

# REPATRIATION OF REFUGEES FROM ARAB CONFLICTS: Conditions, Costs and Scenarios for Reconstruction

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FEMISE Euromed Report 2019



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ECONOMIC  
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منتدى  
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الاقتصادية

First published in 2019  
FEMISE and ERF

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This report received financial support from the European Union through the FEMISE project on “Support to Economic Research, studies and dialogues of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership”. Any views expressed in this report are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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# Introduction

The prospects for early repatriation of refugees who have fled conflicts in Arab countries in recent years do not yet look promising. The conflict in Yemen is at a stalemate; Libya is wedged in a power struggle between two military/political factions; Iraq is struggling to recover from decades of instability; and Syria remains a country at war.

Nevertheless, not only have discussions about repatriation started at both national and international levels, but there is also a steady, though still limited, stream of refugees in neighboring countries trickling back to their war-ravaged homes. With the doors of naturalization and resettlement all but closed and the socio-economic situation in host countries weakening, the refugees have found themselves caught in very difficult circumstances.

While mass repatriation at this stage remains premature for all four war-torn countries, the current situation dictates that we recognize and unpack the issue of repatriation in all its dimensions, so that if and when the time comes, informed actions can be

taken. This would help to support the most positive outcomes – primarily for the refugees, but also for other stakeholders, such as host communities and those left behind in the conflict countries.

With these considerations in mind, this year's ERF-FEMISE Euromed Report discusses the issue of repatriation in general and as a potential solution to the refugee crisis in South Med countries. This is accomplished through undertaking a rounded approach that begins with an understanding of the characteristics of refugees and repatriates, as well as their decision-making processes.

This is followed by a thorough analysis of scenarios for political settlements and reconstruction, and what they mean for repatriation, with a focus on the role that the international community can play to ensure a sustainable return. In particular, the Report attempts to answer the following questions:

- What are the main characteristics of refugees from these countries?
- What are the factors that affect refugees' decisions to return or not to their home countries?

- Under what conditions would repatriation be considered a sustainable solution for refugees' problems in these countries?
- What are the implications of different scenarios of conflict resolution and reconstruction for repatriation?
- What role can the international community play to ensure a sustainable return of refugees?

From a policy perspective, the Report aims to contribute to debates on post-conflict repatriation and reconstruction in the South Med region, highlighting some possible scenarios, their implications, and the potential role of the international community. There is a particular focus on Syria since its conflict has led to the emergence of millions of refugees who, at the time of writing, make up the majority of the total refugee population in the region.

The Report also contributes to the growing literature on the enabling conditions, challenges, and processes of repatriation, exploring it in the context of the Arab refugee crisis, and thereby filling a gap in knowledge on its economic and political impacts.

The Report is organized into four chapters and a final set of conclusions.

Chapter 1 explores the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of refugees from South Med countries, with a particular focus on Syrian refugees. It also touches on the responses of host communities and the challenges that they face. The analysis in this chapter includes countries that

disproportionately accommodate Syrian refugees, namely Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Germany.

The aim of this chapter is to shed light on the difficulties that the refugees face in their host countries, especially in terms of economic outcomes related to education, poverty, and the labor market, and social outcomes in terms of acceptance by and integration into host communities (or lack thereof). It also highlights the diverging experience of refugees depending on their country of asylum and whether they live in camps or not. This chapter sets the stage for the rest of the report by highlighting the critical stage that the refugee crisis has reached, contextualizing the experience of refugees, and stressing the urgency of finding a sustainable solution.

Chapter 2 analyzes the various dimensions of refugees' decision-making processes about whether or not to repatriate, with a particular focus on households headed by women. It begins with an analysis of the factors that pushed (or pulled) early repatriates to return to Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. It then undertakes a literature review of the various security, political, economic, and social considerations behind refugees' decisions about repatriation, and how the information that guides these decisions are collected and processed.

In addition, the chapter briefly discusses the economic and political conditions for sustainable repatriation for both the returnees and for the home country. Finally, the conditions for return –

as reported by the Arab refugees themselves – is discussed, with a focus on Syrian refugees. The aim of the chapter is to highlight the role of refugees as independent decision-makers despite their limited agency, and to pinpoint the factors that are their priorities when considering whether, when, and how to return home.

Chapter 3 follows up with a discussion of political settlements and reconstruction plans in the region. This is accomplished through a thorough understanding of the literature on reconstruction and repatriation, a detailed mapping of stakeholders' goals and responses, and a brief discussion of past experiences of political settlement in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

This is followed by a discussion of potential scenarios of political settlements and the accompanying reconstruction plans that would facilitate the process of sustainable repatriation, distinguishing between refugees in neighboring countries and those in Western countries. The aim of the chapter is to give an informed, realistic picture of the most favorable settlement and reconstruction plans that would ensure the sustainable return of refugees.

Chapter 4 analyzes the economic costs of conflict, post-conflict growth scenarios drawing on the experiences of other South Med countries, and the potential contribution of repatriation to political transition, post-conflict development, economic growth, and reconstruction, again with a particular focus on Syria. Using satellite data and GIS-based esti-

mates, the chapter quantifies the extent of economic destruction in the four conflict countries.

Post-conflict growth scenarios are discussed based on an extended version of the World Bank's Long-Term Growth Model. These include an optimistic scenario that leads to quick economic recovery and a pessimistic scenario that drags out the cost of conflict for decades. Finally, the economic consequences of repatriation for both the home and host countries are elaborated, along with a detailed analysis of repatriation experiences from selected countries.

The conclusions link together the main findings of each chapter, bringing out the Report's coordinated theme in addressing the major issues of repatriation. In addition, they provide policy insights into how to address this issue so as to ensure a sustainable and dignified return of the refugees to their home countries.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Who are the Arab refugees?

### 1.1 Introduction and objectives

In 2011, a series of pro-democracy uprisings erupted in several Arab countries, including Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. The outcome for Libya and Syria turned deadly, setting the stage for civil wars and paving the way for terrorist groups, mainly ISIS, to control parts of these countries. ISIS also expanded its territorial control into Iraq, capturing populated cities, such as Mosul. Yemen has also fared badly: political competition between the Houthi movement and the government has turned into bloody civil war. The outcome of these conflicts, in which hundreds of thousands have been killed and millions have become refugees, is devastating. Syria has suffered the most.

This chapter explores the salient demographic and socio-economic characteristics of refugees from conflicts in these countries. The discussion disproportionately highlights the case of Syrian refugees, mainly because of scale: they number over six million, while

conflict in the other countries has mainly led to internal displacement. While the economic and social cost of displacement is non-negligible, this chapter focuses on refugees, providing the background for a discussion of refugee repatriation in Chapter 2.

Another reason for the focus on Syria relates to data availability: most published reports, studies, and data sets are limited to Syrian refugees. Therefore, to the extent that data allow, we will shed light on non-Syrian refugees covering basic demographic indicators. Then a more thorough discussion will focus on Syrian refugees in major host countries, including Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Western Europe. In this context, this chapter also explores the extent to which Syrian refugees have integrated in host countries, focusing on the perceptions of both the natives and the Syrian refugees.

The analysis provides an insight into the economic conditions of refugees, as well as helping to understand the challenges that they face. The results are vital to inform policy-makers about issues related to providing education and

healthcare, which are key determinants of household welfare and future labor market outcomes. They can also help with the preparation of policies to improve socio-economic conditions and lessen social and economic costs awaiting the end of conflict in the refugees' home countries and eventually their return home.

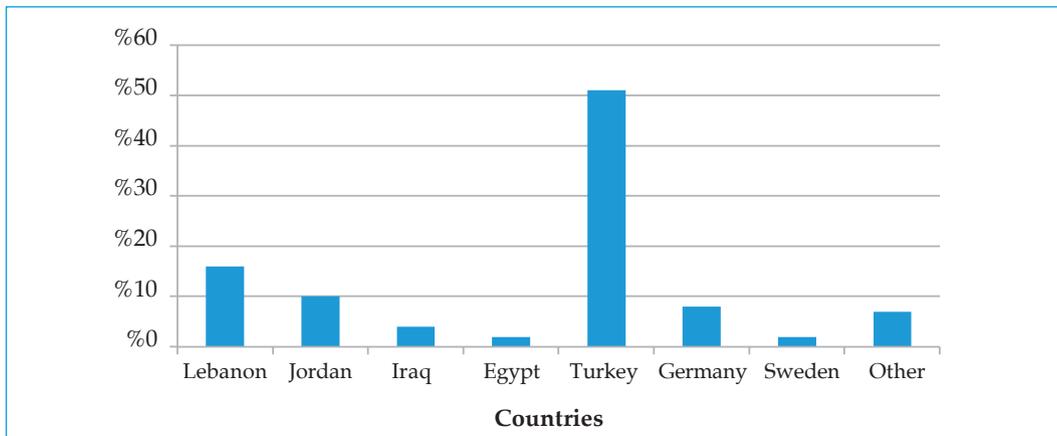
### 1.2 Refugees by country of conflict

The eruption of the Syrian conflict in 2011 has generated massive forced migration and internal displacement. Between July 2017 and June 2018, over 1.2 million Syrians were displaced mainly from North-

ern Syria, namely Idleb, Hama, Deir ez-Zor, Aleppo, Raqqa, Homs, Al-Hassakeh, and Latakia governorates. A total of 6.2 million Syrians remained internally displaced,<sup>1</sup> out of which 5.3 million still live in poor shelters and 4.2 million need shelter support.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, about 6.4 million Syrians, registered refugees, have fled for their lives, mainly to neighboring countries (see Figure 1.1). Turkey has received half of them. Some of the Syrian refugees have settled in Europe, residing mainly in Germany and Sweden. Recent estimates show that Europe accommodates 11.6% of the total Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers in the world.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 1.1: Distribution of Syrian refugees across host countries**



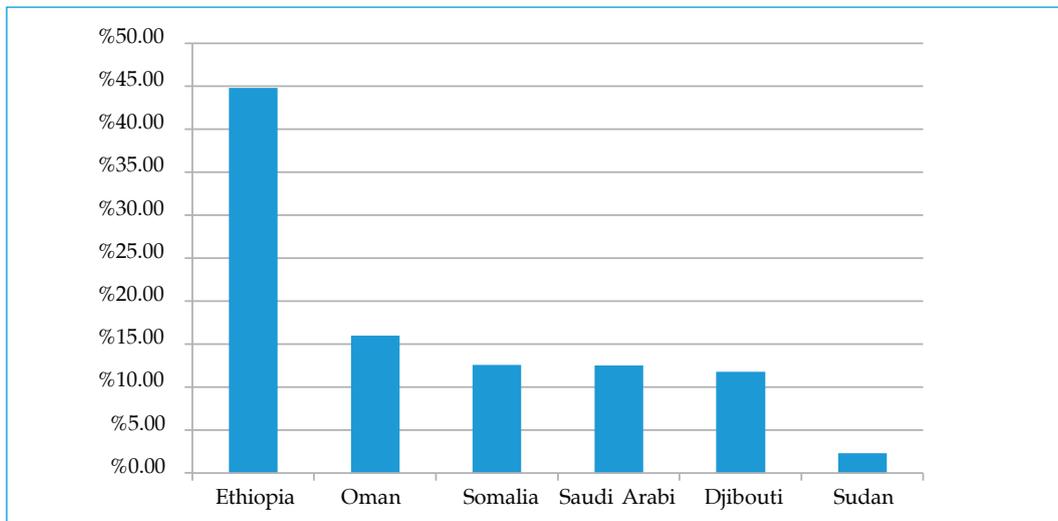
Source: Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/asylum.php> (Erişim: 21.11.2017)/ T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Göç İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü (GİGM): [http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/temporary-protection\\_915\\_1024\\_4748\\_icerik](http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik6/temporary-protection_915_1024_4748_icerik) (Erişim: 21.11.2017)

- 1 UN OCHA. (2018, August). 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (January -December 2018): Syrian Arab Republic. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2018\\_2018\\_hrp\\_syria.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2018_2018_hrp_syria.pdf).
- 2 UN OCHA. (2018, August). 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (January -December 2018): Syrian Arab Republic. [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2018\\_2018\\_hrp\\_syria.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2018_2018_hrp_syria.pdf).
- 3 UNHCR. (2018, April). Comprehensive protection and solutions strategy: A roadmap to advance resettlement and complementary pathways in the Syrian crisis. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/63759>.

The conflict in Yemen has also caused large forced migration, although, unlike in Syria, most of the refugees are internally displaced. According to the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR),<sup>4</sup> in mid-2018, 2.1 million Yemeni had experienced internal displacement, mostly in Houthi controlled territories, such as Hodeida and Taizz. Still, displacement was temporarily or partially resolved for almost half of them. This cohort includes those identified as

having returned, resettled, or locally integrated.<sup>5</sup> In terms of Yemeni refugees, data from the UNHCR show that by May 2019, 318,000 Yemeni had left the country, with the largest section having fled to Ethiopia (see Figure 1.2). The case in Libya is similar: the total number of the internally displaced in 2018 amounted to 240,000 out of which about 63,000 managed to return. The number of Libyan refugees did not exceed 10,000.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 1.2: Distribution of Yemeni refugees across main host countries**



Source of data is UNHCR Operational Portal Refugee Situations. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/yemen>

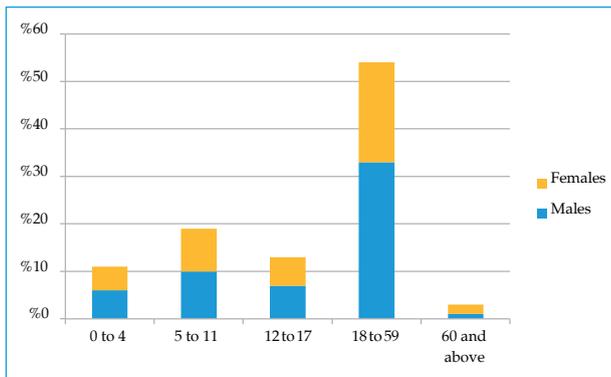
4 See UNHCR Mid-Year Trends 2018. <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5c52ea084/mid-year-trends-2018.html>.

5 See <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/yemen>.

6 See UNHCR Mid-Year Trends 2018. <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5c52ea084/mid-year-trends-2018.html>.

In Iraq, years of conflict, culminating with ISIS controlling Mousol, have induced major displacement across the country, mainly in the Kurdistan region. Between 2014 and 2018, over three million Iraqi have been displaced, with 360,000 residing in informal settlements and abandoned buildings.<sup>7</sup> The conflict has also driven over 280,000 refugees into neighboring countries, mainly Turkey. A UNHCR report<sup>8</sup> in 2016 shows that close to 127,000 Iraqi refugees had settled in Turkey, out of which 43% are children, 23% are women, and 34% are men (see Figure 1.3).

**Figure 1.3: Age composition of Iraqi refugees in Turkey, 2016**



Source: UNHCR Turkey Factsheet- August 2018 <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/unhcr-turkey-factsheet-august-2018>.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.unhcr.org/iraq-emergency.html>.

<sup>8</sup> See <https://reliefweb.int/report/turkey/unhcr-turkey-factsheet-august-2018>.

### 1.3 Syrian refugees across the main host countries

The aim of this section is to explore the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Syrian refugees. Depending on data availability, we carry out this exercise per host country, where most Syrian refugees have settled, focusing on Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Germany. We should stress upfront that the extent of analysis that we undertake is largely determined by available indicators for each host country. In this respect, more discussion will be dedicated to Syrian refugees in Jordan, benefiting from the rich data sets of the Jordanian Labor Market Panel Survey-2016 (JLMPS). We also use available data from the Syrian Barometer Survey (SB-2017) to undertake the analysis in Turkey and from Statistisches Bundesamt-2016 for Germany. As for Lebanon, we also use data, documented in existing reports, mostly published by international institutions, mainly the UNHCR. In addition, to these data sources, we resort to an existing literature review on Syrian refugees to complement our analysis.

#### 1.3.1 Syrian refugees in Jordan

According to the Jordanian population census of 2015, the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan amounts to 1.3 million. About 660,000 of them are UNHCR registered refugees. Of them, 21% have settled in formal

camps (mainly in Za'atari, Azraq, and the Emirati Jordanian Camp), while only 16,000 Syrian refugees settled in informal settlements that lack necessary infrastructure and services. The rest settled in host communities.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the Syrian refugees in the Za'atari camp (85%) came from Daraa governorate, close to the northern border of Jordan, while the rest come from rural Damascus (10%), urban Damascus (2%), and Homs (2%). Markedly, most of refugees in this camp (87%) come from rural areas. Those settled outside refugee camps come, mostly, from Daraa (47%), Homs (26%), rural Damascus (7%) and urban Damascus (7%). Of this section of refugees, 58% come from rural areas: they were farmers and tend to be poorer relative to those coming from urban areas.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, socio-economic conditions of the refugees dictate the extent to which refugees cope with economic consequences associated with their presence in these host countries (see more discussion below).

### 1.3.1.1 Demographic characteristics

The analysis in this section heavily relies on the JLMP-2016, a rich data set on the demographic and socio-economic character-

istics of Jordan residents, including natives, migrants, as well as Syrian refugees. Starting with age composition (see Table 1.1), the data suggest that close to half of Syrian refugees in Jordan are children (younger than 15), constituting a higher share than the corresponding Jordanian share. The share of male Syrian refugee children (55%) is slightly larger than the female share (49%), although, the data show that the youth cohort (between 15 and 29) is disproportionately female. Many young males have remained in Syria, partly to take part in the conflict or they have chosen to settle in other host countries. As for older cohorts<sup>11</sup>, the age composition for males and females are similar.

**Table 1.1: Age composition of Syrian refugees in Jordan**

Age group	Syrian	Jordanian	Syrian females	Proportion males
05_00	22%	14%	22%	22%
11_06	20%	14%	16%	24%
14_12	8%	6%	6%	9%
19_15	10%	11%	10%	9%
29_20	11%	17%	16%	7%
39_30	15%	12%	15%	15%
49_40	9%	11%	8%	10%
59_50	2%	6%	2%	2%
64_60	2%	3%	2%	1%
65<=	2%	5%	2%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source of data is JLMP-2016 survey.

<sup>9</sup> See UNHCR (2017) Syria Regional Refugee Response: Inter-Agency Information Sharing Portal (Jordan). <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107c>

<sup>10</sup> See Stave, Svein Erik, and Solveig Hillesund. (2015) Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market. Geneva: International Labour Office (ILO), Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies.

<sup>11</sup> Caroline Krafft, Maia Sieverding, Collette Salemi, and Caitlyn Keo (2018) 'Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Demographics, Livelihoods, Education, and Health'. ERF Working Paper No 1184.

As for other demographic characteristics, about 19% of Syrian household heads are women; slightly higher than for Jordanians (17%). Of the former, 52% are married, 16% are divorced, 25% are widows, while the remaining share are single women. Markedly, about 8% of married Syrian women who live in camps are younger than 19 relative to 2.5% for those residing in urban or rural areas. Families in refugee camps may have resorted to arranging early marriages as a coping mechanism to mitigate economic hardship.<sup>12</sup> Early marriage is linked to school dropout and associated with a negative social impact for married girls and their offspring.<sup>13</sup>

In 2017, the number of Syrian children enrolled in formal schools was 125,000 (UNICEF and MECI, 2017).<sup>14</sup> UNICEF has played a vital role in providing educational infrastructure in formal camps, while the Jordanian Ministry of Education provides Jordanian teachers. Syrian students, who have been enrolled in government schools in the host communities, either integrated with their Jordanian peers or were absorbed in evening shifts.<sup>15</sup> In terms of the enroll-

ment rate of school-age Syrians (6-17), it varies considerably by place of settlement. Table 1.2 shows that among the formal refugee camps, Za'atari camp got the lowest enrollment rate of 10%. In host communities, about half of school-age children enrolled in schools. The lowest enrollment rate is reported in informal settlements in Mafraq, plummeting to about 3.5%<sup>16</sup> and close to zero enrollment in informal settlement in the Jordan valley.<sup>17</sup>

While existing infrastructure might be insufficient to enroll all school-age children, poor economic conditions are most likely to play a vital role. Many families of Syrian refugees may have forced their children to drop out of school and enter the labor market as a coping mechanism to maximize earnings. Approximately 30,000 children were reported as child labor, mostly engaged in informal activities, mainly working in agricultural activities or selling items on the street.<sup>18</sup>

12 See Women's Refugee Commission. (2014) 'Unpacking Gender: The Humanitarian Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan'.

13 See Lee-Rife, S., Malhotra, A., Warner, A., and Glinski, A. M (2012) 'What Works to Prevent Child Marriage: A Review of the Evidence'. *Studies in Family Planning*, 43(4), 287-303.

14 UNICEF, and MECI (2017) 'Education Sector Dashboard. Inter-Agency Coordination Home Page' <http://scs.raisunhcr.org/dashboards/Education.aspx>

15 See Human Rights Watch (2016) 'We're Afraid for Their Future' - Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Jordan.' Human Rights Watch.

16 REACH (2014) 'Syrian Refugees Staying in Informal Tented Settlements in Jordan: Multi-Sector Assessment Report.' REACH.

17 For more discussion on education condition see Salemi, Colette, Jay Bowman, and Jennifer Compton (2018) 'Services for Syrian Refugee Children and Youth in Jordan: Forced Displacement, Foreign Aid, and Vulnerability.' Economic Research Forum Working Paper .1188.

18 See UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP. (2014) 'Joint Assessment Review of the Syrian Refugee Response in Jordan', 1-34. See also UNICEF (2013) 'Syrian Refugee Children in Jordan: Assessments Desk Review on the Situation of Syrian Refugee Children Living in Jordan'. Amman.

**Table 1.2: School enrollment of Syrian refugees in refugee camps and host communities**

Location	Number of school-age children	Enrollment rate
Za'atari camp	211,287	10%
Azraq camp	11,782	91%
Emirate J camp	2,912	82%
Host community	169,861	54%

Source of data: the figures in this table, based on estimates from MOE and UNHCR, are reported in Salemi et al (2018).<sup>19</sup>

Table 1.3 explores another angle of human capital, focusing on educational attainment across age cohorts. This exercise is important to understand the linkages between refugee influx and labor market outcomes for Jordanians. In theory, it is expected that refu-

gees will compete over jobs with natives who share similar labor characteristics, mainly education. The data show that the educational attainment for the Syrian refugees is lower across all age cohorts relative to Jordanians.

**Table 1.3: Educational attainment across cohorts for Syrian refugees and Jordanians**

Syrian refugees	Illiterates	Read and write	Basic education	Secondary	Graduate	total
19_15	19%	69%	12%	0%		100%
29_20	11%	68%	11%	7%	4%	100%
39_30	21%	66%	3%	3%	8%	100%
49_40	22%	42%	17%	15%	3%	100%
59_50	36%	42%	14%	5%	4%	100%
64_60	39%	11%	12%	19%	18%	100%
65<=	71%	11%	1%	0%	17%	100%
Jordanians	Illiterates	Read and write	Basic education	Secondary	Graduate	Total
19_15	3%	21%	64%	12%	0%	100%
29_20	4%	11%	35%	19%	31%	100%
39_30	7%	12%	30%	20%	31%	100%
49_40	7%	16%	30%	22%	25%	100%
59_50	11%	21%	24%	17%	27%	100%
64_60	25%	19%	14%	13%	28%	100%
65<=	48%	19%	13%	5%	15%	100%

Source of data is JLMP-2016 survey.

<sup>19</sup> See Salemi, Colette, Jay Bowman, and Jennifer Compton (2018) 'Services for Syrian Refugee Children and Youth in Jordan: Forced Displacement, Foreign Aid, and Vulnerability.' Economic Research Forum Working Paper .1188.

**1.3.1.2 Economic characteristics**

In this section, we assess several labor market outcomes for the Syrian refugees and compare them with Jordanians. These include labor force participation rate (LFPR), unemployment, employment characteristics, and wages. This helps to indicate the economic wellbeing of the Syrian refugees, key aspects to understand the likelihood of their repatriation. Typically, with poor economic conditions, many Syrian refugees are expected to return home as security conditions in Syria improve.

The data show that Syrian refugees generally suffer poor labor market outcomes. LFPR<sup>20</sup> for the Syrian refugees is 22% compared with 36% for Jordanians. Most of Syrian labor force participants are male (49%) compared with 3% for females. The corresponding LFPR for Jordanians is much higher (59% and 16%) for male

and females, respectively. Table 1.4 displays differences in LFPR across age cohort between the Syrian refugees and Jordanians. The data, limited to men, show that LFPR is slightly lower for Syrians for individuals younger than 30. The gap widens for older cohorts. It is possible that Syrians older than 49 live off aid or labor income earned by younger family members.

As for the unemployment rate, it amounts to 22% for the Syrian refugees relative to 13% for Jordanians. Comparing unemployment rate across cohort shows a distinct pattern: it is high for all age cohorts, except for the 30-39 age group. In addition, both Syrian refugees and Jordanians share a similar unemployment rate for the 15-19 cohort. The unemployment rate gap widens for older cohorts, more prominently for those older than 39.

**Table 1.4: Male labor force participation rate and unemployment rate for Syrian refugees and Jordanians by age**

age	LFPR		Unemployment Rate	
	Syrian	Jordanians	Syrian	Jordanians
19_15	10.14%	13.39%	50.85%	52.51%
29_20	60.57%	64.31%	27.27%	21.89%
39_30	63.89%	85.82%	9.64%	7.80%
49_40	55.11%	69.56%	31.01%	6.95%
59_50	17.80%	50.26%	48.28%	3.40%
64_60	1.92%	33.33%	41.54%	0.00%

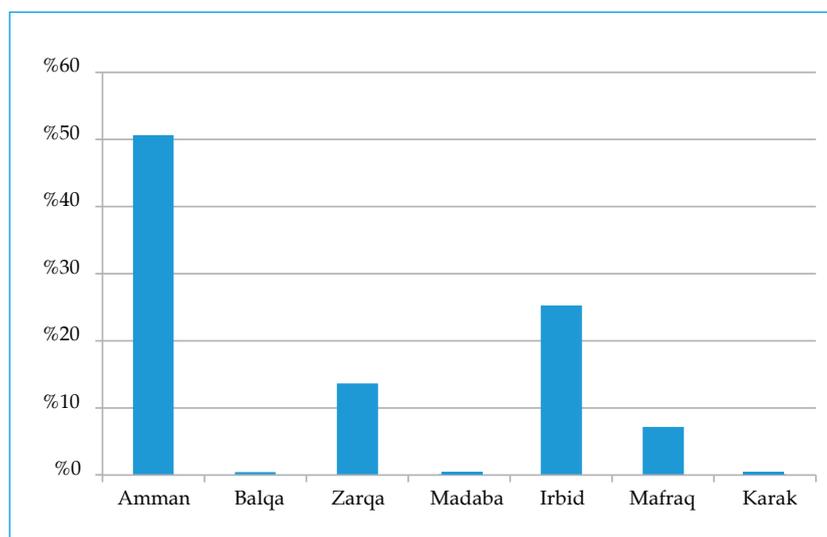
Source of data is JLMP-2016 survey.

<sup>20</sup> Labor force participants are those who either work or actively seek employment during the reference week.

The JLMP data also make it possible to analyze the spatial distribution of employment. Figure 1.4 shows that half of Syrian refugee workers settle in Amman, followed by Irbid, and Zarqa. The overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees (86%) are wage workers, while 10% are classified as self-employed and 2% clas-

sified as employers. In terms of distribution across occupations, the JLMPs data show that the majority of working Syrian refugees is employed in craft trade occupations, followed with a wide margin by services and sales as well as elementary occupations, respectively (see Table 1.5).

**Figure 1.4: Employment share of Syrian refugees across governorates in Jordan**



Source of data is JLMP-2016 survey.

**Table 1.5: Occupation distribution across Syrian refugees**

Occupation	Proportion
Professionals	5.1%
Technicians and associate professionals	0.46%
Clerical support workers	1.11%
Service and sales workers	19.44%
Skilled agricultural, forestry and fish	2.01%
Craft and related trades workers	47.79%
Plant and machine operators, and assembly workers	7.64%
Elementary occupations	16.46%

Source of data is JLMP-2016 survey.

Markedly, most of the Syrian workers are employed in the informal sector (82%); substantially greater than Jordanians (34%). While this might indicate that Syrian refugees compete with informal Jordanian workers, recent research shows otherwise (Fallah et al, 2019).<sup>21</sup> Job competition appears to take place with immigrants. Malaeb and Wahba (2018)<sup>22</sup> show that Syrians refugees mainly compete with economic immigrants, mainly Egyptians, in the informal sector. Evidently, 63% of Egyptian immigrants are employed in the informal sector. Limited chances to work in the formal sector seem to have negatively affected wages for the Syrian refugees: their median hourly wage amounted to JD 1.15 relative to JD 2 for Jordanians. With low earning and high unemployment rate, poverty has afflicted Syrian refugees.

Data from the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) show that 86% of the Syrian refugees were living below the Jordanian poverty line (68 JD per month) (see UNHCR, 2015). In terms of spending, rent, for those living outside refugee camps, accounts for the largest share (69% of monthly expenditure). Housing supply constraint has driven up rent, mainly in urban areas

21 Fallah, B., Krafft, C, and Wahba, J., (2019) 'The Impact of Refugees on Employment and Wages in Jordan.' Journal 'Impact of Refugees on Immigrants' Labor Outcomes of Development Economics, 139: 203-2016.

22 See Malaeb, Bilal, and Jackline Wahba. 2018. 'Economic Research Forum Working Paper Series 1194. Cairo, Egypt.

and forced Syrian refugees to reside in poor quality and overcrowded apartments.<sup>23</sup> The effect of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian housing market has been a central interest of researchers. Al Hawarin et al (2018)<sup>24</sup> show that the Syrian refugees have negatively affected housing conditions of the locals such that poorer households are disproportionately affected. They also show that rent increased significantly in regions closer to the Syrian borders.

Syrian refugees are highly dependent on direct support, cash or in kind, for basic need.<sup>25</sup> Means of support vary covering informal assistance, seasonal emergency cash assistance, and regular cash transfers. The latter benefits are eligible for the UNHCR registered refugees. Monthly cash transfers in 2016 ranged between \$112 and \$218 per household. But without down playing the significance of the cash support, it does not cover all aspects of basic needs.<sup>26</sup>

23 Overseas Development Institute, UNICEF, and UNHCR. (2017). A promise of tomorrow: Effects of UNHCR and UNICEF cash assistance on Syrian refugees in Jordan. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=14564>.

24 Alhawarin I., Assad R., and ElSayed A., (2018) 'Migration Shocks and Housing: Evidence from the Syrian Refugee Crises in Jordan' Economic Research Forum, Working Paper No. 1213.

25 UNHCR, and PU-AMI. (2017). Basic Needs Sector Dashboard. <http://scs.raisunhcr.org/dashboards/BasicNeeds.aspx>.

26 See UNHCR. (2016). UNHCR Cash Assistance: Improving Refugee Lives and Supporting Local Economies. Amman.

Still, with financial constraints, some Syrian refugees remain on the waiting list.<sup>27</sup>

Recent statistics show that 40% of the Syrian refugees in Jordan indicated that their living conditions have deteriorated since their arrival. The high cost of living, the security situation, and lack of assistance are the key determinants. Many of those reporting deteriorating conditions live in Zarqa. Factors such as lack of assistance, both in terms of value and quantity, and cuts in the UNHCR aid and coupons are the main drivers.<sup>28</sup> To cope with the deteriorating conditions, over half of the adult Syrian refugees in Jordan indicated that they have restricted their own food consumption for the benefit of their children. Other coping mechanisms include resorting to cheaper and lower quality food, reducing the number of meals per day, borrowing money, and selling household assets.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.3.1.3 Social integration

As the Syrian conflict broke out and Syrians started to flee to Jordan, welcoming sentiment defined the relationship with Jordanians. But tension started to evolve as the conflict persisted and the flow of Syrian refugees continued to accumulate. The reasons mainly hinge on anxieties around the belief that Syrians are crowding out Jordanians in the labor market<sup>30</sup> as well as perceived competition over public resources, water, education, and health facilities.<sup>31</sup> These have lessened the likelihood of social integration. Based on polls, produced by CSS and Mercy Corps and UK FCO Conflict Pool (2015), two thirds of Jordanians prefer to have a Jordanian neighbor, while the nationality of neighbors did not make a difference to most Syrian refugees.

Using the same poll, Table 1.6 documents perceptions of Jordanians and Syrian refugees of the linkage between the increase in the number of Syrian refugees and the level of security in Jordan. The results suggest that unlike the Syrian refugees, most Jordanians believe that the level of security will decrease. Consistently, Shteivi et al (2014)<sup>32</sup> show

27 See Salemi, Colette, Jay Bowman, and Jennifer Compton (2018) 'Services for Syrian Refugee Children and Youth in Jordan: Forced Displacement, Foreign Aid, and Vulnerability.' Economic Research Forum Working Paper .1188.

28 CARE International. (2018). 8 years into exile: How urban Syrian refugees, non-Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Jordan are coping and meeting challenges, eight years into the Syria crisis. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66543>

29 CARE International. (2017). 7 years into exile: How Syrian refugees, vulnerable Jordanians and other refugees in Jordan are being impacted by the Syria crisis. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/60392>

30 See Razzaz, S. (2017) 'A Challenging Market Becomes More Challenging: Jordanian Workers, Migrant Workers, and Refugees in the Jordanian Labour Market'. Amman.

31 See REACH. (2014) 'Education and Tensions in Jordanian Communities Hosting Syrian Refugees: Thematic Assessment Report'. Amman.

32 Shteivi, M., Walsh, J., Klassen, CH (2014) 'Coping with the Crisis. A Review of the Response to Syrian Refugees in Jordan. Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan. <http://www.jcss.org/Photos/635520970736179906.pdf>.

that negative sentiments towards receiving more Syrian refugees in Jordan increased between 2012 and 2014. In particular, the

share of Jordanians who do not support receiving more Syrian refugees increased from 66% to 79%.

**Table 1.6: Linkages between influx of Syrian refugees and level of security**

Do you think that with the increase in the number of Syrian refugees, the level of security in the region where you live in Jordan will decrease?				
	2013		2015	
	Jordanian (%)	Syrian (%)	Jordanian (%)	Syrian (%)
Yes, it will decrease	71.2	20.9	57	11.4
No, it will stay the same	27	74.4	36.5	81.5
No, it will increase	1.4	4.1	6.5	7.1
No answer	0.3	0.7	0	0
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source of Data: CSS, Mercy Corps and UK FCO Conflict Pool, 2015

### 1.3.2 Syrian refugees in Lebanon

#### 1.3.2.1 Demographic and socio-economic characteristics

The estimated number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is about one million,<sup>33</sup> which makes up about 25% of Lebanon’s population. Geographically, most refugees reside in Bekaa (36%), North Lebanon (25%), and Mount Lebanon (25%). The following discussion explores the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The documented statistics in this section comes from the UNHCR ProGres database,

which allows us to explore a limited number of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. These include age composition, educational attainment, marital status, and employment distribution per occupation.<sup>34</sup> Unlike in Jordan, the data do not allow comparisons with Lebanese cohorts.

Figure 1.5 displays the age composition for both males and females, showing that the larg-

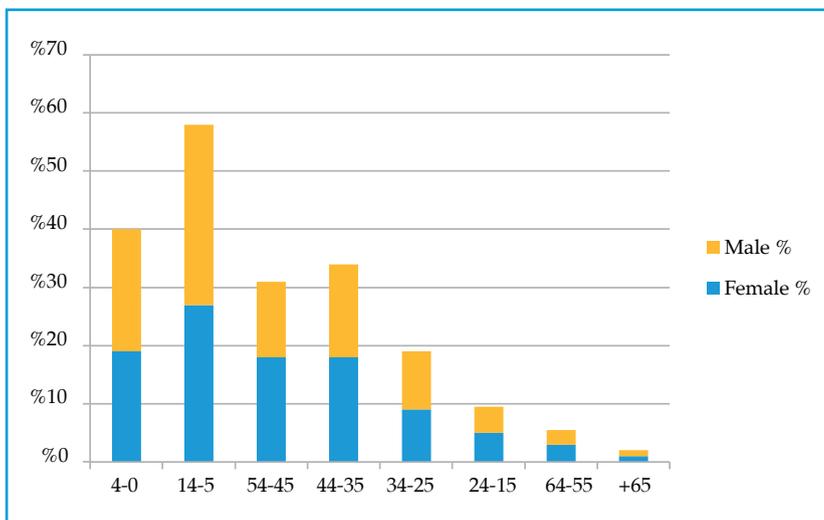
33 See UNHCR (2016). Syria Regional Refugee Response. Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>.

34 The statistics exhibited in the section are taken from: Verme, Paolo; Gigliarano, Chiara; Wieser, Christina; Hedlund, Kerren; Petzoldt, Marc; Santacroce, Marco. 2016. The Welfare of Syrian Refugees: Evidence from Jordan and Lebanon. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/23228> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.!

est cohort consists of children (younger than 15 years), followed by the 15-34 age cohort. In terms of marital status, 60% of the Syrian refugees are single compared with 37% who are married. More recent statistics show that of all registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon, (81%) are women and children.<sup>35</sup>

The average household size of Syrian refugees in 2018 is 4.9, representing a substantial decline relative to 2015 (5.3). This declining trend suggests a tendency for Syrian households, since their arrival in Lebanon, moving more towards nuclear households.<sup>36</sup>

**Figure 1.5: Age composition of Syrian refugees in Lebanon**



Source of data: ProGres data.

Syrian refugees in Lebanon are generally low educated. Figure 1.6 exhibits educational attainment by age cohort. As highlighted above, education composition indicates how the influx of Syrian refugees is expected to affect the Lebanese

labor market. The data show that the highest educational attainment of the vast majority of Syrian refugees is primary education. It is worth noting that two-thirds of Syrian children received no education and that 44% of school-age children have not

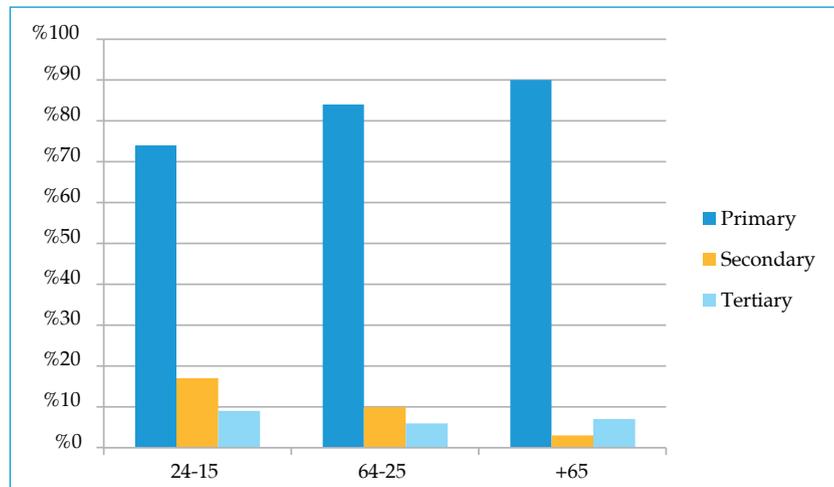
35 UNHCR. (2018). Operational portal - Refugee situations: Syria Regional Refugee Response: Lebanon. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>.

36 See UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP (2018) VASyR 2018: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67380>.

attended school.<sup>37</sup> Many Syrian children are sent to work as street peddlers and beggars to mitigate the dire economic conditions that face their household (ILO, 2014). Another coping strategy is child marriage. Statistics from a recent study, conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UN

FPA), the American University of Beirut, and Sawa for Development and Aid, show that over a third of the Syrian refugee girls between the ages of 20 and 24 years old married before the age of 18.<sup>38</sup> The corresponding rate, among the Syrian families, prior to the conflict is one fourth.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 1.6: Educational attainment of Syrian refugees: across cohort analysis**



Source of data: ProGres data.

In terms of employment, the distribution of Syrian refugees across occupation differs by sex. Table 1.7 shows that most of the male refugees are employed in plant/machine operators, and assembler activities (50%), followed with a wide gap by el-

ementary occupations (20%). On the other hand, close to 90% of employed females work as service and sales workers. Working conditions for the Syrian refugees in Lebanon are poor. A lack of job opportunities forces many Syrian refugees to work

<sup>37</sup> See World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2013. ‘Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon.’ WFP, Rome. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=3853>.

<sup>38</sup> See <https://www.unfpa.org/news/new-study-finds-child-marriage-rising-among-most-vulnerable-syrian-refugees>

<sup>39</sup> See <https://www.unfpa.org/news/new-study-finds-child-marriage-rising-among-most-vulnerable-syrian-refugees>

in exploitative jobs, mostly informal, and accept low wages.<sup>40</sup>

The labor market characteristics of Syrian refugees in Lebanon seem to shape the economic effect of the Syrian influx. David et al (2018)<sup>41</sup> apply a general equilibrium model to explore the effect on the labor market, production apparatus, and macroeconomic indicators. They find that the effect is negative and mostly limited to the most vulnerable Lebanese workers. Interestingly, they show that providing aid in the form of investment enhances economic growth and improves labor market prospects.

In line with low earning repercussions, statistics from the 2018 Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon show that 69% of the Syrian refugee households are below the poverty line.<sup>42</sup> Borrowing to meet basic needs is also common among Syrian refugees. About 90% of Syrian refugee households acquired debts, out of

which 82% borrowed money in the fourth quarter of 2017.<sup>43</sup> Notably, financial challenges have also forced Syrian refugees to cut back on their housing expenses via shifting towards non-residential structures, such as tented settlements, active construction sites, and agriculture rooms (engine and pump rooms). The share of Syrian households residing in such structures increased from 26% in 2017 to 34% in 2018.<sup>44</sup>

**Table 1.7: Occupation distribution for male and female Syrian refugees**

Occupation	Women	Men
Managers	0	2%
Professionals	2%	2%
Technicians and associate professionals	2%	5%
Clerical support workers	0	0.50%
Service and sales workers	89%	5%
Skilled agricultural forestry and fishery workers	3%	7%
Craft and related trades workers	1%	8%
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	0%	50%
Elementary Occupations	2%	20%

Source of data: ProGres data.

40 See ILO (2014) 'Assessment of the Impact of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon and Their Employment Profile.' International Labour Organization, Regional Office for the Arab States.

41 See Anda David, Mohamed Ali Marouani, Charbel Nahas and Björn Nilsson (2018) 'The Economics Of The Syrian Refugee Crises in Neighboring Countries: The Case Of Lebanon'

42 For more discussion on poverty incidence among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, see Yassin, N (2018) '101 Facts and Figures on the Syrian Refugee Crises'. Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs American University of Beirut. <http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi>.

43 UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP. (2018, December). VASyR 2018: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67380>.

44 UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP. (2018, December). VASyR 2018: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/67380>.

### 1.3.2.2 Social attitudes and perceptions of the host and refugee communities

As indicated above, social cohesion and integration of Syrian refugees in their host communities are largely driven by natives' perceptions, which are often driven by a multitude of factors. These include competition over economic and public resources, factors that are linked to the level of development at the host community. The level of development in Lebanon varies geographically: North Lebanon and Bekaa are considered the poorest. These localities are the main host communities for the Syrian refugees. Therefore, it is expected that competition with the Syrian refugees over public resources and jobs as well as a rise in housing rent are driving factors that would amplify locals' negative perceptions.<sup>45</sup>

AlSharabati and Nammour (2015)<sup>46</sup> conducted a survey to explore perceptions of Syrian refugees about a number of social aspects including safety, welcome perception, among other matters. They also explored perceptions of Lebanese people in host communities regarding access to services and perceived threats to local communities. They show that Syrian refugees are concerned the most for their safety, followed in order by economic conditions,

and legal status. In terms of safety, the results show that it varies by regions: 34% of Syrians in Beirut feel unsafe, compared with 30% in the North, 27% in Bekaa, 18% in Mount Lebanon, and 13% in the South.

The majority of Syrian refugees believe that illegal status negatively affects their safety. Furthermore, 76% of Syrian refugees feel unwelcome in Beirut, relative to 60% in Bekaa, and 50% in Mount Lebanon and the South. Markedly, over half of the Syrian refugees have indicated that the situation is getting worse. In terms of Lebanese perceptions, one investigated aspect is hiring Syrian refugees. The results show that 46% of Lebanese recruiters are not willing to hire Syrian refugees, while 28% indicated that they would, 18% indicated that they might hire Syrians, and the rest are willing to hire Syrians if it saves cost. The majority of those who reported that they would not hire Syrians (69%) justified their decision as Syrian refugees take Lebanese jobs, and 21% indicated that they do not like working with Syrians. The rest were concerned with a lack of work permits.

## 1.3.3 Syrian refugees in Turkey

### 1.3.3.1 Demographic and socio-economic characteristics

By end of 2017, the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey was 3.7 million. Most of the refugees are settled in host communities of major Turkish cities (Kayaoglu, 2019).<sup>47</sup> To date, readily avail-

<sup>45</sup> See Ruisi and Shteivi (2016) 'Economic and Social Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.

<sup>46</sup> See AlSharabati, C., and Nammour, J (2015) Survey on Perceptions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon. Institut de Sciences Politiques – USJ, Volume 1.0. <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=9399>.

<sup>47</sup> See Kayaoglu Aysegul (2019) 'Labor Market Activities of Syrian Refugees in Turkey'. Working Paper No. 1290.

able official statistics on the demographics and socio-economic characteristics of Syrian refugees is lacking. We rely on Syrian Barometer 2017 (SB-2017) to explore these aspects. SB-2017 is a data set that covers several demographic and economic characteristics of Syrian and Turkish individuals with a special focus on exploring opinions about social cohesion and the integration of Syrian refugees.<sup>48</sup>

Descriptive statistics from the SB-2017 show that 34% of the

Syrian refugees settled in refugee camps, while the rest settled in host communities. Table 1.8 exhibits the distribution of Syrian refugees, in and out of camps, across Turkish areas. The data show that Şanlıurfa accommodates the highest share of Syrian refugees, followed by İstanbul and Hatay. The data also show that over 50% of Syrian refugees who reside outside refugee camps settled in İstanbul, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, and Adana.

**Table 1.8: Geographical distribution of Syrian refugees in Turkey**

	Camps	Outside camps	Total
Sanlıurfa	13%	12%	25%
Hatay	4%	15%	19%
İstanbul	4%	16%	21%
Gaziantep	3%	12%	14%
Adana	7%	8%	14%
Mardin	3%	3%	7%
Kilis		5%	5%
Mersin		6%	6%
İzmir		5%	5%
Bursa		4%	4%
Total No. Syrian refugees	1035		

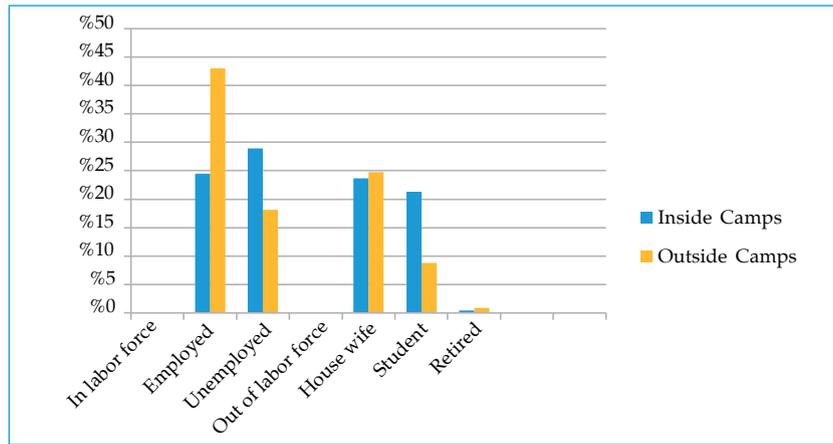
Source of data: SB-2017

In terms of age composition, Figure 1.7 shows that about 50% of Syrian refugees in camps are younger than 18 years old com-

pared with 37% outside camps. The data also suggest that more young and middle-age Syrians settled outside camps.

<sup>48</sup> SB-2017 collected data on 2089 Turkish citizens from 26 provinces and in 1235 Syrian families (7591 individuals) settled in 11 provinces (348 families settled in refugee camps and 887 families in host communities).

**Figure 1.7: Age composition of Syrian refugees in Turkey**



Source of data: SB-2017

Similar to Jordan and Lebanon, most Syrian refugees in Turkey, above 5 years old, are less educated; about 10% finished tertiary education (see Table 1.9). Of a million Syrian children of school age, 40% remained out of school in the 2017-2018 semesters.

For those having access to education, many are enrolled in temporary education centers (TECs). TECs often suffer challenges of medium including education, quality of education, and children drop out mainly after the first and second grade (see Erdogan 2017).<sup>49</sup>

**Table 1.9: Educational attainment of Syrian refugees**

	Inside camps	Outside camps	Total
Illiterate	14.9%	19.7%	18.5%
Literate without diploma	17.2%	10.1%	11.8%
Primary school	29.6%	27.5%	28%
Secondary school	18.8%	20%	19.7%
High school	11%	10.9%	10.9%
Vocational college	3.7%	3.2%	3.3%
Bachelor degree	4.7%	7.9%	7.1%
Master's/PhD	0.1%	0.7%	0.6%

Source of data: SB-2017

<sup>49</sup> Erdoğan, M. Murat (2017), Syrians Barometer 2017. A Framework for Achieving Social Cohesion with Syrians in Turkey. Executive Summary, Hacettepe University Migration and Politics Research Center. <https://mmuraterdogan.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/syrians-barometer-executive-summary.pdf>

In terms of attachment to the Turkish labor market, 58% of Syrian refugees, older than 11 years, have joined the labor force. Still, many of them, (34%), are unemployed (see Table 1.10).

Table 1.10 also shows that the labor force participation (unemployment) rate is higher (lower) among those residing outside the refugee camps.

**Table 1.10: Attachment of Syrian refugees to the Turkish labor market**

	Inside Camps	Outside Camps	Total
<b>In labor force</b>			
Employed	24.5%	43%	38.6%
Unemployed	28.9%	18.1%	19.7%
<b>Out of labor force</b>			
House wife	23.7%	24.8%	24.5%
Student	21.3%	8.8%	11.7%
Retired	0.4%	0.9%	0.8%

Source of data: SB-2017

Table 1.11 exhibits the distribution of employed refugees, in and out of camps, according to their employment status. The overwhelming majority of this cohort is waged workers in which little over half of them are irregular workers. Interestingly, regular workers are more common among those settling in camps. The data also show that most of the employer cohort resides outside the camps. While Syrians have been eligible to obtain a work permit since February 2016, the majority are employed in the informal sector in which deficiencies in Turkish language and barriers to obtain work permits are key factors. As of March 2018, only 40,000 workers got work permits. Ap-

plying for work permits has to be done by employers and that application needs to be renewed if workers change employers. In addition, employers can apply for work permits with the condition that Syrian workers do not exceed 10% of firm's total workforce (see Kayaoglu, 2018).

So far, few studies have looked at the effect of Syrian refugees on the Turkish labor market. Tumen (2016) provides evidence on differential effects such that areas with a larger share of Syrian refugees experience an employment loss (gain) in the informal (formal) sector. Interestingly, he shows that the overall effect is negative, with no impact on wages in both sectors (see also Del Carpio and Wagner, 2015).

**Table 1.11: Distribution of employment status among Syrian refugees**

	Inside camps	Outside camps	Total
(Daily paid job (irregular	38.2%	43.9%	43.1%
Regular laborer	48.1%	39.4%	40.7%
Employer	0.3%	9.1%	7.8%
Seasonal worker	7.3%	6.1%	6.2%
Free family worker	4.8%	0.5%	1.1%
Work in my own job (self-employed)	1%	1%	1%

Source of data: SB-2017

**1.3.3.2 Social integration of Syrian refugees in Turkey**

Competition over economic resources, mainly employment, has raised tension levels in communities that host a higher share of Syrian refugees. This surely affects the nature and extent of integration within these communities both in the medium and long run. The SB-2017 report provides a multitude of indicators that reflect perceptions of Turkish citizens about Syrian refugees. In total, the report provides evidence of a negative perception, which is a major barrier to smooth social integration.

While the majority of Turkish citizens acknowledge that Syrian refugees are victims of war and persecution, many regard them as burdensome, dangerous, and beggars. On the other hand, low shares of respondents regard

them as harmless or abused on the labor market (see Table 1.12). Consistently, Turkish citizens perceive Syrian refugees as culturally distant. An earlier version of Syrian Barometer, published in 2014, shows that about 80% of Turkish citizens think that Syrian refugees do not resemble them. Markedly, it also shows that the corresponding share was higher, relative to average share, in provinces near the Syrian border; those that are ethnically closer to Syrians. Misperception seems to contribute to lack of acceptance. The SB-2017 shows that the overwhelming majority (86.2%) of Turkish citizens think that Syrian refugees ensure their sustenance via aid from the Turkish state. On the other hand, most Syrians who responded to the survey indicate that they earn their living via salaries from work.

**Table 1.12: The most appropriate statements to describe Syrian asylum-seekers (multiple answer)**

Victims who escaped from war and persecution	57.80%
They are people putting burden on us	43%
They are dangerous people who will lead us to troubles in the future	39%
Beggars/who live only with help	24.40%
Our brothers in religion	20.70%
Guests in our country	20.30%
They are quite different and foreigners	18%
Harmless people who live their own lives	14.60%
People who are abused in labor force	14.30%
Other	0.70%
No idea	1.50%

Source of data: SB-2017

In terms of the contribution of Syrian refugees to their host economy, most Turkish citizens think it is little. The SB-2017 shows that 82% think that the Syrian refugees do not contribute to the Turkish economy. The majority (85%) also think that Syrian refugees do not enrich society's culture. In total, 75% say that they cannot live in peace with Syrians.

In line with such attitudes, the majority of Turkish citizens think that Syrian refugees should not have full access to the Turkish formal labor market. In addition, over half of Turkish citizens think that Syrian refugees should not get a work permit and that 23.5% think that Syrian refugees can get temporary working permits for certain jobs (see Table 1.13).

**Table 1.13: What sort of arrangements should be made regarding the work of Syrians in Turkey?**

Definitely should not have working permit	54,6%
Temporary working permits for certain jobs	23,5%
Temporary working permits for all jobs	8,1%
Permanent working permits for certain jobs	6,3%
Permanent working permits for all jobs	5,5%
No idea/no answer	2,0%

An important aspect that measures the extent of potential social integration in Turkey is citizens' opinion on the legal status of Syrian refugees. The findings from the SB-2017 show that the majority (76%) are against granting Syrian refugees full citizenship. Consistently, the majority (86.5%) believe that no political rights should be given to them.

Another important aspect of integration is place of residence. A high share of Turkish citizens think that Syrian refugees should live in safe zones or in camps, although only a minority wants them deported. Those who believe that Syrian refugees should live where they want or should be evenly distributed across Turkey are also a minority (see Table 1.14).

**Table 1.14: Where Syrians should live?**

They should live in the safe zones in Syria	37.40%
Only in the camps	28.10%
They should be all deported	11.50%
Wherever they want to live in	7.90%
They should be distributed evenly in Turkey	7.70%
A Syrians exclusive city should be founded	4.80%
No idea/no answer	2.60%

*1.3.4 Syrian refugees in Europe*

According to the UNHCR, over a million Syrian refugees arrived to Europe in 2015. Unlike in Jordan, Lebanon, or Turkey, most Syrian refugees in Europe are well educated and more economically able. As mentioned above, this section of refugees could afford to travel long distances and reside in Europe. Discussion in this section is limited to discussing demographic and socio-economic characteristics in Germany. Representative data on Syrian refugees in other European countries are not readily available. We believe that the findings from this section give a good picture of the characteristics of Syrian refugees in Europe.

In terms of a source of data, the discussion heavily relies on Statistisches Bundesamt (2016).<sup>50</sup> This comes with a caveat: the data do not distinguish Syrians by refugee status. Still, since the data provide statistics of Syrians who sought asylum in 2015, it largely captures those who fled due to the conflict. Evidently, the number of this cohort increased substantially after 2012, rising from 50,000 to over 350,000.

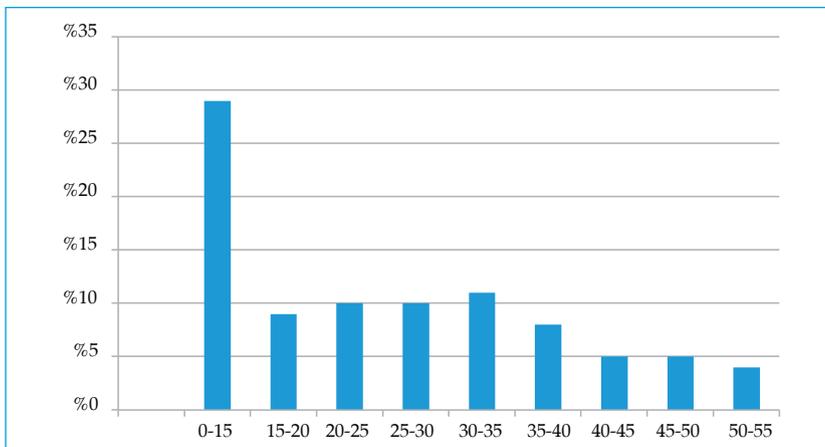
The majority of Syrians in Germany are men (61.6%). In terms of age composition, Figure 1.8 shows

<sup>50</sup> Statistisches Bundesamt (2016). Ausländische Bevölkerung - Ergebnisse des Ausländerzentralregisters (Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit, Fachserie 1 Reihe 2). Wiesbaden: Statistisches Bundesamt.

that around 60% are younger than 30 years old. The mean age is 26.8 years relative to 44.7 for the German population. Figure 1.8 displays the education profile of Syrians relative to Germans. The share of Syrians with no formal education levels at 19.2%, compared with 3% for Germans. Still, the share of Syrian migrants with Abitur (a set of examinations

taken in the final year of secondary school in the German educational system) is higher than that of German population. Interestingly, 36% of the Syrians are either enrolled in education institutions or not attending school (not at school age). The corresponding share of the Germans is 15%: differences in age profile are likely to be the key explaining factor.

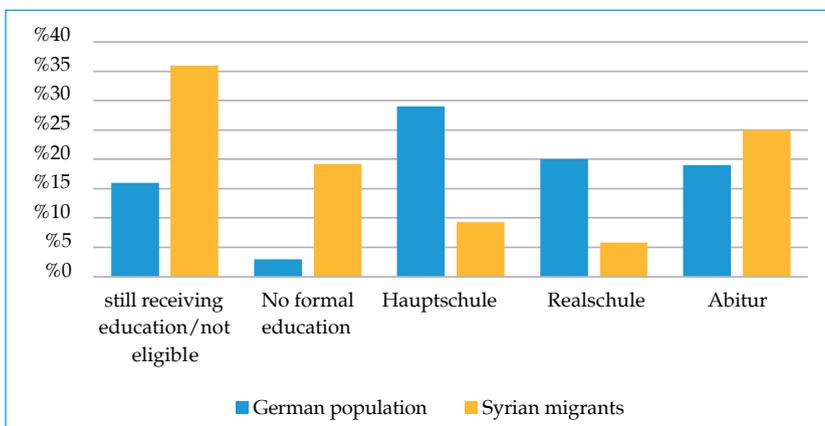
**Figure 1.8: Age composition of Syrians in Germany, 2015**



Source of data: Statistisches Bundesamt, 2016b.

Note: data on higher age groups are not representative

**Figure 1.9: Educational attainment of Syrians and the German population**



Source of data: Statistisches Bundesamt, 2016b.

While Syrians in Germany are relatively young and more educated, most of them are economically inactive. Only 16.9% are employed, 7% are unemployed, while the rest are out of labor force. Half of the latter group are either too young to work (younger than 15 years old) or currently enrolled in education. In addition, Syrians who are going through asylum procedures have not acquired the right to work documents. Another precluding factor is language: Syrians, like other nationalities, will have to spend considerable time learning the German language to ease their access to labor market. These two factors explain why only a small group has so far joined the labor market. Of the total Syrians, 55% live off unemployment benefits or government support.

To enhance the integration of Syrian refugees, the German government has put in place a number of measures. For example, all Syrian children with asylum status are eligible for education. Also, Syrian refugees will be granted a two year resident permit if they find a permanent employment position.<sup>51</sup>

The German government introduced a number of laws that set the stage for easing the asy-

51 See Hindy (2018) 'Germany's Syrian Refugee Integration Experiment'. The Century Foundation; <https://tcf.org/content/report/germanys-syrian-refugee-integration-experiment/?session=1&session=1>

lum procedures via amending the country's Asylum act and Residence Act. The amendments now accelerate the asylum procedures, lower the financial cost for states and municipalities, and improve the safety of refugees.<sup>52</sup> While Syrian refugees generally acknowledge the effort that the German government is investing to assimilate them into the country, they show resentment over the perception that the German still perceive them as totally new individuals without considering the pre-existing skills that they brought to the society.<sup>53</sup>

## 1.4 Conclusions

In 2011, a series of pro-democracy uprisings erupted in several Arab countries. The outcome for Libya and Syria turned deadly. Other countries also suffered the consequences of military conflict, mainly Iraq and Yemen. As a result, millions become internally displaced and refugees. The scale for Syria is incomparably large. This chapter has explored the

52 See Amaral E., Woldetsadik M., and Armenta G. (2018). Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, <https://www.georgetownjournalofinternationalaffairs.org/online-edition/2018/4/20/europes-great-challenge-integrating-syrian-refugees>.

53 See Hindy (2018) 'Germany's Syrian Refugee Integration Experiment'. The Century Foundation; <https://tcf.org/content/report/germanys-syrian-refugee-integration-experiment/?session=1&session=1>

salient demographic and socio-economic characteristics of refugees from conflicts in these countries, focusing mainly on the Syrian refugees and largely limiting the analysis to countries that disproportionately accommodate them, including Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Germany.

The analysis shows that the characteristics of the Syrian refugees vary by host countries. Those settled in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey have mostly come from rural and poorer areas in Syria. Over half of the refugees are children and most of the adults are less educated. Since the eruption of the conflict, the economic wellbeing of Syrian refugees in these countries has deteriorated. Poverty incidence exceeds half of Syrian refugee households and the unemployment rate has been soaring. Those who are lucky enough to find jobs mostly work in informal or irregular jobs and are paid substantially lower wages. With such harsh living conditions, most are highly dependent on direct support, cash or in kind, for basic need.

According to the UNHCR, over a million Syrian refugees arrived in Europe in 2015. Unlike in Jordan, Lebanon, or Turkey, most Syrian refugees in Europe are better educated and more economically able. Due to data availability, we limit our discussion on the de-

mographic and socio-economic characteristics to Germany; the largest recipient of Syrian refugees in Europe.

The labor market performance of Syrian refugees in Germany is not promising with a low LFPR and a high unemployment rate. With this, over half of the Syrian refugees live off unemployment benefits or government support.

To the extent that the available data allow, this chapter also explored the nature of social integration of Syrian refugees in the neighboring countries. The analysis shows that social integration of the Syrian refugees, mainly in Turkey is a farfetched objective. Negative sentiments, have accumulated over the years as the influx of Syrian refugees accumulated with natives' belief that refugees crowd them out in the labor market and compete with them over the limited public resources and housing.

The findings and insights documented in this chapter help to understand the economic and social challenges faced by the Syrian refugees in the main host countries and associated concerns and fears of the natives. These challenges are key determinants to understand the tendency for the Syrian refugees to repatriate, a matter that is explored in Chapter 2.



## CHAPTER 2

# Enabling conditions, challenges, and processes

Belal Fallah

### 2.1 Introduction

Repatriation is one of the durable solutions for refugees endorsed by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) on condition that it is done voluntarily and without coercion (UNHCR, 1995). In practice, it is difficult to define what constitutes voluntary repatriation. For example, it is illegal for host countries to drive refugees physically to the borders of their country (the *non-refoulement* principle) (UNHCR, 1995). But they can still apply a degree of economic and political pressures that can mean that repatriation is the only viable option at a time when conditions at home are still unsafe (Gerver, 2018). This will not only put the refugees at risk of violence but will also create a cycle of displacement if the conditions of the home country cannot sustain return (Harlid et al, 2015)

Some of the literature claims that, especially in the Global South as a result of political context and economic burden, repatriation is the inevitable end to most refugee crises, regardless of the situation back home (Stein and Cuny, 1994). Given the large

scale of the refugee crises and the response of the international community, integration and resettlement may not be feasible options. Therefore, even if talking about repatriation may seem premature, it is important to consider it as a reality and to ensure that it takes place sustainably.

One of the purposes of this chapter is to describe the factors that enter the decision-making processes of refugees when they choose whether or not to repatriate. These contain several dimensions including security concerns, political conditions, economic drivers, and social considerations. The most important issues in each dimension will be unpacked, describing whether they will enable or inhibit repatriation. A special focus will be on households headed by women.

As with any process that involves decision-making, information-gathering is an important dimension to repatriation. Since most official sources are deemed untrustworthy by refugees, informal networks form within refugee communities with specific patterns of information diffusion. The most important literature findings about information-

gathering and informal networks will also be discussed.

Once the process of repatriation starts taking place, it is important to discuss what conditions allows it to be physically, economically, and politically sustainable. The conditions of sustainability will be studied from two angles; the first is the welfare of the refugees themselves; and the second is the welfare of the home country and the communities left behind.

The lessons learned through this extensive literature review will be applied to the case of Arab refugees. This will take the form of a review of various reports and papers that study Arab refugees' motivations and obstacles to return. This section will conclude with implications regarding the most important concerns for refugees and policies that will need to be in place to ensure the best outcomes for refugees.

## 2.2 Early repatriates

This section will summarize the reasons given by Arab refugees for their early spontaneous return to their unsafe homes. Starting with Yemeni refugees in Djibouti, according to news reports by (Adow, 2017) and (Savage and Kalfod, 2016), some refugees (of which many are originally Somalis who sought refuge in Yemen) decide to go back to Yemen despite the continuing conflict and threat of famine and diseases. The reports highlight the bad conditions in the refugee camp, including the heat, limited food rations, and lack of basic services as reasons for return. In addition, around 19,566 Yemeni refugees returned from Saudi Arabia in 2019. The reasons for their return, however, were not monitored (Flow Monitoring Dashboard, 2019).

**Table 2.1: Number of returnees and reasons for return**

Country of origin	Country of asylum	Number of returnees	Most cited reason for return
Yemen <sup>54</sup>	Somalia	-	Bad conditions in refugee camps
	Saudi Arabia	19,566 (in 2019)	-
Iraq <sup>55</sup>	Syria	45,840 (between 2012 and 2013)	Deteriorating security in Syria
	Turkey	62,439 (as of June 2019)	Reunion with family members
	Lebanon	40,230 (as of June 2019)	-
Syria <sup>56</sup>	Iraq	33,703 (as of June 2019)	-
	Jordan	39,082 (as of June 2019)	Reunion with family members <sup>57</sup>
	Egypt	975 (as of June 2019)	-

<sup>54</sup> Adow (2017) and Flow Monitoring Dashboard (2019)

<sup>55</sup> Harlid et al (2015)

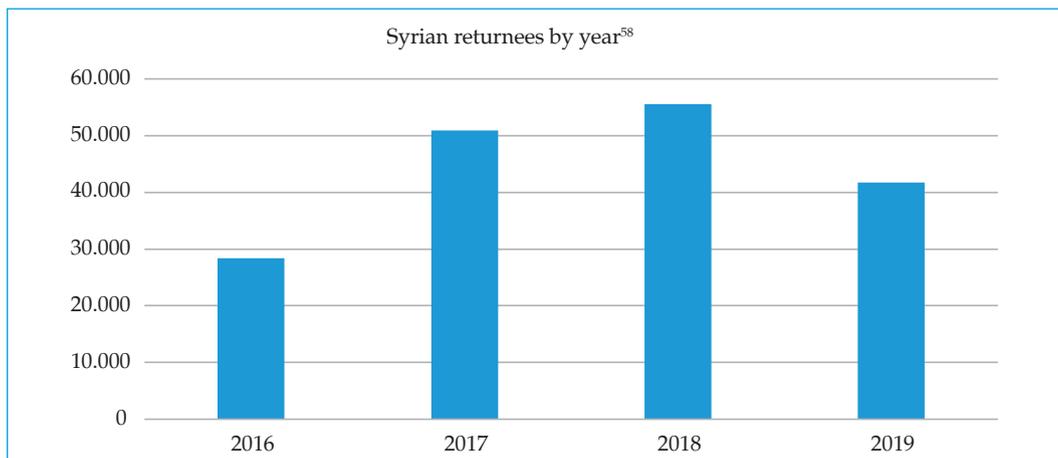
<sup>56</sup> UNHCR (2017a)

<sup>57</sup> UNHCR (2018c)

The situation of Iraqi refugees and repatriates is more complex. Prior to the Syrian civil war, the return of Iraqi refugees was irregular and ill-defined, determined on the one hand by the episodic nature of the civil war in Iraq and on the other by the individual economic and social situation of households (Harlid et al, 2015). In general, return was limited and of cyclical nature, as refugees would go back and forth between Iraq and the country of asylum. But with the onset of the Syrian civil war in 2011, the largest number of Iraqi refugees returned from Syria because of the deteriorating security conditions in the host country (Harlid et al, 2015; Internal Displacement Monitor, 2018). In interviews conducted by Internal Displacement Monitor (2018), family reunifications and deteriorating socio-economic conditions in exile were also some of the main reasons that refugees cited for returning. But many of the returning Iraqis ended up being internally displaced because of the segregation of cities and neighborhood across ethnic lines, as well as loss of property and deteriorating economic conditions (Internal Displacement Monitor, 2018).

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**Figure 2.1: Syrian returnees by year**



The most extensively available data on repatriation come from the small but increasing number of returning Syrians from neighboring host countries. The returnees mostly hailed from Turkey (35%), followed by Lebanon (23%), Jordan (22%), and

Iraq (19%). A small number also returned from Egypt (UNHCR, 2017a). The profile of the returnees is mostly female from Jordan and Lebanon, and mostly male from Turkey, Egypt, and Iraq. The majority of returnees are small families and single people. Two surveys conducted by the UNHCR (2018b) of returning Syr-

58 [https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria\\_durable\\_solutions](https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria_durable_solutions)

ians from Turkey and Jordan on the reasons for return yield the following results; for the vast majority of the repatriates from Turkey, the return is perceived to be permanent<sup>59</sup> (98%). The reasons for returning are joining family members, followed by the deteri-

orating conditions of the country of asylum, and improved security situation back home. Most of those who returned from Turkey went back to Aleppo while those who returned from Jordan went to Daraa.

**Table 2.2: Returnees’ reasons for going back to Syria<sup>59</sup>**

Category	Reason for return	Jordan (2016-2018)	Turkey (2016-2017)
Family	Reunite with family	70.8%	77.0%
	Attend family event	1.3%	-
	Get married	1.3%	-
Conditions in country of origin	Work opportunities	-	3.0%
	Improved security	6.0%	10.0%
Conditions in country of asylum	Lack of income earning opportunities	4.4%	10.0%
	Limited access to assistance	4.3%	
	Living costs outside camp	3.6%	
	Limited freedom of movement	1.6%	
Other	Medical treatment completed	1.1%	-
	Costs of medical treatment	0.8%	

The findings of this UNHCR survey is in line with the literature, which will be surveyed in the next section, with social considerations (family reunions) cited as the most important reason for return. But that does not mean that the role of other variables is irrelevant. This is highlighted by another UNHCR survey (2018a) on intentions to return among Syrian refugees also in neighboring host countries. The study

finds that while the majority of Syrians want to return someday (76%), only 4% plan on doing so in the next 12 months. Again, the main reason for wanting to return within the next 12 months is reunification with family members, with 90% of them planning on returning to the place of origin. But those who want to return are also more likely to have intact property in Syria and are more likely to be ‘severely or highly vulnerable’ (as per socio-economic indicators) compared with the refugee population. More than half of them also report an information

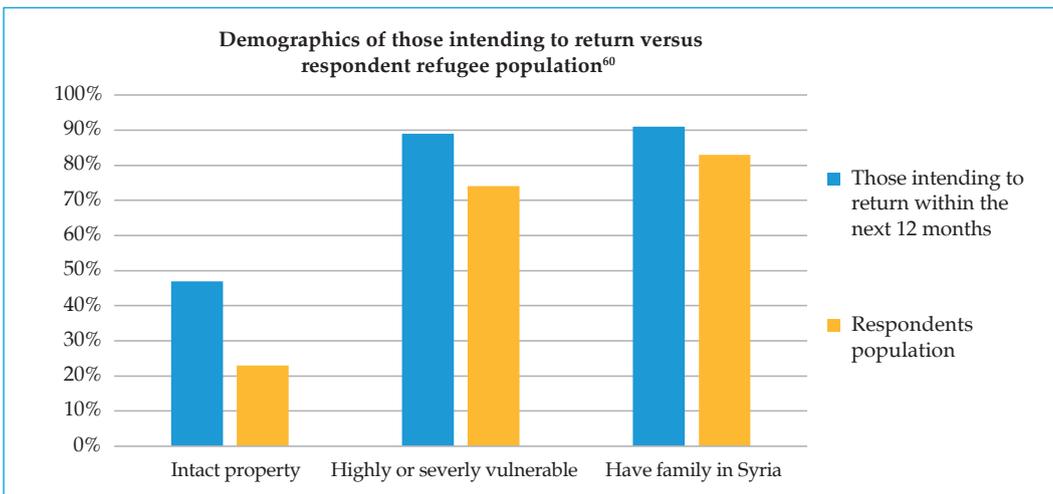
<sup>59</sup> Permanent versus temporary return is not captured in the Jordanian survey.

deficit, especially regarding the security situation and the availability of shelter, services, and livelihood opportunities. They rely primarily on information from their family members and, to a lesser extent, media, community members, friends and social media. The story of disconnected, poverty-ridden Syrian refugee households returning early is collaborated by Kvittingen et al (2018) in their research in Jordan.

**Table 2.3: Intention to return survey**

Intention Survey	Do you hope to return one day?	Do you plan to go back in the next 12 months?
Yes	76%	4%
No	19%	85%
I don't know	5%	11%

**Figure 2.2: Demographics of those intending to return versus respondent refugee population**



Another outlook is provided by a complex World Bank (2019) study that uses econometric analysis to determine the most important factors for return; demographic variables that are positively correlated with return include being single, male, and less-educated. Analysis of pull factors shows that the most important determinant of return is security: refugees are less likely to return to areas that are under

conflict and more likely to return to areas that have experienced change in control. The last factor has a large magnitude and reflects the importance of political considerations alongside security concerns. The security dimension also has parallels with family ties consideration; for example, returnees to high-intensity conflict areas are more likely to be non-immediate family members of those left behind. Services are an important consideration, as lack of provision of education

60 UNHCR (2018a)

and health facilities in the home country is an effective deterrent to return. As for push factors, the results are more complex; for example, having food security in the host country can increase the likelihood of returning but so does living in a refugee camp.

Smaller scale surveys conducted by various researchers highlight the role of push factors undertaken by countries of asylum in premature return, especially in Lebanon. These include a report by SAWA (2019), which invokes the hostile environment in Lebanon towards refugees and the unsustainable living conditions as one of the main reasons for premature return. Another report by Carnegie Group (Yahya et al, 2018) mentions ‘humiliation’ of refugees in Lebanon as

well as dwindling aid in Jordan as the reason behind some returnees’ choices.

The UNHCR (2018b, 2018b), SAWA (2019), and Yahya et al (2018) reports highlight how premature the return at this stage is. Many of those who have returned from Lebanon to Syria became displaced again after realizing that staying in Syria is not feasible. Those who returned from Jordan to Daraa also became re-displaced as the conflict reignited (SAWA, 2019; Yahya et al, 2018). In addition, those who sought to go back within the next 12 months have had insufficient evidence to make a well-informed decision especially regarding the security situation back home (UNHCR, 2018a).

Demographic	Country of origin	Country of asylum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single, less-educated male</li> <li>• Small families</li> <li>• Highly vulnerable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved security situation</li> <li>• Presence of family members</li> <li>• Presence of intact property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty (ambiguous)</li> <li>• Hostile environment</li> </ul>

What do these surveys tell us about return? There is consensus on which demographic and pull factors contribute to early repatriation. Demographic variables include being a less-educated adult male, having a small family, or being an extended family member of those left behind. As

for pull factors from the home country, two stand out. The first is the social dimension and the presence of family, and the second is the (perceived) improved security in the area of origin. Economic pull variables play a role in return, albeit small, mostly taking the form of the presence

of intact property in Syria. It is also worth noting that those who want to return report a deficit of information on the situation back home, which can imply an exclusion from informal social networks. The most unclear pattern emerges when studying push factors from host countries; some indications show that early returnees are overrepresented among the economically vulnerable while others find mixed results or the complete opposite.

In order to understand the specificities of the Arab case, it is useful to contrast it with other historic repatriations. Comparing the responses of Syrian refugees on the intentions to return with Afghani refugees in Pakistan in 2011 shows a similar picture. At that time, 84% of Afghani refugees expressed no intention of returning home (Harlid et al, 2015), similar to the 85% of Syrian refugees who had no plan to return home within 12 months. The experience of Afghani refugees also highlights that the main driver of repatriation is pull factors, not push factors; despite the deteriorating economic conditions in countries of asylum, the number of Afghani repatriates decreased because of the worsening security situation in Afghanistan and only picked up when the security situation at home improved (Harlid et al, 2015). Other examples in the literature tend to be geared towards organized return as oppose to spontaneous return, which is more concerned with the macro-security situation as

opposed to individual decision-making. Throughout the rest of this chapter, however, the situations of Arab refugees and repatriates will be compared with historic refugee crises where appropriate to highlight similarities and differences.

In general, the findings of Syrian repatriates' surveys are in line with the literature conclusions. The demographic features of early returnees are similar to those observed elsewhere. Similarly, the most cited pull factors for return are common among any returning refugee population. The mixed picture when it comes to push factors is also not uncommon in refugee surveys. This will be highlighted in the relationship between poverty and repatriation in section 2.3.3. Therefore, it could very well be the case that early returnees to Syria include a combination of the economically vulnerable and the economically well off. It is also not unreasonable to conclude from the surveyed literature that pull factors play a much more important role in determining return than push factors.

## 2.3 Conditions for return

The general assumption regarding voluntary repatriation is that once the security threat at home is reversed, refugees will go back. The idea is that refugees' attachment to their home country will inevitably drive them to

return once the conflict is over, ending the so-called refugee cycle. This approach, however, has proven to be too simplistic to describe reality. While refugees' wellbeing is highly dependent on supra-individual factors at home and in exile, they remain independent agents with complex decision-making processes that accounts for a myriad of factors (Harlid et al, 2015). While security is undoubtedly one of the most important considerations, refugees also take account of the political, economic, and social factors in the host country and home country.

As a result, a new outlook to the repatriation decision has emerged. Refugees are seen as purposive actors with at least some degree of independence to make their own choices. They compare conditions in exile and at home, and make up their minds accordingly (Harlid et al, 2015; Stein and Cuny, 1994; Zimmermann, 2012). This sometimes leads to early return, before the conditions at home are declared safe (so-called spontaneous return) or, alternatively, it can mean that refugees never return, even when the situation at home is deemed safe (Black and Koser, 1999; Harlid et al, 2015; Stein and Cuny, 1994). The purpose of this section is therefore to describe the security, political, economic, and social variables that have been found to have the most influence on the repatriation decision. As with any decision-making process, repatriation also has a gen-

der dimension, whereby men and women have different priorities and act differently. Therefore, the experience of households headed by women will be discussed separately at the end of each subsection.

### *2.3.1 The paradox of security concerns*

Security is the most cited concern for refugees against returning to their home country. Despite that, 'spontaneous' repatriation does take place before the official end of a conflict (Stein and Cuny, 1994; Zimmermann, 2012). This section will attempt to unpack the relationship between safety and repatriation, and elucidate how security is reconciled with return when it happens before the end of the conflict. These include return to safe areas within the home country, deteriorating security situations in the host country, and the difference between personal safety and overarching security situation.

Some refugees return to 'safe' areas in their home countries before the official end of a conflict. This could be the place they originally repatriated from or a new location (Harlid et al, 2015; Zimmermann, 2012). Once an area in the home country is deemed safer and outright threats of violence are curbed, some refugees opt to return there over staying in their host countries. The main issue with this type of repatriation is that it may not be sustainable; the conflict may erupt again in safer areas, creating another episode

of displacement. In addition, the continuing conflict means that the reconstruction process in these 'safe' areas is delayed, creating dismal economic conditions for returnees (Harlid et al, 2015).

Deteriorating security conditions in host countries may prompt refugees to return, preferring to take their chances back home even if the conflict is still continuing. As mentioned, the decision-making process of refugees involves a comparison between the situation in the home country and that in the host country (Zimmermann, 2012). If their

presence in the host country constitutes a risk to their safety, they might opt to take their chances in their home countries. The creation of an unsafe environment in host countries can be ignited by the presence of refugees, or it can be a calculated move to encourage the return of refugees (Crisp, 2003). Alternatively, in volatile regions, worsening security conditions in the host countries independent of the presence of refugees can push those displaced to repatriate, even if the conflict at home is not yet over (Lischer, 2017).

**Table 2.4: Security threat and its consequences on the refugees**

Country of origin	Country of asylum	Security threat	Year	Consequence
<b>Afghanistan</b> <sup>61</sup>	Pakistan	Threats and police abuse in refugee camps.	2016	365,000 Afghan refugees returned.
<b>South Sudan</b> <sup>62</sup>	Ethiopia	Security incidents in the Ethiopian refugee camp.	2018	20,000 South Sudanese refugees returned home.
<b>Uganda</b> <sup>63</sup>	Sudan	Sudanese civil war	1983- 2005	Both Ugandan refugees and Sudanese fled to Uganda.
<b>Iraq</b> <sup>64</sup>	Syria	Syrian civil war	2011 on-going	Biggest return of Iraqi refugees from Syria back to Iraq.
<b>Somalia</b> <sup>65</sup>	Yemen	Yemeni civil war	2015 on-going	4,300 Somali refugees returned from Yemen
<b>Rwanda</b> <sup>66</sup>	Zaire (DRC)	First Congo War	1996-1997	500,000 Rwandan refugees returned home within a four-day period.

61 Human Rights Watch (2016)

62 Reliefweb (2019)

63 Harlid et al (2015)

64 Harlid et al (2015)

65 UNHCR (2019)

66 Refword (1997)

There is also a need to distinguish between personal safety threatened by individual persecution and the overarching security situation. In general, security and safety are discussed in the form of an end to fighting or the end of violence and movement towards post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction. But in some cases, security concerns are more personal, as they pertain to individual fear of persecution from one side of the conflict (Hardgrove, 2009; Omata, 2013). While those who are concerned with the general security environment may return before the official end of the conflict, those worried about personal safety are more likely to condition return on a political resolution rather than just an end to the violence (Omata, 2013).

As with all factors considered in the repatriation decision, there is a gender dimension to the security concern. A study by Black et al (2004) finds that men more than women cite overarching security fears as a deterrent to returning. As for individual security, the two genders voice different concerns: for men, army conscription and political persecution are the main source of worry. Women, however, tend to worry more specifically about gender-based violence if they decide to return, and they also tend to perceive the journey back home as more unsafe than their male counterparts (Harlid et al, 2015).

### *2.3.2 How can politics influence return?*

Refugees' political ties as well as their view of themselves as agents with political influence can have implications for the decision to return. The most important mechanism through which political factors influence refugees' return is through providing the overarching context in which they must react. It also ties in closely with personal security and expected future economic conditions. This section will briefly unpack some of the implications of the political dimension, including political settlement, political agency, minority return, and the overarching political context.

In the case of civil conflicts, political settlement is an important consideration for refugees, especially as it ties in with personal safety. Fear of returning to a home that is still under the control of a dictatorship is especially amplified for political refugees and for young men who refused to take part in mandatory army conscription (Muasher and Yahya, 2019; Muggeridge and Doná, 2006). In addition, political considerations may be masked by what appear to be economic concerns; many refugees condition return on ensuring that they retain a way of going back to the host country (through owning property, retaining a host country passport, etc.) in case the political situation deteriorates back home (Muggeridge and Doná, 2006).

As for political agency, refugees may view returning home as a political act equivalent to recognizing the legitimacy of the regime in the home country. This is justifiable as no state can achieve validity with a significant portion of its population living outside its borders (Petrin, 2002). When refugees decide to return home, they are effectively showing confidence in the ability of the state to protect them. In the absence of such faith, refugees may choose to remain in exile to deprive the state of political legitimacy, especially in the eyes of the international community (Graham and Khosravi, 1997). Repatriates are also seen as an important tool for rebuilding the state after the end of the conflict through various forms of human and physical capital that can be mobilized in the reconstruction process (Petrin, 2002). But if refugees do not feel connected to the state or feel threatened by it – as is likely to be the case if it is the reason they fled in the first place – then they will have no interest in returning or contributing to the rebuilding process in any of its forms.

In the case of an ethnically charged conflict, the nature of the population's relationship with the state may irreversibly change. For minorities specifically, it may compel them to identify with their religious or ethnic group rather than with their nationality, particularly if they have been tar-

geted during (or even before) the conflict (Graham and Khosravi, 1997). Without effective domestic and international policies, ethnic minority refugees are more likely never to return for fear of safety and deteriorating ties with the homeland, even in conditions of political stability (Harlid et al, 2015). If they do return in a situation where ethnic division is geographically maintained post-repatriation, minority returnees will become internally displaced as they may be forced away from their original locations (Petrin, 2002).

The Table 2.5 below gives examples of minority/majority refugees reacting to minority/majority governments in their country of origin. While these examples are useful in extrapolating realities that can be applied to the Arab cases at hand, it is important to keep in mind that the refugees' reactions are highly context-specific. Conditions in the country of asylum matters, so does the nature of identity and the ties to the homeland. For example, Shi'a Iraqi refugees in Jordan (a majority in a minority government during the Saddam Hussein era) expressed a desire to return home because they did not feel welcome in Jordan (Chatelard, 2003). In contrast, Assyrian Iraqis in Britain felt more welcomed than their Arab/Muslim counterparts and, therefore, expressed less desire to go back (Al Rasheed, 1994).

**Table 2.5: Examples of minority/majority refugees reacting to minority/ majority governments in their country of origin**

Refugee/ Government Typology		Government	
		Minority	Majority
Refugees	Minority	Context-specific: refugees are more likely to express desire or plans to return sometimes conditioning it on the minority staying in power.	Likely to raise questions of identity and belonging for minority refugees but also highly dependent on the relationship to the dominant group and to the homeland
		Sunni Iraqi refugees during the 1990s in Jordan, expected to repatriate but also had better living conditions in exile compared with their Shi'a counterparts. <sup>67</sup>	Armenians Iranian refugees in Sweden expressed doubts about the idea of Iran remaining their homeland. This in contrast with the Baha'is who, despite severe persecution, remained tied to the idea of Iran as home. <sup>68</sup>
	Majority	Likely to express hesitation and mistrust regarding repatriation, even in the case of support from the international community and UNHCR.	Refugees' considerations are less likely to be about identity and more likely to be about security and political agency.
		Hutu Rwandan refugees in Zaire expressed suspicion and reluctance to return home even after it was declared safe. Less than 10% of the Hutu Rwandan refugees returned home prior to the conflict in Zaire. <sup>69</sup>	Interviews with Chilean refugees show they conditioned return on regime change and end to dictatorship because it is the only way they would feel safe. <sup>70</sup>

It is important to mention that the political dimension of repatriation features much more as an overarching context than a 'variable' that affects the decision to repatriate. Specifically, the weight that the international

community is willing to carry in terms of resettling refugees and providing donations and funding to host countries to integrate them will determine how soon and how sustainable the refugees' return will be. While the international community may

67 Chaterlard (2003)

68 Graham & Khosravi (1997)

69 Refworld (1997)

70 Muggerridge & Doná (2006)

not outright condone premature return, they may exercise a level of apathy that leaves the refugees with no other real option but to risk going back to their home country. This is exacerbated by the treatment of repatriation as an end in itself as opposed to a means of protecting refugees (Petrin, 2002). Finally, while the rhetoric of home countries' governments generally favors repatriation as soon as possible, it might be in its interest to delay it or stop it altogether. This could either be due to its economic incapability of absorbing returnees or a political desire to preserve the status quo.

### *2.3.3 Economic drivers of repatriation*

More than any other factor, the focus on economic drivers of repatriation views refugees as 'purposive actors' with the ability to make decisions about their future independently and rationally (Harlid et al, 2015). This is in contrast with the more passive view that understands repatriation as the natural 'next step' once the original causes of displacement have been removed. Consideration of economic factors usually takes the form of a comparison between conditions in the host and home country on which refugees subsequently base their decision to return. This section will discuss some of those

salient economic factors, namely poverty and deprivation; access to services and work opportunities; as well as housing and property rights.

The relationship between monetary poverty and repatriation is complex and can go both ways. Poorer households both repatriate the earliest and the latest (Harlid et al, 2015). Early returnees from poorer households may choose to take their chances back home over impoverishment in their host country or may find staying in exile unfeasible anymore. In other cases, however, poverty acts as constraint on returning since it involves potential exposure to new sets of vulnerabilities that the household may not be equipped to handle. The perception of what type of livelihood access refugees will have on returning is key in defining the relationship between repatriation and poverty. Therefore, it is unclear to what extent deprivation does indeed drive return, despite it being perceived as a successful tool that host countries use to push for repatriation (Harlid et al, 2015). Some of the coping mechanisms that poor refugees and repatriates use include inhabiting urban areas in their home country on returning (even if they mostly hail from rural areas) or undertaking a gradual or partial process of return to minimize the risk and establish a kinship network (Harlid et al, 2015).

**Table 2.6: Impact of poverty on repatriation**

Poverty pushed for repatriation <sup>71</sup>		Poverty hindered repatriation <sup>72</sup>	
Country of origin	Country of asylum	Country of origin	Country of asylum
Iraq	Syria	Liberia	Ghana

Beyond poverty, access to services as well as employment opportunities are two important determinants that are considered in the decision-making process about returning. In many cases, host countries provide some services to refugees, most notably education, access to health facilities, and food aid (Harlid et al, 2015). Some training services may also be provided by the UNHCR and other INGOs (although curbing provision of services is one way through which some host countries and the UNHCR ‘encourage’ repatriation – see Collins (1996). But host countries tend to restrict refugees from getting work permits, making employment opportunities scarce and access to the labor market limited to the informal sector. This can be particularly frustrating for refugees who worked in professional fields prior to exile. On the other hand, home countries that are still undergoing conflict or that have just been declared safe are unlikely to have the infrastructure necessary for the provision of services, especially in rural areas. In addition, employment opportunities are likely to be scarce if the post-conflict reconstruction phase is yet to be initiated.

71 Harlid et al. (2015)

Another important aspect considered in the repatriation decision is the ability to access housing and land on returning. Many refugees may have lost access to their houses and lands during the conflict either because of destruction, looting, or confiscation. In that case, if there is no other means of accessing shelter (for example, staying with kin) refugees have no choice but to stay in host countries. For refugees from rural areas, access to land encompasses both means for livelihood and for shelter, making return even more challenging (Harlid et al, 2015). Having no option but to repatriate, rural refugees may choose to go back to urban areas in their home country rendering them internally displaced. Seizure of property in the homeland may also push for premature repatriation for refugees who wish to regain possession of their land or house. In some cases, this creates cyclical return, with refugees going back to assess if they have access to their property. According to Harlid et al (2015), attempts by the international community and governments to address concerns about house and land access by repatriates have generally fallen short.

72 Harlid et al. (2015)

The economic drivers of repatriation also have a gender dimension. Poverty among the refugee population tends to be concentrated in households headed by women. This generally translates into premature repatriation in the case of the presence of kin in the home country or late repatriation if not (Collins, 1996; Taiwa, 2016). Households headed by women also tend to be more concerned with the provision of services, especially schools and hospitals for their children, while men are more concerned with the availability of working opportunities and access to livelihood (Collins, 1996; Martin, 2004; Taiwa, 2016). Finally, households headed by women may find it particularly challenging to access house, land and property since they have less influence and power (Collins, 1996; Harlid et al, 2015).

There are some economic considerations to repatriation in the literature that are contested or context-specific. The main one is that incentives from home countries mobilize return more effectively than disincentives from host countries. Some case studies support this claim, and it links in with the argument that poverty hinders repatriation. Similar to this argument is the question of whether integration hinders repatriation. While intuitively the answer is yes since it is one of the other durable solutions, some case studies provide evidence that integration may be one way to encourage (partial) repatria-

tion as it provides a 'Plan B' for returnees (Black et al, 2004; Dardush, 2018; Harlid et al, 2015).

#### *2.3.4 Social considerations*

While security is often cited as the most important deterrent to repatriation, social reasons are considered one of the most important drivers of it. Therefore, this section will focus on the most commonly cited social reasons that inhibit or encourage return. Among these are family circumstances in exile and in the home country; social networks and asset; and changing gender relationships and roles.

Family considerations in exile and changes in family circumstances back home are often-cited reasons for return (Black et al, 2004). The presence of family back home can act as an important pull for refugees, especially in the case of important events like weddings and funerals. Family in exile also plays a role in determining return. For example, refugees who have young children attending school may want to wait until they finish their education (Graham and Khosravi, 1997). Similarly, households with elderly or sick family members may find it unfeasible to undertake the journey of repatriation. In some cases, households may send some family member – usually young adult men - earlier than the rest to get an impression of the conditions back home before the rest of the family follows.

Households may also choose to split themselves between the host country and the home country as a back-up plan in case political conditions start to deteriorate or in order to diversify sources of income between remittances sent from abroad and money earned at home. This is a common occurrence, termed by the literature as 'cyclical' or 'iterative' return (Harlid et al, 2015; Omata, 2013).

According to Omata (2013), the 'extent and quality of social assets' are especially important determinants of the decision to repatriate. The presence of connections in the homeland can help to buffer some of the shocks that will inevitably hit the returnees during the adjustment period. In the absence of these social networks in the home country, return will be delayed. As for the presence of social networks within refugee communities or host countries, these can either delay or encourage repatriation. As will be discussed in a later section, social networks are the main method of information transmission between refugees in the absence of trust in official information sources. As a result, those networks within refugee camps and the diaspora can play an important role in informing the decision to return. Those who have connections in host countries may find it easier to integrate and have access to jobs, delaying return. For women and households headed by women, the presence of male next-of-kin in the home country is an essential reason for

repatriate. This is especially the case in conditions where being a woman implies greater risk and more restricted access to livelihood, prompting them to seek the protection and assistance of the men in their families (Collins, 1996; Taiwa, 2016).

An important social consideration in the exile and repatriation journey is the changing relationship between the genders and shifts in gender roles. Women take up responsibilities during conflict and exodus that may have been deemed taboo before leaving the home country (Taiwa, 2016). But harsh exile conditions also play a role in exacerbating already existing inequalities between the genders (Harlid et al, 2015). While some of the responsibilities taken up may be perceived as 'positive', with women heading their households and undertaking paid employment, it can also lead to dire consequences, such as sex work and taking up arms and fighting. This depends on the circumstances of the household as well as the living conditions in the host country. But experience has shown that these roles tend to be reversed once the conflict is over. As a result, women may justifiably assume that returning will mean being relegated back to traditional and inferior social status, which most of them grew to reject (Graham and Khosravi, 1997). If they have undertaken sex work or other roles deemed unacceptable, return might mean social exclusion and even violence. This is especially true

if the home country experienced social changes during the conflict towards traditional views of gender roles. The other side of changing gender roles is that men, especially older ones, may be more open to returning in order to regain their authority and breadwinner status (Graham and Khosravi, 1997).

There is a need to distinguish between women in households headed by men and those headed by women. For all the aforementioned factors – but especially the social dimension – men and women have some diverging priorities when it comes to the decision to return. In the case of women in male-headed households, the decision may be in made in harmony, but they do not have the final say. On the other hand, households headed by women – who often have young children – have more autonomy when it comes to the decision-making process and may come to different conclusions than male-headed households given the aforementioned diverging priorities and experiences (Collins, 1996; Taiwa, 2016).

## 2.4 Other considerations

### 2.4.1 *Networks and information-gathering*

The previous sections highlighted some of the most important factors that determine refugees' propensity to return,

as they compare their situation in exile with the situation back home across several economic, political, and social factors. Since refugees cannot go home to gauge conditions by themselves, their decision to repatriate is heavily dependent on the availability and quality of information. Refugees tend to be skeptical of official information sources, be it from their home country, host country, or even INGOs, so they tend to rely on unofficial information sources, including networks within the refugee camps, the home country, and early returnees (Collins, 1996).

With the emergence and widespread use of mobile phones and the internet, the scope and reach of information sources, especially informal ones, have expanded hugely. This means that refugees are exposed to various information sources, some of which are contradictory, that they will have to consider and evaluate (Gillespie et al, 2016; Wall et al, 2017). This section will briefly explain the prevalence of informal information sources, the patterns through which information is spread, and the implication of the increased use of mobile phones and the internet.

According to Black and Koser (1999), the literature used to attribute the diverging outcomes of refugees to the different information available to them. But with the emergence of the view of refugees as agents with independent and complex decision-making

processes, the focus became more on the frequency and accuracy of information flow when trying to assess the conditions of a potential destination as opposed to only the accessibility of information. Therefore, refugees will only take the decision to return home once they have evaluated the reliability, accuracy, and content of the information gathered (Black and Koser, 1999).

Dissemination or restriction of the flow of certain information in refugee communities can also be used as a tool by the various actors to push for and encourage return or to discourage immigration and curb the flow of refugees (Carlson et al, 2018). This creates an issue of mistrust, making the source of information a very important consideration in determining its reliability among refugee communities. In lieu of official information sources (such as institutions or the media), refugees rely on informal channels, such as social and kin-based networks. In almost all cases, informal channels are considered the most trusted, reliable, and up-to-date information source on the security or economic conditions in the home country (Collins, 1996).

There are some commonalities in the ways that information is spread across formal and informal channels, and the methods through which it is used by refugees. According to Collins (1996), female refugees may receive less information than male refugees especially when the in-

formation is coming from informal sources. In male-dominated societies, households headed by women can be excluded from the information loop, leading either to premature repatriation in the case of lack of integration or delayed return in the case of misinformation about the situation back home.

One of the most important sources of information for refugees are early returnees who are perceived as the most reliable evaluators of the situation back home since they have experienced being refugees themselves and understand what kind of information is valued (Collins, 1996). As for formal information sources, the most mistrusted are those that come from governments (whether in home or host countries) since they tend to be contradictory, inaccurate, or serving ulterior motives. Information from NGOs or INGOs (such as the UNHCR) are perceived to be more reliable if too general to be useful in most cases. These organizations, however, go out of their way to ensure that households headed by women are included in the information loop by, for example, allowing them a tour of the home area (Collins, 1996). All in all, refugees do not discard any piece of information even if it is from an untrusted source; they evaluate and combine the information to get the most holistic picture before they undertake any final decisions or actions (Black and Koser, 1999; Collins, 1996).

With the emergence and dissemination of mobile phones and the internet, social networks can be extended through social media to encompass both strong and weak ties, and diversify the sources of information available to refugees and forced migrants (Gillespie et al, 2016). In addition, it can ensure that the social ties with those left behind in the home country can be maintained. The use of mobile phones can result in both positive and negative outcomes. For example, depending on the quality of the information disseminated and the ability and knowledge to verify it, refugees can use social media to ensure that their decisions are well-informed (Gillespie et al, 2016; Wall et al, 2017). In addition, being directly and instantaneously in touch with family and friend back home ensures that the information they have on the situation in the country of origin is reliable, uncorrupted, and relevant.

The negative outcome of mobile phone usage among refugees comes from two dimensions. First, the inability to distinguish between reliable and unreliable information can have dire consequences that could put the refugees' lives at risk and make them vulnerable to exploitation. In addition, it makes it easier for state and non-state actors to survey and monitor refugees' mobility and actions through the digital footprint that they leave behind (Gillespie et al, 2016). While some literature strands claim that mobile phones have 'revolutionized'

the way that refugees are exposed to and spread information, others find that these claims are exaggerated since the infrastructure to make use of this technology is not always available to refugees, and when it is, it can create social divides and facilitate the spread of misinformation (Gillespie et al, 2016).

#### *2.4.2 Welfare and the sustainability of return*

While in theory repatriation is the most desirable outcome for all stakeholders, this is true for the home country and the refugee community itself only if certain conditions are in place. The process of repatriation not only affects returning refugees but also the communities that they will be returning to. As a result, sustainability takes on two dimensions; the first is that of the returnees themselves, whether conditions are in place to allow them to stay long-term in their home country and reintegrate with the communities that they have left. The second dimension is the welfare of the home country and of the communities to which repatriates are returning to, whether they can reabsorb and make use of the different types of capital that returnees bring with them.

As will be discussed in the next section, return to any of the areas of conflict in the Arab world is not sustainable at this stage. Different reports, especially on Iraq and Syria, show that even the most basic dimension of repatria-

tion sustainability – the physical dimension – is not feasible, with a proportion of the returnees becoming re-displaced once the dormant conflicts reignite. This is not surprising given the continuing nature of the conflict. Despite that, especially in the case of Syrian refugees, repatriation is happening at an accelerating rate.

The welfare of repatriates on returning to their home country is subject to the sustainability of return. There are several dimensions to this sustainability, the most basic of which is the physical dimension; settling at home without being re-displaced after return. The other dimensions of return are socio-economic, which refers to the livelihood and living conditions of returnees and, finally, political dimensions which reflects security and access to services (Black et al, 2004; Fransen, 2017). The success of return on all these dimensions are subject to the demographic of the returning refugees, the situation that they left in the country of asylum, and the situation they are returning to (Black et al, 2004). Measuring the sustainability of return entails comparing the conditions of those who returned with those who were left behind.

Black and Gent (2004) and Black et al (2004) find some demographic characteristics that are linked with sustainability of repatriation. For example, being young and male is correlated with a desire to re-emigrate, as does being coerced to return from

the country of asylum prematurely. Those with more education and with a job are also less likely to want to re-emigrate and have higher income levels, providing evidence of socio-economic integration in the home country. The same is true for those who receive assistance and those who have a secure status abroad.

When it comes to the conditions in the home country, factors such as access to public and social services, housing, education and security all contribute to the sustainability of return. In addition, having links with the host countries after returning may help in the socio-economic dimension of sustainability through providing access to diverse sources of livelihood, such as remittances. It is worth noting that this study was conducted in a post-conflict scenario. If the home country is still subject to bouts of violence, lack of security will be the determining factor for sustainable return or lack thereof.

Repatriation can lead to varying outcomes for the home country and receiving communities, again, depending on the conditions of the homeland and the returnees. In the best-case scenario, returnees can be an important asset for post-conflict reconstruction and the re-establishment of socio-political structures and institutions. This so-called returnee capital comes from the skills and expertise of returnees, their economic and political power, and their unique position in attracting

international development and humanitarian assistance (Helling, 2007).

But this best-case scenario is only feasible if some factors are present in the home country. These include laws and regulations, such as property rights and housing, political settlements, such as disarmament, but also the attitudes and actions of other actors involved, including the state and the receiving community (Black and Gent, 2004; Helling, 2007). The last is especially relevant when it comes to shifting gender roles in exile and how they are perceived by receiving communities that are likely to be more conservative (Jallow, 2004).

## 2.5 What does this mean for Arab repatriation?

The previous sections mapped out the most important factors that enter the decision-making processes of refugees on whether or not to return home. In addition, it provided an overview of how information crucial to the decision-making process is spread across refugee communities with the absence of trust in official information sources as well as the question of how return can be sustainable for refugees, receiving communities, and the host country.

In this section, a review of studies conducted on Arab refugees and repatriates will be sum-

marized to see which of the aforementioned considerations are the most relevant in determining return. While the factors considered in the previous section are the most universally applicable, context will inevitably lead to diverging experiences. This section will encompass the experience of Arab refugees from Yemen, Iraq and Syria with a focus on Syrian refugees since they constitute the majority of those displaced in the region. It will start by briefly outlining the actions of other actors involved, namely the UNHCR, host countries, the international community, and home countries, after which the experience of the refugees themselves will be discussed.

### 2.5.1 Stakeholders

To date, the UNHCR has not declared any of these three Arab countries safe for return. For Yemen and Syria, it recommends that states suspend forcible return to the country (UNHCR, 2015, 2017b). As for Iraq, it places a caveat on suspension of forcible return with 'Iraqis who originate from areas of Iraq that are affected by military action, remain fragile and insecure after having been retaken from ISIS, or remain under control of ISIS' (UNHCR, 2016). Despite the straightforward tone of these declarations, mounting burdens on neighboring countries and pressure from donor states have put the UNHCR in a difficult position: on

the one hand, there is a need to appease funding states that want a quick solution for the refugee crises; and on the other, its mandate to protect the displaced means it cannot endorse return (Crisp, 2017). The compromise is to plan subtly for return while at the same time upholding that it is unsafe at this stage. In Iraq, for example, the UNHCR provides limited repatriation packages for those who express a desire to return (Harlid et al, 2015). As for Syria, it is taking preparatory steps and scaling up its operations inside the country 'in anticipation' of voluntary repatriation (Crisp, 2017; Marks, 2018)

As for host countries, their reactions to the presence of refugees depend on domestic and international pressures, which, more often than not, does not yield 'a rationally evolved refugee policy' (Jacobsen, 1996). In the case of Syrian refugees, both Turkey and Lebanon called for the return of refugees, with Lebanon undertaking explicit policies to discourage Syrians from staying (Muasher and Yahya, 2019). Jordan, on the other hand, maintained that it would neither encourage nor discourage repatriation for Syrian refugees (Muasher and Yahya, 2019). But there are reports of Jordan forcibly returning some refugees to Syria without a valid reason or a chance to challenge their removal (Human Rights Watch, 2017). As for Iraqis in Jordan, they are treated as 'guests'; perceived by the government as temporary residents

who will be returning to Iraq and, as a result, have an unclear status that makes it difficult for them to work (Dockery, 2017). Iraqis in Syria are not faring better; according to one report, they're 'virtually prisoners in the [refugee] camp' (Internal Displacement Monitor, 2018). Finally, for Yemeni refugees, Djibouti has allowed free movement and work permits, but the country is facing its own problems of poverty and deprivation (Adow, 2017).

The reaction from the European Union and the United States to refugees from all three Arab countries has been to find and push for a quick solution (Crisp, 2017; Harper, 2008). Funding for host countries in the region is expensive despite not meeting the needs, and it was made clear, especially by the United States, that resettlement is not an option (Crisp, 2017). While these actions do not directly endorse repatriation, they consciously leave no other solution even as the home countries remain unsafe.

Finally, the last stakeholders in the refugee crises are the Arab home countries themselves. With the war in Yemen continuing, it is difficult to talk about a unified policy or rhetoric about Yemeni refugees. As for the Iraqi government, it recently started undertaking steps to encourage refugees explicitly to repatriate through financial incentives and compensations (Harlid et al, 2015). The rhetoric of the Syrian government is to encourage repa-

triation, but policies put in place regarding property rights and mobility within Syria implicitly discourage return (Muasher and Yahya, 2019).

### 2.5.2 Refugees

After discussing the main reason for return at the beginning of this chapter, this section will discuss the main reasons for not returning. It is worth reiterating that simply reversing refugees' concerns is unlikely to lead to mass return as every household/individual situation is different. Therefore, this literature survey will help to assess the most important obstacles to return.

Starting with Yemeni refugees in Djibouti, the biggest concern mentioned by news reports is security: beyond the general security in the country, refugees – especially young men – are worried about mandatory conscription in one of the fighting factions (Adow, 2017). As for Iraqi refugees, the main hindrance for their return is the continuing and episodic nature of the conflict, confiscation and loss of property, as well as fear of ethnic or religious persecution (ICMC, 2013; Internal Displacement Monitor, 2018). In several studies conducted on Iraqi refugees in Jordan, the idea of returning home is no longer on the table even in the face of deteriorating economic conditions. This is especially the case for minority Christians, who do not think it is safe for them to go back home, but it is also true for for-

mer Baathists who fear persecution (Internal Displacement Monitor, 2018; Majeed, 2018). Majeed (2018), for example, describes the response of an Iraqi ex-officer in the military 'Thus, when I asked him if he had returned since then, or if he wishes to return, he cynically emphasized that there is nothing for him to return there anymore; neither a house, nor anything of the symbolic and material past that once marked his history, identity, or status.'

In the case of Syrian refugees, studies conducted on intentions to return show that ties to the homeland are still intact. As mentioned, the UNHCR (2018a) finds that 76% of Syrian refugees in neighboring country express a desire to go back at some point. But 85% of them do not think it is feasible to do so within the next 12 months. The reasons they give are the lack of safety and security in Syria, livelihood opportunities, and housing. The 11% who are undecided on whether they want to return one day mention security improvements, desire for political change, as well as access to basic services as conditions for return. Finally, the 13% who do not wish to return at all say that the main reasons are safety, concern over property, and scarcity of livelihood opportunities. This shows that all three groups have almost identical concerns regarding return. The reason some express reluctance or refusal to return is therefore likely to be an issue of lack of optimism regarding concrete change in the future

rather than a desire to stay in the host countries.

While frustration with the living situation in host countries is expressed time and time again by both Syrian and Iraqi refugees, it is usually expressed with a caveat about the impossibility of return. For some refugees, going home is synonymous with imprisonment or death so they prefer taking their chances in the host countries even with the deteriorating economic conditions. This is expressed by an Iraqi refugee in Jordan who was interviewed by Majeed (2018):

‘... [She] recounted frequently to me, often noting as justification of why she would never return to Iraq ‘Wallah I would rather die here and live in the street begging rather than return after everything that has happened to us.’’

This sentiment is echoed by Syrian refugees in Lebanon, and indeed seems to reflect the reality of the situation. According to Yehya et al (2018):

‘Other refugees, particularly youths, felt pressure to go home because of the systematic humiliation they faced in Lebanon. But several refugees recounted stories of young men who had returned to Syria out of despair, only to die because of forced conscription or conflict in their areas. In reflection, Aisha, from Homs, asked laconically, ‘Would anyone walk toward death on their feet?’’

That is not to say that poverty and bad living conditions do not

drive refugees to repatriate. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, poorer Iraqi households had to go back to Iraq at the onset of the Syrian civil war. Similarly, according to Kvittingen et al (2018), poorer Syrian refugees in Jordan without social networks or assets were more likely to return home, especially with the recent increase in vulnerability. But it is clear that at this stage, the bad living conditions in host countries are not enough to push for mass return. This is because going home for refugees means worse living conditions, internal displacement, persecution, or death.

This brings us to the extensive report by Yahya et al (2018) which is based on focus group discussions conducted in Lebanon and Jordan with Syrian refugees in 2017. On asking refugees what the main obstacle to return is, interviewed Syrians overwhelmingly responded that their most important concern is security and safety. According to one refugee interviewed by Yahya et al (2018):

‘We will return to Syria if the regime is gone and there is security, which means there is no killing and no bombings.’

The interesting aspect of this quote, and indeed many other responses highlighted in the report, is that refugees make it clear that safety and security to them is interrelated with political factors. Most agree that safety means an end to aerial bombings, sieges,

and checkpoints and express their belief that violence should only be used by 'legitimate authority'. Political considerations are, therefore, intertwined aspect of security, with majority of the refugees saying that they will not go back without a political settlement to end the conflict even if livelihood opportunities are available. On the other hand, they do indicate that they would return in the case of political settlement even with minimal economic or livelihood opportunities. According to Yahya et al (2018):

'A large number of refugees also indicated that even if their homes were destroyed, they would still return to Syria if security and political conditions allowed it and jobs were available. They insisted they would pitch a tent on the rubble of their homes and rebuild them.'

But there are diverging opinions on the specificities of the political conditions for return. Different fractions of the Syrian refugee population, depending on political affiliation, have diverging ideas on what constitutes a desirable political settlement. For example, some of the refugees stress the need for a regime change without specifying the alternative, while others, especially those who are educated and living in Europe, stress the need for sustainable democracy (Kaya and Orchard, 2019). On the other hand, for some pro-regime refugees, the political settlement

constitutes the consolidation of power in the hands of the current regime, without which they will not return. Therefore, while political settlement is seen as necessary for mass return, there is no agreement on the nature of that political settlement.

The gender dimension to the conditions of return shows that women are less likely to compromise and express a desire for return. Consistent with the literature, women particularly express the need for basic services, in terms of education, health, and housing. On the other hand, young men express fears of mandatory conscription in the army on returning, especially with new legislative decree that makes it harder for them to go back. Finally, the report mentions refugees' reliance on informal information sources to gauge the situation back home. This is especially relevant when it comes to the situation in areas of origin or whether refugees will be allowed back to the area they hail from as well as access to land and property after leaving and the procedures they need to follow in order to get them back (Yahya et al, 2018). Unlike most other conflicts with an ethnic dimension, the ethnic/religious majority are equally wary of returning as the ethnic minorities with worries of destruction and lack of optimism about the future of Syria (Yahya et al, 2018).

While the focus of this report is on refugees in a neighboring

host country, one relevant study on the intention of return was conducted in Germany with interesting findings summarized in the Table 2.7 (Kaya and Orchard, 2019). In line with Yahya et al (2018) and UNHCR (2018a), the analysis of the Syrian refugee survey shows that the vast majority of them want to return at some point (90%) and that safety and security is the most important concern, especially for those who have been subject to

violence. The similarity in priorities between those in neighboring host countries and those in Germany despite the different living conditions further supports the widespread desire to go back home and the importance of pull factors in making it happen. As mentioned, however, educated refugees living in Germany particularly stress the importance of sustainable democracy as a condition for return.

**Table 2.7: How does Syria have to change in the future so you could have the option to go back from Germany?<sup>73</sup>**

Response	Response percentage
War has to stop	67.8%
Regime change	51.5%
ISIS leaves country	43.8%
Democracy with free and equal election	41.7%
Reconciliation between religions and ethnic groups	28.8%
Economic situation gets better	25.9%
Autonomy for Kurds	16.1%
I don't want to go back to Syria	8.4%

The aforementioned studies are very useful in highlighting the main concerns that Syrian refugees have against return. Both emphasize how security, in terms of personal persecution and continuing violence, plays the most important role in deterring return. But it also highlights how the security and the political dimension are intertwined; the po-

litical implication of repatriation is not lost on refugees and they see their safety as conditional on political changes. Property rights and services, two factors that are especially concerning for women, are also extensively mentioned as necessary conditions for return. While access to livelihood is also mentioned several times, it does not feature among the most important concerns. It is worth noting that with the increased

<sup>73</sup> Kaya and Orchard (2019)

hopelessness in any real political change in Syria, refugees in neighboring countries are becoming more open to the idea of resettlement and less optimistic about repatriation (Yahya et al, 2018). If this persists, the situation may start to mirror that of Iraqi refugees, who do not see returning home as an option anymore. Indeed, some refugees have begun expressing lost hope. According to Kvittingen et al (2018):

‘All waited to return to Syria pending safety but, as they ‘lost hope’ in a resolution to the conflict, their plans changed. A middle-aged Syrian man explained: At the beginning of the crisis, everyone was saying that there was still hope. That there was a solution, that the world wasn’t going to let it get to this point, or they were hopeful that things wouldn’t get this bad. No one

imagined that the crisis would go on this long.’

The biggest takeaway from this literature survey is that mass return is conditional on security, which is derived from political change, followed by economic concerns, most notably property rights. The question worth asking is to what extent is political change a necessary condition for return? If personal safety is guaranteed and the violence stops, will political settlement still be an essential condition for repatriation? The interviews seem to imply that the answer is yes, without a real political change there will be no mass return despite the harsh conditions in exile. But if this is no longer on the table, the best bet for return would rest on providing guarantee for personal safety of returnees and ensuring that their property rights are respected.

**Table 2.8: The necessary factors and conditions for return**

Priorities <sup>74</sup>	Safety and security (primary)	Political settlement (co-primary)	Economic drivers (secondary)
Refugees in Germany/Europe <sup>75</sup>	General safety	Sustainable democracy	Economic stability
Young male refugees	Fear of mandatory conscription	-	Livelihood opportunities
Female refugees	General safety	-	Need for property rights and provision of services
Ethnic minorities	Minority protection	Ambiguous	Property rights
Pro-Regime	General safety	Regime remains	-
Anti-Regime	General safety	Regime change	-

<sup>74</sup> Kaya and Orchard (2019)

<sup>75</sup> Kaya and Orchard (2019)

## 2.6 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been threefold. The first was to discuss the different aspects that factor into the decision to repatriate. The second was to introduce other dimensions of repatriation, namely networks and information-gathering and the sustainability of return. Finally, the lessons learned were applied to the case of refugees by providing an overview of news reports and surveys conducted on early repatriates and intentions for return.

Four dimensions to the decision-making process were discussed. The paradox of security concerns was addressed, as well as the political, economic, and social drivers for repatriation. A special focus was paid to households headed by women given their diverging experience. The approach was to consider refugees as purposive actors with a degree of autonomy that they exercise by comparing their situation in exile to the situation back home: only then will they make their decision to repatriate. The way information is gathered throughout refugee communities was also touched on, as well as the sustainability of the return encompassing the welfare of the refugees themselves and the home country.

On studying the experience of Arab refugees, various conclusions can be drawn. The first and most important is that return at this stage is not sustainable for Yemenis, Iraqis, or Syrians. For the case of Yemen, deteriorating economic conditions in Djibouti are nonetheless pushing for early repatriation. As for Iraqis, family reunification, the deteriorating security situation in Syria, and the bad socio-economic conditions in exile are all drivers for repatriation. For Syrians, the main motivation for return seems to be family reunions, but perceived improvement in the security situation also plays a role.

Finally, with the continuing conflicts in all three countries, it is no surprise that refugees mention security as the main condition for return. This not only takes the form of an end to the violence but also in sustainable peace and guaranteed individual safety. Consequently, this means that refugees to varying degrees – but from all three countries – are implicitly or explicitly conditioning their return on a concrete political settlement. Beyond that, property rights and access to shelter feature as the second-most important condition to return. The link between political settlements and repatriation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

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## CHAPTER 3

# Repatriation: scenarios for conflict resolution and reconstruction

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Devastating conflicts and state failure have followed the Arab uprisings of 2011 in some MENA countries. The Syrian war continues to displace Syrians, and with Western countries collectively resettling fewer Syrian refugees, there is intensifying pressure on the country's neighbors, which are already hosting millions of refugees amid high unemployment and regional instability. Yemen has endured the complete destruction of its economy, pushing its population to massive internal forced displacements and putting them at risk of starvation and disease. In Iraq, the eradication of the Islamic State came at great human cost, causing massive internal displacements; while in Libya, the successive armed conflicts have eroded the remaining state structures, which were already characterized at the beginning of the conflict by weakness or even complete absence.

At the same time, the global refugee crisis is arguably worse than ever. The Syrian civil war,

and the world's response, is a big part of that. Syria accounts for 24% of the world's 22,5 million refugees, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2018). What truly distinguishes the current refugee crisis is that nowadays refugees are likely to remain displaced for years or even decades, instead of being able either to return home or to be permanently resettled in a third country. While resettlement has always been relatively rare (only 1% of global refugees get resettled – UNHCR, 2010), it is most likely to be used in cases where it is evident that the situation in refugees' home countries will never get better, and that they need to stop waiting and make a new life.

While none of these conflicts has yet fully ended, attention is increasingly being placed on the emerging needs of repatriation and reconstruction. For example, long-term settlement of Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan entails considerable financial commitments from the

international donor community since the burden on Lebanon and Jordan to cater for Syrian refugees has surpassed their financial capacities. Despite the UN pledging \$12 billion for host countries in 2016 and an additional \$6 billion in 2017, the disbursed amount has fallen as short as 54% of pledged funding for 2015, 46% in 2016 and 43% in 2017 for Lebanon, whereas for Jordan, it was only 62% in 2016 and 65% in 2017 (UNSCOL, 2018). In these circumstances, refugees come under mounting pressure to repatriate to Syria.

As for reconstruction, the UN Special Envoy has estimated a cost of \$250 billion to reconstruct Syria; the World Bank has estimated a cost of \$40 billion to reconstruct Yemen; while for Libya it is not so easy to estimate a cost as the country is enduring a new outbreak of violence between the forces of Marshal Khalifa Haftar, self-proclaimed leader of the Libyan National Army, and the Government of National Accord under Prime Minister Fayeza Sarraj, the authority recognized by the international community.

This chapter discusses the very basic notion and literature of political settlements and reconstruction plans in the MENA region, and their implications for refugee repatriation and resettlement. There is a special focus on Syria, which has been one of the most devastating conflicts in recent history, with considerable spillovers onto neighboring countries.

Credible political settlement scenarios will be compared to the de facto situation, with subsequent discussion of different reconstruction plans. The European Union (EU) and the United States are generally leaning towards pushing for repatriation; the US government has made it clear that resettlement in the United States is not an option, and US and EU humanitarian aid going to host countries is expensive and endless (Crisp, 2017). The UNHCR takes the view that it can neither promote nor facilitate the return of MENA refugees, especially Syrians, but given its dependence on Western donors, the organization has been engaged in discreet planning for repatriation (UNHCR 2018b). This chapter will also shed light on the linkages between peace agreements (as a proxy for political settlements) and the share of returned refugees on the ground.

By developing a better understanding of the literature on repatriation and political settlements, alongside the different post-conflict scenarios for Syria, this chapter will elucidate enabling and inhibiting factors for repatriation and sustainability of return. Importantly, given the varying degree of cohesion between refugees and host communities, as well as the role of international agreements, the outcomes may be different for refugees in neighboring countries and those in the West.

### 3.1 Repatriation of refugees and their rights

In this section, we review the literature on refugees and state-building through refugee repatriation. While taking account of the fact that refugee repatriation is not only the preferred option by the international community, but also the only solution to mass exoduses, this section argues that refugee repatriation is an opportunity to build more inclusive states that guarantee their citizens safety over the long term, given that ‘repatriation must be understood not in terms of physical return but as a process of political rapprochement between citizen, community and state’ (Long, 2012). The section also provides an overview of the approaches that the international community, particularly the EU and the United States, have taken to refugees and reconstruction of the four conflict countries.

In order to develop a better understanding of the impact of repatriation on the rights of refugees, and to recognize that the term repatriation means more than simply a return to a refugee’s home, one needs to refer to the definition embedded in the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. This defines a refugee as ‘an individual who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group of political opinion, is unable, or owing

to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country’ (UN General Assembly, 1951).

The assumption of refugee status entails the necessary loss of protection for the refugee from the country of his/her nationality. Under normal circumstances, a social contract would prevail, and this relationship between the state and the citizen would not have broken. Therefore, the concept of repatriation implies the necessary restoration of protection and the rebuilding of a social contract between the refugee and the state (Long, 2012).

Refugee flows are caused in many occasions by the loss of state protection on grounds of group-based identities, whether national, political, ethnic, religious, or cultural. Whenever this is the case, repatriation can become instrumental in state-building as a holistic process of restoring the balance between citizen, nation, and state (Crisp, 2001).

In recent years, the UNHCR’s repatriation policy has embraced the importance of post-conflict state-building. To that end, greater emphasis has been given to repatriation programs that acknowledge the long-term complexity of reintegration and the sustainability goal in returnees’ reintegration (UN General Assembly 1999). Further on, it has to be noted that the UNHCR has asserted that the root causes for refugee fleeing are violence and persecution and not poverty (Crisp,

2001). Hence, it is worth considering the political dimension of state-building, and how the latter can be addressed through a process of refugee repatriation.

From a theoretical point of view, the anchor of refugee protection is the principle of *non-refoulement*, as laid down in Article 33 of the UN Refugee Convention of 1951, which entails that 'no contracting state shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened.'

The contribution that the principle of voluntary repatriation makes to refugee protection is obvious. Yet it is equally clear that the limitations such a principle places on repatriation is frequently resented by states. Host countries are often impatient to see uninvited refugees leave. Countries of origin are sometimes impatient to see them return and signal the end of conflict. Donor states are eager to bring an end to the long-term refugee assistance programs that they fund (Crisp and Long, 2016). In addition, Chimni (1993) argues that the contemporary modality of repatriation is underpinned by the relationship between voluntariness, conceived as an essential protection against *refoulement*, and safety, which represents the most objective standard for assessing the suitability of return.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a number of refugee populations – for example, the Ethiopians in

Djibouti and the Cambodians in Thailand – were all subjected to coerced repatriations, which were at least partly condoned by the UNHCR and the wider international community (Crisp and Long, 2016). These practices were neither founded on standards of voluntariness nor of safety. In this regard, faced with the increasing number of refugees in the world during that period of time, the Executive Committee Conclusion 29 of 1983, called on states to facilitate the work of the UNHCR 'in creating conditions favorable to and promoting voluntary repatriation, which whenever appropriate and feasible is the most desirable solution for refugee problems' (UNHCR 1983), which triggered mounting pressure for refugees to repatriate.

The UNHCR frequently plays an ambiguous role in such negotiations, seeking to uphold internationally recognized legal and ethical principles of which it is the custodian, while simultaneously meeting the concerns of these stakeholders. In the worst cases, the UN refugee agency has capitulated to such pressures and actively engaged in repatriation operations that are far from safe or voluntary (Crisp and Long, 2016). Despite the most recent evidence of repatriation focusing on post-1980 developments, the latter has been the most preferred solution to tackle the challenges posed by refugees among the international community as stated by the League of Nations as early as 1922.

Refugee return is likely to vary from one country to another and from one region to another within different countries. It will depend on conditions in the areas of origin, on the nature of the political bargain that ends the conflict, and the willingness of the ruling elite to allow populations it may consider politically hostile at best, to come back to the country or to move back to areas of interest. Return may well mean secondary displacement, as refugees are unable to return to destroyed homes or to prove their ownership of confiscated property (Lynch and Yahya, 2018).

If the 1990s was a decade of repatriation, the last 15 years are best described as ‘a decade of protracted emergencies’ (UNHCR, 2015). Millions of new refugees have been created as a result of intense violence in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen. At the same time, longstanding conflicts in countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, and Sudan have gone unresolved (Crisp and Long, 2016).

Whenever millions of people have been dispossessed from their properties, driven into exile at home or abroad due to armed conflicts, which have unfolded across multiple levels, reconstruction can never be separated from politics, and it will never be solely triggered by economic or humanitarian needs. Reconstruc-

tion must become an opportunity to build more inclusive societies whereby citizens’ safety is guaranteed as a means of refugee repatriation.

### 3.2 Reconstruction: definitions, scenarios, and impact on refugees

Discussion of reconstruction often begins from economic needs assessment and templates derived from international best practices, rather than through engagement with the affected individuals or with the actual realities on the ground especially in the aftermath of civil conflicts. In fact, reconstruction will be deeply intertwined with the reconfiguration of power relations in societies emerging from conflict (Lynch and Yahya, 2018).

As with political settlements, reconstruction has to start from the nationals, or at least they should have the most important role in deciding the direction of reconstruction. Some might infer that reconstruction means a rebuilding of the status quo ante, something that might be neither normatively desirable nor politically possible. Others might see the push to begin thinking about reconstruction as a political drive to force an end to any viable support for the conflict itself.

For example, European and US discussions about how they might ‘win’ the reconstruction of

Syria could be a face-saving way to move on from more than a half decade of attempting to win through war. The Assad regime views calls for reconstruction as a way of signaling the end of conflict and the beginning of his international rehabilitation (Lynch and Yahya, 2018). Some might also see a focus on reconstruction as a way to avoid dealing with the difficult issues of responsibility, especially in contexts such as Syria where the key party to the conflict has been called out for forced population transfers and for crimes against humanity. A focus on physical rebuilding in such a context implies that any justice mechanism, including transitional justice or the articulation of shared memories, can and will take a back seat to the economic opportunities and political gambits that define post-conflict. Critically, such a focus is likely to undermine international norms of accountability and justice, and will serve to reward those accused of such crimes (Lynch and Yahya, 2018).

Reconstruction in places like Syria is particularly complicated by the questions of how assistance can be given to a regime that was in large part responsible for the country's devastation and has been implicated in war crimes. International actors today are struggling with whether and how to support reconstruction for Syrian communities while ensuring that this does not end up privileging political supporters of the regime. Indeed, recon-

struction funding should not inadvertently empower the Syrian regime. Starting on a small scale in regions that are not under regime control could provide a better alternative for local rebuilding efforts. Any funding should also be conditional on the return of refugees to their homes and access to their property. A vetting process should be established to ensure that local entities receiving international funding have not been involved in war crimes and are not regime fronts.

As we witness considerable disagreements among international actors on how to end these armed conflicts, the question of where reconstruction funding will come from is also very uncertain. It is clear that the important role of the international community and international donors in the reconstruction cannot be taken for granted. The aim of international intervention is to provide support to establish legitimate political authority that is 'democratic, accountable and self-sustained' (Bojicic-Dzelilovic et al, 2016). The state's capability to assume its functions in an equitable, impartial, and effective way guarantees the exit of external actors. But reconstruction history points to some contradictory and very complex experiences and dilemmas. As the international community represents different stakeholders, a more complex approach to their intervention needs to take account of norms such as sovereignty, accountability, legitimacy, and ownership

while providing needed support for local authorities. Striking examples are the US interventions in both Iraq and Afghanistan in the past two decades.

Coming back to the case of Syria, on the one hand, Russia and its regional ally Iran do not have the financial strength to contribute significantly to the rebuilding (of what they were complicit in destroying). On the other hand, European and US assistance, even if plausible, would be subject to a post-conflict political settlement, which in Syria, for example, is far away. While China's President Xi Jinping pledged \$20 billion in loans to revive the Middle East in 2018 (Reuters 2018), it is very unlikely that this financial package will be entirely spent in the reconstruction of countries like Libya, Syria, and Yemen. Only the Gulf countries have the financial strength to fund large-scale reconstruction interventions, even though they are parties in the conflicts of these countries, and any interventions would be eventually subject to political compensations.

Hence, smooth transition to a reconstruction phase is rare. One can argue that in a post-conflict era, norms of sovereignty and accountability have already been affected. Moreover, an *ex-ante* status will lead to failure of the state again as new political realities that cannot be ignored would have emerged. Therefore, a hybrid model of post-liberal peace for intervention could be pro-

posed, which defines a bottom-up approach that is more attentive to local needs and structures, and which defines the relationship between the local population and the international actors (Bojicic-Dzelilovic et al, 2014). In fact, the very term 'globalization' makes it almost impossible to achieve reconstruction without the support of the international community (Luckham, 2003).

While a 'neutral' role could be played by organization such as the UN (not always a clear orientation) under their responsibility of observing humanitarian law, and to prevent human losses (or abuses), it will be unrealistic to ignore the interests of major international players in post-conflict reconstructions and what it involves to balance the powers: the United States, the EU, Russia, Iran, China and rich Middle Eastern countries.

The role of the international community remains an important part of reconstruction, not only in terms of infrastructure and other physical considerations, but also for rebuilding the state and its institutions. The interest of these communities in providing support to post-conflict resolution is rooted in their demand for political stabilization, but also for gaining power *vis-à-vis* counterparts.

In this regard, and in the context of a post-conflict political transition, a safe and sustainable return of refugees often requires a framework that acknowledges the political roots of the armed

conflict rather than just its humanitarian dimension. To this end, safety and security can only be guaranteed through a political process that creates inclusive governance mechanisms, ends criminal impunity, and facilitates reintegration, demilitarization, and access to justice.

While this process will take time given the existing fragmentation within post-conflict scenarios, efforts to prepare refugees for a return have to begin in advance. These could include providing legal assistance to inform refugees of their rights and to help resolve the many anticipated local disputes. They could also include establishing a network of trusted community mediators.

Above all, refugees' right to a voluntary return must be respected. To encourage host countries to adopt policies that secure the basic needs of refugees, international support must include both humanitarian aid and economic investments geared towards job creation for host country nationals and refugees.

### *3.2.1. The EU and US approaches to refugees, repatriation, and reconstruction*

While many refugees of previous waves (up to the end of the 1990s) could reach Europe where they were hosted under a variety of statuses (as refugees or migrants, temporary or long-term), only a tiny proportion of those fleeing conflicts in the 2000s were admitted to Europe.

Amid the conflicts examined in this chapter, it is Syria and Iraq, and to a lesser extent Libya, that are the ones whose refugees have spilled over into the EU. Currently, the EU and its member states' external responses to the Syrian refugee crisis are to end the violence and support efforts to bring about political change in Syria, while simultaneously providing immediate humanitarian assistance to refugees and the internally displaced. These two measures, one political and the other humanitarian, are related and both, directly or indirectly, assist the Syrian people by concurrently addressing their immediate and future needs, the former being life sustaining aid and the latter being a viable nation to return to once the conflict subsides (Fargues and Fandrich, 2012).

The number of asylum applications from citizens of non-EU member states has gradually increased in EU countries since 2008, but it reached a peak with 1,392,610 total applications in 2015 and 1,260,900 in 2016, up from 662,165 total applications in 2014 and 712,200 in 2017 (Eurostat, 2019). With the number of applications in 2015 and 2016 more than doubling the total number recorded in 2013 and 2014, this is an indication of the magnitude of the refugee wave in those two years in the EU.

Germany received most of these applications with 476,459 total applications in 2015, despite

a large influx of about 890,000 arrivals that same year. In the year after (2016), Germany registered as many as 745,545 asylum applications, despite only about 280,000 of those concerned being new arrivals, while the remaining number were formal registrations of protection claims expressed in 2015. Italy and France were also among the top destinations for asylum-seekers, receiving 59,165 and 50,840 applications respectively in 2015, and 123,482 and 85,244 applications respectively in 2016. Sweden witnessed a drastic decrease in the number of asylum-seekers from over 162,000 in 2015 to 28,939 in 2016 after the introduction of internal border controls from December 2015 (Asylum Information Database, 2016 and 2017).

Of those seeking asylum within the EU, Syria has been the main country of citizenship from 2013 onwards. For example, in 2016 in Germany, a total number of 288,866 applications were received from Syrian nationals and 97,162 applications from Iraqi nationals. Syrians were among the top three nationalities of asylum-seekers in 2016 in Germany, Greece, Austria, Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland, Netherlands, Bulgaria, Belgium, Spain, Finland, Norway, Cyprus, Croatia, Ireland, Malta, Slovenia and Serbia, while Iraqis were among the top three nationalities in 2016 in Germany, Greece, Austria, UK, Sweden, Bulgaria, Belgium, Finland, Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia (Asylum Information Database, 2017).

‘Nobody will win neither the war nor the peace without a negotiated political solution’, EU High Representative Federica Mogherini said at an EU side event on the margins of the UN General Assembly (EEAS, 2018). The Brussels Conference supporting the future of Syria and the region in September 2018 highlighted the need to uphold a political transition necessary to allow the safe return of refugees, a goal that the EU supports, and provide a stage for Syrian women, youth, and civil society to build the future of Syria. ‘Every Syrian dreams to go back home. And we can only support this dream’, the High Representative said, thanking countries hosting refugees (EEAS, 2018).

But, Mogherini added, only a tiny percentage of refugees are willing to return to Syria in the current circumstances: ‘Syria is not safe for them to return. Still today, most Syrians simply do not have a home to go back to. Their properties are being confiscated, and many would risk forced conscription or unlawful arrest’. Europeans are willing to contribute to the reconstruction, but a political process must be firmly under way, the High Representative said. ‘Most Syrians do not want to go back to a country where there is no accountability and where political detainees are still in jail’, she added. ‘We discussed ways in which we can increase even more our humanitarian assistance for Syrians, including inside Syria, while still

keeping a very clear position on the fact that EU money for reconstruction in Syria will only come once the political process will be firmly underway under UN auspices', Mogherini said, speaking to the press in Vienna (EEAS, 2018).

In the last years of US President Barack Obama's administration, the United States resettled tens of thousands of Syrian refugees, as well as resettling many refugees from elsewhere: about 70,000 a year from 2013 to 2015, and 85,000 a year in 2016, of which 1,682 were Syrian refugees in 2014, 12,587 in 2015 and 6,557 in 2016 (Refugee Processing Center, 2019). When Donald Trump took office in January 2017, that number plummeted, partly due to the 120-day 'refugee ban' that prevented nearly any refugees from being brought into the United States over the summer of 2017, and partly because of specific scrutiny facing refugees from several countries, including Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. Indeed, there was the original travel ban, which banned all refugees and all arrivals from Syria. Even after that ban was put on hold in court, refugee admissions were stop-and-go for months.

In December 2016, the last full month of the Obama administration, 1,318 Syrian refugees were admitted to the United States (Refugee Processing Center, 2019), whereas in February 2017, the first full month of the Trump administration, the num-

bers decreased to 282 and only kept dropping from there. The 120-day refugee ban officially expired in October 2017, but was replaced with a pause on refugee admissions for 11 countries, including Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, while the US government reviewed vetting procedures. Admissions for Syria restarted at the end of January 2018, and nine refugees have been admitted since then (Refugee Processing Center, 2019).

These restrictions on refugee admissions laid down by the Trump administration, which has set the lowest refugee target in modern history with no more than 45,000, has also been complemented with vocal expressions of little support for large-scale US economic assistance to rebuilding MENA states.

### **3.3. Review of the literature on political settlements**

In this section, we review the most recent literature on political settlements and elite pacts, and how it helps to understand the complex issue of group-based identity, inclusivity in post-conflict political processes, diversity and pluralism within societies in conflict. In the absence of many examples of political settlements in the MENA region, this section examines the cases of Algeria and Lebanon, both of which underwent processes of national reconciliation after devastating

civil wars, in an attempt to draw a typology of political settlements applicable to the four case studies.

There is a large body of research literature that has used the term ‘political settlement’ throughout contemporary history. It first appeared in the works of the sociologist Joseph Melling (1991) in his study of industrial capitalism and the welfare state in England. In spite of no precise definition of the concept being used, Melling refers to the term to describe the political processes that shaped the emergence of social welfare policies. An early reference to political settlements within development studies can be found in Khan (1995), where the author analyses the performance of institutions by means of the ‘inherited balance of power or political settlement’. The concept was later defined by Khan as the ‘distribution of organizational and political power between competing groups and classes’.

The concept of political settlement did not gain significant attention in development studies until it was later used by Fritz and Menocal (2007). These authors disagree with the definition used by Khan and offer an interpretation of settlements as a ‘negotiated agreement (at least in principle) binding together state and society and providing the necessary legitimacy for those who govern over those who are ruled’. The political settlement establishes the foundation for basic state functions: public admin-

istration, security, and the rule of law. According to these authors, a political settlement is not a single event but rather a continuing political process. Furthermore, settlements can adapt to accommodate changes in the relationship between states and societies that arise due to different needs and emerging demands.

The idea of a political settlement as a negotiated agreement between states and societies is rather abstract in its construction, and it is difficult to identify any solid empirical or historical cases where such an agreement, or ‘social contract’ between the state and society, can be shown to have taken place (Laws, 2012). Moreover, there is an implicit assumption that an agreement between state and society features a notion of a unified society, when societies tend to be diverse and plural with different social, economic, and political groupings.

In fact, political settlements differ from peace-building models, in the way that the latter need to reflect the real balance of power to avoid falling back into conflict. In post-conflict situations, there is often a trade-off between stability and elite buy-in on the one hand and socially inclusive settlements on the other (Plonski and Walton, 2018).

The latter also ignores the reality that not all groups share a common relationship with or have comparable access to the state, nor do they necessarily enjoy comparable civil, political

or economic rights (Laws, 2012). Distinct ethnic, religious, social, and gender groups within a society might be excluded to different degrees from participation in formal institutions of the state. Hence, these authors believe that it is not so obvious that, unlike in the opinion of Khan, all societies can be conceived of as single entities, and therefore, be party to a negotiated agreement with the state.

Considering the fractured nature of all societies, particularly in developing countries, the international community, in the process of supporting or brokering political settlements, favors inclusive and power-sharing processes, combined with political participation of previously excluded social groups by engaging with pro-development factions and coalitions (Parks and Cole, 2010). Therefore, a comprehensive definition of political settlements has to take account of the divisive nature of societies, particularly those that are developing.

This concept of inclusiveness constitutes a significant axiom of the literature on political settlements (Whaites, 2008; Barnes, 2009; Parks and Cole, 2010), even though Parks and Cole (2010) suggest that in some cases, the political exclusion of a particular group in a society can be a key factor in explaining the stability of a particular settlement, at least for a certain period of time. When excluded groups have sufficient numbers and resources, they are likely to challenge the terms

of the political settlement from which they are excluded, and its distributional implications. For example, Tadros (2012) asserts that politically and economically excluded Egyptian youth were instrumental in eroding the political settlement under President Hosni Mubarak in 2011, in spite of their absence of elite representation. Arguably, there is a common understanding that the more exclusive and fractured a society might be, the more difficult it will be to forge inclusive and long-lasting political settlements (Parks and Cole, 2010), prompting an end to political conflicts and civil outbreaks. In this regard, the region discussed here is commonly characterized by these features.

To conclude, most of the above-mentioned authors assert that political settlements (a) should not be defined solely as a contract between states and societies; (b) they involve horizontal negotiations between contending elites, and vertical relationships between elites and their followers; (c) they should not necessarily be defined as a reflection of a common understanding between elites; (d) they influence the form, nature and performance of institutions; and (e) they can be more or less inclusive.

The research literature is full of well documented examples of political settlements that have been forged throughout recent history in different regions of the world, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia and Latin

America. But when assessing the reality in the MENA region, examples are scarce, despite the conspicuous evidence – past and present – of widespread political turmoil and conflict.

### *3.3.1 Political settlements in the MENA region*

This chapter could offer a few analyses of how political settlements have been forged in some MENA countries. Two cases, one from the Maghreb and the other from the Levant region, will be featured: Algeria and Lebanon. Particularly noteworthy is the absence of any mechanisms for transitional justice in most of the examples in the MENA region. There are no historical precedents in the region that entail meaningful transitional justice with the exception of Tunisia, where the parliament passed a dedicated law in December 2013, and to some degree Morocco. In the absence of historical reckoning for the perpetrated actions during an armed conflict, only impunity remains, with the consequence that lasting grievances and extremist options might prevail.

#### **3.3.1.1 Algeria**

Algeria endured a bloody civil war from 1991 to 2001 with an estimated 150,000 casualties, 7,000 disappeared, and \$20 billion of damages, according to the World Bank. From 1994, there were unsuccessful dialogue rounds between the regime and the Islamist insurgents, but only

from 1997 onwards did the peace-building process take a successful direction, as the Islamist insurgents moved to declare a unilateral ceasefire (Ghanem-Yazbeck, 2018). Major initiatives such as the Sant Egidio peace process in 1995 in Rome failed due to growing polarization between the two extremes in the dispute: the regime and the Islamists. In any case, the peace-building process facilitated the reintegration into society of around 15,000 fighters (Ghanem-Yazbeck, 2018). In addition, the reconciliation measures eased tensions in society so that Algerians could return to a relative normalcy.

In spite of a political settlement that contributed to ending the conflict and returning the country to peace and stability after a long decade of armed conflict, the regime under the presidency of Bouteflika neglected the war victims, thus preventing a process of bringing to justice various parties involved in atrocities and severe human rights violations (Martínez, 2004), beyond charters and decrees, all of them issued by state institutions. That was the case of the Civil Concord Law, which was adopted in 1999 after a referendum voted favorably by 98,6%, and which granted partial amnesty to former jihadists under the condition of arms dropping and no previous involvement in major massacres, in which case the law was offering reduced jail sentences. Likewise, in 2005, a new law, the Charter for Peace and National Reconcili-

ation exempted members of the security forces and pro-government militias from prosecution (Ghanem-Yazbeck, 2018). Similarly, it gave full immunity to members of the security forces, while it also established compensation for the victims of the war, including relatives of abducted victims and dead jihadists.

The political settlement that Algeria brokered during the last years (and in the aftermath) of the armed conflict was credible but incomplete. A strong state grip by a group of elites on economic resources (mainly oil) and political power created a clientelist structure (Werenfels, 2009). The induced amnesia about the root causes of the violence exerted by the different parties in conflict has neutralized any attempt at transitional justice during the reconciliation process, which has ended up producing grievances that persist to this day and which have eroded possibilities for further democratization. In addition, from the political perspective, such an experience, which was so much distanced from an ideal template, has prompted the activity of extremist movements, such as Al Qaeda, in the Islamic Maghreb within the territory of Algeria (Abadeer et al, 2018), while reducing the effectiveness of Algeria's moderate Islamist parties.

Algeria's civil war triggered a huge flow of internally displaced population. Indeed, while families fled insecurity during the first years of the Algerian crisis,

massacres of the civilian population from late 1996 onwards led to the first massive exodus of people towards the cities, where thousands were forced to move to the outskirts during summer and autumn 1997 (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2006). In this regard, there is no publicly available overview of the number of displaced. According to one newspaper, President Bouteflika said on one occasion that 1.5 million people had been displaced (Le Figaro, 2004). But this information seems to contradict a statement given a few days later by the minister of the interior, stating that only 500,000 people were internally displaced during the conflict (El Watan, 2004).

A great effort was necessary to revitalize the agricultural sector in order to secure a livelihood for the returning population. As part of the post-conflict resolution package, the government launched a rehabilitation program in rural areas to encourage internally displaced people and migrants to return to their villages. The authorities tried, for example, to repopulate villages by promising direct financial assistance to returnees as well as implementing programs to rehabilitate houses, increase employment, and revitalize the agricultural sector, which suffered during the 1990s. Nevertheless, as the procedures for the rehabilitation program were often delayed due to administrative mismanagement, the displaced population was discouraged from returning

to their home villages because living conditions in the countryside were even harder than in the towns, with no drinkable water, poor general infrastructure, and a lack of health facilities (El Watan, 2006). Overall, there is no collated information on the number of returns, apart from a reference in a speech given by President Boute-flika in April 2004, where he said that 700,000 of 1.5 million internally displaced had returned (Le Figaro, 2004).

### 3.3.1.2 Lebanon

Lebanon experienced a tragic and multifaceted war from 1975 until 1990, which resulted in the deaths of an estimated 120,000 people. Prior to the beginning of the conflict, various internal tensions inherent to the Lebanese system and multiple regional developments contributed to the breakdown of governmental authority and the outbreak of civil strife in 1975 (Khalidi, 1979). The cause of the Lebanese civil war was multiple, but neither exclusively for endogenous nor exclusively for exogenous factors, but a combination of both. Precisely, the war ended at a specific historical moment when movements towards internal reconciliation coincided with favorable regional and international developments.

A political settlement enshrined in a Document of National Accord (known as the Taif Agreement) was adopted in October 1989 by members of Lebanon's Chamber of Depu-

ties, and it called for national reconciliation and for 'spreading the sovereignty of the State of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory' through a one-year plan that included the 'disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias' (Taif Agreement, 1989). In this regard, the agreement was decisive in determining the Arab identity of Lebanon, emphasizing that Lebanon was an independent, sovereign, and free country. It also confirmed the territorial integrity of the country and defined its political system as a parliamentary democracy, based on the principles of separation, balance, and cooperation among the various branches of government. It also anchored the country's socio-economic system as a free economy favoring individual initiative and the right to private property. Finally, it advocated the abolition of political sectarianism as a basic national goal to be achieved according to a gradual scheme (Krayem, 1997).

Related to this last point, it is worth noting that political confessionalism has been considered since the independence of Lebanon a temporary arrangement that should be phased out as soon as possible, but it has prevailed up to the present time. Although the Taif Agreement reaffirms the gradual abolition of the confessional system, it still dominates institutional and political life in Lebanon (Krayem, 1997). This was translated into a power-sharing arrangement whereby the president of the country is a

Maronite Christian, the prime minister is a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the house is a Shi'a Muslim. The parliament is still based on confessional quotas that cannot be revised. In fact, to avoid going back to conflict of power, a census has not been held in the country since 1932. Arguably, one might conclude that in reality the elimination of confessionalism has been relegated to a rather distant future, which leaves the door open to the renewal of conflict, and increases the possibilities of its occurrence. This has led to a clientelist relationship between the elite and the people: dignity and protection in exchange of loyalty (Hermez, 2011).

Such a situation does not allow for the revival of a stable political system, one that is urgently needed to revitalize the economy and develop further public and private institutions. In addition, other issues not properly addressed by the political settlement were the presence of Syrian forces on Lebanese soil, Hizbollah's status as an armed militia outside the state, as well as the Palestinian refugee issue, as we will briefly assess in this section.

The political settlement in Lebanon came along with an outstanding effort to transform a war economy into a peace economy after almost 15 years of devastating conflicts. In 1993, the first Rafik Hariri's government launched 'Horizon 2000', a \$20 billion reconstruction pro-

gram, which was funded by a combination of grants, soft loans, and bilateral loans from western countries, Gulf states as well as international organizations, aid agencies, and commercial banks (Najem, 1998). The vast reconstruction project carried out after the adoption of the Taif Agreement focused on downtown Beirut by means of building a new socio-economic and political order organized around the luxury real estate and service industry (Sharp, 2018).

In spite of disagreements among many Lebanese confessional communities over political issues that led to the Taif Agreement, the single issue where agreement existed was that Palestinian refugees should not be 'naturalized', locally referred to as 'implanted' in Lebanon (Azat and Mullet, 2002). The rejection of permanent resettlement in Lebanon was inscribed into the Agreement, which states that 'there shall be no fragmentation, no partition, and no repatriation (of Palestinians in Lebanon)' (Taif Agreement, 1989). Indeed, Lebanon's Palestinian refugee problem predates the civil war and since their forced exile from Palestine more than 60 years ago, the majority of the refugees (and their descendents) have been living in squalid shelters and cramped refugee camps. The 350,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon form a disenfranchised minority, suffering from economic marginalization and fearing being excluded from future peace settlements,

which would leave them exiled in Lebanon. Unlike other Arab countries, such as Jordan and Syria, which also serve as hosts to Palestinian refugees, Lebanon did not grant the Palestinians civic rights and only a few were granted work permits. Currently, Lebanon has the highest percentage of camp-dwelling refugees of all the countries hosting Palestinian refugees.

As the Lebanese civil war did not produce any form of transitional justice, in spite of the conflict ending 29 years ago, the question of civil war memory is still very vivid for many Lebanese who continue debating the root causes and consequences of the war. The assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, the following war between Hizbollah and Israel in 2006, the spillovers into Lebanese territory of the Syrian war from 2011 onwards, and the continued political instability that often hits the country have only added to the notion among many of its citizens that political violence is chronic and structural. As time goes by, many citizens feel that addressing challenges such as the situation created by the wave of Syrian refugees since 2011 is more urgent than dwelling on and dealing with the past civil conflict. The only exception to this pattern was the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which was created to judge the criminals that killed 22 people, including former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005 (Haugbolle, 2018).

### 3.4 Typology of political settlement scenarios

In this part of the chapter, we look at the different scenarios of the political settlements by building a three-dimensional (3-D) typology addressing the relationships between three complex post-war or conflict resolution issues:

1. The type of political settlement that could be set up.
2. How the reconstruction plans have responded to this settlement, particularly the international community and the donors.
3. And how this will affect (or is affecting) repatriation (or return) of the refugees or the displaced to their lands.

Setting up a framework that includes a measure of 'political settlement scenarios' can hold many dimensions. In this section, we look at the scenario-building approach by Kelsall (2016), who has combined three approaches in one:

First, the approach of Bruce Jones et al (2012), in which the degree of horizontal elite inclusion in the political settlement is a major determinant of state fragility.

Second, the approach of David Booth (2015), who sets the development pathway depending on the ruling elites' choice to include rival elites into a political settlement by offering them spoils distribution of 'purposive coordination' around a common vision or goal.

Third, the approach of Brian Levy (2012) and Levy and Walton (2013), who differentiate the different types of settlements based on types of institutions, especially bureaucratic and cultural.

This 3-D relationship can create a typology of different type of political settlements depending on the degree of progress in each of these criteria. The way to assess these three criteria is to answer three diagnostic questions to see where a country is placed within this 3-D cube.

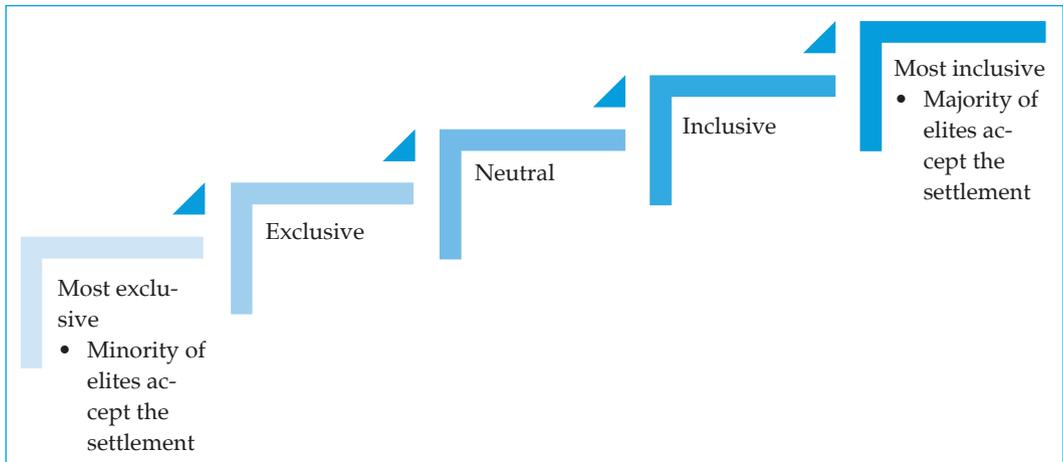
*3.4.1 How inclusive or exclusive is a political settlement?*

Inclusiveness is a measure of a country’s stability within a politi-

cal settlement. Arguably, the more inclusive the settlement is, the more stable the country will be.

Inclusiveness can be broadened beyond political parties or powers to embed social inclusion. The powers of excluded social groups, such as youth, women, sectoral workers (such as farmers, fishermen, etc.), and certain territories in destabilizing a state should not be underestimated. The Arab uprisings of 2011 were initiated by these social groups, rather than by political parties. This means that the less inclusive a political settlement is, the more violence can be generated, which could also lead to renewed collapse of the state.

**Figure 3.1 How inclusive the political settlement is?**



(Source: Authors’ analysis, inspired by Kelsall, 2016)

At the negative extreme of ‘most exclusive’, there is a political settlement that is based on a minority of elites accepting the settlement, leading to instability and potential use of violence.

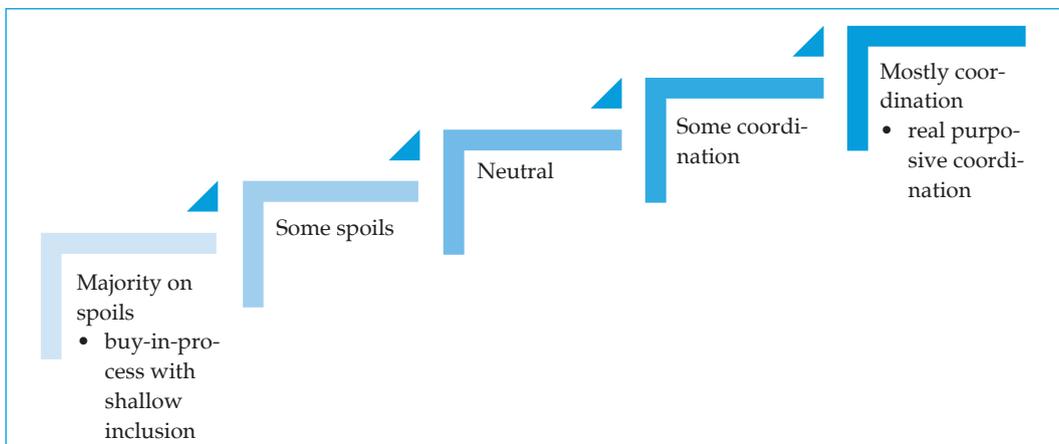
At the positive extreme of ‘most inclusive’, the majority of elites accept the settlement, which ensures stability, sustainability, and refraining from the use of violence.

### 3.4.2 What motivates elites to accept a political settlement?

The second criteria relate to the quality of this inclusion/exclusion in the political settlement, and its ability to supply public and collective goods and services. It looks into how the inclusion was carried out: whether it was carried out on an understanding

and real purposive coordination to serve a common purpose with a real will to rebuild and achieve inclusive development, or whether it was based on a buy-in process to achieve a shallow inclusion, which would create economic rents (power, material gains, etc.) or spoils.

**Figure 3.2** What motivates elites to accept political settlement?



(Source: Authors' analysis, inspired by Kelsall, 2016)

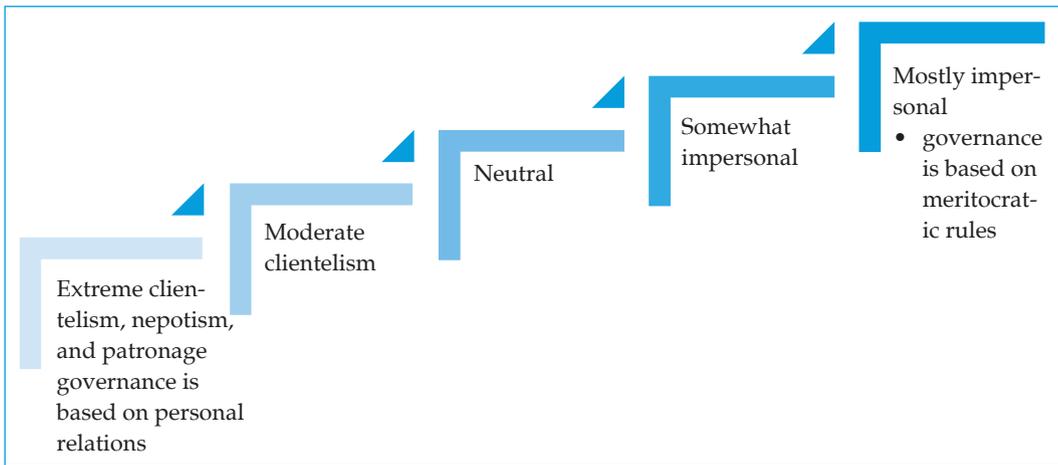
At the negative extreme, 'majority of spoils' means that a political settlement is based on spoils or gains rather than a common agreement. At the positive extreme, 'most coordination' entails an inclusive political settlement that is based on a common purpose.

### 4.4.3 By what norms is bureaucracy governed?

This question attempts to measure the type of bureaucracy and whether it is based on personalized links – that is, relying on patronage, nepotism, and personal relationships – or that it involves meritocratic rules. Clientelism has traditionally been defined as a system in which

the political elite provides services and protection, or resources more generally, in exchange for loyalty of the constituents (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1980), a patron-client type of relationship. Clearly the less personal the governance, the more the ability to supply public goods and services. Interestingly, according to some research (Khan, 2010) modern societies co-exist with clientelism, which could have a different variation and mixes of distribution of power. Moreover, in some cases and following some evolutions, rather than dying out, this patron-client relationship can evolve into different varieties of forms.

**Figure 3.3** By what norm bureaucracy is governed?



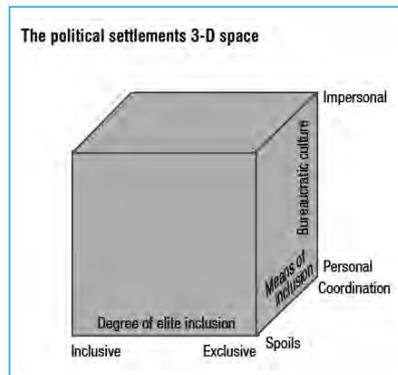
(Source: Authors’ analysis, inspired by Kelsall, 2016)

At the negative extreme of ‘extreme clientelism’, the political settlement is based on client-patron relations between the state and the people. At the positive extreme, the political settlement is based on an impersonal relationship, where all goods and services are delivered to all.

Based on these three questions, we can trace a 3-D cube of the type of political settlement, as we draw lines to the answers to these questions.

**An ideal scenario would be:** an inclusive, coordinated, and impersonal settlement. In this type of ideal scenario, the power is balanced and shared between the most important elites. All parties included are coordinated around one common goal to rebuild the state, and the bureaucracy between them is impersonal and meritocratic (based on merits). Consequently, the political

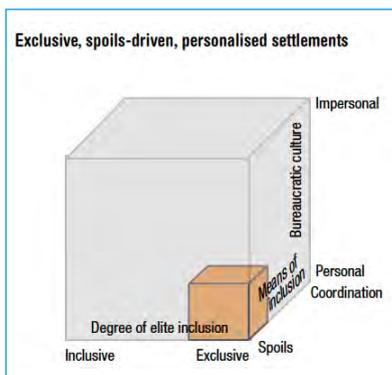
settlement has a high probability of surviving and is capable of inducing peace and development. This type is difficult to achieve in practice: the authors give the example of a post-war settlement in South Korea, and also a close match could be Mauritius.



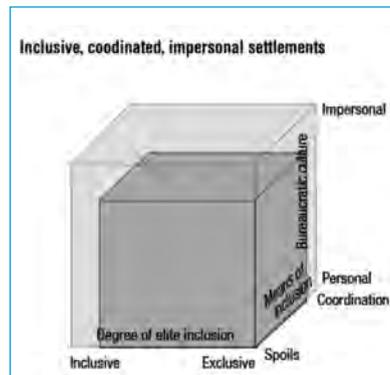
This type of stable scenario will encourage the participation of the international community and donors in reconstruction, being more congruent with regards to the stability, transparency, and resilience of the settlement.

**The worst-case scenario: exclusive, spoils-driven, and personalized settlement**

Clearly this type of settlement is the worst, and where the minority of elites are the ones involved in state-building, probably all linked together with buy-ins and spoils of materialistic and power gains. They are governed by a system that is based on personal relationships and clientelism. This settlement is quite fragile as it is constantly threatened by conflicts within the settlement itself (as their relationship is based on cronyism) and by conflicts from outside the settlement of other elites that have not been included or more broadly the excluded layers of societies. This type of settlement will make it difficult to act for the overall benefit of the state. This of course will affect the development of the state and will make support from the international community for reconstruction quite limited due to its fragility. The author gives the example of the Democratic Republic of Congo as a country with this type of post-conflict political settlement.



**The middle scenario** is between these two previous scenarios. This could be the most common scenario in practice. This type of settlement is set up by the most powerful, excluding other type of elites. Within these elites, some are motivated by the gains they will have while others are still coordinated under a common vision of state-building and seeking development. The bureaucracy is a mix of patronage but some civil servants are actually impersonal and care for the public. Some examples given of this type of settlement are Uganda, Kenya, Indonesia, and Cambodia. This type of settlement can generate some development but it needs to have a mix of portfolios to engage the different layers of society that are excluded.



Other types of settlements can be drawn in this 3-D relationship with settlements that are relatively inclusive but where the bureaucracy is affected by personal relationships and cronyism (for example, Cote d'Ivoire and Malawi). Another type can be

dominated by the exclusive elites, where they are coordinated by a common vision but their bureaucracy is personalized.

### 3.5 Applying a political settlement typology to historic conflicts in some MENA countries

Looking closely at some MENA countries and given the

analysis above, it would be interesting to see where they stand in terms of their type of political settlements and how this is reflected in real terms in their restructuring and the repatriation of their refugees.

The table 3.1 answers the three questions related to this approach.

**Table 3.1. Political settlement, reconstruction and refugees in Algeria and Lebanon**

	Algeria	Lebanon
1. <b>How inclusive/exclusive is the political settlement?</b>	More towards an exclusive political settlement: strong state grip on economic resources and political power by a group of elites (tracing legitimacy to the revolution) with weak institutions (Werenfels, 2009). This has led to tension (political and social) and rise in violence.	Post-war political settlement in 1989 is leaning towards an inclusive model: majority of elites. The confessionalism is a temporary settlement that seems to be perpetuated to avoid returning to war. An arrangement that is currently being contested even by the Lebanese people.
2. <b>What motivates elites to accept the political settlement</b>	Political settlement is based on powers of elites and powerful lobbies that benefit from the system. The settlement is not inclusive and hence fragile.	Inclusion of elite is based on ‘spoils of truce’. A fragile relationship that often leads to tension among elites.
3. <b>By what norms is the bureaucracy governed?</b>	The political settlement is based on a clientelist structure. Caught in relations of ‘reciprocal predation’ between state and society that are expressed in the repertory of political clientelism, the Algerian deputies thus become agents of clientelistic mediation.	The political settlement created a state that is based on clientelism (patron-client relationship): loyalty to the elite in exchange to protection and dignity. This relationship was mixed with corruption, leading to a form of patronage to clientelistic brokerage (Hemez, 2011).

<b>Type of political settlement</b>	The political settlement adopted had ended the civil war and was considered 'credible'. But the root causes of the conflict have not been addressed, risking a resurgence in the conflict.	This fragile political settlement leads to frequent tension among elite groups and their followers. It comes as no surprise that Lebanon often suffers from political deadlocks, growing instability, potentially leading to a state division.
<b>Impact of reconstruction plans</b>	This fragile political settlement led to bribery, corruption nepotism and clientelism. Protestors went on the streets demanding change in the regime and its cronies and ending corruption. (Hirak, Feb 2019)	The plan focused on rebuilding the capital (luxury real estate) and focused on emerging services industry, leaving behind the rest of the territories.
<b>Impact on repatriation of refugees</b>	Uncounted thousands of Algeria fled following the violence and tension in the country (mostly to Europe but many without finding official asylum). Some negotiations are happening for the repatriation of these refugees (with Germany, for example) but so far no specific plans are in place.	Many Lebanese fled the country during the war (about one million nationals), but did not take the status of refugees. They have no intention of returning given the political instability in the country and its neighbors.

Source: Authors' analysis

### 3.5.1 Implications for current post-conflict countries

It is not easy to describe potential settlement scenarios for post-conflict Arab countries drawing on previous experiences in the MENA region.

The following table 3.2 is an attempt to put together the three approaches and apply them to the case of Syria: its political

settlement scenarios; their consequences for reconstruction plans; and the implications of these two for the repatriation of refugees.

As discussed above, while we highlight three different scenarios: best, middle, and worst, there is a wide spectrum of possibilities that exists in between these scenarios. The main driving factor is the type of political settlement, which will determine the

different trajectories of the state’s resilience and development, and on which will depend both the reconstruction plans and the repatriation scenarios (Di John and Putzel, 2009).

**Table 3.2. Scenarios for Syria: Political settlement, reconstruction and refugees**

Political settlement	Reconstruction plan	Implications for refugees: repatriation, resettlement enabling /inhibiting repatriation and sustainability of return
<p><b>Ideal scenario:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive and power-sharing</li> <li>• Coordinated</li> <li>• Impersonal bureaucratic governance</li> </ul> <p>Result: sustainable political settlement</p>	<p><b>Involving the international communities: Yes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UN estimate reconstruction cost of \$250 billion</li> <li>- The EU will fully participate once a settlement process (under the UN) is in place.<sup>76</sup></li> </ul>	<p><b>Support and encourage return</b></p> <p>These include economic reconstruction (rebuilding infrastructure, access to health and education, etc.) and political reform, such as security, property rights, and access to justice (Yahya, 2017).</p> <p>Of total refugees, 80% return rate, using UN (2017) population statistics. The UNHCR (2018) survey (mid-2018) also found that 76% of refugees would want to return to Syria one day.</p>
<p><b>Middle Scenario</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partial political settlement, where majority of elite are included but some are left out.</li> <li>• Elites included are partially included on the basis of spoils</li> <li>• Governance and the relationship between the state and the population are partially on some kind of clientelism, although some political freedoms are given.</li> </ul>	<p>A substantial reconstruction program of \$140 billion (average of the high and low scenarios), spread evenly over a 20-year period.</p>	<p>Of total refugees, 45% return rate based on the ratio of reconstruction funds in the first 10 years (moderate versus high scenario).</p>

76 EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini said at an EU side event at the UN General Assembly in 2018: ‘we discussed ways in which we can increase even more our humanitarian assistance for Syrians, including inside Syria, while still keeping a very clear position on the fact that European Union money for reconstruction in Syria will only come once the political process will be firmly underway under UN auspices.’ (ERF, 2019).

<p><b>Worst-case scenario</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political settlements, excluding the different groups and/or go back to an ante settlement with poor balance of power.</li> <li>• The elites are connected by their own interests and there is a common national purpose.</li> <li>• Clientelism is the main feature between the state and the people imposing a fragile state and with limited guarantees for micro-security, property rights, and human rights.</li> </ul>	<p>Limited reconstruction program of \$30 billion, largely relying on China, Iran and Russia, and spread evenly over a five-year period.</p>	<p>Of total refugees, 19% return rate based on the ratio of reconstruction funds in the first 10 years (low versus high scenario).</p>
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In addition to these, while political settlement is an internal affair, it needs to take account of the borders and not only focus on the state framework (Plonski et al, 2018).

Also, if we are focusing our analysis here on the case of Syria, the political settlement scenarios need to involve a peace-making process. This involves a large number of issues that are summarized as follows:

**Table 3.3. Peace-Making Process requirements**

<b>Issue categories</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Military & security	ceasefires; decommissioning, demobilisation, reintegration; security sector reform
Humanitarian	humanitarian access and emergency relief, technical aspects of return of refugees / IDPs
Legal-judicial	amnesties, prisoner releases; human rights protection and monitoring; judicial reform
Constitutional / territorial status	shape and structure of the state; autonomy arrangements; characteristics of the state, such as status of identity groups, including those made refugees/IDPs
Governing arrangements	power-sharing; transitional governments; elections; democratisation; effective participation / political pluralism
Socio-cultural	policies & programs to support distinctive identity groups; non-discrimination; effective participation
Structural / socio-economic	land reform; natural resource management; revenue sharing; special measures to promote equality; reconstruction
Transitional justice	tribunals, reparations, reconciliation, memorials
Gender sensitivity & gender justice	mainstreaming gender sensitivity; special measures for equality & effective participation

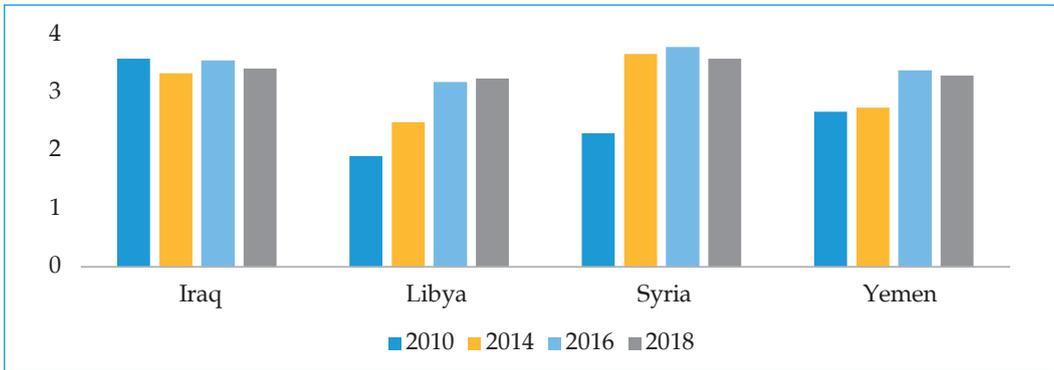
Source: Barnes (2009)

### 3.6 The nexus between political settlements and returned refugees in South Med conflict-affected countries

Regarding conflict severity, the Global Peace Index results for 2018 consider the MENA region

to be the world’s least peaceful region since it is home to 10 of the least peaceful countries in the world. In addition, no country in the region ranked more than 40<sup>th</sup>. Iraq, Syria, and Yemen witnessed some improvements in their scores, with Iraq the best improver (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: Global Peace Index, 2010-2018



Source: Institute for Economics and Peace

Note: The GPI measures a country’s level of Negative Peace using three domains of peacefulness: Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict, Societal Safety and Security and Militarization. The GPI comprises 23 indicators of the absence of violence or fear of violence. All scores for each indicator are normalized on a scale of 1-5,

Political settlements are sometimes associated with events such as the signing of peace agreements and hence, we will take a closer look at peace agreements, as a proxy for political settlements. To that effect, we rely on two databases. First, the UN Peacemaker Database takes stock of existing peace agreements by country, conflict type, and date. Annex 3.1 provides an extract from this database on all existing peace agreements in this database post-2011 for Libya, Syria, and Yemen. This database focuses on the agreements texts, and also

provides support in mediation. But it does not provide any sort of assessment of peace agreements.

Second, the Political Settlements Research Program (PRSP), led by the University of Edinburgh, has developed the Peace Agreements Database (PA-X), which, in contrast to the UN database, codes and maps all peace agreements since 1990 till the present (around 1800 documents in 100 countries). We understand that the implementation of these political agreements matters more than the agreements themselves. But given the fact

that it is complex to measure the outcomes of political events still in progress, the PA-X database instead evaluates the outcomes of peace agreements. The latter usually represent the result of political settlement events. It also allows a comparison of all elements of inclusion, development, and rights, using quantitatively defensible category definitions for power-sharing, women, victims, socio-economic rights, and development (Schünemann and Lucey, 2015).

### 3.6.1 Governance and political settlements

In terms of governance, Khan (2010) suggests that the linkages of political settlements with governance depend on two factors. First, policies and institutions that worked in some advanced countries do not necessarily achieve the same successful results in other developing countries. Second, different policies and institutions are effective in solving different problems in different contexts. This suggests that it is crucial to identify the design of governance reform since it will accordingly shape the necessary growth-enhancing institutions according to the context.

Developing countries differ from advanced countries in their political settlements in that they can have informal institutions playing a significant role. This can make political settlements in these countries *clientelist*, where these informal institutions affect the power exercise. Consequent-

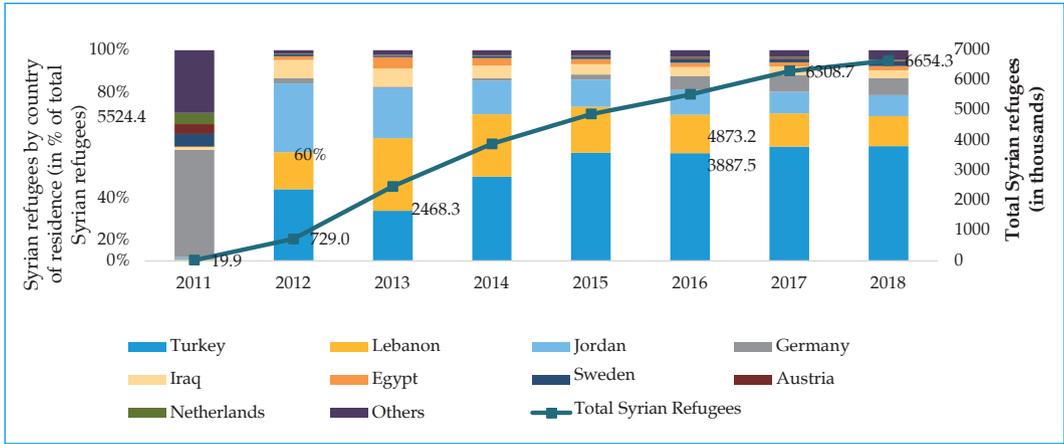
ly, this can have implications for the growth-stability trade-off. In case there is incompatibility between institutions and interests of powerful groups, growth-enhancing institutions might want to consider the transaction cost of resistance and hence make a trade-off between growth and stability (Khan, 2010). The nature of political settlement accordingly shapes the pattern of economic growth and transformation (Osei et al, 2017).

In terms of governance and socio-economic reconstruction, a closer look at the peace agreements in our countries of interest reveals that only three agreements among the 82 agreements in Syria since the uprisings included a mention of mechanisms reforming or establishing new political institutions, whereas 16 agreements included provisions specifically addressing socio-economic reconstruction or development in general terms (Annex 3.2, Tables 1 and 2).

### 3.6.2 Patterns of return of refugees

Conflicts in South Med countries have triggered a refugee crisis. A closer look at the UNHCR statistics provides us with some insights into the repatriation process of refugees. For example, Syrian refugees are concentrated mainly in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan where the share of Syrian refugees in these countries out of total Syrian refugees in 2018 reached 54.4%, 14.2%, and 10.2% respectively (Figure 3.5).

**Figure 3.5: Countries of asylum or residence for Syrian refugees, 2011-2018**



Source: UNHCR data

We are particularly interested in this chapter in the returned refugees. The UNHCR differentiates between returned internally displaced persons and returned refugees.<sup>77</sup> In simple terms, returned refugees are refugees who returned to their place of origin and we will eventually focus on them. The re-

turned refugees in our four countries of interest represent a very small portion out of yearly total refugees over the period 2012 to 2017 (Table 3.4). This share also seems to be declining for the four countries over the period since the Arab uprisings with some recovery in Syria in 2017.

**Table 3.4: Returned refugees by origin as a percentage of total refugees by country of origin, 2012-2017**

(Percentage of total refugees by country of origin)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Iraq	11.0	15.2	2.9	2.2	0.0	0.2
Libya	20.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Syria	9.4	5.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2
Yemen	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: UNHCR data

<sup>77</sup> UNHCR defines returned refugees as ‘Former refugees who have returned to their country of origin, either spontaneously or in an organized fashion, but are yet to be fully integrated. Such returns would normally take place only under conditions of safety and dignity’. As for returned internally displaced persons, UNHCR defines them as ‘Internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced to leave their home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an international border. Returned internally displaced persons refers to those internally displaced persons who were beneficiaries of UNHCR’s protection and assistance activities, and who returned to their area of origin or habitual residence’.

### 3.6.3 Implications from history: linkages between peace agreements and returned refugees

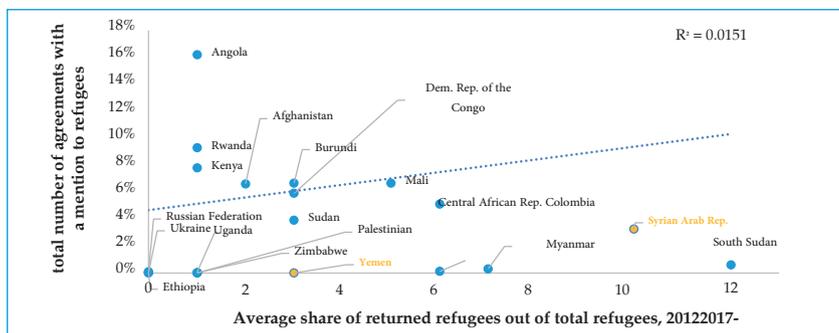
The PA-X database evaluates whether there is a reference to refugees or displaced persons, including repatriation, that appears in a peace agreement.<sup>78</sup> Despite being a critical problem for the conflict in Syria, only 12 among the 84 agreements mentioned refugees with different degrees of details, and only one of them deals with the refugees' problem in a substantive way (see Annex 3.3, Table 1). For Libya, the PA-X database identifies 39 peace agreements since the uprisings: 14 of them mention refugees (see Annex 3.3, Table 2). The case for Yemen is similar: four agreements mention refugees out of a total of 38 agreements (Annex 3.3, Table 3).

It is important to assess the association between these clauses on refugees in peace agreements and the return of refugees on the ground. Figure 3.6 describes the correlation between the

total number of peace agreements where there is a mention of refugees (either merely mentioned, or the agreement contains provisions, or deals with it in a substantive way) and the average share of returned refugees out of total refugees over the period 2012 to 2017 for all countries included in the PA-X database. It seems that the returned refugees share is only weakly positively associated with the number of peace agreements with a mention of refugees (Figure 3.6), suggesting that other considerations are critical for triggering a meaningful response in terms of repatriation.

The figure also shows that two of our countries of interest, Syria and Yemen, are below the average trend line. This indicates that the mere mention of refugees in peace agreement initiatives were not credible enough to trigger the required response in terms of return of refugees in comparison with their peer countries.

**Figure 3.6: Correlation between the share of returned refugees and the total number of peace agreements with a mention of refugees, 2012-2017**



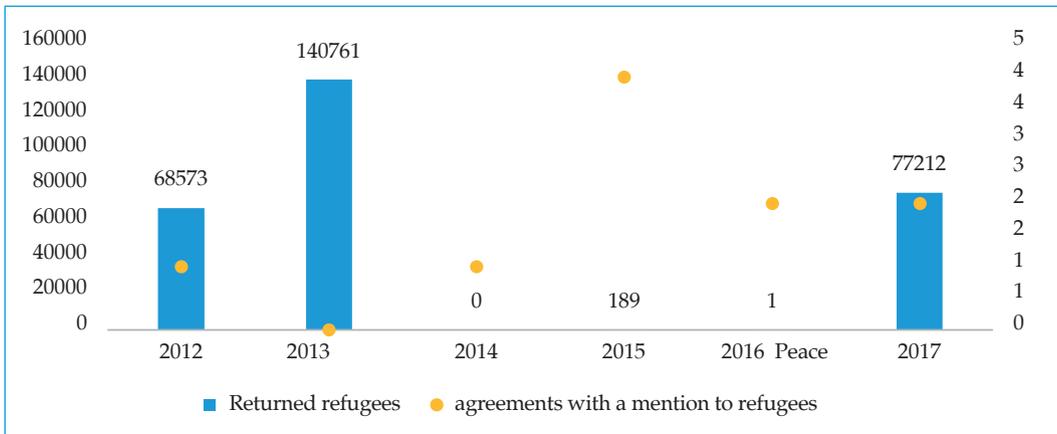
78 The provisions specifically addressing refugees' issues, such as return, and land claims are included in the positive coding of this variable. Further, it includes references to internally displaced persons or displaced persons.

Source: UNHCR data and PA-X database

A closer look at Syria reveals that the returned refugees trend is substantially influenced by other factors, and that even when there is a response to the number of peace agreements, it tends to happen with a lag. For example, the number of repatriates recov-

ered in 2017 after a few agreements were being discussed in 2015. But, the number remains much lower than in 2013, which did not see any agreement as the war was still very much at an early stage of the Syrian conflict (Figure 3.7).

**Figure 3.7: Returned refugees and the number of peace agreements with a mention of refugees in Syria, 2012-2017**



Source: UNHCR data and PA-X database

### 3.6.4 Correlation analysis

In this section, we undertake a correlation exercise that aims to assess the association between the share of returned refugees out of total refugees on the one hand, and some aspects of peace agreements on the other, notably mention of refugees, socio-economic reconstruction, governance aspects, the extent of democracy, and human rights. In particular, we analyze this correlation at two different disaggregation levels: the individual agreement level; and the average by country and year level. This analysis will also

shed light on the robustness of peace agreements. From a policy perspective, this will serve as a sort of inference from history so as to predict what is likely to happen in the case of our countries of interest.

For the peace agreements dimensions mentioned above, we take into consideration the following variables:

- Refugees (GRef): this variable accounts for references to refugees and displaced persons, including repatriation, that appear in the peace agreement.

- Socio-economic development and reconstruction (Dev): this binary variable takes the value of 1 if the peace agreement includes any provisions specifically addressing socio-economic reconstruction or development in general terms.
- Governance, political institutions (Pol): this variable accounts for any instances of the agreement including any mention of mechanisms reforming or establishing new political institutions. This variable also includes provisions for interim administration and/or new democratic institutions.
- State definition (Stdef): this is a binary variable, taking the value of 1 if the peace agreement addresses the issue of state definition.
- Democracy (HrDem): this variable accounts for any references to general commitments to democracy.
- Human rights (HrGen): this binary variable takes the value of 1 if the peace agreement includes any general references and rhetorical commitment to human rights, principles of humanitarianism/law, international law, or the 'rule of law'.

We use UNHCR data to calculate the share of returned refugees in a certain year out of total refugees in the same year. We account for the peace agreements assessment variables in a certain year ( $t$ ), whereas we take the share of returned refugees out of total refugees in the subsequent year ( $t+1$ ). The rationale behind

this one-year lag is that the effect of a political agreement would materialize and get reflected in the process of return of refugees in the subsequent year.

### *3.6.5 Results and policy implications*

Tables 3.5 and 3.6 present our correlation results and the following conclusions can be drawn. First, effective repatriation of refugees is a huge dilemma, requiring sustainable political settlements that take into consideration several factors.

For example, having a policy on refugees embedded in the political settlement is a must and this seems evident from our correlation results at both the individual agreement level as well as at the average country-year level, where mentions of refugees in peace agreements seems to be positively associated with the return of refugees. On the governance side, transition mechanisms such as the existence of political institutions are crucial to ensure efficient management of post-conflict challenges (including acts of violence, massacres, security challenges, forced displacements, etc.). This seems to be reflected in our results where correlations between mentions of political institutions in peace agreements are positive and statistically significant at both the individual agreements level and the average by country and year level.

To support reconstruction and safe return of refugees, political settlements are supposed to en-

sure that a democratic transition is taking place instead of preserving the status quo. Our positive and statistically significant correlations between democracy aspects in peace agreements and share of return refugees at both the individual agreement level and the average country-year level seem to confirm this assumption. On a related front, political settlements are supposed to be inclusive as much as possible in order to guarantee that refugees

return. This seems evident from the positive and statistically correlations between mention of human rights in peace agreements and share of returned refugees at both the individual agreement level and average country-year agreements level.

We thus conclude that our correlation results confirm the importance of the socio-economic reconstruction, governance and inclusion aspects of peace agreements in order to secure refugees' return.

**Table 3.5: Correlation between returned refugees and peace agreements aspects on the agreements level**

	log (share of returned refugees in subsequent year)
log (Refugees, GRef)	0.0824**
log (Socio-economic reconstruction, Dev)	0.0287
log (Political institutions, Pol)	0.0907**
log (State definition, Stdef)	0.0613*
log (Democracy, HrDem)	0.112***
log (Human rights, HrGen)	0.135***
N	1860

Note: \* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.01 \*\*\* p<0.001

Source: Authors' calculations based on UNHCR data and PA-X database

**Table 3.6: Correlation between returned refugees and peace agreements aspects on the average country and year level**

	log (share of returned refugees in subsequent year)
log (Refugees, GRef)	0.147**
log (Socio-economic reconstruction, Dev)	0.0445
log (Political institutions, Pol)	0.129*
log (State definition, Stdef)	0.105
log (Democracy, HrDem)	0.115*
log (Human rights, HrGen)	0.150**
N	562

Note: \* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.01 \*\*\* p<0.001

Source: Authors' calculations based on UNHCR data and PA-X database

### 3.7 Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the literature on political settlements and reconstruction plans in the MENA region and their implications for refugee repatriation and resettlement, with a special focus on Syria. Based on existing literature, the chapter suggests that refugee repatriation is an opportunity to build more inclusive states that guarantee their citizens safety over the long term.

In terms of reconstruction, the chapter argued that it has to start from the nationals, or at least that they should have the most important role in deciding the direction of reconstruction. For example, reconstruction in places like Syria is particularly complicated by questions of how assistance can be given to a regime that was in large part responsible for the country's devastation and has been implicated in war crimes. Furthermore, the role of the international community remains an important part of the reconstruction, not only in terms of infrastructure and other physical considerations, but also for rebuilding the state and its institutions. In this regard and in the context of post-conflict political transition, a safe and sustainable return of refugees often requires a framework that acknowledges the political roots of the armed conflict rather than just its humanitarian dimension. This suggests that to encourage host countries to adopt policies

that secure the basic needs of refugees, international support must include both humanitarian aid and economic investments geared towards job creation for host country nationals and refugees.

The chapter then examined the most recent literature on political settlements and elite pacts, drawing the following insights on political settlements: a) they should not be defined solely as a contract between states and societies; (b) they involve horizontal negotiations between contending elites, and vertical relationships between elites and their followers; (c) they should not necessarily be defined as a reflection of a common understanding between elites; (d) they influence the form, nature, and performance of institutions; and (e) they can be more or less inclusive.

Regarding the different scenarios of political settlements, the chapter proposed a 3-D typology addressing the relationship between three complex post-war or conflict resolution issues: the type of political settlement; the reconstruction plans' response to these settlements; and the impact on the repatriation (or return) of the refugees or the displaced to their lands. Setting up a framework that includes a measure of 'political settlement scenarios' can hold many dimensions. This 3-D relationship can create a typology of different type of political settlements depending on the degree of progress on each of these

criteria. The way to assess these three criteria is to answer three diagnostic questions: (1) how inclusive/exclusive is a political settlement?; (2) what motivates elites to accept a political settlement; and (3) by what norms is bureaucracy governed?

Based on these three questions, the type of political settlement can be classified as follows: (1) the ideal scenario: an inclusive, coordinated, and impersonal settlement; (2) the worst-case scenario: exclusive, spoils-driven, and personalized settlement; and (3) the middle scenario: an in-between these two previous scenarios. This typology has been applied to two cases from the MENA region: Algeria and Lebanon. It was found that the political settlement in Algeria can be considered as an exclusive political settlement, whereas the political settlement in Lebanon post-war in 1989 is more of an inclusive model. But both models are fragile and based on powers of elites and clientelism: they do not address the root causes of the conflict.

The three approaches were then applied to the case of Syria: its political settlement scenarios, their consequences for reconstruction plans, and the implications of these two for the repatriation of refugees. This has indicated three scenarios: ideal,

moderate, and worst-case scenarios. Between the two extremes, the moderate scenario represents a settlement that includes most of the elites, with partial clientelism, which will lead to a moderate but still strong support for reconstruction plans, and potentially close to half of the refugees returning.

Finally, this chapter analyzed the linkages between peace agreements (a proxy for political settlements) and the share of returned refugees on the ground. To that effect, using the Peace Agreements (PA-X) database and UNHCR statistics, a correlation exercise was undertaken to assess the association between the share of returned refugees out of total refugees on the one hand, and some aspects of peace agreements on the other, notably mentions of refugees, socio-economic reconstruction, governance aspects, the extent of democracy, and human rights. In particular, this correlation was analyzed at two different disaggregation levels: the individual agreement level; and the average by country and year level. Our results confirm the importance of the socio-economic reconstruction, governance and inclusion aspects of peace agreements in order to secure refugees' return.

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## Annex 3.1

**Table 1: Peace agreements in Libya, Syria, and Yemen post-2011, as per the UN Peacemaker Database**

Country	Conflict Type	Agreement Title	Date
Libya	Intra-State	Libyan Political Agreement	17/12/2015
Syria	Intra-State	Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic	6/5/2017
Syria	Intra-State	Letter dated 29 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations and the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council	29/12/2016
Syria	Intra-State	Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (Geneva Communiqué)	30/06/2012
Syria	Intra-State	Resolution 2043 (2012): The situation in the Middle East	21/04/2012
Syria	Intra-State	Preliminary Understanding on the United Nations Supervision Mechanism in the Syrian Arab Republic	19/04/2012
Syria	Intra-State	Six Point Proposal of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States	14/04/2012
Yemen	Intra-State	The Peace and National Partnership Agreement	21/09/2014
Yemen	Intra-State	Agreement on the Implementation Mechanism for the Transition Process in Yemen in Accordance with the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)	5/12/2011

Source: UN Peacemaker Database

## Annex 3.2

**Table 1: Peace agreements in Syria with a mention of new political institutions**

Agreement	Date
UN Security Council Resolution 2254	2015-12-18
Statement by the Syrian Revolutionary Factions	2015-09-15
Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (Geneva Communiqué)	2012-06-30

Source: PA-X database

**Table 2: Peace agreements in Syria with a mention of socio-economic reconstruction or development**

Agreement	Date
Joint Statement by Iran, Russia and Turkey on the International Meeting on Syria in Astana, 14-15 May 2018	2018-05-15
Final statement of the Congress of the Syrian national dialogue, Sochi, January 30, 2018	2018-01-30
Joint Statement by Iran, Russia, and Turkey on the International Meeting on Syria in Astana, 30-31 October 2017	2017-10-31
Joint Statement by Iran, Russia, and Turkey on the International Meeting on Syria in Astana	2017-09-15
East Qalamoun Ceasefire	2017-09-05
Ceasefire in Towns of Talbisa, Rastan and Al-Hula in Homs Countryside between Syrian Government and Free Syrian Army (FSA)	2017-07-31
Memorandum on the Creation of De-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic	2017-05-04
Joint Statement by Iran, Russia, Turkey on the International Meeting on Syria in Astana, January 23-24, 2017	2017-01-24
Syrian Ceasefire Agreement: Standard Conditions and Procedures Necessary to Ensure the Cessation of Hostilities	2016-09-09
UN Security Council Resolution 2254	2015-12-18
Homs Ceasefire	2015-12-07
Statement by the Syrian Revolutionary Factions	2015-09-15
Points of the Truce with the People's Protection Units (YPG)	2014-04-24
Homs Hudna Agreement	2014-02-07
Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (Geneva Communiqué)	2012-06-30
Six Point proposal of the Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the League of Arab States accepted by the government	2012-04-14

Source: PA-X database

## Annex 3.3

**Table 1: Peace agreements in Syria with a mention of refugees, 2012-2018**

Agreement	Date	Refugees/ Displaced persons
Joint Statement by Iran, Russia and Turkey on the International Meeting on Syria in Astana, 14-15 May 2018	5/15/2018	1
Memorandum on the Creation of De-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic	5/4/2017	1
UN Security Council Resolution 2254	12/18/2015	1
Homs Ceasefire	12/7/2015	1
Final declaration on the results of the Syria Talks in Vienna as agreed by participants	10/30/2015	1
UN Security Council Resolution 2043	4/21/2012	1
Final statement of the Congress of the Syrian national dialogue, Sochi, January 30, 2018	1/30/2018	2
Announcement of Factions on joining the suspension of Hostilities	10/8/2017	2
Follow up on the implementation of the Previous Agreement in al-Waer, Homs	8/31/2016	2
Wadi Barada Agreement	1/6/2016	2
Homs Hudna Agreement	2/7/2014	2
'Hudna' (truce) of al-Zabadani, Kefriyya and al-Fu'aa	9/20/2015	3

Source: PA-X database

Note:

1 = refugees/displaced persons are merely mentioned, the provision can be said to be rhetorical, without detail or substance.

2 = the agreement contains provision(s) on refugees/displaced persons; these provisions are detailed or include a clear anti-discrimination clause.

3 = the agreement deals with issues related to refugees/displaced persons in a substantive and substantial way, providing details on implementation modalities; alternatively, the agreement makes both fairly detailed provisions and includes an anti-discrimination clause.

**Table 2: Peace agreements in Libya with a mention of refugees, 2012-2018**

Agreement	Date	Refugees/ Displaced persons
Palermo Conference for and with Libya, Conclusions	2018-11-13	1
Pledge of Reconciliation and Cooperation between the Family and Friends in the Area of Tajoura and Souk Jumaa	2018-09-07	1
Pledge of Reconciliation Between the Cities of Zawiyah and al-Zintan	2018-05-10	1
Closing statement from the reconciliation meeting between Zintan and Zawiyah	2018-04-17	1
Joint Declaration (Paris)	2017-07-15	1
Final Agreement between Zintan and Mashashiyya	2017-05-18	1
Statement of the Fezzan Forum for Libya	2018-02-20	2
Reconciliation Agreement between the Zintan and Mashashiyya Tribes	2017-05-18	2
Agreement of Social Honour for the Tribes of Tarhūnah, and the Tribes of Ghriyān, Mashāshiyyah, al-Qal'ah, Yafrin, Jādū, Kābāw, Nālūt and Wāzin	2017-02-08	2
Minutes of Misrata-Tawagha Agreement on the Return of Displaced Persons and Compensation for those Affected	2016-08-31	2
Humanitarian Appeal for Benghazi	2016-03-16	2
Libyan Political Agreement (Sukhairat Agreement)	2015-12-17	2
Final Communiqué: Comprehensive Dialogue for Calm and Peace in the Nafusa Mountains	2015-03-19	2

Source: PA-X database

Note:

1 = refugees/displaced persons are merely mentioned, the provision can be said to be rhetorical, without detail or substance.

2 = the agreement contains provision(s) on refugees/displaced persons; these provisions are detailed or include a clear anti-discrimination clause.

3 = the agreement deals with issues related to refugees/displaced persons in a substantive and substantial way, providing details on implementation modalities; alternatively, the agreement makes both fairly detailed provisions and includes an anti-discrimination clause.

**Table 3: Peace agreements in Yemen with a mention of refugees, 2012-2018**

Agreement	Date	Refugees or displaced persons
Agreement for the exchange prisoners, detainees, missing persons, arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared persons, and those under house arrest	2018-12-17	2
Agreement regarding the Exchange of Prisoners, Detainees, Remains and Missing Persons	2018-01-18	3
Statement on Security in Governorate of Ibb	2015-06-02	1
National Dialogue Conference Outcomes Document	2014-01-25	3
Agreement between the Bani Maudhah, Bani al-Shurayfi and Bani Rassam in Utmah, Dhamar	2014-01-20	1

Source: PA-X database

Note:

1 = refugees/displaced persons are merely mentioned, the provision can be said to be rhetorical, without detail or substance.

2 = the agreement contains provision(s) on refugees/displaced persons; these provisions are detailed or include a clear anti-discrimination clause.

3 = the agreement deals with issues related to refugees/displaced persons in a substantive and substantial way, providing details on implementation modalities; alternatively, the agreement makes both fairly detailed provisions and includes an anti-discrimination clause.



## CHAPTER 4

# Repatriation: potential contributions to post-conflict economic development

Semih Tumen\*

### 4.1 Introduction

Following the Arab uprisings, many countries in the MENA region – especially Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen – have experienced violent conflict, resulting in huge political, institutional, and economic destruction. Millions of people have been forced to leave their homes. The physical, financial, and human capital resources of those countries have fled to safety.

This chapter discusses the economic cost of conflict, post-conflict growth scenarios, and the potential contribution of repatriation to political transition, post-conflict development, economic growth, and reconstruction in four Arab countries: Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. The intensity of violence has declined significantly, and political problems have changed nature in those countries recently. But the conflicts are not yet over, and a massive return of physi-

cal and human capital back to those countries (especially Syria) in the short term is still a remote possibility. Nevertheless, policy-makers should start discussing alternative scenarios for repatriation and economic reconstruction in conflict countries with the ultimate purpose of streamlining transition and normalization.

The plan of this chapter is as follows. It starts with a detailed analysis of the current economic situation in the four countries based on satellite-data estimates. The purpose of this exercise is to provide rough estimates for the extent of physical destruction, to demonstrate the lack of economic opportunities in these conflict countries, and to emphasize the importance of designing feasible and sustainable economic and political reconstruction scenarios. The methodology is described in detail, and a comparison of the baseline estimates with other estimates in the literature is performed.

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There follows an analytical framework that could enable policy-makers to understand the reconstruction and post-conflict growth dynamics. The respective roles of public and private investment are discussed. Empirical estimates of post-conflict growth are reviewed. Results of a simulation exercise focusing on various counterfactual scenarios about post-conflict development paths in Syria are discussed and interpreted. The following section reviews the literature on the impact of return migration/repatriation on economic growth performance and other outcomes in the countries of origin. Country experiences are analyzed, and the main lessons are listed. The final section lists policy recommendations along with a brief discussion of concluding remarks.

## 4.2 The economic situation in the conflict countries

The Arab uprisings have shaken the political and economic foundations of many countries in the MENA region. Some countries have reacted positively by quickly restoring stability and implementing reforms to enhance resilience to shocks, while others – such as Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, Libya – have experienced devastating wars and terrorism with huge physical and human capital costs, large-scale institutional degradation,

multi-dimensional conflict, and state failures. Millions of people have been forced to leave their homes. Cities, cultural heritage, and physical infrastructure have been utterly destroyed.

Research on political conflict in the MENA region has mostly focused on the refugee crisis and the potential impact of refugee waves on several key outcomes for natives residing in host countries – such as employment, wages, consumer prices, housing prices/rents, health status, crime rates, schooling, environmental outcomes, and firm openings (see, for example, Del Carpio and Wagner, 2015; Balkan and Tumen, 2016; Tumen, 2016; Ceritoglu et al, 2017; Assaad et al, 2018; Balkan et al, 2018; Akgunduz et al, 2018; Akgunduz and Torun, 2018; Fallah et al, 2019; Tumen, 2018; Tumen, 2019; Aksoy and Tumen, 2019; Mamei et al, 2019). Political economy consequences of refugee movements have been the main concern driving this agenda (Altindag and Kaushal, 2017). With a few exceptions, economists seem to have mostly ignored what has happened within the conflict countries. This negligence is partly due to a lack of systematic and healthy data on the state of the economies in the post-conflict era.

This section develops a systematic approach to generating credible data using data science techniques with the ultimate purpose of measuring the economic cost of conflict in the afflicted countries. The main data

source is the satellite images processed by means of the geographical information systems (GIS) methods. The focus will be on four afflicted countries: Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. These are the countries that have experienced the most severe physical and economic destruction in the region. A set of preliminary calculations shows that GDP and physical capital stocks are almost halved in some of those countries.

Specifically, the data provided by the National Geophysical Data Center of the United States are used to compare the night-light intensities before and after the conflict in those four countries. Economists have recently started to use night-light data measured by satellites (see, for example, Henderson et al, 2012).<sup>79</sup> The night-light data serve as a proxy for local economic activity and exhibit a strong correlation with other major welfare indicators. Indices are constructed combining the contrast and dispersion of night-lights within fine-grained geographical regions, and then the time series evolution of those indices are reported.

In a recent series of work, Ceylan and Tumen (2018, 2019) use satellite data provided by the National Geophysical Data Center of the United States to com-

pare the night-light intensity in Syria before and after the conflict began. Using the GIS methods adopted in related research, they construct indices combining the contrast and dispersion of the night-lights, and report the time series evolution of those indices both for the entire country and at regional level. The policy implications are discussed.

Technically, this approach has two major advantages. First, night-light intensity is a good alternative measure of income growth at national level. Any potential measurement error due to errors in satellite data will most likely be uncorrelated with measurement errors associated with classical GDP calculation methods. Thus, night-light data can be a complementary source of information in measuring national income.

Second, economic analysis of regional growth and of the impacts of policies and events on cities is hindered by the absence of regular measures of local economic activity. The night-light data are available at a far greater degree of geographical fineness than is attainable by any standard income and product accounts. GDP numbers are not systematically available at a regional level in most countries. Much of the interesting variation in economic growth takes place within countries rather than between countries. Therefore, the GIS methods provide a robust basis for measurement and analysis of economic activity at regional level.

<sup>79</sup> See also Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2013a, 2013b), Hodler and Raschky (2014), Alesina, Michalopoulos, and Papaioannou (2016), Rohner, Thoenig, and Zilibotti (2013), and Storeygard (2016).

Our experience suggests that economic reconstruction in conflict-affected regions cannot be successfully achieved without a feasible and sustainable roadmap. Estimating the economic cost of conflict in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen – the four most severely destroyed countries in the MENA region – would serve as a robust and technical starting point, and a basis for policy debate on post-conflict reconstruction and economic growth. Although economic growth indicators exist for some those countries, they are highly unreliable, and therefore can be misleading due to the lack of a stable/trusted national statistical infrastructure.

To perform this task, satellite data have been collected to construct economic activity indices using the night-light data for Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. The indices are constructed at the aggregate level for each country. The data period is 1994-2018, with some breaks in 2014 and 2018 for some regions. It should be noted that the timing and duration of conflict differ across those four countries; so, a detailed examination of the existing data horizon is required to understand the impact of the conflict. Technical details on the methodology are provided below.

#### *4.2.1 Methodology*

In this part, the measurement methodology is described in detail.<sup>80</sup> The United States Air

Force satellites – the Defense Meteorological Satellite Program – have been orbiting the earth 14 times a day. The satellites have used their sensors to record the earth-based lights since the 1970s – there has been a digital archive open to public use and available for research since 1992. The satellites were originally designed to collect meteorological information, that is, cloud images, mostly for forecast purposes; the night-lights from human settlements are also collected in the course of orbiting. Images from every location on earth are recorded by each satellite every night between (local time) 8.30pm-10pm. The observations are processed by the National Geophysical Data Center, where certain data cleaning activities are carried out. First, the observations from locations experiencing the bright half of the lunar cycle are removed. Second, summer observations with late sunsets are dropped. Third, the polar lights (the auroral lights) are removed. Fourth, observations obscured by clouds are dropped. And, finally, observations from the locations where there are forest fires are also eliminated.

The purpose of this data cleaning/processing is to end up with a data set consisting solely of lights produced by human activity. This data set reflects man-made outdoor and also some indoor activity, which proxy aggregate economic activity for each observation. At the end, valid observations are av-

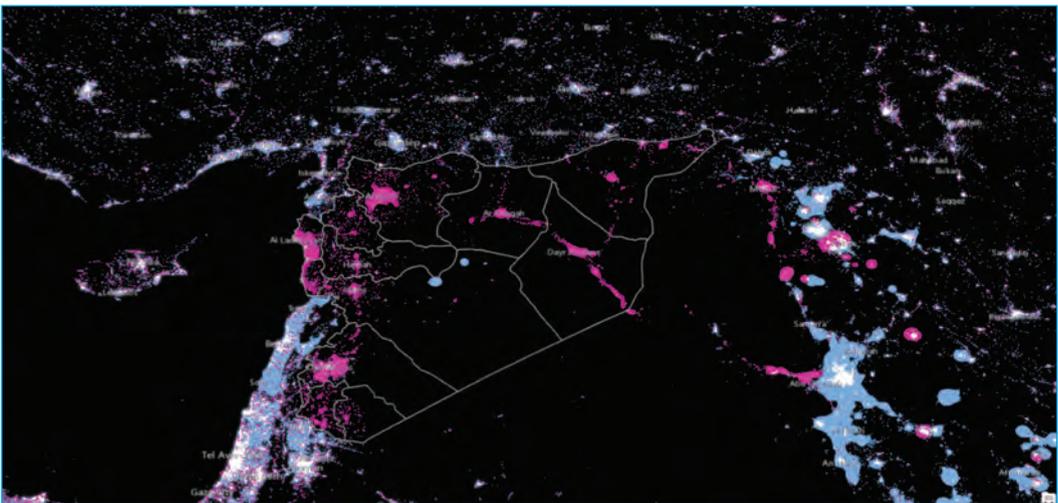
<sup>80</sup> See Henderson et al (2012) for more technical details and additional analyses.

eraged over nights for each satellite in a given year and a large data set with satellite-year variation for each location on earth is constructed. Those locations are classified as ‘pixels’ (around 0.86 square kilometers at the equator). The reported pixels are placed between 65 degrees south and 75 degrees north latitude. The excluded pixels fall into the Arctic regions, where a very tiny and negligible fraction of human activity is recorded. For each pixel, observations are averaged across satellites to obtain pixel-year data, which is also used in the analysis in this section.

The pixel-year data is described by an integer number ranging between 1 and 63. A tiny fraction of data from very densely populated and rich locations

are top-coded to take the value of 63. As Henderson et al (2012) clearly indicate, the quality of observations decline with the age of the satellite. So, year fixed effects are used to control for the satellite age effect in statistical analysis. Figure 4.1 provides an example of a satellite image for Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Northern Jordan, and Southeastern Turkey. The pink color represents the locations for which the light intensity in 2012 declined as of 2016, while the blue color represents the locations for which the light intensity in 2012 increased as of 2016. Clearly, the picture is consistent with the movement patterns of forcibly displaced Syrians. Below, the results of the satellite data analysis are presented for Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen.

**Figure 4.1. Satellite image documenting the movement patterns of forcibly displaced Syrians between 2012 and 2016.**



Source: Ceylan and Tumen (2019) and the National Geophysical Data Center of the United States.

### 4.3 Results for Arab conflicts

#### 4.3.1 The conflict in Iraq

The conflict in Iraq has been one of the most profound, complicated, and long-lasting ones in the MENA region. The 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War and the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 are not covered in our data set. So,

the main focus is on the most recent major conflict in Iraq, which started in 2003 and continued until the withdrawal of US troops in 2011. After the emergence of terrorism in the northern region of the country at the end of 2014, a local conflict has re-emerged especially in Northern Iraq, which still continues locally and intermittently.

**Figure 4.2: Aggregate economic activity in Iraq between 1994-2018 measured in terms of satellite-based night-light data.**

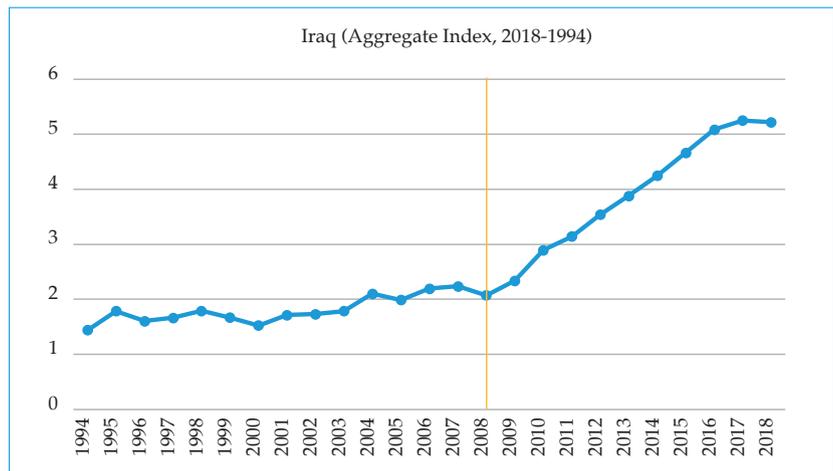


Figure 4.2 plots the night-light index constructed to characterize the trends in the level of overall economic activity in Iraq between 1994 and 2018. Two main episodes are observed during this time period: 1994-2008; and 2008-2018. The first period is characterized by political instability, civil conflict, international disputes, wars, and heavy economic sanctions. The economic activity is nearly stagnant, averaging approximately 3% annual

growth over 15 years despite booming oil prices – which is low in developing country standards. The second period is an episode of gradual resolution of disputes and selective lifting of economic sanctions. The annual rate of economic growth – measured by the evolution of satellite-based night-lights – is above 10%. With the increase in the intensity of local conflict after 2016, the economic activity has again become stagnant. The Iraqi case suggests that

there is a strong positive correlation between conflict, economic sanctions, and economic growth.

#### 4.3.2 *The conflict in Libya*

Libya has constantly experienced international disputes and conflict in the past three decades,

which resulted in the ouster and death of the former leader Muammar Al-Qaddafi in October 2011. The post-Qaddafi era did not bring peace either; the civil conflict has continued and risks of further outbursts of violence are still alive.

**Figure 4.3: Aggregate economic activity in Libya between 1994-2018 measured in terms of satellite-based night-light data.**

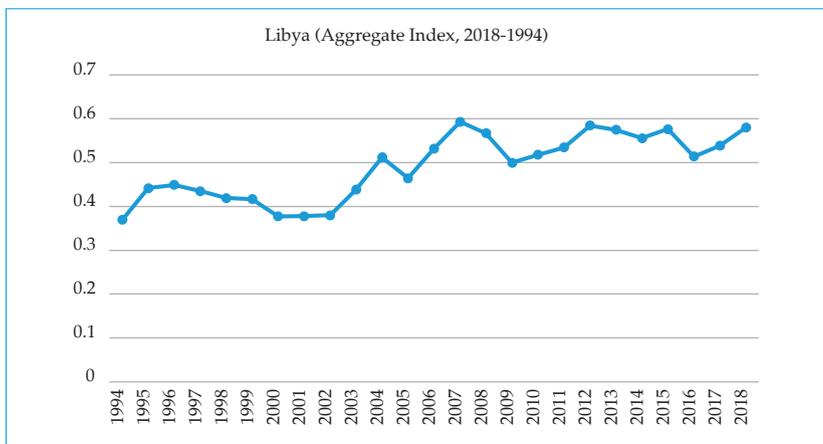


Figure 4.3 demonstrates the trends in satellite-based night-light intensity in Libya between 1994 and 2018. The period between 2002 and 2008 has exhibited the strongest economic growth in the recent history of the country. It was the period in which the Qaddafi regime built good relationships with the Western world—for example, the US Secretary of State made the highest-level official US visit to Libya in 2008 since 1953; Qaddafi paid the first official visit to Italy the year after. As part of the uprisings in the Arab world, an anti-Qaddafi uprising emerged in 2011 in Libya and the regime

was ousted. The country has been experiencing a civil conflict since then, and it has struggled to reconstruct state institutions in the post-Qaddafi era. As a result, economic activity is stagnant, and there are substantial political and economic uncertainties. The Libyan experience also shows that conflict undermines long-term economic growth.

#### 4.3.3 *The conflict in Yemen*

The civil conflict in Yemen started in 2011 and the main inspiration was again the Arab uprisings. The Houthi expansion during the 2011-2015 period

transitioned into violent armed conflict after 2015. Yemen has been among the least developed countries in the region, and the heavy conflict has generated a

dramatic humanitarian crisis. Millions of Yemenis have needed humanitarian assistance, and the risks of famine and epidemic disease are still alive.

**Figure 4.4: Aggregate economic activity in Yemen between 1994-2018 measured in terms of satellite-based night-light data.**

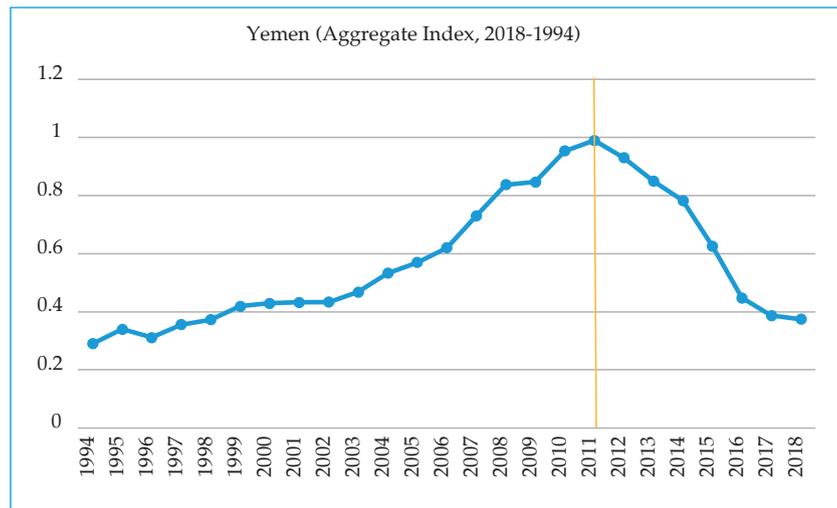


Figure 4.4 depicts the trends in the aggregate index constructed using the night-light series. There are two episodes. The first is until the end of 2011; the second one begins in 2012 and still continues. During the first period, the Yemeni economy expanded rapidly and benefited from the favorable economic conditions in the region due to booming oil prices. In the second period, however, the economy experienced a rapid decline and the economic environment returned to its conditions in late 1990s, which basically means that the extent of economic destruction has been huge. The country is still struggling to

overcome the sources of internal and international disputes. There is also a lack of domestic and international coordination in terms of improving the general institutional structure and the key institutions in the country.

#### 4.3.4 *The conflict in Syria*

The Syrian conflict, which started to escalate in the spring of 2011, has displaced millions of Syrians. Based on the most recent UN figures, around 5.6 million Syrian refugees have fled to neighboring countries, which has had important socio-economic impacts on the entire MENA region and most of Europe. The conflict in Syria is different from

Iraqi, Yemeni, and Libyan conflicts in that it generated one of the largest refugee waves in the past century. This suggests that the Syrian conflict entails

large human capital destruction, which may have irreversible consequences for the country's economic growth potential in the long term.

**Figure 4.5: Aggregate economic activity in Syria between 1994-2018 measured in terms of satellite-based night-light data.**

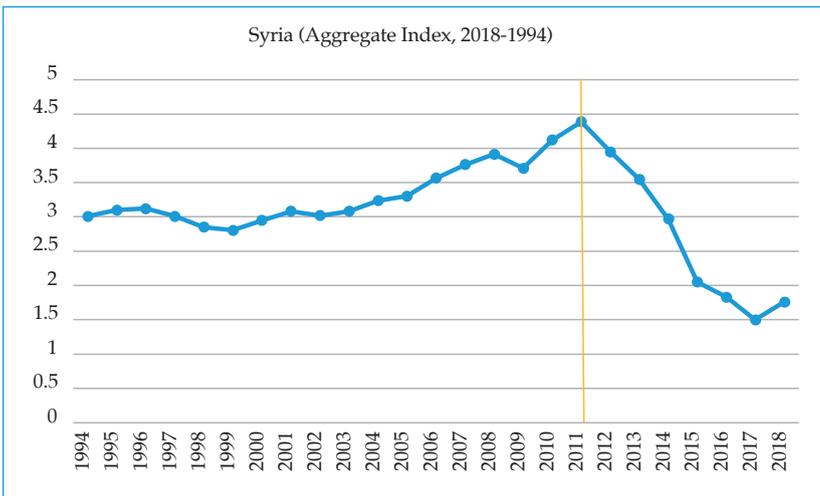


Figure 4.5 plots the trends in economic activity in Syria based on satellite data covering the period between 1994 and 2018. The figure suggests that the Syrian conflict has had devastating economic consequences. The level of night-light intensity is way below its level in the mid-1990s. In comparison with Iraq, Libya, and Yemen, the Syrian economy is in a much worse situation in terms of physical destruction along with vanished human capital and destroyed institutions. Any reconstruction efforts for the Syrian economy should entail serious repatriation efforts in addition to investments in physical infrastructure and institutions.

#### *4.3.5 Comparison with existing estimates*

The estimates presented in this section suggest that the scale and intensity of the violence and destruction in the region have been unprecedented in recent history and the extent of economic destruction is the largest in Syria. The death toll in Syria, as of the first half of 2019, has reached 570,000 according to the calculations of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) performed a very detailed study to estimate the economic costs of the Syrian civil war and conflict. According to their estimates, the

destruction of the physical capital stock by the end of 2017 had reached almost \$120 billion (ESCWA, 2018). Another detailed study calculating the cost of the Syrian conflict was conducted by the World Bank. Their estimates suggest that the cumulative loss in GDP reached \$226 billion – approximately four times Syrian GDP in 2010 — between 2011 and 2016 (World Bank, 2017). Finally, Devadas et al (2019) use a version of the World Bank’s long-term growth model (augmenting public capital and infrastructure investments) and show that real GDP in Syria contracted by 12% per year on average over the 2011-18 period. These estimates are largely in agreement with the satellite-based estimates presented in this section.

#### 4.4 Post-conflict growth potential

##### *4.4.1 An analytical framework and some preliminary findings*

To understand the potential contribution of repatriation to post-conflict economic growth and development in the conflict countries (and also the interaction between repatriation and economic growth), it is useful to think in terms of an analytical framework that appropriately incorporates the key drivers of growth in low- and middle-income countries with a long-term perspective. Those drivers typically include public capital, pub-

lic infrastructure investments, private capital investments, human capital, total factor productivity, demographics, and labor market outcomes. Those elements are typically embedded in large-scale economic growth models in a theory-consistent way. One prominent example is the long-term growth model of the World Bank (see, for example, Hevie and Loayza, 2012; and Loayza and Pennings, 2018) and its extensions embedding public capital/infrastructure – see Devadas and Pennings (2018). These versions of the model are particularly useful in assessing the post-conflict growth potential of conflict countries because they practically allow for key quantitative exercises comparing various counterfactual scenarios under certain assumptions.

The analysis in Section 2 demonstrates that Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen suffer from severe degradation in the quantity and quality of physical capital and infrastructure, which has substantially reduced the level of GDP and the growth capacity of those countries. Economic reconstruction of conflict countries in the region substantially relies on rebuilding the capital stock in those countries. It should be emphasized that investment in public capital will be key, especially in the initial stages. The findings reported by Devadas and Pennings (2018) largely confirm this conjecture. Using an extended version of the World Bank’s model, they discuss the role of public

capital/infrastructure in increasing economic growth potential in low- and middle-income countries. Public capital and infrastructure have been among the key drivers of economic growth and have become a key pillar of development strategies in emerging economies – China’s infrastructure-led growth strategy is the best-known example. Although there is a disagreement in the literature about the magnitude of the effect of public infrastructure on growth in developing countries (Calderon and Serven, 2014), the consensus is that public capital/infrastructure investment positively affects the growth potential of emerging economies through various direct and indirect channels/mechanisms. The main findings of Devadas and Pennings (2018), which also have important lessons for the conflict countries, can be summarized as follows:

- **Conflict countries need substantial amounts of public investment:** The effect of public investment on growth is quite high when (1) the initial public capital/output ratio is low, that is, when public capital is scarce; and (2) the public investment is in the form of essential public infrastructure; while the contribution of public investment to economic growth is small in countries with abundant public capital. Civil conflict and internal war have largely destroyed public capital in conflict countries in the region. This finding suggests that Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen will benefit significantly from large amounts of public capital investment, especially in the form of essential infrastructure.
- **Private investment boosts economic growth in the short term:** Private capital investment has a large impact on economic growth in the short term in low- and middle-income countries, while the size of the effect fades away quickly and becomes smaller in the long term. This implies that attracting large amounts of private capital investment would be important to have a notable short-term boost in economic growth. In other words, complementing public capital investment with private investment in the conflict countries will have a high return on economic growth in the short term.
- **High-quality public investment generates large growth dividends:** Based on a novel index measuring the quality of public investment, Devadas and Pennings (2018) show that high-quality public investment – even when the quantity is kept constant – improves efficiency and increases growth potential substantially in low- and middle-income countries. The quality of public capital and infrastructure is typically poor in the region and the quality dimension even got worse due to civil conflict in afflicted countries. This find-

ing suggests that new public investments should also aim to improve the quality and efficiency of public capital in those countries.

#### *4.4.2 Existing empirical evidence on post-conflict recovery*

To assess the potential for post-conflict recovery in the MENA region, it would be useful to look back into the conflict cases in the past and extract some insights from the growth experiences of other conflict countries in recent history. The loss in economic growth potential is large especially in Syria, but history suggests that a quick recovery along with strengthened socio-economic fundamentals beyond the pre-war situation need not be a remote possibility – if permanent political stability is achieved in a peaceful and inclusive way.

Findings of some of the relevant literature can be summarized as follows. Chen et al (2008) perform an event study design using cross-country data on 41 countries between 1960-2013 for the purpose of analyzing the post-civil-war economic situation and developments. The main finding is that sustaining peace and political stability in the long term increases the possibility of surpassing the pre-conflict economic performance in conflict countries. There are other studies focusing on the Second World War and the economic performance of the afflicted countries in the post-war period (see, for example, Organski and Kugler 1977; 1980).

There is another set of papers arguing that countries exposed to large negative output shocks performed very well in the following decades due to reconstruction dynamics (Milionis and Vonyo, 2015). Countries like Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen have experienced massive destruction of factors of production due to war and conflict in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. The lessons from the reconstruction efforts after the Second World War and insights from other experiences might be useful in evaluating the post-conflict growth potential of the afflicted countries in the region. The similarities and differences between the conflict countries and the countries experienced civil conflict in the past should be carefully assessed to extract useful lessons from the relevant historical events.

For example, as Devadas et al (2019) suggest, ‘One of the key lessons from the experience of post-WWII growth in the European countries and Japan, for example, was that the rapid growth impact of the massive rebuilding of physical capital was made possible, not only by the Marshall Plan resources, but also by the relatively limited war time depreciation of the human capital base and technological potential (Smolny, 2000).’ The conflict in the region following the Arab uprisings has mostly generated large refugee flows. Although the Syrian case is an extreme example, long-term war and conflict in the afflicted coun-

tries led to human capital flight to safety, which is a major challenge. Reallocation of production factors in the post-conflict era is another important issue. In an early paper, Janossy (1969) highlights this issue by arguing that although higher returns to physical capital investment is an important factor improving the growth performance in the post-conflict period, the roles of economic reorganization and reallocation of factors of production should not be ignored.

#### *4.4.3 Post-conflict growth scenarios in Syria*

The Syrian crisis has had devastating humanitarian consequences due to the huge volume of forced displacement it generated during the civil war. Almost two thirds of the 21 million Syrians have been forced out of their homes due to conflict – this figure includes both refugees and internally displaced individuals. As of today, Syrian refugees account for approximately one quarter of the total number of refugees in the world. Similarly, internally displaced Syrians are estimated to be around one fifth of the total number of internally displaced persons in the world. These numbers suggest a huge loss of human capital stock in Syria, which implies that all reconstruction plans should include an effective repatriation plan to bring the country's productive human capital and labor resources back.

Although Section 2 provides estimates for the economic cost of conflict in the afflicted countries, a more theory-consistent approach is needed to incorporate some realistic counterfactual exercises and analyze the post-conflict growth scenarios. Devadas et al (2019) offer such an approach. Specifically, they use the World Bank public capital model of Devadas and Pennings (2019) (i) to produce a simulated 'no conflict scenario' as a counterfactual exercise; (ii) then, to calculate the cost of conflict; and (iii) to evaluate the post-conflict growth potential in Syria. The after-war simulations are performed based on three counterfactual exercises featuring different settlement scenarios:

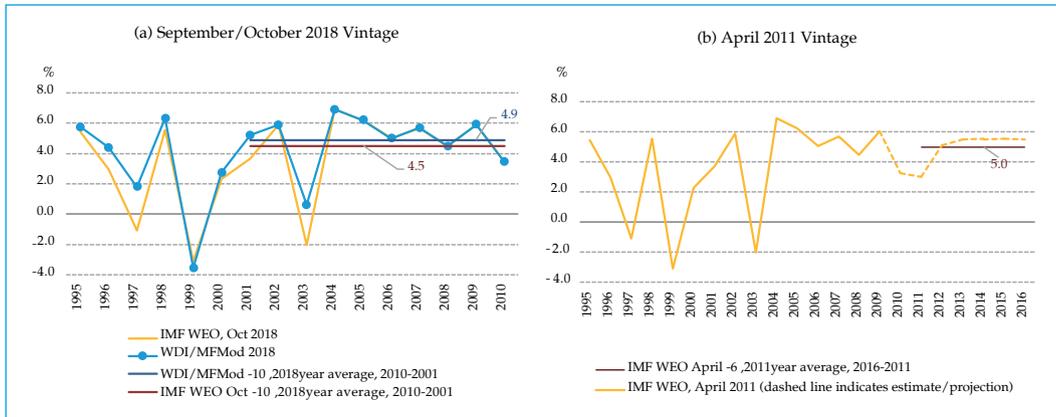
- First, a moderate scenario, which is the baseline scenario, incorporating the 'Sochi-plan' carried out by Iran, Russia, Turkey, and international organizations.
- Second, an optimistic scenario cast based on long-term political settlement operated and monitored by the UN.
- And, finally, a pessimistic scenario featuring fragmented political power.

These three scenarios also accompany three different levels of reconstruction assistance and repatriation volumes (therefore, different levels of public and private investment; different human capital levels): the optimistic scenario features a large amount of reconstruction as-

sistance and repatriation, while both are lower in the pessimistic scenario. The no conflict scenario

has trivial assumptions on reconstruction assistance and repatriation volumes.

**Figure 4.6: Pre-conflict real GDP growth and projection.**

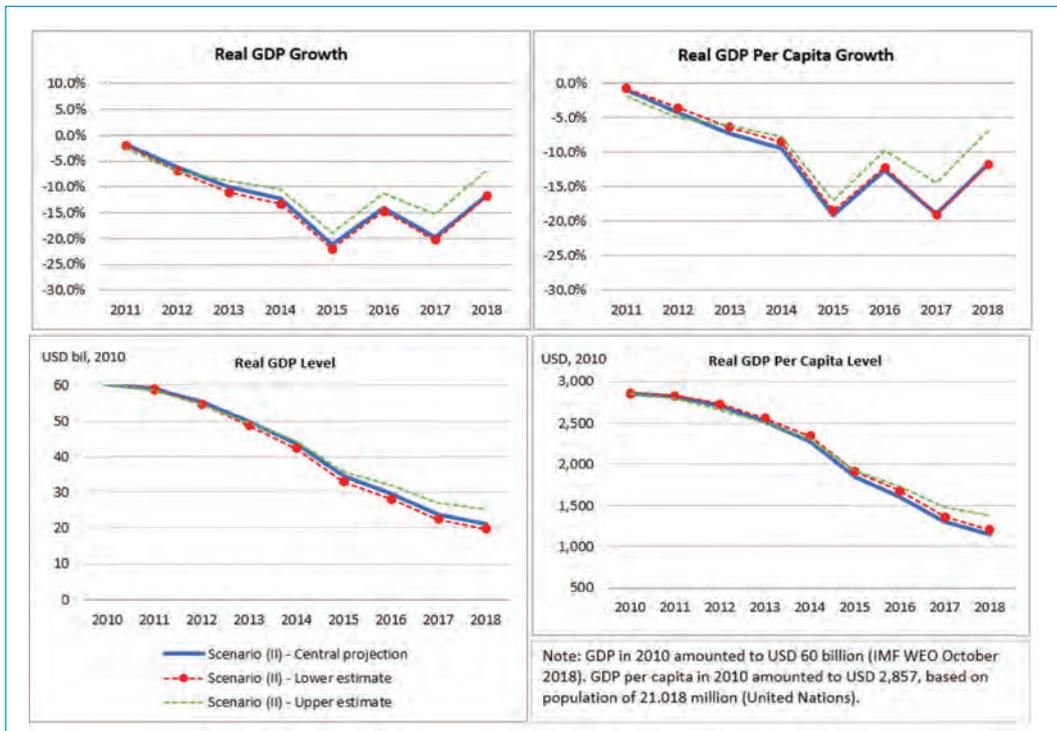


Source: Devadas et al (2019).

Under the ‘no conflict’ counterfactual exercise, the estimates suggest that annual real GDP growth averaged around 5.3% between 2011 and 2018 (see Figure 4.6), which would increase real GDP from \$60 billion in 2010 to \$91 billion in 2018. Similarly, real GDP per capita increased from \$2,857 in 2010 to \$3,774 by 2018. The cost of conflict is estimated to be around -12% real GDP growth per year on average from 2011 to 2018 (see Figure 4.7). This huge economic destruction in GDP implies that the level of real GDP as of 2018 is around \$23.2 billion. Devadas et al (2019) further document that: ‘Comparing the conflict versus no conflict

simulations suggest a cumulative loss in GDP potential of about \$300 billion over 2011-2018. The depletion of factors of production alone may account for about 87% of the negative GDP growth on average, and further, about 64% of the average negative growth is due to physical capital destruction. Physical capital destruction reflects the compounded effects of large outright damages, low new investments, and a falling output base, that is adversely affected by all growth drivers. Demographics and labor account for about 15%, human capital 7%, and total factor productivity 13% of negative GDP growth on average over the conflict years.’

Figure 4.7: Conflict years calibration for GDP in Syria.



Source: Devadas et al (2019).

Their optimistic scenario, which features high investment within the first decade, suggests that Syria will surpass its 2010 GDP and GDP per capita levels in 10 years. The pessimistic scenario, which embeds the assumptions of limited guarantees for micro security/property rights, low reconstruction funds, and low investment, suggests that it would take two or three decades for Syria to catch and surpass its 2010 GDP and GDP per capita levels. In the optimistic and pessimistic scenarios, average real GDP per capita growth would be 8.1% and 3.1% annually.

These findings imply that high post-conflict economic performance is possible in Syria if long-term political stability is achieved, market-friendly mechanisms are redesigned to obtain efficient allocation of resources throughout the economy, appropriately designed reconstruction and repatriation programs are implemented, and those programs are supported by sustainable financing facilities.

## 4.5 Review of the existing results and country experiences

There are several similarities and differences between return migration and repatriation. Both terms refer to going back to the home country after spending some time in a destination country. The main difference is that, in general, return migration refers to going back to the home country for 'economic' or voluntary migrants, while repatriation refers to going back to the home country for 'forced' migrants or refugees. In this section, a brief overview of the literature discussing the impact of return migration and repatriation on both the home and host countries is presented. Although the literature on return migration is rather rich, there is relatively little academic discussion of the impact of repatriation on various economic and social outcomes. The main purpose of this chapter is to compile the existing evidence on both types of returning behavior, and also to extract key lessons and policy implications for today's refugee crises, especially the one in Syria.

Contrary to widespread belief, a non-negligible fraction of immigrants leaves the host country within a few years of arrival (Dustmann and Görlach, 2016). According to an OECD report, 20-50% of the immigrants leave the host country within the first five years (OECD, 2008). The emigration patterns of foreign-born

individuals vary across countries and regions. For example, the emigration rates are lower in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, while they are higher in most of Europe. Those who leave the host country either move to another host country or go back home.

One main implication of temporary (or return) migration is that the ones who choose to leave the host country are probably a selected set of immigrants; therefore, focusing only on the stayers may lead to biased estimates from the perspective of the host country. Another implication is that 'return intentions' shape the economic decisions of immigrants. For example, the expected duration of stay may determine the intensity of human capital investment, amount of savings, and career choice; moreover, these patterns may differ across countries and time periods.

Perhaps the questions most relevant for our context are whether voluntary immigrants or refugees have stronger intentions to leave the host country and how the differences in those intentions affect their behavior. Cortes (2004) argues that refugees intend to stay longer in the host country than economic immigrants, and they are also more willing to invest in their human capital after arriving in the host country than economic immigrants. A similar result is reported by Khan (1997). Dustmann (2008) argues that the differences

in the intentions to stay affect the human capital investment decisions of the second generations; specifically, the sons of the parents who intend to stay longer in the host country are more likely to attain a post-secondary degree. For savings, a number of papers – including Merkle and Zimmermann (1992), Dustmann and Mestres (2010a), Pinger (2010), and Bauer and Sinning (2011) – show that immigrants who are more willing to return tend to save more and have higher remittances than those who are less willing to return.

Another very important issue is the potential impact of remittances, return migration, and/or repatriation on the economic outcomes in the home country. There is a large body of literature trying to address these questions (see Rapoport and Docquier, 2006, for a survey). Remittances can be defined as a major channel through which migration may influence the wellbeing of the individuals living in the countries of origin. Remittances are also affected by the temporariness of migration. Temporary immigrants are more likely to leave their parents behind (Funkhouser, 1995) and they are less likely to move their assets (Dustmann and Mestres, 2010b). If refugees are less likely to return home than economic immigrants, then they will also be less likely to leave their parents behind and more likely to move their assets into the host country.

Other than the remittances channel, return migration and/or repatriation also affect the outcomes in the country of origin directly through the human capital channel. If the returning migrants are high-skilled ones, then return migration has a clear positive impact on the economic outcomes in the home country – even when the initial migration decision is highly selective (see, for example, Domingues Dos Santos and Postel-Vinay, 2003). This suggests that permanent high-skilled migration has negative effects on the long-term human capital capacity of the home country.

In a more general setting, temporary migration has two opposing effects on the aggregate human capital level of the home country. First, temporary migration may be reducing the human capital intensity of temporary migrants, which imposes a negative impact. Second, return migration generates significant knowledge diffusion and improves the technology/knowledge in the home country (Dustmann et al, 2011). As a separate issue, Spilimbergo (2009) argues that return migrants may reconstruct the institutional structure in the home country and increase institutional quality.

These findings suggest that – perhaps due to trauma and other psychological factors, economic destruction in the home country, higher expected returns in the host country, etc. – the refugees

might have strong incentives to stay in their host countries, they may have strong intentions to invest in both their own and their children's human capital, and they may have weak intentions to save and generate remittances. Possible repatriation policies should take these findings into account.

There are various studies investigating the impact of repatriation on host countries' economic outcomes. In an early study, Hunt (1992) investigates the impact of the 1962 Algeria repatriates on labor market outcomes in France. She reports a slight decline in wages and a small increase in the unemployment rate in response to the repatriation movement. Carrington and de Lima (1996) 'examines the labor market effect of the *retornados* who immigrated to Portugal from Angola and Mozambique in the mid-1970s following Portugal's loss of its African colonies.' They document larger negative effects of repatriates on the Portuguese labor markets than Hunt (1992) documents for France. In a more recent study, Aydemir and Kirdar (2017) aim to estimate the impact of Turkish repatriates from Bulgaria on labor market outcomes in Turkey. They document significant increases in unemployment rates, especially for younger workers and for the ones in direct labor market competition with the repatriates – that is, similar skill groups.

In a different strand of the literature, Lee et al (2017) investigate the impact of repatriation of Mexicans out of the United States on the outcomes of US natives. They report that, contrary to the common claim, Mexican repatriation did not expand employment opportunities for US natives. Similarly, Clemens et al (2018) show that 'the *bracero*' – for example, the exclusion of Mexican farmers from US agriculture – did not improve wages and employment for native US workers in the agricultural sector. The evidence suggests that repatriation has slightly negative effects on the wages and employment conditions in countries of origin; but it has not improved the labor market outcomes of natives in host countries.

Although these findings are useful, the papers reviewed above deal mostly with developed countries and their migration counterparts, while the situation in Syria is different in various ways. Most importantly, Syria has lost a substantial fraction of its workforce in the form of forced migration, so the context is different. It is most likely the case that successful repatriation of Syrian refugees – once peace is established, institutions are rebuilt, and political/economic stability is achieved in the long term – will substantially improve the general economic situation in Syria.

It is important to take a closer look at countries and context that are more similar to Syria. Harild et al (2015) address exactly this issue and present eight examples of refugee return for countries that are rather similar to the Syrian context: Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Iraq, Liberia, and South Sudan. These eight cases are reviewed below along the lines Harild et al (2015) discuss in their study.

#### 4.5.1 Afghanistan

Following the Communist coup in 1978, a civil conflict emerged in Afghanistan, which generated a large refugee wave mostly towards Pakistan and Iran. Over almost 10 years of war and conflict, more than five million Afghans fled to safety – more than three million went to Pakistan and around two million to Iran. A gradual repatriation movement started in late 1989 after Soviet troops left Afghanistan. Refugees started to return in huge masses after the collapse of the Communist regime in late 1991. Although civil conflict in Afghanistan continued in different forms, the repatriation wave continued and, by 2000, more than four million refugees had returned.

The repatriation process was assisted by the UN and other international and local NGOs, as well as the Pakistani and Afghan governments. To facilitate the return of refugees, who

were originally residing in rural areas before the refugee wave had started, large-scale projects were concurrently implemented to facilitate the rehabilitation of irrigation systems, seed and fertilizer aid packages were distributed, support was provided to help returnees build their homes, transport infrastructure was improved, schools and government buildings were repaired/rebuilt, and access to sanitized water was provided. Those projects were of benefit not only to the refugees, but also to the relevant communities as a whole. Yet funding was delayed several times and sometimes it was inadequate. In addition, the level of coordination between stakeholders was also sub-optimal. These factors reduced the effectiveness of the assistance programs. After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, another large wave of refugee returns started: another two million Afghani refugees returned within two years. Building on past experiences, the UN and other stakeholders responded more promptly and in a much more organized way to the repatriation wave.

Because of unending conflict and despite intensive humanitarian aid efforts spent over almost 30 years in Afghanistan, the core issues, such as housing, security, and employment, still remain unresolved to a large extent (UNHCR, 2004). Rapidly increasing population (despite huge refugee waves) and the existence of economic/political uncertain-

ties have substantially reduced the effectiveness of reintegration programs. Moreover, the composition of returnees has changed over time and more recent repatriates have headed to urban areas: this has limited the impact of policy interventions, which have mostly targeted the rural areas. The human capital stock and institutional structure of the country have been heavily damaged. Relatively less attention has been devoted by the relevant authorities to rebuilding the key institutions that would supplement economic development efforts in Afghanistan. High-skilled Afghani refugees seem to have permanently left the country and have not yet returned.

#### *4.5.2 Angola*

Angola declared independence from Portugal in 1972 and the country immediately fell into a violent civil war with devastating socio-economic consequences. More than four million Angolans fled their home and around 600,000 of them became refugees. The main host countries were Zambia, Namibia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DCR), South Africa, the Republic of Congo, and Botswana. The civil war was ended in 2002 and a large repatriation wave had started right after the end of the civil war.

Until 2007, around 80% of the Angolan refugees in the host countries had returned, according to UNCHR figures. The

main problem was that most of the refugees did not wait for the formal approval of multilateral treaties, which put them at large risk (HRW, 2005). In addition, they could not benefit from any monetary and non-monetary assistance programs and this sudden movement posed additional challenges for the humanitarian aid process. One main problem was that part of the returnees were 'forced' rather than going back voluntarily, which also complicated the repatriation process and reduced the effectiveness of humanitarian aid efforts. Since the return was not motivated by strong pull factors – such as economic reconstruction and sustained political stability – the existing conditions in Angola were not conducive to resettlement and quick reintegration. The international organizations and humanitarian aid programs could not immediately react to quickly changing conditions in the region, and they failed to understand the socio-cultural forces motivating cross-border movements.

#### *4.5.3 Bosnia-Herzegovina*

Following the fall of the Soviet Union in late 1991, violent political conflict in Yugoslavia generated ethnic cleansing and systematic expulsion/persecution practices against Bosnian people (Toal and Dahlman, 2011). The Srebrenica massacre of more than 8,000 Muslim Bosnian people in 1995 was of-

ficially accepted as genocide by the international community. As a consequence of violent conflict and civil war, around 4.6 million Bosnians fled their home and more than 1.2 million of them became refugees in various host countries across the Europe.

The return of refugees and internally displaced persons were coordinated according to the principles reached in the Dayton Peace Agreement in late 1995. Although the agreement had ambitiously targeted the return of more than two million people within a rather short period of time, only one million of them returned (fewer than 500,000 refugees) 10 years later. The fact that the refugees mostly fled to West European countries with better economic opportunities for them and their families reduced the number of actual returns. One main problem was that the Dayton Peace Agreement focused too much on the mechanics of the return (which generated additional disputes about past ownership of housing/property and the location of returnees) and did not consider or address the socio-political realities of the Bosnian society, which resulted in unusual ethnic ‘un-mixing’ and segregation. Implementation of micro-credit programs and other humanitarian aid projects by various international organizations did not largely alter this situation.

#### 4.5.4 *Burundi*

Two large refugee waves moved from Burundi to Tanzania: one in 1972 due to internal ethnic conflict (300,000 refugees); and the other in 1993, again due to inter-ethnic violence (350,000 refugees). After 1995, the Tanzanian government closed the door to new refugee inflows and imposed several restrictions on the employment and settlement conditions of Burundian refugees in Tanzania. Internal conflict was continuing during this period and the international organizations (mainly the UN High Commissioner on Refugees, UNHCR) were unwilling to initiate a repatriation program as political stability and safety had still not been reached in Burundi.

After the end of civil war in early 2001, the Tanzanian government and the UNCHR agreed on a repatriation plan; the initiative started in late 2002. By 2012, approximately 500,000 Burundian refugees had returned home. Building on past lessons, the UNHCR carried out a relatively successful repatriation program as the outcomes and living conditions of the repatriates substantially improved after returning – although issues about ancestral land and earlier property ownership are still largely unresolved (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012). Extensive micro-credit and employment programs along with development assistance (despite the existence of sustainability concerns)

also facilitated the quick adaptation of returnees.

#### *4.5.5 Cambodia*

More than 500,000 Cambodians fled to Thailand in response to a violent internal conflict in Cambodia during the 1970s and early 1980s. Around 400,000 of the Cambodian refugees went back home after the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement. The UNHCR and the governments of the two countries agreed on a voluntary return plan, which also included various repatriation assistance and monitoring programs. Vocational training programs and access to micro-credit/finance have been identified to be the key channels motivating a successful reintegration of returnees in the Cambodian case. The overall Cambodian repatriation experience is generally regarded among experts and academics to be a successful example (Eastmond and Ojendal, 1999).

#### *4.5.6 Iraq*

The US-led invasion of Iraq generated a huge wave of forced displacement – more than four million Iraqis, around 500,000 of whom were refugees and asylum-seekers. The main host countries in the region were Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Palestine (plus Lebanon and Jordan to a smaller extent). The Iraqi case became more complicated after the spark of a violent internal conflict in Syria, which forced Iraqi refugees back to Iraq and generated a

refugee wave from Syria towards Iraq. Existing evidence suggests that the reluctance to return back to Iraq was counterbalanced by the emergence of violent conflict in Syria (UNHCR, 2015).

The political situation in Iraq has been quite volatile and uncertain over the past 15 years. Episodes of conflict and violence were often followed by episodes of relative stability. But the lack of a permanent resolution of political issues coupled with the lack of high-quality protection standards have made the UNHCR reluctant to offer a structured repatriation plan for the Iraqi refugees. The fragile situation in the region is likely to continue to prevent the design of systematic repatriation programs, at least in the short term. The existing return movements are in the form of a rather compulsory or forced return due to increased violence in destination countries.

#### *4.5.7 Liberia*

The civil war in Liberia in 1989 has generated around 800,000 refugees, who mostly moved to Ghana to seek temporary refuge. Political stability was re-established in Liberia after the end of the civil war in 2003. The UNHCR designed and led several waves of repatriation from Ghana to Liberia starting from 2004. The initial waves were rather unsuccessful, and the number of returnees remained very low.

The Ghanaian government implemented some coercive

measures to reduce the social and economic incentives to stay in Ghana. First, the government excluded the refugees from some employment services. Second, humanitarian assistance was reduced substantially, which put the refugee households in a fragile position. Finally, as the refugee population declined over time, economic activity within the refugee population shrank and the economic incentives to stay in Ghana diminished substantially (Omata, 2012). To sum up, several policies framed as the ‘push factors’ were the main motivating forces behind repatriation, rather than favorable, supportive, and conducive pull factors originating in the home country.

#### 4.5.8 South Sudan

The Republic of South Sudan was established after a six-year interim period following the 2005 ‘Comprehensive Peace Agreement’, which ended nearly five decades of war and violence in the Sudan region. Uganda was the main host country. Among more than two million refugees, around 550,000 returned within the scope of the repatriation program of the UNHCR, while the majority of the remaining refugees returned spontaneously – that is, with no reference to any repatriation program. The emergence of new civil conflicts in early 2010s generated new waves of displacement, which complicated the picture significantly

(UNOCHA 2014). So, the South Sudan experience suggests that the repatriation efforts should also address conflict prevention and peace-building practices, and security priorities in an effective way. Agricultural subsistence plans had been the key elements of repatriation assistance.

## 4.6 Concluding remarks and policy perspective

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss the economic cost of conflict in afflicted countries, the post-conflict growth scenarios, and the potential contribution of repatriation to the economic and political development of conflict countries – especially Syria. To achieve this goal, the level of economic destruction in the four main conflict countries – Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen – were quantified using satellite data and GIS-based estimates. Post-conflict growth scenarios were discussed based on an extension version of the World Bank’s Long-Term Growth Model. And, finally, a detailed literature review on the economic consequences of return migration/repatriation for both the home and host countries were discussed, along with a detailed analysis of the repatriation experiences of selected countries – Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Iraq, Liberia, and South Sudan.

Clearly, the repatriation process is not straightforward. Many parties with conflicting interests and goals are involved. The home country needs to offer peace, political stability, employment opportunities, and other socio-economic benefits for a successful voluntary return to take place. The UNHCR, the main donor countries, and other national/international NGOs also have to play important roles in the whole process to surmount the potential bottlenecks.

This chapter provides several lessons to be learned in terms of the link between the economic consequences of violent conflict, refugee behavior, and repatriation. Several countries in the region have experienced civil conflict, but the Syrian experience is unique in the sense that Syria has been the source country for a huge refugee wave. A healthy reconstruction of the Syrian economy may not be possible without the successful design and implementation of a feasible repatriation plan. Reconstruction of physical and human capital are complementary to each other, which suggests that long-term political, institutional, and economic stability, and the prosperity of Syria may not be achieved without actively involving Syrian people in the reconstruction process. The following main policy lessons and recommendations arise from the discussion provided in this chapter.

1. The existing consensus in the literature suggests that refugees are less likely to leave the host country than economic migrants; they have stronger incentives to invest in their own and their children's human capital in the host country than economic migrants, which suggests that they put a strong effort to align their skill sets with the skill requirements of the host country; and they have lower propensity to accumulate savings and send their money back to home country as remittances, so their potential contribution in terms of reconstruction after conflict may also be limited. These behavioral patterns should be considered in designing repatriation programs, as post-conflict trauma experienced by refugees and superior economic opportunities offered in host countries may make refugees (especially the high-skilled ones) less willing to return. The economic opportunities offered by a potential return to the home country become crucial at this point.
2. But the economic conditions in conflict countries do not look very prospective. Satellite-based estimates suggest that conflict has severely destroyed economic activity, and the size of economic destruction is very large in Syria. This implies that the repatriation programs should focus on systematic and large-

scale economic reconstruction plans – which should naturally embed institutional upgrading.

3. Investment in the quantity and quality of public capital/ infrastructure would play important roles in reconstructing the conflict countries. Moreover, private capital investment could substantially boost economic growth rates in the short term. Conditional on achieving long-term political stability and peace, surpassing the economic performance of the pre-conflict era and rapid convergence to the hypothetical ‘no-conflict path’ need not be a remote possibility, if feasible and appropriately designed reconstruction and repatriation programs are implemented in conflict countries.
4. Existing experiences suggest that most of the repatriation efforts have been less successful than expected due to various problems, including but not limited to: (i) lack of understanding of the cultural, religious, and historical context; (ii) lack of coordination between governments and NGOs; (iii) lack of anticipation of the recurrence of conflict in the post-repatriation period; (iv) failing to address the issues of past property and land ownership; and (v) lack of supporting the repatriation programs with appropriately designed micro-credit assistance, housing support, and employment subsidy programs (which are shown in the literature to be extremely useful). These lessons should be taken into account in designing repatriation programs for the Syrian refugees in the future.
5. Finally, the Syrian refugees are now in the process of integrating into the socio-economic life of their host countries. Developed countries have been implementing financial and technical support programs to facilitate the integration process. For example, Turkey has been implementing large-scale EU-funded programs to integrate Syrian children into the Turkish public education system. The overall enrollment rate is above 60% (including all levels and grades) and the enrollment rate is expected to increase rapidly further into the near future. Host countries are now discussing how to provide official work permits and even to provide citizenship selectively to Syrian refugees. As the resolution of conflict in Syria is delayed, those integration efforts will proceed further, and the Syrian refugees may become less likely to participate in voluntary repatriation plans. International cooperation is needed to end the conflict in Syria (and other conflict countries) and to implement well-designed repatriation programs rapidly in order to expedite economic reconstruction.

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## CONCLUSIONS

# Repatriation of refugees from the Arab conflicts: prospects and potential political and economic implications

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The major problem for repatriation of refugees is the persistence of the conflicts from which they have fled. These continue in varying forms and at varying intensities in the four countries discussed in this Report – Iraq, Libya, Syrian, and Yemen. Final settlements of the conflicts that may lead to national reconciliation are yet to be reached. The fact that all these conflicts have involved extensive direct and indirect foreign interventions – both from other Arab countries and elsewhere in the world – has not only made their resolution more difficult but it has also made the nature of any settlement uncertain.

When the Arab uprisings broke out in 2011, hopes were raised that they would lead to the establishment of democratic regimes in the region and open the door for broad-based development. Yet as of mid-2019, with the exception of Tunisia, these hopes have not been realized. It remains to be seen whether any final settlements could lead to genuine democracy, particularly

in those countries where persistent civil conflicts have forced millions to become refugees, mostly in neighboring countries but also beyond.

Given current conditions, voluntary repatriation – as defined by Article 33 of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention (voluntary, safe, and dignified return) – is not commonly feasible. The reasons are the lack of robust and credible political settlements of the conflicts that, among other things, would guarantee the micro security of returnee individuals and communities as well as both their human rights and their property rights.

In addition, there is an absence of a substantial reconstruction agenda, which, in turn, hinges on the achievement of meaningful political settlements. The relatively limited voluntary repatriation of certain refugees has been made under specific conditions that permitted their return.

With these considerations in mind, this Report reaches five main conclusions.

## Refugees from Arab conflicts: scale and characteristics

First, the conflicts in the region (in Syria and Yemen principally, but also in Libya and Iraq) have caused millions to flee their homeland or forced them to be internally displaced within their own countries. It is estimated that as of mid-2019, 6.4 million refugees had fled from Syria with the majority settling in neighboring countries. Turkey has received half of them, while Lebanon and Jordan have a combined share of about 2.4 million. About a million refugees have settled in Europe, mainly in Germany and Sweden.

In Yemen, over two million have experienced internal displacement, mostly in Houthi-controlled territories with spillovers into neighboring African countries. Between 2014 and 2018, over three million Iraqis suffered internal displacement, while over 280,000, mostly women and children, were forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries, mainly Turkey. Estimates for forced internal displacements in Libya are not available.

Refugees who have settled in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey have mostly come from rural and poorer areas in Syria. Over half of them are children and most of the adults are not well educated. Poverty is widespread. It is estimated that half of the Syrian refugee households suffer from

very poor living conditions with a very high unemployment rate among those able to work. The prospects for potential integration in their host countries are very low.

By contrast, Syrian refugees in Europe are better educated and more economically able. Should they decide to settle in the countries of their refuge, the prospects are probably high.

## Incentives for refugees to return

Second, most refugees would opt to return to their home countries but there are multifaceted conditions that govern their return, security at home being one of the most important. At the same time, in deciding on return, refugees take account of the political, economic, and social factors in both the host and home countries. Interestingly, there is also a gender dimension to repatriation in that men and women have different priorities and act differently.

Restoration of security in certain parts of a country in conflict, as in Syria, has induced a limited return of refugees who hail from these parts. But a major issue here is that to the extent that a political settlement has not yet been reached, this type of return may not be sustainable: the conflict may erupt again in areas considered to be safe or secured by the state.

A wider consideration in this regard is the nature of a political settlement and specifically whether it is politically inclusive and could lead to democratic forms of governance. Refugees may view returning home as a political act equivalent to recognizing the legitimacy of the regime in the home country. Unless they feel they will be protected by the state, they may opt not to return and contribute to the rebuilding process.

Equally, refugees' perceived economic interests play a role in their decision to return or not – that is, their expectations of the conditions of livelihood in their home country and of opportunities for work and access to social services. Here the gender issue enters the picture. Households headed by women tend to be more concerned with the provision of services, especially schools and hospitals for their children, while men are more concerned with the availability of work opportunities and access to livelihood.

Other considerations that influence the decision of refugees to return or not include family circumstances in exile and in the home country. For example, the presence of family back home can act as an important pull for refugees; but if their children are in school in the host country, this could delay the decision to return. Furthermore, consideration

of prospects for reintegrating in the communities they had left could influence the decisions of refugees considering repatriation.

The considerations outlined above indicate clearly that in the absence of a genuine peace, repatriation of refugees faces many uncertainties. While the host countries are nonetheless eager to push in this direction, the voluntary return of refugees will continue to be severely constrained as a consequence of these considerations.

Of those who did return voluntarily, available UNHCR information (2017) on Syrian early repatriates (about 3% of the total) indicates that 58% of the returnees are men citing joining family members as the main reason for return. This is followed by, first, the deteriorating conditions in the country of asylum; second, an improved security situation back home; and finally, the desire to work.<sup>1</sup> The returnees mostly hailed from Turkey (40%), followed by Lebanon (36%), and a small number from Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt.

According to a 2019 World Bank study, demographic variables that are positively correlated with return include being single, male, and less educated. Of the pull factors, the most im-

<sup>1</sup> Available data on the repatriation of refugees from the other countries in conflict is fragmentary and unreliable.

portant is security and then available services, such as education and health facilities. Push factors include efforts undertaken by countries of asylum to induce premature return, especially in Lebanon, a hostile environment and unsustainable living conditions.

### **Rebuilding the social contract between refugees and the post-conflict regime**

Third, whatever motives drive refugees to go back home, their return should be viewed as a process of political rapprochement between citizen, community, and state, which calls for the rebuilding of the social contract between the refugee and the state. This implies proper recognition of the political roots of the armed conflict and not only its humanitarian dimension, and of the need for safety and security to be guaranteed through a political process that creates inclusive governance mechanisms, ends criminal impunity, and facilitates reintegration, demilitarization, and access to justice.

The more genuinely inclusive the post-conflict regime, the greater the incentive for refugees to return. While this process may take time given the varying post-conflict scenarios, efforts to prepare refugees for a return have to begin in advance: for example, providing legal assistance and

identifying trusted community mediators.

In practice, while the emerging post-conflict regime is normally the outcome of national reconciliation of the main parties to the conflict, it may continue to exhibit strong elements of clientelism. In other words, post-conflict governance may fall short of the ideal inclusivity that would serve the common interest rather than catering to a client-patron relationship.

Looking at the MENA region, past political settlements, such as those following the Algerian and Lebanese civil wars (in 2002 and 1990 respectively), are a good illustration. In the former case, the settlement was credible but incomplete: a strong state grip by a group of elites of economic resources (mainly oil) and political power created a clientelist structure, and transitional justice was not enforced. In the latter case, the settlement known as the Taif Agreement only managed to realign the political shares of religious sects in governance (the so-called 'consociational democracy') but did not eliminate existing inequality in citizens' civil rights, as had been hoped.

While a large number of Lebanese citizens who left the country during the civil war did return once a political settlement was reached, a good number opted not to return, especially those who had emigrated to the United States.

For the countries currently in conflict, effective repatriation of refugees presents a huge challenge. It requires having sustainable political settlements leading to the establishment of democratic governance that in turn would support the safe return of refugees and open the door to their participation in planned reconstruction projects.

### Resources for reconstruction

Fourth, in drawing up reconstruction plans, we should keep in mind that key drivers of growth in low- and middle-income countries include public capital, public infrastructure investments, private capital investments, human capital, total factor productivity, demographics, and labor market outcomes. Making available the resources needed to finance the required investment in all of these areas, as well as the workforce to implement them, is a huge challenge facing post-conflict reconstruction plans. Foreign financing will play a crucial role, as too will potentially returning capital as well as remittances from those staying abroad.

Considering specifically the case of Syria, empirical work shows that if there were a large amount of reconstruction assistance and repatriation forthcoming, and hence high investment within the first decade of recon-

struction, then Syria would be able to surpass its 2010 GDP and GDP per capita levels in 10 years' time.

But of course, this optimistic scenario may not emerge. An alternative pessimistic scenario, which embeds the assumptions of limited guarantees for micro-security/property rights, low reconstruction funds, and low investment, suggests that it would take two or three decades for Syria to catch and surpass its 2010 GDP levels.

These findings imply that high post-conflict economic performance is possible in Syria if long-term political stability is achieved, market-friendly mechanisms are redesigned to obtain efficient allocation of resources throughout the economy, appropriately designed reconstruction and repatriation programs are implemented, and those programs are supported by sustainable financing facilities.

Remittances of Syrians (basically of those in the process of integrating into the socio-economic life of their host countries) could be a major channel through which migration may influence the wellbeing of individuals at home.

As for repatriation, if returning migrants are highly skilled, then repatriation has a clear positive impact on the economic outcomes in the home country. Further return migrants would contribute to reconstructing national institutions and raise

their quality. On the other hand, one should bear in mind that the repatriation movement could lead to a limited decline in wages and a small increase in the unemployment rate in the short run.

### **New models of reconstruction and repatriation**

Fifth, a cautionary conclusion is in order. It is not surprising that, so far, repatriation efforts have been much less successful than expected. As indicated above, lack of security in the home countries and anticipation on the part of the refugees of recurring conflicts is a major explanatory factor. Until hostilities are permanently ended and a genuine national reconciliation is achieved in the countries suffering from conflict, particularly Syria and Yemen, a sustained program of repatriation is clearly not expected to succeed to any great extent.

But even when peace is restored, it is essential for the parties concerned (national governments and international organizations), when designing future repatriation programs of refugees, to address other hindrances that have been associated with the so far limited return

of refugees. This would include, among others delineated in the conclusions above, a lack of coordination between the parties concerned with repatriation, a failure of the home country to address issues of property rights, and a lack of sufficient international support for repatriation programs.

Past repatriation and reconstruction efforts were intended to address specific regional or country-specific concerns. But while the effects of existing Arab conflicts and their associated refugee problems remain basically regional concerns, they have now spilled beyond the region to become a global problem. This implies the need for coordinated policy action between all the governments and international organizations concerned to reach an all-encompassing solution that accounts for this new dimension of the refugee problem.

Past regional models and/or individual country efforts may no longer be useful or sustainable. Looking forward to the post-conflict phase, new reconstruction models and institutions would need to be designed to avoid the inefficiencies of the past and lay the foundations for sustainable programs of repatriation.