

Unequally welcome. Austrians' differing attitudes towards Arab/Afghan and Ukrainian refugees

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine has caused the largest refugee movement in Europe since the so called 'refugee crisis' in 2015. This poses an important challenge for social scientists: How does the public react to this new inflow of refugees? This presentation examines whether Ukrainian refugees are evaluated differently by the Austrian populace than Arab/Afghan refugees and identifies important mechanisms behind these differences: human values (Schwartz/Cieciuch 2022) and perceived realistic (security) and symbolic threat that refugees supposedly pose (see Intergrated Threat Theory, Stephan/Stephan 2000).

Using data from the third wave of the Austrian version of the Values in Crisis Panel (N=1,357, Aschauer et al. 2023), the results confirm that Austrians exhibit more favorable views towards Ukrainian refugees. Negative attitudes towards Arab/Afghan refugees are associated with feelings of realistic threat (particularly crime), while both Arabs/Afghans and Ukrainians are associated with symbolic threat. Human values further impact attitudes towards refugees. Self-Transcendence values correlate with favorable attitudes towards refugees overall, Self-Enhancement values only correlate with more favorable attitudes towards Ukrainians. Conservation values indirectly impact attitudes towards Arab/Afghan refugees by intensifying the influence of perceived threat. These results suggest that differences in attitudes stem from concerns about realistic threats and the differing impact of human values.

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