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The Syrian Refugee Crisis and Foreign Policy Decision-Making in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey

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Abstract

How does forced migration affect the politics of host states and, in particular, how does it impact states' foreign policy decision-making? The relevant literature on refugee politics has yet to fully explore how forced migration affects host states' behavior. One possibility is that they will employ their position in order to extract revenue from other state or nonstate actors for maintaining refugee groups within their borders. This article explores the workings of these *refugee rentier states*, namely states seeking to leverage their position as host states of displaced communities for material gain. It focuses on the Syrian refugee crisis, examining the foreign policy responses of three major host states—Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. While all three engaged in post-2011 *refugee rent-seeking behavior*, Jordan and Lebanon deployed a *back-scratching* strategy based on bargains, while Turkey deployed a *blackmailing* strategy based on threats. Drawing upon primary sources in English and Arabic, the article inductively examines the choice of strategy and argues that it depended on the size of the host state's refugee community and domestic elites' perception of their geostrategic importance vis-à-vis the target. The article concludes with a discussion of these findings' significance for understanding the international dimension of the Syrian refugee crisis and argues that they also pave the way for future research on the effects of forced displacement on host states' political development.

Keywords: Middle East, forced displacement, inductive inquiry, case studies, migration, refugee rentier states

Introduction

"We can open the doors to Greece and Bulgaria anytime and we can put the refugees on buses," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declared to a group of European Union (EU) senior officials in February 2016. "So how will you deal with refugees if you don't get a deal? Kill the refugees?" (Reuters 2016a). A year before this, the Greek Minister of Defense Panos Kammenos threatened that "we cannot keep ISIS out if the EU keeps bullying us" (Aldrick and Carassava 2015). Other host states in the region—namely Lebanon and Jordan—have also repeatedly voiced their need for international economic assistance albeit by promising to continue supporting refugee populations within their borders. Indeed, forced migra-

tion often generates tensions in global politics and varied reactions by host states, most strikingly in the responses to the post-2011 displacement of Syrians across the Middle East and beyond. Existing theorization of host states' engagement with forced migration flows indicates that they may aim to benefit from such outflows in an aggressive manner, even if they played no part in generating them. But this does not account for the full gamut of host states' foreign policy choices or some states' abstention from the use of coercion. This article aims to expand our understanding of the interplay between forced migration and power politics within the context of the Syrian refugee crisis, in order to address how refugee flows affect host states' foreign policy.

I argue that a host state's domestic elites often approach refugee communities as potential sources of revenue. I introduce the term *refugee rentier states* to describe states that employ their position as host states of forcibly displaced populations to extract revenue, or *refugee rent*, from other state or nonstate actors in order to maintain these populations within their borders. Building on international relations literature on issue-linkage strategies, I identify two strategies through which a host state may exercise *refugee rent-seeking behavior* in its foreign policy: via *blackmailing*—threatening to flood a target state(s) with refugee populations within its borders, unless compensated—or via *back-scratching*—promising to maintain refugee populations within its borders, if compensated. Recognizing that a state's policy choice is rarely a simple binary between coercion and cooperation, I operationalize the two strategies with regard to specific patterns that allows to distinguish specific behavior patterns in host states' policies. Using a three-case-study approach to examine the foreign policy behavior of the main host states of displaced Syrian communities since 2011, my data suggests that a host state's choice between blackmailing or back-scratching depends on domestic elites' perception vis-à-vis the target state(s). Drawing on data collected in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, I argue that a strategy of black-mailing is adopted when domestic elites believe that their state is geopolitically important vis-a-vis the target state(s) and they host a significant number of refugees. Otherwise, they are more likely to employ a strategy of back-scratching.

The article proceeds as follows. I review the relevant literature and present my theoretical model. I then introduce three case studies that will allow for further theory development via covariation and within-case analysis. Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan are selected for they constitute the largest host states of displaced Syrians in the post-2011 Middle East. I demonstrate how Lebanon and Jordan adopted a strategy of back-scratching in their foreign policy because, even though they believed they hosted large communities of Syrian refugees, they did not consider themselves geopolitically important vis-à-vis the European Union (EU). In sharp contrast, Turkey adopted a blackmailing strategy that can be explained by state elites' perception of Turkey's geopolitical importance and the large size of Syrian refugees residing within its borders. I continue by explicitly discounting alternative explanations that may account for the three states' foreign policy-making. I conclude with a note of how additional research may shed light on how forced displacement affects refugee rentier states' domestic political development, particularly with regard to en-couraging opportunities for state corruption, autocracy, and other pathologies associated with rentierism.

Investigating the Politics of Host States' Forced Migration Management

How does forced migration affect the politics of host states, and, in particular, how do the latter employ the presence of refugees in their foreign policy decision-making? A long line of international relations scholars has attempted to address these questions, albeit not systematically. As Betts and Loescher argue, "only relatively isolated pockets of theoretically informed literature have emerged on the international politics of forced migration," while the study of refugee politics has yet to form part of mainstream international relations (Betts and Loescher 2011, 12–13). This is not to undermine the work of international politics scholars who critically examined the emergence of the international refugee regime, and who pioneered empirical work on the politics of forced migration (Gordenker 1987; Zolberg 1989), primarily within the context of interstate conflict. During the Cold War, superpower rivalry resulted in forced displacement across developing states of the Third World (Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989). It also shaped the refugee policy of American policy-makers, with Washington considering refugees "a weapon in the cold war" (Zolberg 1988, 661; Loescher and Scanlan 1986; Munz and Weiner 1997; Adamson 2006, 190). Beyond the United States' aiding of "lone individuals crossing borders to seek political freedom in the West" (Stedman and Tanner 2004, 5), host states also used refugees instrumentally in military conflicts, while numerous states sought to "embarrass or discredit adversary nations" by allowing refugee flows or to use them against an "adversarial neighboring regime" (Teitelbaum 1984). In the Middle East, the status of Palestinian refugees served as a strategic asset for Arab states' ongoing struggle against Israel (Hinnebusch 2003, 157); in the Rwandan and Pakistani contexts, humanitarian aid to refugee camps fueled violence by providing legitimacy and support to militants (Lischer 2003). In fact, research has demonstrated the wide impact of refugees in the diffusion and exacerbation of conflict (Lischer 2015), with Kaldor including displacement as a form of post-1989 "new wars" in the Balkans, sub-Saharan Africa, and elsewhere (Kaldor 2013).

At the same time, the socioeconomic and political risks perceived to be associated with hosting large numbers of refugees has led to lukewarm responses in tackling the problem of forced migration (Zolberg 1989, 415; Loescher 1996, 8). This also highlights some of the

main problems behind the development of a functional global refugee regime (Betts 2011), as "states have a legal obligation to support refugees on their own territory, [but] they have no legal obligation to support refugees on the territory of other states" (Betts and Loescher 2011, 19). Tackling this dichotomy lies at the heart of host states' political engagement with forced migration. For historical and structural reasons, states across the Global South feature the large majority of refugee populations, which creates a power asymmetry with seemingly unaffected Global North states. Yet, Global North states continue to provide economic support for the governments of refugee host states in the Global South in an act of "calculated kindness" (Loescher and Scanlan 1986; cf. Arar 2017b). From a security perspective, they do so aiming to prevent the diffusion of forced displacement into their own territory, be it North America (Weiner 1992, 101) or Europe (Huysmans 2000; Greenhill 2016). In attempting to examine how the North-South asymmetry may be perceived from the point of view of refugee host states, forcibly displaced populations arguably become a source of revenue, particularly given Western states' tendency to offer "charity" in order to outsource refugee problems to the Global South (cf. Loescher 1996). Empirical examples attest to this: for instance, the influx of Afghani refugees into Pakistan paved the way for a five-year $3.2 billion aid package by the Reagan administration in 1981 (Loescher 1992). More recently, between 2001 and 2007, Nauru received $30 million from the Australian government in order to host refugees and asylum seekers within the Nauru Regional Processing Centre, in addition to Australia covering its operating costs, at $72 million for 2001–2002 alone (Oxfam 2002).[1] This is not to suggest that host states consciously encourage inflows of forcibly displaced populations—rather, that an inflow of refugees may constitute a strategic resource for these states' governments.

How does the strategic importance of these forcibly displaced populations affect refugee host states' foreign policy decision-making? Two research agendas are relevant in this regard: firstly, a small group of researchers examines issue-linkage processes, suggesting that "win-win" strategies may convince Global North states to continue providing support for protecting refugees in the South (cf. Hollifield 2012). As Betts argues, "in the absence of altruistic commitment by Northern states to support refugees in the South, issue-linkage has been integral in achieving international cooperation on refugees" (Betts and Loescher 2011, 20; Betts 2017).

Secondly, work on leverage suggests that host states are also able to proceed unilaterally, aiming at extracting resources from target states that fear being overwhelmed by migrants or refugees; Greenhill demonstrates that host states may employ deportation in order to create targeted migrant or refugee "crises" in target countries that, in fear of being "capacity-swamped," are likely to comply with these states' demands (Greenhill 2003, 2010). As a result, Afghanistan, Sudan, Libya, and Jordan have been able to pursue issue-linkage strategies that manipulate "migration interdependence" by linking the management of cross-border population mobility to extracting foreign policy and economic benefits from Western and non-Western actors (Tsourapas 2017, 2018).

Two questions remain unresolved in existing theorizations of refugee host states' policy-making: firstly, what is the full gamut of foreign policies that these states may employ in seeking to exploit the presence of a refugee population group on their soil, beyond encouraging generations of outflows? Greenhill argues for three types of refugee host states, namely "generators," "*agent provocateurs*," and "opportunists"—which do not consider states that aim to profit from forced displacement without resorting to coercion. A second, related question is the following: why do some refugee host states have more aggressive foreign policy preferences, while others develop strategies of policy coordination rather than coercion? In other words, when do refugee host states adopt a more coercive stance—reminiscent of Fidel Castro's use of the 1980 Mariel boatlift to exert pressure on the Carter administration—and when will they employ a more cooperative one, as in the case of Pakistan or Nauru? In addressing these questions, this article contributes to the literature by presenting a more complete picture of refugee host states' foreign policy decision-making, as well as the rationale behind it.

Theorizing Refugee Rentier States

The earlier examination of the economic benefits accrued to host states by virtue of having refugee populations within their borders points to the need to conceptualize refugee populations as a resource from which rent may be extracted. The political science literature on rent and rentier states is intimately connected with Global South and, in particular, Middle East politics, albeit focusing primarily on benefits provided by oil and other natural resources to regional states (Sayigh 1991). A rentier state needs to meet a number of criteria, mainly that it accrues at least a significant amount of its national revenues from foreign sources in the form of unearned income, or *economic rent*

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[1]   Indicatively, Nauru's 2001 gross domestic product was $19 million.

([Beblawi 1987](#)).[2] At the same time, its government needs to be the principal recipient of this rent, while host state actors are not engaged in the generation of such rent, but on its distribution or utilization ([Mahdavy 1970](#)). In a rentier economy,

> reward—income or wealth—is not related to work and risk bearing, rather to chance or situation. For a rentier [state], reward becomes a windfall gain, an *isolated* fact, situational or accidental as against the conventional outlook where reward is integrated in a *process* as the end result of a long, systematic, and organized production circuit. The contradiction between production and rentier ethics is, thus, glaring. ([Beblawi 1987](#), 385–86)

While rentier state theorists do not discuss cross-border population mobility, I introduce this framework into international refugee politics. I argue that refugee host states may adopt characteristics of a rentier state with regard to their management of forced migration, given that their governments are able to derive similar forms of unearned external income from a specific resource—namely, the presence of refugee populations within a state's borders. For the purposes of this analysis, a refugee rentier state is a state that hosts forcibly displaced population group(s) and relies financially on external income linked to its treatment of these group(s). *Refugee rent* may come from international organizations or third states in a variety of forms, including direct economic aid or grants, debt relief, preferential trade treatment, and so on. As per the expectations of rentier state theory, refugee host state actors are not engaged in the generation of such rent, but on its distribution or utilization, which may or may not directly relate to the domestic management of forcibly displaced population group(s). Finally, a refugee rentier state's government remains the principal recipient of this rent.

Some empirical examples allow the clarification of the refugee-rentier-state concept: Libya's reliance upon European economic aid under Colonel Gaddafi in order to prevent the outflow of sub-Saharan African refugees into the Mediterranean suggests that it is a refugee rentier state. the Libyan state was not involved in the creation of these refugee flows out of sub-Saharan Africa, and the Libyan government was the primary recipient of substantial European economic aid. In contrast, the

1923 population exchange between Turkey and Greece generated more than two million forcibly displaced persons and significant international economic support; yet, given the involvement of both states' governments in the refugee-generation process, neither Turkey nor Greece qualify as refugee rentier states. Since 1948, Israel has witnessed the inflow of millions of Jewish refugees, notably from the Arab world and the Soviet Union; yet, it does not constitute a refugee rentier state, for Israeli governments do not receive any external income with regard to their treatment of these refugees. In contrast, the significant economic aid afforded to the Pakistani government in response to the influx of six million Afghan refugees since 1979 renders it a refugee rentier state.

As discussed in the previous section, the argument that refugee host states may seek material gains from the presence of displaced communities within their borders is not novel. In fact, already in 1984, Weiner had asserted that international migration may constitute a kind of "national resource" (quoted in [Teitelbaum 1984](#), 447). In this line of thought, the rentier state framework allows us a better understanding of states' foreign policy decision-making and the rationale behind it, if examined via the prism of refugee rent-seeking behavior. I introduce two key terms from the literature on interdependence: blackmailing and back-scratching. For Oye, a central aspect of contemporary diplomacy within a world of asymmetrical power distribution involves the use of cross-issue linkage, via two forms. Firstly, blackmailing involves "threats to do something one does not believe to be in one's interest, unless compensated, and promises to refrain from doing something one does not believe to be in one's own interest, if compensated." A main example is the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OAPEC) oil embargo against the United States in 1973, which was not in the interests of its member states. On the other hand, back-scratching involves "promises to refrain from doing something one believes to be in one's interest, if compensated, and threats to do something one believes to be in one's interest, unless compensated." One example of this is the post-1973 tacit agreement between Washington and Saudi Arabia to maintain oil production in excess of Saudi financial needs ([Oye 1979](#), 14; cf. [Haas 1980](#)). Keohane and Nye summarize the difference between blackmailing and back-scratching by arguing that the first involves "making a threat one does not wish to carry out," while the second refers to "offering a *quid pro quo* bargain" ([Keohane and Nye 1987](#), 735).

Importing this model into refugee studies, I argue that there are two ways through which a host state may

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[2]   Beblawi's canonical text on rentier states does not define what a "significant" amount may be. I adopt this approach here, given that it allows for maximum flexibility in understanding states' behavior.

exercise rent-seeking behavior in its foreign policy: via blackmailing—threatening to flood target states with refugee populations within its borders, unless compensated—or via back-scratching—promising to refrain from taking unilateral action against refugee populations within its borders, if compensated. Although back-scratching and blackmailing may be considered as two sides of the same coin and the choice made by refugee rentier states may often be less clear-cut, there is value in understanding how the two policies may differ. I operationalize them as follows: on the one hand, a blackmailing strategy often includes threats of unilateral actions to be taken by a refugee host state. Blackmailers often frame their actions around potential losses that a target state(s) may incur and show little interest in international laws or norms. On the other hand, a back-scratching strategy is usually framed around common benefits accrued by cooperation. Back-scratchers tend to value multilateral negotiations rather than bilateral ones, and they believe that references to international laws or norms strengthen their case.

In order to understand whether a refugee rentier state will adopt a blackmailing or back-scratching strategy, I proceed inductively via an exploratory three-case study research design of the three main states hosting Syrian refugees in the aftermath of the 2011 Syrian conflict, namely Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. In choosing a foreign policy strategy, I expect states to make a rational calculation based on their relative position and strength vis-à-vis their target state(s). This is not a structural variable based on geography alone: the relative position of Egypt vis-à-vis Great Britain, for instance, diminished in the aftermath of World War II once ensuring a safe passage to India became less important to London. The relative position of Pakistan vis-à-vis the United States increased exponentially in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. A second expectation of refugee host-state foreign policy decision-making also involves an evaluation of itself vis-à-vis its target state(s). State strength may be calculated in numerous ways, but I expect the strength of a refugee host state to lie in the size of refugee communities it hosts, given that target states tend to estimate the significance of accepting refugees based on their numbers, rather than any other indicator such as age, sex, or educational status. As Teitelbaum and Weiner argue, the post–Cold War realities suggest that the United States and other Western states see migration flows less as instruments that "could both weaken our adversaries and strengthen our friends" and more as an imposition of "unacceptably high costs" and security threats (Teitelbaum and Weiner 1995, 17; Weiner 1996, 17). The following section offers a brief

discussion of the article's methodology before proceeding to the analysis of the three case studies in more detail.

Methodology and Case Selection

I employ exploratory case-study methodology for the purposes of theory development through induction, and I rely on covariation and within-case analysis (Bennett and Checkel 2015). Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan have been selected for they constitute the largest host states of Syrian refugees. As of September 2018, more than 3.56 million Syrian refugees have registered in Turkey, which currently constitutes the largest host state of Syrian refugees. Syrians enjoyed visa-free entry into Turkey, as part of a 2009 bilateral mobility agreement, until Turkey closed border crossing points in 2015. Estimates for Lebanon and Jordan vary, but they are acknowledged to be the second and third largest host states of Syrian refugees, with 1 to 2.2 million and 660,000 to 1.26 million Syrians, respectively. Jordan initially allowed Syrians free entry, albeit with restrictions on employment. Controls were gradually put in place, coinciding with the opening of the Za'atari refugee camp in July 2012, until border closures became more prominent since mid-2013. Syrians in Lebanon enjoyed similar freedom of entry but were also eligible to work based on the 1991 and 1993 bilateral agreements between the two countries. From October 2014 onward, the Lebanese government adopted the "October Policy" that tightened restrictions on entry and residency for Syrian refugees.

The potential pitfalls of the case-study method have been extensively examined in the literature (Geddes 1990; Collier and Mahoney 1996), particularly if cases are selected on the dependent variable. Yet, a sizeable body of political science research also identifies how "in the early stages of a research program, selection on the dependent variable can serve the heuristic purpose of identifying the potential causes and pathways leading to the dependent variable of interest" (George and Bennett 2005, 23). Covariation is employed to substantiate the study's theoretical claims (Gerring 2016), while within-case analysis is well suited to the "systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analyzed" (Collier 2011, 823). The combination of the two methods enables the use of qualitative tools to assess the causal claims and mechanisms outlined in the previous section (for comparison, Beach and Pedersen 2013).

A final note on data collection: field research in the Global South contexts presents unique challenges (Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015, 218), particularly in light of the fact that regional migration is traditionally considered a security issue for ruling elites

in broader Middle East. At the same time, research is plagued by a lack of detailed, publicly available statistical data on intra-Arab flows, a manipulation of statistics for economic and political gain, as well as by the fact that migration management is handled at the highest levels of the executive (Tsourapas 2019, 24–30). As Brand (2013, 8) wrote on seeking statistical data on the Jordanian political economy, "one works under the assumption that such documents will probably never be released or may never have existed in the first place." To overcome these issues, I rely upon a meticulous collection of primary sources, including Arabic and non-Arabic media reports collected during fieldwork in Amman and Beirut (2017 and 2018). For the purposes of triangulation, I also employ elite interviews, reports, briefs, and communications by international organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with regard to Syrian refugees in all three states.

Foreign Policy and the Refugee Rentier State in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey

Jordan and the February 2016 Compact

To what extent does Jordan constitute a refugee rentier state, and how has that influenced its foreign policy decision-making? With regard to the Syrian refugee crisis, the emergence of the Jordanian refugee rentier state occurred gradually, from 2013 onward. This is primarily evident in policy-makers' attempt to render Syrian refugees as visible as possible to the international community, while also aiming to inflate their numbers. Despite a welcoming policy between 2011 and 2013, Jordan created the Directorate of Security Affairs for the Syrian Refugee Camps in March 2013 and, two months later, closed its border crossings with Syria, even to those carrying valid passports (Syrians do not need a visa for entry into Jordan). Palestinian Syrians, in particular, had been denied entry since April 2012 and officially since January 2013 (Human Rights Watch 2014). A number of security reasons have been identified for these border closures that highlight the potential risks for sociopolitical unrest that a large influx of Palestinian-Syrians into the country might entail. A state security rationale does not, however, adequately account for the fact that Jordanian border officers prompted Syrians to enter the country via informal crossings, instead; at numerous times in the first three years of the Syrian conflict, the country's formal borders were closed to Syrian passport-holders, who were encouraged to use informal border crossings along the eastern border, instead.

While state security concerns were important for domestic policy-makers, the shift in Jordan's policy on border crossings was primarily aimed at increasing the international visibility of the Syrian refugee issue. Those entering the country through informal crossing points are automatically recognized as *prima facie* refugees, according to the 1998 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Jordan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). As a result, with the contribution of aid workers, local authorities were able to classify all Syrians entering into Jordan as refugees, rather than visitors. Syrians entering through informal crossing points were directly sent to the Za'atari refugee camp, near Mafraq. Whereas, in November 2012, Za'atari hosted some forty-five thousand Syrians, by February 2013 it was home to more than seventy-six thousand Syrians, a number that reached 156,000 refugees by March 11, 2013. This strategy enabled the Jordanian state to highlight that it was facing a clearly enumerated influx of Syrian refugees and to strengthen its appeals for international aid. The Jordanian security official in charge of the Azraq refugee camp, which was constructed in May 2014, notes that "if we hadn't built the camps, then the world would not understand that we were going through a crisis" (Betts, Ali, and Memişoğlu 2017, 9). As Turner argues, "part of the reason why Jordan built camps for Syrians is that it used encampment strategically to enable it to raise the profile of, and receive funds for, Syrian refugees on its territory" (Turner 2015, 393). In fact, Jordan insists that the number of Syrians inside its territory well exceeds the number of those formally registered; whereas the UNHCR puts forth approximately 655,500 Syrians registered with the United Nations inside Jordan, the government argues that Jordan hosted 1.3 million Syrians in 2017.

A strong indication of Jordan's refugee rent-seeking behavior lies in its treatment of earlier forced displacement, particularly Iraqi refugees that had entered its territory after 2003. By 2007, UNHCR estimated that Jordan hosted approximately fifty thousand registered Iraqis, but officials would claim that the number was between 750,000 and one million. This would cost the Jordanian state $1 billion annually. An independent report by Fafo, a Norwegian research institute commissioned by Jordan to establish an accurate estimate, produced a figure of 161,000 Iraqis, but the Jordanian government continued to inflate this figure. "We used to exaggerate the numbers with the Iraqis, but we do not do that anymore," one high-ranking Jordanian official admitted, carefully noting that "we are not exaggerating the Syrian numbers" (Arar 2017a, 14). At the same time, Jordan did not place Iraqis into camps, which has been identified as working "strongly against Jordan's attempts to secure increased financial aid" (Turner 2015, 393). Camps can turn refugees into a visible and "spatially legible population"

(Peteet 2011, 18) and facilitate the counting of refugees, which in turn can facilitate fundraising (Black 1998); in Jordan's case, the Iraqis were less visible to the international community, something that Jordanians sought to address with their management of Syrian refugees.

A number of domestic responses to Syrian refugees have been developed under a refugee rent-seeking rationale, particularly the July 2014 "bail out" process. According to this policy, Syrian refugees are permitted to exit their assigned camps only when they are able to secure a sponsorship from a Jordanian citizen, who has to be more than thirty-five years of age, married, and employed in a stable position. The Jordanian sponsor should also be able to prove a family relationship with the applicant and not have a criminal record (Amnesty International 2013). While reliable data on this is not available, the Jordanian state's adoption of a bail-out process has encouraged phenomena of corruption and greed in the dealings between Syrian refugees and the Jordanian social body; numerous instances have been recorded of well-off Syrians that have been able to "buy" their way out of Jordanian refugee camps, for hefty prices. At the same time, the UNHCR has recorded instances of Syrians paying middlemen around $500 in order to be bailed out by unknown Jordanian citizens (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2013, 8). The fact that Jordan cancelled this scheme in 2016, arguably once camp-enclosed Syrians who have been able to afford a Jordanian sponsor concluded such transactions, speaks to the state's refugee rent-seeking behavior.

With regard to foreign policy decision-making, the Jordanian refugee rentier state relies upon securing refugee rent from the international community. Negotiations with donors culminated in the Jordan Compact, an agreement drafted in February 2016 within the context of a London Pledging Summit. The Summit's main objective was the creation of two hundred thousand employment opportunities for Syrians within the country over a three- to five-year period. Jordan also agreed to lift regulatory barriers in allowing refugees to work within the country and to lower work permit charges for those seeking low-skilled work from 700 Jordanian dinars to 10 Jordanian dinars. The compact put forth three broader aims:

1. Turning the Syrian refugee crisis into a development opportunity that attracts new investments and opens up the EU market with simplified rules of origin, creating jobs for Jordanians and Syrian refugees while supporting the postconflict Syrian economy;

2. Rebuilding Jordanian host communities by adequately financing through grants to the Jordan Response Plan 2016–2018, in particular the resilience of host communities; and

3. Mobilizing sufficient grants and concessional financing to support the macroeconomic framework and address Jordan's financing needs over the next three years, as part of Jordan entering into a new Extended Fund Facility program with the International Monetary Fund (Government of Jordan 2016).

The contribution to the Jordan Response Plan referred to a funding package that aimed to support Jordanian capacity to host refugees that, by 2016, had only reached 30 percent of its target. In London, $700 million of grants were raised with the expectation that additional pledges would provide an additional $700 million in 2017 and 2018. At the same time, the World Bank adopted the Concessional Financing Facility (CFF), which provided $147 million in low-interest loans, available only to middle-income refugee-hosting countries. Interestingly, although drafted within the context of the donor conference on Syria, the compact identified that "a new paradigm is necessary, promoting economic development and opportunities in Jordan to the benefit of Jordanians and Syrian refugees" (ibid.). In particular, Jordan secured support for its wish to boost its manufacturing sector by integrating refugees into Special Economic Zones: "[b]y allowing refugees to work in the SEZs [special economic zones], Jordan hopes to attract the additional support needed to make its own national development strategy work" (Betts et al. 2017, 10). This was possible via tariff-free access to the European Union market for goods produced within SEZs with a certain degree of Syrian participation (15 percent) and provided that Jordan issues two hundred thousand work permits to Syrians.

The provision of economic aid to the Jordanian government via the Jordan Compact in response to the Syrian refugee crisis is undisputed, with little doubt that the international community's support was due to Western states being "keen to institute measures that might help to stem the flow of refugees to Europe," as the *Financial Times* put it (Reed 2017). While international aid to Jordan was linked to its treatment of the Syrian refugee population, Jordanian elites also perceived of this revenue as contributing to the country's economic development, within the broader aim of "turning the crisis into an opportunity"—in other words, external revenue constituted a form of refugee rent. It is important to note that this discourse was espoused by World Bank

policy-makers, as well as the international community. Franck Bousquet, the World Bank Director for Regional Programs and Partnerships in the Middle East and North Africa, argued the following:

> It is critical that today we begin to finance projects to support vulnerable populations in Jordan and Lebanon . . . [T]hese countries have made enormous sacrifices to meet the global responsibility of providing refuge from conflict, and it is vital that the international community unite to provide the long-term support that will help them both withstand shocks and continue to develop and prosper. (World Bank 2016)

This narrative was immediately picked up by local elites and policy-makers, shaping expectations and attitudes on the ground. Jordan understands how "the idea of turning the challenge of refugees into an economic opportunity is based on the protracted nature of the crisis," according to Imad Fakhoury, Jordanian Minister of Planning and International Cooperation (Reed 2017). In mid-2016, as the EU relaxed trade rules with Jordan in order to create jobs for Syrian refugees, Fakhoury hailed this as "an opportunity to transform the Syrian refugee crisis to an economic opportunity" (Reuters 2016b). As Saleh Kharabsheh, Secretary General at the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, argued, "[the CSS] will play a significant role in contributing to building the resilience of Jordan's host communities and boost economic growth so that we are able to provide basic services and economic opportunities to both Jordanians and Syrian refugees" (World Bank 2016). By February 2016, once Jordanian policy-makers perceived international economic aid as serving the country's broader developmental goals rather than merely addressing the Syrian refugee crisis, Jordan embodied a refugee rentier state.

In its negotiations with the international community, Jordan adopted a back-scratching strategy. For one, Jordanian elites highlighted the importance of multilateral action and cooperation in dealing with the effects of the Syrian refugee crisis in their country; "in a country of 6.6 million Jordanians, we have opened our doors to 1.3 million Syrians fleeing violence in their homeland," Queen Rania declared at the 2016 United Nations Summit on Refugees and Migrants, providing an inflated estimate that is unsubstantiated by the UNHCR, "just as we have opened our doors in the past to Palestinians, Iraqis, and others seeking a safe haven." She concluded by arguing that, in view of Jordanian generosity, "it cannot fall to the countries closest to the conflicts to shoulder this responsibility alone" ("Queen Rania's Speech at UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants" 2016). But there is little doubt that Jordanian elites aimed to reap economic benefits

from hosting Syrian migrants—for one official, 2016 (the year of the Jordan Compact) was "Jordan's golden year" (Arar 2017b, 308). In fact, as Jordan's 2015 appeal for international aid received less than one-quarter of its $4.5 billion goal (Guardian 2015), the rhetoric intensified, but always framed in a back-scratching tone. King Abdullah would repeatedly state how cooperation would be a win-win strategy. In a February 2016 interview with the BBC, he asserted the following:

> [Western states] realize that if they don't help Jordan it is going to make it more difficult for them to be able to deal with the refugee crisis. And, to be honest, all the leaders that we talk to know that, by helping Jordan, they are actually helping themselves more. So, it is in their vested interests . . . I think the leaders of the international community have the spirit to help us. (BBC 2016a)

At the same time, the Jordanian monarch addressed his appeals toward the international community and adopted cooperative language: "the international community, we've always stood shoulder to shoulder by your side," he declared in February 2016. "We're now asking for your help. You can't say no this time," he said (BBC 2016b). Abdullah aimed to highlight the plight of Jordan, rather than raise threats against other states: in a September 2016 television interview, Abdullah argued how "unemployment is skyrocketing. Our health sector is saturated. Our schools are really going through difficult times. It's extremely, extremely difficult. And Jordanians just have had it up to here. I mean we just can't take it anymore" (CBS News 2016). Ahead of a donor conference on Syria in February 2016, Abdullah became more blunt: "I think it's gotten to a boiling point . . . sooner or later, I think, the dam is going to burst," he warned. "We can't do it anymore" (BBC 2016b).

When asked whether a more assertive foreign policy strategy would have been preferable, my respondents appeared reticent. Most frequently highlighted was the country's relative position vis-à-vis the West. One source in the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation laughed it off—"Send [the Syrian refugees] where? Israel?" While no one disputed that the Syrian refugee community in Jordan represented a sizeable force, the fact that Jordan is landlocked with no pathway to Europe was also frequently mentioned. As Arar also notes, quoting a Jordanian official she interviewed, "we should have blackmailed the EU like Turkey did" (Arar 2017b, 25). An official interviewed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates also doubted that a different policy would bring results; he argued that the influx of Iraqi refugees into Jordan following the 2003

invasion went largely unnoticed by the United States. In fact, back then, King Abdullah had famously declared that Jordan is stuck between "Iraq and a hard place."

Finally, the domestic repercussions of the Jordan Compact merit analysis: the negotiations leading to the Jordan Compact were based on the expectation that two hundred thousand employment opportunities will be provided for Syrian refugees, as a way of reducing their dependence on aid. In practice, this has been difficult given a slower-than-expected economic growth since 2016, high unemployment, as well as a lack of interest in investing in Jordan's business sector. By July 2017, only sixty thousand work permits had been issued. This has resulted in significant tension between Jordan and the international donors, which was further fueled by the Jordanian Ministry of Labor decision to allow each Syrian to carry more than one work permit. In an attempt to reach the two-hundred-thousand mark, the Jordanian government argued that work permits do not represent individuals: "the permits are work opportunities," explained one Ministry official. "It is possible for a Syrian to have more than one permit in a year if he has more than one job" (Betts et al. 2017, 11).

At the same time, in an effort to meet the requirements of the international community and to not jeopardize refugee rent inflows, Jordan has resorted to the tightening of restrictions on other migrant groups' employment within Jordan, namely the country's five hundred thousand to one million Egyptian workers. In June 2016, the Ministry of Labor ceased recruitment of foreign migrant labor, except domestic workers citing "the consequences of the Syrian refugee crisis and the entry of large numbers of Syrian refugees to the labor market" (Abaza 2016). While Jordanian migration diplomacy has attempted to leverage the status of Egyptian workers within the country against Egypt before (Tsourapas 2018), it is the first time that Egyptians are discriminated against in the scramble to secure employment for Syrian refugees. For Linda al-Kalash, the director of Tamkeen, a legal aid and support center for migrant workers, "we are seeing a huge campaign to expel Egyptians" (Ellouk 2017). This has resulted in tight controls over Egyptians' paperwork by Jordanian authorities; according to Ahmed el-Sayed, an Egyptian construction worker in Amman, "[t]hree people were killed last week [August 2016] because they were running from the police . . . [T]hey were working at a construction site when the police came, and in an attempt to escape they jumped from the third floor and eventually died" (Abaza 2016). Ahmed Awad, the director of the Phenix Center for Economics and Informatics Studies in Amman, argued the following:

If Egyptian workers were already vulnerable and living in precarious situations, the Jordanian government's resolution at the international donors conference in London to issue work permits to [two hundred thousand] Syrians (at no cost to employers) within two years further exacerbated the situation. (ibid.)

Lebanon and the February 2016 Compact

In contrast to Jordan, Lebanon did not develop a policy of placing Syrians into refugee camps, a decision linked to its long background of enduring sociopolitical issues arising from its construction of Palestinian refugee camps (Shami 1999). Yet, Lebanon adopted a refugee-rentier-state mentality that bears similarities to Jordan. In matters of enumeration, the two countries share the pattern of statistical inaccuracy in reporting Syrian refugee stocks estimates: UNHCR reported 1,001,051 registered Syrian refugees, but the organization was ordered to suspend registrations as of May 2015. "The government took a decision last October [2014] that included new border measures for all Syrians and also asked [UNHCR] to stop registering refugees unless in very exceptional humanitarian cases," an adviser to the Interior Minister Nohad Machnouk reported to *al-Jazeera*. "Since the beginning of this year, UNHCR has registered thousands of new Syrians, which is basically in contradiction with the Lebanese decision" (Gallart 2015). As a result, the Lebanese government has been able to put forth a wide range of estimates, going as high as 2.2 million refugees.

But evidence of refugee rent-seeking behavior is ample: in January 2015, the government put forth legislation detailing a novel process regulating Syrians' residency in Lebanon. All Syrians that are more than fifteen years of age and registered with UNCHR were now expected to pay a $200 annual renewal fee to the Lebanese state, an amount that is exorbitant given that 70 percent of Syrian refugees in the country fall below the poverty line. Those who had not registered for the UNHCR were required to secure the "sponsorship" of a Lebanese national, similar to the earlier process established in Jordan. In reality, UNHCR reported that Lebanese authorities requested evidence of sponsorship even of Syrians that had registered with them. This requirement has led to processes of exploitation by Lebanese citizens, similar to the Jordanian case: "sponsors are making a business out of it," one refugee reported. "They sell sponsorships for up to $1,000 a person. Potential sponsors wait on the Syrian border or at the airport to sell sponsorships to new arrivals." Another reported this:

My boss makes me work more than [twelve] hours a day at his shop. Sometimes I complain but then he threatens to cancel my sponsorship. What can I do? I have to do whatever he says. I feel like his slave. (Human Rights Watch 2016)

According to a December 2014 directive by the General Security Directorate, Lebanese contractors would be forced to bear the cost of sponsoring each Syrian worker—estimated at $2,000 annually—and would include the "cost of work and residence permits, health insurance, and notary contracts" (Shoufi 2015). As Lebanese officials aimed to extract rent in the form of permits by the private sector, this created a rift with the domestic construction industry, which was already able to profit from the influx of cheap Syrian labor. At the same time, there have been frequent reports of Syrian refugees getting arrested on a regular basis (in most cases exclusively because of lack of legal residency, which is a criminal misdemeanor under Lebanese law). Exact data on this is unavailable; however, NGO representatives have confirmed that, in most instances, the actual criminal case neither reaches the courts nor results in a formal conviction by a judge; this suggests that the various fees that Syrians' families end up paying actually constitute unofficial bribes to the administrators of police detention facilities—or, in this article's argumentation, another dimension of refugee rent.

More prominently, Lebanon has not hesitated to deport Syrian refugees back to their home country. As early as 2012, Human Rights Watch identified processes of disrespecting the principle of nonrefoulement in Lebanon with regard to fourteen Syrian deportees (Human Rights Watch 2012). More frequently, Lebanese authorities grant temporary papers to unregistered Syrian refugees, with strict deadlines for producing legal documents, which would require they return to Syria. Since mid-2014 Lebanon has been monitoring border crossings in order to "deregister" Syrian refugees that cross into Syria—with sixty-eight thousand Syrians having their status revoked between June and October 2014 alone (Janmyr 2017). It should come as no surprise that the Lebanon Compact makes an explicit reference to "ease the temporary stay of Syrian refugees, in particular regarding their residency status." According to one refugee,

things are changing, and now the army is going in and arresting people in their homes, not waiting for them to come to checkpoints . . . When they came to take everyone, they took [twenty-seven] people. They took every male above the age of [fourteen] for four days. And they took all our documents and gave us one week to sort out our residency . . . It would have

required going back to Syria . . . So none of us could do anything, [and] now we're all illegal in the country . . . My only hope is to get out of Lebanon, to get somewhere where I can educate my children. (Alabaster 2016)

Lebanon's attempts at attracting external economic aid are not dissimilar to those of Jordan. In December 2014, the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan was launched in Berlin as part of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan. It stated that Lebanon has "shown exceptional commitment and solidarity and has welcomed around 1.5 million refugees fleeing war-torn Syria [as] Lebanese communities have opened their schools, their clinics, and even their homes to hundreds of thousands" of Syrian refugees. At the same time, however, the inflow of forcibly displaced Syrians created "overwhelming pressures" on Lebanese institutional structures that were "threatening its longer-term stability." In response, the plan aims to ensure the well-being of Syrians in Lebanon, but to also provide support for the Lebanese state:

1. Ensure the protection of vulnerable populations;
2. Provide immediate assistance to vulnerable populations;
3. Support service provision through national systems;
4. Reinforce Lebanon's economic, social, and environmental stability.

The plan initially sought a total of $2.48 billion for 2016, to implement programs by the Lebanese government and the international community. In its 2017–2020 planning, Lebanon proposed for $2.8 billion in aid, in consultation with the United Nations. It also enjoyed access to CFF, as per World Bank decision. The discourse around Lebanon's access to low-interest loans was reminiscent of Jordan's. According to Philippe Lazzarini, United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Lebanon,

Dealing with long-term displacement crises requires innovative responses. Humanitarian support and development assistance need to be coordinated in order to increase the capacity of host communities and institutions from day one. Through close coordination and collaboration with the World Bank and other partners and donors, important concessional development assistance will be available for Lebanon to improve economic conditions, create jobs, and transform the crisis into new opportunities.

At the same time, in February 2016, Lebanon negotiated the Lebanon Compact, which enjoyed EU support and included a minimum of €400 million ($455 million) for 2016–2017, over and above existing pledges. As in Jordan, the EU framed the compact as aiming "to turn the situation into an opportunity to improve the socioeconomic prospects, security, stability, and resilience of the whole Lebanon." The international aid that Lebanon received given its status as a host state for Syrians included significant amounts of refugee rent. In particular, beyond funds targeted toward Syrian refugees, the compact allocated:

> €15 million to boost Lebanon's productivity and competitiveness in the agribusiness and wood sectors . . . €13 million for the implementation of the National Plan to Safeguard Children and Women in Lebanon across the country . . . €1.5 million to reinforce the capacity of the Ministry of Youth and Sports to better address youth issues, including a €800,000 [program] addressing drug abuse . . . €48 million for solid waste management [programs] in addition to €5 million for the construction and equipment of [one] solid waste treatment facility and [one] sanitary landfill . . . €2 million to support the Lebanese Parliament, resulting in reactivation of the Legislative Tracking System in the Lebanese Parliament (European Commission 2016).

Much like Jordan, Lebanon employed a back-scratching strategy in negotiating the 2016 compact agreement. This relied, as with Jordan, on appeals to multilateralism and cooperation on an international level, rather than threats. Echoing the Jordanian monarch's declaration, Prime Minister Saad Hariri has repeatedly stated how he intends "to make sure that the world understands that Lebanon is on the verge of a breaking point" (Reuters 2017a). At an April 2017 Brussels conference on Syria, Hariri argued for the international community to commit $10,000 to $12,000 per refugee in Lebanon over a span of five to seven years, while ensuring that this "would equally benefit Lebanese citizens and displaced Syrians" (Al-Jazeera 2017). "We have enough," Interior Minister Nohad Machnouk declared in January 2015. "There's no capacity any more to host more displaced" (Associated Press 2015). According to Lebanon's Minister of Social Affairs, Rashid Derbas, "the glass cannot fit one more drop . . . now we have 1.2 million [refugees]. I think this is a very exceptional proportion" (Human Rights Watch 2016). Speaking to *Politico* in July 2017, Hariri expanded on how a small country of some four million Lebanese dealt with this:

> Yeah, 4.5 million, so you can imagine the burden, and how much it is difficult. And we believe Lebanon is doing a public service for the entire world, and I believe Lebanon should be also compensated for that, because if those refugees didn't come to Lebanon, they would be everywhere in the world . . . The international community needs to help Lebanon, especially the refugees because with 1 percent growth in Lebanon, we cannot manage to have jobs for the Lebanese and the Syrians. (Glasser 2017)

Officials approached for comment in Beirut highlighted the fact that Lebanon did not have a functioning government between March 2013 and December 2016, following the resignation of Prime Minister Mikati. The general perception was that Lebanon did not have strong international allies or bargaining chips. "*Ce n'est pas nous qui dictent les règles du jeu*" ("It is not us that call the shots"), according to an official interviewed in the Ministry of the Interior, which is tasked with responding to the Syrian refugee crisis. The point of whether Lebanon's proximity to Cyprus, an EU member state, may be important was also dismissed. Despite hosting the most refugees per capita of any country, Lebanon is not considered a gateway to Europe; despite a waterway to an EU member state (Cyprus), Syrian refugees have avoided the island because it offers neither an easy way into the rest of the continent (Reuters 2017b), nor a simple asylum process, with only 3 percent of asylum seekers granted refugee status: "[Cypriot officials] want to give refugees the message: [d]on't come to Cyprus because if you do, you won't get refugee status," according to Doros Polykarpou, executive director of KISA, a Cypriot nonprofit, "and it works" (Karas 2015).

Turkey and the March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement

Turkey hosts the largest number of Syrian refugees, with more than 3,591,714 registered as of November 2018 (3RP Turkey 2019), and exemplifies refugee rent-seeking behavior. That said, Turkey differs in its treatment of them from Jordan and Lebanon in that it combines a number of refugee camps, primarily located across the border with Syria, while also allowing the vast majority of Syrians to reside across Turkey, particularly once the twenty-two camps, or Temporary Protection Centers in Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Hatay, and elsewhere in southern Turkey had been filled to capacity. The status of refugee rentier state is evident in the conclusion of long EU-Turkey negotiations that culminated in the 2016 "deal." This was preceded by an October 2015

Joint Action Plan and a €3 billion package that was negotiated with the EU in November 2015 (European Council 2016a). This evolved into the March 2016 Statement, which added another €3 billion in aid, if Turkey agreed to a readmission of Syrians arriving in Greece and tighter border controls—a system resting on the (precarious) basis that Turkey constitutes a safe third country, which does not allow asylum-seekers in Turkey to move on to another state. For every Syrian returned to Turkey in the scheme, the EU pledged to resettle another in Europe, up to a cap of seventy-two thousand. In return, the EU made a number of concessions, including promises that

> [t]he fulfilment of the visa liberalization roadmap will be accelerated with a view to lifting the visa requirements for Turkish citizens at the latest by the end of June 2016. Turkey will take all the necessary steps to fulfil the remaining requirements . . . The EU will, in close cooperation with Turkey, further speed up the disbursement of the initially allocated €3 billion under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey. Once these resources are about to be used in full, the EU will mobilize additional funding for the [f]acility up to an additional €3 billion to the end of 2018 . . . The EU and Turkey welcomed the ongoing work on the upgrading of the Customs Union. (European Council 2016b)

The European Commission agreed to provide €1 billion in funding, with €2 billion of additional funding from member states (European Council 2016a). The administration of the €3 billion support was organized through the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey, which focuses on six priority areas: humanitarian assistance, migration management, education, health, municipal infrastructure, and socioeconomic support (European Commission 2017a). As of June 2017, forty-eight projects have been contracted worth more than €1.6 billion, out of which €811 million has been disbursed. As its one-year report states, "projects will notably ensure that [five hundred thousand] Syrian children have access to formal education; [seventy] new schools are built; 2,081 teachers and other education personnel have received training and two million refugees will get access to primary healthcare services" (European Commission 2017b). Similar to Jordan and Lebanon, the concessions that Turkey gained involved issues that were not immediately linked to the Syrian refugee crisis—the most evident one being the visa-liberalization process. The promise to reenergize the accession process exclusively benefitted the Turkish state and had no impact upon the country's non-Turkish population.

Unlike Jordan and Lebanon, Turkey developed a blackmailing strategy in its foreign policy decision-making with regard to its international management of the Syrian refugee crisis. This is evident in the threatening discourse that Ankara elite engaged in, targeting Brussels and EU member states. Minutes of a February 2016 meeting between Erdogan, Tusk, and Juncker (later confirmed by Erdogan) have the Turkish prime minister openly threatening to flood Europe with displaced Syrians (Reuters 2016a). The discussion included the amount of capital Turkey had spent on hosting displaced Syrian refugees: in October 2015, for instance, the Turkish Interior Ministry announced that Turkey had spent more $8 billion to support Syrians, "surpassing the Turkish Interior Ministry's budget" (Kızılkoyun, 2015). But Turkey's rationale was better served by a blackmailing strategy: "we want this human tragedy to end," Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu declared in 2016, detailing how Turkey wanted "our citizens to travel visa free, and the customs union to be updated" (Associated Press 2016).

Interestingly, the outflow of refugees via the Aegean Sea into Greece and, subsequently, the rest of Europe, effectively ceased in the aftermath of signing the EU-Turkey deal. Until early 2016, the large flows of irregular migrants from Syria into Europe via Turkey allowed the enrichment of a wide number of Turkish nationals associated with smuggling via the Aegean Sea, which immediately stopped in March 2016; in Istanbul, one of these smugglers, interviewed by the *New York Times*, boasted more than $800,000 in profits, and having "more than [eighty thousand] missed calls from prospective customers" (Kingsley 2017). In Izmir, *al-Jazeera* identifies how $1,000 would allow a smuggler to "launch boats unmolested by police or gendarmes for a day" (Reidy 2016). Following the EU-Turkey deal, all smuggling business stopped; the smuggler identified by the *New York Times* is now considering opening a seaside café, instead.

Turkey's blackmailing strategy continued following the signing of the 2016 deal. One day after the European Parliament called for a pause in the country's EU accession talks over the Turkish government's repressive response to a July 2016 coup attempt, Erdogan declared that "we are the ones who feed 3–3.5 million refugees in this country . . . You have betrayed your promises. If you go any further those border gates will be opened" (Pitel and Beesley 2016). This raises an important point with regard to the domestic political repercussions of refugee rent-seeking, particularly with regard to refugee host states' governments attempts at consolidating authoritarian rule. The European Parliament's decisions are not binding for individual member states; however, observers were keen to note that Erdogan's warnings had

come a few days in advance of the second round of the Austrian 2016 presidential elections. Brussels' response was rather lackluster: "rhetorical threats are absolutely unhelpful and should not be the standard tone between partners," one senior EU official noted on the record. "This will not help Turkey's credibility in the eyes of European citizens. Europe will not be blackmailed" (ibid.).

The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Regional Perspective

All three states examined above fall under the category of refugee rentier states, given the fact that they received external economic aid that was dependent on their status as hosting forcibly displaced populations and that they came to rely on substantial external rent linked to their continuous hosting of these refugee populations. This refugee rent is encapsulated in the three agreements negotiated between these refugee rentier states and the international community—the February 2016 Jordan Compact, the February 2016 Lebanon Compact, and the March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, respectively. At the same time, as per the paper's theoretical framework, their foreign policy with regard to the refugee issue falls under the broad strategies of back-scratching and blackmailing. Jordan and Lebanon broadly employed a back-scratching strategy: although domestic elites made urgent pleas for help, they highlighted multilateralism, tended to approach the matter with reference to the responsibility of the international community to help, and praised the positive-sum value of interstate cooperation. Turkey, on the other hand, employed a different strategy that came closer to blackmailing: elites made little reference to cooperation or multilateralism and put forth distinct threats that aimed to coerce their target audience, rather than ensure cooperation.

What accounts for this variation in policy-making? The data collected suggests that Lebanon and Jordan were not able to employ a blackmailing strategy, even though there was a desire to follow Turkey's example. While the sizeable community of Syrian refugees was deemed important, the two countries' relative positions and elites' doubts on their countries' strategic importance appeared to rule out a more forceful or aggressive policy. In the Turkish case, however, elites' perceptions of the country's geopolitical importance—particularly with regard to the proximity to Greece—appeared to have enabled the government's blackmailing strategy. The geopolitical importance of the host state appears to matter with regard to Jordanian and Turkish strategy historically: back in the late 1960s, King Hussein did not hesitate to use Jordan's hosting of thousands of Palestinian refugees in order to blackmail the United States for a solution to their status. This can be explained by the significant geopolitical importance of Jordan in the late 1960s as the major United States ally in the region, a status that the country has since lost. Similarly, Turkey's behavior post–Gulf War—when, in 1991, it successfully blackmailed the United States on the fate of Kurdish refugees within its borders—was also predicated on its strategic importance for Washington at the time (details on both cases: Greenhill 2010, 296–97, 316–17).

A number of alternative explanations of the three refugee rentier states' behaviors are unconvincing. What about the argument that Jordan genuinely sought a cooperative solution to the Syrian refugee crisis or that it would not consider the deportation of Syrians for humanitarian reasons? This is discounted by two policies that Jordan developed domestically: firstly, the "bail out" process strongly suggests that Jordan aimed to employ the Syrian refugee issue for economic gain. Furthermore, Jordan did engage in the marginalization and deportation of migrant populations—that of Egyptians, which undermines the argument that state policy was driven by a humanitarian rationale. With regard to Lebanon, a number of policies discount the potential counterargument that Lebanese back-scratching policy resulted from its human rights protection record or, put differently, that officials would not consider deporting Syrian refugees for humanitarian reasons. For one, not only did Lebanon order UNHCR to stop registering new refugees, but, in January 2015, the government put forth legislation detailing a novel process regulating Syrians' residency. More importantly, however, Lebanon has not hesitated to deport Syrian refugees back to their home country. Could the Turkish policy of blackmailing be accounted for via alternative explanations? One such explanation could be that Turkey was unable to control its European borders and, therefore, was forced to a policy of confrontation rather than accommodation with the EU. Yet, empirical facts discount this argument, particularly given the impressive decrease in crossings across the Aegean Sea since the signing of the EU-Turkey deal. Turkish state officials, in other words, were more than able to secure its European borders when they had the incentive to do so.

Conclusion

This article has examined how forced displacement affects the foreign policy decision-making of refugee host states. In doing so, it has attempted to move beyond discussion of coercion and to highlight the range of strategies available to host states of the Global South by drawing on the literature on rentier states

and issue-linkage strategies. Through an exploratory, three case-study design, it has introduced the concept of the *refugee rentier state* and identified strategies of *blackmailing* and *back-scratching* in these states' *refugee rent-seeking behavior*. Through a within-case analysis of Jordanian, Lebanese, and Turkish responses to the post-2011 Syrian refugee crisis, it has theorized how international aid to refugee host states constitutes a form of rent. In response, refugee host states' refugee rent-seeking behavior appears to result in a blackmailing strategy when it contains a large number of refugees and when states' elites perceive of their country as having geopolitical importance vis-à-vis the target state(s)—as in Turkey. Alternatively, state elites are more likely to opt for a back-scratching one—as in Lebanon and Jordan.

To what extent do the strategies of back-scratching and blackmailing apply beyond the three cases outlined here? The article findings appear to apply to both current and historical cases. One could argue that states that find themselves in a geo-strategically-important position and face an influx of refugee populations are historically prone to strategies of blackmailing. Back in 2002, Belarussian President Aleksandr Lukashenko aimed to employ Belarus' status as a refugee rentier state of Chechnya's refugees when he "threatened to flood the European Union with drugs and illegal migrants" unless he was allowed entry into a November 2002 NATO summit (Shepherd 2002; Greenhill 2010, 327). Libya's proximity to Europe and its status as a host state for sub-Saharan African refugees had also led Gaddafi to demand an annual payment of €5 billion by the EU in order to prevent it from "turning black" with refugees back in 2009 (Paoletti 2010; Tsourapas 2017). More recently, in 2015, Greek foreign minister Nikos Kotzias warned that, if Greece was forced out of the Eurozone, "there will be tens of millions of immigrants and thousands of jihadists" into Europe (Waterfield 2015). It appears that, when refugee rentier states host a sufficient number of refugees and enjoy an important geostrategic location vis-à-vis their targets, they are likely to develop a foreign policy strategy of blackmailing.

Beyond blackmailing, refugee rentier states are also engaging with back-scratching strategies. Ethiopia's negotiating strategy resulting in the 2019 "Jobs Compact," a $500 million program that aims to create one hundred thousand jobs for Ethiopians and refugees, is one example (Reuters 2019). In the Middle East context, the EU has concluded a number of "Mobility Partnerships" with Morocco in June 2013, Tunisia in March 2014, and Jordan in October 2014 that offer certain perks to these states in return for their management of irregular migration and refugee flows (Collyer 2012). While these countries may be considered geostrategically

important for Europe, they lack large numbers of Syrian refugees that would allow them to pursue a blackmailing policy. Historically, Pakistan relied on extensive American economic support for hosting more than one million displaced Afghans in the aftermath of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—while Pakistan contained a large number of refugees, relations with the United States were tense and it had yet to become the geopolitically important state it is today.

The article advances a research agenda that explores how forced displacement affects states outside the Global North by identifying the ingenuity of governments that are dependent on extracting resources from the international system. It identifies numerous paths for further scholarly and policy debate on how to understand the behavior of refugee host states: for one, moving beyond foreign policy decision-making processes, what are the effects of refugee rent on states' domestic political development? Anecdotal evidence from the article's three case studies suggest that forced migration increases opportunities for state corruption, which would be consistent with the pathologies associated with rentier states. More broadly, given that refugee rent is, by default, awarded to governments, what effects does this produce in terms of instances of violence or the durability of autocratic rule? The well-established literature on rentier states opens up a novel dimension of exploring the effects of forced displacement within the subfield of comparative politics. The mechanisms and dynamics of host-state use of refugee populations in their international relations constitute an important, underexplored field of inquiry in the study of world politics.

Beyond academic work on international relations and comparative politics, the phenomenon of refugee rents carries important policy-level repercussions with regard to the ethical and normative dimension associated with Western states' decision to link economic aid to the management of refugee populations in the Global South. There is a palpable risk that encouraging overburdened states to treat forcibly displaced populations as sources of economic rent leads to refugee commodification. Should refugee host states' governments be condemned for developing coercive foreign policy strategies to cope with forced displacement? Do such strategies constitute an exploitation of Western states' vulnerabilities and the deficiencies of the international system, or are they merely a skillful way of "playing a bad hand?" At the same time, to what extent is a migration management system based on refugee rents sustainable in the long run? Identifying the perils of refugee commodification is not a moral condemnation of host states across the Global South, particularly given the disproportionate share of refugees they are tasked with managing. Rather, it highlights how

the encouragement of refugee rent-seeking behavior as a solution to refugee burden-sharing problems and the absence of multilateral cooperation may produce unintended effects for the future of global migration governance.

Acknowledgements

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