

THE 1951 GENEVA CONVENTION AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

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Abstract

The number of states committed to the international human rights institutions -whether an international organization or treaty- has increased in recent years. This upsurge has led scholars to examine what motivates states to join these institutions designed to constraint them on how to treat their own citizens. Existing studies have argued that states engaged in democratic transition are more likely to commit to the international human rights institutions because they want to credibly signal their resolution to follow democratic rules and international norms. Yet, much less attention has been paid to factors that motivate states to the commit to the 1951 Geneva Convention that imposes restrictions on how to approach refugees. In this study, I discuss that democratizing states are more likely to participate in the 1951 Geneva Convention that is a costly decision to show their commitment to democratic reforms.

Keywords: Forced migration, human rights, international law, treaty commitment, democratic transition.

Ethics Statement: This study has been prepared in accordance with the values of "Research and Publication Ethics".

1951 CENEVRE SÖZLEŞMESİ VE DEMOKRASIYE GEÇİŞ

Özet

Uluslararası insan hakları kurumlarına – bir uluslararası örgüt veya antlaşma- katılan devletlerin sayısı geçtiğimiz yıllarda artmıştır. Bu artış, akademisyenleri, devletleri kendi vatandaşlarına nasıl davranacakları konusunda sınırlamak üzere tasarlanan bu kurumlara katılmaya neyin teşvik ettiğini incelemeye yönlendirmiştir. Mevcut çalışmalar, demokrasiye geçiş yaşayan devletlerin uluslararası insan hakları kurumlarına katılma olasılıklarının daha yüksek olduğunu çünkü demokratik kurallar ile uluslararası normlara uyma kararlarını ciddi bir biçimde göstermeyi istediklerini öne sürmüştür. Ancak, devletleri, mültecilere nasıl yaklaşılacağı konusunda kısıtlamalar getiren 1951 Cenevre Sözleşmesi'ne katılmaya teşvik eden faktörlere çok daha az ilgi gösterilmiştir. Bu çalışmada, demokratikleşen devletlerin, demokratik reformlara bağlılıklarını göstermek için maliyetli bir karar olan 1951 Cenevre Sözleşmesi'ne katılma olasılıklarının daha yüksek olduğunu tartışıyorum.

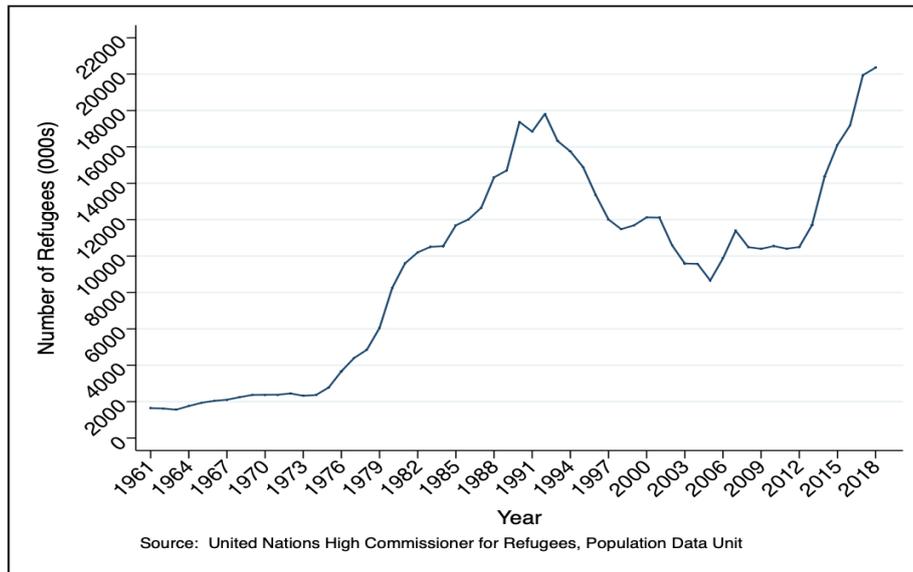
Anahtar Kelimeler: Zorunlu göç, insan hakları, uluslararası hukuk, antlaşmaya katılım, demokrasiye geçiş.

Etik Beyanı: Bu çalışma "Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği" değerlerine uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.

Introduction

The total number of refugees around the world has increased over time and reached an estimated 20.4 million (see Figure 1) in 2018 (UNHCR, 2018). People decide to leave their homes when they are exposed to political discrimination, regime transition or armed conflicts in their countries (Davenport, Moore and Poe, 2003; Moore and Shellman, 2004; Melander, Öberg and Hall, 2006). Once they cross the internationally recognized borders, they lose protection from their national governments. In order to ascertain the appropriate treatment towards refugees and protect their human rights, international community attempted to create a set of guidelines, laws and conventions. In this regard, the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (hereinafter the 1951 Geneva Convention or 1951 Convention) was adopted in Geneva in 1951, which was later supported by the 1967 Protocol. These documents define who a refugee is and set out the international standards for legal protection of refugees and the obligations of countries towards them. While a growing body of literature examines why states enter into specific human rights treaties (Hathaway, 2002; Neumayer, 2005; Vreeland, 2008; Hafner-Burton, 2012) and become members of international organizations (IOs) (Moravcsik, 2000; Pevehouse, 2005; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2006, 2008), we still know less about why states choose to participate in the international refugee regime. With this paper, my goal is to contribute to a growing body of research on treaty commitment by explaining the effect of regime transition on participation in the 1951 Geneva Convention.

Figure 1: Number of Refugees Worldwide



Signing the 1951 Convention is puzzling since it has a potential to create high costs for signatory states. First, states constrain their sovereignty by agreeing to provisions of the 1951 Convention. Building on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted on 10 December 1948, the 1951 Convention approves the principle that refugees will benefit basic rights and liberties that the receiving states provide to their own nationals. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), primary organization working under the 1951 Convention, creates pressure on signatory states to assist refugees and treat them equally regardless of their race, belief or country of origin (UN, 1951, art. 3). Additionally, the 1951 Convention confirms that states are bound by the principle of *non-refoulement* (UN, 1951, art. 33). According to this principle, refugees cannot be returned to “any country where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (UN, 1951, art. 33). Second, by being a party to the 1951 Geneva Convention, states agree to grant refugees living within their own territory a range of legal rights including housing, traveling, employment, and public education (UN, 1951, art. 2-32). Those measures are costly since offering those services to refugees generate pressure on the political, economic, and social life in receiving states (UNHCR, 1997). Thinking that participating in the international refugee regime might create costs for states, why do they want to commit to the 1951 Convention?

Previous work has two main explanations for commitments to the human rights institutions. One of them suggests that the benefits of participating in those institutions outweigh the possible costs. Moravcsik (2000) argues that newly democratic states are more likely to join international human rights institutions due to concerns on democratic consolidation. Membership in international institutions signal current leaders' determination to "lock in" ideal policies and also restrain the behavior of future governments (Moravcsik, 2000, p. 226). Another set of theories represented by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), on the other hand, argues that states are likely to adopt human rights norms on which sufficient number of states have previously agreed and expectation about assurance is created. In doing so, states would send a strong signal to the international community about their willingness to follow international norms and law.

Based on the literature, I argue that newly democratized states are more likely to participate in the international refugee regime than stable democracies or autocracies. New democracies use this move as a costly signal to their citizens about their commitment to strengthen democratic institutions and constrain later governments. It is also a credible signal to international community about their commitment to integrate into the international rules and norms. Therefore, newly democratic states would receive material rewards associated with this recognition. In this paper, I present evidence for my argument by employing a time-series cross-sectional analysis of the 1951 Geneva Convention on 177 countries over the period from 1950 to 2001.

This paper proceeds as follows: In the first section, I provide a brief information about the 1951 Geneva Convention, holding states responsible to provide protection to refugees. Next, I outline my argument about how democratic transitions affect the governments' decisions to enter into the international refugee regime. Then, I describe the data used in the empirical analysis. In the fourth and fifth sections, I summarize the findings for the effect of democratization on the probability of signing the 1951 Convention. In the sixth section, I conclude with a discussion of the implications of this study.

1. The 1951 Geneva Convention

The 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was originally designed for people who fled their homes due to the incidents that happened before 1 January 1951 and within Europe. With the 1967 Protocol, it was turned into a universal instrument.¹ The 1951 Convention combined earlier international agreements regarding refugees and developed an internationally coordinated approach towards refugee rights. While previous international refugee instruments were applied to particular groups of refugees, the 1951 Convention standardized the definition of "refugee" in Article 1.²

By signing the 1951 Geneva Convention, the receiving states accept to protect refugees on the receiving state's territory and to act them in compliance with internationally recognized standards. The most basic right for refugees is the right not to be subject to "refoulement", which is set out in Article 33 of the 1951 Convention. Additionally, states parties to the 1951 Convention accept that the rights protected by the Convention are enjoyed by all refugees regardless of their nationality, ethnic or racial origin (UN, 1951, art. 3). States must ensure the equality of treatments with citizens regarding certain rights such as freedom of religion (UN, 1951, art. 4), intellectual property rights (UN, 1951, art. 14), the right of access to courts (UN, 1951, art. 16), the right to elementary education (UN, 1951, art. 22), the right to public relief (UN, 1951, art. 23), or rights associated with employment, labor legislation, and social security (UN, 1951, art. 24), and those rights must apply to all refugees. However, with respect to some certain rights, the 1951 Convention provides only equality of treatment with other non-citizens. Those rights include the right of association (UN, 1951, art. 15), movable and immovable property rights (UN, 1951, art. 13), the right to work (UN, 1951, art. 17), the right to housing (UN, 1951, art. 21), the right to post-elementary education (UN, 1951, art. 22), and freedom of movement (UN, 1951, art. 26). Finally, Article 34 of the 1951 Geneva Convention strongly encourages the receiving states to

¹ As of 2015, 148 countries have acceded to the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol (UN, 2015).

² According to the Article 1 of the 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is a person who:

"owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (UN, 1951, art. 1).

grant refugees citizenship; thus, refugees are allowed to stay as long as they want and integrate into the society in the receiving states.³

The international community takes the measures to assure the protection of refugees' rights and physical safety because refugees lose protection from their home governments. The UNHCR supports the 1951 Geneva Convention, controls government compliance with international law, and provides emergency aid and material support to civilians who flee by providing them with food, water, shelter and medical care (UNHCR, 2018). However, refugee influx creates high costs for receiving states because refugee populations increase the demand for goods and services, strain countries' scarce resources, and thus create discontent among local population (UNHCR, 1997). So, why do states sign the 1951 Geneva Convention and accept this responsibility? In the next section, I present my argument explaining the reason of state willingness to bind themselves with the 1951 Geneva Convention.

2. Commitment to the 1951 Geneva Convention

Why do states participate in the international refugee regime? Recent research presents that refugee populations lead to negative political, economic, and social outcomes in the host states. In addition, states suffer sovereignty costs because parties to the 1951 Convention accept that they are bound to the principle of "non-refoulement" (UN, 1951, art. 33), and UNHCR is allowed to monitor how they treat refugees (UN, 1951, art. 35). Despite these potential costs, I argue that newly democratic states participate in the 1951 Convention for two reasons. First, new democracies want to send a credible signal to domestic audiences that the government is committed to strengthen the democratic institutions by adopting internationally recognized legal and humanitarian standards (Moravcsik, 2000). Second, they want to send a credible signal to international audiences for their willingness of the integration into the international rules and norms (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998).

I argue that being a party to the 1951 Convention is a costly signal to domestic and international audiences due to possible unfavorable outcomes associated with refugee migration. What are these costs? First of all, refugees create political costs because of their potential for spreading internal and international conflict. There is a risk that warrior groups will disguise in the refugee populations and benefit refugee protection provided by the international community (Lischer, 2005; Salehyan, 2007; Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguayo). Refugee influx threatens the security and stability of the receiving states by motivating a civil conflict especially when refugees have ethnic and political affiliations with contending groups residing in the receiving states (Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006; Ruegger, 2019). Moreover, refugee migration enhances the probability that the receiving and sending states are involved in a conflict (Salehyan, 2008).

Second, refugee migration imposes an economic burden on the receiving countries. The UNHCR's Global Trends 2018 report shows that 84% of the world's refugees live in developing countries, and that 33% of the refugees are hosted in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) (UNHCR, 2018). The fact that the UNHCR is funded voluntary contributions by individual governments and private donors makes the receiving country responsible for most of the expenses for refugees (UNHCR, 1997). The existence of large number of refugees and in return growing demand for nutrition, shelter and medical services cause significant costs for receiving countries, leading to economic disturbances such as increasing rents and commodity prices, and contributing to dissatisfaction against the receiving countries' governments (UNHCR, 1997).

Third, social costs arise due to the effects of refugee movements on public health and ethnic balance in societies. Refugee movements raise public health costs in receiving states by increasing the risk of contagious diseases (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Rowland and Nosten, 2001; Toole and Waldman, 1997). Additionally, refugees are not always welcome by people living in the receiving countries. Dominant groups in the receiving states would be intimidated when refugees are ethnically related to rival groups because they would create a potential to change ethnic balance in those countries (Brown, 1996; Salehyan, 2008).

Despite the aforementioned costs associated with the refugee influx, I argue that states that experience a democratic transition are more likely to sign the 1951 Geneva Convention since their gains exceed supposed

³ Article 34 of the 1951 Geneva Convention describes integration:

"The Contracting States shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees. They shall in particular make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings and to reduce as far as possible the charges and costs of such proceedings" (UN, 1951, art. 34).

costs. First of all, states that experience a democratic transition want to send signal to domestic and international audiences that the democratic institutions will be consolidated. Since the mid-1970s, the world has undergone a period of democratization during which many countries have experienced transitions to democracy (Huntington, 1991). While transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic ones has surged, many states have failed to sustain democracy and revert to a form of authoritarianism (Kaufman and Haggard, 2016). One reason for that is the lack of credible commitment to new policies and institutions (Przeworski, 1991; Keefer 2007; Svobik, 2008). More than often, unexpected situations lead to repeated modifications or ignorance of the new constitutions in transitional countries (Kaufman and Haggard, 2016). In order to prevent authoritarian reversals, governments in democratizing states need to take costly actions that credibly commit them to maintain democratic reforms (Przeworski, 1991; Keefer 2007; Svobik, 2008).

Recent research has argued that democratizing states are more likely to join international institutions, which is seen as a costly action (Moravcsik, 2000; Pevehouse 2005; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2006, 2008; Hafner-Burton, Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2015). In newly democratic states, the level of political uncertainty becomes high because it has been unknown whether incumbent democratic leaders would renege on their promises and centralize their power at the expense of their political rivals (Moravcsik, 2000; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2006, 2008). Joining international institutions that impose constraints on state sovereignty, current leaders in newly democratic states signal that they are credibly committed to democratic reforms (Moravcsik, 2000; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2006, 2008). Similarly, in democratizing states, dissatisfied groups might come to power through elections and then undermine democratic principles. Membership in international institutions limit the power of future governments that would want to overturn the policy reforms (Moravcsik, 2000; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2006, 2008).

Additionally, membership in an international institution could be seen as a type of global recognition (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Pevehouse, 2005). Participation in international institutions that are mostly consisted of democratic countries is a credible signal for willingness to sustain democracy (Pevehouse, 2005; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2006, 2008; Hafner-Burton et al., 2015). Recognition of a consolidated democracy in the international community would bring material benefits to newly democratized states. A strong link between democratic institutions and foreign direct investments (Jensen 2008), foreign trade flows (Morrow, Siverson and Tabares, 1998), and Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) (Mansfield and Milner, 2012) have been recently shown in the literature. On the other hand, violations of the norms spread by these institutions would prevent states from receiving the benefits.

Following the argument on the link between democratic transitions and membership in international institutions, I contend that new democracies are more inclined to sign the 1951 Convention because the benefits will outweigh the aforementioned costs imposed through their commitment. Since democratic reforms could be easily reversed by dissatisfied groups in newly democratic countries, leaders commit to the 1951 Convention in order to constrain future governments that may be less prone to protect refugee rights. International institutions require future governments to comply with their rules and thus prevent future authoritarian reversals (Moravcsik, 2000). Committing to the 1951 Convention, democratic leaders also demonstrate their commitment to respect not only their own citizens' rights but also other states' citizens' rights. By doing so, they show their willingness to take costly actions to sustain democratic policies. Besides, joining international refugee regime to solidify democratic institutions is important for leaders who rule the country during the transition period because they would be punished harshly if the transition is reversed.

Furthermore, democratizing states will be more likely to commit to the 1951 Convention since international recognition of a consolidated democracy is rewarding. Participation in the 1951 Convention that imposes constraints on how states treat refugees will send a strong signal to international audiences about newly democratic states' determination on following democratic policies. Equally important, international institutions assist democratizing states to consolidate democratic rule by creating a record on their reputation (Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2006, 2008). Signing the 1951 Convention will show that newly democratic states are willing to respect democratic reforms since any violation will harm their reputation, and eventually, prevent them receiving benefits associated with their commitment. Therefore, new democracies are more likely to commit to the 1951 Convention because they want to increase the credibility of current democratic policies, limit future governments' actions and have benefits stemming from membership in international norms and standards.

Compared to newly democratized countries, stable autocracies and democracies are less likely to join in the 1951 Convention because the costs of signing it might exceed the benefits. Leaders in stable democracies

would be less likely to sign the 1951 Convention because they already respect to human rights and do not need to lose their freedom of action when their constituents experience problems associated with refugees. Leaders in stable democracies are more likely to be concerned about whether the problems led by refugee migration affect their constituents' content. Since in democracies people have elections to punish leaders whose decisions affect constituents' lives in a negative way, leaders should be careful about the possible outcomes of their decisions. One example is India, which is a stable democracy and has received large number of refugees over time. India is not a State party to the 1951 Convention; thus, refugees in India are subject to the provisions of domestic law. India has been unwilling to sign the 1951 Convention to ensure the protection of refugee rights in order not to lose its freedom of action due to political, economic and social consequences of refugee movements (Weiner, 1993).

Similarly, stable autocracies are less likely to be part to the 1951 Convention because, first, they would not want to accept to provide certain legal rights to refugees without discrimination. They use clientelist spending to sustain support of their constituents (Siverson, Morrow, de Mesquita, and Smith, 2003). In order to remain longer in the office, autocrats politicize public resources (Greene, 2010). Therefore, autocratic leaders enjoying clientelist practices in their countries would like to keep their rights to choose the ones that they are willing to grant rights. Second, autocratic leaders are more likely to use repression as an instrument to govern than their democratic counterparts (Davenport and Armstrong, 2004; Poe and Tate, 1994). Economic, political or cultural problems associated with refugees would increase the possibility of dissent in the society, repression in return, and costs of autocratic leader survival because repression is costly. Therefore, stable autocrats would not prefer to take that risk. Moreover, under Article 35 of the 1951 Refugee Convention, states agree to cooperate with UNHCR in the exercise of its functions and to help UNHCR supervise the implementation of the provisions in the 1951 Convention. Article 35 also opens a door for naming and shaming by UNHCR in case that the countries do not treat refugees in congruence with the 1951 Convention. This provision would make most autocracies unwilling to commit to the 1951 Convention because it increases the sovereignty costs that states bear.

Ultimately, the theory proposed here presents that states that experience a democratic transition are more likely to demonstrate their willingness to share responsibility for refugee protection. In order to signal their incentive for consolidating democratic institutions and integrating into international rules and norms, new democracies are more likely to sign the 1951 Convention. Since this is a high-cost signal due to the political and socio-economic costs related to refugee migration, it is more likely to be understood as a credible commitment by domestic and international audiences. The preceding discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

- H1: States that experience a democratic transition are more likely to sign the 1951 Convention.

3. Research Design

I examine the support for my hypothesis using a time series cross-sectional research design. The dataset covers 177 countries, where available, for a period from 1950 to 2001. Although the temporal domain begins in 1950, it changes slightly across the measure of the total number of refugees and the number of refugees from neighbors. The unit of analysis is the country-year. The dependent variable is coded 1 if a state, i , joins the 1951 Geneva Convention in time t , or 0 otherwise. Since I attempt to explain the probability whether or not a state commits to the 1951 Geneva Convention, I code the dependent variable 1 only for years in which states join in the refugee protection regime. Ongoing treaty years are coded 0.

The main independent variable is *Democratic Transition*. Following Hafner-Burton et al. (2015), I measure regime change and durability over five-year period using Polity IV dataset (Jagers and Marshall, 2007). First, I measure the regime type using a twenty-one-point index from the Polity IV dataset, which ranges from -10 (strongly autocratic) to +10 (strongly democratic) with higher values indicating higher levels of democracy (Jagers and Marshall, 2007). Former literature defines states as democratic, where democracy is indicated by a polity score higher than 6 on the -10 to +10 Polity IV scale. States are characterized as autocracies when they have a polity score of lower than -6 on the 21-point index. States are defined as anocracies when they have a polity score between -6 and +6. Next, the independent variable, *Democratic Transition*, is coded 1 when a state experiences a transition to democracy from either an autocracy or anocracy or to anocracy from an autocracy in between time $t-5$ and time t , or 0 otherwise. I expect the coefficient of *Democratic Transition* to be positive.

In order to accurately establish the relationship between democratization and signing the 1951 Geneva Convention, I include control variables that may affect this relationship. First, I add a variable indicating the annual number of refugees in signatory states because refugee flows may motivate receiving states to seek international assistance from UNHCR and increase the possibility of states to commit to the international refugee regime. The data for the number of refugees come from the UNHCR, which publishes annual data on the number of refugees and information about the refugee-receiving and -sending countries from 1960 to today. The data are given as annual dyads reporting the stock of refugees from the country of origin in the country of asylum in a given year. I transform the dyadic refugee data into a monadic one by summing all numbers of refugees in the country of asylum in year t regardless of the country of origin and logged that number. In addition to the total number of refugees in receiving states, I also add another variable indicating the log number of refugees from neighbors in a state in year t . Data for the log number of refugees from neighbors come from Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006).

Following Mansfield and Pevehouse (2006), I add two variables in order to control for the effect of economic wealth on the probability of participating in the international refugee regime: one is for a state i 's per capita GDP in year t , and the other one is for the population of a state i in time t . The data for those variables come from World Bank's World Development Indicators (WB, 2012).

4. Results

I use probit estimation to test whether or not transition to democracy within five years leads to a higher probability of signing the 1951 Geneva Convention since the dependent variable, commitment to the 1951 Convention, is a binary variable. To deal with the issue of correlation of errors within panels, I cluster the standard errors according to the units, which are country-years. The results are reported in Table 1. Model 1 in Table 1 provides strong support for my hypothesis. As suggested, the main independent variable in this study, *Democratic Transition*, is positively signed and statistically significant, showing that countries experiencing democratic transition within 5 years are more likely to sign the 1951 Convention.

Several other results stand out in Model 1 in Table 1. As expected, an increase in Polity IV score has a significant positive effect on commitment to the 1951 Convention. This result shows that states are more likely to join the international refugee regime as they become more democratic. Interestingly, the estimated coefficient of economic development measured by the level of GDP per capita is negative. Although this suggests that wealthier states are less likely to sign the 1951 Convention, it actually has no effect on membership in international refugee regime since it is insignificant. Population, on the other hand, has a significant negative effect on the commitment to the 1951 Convention as presented in Model 1 in Table 1, indicating that more populous states are less likely to join the international refugee regime. On the other hand, I find no impact for total number of refugees and the number of refugees from neighbors, which means that hosting large number of refugees has no significant effect on the probability of signing the 1951 Convention.

Table 1: 1951 Geneva Convention and Democratic Transition

	(1)	(2)
	1951 GC	1951 GC
Democratic Transition _(t-5)	0.294* (0.015)	0.320* (0.018)
GDP Per Capita _(t-1) (Logged)	-0.0668 (0.195)	-0.251** (0.004)
Population _(t-1)	-0.0524*	-0.0255

(Logged)	(0.017)	(0.266)
Regime Type _(t-1)	0.0326** (0.002)	0.0428*** (0.000)
Refugees _(t-1) (Logged)	0.00912 (0.657)	0.0377 (0.101)
Refugees from Neighbors _(t-1) (Logged)	-0.0132 (0.556)	-0.0370 (0.120)
Communist		0.585** (0.005)
Cold War		0.428** (0.002)
Civil War in Neighbors _(t-1)		0.107 (0.260)
MID Onset _(t-1)		0.248 (0.267)
Latin America		-0.249* (0.025)
Eastern Europe		0.317 (0.083)
North Africa & Middle East		-0.760** (0.006)
Sub-Saharan Africa		-0.220 (0.220)
Asia		-0.776* (0.010)
Constant	-1.307**	-0.298

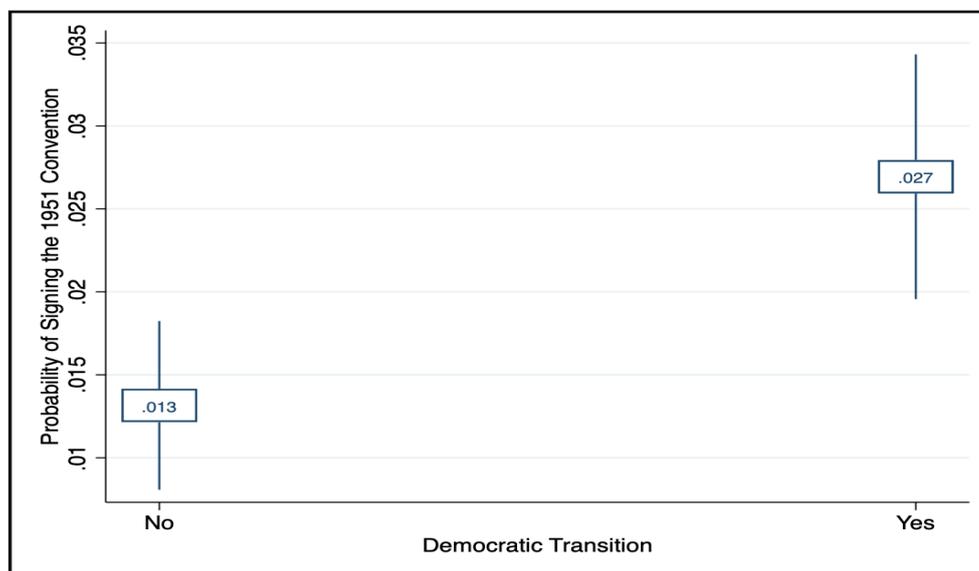
	(0.008)	(0.699)
Observations	4255	3599

p-values in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Standard errors are clustered by country.

Since it is not straightforward to interpret the coefficients from the probit model, Figure 2 presents the predicted probability of signing the 1951 Convention. Holding other variables at their means, the predicted probability of commitment to the Convention raises from 1.3% to 2.7% when the value of the key independent variable in this study, *Democratic Transition*, changes from zero to one, and this effect is significant. Even though this seems like a low probability, it displays more than a 100% increase in probabilities over the baseline case. The result confirms that democratization leads to higher probability of entering the international refugee regime.

Figure 2: Predicted Probability of Signing the 1951 Convention with 95% Cis



5. Robustness Checks

The initial results demonstrate that democratizing states are more likely to join the international refugee regime. In order to ensure that the results are not sensitive to the model specification, it is important to control for other variables that may affect the relationship between democratization and commitment to the 1951 Convention. For this reason, I add several variables that are accounted by the literature on international law (Vreeland 2008; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2006, 2008; Hafner-Burton et al., 2015). Despite the inclusion of these variables, the main result that democratizing states are more likely to commit to the 1951 Convention remains unchanged.

For further robustness checks, I first control the likelihood that states with increasing number of past disputes are less likely to be a part of the international refugee convention. States with higher number of disputes might not want to become a part of international institutions in order not to be restricted when they take security related measures, or they might not be welcomed by other members of international institutions (Hafner-Burton et al., 2015). To control this effect, I include a variable measuring the number of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) that a state i has in year t . Data on the number of MIDs is taken from the MID 4 data (Palmer, dOrazio, Kenwick and Lane, 2015). The data identify MIDs as incidents of historical disputes between countries, including but not limited to threats to use of force, alerts, and military mobilizations. Second, I add a variable for civil wars in neighbors considering that internal conflicts lead to refugee flows towards neighboring states. Data for this variable come from Salehyan and Gleditsch (2006).

Next, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of the former communist countries attempted to participate in Western organizations, specifically human rights organizations (Vreeland, 2008; Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2008; Hafner-Burton et al., 2015). In order to control the possibility that the increased demand from the former Communist countries creates the correlation between democratic transition and signing the 1951 Convention, I code the variable *Communist* 1 for states that were communist during the Cold War era until the communist governments are removed from power. Similarly, it is possible that the increase in democratic transitions in the post-Cold War era affects the relationship between the commitment to the 1951 Convention and regime changes. In order to control that possibility, I operationalize a dummy variable for the Cold War era which is coded 1 for 1991 and before. In addition, following the argument that patterns of membership in international institutions may be similar within geographic regions (Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2006, 2008; Hafner-Burton et al., 2015), I create six dummy variables indicating all regions -Western Europe, Latin America, Eastern Europe, North Africa and Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia. I exclude the dummy variable for Western Europe from all models as the reference category.

Model 2 in Table 1 reports the results for robustness checks. As expected, the coefficient estimate of my explanatory variable, *Democratic Transition*, is still positive and significant, presenting evidence that democratizing states are more likely to commit to the 1951 Convention. Similarly, being a formerly communist country has a significant positive effect on the probability of signing the 1951 Convention, indicating that the fall of communist governments leads to a higher probability to sign the 1951 Convention. Additionally, the significant positive effect of Cold War variable suggests that states are more likely to join in the international refugee regime in that era. Although both civil wars in neighbors and MID onset have positive relationship with the likelihood of commitment to the 1951 Convention, these effects are insignificant. The estimated coefficients of regional dummy variables *Latin America*, *North Africa and Middle East*, and *Asia* are negative and statistically significant, presenting that states in these regions are less likely to commit to the 1951 Convention compared to the *Western European* states (reference category).

After including additional variables that might affect the relationship between democratization and the probability of signing the 1951 Convention, democratic improvement measured still increases the likelihood of participation in international refugee regime. Interestingly, negative sign of the economic development becomes significant, showing that wealthier states are less likely to sign the 1951 Convention. While the population still has a negative effect on the joining the international refugee regime, this effect becomes insignificant in Model 2 in Table 1. Both of the variables for the number of refugees in the receiving states and the number of refugees from neighbors keep their signs and significance in Model 2 in Table 1, indicating that the number of refugees has no significant effect on the likelihood to sign the 1951 Convention.

Conclusion

The increased number of forcibly displaced people before and after the World War II raised a concern among international community about protection of their rights. With this concern, the international refugee regime was created based on the 1951 Convention, the universal international instrument for the protection of refugees. Yet, international refugee regime brings significant responsibilities for the receiving states. Under the 1951 Convention, states accept to grant to refugees, who reside on their territory, a range of legal rights including housing, traveling, employment, and public education (UN, 1951, art. 2-32). In addition, states accept to ensure respect for the basic rights of refugees and guaranteeing that no-one will be returned against their will to a country in which they fear persecution (UN, 1951, art. 33). Due to their responsibilities emerging from the 1951 Convention, states suffer political, economic, and social costs additional to the costs related to the reduced sovereignty.

Looking at the costs associated with the commitment to the refugee regime, in this paper, I address the puzzle: Why do states commit to the 1951 Geneva Convention despite its costs? Drawing on the international human rights treaty commitment literature, I argue that new democracies are more likely to sign the 1951 Geneva Convention because they need to send costly signals to domestic and international audiences. First, leaders in new democracies want to constrain future leaders' behaviors by committing to the international refugee protection. Therefore, future leaders will be urged to treat refugees living on their land in congruence with the international law. Second, leaders in new democracies want to display their determination to integrate into the international norms and standards by signing the 1951 Convention. Leaders in stable autocracies and democracies, on the other hand, are less likely to sign the 1951 Convention because the costs of negative externalities created by refugees might be higher than the benefits the treaty would bring.

The evidence presented in this study shows that democratic transitions increase the likelihood of signing the 1951 Geneva Convention. Therefore, democratic transitions make states more willing to commit to protect not only their citizens' rights but also refugees' rights. One implication from this study is that promoting democratic values around the world leads to a better international refugee protection. Another implication is that better refugee protection through democratization would reduce crimes that mostly victimizes vulnerable refugees.

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Appendix

Table A1: Summary Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
The 1951 Convention	7154	0.02	0.13	0	1
Democratic Transition	4763	0.56	0.50	0	1
GDP per capita	6480	8.16	1.01	5.62	10.74
Population	6911	8.84	1.65	4.64	14.05
Regime Type	6578	-0.22	7.58	-10	10
Total Number of Refugees	6990	2.69	4.57	0	15.30
Refugees from Neighbors	6990	2.19	4.29	0	15.30
Communist	7154	0.03	0.17	0	1
Cold War	7154	0.73	0.44	0	1
CW in Neighbors	6990	0.53	0.50	0	1
MID Onset	6187	0.03	0.17	0	1