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Local Politics and the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Exploring Responses in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan

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Executive Summary

- In order to explain responses to Syrian refugees, it is important to understand politics within the major host countries. This involves looking beyond the capital cities to examine variation in responses at the local level.
- Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan followed a similar trajectory as the crisis evolved. Each began the crisis in 2011 with a history of relative openness to Syrians, then increased restrictions especially around October 2014 with the growing threat of ISIS, before agreeing major bilateral deals with the European Union in early 2016.
- These common trajectories, however, mask significant sub-national variation. To explore this we examine three local contexts in each of the main countries: Gaziantep, Adana, and Izmir in Turkey; Sahab, Zarqa, and Mafraq in Jordan; and predominantly Christian, Shia, and Sunni areas in Lebanon.
- In each country, some governorates and municipalities have adopted relatively more inclusive or restrictive policies towards Syrian refugees. The main sets of factors that appear to mediate this relate to identity and interests, but also to the personalities of individual heads of municipal authorities.
- In Lebanon, the Sunni municipalities we spoke with have been the most welcoming. Elsewhere, Hezbollah-run Shia areas have become the least welcoming, with Christian areas ranging across the spectrum. Confessionalism has mattered because of the predominantly Sunni identity of Syrian refugees – assumed rightly or wrongly to be supportive of the Syrian Revolution – by Hezbollah which is allied to the Assad regime. However, this has also been shaped by class dynamics and importantly, the personalities of particular mayors.
- In Jordan, at the governorate level Mafraq was relatively more open, followed by Sahab and Zarqa. The role of tribal affiliation and the historical relationship between the area and Syrians has been influential. But so too have perceptions of economic opportunity and for local elites seeking resources from the central government.
- In Turkey, Gaziantep municipality, followed by Adana, followed by Izmir have been the relatively most active in offering supplementary support to refugees. Party politics appears to have played a significant role, with different parties in municipal authority having different perspectives. Alongside this, business interests have also mattered, with local entrepreneurs and chambers of commerce especially important for inclusion in Gaziantep.

The report argues that political analysis – across all levels of governance – matters for refugee protection. There is a need to enhance the capacity for political analysis within humanitarian organisations.

Introduction

Refugee protection is inherently political. While international law and values inevitably influence governments' decisions about how to respond to refugees, so too do power and interests. Host and donor states' commitment to assist, protect and provide solutions for refugees are all shaped by whether and to what extent they perceive refugees to be a burden or a benefit in relation to security and development outcomes, for example. Evidence for this can be found in almost every aspect of the functioning of the refugee system: from donors' earmarking of humanitarian contributions to resettlement decisions to host states' decisions about whether to provide socio-economic freedoms to refugees.

Yet international humanitarian organisations have sometimes lacked the capacity to adequately engage with this politics. UNHCR's Statute of 1950 states that "the work of the High Commissioner is humanitarian and social and of an entirely non-political character". This clause – created for the early Cold War context in order to ensure the Office was perceived as ideologically non-aligned – has frequently been misinterpreted as proscribing analysis of and engagement with the politics that determines outcomes for refugees. For example, in contrast to legal or operational expertise, political science has never been seen as an important area of expertise or professional competence in the work of the organisation. The presumption is that it is 'learned on the job' or 'what country Representatives inherently do'. Yet, there is a key difference between being 'politicised' and being 'politically engaged'. The former is about taking an ideological position whereas the latter is about having analytical capacity.

To be politically engaged is to have analytical tools and lenses through which to recognise and understand the behaviour of elite decision-makers. In relation to power: which actors matter for influencing and shaping particular outcomes? In relation to interests: what motivates or determines the tactical or strategic choices they make? Being able to answer these questions matters for policy-makers. If we know which key gatekeepers and veto players are shaping agenda-setting, negotiation, and implementation of policy choices, we in turn have the means to influence outcomes. Methodologically, answering these questions relies upon in-depth process-tracing to establish which outcomes have been shaped by particular structures and actors, and identifying counterfactually how outcomes would have been different in the absence of those variables. It requires

working between context-specific knowledge and more universally applicable analytical tools. Done well, this may offer insights into what forms of external influence can leverage better outcomes for refugees.

Most pressing the politics that needs to be understood is that of refugee-hosting states closest to major displacements. Nearly 90% of the world's refugees remain in states adjacent to their country of origin. And the challenge is geographically concentrated: just 10 countries host 60% of the world's refugees – Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, Pakistan, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.¹ The key to leveraging better protection and solutions for refugees is therefore to be able to influence political decision-making in these countries: to respect *non-refoulement*, to offer opportunities for socio-economic inclusion, and perhaps, where appropriate, even to consider long-term local integration. This is difficult given that these countries often face significant security and development challenges related to hosting large numbers of refugees.

But the politics of these host states is diverse. They vary by regime type: they may be democracies, authoritarian, or competitive authoritarian regimes. They may have different relationships to the international community, of greater dependency, independence, or interdependence. Particular identity structures may underpin authority in particular ways: ethnicity, religion, or kinship, for example. They may occupy different positions in the global economy: whether primarily agricultural, manufacturing, or extractive economies, and this may in turn be related to the presence of patrimonial or rent-seeking behaviour by elites. They may have different approaches to migration: nationalist, developmental,

¹ UNHCR (2017), *Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2016* (Geneva: UNHCR).

or neo-liberal, for example, shaping the conditions under which the presence of non-citizens is regarded as threat or opportunity.

Refugee politics, however, is not deterministically shaped by these macro-level variables. Nor is it exclusively the outcome of what happens in capital cities. Looking at politics in Nairobi, Ankara, or Bangkok will only tell you so much about the politics of host states. Although increasingly urban, refugee-hosting often takes place in geographically remote areas, close to international borders. Consequently, it frequently implicates a range of sub-national actors and structures. Refugee politics is ‘local’ politics; regional, district, and municipal authorities are often key gatekeepers. Whether they perceive refugees as opportunity or threat shapes not only local policies but also the creation and implementation of national (and international) policies. Irrespective of national legislation and policy statements, the practice of everything from refugee-status determination to the right to work is influenced by sub-national politics. Evidence for this stems from a simple observation: even where there is a common national policy framework, there is frequently sub-national variation in practice and implementation.

In order to demonstrate the analytical importance of the sub-national level, this report explores the ‘local’ politics of refugee protection in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis. Since 2011, conflict in Syria has displaced over 12 million people, around 6 million as refugees. While the ‘European refugee crisis’ of 2015, drew attention to the nearly 1 million Syrians who travelled to Europe, the overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees fled to neighbouring states, most notably Turkey (3.2 million), Lebanon (1 million), and Jordan (654,000).² Each country’s response to the mass influx has commonalities: an initially generous response between 2011 and 2014, a restrictive turn with the advent of ISIS-violence from late 2014, and different forms of a financial ‘deal’ with Europe in early 2016 to ensure ongoing hosting. Nevertheless, there are key differences both across the countries and, crucially, within the countries.

We focus on understanding the politics behind the response of those three main host countries. Based on fieldwork and elite interviews in all three countries we examine: 1) the trajectory of each country’s response to the Syrian influx between 2011 and 2016; and 2) the variation in response at the sub-national level within each country. In addition to data collection at the capital city level, we focus on three different sites in each host country. In Turkey, we focus on Izmir, Gaziantep, and Adana. In Jordan, we focus on Mafraq, Sahab, and Zarqa. In Lebanon, we focus on areas with predominantly Christian, Sunni, and Shia populations with different historical relationships with Syria and Syrian migrants.

While we find commonalities in the trajectories of the three countries’ national policies, we find variation at the sub-national level, whether at municipal or governorate levels. In some areas, there is greater openness and tolerance to refugees than others. Two broad sets of factors appear to have shaped this variation at the sub-national level: identity and interests. The main identity-based factors have been political parties (Turkey), tribes (Jordan), and confessionalism (Lebanon). Meanwhile, in terms of interests, elites within local politics have sometimes engaged in policy entrepreneurship depending on whether they have stood to gain from representing Syrian refugees as threat or opportunity.

The intended contribution of this paper is two-fold. First, it seeks to offer situation-specific insights relevant to understanding the regional response to the Syrian refugee influx. Second, it begins to provide insights into how policy-makers and academics can develop better analytical tools to identify opportunities to influence sub-national refugee politics. In order to make these contributions, the paper is structured in five main parts: first, it offers a theoretical framework for understanding the politics of the Syrian refugee crisis; then it applies this framework to look specifically at each of Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, before concluding with situation-specific and more generic implications.

² Syria Regional Refugee Response, UNHCR, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php> (last accessed 28 October 2017).

Theory: Explaining Sub-National Variation in Refugee Politics

The central research question explored in this paper is: what explains sub-national variation in refugee policies? For explaining sub-national variation in policy implementation, there is no ideal framework but different insights can be taken from a number of sources. Combined, the three particular lenses – political science, political economy, and political sociology – offer complementary insights, all with particular strengths and weaknesses. From each one we can take something, which when combined offers a more complete picture of the role of sub-national politics in shaping outcomes for refugees.

Political science – levels of analysis

Political science has developed tools useful for thinking about how the same international policies and norms can exhibit variation in outcomes at the national level. In other words, it offers a starting point for examining how policies translate from global to national to local levels. This question lies at the intersection of International Relations and Comparative Politics. ‘Levels of analysis’ offers a framework for establishing whether an observed outcome is primarily the result of international, national, or local variables.³ It was originally developed to understand Cold War politics, by assessing whether a given outcome was shaped by system-level changes, national level politics, or individual decision-making. It has subsequently been developed to allow consideration of what Robert Putnam called ‘two-level games’: examining international and domestic interactions, which have subsequently become a mainstay of International Relations.⁴ Literature on ‘multi-level governance’, applied most notably to the European Union, has recognised the importance of international-national-sub-national interactions.⁵

A recent trend in International Relations has explored how and why international norms – including those relating to human rights and refugee law – often vary

in their national and local-level implementation. Finnemore and Sikkink, for example, show how human rights norms disseminate from international to national levels, examining the role of norm entrepreneurs, including national level actors, in shaping outcomes.⁶ Acharya takes this a step further by outlining a process of ‘localization’, whereby international norms often have specifically regional or local manifestations, becoming altered in their interactions with local cultural contexts.⁷ Meanwhile, Betts and Orchard, have examined norm implementation at the national level, showing why the same international humanitarian norms, including refugee norms, frequently lead to radically different practices in different contexts.⁸

The strength of this body of political science literature is its recognition that decisions at higher levels of governance do not have uniform effects at lower levels of governance. In order to understand translation mechanisms across levels of governance, we have to have a nuanced understanding of national and sub-national politics, understanding how willingness and ability to implement norms and policies is mediated by cultural and political context. However, the weaknesses of this literature are that 1) it mainly examines translation from international to

³ Singer, JD (1961), ‘The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations’, *World Politics*, 14(1): 77-92.

⁴ Gourevitch, P (1978), ‘The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics’, *International Organization* 32(4): 881-912; Moravcsik, A (1995), ‘Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics’, *International Organization* 51(4): 513-553; Milner, H (1997), *Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

⁵ Liesbet, H and Gary, M (2003), ‘Unraveling the Central State, But How? Types of Multi-Level Governance’, *American Political Science Review* 97(2): 233-243; Piattoni, S (2009), ‘Multi-Level Governance: a Historical and Conceptual Analysis’, *European Integration* 31(2): 163-180.

⁶ Finnemore, M and Sikkink, K (1998), ‘International Norm Dynamics and Political Change’, *International Organization* 53(3): 887-917.

⁷ Acharya, A (2004), ‘How Ideas Spread? Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism’, *International Organization* 58(2): 239-275.

⁸ Betts, A and Orchard, P (2014), *Implementation in World Politics: How International Norms Change Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).



national levels; 2) it mainly focuses on norms, and therefore often over-emphasises the role of courts and government bureaucracies as intermediaries; 3) it sometimes has poorly specified mechanisms of translation across levels.

Political economy – interests

A complementary approach is a political economy analysis. In simple terms, this approach tries to explain observed outcomes by asking ‘qui bono?’ – who wins? It views the political as inextricable from the economic. It emphasises the importance of interests and power relations at any level of analysis, including the sub-national level.

Such an approach traditionally focuses on the interaction between the incentive structures created by institutions and their role in shaping actor behaviour. It is based on an assumption of ‘rational actors’ (i.e. elite policy-makers seeking to maximise individual gains). The approach explores whether and how changes to institutional incentive structures can in turn change individual and collective behaviour. The structures may be based on inducement or coercion (‘carrots or sticks’).

This approach has also been adapted from a purely rationalist framework to include alternative, critical frameworks, such as Marxist analyses, with a greater focus on power rather than simply interests. For

example, a Marxist approach would tend to emphasise how global capital influences politics. Several scholars have adopted such a political economy approach to look at how material interests shape outcomes in the refugee regime.⁹

The strengths of a political economy approach are that it provides a structured analytical of how actors respond to incentive structures, and can operate at or across any level of analysis. However, its limitations are that 1) it frequently relies upon rationalist assumptions about actor behaviour which may neglect the role of cultural variables; and 2) its more critical variants, with a focus on power, are often challenging to methodologically operationalise.

Political sociology – identity

Sociology has increasingly been used to examine politics, policy and institutions.¹⁰ It tends to have a broader understanding of the ‘political’ as embedded in culture. For sociologists, particularly since the ‘cultural turn’ we cannot even look at the realm of ‘politics’ until we can cast a gaze more widely to appreciate the broader historical and cultural context in which it operates. Power relations, understandings of interests, and interpretation of norms are – for political sociologists – historically and culturally contingent; in other words, they cannot be understood apart from the time and place in which they operate. Political sociology takes particular account of the role

⁹ Castles, S (2004) ‘Why Migration Policies Fail’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27(2): 205-227; Chimni, BS (1998), ‘The Geopolitics of Refugee Studies: A View from the South’, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 11(4): 350-374; Duffield, M (2001), *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed Books).

¹⁰ Nash, K (2010). *Contemporary Political Sociology: Globalization, Politics, and Power* (London: Wiley-Blackwell).

of identities and the ways in which they intersect: ethnicity, class, gender, nationality, and religion, for example. It examines politics as practice: looking at the everyday enactment of politics as well as simply abstract institutions or policy statements.¹¹ In that sense, it is more likely to reveal granular insights into how politics interacts with lived experiences.

In recent years, ethnographic methods derived from anthropology have increasingly been used in International Relations.¹² Part of the reason for this has been a methodological dissatisfaction with the remoteness and abstraction of ‘armchair International Relations’, and a desire to critically examine the relationship between intergovernmental processes and practices ‘on the ground’. For example, there has been recent research exploring how international UN-led peacekeeping and peacebuilding in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo has led to perverse outcomes that often deviate from the stated intentions of international public policy-makers, as a result of complex encounters between the ‘international’ and the ‘local’.¹³ Another study examined the different layers of sovereignty of the Syrian state, the UNHCR, and humanitarian INGOs in Syria, as experienced by Iraqi refugees between 2003-2010.¹⁴

The strength of political sociology or political anthropology approaches is that they can offer in-depth, granular insights into local political behaviour. This is in part because it often uses fieldwork and participant observation as a methodology, and in part because it draws attention to concepts and variables, like identity, which may be underplayed by mainstream political science. However, the weakness of such an approach is that 1) it may be resistant to comparative analysis, and 2) it is often empirical and inductive in approach, and so reduces the scope for the type of abstract generalisation desired by policy-makers.

A theory of local variation

Our purpose is not to develop a grand theory that explains sub-national political variation. Rather, it is to begin to build a simplified heuristic framework that can shed light on the kinds of factors that explain sub-national variation, and thereby have a useful role

in rendering visible opportunities and constraints for international public policy-makers. We adopt what social scientists call a ‘theory-building’ rather than a ‘theory-testing’ approach: we seek to draw upon the existing literatures described above in a way that resonates with and organises the empirical material gathered in our research.

We suggest that each of the literatures described above has a contribution to make, although does not offer a complete picture when applied alone. We thereby adopt a ‘levels of analysis’ approach, exploring the interaction between global, national, and local levels. We suggest, based on our Syria-specific research, that two sets of factors are important in mediating policy translation at each stage: identity and interests. These are very broad categories, and one could include others, but they are the ones that stand out as shaping translation between levels of analysis in the main Syrian refugee-hosting states.¹⁵

We recognise that feedback loops will occasionally occur, moving upwards from local to national to international. However, our main interest is in the ‘downwards’ translation process that means that the same international and national policies often mean different things in particular sub-national contexts. Figure 1 illustrates this simplified heuristic framework.

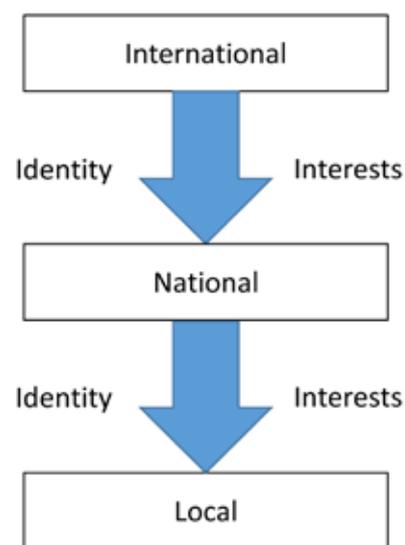


Figure 1. Theoretical framework relating to the translation of policies across levels of analysis

¹¹ Poulliot, V (2008), ‘The Logic of Practicality: A Theory of Practice of Security Communities’, *International Organization* 62(2): 257-288.

¹² Hoffman, S (2016), *Iraqi Migrants in Syria: The Crisis before the Storm* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press).

¹³ Autesserre, S (2010), *The Trouble with Congo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Paddon-Rhoads, E (2015), *Taking Sides in Peacekeeping: Impartiality and the Future of the United Nations* (Oxford: OUP).

¹⁴ Hoffman (2016).

¹⁵ The key distinction is between ‘constitutive’ variables (which work with a reflectivist ontology) and ‘constraining’ variables (which work with a rationalist ontology).

Application to the three cases

The three country case studies exhibit significant similarities. They have parallel trajectories. First, at the onset of the Syria crisis in 2011, each country begins with an open and tolerant policy to Syrian refugees, based partly on historically open policies towards Syrian migration. Lebanon allowed open circular migration under a 1991 bilateral agreement with Syria.¹⁶ Jordan, allowed reciprocal free movement but without the right to work.¹⁷ Turkey treated Syrians as ‘guests’, reinforcing this through legislation.¹⁸ Second, following a series of tipping points, all three countries then introduce restrictions on Syrian refugees’ access to territory and rights from around October 2014. This turning point coincides with increased ISIS-related activity in Syria. Third, in all three countries, the European Union agrees deals with the host countries in early 2016 in an attempt to keep them open to refugee-hosting. Yet despite this apparent uniformity, each country demonstrates

significant sub-national variation in implementation of the post-2014 restrictive policy frameworks.

Across the three countries, the most important explanation for sub-national variation can be found in identity-related factors. In Turkey, political parties matter, with the degree of openness to refugees existing on a spectrum depending on whether municipal authorities are run by AKP (the most open), MHP, or CHP (the most restrictive). In Lebanon, confessionalism matters, with Christian, Sunni, and Shia host communities occupying different positions on an ‘openness’ spectrum. In Jordan, tribal affiliation seems to matter, with particular Jordanian tribes having more open and tolerant historical relationships with Syrian communities.

In addition to identity, a secondary factor that explains variation is material interests. In Turkey, in the more open municipalities, like Adana and Gaziantep, business, including Chambers of Commerce, plays

Table 1. Illustrating the key insights and comparisons that emerge from the research

	Turkey	Lebanon	Jordan
Starting point	Guests	Open circular migration (1991,1993 bilateral deal)	Free movement without right to work
Turning points leading to Sept/Oct 2014 policy restrictions	1. Reyhanlı bombings 2013 2. Opposition to refugees in local elections June 2014 3. AKP recognition of ‘permanence’ Oct 2014	1. Hezbollah end ‘disassociation’ 2013 2. Nusra Front attacks in Lebanon 3. Oct 2014 policy for General Security	1. Za’atari opened July 2012 2. Directorate for Camps opened, Ministry of Interior (2013) becomes SRAD (2014) 3. June 2016 border closed after terrorist attack/surge in ISIS
International role in policy	EU-Turkey Deal March 2016	Lebanon Compact Feb 2016	Jordan Compact Feb 2016
Main source of sub-national variation in implementation	Political parties	Confessionalism	Tribes
Order of localities in terms of how open they are/ have been towards Syrians (1=most)	1. Gaziantep (AKP: solidarity) 2. Adana (MHP: selective solidarity) 3. Izmir (CHP: non-intervention)	1. Sunni (tolerance) 2. Christian (mixed) 3. Hezbollah (security-driven)	1. Mafraq (kinship) 2. Sahab (lack kinship but economic opportunity) 3. Zarqa (no kinship and limited economic opportunity)
Secondary sources of variation	Business	Class	Local governments seeking resources

¹⁶ Chalcraft, JT (2009), *The Invisible Cage : Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon*. Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).

¹⁷ Turner, L (2015), ‘Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees: Security, Class and the Labour Market in Lebanon and Jordan’, *Mediterranean Politics* 20(3): 386–404.

¹⁸ Memişoğlu, F and Ilgit, A (2017), ‘Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Multifaceted Challenges, Diverse Players and Ambiguous Policies’, *Mediterranean Politics*, 22(3): 1-22.

a significant role in supporting refugees' economic inclusion. In Lebanon, class matters: middle-class Syrians with capital were not constrained by the residency fees and entry restrictions that were contingent upon economic resources, imposed by Lebanon after October 2014. Affluent Syrians are also less likely to stand out from affluent Lebanese in municipalities which have imposed – illegally – night curfews on Syrians. Relatively poorer Syrians, on the other hand, have been further immiserated and live in extremely precarious situations.¹⁹ Class also matters in the sense that in the Qalamoun municipality in

Lebanon, the working class and socially conservative Syrians arriving from Homs appeared similar in socio-economic terms to much of the local population.

In Jordan, economic opportunities matter, with local mayors and municipality staff seeking additional public or private funding, for example from the central government or from the presence of international organisations, to support their hosting of Syrian refugees. Table 1 summarises all of these findings in a way that allows clear comparison across the three countries.

Jordan

Before the onset of the Syrian conflict, Jordan allowed Syrians to travel freely across the border, albeit with restrictions on the right to work. In July 2012, the government opened the Za'atari refugee camp, with an initial capacity of 9,000 refugees in 1,800 tents. Restrictions were imposed on Palestinians coming from Syria, with attempts to deport Palestinians who arrived without documents.²⁰ However, for the most part, Syrians were welcomed, albeit with severe de facto restrictions on the right to work and strong encouragement to locate in the newly created camp rather than in urban areas. Protecting certain professions has been a keystone of Jordan's policy: with a high rate of unemployment in Jordan, particularly amongst Jordanian university graduates. An anthropologist based in Jordan explained that "the professional Guilds will not allow competition from non-Jordanians and the Jordanian government is, like many others globally, and as it did in relation to Iraqi refugees in Jordan, protecting its populations' jobs."²¹ One official at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) expressed frustration at foreign governments and INGOs who kept insisting on the opening up of professions to Syrian competition. "This is not possible, and it is not constructive to keep suggesting this."²²

Gradually, from 2013, the government became increasingly concerned about security and the risk of conflict spillover. In March, for example, the Directorate of Security Affairs for the Syrian Refugee Camps was created, with a mandate to control entry and exit to and from the camps.²³ From June, informal western border crossings were closed to all but exceptional cases, like the war-wounded,²⁴ requiring Syrians to travel to informal crossings along the eastern side of the border to avoid checkpoints. In April 2014, the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD) was created, a branch of Jordan's security services tasked with policing Syrian refugees. A month later the Azraq camp was opened, the sixth refugee camp for Syrians, and the largest in terms of area. Securitization and humanitarian service delivery are integrated at this camp in unprecedented ways.²⁵ Azraq represents both an intensification of the securitization of Syrian refugees, and an attempt to encourage greater international visibility through encampment. The Jordanian security official in charge of the Azraq refugee camp noted: "If we hadn't built the camps, then the world would not understand that we were going through a crisis."²⁶ Jordan's calls for international assistance to support its hosting of Syrian refugees resonate with past practices of using

¹⁹ El Helou, M (2014), 'Refugees Under Curfew: The War of Lebanese Municipalities Against the Poor', *The Legal Agenda*, December 22, 2014. <http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=674&folder=articles&lang=en>.

²⁰ <http://newirin.irinnews.org/syrian-refugees-restrictions-timeline/>

²¹ Discussion during research seminar, Amman, January 2017.

²² Interview, MOPIC official, Amman, February 2017.

²³ <http://ainnews.net/?p=233731>

²⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/03/jordan-syrians-blocked-stranded-desert>

²⁵ Hoffmann, S (2017), 'Humanitarian Security in Jordan's Azraq Camp', *Security Dialogue* 48(2): 97–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010616683311>.

²⁶ Interview, March 2017.

the presence of refugees as a source of income, such as with Iraqi refugees.²⁷ An important lesson learned from the presence of Iraqi refugees was to make Syrians more visible through encampment.²⁸ Rent-seeking has historically been an important part of Jordan's national income, although it has varied over time in form and in the structure of the relationships, and in terms of internal and external coalitions.²⁹

Despite this climate of concern with security points, emphasis on encampment, and occasional ad hoc restrictions on informal border crossings, Syrians were for the most part able to find safety within Jordan. The turning point came with the emergence of ISIS-related violence in Syria after September 2014. From October, Jordan began to implement ever-greater restrictions. At the border, UNHCR reported increasingly stark examples of refoulement and the suspension of registrations for new arrivals, although the government initially claimed that the border remained open. As a result, thousands of Syrians were left stranded along the border, within the demilitarized area known as 'the berms', not being allowed entry into Jordan. By April 2015, the last formal crossing with Syria, Jaber/Nasib, was closed by the Jordanian government after Syrian rebel fighters took control of it on the Syrian side.³⁰

By 2015, the Jordanian government had become increasingly vociferous about the security and development challenge it faced in the context of hosting – it claimed – over 1 million Syrian refugees against the backdrop of a national population of 9.5 million people. It began to highlight the inadequacy of international responsibility-sharing in almost every available forum. With the border effectively closed, reports of refugees being refouled back to the Berms, and severe limitations on the socio-economic rights of refugees, Jordan was becoming increasingly restrictive.

At a London Pledging Summit in February 2016, the UK government played a leading role in concluding a deal called the Jordan Compact to support Syrian

refugees. Its focus is to enable refugees, previously subject to regulatory barriers to labour markets, access to jobs.

Under the agreement, Jordan reduced its regulatory barriers on refugees' right to work. Instead of charging around 700 JOD for a work permit, and mirroring the processes in bureaucratic hurdles, it cut the price to just 10 JOD for most low-skilled work categories in sectors like agriculture, construction, and manufacturing, excluding most 'protected professions'. In return, the donor community agreed to better support for the Jordan Response Plan (JRP), a pre-existing funding package to support Jordan's capacity to host refugees, which by 2016 was only 30% funded.

Crucially for the Jordanians, the deal entails a model designed to help Jordan make the leap to manufacturing by integrating a focus on refugees into its pre-existing Special Economic Zones (SEZs) strategy. By allowing refugees to work in the SEZs, Jordan hopes to attract the additional support needed to make its own national development strategy work. Two innovations aim to assist this. First, the EU has offered tariff free access to European markets on condition that businesses in Jordan employ a certain proportion of Syrian refugees and produce in one of 18 SEZs and in one of 52 product categories. Furthermore, if these conditions are fulfilled, the 'rules of origin' are also adjusted to require only 30% value addition within Jordan. Second, the World Bank has for the first time offered a Concessionary Finance Initiative, providing low-interest loans for middle-income countries hosting refugees.

The stated objective at the London Summit was to create 200,000 jobs for Syrian refugees over 3–5 years. Certainly there are numerous challenges. So what progress has been made? Around 60,000 work permits (albeit only 2000 women) have been issued by July 2017.³¹ While a significant proportion of this has been the formalisation of existing informal sector

²⁷ Lenner, K (2016), 'Blasts from the Past: Policy Legacies and Memories in the Making of the Jordanian Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis', EUI Working Paper, Florence, Italy: European University Institute. <http://opus.bath.ac.uk/52658/>; Seeley, N (2010), 'The Politics of Aid to Iraqi Refugees in Jordan | Middle East Research and Information Project', *Middle East Reporting and Information Project* 40 (256). <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer256/politics-aid-iraqi-refugees-jordan>.

²⁸ Turner, L (2015), 'Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees: Security, Class and the Labour Market in Lebanon and Jordan', *Mediterranean Politics* 20(3): 386–404. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2015.1078125>.

²⁹ Knowles, W (2005), *Jordan Since 1989: A Study in Political Economy* (I.B.Tauris); Peters, AM, and Moore, PW (2009), 'Beyond Boom and Bust: External Rents, Durable Authoritarianism, and Institutional Adaptation in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan', *Studies in Comparative International Development* 44(3): 256–85. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-009-9053-0>.

³⁰ <https://www.ft.com/content/c0df376a-dd27-11e4-a772-00144feab7de?mhq5j=e1>

³¹ Fieldwork visit to Special Economic Zones in Sahab, July 2017. See also ILO (2017), 'EU-Funded Zaatari Camp Job Centre Hosts Unprecedented Job Fair', News, October 4, 2017. http://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS_579487/lang-en/index.htm.

Syrians working in a Special Economic Zone in Jordan



jobs, the change in policy – if correctly implemented – can reduce registered refugees’ risk of exploitation by allowing them to access a range of labour rights protections, including access to the minimum wage, a 48 hour working week, social security, paid maternity leave, and annual leave. However, in practice employers are known to still make Syrians pay for the work permits themselves, and pay for the employer’s social security contribution as well as their own.³² Better enforcement of the regulations could help, but it should not be so heavy handed that it deters employers and Syrians from the formalisation process altogether. A point of potential tension between the Government of Jordan and international donors is that work permits do not necessarily represent individuals working in singular jobs. “The permits are work opportunities,” explained an official at the Ministry of Labour, “it is possible for a Syrian to have more than one permit in a year if he has more than one job”.³³ Syrians are now subject only to “relaxed inspections” as part of the

plan to encourage the take-up of permits. This contrasts with the tougher inspections which Egyptians were subjected to from late 2016.³⁴ There are concerns that the new labour Syrian policy may simply displace Egyptians migrant workers and risk forcing them underground into more exploitative and precarious situations to escape deportation. The severity of the crackdown prompted the Egyptian Foreign Minister to meet with the Jordanian Prime Minister on February 9th 2017 to secure a two-month grace period for Egyptians caught working without a permit.

Most of these permits have so far been issued in urban areas, and in the agricultural and construction sectors, rather than in the SEZs, where gradual progress is being made. USAID and DFID have funded the identification of 300 existing manufacturers with the potential to employ within the SEZs, with an initial focus of 20 that already employ Syrians. Meanwhile, UNHCR began jobs matching in early 2017, working with the Jordanian Investment Authority to engage Jordanian firms. In its first 5 months, it has placed 100 Syrian workers with around 10 factories, and it is about to add an additional 19 firms with 400 new opportunities. Recently UNHCR and the ILO organised a job fair inside Za’atari camp, with EU funding, and in collaboration with the Norwegian Red Cross and the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate.³⁵ UNHCR is finding that many Syrians prefer to take agricultural and construction jobs, but this is in part due to lack of facilities like transportation and nursery care to enable refugees to access manufacturing jobs. A UNHCR Livelihoods Assistant explained that many manufacturing jobs, within and beyond the SEZ, are unfeasible for Syrians living in Jordan, particularly those with dependents.³⁶ A typical SEZ job paying the minimum wage of 190 JD may be feasible for a single labourer living in an onsite dormitory whose aim is to support relatives in Sri Lanka, for example, where the cost of living is lower than in Jordan. It is not adequate for most Syrians who must deal with the cost of living in Jordan. Many of these jobs have 12 hour daily shifts which prevent employees from seeking

³² Work permits for Syrian refugees in Jordan. 2015. ILO Regional Office for Arab States, Amman.

³³ Interview, Amman, January 2017.

³⁴ Abaza, J (2016), ‘Egyptian workers face clampdown in Jordan as Syrians join labour market,’ *Middle East Eye*, 4 December 2016. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/features/jordans-crackdown-egyptian-migrant-workers-stirs-anger-confusion-1239563644>

³⁵ ILO (2017), ‘EU-Funded Zaatari Camp Job Centre Hosts Unprecedented Job Fair’, News, October 4, 2017. http://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS_579487/lang--en/index.htm.

³⁶ Interview, Amman, January 2017.

additional work to supplement the low income. The creation of adequately paid work must be factored in to the policy by all the stakeholders if the goal of 200,000 formalised jobs for Syrians is to be achieved.

Another challenge has been attracting multinational corporations (MNCs). Classic Fashion Apparel operates on the Al Hassan Industrial Estate in Irbid, employing Syrian refugees since the Compact, selling to the likes of Wal-Mart and Asda. IKEA is placing orders from factories within the SEZs. And a German business delegation has established the basis for German-Jordanian collaboration on a renewable energy factory in the Aqaba Economic Zone. But these examples remain rare. Another challenge has been how to attract international investment or get MNCs to place orders with the factories at sufficient levels to scale the SEZ mode, especially in an economy with little prior comparative advantage in low-skilled manufacturing and a GDP growth rate of just 2.5%. The Jordanians have tried hosting a CEO-level textiles event in London and appealed to Syrian diaspora in Europe to back the project but to limited effect.

Nevertheless, at the national level, the Jordan Compact experience reveals a sustained commitment by key individuals, such as the Minister for International Cooperation and Planning, Imad Fakhoury, to view Jordan's refugee population as an opportunity for national development. He has worked internally to sustain political support for the refugees in Syria, and externally to increase refugee-related aid and investment in ways that can benefit Jordan.

Sub-national variation

Jordan is perhaps the most politically centralised of the three major host states, with national authority being concentrated in the hands of the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD) while MOPIC manages relations with the international donor community. Nevertheless, despite reduced scope for autonomous policy-making at the governorate or municipal levels, there is sub-national variation in the implementation of national policies. We explored this by looking at three governorates. Across these three, we found a spectrum of responses. Mafraq has been the relatively most open, followed by Sahab, and then Zarqa. A significant

part of this variation can be explained by identity, and the role of the 'tribes' which are extended cross-border kinship networks that tie Syrians to Jordanians. In addition, an important secondary factor has been interests, and the role of economic opportunity.

First, in Mafraq the relationship between the host Jordanian population and Syrian refugees is complex. Syrian seasonal migrant workers have had a long presence in Mafraq, related in part to kinship ties but also to the needs of Jordan's agrarian economy,³⁷ and to the dispossession of Syria's rural population.³⁸ A decade of liberalisation reforms in Syria under Bashar Al Assad combined with corruption and severe, but also expected, drought to further immiserate Syria's rural population.³⁹ A significant proportion of Syrian refugees who have fled to Mafraq since 2011 have come from Dara'a. While a 2013 study by Mercy Corp notes that these kinship ties were less strong in Mafraq than Ramtha in the Irbid Governorate, they are nevertheless stronger and more historically rooted than in other parts of Jordan.⁴⁰ In addition to these ties, the engineer running the Local Development Unit of the Za'atari and Munshiya Municipality explained that there are kinship ties between Jordanians in his municipality and Syrians in Homs. Many local families acted as sponsors for their relatives who at first ended up in the neighbouring Za'atari refugee camps. "They have support from their families" he said, but they are not getting the same sort of assistance as Syrians in the camps, noting that they seem to be of less interest to many INGOs because the camp draws more global attention.⁴¹

These links have ensured that solidarity has endured despite reports of growing socio-economic tensions. In particular, the presence of refugees and of the humanitarian community has put great strain on Mafraq's infrastructure and economy. Inflation in prices and rents, as well as pressure on schools, water resources, and the creation of unmanageable levels of waste have increased resentment. Nevertheless, violence has been rare and a passive acceptance has endured partly because of longstanding kinship ties that predate the conflict.

Furthermore, some of Mafraq's municipalities have seen the visible presence of refugees – and the

³⁷ Wagner, A-C (2017), 'Unsteady frontiers, wild growth at the margins: cross-border and rural-urban displacement of Syrian refugees in the north of Jordan', *Beyond Crisis: Rethinking Refugee Studies*, RSC Conference 2017, University of Oxford, 16-17 March.

³⁸ Proudfoot, P (2017), 'The smell of blood', *City*, 21: 3-4, 483-502.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Mercy Corp (2013), 'Mapping of Host Community-Refugee Tensions in Mafraq and Ramtha', (Amman: Mercy Corp).

⁴¹ Interview, Za'atari and Munshiya Municipality, March 2017.



Syrian refugees at Za'atari refugee camp, Jordan

presence of Za'atari – as an opportunity for seeking income from the central state. In the village of Um Al Jamal, the mayor has used the presence of 10,000 Syrians alongside 25,000 Jordanians as an opportunity to leverage national and international support.

For example, he has approached the King and the Directorate of Archaeology and received significant funding to support restoration of the town's basalt fort, and to rebuild the town's infrastructure. Just by the municipality, the newly asphalted roads provide a smoother drive than the main highway running from Mafraq to Za'atari camp. He was very keen to point out the different identity-based solidarities that were mobilised to support the increased Syrian population: "The relationship is cultural in terms of our pan-Arab identity, religious as we are all Muslims, and tribal because many of us are from different branches of the same tribe."⁴²

Sahab municipality lies on the south east of Amman and as such has lacked historical social ties to the Syrian population, being further away from the border. It has faced the challenge of hosting 50,000 Syrian, Iraqi and Yemeni refugees, while already being a key destination for migrant workers from Egypt and South Asia. Nevertheless, it has largely embraced Syrian refugees as an economic opportunity, and involved them in community consultations regarding municipal development issues. The Mayor of Sahab proudly noted that "It shows the strength of the culture here that we can absorb so many people."⁴³ Sahab's municipal staff have shown proactivity and initiative.

This is in part a result of difficult circumstances hoisted upon them. They have had to work hard to build a functioning municipality after their withdrawal from the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) which took away waste-collection trucks and even the trees when Sahab became independent from it in 2013.

Having recently withdrawn from the GAM, Sahab has taken a proactive approach to economic and community development. In the Sahab municipality, for instance, the mayor Abbas Maharmeh is trying to strategically position the municipality in order to attract investment. Given its economy was already based significantly on manufacturing and migrant workers, the Jordan Compact has represented a particular opportunity for Sahab.

Indeed, the Sahab Special Economic Zone is one of the success stories of the Jordan Compact, hosting several Syrian manufacturing firms, previously operating in Syria, which have relocated, and are now employing both Syrians and Jordanians. For example, the Al Fayhaa Company focuses on plastics and rubber, including flexible and hygienic packaging, in its 18,000 square foot factory. Under Syrian management, it employs 82 Syrians out of 313 employees, and claims to already be exporting to Sweden, Spain, France, and the Netherlands under the Compact, with 40% of its total sales to the EU. Meanwhile, SIGMA Detergents, which used to operate just outside Damascus until its relocation in 2013 has expanded its Syrian staff to 30 out of 70,

⁴² Interview, Umm Al Jimal, March 2017.

⁴³ Interview, Sahab, March 2017.

and, with its primary export markets to Iraq and Syria now closed, is turning to Europe, but until the Jordan Compact it could not meet the EU's rules of origin criteria as it imports raw materials from China.

Furthermore, Sahab's inclusive community approach is part of a strategy to reduce the possibilities for tensions between the host and refugee populations: their approach challenges the idea of a dichotomy between the two. The Mayor explained that "Syrians are not refugees, foreigners, we treat them like citizens. We're happy to do our duty to our brothers."⁴⁴

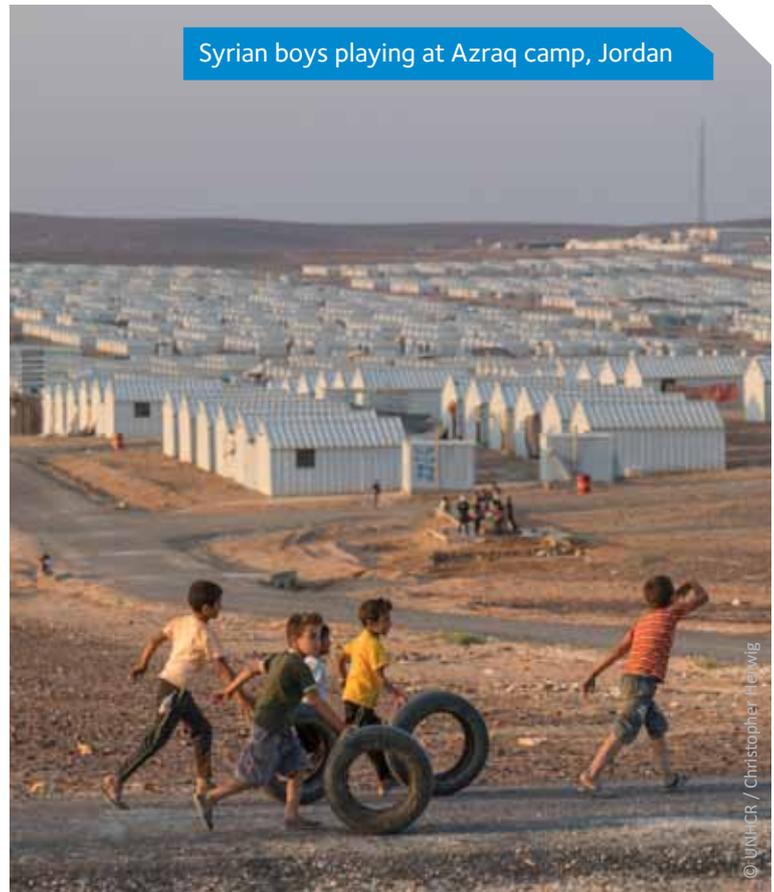
"There is poverty and unemployment here. We have to convince the Jordanians that the Syrians have improved the situation for Jordanians as well... We explain to people that it isn't just competition for jobs and services. We try to bring projects that benefit all."⁴⁵

Zarqa governorate has lacked either identity or interest-based grounds to show the same type of hospitality to Syrian refugees. A large industrial city north of Amman, it officially hosts 47,500 (UNHCR 2017) Syrian refugees, with the governorate claiming to host over 130,000. The Governor, Raed Al Adwan, has been outspoken about the burden placed on the economy, health, education, and public services sector in speeches to the media and visiting delegations.

This response has partly been understandable given the economic challenges. On a development level, with 60% of the population aged under 30, the governorate has a youth unemployment rate of nearly 30%. The combination of these factors makes Zarqa the poster child for the central government's narrative of the presence of Syrians as a significant development challenge.

At the municipal level, the Head of the Local Development Unit (LDU) has not been so publically vocal about the challenges of hosting Syrian refugees. While he did not challenge the veracity of the

Syrian boys playing at Azraq camp, Jordan



officially stated number of Syrians in Jordan, he was of the view that the number of Syrians living and working in Zarqa is much higher than the registered number. "Many come here from Mafraq to live and work, some of them are registered in Mafraq but work in Zarqa."⁴⁶ The Palestinian refugees in Zarqa had been there since 1948 and were, he explained, involved in the establishment and development of the Jordanian state. The Syrian population lacks this state-building historical element. Although Syrians were initially received with much empathy, in the LDU there is acknowledgement of some social tension. The Syrian presence in Zarqa lacks the historical and familial familiarity felt in Jordan's northern provinces. "We have pleasant memories of Syria because Jordanians could travel visa-free and go from Zarqa to Damascus to relax, to buy clothes, and come back the same day," but today, he explained, "The Jordanian citizen, if asked about the economic problems, will blame the Syrians."

⁴⁴ Interview, Sahab, March 2017.

⁴⁵ Interview, Mayor of Sahab, March 2017.

⁴⁶ Interview, Zarqa, March 2017.

Lebanon

The starting point for Lebanon's response to the Syrian influx was its 1991 and 1993 bilateral agreements with Syria allowing reciprocal freedom of movement, residence, and property ownership.⁴⁷ Under these agreements, circular migration has been an important characteristic of both economies, with Syrian agricultural labour working seasonally in Lebanon and construction labourers working almost continually as much needed labour in Lebanon's reconstruction.⁴⁸ An economic interdependence premised upon human mobility existed between the two countries, as did a relationship of exploitation with corrupt Syrian military and political officials taking advantage of Syria's occupation of Lebanon.

Lebanon had had no government between March 2013 and December 2016 after Prime Minister Najib Mikati resigned after a dispute with Hezbollah. This left President Michel Suleiman presiding over a country with no government and faced with political paralysis: protracted negotiations over a new Council of Ministers headed by the replacement PM, Tammam Salam, continued. Hence throughout the early influx of Syrians, the Lebanese state's response was characterised mainly by inaction and the absence of strategic decision-making. The government was seen to be burying its head in the sand, labelling Syrians as 'displaced' and refusing to call them refugees.⁴⁹

Lebanon adopted a 'disassociation policy' towards the conflict in Syria in July 2012. This position was first taken during an Arab League meeting in Qatar that called for President Assad to step down. The motivation for this was to avoid the 'spillover' of the conflict. Indeed, Lebanon was divided: for the Shia Hezbollah – which was growing in strength and influence in Lebanon politically and militarily – Syria's regime was an important political and military ally, and a patron. But an array of political groups formed the March 14 bloc after the 2005 Cedar Revolution to end the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. The largest of them was the Future Movement, a Sunni party led by Saad Hariri, son of former PM Rafiq Hariri who was assassinated in February 2005.

The Syrian regime was accused of carrying out his murder. The relationship of different Christian parties to Syria was complicated. Some were part of the March 14 bloc, and others part of the Hezbollah-led pro-Assad March 8 bloc. The Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) were weary of the Syrian regime's influence in Lebanon and were initially part of the March 14 bloc but joined the March 8 bloc in 2006 after the objective of ending the Syrian occupation of Lebanon was achieved. They became more concerned about the growing presence of Syrian refugees, the majority of whom are Sunni Muslims.

Concerns about the potential spillover of Syria's uprising and conflicts into Lebanon facilitated broad agreement that Lebanon should remain neutral. Disassociation was central to understanding the trajectory – and sustainability – of Lebanon's refugee policies. While it lasted, it enabled the presence of Syrians to be perceived in humanitarian rather than security terms. But as time passed and the number of Syrians increased, there was also a powerful fear that the presence of a large number of mostly Sunni Syrian refugees would be permanent, and this would alter the demographic balance against the interests of Christian and Shia political groups in Lebanon.

In May 2013 disassociation came to an end. Hezbollah openly supported Assad. Assad's forces were on the back-foot and were much in need of assistance, particularly in Qusayr, strategically important because of its position on land and highways connecting Damascus to the coastal areas of Syria. Hezbollah was openly involved in the Battle of Qusayr. As Assad's Army attempted to disrupt the supply chain to rebel forces in Homs, it launched the Al-Qusayr Offensive, attacking a town near the Lebanese border of strategic importance to the rebel Free Syrian Army, and collaborated openly with Hezbollah in doing so.⁵⁰

This gave the green light to the Syrian opposition – and those Lebanese sympathetic to their fight against the Assad-regime – to attack Hezbollah inside Lebanon. And so the security situation within

⁴⁷ The Fraternity, Cooperation and Coordination Treaty was concluded between Syria and Lebanon on 22 May 1991 and complemented by The Agreement for Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination 16 September 1993.

⁴⁸ Chalcraft, JT (2009), *The Invisible Cage: Syrian Migrant Workers in Lebanon* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).

⁴⁹ Saghieh, N and Frangieh, G (2014), 'The main features of Lebanon's policy towards Syrian refugees: from the ostrich policy to soft power.' *The Legal Agenda*, 9-12-2014. <http://legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=945>

⁵⁰ Naame Shaam (2014), 'Iran in Syria: From an Ally of the Regime to an Occupying Force', *Issuu*, September 2014. http://issuu.com/paul.smith.bp1000/docs/report_iran_in_syria.

Lebanon began to deteriorate. The Nusra Front engaged in cross-border incursions and took over parts of Northern Lebanon. There was an assassination attempt against the Head of General Security, a Shia, in June 2014.⁵¹ With the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) now fighting the (Sunni) Nusra Front inside Lebanon, it was no longer perceived as neutral amongst a growing cross-section of Lebanese Sunnis, believing that the LAF is colluding with Hezbollah or at best focusing all of its counter-terrorism efforts exclusively on Sunni populations in Aarsal and Tripoli.⁵² Several LAF personnel were held captive, and some killed, by armed groups on the outskirts of Aarsal. Armed elements connected to Nusra and ISIS began to infiltrate regions close to the Syrian border which had for long been economically marginalised. The LAF buildup along the Lebanese-Syrian border could create tensions with Hezbollah in the long-term as there are likely to be implications for Hezbollah's operations in border regions.⁵³

In May 2014, faced with this deterioration in security, the cabinet briefly came out of its usual state of paralysis and division to create the government's Crisis Cell, and in October 2014 it passed a new policy, known as the 'October Policy'. The most significant change was imposing restrictions on the free movement and residency of Syrians, thereby giving General Security – the branch of state security responsible for dealing with foreigners – a remit to impose controls and interfere in the daily lives of Syrians. The policy set out a number of goals: to reduce refugee numbers crossing the border (except for exceptional humanitarian cases) and encourage return; implement security measures at municipal level; ease the burden by preventing Syrians from working unlawfully and seeking international support.⁵⁴

Michel Suleiman's term as President expired in May 2014, but the October Policy was passed. The Lebanese government's newly created Crisis Cell approached the international community for support.

One pillar of this was the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP)⁵⁵ as part of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) which was launched in December 2014 in Berlin with an emphasis on refugee and host resilience. Another pillar was the Lebanon Compact, agreed in London in February 2016, in parallel to the Jordan Compact, and supported by the EU.⁵⁶ This pact included a focus on fostering job and educational opportunities for all of Lebanon's vulnerable groups and not only vulnerable Syrians. In exchange for a commitment of around 400m Euros, Lebanon committed to allow the temporary stay of Syrian refugees. While European states may have been hoping to encourage a more relaxed interpretation of the 'October Policy', Lebanon imposed further restrictions on residency for Syrians pushing those who could not afford the costly renewal of residency permits – the vast majority of them – into circumstances of increased precariousness and insecurity.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the Lebanese Armed Forces intensified their raids on Syrian refugee camps, or the 'Informal Tented Settlements' as the government called them because formal camps still remain against government policy. The securitization of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has only increased at the level of national politics as politicians, such as the Foreign Minister Gebran Baseel of the Maronite Christian Free Patriotic Movement, seek to assert their communal nationalist credentials through hostile positions towards Syrian refugees. Baseel's position has only been strengthened by the appointment of his father-in-law, Michel Aoun, as President of Lebanon in December 2016.

Sub-national variation

One of the striking features of the October 2014 policy is that it prompted extra-legal sub-national implementation at the municipal level. For example, the policy seems to have encouraged a number of municipalities to impose nighttime curfews upon Syrian refugees. But, in practice, these restrictive

⁵¹ Al Jazeera and agencies (2014), 'Lebanon Security Chief Survives Bomb Attack', *Al Jazeera English*, June 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/two-killed-suicide-blast-lebanon-201462084724664691.html>.

⁵² Nerguizian, A (2015), 'Between Sectarianism and Military Development: The Paradox of the Lebanese Armed Forces', in Salloukh B et al. (eds) *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*, pp.108–35 (London: Pluto Press).

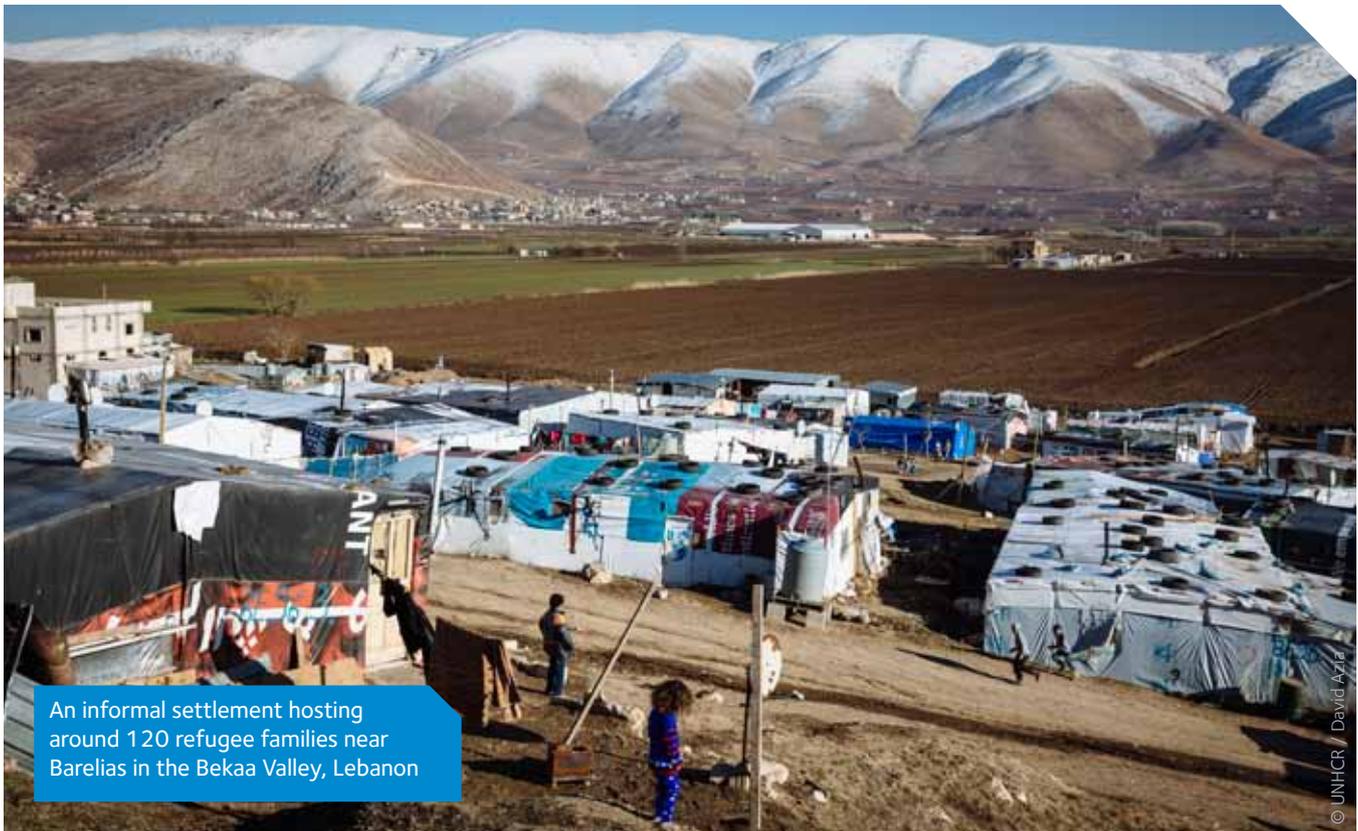
⁵³ Nerguizian, A (2015).

⁵⁴ 23 October 2014 Session of the Lebanese Council of Ministers: <http://www.pcm.gov.lb/arabic/subpg.aspx?pageid=6118>

⁵⁵ The 2016-2016 LCRP: <http://lcrp.gov.lb/pdf/fullbrochure.pdf>

⁵⁶ See <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/lebanon-compact.pdf>

⁵⁷ Frangieh, G (2014), 'Forced Departure: How Lebanon Evades the International Principle of Non-Refoulement', *The Legal Agenda*, December 29, 2014. <http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=675&folder=articles&lang=en>; Frangieh, G (2015), 'Lebanon Places Discriminatory Entry Restrictions on Syrians', *The Legal Agenda*, January 22, 2015. <http://english.legal-agenda.com/article.php?id=679&folder=articles&lang=en>; Frangieh, G, n.d., 'Denying Syrian Refugees Status: Helping or Harming Lebanon?', *The Legal Agenda*, accessed January 10, 2017. <http://legal-agenda.com/en/article.php?id=3355>.



practices were unevenly implemented, with some areas being more lenient than other. Only around 45 out of 1000 municipalities have enforced a curfew. Meanwhile, practices of refoulement, forced return, and de facto integration have varied by region. The absence of a unified central government and the resulting ‘non-policy’ towards refugees has allowed a significant degree of decentralisation in policy implementation. Much of the resulting variation can be explained by identity politics, notably the role of confessionalism. But political economy has also played a role as municipalities have sought to sensitise international organisations to the important services which Syrians rely on, even those living in Informal Tented Settlements.

It was in Hezbollah municipalities that restrictions on Syrians were most harshly implemented. This reflected the sense of fear and securitization that came from Hezbollah’s relationship with the Assad regime and the reality that most Syrian refugees in Lebanon were fleeing the Assad regime, and more likely to be Sunni than Shia. Hezbollah has faced a fine balance. Early in the crisis, it welcomed and assisted Syrian refugees because it wanted to safeguard its reputation for charity after Syrians opened their doors to Lebanese civilians fleeing the Israeli bombardments of 2006, and because its leader Hassan Nasrallah insisted that the war must stay out of Lebanon.⁵⁸ Over time

Hezbollah has adopted a securitization stance towards Syrians, insisting on a strict management of Syrians in municipalities run by its party, but also in areas where it is rumoured to have been fighting alongside the Lebanese Armed Forces against Al Nusra and ISIS affiliated groups. In the town of Arsal, for instance, violent clashes between Hezbollah and other armed groups have led to Hezbollah’s involvement in the repatriation of Syrian fighters and civilians to Idlib Province. Examples of forced return and non-refoulement have become prevalent in 2016 and 2017.⁵⁹

Second, as one would expect, the Sunni areas have been the most tolerant of the Syrian presence. This is particularly true in the areas with a long history of hosting Syrians. The cities along the coast like Tripoli and Sidon, as well as large parts of Beirut, have been far more relaxed on implementing the residency restrictions of the October Policy. This is in part because of extensive and long-standing informal networks between Syrians and Lebanese, many formed as a result of the 1993 bilateral agreement through which around 500,000 Syrians were already working in-country before 2011. As a result, these areas have been far more likely to allow de facto socio-economic integration, and the state has largely left civil society to adapt to the Syrian influx.

⁵⁸ <http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/lebanon-hezbollahs-refugee-problem>

⁵⁹ www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/14/thousands-refugees-militants-return-syria-from-lebanon-hezbollah



Kfar Qahel informal settlement in Northern Lebanon

Nevertheless, across Sunni municipalities, there has been variation, and personalities have mattered. In Tikrit, for instance, a mixed but predominately Sunni town, Human Rights Watch report curfews have been implemented. In notable contrast, the mayor of Tripoli adopted a relaxed and open policy towards Syrians. His estimate of the increase in Tripoli's population was based on the proportional increase in the amount of solid waste processed by the Municipality rather than any active population count. "It's hard to tell them apart anyway, they are just like us. There are Syrians here who speak the same as us, and have married into our families, and we have married into theirs."⁶⁰

Third, Christian areas have had a mixed response, many seeking a degree of control, while others have tolerated the Syrian presence. Around 10% of the Syrian refugees are Christians. But an additional factor that appears to have mediated response is social class, with wealthy Syrians often more likely to self-select to live in wealthy Christian areas than the informal settlements in many of the Sunni areas. Once again, personality has mattered. In Zahle, for instance, the Christian mayor, As'ad Zughayb, has not imposed curfews or oppressed Syrian refugees in part because of his professed liberal values: "I'm not going to stop a Syrian from taking a walk with his wife in

the evening after working all day." His frustrations were targeted at international organisations. "We have had camps in our municipality for a long time, but it was only after we stopped collecting the waste from them that the international organisations started speaking to us."⁶¹ This response contrasts with that in other Christian cities; for example, in the coastal town Jounieh, Syrians have frequently faced greater levels of discrimination and oppression, including by the police and General Security.⁶² The Mayor of Zahle also lamented the inadequate level of organisation of the refugee response generally. He was concerned about fire safety in the informal camps, with tents being too close to each other, and inadequate clean water provision. Zahle was not the only municipality which strategically denied services to camps to gain attention. "Municipalities have tried to sensitise camp populations to waste issues by not collecting waste from time to time," explained a UNHCR liaison officer.⁶³ Municipalities may also be using curfews as a way to seek attention from the international aid organisations: curfews were interpreted by some international organisations as an indicator of social tensions, thereby flagging the need for assistance, and incentivising the indication of social tensions on the part of local authorities.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Interview, Tripoli, October 2016.

⁶¹ Interview, Zahle, October 2016.

⁶² <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2016/07/lebanon-syria-conflict-refugee-abuse.html>

⁶³ Interview, Zahle, October 2016.

⁶⁴ For further details of conflict driven and conflict insensitive aid, see Mourad, L (2016), 'From conflict-insensitive to conflict-driven aid', Middle East Institute, <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/conflict-insensitive-conflict-driven-aid>

Turkey

Leaving aside longstanding bilateral disputes, Turkey and Syria normalised their relations in the 2000s and created a framework for cooperation over a wide range of policy issues, including security, trade, health and agriculture.⁶⁵ Following the signing of a Free Trade Agreement in 2004 (in effect from 2007), trade between the two countries more than doubled in three years, rising from \$795 million to \$1.6 billion in 2009.⁶⁶ While Turkey was not among Syria's top five importing countries in 2000, it became first in 2010.⁶⁷ Prior to the outbreak of the Syrian conflict, the Turkish-Syrian High Level Strategic Council adopted more than 60 cooperation agreements, including a bilateral mobility agreement in September 2009, which mutually cancelled visa requirements for their respective citizens for tourism visa-free entry up to 90 days.⁶⁸ The following year 1.35 million Turks visited Syria, while 750,000 Syrians visited Turkey.⁶⁹

The mobility agreement also allowed free border crossing early in the crisis. The first arrivals – initially just a few hundred – came in late April 2011, with a small camp being established for refugees in the Hatay region. As the situation in Syria deteriorated, Turkey's response was initially hospitable. In June 2011, following the Syrian government's siege of Jisr al-Shughur, more than 10,000 people fled to Turkey, leading the government to declare an open border policy for those fleeing the Syrian conflict.⁷⁰ This reflected both the anti-Assad position of the Erdoğan government and the generally strong solidarity between the people of Hatay and Syrians from across

the border.⁷¹ By the end of 2011, Turkey had spent at least \$15 million on setting up six camps, and designated the status of refugees to be 'guests'.⁷² The then Prime Minister – now President – Erdoğan was determined to position Turkey as a 'global humanitarian actor' and a major player in the regional politics.⁷³

The following year saw a dramatic increase in Syrian arrivals. In April 2012 in advance of a UN ceasefire, over 2,500 people arrived at the Turkish-Syrian border in just one day, the highest recorded up to that point.⁷⁴ In June 2012, Turkey formally changed its position in the conflict, after Syria shot down a Turkish plane that strayed into its territory, declaring that if Syrian troops approach Turkey's borders they would be seen as a military threat. Further tension arose in October, when for the first time a Syrian mortar landed on the border town of Akçakale killing five Turkish civilians, followed by immediate military retaliation from Turkey and the parliament's approval to deploy armed forces in foreign countries when deemed necessary by the government.⁷⁵ By December 2012, the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey had reached 150,000, then half a million at the end of 2013. A big increase occurred in 2014, with over 1.5 million registered Syrians in December 2014.⁷⁶

From 2013, Turkey finalised almost a decade-long process of building more formal national institutions for refugee and migration management.⁷⁷ In particular, it passed its Law on Foreigners and International

⁶⁵ For in-depth accounts on Turkey-Syria relations, see Bishku, M (2012), 'Turkish-Syrian Relations: A Checkered History', *Middle East Policy*, 19(3): 36-53; Hinnbusch, R and Tür, Ö (2013), *Turkey and Syria Relations: Between Enmity and Amity* (Farnham: Ashgate); Ilgit, A and Davis, R (2013), 'Many faces of Turkey in the Syrian Crisis', *Middle East Research and Information Project*; Abboud, SN (2016), *Syria* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

⁶⁶ Bilefsky, D (2010), 'Syria's New Ardor for a Turkey looking Eastward', *The New York Times*, July 24. The Free Trade Agreement was suspended on 6 December 2011.

⁶⁷ Bilgic-Apaslan, I (2012), 'Suriye Krizi Türkiye Ekonomisini Nasıl Etkiler [How does the Syrian crisis affect the Turkish economy]?', Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) Assessment Report N201248.

⁶⁸ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-syria.en.mfa> (accessed 25 October 2017).

⁶⁹ Bishku (2012).

⁷⁰ On the early dynamics of refugee inflows to Turkey, see Ilgit and Davis (2013); Ozden, S (2013), 'Syrian Refugees in Turkey', Migration Policy Centre Research Reports 2013/05, European University Institute; Dinçer, O, Federeci, V, Ferris, E, Karaca, S, Kirişçi, K, and Çarmıklı, E (2013), 'Turkey and Syrian refugees: the limits of hospitality', Brookings Institution & USAK.

⁷¹ Ozden (2013).

⁷² Stack, L (2011), 'For Refugees from Syria, A Visit With No Expiration Date', *The New York Times*, November 14.

⁷³ Ilgit and Davis (2013); Gökalp Aras, E. and Sahin Mencutek, Z (2015), 'The international migration and foreign policy nexus: the case of Syrian refugee crisis and Turkey', *Migration Letters*, 12(3): 193-208; Abboud (2016).

⁷⁴ 'Syrian Refugees: A Snapshot of the Crisis- in the Middle East and Europe', Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute. Available at: <http://syrianrefugees.eu> (accessed 29 October 2017).

⁷⁵ Ilgit and Davis (2013); also see, 'Turkey border town quiet after shelling', *Hürriyet Daily News*, 5 October 2012.

⁷⁶ UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response.

Protection (LFIP), its first comprehensive migration legislation, under a degree of pressure from the European Union and established the Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM), which became operational in 2014. The new legislation created regulation to manage the entry and exit of foreigners, and also set out four international protection categories: refugees (from Europe), conditional refugees (from outside Europe), subsidiary protection (individual, human-rights based), and temporary (for mass influx situations). The final one of these statuses was offered to Syrians.⁷⁸

The LFIP provides that refugees or conditional refugees may apply for a work permit six months from the date of lodging a claim for international protection; beneficiaries of subsidiary protection may work for a restricted period if circumstances in the labour market necessitate it. Meanwhile, in January 2016, the Regulation on Work Permits of Refugees Under Temporary Protection was passed, allowing work permits to be granted to Syrians under certain conditions and with certain restrictions. But in practice, the restrictions have been significant: employers of Syrian employees must apply to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security for a work permit six months after registering for temporary protection status; employment must be found in the city of registration; and in any given workplace the number of temporary protection workers cannot exceed 10% of the Turkish citizens employed. Around 20,000 Syrians were granted work permits between 2011 and 2016, which comprises nearly 1% of the total working age population. The estimated numbers of informally employed Syrians in Turkey range between 500,000 and 1 million.⁷⁹ Formal and informal employment mainly centres around

agriculture, construction, textile and service sectors.⁸⁰ As an official from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security explained, work permit applications remain below expectations, mainly because it is a relatively new process and there is a general lack of public awareness on formal procedures. He added, “but the 10% quota will remain for now, because we have to be careful about maintaining the labour peace.”⁸¹

Indeed, during the process of developing these institutions, the government had shifted towards a generally more restrictive set of policies concerning mobility given growing security concerns. A key turning point were the February and May 2013 bombings in Reyhanlı, one of Hatay’s border towns with Syria; first an explosion at the Cilvegözü border crossing point and later twin bombings in central Reyhanlı, killing at least 51 people and injuring 140. This created a growing recognition of a possible link between Syrian refugee movements and a terrorist threat.⁸² Almost immediately afterwards, Turkey began to close some of its official border crossing points with Syria, for example, building a 2 metre wall initially in the district of Nusaybin.⁸³

Although Turkey proclaimed that its borders were open, in practice this was not always the case. As the conflict dynamics in Syria shifted towards a role for ISIS and as more people fled Kurdish areas following the siege of Kobane in October 2014, the Turkish government increasingly feared the dual terrorist threat of the PKK and ISIS.⁸⁴ As in Lebanon and Jordan, October 2014 marked an important turning point in growing restrictivism on mobility. The government proclaimed that it now viewed the Syrian presence as ‘permanent’ rather than temporary and that the country needed to adapt accordingly.⁸⁵ That month, the

⁷⁷ For in-depth discussions on recent changes in Turkey’s migration policies and practice, and the EU’s impact on Turkey’s migration regime, see İçduygu, A (2004), ‘Demographic Mobility and Turkey: Migration Experiences and Government Responses’, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 15(4): 8-90; Kirişçi, K (2007), ‘Turkey: A Country of Transition from Emigration to Immigration’, *Mediterranean Politics*, 12(1): 91-97; Özçürümez, S and Şenses, N (2011), ‘Europeanization and Turkey: studying irregular migration policy’, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 13(2): 233-48; Sirkeci, I. & Pusch, B. (eds) (2016), *Turkish Migration Policy* (London: Transnational Press).

⁷⁸ Ineli-Ciger, M (2014), ‘Implications of the New Law on Foreigners and International Protection and Regulation No. 29153 on Temporary Protection for Syrians Seeking Protection in Turkey’, *Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration*, 4(2): 28-36.

⁷⁹ Kadköy, O (2017), ‘Syrians and Labour Market Integration – Dynamics in Turkey and Germany’, On Turkey Analysis Briefs, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2 February.

⁸⁰ Korkmaz, E (2017), ‘How do Syrian refugee workers challenge supply chain management in the Turkish garment industry?’, University of Oxford, International Migration Institute Working Paper Series 133: 1-18.

⁸¹ Interview, Ankara, December 2016. See also, İçduygu, A and Diker, E (2017), ‘Labour Market Integration of Syrian Refugees in Turkey: From Refugees to Settlers’, *The Journal of Migration Studies*, 3(1): 12-35.

⁸² Dinçer, et al. (2013); Schleifer, Y (2013), ‘After Obama Meeting Turkey’s Erdoğan Recalibrates Syria Policy’, *World Politics Review*, June 4.

⁸³ Burch, J (2013), ‘Turkey shuts Syria border crossing after deadly bombs’, Reuters, May 22; Pamuk, H and Coskun, O (2013), ‘Turkey builds wall on Syrian border to stem illegal migration’, Reuters, October 7.

⁸⁴ Kirişçi, K and Ferris, E (2015), ‘Not likely to go home: Syrian refugees and the challenges to Turkey and the international community’, Turkey Project Policy Paper No.7, Brookings Institute.

⁸⁵ Memişoğlu and Ilgit (2017).



Ministry Council approved the temporary protection regulation (as a by-law of the LFIP). It guaranteed protection against forced returns and assistance for all Syrians (both camp and non-camp refugees, with or without identification documents), Palestinians from Syria, and stateless.⁸⁶ From March to early June 2015, Turkey closed all border crossing points to individuals, including Syrian citizens who are passport holders, until it admitted over 15,000 Syrians who fled from the increased fighting in Tel-Abyad.⁸⁷

April 2015 saw the start of the so-called 'European refugee crisis'. From June to November, nearly 704,000 people, predominantly Syrian nationals, irregularly arrived in Greece by sea from Turkey.⁸⁸ Gradually, this increased the bilateral pressure on Turkey to restrict the movement of Syrians within and from Turkey.⁸⁹ In October 2015, the EU and Turkey agreed to a Joint Plan of Action, including a Refugee Facility for Turkey that would include capacity building for better border management, as well as international protection. In late November, Erdoğan met with EU heads of state in Brussels, and a 3 billion Euros package was agreed to support EU-Turkish cooperation relating to Syrian refugees as part of the EU's wider migration strategy for the Western Balkans and the Aegean Sea. This culminated in the

March 2016 EU-Turkey deal, which offered a further 3 billion Euros in exchange for Turkey agreeing to accept the readmission of all Syrians arriving in Greece, and the reinforcement of mobility controls for Syrian refugees within Turkey.⁹⁰

These policies had knock-on effects. By February 2016, for example, nearly 60,000-70,000 people were stranded near the southeast border town Kilis, mostly fleeing the bombing around Aleppo. Turkey did not open its borders for this new influx and instead opted for assisting them on the other side of the border, building makeshift camps and providing basic needs as it sought to develop a 'safe haven' model on the Syrian side of the border. As a series of attacks followed, Turkey enhanced its border security and completed the construction of a 700 km long wall along its border with Syria by the end of September 2017.

Meanwhile, the changing dynamics of the refugee situation has made the social-integration issues of urban refugees a policy priority, a challenge with many dimensions and political implications. Opening pathways to citizenship, for instance, has become a hot political topic following Erdoğan's public announcement in July 2016 of plans to grant citizenship to Syrians, stirring a strong public reaction.

⁸⁶ Tograk-Koca, B (2015), 'Deconstructing Turkey's Open Door Policy towards Refugees from Syria', *Migration Letters*, 12(3): 209-225; Baban, F, Ilcan, S, and Rygiel, K (2017), 'Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Pathways to Precarity, Differential Inclusion, and Negotiated Citizenship Rights', *Journal of Migration and Ethnic Studies*, 43(1): 41-57.

⁸⁷ Konuksever, A (2015), 'Akçakale'de sınır yeniden açıldı [The border reopened in Akçakale]', *Al Jazeera-Turk*, 15 June.

⁸⁸ UNHCR Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response: Mediterranean, 24 April 2016.

⁸⁹ Memişoğlu and Ilgit (2017).

⁹⁰ Okay, A and Zaragoza-Cristiani, J (2016), 'The Leverage of the Gatekeeper: Power and Interdependence in the Migration Nexus between the EU and Turkey', *Italian Journal of International Affairs*, 51(4): 51-66.



According to officials, over 10,000 Syrians have been granted citizenship so far, and with the applications currently being processed, the numbers will reach 50,000.⁹¹

Sub-national variation

In Turkey, refugee policy is determined by the central government, with governorates representing the central government. However, locally elected municipalities have an important role in shaping socio-economic integration. The initial influx focused on Hatay and later on the southeast border cities with official and unofficial crossing points: Gaziantep, Kilis, Şanlıurfa and Mardin. Hatay has a long history of representing cross-border communal ties between Syria and Turkey, especially through its Christian and Alawite Arab population, and hence solidarity with Syrians was a core part of regional identity. Indeed, kinship ties and already existing socio-economic networks with the host community along the entire border region play a crucial role in refugees' preference for self-settlement.⁹²

From 2012, Turkey had begun to build more camps around the border provinces of Hatay, Kilis,

Gaziantep, Mardin and Şanlıurfa, and the surrounding provinces of Adana, Mersin, Kahramanmaraş and Osmaniye. Syrians also started settling more in urban areas. As their stay has prolonged, some moved to the other regions for socio-economic networks, larger job markets, and some for growing security concerns especially after the Reyhanlı bombings.⁹³ There were growing identity-based tensions in Hatay.⁹⁴ While most of the Syrian refugees were initially Sunni, and a minority of Hatay's Turkish population – around 30% – were Alawite, leading to occasional tensions and protest.⁹⁵

More than half of the Syrian refugee population is still concentrated in the south and southeast regions.⁹⁶ Yet, as they began to move to other parts of the country, there was clear variation in the degree of openness in different municipalities. While Turkey as a whole embarked on a more restrictivist turn from 2014, some municipalities showed different degrees of solidarity, albeit within the limited framework afforded by national policy and legislation. In Turkey, the Governorate is the regional representative of the central government. In the major refugee-hosting cities, the governorates are primarily responsible

⁹¹ Interview, Ankara, December 2016. Also see, 'Turkey processing citizenship for 50,000 Syrians', *Daily Sabah Turkey*, September 23.

⁹² Ozden (2013); Kaya, A (2016), 'Syrian Refugees and Cultural Intimacy in Istanbul: I feel safe here', EUI Working Paper Series RSCAS 2016/59, European University Institute.

⁹³ Abboud (2016).

⁹⁴ Zaman, T (2016), *Islamic Traditions of Refuge in the Crises of Iraq and Syria* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).

⁹⁵ Seibert, T (2012), 'Syrian refugees forced away from Turkish border Area', *The National*, September 11. Available at: <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/syrian-refugees-forced-away-from-turkish-border-area-1.441465> (accessed 20 October 2017); Kirişçi and Febris (2015).

⁹⁶ DGMM website, available at: http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik (accessed 20 October 2017).

for the coordination of state and non-state actors involved in the local refugee response. Meanwhile, there are popularly elected metropolitan and district-level municipalities. The current legal framework does not lay out formal institutional responsibilities for municipalities to incorporate refugees into their assistance and social services. And there is no specific financial allowance for refugees within the allocated budget from the central government, the major revenue sources of municipalities.⁹⁷ Thus, municipalities play a key role in deciding whether to offer additional, supplementary support to refugees, often shaped by party politics. According to the representatives from the Union of Turkish Municipalities, an umbrella organisation representing and lobbying for all the 1397 municipalities at the central and international levels, this legal loophole leads to variations in municipality's role, from marginal involvement to active engagement.⁹⁸ Mayors are influential local, sometimes national, political figures in Turkey. Their particular approach to the refugee situation and political will is also a determining factor in the overall municipal engagement with refugee politics.

One of the key factors underlying this appears to be the role of political parties as well as the degree to which refugees were perceived as a potential economic opportunity by local business leaders. We illustrate this variation, using the examples of the response of Gaziantep, Adana, and Izmir's metropolitan municipal authorities.

First, across the three examples, Gaziantep has shown the greatest degree of municipal solidarity. Located less than 100 km from the border with Syria, Gaziantep was one of the first cities to receive waves of refugees from Syria and to set up refugee camps in the surrounding districts of Islahiye, Nizip and Karkamış. Demographically, the city has experienced a major boom with the growing influx of urban refugees from early 2012, whose share currently makes up nearly 20% of the total population.⁹⁹ Several factors account for Gaziantep's popularity among Syrian refugees: geographical and cultural

proximity to Syria, kinship ties, existing social and economic networks, the city's relatively strong economic profile in the region, and the overall local responsiveness.

Run by AKP, Gaziantep's metropolitan municipality has been proactively engaged with the Syrian refugees from the early years of the crisis. Initially focused on providing basic humanitarian assistance, there is now a broad range of municipal services available for refugees, from schooling to livelihoods and community support. Following the election of mayor Fatma Şahin (the former Minister of Family and Social Policies) in 2014, who has shown a pro-refugee stance, the municipality has systematized its informal assistance mechanisms and set up a sub-directorate migration affairs unit in early 2016. The unit, the first of its kind in Turkey, intends to coordinate more effectively between the municipality and public institutions, NGOs, and international organisations. Within the mandate of the directorate, there are two schools for Syrian pupils (accredited by the Ministry of National Education) and a community centre.¹⁰⁰ Located in the mixed Turkish-Kurdish-Arabic district of Narlıtepe, the 'Ensar' community centre provides consultancy services to up to 400 Syrians every week. Their practicality in handling everyday issues of Syrian refugees is noteworthy: the head of the community centre proudly explains that their recommendations on registration of marriages, and the registration of Syrian car plates, were taken seriously by the central authorities, which later became nationwide implemented practices.¹⁰¹ The community centre appears to have a positive impact on boosting refugee-host community dialogue in the neighborhood as their events and programmes are open for all. Yet, as one of the mukhtars of the Narlıtepe district notes, social integration would take a while, given that the Syrian refugees move too often within and from Gaziantep when they find cheaper accommodation and employment in other cities.¹⁰²

In terms of understanding the particular socio-economic aspects of the Syrian refugee crisis for Gaziantep, it is important to draw comparisons with

⁹⁷ Interviews, Ankara, December 2016. See also, Erdoğan, M (2017), 'Urban Refugees from Detachment to Harmonization, Syrian Refugees and Process Management of Municipalities: the case of Istanbul', Marmara Municipalities Union Publications.

⁹⁸ Interviews, Ankara, December 2016.

⁹⁹ As of October 2017, Gaziantep hosts 342,442 registered Syrian refugees under temporary protection and an additional 24,905 camp refugees. These figures do not include unregistered Syrians and Syrians residing in Gaziantep under foreigner status (with residence permits). Source: Directorate General of Migration Management website, http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713_icerik, last accessed 26 October 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Interview, Metropolitan Municipality of Gaziantep, October 2016.

¹⁰¹ Interview, Gaziantep, October 2016.

¹⁰² The mukhtars are elected head in villages and neighbourhoods in Turkey. Interview, Gaziantep, October 2016.

the pre-war conditions of the late 2000s. Back in 2005, Gaziantep and Aleppo officially became ‘twin cities’, an initiative taken by local authorities to bolster economic, social and cultural ties between its people. The locals often reminisce about the days where taxis were continuously transferring business people and day visitors between the two cities. Aside from growing entrepreneurial investments on both sides, there was also a steady increase in exports from Gaziantep to Syria between 2005 and 2010. Despite a sharp decrease of 45% in 2012, the following period from 2010 to 2015 saw a drastic increase of 237% owing largely to the local firms’ share in delivering humanitarian assistance across the border.¹⁰³ Meanwhile Syrian refugees set up more than 800 firms in Gaziantep by the end of 2016, compared with only 20 back in 2011.¹⁰⁴ With considerable economic interests at stake, the Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Industry actively support the socio-economic integration of Syrian refugees, especially of the middle-class. The Chamber of Commerce, for instance, has set up a Syria desk to facilitate bureaucratic hurdles encountered by their Syrian members and to strengthen coordination ties with the local business associations and networks found by Syrian refugees in Gaziantep. The representatives from the Association of Syrian Business and Trade People (SIAD) said they have minimum interaction with local authorities over work permit processes as they are granted through a central system of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. The mediating role of the Chamber of Commerce helps them to overcome language and other bureaucratic barriers. Their primary demand from the central authorities is to reconsider the implementation of the 10% quota in major refugee-hosting cities: “there are Syrian businesses here who could employ 100 Syrian refugees, but they don’t have the capacity to employ an additional 1000 Turkish employees.”¹⁰⁵

The officials working at provincial employment agencies (İŞKUR) also noted their limited involvement in the integration of Syrian refugees into the local labour market. If they get directly involved, according to the officials, this would increase the Syrians’ awareness about their formal right to

work, the work-permit procedures and İŞKUR’s job postings, but intensify the workload and capacity needs of local agencies.¹⁰⁶

Gaziantep’s strategic position as the regional operational hub for the UN agencies and other international organisations involved in the management of the refugee crisis is also an advantage for local actors. Through partnerships with the UNDP, for instance, the Metropolitan Municipality gets capacity-building assistance on waste management and recovery. Within the framework of another project with the UNDP, the municipality and the Chamber of Industry carry out vocational training focusing on the employability of Syrian refugees in service and industry sectors.¹⁰⁷ Yet, the cooperation framework remains limited, a criticism often raised by local authorities and local NGOs towards international partners and donors despite the latter’s presence in Gaziantep since the early years of the crisis. The words of a representative from the Chamber of Industry reflect such criticisms:

“The international organisations here are acting like they are trying to solve a mystery, but there is no mystery. They have waited too long to intervene. We looked for partners to conduct a professional mapping study to be able to match the skillsets of Syrians with labour force needs, we couldn’t find any. First, you need to identify what kind of a population you are dealing with. You need to teach them a profession, a professional culture, you cannot just give money unconditionally. Second, they need to support the development of physical infrastructure. This is a forced displacement situation, not a planned immigration. They are implementing unfeasible projects without taking into account these realities on the ground.”¹⁰⁸

As the sixth most populous city of Turkey, Adana’s socio-economic profile, well-developed agriculture and textile sectors, and its proximity to the border provinces make it a popular destination for Syrian refugees.¹⁰⁹ The city is home to a diverse group of

¹⁰³ Interviews, Gaziantep Chamber of Industrialists, October 2016. For the 2012 figures, see, <http://gto.org.tr/upload/serbest/Icimizdeki-Suriye-Ortak-Akil-Raporu--2-113627.pdf> (accessed 20 October 2017). Also see, Karasapan, O (2017), ‘Syrian businesses in Turkey: The Pathway to refugee integration?’, Brookings Institute, October 3.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce, October 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Interviews, Association of Syrian Business and Trade People, Gaziantep, October 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Interviews, Gaziantep and Adana, October 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Interview, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, October 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Interview, Gaziantep, October 2016.

¹⁰⁹ As of October 2017, Adana hosts 164,590 registered Syrian refugees under temporary protection and an additional 27,750 camp refugees. See, DGMM website.

internal migrant communities from the southeast regions and as well as seasonal migratory agricultural workers, who are now increasingly replaced by Syrian agricultural workers.¹¹⁰ The presence of a large local Arab population in Adana also plays a role in the settlement preferences of Syrian refugees. Yeşilbağlar neighbourhood, for instance, hosts more than 10% of the city's Syrian refugees. One of the mukhtars of the neighborhood, while speaking fluent Arabic with the Syrian refugees visiting his office, told that extended family networks between the local residents who are mainly from Şanlıurfa and Syrians from Deir ez-Zur reunited them in Yeşilbağlar.¹¹¹

The city's local government represents a mixture of political parties: the metropolitan municipality is run by MHP, while its two district-level municipalities of Seyhan and Yüreğir, which together host nearly the entire Syrian refugee population, are run by CHP and AKP respectively. Reflecting the nationalist stance of the MHP, the metropolitan municipality has adopted a 'selective-solidarity' approach in their response to the refugees. They prioritise providing assistance services to the refugees that 'they have common kinship with', most notably Turkomans coming from Syria and Iraq.¹¹² In a small guesthouse run by the municipality, they offer temporary accommodation for refugees when needed. They organise aid campaigns through social media for refugees approaching the municipality for financial assistance. Through establishing networks with Turkoman associations in Syria and Iraq, they are also delivering aid across borders in cooperation with KIZILAY. All these activities are carried out by the directorate of the Health and Social Services since there is no specific directorate for migration affairs as in the case of Gaziantep. When asked whether the municipality has any plans to formalise and expand its services for refugees, the officials point at legal and budget restrictions concerning municipalities, and their sensitive political position as the representatives of an opposition party. "It is hard for us to deliver any services that are permanent, we need to think twice. It is mainly through our personal efforts that we contribute to the refugee response. What we are mainly interested in is to help these people (refugees) to normalise their daily lives. Some of these people fled Daesh, they are terrorised. We help them to organise



their weddings for instance, as if their lives continue as normal.”¹¹³

The district municipality of Seyhan (CHP), which hosts more than 50% of Adana's Syrian refugee community, shows openness especially in establishing partnerships with national and international NGOs in supporting livelihoods projects. Following the successful implementation of a 'cash for work' project in 2016, they are currently providing short-term employment for 200 Syrian refugees and 200 Turkish nationals in the municipality's parks and green spaces. The municipality is prudent about balancing between a pro-active refugee stance and being cautious about its electorate given that the Seyhan district has one of the highest unemployment rates in Turkey. The mayor, who is a well-known local political figure, has negotiated with the international donors and insisted that the project should also involve the host community instead of providing livelihoods only for the refugees.¹¹⁴ The applications they received caught the officials of the municipality by surprise, as there were engineers, French teachers, and architects among the Syrian refugee applicants. For the officials, this indicates the urgent need to undertake a local professional mapping in order to provide employment opportunities for the unemployed high-skilled Syrian refugees.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ 'Fertile Lands, Bitter Lives: The Situation Analysis Report on Syrian Seasonal Agricultural Workers in the Adana Plain', The Development Workshop Publication, November 2016.

¹¹¹ Interview, Adana, November 2016.

¹¹² Interview, Adana Metropolitan Municipality, November 2016.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Interview, Seyhan District Municipality, July 2017.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Meanwhile, the Governorate and the provincial DGMM of Adana play a particularly active role in the mobilisation of local actors in the refugee response. As often stated by international and national NGOs, the openness of these public institutions enables the non-state actors to operate more effectively and practically in delivering assistance to the Syrian refugees.¹¹⁶ Regularly held coordination meetings by the Governorate have contributed to the development of an informal communication mechanism between the local actors involved in the refugee response, which help to assess the gaps in services, and minimise the risk of duplication of projects implemented by different actors, a main problem often encountered in other cities.¹¹⁷ A fieldworker working at a local NGO noted that the authorities' positive approach also facilitates the interaction between NGOs and municipalities: "the authorities here value our humanitarian work. We don't have to be concerned about being labelled as 'political' when we have partnerships with municipalities of opposition parties. We have no political gains or interests, and they understand that."¹¹⁸

Although more limited than in Gaziantep, the local economic actors are also getting more involved in refugee issues. There were around 100 Syrian firms registered with the Chamber of Commerce at the end of 2016. The Chamber organised several meetings with their Syrian members, and submitted a needs assessment report to the relevant ministries in 2015. As told by an official from the Chamber, they are ready to advocate the socio-economic integration of Syrian refugees, but the main problem stems from the Syrians' lack of future prospects in Adana. "They want to invest more, they want to buy property, but they don't know whether they will permanently stay in Adana. The local business circles are also hesitant in establishing partnerships with Syrian entrepreneurs for this reason. There needs to be more incentives."¹¹⁹ According to an expert from the regional development agency, migration was not considered as a development-related issue in the Çukurova region, but this perception is gradually changing due to the growing numbers of Syrian entrepreneurs in Adana's adjacent province Mersin. "In Adana, there is good will but it is a big city, Syrians are quickly

absorbed. Both the opportunities and the problems are invisible. In Mersin, on the other hand, there are Syrian investors. It has become the new Beirut. Adana's economy could also benefit from this."¹²⁰ The agency has funded several refugee-related projects implemented by Seyhan District Municipality, DGMM (Mersin) and local NGOs in Adana and Mersin.

Izmir's municipality took a relatively passive role towards Syrian refugees. It regarded the arrival of Syrians mainly as a transit problem, with Syrians using the city as a means to access the Aegean Sea and reach Europe. From 2015, the central government began to focus on Izmir, not least given pressure from the European Union to stem the movement of people. In the summer months of 2015, the Governor for instance made clear that mobility controls should be introduced to stop people from entering Izmir.¹²¹ As told by one of Izmir's deputy governors, the implementation of the Turkey-EU agreement has had a positive impact on lessening the burden of curbing irregular migration flows and the over-stretched capacities of the law enforcement units and migration management officials.¹²² Meanwhile, the local authorities have also been concerned about criminality in the Basmane district, the downtown area from which smugglers negotiate with refugees for perilous journeys to Europe. The agreement has also diminished the booming effects of migrant smuggling on the local economic activities of Basmane: the shops selling life jackets, the hotels and restaurants that were filled up with transit refugees back in 2015 were almost entirely empty in December 2016.

This has also been a critical turning point for local actors to start acknowledging that the city's remaining Syrian population are there to settle, followed by the opening of the first temporary education centre for Syrian pupils in 2016.¹²³ Some other steps followed, such as the Metropolitan Municipality's decision to include Syrian refugee children into their milk assistance programme in early 2017 after showing resistance to the demands of rights-based NGOs for several years.¹²⁴ Yet, the Metropolitan Municipality did not have any other assistance mechanisms or services directly addressing the needs of Syrian refugees in December 2016.¹²⁵

¹¹⁶ Interview, Adana, January 2017.

¹¹⁷ Interviews with local and international NGO officials, Adana, October 2016.

¹¹⁸ Interview, Adana, October 2016.

¹¹⁹ Interview, Adana, November 2016.

¹²⁰ Interview, Çukurova Development Agency, Adana, November 2016.

¹²¹ Memişoğlu and Ilgit (2017).

¹²² Interview, Izmir, December 2016.

¹²³ As of October 2017, Izmir hosts 118,659 registered Syrian refugees under temporary protection. See, DGMM website.

¹²⁴ Interviews, District Municipalities of Karabağlar and Konak, Izmir, December 2016.

At the metropolitan municipal level the centre-left Republican People's Party (CHP) is in office in Izmir. Its response (or non-response) was one of criticism of the AKP's national refugee policies. Reflecting Izmir's long history of being a transit port for Afghans and Iranians, for instance, the CHP reflected popular concerns that this flow created sources of local instability. Its main focus of criticism has been the lack of central government support to enable municipalities like Izmir to adequately absorb the strain on public services, while using the refugee question to advance AKP's own agenda and foreign policy interests. Representatives from local NGOs describe the municipality's stance in the local refugee response as 'self-isolating' and 'too politicised'.¹²⁶ For the officials from the municipality, it is the legal restrictions that hold them back in providing direct assistance to the Syrian refugees. If they are granted permanent legal status, in their view, this situation might change.¹²⁷ On the other hand, the district municipalities of Karabağlar and Konak (also CHP), which together host nearly 60% of the Syrian refugees in Izmir, are actively engaged with refugee communities. Indeed, their involvement in refugee politics dates back to early 2000s when the city became a transit hub for different migrant communities and formal assistance mechanisms were almost non-existent.¹²⁸

For the Syrian refugees, employment opportunities, kinship ties and cultural affinity play a key role in their settlement preferences to Izmir.¹²⁹ In the early years of the crisis, Syrians arriving in Izmir mainly settled in Karabağlar district, home to large internal migrant communities of Turkish and Kurdish origins from the southeast provinces. The locals showed strong solidarity with the new arrivals providing them housing, food and other basic needs. In order to find a more systematic way to engage with the growing Syrian community in the district, the city council of the Karabağlar district municipality established a working group on refugees in 2013, which later turned into a 'refugee assembly' in partnership with the Konak district municipality. Apart from advocacy and consultancy services, their main activity is running Turkish language courses for refugees with the support of local NGOs. In comparison to Gaziantep,



socio-economic integration opportunities for Syrian refugees have remained very limited until recently, and it is mainly through the efforts of small-size local NGOs, such as Kapılar, and Bridging People, that the refugees get a chance to participate in livelihoods programmes and community services. The national and international NGOs started opening offices in Izmir only from late 2015, while they have been active in the south and southeast regions since the early years of the crisis. ASAM for instance, operating in Izmir since 2014, now has two multi-service support services.

In contrast to Adana and Gaziantep, Izmir's business circles did not regard refugees as an investment opportunity. At the end of 2016, there was no official data available from the Izmir Chamber of Commerce on the numbers of Syrians firms registered with the Chamber. According to a representative from the Chamber, Syrian entrepreneurs do not settle in Izmir, because they do not receive sufficient incentives to invest in the economically developed cities.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Interview, Metropolitan Municipality, Izmir, December 2016.

¹²⁶ Interviews, Izmir, December 2016.

¹²⁷ Interviews, Izmir, December 2016.

¹²⁸ Interviews, Izmir, December 2016.

¹²⁹ Yıldız, A, and Üzgören, E (2016), 'Limits to temporary protection: non-camp Syrian refugees in Izmir, Turkey', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 16(2): 195-211.

¹³⁰ Interview, Izmir Chamber of Commerce, December 2016.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a comparative analysis of the local politics of the three major host countries for Syrian refugees. It is based on a preliminary study of three different contexts in each of the three countries and so does not offer a complete picture of local refugee politics across the countries. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that, irrespective of international and national-level policy making, local politics also shaped outcomes for refugees. International and national policies are often mediated through elite decision-making at governorate or municipality levels, for example. Even in countries like Turkey and Jordan, with relatively centralised authority over refugee policy, local actors matter for integration outcomes.

The two sets of factors that appear to explain variation in local policies within the same country are identity-based factors, followed by economic factors. These are broad categories and the most salient factors within these umbrella categories vary across the case countries. In Turkey, political parties matter; in Lebanon, confessionalism matters; and in Jordan, tribalism matters. Interests also matter: if elite decision-makers perceive that they will win or lose from offering inclusive or restrictive responses, they will often adjust policies and narratives. This is particularly the case for local mayors. Obviously, this framework is a simplified analysis but provides an attempt to offer parsimony rather than simply to describe complexity.

A number of implications stand out, of relevance to public policy-makers engaged in refugee protection and assistance, whether operating at the international, national, or local levels:

International policies can have different impacts at the sub-national level

Of course, their primary impact will be at the national level but their local impacts will be mediated through local identities and interests. The major bilateral deals that emerged in early 2016 – the Jordan Compact, the Lebanon Compact, and the EU-Turkey deal – have had more profound implications for some parts of those countries. In Turkey, Izmir has been disproportionately affected, with the municipal authorities seeing this as an opportunity to restrict transit. In Jordan, some areas, such as Sahab have benefited disproportionately from the Jordan Compact. In Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley has received much of the assistance relating to the Lebanon Compact.

Political analysis capacity matters

Humanitarian organisations like UNHCR treat some academic areas such as law and economics as ‘technical’ or ‘expert’ areas, but rarely is political science seen in this way. And yet high quality political analysis may reveal causal mechanisms through which policy change can be externally leveraged. With high quality process tracing, the causal pathways through which an external policy intervention is mediated can be better understood, potentially offering greater predictability in terms of outcomes. Without an understanding of key gatekeepers, veto players, and local power relations, there is greater likelihood of unanticipated outcomes or missed opportunities.

Municipal authorities are key actors

More than half of the world’s refugees now live in urban areas, and it has been increasingly recognised that municipalities can be progressive and influential actors in refugee response. Often particular mayors, sometimes for idiosyncratic reasons of personality, can make a difference to refugee policies. From Zahle in Lebanon to Sahab in Jordan to Gaziantep in Turkey, the mayors we have interviewed have been important for encouraging progressive local refugee responses. They, in addition to national governments, should be regarded as important partners for the international community.

Leveraging opportunity

Recognising local politics is one thing, influencing it is another. An important question that arises from our analysis is whether, and how far, international policy-makers should seek to alter local political dynamics? It seems that incentives structures at the local level, in terms of direct financial support to strategically important municipalities and governorates, can make a difference. Meanwhile, the story that emerges from Sahab, Gaziantep, and Adana confirms that local business actors and even chambers of commerce can also be key intermediaries for influencing local politics, whether through investment or lobbying.

Seeing beyond restrictions

Around the world, many of the major refugee host countries appear highly restrictive. With notable exceptions, central governments frequently offer a narrative of threat, fear, or exclusion. Already challenged states may emphasise the security and development costs of hosting as a means to leverage international support. This can lead international policy-makers to conclude that there are few opportunities for engagement. Yet, our analysis suggests policy-makers and advocacy organisations should look beyond the rhetoric of capital cities and seek to engage progressive local actors.



Syrian refugees in Izmir, Turkey



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