



UNIVERSITY OF
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REFUGEE
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CENTRE

ANNUAL ELIZABETH COLSON LECTURE 2023

Discrimination and Delegation: Explaining State Responses to Refugees

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What explains state responses to the refugees they receive? Discrimination and Delegation identifies two puzzling patterns: states open their borders to some refugee groups while blocking others (discrimination), and a number of countries have given the UN control of asylum procedures and refugee camps on their territory (delegation). To explain this selective exercise of sovereignty, the book develops a two-part theoretical framework in which policymakers in refugee-receiving countries weigh international and domestic concerns. Internationally, leaders use refugees in order to reassure allies and exert pressure on rivals. Domestically, policymakers have incentives to favor those refugee groups with whom they share an ethnic identity. When these international and domestic incentives conflict, shifting responsibility to the UN allows policymakers to placate both refugee-sending countries and domestic constituencies. The book then carries out a “three-stage, multi-level” research design in which each successive step corroborates and elaborates the findings of the preceding stage. The first stage involves statistical analysis of asylum admissions worldwide. The second stage presents two country case studies: Egypt (a country that is broadly representative of most refugee recipients) and Turkey (an outlier that has limited the geographic application of the Refugee Convention). The third stage zooms in on sub- or within-country dynamics in Kenya (home to one of the largest refugee populations in the world) through content analysis of parliamentary proceedings. Studying state responses to refugees is instructive because it can help explain why states sometimes assert, and at other times cede, their sovereignty in the face of refugee rights.

**DISCRIMINATION
AND DELEGATION**

Explaining
State Responses
to Refugees

LAMIS ELMY ABDELAATY

4-5pm, Wednesday 15 November 2023

Online via Zoom

Full details including registration: www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/colson2023

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