

## Crises between Syria, Jordan and Lebanon after the Arab Uprising

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### Abstract

*The aim of the study is to explore the influx of refugees in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon and its implications. The under-observation study addressed the political, social, and economic factors, that led to civil war in Syria and became the cause of massive migration of population to the neighbouring countries like Lebanon and Jordan. Bashar al-Assad's coercive policies forced vulnerable populations to move beyond the Syrian border. This study is based on qualitative research methodology. Results of the study show that the Syrian conflict became the cause of the worst refugee crisis since the Arab Uprising and influenced the countries and their inhabitants at all levels. The recommendation of the research is that there must be an approach of cooperation and comprehensive assistance in the field of humanitarian including hosts and refugees in both communities.*

### Key Words:

Syrian Civil War, Regional and International Powers, Jordan, Lebanon

### Introduction

The study has explored the refugee crisis in Syria, located within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The under-observation study addressed the political, social, and economic factors that led to the civil war in Syria and became the cause of the massive migration of the population to neighbouring countries like Lebanon and Jordan. It is argued that the crisis is the result of the Arab Uprising, the long authoritarian regime of Bashar al-Assad, regional turmoil, and domestic politics that forced vulnerable populations to move beyond the Syrian border. The quietness of the regional game players who led turmoil in the region shows that they left alone Lebanon and Jordan to cope with the massive refugee flow. However, by exhibiting their domestic vulnerable resources both collected funds from international human rights associations and communities. However, due to the insufficient arrangements of funds, the degree of funds decreases by the year.

The history of the Arabs is full of glorious feats of bravery. In the present era, they have failed to recover their former glory in any way. After World War I, European powers began to occupy the Middle East and North Africa. France and Britain used ruling elites to ensure their interests in the region. Post WW II, the people of MENA endeavoured to change the political legacy of colonialism. Consequently, a military coup overthrew the monarchy regime in Libya, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, to achieve progress and end colonialism. But both revolutionaries and conservatives had failed to achieve prosperity and development. Arab governance remained weak. The feudal and authoritarian nature of governments failed to guarantee political accountability to their nations. So in the first decade of the 21st century, in 2010 people of these countries tried to overthrow the dictatorial governments. They wanted to see democracy in their states. Yet a couple of countries could meet the fruits of revolution such as Jordan and Morocco. This resulted in the fall of several dictators like Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, and the collapse of Muammar al-Qaddafi's regime in Libya. Likewise, in Yemen after the uprising sectarian and territorial fragmentation has catastrophe the country since 2014. The Arab Uprising has left a vast political vacuum in the MENA region and destabilized the countries. The two countries were also involved in facilitating in transfer of jihadists to the Syrian front. Succinctly it is argued that economic and political competition over the region added oil to the fire (Hosseinioun, 2015).

### Historical Perspectives of the Syrian Civil War

No country has been affected by mass protests as much as the Syrian Arab Republic. The sectarianism and militancy of the Arab conflict in Syria reached their climax. Syrian administration suppressed protests with blood and iron policy under President Bashar. Consequently, the opposition went from peaceful protest to

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militarization and dropped the country into eternal chaos. This resulted in myriad casualties and millions of people internally displaced and moved to neighboring countries

The situation did take a new turn when Hafiz Assad, who belongs to the Alvi sect, assumed power in 1970. Alvi is the branch of Shi'ism and was 10-12% population of Syria. He belonged to the Ba'ath party and was interested in secularism in Syria and Sunni Islamists were against this party. Hafez Al-Assad immediately established a statistical regime when took power.

The military institution has also been used to control power. A military academy was established in Homs in 1933, and training opportunities were opened to all civilians, but Alvi joined the military academy and Sunni rejected it, as a result, Alvi became a military officers. Hafez Assad capitalised on the system by introducing new public reforms and also controlled the country's economy. So capitalism strengthens the monopoly of political elites in the country that angst Syrian bourgeoisie who were Sunni living in Aleppo. Sunni is 70% population of Syria and has faced marginalization. They were politically and socially weakened. Only a few Sunni bourgeoisie were in favour of the Assad regime. Sunnis were kept away from politics. Sunni military officers were also removed, and Sunni youth were not allowed to join military academies (Tucker & Roberts, 2019).

Assad's policy has established relations between the Alawite sect and the twelve creeds of Shi'ism fueled the fire of sectarianism. By following policy he established strategic and cordial diplomatic relations with Iran. Lebanese played a vital role in strengthening the Syria-Iranian strategic alliance. Syyid Musa Al-Sadr issued a highly influential Fatwa in 1973 that Lebanon should recognize Syrian Alawites as Shia Muslims. Political and ideological Shia scholars also provide a channel to connect with Syrian political Shia elites in liaison with counterparts in Iran. As a result, opposition to the Sunni representative party "Muslim Brotherhood" increased more against the Ba'ath regime. Muslim Brotherhood (MB) started a campaign to DE legitimization of the regime because of the relation between the Alawite creed and the Ba'ath regime. Even they launched terrorist attacks against the government with the help of Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, a group of Mujahidin in Syria, and other several Islamic groups. They mobilized against the anti-Islam regime and targeted elites and Alawite officers. But the Assad regime badly crushed these attacks. But the Assad regime badly crushed these attacks. In 1982 he eventually reached his climax when he set the stage of the Hama massacre and made 1000-40000 Islamists targets of his wrath and killed them. In 2000 Hafez Assad died but his atrocities and regime continued in the face of his son Bashar Al-Assad.

The US invasion of Iraq frightened the Assad regime. The presence of US troops in Iraq had given Assad sleepless nights. Especially America claimed him for supporting terrorism in Iraq. To foil the US in Iraq Assad began to utilize Islamic militants Al-Qaida, and former Iraqi Ba'athists officers. He also supported the Sunni resistance in Syria.

### **The Syrian Civil War and Its Implications**

After the Arab Spring in Tunisia, it also took place in several states of the region. The fever of revolution also moved to Syria, where 27 children had been arrested while writing on a wall "It is your turn Bashar", and children were tortured by the Syrian government. The incident had been placed in Daraa City located in the southern border of Jordan. The protests flared on March 15, 2011, to demand to stop the suppression of liberties and reduction of corruption and repression. Those children had been affected by the revolutionary movement that erupted across the Arab world. Many Arab leaders were toppled. Bashar al-Assad became furious with the children and tortured them for weeks. After this incident, protestors moved to Damascus and demanded political, economic, and social reforms. The government responded brutally. The regime portrayed this violence and coercion as a war against Islamic extremists. The brutal response of the Assad regime transfers protest into an armed uprising. The internal controversy of Syria led to the involvement of regional and international powers like Turkey, Russia, the US, and Iran. Local forces including Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, and government forces also made the situation more sensitive. It is argued that regional conflict bred almost 1,000 militant opposition groups. Syria characterized the two major regional disorder dynamics of the Middle East territorial fragmentation and rise of sectarianism. From the historical perspective, it is argued that sectarianism played an important role as an instrument in the Syrian crisis. By recognizing the Alawite sect, they were assigned the same religious identity. That paved the way for sectarianism and resulted in the Syrian civil war. The regime separated minorities from revolutions, therefore Druz and Christians are still supporting Assad's regime. Sunnis, who were supporting Assad, now saw civil war as an opportunity to overthrow his regime. Now the game is in the hands of

minorities who are within the 12% community regime and the Sunni majority who are marginalized. Succinctly, the civil war in Syria is rooted between secularists and Islamists. Bashar Al-Assad is against Islamists, who want to establish Islamic society in the country. The Sunni population has seen the crisis as an opportunity to take revenge (Tucker & Robert, [2019](#)).

### **Entrance of Regional and International Powers in Syria**

The intense civil war in Syria goes beyond the border and invites neighbouring states to intervene in the domestic crisis. The neighbouring states took part in the war behind the ideological division between Shia and Sunni. In the context of regional domination, this war followed the lines of economic, political, and ideological divisions. The main supporter of Bashar Assad's regime is Iran which is the leading Shia power in the region. In the beginning, Turkey was confused about taking any decisive stance about Syria, because both had pleasant diplomatic relations before the Arab Uprising. It kept a continuing channel of communication with the Assad regime to undertake new reforms. But Turkey's hopes ended with frustration (Stivachtis, [2018](#)). After nine months of the beginning of protest in 2011, Turkey demanded the Syrian president step down, and sanctions against his regime. Four months later Turkey closed the Syrian embassy in March 2012, and subsequently in May 2012 expelled Syrian diplomats. Rejab Tayyip Erdogan is interested in the northern territory of Syria, to break the Kurdish strength, and cease the Kurdish cause in Turkey. Qatar and Saudi Arabia also fund the FSA in Syria and provide ammunition to the rebel army.

On the contrary of others, Saudi Arabia had a fevered interest in the Syria crisis, because it had seen a strong coalition between Syria and Iran (Jathol, Qazafi & Husain, [2017](#)) Iraq is also interested in Syria, successive governments have inclinations toward Iran-supported Shia regime. In April 2013, after two years of "dissociation policy" Lebanon took part in the Syrian crisis. Thousands of Hezbollah fighters crossed borders and joined the Assad military. On the contrary, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were interested in the fall of the Assad regime. The presence of Hezbollah triggered Israel, which started a raid in Syria in January 2013 Syria and Israel were already at war since 1967 on the subject of the occupation of Golan Heights. In 1981 Israel annexed Syrian territory about 1200 sq. km. All these factors triggered Middle Eastern states to be concerned and involved in the Syrian conflict. Thus the war has become regionalized and gradually internationalized. International powers are divided, especially in the UN Security Council. In the beginning, the US, supported by Britain and France wanted to see the collapse of the Assad regime. On the other hand, because of an old socialist friend Russia supports the Syrian regime. By following a multipolar vision China is hostile to US existence in Syria because US intervention shows that there is no chance of a Syrian solution. International stakeholders have been involved in military intervention against Islamic State (IS) in Syria since 2014 until the US withdrawal in October 2019; they had no consensus on the resolution of the Syrian crisis (Stivachtis, [2018](#)).

### **The Syrian Refugee Crisis**

So far, the Syria crisis seems to be unresolved because of a multitude of regional and international actors. Due to uncertain circumstances in Syria, more than one million Syrians moved to neighboring states like Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and others. The Syrian conflict created the worst humanitarian crisis after the Second World War. In March 2013 1 million refugees moved out of the border and in July it increased to 3 million after the use of chemical weapons against Syria by Bashar. The refugee crisis reached Europe in early 2015 when 100,000 refugees sought refuge. Over 3 million Syrians are trapped in their areas because of limited humanitarian access. The largest number of refugees moved toward Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, while these countries haven't signed the Geneva Convention of 1951 defines the legal rights of refugees (UNHCR, [2018](#)). Arab cooperation is significant in coping with the Syrian crisis, but since the Kuwait crisis of 1990-1991, the Arab world has remained as weak as ever. There is no security system in the region. The intergovernmental organization of the region "The Arab League" has failed to bring sustainability to the region. The region suffered from mistrust and internal-state and inter-state rivalries. Anyhow Jordan and Lebanon are the most affected countries of Syrian refugees (Azizyya, [2013](#)).

### **Syrian Refugee Crisis in Jordan**

Jordan has been faced with extreme water scarcity; the influx of refugees from Syria has aggravated this challenge. According to the current Census in December 2015, the refugee's strength reached 1.3 million both

registered and unregistered. 84% of refugees lived in urban areas and it is expected they will remain in Jordan; they are vulnerable especially because of homelessness and high house rental prices besides health, education, jobs, and water resources. Syrian refugees in Jordan, especially those in urban areas, face challenges related to protection, exploitation, and poverty. Many are vulnerable, particularly women and children. No doubt, the Syrian refugee crisis has had a significant impact on Jordan, particularly since the Arab Uprising in 2011. Jordan has been one of the countries most affected by the massive influx of Syrian refugees, and it has faced various challenges and implemented numerous measures to manage this crisis (Stave & Hillesund, [2015](#)).

The influx of refugees has strained Jordan's resources and infrastructure, including housing, healthcare, water mismanagement, education, an inefficient agricultural sector, and employment opportunities. This has had a significant impact on the Jordanian economy and public services. Syrian refugees in Jordan can be found in both refugee camps and urban areas (Alshoubaki & Harris, [2018](#)). The largest refugee camp is Zaatar, located in the north of the country. Many refugees live in urban areas like Amman, Irbid, and other cities. Efforts have been made to ensure access to education for Syrian refugee children in Jordan. Jordan has allowed Syrian students to attend public schools, and there are also refugee-specific education programs. In terms of health Syrian refugees in Jordan have access to healthcare services, including medical care, vaccinations, and maternity care through various healthcare providers and clinics. Although economic opportunities remain limited for many, the Jordanian government has taken steps to enable Syrian refugees to work legally in certain sectors (Ehteshami & Others, [2018](#)).

Jordan has maintained an open-door policy toward Syrian refugees, allowing them to enter the country and access basic services. However, due to resource limitations and security concerns, the government has had to implement stricter border controls over time. Jordan has received international assistance to help cope with the refugee crisis. Various humanitarian organizations, including the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, have provided aid and support to both refugees and the Jordanian government. Some refugees have returned voluntarily to Syria, but large-scale repatriation has been limited due to ongoing conflict and security concerns (World Food Programme, [2015](#)).

The Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan is a protracted and complex issue with significant humanitarian, economic, and social implications. While Jordan has shown generosity in hosting Syrian refugees, the ongoing challenge lies in ensuring the well-being and integration of refugees while also addressing the broader socioeconomic impact on the host country. The international community continues to provide support to Jordan and other countries affected by the Syrian refugee crisis to help manage and alleviate the challenges posed by this humanitarian catastrophe (Amnesty International, [2015](#)).

### **Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon**

This section of the study is based upon some facts as well as opinions regarding the turmoil that Lebanon is going through with a rational solution to the refugee crisis in Syria. The paper highlights as well as delineates pretty much everything that went wrong with the Syrian massive flees from their homeland to their neighbouring country. Still somewhere better than Syria, however, it is also not going very well considering the past key events that led to its economic downfall and default economy (Janmyr, [2016](#)).

### **Syrian Refugee Crisis: Any way forward?**

Almost 1/4 of Lebanon's population are refugees with the highest numbers being from Syria, especially after the 2012 civil war that led to this massive refugee around 1.5 million coming from Syria without registration. Syria has been a war-torn country where many powers like the US, Russia, Turkey, Israel and Iran are trying to consolidate their power to uphold their control in the region. All of them are following their own interests and connived with these groups to prolong the civil war of their own interest (Republic of Lebanon, [2016](#)).

Their mass migration is causing socio-economic upheaval in the country where job disparity can be seen a lot with them willing to work for a cheap price. According to the estimate, their monthly salary would be \$299 dollars while Lebanese have up to \$400 dollars. Many other impacts like sectarian or communal violence for different views leave the country in an imbalanced place. Even though it gets \$1.5 billion USD annually out of their refugee crisis, it has disturbed the public sector largely like the education system where it is hard for them to synthesize both ideas and thoughts into one.

On the other hand, Lebanon is highly dependent upon trading which has been disrupted due to the Syrian crisis of 2013. A chunk of his trading (1/3 position) has been lost with more GDP going under decline every three years by 1% (Amnesty International, [2015](#)).

### **Some Solutions to Resolve These Crises**

**Turkish Model:** Turkey is way better than these war-torn countries because it knows how to deal with its borders. Since Turkey acts as a gateway from Asia to Europe, it has compelled the European Union to pay a hefty price to keep large quantities of refugees away from its borders. It was not a complete success; yet, they are pushing and financially supporting Turkey to keep them away from their borders in large numbers. Lebanon could play a similar role here and allow refugees from Syria and Jordan to carry on their excursion from them to European countries. This could compel them to rethink about how an economically strained country would keep them in its place, but for how long and it will start to financially aid Lebanon to keep them at their place. Since it is not a part of the EU, no such sanction will be imposed as they already have 1.5 million refugees inside

**Safe Passage:** Differences in Syria would stay for a long time since other powers have indirectly involved themselves through proxy wars. One great development to get over this vexed and fraught economy is a convention where representatives from all neighbouring countries would be present (including non-state actors) and sign a free trade deal that could at least ease the pressure upon countries like Lebanon that have suffered the most after covid-19 and blast attack. It will benefit all neighbouring states with non-state actors eventually interdependent upon one another, it could also reduce the possibility of interstate war and terrorism of their reliance upon each other (Alshoubaki & Harris, [2018](#)).

**Nationalism:** To win soft power, spread your culture in other nations. The idea is taken from the process of Islamization by Pakistan's former president Zia-ul-Haq. As the Afghan war was at its peak, Zia took the initiative to educate people from NWFP to gain education about the history of Pakistan especially for Pashtoons. To end polarization in Lebanon, their government should take the initiative to form refugee schools for children and everyone where they can learn the history and culture of Lebanon. This could end the polarization at the grassroots level, but it will pay off over the course of time.

The 'Internationalization' programs by the United States proved to be "not universal" as democracy is not for every country. Some countries have their own ideologies shaped by culture, history, social norms, traditions etc. Operation Iraqi Freedom, Vietnamization or Afghanization all collapsed for the same reason mentioned above. The masses of refugees departing their land are fueled to heights by these failed operations by the US. However, out of all these countries, one country which is Afghanistan is a role model and an open textbook of solution which is the exclusion of all super powers from Syria just like Afghanistan and let people of their own ideology create a government. This would stop refugees and allow others to live in peace without

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The Syrian conflict became the cause of the worst refugee crisis in the region, especially since the Arab Uprising. Syrian migration toward Lebanon and Jordan influenced the countries and their inhabitants at all levels. This issue has turned into a political shape at both levels domestic and regional which revealed emerging geopolitical order in the Middle East. It also realized that there must be an approach of cooperation and comprehensive assistance in the field of humanitarian including hosts and refugees in both communities. Syrian migration to Jordan and Lebanon has also increased the competition for access to jobs, infrastructure, and public services.

- Exacerbating risks for the poorest classes
- Increased competition in the labour market
- A growing burden on public services and infrastructure
- The pressure on public finance is increasing day by day.
- Rising costs of various factors in the field of housing, energy, water, shelter, health, and education.

Anyhow, there is not only a negative impact on Syrian refugees but policymakers in the Jordan government also have planned to invest in Syrian refugees and showed their commitment to seeing them as an opportunity for national development.

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