Helpdesk Research Report

Refugee, IDP and host community radicalisation

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Question

What makes people affected by armed conflict – in particular IDPs, refugees and their hosts – become radicalised? How does humanitarian aid contribute or not? With a particular reference to the Middle East.

Contents

1. Overview

The perception that refugees are inherently prone to political violence is rooted in a number of prominent cases in which armed groups based in refugee camps carried out cross-border attacks that set off larger conflicts. These include Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, Afghan refugees in Pakistan in the 1980s and the radical Rwandan Hutu militias in the refugee camps of eastern Zaire (Doar and Krauss, 2013). These situations gave prominence to the 'refugee warrior' phenomenon (a term coined by Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguayo). It recognises that refugees are not merely a passive, dependent group but can be actor-subjects, with a political leadership structure and armed sections engaged in warfare to

achieve political goals. These cases also resulted in recognition that humanitarian aid can exacerbate conflict. Despite these examples of refugee engagement in political violence, a study conducted by Lischer (2005) finds that in reality, very few refugee situations generate such violence. There are many other examples of cases in which refugees have not participated in political violence.

This report looks at factors that can help to explain why refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) may become militarised or radicalised[1] in some situations and not others. Where available, it makes note of the involvement of humanitarian assistance (although most of this discussion is contained in the section on external factors). There is limited discussion in the literature on the specific role that humanitarian aid has played in these various factors apart from generalities. The factors discussed are:

Socioeconomic conditions: In some circumstances, poor socioeconomic conditions (e.g. impoverishment, unemployment, lack of access to services and infrastructure, over-crowded living conditions) may make it more likely for refugees/IDPs to become radicalised. However, Lischer (2005) finds instead that there is generally little evidence to support the connection between particular socioeconomic conditions and refugee violence. Drawing on a case study of camps in Dadaab, Kenya, for Somali refugees, Martin-Rayo (2013) finds that good quality education is a key factor in countering the risk of radicalisation. A study on Gulu town, Uganda, finds that continued close connections of IDPs with their families and those they lived with before displacement resulted in internal social regulation and lack of resort to violence among Gulu's displaced population.

Political factors:

- *Voice and grievance mechanisms*: lack of outlets for the peaceful expression of refugee/IDP voices and their exclusion from political processes may encourage violence as this may be seen as the only way in which the displaced can be heard. In addition, the lack of effective grievance mechanisms can result in misclassification of ordinary political engagement as radicalisation.

- *Circumstances of expulsion*: Lischer (2003; 2005) identifies three categories of refugees based on their cause of flight: situational refugees; persecuted refugees; state-in-exile refugees. Persecuted refugees are more vulnerable to propaganda and manipulation than are situational refugees. State-in-exile refugees (e.g. Rwandan Hutus in Zaire; Afghans in Pakistan) are the most likely to engage in military violence as an extension of pre-existing conflict. Other scholars have contributed additional criteria to explain whether refugees/IDPs are likely to become militant, such as the socioeconomic status of those who fled; political motivation in the form of an ethno-nationalist project focused on the country of origin; and economic motivation toward the country of origin.

- *Host capability and will*: where the capability and will of receiving states to secure borders and demilitarise refugees are both high, the risk of refugee/IDP violence should be lower; where capability and will are low, conflict and the misuse of humanitarian aid as a tool of war is likely.

Impact on host communities: Refugees/displaced persons have the potential to destabilise host communities in various ways, including directly by participating in attacks; indirectly by changing the demographic (ethnic or sectarian) composition of host communities; and indirectly by imposing a heavy

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[1] Militarisation describes 'non-civilian attributes of refugee populated areas, including inflows of weapons, military training, and recruitment. Militarization also includes actions of refugees or exiles who engage in non-civilian activity outside the refugee camp, yet who depend on assistance from refugees or international organisations' (see Lischer, 2006). Radicalisation involves 'the social processes by which people are brought to condone, legitimize, support, or carry out violence for political or religious objectives' (see Ladbury, 2009).

economic and social burden on local communities (e.g. driving up rents; competing for employment; and drawing on limited social services). These conditions can produce resentment among local host populations and could, alongside extreme refugee deprivation, create the background for future clashes and conflict. Negative perceptions of refugees/IDPs can also result in harsh constraints placed on these populations. Mistreatment of refugees/IDPs can become a grievance against which refugee/IDP communities unite.

Protracted situations: If refugee/IDP crises become protracted, there is a greater likelihood that refugees/displaced persons will become involved in political violence and be susceptible to militant recruitment. Over time, refugees can develop into a highly organised and militant states-in-exile. In addition, protracted situations result in reduced expectations for the future, increasing feelings of hopelessness, and desperation among refugees/displaced person. Further, host societies are likely to become less hospitable the longer a refugee/IDP crisis lasts.

Geographic factors and camp design: There are concerns that the establishment of refugee/IDP camps in some situations can undermine security, particularly if they become organised along sectarian lines. Even if refugees/IDPs are not concentrated into camps, they may still concentrate in particular neighbourhoods, which could contribute to violence.

External factors: Humanitarian assistance can be essential in countering the desperation and plight of refugees and IDPs that can render them susceptible to recruitment by militant actors. Aid can exacerbate conflict, however, by feeding militants; sustaining and protecting the militants' supporters; contributing to the war economy; and providing legitimacy to combatants. Humanitarian organisations can choose to ignore the militarisation; attempt to improve security; or reduce the level of assistance available for manipulation. Humanitarian organisations may also inadvertently create or exacerbate tensions between refugee/IDP populations and host communities by providing services and aid solely to refugee/displaced persons. Assistance should also benefit local populations in order to prevent local resentment.

Donor states can contribute to security by providing resources to receiving states that may by incapable to prevent militarisation of refugees/IDPs. In other cases, external actors may actively support militant activity by refugees, for example U.S. support for the militarisation of Afghan refugees in the 1980s.

2. Socioeconomic conditions

Living conditions and employment

Most refugee/IDP crises occur in the poorest regions of the world, with immense material hardship experienced by refugees and IDPs (Holzer 2012). **Some argue that poor socioeconomic conditions can make it more likely for refugees/IDPs to become radicalised**. Hutson, Long & Page (2009) find that some Palestinian refugees living in poverty-stricken camps in Lebanon, with minimal opportunities, have exhibited an attraction to radical Islam, which has not occurred among the better-integrated Palestinian community living outside the camps. Hanafi and Long (2010) argue that the negative effects of confinement and overcrowding in these camps, including feelings of despair, are likely to lead to chaos.

In the case of Iraqi refugees, Leenders (2010) states that extreme deprivation (impoverishment, lack of access to higher education, and limited employment opportunities) fuels grievances, particularly among youth. This, combined with growing resentment within some host communities (see impact on host communities section) could trigger future clashes and conflict, possibly of a sectarian nature. Within Iraq, the displacement of Iraqis is occurring in a context of high unemployment, decreased access to basic food

rations, clean water, sanitation and electricity. Ferris (2008) claims that although there is no evidence that IDPs are being recruited into militias in a greater proportion than other Iraqis, the greater likelihood of IDPs being unemployed that those not displaced makes them particularly vulnerable. In order to counter this vulnerability and security risk, she calls for sufficient humanitarian assistance to ensure that IDPs have livelihoods and access to education and health services. Lischer (2008) also emphasises that in the case of Iraq, where refugees and IDPs are mainly concerned about food, shelter, health care and education, humanitarian assistance plays an essential role in minimising the influence of militant groups on refugees and displaced persons and pacifying anxious host states.

More generally, however, **Lischer (2005) finds that there is little evidence to support the common argument that particular socioeconomic conditions**, including poor living conditions and the presence of bored, young men among the refugees, **are correlated with refugee violence**. **She finds political factors to be more relevant** (see sections of conditions of flight; host capability and will; and external factors). Allen (2010) observes that Somali refugees, living in very poor conditions in camps in Dadaab, Kenya, and facing high rates of crime and violence, were not themselves inclined to organise into armed groups.

Education

Martin-Rayo (2013) also finds that poverty, lack of employment opportunities and the presence of idle youth have not resulted in radicalisation and terrorist recruitment of those in the camps in Dadaab. He considers **good quality education to be a key factor in countering the risk of radicalisation**. Those who have received even a little education are more inclined to view violence negatively and to be less susceptible to ideological brainwashing by extremist groups. He compares their situation to that of Somalis living in a small refugee camp in Kharaz, Yemen, who experience institutionalised discrimination in education (e.g. language barriers, corrupt payments, violence targeting only Somali students). Some of these students, who expressed a sense of desperation, openly identified their desire to join al-Qaeda upon graduation. In light of these findings, Martin-Rayo (2013) concludes that a well-rounded education, even if for short duration, is a key factor in reducing radicalisation of refugee/displaced populations and that the international community should develop protocols for education in camps alongside established protocols for food, clothing and shelter.

Social ties

A study on displaced populations in Gulu Town, Uganda, attributes the relative stability of the town – despite the massive influx of uprooted rural Acholi people – in part to social ties. The displaced were often tightly connected to their families and those they lived with before displacement, resulting in considerable **internal social regulation** among Gulu's displaced population (Branch, 2013). Over time, however, the new generation of displaced comprised those who are poor and had lost their family and social ties. This new dynamic has contributed to a rise in tensions that could in turn increase urban violence or provide a recruitment ground for government militias or rebels (Branch, 2013).

3. Political factors

Voice and grievance mechanisms

There has been a growing critique in recent years of the way in which humanitarian and aid agencies purport to speak on behalf of refugees and their tendency to represent refugees solely as helpless and lost.

This has resulted in the silencing of refugee voices and their exclusion from the design and implementation of interventions aimed at refugee communities (often undermining efficient and dignified programming) (see Hanafi and Long, 2010). In addition, they have been **left out of political processes**. Palestinian refugees, particularly the youth, have been critical of having no voice in the legal formulation of their status and say in either the Lebanese or Palestinian political processes that affect them (Hanafi and Long, 2010). In the case of Rwandan Hutu refugees, Perera (2013) finds that their exclusion from access to conventional political power/local governance structures in both their home country of Rwanda and their site of resettlement in eastern DRC has strengthened their conviction that they need to remain armed to survive. They continue to attempt to recruit Rwandans, who suffered from the refugee crisis (but who had not necessarily participated in the Rwandan genocide). In the case of Darfur, IDPs have regularly expressed concerns over the lack of access to the political process. Kahn (2008) argues that **the principle that camps are neutral spaces should not result in them being strictly apolitical**. Rather, the **failure to allow for the peaceful expression of political views may encourage violence** as this may be seen as the only way in which those displaced can be heard.

Further, the **lack of effective grievance mechanisms** and outlets to articulate different viewpoints – and the failure of humanitarian actors to institutionalise such practices – **can result in the misclassification of ordinary political engagement for radicalisation**. Acts that could otherwise be considered civic debate are seen as a social problem (Expert comments, E.H.). This in turn can result in problematic repression of such engagement. In a case study on a Liberian refugee camp in Buduburam, Ghana, Holzer (2012) points to inadequate grievance practices as a key factor behind the classification of social protests as 'criminal acts' and subsequence police crackdowns. Between 2007 and 2008, a group called Refugee Women with Refugee Concerns engaged in social protests (including a food boycott) to push for better migration choices. The ensuing police actions in the camp produced a marked rise in tensions between Liberians and Ghanaians in both Ghana and Liberia. In contrast, the demonstrations over repatriation held by Guatemalan refugees in Mexico produced a tolerant response from the Mexican hosts and resulted in their participation in peaceful negotiations with UNHCR and the Guatemalan government. The latter case, according to Holzer (2012) has been an exception.

Practitioners and policymakers need to **view refugees as actors who take independent political action**. This, Lebson (2013) argues could result in a **reconsideration of policies that seek to deter political activity and that instead aim to establish alternative opportunities for political agency**, such as town hall forums in camps and communities, refugee-run media, polling and traditional forms of political engagement unique to each group.

Circumstances of expulsion

The level of politicisation, or political cohesion, of the refugee group at the outset of the crisis, is considered by Lischer (2003) as a crucial factor in explaining the potential for refugee-related violence. It is possible to determine the level of political cohesion from the conditions of refugees' flight. Lischer (2003; 2005) identifies three categories of refugees based on their cause of flight:

- **Situational refugees** flee in order to avoid danger during large-scale violence and civil war. They are neither direct participants in nor direct targets of the violence – and have a willingness to return home as soon as possible. They have little political cohesion within the host states and do not involve themselves in political or military activities in support of either side of the conflict.

- **Persecuted refugees** are the target of ethnic cleansing, genocide, or other oppressive policies. Their experiences could generate a degree of political cohesion that could be conducive to

militarisation. They are **more vulnerable to propaganda and manipulation than are situational refugees**. Refugee or rebel leaders can draw on the experience of persecution to garner support for military activity. Persecuted refugees require political guarantees in order to be willing to return home.

- **State-in-exile refugees** are often **highly organized** (having fled with an existing political and military leadership) and use refugee protection as a strategy to avoid defeat in a civil war. They are the **most likely to engage in organized, military violence** as an extension of pre-existing conflict. While many of the refugees in this situation may have little desire to become involved in violence, militant leaders in control of information and the distribution of humanitarian aid can convince them of threats to their safety and the need to mobilise. State-in-exile refugees usually return home either in victory or due to forced repatriation.

One example is the Rwandan Hutu refugees in eastern Zaire (many of whom were part of the radical Hutu regime), following the 1994 genocide. The strong political organisation, exercised by the leaders, allowed for the diversion of large amounts of humanitarian assistance to support the conflict. The leadership in Rwandan Hutu camps fostered a belief in Hutu victimhood, drawing on fears created by examples of real injustices. Another example of the state-in-exile phenomenon is the Afghan refugees who fled to Pakistan after the Marxist military coup in Afghanistan in 1978 and subsequent Soviet invasion in 1979. The well organised and well-funded Afghan rebel groups lived among the refugees, recruiting new refugee arrivals as members and fighters. They organised attacks from Pakistan with the goal of destabilising and ultimately overthrowing the Soviet-backed government in Kabul. Similar to the case of the Rwandan camps, international humanitarian assistance contributed to the spread of conflict, as did the external support of donor governments (see section on External factors).

Refugees may change categories over time, particularly in protracted situations. Persecuted refugees can become more prone to violence as a leadership emerges and political and military organisation develops in exile. For example, the expulsion of Palestinians in 1948 resulted in the creation of a persecuted refugee group. Over time, however, organised militant groups, such as the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah) and the Palestinian Liberation Organization emerged among the refugees. Already being a persecuted group, Palestinian refugees were susceptible to militant recruitment, often drawing on perceived and real injustices (as in the case of Rwanda). Under the leadership of the militant groups, militarised refugee populations engaged in cross-border warfare against Israel. **In such situations, protracted refugee assistance can help to build and sustain a militarised population** (Lischer, 2003; Lebson, 2013).

Some scholars (e.g. Doar and Kraus, 2013; Leenders, 2010) have critiqued Lischer's breakdown of refugee types. They **argue that most conflicts are expected to produce all three types of refugees. Nonetheless, the typology has been widely applied to contemporary situations.**

According to Doar and Kraus (2013), while the refugees fleeing Syria are likely to fall under all three categories, anecdotal evidence indicates that many if not most of the refugees are situational, and thus less susceptible to militancy. Few have participated directly in the violence and although most refugees are Sunnis, there is little evidence that they were persecuted due to their religious identity. As the conflict drags on, and takes on a more extreme and religious tone, it is possible that more Syrians will flee based on sectarian grievances, falling into the category of persecuted refugees.

Leenders (2010) argues that in the case of the Iraqi refugee crisis (triggered by the 2003 US-led invasion and escalated by the outbreak of sectarian fighting in 2006), the refugees can be classified as persecuted refugees (fleeing at the hands of sectarian militias). In addition, the receiving states have questionable

capacity to rein in militancy, considered to be another risk factor (see section on host capability and will). However, despite widespread fears that Iraqi refugees would quickly become 'refugee warriors' or militarised, there has been virtually no political violence by these refugees in Jordan or Syria. **Leenders argues Lischer's categories are insufficient and that other factors are equally important.** In the case of Iraqi refugees, anecdotal evidence suggests that a large number of the refugees were middle-class professionals with minimal if any interest or involvement in the country's politics (Leenders, 2010). While many refugees had suffered sectarian attacks in Iraq, grievances were not typically explained by reference to religious groups (Paasche, cited in Doar and Krauss, 2013). In addition, a disproportionate number of Iraqi refugees (with the exception of those in Lebanon) were women, children and the elderly. Leenders (2010) emphasises the **importance of getting to know the specific characteristics and viewpoints of refugees before assuming that they will be a security threat**. Such assumptions risks stigmatising refugees, which can provide a rationale for host countries to restrict their rights.

Lebson (2013) finds that Lischer neglects **two additional important factors concerning whether refugees may become militarised: political motivation in the form of an ethno-nationalist project focused on the country of origin; and economic motivation toward the country of origin**. Should economic orientation be toward the host country, then there is less likelihood of militarisation. If living conditions are substantially worse for refugees than in the home country, this will serve as a constant reminder of the injustice that they have experienced, which could increase their motivation to support militancy.

Host capability and will

The policies of the receiving state and their level of capability and will to secure borders and demilitarise refugees are also considered by Lischer (2003; 2005) to be a key factor in whether refugee populations will engage in violence. Where capability and will are both high, violence should be lower; where capability and will are low, conflict and the misuse of humanitarian aid as a tool of war is likely.

Effective state responses include: policing refugee camps and separating militants from refugees; protecting aid supplies from diversion toward war goals; securing the border; and disarming and reintegrating willing militants into civilian population (Lischer, 2003). These responses require law enforcement, including possibly police or army action in the host state. Lischer (2003) notes, however, that the level of capability is often low in refugee crises since the majority of host states are developing countries with limited resources. **Lack of law and order in and around camps**, particularly those located in peripheral regions of the receiving state, and a **weak judicial system** to handle any militants or criminals among the refugees **can increase the likelihood of recruitment of refugees for military purposes**. During the Rwandan refugee influx in Zaire in the mid-1990s, for example, the eastern areas where refugees were located, had virtual autonomy from the faltering central government – resulting in the rise of capricious, greedy local leaders and militias. External assistance, such as an external intervener or a multilateral peace enforcement unit, can be essential in such cases (see section on External factors). In the case of the Dadaab camps in Kenya, which have housed Somali refugees, the UNHCR was able to negotiate with the Kenyan government to supply extra police. This helped to counter the low-capacity of the state and effectively lowered the level of violence in and around Dadaab camp (Allen, 2010).

Aside from capability, the **receiving state may not have the will** to impose political order and prevent military activity by refugees **if there are ethnic, sectarian or political ties between the refugees and groups in the receiving state**; and/or it actively sympathises with the refugees' goals. This was the case with Afghan refugees and their Pakistani hosts in the 1980s, resulting in a high level of militarisation and recruitment among the refugees (Lischer, 2006).

In the case of Lebanon, Doar and Krauss (2013) find that although it is not a strong state, there is a strong consensus among the major power brokers against civil unrest (due to the legacy of the civil war). This feature, alongside the strengthening of the Lebanese Armed Forces in recent years, should reduce the chances that the country would tolerate or encourage militancy among Syrian refugees fleeing to Lebanon during the recent conflict. The authors cautions that the treatment by Lischer of the receiving state treats as a unitary actor does not hold in the case of Lebanon, where the government is consociational.

In Iraq, Lischer (2008) finds that the government's failure to address the displacement crisis has created opportunities for militant groups to increase their influence by distributing assistance to IDPs in the form of social services and humanitarian aid. There is anecdotal evidence that this strategy has won the gratitude of desperate residents, resulting in a rise in both voluntary and involuntary recruitment among displaced populations.

4. Impact on host communities

Much of the literature outline the **destabilising effects that an influx of refugees/displaced persons can have on host communities/receiving states** (see Shaver, Zhou & Abdelaaty, 2014 for an overview). They can cause destabilisation in various ways:

- **Directly** by participating in terrorist **attacks**; **allying with domestic opposition** and providing them with mobilisation resources; or engaging in cross-border **transfer of combatants, weapons, and ideas**.

- **Indirectly** by imposing a **heavy economic and social burden**. Their presence and competition for jobs, housing, social services and other resources can drive wages down, push housing costs up and result in insufficient access to services and infrastructure on the part of local residents. These conditions **can foment resentment among local host populations, particularly if the situation continues for a long duration** (see section on Protracted situations).

- By **shifting the ethnic or sectarian composition of host communities**, which can be particularly problematic in societies with a precarious demographic balance and pre-existing ethnic or sectarian rivalries.

Although their study does not identify which (if any) of these hypothesized mediums may contribute more to destabilisation, Salehyan and Gleditsh (2006) find in the case of refugee flows, that the number of refugees from neighbouring countries has a significant effect on the onset of civil war in the host country (cited in Shaver, Zhou & Abdelaaty, 2014).

The **Middle East** has experienced many refugee flows over time and this affects the sentiment of host societies, who have received refugees in the past, toward further influxes of refugees. The region's **experience with Palestinian refugees strongly conditions the reactions of host governments and societies.** It contributed to concerns, particularly on the part of Jordan and Syria, that Iraqi refugees could destabilise much of the region and to statements by the governments of both countries that they would respond harshly to any militant action among the refugees (Lischer, 2008). Iraqi refugees were considered to be resource-poor, to harbour sectarian grudges and to have military experience (Ferris, cited in Lischer, 2008). This was not necessarily the composition, however, of the Iraqi refugees in question (see section above on circumstances of expulsion).

Hosts are also continually concerned about the economic burden imposed by refugee crises and the potential this has to cause violence between locals and refugees (Lischer, 2008). Leenders (2010) states

that members of host communities in Syria and Jordan perceive Iraqi refugees as responsible for their higher cost of living and worsening crime rates, while resenting the benefits refugees receive from declining state subsidies of basic commodities and aid. He cautions that **extreme refugee deprivation combined with growing resentment within some host communities could create the background for future clashes and conflict** that could take on a sectarian dimension. Lischer (2008) finds that in the case of Syria, economic strains have produced local resentment of Iraqis and dissatisfaction with the government. Internally in Iraq, local government and residents of communities housing displaced persons have also come to resent the drain on already limited social services caused by IDPs (Lischer 2008).

The recent Syrian refugee crisis has now added additional challenges to the region. Mikail (2013) stresses that Jordan in particular has been struggling to cope with the latest round of refugees and the additional costs to the country. He states that Jordanians are increasingly protesting against poor economic conditions and feel that the influx of Syrian refugees has further exacerbated the burden they have taken on in recent years for having admitted Iraqi and Palestinian refugees.

In the case of Lebanon, large-scale violence is considered unlikely (due to the greater likelihood of Syrian refugees being situational refugees and the willingness and growing capability of the Lebanese state to take control of security – discussed above in the sections on Circumstances of expulsion and Host capability and will). However, Doar and Krauss (2013) find that there is a greater risk of localised violence, particularly in border communities that are already caught in the Syrian crossfire. Many of the communities have lost their traditional trade routes and sources of income with border closures or limited access to borders. This, along with the increasing price of apartments and other basic goods due to the influx of Syrians, has produced much hardship for the already poor residents of host communities. Although there have not been reports of violence, a UNDP report found growing frustration and some resentment on the part of Lebanese hosts. This could be particularly problematic as increasing numbers of refugees (most of whom are from the Sunni majority) are changing neighbourhood dynamics. There are concerns of growing sectarian anger and fears that spontaneous local clashes could easily spread (Doar and Kraus, 2013).

Mikail (2013) states that at present, only Turkey seems capable of coping with the refugee inflows. The government of Turkey has been providing high-quality assistance to Syrian refugees and as in many refugee situations, the host populations have initially been sympathetic and welcoming. Despite initial support, Dinçer et al. (2013) caution that the longer the displacement lasts, the more likely tensions are to increase between refugees and local populations (see section on Protracted situations). Host communities along the border region have suffered economic losses due to constraints in trading routes, similar to the case of Lebanon. The price of basic goods has risen, and social services initially set up to assist the Turkish poor have been diverted to Syrian refugees. At the same time, however, Syrian refugees have brought in funds to the border regions that have been used to set up companies, producing economic benefits to the region. Dinçer et al. (2013) **advocate that alongside assessments of the economic cost of refugees, the benefits of their presence should also be determined.**

Mikail (2013) stresses that refugee issues must be managed properly in the region as the perceived burden that they constitute to hosting societies and the potential radicalisation of refugees are elements that Islamists and secularists could use to criticise each other. The persistence of refugee issues in the region could widen the divide between Islamists and secularists. Further, the question of IDPs and refugees in the region has, according to Mikail (2013), aggravated sectarian strife: in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, fighting between Sunnis and non-Sunnis is becoming more acute. This has reinforced the global perception that mass movements of populations are due to conflicts between Sunnis and non-Sunnis when in reality, most

refugees and IDPs are fleeing a political problem, which is then increasingly expressed through a sectarian lens.

The situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan provides another example of the toll that refugee influxes can place on host societies. Initially, refugees were treated with tremendous generosity by both the Pakistani government and local populations; however the sheer number of refugees and the protracted nature of their displacement gradually resulted in waning hospitality, particularly when international assistance began to dwindle (Schmeidl, 2002). Beginning in the late 1990s, Pakistan began to increasingly blame refugees for growing social ills in host communities, including crime, availability of weapons, drug abuse, prostitution, and the deterioration of the economy. Afghans were blamed for rising rents, lower wages and for taking jobs from local workers, resulting in ambivalent feelings and in some cases local resentment. These effects were given prominence over the benefits that urban Afghan refugees brought to the local economy; many opened small businesses and others provided cheap labour for Pakistani businesses (Schmeidl, 2002). The larger influx of Sunni Muslims from Afghanistan into the Northwestern Frontier Province border areas also resulted in a change in demographics, offsetting the preponderance of Shias. This contributed to existing tensions between Shia and Sunnis in Pakistan (Schmeidl, 2002)

Host perceptions and labelling of refugees/IDPs

As discussed above, many host populations have developed **negative perceptions of refugees, which can automatically taint their view of subsequent refugee flows.** Mikail (2013) emphasises the importance of understanding perceptions of refugees among populations in the Middle East and North Africa. The Lebanese, for example, generally have a negative perception of Palestinian and Syrian refugees. There is also evidence of this now in Turkey, aggravated by the car bombings in May 2013 in Reyhanli (one of the main Turkish crossing points for Syrian refugees). Egyptians also are reported to feel resentful towards Sudanese refugees.

In Lebanon, negative perceptions are driven in part by the view that Palestinians are more prone to commit crimes and that the camps that house them are dangerous, warranting the presence of checkpoints. Hanafi and Long (2010) find that these perceptions have been challenged by findings that some camps have lower crime rates and presence of weapons than in other areas of Lebanon. Palestinian **mistreatment as a result of these fears can in turn result in the creation of violent tendencies.** The humiliation of individual Palestinian refugees at army checkpoints in Lebanon and the cordoning off of many of the camps by the army can result in the perception of victimisation of the entire community. This has already contributed to the radicalisation of some young Palestinians, making them more likely to participate in acts of violence against the Lebanese state and its agents (Hutson et al. 2009, cited in Hanafi and Long, 2010).

In the case of Rwandan refugees, Perera (2013) cautions against labelling all members of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) as genocidaires, but rather to recognise the multi-dimensional nature of the group. **Viewing and treating all members of the group as the same can create a grievance against which to unite** – opening the door for FDLR hardliners who remain in the Congo to exploit the marginalisation and exclusion felt by more moderate members for their own ends.

5. Protracted situations

If refugee/IDP crises become protracted, there is a greater likelihood that refugees/displaced persons will become involved in political violence and be susceptible to militant recruitment. As discussed above, this could be the case because **over time, refugees can develop into a highly organised and militant state-**

in-exile (see section on circumstances of expulsion), as occurred with Palestinian refugee populations, who did not militarise until almost two decades in exile. After many years of exile, Afghan mujahideen were also able to organise the refugees into a state-in-exile, successfully launching an insurgency from their bases in Afghanistan. In addition, the longer a conflict situation lasts, the more likely it is that identity-related issues will emerge, also in the case of Palestinian refugees (Lebson, 2013).

Protracted situations also result in reduced expectations for the future, **increasing feelings of hopelessness, and desperation among refugees/displaced person**. These sentiments may make them more easily recruited by militarised actors (Lischer, 2006). Protracted situations can also result in a generation of children who have grown up in camps, never knowing their homeland, or peace. This, according to Schmeidl (2002) contributed to the rise of the Taliban. She advocates for **greater attention in such protracted situations to the issue of trauma and providing for emotional and psychological needs and for education**, alongside food and shelter.

Further, **host societies are likely to become less hospitable the longer a refugee/IDP crisis lasts**, as the economic and social drain of hosting refugees/IDPs becomes more pronounced (see section above on Impact on host communities). In such circumstances, the instability predicted in host communities is of a very different quality than that of the immediate and purported dangers attributed to refugee warriors infiltrating host societies. Rather the **instability is now thought to be caused by conflicts originating within the host societies as refugee grievances and host communities' resentments fail to be adequately addressed** (Leenders, 2010). Resentment on the part of host societies, alongside restrictions placed on refugee/IDP activities, can exacerbate a sense of desperation among refugees and IDPs. This, in turn, could make them more susceptible to political manipulation by extremists. Lischer (2008) finds that militant groups in Iraq have capitalised on this opportunity, offering shelter and protection to exiles and increasing recruitment activities in IDP settlements.

Lischer (2008) cautions that external actors and peacemakers should not adopt a 'wait-and-see' attitude and neglect to address refugee crises until there is a peace settlement. It is important to pay attention to displacement issues while the situation is still fluid.

6. Geographic factors and camp design

Shaver, Zhou & Abdelaaty (2014) find in their cross-national study that although there is no empirical support for the claim that refugee populations act as a mechanism through which conflict spreads, **camps that are labelled as 'temporary' by host governments are associated with higher likelihood of conflict onset than settlements of a more permanent nature**. This is despite the fact that in reality, the two are unlikely to differ to in terms of duration, demographic composition and aid assistance from international organisations. The authors theorise that this finding may be due to host governments avoiding granting permanent status to camps that have characteristics that make them more prone to produce localised conflicts; and because a **government's decision to deny permanent status to a refugee population may itself lead to conflict if the refugee community opposes such a policy and considers it a grievance**. The likelihood of conflict is even higher if the camp is located in more rugged areas.

There are concerns that the **establishment of refugee/IDP camps in some situations can undermine security**. In the case of Iraqi refugees and IDPs, the vast majority are not living in camps but rather have established themselves informally in urban areas. They are renting houses, living with family and friends or living in abandoned buildings. Ferrer (2008) and Lischer (2008) have cautioned that the establishment of camps could have negative security implications, primarily because large camps would likely be **organised**

along sectarian lines, making them vulnerable to attack by armed militias of other sectarian groups. Desperate camp conditions (as reported in existing IDP camps, such as high unemployment and poverty rates, inability to achieve self-sufficiency, overcrowding and lack of privacy) could also render residents more likely to engage in political violence. Large camps could become accessible places for recruitment of young men and children into militias, particularly if militias were to take on the administration of the camps, controlling food distribution and access to services (Ferris, 2008; Lischer, 2008). Doar and Krauss (2013) also state in relation to the conflict in Syria that the settlement of refugees in camps could make it easier for militants to recruit fighters and organise themselves. It could, however, also make it easier for local security forces to document and monitor refugees.

The creation of large-scale refugee camps does not necessarily mean that conflict is inevitable. Doar and Krauss (2013) emphasise the importance of other factors, such as the disposition of refugees, the presence or lack of an organised political/military movement among them, the extent to which local state authorities patrol camps, and the role of international actors in encouraging or dissuading militancy (see sections on Circumstances of expulsion; Host capability and will; and External factors).

Even if refugees/IDPs are not concentrated into camps, they may still concentrate in particular neighbourhoods. This, according to Lischer (2008) **could contribute to violence**. In both Jordan and Syria, for example, Iraqi refugees have re-created Iraqi neighbourhoods in exile. In Jordan, the Iraqi neighbourhood is commonly referred to as a 'hotbed of radicalism'. Although, these neighbourhoods have thus far avoided sectarian violence, Lischer (2008) cautions that this could change should radical groups strengthen their hold among exile groups. Leenders (2010) points out, however, that the clustering of Iraqi refugees is **not necessarily connected to 'sectarianism'**, but rather is better seen as a pragmatic, non-political strategy whereby newcomers rely on relatives and friends already living abroad.

Based on studies of Pakistan (Afghan refugees), Dadaab, Kenya (Somali refugees), Kharaz, Yemen (Somali refugees), Martin-Rayo (2008) finds that the **argument that encampment versus open camp policies have an effect on radicalisation is not valid**. In Pakistan, students living in closed camps seemed no more or less radicalised that those living outside in slums. Somali refugees in Kharaz face an open camp policy and can travel to urban areas to find employment, in contrast to Dadaab where there is a strict encampment policy; however, there is a higher degree of radicalisation among Somali youth in Kharaz than in Dadaab. As discussed earlier, Martin-Rayo (2008) attributes this largely to education (see section above on socioeconomic conditions).

7. External factors

In addition to examining the (i.) circumstances of expulsion; and (ii.) the capability and will of the receiving state, Lischer (2003; 2005)'s third layer of analysis concerns external actors. This includes both international humanitarian aid organisations, which in some cases can unintentionally provide aid to armed groups and contribute to fuelling conflict; and powerful states that have the ability to put pressure on receiving states to act in a particular manner (in some cases, to allow refugee militarisation) and/or provide them with resources to help manage the security risks.

Humanitarian aid

Humanitarian assistance can be essential in countering the desperation and plight of refugees and IDPs that can render them susceptible to recruitment by militant actors. Lischer (2008) advocated for a massive influx of humanitarian aid to Iraqi refugees/displaced persons to provide them with food, shelter, services

(including education) and other resources – and to avert concerns over their potential to destabilise the region.

There are **four key mechanisms**, according to Lischer (2003) **through which humanitarian aid in refugee crises can exacerbate conflict**. Refugee relief can:

- **Feed militants**: militants may hide among refugees, gaining access to food aid. Such was the case in the camps in Zaire that housed Hutu militants. In some cases, aid workers were unaware of their participation in the genocide; in other cases, aid workers intentionally provided food directly to militants, assuming that they would steal it from other refugees otherwise, or in the belief that their humanitarian mission entailed also feeding hungry warriors.

- **Sustain and protect the militants' supporters**: assistance relieves militants from having to provide goods and services to their supporters.

- **Contribute to the war economy**: relief resources may be diverted by militant leaders, who control the distribution process, to fund the war effort, as occurred in the case of Rwandan refugees.

- **Provide legitimacy to combatants**: humanitarian assistance can shape international opinion about the actors in a crisis. Aid to Rwandan refugees, for example, established a perception of the Hutu refugees as needy victims, obscuring their role as perpetrators in the genocide. In addition, humanitarian agencies often need to negotiate with rebel groups to access needy populations, which can also impart legitimacy.

Lischer (2003) emphasises that the above mechanisms do not operate in all refugee/IDP crises. The circumstances of refugee/IDP expulsion and receiving state capability and will (see sections above) help to explain why a refugee population may have a higher or lower propensity to use humanitarian assistance as a resource for war.

In cases where militarisation exists among refugee/IDP communities, Lischer (2003) outlines **three choices for humanitarian organisations: ignore the militarisation; attempt to improve security; or reduce the level of assistance available for manipulation**. Although humanitarian workers have chosen to ignore the militarisation in some cases, as in the case of Rwandan refugees, Lebson (2013) finds that in many cases, refugees are actively discouraged from political organisation and activity not only by their host state, but also by the international refugee regime – particularly the UNHCR. This may be achieved through the mere presence of the UNHCR and humanitarian organisations in the camp, bearing witness to abuses and advocating on behalf of vulnerable refugees (Lischer, 2006). In other instances, they may hire private forces or provide funds to train local forces. This tactic, however, has according to Lischer (2006) been ineffective in preventing militarisation. In addition, a focus on formal refugee/IDP camp security neglects the security of those living in informal settlements, squatter camps or dispersed among local residents.

Humanitarian organisations may also inadvertently create or exacerbate tensions between refugee/IDP populations and host communities. A common example given is the **provision of assistance solely to refugee/displaced persons, ignoring the often also dire situations of local residents**. In the case of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, for example, the majority of refugees are hosted in poor and disadvantaged areas of Lebanon. Services provided for free to refugees from Syria by humanitarian agencies, without equivalent treatment to poor Lebanese host communities, risks exacerbating perceived or real inequalities. Cash payments for rent/shelter to Syrian refugees, in the absence of payments to host families, who are incurring the costs of housing refugees, has been particularly controversial. Job creation programmes targeting Syrian refugees, amidst high Lebanese unemployment in poor areas, exacerbates the view that Syrians are responsible for Lebanese labour problems (Stamm, 2013). Lischer (2008) also emphasises in the

case of Iraqi refugees/displaced persons that **assistance should benefit both the local and displaced populations in order to prevent resentment by local residents**.

Donor states

Receiving states/communities may by incapable and/or unwilling to prevent militarisation of refugees/IDPs. In such situations, a powerful **external intervenor**, in the form of a regional state, a powerful donor state, or a multilateral peace enforcement unit, is **required to impose order** (see section on Host capability and will). In some cases, external actors are also unwilling to act. During the Rwandan refugee crisis, for example, no external actor was willing to pay the political and military price of separating the Rwandan militants from the refugees (Lischer, 2003).

In other cases, external actors actively support militant activity by refugees. For example, the U.S. supported Afghan refugees to militarise against their home country in the 1980s (Lebson, 2013; Lischer, 2003). This greatly **limited the scope for action by both the UNHCR and the host country**, Pakistan, which benefited from U.S. donations (Lischer, 2003). The support from the U.S. explains why the Afghan refugees became a source of violence in Pakistan but did not become militarised in Iran, where the fighters had much less support (see Doar and Krauss, 2013). The liberal camp set-up in Pakistan, which had charged refugees with the distribution of assistance, further facilitated militarisation (Schmeidl, 2002).

In contrast, Doar and Kraus (2013) find that external actors are not providing arms or other support to Syrian refugees warriors in Lebanon because arms are being provided largely to those on the front lines in Syria. This reduces the likelihood of militant activities among refugees. In addition, there is little risk of a massive humanitarian aid operation inadvertently sustaining militant refugees in Lebanon as Syrian refugees have largely been absorbed into host communities in Lebanon, thus receiving less international attention and humanitarian assistance.

In the case of Darfur, Kahn (2008) argues that the international community's focus on military responses to the conflict has exacerbated militarisation in the region. IDP camps in the region are very volatile, due largely to poor coordination, management and monitoring, which makes it difficult to provide adequate protection. The camps have become targets for attack by the government-allied militias. They have also become areas for rebel group activity and recruitment (Lischer, 2006), with no real attempts made by the international community to separate military from civilian elements (Kahn, 2008).

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