From Brother to Other:

Sovereignty, (In)security, and the Construction of Syrians as "Threats" in Lebanon

by
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Abstract

Since 2017, Lebanese politicians have increasingly urged Syrians to return to Syria, citing the presence of nearly 1.5 million displaced Syrians in Lebanon as sources of instability, social tensions, and general economic ills. But in 2019, the criminalization and marginalization of Syrians in Lebanon reached a new peak as demands for Syrians to return to their war-torn country coincided with material pressures for them to do so. Despite pre-existing government corruption, economic precarity, environmental degradation, reliance on clientelism and patronage networks, and poor infrastructural development afflicting a wide segment of the Lebanese population, it is nevertheless the presence of refugees which receives a widespread and disproportionate amount of blame for the conditions in Lebanon. However, the "securitization" and marginalization of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is not simply a reaction to the Syrian Civil War. I argue that the treatment of Syrians in Lebanon as threats post-2011 is shaped by anxieties of national sovereignty and identity that emerged in the twentieth century, the post-Cold War reconfiguration of sovereignty, and the securitization of migration in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

These present-day ethnonationalist and class-coded antagonisms of Lebanese towards Syrians are derived in part from a post-colonial struggle for statehood and sovereignty. Within this struggle, various iterations of Lebanese nationalism and visions for Lebanese identity were articulated in relation to and interwound with ethno-sectarian and class-coded conceptualizations of Syria and Syrian identity. Furthermore, the prevailing conception that Lebanon is a "weak" or "fragile" state, developed during the post-Cold War period in wake of the Lebanese Civil War, masks dynamics of contentious plural governance and security provision in Lebanon that offer alternative understandings of insecurity and state sovereignty. Lebanese politicians elevate ethnonationalist and ethno-sectarian frameworks to mask other cross-cutting socioeconomic and geographic factors that are at play within Lebanese society. By "signaling out" to international actors using globalized discourses of insecurity and preconceptions of Lebanese politics and society as sectarian, fragile, and generous towards displaced populations, these politicians covertly appeal to international donors and political allies to advance their political aims. This has resulted in a rhetoric that in effect shifts discussion of vulnerable displaced persons as *at* risk instead to *as a* risk. Thus, the Lebanese government and para-state security actors' response to the post-2011 refugee crisis by a "push for return" capitalizes upon language describing Syrians as threats to the Lebanese social fabric, resulting in increased violence and precarity for Syrians in Lebanon.

Keywords: Lebanon, Syria, Refugees, Security, Insecurity, Sovereignty, Securitization, Weak States, Syrian Refugees, Syrian Refugee Crisis

للبنانيين و السوريين، و للمظلومين في أي مكان، أنّنا سنرى عالم أكثر سلاماً.

For the Lebanese and Syrians, and the oppressed anywhere, that we will see a more peaceful world.

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Introduction

When conflict erupted in Syria in 2011, Syrians began fleeing to neighboring Lebanon, first in small numbers and then in a rush, seeking refuge from the escalating violence. Now, more than eight years into the Syrian Civil War, much of Lebanese society is fatigued by the endurance of what has come to be a refugee crisis. Since 2017, xenophobic rhetoric amongst Lebanese politicians has increasingly urged for Syrians to return to Syria, citing the presence of nearly 1.5 million displaced Syrians in Lebanon as instigators of instability, social tensions, and general economic ills. One public opinion survey found that over 90 percent of Lebanese think that the Syrian conflict has had a negative impact on the Lebanese government's ability to protect its own citizens, and roughly 75 percent of Lebanese believe that Syrian refugees[1] pose a threat to Lebanon's national security and stability.[2]

Responding to the crisis, Lebanese authorities have increasingly restricted Syrian refugees' access to livelihoods, constraining their ability to work legally to only three sectors. Since 2017, anti-Syrian, often right-wing political forces have mounted increasing pressure to enforce labor

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[1] Although Lebanon is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, to receive or possess refugee registration with the UNHCR widely means to be entitled to receiving certain rights and protections from one's host country. As such, the Lebanese government and politicians tend to avoid using the term "refugee", except in outward-facing documents and press releases to the broader international community. In inward facing reports and statements, the preferred term is typically *nazihin*, meaning "displaced"—which comparatively has no international legal repercussions. For the purposes of this paper, I use the term "refugee" to generally refer to displaced persons who are seeking refuge from violence in a secondary country, though when relevant I specify other layers of classification. *See*: Maja Janmyr and Lama Mourad, "Modes of Ordering: Labelling, Classification and Categorization in Lebanon's Refugee Response," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 31, no. 4 (December 1, 2018): 544–65, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fex042.

[2] Mona Christophersen, Cathrine Moe Thorleifsson, and Age A. Tiltnes, "Ambivalent Hospitality: Coping Strategies and Local Responses to Syrian Refugees in Lebanon - Lebanon" (Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies, November 30, 2013), https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/ambivalent-hospitality-coping-strategies-and-local-responses-syrian-refugees-lebanon, 49.

codes and regulations which target refugees, over 90 percent of whom are employed without a formal work contract and with little to no legal protections.[3] This has created a structurally coercive environment in Lebanon, where nearly 70 percent of Syrian refugee households remained below the poverty line as of 2018, and more than half are unable to meet the minimum food, health and shelter requirements for survival.[4] Over 70 percent of refugees above the age of 15 reported not having legal residency,[5] and Lebanese authorities have put up unpredictable barriers to renewing residency, deterring refugees from re-applying and putting them at risk of detention or eviction.[6] At the same time, nine years into the crisis, international donor funds intended to help Lebanon cope with and manage the influx of Syrians are slowing down. In the third quarter of 2018, only approximately one-third of the estimated $2.291 billion USD needed to adequately support Syrian refugees in Lebanon was funded, leading to a reduction in direct assistance to vulnerable populations and depriving the Lebanese economy of valuable international aid.[7]

From who receives international humanitarian aid or government assistance, to who is recognized and protected as a citizen or is neglected in statelessness, the modes of ordering that occurred during the refugee crisis enmeshed issues of access to resources and security with one's label or categorization. Under these circumstances, the implications for whether or not one is deemed an "insider" or an "outsider" are intensified: The legal, bureaucratic and social categories that developed during the refugee crisis to demarcate in-groups from out-groups tangibly

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[3] Mary Kawar and Salem Ajluni, "Towards Decent Work in Lebanon: Issues and Challenges in Light of the Syrian Refugee Crisis," Report (International Labor Organization, June 10, 2015), http://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_374826/lang--en/index.htm.
[4] "VASYR 2018 - Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," VASYR (UNICEF, UNHCR, UN WFP, December 2018), https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2018-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon.
[5] "VASYR 2018 - Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon."
[6] Rouba Mhaissen and Elena Hodges, "Unpacking Return: Syrian Refugees' Conditions and Concerns" (SAWA For Development and Aid, February 2019), https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/unpacking-return-syrian-refugees-conditions-and-concerns-enar.
[7] "VASYR 2018 - Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon."

determine what actions one may take, how one's presence is understood by others, and what type of rights and protections one may have access to.[8]

In the twenty-first century, the expansion of concepts of sovereignty and human security under the "war on terror" extended categories of "insiders" and "outsiders" beyond (and within) national borders—with "outsiders" coded in a language of "threat," "danger," and "insecurity."[9] Simultaneously, harsh state residency and labor requirements coerce refugees and asylum seekers into "illegal" modes of existence, a form of contrived criminality. Thus as "terrorism, crime and asylum [became] entangled together within the narrative of national security," the framework of security was then "applied indiscriminately to all those categorized as 'alien' and 'illegal'."[10] Legally and socially constructing a securitized subject as an "other" and as "illegal" legitimizes and normalizes *action* upon such populations under the banner of being a "security problem".

In Lebanon, this has manifested in the perception that Syrian refugees are a danger to Lebanese security and society. Although there were rare incidents of conflict or escalated disputes related to refugees prior to 2017, the escalation in anti-Syrian rhetoric thereafter has heightened social tensions. In some instances, it has been accompanied by violence between Syrian refugees and their Lebanese host communities, particularly in already economically vulnerable rural areas, such as Dar al-Ahmar in the Beqaa Valley.[11] Such incidents are not only condoned but promoted by prominent officials, such as Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, increasing refugees' sense of dehumanization and fears of state-authorized violence. Right-wing politicians such as

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[8] Janmyr and Mourad, "Modes of Ordering,"1.

[9] Fran Cetti, "Asylum and the Discourse of Terror: The European 'Security State,'" in *Discourses and Practices of Terrorism: Interrogating Terror*, ed. Bob Brecher, Mark Devenney, and Aaron Winter (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/brown/detail.action?docID=481027, 60.

[10] Cetti, "Asylum and the Discourse of Terror: The European 'Security State.'"

[11] Kareem Chehayeb, "Lebanese above All: The Politics of Scapegoating Syrian Refugees," *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed (The New Arab)*, June 17, 2019, https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2019/6/17/scapegoating-syrian-refugees-in-lebanon.

Bassil propagate misconceptions that Syrian refugees and Syrian competition with Lebanese in the labor market are the primary factors for the deterioration of the Lebanese economy, in part leading to the widespread scapegoating of low-income laborers for the repercussions of broader economic challenges.

In 2019, the criminalization and marginalization of Syrians in Lebanon, set in motion within the evolving security arena of the past three decades, reached a new peak as demands for Syrians to return to their war-torn country coincided with material pressures for them to do so. Rhetorics of security, threat, and fear scapegoat the "other" and detract from structurally oppressive conditions that affect a wider segment of the Lebanese population. Whereas pre-existing government corruption, economic precarity, environmental degradation, reliance on clientelism and patronage networks, and poor infrastructural development afflict a wide segment of the Lebanese population, it is nevertheless the presence of refugees which receives a widespread and disproportionate amount of blame for the conditions in Lebanon. While such practices make low-income Syrians in Lebanon more at risk, it is unlikely that vulnerable Lebanese, who have faced increased labor competition with Syrian workers in Lebanon, will benefit from refugee return, though repatriation is hailed by its proponents as the solution to their ills.

But the "securitization" and marginalization of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is not simply a reaction to the Syrian Civil War. In this thesis, I argue that the treatment of Syrians in Lebanon as threats post-2011 is shaped by anxieties of national sovereignty and identity that emerged in the twentieth century, the post-Cold War reconfiguration of sovereignty, and the securitization of migration in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

In Chapter 1, I demonstrate that the present-day antagonisms of Lebanese towards Syrians derive in part from Lebanon's post-colonial struggle for statehood and sovereignty. Within this

struggle, various iterations of Lebanese nationalism and visions for Lebanese identity were articulated in relation to and interwound with ethno-sectarian and class-coded conceptualizations of Syria and Syrian identity. During the mandate period, Lebanese debates over national identity were closely tied to concerns of Lebanon's ethno-sectarian makeup and relations to both France and Syria. While primarily Christian intellectuals emphasized Lebanese "ethnic" difference from Syrians to justify an independent, France-supported Lebanese state, many Muslims who opposed such a state instead stressed pan-Arab identity and appealed for greater affiliation with Syria. The ideological, sectarian, and national relationships between the two countries were then codified, institutionalized, and contested throughout the following decades, whether politically or militarily. Sect-based power sharing agreements, such as the Constitution of 1926 and the National Pact of 1943, implemented a parliamentary system where political power was allocated based on confessional affiliation. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the Lebanese Civil War and the ensuing period of Syrian dominance in Lebanon—known as *Pax Syriana*—further entrenched these tensions as self-versus-other divides that were deeply tied to identity, statehood, and sovereignty.

In part because of Syria's posturing as a guarantor of stability in Lebanon during the period of *Pax Syriana*, the prevailing conception that Lebanon is a "weak" or "fragile" state gained prominence in the shadow of the Lebanese Civil War during the post-Cold War period. This framing was also largely shaped by the United States' policy imperatives in the Middle East, especially following the declaration of the "Global War on Terror." This "weak state" framing, however, obscures underlying dynamics of contentious governance and interplay with the multitude of competing security actors in Lebanon that offer more nuanced understandings of insecurity and state sovereignty. Waleed Hazbun and Sara Fregonese suggest that the Lebanese

security system is best understood as a series of competing security assemblages. This refers to the interactions between elements in the political and security apparatus that are formally recognized as a part of the state with the non- or para-state elements of sectarian political movements that play a significant role in the provision of governance and security.[12] The diverse range of actors within these assemblages must then continually negotiate among often-rival understandings of insecurity, and the interlocutors of these assemblages must signal both inward to their constituencies and outward to international audiences through acts of security that are designed to serve the actors' strategic uses by demonstrating particular interpretations of (in)security.

Chapter 2 illustrates how, through the rhetoric of "security" and "sovereignty," overlapping and contradictory visions for Lebanese-Syrian relations, statehood, and security masked the complexities of contentious plural governance in the Lebanese security apparatus. The securitization[13]—broadly, the process by which a subject is come to be understood primarily in terms of or as a matter of (in)security—and marginalization of refugees transforms them from persons *at risk* to persons *as risk*, while serving as a method of diversion to avoid addressing underlying causes of discontent and insecurity in Lebanon.

The Lebanese government and para-state security actors' response to the post-2011 refugee crisis, analyzed in Chapter 3, signals expressions of both security and insecurity as understood within the prevailing "weak state" framework. The Lebanese government's initial response to the

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[12] Waleed Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State:' The Contentious Politics of Plural Governance in Lebanon since 2005," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 6 (June 2016): 1053–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1110016; Sara Fregonese, "Beyond the 'Weak State': Hybrid Sovereignties in Beirut," *ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING D-SOCIETY & SPACE* 30, no. 4 (2012): 655–74, https://doi.org/10.1068/d11410.

[13] Huysmans defines "securitization" in more detail: "…Securitization involves three elements. First, it requires practices of enunciating security, of mobilizing security knowledge in a particular political context. Second, these practices, if successfully performed, articulate a configuration that integrates problem definitions, institutional processes, and expectations under a security umbrella...Third, securitization requires a constellation of rules, or a logic, that organizes practices as security practices." *See:* Jef Huysmans, "Defining Social Constructivism in Security Studies: The Normative Dilemma of Writing Security," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 27, no. 1 (February 2002), 45.

Syrian conflict and the resulting refugee influx can generally be grouped into two phases: the first, referred to as the period of "inaction," lasted from 2011-2014 was characterized by a lack of central government regulation, and the second, referred to as the period of "action," began in 2014 with the central government imposing increasing national regulatory border and labor policies. In the period of government "inaction," the decentralized approach to the refugee influx allowed municipalities to make power visible by regulating and excluding Syrians through curfews and other local measures. In the period of government action, the Lebanese central government used the law to exclude and criminalize Syrians. In doing so, it sought to displaying "internal" sovereignty by making state power and state response visible to its constituents through these crackdowns. These security acts escalated during the push for return (2018-2019), which employed physical coercion and targeted harassment of Syrians.

Thus the push by Lebanese politicians and authorities for Syrians to return to their country and the accompanying scapegoating and harassment of informal laborers is not solely indicative of post-2011 security or economic conditions, but instead capitalizes upon language describing Syrians as threats to the Lebanese social fabric, a part of a "culture of diversion" used to garner support through clientelism and patronage networks. I argue that Lebanese elites manipulate ethnonationalist and class-coded discourses, using Syrian refugees as a bargaining chip to appeal to both local bases of support and powerful international actors. By "signaling in" to the societal anxieties of Lebanese in the context of decades of antagonism between the two states, Lebanese politicians elevate ethnonationalist and ethno-sectarian frameworks to mask other cross-cutting socioeconomic and geographic factors that bear on Lebanese society. By "signaling out" to international actors using globalized discourses of insecurity and preconceptions of Lebanese politics and society as sectarian, fragile, and generous towards displaced populations, these

politicians appeal to international donors and political allies to advance their political aims without revealing their own stake in the outcomes.[14] Though elites largely propagate these discourses, they are "replicated through the daily politics of individuals and groups," which has resulted in increased violence towards and precarity for vulnerable Syrians marked as "threats" to Lebanese society.[15]

The thesis concludes with the ways in which the 2019-2020 (ongoing) Lebanese protests illuminate these phenomena. The demands of protestors and responses of state authorities demonstrate that the anxieties of statehood, sovereignty, and national identity in Lebanon retain their political utility even in new political contexts an continue to be used to scapegoat Syrian refugees in Lebanon, despite lacking an empirical grounding. By unpacking the animosity towards Syrian refugees in Lebanon and analyzing its historical and discursive components, I hope to illuminate the possibilities for improving intercommunal relations and for a more critical and just approach to thinking about insecurity in Lebanon.

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[14] For an overview of the main Lebanese political parties' stakes and interests in the resolution of the Syrian refugee crisis, *see* Sami Atallah and Dima Mahdi, "Law and Politics of 'Safe Zones' and Forced Return to Syria: Refugee Politics in Lebanon" (Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, October 2017), https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf, 44.

[15] Bassem Chit and Mohamad Ali Nayel, "Understanding Racism against Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," Text, Civil Society Knowledge Centre, October 28, 2013, https://civilsociety-centre.org/paper/understanding-racism-against-syrian-refugees-lebanon.

Chapter 1: Anxieties of Ethnonationalism and Statehood in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Between Lebanon and Syria there is a special relationship that derives its strength from the roots of blood relationships, history, and joint fraternal interests. This is the concept on which the two countries' coordination and cooperation is founded, and which will be embodied by the agreements between the two countries in all areas, in a manner that accomplishes the two fraternal countries' interests within the framework of the sovereignty and independence of each of them.

- *Ta'if Agreement, 1989*

We dedicated an understanding of the Lebanese affiliation that is above any other affiliation, and we said that it is genetic, and that it is the only explanation for our similarities and our distinction together, for our endurance and adaptation together, for our flexibility and our firmness together, our ability to integrate and assimilate together on the one hand and to reject emigration and asylum together on the other hand.[1]

- *Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, June 7, 2019*

Introduction

The presence of approximately 1.5 million displaced Syrians in Lebanon post-2011 has stressed the country's already ineffectual infrastructure and social service sector, and fueled fears about Lebanon's political stability. These fears are manifested in many Lebanese's perceptions of Syrians: Polling data from the Fafo Research Foundation shows that 98 percent of Lebanese believe that Syrians are taking jobs from Lebanese people, and frequently hold stereotypes of Syrians as "thief-like, promiscuous, unclean, uncultured, and with dubious morals."[2] Despite

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[1] Gebran Bassil, "@Gebran_Bassil on Twitter: ' لقد كرّسنا مفهوماً لانتمائنا اللبناني هو فوق اي انتماء آخر، وقلنا انه جينيّ وهو التفسير الوحيد لتشابهنا وتمايزنا معاً، لتحملّنا وتأقلمنا معاً، لمرونتنا وصلابتنا معاً، ولقدرتنا على الدمج والاندماج معاً من جهة وعلى رفض النزوح واللجوء معاً من جهة أخرى,'" Twitter, June 7, 2019, https://twitter.com/gebran_bassil/status/1136907609431314432.

[2] Mona Christophersen, Cathrine Moe Thorleifsson, and Age A. Tiltnes, "Ambivalent Hospitality: Coping Strategies and Local Responses to Syrian Refugees in Lebanon - Lebanon" (Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies, November 30, 2013), https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/ambivalent-hospitality-coping-strategies-and-local-responses-syrian-refugees-lebanon.

heightened social tensions, and some protests against Syrian labor competition, there has been relatively low levels of socio-economic conflict between Lebanese and Syrians in Lebanon.[3] Nevertheless, politicians have increasingly pushed for Syrians residing in Lebanon to return to Syria, citing their presence as a danger to Lebanese state and society, at a time when the safety and security of doing so remains questionable.[4] One prominent example, Gebran Bassil, Lebanon's foreign minister and head of the primarily Christian Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) party, has warned that the Syrian refugee crisis "threatens Lebanese identity,"[5] and that influx of Syrian refugees "threatens [Lebanon's] existence by tearing apart its social fabric."[6]

Amidst global waves of right-wing populism and vitriolic rhetoric towards migrants and asylum seekers, Bassil's apparent ethnonationalism may not seem out of place. Politicians and governmental authorities across Europe and North America have voiced similar racialized and class-coded opposition to migration, especially those fleeing violence in countries in the Global South. Many Western leaders have voiced or appealed to fears that refugee movements threaten "inter-communal harmony and undermine major societal values by altering the ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic composition of host populations."[7] Across the European Union, other anti-

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[3] Lea Bou Khater, "Labour Policy and Practice," The Peace Building in Lebanon News Supplement (United Nations Development Programme, August 2017), https://www.undp.org/content/dam/lebanon/docs/CrisisPreventionRecovery/SupplementArticles/16Supp/PEACE%20BUILDING2%2016%20july%202017%20p4.pdf.

[4] Carmen Geha and Joumana Talhouk, "Politics and the Plight of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon | Political Brief on the Return of Syrian Refugees" (American University of Beirut, August 2018), https://www.aub.edu.lb/Documents/Politics-and-the-Plight-of-Syrian-Refugees-in-Lebanon.pdf.

[5] The Daily Star, "Refugee Crisis Threatens Lebanese Identity: Bassil," *The Daily Star*, September 19, 2016, https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2016/Sep-19/372580-refugee-crisis-threatens-lebanese-identity-bassil.ashx.

[6] Gebran Bassil, "@Gebran_Bassil on Twitter: ' % 40 مليون ونصف نازح سوري أي 200/كلم2 أرهقوا لبنان مادياً بخسائر وصلت الى من ناتجه القومي، وهم يهددون وجوده بتمزيق نسيجه الإجتماعي '," Twitter, February 4, 2019, https://twitter.com/gebran_bassil/status/1092367043821780992.

[7] Gil Loescher, "Refugees as Grounds for International Action," in *Refugees and Forced Displacement: International Security, Human Vulnerability, and the State*, ed. Edward Newman and Joanne van Selm (Tokyo ; New York: United Nations University Press, 2003), 34.

immigration politicians and political parties have made a comeback,[8] increasingly portraying asylum seekers as a risk "to Europe's security, culture and social fabric."[9]

But in comparison to the largely exaggerated claims that the refugee crisis has distressed infrastructure and society in Western countries, Lebanon has faced a significant crisis of governance and of reinvigorated disputes over national identity. Whereas the European Union and the United States have each accepted less than one percent of their own populations in refugees and asylum seekers despite having stronger national economies and infrastructures, Lebanon now accommodates a refugee population exceeding 25 percent of its total population.[10]

Furthermore, the rapid demographic shift in Lebanon raises especially pertinent questions of statehood and political autonomy, given the country's history of navigating a consociational political system that allocates political representation on a sectarian basis. The Syrian Civil War actualized historical fears of cross-border spillover conflict between the two countries, and raised international and domestic concern over Lebanese authorities' ability to exert territorial and governmental sovereignty. An ominous and somewhat omnipresent sense that the conditions in Lebanon mirrored those preceding the Lebanese civil war in the early seventies heightened these anxieties—what Sami Hermez describes as a collective memory of trauma that functions as a "constant anticipation of violence" deep within Lebanese society.[11] Observers drew parallels

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[8] "The Right-Wing Nationalists Shaking up Europe," *BBC News*, November 13, 2019, sec. Europe, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36130006.

[9] Harriet Gray and Anja K. Franck, "Refugees as/at Risk: The Gendered and Racialized Underpinnings of Securitization in British Media Narratives," *SECURITY DIALOGUE* 50, no. 3 (June 2019): 275–91, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010619830590, 275-6.

[10] Joumana Farhat, "The Repercussions of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on Lebanon: The Challenges of Providing Services and Creating Jobs," Roundtable Report Series (Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, January 20, 2016), http://lcps-lebanon.org/publication.php?id=282, 2; "UNHCR Statistics - The World in Numbers," popstats.unhcr.org, accessed April 19, 2020, http://popstats.unhcr.org; "Refugee Crisis in Europe: Aid, Statistics and News | USA for UNHCR," accessed April 19, 2020, https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/refugee-crisis-in-europe/.

[11] Sami Hermez, "'The War Is Going to Ignite': On the Anticipation of Violence in Lebanon," *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 35, no. 2 (2012), 327.

between the influx of displaced Syrians in Lebanon and the presence of over one hundred thousand Palestinian refugees in the 1970s[12]—which some analysts blame for the onset of the Lebanese Civil War. For Lebanese elites and international powers, and a significant part of the Lebanese populace, the presence of displaced Syrians came to be seen as a potential catalyst for destabilizing the domestic balance of power.[13]

Concerns surrounding the autonomy, demography, and sovereignty of Lebanon are long-standing, and were shaped not only by Lebanon's experience during the civil war in the late 20th century, but also by the Mount Lebanon Ottoman Mutassarifat in the 19th century, the creation of mandatory Lebanon post-World War I, and the establishment of an independent Lebanese state thereafter. This chapter argues that present-day ethnonationalist, class-coded antagonisms of Lebanese towards Syrians are derived in part from this post-colonial struggle for statehood and sovereignty. The partition of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century and the subsequent French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon led to debates as to whether or not the mandatory sub-state of "Greater Lebanon" would, after independence, become its own state or be encompassed as part of a singular Syrian state. Within this struggle, various iterations of Lebanese nationalism and visions for Lebanese identity were articulated in relation to (typically in distinction from or similarity to) Syria and Syrian identity.

When Syria then intervened during the Lebanese Civil War, Syrian actors and pro-Syrian media rhetorically wielded the supposed Lebanese-Syrian "brotherhood" and strong ethnic connections between the two countries in order to justify Syria's ongoing objectionable military

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[12] The UNRWA cites 96,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, whereas the Lebanese Survey cites 106,440. Interviews with Palestinian camp leaders by Bassem Sirhan estimate 140,000-150,000 refugees. *See*: Bassem Sirhan, "Palestinian Refugee Camp Life in Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 4, no. 2 (1975): 91–107, https://doi.org/10.2307/2535839, 92.

[13] Waleed Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State:' The Contentious Politics of Plural Governance in Lebanon since 2005," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 6 (June 2016): 1053–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1110016, 1067.

presence, adding a layer of resentment to the countries' relationship. Thus expressions of differentiation from and animosity towards Syrians found in the response to the present-day influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is not only tied to the rapid shift in the country's ethno-sectarian demographic make-up, but is also concerned with articulating anxieties of statehood and sovereignty in the broader context of regional politics.

The chapter begins during the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon, when the borders of what would become the Lebanese Republic and the Syrian Arab Republic were drawn. France set aside the geographic area that would become present-day Lebanon as a separate entity, sparking an ongoing debate over the relationship between and authenticity of Lebanese and Syrian sovereignty and national identity. The paper then turns to the Lebanese Civil War and the period of *Pax Syriana* after 1976, when, amidst sectarian militarization and the breakdown of the consociational political system that characterized the early days of the war, the Syrian government dispatched troops to Lebanon under the pretense of a stabilizing force. Continuing into the 21st century, the chapter then traces the tensions in the two states' relationship from the withdrawal of Syrian forces through the start of the Syrian Civil War. As the Lebanese government began physically demarcating the border between the two countries to an unprecedented extent, using processes of "shifting the border in," many Lebanese increasingly differentiated between Lebanese and Syrians in terms not only of nationality but of class and religious sect.

The Mandate Period and Lebanese Nationalism

Neither a return to a primordial "natural" entity nor any more "artificial" than any of the other nation-states created during the mandate partition, the establishment of the Lebanese state was determined primarily by French regional interests after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire.

Though various local actors lobbied for and against a distinct Lebanese entity, the final product of the negotiations "hardly corresponded to the programme of any Lebanese political party."[14] It was primarily Maronite Christian populations in the Mount Lebanon region that campaigned for a separate Lebanese state, and largely Muslim and non-Maronite (Orthodox and Greek Catholic) Christian populations that opposed it.[15] However, Christian proponents of Lebanese independence did not expect a Lebanon with such expansive boundaries. When France carved out the separate "State of Greater Lebanon," it coupled the primarily Christian region of Mount Lebanon with clusters of Shi'i, Sunni, and Druze inhabited regions in the south in a move both to account for agricultural production and to safeguard Lebanon's reliance on France for military and economic security.[16]

But this reliance also stemmed from France's civilizational motivations. During the late Ottoman and mandate periods, France portrayed itself as a defender of "minorities" in the Middle East, a concept which emerged in the region in the context of imperial projects and the gradual emergence of the nation-state.[17] Throughout the mandate period, France emphasized social and cultural differences between the Syrians and Lebanese, referring to sectarian violence between Maronites and Druze in the 1860s as evidence of these divergences, and of the necessity of France's presence.[18] The French depicted Maronites as numerically weak but culturally more advanced than the Muslims in Syria, whom they viewed as narrow-minded, intellectually

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[14] Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 75.
[15] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, 81.
[16] Naomi Joy Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon: The 1975-76 Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 31; R. Avi-Ran, *The Syrian Involvement in Lebanon since 1975* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991) 4-5.
[17] Benjamin Thomas White, *The Emergence of Minorities in the Middle East the Politics of Community in French Mandate Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, 2-4.
[18] Youssef Chaitani, *Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon: The Decline of Arab Nationalism and the Triumph of the State* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007), 7-8. For more on sectarianism in the 19th century and the violence in the 1860s, see Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism* (University of California Press, 2000).

underdeveloped, and obstructing "progress."[19] Thus, those who came to view Lebanon and the Lebanese as comprising a distinct nation often aligned themselves, whether politically or intellectually, with France, while those who saw Lebanon as part of a larger national community—whether Syrian or Arab—came to resent expressions of Lebanese nationalism.[20]

With the founding of the Lebanese state following independence from France, the ideological battles between visions of Lebanese independence, Syrian statehood, and France's relationship to both countries intertwined with the political institutionalization of sectarian identity. While the idea that sectarian identity is a primordial attachment continues to be a popular view implicitly found in some scholarly arguments—identifying *ta'ifiyya* (broadly, sectarianism) as an invariable, ancient tendency that undermines *wataniyya* (patriotism or nationalism)—other scholars argue that it is a purely modern phenomena arising from and unable to exist outside of the nation-state system.[21] Sects are neither primordial nor exclusively modern, but in effect function as "a malleable product, a historical effect, and not an impermeable condition."[22] The origins of Lebanese sectarianism can be traced to the "unequal levels of access to various political and socio-economic positions in the late-feudal system of Mount Lebanon" by both the various Christian and the Druze sectarian communities.[23] Sects can be characterized as "true societal entities" that "are not ahistorical immutable essences, but are constructed and deconstructed, united and separated, their importance within the social sphere swelling and ebbing."[24] Neither solely a political affiliation formed in opposition to the nation-state, nor a solely religious

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[19] Chaitani, *Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon*, 7-8.
[20] Chaitani, *Post-Colonial Syria and Lebanon*, 7-8.
[21] *See*: Michael Gasper, "Sectarianism, Minorities, and the Secular State in the Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48, no. 4 (November 2016): 767–78, https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074381600091X.
[22] Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi`ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), 15.
[23] Fawwaz Traboulsi, "Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon" (Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung), accessed April 19, 2020, https://lb.boell.org/en/2014/05/04/social-classes-and-political-power-lebanon, 19.
[24] Traboulsi, "Social Class and Political Power in Lebanon," 15.

association, rather, sectarianism in Lebanon is a political relationship that is mediated through both the state and through religion, and which has "historically proved malleable and fluid enough to function as a subnational, supranational, or even national signifier."[25]

As the Lebanese state formed, distinct sectarian/confessional socio-political cultures developed different concepts of Lebanese identity. Broadly, the primary sub-discourses and contending visions of national identity operative during the formation of the Lebanese state can be labeled the Phoenicianist, the Arabist, and the Syrianist discourses.[26] All three discourses invoked a combination of elements of historical reality and origin myths in order to legitimize a particular socio-political vision or future trajectory.

Christian intellectuals and politicians during the French Mandate developed a national ideology discourse largely in opposition to Arabist ideologies arising in Ottoman Lebanon and Syria at the end of the nineteenth century.[27] To distinguish themselves from their Arab neighbors, primarily Maronite Christian intellectuals claimed that Lebanon had an exceptional, uninterrupted cultural legacy descended directly from ancient (Phoenician) times, arguing that modern Lebanon should not be thought of as "ethnically" Arab.[28] This ideology was also rooted in concerns that the minority Christian population would be enclosed by hostile Arab (Muslim) surroundings, ostensibly necessitating Euro-Christian support to maintain security. Viewing Arabism and Syrianism as "a danger which would put an end to their 'ancient particularism'," many Maronite Christians began to articulate that particularism in nationalistic terms.[29]

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[25] Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism,* 4.
[26] Rola El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana Elite Politics in Postwar Lebanon*, 2012, 199.
[27] Kais M. Firro, "Lebanese Nationalism versus Arabism: From Bulus Nujaym to Michel Chiha," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no. 5 (September 2004), https://doi.org/10.1080/0026320042000265657, 1.
[28] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 199-200.
[29] Firro, "Lebanese Nationalism versus Arabism," 1.

Many Muslims, meanwhile, denounced the establishment of Greater Lebanon as a French maneuver that served "Maronite interests," grounded in the Muslim-majority population of the annexed territories' resistance to economic, administrative, and fiscal injustices that arose from the creation of the Lebanese state.[30] Arabist discourse emphasized a shared Arab identity—and the need for regionwide Arab unity—that had been suppressed under the Ottoman Empire and later by European colonial powers.[31] Arabists felt that the Maronite Phoenicianist discourse marginalized the Arab-Muslim community.[32] Rather than a step toward regional independence, Arab nationalists viewed the Lebanese state as a remnant of colonial interference that could continue to pose risks to regional security and stability.

Lastly, the Syrianists, encompassing both non-Arab and Arab Syrian nationalist ideologies, viewed the Lebanese state as a step in the broader trajectory of a secular unification of the region.[33] Largely spearheaded by Antoun Saadeh, the founder of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), Syrianism promoted a vision of a primarily geographic and civilizational Syrian national homeland. This platform mainly found popularity among minority communities, such as the Greek Orthodox, that were alienated by the national visions of both the pan-Arabists and the Phoenicianists.[34] Visions that called for Lebanese-Syrian unity—whether pan-Arabist or Syrianist—were not only held in Lebanon, but had popular bases of support in Syria. Many Syrians believed that Lebanon and Syria together are integral parts of "Greater Syria," and that the severing of Lebanon from the Syrian state was an artificial and illegitimate division imposed by colonial mandate powers.[35]

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[30] Firro, "Lebanese Nationalism versus Arabism," 17; Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, 81.
[31] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 201.
[32] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 201.
[33] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 203.
[34] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 202.
[35] A. I. Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 72.

During these debates, intellectuals emphasized Lebanese and Syrian "ethnic" difference or similarity as a means of advancing a particular vision for the future, and articulated beliefs about the sectarian makeup of Lebanese society that became foundations for the Lebanese governance system. Though Syria did not introduce a sect-based governance system, Syria similarly contains an array of religious minorities with sectarian communities that overlap with those in Lebanon—as such, the relationship between the Lebanese and Syrian peoples is articulated not solely in terms of nationality, but as a matter of overlapping, multi-scalar[36] ethno-sectarian identities at play. The debates over national identity in the French Mandate period thus laid the groundwork for questions of Lebanese sovereignty to be closely tied to concerns of Lebanon's ethno-sectarian makeup, post-colonial legacy, and Syria's role in the region.

Foundational Documents: The 1926 Constitution and the 1943 National Pact

In 1926, the adoption of the Constitution of the Lebanese Republic under the French Mandate created a parliamentary system in Lebanon with representation on the basis of confessional identification. The Lebanese constitution's hybrid republic-confessional representational system is largely attributed to Michel Chiha, a prominent Lebanese nationalist who was a leading figure in the constitution's drafting.[37] Chiha sought not only to justify a Lebanese territorial state, but to provide a blueprint for nation-building that used political power-sharing to regulate the component ethno-religious communities in the country.[38] Thus, the

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[36] I borrow the term "multi-scalar" from Lama Mourad's interpretation of the geographical concept: "Theories that employ a multi-scalar understanding of local politics are fundamentally relational… different geographical levels, such as the local, regional, national, and international scales, operate together to generate phenomenon that cannot be understood by looking at one scale in isolation, or even all these scales in a simple additive formulation" (*See*: Lama Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures: Decentralization and The Politics of Local Responses to the Syrian Refugee Influx in Lebanon" (University of Toronto, 2019), 119.)

[37] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, 90.

[38] Firro, "Lebanese Nationalism versus Arabism," 23.

constitution instituted the tradition of having a Maronite president, a Sunni prime minister, and a Shi'i speaker of the house, as well as giving the president the power to appoint the prime minister and the cabinet. Representation in parliament would be allocated on the basis of confessional identification, with proportional distribution based on the only official post-Ottoman census of Lebanon, taken in 1932, in which Maronites composed about 30 percent of the population, followed by Sunnis, Shi'a, Greek Orthodox, and Druzes in that order. The circumstances of the 1932 census were contested, however, and the constitution did not stipulate any adaptive mechanisms for inevitable demographic variation over time; the inflexible and maladaptive relationship between the census and the confessional distribution of political power has thus proven to be a continued source of tension.[39]

The post-independence National Pact of 1943, which was based on the 1926 Constitution, established Lebanon's independence and solidified Christian supremacy in the government. Initially an informal verbal understanding between the first post-independence president and prime minister of Lebanon, the National Pact supplemented the constitution, clarifying questions and concerns regarding the country's identity, its international relations, and Muslim sects' access to political power.[40] Fawwaz Traboulsi argues that the National Pact can be understood as an affirmation of political guarantees for Christian parties in exchange for political and socio-cultural promises for Muslim parties.[41] In addition to the power-sharing formula outlined in the constitution, the pact affirms the country's "Arab profile," thus assuaging primarily Muslim calls for Arab unity, while asserting that it incorporates "all that is beneficial and useful in Western Civilization," thereby tempering the primarily Christian insistence on alignment with France and

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[39] David S. Sorenson, *Global Security Watch--Lebanon : A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger Security International/ABC-CLIO, 2010).
[40] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, 111-112.
[41] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon,* 112.

the West.[42] Despite the pact's mediation of contending visions for the Lebanese state, Traboulsi argues that the negative impacts of Lebanon "taking off" with two founding documents, rather than one, was momentous: "a great part of the later history of Lebanon and of its conflicts would be articulated around the way those two texts were read, interpreted, and assigned priority" in contestation with one another.[43]

These documents codified sectarian identity as the most salient political indicator and as a prerequisite filter for accessing political representation through parliamentary and bureaucratic structures. Sectarianism and political power are intimately related, which in turn shaped other aspects of Lebanese society: "the sectarian structure has penetrated all areas of society, and affects the economy, social life and culture just as much as it does politics, symbolism and ideology."[44] Throughout the twenty-first century, for example, Maronite Christians gained privileged access to positions of power and the most profitable sectors of the economy, and benefited disproportionately from the distribution of wealth.[45] Between the lower-middle and middle classes, small sect- and region-based privileges, largely for Christians, manifested into direct socio-economic advantages in the bureaucracy and education systems.[46]

In the context of Lebanese and Syrian intertwined struggles for statehood, sovereignty, and legitimacy, what is at stake is not the survival of the nation-state itself, but rather competition for control over the "nature of its governing order: hierarchies of power, access to and distribution of political and economic resources, the identity of the nation-state, and the symbolic content of national identity."[47] In these debates, the centrality of the nation-state is not challenged, rather

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[42] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon,* 111.
[43] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon,* 112.
[44] Traboulsi, "Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon," 18.
[45] Traboulsi, "Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon," 20.
[46] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon,* 164
[47] Fanar Haddad, "Sectarian Identity and National Identity in the Middle East," *Nations and Nationalism* 26, no. 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12578,128.

control of the nation-state is "the prize of the contest," as it provides legitimacy and "popular resonance for competing sect-coded claims" to governing authority.[48] These contending visions for the Lebanese state would reach a crisis during the Lebanese Civil War, in which an array of sectarian, regional, and international political actors took to arms to defend and challenge the status quo in the country.

The Lebanese Civil War

If Chiha and other architects of the Lebanese constitution instituted the consociational political system to "tame the inherently violent excesses of 'sectarianism'," the Lebanese Civil War raised questions about whether such a system might constitute an enduring *source* of conflict.[49] In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the inability of the Lebanese political and social establishment to meet changing socio-political realities led to heightened radicalization and polarization.[50] The confessional political system strained as elites, particularly Christian groups that held disproportionate political power, were unable or unwilling to cede concessions to competing parties, leading to the breakdown of elite pacts that had, up until the early 1970s, held the system in place.[51] By 1975, the contrast between the privileged few and the comparative socio-economic disadvantages and unequal access faced by many led to most segments of the Lebanese population expressing desire for political, economic, and social change.[52]

As Lebanese state institutions broke down over the course of the civil war, both Syrian and Lebanese actors emphasized a strong centralized sovereign governing body in Lebanon as the best

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[48] Haddad, "Sectarian identity and national identity in the Middle East," 128.
[49] Maya Mikdashi, "What Is Political Sectarianism?," Jadaliyya - جدلية, March 25, 2011, https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/23833.
[50] *See*: Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, 157-189.
[51] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana,* 10.
[52] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, 165.

guarantor of security. The foreign minister of Syria described the weakness of the Lebanese state as a central cause of the conflict.[53] Responding to early Syrian expressions of interest in intervention in the budding Lebanese conflict, the leader of the right-wing Maronite Phalange (*Kataeb*) Party, Pierre Gemayel, agreed with this framing and pushed further, arguing that "it was incumbent upon Syria ... to restore to Lebanon its state."[54] In this case, Gemayel was referencing Palestinian guerillas who operated in Lebanon with a degree of autonomy that, in his view, infringed upon Lebanon's sovereignty.[55] Although Gemayel's vision for a sovereign Lebanese state was not representative of all groups—ideal visions varied between factions and regionally— it was Lebanon's status as "weak state" and the looming risk of state failure that remained a central concern to most state parties involved, regardless of alliance.[56]

When Syrian troops first moved into Lebanon in June of 1976, few would have expected that the initial military incursion would weather the civil war and evolve into a decades-long occupation. Lebanese supporters of Syrian direct involvement initially argued that the intervention would be limited to preserving security in "troubled areas" as well as being limited in scope and duration, and that, once security was achieved, political discussions would lead to a settlement.[57] Yet the official Syrian position hinted at a more open-ended involvement. The Syrian information minister at the time said that "Syrian forces would not be withdrawn from Lebanon ... until 'peace and security reign.'"[58]

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[53] Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon,* 173.
[54] Quoted in Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon,* 174.
[55] Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon*, 174.
[56] Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State'," 1055.
[57] Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon*, 210.
[58] "Assad, in Paris, Says He Backs Arab Peace Force in Lebanon," *The New York Times*, June 19, 1976, sec. Archives, https://www.nytimes.com/1976/06/19/archives/assad-in-paris-says-he-backs-arab-peace-force-in-lebanon.html.

In a speech that same June, Syrian president Hafez al-Asad attempted to quell regional and international concerns relating to Syria's early actions in Lebanon and assert Syria's stance on an international stage. Asad proclaimed: "Throughout history, Lebanon and Syria have constituted one country and one people, and throughout history the one people have brought about genuine common interests. This has brought about genuine common security and a genuine close kinship between the people in the two countries."[59] The same month, Syrian state media outlet *Tashrin* published a piece calling

> ...on the masses and peoples of the Syrian region for increased caution and increased vigilance to confront the imperialist designs and defeat them ... Strengthening national unity [was] imperative if Syria [was] to stop the war in Lebanon, safeguard Lebanon's unity, and emphasise Lebanon's Arab character…[Syrians] must all stand behind the heroic Syrian army which has always been the shield of the Arab nation in its struggle against all conspiracies…[60]

The rhetoric used to justify the trespass on traditional bounds of sovereignty was closely related to disputes regarding the nature of the two states' relationship: Syria, under Asad, saw itself as an Arab nationalist bulwark against imperialism and external interference, and understood Lebanon to be an Arab state whose separation from Syria—politically and rhetorically—was, in effect, the product of imperialism and external interference. Thus, Asad observed: "It is difficult to draw a line between Lebanon's security in its broadest sense and Syria's security."[61]

Pax Syriana

In October 1989, Lebanese parliamentarians signed the Ta'if Agreement in the eponymous city in Saudi Arabia, introducing the process that ended the Lebanese Civil War and beginning the

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[59] Hafez al-Assad, speech, June 20, 1976. Accessed in Arabic and in English, translation author's own.
[60] *Tashrin* (Damascus) 10 June 1976, translated in Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*, 137-8.
[61] Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*, 72.

long journey to peace and reconstruction.[62] Saudi Arabia and Syria brokered the Arab League initiative that led to the cease-fire in Lebanon as well as the meetings between Lebanese leaders in Ta'if, with the support of the United States and European states.[63] In effect, the Ta'if Agreement reproduced the same sectarian system whose failings in part led to the civil war, but with significant modifications to the confessional allocation of political representation.[64] The reification of sectarian political systems in the post-war context ensured that antagonisms rooted in the war or preceding it would continue indefinitely. The three-way sectarian arrangement between the Maronite, Sunni, and Shi'a sects furthered the unstable power relations, and in this way, the Ta'if Agreement reinstated a system of discord.[65] However, Traboulsi points out, "this time, there was an arbiter: President Asad in Damascus."[66]

The agreement's rhetoric conflated security, independence, and sovereignty, while reasserting Syria's hegemonic authority over what constituted a threat to any of them. Syrian "mediation" in Lebanon and involvement in "conflict resolution" itself served as a display of Syrian power over Lebanon.[67] But Syria also secured two clauses in the Ta'if Agreement that formed the internationally recognized basis for its continued presence in Lebanon: First, the right to deploy Syrian forces in Lebanon for a period to be agreed upon by the Lebanese and Syrian governments alone, and not external actors; and second, the right to react from within Lebanon to threats to Syrian security.[68] On Lebanese-Syrian relations, the agreement states:

> Lebanon should not be allowed to constitute a source of threat to Syria's security, and Syria should not be allowed to constitute a source of threat to Lebanon's security under any circumstances. Consequently, Lebanon should not allow itself to become a pathway or a

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[62] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, 246.
[63] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, 248; 252.
[64] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, 250.
[65] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, 251.
[66] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon,* 251.
[67] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon,* 251.
[68] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 16-17.

base for any force, state, or organization seeking to undermine its security or Syria's security. Syria, which is eager for Lebanon's security, independence, and unity and for harmony among its citizens, should not permit any act that poses a threat to Lebanon's security, independence, and sovereignty.[69]

The ambiguity of security discourse—even in legal contexts—and conflicting international, national, and local interests, left ample room for contending visions of what a "secure" relationship between Lebanon and Syria might look like. The language of the agreement gives no acknowledgement to the power differential between the two countries, and in effect allows Lebanon's relative "weakness" in itself to constitute a threat to Syria, thus making it always a matter of the latter's purview.

Although the Ta'if Agreement eventually brought an end to the fighting, it failed to resolve underlying political grievances and sectarian animosities that had both sparked and emerged during the civil war. While key political posts remained distributed along sectarian lines as allocated in the National Pact—the president would remain a Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni, and the speaker of parliament a Shi'i—the Ta'if Agreement adjusted the respective positions' power.[70] It reduced the power of the presidency to be on par with that of the prime minister and the speaker, expanded the power of the parliament, and established parity in the numerical distribution of parliamentary seats between Christian and Muslim representatives (though Christians no longer constituted 50 percent of the population).[71] The agreement also required the disarmament and dissolution of all Lebanese militias (with the notable exception of Hezbollah), the restoration of the authority and sovereignty of the Lebanese central government, and the

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[69] Sorenson, Appendix C, Document 2 in *Global Security Watch--Lebanon*, 180. As Eric Thompson explains, "this provision gives Syria a legal basis to respond to perceived threats to Syrian security within the borders of Lebanon" and provides Syria "an invaluable, internationally recognized, legal basis for the continued deployment of Syrian troops within Lebanon." Thompson, "Will Syria Have to Withdraw from Lebanon?," 81.
[70] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 13.
[71] Taku Osoegawa, *Syria and Lebanon : International Relations and Diplomacy in the Middle East* (I.B. Tauris, 2013), 94.

withdrawal of the occupying Israeli army from southern Lebanon.[72] This, of course, was in addition to the recognition and normalization of the "special" relations between Lebanon and Syria that allowed the latter influence over the former for an indefinite period of time.[73]

Not all parties to the conflict welcomed the Ta'if Agreement. Then-Lebanese Army general (and later president) Michel Aoun refused to accept the outcome in the midst of his "war of liberation" against Syrian forces.[74] But Syria's participation in the US-led anti-Iraq coalition during the First Gulf War strengthened US-Syrian relations, and with tacit permission from the United States and Israel, Syria defeated Aoun's forces militarily, thus securing the surrender of the most prominent anti-Syrian bloc in Lebanon and establishing Syrian hegemony.[75]

The 1991 "Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Lebanese Republic" reinforced the unequal bilateral relations between the two states, including articles that repeated the Ta'if Agreement nearly word-for-word.[76] This treaty related the political relations between the two countries in terms of "security" and "threats," ambiguous terms that legitimated a vast array of actions. The treaty also outlined concrete mechanisms to institutionalize bilateral coordination between Lebanon and Syria, including the establishment of a bilateral supreme council, follow-up and coordination board, economic and social committee, foreign affairs committee, general secretariat, and defense and security committees. As Bassel Salloukh notes, "given the power disparity between the two states, the

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[72] Osoegawa, *Syria and Lebanon*, 94.
[73] Osoegawa, *Syria and Lebanon*, 94.
[74] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 29; Osoegawa, *Syria and Lebanon*, 96.
[75] Osoegawa, *Syria and Lebanon,* 95-96.
[76] "Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination Between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Lebanese Republic" (United Nations - Treaty Series, 1992), https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/LB-SY_910522_TreatyBrotherhoodCooperationCoordination.pdf.

treaty amounted to the institutionalization of a Syrian overlordship in Lebanon, especially in the foreign policy and security fields."[77]

A Defense and Security Agreement, signed in September of 1991, in effect ensured Syria's domination over Lebanon's military and intelligence apparatuses.[78] The agreement treated freedom of the press in Lebanon as a security matter, thus subjecting it to the "decades-long phobias of Syrian rulers vis-à-vis the role of the Lebanese press in affecting political change in the sister country."[79] Syrian leaders, fearing the potential "spillover" of Lebanese speech on their own domestic constituents, implemented a security regime in Lebanon more similar to the Syrian *mukhabarat* (intelligence services) than to the historically more open press in Lebanon. Throughout the 1990s, public discussion of the relationship between Lebanon and Syria remained taboo.[80] Syrian domination of the Lebanese political and security system continued for an additional fifteen years, until international pressure and mass protests expelled the remaining Syrian forces from the country.

The 21st Century

In September 2004, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1559, introduced by the United States and France, which "called upon all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon" as well as the "disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias."[81] Issued after the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000, the resolution was

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[77] Bassel F. Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed," *Middle East Report*, accessed December 3, 2018, https://www.merip.org/mer/mer236/syria-lebanon-brotherhood-transformed.
[78] "A Brotherhood Transformed."
[79] Traboulsi, *History of Modern Lebanon*, 252.
[80] The issue was "not a part of the national discourse in either country, nor was it discussed by the press in Lebanon." El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 188.
[81] "UN Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004)" (United Nations, September 2, 2004), https://www.un.org/press/en/2004/sc8181.doc.htm.

directed at Syria and Hezbollah. But in spite of the resolution and internal pressure from Lebanese politicians, Syria doubled down in its posturing in Lebanon.[82] During the Hafez al-Asad era, Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri had maintained close ties with the Syrian government and acted as a mediator and negotiator between the two governments. However, with Bashar al-Asad's ascension to the presidency in 2000, Hariri's influence waned, and the Security Council decision— for which the Syrian leadership may have held Hariri responsible—only exacerbated this.[83] When Hariri cooperated with Lebanese anti-Syrian parties in the lead-up to the 2005 parliamentary elections, opposing Syrian-backed President Emile Lahoud, it appeared the prime minister may have been mobilizing to dismantle the Syrian political-security apparatus entrenched in Lebanon.[84] This posed a risk to Syrian government interests.

Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated in central Beirut on February 14, 2005, by a car bomb that killed twenty-one others. Though no definitive perpetrator was ever determined, many suspected the involvement of Syria and/or Hezbollah.[85] Hariri's supporters gathered in spontaneous demonstrations that rapidly gained in popularity. Despite counter-protests by Hezbollah and its supporters, crowds estimated at over one million gathered in Beirut on March 14th to call for the pullback of Syrian influence in what is known as the "Cedar Revolution."[86] Compounded by international pressure, namely from the United States, in April of 2005, Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon, abruptly ending nearly three decades of occupation.

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[82] "A Brotherhood Transformed."
[83] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 95-96. El-Husseini hypothesizes that "it is likely that Syrian leadership held Hariri accountable" for the passing of Resolution 1559.
[84] "A Brotherhood Transformed"; El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 96.
[85] *See* investigation into Rafiq Hariri assassination: United Nations Security Council Resolution 1595; UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon 2007.
[86] Ohannes Geukjian, "Political Instability and Conflict after the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon," *Middle East Journal*, no. 4 (2014): 521; Sorenson, *Global Security Watch--Lebanon*, 34-35. The anti-Syrian camp refers to themselves as the March 14 Movement or Alliance, and the Hezbollah supporters refer to the counter protests as the March 8 Movement or Alliance.

However, this did not come without its opponents. Two blocs emerged in Lebanese politics: the pro-Syrian "March 8 Alliance," and the anti-Syrian "March 14 Alliance." The March 8 Alliance is primarily composed of the Shi'i political movements Hezbollah and Amal, and other pro-Syrian parties such as the primarily Christian Free Patriotic Movement, which would join the coalition in 2006. The March 14 Alliance included the predominantly Sunni Future Movement, as well as the predominantly Christian Lebanese Forces and Kataeb parties, and the secular, yet predominantly Druze Progressive Socialist Party, which withdrew in 2009.[87]

By April 26th, the last Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon, but concerns remained about Syrian political control and *mukhabarat* presence. As Lebanon's elections approached that summer, there was regional and international uncertainty about the stability and security of the Lebanese political system in the near future, with concerns ranging from internal sectarian and political divisions, to the status of Hezbollah in the Lebanese political system, to the reform of the Lebanese security apparatus, and even the continued involvement of Syria.[88] While Lebanon regained some elements of state sovereignty, on the whole it found itself in a less stable region and in a more unsteady position, given the inflexibility of political elites with discordant visions for power-sharing.[89]

In 2008, the Lebanese and Syrian governments established formal diplomatic relations for the first time in their shared national histories.[90] Under pressure from foreign governments, the two countries began the process of demarcating Lebanon's northern border, whose exact

[87] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures: Decentralization and The Politics of Local Responses to the Syrian Refugee Influx in Lebanon," 47.

[88] "Syrian Troops Leave Lebanon After 29-Year Occupation - The New York Times," accessed December 5, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/26/international/middleeast/syrian-troops-leave-lebanon-after-29year-occupation.html.

[89] Ohannes Geukjian, "Political Instability and Conflict after the Syrian Withdrawal from Lebanon," 528.

[90] Jamil Mouawad, "Lebanon's Border Areas in Light of the Syrian War: New Actors, Old Marginalisation," Middle East Directions (European University Institute, March 2018), http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/52564/RSCAS_PR_2018_03.pdf?sequence=1.

placement had never been formally established during either the French Mandate or the post-independence period.[91] When fighting broke out in Syria in 2011, these Lebanese-Syrian border areas became "at the heart of major transformations succumbing to a double pressure of fighting in Syria and border closures."[92] Given these areas' historic marginalization from the Lebanese state, and their close economic and social ties with neighboring Syrian villages and laborers, however, an investigation into the processes of borderization and differentiation of Lebanese from Syrian identity can offer insights to the broader processes of statehood, citizenship, and national affiliation throughout this period.

Porous Frontiers, Dependent Economies, and Borderization

There is a tendency among scholars and practitioners to rely on sect as a primary mobilizing structure in Lebanese—and more generally, Middle Eastern—society. The social and political arenas in Lebanon are a battlefield for not only sectarian partisanship, but also for reproduction of and competition between classes. At their many points of intersection in politico-economic relationships, sects act as conduits which modify the class structure.[93] Given that the majority of Syrian laborers are made highly visible through manual, lower-class positions, there is an additional conflation of ethno-sectarian identity and class-coded discourses.[94] Many of the stereotypes Lebanese hold of Syrians are conflations with prejudices typically held against the lower- and lower-middle classes.

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[91] Mouawad, "Lebanon's Border Areas in Light of the Syrian War," 7; Nicholas Blanford, "Case Study: The Lebanon-Syria Border," Rethinking International Relations After the Arab Revolutions (Beirut: Université Saint Joseph, April 16, 2016).

[92] Mouawad, "Lebanon's Border Areas in Light of the Syrian War," 7.

[93] *See*: Traboulsi, "Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon," 18.

[94] *See*: Traboulsi, "Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon."

After the declaration of the State of Greater Lebanon in 1920, Lebanese border areas' direct social, economic and trade relations with Syria dissipated, yet these areas did not fully become "economically, politically and socially integrated into the Lebanese state."[95] These areas developed seasonally-patterned border-trade economies: Lebanese in these areas "became 'consumers' of goods and services coming from Syria to meet their basic needs," and "'traders' [smuggled] goods from Lebanon into Syria in order to meet the demands of Syrian society for 'global products' that [were] unavailable in Syria."[96]

Throughout the twentieth century, Syrians traveled freely across borders to fill the manual labor market in Lebanon. Successive Lebanese and Syrian governments tacitly—if not intentionally—opened borders for these Syrian migrant workers.[97] Post-war Lebanese-Syrian bilateral agreements established labor relations that favored the Syrian government's interests, removing travel restrictions for Syrians entering Lebanon in order to boost remittances and cash-flow into the Syrian economy.[98] To further institutionalize employment-sector interdependence, the 1994 Bilateral Labor Agreement allowed Syrians to acquire expedited work visa and residency permits at the border in a single, inexpensive card, in contrast to the lengthier and more costly process faced by other foreigners.[99] While the agreement specified that incoming workers *should* have a formal work contract, it was not strictly enforced and many border-entry visas were issued informally.[100] Throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, Lebanese General Security's

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[95] Mouawad, "Lebanon's border areas in light of the Syrian war," 5.
[96] Mouawad, "Lebanon's border areas in light of the Syrian war," 6.
[97] Mouawad, "Lebanon's border areas in light of the Syrian war," 5; John Chalcraft, "Syrian Workers in Lebanon and the Role of the State: Political Economy and Popular Aspirations," in *Migration et Politique Au Moyen-Orient*, ed. Françoise de Bel-Air, Contemporain Publications (Beyrouth: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2014), 81–103, http://books.openedition.org/ifpo/4777.
[98] "Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination Between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Lebanese Republic."
[99] Chalcraft, "Syrian Workers in Lebanon," 17.
[100] Chalcraft, "Syrian Workers in Lebanon."

reporting of Syrian arrivals in and departures from Lebanon was characterized by an intentional lack of accuracy.[101] Thus Syrian informal laborers were privileged in entering the Lebanese economy, and were protected vis-à-vis migrant laborers from other countries.

In fact, Syrian labor constituted a large component of the post-war reconstruction workforce in Lebanon, as Lebanese outmigration during the war resulted in manual labor shortages.[102] However, once Syrian seasonal migrant workers who had fled during the civil war returned,

> some Lebanese interpreted the reappearance of hundreds of thousands of these workers after the end of the war as an "invasion" of the Lebanese job markets by the country's powerful, but economically stagnant, neighbor. The [Maronite Council of Bishops] expressed the view that these workers represented a threat to the Lebanese economy and were taking jobs that should be the prerogative of Lebanese citizens.[103]

As Bassam Chit notes, scapegoating "has always been directed against migrant workers, refugees, workers, and the poor," rather than interfering governments or rich Arab and international interventionists.[104]

Lebanese employers benefited from Syrian laborers because they worked for less pay and had fewer social protections due to their foreign status.[105] Lebanese citizens had access to a more competitive educational infrastructure and more often joined "highly skilled" and capital intensive service sectors, industries that were also legally reserved for Lebanese.[106] Syrians largely filled the

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[101] Chalcraft, "Syrian Workers in Lebanon," 17.
[102] Lea Bou Khater. "Labour Policy and Practice."
[103] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana,* 190.
[104] Bassem Chit and Mohamad Ali Nayel, "Understanding Racism against Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," Text, Civil Society Knowledge Centre, October 28, 2013, https://civilsociety-centre.org/paper/understanding-racism-against-syrian-refugees-lebanon.
[105] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana,* 190. Furthermore, most Syrian workers' earnings went back into the Lebanese economy, and contributed to increasing the demand for Lebanese imports in Syria.
[106] Filippo Dionigi, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: State Fragility and Social Resilience," LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series (London School of Economics, February 2016), 31.

manual labor gap, working in poor conditions with lower wages than their Lebanese counterparts.[107] Thus, Syrian economic migrants to Lebanon were not only a part of the social, geographic, and economic fabric of these manual labor industries and border-frontier areas, but contributed to the development of class politics in Lebanon.

Following the Summer 2006 war, international pressure—particularly from the United States and Israel—mounted on the Lebanese and Syrian governments to "formally demarcate their joint border and to tighten security along what has traditionally been a porous frontier."[108] This began a process of borderization and securitization that continued for over a decade. As Jamil Mouawad explains, "between 2011 and 2013, the border areas witnessed mobility on both sides of the borders: from Syria into Lebanon, where a steady flow of Syrians escaping war moved to and settled in Lebanon, and from Lebanon into Syria, where fighters and weapons entered Syria."[109]

Many Lebanese, small business owners in particular, benefit from the cheap labor and increased consumption that Syrian migrants provide. Almost 90 percent of Syrians in Lebanon are paid 40 percent below the minimum wage at approximately $280 USD per month—significantly less than Lebanese workers.[110] Small businesses and average Lebanese citizens have become dependent on cheap Syrian laborers for their convenience and economy.

The processes of physically demarcating the historically porous frontiers between the two countries has also served to demarcate the "other" or foreigner on a systematic level. Hafeda

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[107] Dionigi, "Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon," 31. This is with exception to the small but substantial number of prominent, wealthy Syrian families which immigrated to Lebanon in several waves. See: Traboulsi, "Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon."

[108] Blanford, "The Lebanon-Syria Border," 1.

[109] Mouawad, "Lebanon's Border Areas in Light of the Syrian War," 7.

[110] Bachir el Khoury, "The Economic Benefits of the Massive Presence of Syrian Refugees," The Peace Building in Lebanon News Supplement (United Nations Development Programme, August 2017), https://www.undp.org/content/dam/lebanon/docs/CrisisPreventionRecovery/SupplementArticles/16Supp/PEACE%20BUILDING2%2016%20july%202017%20p4.pdf.

explains how "identity formation and subjectivity, in relation to differences and the other ... structure material and immaterial (and emotional) borders through human interaction and activities," thus extending the concept of "bordering practices" from the realm of the geographic, political, and juridical to that of the human subject.[111] In Lebanon, the subjectivism of such borders is especially relevant, as these constructions "relate to the identity of the different contested political and sectarian communities," and are intricately tied with an individual's given experience with any particular border.[112] That is, the immaterial borders between Lebanese and Syrians are deeply intertwined with the material and spatial history of the physical borders between Lebanon and Syria.[113]

The differentiation between Syrian and Lebanese workers reached an a new level in 2014, when the Lebanese government approved Decision 197 as an addendum to the Lebanese labor law regulating foreign workers, restricting the industries in which non-Lebanese are permitted to work to construction, agriculture, and cleaning services (later expanded to include waste disposal).[114] In 2015, General Security closed the borders to Syria and began registering new Entry and Renewal of Residency Permits, and the Lebanese government suspended United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) registration of Syrian refugees.[115] These new regulations

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[111] Mohamad Hafeda, *Negotiating Conflict in Lebanon: Bordering Practices in a Divided Beirut* (I.B. Tauris, 2019), 27.

[112] Hafeda, *Negotiating Conflict in Lebanon,* 27.

[113] A note on the subjectivity of experiences of border practices: While I was conducting interviews in Beirut, some scholars were adamant that the Syrian intervention was a brutal occupation, while others rejected the use of the term "occupation" altogether. This is but one of many vignettes that demonstrate the ways in which the civil war was not experienced in a uniform manner. To some, the memory of the Syrian intervention comes with trauma, to others, it is discussed with pragmatism that implies degrees of separation or tacit support.

[114] "Decision No. 197/1," Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, December 17, 2014, http://www.lpdc.gov.lb/labor/decision-no-1971/15/en; "Truck Drivers Protest Syrian Job Competition," The Daily Star, March 9, 2019, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Mar-09/478410-truck-drivers-protest-syrian-job-competition.ashx.

[115] Agnès Favier, "Increasing Vulnerability for the Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: What's Next?," Middle East Directions (European University Institute, November 2016), http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/52564/RSCAS_PR_2018_03.pdf?sequence=1.

on Syrian migration and labor left around 70 to 80 percent of Syrian refugees without legal residency permits, and therefore increased the preponderance of informal labor.[116] Agnès Favier describes three de facto categories of refugees resulting from these regulations:

> (1) A minority of wealthy Syrians who can obtain a three-year residency permit; (2) Syrians who were previously registered with the UNHCR, who have been requested to sign a pledge not to work and some receive very little compensation; and (3) Unregistered Syrians who wish to work within the three sectors legally opened to them ... who have to obtain a pledge of responsibility by a Lebanese sponsor.[117]

Beyond the classification of "displaced persons" or "refugees", a Syrian can reside lawfully in Lebanon if registered as an economic migrant under the sponsorship system (kafala).[118] Janymr and Mourad argue that "these new residency policies are as such arguably the clearest manifestation of an attempt to transform Syrian 'displaced' into economic migrants, and therefore without the international protection ordinarily afforded refugees."[119] This "rebranding," they argue, was partly intended to placate Lebanese apprehensive of hosting large numbers of refugees, but who were accustomed to the presence of Syrian migrant laborers.[120] However, as the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies notes, "economic refugees are perceived as refugees taking advantage of the current situation through informal employment without paying taxes," and are simultaneously "perceived to have an advantage over their Lebanese counterparts, as they are accepting lower wages, and receiving foreign aid."[121] Thus, low-income Syrian laborers in Lebanon are stuck

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[116] Favier, "Increasing Vulnerability for the Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: What's Next?" 2.
[117] Favier, "Increasing Vulnerability for the Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: What's Next?"
[118] Maja Janmyr and Lama Mourad, "Modes of Ordering: Labelling, Classification and Categorization in Lebanon's Refugee Response," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 31, no. 4 (December 1, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fex042, 10-11.
[119] Janmyr and Mourad, "Modes of Ordering," 10-11.
[120] Janmyr and Mourad, "Modes of Ordering," 10-11.
[121] Sami Atallah and Dima Mahdi, "Law and Politics of 'Safe Zones' and Forced Return to Syria: Refugee Politics in Lebanon," Policy Paper (Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, October 2017), https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf, 17.

between a rock and a hard place, pushed out of the classification of "refugee" while simultaneously vilified for supposedly taking advantage of loopholes created to allow their economic exploitation.

As with the presence of nearly half a million Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, the question of protracted displacement and political agency remains a pressing concern for Lebanese authorities. For Lebanese politicians, Syrians feeling welcomed or accepted in Lebanon risks increasing the likelihood of their staying and, the longer they stay, the likelihood that they will demand political rights. Thus, there is a double incentive for the non-encampment of Syrians. On the one hand, the refusal to build camps serves an economic purpose, "designed to serve Lebanese owners of businesses and capital by expanding the labour supply, lowering wages and increasing workers' precarity."[122] On the other, the politicization and legal recognition of camps would disturb the demographic balance of sectarian bases of political support in Lebanon, and would raise questions regarding the demographic and national underpinnings of Lebanese political identity.

Conclusion

In 2015, Syria's ambassador to Lebanon, Ali Abdel-Karim Ali, drew on a long-standing idiom among supporters of a political project of "Greater Syria" when he described Lebanese and Syrians as "one people belonging to two countries."[123] Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, however, posited that "we have become two peoples in one state and not one people in two

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[122] Lewis Turner, "Explaining the (Non-)Encampment of Syrian Refugees: Security, Class and the Labour Market in Lebanon and Jordan," *Mediterranean Politics* 20, no. 3 (September 2, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1080/13629395.2015.1078125, 397.

[123] "Lebanese, Syrians One People in Two Countries: Syrian Ambassador," *The Daily Star*, January 9, 2015, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jan-09/283518-lebanese-syrians-one-peo-ple-in-two-countries-syrian-ambassador.ashx.

states."[124] Rooted in understandings that developed during the colonial and post-colonial establishment of the Lebanese and Syrian states, these opposing perspectives regarding the unity or disunity between the Lebanese and Syrian "people(s)" embody the competing visions for Lebanon, and its relationship to Syria, in light of the refugee crisis. The ethnonationalist and class-coded intolerance that many Lebanese express towards Syrians is not simply a local iteration of the racism or xenophobia articulated in Western countries facing increases in migrants and asylum seekers in the twenty-first century, but is derived from this particular post-colonial struggle for statehood and sovereignty.

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[124] Dionigi, "Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon," 31; "Bassil Says Syrian Refugees Threaten Lebanon's Existence," *The Daily Star*, September 27, 2013, https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Sep-27/232805-bassil-says-syrian-refugees-threaten-lebanons-existence.ashx.

Chapter 2: Globalized and Localized Security Discourses

Lebanon should not be allowed to constitute a source of threat to Syria's security, and Syria should not be allowed to constitute a source of threat to Lebanon's security under any circumstances. Consequently, Lebanon should not allow itself to become a pathway or a base for any force, state, or organization seeking to undermine its security or Syria's security. Syria, which is eager for Lebanon's security, independence, and unity and for harmony among its citizens, should not permit any act that poses a threat to Lebanon's security, independence, and sovereignty.

-   *Ta'if Agreement, 1989*

Introduction

In 2014, the RAND Corporation's National Defense Research Institute[1] published a report titled "Spillover from the Conflict in Syria: An Assessment of the Factors that Aid and Impede the Spread of Violence." The report begins with an overview of "spillover violence," which the authors claim is "is similar in many ways to the spread of an infectious disease, either within given cultures and populations or between them."[2] The authors continue, "like a virus, extremist ideologies, ethnic sentiment, and religious anger know no boundaries."[3] The report then discusses the strain placed on Lebanon's power sharing institutions by the influx of refugees, which it claims "has started to tip the sectarian balance within Lebanon," and "ignited historical hatreds between Sunni and Shia that have already culminated in violence," ignoring the socio-political factors that underlie sectarian divisions and opting for an Orientalist generalization.[4]

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[1] Sponsored by the United States Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community.
[2] William Young et al., *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria: An Assessment of the Factors That Aid and Impede the Spread of Violence* (Santa Monica, UNITED STATES: RAND Corporation, The, 2014), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/brown/detail.action?docID=1899338, 5.
[3] Young et al., *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria,* 5.
[4] Young et al., *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria*, 26.

According to the report, Lebanon's particular vulnerability—as compared to other states that border Syria, such as Turkey and Jordan—is rooted in the country's "crippled government, division among its internal security forces, and continued external/Iranian support to Hizbollah."[5] Such mainstream security discourse, which perpetuates normative state-building theory, implies that Lebanon's security is necessarily dependent on statist efforts to "centralise the authority and expand the coercive powers of the Lebanese State."[6] This framework imagines the ultimate solution to corruption, civil strife, and armed violence in Lebanon to be a "strong state," exercising sovereignty undiminished by external, nonstate, and parastate actors, and achieved through aid and assistance by external, allied neoliberal actors.[7]

Scholars and practitioners have broadly conceptualized Lebanese state failure as "the result of the inability of different pre-modern, sectarian groups to work together toward the establishment of a modern, secular state."[8] This can be seen in the RAND report's warnings of a "sectarian battle between Sunnis and Shia that is radicalizing the youth and otherwise secular populations in the region."[9] But an overreliance on sectarian frameworks has minimized economic, political, and historical contexts, subjecting security discourses to what Nikolas Kosmatopoulos calls "sectarianization," wherein sectarian identities are flattened into a "single frame of identification when there are none or many more than one."[10] What constitutes security as experienced by those in Lebanon is not reducible to "primordial sectarian identities" but is rather subject to alternative

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[5] Young et al., *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria,* 25.
[6] Waleed Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State:' The Contentious Politics of Plural Governance in Lebanon since 2005," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 6 (June 2016) https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1110016, 1053.
[7] Nikolas Kosmatopoulos, "Toward an Anthropology of 'State Failure': Lebanon's Leviathan and Peace Expertise," *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, no. 3 (2011): 115, https://doi.org/10.3167/sa.2011.550307.
[8] Kosmatopoulos, "Toward an Anthropology of 'State Failure'," 129.
[9] Young et al., *Spillover from the Conflict in Syria,* 1.
[10] Kosmatopoulos, "Toward an Anthropology of 'State Failure'," 123-124; 129.

contenting discourses and political constructions, such as socio-economic standing, geographic location, access to political power and representation, and myriad other factors.[11] What is evident, however, is the disjuncture between conceptions of state sovereignty wielded in the geopolitical arena and their implementation in Lebanon.[12]

New scholarship has critiqued "weak state" approaches that argue that strong centralized state institutions are the key to resolving all forms of insecurity, highlighting that concepts of "state weakness" themselves refer to colonial notions of "absences" or "failures" to keep pace with European models and trajectories of state formation and sovereignty.[13] Because conventional security studies has largely taken the construction of the state for granted and overlooked the role of Western imperialism, colonialism, and Orientalism in the emergence and development of the modern state system, it has excluded social responses to threat or non-state forms of security.[14] Western intervention in "failed" or "weak" states is thus normalized by the broad construction of entire governance, social, and political systems as deficient, unstable, and threatening. In this way, "underdeveloped" states home to large at-risk populations—typically impoverished populations, displaced persons, and refugees—came to be viewed as "breeding grounds" for terrorists, and thus a matter of concern to international states. The United States' foreign policy agenda since 9/11

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[11] Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State'," 1054.

[12] Sara Fregonese, "Beyond the 'Weak State': Hybrid Sovereignties in Beirut," *ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING D-SOCIETY & SPACE* 30, no. 4 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1068/d11410, 656.

[13] Steve Niva, "Contested Sovereignties and Postcolonial Insecurities in the Middle East," in *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger*, ed. Jutta Weldes, Borderlines, v. 14 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 149-151.

[14] Niva, "Contested Sovereignties," 149-152. Pinar Bilgin points out one such fundamental problematic of traditional "security studies" approaches to the Middle East. Whereas the "Middle East" is widely conceptualized as a discrete region, Bilgin instead argues that its historical construction is a "geopolitical invention," developed not for its unipolarily or because of a strong regional consciousness, but because it serves "to describe a part of the world that is crucial to external actors' security concerns and interests."[#] Thus from the onset, the prevailing approaches to "regional security" in the Middle East "fail to take into consideration alternative conceptions of security that coexist in the region" or ask what it actually means to be "secure" in the Middle East.[#] See: Pinar Bilgin, *Regional Security in the Middle East: A Critical Perspective* (Abingdon, Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2004), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/brown/detail.action?docID=183438.

therefore shifted to view the "domestic characteristics of Arab states and societies ... such as the lack of political and economic freedoms and the failure ... to embrace globalization" as *threats* themselves.[15] But in doing so, this discourse decontextualized threats from their territorial and geopolitical location, in effect failing to acknowledge competing state, societal, and transnational actors, and consequently failing to recognize alternative versions of security and insecurity.[16]

The prevailing conception that Lebanon is a "weak" or "fragile" state, especially in relation to Syria, developed in the post-Cold War period and in the shadow of the Lebanese Civil War, and was largely shaped by US policy imperatives in the Middle East. This "weak state" framing, however, masks dynamics of contentious plural governance in Lebanon and competing actors within the Lebanese security apparatus that offer alternative understandings of insecurity and state sovereignty. These security assemblages lend themselves to security acts, which, often performative in nature, are used to convey interpretations of "security" and "sovereignty" that serve the strategic uses of the political forces that propagate them, whether Lebanese or international. One such result is the securitization and marginalization of refugees as security threats: Despite a lack of substantiated evidence that Syrians pose a tangible security threat to Lebanon, this rhetoric in effect shifts discussion of vulnerable displaced persons as *at* risk to *as* risk.

This chapter begins with an introduction to the discussion of "weak" states and "state failure" in contemporary international relations and security studies scholarship, particularly during the post-Cold War and "Global War on Terror" periods. Then, turning to these mainstream discourses' failure to account for forms of (in)security and sovereignty that lie outside the purview

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[15] Waleed Hazbun, "US Policy and the Geopolitics of Insecurity in the Arab World," *Geopolitics* 15, no. 2 (April 2010), https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040903486918, 240.
[16] Hazbun, "US Policy and the Geopolitics of Insecurity in the Arab World," 243-244.

of Western hegemonic interests, the chapter sheds light on mechanisms of contentious plural governance and security assemblages in Lebanon. Tracing the performative nature of security discourse from the start of the twenty-first century through the present, the chapter then demonstrates how political actors in Lebanon, and elsewhere, ground universalized language of "security" and "sovereignty" in tangible experiences of (in)security to achieve their own aims. Lastly, the chapter looks at how both global and local developments coalesced to "securitize" Syrian refugees in Lebanon, shifting consideration of issues pertaining to refugees from the realm of the "political" to the realm of "security." Both an effect and an agent of global processes of "securitizing" migration, Lebanese political actors capitalize on universalized security discourses to deflect from responsibility in Lebanon's underlying governance and economic issues, instead stigmatizing refugees as a risk to Lebanese state and society.

Lebanon as a "Weak" State—Problems and Responses

After World War II, American policy scholars generally viewed the Middle East as a region of strategic interest to the United States through the lens of neorealism.[17] During the early part of this period, the United States viewed Lebanon as a strategic asset within the context of the Cold War.[18] However, aside from a brief US military intervention in 1958, Lebanon largely fell out of the United States' focus until the breakdown of the Lebanese state in 1975, at which point it reemerged as a potential threat to US interests in the Middle East.[19]

Until the Cold War, the fields of international relations and security studies largely conceptualized the modern sovereign state as the primary subject of "security," which was

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[17] Hazbun, "US Policy and the Geopolitics of Insecurity in the Arab World," 239.
[18] James R. Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention : US Foreign Policy and the Collapse of Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Cornell University Press, 2016), 4.
[19] Stocker, *Spheres of Intervention*, 4-5.

threatened primarily by the military threat posed by rival states.[20] Following the Cold War, however, scholars noted that threats to security continued to proliferate in ways which contradicted classical notions of "objective" military threats.[21] As the superpowers cut off their clients, regimes which had once relied on external support to control and manage their populations were left "alone to face their long-suffering societies," with violent and devastating results.[22] The ensuing "new wars"—in what are commonly referred to as "failing," "weak," or "deficient" states—brought about a paradigmatic reconceptualization in the field of security studies. Non-state or parastate organizations that utilized violence proliferated, leading to wars which transcended state boundaries and extended the idea of what needed to be "secured" from the entity of the state to the people that live inside it.[23]

Thus, if US security depends on the ability of other states to maintain control and manage their own internal sovereignty, the United States has an impetus to strengthen the capacities of its allies to achieve its aims. The escalation of "untraditional" guerilla conflicts that began during the Cold War lent itself to "an endless process of risk management," in which the United States sought to bolster key powers' central authority and military capacity in response to communist and other threats.[24] The ambiguous language of "terrorism" made it easy to justify and legitimize action while masking specific political aims: "The broad use of terrorism by American policymakers to indicate any enemy in the Middle East which used unconventional means was in itself a problem because it

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[20] Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, eds., *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (Minneapolis, UNITED STATES: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Niva, "Contested Sovereignties."

[21] Simon Dalby, "Contesting an Essential Concept," in *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (Minneapolis, UNITED STATES: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/brown/detail.action?docID=315340.

[22] Michael N. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), 162-3.

[23] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 162-3.

[24] Mattia Toaldo, *The Origins of the US War on Terror: Lebanon, Libya and American Intervention in the Middle East* (London: Routledge, 2013), 166.

grouped under the same label organizations and governments that had very different ideologies, structures and aims."[25]

The attacks of September 11, 2001, and the ensuing US declaration of a "Global War on Terror" represented a turning point in global discourses of security. The Global War on Terror reconfigured how states envisioned their sovereignty externally as well as internally, and redefined the "legitimate" use of force. The US government capitalized on public panic, rooted in the cultural trauma that 9/11 inflicted on the American psyche, to rapidly expand its powers and global reach in the name of "security" and "counterterrorism."[26]

The Global War on Terror provided both an internationally recognized language and modus operandi for the United States to achieve its policy aims in the Middle East—especially protecting their primary regional ally, Israel. The administration of George W. Bush introduced the doctrine of "preemption," which expanded its targeting of "terrorist organizations" to include "rogue states," paving the way for intervention and disruption in states whose governments the United States viewed as unfit, insecure, or a threat to US interests.[27] Both Lebanon and Syria fit this bill, especially in the period following the US invasion of Iraq, and the US administration soon applied a "war on terror" discourse to the Lebanese context. However, as the early 2000s demonstrated, prevailing Western conceptions of Lebanese security clouded the contested and overlapping forms of insecurities that Lebanon's social and political spheres experienced.

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[25] Toaldo, *The Origins of US War on Terror*, 2.
[26] Gershon Shafir, "Introduction: Constructing National and Global Insecurity," in *Lessons and Legacies of the War on Terror: From Moral Panic to Permanent War*, ed. Gershon Shafir, Everard Meade, and William J. Aceves, Critical Terrorism Studies (London ; New York: Routledge, 2013), 4.
[27] Osoegawa, *Syria and Lebanon*, 102.

Contentious Discourses of (In)security and Security Assemblages in Lebanon

Both external and local actors have used the globalization of these aforementioned security discourses, with their normative and legitimizing effect, to achieve their own policy objectives. In particular, anti-Syrian Lebanese politicians tapped into the language provided by the "Global War on Terror" to leverage international pressure against pro-Syrian forces, including Hezbollah. In some ways, this mirrors the Syrian government's use of universalized language of "brotherhood" and "stability" to justify its own policy imperatives in Lebanon in the decades prior. The effect in both cases is to mask underlying contentions and alternative understandings of (in)security, while influencing international policy to the promoting party's favor. While Western states act under the guise of promoting Lebanese security and stability in their best interest, local actors have found in these discourses a language to signal to international bodies for political, financial, and military support, and to shape local perspectives of threat. That is, security discourse in this case is "multivocal": multiple, possibly conflicting messages can be sent by a "transmitter" to multiple "receivers" at the same time, and each receiving party also plays a role in active constructing of their meaning.[28]

Such multivocal exchanges took place between various Lebanese politicians, regional governments and security actors, and US administrations, all signaling to the others meanings and interpretations of "security" and "sovereignty" in order to serve their own strategic purposes, and ideally achieve a mutually beneficial result.[29] One such instance is the relationship between right-wing Lebanese Christians and neoconservative scholars and policymakers in the United States.[30]

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[28] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures," 10; Dvora Yanow, *How Does A Policy Mean? : Interpreting Policy and Organizational Actions* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996).

[29] There are a multitude of overlapping potential audiences, ranging from segments of the Lebanese population and their Syrian counterparts, to state authorities and others politicians, to international bodies such as the United Nations as well as an array of non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations.

[30] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 190-191.

These alliances began forming during the *Pax Syriana* period, in which the Lebanese government and its politics were subsumed by its domineering neighbor, which had managed to project itself internationally as the "guarantor" of Lebanese security, and thus the regional geopolitical system.[31]

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, US policy in Lebanon was subordinated to its goals in the Cold War and to its "special relationship" with Israel in the Arab-Israeli negotiations, furthering alliances between US and Israeli right-wing parties.[32] In the 1980s, the conservative US Reagan administration provided military support and assistance to the Lebanese central government, which was then held by the right-wing, primarily Christian *Kataeb* party.[33] Evangelical and fundamentalist Christians have long been a powerful force within the US Republican party,[34] and their connections to Lebanese Christians—as well as the notion that the Christian minority in the Middle East must be protected through US foreign policy—have played a significant role in the formation of right-wing alliances between the two states. Throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, American (neo)conservatives advocated a "moral" foreign policy that "supported regime change against the rogue regimes," such as Iraq and Syria, and continued to back Israeli interests in the region.[35]

In May 2000, a group of neoconservative intellectuals, business people, and retired military officials under the umbrella of the Lebanon Study Group produced a document called "Ending Syria's Occupation of Lebanon: The U.S. Role."[36] Ziad Abdelnour, a wealthy financier and president of a lobbying firm called the United States Committee for a Free Lebanon, and Daniel

[31] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 190

[32] Stoker, *Spheres of Intervention*, 221; Toaldo, *Origins of the US War On Terror*, 158-159.

[33] Toaldo, *Origins of the US War On Terror*, 158.

[34] Mohd Afandi Salleh and Hafiz Zakariya, "The American Evangelical Christians and the US Middle East Policy: A Case Study of the Christians United for Israel (CUFI)," *Intellectual Discourse* 20, no. 2 (2012): 139–63.

[35] Toaldo, *Origins of the US War On Terror*, 167.

[36] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana,* 190-191; Jordan Green, "Neocons Dream of Lebanon," Global Policy Forum, July 23, 2003, https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/153/26103.html.

Pipes, president of the Middle East Forum, a right-wing, pro-Israel think tank, coauthored the document.[37] Calling for the immediate withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, the document incorporated "ideas of American triumphalism, Christian exceptionalism, and fear of weapons of mass destruction," and argued that "Syria's current domination as Lebanon has unwittingly become a breeding ground for various threats to the stability of the Middle East."[38] The report stressed Lebanon's strategic importance to the United States, labeling Syria as the "principal instigator of violence throughout Lebanon's war years," and generally oversimplifying the regional context through the lens of US hegemonic interests.[39] Nevertheless, the document had significant impact among neoconservative circles, with the document compounding pressure on Syria and shaping discourse on Lebanese-Syrian relations in the United States.[40]

Relations between Syria and the United States soured further in the leadup to the US invasion of Iraq, which Syria vehemently opposed. In part over Syria's stubborn refusal to accept the United States' invasion, the US administration began pressuring the Syrian regime and working to limit Syria's control over Lebanon.[41] This manifested in the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SALSRA), passed in November of 2003. The SALSRA allowed the United States "'to apply a combination of diplomatic and economic sanctions against Syria', if it did not end its support to 'terrorists,' its development of WMDs, and its 'occupation' of Lebanon."[42] Exiled general Michel Aoun testified before the House of Representatives and drew direct parallels between the United States' war on terror and Lebanon's struggle with Syria, calling

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[37] Lebanon Study Group, Daniel Pipes, and Ziad Abdelnour, "Ending Syria's Occupation of Lebanon: The US Role" (Middle East Forum, May 2000), https://www.meforum.org/MiddleEastForum/media/MEFLibrary/pdf/Lebanon-Study-Guide.pdf.; El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana,* 190-191; "Neocons Dream of Lebanon."
[38] "Neocons Dream of Lebanon"; "Ending Syria's Occupation of Lebanon: The U.S. Role."
[39] "Ending Syria's Occupation of Lebanon: The U.S. Role."
[40] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 190-191.
[41] Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State'," 1055.
[42] Osoegawa, *Syria and Lebanon*, 103.

it "a fight for freedom against terrorism and oppression."[43] Key figures in the US administration testified to Congress that Syria was a global "security concern," and "uniformly represented Lebanon simply as under Syrian 'occupation', with Hezbollah as a Syrian (and Iranian) proxy, a 'terrorist organization' with 'global reach'."[44] By using this security framing, anti-Syrian political forces in Lebanon benefited by delegitimizing the Syrian presence with a powerful backer on their side, while the United States gained a pretext through which they could rebuke Syria's regional standing in retaliation for not aligning with the US agenda in Iraq. However, this signaling was not grounded in the concerns and experiences of the Lebanese population writ large, nor did it serve to immediately better their lives vis-à-vis the ongoing Syrian presence.

Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, the United States and its allies fighting the "Global War on Terror" thus sought to portray Lebanese and Syrian relations through the lens of "terrorism" and "sovereignty" as envisioned by Western states, without a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which such concepts played out differently in their local and regional geopolitical contexts. This critical disjuncture between foreign and local understandings of Lebanese security was perhaps most clearly demonstrated during the Summer 2006 War. Just a year after the Cedar Revolution and the 2005 elections, in which Hezbollah gained 28 of 129 total parliamentary seats, a cross-border raid by the party's military branch triggered a war with Israel, raising questions as to Lebanon's stability and further testing local and international conceptualizations of Hezbollah as either a threat or a means to security.[45]

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[43] El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana*, 191.

[44] Karim Makdisi, "Constructing Security Council Resolution 1701 for Lebanon in the Shadow of the 'War on Terror,'" *International Peacekeeping* 18, no. 1 (February 1, 2011), https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2011.527502, 8.

[45] David S. Sorenson, *Global Security Watch--Lebanon : A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger Security International/ABC-CLIO, 2010), 36.

On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah militants ambushed a patrol over the Israeli border, eventually killing eight soldiers and capturing two. Israel, which had been enduring Hezbollah's provocations since it withdrew troops from southern Lebanon in 2000, decided to "have it out" with Hezbollah.[46] Israel's retaliatory offensive exceeded what Hezbollah's leadership anticipated in both aggression and scale.[47] Israel established a total war "killing box" strategy intending on eradicating civilians in southern Lebanon.[48] While Hezbollah's rapid social services response impressed the Shi'i community and even increased support amongst segments of the Lebanese population, the 2006 war cost Lebanon approximately four billion dollars and undid fifteen years of post-civil war reconstruction, dividing Lebanese citizens.[49]

The Summer 2006 war marked a turning point for international perceptions of Lebanese security threats, and domestic Lebanese interpretations of security actors and the international communities' real interests in Lebanon. Israel's disproportionate retaliation, which destroyed significant portions of Beirut's recently rebuilt infrastructure, aimed to convince the Lebanese public and government officials that Hezbollah was a threat to public safety.[50] Instead, it had the opposite effect: public opinion polls showed that Lebanese support for Hezbollah's right to arms increased nearly 30 percent following the 2006 war.[51] Hezbollah gained unparalleled power as an arbiter of security following the war, and by 2010 appeared to be securing a stable political order.[52] Many Lebanese, regardless of sectarian affiliation or ideological trend, generally acknowledged that only Hezbollah, not the Lebanese Army, was able to defend Lebanon against the Israeli threat

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[46] Augustus R. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton University Press, 2018),133.
[47] Norton, *Hezbollah,* 136.
[48] Norton, *Hezbollah*, 138.
[49] Norton, *Hezbollah*, 140-142.
[50] Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State'," 1059.
[51] David Hirst, *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East* (New York, UNITED STATES: Nation Books, 2010), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/brown/detail.action?docID=488089, 357.
[52] Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State'," 1063.

and that the United States, in spite of its posturing as a defender of Lebanese sovereignty, was not an ally to be relied on when it came to the threats posed by Lebanon's southern neighbor.

The United States and Israel, which remained vehemently opposed to considering Hezbollah anything other than a terrorist group, found the organization's increased legitimacy deeply concerning and sought to bolster the strength of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). With increased global attention to the risks posed by "weak" states and the ever-present fear of terrorism, the Lebanese security sector benefitted from donor assistance that sought to boost the authority of the state (and which in part allowed it to securitize migration in Lebanon, militarize the handling of migrants, and criminalize the presence of Syrians in the country, as will be discussed in Chapter 3).[53] Following the 2006 War, US security aid to the LAF continued to increase under American policy imperatives in the war on terror.[54] US security assistance to the LAF, and other Lebanese security agencies, "reflects a strategic policy choice to counter Hezbollah and ultimately Iranian influence" in Lebanese security actors' military capabilities.[55] While working towards the "return" of the Lebanese state via its security agencies' consolidation under the umbrella of a united, strengthened national force is one goal of US-driven foreign security assistance to Lebanon, Tholens identifies three other policy objectives served by these aid packages: (1) maintaining Israel's military edge over its neighbors by limiting the kind of weaponry delivered to Lebanon, (2) containing the spillover from the Syrian conflict and regional violent extremism generally by strengthening Lebanese counterterrorism capacities, and (3) improving centralized territorial control in "weak" states.[56]

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[53] Simone Tholens, "Border Management in an Era of 'Statebuilding Lite': Security Assistance and Lebanon's Hybrid Sovereignty," *International Affairs* 93, no. 4 (July 2017), https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix069, 875-876.
[54] Tholens, "Statebuilding Lite."
[55] Tholens, "Statebuilding Lite," 871.
[56] Tholens, "Statebuilding Lite," 871.

Despite the weight the United States gives to the role of the LAF in the Lebanese security apparatus, it is perhaps better to conceptualize state power and security provision in Lebanon as an assemblage of contesting actors, interests, and insecurities wherein sovereignty functions as an array of "hybrid, fluid, contested processes, knowledges, and practices alongside, with, and beyond the state."[57] The LAF is heralded by Lebanese and international actors alike as one of the few unifying, non-sectarian institutions in Lebanon, but its ability to serve as a "nationally representative" military is dependent upon operating within a balance of rival sectarian, social, and political forces and communities that make up the Lebanese security apparatus.[58] Security practices in the close-knit urban geography of Beirut demonstrate a microcosm of the realities of contending discourses and experiences of (in)security in the country. Often, neighborhoods or zones are subject to "plural security provision," in which "multiple state and nonstate actors asserting claims on the legitimate use of force" administer forms of security or mitigate threats.[59] That is, an array of security providers in Beirut operate with varying degrees of state authorization. These include political parties, the Internal Security Forces (national police), municipal police, the LAF, local neighborhood committees, popular committees in Palestinian camps, and commercial private security companies.[60] These security providers both cooperate and compete in the context of local, national, regional, and geopolitical conflicts, with each generally focusing on de-escalation and supporting in-group social cohesion.[61] Thus inhabitants of Beirut are subject to

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[57] Fregonese, "Beyond the 'Weak State'," 670; Hazbun "Assembling Security," 1056.
[58] Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak' State," 1056; Aram Nerguizian, "Between Sectarianism and Military Development: The Paradox of the Lebanese Armed Forces," in *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*, ed. Bassel Salloukh et al. (London: Pluto Press, 2015).
[59] Nora Stel, Chris van der Borgh, and Megan Price, "Plural Security Provision in Beirut," accessed March 14, 2019, https://www.academia.edu/17415151/Plural_Security_Provision_in_Beirut, 4.
[60] Stel et al., "Plural Security Provision in Beirut," 6.
[61] Stel et al., "Plural Security Provision in Beirut," 6.

"overlapping, sometimes conflicting security systems that neither report to the same authorities nor concur on their identification of what constitutes a threat."[62]

Since 2004, processes of material securitization ("blocked streets, deviated passages, no parking zones, no photography areas, illegal parking, and other security measures [that] imposed daily harassments, lengthened commutes, and constrained ... daily practices") that had largely been subdued since the end of the civil war resurfaced.[63] But despite the increase of security infrastructures in the city, such mechanisms "cannot claim or even pretend to protect city dwellers from the two main threats that the majority of them face," that is, regional war and increasing economic vulnerability.[64] Instead, security mechanisms found throughout the city are responses to "the constructed and perceived threats that face particular political and economic interests and powerful social groups who are able to mobilize and leverage a visible security presence."[65]

Processes of urban securitization in Beirut are indicative of larger post-Cold War trends, wherein concepts of "sovereignty" shifted from classically-defined territorial authority and recognition by other states on the world stage to "issues of internal constitution of sovereign power

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[62] Mona Fawaz, Mona Harb, and Ahmad Gharbieh, "Living Beirut's Security Zones: An Investigation of the Modalities and Practice of Urban Security," *City & Society* 24, no. 2 (August 2012), https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-744X.2012.01074.x, 188. Stel et al. found that "Several interviewees also shared examples of how party members rouse, allow, or oversee neighborhood-level interventions of state security institutions, specifically, the municipal police, ISF, and LAF. Local party networks were particularly activated for any neighborhood incident with a political or sectarian dimension, where party members or their direct emissaries were reportedly almost always the first to respond. According to interviewees, in such cases, the ISF or LAF intervene only after obtaining a political green light to do so."

[63] Fawaz, Harb, and Gharbieh, "Living in Beirut's Security Zones," 174. *See also*: Mona Harb, Mona Fawaz, and Ahmad Gharbieh, eds., "Beirut / Mapping Security," Diwan, 2009, https://www.academia.edu/9224504/BEIRUT_MAPPING_SECURITY_Edited_by_Mona_Fawaz_Ahmad_Gharbieh_and_Mona_Fawaz._DIWAN_Series_Edited_by_Philipp_Misselwitz_and_Can_Altay._IABR_2009.

[64] Fawaz, Harb, and Gharbieh, "Living in Beirut's Security Zones," 180. The authors' survey also found that "in Beirut, the perception of security is solidly tainted by one's own political orientation which, in turn, affects the respondent's assessment of the threat and his/her judgment of whether security is justified or not" and that that secondary variables such as sect, gender, class, and/or one's precarious (legal) status impact perception of security.

[65] Fawaz, Harb, and Gharbieh, "Living in Beirut's Security Zones," 180.

within states through the exercise of violence over bodies and populations."[66] The Syrian refugee crisis—which, despite its global visibility has had its most significant impacts regionally, as the vast majority of refugees have been displaced to Middle Eastern countries neighboring Syria—has further exacerbated this shift. Following the Arab Spring, the European Union found itself faced with unprecedented numbers of asylum seekers.[67] Confronting an influx of people from the Global South fleeing violence, Western states took up the language of a "refugee crisis" as they grappled with their fears of refugees' "otherness" leading to societal breakdown, in addition to economic and socio-political concerns.[68] Governments, international humanitarian organizations, and academics have used the language of "crisis" and "emergency" to describe refugees and their movements throughout the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. In the twenty-first century, terminology that casts refugees as exceptional or an unintended "mishap"[69] of the modern nation state system coalesced with post-9/11 security discourse, resulting in the securitization of refugees.

The Securitization of Migration

As concepts of sovereignty developed during the twenty-first century, new terminologies evolved to address forms of insecurity and fragility that seemed to beleaguer progress towards international security. Against this backdrop emerged the concept of "human security," first envisioned as a move away from national security in the traditional military sense and towards a

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[66] Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, eds., "Introduction," in *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005), 2. Emphasis author's own.
[67] Leo Lucassen, "Peeling an Onion: The 'Refugee Crisis' from a Historical Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41, no. 3 (February 19, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1355975, 384-385.
[68] Maggie Ibrahim, "The Securitization of Migration: A Racial Discourse," *International Migration* 43, no. 5 (2005), https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2005.00345.x,164-165.
[69] Peter Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees Beyond States of Emergency*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 2005), 9.

more holistic definition of security as "a matter of adequate food, water, shelter, work, a clean environment, individual and public health, freedom of religion and human dignity."[70] Reframed in a progressive, emancipatory, and humanized way, security studies scholars and humanitarian practitioners promoted "human security" as a way to shift global attention and resources away from military buildup and toward addressing the everyday concerns of vulnerable populations. Human security became a popular discursive framework for security actors, re-centering the human subject as the analytic focus and moving away from state-centric frameworks seen as outdated.[71] But in seeking to assist individual humans *at* risk, the human security approach has also been used to cast humans *as* risk to national security.[72] That is, human security securitizes society by expanding the range of threats, and justifying state efforts to subject nearly all realms of human life to a biopolitics of security that ultimately leads to surveillance, state control, and further insecurities.[73] Human security has allowed "the state to take up questions of biological survival, determining whose survival threatens (the state and society) and whose does not."[74]

In the framing of the "war on terror" as a perpetual state of emergency, security discourses legitimize or normalize preemptive intervention to protect not only the individual, but the state.[75] After 2015, many European governments and political parties have represented refugees and other migrants as threats to national security. In the context of a state of "crisis" or "emergency," state

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[70] Jacqueline Berman, "The Vital Core: From Bare Life to the Biopolitics of Human Security," in *Protecting Human Security in a Post 9/11 World: Critical and Global Insights*, ed. Giorgio Shani, Makoto Satō, and Mustapha Kamal Pasha (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 30.

[71] Mark Neocleous, "(In)Human Security," in *Critical Perspectives on Human Security: Rethinking Emancipation and Power in International Relations*, ed. David Chandler and Nik Hynek (London ; New York: Routledge, 2011); Ibrahim, "The Securitization of Migration," 168.

[72] Gray & Franck, "Refugees as/at risk."

[73] Berman, "The 'Vital Core:' from Bare Life to the Biopolitics of Human Security."

[74] Berman, "The 'Vital Core'," 46.

[75] Craig Calhoun, "The Idea of Emergency: Humanitarian Action and Global (Dis)Order," in *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions*, ed. Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi (New York : Cambridge, Mass: Zone Books ; Distributed by the MIT Press, 2010), 46; Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State'," 1055.

and societal discourses can quickly portray the new "other" as "as a national 'threat' to unity, security, and sovereignty" in order to mobilize resources and political support.[76] The Syrian conflict and its regional effects bring together two discourses of "crisis": that of a "refugee crisis" and that of a crisis of "weak" and "failing" states. Whereas refugees and other migrants themselves are populations *at* risk of violence, the "human security" and "weak state" approaches of the twenty-first century portray migrants themselves *as* risks to host countries, which they purportedly threaten to destabilize (economically, socially, or politically).[77]

Within the "human security" framing, these "others" continue to be "managed in line with national security concerns" envisioned, defined, and enforced by the state. The management of refugees' access to livelihoods "becomes an occasion to wrest control over who should move and thus, survive, as determined by the national security of the state."[78] Refugees and migrants fleeing violence or other structurally coercive conditions are in disadvantaged positions in relation to the state, often requiring state-mediated assistance or support for access to fundamental necessities for survival. Hansen and Stepputat thus argue that migrants have "emerged as … a form of human life upon which the sovereignty of states, of ethnic/religious communities and local strongmen can be performed."[79] In Lebanon, Jessy Nassar argues that the government, in order to counter its appearance of "weakness" in the conventional sense of sovereignty, enacts harsh "measures inflicted on the refugee to make 'power highly visible.'"[80] These security practices have gone hand-in-hand with scapegoating that increases hostility towards and pressure on vulnerable Syrians in Lebanon, exacerbates ethnic and cultural differences between Lebanese and Syrians on an

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[76] Jessie Nassar, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis: A Reification of State Sovereignty in Lebanon?" (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2014), 9.
[77] Ibrahim, "The Securitization of Migration," 169; Loescher "Refugees as grounds for international action," 34.
[78] Berman "The Vital Core," 46.
[79] Hansen and Stepputat, "Introduction" in *Sovereign Bodies*, 35.
[80] Nassar, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis," 10.

interpersonal level, and fuels institutional processes of securitization and borderization, discussed in the following chapter.

Conclusion

Prevailing conceptions of Lebanese state "weakness" are rooted in the post-Cold War period in which the United States' policy imperatives in the Middle East shaped policy towards Lebanon and Lebanese-Syrian relations in the wake of the Lebanese Civil War. The persistence of this "weak state" framing, however, miscalculates the dynamics of contentious plural security provision in Lebanon and alternative conceptions of (in)security. The performance of security provision, then, is used to express interpretations of "security" and "sovereignty" that serve the calculated interests of the provider, whether Lebanese or international. As a result, refugees in Lebanon are portrayed and, consequently, treated as security threats, as part of a localized effort to make power visible upon vulnerable bodies, in keeping with internationalized processes of securitizing migration.

Chapter 3: Scapegoating Syrians as Threat Post-2011

... the worst part is that people treat us like trash. You can see the discrimination between Lebanese and Syrians out on the streets, in the courtrooms, in the hospitals. We can't move around after dark. We can't get work. The employers ask us for residency papers that we don't have and then insult us. And there's the constant threat of detention. Arrests are happening continually. I don't see our situation here getting better, since we don't have the money required to live in dignity. If it was safe to go back, we wouldn't stay a day longer in Lebanon. No one wants to live like this ...

-    *"Uthman," Syrian Refugee in Lebanon, 2019*[1]

Introduction

The Syrian Civil War actualized historical fears of conflict spilling over the borders between the Syria and Lebanon and raised international and domestic concern over Lebanese authorities' ability to exert territorial and governmental sovereignty. In the months following the onset of the Syrian crisis, armed clashes and border skirmishes furthered the risk of "contagion" or "spillover" violence.[2] An ominous sense that conditions in Lebanon mirrored those that preceded the civil war in the early seventies—what Sami Hermez describes as a collective memory of trauma that functions as a "constant anticipation of violence" deep within Lebanese society— became widespread.[3] Observers drew parallels between the influx of Syrian displaced persons in Lebanon and the presence of Palestinian refugees in the 1970s—which continues to be blamed for the onset of the Lebanese Civil War.

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[1] Quoted in: Rouba Mhaissen and Elena Hodges, "Unpacking Return: Syrian Refugees' Conditions and Concerns" (SAWA For Development and Aid, February 2019), https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/unpacking-return-syrian-refugees-conditions-and-concerns-enar,17.

[2] Naomi Joy Weinberger, *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon: The 1975-76 Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 5.

[3] Sami Hermez, "'The War Is Going to Ignite': On the Anticipation of Violence in Lebanon," *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 35, no. 2 (2012), 327.

Lebanese elites and international observers—as well as a significant portion of the Lebanese populace—came to see the demographic changes introduced by the influx of displaced Syrians, coupled with regional geopolitics, as a potential catalyst for the transformation of the domestic balance of power.[4] Speaking at a conference in early March of 2019, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri stated that "the competition over scarce resources and jobs has put the relationship between [Lebanese] host communities and the [Syrian] displaced under severe tensions," and that "the only solution to the Syrian displaced crisis is their safe return to their home country, in accordance with international laws and treaties."[5] Lebanese political parties generally agree on the negative impact of the refugee presence on the Lebanese economy and tacitly, if not openly, acknowledge that refugee return is the end goal—even if they disagree about the necessity of a political solution in Syria as a precondition of return. A study by the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies in 2017 found that "Lebanese rhetoric on the presence of Syrian refugees reflects a common sentiment that refugees are a burden on Lebanon's economy ... Lebanese communities blame most of their problems on Syrian refugees [and] they believe the solution to the current crisis is the refugees' return to Syria."[6] The political focus on Syrian refugees and their impact on the economy has distracted from (or served as a convenient scapegoat for) governmental mismanagement and corruption. By painting Syrians as sources of violence, proponents of this rhetoric normalize and encourage the criminalization and legal dispossession of those in an already

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[4] Waleed Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State:' The Contentious Politics of Plural Governance in Lebanon since 2005," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 6 (June 2016), https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1110016, 1067.

[5] "Hariri Warns Syrian Crisis Threatens Lebanese Stability," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, March 15, 2019, https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1634881/hariri-warns-syrian-crisis-threatens-lebanese-stability.

[6] Sami Atallah and Dima Mahdi, "Law and Politics of 'Safe Zones' and Forced Return to Syria: Refugee Politics in Lebanon," Policy Proposal (The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, January 12, 2018), http://lcps-lebanon.org/publication.php?id=313,16.

precarious situation, leading to impoverishment, food insecurity, lack of shelter and legal protection, and, in the case of the recent push for return to Syria, re-displacement.[7]

The Lebanese government and para-state security actors' response to the refugee crisis post-2011 demonstrate ways of navigating prevailing "weak state" conceptions to strategically suggest state "absence" or "presence" as politically expedient. Between 2011 and 2014, the Lebanese government took a decentralized approach to the refugee influx, allowing municipalities to project state presence and power by regulating and excluding Syrian refugees through curfews and other measures, while shirking responsibility for subsequent injustices. This strategy shifted in 2014, when the Lebanese central government centralized the response to the crisis with the "October Policy," which set in motion processes of legal and spatial exclusion of non-Lebanese, targeted at Syrians. These demonstrations of "internal" sovereignty escalated in 2018, culminating in a push for Syrians to return to Syria, which featured expressions of state power through physical coercion and targeted harassment of Syrians.

The push by Lebanese politicians and authorities for Syrians to return to their country and the accompanying scapegoating and harassment of informal laborers capitalizes on language describing Syrians as threats to the Lebanese social fabric, as part of a "culture of diversion" used to garner support through clientelism and patronage networks. Though these discourses are largely propagated by elites, they are "replicated through the daily politics of individuals and groups," which has resulted in increased violence and precarity for vulnerable Syrians marked as "other"

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[7] See: "VASYR 2019 - Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," VASYR (UNHCR, UNICEF, UN WFP, December 2019), https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/vasyr-2019-vulnerability-assessment-syrian-refugees-lebanon; Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return."

and as "threats" to Lebanese society, as manifested in the incitement for Syrians to return under precarious conditions.[8]

The "Policy of No-Policy" (2011-2014)

The Syrian uprising was one of a series of popular protest movements, commonly referred to collectively as the "Arab Spring," that swept through the Arab world in 2011, a cumulation of frustration with state-society relations in Arab countries that contributed to regional geopolitical instability.[9] Hazbun argues that the widespread mobilizations in the spring of 2011 were the product of Arab regimes seeking to safeguard their own security through external ties and military force, whereas their populations, suffering under neoliberal economic policies, developed differing perceptions of insecurity and pressing concerns otherwise unaddressed by the state.[10] The Syrian Civil War began as a largely peaceful uprising against the regime of Bashar al-Asad, son of former president Hafez al-Asad. In the years since the death of his father, the younger al-Asad had been occasionally touted as a liberal reformer by Western analysts, but generally failed to deliver on promises of public freedoms or economic prosperity.[11] Syrian forces violently cracked down on the peaceful protestors in the spring of 2011, and by that summer, against the backdrop of regional uprisings and an emerging armed insurgency, the country soon descended into civil war. By late 2012 and 2013, external parties joined and rapidly internationalized the conflict, with the United

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[8] Bassem Chit and Mohamad Ali Nayel, "Understanding Racism against Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," Text, Civil Society Knowledge Centre, October 28, 2013, https://civilsociety-centre.org/paper/understanding-racism-against-syrian-refugees-lebanon.

[9] Waleed Hazbun, "A History of Insecurity: From the Arab Uprisings to ISIS," *Middle East Policy* 22, no. 3 (Fall 2015), https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12143, 63.

[10] Hazbun, "A History of Insecurity," 63.

[11] "A Wasted Decade | Human Rights in Syria during Bashar Al-Asad's First Ten Years in Power," Human Rights Watch, July 16, 2010, https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/07/16/wasted-decade/human-rights-syria-during-bashar-al-asads-first-ten-years-power.

States, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran heavily investing in various factions across a range of pro- and anti-Asad camps.

In the months following the Syrian government's crackdown on protests, Syrians began to escape from the escalating violence into Lebanon with the expectation that the unrest would not last long. Most Lebanese initially expressed empathy for the Syrians entering their country, as historically—including as recently as the 2006 war—Lebanese had sought refuge in Syria during periods of conflict.[12] As the Syrian conflict extended, feelings of solidarity gradually gave way under the hardships imposed by rapid demographic shift on an already strained socio-political and economic system. In Lebanon, the Syrian crisis reignited political divides between the coalitions that had emerged in 2005, with the March 14 alliance supporting the uprisings and the March 8 alliance supporting the Syrian regime, at least initially.[13] In addition to fears of cross-border spillover, Hezbollah's military involvement in Syria provoked bouts of retaliatory violence and exacerbated feelings of insecurity in Lebanon's Sunni community, many of whom opposed Hezbollah's political agenda and military activities.[14]

Until 2013, the Lebanese government's official position regarding the Syrian conflict was that of dissociation. At a National Dialogue meeting in June 2012, at the behest of then-president Michel Suleiman, all Lebanese political parties signed on to the Baabda Declaration, which called for Lebanon "to avoid the negative repercussions of regional tensions and crises," in part by implementing border control measures to prevent Lebanon from being used as a "buffer zone,"

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[12] Mona Christophersen, Cathrine Moe Thorleifsson, and Age A. Tiltnes, "Ambivalent Hospitality: Coping Strategies and Local Responses to Syrian Refugees in Lebanon - Lebanon" (Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies, November 30, 2013), https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/ambivalent-hospitality-coping-strategies-and-local-responses-syrian-refugees-lebanon, 37.
[13] Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State'," 1063.
[14] Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State'," 1063; Melani Claire Cammett, "The Syrian Conflict's Impact on Lebanese Politics" (United States Institute of Peace, November 18, 2013).

"base," or "corridor" for conflict with Syria.[15] With a "nearly singular" focus on keeping Lebanon out of the Syrian conflict, the document gave little importance to managing the refugee presence, instead affirming "the right to humanitarian solidarity."[16]

Meanwhile, the sympathy of many Lebanese towards Syrian refugees was waning. Many Lebanese from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds believed, rightly so, that refugees received disproportionate international financial support, while the pressing needs of impoverished Lebanese went unmet.[17] A 2013 study by the FAFO Research Foundation found that while "Lebanese residents expressed a moral obligation to protect and help their Syrian 'brothers' traumatized by violent conflict," the added pressures on limited resources in already impoverished villages began to show "wear and tear" on the initial generosity (or ambivalence) towards Syrians, gradually giving way to increasing prejudice.[18] Prejudice was not limited to the lower- and middle-classes, however. The Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, in a news conference held to address the influx of Syrian refugees into Lebanon, claimed that "around 87 percent of those detained by the police and people undergoing court trials were Syrians."[19] However, no sources

[15] "Baabda Declaration" (United Nations General Assembly Security Council, June 21, 2012), http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Lebanon%20S%202012%20477.pdf. *See also*: Sami Atallah and Dima Mahdi, "Law and Politics of 'Safe Zones' and Forced Return to Syria: Refugee Politics in Lebanon" (Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, October 2017), https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publications/1515749841-lcps_report_-_online.pdf, 22; Bassel F. Salloukh, "The Syrian War: Spillover Effects on Lebanon," *Middle East Policy* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2017), https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12252, 73; Waleed Hazbun, "The Politics of Insecurity in the Arab World: A View from Beirut," *PS-POLITICAL SCIENCE & POLITICS* 50, no. 3 (July 2017, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096517000336, 657.
[16] Lama Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures: Decentralization and The Politics of Local Responses to the Syrian Refugee Influx in Lebanon" (University of Toronto, 2019), 48; Baabda Declaration.
[17] Christophersen, Thorleifsson, and Tiltnes, "Ambivalent Hospitality," 61.
[18] Christophersen, Thorleifsson, and Tiltnes, "Ambivalent Hospitality," 43.
[19] "Bassil Says Syrian Refugees Threaten Lebanon's Existence," *The Daily Star*, September 27, 2013, https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Sep-27/232805-bassil-says-syrian-refugees-threaten-lebanons-existence.ashx.

backed up this claim: national statistics show that Syrian arrest and prosecution rates are not disproportionately high in relation to number of Syrians in Lebanon.[20]

Closures and Exclusions: The Government Responds (~2014-2017)

In October 2014, in light of increasing tensions and enmity towards Syrians, the Lebanese Council of Ministers adopted a new framework for managing and policing Syrians. The restrictive measures, known as the "October Policy," were aimed at "reducing the number of displaced Syrians," increasing regulation of Syrians in Lebanon, and easing the strain on already overburdened Lebanese infrastructure.[21] Following the 2014 October Policy, Lama Mourad notes, the Lebanese governments' policy response shifted from one of "inaction" to "exclusion," via processes of "shifting the border in."[22] At both a central and local level the Lebanese government used territorial exclusion (removing unauthorized migrants from the territory) and social exclusion (limiting unauthorized migrants' access to livelihoods) to govern the Syrian presence in Lebanon.[23] It did so by intentionally blurring categories of refugee and migrant, reifying social boundaries between Syrians and Lebanese via municipal curfews, and manufacturing a "forced illegality" of Syrian's status, thus placing Syrians at constant risk of state violence and other insecurities.[24]

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[20] Christophersen, Thorleifsson, and Tiltnes, "Ambivalent Hospitality," 44; As reported in *The Daily Star*, an Internal Security Forces source claimed that "statistics gathered since the beginning of the Syrian uprising until recent months have indicated that Syrians made up no more than 20 percent of the total of people arrested." *See*: "Bassil Says Syrian Refugees Threaten Lebanon's Existence."

[21] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures," 50; Agnès Favier, "Increasing Vulnerability for the Syrian Refugees in Lebanon: What's Next?," Middle East Directions (European University Institute, November 2016), http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/52564/RSCAS_PR_2018_03.pdf?sequence=1, 2; Simone Tholens, "Border Management in an Era of 'Statebuilding Lite': Security Assistance and Lebanon's Hybrid Sovereignty," *International Affairs* 93, no. 4 (July 2017), https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix069, 870.

[22] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures," 158.

[23] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures," 161.

[24] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures," 178.

Several turning points led to the enaction of more active policies towards Syrian refugees. In May 2014, the UNHCR registered one million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The Lebanese government established an inter-ministerial "crisis cell" to oversee the management of refugees, and by that summer the Ministry of Interior began monitoring Syrians' border crossings.[25] Also in May 2014, tens of thousands of Syrians took to the streets of downtown Beirut in support of Syrian president Bashar al-Asad, in advance of the June 3rd Syrian presidential elections, for which Syrians were eligible to vote from abroad at local embassy offices.[26] This massive rally not only made the Syrian presence more visible than before, but demonstrated to Lebanese that Syrians were more politicized than previously thought, and thus transformed "them in the eyes of many of their remaining allies: [Syrians] were no longer perceived as safe political tools but rather had the potential to become threats themselves."[27]

The same summer, a new, unifying threat emerged: the group known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—referred to in Arabic as *Daesh*. ISIS gained control over territory close to the Lebanese border and claimed responsibility for a series of attacks and plots in Lebanon targeting the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and areas considered bases of support for Hezbollah.[28] In mid-2014, battles between ISIS and the al-Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front and the LAF occurred in northern and eastern Lebanon, as did instances of car bombings, assassinations, and hostage takings. [29] As the overall sense of security in the country worsened, rumors spread of additional planned attacks, exacerbating fears and resentment towards Syrians. But despite

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[25] "Situation Syria Regional Refugee Response," accessed April 19, 2020, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71; Filippo Dionigi, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: State Fragility and Social Resilience," LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series (London School of Economics, February 2016),14.

[26] Dionigi, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon," 13-14.

[27] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures," 50.

[28] Atallah and Mahdi, "Law and Politics of 'Safe Zones' and Forced Return to Syria: Refugee Politics in Lebanon," 22-23; Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State'," 1064; Hazbun, "A View from Beirut," 657.

[29] Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State'," 1064.

continuing internal divisions over the conflict in Syria and domestic politics, a wide range of security actors—including both the LAF and Hezbollah—cooperated to repel the common enemy. Subsequently, some Lebanese political actors adopted the perception that Syrian settlements were breeding grounds for religious-extremist terrorism in Lebanon.[30]

The Lebanese government began closing the borders to Syria after a decision by the Lebanese Council of Ministers in October 2014.[31] In December 2014, the Lebanese government approved Decision 197 as an addendum to the Lebanese labor law regulating foreign workers, restricting the industries in which non-Lebanese are permitted to work to construction, agriculture and cleaning services. Cleaning services was eventually expanded to include an "environment" category, "a euphemism for the waste disposal sector."[32] Intentionally barred from pathways to legal residency, Syrians "illegally" residing and working in Lebanon are at constant risk for arrest and detention, eviction, and night raids by the General Security Directorate (GSO) and the LAF.[33] To mitigate this risk, refugees have restricted their movements to avoid checkpoints and interactions with authorities, in turn limiting their access to aid and services. Unable to rely on authorities for protection, refugees are more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and other forms of violence.[34]

In 2015, departing from the historically open borders between Syria and Lebanon, General Security began registering new Entry and Renewal of Residency Permits and the Lebanese

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[30] Dionigi, "The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon," 15.
[31] *See*: Jamil Mouawad, "Lebanon's Border Areas in Light of the Syrian War: New Actors, Old Marginalisation," Middle East Directions (European University Institute, March 2018): "Despite the state's return to these areas, and despite LAF presence along the borders, control is not complete and these areas remain 'grey zones'. In fact, smuggling is still active but restricted to mafia-like networks, and according to some sources, the authorities turn a blind eye to these transborder interactions, which have become a fundamental part of the war economy."
[32] "Decision No. 197/1," Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, December 17, 2014, http://www.lpdc.gov.lb/labor/decision-no-1971/15/en; "Truck Drivers Protest Syrian Job Competition," *The Daily Star,* March 9, 2019, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Mar-09/478410-truck-drivers-protest-syrian-job-competition.ashx.
[33] Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return," 15.
[34] Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return."

government suspended UNHCR registration of Syrian refugees.[35] These new regulations left more than 70 percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon without legal residency permits and increased their engagement in informal labor, thus putting them at risk of detention, deportation, and general housing and livelihood insecurity. The October policy also allowed General Security—which deals with foreigners, including issuing passports, visas, and entry permits—to impose controls on the free movement and residency of Syrians, subjecting them to arbitrary criminalization.[36]

As discussed in Chapter 2, narratives of state weakness obscure more than they reveal. In this case, government inaction at a national level enabled municipal actors to act as key players of governance and arbiters of state power in dealing with Syrian refugees.[37] The apparent "weakness" of the Lebanese state to respond cohesively to the refugee presence, Mourad argues, is in actuality a strategic "strength," enabling the Lebanese government to "appeal to international donors on the basis of 'local grievances' while distancing itself from the human rights violations that occur."[38] This decentralized approach—including imposition of municipal curfews on Syrians—enables the central government to deny refugees rights and protection while promoting Lebanon as a generous host, obscuring responsibility by directing claims of "weakness" to an audience of international bodies and institutions.[39]

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[35] *See*: Maja Janmyr and Lama Mourad, "Modes of Ordering: Labelling, Classification and Categorization in Lebanon's Refugee Response," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 31, no. 4 (December 1, 2018): 544–65, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fex042.

[36] Alexander Betts, Ali Ali, and Fulya Memişoğlu, "Local Politics and the Syrian Refugee Crisis: Exploring Responses in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan" (University of Oxford, November 24, 2017), https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/local-politics-and-the-syrian-refugee-crisis-exploring-responses-in-turkey-lebanon-and-jordan,16.

[37] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures," 30.

[38] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures," 9-10.

[39] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures," 188.

The Push for Return (2016-2019)

In 2016, a combination of international, regional, and local developments further incentivized Lebanese politicians to wield the presence of refugees for bargaining purposes.[40] After two years of a presidential vacuum, the Lebanese parliament elected Michel Aoun, the former military commander who had opposed Syrian rule at the end of the Lebanese Civil War and the current head of the Free Patriotic Movement, to the presidency.[41] At the same time, any hope of ending the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Syria seemed ever more distant.[42] Furthermore, the global rise of far-right movements fueled increasingly vitriolic international anti-refugee discourse.[43]

While displaced Syrians in Lebanon are more vulnerable and insecure, Lebanese politicians at the national level have increasingly drawn on antagonistic and hateful rhetoric to cast Syrian residents of Lebanon as threats, thereby boosting their communal nationalist credentials.[44] But such rhetoric is used not only to "signal in" to the Lebanese population, but to "signal out" to international donors.[45] As humanitarian and development aid is legitimized and spurred by the ongoing "emergency" nature of the "refugee crisis," so long as it is recognized internationally in these terms, the ongoing Syrian refugee presence will continue to appeal to the funding schemes of large international donor institutions. Thus, Lebanese political actors are doubly incentivized to weaponize discourses of security and crisis both to encourage donor aid and to legitimize domestic (in)actions.

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[40] Carmen Geha and Joumana Talhouk, "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, no. 4 (December 1, 2019), https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fey052,13
[41] Geha and Talkhouk, "From Recipients of Aid to Shapers of Policies," 13.
[42] Geha and Talkhouk, "From Recipients of Aid to Shapers of Policies," 13
[43] Geha and Talkhouk, "From Recipients of Aid to Shapers of Policies," 13.
[44] Betts, Ali, and Memişoğlu, "Local Politics and the Syrian Refugee Crisis," 16.
[45] Favier, "Increasing Vulnerability for the Syrian Refugees in Lebanon," 3.

International aid has constituted a substantial part of the Lebanese economy since the onset of the Syrian conflict: An estimated average of $1.5 billion USD per year in aid enters the Lebanese economy, and refugees in Lebanon consume an additional estimated $1.5 billion USD per year.[46] But as the conflict in Syria and the consequent refugee exodus protracted, international funding for humanitarian projects in Lebanon dwindled, a familiar phenomenon known as "donor fatigue."[47] Donor aid to Lebanon peaked between 2015-2016, and crisis response plans structured to support both refugees and vulnerable local Lebanese populations have since received only limited partial funding.[48] Even as the sudden expansion of the population in Lebanon and an active conflict with a bordering country distress the economy, the Lebanese government and politicians are incentivized to maintain an "in-need" population in order to appeal to donor countries and institutions for such sources of income.

But despite the potential economic stimulus from rhetorically maintaining an "at need" population within the country, there remains a significant political impetus to expel such a population, which can just as easily be portrayed as a resource burden and security risk. Since 2017, Lebanese politicians have increasingly pushed for domestic and international support to return Syrians to Syria, citing their presence as threatening the economic, social, and political stability of Lebanon. July 2017 witnessed what Jamil Mouawad calls "an important yet very timid development," when Hezbollah brokered an agreement with Syrian security agencies to repatriate

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[46] For 2016 figures. Bachir el Khoury, "The Economic Benefits of the Massive Presence of Syrian Refugees," The Peace Building in Lebanon News Supplement (United Nations Development Programme, August 2017); Tobias Schillings, "The Macro-Economic Impacts of Syrian Refugee Aid," *Forced Migration Review*, no. 58 (June 2018), https://www.fmreview.org/economies/schillings. As SAWA for Development & Aid, one of the first Lebanese civil society organizations formed to respond to the effects of the conflict in Syria, notes in their report "Unpacking Return," there is a systematic lack of accountability and transparency in tracking such funding between donor governments and institutions, Lebanese ministries, and service providers, and as such is unclear how much aid is ever disbursed and actually reaches beneficiaries.
[47] Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return,"4.
[48] Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return," 4.

approximately thirty refugee families to Syria.[49] With this, calls for return to Syria—which had begun as murmurs from the arrival of the first Syrian refugees in Lebanon—skyrocketed. Since May 2018, Lebanese General Security began coordinating with Syrian state agencies to organize "voluntary" return trips for Syrians. By March 2019, over 170,000 Syrians had reportedly returned to Syria, both via organized and spontaneous trips.[50] However, given the structurally coercive environment in Lebanon, as well as misinformation and lack of transparency provided to Syrians considering such a journey, the "voluntary" aspect of state-organized refugee return is dubious at best.[51]

Those who return to Syria often face harassment, extortion, and violence from state security agencies, residency battles with squatters, and the local rule of extremist non-state actors. The Syrian government's security clearance procedures for vetting returnees is suspected to have been designed with the intent to "expand the already vast repository of information [the Syrian security apparatus] has long collected about its citizens and to dissent-proof the future."[52] Syrian authorities have arrested and detained hundreds of returnees, some of whom reported being subjected to torture to extract information about their or other refugees' activities while in Lebanon.[53] Despite Lebanese politicians' claims that Syria is "safe" for return, Syrians are still making the dangerous journey to Lebanon for the first time even eight years from the onset of the conflict, thus indicating

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[49] Mouawad, "Lebanon's border areas in light of the Syrian war," 8.

[50] "General Security Organizes Return of 621 Syrian Refugees," *The Daily Star*, June 1, 2019, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Jun-01/484475-general-security-organizes-return-of-621-syrian-refugees.ashx. SAWA for Development & Aid notes that the GSO figure is not verified and very likely to be inflated. *See:* Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return," (2019).

[51] Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return"; Charlotte Alfred, "Dangerous Exit: Who Controls How Syrians in Lebanon Go Home," *News Deeply*, August 8, 2018, https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2018/08/08/dangerous-exit-who-controls-how-syrians-in-lebanon-go-home.

[52] Louisa Loveluck, "Assad Urged Syrian Refugees to Come Home. Many Are Being Welcomed with Arrest and Interrogation.," *Washington Post*, June 2, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/assad-urged-syrian-refugees-to-come-home-many-are-being-welcomed-with-arrest-and-interrogation/2019/06/02/54bd696a-7bea-11e9-b1f3-b233fe5811ef_story.html.

[53] "Assad Urged Syrian Refugees to Come Home."

that prospects for security and safety are tied to factors beyond large-scale active fighting. Many Syrians who did return ended up fleeing into Lebanon for a second time, having found conditions of insecurity and vulnerability more extreme in Syria than Lebanon.[54]

But mainstream Lebanese security discourse has failed to account for these insecurities faced by refugees, or for the geopolitical repercussions for premature repatriation and potential refoulement as potential sources of future instability themselves. There appears to be a general consensus across an otherwise highly divided political playing field that Syrian refugees are the ideal scapegoat for the country's political and economic woes and that return—despite divisions over questions of *how* and *when*—is the remedy. At present, a party's membership in either the March 8 or March 14 alliance offers some indication of its position regarding timing and methods of repatriation, though there has been some shifting of alliances since 2011. Lebanese President Michel Aoun, his son-in-law Gebran Bassil, and their party, the Free Patriotic Movement, as well as Hezbollah and other supporters in the March 8 Alliance, generally favor normalizing ties with Syria and coordinating with Syrian state agencies to facilitate Syrian repatriation.[55] On the other hand, Prime Minister Saad Hariri's Future Movement, the Lebanese Forces, and other supporters in the March 14 Alliance "have staunchly opposed direct contacts with Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime until a solution to the conflict has been reached."[56]

In June 2019, Aoun and Bassil's Free Patriotic Movement staged a protest in a campaign to boycott and report businesses hiring Syrians without work authorization—the vast majority of

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[54] "Dangerous Exit: Who controls how Syrians in Lebanon go home."
[55] ""Syrian Refugee Returns Stymied by Insistence on Political Solution: Aoun," *The Daily Star*, March 15, 2019, https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Mar-15/478915-refugee-return-efforts-stymied-by-insistence-on-political-solution-aoun.ashx; "Aoun Refuses Linking Refugee Returns to Political Solution in Syria," *The Daily Star*, February 20, 2019, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Feb-20/477043-aoun-refuses-linking-refugee-returns-to-political-solution-in-syria.ashx.
[56] "Syrian Refugee Returns Stymied by Insistence on Political Solution: Aoun."

Syrians in Lebanon.[57] The FPM distributed fliers that stated: "Protect Lebanese workers and file a complaint about violators. Syria is safe for return and Lebanon can no longer take it."[58]

From the Facebook page of the Free Patriotic Movement's Youth page.

Up until the spring of 2018, Lebanese authorities regularly elected not to enforce labor codes, allowing Syrians to find informal work with a wider array of organizations and businesses.[59] But with mounting pressure from Lebanese politicians and society, "this uneasy, informal arrangement has ceded to more aggressive enforcement."[60] Beginning in mid-2018, authorities closed down several health clinics in Tripoli that employed Syrian staff; General Security began inquiring about international non-governmental organizations' employees' nationalities, work visa status, and passports; and GSO officials coordinated crackdowns to close Syrian-owned shops, detain Syrian workers, and impose a fine of nearly $700 USD on businesses illegally employing Syrians.[61] Furthermore, Syrian employers must secure a class-A work permit that costs $10,000 and proof of

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[57] Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return"; El Khoury, "The Economic Benefits of the Massive Presence of Syrian Refugees."
[58] FPM Youth- وظّف لبناني "بتحب لبنان؟ ,في التيار الوطني الحر ! قطاع الشباب FPMYouth# اللبناني_قبل_الكل#," Facebook, June 8, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/FPMyouth/photos/a.10151393901049420/10157284284799420/?type=3&theater.
[59] Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return," 11.
[60] Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return," 11.
[61] Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return," 11.

assets over $70,000—nearly impossible conditions to meet for the vast majority of Syrians in Lebanon.[62]

This structurally coercive and discursively violent environment has tangibly impacted the livelihoods of Syrians in Lebanon, normalizing acts of aggression against those perceived as low-income Syrians. The same week as the FPM rally, fires in an informal tented settlement[63] displaced hundreds of refugees from the town of Deir al-Ahmar following a confrontation between local Lebanese and Syrian refugees.[64] In another informal tented settlement in Arsal, the Lebanese military issued a decree to demolish concrete walls that stood taller than one meter, forcing Syrians to reduce their shelters to rubble in the heat of June.[65]

Facing criticisms for the FPM's protests against Syrian laborers, Bassil tweeted: "Of course we want to distinguish Lebanese from foreigners in labor, housing, taxes and other things. This is not racial discrimination, but the consolidation of state sovereignty."[66] Thus the rhetoric of the FPM and the actions undertaken by its supporters can be understood as expressions of sovereignty by physical coercion and targeted harassment of Syrians. The anti-Syrian, anti-refugee rhetoric promoted by Lebanese politicians and adopted and reproduced by the bases to which they appeal go hand-in-hand with lived repercussions for those they scapegoat. In the case of Lebanon, this is the vulnerability and violence Syrians face as easily identifiable "others."[67]

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[62] Mhaissen and Hodges, "Unpacking Return," 11.

[63] Due to the non-encampment policy, the Lebanese government calls de-facto refugee camps "informal tented settlements."

[64] "Fire Blazes in Deir Al-Ahmar Refugee Camp," *The Daily Star*, June 7, 2019, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Jun-07/484730-fire-blazes-in-deir-al-ahmar-refugee-camp.ashx.

[65] Kareem Chehayeb, "Lebanon Troops Demolish Syrian Refugee Homes as Deadline Expires," *Al Jazeera*, July 1, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/lebanon-troops-demolish-syrian-refugee-homes-deadline-expires-190701111106849.html.

[66] Gebran Bassil, "@Gebran_Bassil on Twitter: ' طبعا نريد ان نميز المواطن اللبناني عن غير اللبناني بالعمل والسكن والضريبة وامور كثيرة وهذا ليس تمييزا عنصريا بل سيادة الدولة على ارضها '," Twitter, June 8, 2019, https://twitter.com/gebran_bassil/status/1137448967954948098.

[67] *See:* Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASYR) 2019.

Conclusion

The Lebanese government and para-state security actors' response to the Syrian refugee crisis "signals" forms of (in)security to both internal and external audiences. Given the prevailing frameworks of Lebanese state "weakness," the decentralized approach to the Syrian Civil War and refugee influx during the period of government "inaction" can be understood as a strategic "strength," permitting municipalities to project state control into the interior by regulating and excluding Syrians through curfews and other local measures, while absolving the central government from responsibility.[68] Once the government began responding more overtly in 2014, displays of "internal" sovereignty shifted to processes of legal exclusion targeted at Syrians. The increasing push for Syrians to return to Syria, which featured physical coercion and targeted harassment of Syrians, can be seen as an iteration of using language of "security" and "stability" to serve the strategic interest of the proponents of return. The scapegoating and harassment of Syrian informal laborers is not simply a response to increasing economic difficulties post-2011, but rather an opportune manipulation of language describing Syrians as threats to the Lebanese social fabric in order to divert attention from political elite's involvement in the ills of the Lebanese economy and to redirect popular frustration through historical clientelism and patronage networks.

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[68] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures," 10.

Conclusion

In the summer of 2019, *The Daily Star*, Lebanon's leading English-language news source, published a special edition in lieu of their usual print newspaper, which it described as a "stance on the deteriorating situation in Lebanon."[1] On the front page, in a bold white font against a solid black backdrop: "Lebanon." Each page thereafter had a smaller black box with a similar bold, white-text statement, bluntly proclaiming a form of insecurity facing Lebanon that had been largely unaddressed by the government. "Government deadlock"; "Sectarian rhetoric increasing by the day"; "Illegal weapons abound in the country"; "Over 1.5 million refugees in the country"; "Public debt close to $100 billion." On the back page, a color picture of a cedar tree against a snowy white backdrop alluded to the impacts of the country's dangerously high levels of pollution on the country's beloved national tree and landscape. The text reads: "Wake up, before it's too late!"

The front and back covers of the special edition of The Daily Star, *August 8th, 2019.*

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[1] "Wake up! TDS Takes Stance on Situation in Lebanon," *The Daily Star*, August 8, 2019, https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Aug-08/489301-tds-takes-stance-on-situation-in-lebanon.ashx.

The issue was released during the last week of nearly eight months that I spent working and studying in Lebanon. During the summer I worked on refugee policy for a research institute in Beirut, monitoring politicians' and local actors' promotion of Syrian refugee return as a solution to Lebanon's socio-political ills.[2] Despite the proliferation of this discourse among Lebanese politicians, however, I noticed in "elite" spheres a broad acknowledgement that such discourse was a distraction from underlying economic difficulties, environmental degradation, and widespread government corruption. Anti-refugee rhetoric, many noted, was used to rally together Lebanese under the same array of clientelist networks that had held the Lebanese political system together since the end of the civil war. Outside of research and academic networks, too, there was increasing frustration with politicians' inadequate responses to problems such as those raised by *The Daily Star*'s feature, and the corruption and nepotism which undergirded the Lebanese economic system, though this was often accompanied by anti-Syrian and anti-refugee rhetoric.

It perhaps shouldn't have come as a great surprise, then, when two months after my return to the United States, Lebanese took to the streets en masse in spontaneous protests calling for political change. Perhaps, caught up in my own research on security discourse, I too readily accepted the counter-narrative of Lebanon as "surprisingly resilient,"[3] in contrast to Western characterizations of it as prone to threats and instability, running the risk of inadvertently normalizing the hardships of those who live with the daily struggles of a poor political and economic system.

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[2] This is not to overemphasize the knowledge gained while studying in Beirut for less than a year, or to prioritize my own perceptions over those of locals immersed in the situation to a much greater depth than I.

[3] Waleed Hazbun, "Assembling Security in a 'Weak State:' The Contentious Politics of Plural Governance in Lebanon since 2005," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 6 (June 2016), https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1110016, 1053.

The protests erupted in the wake of a series of forest fires in the Chouf region, south of Beirut, which brought criticism of the Lebanese government's inability to respond effectively to what appeared to be an otherwise containable natural disaster.[4] With the Lebanese Civil Defense, the Lebanese Red Cross, and other rescue teams overwhelmed, the Palestinian Civil Defense and other volunteer firefighters in Lebanon stepped in to help contain the fires.[5] To many Lebanese, that refugees were aiding the Lebanese government to extinguish the fires was confounding, especially given that Lebanese politicians continued to vilify refugees, not only in the broader context of the refugee crisis but even going so far as to blame them for *intentionally starting* the fires.[6] The disjuncture between the assistance volunteered by some of the most marginalized in Lebanese society and their vilification by Lebanese political parties showed how far Lebanese politicians would go to exploit fear and scapegoating to distract from their own shortcomings.

The fires also demonstrated that Lebanon's civil infrastructure was greatly in need of developmental aid, especially when compared to the funding allocated to its security sector. Anti-riot tanks, equipped with water cannons intended to break up protests, stood in for civilian fire-fighting equipment.

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[4] Timour Azhari, "Lebanon Wildfires: Hellish Scenes in Mountains South of Beirut," *Al Jazeera*, October 16, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/10/hellish-scenes-wildfires-engulf-lebanon-191015191252866.html.
[5] UNRWA, "Palestinian Civil Defense in Lebanon Helps Fight Raging Fires - Lebanon," ReliefWeb, October 25, 2019, https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/palestinian-civil-defense-lebanon-helps-fight-raging-fires.
[6] StepFeed, "Lebanon's Racism and Sectarianism Take Center Stage amid Fires," StepFeed, October 16, 2019, https://stepfeed.com/lebanon-s-racism-and-sectarianism-take-center-stage-amid-fires-5171.

Anti-riot equipment being used to contain wildfires in Lebanon, October 2019.
Photo credits: Mohammed Zaatari. From Twitter, @timourazhari.

On October 17, days after the forest fires, a small number of protestors gathered outside the presidential palace, marking the beginning of the "October Revolution" that would grow to include street demonstrations of crowds estimated at over one million—approximately a quarter of the Lebanese population.[7] Even with the notably non-sectarian character of the uprisings to date—despite attempted co-option by sectarian security actors, namely Hezbollah and Amal—many Syrian participants expressed fear of being visibly identified as such. Yet, the presence of refugees in the country did not emerge as a major issue amongst the protestors.[8] When it did arise, protestors called out the xenophobic, anti-Syrian rhetoric spearheaded by Lebanese politicians, namely Bassil and the FPM, with chants such as "Refugees, in, in; Bassil, out out,"[9] and others

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[7] Jason Lemon, "Mass Protests Persist in Lebanon, as Local Media Reports Well over 1 Million in the Streets," *Newsweek*, October 20, 2019, https://www.newsweek.com/mass-protests-lebanon-over-1-million-1466544.

[8] As relayed by live reporting of the protests from friends and former colleagues via social media, as well as media shared by journalists and other reporters at the protests. See, for example: Abby Sewell, "@SewellA on Twitter: 'Aoun Falling Back on a Favorite Topic of Lebanese Politicians: The Syrian Refugees. I Have Been Talking to Protesters for the Past Two Weeks, in Different Parts of the Country, Different Classes, Sects, Etc., and No One Has Mentioned the Refugees as One of Their Major Issues.,'" Twitter, October 31, 2019, https://twitter.com/sewella/status/1189975016336744448.

[9] Taha Bali, "@Tahabito on Twitter: 'This One Is Simple and Powerful. It Invokes Gebran Bassil, Aounist Foreign Minister and Heir Apparent to His Father-in-Law President Aoun, Notorious for Anti-Refugee and Generally

which mocked the foreign minister and his family. Syrians, too, joined the protests, expressing

solidarity with the Lebanese protestors and advocating for greater social inclusion and

understanding. One sign, placed next to free snacks and water for the protestors read (in English

and Arabic): "We love you, please stop racism against us Syrians in Tripoli."[10]

A sign from a Syrian in Tripoli, alongside free snacks and supplies for the protestors in Lebanon,
October 2019. Image from Twitter @tahabito.

In a tweet, *Washington Post* reporter Asser Khattab alluded to the irony of dual insecurities:

"'Don't speak Syrian at the protest,' my mother told me as tear gas canisters indiscriminately

rained down on everyone in Downtown Beirut."[11] In spite of the imminent danger of the anti-

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Xenophobic/Racist/Sectarian Statements "Refugees in, in; Bassil out, out." Https://T.Co/FuNgNCf9Bp' / Twitter,"
Twitter, October 20, 2019, https://twitter.com/tahabito/status/1185915793743241219; "نازح جوا، جوا؛ باسيل برا، برا!!"
[10] Taha Bali, "@Tahabito on Twitter: '... Https://T.Co/O435GW3ZvD,'" Twitter, October 20, 2019,
https://twitter.com/tahabito/status/1185924189590568960.
[11] Asser Khattab, "@KhattabAsser on Twitter: '"Don't Speak Syrian at the Protest," My Mother Told Me as Tear
Gas Canisters Indiscriminately Rained down on Everyone in Downtown Beirut.,'" Twitter, October 18, 2019,
https://twitter.com/khattabasser/status/1185286045195264000.

protest weaponry, it was the discrimination by Lebanese towards Syrians that Khattab's mother feared more immediately. In another moment of dark irony, the Syrian regime joined in, with Syrian state-run media calling on Syrians to leave Lebanon due to the "insecurity" produced by the protests.

Urgent: The Syrian Foreign Ministry requests Syrian residents in Lebanon leave immediately, given the bad security situation there. (Author's translation.)
Image from Twitter @jomanaqaddour.[12]

The United States, of course, had to have a say in the protests as well. Although the Trump administration was already withholding security aid from Lebanon, upon which state security forces heavily rely, the protests furthered protestors' and analyst's concerns alike as to whether the United States' would interfere in order to achieve its desired outcomes of the protests to benefit US-Israel bilateral relations.[13] While some in the US foreign policy establishment hypothesized that aid might be leveraged to bar Hezbollah from entering a new government, in keeping with the desires of the United States and its ally, Israel, others chalked up the aid's delay to bureaucratic

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[12] Jomana Qaddour, "@JomanaQaddour on Twitter: 'The Syrian Foreign Ministry Calls for Syrians to Immediately Leave Lebanon Due to the Security Situation There. Https://T.Co/VN197Q8OAY,'" Twitter, October 18, 2019, https://twitter.com/jomanaqaddour/status/1185280903028920320.

[13] Nabih Bulos and Tracy Wilkinson, "U.S. Military Aid to Lebanon on Hold amid Unprecedented Protests," *Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 2019, https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-11-28/u-s-military-aid-to-lebanon-on-hold-amid-unprecedented-protests.

processes of approval.[14] Regardless, Lebanese and non-Lebanese alike expressed fear that the protests may provide an opportunity for international heavyweights to sway negotiations, thus capitulating to others' interpretations of security and prosperity in determining Lebanon's future policy agenda.

In an October 2019 *Washington Post* column titled "Syria Is Lost. Let's Save Lebanon," David Ignatius glosses over the complex socio-political and security situation in Lebanon to foreground the perspectives of Western analysts and observers. Ignatius returns to a primordialist argument, writing:

> Lebanon survives by maintaining a balance between East and West, Iran and Saudi Arabia, Sunnis and Shiites, Christians and Muslims. What has helped keep this precarious structure alive for decades was the belief that the United States, in the end, wouldn't let the country be dominated entirely by enemies of the West.[15]

Was this centering of the United States' role truly what kept Lebanon afloat?

Ignatius recycles many of the same tired state-building platitudes that this paper has deconstructed. The primary enemy of a strong, sovereign Lebanon, he argues, is Hezbollah, which "profits from chaos."[16] A stronger Lebanese state "would be better able to assert its sovereignty, starting with borders."[17] The corruption of the Lebanese (bankrupt) state, he argues, is "*almost* as serious a threat as Hezbollah."[18]

But despite Mr. Ignatius' prognosis, economic collapse came for the state before Hezbollah could, and to the chagrin of anti-Syrian and right-wing Lebanese politicians, it was not tied to labor competition from refugees but from economic mismanagement and corruption. In the early months

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[14] Bulos and Wilkinson, "U.S. Military Aid to Lebanon on Hold amid Unprecedented Protests."
[15] David Ignatius, "Opinion | Syria Is Lost. Let's Save Lebanon.," Washington Post, October 16, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/the-us-should-double-down-on-support-for-lebanon/2019/10/16/846f9a18-f028-11e9-89eb-ec56cd414732_story.html.
[16] Ignatius, "Syria is lost. Let's save Lebanon."
[17] Ignatius, "Syria is lost. Let's save Lebanon."
[18] Ignatius, "Syria is lost. Let's save Lebanon." Emphasis my own.

of 2020, the Lebanese Lira rapidly devalued, unemployment rates soared, and, in March, the country defaulted on a $1.2 billion Eurobond—the first default in the country's history.[19]

To make dire matters worse, with the unexpected outbreak of the novel COVID-19 global pandemic, Lebanon is now facing "twin crises."[20] The arrival of COVID-19 has, in effect, interrupted the reform movement in Lebanon, as the public health crisis undercuts possibilities for mass public demonstrations and other channels for solidarity.[21] In this way, COVID-19 may be considered a "gift" to those who wish to maintain the political and sectarian status quo.[22] Just as concerning, given the central government's inability to resolve the crisis financially, politically, and epidemiologically, "COVID-19 has provided an opening for sectarian parties to reassert their role and seeming indispensability for assuring the basic public welfare of Lebanese citizens," risking a relapse to dependence on security provision through sectarian patronage networks.[23] Sectarian political and security actors are well aware of this opportunity: weeks after the first cases in Lebanon, pictures circulated on social media platforms, depicting medical masks with the logos of the Lebanese Forces and Amal Movement—both sectarian political parties.

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[19] "For the First Time, Lebanon Defaults on Its Debts," *The Economist*, March 12, 2020, https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2020/03/12/for-the-first-time-lebanon-defaults-on-its-debts; Kareem Chehayeb, "Besides Coronavirus, Lebanon Has an Equally Dangerous Outbreak on Its Hands - Unemployment," *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed (The New Arab)*, March 29, 2020, https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2020/3/31/beyond-covid-19-lebanons-unemployment-outbreak.
[20] Melani Claire Cammett and Lama Mourad, "The Twin Crises and the Prospects for Political Sectarianism in Lebanon," Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, April 2020, http://lcps-lebanon.org/featuredArticle.php?id=286.
[21] Cammett and Mourad, "The Twin Crises and the Prospects for Political Sectarianism in Lebanon."
[22] Cammett and Mourad, "The Twin Crises and the Prospects for Political Sectarianism in Lebanon."
[23] Cammett and Mourad, "The Twin Crises and the Prospects for Political Sectarianism in Lebanon."

Top: Masks with the symbol of the Amal Movement. Bottom: A mask with the symbol of the Lebanese Forces. (Repost from @DaleelThawra. Original source unknown.)[24]

In addition to responses from sectarian political actors, other local security actors have stepped in to address the public health crisis. Human Rights Watch documented at least eight municipalities that implemented curfews restricting the movement of Syrian refugees, preceding the mid-March announcement of a nationwide curfew by the central government.[25] What's more, the restrictions that these municipalities imposed on Syrians then exceeded those that the government established for the general population.[26] Given the manufactured illegality for Syrians residing in Lebanon

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[24] Circulated widely online, original source unknown. Accessed from: "اشلح حزبك و البس وطنك," April 3, 2019, https://www.instagram.com/p/B-iJGSyp3Tt/.

[25] "Lebanon: Refugees at Risk in COVID-19 Response," Human Rights Watch, April 2, 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/02/lebanon-refugees-risk-covid-19-response.

[26] "Lebanon: Refugees at Risk in COVID-19 Response."

without documentation and the structurally coercive conditions in the country, many Syrians have expressed fear of deportation should they seek medical testing or treatment.[27]

These ongoing crises, however, confirm that such scapegoating of refugees is misplaced, and in effect conceal other sources of (in)security as well as administrative and financial complacency regarding the problems faced by many Lebanese today. Diving deeper into the historical underpinnings of the treatment of Syrians as "threats" unpacks the mediating social relations and dynamics that extend beyond issues relating to the presence of refugees.[28] The political expediency for Lebanese authorities to exploit the vulnerability of refugees through "the settling of scores that have little to do with, or, at the very least extend well beyond issues related to, their presence" warrants a critical evaluation of the underlying factors which are attributed to supposed threats posed by vulnerable refugee populations.[29]

Chapter 1 demonstrated that the present-day antagonisms of Lebanese towards Syrians derive in part from Lebanon's post-colonial struggle for statehood and sovereignty, wherein iterations of Lebanese nationalism and visions for Lebanese identity were articulated in relation to and interwound with ethno-sectarian and class-coded conceptualizations of Syria and Syrian identity. As the ideological, sectarian, and national relationships between the two countries were codified, institutionalized, and contested throughout the following decades, these self-versus-other divides were deeply enmeshed with disputes over identity, statehood, and sovereignty. Chapter 2 delineated how overlapping and contradictory visions for Lebanese-Syrian relations, statehood, and security masked the complexities of contentious plural governance and security provision in

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[27] Alice Fordham, "Syrian Refugees In Lebanon Fear Deportation For Seeking Coronavirus Test Or Care," NPR.org, April 6, 2020, https://www.npr.org/2020/04/06/825158835/syrian-refugees-fear-deportation-if-they-seek-coronavirus-testing-and-treatment.

[28] Lama Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures: Decentralization and The Politics of Local Responses to the Syrian Refugee Influx in Lebanon" (University of Toronto, 2019), 158.

[29] Mourad, "Open Borders, Local Closures," 158.

the Lebanese. The securitization and marginalization of refugees thus transforms Syrians in Lebanon from persons *at risk* to persons *as risk*, while diverting from other underlying causes of discontent and insecurity in Lebanon. Lastly, Chapter 3 illustrated how the Lebanese government's response to the refugee crisis, particularly the push by Lebanese politicians and authorities for Syrians to return to their country and the accompanying scapegoating and harassment of informal laborers, is not solely indicative of post-2011 security or economic conditions, but instead a culmination of and capitalization upon language describing Syrians as threats to the Lebanese social fabric. By deconstructing these historical and discursive elements which have contributed to the animosity towards and increasing vulnerability of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, I hope to illuminate the possibility not only of easing intercommunal hostilities, but also of a more critical and just approach to thinking about insecurity in Lebanon.

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