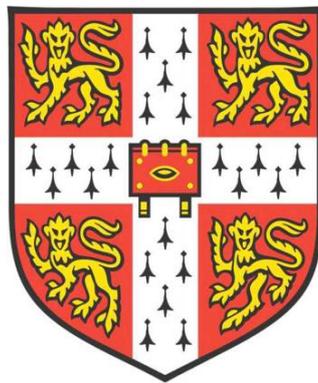


Between the State and the ‘State of Exception’: Syrian Refugee Governance in Lebanon



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June 2020

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

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Syrian Refugee Governance in Lebanon
Dima Krayem

Abstract

The plight of refugees is often framed as an ‘emergency’ or as a moment of ‘crisis,’ rooted in temporariness and requiring unique systems of governance. Such a framing obscures practices and measures governing refugees, which are part and parcel of ‘normal’ and ‘ordinary’ politics. Challenging the understanding of refugee presence as the study of a particular (exceptional) moment, this dissertation grounds the study of Syrian refugee governance in Lebanon within a political economy approach, which positions ‘refugeeness’ within a history of ruptures and continuities. The main argument in this dissertation is that the governance systems of Syrian refugees are not the exclusive creation of the current moment but rather stem from a history of turbulent political relations between neighboring countries, interdependent economies, and complementary as well as conflicting policies that have shaped the history of Syrian migrant workers in Lebanon for decades. A political economy perspective sheds light on systems of governance that manage refugee presence in host countries and reflect existing structures of power relations and political struggles among a broad spectrum of actors.

The dissertation is based on fieldwork in four urban areas in Beirut and Mount Lebanon among Syrian refugees and Lebanese host communities. It relies on qualitative research tools including focus-group, community, and semi-structured elite interviews. The dissertation traces the subjugation of Syrian refugees to the machinery of the humanitarian regime in Lebanon, beginning with an examination of the formal registration process within a framework of a complicated history of aid politics, the intricate sectarian power-sharing structures of the Lebanese state, and the absence of a domestic legal framework that could organize refugee presence. The governance mechanisms and policies produced at the onset of the Syrian influx are shown to effectively reproduce deeply entrenched political struggles and power dynamics that reflect Lebanon’s political landscape. The dissertation also examines the construction of Syrian refugees as humanitarian and social subjects through processes of ordering and control that essentialize refugee identity.

In line with the rising global debates on the link between refugees and the question of security, this dissertation examines the securitization process of Syrian refugees. The construction of Syrian refugees as security threats lies in the intersection between a discourse of crisis and existential threat and a systematic set of procedures deeply embedded in historical and institutionalized understandings of security and of routine security practices carried out by a complex security apparatus that includes state and non-state actors. The dissertation, further, argues that the process of constructing the refugee as a humanitarian and social subject and establishing practices of securitizing refugee presence occurs within a framework of extended ‘precarity.’ My research examines precarity as an evolving condition for Syrian refugees that stems from the failures of the

humanitarian government that leaves Syrian refugees to fend for themselves for survival in an unregulated market of services and labor opportunities. It demonstrates the double disenfranchisement of Syrian refugees both as humanitarian objects and as labor market actors.

While the dissertation focuses on the case of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, it attempts to extend the analysis on how systems of governance deal with marginal populations beyond moments of ‘crisis’ and the need to understand how these moments are rooted in a nexus of several local, national, transnational actors. Syrian refugees may or may not return to Syria, but this dissertation aims to examine what remains of the mechanisms of their governance and how they might be used to manage other marginal populations in the future.

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Prologue

In 2000, Saad arrived in Mount Lebanon at the age of 20. Saad grew up in al-Rastan, a city in the Homs governorate of Syria, and graduated from a public high school at the age of 18. For the following 2 years, he served in the Syrian army in Syria. Upon completing his conscription, he began to search for work. As is the norm for men of his city, a move to neighboring Lebanon was inevitable. His neighbors of al-Rastan had secured him a job at a packaging factory in Mount Lebanon. He was the fourth worker from al-Rastan to work at Novopack.

At Novopack, Saad's job entailed heavy labor of carrying hefty raw material, producing boxes, and deep cleaning of the machinery and facility. His working hours were roughly 10 hours a day, 6 days a week. For approximately 11 years, Saad would return to Syria every 6 months to visit his family and to renew his residency in Lebanon at the Lebanese-Syrian border. Saad did not require a work visa, nor was the renewal of his legal residency a cumbersome process: a simple re-stamping of his passport upon entry into Lebanon for a negligible fee. Saad shared a basic room with four of his colleagues at the factory building. Starting with a monthly salary of \$400, by 2011, Saad was making \$650 as a 'reward' for his improved skillset and commitment. According to Saad, most of his income was sent back to Syria in the form of remittances. He was saving to buy two apartments in al-Rastan, one for his family, and one for his future family. In 2008, Saad's visit back to al-Rastan was rather special. He was no longer a single man. Two weeks later, he returned to Lebanon as a newlywed, while his wife moved in with his parents in al-Rastan. In 2009, Saad visited for another two weeks to meet his first son.

This seemingly smooth story of circular migration experienced by Saad and his friends came to an end in 2011. Al-Rastan was one of the first Syrian cities to participate in the uprisings against the Syrian regime. The city witnessed violent clashes between Syrian opposition forces the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the Syrian regime for the following 2 years. Saad was hesitant to return to al-Rastan, and he lived in constant fear of losing his family while the fighting prevented him from moving his family to Lebanon. Malek, also a worker in Novopack, decided to visit al-Rastan despite the clashes but never returned. Seven years later, at the time of writing, Malek remains missing. His family has no information regarding his fate, but it is safe to assume that, along with the thousands that have gone missing, he was either abducted or killed. By mid-2012, however, the FSA had regained control of al-Rastan, and Saad was able to bring his family to Lebanon.

His wife, son (now 3-years old), and parents crossed the Lebanese border along with thousands of fleeing Syrians, with just a stamp on their passport. The families of fellow factory workers also followed suit. As soon as they arrived, Saad asked his boss for a larger room in order to accommodate his family. The need for larger accommodation coincided with Novopack's expansion, so his boss was able to secure larger rooms for each family on the top floor of the newly expanded factory. In the span of 2 months, the factory that had once accommodated four workers, now housed three workers and 11 family members.

As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) rolled out its massive response to the Syrian refugee plight in Lebanon, all three families registered with UNHCR as

Syrian refugees. While Saad had been a migrant worker in Lebanon for decades, he and his fellow friends at the factory, like thousands of other Syrians in Lebanon, suddenly became refugees. They hoped that registering with UNHCR would secure access to much needed assistance for their families. While UNHCR did not provide them with any in-kind or cash assistance (on the basis of ambiguous criteria that Saad and his friends could never fathom), UNHCR did cover the delivery of the four children who were born and raised in the factory between 2012 and 2017. Saad and his friends were also able to register their children in Lebanese public schools for free.

The year 2015 represented another juncture for Saad, his friends, and their families. The Government of Lebanon (GoL) introduced an increasingly tight policy aimed at restricting Syrian entry into Lebanon while making granting a legal status for those Syrians already residing in Lebanon a very difficult process. Essentially, the new policy divided Syrians into two categories: those who were allowed to renew their legal status in Lebanon through UNHCR registration, which was contingent on signing a ‘pledge not to work’ confirming their destitution and reliance on the humanitarian apparatus for survival; and those who had to rely on the *kafala* (sponsorship) system to achieve legal status.

Naturally, as Saad was afraid of the repercussions of the authorities discovering that he was in fact a worker at a factory, he opted to renew his residency through the *kafala* system and not through UNHCR registration. As they required the sponsorship of a Lebanese national, Saad and his fellow workers managed to persuade the factory owner to sponsor them and their families. Each year, the factory owner had to pay the hefty fee of \$300 for each family member (excluding children) and sign a ‘pledge of responsibility’ for the workers in his factory.

Standing outside his family’s room in the factory, Saad stared at the bunch of papers in his possession. Each piece of paper had a specific function in dictating his family’s life. Sponsorship by the factory secured his residence and legal status but not his work status. That would require a work permit from the Ministry of Labor (MoL), costing additional fees which neither the factory owner nor the workers could be bothered to attain. At that stage, Saad also had the UNHCR registration papers which meant nothing beyond offering sporadic health and education benefits that were gradually stripped away. While UNHCR registration had previously guaranteed his son access to a public school, by 2015, the public school a few blocks away from the factory refused to register Saad’s eldest son as the principal of the school dispassionately informed Saad of the lack of space for his son. Luckily, the owner of the factory agreed to cover Saad’s son’s tuition in a rather affordable private school for that year. However, as of 2016, Saad would need to pay the tuition himself.

In December 2015, the General Security Office (GSO), which is tasked with monitoring and issuing residency permits in Lebanon, carried out an arbitrary check of workers at Novopack while Saad was out running an errand for his boss. For unknown reasons, the GSO decided that Saad had forged his residency papers. As the owner was not on the premises and the other workers had no way to vouch for Saad’s legal status, the GSO refused to renew Saad’s residency (and consequently his family’s) in 2016 for ‘forging residency.’ Suddenly, Saad’s legal status was stripped away from him. In another haphazard check, this time by the municipality, Saad was randomly stopped on the street. He did not have any legal papers on him as he was unable to renew his residency in 2016. Luckily, the municipality was easy on him and only asked him to report to

them and attain a registration card (within the municipality) regardless of his legal status at the GSO. Saad was perplexed and confused with the never-ending legal requirements that were stipulated by different entities and most of which he failed to secure.

By 2018, Saad was distraught. He was tired of living precariously, of negotiating his legal status with the GSO and enduring sporadic municipality raids, and of pleading with his boss to pay for the arbitrary fees of achieving legality. He struggled to make ends meet with a slightly increased salary of \$800 to support six people, and he was tired of negotiating with UNHCR healthcare for his aging parents. On the other hand, his Lebanese boss was increasingly frustrated with declining business activity as a direct result of the Syrian war, the closure of borders, and the halt of exports, and with the increasing operational fees of hosting the growing population in his factory. His only source of satisfaction was the fact that there were no ‘return vacations’ for his workers. For 7 years they worked tirelessly at the factory, even on their one day off. At the community level, the neighbors were increasingly annoyed with the noise coming from children, the smell of the hookahs at night, and the ‘factory that never sleeps.’

Saad finally made up his mind. Al-Rastan was now back in the hands of the regime and the clashes had ended. His family must now return to Syria where they will be safe and can secure a more affordable and stable existence. And so they did, along with the families of his colleagues, on a seemingly smooth journey facilitated by the Lebanese border security officers, who were ecstatic to send-off Syrians. The three men remained at the factory and could now grapple with issues of legality and survival on their own.

Frustration with news of the families’ departure, however, was visible on Abu Mansur’s face. Abu Mansur owned a small supermarket adjacent to the factory. For 7 years, the families were his most regular customers, and Abu Mansur had now lost a reliable source of business.

Saad’s story is a vivid articulation of heightened precarity, changing legal status, encounters with various faces of the governing apparatus, negotiations of survival, and daily navigations of bottlenecks faced by the close to one million Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

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List of Abbreviations

CSO	Civil society organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
ESIA	Economic and Social Impact Assessment
FPM	Free Patriotic Movement
FSA	Free Syrian Army
GoL	Government of Lebanon
GSO	General Security Office
HRC	High Relief Commission
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMC	International Medical Corps
ISF	Internal Security Forces
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LNM	Lebanese National Movement
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoIM	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities
MoL	Ministry of Labor
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PRS	Palestinian Refugees from Syria
PSP	Progressive Socialist Party
RRP	Regional Response Plan
SDC	Social Development Center
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction

Refugee situations are often depicted as emergency and crisis-ridden moments requiring unique systems of management and governance in the realm of exceptional politics (Bakewell, 2008; Ramsay, 2017). Often the norm rather than the exception, refugees, predominantly residing in the Global South, are faced with exclusionary government policies and mechanisms of control and containment ranging from encampment, restrictions on mobility and labor market participation, to ambiguous legal status (Baban et al., 2017; Canefe, 2018; Grabska, 2006; Lenner & L. Turner, 2019). Such mechanisms and policies are often tied to fears of permanent settlement and security concerns over refugee presence (Campbell, 2006; Grabska, 2006; Jacobsen, 1996). Among the most powerful actors in refugee management is the international humanitarian regime (led by UNHCR), a group of international and national organizations tasked with responding to refugee ‘crises’ and backed by donors from countries of the Global North (Agier, 2011). Policy-oriented and academic literature on refugees tends to situate their subjects outside the sphere of normal national and international politics and instead focus on narrow issues of UNHCR’s interventions, possible durable solutions, and humanitarian relief (Sanyal, 2014). In fact, the field of refugee studies has come under careful scrutiny from critical scholarship for its narrow-focused ‘problem-solving’ approaches which prioritize a legal and formalistic research agenda often centered around the refugee ‘label’ (Black, 2001; Malkki, 1995; Zetter, 1988).

The conflict in Syria which erupted in 2011 has resulted in the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II (Guha-Sapir et al., 2015). The Syrian conflict has also resulted in record high global figures of forced displacement. By December 2017, 68.5 million persons worldwide were forcibly displaced, 18% of which were Syrians (UNHCR, 2017a). In fact, more than 50% of the pre-crisis Syrian population (close to 13 million people) has been forcibly displaced in the last 6 years. Out of this number, 6.3 million are refugees while 6.2 million are internally displaced (UNHCR, 2017a). In the Middle East, and by the end of 2017, Turkey hosted the largest number of Syrian refugees (3.4 million Syrian refugees), while Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt received a smaller number of Syrian refugees reaching around 650,000, 247,000, and 126,000 persons, respectively (UNHCR, 2017a, 2017d). Of the close to 5.5 million Syrian refugees in the region by the end of

2017, only 500,000 persons (8% of total refugees) resided in camps (UNHCR, 2017d). Lebanon on the other hand hosted the highest proportion of Syrian refugees, relative to its population, which now constitute close to 16% of its pre-crisis population (approximately one million refugees).

By taking Lebanon as a case study of one of the most acute refugee presence in recent history, this dissertation demonstrates how rather than ‘moments of exception’ requiring unique systems of management, refugee situations often reflect and reproduce existing and long-entrenched structures of power and competing interests. The dissertation aims to examine the architecture of governance comprising a constellation of transnational, national, and local actors orchestrating the Syrian refugee presence in Lebanon for the period 2011–2017. By adopting a political economy approach, this dissertation situates Syrian refugee governance in Lebanon within a history of ruptures and continuities between the two neighboring countries. Such an approach aims to challenge the understanding of refugee presence as particular and exceptional moments calling for unique and temporary systems of management (Ramsay, 2017; Sanyal, 2014; Soguk, 1999).

In doing so, I adopt precarity as an analytical framework for understanding the Syrian refugee condition in Lebanon (Butler, 2004, 2009; Lorey, 2015). Drawing on Butler (2004, 2009), the dissertation understands precarity as a politically produced and charged condition whereby the distinctions between the lives worth and not worth living are magnified through legal and political institutions and modes of governance that (re)produce precarity as a mode of ordering of domination (Lorey, 2011, 2015).

1.1 Research Questions and Contribution

This dissertation builds on critical global scholarship which examines the refugee figure as a politically-evolving and socially-produced construct which is continuously contested and reconstructed (Agamben, 1995; Agier, 2011; Malkki, 1995; Owens, 2009). It draws on this vital scholarship to trace the subjugation of Syrian refugees to the machinery of the humanitarian regime in Lebanon. The dissertation is, therefore, guided by the two interconnected overarching research questions: 1) How does the governance structure of a refugee ‘crisis’ reproduce and reify existing

power relations and political contestation among different actors? and 2) What modes and mechanisms of ordering and control does this architecture of governance employ in managing Syrian refugees in Lebanon?

In addressing these questions, the dissertation aims to provide a framework that analyzes the different actors and their dynamic relations involved in managing the Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon from 2011 until 2017. The main actors examined here include the Lebanese state and its institutions (such as General Security, local authorities, and various ministries and local branches), the response apparatus of the UN-led international humanitarian regime, and the market as an institution and driving force influencing the relationship between Lebanese communities and Syrian refugees. It aims to illustrate how the actors and institutions governing the refugee presence are embedded in an architecture of control involving complex power relations, historical structures, and competing interests which have underscored Syrian-Lebanese relations for decades.

The dissertation also aims to explore two further sub-questions:

- How are humanitarian structures implicit in reproducing and elaborating a condition of precarity in the communities in which they operate?

- How has the Syrian refugee figure been constructed as an object of securitization?

To answer these questions, the dissertation addresses three central themes which manifest and produce a process of precarity: that of refugee governance systems, namely refugee registration; the question of refugee securitization; and the conditions of labor market precarity. It examines how the three intersect in a process of constructing the refugee as a humanitarian and social subject vulnerable to modes of ordering and control implemented by an overarching architecture of governance, which in turn contributes to cementing the insecure and precarious lives of refugees.

Taking into account the vast body of interdisciplinary critical scholarship that has carefully scrutinized the workings of the humanitarian regime in the past 50 decades (Ajana, 2013; Franke,

2009; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Huysmans, 2006; Malkki, 1995; Oh, 2017; Zetter, 1991), the dissertation aims to make two major contributions. First, it challenges the limited and politically naive framework of exceptionalism often employed to understand refugee situations (Bakewell, 2008; Stel, 2017). It is now quite difficult to come across interdisciplinary academic scholarship on refugees which does not either engage with, build on, or critique Agamben's (1995, 2005) theories of sovereignty, conceptions of 'bare life,' and the idea of the 'state of exception' (Hanafi & Long, 2010; Martin, 2015; Ramadan & Fregonese, 2017; Salih, 2013). While Agamben's influential work will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, it is important to note that Agamben's 'state of exception' refers to the sovereign power's ability to exclude the refugee from the political through legal suspension, resulting in the production of 'bare life' in the 'state of exception.' The state of exception is "the zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion," as it is the sovereign who decides on the law and when to suspend it (Agamben, 1998, p. 181). Critiques of Agamben's work focus on his sovereign-centric approach as well as the depiction of refugees as agency-less against the sovereign ban and the conception of 'bare life' contributing to (re)producing the refugee figure as helpless (Fassin, 2007; Martin, 2015; Ramadan, 2013).

The dissertation sees exceptionalism as a problematic tool that is more a method of justification than a tool of analysis. Instead, it offers a framework which favors the historical continuities in contexts of refugee presence. In this light, this is one of the few studies that seeks to establish and address continuities and ruptures of the Syrian-Lebanese relationship in terms of political, economic, and social relations. It also attends to the dynamics and practices of refugee governance that occur outside the realm of law and formal institutions.

Second, characteristics of refugee situations such as informality, precarity, marginality and exclusion are often used as descriptive indicators. This dissertation, instead, sees these as processes which are constantly being produced and reproduced by the same institutions that aim to remedy these conditions. The dominant literature on the governance of Syrian presence tends to assert that political deadlock, a dysfunctional sectarian system, and political fragmentation and disagreement about Syrian refugee management have hindered a comprehensive plan for refugee governance. Other explanations focus on Lebanon's limited capacities and infrastructure to deal with the Syrian

refugee influx (Boustani et al., 2016; Dionigi, 2016; Fakhoury, 2017; Ghaddar, 2017). Frequent academic debates around the Syrian refugee governance have highlighted the lack of a comprehensive policy, domestic refugee frameworks, and refugee policies, as the reason behind hybrid and often illegal forms of governance, at the local level, that have proved to be determinantal to the lives of refugees (Boustani et al., 2016; Fakhoury, 2017; Ghaddar, 2017; Nassar & Stel, 2019).

The research for this dissertation, however, offers a dynamic examination of how the overall system of governance, through its multiple institutions, drives precarious outcomes for refugees. Using precarity as an analytical concept allows for situating the outcomes of refugee lives within the broader historical context and structures of Lebanon's political economy. In a sense, it is through the heterogenous and numerous stories and experiences of Syrian refugees that we are able to understand the institutionalization of precarity (Paret & Gleeson, 2016). Precarious outcomes are multidimensional, often combining labor market insecurities, the failures of humanitarianism, the securitization of subjects, and a rigid system of categorization and ordering.

Combing these two conceptual framings, the dissertation's main contribution is to show, through the examination of different structures of governance, how the system reinforces precarious outcomes for refugees and how these systems of governance are not 'exceptional' but rather are part and parcel of 'normal politics,' involving existing actors, interests, structures, and power relations.

1.3 The Syrian Conflict

Since 2010, the Arab World has witnessed a wave of uprisings primarily aimed at toppling archaic authoritarian regimes in demand for freedom and in the hope of a transition towards more representative and democratic regimes. The region was ripe for mass uprisings due to mounting socio-economic and political factors, distinct in their nature within each country, but forming a common denominator for the revolting countries (Achcar, 2013). Of the six countries that have experienced uprisings, namely Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain, and Syria, by far the longest, most brutal, and most violent conflict has been the case of Syria (Krayem, 2015). Inspired

by the relative success of the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings and the global attention that the Libyan case attracted, the Syrian people arranged modest and peaceful gatherings in the capital of Damascus in solidarity with the Libyan uprisings, in February 2011. Bigger but consistently peaceful protests erupted in the city of Dar‘a in March 2011 and soon spread to other major cities in Syria (Achcar, 2013; Ismail, 2011). However, the Syrian people were met with brutal oppression and ruthlessness by a regime that wanted, at all costs, to avoid the fate of Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, and Ben Ali of Tunisia, turning to violent repression¹ as its weapon of first and last resort (Achcar, 2013). Regime repression generated a cycle of violence, transforming the uprisings from a peaceful call for change to an armed struggle within 6 months of the buoyant uprisings (Krayem, 2015). As of early March 2011, estimates of the mounting death toll in Syria had reached 470,000 (Humud et al., 2016; SCPR, 2016). By the end of 2015, it was estimated that 11% of the population in Syria (more than two million individuals) were either killed or injured as a result of the conflict. In addition to the human cost, the economic conditions of most Syrians deteriorated rapidly. Unemployment rates surged to 53% in December 2015, a 38% increase from pre-crisis levels in 2011. Most staggeringly, the overall poverty rate within Syria rose to 85%, with 69% of the population living under the extreme poverty line (SCPR, 2016). This resulted in several large waves of forced displacement of Syrians mostly to Turkey, Lebanon, and a few other countries in the region, with Lebanon hosting the highest proportion relative to its population.

Absorbing the influx of Syrian refugees has proven to be an enormous challenge for the hosting countries, with significant economic and social implications on Syrian refugees and host communities alike. While the aggregated numbers cited above risk dehumanizing the experience of the individuals who have suffered displacement, death, and abject poverty, as well as the counter subjective experience of vulnerable hosts, these figures are necessary to depict the magnitude of a conflict with no imminent solution on the horizon.

¹For an analysis of how the Syrian regime’s brutality is embedded in its governing philosophy, see Achcar’s (2013) *The People Want* and Yassin al-Haj Saleh’s (2014) “On the Social and Cultural Roots of Syrian Fascism” in *The Arab Spring: Revolutions for Deliverance from Authoritarianism: Case Studies*.

1.4 Overview of Lebanon's Response to the Syrian Influx

Starting in 2011, thousands of Syrians fled to neighboring Lebanon and settled in the northern area of Wadi Khaled, relying on their decades-long historical family ties and trade relations for refuge (Dionigi, 2016). By the beginning of 2015, the number of Syrian refugees fleeing to Lebanon had reached record levels, exceeding one million, which is equivalent to almost a quarter of Lebanon's pre-influx population (see Figure 1). By 2017, 62% of the close to one million registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon were residing in the Bekaa and North Lebanon (Figure 2). As of 2018, 51% of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in the region (Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt) were below the age of 18, while 81% of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon were women and children (Yassin, 2019).

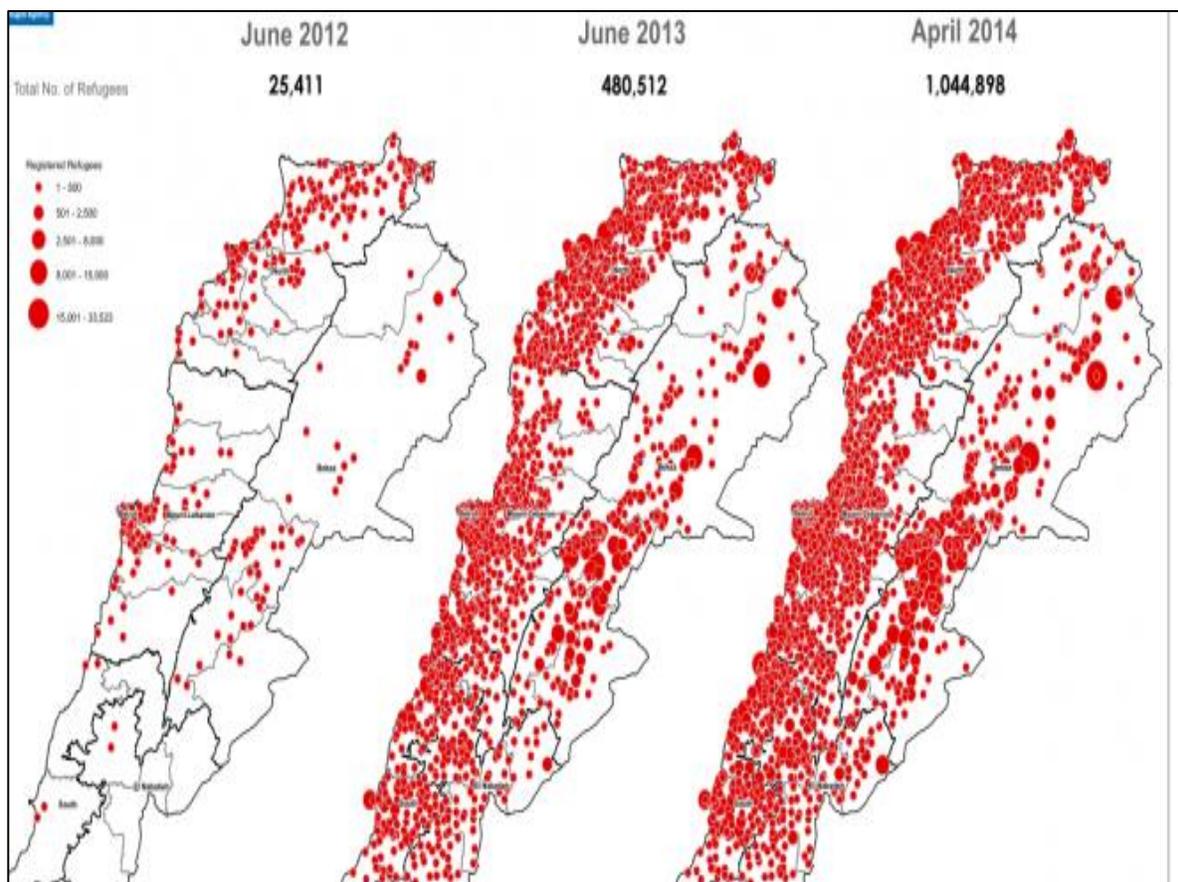


Figure 1. Distribution of Syrian Refugees Across Lebanon 2012–2014 (UNHCR, 2017b)

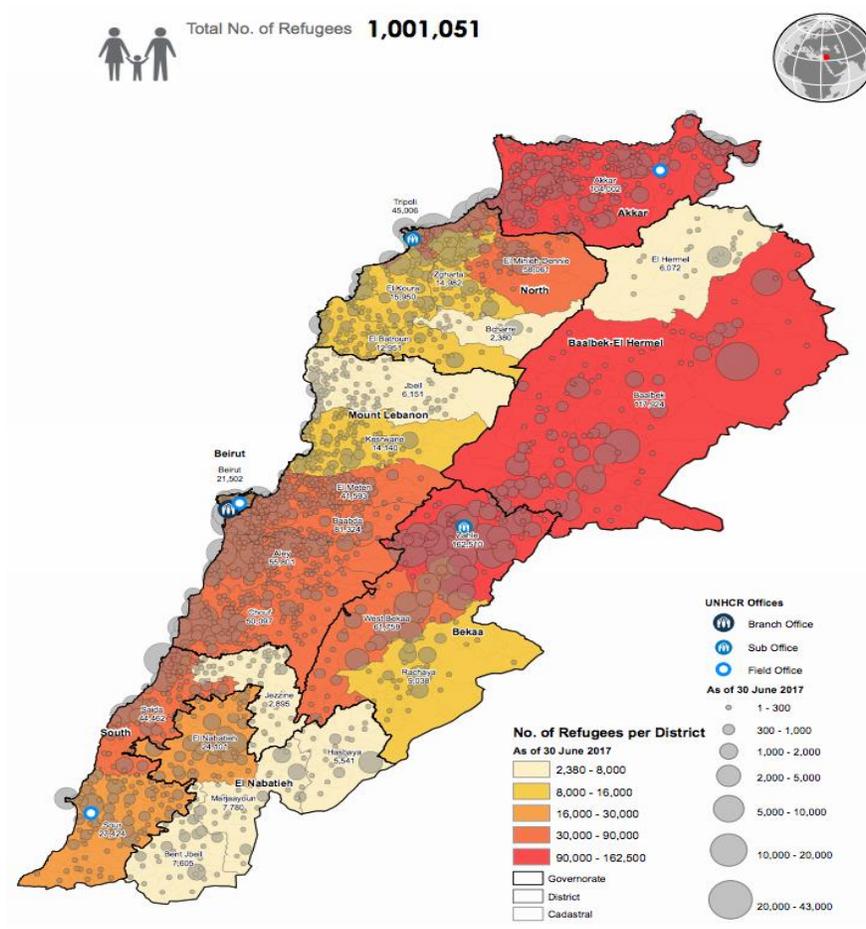


Figure 2. Distribution of Syrian Refugees across Regions (UNHCR, 2016d)

In the absence of a legal framework for refugee protection, and since Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention nor its 1967 protocol, Lebanon maintained its open-door policy² and adopted a non-encampment policy, which allowed Syrians to flee to Lebanon freely and settle informally across the country, relying on their historical social networks (Boustani et al., 2016). The encampment of Syrian refugees was purposively avoided because of the government's conviction that encampment will certainly result in a replication of the Palestinian refugee situation in Lebanon (L. Turner, 2015) discussed in chapter three. In the early months of the Syrian conflict, the Lebanese government perceived the events in neighboring Syria as short-

² Up until 2014, the Treaty of Brotherhood and Cooperation signed between Syria and Lebanon in 1991 governed the entry of Syrian refugees into Lebanon. The agreement stipulated free movement of goods and people and granted freedom of work, residency, and economic activity for nationals of both countries (Dionigi, 2016; Janmyr, 2016).

term and largely contained (Dionigi, 2016). At the onset of the refugee influx in 2011, Lebanon was applauded by the international community for its generosity in hosting Syrian refugees and maintaining an open-door non-encampment policy (L. Turner, 2015). However, in the absence of a national response strategy, International organizations and United Nations agencies took the lead in responding to the Syrian refugee influx (Boustani et al., 2016). While UNHCR registered civilians fleeing Syria into Lebanon as *prima facie* refugees, the Lebanese government referred to them as ‘displaced Syrians.’ This divergence in terminology reinforces the official government’s stance of resenting a permanent settlement on its territory and relieving itself of any responsibility attached to Syrian ‘refugeehood’ under international law (Al-Saadi, 2015; Janmyr, 2016).

As the influx continued, the Lebanese government’s rhetoric expressed mounting concerns regarding the growing number of Syrian refugees, which was deemed a substantial threat to its security as well as political, economic, and social stability (Janmyr, 2016). With the formation of a new government in February 2014, the Government of Lebanon (GoL) became increasingly involved in the management of the Syrian refugee presence. In October of that year, Lebanon’s Council of Ministers adopted the first comprehensive policy on Syrian displacement. The policy’s explicit goal was to decrease the number of Syrians in Lebanon by implementing new restrictive measures on the entry of Syrians to the country and new rules for Syrians residing in Lebanon. In May 2015, the GoL instructed UNHCR to halt its registration of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, under the premise that a new registration scheme (that has not materialized to date) was being prepared (Janmyr, 2016).

Such policies have created a de facto situation in which large numbers of Syrian refugees had to become self-sufficient to survive amidst informality, exploitation, and uncertainty, and increasing securitization. Increasing restrictive border policies have led to a steady decline in the number of households with legal residency in the past 3 years, reaching a record low of 19% of registered refugee households satisfying legal requirements (UNHCR et al., 2016). Such restrictions and arbitrary applications to residency policies have resulted in yet greater exposure of Syrians to arbitrary arrests and detentions, with devastating consequences on childbirth registration, access to services, and the basic right of freedom of movement (see Figure 3).

Since 2014, the GoL and UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Lebanon jointly led the development of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) designated with an official coordination role (Boustani et al., 2016). The GoL and UN agencies have more recently developed a four-year LCRP plan (2017-2020) that reflects a shift from emergency funding to a long-term development approach. The LCRP contains programs from various sectors aimed at providing immediate assistance to vulnerable populations and strengthening the capacity of national service delivery systems. Since 2013, Lebanon has received more than one billion dollars annually from various donors, most notably the United States and the European Union, in aid for its hefty humanitarian operation (UN OCHA, 2017). One of LCRP’s priorities is to further mobilize financial resources.

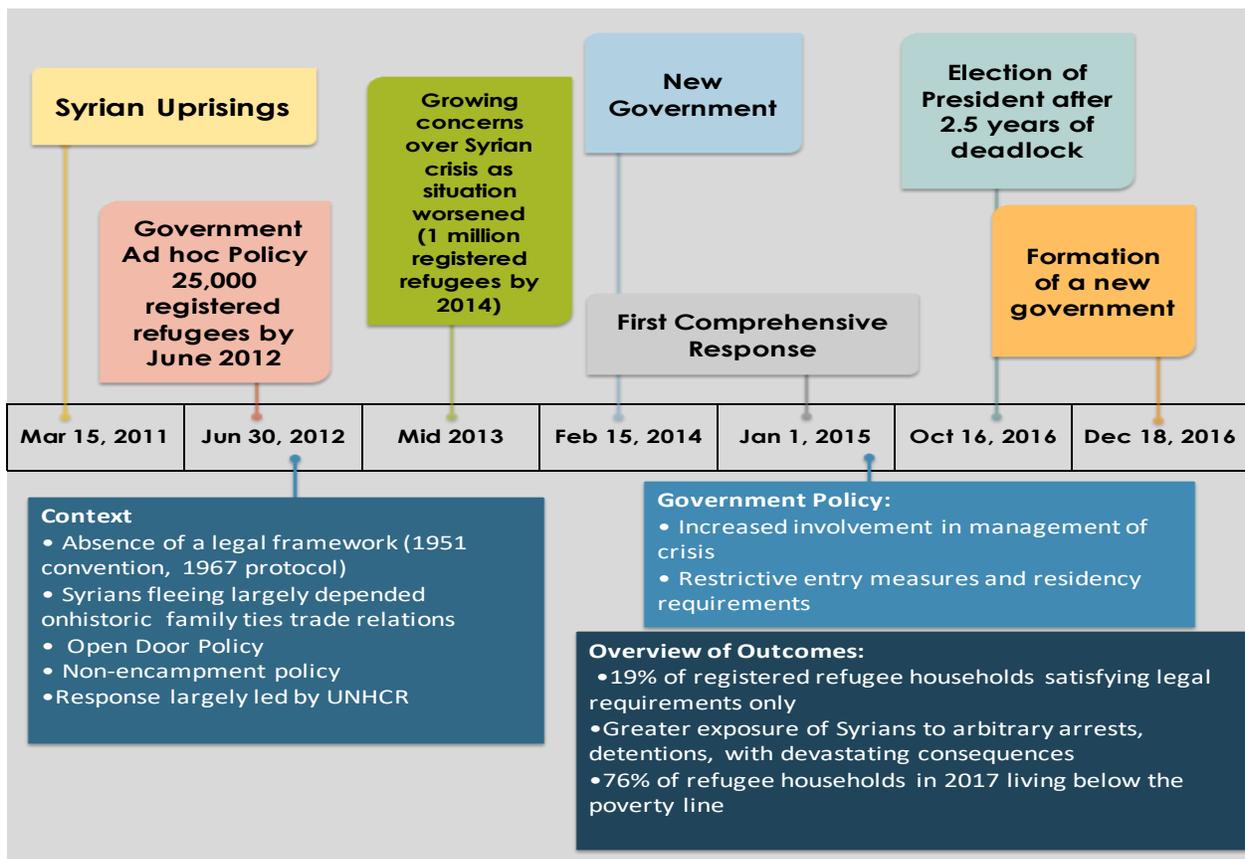


Figure 3. Overview of Government Policy

Much of the literature on the Syrian influx to Lebanon has focused on the immediate impact of the crisis on the host economy in addition to the humanitarian needs of Syrian refugees. In 2013,

the World Bank Rapid Economic and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) of the Syrian conflict on Lebanon estimated that the conflict would lead to a 2.85% cut in real GDP growth each year and a significant increase in government expenditure (World Bank, 2013). On the other hand, a study commissioned by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UNHCR on the impact of an annual aid package of \$800 million reveals that every dollar spent on humanitarian assistance had a multiplier effect of 1.6, resulting in a 1.3% growth in Lebanese GDP (UNDP & UNHCR, 2015). Dahi (2014) calls for an increase in development spending, infrastructure upgrading, and job creation to avert devastating implications for both host and refugee communities. Verme et al. (2015) concede that seven in ten registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon are considered poor and calls for a shift in focus towards economic inclusion and self-reliance of Syrian refugees.

Against this background, this dissertation situates the response to the Syrian refugee influx within a history of continuities by attending to the dynamic relations between the constellation of actors involved in Syrian refugee management in Lebanon. It examines how the overarching architecture of governance, through modes of ordering and control implemented by the multiple institutions, drives precarious outcomes for refugees. As one of the largest and most central refugee situations in the twenty first century, the case of Syrian refugee management in Lebanon allows for an examination of diverse structures of governance, reflecting the problems with humanitarian governance, increased refugee securitization, and the myths surrounding refugee presence as exceptional moments.

1.5 Research Methodology

1.5.1 Qualitative Research Approach

This dissertation adopts a qualitative research methodology and relies primarily on fieldwork carried out with Syrian refugees in four urban areas in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, complementary interviews with members of the Lebanese host communities, as well as interviews with policy makers and representatives of humanitarian organizations managing the Syrian refugee response. A qualitative approach is most suitable for this type of research, as it focuses on examining the interrelated processes, structures, living conditions, and market dynamics governing Syrian

refugee presence. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) assert, “qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (as cited in Hogan et al., 2009, p. 4). It also allows the researcher “to pay special attention to the ‘qualities’ of experience, aspects of life that quantitative approaches typically gloss over” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997 as cited in Hogan et al., 2009, p. 4). Particularly, the ‘micro’ understandings and experiences of the lived reality of Syrian refugees will then be connected to the ‘macro’ level, reflecting the links between Syrian communities and the state and international organizations governing them (Hogan et al., 2009).

The main qualitative methodological tools employed are semi-structured interviews and participant observation. My primary research target group consists of Syrian refugees, while a smaller number of interviews with Lebanese host communities are meant to compliment interviews with Syrian refugees. In addition, in-depth interviews with governmental advisors and representatives of municipalities, community centers, and international organizations were also carried out. Fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted between September 2017 and September 2018. This section describes the data sources, research methods, and selection of research sites for fieldwork along with a section on ethical considerations and the influence of positionality on my research.

1.5.2 Research Methods and Data Sources

The main research methods used for this dissertation are semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with government officials (particularly the Prime Minister’s office and line ministries taking the lead in coordinating the response to the influx), local authorities, and representatives of the largest international agencies managing the Syrian presence. At the community level, semi-structured interviews were primarily conducted with Syrian refugees in addition to a small number of complementary interviews with Lebanese host communities. Interviews with Syrian refugees sought to better understand the multiplicity of stories and lived experiences in the urban areas. It also aimed to gauge the impact of government policies and processes of exclusion on refugee lives. While my primary research target group consisted of Syrian refugees, complementary interviews with members of the Lebanese

communities focused on the lived experience of Lebanese hosts since the Syrian influx and their evolving experience in the labor market.

The key site of my fieldwork was the Social Development Centers (SDCs) and my sample of participants from both refugee and host communities was purposively selected from the visitors to these centers run by MoSA in Lebanon. More than 200 SDCs around the country constitute the main service providers of MoSA at the community level (Government of Lebanon & United Nations, 2017). Since the beginning of the Syrian influx in 2011, SDCs have expanded their services and have been providing social services, relief aid, trainings, medical consultations, and other types of assistance to both Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities. Given the non-encampment policy towards Syrian refugees in Lebanon and the huge size of the communities I aimed to examine, the SDCs have been an ideal point of entry and site for fieldwork within each locality. A total of 59 semi-structured interviews were conducted, 36 of which were with Syrian refugees, and 23 with Lebanese hosts (see Table 1). Only 22% of the interviewees were men (13 out of the total 59 interviews), reflecting the gender distribution of visitors at the SDCs.

Table 1. Number of Semi-structured Interviews per Area

Area	Number of Syrian Refugees ³	Number of Semi-Structured Interviews (Syrian Refugees)	Number of Semi-Structured Interviews (Lebanese Communities)	Total Number of Community Semi-Structured Interviews
Mazra'a	9,755	6 (all female)	4 (2 female, 2 male)	10
Bourj Hammoud	14,417	12 (all female)	8 (5 female, 3 male)	20
Bourj al-Barajneh	20,649	14 (12 female, 2 male)	7 (4 female, 3 male)	21
Bawshriye	4,832	4 (2 female, 2 male)	4 (2 female, 1 male)	8
Total	49,653	36	23	59

Access to the SDCs was facilitated by a letter obtained from the director of SDCs at MoSA. Prior to my PhD, I had established a solid relationship with the SDC directorate at MoSA and a few SDCs in the country as part of the National Poverty Targeting Program I worked on, which

³Source: (UNHCR, 2017b).

was rolled out at the level of the SDCs. MoSA gave me permission to visit the selected SDCs between April 2017 and October 2018. My knowledge of SDCs as local arms providing social services and my established relations with SDC employees and volunteers proved vital to the research process. The semi-structured interviews lasted for approximately an hour each and were audio-recorded, when given permission by participants, and consequently transcribed. The questions revolved around the participants' experience of living in the host community, access to humanitarian aid, the process of navigating governance structures, and the labor market experience.

At the SDCs, I also employed participant observation as a method in order to capture the interactions between members of both communities and the SDC staff, without any claim on representing the refugee story (Donà et al., 2020). In order to achieve this, I spent time volunteering at each of the SDCs was, thus, able to observe the dynamics between hosts, refugees, and SDC workers and volunteers by establishing a consistent presence prior to carrying out interviews. Many of the SDC visitors from the refugee community were regular visitors either for medical consultations, access to medication, or weekly courses.

Moreover, I conducted a total of 18 semi-structured interviews with key government officials, reflecting the diversity of Lebanese politics and views on the Syrian refugee influx, and members of the leading international agencies and donors (see summary in Table 2).

Table 2. Interviews with Policy Makers

Interview	Description
1	Bawshriye Mayor
2	Bawshriye Security Colonel at Municipality
3	Bourj al-Barajneh Mayor and Board Members
4	Bourj Hammoud Municipal Representative for Syrian Response
SDC Directors	
5	Bourj Hammoud Director
6	Bawshriye Director
7	Infirmary Director at SDC

8	Bourj al-Barajneh Director
9	Mazra'a Director
Government and UN Officials	
10	Hezbollah Official and Member of Parliament
11	Principal Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister's Office
12	Advisor for Future Movement at the Ministry of Interior
13	Free Patriotic Movement Member of Parliament
14	Principal Advisor to MoSA Minister on Refugee Response
15	SDCs Director at MoSA
16	Head of Budgeting for SDCs at MoSA
17	UNICEF representative
18	UNHCR representative

Also, elite interviews with SDC directors, municipal and government officials, and representatives of UN agencies sought to understand the government's response and policies regarding Syrian refugee presence within the particular context of the Lebanese system and structure.

Four distinct urban areas in the Greater Beirut Area and the Governorate of Mount Lebanon were chosen as sites for my participant observation and community interviews. The regions were selected for three reasons. First, Beirut and Mount Lebanon hosted a large number of refugees, around 30%, of the one million refugees present in Lebanon at the time of research (see Figure 4 and Figure 5). Second, the level of vulnerability of the localities was a key selection criterion. The UN inter-agency coordination unit in Lebanon has identified 251 most vulnerable localities in Lebanon based on a multi-deprivation index and the number of Syrian refugees and Lebanese host individuals within each locality. The 251 most vulnerable localities hosted, at the time of research, 87% of refugees and 67% of deprived Lebanese host individuals (UNDP, 2016; UNHCR, 2016b) (Figure 6 and Figure 7).

The four localities chosen are Bourj Hammoud, Bawshriye, Mazra'a and Bourj al-Barajneh, all of which are considered most vulnerable localities (Figure 8 outlines the maps of the localities chosen and the number of Syrian refugees hosted in each locality). The four localities

are host to both relatively large numbers of Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese communities. More importantly, the localities chosen are also characterized by the absence of informal tented settlements, thus ensuring that the subjects of this research are Syrian refugees living among the Lebanese host communities.⁴

Bourj Hammoud, a city located in the Matn district of Mount Lebanon (northern suburb of Beirut), is one of the most densely populated cities in the Middle East. Its population is predominantly Armenian Christian, although it is host to Christian, Muslim and Kurdish communities as well as guest workers from various backgrounds, given its industrial and commercial nature.⁵

Bourj al-Barajneh is located in the southern suburb of Beirut, and its local population is mainly Lebanese Shi'ite, although it is home to various vulnerable populations (most notably Palestinian refugees in the Bourj al-Barajneh camp).

Mazra'a is located in the capital Beirut and is predominantly Sunni Muslim. It is home to the most vulnerable populations of Beirut.

Bawshriye is a predominantly Christian neighborhood in the industrial and commercial area of Jdiedeh, which is the administrative capital of the district of Matn in Mount Lebanon.

My choice of these areas was based on a factor which is often underdiscussed in refugee research. At the beginning of my fieldwork in April 2017, the Syrian influx was well into its sixth year. By then, Syrian refugees and host communities alike were suffering from research fatigue.

⁴ According to the Lebanon Shelter Strategy 2015, informal tented settlements are defined as “an unofficial group of temporary residential structures, often comprising of plastic-sheeting and timber structures and can be of any size from one to several hundred tents” (UNHCR, 2015b). Very often, the informal tented settlements are in remote areas and secluded from host communities, which limits the interaction between Syrian refugees and host communities. As of February 2016, Lebanon had 6,271 informal tented settlements comprising a total of close to 42,000 tents hosting 237,000 Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2016a). The unsystematic emergence of informal settlements commenced in the Bekaa and North Lebanon and soon spread to all governorates in Lebanon to accommodate the increase in the number of Syrian refugees in the absence of an encampment policy (Yassin et al., 2015).

⁵ The source of the confessional composition of each locality is based on an analysis of the 2010 interpretation of electoral checklists in (Eid, 2010).

By 2017, Lebanon had become laboratory for refugee research owing to the unprecedented size of the refugee influx relative to the size of the population. Bearing that in mind, I chose to go to SDCs particularly in under researched urban areas in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. While all urban areas chosen were considered severely vulnerable at the time of fieldwork, much of qualitative research had focused on the Bekaa and North Lebanon regions that have the heaviest concentration of Syrian refugees (Danish Refugee Council [DRC], 2011a; Harb & Saab, 2014; ILO, 2014; Lebanon Support & al-Masri, 2015; Mackreath, 2014; Van Vliet & Hourani, 2014).

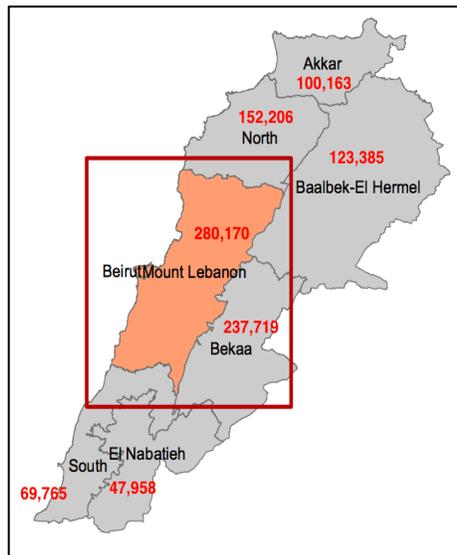


Figure 4. Number of Syrian Refugees by Governorate in Lebanon (UNHCR, 2016d)

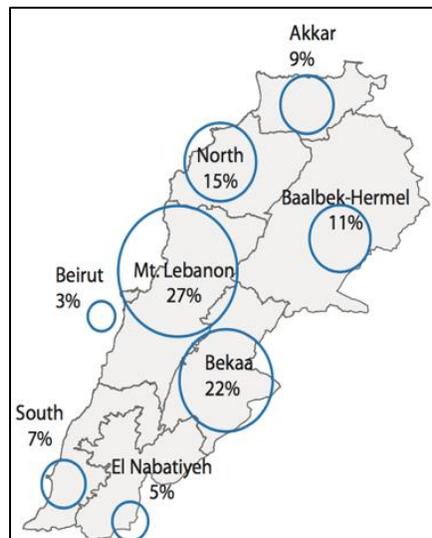


Figure 5. Percentage of Syrian Refugees in Each Governorate in Lebanon (UNHCR, 2016d)

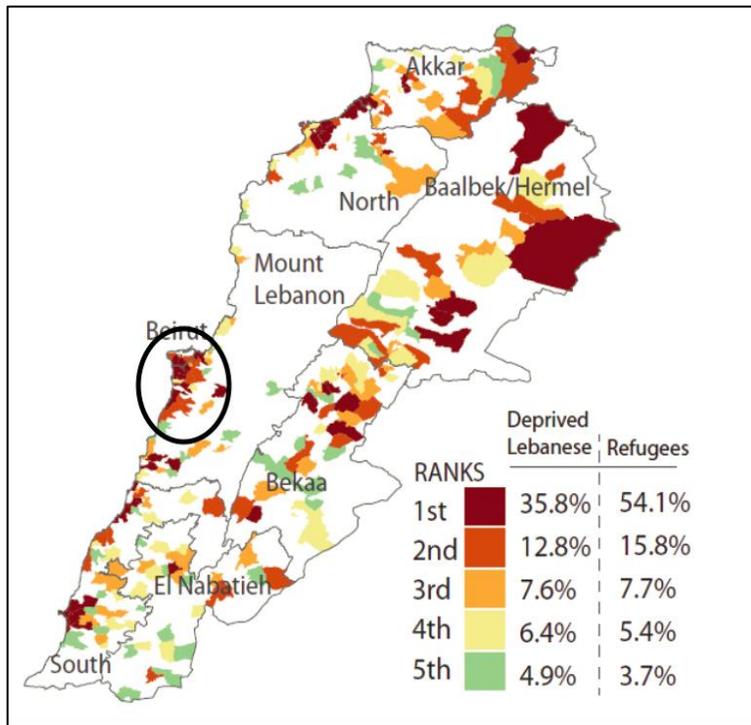


Figure 6. Distribution of Most Vulnerable Localities (UNHCR, 2016b)

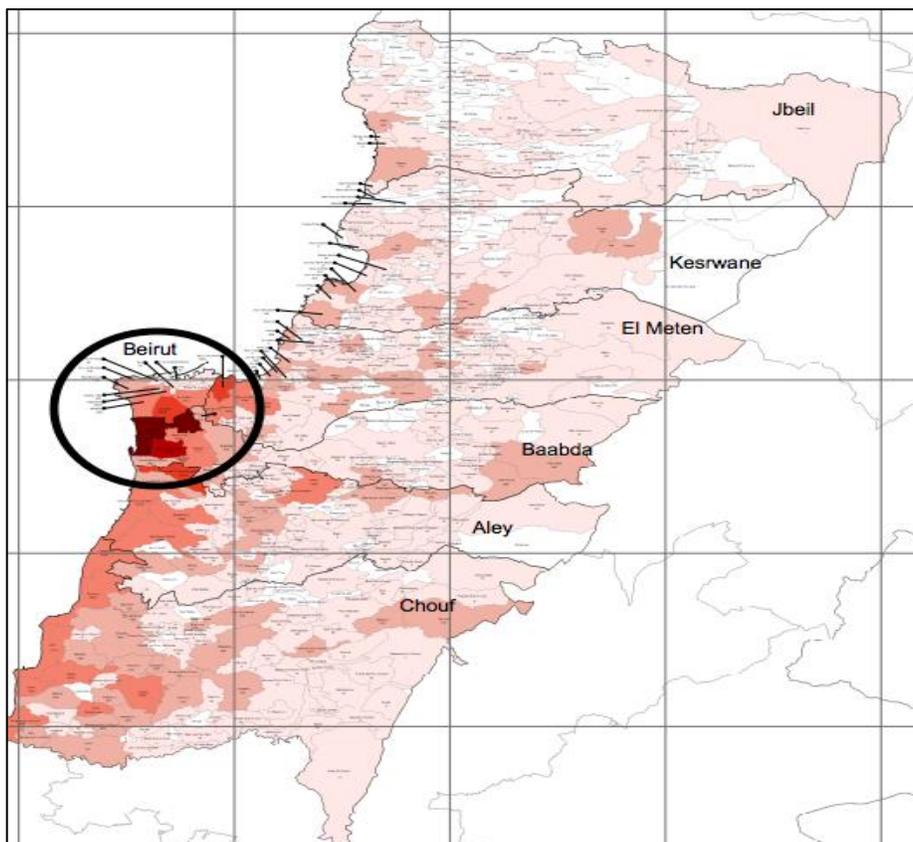


Figure 7. Beirut and Mount Lebanon Map of Most Vulnerable Localities (UNHCR, 2017c)

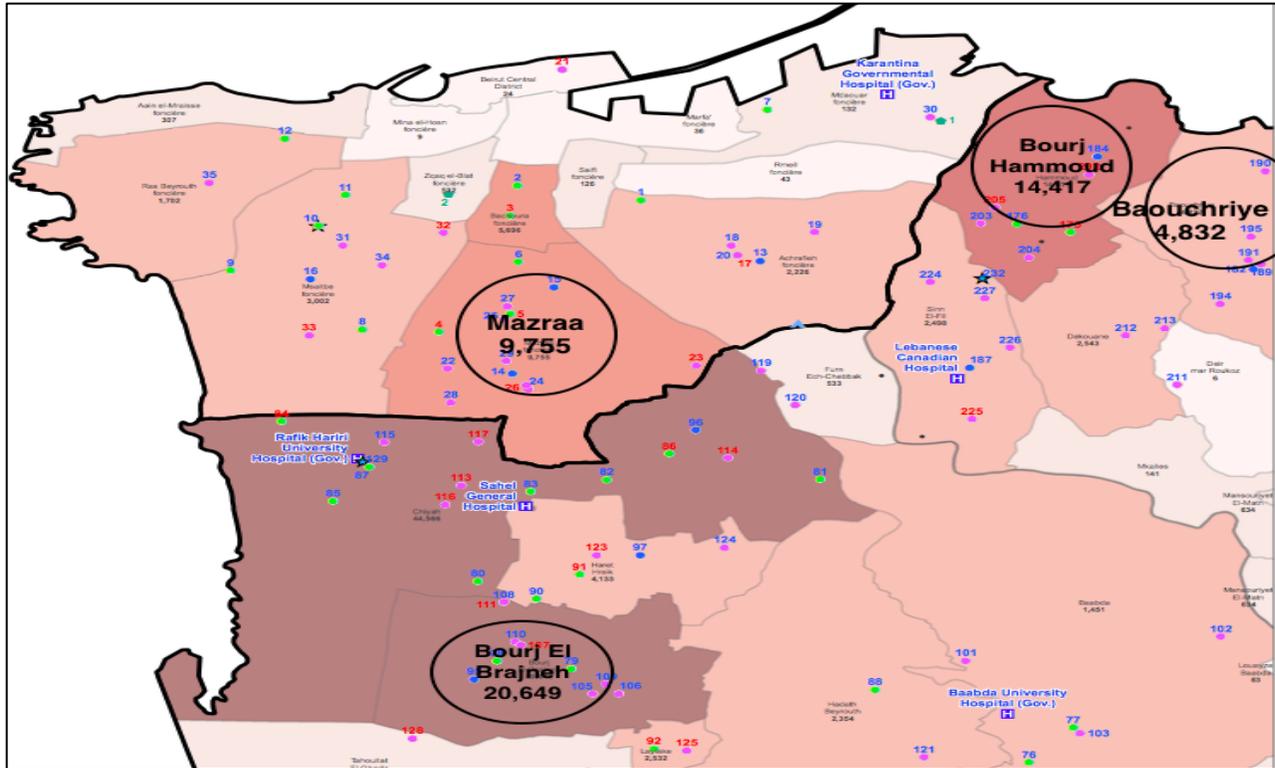


Figure 8. Map of the Four Chosen Vulnerable Localities and Number of Syrian Refugees in Each Locality (UNHCR, 2017c)

In order to compliment my fieldwork, secondary sources research was conducted examining a wide range of official documents in order to evaluate the government response and policies governing Syrian refugee presence within the particular context of the Lebanese system and structure. I examined various international organizations’ published reports and government decrees on the Syrian influx. Such reports include the bi-annual World Bank Economic Monitor that analyzes the impact of the Syrian crisis on various sectors of the Lebanese economy, inter-agency United Nations needs assessments of Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese hosts, International Labor Organization (ILO) reports on the characteristics and the demographics of the Syrian labor force in Lebanon, NGO reports on community relations between Syrian refugees and Lebanese hosts, UNHCR demographic data, and the Regional Response Plan (RRP) and LCRP official documents. Since 2011, The Information Sharing Portal hosted by UNHCR has made public hundreds of documents, analytical reports, and statistical data on the current Syrian refugee presence in Lebanon.

1.6 Ethical Considerations and Positionality in Qualitative Research

Fieldwork with vulnerable communities particularly requires deep reflexivity on the ethical considerations of doing research, the power dynamics at play, and the positionality of the researcher. The positionality of a researcher is one of the most important factors in the process of qualitative research. I draw on critical literature on ethical considerations of doing fieldwork particularly with refugees, in addition to critical scholarship that has recognized the dynamic nature of the researcher's positionality to discuss the challenges and limitations of my research methods. In what follows, I critically reflect on the limitations of my positionality and discuss how rapport and trust with interviewees were established through shifting positionalities tied to nationality, gender, class, and socio-economic and educational background. While nationality, gender, language, and culture served as commonalities between me and participants, others needed to be navigated more carefully at times.

1.6.1 Ethical Considerations in Refugee Research

Scholars in forced migration are faced with a 'dual imperative,' that of research satisfying rigorous academic standards but also influencing refugee policy to contribute to alleviating the suffering of forced migrants (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003). This dissertation has been guided by adhering to sound research methodologies and tools to ensure a 'do no harm' approach and the safety of subjects, while remaining transparent about the limitations of the research methodologies adopted. Particular focus was given to the ethical considerations of doing research with vulnerable communities and refugees, many of whom are not only facing dire living conditions but are also considered illegal by state security apparatuses and are thus subject to arrest and detention. Confidentiality is key in addressing ethical considerations of doing research with refugees in particular. Thus, prior to fieldwork, I gave great consideration to avoid the risk of putting research subjects in compromised positions. I was also guided by the principle of 'do no harm' and driven by the ethical responsibility of weighing the risks associated with this methodology (Donà et al., 2020). As such, in addition to ensuring utmost consideration for ethical challenges in researching refugees and vulnerable populations and stressing the optional nature of the interviews, my contact

with both communities was founded on principles of respect, sensitivity, confidentiality, and anonymity.

In line with the theme of this dissertation, that of critically examining the refugee figure and challenging the bureaucratic construction of a 'refugee identity,' interviews were carried out with all Syrians who visited the SDCs, regardless of their legal status as refugees, labor migrants working in Lebanon prior to the Syrian conflict, or those who failed to achieve legal status. My respect of the suffering of all participants interviewed pressed me to listen to the multiplicity of their stories and experiences in order to understand how they individually experienced the governance structures that shaped their suffering.

My awareness of the risks that my research might pose to the individuals I interviewed brings us to the discussion on the types of questions one can or cannot ask Syrians in such a complex and securitized environment. In particular, in Bourj al-Barajneh, which is an area managed by Hezbollah, a powerful actor in the Syrian conflict, direct questions about Hezbollah are not only unhelpful, but they may also endanger the participant or simply trigger a fearful reaction. Therefore, I made certain to steer away from conversations that may put refugees at risk as a result of information revealed and remained mindful of the political and legal marginalities with which refugees often grapple. This was particularly driven by the fact that many of the participants were from Deir ez-Zor, a region in which Hezbollah was actively fighting at the time of my fieldwork. Instead, my conversations with Syrian participants in Bourj al-Barajneh centered around everyday hardships and livelihood opportunities, while allowing space for participants to express their own frustrations with failing to achieve legal status and struggling with haphazard curfews. I was particularly struck by the interviewees' honesty and openness in describing their daily navigation of restrictive policies and measures.

I also provided verbal and written information about my research prior to obtaining consent. More importantly, my presence at the SDCs prior to the interviews played an important role in establishing rapport and building trust with visitors to the SDCs from both communities and thus increasing the likelihood of a comfortable and unrestrained conversation. In order to

manage expectations, I also emphasized the fact that participation in the research is not tied to any outcome or change in the participants' situation.

1.6.2 Reflexivity and Positionality

Critical reflexivity is an essential research practice that allows the researcher to understand the power differentials between her and her research subjects as well as a process whereby the multidimensional positionalities of a researcher are interrogated to gauge how they have shaped the research methodology, process, and findings (Donà et al., 2020; Pillow, 2003). The positionality of a researcher is an indispensable element of the process of qualitative research. Many intersectional factors influence the research process, including nationality, class, gender, generation, and socio-economic and educational background. Scholars have critically examined the outsider/insider dichotomy of the researcher and have more recently broken away from this binary by emphasizing the complexity of the researcher-participant relationship, which is influenced by a multidimensionality of fluid factors for both researchers and participants (Bourke, 2014; Flores, 2018; Ganga & Scott, 2006; Ryan, 2015). As Ryan (2015) posits, recognizing the multidimensionality of positionalities “enables researchers to be reflexive about the instability and contingency of empathy, understanding and rapport, and how these need to be continually negotiated across layers of power differentials” (p. 2).

My experience in the field is in line with the critique of the rigid binary of insider/outsider status. While my access to the SDCs was facilitated by virtue of being an ‘insider’ having interacted with SDCs prior to my PhD, I was relegated to an ‘outsider’ status in many of my conversations with local communities and refugees alike. Sharing a nationality, language, and culture with interviewees certainly did not guarantee me an ‘insider’ status. In other words, the assumption that one becomes an ‘insider’ by virtue of one’s ethnicity or nationality conceals the multidimensionality and fluidity of the identities of both researchers and participants (Ryan, 2015). Thus, instead of focusing on researchers’ similarities with their participants, reflexivity as a process entails grappling with the uncomfortable differences and power differentials, in line with practicing reflexivity of discomfort as posited by Pillow (2003). Establishing trust with refugees is one pertinent factor when contextualized in an overall environment of exclusion, discrimination,

and ‘othering.’ Refugees are already navigating power differentials attributed to the humanitarian system and local authorities.

While being an ‘insider’ is usually considered an advantage, by virtue of speaking the same language and sharing culture background and heritage with research participants, it also magnifies the existing social differences. In addition, while being an insider translates into greater proximity with the participants, it introduces its own set of complications. In my case, my socio-economic position and educational background as a researcher particularly stood out. I felt as an ‘outsider’ in many of the interviews, particularly with members of the Lebanese host communities. This speaks to shifting and dynamic positionalities in doing fieldwork; there is no such thing as a static insider positionality owing to the multidimensionality and fluidity of positionalities. When conversing with Lebanese participants, our class differences were magnified. For example, in some cases, my interviewees did not expect me to understand their hardships in terms of access to livelihood opportunities, basic services, and labor market opportunities. Experiences were narrated to me as ones I could not conceive of by virtue of my positionality. Both the interviewee and I were aware of our social positions. Sometimes we were able to transcend into conversations unconstrained by the rigid binary of researcher/participant, where I was asked questions about my research or background, or we talked about the experience of accessing services at the SDC. For some participants, the conversation was a way to let out their frustration, but at no time did I pretend to be unaware of my social position.

As a Lebanese interviewing Syrian refugees, navigating the fluidity of positionalities was also challenging, particularly in an environment largely characterized by growing hostility towards Syrian presence and a growing sense of ‘us’ vs. ‘them.’ Establishing trust with Syrian participants was far from a linear process. Even assumed commonalities of language were at times hard to navigate. For example, during the first week of my fieldwork in the area of Bourj Hammoud, all Syrians I asked declined to speak with me. I had difficulty understanding why, given that in my previous work, my experience with Syrian participants was smooth. One day, a Syrian lady who visits the SDC daily asked me why I was there. After I had explained my research project to her, she asked how I was introducing myself, and I answered that I usually say I am working on ‘research’ (*baḥith* in Arabic) on Syrian refugees and Lebanese hosts, to which she said I should be

careful about my wording. She told me how lately there had been a crackdown on Syrian workers in the area surrounded by ambiguity around a possible curfew restricting Syrians' movement, a sign of escalating hostility towards Syrian presence in the area. She then explained that many Syrians may feel unsafe upon hearing the word research in Arabic since they may associate *baḥith*, which also means 'to search,' with security practices. I thanked her and began using the word study, *dirasa* in Arabic, to introduce my research, which led to a smoother experience in approaching Syrians at the SDCs. This is to say that as researchers not only do the smallest of words we use matter, but it is also our obligation to constantly adapt and be mindful of which words might trigger different kinds of associations for our research subjects.

In terms of gender, being a woman played different roles in my interaction with different groups. Being a woman was certainly an advantage in conversations with Syrian and Lebanese participants at the SDCs. Close to 80% (46 out of the 59 interviews) were with women, given that females disproportionately visit SDCs to access services, medical consultations for their children, or attend training sessions. Establishing trust with female participants through friendly conversations about their daily lives was facilitated by our shared gender. In fact, very few men visited or even worked at the SDCs on a daily basis, which noticeably contributed to a much more relaxed and friendly environment. However, interviewing government officials, advisors, and UN officials was a different experience in my position as a young female researcher. To start with, these interviews were predominantly with older men in positions of power and decision making. In order to secure interviews with government officials and international organization representatives, I relied on my network of contacts that I had established as a research analyst for the World Bank in Lebanon for 4 years, prior to my PhD. While being a student at a reputable university also aided in access to those interviewers, the power dynamics that would come to play were inevitable. Positionality as a young female meant that often my 'conversations' took the form of a lecture rather than a dialogue. Policies, measures, and decisions were sometimes overexplained to me. Nonetheless, in all my interviews, I remained respectful and patient, asking probing questions that at times developed into a two-way conversation that I genuinely benefited from and appreciated.

In a country like Lebanon, sectarian identities are always present. My background as someone originally from South Lebanon, and thus associated with the Shi'ite identity, played a pivotal role in my access to information in the area of Bourj al-Barajneh, a Shi'ite stronghold under the complete control of Hezbollah and its security apparatus. For example, in my interview with the area's SDC director, the conversation started by her narrating the dominant official line communicated to all researchers and audiences. Rather abruptly, and as expected in any conversation in Lebanon, she asks me about my family name and where I come from. I respond by saying I was from the South. She turned out to be from a village near my family's hometown. She then assures me that since "I am one of them," our conversation is going to be quite different. From there on, she became very candid about the security apparatus in the area and the SDC's coordination with Hezbollah. The same occurred during my meeting with the municipality. The conversation began with the mayor describing how Bourj al-Barajneh was a model case in terms of Syrian refugee experience: here, unlike other municipalities, there are no restrictions on movement; Syrians are not prohibited from working but are actually welcomed; and the neighborhood is distinguished by its hospitality. After asking me the same questions about my hometown and confessional background, the mayor also was consequently more trusting of me and went on to explain that actually Syrians in the area were under a heavy system of surveillance. He even shared with me the actual physical 'Syrian files' containing information on Syrians in the area. By virtue of my perceived positionality as a Shi'ite researcher from the South, I was perceived as an 'insider' far more than I actually felt like one.

1.7 Dissertation Outline

This dissertation explores the main research question of how the architecture of governance of a refugee 'crisis' reproduces and reifies existing structures, power dynamics and political struggles. It particularly explores the modes and mechanisms of ordering and control that the system of governance in Lebanon reproduced to manage Syrian refugees. To this end, the dissertation is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter has provided an overview of the Syrian conflict and the spillover into Lebanon and presents the main research questions this dissertation aims to address. It also discussed the research methodology and methods while recognizing the limitations faced during fieldwork. It has presented the main argument and the contribution of the dissertation

and situated this research within the broader political economy and critical forced migration scholarship.

Following this introductory chapter, **Chapter two** presents the conceptual framework that relies on scholarship from cultural anthropology, critical forced migration studies, and security studies. In particular, it lays out the two intertwined frameworks that this dissertation draws on.

The first framework challenges the understanding of refugee presence as the study of a particular (exceptional) moment by grounding the study of Syrian refugee governance in Lebanon within a political economy approach, which positions ‘refugeeness’ within a history of ruptures and continuities. It argues that governance systems producing precarious outcomes for Syrian refugees are not the exclusive creation of the current moment but rather stem from a history of turbulent political relations between neighboring countries, interdependent economies, and complementary as well as conflicting policies that have shaped the long history of Syrian migrant workers in Lebanon for decades. The second framework that this dissertation adopts is the politically induced notion of precarity afforded by Butler (2004) as an analytical tool for understanding the Syrian condition. To examine how the phase of ‘refugeeness’ has (re)produced precarious outcomes, the chapter relies on critical scholarship in forced migration that emphatically sees the refugee figure as a contested socially and politically produced construct. In particular, in order to trace the subjugation of Syrian refugees to the machinery of the humanitarian regime in Lebanon, it draws from critical scholarship on the rise of the figure of the refugee, one that has given rise to a global architecture of ordering and control starting with the refugee registration process (Glasman, 2017; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Malkki, 1995, 1996; UNHCR, 2012; Zetter, 1991). Another form of control in refugee governance is that of the securitization of refugee presence, which equally contributes to the production of precarious lives (Hammerstad, 2014). The section on securitizing refugees relies on sociological approaches to securitization that go beyond discursive acts and often involve routine and ordinary everyday practices of securitization that reflect existing political struggles and power relations rather than exceptional systems of management among different actors (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006). Finally, nowhere is precarity more rooted than in the labor market. The last section draws on the

literature on precarity as a labor market condition to examine the evolving Syrian position in the Lebanese labor market (Craig et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2015; Lewis & Waite, 2015; Waite, 2009).

Chapter three situates the Syrian refugee presence within the broader Lebanese political economy background and context. It traces the intricacies of the Lebanese-Syrian political relationship, state policies, and economic inter-dependence. The chapter argues that the current refugee management and governance has its roots in the nature of the Lebanese state and the tumultuous relationship between Syria and Lebanon and is grounded in historical policies of exclusion and deterrence towards refugees. The second section, in particular, unpacks the nature of the Lebanese political system that has survived several crises and has reproduced and sustained a confessional power-sharing formula under clientelist and nepotistic mechanisms. It also traces the Syrian regime's role in postwar governance by examining the reconstruction phase and the neoliberal transformation of the Lebanese economy, all occurring against a background of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. The third section examines how Lebanese-Syrian relations have been historically economically and politically intertwined and examines the protracted presence of Syrian migrant workers in low-skilled jobs in Lebanon. This presence, that is often politicized and historically blamed for structural problems, is relevant to the understanding of the current refugee presence. Lastly, by illustrating refugee governance in the case of Lebanon, particularly Palestinian refugees, it illustrates how the Lebanese system has blatantly favored a policy of exclusion to deter permanent settlement.

Chapters four, five and six, all draw on empirical work to trace humanitarian governance and government policies in (re)producing precarity through the process of refugee registration, refugee securitization, and labor market outcomes.

In line with the overarching argument of this dissertation, **Chapter four** argues that rather than constituting a moment of exception, the governance mechanisms produced and elaborated at the onset of the Syrian refugee influx and the accompanying process of registration are emblematic of deeply entrenched power dynamics and struggles characteristic of Lebanese politics. It examines the case of Syrian refugees' subjugation to the machinery of the humanitarian regime in Lebanon by highlighting the complex power dynamics of the registration and status determination

processes. It then highlights how the experience of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is largely determined by this early stage of formal recognition whereby a ‘humanitarian government’ takes control of ordering and labeling Syrians along several categories. It also traces how the formal registration process is embedded in the long history of aid politics in Lebanon and the absence of a domestic legal framework. The chapter also illustrates the various phases of registering Syrian refugees and unpacks the current government policies that are driven by political priorities, fears, and complacency.

Chapter five traces the construction of Syrian refugees as security threats, analyzing it as a process that lies in the intersection between a discourse of crisis and existential threat and a systematic set of procedures deeply embedded in historical and institutionalized understandings of security and of routine security practices carried out by a complex security apparatus including state and non-state actors. It also illustrates the decentralization of refugee securitization as a unique feature of the Lebanese case to show how securitization seldom reflects a unified policy or a homogenous set of practices.

Chapter six examines precarity as an evolving condition for Syrian refugees that stems from the failures of humanitarian government, which leaves Syrian refugees to fend for themselves for survival in an unregulated market of services and labor opportunities. It particularly examines the Syrian refugee experience through the lens of evolving precarity under a distinct labor market regime and the unstable conditions of everyday life. This chapter argues that for Syrian refugees, particularly those residing in urban areas, precarity is partially an evolving labor market condition which they experience in relation to a long history of labor migration to Lebanon.

Chapter seven concludes this dissertation by summarizing the main overarching argument and the research findings of each chapter. It also reflects on the ability to extend this research and analysis beyond the current Syrian refugee ‘crisis’ as mechanisms of governance that may be used to manage other marginal populations in the future.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

The world is full of ‘emergency’ situations and moments, which when seen as such imply that such moments pose a great danger and thus call for ‘exceptional’ forms of governance as urgent responses (Beckett, 2013). Humanitarian interventions and emergency responses are at the heart of this dominant approach (Fassin & Vasquez, 2005). In particular, one dominant view of refugee movements is that their displacement is characterized by an element of exceptionality. Refugees are consistently portrayed as exceptional populations requiring exceptional modes of governance (Bakewell, 2008; Beckett, 2013; Ramsay, 2019). Furthermore, it is not only refugees who are portrayed as exceptional populations, but the modes of governance required to manage them are also understood within the realm of exceptionality. Today, few terms are more used to represent refugee plight than ‘crises’ and ‘emergency.’ Refugee movements are viewed as distinct ‘crises’ requiring ‘emergency’ forms of intervention (Ramsay, 2019).

Against this background, this dissertation aims to provide a framework that analyzes the different actors, and their dynamic relations, involved in managing the Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon from 2011 until 2017. It intends to demonstrate that the system of governance of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is emblematic of existing structures of power relations and political struggles among a wide range of actors. To this end, it builds a framework which brings together two theoretical lenses. The first approach critically challenges the framing of refugee plights as moments of crisis and exception requiring unique systems of management. It examines ‘refugeeness’ with a lens that grounds the Syrian refugee plight in the two countries’ interdependent political and economic history with its continuities and ruptures. The examination of how existing social, political, and economic configurations organize and shape refugee lives, certainly demands revisiting the framing of the refugee category as exceptional (Ramsay, 2019).

This second approach which offers a critical lens to examine refugee governance in Lebanon is that of precarity (Butler, 2004, 2009; Lorey, 2015). The dissertation argues that the

Syrian refugee presence cannot be understood as ‘exceptional,’ but as extended experiences of precarity that are the consequence of the historical, social, and economic configuration of Lebanon’s political economy on one hand and the humanitarian governance system on the other. To put it differently, I argue that the framing of refugee plights as emergency moments, requiring urgent and exceptional responses, has given rise to humanitarian governance, which further contributes to (re)producing precarious outcomes. Precarity, as a second overarching framework, and as afforded by Butler (2004, 2009) is a politically produced and charged condition whereby the distinctions between the lives worth and not worth living are magnified. It is exactly through legal and political institutions and modes of governance that precarity is produced as a mode of ordering of domination (Lorey, 2011, 2015).

This dissertation argues that precarious outcomes are in fact multidimensional, and best explored through three central themes, namely; refugee registration, refugee securitization and labor market precarity. I argue that the three intertwining themes intersect in processes of constructing the refugee as a social and humanitarian subject at the center of modes of ordering and control administered by the overall architecture of governance and contributing to the creation of an essentialized refugee identity. My analysis is firmly positioned in an understanding of the refugee figure as a contested socially and politically produced construct that is continually made and remade.

First, it traces the subjugation of Syrian refugees to the machinery of the humanitarian regime in Lebanon, beginning with the formal registration process that is grounded in the complicated history of aid politics; the intricate sectarian power-sharing structures of the Lebanese state; and the absence of a domestic legal framework that could organize refugee presence. To this end, this dissertation demonstrates how humanitarian structures in Lebanon are implicit in producing and extending precarity. It examines processes of refugee registration and securitization and the continuously reimagined construct of the refugee within a framework of extended precarity. In this regard, Ajana (2013), Franke (2009), Harrell-Bond et al., (1992) and Oh (2017) all examine the process of refugee registration as a technique of control administered by the international humanitarian regime, and more specifically by UNHCR. Refugee registration is one form of control that belongs to broader processes of categorization, stratification, and labeling of

refugees, all of which contribute to the essentialization of a refugee identity (Glasman, 2017; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Malkki, 1995, 1996; UNHCR, 2012; Zetter, 1991).

Second, the architecture of control in refugee governance is related to the ‘securitization’ of refugee presence, a phenomenon which became increasingly salient as a result of the expansion of conceptions of security at the end of the cold war and which also contributes to producing precarious lives (Hammerstad, 2014). The securitization literature has been dominated by conceptions of securitization as discursive practices of constructing refugees as threats thereby requiring extraordinary measures in the realm of exceptional politics (Buzan et al., 1998; Taureck, 2006; Watson, 2011). This dissertation draws on Huysmans’ (2006) work, who adopts a Foucauldian lens to securitization, which allows for a deeper interrogation of security practices and routines that go beyond the discursive and represent biopolitical acts of control. By elaborating this theoretical position, this chapter argues against the exceptionalism and crisis discourse of refugee governance adopted by the Lebanese state and humanitarian regime. It contends that this discourse often obscures practices and measures of refugee governance that are a continuation and extension of a dominant and ordinary paradigm.

Lastly, the production of precarity is nowhere more rooted than in the labor market. This dissertation also engages with the literature on precarity that has increasingly combined labor market insecurities characterized by informality, low-wage, and impermanence with the role of the neoliberal market as well as various other forms of vulnerabilities and marginalization (Banki, 2013; Hewison & Kalleberg, 2013; Siegmann & Schiphorst, 2016). Such labor market insecurities and dynamics have existed long before a refugee ‘crisis.’ As such, precarious outcomes for Syrian refugees is an ontological experience, combining the failures of humanitarianism, labor market insecurities, the securitization of subjects, and a rigid system of categorization and ordering.

2.2 The Exceptionalism of the Refugee Plight

“To understand this far from exceptional moment, it is inscribed in its historical context, and related to the prevailing mystique of power” (Fassin & Vasquez, 2005, p. 390).

The humanitarian state of exception has become a dominant paradigm in understanding the refugee experience (Fassin & Vasquez, 2005). This exceptionality relies on the framing of the refugee figure as an exceptional category outside the nation-state configuration (Malkki, 1995). Malkki and Owens trace back the origin of ‘the refugee’ as a legal category and the rise of a global architecture in governing refugees to post-World War II Europe (Malkki, 1995, p. 497; Owens, 2009). It was the aftermath of WWII in 1945 and its unprecedented mass displacement of close to 35 million people that resulted in key techniques for managing displacement. Such techniques were improvised, standardized, and then globalized (Malkki, 1995). Malkki does not imply that mass displacement originated at the end of WWII, as people had sought refuge for decades and centuries earlier; rather, she asserts that this period paved the way for the establishment of ‘the refugee’ as a social and legal construct at a global level. Malkki examines the rise of various dimensions of power in refugee camp management, refugee resettlement, and refugee control mechanisms in the postwar years when refugees came to be considered institutionally as an “international humanitarian problem” (p. 499).

The aftermath of WWII led to the formulation of international refugee law and similar legal instruments governing refugees today. The 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1967 Refugee Protocol, and the Statute of UNHCR constitute the international regime for refugee protection (Akram, 2002).⁶ The convention and its protocol also lay out the role of UNHCR as an agency mandated with providing international protection to refugees and seeking permanent solutions, which are defined by UNHCR as ‘durable solutions,’ namely voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement.⁷ The modern, postwar refugee became a recognizable figure through processes of

⁶The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a ‘refugee’ as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2010, p. 3). The most notable principal within the convention is that of *non-refoulement* which stipulates that “no one shall expel or return a refugee against his or will, in any manner whatsoever, to a territory where he or she fears threats to life or freedom” (UNHCR, 2010, p. 3). The convention also lays out the rights states have agreed to provide to refugees, which include “administrative assistance (Article 25); identity papers (Article 27), and travel documents (Article 28); the grant of permission to transfer assets (Article 30); and the facilitation of naturalization (Article 34)” (Goodwin-Gill, 2014, p. 6).

⁷The three durable solutions are voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement. Voluntary repatriation refers to refugees returning safely and with dignity to their country of origin, and re-availing themselves of national protection. Resettlement is the process by which refugees are selected and transferred from their country of refuge to a third country that has agreed to admit them as refugees with permanent residence status. Local integration is

resettlement, organized repatriation, law enforcement, and social programs controlled by the international refugee regime (Malkki, 1995 as cited in Owens, 2009). As such, it becomes clear that the modern conventions on human rights and the established international organizations reproduce the sovereignty of the nation-state by controlling refugees in a manner that does not undermine but rather reinforces the classical trilogy of nation/state/territory. All three durable solutions, as parts of the UNHCR mandate, are founded on the conception of rights and citizenship. As Owens (2009) elaborates, “refugees must either return ‘home’ or be naturalized somewhere else. But, more fundamentally, refugee populations are produced and governed as subjects amenable to public and private management techniques – the techniques now closely linked to the rationalities of economic globalization” (p. 571).

On the other hand, the work of Giorgio Agamben on the state of exception and the creation of a permanent state of emergency has become a prominent reference setting the dominant paradigm for understanding the workings of sovereign power (Agamben, 1995, 1998; Fassin & Vasquez, 2005; Nyers, 2006).

Central to Agamben’s work is the reevaluation of theories of sovereignty. Drawing on Schmitt’s definition of the sovereign, Agamben (1998) asserts that the sovereign is the one “who decides the exception” (p. 83). More notably, the sovereign decides whom to include and exclude from the life of bios, or the political life. As such, the sovereign ban becomes the ban that excludes persons from the bio and confines a person to the bare life best depicted in the figure and life of Homo Sacer. The Homo Sacer “can be killed but not sacrificed” (Agamben, 1998, p. 58), as persons condemned to the life of Homo Sacer are stripped of their political rights and exist at the mercy of the sovereign. The very expulsion from bios and the relegation to bare life creates the “state of exception” (Agamben, 1998, p. 12). To put it differently, it is the state of exception that allows the sovereign to enact bare life. This does not at all imply that the Homo Sacer confined to a bare life is excluded from the juridical order. On the contrary, bare life is included in the juridical order precisely by being excluded from it. Stemming from the fact that the sovereign decides on

defined by UNHCR as the process in which refugees are legally, economically, and socially integrated in the host country, availing themselves of the national protection of the host government (UNHCR, 2011a).

the law, and when to suspend it, the state of exception is the “zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion” (Agamben, 1998, p. 102).

‘The state of exception’ is exceedingly relevant to the experience of a refugee camp, which Agamben explores (particularly the Nazi concentration camps of World War II) first in *Homo Sacer* (1998) and then in *The State of Exception* (2005). The camp, a purely biopolitical place, where the suspension of the law creates a state of exception, is essentially the product of sovereign power. The camp is “a piece of land placed outside the normal juridical order, but it is nevertheless not simply an external space” (Agamben, 1998, p. 96). The sovereign exercises its power to exclude and eradicate the threats to its security within the “hidden matrix” of the camp (Agamben, 1998, p. 95). As such, Agamben (1998) asserts that refugees can be regulated as biopolitical subjects in the ‘state of exception’ of the camp (as cited in Owens, 2009, p. 568). Examination of the ‘state of exception’ in the context of a refugee camp, a biopolitical space where the suspension of the law by the sovereign power creates a state of exception, has become increasingly salient and influential in the refugee studies literature (Agier, 2002, 2011; Diken, 2004; Salih, 2013).

2.2.1 Beyond the State of Exception

However, examining Agamben’s theory of sovereignty, state of exception, and bare life has also generated substantial critique (Fassin, 2007; Martin, 2015; Owens, 2009; Schiocchet, 2014). In a sense, Agamben’s depiction of the bare life of *Homo Sacer* implies that refugees are agency-less and powerless in the face of sovereign power. His work is not meant to explain nor illustrate the various forms of resistance that refugees adopt. As such, several scholars have highlighted the need to balance the structural intervention exerted by sovereign power with the resistance individuals put up against the sovereign ban. Consequently, according to Bachelet (2012), Agamben and other scholars influenced by him, do not stress refugee restrained agency but rather regard the state of exception as a “special and social exclusion” (p. 150). Echoing that constraint, Edkins and Pin-Fat (2005) affirm that Agamben’s conceptualization, although ideal for conveying the operationalization of sovereign power, is lacking in its engagement with the consequent resistance and transformation of refugees into political subjects, which lead to the return of refugees to a life of power. Similarly, Schiocchet (2014) argues that Agamben’s concepts expose

the veil of the nation-state's principles and the fragility of the juridical and political order governing citizenship but do not reveal the exceptionality of refugee camps that burst with culture, political agency, and subjectivity. Agier (2011), although influenced by Agamben's sovereign analysis, also sheds light on refugees' agency, albeit restrained, in negotiating their lives as actors and not merely seeking protection and humanitarian aid. Ramadan (2013) challenges the silenced agency of refugees in a bare life in Palestinian camps in Lebanon. He also sheds light on the shortfalls of portraying a refugee camps as generalized spaces of exception, from the silenced agencies in Agamben's space of exception, to the relations and power dynamics between a plethora of actors contributing to the suspension of the law.

Thus, the concept of sovereignty as developed by Agamben could be seen as insufficient or problematic. While Agamben (2005) does allude to the fact that the state of exception has progressed from an emergency procedure to a 'dominant paradigm' enacted by states, the state remains the sole decision-maker or sovereign power in terms of suspending the law and deciding on the 'exception.' In contexts where sovereignty is managed by several actors, there are several actors involved in enacting bare life. As Ramadan (2013) states, "if sovereignty, following Agamben, is about the ability to declare the exception, then we must understand what actors, relations and practices contribute to the suspension of the legal order" (pp. 68–69). Rather than the state being ascribed the role of the sole sovereign power and enacting bare life, multiple players, institutions, and structures coordinate, coerce, and compete over the enactment of 'bare life.' Particularly if one examines the architecture of governance around Syrian refugees in Lebanon, it becomes clear that sovereign decisions are not limited to the Lebanese state but are shared by multiple actors, mainly the UN-led humanitarian regime and the market as a driving force and regulator of community relationships. A deeper examination of the dynamics, interests, and decision making that come into play among the various actors also reveals the complexity in ascribing 'sovereign power' to a single actor. Municipalities, for example, have their own distinctive practices of 'registering' refugee presence, which are often tied to security concerns.

Moreover, as much as the sovereign ban relates to exclusion from the political order, such a practice is not limited to refugees or non-citizens. Indeed, "we are all, therefore, potentially *homines sacri* in the modern state for which the state of exception has become the rule" (Ramadan,

2013, p. 68). In other words, the zone of indistinction or state of exception is far from one-dimensional. As Sanchez (2004) points out, individuals are far from equal in their reduction to bare lives. Being summoned to ‘bare life’ is far from a homogenous experience. “The bio-political regime of modern liberal states is not simply an abstract entity that functions according to the notions of sovereignty, but historically rooted hierarchy that practices specific discriminatory patterns” (Sanchez, 2004 as cited in Casabó, 2016, p. 13). Such discriminatory patterns founded on class, race, religion, and gender is the reason why various individuals and communities exist in bare lives deeper than others. Martin (2015) echoes that conception in her examination of Palestinian refugees’ lives in the Lebanese context. She argues that,

‘bare life’ is not only produced in legal terms as Palestinians are excluded from the benefits of citizenship, but is also rendered such through social and economic discourses and practices cutting through the Lebanese population and separating Lebanese lives that are worth living from those deserving the sovereign’s abandonment. (p. 10)

Her depiction asserts that bare life is not a struggle confined to refugees physically residing in camps, but rather it also concerns all individuals produced by the sovereign powers. This analysis is made possible by disengaging from the realm of law proposed by Agamben and instead employing Foucault’s conception of processes occurring beyond the law.⁸ As the Lebanese context reveals, legal distinctions fail to expose “the complexities of life, forms of lives and their spatialisations” (Martin, 2015, p. 10).

By drawing on the critiques of the limitations of Agamben’s sovereign theory, it becomes clear that ‘the state of exception’ falls short of acknowledging continuities or addressing the ruptures of the Syrian-Lebanese relationship. Moreover, it does not help us to attend to the dynamics and practices of refugee governance that occur outside the realm of law and engage a plethora of actors who have been fighting over competing priorities long before a refugee ‘crisis.’

⁸ Foucault (1997) argued that: “If you try to analyze power not on the basis of freedom, strategies and governmentality, but on the basis of the political institution, you can only conceive of the subject as a subject of law. One then has a subject who has or does not have rights, who has had these rights either granted or removed by the institution of political society; and all this brings us back to a legal concept of the subject” (as cited in Martin, 2015, p. 10).

As highlighted before, by disengaging from the realm of law, we are able to understand those practices concealed under a state of exception.

In fact, powerful critiques of humanitarianism allow for a breakaway from the nation-state paradigm in which theories of the state of exception and conceptions of bare life are grounded in (Fassin, 2007; Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010; Fassin & Vasquez, 2005). This is because, since the 1980s, humanitarianism has expanded as a form of transnational governance that appears to be grounded in a moral obligation to protect, breaking away from political processes that have been replaced by the moral duty to intervene to save lives (Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010).

Humanitarian governance is defined as the increasingly organized and institutionalized attempt to save lives, enhance welfare, and reduce the suffering of the world's most vulnerable populations (Barnett, 2013; Fassin & Vasquez, 2005). This international humanitarian order, which involves a constellation of transnational and national actors, is founded on the moral obligation and responsibility to protect and save lives through institutionalized interventions ranging from the provision of emergency relief, to the advocacy of human rights, to the provision food aid (Barnett, 2013). Several scholars have highlighted how the moral sentiment and obligation which is the driving force behind humanitarianism obscures and justifies the modes of power involved in humanitarian intervention (Beckett, 2013; Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010). As such, humanitarian government becomes a mode of governance whereby the political is conflated with the ethical, obscuring the power dynamics involved. Declaring an emergency is in itself an act of power, and the humanitarian government arising from this emergency, seemingly impelled by the moral imperative to protect, ends up replicating and reifying the very same conditions it seeks to address, from exclusion, to uncertainty, to poverty and war (Beckett, 2013, p. 98).

Humanitarianism is thus always a matter of emergency; an exceptional moment requiring unique forms of governance and immediate action justified by the moral obligation to save lives (Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010). The unique system of management borne out of humanitarian governance is justified by the exceptionalism of a particular moment, conflates the moral with the political, and justifies 'exceptional' practices and measures implemented by the architecture of governance (Barnett, 2013; Ilcan & Rygiel, 2015). Humanitarian governance has increasingly

become associated with acts of domination in the name of saving lives and alleviating suffering; in essence, this form of governance is about power concealed by ethical justifications, but nonetheless shapes the lives of millions around the world (Barnett, 2013). The declaration of an emergency is the outcome of both a political rhetoric of emergency and political acts that are often reflective of existing power relations. As Fassin and Vasquez (2005) posit, problematizing the state of exception entails questioning its normalization and the generalized discourse surrounding it (p. 390).

This framing grounded in exceptionalism contributes to normalizing the exceptional modes of governance borne to manage their presence. In this dissertation, I argue that Syrian refugee presence cannot be understood as ‘exceptional,’ but rather as extended experiences of precarity, which are the consequence of the historical, social and economic configuration of Lebanon’s political economy involving a constellation of actors with competing priorities on the one hand, and the rise of humanitarian governance on the other. (Ramsay, 2019). As several scholars have posited, labeling refugee movements as ‘crises’ serves several functions, one of which is to conceal the modes of ordering and control characterizing refugee governance and normalize them as crucial and necessary (Masco, 2017; Ramsay, 2019).

Moreover, humanitarian structures increasingly contribute to precarious outcomes by essentializing refugee identity and implementing modes of ordering and control that are obscured by the humanitarian sentiment of the responsibility to protect and provide care. In light of this, this dissertation examines the role of the humanitarian government in sustaining the construction of refugees as dependent, victims, and voiceless and in further contributing to their precarity. It also situates the rise of humanitarian government within the broader historical and socio-economic contexts in Lebanon (Chimni, 1998). In other words, it focuses on how humanitarian governance plays a crucial role in maintaining existing power structures (Beckett, 2013; Duffield, 2014; Fassin & Pandolfi, 2010).

To examine how the architecture of governance managing Syrian presence contributes to extending precarious outcomes of refugees, this dissertation focuses on three interrelated processes of ordering and control implemented by the entire system of governance. In scrutinizing the formal

registration process of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, it relies on the critical refugee registration literature as a mechanism of ordering and control (Ajana, 2013; Franke, 2009; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Oh, 2017). This critique is part and parcel of the broader literature on labeling, identifying, and categorizing refugees, thereby enforcing an institutional refugee identity with which refugees seldom identify (Harrell-Bond, 1986; Zetter, 1991). Drawing on sociological securitization approaches, the analysis focuses on the establishment of discursive and nondiscursive practices of securitizing refugees, the product of the entire governance architecture in the current Syrian refugee presence, that is embedded in previous patterns, dynamics, structures, and power relations. Finally, it traces precarity as a labor market outcome for Syrian refugees who are left to fend off for themselves in the context of a segmented and hierarchal labor market. As such, precarious outcomes for Syrian refugees is an ontological experience, combining the failures of humanitarianism, labor market insecurities, the securitization of subjects, and a rigid system of categorization and ordering.

2.3 Precarity as a Product of Humanitarian Governance

2.3.1 Refugee Registration as a Tool of Control

Among the first procedures of dealing with an immediate refugee ‘crisis’ is the establishment of a status determination process which defines who is and is not a refugee. In its Handbook for Emergencies, UNHCR justifies refugee registration as vital for planning a humanitarian operation, disseminating information on refugee movements, and fundraising from donor states (Crisp, 1999; Franke, 2009; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992). As such, refugee registration is a process whereby refugee numbers must be constantly updated and monitored to ensure accuracy and proper assessment of refugee situations. Ultimately, the validity of UNHCR’s humanitarian operations stems from its ability to gather, track, and disseminate up-to-date records of ‘refugee populations.’ UNHCR is thus both “the source of knowledge for UN members regarding the protection and assistance needs of refugees and the mechanism through which persons deemed refugees may come to know themselves as ‘communities’ deemed worthy of international protection and assistance” (Franke, 2009, p. 354).

However, refugee registration has come under careful scrutiny by scholars who critically examine the process as a mechanism of ordering and control (Ajana, 2013; Franke, 2009; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Oh, 2017). This critique is part of a substantial critical literature on counting, locating, identifying, and thus labeling refugees (Zetter, 1991). Harrell-Bond (1992) argues that the “requirement to count refugees leads to highly undesirable, oppressive consequences for refugee populations, it forms a central component in an ideology of control which is part and parcel of most assistance programs” (p. 206). In the registration process, the exercise of counting refugees is justified as a necessity to determine the needs of refugee populations and more specifically the number of beneficiaries for humanitarian assistance programs (Harrell-Bond et al., 1992). Similarly, refugee registration is regarded as essential for refugees to acquire rights and reunite with family members (Crisp, 1999). However, counting refugees is arguably an impossible task, and as such often inadequate for assessing the needs of refugee populations (Franke, 2009; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992). The reasons for the unreliability of refugee statistics are numerous, ranging from the administrative incapacity of the international refugee regime, to the constant refugee mobility in search for livelihood, to domestic and foreign policy concerns (Harrell-Bond et al., 1992).

While some scholars have argued that refugee registration plays a crucial role in protecting the rights of refugees (Crisp, 1999), the dominant critique is that registration has devastating consequences on refugee identity (Bakewell, 2001; Franke, 2009; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Zetter, 1991). As Franke (2009) reveals, the impact of this registration exercise is such that,

under these conditions, the culture of refugees’ being is no longer a matter of their personal histories, their reasons for flight, their desires for and rights to freedom, and their fears...Registered as ‘refugees’ within this system, these persons become defined by a voicelessness and helplessness dictated by the agency and control of others. (pp. 360–361)

Bakewell (2001) exposes how the refugee registration process which imposes the refugee label is a bureaucratic practice that seldom reflects the identity of the displaced person, but rather serves the interests of the international humanitarian system. In other words, there will be a strong inclination for displaced persons to register and identify as refugees as long as it is beneficial for them to do so, to access aid for example. In cases where refugee registration leads to camp

confinement, displaced persons may have a strong aversion to it. Naturally, the participation of displaced persons in the process of registration entails having to provide data based on pre-set categories determined by the international humanitarian regime to serve their operations of providing aid and implementing durable solutions (Franke, 2009).

However, this attempt at control by the international humanitarian regime, and particularly UNHCR's refugee registration process is not one-directional. It comes as no surprise that host states, host communities, and refugee themselves attempt to alter, manipulate, or discredit the practice of registration in an attempt to establish their own position of control. For example, refugees may register in multiple sites, to secure further aid, while local nonrefugees may seek to register as refugees to gain access to resources, and host states may inflate refugee numbers to attract foreign aid. Such practices should not be construed as the main obstacles to accurate refugee registration, but rather as denoting ontological problems of the practice of refugee registration (Franke, 2009; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992).

In an attempt to provide the right solution to the wrong problem of accurate registration, UNHCR has developed more technologically advanced registration operations and enhanced its registration guidelines. At the start of the new millennium, UNHCR introduced computer-based registration along with standard rules for registration, coordinated systems that aggregate data worldwide, and biometric data registration. Such technological practices are all in line with UNHCR's goal of instituting a unified culture of registration globally (Franke, 2009). The practice of biometric data registration is of particular importance here as it was introduced in the process of registering Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Rather than a tool to keep track of refugee numbers, biometric registration of refugees has been consistently documented as an instrument of control (Ajana, 2013; Oh, 2017). As Oh (2017) illustrates in the case of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, "biometric registration adds another dimension to the identification, differentiation and classification of refugees" (p. 3). In *Governing through Biometrics*, Ajana (2013) demonstrates that biometrics is "a technology of biopower whereby the body and life itself are the subject of modalities of control, regimes of truth and techniques of sorting and categorization" (p. 4). She provides a genealogy of biometrics by establishing a continuum between the more recent and technologically advanced methods of biometrics and the older mechanisms of identification such

as fingerprints and paper-based identity documentation. Biometrics as a technique of control is less concerned with traditional markers of refugee identity (race, gender, age, etc..) but “merely in scanning their bodies for signs of (il)legitimacy through biometric technology in order to grant or restrict their access” (Ajana, 2013, p. 12).

2.3.2 Labeling, Categorizing and Ordering Refugees

Moreover, an integral and powerful attribute to refugee registration is its contribution to processes of ordering, categorizing, and labeling of refugees. Scholars have critically examined processes of categorization and stratification of refugees as tools of control by the international humanitarian regime, the essentialization of a refugee identity, and refugees’ responses to the refugee construct and its impact on transforming their identity (Glasman, 2017; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Malkki, 1995, 1996; UNHCR, 2012; Zetter, 1991).

Labeling refugees involves processes of creating rigid standardized categories and stereotypes (Zetter, 1991), which form the basis for an institutional refugee identity, one with which refugees seldom identify (Harrell-Bond, 1986). What Zetter (1991) calls ‘bureaucratic practices’ of the international humanitarian regime, which create the refugee label and the identity it conveys, have consequences on refugee lives. Not only does the label of the refugee transforms refugee identity, but also conformity to this institutionally constructed label reinforces control (Zetter, 1991). While humanitarian assistance has become increasingly globalized, modes of ordering and classifying refugees, predominantly led by UNHCR, result in the stratification of humanitarian aid and protection tailored to specific groups as per UNHCR classifications (Glasman, 2017). Glasman provides a historic overview of ordering refugees since the creation of UNHCR in the early fifties. Refugees were first distinguished from migrants and then stratified according to different categories of protection, depending on the national law or international convention recognizing them. Other legal categories such as internally displaced, asylum seekers, stateless people were also enacted, as classification and stratification of different categories became central to the operations of humanitarian organizations (Glasman, 2017). The importance of refugee classification lies in its consequential impact on refugees’ access to aid protection. As Glasman (2017) illustrates,

Refugee status, family size, special needs: categories shape a refugee's chances in life, the opportunities and constraints. They are important not only for the refugees themselves, but for the system of protection as a whole. Need assessment, programme planning and resource allocation are all based on refugee classifications. (p. 338)

Driven by its protection mandate, UNHCR categorizes refugees through a process of translating complex and heterogeneous claims and experiences into standardized and universal categories that claim to be non-political. Thus,

Refugee classifications are like abridged maps of societies, representing the slices of reality that are of interest to international institutions. However, refugee classifications are more than just maps; they shape reality, have juridical and material consequences, and mediate between discourses and everyday actions. (Glasman, 2017, p. 340)

By the same token, Malkki (1995, 1996) provides a genealogy of the construction of the refugee category as tied to an identity driven by the 'refugee experience' and essentialized by the workings of the international humanitarian regime. In what she refers to as 'dehistoricizing universalism,' Malkki (1996) illustrates how both the refugee is socially constructed as a mute victim and displaced people are universalized into a common refugee identity devoid of a historical, political, and cultural context. It is against this essentialized refugee identity, that Malkki (1996) proposes the concept of 'refugeeness.' To experience 'refugeeness' refers to a process where one does not suddenly become a refugee by registering with UNHCR or crossing the border, but rather through a culmination of several experiences, networks, and dynamics (Al-Sharmani, 2003; Grabska, 2006; Malkki, 1996).

Against this background, the 'humanitarian regime' in Lebanon has emerged as a structure of many agencies which complement actors to the Lebanese state and its institutions since the country's independence from the French mandate in 1943. This relationship has been marred by power struggles and conflicting, yet at times complementary, interests. Furthermore, this relationship did not suddenly emerge as a result of the Syrian refugee presence. As the next chapter will show, the UN apparatus has for decades had a habit of expanding in times of 'crisis' and downsizing when the 'crisis' is over. More crucially, as the governing body responsible for refugee

maintenance, care, and control (Malkki, 1995, 1996), the international humanitarian regime is the sovereign power that declares the state of emergency in the form of a refugee ‘crisis’; nonetheless, it functions “within the existing state without challenging its territorial extent, but also represents a limit to the sovereign power of that state” (Elden, 2009 as cited in Ramadan, 2013, p. 69). Rather than the function of one sovereign power, the function of ‘control’ is the product of the whole governance architecture in the current Syrian refugee presence, which is tied to previous patterns, dynamics, structures, and power relations that are better interrogated through securitization approaches.

2.4 Securitization of Refugees

Global refugee governance has increasingly been driven by security concerns. The migration-security nexus has gained salience in the past three decades, primarily as a result of an expanded security agenda at the end of the Cold War (Hammerstad, 2014). Ibrahim (2005) traces the expansion of the idea of migrants as security threats, showing that while migrant labor has been pivotal for capitalist expansion in the Global North in postwar efforts, the 1980s witnessed the increased concern over security. Up until the Cold war, security broadly centered around the state, but by its end a major transformation had occurred where the notion of security centered around the individual. With the widening of the conception of security, the notion of human security gained salience, thereby paving the way for the link between security and migration (Faist, 2006; Hyndman, 2012; Lohrmann, 2000; Shahrbanou, 2005; Vietti & Scribner, 2013). To put it differently, human security is centered around threats to populations rather than states. Ironically, rather than migrant populations being identified as the threatened population, owing to their displacement as a result of hunger, war, and persecution, migrants were quickly transformed to subjects of threat to receiving populations (Ibrahim, 2005).

This dissertation engages with several securitization approaches to trace the transformation of Syrian refugees into objects of securitization and as sources of security threats. The most dominant securitization approach is that of the Copenhagen school, which defines securitization as a discursive social and political construct steeped in discourses of threat and crisis (Buzan et al., 1998; Taureck, 2006; Watson, 2011). However, more sociological approaches to securitization

have contributed to our understanding of securitization beyond that of a discursive act; as a process that often involves routine and ordinary everyday practices of securitization that reflect existing power struggles and power relations rather than exceptional systems of management among different actors (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006).

2.4.1 The Limits of a Discursive Approach to Securitization

One of the most prominent securitization approaches is afforded by the Copenhagen school (Buzan et al., 1998). ‘Securitization’ refers to the process by which security threats are politically and discursively constructed by dominant political actors, with such threats backed by the buy-in and consent of an audience. This established buy-in from the audience is what justifies exceptional measures for dealing with the existential threat (Buzan et al., 1998). It is very much a constructivist approach, particularly portraying refugees and asylum seekers as security threats (Hammerstad, 2014). The securitization approach of the Copenhagen School has been readily applied to immigration and asylum seekers in liberal democracies of the West. Security is a social and political construct, whereby a referent object’s existence is threatened by the security speech act, thereby requiring extraordinary measures outside the realm of normal politics (Buzan et al., 1998; Taureck, 2006; Watson, 2011).

Scholarly debates on exceptionalism have attributed the presence of exceptional practices to the problem of ‘limits.’ In other words, practices of exceptionalism occur beyond the structural limits of liberal democratic politics in particular. Such readings have been influenced by Carl Schmitt and consequently Agamben’s reading of the sovereign as the one who decides on the exception (Jaskulowski, 2017). However, as Neal (2008) asserts, the justification of practices of exceptionalism as a natural consequence and outcome of structural limitations, risks normalizing such practices and thereby not only reifying their prevalence but also cementing them, such as the suspension of the law or norms under the veil of exceptionalism. In a sense, Schmitt’s reading of exceptionalism poses a two-fold problem. The first is the justification of structural limitations leading to the suspension of law and norms under exceptional situations. On the other hand, exceptionalism and exceptional circumstances are attributed to securitization. In other words, the structural limits leading to exceptionalism are almost always securitized. As Neal (2008) affirms,

“in the exceptionalism debate specifically, the discourse of limit both reifies exceptionalism as a structural inevitability and overdetermines the philosophical problem of limits by assuming it is *always already securitized*” (p. 46).

In *Precarious Life*, Butler (2004) offers a critical reading of exceptionalism and the problem of ‘limits.’ Butler’s contribution to the exceptionalism debate relies on a combination of Foucault’s concept of governmentality and her own concept of performativity. According to Butler, exceptionalism in itself is not an outcome of structural limits, but an often instrumentalized tactic in itself, a manifestation of governmentality in practice. To put it differently, the inevitability of exceptionalism is a political practice rather than an outcome of structural limitations. Exceptionalism is not a single decision of a sovereign, but rather the culmination of political practices and tactics. Butler’s theory of performativity on the other hand, seeks to illustrate how exceptionalism as a practice of politics is normalized through its repetition, whereby the exception becomes the norm. Butler refutes Schmitt’s binary, that of separating between the presence of established norms and the sovereign who decides on the exception. According to Butler, the practice of exceptionalism is in itself performative (Butler, 2004; Neal, 2008).

The Syrian refugee presence is framed around Schmittian and Agambenian readings of exceptionalism justified as a natural outcome of structural limitations (Neal, 2008). Structural limitations in the Lebanese context are numerous, ranging from a lack of a domestic legal framework for refugees, to political deadlock, to the financial and infrastructural incapacity of the government to manage a massive influx, all of which serve the purpose of justifying exceptional measures and practices of governance. However, as illustrated above, readings of exceptionalism practices as natural outcomes of structural limitations risk normalizing such practices (Neal, 2008). This discussion on the limits of the exceptionalism discourse foregrounds the need for a more sociological approach to securitization which sees it as a process that takes into account the discursive and nondiscursive practices of securitization.

2.4.2 *Securitization as a Process of (In)securitization*

Securitization theory's focus on language and the ability of language to construct a security threat has been criticized for excluding other forms and conceptions of security (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006; McDonald, 2008; Watson, 2011). Adopting an interdisciplinary approach to studying security, Balzacq et al. (2010) insist on the "need to analyze security and insecurity not only as a process but as the same process of (in)securitization" (pp. 3–4). Thus, security is the study of the process of (in)securitization:

(In)securitization is not a definition but a process which creates the effect of reading social changes and social interactions through the language of order, and of initiating struggles for legitimacy between adversaries, which give an advantage to those who favor coercion, exception, or a dominant order over those who prefer non-coercion, normality of social change, and political transformations. It implies a sacrificial practice, not recognized as such, since more securitization does not lead to less insecurity, but on the contrary expands it as each practice of security creates more insecurity and fear for other groups, or even for the same group or person (Bigo 2008). The process of securitization is always drawing limits, excluding categories, banning people, even when it claims to be doing the opposite (as in human security). (Balzacq et al., 2010, p. 12)

Thus, rather than focusing on defining security, the authors posit that studying the process of (in)securitization reveals the heterogenous discursive and nondiscursive practices at the root of the process. Apart from looking beyond discursive practices of security, the divergence in analysis of (in)securitization from the securitization theory of the Copenhagen school is in a sense two-fold. Analyzing discursive practices of security places governments and political factions at the center of the analysis, by virtue of being agents performing discursive practices. This analysis falls short of engaging with other agents involved in quotidian processes of (in)securitization. Moreover, such practices of discursive securitization are very often performative. Balzacq et al. (2010), insist on the importance of both discursive and nondiscursive practices in analyzing process of (in)securitization.

It is in this light that sociological approaches to understanding securitization have gained salience. Such conceptions of securitization point to processes and practices that can render asylum as a security threat without necessarily being discursively constructed as such (Bigo, 2002;

Huysmans, 2006). Drawing on Foucault, scholars such as Bigo (2002) of the Paris School of Security Studies and Huysmans (2006) deepen our understanding of securitization by examining securitization practices as biopolitical acts of control, in other words “security as a technique of government” (p. 6). The concept of security as a technique of government, influenced by Foucault, refers to going beyond speech acts, to methods and activities that very much involve routine practices, technological knowledge, and skills such as risk assessments and surveillance (Huysmans, 2006). As Huysmans posits, “the security continuum is an institutionalized mode of policy-making that allows the transfer of the security connotations of terrorism, drugs traffic and money-laundering to the area of migration” (Huysmans, 2006, p. 71).

In similar fashion, several scholars have adopted a sociological approach to securitization of migration in the case of the EU (Jaskulowski, 2017; Lazaridis & Wadia, 2015). In the European case, the link between securitization and migration is constructed by immigration policies that divide migrants into two broad but very rigid categories: educated and skilled migrants who benefit from more liberalized immigration policies, and low-skilled migrants, refugees, and other less privileged migrants who are constructed as security threats (Jaskulowski, 2017). Moreover, beyond discursive constructions of refugees as threats, numerous practices of securitization in the European context abound, including: the privatization of security for border control; the prevalence of detention as a normalized practice; deportation schemes of undesirable migrants and technologically advanced surveillance mechanisms (Jaskulowski, 2017; Lazaridis & Wadia, 2015).

In the same vein, Biehl (2009) illustrates how immigration from the South to the North has been increasingly linked with ‘terrorism’ giving rise to a rhetoric of protecting ‘national security.’ Securitization practices against migrants and asylum seekers have gained salience particularly in the aftermath of 9/11 (Biehl, 2009; Jaskulowski, 2017). Very often, discursive securitization influences and shapes restrictive policies of asylum and refuge. It is in this context that a securitization approach to asylum has resulted in heavier border control, restrictive requirements to legal entry, policing practices, and increased detention (Biehl, 2009). Ibrahim (2005) goes further to illustrate how establishing a link between security and migrants in the context of Chinese boat people migrants in Canada actually reifies a racist discourse founded on “exclusion based on

cultural differences” and an “us” (referring to the civilized west) vs. “them/the other” dichotomy (p. 164). In similar fashion, Koca (2015) examines how apparently non-securitized discourses around refugees in the Turkish context, which are very often driven by promoting a humanitarian discourse on refugee presence, largely conceal securitization frameworks of control and containment.

More importantly, several scholars have also examined the role of humanitarianism and the role of the international humanitarian regime in contributing to discursive and nondiscursive practices of securitizing refugees (Hammerstad, 2011, 2014; Watson, 2011). Hammerstad (2011) illustrates how UNHCR, the most prominent organization of the international humanitarian regime, is complicit in the securitization of refugee flows through propagating a security discourse in the last few decades. Hammerstad (2011) views UNHCR’s shift to a securitization discourse as reflective of donor state and host state interests and concerns. This change stems from their need to engage with their funders and the states which offer access to refugees. Hammerstad (2011) traces the changes in UNHCR’s discourse towards refugees since its inception in the 1950s. UNHCR gradually transformed from an agency strictly monitoring the refugee convention in the 1950s to one focused on extending humanitarian assistance in the 1970s, and later adopting an increasingly politicized human rights approach in the 1980s centered on the root causes of displacement. However, it was not until the 1990s that the agency endorsed a security focused discourse. While previously UNHCR’s mainstream operations primarily focused on assisting refugee flows in receiving countries and did not address the reasons and causes of mass displacement, the agency, particularly in the 1990s, became increasingly involved in assisting a wide array of populations within countries of conflict and warzones, not limited to internally displaced persons. Such a shift in the nature of UNHCR’s operations has necessitated increased involvement with security and military actors such as NATO and the UN security council, thus paving the way for the securitization of refugee movements to emerge in the agency’s discourse (Hammerstad, 2011).

Humanitarianism plays a role in justifying extraordinary and exceptional measures and practices. The most obvious example is the use of humanitarianism as a discourse to justify military intervention in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. Watson (2011) argues that humanitarianism is

similar to securitization, in the sense that they are both contested conceptualizations whose blurred boundaries and discursive power are often manipulated by political agents. Humanitarianism is thus a form of securitization by virtue of being a process that identifies a referent object as threatened and requires emergency measures to mitigate the threat. In this conception of humanitarianism as a securitizing discourse, securitization agents who decide on what qualifies as an existential threat, such as hunger, poverty, natural disasters, are not limited to humanitarian organizations (Watson, 2011). In a sense, while humanitarianism as a process of securitization homogenously agrees on human life as the referent object of security, securitizing actors in humanitarianism disagree on the nature of existential threats and the types of emergency measures they warrant. Nonetheless, emergency measures of relief and aid to mitigate human insecurity are far from exceptional, but rather have become institutionalized responses in humanitarian emergencies. In other words, the international humanitarian regime forms institutionalized and bureaucratized responses to recurrent humanitarian emergencies, operating under a ‘threat-urgency’ framework (Watson, 2011).

Drawing on these theoretical discussions, this dissertation examines the biopolitics in place in terms of the security architecture in Lebanon as the coming together of both discursive and nondiscursive practices. The securitization of Syrian refugee presence has been propagated by a public discourse consumed with ‘othering’ Syrian refugees as threats to Lebanon’s economy, security, labor market, social fabric, demographic balance, health, and educational conditions. This has been coupled with more institutionalized, bureaucratic procedures and practices that are to a large extent influenced by the power relations between the different actors managing the refugee situation. Security practices and measures operate well below the level of exception in both an ad hoc and institutionalized fashion, thereby problematizing the distinction between “normal and emergency measures” and replicating unchanging nonexceptional measures to mitigate perceived threats (Watson, 2011, p. 7).

2.5 (Re)Producing Precarious Lives

Precarity is a contested concept that has been the subject of intense academic debate in the new millennium (Millar, 2017). Precarity has most prominently been used to describe an arguably new

labor market condition associated with post-Fordism capital expansion in the Global North (Craig et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2015; Lewis & Waite, 2015; Waite, 2009). This dissertation, however, uses a broader framing of precarity to examine the conditions of Syrian refugees under a failing humanitarian government which heightens their vulnerabilities and leaves them to fend for themselves for survival in an unregulated market of services and labor. Chapter six in particular examines the mechanisms of ordering and control through the Syrian refugees' position in the Lebanese labor market. The overarching framework of this dissertation, however, draws on Butler, (2004, 2009), and Lorey's (2011, 2015) socio-ontological deconstruction of precarity. In this framing, precarity is a politically produced notion embodied in the multiple processes of refugee registration, the construction of the refugee as a social subject, and the establishment of discursive and nondiscursive practices of securitizing refugee presence.

2.5.1 Ontological Precariousness and the Conception of Precarity

In *Frames of War*, Butler (2009) distinguishes between 'precariousness' and 'precarity.' Precariousness, according to Butler, is a human condition not only cemented by one's mortality but also by the human condition's dependency on sociality, labor, and the need for shelter and food. Precariousness is very much a generalized condition that one is born with and is experienced relationally. However, it is the fact that every life requires conditions to become livable, that economic and social institutions are designed to satisfy that in a sense produces precarity. Precarity is a politically produced and charged condition whereby the distinction between the lives worth and not worth living are magnified:

Precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death. Such populations are at heightened risk of disease, poverty, starvation, displacement, and of exposure to violence without protection. (Butler, 2009, p. 25)

Thus, while precariousness is the shared ontological condition of vulnerability owing to our sociality, precarity in a sense is the unequal distribution of vulnerability by institutions (Millar,

2017). More importantly, Butler distinguishes precariousness from the concept of ‘bare life’ posited by Agamben, through attending to the power relations that produce it:

Since the lives in question are not cast outside the polis in a state of radical exposure, but bound and constrained by power relations in a situation of forcible exposure. It is not the withdrawal or absence of law that produces precariousness, but the very effects of illegitimate legal coercion itself, or the exercise of state power freed from the constraints of all law. (Butler, 2009, p. 29)

In other words, Butler’s conception of precarity as politically charged and produced goes against Agamben’s conception of ‘bare life,’ as it is related to power relations and the infliction of social and political marginalizations, which result in ruling through legal coercion, rather than legal suspension as envisaged by Agamben.

Heavily influenced by Butler, Lorey (2015), in her book *State of Insecurity*, distinguishes between three concepts: precariousness, precarity, and governmental precarization. Lorey (2011, 2015) concurs with Butler’s conception of precariousness as a socio-ontological condition of all living things by virtue of their sociality. It is both existential and relational. Because precariousness is a shared condition that is experienced relationally, bodies are dependent on each other and on institutions to survive. Forms of domination follow from the existential state of insecurity emanating from bodies possibly being threatened by others (Feijóo, 2017; Lorey, 2011, 2015). It is exactly the legal and political institutions and regulations that are allegedly protecting living beings from general precariousness that precarity, as a political concept, is produced. Precarity is the classification and ordering of common precariousness, whereby some lives are more worthy than others in terms of protection. It is a mode of ordering of domination. Such relations of domination result in structural inequalities, very often along the lines of gender, race, class etc. (Kunst, 2015). Socio-ontological precariousness is constructed as a threat, thereby invoking precarity as a condition of inequality attributed to the ‘others,’ whose precariousness is marked as a threat (Lorey, 2011, 2015). Lorey (2011) contends with precarity as “social positionings of insecurity” (p. 2); yet, she acknowledges that precarity does not speak to the agency of people subject to precarity nor to the modes of ‘subjectivation’ involved in the segmenting and the ordering of precariousness. It is in this spirit that she introduces the concept of governmental precarization as both a mode and instrument of governing in the context of capitalist conditions

that have become normalized. Precarization as a mode of governing is founded on fear from insecurity, allowing for the continuous production of structures and dynamics that normalize precarity as a political and economic condition (Kunst, 2015). As Butler posits with regard to Lorey's concept of precarization, "precaritization allows us to think about the slow death that happens to targeted or neglected populations over time and space" (Puar, 2012, p. 169).

2.5.2 Precarity as a Multi-dimensional Phenomenon

Various scholarly work has advanced diverse ontologies of precarity by attending to the multidimensionality of the phenomenon of precarity (Banki, 2013; Canefe, 2018; Ilcan et al., 2018; Janmyr, 2016). This is perhaps influenced by Butler's deconstruction of precarity (Butler, 2004, 2009; Lorey, 2015) expounded above, which has paved the way for wider conceptions of precarity not restricted to the labor market. For example, in what they label as the "ambiguous architecture of precarity," Ilcan et al. (2018, p. 51) focus on the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion producing ambiguity tied to three dimensions of precarity in the experience of Syrian refugees in Turkey, that of status, space, and movement. Janmyr (2016) has also illustrated the precarity of legal status in the case of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. On the other hand, Canefe (2018) adopts a gendered approach to illustrating precarity, whereby Syrian women are not only subject to labor-centric precarity with regard to their working conditions but also undergo processes that remain largely unseen, such as early forced marriages and human trafficking. For Canefe, the concept of precarity signifies lived experiences marred by uncertainty and instability. Wall et al. (2017) focus on information precarity in the case of Syrian refugees in Jordanian camps. They define information precarity as the instability and insecurity of access to information with devastating outcomes for refugee lives. In the case of Japan, (Allison, 2012) attends to social precarity, a condition she defines as "being and feeling insecure in life that extends to one's (dis)connectedness from a sense of social community" (pp. 348–349). Paret and Gleeson (2016) explore the concept of precarity as tied to the phenomenon of migration. They argue that:

the central significance of the precarity concept lies in the way in which it connects the micro and the macro, situating experiences of insecurity and vulnerability within historically and geographically specific contexts. An analysis of precarity thus calls for the study of broader political and economic shifts, and how they reshape the relationships

between individuals and groups on the one hand, and capital and the state on the other. In this sense, the diverse approaches may represent strength rather than weakness, because they expose the multiple dimensions of precarity. (p. 280)

Thus, as an analytical tool, precarity, particularly when examining forced migrant experiences, allows for an exploration of the multiple forms of exclusion, vulnerability, and insecurity. It also allows for an examination of the history, policies, and interrelated mechanisms that constitute a precarious living for forced migrants that is distinct to each context and existing in relation with other populations (Paret & Gleeson, 2016).

In this context, more recent literature on precarity either illustrates the condition as a product of societal insecurity or the product of neoliberal market dynamics that result in precarious conditions, uncertainty, instability and insecurity (Millar, 2017; Waite, 2009). However, when approaching precarity as a labor condition under distinct labor regimes and political and economic structures, there is a need to emphasize the link between the precarious labor market condition and the ontological experience of precarity. As Millar (2017) argues, “when approached as an open question about the relationship between forms of labor and fragile conditions of life, precarity retains both its analytical and political value” (p. 7).

2.5.3 Precarity as a Labor Market Condition

The concept of labor precarity can be traced back to the early works of Pierre Bourdieu, specifically his study on casual labor in Algeria in 1963 (Paret & Gleeson, 2016; Waite, 2009). The notion became increasingly salient in Europe at the start of the new millennium in the aftermath of labor protests and social movements against austerity, economic hardship, and labor market instability (Neilson & Rossiter, 2005; Paret & Gleeson, 2016).

The literature on precarity has been dominated by labor market-centric explanations focusing on the rise of precarious jobs that are ‘risky,’ ‘unstable,’ ‘low-skilled’ and ‘low-wage’ under a new labor regime (Banki, 2013; Ilcan et al., 2018; Waite, 2009). Precarity as a post-Fordist phenomenon is often associated with menial jobs, flexible work, and a labor market outcome marred by insecurities, exploitation, and instability (Craig et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2015; Lewis

& Waite, 2015; Waite, 2009). Particular attention has been paid to the role of capitalist markets in prolonging and magnifying precarity and labor insecurity, more specifically labor commoditization (Hewison & Kalleberg, 2013). Precarious work proliferated in countries of the global North as a result of the weakening of labor unions and protection, the flexibilization of labor, and the dismantling of welfare systems in postindustrial societies following the Fordist era (Millar, 2017). Thus, the concept of precarity is generally used to describe labor market regimes and positionings in the wake of the 1970s recession, which witnessed the proliferation of insecure and ‘flexibilized’ jobs particularly in advanced capitalist economies (Waite, 2009).

Critiques of the literature which understands precarity as a labor market condition focuses on several issues. To start with, precarious labor is not as new as is often suggested and forms of insecure, irregular and informal work were actually the norm during the early decades of industrialization and capital expansion in countries in the Global North (Paret & Gleeson, 2016). In similar fashion, scholarship from the Global South has illustrated the wide pervasiveness of precarious labor historically (Munck, 2013; Waite, 2009). More specifically, several scholars have shifted from the often Eurocentric and North Atlantic focus on precarity by adopting a more global approach and focusing their empirical work on the Global South (Lee & Kofman, 2012; Munck, 2013). Lee and Kofman (2012), for example, argue that precarious employment is a crisis of social reproduction while demonstrating how precarious labor in countries such as China is tied to state development strategies serving their labor-intensive export. They also demonstrate that the foundations of precarious employment and labor regimes in the Global South differ from those in the Global North, as they are influenced by historical legacies of colonialism, authoritarianism, and neoliberal restructuring dictated by international financial institutions. Munck (2013) argues that precarious work has always been prevalent in the Global South, noting that “super-exploitation, accumulation through dispossession and what might be called ‘permanent primitive accumulation’ have by and large prevailed” (Munck, 2013, p. 752).

Analysing labor market precarity also tends to take a narrow focus on the underlying causes of precarity. Bernards (2018) argues that research on labor precarity focuses on unregulated labor markets as the main cause of precarity and, hence, assumes that introducing regulatory frameworks is the answer. The ILO has similarly called for formalizing informality and introducing labor

regulations and social protection regimes. On the other hand, the World Bank adopts De Soto's (1989) conception of 'informality' as a consequence of exclusion from market forces as a result of overly regulated labor markets. Deregulation of labor markets and extending credit thus encourage and foster entrepreneurship, essentially a form of informalization of heavy state regulation. This improvement of institutions brings the informal economies into formal markets. According to Bernards (2018), both views on informality and formalization of markets misconceive the fluid boundaries between informal and formal work. Thus, going beyond regulatory failures as a dominated explanation for the rise of labor informality and precarity, broader analysis of global structures of production and accumulation are necessary (Bernards, 2018).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has laid out the two intertwined frameworks that guide this dissertation. It first challenges the exceptionalism framework often employed to understand refugee presence. It argues that the framing of refugees as emergency situations and exceptional moments conceals modes of governing, ordering, and controlling of refugees that are part and parcel of ordinary politics and are reflective of existing structures and power dynamics. It thus offers an alternative framework for understanding Syrian presence within its historical, political, and social context. By adopting the notion of precarity as an ontological experience as an overall framework, to examine how the overall system of governance through its multiple institutions drive precarious outcomes. Drawing on the extensive body of interdisciplinary critical scholarship that has carefully scrutinized the workings of the humanitarian regime in the past 50 decades (Ajana, 2013; Franke, 2009; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Huysmans, 2006; Malkki, 1995; Oh, 2017; Zetter, 1991), the chapter identifies and elaborates on three concepts that are crucial to understanding the Syrian refugee experience in Lebanon: the social construction of the figure of the refugee; the discursive and nondiscursive processes of securitizing refugees; and precarity as a labor market condition. Against this background, the next chapter will lay out a historical overview of the Lebanese economic and political system and the intricacies of the Lebanese-Syrian relationship to better ground the onset of the Syrian refugee influx in Lebanon.

Chapter 3: Political Economy of Lebanon and the History of Lebanese-Syrian Relations

3.1 Introduction

A ‘problem-solving’ discourse has always dominated the study of refugees (S. Turner, 2016). Refugee presence in this approach is seen as the product of exceptional circumstances, ranging from wars to natural disasters, and requiring a solution, in the realm of exceptional measures and politics, to resolve a ‘crisis’ (Ramsay, 2017; Soguk, 1999). It is in this spirit that mainstream policy and academic literature tend to situate the ‘refugee’ outside the sphere of ‘normal societies’ and frame the solutions to their crisis around humanitarian relief programs often under the umbrella of UNHCR (Sanyal, 2014). Central to this framing of refugees is the assumption that refugee flows are temporary emergency situations to be handled by the international humanitarian regime in agreement with the host state (S. Turner, 2016). Such a framing both threatens and reifies the principles of the nation-state and citizen/nation/state trilogy by virtue of constructing the refugee as a marginal entity outside of it (Agamben, 1998; Haddad, 2003). This dissertation challenges the understanding of refugee presence as an exceptional, isolated moment by situating the condition of Syrian refugeeness in a wider examination of the socio-political context in Lebanon and demonstrating how this has shaped management of the current refugee wave. The study of refugee presence must be understood as part of a context and not as taking place in a vacuum as accounts of refugees as temporal and exceptional seem to suggest. A political economy perspective is also better able to show how systems of refugee governance are often reflective of long power structures and dynamics as well as of political struggles among competing actors.

Based on this assumption, this chapter critically examines the historical, political, and economic landscape of Lebanon since its independence in 1943 to better understand the context in which Syrian refugees have been governed since 2011. More specifically it highlights three dominant structures of the Lebanese polity and society. In the first section the chapter focuses on the dynamics of a confessional power-sharing system which emerged since the country’s independence. The section unpacks the Lebanese political system and reveals how it has survived

several crises through a confessional power-sharing formula under clientelist and nepotistic mechanisms. It also shows how this system left the Lebanese state and its institutions weakened and captured by different internal and external political forces. Throughout its independent history, periods of political crisis, divisions, deadlock, and turmoil became a feature of the Lebanese confessional power-sharing system.

The second section examines the interplay between the confessional power-sharing system and the particular variant of Lebanese capitalism. It particularly highlights how pre-civil war (1943–1975) laissez-faire economy benefited the bourgeoisie, particularly merchants and financiers, of both Muslim and Christian communities, owing to Lebanon’s role as a financial intermediary between the Arab world and the west (Baumann, 2012). Later, the civil war witnessed the rise of a ‘militia economy’ controlled by warring militias appropriating rents and dominating the country’s economy. The postwar period saw the shifting of the Lebanese economy from a liberal to a neoliberal system, with a particular transformation of the role of the Lebanese state under Syrian tutelage.

Section three examines the intricacies of the Lebanese-Syrian political relationship, state policies, and economic inter-dependence. It argues that the current refugee management and governance has its roots in the nature of the Lebanese state and the tumultuous relationship between Syria and Lebanon and is grounded in historic policies of exclusion and deterrence towards refugees.

Finally, the chapter engages with the case of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon to argue that this experience has shaped policies and attitudes towards Syrian refugees since 2011.

3.2 Lebanon’s Political Economy

3.2.1 Tracing Confessional Governance: 1943–Present

Present-day Lebanon can be traced back to the Emirate of Mount Lebanon established in the 16th century under Ottoman rule. The Emirate was known for “a sizable Christian numerical majority;

an early conversion to production for the market (silk) and to international trade; a long cultural exposure to Europe, and a tradition of intervention by European powers in its internal affairs” (Traboulsi, 2007, p. 3). Such elements have greatly shaped the history of Lebanon until this present day. The end of the first world war witnessed the dismantling of the Ottoman empire upon the victory of the Allies and as a result Arab provinces previously under Ottoman rule were apportioned and divided between British and French rule under the Sykes-Picot accords of 1916 (Harris, 2012; Salibi, 1976). By 1920, and particularly following the San Remo agreement between Britain and France, the final shape of British and French mandates on Arab provinces had taken place (Harris, 2012).

Like other Arab states in the region, including Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Iraq, the state of Greater Lebanon was the product of the colonial partition process. Greater Lebanon was established under the French Mandate in response to the demands of the primarily Maronite Christian community in Mount Lebanon calling for the establishment of a ‘Greater Lebanon’ as an independent entity from Syria (Traboulsi, 2007). The Maronite Christians demanded that Mount Lebanon should extend to include fertile valleys and areas of the dismantled Ottoman empire namely “coastal towns of Tripoli, Beirut, Sidon and Tyre and their respective hinterlands, which belonged to the Vilayet of Beirut; and the fertile valley of the Bekaa (the four Kazas, or administrative districts, of Baalbek, the Bekaa, Rashayya and Hasbayya), which belonged to the Vilayet of Damascus” (Salibi, 1988, p. 25). The annexed areas comprised a Muslim majority population which was formerly part of Syria.

After more than two decades under the French Mandate, Lebanon obtained its formal independence as a state in 1943 (Hudson, 1997; Makdisi, 2007). The Lebanese state was established as a consociational democracy, a form of government guaranteeing group or communal representation in deeply divided societies (Lijphart, 1969). From its inception as a state, Lebanon was founded along religious confessional lines under a system that was meant to avoid the over-domination of one confessional group over others through a power-sharing formula (Hudson, 1997). This power-sharing system, which would dominate the country’s character for decades to come, was institutionalized in the landmark National Pact of 1943. The National Pact, which was negotiated by Lebanon’s president and prime minister at the moment of independence, is

essentially an unwritten power-sharing arrangement between the country's Maronite Christian and Sunni Muslim elites.

The National pact instilled a confessional/sectarian system that allocates political and administrative functions to the main sects in Lebanon: Maronite Christians, Sunni, Muslims and Shi'ite Muslims (Hudson, 1997; Krayem, 1997; Traboulsi, 2007). The National Pact, a non-written agreement, stipulated that in Lebanon's presidential democracy, the president should be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of parliament a Shi'ite Muslim. It also ensured that Christians outnumbered Muslims in the parliament and the civil service with a ratio of 6 to 5, reflecting the latest 1932 census and the relative Christian dominance at that time (Hudson, 1997).

Outside the realm of formal politics, post-independent Lebanon was dominated by elitist sectarian leadership, also known as *zu'ama*, who represented the large landowning class and maintained close relations with the bourgeois merchant families who had increasingly dominated rising service sectors including banking, real estate and tourism. This network of business interests grew to play an intermediary trading role between the west and the Arab world (Baumann, 2016; Traboulsi, 2007). An independent Lebanon boasting a *laissez-faire* economy was advantageous for all merchants where, by and large, Christian merchants handled trade with the west, while Muslim merchants facilitated trade relations with the Arab World (Baumann, 2019; Traboulsi, 2007).

The years between 1943 and 1975 were often referred to as a 'golden age,' a time when the Lebanese consociational system was relatively stable and Muslim-Christian tensions were limited and easily controlled. The golden age also referred to steady rates of economic growth, flourishing political freedoms compared to its Arab neighbors and regular parliamentary elections (Hudson, 1997). However, portraying the pre-war decades as a golden age grossly obscures economic and political features of the country during this period. Internally, while the three decades following independence recorded steady economic growth, they were also marked by uneven development across regions, sects and social classes as well as rising inequality (Hudson, 1997; Krayem, 1997). Externally, the country faced an increasing involvement in the Arab-Israeli

conflict. Up until the late 1960s, Lebanon was relatively unaffected by the Arab-Israeli conflict and enjoyed the intermediary financial role of connecting the Arab world to international markets. It was not until after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war that domestic polarization increased particularly around the presence of armed Palestinian forces in Lebanon (Krayem, 1997). By and large, however, sectarian tension was minimal. A brief civil strife in 1958 lasted for a period of 5 months (February – July 1958). The strife was a reflection of ideological polarization in the country rather than a conflict of a predominantly confessional nature. At the time, Lebanon was divided between the Pan-Arab nationalist camp and those with more pro-western orientations. The brief civil war ended with US military intervention and the election of a new president, army commander-in-chief General Fuad Shihab (Hudson, 1997). The Shihabist era (1958–1970) was a limited attempt at modernizing and strengthening the state and its institutions and addressing social divisions (Hudson, 1997; Makdisi, 2007). Among the many reforms the Shihabists embarked on was the strengthening and expansion of social service provision in an attempt to mitigate the widening inequality (Hudson, 1997). This era was also marked by the enhancement of several public institutions such as the National Social Security Fund, Green Projects, social welfare systems, public schooling, and the creation of the Lebanese University and the Central Bank in 1964 (Gaspard, 2003; Makdisi, 2007; Traboulsi, 2007).

The Shihabists, however, were defeated in the 1968 parliamentary elections and subsequently in the 1970s presidential elections. An alliance of strong Christian leaders rallied around Suleiman Franjeh, a *za'yim* and traditional feudalist family leader from North Lebanon, whose political project hinged on reestablishing Maronite Christian hegemony and traditional leadership that had dominated the country prior to the 1958 civil strife (Hudson, 1997).

Civil War (1975–1989)

The Lebanese civil war erupted as a result of a combination of domestic, regional as well as international tensions (Khalidi, 1979; Salibi, 1976). The relocation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from Jordan to Lebanon in 1971 intensified the domestic polarization around the presence of Palestinian armed groups in Lebanon (Hudson, 1997). The outbreak of the civil war also had its roots in social and economic struggles, most notably over deteriorating living

conditions, rising inequality, rural-urban migration, and the creation of slums around cities (Krayem, 1997).

Owing to the political developments that resulted in the National Pact and the dominant role of *zu'ama* in the Lebanese society, the civil war assumed a sectarian character. As the war broke out, it was marked by political polarization across two camps. The first camp, the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), consisted of nationalist and leftist parties, allied with the Palestinian resistance movement. Its most notable figure was Kamal Joumblat, leader of the Druze community and the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP). The LNM's demands included a revisiting of the 1943 National Pact's power-sharing formula, fighting inequality, and supporting the Palestinian cause and movement (Hudson, 1997). The other camp at the beginning of the civil war was the anti-Palestinian Lebanese Front, a group of conservative Christian Maronite factions, most notably the Christian Phalange party⁹ (Krayem, 1997). The main concern of the Maronite Christians was to mobilize against the Muslim and Palestinian threat to the country. Shi'ite Muslims also began to mobilize along factional lines in response to what they considered the oppression of their deprived people. These Shi'ite groups were led by non-elite leaders, most important of whom was Imam Musa al-Sadr, a rising religious leader who emerged as a rival to the traditional Shi'ite leadership and advanced the Shi'ite community's political claims (Hudson, 1997).

The first period of the civil war, between 1975–1982, witnessed the rise of war militias. What started as locally mobilized armed groups gradually emerged and consolidated into large militias with vast power and resources. Soon, these militias were able to divide the Lebanese landscape among their factions (Picard, 2000). Various militias took control or gained advantage at various stages of the conflict and inter-militia fighting intensified throughout the course of the civil war. This range of political and sectarian militias and organizations vying for control in a fragmented country, were headed by either traditional sectarian *zu'ama* or rising militia leaders. More specifically in this phase, militias controlling various territories of Lebanon gradually

⁹The Christian phalange party was established in 1936 by Christian Maronite politician Pierre Gemayel. It played a major role in the civil war and led the Christian National Front coalition. Its armed group, the Lebanese Forces, transformed into its own political party and was led by Bachir Gemayel the son of Pierre Gemayel. Bachir Gemayel was assassinated prior to his inauguration as the President of Lebanon in 1982 (The Samir Kassir Foundation, 2019).

established frameworks for resource control and coercion in what Picard (2000) calls the formation of ‘ministates.’ This militia landscape saw the concentration of Palestinian influence and financial support in ‘Muslim areas’ especially with the rise of Syrian hegemony in 1976. Key militias included the Amal Movement headed by Shi’ite leader Nabih Berri, the Lebanese forces led by Christian leader Samir Geagea, and the PSP led by Kamal Jumblatt (Hudson, 1997).

In what is widely known as the ‘militia republic,’ Lebanon’s formal state institutions gradually collapsed, and its infrastructure was ravaged by different warring groups. It is important to highlight the magnitude of infrastructure destruction that the country experienced during this phase of the war. As Picard (2000) explains, the militias’ tactic of targeting the country’s infrastructure served two purposes:

First, it destroyed the physical infrastructure that constituted the material basis of the coexistence between communities to legitimize the militias’ bellicose project. And second, it deprived their adversaries of resources such as oil and electricity so as to secure a monopoly over them. (pp. 294–295)

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which left around 17,000 people dead and 300,000 others injured (Haugbolle, 2011), was a turning point in the civil war (Makdisi, 2007). The Israelis joined a civil war landscape comprising Palestinian armed groups, Iranian revolutionary guards, a Syrian military intervention, and a brief presence of US Marines in 1982 (Hudson, 1997; Picard, 2000; Traboulsi, 2007). The invasion led to the complete collapse of the Lebanese state particularly the Lebanese army. The collapse of the army in 1984 was due to the rebellion of its various sections and resulted in the inability of the Lebanese state to maintain control over its territories (Picard, 2000). The invasion also led to the steep devaluation of the Lebanese pound and its economic consequences. In 1985, Israel withdrew from most of Lebanon following its failure to dismantle the PLO or to form a government allied with Israeli interests (Hudson, 1997). Perhaps one of the most important consequences of Israeli occupation and its lasting legacies has been the creation of Hezbollah, a Shi’ite political party and militia that will gradually come to dominate the Lebanese political arena and play a key role in the Syrian refugee management in present-day Lebanon.

A parliament with a minimal degree of legality survived the civil war and managed to consistently renew its mandate in the absence of national elections (Hudson, 1997). This unelected Parliament swore in four presidents, all under considerable influence from external powers including Syria and Israel. In 1976, Elias Sarkis, for example, was elected under pressure from Syria, while in 1982, Bachir Gemayal was elected as a result of Israeli pressure and the military invasion of Beirut. In 1989 alone, two Syrian-approved presidents were put in place. The assassination of the first, René Moawad, led to his replacement by Elias Hrawi (Hudson, 1997). It was this same 1972 elected parliament, or those who survived of its members, that convened in 1989 the postwar accord of national reconciliation, a document also known as the Ta'if Agreement.

Sustaining the Sectarian Power-Sharing System in Postwar Lebanon

The fifteen-year civil war led to a mass exodus of close to 800,000 Lebanese, the death of more than 100,000 people and the internal displacement of close to 500,000 people (Harris, 2012). Furthermore, as Traboulsi (2007) illustrates, the civil war significantly weakened the state while war militias established their own institutions and ran their own economies. The Ta'if Agreement, also known as the Document of National Accord, signed in 1989, sealed the end of the Lebanese civil war and effectively endowed Syria with the upper hand in ruling Lebanon (Krayem, 1997; Picard & Ramsbotham, 2012; Traboulsi, 2007).

The Ta'if Agreement not only put an end to the civil war, but it also created the basis for institutionalizing Lebanon's traditional confessional power-sharing system (K. Karam, 2012; Makdisi, 2007). The Ta'if agreement updated and codified the confessional power-sharing formula by guaranteeing Muslims and Christians equal representation in parliament. It abolished the historical Christian advantage, a long-awaited outcome for the Muslim community (K. Karam, 2012, Makdisi, 2007). The new system ensured the representation of all confessional groups in political life and nurtured a decision-making process that relied on the formation of grand coalitions between confessional groups. At the same time, it ensured that different groups enjoyed veto power to hinder decisions not reached through consensus (Geha, 2019). The Ta'if Agreement also provided permission for Syrian military forces to remain in Lebanon for 2 years until the election of a new president, the formation of a government, and the approval of constitutional

amendments. However, Syrian troops did not redeploy to Eastern Lebanon as agreed nor withdraw completely from Lebanon until 2005 (Chalala, 1985; Makdisi, 2007; Traboulsi, 2007). The postwar period, which was ruled by Syria as power-broker, became known as ‘Pax-Syriana’ (Hinnebusch, 1998).

The end of the civil war also witnessed the demobilization of all militias with the exception of Hezbollah, which justified its existence as a resistance movement against Israel (Picard & Ramsbotham, 2012). Interestingly, Lebanese warlords were pardoned under the General Amnesty Law of 1991¹⁰ and many of them moved on to become politicians in the new postwar period (Picard, 2000; Picard & Ramsbotham, 2012). Following the Ta’if agreement, the ‘troika rule,’ which refers to the agreement between the Christian president, the Sunni Prime Minister, and the Shi’ite Speaker of Parliament, in coordination with the Syrian regime, began to dominate political decision making. Disputes were often resolved outside public institutions such as the parliament or the Council of Ministers, and the settlements were often imposed by the Syrian regime (Makdisi, 2007). Naturally, the troika members were all Syria’s allies. The troika rule protected the interest of the Syrian regime in Lebanon and largely undermined the role of Lebanese political institutions. The Syrian regime not only extended its political and security agenda in Lebanon, but it also wielded its power to suppress political opposition and censor free, independent media (Geha, 2019).

In 2005, opposition to Syrian occupation of Lebanon reached its peak in the wake of the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of which the Syrian regime had been accused (Baumann, 2016; Blanford, 2006). The event led to the rise of two opposing political camps. On one hand, the March 14 coalition was born from an alliance between the Sunni Future Movement (Hariri’s political party), the PSP led by Walid Jumblatt, and the Lebanese Forces (a Maronite Christian political party led by Samir Geagea upon his release from prison in 2005). The anti-Syrian bloc was backed by the US, France, and the UK. The name, March 14 bloc, was in reference to the date when close to one million people demonstrated in the streets following Hariri’s assassination. demonstration of close to one million people on that date following Hariri’s

¹⁰ Law No. 84 of August 26, 1991, Granting General Amnesty to Crimes Committed before March 28, 1991 (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2014).

assassination. The aftermath of his assassination and the large public outcry and massive demonstrations ushered in what is known as the ‘Cedar Revolution,’ which managed to overthrow the pro-Syrian government and resulted in the withdrawal of Syrian military forces from Lebanon (Knudsen, 2005; Obeid, 2010).¹¹

On the other hand, the March 8 alliance emerged as a staunch supporter of the Syrian regime and was primarily backed by Syria and Iran. This bloc consisted of Hezbollah, Amal Movement, and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)¹² led by General Aoun who returned from exile in 2005. Aoun initially supported the March 14 bloc but soon shifted his alliance to the March 8 bloc after the parliamentary elections (Makdisi, 2007).

The political polarization between March 8 and March 14 blocs was primarily over the formation of an international tribunal to investigate the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri and, more generally, over curbing Syria’s influence after its formal withdrawal from the country. The polarization resulted in a year and a half of political deadlock during which a Hezbollah-led opposition briefly seized control of the country’s capital, Beirut (Geha, 2019).

Furthermore, the end of the civil war and Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon did not result in any serious institutional reform or any improvement in governance mechanisms. On the contrary, nepotistic and clientelistic relations were sustained in a context of proliferating corruption. Several scholars have discussed the deeply entrenched clientelistic networks in Lebanese politics arguing that they are neither new nor static. Hamzeh (2001), for example, traces the development of political clientelism from a traditional feudal system prior to independence to the more recent form of *zu‘ama*, party-based, and militia-oriented clientelism. In *Compassionate*

¹¹ UN Security Council resolution 1559, ratified in 2004, called upon Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon but was not respected until after the assassination of Lebanon’s Prime Ministry Rafiq Hariri.

¹² The FPM was founded in 1994 by General Michel Aoun, a Lebanese army general and interim Prime Minister between 1988–1990, who rejected the Ta’if agreement and was consequently exiled by Syrian troops from Lebanon to France. He returned from exile in 2005, as a March 14 ally but soon after parliamentary elections allied with the March 8 bloc. In 2006, the FPM and Hezbollah forged a political alliance that was sealed in a signed MoU (Helou, 2019). The FPM is one of the largest parliamentarian blocs in parliament (The Samir Kassir Foundation, 2018c). Michel Aoun leader was elected President of Lebanon in 2006. His son-in-law, and Lebanon’s Foreign Minister at the time of writing, is the current FPM leader.

Communalism, Cammett (2014) goes further to examine the politics of welfare provision across various sectarian groups in Lebanon. The country's multiple sectarian groups have developed structures capable of appropriating and exploiting state institutions in order to position themselves as welfare providers. Furthermore, sectarian-based welfare distribution and provision have also served as mechanisms for mobilizing political support, attracting voters, and supporting militias. Thus, a confessional power-sharing system created widespread inefficiency in the Lebanese public sector and helped to sustain clientelistic networks and mechanisms (Makdisi, 2004). Makdisi describes a 'culture' of corruption in postwar Lebanon that developed as warlords participated in successive governments and poured money to achieve political gains.

Lebanon's sectarian system has proved to be an impediment to balanced growth and development, effective governance and service delivery and, most importantly, has resulted in a hollowed-out state vulnerable to external factors and influence (World Bank, 2015). To put things in perspective, Chaaban calculates the additional costs Lebanese citizens incur in their lifetime in various sectors, such as health, schooling, and other public services, as a result of the sectarian system. Chaaban (2014) estimates that Lebanon's confessional governance costs the country 9% of its GDP annually (a total of three billion dollars incurred by society in additional costs yearly). In a context of gradually diminishing public institutions and public provision of services, the private sector and international and national organizations provided vital services in lieu of the state. What perhaps started as different actors replacing vital government services in times of war, continues in present-day Lebanon where state institutions fail to provide a range of public and social services, and international and national organizations continue to dominate the realm of service provision (Picard, 2000).

During the postwar period, and in line with Lebanon's historical reliance on external powers as mediators in its domestic affairs, Qatar mediated a regionally brokered agreement that put an end to political tensions in the aftermath of Hariri's assassination. The Doha Agreement of August 2008 ended the political deadlock in the country and brought about a compromise between the opposing blocs, culminating in the election of the chief of the army as president, the agreement on the formation of a new government, and the distribution of different ministries across political blocs. The Doha agreement also paved the way for the modification of the electoral law with the

aim of satisfying all political parties in the lead up to the 2009 parliamentary elections (Makdisi & Marktanner, 2009).

3.2.2 Lebanon's Laissez-Faire Economy

A political system which relies on balancing a range of confessional and political interests and hinges on consensus among often warring factions, has necessitated a particular form of economic arrangements since the country's independence. The need for political consensus, largely driven by a sizable and powerful business class with close links to the political elite, dictated the laissez-faire nature of the Lebanese economy (Makdisi et al., 2010). A laissez-faire economy was expedient to the merchant classes of all sects. Since independence, the Lebanese economy has undergone three historical phases: the post independence years until the civil war (1948–1974), the civil war period (1975–1990), and the postwar decades (1991–2005, and 2005–present) that depicted a period of reconstruction and debt management (Gaspard, 2003).

The Origins of the 'Laissez-Faire' Economy

Since independence and in the decades leading up to the civil war in 1975, the Lebanese economy was primarily service based, externally oriented, and heavily dependent on foreign capital (Krayem, 1997). Contrary to other Arab countries, state-led development strategies were never pursued in Lebanon (Baumann, 2016). With the exception of the Shihabist era between 1958–1964, the state in Lebanon never embarked on large-scale centralized efforts for development (Gaspard, 2003; Makdisi, 2007; Traboulsi, 2007).

Owing to the country's pluralist multi-sectarian society and strategic location as an intermediary between the Arab East and the West, Lebanon adopted a laissez-faire economic system with minimal constraints on free movement of labor and capital. Thus, Lebanon's financial and commercial intermediary role came to dominate the pre-war economy, and was aided by a floating exchange rate and open flow of capital (Baumann, 2016; Gaspard, 2003; Traboulsi, 2007). The relaxation of capital controls in 1948, followed by the complete removal of all controls in 1952, were characteristic of this era (Gaspard, 2003). Unlike other countries in the region,

Lebanon's exchange system was unrestricted, attracting foreign capital and investments in a state of virtually non-existent government intervention. This period also witnessed a high flow of remittances from the Lebanese diaspora (Makdisi, 2007). The pre-war years were marked by a robust financial condition that was based on promoting macroeconomic stability, low public debt, a fiscal surplus, and a floating exchange rate. Up until the civil war, the exchange rate in Lebanon was approximately three Lebanese Liras to the dollar (Nasr, 1978). During that period, Lebanon was often dubbed the 'Switzerland of the Middle East' owing to its high literacy rates, high living standards and high growth rates. Between 1950 and 1974, for example, Lebanon, particularly as a non-oil producing country, witnessed impressive growth rates of around 7%, (Makdisi, 2007).

However, this portrait of a thriving, liberal economy requires critical scrutiny. For example, Gaspard (2003) argues that it was not the *laissez-faire* economy that fostered healthy economic growth but rather external positive shocks that were responsible for high growth levels during this period. Such positive shocks included Palestinian capital inflows to Lebanon in the aftermath of the Nakba in 1948, influx of Arab capital fleeing successive waves of nationalization, particularly from Syria and Egypt in the late 1950s, and the surge in capital inflows as a result of oil income in the Gulf countries.

More importantly, the emphasis on the strong economic growth of the pre-war years obscures the uneven distribution of said growth, wealth and living standards. The benefits of a liberal economic system accrued to a narrow businesses and political class owing to the clientelistic nature of the political system (Makdisi, 2007). For example, a study carried out by IRFED (Institut de Recherche et de Formation en vue du Développement) in the 1960s found that 50% of the population lived below the poverty level. Moreover, as an indication of the vast inequality that existed, 3–4% of households held 84% of total savings in Lebanon until the mid-1960s (World Bank, 2015). This was further compounded by the fact that only 5% of beneficiaries had access to close to 70% of bank credit (Gaspard, 2003).

With minimal state intervention in drawing economic policies, the Lebanese economy saw a deterioration in vital productive sectors in favor of services. Lebanon's intermediary role in the region necessitated the development of the banking sector. By 1974, the proportion of total

deposits to national income reached 122% (Nasr, 1978). The Lebanese and Arab bourgeoisie played a crucial role in developing the banking sector in Lebanon starting in the 1950s. The number of Lebanese banks more than doubled from a total of 20 banks in the 1950s to 55 Lebanese banks in 1965.¹³

The service sector, particularly the banking sector, gradually expanded and dominated other productive sectors of the economy, namely agriculture and industry. In the same period, the service sector accounted for two thirds of GDP (Nasr, 1978). With the expansion of the service economy, the agricultural sector witnessed a steady decline with its share of GDP dropping from 19% in the 1950s, to 9% in the 1970s prior to the civil war. This led to rural-urban migration, a widening gap in income between regions, and the creation of poverty slums in the outskirts of major cities (Makdisi, 2007; UNDP, 1997). More specifically, between 1965 and 1980, Lebanon noted the highest rural to urban migration in the Middle East region as a result of the lack of income opportunities in rural areas. This migration was the source of a staggering 65% of urban growth and led to an increase in employment in the service sector that absorbed the migrants (Gaspard, 2003). While employment in services only accounted for 34% in 1950, 61% of employees worked in the service sector in 1997. It is in this spirit that *laissez-faire* in Lebanon was historically characterized by integrating and incorporating unskilled labor in the economic process while skilled labor sought opportunities abroad through emigration (Gaspard, 2003; Makdisi, 2007). Therefore, as Nasr (1978) argues, on the eve of the civil war, Lebanon was facing a social and economic crisis, a “crisis of Lebanese capitalism,” most notably reflected in widening inequality (p. 1).

The Civil War Economy: 1975–1989

Two broad phases characterize the economic developments of the civil war period (1975–1989). As Baumann (2019) suggests, the period between 1975 and 1982, was one of resilience, while that

¹³ The global financial crisis of 1966, which was characterized by high interest rates in the West, heavily influenced the banking sector landscape in Lebanon. As a result, the Lebanese financial sector was left exposed to capital outflows, resulting in a decreased and diminished role for Lebanese financiers, who were replaced by a substantial number of Western financial institutions (Nasr, 1978).

of 1982 and 1990 was one of collapse. Naturally, the civil war saw the end of the role of the Lebanese economy as a financial intermediary. The period between 1975 and 1982, Picard (2000) notes, witnessed the rise of a militia economy, whereby different militias concentrated modes of coercion, maximized economic opportunities, and monopolized resources. Up until 1982, warring militias benefited from outside financing that aided in keeping the Lebanese currency afloat. In addition, outside financing was boosted by remittances sent from abroad following the civil war mass immigration particularly to Gulf countries (Picard, 2000). However, the period starting in 1982 witnessed the Israeli invasion, which was followed by a monetary crisis characterized by rapid and steep decline of the Lebanese pound, hyperinflation, and the collapse of the Lebanese state and its ability to control its resources. Warring militias expanded their grip over their respective territories against the background of a collapsed state. As mentioned earlier, the militia landscape is particularly pertinent for understanding the postwar state and peacebuilding process, since the same civil war militias were later incorporated into the Lebanese state.

Between 1975 and 1982, at the onset of the civil war, the militias controlling various territories of Lebanon gradually established frameworks for resource control and coercion in what Picard (2000) calls the formation of ‘ministates’ during a period of mass destruction of infrastructure, particularly in the city of Beirut. This destruction led to a 40% loss in GDP in 1976 and a consequent rise in the militias’ dependence on external financing, particularly from expatriates and remittances, in order to finance their struggle on Lebanese soil; resources coming in from the diaspora were estimated at \$1.5–2.5 billion a year (Picard, 2000). The civil war economy ensured that Lebanon was connected to the global economy through regional and expatriate financing of contending militias (Baumann, 2016). Moreover, this first phase of the civil war was also characterized by an overvalued exchange rate of the Lebanese lira with respect to the dollar. In other words, the first chapter of the civil war saw the maintenance of a strong Lebanese pound. The strong pound meant that the state and its institutions had not fully collapsed yet, as the government continued to pay civil servant salaries and exert price controls on essential goods and collect tariff revenues (Makdisi, 2004; Picard, 2000; Traboulsi, 2007).

The Israeli Invasion of 1982 led to major economic consequences, notably the loss in the government’s ability to collect revenues, which it had been relatively able to maintain during the

first phase of the war, notwithstanding the massive destruction to the countries' infrastructure and institutions. The years between 1982 and 1990 constituted the second phase of the civil war and saw the complete collapse of the Lebanese state, particularly the collapse of the army and the gradual yet enormous monetary crisis which led to the steep devaluation of the Lebanese pound. During this phase, the collapsed Lebanese state barely controlled 10% of the Lebanese landscape and lost its ability to control its financial resources, (for example, in 1986, the Lebanese state was only able to collect 10% of revenues from tariffs) (Picard, 2000). The collapse of the Lebanese economy after 1982 was also tied to the diminishing Palestinian role in sustaining the economy and currency; the PLO's budget in Lebanon was equal to that of the Lebanese state. As mentioned earlier, the country's economy had also depended heavily on remittances from emigrants, which peaked at two billion dollars annually in 1982. However, starting in 1982, both remittances and PLO budgets in Lebanon waned (Harris, 2012). As a consequence, the country plunged into hyperinflation reaching 400% in the late 1980s (UNDP, 1997). The monetary crisis of the pound depreciation was also instigated by significant speculation against the currency (Gaspard, 2003). This phase also saw the expansion of the militia economy in lieu of a destroyed state, capital flight, and massive emigration, particularly of skilled labor, as the devaluation of the pound caused massive impoverishment and a deterioration of living conditions for all but a minority who benefited from the militia economy (Picard, 2000). By 1990 when the civil war came to an end, the Lebanese economy was practically shattered. Inflation had reached 500% in the late 1980s, and GDP was estimated at \$2.2 billion in the context of an overwhelmingly informal economy managed by the militias (Knudsen, 2005; Picard, 2000).

Post-Civil War: Reconstruction and Debt Management

The 1990s reconstruction project marked a shift to a neoliberal economy (Traboulsi, 2014). The postwar neoliberal transformation was spearheaded by Rafiq Hariri, a rising Lebanese bourgeois in the Gulf, whose neoliberal project hinged on two pillars of rent creation; that of the reconstruction of central Beirut through privatization and costly currency stabilization. Hariri's government favored a policy of attracting Gulf capital, particularly in finance and real estate. The reconstruction project was led by Prime Minister Hariri from 1992 until the 2000 and then during his second brief stint as Prime Minister from 2004–2005 before his assassination. Prime Minister

Hariri, a rising Sunni bourgeois, who had accumulated his wealth in Saudi Arabia, returned to Lebanon armed with his Gulf-accumulated wealth. Hariri was a powerful example of the eventual rise of a new contractor bourgeoisie of Gulf-based Lebanese immigrants who were looking to invest in postwar Lebanon (Baumann, 2016). ‘The Hariri Project’ of the 1990s was guided by a vision of reestablishing Lebanon as a financial and business hub of the region, a tax haven for attracting capital. Essentially, Hariri saw the civil war as a disruption of the Lebanese liberal economy and the postwar phase an opportunity to return to liberalism (Baumann, 2016). Hariri’s neoliberal project hinged on clouding the difference between economic and political power and romanticized the pre-war year, referring to them as a ‘golden age’ of economic ‘prosperity’ and political stability of the confessional power-sharing system. With its service based and banking engines, it became a model to be followed in the postwar reconstruction project.

More importantly, postwar reconstruction was financed by the public sector, with the government borrowing at excruciating interest rates from the domestic financial sector ultimately leading to soaring budget deficits and public debt reaching 180% of GDP in the early 2000s (Gaspard, 2003). The postwar economic policies, therefore, led to a chronic government debt trap, with the debt to GDP ratio reaching 150% of GDP in 2018. In short, economic growth was not due to a postwar recovery of productive sectors, namely industry and agriculture. Nor was this growth equally distributed, which further exacerbated the severe disparities between income groups and regions (Knudsen, 2005; Makdisi, 2007; Picard, 2005; World Bank, 2015).

The reconstruction project, moreover, gave a large role to members of the warring militias who were completely absolved of any responsibility for the war, which was instead blamed on external agencies and factors (Traboulsi, 2014). While Hariri, along with a group of technocrats, took control of economic ministries and institutions, namely the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank, former militia leaders were allowed to control service and welfare ministries. As Baumann illustrates, militia leaders

demanded a share of neoliberal rents appropriated by Hariri and other new contractors as side payments because they could act as spoilers. This division corresponds to the division of the state into a ‘right hand’ and a ‘left hand’ proposed by Pierre Bourdieu: the realization of neoliberal economic policies requires a strengthening of the economic ministries that

make up the right hand of the state and the neglect or weakening of the welfare functions of the state that constitute the left hand. (Bourdieu, 1998, as cited in Baumann, 2012, p. 105)

On the whole, the postwar economic project focused on privatization and real estate operations with a complete disregard for provision of public services. Effectively, by making use of accumulated capital by various war militias, the reconstruction of the Lebanese economy enabled these militias to fully integrate into all sectors (Picard, 2000). It is in this context that, as Picard (2005) suggests, land and money evolved into the two sectors which predominantly monopolized national wealth, leading to vast distortions in the structure of the national economy. For example, 40% of the 1997 budget was reserved for debt service, crowding out social project financing and social service provision (Perthes, 1997). It comes as no surprise, thus, that the decades between the civil war and the new millennium resulted in a more than 50% reduction in the size of the middle class in Lebanon, decreasing from 68% of the population in 1973 to around 30% in 1999 (Knudsen, 2005).

The other pillar of the neoliberal project in the 1990s was currency stabilization. In 1997, the Lebanese Lira was pegged to the US dollar, a culprit for the high debt accumulation in the postwar economy. By maintaining a fixed exchange rate to the dollar, the postwar economy was dependent on attracting dollars from abroad, which poured into the real estate, banking, and tourism sectors. Significant dollar capital inflows came from the Lebanese diaspora, particularly expatriates in the Gulf. The banking sector attracted such large deposit inflows by maintaining high interest rates. With this capital, commercial banks financed government spending by investing in government bonds and benefiting from over-priced interest rates. Commercial banks made a massive profit of \$22 billion between 1993 and 2018. Such high interest rates meant that government debt and debt servicing were accumulating rapidly, increasingly resulting in a debt trap. As early as 1997, debt servicing accounted for 40% of the government budget, while in the early 2000s, public debt reached 180% of GDP (Gaspard, 2003). As Salti (2019) suggests, the high debt servicing costs meant that there was no fiscal space to spend on redistributive efforts; rent was accumulated in a very narrow base that seldom trickled down.

Postwar Lebanon, however, did enjoy periods of steady economic growth, albeit susceptible to external and internal security and political shocks. Between 1991 and 1996, growth averaged at an impressive 13% as a direct result of public investment in infrastructure and reconstruction (World Bank, 2015). Economic growth slowed down thereafter and hovered around 2.4% as fears of the mounting public debt soared with the debt to GDP ratio exceeding 180% of GDP in the early 2000s (total of \$31 billion). Two Paris donor conferences in 2001 and 2002 aided in restoring back ‘confidence’ in the Lebanese economy by pledging a total of \$4.4 billion as a mode of refinancing Lebanon’s national debt at lower interest rates (Gaspard, 2003; World Bank, 2015). Another Paris conference in 2007 instigated record economic growth at an average of 9.2% between 2007 and 2010. This was also the result of high oil prices that led to a surge in Gulf deposits in the Lebanese banking system. This was coupled with the Lebanese banking system attracting capital in the aftermath of the global financial crisis owing to its lack of exposure to bad debt, tight regulation, and banking secrecy (World Bank, 2015).

However, focusing on economic growth often conceals the structural malaise of the Lebanese economy. The Lebanese economic system is frequently cited as a system in ‘crisis’ (Baumann, 2019). The traditional drivers of the Lebanese economy have for decades been service-oriented, namely real estate, construction, finance, and tourism sectors, all of which are volatile to external shocks and political turmoil. As low value-added sectors, they also fail to create employment opportunities (see chapter five for a detailed analysis of the labor market) (Harake et al., 2018). Lebanon faces the third highest debt to GDP ratio worldwide, reaching 150% of GDP in 2018 (Harake et al., 2018). As mentioned earlier, Lebanese government debt is predominantly domestically held by the central bank and Lebanese domestic banks.¹⁴ More importantly, Lebanese domestic banks are captured by the political elite.¹⁵ In short, with banks and the government in a

¹⁴ In 2019, out of \$86 billion in government debt, only between 5–11% of total public debt was held by foreigners (Azzi, 2019). Close to 40% of Lebanese debt is in foreign currency (Eurobonds) while the remaining 60% is in Lebanese Liras, with debt servicing costs accounting for a sizable 10% of GDP annually, or 50% of government revenues annually (Harake et al., 2018).

¹⁵ Chaaban (2016) provides crucial empirical evidence of elite capture of Lebanon’s affluent and thriving banking sector by the political class as a form of crony capitalism. He finds that affiliates of the political elites in Lebanon control 43% of assets in the banking sector. Even more stunning is that 18 out of 20 banks’ shareholders are affiliated to political elites. With equity estimated at over seven billion dollars, eight political families in Lebanon control 30% of the banking sector’s assets (Chaaban, 2016).

situation of mutual hostages, the postwar economy has been characterized by a chronic debt trap with debt sustainability and the potential collapse of the banking sector at its center. Elite capture of the Lebanese economy and its chronic structural woes have further produced staggering and persistent inequality (World Bank, 2015). For example, Assouad (2019) estimates that the top 1% of the adult population receive 25% of national income and hold 40% of total personal wealth, while the top 10% receive 55% of national income and 70% of personal wealth.

The postwar reconstruction phase and the neoliberal transformation of the Lebanese economy occurred against a background of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon. In fact, even prior to the neoliberal transformation under Syrian presence, Lebanese-Syrian relations had been historically economically and politically intertwined.

3.3 Syrian-Lebanese Relations

Lebanon's management and response to the Syrian refugee influx as well as the country's public discourse and the Lebanese-Syrian communities' dynamics are rooted in the complex political and economic relationships between the two countries. The countries' common history, inter-reliant economies, and state policies produced a complex political relationship which has shaped the current Syrian refugee presence in Lebanon.

3.3.1 Decades of Political Turbulence

Since Lebanon's independence in 1943, and even under the French mandate era (1920–1943), Syria (which is approximately five times the size of Lebanon) has considered Lebanon to be its backyard, bound to it by “distinctive relationships” (Salloukh, 2005, p. 14). Starting in 1976, the Syrian military began to intervene in the Lebanese civil war by sending army troops in response to an invitation by the Lebanese president and the Lebanese Front. This intervention was endorsed by two Arab summits (Krayem, 1997).

The Syrian military intervention was not driven by an ideological vision in support of a particular faction in the civil war. On the contrary, the Syrian regime's role was to provide a

balance between warring factions as it sought to protect its own strategic and political interests (Chalala, 1985; Perthes, 1997). Most notably, the Syrian military invasion of Lebanon in 1976 came in the aftermath of 2 years of clashes between the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), also called the “Muslim Left,” fighting alongside Palestinian factions, against Christian militias under the Lebanese front. The Syrian military deterred the LNM from invading Christian areas in fear that a Christian defeat would prompt an Israeli invasion. The Syrian regime and military ultimately turned against the Christian militias in 1977, shifting its alliance, a pattern which would characterize its role in the course of the civil war (Picard, 2000).

As Palestinian factions’ influence in Lebanon gradually dwindled upon the departure of their troops from Lebanon in 1982, Syrian influence rose in its stead with the support of regional powers (Krayem, 1997). The Syrian regime maintained an upper hand in the civil war and played a crucial role in influencing the outcome of several military clashes. For example, in 1983, Syria obstructed an Israeli-Lebanese agreement, on Israeli occupation of Lebanon, which was devised by the conservative right-wing Christian Front (Perthes, 1997). In 1987, it intervened to control West Beirut after heavy fighting between Amal, a Shi’ite faction, and pro-Syrian factions. Syrian hegemony over Lebanon lasted from 1976 until 2005, significantly shaping Lebanese politics and conflict dynamics in the postwar era (Salloukh, 2005). As mentioned earlier, the Ta’if Agreement not only provided the basis for ending the civil war but also fortified Syria’s role as the external power-broker between the different Lebanese communities and sects. It is hence in the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war that Syrian hegemony over Lebanon was fully exercised both domestically and regionally.

Following the Ta’if agreement, Syrian hegemony was institutionalized through the signature of two treaties between the two countries. The Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination was signed in 1991 and stipulated the full collaboration of the two countries in all political, economic and security matters, ultimately affording the Syrian regime complete control and oversight particularly in security and foreign policy matters in Lebanon (Picard, 2000; Traboulsi, 2007). The Defense and Security Agreement, also signed in 1991, gave the Syrian regime domination over Lebanon’s military and intelligence apparatus (Picard, 2012; Salloukh, 2005).

Both agreements have had far-reaching effects. The treaty of Brotherhood, rather than being a bilateral agreement between two neighboring countries, was in essence an unequal treaty between “a dominant power and a dominion state” (Picard, 2012, p. 6). The ideological foundation for this treaty was that both countries would be bound by a “common destiny (*talazum al-masarayn*)” in confronting external threats from Israel and beyond (Picard, 2012, p. 6). The Defense and Security Agreement further cemented the presence of Syrian military in Lebanon, estimated anywhere between 15,000 to 25,000. This allowed the Syrian regime to oversee the development of a large army and impose a Syrian officer in every military base; meanwhile, a head of Syrian intelligence based in Lebanon communicated the regime’s directives to Lebanese politicians and officers (Picard, 2012). As a testimony to the heavily securitized state that the Syrian regime instilled in Lebanon in the civil war and postwar eras, a significant amount of Lebanese and Palestinian citizens (numbers unknown) have been ‘disappeared’ since at least the 1980s until well after the war in 1996 (Sherry, 1997).

As such, Syrian hegemony dominated Lebanese society and state, especially in terms of governance, and according to some, it hindered the establishment of effective and independent state institutions (Picard, 2000; Traboulsi, 2007; World Bank, 2015). As Chahal (2012) states, “the status of Lebanese political leaders from all factions was dependent on good relations with Syrian military officers and with Damascus” (p. 72). Political parties close to the Syrian regime were rewarded with high administrative and ministerial positions, while opponents to the regime were marginalized (Makdisi, 2007). While the Syrian regime entrusted the Syrian High Commissioner in Lebanon with security matters, it left the economy in the hands of Hariri, who also enjoyed the cooperation of war militias and political factions spanning the whole spectrum from right to left (Traboulsi, 2014).

Syrian hegemony over Lebanon also benefited from massive opportunities for wealth production and investment in the postwar reconstruction of Lebanon. Syrian regime insiders, along with their Lebanese business partners, managed lucrative business sectors including cellular phone companies and reconstruction projects, which economically strengthened the regime in Damascus (Salloukh, 2005). The Syrian regime, of course, supported Hariri’s economic policies. Not only did

Syria benefit from the lucrative opportunities they provided, but Lebanon's reconstruction was also the ideal site to absorb Syria's unemployed labor force. In a way, Lebanon functioned as "Syria's Hong Kong" (Perthes, 1997, p. 18). From the Syrian perspective, the Lebanese labor market offered a safety valve for the Ba'athist regime in terms of securing job opportunities for unemployed Syrians (Young, 1999). Balanche (2007) shows how migration of Syrian labor to Lebanon was the result of the economic failure of the Ba'athist regime in job creation. In Syria's northeastern province of al-Hasakah, which is predominantly Kurdish and neglected by the regime, official unemployment rates exceeded 26%, between 1994 and 2004. During that decade, the same province had the highest migration deficit of Syria, with massive unemployment driving the rural population towards Damascus but also towards Lebanon. Balanche estimates that between 10 to 15% of Syrian workers find menial jobs in Lebanon, with an average annual value of one billion dollars in remittances directly invested in the Syrian economy.

However, as a result of domestic, regional, and international pressure in the aftermath of Hariri's assassination, which was blamed on the Syrian regime, Syrian troops had to finally withdraw from Lebanon in 2005 (Knudsen, 2005). Yet, Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon did not lead to a sudden and abrupt change in the nature of the two countries' relations. The Syrian intelligence apparatus in Lebanon continued to penetrate Lebanon's military and security apparatus and to intervene in domestic politics (Salloukh, 2005). The schism between the March 14 and March 8 political camps, which centered around the role of Hezbollah and its demobilization and the meaning of state sovereignty, intensified around this period (Picard, 2012). With the start of the Syrian uprisings in 2011, Lebanese political factions became even more sharply polarized. At the societal level, for many Lebanese, their country was seen to have suffered greatly under Syrian occupation and economic exploitation. This translated into strong anti-Syrian sentiments (Pipes, 2000). However, a long history of intermarriage and social and economic links between the two countries explains the hospitality of Lebanese communities towards Syrian refugees at the onset of the Syrian influx (Chatelard, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2013). It is in this light that the politicization of the Syrian refugees' presence must be understood.

3.3.2 Economic Inter-dependence and Politicization of Syrian Labor

Since their inception as autonomous nation states, the complex relationship between Lebanon and Syria has seen their economies interconnected through a number of fundamental ties; namely, capital and labor. Dating back to World War II, the laissez-faire Lebanese economy, also known as the ‘Merchant Republic,’ privileged the free movement of capital, goods, and people with its neighbor Syria. Lebanon’s heavy reliance on services required a supply of cheap, unskilled labor. The free movement of unskilled and cheap Syrian labor from its less prosperous neighboring country was encouraged in order to maintain the Lebanese economic model, as the Lebanese themselves were not willing to indulge in heavy and manual labor (Chalcraft, 2006, 2014). On the other hand, Syrian capital often contributed to booms in the Lebanese economy.

Syrian capital began to arrive in Lebanon in the 1960s with the rise to power of the Ba‘th Party in 1963. The socialist policies of the Ba‘th meant that the Syrian state gradually took over all economic production. Waves of nationalization of private companies and banks as well as land reforms in the country pushed owners of private capital to flee to Lebanon in the 1960s and 1970s. Lebanon’s capital-friendly atmosphere, in contrast, gave precedence to a growing banking and financial sector that welcomed the new arrivals. The two countries followed very different economic models. The political economy of Ba‘thist Syria, founded on restrictions on capital, resulted in a weak currency and limited job creation but ensured social re-distribution through the provision of health and education services in addition to maintaining various subsidies bringing down social costs (Chalcraft, 2008). Lebanon on the other hand, offered relatively higher wages and more opportunities for workers but high social costs in terms of health, education, and other social provision in the absence of a developmental state.

Syrian labor, more importantly, has been a crucial factor in Lebanon’s economy. The promise of job opportunities and higher wages had always attracted Syrian workers to Lebanon, and in the lead up to the civil war, their numbers amounted to 279,541 or a staggering 50% of the Lebanese working population (Longuenesse, 2015). The presence of Syrian migrant workers occupying low-skilled jobs in Lebanon was mutually beneficial for the Syrian economy in the form of remittances.

However, with the onset of the civil war in 1975, Syrian labor in Lebanon began to face new impediments as well as growing political hostility. With the rise of warring militias, the Nationalist Christian Militias (the Phalangists) began to target Syrians on the basis of their nationality. As a result, Syrians fled Christian areas and were eventually driven out of Lebanon after having predominantly worked and resided in all areas of Lebanon prior to the civil war. Starting in the 1980s, Syrian workers began to be replaced by workers from different nationalities, including Indians (Longuenesse, 2015). More importantly, with the economic crisis resulting in the collapse of the Lebanese pound in the 1980s, Syrian labor was seen as the culprit for the gradual destruction of the Lebanese economic miracle. Although the numbers of Syrian and other foreign laborers in Lebanon were far lower than pre-war figures, public outrage singled out foreign labor as responsible for the country's economic woes of unemployment and the decreasing purchasing power attributed to inflation. The economic crisis prompted the Lebanese state to introduce, for the first time, policies aimed at the protection of Lebanese labor in 1986. However, they remained largely unenforced (Chalcraft, 2014).

The end of the civil war and the resulting Syrian control over Lebanon was another political turning point which influenced Syrian labor in Lebanon. The end of the civil war with the Ta'if Agreement and the ensuing Syrian hegemony saw the return of Syrian workers to take part in the reconstruction project of the 1990s. Under Syrian hegemony, a bilateral labor agreement was signed in 1994, allowing seasonal Syrian workers to move freely between the two countries (Chalcraft, 2006; Longuenesse, 2015). It entitled workers from both states to enjoy the same treatment, privileges, rights and obligations (Battistin & Leape, 2017; Syrian Lebanese Higher Council, 1994). Temporary residency and work entry cards issued at the border were non-renewable, but free of charge, and effectively allowed seasonal workers entry for the duration of their seasonal work. In theory, a formal system of work permits was mandatory in order to allow Syrians to enjoy the privileges of the bilateral agreement. However, formal rules and work permits were largely ignored. In fact, Syrian workers encountered the Lebanese state only at the borders, where they were issued residency temporary permits and work visas. As for their Lebanese employers, they hardly had any incentive to adhere to the work permit requirements and its associated costs. Similarly, state authorities hardly ever intervened to check work permits

(Chalcraft, 2014). As Young (1999) illustrates, only a total of 530 work permits were issued to Syrian workers in 1999, out of a working population of hundreds of thousands of Syrians in Lebanon. From an economic perspective, restricting Syrian labor or regulating their presence would have negatively affected the economic project of the 1990s, which relied on regional capital and was predominantly carried out on the backs of cheap Syrian laborers (Chalcraft, 2014).

Political polarization in the country during this period meant that Syrian labor was a subject of intense debate. In the context of Syrian hegemony, factions opposing Syrian occupation of the country saw unwanted Syrian migrant labor in Lebanon as an imposition by the Syrian regime (Balanche, 2007; Chalcraft, 2014). As Chalcraft (2014) states, “Lebanese and particularly Christian fears over the sectarian balance and the dilution of Lebanese culture and identity played an important role in bolstering this view, which strongly opposed the pro-Syrian notion of ‘two states, one people’” (p. 82). This camp insisted that Syrian hegemony not only imposed Syrian workers on Lebanon, but it also ensured that Syrian labor remained protected as calls for reform and regulation of the labor market remained unmet owing to the Syrians’ privileged status under the occupation. Pro-Syrian factions, on the other hand, attributed the presence of Syrian labor to the nature of the Lebanese economy and its historical reliance on cheap Syrian labor and the associated division of labor (Chalcraft, 2014). Chalcraft (2014) dismisses both views as reductionist and argues that it was the crucial role of the aforementioned divergent state policies in both countries that has prolonged and maintained Syrian migration. According to Chalcraft, both views ignore the reality that circular migration had always been a characteristic of both countries’ economies long before any formal agreements were put in place.

In 2005, in the aftermath of Syrian military withdrawal from Lebanon, Syrian workers consequently fled Lebanon in fear of retaliatory measures against them. The Lebanese government, in May 2005, and following the military withdrawal of the Syrian regime, announced that it would adopt restrictive measures against Syrian workers in Lebanon as a protection measure for Lebanese labor. The Ba‘thist regime did not protest these measures as it perfectly understood that the Lebanese economy could not survive without the vital Syrian labor force (Balanche, 2007). Indeed, in a matter of a few months, Syrian workers returned to Lebanon en masse, with both

governments realizing how labor migration was essential for the stability of their respective regimes (Balanche, 2007).

Despite the vast number of Syrian workers and their contributions to both economies, Syrian labor in Lebanon has never been characterized by permanent settlement. Anti-Syrian sentiment cannot be held responsible for this fact. Members of the Syrian bourgeoisie have never faced any problems that prevented them from settling in Lebanon. In fact, many middle class Syrians were naturalized in 1994. For poor Syrian workers, however, permanent settlement has always been hindered by the high social costs of life in Lebanon (Chalcraft, 2008). The number of Syrian workers in Lebanon has always been a subject of fluctuating political and economic factors. For example, in the wake of the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon, a slowdown in the construction sector and a drop in consumption rates led to a sharp decline in the number of Syrian workers in the country. Despite the often-heightened anti-Syrian sentiment, the decrease in Syrian worker numbers has never been driven by a desire to replace them with Lebanese workers. In fact, Syrian workers' flexibility, tied to their ability to return home easily in off-peak periods and return back en masse during periods of Lebanese economic growth, was one of their most prized features (Balanche, 2007).

By the early 2000s, some estimated that Syrians constituted 20 to 40% of the Lebanese workforce (Chalcraft, 2008). Just before the outbreak of the Syrian uprising, the World Bank put the figure at 17%, (World Bank, 2013). In the immediate outbreak of the conflict in Syria and the increasing number of fleeing Syrians, the large numbers of Syrian workers in Lebanon quickly faced the challenge of moving from the category of seasonal migrant workers to that of refugees.

3.4 Palestinian Refugees and the Roots of the Syrian Refugee Management

Lebanon's unique socio-political and economic structures and its unusual relations with Syria have underscored the way Syrian refugees have been managed and securitized in the wake of the Syrian conflict. Perhaps one of the most crucial dimensions of Lebanon's modern geopolitical realities, and one which is largely responsible for its reaction to the Syrian influx, is undoubtedly the Palestinian question and the history of Palestinian refugees in the country. In the aftermath of the

1948 expulsion of Palestinians from Palestine upon the establishment of the State of Israel, 100,000 Palestinians, of the close to 800,000 who fled their homeland, sought refuge in Lebanon (Chatty, 2010; Suleiman, 2008). This first wave of Palestinian forced displacement was followed by further waves of mass displacement in the aftermath of subsequent Arab-Israeli wars in 1956 and 1967.

A small minority of Palestinian refugees were wealthy individuals who brought capital and business opportunities into Lebanon. This capital flight contributed to the expansion of the Lebanese economy. The relocation of the Palestinian bourgeoisie and their capital to Lebanon was often rewarded with Lebanese citizenship to wealthy businessmen, predominantly Christians (Picard, 1996). Traboulsi (2007) cites that the estimated value of capital moving from Palestine was valued at 150 million Palestinian pounds. Furthermore, the Lebanese economy also benefited by taking over the role of the Palestinian city of Hayfa as the primary port linking the Arab World to Asia and Europe (Traboulsi, 2007). On the negative side, Palestine, especially its bordering regions with Lebanon, was one of the most crucial export markets for Lebanese goods. The loss of this market resulted in a complete collapse of the industries that relied on it (Traboulsi, 2007).

However, it was the poor Palestinian refugees who were seen as an economic burden and as posing a ‘crisis’ with which the country could not cope (Traboulsi, 2007). With the exception of the few naturalized wealthy Palestinians who mainly fled from Hayfa, Palestinians who fled to Lebanon have been generally the “most unfortunate and destitute grouping of Palestinian refugees in any Arab host country” (Suleiman, 2008, p. 94). However, since their arrival, the Lebanese economy has mostly benefited from cheap, reliable, and skilled labor. More importantly, Palestinians offered a labor supply stripped of its political and union rights, which constituted favorable conditions for landowners and businesses in the service sectors (Picard, 1996). After its unsuccessful attempts to relocate the Palestinian refugees to Syria, the Merchant Republic adopted a practical strategy of settling them into camps set up close to industrial zones in order to take advantage of their labor (Traboulsi, 2007).

Historically, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been heavily marginalized and institutionally excluded from access to public services and social and political life (Petet, 2005;

Suleiman, 2006). Spatially, Palestinians have always been confined to camps while economically, they have been barred from formal employment and effectively confined to menial jobs (see chapter five). Since 2001, Palestinians in Lebanon have also been barred from owning property (Chatty, 2010). All these exclusions are substantiated by a political and public discourse portraying Palestinians as a threat to the sensitive demographic fabric of the country (Knudsen, 2008; Peteet, 2005). The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is the main agency responsible for providing relief and services to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, including public education, public healthcare, and social services. For Palestinians in Lebanon, assistance has always been a substitute for rights (Ramadan & Fregonese, 2017).

The Lebanese government's hostility towards Palestinian refugees and the systematic discrimination against them was partially tied to the rising role of the armed Palestinian factions in the Lebanese civil war (Peteet, 2005). Palestinian camps in Lebanon became controlled by Palestinian factions, with the Lebanese army exercising no control over the security of the camps. The dominant discourse on Palestinian camps is that they are states within a state and act as criminal sanctuaries, thus posing a threat to Lebanese sovereignty (Khalidi, 1979; Weighill, 1997). Furthermore, Palestinian refugees, who are predominantly Sunni Muslims, have always been seen as a threat to the 'sectarian balance' in the country.

As a result, the political discourse in Lebanon has been historically dominated by fear and rejection of any naturalization or *tawfīn* efforts of Palestinian refugees. In that sense, all Lebanese political and social groups seem to agree on one thing: advocating for the Palestinian right of return as a means to prevent Palestinian refugees' permanent settlement in Lebanon (Khalili, 2007). As Peteet (2005) asserts, Palestinians "have become an 'other' on which a Lebanese national identity and sense of territorial sovereignty are being constructed" (p. 224). Thus, even initiatives aimed at easing socio-economic hardships of Palestinian refugees or improving their camps' abysmal infrastructure are considered by many as a prelude to citizenship or *tawfīn*. The mainstream Lebanese discourse in the Palestinian case has been based on a rather narrow binary of either the return of Palestinians to their homeland or their permanent settlement in Lebanon through

naturalization. Any attempt at advocating for legal, economic, and social rights or improved conditions has been ignored.

Sustaining abysmal living conditions of refugees is a governance strategy devised to prevent prolonged and permanent stay. This policy of deterrence has ‘successfully’ driven away Palestinian refugees from Lebanon over the decades. While the number of Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA in Lebanon exceeds 495,000 individuals, the latest census conducted in 2017 reveals that Palestinians residing in Lebanon do not exceed 175,000 individuals (Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee [LPDC] et al., 2018). This experience is particularly pertinent for understanding the active policies of exclusion in the current Syrian refugee influx.

As I argue in chapter four, the same logic has been adopted in the political discourse on the current Syrian refugee presence in Lebanon, focusing on a similar binary of either the repatriation of refugees back to Syria or their permanent settlement in Lebanon through naturalization. The overwhelming emphasis on the ‘right’ of Syrian refugees to repatriate and the perception of Syrian refugees as a burden and a threat to Lebanese sovereignty and sectarian balance seem to have been significantly influenced by the historical experience of the Palestinian refugee presence.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has laid out the origins of the confessional power-sharing formula governing the Lebanese political system. It is a system that has weathered several crises, most notably a brutal civil war from 1975–1990, but one that has been heavily reliant on external forces and power brokers. The withdrawal of Syrian military forces from Lebanon in 2005 resulted in a power vacuum followed by deep polarization between its political constituencies that persisted and was present at the onset of the Syrian refugee influx.

Moreover, this chapter has also laid out the transformations in the Lebanese economic system that are deeply tied to state creation in Lebanon. It is an economic system set up as *laissez-faire*, which while achieving economic growth in the pre-war years, led to uneven distribution of standards of living, income, and wealth. The fruits of this liberal economic system were

accumulated by businesses and political classes owing to the clientelistic nature of the political system. Postwar political governance reinforced the confessional power-sharing structure with Syria as a power-broker, amplified the weakness of a depleted state after the war, and augmented clientelism and nepotism. Economically, the ‘Hariri Project’ for reconstruction in the postwar era saw a shift from a pre-war liberal economy to a neoliberal one, where state institutions and interventions were utilized to ensure the success of the economic project. It was a project that focused on privatization, real estate, and attracting capital most notably from the Gulf. But more importantly, it was a project that was publicly financed by government borrowing at excruciating interest rates, steadily resulting in a persistent public debt trap. Similar to the pre-war years, postwar Lebanon did enjoy periods of economic growth that remained volatile to external and internal political turmoil and shocks. These periods of economic growth, however, conceal the elite capture of the Lebanese economy and the chronic structural woes that have resulted in persistent inequality.

Finally, this chapter has shed light on two foundational pillars to the understanding of the management of the current refugee influx. The tumultuous relationship between Syria and Lebanon, characterized by 1) Syrian hegemony over Lebanon politically and in security matters, and 2) the countries’ economic inter-dependence, entailing the presence of the often-politicized Syrian labor force in Lebanon, has been closely examined. Lastly, by illustrating refugee governance in the case of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, this chapter has argued that the Lebanese system has blatantly favored a policy of exclusion to deter permanent settlement. Against this background, the next chapter will lay out the governance mechanisms as a combination of government policies and humanitarian practices of ordering and control produced and elaborated at the onset of the Syrian refugee influx.

Chapter 4: The Rise of Humanitarian Government: Registering and Governing Refugees

4.1 Introduction

The humanitarian apparatus has emerged as a contemporary system of management of refugees, whereby the politics of care, assistance, and control are often intertwined (Agier, 2010; Mavelli, 2017). With the arrival of each mass wave of refugees into a receiving country, the humanitarian apparatus immediately assumes responsibility as the principal actor for the ordering and management of such ‘situations of exception’ (Agier, 2010). Within humanitarian governance, status determination, a process which requires an elaborate system of refugee registration, is among the first procedures of dealing with the ‘crisis’ of a refugee influx. The process of refugee registration in the host country and the power dynamics that underpin its operations have come under increasing scrutiny in the last two decades. Many scholars have critically examined the process of refugee registration in different contexts, illuminating its role as a mechanism of ordering and control of refugee populations (Ajana, 2013; Franke, 2009; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Oh, 2017). This chapter examines the case of Syrian refugees’ subjugation to the machinery of the humanitarian regime in Lebanon by highlighting the complex power dynamics of the registration and status determination processes. The chapter foregrounds how the experience of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is largely determined by this early stage of formal recognition where a humanitarian government takes control of ordering and labeling Syrians under several categories that determine refugees’ rights and are likely to shape their lives. This formal registration process arguably has its roots in the long history of the politics of aid to Lebanon and the complex history of the Syrian-Lebanese relationship discussed in chapter three. Status determination also takes place in the absence of a domestic legal framework that offers clear rules on governing refugee presence in the country.

The chapter first lays out the humanitarian and development landscape that saw thousands of NGOs and dozens of UN agencies position themselves to lead the Syrian refugee response alongside state institutions starting in 2011. By focusing on the period between 2011–2013, this

chapter argues that the governance mechanisms produced and elaborated at the onset of the Syrian refugee influx and the accompanying process of registration were not the fruits of a moment of exception but rather of the deeply entrenched power dynamics and struggles characteristic of Lebanese politics. It particularly examines how different political groups and factions purposively avoided setting up a humanitarian legal framework for dealing with Syrian refugees, in fear of creating conditions for permanent settlement of those refugees. This has led to the creation of a humanitarian order which focuses on assistance rather than protection, thus producing the refugee as a construct that is unanchored in a legal framework and unprotected by a legal status. The chapter also illustrates the various phases of registering Syrian refugees and unpacks the government policies of the moment, which are driven by political priorities, fears, and complacency. It further traces the transformation of refugee registration from a process that hesitantly records fleeing Syrians to a mechanism of ordering and control implemented by the international humanitarian regime. It particularly reveals how refugee registration in the case of Lebanon contributes to processes of ordering, stratifying, categorizing, and labeling of refugees, all of which reinforce the creation of an essentialized refugee identity of passive victims who are both a liability and a burden (Glasman, 2017; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Malkki, 1995, 1996; Zetter, 1991). The examination of ordering and labeling of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, through a system of registration, reveals competing, and often conflicting, sets of actors and power dynamics characteristic of Lebanon's political landscape. Thus, the registration process needs to be examined within a wider context in which two overarching power structures dominate; humanitarian aid and legal institutions.

4.2 Lebanon's Market for Aid

The humanitarian operation for Syrian refugees in Lebanon reached \$6.7 billion by 2018. While a staggering figure, the country has been at the heart of large developmental operations and foreign aid flows throughout its modern history (Combaz, 2013; UN OCHA, 2018). In fact, international aid to Lebanon has shaped the face of the Lebanese political landscape since the 1970s (Combaz, 2013). It has been a key feature of the country's developmental, humanitarian, stabilization, and, reconstruction efforts during the last five decades (Combaz, 2013; Mac Ginty & Hamieh, 2010; Mitri, 2015). International aid to Lebanon has always come as a response to historical landmark

events including: a devastating fifteen-year civil war (1975–1990); the subsequent reconstruction and macroeconomic stabilization efforts; an Israeli invasion in 1982, Israel’s occupation of the South of Lebanon until 2000; and an Israeli military attack on Lebanon in the summer of 2006. These landmark episodes have all taken a heavy toll on the country’s infrastructure and its social and financial institutions (Combaz, 2013; Dibeh, 2007; Mac Ginty & Hamieh, 2010). The aid market in Lebanon has been characterized by a number of features similar to countries with similar complex geopolitical realities. Firstly, aid to Lebanon consists of a plethora of players including traditional and non-traditional donors and a vast array of recipients such as the public sector, civil society organizations (CSOs), and a host of political factions. This complex system makes it especially difficult to document all funding channeled to Lebanon. Secondly, key to the market of aid in Lebanon is the lack of coordination among its different actors, a feature that has certainly been exacerbated with the new wave of foreign aid flowing to Lebanon as a result of the Syrian influx. Thirdly, foreign aid to Lebanon has historically been subject to political considerations, and thus has remained far from impartial (Dibeh, 2007; Mac Ginty & Hamieh, 2010).

Since the massive influx of Syrian refugees began in 2011, Lebanon’s aid market has registered new changes. Key among these has been the creation of a parallel financing structure designed to receive and process the humanitarian aid flows in this emergency context. This new system has been largely managed by the international humanitarian regime (primarily UNHCR) and has ultimately excluded traditional government channels and national systems.

4.2.1 Post-Civil War Foreign Aid: Reconstruction and Stabilization

Foreign aid to Lebanon became particularly pertinent in the postwar reconstruction and financial stability era starting in 1990. Dibeh (2007) distinguishes between two phases of foreign aid in postwar Lebanon. The first phase, in the immediate aftermath of the Lebanese civil war, from 1992 until 1997, was characterized by aid channeled towards reconstruction efforts. By 1997, foreign funding for reconstruction amounted to four billion dollars and was primarily channeled through the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), a public entity mandated with reconstruction (Dibeh, 2007). Moreover, aid flows to Lebanon have been historically subject to political considerations since the early postwar days. For example, traditional donors including the

US, Europe, and some Arab countries pledged far less funds to finance postwar reconstruction than originally promised, in protest of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon following the civil war (Dibeh, 2007). The second phase of aid flows commenced in 1997 with a shift from financing reconstruction towards financing mechanisms to safeguard financial and macroeconomic stability. A series of international donor conferences, starting with the 1997 Friends of Lebanon Conference in Washington, saw aid geared towards ensuring macroeconomic, currency, and debt sustainability through foreign exchange reserve deposits, foreign currency grants, and loans (Dibeh, 2007). This shift in aid towards macroeconomic stability continued with the Paris I, II, and III conferences that aimed at economic restructuring in 2001, 2002, and 2007, respectively. A total package of \$10 billion pledged in Paris II in 2002 arguably averted an imminent financial crisis in the country. Nevertheless, the Paris conferences ensured that foreign aid became increasingly conditional on structural and fiscal reforms, which, however, were seldom implemented.¹⁶

Regarding donor composition, Figure 9 shows that on average 70% of the official recorded aid to Lebanon in the past two decades came from Western countries represented by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), namely the US and EU countries (Combaz, 2013; Mitri, 2015). In the years leading up to the Syrian refugee influx between 2006 and 2011, the total amount of recorded aid from traditional donors averaged \$600 million yearly, with 2008 standing out as aid reached close to one billion dollars, more than 65% of which came from DAC countries (Combaz, 2013). As Figure 9 reveals, the years of the Syrian refugee influx between 2012 and 2017 saw a 40% increase in total aid from traditional donors, averaging a staggering amount of one billion dollars yearly, of which \$650 million on average were funded yearly by DAC.

¹⁶As laid out in chapter three, the postwar economic model relied on economic growth driven by large infrastructural projects and the tourism sector. Reconstruction was primarily financed by the public sector with the government borrowing at exorbitant interest rates from the domestic banking sector. This model gradually led to soaring budget deficits and high public debt, requiring regional aid packages which urged the country to structurally reform its economy.

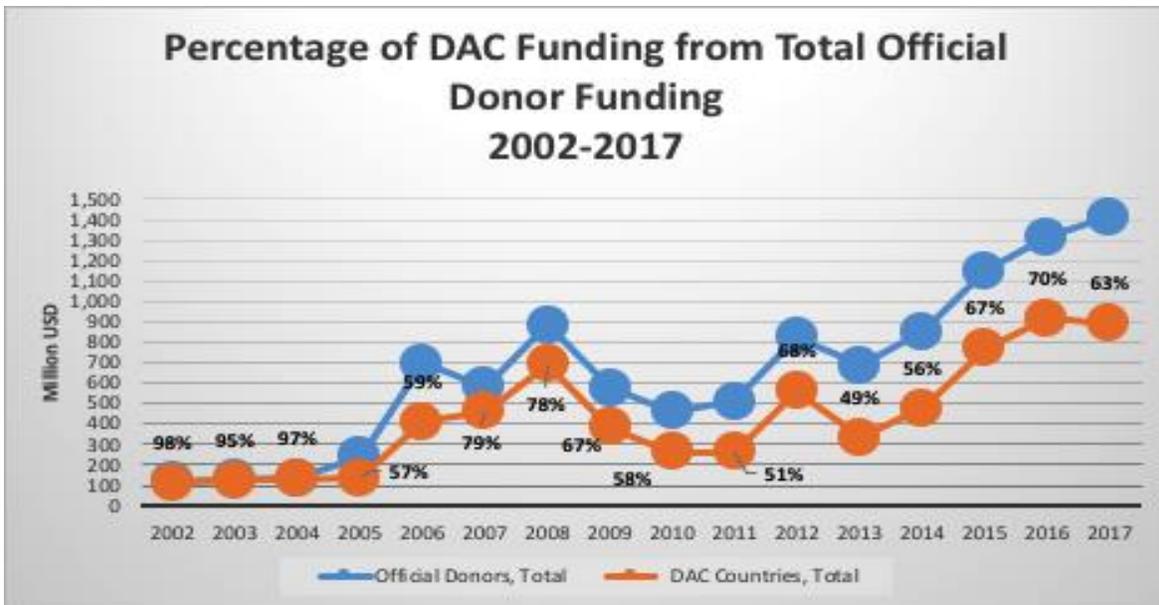


Figure 9. Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Funding to Lebanon 2002–2017 (OECD.Stat, 2017)

The public sector was the main recipient (43%) of all DAC aid between 2006 and 2011. While the aid market was open to a wide host of actors, multilateral organizations (primarily the UN agencies) remained an important body and principal agent in operating reconstruction efforts. Therefore, between 2006 and 2011, the UN’s 25 specialized agencies that have operated in Lebanon for decades were responsible for the disbursement of a yearly average of 16% of DAC country funding (see Figure 10).¹⁷ The UN and other multilateral organizations operate in a context of an active and vibrant civil society community. In total, civil society organizations (CSOs) received an average of 13% of DAC country funding between 2006 and 2011 (see Figure 10). With over 8,000 organizations registered in Lebanon, the civil society community is characterized by a significant margin of freedom, and it is one of the largest and most vigorous in the region (Beyond Reform & Development, 2015; Elbayar, 2005). Indeed, CSOs have flourished in Lebanon

¹⁷ These agencies’ mandates ranged from providing technical advice and supporting institutional structures at the level of different ministries to implementing social, environmental, and governance projects across the country. UNDP for example, with a local team of more than 300 individuals, operated a budget of close to \$30 million in 2011 and managed over 60 projects with multiple stakeholders including the GoL, other UN agencies, the private sector, and NGOs (UNDP, n.d.).

since the 1950s and particularly played a pivotal role in providing healthcare, education, and emergency services during the civil war (Elbayar, 2005).¹⁸

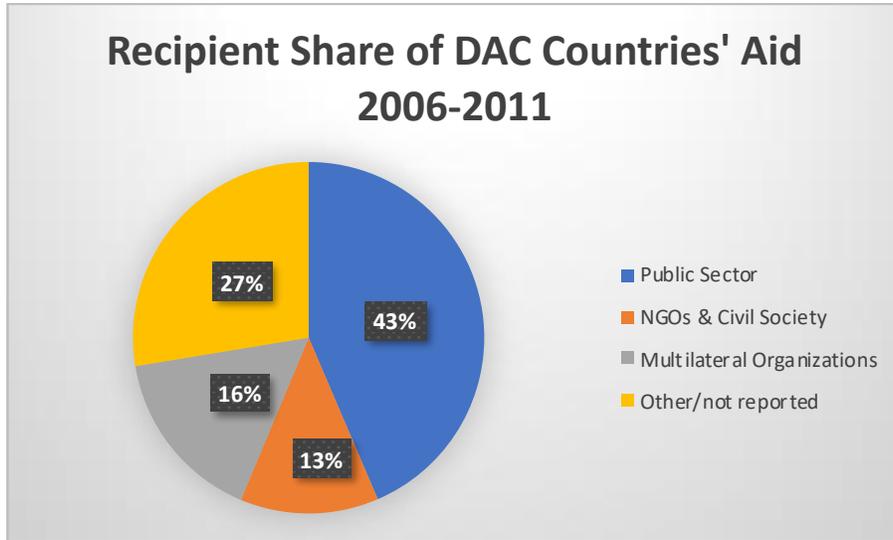


Figure 10. Recipient Share of DAC Aid 2006–2011 (OECD.Stat, 2011)

Despite the centrality of traditional donors to Lebanon’s aid landscape, it is crucial to highlight the diversity of non-DAC countries including Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf countries, whose significant contributions remain largely unrecorded in official figures. These donors are particularly central to this dissertation’s analysis of the political nature of aid to Lebanon. While aid is generally dominated by geopolitical considerations, the case of Lebanon stands out in this regard (Combaz, 2013; Dibeh, 2007; Mac Ginty & Hamieh, 2010). Because of the specificities of the country, aid flows to Lebanon are far from impartial and are always motivated by a wide array of political, religious, and ideological interests (Combaz, 2013; Mac

¹⁸ Many of these organizations are faith-based, supported by political parties, and organized along confessional identities, which reflects the sectarian nature of welfare provision. The postwar era gave rise to a new breed of CSOs heavily involved in development and political agendas and service provision. These tend to work closely with and are often seen as complementary to inadequate government services, particularly in health and education sectors (Beyond Reform & Development, 2015). For example, it is estimated that 60% of health centers across Lebanon are run by non-profit organizations (Elbayar, 2005).

Ginty & Hamieh, 2010). Non-traditional donors figure prominently in this regard mainly because their aid is not usually included in official figures and is hard to trace.¹⁹

Moreover, the lack of coordination with regard to aid distribution has been endemic to the aid market in Lebanon (Ayoub & Mahdi, 2018; Mac Ginty & Hamieh, 2010). Describing the lack of coordination among a plethora of aid recipients as well as the impossibility of tracking the reconstruction operations in the aftermath of the 2006 Israeli war, a UNDP policy advisor noted:

In 2006, anyone who wanted to be part of the reconstruction efforts was free to do so. You had individuals, organizations, and committees ranging from small donors to the usual suspects [in reference to Gulf and Iranian non-DAC donors and UN organizations]. They opened offices, provided cash, reconstructed houses, and adopted whole villages in the south to rebuild. Everyone was invited to take part in the reconstruction efforts as a quick method to attract aid and accelerate implementation. A very much open and laissez-faire environment. (personal communication, April 10, 2018)

In general, in the two decades following the civil war, Lebanon received more development and reconstruction aid than humanitarian aid. Even in the aftermath of the 2006 Israeli war, due to its short duration (34 days), humanitarian needs in the form of food assistance, shelter, and emergency relief assistance were not a priority; when the war came to an end, reconstruction aid rather than humanitarian assistance was mobilized (Mac Ginty & Hamieh, 2010). This, however, was about to change with the outbreak of the events in Syria.

4.2.2 Syrian Refugee Influx and the Humanitarian Aid Market

At the onset of the Syrian refugee influx, the aid market in Lebanon witnessed several changes. Apart from a significant increase in DAC funding and humanitarian funding from a host of traditional and non-traditional channels, humanitarian aid began to account for a significant share of total aid. This is in contrast to a history of aid channeled towards development, stabilization, and reconstruction efforts. Furthermore, while aid was historically largely channeled through

¹⁹ For example, during the 2006 reconstruction efforts following the Israeli attack on Lebanon, allegations were made that Saudi Arabia transferred its contribution directly to the private bank account of its close ally, the Prime Minister, while Iran's contributions went directly to Hezbollah, its own ally in Lebanon (Combaz, 2013).

government mechanisms, a parallel financing structure for the massive humanitarian operation was created and managed by the international humanitarian regime. The significant role played by multilateral organizations in this process came at the expense of the power of government institutions and national systems.

Figure 11 shows how DAC funding witnessed a 37% increase from the pre-influx period of 2006–2011 to the Syrian refugee influx years between 2012–2017. It reveals that the share of humanitarian aid from total DAC aid rose to an average of more than 60% in the years of the Syrian influx, while it had not exceeded 20% of total DAC funding throughout the decade preceding the influx.

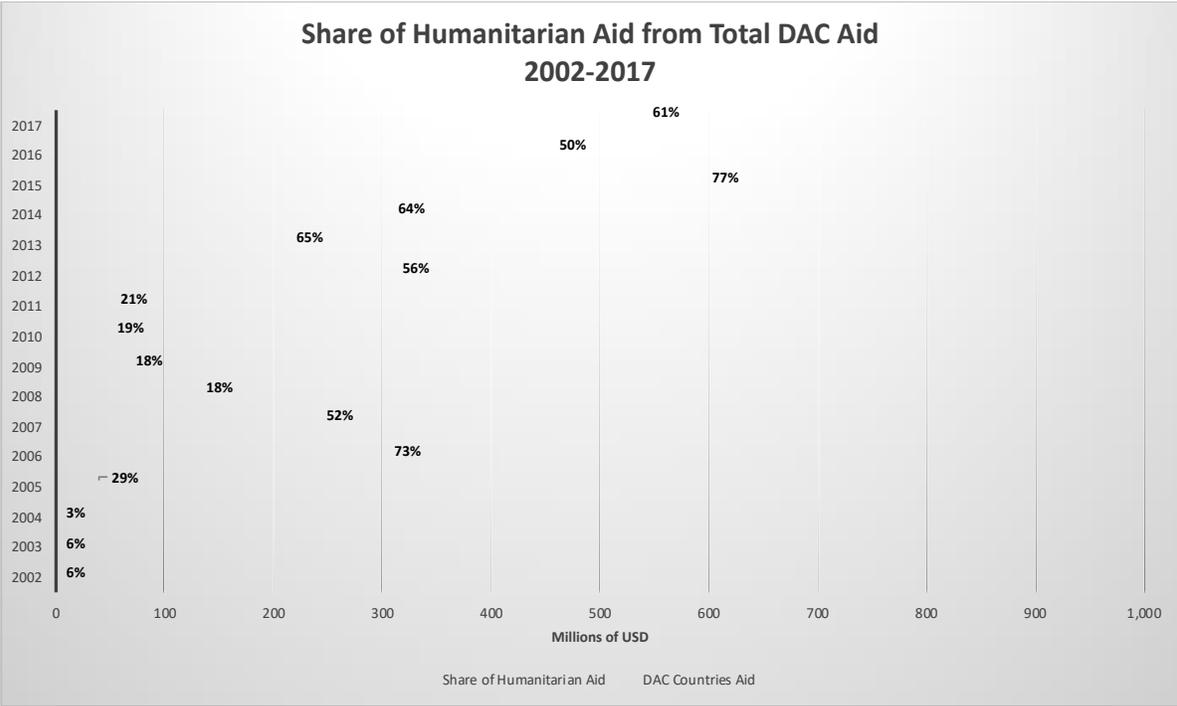


Figure 11. Share of Humanitarian Aid from Total DAC Aid 2002–2017 (OECD.Stat, 2017)

A significant change also occurred in terms of the share of recipients of DAC aid. As Figure 12 portrays, between 2012–2017, the public sector share of DAC aid decreased to 25%, while both multilateral organizations and NGO and CSOs’ share of DAC aid increased to 37% and 18% respectively.

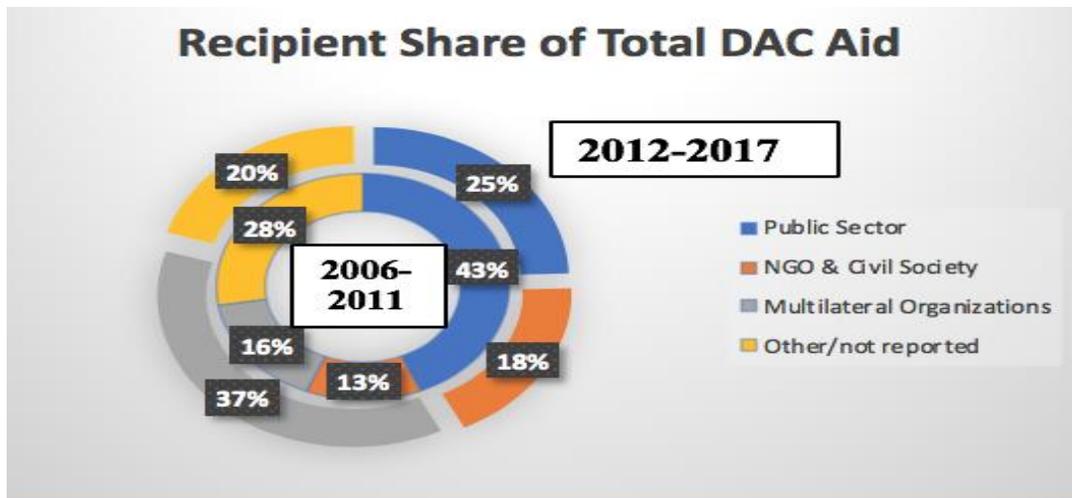


Figure 12. Recipient Share of DAC Aid 2012–2017 (OECD.Stat, 2017)

As is customary to the aid landscape in Lebanon, the massive humanitarian operation did not rely on DAC donors alone. Instead, the new shift towards a massive humanitarian aid operation has involved the same range of actors: DAC donors, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, Iran, UN Agencies, and local and international NGOs (Mitri, 2015). Moreover, as Figure 13 reveals, between 2011 and 2018, a staggering total of \$6.7 billion was committed to the Lebanon response to Syrian refugee presence. More importantly, Figure 14 shows that 72% of the total humanitarian flows to Lebanon were channeled to UN agencies, with less than 1% channeled to government institutions, reflecting the parallel system of financing carved out by the international humanitarian regime and excluding government institutions and channels. In addition to reflecting the lack of trust of the donor community in government institutions, the channeling of most humanitarian aid to the UN-led international humanitarian regime was justified on the premise of the need for an impartial mechanism to handle an often-politicized emergency situation. The UN funding mechanism and parallel structure was also seen as a means to avoid the cumbersome and time-consuming bureaucracy of aid channeled through government institutions and national systems (government advisor, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

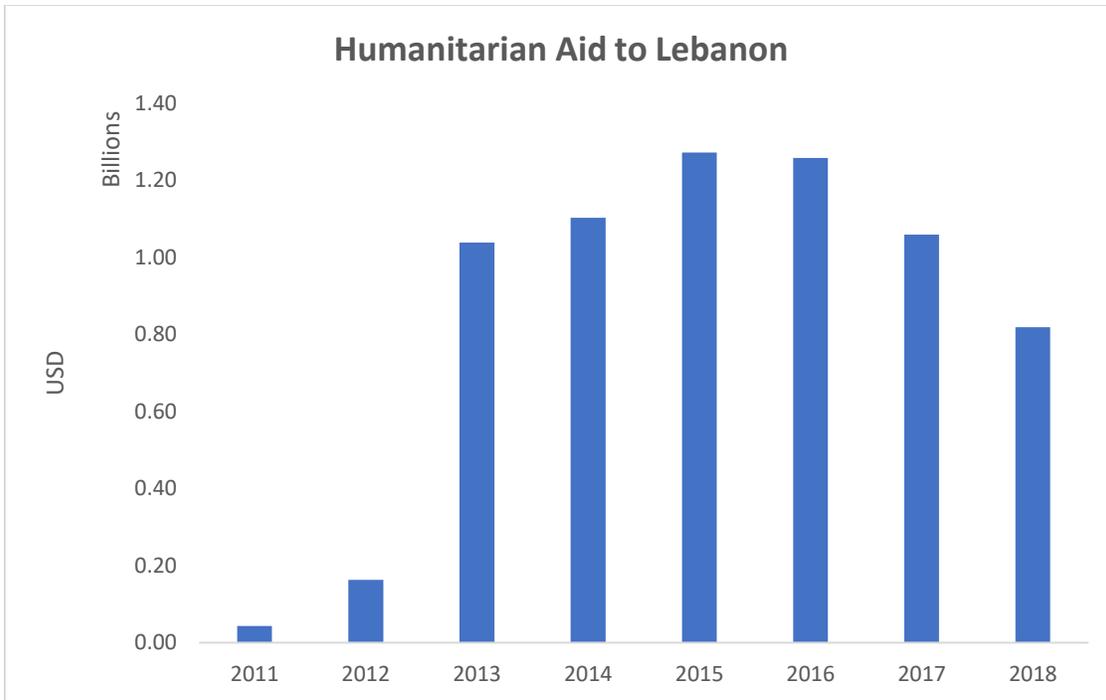


Figure 13. Humanitarian Aid to Lebanon (UN OCHA, 2018)

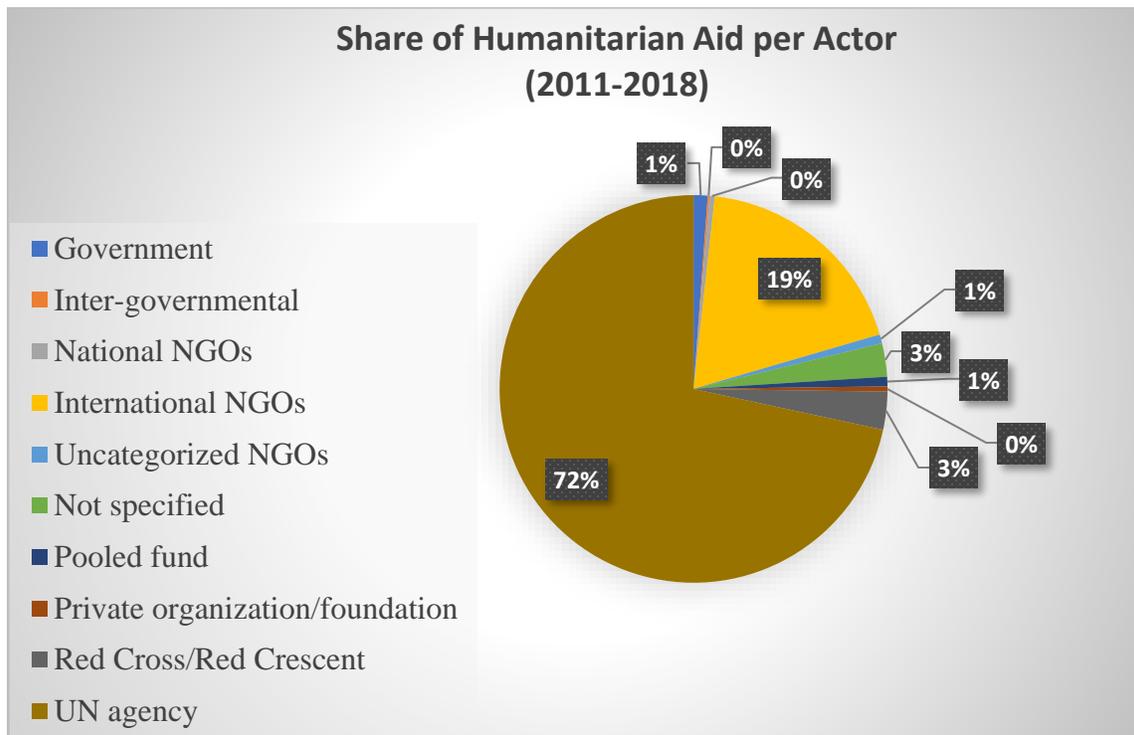


Figure 14. Share of Humanitarian Aid per Actor 2011–2018 (UN OCHA, 2018)

With the onset of the Syrian refugee influx, two fundamental changes developed in the operation of aid politics. First, civil society and multilateral organizations switched their agendas and projects to cater for relief, emergency, and humanitarian projects. The new landscape of humanitarian aid became dominated by a handful of humanitarian agencies that cater for refugee communities while UNHCR emerged as the major player. Historically, UNHCR's program in Lebanon in the five decades preceding the Syrian refugee influx was a modest one committed to only a couple of thousand refugees from the region (mainly Sudanese and Iraqi refugees) (UNHCR, 2018). The second development in the aid market pertained to increasing competition. While lack of coordination among agents in the aid market has always posed a challenge, the massive increase in the humanitarian aid flowing to Lebanon combined with a host of actors carving out their share of humanitarian funding further accentuated the lack of coordination. This development took a new turn in terms of competition between the government and CSOs, the decrease in the share of aid going to the public sector, and, finally, the government's power to manage and channel this aid (Ayoub & Mahdi, 2018). These competing interests and political agendas had a significant influence on refugee lives. Furthermore, this massive humanitarian operation has taken place within a legal vacuum which further complicated the refugee operation, especially the registration process.

4.3 Humanitarian Legal Vacuum

In parallel with a hugely competitive aid market, a vague legal framework for humanitarian operations was a defining feature of the Lebanese context on the eve of the Syrian refugee influx. The Syrian influx occurred in a legal vacuum characterized by the lack of a clear mandate for UNHCR and the myriad humanitarian organizations present on the ground (Boustani et al., 2016; Janmyr, 2018). Although Lebanon is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which acknowledges the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution, the country is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 protocol which constitute the foundation of international refugee protection (UNHCR, 2010, p. 2). The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a 'refugee' as "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UNHCR, 2010, p. 3). The most notable principle in

the convention is that of *non-refoulement* which stipulates that “no one shall expel or return a refugee against his or will, in any manner whatsoever, to a territory where he or she fears threats to life or freedom” (UNHCR, 2010, p. 3). The convention and its protocol also lay out the mandate of UNHCR; established in 1951, to provide international protection to refugees and seek permanent solutions to their plights, which are designated by UNHCR as ‘durable solutions.’ The three durable solutions are voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement.²⁰

Not ratifying the 1951 convention and its 1967 protocol has posed a legal challenge for UNHCR’s operations in Lebanon and for the international protection regime as a whole. The absence of a legal framework for refugee protection, however, is a common feature of the majority of countries in the Middle East (Frangieh, 2016; Kagan, 2011). This legal vacuum is partially compensated for by bilateral agreements between the government and UNHCR. Up until 2003 and since the establishment of its first office in Lebanon in 1964, UNHCR had been operating on the basis of a ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ with the Lebanese government (Frangieh, 2016). As mentioned earlier, in those five decades, its operations were relatively contained and limited to a couple of thousand refugees from the region (UNHCR, 2018). However, due to the increase in detention and deportation of MENA refugees in Lebanon (particularly Iraqi and Sudanese refugees) starting in 1999, UNHCR and the Lebanese authorities successfully negotiated and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2003 (Frangieh, 2016; Vliet & Hourani, 2012). While the MoU provides temporary residency to asylum seekers, it imposes responsibilities on UNHCR to find a permanent solution for them, namely resettlement in a third country. This is obviously not a decision within the power of UNHCR (Frangieh, 2016). Moreover, the MoU was signed between UNHCR and a security apparatus (the GSO), thereby establishing, from the outset, a strong link between refugees and security concerns as will be discussed in chapter five (Janmyr, 2018; Frontiers Association, 2003; Vliet & Hourani, 2012). Particularly alarming, in this regard, is that the MoU does not include the principle of *non-refoulement* and, thus, provides the Lebanese

²⁰Voluntary repatriation refers to refugees returning safely and with dignity to their country of origin and re-availing themselves of national protection. Resettlement is the process by which refugees are selected and transferred from their country of refuge to a third country that has agreed to admit them as refugees with permanent residence status. Local integration is defined by UNHCR as the process in which refugees are legally, economically, and socially integrated in the host country, availing themselves of the national protection of the host government (UNHCR, 2011a). In the past decades, UNHCR’s role has expanded to include displaced persons, returnees, and other persons deemed of concern to the international community (Akram, 2002).

security apparatus with leeway to detain and force the return of asylum seekers to the countries from which they had fled. Finally, registration with UNHCR, according to the MoU, does not grant refugees legal residence in Lebanon. While refugees registered with UNHCR are theoretically entitled to a temporary circulation permit, such permits have only been irregularly issued by the Lebanese authorities (Frangieh, 2016).

Establishing a clearly defined refugee protection regime is hindered by the Lebanese authorities' refusal to commit to long-term responsibilities in fear of a permanent refugee presence on its territory (Frangieh, 2016; Janmyr, 2018). As mentioned in chapter three, Lebanon's political elites are strongly opposed to permanent settlement of refugees, or naturalization (*tawfīn*), which is seen as a threat to Lebanese sovereignty and its delicate sectarian balance. Furthermore, the conditions of the MoU reify the State-to-UN responsibility shift (Kagan, 2011). The MoU ensures that Lebanon provides sporadic and temporary protection to refugees on the condition that their long-term responsibility lies with the international community (Frangieh, 2016). UNHCR has throughout the years understood and accommodated the fear of permanent refugee presence expressed by various governments and political actors and has, as a result, maintained its focus on improving the protection space for asylum seekers rather than pressuring the government to ratify refugee conventions (Janmyr, 2018). The UNHCR MoU thus promotes a 'regime of tolerance' of temporary residency of asylum seekers in Lebanon until their resettlement in third countries (Frangieh, 2016). The produced and forceful temporariness of refugee presence is evident in their precarious legal status and the government's non-adherence to the concept of *non-refoulement*. As Frangieh (2016) explains, host states in the region and particularly in Lebanon have

often adopted a flexible approach towards the prolonged presence of refugees through inconsistent and ad hoc protection measures, while at the same time blocking prospects for permanent settlement... This regime of 'tolerance' mainly relies on maintaining refugees in a precarious status and subjecting them to exclusionary policies that ensure their visibility to the international community and their invisibility to the local population. (p. 39)

With the legal framework remaining largely undefined, UNHCR most recently drafted a new MoU in 2011. However, the proposal was unequivocally rejected by all factions of the Lebanese government and was perceived as a 'trap' to accede to the 1951 Refugee Convention

(Janmyr, 2018; government advisor, personal communication, September 3, 2018). Given the limitations of the 2003 MoU and the failure of the 2011 proposed MoU to gather momentum, there was no domestic legal framework in place to deal with the refugee influx at the onset of the Syrian displacement but only temporary measures for asylum seekers transiting through Lebanon. To complicate matters further, the Lebanese authorities considered the Syrian influx as falling outside the scope of the MoU signed with UNHCR in 2003 (Janmyr, 2018). In the absence of a legal framework grounding the humanitarian response to the influx of Syrian refugees, registration of refugees became a process subject to negotiations and ad hoc procedures. In this context, refugee access to protection came to be seen as a privilege rather than a right.

4.4 Refugee Registration: From Ad Hoc Procedures to Mechanisms of Ordering and Control

The registration process of Syrian refugees bore similarities to international trends of refugee registration discussed in chapter two, namely processes of identifying, counting, categorizing, and labeling of refugees (Bakewell, 2011; Franke, 2009; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Zetter, 1991). However, the process followed a unique path largely shaped by the specificities of the Lebanese context and the complex history of Lebanese-Syrian relations. By and large, the registration process occurred in two phases. With the onset of the influx in 2011–2012, the first phase was driven by the assumption of the temporary and short-term nature of the influx and, thus, lacked any long-term vision. The operation at this stage was jointly run by both UNHCR and government institutions. As the influx of refugees continued, however, the second phase of registration became mainly managed by UNHCR under an ever-expanding humanitarian international regime. The launch of a massive humanitarian appeal to support the operation relied on the power of data gathered in the registration process and led to the creation of a parallel structure of financing for the large-scale humanitarian emergency operation.

4.4.1 The First Phase of the Registration Process: Ad Hoc Procedures

The Syrian regime's repression of the buoyant uprisings was generating systematic cycles of violence, gradually transforming the uprisings from a peaceful movement to an armed struggle,

resulting in mass displacement of the Syrian people into neighboring countries (Achcar, 2013). By April 2011, preliminary UNHCR reports indicated that around 4,000 individuals (1,000 families)—most of whom were women and children—had crossed the porous border from Tal Kalakh in Syria to Wadi Khaled in Lebanon in an attempt to escape the escalation of events in Syria (International Medical Corps [IMC], 2011). Those individuals, however, did not conceive of this passage as an official border crossing. Moving between the two countries had always been a routine practice carried out by people both for leisurely visits of friends and family and for the satisfaction of material needs on both sides of the border (Obeid, 2010). While there are three official border crossings between Syria and Lebanon, significant sections of the borders are porous and have always constituted informal channels for the exchange of goods and weapons and the fluid circular movement of people on both sides (ACAPS, 2013). Borders in the Middle East need to be understood from a perspective of fluidity between lived experiences of social borders and the rigidity of state-defined borders (Obeid, 2010). By May 2011, border crossings increased dramatically as Syrians of all age groups and gender fled to their relatives' homes in the Lebanese villages of Wadi Khaled and Bireh in Akkar. In line with long existing routine procedures, all Syrians crossing the official border received a renewable 6-month stamp on their passport subject to re-crossing the border.

Registration of Syrian refugees at this junction was sporadic. On the Lebanese side, local actors in the form of *mukhtars* were the first point of registration of refugees. *Mukhtars* are locally elected officials for neighborhoods or local towns and villages and are responsible for issuing formal documents such as National ID cards and passports (El Amine, 2016). In their new role, *mukhtars* provided the first few humanitarian agencies (UN organizations and other NGOs) present on the ground with a head count of Syrians present in the 25 villages in Wadi Khaled and the 14 villages in Bireh (Akkar). In May 2011, however, Saad Hariri, the caretaker Prime Minister, engaged the High Relief Commission (HRC) to manage the response to the needs of the Syrians arriving in North Lebanon (IMC, 2011). The HRC, a governmental body overseen directly by the Prime Minister's Office and comprising of various government ministries, is the main recipient of relief grants in times of emergency, and its main responsibility is to provide financial compensation to victims of natural disasters and intermittent clashes. In the northern region of Akkar and Wadi Khaled, the HRC was joined by MoSA, UNHCR, and a handful of NGOs and UN agencies already

working in the area including the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Medical Corps (IMC), and the World Health Organization (WHO), to carry out sporadic surveys and needs assessments for arriving Syrians. In parallel, MoSA also opened its local arms, the Social Development Centers (SDCs) to NGOs and UN-led activities aimed at addressing the needs of the growing Syrian population.

Within this nascent humanitarian space, non-traditional actors, in the form of Gulf country donors, philanthropic organizations, and faith-based organizations also began to provide relief to fleeing Syrians in North Lebanon (Mitri, 2015). For example, Islamic charities in North Lebanon formed the coalition *Ittilaf*, consisting of over 20 associations, in the city of Akkar to coordinate their different aid programs through a common database. The coalition distributed the donations from Gulf states and humanitarian assistance according to Islamic charity traditions (Hasselbarth, 2014). Several existing service provision CSOs such as Arc En Ciel, Makhzoumi Foundation, Caritas, and the Makassed Philanthropic Association altered their services to cater for the growing refugee communities and became crucial partners for donors and UN agencies at the local level (J. G. Karam, 2018).

In this frenzy of initiatives, Syrian refugees continued to be registered through dispersed mechanisms. The registration process of displaced Syrians in the North was managed by UNHCR and the HRC accompanied by MoSA mobilized teams. Newly arrived individuals fleeing Syria were registered under the category of ‘displaced Syrian families in the North of Lebanon.’ Registration was a process comprising of a twenty-page questionnaire filled out by outreach teams to gauge the number of refugees arriving in the North and their associated psycho-social needs. MoSA social workers²¹ were mobilized to carry out door-to-door registration of arriving Syrian families with technical assistance from UNHCR (government advisor, personal communication, September 3, 2018). Identification and registration occurred on a daily basis in the North and by

²¹ Around 300 social workers were recruited by MoSA across Lebanon for the implementation of the National Poverty Targeting Program (NPTP), some of whom took part in the early phases of the registration process of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as the NPTP had not yet been launched. NPTP is a joint World Bank and GoL (MoSA) program that was officially launched in October 2011 in an attempt to tackle the fragmentation in social safety net systems in Lebanon. It is the first poverty-targeted program in Lebanon (using the Proxy Means Testing mechanism) and provides the extreme poor in Lebanon with health and education benefits (World Bank, 2014).

October 2011, the majority of displaced Syrians had been registered as predominantly residing in North Lebanon, with a limited documented presence of 150 Syrian families in the Bekaa region (DRC, 2011b).

However, distinct to this initial phase of registration in 2011 is that Syrian entry to Lebanon was circular in nature as Syrians fled intermittent battles and returned home when battles subsided. In its July 2011 shelter assessment, DRC documented the regular background movement of Syrians and registered that the majority of the approximately 6,000 Syrians who fled into the Akkar region of North Lebanon since the beginning of May had returned back to Syria. Of the 2,500 who remained by July 2011, 91% were hosted by families, relatives, and strangers, reflecting the northern host communities' generosity and close familial ties with Syrians in the region (DRC, 2011b). Given the uncertainty of the situation in late 2011 and the backward movement to Syria, the initial registration practices were merely an effort to record the limited Syrian influx to Lebanon rather than serious attempts at management and coordination. In fact, registration at this stage had no legal implications for Syrians.

The registration process resulted in the creation of a valuable resource, namely, data. The elaborate data collected by different authorities would soon develop into a state-of-the-art database, a rare commodity in the context of Lebanon that would soon become a point of contention and an instrument to assert power by different actors. The collection of systematic and complete data on refugees stood in stark contrast to the almost total absence of reliable data on Lebanese nationals. For example, it should be noted that the latest population census in Lebanon dates back to 1932. Due to the confessional power-sharing political system in Lebanon, demographic data has always been a politically contentious area (Coutts & Krayem, 2018). UNHCR and HRC worked closely to verify and update the ever-changing registration numbers of displaced Syrian families. At this early stage, UNHCR coordinated with the Lebanese government (namely HRC and MoSA) and other UN organizations and partners and reached a tacit agreement to share the data, a reality that would later change in 2012 (UNHCR, 2011b). This coordination saw UNHCR invest in the capacity building of government and local partners by training MoSA SDC staff and offering technical support to HRC and MoSA.

In the final 2 months of 2011, the number of registered displaced Syrians with both UNHCR and HRC had reached close to 5,000 individuals, many of whom had arrived in Lebanon in earlier months but had only registered towards the end of the year (UNHCR, 2011c). Soon after, by the beginning of 2012, UNHCR and HRC began registration of displaced Syrians in the northern city of Tripoli, as arriving Syrians spilled over to settle further away from immediate border areas (UNHCR, 2012a). More steps to formalize this process followed. For example, the newly formed pro-Assad Lebanese government headed by Najib Mikati began to gradually transfer a total of three billion Lebanese Liras (two million dollars) to the HRC in the form of treasury advances to provide relief to displaced Syrians in the North (Government Decree no. 6011 and no. 6805).²²

This was followed by the creation of a referral system for displaced Syrians to access healthcare services established by UNHCR, HRC, and the WHO, who were later joined by a host of NGOs including the IMC, the Norwegian Refugee Council, World Vision, and Médecins sans Frontières. As implementing partners of UNHCR and HRC, the network of NGOs provided remedial classes, psycho-social care, and protection interventions. The HRC, on the other hand, covered the costs of treatment for displaced Syrians injured in the hostilities (UNHCR, 2011c). This referral system contributed to strengthening the registration and the elaboration of data on Syrian refugees.

This developing system of registration, however, remained highly informal in terms of providing legal documentation to Syrian refugees themselves. Upon registration, displaced Syrians did not receive registration certificates or circulation permits neither from UNHCR nor HRC. This led to a growing sense of frustration among Syrians who, as a result, were unable to move freely inside Lebanon, especially those who had entered Lebanon through informal border crossings (UNHCR, 2012a). The Lebanese government had deliberately chosen not to formalize the

²² The Mikati government was formed after 5 months of political stalemate following the toppling of the Hariri coalition government. This newly formed government did not include any of Hariri's coalition members, an exclusion that the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad himself welcomed (Bassam, Bayoumy, 2011). In his inaugural speech, Mikati asserted that "this government is committed to maintaining strong, brotherly ties which bind Lebanon to all Arab countries, without exception," in a signal to his government's implicit support of the Syrian regime amidst increasing domestic polarization on the events unraveling in Syria (Bassam, Bayoumy, 2011).

registration process and hand out documents which could commit the government to certain responsibilities (government advisor, personal communication, September 3, 2018), The pro-Assad government feared that a formal documentation of Syrian refugees would be seen as an implicit acknowledgement of the escalating conflict in Syria and the Syrian regime's responsibility for the displacement of its people. Moreover, formalizing the position of Syrians by providing them with documentation could also imply a long-term responsibility that the Lebanese government associated with permanent settlement, a prospect which it strongly opposed.

A final feature of this phase of registration was the complete absence of a long-term vision or policy for dealing with the Syrian refugee influx. This lack of vision was mostly driven by the assumption shared by all actors that Syrian displacement was a temporary process that would soon abate. All actors preferred a policy of waiting for more developments in Syria. This approach was embraced by the international humanitarian regime represented by UNHCR. As the UNHCR representative for Lebanon between 2010–2015 attests, the prediction was that the 'crisis' inside Syria would be short-lived. She elaborates that "initially, projections were based on the expectation that — as in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya — mass refugee flows would abate" (Kelley, 2017, p. 88).

This short-sightedness was not the only reason for the lack of a clear plan. The lack of a plan needs to be understood within the context of UNHCR's infamous inability to manage a refugee influx, particularly in the short-term, a reality that has been extensively highlighted particularly in cases of Iraqi, Rwandan, and Kosovar Albanian refugees (Loescher, 2001). Of crucial importance to this incapacity to deal with the Syrian refugee influx has been the lack of understanding of the social-economic and political context of Syria and the region. The same UNHCR representative describes:

Humanitarian forecasting in the Syrian situation seemed to be based more on previous experience elsewhere, than grounded in a firm understanding of the social, political, and economic history within Syria...Contingency planning that fell far short of what materialized was not unique to Lebanon. (Kelley, 2017, p. 88)

Even as the influx continued, UNHCR was unable to improve its planning. Preparing for a 'crisis' and 'emergency' implied that UNHCR had to engage in the analysis of the likelihood of

political scenarios that would cause mass displacement. This was seen to risk the organization's 'impartiality.'

As the conflict spread and the volume continued to grow, other factors limited projections. Of these, the most significant factor was the sense that humanitarian planning based on projected political outcomes was fraught with risks...In the Syria context, projecting mass outflows could have been perceived poorly by the Syrian government, hindered humanitarian operations there, and caused panic in neighboring countries. (Kelley, 2017, p. 88)

UNHCR's claims of a non-political mandate grounded in its alleged adherence to the humanitarian principles of impartiality, humanity, neutrality, and independence have been heavily critiqued (Barnett, 2001; Chimni, 2000; Loescher, 2001). Despite this critique, UNHCR continues to retain its central role in humanitarian governance due to the legitimacy that this alleged neutrality accords it. UNHCR undeniably remains the most favorable institution among various actors owing to the massive operations it manages and the legitimacy it enjoys regionally and globally (Vautravers & Fox, 2012). Thus, as the perfect apparatus of an 'apolitical,' 'impartial,' and 'independent' response, it came as no surprise that UNHCR lead the response in Lebanon. This dovetailed neatly with a government response, adamant on an 'ostrich policy,' also intent on depoliticizing a highly politicized wave of displacement. Apart from timid and unsystematic reports of where and how camps could be set up in the event of a protracted refugee influx (DRC, 2011a), actors banked on the situation resolving itself. However, it was not only the UNHCR-led response apparatus that anticipated the short-term nature of the influx. Host communities, predominantly in the Sunni villages of Akkar and Tripoli, had welcomed Syrian families in solidarity and generosity, despite their limited resources and financial means, also in the expectation that their unstinting accommodation would be short-lived (Meier, 2014).

The importance of this initial stage of registration lies in the way the Lebanese government initiated several policies which will hold great influence over the position of Syrian refugees for years to come. As the next section will convey, the government's assumption of the short-term nature of the influx as well as Lebanon's complex political history were pivotal for shaping policies to manage Syrian refugee presence on its soil. These policies of the moment laid the foundation for modes of ordering and control of Syrian refugees which in turn contributed to (re)producing

their precarity as a politically induced condition whereby Syrian lives were deemed less worthy of protection (Butler 2004, 2009).

4.5 The Syrians Are Here to Stay: Unpacking Government Policies of the Moment

The Lebanese government's policies during this initial period in 2011 were not designed to offer sustainable governance systems for the Syrian presence. Policies were rather based on ad hoc measures which aimed instead to contain the influx and reflected political assumptions and alliances tied to the conflict in Syria. As it nervously awaited a 'winner' to emerge from the Syrian conflict, the government avoided adopting any policy which would imply or encourage refugees' permanent settlement on its territory. As such, a number of policies were adapted, namely an open-door policy, a non-encampment policy, and a 'policy of disassociation' from the conflict in Syria.

4.5.1 Open-Door Policy

A long history of deeply intertwined political and socio-economic inter-dependence between Lebanon and Syria (see chapter three) have undoubtedly shaped the government policies adopted in light of the Syrian refugee influx. The Treaty of Brotherhood and Cooperation, signed between Syria and Lebanon in 1991, remained the governing treaty for entry of Syrian refugees into Lebanon until the later adoption of restrictive border measures at the end of 2014. The agreement stipulates free movement of goods and people and grants freedom of work, residence, and economic activity for nationals of both countries (Janmyr, 2016; L. Turner, 2015). Lebanon was applauded by the international community and various human rights organizations for its generosity in hosting Syrian refugees and maintaining an open-door, non-encampment policy at the onset of the refugee influx (L. Turner, 2015). Others, however, described the government's policy of the time as the 'policy of non-policy' operating in a context of political stalemate (Fakhoury, 2017; Geha & Talhouk, 2018; Janmyr, 2016). However, it is in light of the dominant assumption that the Syrian influx was temporary, contained, and limited in nature, that the open-door policy must be understood. When assessing the government's policy 8 years into the Syrian refugee influx, it becomes clear that maintaining an open-door was, in fact, a deliberate policy of the moment in 2011–12. It was a policy which both pro and anti-Syrian regime political factions

in Lebanon could agree on while they awaited either the toppling or the survival of the Assad regime.

By and large, during the early stages of the Syrian influx, polarized Lebanese political factions agreed on the maintenance of an open border policy, albeit driven by different political motives and justifications. During the brief period of (anti-Syrian regime) Prime Minister Hariri's caretaker government in April 2011, the main justification for maintaining an open border emphasized a strong sense of solidarity for the exodus of Syrians fleeing the brutality of the regime in Syria. As a top advisor from the Hariri government explains, "the Syrian regime was brutally oppressing and killing its people, and we were not going to close our borders and deny them a safe haven. We stood in solidarity" (personal communication, September 12, 2018).

With the arrival of a pro-Syrian regime government led by Mikati in June 2011, pro-Assad factions, most notably Hezbollah, stressed the brotherly ties between the Syrian and Lebanon people as justification for the maintenance of an open-door. A leading Hezbollah MP in the Mikati government explains the government's stance:

Of course, we supported keeping our borders open. Because as you know, Syria and Lebanon, we are 'one people in two countries.' And this is not a political statement but a reality. There is not a single family in Lebanon that does not have a Syrian relative. (personal communication, August 29, 2018)

Justifications stressing solidarity with the Syrian people's political struggle or brotherly ties and kinship conceal more pragmatic concerns. For the pro-Assad Mikati government, maintaining an open-door was in line with its political decision not to acknowledge the escalating armed struggle in Syria. More importantly, however, it was also tied to the confessional nature of politics in Lebanon. In the aftermath of the toppling of the Hariri government, which was largely orchestrated by Hezbollah (Bassam, 2011), incoming Prime Minister Mikati adopted a hawkish policy in support of the Sunni sect to project the image of a strong Sunni leader. It is plausible to assume that as most Syrians arriving in Lebanon were Sunnis, Mikati was sending a message to his allies in the government, and particularly to Hezbollah: while they were aligned over 'strategic' issues, one of which was backing the Syrian regime, this alliance did not entail making any

concessions regarding the Sunni share of power in the internal political game. Mikati's pro-Syrian regime stance, however, meant that a 'humanitarian' approach driven by solidarity was used to justify the open-door policy rather than a response focused on the causes of displacement. At that moment, there were only limited calls for restrictive border measures. They were primarily issued by Christian factions, who were particularly fearful of the mass Sunni influx into Lebanon (NOW, 2013).²³ Another explanation for the adoption of an open-door policy is tied to the historical power relations between the two countries. Lebanon, as the historically smaller neighbor living in the shadow of a much larger and more powerful Syria, feared that the closure of borders would incur retaliation in the future, regardless of which side were to triumph in Syria (Mouawad, 2018). Finally, maintaining an open-door was in line with government policies in neighboring countries, namely Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq where Syrians fleeing the conflict could enter with no visa requirements (UNHCR, 2012b).

4.5.2 Non-Encampment Policy

Refugee camps are established as the initial and 'temporary' response by humanitarian organizations in times of crises and emergencies, particularly in the global south. Often, the building of camps continues despite empirical evidence of the protracted nature of refugee situations across the world. In many cases, encampment, meant to offer relief in situations of exceptions and emergency, has often evolved into highly visible and permanent sites administered by the international humanitarian regime (Abdi, 2005; Bakewell, 2008). Host governments assisted by the international humanitarian regime, particularly in the global south, usually favor the establishment of camps for arriving refugees in fear of engendering local integration processes which are often thought to be linked to permanent settlement. In this view, camps are associated with temporariness and ease of repatriation. They also work as physical markers around which international assistance could be mobilized, thereby availing the host governments of the costs and 'burdens' of caring for refugees (Crisp & Jacobsen, 1998; Kibreab, 1983).

²³ The Minister of Energy and leader of the largest Christian bloc in parliament (the Change and Reform Bloc) stated in August 2013: "The bloc's suggestion includes ceasing to receive Syrian and Palestinian refugees coming from Syria and enforce complete control over the borders" (NOW, 2013).

In stark contrast, the Lebanese government has favored a non-encampment policy during the Syrian conflict. The encampment of Syrian refugees was purposively avoided, allowing Syrians to flee to Lebanon freely and settle informally across the country, relying on their historical social networks (Boustani et al., 2016). Interestingly, while encampment is often justified by fears of permanent settlement of refugees, the Lebanese government resisted encampment in order to avert such a fate. Contrary to the literature on forced migration that portrays encampment as a mechanism to ensure the impermanency of refugee presence and its containment, the case of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon had historically become tied to a state of permanency and security threats. Thus, the Lebanese government's policy was driven by fear that encampment of Syrian refugees would result in a replication of the Palestinian refugee situation (Janmyr, 2016; L. Turner, 2015). For most factions in the Lebanese government, the case of Palestinian refugees who settled in Lebanon in the aftermath of 1948 and the consequent waves of Palestinian displacement to Lebanon in 1956 and 1967 (Chatty, 2010; Suleiman, 2008) showed that encampment was neither temporary nor a guarantee of better control of refugee populations. As laid out in the previous chapter, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been historically marginalized and excluded from access to public services and social and political life (UNHCR, 2016c). This situation was justified by the role of armed Palestinian factions in the Lebanese civil war (Suleiman, 2006). Situated on the margins, Palestinian camps were taken over by Palestinian factions, with the Lebanese army having no control over the security inside the camps. Palestinian camps began to be perceived as states within a state and as a source of instability in the country. They were considered criminal sanctuaries, weapon warehouses, and a threat to Lebanese sovereignty and its delicate sectarian power structure (Khalidi, 1979; Weighill, 1997). A 'trauma' based on the Lebanese experience with Palestinian camps developed in the political and public imaginaries as an FPM member of parliament explains:

The non-encampment policy stems from our conviction that encampment is an institutionalization of Syrian presence in Lebanon. We want their presence to be as flexible as possible by not giving it a legal or de facto status in such a way that it starts to resemble the Palestinian presence. The idea is to make it easy for them to leave as quickly as they want just as they could come in as quickly as they wanted. Our trauma of Palestinian camps played a pivotal role in this. (personal communication, September 3, 2018)

Similar to the FPM stance on encampment, Hezbollah also drew on the fear linked to the securitization of refugees in camps that was largely influenced by the Palestinian experience in Lebanon:

Of course, we were against encampment because unfortunately we are a weak state. Therefore, ensuring the security of the camps would have been very difficult and challenging. And confining Syrians to camps without any form of control will turn them into a source of danger. The camp will evolve into one of militancy, training, and the production of terrorists. (Hezbollah MP, personal communication, August 29, 2018)

With the influx of refugees, settling freely and informally across the country, reaching the one million mark in late 2013, the debate on encampment continued. However, these discussions that centered around the rationales of ‘weak state,’ ‘the Palestinian trauma,’ ‘one people in two countries,’ were far from new. They were old debates redrawn around a new ‘crisis.’ The Syrian refugee ‘crisis’ was not a moment of exception. Instead, it presented a continuity of old discourses and power dynamics playing out in a new context.

4.5.3 The Politics of the Disassociation Policy

With the continued influx of Syrians and political polarization around events in Syria, President Suleiman launched a series of National Dialogue meetings including all political factions at the presidential palace in Baabda starting in June 2012. Notably absent, was Saad Hariri, the former prime minister who was in self-exile following the toppling of his government in 2011. The outcome of the dialogue was the infamous Baabda Declaration, a document that was passed on to the UN General Assembly. Article 12 of the declaration guaranteed that Lebanon would eschew regional and international conflicts and any “negative repercussions of regional tensions and crises in order to preserve its own paramount interest, national unity and civil peace” (National Dialogue Committee, 2012, p. 3). On the other hand, Article 13 called for controlling the Lebanese-Syrian border to prevent its use a corridor for smuggling combatants and weapons, while at the same time guaranteeing the right to humanitarian solidarity enshrined in the Lebanese constitution (National Dialogue Committee, 2012). ‘Humanitarian solidarity’ referred to the unconditional welcoming of Syrians crossing the border. Based on this declaration, the Mikati government adopted a

‘disassociation policy’ that stipulated neutrality towards the conflict in Syria in the summer of 2012. Far from a form of government inaction or a “laissez-faire policy of no policy” (Fakhoury, 2017; Geha & Talhouk, 2018, p. 651), the ‘disassociation policy’ was in fact a political statement. The priority, at that moment, was to contain the political polarization among political factions in Lebanon around the conflict in Syria and to maintain the delicate political and confessional balance in the country.²⁴

4.6 The Rise of the Humanitarian Government: Ordering, Control, and Parallel Structures

The modern, postwar refugee became a recognizable figure through processes of resettlement, organized repatriation, law enforcement, and social programs controlled by the international refugee regime (Malkki, 1995). The ‘humanitarian government’ which emerged out of these processes is essentially an apparatus comprising of UN agencies, private and public institutions, and governmental and NGOs. This humanitarian government is characterized by a function of “control as much as care” (Agier, 2010, p. 34). The function of control exerted by the humanitarian government arguably dominates that of protection and care and is evident in the labeling and categorization of refugees, the measurement of their levels of vulnerability, and the distribution of humanitarian aid (Agier, 2010, 2011). The humanitarian government has been criticized for operating a standardized emergency response of ‘one size fits all,’ which misses the particularities of each context and fails to involve local actors (AECID & DARA, 2014; Barber, 2015; Malkki, 1996). After an initial stage of ad hoc governance of Syrians, a humanitarian government in Lebanon began to take shape as the conflict in Syria intensified. The beginning of 2012 marked the creation of a parallel structure led by UNHCR while the government gradually took the back seat due to lack of funds, resources, and political will. The Lebanese government favored providing an umbrella for UNHCR’s operations. As Owen (2009) articulates with regard to the institutional management of refugees, “if the state manages the ‘normal’ population by tending to the needs of ‘life,’ then the pastoral care of the international humanitarian refuge performs this function for refugees, but without the consoling fictions of citizenship” (p. 570).

²⁴Some commentators noted that “pretending to be neutral, this policy in fact adopted the point of view of the most powerful—the Syrian government—and was referring to traditional links between main political components of the Lebanese government with the Assad regime” (Meier, 2014, p. 388).

With the growing influx of Syrians and their dispersion throughout the country, UNHCR and HRC had registered close to 8,000 Syrian refugees in the North by March 2012 and were starting to register almost 3,000 more seeking refuge in Tripoli (UNHCR, 2012b). By that time, Syrians had also fled to other parts of Lebanon, namely the Bekaa region. However, since the HRC did not have a mandate to carry out registration outside North Lebanon, the estimated 5,000 Syrians residing in the Bekaa region, not all of whom were registered, were assisted by local NGOs and municipalities (UNHCR, 2012b). Furthermore, due to the mounting costs of providing medical care to injured Syrians, the HRC voiced concerns over the lack of funding at a time when several ministers were expressing dismay at the high spending of treasury advances on Syrians rather than Lebanese communities (government advisor, personal communication, September 3, 2018). With the Lebanese authorities showing signs of failure in dealing with the enormity of the influx, UNHCR stepped up its efforts and led the registration exercise of close to 2,600 displaced Syrians in the Bekaa. It soon created the Inter-Agency Task Force with sectoral working groups for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), shelter, and protection (UNHCR, 2012b).

While coordination between UNHCR and government entities such as MoSA and local municipalities continued, it was becoming evident that the UNHCR and the government bodies working on the ground were moving in different directions. In a comment on the UNHCR division of sectoral working groups and the government's back-seat role, a government advisor noted:

If you look at the sectors, they are not divided according to ministries. The clusters are based on a UN vision otherwise you would have had ministerial sectors. This was not the government's response, it was actually UNHCR leading the response. The government was there as support (in the form of MoSA and HRC), but in many cases it was only providing an umbrella for UNHCR to do what the organization thought was best (personal communication, September 3, 2018)

By July 2012, government institutions no longer participated in the registration process of Syrian refugees along with UNHCR. HRC, the government entity co-leading the registration process in the North, announced that it will no longer take part in door-to-door registration in Tripoli. Moreover, HRC announced that due to lack of funds it will no longer cover secondary healthcare expenses (UNHCR, 2012d). While the Prime Minister verbally instructed MoSA to

carry on with registration in the North, the Lebanese government refused to provide the ministry with finances to recruit social workers to continue registration. In fact, MoSA lost its social workers to the newly launched National Poverty Targeting Program discussed above (government advisor, personal communication, September 3, 2018). In light of this, the government, represented by MoSA and HRC, gradually retreated from the registration process as Syrians settled all over the country and were no longer confined to North Lebanon.

While financial concerns are often the cause for marginalization of national governments in the process of refugee management, other factors were responsible for the Lebanese government halting its participation in the registration process. High among these is the delicate sectarian balance which underlines Lebanon's state and society relations. Sectarian fears over population balance are always major drivers of Lebanese policy decisions. Another government advisor asserted:

It's naive to assume that MoSA or HRC would have been able to sustain registration and remain in control beyond the first couple of months in the North due to the political implication of the issue. You have to understand the Lebanese system. We are a country whose women cannot pass on nationality to their children so that the number of Sunnis in the country does not increase. We are not going to register Syrians [who are predominantly Sunni] even if we do not naturalize them. It is the same paranoid thinking. (personal communication, September 18, 2018)

As the balance of power changed, a pertinent repercussion of the government's withdrawal from the registration of Syrians was that the data gathered in the expanding registration process carried out by UNHCR would no longer be shared with government entities but would belong solely to UNHCR. This data would soon evolve into a state-of-the-art database, an instrument to assert power, and an object of contention between UNHCR and the Lebanese government. This contention was epitomized in a 'data feud' over the control of this rare commodity between the GoL and UNHCR upon UNHCR's refusal to share this database with the government in 2015 (discussed in chapter five).

The Lebanese government's withdrawal from the registration operation did not, however, mean that the government did not want to intervene in the management of the refugee presence.

As the number of Syrians in Lebanon hit the 100,000 mark in October 2012 and the emergence of a victor in the Syrian conflict seemed unlikely, the Prime Minister found it imperative to establish an inter-ministerial committee to co-lead the Syrian influx response. This committee comprised of the ministers of social affairs, education, health, interior and defense in addition to the HRC. However, the mandate of the inter-ministerial committee and its coordination mechanisms remained ambiguous and constituted another bureaucratic layer with no decision-making power in a complex system of governance (UNHCR, 2012f).

The layers of bureaucracy that have grown around the arrival of Syrian refugees hardly helped alleviate the plight of the refugees and their harsh living conditions. Instead, they contributed to creating an architecture of fragmented institutions, which, if anything, managed to lead to further precarious outcomes for refugees.

4.6.1 The Shift to an Urgent Humanitarian Appeal and Support for the Lebanese Government

Under the ascendancy of a new humanitarian government, the GoL eventually had to change its approach of denying the gravity of the problem to appealing to the international community for support in managing the ‘crisis.’ This change of heart was driven by pragmatic calculations. The government believed that a greater role in the management of refugees would guarantee it significant political and financial gains; thus, it shifted its discourse “from a ‘no problem’ policy to an ‘urgent international call,’ acknowledging that Lebanon was facing a massive influx of Syrians entering and staying in the country” (Meier, 2014, p. 389). The government realized that the humanitarian regime’s priorities of providing ‘maintenance and care’ and improving the protection space for a growing refugee population and its own interests in discouraging permanent settlement and extracting political and financial gains from the international community were not mutually exclusive. It therefore full-heartedly joined in the global appeal for support for the unraveling emergency operation led by UNHCR on its soil.

In the context of its expansion, supported by the data gathered in the registration process, UNHCR launched its first Regional Response Plan (RRP). The Syria RRP laid out emergency humanitarian and protection requirements needed to assist Syrians in Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq

for the next 6 months (UNHCR, 2012b). The total appeal of \$84 million was intended to cover the needs of a projected 100,000 Syrians in neighboring countries. The plan aimed to attract and consolidate humanitarian aid under a new aid framework led by UNHCR (Boustani et al., 2016). As the number of Syrians fleeing to neighboring countries far exceeded the projections, the RRP had to be revised twice in 2012.²⁵ Finally, as the situation in Syria considerably deteriorated, the revised RRP3 in September 2012 appealed to close to \$500 million to assist more than 700,000 Syrians in neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2012e).²⁶

One particular feature of the humanitarian appeal is that the first few RRP3s did not involve any Lebanese government institution. A parallel structure of aid management and implementation was dominated by the UN and its partner NGOs despite coordination with the Lebanese government. While UNHCR coordinated its response plan with the government's various ministries, security apparatuses, and local authorities, the humanitarian aid to Lebanon was channeled to and managed by UNHCR rather than government systems.²⁷ The patronage of UNHCR was justified by the weakness and corruption of Lebanese political institutions.

By the end of 2012, the Lebanese government seized the opportunity to jump on the bandwagon of massive humanitarian appeals and prepared its own refugee response plan. The government's response plan incorporated the needs of five service ministries and HRC under the patronage of Prime Minister Mikati. However, the government plan was more of a 'shopping list' than a humanitarian appeal and was thus ignored by the international community which preferred to finance appeals through the impartial, transparent, and coordinated UNHCR response (government advisor, personal communication, September 18, 2018). As a consequence, the Prime

²⁵ The revised plan RRP2 in June 2012 reflected a doubling in humanitarian requirements to \$193 million for an increasing Syrian population of 185,000 individuals (UNHCR, 2012e).

²⁶ With regard to the appeal specific to Lebanon, the total amount requested from the international community in the first RRP was close to \$29 million to cover the needs of 25,000 Syrians and involved twenty-three partners and agencies working on the ground. However, by September 2012, as the number of Syrians fleeing to Lebanon reached 75,000, the appeal for Lebanon increased to \$105 million for a population of 120,000 Syrians expected to be registered with UNHCR by the end of 2012. In the span of 6 months, the number of Syrians fleeing to Lebanon had grown by three-fold, from 24,000 to 74,000.

²⁷ By the end of 2012, Lebanon had received a total of \$163 million, predominantly channeled to and managed by UNHCR, to meet the humanitarian needs of the growing Syrian population. While non-DAC funding to the humanitarian response was estimated at 12% of official humanitarian aid between 2011–2013, the RRP3s represented an attempt to streamline funding channels under the patronage of UNHCR (Mitri, 2015).

Minister requested that MoSA devise a coherent and national strategy to respond to the Syrian influx in 2013. The new strategy laid out the roles of relevant ministries and local authorities, a proposed policy on setting up camps for Syrian refugees, and a more unified government vision. Naturally, a polarized cabinet which disagreed on everything from refugee encampment to ministerial responsibilities could not reach a consensus on the response plan, leading to its failure.

A major change in the role of the Lebanese government in the Syrian refugee response began to gradually emerge with UNHCR's fourth appeal for \$267 million for a projected 300,000 Syrians to be assisted in Lebanon. RRP5 was launched in May 2013 and included, for the first time, an appeal from the GoL to support its national institutions and budget (UNHCR, 2013f). The total financing requirements of RRP5 amounted to a staggering three billion dollars regionally, \$1.2 billion of which were appealed specifically for Lebanon (to be managed by the international humanitarian regime), in addition to a government appeal of \$500 million to be channeled through national systems.

The plan also, for the first time, accounted for the needs of the long-neglected host communities and represented the first attempt to shift from an emergency humanitarian approach to a stabilization approach. The needs of host communities during refugee influxes have long been ignored by humanitarian agencies mandated to respond to the needs of the refugee population (Porter et al., 2019). More specifically, the focus in the past decades has been on relief and assistance to refugees in camp settings. It was not until 2009 that UNHCR acknowledged that most refugees globally reside in urban contexts as opposed to camp settings (Porter et al., 2019). The disregard for host communities' needs is also tied to the complexity of shifting from emergency humanitarian assistance to developmental and stabilization efforts aimed at host communities and countries as refugee situations become increasingly protracted. This complexity is often political as it compounds fears of permanent settlement for host countries and involves securing donor buy-in to finance long-term development projects (Jacobsen, 2001). The Lebanese case is no exception to such global trends in humanitarian governance.

The Lebanese government invited the World Bank in partnership with UN agencies and government ministries to carry out a rapid Economic and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) of the

Syrian conflict on Lebanon for the 2012 to 2014 period. At the time of its publication in 2013, the ESIA projected that during this period, the conflict would (1) result in a 2.85 percentage points (pp) cut in real GDP growth each year, entailing large losses in terms of wages, profits, taxes, and private consumption and investment; (2) push 170,000 Lebanese into poverty (over and above the 1.2 million living below the poverty line) and double the unemployment rate to above 20%, mostly among unskilled youth; and (3) lead to a \$1.5 billion decline in government revenue collection with a simultaneous increase in government expenditure by \$1.1 billion due to the surge in demand for public services (World Bank, 2013). The dramatic illustration of the negative impact of the Syrian conflict soon became a sacred non-negotiable tool in the absence of any other reliable data as well as the cornerstone of a hegemonic political discourse of ‘negative impacts’ and ‘burdens.’

The year 2013 marked an exceptional year both in terms of the rapid increase in the Syrian influx as a result of the deteriorating situation in Syria and also in terms of the massive increase in humanitarian aid flowing into Lebanon.²⁸ It was during this wave of expansion of operations and financing that standardized global tools and assistance were implemented. Syrian Refugee Registration centers were established permanently and supported by biometric technology. They introduced cash assistance and food e-card vouchers and launched ‘vulnerability’ assessments to identify and quantify refugee vulnerabilities, that would be used to provide targeted assistance (UNHCR, 2013e) and create a hierarchy of deservingness. Expanding the registration process and specifically the use of biometric technology is part of a global trend to produce unified data and create a unified culture of registration (Franke, 2009). Adding yet another layer to the classification and identification of refugees, biometric technology scanning of refugee bodies has become the mode of granting or refusing access (Ajana, 2013; Oh, 2017; Ramsay, 2019), as will be discussed in chapter six.

²⁸ In January 2013, the International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria, the first of its kind, was held in Kuwait. More than \$1.5 billion were pledged by the donor community to assist Syrians within Syria and those fleeing to neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2013a). As the humanitarian aid to Lebanon slowly mounted to 8 times the aid received in 2012, UNHCR’s power and leverage with the GoL in the following 6 years would stem from its ability to attract donor funding from the international community. The sixth and final appeal was launched in December 2013, reflecting the massive increase in the number of partners and actors involved. It comprised over 60 partners for a total appeal of \$1.7 billion for agencies working across Lebanon and an appeal of \$165 million to be channeled towards the GoL and through government national systems (UNHCR, 2013g).

4.6.2 The Challenges of the Humanitarian Government in Lebanon

In Lebanon, UNHCR's power mainly stems from its multifold role as a donor, a coordinator, and an implementing partner of the largest humanitarian operation in recent times (Mitri, 2015). At the onset of the refugee influx in 2011, UNHCR operated a small office in Beirut that managed the needs of a modest Iraqi refugee caseload and an annual budget of four million dollars. By 2014, UNHCR, bolstered by over 40 implementing partners and an operating budget of \$322 million, had established 16 offices in Lebanon and employed a growing staff of 800 individuals (as opposed to 65 in 2011), (Kelley, 2017). Already by May 2013, 81 organizations operating in 5 governorates and 26 districts across Lebanon were assisting a population of 500,000 registered Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2013d).

The UN governance of the Syrian response, however, faced the same challenges of humanitarian emergencies across the globe. For example, the needs in the humanitarian emergency far outweighed the aid committed and the local capacity required to respond to the influx (AECID & DARA, 2014). Between 2011–2013, for example, funding was both unpredictable and earmarked, thus hindering the ability for efficient long-term planning in order to meet the required needs of the refugee community (Kelley, 2017; Mansour, 2017). This was coupled with difficulties in coordination among UN agencies due to the “lack of capacity, insufficient local focus, and overlapping and duplicative UN processes” (Kelley, 2017, p. 91). It was further compounded by ‘turf battle fights’ among UN agencies over the leadership of the response (Mansour, 2017).

While, initially, UNHCR was not particularly sensitive to the specificities of the Lebanese context, it soon began to attend to the intricacies of the Lebanese case. This is not to say that the response was designed according to a well-informed understanding of Lebanon's context, but rather in a way that would allow the agency to practically deal with Lebanon's malfunctioning political system. The UNHCR-led international humanitarian regime soon understood, adapted to, and made use of the fragmented nature of governance in Lebanon. Instead of pushing for a coherent and unified government response to the Syrian influx, UNHCR negotiated separately with each relevant government body. For example, enrolling Syrian children in Lebanese public schools was negotiated with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). As a result, by March

2013, UNHCR along with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in coordination with MEHE were able to enroll close to 30,000 school-aged Syrians in Lebanese public schools (UNHCR, 2013b). Providing primary healthcare centers, on the other hand, was negotiated with the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) (UNHCR, 2012c).

The Lebanese security apparatus was an important partner with which UNHCR quickly learned to negotiate. As Syrians fled to Lebanon through unofficial border crossings and were thus considered ‘illegal’ by the Lebanese authorities, they increasingly risked detention and restriction of movement. UNHCR, driven by its protection mandate, advocated for the regularization and legalization of the status of Syrians with the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM) and the General Security Office (GSO). After considerable negotiation between the GSO and UNHCR, the former agreed to renew Syrians’ residency permits for one year rather than 6 months for the set fee of \$200. Later, UNHCR continued to advocate for the removal of this fee all together (UNHCR, 2013a). However, these tactical negotiations for the sake of minimal protection gains for refugees would soon turn refugee rights into selective privileges which relied on constant bargaining, financial deals, and patronage politics. For example, in February 2017, and after considerable pressure from the international community, the General Directorate of the GSO waived the annual \$200 renewal fee for Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR prior to January 2015. The decision, however, excluded registered refugees who renewed their residency through alternative channels (see chapter five). The waiver to the permit fees could only be achieved through forging a deal with the authorities as explained by a government advisor:

The international community lobbied for the removal of the residence renewal fee of \$200, but the government refused to remove the waiver until there was money on the table. An agreement was signed between UNHCR and the GSO for \$21 million. Officially, the money was for the capacity building of GSO offices around the country. (personal communication, September 18, 2018)

This system of negotiation with relevant ministries and state institutions did nothing to build the government’s capacity or improve its planning skills. One could argue that it has actually further exacerbated fragmentation across government institutions. However, as one government advisor attests:

Lebanon does not have a policy, nor a unified vision; so UNHCR was able to approach each minister individually and get what they needed from each ministry. It was not UNHCR's fault—it was their way of getting things done. But at the same time, this weakened the government. (personal communication, September 3, 2018)

Others went further to argue that UNHCR's strategy has contributed to reproducing the corruption and political nepotism that are symptomatic of the Lebanese system. One stark example in this regard is the process of recruitment in the Response to the Syrian Crisis project funded by UNHCR and UNICEF in partnership with MoSA. The project was designed to recruit about 50 social workers to be employed in 25 SDCs. The social workers as well a number of other managerial positions to be placed at MoSA were funded by UNICEF and UNHCR. It soon became clear that the process of hiring for these positions was far from transparent. A government advisor explains the process of recruitment:

It was very clear from the beginning: recruitment was going to be political. We had two positions for each SDC in different localities, a total of 50 positions. The MoSA minister talked to MPs of those areas asking them to provide MoSA with 3 CVs for each area. No one had a problem [neither UNICEF nor UNHCR] with this—they knew that this was the only way. You may think that this is a clientelistic way of hiring but really it is not. Not all people know how to access these opportunities or know how the UN works. The public would not know how to apply for these jobs anyhow. (personal communication, September 3, 2018)

The silence of the international humanitarian regime on this practice is not unique to Lebanon but exists in other contexts of massive emergency responses (Hancock, 1992; Savage et al., 2007; Willitts-king & Harvey, 2005). In the case of Lebanon, however, the international humanitarian regime went further to actually use its influence and the power of its massive operation by dangling 'carrots' to various ministries in order to secure its objectives and the success of its projects on the grounds. UNHCR was indeed active in reproducing traditional clientelistic relations in the country. A government advisor reveals how the Syrian crisis became a source of job creation for the children of the country's elite:

UNHCR hired the children of senior officers in the GSO for the large number of positions of advisors, assistants, and other staff members in its operations. Hiring them provided UNHCR with more leverage in its negotiations with the GSO over the conditions of Syrians. Look also at UNDP—their recruits are all political celebrities. Their regional

offices are hubs for politicians to come and ask for jobs for their supporters and for projects for their municipalities. The ‘beauty’ of the Lebanese system is that it incorporated the response plan into the domestic clientelistic networks. (personal communication, September 18, 2018)

The legacies of these political appointments, dubious contracts, and diminishing funding to beneficiaries became foundational to the humanitarian response as it expanded and involved more actors keen on making political and financial gains. They also intensified power struggles between the different ministries and the international humanitarian regime.

4.7 The Power of Labeling

At the heart of humanitarian management and the complicated bureaucratic practices of refugee registration and status settlements lies a system of labeling. The processes of the labeling and categorization of refugees have arguably become a tool of ordering and control used by the international humanitarian regime, essentializing refugee identity and creating a stratified system of privilege and exclusion (Glasman, 2017; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Malkki, 1995, 1996; Zetter, 1991). Labeling in particular is a process of “*stereotyping* which involves disaggregation, standardization, and the formulation of clear cut categories. In the institutional setting these characteristics assume considerable power, for labelling simultaneously defines a client group and prescribes an assumed set of needs...together with appropriate distributional apparatus” (Zetter, 1991, p. 44).

As discussed in chapter two, several scholars have attended to the politics of labeling refugees as a process that homogenizes experiences of vulnerability and justifies policy outcomes and interventions that are seemingly needs-based but fall short of mitigating suffering (Bakewell, 2011; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Gupte & Mehta, 2007; Moncrieffe, 2007; Stevens, 2013; Phillips, 2011; Zetter, 2007). Through this process, a refugee identity is formed—an identity with which refugees themselves seldom identify (Harrell-Bond, 1986)—that shapes their social reality and often results in processes of stigmatization, othering, and exclusion (Gupta & Mehta, 2007).

As Moncrieffe (2007) asserts, the process of labeling involves relationships of power by the different actors involved (NGOs, UN organizations, governments) and has a palpable effect on how the labeled communities are represented and treated. To put it differently, the creation of a refugee identity and the meanings attached to it is often a highly politicized process that reflects the different priorities of powerful actors. The question of labeling was at the heart of the registration process and the development of humanitarian government in. Categorization of Syrians fleeing to Lebanon and the labels that were subsequently attached to their status in the country have been core—highly politicized and contested—issues.

Since the early days of registration, the Lebanese government has been deeply invested in the labeling of Syrians fleeing the conflict into its borders. Keen on maintaining a policy of ‘neutrality’ towards events in Syria, the Lebanese government carefully chose the labels it would attach to Syrians arriving in Lebanon. Instead of the politically charged ‘refugee’ label, the government opted for the term ‘displaced Syrians’ (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018), thinking that the latter would relieve it of any responsibility attached to Syrian refugeehood under international law and deny any possible claims for permanent refugee settlement on its territory (Al-Saadi, 2015). The power of labeling and its political value was explained to me by a Hezbollah MP whose party supported coining the term displaced Syrians as opposed to refugees:

The displaced have a temporary status. Displaced people come from places to which they can return. Refugees, however, come from places to which they cannot return and thus remain longer. Syrians are not refugees—they are not like the Palestinians who sought refuge here because they couldn’t return. That is why we speak of their [Palestina] right to return as refugees. Psychologically, we were against using the term ‘refugees’ for Syrians because we did not want to give them a permanent status. We also do not want the Syrian file to turn into a Palestinian file. (personal communication, August 29, 2018)

For other political factions, Syrians fleeing the Assad regime were undoubtedly refugees, a label which was necessary to distinguish them from migrants. An advisor to the then ousted Prime Minister Hariri and a strong antagonist to the Syrian regime and its allies in Lebanon dismissed the feud over refugee vs. displaced labels as semantics:

This is semantics at the end of the day. A disillusion among some Lebanese political factions is that if you label Syrians displaced and not refugees, they will not have the same

privileges under international law. At the end of the day, we all know that under international law anyone who crosses a border is a refugee and not a displaced person. Displacement is internal. Unless they consider Lebanon and Syria as one country, then we have a bigger problem. (personal communication, September 12, 2018)

For the Lebanese Foreign Minister, the leader of the largest Christian party in parliament (FPM) and son-in-law of the country's President, Michel Aoun and arguably the leader of the anti-refugee rhetoric in the country, a distinction between voluntary immigration and refugeehood was crucial to show how refugees should not be seen simply as passive victims seeking assistance and safety but also as threats and even vehicles of destruction:

Immigration is a choice, while seeking asylum is forced. Accepting immigrants is a sovereign right of host countries, while accepting asylum seekers is forced upon it. Immigration is driven by ambition, while seeking asylum is driven by desperation. Immigrants search for the land of dreams, while asylum seekers seek safety. Immigration implies diversity, while asylum seeking threatens diversity. Immigration contributes to the greatness of countries, while asylum has contributed to its destruction and decline. (Al Kalima Online, 2018)

On the other hand, UNHCR considered all Syrians fleeing to Lebanon to be refugees by virtue of classifying the movement from Syria to Lebanon as a refugee movement (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018). Interestingly, classifying the influx of Syrians into Lebanon as a 'refugee movement' is in contrast with declaring *prima facie* refugee status, whereby UNHCR recognizes refugee status for persons displaced en masse according to "readily apparent, objective circumstances in the country of origin" (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018, p. 547). To put it differently, granting *prima facie* refugee status is a recognized means of determining refugee status under international law. While Syrians fleeing to Lebanon were not recognized as '*prima facie* refugees,' UNHCR considered them to be *de facto* refugees. In fact, mirroring the *prima facie* registration process, UNHCR registered fleeing Syrian as refugees and provided them a registration certificate. In essence, a registration certificate, valid for 2 years, granted Syrians access to humanitarian aid but up until 2015 was not a means to ensure their legal status in the eyes of the Lebanese authorities (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018). While UNHCR's registration process in other parts of the world usually grants refugees a legal status and entitlement to protection in emergency contexts, in the case of Lebanon, registration only created an essentialized identity of refugees as victims entitled to

humanitarian aid but without the consoling benefits of protection and legal status. However, as registration remained a voluntary process, not all Syrians crossing into Lebanon were registered with UNHCR. Reasons for not registering ranged from fearing for their security, to wishing to avoid the stigma associated with the refugee label or relying on social or financial capital in settling in Lebanon (owning capital, student status, staying with family). This complicated matters further as two distinct categories of Syrians were created; those who ‘registered’ with UNHCR and provided with a registration certificate, and those who did not and were labeled ‘unregistered’ Syrian refugees.

As the next chapter will reveal, the GoL requested that UNHCR halt its registration of Syrian refugees in 2015. As a result, Syrians wishing to register with UNHCR were only recorded, creating yet another category of ‘recorded Syrian refugees.’ This category of recorded refugees received humanitarian assistance but was not provided with registration certificates, which became crucial for securing legal status in the country after the government adopted and implemented restrictive measures in 2015. Moreover, as the next chapter will illustrate, the enactment of the *kafala* system for Syrians starting in 2015 attempted to distinguish between economic migrants, who, despite their historical presence in Lebanon, now faced increasing challenges to achieve legal status, and registered refugees, who were cast as passive victims in need of assistance and required to sign a pledge not work in Lebanon to secure their legal status through the UNHCR registration certificate.

Whether categorized as ‘displaced,’ ‘foreigners,’ ‘Syrian workers,’ ‘refugees,’ ‘registered,’ ‘recorded’ or ‘unrecorded,’ the emerging identities of Syrians in Lebanon have never been static. Often, individuals grappling with their newly conferred identity as ‘refugees’ or ‘displaced persons’ had been considered economic migrants for decades. Syrians living and working in Lebanon through a revolving door policy suddenly had to contend with a new identity with which they could not identify. In other words, as Malkki (1996) argues, ‘refugeeness’ is not an exclusive creation of the current refugee experience. Rather, ‘refugeeness’ in this case is tied to the complex historical relationship between Syria and Lebanon.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that significant aid flows to Lebanon and the laissez-faire modality of governance, involving heterogeneous actors with competing priorities and varying forms of leverage and power, are not the product of the current refugee influx response. Rather, the response of the humanitarian government to the Syrian influx has seen a continuation of power structures and struggles endemic to an almost permanent Lebanese ‘state of exception.’ By focusing on the particularities of the Syrian refugee situation, this chapter has examined the international humanitarian regime’s management of the refugee influx in the absence of a domestic humanitarian legal framework long driven by fear of permanence of refugee presence. It discussed the various phases of registering Syrian refugees and unpacked the government policies of the moment as pillars of an overarching system of ordering and control.

By mid-2013, with Syrian numbers reaching the one million mark, the situation and priorities of actors witnessed significant changes. The most dramatic was Hezbollah declaring its military support of the Syrian regime. Stricter border control policies and the spillover of security incidents into the North and Bekaa areas marked a new phase of securitizing rather than simply registering refugees. This ‘securitization’ phase was accentuated by political deadlock: the resignation of the prime minister in March 2013 and a presidential vacuum after political elites failed to elect a president at the end of Michel Sleiman’s tenure in May 2014.

Chapter 5: Securitizing Refugees

5.1 Introduction

The end of the cold war witnessed the expansion of a security agenda, no longer centered around the state, but concerned with the individual, giving rise to the notion of human security (Faist, 2006; Hammerstadt, 2014; Hyndman, 2012; Ibrahim, 2005; Lohrmann, 2000; Shahrbanou, 2005; Vietti & Scribner, 2013). This shift contributed to an increasing linkage between refugees and a wide array of security concerns, which has been at the heart of a growing debate in the last three decades. In other words, since the end of the cold war, a defining feature of refugee movements has been their representation as security threats (Hammerstad, 2011, 2014). Consequently, global refugee governance is no longer driven solely by humanitarian concerns but also by security priorities shaping policy formulation and aid politics. While securitization is a social and political construct often steeped in discourses of ‘threat’ and ‘crisis’ (Buzan et al., 1998; Taureck, 2006; Watson, 2011), it is also a process which manifests itself in everyday practices that reflect existing political struggles and power relations rather than exceptional systems of management (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006). This dissertation understands securitization as a complex process that links discourses of threats and crises with bureaucratic practices and institutionalized procedures as well as one that employs a variety of mechanisms including population management, border control, and decentralized practices of surveillance (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006).

In Lebanon, the Syrian refugee has become perceived as a security threat and an object of securitization (Estriani, 2018; Khouri, 2017; Şahin Mencutek, 2017). Similar to global patterns, the construction of Syrian refugees as security threats, therefore, lies in the intersection between a discourse of crisis and existential threat and a systematic set of procedures, which are deeply embedded in historical and institutionalized understandings of security. The securitization of Syrian presence in Lebanon is characterized by the “tension between claims of exceptionality and the continuous enacting of insecurity through routines and in the institutional competition between security agencies” (Huysmans, 2006, p. 158).

This chapter examines the rise of the ‘security-first’ discourse which developed out of a deteriorating security situation and the spillover of the Syrian conflict into Lebanon in 2013. This discourse focused on ‘othering’ Syrian refugees who were presented as threats to Lebanon’s economy, welfare, national security, social fabric, and demographic balance. The chapter then proceeds to analyze the non-discursive securitization of Syrian refugees reflected in multiple levels of institutional and bureaucratic procedures and practices of exclusion led by the humanitarian regime (most notably UNHCR) and the Lebanese government. These included a strict border policy introduced in February 2014, increased calls for reducing the numbers of Syrian refugees present in Lebanon, and greater enforcement of legal requirements for Syrians. The decentralization of refugee securitization, as a unique feature of the Lebanese case, is then explicated to show that securitization seldom reflects a unified policy or a homogenous set of practices across this small country. In general, the chapter argues that the securitization of Syrian refugee presence does not reflect new or exceptional systems of management. Rather, this process is emblematic of deeply entrenched power structures and struggles among various actors with competing priorities and further contributes to conditions of precarity among refugees.

5.2 A Volatile Security Context

While the previous chapter emphasized that most Lebanese factions attempted to assume positions of neutrality during the early phase of the Syrian conflict, the period starting 2013 witnessed an open engagement of some groups, namely Hezbollah, in the conflict. In the name of protecting Lebanon from takfiris or extremist Islamist fighters in Syria, Hezbollah sent dozens of its troops to defend the holy Shi’ite shrine of Sayyida Zaynab in southern Damascus in early 2013 (Karouny, 2013). A few months later, in May 2013, Hezbollah openly declared that it was actively taking part in the Syrian conflict starting with the infamous battle of al-Qusayr and later in Aleppo, 400 km away from the Lebanese border. In his speech in May 2013, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah announced the party’s involvement in the fight to protect the ‘resistance axis’ (Iran-Syria-Hezbollah), while at the same time calling on all Lebanese factions to settle their political differences on Syrian soil in order to spare Lebanon the spillover of violence (Hashem, 2018; Meier, 2014). A prominent Hezbollah figure explained the shift of the organization’s military

operation in Syria from one aimed at protecting the country's borders to one fighting for the resistance axis' survival:

Those armed militias occupied Syria and Iraq. Do you think Lebanon was going to be spared? They were coming to occupy Lebanon and our decision to protect the border was to protect Lebanon. When we liberated all the villages at the border, we realized that the militias were based in al-Qusayr. Perhaps it was the first battle ever in which Hezbollah employed an attacking tactic. Now [6 years on] you ask me, what were we doing in Aleppo, knowing that Aleppo is very far from the Lebanese border? We fought in Aleppo because we now believe that we need to triumph in Syria, our axis needs to triumph, or else the militias will be back. (personal communication, August 29, 2018)

When Hezbollah openly declared its military involvement in the Syrian conflict, the disassociation policy of 2012 quickly collapsed (Hashem, 2018; Meier, 2014), and in March 2013 Prime Minister Mikati submitted his resignation.²⁹ Soon after, sectarian clashes between the historically rival neighborhoods of Bab al-Tabbaneh (predominantly Sunni area) and Jabal Mohsen (predominantly Alawite neighborhood) erupted in the northern part of the country. With the onset of the Syrian refugee influx, intermittent clashes between the two neighborhoods had escalated, resulting in more than 100 casualties (The Daily Star, 2013).³⁰ A new cabinet under Tammam Salam, a Sunni consensus figure, was not formed until February 2014 as negotiations between political factions stalled while they nervously awaited the Syrian conflict to unravel. Hezbollah opposed the formation of a government that was not aligned with its own stance on the Syrian conflict, while anti-Syrian regime factions awaited foreign intervention that was hoped would topple Assad's reign over Syria (Hashem, 2018).

²⁹ His resignation came after a governmental dispute with Hezbollah over the extension of the position of a senior Sunni security official and the creation of a supervisory body to oversee the upcoming parliamentary elections of June 2013 (Bassam, 2013).

³⁰ Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen are both urban impoverished neighborhoods in the center of the northern city of Tripoli with a history of communal tensions and intermittent battles. Bab al-Tabbaneh is a Sunni stronghold while Jabal Mohsen is home to the city's Alawite community. The two quarters are separated by Syria Street, which acts as the front line between the often-warring areas. The dynamics of the conflict between the two quarters are rooted in festering civil war grievances, the post-war political landscape, sectarian tensions, and the exploitation of the conflict by political patrons. The intermittent battles that flare between the two impoverished areas have become proxy conflicts of the larger political divide across the country. Between 2011 and 2014, more than 20 rounds of battle have erupted between the two neighborhoods which support opposing sides of the Syrian conflict, resulting in more than 200 casualties, (A. J. Knudsen, 2017).

Hezbollah's open declaration of its military involvement in the Syrian conflict had significant consequences for increasing the securitization of Syrian refugees. Lebanon could no longer wait in fear of the conflict spilling over into its territory but had to take action to manage this spillover. More importantly, Lebanon, through Hezbollah's military action, would become responsible for the displacement of Syrians and their influx into Lebanon. For example, starting in May 2013, during the battle of al-Qusayr in Homs in which Hezbollah was heavily involved, there was a surge in the number of Syrians fleeing into Lebanon (Eakin, 2013; UNHCR, 2013c).

A heavy backlash against Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian war was inevitable. This backlash led to a significant deterioration of the already volatile security situation in Lebanon. For example, the northern city of Tripoli witnessed another round of sectarian clashes between pro-Assad Alawite militants in Jabal Mohsen and pro-rebel Sunni militants of Bab al-Tabbaneh in May 2013, leaving 10 dead and 70 injured, including two Lebanese army soldiers (BBC, 2013). Similarly, a radical Sunni armed cleric, Ahmad al-Assir,³¹ and his followers protested Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian war in the southern city of Sidon, leading to a military confrontation between al-Assir's followers and the Lebanese army. Two days of deadly battles claimed the lives of 18 army soldiers and close to 40 of al-Assir's followers. Many accused Hezbollah of coordinating or fighting alongside the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in the crackdown on predominantly Sunni communities, thereby fueling further sectarian tensions in the country (Hashem, 2018; Solomon, 2013).

Moreover, a wave of political assassinations against anti-Assad Sunni officials took place in tandem with increasing attacks on Hezbollah areas. Starting in July 2013, Hezbollah strongholds, namely Dahieh in southern Beirut, witnessed a series of deadly bombings including two incidents in Bir al-Abed in southern Beirut that left a total of 50 people injured and 20 civilians killed (Chulov, 2014). In January 2014, two attacks killed at least nine people and injured hundreds of others (Bassam, 2014). These bombings were allegedly led by opposing Sunni Islamists and

³¹ Shiekh Ahmad al-Assir and his movement gained track following the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, particularly in light of the deepening Sunni- Shi'ite divide and a weakening of traditional Sunni leadership. His rise as a radical Sunni Salafist garnered support in the city of Sidon, in the South of Lebanon, but his movement quickly came to an end upon deadly clashes with the army (A. J. Knudsen, 2019).

militants retaliating against Hezbollah's engagement in the Syrian war. In fact, several Sunni opposition groups and al-Qaeda affiliates openly threatened to attack Hezbollah areas in Lebanon if it did not withdraw its troops from Syria (Hubbard & Barnard, 2014).

Deadly tensions across the country gradually escalated. Tripoli, in North Lebanon, witnessed a twin car bomb attack outside two mosques that killed more than 40 people in August 2014. This was followed by a double suicide attack bombing in November, which was claimed by a Sunni Jihadist group targeting the Iranian embassy (a staunch ally of Hezbollah), killing 22 people and injuring 140 others (Wood, 2013). The violence reached the heart of the capital in December when an explosion in downtown Beirut killed the former minister of Hariri's anti-Syrian Future Movement and an open critic of Hezbollah, Mohamad Chatah, along with seven other civilians (Hubbard & Barnard, 2014). The assassination was the second of its kind in the span of one year, following the 2012 assassination of Wissam al-Hassan, the head of the Internal Security Forces' (ISF) Intelligence Unit and a close aide of the Hariri family (Felsch & Wählisch, 2016). The start of the new year saw escalated tensions with seven casualties reported in battles across Tripoli, rocket fire launched by the Syrian regime on the border town of Aarsal, killing seven people, and a suicide bomb killing another three people in Hermel, a Shi'ite border town supportive of Hezbollah (Bassam, 2014).

As a consequence of the deteriorating security conditions across Lebanon, Hezbollah areas in particular, became increasingly militarized. In 2013, all roads to Dahieh were closed off by checkpoints, resulting in huge discontent among residents and non-residents alike (Hazbun, 2016; Zelin, 2016).

5.3 Discourses of Securitization: The Construction of Syrian Refugees as Threats

Against this dramatic background, official Lebanese sources began to promote a discourse portraying the growing number of Syrian refugees arriving in Lebanon as a serious threat to the country's security as well as to its political, economic, and social stability (Boustani et al., 2016; Janmyr, 2016). Interestingly, these discourses were also, perhaps inadvertently, fueled by a parallel

discourse of international humanitarian organizations using a language of ‘crisis’ and ‘threats’ (Şahin Mencutek, 2017).

The official Lebanese discourse on Syrian refugees was promoted by leading members of the political establishment, not least of whom was the President of the Republic Michel Suleiman, who famously stated in the 2013 Doha Arab Summit that “this intensive displacement movement has begun to leave its marks and repercussions on the composition of the Lebanese society, particularly at the economic, social and security levels” (Guerrero Turbay, 2015, p. 21). Another notable example was the Minister of Energy and leader of the largest Christian parliamentary bloc who infamously called for deporting all Syrian refugees from Lebanon and demanded they be declared a security threat. He went even further to accuse the Syrian refugee movement of being part of a deliberate plot to transform the demographic balance of Lebanon (NOW, 2013a, 2013b).

Media outlets also played a prominent role in promoting a discourse of scapegoating and ‘othering’ Syrians. In January 2015, for example, Lebanese newspaper *An-Nahar* published an article entitled “Hamra is no longer Lebanese, Syrian Expansion has changed its Identity.” The article denounced all forms of Syrian presence in the capital city’s most iconic neighborhood from ‘child beggars’ to workers and tourists. The newspaper went on to lament that Hamra had lost its Lebanese residents, using racist language to describe how Hamra had become ‘black’ (Hazzouri, 2015). Similarly, MTV, a Lebanese TV channel,³² broadcasted a report attributing the rise in cancer rates in Lebanon to Syrian presence. Finally, New TV³³, another Lebanese television station, broadcasted a widely watched racist song with the following lyrics:

Oh wow, look at the Syrians on our Lebanese land. We are now the immigrants and they the majority. My [Lebanese] neighbor owns a room with a sink and a tap...An eager Syrian newlywed and his young wife have rented it for a ‘short while’ until the situation calms down in Syria. They entered the room as a couple a few summers ago, and goodness now they are more than a dozen in there. (The New Arab, 2018)

³² MTV is owned by Gabriel al-Murr, a Christian politician and businessman. While MTV was forced to shut down in 2002 as a consequence of its stark opposition of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon, it reopened in 2009. It politically supports the views of the March 14th Alliance (The Samir Kassir Foundation, 2018b). During the current refugee influx, it spearheaded the racist rhetoric and attacks against Syrian refugees in the country.

³³ New TV is owned by Tahsin Khayyat, a Lebanese businessman. The news station is critical of the March 14th alliance (The Samir Kassir Foundation, 2018a).

As Majed (2017) argues, such hate discourse was actively encouraged by the political elites who aimed to shift the blame for Lebanon's endemic socio-economic crises and the failure of its service provision structure from the state and its institutions to refugees.

However, the construction of Syrian refugees as an existential threat should be understood beyond the current refugee influx into Lebanon. It needs to be examined within the context of past refugee movements to the country, particularly Palestinians, and the antagonism this category has always engendered. As mentioned in chapter three, the dominant view of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and of Palestinian refugee camps in particular, is that they are states within a state which pose a threat to Lebanese sovereignty and its fragile sectarian power structure (Khalidi, 2010 as cited in Stel, 2017; Weighill, 1997). As Peteet (2005) asserts, the Lebanese "refugee-host tensions have been at times murderous" (p. 6). This perception of Palestinian refugees, which holds them responsible for Lebanon's economic and social woes and even its bloody civil war, has time and again legitimized and justified their decade-long exclusion.³⁴ Like Palestinians, Syrian refugees have been turned into objects of securitization especially with the added panic over the possibility of their permanent settlement in the country.

While the securitization discourses of Syrian refugees were manufactured domestically, these were largely aided by UN reports using a language of crisis and threat. With the exponential increase of the Syrian influx, bringing the total Syrian population registered with UNHCR close to 400,000 in March 2013 (UNHCR, 2013b), the international humanitarian regime, including UNHCR, framed the Syrian refugee influx as a 'crisis' in order to attract international attention and financial support (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). Critical scholarship on the European 'refugee crisis' has sought to problematize the utilization of the 'crisis' language (Heller et al., 2016). Crisis-centric discourses that are routinely used by humanitarian agencies on 'migration,' 'humanitarian situations,' and 'border control' are often driven by European countries' need to justify and substantiate exceptional practices of control in an 'emergency' context such as border control and

³⁴ Spatially, Palestinians have historically been confined to camps and institutionally excluded from public life and formal employment. Palestinians have effectively been marginalized from the labor market and confined to menial jobs as a result of a public discourse portraying them as security threats (Knudsen, 2008; Peteet, 2005).

everyday practices of policing (Heller et al., 2016). A ‘crisis’ by definition signifies a disruption to an otherwise stable situation, thus stipulating emergency action to restore stability (Heller et al., 2016). It is important to remember that the dominant European discourse is one in which the ‘crisis’ is very often externalized to the Middle East as the origin of the conflict resulting in the influx of migrants and refugees to Europe. Portraying refugee influx as an exceptional crisis seeks to justify “the violence and permanent exception that are the norm under global capitalism and our global geopolitics” (Heller et al., 2016, p. 10). By the same logic, the labeling of the refugee influx in Lebanon as an exceptional crisis seeks to obscure and also justify the violence and measures of exception that are, indeed, the norm in Lebanese politics.

From the notion of crisis, the United Nations organizations and the entangled web of NGOs working on the ground further focused on the notion of ‘tensions’ between refugees and host communities. Publishing numerous reports stressing the lack of social stability in the country as well as the rising tensions and conflicts between the refugees and host communities, the humanitarian government contributed to the securitization of Syrians (Akram et al., 2015, Al-Masri, 2015; Midgley et al., 2013; O’Driscoll, 2018; UNRHC, 2018; World Bank, 2013). In the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), for example, the word ‘tensions’ was mentioned 105 times (Government of Lebanon & United Nations, 2017). ‘Tensions’ here alluded to anything ranging from individual confrontations, to different forms of political conflict, to incidents of Syrians subjected to abuse, evictions, and curfews. What these reports, however, failed to address was that many of these tensions may have been a direct outcome of the work of the international humanitarian regime, which, for the first few years of the influx, provided assistance to refugees while ignoring the needs of their underprivileged and marginalized host communities. Moreover, these reports are mostly based on perception surveys rather than documented cases of tension and conflict. Most of the claims that Lebanese communities perceive Syrian refugees as threats and reports of increased feelings of tensions are seldom backed by real supporting evidence (Government of Lebanon & United Nations, 2017; UNDP, 2017). Even authors who acknowledge the possibility of existing tensions between refugee and host communities argue that rather than exceptional outcomes of the refugee-host dynamics, these tensions and conflicts are far from new in the Lebanese context. In fact, the Syrian influx has only magnified the existing structural socio-economic problems of marginalized communities that have become the primary hosts of Syrian

refugees (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). The promotion of security discourses of ‘threat,’ ‘crisis,’ and ‘tension,’ among others, served as a context and justification for the rise of a set of securitization measures against Syrian refugees.

5.4 ‘Security-First’ as National Priority

Lebanon’s complex sectarian power-sharing system does not allow for the construction of a unified understanding of (in)security. The fluid understandings of security by a plurality of actors are often contradictory and constantly evolving, thus shaping an ever-changing set of security policies (Hazbun, 2016). More importantly, authority over the control of coercive power is distributed across diverse actors of rival political constituencies (Hazbun, 2016). One should not forget that the Syrian regime’s occupation in Lebanon and its domination over domestic security affairs between 1976 and 2005 largely undermined the country’s potential to rebuild independent national security institutions following the civil war (Geha, 2015; Salem, 2012). The withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005 was followed by an increase in security policy fragmentation as a result of fierce competition among several actors dominating the security landscape in Lebanon. Among those stands the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Although generally regarded as an inclusive national institution, the LAF is still closely associated with Hezbollah (particularly its army intelligence branch). The ISF, on the other hand, is closely tied to Hariri and the Future Movement and has seen an increase in its capacity and power following the era of Syrian occupation in Lebanon. Furthermore, the GSO, mandated with border management and control, is known for its close affiliation to Hezbollah (Geha, 2015; Hazbun, 2016; Salem, 2012). This security ‘assemblage’ is largely dominated by Hezbollah which remains the most powerful force in the country by virtue of its military capacity, control over borders, and final decisions of war and peace (Hazbun, 2016; Salem, 2012). Lebanon’s security system is highly decentralized and managed by a plurality of actors, which blurs the lines between formal and informal institutions, state and non-state actors, and local and central powers. It is against this background that a securitization framework of Syrian refugees has emerged.

Hezbollah’s military involvement in Syria and the consequent deterioration of the security situation in Lebanon, along with the threat of an Islamist extremist infiltration, led to a convergence

among those competing actors towards a common security concern. Under the new Salam government, a new security plan was introduced to contain the volatile security situation in the country through coordination and cooperation between rival parties and the fragmented security apparatus they control (Hazbun, 2016). The security plan endorsed a strategy of formal and informal intelligence coordination between different security institutions. While the ISF Intelligence Unit was tasked with cracking down on domestic takfiri or jihadi cells, Hezbollah and the Lebanese army collaborated to drive Syrian rebel forces away from the Lebanese border (Zelin, 2016). Moreover, the army saw increased deployment in the border regions of the North and the Bekaa, with various security apparatuses working together towards cracking down on arms smuggling and tightening border control (Felsch & Wählisch, 2016).

The overt coordination between various security apparatuses, particularly those dominated by Hezbollah, is best revealed in the battle of Arsal in August 2014. Prior to the formation of the government, a humanitarian emergency in the Lebanese border town of Arsal, a predominantly Sunni village supportive of the Syrian opposition, saw a surge in Syrians fleeing the nearby battles of Qalamoun on the Syrian side of the border.³⁵ The reality of Arsal gave rise to a rhetoric whereby Syrian settlements were feared to be sediments for rebel groups/Sunni extremists in Lebanon. In August 2014, Jabhat al-Nusra and Islamic State (ISIS) fighters captured the town of Arsal, took members of the security forces hostage, and clashed with the Lebanese army.³⁶ The sectarian dimension and complexity of the battle of Arsal is one where the Sunni community widely believed that the army was working with Hezbollah and the Syrian regime (Şahin Mencutek, 2017). Further tarnishing the army's image of neutrality was the fact that it was "primarily targeting Sunnis in Tripoli while turning a blind eye on Hezbollah dominated areas elsewhere," which prompted criticism of Hezbollah's 'partisan immunity' (Zelin, 2016, p. 63). Despite the Sunni community's dismay over the LAF's coordination with Hezbollah and the threat of sectarian conflict, the battle

³⁵ By the month of February 2014, close to 15,000 Syrians arrived in Arsal, bringing the refugee population to a total of 50,000 Syrians, exceeding the local population of 35,000 residents (UNHCR, 2014). By August 2014, Arsal hosted around 100,000 Syrian refugees, and served as a base for the Syrian opposition and their families. Its logistical particularity is that it is a Sunni border town surrounded by Shi'ite villages in the Bekaa region, all of which are bases for Hezbollah into Syria (Ranstorp, 2016). Arsal in particular was a security concern, with UNHCR even reporting the presence of weapons in informal tented settlements in Arsal (UNHCR, 2014).

³⁶ The battle lasted around 5 days and ended with the rebel fighters withdrawing to the nearby Qalamoun mountains in Syria with tens of civilians and soldiers killed (Ranstorp, 2016; Felsch & Wählisch, 2016; Knudsen, 2014).

of Arsal forged a common ground around the LAF and its role as a counter force against the existential threat of Jihadists in Lebanon and as a power capable of containing the sectarian clashes in Tripoli and the North (Fakhoury, 2016).³⁷

The volatile security situation in the country culminating in the battle of Arsal underpinned the need for a securitization framework to manage refugee flows into Lebanon. Accordingly, a national security plan emphasized the central role of the national army, endorsed a zero-tolerance policy towards Sunni radical insurgency, and insisted on the need to contain the ‘threat’ of refugees.

5.5 The Rising Regime of Securitization

A crisis-centric discourse, with the figure of the refugee at its core, was able to validate and normalize a wide range of securitization mechanisms at both the national and local levels. These ranged from border control and tight registration mechanisms to the expansion of the *kafala* system at the national level. At the local level, securitization included measures such as enforcing curfews and raids on Syrian settlements. The decentralized mechanisms of governance at the regional and municipal level were not, as is often argued, an outcome of the lack of a coherent and comprehensive national policy (Boustani et al., 2016; Fakhoury, 2017; Ghaddar, 2017; Nassar & Stel, 2019). Rather, it was the national institutions that endorsed and promoted decentralized securitization practices that were tailored to the specific needs of each area.

5.5.1 Border Management and the Creation of the ‘Illegal’ Migrant

After decades of an open border policy that continued well into the first 2 years of the Syrian conflict, the Lebanese government decided to effectively close its borders to Syrians. Such a major step of restricting Syrian entry into Lebanon and the closure of the borders could only take place gradually. The first step in this process was to impose stricter border controls not over Syrian

³⁷ This consensus over the importance of the army’s role was complemented by international backing of the army with Saudi Arabia, for example, granting one billion dollars to strengthen the Lebanese army (Felsch & Wählich, 2016).

refugees but over Palestinian Refugees from Syria (PRS).³⁸ By August 2013, restrictions on PRS entering Lebanon required evidence of a valid pre-approved visa which could only be secured through application made by a guarantor in Lebanon. The new government effectively closed the border against PRS in May 2014. Four months later, new restrictive policies for all Syrians were introduced (Amnesty International, 2015). In June 2014, Lebanese authorities announced that only Syrians fleeing bordering areas were allowed to enter Lebanon (Akram et al., 2015; Amnesty International).

These restrictions were introduced in the one-page “Policy Paper on Syrian Refugee Displacement” that was approved by the Council of Ministers in October 2014 (PCM, 2014). The paper emphasized that while Lebanon had set a global example of adhering to humanitarian principles with regard to Syrian presence on its territory, the country, as a result, was on the brink of an economic, social, and security related explosion threatening its very existence. The policy paper called for a three-fold system of intervention to avert this fate, namely, reducing the number of Syrians present on its territory, enhancing security measures to protect its security, and alleviating the burden of the Syrian presence on the Lebanese people and economy. The first pillar of this policy focused on halting UNHCR registration systems, encouraging Syrians to either return to Syria or seek resettlement in a third country, and enforcing legal requirements on Syrian presence. The latter consisted of withdrawing the label of ‘displaced’ from those Syrians who had entered Lebanon illegally or were moving back and forth between the two countries. Withdrawing the label ‘displaced’ from Syrians effectively meant withdrawing their UNHCR ‘refugee’ status. However, as the category ‘displaced Syrians’ had no legal basis, what the government essentially meant was that Syrians involved in circular migration should no longer be registered with UNHCR as refugees. Government officials stressed that the new government policy aimed at distinguishing between two categories of Syrians, one of displaced persons/refugees and the other of economic migrants, each subject to different regulations. Therefore, new rules were introduced to organize

³⁸ As PRS fleeing to Lebanon were facing the double burden of yet another wave of forced displacement and their statelessness, they were subject to different rules and regulations from the onset of the Syrian influx. PRS do not fall under the mandate of UNHCR, and thus do not register with UNHCR when they first arrive in Lebanon. UNRWA is the agency responsible for providing PRS with services. At the onset of the refugee influx, PRS were provided with a visa valid for 15 days, renewable subject to the payment of fees that were abolished in February 2013. After which, PRS could renew their visa for a period of 3 months without charge (Akram et al., 2015).

the affairs of Syrian residents in Lebanon, and more restrictive measures were to be enforced on the entry of Syrians into the country. This government policy was essentially devised to close down the borders and restrict new waves of Syrian influx under the premise that the ongoing battles in Syria were not close to the Lebanese borders. Lebanon was following the example of other countries in the region particularly Jordan (Akram et al., 2015). Moreover, the ‘October Policy’ was in line with the government’s hesitance to recognize ‘refugeehood’ and the corresponding obligations under international law (Dionigi, 2016; Janmyr, 2016). A government advisor explains the rationale behind the October Policy:

In 2014, the concern was not over the number of Syrians in Lebanon, but that the number of Syrians registering with UNHCR was rising exponentially. The idea was to separate between economic migrants and refugees. The UNHCR registration process was halted so that the government could re-evaluate it and take control of registering refugees, although that did not actually happen. (personal communication, September 18, 2018)

The new restrictive measures came into effect in January 2015, tasking the GSO with publishing and executing the new procedures. Syrians wishing to enter Lebanon now had to belong to one of seven categories including tourism, study, transit, and medical treatment among others. ‘Displacement’ was one of the seven categories but limited to ‘exceptional’ humanitarian cases directly approved by MoSA. The criteria for such cases remained largely ambiguous, and the conditions to qualify as a ‘displaced person’ became increasingly hard to satisfy (Nassar & Stel, 2019). All seven categories required refugees to submit expensive documents that were difficult to obtain, thereby excluding Syrians with limited financial ability (Janmyr, 2016; Lebanon Support, 2016b; Nassar & Stel, 2019). The new restrictions have certainly deterred Syrians from seeking refuge in Lebanon, with the number of Syrians registering with UNHCR featuring a massive 80% drop in the first 3 months of 2015 compared to the previous year (Amnesty International, 2015).

The October Policy restrictions also applied to Syrians already present in Lebanon, who now had to face cumbersome procedures to renew their residency and qualify for legal status. Essentially, the policy divided Syrians in Lebanon into two categories with different requirements for residency renewal; those registered with UNHCR as refugees and those who are not (Amnesty International, 2015). Both categories, however, required the payment of an annual fee of \$200 for

residency renewal. Syrians who were able to prove their extreme vulnerability and complete dependence on humanitarian aid were allowed to renew their residency as UNHCR registered refugees. Successful renewal of residencies, of course, were at the discretion of the GSO. In addition to a \$200 fee for individuals above 15 years of age, residency renewal for Syrians already registered with UNHCR required documents such as housing contracts which are extremely difficult to obtain in Lebanon where rent contracts are usually informal. Other required documents included a ‘pledge not to work’ signed by a public notary (Amnesty International, 2015). Syrians not registered with UNHCR had to secure legal status through a ‘pledge of responsibility,’ also known as *kafala* (sponsorship), by a Lebanese national who commits to provide Syrian individuals with work permits or sponsor and host Syrian families (Amnesty International, 2015; Janmyr, 2016). This sponsorship scheme is further complicated by the fact that Syrians’ entry into the formal labor market is restricted to a few sectors including the environment, agriculture, and construction (Janmyr, 2016).

In a highly securitized context, these new measures were backed, supported, and implemented by the GSO, which was granted authority to manage the legal status of all Syrians. Another government advisor explains the role of the GSO under the newly devised government policy:

Everyone supported the GSO procedures because the policy was going to stop the influx not just limit it. The GSO was the only public entity that would dare to publish and implement these procedures. No other government body wanted to be held responsible for this decision. (personal communication, September 3, 2018)

However, while the GSO had both the legitimacy and power to manage the Syrian population, it lacked the capacity to do so. Another government advisor highlights the GSO’s lack of capacity to implement the October Policy’s procedures:

The 2015 procedures were not initiated by the GSO—it was the government that requested the GSO devise and implement procedures that support the rhetoric against the Syrian refugees. Yet the GSO is one of the agencies that actually bore the cost of the Syrian crisis. Its role, mandate, and the number of people it was expected to deal with increased exponentially. Most of the problems that the GSO faced in implementation was a result of its lack of capacity. (personal communication, September 18, 2018)

As the burden on the GSO grew, the new regulations became increasingly subject to arbitrary and subjective enforcement, encouraging a discretionary and ever-changing form of governance (Fakhoury, 2017). In fact, Syrian presence and legal status in Lebanon was not governed by laws but rather by a context of institutional ambiguity and changing procedures and requirements, stipulated by the GSO, which left ample room for the discretion of particular authorities, or even individuals, to implement them (Amnesty International, 2015; Janmyr, 2016; Nassar & Stel, 2019). The new procedures and a general lack of coordination across different government bodies soon gave rise to a set of discrepancies. In an interview with a high official at the MoIM, the system was explained to me:

Under the *kafala* system, a Lebanese employer can sponsor a Syrian to come and work for them. According to the GSO, the Syrian worker is eligible to be granted a legal status. However, the same worker will not be granted a working permit from the Ministry of Labor [MoL]. So, a Syrian employee who enters the country legally through a Lebanese sponsor today, tomorrow will be subject to a fine by the MoL for not having a work permit. This is an example of two public institutions are working in contradiction with each other. (personal communication, September 18, 2018)

Similarly, Akram et al., (2015) show that while Syrians that have entered Lebanon irregularly prior to the October Policy are in theory allowed to submit a ‘petition for mercy,’ along with a payment of \$600 in order to legalize their status, this process, in fact, lacks concrete guidelines and policies. The success of these petitions is thus completely at the discretion of the GSO.

While the government claimed that its new measures were designed to regulate and protect Syrian legal status, these procedures only succeeded in creating greater illegality and informality among the Syrian population (Amnesty International, 2015; Lebanon Support, 2016b). In fact, since 2014, the number of Syrian households with legal residency has witnessed a steady decline to reach a record low of 19% of the total registered refugee population in 2016 (UNHCR et al., 2016). As a result, those newly created ‘illegal’ refugees became targets for arbitrary arrests and detentions with devastating effects on childbirth registration, access to services, and the basic right of freedom of movement. Large numbers of illegal Syrian refugees now had to find ways to survive

amidst increasing exploitation and uncertainty. These government procedures, which transformed the majority of Syrian refugees into illegal subjects effectively helped institutionalize conditions of their precarity.

5.5.2 *The Kafala System, Lebanese Style*

Under the new restrictions governing refugees present in Lebanon, Syrians not registered with UNHCR had to obtain a ‘pledge of responsibility,’ also known as the *kafala* (sponsorship) system in order to secure legal status (Janmyr, 2016). The *kafala* system is better known in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries—Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman. Since the discovery of oil in the 1950s and the high demand for foreign labor in these countries, *kafala* became the main system governing foreign workers particularly in the construction and domestic service sectors (Khan & Harroff-Tavel, 2011; MFA, 2015; Rahman, 2012). Under this system, the employer/*kafeel* (sponsor), a GCC national or in some cases the recruitment agency or company, assume complete economic and legal responsibility for the migrant worker (Rahman, 2012). The *kafala* system is widely regarded as a form of ‘modern-day slavery,’ as sponsors often confiscate workers’ passports, thereby controlling their right of movement or changing employment. Similarly, workers have to endure dreadful working conditions and hours, abuse of their human rights, and repeated violence (Khan & Harroff-Tavel, 2011; MFA, 2015).

The same *kafala* system was introduced in Lebanon at the end of the civil war with the growing number of non-Arab migrant domestic and unskilled workers in Lebanon (Picard, 2013). Similar to the case of GCC countries, the *kafala* system in Lebanon has been widely recognized as a mechanism that “systematically produces a new population of readily exploitable workers” (Pande, 2013, p. 415). It has also allowed for a shift of the control over migrant workers from the state to employers, thereby increasing the power of private actors in migration management (Picard, 2013). While theoretically Lebanese national labor laws apply to migrant workers (except for domestic workers), the employer/*kafeel* under this system has considerable leverage over employees, often imposing on them harsh working conditions, limited wages, and restrictions on

mobility and access to passport (Picard, 2013). The foreign worker's legal status, economic wellbeing, and daily survival is thus at the mercy of the sponsor (Pande, 2013).

The introduction of the *kafala* system to the Syrian context can only be seen as part of the expanding securitization framework. While the government justified the introduction of the *kafala* system as a mechanism to distinguish between Syrian migrant workers and Syrian refugees arriving in the country, this justification falls short of explaining why Syrian workers who had been working in Lebanon for years were also subjected to the *kafala* system—an issue that will be discussed in detail in the following chapter on precarious labor market outcomes.

It is against this background that Syrians in Lebanon had to find ways to navigate the shifting realities that were conditioned by discretionary measures and the sudden changing of their legal status. Among the Syrian population, reactions ranged from resigning to the new realities of an illegal status to subverting these new restrictive measures. Speaking about the repercussions of their changing legal status, Samah, a mother of five children, who fled Idlib with her family to Bourj al-Barajneh, explains:

When we first came to Lebanon, at the onset of the events in Syria in 2012, we arrived in the country legally. However, now we are illegal (due to the family's inability to renew their papers). We do not have a sponsor; our sponsor is god. Sometimes when my husband leaves to go to work, he gets stopped. They tell him to get a sponsor as soon as possible. Now that they know he is illegal, he prefers to stay at home. Although they have never detained him—if they take him, will happen to us? (personal communication, December 3, 2017)

In many cases, the decision to become 'legal' is subjected to a cost-benefit analysis. Many Syrians cannot afford to pay for the legal documents required to achieve legal status, and even if they were to secure the necessary fees, they would still have to engage in a complicated process of risk assessment and survival strategies. Saad, a refugee from Aleppo who works as an informal handyman in Bourj al-Barajneh, explains his decision to reject the sponsorship program:

I did not even try to get a sponsor because the situation has become exploitive. It is like a business deal—we have become a commodity. The sponsor asks for insane amounts of money—one wants \$500, the other wants \$800. I am trying to renew my residency based

on my registration as a refugee with UNHCR, but my papers have been at the GSO for 8 months now. You need to pay extra fees if you want your residency finished faster. I told the GSO that I do not have any money, so they can keep my papers until they are done with them. Sometimes, I get stopped by the authorities and I provide them with my identity papers. To be honest, I'm not afraid since I am clean and there is nothing on me. (personal communication, December 4, 2017)

The transformation of the Syrian refugee population into an overwhelming majority of persons with illegal status needs to be understood as a mode of governance under a securitization scheme that exaggerates threats and intensifies vulnerability. Syrians could achieve legal status either as destitute refugees in need of assistance or through the exploitative *kafala* system. These ad hoc policies created an environment where Syrians had to live in 'detention-like conditions' despite not being confined to camps (Sanyal, 2018).

5.6 Bureaucratized Securitization: The Contribution of the International Humanitarian Regime

International humanitarian organizations have not only contributed palpably to the discourse of refugee securitization but also closely cooperated with and provided support to the Lebanese government on a range of activities that turned the Syrian refugee into both a source and object of securitization. As Agier (2011) argues, the humanitarian government became the "hand that heals" acting in solidarity with the "hand that strikes" represented by big global powers and domestic security systems (p. 200).

The UN agencies jointly led the development of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP) with the GoL and NGOs working in Lebanon under the coordination of MoSA (Boustani et al., 2016). The LCRP included programs aimed at providing immediate assistance to vulnerable populations and at strengthening the capacity of national service delivery systems. The LCRP implicitly supported a securitization policy by working under an overall framework whose main aim was to regulate Syrian entry, residency, and labor participation under the new restrictive government policy (Nassar & Stel, 2019). More recently, the GoL and UN agencies have developed a four-year LCRP plan (2017–2020) that reflects a shift from an emergency funded operation to a long-term development approach. Further reinforcing the crisis-centric rhetoric and

shift towards a securitization approach, an inter-ministerial crisis unit was formed and tasked with coordinating with UN agencies on the LCRP (Guerrero Turbay, 2015). The creation of a crisis unit not only cemented the securitization framework and discourse but was also a strategic act to demonstrate the government's eagerness towards implementing a security strategy (Guerrero Turbay, 2015).

More importantly, the international humanitarian regime provided support to the Lebanese government by offering capacity building projects and assistance in areas of security. For example, the UN assisted district level security units in data collection on Syrian presence while other projects sought to increase the capacity of municipal police. For instance, the UN supported the MoIM to deliver trainings and devise standard operating procedures and codes of conduct for municipal police. The underlying premise of such initiatives emphasized the need to reinforce peace, stability, and rule of law (Government of Lebanon & United Nations, 2017; UNRHC, 2018).

An interesting outcome of the expanded securitization framework was the eruption of a 'data feud' between the GoL and UNHCR in the beginning of 2015, exemplifying a war on the politics of control of refugee data. After forcing UNHCR to halt its registration process, the government requested access to the agency's elaborate database on registered Syrians. Negotiations over a data sharing agreement had stalled as narrated by a government advisor:

In 2014, UNHCR and the government were negotiating a data sharing agreement. UNHCR was only willing to provide basic data which the government presumably had, as the GSO was also monitoring the entry and exit of Syrians. But, the government wanted access to the full data which was much more comprehensive. MoSA knew quite well what kind of database was available, as MoSA staff had shadowed UNHCR at the beginning of the registration process. As a government, we argued that we needed the data for all kinds of planning concerning refugees, but UNHCR remained skeptical. (personal communication, September 3, 2018)

The relationship between UNHCR and the GoL, especially with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, grew very tense as a result of the data feud. UNHCR's refusal to share the data stemmed from concerns over refugees' security and fear of breaching their ethical commitment to refugees

(UNHCR, 2015a). Another government advisor explained how UNHCR was capable of negotiating this hurdle:

UNHCR knows the system very well, and they tailor their arguments depending on who they are talking to. They know that I am close to Hariri and anti-Syrian regime. They told me that they do not want to give the data to the government in fear that the data will be transferred from the GSO to the Syrian regime, and thus put the lives of refugees in Lebanon in danger. We knew that this argument was unfounded because the Syrian regime already had the data of all Syrians entering Lebanon legally, and so did the GSO. (personal communication, September 18, 2018)

The data feud was finally resolved when UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres and head of UNDP Helen Clark visited Lebanon in September 2014. Instead of a complicated data sharing agreement, a letter of exchange was signed between the GoL and UNHCR, as another government advisor explains:

Guterres decided that there was no need for a data sharing agreement; instead, there would be an exchange of letters between Guterres and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This granted MoSA basic data on registered refugees in Lebanon and required that MoSA sign a confidentiality agreement stipulating that the data would not be shared with any other authority. UNHCR did not want the GSO to obtain the data out of security concerns. Even though the Ministry of Foreign Affairs negotiated the exchange of letters, it was MoSA that received this data. The idea was for MoSA to take over the data and carry out a revalidation exercise of refugees. The government wanted to take over the registration process and decide refugee status according to its own criteria—it wanted to deregister anyone it considered to be an economic migrant. However, the plan never materialized. (personal communication, September 3, 2018)

Interestingly, a government source claims that the exchange of letters was only agreed upon after UNHCR paid a handsome sum of money to finance the hiring of a whole team of legal advisors for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The irony of the situation was not missed by the same source who asked me: “How are you supposed to negotiate with UNHCR and have any leverage when UNHCR is practically financing your whole support network? How can you have any independence?” (personal communication, September 18, 2018)

5.7 Decentralization of Everyday Securitization

Processes of securitization also involve ordinary and bureaucratic practices as biopolitical acts of control (Huysmans, 2006). In other words, security practices occur in both ad hoc and institutionalized fashion, blurring the lines between mundane and emergency practices, thereby replicating unchanging and far from exceptional measures to mitigate perceived threats (Watson, 2011). Such practices of security involve a wide spectrum of actors, not limited to state actors. Indeed, scholarship from Latin America and South Africa on security governance has increasingly moved away from state-centric approaches that focus on legal and formal institutions responsible for security, examining instead practices of security that occur outside legal and formal institutions and actors (Durán-Martínez, 2018; Ilgit & Klotz, 2014; Müller, 2010, 2018; Villa et al., 2019; Willis, 2015; Zeiderman, 2016). Recognizing the complexity of the security landscape and steering away from state-centric approaches and frameworks for understanding security, particular focus has been given to the rise in privatized security actors, the increased commodification of security, and the coordination and relationality between state and non-state security actors who often undermine, compete with, or coordinate with each other (Müller, 2018; Willis, 2015; Zeiderman, 2016). For example, in what she calls ‘twilight policing’ in the case of South Africa, Diphoorn (2016) demonstrates the everyday policing practices that blur the boundaries between state and non-state actors. Hybrid security governance in South America has been increasingly portrayed as the coming together of security practices and discourses involving a range of informal and formal and state and nonstate actors (Villa et al., 2019). To this end, this section explores decentralized practices of securitization that involve distinct and diversified routine practices, technological knowledge, and surveillance incorporating informal militias and security actors along with formal municipal policies.

The second pillar of the October papers was the increased role of local municipalities in managing the security situation around Syrian presence. The document called for municipalities to carry out a census of all Syrians and empower the municipal police with the necessary tools to oversee the security in their respective areas. This was preceded by an explicit MoIM memorandum not only advising but urging municipalities to enact security measures against Syrians. Municipal authorities were now tasked with carrying out registration schemes, enhancing

local police capacities, and purchasing more weapons as needed (Al-Masri, 2015). Municipalities were also asked to be involved in humanitarian aid distribution (Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, 2013).

With the development of more restrictive security policies and procedures at the central level following the Aarsal battle, several human rights organizations documented the surge in the imposition of curfews on Syrian communities across at least 45 municipalities, limiting their freedom of movement and hindering their access to vital services (Amnesty International, 2015; Frangieh & Barjas, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2014; Janmyr, 2016; Sanyal, 2018). Such curfews were typically enforced by municipal police and understood as retaliatory practices following the Aarsal events in August of that same year (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Arbitrary curfews were also coupled with over 7,000 cases of forced evictions in the first quarter of 2015 as well as arbitrary arrests and detentions of Syrian refugees in various regions across Lebanon (Amnesty International, 2015). In parallel, reports of cracking down on informal Syrian settlements by security forces in the North and the Bekaa regions proliferated (Enab Baladi, 2017; Ghaddar, 2017). By 2017, the number of municipalities implementing curfews rose to a total of 4,000, while close to 100 municipalities had enacted informal security apparatuses constituted of local men to support its security measures against Syrians (Government of Lebanon & United Nations, 2017).

5.7.1 Securitization Techniques: Curfews, ‘Shawishes,’ and Data Gathering

Despite being unconstitutional and violating international human rights treaties, the Lebanese central government and the MoIM made no move to contest or revoke curfews and other restrictions on Syrians’ freedom of movement at the local level despite calls from several NGOs and UN bodies (Human Rights Watch, 2014). In a published interview, an MoIM government advisor asserted that the decentralization practices have in fact been positive, particularly in the short-term, as they “filled a certain gap and alleviated the burdens” created by the lack of a national framework and strategy. He stressed that the MoIM does not interfere or attempt to stop these curfews because their implementation is driven by security concerns at the local level (Frangieh & Barjas, 2016, Overseeing the Municipalities section). This emphasis on local concerns has served to legitimize the suspension of the law and empower local municipalities to implement

context-specific measures in the knowledge that the central government will support such practices.

The case of Bourj Hammoud is a powerful illustration of the explicit coordination between state security apparatuses (namely the LAF and ISF) and the municipality over the implementation of curfews on the Syrian population. Bourj Hammoud, located in the eastern suburbs of the capital Beirut, is host to more than 30,000 Syrians, with a total local population of 100,000 (Madoré, 2016). Bourj Hammoud has historically been home to largely diverse communities including poor migrant workers from South East Asian and Arab countries, diverse internally displaced Lebanese communities, and a large Lebanese Armenian community. Despite the over crowdedness and poor infrastructure of the area, many are attracted to it due to its affordable rents and livelihood opportunities in various industries and construction sites. The area, moreover, has been highly stable with only limited security incidents (Madoré, 2016). A municipality representative asserted that in the 7 years of Syrian displacement, only four major security incidents have occurred in the area. The first was political and involved a confrontation between pro and anti-Assad Syrian supporters. The other two incidents were mostly personal in nature. The fourth episode, which was triggered by the verbal harassment of a Lebanese woman by a Syrian man in 2014, soon descended into what a municipality representative called a scene from the “Gangs of New York”: Lebanese men stalked and beat Syrian men in select neighborhoods, creating an environment of fear and instability (personal communication, September 6, 2018). Despite the general stability of Bourj Hammoud, this incident created a reaction by security forces against all Syrian residents. The same municipality representative narrates how the incident soon prompted pressure from the central authorities on the municipality to instill a curfew:

Although several security apparatuses tried to calm the situation down—from the ISF to the LAF, to intelligence units—they were not able to contain it due to the particular architecture of Bourj Hammoud—its narrow streets and high density. Thus, we were asked to instill a curfew. I, personally, refused for three reasons: it is unconstitutional, it is illegal, and it is against basic human rights. But due to heavy pressure from the central authorities, we decided to instill a curfew for 5 days only. We received backlash from human rights organizations who called us racist and vilified us for implementing illegal procedures, but we only wanted Syrians to restrict their movement between 8pm and 6 am for their own safety. There are municipalities that instilled curfews although they didn’t face any security

problems—we instilled a curfew once after a real security threat and significant pressure from the central authorities. (personal communication, September 6, 2018)

Interestingly, Madoré (2016) reports that many Syrians in the area said that the curfew was still in effect a year after the incident had taken place, while some were unsure whether or not it was being enforced. My interviews with Syrian residents in Bourj Hammoud revealed this confusion over the curfew and their varied reactions to its implementation. Samira, a Syrian who works at a vegetable shop from 8 am until 8 pm, asserted:

Movement has become more restricted—at least in the last 3 months due to the curfew. However, we really don't abide by it to be honest. We go out after 8 pm, and no one says anything. I hear that in other areas the curfew is much stricter. (personal communication, October 14, 2017)

Hassan, a father of five from rural Hama, who only managed to flee Syria in 2016, voices his resistance to the curfew:

We do not really abide by the curfew. If I have to go to the pharmacy late at night to get medication for my sick son, I will go. They [referring to the municipal police] will see that I am going for my sick son. They know that I am not going out for a walk—that I am going out for a reason, so they don't say anything. (personal communication, October 20, 2017)

Recent literature on the subjective experiences of refugees has reflected how the refugee experience is often correlated with internalizing discourses of dehumanization, criminalization, and marginalization tied to the refugee identity (Belloni, 2016; Hashim, 2013; Tewolde, 2017). In a case of Syrians internalizing discourses of 'othering,' another resident, Mariam, a Syrian mother of three from Deir ez-Zor, concurred that the curfew was still in effect and largely ignored but added that it had to be understood as a legitimate security measure:

I understand them when they impose curfews on us—it doesn't bother me. Well, it does restrict my freedom of movement, but at the end of the day this is not my country. It is not our country to move around freely and go wherever we want. (personal communication, October 23, 2017)

5.7.2 *Informal Securitization*

Madoré (2016) attributes the above confusion over the curfew to the hybrid form of security that incorporates informal militias along with formal municipal policies regulating the Bourj Hammoud space. Critical security scholarship, especially from the Global South, has more recently illustrated the rising hybrid forms of security governance, particularly in countries considered ‘fragile’ and ‘conflict-ridden,’ revealing highly context-specific definitions of security (Bagayoko et al., 2016; Luckham & Kirk, 2013). Hybridity as a concept blurs the lines between all actors involved in security arrangements (Colona & Jaffe, 2016). More importantly, critical scholarship on hybrid political orders helped shift the focus in security arrangements from the state towards the complex web of state, non-state, international, national, global, and local actors (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2007; Bagayoko, 2012; Meagher, 2012; Moe, 2011; Tholens, 2017). In line with global trends of hybrid security arrangements, the securitization of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has prompted the emergence of privatized security networks, often tied to political factions and tasked with guarding the community, in addition to state and non-state actors (municipalities, local police, ISF, LAF) (Şahin Mencutek, 2017; UNDP & Lebanon Support, 2015).

A prominent example of informal security actors tasked with managing Syrian refugees in Lebanon is that of the *shawishes*, who have proliferated primarily in informal tented settlements across the Bekaa and North regions (Abu Kheir, 2016; Ghaddar, 2017; Lebanon Support, 2016a; McCarter, 2018). Prior to the Syrian refugee influx, *shawishes* were Syrian nationals who predominantly functioned as managers of seasonal Syrian laborers, linking them to and arranging work opportunities for them on farms (ILO, 2016; McCarter, 2018). *Shawishes* are either directly appointed by landowners to maintain order and collect rents, or they rent out a plot of land and set up tents for residents (Abu Kheir, 2016).

In the current refugee context, *shawishes* have evolved into ‘de facto camp superintendents’ in informal tented settlements (Ghaddar, 2017). Their role ranges from acting as middlemen between Lebanese landowners and Syrian tenants, to securing permission to set up the settlement, and distributing humanitarian aid and managing the settlement (Ghaddar, 2017). While

UNHCR refers to the *shawish* as a person nominated by the refugee community to supervise and run the settlement (Mawad, 2018), many scholars reveal a more exploitive relationship between the *shawish* and settlement tenants. McCarter (2018), for example, demonstrates how the discretionary power of *shawishes* in the Bekaa region over residents' access to aid and services is often characterized by extortion and exploitation. Abu Kheir (2016) likens the *shawish* to the President of the Republic, owing to the asymmetrical power relationship between settlement residents and the *shawish*, where the vast majority of residents primarily in the Bekaa region suffer from uneven distribution of aid, bonded labor, and the threat of eviction should they ever defy the *shawish's* orders. In one case, the *shawish* prohibited the children of a particular settlement from attending public schools and forced parents to send their children to a private school where he was known to receive a share of the student fees from the school owners. When some parents complained, the *shawish* threatened to turn in those without legal status to the local authorities (Abu Kheir, 2016; McCarter, 2018).

Shawishes and their growing power to harass women, deny families aid, and threaten them with eviction have been supported by the state's security agencies. The *shawishes* often act as local informants for security institutions. As Ghaddar (2017) suggests, "the Shawishes are a perversion in a system that is reinforced by State Security actors, ignored by the Ministry of Interior and local municipalities, convenient for landowners, and problematic for aid organizations and refugees" (p. 4).

This 'subcontracting' of security agents under a hybrid system of governance is more pronounced in the case of the Bawshriye area in Mount Lebanon. This area offers an illustration of the synchronization between national government policies and procedures and local practices of securitization. The municipality of Jdeide- Bawshriye, a predominantly Christian area in Mount Lebanon, is host to a relatively small number of registered Syrian refugees of about 3,000 individuals (UNHCR, 2019). Similar to Bourj Hammoud, the securitization mechanisms devised by the municipality followed recommendations received from the security units that were established at a district level following the government's October Policy as part of empowering municipalities to adopt security measures with regard to Syrian presence (Frangieh & Barjas, 2016). Here, the municipal police contracted a former detective from the judicial police to manage

the security file of all foreigners in the area: predominantly Syrians and a limited number of Iraqi refugees as well as Egyptian workers.

The aptly named ‘Colonel’ was tasked with carrying a door-to-door census of all foreigners in the area, as a legal practice posited in the municipal law that allows the municipality to gather information on residents in the area for security reasons. The colonel explained that the data collected includes demographic information, employment, former residence, and legal status. As part of a ‘proactive’ security plan, the colonel, accompanied by a municipal team, visits ‘foreigners’ at their homes and notifies them of the following:

They are kindly required not to make any mistakes. Whatever their rights are, we will observe them as per the law, and it is their responsibility to act lawfully. Mistakes are not allowed, and there is no fooling around with us—if they mess up, they will bear the responsibility. I use this firm tone with them, and it really helps. I reiterate that we are here to serve and assist them but that mistakes are not allowed. (personal communication, January 22, 2018)

This approach is supposed to work as a deterrent as the area has hardly had any security incidents to warrant special measures. When asked if there were any security related incidents, the colonel assertively answered that there have not been any problems.

Spatial mechanisms of control are also used in order to keep Syrian presence in the area to a minimum, as Syrians are only allowed to rent accommodation in peripheral areas in Bawshrieh. The ‘policy of deterrence’ would be followed by other steps if the need arises. The colonel explains the measures taken in the case of persons without a legal status:

Our job is to notify foreigners of their illegal status. As a second step, we coordinate with the security apparatus and various ministries by sending them the names and information of all illegal foreigners in the area. It is the GSO that is responsible to take action against them. We do not take any action against Syrians registered with UNHCR, but we inform them that they are foreign citizens in Lebanon, and that they are under the jurisdiction of the GSO and the MoL, not UNHCR. Similarly, if I have suspicions about anyone, I pass on my suspicions to the state security, and they will investigate the person’s security profile. I believe that, today, the GSO and we act as one apparatus. (personal communication, January 22, 2018)

5.7.3 Hezbollah: Distinctive Modes of Securitization in Bourj al-Barajneh

As mentioned earlier, Lebanon's security assemblage is highly decentralized and involves a multiplicity of actors. However, Hezbollah, a dominant force in this assemblage by virtue of its military capacity, control over borders, and final decisions of war and peace, warrants a separate examination (Hazbun, 2016; Salem, 2012). The area of Bourj al-Barajneh is one of Hezbollah's strongholds where the political party has built an extensive network of local institutions that offer a wide array of public services as well as a powerful security apparatus that governs all community affairs (Harb, 2007). Hezbollah's security apparatus relies on advanced surveillance measures, systematic data collection methods, and population management techniques, which make it unique in the country. Hezbollah exercises complete control over all residents in this stronghold, including Syrians. Latest figures show that Bourj al-Barajneh is home to close to 20,000 registered Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2019). My own research based on extensive interviews in the area, however, puts the figure up at 30,000, which could be explained by the fact that many Syrians in the area have not registered with the UNHCR.

While Hezbollah's unique security structures are autonomous and almost always operate independently from state institutions, in the case of governing Syrian refugees, the organization has had to occasionally cooperate with other state institutions. Following Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian war and the repeated attacks on its areas in Lebanon, Hezbollah allowed the Lebanese army to take over the security checkpoints historically managed by the party in its stronghold Dahieh in southern Beirut. This, however, was regarded by many as a clever strategic move to shift the responsibility of the heavy security measures implemented in the area and the resulting frustration and anger of its residents from the organization to the state (Zelin, 2016). The shift was also a tactic used by the group to deflect accusations of Hezbollah's overwhelming control over both the army and the government (Zelin, 2016). This strategy, however, was an act of performative security. In reality, the state-run checkpoints were symbolic, while the actual securitization of the Syrian presence in Bourj al-Barajneh was run by the usual sophisticated procedures, tactics, and practices managed by Hezbollah's security apparatus which is widely recognized by residents and non-residents alike.

Hezbollah's tight securitization of Syrian residents in the area is veiled by a discourse of humanitarian care. Even prior to its military involvement in Syria, Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah repeatedly urged Lebanese communities to treat Syrians in light of their humanitarian plight and to refrain from politicizing the Syrian influx. He also called for Lebanese unity in maintaining an open border and welcoming Syrian refugees regardless of their political affiliation (Naharnet, 2013). On the ground, Hezbollah offers assistance to refugees in their strongholds within the Bekaa region and the Greater Beirut area of which Bourj al-Barajneh is a part. In a meeting with the municipal board of Bourj al-Barajneh, in which the Hezbollah Director of the Syrian Refugee Security File was present, one member explained to me their approach in managing the Syrian presence in Bourj al-Barajneh:

The general approach here is to assist Syrians and to be empathetic to their cause. We are very different from other areas that regard Syrians as enemies and a burden. Our [Hezbollah] political position affirms that Syrians are displaced from their homes, and it is our duty to assist them in Dahieh. We do not have policies that restrict their movement or their search for livelihood opportunities. We don't want to make them feel uncomfortable or to evict them. (personal communication, August 28, 2018)

Behind this humanitarian discourse, however, lies a different reality in which Syrian presence is highly securitized through a range of procedures and mechanisms. Under a tight security framework, Hezbollah's approach to Syrians has been driven by a preoccupation to prevent refugees and their support networks from being used as a cover for anti-Assad activities and facilitating the smuggling of weapons and fighters (International Crisis Group, 2013, p. 12). The same report describes how local organizations offering services to refugees in Hezbollah-controlled areas are heavily monitored by the party, which at times curtails their work. In an interview, the Hezbollah Director of the Syrian Refugee Security File in Bourj al-Barajneh explained the high levels of control exercised over Syrians:

We know everything about every single Syrian individual in the area—where they come from, to their family situation and life history, to their whereabouts at any given time. If a Syrian is not welcome for any reason, he will not remain in the area for a single minute. (personal communication, August 28, 2018)

Comprehensive profiles of Syrians are created based on detailed information gathered by Hezbollah's security apparatus. The same official continued:

We don't coordinate our data with anyone [referring to UNHCR and other security apparatuses]. Our own analysis and census are security-driven. We want to know who the Syrians here are, what they do, where they live, and where they are from. This is how we ensure the security of our area. Our data is much more accurate than any data out there. Any security breach is dealt with immediately without anyone noticing. (personal communication, August 28, 2018)

The mechanisms of control go well beyond censuses and other overt monitoring procedures. One such example comes from a community organization in Bourj al-Barajneh. The organization is partially funded by UNHCR and provides training programs on innovative skillsets to improve Syrians' chances of finding job opportunities. Host community members are also welcome to take part in the training programs. A small part of the program involved training youth on setting up surveillance cameras as a particular skill. This activity raised a security flag for Hezbollah who quickly stepped in. In coordination with the director of this same organization, Hezbollah sent two undercover men to attend the training. Their role was to monitor and report on the Syrian trainees for the duration of the course as narrated to me by the organization director (personal interview, November 21, 2017).

Another incident relayed to me during fieldwork allegedly took place during Hezbollah's fighting alongside factions of the Syrian regime and Iranian militias in Deir ez-Zor in 2017. The incident revolved around a Lebanese business owner and his Syrian employee who were stopped at a Hezbollah checkpoint as they crossed into its security zone to run an errand. The Lebanese businessman was asked to leave the Syrian worker at the checkpoint and continue on with his business in Dahieh. After 48 hours without news from the employee, he finally received a phone call from Hezbollah authorities assuring him that the Syrian employee was free to enter Bourj al-Barajneh. The Syrian employee told a story of detention, beatings, and pressure to confess ties with Syrian opposition militias in his hometown of Deir ez-Zor. After 48 hours of intimidation, Hezbollah was convinced of the man's innocence and set him free.

Beyond the overt securitization techniques of routine censuses, data gathering, surveillance, and intimidation practiced by the Hezbollah security apparatus, securitization in the Bourj al-Barajneh context, to borrow from Malkki (1996), further involves processes of dehistoricization and depoliticization of the Syrian subject. In what she refers to as ‘dehistoricizing universalism,’ Malkki illustrates how the refugee is socially constructed as a mute victim, and how the universalization of displaced people into refugees, removed from their historical, political, and cultural contexts, tends to silence refugees. ‘Exemplary victims’ have no history, and any narratives of their historical and political identities are deemed unnecessary, irrelevant, and subjective stories that should have no bearing on their governance structures.

While processes of the ‘dehistoricization’ of the Syrian subject are a feature of the overall securitization process in Lebanon, they are particularly pertinent in Hezbollah areas. The complex role of Hezbollah and its heavy involvement in the Syrian war render the Syrian refugee’s personal narrative unwelcome. In other words, in order to regard the Syrian refugee an ‘exemplary victim’ who deserves to be treated humanely, it is necessary to deny his/her political subjectivity. To be perceived as a political agent identifying with a particular worldview could bring on the wrath of Hezbollah. Syrians, instead, had embody subjects suffering destitution, vulnerability, and marginalization, in endless need of humanitarian aid rather than political agency. In Bourj al-Barajneh, there is no room for Syrians to develop narratives of historical and political trajectories, only physical manifestations of hardship and complete acceptance of the political order that governs them. Only then can Syrians be spared from harassment and demeaning curfews and treated as ‘exemplary victims,’ as a member of the Bourj al-Barajneh municipal board elaborates:

Everything here is under control—we are in no need of restricting movement (of Syrians). To do that would be racist. The Syrians who move around, we know who they are. Also, this is a humanitarian matter. The refugees we deal with are human beings— there are circumstances that forced them to become displaced. It’s not right to treat them in a condescending way or as subhuman. It’s against the values of our religion...Syrians occupy entire neighborhoods in Bourj al-Barajneh. They are all are under surveillance. Syrians know that they are being watched, that’s why problems never occur here...Syrians know that if they want to live in this area, then they have to integrate politically and socially. (personal communication, August 28, 2018)

In describing the securitization of Syrian refugees, the director of a community organization in Bourj al-Barajneh explains:

We all support Hezbollah being in control of the intelligence, information, and security situation of Syrian refugees in the area. Knowing that the security information and environment is under control puts us all at ease. The knowledge that our party is aware of everything and is controlling everything makes us comfortable. Here, no Syrian speaks about ‘politics.’ (personal interview, November 21, 2017)

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the securitization of Syrian refugees in Lebanon as the coming together of both discursive and nondiscursive practices. The securitization of Syrian refugee presence is first propagated through a crisis-centric political discourse, involving all actors, which is consumed with ‘othering’ Syrian refugees and legitimizing ‘exceptional’ practices of governance aimed at alleviating the threat of Syrian presence. The discursive securitization of Syrian presence is coupled with more institutionalized and bureaucratic procedures followed by highly diversified decentralized practices of securitization.

This chapter has argued that the lack of a comprehensive policy is foundational for successful securitization modes of governance at the local level. The underlying securitization framework, founded on plural governance of security, is one where a comprehensive state policy is historically absent and allows for more maneuvering and justification of micro-level processes of securitization that occur outside the realm of the law and involve a hybridity of actors and security arrangements. State policies and procedures ensure the transformation of Syrians into vulnerable and marginalized subjects before they are controlled by contextualized forms of security. However, it is these ad hoc government procedures ensuring illegality, restriction, and exclusion that have substantiated the micro processes of securitization, which were in essence decentralized, thus allowing for each area to follow a needs-based approach to securitization. While the state is responsible for transforming the Syrian population through institutionalized practices into illegal subjects living in fear of the law, the regional dimension of their place of residence determines the contextualized securitization schemes and mechanisms that regulate them.

As the next chapter will illustrate, it comes as no surprise that the outcome of the architecture of governance of refugees in the Lebanese context, combined with the workings of the market, is the production of precarious lives.

Chapter 6: (Re)producing Precarious Lives: The Market, Informality, and Livelihoods under ‘Duress’

6.1 Introduction

The process of constructing the refugee as a humanitarian and social subject through discursive and nondiscursive practices of labeling, categorization, and securitization takes place within a wider framework of extended precarity. While most of the literature on precarity, as discussed in chapter two, focuses on the concept from a labor market perspective, this dissertation draws on Butler (2004, 2009) and Lorey (2015) in distinguishing between ontological precariousness and precarity as a politically produced condition and mode of ordering, whereby some lives are deemed more worthy of protection than others. The last two chapters have, hence, examined processes of registration and securitization of Syrian refugees in Lebanon as modes of ordering which contribute to creating insecure, precarious living conditions. Syrian refugees in Lebanon, however, also face mechanisms of ordering and control through their position in the domestic labor market, a position which they have occupied for decades but that has seen major transformations since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria. Precarity, a contested concept, is nonetheless widely recognized as a labor market condition tied to ‘flexible’ work conditions marred by insecurity, exploitation, and instability and born of the expansion of global capitalism in post-Fordist economies (Craig et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2015; Waite, 2009). In this regard, migrants across the Global South are often distinctly trapped in extreme forms of systematic exploitation by virtue of their double position as migrants and members of the labor force (Canefe, 2018).

This chapter argues that ‘refugeeness,’ often framed as an emergency, ignores how most refugees in reality reside in urban contexts and compete over the same resources and markets with host communities (Longuenesse, 2015). Indeed, a vast body of literature treats Syrian refugees as a vulnerable homogenous category and studies the impact of the Syrian influx on the Lebanese labor market (Ajluni & Kawar, 2015; David et al., 2018; Verme et al., 2015; World Bank, 2019), while very scant academic literature takes their post-2011 labor market experience qualitatively seriously (Harb et al., 2019).

Therefore, this chapter examines the Syrian refugee experience through the lens of evolving precarity under a distinct labor market regime and the unstable conditions of everyday life. It first discusses how humanitarian systems have failed to fulfill their promises to protect refugees and provide them with adequate assistance. It attends to the mechanisms of targeted assistance and the ‘moral economies’ of unevenly distributed assistance that have left Syrian refugees feeling abandoned and having to fend for themselves in the market (Ramsay, 2019). Syrian refugees across the region have been denied access to the formal labor market and have had to rely instead on the informal market to secure livelihood opportunities under hyper-precarious conditions of forced labor and exploitation (Lenner & Schmelter, 2016; Lenner & L. Turner, 2019). This situation is further compounded in a context such as Lebanon, where Syrian entry into the labor market is not only restricted but also politicized and tied to debates on permanent settlement.

6.2 The Failures of Humanitarianism

The objectives of the massive humanitarian operation in Lebanon center around protecting Syrian refugees, providing necessary humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups, and enhancing the capacities of national service systems (Government of Lebanon & United Nations, 2017). Social protection was partially covered by the massive Syrian refugee response, which provided refugees with access to national systems of health and education. However, the needs of the Syrian population remained largely unsatisfied (UNHCR et al., 2018).

While annual funding for the humanitarian operation in Lebanon has consistently exceeded one billion dollars, the needs of the Syrian refugee communities, as estimated by the international humanitarian regime, have consistently exceeded the achieved funding. In 2018, for example, only one third of the estimated \$2.3 billion funding requirements for Syrian refugees was met (UNHCR et al., 2018). In a context of dwindling funding that has fallen short of refugee needs, donor earmarking of funding, and unpredictability of funding flowing towards the humanitarian operation in Lebanon, the international humanitarian regime’s systems of assistance and protection have faced several impediments that have ultimately impacted the lives of refugees.

According to the UN-led vulnerability assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon in 2018, 50% of Syrian refugee households remain unable to meet their most basic survival needs, calculated at a minimum basket of \$2.9 per day per person. This reality has translated into a staggering 69% of Syrian refugee households living below the poverty line of \$3.84 per person per day in 2018 (UNHCR et al., 2018). The inevitable outcome is that 34% of the Syrian refugee population remain moderately to severely food insecure.

A clearer picture of refugee living standards emerges when comparing average monthly expenditure by refugees with average monthly income and average debt. Average expenditure per capita among the Syrian refugee population is estimated at \$111. Since 2017, debt accrued by refugee families has been mounting, reaching an average of \$250 per refugee, while the monthly income for a working Syrian refugee male does not exceed \$209. This situation is bleaker for Syrian refugee women, whose average monthly income does not exceed \$92 (UNHCR et al., 2018).³⁹

In terms of access to services, Syrians are suffering particularly in relation to education attainment. Out of the total (registered) refugee population in Lebanon, an estimated 488,000 children are of school age (3–18-years old). While the humanitarian operation seeks to ensure that all school-aged children have access to formal education, more than half of Syrian school-aged children remain outside school. The main reasons for this are the high transportation costs (not covered by the humanitarian operation) and the inability to afford the loss of income from child labor (UNHCR et al., 2018). The situation is further compounded by the low-quality of education received as well as the low retention and completion rates for Syrian children.

This situation takes place within a restrictive legal framework that has resulted in 73% of the Syrian population lacking legal status, and thereby subject to regular arrests, detentions, and exploitation (UNHCR et al., 2018). As mentioned in chapter five, this is primarily sustained by discretionary policies and tough requirements to achieve legal status, such as the increased cost of

³⁹ This figure includes humanitarian assistance received by Syrian households.

renewing legal residency as a UNHCR registered refugee. While considerable pressure from UNHCR has led the GSO to waive renewal costs for refugees registered with UNHCR prior to 2015, the reality remains that this waiver does not apply to more than 50% of the registered refugee population. This is further compounded by the fact that renewals remain a complex process whose success is at the discretion of the GSO. Moreover, any registered refugee that has renewed his/her residency through the sponsorship system or any other category stipulated in the October Policy of 2014 is barred from renewing legal residency as a UNHCR registered refugee (UNHCR et al., 2018).

The shortage in humanitarian funding in Lebanon has pushed the humanitarian regime to adopt another technique of governance that relies on the categorization and prioritization of lives as some more ‘worthy’ of protection and aid than others. One of the ways in which humanitarian systems mitigate shortages and inconsistent flows of funding towards their operations is through adopting a vulnerability-based targeting mechanism in prioritizing beneficiaries for assistance. In fact, ranking refugees by their levels of vulnerability is part of a global shift driven by donor pressure for timely, efficient, and measurable outputs. Displaced persons are now seen more as ‘clients’ in need of improved public management systems in a field “ever more fixated on quantifying the number of beneficiaries and creating outcomes that can be measured and compared across a diversity of settings” (Kihato & Landau, 2017, p. 414).

Since 2013, an annual inter-agency vulnerability assessment of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon has been carried out for the purpose of ordering and ranking vulnerability, whereby ‘vulnerability’ is measured against factors including coping strategies, food security, and shelter arrangements. Assessments are carried out through technocratic and seemingly neutral humanitarian bureaucracies that are increasingly driven by the need to report on measurable outcomes (Kihato & Landau, 2017). While all vulnerability assessments to date posit that all refugees in Lebanon are in fact vulnerable, vulnerability is further ranked in ways to determine which Syrian refugees are eligible for humanitarian assistance (Janmyr & Mourad, 2018).⁴⁰

⁴⁰ For example, the World Food Programme (WFP) in Lebanon has reached 113,000 of the ‘most vulnerable’ refugee households with targeted food assistance (includes cash assistance and e-card food voucher assistance), amounting

Humanitarian systems seem to have finally caught up with the fact that most refugees no longer reside in camps but rather in urban centers (UNHCR, 2018). Indeed, in Lebanon, 30% of registered refugees reside in impoverished urban areas of two regions, Mount Lebanon and Beirut. The need to tackle the priorities of urban refugees, as Kihato and Landau (2017) assert, has prompted humanitarian systems to focus on specific vulnerabilities that are often detached from broader phenomena of urbanism, precarity, and prevailing economic systems. However, state-of-the-art targeting, expansive private sector partnerships to improve efficiencies of systems, and bureaucratic procedures that form advanced designs to humanitarian intervention cannot remedy the historical socio-political systems of inequality and precarity and the rapidly changing ‘social realities’ in such spaces. In this particular management of the refugee system, the humanitarian regime, through its vulnerability ranking, has successfully produced what Ramsay (2019) calls the “moral economies of unevenly distributed care and protection” (p. 7). In all my interviews with Syrian refugees, their disappointment with the failure of the humanitarian system to protect them extended to this system of ‘moral economies of unevenly distributed care.’ Many of them emphasized the impossibility of ranking and prioritizing human vulnerabilities. For example, Salwa, a Syrian woman registered as a refugee, in Bourj al-Barajneh narrates:

I registered with UNHCR but have never received assistance. I am told I have two sons who can work and help me. But I am a displaced Syrian—like all other Syrians who have been receiving assistance since the beginning of the crisis. UNHCR gets paid per refugee, but I do not receive anything in return. Why is everyone getting assistance for rent and benefiting from the e-card food voucher, but we do not get anything? I am a displaced Syrian—not a tourist. I do not come from Europe. (personal communication, December 5, 2017)

For Syrians transformed into humanitarian objects or ‘refugees,’ daily life becomes a struggle for survival. Survival revolves around finding livelihood opportunities to provide for the family and accessing an increasingly depleted system of social networks for financial, emotional, and mental support. But above all, daily life is mostly a struggle to prove one’s worth and

to roughly 50% of the refugee population. UNHCR’s multipurpose cash assistance managed to reach 33,000 of the most vulnerable families (UNHCR et al., 2018).

deservingness of humanitarian assistance. Tala, a single mother of four in Bourj Hammoud, grapples with UNHCR's refusal to provide her with assistance:

I went to UNHCR for help as a single mother of four, but they did not help me. My circumstances are very dire. We registered with UNHCR, but they told me that I am not eligible to receive any benefits. I asked them how that was possible when I am a single mother, and they said they had to verify this information. I told them to come and ask my neighbors. They have helped everybody who is not in need of help and left everyone in desperate need without any assistance. They didn't believe me—if I am not eligible, then who is? If it weren't for my sister's help, I would be on the streets by now. (personal communication, October 10, 2017)

6.3 Fending off the Failures of Humanitarianism: The Role of the Market

Syrian refugees have had to struggle to maintain their livelihoods outside of the inadequate humanitarian system. They do so by negotiating their place in a Lebanese urban labor market. The general experience of refugees in local labor markets has been recently examined as part of the humanitarian system's ideological and programmatic shift from its traditional assistance models to new models promoting refugee 'self-reliance' (Ramsay, 2019). The protracted nature of refugee 'crises' has allegedly made the assistance model unsustainable while a global neoliberal shift away from welfare and aid programs has created a focus on the individual's self-reliance. This dissertation argues that this shift inevitably produces new forms of precarity largely dictated by the political economy of host countries and the refugees' position within their domestic contexts. Ramsay (2019) coins the term 'humanitarian exploits' to refer to situations whereby precarity is an outcome of modes of governance seeking to both protect refugees and promote their self-reliance towards increased productivity. It is exactly this transformation from "passive victims whose livelihoods are dependent on aid to exploitable workers whose livelihoods are dependent on often-volatile local economies" that amplifies refugees' precarity and creates new forms of insecurity (Ramsay, 2019, p. 11).

The moral economy of deservingness of the humanitarian government in Lebanon has forcibly pushed refugees to become self-reliant agents who must find their own ways of survival. Nonetheless, a registered refugee status immediately bars Syrians from joining the urban labor

force, particularly since the introduction of restrictive government policies in 2015 stipulating that refugees sign ‘a pledge not to work’ (Lenner & Schmelter, 2016). To put it differently, registration with UNHCR has hindered Syrians’ ability to access the formal labor market, forcing them into more exploitative relations in the informal labor market. Syrians’ growing precarity stems from double disenfranchisement both as refugees and as workers. To understand Syrian precarity as an outcome of the labor market, an analysis of the overall labor dynamics in Lebanon is necessary.

6.4 Lebanese Labor Market Characteristics

The Lebanese labor market can be examined through a number of characteristics, most important of which are jobless economic growth, endemic unemployment, informal labor relations, and segmentation along different lines of public and private, formal and informal, and national and migrant as well as an internal system of hierarchy among migrant workers (Longuenesse & Tabar, 2016). The Lebanese economy has been overwhelmingly dominated by jobless economic growth, particularly in the decades after the end of the civil war (Dibeh et al., 2016; World Bank, 2015). The World Bank, for instance, estimates that between 1997 and 2009, the average growth rate (real GDP growth) of the Lebanese economy reached 4.4% per year, while employment only grew by 1.1% per year for the same period (World Bank, 2012). Moreover, employment growth is primarily driven by growth in jobs in low-productivity sectors. For example, for the period between 2004 and 2009, trade accounted for 61% of net job creation, followed by low-productivity services (35% of new employment), and construction at 10% of new employment (World Bank, 2015). Additionally, in 2010, only 14% of wage employment was in productive and transformative sectors, while two thirds of the employed were in trade and services (World Bank, 2015). Prior to the Syrian influx in 2010, average growth in worker productivity in Lebanon was actually negative owing to the fact that low-productivity jobs, characterized by their low-paying and low-quality nature, dominated employment growth. Such jobs in the last decade have been concentrated in the trade, construction, and services sectors as opposed to more productive sectors of agriculture, manufacturing, and financial services (Ajluni & Kawar, 2015).

Jobless growth has led to the second characteristic of the Lebanese economy—endemic levels of unemployment. Between 1990 and 2010, the labor force in Lebanon was estimated to

have doubled, reaching 1.5 million in 2010 as a result of population growth, of which immigration in addition to growth in the working-age population and an increase in female participation rates are important factors (Ajluni & Kawar, 2015). Labor force growth was matched by increasing unemployment rates. Female unemployment rates are particularly high, reaching twice the average unemployment rate for men (18% and 9% respectively), according to the latest estimates that date back to 2010 (World Bank, 2012). Moreover, youth suffer the highest levels of unemployment, estimated at 34%—three times more than the national average—along with a staggering 70% inactivity rate that indicates an underestimated unemployment rate (Ajluni & Kawar, 2015). Fueling the ‘brain drain’ of educated youth is the limited demand for high-skilled jobs and the prevalence of low-quality, low-paying jobs in unproductive sectors and sub-standard conditions. It is estimated that as much as 15% of the Lebanese population has emigrated as a result of political turmoil and the lack of job opportunities in Lebanon (World Bank, 2015). Of all Lebanese with tertiary education, as much as 44% have emigrated between 1999 and 2007 (World Bank, 2015).

Informality is perhaps one of the most distinctive features of the Lebanese economy. The consistent failure, by both government and private sector, to create formal jobs has resulted in high levels of informality and a growing informal market absorbing large shares of the labor force (Dibeh et al., 2016). The World Bank estimates that half of the labor force in Lebanon is employed in the informal sector. While 20% are in informal wage employment, 30% of the labor force are self-employed with no access to social security (Gatti et al., 2014; World Bank, 2012, 2015). Informality in Lebanon, as elsewhere, is associated with poverty. This is evident in the fact that 74% of individuals in the poorest quintile in Lebanon are in informal wage employment, the sector most relevant for understanding the position of Syrians in the country (World Bank, 2015).

Informal markets, however, are characterized by the lack of enforcement of labor regulation, and Lebanon is no exception to this (Balanche, 2007; Lenner & L. Turner, 2019; Longuenesse, 2015). The MoL in Lebanon operates a weak regulatory labor framework with its role effectively limited to refusing or granting work permits to foreign labor. This weak system often results in employers’ failure to declare the actual number of employees and their accurate salaries or to register their foreign workers in social security schemes or provide them with private insurance (Hachem & Longuenesse, 2013). In the absence of any supervision by the MoL, these

workers suffer from poor and unprotected labor conditions and lack a legal status (Longuenesse, 2015). The link between informality and illegality has recently become stronger with most informal workers in Lebanon working illegally. For example, only 185,000 work permits were issued for foreign workers in 2011, rendering the rest of foreign workers in Lebanon effectively 'illegal' (Picard, 2013).

6.4.1 Migrants in a Segmented Labor Market

Labor market segmentation is always supported by the institutionalization of race, gender, and age inequalities which manifest in daily practices (Ong, 1991). Globally, migrant workers feature prominently in this structure, where they increasingly face systemic exploitation and are predominantly excluded from national social protection systems (Avato et al., 2010; Devereux et al., 2011; Hennebry, 2014; Sabates-Wheeler & Feldman, 2011; Van Ginneken, 2013). The politics of excluding migrants from national social protection systems particularly in liberal democracies is seen as a way to control and curb migration from poorer countries (Sabates-Wheeler & Feldman, 2011). In Lebanon, while migrant workers are selectively included into particular sectors, they are excluded from a social system of rights and benefits as stipulated in the Lebanese Labor Law of 1946 (Longuenesse & Tabar, 2016). The heavy reliance on migrant workers residing legally and illegally goes beyond an economic rationale of attracting cheap labor (Young, 1999). This is because migrant laborers offer a large reservoir of vulnerable labor which is easily controlled, disposed of, and replaced. The informal market in Lebanon today relies to a large degree on migrant labor that has entered the country legally through the sponsorship system, and on migrant labor residing illegally (Arabs entering from Syria for example). Since the 1990's, Lebanon's economy has increasingly attracted low-skilled workers from Arab, Asian and African countries (Kasparian, 2009; Longuenesse, 2015; World Bank, 2012). In 2011, the World Bank estimated that half of the labor force in Lebanon was constituted of foreign workers (760,000 out of 1.5 million workers). They are, therefore, highly prized by employers who prefer hiring them over the more expensive Lebanese workers who would be more difficult to lay off or strip of their rights. Lenner and L. Turner (2019) agree that in a heavily unregulated market and an unprotective business environment, employers resort to hiring migrant labor as an efficient cost minimizing practice leading to competitiveness in the market. Apart from this obvious economic benefit, the

authors further posit that it is just as effective in cementing neoliberal systems of governance based on conditions of ‘flexibility.’

The segmentation of the market by nationality is also a political decision to exclude certain populations from neoliberal calculations and constitutes a form of ‘exception to neoliberalism,’ a strategy adopted to ensure precarious labor market outcomes and drive impermanent settlement (Ong, 2006). In Lebanon, this has been particularly pertinent for the Palestinian refugee experience, that most certainly affects active policies of exclusion in the current Syrian refugee influx. Driven by fear of permanent settlement and upsetting the sensitive demographic balance of the country, Palestinian refugees have been denied access to the formal labor market. While this is framed as a protection measure for Lebanese labor from foreign competition, it is in fact more of a long-term strategy aiming at driving out Palestinians from the country. As illustrated in chapter three, rather than an ambiguous architecture of governance blurring the lines between inclusion and exclusion, Palestinian refugee governance in the case of Lebanon has blatantly favored a policy of exclusion to deter permanent settlement. This has been particularly pronounced in the labor market, where Palestinians until 2010, were required to obtain a costly work permit, their participation in the formal labor market restricted, and barred from joining syndicate and liberal professions (ministerial decree No.1/289) which restricted Palestinian employment out of 70 commercial and administrative professions (ILO & CEP, 2012; Peteet, 2005). While the restrictions on commercial and administrative professions were lifted in 2005, it nonetheless required a work permit, that only became free of charge in 2010, to be renewed annually, and following a cumbersome procedure which is a disincentive for employers.

The Lebanese labor market is a complicated one with generations of legal/illegal foreign workers, certain nationalities banned from several sectors and excluded from access to legal rights, along with a *kafala*/sponsorship system (Longuenesse, 2015). Against this background, it becomes clear that Syrian labor has to struggle with positioning itself along this hierarchal, segmented, and informalized market.

6.4.2 *Syrian Labor in the Lebanese Labor Market*

One Syrian lives on Lebanese territory for every two Lebanese...The number of Lebanese residing in Lebanon is thus slightly more than double the number of Syrian residents...Syrians work as construction contractors, whether in large public projects or in construction sites, in addition to working in the agricultural, industrial and service sectors. Some of those who work in public projects work seasonally, and 700,000 are estimated to be working permanently, but on a rotational basis... (Murquos, 1995)

At first glance, one would assume that the above excerpt reflects current challenges and concerns related to Syrian refugees post 2011. However, the article was the bold headline of the An-nahar newspaper in 1995.⁴¹ In fact, Lebanese newspapers seem to have hardly changed their headlines two and half decades later. Amidst the latest wave of Syrian influx to Lebanon, newspapers have regularly employed headlines such as: “The Lebanese are decreasing...The Syrians are increasing” (An-nahar, 2017), “38% of Lebanon’s population is Syrian, and more than 1.5 million displaced by the end of 2014: Unequal competition in the labor market and an unemployment rate exceeding 20%” (Matta, 2014), “Syrian workers are ‘confiscating’ Lebanese jobs” (Saarati, 2014).

What these headlines in fact do is show that the ‘exceptional’ character of the current refugee influx is indeed far from exceptional. Instead, they use what seems like exceptional numbers to exaggerate the severity of the Syrian ‘threat.’ Contrary to the ‘exceptionalism’ rhetoric dominating Lebanese public discourse in the last few years, the ‘threat’ of Syrian presence, particularly in the labor market, has long been a normal characteristic of Lebanon’s economy. More importantly, this newspaper excerpt establishes that discussions on Syrian labor in Lebanon in the current state of affairs must be rooted in an understanding of the continuity between the previous migration experience and the current ‘refugeeness’ phase.

⁴¹ For a detailed analysis on the Lebanese public discourse on the presence of Syrian labor from 1945 onwards, see John Chalcraft’s (2006) *Syrian migrant workers in Lebanon: The limits of transnational integration, communitarian solidarity, and popular agency*.

Many discussions around the new wave of Syrian entry into the Lebanese labor market pertain to increased unemployment and wage suppression. In 2013, the World Bank stated that as a result of the Syrian ‘crisis’ (refers to both the effects of the Syrian war and the Syrian refugee influx), an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 Lebanese citizens would lose their jobs and thus become unemployed (World Bank, 2013). The labor force in Lebanon was expected to expand by 35% with this influx, disproportionately affecting youth and women and increasing the unemployment rate for Lebanese by ten percentage points as a result of Lebanese workers, unskilled labor in particular, replaced by Syrian workers. However, the ILO assert that the World Bank estimates are in fact exaggerated as its figures overstate the size of the Syrian influx and understate that of the Lebanese labor force (Ajluni & Kawar, 2015). Such estimates must be treated with caution in a context whereby labor force and household surveys are infrequent and outdated. The latest official unemployment rate in Lebanon dates back to 2009 and shows an approximate figure of around 9% while a more recent World Bank employer-employee survey conducted in 2010 provided an updated but incomparable figure of 11% (World Bank, 2012). In the absence of timely data, researchers cannot produce a more nuanced analysis of the post-2011 labor market dynamics characterized by labor supply increase particularly in the informal market. Moreover, in a hierarchal labor market segmented by nationality, Syrian labor could never perfectly ‘substitute’ Lebanese workers in the informal market as situations of refugee influx create additional demand thus generating new employment opportunities (World Bank, 2019). It is plausible however, that the informal sector has in fact expanded as a result of the Syrian, and that competition between Lebanese, Syrian, and other foreign workers has been restricted to certain segments of the low-skilled jobs in the sector.

As laid out in chapter three, the ‘refugeeness’ experience for Syrians in Lebanon had been preceded by decades of circular migration, as hundreds of thousands of Syrian laborers moved freely from Syria to Lebanon through a ‘revolving door’ and provided a foundation of ‘cheap labor’ to the Lebanese economy (Balanche, 2007; Chalcraft, 2008; Longuenesse, 2015). To understand the nature of Syrian migration to Lebanon, that has been circular and managed by an open-door between both countries, one must look beyond economic-centric explanations and into the deeply intertwined nature of Syria and Lebanon, politically, economically, and socially, governed by an open-door since World War II.

More importantly, examining Syrian displacement through lenses of continuity with the history of Syrian labor migration experience reveals that it is an experience that has always been dominated by precarious conditions which were made possible specifically because of this open-door policy. For decades, Syrian migrants “were rotating, menial workers who generally took unskilled, low-paying, dead-end jobs, connoting ‘inferior social status and involving hard or unpleasant working conditions and considerable insecurity’” (Piore, 1979, as cited in Chalcraft, 2008, p. 17). Syrian workers in Lebanon had thus a ‘special’ status in the low-skilled market (Longuenesse, 2015). Unlike other foreign workers in Lebanon, who needed work permits, Syrian workers were always ‘flexible’ in the sense that they could always be sent home swiftly in off-peak and low growth periods and return en masse during the Lebanese economy’s growth (Balanche, 2007). In comparison with other foreign workers who are managed by strict residency requirements Syrian workers were for the large part exempt from residency fees and work permits prior to 2015. In a sense, their precarious position stemmed from flexible work and unregistered employment (Longuenesse & Tabar, 2016). The post-2011 phase saw further developments in increased precarity among Syrians in Lebanon, many of whom fled to Lebanon for the first time.⁴²

Most employment for Syrian refugees occurs in the informal sector, with no secure contracts. Of the Syrians that are considered employed, however, this does not translate into regular work and stable income channels as only 25% of Syrian refugees are employed regularly. The average monthly income for a Syrian individual remains well below the Lebanese minimum wage of \$350. The overwhelming majority (97%) of refugee families have reverted to stark coping strategies to ensure survival in the course of their displacement. Those mechanisms included cutting down on food consumption, constant displacement to cheaper shelter and getting heavily indebted. 90% of refugee households are documented to have acquired some form of debt in 2017 and 2018. Moreover, being employed does not speak to the gruesome conditions of the work. For example, 71% of Syrian refugees are reported to work more than 47 hours a week. Syrian refugees

⁴² In 2018, the total labor participation rate for registered Syrian refugees was estimated at 43%. Syrian unemployment rates reached 40% in 2018 (this again was characterized by gender disparities, with refugee women unemployment reaching 61% compared to 35% for refugee men.) This may objectively put downward pressure on wages in the informal labor market, particularly in areas with the higher concentration of Syrian workers and unemployed, such as in the Bekaa and the North (Ajluni & Kawar, 2015).

have continued to join the same sectors which Syrian migrants had historically occupied. For instance, 32% of registered refugee men now work in construction, 21% in agriculture while 38% of refugee women are employed in agriculture. Monthly income is \$209 for refugee men, and \$92 for refugee women (UNHCR et al., 2018).

Contrary to media and political discourses of ‘crisis’ and ‘threat,’ the influx of a large supply of Syrian labor into the Lebanese labor market has not resulted in an ‘implosion’ (Ajluni & Kwar, 2015). Since the Lebanese labor market is structured towards an increased demand for low-skilled workers, what we have seen instead has been a ‘downward’ spiral of exacerbated working conditions in low-productivity sectors. The irregular, often ‘illegal,’ supply of labor has, in other words, created more conditions of precarity for migrant workers, particularly Syrians in the informal market.

6.5 From Migrants to Refugees: Evolving Forms of Precarity

One new change to the Syrian workers’ experience in Lebanon since 2011 has been the increasing burden of survival stemming from losing their social networks in Syria which had for decades guaranteed their social reproduction. For decades, Syrian labor in Lebanon practiced “ongoing basic separation between reproduction and maintenance of the workforce on one side, and its daily renewal and employment on the other” (Chalcraft, 2008, p. 17). Due to the complete absence of social protection, welfare provisions, or a system of benefits in addition to the higher costs of living in Lebanon, most Syrian workers have historically lived in Lebanon, while their families remained in Syria. Prolonged circular migration and constant return to Syria was both the direct result of Syrian workers availing themselves to their own national systems for social protection, and the need to maintain familial ties in Syria (Chalcraft, 2008). The ability for Syrian migrants to separate between social reproduction and employment was supported by an open-door policy. The endurance of the open-door system demonstrates that when given the choice, Syrian migrants always opted out of permanent settlement in Lebanon (Chalcraft, 2008).

A crucial change to the position of Syrian migrants in the labor market post 2011, apart from its forced nature, was that the separation of reproduction and employment was no longer an

option. In a context of failing humanitarian systems, not only the male breadwinner but the entire family have come to depend on Lebanese markets for their livelihood with harder access and at higher costs. The current ‘refugeeness’ phase, characterized by the prolonged forced presence of Syrians in Lebanon, has reignited a Lebanese fear of permanence. As the next section will reveal, this has given rise to mechanisms of governance such as the *kafala* system and the restriction and subordination of Syrian labor. These deliberate policies not only ensure that the Syrian experience remains impermanent but also constitute modes of ordering that (re)produce precarity as a labor market outcome.

6.5.1 The Kafala System

With the increasing Syrian influx, the Lebanese government called for greater enforcement of Lebanese labor laws with regard to Syrian employment in order to protect Lebanese workers from competition in the labor market (PCM, 2014). The *kafala* system, discussed in the previous chapter, was introduced to restrict Syrian employment by requiring them to obtain a ‘pledge of responsibility’ or *kafala* (sponsorship) from a Lebanese employer (Janmyr, 2016). Any ‘registered’ Syrian wishing to work in Lebanon, as a result, needed *kafala* in order to secure legal employment. At the same time, Syrians with *kafala* could no longer claim legal status via UNHCR registration. The government justified the introduction of the *kafala* system for Syrians as a mechanism to distinguish between Syrian migrant workers and Syrian refugees arriving in the country after 2011; however, this justification falls short of explaining why Syrian workers who had been active members of Lebanon’s labor force for decades were also subjected to the *kafala* system. In fact, what the *kafala* system did was to deprive Syrians of their ‘privileged status’ relative to other foreign migrant workers and enact a new regime of ‘derogation.’ Many accounts from my field research describe how Syrians in Lebanon negotiated this new system.

Hammoud has been in Lebanon for the last 10 years. He had been a painter in the informal sector, initially working in Tripoli then moving to Bawshriye, an eastern suburb in Beirut, a few years later. His wife and six children joined him from rural Hama in 2012 in the aftermath of the Syrian war. To provide accommodation for his family, he had to rent a bigger room for 500,000LL, without a written contract, as he could not afford an entire flat. When his family arrived, they all

registered with UNHCR but never received assistance. In 2015, Hammoud and his family were unable to secure legal status as the GSO requested that he secure a sponsor under the *kafala* system. In the past 5 months, Hammoud has struggled to find any work and has become indebted to his brother and relatives for falling behind on rent payments. Hammoud describes his current living situation relative to his conditions in Lebanon prior to the Syrian war:

Before, it was much easier for me to find work. Not only were there more opportunities, but I didn't have to worry about my papers begin legal or obtaining sponsorship. Before, the money I made was just enough for my family in Syria and my limited expenses in Lebanon. Now, I make less money, the rent is very high, and my family lives here. Lebanon is very expensive. In Syria, my family did not have to pay for rent, schooling, or medical care. (personal communication, January 15, 2018)

Another account comes from Hassan, a construction worker who has worked in Lebanon since 1990. Hassan was a seasonal worker at various construction sites around Lebanon, but 2 years ago, he and his wife had to move to Lebanon as fighting intensified in the area where they lived around Aleppo. His wife, Siham, emotionally explains:

Before, people could come and go between Syria and Lebanon and work here very comfortably. Now, they are making it extremely difficult with all their regulations and sponsorship schemes. Before, Syrians were able to return to Syria every few months, but now we are forced to stay here for years with no sponsor or legal papers. (personal communication, January 15, 2018)

Siham reaches for her phone and shows me a photo of her husband on the construction site where he works. It was a picture of roughly a dozen men standing in protest outside a construction site:

My husband and his friends are on strike. The owner wants to cut their salaries. My husband does not have any legal papers. Not only that, but the owner also wants to hold them liable for the sponsorship fee to make them legal. We are talking about \$500–600. (personal communication, January 15, 2018)

The *kafala* system succeeded in increasing the number of 'illegal' Syrians, thus accentuating the precarity of their position. The significant increase in the Syrian labor supply in

low-productivity jobs resulted in an exacerbation of poor working conditions, heightened competition between Syrian migrants over limited menial jobs in the informal market, and depression of wages in low-skilled jobs. The new ‘refugeeness’ experience has further cemented their inferior social status aggravated by limited choices, higher living costs, and further insecurity, forcing them to choose illegality and its associated conditions of exploitation. The outcome is a supply of flexible, unprotected, and low-skilled labor reserve in the service of a neoliberal economy. Lama, a resident of Bourj al-Barajneh who fled Idlib with her family in 2012, gives a testimony of these patterns in relation to her husband’s work:

My husband has been working in Bourj al-Barajneh since the 90’s as an informal worker in a steel factory. His boss exploited him and at times refused to pay him. He eventually fired my husband and hired another Syrian worker instead. My husband then rented a cart for selling vegetables. He was making only \$7 a day but it was better than nothing—at least we could pay rent. However, now with so many Syrians in Lebanon, my husband has been struggling to find any work. He has found intermittent work, but the pay is either too little or not at all. Also, he is often stopped by authorities because he does not have legal documentation. Obviously, he failed to find a sponsor. (personal communication, November 20, 2017)

It is from such positionings in the labor market that the experience of precarity is best understood. Descriptions of the experience in the labor market were predominantly dominated by worker fatigue in addition to relentless hours associated with a life to be maintained without mistakes. It was described as intolerable and dehumanizing by Rima, a mother of two from rural Damascus residing in Bourj Hammoud:

You feel that people in this area suck the blood of Syrians. My husband works in a metal shop. One month he receives his salary, the next he doesn’t. Of course, there is no formal contract, and the Lebanese owner did not offer to sponsor him. When my husband asks for his salary, the owner tells him I’ll give it to you later. (personal communication, October 21, 2017)

Arriving in Lebanon for the very first time, Anis found a job as a daily worker in a factory around Bourj Hammoud. His wife narrates:

When we first arrived from Homs with our two children, our main concern was to be able to afford rent. My husband’s brother was already here and found him work. Honestly, my

husband was like a slave. He worked 11 hours a day for \$20 a week. It was inhumane, so he left his job. He now works whenever he can find work. If the neighbors want something fixed, for example, they call him. But it's very unsustainable. We live in fear of eviction because we cannot afford rent. In Syria, we had our own house—no one could evict us. (personal communication, October 21, 2017)

Five years ago, Nohad and her family arrived from Qamishli. She narrates how her husband found work in Mazra'a as a concierge for a parking lot where they were provided a room:

Life is very difficult here. Everything is very expensive. You need to work to survive, to pay bills for water, electricity, rent... These are very hard to attain. My husband is not comfortable in his job which is very tiring. He's a concierge in a parking lot, so he needs to have his eyes open 24 hours a day to make sure that the cars entering and leaving pay the parking fee. If the cars don't pay, the parking lot owner would blame my husband. I stay inside a room in a parking lot all day. (personal communication, September 30, 2017)

More importantly, in a context of a crowded informal market, and modes of governance limiting legal status under *kafala*, expressions of precarious conditions reveal that in fact it was a multi-dimensional and a far-reaching phenomenon. Narratives of Syrians in urban areas revealed that in a context of limited livelihood opportunities, all aspects of living conditions become precarious. This has paved the way for diversified expressions of precarious living as the accounts below reveal. While some have focused on the precarious shelter arrangements, others have highlighted processes of 'de-qualification' and the changing gender dynamics in survival strategies and coping mechanisms.

Ahmad has been living in Bourj al-Barajneh, an affordable area close to the factory where he used to work, since 1992. He has changed several jobs since his arrival more than 25 years ago. Today, he works at a dry cleaner but without a sponsorship. Ahmad's monthly salary never exceeded \$400. For the most part, he shared an apartment with fellow Syrian workers to save on rent. After paying the \$100 monthly rent, he would send most of his remaining income to Syria, which his wife, Manal, would spend on their three children and still manage to save. For years, Ahmad would visit his family in Idlib roughly every 3 months. However, 5 years ago, Manal and their children were forced to join Ahmad in Bourj al-Barajneh in fear for their lives. They came to Lebanon before border controls were tightened in January 2015. They registered with UNHCR but

have not received any benefits. Manal reckons it is because her husband works that the family is not considered to belong to the most vulnerable category of refugees that qualifies for assistance. They pay \$300 in rent for a one room apartment with a counter kitchen in the bedroom. Manal explains:

We cannot always afford rent. There was a time when the landlord confiscated my husband's identity papers because we could not pay on time. The Lebanese lady who manages the building has her own way of abusing us. She has a vegetable shop under the building, and if you refuse to buy from her, she will make sure that the rent is increased. You are not allowed to buy goods from anywhere else, and everything at her shop is more expensive. (personal communication, November 30, 2017)

As Manal's testimony portrays, when livelihoods are dependent on an informal market, the dimensions of precarity become multi-fold, in consumption, shelter, and security. Another example of such precarity involves a family whose head of household used to be a daily worker in Lebanon in the 1990s. The family fled to Lebanon in 2012 and settled in Mazra'a. He luckily found work as a daily driver for a Lebanese family for a little less than \$500 a month. The entire family registered with UNHCR but received no assistance, and in 2015, they were refused residency by the GSO as a result of the UNHCR registration. This has meant a precarious existence especially in terms of shelter. His wife Amal explains:

We live in a two-room apartment in an abandoned building. There are ten of us in two rooms because my husband's family joined us here around 2 years ago. The deal with the Lebanese owner is that we rent out the apartment in its current condition for \$350 a month. If there is any sort of refurbishment to be done, we are responsible. The whole abandoned building is comprised of Syrians who pay the same amount—sometimes more. It is quite unlivable, but what choice do we have? We have no formal rent contracts. In our apartment, for example, we have a balcony without a door. My children were sick the whole winter because we were not able to close it. You do the math, we pay \$350 for rent, and my husband barely makes \$500 a month, so we are left with \$150 for ten people. (personal communication, September 29, 2017)

She summarizes her condition in one statement: “whoever is forced to live has to be satisfied with what they have.” She then compares her life in Lebanon to that in Syria: “In Syria I was financially comfortable. I had my own shop outside the house, and I used to make my own

money instead of only relying on my husband's earnings. Our house was our own property" (personal communication, September 29, 2017).

A striking dimension of the Syrian experience with precarity is the processes of de-qualification in terms of opportunities in the informal market. As Dalal from Damascus attests, "my husband went from three courses short of becoming a lawyer in Damascus to an informal daily worker in a factory for Nylon bags making \$50 a week" (personal communication, October 12, 2017). For many Syrians, the menial jobs they occupy are well beneath their qualifications and capabilities and offer a form of skill dispossession. Halim, a business owner from Aleppo, narrates his experience with de-qualification. Halim's story reflects the inherent hierarchy and segmentation of the informal market along nationalities.

I am the type of person who hates to travel. This is the first time in my life that I leave Aleppo. Do you know what I used to do in Aleppo? I used to own an electronic embroidery factory. I suddenly lost everything. I am now a driver for a restaurant—'valet parking' as they call it here. I get paid per day, but every day varies. I live with my wife and three children in one room that the restaurant owner has provided us with. If I had to pay rent, I would not be able to survive. Lebanese workers occupy a higher level in the hierarchy. They work inside the restaurant, while I work outside as a valet parking driver, and of course their income is much higher. Each month, I barely make 500,000LL (\$350), while the Lebanese make \$700 and above. (personal communication, October 15, 2017)

Moreover, the magnitude of the Syrian refugee plight and the challenges of securing educational provision in neighboring countries has shifted the attention of international organizations and the international humanitarian regime to Syria's lost generation of school-aged children (Beste, 2015; de Hoop et al., 2019; Deane, 2016; El-Ghali et al., 2016; UNHCR et. al, 2017). As of 2016, more than half of the estimated 1.4 million Syrian refugee children in the region were out of school (Beste, 2015; Deane, 2016). In Lebanon, as mentioned earlier, while the international humanitarian regime funded a large operation in collaboration with the MEHE to support the enrollment of Syrian refugees in Lebanese public schools, out of school children remain around half of the targeted population (de Hoop et al., 2019). This is mainly due to challenges with the language of instruction (English or French in Lebanon and Arabic in Syria), hefty transportation costs, and reliance on out of school children for income (El-Ghali et al., 2016; Shuayb et al., 2014). Indeed, the precarious living conditions of many families have translated into

taking their children out of school to help provide for the family, as Nour, a mother of two sons from Aleppo, narrates:

My husband has been living in Bourj al-Barajneh for a very long time. He is an informal furniture painter. When the situation grew worse in Aleppo, I joined him here with our kids. He has much less work now that there are many Syrians in Lebanon. The worst part is that I have an education, but I cannot educate my sons because they need to help their father for us to survive. Both have reached 9th grade, but they had to drop out of school and work. Everything is expensive here. We pay \$300 for rent and an extra \$100 for utilities, and then we need to spend on food and other necessities that we can barely afford a living. (personal communication, December 4, 2017)

Canefe (2018) illustrates hyper-precarity as a gendered condition affecting Syrian women, whereby their precarious livelihood opportunities are characterized by ‘forced’ and ‘deceptive’ employment and diverse forms of bonded labor in addition to poor working conditions. The below testimony by Sarah from Damascus illustrates how women, who with children constitute the vast majority of refugees present in Lebanon, are under increased pressure to provide for their families, an experience that is shared with several women in the testimonies above. This has prompted several transformations in the lives of Syrian refugee women as a direct result of displacement and dispossession. Many of these women, who are already busy with housework and family obligations, are forced to help out their husbands by undertaking menial work in the informal sector ranging from working in a vegetable shop to housecleaning or childcare duties. Sarah, who resides in Bourj Hammoud, relates her oppressive work schedule, “I work at a vegetable shop 7 days a week, from 7am till 8pm, I make \$50 a week. I am responsible for the whole shop, and I do not get a single day off” (personal communication, October 10, 2017).

The Lebanese government’s vested interest lies in perpetuating the current status quo, translated in terms of abysmal socio-economic outcomes for Syrian refugees, in the context of failing humanitarian systems. Such a status quo ensures that refugees are never comfortable enough to reconsider the temporariness of their situation. In short, a ‘dignified life’ for refugees is tied to permanency, a solution that the Lebanese system of governance vehemently resists. This status quo is best described by two Syrian beneficiaries at the SDC, one of whom told me “in Syria, I was free” (personal communication, September 7, 2017), while the other said that in Syria “I was

living on the top of the mountain. Here, I am crushed under it” (personal communication, November 20, 2017).

6.6 Ramifications on the Local Labor Market and Host Communities

Precarity, as a labor market outcome, is not exclusive to Syrian refugees, but must be understood as part of the overall labor dynamics undeniably affecting sections of Lebanese workers. The market is indeed a driving force that results in forms of social and economic ‘abandonments’ that engulf citizens, foreigners, and various communities alike (Martin, 2015). In particular, the informal market does not distinguish between Syrian and non-Syrians or citizens and non-citizens. Rather than a clear-cut Syrian-host divide, the informal market divides actors from both communities between winners and losers. Owners of assets and businesses stand out as winners, while Syrian refugees and segments of the Lebanese labor force whose livelihoods depend on the informal market are the ‘losers’ of said market.

One morning in Bourj al-Barajneh, around a dozen Lebanese men were standing outside the municipality. The municipality representative I interviewed explained to me the reason behind this modest demonstration. The men were all Lebanese owners of shops rented out to Syrian businesses in Bourj al-Barajneh. They were there to protect their interests in keeping their shops rented out amidst rumors of a crackdown on Syrian-run shops in the area:

Of the 300–400 stores that exist in Bourj al-Barajneh, around 50–60% are now (informally) rented out to Syrian businesses. If we decide to close them down, we will face a backlash from the Lebanese asset owners. We received many complaints from business owners about the rumors that we were going to close down Syrian shops, fearing they will lose their source of livelihood. Many Lebanese shop owners are earning around \$1,000 a month from rent, so it is not in their interest for Syrian businesses to close down. You have two camps, the owners who are benefiting from Syrian businesses and rent seeking and oppose their closure, and the owners of capital [not rented out to Syrians] who are not benefitting and are unhappy with the intense competition. (personal communication, August 28, 2018)

Syrian businesses, however, are not replacing Lebanese businesses. A World Bank report published in 2015, documents the increase in informal businesses managed by Syrians starting in 2011. According to the report, 66% of informal businesses opened after 2011 are managed by

Syrians, compared to 29% managed by Lebanese. However, the share of informal businesses managed by Lebanese between 2011–2014 is equal to the one prior to 2011, revealing that new informal businesses opened by Syrians have not replaced Lebanese ones. In fact, the overwhelming majority (84%) of new informal businesses opening around Syrian settlements are Lebanese owned (World Bank, 2015). Similarly, Harb et al. (2019) argue that rather than the mainstream view of Syrians as competing with Lebanese labor and businesses, Syrian entrepreneurs have in fact enriched spatial practices around the city of Beirut. Houseowners, in particular, stand out as winners, as evident in the staggering rents that Syrian refugees are forced to pay, illustrated in the above accounts. The reality that Lebanese business owners are benefiting from Syrian presence does not go unnoticed among members of the Lebanese communities I worked in. Ali, a former shop keeper who has been a resident of Bourj al-Barajneh for over 40 years, narrates:

There are many Lebanese people who are benefiting from the Syrian presence. If they weren't, you wouldn't see Syrians living here. We are welcoming them because we are benefiting from them. They live in crowded apartments (three families in one apartment) and pay \$700 rent. That's a lot of money. It is very much the Lebanese people's fault because they close their own businesses and rent out their shops to Syrians in return for a steady monthly income (personal communication, November 2, 2017)

However, in that same market, a significant number of Lebanese families have also come out as 'losers,' particularly those whose livelihoods also depended on the informal market and were left to grapple with higher rents and heightened competition in certain of its segments. This does not translate, however, into a homogenous belief that Syrian labor is responsible for the deterioration of Lebanese workers' conditions in that same segment of the market.

Stories of Lebanese workers who were substituted by Syrian or other migrant workers are not uncommon. An informal cleaner at a school in Bourj al-Barajneh, for example, has most recently been fired and replaced by a Syrian woman making \$200 a month, \$100 less than the Lebanese woman. Stories of university graduates who were working informally as shop keepers for less than minimum wage but were then replaced by Iraqi or Syrian saleswomen are prevalent in Bourj Hammoud. The mother of such a case explains:

An Iraqi girl at the shop is now paid 350,000LL [around \$230]. An Iraqi is satisfied with this amount, but my daughter cannot accept it, as it is barely enough for transportation. I am not against people in dire circumstances trying to find jobs at any cost—it's not their fault—but the outcome is that Syrian and Iraqi ladies find work while Lebanese ones sit at home. If they were not here, business owners would be forced to hire Lebanese employees at higher wages. But of course, it's the state's fault. (personal communication, October 16, 2017)

Another woman in Bourj Hammoud narrates how her husband has been laid off from his job as an informal car mechanic. Prior to the Syrian influx, her husband made \$100/week for 10 years. He was let go in favor of a Syrian worker who agreed to a wage of \$50/week. The couple, who have no source of income at the moment, have directed their anger towards the repair shop owner who took the decision after 10 years of the husband's loyal work. The informal nature of such work, governed by a system of non-enforcement, has undoubtedly benefited employers who tended to substitute Lebanese labor with a vulnerable and exploitable Syrian population. The same woman concludes that “we (Lebanese) are not empathetic towards each other, nor are we supportive. He could have chosen to give my husband \$70/week instead of firing him” (personal communication, October 16, 2017).

6.6.1 The Process of Informalization

An important but seldom discussed phenomenon that has influenced the lives of vulnerable Lebanese communities is the process of job informalization. By drawing on the Syrian refugee presence, many businesses have turned formal jobs with a modicum of job security into informal and more precarious ones that are not acceptable to Lebanese workers. Informalization, however, is not the product of a refugee influx but rather a reflection of structures and transformations in the Lebanese economy. As İçduygu (2006) asserts, rather than creating the conditions for informalization, immigrants or refugees take up opportunities produced by informalization. The most tedious and least desirable jobs are given to migrants in the process of informalization (İçduygu, 2006). This particular process has seen many jobs occupied by Lebanese employees become informalized and taken by Syrian workers. Irregular work is not solely the outcome of regulatory failures but is also tied to deeper interpretations of structures of production and accumulation (Bernards, 2018). As mentioned in chapter two, far from being a by-product of

underdevelopment, informalization and informality expanded as economies grew demonstrating the creation of flexible, specialized, irregular workers under global capitalism. By the same token, informality in the Lebanese market is increasingly tied to the globalization of labor and processes of capital accumulation that cannot be altered by government decrees, labor regulation, or enforcement of labor laws. As a result, exclusionary policies banning Syrian labor from formal sectors of employment do not incentivize the formalization of job opportunities but instead serve as a constant reminder for Syrian workers of their informality and justify and substantiate their exploitability (Lenner & L. Turner, 2019).

Hazem's story is an attestation to the pervasiveness of informality in the Lebanese labor market and the associated phenomenon of informalization. Hazem had been a formal worker at a gas station for 10 years, earning minimum wage and benefiting from social security. He has recently been laid off on the premise that his services were no longer required. His job was subsequently informalized by the owner, who hired two Syrian workers whose cumulative income did not exceed minimum wage in an attempt to benefit from the 'cheap' and increasing supply of Syrian labor. The Lebanese workers negatively affected by informalization are constantly reminded that formal employment is not a guarantee of protection from precarious outcomes owing to the nature of the Lebanese labor market dynamics that facilitates conditions of informalization. Pierre, a 60-year-old man, in Bawshriye explains how he was laid off from his job as a parking attendant for one of the largest supermarkets around Bawshriye:

I used to work in xx Supermarket, but I was fired. I used to be in charge of the parking. They told me they will replace me with three migrant workers. They fired me to hire Iraqis because Iraqis are cheaper. I used to earn minimum wage, and I was enrolled in social security. They now only hire Syrians, Indians, Bangladeshi, and Iraqi workers because they can hire three migrant workers for the price of one Lebanese. Since then, I have not been working at all. (personal communication, February 7, 2018)

Another such example of the process of informalization is evident in the case of taxi drivers in both Bourj al-Barajneh and in Bourj Hammoud. Lebanese taxi drivers have been informally renting out their red plates (taxi licenses) and cars to Syrian drivers who are officially barred from such an occupation. This rent seeking strategy has resulted in a proliferation of Syrian taxi drivers as well as high profits for Lebanese taxi owners. This process of informalization has maxed out

former Lebanese taxi drivers from entering this market. Reem, a mother of three originally from Tripoli but residing in Bourj Hammoud, narrates her husband's struggles with finding a taxi car:

My husband used to be a taxi driver, but he fell sick and cannot afford to rent a taxi now. I cannot even find one for him to rent because all public transportation drivers are now foreigners. The taxi drivers are all Syrians or Iraqis now! Lebanese taxi owners are renting them their cars for a higher price than Lebanese drivers to make a bigger profit. Now you have way less Lebanese drivers who can afford to rent a taxi car. (personal communication, December 4, 2017)

Examining the ramifications on host communities reveals that contrary to the mainstream view of refugees as a burden on and substitution for Lebanese labor, prevailing market dynamics, in fact, introduce a different dichotomy than that of refugees vs. hosts. In a highly informalized, segmented, non-regulated, and hierarchal labor market, owners of assets and businesses have benefited from a magnified supply of a protection-less and exploitable labor force facing further depression to their wages. However, in that same market, a significant number of Lebanese families have also come out as 'losers,' particularly those whose livelihoods also depended on the informal market and were left to grapple with higher rents and heightened competition in certain of its segments. Thus, precariousness needs to be understood beyond the traditional boundaries of citizen and non-citizen binaries.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to illustrate precarity as a multi-dimensional and evolving outcome by examining the labor market experience of Syrian refugees. It has aimed to contribute to the limited literature qualitatively examining the labor market experience of 'refugees,' who rather than labor market actors, are often studied as a homogenous vulnerable category, either affecting labor market outcomes of host countries or requiring humanitarian assistance in emergency contexts. The experience of Syrian refugees in the Lebanese labor market is born of the failures of humanitarianism, whereby humanitarian assistance has consistently been inadequate to maintain meaningful livelihoods, forcing refugees to turn to the market as an institution guaranteeing survival. Precarity, as a labor market outcome, is rooted in an understanding of Lebanon's economy and labor market dynamics prior to the Syrian refugee influx. The Lebanese labor market

is one that is increasingly enmeshed in the global labor market, which posits Lebanon as both an emigration and immigrant country, thus reifying the effects of globalization on its local labor market. It is a labor market reliant on including migrant workers from various nationalities and excluding them from their rights, epitomizing the overwhelming nature of captivity of foreign labor in the Lebanese labor market. Syrians have historically been politicized actors of the precarious foreign labor force that the Lebanese labor market relies on. Several exceptions to neoliberalism have been reenacted in their current refugeeness phase, ranging from processes of exclusion from neoliberal calculations and restrictions on formal employment to the introduction of the *kafala* system in its Syrian version. The conditions faced by Syrian workers after the Syrian influx are now dominated by a captive character enabling their exploitation and inability to take charge of subsistence and reproduction and forcefully driving them away from permanent settlement. This chapter's examination of the overall labor dynamics and particular features affecting Lebanese workers in the informal sector reveals that rather than pitting refugees against local Lebanese workers, labor market outcomes for segments of both communities reflect structures of production and accumulation of the Lebanese economy that have historically benefited the elite minority. In short, the Lebanese labor market has never been structured in favor of workers, and the Syrian refugee influx resulting in an increase in the labor supply has not transformed market relations but epitomized market dynamics rooted in labor exploitation, informalization, and segmentation.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

It is 10 a.m. on an October morning in Bourj Hammoud, a bustling overcrowded urban suburb of Beirut, historically home to migrant Armenians, displaced Lebanese communities, a host of migrant workers, and, more recently, Syrians fleeing the war across the borders. On the corner of a side street stands the municipality of Bourj Hammoud, outside of which municipal police officers are standing idly. The municipality is located a few blocks away from a banner that states: “The municipality of Bourj Hammoud restricts the mobility of foreign residents (Syrians) between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m.” On the very same street, several new shops and carts have cropped up—vegetable carts, butcheries, and hardware stores. The street is vibrant with indifferent shoppers minding their daily business. The Social Development Center of the Ministry of Social Affairs is located on a perpendicular street. On the second floor, thirteen patients wait for the dentist to arrive. The nurse takes note of the patients present at the SDC: of the thirteen patients, three are Lebanese, two are Ethiopian, and eight are Syrian. All are women, sitting quietly and patiently with their children who occasionally interrupt the silence by walking around aimlessly and crying out from boredom. The whole scene seems to defy the municipal order which aims to restrict movement and limit ordinary life, a scene that involves both acceptance of an austere reality and the will to tirelessly challenge it.

This routine morning in Bourj Hammoud, at the very beginning of my fieldwork four years ago, shaped the trajectory of this dissertation. The first question that came to mind then was what were the factors that shaped both the ordinary and the extraordinary in Syrians’ lives in Lebanon? What exactly determined the creation and reproduction of their daily struggles? In other words, what made Syrian lives, in such context, so precarious? Is it the restrictions on movement or the bleak livelihood opportunities? The public discourse surrounding Syrians speaks of an emergency and exceptional ‘crisis’ threatening the very existence of the country. And yet, reality on the ground feels different. ‘Syrians’ are far from a monolithic and homogenous category separate from their surroundings. This mundane morning challenges the framing of the Syrian refugee influx since 2011 as a ‘crisis’ and a case of national threat. Rather, it invites an investigation of the

architecture of governance managing Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In what follows, I bring together the theoretical ramifications and empirical findings of my research and discuss areas of research for further exploration.

7.2 The Notion of Exceptionality and Emergency

Four years after I began fieldwork, I now argue that the system of governance set in place to manage Syrian presence is neither ‘exceptional’ nor transitory, but rather intrinsic to the Lebanese political system and its power structures as well as to groups of local national and transnational actors with competing interests and relations of power. As I examine different structures of governance, I situate the experience of Syrian displacement in Lebanon within a history of ruptures, continuities, conflict, and collaboration between the two neighboring countries and demonstrate how these reinforce precarious outcomes for refugees. Instead of framing refugee plights within the logic of exception, ‘refugeeness’ is read in this thesis as extended experiences of precarity, the consequence of historical, social, and economic configurations of Lebanon’s political economy involving a variety of actors with competing priorities.

The main line of inquiry guiding this dissertation pertains to the overall regime of governance of Syrian refugees, the multiple institutions that it implicates, and the precarious outcomes it derives. While substantial scholarship on refugees has relied on Agamben’s paradigm of the ‘state of exception’ and ‘bare life’ to demonstrate the sovereign’s ability to exclude individuals from the political, I contend that the framing of the state of exception falls short of examining an entire system of governance that cannot be attributed to a single ‘sovereign power’ owing to the multiplicity of actors involved in refugee governance in Lebanon. Furthermore, I contend that the notion of ‘bare life’ does not materialize solely in legal terms, but it is also constructed through social, economic, and political discourses and practices that rely on existing structures outside the realm of law. While I recognize the theoretical contribution in Agamben’s theories of sovereignty, I have attempted to push his work forward by probing the framing of refugees’ experiences as exceptional moments requiring unique systems of management and governance.

A crisis-centric approach to refugee presence centered around exceptional modes of governance obscures practices, measures, and structures of refugee governance that are often a continuation and extension of a dominant and ordinary paradigm. Revisiting the exceptionalism framework around refugee plight allows for an examination of how existing social, political, and economic configurations organize and shape refugee lives. By going beyond exceptional moments, I attempt to establish and address continuities and ruptures of the Syrian-Lebanese relationship in terms of political, economic, and social relations. Throughout the dissertation, we are reminded that the Syrian refugee ‘crisis’ has not been a moment of exception. Instead, it is the extension of preexisting discourses and power dynamics, reinvigorated and reproduced by the influx of refugees.

If anything, the system of governance managing refugees is deeply rooted, structurally in the Lebanese state, and historically in the tumultuous relationship between Syria and Lebanon. The intertwining of structural and historical modes of governance has yielded policies of exclusion and deterrence towards refugees, best illustrated in a political economy approach. The political economy lens contextualizes refugee influx within the confessional power-sharing political system, the capitalist nature of the Lebanese economy, and the influence of Syrian-Lebanese historic relations as demonstrated in chapter three. It sheds light on the politicization of the prolonged presence of Syrian labor in the context of interdependent economies and their position as natural scapegoats for structural problems in the Lebanese labor market. It demonstrates how the political discourse around Palestinian presence, consumed with the rejection of *tawfīn* (naturalization), has contributed to the representation of refugees both as a burden and a threat to Lebanese sovereignty and the country’s delicate sectarian balance. This history has set the parameters and reproduced the discourse around Syrian presence, particularly as the decades-long policy of deterrence and exclusion has accelerated Palestinian migration from Lebanon, decreasing the number of Palestinians residing in the country.

The humanitarian response and operation reaching close to seven billion dollars by 2018 has to be understood within the broader context of Lebanon’s market for aid, which reveals that humanitarian modes of governance predate the refugee influx. The large aid channeled to Lebanon at the onset of the Syrian influx aligns with a history of international aid that has shaped Lebanon’s

political landscape and involves a plurality of players, all of whom were heavily engaged in the unraveling humanitarian operation—that certainly did not evolve in a vacuum. I trace the subjugation of Syrian refugees to the machinery of the humanitarian regime in Lebanon, beginning with the formal registration process, which is grounded in the complicated history of aid politics and the intricate sectarian power-sharing structures of the Lebanese state.

I particularly analyze Lebanon's complex political landscape animated by actors competing over the control of coercive power and demonstrating varying understandings of security. Akin to humanitarian modes of governance, the securitization of Syrian refugees predates the refugee influx. The construction of Syrian refugees as an existential threat is far-reaching. It is better understood within the context of past influxes of refugees into the country and the fear of naturalization it has triggered. I contend that the labeling of the refugee influx in Lebanon as an exceptional and existential threat both obscures and justifies the violence and measures of exception that have been, indeed, the norm in Lebanese politics. As it has become clear, security practices and measures defy the logic of exception, in both ad hoc and institutionalized fashion, thereby blurring the lines between mundane and emergency practices.

Syrian refugees' evolving experience in the labor market is rooted in an understanding of Lebanon's economy and labor market dynamics prior to the Syrian refugee influx. In the dissertation, I trace the dependence of Lebanon's economy on migrant workers from various nationalities and the curtailment of their rights that epitomize the experience of foreign labor and its overwhelming nature of captivity. Syrian workers have been historically at the heart of this model, often framed as politicized actors of the precarious foreign labor that the Lebanese labor market relies on. I also suggest, in chapter six, an alternative reading of the labor market, one that explores the ramifications on host communities' labor market outcomes—not as the result of the Syrian refugee influx but rather as an illustration of a labor market that historically abounds with exploitation, informalization, and segmentation. The labor market continues to reflect structures of production and accumulation of the Lebanese economy, ones that predate the Syrian refugee influx and historically benefit the elite minority in Lebanon.

7.3 Sovereignty, Fragmentation, and Humanitarian Governance

This dissertation situates humanitarian governance at the intersection of Lebanon's political economy and the politics of humanitarian aid comprising transnational, national, and local actors orchestrating the Syrian refugee presence in Lebanon for the period 2011–2017. Examining the international humanitarian response against the backdrop of existing political and power structures in Lebanon, reveals that the international humanitarian regime functions in a manner that does not undermine but rather reinforces government priorities of deterrence and fragmented modes of governance. Moreover, this dissertation argues that rather than the function of one sovereign power, the function of 'control' is the product of the whole governance architecture managing Syrian presence, which is tied to previous patterns, dynamics, structures, and power relations.

I argue that the response was first shaped by the complementarity of a humanitarian operation led by an ostensibly impartial institution (UNHCR) and a government adamant on an ostrich policy in an attempt to depoliticize the Syrian refugee influx driven by political considerations to the Syrian-Lebanese relationship. I focus on the unraveling of humanitarian operations in the absence of a legal framework for refugee protection and its devastating effects on refugee lives. I demonstrate how the lack of a legal framework grounding the humanitarian response conditioned refugee access to protection, thereby transforming aid into a privilege rather than a right, one that is subject to ad hoc procedures and negotiations. I trace the shift in government policy from a 'no problem' policy to an 'urgent international call,' driven by the realization that the priorities of the humanitarian regime—those of providing 'maintenance and care'—do not contradict the government's priorities to discourage permanent settlement, on the one hand, and extract political and financial gains from the international community, on the other.

This dissertation contends that the intricacies of the humanitarian response in Lebanon was far from being guided by a well-informed understanding of the Lebanese context but rather adapted to the fragmented nature of governance in Lebanon, further contributing to precarious outcomes for refugees. I focus on fragmentation across government institutions as the cornerstone of the regime of governance reproducing and ultimately reifying existing political structures and power dynamics. I demonstrate how the humanitarian regime contributed, at times, to reproducing

corruption and cronyism without enhancing state resources or mandating improvement in planning skills. The entanglement of international aid organizations with the Lebanese regime is further made visible in their tacit negotiations with the security apparatus for minimal protection of refugees. Practices of negotiation and mediation transformed refugee rights into selective privileges reliant on financial bargaining and clientelism. The humanitarian government ended up becoming the “hand that heals” acting in solidarity with the “hand that strikes” (Agier, 2011, p. 200) represented by government policies of deterrence and the domestic security system.

Moreover, I examine humanitarian governance beyond the nation-state paradigm that informs theories of sovereignty. This is owing to the transnational nature of humanitarian organizations whose mandates are to save lives and alleviate suffering. Humanitarianism is always a matter of emergency, an exceptional moment requiring unique modes of governance, driven by the responsibility to protect. While humanitarianism is seemingly driven by the moral imperative to protect in exceptional moments, I contend that it ultimately replicates and reifies the very same conditions it sought to address beginning with exclusion and uncertainty and not ending with poverty (Beckett, 2013, p. 98). I argue that the function of control exerted by the humanitarian government dominates that of protection and care and is evident in the labeling and categorization of refugees, the measurement of their levels of vulnerability, and the distribution of humanitarian aid (Agier, 2010, 2011).

I attend to the aspects of the humanitarian operation that bore similarities with international responses to ‘emergency situations.’ I probe the under-funded humanitarian operations that are contingent on earmarked donor funding and consistently falling short of estimated needs. I then proceed to analyze the expansion of the humanitarian operation that gave rise to standardized, global tools of registration and assistance. Most notably, the rolling out of biometric identification in the registration process and vulnerability assessments fostered a moral discourse of assistance based on a hierarchical scale of need. It also foregrounded UNHCR as the guardian of a vital database that doubles as an instrument of asserting power.

This dissertation highlights how the experience of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is largely determined by this early stage of formal recognition whereby a humanitarian government takes

control of ordering and labeling Syrians along several categories. It particularly reveals how refugee registration in the case of Lebanon contributes to processes of ordering, stratifying, categorizing, and labeling of refugees, all of which reinforce the creation of an essentialized refugee identity of passive victims who are both a liability and a burden (Glasman, 2017; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Harrell-Bond et al., 1992; Malkki, 1995, 1996; Zetter, 1991).

It argues that this overarching architecture of governance is responsible for processes of constructing the refugee as a humanitarian and social subject vulnerable to its modes of ordering and control, which in turn contribute to cementing the insecure and precarious lives of refugees. It attends to the discursive and non-discursive bureaucratic and institutionalized processes of ordering and control that are constantly being produced and reproduced by the same institutions that aim to remedy these conditions. It is in this light that this dissertation argues that the Syrian refugee presence cannot be understood as ‘exceptional,’ but as extended experiences of precarity that are the consequence of the historical, social, and economic configuration of Lebanon’s political economy, on one hand, and the humanitarian governance system, on the other.

7.4 The Production of Precarity

Using precarity as an analytical concept allows for situating the outcomes of refugee lives within the broader historical context and structures of Lebanon’s political economy. Precarity is understood as a politically produced and charged condition whereby the distinctions between lives worth and not worth living are magnified (Butler, 2004, 2009). It is exactly through legal and political institutions and mechanisms of governance that precarity is produced as a mode of ordering of domination (Lorey, 2011, 2015) and the unequal distribution of vulnerabilities (Millar, 2017). To this end, this dissertation demonstrates how humanitarian structures in Lebanon are implicit in producing and extending precarity. It examines processes of refugee registration and securitization and the continuously reimagined construct of the refugee within a framework of extended precarity. I argue that precarity is a politically induced notion embodied in the multiple processes of refugee registration, the construction of the refugee as a social subject, the establishment of discursive and nondiscursive practices of securitizing refugee presence, and labor market insecurities.

I examine securitization as a complex process of linking discourses of threats and crises with bureaucratic practices and institutionalized procedures that are historically embedded in institutionalized understandings of security and drive precarious outcomes. The securitization of Syrian refugees is at the intersection of an emergent discourse of national threat, historical and institutionalized understandings of state security, and routine practices enacted to neutralize them. Discursive securitization emerges from political actors' propagation of an existential crisis-centric political discourse that others Syrian refugees, constructing them as a threat to the political, economic, and social stability of the country. The endemic discourse of securitization is complemented by a humanitarian discourse that reifies the discourse of crisis and threat by, paradoxically, situating itself against it. The securitization of refugees is intrinsic to the crisis-centric discourse, validating and normalizing a wide range of local and national practices. National practices include border control, tight registration mechanisms, the institutionalization of the *kafala* system, and the staging of military raids on refugee camps. A unique feature of the Lebanese case, the decentralization of refugee securitization stems from fragmented policies and heterogenous practices across the country. Rather than unifying securitization measures, state security apparatuses have endorsed and promoted decentralized and paralegal securitization practices tailored to the specific needs of each area and community, cementing Syrian refugees as objects of securitization and contributing to their precarity.

Moreover, the framing of refugee experience as a crisis and refugees as subjects of humanitarian aid conceals the perspective of the labor market that is best explored through the lens of precarity as a labor market outcome, particularly in light of decades of circular migration of Syrian workers into Lebanon. I examine Syrian displacement through lenses of continuity with the history of Syrian labor migration experience, revealing it is an experience that has always been dominated by precarious conditions, particularly for those residing in urban areas. However, the failures of humanitarianism have exacerbated Syrians' precarity as a labor market condition. The disenfranchisement of Syrians in urban areas is two-fold: Refugees in urban areas are subject to a hierarchical scale of need deeming them unworthy of assistance and preventing them from sustaining meaningful livelihoods. Furthermore, refugees' registration with UNHCR restricts their access to the labor market, amplifying their exploitation as an informal labor force. The outcome

is a supply of flexible, unprotected, and low-skilled labor, servicing a neoliberal economy and further cementing the inferior social status of Syrian workers aggravated by increasing living costs and decreasing work opportunities. Precarity as a labor market outcome reveals that mechanisms of governance such as the kafala system not only restrict and subordinate Syrian labor, but they also deliberately serve the government priority of ensuring that the Syrian experience is impermanent.

As such, precarious outcomes for Syrian refugees is an ontological experience, combining the failures of humanitarianism, labor market insecurities, the securitization of subjects, and a rigid system of categorization and ordering. When approaching precarity as a labor condition under distinct labor regimes and political and economic structures, I have attempted to emphasize the link between the precarious labor market condition and the ontological experience of precarity for Syrian refugees.

7.5 Areas for Further Research

Examining the market as a driving force that influences the decision of exclusion and inclusion in a different distinction than the legal construct of citizen/non-citizen opens up new lines of inquiries that this dissertation did not explore. Further lines of inquiry may build on citizenship literature to investigate the blurred boundaries between refugees and citizens. More extensive fieldwork with Lebanese host communities, particularly in spaces marred by informality, may help scrutinize the supposed distinction between a citizen and a refugee based on legal status. In other words, further research may focus on everyday life dictated by social and economic configurations proving that the dichotomy between certain categories of citizens and refugees is attenuated. Another line of inquiry for further research may adopt precarity as an analytical tool to investigate precarious outcomes increasingly defining lives beyond refugees (Allison, 2012; Butler, 2004; Ramsay, 2019). In fact, adopting precarity as an analytical tool and a condition experienced not only by refugees but also by communities of Lebanese citizens, becomes all the more valuable in the context of a chronic absence of citizen rights and protection-based systems opens up new lines of inquiries.

Also, exploring refugee management as the culmination of overlaying modes of governance has implications on further research on the Lebanese state. The literature on the state in Lebanon has been historically conceptualized, as ‘weak’ and ‘confessional’—an anomaly to the prevailing authoritarian and strong surrounding states in the region. Going forward, examining refugee governance and its implications on the Lebanese state may suggest an alternative to the conception of the Lebanese state as a monolithic entity owing to the transnational dimensions that constitute and influence it. Another line of inquiry may build on the growing literature on the anthropology of the state (Fregonese, 2012; Kosmatopoulos, 2011; Mouawad & Baumann, 2017; Obeid 2010, 2019; Stel, 2016) , to interrogate the state as a construct, made visible in its rapport with Syrian refugees.

7.6 Conclusion

In summary, the logic of exceptionalism has been consistently used to justify modes of ordering and control. A problematic approach that deems exceptional the influx of refugees, exceptionalism depicts refugees in need of unique and urgent systems of governance which, as it becomes clear, further contributes to their precarity. Beyond the logic of exceptionalism, I explore structurally and historically multiple state and transnational institutions and retrace their precarious outcomes on Syrian refugees. Precarious outcomes are, in fact, multidimensional, often involving labor insecurities, the failures of humanitarian modes of governance, securitization of subjects, and rigid systems of categorization and ordering. Descriptive characteristics of refugees’ experience, such as informality, marginality, precarity, and exclusion are processes constantly produced and reproduced by the same institutions, involving the same actors, structures and power relations, originally put in place to alleviate the conditions of refugees.

While the dissertation focuses on the experience of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, it makes larger claims on how systems of governance approach marginal populations beyond the logic of ‘crisis’. It demonstrates the need to understand how ‘crisis’ junctures are rooted in a spectrum of multiple local, national, and transnational actors. Although Syrian refugees may or may not return to Syria, this dissertation reveals that which remains of the mechanisms of their governance and how such mechanisms might be used to manage other marginal populations in the future.

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