Location Matters:  
The Politics of Refugee Camp Placement

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Abstract

Border refugee camps sometimes provoke cross-border attacks and destroy productive land and may introduce disease into the refugee recipient country population. On domestic grounds alone, it appears that border refugee camps are often suboptimal. Yet countries frequently choose to set up border camps in response to refugee flows. Why, then, are border refugee camps so common? They can accomplish a foreign policy aim. When a refugee-receiving country wants to support a rebel group in a neighboring country, the refugee-receiving country can set up border camps, invite international funding, and allow access for a rebel group to recruit, tax, and politicize its cause among refugees. This article draws on East African refugee crises to develop a model of refugee policy selection during a strategic civil war. Implications from the model can help aid agencies improve the conditions of refugees in camps. By identifying what kind of interest—domestic or foreign policy—is driving the border refugee camp, humanitarian organizations can propose camps that meet these needs of the refugee-receiving country while being less crowded or further from a border.

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1 Introduction

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, hundreds of thousands of refugees poured into Tanzania and Kenya. Tanzania set up a series of large, densely populated camps for Burundians along the border, and Kenya similarly set up a large, densely populated complex for Sudanese near the border. These policies created health, environmental, and security problems in the camps and for the surrounding communities. Scholars and practitioners explain these encampment policies as the culmination of long-term trends. Tanzania and Kenya were overwhelmed with refugees (Kamanga 2002), the public grew weary of hosting them (Rutinwa 2002), and these countries were either incapable of or unwilling to improve the security situation around the camps and in the border area (Salehyan 2009; Lischer 2005). However, these explanations neglect the variation in refugee policy in Tanzania and Kenya. While very few Sudanese were allowed beyond the border area in Kenya, perhaps 60,000 Somali refugees settled in the capital. In Tanzania, Mozambican refugees settled in villages across the south, and Tanzania actively denied the requests of NGOs to set up camps. These countries enforced border camps for some refugees while being comparatively lax with others.

This article investigates long-term, densely populated, strictly enforced refugee camps at the border (border camps) and highlights their importance for strategic geopolitics. Border refugee camps provide a rebel group in a neighboring country with access to a concentrated pool of potential recruits and people to tax. When a refugee-receiving country wants to support a rebel group or push for regime change in a neighboring country, the refugee-receiving country can set up border camps, invite international funding, and allow access for a rebel group to recruit, tax, and politicize its cause among refugees. The refugee-receiving country uses humanitarian aid to help the rebel group recruit, and therefore fight, more efficiently.

The argument advanced in this article is an extension of work in International Relations on transnational civil war, interstate disputes with non-state actors, and international dimensions of refugee policy. An expanding literature in transnational civil war examines non-state actors, like rebel groups, when they cross borders (Gleditsch, Salehyan, and Schultz 2008; Salehyan 2009).
Until now this literature has studied the agency of the rebel group while leaving the agency of the refugee-receiving country unexplored. By examining the agency of the refugee-receiving country, I am able to highlight a previously unacknowledged transnational dimension of civil war: the refugee camp as something given to, or withheld from, the rebel group. Following work that investigates international dimensions of refugee policy (Greenhill 2010), I describe how geopolitics influences refugee policy and add to that work by focusing on refugee-receiving countries where most refugees are located, in the developing world and on the periphery of systemic politics. These refugee-receiving countries have limited capacity and engage on a regional level with state and non-state actors. In this regard, the argument I advance is similar substantively, and methodologically, to more recent formal work that examines interstate dynamics in the presences of non-state actors (Schultz 2010; Carter 2015). Finally, the article speaks to a literature among humanitarian organizations and scholars on the openness of refugee policy (Milner 2009), illuminating the foreign policy incentives that refugee-receiving countries face and drawing out implications for the humanitarian community.

This article uses an Analytic Narrative approach to understand refugee policy. An Analytic Narrative draws on in-depth knowledge of cases to develop a generalizable model, posit empirical predictions, and consider alternative explanations (Bates et al. 1998). I proceed by introducing the East African refugee context, the important actors, and their interests and choice set. I use these narrative foundations to develop a model and generate comparative static predictions. The theory uses the prevailing alternative explanation, domestic politics, and builds on a fundamental insight into why border refugee camps matter in civil wars. Just as camps are efficient for aid agencies, they can also make a rebel group more efficient. I embed this insight into the model of refugee policy making in the midst of a transnational civil war. Then I return to the cases and examine predictions of the model, alternative explanations, and substantive implications.

Implications from the model can help aid agencies improve the conditions of refugees in camps. The underlying reason that a country has chosen a border refugee camp informs how it views expansion and enforcement of that camp. A country that sets up border camps because it will help
a rebel group views the each additional refugee (i.e. the marginal refugee) as a net benefit. The country seeks to maintain or increase the strategic value of the border refugee camp. However, the country is indifferent among camp configurations that help the rebels equally well. For example, the country may be indifferent between allowing a camp to get more dense and expanding the camp in the direction of the border. A humanitarian organization can use this indifference to select a configuration that will improve refugee welfare. For example, when population density is a greater threat to well-being than proximity to a border, expansion towards the border makes the refugees’ situation better.

2 Actors, Interests, and Efficiency

In the development of the model, two running examples provide context for the model and highlight the reasoning behind assumptions. These cases are roughly contemporaneous refugee crises in East Africa, the arrival of Mozambicans in Tanzania in the late 1980s and the arrival of Sudanese in Kenya in the early 1990s. The following sketches of the cases introduce the context and show the spectrum of options for refugee policy, the actors making decisions, their interests, and the strategic environment.

For Mozambicans, Tanzania promoted dispersal of refugees in villages throughout the south, a policy option consistent with both Tanzania’s domestic and foreign policy interests. Mozambicans easily integrated with their co-ethnics in the sparsely populated border area of Tanzania. This was possible because two large tribes, the Makonde and the Yao, dominate areas on both sides of the border, and so refugees shared ethnic identities and ways of life with their Tanzanian hosts. Because refugees integrated into villages, little international humanitarian aid was directed at the refugees in Tanzania. The policy also meant that estimates of the refugee population varied wildly. In 1988 an estimated 72,000 Mozambicans had fled to Tanzania, but population estimates were as high as 300,000 by the early 1990s (Crisp and Mayne 1996).

Tanzania was proactive in ensuring that there was no concentration of refugees along the border
because it made good foreign policy. When refugees began congregating near the border in 1987, Tanzania set up transit centers and allocated land to refugees that was several hours’ drive from the border in Ruvuma. Tanzania cited fears that the border area would be ‘raided’ by the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), the rebel group fighting the government of Mozambique. Tanzania had close ties with the Mozambican government, who had formed their Independence party a few decades earlier in Tanzania, and did not want to make it easy for Tanzanians or Mozambican refugees to become the victims of RENAMO (Brennan 1988).

Kenya faced a starkly different situation in 1992 and chose to set up border camps for Sudanese refugees, a policy that satisfied domestic stakeholders and advanced Kenya’s foreign policy agenda. On the domestic front, Kenya’s choice to set up border camps helped avert economic and social conflict in hosting areas. Most people near the border, in Kenya and in southern Sudan, are herders, the land is not good for agriculture, and land politics are sometimes contentious. The policy also advanced a foreign policy agenda. Kenya set up Kakuma camp in the far northwest of the country, about 30 kilometers from an international border. The People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), the rebel group in Southern Sudan, recruited in Kakuma and, aid workers noted regularly seeing SPLA soldiers in the camp. Kenya cultivated a relationship with the SPLA and invited SPLA leaders to Nairobi, and SPLA leaders in turn made overtures about joining the East African economic community. Kenya’s preference for the SPLA was apparent to regional observers, and it further strained their relationship with the government in Khartoum. However, Kenyan-Sudanese relations stopped short of being hostile.1

One natural concern is whether Tanzania and Kenya are the relevant decision makers. During this period Tanzania and Kenya delegated much of refugee management to international organizations. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) coordinated the humanitarian efforts in East Africa, but the organization served only at the invitation of the host governments. UNHCR officials observed that host governments controlled encampment, the locations and space allocated for camps, and enforcement of encampment. In the Mozambican case, Tanzania declined

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1. This is in contrast to Sudan’s relations with Uganda or Ethiopia, which were openly hostile, as these countries were on opposing sides of internationalized civil wars.
requests to set up camps early on, and ultimately established one settlement, Likuyu, which housed about 12,000 refugees and was 130 kilometers from the border with Mozambique (Brennan 1988). In Kenya, the local politics determined the parcel of land for Kakuma, but the size and enforcement of the camp was the decision of the Kenya government. Kenya and Tanzania had alternative policy options and the capacity to choose them.

Parties of the civil war from which refugees fled are also important actors in the narrative because they respond to the refugee policy. This is most apparent in the Kenyan case. The SPLA recruited, and sometimes kidnapped, boys from Kakuma camp to serve in the army. Members of the SPLA were often in the camp to take advantage of food and medical care. The SPLA also regularly recruited from and taxed territory in Southern Sudan, but the border camp in Kenya was far more densely populated than most of the SPLA territory. The four most populous towns in Southern Sudan in 1993 were controlled by the government in Khartoum, leaving no town controlled by the SPLA as large as Kakuma at its height with 64,000 Sudanese. Finding people to recruit and tax quickly was easier in Kakuma than most of the SPLA territory.

The SPLA is not unique in what it did in Kakuma. Rebel groups often recruit, tax, and steal in camps (Lischer 2003). What rebels do in refugee camps is well documented. There has been little reflection, though, on how the camp is useful to rebels. The how is critical for understanding the refugee camp as a strategic tool for the refugee-receiving country. In and around East Africa rebels fight with ground forces, small arms, and a range of guerrilla and terrorist-style tactics. Their ability to recruit and maintain forces is essential. The refugee camp can increase the efficiency with which the resources are procured. Rebel groups recruit and tax (or steal) regardless of whether they have access to a camp. Rebel-controlled territory, though, is often sparsely populated. By recruiting, kidnapping, taxing, and stealing from a refugee camp, the rebel group is able to get more, faster than they would if they went from village to village (Achvarina and Reich 2010). By recruiting and raising funds efficiently, the rebel group fights more efficiently.

Knowing that the rebel group will fight more efficiently with a border refugee camp, the rebel group and the government in the civil war have clear preferences. The SPLA was happy to have
Kakuma and use this advantage in fighting the government in Khartoum (ICG 2010). Khartoum would have preferred an alternative policy, and indeed attacked other border camps, though not in Kenya.

The strategic refugee-receiving country understands that a border refugee camp can alter a neighboring country’s civil war. Kenya cultivated a relationship with the SPLA partially because an independent South Sudan would be landlocked, and Kenya’s ports would likely reap the benefits of additional trade and oil. Meanwhile, Tanzania spent resources to prevent border camps because of concerns over RENAMO recruiting and kidnapping refugees, concerns that the Mozambican government shared.

3 The Model: Refugee Policy and Strategic Civil War

From the cases, the structure of a model, three key actors, and their interests become clear. The refugee receiving-country (or country of asylum), the government in the country of origin, and a rebel group all can gain or lose from the refugee policy. The refugee-receiving country takes into account domestic costs—will refugees integrate seamlessly or cause economic or social tensions?—and also considers foreign policy interests—will a border camp give an advantage to a friendly insurgent group or could it undermine a productive relationship with a neighboring government? The rebel group and the government in the country of origin can anticipate a border refugee camp. Given the opportunity, the rebel group will recruit more efficiently, and therefore fight more efficiently. Knowing this, the government in the country of origin will adjust to fight a more or less efficient foe.

The model builds on domestic determinants of refugee policy from the literature and the insight that the rebel group gains efficiency from a border refugee camp. From the purview of foreign policy, the asylum country has two options: keep all of the refugees contained and at the border (Border Camps (B)) or allow them into the interior as dispersed individuals or settlements (Dispersal (D)). If the asylum country allows the refugees to disperse or situates settlements very far from
the border, there will be no extra efficiency introduced into the civil war. However, if the asylum country sets up camps close to the border, they give the rebel group added efficiency which could change the outcome of the war.

The potential help to the rebel group is where the strategic interaction comes in. Since the refugee policy could change the outcome of the civil war, the rebel group and government in the country of origin will strategically adjust their investment in the civil war when there is a border refugee camp. The country of asylum ultimately weighs its domestic interests and foreign policy concerns and the impact they can have and then chooses the most advantageous refugee policy.

### 3.1 Domestic Interests

Domestic interests in refugee policy are widely discussed in the international law and humanitarian literature. These studies of refugee policy focus on whether countries should place refugees in camps (Borght and Philips 1995; Jacobsen and Crisp 1998), the degree of openness of a country’s asylum policy (Jacobsen 1996; Milner 2009), and the welfare consequences of these choices (Kok 1989; Whitaker 2002). This collection of work establishes several correlates of refugee policy openness, most of which pertain to consequences inside the asylum country, like regime survival, national security and stability, xenophobia, foreign aid coming in, and the interests of domestic constituencies.²

The most prominent explanations for refugee camps and restrictive policies are domestic pressure when residents grow tired of hosting refugees or are overwhelmed by numbers, and issues like local security and environmental degradation (Crisp 2000; Rutinwa 2002; Kamanga 2002). When the refugee population can integrate into the country of asylum and become self-sufficient, as with Mozambicans in Tanzania, there is little impetus for setting up refugee camps or even seeking international aid. This is partly related to the volume of refugees arriving, but the characteristics of the refugees, the local hosts, and the region where refugees will live are also factors. When

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² One exception is the discussion of supporting pan-African goals for independence; even this, though, is the reflection of a public sentiment.
refugees cannot easily integrate into the country of asylum, either because of their number or their characteristics, as was the case for Sudanese in Kenya, camps become a more attractive policy option. The model formalizes these correlates and uses the cases to give them more shape.

3.1.1 Dispersal: Allowing Refugees into the Interior

Allowing refugees to disperse can take a few forms. First, the country could do nothing. People would then be free to move across the border and settle where it is convenient. In some places, this might also involve formal recognition of the migrants as refugees and even active efforts to ensure that refugees do not congregate too close to the border. However, in other places, people may just move across the border without any formal recognition. Largely, this was the Tanzanian approach to the Mozambican refugee crises of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In this case, ethnic Makonde and Yao from Mozambique joined their co-ethnics just north in Tanzania, settling in villages across thousands of square kilometers in southeastern Tanzania.3

The cost associated with dispersal of refugees is a function of population. As more people arrive, this option becomes more costly. When there is a large enough population of refugees, the cost associated with dispersed refugees rises dramatically. The costs in this model are intended to encompass at least two kinds. First is the strain that additional population may put on public goods provision in the communities where the refugees settle, such as overuse of roads, education, or health care. The second cost is the domestic discontent associated with the refugees’ use of public goods and resources. These are the dynamics most often discussed by African scholars of refugee policy, who note that it is the combination of volume of refugees, failures in service provision, and growing xenophobia that determine refugee policy (Rutinwa 2002).

More formally, the cost of choosing dispersal, \( c_D \), is a function of the population that arrives at the border, \( F \). Costs are increasing in population \( c'_D(F) > 0 \), and the marginal cost of each additional person is increasing. That is, the costs are convex in \( F \) \( (c''_D(F) > 0) \).4 Qualitatively, the domestic discontent associated with refugees is why the cost function is convex. That is, a

3. See map in Figures 3 and 4 for orientation.
4. These functional form assumptions ensure a unique ordering of the two options as population increases.
few refugees in a community would not be a problem. When many communities find their public buildings—schools, churches, hospitals—filled with refugees rather than with fellow villagers, their discontent is compounded. Eventually, it becomes a problem with national attention.\(^5\) The more easily the refugees and local population live together, the more shallow this convexity is. For example, the Yao and Makonde in the south of Tanzania and the north of Mozambique already had lived together and shared land, so while convex, the marginal increase in Tanzania’s cost of dispersal is small. By contrast, in the Kenyan case, the Turkana from Kenya and the Dinka and Nuer from Southern Sudan would compete for pasture land. Because they are distinct groups of people and resources are limited, Kenya’s cost of dispersal was more steeply increasing with additional Sudanese refugees.

The key benefit of dispersal is maintaining international relationships. By providing asylum, the country gets a benefit, \(H_D\), similar to the international reputational benefit often attached to compliance with a treaty. In post-Colonial East Africa, people talk about providing hospitality to their fellow black Africans, suggesting that the benefit extends beyond mere compliance (Rutinwa 2002).

### 3.1.2 Border Camps

The other option is to contain refugees at the border. This policy involves recognizing refugees formally and then restricting their movements. Often, restriction is to designated pieces of land which, with the help of humanitarian aid, become “camps.” While most common in the developing world, border refugee camps have been used on nearly every continent since the 1950s (Mtango 1989), and middle income countries, like Turkey, China, and South Africa, have used this policy. Since setting up a camp involves allocating land, there are up-front fixed costs to the border camp. Once set up, there are smaller incremental costs to expanding the camp and enforcing the restrictions. In other words, the costs of the camp are increasing with population, but benefit from economies of scale. Formally, the fixed cost of setting up the border camp is \(s_B\), and the cost of

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5. Descriptions in Rutinwa 2002; Milner 2009 also illustrate how the volume of refugees drives political discontent and the convexity of costs.
expanding camps is $c_B$. Set-up cost can be low if there is unused land, as in Tanzania. However, if the land itself is in high demand or politically contentious, as in Kenya, the set-up costs increase. Expanding the camp is increasing in refugee population, $F$, but concave in $F$. The concavity captures economies of scale. Once the camp is established, it costs the asylum country very little to fill or even expand.

As for benefits, like allowing refugees to disperse, border camps allow the asylum country to meet its treaty obligations and gain international reputational benefits, $H_B$. With a border camp, $H_B$ often includes international assistance that will accrue to the country of asylum, like upgrading roads or an airport or hiring asylum-country nationals or giving contracts to asylum-country-based NGOs. Benefits from the international community are at least as great for setting up the border camp as they are for dispersal ($H_B \geq H_D$). Camp policies ensure more of the refugees are counted. With dispersal, counting is often difficult, as the Mozambican case demonstrates.\footnote{A more recent example of this is dispersed Syrian refugees in Lebanon, where estimates of the refugee population ranged from 1.1 to 1.5 million.}

A final assumption is that there is always a small enough population of refugees that if that number were to arrive, the country of asylum would not pay the fixed cost of setting up a border camp because the cost of allowing them to disperse is less.\footnote{To avoid confusion, note that this assumption does not incorporate any of the interstate politics that might influence the asylum country’s decision.} If only 20 people arrive claiming refugee status, no state sets up a refugee camp. For a few refugees, it is always more cost effective to allow them to choose where to settle and work during their period of asylum.

The formalization of a theory of domestic consideration in refugee policy making yields a simple calculus. On the one hand, the asylum country considers dispersing the refugees. The country weighs the reputational benefits of hosting refugees, less the cost of dispersal, given the population arriving: $H_D - c_D(F)$. On the other hand, the asylum country considers setting up a border camp. The country weighs reputational benefits of hosting refugees, plus some international aid, less the set-up cost of a camp and the incremental cost of expanding the camp, given the population arriving: $H_B - s_B - c_B(F)$. 


3.2 Foreign Policy Interests

Modeling the asylum country as an agent in foreign policy is a primary contribution of this article. In previous literature, placing a camp near the border has been thought of as a domestic cost-saving exercise, keeping the refugees at the periphery. Accounts of how rebels use refugee camps, however, calls this into question. If it were just a cost-saving exercise, the presence of transnational rebels and the potential for cross-border attacks would offset cost-savings. This points to a possible benefit, refugee camps may be worth attacking because they are helping rebel groups. Depending on the foreign policy interests of the refugee-receiving country and the likelihood of cross-border attacks, helping the rebel group could be a net benefit.

This part of the model connects two insights: The asylum country has preferences for one regime over another in a neighboring country, and the border camps can make the rebel group more efficient. Formally, the country of asylum must weigh domestic and foreign policy considerations and choose between dispersal and border camps. The value of a regime change, $w$, is deviations from an ideal point for coordination with the country or rebel group. The technology provided by the border camp is a component of the probability that the rebel group wins the war, $p_R$. These paired together form the foreign policy calculus, the expected value of a regime change in the asylum country’s neighbor.

$$U_x = H_x - s_x - c_x(F) + p_{R,x}w, \ x = D, B.$$ (1)

3.2.1 The Expected Value of a Rebel Win

The asylum country has preferences about who rules a neighboring country—the one from which the refugees fled—and so, the asylum country cares about whether the rebel group or the government wins the civil war. The asylum country considers how the extra technology of a border refugee camp will change the probability that the rebel group wins. Therefore, the model connects

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8. Indeed, countries have discovered that border camps are costly because of cross-border attacks, and they move camps away from the border. In response to attacks, Tanzania moved camps back in the 1970s, Mexico did so in the 1980s, and Guinea in the 2000s. In each case, hostilities de-escalated.
the border refugee camp, a form of technology, to a strategic civil war. The value of connecting the asylum country’s refugee policy to the civil war is to study it as an intervention. When strategic parties in the civil war see that the rebel group will get additional technology, they change their behavior. The possible change in the civil war thus informs the asylum country’s refugee policy.

Formally, the value of a regime change, $w$, is a preference for convergence on regional policy. If two countries agree on how to coordinate trade, migration, or other regional matters, there will be mutual gains in the long run. In the model, the value of the rebel win is intuitively ordered. If the asylum country prefers regime change and coordination with the rebel group (rather than the government in power), $w$ will be positive. If, however, the asylum country prefers to coordinate with the government, $w$ will be negative.

The example of Kenya and refugees from South Sudan illuminates how preferences for a regime and the efficiency provided to the rebels enter into the refugee policy decision. Kenya had good cooperative economic prospects, given a victory by the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and an independent South Sudan. Kenya would gain a new landlocked trading partner and the opportunity to benefit mutually from an oil pipeline through South Sudan to port in Kenya. By contrast, Sudan was not landlocked, and the government in Khartoum was oriented toward trading with its neighbors in the north. Prospects for coordination and cooperation between the SPLA and Kenya were much better than the status quo relationship that Kenya had with Sudan. As for the border camp, the SPLA took advantage of opportunities in the Kakuma refugee camp, and it made the SPLA more efficient.

None of what the refugee camp provides the rebel group directly helps fight the war; refugee camps do not provide arms or soldiers directly. However, refugee camps do enhance the rebel group’s ability to fight the war. When rebels have access to refugee camps, they gain access to humanitarian aid and to the refugees themselves: a concentrated recruitment pool and ways to

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9. To focus on the decision making of the asylum country, I sketch an underlying model and relegate more detail to the appendix.
10. The appendix contains an extension of the model in which $w$ is the deviation from the status quo on a single dimension policy space.
11. Later we will refer to this as the value of a rebel win and its opposite as the value of a government win.
12. See earlier discussion and also ICG 2010.
support their soldiers (Lischer 2003; Achvarina and Reich 2010). Formalizing the refugee camp as a conflict technology maps directly onto how scholars and practitioners understand the rebels’ use of refugee camps qualitatively. Therefore, I draw on the economic rent-seeking literature and select a model of civil war that incorporates differential technology of war.\(^\text{13}\)

In the model of civil war, the government of the country of origin (O) and the rebel group (R) have an endowment of resources they can choose to invest in either production (X) or fighting (G). The probability that each party wins the war is based on a contest success function \(p\) of their investments in fighting. Each party’s objective function is the expected value of winning the war. Thus, they take into account their probability of winning the war \(p\) and the total remaining resources, that is, those devoted to production rather than to fighting. The parties simultaneously allocate resources. The war occurs, and the winner takes all the spoils.

Since a rebel group may or may not have a border refugee camp to use, I model two potential civil wars. One is the baseline in which there is no additional technology from the border camp. The other is the war in which the rebel group has improved fighting technology because of the border camp. To capture differential technology, I use a weighted lottery over the allocation to fighting. Formally,

\[
p_i(G_i, G_{-i}) = \frac{\alpha_i G_i}{\alpha_i G_i + \alpha_{-i} G_{-i}} \quad \text{for } i = O, R. \tag{2}
\]

The weights, \(\alpha_i\), in the lottery correspond to how efficiently the parties fight. This efficiency I will refer to as their technology. The rebel group’s technology can be decomposed into two parts: what is from the border camp and everything else. Thus, \(\alpha_R = \tau \hat{\alpha}_R\). In the civil war with no border camp, the technology scaler is \(\tau = 1\). In the civil war where the rebel group gets the border refugee camp, the rebel group receives additional technology, \(\tau > 1\), which scales up the rebel group’s original conflict technology.

\(^{13}\) The contest success function framework is a common choice to examine civil conflict. The model used here is a case of what is reviewed in Garfinkel and Skaperdas 2007. The application is novel. Typically, interventions in conflict operate through material resources (e.g., Nunn and Qian 2014). In this application, the refugee camp provides better technology or efficiency. Thus, the intervention operates through the scaler, \(\alpha\), not the resources available to the rebels, \(X\).
The full model contains the civil war and the asylum country’s decision in a two-stage sequential game. First, the government of the country of origin and the rebel group choose their allocation to fighting. Second, the country of asylum chooses a border camp or dispersal. In this sequential framework I can characterize the Subgame Perfect Nash Equilibrium.

3.3 Equilibrium

The equilibrium depends on a threshold at which the asylum country is just indifferent between border camps and dispersal. This threshold defines how important the rebel group has to be, relative to domestic politics, for the country of asylum to choose border refugee camps and provide technology. Below the threshold, if the asylum country does not care for the rebel group and it is low cost to host refugees in a dispersed fashion, the country of asylum will choose dispersal. With dispersal there will be no intervention in the civil war and the rebel group and government will invest accordingly in the civil war. Alternatively, if the country of asylum values the rebels winning the war, they will choose border camps, even if it is low cost to disperse refugees. In this situation, the government of the country of origin and the rebel group will invest in arming, anticipating the greater level of technology.

However, domestic considerations can outstrip the foreign policy considerations, creating a very low threshold to choose border camps. If domestic costs of dispersal are sufficiently high, the asylum country will choose border camps even if, on foreign policy grounds, they would prefer not to help the rebel group.

Since the equilibrium is subgame perfect, the logic of backward induction requires beginning with the civil war. The model of the civil war yields two important implications for the asylum country’s decision. First, in the absence of a border refugee camp, the equilibrium probability of a rebel win depends strictly on the technology of the government in the country of origin and the technology of the rebels. Furthermore, the probability of a rebel win is strictly increasing in the value of the rebel’s technology (and therefore, \(\tau\)). Thus, the more that the border refugee camp

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14. I restrict attention to when the budget constraint binds.
improves the efficiency with which the rebel group fights, the greater the probability that the rebel group wins in equilibrium.

Specifically, when the asylum country has chosen dispersal,

\[ p_{R,D}^* = \frac{\sqrt{\alpha_R}}{\sqrt{\alpha_R} + \sqrt{\alpha_O}}, \tag{3} \]

and when the asylum country has chosen a border refugee camp,\(^\text{15}\)

\[ p_{R,B}^* = \frac{\sqrt{\tau \alpha_R}}{\sqrt{\tau \alpha_R} + \sqrt{\alpha_O}}. \tag{4} \]

The asylum country has a simple maximization problem with two options. Whichever utility is the largest, \(U_D\) or \(U_B\), the asylum country’s best response is to choose the corresponding policy, Dispersal or Border Camps. However, because the border camp will impact the civil war in favor of the rebels, the probability of the rebels winning changes the value of \(U_B\). Anticipating the refugee policy choice of the asylum country (A), the government of the country of origin (O), and the rebel group (R) adjust the resources devoted to fighting according to whether or not the rebel group receives the additional technology (\(\tau\)) of a refugee camp.

The equilibrium refugee policy choice depends on the threshold, \(\bar{w}\), the point at which the asylum country is indifferent between dispersal and border camps. Formally,

\[ \bar{w} = \frac{(H_B - H_D) - (s_B + c_B(F) - c_D(F))}{p_{R,D}^* - p_{R,B}^*}. \tag{5} \]

In equilibrium, if the value of a rebel win is larger than the threshold, \(w > \bar{w}\), the asylum country will choose border camps. If the value of a rebel win is at least as small as the threshold, \(w \leq \bar{w}\), the asylum country will choose dispersal. Intuitively, the threshold takes the domestic calculus of the asylum country and compares it to foreign policy interests, i.e., how valuable it is to the asylum country that the rebels win the civil war. Each of these components can dominate. Suppose that the difference between dispersal and border camps, on domestic grounds alone, is small and fixed.

\(^{15}\) Since there is no border camp, \(\tau = 1\).
If the asylum country prefers the rebel group very much, the asylum country will choose border camps, which help the rebels. Alternatively, if the asylum country prefers the government of the country of origin very much, the asylum country will choose dispersal to avoid intervening in favor of the rebel group.

In another situation, suppose that the asylum country does not see much difference between the rebel group and the government of the country of origin. Then the value of a rebel win is small and fixed. If the cost of dispersal on domestic grounds alone is very high (e.g. there are many refugees), then the country of asylum will choose border camps, even though they do not care much about the civil war. If the cost of dispersal is quite low (e.g. the refugees are culturally similar and there is plenty of space), they will choose dispersal.

The threshold that defines the equilibrium contains another quantity: how much difference the refugee policy will make in civil war or the differential probability of the rebel group winning. Since the differential probability of the rebel group winning the war is a function of technology, as the technology of a refugee camp changes, the weight given to domestic and foreign policy interest changes. The role of technology in the threshold is important because, depending on what is driving the refugee policy decision, domestic or foreign policy interest, the technology prompts refugee-receiving countries with border camps to behave differently.

### 3.4 Comparative Statics of Technology

Key predictions come from analyzing the comparative statics of the model. In particular, if a country prefers a border camp on domestic grounds alone, as technology of the camp increases, the threshold at which the country will choose a border camp increases. In other words, as the technology provided to the rebel group increases, the hurdle to choose a border camp gets higher. Meanwhile, if a country prefers dispersal on domestic grounds, as technology of the camp increases, the threshold at which the country will choose a refugee camp decreases. In other words, as the technology provided to the rebel group increases, the hurdle to choose a border camp gets lower.
The comparative static asks, if all else is equal, when the technology of the camp increases, what happens to the threshold for choosing border camps? This depends on whether the refugee-receiving country prefers border camps or dispersal on domestic grounds alone.

Figure 1 shows how the comparative statics work, and the logic for difference in preferences. The left side is the case where on domestic grounds alone, the asylum country prefers dispersal (i.e. \( H_B - H_D - (s_B + c_B(F) - c_D(F)) < 0 \)). The right side is the case where on domestic grounds alone, the asylum country prefers border camps (i.e. \( H_B - H_D - (s_B + c_B(F) - c_D(F)) > 0 \)). Along the horizontal axis, the technology of the camp is increasing, so choosing a border camp will provide greater efficiency to the rebel group. Along the vertical axis is the value of a rebel win. At the top, the asylum country prefers the rebel group; at the bottom, the asylum country prefers the government in the country of origin.

Beginning on the left side, since the asylum country prefers dispersal on domestic grounds, in order for the country to consider building border camps (be at the threshold \( \bar{w} \)), the asylum country must want to help the rebels. As the technology of a camp improves, the asylum country more easily chooses border camps because they will yield greater foreign policy benefits. Meanwhile, on the right side, in order for the country to consider dispersal, it must be the case that the country...
prefers not to help the rebels. As technology increases, the costs of helping the rebels is greater, and
the asylum country has to like the value of the rebels winning more (a smaller, negative number)
to still be willing to have border camps, so the threshold becomes higher.

When are border refugee camps especially useful to the rebel group? Border camps are useful
when the rebels depend on large numbers of people to fight the war. Larger, more densely popu-
lated camps make recruitment even more efficient. More prime-age potential recruits—adolescent
and young adult men—make a higher quality recruitment pool. Finally, easier travel between the
front lines and the refugee camp means that smuggling recruits and appropriating food or supplies
is easier. Shorter distances, flatter terrain, and the absence of bodies of water should increase the
efficiency of the rebel group.

Thus, these predictions have substantive implications for camp location, since geography can
determine closeness to the border and greater technology. In small countries, when camps are set
up, they are necessarily close to international borders. Therefore, they offer greater technology
to rebel groups (further right in the graphs in Figure 1). Small countries will be more responsive
to the foreign policy cost or gains of refugee policy. In other words, small countries will select
dispersal when on domestic grounds, they would have preferred border camps, and choose bor-
der camps when on domestic grounds, they would have preferred dispersal, even in response to
smaller foreign policy interests than those that larger countries allow to influence their decision.
Other situations that limit the possibilities to place camps far from a border, like mountain ranges,
large lakes, or even deserts, should similarly make countries more responsive to the foreign policy
consequences of refugee policy. More generally, when countries are limited to placing camps near
the border because of geography, the foreign policy implications of refugee policy loom larger in
the policy calculus.

### 3.5 The Marginal Refugee

The prediction about technology connects to how countries change their policy decision as
the technology of a border camp increases because of additional refugees. For large values of a
government win and large refugee population, the asylum country may prefer to defray the foreign policy cost of a denser camp by degrading the technology of the camp, making it less dense, further from the border, or with fewer prime-age recruits. The converse is also true; for a country that places a high value on a rebel win, each additional refugee increases the technology of the camp, and can be a foreign policy benefit. In this case, the refugee-receiving country wants a denser camp or a camp closer to the border.

The intuition for these implications is as follows. When the refugee population increases, domestic pressure for border camps increases. When a country of asylum greatly values the government in the country of origin, there is a countervailing pressure toward dispersal because as population increases, the refugee-receiving country wants to avoid denser, more efficient camps that help the rebel group. When the refugee receiving-country places a high enough value on the neighboring government winning, the marginal refugee is a greater foreign policy cost than domestic policy cost. The asylum country does better by expanding a camp to maintain the same density, and therefore the same technology.

These dynamics come from comparative static and marginal utility analysis with one additional assumption. Since the efficiency of the border camp is tied to the density of the camp, I assume the efficiency is strictly increasing in population, \( \tau'(F) > 0 \). With this assumption \( \tau(F) \), replaces \( \tau \) in \( \bar{w} \). Figure 2 displays a plot of how the threshold \( \bar{w} \) changes as population increases, where changes in population change the domestic cost of hosting and the density (technology) of a border camp.

Unlike the comparative static on technology (\( \tau \)), \( \bar{w} \) is decreasing in population.\(^{16}\) The initial decrease is because, as more people come, dispersal becomes a lot more costly than border camps, on domestic grounds alone. Below zero, the opposite relationship as technology alone\(^{17}\) The decline is less steep, though, than it would be if \( \tau \) did not vary with population. This means that as population increases and preference for the rebel group decreases, the hurdle for choosing a border camp gets higher than it would be if population had no bearing on technology.

\(^{16}\) This requires that the slope of \( C_D(F) \) is sufficiently steep, so that the \( C_D'(F) \) dominates the numerator of derivative \( \bar{w} \). This is in the spirit of the initial discussion, that after some amount of arrivals the domestic cost of dispersal increases drastically.

\(^{17}\) The right side of Figure 1.
The in-equilibrium marginal utility of an additional refugee, given a border camp, reinforces this intuition. When the refugee-receiving country prefers border camps because they appease a domestic audience and has a friendly relationship with the government in the country of origin, each additional refugee is a cost to the country. When the value of the government winning is large enough, the foreign policy cost can dominate the domestic policy cost. In this case, the refugee-receiving country will prefer to maintain the technology of the camp with the additional refugees, rather than allow the technology to increase. They do this by changing the border camp on the margin: expanding the camp, moving it away from a border, or allowing more people to work in urban areas in response to the additional refugee. Meanwhile, when a refugee-receiving country sets up the border camp because of its foreign policy aims, and the value of a rebel win is large enough, the marginal refugee is a benefit. By allowing the additional refugee to increase the density of the camp, the country is better off.

The analysis of the marginal refugee suggests implications that aid agencies can use to make refugee camps on the margin further from the border or less dense. If the refugee-receiving country is responding to domestic pressure and foreign policy interests are large enough, the humanitarian
organization can use new arrivals to expand a camp or move it further away from the border. The refugee-receiving country will do this because it will decrease the foreign policy cost of the additional refugee. By contrast, a country that sets up border camps because it will help a rebel group seeks to maintain or increase the strategic value of the border refugee camp. However, this country is indifferent among camp configurations that help the rebels equally well. Humanitarian organizations can judge if distance from the border, camp density, or demographic characteristics are the greatest threat to well-being. A country motivated by foreign policy interests may well consider closeness to the border and camp density substitutes. Thus the humanitarian organization can propose a denser camp further from the border or a camp closer to the border with lower density, whichever is welfare improving for the refugee.

4 Refugee Policy in Tanzania and Kenya

I return now to the cases in East Africa. The two running examples have been useful because they create dichotomy: dispersal or border camps. In both cases, the domestic and foreign policy interests of the receiving countries, Tanzania and Kenya, are well aligned. Two additional cases, the arrival of Somalis in Kenya beginning in the early 1990s and the arrival of Burundians in Tanzania in the mid-1990s, provide substantive context for when domestic and foreign policy interests are in tension. Figure 3 displays a map of Africa with these countries noted.

4.1 Tanzania’s Distinct Refugee Policies

In Tanzania in the mid 1990s, Burundian refugees were affected by a policy far different from that for the Mozambicans. They were placed in densely populated camps, very close to the border. The domestic contexts of the arrivals of Mozambicans and Burundians have a number of similari-

18. An analytically useful feature of these cases is that the regional geopolitical aims of Kenya and Tanzania are separable because they affect different referent regions. Tanzania-Burundi relations occur in the context of East and Central Africa, while Tanzania-Mozambique relations occur in the context of Southern Africa. Similarly, Kenya-Somalia relations occur squarely in the context of the Horn of Africa. Kenya-Sudan relations are more complex, but because of the rebel group’s origins and orientation, the geopolitics Kenya is concerned with have to do with East Africa.
Figure 3: Map of African Countries Referenced in Case Studies
ties, and therefore do not explain the policy difference. The foreign policy implications do explain the difference. An agenda beyond Tanzania’s borders motivates the drastically different refugee policies.

Beginning in late 1994, Burundi descended into civil war. Burundians, mostly ethnic Hutu, fled to Tanzania. Tanzania set up a series of camps for Burundian refugees, all 15 to 30 kilometers east of the Burundian border. Throughout the refugee crisis, Tanzania maintained a strict encampment policy. Very few of this refugee cohort lived anywhere else. Figure 4 displays a map of Tanzania and neighboring countries, placement of the border camps from the Burundian crisis in the 1990s, and the area where most of the Mozambicans lived.

Figure 4: Map of Tanzania with Burundian and Mozambican Refugee Policy
Allowing refugees into the interior to settle and farm would have posed domestic costs somewhat comparable to allowing the Mozambicans to do so. One of the border regions, Kigoma, is predominantly ethnic Ha. The Ha speak a language similar to Kirundi, the main language in Burundi. They also have a pre-colonial relationship with a group of Tutsi rulers that is similar to the pre-colonial relationship between Hutu and Tutsi in Burundi. The Ha and Burundian refugees were agriculturalists (Malkki 1995; Veney 2007). Kigoma and much of the surrounding area in Tanzania was not densely populated in the 1990s, and there was ample fertile land to farm. Another alternative to border camps was organized settlements for Burundians away from the border, a policy Tanzania had favored for Burundians in the past. In the 1970s during an earlier crisis, Tanzania established three large interior settlements for hundreds of thousands of Burundian refugees, and they became self-sufficient. Burundian refugees from earlier crises also lived dispersed in Kigoma, the major town in the region near Burundi (Malkki 1995). Thus, Tanzania had a number of feasible alternatives to the dense border camps.

Tanzania’s relations with Burundi were not like its relations with Mozambique. Tanzania-Burundi relations grew tense in the 1990s, and two incidents were pivotal. In 1996, a coup ousted the fledgling constitutional government. Pierre Buyoya took power, and returned the country to minority Tutsi rule. Tanzania led other East African countries in sanctions against Burundi and denounced the coup. Then in 1997, the Tanzanian military and Burundian military exchanged attacks in Lake Tanganyika, which borders both countries (Durieux 2000; Ghosn, Palmer, and Bremer 2004). The border remained militarized into the next decade. However, the relationship is less clear than Kenya’s preference for the SPLA. Burundian rebel groups used the border camps, but Tanzania aimed to appear neutral. They sequestered some individual rebels who were caught inside Tanzania (Crisp 2001). The countries maintained trade ties, which were critical for landlocked Burundi’s access to shipping. Tanzania hosted a series of talks throughout the late nineties, which ultimately resulted in an agreement to end the war in 2005 (Peace Accords Matrix 2000).

Meanwhile, the Hutu rebel movement had ties to Tanzania. A group of Burundian refugees who had fled Burundi in the 1970s established a political party, the Party for the Liberation of the
Hutu People (PALIPEHUTU) in Tanzania. By 1985, PALIPEHUTU had an armed wing, but the party split into multiple political and armed factions in the 1990s. The refugee camps along the border that were established in the 1990s served as a point of organization as well as recruitment for rebel groups. Some reports suggest that training took place in the refugee camps, but more often just outside their boundaries (HRW 1999; ICG 1999; Durieux 2000). As the civil war progressed, two of the most important rebel groups used the border camps. Ultimately, the larger rebel group, Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), took power in Burundi in the 2000s (ICG 1999).

4.2 Enforcement of Kenya’s Camps

Like Tanzania, Kenya responded to nearly simultaneous refugee crises with different policies, although the Kenyan case is more nuanced. By the end of the 1980s, political events in multiple countries threw Kenya’s neighbors into chaos, and refugees arrived in Kenya by the thousands. Refugees from Somalia and Sudan were the most numerous, and Kenya allocated border land for camps for the Sudanese and Somalis. Since then Kenya has claimed to have a strict encampment policy. The *de facto* arrangements for refugees differ. Somalis are spread across a number of locations. They lived in a cluster of camps, known as Dadaab, near the Somali border; a sizable population lived in Nairobi and at Kakuma, as well (Parker 2002). Sudanese refugees, on the other hand, had a strictly enforced encampment policy at Kakuma only. Sudanese did not appear in any numbers outside Kakuma. Kenya’s foreign policy interest helps to account for the dispersion of Somalis across locations and how it changed overtime. For reference, Figure 5 displays a map of Kenya with its neighbors and the locations of refugees.

The approach that Kenya took with Somali refugees has similarities with the approach to Sudanese refugees from the perspective of domestic politics. Domestic costs of a dispersal policy were quite high. In 1991, at the beginning of the crisis, Somalis settled in locations up and down the Eastern half of Kenya. The first and largest refugee camps for Somalis were on the border with Somalia. A proliferation of small camps were situated along the coast and around Mombasa, and
Figure 5: Map of Kenya with Refugee Camps for Sudanese and Somalis
there was a large settlement in Eastleigh, a Nairobi neighborhood (Parker 2002).

Somali refugees who had settled near the coast initially posed economic and political problems for Kenya. The coast is the heart of the tourist and shipping economy, and thus the land is valuable. Furthermore, there is a small, sometimes problematic, rebel movement in the coastal region that seeks independence from Kenya. The Kenyan government recovered valuable coastal land and settled most Somali refugees in camps away from valuable land. There is an ethnic Somali population in Kenya with close ties to ethnic Somalis in Ethiopia and Somalia, which might have made integration of Somalis along the border easier. However, there was some suspicion of ethnic Somali Kenyans and Somalis alike because Siad Barre had attempted to create a pan-Somalia and take territory from Kenya.

By 1994, Kenya began consolidating the Somali refugees into Dadaab, near the border with Somalia. However, in crucial ways, Dadaab does not resemble the Burundian camps in Tanzania nor Kakuma. Kenya gave Somali refugees along the coast a few options. They could go to Dadaab, they could settle in Kakuma, far away from the Somali border, or they could repatriate. Even in this consolidation exercise, though, the number of Somali refugees in Nairobi continued to grow. It was only in 2010 that Kenya made an effort to move the Nairobi-based Somali refugees to Dadaab, and it is hardly clear that the effort was sustained or effective.¹⁹

Relations between Somalia and Kenya follow a pattern that helps explain Kenya’s wavering about Somali border camps. Before 1991, while Siad Barre was in power, Kenya and Somalia had a rather tense relationship because of the pan-Somalia movement. Following the fall of Siad Barre, there were many Somali factions that Kenya could have built alliances with, but initially relations were unclear. Over time, though, Kenya chose a few groups, which led to a friendly relationship with the later established transitional and federal governments. As Kenya allied itself with the government of Somalia, Al-Shabaab formed and grew into a formidable rebel group. Among the biggest problems in the Dadaab Refugee camps since the 2000s are the recruitment and kidnapping of Somali refugees for Al-Shabaab forces and the hiding of Al-Shabaab fighters

¹⁹. As of 2007, as many as 60,000 Somali refugees lived in Eastleigh, but Kenya responded to Al-Shabaab terror attacks in Nairobi and elsewhere by sending many Somalis to Dadaab. See Migiro 2011.
in and around Dadaab. The Somali border camps have evolved into a foreign policy problem for Kenya (Migiro 2011).

5 Implications and the Cases

Tanzania’s insistence on camps so close to the border in the Burundian case and Kenya’s hedging on implementing a total encampment policy for Somalis are consistent, not only with the idea that foreign policy matters for refugee policy, but also with model predictions on technology and the marginal refugee. One technology implication from the model describes the Tanzania-Burundian case, and the implications regarding the marginal refugee help explain the lax Kenya policy toward Somali refugees.

One implication of the comparative statics analysis on technology is that when a country values the rebel group winning and would otherwise choose dispersal, it becomes easier to choose border camps, as technology increases. This happens in Tanzania. Tanzania preferred to support the Hutu rebel movement over the minority Tutsi government, but probably could have accommodated the Burundian refugees, dispersed in large settlements in the interior. Once Tanzania chose border camps, the closer to the border they were and the denser they were, the more impact they had supporting the rebel movement.

One objection to this interpretation is that an increasingly xenophobic public in Tanzania might have forced denser camps, closer to the border. Some evidence from the camps suggests otherwise. A few years after the Burundian refugee crisis in Tanzania was resolved, Jean-Francois Durieux, an UNHCR official who worked in Kigoma from 1997 to 1999, reflected on Tanzania’s decision to place Burundian refugees along the border. He wrote:

All camps hosting Burundian refugees in the Kigoma region are within walking distance from the international border . . . The location of the camps in this kind of proximity was no accident. It is the result of a deliberate policy by the government of Tanzania to keep the refugees in the border area . . . The strategic value of refugee camps in the border area is obvious from the standpoint of armed Burundi opposition groups. While the precise role of the camps in a possible Tanzanian strategy is harder

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to figure out, there can be no doubt that they play some role in such a strategy (Durieux 2000, 2-3).

Durieux is not clear on what Tanzania’s foreign policy strategy is. He has concluded, though, that the camps along the border are part of it. The model and implications in this article help address his confusion and explain Tanzania’s strategic logic. Typically, placing a camp along the border is not thought of as aiding rebels or intervening in a civil war. This is because setting up a border refugee camp is not like providing military aid, arms, or soldiers in a war. The border refugee camp is more subtle. It does not provide resources. Rather, it helps the rebel group be more efficient.

Tanzania could control how close the camp is to the border. Camps closer to the border should be more efficient for the rebels. Tanzania preferred to support the Hutu rebel movement, and as a border camp offers more technology to the rebel group, a border camp policy is more likely. This is precisely because when an asylum country prefers dispersal on domestic grounds, the threshold to choose a border camp ($\bar{w}$) is decreasing in technology.

5.1 Camp Enforcement

A similar logic in the marginal refugee analysis explains why Kenya chose lower enforcement of the Somali refugee camps. The asylum country has some control over the density of refugee camps and the quality of the potential recruits. By spreading camps out further from the border and over more space, Kenya degraded the efficiency of the camp for Al-Shabaab. By allowing refugees to pursue economic or schooling opportunities outside refugee camps, an asylum country uses normal economic processes to degrade the quality of the recruits. Prime-age working men are more likely to seek opportunities outside the camp, and children who are coming of age often look for opportunities to go to school elsewhere. Thus, when enforcement is relaxed, prime-age men and youth leave disproportionately. These are precisely the most sought-after recruits.

As with Burundians in Tanzania, Kenya’s optimal domestic and foreign policies were at odds with each other in the Somali refugee crisis. Kenya faced domestic pressure to contain refugees at
the border. However, had Kenya only had foreign policy interests to consider, they probably would have chosen to disperse Somalis in large settlements well away the border area. When interests are at odds like this in the model, as the border camp offers less technology to the rebels, the border camp threshold decreases, and a border camp policy is more likely. But there is tension; as the refugee population grows, foreign policy pressure makes containment at a border less preferable. Thus, degrading the technology of the camp makes the already established border camp marginally better.

The insight about Kenya wanting to degrade the efficiency of the camp by making it less dense with a less useful recruitment pool has a host of policy implications for the humanitarian community. For example, when a rebel group that uses child soldiers has easy access to a refugee camp with many children, the camp is improving their efficiency. The rebel group need not go from village to village to recruit or kidnap. They can go to one place and get many child soldiers. Creating opportunities for children, who are old enough to be recruited, to go to school outside the camp may protect those children. A second example is when a refugee camp is threatened by health risks because of how dense it is. If the refugee-receiving country wants to degrade the technology of a camp, they will expand the camp, and may even prefer to expand the camp away from the border.

5.2 Alternative Explanations

There are several alternative explanations for why asylum countries choose refugee border camps. One is that domestic matters are what drive refugee policy. Another is that sheer volume of refugees forces countries to build camps. A third is that successive waves of refugees wear down a hospitable public, and eventually they become unwilling to continue to pay the cost of hosting. A final alternative explanation is that refugee policy is driven by international politics, but not by regional geopolitics. Rather, it is the end of the Cold War and the end of the Apartheid era that have led to the closing of refugee policy and border camps. Each of these explanations has some merit, but empirical facts from the cases and their relationships render many of these explanations unsatisfying.
I address domestic determinants of refugee policy by incorporating them into the theory. Although not the focus of the article, domestic interests certainly matter in explaining refugee policy. Domestic politics were a driving force behind Kenya’s decision to consolidate Somali refugees camps. Essentially, when foreign policy interests are small, domestic politics determine refugee policy in the model. This is a special case of the larger theory I propose that includes foreign policy aims, too.

Among the most referenced explanations for border camps is domestic pressure from the sheer volume of refugee flows. When flows get large enough a country has no choice but to provide refuge in camps. The relationships among the four cases and particular facts make this explanation less compelling. The four cases are analytically useful because they help set aside this explanation. All of the cases have large numbers of arrivals, ranging from more than 50,000 to around 500,000. The Mozambican case demonstrates that even when there are very large flows, perhaps 300,000, dispersing refugees can still make sense. The Somali case further casts the flow explanation into doubt. With the estimated 60,000 Somalis in Nairobi, the numbers alone cannot explain why Kakuma was the sole place that 64,000 Sudanese were allowed to live.

Similarly, empirical facts in Tanzania seem to undermine a public fatigue explanation and the explanation that the Cold War or Apartheid changed policy. At first glance, the fact that the Mozambican civil war preceded the Burundian crisis explains the difference in policy. Actually, Tanzania consistently changed encampment policy from independence through the 1990s. For example, the Mozambican civil war was not the first Mozambican refugee crisis in Tanzania. Earlier during the revolution, when Tanzania supported FRELIMO’s fight against Portugal, refugees came to Tanzania. Tanzania chose to put the Mozambican refugees in camps, some of which had easy access to the border. On the other side, well into the late 1990s a population of Congolese refugees lived dispersed in Kigoma and around Lake Tanganyika. Even while Burundians were being rounded up in this area, Congolese were mostly ignored.
6 Conclusion

This article examines reasons that refugee-receiving countries often select border camps to deal with refugee crises. I argue that on domestic grounds alone, border refugee camps are not always optimal. Despite efforts to set an international norm of keeping refugee camps away from the border, border refugee camps persist. Two critical insights underpin an explanation for border refugee camps. First, asylum countries are considering not only their domestic concerns, but also their foreign policy aims. Second, a border refugee camp helps a rebel group to fight more efficiently by making recruitment easier. As such, a border refugee camp constitutes an intervention in a neighboring country’s civil war.

The formal analysis explains more puzzling features of Tanzania’s and Kenya’s actions. Kenya was more lax in their enforcement of the encampment policy for Somalis in order to undermine the efficiency provided to Somali rebels, while being very strict with the Sudanese in order to bolster the efficiency provided to the SPLA. Furthermore, Tanzania’s insistence on placing refugee camps so close to the border was driven by the opportunity to enhance the position of the Burundian rebel groups. Setting up the border camps may have been aimed at shifting the bargaining position of the rebels and leveraging the possibility of a negotiated settlement.

While developed in East Africa, the theory has implications that do generalize. There are some clear limitations, though. The model relies on the notion that the location of the refugee settlements is the choice of the asylum country. While the UNHCR has made recommendations about camp locations and size parameters, Tanzania and Kenya made the camp location and size part of their prerogative. This appears similar in places in Southeast Asia, but by no means must be a worldwide phenomenon. Furthermore, while Tanzania and Kenya are sufficiently large countries that allocation of land is a feasible choice, in smaller, more densely populated countries, choosing land may be impossible. Also, the theory assumes that refugees are fleeing a civil war with a rebel group that fights using large groups of people and small arms. This is the kind of civil war that is typically fought in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as other places in the world. However, the logic of the refugee camp improving efficiency may carry less well to rebel groups that employ different
fighting technology—urban terrorism or large weapons systems. Furthermore, refugees flee other kinds of violence besides civil wars.

The theory developed in the article has key policy implications of interest to the international aid community. Most stark, when the international community funds the refugee policy of an asylum country that is adjacent to the civil war, they are funding a policy with strategic implications for the war. By funding a refugee-receiving country’s border camps, donors are also funding the asylum country’s foreign policy objectives, which may not be aligned with a humanitarian agency’s.

On the other hand, border refugee camps in some cases, like the Somali case in Kenya, may be driven by domestic politics. In these cases, the international community can more easily put their funds to work limiting the extent to which the border refugee camp makes rebels efficient. This may include sponsoring children’s schooling away from the camp, expanding camps away from the border, and implementing programming to support refugees who seek economic opportunities far from the camps, as Somalis do in Nairobi.

The theory may also have implications for two other dynamics in forced displacement. Internally Displaced Persons camps that are located in or that abut rebel-controlled territory can function similarly to border refugee camps. Humanitarian organizations may need to devise policy that degrades the quality of recruits or the technology of the IDP camp more generally. Encouraging schooling or working abroad are options, as is maintaining low density camps away from rebel controlled territory. Finally, as asylum seekers move well beyond their region of origin, to Europe and beyond, civil war has broader transnational, even global, implications. The reasons asylum seekers travel so much further from home demands more research. This article provides a context for why asylum seekers may need to flee their country of origin and their region of origin, as well.
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