The Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon:
A pilot Study of Destination Choices

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1. Introduction

More humans are displaced today than ever before in recorded history. As the international community remains ill-prepared for the rising number of people forced to move by political violence and warfare, refugee issue has emerged as one of the world's great contemporary challenges. Nowhere is this truer than in Syria, where civil war has forced nearly five million Syrians to flee to neighboring countries. Despite the large scale of refugee emigration from Syria and the recent media attention the Syrian refugee issues received, there is a dire paucity of systemic knowledge of who those refugees are and how they have fared. Investigating these micro-level basics of the refugee crisis in a timely manner is crucial not only in assessing conflict consequences but also in constructing well-targeted policy responses.

There is a vast amount of data being generated about the current Syrian refugee crisis. Hundreds of organizations are charting the flow of millions of people being pushed out of the country due to ongoing violence. Information on how many refugees are in which country is readily available to policymakers and support organizations, as well as information on current policies and actors within these countries. However, to view these refugees solely as victims or beneficiaries robs them of a certain dignity of self-determination. Aside from quantitative flows and trends, these are individuals and families with personal priorities, fears, and expectations. Even though refugees are by definition coerced from their homes under threat of violence and persecution, their destination is not necessarily outside of their control. As Moore and Shellman

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(2007) emphasizes, refugees are "people making choices under *highly constrained circumstances*, but nonetheless choosing where to flee." Hence refugee decision-making is not altogether different from general migrant decision-making often based on cost and benefit calculations. To root this understanding in economic terms allows for the consideration of refugees as rational economic actors, instead of simply cast-about victims. Of course this is not to diminish the very real restrictive effects of persecution, terror, poverty, and other binding constraints on decision-making in their home country; nor is it to discount the challenges faced by refugees both in transit out of their home country and in their host countries.

This research aims to heed the call of Stein and Tomasi (1981) for a "comprehensive, historical, interdisciplinary and comparative perspective which focuses on the consistencies and patterns in the refugee experience." It is with this in mind that we set out to interview Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. With the data collected from individual and household level of the refugee population, we are able to describe the demographic profile of Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, to evaluate aspects of refugee decision-making capacity, and to investigate what expectations refugees have of their host communities upon arrival and subsequently how those expectations change following prolonged residence. Our research goal is to improve our understanding of the decision making process of refugees and of the challenges they have faced. This in turn shall enable us to provide evidence-based suggestions for better policy makings aimed to help Syrian refugees in particular and refugees in general.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a review of the literature regarding the selectivity and choice of destination countries among refugees. Section 3 presents background information on Syria civil conflicts and refugee policies in Jordan and

Lebanon. Section 4 introduces data and reports summary statistics. Section 5 presents the results, and section 6 concludes.

2. Literature Review

E.F. Kunz (1973) models the movement of refugees in kinetic terms. A migrant is pulled to an environment because of perceived benefit, whereas a refugee is pushed by well-founded fear of persecution. Kunz further classifies two kinetic types of refugee, anticipatory refugees and acute refugees. While anticipatory refugees may seem at surface level to be voluntarily migrating, the underlying factor in their migration rests in a push factor of their anticipation of worsening situation at their home country. Perhaps more prevalent as the typical image is that of the acute refugee, often fleeing in difficult conditions sometimes without possessions or supplies at a moment's notice, or after a period of internal displacement. For refugees there is, however, a distinct decision not only to flee, but also of destination choice for the acute refugee as well as the anticipatory refugee.

The selectivity and the choice of destination countries among refugees has not been fully understood. Some empirical evidence can be found in Neumayer (2004) which focuses solely on asylum seekers in 17 Western European states. It shows that higher per capita income increases the attractiveness of a destination country. Additionally, this study shows that "existing communities of past asylum seekers are substantively most important and clearly dominate the other variables." Following this dominant variable in order of descending magnitude of impact is income level, share of right-wing populist parties, geographic proximity, language ties, colonial links, and whether or not the country was part of the Schengen zone. Moore and Shellman (2007) subsequently embarked on a global study of refugee destinations from 1965 – 1995 and also

found that higher per capita income of hosting countries attracts refugees, but its effect is only significant for bordering countries. Interestingly enough, Moore and Shellman found that refugees are less likely to seek asylum in higher income per capita countries that do not border their country of origin, regardless of the strong effect of colonial ties and a diaspora network. The rationale for these results is posited as a function of higher relocating costs associated with higher income countries that are farther away.

Böcker (1998) in contrast finds that geographical proximity had a negative effect on destination choice, with colonial ties being the greatest determinant variable. Although without reported confidence intervals or standard errors, it is impossible to gauge the statistical significance of her coefficients. Thielemann (2003) reports that total unemployment and deterrent policies have a negative impact on the share of asylum seekers in 20 OECD countries. The study also shows that existing asylum seeker communities and aid relative to GNP are positively correlated.

In light of the findings of the recent literature, it may be necessary to expand on Kunz's kinetic framework of migration theory to allow that refugees do not solely face push factors. Pull factors, the economic characteristics of potential host countries, may also play a part in the decision-making process of refugees. What, then, are the expectations asylum seekers have of their host countries, the perceptions they have of the circumstances in their destinations? How do these expectations change upon arrival or resettlement? Econometrics provide an interesting view of the correlations and dynamics of refugee movement, but lack the personal viewpoint of those refugees in question.

In keeping with a foundational tenet of economics, refugees remain rational actors despite their circumstances. However, expected benefit due to actions may in actuality be

inconsistent with reality. Henkin and Singleton (1992) find that "unrealistic expectations in terms of anticipated cultural change, impending social and economic status, and capacity to assure continuities of tradition life-ways in the host country are apparent" in a study of Vietnamese refugees resettled in the United States. Differing from this survey sample and the one at hand in our study, Syrians in Lebanon and Jordan did not travel across the globe to a host environment with anywhere near the per capita income disparity of the Vietnam-U.S. dyad. This tempers the generalizability of the Henkin and Singleton study. Regardless, they do assert a key takeaway that where wide discrepancies between the expectations of refugees and reality exist, "social institutions and assisting agencies may anticipate continued high levels of demand for [a] range of social, educational and mental health services" (Henkin and Singleton, 1992).

Despite contemporary political boundaries in the Levant between Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, a broader Arab identity still persists. Historically, "Syria" was not a defined and delineated political entity, but referred to the entire region of the Levant, also known as Bilad al-Sham or "Greater Syria". There is much shared cultural, linguistic, and religious heritage between Levantine Arabs. In recent history, greater emphasis has been given to national identity as opposed to a pan-Arabism. Interestingly enough, this has been observed in a study of Syrian textbooks, which after 2004, began moving away from the shared Arab nationality view to a more contemporary view of Syrian-Arabs, Lebanese-Arabs, etc. (Bollinger, 2011). Both Jordan and Lebanon face an existential crisis of national identity due to the proportion of refugees, mainly Syrian and Palestinian, outweighing the number of native Jordanians and Lebanese. Communities in Lebanon are highly homogenous and divided by sectarian lines. The majority of Syrian refugees fleeing to

Lebanon are Sunni, which risks distorting the precarious Lebanese political and religious balance (Guay, 2016). Syrians refugees generally settle in areas they feel secure in and in Lebanon this rational extends to communities that share their political and religious views. Pro-Assad-regime refugees have been more prone to settle in Hermel and Baalbeck regions. However, in 2013 this trend began to break as oversaturation of services and unemployment further displaced refugees within the country (IRIN Middle East, 2013). Now a mix of pro-regime and pro-rebel refugees has begun to move into South Lebanon, increasing tension (van Vliet and Hourani, 2014). In Jordan, cultural and religious context does play a role, but to a lesser extent compared to Lebanon.

Cultural familiarity may in fact play a large part in the decision-making process for refugees. A sizeable number of refugees living in those host countries closest to Syria, namely Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, have actually begun returning to Syria rather than seeking asylum in relatively unfamiliar EU member countries (Achilli, 2015). One UNHCR spokeswoman in Lebanon stated "Every refugee I talked to said that they would like to go back to Syria. In the ideal world, refugees want to go back to Syria as soon as they can. They wish to stay here [in Lebanon] not because they like it, but because they are close to home" (Ojewska, 2016). In Jordan, the protracted stay of Syrians has strained cultural relations between the two communities. Jordanians now more often refer to Syrians as *laji*, "refugees", as opposed to *duyuf*, "guests" (Achilli, 2015). Refugee policy in Jordan has become more restrictive and although still supporting a massive number of refugees, the government of Jordan is not a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees or the 1967 Protocol. In 2015, the Jordan Response Plan was put in place by the Jordanian Ministry of Planning, which provides a humanitarian strategy for refugee assistance as well

as resilience measures for host communities to reduce social tensions (Jordan Response

Platform for the Syria Crisis, 2015). In June of 2016, Jordan effectively closed its border

(Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2017). Although Lebanon previously had an open-border policy, as of

January 2015, a de-facto closed border strategy has significantly restricted the ability of

Syrian refugees to enter (Haidamous and Naylor, 2015). Lebanon is also not a state party to

the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. Refugees in both countries have some reason to

be skeptical of the host governments, as both Lebanon and Jordan have a history of

cooperation with intelligence services from the refugee state of origin (Chatelard, 2002;

Naufal, 2013). Irrespective of official policy, many Lebanese and Jordanian communities

have provided refugee families with food, shelter, and other assistance (UNHCR, 2013).

Cultural aspects also influence how individuals perceive their circumstances and

inform their expectations. Syrians place a high importance on education, which is reflected

in their pre-2011 enrollment rates, 92% for female primary enrollment and 97% for males

(UNDP, 2011). The conflict and displacement has devastated this value and as of 2013,

approximately 50% of Syrian children have been able to continue their education in Jordan

in some capacity and only 12% in Lebanon (Watkins, 2013). Women and children have

been placed in a particularly vulnerable position, not only through the deprivation of

education, but through a distortion of an already masculine-gendered bias in Syrian society

and family structure. Psychological and economic strain has led to hyper-masculinity and

aggression, especially within the traditionally patriarchal households (Charles and

Denman, 2013). Among refugee populations, women's workload has increased, while men's

workload has decreased, due in no small part to work-permit restrictions in host countries

(ibid). This has increased the stress and anxiety on families, which has unfortunately

manifested itself in domestic violence instances, which often serves to reinforce traditional

subordinate gender roles. Violence against women, sexual harassment, and even

kidnapping has become an acute fear for single women and widows (El Masri, Harvey, and

Garwood, 2013). This provides a strong incentive for women to retreat from the outside

world, adding a dimension to the perceived security risks of both fleeing and displacement

in a foreign community. Additionally, families have begun to marry their daughters off at

younger ages in order to secure financial and relative physical security for them (Care,

2013).

Social cohesion has not only been threatened within the household, but has

expanded to affect the host community. Lebanon's delicate sectarian balance has been

disrupted through the uneven influx of Sunni and Shia Syrians, while the religious

conservativism of many Syrians has not easily integrated with the more moderate religious

environment of Jordan (UNDP-UNHCR Joint Secretariat, 2015). Tensions increasingly arise

in host-refugee shared spaces in which resources are already strained (World Bank, 2013).

Refugees are not ignorant to the limited infrastructure, space, work, and provisions of their

host countries, and are aware of the tensions that this scarcity creates. However, it is

possible that prior to fleeing, expectations for aid and absorptive capacity of the host

community were not accurate due to an expectation for short-duration asylum.

It may be that before fleeing, Syrian refugees had a more realistic expectation of the

situation in Lebanon and Jordan, due not only to geographic proximity, but also historical

labor migration within the region. Syrian labor has an extensive history in Lebanon

(Chalcraft, 2005) as well as Jordan (Migration Policy Centre, 2013). Expectations of host

country circumstances may then be more supportive of Moore and Shellman's (2007)

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hypothesis that refugees take into consideration cost of relocation. This perceived cost may be reduced by prior familiarity with destination environment economic conditions, while lack of information on destination environment economic conditions could potentially increase the perceived cost and risk. Syrian semi- and unskilled labor has had a large presence in Lebanon since the 1950's, however, only a small proportion of Syrian laborers settled permanently in Lebanon (Chalcraft, 2006). Currently Syrian refugees in Lebanon are only permitted by the Lebanese Ministry of Labor to work in low-skill and typically informal sectors, agriculture, custodial, and construction jobs (Schibli, 2015).

Labor migration is markedly different from the mass waves of forced migration seen today. The demographics and challenges of these groups are complex and different. Relative to the scholarship on Arab migrants in the United States, Canada, Europe, Malaysia, Australia, or Latin America, there is a knowledge gap about forced migrants within the Middle East (Cainkar, 2013). One set of interviews found that refugees living in Amman, Jordan were more interested in further migration to Europe and had a tendency to be medium-high skilled labor with greater proficiency in English. This is in contrast to refugees settled in the camps or along the Jordan-Syrian border, who tended to come from rural areas with low-skill labor backgrounds and little proficiency in English. The latter group more often held on to a hope of returning to Syria, generally driven by a perceived inability to integrate to European culture and the lack of a future in Jordan (Achilli, 2015).

Theory on Refugee Flee and Destination Choice

Economic theories of decision-making present a structured view of the expectations and analysis that a person makes, assuming that they are a rational actor. Syrian refugees,

despite the immediacy and intrinsic stress of their decisions, very much fit within this framework. We can assume that refugees attempt to maximize their benefit at the least risk or cost, albeit within highly constrained circumstances.

Theoretical models of refugees have for the most part been constructed with a focus on response to refugees. Early explorations of the refugee as a person and their relationship to their environment has been grounded in Georg Simmel's concept of "the Stranger" (1908). Refugees were, in the words of Edna Bonacich (1973), "sojourners" with a degree of hostility to their host communities. H.B.M. Murphy (1955) describes the position of dependency and incompetence refugees are placed in to, but studies mainly the decisions open to a refugee once they decide to leave a refugee camp outside of their home country. At this point, refugee studies go on to model the assimilation and resettlement process (Stein, 1981). Keller (1975) explored refugee reaction to threats and the impact of stress on behavior. He posits that late refugees tend to exhibit characteristics of guilt, invulnerability or risky behavior, and aggressiveness, primarily due to the trauma of flight. Keller does not however provide an adequate framework through which to contextualize refugee expectations.

It is difficult to develop an adequate theory. Bascom (1998) argues that not only is there no theory of refugees, but there is not going to be. "Refugee" is a legal description, not a generalizable theory. Regardless of Bascom's ominous declaration, we find that it is appropriate to view refugees as rational actors with highly constrained choices and expectations, which does lend itself to theory. Hein (1993) explicitly refutes the argument that differences between refugees and immigrants are nominal. There may indeed be a

refugee theory to be developed, but certainly it will take careful consideration of the specific situations each refugee has faced and is facing.

The kinetic model of push and pull factors developed by Kunz (1973) provides a strong framework with which the Syrian refugee can be analyzed. The push factor, violence, may seem obvious, but individual variations in the violence suffered matters. Not every Syrian fled at the onset of the fighting and not every Syrian fled in the same manner once they had been physically displaced. Currently millions of Syrians are internally displaced within the country, rather than fleeing outside its borders, despite experiencing a similar push factor. Pull factors amount to the expectations held by refugees of their destination country. Likewise, there is individual variation in these expectations beyond simple safety from violence, and these variations matter. Somewhat contrary to Böcker (1998) and consistent with Neumayer (2004), it is anticipated that geographic proximity and cultural/linguistic similarities will be pull factors of high importance.

Framing Syrian refugees solely within a benefactor-beneficiary model does a disservice. Dorsh Marie de Voe (1981) argues that viewing the refugee as a sort of economic client categorizes them with an impersonal quality and because they are often at the mercy of the host-benefactor, that quality is much like property. There should be a balance between viewing those we aim to interview as Syrians making economic decisions for their benefit, and refugees with little control over their circumstances.

It is with this in mind that we set out to evaluate the qualitative aspect of refugee decision-making capacity within the context of the Syrian refugee crisis. Of particular interest to us was the situation of those refugees that decided to stay within the local region, fleeing to Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey rather than to Europe or other areas.

How did these individuals end up where they were and more importantly, what were their expectations of their destination that influenced the decision to flee to that community as opposed to another? Refugees often have incomplete, dated, or distorted information about their destination due to their highly constrained circumstances. How does this affect where they end up? We anticipate that the primary driver of a refugee fleeing a civil war is first and foremost is safety and security. This is consistent with rational choice theory; the highest self-interest is in self-preservation. However, beyond that requirement there are other needs: food, work, education, healthcare, etc. The challenges faced by a refugee do not cease at a political border. After safety from war is reached, refugees face a different set of constraining circumstances. Qualitative analysis through interviews provides us with a view of those constraints.

3. Background

3.1. Conflict in Syria

In the study of Syrian refugees and their decisions regarding where to seek asylum, one must understand the situation from which they have fled. The following section summarizes the conflict in Syria, as it has developed geographically over time. This information sheds light on the populations that have been affected by the war. Understanding these populations aids in understanding their decisions regarding where to seek asylum. For reference to a provincial map of Syria, see the Appendix attached to this report.

Year 2011

As noted, the root causes underlying the Syrian civil war prevailed for years before the conflict erupted. In line with the other nations involved in the Arab Spring, Syria experienced its first democratic protests in early 2011. On March 15th, protestors marched into the city of Damascus, demanding democratic reforms and the release of political prisoners. Damascus is located in the southwestern province of Rif Dimashq. Throughout the spring of 2011, similar protests spread across Syria, including in major cities Homs and Dara'a (Holliday, 2011). Homs is located in fertile central Syria, and Dara'a is Syria's southernmost major city, located on the Jordan border. Protests increasingly gave way to violent clashes between security forces and demonstrators. In July, an official armed rebel force mobilized, as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) formed via defectors from the Syrian army (O'Bagy, 2013). Throughout the second half of 2011, the Assad regime's security forces used aggressive measures to quell protests in areas of centralized unrest (Holliday, 2011). They were successful in suppressing protests in Damascus, Dara'a, and throughout Syria's coastal region. However, because its forces were committed in other areas, the regime could not subdue the armed resistance that developed in Homs, which became the conflict's center of gravity by the end of 2011. The scale of protests across Syria exposed the government's limited capacity to respond to every area of unrest. This fact, coupled with the regime's aggressive responses to protestors, strengthened the resolve of the rebel movement (Holliday, 2011). By the end of 2011, civil war appeared unavoidable in Syria.

Year 2012

Throughout early 2012, the international community applied increasing attention to the developing Syria crisis. However, disagreement among the United Nations Security Council prevented the establishment of a transitional government via UNSC resolution. In the first half of 2012, the majority of fighting remained centralized around Homs but spread to Hama. By mid-2012, both the United Nations and the Syrian regime publically acknowledged a state of civil war in Syria. As the year progressed, several trends marked Syria's descent into a complex emergency: reports of fighting increased across the country, military officials continually defected, and terrorist bombings by several jihadist groups occurred in conflict areas. Furthermore, foreign actors became increasingly involved as Russia supplied the Assad regime with weapons and vehicles, and the United States government began to train rebel forces on a small scale. The summer of 2012 marked a major increase of violence in the Syrian war. In July, a suicide bombing in Damascus set off fighting between rebels and the government in a city where the government had previously been able to suppress protestors. In late July, fighting began in Aleppo, Syria's major economic center in the northwest, near Turkey.

Year 2013

Continued fighting and a deteriorating humanitarian situation characterized Syria in 2013. Fighting was mainly concentrated around Homs, Damascus and Aleppo. Three major military developments occurred in the first half of 2013, after which an overall stalemate developed between the government and opposition forces (The Carter Center, 2013a). Firstly, government forces conducted major operations in and around Damascus, taking

control of much of the province's countryside. Secondly, the Syrian military took control of the region between Homs and the Lebanese border, culminating with a battle for Qusayr. Finally, the opposition front maintained its control in the northern regions of Syria, repelling a government offensive in Halab and laying siege to government-controlled districts of Aleppo. The significant actors involved in the Syrian war increased in 2013 as well. Firstly, Kurdish forces took a greater role in the conflict, as they carved out the northeastern region of Syria and claimed most of al-Hasakah province for Kurdistan (The Carter Center, 2013b). The Kurds (known as the People's Protection Units – YPG) clashed with Syrian opposition groups in al-Hasakah. Turkey entered this phase of the conflict by supporting the rebels against the Kurds. Second, the rebels, who were formerly united under the vague FSA alliance, fragmented significantly in 2013. These divisions generally occurred along Islamic vs. secularist lines, depending on the overarching objectives of the respective rebel group. This decentralization among rebels provided a context for the rise of both the Supreme Military Council (the most centralized version of rebel opposition) and the Islamic State (ISIS), an offshoot of al-Qaeda (The Carter Center, 2013b). Finally, foreign militaries remained uninvolved with the fighting in Syria in 2013, with the exception of Hezbollah, which joined the Syrian government in taking territory around Damascus. Overall, the conflict fronts in Syria ossified in 2013, and the humanitarian plight of Syrian civilians worsened dramatically. By the end of 2013, the UN estimated 6.5 million displaced people in Syria due to the war. Furthermore, 2.3 million refugees had registered with UNHCR (The Carter Center, 2013b).

Year 2014

In 2014, the overall stalemate between the Assad regime and the opposition front continued, as the fragmenting of the rebel forces hindered the coalition from advancing significantly against government forces. By early 2014, over 5,000 armed rebel groups had formed in Syria (The Carter Center, 2014a). The FSA devolved into more of an idea than an organized military operation, but several actors from the opposition forces emerged as key rebel groups via the loose coordination of the Supreme Military Council. These groups included the Islamic Front (IF), the Syrian Revolutionaries' Front (SRF), and Jaish al-Mujahedeen (JM). The rebel groups formed under varying circumstances and with differing objectives: some under the leadership of defected Syrian military officers, some in response to the ISIS threat. ISIS officially broke off from the rebel coalition in 2014 and engaged rebel forces on a massive scale, thus joining the Syrian government and the opposition forces as the third major military actor in the war. This conflict between ISIS and rebel groups opened a new front in the war, which further deterred the rebels' progress against the government. In early 2014, nearly all rebel groups engaged ISIS in an effort to take back ISIS-controlled territory across northeastern Syria. The campaign proved fairly successful as they forced ISIS to retreat to its strongholds in the Aleppo, Raqqa, and Deir Ez-Zour provinces. Meanwhile, the Kurdish YPG forces solidified their stronghold in the northeastern corner of the al-Hasakah province and established two more in the Aleppo province, along the Turkish border. Throughout the summer of 2014, ISIS reversed the loss it had yielded to the rebels and advanced rapidly across eastern Syria, consolidating control in large swathes of territory. By late 2014, fighting occurred regularly in nearly every region of Syria, its territory partitioned between the Kurds in the northeast, ISIS in

the east and central region, and the government and opposition forces splitting the western half of the country. The most common forms of fighting included shelling and armed skirmishes between any two of the major actors. Foreign governments increased their roles in Syria in 2014 as well, as the Saudi, Qatari, American, Jordanian, and Turkish governments provided weaponry to the opposition forces. (The Carter Center, 2014b). By the end of 2014, Aleppo was the flashpoint of the Syrian civil war: the government, the rebels, the YPG, and ISIS all controlled territory in the city, and it appeared the fate of the war hinged on who would emerge victorious there. By the end of 2014, 3.7 million Syrian refugees had registered with UNHCR (UNHCR, 2016).

Year 2015

Most of 2015 progressed with similar themes to the preceding year. Government and opposition forces remained at an impasse, much due to the rebels' inability to unify. Numerous rebel groups operated under differing goals, leadership, and foreign supporters, thus limiting their ability to establish an integrated front against the government (The Carter Center, 2015a). The stalemate on this front of the war allowed ISIS to thrive and advance, as the group extended its territory in Homs, Hama, and the Damascus countryside. Foreign militaries became more involved in Syria in 2015, as the government relied more heavily on military support from Hezbollah, especially near Damascus. In late 2015, a major development occurred that shifted the storyline of the Syrian civil war in the international arena. In September, Russia, which had previously supplied weapons and infantry units to government military bases, initiated a bombing campaign in coordination with a ground offensive conducted by the government (The Carter Center, 2015b). Throughout late 2015,

Russian warplanes engaged in numerous bombing campaigns in regions across Syria.

Subsequently, Russia publicly vowed its support to the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war.

Fighting occurred in every province of Syria in 2015, with the most intense fighting

occurring between government and opposition forces in the Hama, Idlib, and Latakia

provinces. The persistent conflict between the government, rebels, ISIS, and the Kurds

continued to displace Syrians and advanced the humanitarian catastrophe in the country.

By the end of 2015, nearly 4.6 million Syrian refugees had registered with UNHCR (UNHCR,

2016).

Year 2016

Throughout 2016, Russia continued its in involvement in Syria via extensive

bombing campaigns. Russia first focused on bombing the Hama and Idlib provinces, then

shifted to rebel-held areas in Aleppo. Russia later conducted bombing raids against

opposition forces in the Latakia and Dara'a provinces. As Russia continued its bombing

campaigns, the resulting devastation mostly affected Syrian civilians, thus creating a new

layer of the displacement issue (The Carter Center, 2016a). Throughout most of 2016, the

overall deadlock in territory controlled by opposing forces prevented the front lines of the

war from shifting dramatically. This stalemate led to a ceasefire between the main war

actors in early 2016. By most accounts, the ceasefire failed by April as opposing parties re-

engaged each other in conflict (The Carter Center, 2016b). As 2016 progressed, the focus of

the war shifted back to Aleppo. By June, half of the recorded conflicts in the war were

occurring in Aleppo. By late summer, the war had fully concentrated in Aleppo, as

government forces besieged the last remaining stronghold of the opposition forces, located

in the eastern district of the city. As the siege progressed, Aleppo citizens lost electricity,

and were placed under dire humanitarian circumstances. Masses of displaced people

flowed from Aleppo in a humanitarian emergency. The battle for Aleppo lasted until the

end of 2016, when government forces succeeded in forcing the remaining rebels from their

stronghold in Aleppo (The Carter Center, 2016c). By the end of 2016, 4.8 million Syrian

refugees had registered with UNHCR (UNHCR, 2016).

Year 2017

Four trends have marked the first months of 2017 in the Syrian civil war. First,

significant shifts have occurred among opposition networks, with new groups forming and

some engaging each other in conflict (The Carter Center, 2017a). Second, the fighting in

Syria has concentrated in the province of Idlib, a region mostly dominated by rebel forces.

Much of the fighting has occurred in this region due to opposition groups fighting each

other (The Carter Center 2017b). Meanwhile, ISIS continues to lose territory, and both

government and rebel forces are currently advancing toward the ISIS-held town of Al-Bab

in the Aleppo province (The Carter Center, 2017c). Finally, 2017 has marked a change in

American involvement in Syria, as the United States has nearly doubled its troops deployed

there and has demonstrated support to pro-government forces (The Carter Center, 2017d).

The humanitarian crisis in Syria continues undeterred: as of February 16, 2017, over 4.7

million Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR (UNHCR, 2016).

3.2. Refugees Policies in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey

Syria's neighbors host the most Syrian refugees of any nation. The impact of the Syrian civil war and the refugee crisis are unique to these states in a manner not felt by other states. Thus, their legal and institutional responses to the refugee crisis are worth consideration. The following section presents the case studies of Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.

Jordan.

Jordan is not a signee of the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, nor has it adopted any specific legislation specifically addressing the status of refugees (Saliba, 2016a). The authoritative legal instrument providing guidance on the treatment of refugees in Jordan is a 1998 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between Jordan and the UNHCR. Because this document provides the majority of guidance on refugee treatment, Jordan generally lacks a consistent legal framework regarding refugees. However, certain legal instruments in Jordan do affect how the state treats refugees. For instance, the MOU specifies that Jordan accepts the 1951 Convention's definition of a refugee and the principle of *non-refoulement*. An article in Jordan's national constitution protects political refugees from extradition on account of their political ideologies. Finally, a national law enacted in 1973 regulates travel documents granted to foreigners in Jordan (both refugees and non-refugees) and specifies documents that may be granted to refugees, despite a lack of guidance on circumstances for admitting refugees into Jordan (Saliba, 2016a).

A 2015 International Labor Organization Report cites a lack of legal protection for refugees in Jordan:

Jordanian law makes limited references to asylum seekers and refugees. Despite

having the highest ratio of refugees to citizens in the world, Jordan has not signed

the Refugee Convention of 1951 or its subsequent 1967 Protocol. Several concerns

are usually cited over Jordan's non-signatory status, including the politically and

socially complex—and yet unresolved—Palestinian refugee issue, popular

sentiment against refugee integration, lack of resources and capacity to provide for

refugees, and misinformation about the perceived social and economic burden of

refugees and related questions of national security…In practice, Jordan avoids the

official recognition of refugees under its domestic laws and prefers to refer to Syrian

refugees as 'visitors', 'irregular guests', 'Arab brothers' or simply 'guests', which has

no legal meaning under domestic laws, and was the same for Iraqi refugees under

the MOU. This was further confirmed in an interview with the MOL [Ministry of

Labor], Labor Inspection department.

In summary, Jordan's lack of a legal framework for refugee treatment makes for an unclear

national policy. While the ILO criticizes Jordan's incoherent legal framework, the UNHCR

has confirmed Jordan does provide asylum for many Syrians, Iraqis, and others, recognizes

them as refugees, and has granted Syrian refugees access to health, education, and other

services. With the 1998 MOU being the last major legal instrument in Jordan regarding

refugees, there has been no formal legal response to the current refugee crisis or the Syrian

civil war.

Lebanon.

Like Jordan, Lebanon is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, nor has it adopted any specific legislation specifically addressing the status of refugees (Saliba, 2016b). Also like Jordan, the authoritative guidance on the treatment of refugees in Lebanon comes primarily from an MOU signed between Lebanon and the UNHCR in 2003. The MOU was signed as a result of the "absence of a national refugee law" and primarily provides a mechanism for the issuing of temporary residence permits to asylum seekers. As for Lebanon's national law concerning refugees, one constitutional provision and one law comprise the primary legal instruments guiding the treatment of refugees. The preamble of the Lebanese constitution declares Lebanon is a founding member of the United Nations and abides by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Secondly, the Law Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Exit from the Country, enacted in 1962, provides *non-refoulement* protection to "political refugees." It also designates the maximum prison sentence for foreigners who enter Lebanon illegally.

Unlike Jordan, Lebanon has implemented institutional legal measures specifically in response to the Syrian civil war and the migrant crisis. On January 5, 2015, the Lebanese government published a set of instructions specific to Syrians entering Lebanon. These instructions assign lengths of stay per individual entering Lebanon and require differing supporting documentation depending on the purpose of visit. The instructions state:

> ...no Syrian shall be permitted to enter as a refugee save in exceptional
>
> circumstances as shall be later determined in coordination with the Ministry of

Social Affairs…a notarized commitment not to seek employment shall be provided

when renewing temporary residency permits…by Syrian refugees holding UNHCR

certificates (Saliba, 2016b).

Lebanon's legal framework for the treatment of refugees is even less clear than that of

Jordan. Although Lebanon has taken on a vast number of Syrian refugees in proportion to

its population, it appears to have thickened its borders in response to the Syrian refugee

influx.

Turkey.

Because of its geographic orientation on two continents, Turkey plays a distinct role

in the global migrant crisis. Turkey acts as one of the major passages through which

refugees have passed from Asia into Europe in the past two decades, thus earning its status

as a transit country (Zeldin, 2016). Until recent years, two legal instruments guided

Turkey's entire legal framework regarding the settlement of foreigners in Turkey. The first

was the Law on Settlement, enacted in 1934 and updated in 2006. This law restricted the

right of asylum and immigration only to persons of "Turkish descent and culture." The

2006 edition of this law did not change this principle (Zeldin, 2016). The second guiding

instrument was Turkey's accession to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Thus,

Turkey differs from Jordan and Lebanon in this regard. Notably, however, the instrument

by which Turkey acceded to the Convention limits the scope of the Convention's application

to European asylum seekers only. Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war and the

associated refugee crisis, Turkey has enacted three major legal or institutional responses

that guide how it treats refugees today. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection in 2013, which provides for *non-refoulement*, is the country's primary guiding instrument on the nation's treatment of refugees. The Temporary Protection Regulation (2014) establishes a class of protection separate from the official refugee designation. As noted, Turkey's refugee law only officially protects individuals of Turkish descent fleeing from European countries, so this law essentially provides legal coverage for the vast majority people (including Syrians) who have sought asylum in Turkey since the Syrian civil war began. Finally, the EU/Turkey Joint Action Plan (2015) places Turkey in charge of sea patrols, enforcing border restrictions, combating human trafficking and passport forgeries, and returning refugees to their countries of origin if they do not meet refugee status requirements. Due to the limited scope of Turkey's legal instruments in granting asylum seekers refugee status, most current asylum seekers are placed under "temporary protection" for settlement in another country rather than being accepted as refugees for settlement in Turkey (Zeldin, 2016). Concerning Syrian refugees, the Turkish government has gradually expanded their rights and protections, but they remain barred from gaining regular refugee status. Thus, most individuals living as refugees in Turkey do not enjoy the full protection of rights entitled to refugees under international law.

4. Methodology

In order to explore the expectations that Syrian refugees hold of their host community we needed to explore the challenges and perceptions faced by individual refugees. Specifically, we were interested in the experiences of those refugees who had stayed in countries bordering Syria, instead of continuing through one of the many migrant

routes into Europe. Existing research literature has given us a broad sociological and economic understanding of decision-making factors of refugees. However, the specific experiences and decision-making processes of individuals provides us with important insight into the complexity of the transition into being a refugee. There should be a caveat to viewing refugees solely in terms of mass influxes and outflows, in dollar-amounts and headcounts. Beyond policies of management and relocation, policies that aim to help restore the individual dignity of a refugee may prove fruitful. Because of this, we aimed to bring life and personal experience to the theory of refugee movement.

In July/August 2016 we set out to conduct qualitative interviews with individuals that had fled Syria and are currently living in the host communities in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. Unfortunately, due to the Turkish coup d'état attempt that began on July 15, 2016 and the following declared state of emergency, we were unable to conduct our interviews planned in this country. To compensate, we increased the number of conducted interviews in Lebanon and Jordan. The situation of refugees in Turkey remains a topic of heavy interest, and we cannot explicitly state that their experiences perfectly parallel those of the individuals interviewed in Lebanon and Jordan. Several of the interviewees had friends or family that had fled to Turkey or moved as a secondary-migration. Anecdotes from these interviewees provided us with glimpses of the experience in Turkey, but the picture is not entirely complete.

The interviews were structured to provide basic demographic information about the refugees and their household including their former occupation, home region, education level, and the month/year in which they fled Syria. Education level of their

household members was also recorded. Open-ended questions focused on the challenges they faced within Syria after the onset of the civil war in 2011, challenges faced on the way to their current host country, and the challenges faced within the host country since arrival. Next, we explored the expectations of the host country held by the interviewees and how these expectations changed during their stay. It was anticipated that the primary expectation that any refugee holds of a host country would be safety first and foremost. However, as the literature has explored, refugee decision-making is still a complex process involving cultural affinity, future prospects, incomplete information, and other factors. Finally, we asked about the interviewees perceptions of Europe's refugee policies and situation. This, we viewed as particularly pertinent for refugees that had been given an opportunity through the UNHCR to be relocated out of their current host communities in Lebanon and Jordan. Their relocation to Germany or Sweden does not diminish their status as a refugee, as they have still fled Syria due to the threat of violence or persecution. Undoubtedly though, the majority of European countries are able to provide more services and support to refugees with less strain on their economy and infrastructure than is currently possible in Lebanon and Jordan. Would interviewees have refused relocation in favor of other factors?

Interviews in Jordan were conducted in 4 main localities: Amman, Irbid, Mafraq, and Ramtha. These locations were selected to include a wider range of refugees, with the idea that those fleeing from Dara'a, Syria would likely be in the northernmost towns, closest to their former home. Dara'a is not only one of Syria's southernmost towns, closest to the Jordanian border, but it is also where much of the unrest began in 2011. Amman, Jordan's major metropolitan center was likely to have refugees from a varied mix of Syrian regions

as many families and individuals had relocated to the city from the refugee camps in search of work or support. UNICEF Jordan and the Jordan River Foundation graciously provided a great amount of assistance in providing access and coordinating the bulk of these interviews.

Interviews in Lebanon were conducted within the Bar Elias informal settlement of the Bekaa Valley. This location was selected primarily for its high density of registered Syrian refugees. As of 2016, there were 365,555 registered Syrian refugees in the Bekaa governate, compared to 538,823 Lebanese citizens (UNOCHA, 2016). The Bekaa Valley, lying southeast of Beirut, along the Syrian border has received the highest number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and hosts the largest concentration of informal settlements. Of the localities within Bekaa Valley, Bar Elias is one of several localities classified as "most vulnerable" by OCHA (UNOCHA, 2016).

Interviews were first transcribed and then qualitatively coded utilizing computer-assisted qualitative data analysis – CAQDAS – to better identify themes within the data. These themes were contained within "nodes," which collected any instance of an interview explicitly mentioning a specific factor, e.g. beatings, arrests, food, work permits, and cross-referenced that instance across interviews. This allowed us not only to view the frequency with which a particular concern was raised, but whether there were any interrelationships between factors mentioned in the interviews. 47 nodes were coded in order to gain a more comprehensive view of the data at hand. CAQDAS, while not exactly an analytical tool, provided a means to organize our data in order to facilitate a more objective understanding of the subject. Interviews typically lasted between 20 to 30 minutes, and while responses

were often detailed and heartbreaking, coding responses in this manner allowed for a broader view of the circumstances, concerns, and priorities of the refugees as a group.

4.1. Data and Descriptive Statistics

Of the 92 households surveyed – 46 in Lebanon and 46 in Jordan – summary statistics show a fairly well distributed sample group, demographically (Fig. 1). Respondents were also asked about members of their household, who had fled with them and still lived with the respondent as refugees. This increased our sample regarding demographic information to 568 observations (Fig. 2). The mean refugee household size was roughly the same across Jordan and Lebanon at 6.152 (S.D. 3.419) and 6.196 (S.D. 3.038), respectively. Age distribution within households followed roughly the same curve, with ages 18-59 making up the bulk of household composition, followed by ages 6-17, 0-5, and lastly 60+, meaning that most refugee households surveyed consisted primarily of adults. With regards to reported home province, 89% of Lebanon-based respondents had fled from the Homs Governate, while respondents in Jordan were more spread between primarily the Daraa Governate, Homs Governate, and Damascus Governate. This is likely due to 20 of the interviews being conducted in the Jordanian towns of Irbid, Ramtha, and Mafraq, closer to the Syrian border near Daraa. Over half of Jordan-based respondents arrived in 2013, perhaps as a result of the March 2013 uptick in fighting between the Syrian government and Syrian opposition in southern Syria.

Respondents were also asked whether they intended to stay in the host country for the foreseeable future. In both cases, a majority of respondents answered yes, 65% in Jordan and 59% in Lebanon. For those who expressed a desire to relocate to another

country, most Jordan-based respondents named European countries as their tentative destination. 25% of Lebanon-based respondents reported a desire to relocate to Turkey, and 17% to Jordan. Interestingly, no Jordan-based respondents expressed an interest in relocating to Turkey or Lebanon, when Jordan-based respondents were explicitly asked about their perception of conditions in Lebanon or Turkey, the answer was uniformly negative and pessimistic. Finally, twice the number of Jordan-based respondents (43.5%) reported household members either staying or being left behind in Syria as Lebanon-based respondents (21.7%).

The data for Syrian refugees interviewed in Lebanon is incomplete and sparse in some areas. Demographic data was not obtained for multiple households. Complete age data exists only for households 47, 48, 49, 61, 62, 66, 68, 70, 71, 73, 74 and 81. For this reason, the demographic age composition of the average Syrian refugee household in Syria represents data only from these twelve households. The average number of individuals per age group in each Syrian refugee household in Jordan was constructed via the age data extracted from these households only. However, the minimum and maximum values for each age group represent data taken from all 46 households in Lebanon. For instance, the maximum number of "youths" (Age 6-17) in a given Syrian refugee household in Lebanon is five. However, this value came from household 67, which does not have complete age data for all of its individuals. Thus, the minimum and maximum utilize all of the household interviews in Lebanon, while the averages per age group utilize only the twelve households containing complete age data.

Figure 1

Comparison: Refugee Household Characteristics in Jordan and Lebanon						
	Jordan		Lebanon		Comparison	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	|Difference|	*t*
Household Size	6.152	3.419	6.196	3.038	0.043	-0.065
Demographic composition						
__Age 0-5	0.522	0.298	0.667	0.373	0.145	0.018
__Age 6-17	1.870	0.478	1.083	0.446	0.786	1.438
__Age 18-59	2.783	0.501	2.167	0.504	0.616	-0.773
__Age >=60	0.152	0.167	0.167	0.200	0.014	-1.515
Home Province						
__Aleppo Governorate	0.065	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.065	1.772
__Damascus Governorate	0.217	0.417	0.000	0.000	0.217	3.536
__Daraa Governorate	0.413	0.498	0.022	0.147	0.391	5.112
__Deir ez_Zor Governorate	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-
__Hama Governorate	0.022	0.147	0.000	0.000	0.022	1.000
__Al-Hasakah Governorate	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-
__Homs Governorate	0.239	0.431	0.891	0.315	0.652	-8.285
__Idlib Governorate	0.022	0.147	0.022	0.147	0.000	0.000
__Latakia Governorate	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-
__Quneitra Governorate	0.022	0.147	0.000	0.000	0.022	1.000
__Ar-Raqqah Governorate	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-
__Rif Dimashq Governorate	0.000	0.000	0.065	0.250	0.065	-1.772
__As-Suwayda Governorate	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-
__Tartus Governorate	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-
Year of Arrival in Host Country						
__2010	-	-	0.087	0.285	-	-2.070
__2011	0.022	0.147	0.152	0.363	0.130	-2.257
__2012	0.326	0.474	0.326	0.474	0.000	0.000
__2013	0.543	0.504	0.217	0.417	0.326	3.382
__2014	0.109	0.315	0.217	0.417	0.109	-1.411
Plan to stay in Jordan/Lebanon?						
__Yes	0.652	0.482	0.587	0.498	0.065	0.639
__No	0.348	0.482	0.413	0.498	0.065	-0.639
Desired Destination						
__Europe (general)	0.313	0.479	0.167	0.389	0.146	-0.541
__Canada	0.063	0.250	0.083	0.289	0.021	-1.033
__Germany	0.188	0.403	0.167	0.389	0.021	-1.108
__Sweden	0.125	0.342	0.000	0.000	0.125	0.726
__The Gulf	0.063	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.063	0.507
__Turkey	0.000	0.000	0.250	0.452	0.250	-3.848
__Belgium	0.000	0.000	0.167	0.389	0.167	-2.980
__UK	0.188	0.403	0.083	0.289	0.104	-0.217
__USA	0.125	0.342	0.000	0.000	0.125	0.726
__Switzerland	0.063	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.063	0.507
__Jordan	0.000	0.000	0.167	0.389	0.167	-2.980
__Italy	0.000	0.000	0.083	0.289	0.083	-2.009
Household members stayed behind in Syria?						
__Yes	0.435	0.501	0.217	0.417	0.217	2.261
__No	0.565	0.501	0.783	0.417	0.217	-2.261
How many members stayed behind in Syria?	1.174	1.817	0.326	0.668	0.848	2.970
Number of Obs.	92 households total					

Figure 2

Individual Refugee Charateristics in Jordan and Lebanon						
	Jordan		Lebanon		Comparison	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Difference	t
Men	0.529	0.500	0.509	0.501	0.020	0.451
Age	24.167	17.023	24.991	17.592	0.824	-0.421
Education						
__No Education	0.287	0.453	0.455	0.500	0.168	-3.011
__Primary School (1st-6th Grade)	0.287	0.453	0.263	0.442	0.024	0.452
__Middle School (7th-8th Grade)	0.193	0.395	0.253	0.437	0.060	-1.234
__High School (9th-12th Grade)	0.148	0.355	0.010	0.101	0.137	3.784
__Professional Degree	0.008	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.008	0.902
__College	0.078	0.269	0.020	0.141	0.058	2.025
Worked in Syria	0.478	0.505	0.522	0.505	0.043	-0.413
Former Occupation						
__Manager	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-
__Professional	0.227	0.429	0.083	0.282	0.144	0.331
__Technician	0.091	0.294	0.042	0.204	0.049	0.035
__Clerical Support Worker	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	-
__Services/Sales Worker	0.318	0.477	0.167	0.381	0.152	-0.156
__Agricultural/Forestry/Fishery Worker	0.045	0.213	0.042	0.204	0.004	-0.469
__Craft/Trade Related Worker	0.091	0.294	0.333	0.482	0.242	-3.526
__Plant/Machine Operator or Assembler	0.136	0.351	0.083	0.282	0.053	-0.276
__Elementary Occupation	0.091	0.294	0.250	0.442	0.159	-1.422
Number of Obs.	568					

4.2 Data Analysis

60 Respondents explicitly mentioned that the overall security situation in Syria was a concern (45 in Jordan; 15 in Lebanon). 17 went on to list arrests as a concern. Some described violence directed either towards themselves personally or towards family members. Some fled after their house or even town had been destroyed by bombardment. Other issues mentioned as major concern while still in Syria were beatings, inflation and money, work, shelter, water, electricity school access, and health. 26 respondents stated that they had concerns regarding access to food in Syria (24; 2), while 7 stated that they did not have issues regarding food access while in Syria. 25 respondents mentioned "checkpoints" as a concern either while living in Syria or en route out of Syria. 5

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respondents in Jordan explicitly stated that they had no issue with checkpoints. Experiences recounted about checkpoints ranged from simple delay and queues, to bribes and extortion, to abductions, threat of violence, and coming under fire. 43 respondents reported no problems at the border between Syria and either Jordan or Lebanon (15; 28). While in the host country, by far the most frequently mentioned concern was money, with 51 respondents mentioning money concerns (33; 18). The second most frequent concern regarded work with 38 (29; 9).

Regarding expectations, it comes as no surprise to find that the most frequently mentioned expectations of the current host country were safety and that the duration of stay would be at a maximum only a few months. 32 respondents stated that upon arriving in the host country, they anticipated staying only a short while (8;24). 29 simply stated that their expectation was safety (25;4) and 22 stated that they held an expectation of continuing or resuming a "normal" life (5;17). There were seven nodes encapsulating the expectations stated by respondents: *normalcy, safety, work, education, freedom, humanitarian assistance,* and *short duration of stay*. Within these nodes, 132 instances of stated expectations were made by respondents (some held more than one expectation of their soon-to-be host country.) Subsequently coded were instances of the respondent expressing that their expectations had changed after arriving in the host country of which there were 54. 44 of these instances reflected a negative change in the respondent's expectation of the host country, i.e. they expected the situation to be better before arrival and after arrival found and expected that things are and will be much worse than they anticipated. Finally, when asked about their views of the situation of Syrian refugees in Europe, 66 respondents expressed that they were aware to some level of the situation of

Syrian refugees in Europe (34;32) and 56 further expressed that the European refugee policies were supportive and refugees in Europe were faring well (27;29). 21 expressed that they had little or no knowledge or perceptions of European refugee policies (9;12).

5. Result/Findings

The refugees interviewed were primarily driven by the key push-factor identified in the theory, security. However, interviewees identified other priorities that informed their expectations of their destination/host country beyond safety from violence. Money is identified as a key factor in initial destination. Furthermore, distance to travel translates into money as checkpoints and transportation/smuggling requires bribes and payments. Once within the host country, money becomes integral to a household's mobility. With increased household size comes higher prices for food, water, rent, health, etc. However, in several cases, household size also determined the amount of assistance given by humanitarian organizations and potential income from work. An additional family member therefore creates a challenging dynamic whereby they are both an asset and a burden to the household. Several interviewees reported that the cash aid they received relied on a per person basis within the household. Additionally, the tenuous economic and security circumstances have pushed women to seek marriage, or be married off, at younger ages than they may have outside of a refugee context. One young female respondent stated that because she cannot work, continue her university education, and now has no living family, she feels her only recourse is to find a husband in order to survive. Similarly, a parent interviewed divulged that arranging for their young daughter to marry was primarily

motivated by the opportunity for increased security and household income. It was emphasized that girls were being married young because of "the atrocities of war."

The challenges faced within Syria by the interviewees ranged from general insecurity and economic degradation to explicit brutal acts and threats of violence against the interviewee or their family. Several recounted incidents all too common in war; some described war crimes enacted by various belligerent forces that have left a severe emotional and psychological impact on many of the interviewees and particularly their children. Those that fled during earlier periods of the civil war still reported challenges with beatings, arrests, kidnappings, and violence, however it was explained by multiple respondents that these incidents grew more frequent as the civil war continued and foreign fighters began manning checkpoints. One refugee stated that when Syrian fighters controlled a checkpoint, they may take money or valuables, but that as the war progressed, non-Syrians began kidnapping young men and women and taking everything they could from those fleeing the conflict.

Most of the refugees interviewed articulated desires and hopes for a future. Frequently, respondents expressed a desire to continue education and to work either for themselves or for household members. Often this led to exasperation, anger, and forlorn depression when these opportunities were not available. Freedom and education were the two most frequently mentioned "pull factors." Regarding European refugee policies, respondents in both countries overwhelmingly viewed Europe as better to live in due to the "freedoms" that refugees get. It was not often elucidated upon as to what "freedom" entailed specifically, though. Additionally, it was not expounded upon as to whether the lack of freedom in their current host environment was solely due to legal restrictions, e.g.

movement or work restrictions, or also due to the generally constrained circumstances and weak financial independence. Younger respondents whose education had been interrupted desired to continue their education and parents, regardless of their own education level, desired for their children to be able to attend school. One respondent emphasized that education is very important to Syrians. Unfortunately, many respondents or members of their households have had their studies interrupted for nearly up to five years as of 2017.

As the duration of respondents' stays endured, expectations shifted. Hope for a brief stay led many to expect a level of normalcy. Six respondents even took open holiday from their employment in Syria to wait out what they anticipated to be a quickly resolved situation. As the illusion of a short vacation gave way to the realization of prolonged violence and destruction, expectations shifted from eyeing a return to Syria, to looking outward, at Europe, the U.S., and Canada. While ten respondents stated a preference for the culture, language, and customs in Lebanon and Jordan, sixteen cited prejudice, "racism" against Syrians, and a sense of being unwanted in their current host country. Most refugees in Jordan expressed a negative view of the conditions in Lebanon and Turkey. Regardless of the challenges faced in their current position, the prevailing sentiment was that the situation of refugees in Lebanon was worse than in Jordan due to the fragile security situation in Lebanon. However, the information that interviewees had of the conditions in other countries was imperfect and often was based on hearsay and rumor. Regarding Turkey, respondents in Jordan overwhelmingly saw Jordan as a better host environment, with the lone exception of a single respondent who wondered if there might be a chance to work in Turkey. Higher cost of living, insecurity and kidnappings, and a non-Arab environment were all mentioned as reasons not to go from Jordan to Turkey.

It is important to evaluate our findings with a gendered lens in mind. Fortunately, a near equal proportion of men and women were interviewed, allowing for a more diverse perspective on refugee household decision-making. Several interviews were conducted with individuals from a more conservative background and family. Four female respondents would not comment on matters of opinion or decision-making in order to not critique or criticize the opinion or decisions of their husband. They were not pressed further. However, in an evaluation of rational actors facing constrained-circumstances in decision-making, it is an important take-away to note that being a female refugee in a more conservative patriarchal culture may constrain circumstances even further. These four respondents would not even entertain speculation on moving to another country as that was the purview of their husband, father, or father-in-law. Conversely, male respondents overwhelmingly identified the lack of legal work as a primary challenge within the host country, and often informed their opinion of other countries in the context of whether work would be available. There was an expectation, sometimes tacit and other times overtly expressed, that male household members must work. One mother lamented that her son had become increasingly aggressive and distant as he had to forgo school and work long nights. While there are opportunities for male refugees to work, legally permitted opportunities are limited and opportunities for female refugees to work are even fewer.

Opportunity is the consistent desire and frustration of the refugees interviewed. Younger respondents sought opportunity for themselves; older respondents sought opportunity for their children or to help their family. Where many initially saw an opportunity to return to Syria, now they see little opportunity left and have shifted their search for opportunity to outside those states bordering their homeland. When

respondents held an opinion of the refugee policies in Europe, all but ten felt that the policies were supportive and represented an opportunity for a more positive future. The desire to return to Syria remains strong among some refugees, however, a questioned remains amongst many Syrians who have fled as to what remains or will remain to return to.

6. Conclusion

The refugees interviewed in this study have faced immense challenges and continue to live in a state of devastation. They have lost parents, children, grandchildren, siblings and more. Some have escaped the war relatively unscathed, but each has been thrust into a position of insecurity and powerlessness. We have sought to contextualize within the Syrian refugee movement the constrained-circumstances and push/pull factors of refugee theory. Three major influences can be identified throughout the interviews conducted: initial expectation of a short duration of stay in the host country; a desire for either work or education; and an unsure conceptualization of the future given the protraction of war in Syria. The expectation of a short stay can be viewed in the light of a "pull factor" as a refugee may seek a host country geographically closer, should hostilities resolve and they be able to return to their homes quickly. The desire for work and education in some instances resulted in a conflicting dynamic. Europe may represent a better opportunity for work and education, however the path to Europe is expensive and often an individual must decide between working and going to school, assuming there is work or school to be had. Finally, as the war continues in Syria and destruction spreads, the question begins to arise as to whether there will be a Syria to return to. Entire neighborhoods and cities have been

leveled. Now, some Syrian refugees contemplate the prospect that they will face the same fate as the thousands of Palestinian refugees that have resided in neighboring states for decades.

Although we were prevented from conducting interviews in Turkey, anecdotes and experiences shared by those individuals interviewed in Lebanon and Jordan suggested that those who fled North faced similar challenges and were influenced by similar factors. Our study focused solely on Syrian refugees, yet there are many other nationalities that comprise the current refugee crisis. Conditions and influences may be different for the millions flowing from South Asia or Africa, yet overall the theory of push- and pull-factors remains sound. Once these factors can be discerned, policy can be better tuned to the purpose of mitigating, sustaining, integrating, or assimilating refugee populations. Information is key to the decision-making process and while certain information remains clouded by the fog-of-war, being informed of one's rights and opportunities may lead to a more independent decision-maker. Education and employment of refugees are two policy areas that may reduce the dependence refugees have on the host communities and aid communities they reside in.

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