

What Drives Expenditure Allocation in IOs? Problem Pressure, Donor Interests, and Bureaucratic Resource Mobilization in the UNHCR and IOM*

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Abstract

Resources are key to the power of international organizations (IOs) and their bureaucracies. As most IOs cannot rely only on assessed state contributions, the overall availability of resources ultimately depends on IO bureaucracies' ability to mobilize voluntary funding. There is however little knowledge about what drives the allocation of these resources. Does resourcing reflect global and country-level needs or is resource allocation rather driven by donor state interest? Focusing on the resourcing of refugee and forced migration policy in the United Nations system, we present an original dataset including both donor contributions and country-level expenditures for the two lead agencies responsible for these issues: UNHCR and IOM. We assess the extent to which expenditures in both agencies reflect shifts in the distribution of the global refugee population. In addition, we we assess donor influence over expenditures, measured by an influence-weighted interest score (IWIS), where the share of voluntary contributions of donor states proxy for influence, and a donor's interest in a given recipient is measured either using geographical distance (IWIS-G) or aid flows (IWIS-A) between donor and recipient. We show that the UNHCR is highly reponsive to shifts in refugee flows, while IOM is not. Donors, however, influence expenditure allocation in heterogeneous ways, suggesting the need to further unpack the different strategies donors can use to exert their influence at various points in time. It further highlights the need for nuance in interpreting the various available proxies for state interests in the international arena.

1 Introduction

In light of a variety of transnational policy problems that are hard for states to deal with on their own, there is continued demand for international organizations (Keohane, 1982; Keohane and Martin, 1995). These transnational problems range across global policy domains (cf. Stone, 2008; Stone and Ladi, 2015), from climate change and global health policy to international security and global refugee policy. And although some claim that international organizations (IOs) are little more than tools of their member states (Mearsheimer, 1994/1995), others argue that IOs and in particular their bureaucracies (cf. Barnett and Finnemore, 2004; Knill and Bauer, 2016; Bauer, Knill and Eckhard, 2017) have the ability to independently influence global policy making (Busch, 2014; Eckhard and Ege, 2016). Some consider that we should, indeed, conceive of these bureaucracies as “problem-solvers” in world politics (Biermann and Siebenhüner, 2013)—i.e., as exactly those actors most interested and able to address global and transnational policy problems.

One way in which IO bureaucracies gain both autonomy and capacity to address global policy problems is by acquiring various financial and non-financial resources (Ege and Bauer, 2017). Budgeting and resource mobilization are among the tasks frequently delegated, at least in part, by states to IO bureaucracies (Goetz and Patz, 2017; Patz and Goetz, 2017, forthcoming), providing them with means to shape the revenue and expenditures of their respective IOs. However, it is contested in how far access to resources allows IO bureaucracies to autonomously drive problem-solving activities, in line with distinct preferences developed as a result of their mandates (cf. Hall, 2015) or their expertise (cf. Busch and Liese, 2017) and the extent to which these go beyond resource-maximizing behavior (Vaubel, 2006)

The key argument is that states use their financial and non-financial influence to direct IO bureaucracies towards those issues prioritized by states putting their “geopolitical interests” over “human needs” in “the allocation of relief” (Väyrynen, 2001, 148). In the

changing landscape of the resourcing of IOs (Goetz and Patz, 2017; Michaelowa, 2017), this happens in particular by earmarking significant amounts of voluntary contributions to IOs (Graham, 2015, 2017a,b), for instance in the form of multi-bi aid Reinsberg, Michaelowa and Eichenauer (2015) and trust funds (Reinsberg, 2017b,a); by using general funding to influence the staffing of IOs (Thorvaldsdottir, 2016); by only providing funding to IOs with overlapping policy portfolios to national portfolios (Schneider and Tobin, 2016); or by using their financial leverage to influence field-level activities of IO bureaucracies (Eckhard and Dijkstra, N.d.).

Thus, a central question is whether states' undeniable attempts to influence IOs through financing leave room for these IOs and their bureaucracies to address global policy problems or whether IOs are just sophisticated financial transmission mechanisms of major donors' geopolitical interests. In order to answer this question, we study the domain of global refugee and forced migration policy, one of the oldest policy domains in which IOs are involved. It is also a domain where human needs and states' geopolitical interests clearly do not always overlap. This affects, for instance, how donors provide funding to UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency (Roper and Barria, 2010). To address the question raised, we go beyond UNHCR and beyond the most recent time period and present a novel dataset of (state) donor contributions as well as country-level expenditures of two globally-active international agencies in the domain of refugee and migration policy: the UNHCR (1973-2015) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (1999-2016¹). The data permits us to trace whether the geographical distribution of expenditures by these two agencies follows the global distribution of relevant populations of concern, in particular refugees, as a key indicator of a problem-solving orientation of those IOs. It also allows for assessing whether the expenditure patterns are tilted towards

¹At the time of submitting this conference paper, we have just received access to previously unpublished IOM financial reports going back to 1953. This data will be analyzed in future versions of the paper. Please also note that there was a shift in the reporting of country-level expenditures for IOM from 2005 to 2006, shifting from office to overall expenditures. The present paper version does not yet take this into account.

major donor state interests—as measured by an influence-weighted interest score (IWIS) covering donors’ geographical distance (IWIS-G) or aid flows from donors (IWIS-A) to recipient states of UNHCR and IOM expenditures. By analyzing this for both IOM and UNHCR, we can assess whether the agencies react differently to problem pressure and donor interests—something that their common history and different profiles might suggest (cf. [Hall, 2015, 2016](#)).

The following section of the paper presents the theoretical framework of the paper in more detail. In the next section, we introduce UNHCR and IOM, in particular the financial and operational landscape in which they are active. The fourth section presents our dataset and the measures, while the fifth section contains separate statistical analyses for both organizations. Our findings suggest, in line with general expectations, that both organizations are quite different, and that their expenditures at country-level are shaped by different dynamics. UNHCR’s country-level expenditure patterns are clearly and strongly responsive to the global distribution of refugees in recipient countries. No such link can be found for IOM expenditures. At the same time, while donors are found to have some influence, collectively and individually, the patterns are heterogeneous, with considerable differences depending on whether we use geographical distance or aid flows as our influence measure, as well as over time. In the conclusion, we discuss these findings and their implications for the study of IOs in general and the two agencies in particular. We also discuss the implications of our findings for the role that different types of IO bureaucracies may have in resource mobilization and allocation.

2 Problem Pressure, Donor Interests, and Bureaucratic Influence

In this section, we formulate a theoretical framework to explain country-level expenditure patterns of IOs as a key measure of the scale and distribution of IOs' operational activities. This theoretical argument expands the growing literature on the drivers of IO resourcing (Michaelowa, 2017). Following (Olson, 1965; McCubbins, Noll and Weingast, 1989; Lyne, Nielson and Tierney, 2006), our first expectation is that the individual and aggregated preferences of donor states as collective and multiple principals (Graham, 2017*b*; Thorvaldsdottir, 2016) are unlikely to mirror the global distribution of problem pressures in a given policy-domain, unless coordinated through international institutions and their bureaucracies. The second expectation is that—building on findings that IO bureaucracies gain autonomy through their access to financial resources (Ege and Bauer, 2017) and are able to shape both IO budgeting and IO resource mobilization under conditions of complex principal interests (Patz and Goetz, 2017)—IO bureaucracies have preferences of their own and should attempt to influence income and expenditure patterns of their respective IOs. Thus, if states were to allocate resources directly, without coordination from international institutions or IOs and their bureaucracies, or were IOs simply unfiltered transmission mechanisms of states' global distributive preferences, expenditure patterns of IOs should be tilted towards (major) donor interests. Where IO bureaucracies are intervening as autonomous and influential actors in expenditure decision-making, they may tilt expenditure patterns of IOs towards their own preferences.

A key question is whether state influence or bureaucratic influence allows IOs to fulfil their mandates, for example by shifting expenditures in reaction to changing problem pressures in the global policy domains in which they are mandated to act. Depending on the policy issue, this problem pressure may be objectively measurable—such as actual

refugee numbers, actual global temperature increases, or actual sizes of ozone holes, etc.—or not. The perception of the salience, scale, and urgency of the problem may result from IOs’ statutory mandates (Hall, 2015), from IOs’ policy expertise (Haas, 1964; Johnson and Urpelainen, 2014; Busch and Liese, 2017; Littoz-Monnet, 2017), their staff composition (Parizek, 2017) or their field presence. IOs may also face public pressure from national or international governmental actors, NGOs, or media. As a result, the UN Security Council may react differently to a violent conflict than to a natural disaster, while the World Food Programme might want to become involved in both cases as long as food shortages for affected populations are the consequence of conflict or disaster. Measuring problem pressure may require examining factors completely external to an IO to test how expenditure patterns shift when problem pressure shifts; it may be based on measures of public salience of particular problems, in particular if there is good reason to assume that IOs are responsive to salient issues; or by measuring problem pressure perceptions by various key actors inside an IO.

As indicated above, states may try to influence IOs and their expenditures in line with their own interests, which do not necessarily reflect the global distribution of problem pressures or core mandates of IOs. Whereas states may have other ways of influencing IOs and IO expenditure patterns than through donor relations—for example through core IO budgeting procedures (Patz and Goetz, forthcoming)—there is strong reason to believe that states that provide voluntary funding to an IO should have particular interests in influencing expenditure patterns. This builds on studies explaining and demonstrating how states use voluntary contributions—especially earmarked contributions that limit the scope for IO bureaucracies to allocate expenditures—to individually and collectively influence IOs and their bureaucracies outside of established multilateral decision-making bodies (Graham, 2015, 2017a,b; Thorvaldsdottir, 2016). Thus, states do not simply join IOs and then provide membership contributions that are allocated according to collec-

tively formulated priorities. Instead, many international agencies, especially in the UN system, depend heavily or completely on voluntary support that states can provide or withdraw at will (Bayram and Graham, 2017).

Not surprisingly, major donor states, in particular the US, are found to have “a disproportionate influence” over agencies like UNHCR (Loescher, Betts and Milner, 2008, 95). Notably, Roper and Barria (2010, 621), using 1995-2005 donor data from the UN refugee agency, have shown that “[c]ontributions to the UNHCR ... may have little to do with the refugee emergency or humanitarian crisis at hand” and that “states provide larger contributions because of their own domestic and foreign policy priorities that may not be linked to larger humanitarian issues”. Yet, this dependence on donors extends beyond the US as a major power and main contributor to the UN system. Recent studies have cast extensive light on why states provide financing to IOs. Schneider and Tobin (2016), looking at 12 international development organizations and contributions from 22 OECD donor states over almost 40 years, show that donors shift their financial support to those IOs that in their expenditures match their own national development aid portfolios. This suggests that donors not only choose whether and to what extent they support single IOs, but that they also have a choice which IO to support or which specific issue areas they would like to support. It also suggests that states that provide more financing are in a better position to see their interests reflected in IO activities. The higher their share of the overall contribution of a donor to an IO, the more the IO bureaucracy may want to make sure that it keeps this support by responding to major donor interests. Major donors can also simply earmark significant amounts of their contributions, thereby having a direct influence on major expenditures. Hence, the ability of donors to pick and choose where to allocate their resources may push IOs to direct activities in the direction of donor interests.

How we conceive of those donor interests depends on our prior assumptions of what

the key drivers are for decisions on multilateral or multi-bi aid allocation of states to international organizations like UNHCR. State interests may be shaped by common regional concerns or by donors' individual geopolitical interest, in particular geographical, economic, or social proximity to recipient countries. Measuring the level of interest or the strength of ties between donor and recipient states is possible, for example, by assessing the size of overall bilateral aid or trade flows from donor to recipient states, by measuring physical distance or contiguity, by looking at alignment of global policy preferences as expressed in UN General Assembly votes (Bailey, Strezhnev and Voeten, 2017), or by controlling for colonial ties (cf. Mayer and Zignago, 2011). However, whereas the variety of donor interests in providing funding has been acknowledged, especially where IOs are heavily financed through voluntary contributions, most studies are limited to the attempts of states to influence IO activities through donations. An open question is in how far this actually allows them to direct IOs away from being responsive to problem pressure or from allocating expenditure in line with state preferences.

In addition, whether and how IO bureaucracies influence expenditure allocation in their organizations, and whether this is to ensure, or to prevent, problem-driven resource allocation, is contested in the literature. Measuring such IO bureaucracy influence is difficult (Eckhard and Ege, 2016). A key challenge is that, without having direct measures of bureaucratic preferences, this requires making assumptions or having prior knowledge of what specific IO bureaucracies might want. If IO bureaucracies were indeed problem-solvers in global policy making (Biermann and Siebenhüner, 2013), they should attempt to counteract state interests that are not aligned with problem pressure in areas of IOs' mandate or should try to coordinate complex principal interests towards a stronger problem-solving approach. As IO bureaucracies develop greater agency or identity over time (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004); and as they can gain "autonomy of will" (Bauer and Ege, 2016, 2017) or expert authority (Haas, 1964; Johnson and Urpelainen, 2014; Busch

and Liese, 2017; Littoz-Monnet, 2017), that may increase their influence in driving expenditure patterns in line with their preferences. When they are problem-solving actors, they should use their ability to independently solicit voluntary contributions (Graham, 2015, 2017a; Goetz and Patz, 2017; Ege and Bauer, 2017) to ensure that financing is available to address problems they identify as being in line with their IO's mandate.

Whether indeed IO bureaucracies will choose the problem-solving approach to fundraising may depend on whether they are designed as such (cf. Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal, 2001; Hawkins et al., 2006; Hooghe and Marks, 2015; Hall, 2015; Hooghe et al., 2017). IO bureaucracies might not actually be driven by normative or mandate-related concerns that encourage global problem-solving preferences. They could simply be oriented towards functional concerns and service-oriented task for whatever their member states and major donors want (cf. Hall, 2015). IO bureaucracies could also show pathological behavior that drives them away from mandated task and problem solving (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004), including where their main preference is increasing their resources (Vaubel, 2006) instead of directing funding and activities to where the problems are.

The theoretical arguments formulated so far have consequences for our expectations regarding observations on our dependent variable, i.e., country-level expenditure allocation in IOs. The country-level expenditure patterns may follow problem pressure (Hypothesis 1). If this is the case in a given IO, this would be a strong indicator for a problem-driven bureaucracy being able to ensure that funding is allocated where the needs are. Country-level expenditure patterns may also follow donor state interests, in particular following the preferences of major donors that have significant influence on an IOs for certain recipient states (Hypothesis 2). For the second hypothesis, we later present an influence-weighted interest score (IWIS) as a composite measure that links one donor's—or a group of donors' up to all donors'—financial influence on an IO and its—or their—interests in specific recipient countries.

Whereas these two hypotheses reflect the extreme ends of two debates in IR and IO studies, one may find that, in reality, IO expenditure are influenced both by problem pressure and by state interests at the same time—and it seems realistic to expect that this is often the case. Even strongly problem- or mandate-oriented IO bureaucracies may have to balance their urge to solve global policy problems in line with their mandates while also keeping member states and donors happy. The question may then be to what degree problem-pressure or donor interests are driving the expenditure patterns in an IO. Alternatively, one may also find cases where expenditure patterns neither correspond to globally distributed problem pressure nor to broad and measurable interests of donors. This could then be an indicator for IOs or IO bureaucracies that are either pathological or that, for different reasons, may respond to specific problems in a selective manner, for example because they are highly specialized in certain tasks or geographical regions, or because their services may only be requested very selectively by certain donors.

In this paper, the central question is in how far the expenditure patterns of two major UN system agencies in the domain of global refugee and forced migration—UNHCR and IOM—seem to respond to either problem pressure—as measured through the global distribution of refugees and other populations of concern—or to (major) donor interests, in particular interests defined by geographical distance or dyadic aid flows to recipient countries. In the following section, we first introduce the two organizations and their historical, organizational, and financial features that may allow us to formulate more precise expectations about what patterns we expect to find in each case, before analyzing the data collected for these two cases in the following section.

3 UNHCR and IOM: Unequal Sisters or Two Sides of the Same Coin?

The domain of global refugee and (forced) migration policy is among the oldest policy domains that IOs have dealt with, at least since the League of Nations and the creation of the ILO (Holborn, 1939). Thus, even before the creation of the short-lived International Refugee Organization (IRO) at the end of World War II, refugees were a concern for multiple IOs, never just for a single organization (Malin, 1947). Today, global refugee policy is populated by a range of international organizations. Within the United Nations system, these organizations come together in the Global Migration Group (GMG) with more than twenty members (cf. Thorvaldsdottir, 2017), including agencies with significant budgets such as the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF, or UNDP. Regional international organizations, such as the African Union (Tigere and Amukhobu, 2005) or the European Union (Lavenex, 2016), as well as non-governmental actors such as the ICRC, also have played a central role in this policy domain for decades.

Despite the multitude of actors, the main IOs active in global forced migration policy in general are UNHCR and IOM.² Both organizations are not just present in their Geneva-based headquarters, but they have field and regional offices around the world. In addition, they are worth studying alongside each other in the context of IO resourcing because “IOM and UNHCR have a long history of rivalry about competencies and government money and a general animosity growing from conflicting political assignments and philosophical worldviews” (Georgia, 2010, 54). Indeed, the two have a long and shared history since their creation in the early 1950s (Elie, 2010). UNHCR was founded in 1950, and the predecessors of IOM³ came to life just shortly thereafter, in 1951. Both were created in

²We consider UNRWA to be the third IO with a major role in global migration policy, but its geographical reach is not global. For background see Patz, Thorvaldsdottir and Goetz (2017)

³Including its earliest predecessors, PICMME, later renamed ICEM, and then ICM, before becoming IOM in 1989.

reaction to the prevalence of the large number of refugees and displaced persons in the post-WWII Europe. Both emerged, directly and indirectly, from the ruins of the failed IRO, but were set on two different paths: UNHCR became a mandate-driven United Nations agency basing its work on the 1951 Geneva Convention. IOM was created by mainly Western countries under the leadership of the UNHCR- and ILO-critical USA. Its main task was to provide various refugee- and migration-related logistical services to its member and donor states and to exclude Communist influence (Georgia, 2010). Similar to UNHCR, IOM was focused on Europe in its early years; and, similar to UNHCR, IOM was only created as a temporary body, which it remained for the first 40 years of its existence (Pécoud, 2017, 1622). In 2016, IOM joined the UN system as a ‘related agency’, similar to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), making it join the UN family alongside UNHCR. These similar paths not only invite for a diachronic analysis of both organizations over the full period of their existence, but they suggest that dynamics in one may be closely related to dynamics in the other, including that donors might regard them as complementary recipients of their financial support, either in direct competition to each other or each in their respective niche.

Nevertheless, many differences between IOM and UNHCR have been noted, in particular the difference between what appears to be a mandate-driven IO—UNHCR—and a more “functional” IO—IOM (Hall, 2015). The diverse and rich research on UNHCR in global refugee studies has covered most aspects of its operations (Betts, 2003, 2009, 2013a,b; Betts, Loescher and Milner, 2012; Ben-Nun, 2017), and its pathologies have received particular attention in IO bureaucracy research (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). Dedicated research on IOM has been relatively sparse until recently (Georgia, 2010), and specific attention to its finances has been limited to the first decade of its existence (Franghiadis, 2015). Pécoud, introducing a recent IOM-focused special issue of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, observed, however, that

“[IOM] is an intergovernmental organisation, but at times seem to function like a private company, while also competing with civil society groups and NGOs. . . . IOM appears as a loosely connected network of projects and field offices, addressing a heteroclitite range of issues, and moving quickly from one to another, according to opportunities and circumstances” (Pécoud, 2017, 1622).

Most academic observations mirror Pécoud’s interpretation of IOM being a project-based organization, and this project-based orientation is clearly reflected in the way it constructs its budget and its financial reporting in recent decades. Because of this setup, countries like the UK are found to seek influence on the organization only a project-level, through direct financing, not at a headquarter level (Hall, 2016, 89-90). Some of it may come from the lack of a clearly normative mandate, but also be an echo of IOM historically being mainly a “travel agency”. In its early years, it was mainly concerned with transporting refugees and other migrants, and only in 1992 “established its first Emergency Relief Unit” (Hall, 2016, 90-91). In contrast, UNHCR is regarded as the key actor in global refugee policy, driven by its obligations under the Geneva Convention—a traditional “normative” and mandate-driven organization (Hall, 2015), even when some have seen it drift away from its mandate and towards more pathological behavior (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004).

Already in the late 1990s, however, expert observers had “the impression that several donors were abusing the dependence by UNHCR on voluntary funding for their own political purposes”, especially through earmarking at program or country-level (Väyrynen, 2001, 159). UNHCR, financed only with a small contribution from the regular UN budget, has faced the challenge of mobilizing its finances and in-kind support since its inception (Betts, Loescher and Milner, 2012, 96-100). It has been described as a “huge fundraising operation” where a previous High Commissioner, “Sadako Ogata, referred . . . to fundraising as her major activity during the last ten years” (Väyrynen, 2001, 150). UNHCR,

alongside other UN emergency agencies such as WFP, is considered very successful in efforts to the degree that it was dominating the competition (Weiss, 1998, 62). However, in particular during the competing refugee crises in the Western Balkans and the African Great Lakes Region in the early 1990s, some have raised the questions (e.g., Whitaker, 2008) whether this overall fundraising success is equality distributed according to refugee numbers and needs or whether some regions get more favorable treatment from donors. Historically speaking, African refugee crises had been regarded as receiving significantly less attention than other crises by UNHCR (cf. Adepoju, 1982).

The question therefore is whether the suggestions made by previous research on donor support to refugee and forced migration agencies (Betts, 2003; Roper and Barria, 2010) and the different fundraising efforts—IOM with its focus on project-level finances, and UNHCR, where fundraising is a major organizational task involving everyone up to the High Commissioner—results in different results and expenditure patterns. In line with the hypotheses formulated above, one expectation could be that both organizations are heavily driven by (major) donor interests, but that UNHCR manages to direct its expenditures more towards the global distribution of problem pressure thanks to a more strategic and centralized approach, while IOM’s expenditures only follow refugee numbers where donor states consider these most relevant for themselves.

4 UNHCR and IOM Expenditures: A New Dataset

In order to test our hypotheses about varying expenditure patterns, we have coded an original dataset of country-level annual expenditures of two globally active refugee and migration agencies, UNHCR and IOM. Furthermore, in keeping with a growing body of literature demonstrating the influence of donors over IO policies (see above), we also coded annual contributions to these organizations, available mostly in the same reports as the expenditure data. This allows us to test hypotheses of member state influence

over IO expenditure by using donations as a proxy for states' ability to influence IOs and combining it with measures of state interest. In this paper, we consider two separate measures of state interest: geographic distance between donor and recipient state and bilateral aid between a donor and a recipient. Combined with the percentage share of the donors' contributions to the IO, this provides an influence-weighted interest score (IWIS) combining donor influence (i.e., share of contributions) with various definitions of donor interest.

The UNHCR data were coded manually from reports entitled *Financial report and audited financial statements*, submitted annually to the UN General Assembly from the UNHCR Board of Auditors.⁴ These reports include reliable country-level expenditure details as of 1967; however, due to data availability for other variables, we use 1973 as the starting point in our analysis.⁵ The IOM data were also coded manually from annual financial reports. These reports are available on the IOM's website from 1999 onwards.⁶ We code separately assessed contributions and programmatic contributions, but use only the latter in the current analysis, as the assessed contributions are not intended for programmatic purposes. Expenditures for both agencies are coded in nominal US dollars, except for IOM assessed contributions, which are reported in Swiss Francs (for total

⁴Except for the first two years of the organization's existence, when the report covered two years. For the most recent years, missing data added from the biannual reports of the UN Secretary General on "Budgetary and financial situation of the organizations of the United Nations system", data also published by UNSCEB.

⁵These reports were downloaded through the UN Official Documents System (ODS) wherever possible and from the UN Digital Library for years not available through ODS. Whenever possible, we code separately expenditures through the Annual Programme Fund and through the various Special Programme Funds. We made every effort to code every line item of expenditure. However, it was sometimes impossible to assign an expense to a particular country; in those cases, we coded the data into a regional expense category wherever possible. The latter often come with restrictions (thematic or geographical) on where the funds can be spent, which suggests that the political determinants of spending through these different types of funds may vary in ways that could be important to capture to the extent possible. Sometimes, however, we had to drop an expenditure item when it was impossible to assign it a geographical location (e.g., the 1970 report included an expenditure item on the "Promotion of Legal Protection in Africa and Asia"; this item is not coded in our dataset). The uncoded expenditures account for a minuscule portion of overall expenditures and we have no reason to believe that these are distributed non-randomly in a way that would affect the quality of our data.

⁶As indicated above, we have received access to further reports going back to 1953 at the time of submitting this paper.

country-level expenditure see Figure 1). For the purposes of the statistical analysis, we convert this figure to real 2010 US dollars and take the natural log, in order to reduce the influence of extreme outliers on our results and remove any effect of inflation or deflation on the expenditures.

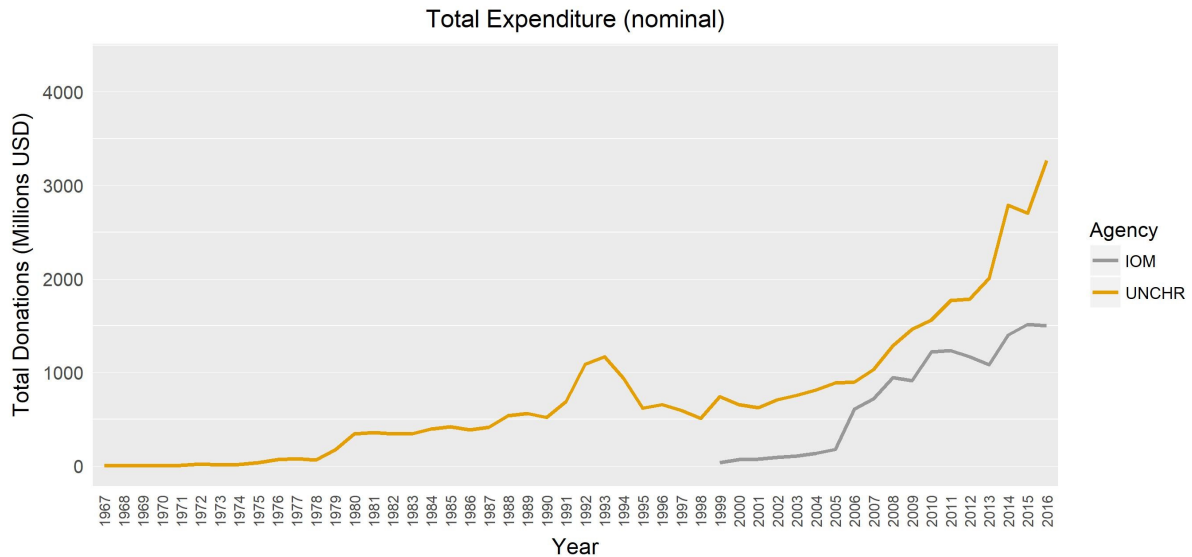


Figure 1: Total country-level expenditures of UNHCR (1967-2016) and IOM (1999-2016)

Our main independent variables of interest include measures of the problem pressure and donor interests. The problem pressure is measured by two variables: a) the number of refugees in a country in a given year, and b) the total displaced population in a country in a given year, less the number of refugees. Thus, the two measures give us a comprehensive picture of the scope of the problem pressure, but allows us to examine specifically the impact of the refugee population. Measures of displaced populations are available at the country-year level from the UNHCR Population Statistics Database.⁷ Although maintained by the UNHCR, this is the population served by both agencies in our analysis as well as a number of other international agencies. These figures exclude the displaced population served by UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. The

⁷See <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview> for a detailed overview of the different categories and their definitions. Note that the UNHCR does not maintain data on the population that falls under the mandate of UNRWA.

latter population is not only counted separately but also served primarily by UNRWA under its UN General Assembly mandate (Patz, Thorvaldsdottir and Goetz, 2017).

Figure 2 gives an overview of the scope of the global refugee and forced migration population as it has developed over time. Notably, the refugee category is the largest of the different populations that UNHCR keeps track of until the mid-2000s, when it is superseded by the number of internally displaced people (IDPs). This increase is, in large part, explained by the Syrian conflict, but also by the fact that the definition of IDPs was broadened somewhat starting in 2007. Due to the substantive orientation of this paper being on global refugee policy, we focus on that measure in our analysis but, as noted above, include the remaining displaced population in all our regression models.

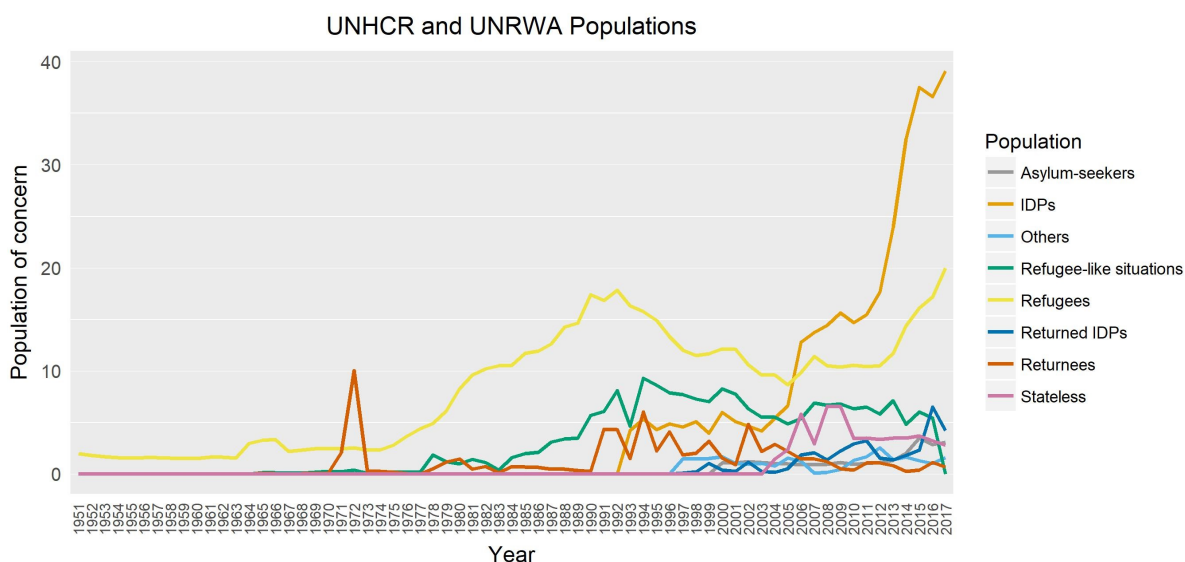


Figure 2: Total registered population(s) of concern 1951-2017. (Source: Population Statistics Database. Own visualization.)

In order to capture donor interest and ability to influence these two organizations, we develop an influence-weighted interest score (IWIS). This measure allows us to not only capture variation in donors’ ability to influence an organization over time by taking into account the size of countries’ donations to the organization relative to others, but it also accounts for donors’ preference for some recipient countries over others.

In this paper, we use two different proxies for donor interest. The first one is the geographical distance between a donor and a recipient.⁸ This proxy is based on existing literature on humanitarian and refugee funding (cf. [Smillie and Minear, 2003](#); [Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006](#); [Whitaker, 2008](#)) as well as interviews with IO bureaucrats that all highlight the importance of geographical proximity; namely, that states care a lot more about refugee problems that are close than ones that are distant. Thus, we would expect donors to want more funding from IO expenditure budgets to flow to countries that are close to them geographically. The second proxy is bilateral aid from a donor to a recipient country.⁹ Bilateral aid has long been known to be determined to a considerable degree by donors' geostrategic interests (cf. [Alesina and Dollar, 2000](#); [de Mesquita and Smith, 2009](#)), which means that the IWIS measure based on aid is tapping into a different source of interest than the geographic score.

The calculation of IWIS measure is as follows. First we generate a dyadic (and annual, in the case of aid) measure of interest between a donor and a recipient state. This is simply the geographic distance (IWIS-G) or amount of bilateral aid (IWIS-A), in our case. We then weight this interest measure by the percentage of total donations to an agency that the donor country contributed in a given year. This measure can be used to evaluate the weighted interest of a single donor on a single recipient (as we do in [Tables 2 and 3](#), below), or it can be aggregated across donors, to get an overall measure of a particular recipient's importance to all donors (as we do in [Table 1](#)). This calculation permits donors with higher shares of contributions have greater influence over an organization's expenditures in line with their interests vis-à-vis recipient states. For example, in 2015, Sweden contributed three percent of the total donations to UNHCR, and thus Sweden's geographical distance to each recipient country is multiplied by 0.03,

⁸Geographical distances were calculated based on ([Weidmann, Kuse and Gleditsch, 2010](#))

⁹Bilateral aid was calculated using the AidData Core Research Release, Version 3.1 ([Tierney et al., 2011](#)). AidData is comprehensively available for the period 1973-2013, so this becomes the period of analysis for our main UNHCR models. Due to lack of data on IOM expenditures and donations, we use a shortened panel of 1999-2013 for the IOM.

to account for Sweden’s ability to influence the organization, relative to other donors. In the same year, Japan provided six percent of the total donations to the UNHCR, and thus its geographical distance of each recipient to Japan is multiplied by 0.06.

In addition to measuring problem pressure and the two IWIS measures, we include three recipient-country control variables in the regression models. First, we control for GDP¹⁰, to account for variation in countries’ ability to deal with an influx of refugees through their own domestic budgets. Second, we control for population size, considering the fact that bigger countries may have greater ability to highlight refugee crises within their borders and thus might attract more funding. Third, we control for the *Polity Score*, to account for the possibility that countries with strong democratic institutions may be better at attracting funding due to less concern about mismanagement of funding or simply due to any greater feelings of affinity between the largely democratic donor states and more democratic recipients.¹¹ Both recipient states’ GDP and population size are logged in the empirical analysis. Lastly, the models include both country and time fixed effects to account for unobserved heterogeneity between countries and over time. Thus, the regression models use expenditure by either UNHCR or IOM in country i and year t as a dependent variable, with the main independent variables of interest being the number of refugees and the IWIS measures in country i and year t . To simplify the interpretation of the regression models, we regress on the organizations individually, but pooled models—combining the data for both organizations—with interaction terms between the agency and the variables of interest show the same results both in terms of substance and statistical significance.

¹⁰We have also used GDP per capita in our regression models, and the results are the same, which is unsurprising as we also control for population. However, as our interest is in measuring overall absorption capacity in a country, we prefer to use GDP in our main models.

¹¹The *Polity Score* is one of the more common measures of how democratic governmental institutions are within a country. It is a composite index that ranks countries on a scale of -10 to +10, where -10 indicates a fully institutionalized autocracy and +10 indicates a fully institutionalized democracy (Marshall and Cole, 2011). It includes all countries with populations greater than 500,000 in the most recent year.

5 Analysis: Expenditure Patterns in UNHCR and IOM

Table 1 below shows the results of regressions where we include the population of interest (i.e., refugees) as well as the aggregated IWIS for both geographical distance (IWIS-G) and bilateral aid (IWIS-A). Models 1-4 show the results for the UNHCR, while models 5 and 6 focus on the IOM. For greater ease of comparison between the agencies, models 2 and 4 limit the period of analysis for UNHCR to the same years (1999 to 2013 or 2015, depending on which IWIS measure is being used) for which data is available from the IOM, while models 1 and 3 show results from the entire time period available.

An initial and striking difference between the organizations is that, across all the UNHCR models, we see a robust and positive relationship between the refugee population and expenditures, while the variable never reaches statistical significance in the case of the IOM. Depending on specification, we observe an approximately three to six percent increase in expenditures for a ten percent increase in the refugee population in the UNHCR. The coefficient size for the IOM is similar in magnitude, but is statistically indistinguishable from zero. In addition, we see that UNHCR is similarly responsive to shifts in the other populations of interest, although the magnitude of the effect is only about a third to half of the size of the refugee population. Given the size of the refugee population relative to the other categories, this is perhaps unsurprising. The IOM results for the other populations of concern suggest that perhaps that organization is rather more responsive to non-refugee populations, but given the lack of statistical significance, it is impossible to make meaningful inferences about this relationship.

Interestingly, the aggregated IWIS measures (see Table 1), both for distance- and for aid-related interests, largely fail to achieve statistical significance. Only in the case of bilateral aid for the entire time period for the UNHCR (Model 3) does donor interest appear to influence expenditures. This runs counter to our expectations based on Hypothesis 2, which suggests that donor interest is likely to significantly impact expenditures. This

DV: Expenditures (Real USD, logged):

	IOM					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	<i>UNHCR</i>					
Number of refugees (logged)	0.616*** (0.066)	0.394*** (0.097)	0.617*** (0.066)	0.322*** (0.080)	0.065 (0.147)	0.073 (0.169)
Other pop. of concern (logged)	0.344*** (0.048)	0.173** (0.071)	0.363*** (0.053)	0.188*** (0.056)	0.098 (0.063)	0.113 (0.082)
IWIS-G: Geographical distance	0.332 (0.266)	-0.518 (0.570)			0.286 (0.278)	
IWIS-A: Bilateral aid			0.002** (0.001)	0.001 (0.002)		0.003 (0.002)
Recipient country:						
Polity score	0.073 (0.046)	0.070 (0.049)	0.012 (0.045)	0.026 (0.054)	0.145 (0.094)	0.092 (0.095)
Real GDP (logged)	-0.101 (0.388)	-0.461 (0.548)	0.036 (0.435)	-0.407 (0.597)	1.258 (1.028)	1.222 (1.135)
Population (logged)	2.213 (1.469)	8.481*** (2.671)	-0.372 (2.089)	0.666 (3.155)	5.051 (3.402)	7.291 (5.242)
Time Period	1973-2015	1999-2015	1973-2013	1999-2013	1999-2015	1999-2013
Country Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Number of Observations	5581	2304	4185	1583	2304	1583
Adj. R-squared	0.67	0.80	0.66	0.84	0.73	0.75

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the country level

lack of support for Hypothesis 2 may be for two reasons. Either it is the case that donors are not trying to influence expenditures and staff members of the organizations in the ways suggested by existing literature, or it could be the case that aggregation across all donors may wash out important differences between individual donors. Thus, examining the IWIS measures for individual donors, especially ones with strong global geostrategic interests, is useful in order to get a clearer picture of how donor interests may operate within these two UN system agencies.

Tables 2 and 3 thus replicate the models from Table 1, with Table 2 including only regressions with the geographical IWIS and Table 3 only the aid-based IWIS. Both tables include as separate variables each of the G5 countries—United States, Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. As noted above, these are useful countries to explore individually as they all have global strategic interests, give aid broadly, and are likely to care about events both distant and proximate, so we are not biasing our findings by including countries whose interests may be more limited in scope. Three of the countries—Germany, France, and the United Kingdom—are geographically proximate to one another, so they are reasonably similar on the distance measure. All five G5 countries follow roughly similar trajectories in their bilateral aid donations, although the US increases its net bilateral donations significantly in the mid-2000s relative to the others. Importantly, however, the G5 vary considerably in the size of their contributions to the two agencies, with Japan, Germany and the United Kingdom rather consistently showing up as top five donors to both organizations, while France usually donates much less. The United States is virtually always the top donor to both IOM and UNHCR, making it interesting to see how its relationship with the organizations varies with its relative share of the donations. Japan as a major donor is particularly interesting to study due to its geographical location outside Western Europe and North America, which allows for variation in the geographically defined interest variable.

Examining first the models in Table 2, where we include the geographical IWIS for individual G5 donors, we now observe considerable variation in how these economically powerful states influence country-level expenditures. The coefficients on the individual G5 variables represent the distance from that country to recipient countries, weighted by the percentage the G5 country donated in that year. So, for example, in 2015, the US donated 37.5 per cent of the overall donations to the UNHCR, so its geographical distance from each of the recipient countries is multiplied by 0.375 to generate the weighted distance variable.

While it is possible that the overall effect size may be attenuated due to limited variation in the percentage of total donations these countries are responsible for, we are still able to observe significantly different results, both across the organizations and over the two different time periods for the UNHCR. For example, in Models 1 and 2, we see that the weighted distance from the US and France influences expenditure amounts for UNHCR, while that of the other G5 countries does not. The coefficient on the weighted distance from the US in Model 1, for example, is 1.140, which implies that countries further away from the US see greater expenditures when the US increases its donations (and thus its ability to influence the agency). To get a sense of the magnitude of this effect, a shift of one standard deviation in the distance measure, which for the US is 1.29, we would expect to see an increase in expenditures by 1.47 on the log scale. For a country receiving the median amount of expenditures (14.26 on the log scale, or USD 4.1 million) this amounts to a nontrivial increase of USD 5.2 million.

The way the US uses its influence, however, has changed over time. In the full panel, we see that countries further away from the US appear to benefit most from increases in the US donation share to the organization, while the more limited panel shows the opposite result, namely that more proximate countries see increases in expenditures when the US increases its donation share. In the case of France, we see a similar trend, although

the effect is insignificant in the more limited panel. Thus, it is likely that this effect is largely driven by its spike in donations in 1993, when it jumped from its usual two to three percent of contributions to over five percent. Although further analysis of the distribution of crises and shifts in US and French contributions is needed to understand these dynamics, it seems clear that there are notable country-specific impacts on expenditure patterns in the UNHCR that are masked when using the more aggregated measure.

Taken together, it appears as though powerful countries are bigger drivers of expenditures in the IOM than in the UNHCR. Three out of five G5 countries are significant in Model 3 (Japan, France, and the United Kingdom). Increases in donations from Japan benefit geographically more proximate countries while those from France and the UK benefit distant ones. Due to the relative locations of these countries, these findings are substantively consistent with one another and it is likely that the same countries are benefitting in all cases. Lastly, although these effects are not all statistically significant, it is substantively interesting to note that these same countries (Japan, France, and the UK) have the opposite effect on expenditures across the two organizations. A tentative interpretation of this could be that the organizations are trading off the relative capabilities of the two agencies, preferring UNHCR in some regions or countries and the IOM in others.

Looking at Table 3, which uses the IWIS-A measure, the results rather mirror those from Table 2. This is unsurprising, given that we expect all countries to prefer expenditures in countries with which they have strong bilateral ties, whereas the geographic measure allows for some donors to prefer expenditures to proximate countries to those more distant. The coefficients for the United States and the United Kingdom are both positive and significant in the longer panel and fail to achieve significance in the shorter one. Because the total amount of bilateral trade as well as donations to the agencies vary between the different donors, the coefficients on the individual countries are not

Table 2: Models including the IWIS-G for G5 donors

	<i>DV: Expenditures (Real USD, logged):</i>		
	<i>UNHCR</i>		<i>IOM</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Number of refugees (logged)	0.610*** (0.064)	0.396*** (0.098)	0.052 (0.147)
Other population of concern (logged)	0.343*** (0.048)	0.165** (0.071)	0.106* (0.064)
Geographical distance:			
IWIS-G: United States	1.140*** (0.404)	-1.706** (0.780)	-0.292 (0.625)
IWIS-G: Japan	-0.750 (0.812)	0.378 (1.324)	-2.474* (1.502)
IWIS-G: Germany	0.704 (1.374)	3.938 (3.381)	1.201 (0.819)
IWIS-G: France	8.468*** (2.244)	-7.368 (11.832)	34.068*** (10.855)
IWIS-G: United Kingdom	-0.747 (1.186)	-0.362 (1.301)	3.430** (1.437)
Recipient country:			
Polity score	0.073 (0.046)	0.076 (0.048)	0.147 (0.094)
GDP (logged)	-0.121 (0.386)	-0.473 (0.539)	1.252 (1.029)
Population (logged)	2.164 (1.464)	9.079*** (2.603)	5.515 (3.523)
<hr/>			
Time Period	1973-2015	1999-2015	1999-2015
Country Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Number of Observations	5581	2304	2304
Adj. R-squared	0.67	0.80	0.74

Notes:

26 *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the country level

Table 3: Models including the IWIS-A for G5 donors

	<i>DV: Expenditures (Real USD, logged):</i>		
	<i>UNHCR</i>		<i>IOM</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Number of refugees (logged)	0.632*** (0.087)	0.356*** (0.098)	-0.039 (0.213)
Other population of concern (logged)	0.326*** (0.078)	0.202*** (0.065)	0.112 (0.102)
Bilateral aid:			
IWIS-A: United States	0.003*** (0.001)	0.001 (0.003)	0.0004 0.0004
IWIS-A: Japan	0.001 (0.001)	0.002 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.007)
IWIS-A: Germany	-0.007 (0.013)	0.026 (0.037)	-0.024 (0.047)
IWIS-A: France	-0.067 (0.054)	0.008 (0.065)	0.895* (0.515)
IWIS-A: United Kingdom	0.023* (0.013)	-0.009 (0.012)	0.020** (0.008)
Recipient country:			
Polity score	-0.013 (0.053)	0.025 (0.065)	0.101 (0.108)
GDP (logged)	-0.372 (0.685)	-0.296 (0.732)	2.049 (1.328)
Population (logged)	-3.903 (3.540)	-0.488 (4.066)	7.024 (6.455)
Time Period	1973-2013	1999-2013	1999-2013
Country Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Number of Observations	1765	1123	1123
Adj. R-squared	0.65	0.81	0.75

Note:

27 *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Standard errors are clustered at the country level

directly comparable; thus, what appears to be a larger substantive effect of the UK on expenditures versus the US is actually the opposite. A standard deviation change for the US, which on the IWIS-A scale is 139.69, implies an increase of 0.41 on the log scale, representing an almost USD 800,000 increase for the median country in our dataset. Conversely, a standard deviation change for the UK is only 7.83, which represents a 0.18 increase on the log scale, or about USD 300,000 for the same median country.

In the more limited panel dataset for the UNHCR, none of the G5 countries appear influential based on their IWIS-A score, suggesting that aid may represent their geostrategic interest in different ways than in the past. Claiming that bilateral aid is not an important driver of geostrategic interest in recent decades, however, would be undermined by the results for the IOM in model 3. Here, geostrategic interests appear to play a role in a way that is consistent with the results in Table 2 (using the IWIS-G measure), with both France and the UK having a positive and significant impact on expenditures. The only difference is that the point estimate for Japan is no longer significant, although the direction of the coefficient remains the same.

Overall these findings suggest that the relationship between the organizations and member states is complex and that the problem pressure can only tell us part of the story, depending on how we study donor influence and in which periods we do so. The UNHCR appears able to respond quite effectively to shifts in refugee populations, no matter where the pressures are coming from, whereas the global distribution of problem pressure is virtually never a significant predictor of IOM country-level expenditures. Unsurprisingly, member states influence resource allocation in both organizations, but they do so in ways that shift across donors, time, and influence measure. In addition, we see that different G5 donors—who we might expect to have a somewhat similar outlook on the geopolitics of humanitarian aid—have a differential impact on the two agencies. This suggests that there may be specialization happening between the agencies, not only in terms of which

refugee situations they respond to, but also in terms of which donors they tend to focus on and are responsive to.

6 Conclusion

The present paper contributes to the ongoing debate on whether IOs and their bureaucracies can be considered problem-solvers in global policy making or whether they are simply tools of member states using their political and financial influence to shape IOs' activities according to their individual interests. It also contributes to the growing literature on the resourcing of international organizations and to an understanding of the changing financing patterns in an ever-more fragmented organizational landscape. The novel data that we have presented here on country-level expenditures by UNHCR and IOM as well as on donor contributions to both agencies is more extensive in its temporal coverage (1973-2013/15 for UNHCR; 1999-2013/15 for IOM) than previous analyses of both organizations. It is also the first analysis using country-level expenditures as a key measure for IOs global operational activity to test both problem- and donor-state driven dynamics in IOs.

The results of the statistical analysis presented above gives support to our expectation that IO IOs can be problem-driven actors, but also to assumptions that major donors may have distinct influence on IO activities. With regard to the two organizations of interest, our results support existing literature suggesting (Hall, 2015, 2016) that they are quite different actors: UNHCR expenditures seem much more driven by refugee numbers, while balancing out individual donors who try to influence the organization in line with their geographic or geopolitical interests. IOM, while responding to varying individual donor interests, does not follow the global distribution of refugees or other populations of concern in the distribution of its expenditure, indicating an organization that has been heavily project-driven in recent decades.

With regard to donor influence, our findings regarding the divergent strength and direction of the effects of collective and individual donor interests confirm that states “contribute to refugee protection because of a combination of norms and interests” (Loescher, Betts and Milner, 2008, 94). This underlines that donors are indeed a complex principal (cf. Graham, 2017a; Patz and Goetz, forthcoming; Thorvaldsdottir, 2017). Making general assumptions about states’ influence in international agencies financed mainly by voluntary contributions is thus not possible. Only when considering individual states’ varying interests and when then accounting for the degree to which they may exert actual influence by the share of their contributions might one understand complex expenditure dynamics.

With regard to the influence of IO bureaucracies on expenditure patterns in IOs, the present analysis suggests that the staff and administrative leadership of a mandate driven organization like UNHCR can still be remarkably effective in managing IO expenditure allocation in such a way that money follows needs, even when the agency is criticized for its bureaucratic pathologies or for the diversion of its attention to mandate due to donors’ influence, and even when the overall resources available may not match the needs identified. At the same time, the patterns observed in IOM suggest that an IO bureaucracy may find a niche in which it can significantly grow its budget without being mandate-driven and without simply aligning to broad donor interests. Instead, a first qualitative look at the diversity of projects funded by different IOM donors shows that states use the organization for diverse services in diverse location, dynamics that may only be fully understood at the project- and not at the country-level.

Thus, and this was confirmed by interviews and discussions with UNHCR and IOM officials in Geneva and Brussels, this implies quite different resource mobilization strategies by the two international bureaucracies, combining a mix of global donor relations and decentralized fundraising in UNHCR, and a mainly country- and project-level fundraising

and paid-for service provision in the case of IOM. Studying and understanding how these different approaches to resource mobilization affect the way these and other international bureaucracies with diverse organizational structures and philosophies are able to raise and allocate funds should be the focus of future research.

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