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Measuring National Refugee Policies: Recent Trends and Implications for Future Development*

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Refugee issues are among the most imminent and important problems facing modern societies. This review essay systematically reviews recent social scientific literature that quantitatively measures national refugee policies. In so doing, we compare several recent and prominent cross-national data sets on this topic, namely those constructed by de Haas, Natter, and Vezzoli (2015), Hatton (2016), Helbling *et al.* (2017), Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2022), and Savun (2022). We point to both the advantages and disadvantages of the respective data sets while providing suggestions on how to practically apply them and how to merge their scopes and perspectives in a more comprehensive manner in order to better fit researchers' and practitioners' scopes of interest. We conclude this article by suggesting future research agendas by highlighting the significance and feasibility of a compilation of a more extensive data set based on the existing ones.

KEYWORDS: national refugee policies, cross-national analyses, data sets political science

1. Introduction

Why do countries exhibit diverse policies toward refugees? The global scale of forced displacement and refugees has reached a record high. At the end of 2020, Syria most heavily contributed to this global trend (6.7 million), followed by Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar, while the recent political crisis in Venezuela created a displacement of 3.9 million people (UNHCR 2021). Furthermore, the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 produced more than 3 million Ukrainian refugees over a period of three weeks (as of 15 March 2022), the largest volume of refugees at the fastest pace in Europe since the end of WWII. The international community has explored durable solutions to coordinately ameliorate this unfortunate reality but without much tangible success. Although the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is dedicated to issues on displaced persons and seeks multilateral efforts in assisting and protecting displaced people, it faces a classic collective action problem emerging from its lack of enforcement mechanisms for controlling self-interested sovereign countries. Despite the prevalence of international refugee and human rights laws regulating countries (e.g., the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol), the impact of these rules is, after all, hinged upon each signatory country's willingness to implement them domestically.

In this article, we survey the plethora of research on national refugee and asylum policies. In so doing, we aim to introduce recent efforts made by scholars to quantitatively understand countries' adoptions of divergent policy tools in handling refugees. We regard a refugee as "anyone who flees a country of origin or residence for fear of politically motivated harm" (Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006: p. 341). We adopt this broad definition, following the UNHCR's motivations, while distinguishing individuals with more specified status whenever needed.[1] Based on this definition, we aim to elaborate conceptual and operational agreements and disagreements across newly emerging data sets measuring national refugee policies, particularly those by de Haas, Natter, and Vezzoli (2015), Hatton (2016), Helbling *et al.* (2017), Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2021a,b), and Savun (2021). This comparison across the data sets demonstrates the necessity to generate a more comprehensive data set and, thus, functions as a stepping stone toward accomplishing this goal. We also aim to provide practical suggestions on how these extant data sets can be applied to serve researchers' interests until such a comprehensive one becomes available.

The rest of this essay is organized into three sections. Immediately below, we assess the emergence of the field devoted to understanding refugee policies by illustrating its difference from general migration policies. This section

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[1]Since 2007, the UNHCR counts refugees as all individuals residing in a third country (1) who enjoy formally recognized refugee status, (2) who have been granted complementary and temporary forms of protection, or (3) who are in a refugee-like situation, referring to groups of persons outside their origin country or territory, facing protection risks similar to those of refugees without formal refugee status (UNHCR 2015).

aims to demonstrate how this new field has established its concept of refugee policies. Next, we selectively review recent empirical investigations by identifying their constructs, measurements, and data collection and coding methods in generating new data on refugee policies. After closely comparing these data sets, we conclude by suggesting future research agendas for empirically understanding host countries' refugee policies with a broader temporal and geographic scope. We argue that, although unraveling refugee policies is by no means new, recent quantitative analyses engage in more diverse and innovative ways. Nevertheless, the literature displays both innovations and pitfalls, partly as a result of conceptual disagreements on what constitutes refugee policies and their implications.

2. Conceptualization

Prior to comparing and assessing data sets on refugee policies, we first shed light on how refugee policies have been conceptualized in the literature. In the simplest terms, national refugee policies can be defined as those imposed by individual countries to control or manage refugees. Similar to migration policies in general, refugee policies can be further disaggregated based on multiple dimensions. One of the most common classifications hinge on whether the policies regulate the volume of inflows of people (policies on entry) or their lives after they enter the host territory (policies on rights) (Ruhs 2013; Ruhs and Martin 2008). The latter policies tend to be further elaborated depending on the researcher's perceptions of what constitutes refugee rights, such as access to education or healthcare (e.g., Hatton 2009; Savun 2021). Additional yet popularly implemented concepts in understanding refugee policies can include factors such as duration (temporal versus resettlement) (e.g., Gibney 2004; Zucker and Zucker 1989), mode of residence (social cohabitation or refugee camps) (e.g., Horst 2006; Jansen 2008), or country of origin (caps based on certain nationalities or ethnicities) (e.g., Helbling *et al.* 2017).

The traditional approach in comparing national refugee policies followed the trend of migration studies, which divided migration policies between the Global North and Global South. In the refugee context, the North can be seen to comprise industrialized third-country asylum states, which are generally outside refugees' regions of origin, while the South comprises the refugee-producing, transit, or first-asylum host states within the refugees' regions of origin (Betts 2008). The Southern states generally tend to be in closer proximity to conflict areas or human rights-abusing regimes and therefore receive the overwhelming majority of the world's refugees (Betts 2008; Moore and Shellman 2007), while the Northern states, mostly Western democracies, are reluctant to accept refugees under democratic constraints (Higashijima and Woo 2020). Thus, the migration policies of the North tend to focus more on legal migrants with family ties to the receiving country or individuals satisfying labor market demands. For these countries, national migration policies are interpreted as serving the interests of their own population, either specific individuals such as the sponsors of those coming through family reunification or the wider economy as in the case of skill-selective labor migration (Hatton 2020). Naturally, they tend to perceive that an acceptance of refugees mainly serves the displaced persons' interest, such as escaping persecution, rather than of any direct benefit to the host society or certain members in it.

In other words, the migration policies in the North are more heavily geared toward legal migrants while halting refugees via border controls and extraterritorial influence. In so doing, they contain humanitarian crises to neighboring countries in order to keep refugees from reaching their borders while buck-passing responsibilities to the South (Aleinikoff 1995; Betts 2008).[2] Meanwhile, there are mixed findings on refugee policies in the South. The main concern arises in regard to whether these countries admit refugees either because of their inevitability due to geographical proximity (Melander and Öberg 2007; Schmeidl 1997), altruism arising from compassion due to similar experiences and cultural or ethnic ties (Moore and Shellman 2004; Neumayer 2004; Rüegger and Bohnet 2018), or willingness due to self-interested motivations, such as financial or material support from the international community (Bermeo and Leblang 2015; FitzGerald 2019; Loescher 1993).

In essence, refugee policies possess multidimensional features and tend to significantly vary across countries or time within a single country. Consequently, scholars have questioned why and how countries implement different approaches on refugees by relying on various conceptualizations. These differences in turn further lead to dissimilar operationalizations and measurements of the policies. Even in migration literature in general, it is still considered a tremendous challenge to empirically measure openness or restrictiveness of migration policies. Countries enact diverse types of migration policies, and thus, numerous problems arise in directly comparing one to another. Moreover, scholars have not achieved much consensus on how to measure policies due to conceptual disagreements on the definition of these policies as well as different focuses and scopes on the topic.

Nonetheless, scholars have rigorously contemplated the issue and derived various data sets, cross-nationally measuring migration policies across time. For instance, policies on migrant entry and movement are well tracked by Peters (2015, 2017). Policies on migrant rights and integration are operationalized and coded in data sets such as the

[2]However, the North cannot perfectly halt the inflow of refugees as a greater portion of displaced people cross borders illegally. In fact, despite the terminological and legal distinctions between "asylum-seekers," "refugees," "forced migrants," "economic migrants," and "irregular migrants," these statuses are closely interlinked, and the status of individuals may change over time or simultaneously fit into two or more of these categories (Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Mainwaring and Brigden 2016). This feature adds another uniqueness to refugees.

Legal Obstacles to the Integration of Immigrants (LOI) index (Waldrauch and Hofinger 1997), Indicators of Citizenship Rights for Immigrants (ICRI) data set (Koopmans and Michalowski 2017), and Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) (Solano and Huddleston 2020). The ongoing efforts are paid for by projects such as the International Migration Policy and Law Analysis (IMPALA) database (Beine *et al.* 2016), which considers refugee and asylum policies as well. Recently, scholars have attempted to create cross-national data sets measuring refugee policies. The next section discusses this trend in more detail.

3. Measurement and Data Sets

While there has been an increased effort to measure general migration policies with tangible success and advancement, refugee (and asylum) policies have been considered more difficult to measure. In addition to the conceptual and methodological obstacles, features inherent to refugees (e.g., multiple movements and ambiguous statuses) compound the issue, and thus many scholars have instead relied on the UNHCR data set on countries' refugee recognition rate (based on acceptance and rejection of refugee applications) as a proxy to determine countries' attitudes toward refugees (Hatton 2009). While these numbers indicate countries' overall liberal or closed stances toward the phenomenon, they do not fully reflect exactly how these countries regulate incoming or resident refugees. Despite the lack of a comprehensive data set measuring refugee policies across time and country, scholars have recently made several important attempts. This section introduces the most comprehensive and updated data sets among them.

3.1 de Haas, Natter, and Vezzoli (2015) and Hatton (2016)

The International Migration Institute (IMI) at the University of Oxford maintains a number of important migration databases. Among them, the Determinants of International Migration (DEMIG) POLICY data (de Haas, Natter, and Vezzoli 2015) records specific migration policy changes along with country and year of enactment across 45 countries between 1945 and 2013, capturing more than 6,500 policy changes in total.

The unit of analysis in the IMI is policy records, implying that there may be one policy record for one country for a given year, or there may be multiple policy records for the country for another year. In addition to policy records, the data set notes whether each policy was restrictive (+1) or liberal (−1) within the existing legal system. Every policy change is also coded according to the magnitude of the policy shift (major, mid-level, minor, or fine-tuning), policy area (border control, legal entry, integration, exit), policy tool (recruitment agreements, work permit, expulsion, quota, regularization, resettlement, carrier sanctions, etc.), and migrant origin (all foreign nationalities, EU citizens, specific nationalities, etc.) (DEMIG 2015). Although its scope is migrants in general, the data set captures some significant aspects about cross-national refugee policies by further distinguishing migration policies based on migrant target (e.g., low- and high-skilled workers, family members, refugees, irregular migrants, students, etc.).[3]

In fact, the DEMIG POLICY database was inspired by the approaches adopted by Mayda and Patel (2005)[4] and Hatton (2009), characterized by two concepts: policy change and policy restrictiveness. Particularly in regard to policies on refugees and asylum seekers, instead of seeking to comprehensively collect all policy changes, Hatton (updated version: 2016) focuses on major changes[5] between 1997 and 2012. Specifically, based on diverse sources such as the OECD's annual publications (International Migration Outlook: formerly, Trends in International Migration), the country reports of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (2006), and the country reports of the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Hatton developed indices that are divided into three themes, each consisting of five components: welfare (detention, deportation, employment, access to benefits, family reunification), access to territory (visa requirements, border controls, penalties for trafficking, carrier liability, offshore applications), and processing (definition of a refugee, manifestly unfounded applications, expedited processing, subsidiary status, appeals). He first separately rates fifteen specific components and then aggregates these values for each theme. The total policy index is composed based on the summation of the values of these three themes.

Although these two data sets were established based on the same conceptualization of policies, there are noticeable differences. First, the scopes (coverage of both country and period) are different. While the DEMIG data set covers more general information on policy change between 1945 (for some countries, even earlier years) and 2013, Hatton covers more extensive and detailed information on the nature of major changes between 1997 and 2012.[6] Moreover, while Hatton focuses on 19 OECD countries, the DEMIG data set does so for 23 among the initial 45 countries.[7]

[3]Although the data set records refugee-related policies under the target group of "Refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable people" and therefore, policies targeting other activities, such as human trafficking and illegal smuggling, can also be categorized together, it is relatively easy to select refugee-related policies as the data set includes a specific explanation for each policy enactment.

[4]The data set compiled and used by Mayda and Patel (2005) and Mayda (2010) consider migration policy enactments across fourteen OECD countries over the period between 1980 and 2000, and hence, do not discuss on refugee or asylum policies. Nevertheless, this data set has significantly contributed to the international migration literature. For instance, it has been updated by Ortega and Peri (2009, 2013), who expanded the time scope to provide coverage up to 2005.

[5]In other words, "a policy change [likely] to affect a significant proportion of asylum seekers and [which] substantially alters access to asylum procedures, or the likelihood of a successful claim, or the material welfare of asylum seekers" (Hatton 2009: 211).

[6]For instance, in the DEMIG data set, some countries' refugee policies are recorded since 1920 but with interruptions (e.g., the next data point does not appear until 1947).

Second, because Hatton's research interest is the flow of refugees to Western countries, his data set takes a dyadic form where he investigates the effects of asylum policies of destination countries on the movement of refugees from more than 50 developing countries. Meanwhile, the DEMIG POLICY data set is concerned with policy changes in the involved countries, and thus, only marks policy changes across target countries. Third, and most importantly, Hatton collects policy changes across the aforementioned three dimensions, which are compiled based on the 15 sub-components. The DEMIG Policy data set instead records more ambiguous events. In the case of Australia, for instance, the DEMIG records events such as "Official publication of a report (action plan) on asylum and irregular entries." These events are not recorded in Hatton's data set because they are uncertain in their effects.

Nonetheless, because they conceptualize and operationalize policies in the same fashion, focusing on policy change and restrictiveness, these two data sets are invaluably helpful in generating a more comprehensive index. Depending on the researcher's research interest, one could set a starting year (0) as baseline for measurement. Combining these two data sets would enable migration scholars to more expansively compare refugee policies by including more countries while they can apply the same standards to countries that are not included in either data set, such as those in East Asia (e.g., South Korea), Eastern Europe (e.g., Estonia, Latvia, the Slovak Republic, and Slovenia), and Latin America (e.g., Chile and Mexico). These efforts will allow us to depart from a Europe- and US-centric perception of destination countries while more deeply engaging into regional differences in handling refugees.

3.2 Helbling *et al.* (2017)

The Immigration Policies in Comparison (IMPIC) project, led by Helbling *et al.* (2017), is another data set that measures immigration policies across 33 OECD countries for the period 1980–2010. Similar to the DEMIG Policy data set, this data set measures the restrictiveness (or liberalization) of immigration policies based on legal regulations, with policies related to refugees and asylum-seekers recorded as part of the data set.

The IMPIC project conceptualizes immigration policies based on several classifications. The first classification is policy targets, which is also linked to motivations behind the policies: labor migration (economic interests), family reunification (social interests), refugees and asylum seekers (humanitarian interests), and co-ethnic migrants (cultural and historical interests). The project notes that even within the same category, different entry routes exist, and they are likely to impact the conditions, eligibility criteria, rights, and status of respective migrant groups (Helbling *et al.* 2017). Thus, these four migrant types are further differentiated into sub-types: by type of work permit (labor migrants), whether sponsors are third country nationals or citizens of the host society (family reunification), whether migrants are asylum seekers, recognized refugees, or people with humanitarian/subsidiary protection (refugees and asylum seekers), and whether preferential treatment exists, and if so, how do they differ depending on co-ethnicity (co-ethnic migrants).

The second classification then differentiates migration policies based on a two-dimensional scheme: *modus operandi* and *locus operandi* (Bjerre *et al.* 2016). The former dimension aims to evaluate how laws are operated while the latter dimension investigate where these laws are operated. Specifically, *modus operandi* distinguishes laws into regulations and controls. Regulations refer to laws that provide or constrain rights (e.g., necessity to hold a work permit for employment) while controls are monitoring mechanisms that ensure the functioning of the regulations (e.g., sanctions for employing irregular migrants). The second dimension, *locus operandi*, examines whether countries regulate and control immigration at their borders (externally targeted laws) or within their territories (internally targeted laws). The data set further takes into account different types of external and internal regulations, for instance, eligibility requirements and additional requirements to be qualified (conditions) for external regulations, and rules on security of status and associated rights for internal regulations.

All individual items vary between 0 (open) and 1 (restrictive) (Bjerre *et al.* 2015). Within this range, the IMPIC raw data involves two types of scales: ratios (e.g., degree of restrictiveness of a certain policy) and categories (e.g., necessity of a language test). In order to aggregate individual items, it fixes the minimum and maximum at the same value for all items while applying a threshold at the numerical value of 0.5 for the presence of a legal provision (Helbling *et al.* 2017).

For instance, refugee and asylum policies can be clustered into four categories. The first two deal with external regulations. Eligibility concerns items such as the existence of subsidiary/humanitarian protection, nationality-based rules, asylum quotas, safe third country agreements, safe countries of origin adoption, and resettlement agreements while the condition mechanism examines whether there are constraints based on place of application. The remaining two deal with internal regulations. Security of status rules tackle issues such as permit validity, permit renewal, permanent permits, right to appeal, and status when crisis is resolved while rights-associated concerns include free movement, (self)employment, and form of benefits (how and whether cash is transferred). Measurements follow the general rules. For instance, the data on refugees' right to appeal is coded as: 0 if yes, 0.5 if no, and 1 if no asylum policy. In sum, the IMPIC provides valuable data on migration in general and refugees. Due to the focus of the project

[7]Hatton investigates Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic*, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary*, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland*, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The DEMIG Policy data set involves Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland*, France, Germany, Greece*, Iceland*, Ireland, Italy, Japan*, Luxembourg*, the Netherlands, New Zealand*, Norway, Portugal*, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The countries marked with an asterisk are only included in the respective data sets.

on immigration policy, the data is heavily geared toward policies on entry, movement, and status instead of post-entry rights, such as access to education or healthcare.

3.3 Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2021)

Pointing out that most previous migration policy data sets are heavily geared toward Western countries, the Developing World Refugee and Asylum Policy (DWRAP) data set by Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2021a,b) compiles national laws on forcibly displaced populations in a sample of 92 developing countries from Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia for the period between 1951 and 2017. In total, it is based on 229 national refugee policies, which are listed in the appendix provided by Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2021a). The unit of analysis is policy for a given country and year, yielding a total of 4,641 observations.

The authors conceptualize refugee and asylum policy as a combination of policy provisions regulating five core dimensions: access, services, livelihoods, movement, and participation. They categorize the five policy dimensions into 14 policy strands, including: *access*: status security, control measures, family unity, legal recourse; *services*: education, aid, healthcare; *livelihood*: property, land, employment; *movement*: settlement policy, document access; and *participation*: citizenship, political rights. By further disaggregating these strands, they rely on a total of 54 specific provisions across these strands (refer to the Appendix). For instance, within the first policy dimension, *access*, the first specific provision ("accept asylum-seekers") records whether the national law or policy specifies a process for granting subsidiary or humanitarian protection or relates to such a process already defined (coded as 0 if no and 1 if yes). Meanwhile, the third provision ("cessation categories") records whether the country reserves the right to cease status recognition for certain individuals. For this type of category, data is coded as 0 if yes to any individual; 1 if yes to individuals who fit cessation categories beyond those outlined in the 1951 Convention; 2 if no, indicating that individuals may only have their status ceased for reasons outlined in the 1951 Convention; and 3 if no, indicating that individuals may not have their status ceased for any reason.

As can be observed from the specific examples above, the 54 provisions are coded either dichotomously or into three to four categories. Detailed descriptions for each provision can be found in the appendix provided by Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2021a). Following Anderson (2008)'s intuition, they use an aggregation procedure based on inverse covariance-weighting (ICW) to derive comprehensive indices across countries for a given year. They use a series of summary indices to aggregate from individual policy provisions to policy strands, policy strands to policy dimensions, and eventually policy dimensions to unified policy scores.[8] As can be expected from the coding of each provision, the higher (lower) indices indicate more liberal (restrictive) refugee policies.

Using the DWRAP data set, Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2021a) investigate the conditions under which host countries change their policies toward forcibly displaced persons. They find that neighboring countries' experience of civil conflicts become the most significant impetus for host countries to change their refugee policies. In particular, their cross-country analysis demonstrates that states tend to pursue liberalization of refugee policies when their political elites have co-ethnics who are discriminated against in neighboring countries. In another study using the same data set, Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2021b) explore the relationship between refugee policy liberalization and forced migration. They find evidence that liberal *de jure* refugee policies tend to attract forced migration, especially when information openness is high in origin countries and co-ethnic networks are available in host countries.

The DWRAP data set significantly improved our understanding of countries' attitudes toward refugees among developing countries, which had been treated as a black box where the majority of refugees voluntarily or inevitably reside or resettle. Furthermore, because it gathers and compares data based on objective criteria deduced from policy dimensions and provisions, its data gathering procedure and compilation of scores are extremely transparent and replicable, implying an optimistic plausibility of implementing them to new countries.

3.4 Savun (2021)

While the aforementioned data sets consider both policies on entry and rights as components of refugee policies, Savun (2021) pays particular attention to the integration rights of refugees by focusing on five policy areas: freedom of movement, right to work, right to own property, right to own land, and right to education across all the countries between 1996 and 2015. She codes each policy ranging between 0 and 5: 0 denoting a country providing none of the rights, and 5 denoting a country providing all five rights in a given year.[9]

Using this data set, Savun (2021) empirically investigates the effects of refugees' rights on the onset of civil conflict. By providing refugees with economic and social rights, refugees become less incentivized to join or support violence against host states. Conducting a cross-national statistical analysis, she finds that refugee rights are negatively associated with civil conflict onsets. In addition to civil conflict, she also explores the relationship between refugees' rights and political violence against refugees by using the Political and Societal Violence by and against Refugees

[8]Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2021a,b) also recompose the indices based on both equal weighting (EW) and principal component analysis (CPA) and find that these alternative methods provide the similar results.

[9]In her actual empirical analysis, she dichotomized these measures: 1 if a host state grants at least four out of five integration rights (high refugee rights) and 0 if otherwise (low refugee rights).

Table 1. A comparison of available data sets on refugees.

Data	Country	Year	Target	Policy Dimension
IMI (2015)	23 developed countries	1945–2013	Migrants	3 dimensions: 1) policy area (border control, legal entry, integration, exit), 2) policy tool (recruitment agreements, work permit, expulsion quota, regularization, resettlement, carrier sanctions), 3) migrant origin targeted (all foreign nationalities, EU citizens, specific nationalities)
Hatton (2016)	19 OECD countries	1997–2012	Refugees	3 dimensions: 1) welfare (detention, deportation, employment, access to benefits, family reunification), 2) access to territory (visa requirements, border controls, penalties for trafficking, carrier liability, offshore applications), 3) processing (definition of refugees, manifestly unfounded applications, speeding up of processing, subsidiary status, appeal)
IMPIC (2017)	33 OECD countries	1980–2010	Migrants	4 dimensions: 1) eligibility (external regulations), 2) conditions (external regulations), 3) security of status (internal regulations), 4) rights associated (internal regulations)
DWRAP (2021)	92 developing countries	1951–2017	Refugees	5 dimensions: 1) access (the ease of entrance and security of status), 2) services (provision of public services and welfare), 3) livelihoods (the ability to work and own property), 4) movement (encampment policies), 5) participation (citizenship and political rights)
Savun (2021)	192 countries	1996–2015	Refugees	5 items: 1) freedom of movement, 2) right to work, 3) right to own property, 4) right to own land, 5) right to education

(POSVAR) data set (Gineste and Savun 2019). While granting those rights to refugees might increase grievances among the locals, it may also provide economic benefits and reduce health risks associated with warehousing refugees in camps for local communities. She shows empirical evidence in support of the latter, finding that refugee rights are negatively associated with political violence against refugees.

Although the data set examines a relatively narrow scope of refugee rights compared to previously introduced ones, it is noteworthy that it engages in a cross-national comparison by investigating all 192 countries, both developed and developing, over 20 years. By focusing on key post-entry rights, this comprehensive country coverage enables researchers to draw a larger picture with uniform conceptualization and operationalization.

4. Comparisons and Limitations

Table 1 summarizes key features across the five data sets related to national refugee policies. Based on this table, this section compares these data sets by parsing out differences and similarities.

The most conspicuous yet critical difference among these data sets rests on their scopes in terms of policy dimensions, time, and countries. At a glance, the noticeable trend is that the extensiveness of policy dimensions shrinks as the data enlarges its geographic coverage. While Savun's data covers all countries (192 countries), surpassing the rest of the data sets, it constrains its scope by solely focusing on five specific refugee rights. Meanwhile, despite its limited country selection compared to the Savun's, the DWRAP data set by Blair, Grossman, and Weinsten exhibits the most expansive coverage of policy dimensions.

In a more detailed comparison, even within the data sets by the IMI and Hatton, which both focus on policy changes, their data structures critically diverge due to their different units of analysis (policy by IMI and country by Hatton) and targets (migrants by IMI and asylum seekers by Hatton). Thus, there is a mismatch between the policy dimensions they have adopted. Most notably, while Hatton exclusively disaggregates refugee policies into three categories (access, processing, and welfare) based on fifteen indicators, the IMI lumps these dimensions together into one dimension, labeled as "policy area." Alternatively, the IMI adds two additional dimensions: "policy tool," recording a specific description of what kind of measure was taken, and "policy target," clarifying which migrant group the policy was oriented toward. Due to these different approaches, it is problematic to directly merge these two data sets. As a practical example, according to Hatton's data set, Australia experienced policy shifts in five years (2000, 2001, 2002, 2008, and 2009) between 1997 and 2012. In the same time period, however, the IMI only records two years (2000 and 2008) in which major policy change targeting refugees and asylum seekers occurred.[10] This may be due to their disagreements on which policies constitute ones that have brought about *major* changes. Furthermore, the IMI classifies policies based on whether they were targeted toward, for example, all migrants, irregular migrants, migrant workers, or refugees. This practice implies that policies categorized for non-refugee targets (e.g., all migrants) may be, in fact, relevant to refugees and asylum seekers.

Additionally, while both the IMI and Hatton as well as the IMPIC data sets investigate refugee policies in developed countries, the DWRAP data set by Blair, Grossman, and Weinsten examines policies in developing countries to explore variations in refugee policies in the South. This geographic imbalance indicates that by relying on any one of these data sets, researchers cannot derive results or interpretations across developed and developing countries under the unified

[10]The IMI classifies policy change into four levels: fine-tuning, minor change, mid-level change, and major change. If we include both policies with major and mid-level changes, there are five important years (1999, 2000, 2001, 2008, 2012) for policy shifts but these do not align with Hatton's data. Alternatively, if we disregard the level of changes and include all policy changes, there appears to be seven years (1999, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2012) in which policy change took place.

framework. This is a very pertinent concern because some explanatory variables affecting national refugee policies, such as a country's political regime, exhibit much variation between developed countries (mostly democracies) and developing countries (mostly mixed regimes or autocracies).[11] In such cases, clustering countries into a simple dichotomy of developed or developing countries introduces serious selection biases as well as systemic errors and spurious correlations. In order to avoid this problem, Savun's data set can be instead applied considering its global coverage; however, its limited policy scope may be inadequate for some research interests while also leading to the similar methodological threats.

Meanwhile, these data sets reveal similar limitations. Most notably, they code refugee policies and refugee rights mainly by referring to the written refugee laws in each country. As these are official documents, they provide an objective baseline in uniformly coding national policies in a cross-nationally comparable fashion and are surely invaluable since they act as a blueprint in coping with refugee issues. However, it is uncertain whether these *de jure* entitlements of refugee rights exactly correspond with *de facto* treatment of refugees in recipient countries. For instance, migration data sets in general record countries with no tangible migration or refugee policies as zero (hence, exclusion from data analysis) or indicative of "not doing anything" or a laissez-faire stance. However, as Norman (2019) suggests, this stance may not have been driven by a state's indifference, but rather, its way to defer to international organizations and civil society actors to provide basic services to migrants and refugees. As another example, if a country is less democratic, political leaders may find it easier to renege on what they have promised on by law, leading to *de facto* infringement of refugees' rights. Thus, researchers need to remember that there could be possible gaps between nominal entitlement and actual treatment of refugees in receiving countries.

Another commonly faced limitation is that these data sets shed light exclusively on recipient countries' policy responses to incoming refugees, and therefore, do not include a dimension that considers whether there was involvement from the UNHCR for the given policy or year. While it is legitimate to focus on country decisions, we need to bear in mind that international collaboration frequently takes place to deal with refugees. The UNHCR, albeit with limited monetary, human, and organizational resources, has played a significant role in assisting displaced persons in host societies while organizing and coordinating international cooperation for tackling refugee issues globally. Thus, national approaches on refugees, especially when faced with the reality or possibility of a massive refugee inflow, may be hinged upon the UNHCR's intervention. When a country accepts this intervention, it can, to a certain degree depending on circumstances, share its responsibilities with the UNHCR on various aspects, ranging from refugees' accommodation to their final resettlement. In this sense, it is highly likely that a host country which receives assistance from the UNHCR coordinates its refugee policies based on a calculation between which dimensions it needs to be more responsible for and what can be buck-passed to the UNHCR. For instance, a country may open its borders but with limited post-entry rights once it is already aware that the UNHCR will provide assistance on refugees' healthcare and education. Since the UNHCR is the most representative international institution on refugees, its intervention and its effect on domestic refugee policies is extremely salient.

5. Discussions: Immediate and Future Research Directions

This essay has reviewed burgeoning cross-national research on refugee policies by focusing on their constructs, measurements and data collection and coding procedures. These previous studies have made substantial contributions in advancing our understanding on the manners in which recipient governments handle incoming displaced persons through the provisions of, or constraints on, various rights and treatments as refugees. By comparing the most refined and recent data sets, we have derived disagreements among them as well as common challenges they face. This discussion not only highlights the necessity to realize a more comprehensive data set as the next step in the field of refugee studies but also demands scrutiny on how these extant data sets can be used more efficiently until such a comprehensive one becomes realized. This section aims to provide several potential solutions for the both immediate and future concerns.

As for the immediate remedy, the pertinent issue is scope imbalance across the data sets that makes it difficult to comprehensively compare policies across both developed and developing countries. The additional difficulty emerges as the data sets by the IMI and Hatton measure policy changes while the unit of analysis of the DWRAP data set is country. However, because of the latter's clear and systematic conceptualization and operationalization, it can take various forms to meet scholars' research interests. For instance, considering that asylum and refugee policy reforms rarely take place, Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2021a) measure policy change based by reconfiguring their original data set. They define an instance of policy reform as a one standard deviation change in a country's policy score from year $t-1$ to year t. Thus, in this converted data set, the approach is binary depending on whether there was a policy reform in a country in a given year (1) or not (0). Using this codification, they utilize three main dichotomous variables:

[11] Higashijima and Woo (2020) demonstrate that refugees tend to be clustered into mixed regimes which have characteristics of both autocracies and democracies.

whether there was a policy change (*change*), and whether the change was positive (*liberalization*: increased standard deviation) or negative (*restriction*: decreased standard deviation) compared to the previous year.[12] In this sense, the DWRAP data set is also comparable to ones by the IMI or Hatton, which also stress policy changes. In essence, the approach introduced by Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2021a) is promising when combined with other data sets on developed countries. However, because these data sets apply different constructs and measurements, researchers are advised to narrowly select dimensions of policies to ensure both data sets are combined in a consistent manner.

However, this immediate solution is far from being complete. Even the costs of combining only a few specific policies is tremendous. This current circumstance leads us to scrutinize how we can possibly realize a comprehensive data set with expansive coverage on policy, country, and year. Again, we suggest to begin with the DWRAP data set due to two advantages by doing so. First, DWRAP's operationalization of refugee policies is extremely detailed and expansive while its coding schemes are systematic and consistent. Second, in the data-gathering process, it is usually countries in the South that are lacking important information due to reasons such as political censorship and outbreak of conflict or war. By contrast, countries in the North, particularly OECD members, tend to publicly provide ample fine-grained information in both written format (e.g., actual charters of refugee laws, individual country reports, OECD annual reports) and raw data which are readily and publicly available.

That being said, it is also crucial for a comprehensive data set on refugee policies to include a dimension on the role played by the UNHCR during the post-WWII period. For example, one can examine whether and how the UNHCR responded to a refugee crisis by investigating its interaction with and assistance to host countries. The archival office of the UNHCR in Geneva preserves exhaustive amount of resources such as official reports (e.g., Executive Committee Reports) that record the UNHCR's activities to assist host countries, and official letters exchanged with each host country. Moreover, the UNHCR has published a large volume of country reports with various stylized facts on refugee situations in each recipient country and the UNHCR's responses to refugees. Based on these resources, it becomes possible to systematically code the UNHCR's interventions via human coding and textual analysis.

Despite the feasibility of a comprehensive data set, there still exists some challenges inherent in the practice of quantifying written policies. First, as mentioned earlier, researchers should be aware that there may be a gap between what is "written" and what is "done." Of course, the ideal solution would be to construct an additional comprehensive data set on *de facto* provision of refugee rights (e.g., ongoing efforts by the DARA Refugee Response Index). However, this requires new scrutiny on concepts and measurement issues, which are out of the scope of this review essay. Second, large-N studies through codifications of measurements allow researchers to estimate the average effects and associations of variables. However, this generalizability and parsimony are achieved at an expense of contextual nuances and explanatory richness (Gerring 2017; Mahoney and Goertz 2006). A comprehensive data set on refugee policies would certainly enable us to extend our knowledge on causes and consequences of the policies across the globe. However, it would not tell us, for example, whether the countries mark the same policy score because they are identical (George and Bennett 2005). As much as grasping a general pattern is important, understanding country-specific nuances fills drawbacks in large-scale data sets by identifying unique causal paths to outcomes. Thus, constructing a global, comprehensive data set on refugee policies and UNHCR intervention would enable us to better locate each country's responses to refugees, cultivating new intriguing research questions for both quantitative and qualitative case studies as well as identifying important cases to explore in future research.

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[12]Alternatively, to address the concerns over rare policy reforms, Blair, Grossman, and Weinstein (2021b) uses a five-year lagged moving average of the indices.

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