Chapter 11
Ecologies of Conflict and Coexistence in the Mediterranean: Seeking Refuge in post-war Lebanon

Tamirace Fakhoury and Miriam Aitken

11.1 Introduction

The Mediterranean has historically developed into a continuum of conflicts, connections, and entanglements (Tucker, 2019). Within this continuum, spaces of solidarity but also of struggle have deeply shaped the (un)making of borders, sovereignties, and governments. In a wider patchwork of "collective destinies" (Tucker, 2019, p. 2) that have nonetheless collided, the Eastern Mediterranean region, commonly framed as the Levant, has emerged as a diverse *geoscape* where states and societies have wrestled over the construction of borders and national pacts. A myriad of geopolitical and colonial dynamics has deeply marked the making and unmaking of such national pacts. Fairly young nation-states such as Lebanon, Syria, or Jordan were established in the context of longstanding struggles. Their post-colonial orders have contended with various political imaginaries over borders, citizenship, and otherness. In Lebanon, the 1943 National Pact or *Mithaq el Watani*, as Ussama Makdisi (1996) argues, comes as a historical development that not only seeks to establish the Lebanese nation-state but also to articulate a response to colonialism and citizenship in the context of dizzying struggles over sectarian representation. Similarly, in Jordan, struggles over the Hashemite Kingdom's identity in the context of contending tribal and regional allegiances have deeply shaped state-building (Valbjorn, 2019).

In addition to representing a complex terrain of shifting borders and belongings, the Levant has historically hosted millions of displaced individuals mostly from the region (Yahya & Muasher, 2018). Conflicts, cross-border struggles, and occupation

T. Fakhoury (✉)
Department of Politics and Society, Aalborg University, Copenhagen, Denmark
e-mail: talfa@dps.aau.dk

M. Aitken
Modern Middle Eastern Studies at St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

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have spurred the mass flight of individuals, leading to a paradoxical phenomenon of open borders versus "closed citizenries" (Fargues, 2013). Indeed, states such as Lebanon and Jordan have welcomed displaced individuals but have treated them as temporary guests. At the same time, they have refused to grant them citizen status, leaving refugees in a state of liminality (Fakhoury, 2019). A prevalent policy narrative depicts incoming others as a threat to the societal and state structures that accommodate already existing communities (Yahya & Muasher, 2018).

This chapter draws on the example of refugee displacement in Lebanon to derive broader conceptions on how notions of national identity and otherness materialize, interlace, and collide in the Mediterranean. We argue that Lebanon's political system has constructed the figure of the refugee as a disrupter to Lebanon's national identity, framed in the political rhetoric as a static bond structuring relationships between already existing sectarian communities. This bond revolves around a century-old sectarian power-sharing formula in which eighteen confessions are supposed to divide political offices and resources. At the same time, refugee-centric spaces have contested such ossified conceptions of identity. Various civic and humanitarian actors have "curated" alternative spaces of hospitality. Moreover, contentious episodes including Lebanon's 2019 iconic protest movement as well as smaller-scale refugee-led protests have called for debunking the conception of a closed, exclusionary, and sectarian-tied citizenship. Protests have embraced a dynamic conception of belonging in which both citizens and non-citizens including migrants, displaced individuals and stateless persons enact citizenship (or the bond between the individual and the state) by (re)claiming their rights in their daily realities (Fakhoury & Icaza, 2023).

The chapter is structured as follows. First, we account for how Lebanon's sectarian-led model of politics has constructed Syrian displacement as a menace to the components of citizenship and sectarian coexistence. To that end, we trace the government's securitized policies since the onset of Syrian displacement in 2011. We show how they have entrenched spaces of exclusion and cast refugees as threats to the infrastructural power of Lebanon's sectarian model of politics. We then deflect focus from the policy field. Instead, we explore how humanitarian spaces, bottom-up contention, and coalitional politics from below have sought to reconfigure this politics of exclusion. In so doing, we attract attention to how the politics of refuge unlocks a heterotopic space where conflict and coexistence, exclusion and inclusion co-constitute each other, and where static and dynamic conceptions of citizenship interlace (Ataç et al., 2016; Isin & Nyers, 2014).

11.2 Lebanon's Policy Response to Syrian Displacement

Since the onset of Syria's lethal conflict in 2011, Lebanon has received over 1.5 million refugees (UNHCR, 2022a, b). The Lebanese state's policy response to the issue of Syrian displacement evolved from what was characterized as a "policy of no-policy" (Mourad, 2017; Geha & Talhouk, 2018; Nassar & Stel, 2019) to a more

assertive stance in which the state took on an active role in shaping refugee issues (Geha & Talhouk, 2018). Lebanon's initial response to the arrival of refugees from 2011 onwards was widely lauded for its open borders. Assuming Syrian displacement to be short-term, the Lebanese government allowed Syrians to enter Lebanon freely under the terms of a previous agreement with Syria, the Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination (Dionigi, 2016). Norms of hospitality and traditions of transborder loyalties framed Syrians as "brothers" (Knudsen, 2017, p. 149) and guests, notably, however, temporary ones (Fakhoury, 2017). In this initial phase, the UNHCR took charge of coordinating the response to Syrian refugees and was given a high degree of autonomy by the government (Dionigi, 2016). In 2014, as Syrian displacement became protracted, the government led at the time by former Prime Minister Tammam Salam took a more active stance against Syrian refugees. Subsequently, it imposed restrictive border controls, residence, and work regulations and in May 2015, called on the UNHCR to stop refugee registrations. In 2015, the UNCHR and Lebanon issued the first Lebanon Crisis Response Plan which officially enshrined the government's rejection of Syrian settlement in Lebanon (Janmyr, 2018). Since then, Lebanon's successive governments have scaled up their calls for refugee return. In 2022, Lebanon formally announced to the UNHCR that it can no longer host Syrian refugees in the context of its compounding crises and its deteriorating infrastructure (UNHCR, 2022a, b).

Two background factors help us to understand Lebanon's general policy framework towards Syrian displacement: The country's historical framing of its status as a non-asylum country and the politicization of Syrian displacement in Lebanon's political landscape. Historically, Lebanon has defined itself as a transit country, and has been adamantly opposed to signing the 1951 Refugee Convention or develop domestic legislation regulating refugee affairs (Janmyr, 2017; Knudsen, 2017). Indeed, the Lebanese government refuses to use the term 'refugee' (*laji'*). In the context of refugee displacement from Syria, it has recurrently insisted on framing Syrians as 'displaced people' (*naziheen*) bound to return or be resettled (Mourad, 2019, 2020). As many argue (Janmyr, 2017; Fakhoury & Abi Raad, 2018), Lebanon has justified its reluctance to ratify the Refugee Convention by fears that local integration of refugees would upset the fragile demographic balance at the heart of its consociational model of sectarian power-sharing.

Regarding the issue of Syrian refugees in particular, Lebanon's response must be seen in the context of the governing parties' polarization over the war in Syria (Fakhoury, 2017, 2021a). Relations with Syria have historically evolved into a major contentious issue, notably in light of Syria's occupation of Lebanon between 1976 and 2005. After the contentious withdrawal of Syrian troops in 2005, and with the emergence of two contending Lebanese political alliances (the pro-Syrian *March 8* and the largely anti-Syrian *March 14* blocs), support for or opposition to the Syrian regime became a major fault line in Lebanon's domestic politics. This polarization generated a myriad of party-driven rather than nationally coherent stances vis-à-vis the war in Syria and consequently the issue of Syrian refugee displacement (Knudsen, 2017; Fakhoury, 2017; Geha, 2019). In 2012, the Baabda Declaration affirmed Lebanon's disassociation from the conflict in Syria. In practice, however political

parties have instrumentalized Syrian refugee presence to garner electoral support and maintain their positions of power (Fakhoury, 2021a). In this regard, a key political tactic lies in framing refugees as political and economic threats.

In the next sections, we show that Lebanon's securitized refugee positions in addition to its recalcitrance to endow Syrian refugees with rights must be contextualised in the wider set-up of its sectarian power-sharing system (Fakhoury, 2017; Geha, 2019). We first conceptualise the linkages between Lebanon's sectarian model of politics and its framings of refugees as threats to its political system and social fabric. Departing from this framework, we argue that framing refugees as a threat provides ruling elites with a core narrative to equate citizenship – defined here as the bond between an individual and a nation-state (Isin & Neyers, 2014) – with belonging to the sectarian mould. Second, we show the many benefits that the Lebanese state derives from constructing refugees as a threat on the one hand, and from strategically crafting ambiguous policymaking over displacement on the other.

11.2.1 Refugee Framings in the Context of Lebanon's Sectarian Power-Sharing System

Lebanon's power-sharing system is described as a form of corporate consociational democracy that institutionalizes power-sharing between different sectarian groups (Nagle, 2016). First made official in the 1943 National Pact after Lebanon's independence from the French mandate, the power-sharing formula was revised in the 1989 Ta'if Agreement that provided the basis for ending the 1975–1990 Lebanese Civil War. It stipulates quotas for Lebanon's eighteen recognized sects in legislative and executive positions, most notably reserving the Presidency for Maronite Christians, the position of Prime Minister for Sunni and the Speaker of Parliament for Shia Muslims (Fakhoury, 2014). Quotas are also increasingly applied to public sector jobs (Salloukh, 2019). Moreover, public status laws including the regulation of marriage, divorce or inheritance are the prerogative of confessional courts. The sectarian system thus pervades the Lebanese state and state-society relations on all levels (Nagle, 2020).

While intended to provide stability and foster harmony between Lebanon's confessional groups, the power-sharing system has strengthened sectarian identities and perceptions of difference. Moreover, the institutionalised power of sectarian leaders has fostered clientelism, corruption and elite bargaining. It has also entrenched hybrid forms of governance in which the line between formal and informal power is blurred (Huber & Woertz, 2021). In this setting, the system, which is supposedly based on consensus decision-making, results in a slow, cumbersome, and largely dysfunctional process of governance in crisis situations (Dionigi, 2016). This deadlock in formal state institutions prompts political officials to reach decisions and craft agreements informally (Geha, 2019). Negotiations are mainly driven by sectarian governing parties' interests rather than by a unified national interest.

In this regard, the state's response to Syrian displacement reflects and reproduces the logic of Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system, both in its premise of sectarianization and in its strategies of governance (Fakhoury, 2017). As we show below, the state has reified a sectarianized and static conceptualization of citizenship, linking it to the existing parameters of power-sharing in which coexistence between sectarian communities must prevail. In this regard, the *incoming other* who is seeking refuge is framed as a political, economic and security threat that destabilizes the infrastructural and ordering power of sectarianism. Within this climate, the *incoming other* is barred access to citizenship framed herein as the negotiation of "reciprocal rights and duties between the state and the individual" (Owen, 2018).

11.2.2 Refugees as Threat to Lebanon's 'Cementing Glue': Securitizing Citizenship

Since the inception of the Lebanese nation-state in the wake of the French mandate, Lebanese notions of citizenship have evolved into a battleground. Sectarian groups' divergent state-building ambitions and the lack of a decolonisation struggle have undermined a unified national consciousness. This has shaped sectarian belonging as the most salient identity in Lebanese's everyday lives (Serhan, 2019). However, sectarian belonging goes beyond a simplistic reading of entrenched sectarian identities. A weak central state that fails to provide many essential services, paired with a highly patrimonial bureaucracy in which the government relies on informal sectarian power bases to exercise its functions, has strengthened sectarian belonging (Atzili, 2015). Most importantly, the political system itself defines pre-determined sectarian identities as the only possible basis for political power. This creates an exclusive notion of citizenship that discriminates against alternative identities, such as gender and sexual identities, and ideological, religious, and ethnic identities that do not fall within the clearly defined sectarian groups institutionalised in the system (Salloukh & Verheij, 2017). This is reflected in Lebanon's civil society which historically has been dominated by community-based rather than interest-based organisations (Clark & Salloukh, 2013). Against this background, the systemic power of sectarian elites and clientelist networks have enabled ruling incumbents to undermine alternative grassroots mobilisation seeking to challenge the system while NGOs and civil society organisations have relied on sectarian elites to access resources and influence. For example, Lebanon's 1909 *Law on Associations* requires organisations to notify and receive a notification receipt from the government, a process which is often delayed and without which the organisation cannot carry out key activities that allow it to fully operate such as opening a bank account or accessing international funding. The government also does not have any dedicated budgetary support for NGOs, leaving many reliant on private funding which often falls along sectarian lines (ICNL, 2021). Moreover, incumbent sectarian leaders have used their positions of power in state institutions and over the media to block or obstruct alternative

NGOs work, for example by controlling media coverage (Clark & Salloukh, 2013). To conduct many activities such as public events, NGOs tend to rely on sectarian leaders who hold either formal or informal power over local authorities and institutions. This in turn leads many NGOs to "court" sectarian leaders to facilitate carrying out their activities. The dual dynamic of political elites undermining civil society organisations and NGOs themselves instrumentalising sectarian structures to advance their goals, creates a dependency in which NGOs rely on the power dynamics of the sectarian power-sharing system or are co-opted into it. This dependence on sectarian power structures has substantially undermined the agency of cross-sectarian actors or other identity-based groups within Lebanon's power-sharing system (Clark & Salloukh, 2013; Salloukh & Verheij, 2017; Nagle & Fakhoury, 2021).

Within this context, the figure of the refugee which falls outside these pre-determined identity categories, embodies a "new" disruptive "minority" (Fakhoury & Abi Raad, 2018, p. 43) that transgresses Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system. Indeed, the notion of citizenship as intrinsically linked to confession has provided a fertile ground for securitizing the figure of the incoming refugee. The latter has been depicted as a demographic threat to Lebanon's delicate confessional balance that underpins its political system (Fakhoury & Abi Raad, 2018). In the eyes of key governing coalitions, the integration of 1.5 million Syrians, who are mostly Sunni Muslim, would have a significant impact on the confessional balance of Lebanon's power-sharing system. For Christian, and to a lesser extent Shia parties, this prospect poses a serious threat to their position within the political system (Fakhoury, 2017). As it became increasingly clear from 2014 onwards that Syrian displacement is protracted, elite discourse began constructing the long-term Syrian presence not simply as a crisis, but an "'existential threat'" (Dionigi, 2016, p. 20). Christian parties, including the Lebanese Forces, Kata'ib., and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), despite their positions on opposite sides of the March 8/March 14 fault line, all evoked the threat of Syrian refugees to Lebanon's demographic balance. In particular, the FPM who forms a major part of the pro-Syrian March 8 bloc and is allied with the Shia Hezbollah has painted the largely Sunni Syrian refugees as a threat to the balance between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon (Fakhoury, 2017). In this context, government officials have repeatedly voiced to international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) Lebanon's categorical rejection of refugee naturalization (Fakhoury & Abi Raad, 2018).

The securitisation discourse around Syrian refugees however is not new. It has a striking precedent in the historical narrative of Palestinians in Lebanon (Fakhoury, 2021a). In the wake of Palestinian displacement after the 1948 *Nakba*, there emerged a cross-sectarian consensus amongst Lebanon's political elites to reject the naturalization of Palestinians (Serhan, 2019). This has been enshrined in Lebanon's political order through the repudiation of '*tatween'*, literally 'implantation'. The term's exact meaning is ambiguous (Janmyr, 2017). In Lebanon's dominant political discourse however, *tatween* is equated with the naturalization and permanent settlement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (Serhan, 2019). While this stance has, in part, been justified by Lebanon's geopolitical positioning vis-à-vis Israel and the

claim to uphold Palestinians' right of return (Fakhoury, 2021b; Sanyal, 2017), it also reflects politicians' attempt to construct the Palestinian presence as a threat to "the very existence of Lebanon and the Lebanese people" (Serhan, 2019, p. 249). Indeed, as Serhan (2019) argues, this narrative cannot be explained by the demographic threat alone. It serves a wider governance logic. By crafting consensus around the rejection of Palestinian naturalisation, the usually deeply divided political class performs unity and coherence, buttressing Lebanon's power-sharing system as an ordering and unifying frame. In other words, the exclusion of the Palestinian 'other' gives the Lebanese power-sharing system a means of consociational consensus-building. Moreover, the rejection of Palestinian naturalization provides an element against which Lebanese identity, as a static bond between the citizen and the state, is constructed (Ibid.). This same self-legitimizing dynamic can be seen in the political elites' unified rejection of permanent settlement for Syrians, despite initial discourses of solidarity uttered by some political parties (Fakhoury, 2017). As in the Palestinian precedent, politicians' framing of Syrian refugees as a threat provides them with an instrument for sustaining the robustness of Lebanon's sectarian model of politics. It boosts their ability to brand this model as a cementing glue that is able to produce consensus on the rejection of refugee naturalization. In this context, the refugee 'other' provides a contrasting backdrop against which the state reifies an otherwise divided Lebanese identity.

In addition to portraying refugees as a threat to Lebanon's conception of citizenship, key governing coalitions have portrayed Syrian displaced individuals as a core economic and security threat that destabilizes the nation. Depicting refugees as an economic burden to existing resources allowed political leaders to mobilize their constituencies. It also allowed them to leverage the refugee issue vis-à-vis international donors without making any efforts to improve the country's deteriorating infrastructure and service provision.

Governing parties have also made sure to portray protracted Syrian displacement as a potential avenue for conflict spill-over from Syria to Lebanon. This narrative strongly draws on Lebanon's history of Palestinian refugee militarization to justify its credibility. When the Palestinian Liberation Organisation was based in Lebanon after the 1967 Six-Day War and until 1982, Palestinian groups used refugee camps in Lebanon as a base for guerrilla warfare against Israel. Moreover, some parties used Palestinian militias as scapegoats, blaming them for the Lebanese Civil War which further underscored the marginalisation of the Palestinian community in Lebanon and the denial of their basic rights (Sanyal, 2017). Against this backdrop, some political coalitions evoked in various instances the risk that Syrian refugee settlements could provide a base for radicalised extremist groups (Fakhoury, 2017). The predominant perception of refugees as a threat to national security was further exacerbated by several security incidents along the Syrian border in Northern Lebanon, notably the 2014 cross-border clashes between Lebanese security forces and militant Islamist groups from Syria around the Lebanese border town of Arsal (Fakhoury & Abi Raad, 2018). Building on the narrative of Palestinian refugee militarization and on the likelihood that refugee camps evolve into conflict enclaves, most of Lebanon's political coalitions have vehemently refused to set up camps for

Syrian refugees (Turner, 2015; Içduygu & Nimer, 2020; Sanyal, 2017). While international organizations and NGOs initially praised Lebanon's decision not to restrict refugees' housing to closed camps, it is important to contextualise this policy within Lebanon's repertoire of securitization (Turner, 2015; Fakhoury, 2017). Indeed, the perception of encampment as a step towards permanent settlement and the alleged fear that camps represent a security threat led the government to formally reject the establishment of formal camps (Nassar & Stel, 2019). This, however, prompted the mushrooming of informal settlements which has provided a rationale for security forces to enforce housing demolition orders.

11.2.3 Securitization through Ambiguous Policymaking

As underscored, Lebanon's severing of the bond between displaced individuals and their access to rights must be contextualised within the state's strategies of sectarian governance and the ways it draws on displacement to assert sectarian citizenship as a governing tool. At the same time, as various scholars have shown (Sanyal, 2017; Mourad, 2019; Nassar & Stel, 2019), a reading of Lebanon's reaction to refugee displacement must go beyond a cursory analysis of securitization through deterrence measures and restrictions. An important characteristic of Lebanon's politics towards Syrian refugees consists in producing, reproducing, and performing informalized and ambiguous policies. The latter have paradoxically reinforced the state's apparatus of securitization. Indeed, this informality coupled with "institutional ambiguity" (Nassar & Stel, 2019, p. 44) has translated into greater marginalization of refugees. At the same time, ambiguous and informal policies have allowed the state to derive various strategic benefits (Fakhoury, 2021a, b). Examples abound.

On a local level, the state has tacitly authorized Syrian settlements. It has also devolved responsibilities regarding service provision and security to municipal and non-state actors operating independently and arbitrarily (Mourad, 2019). This ambiguous enforcement of regulations regarding registration, residence, and the right to work have further pushed refugees into illegality, allowing the government to avoid responsibility for the displaced population (Nassar & Stel, 2019). Scholars have contested the notion that this approach is a result of state weakness (Geha & Talhouk, 2018) or mere incapacity in the face of crisis (Nassar & Stel, 2019). Instead, the exercise of informality is seen as a deliberate strategy in what Carpi (2019, p. 92) calls a policy of "state liminality" that forms a "specific character of the Lebanese state's agency" (p. 83) and practically translates into violent repression and state neglect. Relatedly, Nassar and Stel (2019, p. 46) argue that the Lebanese state exercises a "strategic ambiguity" that aims to deter refugees through precarity and preclude long-term settlement.

On a supra-national level, Lebanon's ambiguous state response allowed it to outsource its refugee management to international organisations, particularly the UNCHR and the European Union (EU). For years, the government's depiction of refugees as an economic and security threat enabled it to deflect focus from its own

collapsing system. Decades of corrupt and incompetent governance, however, have come to a head with Lebanon's financial meltdown and concomitant crises such as the 2020 Beirut Port explosion. This has cost the political elites much of their credibility in the eyes of the international community (Fakhoury, 2021a). Moreover, large parts of the Lebanese population have come to see the entrenched sectarian power structures as well as corrupt officials, rather than refugees, as the main threat to their lives and livelihoods. Nevertheless, this has not translated into changes in policies. Refugees' lived realities have continued to deteriorate in light of Lebanon's economic and financial collapse.

11.3 Transgressing Securitization: Refugee-Centric Spaces and Acts of Everyday Resistance

Much has been written about how Lebanon's securitized policies have constructed refugees as disrupters to conceptions of citizenship stunted within a century-old sectarian form of governance. We know however less about refugee-centric spaces and their implications for Lebanon's sectarian-centric notion of citizenship. In particular, we know less about how various actors, who by unsettling the state's politics of securitization, have unlocked alternative notions of belonging between the individual and the state.

Countless practitioner and policy reports have documented how actors including international organizations, NGOs, and religious organizations have sought to curate refugee-centric spaces and practices (UNHCR, 2017; Yassin & Chamaa, 2016; Gutkowski & Larkin, 2021). As mentioned above, the Lebanese state has in this regard outsourced key responsibilities to non-state and civic spheres in areas related to refugee livelihoods and protection. The civic sphere has played an instrumental role in filling the cracks of Lebanon's politics of reception. One of its merits has been to craft participative community solutions with a view to defusing tensions between refugee and host communities. In the last years, external and local NGOs have worked together, privileging projects that bring joint economic and social benefits for both Syrians and Lebanese.[1] Local religious institutions and faith communities have established themselves as core alternative actors that have upheld a politics of hospitality (Gutkowski & Larkin, 2021; Kraft, 2015). In December 2017, Lebanese and international stakeholders adopted the Beirut declaration which seeks to turn universities into places of sanctuary as well as platforms where fact-based knowledge is produced to alter policy discourses (ALUM, 2017a, b). Referring to informal customs of hospitality or to international treaties that stress non-refoulement and dignified treatment, grassroots NGOs as well as local judges and civil society actors

[1] Interview with Lebanese practitioner, April 2017, Beirut.

have reasserted refugees' access to rights, disputing Lebanon's representation of itself as a non-asylum country.[2]

In this context, multiple actors ranging from international organizations, Lebanese community-based organizations and Syrian civil society have coalesced to carve – albeit in limited ways – spaces of hospitality in which displaced individuals have claimed their access to rights. Refugee-centric projects go beyond relief aid, service provision and legal advice. Some organize cultural initiatives showcasing refugee contributions to art and theater or debunking stereotypes about tensions between refugee and host communities. For example, the NGO *Basmeh & Zeitooneh*, launched in 2012, works through community centres with some of Lebanon's most marginalised refugees to provide livelihood and protection needs, but also art and cultural activities such as theatre, visual art and sport programs. Another example is *Seenaryo* which runs threatre and play-based learning programs with vulnerable communities in Lebanon and Jordan (Basmeh & Zeitooneh, 2022; Seenaryo, 2022). Other initiatives have launched refugee productions and art residences like the non-profit theatre company *Masrah Ensemble* or the *Arab Puppet Theatre* (Arab Puppet Theatre, 2022; Masrah Ensemble, 2022; Houssami, 2016). In a yet different perspective, some civic platforms have positioned themselves as alternative voices in humanitarian governance. They have criticized the politics of short-term humanitarian aid and diffused new scripts that frame refugees as core humanitarian actors rather than mere aid recipients (Fakhoury & Icaza, 2023; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020).

The role of civic coalitions and humanitarian actors in challenging the state's politics of securitization and thereby crafting alternative notions of belonging is important. Yet, it is equally critical here to mention how ordinary citizens and refugees as *political subjects* have reconceived "citizenship from the margins" (Ataç et al., 2016) by engaging in everyday acts of resistance. Contentious performances such as protests have unsettled – at least symbolically – policy scripts opposing the citizen to the external other.

Research has shown that refugee mobilizations in Lebanon have been less successful than in Turkey and Jordan (Clarke, 2018). Yet displaced Syrians have not remained passive spectators in the context of deteriorating rights and livelihoods. With Lebanon's economic collapse, they have organized week-long mobilizations in front of the UNHCR offices in Beirut. During those sit-ins, they have pointed to structural deficiencies barring their access to rights: shrinking freedoms, underfunded aid programs, lack of housing options, and absence of durable solutions for their displacement (Alfaisal, 2020; ACHR, 2020).

With Lebanon's 2019 uprising, this politics of resistance, which questions the binary between the citizen and the other, reached new heights. Throughout the uprising that initially focused on dismantling sectarian rule, protesters dispelled through marches, graffiti, and slogans the *refugee crisis imaginary* that incumbents have sustained over the years. Marches rallied not only for Lebanese citizens but also

[2] One of the authors' participant research, 2012–2020, Beirut.

for women's, LGBTQ, workers', refugees', and migrant workers' rights (Nagle & Fakhoury, 2021). In those protests, refugees shied away from direct action. Yet by highlighting transversal and subaltern struggles, protesters managed to discredit prevalent narratives of the "other" as a liability. Instead, they riveted attention on Lebanon's political regime as the key threat (Fakhoury & Icaza, 2023).

While it is hard to assess the policy impact of such acts of contention, it appears necessary to account for their symbolic and cognitive implications. As argued by Ataç et al. (2016), such performances yield consequences. By contesting exclusion or calling for social justice and fairer human rights regimes, such struggles enact a conception of citizenship dissociated from passports, borders or from the narrow focus of national institutions (Ataç et al., 2016). They also attract attention to how rights and citizenships may be "enacted" beyond territoriality (Isin & Nyers, 2014, p. 7).

11.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we looked at ecologies of conflict and coexistence as well as inclusion and exclusion through the lens of *refugeeness*. We explored how the sectarian-based Lebanese political system has shaped the figure of the refugee as a disrupter to the notion of citizenship. The latter defines the bond between the individual and the state primarily through the lens of the territorially bound sectarian formula. At the same time, we explored how humanitarian and refugee-centric spaces have challenged such static conceptions of identity and citizenship and negotiated alternative visions of belonging with refugees and civil society actors as active agents. Indeed, through a variety of repertoires ranging from solidarity networks to protests, refugees and citizens alike have re-envisioned alternative framings of citizenship for Lebanon. Such framings defy exclusionary understandings of reciprocal rights and duties negotiated between the individual and the state within the confines of the nation-state. Here, we attracted attention to how such contending visions of crafting citizenship *from below* shape, contest, and coexist with spaces of securitisation.

The Lebanese case is no exception. For centuries, migration across the Mediterranean has conjured key questions at the heart of active inclusion and exclusion. The enduring displacement of Syrian refugees both in Syria's neighboring countries and in Europe has brought to the fore a myriad of unresolved dilemmas about belonging and identity. At the same time, refugee humanitarian and activist spaces are evidence that the notion of belonging is so much more than a static bond between the individual and the state within territorial confines (Selim, 2021). Notions of belonging may represent strategies for survival but may also indicate the quest for dignity and community (Pearlman, 2021). The Lebanese case thus has broader relevance for understanding what appears to be a discrepancy between the Mediterranean's hospitable and securitised spaces (Tucker, 2019). Refuge emerges here as a shifting terrain where the volatile relationship between open borders and exclusionary meanings of citizenship is tested on an everyday basis.

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Tamirace Fakhoury is Associate Professor of Political Science and Global Migration and Refugee Studies at Aalborg University in its Copenhagen Campus in Denmark, visiting Professor at Sciences Po (Paris) and former Kuwait Chair at Sciences Po. Previously, she was Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the Lebanese American University and the Director of the Institute for Social Justice and Conflict Resolution. Tamirace has recently earned the Carlsberg Monograph Fellowship to write a book on political systems, conflict and time. Her core research areas are power-sharing and post-conflict governance, refugee and migration governance, norm contestation in the international system, and the European Union's conflict resolution and migration policy.

Miriam Aitken is an MPhil candidate in Modern Middle Eastern Studies at St. Antony's College, University of Oxford. She holds a MA in Human Rights and Humanitarian Action from Sciences Po Paris and a BA in International Relations from King's College London. She is currently a Research Associate at the International Crisis Group and previously worked as a Research Assistant at the Kuwait Chair at Sciences Po Paris. She received the Kuwait Program at Sciences Po Student Paper Award for her paper "*From Martyr's Square to the Global Stage: An Analysis of the Spatial Dialectics of the 2019 Lebanese Thawra*". She has also published in the *Oxford Middle East Review* and with the International Crisis Group.