

# Compliance without Obligation: Examining State Responses to the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Samuel A. Davidoff-Gore

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# Research Problem

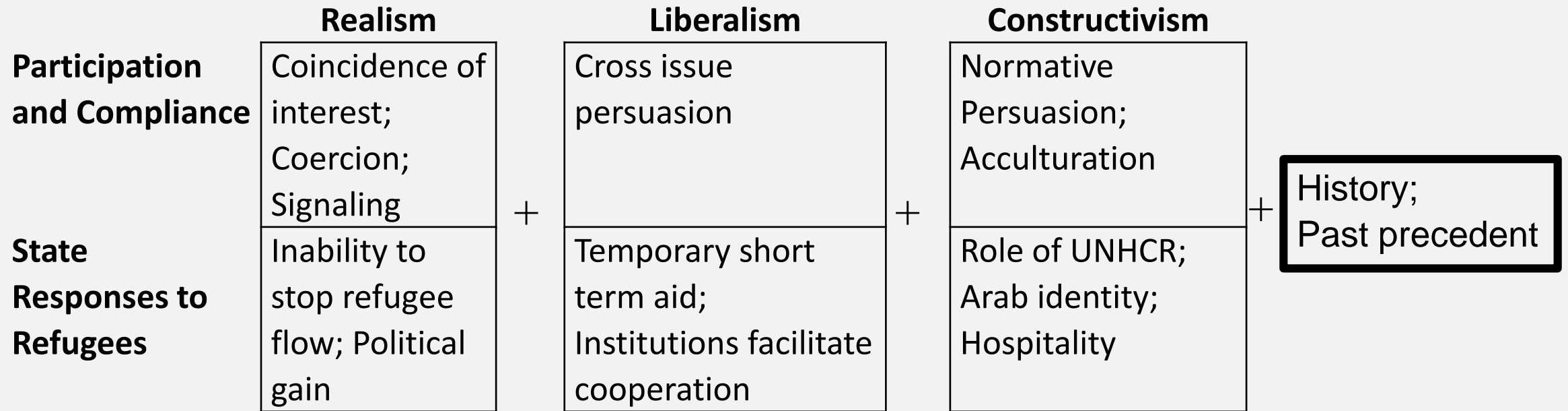
1. Why do states host and protect refugees when they do not have the resources to do so?
2. Why do some states comply with international law without participating in it?

## Research Question

Given that Jordan and Lebanon are not parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (CSR), what explains their compliance with the CSR with regard to their response to the Syrian refugee crisis?

# Theoretical Significance

- Integrating bodies of literature and perspectives in International Relations



- Case study

# Practical Significance

- Timely
- Effectiveness of CSR
- Refugee Politics in the Arab Middle East



Source: <http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/dam/assets/140311173601-zaatari-camp-aerial-shot-story-top.jpg>

# Argument

1. Jordanian and Lebanese compliance is a result of their previous decisions to host Palestinian and Iraqi refugees.
2. Jordan's compliance may be the result of pan-Arab solidarity and Arab hospitality.
3. Lebanon's compliance is the result of Lebanon's prior relationship with Syria and this compliance is mitigated by an ineffective government and security threats.

# Methods

- Comparative case study
- Process tracing
- Holistic definition of compliance
- Time Frame

Jordan	Lebanon
1948 Arab-Israeli War	
1967 Arab-Israeli War	
1988 Disengagement	1991 Post-Civil War
2003 Iraqi Refugee Crisis	
2011 Syrian Refugee Crisis	

# Findings

- No coherent domestic refugee policies
- Policies towards previous refugee populations shape policies towards Syrian refugees

# Findings

- Jordan is more compliant than Lebanon because:
  - Different decisions in 1948
  - Strong, centralized government vs. weak, sectarian government
  - Experience hosting non-Palestinian refugees and working with UNHCR
- No specific IR perspective validated



# Implications

- Theory
  - Participation in international law is important, but not essential, to compliance.
  - Prior decisions influence current policies.
  - Case studies allow for more complex analysis.
  - The Arab Middle East should not just be studied as a monolith.
- Practice
  - UNHCR-government cooperation is important.
  - The international refugee regime should universalize regional developments.
  - The CSR should be amended to include Palestinian refugees.

# Future Research

- Turkey – participatory, compliant, and hosts Syrian refugees
- Afghanistan and Somalia – outside of the Syrian refugee crisis
- Large-*n* study of the CSR
- Other international legal regimes in the Arab Middle East