

REFUGEE RENT-SEEKING STRATEGIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

A diverse and rising number of states in the Global South, including Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia, as well as regional groups, use their position as recipient states of refugees to obtain financial benefits.

Their refugee rent-seeking strategies are disseminated within and across regions through three mechanisms: **learning, cooperation, and emulation.**

These three processes are not mutually exclusive and often intertwine.



THE NATIONAL LEVEL LEARNING

State officials learned to use **rhetorical threats** to make their warnings more distinct and effective at extracting aid, describing overwhelming numbers of refugees and emphasising their fears of potential state collapse.

"The glass cannot fit one more drop... we now have 1.2 million refugees."

**Rashid Derbas,
Lebanon's Minister
of Social Affairs (2015)**

"Colombia is on the front lines of one of the most serious humanitarian challenges the Western Hemisphere has seen in the modern era."

**Ivan Duque,
President of Colombia (2020)**

"...sooner or later, I think, the dam is going to burst. We can't do it anymore."

**King Abdullah,
Jordan (2016)**

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An exploratory analysis across three regions: the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and South America.

A multi-method approach was developed that relied on qualitative research focusing on the **analysis of policy documents**, aid packages, public statements by government officials and **80 interviews with policymakers.**

Interviewees were asked about the motivation for different packages of refugee aid, how funding decisions were made, and the major factors in receiving refugee aid.

Finally, **examples of threats** were identified in media reports, leaked memos from WikiLeaks and reports released via Freedom of Information Act requests.



THE REGIONAL LEVEL COOPERATION

States adopted refugee rentierism through international cooperation by **signing tri-partite agreements** to build trust with donors, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration.

"We see the presence of the three parties here today as a call to the rest of the international community to commit more vigorously for viable and sustainable solutions for the victims of a conflict that has lasted too long."

UNHCR, 2013

THE GLOBAL LEVEL EMULATION

Emulation occurs when refugee rentierism becomes an **international norm**. Unlike cooperation, emulation involves rent-seeking that responds to international norms.

For example, in 2016, the UN, the World Bank, and the Islamic Development Bank created the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCF) to provide loans to assist refugees and host countries.

Initiatives like the GCF contribute to normalizing the logic of using refugee populations as leverage for additional aid or loans on favorable terms.



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