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The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan And Lebanon: Impact And Implications

Juline Beaujouan and Amjed Rasheed

Dr. Beaujouan is a research associate at the Political Settlement Research Programme, University of Edinburgh, and at the Directorate of Research and Scientific Development (DRSD), Newroz University. She is also a research fellow at the Institute for Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (IMEIS) and the HH Sheikh Nasser al-Mohammed al-Sabah Programme, Durham University. Dr. Rasheed is a lecturer at the Eberhard Karls Institute of Political Science, University of Tubingen, and a visiting fellow at IMEIS and the HH Sheikh Nasser al-Mohammed al-Sabah Programme. He is also a research associate at DRSD, Newroz University.

While the global pace of civil wars has slowed down in the past three decades, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) has increased dramatically. Today, those direct victims of conflicts number nearly 60 million, twice as many as 10 years ago. These massive displacements threaten not only regional and global economies, but also the social demography of states. Moreover, they indirectly increase the likelihood of conflict.

The civil war in Syria resulted in one of the largest and most devastating human exoduses since World War II. Almost 10 years after the beginning of the conflict, the UN reports that an estimated 11 million Syrians (half of them children) remain in dire need of humanitarian assistance. They include 6.2 million IDPs. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of October 2020, more than 5.5 million Syrians are still distributed across Turkey (65.1 percent), Lebanon (15.8 percent), Jordan (11.8 percent), the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) (4.4 percent), Egypt (2.3 percent) and elsewhere.[1] This population surge in host countries has resulted in severe pressure on infrastructures and services, as well as growing social tensions between refugees and host communities.

Previous research on this humanitarian crisis has often focused on Syrian refugees themselves,[2] neglecting their impact on

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host communities. But refugees are not the only victims. Moreover, recentering the focus sheds light on the politics of the refugee crisis: the local and international humanitarian interventions and their harmful consequences for receiving countries, as well as the response of governments to the crisis. It is crucial to recognize the grievances of host communities against refugees and between the diverse refugee populations in welcoming countries. In Jordan and Lebanon, the refugee population is mainly composed of Syrians, Palestinians from the West Bank and Syria, and Iraqis.

This paper adopts a transdisciplinary approach across the social sciences to investigate the political and socioeconomic impact of the Syrian refugees on Lebanon and Jordan — Syria's direct Arab neighbors — and these countries' coping mechanisms. It aims to review and assess the role of host governments, the international community, and the humanitarian stakeholders in shaping perceptions toward the Syrian refugee crisis. Ultimately, this paper contributes to the understanding of the conditions and policies of refugee hosting in developing countries, where 85 percent of refugees are located.[3] It offers an alternative view, beyond the European framing, that is playing out in neighboring countries.

Jordan and Lebanon were caught in the regional Arab disorder aggravated by the advent of the Arab uprisings in late 2010. While both have a long tradition of hosting refugees (mainly Arab), one could wonder whether the host communities and governments in those two countries showed Arab solidarity in the midst of unprecedented humanitarian tragedy. Furthermore, while the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on Turkey has been registered[4] — not least because of the significant numbers of academics with Turkish ties now working in Europe and North America — Jordan and Lebanon remain understudied.

This paper investigates the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on Jordan and Lebanon at three different levels: the state (government), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs), and local populations. The selection of these levels is not incidental. During two months of field research conducted in June and July 2018, it became evident to the authors that the Syrian refugee crisis had a sharp but diverse effect on these three sets of actors in both Jordan and Lebanon. Each level provides a different, yet complementary, analysis of the humanitarian crisis.

STATE LEVEL: SHIFTING POLICIES

Although successive governments in Jordan and Lebanon have been able to contain the humanitarian crisis to a certain extent, they adopted a reactive and shifting approach based on the course of the civil war in Syria. The two exhibited a similar trend in their refugee policies that can be analyzed along three main time periods. Notably, the incoherence of their approach impeded the implementation of a much-needed strategic outlook that would take into consideration the relevant stakeholders and the impact and future of the refugee crisis inside their borders.

Open-Door Policy (2011–14)

At the onset of the Syrian crisis in 2011, Jordan and Lebanon adopted an open-door policy that offered fleeing Syrians a safe refuge. In Jordan, state policy was reinforced by tribal relationships among populations living in border areas, espe-

cially in the cities of Irbid and Mafraq. In Lebanon, two bilateral agreements dating back to 1991 and 1992 enabled Syrians to officially cross the borders and be granted legal residency for six months if they could provide a valid identity document.

From a security perspective, the purpose of an open-door policy was to display a neutral position of non-interference in the conflict between the Syrian government and opposition groups. In Lebanon, this policy was enacted in the 2012 Baabda Declaration, signed by all major political parties under the label "disassociation policy." It was thought of as a way to preserve the fragile balance between the various sectarian forces in the country.[5] The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon is highly politicized, and the government's stance can be explained by the conflicting loyalty of the main antagonistic political parties to its diverse actors. The political divide in the country has deepened after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005, allegedly instigated by the Syrian regime. In the aftermath, two blocs were formed: the anti-Syrian March 14 Alliance, led by the Future Movement that is primarily affiliated with the Sunnis, and the pro-Syria March 8 Alliance. The latter mainly includes the Shia-associated Amal Movement and Hezbollah. In 2006, the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), led by Maronite Christian Michel Aoun, rallied behind the March 8 Alliance after signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Hezbollah. Hence, the politicization of the Syrian war and refugee crisis came as no surprise, though it aggravated political tensions and hampered the performance of the government.[6] In June 2011, as war erupted in Syria, the March 8 Alliance came to power following the fall of Saad Hariri's Future Movement government. The new cabinet, led by Prime Minister Najib Mikati, was favorable toward Assad's regime in Syria. As a result, the Lebanese government pushed for a signing of the Baabda Declaration, in which the major political parties agreed to dissociate themselves from the Syrian conflict while upholding the "right to humanitarian solidarity."

Nevertheless, Lebanon remained committed to its longstanding refusal to consider itself an asylum country, referring to the Syrians as "displaced" (*nazihoun*) or "guests" (*dhuyuf*).[7] The Mikati government, backed by Hezbollah and other members of the March 8 Alliance, refused to open refugee camps for Syrians, a choice informed by the "encampment" and settlement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees after the 1948 and 1967 *Nakba* wars. Instead, informal camps were installed by international NGOs, but they remain illegal.

In contrast, between 2012 and 2014, the Jordanian government opened four official refugee camps: Zaatari, Mrajeeb al-Fhood, Azraq and King Abdullah Park. This official stance allowed Syrian refugees to seek haven in the kingdom, although their right to work was restricted. The scapegoats of this open-door policy were the Palestinian refugees coming from Syria, where they had fled after 1948 and 1967. It was notably reported that the Jordanian government attempted to deport Palestinians who entered without documents.[8] The kingdom's encampment policy echoed the previous no-camps strategy adopted by the government to cope with Iraqi refugees in 1991 and 2003. By not opening official camps for Iraqi refugees, the crisis was invisible to the international community and prevented the country from attracting media attention and aid. By opening of-

ficial refugee camps, the Jordanian government intended to become the symbol of the humanitarian burden and, therefore, the prime recipient of aid to mitigate the crisis. Furthermore, the Hashemite Kingdom denounced international responsibility-sharing as inadequate, urging European countries to financially support the hosting of more than one million Syrian refugees.

Finally, Jordan and Lebanon closely collaborated with UN agencies to develop a complex policy framework of response plans and funding channels to address the impact of the Syrian refugee crisis on the host countries and communities. Before the Syrian refugee crisis, both states' policies were characterized by the absence of a legal framework. In addition, neither had signed the 1951 Geneva Convention or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Their national legal frameworks were based on scarce and ill-adapted constitutional provisions and outdated MoUs between the UNHCR and Jordan (1998)[9] and Lebanon (2003).[10] Yet, in late 2014, the Jordan Response Plan to the Syria Crisis (JRP) and the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) were launched to ensure assistance and protection to the Syrian refugees and sustain the socioeconomic stability and capacity of the countries. Although those two plans did not rekindle the debate around the legal status of refugees — the LCRP actually confirmed their "non-status" — they officially provided a framework to enable various stakeholders to meet the refugees' basic needs, and thus respect their fundamental rights to a decent life.

Securitization of Refugees (2014–16)

As the war in Syria was escalating, especially after the establishment of the Islamic State (IS) in July 2014, Jordan and Lebanon started securitizing the Syrian refugees. In Lebanon, the policy of dissociation came to an end with the direct involvement of Hezbollah on the side of Syrian regime against the rebels. Hezbollah justified its military deployment as necessary to counter IS and its sectarian agenda and prevent sectarian strife in Lebanon. As expected, Hezbollah not only did not fight IS, it also fought multiple anti-Assad military forces on the ground. This move plunged the country into instability. It is important to mention here that, since 2011, several neighborhoods of Tripoli have been subjected to violent clashes between anti-Syrian Sunni groups and pro-Syrian Alawites and Shia groups.[11] More confrontations involved Hezbollah against al-Qaeda-affiliated fighters, while IS soldiers fought members of al-Nusra (currently named Hayat Tahrir al-Sham) in the city of Arsal, northeast of Beirut. Al-Nusra also engaged in cross-border fighting with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) after Lebanese security forces arrested one of its leaders in Arsal in summer 2014.[12] The LAF were only able to regain control over the city with the help of the Syrian air force.[13] Finally, between late 2012 and late 2015, no fewer than 29 violent security incidents — mainly bombings — struck Lebanon,[14] causing widespread trauma.

As a direct consequence of these incidents, the Lebanese government closed its points of entry to all Syrian refugees except those trapped in fighting along the borders. In October 2014, under the auspices of the March 8 Alliance, the cabinet approved a "Policy Paper on Syrian Refugee Displacement," known as the "October Policy." It acknowledged three main goals regarding the displaced Syrians: (1) to reduce their numbers by limiting their access to Lebanon and encouraging them

to return to Syria, (2) to increase security regulations, and (3) to ease the burdens of both local and national authorities. The restrictive October Policy was implemented through a series of rules on entry, residency, renewal and regularization, enacted in January and February 2015. For instance, the country suspended the issue of new work permits. As for refugees who already had one, their employment was limited to the third sector — mainly construction, agriculture and cleaning services — and they were compelled to pay a fee of $80 to $300 to renew the permit.[15] In May 2015, the Lebanese authorities imposed a ban on the registration of Syrian refugees — officially to enable the government to establish a new mechanism for registration. The UNHCR was compelled to stop monitoring Syrian refugees, including those already in the country and new arrivals.[16] Simultaneously, informal refugee camps became the favored target of LAF raids.

In Jordan, Syrian refugees were subjected to more flexible treatment, as the kingdom was able to preserve its territorial integrity. Nevertheless, the refugees were the direct victims of the rising security threat inside the country. From June 2013 onward, the government started closing all its informal border crossings from Syria, and road access was definitively shut in April 2014. At the same time, the crisis affected the institutional structure of the government, placing a further burden on financial and human resources. In April 2014, the Ministry of Interior created the Syrian Refugee Affairs Directorate (SRAD) as a branch of Jordan's security services. The new directorate was given the mission of policing Syrian refugees inside and outside camps. The turning point came with the growing influence and violence of IS in Syria that began in September 2014. While the jihadi group launched an intimidating campaign aimed at the kingdom via its wide-ranging media apparatus, rumors spread that the group had infiltrated refugee camps and would pose a serious security threat inside the country. Jordan responded with increased securitization and greater restrictions. The kingdom shut its last points of entry after the June 21, 2016, attack, allegedly supervised by IS supporters from the nearby Syrian Rukban refugee camp. Several reports pointed to a number of instances of massive refoulements (forcible returns) and the suspension of registration for new arrivals at the border.[17] Thousands of Syrians were turned away and abandoned in a demilitarized area known as "the berms."

Enough: To Cooperate and Return (2016)

From 2016 onward, the Jordanian and Lebanese governments entered new and comprehensive cooperation with the international community. When the refugee crisis reached Europe in 2015, it became a global crisis. Jordan and Lebanon saw the chance to turn the humanitarian crisis into an opportunity. In February 2016, at the London Pledging Summit, the "Jordan Compact" and the "Lebanese Compact" were concluded with the European Union to support Syrian refugees and vulnerable populations in the two countries. Lebanon allowed Syrian refugees to temporarily stay in the country. In exchange, European states committed around 400 million euros to support Lebanese policies.[18] However, expectations were not met, and further restrictions on residency for Syrians were imposed. In fact, the Lebanese government — which at the time of writing is dominated by the Aounists (referring to President Michel Aoun) and Hezbollah,

both supporters of Assad — commissioned the General Security Directorate to coordinate the return of Syrian refugees with the Syrian government. This return policy was seen by many analysts as an attempt to legitimize Assad's regime and depict him as the only source of legitimacy in the country. In other words, the Lebanese government promoted Assad's "Welcome to victorious Syria" discourse towards refugees.[19] Centers were set up to "advise" refugees on their prospects and register the names of those intending to return. The lists would then be forwarded to the Syrian government for approval. Finally, buses would be sent to Lebanon to "facilitate" the journey back to Syria. In fact, the situation of Syrian refugees in Lebanon became so poor that more than 80 percent are believed to want to return to their homeland.[20] In addition to the poor living conditions, Syrian refugees face discrimination and racist campaigns launched by several politicians, including Aoun.[21] In April 2019, Lebanon's Higher Defense Council ordered refugee structures made of any material other than plastic and wood to be taken down. Mass demolitions in bordering areas followed the decision, intensifying pressure to return to Syria.[22]

In Jordan, cooperation with the European Union (EU) was much more fruitful, paving the way for a more human policy toward Syrian refugees. The Jordan Compact focused on integrating Syrian refugees into the labor market. The kingdom agreed to soften its strict regulations on refugees' right to work and pledged to create up to 20,000 work opportunities for them. In exchange, the EU offered tariff-free access to European markets on condition that Jordanian businesses employ a certain proportion of Syrian refugees.[23] Also, the kingdom was offered no-interest grants from the United Kingdom, as well as market-interest loans from the World Bank. At the government level, Jordan — through the voice of the minister of planning and international cooperation, Mary Kawar — officially refused to force Syrian refugees to return to their homeland.[24] Yet, while the Syrian refugee situation became the country's political priority, attempts to pass socioeconomic reforms were paused. These factors created public discontent that materialized in a wave of protests against the government in June 2018. The kingdom thus faced numerous challenges, having to balance its refugee policy with domestic-development measures. At the social level, Jordan is based on tribal structures. While demographics have been altered dramatically by the influx of Syrian refugees, political structures — such as the nationality law — remained unchanged. Legally, Jordanian women do not have the right to grant their own nationality to a child. Therefore, a woman's child with a non-Jordanian man cannot be considered Jordanian. Many of these cases of mixed marriages have occurred among the increasing Palestinian population in Jordan. Hence, it is likely that the next generation of individuals living in Jordan will not have Jordanian nationality but will constitute an unrepresented "second class." This fringe of the population may eventually question the legitimacy of the government and ask for more rights or equal status with Jordanians, ultimately leading to social upheaval.

THE NGO AND CBO SECTOR

Although NGOs and CBOs have been at the forefront of the Syrian refugee crisis in host countries, no analysis has critically assessed how they have been affected. Yet, the catastrophic situation that stemmed

from the influx of Syrian refugees has had multiple and diverse impacts on them, especially at the local level. On the one hand, the crisis has shaped the representation and policy of these humanitarian actors. On the other, it has raised a series of questions about the future of humanitarian interventions around the world. In Jordan, although the government quickly reacted to the influx and opened several refugee camps, more than 80 percent of Syrian refugees live in urban and peri-urban areas.[25] In Lebanon, the situation turned even more chaotic due to the government's non-encampment policy. In both cases, demographic pressures caused a strain on infrastructures and economic resources. State institutions were unable to develop and implement effective policies quickly. As a result, local and international NGOs stepped in to fill the void, particularly in the case of Lebanon. Lebanese NGOs have a long history of relief activities, mainly inherited from their experience during Lebanon's civil war (1975-90) and the successive Israeli military offensives in 1993, 1996 and 2006. Hence, when the Syrian refugee crisis spilled into Lebanon — and while the government was unable to settle on a common policy — the local NGOs (LNGOs) naturally started helping. In total, more than 100 international and local humanitarian actors cooperated to mitigate the impact of the crisis.[26] In both Jordan and Lebanon, NGOs and CBOs prioritized the delivery of food and hygiene products, shelter, healthcare and education.

Hence, the Syrian crisis created new opportunities for the development of the NGO and BCO sectors. On the bright side, new organisations and jobs were created, and young workers were trained to become experts in the management of the humanitarian crisis. The exceptionalism of the refugee situation in Jordan and Lebanon pushed organizations to look for alternative solutions and innovative approaches. In addition, the crisis not only encouraged engagement and cooperation between LNGOs and CBOs, it helped achieve greater collaboration among local, national and international NGOs (INGOs). For instance, in October 2012, the Lebanon Humanitarian INGOs Forum (LHIF) was created to facilitate coordination among 52 INGOs working in Lebanon.

Notwithstanding these positive consequences, the Syrian refugee crisis had a negative impact on the NGO sectors in both Jordan and Lebanon. According to Ghreiz and Saade — who witnessed and documented the impact of the crisis on the NGO and CBO sectors — Jordanian and Lebanese humanitarian actors were compelled to shift their focus from fostering development to providing emergency response to Syrian refugees.[27] As a consequence, humanitarian policies were re-oriented toward refugee communities, which by default undermined the development needs of the hosts. This change in focus was not only due to the urgency of the crisis, but also to the policies of the donors and international community. Consequently, the Jordanian and Lebanese humanitarian actors became prisoners of priorities and policies decided at the international level, while local specificities were not often taken into consideration. This "forced" reconversion to emergency relief clashed with the scope and skills of a number of humanitarian organizations, harming the relief's impact.

Moreover, as a direct result of the differentiated treatment, rising tensions between the two groups complicated the work of humanitarian agencies and shook faith in state policies. In Jordan, for instance, one

of the humanitarian initiatives that harmed those relations most was the 2013 launch of cash assistance and in-kind donations. This policy caused frustration among those in the Jordanian community who were suffering from steadily soaring prices — because of increased demand — without receiving humanitarian assistance. Similarly, in Lebanon, the UNHCR-targeted medical assistance caused a wave of incomprehension and anger at the refugees. Indeed, vulnerable Lebanese populations had to gird themselves with patience to access primary healthcare and have their expenses covered by the Ministry of Public Health. From late 2013 onward, as they were confronted with the deepening divide, NGOs and CBOs adjusted their policies to include vulnerable host populations in Jordan and Lebanon. Yet, those efforts came late and had mixed results. In Jordan, INGOs and the government decided to allocate 25 percent of the funding to the Jordanian host community in all governorates. However, the policy failed to recognize local disparities and to enhance resilience in the governorates hosting the largest refugee populations.

Furthermore, the response to the Syrian refugee crisis has been gravely impeded by the poor coordination and latent lack of communication among humanitarian actors at three levels: between international and local NGOs, between local humanitarian actors and the Jordanian government, and among local NGOs. In the Lebanese context, Saade warns against the "paternalistic" relationship between international and local actors. She also regrets that external funding goes preferentially to compatriot international agencies instead of Lebanese groups.[28] Furthermore, Ghreiz explains that, in practice, each local organization approached similar needs from a different perspective, favoring either short-term relief or a longer-term developmental policy.[29] The lack of harmonization resulted in situations where duplicate products were delivered to Syrian families, who lacked essential hygiene products, and *vice versa*. Hence, the Syrian refugee crisis highlighted the urgent need to rationalize humanitarian policies and foster communication and complementarity between international and local actors.

One of the other challenges the local NGOs face is the sustainability of the humanitarian response. This was mostly jeopardized by the protracted nature of the crisis, as well as donor fatigue after eight years of conflict.[30] According to Saade, the Syrian refugee crisis highlighted the main challenge for LNGOs in Lebanon: the localization of humanitarian aid. Even though local organizations have the potential to rapidly access information and endangered populations — and to provide an effective response based on local cultural sensitivity — their voices are largely ignored by international humanitarian actors.[31] As the Global Humanitarian Assessment Report 2015 reveals, in 2014 only 0.2 percent of total international humanitarian assistance went directly to local and national NGOs.[32]

According to Saade and Ghreiz, one of the important lessons to draw from the Lebanese and Jordanian experiences is the need to develop a combination of humanitarian, peace-building and development measures to cope with future crises. In addition, they urge the NGO and CBO sectors to come to the realization that the Syrian refugee crisis will last for years to come in Jordan and Lebanon, as it is expected that thousands of refugees will not return to Syria. The future response to the ongoing crisis must allow the settlement of these refugees without undermining the

rights and needs of the host communities. Further challenges will arise from budget cuts and the foreseen departures of international organizations. One of the questions that remains unanswered is that of the fate of workers who have been hired and trained in the context of the Syrian crisis. Similarly, young and small NGOs and CBOs have already been affected in their *raison d'être*, as some always depended on short-term project-based funding. In a competitive environment, those LNGOs need to avoid the trap of "excessive funding," the imbalance between fundraising activities and humanitarian-solution implementation.

A PROTRACTED CRISIS

Before the Syrian refugee influx, the Jordanian and Lebanese governments dealt with emergencies based on humanitarian relief. That was also the case during the first years of the Syrian conflict and its spillover effects. Yet, from 2014, national and international actors cooperated to implement an overall comprehensive response that included long-term development. In December 2014, those efforts resulted in an enactment of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), signed by Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The 3RP was thought of as a compendium of good and innovative practices in the context of the regional response to the Syrian crisis.[33] In the words of a UN Development Programme (UNDP) policy and crisis coordinator in Amman, "The 3RP is the result of the realization that there is a greater need for social cohesion, livelihood, and economic strengthening in order to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis in a sustainable way."[34] As such, the plan endorsed a dramatic transformation in the humanitarian system: a shift from emergency response toward development. Indeed, the 3RP not only included a resilience pillar for the first time; it was also co-led by the UNDP and the UNHCR. As such, the 3RP was initially thought of as the ideal marriage between the essential and complementary relief and development aspects of the response to a humanitarian crisis. Finally, the regional plan was aligned with existing national response plans (NRPs), the JRP and the LCRP, and regularly renewed ever since. Both plans are platforms that gather a number of diverse governmental, humanitarian and academic actors, and aim to strengthen the cooperation and trust among them. At the national level, those two plans embodied a new comprehensive strategy that goes beyond humanitarian relief and gives a greater role to local specificities and national actors. While the UN was involved in the preparation of the JRPs, the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs were in charge of implementing the JRP and the LCRP, respectively.

In spite of the salutary evolution of the 3RP approach, the latter has been subjected to a number of criticisms formulated at the UN on the governmental and population levels.[35] First, there was a lack of coordination between the 3RP and the national response plans. The latter are said to be "chapters" of the 3RP, which was officially signed by national governments. Yet, the 3RP was never approved at the national level, nor does it include national actors or NRPs. The rationale for the noninclusion of national governments was to achieve neutrality and to avoid corruption and the politicization of foreign aid. In fact, the 3RP is not so much a policy plan as an appeal or fundraising document that allocates funds to targeted sectors affected by the

crisis. Hence, the 3RP failed to take into consideration the needs of national actors and their capacity building. It also ignored the priorities highlighted in the NRPs. In other words, while the 3RP and the NRPs do not clash, they ignore each other.

The following anecdote, from Jordan, is significant; similar stories were recalled in the Lebanese context. The lack of communication and interaction between what could be described as the two faces of one coin is noticeable at the level of the UNDP itself, which co-leads the 3RP and is a major actor in the JRP. As such, the UNDP is represented by a coordination specialist from the JRP at the national level and by a regional coordinator from the 3RP at the international level. Both coordinators are based in Jordan, yet they meet only twice a year. While the kingdom took the initiative on a national response plan and appealed to the international community and the UN to gain support, one wonders why a different plan was created instead of adopting a complementary approach. That is all the more so as a plethora of institutions and LNGOs proved stable and active in the mitigation of the refugee crisis. Hence, the justification and legitimacy of a formal international framework such as the 3RP is highly debatable. This is less true in Lebanon, where a divided government was unable to take action on this matter.

This lack of cooperation resulted in the mismanagement of the allocation of aid in Jordan and Lebanon. Some needs received much funding, while others failed to attract the attention of international donors that channel their contributions through the 3RP. Said differently, there is a competition for appeal, as donors must choose only one funding plan — and the needs and priorities it emphasizes. Similar accounts were reported during our field research in Jordan and Lebanon. In one of those instances, a donor pledged funds through the 3RP — because the UN has the advantage of being apolitical and enjoys a strong reputation of transparency and good practices — to open a school in a region strongly affected by the refugee crisis. Yet, two months after the first donation, a national NGO contacted the same donor to raise money to build a new school in the very same region. The donor became confused, thinking that the donation had gone to a very similar project. Such occurrences contributed to donor fatigue and distrust in worthy programs.

To conclude, there is a damaging lack of cooperation between the international and domestic levels of response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and Lebanon. Almost 10 years after the beginning of the crisis, one might even wonder whether UN involvement is still legitimate, as there is no emergency anymore.

SOCIETAL LEVEL

The Lebanese and Jordanian communities were initially impacted in a similar way by the influx of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees: an increased demand for public services, infrastructure and jobs. The sectors most affected were education, energy, food, housing, health and water. The demographic pressure exacerbated vulnerabilities for the poorest segments of the Jordanian and Lebanese populations. As such, it threatened the sustainability of quality service provision in the most affected regions.[36]

Around half of the Syrian refugee population in Jordan and Lebanon is under the age of 18. In Lebanon, an additional 447,409 Lebanese children are in need of educational assistance, not to mention the situation of Palestinian children.[37] In 2018, 350 Lebanese schools offered double

shifts to meet the demand,[38] while Jordan has already invested over $200 million to enroll more than 130,000 Syrian children in public schools.[39] In spite of governmental efforts, 40 percent of Syrian school-age children remain deprived of education in Jordan, while their share reaches more than 50 percent in Lebanon. In both countries, public schools are saturated, and teachers have been required to cover double shifts without receiving fair financial compensation. Finally, the recruitment of additional teaching staff is a burden on public finances. All these constraints impede the quality of education and teaching in both countries.

Energy is subsidized by the governments of the two countries. Jordan is one of the most energy-dependent countries in the world, with imports accounting for close to 97 percent of its needs. Continuous disruptions in energy imports from Egypt, coupled with the urbanization of Syrian refugees, further aggravated the imbalance. It is estimated that during the first five years of the crisis (2011–2015), government subsidies for petroleum and electricity reached $7.1 billion.[40] Yet, energy consumption per capita decreased by 18 percent over the same period,[41] showing that both host communities and Syrians face severe restrictions on access to this public utility. Similarly, in Lebanon, 45 percent of Syrian refugees meet their demand for electricity through illegal connections to the national grid.[42] This has led to significant technical damage, increased maintenance costs, and reductions in the quality and quantity of supply for host communities. It should be noted that, throughout the conflict, Syria remained the principal electricity supplier of Lebanon.

Concerning food security, more than 70 percent of Syrian households living outside refugee camps in Jordan are almost completely dependent on food assistance; the figure is 91 percent in Lebanon.[43] Yet, in 2019, up to 26 percent of the Jordanian population was considered food insecure,[44] and 49 percent of Lebanese reported being worried about sourcing enough food.[45] In the first five months of 2015, the Jordanian government provided more than $100 million in food subsidies. Yet, food assistance in Jordan and Lebanon remains mainly provided by the international community through vouchers, ad hoc in-kind assistance and meals to schoolchildren. Furthermore, the massive increase in food demand and the injection of cash and food/cash vouchers for Syrian refugees had two main reverse effects in both Jordan and Lebanon. First, an increase has occurred in imports of basic food staples such as wheat. Second, prices of basic goods have soared; Jordan experienced a 15.5 percent increase between 2009 and 2016.[46]

The health sector was immediately affected by the refugee crisis; it is also the sector that has received the most academic attention since the beginning of the humanitarian influx.[47] In Lebanon, all Syrian refugees, whether registered with the UNHCR or not, have free access to primary healthcare facilities. The same was true in Jordan until 2014. In 2017 alone, nearly one million consultations were provided to Syrians in Lebanon,[48] while around 630,000 Syrian refugees were admitted to Jordanian public hospitals between 2011 and 2016.[49] This caused a significant burden on the health sector. In addition to the increased demand and costs of the healthcare system, health centers are suffering from a shortage of medicines and vaccines. High demand for health services has led Lebanese and Jordanians to turn to private centers and hospitals, which are

less accessible and more expensive. To overcome the pressure, in 2014, the Jordanian government granted universal free access to health care for Jordanians, while Syrian refugees were no longer entitled to gratis medical services.[50] Finally, the NRPs and independent studies point to the increase in the rates of communicable and noncommunicable diseases, disability and mental-health problems that stem from the shifts.[51] The demographic pressure caused housing crises in both countries. The fact that more than 80 to 90 percent of Syrian refugees live outside camps in Jordan and Lebanon, respectively, led to the subdivision of existing units and a significant rise in rent. This is especially true in northern Jordan, where average prices tripled,[52] and in Beirut, where prices rose up to 400 percent.[53] In Lebanon in 2017, 33 percent of Syrians lived in shelters with less than 4.5 square meters per person,[54] not to mention the rent paid to tent owners in informal camps, varying between $100 and $160 per household.[55] The demographic pressure harmed the nearly 445,000 Lebanese who live under the poverty line and have no access to adequate housing.[56] In Jordan, the situation is no better. In 2018, 1.36 million individuals still lack access to adequate housing, of which 69 percent are Jordanian and 31 percent are Syrian refugees.[57] As a result, competition for affordable, decent housing has become one of the main sources of social tensions.

The influx of Syrian refugees also led to water scarcity. Jordan is the third most water-scarce country in the world.[58] Increased demand led to the overexploitation of underground aquifers; ultimately, levels are dropping while quality is deteriorating. In northern areas, the average daily supply has fallen below 30 liters per person, well under the 50 liters recommended for basic needs.[59] The crisis has also put pressure on the already limited sewage and communal waste system, which covers only 62 percent of the Jordanian population. Lebanon suffers from the same problems, in spite of its favorable water endowment. The impact has been especially strong on agriculture, which accounts for 61 percent of total demand. This has resulted in the creation of an unregulated parallel supply market where rates are 200 to 300 percent higher than public water fees.[60] Water access and quality in both countries have been underscored by weak sewage systems, also under pressure from the demographic surge

The increased competition created by the arrival of Syrian refugees over access to labor markets has raised the biggest debate in Jordan and Lebanon. The most tangible impact of Syrian refugees is on existing job opportunities, wage levels and working conditions, as well as the accessibility to work. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), national unemployment in Jordan increased from 14.5 percent in 2011 to 22.1 percent in 2014.[61] This occurred in spite of the fact that Syrian refugees were legally not allowed to work in Jordan until 2016. However, the ILO study showed that Syrians have occupied jobs in the agriculture, construction and service sectors — the same ones that have shown impressive growth since the beginning of the crisis.[62] As of April 2017, 18.6 percent of Jordanians were still unemployed, including 30 percent of the youth. Similarly, in March 2018, Aoun directly pointed to Syrian refugees as the main cause of the rise of the unemployment rate in Lebanon to 46 percent.[63]

Since the onset of the Syrian crisis, Lebanon's labor force has increased by 50 percent. Simultaneously, in 2013, the ILO estimated that half of the working-age

Syrian refugees were active.[64] The competition over jobs became particularly high in the informal sector, which contributes more than 56 percent of total employment in Lebanon. Moreover, the fact that Syrian refugees accept lower incomes and longer hours without any social benefits presents a direct challenge to Jordanians and Lebanese. The minimum monthly income of Syrian refugees is 40 percent lower than that for Lebanese.[65] In February 2015, faced with mounting social unrest, Lebanon suspended the right to work for Syrian refugees. As for Syrians with work permits, their employment was restricted to the third sector, they must pay a high renewal fee and their employer must prove an inability to find an adequately skilled Lebanese worker for the same job.[66]

However, some advocate that the refugees' access to the labor market is not necessarily conducive to real competition because there is a structural gap between less-educated refugees and host communities.[67] As Razzaz explains, the labor market is segmented based on nationality and family situation rather than education or skills.[68] In any case, the competition is direct between Syrian refugees and other immigrants. This demographic change poses three main challenges to the Jordanian and Lebanese governments: how to 1) increase employment in host communities, 2) ensure decent working conditions for all workers, including migrants and refugees, and 3) incorporate Syrian refugees without displacing the two other groups.

RISING TENSION OR INCLUSION?

As briefly discussed in the previous section, Lebanon rests on a fragile balance among religious communities. The diversity of the population and the affiliation of each sect to different actors in the Syrian conflict has increased sectarian polarization in society. The Syrian refugee crisis has put pressure on goods and prices, infrastructures and services, and the job market. Yet, the humanitarian challenge was met with a differentiated approach at the local level. Indeed, the absence of a unified government and the resulting "non-policy" toward Syrian refugees allowed a certain degree of decentralization in policy implementation. Identity politics, notably confessionalism, played a highly influential role, together with the political economy and the perceived opportunity to attract funds to mitigate the impact of the Syrian refugee presence.[69] For instance, Sunni areas welcomed and supported fleeing Syrians for a mixture of political and religious reasons, Syrian refugees being mostly Sunnis.

At the political level, Lebanese Sunnis bear resentment toward the Syrian regime for its violence in Lebanon during the years of occupation, 1975–2005. As a result, the Sunni Lebanese community welcomed Syrian refugees as a means of supporting the Syrian revolution and as an act of retribution against the Syrian regime, causing discontent among the Aounists and Hezbollah members. Yet, as the crisis became protracted, the initial Sunni support transformed into fatigue and growing irritation over the mismanagement of the humanitarian situation, which prioritized the needs of Syrian refugees over those of vulnerable host communities. This resulted in growing tensions between the refugee and host communities, on the one side, and municipalities and humanitarian actors, on the other.

In Shia areas, Hezbollah is politically and socially dominant; hence, the party's approach to the refugee crisis is at the local level. As mentioned earlier, Hezbollah fos-

tered a welcoming stance towards Syrian refugees. This policy was partially reminiscent of the close ties between the Shia party and the Syrian regime that provided great support to fleeing Lebanese when the country was bombed by Israel in 2006. It also aimed at avoiding the spillover effect of the Syrian conflict in Lebanon. Finally, Hezbollah's position could be seen as a control on anti-Assad Syrian opposition in Lebanon. Yet, the Syrian refugees quickly became securitized, and Hezbollah was often accused of being involved in cases of forced eviction and refoulements.[70] While the confessional cleavage between the mostly Sunni Syrian refugees and Shia localities — and the fear of demographic change — played an important role in the policy shift, the pace of securitization accelerated following three main developments: the military involvement of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict, the rise of IS violence in Lebanon and the soaring incidence of petty crime since the arrival of Syrian refugees. Indeed, the security dimension is one of the main drivers of local Shia antipathy against the Syrian refugees. The series of events mentioned above turned the Shia areas into potential targets for IS and other Sunni jihadi groups that operate across the borders. Hence, locals grew fearful of the Syrian refugees, especially in areas targeted by suicide attackers, such as Burj al-Barajneh.[71]

Finally, it seems that Christian Maronite localities mediated their response to the refugee crisis according to social class instead of religious identity.[72] Wealthy Syrians were often more likely to be integrated into a wealthy Christian area. The perception of economic opportunity to seek international aid to cope with the influx encouraged several mayors to use curfews and deny services to camps as an indicator of social tension and need for assistance. On the other hand, the Christian community viewed the Syrian "Sunni" settlement as an existential threat, especially when the Syrian conflict became protracted and prospects of return vanished. Finally, local resentment towards the Syrian refugees was fueled by a rise in petty crime after the arrival of refugees. [73]

Putting aside those confessional differences, it is important to mention that the Lebanese population became very much aware of several of the socioeconomic challenges fostered by the arrival of more than one million Syrians. At the top of the list are corruption, weak governance, poor planning, lack of resources and the absence of a strong and unified government to implement policies at the national level. Hence, although the "weak" government has proved incredibly resilient over the past eight years, it is likely that the refugee crisis exacerbated public discontent in the ruling parties, deepening the divide between government and people.

In Jordan, society is less divided than in Lebanon, and the country has been able to absorb a high number of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees.[74] But Jordanians have been greatly impacted by the unprecedented influx of Syrian refugees. Based on a national survey conducted in 2017 among both Jordanian and Syrian nationals living in the kingdom, Shteiwi analyzed the perception of the crisis at a time when the government seemed inclined to promote the empowerment and inclusion of its Syrian "guests."[75] He argued that the humanitarian crisis had not led to any serious conflict between refugee and host communities, although relations between the two groups remained mainly exclusive.

According to the Centre for Strategic Studies, 73 percent of the Jordanian

population believe that the employment of Syrian refugees creates tension between Syrians and Jordanians. Yet, the Jordanian population seems almost equally divided between those who support the integration of Syrian refugees in the labor market and those who oppose it. Shteiwi also emphasized that the Jordanian population resists the inclusion of Syrian refugees and is not ready to coexist, citing that 74 percent of them preferred that Syrians live in camps instead of urban areas.[76] This analysis is supported by the fact that fewer than 10 percent of the Jordanian population have Syrian relatives living in the kingdom, while the number reaches 83 percent for Syrian refugees themselves.[77]

LESSONS LEARNED

Beyond the Syrian crisis and the Middle East, this paper intends to shed light on the reality and consequences of humanitarian crises in developing countries. As highlighted by the cases of Jordan and Lebanon, the influx of refugees sharply halted the development process and shook the relative stability of fragile economic and socio-political structures. Several lessons learned in Jordan and Lebanon are applicable to other countries or regions confronted with a similar human exodus. First, there is a pressing need to unite the skills and efforts of the international, national and subnational humanitarian actors. The intervention of the international community should not be detrimental to the high potential of local stakeholders in terms of access, skills and knowledge. Humanitarian intervention has to go beyond the politics of the UN and INGOs that is often cooked up in New York. Second, it is crucial that the much-needed humanitarian response to a refugee crisis does not adversely affect the development measures already in place in developing countries. Observers and practitioners must realize that short-term humanitarian interventions and development-oriented long-term policies have a complementary nature. Emergency and resilient policies must go together. Third, corruption increases rapidly during emergencies, at both the international and the national levels. The flow of money typically channeled via international organizations to mitigate the effects of a humanitarian crisis tends to reinforce the bribery that often undermines developing countries. Thus, this paper advocates for the reinforcement of existing external and domestic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to tackle corruption.

Finally, host communities tend to rely on the international community and developed countries instead of their own governments to mitigate a humanitarian crisis. This can be explained by the fact that governments confronted with a crisis often coin a double discourse, one directed to the host communities that fosters a sense of normalcy and patience, another directed to an international audience that stresses the urgency of the situation and calls for immediate action. Ironically, the latter discourse is often heard by the locals — partially because the psychology of fear always prevails — causing public discontent. It is crucial that governments put out one common message to all audiences, domestic and international, to avoid further divisions in a tense context such as that created by the massive influx of refugees. While a humanitarian crisis challenges a country at all levels, it can also be seen as an opportunity for a government to bring its population together without infringing on the rights and interests of the refugees themselves.

The Syrian civil war that erupted in

March 2011 is different from the many conflicts that shook the modern Middle East. In addition to the thousands of lives sacrificed to political and religious dominance, the conflict caused the worst refugee crisis since the horrors of World War II. The Syrian case stirred up controversy, leading to the involvement of the most powerful powers within and outside of the Middle East, and to the creation of hundreds of armed opposition groups commanding an estimated 100,000 fighters.[78]

This section suggests some ways forward by outlining avenues for further reflection. First and foremost, the Syrian refugee crisis is intrinsically political. Although it took root in Syrian domestic politics, the conflict will only be settled with the involvement of all actors affected, including the Middle Eastern countries that hosted thousands of Syrian refugees. Conversely, the refugee situation is conditional upon the resolution of the Syrian crisis. It seems that the case of the refugees will remain the cornerstone of future negotiations for postconflict Syria. These negotiations necessarily involve the political and humanitarian cooperation between Syria and host countries. Yet, the return process might be hampered by the tense diplomatic relationships that exist between Syria and its neighbors, especially Lebanon. Finally, several questions remain regarding the future of Syrian refugees, such as their prospects of return, return policies — mainly, who will be allowed to return to Syria — and the impact on the demography of Syria.

The Syrian refugee crisis took political shape at the domestic level in host countries, especially in Lebanon, where the political answer to the crisis was constrained by divisions over the Syrian conflict. Moreover, in Jordan and Lebanon, the influx of Syrians has been portrayed as a security threat by the ruling powers, as a means to reinforce their grip on the states' affairs and general policy. Besides, as the following months portend a progressive resolution of the Syrian conflict, the refugee situation in Lebanon and Jordan is likely to last for years to come. One might wonder, therefore, what the prospects are for the Syrian refugees who stay in Jordan and Lebanon. The resilience of the two countries has been put under strain over eight years of a multilevel crisis. The willingness of Jordan and Lebanon to adapt their policies to cope with the potential stay of thousands of Syrian refugees remains an unanswered concern. In Lebanon, particularly, the settlement poses a series of demographic challenges in a country, whose political system is based on a sectarian balance that mirrors its population.

Second, although the Syrian refugee crisis was an undeniable strain on the politics, structure and populations of host countries, it also led to salutary developments. While Arab countries are often portrayed as weak and unstable, one must recognize that Jordan and Lebanon have proven incredibly resilient. This goes for political systems, infrastructures and local communities. Equally so, ruling elites and corruption — especially in the case of Lebanon — have barely been affected by the humanitarian situation. The Syrian refugee crisis has brought an unprecedented shift in the way the international community approaches the humanitarian effect of conflicts. The emergency response — under the leadership of the UNHCR — and the development approach — guided by the UNDP — have cooperated and joined hands to provide a comprehensive and efficient response. In other words, relief and development are two faces of the same coin when

it comes to alleviating the human suffering inherent to conflicts. In the same vein, the refugee situation brought about the realization that the refugees themselves are not the only victims. Hence, the humanitarian response must include both refugee and host populations to prevent the risk of social tensions and the spillover effect of conflict in hosting countries. In spite of those steps forward, the international community will need to keep adapting its mission to local specificities and assist host governments in mitigating the potential stay of thousands of refugees. The main point of contention might be how to foster the integration of Syrians without dismissing the rights of local communities.

Third, it is crucial to recognize that the refugee crisis had positive impacts on the public revenues and influx of foreign aid into Jordan and Lebanon. In Lebanon, between 2011 and 2016, state revenues grew by almost $600 million.[79] In 2013, a study estimated that Jordanian public revenues from the hosting of Syrian refugees amounted more than $1 billion in 2013 alone.[80] This increase was the result of consumption taxes, mainly from the boost in private consumption — notably the purchase of goods in local markets and the soaring subscription rate for mobile services. In addition, residence and work permits were a major source of income for the Jordanian and Lebanese governments. While only 20 percent of concerned Syrian refugees renew their residence permits each year, Lebanon still saw an increase in revenues from $35 million to $50 million from residence fees between 2011 and 2015.[81] Similarly, the revenue generated from work permits bought by Syrian refugees in Jordan amounted to about $120 million in 2014.[82]

In terms of foreign aid, reports state that the Hashemite Kingdom received around $2.8 billion in 2016,[83] while Lebanon attracts roughly $1.5 billion each year according to official figures.[84] Both countries were main receivers of billions of U.S. dollars in grants and loans pledged during the Kuwait and London donor conferences. These figures exclude additional humanitarian aid and the budget of aid agencies working in the two countries. While financial assistance was motivated by the Syrian refugee crisis, much of it has been allocated to the "resilience" pillars that target host communities.[85]

Furthermore, many Syrian refugees who settled in Lebanon from the onset of the conflict are part of the bourgeoisie from Damascus and Aleppo. Although most of the wealthy Syrians settled in Europe, the United States or the Gulf countries, a smaller share of businessmen went to Lebanon and invested in the country's real estate, private education and companies.[86] In Jordan, especially in the northern governorate that welcomed the highest share of Syrian refugees, villages have transformed and burgeoned under the influence of international humanitarian actors, foreign direct investment, and the relocation of Syrian businesses. In Irbid, for example, 12 factories specialized in food manufacturing relocated from Syria between 2011 and 2015.[87] Moreover, in 2013 alone, Syrians invested almost $50 million in nearly 1,000 companies in Jordan.[88] In 2014, the Jordanian government introduced a series of measures in order to re-attract and boost Syrian investments that partially left the country due to the protracted nature of the conflict. Finally, in 2014, Syrians invested about $40 million in real estate, 256 percent more than in 2010. That same year, they ranked third among foreigners purchasing apartments in Jordan.[89] In the

same vein, Syrians were the top real-estate investors in Lebanon in 2018.[90]

Finally, the Syrian refugee crisis revealed important dynamics, both at the regional and domestic levels. The general silence of Middle Eastern countries on the Syrian refugee case is symptomatic of a lack of leadership and cooperation. While Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and the KRI welcomed the bulk of Syrian refugees, the Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia remained conspicuously deaf to their neighbors' calls to share the humanitarian burden. This is in spite of the infamous financial involvement of Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states in the Syrian conflict. On the other hand, Russia — which deserted the Middle East stage for two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union — used the Syrian conflict to present itself as a central actor in regional politics. The Syrian refugee case was no exception, as the Russian government offered to facilitate negotiations between host countries — mainly Lebanon — and Assad regarding the return of Syrian refugee populations.[91] As such, the Syrian conflict and the refugee crisis characterize a period of transition in the Middle East regional order.

At the domestic level, the Syrian refugee crisis crystallized the bitterness and concerns of Lebanese society. On the one hand, the refugee crisis served as a reminder that Lebanon remains fragmented along confessional lines. In fact, it appears that the country never recovered from the civil war (1975-90) and failed to implement national reconciliation. On the other hand, Lebanon remains deeply traumatized by the influx of Palestinian refugees after the 1948 and 1967 wars. For the Lebanese, the Syrian case was reminiscent of demographic change and instability and brought fear that Syrian refugees might settle in the country. The same is true in Jordan, where the population is believed to be almost equally divided between Jordanian and Palestinian refugees who were given Jordanian citizenship.[92]

The sensitivity of the refugee issue in Jordan and Lebanon explains the lack of a domestic legal framework to deal with refugee populations. Moreover, the crisis showed that the question of identity in the Middle East remains at the center of street and state politics. One could have expected that Syrians and host communities would be united by their "Arabness" or common Islamic identity. Yet, it seems that Lebanese and Jordanians were quick to distance themselves from their fellows. While modern borders in the Middle East are often contested, and several nonstate actors call for the establishment of a transborder Islamic state, the Syrian refugee crisis proved that territorial nationalism and citizenship are powerful drivers of everyday politics. This realization also enshrines — yet again — the decay of transborder ideologies such as pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism. In light of this, it is difficult to foresee the policies of Jordan and Lebanon relating to the status of their refugee populations — not only Syrian but also Palestinian in the case of Lebanon and Iraqi in the case of Jordan. Needless to say, the socioeconomic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has added to the burden on Syrian refugees and host communities alike, further damaging social cohesion and social trust.

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