Why do civil society organisations working on international protection tend to have positive dispositions towards refugees? A macro-level opportunity structure model

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Abstract: Studies of civil society organisations (CSOs) working on international protection related issues have typically focused on those positively disposed towards refugees, without asking either whether this is the full range of dispositions in CSOs or why negatively disposed individuals appear not to mobilise in the same way. Using a novel survey of CSOs in Europe we show that most have positive dispositions, explained by attitudes towards international protection, which incentivises such organisational forms. By contrast, those with negative dispositions are incentivised to focus their efforts on the party-political sphere, to regulate public policy to limit international protection.

Keywords: civil society organisations; CSOs; refugees; international protection; opportunity structures; attitudes; party politics.

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1   Introduction

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are a critical part of the system of international protection of refugees. Acting independently or in conjunction with bodies such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) or national public authorities, groups provide extensive direct and indirect support to millions of individuals around the world, from emergency relief and rescue to education, resettlement assistance and family reunion. As much as the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1961 Protocol were signed by and bind states, it has become evident that without the contribution of CSOs the practical implementation of those provisions would be much weaker, notably on provision of direct services (Loescher, 2013; Steiner et al., 2010; Lester, 2005).

Various studies (cf. Bagavos and Kourachanis, 2022; Martin and Nolte, 2020; Mayblin and James, 2019; Garkisch et al., 2017) have highlighted the scale and diversity of this work, placing CSOs firmly as defenders of the Convention's norms about the necessity of protecting refugees' rights and ensuring support on the ground. This role has only become more pronounced in the past decade with the formulation and agreement of the global compacts on refugees (GCR) and for safe, orderly and regular migration (GCM), which institutionalised roles for CSOs alongside states and international organisations in the formulation and implementation of policy (Clark-Ginsberg et al., 2022; Arnold-Fernandez, 2019).

Alongside this, it is widely acknowledged the CSOs play a vital role in implementing solidarity initiatives and are integral to a functioning democracy (McLaverty, 2002; Scholte, 2002). This has become even more evident as a result of the impact of the 2008–2010 economic crisis, austerity measures – a label under which the state progressively has retrenched from its role as welfare provider (Featherstone et al., 2012; Dagdeviren et al., 2019) – and the recent challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic so that a variety of CSOs have, at the street level, responded to the demand for concrete implementation of solidarity initiatives in the form of social services and advocacy (e.g., Rother, 2020).

One question that appears not to have been much addressed in the literature is that of why CSOs are so positively disposed towards refugees; even Borri and Fontanari's (2017) otherwise comprehensive discussion of such groups' work in relation to refugees in Italy and Germany only contrasts positive CSOs against more mixed patterns in civil society more widely. As their name implies, these groups emerge from civil society, as collections of individuals move from the identification of a problem to collective action

to address that problem through the institution of an organisational framework. We know from Europe-wide public opinion surveys that attitudes towards refugees and migrants are diverse in all states (De Coninck, 2020; Dempster and Hargrave, 2017), from highly positive and inclusive to highly critical and exclusionary. If we bring together these two points, then we might usefully ask why anti-refugee CSOs seem to be so rare, given the absence of an a priori bar to their existence.

This article argues that this is the result of the interplay between attitudes and opportunity structures. Attitudes draw on individuals' dispositions towards the world, which then find express through, around and against contingent and structural opportunities: Opportunity structures are thus a combination of endogenous preferences and exogenous constraints or enablers (such as access to finances, an ability to effect material change or even the impact of public opinion: see Wyss et al., 2022; Arzheimer and Carter, 2006). The work draws on a new survey of CSOs working on international protection, and is informed by a cleavage model of attitudes towards such protection, ranging from nativistic defense of only those within the same national community to globalist help of anyone in need, whoever and wherever they might be (Sicakkan, 2021). From this, some dynamics are identified that incentivise those supportive of refugees towards the formation of a CSO while simultaneously pulling those more critical towards party politics (with its focus on controlling state policy) to achieve their aims.

As such, the diversity of public opinion is represented in organised groups that emerge from civil society, but with a basic difference in the route that is taken, mirroring different understandings of the issues involved and different identifications of the solutions needed to address perceived problems.

The model that this work establishes provides a valuable insight into the broader political context within which international protection CSOs operate. Party politics does not simply provide a more attractive opportunity for those critical of refugees, but also allows for the shifting of government policy: indeed, this is what makes it attractive in the first place. Whether national governments include such critical voices or just attempt to adjust policy to prevent them obtaining additional power, the effect is to make the terrain more problematic for pro-refugee CSOs to operate, as seen in the restrictions in Poland under the Law and Justice government (McMahon and Niparko, 2020; Rossell Hayes and Dudek, 2020; Krzyzanowski, 2018). At the next level, such government shifts also compromise international action, be that through the convention or the global compacts.

Moreover, the model also has potential application beyond international protection, since the asymmetric opportunity structures and incentives logically apply to related fields. In particular, the foundation of protection in abstracted liberal rights makes it akin to the general post-second World War architecture of human rights and to the liberal constitutional norms of rule-of-law and limited government. The challenges to all of these areas are well-documented (Adamidis, 2021; Goold and Lazarus, 2019; Roth, 2017) and a better understanding of how different kinds of action might be working at cross-purposes with those holding different views could provide improved strategy and tactics.

The article starts by setting out the core theoretical tools to allow for an exploration of this dynamic, before establishing a set of theoretically informed expectations for those supportive and those critical of international protection and of refugees. Data from a CSO survey and from a pre-existing dataset on party-political positions is presented and discussed, together with implications for the on-going provision of international protection.

Ultimately this study contributes to multiple bodies of research. It extends research on CSOs broadly intended, as the large scale survey carried out offers an original angle to examine how values and beliefs relating to migrant and refugee issues may be mobilised to steer (individual or collective) action. Moreover, the variety of attitudes and opinions grouped into the cleavage model allows us to inspect closely how migration as a highly debated topic may create conflict within both political camps (i.e., progressive and conservative) and how it can be used for political expediency, especially by radical right nationalist and populist agendas. The overarching framework of the global compacts also provides an additional value as to how decision making at different levels intersect.

2   From cleavages to opportunity structures

The starting point for this work has to be a consideration of the nature of civil society itself, since CSOs, political parties and state structures ultimately rest on the foundation of inter-personal activity that is relatively unstructured itself. The boundaries of civil society emerge less from any intrinsic or internal features and more from its contrast on the one hand to the personal world of the individual and on the other to the formalised architectures of social and political institutions. Within this space, people are relatively free to choose when and how to engage in collective activity, as they move from attitudes and dispositions towards mobilisation and action. Thus, Amnesty International grew from a very specific focus on prisoners of conscience in the early 1960s to become a more general defender of human rights with the size and reputation to push governments to review and reverse legal processes (Hopgood, 2013).

CSOs, as we understand them here, are highly diverse; from very extensive and long-lasting international organisations such as the Red Cross system or Médecins Sans Frontières to very localised charities working within one locality over a short time frame (e.g., Care4Calais). Given the broad spectrum of entities that fall under the category and the lack of agreement as to what actually can be considered as a CSO, scholarship over the years has increasingly accepted the idea that establishing a typology would reduce the richness and diversity of the concept (including cognate definitions such as: NGO, third sector organisations, non-profit or not-for-profit organisation, social economy, etc. See Rainey et al., 2017). We argue that a pragmatic approach which focuses on *norms* or values, *forms* and *spaces* (Edwards and Gaventa, 2014) can help us capture components that allow a more analytical approach as a vehicle to understand, describe, and make comparisons. Any organisation that is not a public body nor a political party would fall within this broad definition, within which we still find much commonality of attitude and action. They differentiate themselves from public bodies and political parties by not seeking to be, or gain direct control of, the formal apparatus of the state, but instead operate around and alongside it, pursuing aims that serve a discrete and limited set of objectives.

In the broadest of terms, individuals have a choice between directing those efforts towards the formal architecture of political institutions or towards the more organised end of civil society (Lang, 2012; Hasenfeld and Gidron, 2005). The former route ranges from voting (the classic mechanism in liberal democracies for translating social preferences into political action) to more active engagement in party politics, all with a view to shaping public policy directly. The latter route leads towards participation in CSOs, partly to shape public policy (through lobbying and public education) but also to create

capacity to undertake actions directly in the field of interest (consider Mair, 2023's seminal discussion of the systemic shifts in contemporary governance). These routes highlight a key difference between CSOs and political parties, namely that even if the two forms of organisations may share similarities in terms of *form*, the *norms* or *values* that sustain them are different. Political parties explicitly pursue public office as opposed to CSOs which can have much more heterogenous objectives, including non-utilitarian values of service and cooperation. Solidarity ultimately drives CSOs, and that is why they are more inclined to embrace heterogeneity and transcend boundaries. Moreover, if we abide by Sartori's classical definition of political parties as "any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or non-free), candidates for public office" (cited in Russell et al., 2011, p.7) we can observe another difference in the realm of *norm* (or values) and *space*. Political parties operate in a nation-state system framework which by definition posits the homogeneity of the nation together with the (contested) notion of universality of rights within that national polity (see Mathieu and Bodet, 2019).

This understanding of civil society therefore rests on two main pillars: attitudes and opportunity structures. Individuals need to have a personal set of objectives that can shape their understanding, preferences and hierarchy of activities to undertake, but these then have to be contextualised by the situation in which they find themselves. As Usherwood (2021) discusses, there is a danger in conceptual stretching when it comes to opportunity structures, especially if attitudes are folded in as just one more endogenous factor, so here we argue that a parsimonious approach is required to maintain more clarity about how elements fit together.

Consequently, we begin with a simple model of attitudes, based on Sicakkan's (2021; also Sicakkan and Atak, 2021) cleavage model, which is precisely focused on attitudes towards international protection itself. Sicakkan argues that there is a set of 'structural, resilient, and mutually reinforcing conflicts, contestations, and collaborations between political actors over a web of global political issues' [Sicakkan, (2021), p.5] that delineate a space for public and political debate, drawing on differing world views, be that at the more abstracted level of the nature and role of the state in our lives or the more specific application to international protection. Indeed, that connection of levels is particularly apposite in the case of international protection, since it involves questions of borders and states' control thereover, as well as the issue of what status and rights individuals who cross such borders should be able to access: international protection is thus a reflection on the nature of national communities and how much states are beholden to international commitments or norms (Sicakkan, 2021).

Sicakkan suggests that there are four principal positions that exist within this cleavage model, which have been borne out by its application against public opinion (Sicakkan and Heiberger, 2022), legal frameworks (Castecker and Ecker, 2022) and government policy (Longo and Fontana, 2022). In the most restrictive grouping of nativists, it is solely the national community that is in need of protection and so only those diasporic individuals who return to that community who can expect any attention or support and then only on the terms of the community itself, rather than any international conventions. For those in this group, international protection is a challenge to internal values and has no traction except insofar as it conforms to community values: refugees beyond any returning diaspora are seen as intrinsic and permanent outsiders that have no place within the receiving community.

At the other end of the spectrum, globalists place international protection in a very central position in their worldview, as an embodiment of liberal human rights that create fundamental and universal obligations on everyone to act to ensure their realisation. International protection is thus not simply a system of international obligations, but also a national and personal moral duty. Refugees are removed from any identification as members of this or that community and instead become treated as individuals in need of help by consequence of their physical relocation.

Between these two counterpoised positions, we find more mixed understandings. Nation-statists retain the nativist view of the dominance of the national community, but in a less exclusive manner, being open to the concept of international protection as a positive concept in abstract, albeit without treating it as a set of obligations in practice. Finally, regionalists take the globalist view of international protection as a necessity to act upon but limit themselves to implementation domestically and with the local region of the world as they marry up human rights with pragmatic views about the extent to which they can shape more distant regions. Both nation-statists and regionalists work towards making international protection exist on the ground, but typically decoupled from the moral dimension that informs globalists.

These four groups and their different understandings of international protection provide not merely a typology of attitudes but also a key to unlocking the relevant opportunity structures that might apply to their choices of mobilisation. At the globalist end of the spectrum, there is an implication that all action should internalise the notion of protection. This might include trying to change local, national and international structures of governance and public policy to mainstream such values, but it also creates a strong incentive to work with and provide direct support to refugees themselves. This is especially true if governance and public policy is seen as falling short in implementing protection or in managing particular situations, such as new flows of refugees. By contrast, the intrinsic marginality of the refugee in the nativist worldview suggests that such people are unlikely to sit in a dominant position in the range of actions that might be undertaken. Instead, it is more likely that nativists will concentrate their attention and efforts on defending social and political structures that they consider to be affected or attacked by refugees, since those structures are more crucial in the maintenance of national communities. Regionalists and nation-statists sit somewhere between these two positions, recognising a role in providing international protection and support for refugees, albeit in a more bounded way.

The broad tension between globalists and nativists thus sets up a differentiated understanding of what pathway to action might best serve positions within the cleavage model. If we can accept these two groups as being broadly representative of what we have already termed positively- and negatively-disposed positions towards refugees then we can mark out how this translates into more detailed expectations about what to do.

For those negatively disposed (including nativists), refugees exist as an external function of the national community. Since there is no sense of international protection creating obligations towards refugees, it is unlikely that many of those holding such views will want to engage in direct actions towards them. In *extremis*, those with violently racist or xenophobic views might seek to directly attack or harass refugees in their state, but such action is almost always illegal and so also not conducive to the formation of formal CSOs structures. A more potentially productive path (from their perspective) is therefore to seek to work indirectly by shaping public policy, using negative discourse and portrayals of migrants and refugees to generate pressure for more

restrictive or punitive state action either by securing public office or by making other parties of government move towards such positions to minimise electoral losses: nativist views lend themselves to the creation of nationalist and/or populist party-political programs (Guia, 2016). Here matters relating to international protection or to refugees can be reframed as part of (respectively) questions of exclusive and/or chauvinistic national identity and community or of oppression of an authentic communal will by a corrupting elite. While based on different ideological foundations, in practice there is a similar articulation by both populists and nationalists, through restrictions in immigration policy or opposition to multiculturalism, each asserting the needs of an imagined local community of 'us' counterposed to a threatening 'them' that sets them apart from other political families (Singh, 2021).

By contrast, those positively disposed (including globalists), the moral imperative to enact international protection at all times in all places produces a very different picture. In stark contrast to those negatively disposed, direct action is both generally legal and effective. This effectiveness derives from the opportunities offered by CSO formation: groups can be highly specialised and optimised for their designated tasks, able to make relatively rapid adaptations to emergent needs (see Meyer and Simsa, 2018 for a recent example; Hall, 2013). This is particularly useful if there is a view that public bodies have fallen short in their work or have become politicised: CSOs typically operate with fewer constraints, with those running them being drawn from a cohesive section of public attitudes. With international protection often involving cross-border issues, the more flexible and adaptable options offered by CSOs also look attractive when compared to formal inter-state mechanisms.

At the same time, positively disposed individuals and groups also will look to taking more indirect action relating to refugees, both towards publics (through information and education campaigns) and towards state structures (to maintain and extend what international protection exists in policy). However, while the national construction of political spheres favours the nativist subsuming of refugees into nationalist and populist programs, it is harder to turn globalist positions into something similar, precisely because of their intrinsic internationalism (Sicakkan, 2021). Moreover, it is apparent that the stagnation of the international protection regime globally since the 1960s – global compacts notwithstanding – places more emphasis on the upkeep of what already exists in terms of legal obligations than on the extension of those.

3   Methodology

To test whether this differentiated opportunity structure model works, we combine a novel survey of CSOs in multiple European states with existing research on political parties. Critically, the CSO survey starts from a position of looking at any such group that is externally associated with refugees and migrants, rather than simply those that profess to work with these individuals.

It is important to note here that we concur with critical migration scholars with regard to the limitations brought about by categories such *migrant* or *refugee* (and, by the same token, every essentialised 'other' such as 'economic migrant', 'clandestine' or 'illegal migrant' to name but a few). These appear to be more like constructed figures created by public discourse, law and policy, apt to maintain a *categorical fetishism* or as Crawley and Skleparis put it 'empty containers […] into which people can be placed […] like a

small child putting bricks into a series of coloured buckets', yet fail to capture adequately subjective and objective drivers of migration, such as familial ties, economic or environmental pressures to move [Crawley and Skleparis, (2018), p.49; cf. De Genova, 2002]. As such, the categories describe better the implicit values of those who talk about and act upon them than they do the people themselves. Therefore for the purpose of this work the use of migrant or migration will be taken at face value as displayed by CSOs' outputs and responses from the survey conducted: since we are concerned with the views of the CSOs are described in their own terms, rather than any external classification, this allows for a less distorting way of accessing this, in line with our intention to apply Sicakkan's cleavage model.

As part of the project within which this work was conducted, a separate team produced a list of organisations proximally linked to mentions of 'refugees', 'migrants' and 'asylum seekers' (and variations thereof) in social media posts in 17 countries between 2015 and 2019, using data from Reddit, Twitter and YouTube.[1] This proximity was assumed to represent some association between organisations and refugees and/or migrants, potentially reflecting an interest of the former in those latter. Automated processing using word2vec models (Goldberg and Levy, 2014) that drew on databases of organisations and bodies marked up all identifiable cases, from which CSOs were extracted to form the target list for the present research.[2] Aware of the diversity of CSOs [for example, community-based organisations, trade unions or voluntary, faith-based organisations, and other non-governmental organisations, to name a few (Anheier, 2005; Garkisch et al., 2017)] we have been fully aware of the risks of generating specious outcomes based on the particularities of how the boundaries are drawn. In this case, the criteria for inclusion as a CSO were solely that there was an evident organisational structure, that it was not a public body or treaty-based international organisation and that it was not a political party, in line with the Anglo-Saxon scholarly debate (Salamon and Sokolwski, 2016).

One hundred twenty one CSOs in 14 European states and in general international operation were identified in this way.[3] While this is evidently not a full coverage of CSOs, it does provide a well-grounded evidence base with a more uniform cut-off of smaller groups that have not been linked in public social media discussion to the key themes in international protection and there is no a *priori* exclusion of groups that might have been negatively-disposed (or indeed, indifferent) towards refugees. As a result, it allows us to capture the full range of positions within Sicakkan's cleavage model, with coding by researchers on the basis of their publicly available self-produced statements and materials, including activities undertaken by groups in the period 2019–2022, as well as media reports to enhance triangulation. The survey contain both descriptive and analytical elements: on the former without an operational metric for estimating the size of CSOs, we limit ourselves to providing aggregated results across the full sample; on the latter, Sicakkan's model was used to create markers of categories. Data were cross-checked and recoded by separate coders to ensure robust evaluations, even though direct language on attitudes towards international protection was rarely encountered. The authors did have a small number of direct interactions with CSO personnel where there was a deeper exploration of relevant issues, which was consistent with the survey findings, providing increased confidence in the process adopted even as the scope of the survey could be much more extensive than otherwise possible.

For political parties, we make use of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey's 2019 wave of coding of European parties across the same European states as the CSO survey (CHES:

Bakker et al., 2020). However, neither CHES nor a new coding would allow for the direct use of the cleavage model's categories with parties: they are almost all organisations with multiple policies among which international protection might not be particularly developed or expressed explicitly. Instead, the survey provides a proxy via its data for all parties on immigration policy and on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers (multiculturalism versus assimilation). This data captures pertinent dimensions of international protection (namely entry and treatment), as well as salience, which enables comparison with CSOs on the extent to which such questions are important in overall policy. As Abou-Chadi (2016) notes, immigration policy in parties is driven by a wide range of ideological and institutional factors and consequently contains more nuance and variety than is represented here. However, our primary interest here is with the function of parties as office-seeking groups, so even this imperfect measure provides a useful indication of the distribution of preferences and saliences across the party-political system. Voting data from the last relevant national election is also attached to the dataset.

4   Results

CSOs present a distinctive picture with regard to positioning within the cleavage model. 96 of the 121 groups (75%) with identifiable positions on the cleavage model were identifiable as globalist in position, with a further 17% being marked as regionalist: 1% were nation-statist and 3% nativist. Importantly, these definitions obscure the high degree of overlap in attitudes, given that all the regionalist groups identified present clearly as holding strong universalistic conceptions of international protection and only fall into their category by consequence of stating a geographically circumscribed area of operations.

By contrast, there are only a small handful of nativist CSOs that can be attributed to positions within the cleavage model. While few in number, their existence does underline the need to consider the full variety of views towards refugees when looking at this field. As much as universalistic attitudes predominate in the CSO landscape, more antagonistic groupings are also in operation. Moreover, in a rather different way, we also note that several of the organisations that could not be adequately fitted into the cleavage model also undertook some (limited) actions in relation to refugees, most notably the provision of resource to refugee athletes by a number of international sporting organisations. As much as such actions speak towards a sense of solidarity and support, the lack of overt generalisation towards a theory of international protection is understandable in such cases (Abd Rahim et al., 2018), even as it draws attention towards the uncertain boundaries of where the collection of international protection-salient CSOs might sit.

The contrast between globalist/regionalist and nativist groups is further underlined by the nature of activity in the three years prior to data collection and analysis (Table 1). Work relating to refugees was classified as either direct or indirect: the former encompasses anything that immediately applies (e.g., humanitarian support, education and legal case work), the latter those acts that seek to shape broader environments around refugees (e.g., lobbying, campaigning, media work). The dominance of direct activity among globalists and regionalists is made more striking by its absence in the other two categories, although we note that supporters of one of the nativist groups (the English Defence League) had been linked in earlier periods to violent acts against immigrants and refugees as part of its Islamophobia (Allen, 2011). That caveat aside, the very different

pattern of activity displayed reflects the extent to which nativists place international protection and refugees in a relatively marginal position within their overall program of work. Globalists and regionalists are both more likely to place refugees centrally and therefore act extensively and directly in relation to them. Regionalists display this more strongly than globalists in the survey mainly because of our definitional terms in the coding: the globalist group includes a number of large CSOs whose work is tangentially connected to refugees, enough to warrant stated positions about the nature of international protection but not enough to produce specific classes of direct or indirect actions, a situation absent in the regionalist category.

Table 1   The nature of CSO activity by position in the international protection cleavage model (N)

Groups by cleavage position	Activities			
	Direct and indirect activity	*Direct activity only*	*Indirect activity only*	*No activity on international protection*
Globalist	50	4	20	22
Regionalist	17	0	3	0
Nation-statist	0	0	1	0
Nativist	0	0	0	4

The survey data highlight the extent to which CSOs working in international protection and on or with refugees are typified by globalist and regionalist positions and attitudes, albeit not exclusively so. The presence of nativist and nation-statist groups speaks to the opening observation of this article, namely that there is nothing *a priori* stopping those with any particular view or disposition towards refugees forming a CSO. What is absent from the survey is any example of a negatively disposed CSO that is very strongly focused on refugees and refugee affairs.

Moving to political parties, we treat the CHES data as marking both supply and demand of party-political positioning on international protection-related issues: parties form policy both as a function of their constituent members' attitudes and as a result of voters' positioning (see Bakker et al., 2015 for more on this). Therefore, we have to exercise particular care in how we represent what we find, beyond the caveats mentioned in the methodology.

Party positions on immigration policy and on multiculturalism versus assimilation of immigrants are highly correlated (0.9734** in our sample of 125 parties): those that seek a more restrictive immigration policy also favour assimilation, while multicultural supporters also want a more liberal immigration policy. This suggests that there is a relatively internally consistent set of views around these questions across the political spectrum, even if there is more scepticism towards immigration than to multiculturalism, and that we can have reasonable confidence in the use of these metrics in measuring approximations of positions on international protection.

At the simplest level of analysis, there are more parties with restrictive immigration and with assimilationist policies than there are with liberal, multicultural positions across the countries of our sample (Table 2). Notable too, that while there are more parties with strongly restrictive and assimilationist positions than moderately so, the liberal, multicultural moderates outnumber the strongly liberal, multicultural parties.

Table 2   Number of political parties by position on CHES evaluations of immigration and multiculturalism policies (0–10 scales)

	Immigration				Multiculturalism			
	0–2.4999	2.5–4.999	5–7.4999	7.5–10	0–2.4999	2.5–4.999	5–7.4999	7.5–10
	Strongly liberal			*Strongly restrictive*	*Strongly multi-cultural*			*Strongly assimilationist*
Austria	0	3	0	2	1	2	0	2
Czechia	0	2	3	4	0	2	3	4
Denmark	3	1	2	4	1	3	4	2
France	1	3	2	3	1	3	2	3
Germany	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2
Greece	2	3	0	3	2	3	0	3
Hungary	0	4	1	2	1	2	2	2
Italy	2	1	3	2	2	1	3	2
Netherlands	2	4	3	4	2	3	4	4
Poland	2	3	1	3	2	2	2	3
Slovenia	1	2	3	3	1	3	2	3
Spain	3	4	4	2	1	6	4	2
Sweden	3	1	1	3	3	1	3	1
UK	3	2	0	3	0	5	1	2
Total	*25*	*35*	*25*	*40*	*19*	*39*	*32*	*35*

Source: CHES

The imbalance is further underlined when we look at how immigration and multiculturalism policies are associated with issue salience for each party. In both cases, it is clear that parties with policy preferences closer to each end of the spectrum also give higher salience to the policy, but also that there are more parties that favour restrictive immigration and assimilation of migrants. It is also notable that the highest saliences occur at this end of the spectrum, with more liberal, multiculturalists not being quite as emphatic in the centrality of the issues to their programs. Parties with scores of more than 5 on immigration policy average 7.13 on salience, while those with 5 or less average 5.55: For multiculturalism, equivalent salience averages are 6.53 and 5.43.

As already noted, parties operate in a dialogue with voters, so it also possible to have some measure of how those voters split in their positions across the policies, at least in terms of their willingness to vote for parties that hold such positions. Again, we recall that salience is higher at both ends of the spectrum, so extreme policies are more likely to be points of attraction to voters than coincidental. The skew towards the more restrictive/assimilationist end of the spectrum is clear, with approximately 60% more voters voting for parties with policies at 5 or above on both policy scales.

5   Discussion and conclusions

The evidence presented is consistent with the differentiated opportunity structure model for international protection. CSOs are indeed predominantly characterised by positions and practices consistent with a positive disposition towards refugees, while political parties are skewed towards more negative dispositions. This article has argued that this is the result of the different motivations and worldviews behind such dispositions, which in turn incentivise different choices about the preferred form of organisation out of civil society. This starts to provide an evidential basis to a phenomenon that has hitherto been taken as a given, without systematic inspection.

This differential is more clearly seen with regard to CSOs: we find very few instances of such groups that do not hold globalist positions within Sicakkan's (2021) cleavage model of international protection and those that do exist place refugee-related work in relatively minor places among their portfolio of activity. This is consistent with the overlying premise of the cleavage model, namely that the less one considers international protection to be important, the more likely one will frame in terms of other things, such as defense or promotion of a national community. In the case of globalists and regionalists, we note that there are both CSOs that define themselves solely in terms of working with refugees *qua* refugees and those that frame refugees as instances of broader categories, notably humanitarian relief: thus, the Red Cross is simultaneously one of the most significant CSOs working on refugee-related direct support, but also undertakes major programs of work with those who are not refugees. Consequently, it is important to note that across the spectrum of attitudes, there is no intrinsic requirement that any group within the cleavage model should form solely to service perceived needs of refugees in of themselves, even if all such groups that do form are globalist in outlook.

Likewise, the anticipated split among CSOs regarding direct and indirect work relating to refugees is borne out: those few non-globalist groups that do exist do not do any direct work, but concentrate what attention they have on campaigning and lobbying to change public policy. In all instances in our CSO sample, direct work relating to refugees has been characterised by positive dispositions; providing emergency relief and

longer-term support to help with the various aspects of these individuals' uprooting, relocation and resettlement into host states. We note that much of this work is presented both as a good in itself (using globalist language) and as a response to shortcomings (or the simple absence) of public policy. To give just one such example, Italian-based Emergency provides search-and-rescue and post-rescue assistance in the Mediterranean, arguing:

> "It is our duty not to look the other way: that is why we are asking, once again, for legal and safe channels of access. And until Europe responds, we will be with those who save, with those who welcome, with those who do not turn away. We believe that human life is an absolute value and we do not want to helplessly watch a massacre that is repeated every year". (Emergency, n/d)

As much as we treat CSOs as functions of mobilised civil society attitudes, such attitudes are not purely about dispositions towards international protection in itself but also reflect perceptions of pre-existing (in-)activity: the flourishing of positively-disposed CSOs in recent decades is thus as much a reflection on the persistent weakness of national and international policy as it is on the new flows of refugees around the world (Guo et al., 2020; Gerver, 2014).

Figure 1 Immigration policy position, by political family (see online version for colours)
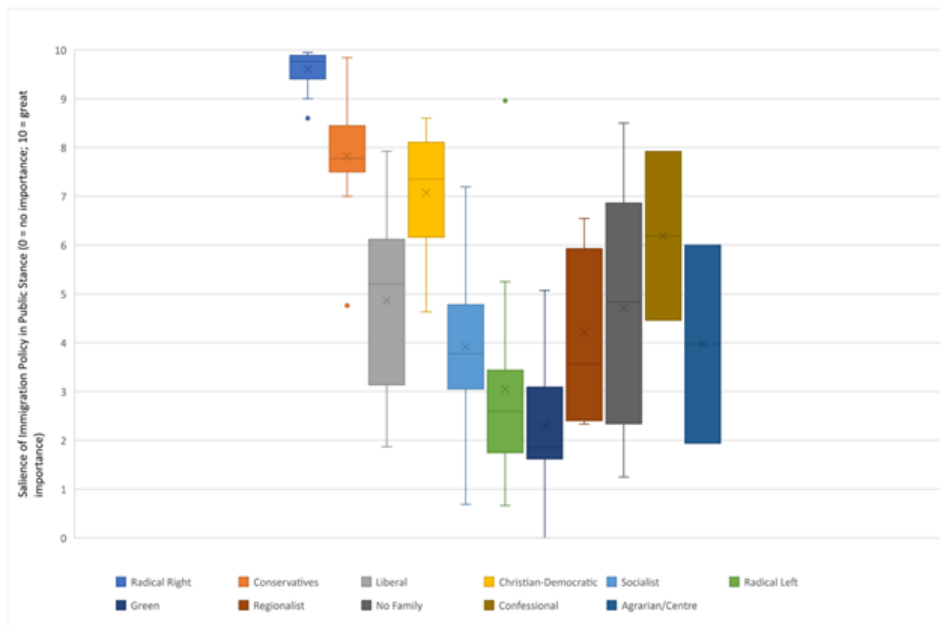
This brings us to the party-political sphere. While there is not as clear-cut a picture as for CSOs, the proclivity of parties towards more restrictive immigration policy and towards assimilation over multicultural absorption of immigrants reflects the wider rise of more populist and/or nationalist politics across Europe (Lochocki, 2018; Muis and Immerzeel, 2017; Taggart, 2004). This is both a function of the rise of explicitly populist and nationalist parties and of the attempts by more moderate competitors to toughen up their rhetoric and policy to try to close down space (note Mudde's critiques (2021, 2016) of the latter). The consequence has been that even when parties with significantly more negative

dispositions towards refugees do not enter into governments, they still shape policy agendas and limit the possibilities for changing public policy to provide either more direct support towards refugees or even more benign general conditions. Thus, in Italy the rise of populist parties has constrained the provision of both sea rescue and migrant housing provision in recent years (Casaglia and Coletti, 2021). It is notable in the present CHES dataset that those parties with the most liberal policies towards immigrants come from a wide range of political party families, from greens to socialists, liberals to agrarians, and that with only a handful of exceptions (Syriza in Greece, the Italian PD and the British Labour party) most secured single digit vote shares in national elections, with none in office. By contrast, the most restrictive parties cluster in the radical right, with several being parties of government (Fidesz in Hungary, the FPÖ in Austria, the Polish Law and Justice and the Lega in Italy (2018): Figure 1). Put differently, liberal, multiculturalist policy positions are dispersed across a much wider range of political families but without having any one such family being consistently supportive.

The skew in parties is also therefore reflected in the distribution of voters. Taking the states as a whole we can see that there are substantially more people willing to vote for parties negatively disposed towards refugees and immigrants than for those positively disposed. Moreover, given the salience of such issues being higher at the extremes of the policy spectrum, we might assert that votes are cast because of those party dispositions, as they manifest themselves in the various framings that parties use. More particularly, the articulation of radical right nationalist and populist agendas provides a broad architecture within which to situate strongly negative dispositions towards international protection, through its presentation as being at odds with the national community.

A further consequence of this imbalance in both popular opinion and in organisational forms is that it is likely to be reinforced over time. As populist/nationalist parties become more successful, so the scope for generating more liberal and pro-international protection public policy contracts, leading those in civil society who hold positive dispositions towards refugees to direct more of their efforts into CSOs, through which they can both provide direct aid and bypass state structures and gatekeepers. In turn, the burgeoning CSO community might be posited to further stimulate those with negative dispositions towards refugees to support parties that either direct restrict public policy further or use the existence of civil provision (via CSOs) to argue that state provision is less required.

Such reinforcement is not inevitable. There is still a considerable number of political parties (of many colours) that supply pro-refugee public policies and there are clearly points of provision that CSOs cannot supplant the state (notably on border transit and refugee status itself). That states themselves are bound by an international legal order under the 1951 Convention also makes it difficult for strongly anti-refugee public policy to take hold, constraining national administrations whoever controls them (Benhabib, 2020; McAdam, 2017). At the same time, the situation does highlight the rather conditional nature of international protection, both within states and more broadly.

With this in mind, it is important to underline that the mechanisms at work here are not specific to international protection but reach more widely. Most obviously, the general system of liberal human rights and its place within the package of liberal democratic norms is also challenged in many places and for the same reasons (Alston, 2017). Ironically, the breadth of the post-WWII consensus about such matters created a diffuse support for them across much of civil society and party politics; no one was needed to be the standard bearer of protecting those rights since almost everyone was already in agreement. Note again that what maintenance there was came in significant

part from CSOs such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch, alongside any national or international bodies. At the point that this consensus became more contested – again, often on grounds of nationalist and populist critiques – there was no obvious point from which to resist, making it easier for challengers to break into positions of authority.

In both the general case of human rights and the present case of international protection, this suggests a number of key action points for those who seek to defend the architecture that has been built up since the second World War. Most critically, CSOs represent a significant resource for both the on-the-ground provision of support to refugees and more indirect campaigning, lobbying and public education about the value of such work. As organisations with often substantial specialised expertise and resourcing and a structural capacity to be more adaptable that public bodies, they are valuable partners for emergency provision and for more long-term activity in the absence or retreat of the state. Collaboration and mutual support between CSOs will also become more important over time, both to maximise the available resources and to lobby states to maintain the legal architecture of international protection. Moreover, CSOs' separation from public authorities is often a positive consideration when seeking to build connections with refugees themselves, many of whom have gained their status through the actions of state bodies in their home country (Bulley, 2014; Lester, 2005). In terms of public perception, the framing of refugees by many CSOs in the sector as examples of cross-cutting definitions (typically humanitarian) can help to call into question any stigma or negative portrayal by those more negatively disposed to them, so generating societal effects in distinction to state narratives (see Usherwood et al., 2022 for further discussion of this). By becoming the leading voices on such questions, CSOs have the potential to push back more effectively against party political incentives to move towards more populist or nativist frames.

However, CSOs do not reproduce the full diversity of society or of social attitudes. As this article has argued, those who hold nativist views of international protection have much more incentive to direct their efforts into seeking changes to public policy on the matter via voting for, or creating, political parties. Conversely, political parties are also imperfect vehicles for interest representation. For governments seeking to build long-term policy that has deep support across society, that means recognising, acknowledging and incorporating the full range of those active on the matter: for researchers, it means taking care not to treat civil society and party politics in isolation from each other.

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Notes

1   In Europe: Spain, Italy, France, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Czechia, Germany, Austria, UK, Denmark, Sweden, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia. South Africa, Canada and USA were also surveyed. For the purpose of this article, the focus will be on the European states, and those CSOs identified as operating on a broad international basis.

2   Full detail of the protocol for this work is available from: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6483599.

3   Survey results available at: https://darus.uni-stuttgart.de/privateurl.xhtml?token=c3371e7b-0ef1-4db2-ae3e-83e05058eb30.