How refugees are interpreted in public debates in different countries

First results of a comparative project

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Contribution to the Ad-hoc Group »Public Discourses on the Admission of Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Similarities and Differences between Countries«

Introduction[1]

Across the world, the number of people forcibly displaced from their homes because of political persecution, conflict or serious human rights violations has doubled in the last decade. As of 2019, around 33.8 million people have been forced to leave their country and to seek refuge abroad (UNHCR 2020).

In principle, international law requires states to give those fleeing persecution and serious human rights violations access to their territory. The Human Rights Declaration grants the right to seek asylum from persecution (Article 14). The "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees" drafted in 1951 in Geneva further obligates states not to penalize and not to return refugees to where they might face threats to their life or freedom (principle of "*non-refoulement*") (Article 33(1)). Additionally, states are not allowed to discriminate between refugee populations based on race, religion, or country of origin (Article 3).

The Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol have been signed by 149 states of the world and its fundamental principles – such as the principle of non-refoulement – have become part of international customary law, which means that they also bind the few remaining states that are not party to the Convention (Drewski, Gerhards 2020). In consequence, one could expect states across the world to adopt similar policies towards the admission of refugees and to provide similar justifications for these policies.

However, in practice, states' policies on the admission of forced migrants and their justifications of them differ significantly (see Abdelaaty 2021). For example, Turkey has adopted an "open door policy" for refugees fleeing the regime of Bashar al-Assad and the Syrian civil war and is now home to the highest number of refugees worldwide. Turkey's president Erdogan mobilizes a discourse of religious solidarity to justify this policy. Chile grants a special "visa of democratic responsibility" to Venezuelan migrants who escape the political instability under the Socialist regime of Nicolás Maduro – though strictly speaking not a refugee crisis, but according to the UNHCR one of the worst crises of displacement across the world. In contrast, Singapore, facing the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar as part of the ASEAN community, has completely sealed its borders, offering only humanitarian assistance. It justifies this policy citing limited land and resources.

This is the "puzzle" which motivates our research project. We seek to describe how and to understand why political discourses on the admission of refugees differ between countries. We pursue essentially two research questions, a descriptive and an explanatory one: First, we attempt to reconstruct the arguments, narratives, and frames mobilized in political discourses to justify the admission or exclusion of forced migrants. Secondly – even though this is a qualitative research project – we try to explain differences between countries.

By "political discourse" we understand the aggregate public communication of political actors such as state officials, party representatives or social movement leaders in different arenas of the public sphere, for example in parliament, the media or at rallies. Political discourses offer interpretations of issues of general concern by framing that issue in a specific way and by providing justifications for specific policies. Different political actors compete over the interpretation of these issues by making use of different framing strategies. Political actors' success in shaping the public discourse becomes manifest when certain frames prevail and achieve hegemonic status, and when justifications are taken for granted (Ferree et al. 2002). Political discourses shape policies by influencing public opinion on them.

To answer our research questions, we are conducting a qualitative analysis of political discourses in six countries: Chile, Germany, Poland, Singapore, Turkey, and Kenya.[2] All these countries face pressures to admit refugees, but some of them react with more restrictive and some with more permissive policies. With this selection of countries, we cover different displacement situations and explicitly include countries from different regions across the world, given that many studies on refugee-related discourses tend to focus on Western Europe and North America. Methodologically, we conduct qualitative content analyses of political statements made in parliamentary debates or in official speeches. We focus on the statements made by the main political parties in a country. At a later stage of the project, these content analyses will be complemented with interviews with key actors in the public sphere to understand their discursive strategies.

The following sections provide an overview of our conceptual framework, specify our strategy for sampling and data analysis, and report preliminary results of our analysis of political discourses in two countries: Turkey and Chile.

Accounting for political discourses on refugees

While the main aim of our study is to empirically show how the admission or rejection of refugees is discursively justified in different countries, we would also like to explain differences between and with-

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[2] It is not yet decided whether we will include Kenya or Uganda.

in countries. By "explanation", we do not mean that we want to establish causal relationships between variables that hold independently of the single case. Instead, we follow Max Weber's notion of "*verstehendes Erklären*" (interpretative explanation) by providing a plausible interpretation for why the discourse in one country plays out as it does and why the framings differ from one country to another. We try to move beyond the following two dominant accounts in the literature by highlighting the importance of context specific factors in the host country.

One group of scholars stresses the normative force of international law and human rights norms in shaping national migration policies and discourses (e.g., Soysal 1994; Joppke 2005). Since World War II and in reaction to the displacements caused by totalitarian regimes, a body of international human rights and migration law has emerged that increasingly constrains national sovereignty over border control, for example through the principle of non-discrimination or the right to family reunification. It also singles out a particular group of migrants, namely refugees, who are granted the right to access the territory of another state in search of protection from political persecution and serious human rights violations and obligates states not to return refugees to where their lives are at risk. These norms and laws are embedded in a liberal discourse that stresses the sanctity of individual rights and the equality of all humans (regardless of race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc.) vis-à-vis primordial conceptions of community and the sovereign rights of the state.

Another group of scholars stresses quite the opposite (e.g., Huysmans 2006; Hammerstadt 2014). They claim that confronted with increasing migration flows – and forced migration in particular – states will assert their sovereignty and close their borders. In particular, politicians will discursively construe migration policy as a matter of national security that requires government action to protect the nation. They will associate migrants not only with a threat to national security because they potentially engage in criminal activities and terrorist acts. They will also portray them as a burden to the national welfare system, as competitors on the national labor market and as cultural others that undermine social cohesion. When it comes to refugees, governments may continue to pay lip service to the norms of international protection, but they will try to avoid actually honoring their obligations by an array of policies that prevent refugees from reaching their territory and by discursively disqualifying refugees as persons in need of protection (e.g., by labeling them "economic migrants").

We argue that none of these accounts are sufficient to help us make sense of the political discourses on the admission of refugees we encountered in our data. Our main claim is that national contexts matter, as they shape the policies and political discourses on the admission of refugees and asylum seekers in significant ways. In fact, politicians in each country draw on very specific cultural repertoires, narratives, ideologies, and self-understandings to justify their policies towards refugees. Their framing strategies are shaped by what we call "discursive opportunity structures". By discursive opportunity structures, we understand the contextual factors and ideational elements that make some political discourses resonate more than others within the public sphere of a country (McCammon 2013).

Following the idea of grounded theory, namely that explanations should be derived inductively from the empirical analysis, we have so far identified three relevant dimensions of a country's discursive opportunity structure that might help explain the character of its discourse on refugees. First, political discourses about refugees are typically embedded in *definitions of a country's collective identity and collective memories of its past*. This refers to a definition of who "we" as a collective are by virtue of our history. Second, the discourse can also be related to *interpretations of a country's economic situation and security*. Different assessments of a country's economic strength and security situation have an effect on the political discourse towards refugees. And third, political discourses on refugees are related to assessments of a country's *international relations and its foreign policy doctrine.* This refers to how

a country positions itself in relation to other countries (particularly the refugee-sending country) and the international community at large.

Up to this point, we have discussed the factors that might help to account for differences *between* countries in their discourses on refugees. But of course, there is typically not one homogenous political discourse per country (at least in minimally democratic ones). Different political actors try to promote different interpretations of an issue and offer different policy solutions. To grasp these internal variations, we further draw on the concept of "cleavage structure" (Lipset, Rokkan 1967). Cleavage structures are deeply rooted and permanent lines of conflict in a society. Societies can be shaped by different kinds of cleavage structures. For example, there can be a religious/secular cleavage, an urban/rural cleavage, a center/periphery and/or a capital/labor cleavage.

More recent studies claim that the dismantling of national borders following processes of globalization and the increasing mobility of goods and people tend to provoke the emergence of a new cleavage between "cosmopolitans" and "communitarians": Cosmopolitans advocate open borders and are in favor of migration, while communitarians defend border closure and tend to reject migration (de Wilde et al. 2019). However, we find that this account does not help to explain the different opinions regarding the admission of refugees in some countries in our sample. Instead, they map onto other kinds of cleavages, such as the religious/secular cleavage as in the case of Turkey, or a post-authoritarian/democratic cleavage as in the case of Chile. In short, we claim that within-country differences of how to deal with the admission of refugees will be shaped by a society's specific cleavage structure.

Due to space limits, in this paper we will only focus on the dominant discourse in a country (i.e., the government's discourse) and leave out within-country differences along its cleavage structure. In addition, we will report results from two countries (Turkey and Chile) only.

Data and methods

In our research project, we analyze political discourses in six countries around the world: Chile, Germany, Poland, Singapore, Turkey, and Kenya. Why did we select these countries? Public debates on a topic arise only when an issue is perceived as a significant problem requiring government action. Thus, all countries in our analysis share that they face significant pressure to admit refugees and asylum seekers for various reasons. For example, they directly neighbor the refugees' countries of origin (such as Turkey and Kenya), they are relatively prosperous and stable countries that attract refugees among other kinds of migrants (such as Chile and Germany), or they are part of regional organizations that are confronted with a refugee crisis (such as Poland as a member of the EU and Singapore as a member of ASEAN). Given that we focus on political discourses, our choice of countries also includes only those that are not full-fledged authoritarian states and do not fully suppress public debate and parliamentary activity.

At the same time, our choice of countries is also motivated by the aim to maximize variance across the following two dimensions: First, country differences can only be described and explained if there is variance in the "dependent variable" and countries differ in their framing. Therefore, we included cases with a more refugee-friendly discourse and countries with more restrictive discourses and policies. Second, we have also maximized the geographic scope of our comparison. While much of the previous literature has focused on discourses in Western Europe and North America, we include countries of the so-called "Global South" in our analysis. In fact, most refugees worldwide are hosted there and not in the so-called "Global North".

In each country, we focus on "critical discourse moments". Critical discourse moments are moments when an issue becomes an important topic of public debate. For example, the Syrian civil war triggered a public debate on refugees in many countries. Critical discourse moments are processed in different "public forums" (Ferree et al. 2002). A "forum" is a more or less institutionalized ensemble of speakers and their audiences. There are forums like the mass media forum, the parliamentary forum (i.e., debates in parliament), the civil society forum, etc. We primarily but not exclusively focus on parliamentary debates. Finally, forums consist of different actors (speakers/authors and public). We focus on the statements of those speakers that are influential and speak on behalf of an important constituency. This means that we select statements made by the government and large political parties.

For our discourse analysis, we make use of a scheme of analysis that was in part developed inductively, and in part inspired by critical discourse analysis (Wodak, Meyer 2001). In the context of this paper, we will only refer to the most important dimensions of analysis: First, the statements we analyze typically pick up an issue related to migration and frame it as a problem. We call this the "*problem diagnosis*". For example, one can frame the fact that many Syrian refugees enter a country as "there are too many illegal immigrants in our country". Second, this problem diagnosis is typically put in relation to a certain *definition of the "we"*. This refers to how a society and its members are described and who belongs to it. For example, a self-definition can be "we as a Christian community". Third, statements typically *describe the refugees* in a certain way. They are put in different categories and characterized accordingly. For example, they can be labeled as "Muslim terrorists". Finally, these dimensions converge into a core *argument* justifying the admission or exclusion of migrants. For example, "we can legitimately exclude refugees because we have the right to defend our national sovereignty". It must be noted that our analytical scheme also incorporates other dimensions which we cannot explain in detail here.

As we have been working mostly on the cases of Chile and Turkey so far, we will focus on the results from these two countries only. We will also just focus on the respective governments' discourses and leave out differences within countries. The governments of both countries have tended to adopt a rather permissive discourse towards refugees, but for different reasons, as we will see next.

The political discourse on Syrian refugees in Turkey

Background information on Turkey's refugee policy

Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war worldwide. As of 2019, Turkey has hosted 3.6 million Syrian refugees (relative to population size, Turkey only follows Jordan and Lebanon) (UNHCR 2020). Syrian refugees started arriving in Turkey in 2011 with the outbreak of the civil war. Turkey hosts a further 330,000 refugees and asylum seekers that come from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and other countries, but they will not be the topic of our analysis.

Turkey is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol but keeps in place its geographic restriction to refugees originating from Europe. Nevertheless, the Turkish government initially pursued an "open border policy" towards Syrian refugees, expecting that the conflict would soon end. This policy was formalized following the 2013 "Law on Foreigners and International Protection," based on which Syrian refugees are granted the status of "temporary protection." It gives Syrians access to basic services but is more limited in scope than the refugee status under international law. Starting in 2016, the Turkish government somewhat reversed course on its open border policy, by beginning with the construction of a border fence along the border with Syria in 2016 and legitimating its military

incursions in Northern Syria starting in 2018/19 with the need to create "safe zones" that would allow the repatriation of Syrian refugees.

The Turkish government's discourse on Syrian refugees

The continuously rising number of Syrian refugees in Turkey has triggered many political debates over the past decade. As stated before, we concentrate our analysis on the government's stance. Turkey has been governed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his conservative and moderately Islamist (and increasingly authoritarian) AKP ("Justice and Development Party") since 2003. Erdogan and the governing AKP have pursued a rather welcoming discourse on refugees and have more or less consistently advocated for an open border policy (with a slight course reversal in 2018/19).

The *problem diagnosis* advanced by the government is the following. In its view, the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and the ensuing civil war have created a humanitarian disaster and caused millions of Syrian civilians to flee. Most are crossing the border to Turkey to seek refuge.

Confronted with this situation, Erdogan and representatives of the AKP mobilize a very particular *definition of the Turkish "we"*. They define Turkey not in terms of the modern secular Turkish Republic (i.e., stressing national unity and secularism). Rather, they seek to reconnect to Turkey's Ottoman imperial past and emphasize its Islamic heritage. This is expressed in the following quote from a speech given by President Erdogan on the Opening Day of the Turkish National Assembly in 2015, in which he addressed the refugee crisis: "What we call Syria and Iraq at present, were geographies no different to us than Mardin, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep and Hatay just a century ago" (Erdogan 2015). In this quote, Erdogan evokes the geographic extension of the former Ottoman Empire, which covered the territories of present-day Syria and Iraq, and he includes these territories in the definition of the "we".

This definition of Turkish identity entails a *definition of the refugees* from Syria not as "others", but essentially as part of the "we". Syrian refugees are sometimes referred to as "brothers and sisters" because of the common ancestry they share with Turkish citizens as part of the Ottoman Empire. They are also defined as religious fellows suffering from persecution ("*muhacir*") to whom Muslim Turks are required to show hospitality. It must be noted, however, that the government never refers to Syrians as "refugees" under international law, with the corresponding rights, but rather as "guests", which suggests that Turkey is acting out of a sense of hospitality and not under a legal obligation.

In consequence, the government's *arguments for the admission* of Syrian refugees are straightforward. It primarily appeals to Turkey's obligation to help former subjects of the Ottoman Empire now suffering from war and persecution, just as Turkey took in refugees from former Ottoman lands after the collapse of the Empire. The government also appeals to a sense of solidarity with fellow Muslims. In this case, a typical historical analogy mobilized by the government is the story of the solidarity the citizens of Medina extended to prophet Mohammed and his followers fleeing persecution in Mecca. Taken together, Erdogan and the AKP appeal to a sense of hospitality and solidarity, and not to legal obligations towards Syrians. This is expressed in the following quote: "Drawing a line between our citizens and those living in Syria and Iraq would make us embarrassed in the eyes of history, our ancestors and especially our martyrs." (Erdogan 2015).

Accounting for the Turkish government's discourse on refugees

How can we account for the Turkish government's rather welcoming discourse towards Syrian refugees? We argue that this has to do with the following discursive opportunity structures:

1) The Turkish government's discourse on Syrian refugees is substantially entangled with its attempt to redefine Turkey's collective identity and historical memory (see also Polat 2017). The AKP mobilizes a

very different understanding of Turkey's collective identity than the official ideology of the modern Turkish Republic founded in 1923. This narrative had emphasized national unity and the secularist character of the Republic. It had also stressed Turkey's "Western" orientation and constructed a symbolic boundary towards neighboring Muslim Arab countries. In contrast, for a couple of years now, the AKP has attempted to revalue Turkey's imperial past in terms of the Ottoman Empire as well as to emphasize religious traditions and an Islamic identity. This identity construction defines Turkey as sharing historical and religious bonds with neighboring Middle Eastern countries.

2) Interestingly, economic and security-based factors are largely absent from the government's discourse about Syrian refugees. Instead, this dimension is taken up by the opposition parties who point out the pressures on the national labor market following the admission of Syrian refugees, the burden they put on state finances, and the threat emanating from terrorist organizations (Kurdish and IS related) moving across the Syrian border.

3) The discourse in Turkey relating to Syrian refugees is also heavily influenced by foreign policy considerations, both in relation to the "Middle East" and the "West." On the one hand, the government's discourse on refugees is related to Turkey's role in the Middle East. Under the recent "neo-Ottoman" foreign policy doctrine of the AKP government, Turkey is seeking to become a hegemonic regional power in the Middle East, in contrast to the "Western" orientation and non-interventionist foreign policy characterizing the previous Kemalist doctrine (Arkan, Kınacıoğlu 2016). Consequently, Turkey became involved militarily in the Syrian civil war, opposing the regime of Bashar al-Assad, first by funding opposition forces, then with military incursions into Northern Syria. As such, Turkey has become the most important player in the conflict besides Russia and Iran. Accepting Syrian refugees can be interpreted as part of this geopolitical strategy, signaling Turkey's rebuke of Assad and assuming the role of regional benefactor. This strategic orientation is opposed by opposition parties, who criticize Turkey's involvement in the Syrian civil war.

On the other hand, Turkey's policy towards Syrian refugees is related to Turkey's relationship to the EU and the "West" in general. In recent years, Turkey's EU accession bid has come to a halt due to the reluctance of the EU, as well as Erdogan's increasingly authoritarian policies and the geopolitical reorientation of his foreign policy. In March 2016, the Turkish government signed a "re-admissions" agreement with the EU, in which it agreed to take back refused asylum seekers in exchange for EU funding. In this context, Syrian refugees act as a "bargaining chip" for the Turkish government. First, the fact that Turkey is the largest host country of Syrian refugees, while the EU closes its borders, can be used to shame the EU's professed "humanitarianism". Second, hosting Syrian refugees secures EU and international funding. And finally, the threat to open Turkey's borders to the EU, allowing Syrian refugees to continue to Europe, forms a potent bargaining tool in the relationship to the EU.

The political discourse on Venezuelan migrants in Chile

Background information on Chile's migration policy

In recent decades, Chile has turned from a country of net emigration into a country of net immigration. As of 2019, Chile hosted 1,492,522 international migrants, which is around 7% of the resident population (INE–DEM 2019). Most migrants come from Venezuela (455,494), followed by Peru (235,165) and Haiti (185,865).

Chile hosts only a few hundred recognized refugees. However, the UNHCR recognizes migrants from Venezuela as a population of concern (though not directly as refugees). About 4.5 million Vene-

zuelans have left the country mostly since 2015 due to political instability and the socioeconomic crisis under the Socialist government of Nicolás Maduro (UNHCR 2020). Chile is the third-largest host country of Venezuelan migrants in Latin America, after Colombia and Peru. The Chilean government does not categorize Venezuelans as refugees in terms of policy, but in 2018 it decided to extend special so-called "visas of democratic responsibility" to them.

At the time of the debates we analyzed, Chile's migration law still dated back to 1975, drafted under the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. It has been undergoing successive reform efforts since 2008. Chile is a signatory of the relevant international agreements on refugees, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and its Protocol. It has also signed the (non-binding) Cartagena Declaration, which extends the refugee definition contained in the 1951 Convention.

The Chilean government's discourse on Venezuelan migrants

The issue of Venezuelan migrants is embedded in the broader debate on the reform of Chile's migration law which was triggered by the rising number of migrants. Since 2008, successive reform efforts have been undertaken by alternating left-wing and right-wing governments. Pressures to reform mounted with the Venezuela crisis and the rapidly rising number of Venezuelan migrants since 2015. We concentrate on statements on the migration law reform initiated by the right-wing government of Sebastián Piñera and his coalition "Chile Vamos" in 2018. The bill was approved in Parliament across party lines. Again, given space limits, we do not focus on inter-party differences.

The Chilean government's *problem diagnosis* is the following: Chile has become a country of immigration, attracting migrants because of its political stability and economic growth compared to other countries in the region. In particular, it attracts migrants from Venezuela, who are escaping the political instability and socioeconomic crisis under the Socialist regime of Nicolás Maduro. However, Chile's migration law is not up to date to adequately deal with this influx.

Confronted with this situation, the government proposes a *definition of the Chilean "we"* that describes Chile as a successful role model of "modernization" in the region, a development the government takes pride in. Modernization is understood in the sense of the world cultural script: Economic growth, democracy and a stable rule of law, commitment to international law and multilateralism. Its success in these areas has put Chile ahead of other countries of the region (particularly failing Venezuela). However (and this element is only marginal in the government's discourse but more prominent among the opposition parties), Chile also has to grapple with a troubled past under the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet that persecuted political opponents and forced many of them into exile.

The Chilean government's *description of the refugees and migrants* coming to Chile refers to attributes of "universal personhood": They are defined as individuals in search of better opportunities, subject to the rule of law and endowed with rights and obligations. The government speaks of "friends that have come to our country to realize their dreams of a better life" (Piñera 2018, authors' translation) – understood primarily in economic, but also in political and social terms.[3] This applies to Venezuelans in particular, whose life plans are being thwarted by the Venezuelan government. In addition, the government emphasizes migrants' human capital (skills and resources) and their potential economic contribution to the country.

Given these definitions of the "we" and the migrants, the Chilean government *argues for the admissions of migrants* (and Venezuelans in particular) for the following reasons. First, they should be admitted because they can contribute with their skills and resources to Chile's project of modernization. And

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[3] But there is also a strong symbolic boundary against "criminal" migrants who do not play by the rules.

second, the government also appeals to an obligation of reciprocity. Given its history and the fact that many Chileans were forced into exile by the Pinochet dictatorship, Chile has an obligation of reciprocity towards refugees and those from Venezuela in particular, as Venezuela took in Chilean refugees decades ago. This is illustrated in the president's announcement of the "visa of democratic responsibility" extended to Venezuelans, which he justifies by "taking into consideration the serious democratic crisis that currently affects Venezuela, and recalling the humanitarian policy that Venezuela had that welcomed many Chileans in times when they needed it and who were seeking refuge on its borders" (Piñera 2018, authors' translation).

Accounting for the Chilean government's discourse on refugees

How can we account for the Chilean government's discourse on Venezuelan migrants?

1) Chile's discourse on migration is shaped by the way political actors define its national identity and collective memory. In particular, Chile's collective memory is shaped by the military dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet (from 1973 to 1990). His regime was responsible for murdering political opponents, massive human rights violations and forcing many members of the opposition into exile across the world. Chile's "return to democracy" is marked by attempts to redress these wrongs and strengthen the country's commitment to human rights. References to this troubled past are more prominent in the statements of the political opposition, but the government occasionally appeals to obligations deriving from this history as well.

2) Chile's discourse on migration is also shaped by how political actors perceive and define its national economic situation. Chile has had one of the highest economic growth rates of the region in the past decades and has recently turned into one of the few high-income countries in Latin America. In consequence, Chile was admitted to the OECD in 2010. These factors contribute to viewing rising migration as a proof of the country's success compared to other countries in the region.[4]

3) Finally, Chile's political discourse on migration is shaped by its foreign policy doctrine. On the one hand, Chile is a somewhat peripheral country at the margins of the world system. This sense of marginality might have been further supported by international isolation under Pinochet's military dictatorship. To make up for its marginal position, Chile has strived to establish itself as a serious partner in international relations, committed to multilateralism and international law. Reforming the country's migration law is seen as bringing it in line with international standards. On the other hand, particularly the right-wing government of Piñera maintains a critical distance to the new Socialist governments of Latin America (such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and at times Argentina). It warned that Chile could become like "Venezuela" under a left-wing government. Hence, the admission of migrants from Venezuela is a device to "shame" the Maduro government and prove Chile's anti-Socialist stance.

Summary

This paper has presented work in progress from a comparative analysis of political discourses on the admission or rejection of refugees in different countries around the world. Despite being subject to the norms and principles of international law that require states to open their borders to refugees

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[4] However, Chile is also one of the most unequal countries of the region. This led to social unrest at the end of 2019, which occurred after the debates we analyze here. It is an open question whether socioeconomic anxieties might contribute to a more restrictive discourse on migration.

seeking safety from persecution and serious human rights violations, states differ significantly in terms of their refugee policies and their justifications of these policies. We have tried to account for these country-specific political discourses by drawing on the notion of "discursive opportunity structures". We have illustrated how different discursive opportunity structures might have shaped the Turkish discourse on Syrian refugees and the Chilean discourse on Venezuelan migrants.

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