The Global Refugee Crisis: Regional Destabilization & Humanitarian Protection

Sarah Kenyon Lischer

Abstract: In addition to being a tragic output of civil war, large-scale displacement crises often become enmeshed in the politics, security, and economics of the conflict. Refugee and internally displaced populations thus exacerbate concerns about regional destabilization. The Syrian refugee crisis, for example, is deeply entwined with civil and international conflict. Neighboring host states of Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon bear the brunt of the crisis, while European states seek to prevent further encroachment by Middle Eastern asylum seekers. Policy-makers often mistakenly view host state security and refugee security as unrelated – or even opposing – factors. In reality, refugee protection and state stability are linked together; undermining one factor weakens the other. Policies to protect refugees, both physically and legally, reduce potential threats from the crisis and bolster state security. In general, risks of conflict are higher when refugees live in oppressive settings, lack legal income-generation options, and are denied education for their youth. The dangers related to the global refugee crisis interact with many other threats that emanate from civil wars and weak states, such as fragile governments, rebel and terrorist group activity, and religious or ethnic fragmentation.

SARAH KENYON LISCHER is Associate Professor in the Department of Politics and International Affairs at Wake Forest University. She is the author of *Dangerous Sanctuaries: Refugee Camps, Civil War, and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid* (2005) and has published articles in such journals as *International Security*, *The American Scholar*, *Conflict, Security, and Development*, and *Global Governance*.

Millions of people around the world today have fled their homes to escape civil war and other violence. Recent United Nations figures report 22.5 million refugees and 38 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). Statistics from 1996 to 2016 show that refugee numbers are at a twenty-year high. Internal displacement, in which people are forced from their homes but cannot cross the border, is also at a twenty-year high. Remarkably, 55 percent of the world's refugees come from three states experiencing protracted civil wars: Syria (5.5 million), Somalia (1.4 million), and Afghanistan (2.5 million).[1] Contrary to their expectations of sanctuary, many of these people continue to experience security threats in their new locations. Manipulation of refugee groups for political and stra-

tegic purposes generally reduces their safety and downplays the human suffering associated with the crisis. In addition to being a tragic output of civil war, massive and intractable refugee crises often become deeply enmeshed in the politics, security, and economics of the conflict.

Early responses to refugee flows usually address functional and practical issues, actions such as meeting basic needs and working out the logistics of displacement, but these rarely require direct attention from national political leaders. As the crisis grows geographically and numerically, national leaders are confronted by the broader implications of refugee populations, though government discourse focuses more on the humanitarian disaster, rather than the conflict itself, increasing the likelihood of scapegoating and manipulation. Temporary situations begin to seem more permanent, increasing displacement-related tensions within and between affected states. A major concern of international negotiation then revolves around dealing with the "excess" people produced by the conflict, sometimes even eclipsing the focus on conflict resolution.

Many host states express concern about the destabilizing effects of sizeable refugee populations. Large-scale forced displacement places an immense strain on the resources of the host states, the refugees, and international donors. Some governing parties fear a loss of power due to popular anger over economic hardship and social pressures sparked by large refugee populations. Refugee crises may exacerbate existing political, ethnic, or religious tensions within the host state or between the host and sending states. Refugee demographics can create an unstable ethnic balance that encourages a previously oppressed minority to confront the government. Host states struggling to meet the needs of both displaced people and their own citizens resent the lack of assistance from wealthier, more distant states. In the worst-case scenario, destabilization of the host state and threats to refugee protection can exacerbate civil and international conflict.

In Lebanon, a country already coping with political and economic difficulties, Syrian refugees now account for more than 20 percent of the population. Local Lebanese citizens blame the influx of refugees for increasing food and housing prices and for undermining wages.[2] The mostly Sunni Arab newcomers affect the delicate sectarian balance, which also includes Christians and Shia Muslims. The antigovernment Shia group, Hezbollah, actually offers significant military assistance to the Assad government in Syria. The International Crisis Group explained that "the specter of renewed conflict has led the Lebanese authorities to adopt a heavy-handed security approach toward the refugees" that has included raids on refugee encampments and arrests of refugee men.[3] Governments such as Lebanon's that bear the brunt of regional crises therefore express resentment when the United States and other wealthy countries refuse to accept even a miniscule proportion of the displaced people. Regional governments have increasingly used refugees as leverage in negotiations with Western states desperate to prevent the mass arrival of asylum seekers. Humanitarian organizations, refugees, and sympathetic governments condemn the manipulation of displaced populations for political reasons. Advocates are particularly critical of measures, such as forced return to conflict zones, that contravene the international legal principles of refugee protection. In some situations, overwhelmed or hostile host states reduce legal protection and humanitarian aid, which can lead to violence and renewed displacement. Destabilization and human rights abuses in the first country of asylum can spur secondary displacement, as we have seen in the mass movement of refugees from the Middle East to Europe.

The most extreme outcome is the spread of violence across borders, which occurs if the original conflict spreads from the refugee-sending state via cross-border attacks, rebel activity, or invasion. Militants may mix among the refugees, as occurred when the militarized Rwandan Hutu state-in-exile fled to Zaire among millions of refugees following the 1994 genocide. Refugee-related violence remains rare, however, and observers caution against treating all refugees "as potential threats to be controlled, rather than as displaced victims of conflict in need of asylum."[4] Indeed, drawing on Stephen Stedman and Bruce Jones's argument, which downplays the current rhetoric about global chaos, one could argue that attention to the global refugee crisis has more to do with its influence on Europe and the Middle East than a qualitative change in the nature of displacement. Stedman and Jones have labeled as "preposterous" the idea that refugees from the Middle East fundamentally threaten European security.[5]

In addition to displacement across international borders, most conflicts include large numbers of IDPs. In conflicts such as Syria, Iraq, and Colombia, there are more people displaced within the borders than outside them. As of 2015, 6.7 million Colombians were displaced within the country due to the decades-long conflict there, whereas 360,000 Colombians were registered as refugees in neighboring countries.[6] Both refugees and IDPs suffer from similar humanitarian needs, and both generally lack security. In terms of international law and security, the situation differs for these populations since IDPs are supposed to be protected by their own government. Concerns with sovereignty complicate efforts to protect and assist the internally displaced, particularly when the government is a main driver of displacement. A major concern in conflict resolution is that returning refugees end up internally displaced, creating an im-

pediment to peace-building and stability. Unlike refugee populations, IDPs present less risk to regional stability or the international spread of civil war.

The violence directed at refugees and IDPs generally far outweighs criminal or militant activity emanating from the population. For example, Palestinian refugees within Syria have faced mounting difficulties now that they are also internally displaced. The Brookings Institution reported that, in 2011, the Yarmouk camp near Damascus held 150,000 to 200,000 Palestinians, as well as 650,000 Syrians. Later, in 2012, "intense fighting broke out in the camp between pro-regime and opposition forces, with the Free Syrian Army and the Al Nusra Front taking control of the camp by the end of the year."[7] Most of the Syrians left the camp. The Syrian government imposed a siege on the camp in mid-2013. After the siege was "relaxed" in early 2014, it then suffered attack by ISIS in April 2015. As of fall 2015, five to eight thousand people remained in Yarmouk.[8] The Palestinian refugees in Syria thus suffered the effects of multiple types of displacement.

Large-scale forced migration initially affects the specific hosting states and refugee groups, however, those trends can also have a much broader reach. Considering the potential for exacerbating conflict or undermining peace efforts, this essay explores the following questions: Under what circumstances does a refugee crisis contribute to destabilization in the host state? What conditions are most likely to promote violations of humanitarian and legal protection for the displaced? In what ways do host-state destabilization and refugee insecurity interact with the wider dynamics of a civil war? Answering these questions requires an examination of the historical context in the host state, the regional security environment, the response by Western states, and the human geography of the crisis.

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Host state responses differ because each state views refugee crises in the context of past experiences with displacement and civil conflict, which leads to variations in security and economic concerns. Historical context helps explain why some states view refugee populations with alarm and hostility even in the absence of provocation. In many Middle Eastern countries, past experience with Palestinian refugees has shaped the response to Iraqi and Syrian refugees.

In general, states with existing refugee populations from earlier conflicts tend to extrapolate from that experience, especially in determining initial responses toward new populations. In trying to predict conflict, one can ask whether and how past refugee crises have been resolved in the host state, and which issues proved most difficult to resolve.

Host states that have experienced civil war, especially a conflict based on communal differences reflected in the refugee population, are more likely to fear destabilization and curtail refugee protection measures. Refugees may share ethnic or religious characteristics with local populations that are in conflict, creating the perception of a demographic threat. For example, when hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians fled to Macedonia in the late 1990s, the government was concerned that the influx would unsettle the fragile ethnic balance in the state. In such circumstances, refugees will face hostility based merely on their demographic attributes.

Historical context has also affected responses to the displacement of millions of Syrians, the most high-profile refugee crisis at present. Not unreasonably, the regional hosting states of Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey fear destabilization and the spread of violence. Reports of militarization include recruiters for the Free Syrian Army operating in the Zaatari camp in Jordan.[9] Turkish policy has shown sympathy for Syrian rebels and Sunni jihadist groups fighting the Assad regime. Political scientists Özden Zeynep Oktav and Aycan Çelikaksoy cite a 2012 BBC Turkey report that describes a separate refugee camp in Hatay "that housed defectors from the Syrian security forces and wounded members of the Free Syrian Army."[10] Attempts to control the crisis by violating refugees' rights have caused a secondary migration as the desperate refugees seek asylum in Western Europe, leading to Western actions that may create further insecurity.

The response of Jordan to Syrian refugees harkens back to the Palestinian displacement of 1948. That era "not only shaped Palestinian identity, but it has dominated Arab-Israeli relations for sixty-plus years and has influenced the region's response to later waves of displacement."[11] The refugee crisis began with an estimated 600,000 to 840,000 refugees from the 1948 war with Israel. The Palestinian refugees went primarily to the West Bank (controlled by Jordan), the Gaza Strip, and neighboring states. Political parties later emerged among the refugee population, including the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which formed in 1964.

By September 1970, the PLO had over five thousand full-time and twenty to twenty-five thousand part-time fighters, mostly based in Jordan. Despite Jordan's generous treatment of the refugees, including granting citizenship, the Palestinian militants sparked a civil war and nearly toppled the government of King Hussein. Thousands of Palestinian civilians and militants died during Hussein's harsh crackdown on Palestinian activity. The PLO was forced to move its forces to Lebanon. Jordan learned from that Black September that refugees can become militarized and hostile. And that they can overstay their welcome.

More recently, Jordan experienced a massive migration of Iraqis in 2006. Considering its past, Jordan, with a population of only 5.7 million (more than half of whom

are Palestinians) understandably viewed the Iraqi refugee crisis as a serious security threat.[12] In March 2008, the International Organization for Migration estimated that 2.4 million Iraqis had crossed international borders, including around five hundred thousand into Jordan and 1.2 to 1.4 million into Syria.[13] Other refugee-receiving states included Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey.

In Jordan, alarm over the influx led to restrictions that violated international refugee protection guidelines, but because Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, it is not obliged to follow the convention's mandates. Since the government considered the Iraqis illegal aliens rather than refugees, they continually faced the threat of deportation. In February 2008, Jordan introduced visa restrictions that required Iraqis to apply for a visa in Iraq, rather than at the Jordanian border crossing. In addition, border officials refused entry to men between eighteen and thirty-five years old and reportedly turned back many Shia would-be refugees; most of the Iraqis returned to Iraq, although they remained displaced within its borders.[14] Jordanian officials likely reacted, in part, based on their experience with the Palestinians.

Important lessons can also be drawn from the decades-long presence of over 330,000 registered Somali refugees in Kenya.[15] Although the Somali refugee crisis receives less international attention and assistance than Syria, there are useful comparisons that apply. Kenya's 2011 invasion of Somalia was partially motivated by the political and security dynamics of the massive long-term displacement of Somalis. The Kenyan government has also successfully manipulated the refugee crisis to gain Western support for its military policies. In addition, refugees in Kenya have been targeted by Al Shabaab operatives in the camps. In both the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, the fear of terrorist groups has provided a rationale for eroding refugees' legal and physical protection. Addressing the refugee crises is an essential aspect of conflict resolution in both situations.

Domestic demographic considerations influence how Kenya responds to the Somali refugees within its borders. Somalis have lived in Kenya for decades; many arrived as early as 1991, fleeing civil war. The ethnicity of the refugees affects Kenya's domestic policy and the harsh crackdowns on the displaced. The Kenyan government often scapegoats the Somali ethnic minority and conflates it with the refugee population. Despite that long-term population, Kenya refuses to offer permanent residence to Somali refugees and drastically curtails their freedom of movement. Journalist Ben Rawlence has observed that the "Dadaab [camp] has survived as an isolated slum precisely because Kenya does not want to swell the Somali vote by up to one million refugees, or 2 percent of Kenya's population."[16]

In general, destabilization and violence are more likely when the host state has been involved in refugee-related violence in the past or when refugees alter demographic balances related to host-state internal conflict. Analyzing each new refugee crisis in its historical context allows policy-makers to predict potential destabilization and target resources accordingly. If security resources are scarce, for example, it makes more sense to focus them on refugee crises that occur in a possible tinderbox, rather than situations in which refugees and their hosts share ethnic ties and cultural sympathy.

Unsurprisingly, refugee crises tend to occur in unstable and high-conflict regions, which begets further violence and displacement. Trying to resolve a crisis in isolation of the regional security environment generally leads to frustration and a waste of resources. For example, the return of hun-

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dreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees who had been in Syria does not indicate improvement in the Iraq conflict; it merely demonstrates the decreasing options available to the Iraqis who, for the most part, remain displaced within Iraq. Rather than solving a problem, refugee return merely relocated it.

Political scientist Myron Weiner's classic article on refugees and conflict, "Bad Neighbors, Bad Neighborhoods," explains how regional conflict contributes to the likelihood of refugee-related violence.[17] Certainly, both the Horn of Africa and the Middle East qualify as "bad neighborhoods" in which conflicts tend to cluster. In assessing the likelihood of further conflict, one can ask how many neighboring states experience violent conflict and whether there is cross-border violence or rebel group activity. Those questions highlight the role of weak or fractured governments, particularly those that lack control of their periphery, in exacerbating potential destabilization. The relationship between the host and the sending state will also determine the level of tension and risk of violence based on the refugee crisis.

The dangerous security environment has clearly affected the Turkish government's response to Syrian refugees and has created a precarious situation for them on the border. Turkey does not grant Syrians refugee status or allow them to register with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); rather they are granted "temporary protection." In 2013, Turkey adopted the Law on Foreigners and International Protection to establish an immigration process for Syrians. The law recognizes Syrians as "guests" rather than as refugees and uses the term "guest camps" rather than refugee camps.[18]

The mixed Turkish government response to Syrians stems, in part, from conflicts and tensions with its own Kurdish population. As President Erdoğan stated, "What happens in Syria [is] an internal affair of Turkey and not a foreign policy issue."[19] A Kurdish homeland is anathema to Turkey, yet the displacement patterns of Kurds are increasing the geographical clustering among Kurds in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Foreign policy scholars Elizabeth Ferris and Kemal Kirişci have explained that "the Turkish government considers the prospect of an uninterrupted Kurdish-controlled zone along its border a threat to national security." They continue, "this complicates Turkey's relationship with the United States, which maintains very close cooperation with the [Syrian Kurdish rebel group] PYD in the fight against ISIS."[20] In addition, Syria's Kurds have been effective in countering ISIS; thus, military action to weaken them creates tension between Turkey and the United States. The main losers in the high politics and negotiations have been the refugees, who see a continual decline in their humanitarian and legal protection.

Regional violence also surrounds the issue of displacement in Kenya, a host state in a supremely bad neighborhood. The surrounding states include Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Uganda – countries that have variously suffered civil war, international war, famine, terrorist attacks, and crushing poverty. Cross-border refugee flows and rebel attacks coexist in this unstable region.

The Kenyan government views its Somali refugee population as intertwined with the larger security issue of cross-border attacks by Al Shabaab. Kenya cited the need to relocate refugees to support its 2011 invasion of Somalia and the establishment of a buffer zone on the Somali side of the border. Abdeta Beyene and Seyoum Mesfin highlight the regional security strategy of buffer zones, "which can be established in a shared territory or created unilaterally through force and monitored exclusively by one state or through proxies in a nonshared area in (a) relatively weaker state(s), or on the other side of the enemy's

territory that harbors a threat to the stronger state."[21] The Kenyan government continues to battle Al Shabaab and intermittently revives the threat to close the refugee camps.

Regional security issues remain important during conflict resolution and peace-building, as well. The way in which displaced populations are integrated into a peace plan, and whether they are offered a durable solution to their situation, can influence postconflict stability. Refugees from the most protracted conflicts, such as in Afghanistan, include people who were born into refugee status and have never seen their "homeland." The concept of voluntary return often does not appeal to the generations who grew up in Pakistan and live in established communities there. This creates tensions between the host state, which urges the refugees to return, and the refugees who resist repatriation. Reporting from Pakistan, Human Rights Watch claimed that "in the second half of 2016, a toxic combination of deportation threats and police abuses pushed out nearly 365,000 of the country's 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees, as well as just over 200,000 of the country's estimated 1 million undocumented Afghans."[22] The government of Afghanistan, which cannot meet the needs of its existing inhabitants, finds itself overwhelmed by returning refugees. A November 2016 report describes instances of "returning refugees clashing with locals over resources and land," and explains that "the displaced are often rejected, or pushed into squalid camps. They also face the threat of forced eviction and rarely have access to clean water or food."[23] The internal displacement crisis in Afghanistan demonstrates the need to develop a feasible survival plan for the returnees. Otherwise, conflict can erupt and displacement will continue to grow.

The negative effect of bad neighborhoods indicates that peacemakers must take a coordinated regional approach to conflict resolution. In conflict clusters, such as Central Africa, the attempt to resolve one crisis usually results in the relocation of violence rather than resolution. As Congolese rebels (and refugees) were pushed from Uganda, for example, they merely resurfaced in other weak, conflict-ridden states in the region. The destabilizing effect of refugee repatriation in Afghanistan offers another example of traditional peace-building measures that can actually worsen a situation. In the short term, policy-makers may find it easier to focus on piecemeal solutions to displacement crises, but such measures can actually undermine long-term peace efforts.

Unlike neighboring states such as Jordan and Kenya, Western states usually enjoy the privilege of distance from the conflict zone, which decreases pressure for an immediate reaction. The initial Western approach to refugee crises commonly divorces the humanitarian emergency from the causes of the displacement, addressing them through entirely separate channels. In response, humanitarian organizations reiterate that the provision of aid as a life-saving measure cannot resolve the crisis, particularly when political efforts undermine humanitarian goals. A disjointed response to the crisis reduces the likelihood of a durable resolution of both the refugee crisis and the conflict.

A Western state with security interests in the regional conflict is more likely to view the refugee population in strategic, rather than humanitarian, terms. The crisis may fit into a broader political relationship with the refugee-sending and -hosting states. Conversely, Western states may ignore a crisis that occurs in a region with little strategic value. In that case, the only engagement will be through humanitarian assistance, and usually at insufficient levels to meet refugees' needs. That may leave refugees unprotected from militarization and desperate for any means to improve

their situation. Such a combination can quickly lead to violence.

Many Western governments are complicit in schemes that essentially use refugee populations as bargaining chips in international politics. In some cases, host governments use refugees as leverage in negotiations with Western states desperate to prevent the mass arrival of asylum seekers. Donor states have also encouraged manipulation and commodification of refugees by offering money to states that promise to prevent refugee flows.

The 2016 agreement between the European Union and Turkey formalized the treatment of refugees as political bargaining chips, and is likely to spur other receiving states to follow Turkey's strategy. By agreeing to accept Europe's unwanted asylum seekers, Turkey gained long-sought advances toward integration with Europe, as well as an additional three billion Euros for refugee assistance.[24] Human rights advocates express concern that the agreement violates international law and infringes on migrants' rights. The agreement forcibly returns asylum seekers without giving them a hearing. It also provides no guarantee that Turkey won't forcibly return people to dangerous situations. Rawlence explains the larger impact of sacrificing the legal rights of refugees in pursuit of political gain: "Against the backdrop of the Turkey deal, refugees are a good currency to hold: a hedge against foreign criticism, a liability for which to blame domestic problems, and a bargaining chip for special favors from abroad. In its vulgar attempt to buy itself out of its international obligations, the European Union has started a bidding war."[25]

The Syrian civil war and refugee crisis is deeply intertwined with Turkey's regional and international ambitions. Oktav and Çelikaksoy have explained that the refugee crisis has led the Turkish government to both blame and embrace the West: "This bifurcated attitude toward the West has typified the Turkish dilemma of trying to both gain membership in the EU and at the same time establish normative influence regionally."[26] Turkey berates Western donors for their stinginess, yet rejects international involvement in refugee-hosting areas. As the crisis unfolded in 2011, "the Turkish government saw international nongovernmental organizations and UN agencies as invasive and therefore acted to keep them at bay."[27]

The Turkey-EU deal formalized an arrangement that occurs less formally in other crises. For example, Kenya has an unsettling habit of threatening to close refugee camps as an attention-getting ploy. Rawlence has argued that Kenya's announced plan to dismantle the Dadaab refugee camp, which houses nearly half a million people, is actually "a demand for ransom" from Western nations that follows from Turkey's lucrative deal with the European Union.[28] In the past, Kenyan threats to close Dadaab netted a U.S. promise of a $45 million aid bonus.

Kenya has also been able to leverage American antiterror concerns to build support for military action against Al Shabaab in Somalia. Kenya's 2011 invasion of Somalia was both antiterrorist and antirefugee since the government hoped to establish a border zone in Somalia and expel refugees from Kenya. After Al Shabaab gunmen attacked Garissa University College in Kenya, killing 147 people, the government scapegoated refugees. This rationalized security crackdowns and aid reductions at the Dadaab camp.

Overall, destabilization and violence are more likely when host states use refugees as political pawns in negotiations with third parties. The willingness of Western states to resettle refugees also influences the refugees' levels of desperation and discontent in the country of first asylum. The chance of conflict also increases when host states do not have the means (or desire) to

meet the refugees' basic needs. Since most host states cannot afford to provide sufficient assistance, this requires massive donations by wealthier countries.

The human geography of a crisis, including the organization and administration of a refugee camp, can affect security and protection. Host states usually site camps in peripheral and inhospitable regions of the country, sometimes with the explicit intention of discouraging long-term settlement. Some governments even forbid refugees and aid agencies from using durable building materials to emphasize the impermanence of the settlements. Measures intended to reduce host-state destabilization, such as enclosed camps and denial of legal employment, infringe on refugee protection and rights. Over time, the policies meant to increase state security backfire by isolating and impoverishing the refugees and creating resentment. Far-flung camps also offer increased opportunities for criminal and political violence to flourish.

Considering the norm of massive, underfunded camps such as Dadaab in Kenya (321,000 residents) and Zaatari in Jordan (90,000 residents), it makes sense to pay attention to how camps function. Host states promote the perception of camps as temporary humanitarian way stations as a way to avoid dealing with the reality of camps as sprawling, insecure, and impoverished slums. Yet, as noted by political scientist Lionel Beehner, "there has been little attention to date on how the construction, organization, and administration of refugee camps can contribute to security threats or vice versa."[29]

In their organization and governance, refugee and IDP camps can function as areas of limited statehood where nonstate actors perform government functions. As Thomas Risse and Eric Stollenwerk explain, "Limited statehood concerns those areas of a country in which central author-

ities (governments) lack the ability to implement and enforce rules and decisions and/or in which the legitimate monopoly over the means of violence is lacking."[30] Although international law mandates that the government is responsible for meeting the needs of displaced populations, the host government often does not provide public goods or even security in refugee camps. UN agencies, NGOs, and donor states provide food, medical care, shelter, and sanitation for displaced people. When the host state lacks the willingness or ability to provide security, camp organizers must make ad hoc arrangements, such as hiring private contractors or local police to patrol camps. Many observers, including the beleaguered providers of services and security to the displaced, express a wish for states to establish effective sovereignty in the camps. Risse and Stollenwerk, however, challenge the commonly held concern that areas of limited statehood pose inherent risks of violence.[31] Instead, such areas can remain stable and peaceful, especially if a stronger state would result in increased threats toward the inhabitants of refugee and IDP camps. Somaliland, a breakaway and autonomous region of Somalia, hosts tens of thousands of recent Yemeni refugees. The region declared independence from Somalia, although it remains unrecognized internationally, and offers a more peaceful haven than either Yemen or Somalia.[32]

The organization of refugee settlements, as well as their conditions, can influence the likelihood of violence and destabilization. When host states and aid organizations build settlements, they may unwittingly undo existing patterns of integration by clustering refugees according to ethnic or religious affiliation. This can potentially create more identity-based communities. In some cases, however, such as when they are a persecuted minority, refugees are sequestered for their own protection. As a general rule, settlements func-

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tion more smoothly when the inhabitants are consulted about their organization.

The conditions of exile also influence the potential for conflict. The main points of contention for refugees are freedom of movement, the right to work, and education for their children. While locals may resist allowing refugees those freedoms, in the long run, more self-sufficiency reduces tensions and can even have a positive economic impact. Regardless of legal restrictions, markets will abound among the displaced. The question is really whether jobs will occur legally or as part of a distorted informal economy (including criminal networking).

Based on field research in the Zaatari camp, Beehner argues that top-down social engineering policies that treat refugee camps as "incubators of social unrest, terrorism, and illicit markets" are "counterproductive to enhancing security in refugee camps, both for the refugees themselves and for the host state."[33] As of 2016, the Zaatari camp in Jordan held about ninety thousand Syrian refugees.[34] Every type of business flourishes despite attempts to restrict refugees and regulate their living conditions; services such as pizza delivery and wedding dress rentals are available from refugee-run businesses. Beehner strongly advocates for less regimented camps that allow refugees greater cultural and economic flexibility, arguing that "camps, left unregulated, have the same dynamic capacity to become engines of economic growth as they do to become incubators of violence."[35]

Beehner's recommendations on camp structure would fall on deaf ears in Kenya, where the residents of Dadaab find themselves continually restricted. The camps are so-called "closed camps," in which refugees must obtain official permission to leave. The government refuses to allow any construction using permanent building materials, consigning refugees, many

of whom have lived their entire lives in Dadaab, to flimsy and dangerous structures. Income generation is also highly restricted and the government mandates that all of the best jobs, such as staff with international NGOs, go to Kenyan citizens. Of course, strict limits on employment and movement end up creating a distorted informal economy. Massive smuggling operations, which profit Kenyan civil servants and businessmen, use the refugee camps as hubs. The sugar trade in Kenya is a complex and corrupt web of profit between government officials and Al Shabaab militants that relies on cheap refugee labor. The profiteers bring contraband sugar across the Somali border on trucks that also rent space to Somalis desperate to reach refugee camps in Kenya.[36] The Kenya example suggests that when corruption benefits government factions, they have a further incentive to reduce the legal options for the refugees.

Although Syrian refugees in Turkey are concentrated in border regions, where one might expect conditions to exacerbate tensions, observers have found little evidence to support worries of destabilization. Around 260,000 Syrians are housed in twenty-one government-run camps, with the vast majority living in urban areas.[37] Economic analysis by Yusuf Emre Akgündüz and colleagues finds that the presence of over five hundred thousand refugees has not distorted labor markets and has only minimally increased food and housing prices. Their finding suggests that economic conditions will dampen local resentment against the refugees. They also note, however, that Syrian refugees lack legal protection in Turkey since the government labels them "guests" rather than "refugees."[38] The International Crisis Group suggests that "Ankara now needs to assume the permanence of the refugees in order to craft an integration strategy to mitigate the long-term risk for the nation's stability."[39] Opponents of the Turkish government complain that the

ruling Justice and Development Party is relocating the Sunni refugees into opposition and minority areas as a way to "achieve absolute power."[40] Physical and legal insecurity increases the potential for destabilization, which could be alleviated by granting the Syrians refugee status and the related legal protection that implies.

According to the UNHCR, Syrian refugees in Lebanon suffer in very poor conditions: "Around 70 percent live below the poverty line. There are no formal refugee camps and, as a result, more than a million registered Syrians are scattered throughout more than 2,100 urban and rural communities and locations, often sharing small basic lodgings with other refugee families in overcrowded conditions."[41] The government has responded to security risks with indiscriminate crackdowns on refugees, as well as Lebanese civilians.[42] Lebanon is probably the host state most at risk for increasing political instability, given its existing problems. In general, risks of conflict rise when refugees live in oppressive and highly regimented settings. This is exacerbated when they have no legal income-generation options and when young people are denied an education.

Large-scale population displacement generates fear. Refugees flee due to fear of persecution and violence; those fears often do not dissipate in their new surroundings. Host countries fear the potential destabilizing effects of refugees in the economic, political, and security realms. Regional and international observers fear the spread of conflict across borders. Many of these concerns stem from past historical experiences and existing political tensions, leading to refugee policies that actually worsen the risks for destabilization. Confining the displaced to squalid, insecure, and underfunded camps can create a high level of desperation among inhabitants. Faced with an unlivable situation, refugees will risk their lives on a treacherous journey to reach a perceived safe haven, such as Europe. A lack of security also creates the opportunity for militant activity, including forced or voluntary recruitment of people in search of basic safety. For example, forced recruitment by militant groups in Africa has occurred in unprotected camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur, Chad, Somalia, and many other states.[43]

Policy-makers often view host-state security and refugee security as unrelated – or even opposing – factors. In reality, refugee protection and state stability are strongly connected; undermining one factor weakens the other. Policies to protect refugees, both physically and legally, reduce potential threats from the crisis and bolster state security. Overwhelmed and often impoverished, host states cannot provide this protection without significant international assistance. Outside help is also required when the host state is hostile to the displaced population or seeks to manipulate their situation for unrelated gains.

The dangers related to the global refugee crisis interact with many other threats that emanate from civil wars and weak states. In many cases, refugee crises destabilize international security only in the company of other factors, such as weak governments, rebel and terrorist group activity, and religious or ethnic fragmentation. When states lose control over territory or engage in civil war, massive displacement is a likely result. Mitigating the risk factors for host state destabilization and refugee insecurity will reduce the likelihood that a refugee crisis will contribute to further conflict.

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ENDNOTES

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Sarah Kenyon Lischer