

## **Final scientific report on the SNIS funded Research Project "Refugee Flows and Transnational Ethnic Linkages"**

Prof. Lars-Erik Cederman, ETH Zürich  
Prof. Simon Hug, Université de Genève  
Prof. Idean Salehyan, University of North Texas  
Alain Dubois, Université de Genève  
Heidrun Bohnet, Université de Genève (PhD student)  
Seraina Rüegger, ETH Zürich (PhD student)

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### **Overview of past events and current state of research**

After the research project started in March 2010 by which time the two PhD students were hired, several research meetings were held in Zürich and Geneva. While in the first year, we predominantly planned and discussed the organization of the data collections including possible cooperation with UNHCR at these meetings, in the second year, the focus shifted to the presentation and discussion of the research results. In addition, the two PhD students closely collaborated and met several times to coordinate their research efforts. The last general meeting with all project members including Idean Salehyan took place in Zürich in December 2011, where the successful compilation of the data set on the ethnicity of refugees was announced and both PhD students presented their research papers.

The project proposal promised two research papers based on the data collections on refugee flows. Our project has exceeded the original objectives in this regard. A first co-authored research paper particularly focusing on the impact of refugee on the ethnic balance in the country of asylum was presented by the two PhD students at the APSA conference in 2011 (Rüegger and Bohnet 2011). After additional revisions, this paper will be submitted for publication shortly. A second research paper analyzing the relation between refugees and ethnic kin groups in the host country and possible conflict diffusion was presented by Rüegger (2012) at the ASSP/SVPW conference and the ISA conference this spring and will now be submitted to an international journal. Bohnet will present the third research paper about concentrated refugee settlements and conflict at two international conferences this summer, namely the EPSA and IPSA conferences (Bohnet 2012). In addition, a data paper, which is in the process of being completed, presents the first comprehensive data set on the ethnicity of refugees and tests quantitatively whether refugees in fact flee along transnational ethnic linkages (Rüegger and Bohnet 2012). These research papers demonstrate that our promised contribution to the literature on refugees is well under way. Our PhD students successfully completed their research tasks and have made very good progress towards completing their dissertations.

Furthermore, through the Euroscholars program, an American undergraduate student (Natalie Gill, University of Maryland) spent the fall semester 2011 at the University of Geneva and contributed significantly to data collection on refugee camp locations and drafted a paper on "Somali Refugees and Domestic Violence in Dadaab Refugee Camp".

In order to outline more clearly the progress achieved so far, we now turn to the data collection progress, the two dissertation projects and future steps.

## **Data collection progress**

The original project application proposed the creation of two different datasets: the first of these is a global data set that indicates the ethnic composition of refugee movements between two countries and the second data set includes the exact geographic location of refugee settlements.

### *1) Dataset on the Ethnic Composition of Refugees Flows (ECORF)*

The compilation of the first data set on the ethnic composition of refugee flows was completed at the end of 2011. Initially planned to encompass the period from 1990 to present, this data set has been extended to cover the years from 1975, so that we are now able to offer a comparative dataset on the ethnicity of refugees with global coverage, which is of very great value for scientists as well as policy makers (This has been evidenced by numerous requests by scholars wishing access to the data). We obtained data on refugee sending and receiving countries as well as refugee numbers from the UNHCR. The data are collected for all countries that received at least 2000 refugees. As a matter of feasibility and likely marginal impact on asylum and origin country alike we refrained from collecting data for smaller refugee flows. Further, we collected the data for neighboring countries and countries in proximity of each other only. Since approximately 80 percent of the world's refugees reside in neighboring countries, we still provide encompassing coverage. For each country of asylum the three largest ethnic refugee groups within a refugee movement from each country of origin are defined separately, thus, the primary units of analysis in our data set are country-dyad-years. While we initially planned to indicate the exact share of each ethnic group within the refugee flow, this information could only be obtained for approximately 50 ethnic refugee groups. Hence, we included ordinal information on whether an ethnic refugee group is dominant, a majority or a minority within the dyadic movement. Nevertheless, based on this ordinal ranking we were able to estimate the size of the different groups. Descriptive results indicate a trend towards ethnically homogeneous refugee flows, that is in approximately 60 percent of the collected refugee movements one ethnic group constitutes a dominant share within the flow while the remaining 40 percent are composed of a majority with one or two minorities or several minority ethnic refugee groups.

As already mentioned in the intermediate report, the data collection had taken longer than expected, mainly due to the fact that information on the ethnic composition of refugee flows is difficult to obtain, and thus intensive investigation had to be conducted. While we initially expected to obtain information on the ethnic background of refugees from UNHCR, we soon realized that such information is not systematically collected by UNHCR and, although several local UNHCR country offices affirmed us that they register ethnicity, they were often either unable or unwilling to share this information. Therefore, not only the two research assistants but an additional student assistant were busy collecting data for more than a year.

The ethnicity data set will be presented and published by Rügger and Bohnet (2012) in a co-authored data paper with the title "No Undifferentiated Mass: Introducing a Quantitative Data Set on the Ethnic Composition of Refugee Movements". After describing the coding procedure and the summary statistics, the paper proceeds to test with a "push & pull model" the widespread assumption that refugees move along transnational ethnic linkages. The results confirm that many ethnic refugee groups flee to kin groups in neighboring countries suggesting

that sub-national refugee characteristics such as ethnicity are essential in order to understand the direction of refugee movements, their diffusion effect and the refugees' relation to the host community. By putting the focus on the direction of refugee movements, as opposed to the project's general dependent variable "conflict", we intend to attract a much broader audience from the refugee-field. Interest in our data was proven by the many requests for use of our data from other researchers that we received in the course of the project. After having published the data and research papers we will happily share the data.

## *2) Refugee Location Dataset (REFLOC)*

A second dataset on the geographical location of refugee settlements with total refugee population numbers per settlement has been created by Heidrun Bohnet and has been completed in April of this year. The regional coverage encompasses the whole of Africa and covers the time frame from 1999 to 2010. A historical dataset such as this did not exist before. UNHCR provides data for 2010 (most current year) but does not collect any historical data. The establishment and closing date of settlements are recorded to some extent; however, refugee numbers per location are only given for the most recent year. Refugee numbers can be taken from the UNHCR Statistical Yearbooks but are often not compatible with the location dataset of 2010. Therefore, through the process of geo-referencing via ArcGIS, Bohnet collected data on the missing longitudes and latitudes for the refugee settlements that could not be merged. Bohnet used ESRI World Places, as well as an own created locator established through the available 2010 data, to get the missing information. In those cases where UNHCR only provided information on refugee numbers per region (province or administrative unit), the centroid of that region was taken as the reference point. Between 1999 and 2010 around 1100 refugee settlements existed and to some extent still exist. Data before 1999 could not be collected because the UNHCR Statistical Yearbooks only deliver data on refugee numbers per settlement from 1999 on.

With this data collection, we now have the very first dataset that provides the exact geographical location of refugee settlements and their refugee populations (point data). Through it, it is now possible to do analysis on the sub-national level and thus go beyond the view that refugees are settled "in a clump" in one country, but instead that their settlement pattern differs from country to country. These divergent refugee settlement patterns, consequently, can have different effects on the host country which are more closely studied in the dissertation project by Bohnet. This dataset, however, will not be only interesting for the study of conflict researchers, but to all researchers as well as policy-makers interested in the sub-national characteristics of refugees and that want to expand their analysis to a time frame and not just limit it to one year.

In addition to these two main data projects, our project has also contributed to the creation of a third dataset, which covers "transborder ethnic kin" relations and is directly linked to the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset. Idean Salehyan started the coding of this dataset in 2008, and in 2011, the project was completed under the supervision of Seraina Rügger. The data are essential to her dissertation project, but has also been used to study conflict processes unrelated to refugee flows, see Cederman, Gleditsch, Salehyan and Wucherpfennig (forthcoming).

## **PhD Projects**

The two PhD projects that emerged from this research project both account for the mechanisms by which refugee influxes lead to violent conflict. Thus, in accordance with the overall principles

of the project, the dissertations assume that refugees are not only to be seen as passive victims but also as active actors in conflict processes.

While Heidrun Bohnet analyzes the effects of different refugee settlements on conflict outbreak and its intensity, Seraina Rüegger focuses on the diffusion of conflict along transnational ethnic linkages and the role of refugees within this process. Her main argument is that the refugees' relation to the host population and the political power distribution in the country of asylum matter for either direct or indirect conflict spread by refugees. The findings of both PhD students suggest that a disaggregated approach towards refugees is essential in order to understand the mechanisms of refugee-related conflict.

In her dissertation Seraina Rüegger analyzes the problem that refugees are a possible cause of conflict diffusion, especially in connection with the presence of cross-border ethnic ties or rebel groups. The causal mechanisms underlying refugee-related conflict spread are that refugees might disturb the ethnic balance in the host country, diffuse war resources, expand rebel networks or imply a demonstration effect on the host population and put economic pressures on the country of asylum. Analyzing under what circumstances these factors come into action, she argues that refugee movements along transnational ethnic ties play an important role as well as the degree of access to state power of the refugees' ethnic kin group in the receiving country. Because of her research design, she particularly uses the first project data set on the ethnicity of refugees, of which she has organized and led the data collection efforts.

Together with the other PhD student, she presented first results that particularly focus on the mechanism that refugees disturb the ethnic set-up of a country at the American Political Science Association (APSA) conference in Seattle in September 2011 (Rüegger and Bohnet 2011). While this first paper analyzes refugee-related conflict on the country-level in Eurasia and Sub-Saharan Africa, in her second paper, Rüegger focuses on the issue that refugees might affect ethnic kin groups and disturb the ethnic balance with a more disaggregated ethnic group-level approach with global coverage. The paper with the title "Refugees, transnational ethnic linkages and civil conflict" (Rüegger 2012a) has been presented successfully at the Annual Congress of the Swiss Political Science Association (SVPW) in Luzern in February 2012 and the International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Meeting in San Diego in April 2012. As soon as final revisions are completed, she will submit it for possible publication in a peer-reviewed journal. In a third paper, she analyzes the outcome of the Kosovo crisis in all countries that hosted a major amount of Kosovar refugees finding support for the assumption that refugee-related conflict is more likely if the refugees are kin of an aggrieved ethnic group by particularly comparing Albania and Macedonia (Rüegger 2012b). This case study helps to shed light on refugee-related conflict-issues on a more disaggregated micro-level. To gain more in-depth information on refugee experiences, she plans to conduct individual interviews in an upcoming research stay in the region. Finally, in her forth paper, she intends to analyze the mechanism that refugees diffuse war resources and expand rebel networks more precisely by focusing on the "rebel-refugee nexus", that is the relationship between refugees and violent non-state-actors. She argues that, first, both rebels and refugees follow endogenous transnational networks, particularly border-crossing ethnic linkages, which, second, enhance rebel recruitment among refugees because ethnic kinship between rebels and refugees facilitates mobilization.

In summer 2011, Rüegger took part in the ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods of Social Research at the university of Michigan, where she attended a four-week class in maximum-likelihood estimation techniques. This summer, she will attend a course in "Advanced Quantitative Data Analysis" at the Essex Summer School in Social Science Data Analysis.

Having profound statistical skills is essential for her to conduct in-depth tests of her hypotheses.

Besides working in close collaboration with the other PhD student on the ethnicity of refugees, Heidrun Bohnet's main research focuses on the refugee settlement patterns in Africa and their consequences for the security situation in the host country. She analyses how different concentration levels of refugee settlements and numbers of refugees per settlement within a country and administrative unit affect the likelihood of conflict outbreak between refugees and the local population. Her central argument is that regions (countries or administrative units) with concentrated refugee settlements (those settlements with large refugee population numbers and those clustered together) are more likely to experience conflict than those with dispersed ones. Concentrated refugee settlements facilitate opportunities for interaction and mobilization as well as increase pressures on resources. For that, Bohnet uses mainly the newly established REFLOC dataset.

In the last couple of months, she was extensively involved in the creation of this refugee location dataset with the help and cooperation of Alain Dubois. In January of this year, she also took part in a course on Geoinformatics, taught in part by Alain Dubois, to get the necessary knowledge and geographical background that was needed for the creation of this dataset and will help her for future to do geo-referenced analysis. In June of this year, Bohnet will present her first preliminary results at the EPSA conference in Berlin and at the IPSA conference in Madrid. In this paper, she uses the first-order administrative division as the unit of analysis testing her hypotheses on concentrated refugee settlement patterns.

In the fall of last year, Bohnet, moreover, worked closely together with an American undergraduate, Natalie Gill (participant in the Euroscholars program), who helped in the collection of a third dataset which records refugee-related security events. This dataset will make it possible to look at conflict events at the refugee settlement level. BBC Monitoring reports on refugee-related security events were extracted from LexisNexis for the whole of Africa between the years 1999-2010. In a next step, these reports will be analyzed more closely to construct a conflict event dataset that focuses on refugee related security events such as attacks on camps, ethnic rivalries and resource competition between refugees and the local population. Bohnet took part in a content analysis workshop to this end and learned to use several qualitative and quantitative text analysis programs such as NVivo which will be used for the content analysis.

Bohnet will, furthermore, take part in the Summer School at the University of Michigan on Spatial Econometrics. Last summer, she already successfully completed a four weeks course on Logit and Panel models at the ECPR Summer School in Essex.

Heidrun Bohnet, in addition, was in Nairobi last year to gather information about the refugee settlement patterns and situation there and plans to leave for a longer period this year to Ethiopia and work there more closely with UNHCR and other relevant refugee agencies to foster the exchange between practitioners and academics. This will also help her to give a more profound picture of the security situation in the Horn of Africa which is the regional focal point of her dissertation.

### **Future steps**

A possible workshop with UNHCR is envisaged if funding is available to present the two datasets that have been collected during the projects and to strengthen cooperation. In addition,

all project members would be able to meet again and exchange with other interested researchers their results to advance the study on refugee related security concerns.

Furthermore, the finishing of the two PhD projects is financed by a follow-up research project "Forced migration, environmental risks, and conflict" (funded by the AXA Research Fund in association with Prof. Clionadh Raleigh, Trinity College and Prof. Idean Salehyan, University of North Texas), and funds of ETH Zürich. The focus in the new research project is on environment-induced migration and internal displaced persons (IDPs). The idea is to investigate how these different forms of forced migration might lead to conflict to be able to identify all potential risk factors posed by forced migration, be it because of environmental reasons or conflict.

Finally, the project team plans to publish the data as well as the findings made in the research papers in peer-reviewed journals.

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