Under pressure: When refugees feel pressured to leave their host countries[1]

Alex Braithwaite, Faten Ghosn, and Tuqa Hameed

Abstract

A significant portion of the global population of 270 million migrants are refugees who were forcibly displaced from and are unable to return to their country of origin for reasons ranging from personal safety to economic instability. Almost 30 million refugees are protected by an international refugee regime, which obliges host states to provide safehaven and protections against forced expulsion. Nonetheless, refugee experiences in host countries are highly varied, including with respect to how welcome they feel in their host states. This matters, because refugees that feel pressured to leave may be more likely to look to move on to a third country or return home involuntarily and before conditions are safe to do so. We argue that whether or not refugees feel pressured to leave host countries is affected by the varied nature of their quotidian interactions with authorities and regular citizens. To test the validity of this argument we draw upon approximately 1,700 responses to a survey administered among the Syrian refugee population throughout Lebanon in June and July 2018. Our statistical analyses demonstrate that individuals who are registered with the UN and the Lebanese government both feel more pressure to leave the country, as do individuals who are subject to ill-treatment at the hands of Lebanese residents or authorities. We also find some tentative evidence that individuals who are not well socially connected within Lebanese society – those that live in predominantly Syrian neighborhoods in Lebanon – also feel more pressure to leave the country.

The international refugee regime—with the 1951 Refugee Convention at its core—reflects the confluence of strong norms and clear international laws. Central to the regime are the notions that host states will provide safehaven to refugees and that they will not expel refugees from their territories when doing so might place them in harm's way. Indeed, short of the refugee having broken local laws, the state is expected not to forcibly remove refugees under any circumstance. Rather, the burden under international law falls on the individual refugee, with the assistance of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to determine the conditions under which their departure might be possible – i.e., when they judge conditions are "safe" for them to return to their homes (Barnett and Finnemore 2012; Koser and Kuschminder 2015). This is, at least, how things are expected to work in principle under international refugee law.

In practice, we see frequent instances of violations of this norm. Our study focuses on more informal and complicated potential violations of the norm.[2] We suggest investigation of informal violations is important because they are likely to be much more common in practice and yet are not widely studied. We conceive of informal violations as circumstances under which refugees feel pressured to leave their (temporary) host country and return home or relocate to a third country. Such pressures are important to understand, because they plausibly help us to understand the conditions under which refugees might end up leaving their host country on

---

[2] Perhaps more frequently discussed are more formal violations of the norm involving government-sanctioned actions.. This includes examples of governments forcibly repatriating refugees at gunpoint. One infamous example of this occurred in 1979 when Thai forces forcibly repatriated some 45,000 Cambodian refugees from the relative haven of the Thai side of the disputed border region of Prasat Preah Vihear back into their homeland, potentially to face the wrath of the repressive Khmer Rouge (Zieck 1997). More than 3,000 refugees were killed during the expulsion; many of them shot by the Thai forces for refusing to repatriate (Thompson 2010).

something other than a voluntary basis (Chimni 2004; Koser and Kuschminder 2015; Yahya et al. 2018). Examples abound. For instance, in August 2002, the Iranian Office of the Bureau for Foreign Immigrants and Alien Affairs issued a proclamation for undocumented Afghanis—including many displaced by the US-led intervention in the prior year—to apply for documents required to exit and return home. This came on the heels of a joint voluntary repatriation program between the UNHCR and the Iranian government. The combination of the two resulted in many Afghan refugees feeling pressured to leave Iran (The New Humanitarian 2002).

Similarly, Syrian refugees in Lebanon, many of them now entering their tenth year, are subject to feelings of pressure to return home, even while the conflict in Syria rages on (El Deeb 2019; Ghosn et al. 2021). Of course, it is not only government actions that might make refugees feel pressured to leave host countries before it is safe to do so (El Mufti 2014; Janmyr 2017; Mourad 2017). Non-governmental actors and citizens often also express their displeasure at hosting refugees (Dempster and Hargreaves 2017; Ghosn et al. 2019) and sometimes even engage in violence against refugees (Gineste and Savun 2019; Onoma 2013).

But why does this matter? The UNHCR promotes voluntary repatriation and resettlement to third countries as durable solutions to ongoing and, especially, protracted refugee situations (Barnett and Finnemore 2012). Their stated priority is to ensure refugees can determine when they are ready and able to move on from temporary host countries and to ensure that individual refugees are able to exercise a free and informed choice when doing so. In practice, however, it is not clear that this notion of decisions being "voluntary" is really very meaningful (Barnett and Finnemore 2012; Chimni 2004; Yahya et al. 2018; Zieck 1997).

The freedom of choice taken by refugees to *voluntarily* return home or move to a third country would ideally be free of influence by the host government or its citizens. That is to say

that while refugees may weigh up their current circumstances in determining whether or not they wish to leave their host country, the freedom of their decision would be badly undermined if they felt a pressure to leave. If we are to return to or move towards a system in which individual freedom of choice influences when individuals might safely and voluntarily move on, it is important for us to better understand the conditions under which this normatively preferred condition is not met: i.e., when refugees feel pressured to leave their (temporary) host state. Accordingly, the conditions under which these informal pressures are felt by refugees is the focus of this study.

We argue that whether or not refugees feel pressured to leave their host countries is affected by the varied nature of individual refugee's quotidian interactions with authorities and regular citizens. These interactions capture the extent to which refugees might be monitored by authorities, the ways in which they are treated by locals, and whether or not they are socially connected to Lebanese residents. We also suggest that these characteristics of interactions ought to have differential effects on refugee perceptions regarding the source of their feeling pressured to leave: whether a general sense, or stemming from host government or local citizens.

We focus attention upon the case of Syrian refugees hosted in neighboring Lebanon. Lebanon serves as an instructive case. With more than 1 million refugees, Lebanon hosts the highest per capita population of refugees globally, the vast majority of whom are from neighboring Syria. While the case of Syrians in Lebanon might not be entirely representative of other protracted refugee situations, it should be instructive in helping to uncover the conditions under which individuals experience pressure to leave their host countries. Specifically, we draw upon approximately 1,700 responses to a survey administered among the Syrian refugee population throughout Lebanon in June and July 2018. In this survey, we asked refugees to

identify whether they have recently felt pressure from either Lebanese citizens or the Lebanese government to leave the country. We use a variety of questions from the survey to then explore the conditions under which refugees do and do not feel pressured to leave their host country.

The results of our multivariate logistic regression analyses suggest that simply having registered with the local government and with the UN predisposes individuals to subsequently feel pressured to leave the country. This correlation would seem to be inconsistent with the spirit of international protections for refugees. Nor is evidence that Syrian refugees subject to ill-treatment and those poorly connected to Lebanese society each feel greater pressure to leave the country.

Refugees and the pressures they face to leave host countries

In the decades since the inauguration of the 1951 refugee convention, the UNHCR and governance actors engaged in managing refugee situations have changed their priorities with respect to what constitutes appropriate treatment of refugee populations in various settings (Barnett and Finnemore 2012). Since repatriation – or return of refugees to their home countries – became more popular in the late 1970s, we have witnessed a relaxation of standards as to what constitutes conditions that are "safe" for refugees to return home (Barnett and Finnemore 2012; Zieck 1997). This "normalization" or return has resulted in a clearer sense that conditions on the ground no longer need to have improved "substantially" but rather just "appreciably" (Barnett and Finnemore 2012, 99; see, also, Barbero 1993; Chimni 2004). Under pressure from growing numbers of refugees in the global population and increasingly reluctant host states, this has resulted in a blurring of the lines as regards what in voluntary and what is involuntary return (Koser and Kuschmminder 2015; Ghosn et al. 2021).

Nowhere is this clearer than in Lebanon, which hosts the highest per capita number of refugees of any country globally. When the United Nations Security Council issued Resolution 2254 in December 2015 calling on refugee host countries to respect refugees' rights to "voluntary return", various members of Lebanon's government quickly and loudly expressed their concerns. They contended that doing so would imply refugees had a right to full integration into Lebanese society (Janmyr 2017). Rather, the Lebanese government has long suggested that refugees should be expected to return home not when they volunteer to do so, but rather when conditions are deemed "safe" for them to do so. For instance, in 2015, they stated formally to the UNHCR's Convention on Ethnic and Racial Discrimination (CERD) Committee that 'Lebanon was not seeking to definitively resettle refugees [in Lebanon], as it hoped that they would be able to safely return home one day' (Janmyr 2017, 456).

It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that, in Lebanon and elsewhere, relationships between refugee and host populations are often tense and subject to animosity, with hosts frequently concerned about the risks associated with and unhappy with the costs borne for providing safe haven (Ghosn et al. 2019; Dempster and Hargreaves 2017; Braithwaite et al. 2019), and anxious to see refugee return home as soon as possible (Janmyr 2017; Koser and Kuschminder 2015). It is important, therefore, to shine a light on the quotidian aspects of being hosted that might affect refugee decision-making regarding staying in place and potentially leaving, including to return home. After all, while much attention is often paid to the extreme examples of governments forcibly removing refugees from their territories, it is likely quotidian interactions between refugees and host communities also have a bearing on refugees' decisions regarding integration and onward movement.

Vulnerable refugee populations often find themselves caught between proverbial rock and hard place. Commonly unable to formally resettle to third countries (Salehyan 2018; UNHCR 2019) and fearful of risking informal relocation (Tinti and Reitano 2018), refugees often have to decide between staying in place where they might face mounting levels of animosity from host governments and populaces (Buehler et al. 2020; Hartman and Morse 2018) or returning to homelands before safety and security there can be assured (Schwartz 2019). Given this delicate balance, it is important for us to understand the conditions under which individuals feel pressure to leave their host country, as it is possible that this pressure serves as a precursor to individuals taking on a risky journey to relocate to a third country or returning home before peaceful conditions guarantee safety.

Importantly, though, we believe there is likely to be considerable heterogeneity in whether or not refugees feel pressured to leave their host countries. We contend this is affected not just by the prevailing policy agenda set by the government and international organizations but by the varied nature of individual refugees' quotidian interactions with authorities and regular citizens. What defines a satisfactory environment to reside in is surely complicated and varied. For some refugees cultural similarity is of utmost importance, for others economic opportunity is needed, or, indeed, they may simply seek a country with a stable political climate (Koser and Wilkinson 2007). We focus attention on three forms of interactions: the extent to which refugees might be monitored by authorities, the ways in which refugees are treated by locals, and whether or not they are socially connected to Lebanese society.

The first set of interactions with the host cluster around notions of monitoring. Upon arrival in a host country, forced migrants are subject to a considerable degree of monitoring. Most importantly, registered refugees are entered into the administrative systems of the local

host and/or the UNHCR. In many cases, refugees aspire to being registered, as this will often serve as a precursor to gaining status as a refugee through the UNHCR and gaining access to relief and resources from the host country and myriad aid agencies that may serve refugees locally. In other words, being "in the system" surely provides them with access to some resources that will simply not be available to those individuals who opt to remain undocumented. Access to these resources could serve to improve the quality of their time in the host country and reduce the pressures they feel to leave. This is, of course, likely subject to more than simply being registered – as we will discuss later.

Under ideal circumstances, therefore, refugees will want to be registered in order to receive protections, be processed, and begin the process of identifying a pathway forwards toward either resettlement in a third country or potential return to their country of origin when conditions allows for this in a safe and voluntary manner. In the Lebanese context, however, in which the state in overburdened (Ghosn and Braithwaite 2018; International Alert 2015), we contend registration also makes it easier for the authorities to monitor and pressure refugees to leave the country.

Naturally, of course, there are those that will look to avoid being formally documented upon arrival; potentially for a variety of reasons. It is important to note, of course, that this is not to suggest that un-registered individuals feel safe and secure in their situation in Lebanon. Rather, we suggest that they are less likely to feel directly pressured by the government, as they presumably are able to remain somewhat under the radar. In other words, arriving migrants who were forced to flee their home countries and are now requesting to gain status as refugees will typically be rather closely monitored from day one of their new lives in a neighboring host country.

Importantly, therefore, being registered means that refugees are now traceable by the state. This matters, because should the local authorities determine that they wish to start encouraging refugees to leave the country, we might expect them to start constructing lists of candidates for repatriation by consulting their registration records. There is mounting evidence of the Lebanese authorities and security forces targeting and forcibly evicting refugee families from their homes under the guise of demolishing abodes that do not comply with housing codes (Hochberg 2019; Human Rights Watch 2019). We suggest that authorities are most likely to begin systematic processes of demolitions, evictions, and deportations against individuals for whom they have documented evidence of their whereabouts – i.e., those for whom they hold official registration documentation. Accordingly, we anticipate:

Hypothesis 1: Refugees that are registered with local authorities are more likely to feel pressure to leave the host country than those that are not registered.

The second and third sets of interactions align more closely with the logic underlying the "push and pull" factors pre-theoretical framework that is commonly adopted in studies of migration broadly construed, and studies of refugee movements, more specifically. This framework is typically applied to the decision-making processes of potential migrants. The logic suggests that individuals evaluate the costs and benefits of a potential move on the basis of factors that might push them away from their country of origin, including conflict, political violence, repression, loss of economic opportunities, natural disasters, and factors that might pull them towards (or attract them to) destination countries, including the relative absence of violence, access to opportunities to improve their livelihoods, and the presence of ethnic kin (Braithwaite et al. 2021; Davenport, Moore, and Poe 2003; Moore and Shellman 2007). It stands to reason that once they have completed the initial journey to a new host country, refugees might

revisit their initial evaluation of prevailing conditions and once again assess these same factors in situ.

Accordingly, we suggest that a second set of interactions relate to treatment of refugees within their host communities. Refugees have typically fled their countries of origin in order to escape the real or perceived threat of violence, persecution, and discrimination (see, e.g., Schmeidel 1997; Turkoglu and Chadefaux 2019). It stands to reason that they would be sensitive to being exposed to these forms of ill-treatment in their new host countries. It is by now well established that by default local host populations display xenophobia and animosity towards refugee populations (Adida, Lo, and Platas 2018), especially in cases in which refugees experience protracted exile (Hyndman and Giles 2017). We contend that as individuals become increasingly exposed to forms of abuse and ill-treatment through their interactions with host populations, so their cost-benefit calculations will tend to point towards exiting the host country. Accordingly, we anticipate:

> *Hypothesis 2: Refugees who have been subject to abuse in the host country are more likely to feel pressure to leave the host country than those that have not been subject to such treatment.*

The final set of interactions relate to the extent to which refugees are socially connected to the host society. Connectedness is an important ingredient in creating a cohesive society (Schiefer and Van der Noll 2017). In the broader literature on migration, social connections are said to play an important role in influencing and motivating initial decisions and inclinations to migrate (Aslany et al. 2021); and connections to and participation in the current host society, in particular, serve as a deterrent to onward migration in samples of potential migrants across multiple continents and contexts (Golovics n.d.; Lee and Lee 2019).

In the realm of migrant and refugee integration, mounting evidence points towards greater interactions between refugees and hosts improving the nature of their relationship (Ghosn et al. 2019; Hartman and Morse 2019). In Turkey, for instance, the absence of connectedness is one important condition explaining Turkish migrant returns from Germany (Kunuroglu et al 2018). Given that large numbers of refugees entering into a country will deepen the pre-existing strain on resources, exacerbating social cleavages (Loescher and Monahan 1989; Greenhill 2016), social connectedness might help to reverse the natural course of souring relations between refugees and hosts (Ghosn and Braithwaite 2018).

The literature on migrant networks maintains that individuals from one origin country or hometown cluster in the same geographic locations in the destination country as this allows them to maintain the familiar connection to their homeland through the preservation of shared customs and traditions (Epstein 2008; Faini and Venturini 2010; and Barett and Mosca 2013). As such, an individual who feels an attachment to their homeland may choose to live in a neighborhood where they may enjoy these network externalities, making them less socially connected to their host community. Accordingly, we anticipate:

> *Hypothesis 3: Refugees who are more socially connected to the host population are less likely to feel pressure to leave than are those that are less socially connected.*

When refugees feel pressured to leave host countries: Evidence from Syrians in Lebanon

In order to explore the validity of our main hypotheses, we draw upon responses from an original survey conducted in June and July of 2018 among more than 1,700 Syrian refugees hosted in

Lebanon.[3] This is a meaningful context in which to investigate the conditions under which refugees feel pressure to leave host countries, because Lebanon has served as host to more than one million refugees from the Syrian Civil War, which represents almost a quarter of their own native population. At the peak in May 2015, the UNHCR recorded 1,184,427 Syrian refugees in Lebanon. This number had dropped to 929,624 in June 2019, suggesting that almost two hundred thousand refugees had left the country, perhaps having embarked upon dangerous journeys to new third countries or attempting to return home to Syria even while the civil war there rages on (Hochberg 2019).

In addition to hosting the world's highest per capita proportion of refugees, Lebanon is also a striking case to study for the rather delicate balance of social tensions that it experiences. The country has significant levels of youth unemployment, high inflation and debt obligations, and stagnating GDP prior to the arrival of refugees from neighboring Syria from 2011 onwards (Eldawy 2019). Given this domestic turmoil and dynamics, the Lebanese government was unable to provide a unified and coherent policy to address the humanitarian crisis on its border with Syria, thereby failing to regulate the residency of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (Saghieh and Frangieh 2014). However, some scholars have maintained that the Lebanese response, characterized by institutional ambiguity, was part of the government's strategy (Geha and Talhouk 2018; Nassar and Stel 2019). This so-called "policy of no-policy" resulted in more consistent decentralization and local autonomy (El Mufti 2014; Mourad 2017). This led certain branches of government as well as local municipalities to take actions into their own hands and

---

[3] We provide a comprehensive discussion of the ethical issues and considerations that guided our research design in Appendix A. This also includes identification of the IRB protocol for the study. Appendix B provides an abridged version of the survey instrument implemented for this study.

impose their own rules and regulations (see, e.g., Mourad 2019), leaving many Syrian refugees in a deeply precarious legal position (Janmyr 2016). In turn, this deepened systemic dependence upon the UNHCR and other aid agencies as "surrogate states" (Kagan 2011; Weiss et al. 2017).

As a result, with the addition of significant financial, social, and security burdens associated with hosting such a large population of refugees, it is perhaps unsurprising that initially high levels of support among Lebanese residents for hosting Syrian refugees have dwindled as each year of the situation has passed (Ghosn and Braithwaite 2018; International Alert 2015) and that most recently we have witnessed the specter of forcible returns, in violation of international norms (El Deeb 2019).

The UNHCR identify some 70% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon as living in residential areas and 30% in more concentrated settlements and camps. Our survey sample was designed to reflect this distribution across the districts of the country. Utilizing data provided by the UNHCR, we distributed the number of surveys conducted per district to be proportional to the size of the refugee population in each district. We then selected towns or settlements within each district such that their probability of being chosen was proportional to the size of the refugee population in each of the towns or settlements. Utilizing the household listing for each town of the number of refugees maintained by municipalities, the survey firm was able to locate Syrian refugee households. In general, Syrian refugee households were clustered within the town, with many renting/living in older homes and apartments that were rundown but cheap. In each town or settlement, the firm randomly selected the first household listing (or tent in settlements) until an adult respondent accepted to participate (only one respondent per household). The enumerators then skipped 3 houses to go to the fifth house (or tent) to request their next

participants. This process was repeated until the number of surveys from the town or settlement was completed.

It is important to note that while we believe our survey sample is fairly representative of the broader Syrian refugee population hosted in Lebanon, we do not believe that our research design enables us to infer truly causal claims about factors affecting whether respondents feel pressured to leave Lebanon. It was not feasible for us to randomly assign respondents to treatments about which we were interested in exploring effects. Accordingly, we are keen to emphasize, therefore, that while our analyses do not uncover causal relationships, we are confident that the inclusion of spatial fixed effects and a set of important controls for potential confounders (each of which are detailed below) leaves us with a series of credible conclusions regarding common patterns of statistical association between our explanatory and dependent variables.

Dependent variables

With regard to capturing refugee feelings of pressure to leave Lebanon, we employ responses from two questions from our survey to operationalize our dependent variables. As part of the survey individuals were asked the following question: "Do you feel pressured to leave Lebanon?" They were able to answer "yes", "no", "do not know." 1,749 respondents provided a clear yes or no response. 110 individuals (or about just 6% of our respondents) stated that they had felt some pressure to leave Lebanon. Those that answered yes were then asked to identify the source of that pressure. 51 individuals identified the Lebanese Government as the source of their feelings of pressure to leave. 59 individuals identified Lebanese citizens as the source of their feelings of pressure. From this we generate three binary variables, simply capturing whether

respondents have felt pressured to leave Lebanon (1) in general; (2) as a result of the Lebanese government; and (3) as a result of the Lebanese citizenry.

Given the design of our survey instrument, these questions do not provide much context regarding what individual respondents understand by the phrase "pressured to leave." It is important, therefore, to take some time to reflect upon what respondents may understand. We reiterate that only a small proportion of respondents identify having felt pressured. This suggests that feeling pressured likely does not reflect common experiences associated with emotional, social, economic, or personal difficulties in life.

It is also important to note that feeling pressured appears to be somewhat distinct from what we identify here as bad treatment: being subject to either verbal or physical assault. While we will identify a statistical correlation below between feeling pressured to leave and having experienced verbal or physical assault (this is our test of hypothesis 2), these concepts are not synonyms for one another. Our survey shows that 57% of respondents who feel pressured to leave have experienced verbal assault and 16% physical assault. These are certainly higher rates of exposure than in the population that have not felt pressured, where 34% have experienced verbal assault and 6% physical assault; however, there is certainly not a perfect overlap with feeling pressured.

In addition to the main survey from which we are drawing data here, our broader project also involved convening six focus groups: 2 with men living outside of the camps; 1 with Syrian men living inside the camps; 1 with Syrian Kurds; 1 with Syrian women living inside camps; and 1 with Syrian women living outside of the camps. Each focus group involved between 6 and 10 participants. These participants were recruited from the broader population that had completed our survey. However, selection was not representative. Rather, we contacted only those

15

individuals who expressed a willingness to participate in follow up conversations. We do not view these focus groups or the evidence drawn from them as being representative. Accordingly, we do not suggest that this evidence should be used to test our hypotheses. Rather, our focus groups were set up so that the research team could contextualize and follow-up on some of the unique/puzzling findings from the survey, as well as better gauge the preferences of individuals.

Important for the definition of our dependent variable in this study, some focus group discussions did address what it means to feel pressured the leave. While lived experiences impacted individuals' feelings about Lebanon and some participants detailed having experienced firsthand verbal assault, this was different from their overall assessment of being pressured. For example, one participant in a focus group mentioned that a Lebanese couple in the building in which she was living did not like her or her family because they were Syrians, so they started rumors about her and repeatedly complained to their landlord. The landlord apologized for the behavior of the couple but advised the Syrian resident to leave because if they did not the Lebanese couple may target her husband. Therefore, while this individual never experienced verbal or physical assault directly, she felt that she was being pressured to leave because she and her family were refugees from Syria.

Independent variables

In order to test our hypothesis, we are primarily interested in understanding respondents' various forms of interaction with their host society. In line with our theoretical framework, we attempt to operationalize this across three areas of activities and experiences. We operationalize *monitoring* using two questions: (1) are you registered with the United Nations? (2) Are you registered with the Lebanese government? 65% of respondents identified as being registered with the UN and

26% as being registered with the Lebanese government. We next operationalize *treatment* using answers to two questions in the survey in which respondents are asked if – during their time in Lebanon – they have experienced either "verbal assault" or "physical assault." 27% and 6%, respectively, self-identified as being subject to these forms of ill treatment while in Lebanon.

Finally, we operationalize *social connectedness* to Lebanese society by drawing upon answers to two questions. In both instances, we seek to identify how individuals' living arrangements may affect how well they are socially connected within the broader Lebanese society. First, we draw upon responses to a question in which we asked "What proportion of the neighborhood in which you currently live, would you say is Syrian?" We code a binary variable to identify those individuals who say they live in a predominantly Syrian neighborhood. 48% of respondents say that almost all or all of their neighbors are Syrian.

Second, we identify individuals that answered the question, "What is your current living arrangement" by noting that they live in a camp. Lebanese authorities have not been able to agree upon appropriate regulations for formal UNHCR refugee camps within the country (Hochberg 2019). Accordingly, most Syrian refugees live within regular Lebanese communities. However, approximately 30% of our respondents state that they live in informal camp settlements. We suggest that these two variables help us identify individuals who are less likely to be well connected to the broader Lebanese society, as they are most likely housed among predominantly Syrian populations.

Similar to other studies using survey evaluations of individual attitudes, we include a series of control variables in our model specifications (e.g., Branton 2007; Savelkoul et al 2011). These controls are included because we believe they enhance the plausibility of our research design and regression analyses. For this, we rely upon factors that ought to account for variation

in experiences of integration among refugees. First, we control for respondents' perceptions of whether their personal situation in Lebanon has recently gotten worse. For this purpose, we draw upon a question in our survey in which we ask, "In the past three months, has your situation in Lebanon gotten better, stayed the same, or worsened?" We code this as a binary variable, with "1" representing those individuals who identify their personal situation as having gotten worse over the past quarter year, "0" otherwise. Almost one quarter (approximately 24%) of respondents claimed they believed that their personal situation in Lebanon had worsened in the prior 3 months.

Second, we control for the timing of when individual refugee respondents arrived in Lebanon. On December 31, 2014, the Lebanese government enacted their "Policy on Syrian Displacement," which was adopted by the Lebanese Cabinet on October 23, 2014 and aimed at regulating and restricting the entry of Syrian refugees in Lebanon as well as the ability of the UNHCR to register them (see Frangieh 2015 for the list of criteria to qualify for entry into Lebanon). For this, we include a simple binary variable that is coded "1" for those that arrived in the country after the Lebanese government restricted formal registrations at the end of 2014, and "0" for those that arrived prior to this time. This variable is intended to capture the ease of formally registering with the authorities and serves to enhance our confidence in the plausibility of our research design.[4]

We also control for a fairly standard set of demographic characteristic of respondents. This includes their age, gender, marital status, and whether or not they have children. Our

---

[4] While UNHCR was unable to officially register Syrian refugees, during fieldwork the authors found out that individuals were given "unofficial" registration cards/numbers. Many individuals in the focus groups conveyed confusion with the UNHCR system as well as ability to access resources as the criteria of whether they qualified or not kept changing.

respondents range from 18 years of *Age* through to 90, with an average of close to 35 years. *Male* is coded as 1 if the respondent identified as male and 0 if female. Our sample is split almost exactly at 50%. *Married* is a binary indicator coded 1 if the individual is married (approximately 88% of our sample) and 0 otherwise. Children is a binary variable coded 1 if the respondent identifies having children (87% of our sample) and 0 otherwise. We do not include any indicator of religious identification as our sample is almost exclusively Sunni.

Summary statistics for all variables included in our model specifications are detailed in Table 1. Before proceeding, it is worth noting that our sample of respondents shares a similar profile to samples from other surveys carried out among Syrian refugee populations in Lebanon (see, also, Alsharabati and Nammour 2015; Corstange 2019, 2020; and Lehman and Masterson 2020). Across each of these studies, respondent populations tend to skew slightly towards men, with mean ages in the 30s, and individuals with low-to-middle levels of education and wealth.

[Table 1 About Here]

Discussion of results

Given that our dependent variables are binary, we employ logistic regressions (Long 1997). The full set of parameter estimates are detailed in Table 2. We include location fixed effects in each of our model specifications. For this, we subdivide Lebanon into 22 districts, which represent the second level of administration within the country. Respondents are associated with the district in which they were residing at the time the survey was completed. Inclusion of these fixed effects is one means of determining whether our cross-respondent claims are robust to potential confounders that are constant across respondents in the same or similar locations. We run six

models in total. The first three models include only the parameters operationalized to test each of our three test hypotheses. Models 4 through 6 then regress each of our three dependent variables on a full set of explanatory factors and control variables.

[Table 2 About Here]

We discuss our results via their visualization in a coefficient plot in Figure 1.[5] The plot in Figure 1 depicts results from Models 4, 5, and 6 directly alongside one another. Each depicts point estimates of coefficients – the circles represent estimates from Model 4 on all sources of pressure, the diamonds represent Model 5 on government as the source of pressure, and the squares represent Model 6 on citizens as the source of pressure. The whiskers depict the associated 95% confidence intervals around these point estimates. The vertical line is "0," such that point estimates to the right demonstrate a positive relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable and estimates to the left reflect a negative relationship. Parameter estimates are provided for each of the three dependent variables alongside each of our explanatory variables (listed on the Y-axis).

[Figure 1 About Here]

---

[5] Control variables are typically included in econometric designs to address potential sources of bias in the results and to increase the plausibility of interpretation of the main quantities of interest. As such, direct interpretation of control variables can be problematic. Accordingly, we do not report parameter estimates on these control variables in our figure or table of results.

We begin by exploring what our analyses reveal regarding evidence for our three hypotheses. We do so by examining the effects observed in Models 4 through 6. First, refugees who are subject to monitoring by the UN or the Lebanese government in the host country are generally more likely to feel pressured to leave the country (hypothesis 1). This effect is statistically significant for the general indicator (Model 4) and for feelings of pressure from the government (Model 5). This makes sense, given that formal records of registration with the government and the UNHCR are made available to the authorities for use in monitoring. Specifically, we find that those registered with the UN are more than five times (536%) as likely as those not registered with the UN to feel pressured by the government to leave; and the quarter of refugees registered directly with the government are more than three times (350%) as likely to feel pressured by the government to leave as those that are not.

Second, we find that refugees who are subject to ill-treatment in the host country are also generally more likely to feel pressured to leave the country than are those not subject to ill-treatment; as anticipated in hypothesis 2. Specifically, we find that those subject to verbal assault in the host country are approximately 124% more likely to feel pressured to leave the country than are those not subject to verbal assault. This effect is consistent across the three models, with the effect greatest (432%) in Model 5 exploring feelings of being pressured by the government.

Individuals who have been physically assaulted in the host country are 116% more likely to feel pressured to leave in general and more than four times more likely to feel pressure at the hands of the government to leave than are those that have not experienced physical assault in the host country. It is important to note that the coefficient estimates on the "pressured by citizens" parameters does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. It is possible that this is driven by the relatively positive news that only 6% of surveyed individuals identify having been

physically assaulted – the rarity of the occurrence perhaps undermining the statistical power of the model. Our focus here has been on the personal experiences of refugees themselves. With respect to experience of physical assault, twice as many refugees (12%) believe that other Syrian refugees have experienced physical assault and 34% believe other refugees have experienced verbal assault. This is in line with other studies which have found smaller percentages of refugees reporting being personally threatened than observing threats against others (see, e.g., Alsharabati and Nammour 2015).

Finally, our analyses reveal mixed evidence with respect to our third hypothesis, that refugees who are socially connected to Lebanese society appear less likely to feel pressured to leave. Our specific contention is that individuals who live in predominantly Syrian neighborhoods or in camps are less likely to feel socially connected in their host communities. On the one hand, it does appear that individuals who live in predominantly Syrian neighborhoods are almost twice as likely as those not living in such neighborhoods to feel pressured to leave (Model 4). By contrast, however, we find that individuals who identify as living in camps are actually less likely to feel pressured to leave the country. This effect is marginally short of statistical significance in the general model (4) but does attain significance with respect to feel pressured at the hands of the government. This suggests that perhaps living in camps reflects more than just a lack of connection to Lebanese society. It might be, for instance, that individuals in camps are more dependent upon the resources they receive from officials and, thus, less able to consider departing. It might also be that they relatively protected or sheltered from potential exposure to anti-refugee sentiment.

Conclusion

In this paper, we uncover some correlates of refugees feeling pressured to leave their host country. We provide evidence from the case of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Drawn from an original survey of some 1,700 Syrians, this evidence offers partial support for our three hypotheses, which collectively suggested that whether or not refugees feel pressure to leave the host country is driven, in part, by the prevailing nature of their quotidian interactions with host authorities and citizens.

It is normatively fortunate that as low as 6% of refugees report feeling pressured to leave Lebanon. This seems to suggest that while refugees possibly expect to face difficult circumstances in their host countries, they do not automatically interpret this as pressure to leave the host country. It is concerning, nonetheless, that the minority of refugees who do feel pressured to leave are those who experience a variety of quotidian interactions with state authorities and citizens. Perhaps most notably, our analyses demonstrate that individuals that have registered with the local government and with the UN are also highly likely to also feel pressured to leave the country. This correlation would seem to be inconsistent with the spirit of international protections for refugees.

This informs our understanding of the more informal ways in which state authorities and their citizens might edge towards encouraging refugees to leave their country. Ours is a meaningful context in which to investigate this puzzle, because Lebanon has served as host to more than one million refugees from the Syrian Civil War, which represents almost one-quarter of their own native population. In addition to registering their status, refugees are likely to feel greater pressures when they are subject to ill-treatment and when they are not well socially connected to Lebanese society.

There are, however, reasons for greater optimism moving forward. Importantly, our observed relationships reveal that refugees more consistently feel pressured to leave by government than they do local citizens. This suggests that even well into protracted refugee hosting situations, it is possible that refugee-citizen relations, while souring (see, e.g., Ghosn and Braithwaite 2018), have not devolved sufficiently to exert pressure on refugees to consider leaving the country. This suggests finding durable solutions to refugee situations may rest upon citizens' rather than governments' shoulders (Esses, Hamilton, and Gaucher 2017).

References

ADIDA, CLAIRE L., ADELINE LO, AND MELINA R. PLATAS. (2018) 'Perspective taking can promote short-term inclusionary behavior toward Syrian refugees'. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115(38): 9521-9526.

ALSHARABATI, CAROLE AND JIHAD NAMMOUR. (2015) Alsharabati, Carole, and Jihad Nammour. 2015. "Survey on Perceptions of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: Between resilience and vulnerability." Working paper: Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth.

ASLANY, MARYAM, JORGEN CARLING, MATHILDE BALSRUD MJELVA, AND TONE SOMMERSFELT. (2021) 'Systematic Review of Determinants of Migration Aspirations.' QuantMig Project Deliverable D2.2. Southampton: University of Southampton.

BARBERO, JULIE C. (1993) "Refugee Repatriation During Conf1ict: A New Conventional Wisdom." Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees 7-11.

BARETT, ALAN AND IRENE MOSCA. (2013) 'The Psychic Costs of Migration: Evidence from Irish Return Migrants.' *Journal of Population Economics 26*(2): 483–506.

BARNETT, MICHAEL, AND MARTHA FINNEMORE. (2012) "Defining Refugees and Voluntary Repatriation at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees." In *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics*, pp. 73-120. Cornell University Press.

BRAITHWAITE, ALEX, TIFFANY S. CHU, JUSTIN CURTIS, AND FATEN GHOSN (2019). 'Violence and perceptions of risk associated with hosting refugees.' *Public Choice* 178(3): 473-492.

BRAITHWAITE, ALEX, JOSEPH M. COX, AND FATEN GHOSN (2021). 'Should I stay or should I go? The decision to flee or stay home during civil war.' *International Interactions*: 47(2): 221-236.

BUEHLER, MATT, KRISTIN E. FABBE, AND KYUNG JOON HAN. (2020) 'Community-Level Postmaterialism and Anti-Migrant Attitudes: An Original Survey on Opposition to Sub-Saharan African Migrants in the Middle East'. *International Studies Quarterly*, in press.

CHIMNI, BUPINDER S. (2004) "From resettlement to involuntary repatriation: towards a critical history of durable solutions to refugee problems." *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 23(3): 55-73.

CORSTANGE, DANIEL. (2019) "The Syrian conflict and public opinion among Syrians in Lebanon." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 46(1): 178-200.

CORSTANAGE, DANIEL. (2020) "National and Subnational Identification in the Syrian Civil War." *Journal of Politics* 82(3): 1176-1181.

DAVENPORT, CHRISTIAN, MOORE, WILL H, POE, STEVEN C. (2003) 'Sometimes you just have to leave: Domestic threats and refugee movements, 1964–1989'. *International Interactions* 29(1): 27–55.

DEMPSTER, HELEN, AND KAREN HARGRAVE. (2017) 'Understanding public attitudes towards refugees and migrants'. Overseas Development Institute: Working Paper.

EL DEEB, SARAH. (2019) 'In Lebanon, Syrian refugees face new pressure to go home'. The Associated Press. June 20. https://apnews.com/0a77b3506e6d4c12a877ef059fdc4f4a [Accessed April 5, 2020].

EL MUFTI, KARIM. (2014) "Official response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, the disastrous policy of no-policy" Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support, January.

ELDAWY, DINA. (2019) 'A Fragile Situation: Will the Syrian Refugee Swell Push Lebanon Over the Edge?' Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved 7 May 2020, from https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/syrian-refugee-swell-push-lebanon-over-edge

EPSTEIN, GIL S. (2008) 'Herd and Network Effects in Migration Decision-Making.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *34*(4): 567–583.

ESSES, VICTORIA, LEAH K. HAMILTON, AND DANIELLE GAUCHER. (2017) 'The Global Refugee Crisis: Empirical Evidence and Policy Implications for Improving Public Attitudes and Facilitating Refugee Resettlement'. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 11 (1): 78-123.

FAINI, RICCARDO AND ALESSANDRA VENTURINI. (2010) 'Development and Migration: Lessons from Southern Europe.' In *Migration and Culture, Volume 8*, eds. Gil Epstein and Ira Gang. UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

FRANGIEH, GHIDA. (2015) "Lebanon Places Discriminatory Entry Restrictions on Syrians," *The Legal Agenda*, 22 January, http://legal-agenda.com/en/ article.php?id=679&lang=en, last accessed 18.03.2021.

GEHA, CARMEN, AND JOUMANA TALHOUK. (2019) "From Recipients of Aid to Shapers of Policies: Conceptualizing Government—United Nations Relations During the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 32(4): 645-663.

GHOSN, FATEN AND ALEX BRAITHWAITE (2018). 'Could Contact Stem the Rising Tide of Negative Attitudes Towards Hosting Syrian Refugees in Lebanon?' *Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration: Field Monitor* 7(2): 69-74.

GHOSN, FATEN, ALEX BRAITHWAITE, AND TIFFANY S. CHU (2019). 'Violence, displacement, contact, and attitudes towards hosting refugees.' *Journal of Peace Research* 56(1): 118-133.

GHOSN, FATEN, TIFFANY CHU, MIRANDA SIMON, ALEX BRAITHWAITE, MICHAEL FRITH, AND JOANNA JANDALI (2021). "The journey back home: Violence, anchoring, and refugee decisions to return.' Forthcoming at *American Political Science Review*.

GINESTE, CHRISTIAN, SAVUN, BURCU. (2019) 'Introducing POSVAR: A dataset on refugee-related violence.' *Journal of Peace Research* 56(1): 134–145.

GOLOVIC, JÓZSEF. (N.D.) 'The role of loyalty in migration intentions: Theory and evidence from the EU.' *Society and Economy*: in press.

GREENHILL, KELLY M. (2016) 'Migration as a Weapon in Theory and in Practice'. *Military Review* November-December: 23–36.

HARTMAN, ALEXANDRA., AND BENJAMIN S. MORSE. (2018) 'Violence, Empathy and Altruism: Evidence from the Ivorian Refugee Crisis in Liberia'. *British Journal of Political Science*, in press.

HOCHBERG, LEO. (2019) 'No Longer Just a Humanitarian Crisis: The Politicization of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon'. Heinrich Boll Stiftung. Retrieved 7 May 2020, from https://lb.boell.org/sites/default/files/politicization_of_syrians.pdf

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH. (2019) 'Lebanon: Syrian Refugee Shelters Demolished'. July 5. Accessed online [June 4, 2020]: https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/05/lebanon-syrian-refugee-shelters-demolished

HYNDMAN, JENNIFER, AND WENONA GILES. (2017) *Refugees in extended exile: Living on the edge*. Routledge.

INTERNATIONAL ALERT. (2015) *Citizens' Perceptions of Security Threats Stemming from The Syrian Refugee Presence in Lebanon.* Beirut: International Alert.

JANMYR, MAJA. (2016) "Precarity in Exile: The Legal Status of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 35(4): 58–78.

JANMYR, MAJA. (2017) "No Country of asylum: 'Legitimizing' Lebanon's rejection of the 1951 refugee convention." *International Journal of Refugee Law* 29(3): 438-465.

KAGAN, MICHAEL. (2011) "The UN Surrogate State and the Foundation of Refugee Policy in the Middle East." *UC Davis Journal of International Law & Policy* 18: 307.

KOSER, KHALID, and KATIE KUSCHMINDER. (2015) "Comparative research on the assisted voluntary return and reintegration of migrants." *International Organization for Migration,* IOM Publications: Geneva, Switzerland.

KOSER, KHALID AND PAUL WILKINSON. (2007) *International migration a very short introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

KUNUROGLU, FILIZ, KUTLAY YAGMUR, FONS JR VAN DE VIJVER, and SIAAK KROON. (2018) "Motives for Turkish return migration from Western Europe: Home, sense of belonging, discrimination and transnationalism." *Turkish Studies* 19(3): 422-450.

LEE, YEONKYEONG AND SEUNG JONG LEE. (2019) 'Analysis of the Influence of Social Relations on Migration Intention: Focusing on Local Social Capital and Subjective Socioeconomic Status.' *International Journal of Community Well-Being* 2(3): 193-211.

LEHMANN, M. CHRISTIAN AND DANIEL MASTERSON. (2020) "Does Aid Reduce Anti-Refugee Violence? Evidence from Syrian Refugees in Lebanon." *American Political Science Review*, 114(4): 1335-1342.

LOESCHER, GIL, AND LAILA MONAHAN. (1989) *Refugees and international relations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

LONG, J. SCOTT. (1997) *Regression models for categorial and limited dependent variables.* Sage Publishing.

MOORE, WILL H., AND STEPHEN M. SHELLMAN. (2007) 'Whither will they go? A global study of refugees' destinations, 1965-1995'. *International Studies Quarterly* 51(4): 811-834.

MOURAD, LAMA. (2017) ""Standoffish" Policy-Making: Inaction and Change in the Lebanese Response to the Syrian Displacement Crisis." *Middle East Law and Governance* 9(3): 249-266.

MOURAD, LAMA. (2019) *Open Borders, Local Closures: Decentralization and the Lebanese Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. University of Toronto: PhD dissertation.

NASSAR, JESSY, AND NORA STEL. (2019) "Lebanon's response to the Syrian Refugee crisis – Institutional ambiguity as a governance strategy." *Political Geography* 70: 44–54.

NEW HUMANITARIAN, THE. (2002) 'Afghan refugees feel under pressure to leave'. August 27. http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2002/08/27/afghan-refugees-feel-under-pressure-leave-0 [Accessed April 5, 2020].

NZWILI, FREDRICK. (2013) 'Long at home in Kenya, Somali refugees feel pressure to leave.' The Christian Science Monitor. November 14. https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2013/1114/Long-at-home-in-Kenya-Somali-refugees-feel-pressure-to-leave [Accessed April 5, 2020].

ONOMA, ATO K. (2013) *Anti-Refugee Violence and African Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

SAGHIEH, NIZAR, AND GHIDA FRANGIEH. (2014). 'The Most Important Features of Lebanese Policy Towards the Issue of Syrian Refugees: From Hiding its Head in The Sand to

"Soft Power"', *Heinrich Böll Stiftung Middle East*, 30 December,
https://lb.boell.org/en/2014/12/30/most-important-features-lebanesepolicy-
towards-issue-syrian-refugees-hiding-its-head, last accessed 3.18.2021.

SALEHYAN, IDEAN. (2018) 'The Strategic Case for Refugee Resettlement'. Washington, DC:
Niskanen Center.

SCHIEFER, DAVID, AND JOLANDA VAN DER NOLL. (2017) "The essentials of social
cohesion: A literature review." *Social Indicators Research* 132(2): 579-603.

SCHMEIDL, SUSANNE. (1997) 'Exploring the Causes of Forced Migration: A Pooled Time-
Series Analysis, 1971-1990'. *Social Science Quarterly* 78(2): 284-308.

SCHWARTZ, STEPHANIE. (2019) 'Home, Again: Refugee Return and Post-Conflict Violence
in Burundi'. *International Security* 44(2): 110-145.

THOMPSON, LARRY CLINTON. (2010) *Refugee Workers in the Indochina Exodus, 1975-
1982*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

TINTI, PETER AND TUESDAY REITANO. (2018) *Migrant, refugee, smuggler, saviour*.
Oxford: Oxford University Press.

TURKOGLU, OGUZHAN, AND THOMAS CHADEFAUX. (2019) 'Nowhere to Go? Why Do
Some Civil Wars Generate More Refugees than Others?' *International Interactions* 45(2): 401-
420.

UNHCR. (2019) 'Less than 5 per cent of global refugee resettlement needs met last year'.
Accessed online [February 22, 2019]: https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2019/2/5c6bc9704/5-
cent-global-refugee-resettlement-needs-met-year.html
WEISS, THOMAS G., RORDEN WILKINSON, AND SARAH DEARDORFF MILLER. (2017) *UNHCR as a
surrogate state: Protracted refugee situations*. Routledge.

YAHYA, MAHA, JEAN KASSIR, AND KHALIL EL-HARIRI. (2018). *Unheard voices: What
Syrian refugees need to return home*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International
Peace.

ZIECK, MARJOLEINE. (1997) *UNHCR and Voluntary Repatriation of Refugees: A Legal
Analysis*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.