



MAGYC
Migration Governance and Asylum Crises

The Jordan Compact

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MAGYC: The MAGYC (**Migr**Ation **G**overnance and **AsYlum C**risis) project seeks to assess how migration governance has responded to the recent “refugee crises” and has since been influenced by it, and how crises at large shape policy responses to migration. This four-year research project (2018–2022) brings together twelve international partners: the Hugo Observatory from the University of Liège (Coordinator), Sciences Po, the University of Economics in Bratislava, the GIGA institute of Global and Area Studies, Lund University, the IDMC, SOAS University of London, the University of Milan, the Lebanese American University, the University of Macedonia, Sabanci University, IfPO/CNRS.

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3	30 April 2022	As per feedback, adopted a more critical approach to the Compact and additional historical background on Jordanian experiences with refugees

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MAGYC Working Paper

Abstract

How does the 2016 Jordan Compact fit within the broader strategic management of forced migration in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and what does it reveal about how the EU responded to the post-2015 migration 'crisis'? This working paper sheds light on the long tradition of hosting refugees within the Kingdom – from successive waves of Palestinian refugees to the post-2003 arrival of Iraqis – in order to contextualise elites' responses to the Syrian refugee crisis. Adopting a framework of 'refugee rentierism,' the paper highlights how the Jordan Compact, as well as a variety of policies adopted by the Jordanian state before and after 2016, have sought to 'turn the refugee crisis into an opportunity' for economic development. In this sense, the Jordan Compact demonstrates the multi-dimensional dimension of EU migration policy that relates to development goals. The paper also provides a critical evaluation of Jordan's refugee rent-seeking strategies and places them within the broader framework of Western actors' – including the EU – developmental and neoliberal approaches to migration management.

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Introduction

A key dimension of Western states' response to the challenges posed by forced migration has historically centered on strategies of restricting mass refugee inflows into their own territory (FitzGerald, 2019). This includes European Union (EU) strategies on addressing irregular migration, particularly in its periphery (Collyer, 2016; Lavenex, 2016). In the context of the Syrian refugee crisis, this led to a sustained effort towards providing economic support to refugee host states of first asylum: Turkey secured an unprecedented sum of €6 billion in 2016, as well as other concessions, in return for keeping Syrian refugees within its borders (Collett, 2016). Beyond EU funds supporting vulnerable refugee populations, Brussels also promised to re-examine the visa liberalisation process that would allow Turkish citizens' access to EU member-states. Egypt secured access to the EU's 2015 Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, worth over €2.9 billion in total, allocating funds for '...the creation of jobs and economic development, basic services for local populations, stability and governance, and migration management' (Norman 2020). In 2016, Lebanon negotiated the Lebanon Compact, which involved a minimum of €400 million for the 2016-17 year, as it sought 'to turn the situation into an opportunity to improve the socioeconomic prospects, security, stability, and resilience of the whole Lebanon' (Tsourapas, 2019).

A key refugee host state of first asylum is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which has been both a major destination country for Syrian refugees as well as a partner in Western states' attempts at managing forced migration from afar. This policy paper utilises the concept of the *refugee rentier state*, namely a state that 'hosts forcibly-displaced population group or groups, and which relies financially on external rent linked to its treatment of these group(s)' (Tsourapas, 2019). As with other rentiers, we expect these states to demonstrate *refugee rent-seeking behaviour* – namely to search for strategic privilege in domestic and international markets: indeed, refugee host states develop specific policies with regard to the management of refugee populations domestically. Refugee rent-seeking behaviour may be linked to material benefits – the Lebanese state, for instance, introduced a December 2014 directive that forced Lebanese contractors to bear the cost of sponsoring each Syrian worker's 'cost of work and residence permits, health insurance, and notary contracts,' estimated at \$2,000 annually (Shoufi 2015). Other times, refugee rentier states may accrue non-material benefits from hosting displaced populations: historically, Gamal Abdel Nasser's decision to offer a range of socio-economic and political benefits to

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displaced Palestinians living in Egypt was directly linked to pan-Arabism rhetoric and his image as an Arab nationalist leader (El-Abed 2009). Similarly, refugee rent-seeking behaviour may be linked to states' foreign policymaking by using bargains or threats to target states and international organisations for economic and/or political concessions. In May 2019, Iran's deputy foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, said that if crude exports continue to decrease in light of American sanctions, 'it is possible that we ask our Afghan brothers and sisters to leave Iran.'

This working paper focuses on how the linkage of migration and developmental goals has affected the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's management of forced migration, and how the 2016 Jordan Compact features in national and EU attempts to respond to migration and refugee crises. It examines, firstly, how forced migration has affected Jordan from 1948 onwards, paying particular attention to the diverse groups of refugees that sought shelter into the country – namely, Palestinians, Iraqis, and Syrians. It continues to focus on the Jordanian management of Syrian refugees and the creation of the 2016 Jordan Compact, the multilateral agreement aiming at providing economic support to the country in exchange for continuing to host Syrian refugees. Finally, it analyses how the Jordan Compact has affected and, in some cases, contributed to, cases of refugee rentierism across the Kingdom. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of the broader applicability of its framework in understanding the global shift towards linking migration and developmental policy via 'migration deals' and 'refugee compacts.'

Forced Migration in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

A brief initial discussion of the historical and institutional background in terms of Jordanian experiences with refugees is necessary in order to understand the state's responses to the Syrian refugee crisis. This section details both the institutional background to forced migration in Jordan as well as the historical context in which Palestinian, Iraqi, and Syrian forcibly-displaced communities sought shelter in the Kingdom from 1948 until today.

In terms of the legal framework governing forced migration in Jordan, the country is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, although the international refugee apparatus has been expanded across the country. The fact that the country does not partake in the 1951 or 1967

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agreements allows stakeholders remarkable flexibility in the terminology used to describe Jordan's policy towards forcibly displaced communities. The only law discussing 'asylum' or 'refugees' – Law of Residence and Foreign Affairs No. 24 / 1973 and its subsequent amendments – does not define these groups (De Bel-Air, 2019). The Ministry of Interior is entitled to specify the conditions under which refugees are able to enter into Jordan, as well as the documentation that needs to be issued. This is based on a country of origin model, which allows Jordan to implement selective refugee policies depending on a person's nationality or citizenship, with the agreement of the UNHCR and international donors. For instance, between 2012 and 2015, Syrians were granted *prima facie* refugee status while other refugees had to undertake refugee status determination (Mencütek, 2018, p. 193). Similarly, Palestinians entering Jordan carrying Syrian travel documents would fall under the jurisdiction of UNRWA rather than the UNHCR. (Bidinger et al 2014).

At the same time, Jordanian responses to forced migration is also driven by the 1998 Memorandum of Understanding signed on 8 April 1998 with the UNHCR and revised in March 2014. The agreement grants UNHCR full responsibility for determining refugee status, with Jordan committing itself to respect the principle of non-refoulement. The process of determination may take up to six months, during which asylum seekers may reside in Jordan. The Memorandum creates four types of refugees within Jordan – 1) refugees recognized by the UNHCR; 2) asylum seeker card holders that are part of the organization's six-month temporary protection program; 3) those rejected by the UNHCR as refugees but whose circumstances have changed; and 4) persons who have not approached the UNHCR but have fled persecution or violence (Needs Analysis 2013). Although Jordan has granted the UNHCR considerable leeway in this, it retains firm control over the right to employment which rests, according to the 1952 Constitution, exclusively with Jordanian citizens. Since 1973, foreigners with valid residence permits may also be employed in limited professions and industries.

Jordan hosted the largest number of Palestinian refugees following the 1948 War, remembered as the Catastrophe (*al-Nakba*). The state responded by granting citizenship to those Palestinians who wished to become Jordanian citizens in 1950 – as well as their descendants, who would automatically be granted citizenship according to the Family Book of Jordanian Law (Brand, 1988). The second wave of Palestinians arriving in 1967 was not granted citizenship but registered as refugees with the UNRWA. Following Jordan's 1988 disengagement from the West Bank, West Bank Palestinians

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would be granted Jordanian passports (if they sought to travel) but these papers did not constitute citizenship (El-Abed, 2014). At the same time, once the Palestinian Authority began issuing passports in 1995, Jordan would revoke Jordanian citizenship if persons were identified as carrying an Israeli or a Palestinian passport. A final wave of Palestinian refugees entered Jordan following the 1990-91 and 2003 Iraq Wars. Some 300,000 Palestinians living in Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf States were returned to Jordan (New York Times 1995). A fraction of the 30,000 Palestinians working in Libya were expelled in 1993 due to Colonel Gaddafi's anger at the PLO's decision to sign an interim accord with Israel. Most recently, approximately 70,000 Palestinians have sought asylum in Jordan (as well as Lebanon) as they fled from violence in Syria (Dorai 2015). As a result of these successive inflows of refugees, Jordan currently has the highest Palestinian refugees-to-citizens ration in the world (Mencütek, 2018, p. 189), and constitute over half of the total population of Jordan (Reiter, 2004). Tensions between Palestinians and Jordanians have accompanied Jordan since 1948, particularly between Palestinian Jordanians of the West Bank and Jordanians of the East Bank (or, Transjordanians) – both referred to today as Jordanians. The former trace their ancestry to the West Bank of the Jordan river as well as the Gaza Strip and were granted citizenship in 1950. The latter trace their origin to the area East of the Jordan river, living primarily in traditional tribes across the country's rural northern and southern regions. They also occupy traditional positions of power within the government and state bureaucracy, including the military. While a discussion of these tensions is beyond the scope of this book, the Jordanian state has attempted to introduce various measures aiming to assimilate the Palestinian population, without necessarily giving it equal access to rights and services.

Beyond Palestinians, the 2003 Gulf War produced an exodus on an estimated 2 million Iraqis that sought shelter in neighbouring countries (Barnes 2009). Exact numbers of this refugee community vary, ranging from 750,000 Iraqi refugees in Jordan according to the Jordanian government to 450,000 according to UN estimates in 2008. 2010 estimates by the UNHCR put the figure of Iraqis in Jordan to 500,000-750,000 refugees (Qumri 2012), with Jordan later claiming that the actual number was 450,000-500,000 (Gibson 2015). Generally middle- or upper-class, Iraqis in Jordan were able to purchase homes in Jordan and to recreate their businesses there (El-Abed, 2014). A smaller number of them were lower middle-class families, settling in East Amman and Zarqa, who depended on aid and assistance from local NGOs supported by the

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UNHCR. According to the November 2015 census, 130,911 Iraqis lived in Jordan, with 42,941 of them classified as refugees (Winckler, 2019, p. 41). While they were given access to health services and public schools, Iraqis in Jordan were never officially granted refugee status, instead recognised as temporary guests.¹

Not unlike Palestinian refugees, Iraqis have also faced a number of problems within Jordan. They are often targeted as causing unemployment and inflation inside Jordan (El Dardiry 2017). The Jordanian state has responded to this influx in a number of ways, which will be explained in detail below: from February 2007 onwards, Jordanian border authorities began restricting access to Iraqis, forbidding entry to male Iraqis between the ages of 20 and 40 (Mokbel 2007), restrictions that were not applied to wealthier Iraqis. At the same time, there has been considerable disagreements with regard to the precise number of Iraqi refugees, with the Jordanian state accused of seriously inflating their numbers. Finally, the influx of Iraqi refugees coincided with the Jordanian government's introduction of quotas in terms of international humanitarian programmes, which would benefit both Jordanian and Iraqi populations alike, something that has been repeated in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis.

Syrians first started seeking shelter in northern Jordan following the violent clashes in Syria in March 2011. Jordan broadly implemented an open-door policy until 2013, allowing Syrians to be self-settled until July 2012 (Dorai 2017). This was due partly to the existence of a pre-war bilateral non-visa regime that allowed for the free entry of Syrians through the Jordanian border (ILO, 2015). From January to April 2013, only 300 Syrians were allowed per day. The majority of these refugees were able to self-settle across Jordan; in 2015, the Ministry of Interior led a process of issuing new security cards to all Syrian refugees outside camps, which forced refugees to visit police stations in order to apply for, and renew the card, on an annual basis in order to be eligible to reside in Jordan or to have a work permit. Some 418,063 cards were issued (Lenner & Turner, 2018). Other Syrians would be hosted in a variety of camps across the country: the King Abdullah Park was the first to be built for approximately 1,000 refugees; the Emirates Jordanian Camp and the Azraq Camp were constructed in 2013 and 2014, respectively, for a total capacity of 40,000 refugees. UNHCR helped construct the Zaatari Camp in 2012, which reached approximately 200,000 refugees by April 2013. That said, Jordan continued to differentiate its policy with regard to refugees'

¹ Author interviews, Norwegian Refugee Council (Jordan) – April 2019.

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nationality: from October 2012 onwards, Jordan refused to allow any Palestinians to enter from Syria – by then, some 7,000 Palestinians had gained entry into Jordan.² Many were either forced back to Syria, or enclosed in facilities like the CyberCity refugee camp: from there, they would be able to leave only to return to Syria, unless they secured a Jordanian sponsor (Soh et al., 2016). This flexible process of bailout was extended to Syrian citizens seeking to leave refugee camps until mid-2014 and will be explained in detail below.

A shift occurred from mid-2013 onwards, by which time the number of Syrian refugees in the country had reached half a million. From August 2013 onwards, Jordanian border authorities began denying entry to Syrians, causing thousands of them to be stranded on the Syrian side of the border (Blair and Watt 2013). By mid-2014, some 12,000 Syrians were stranded on the border, while Jordan shifted to a closed-door policy that stopped Syrians from arriving at its international airport or allowing more than 50 to 100 Syrians to cross into the country. As a result, a number of informal displacement camps were set up along south-eastern Syria, controlled by the Jordanian army. With regard to Syrians living outside camps, the bailout process was effectively frozen from 2014 onwards, and was formally suspended in February 2015. Any Syrian caught without a security card would be relocated to a refugee camp. The decision to construct refugee camps and to complicate refugee's ability to leave them or to settle in urban areas arguably has a distinct security component, as well as a political one – given the country's previous experience with Palestinian refugees. At the same time, however, it has a distinctly refugee rentier dimension that will be detailed below.

Table 1 – Major refugee movements to Jordan

Date	Origin of forced migrants	Estimated numbers
1948	Palestinians from Palestine	c. 450,000
1967	Palestinians from West Bank and Gaza	c. 350,000
1990-92	Jordanian nationals of Palestinian origin from Kuwait and other Gulf states	c. 300,000
1990-2007	Iraq	160,000 – 700,000
2011 - present	Syria	660,000 – 1,300,000

Source: Lenner (2016)

² Author interviews, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Jordan) – April 2019.

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The Jordanian state has been examined as a semi-rentier state as, for much of its history, it has relied on external aid – either by the British or, more recently, the Americans as well as the oil-producing monarchies of the Persian Gulf (Brynen, 1992; Peters & Moore, 2009). Lacking abundant natural resources, Jordan has been adept at taking advantage of its strategic geopolitical position in the Middle East, its management of Islamist political actors, as well as its role in the Arab-Israeli Conflict in order to secure external rent up until today. Upon Abdullah's acceptance of the throne in 1921, the British Colonial Office supported him with a monthly subsidy of £5,000. These subsidies grew to around £100,000 per year by the mid-1920s, and they reached around £2 million by the mid-1940s (Brynen, 1992). As Brand calculates, from 1924 to 1944, over half of Transjordan's government revenues came in as grants-in-aid from abroad, namely from the British Treasury (Brand, 1988, pp. 156–7). British and – later on – American support continued into the 1950s, with foreign grants accounting for approximately 30 per cent of all government revenue and between one fifth and one third of GDP between 1952 and 1966. From 1967 to 1972, foreign grants accounted for 58 per cent of all government revenue (Mazur, 1979), never falling below 55 per cent for the rest of the decade, and continuing until today. A closer examination of the Kingdom's treatment of Syrian refugees demonstrates the extent to which Jordan also constitutes a refugee rentier state – one that is developing specific policies in order to attract international economic aid. This section highlights a range of policies developed by governmental actors, culminating on the signing and implementation of the 2016 Jordan Compact.

The signing of the Jordan Compact was the culmination of a turbulent relationship between the Jordanian state and Syrian refugees. As detailed above, despite a welcoming policy over the first two years, Jordan created the Directorate of Security Affairs for the Syrian Refugee Camps in March 2013 and, two months later, closed its border crossings with Syria, even to those carrying valid passports (Syrians do not need a visa for entry into Jordan). Palestinian Syrians, in particular, had been denied entry since April 2012, and officially since January 2013 (Human Rights Watch, 2014). A number of security reasons have been identified for these border closures that highlight the potential risks for socio-political unrest that a large influx of Palestinian-

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Syrians into the country might entail.³ A state security rationale does not, however, adequately-account for the fact that Jordanian border officers prompted Syrians to enter the country via informal crossings: at numerous times in the first three years of the Syrian Civil War, Jordan's formal borders were closed to Syrian passport-holders, who were encouraged to use informal border crossings along the eastern border, instead.⁴

While state security concerns were important for domestic policymakers, the shift in Jordan's policy on border crossings reflected state elites' refugee rent-seeking behavior and was primarily aimed at increasing the international visibility of the Syrian refugee issue. Those entering the country through informal crossing points are automatically recognized as *prima facie* refugees, according to the 1998 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Jordan and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. As a result, with the contribution of aid workers, local authorities were able to classify all Syrians entering into Jordan as refugees, rather than visitors. Syrians entering through informal crossing points were directly sent to the Za'atari refugee camp, near Mafraq. Whereas, in November 2012 Za'atari hosted some 45,000 Syrians, by February 2013 it was home to over 76,000 Syrians, a number that reached 156,000 refugees by 11 March 2013. This strategy enabled the Jordanian state to highlight that it was facing a clearly enumerated influx of Syrian refugees, and to strengthen its appeals for international aid. The Jordanian security official in charge of the Azraq refugee camp, which was constructed in May 2014, notes that 'if we hadn't built the camps, then the world would not understand that we were going through a crisis' (Betts et al., 2017, p. 9). As Turner argues, 'part of the reason why Jordan built camps for Syrians is that it used encampment strategically to enable it to raise the profile of, and receive funds for, Syrian refugees on its territory' (Turner, 2015, p. 393). In fact, Jordan insists that the number of Syrians inside its territory well exceeds the number of those formally-registered: whereas the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] puts forth approximately 655,500 Syrians registered with the United Nations inside Jordan, the government argues that Jordan hosts 1.3 million Syrians in 2017.

A strong indication of Jordan's refugee rent-seeking behavior lies in its treatment of earlier forced displacement, particularly Iraqi refugees that had entered its territory

³ Author interviews, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Jordan) – April 2019.

⁴ Author interviews, Syrian refugees residing in Amman – April 2019.

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after 2003. By 2007, UNHCR estimated that Jordan hosted approximately 50,000 registered Iraqis, but officials would claim that the number was closer to one between 750,000 and 1 million. This would cost the Jordanian state \$1bn annually. An independent report by Fafo, a Norwegian research institute commissioned by Jordan to establish an accurate estimate, produced a figure of 161,000 Iraqis, but the Jordanian government continued to inflate this figure. 'We used to exaggerate the numbers with the Iraqis, but we do not do that anymore,' one high-ranking Jordanian official admitted, carefully noting that 'we are not exaggerating the Syrian numbers' (Arar, 2017a, p. 14). At the same time, Jordan did not place Iraqis into camps, which has been identified as working 'strongly against Jordan's attempts to secure increased financial aid' (Turner, 2015, p. 393). Camps can turn refugees into a visible and 'spatially legible population' (Petee, 2011: 18) and facilitate the counting of refugees, which in turn can facilitate fundraising (Harrell-Bond, 1998); in Jordan's case, the Iraqis were less-visible to the international community, a fact that Jordanian policy-makers became quickly aware of.⁵

A number of additional Jordanian responses to Syrian refugees have been developed under a refugee rent-seeking rationale, particularly the July 2014 "bail out" process. According to this policy, Syrian refugees are permitted to exit their assigned camps only when they are able to secure a sponsorship from a Jordanian citizen, who has to be over 35 years of age, married, and employed in a stable position. The Jordanian sponsor should also be able to prove a family relationship with the applicant, and to not have a criminal record (Amnesty International, 2013). While reliable data on this is not available, the Jordanian state's adoption of a "bail out" process has encouraged phenomena of corruption and greed in the dealings between Syrian refugees and the Jordanian social body: numerous instances have been recorded of well-off Syrians that have been able to "buy" their way out of refugee camps in Jordan, for hefty prices. The UNHCR has recorded instances of Syrians paying middlemen around \$500 in order to be bailed out by unknown Jordanian citizens (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2013, p. 8), or whose escape is organized by smugglers. Once they were out, they were told, according to a security officer that they are able to 'go to police station, take an iris scan and get the ID, and you will be fine. You can be free and legal' (Mencütek, 2018, p. 199). The fact that Jordan has cancelled this

⁵ Author interviews, El-Karama NGO officials (Jordan) – April 2019.

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scheme in 2016, arguably once camp-enclosed Syrians that have been able to afford a Jordanian sponsor concluded such transactions, speaks to the state's refugee rentier mentality.

With regard to foreign policy decision-making, the Jordanian refugee rentier state relies upon securing refugee rent from the EU and the broader international community. EU-Jordan relations expanded significantly since the 2002 EU-Jordan Association agreement that focused on establishing a free trade area, as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy; the EU is Jordan's traditional largest trading partner – ahead of the US, Saudi Arabia, and China (European Commission, 2020). Jordan is also a member of the Union for the Mediterranean, but it was the negotiations around the Jordan Compact that placed refugee management in the forefront of the EU-Jordanian relations. In February 2016, Jordan argued for a 'holistic' approach to manage the 'spillover' of the Syrian refugee crisis to its economy in the context of the London Donor Conference. A subsequent International Compact for Jordan (co-chaired by Germany, Kuwait, Norway, Qatar and the United Kingdom and a number of international institutions) agreed to disburse \$700 million of grants in 2016-18 and up to \$300 million in loans. In the context of this agreement, the EU adopted the Jordan Compact on 19 December 2016, annexed to a political declaration, the EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities (Panizzon, 2019).

A key concern for parties involved was the creation of 200,000 employment opportunities for Syrians within Jordan over a 3- to 5-year period. Jordan also agreed to lift regulatory barriers in allowing refugees to work within the country, and to lower work permit charges for those seeking low-skilled work from 700 Jordanian dinars to 10 Jordanian dinars. The Compact put forth three broader aims:

1. Turning the Syrian refugee crisis into a development opportunity that attracts new investments and opens up the EU market with simplified rules of origin, creating jobs for Jordanians and Syrian refugees whilst supporting the post-conflict Syrian economy;
2. Rebuilding Jordanian host communities by adequately financing through grants to the Jordan Response Plan 2016-2018, in particular the resilience of host communities; and
3. Mobilizing sufficient grants and concessionary financing to support the macroeconomic framework and address Jordan's financing needs over the next three years, as part of Jordan entering into a new Extended Fund Facility program with the IMF' (Government of Jordan, 2016).

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The contribution to the Jordan Response Plan referred to a funding package that aimed to support Jordanian capacity to host refugees that, by 2016, had only reached 30% of its target. In London, \$700 millions of grants were raised with the expectation that additional pledges will provide an additional \$700 million in 2017 and 2018. At the same time, the World Bank adopted the Concessional Financing Facility [CFF], which provided \$147 million in low-interest loans, available only to middle-income, refugee-hosting countries. Interestingly, although drafted within the context of the donor conference on Syria, the Compact identified that 'a new paradigm is necessary, promoting economic development and opportunities in Jordan to the benefit of Jordanians and Syrian refugees' (*Ibid.*). In particular, as Betts et al. argue, Jordan secured support for its wish to boost its manufacturing sector by integrating refugees into Special Economic Zones: 'By allowing refugees to work in the SEZs, Jordan hopes to attract the additional support needed to make its own national development strategy work' (Betts et al. 2017, 10) This was possible via tariff-free access to the European Union market for goods produced within SEZs with a certain degree of Syrian participation (15%) and provided Jordan issues 200,000 work permits to Syrians.

The provision of economic aid to the Jordanian government via the Jordan Compact in response to the Syrian refugee crisis is undisputed, with little doubt that the international community's support was due to Western states being 'keen to institute measures that might help to stem the flow of refugees to Europe,' as the *Financial Times* put it (Reed 2017). While international aid to Jordan was linked to its treatment of the Syrian refugee population, Jordanian elites also perceived of this revenue as contributing to the country's economic development, within the broader aim of "turning the crisis into an opportunity" – in other words, to function as a form of refugee rent. It is important to note that this discourse was espoused by World Bank policy-makers, as well as the international community. Franck Bousquet, the World Bank Director for Regional Programs and Partnerships in the Middle East and North Africa, argued:

'It is critical that today we begin to finance projects to support vulnerable populations in Jordan and Lebanon ... these countries have made enormous sacrifices to meet the global responsibility of providing refuge from conflict, and it is vital that the international community unite to provide the long-term support that will help them both withstand shocks and continue to develop and prosper' (World Bank 2016).

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This narrative was immediately picked up by local elites and policy-makers. Jordan understands how 'the idea of turning the challenge of refugees into an economic opportunity is based on the protracted nature of the crisis,' according to Imad Fakhoury, Jordanian Minister of Planning and International Cooperation (Financial Times, 2017) In mid-2016, as the EU relaxed trade rules with Jordan in order to create jobs for Syrian refugees, the Jordanian Planning Minister hailed this as 'an opportunity to transform the Syrian refugee crisis to an economic opportunity' (Reuters, 2016). As Saleh Kharabsheh, Secretary General at the Jordanian Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, argued; '[The CSS] will play a significant role in contributing to building the resilience of Jordan's host communities and boost economic growth so that we are able to provide basic services and economic opportunities to both Jordanians and Syrian refugees' (World Bank 2016). By February 2016, once Jordanian policy-makers perceived international economic aid as serving the country's broader developmental goals rather than merely addressing the Syrian refugee crisis, Jordan embodied a refugee rentier state.⁶

In its negotiations with the international community, Jordan highlighted the importance of multilateral action and cooperation in dealing with the effects of the Syrian refugee crisis in their country: 'in a country of 6.6 million Jordanians, we have opened our doors to 1.3 million Syrians fleeing violence in their homeland,' Queen Rania declared at the 2016 United Nations Summit on Refugees and Migrants, providing an inflated estimate that is unsubstantiated by the UNHCR, 'just as we have opened our doors in the past to Palestinians, Iraqis, and others seeking a safe haven.' She concluded by arguing that, in view of Jordanian generosity, 'it cannot fall to the countries closest to the conflicts to shoulder this responsibility alone' ('Queen Rania's Speech at UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants', 2016). In the 2013 UN General Assembly, King Abdullah argued that Jordan 'cannot be asked to shoulder the burden of what is a regional and global challenge [for] not even the strongest global economies could absorb this demand on infrastructure and resources, let alone a small economy and the fourth water-poorest country in the world.'

But there is little doubt that Jordanian elites aimed to reap economic benefits from hosting Syrian migrants – for one official, 2016 (the year of the Jordan Compact) was 'Jordan's golden year' (Arar, 2017b, p. 308). In fact, as Jordan's 2015 appeal for

⁶ Author interviews, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Jordan) – April 2019.

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international aid received less than a quarter of its £2.9bn goal (The Guardian, 2015), the rhetoric intensified. King Abdullah would repeatedly state how cooperation would be a win-win strategy. In a February 2016 interview with the BBC, he asserted that:

'[the international community,] they realise that if they don't help Jordan it is going to make it more difficult for them to be able to deal with the refugee crisis. And, to be honest, all the leaders that we talk to know that by helping Jordan, they are actually helping themselves more. So it is in their vested interests ... I think the leaders of the international community have the spirit to help us' (BBC, 2016a).

At the same time, King Abdullah addressed his appeals towards the international community, and adopted cooperative language: 'the international community, we've always stood shoulder to shoulder by your side' he declared in February 2016. 'We're now asking for your help, you can't say no this time,' he said (BBC, 2016b). Abdullah aimed to highlight the plight of Jordan, rather than raise threats against other states: in a September 2016 television interview, Abdullah argued how 'unemployment is skyrocketing. Our health sector is saturated. Our schools are really going through difficult times. It's extremely, extremely difficult. And Jordanians are just have had it up to here. I mean we just can't take it anymore' (CBS, 2016). Ahead of a donor conference on Syria in February 2016, King Abdullah became more blunt: 'I think it's gotten to a boiling point ...sooner or later, I think, the dam is going to burst,' he warned; 'we can't do it anymore' (BBC, 2016b).

While the ongoing implementation of the Jordan Compact prevents complete analysis, the compact model has already run into specific problems: for one, the negotiations leading to the Jordan Compact were based on the expectation that 200,000 employment opportunities will be provided for Syrian refugees, as a way of reducing their dependence on aid. In practice, this has been difficult given a slower-than-expected economic growth since 2016, high unemployment, as well as a lack of interest in investing in Jordan's business sector.⁷ By July 2017, only 60,000 work permits had been issued. This has resulted in significant tension between Jordan and the international donors, which was further fueled by the Jordanian Ministry of Labor to allow each Syrian to carry more than one work permit. In an attempt to reach the 200,000-mark, the Jordanian government argued that work permits do not represent individuals: 'the permits are work opportunities,' explained one Ministry official, 'it is

⁷ Author interviews, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (Jordan) – April 2019.

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possible for a Syrian to have more than one permit in a year if he has more than one job' (Betts et al., 2017, p. 11).

At the same time, the effort to meet the requirements of the international community and to not jeopardize refugee rent inflows, Jordan has resorted to the tightening of restrictions on other migrant groups' employment within Jordan, namely the country's 500,000 to 1 million Egyptian workers.⁸ In June 2016, the Ministry of Labor ceased recruitment of foreign migrant labor, except domestic workers citing 'the consequences of the Syrian refugee crisis and the entry of large numbers of Syrian refugees to the labor market' (Abaza, 2016). While Jordanian migration diplomacy has attempted to leverage the status of Egyptian workers within the country against Egypt before (Tsourapas 2018), it is the first time that Egyptians are discriminated against in the scramble to secure employment for Syrian refugees. For Linda al-Kalash, the director of Tamkeen, a legal aid and support center for migrant workers, 'we are seeing a huge campaign to expel Egyptians' (Ellouk, 2017). This has resulted in tight controls over Egyptians' paperwork by Jordanian authorities: according to Ahmed el-Sayed, an Egyptian construction worker in Amman, 'Three people were killed last week [August 2016] because they were running from the police ... they were working at a construction site when the police came, and in an attempt to escape they jumped from the third floor and eventually died' (Abaza, 2016). For Ahmed Awad, the director of the Phenix Center for Economics & Informatics Studies in Amman:

'If Egyptian workers were already vulnerable and living in precarious situations, the Jordanian government's resolution at the international donors conference in London to issue work permits to 200,000 Syrians (at no cost to employers) within two years further exacerbated the situation' (*Ibid.*).

Conclusion

With forced migration generating tensions in global politics and varied responses by host states, these agreements have come to the forefront of academic and policymakers' discussions in terms of strategies of managing displacement. In an attempt to shed light on how a key host state of Syrian refugees has managed this 'crisis,' this working paper focused on the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. By

⁸ Author interviews, El-Karama NGO officials (Jordan) – April 2019.

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contextualizing Jordanian policy responses historically, it has shed light on the range of refugee rent-seeking practices and strategies adopted by state elites. It continues to place the signing of the 2016 Jordan Compact within this framework, focusing on the intricacies of the multilateral agreement aiming at providing economic support to the country in exchange for continuing to host Syrian refugees. Finally, it analysed how the Jordan Compact may have contributed to cases of refugee rentierism across the Kingdom, with a particular focus on the status of other migrant groups within it, such as unskilled and low-skilled Egyptian labourers.

Moving beyond the case of Jordan, the popularity of 'refugee compacts' and 'migration deals' is now arguably global: beyond the Middle East, it is evident across the world, from the United States' evolving relationship with Mexico and Central American migrant transit countries to Australia's financing of offshore detention centers in Nauru and other small Pacific island-states. Between 2013 and 2014, the EU concluded 'Mobility Partnerships' with Morocco, Tunisia, and Jordan that offered certain perks to these states in return for securitizing irregular migration and refugee flows in the European periphery. In 2019, Ethiopia signed on to a new 'Jobs Compact,' a \$500-million program that aims to create 100,000 jobs for Ethiopians and refugees, which has been hailed as the latest example of the international community providing economic support to states most severely affected by forced migration.

Framed in language that encourages a developmentalist – or, some would argue, neoliberal (Adamson & Tsourapas, 2019) – view of the management of forced migration, these agreements embody Global North states' keenness to externalize and outsource migration management beyond their geographical borders. Yet, there are distinct implications in the adoption of an instrumentalist, development-centred strategy to govern forced displacement, particularly with regard to the commodification of refugee communities: the extent to which "migration deals" constitute a panacea to refugee burden-sharing problems is debatable. Beyond encouraging refugee rent-seeking behaviour across host states of first asylum located across the Global South, refugee commodification hints at the precarious state of global migration governance.

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