take a more positive stance. Reflecting the positive change in popular attitudes, governments can become willing to receive further immigrants. This theoretical logic was originally applied to the acceptance of immigrants, but the same logic may also apply to that of refugees. So the following hypothesis can also be envisaged:

H3b: When a country already has a large population with the same ethnic and religious background as that of refugees and asylum-seekers, its government is likely to support a refugee-sharing scheme.

#### **2.4. Labor market conditions**

In economic terms, immigration on a large scale brings a mixture of costs and benefits to the receiving countries (Orrenius & Zavodny 2012). As the number of immigrants increases, the public expenditure grows where education, medical care, and, when appropriate, pensions are concerned. But at the same time, immigrants can also contribute to their host countries by boosting the national workforce and contributing to tax revenue.

Most of the previous economic research, however, has shown that the macro-economic impact of immigrants is modest. Even so, one particular economic aspect may carry weight among government policy-makers: the effect of immigration on the labor market. Various reports from think-tanks, newspaper articles and magazine columns suggest



that immigrants can fill in the shortage of labor in many developed countries (e.g. Peri 2014). When a country's workforce declines and its population ages, it faces a growing number of pension beneficiaries and increasingly expensive medical and social care for the elderly. To cover the cost of its payments, governments need a strong and steady workforce. So, for fear lest the shortage of workers will hinder the balancing of the national budget and sustainable economic growth, states may look to immigrants and refugees in the hope that they can offset the anticipated negative impacts. From this line of reasoning, the following hypothesis can be derived:

H4: States are likely to support a refugee-sharing scheme when they face a steady decline in the working age population.

## 2.5. Social norms

It is also worthwhile to take an alternative perspective provided by social constructivism or sociological institutionalism, which has secured an important position in the theoretical debates on international relations (Wendt 1999). Its distinctiveness lies in its theoretical assumption about the human motivation to act in a particular way. Constructivists consider that people act with reference to their normative and inter-subjective frameworks, guided by a collective understanding of what are commonly perceived as appropriate, legitimate or desirable acts in a given social environment (March & Olsen 1998: 309-312). One of the important implications of this assumption is that people will try to help others out, not because it is in their material interests, but because they consider doing so to be a moral imperative.

In the context of a refugee crisis, one such behavior is to save the lives of refugees (Thielemann 2003b). But when are states morally motivated to help refugees out? To help refugees is to respect and guarantee basic human rights, such as physical safety, minimum

means of life (e.g. food and accommodation), the right to property, equality and non-discrimination. Therefore we can expect to see national support to a sharing scheme and refugees received in states where human rights as important values and norms are highly regarded. By contrast, reluctant attitudes will prevail in states where human rights protection is not so highly recognized as an important value:

H5: In states where people attach much value to the protection of human rights, the governments are likely to support a sharing scheme.

## 2.6. Security concerns

Since the 9/11 strikes and the ensuing wave of terrorist attacks in various regions, the linkage of security with transnational human mobility has gained particular prominence in political and academic debates around the world (Adamson 2006).

Terrorist groups, radicalized with fundamentalist beliefs or extreme political ambitions, do not, as a rule, have strong enough military forces to match those possessed by modern states. In such an asymmetrical power relationship, what they attempt to do is to challenge their target states by, for example, the indiscriminate suicide bombing of crowds in city streets and attacks on transportation systems (Koslowski 2012).

In relation to refugees and asylum-seekers, terrorists make use of trans-border mobility in two main ways (Leiken 2005). First, terrorists sometimes hide among refugees in order to enter a target state. Second, they also seek collaboration from refugees and immigrants, and solicit them to carry out terrorist acts. The terrorists get in touch with refugees or immigrants via their transnational networks, often using social networking services or Internet webpages.

Seen in this light, it is clearly not the refugees or asylum seekers themselves who threaten state security. It is instead the activities of terrorist groups

exploiting the flow of immigrants and refugees for their own ends that are perceived as a threat in this context.

To eliminate such a risk, national governments take various measures – enhancing their border controls, intelligence services and policing activities. Importantly, nations vary in the extent to which people feel vulnerable to the security threat posed by the mingling of terrorists in the flow of refugees and asylum-seekers. States that have confidence in their border control capacity and policing activities against terrorists are expected to be more prepared to accept refugees, thereby making the governments supportive of a refugee-sharing scheme. By contrast, when they are less confident in their country's security measures, they will be less willing to support such a scheme. Based on such reasoning we can formulate the following hypothesis:

H6: In states where the hosting of refugees is not widely considered to pose a significant threat to public order, governments are likely to support a refugee-sharing scheme.

So far, we have formulated a wide range of hypotheses that may plausibly explain the positions of national governments on the sharing of refugees. While these hypotheses, taken together, cover a wide range of possible factors influencing governmental positions, one may consider that there are other possible factors, presumably, public attitudes to the EU, the general economic conditions, geographical factors, or the interactive effects of economic and social conditions. In our empirical analysis below, for a robustness check, we test these possible factors as well.

### **3. The EU's two decisions to share asylum-seekers in 2015**

During the 2000s, a great many of the refugees who arrived in Europe originated from Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea and Yemen. But the situation became far worse, in the 2010s when a wave of pro-democratization movements called “the Arab Spring” surged over the Middle East and North Africa. In some countries, armed conflicts and civil wars were triggered and the one that erupted in Syria has particularly escalated, causing an immense number of casualties, internally displaced persons and refugees. The refugees from this region fled to various neighboring countries, the highest number going to Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. The number of those who crossed the Mediterranean to a European country has also sharply increased. The estimated number of first-time asylum seekers who reached Europe was around 431,000 in 2013 and around 626,000 in 2014. The figure increased further to around 1.25 million in 2015.

Faced with the massive inflow, in April 2015, the European Commission presented a document called a “European Agenda on Migration” which set out a series of emergency measures, intended both to help asylum-seekers and to spread among the member states the heavy burden of asylum-seekers that had fallen on a few of them. As part of it, the EU member states adopted two decisions in September 2015 which laid out a temporal relocation scheme. The first decision, made on 14 September 2015, proposed relocating 40,000 asylum-seekers from Greece and Italy to other member states.<sup>1</sup> The second one, adopted on 22 September, envisaged the relocation of a further 120,000 asylum-seekers from Greece and Italy.<sup>2</sup> In putting forward these two decisions, the Commission calculated how many refugees and asylum-seekers each member state should receive

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<sup>1</sup> Council Decision (EU) 2015/1523, OJL239, 15/9/2015, pp.146-156.

<sup>2</sup> Council Decision (EU) 2015/1601, OJL248, 24/9/2015, pp.80-94.



according to a combination of several criteria: the size of each state's population, GDP, the average number of asylum applicants in the last four years, and the unemployment rate.

The debates on the relocation scheme sparked great controversy among states. With regard to the first decision, the member states managed to reach consensus, but when the negotiations moved on to the second proposal, several states were vehemently opposed to it, thereby making it impossible to reach consensus. To resolve the deadlock, the states that supported the proposal went ahead with a qualified majority vote, under the TFEU78 (3), deviating from the Council's general practice of settling negotiations by consensus.

The vote revealed the various positions taken by the member states: eighteen states approved, one opted in (Ireland), one abstained (Finland), four disapproved (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia), and two opted out (Denmark and the UK). Initially Poland and Latvia also expressed reluctance but in the end they chose to vote for the proposal. In this decision, Hungary, which was one of the strongly opposing countries, also refused an offer to relocate those who arrived there. Even after the decision was adopted, their opposition continued. In an attempt to annul the decision, Hungary and Slovakia brought this issue before the Court of Justice, which eventually dismissed the claims of these countries.

The two relocation decisions foresaw the completion of the relocation within two years. But before long, it became clear that the relocation scheme

could not be implemented as originally planned. As of January 2018, only 33,365 asylum-seekers have been relocated (21,711 from Greece and 11,654 from Italy), which is far below the originally scheduled number of 160,000. In this situation, the Commission and the European Parliament warned the member states that they must step up their efforts to implement the relocation scheme, and in June 2017, the Commission started infringement procedures against Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, which continued to refuse their committing to the scheme.

In this way, the relocation decisions exposed the conflicting positions between the member states. Why did some states support the EU's refugee-sharing scheme and why did the others oppose it? This is the question that we analyze in the next section.

#### 4. Research design

Here we provide information on the ways that we operationalized our dependent variables, independent variables, our statistical research methods, and the set of data on which we relied for our empirical analysis.

##### 4.1. Dependent variables

Our empirical focus was on the second relocation decision of the EU. Our dependent variables were the national positions taken by each member state vis-à-vis the Commission's proposal for refugee relocation. We coded "1" for the governments which voted "yes" or decided to "opt in" (Ireland) to the refugee-sharing proposal and "0" for all the others, that is, the governments which voted against, abstained

**Table 1: National positions on the relocation scheme proposed by the Commission**

Positions	Member states
Yes	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden
Opt-in	Ireland
Abstention	Finland
Opt-out	Denmark, the United Kingdom
No	The Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania

or remained “opted-out”. We considered this way of coding the most straightforward. However, two government positions are hard to define: those of Poland and Latvia. While they decided to vote for the proposal, they had publicly expressed their reluctance during the negotiations. Hence, the following analysis adds another model that switches these two cases (from “0” to “1”) as a robustness check of our empirical analysis.

We use a logistic regression model, with a robust standard error. Models 1 and 2 use the same dependent variable, but Model 2 includes the interaction term between the effect of a right wing opposition and that of the left-right positioning of the government to test H1c. Model 3 uses an alternative dependent variable, that reverses Poland and Latvia’s position for a further robustness check.

#### 4.2. Independent variables

To empirically test the hypotheses as formulated above, we relied upon various types of information relevant to our hypotheses.

First, in operationalizing the positions of political parties on the ideological left-right dimension (H1a,b,c), we used Döring and Manow’s Parliament and Government (ParlGov) database (Döring & Manow 2016).<sup>3</sup> Summing up the left-right scaling of each political party in a government coalition at the time of September 2015 after weighing each party’s importance on the basis of its share of seats, we made each government’s left-right scaling (from -5, farthest left, to 5, farthest right).<sup>4</sup> For the definition of “rightist parties”, we used ParlGov data. If a given party was defined as “right wing” in the database, and such a party was in opposition in September 2015, its share of seats in parliament was coded as a seat share of the

right-wing opposition (from 0 to 100).

Second, to measure the institutional capacity of each state, we used the number of refugees per national population, calculated by each country’s number of refugees residing in the country divided by its total population. In this regard, we used the number before the start of the “Arab Spring”, since the number, which has shown a significant increase since then, is the very aspect of the problem that we address in our analysis. We thus chose to use the UNHCR’s data of 2010 for the number of refugees residing in each country (UNHCR 2010), and the Eurostat data for the total national population in the same year (Eurostat 2016b). We took the number of refugees per national population as a proxy for the level of development of domestic capacity for accepting refugees. The reasoning behind this was that the more a country has accepted refugees in proportion to the size of its population, the more the country is considered to have developed the domestic institutional capacity to accept refugees.

Third, the socio-ethnic composition was operationalized by the ratio of the Muslim population in each country’s population, drawing on data from the Pew Research Center (2011). The use of a Muslim population ratio can be justified when we recall that many refugees and asylum-seekers entering EU states are Muslim or at least come from Islamic countries. Fourth, the extent to which a country’s labor force is increasing or declining was captured by looking at each country’s ratio changes in the working age population (15-64 years old) in relation to the total population between 2004 and 2014. Here we relied on the Eurostat data (Eurostat 2016a).

Fifth, in order to represent the level of each country’s respect for the normative values of helping refugees,

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<sup>3</sup> ParlGov database [<http://www.parlgov.org/>] (Döring and Manow, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Originally, this score was to range from 0 to 10. However, such a method makes it difficult to interpret the effect of an interaction-term included on this scale, because intermediate numbers do not include 0. Hence we replaced the range of numbers “from 0 to 10” by “from -5 to 5,” by adding five points to each original score.

we drew on a question asked in a special edition of the *Eurobarometer: Europeans in 2014*: “In the following list, which are the most important values for you personally” (European Commission 2014: 124). This question allowed multiple answers, and we used the percentage of respondents in each state who answered “human rights”. Sixth and finally, we operationalized the level of security concerns in each state by using a question asked in another *Special Eurobarometer: Europeans’ Attitudes towards Security* (European Commission 2015: 25). The question was “In your opinion, how important are the following challenges to the internal security of the EU?” Again, multiple answers were offered to respondents. Here we used the percentage of respondents in each country who answered that the “management of the EU’s external borders” was “very important”.

## 5. Empirical analysis

Table 2 demonstrates the results, with the following findings.

### 5.1. Party politics (H1a,b,c)

The estimates of the effect of the government’s left-right positioning are statistically insignificant in all models. We got the same results in our preliminary analysis by controlling for the other parameters. Hence, we can say that the left-right scaling of a government *alone* is not relevant to its position (H1a). However, the analysis shows that under some conditions the configuration of political parties matter and it reveals that the seat share of right-wing opposition parties has a negative and statistically significant effect on government positions (Model 1). This result is seen to be consistent with H1b. The odds ratio of this factor in Model 1 is estimated at 0.77 times, in the case of an increase of 1 point (1 percent) in the share of seats for right-wing opposition parties in parliament. Therefore, if the right-wing opposition has 10% of seats in parliament in a given country, the probability of voting “yes” to a refugee scheme would decline to 7.3% ( $0.77^{10}$ ), compared to a country (with the same conditions in other parameters) without

**Table 2: Multivariate logistic regression on the EU states’ positions on the refugee-sharing scheme**

	MODEL		
	(1)	(2)	(3) PL&LV=0
Cabinet right-left scale (H1a)	-.190 (.316)	.263 (.385)	-.251 (.386)
Seat share of right wing opposition (H1b)	-.256** (.121)	.352 (.263)	.299 (.255)
Cabinet right-left scale * Seat share of right wing proportion (H1c)		-.308** (.130)	-.270** (.116)
Refugees per population (H2)	.306 (.197)	.386* (.233)	.420** (.204)
The ratio of Muslim population (H3ab)	.938 (.732)	.689* (.397)	.820** (.363)
Labour force decline (H4)	.231 (.480)	.440 (.593)	.301 (.497)
Human rights norm (H5)	.023 (.127)	.015 (.101)	-.088 (.093)
Security concern (H6)	-.275 (.242)	-.282 (.249)	-.243 (.192)
Constant	10.513 (11.707)	11.200 (11.701)	13.018 (9.250)
Pseudo R2	.472	.554	.581
N	28	28	28

Estimation with Robust Standard Error \* p < 0.10, \*\* p < 0.05, \*\*\* p < 0.01

any right-wing opposition party. This effect seems to lose statistical significance in Models 2 and 3, both of which included the interaction term effects. Technically speaking, these results in Models 2 or 3 tell us only that the share of seats for the right-wing opposition has no statistically significant effect, if and only if the government left-right scaling takes the score “0.”

The interaction term between a government’s left-right scaling and the share of seats for its right-wing opposition has a negative and statistically significant effect. This result implies that the government left-right scaling has a conditional effect based on the proportion of seats won by the far-right opposition in the last elections. Its effect on the government position (taking the score of “1” in our dependent variable) will become more negative in cases where the proportion of seats won by right-wing parties is high. Figure 1 shows this effect. Regarding the negative effect on the share of seats of the right-wing opposition, its effect also becomes more negative when the government position is farther to the right and less when the

government position is more moderate (Figure 2). These results are consistent with our H1c.

These results indicate that in the states where governments were right-inclined and at the same time right wing opposition won seats, the governments tended to oppose the EU’s scheme. To give specific examples, the UK’s Conservative cabinet with UKIP in opposition, Hungary’s Fidesz cabinet with the far-right opposition of Jobbik, and Denmark’s center-right Liberal Party cabinet facing the powerful right-wing opposition Danish Peoples Party, fulfilled these conditions, and none of these governments supported the scheme. In contrast, Estonia, where the government was rightist but there were no right-wing opposition parties, and Sweden, where far-rightist opposition won many seats but the government was leftist, supported the scheme.

## 5.2. Institutional capacity (H2)

The governments which traditionally have accepted a large number of refugees must have a relatively high number of refugee inhabitants. In our analysis, this

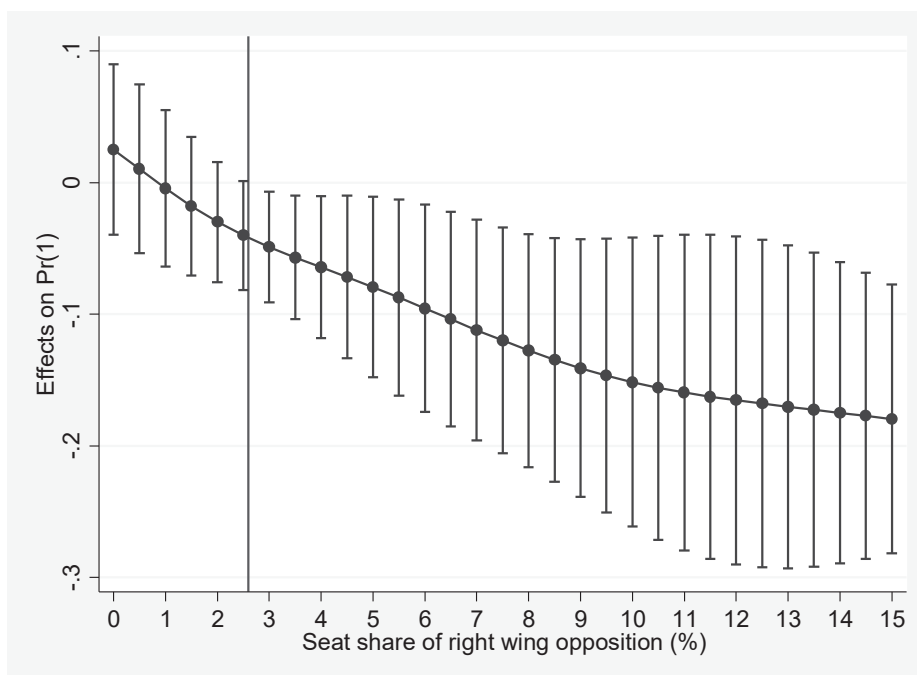
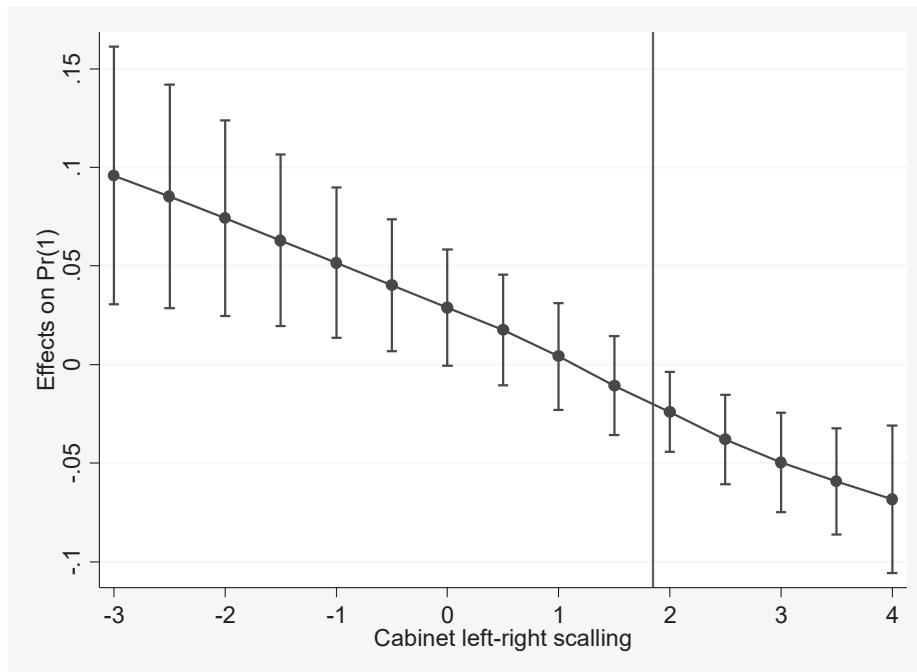


Figure 1. Average Marginal Effects of Cabinet left-right scaling with 95% CIs



**Figure 2. Average Marginal Effects of Rightist Oppositions with 95% CIs**

refugee ratio has a statistically significant effect on a government decision to share the burden of refugees (see Model 2 and Model 3 in Table 2). It was shown that states which have already accepted a large number of refugees tended to support the scheme more than those with limited experience of doing so.

### 5.3. The socio-ethnic composition (H3a,b)

The Muslim population ratio in each state, presented in Models 2 and 3, have a positive and statistically significant effect on governments' support of or opposition to refugee-sharing. Consistent with the prediction of H3b, and opposed to that of H3a, the odds ratio of accepting the sharing scheme is 1.99 (see Model 2). This means that only a one percentage point increase of Muslim residents in a given country makes the probability of the country's accepting the scheme almost twice as great. This effect is very marked.<sup>5</sup>

This positive effect still survives if we interact it with economic inequality (see Appendix). Some previous research suggests that the interaction between ethnic heterogeneity and economic inequality may increase exclusionary attitudes to ethnic minority groups and bring about ethnic conflicts (e.g. Cederman et al 2014), but this was not the case in our analysis.

Some might consider that this effect of a Muslim population ratio emerges because of a spurious relationship caused by past government policies of accepting refugees. However, we checked this possibility and no statistical correlation was found between the Muslim population ratio and the number of refugees accepted. This effect was in fact independently investigated in our model, as shown below.

Comparing Bulgaria and Romania seems to be fruitful in this regard. They have much in common:

<sup>5</sup> This significance is only observed among the effects of a Muslim proportion. Testing the effect of the other (similar) independent variables (including the proportion of immigrants or ethnolinguistic fractionalization) did not provide such a result (see Appendix).

both are southeastern European countries which joined the EU in 2007; their economic situations were similar; and both remain outside of the Schengen area. But Bulgaria supported the sharing scheme whereas Romania opposed it. Based on our analysis, the difference can be explained by the difference in the population ratio of the Muslim minority; the Muslim population accounts for 13.7% in Bulgaria and only 0.3% in Romania.

#### 5.4. Labor market conditions (H4)

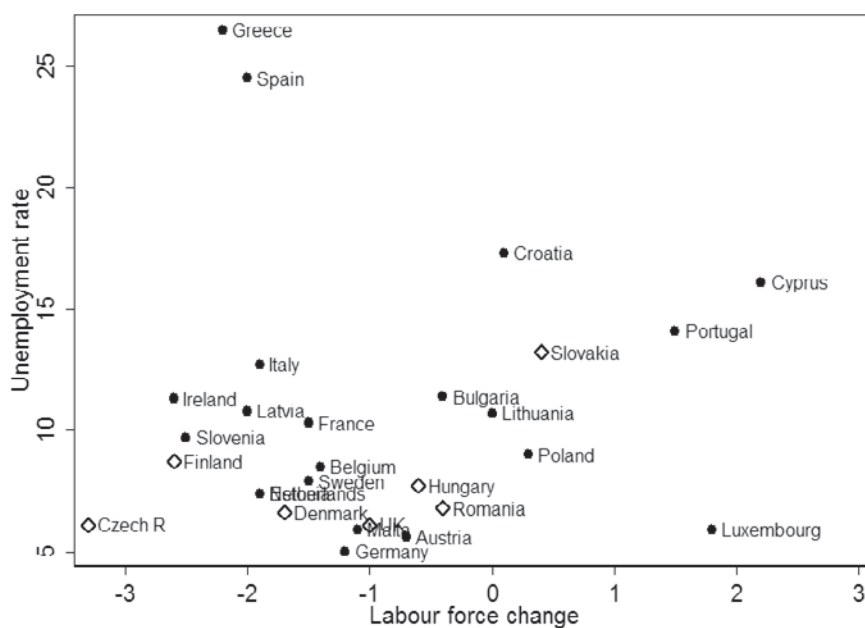
The estimates for the decline in labor force were found to be statistically insignificant. Our analysis rejected Hypothesis 4. Our preliminary analysis also found that the alternative measures of the economic situation, such as the unemployment rate, also had no significant effect. These interactions also failed to prove their explanatory power with regard to the refugee-sharing scheme.

For example, on the one hand, Portugal and Cyprus, each with an increasing labor force and high

unemployment rate, accepted the refugee relocation plan. This contradicted the theoretical predictions that these countries would refuse to accept new refugees as a labor force. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, had experienced the most severe decline in the labor force in Europe, along with one of its lowest unemployment rates. Theoretically, this nation should have accepted newly relocated refugees as a latent labor force. However, it voted against the refugee-sharing scheme (Figure 3).

#### 5.5. Social norms (H5)

People's normative consciousness, represented by the proportion of people who think that human rights is "the most important value", does not have a statistically significant relationship with their government's attitude to the refugee-sharing scheme. It seems that the governments of the member states decided whether to support or oppose the EU scheme irrespective of the levels of norm strength concerning the respect of human rights among the general public.



◇: Against the EU scheme ●: Support for the EU scheme

Figure 3. Economic situations and support/opposition to the refugee-sharing scheme



### 5.6. Security concern (H6)

Security concerns, operationalized by the saliency of the border issue, demonstrate a negative effect in Model 3 (moreover, only to a 10% significance standard) but the other two models do not present statistical significance. Given this finding, we hold that security concerns do not have significant influence on the decisions of the member states regarding the sharing scheme.

For a further robustness check of our analysis, we also analyzed how our results might differ if we omitted some special cases. In particular, we tested the effect of Euroscepticism on government decisions, with the data of the proportion of respondents that does “not tend to trust” the European Commission, according to the data presented in Eurobarometer 81. This test finds no statistical significance (see Appendix). The degree of Euroscepticism among the general public did not matter. We also conducted another analysis with the cases of Italy, Greece, and Malta omitted from our analysis sampling. We omitted Italy and Greece, because the EU’s refugee-sharing scheme would relocate asylum-seekers who had arrived in these two countries. We also omitted Malta since the EU, as a pilot program, has recently relocated asylum-seekers from this country to other states. This analysis did not provide a very different result from the analysis shown above (see Appendix, Model 5). So we can say that the results of our analysis are stable and robust.

### Conclusion: A glimpse of hope for solidarity

In this article, we have attempted to uncover the factors underlying the variations in national position, by focusing on the refugee-sharing scheme set in place by the EU in 2015. Our statistical analysis finds that national governments in three specific situations supported the scheme. First, national governments

supported the scheme unless a rightist party (or more than one) was in power and at the same time other right-wing parties — most commonly, radical right-wing parties — were in opposition. Having similar ideological and policy preferences, the center-right government and radical right-wing opposition are seen to be competing fiercely with each other for conservative or nationalist votes. In these circumstances, it is found, the radical right-wing opposition brings about the “contagion effects” which drive the center-right government to shift its position so as to reject the scheme.

Second, it is also shown that governments were willing to support the scheme when they had a wealth of experience in refugee protection. In this respect, we can see a positive feedback loop which can increasingly make states willing to accept refugees. This mechanism is that the experience leads to capacity building in the area of refugee protection, which in turn gives governments more confidence to accept further refugees.

Third and finally, our analysis also reveals that many states which in fact supported the scheme were those which had a large Muslim population compared to the total national population. This finding indicates that in states where many Muslims have already settled, people are used to sharing their life with those Muslims and as a result feel less resistant to the prospect of new Muslim refugees entering their society. The governments’ support to the scheme can be seen as reflecting such positive intergroup relationships. But, conversely, the finding also suggests that in states with a lower Muslim population, people are not accustomed to interacting with Muslims and do not feel they can easily accept Muslim refugees in their societies, thereby leading their governments to be less supportive of the scheme.

Out of the three hypotheses found relevant in this analysis, one is the hypothesis specific to refugee protection (H3: Institutional capacity), while the other

two (H1: party competition and H4: socio-ethnic composition) are derived from the insights which have been developed in the studies focusing on a broad category of 'immigrants', without differentiating voluntary, often economic, migrants from refugees or asylum seekers who are forced to flee their countries of origin. In the literature, it has generally been less clear whether the two hypotheses drawn from studies of migration are also relevant to the shaping of national positions vis-à-vis a refugee-sharing scheme. Our analysis found that the contagion thesis and the contact thesis have broader applicability to refugee protection.

There are some limitations to this study. First, more cases and samples are needed, to better understand and draw more definitive conclusions about the variation in national positions vis-à-vis the relocation of refugees. We have analyzed only one specific situation in the EU with a limited number of samples. Future research would do well to expand our analytical coverage to other attempts made to construct a relocation scheme. Second, what we have empirically examined was the EU decision that was adopted in September 2015. An important point is that the decision was adopted shortly after a shocking photo was spread across the world, showing a three-year old Syrian boy who was drowned on his journey across the Mediterranean to Europe. The timing of the decision should be kept in mind, since the photo is thought to have been a powerful inducement to governments to support the relocation scheme. We should examine whether national governments can be persuaded to accept refugees even without such a facilitating factor.

Given these limitations, and given also our findings, let us now consider a normatively and practically important question: whether states can create solidarity to offer protection opportunities to as many refugees as possible. Admittedly, those who would propose a refugee-sharing scheme have some

reasons to be pessimistic. We are currently witnessing the spread of support for radical right-wing parties in European countries. There are rightist parties which have lately picked up the reins of government in Europe. These two phenomena, taken together, simply increase the likelihood, in terms of the configuration of political parties, first, that the center-right parties which are in power will, faced with radical right-wing parties in opposition, thereby oppose refugee-sharing as a move in their inter-party competition. Second, it may not be desirable to impose a mandatory quota of refugees on states with less experience and capacity in refugee protection, because rather it often provokes resistance of those states. Third, since there is little likelihood that the Muslim population ratio will change drastically in the short run, we see few chances for some time that states with a smaller Muslim population will change their position in favor of supporting a plan for relocating refugees and accepting more.

Nonetheless, from the longer-term perspective, we can see a glimpse of hope. In the first place we should not underestimate the significant fact that of the EU member states, as many as twenty countries voted for the sharing scheme, while only four states voted against it. Our analysis suggests that there are three main factors behind their reluctance or opposition: the rivalry between rightist parties, limited experience and capacity in refugee protection, and a lower Muslim population. These three are not rigidly static factors; they can change. First, with regard to party politics, it is rather rare for the two conditions (a right-wing government and radical right-wing opposition) to coexist. This means that when one left-wing party or more joins a government, as happens more often, the latter is less likely to oppose the idea of relocating refugees, even if its coalition contains rightist parties. Furthermore, it is also suggested that governments are least likely to oppose this idea when radical right-wing parties are absent from parliament. Second, we can

consider that institutional capacity can be expanded in many countries. Even if states do not have sufficient capacity at present, they may feel less resistant to increasing, little by little, the number of refugees they accept, and in this way build up their capacity gradually. As they increasingly have experience of accepting refugees and correspondingly strengthen their institutional capacity, they may be expected to become more willing to accept yet more refugees and to support a proposal for refugee-sharing. Third, there is in the long run a tendency for the Muslim

population in many countries to gradually or steadily increase, including those countries which have a small Muslim population at present. In several decades, more Muslims will be living in these countries and will interact with the local people. This tendency provides us with a future prospect that more European countries may be more willing to receive refugees and asylum-seekers coming from Islamic countries. All things considered, in the long run, we should not despair over the prospects for refugee-sharing.

## Appendix

### Results of Robustness Checks

	MODEL				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) IT, EL, MT omitted
Cabinet right-left scale	.023 (.381)	.133 (.408)	.446 (.721)	.463 (.427)	.484 (.460)
Seat share of right wing opposition	.567 (.408)	.625* (.326)	241 (.221)	.420 (.318)	.020 (.144)
Cabinet right-left scale * Seat share of right wing proportion	-.289* (.163)	-.321** (.133)	-245** (.116)	-.405* (.212)	-.169** (.070)
Refugees per population	.167 (.138)	.447** (.218)	1.094* (.620)	.313 (.221)	-.164 (.265)
The ratio of migrant population	.250 (.183)				
Ethnolanguage Fractionalization		-.106 (.076)			
The ratio of Muslim population (centralized)			.443** (.218)	.846 (.562)	.700** (.306)
Gini Index [centralized]			1.123** (.442)		
The ratio of Muslim population * Gini Index			.080 (.080)		
Labour force decline	.517 (.635)	.356 (.457)	-.505 (.388)	.437 (.596)	.433 (.612)
Human rights norm	.160 (.156)	.406 (.132)	-.239** (.118)	-.096 (.131)	-.013 (.098)
Security concern	-.066 (.099)	-.103 (.093)	-.595* (.308)	-.354 (.303)	-.236 (.184)
Euroscepticism				-.077 (.060)	
Constant	-4.560 (8.735)	9.985 (11.056)	35.829** (15.666)	25.371 (20.250)	10.817 (9.406)
Pseudo R2	.396	.387	.705	.581	.549
N	28	28	28	28	25

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