MAINTAINING PATRON-CLIENT RELATIONS: STATE RESPONSES TO DISPLACED IRAQIS IN JORDAN

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I. Introduction

In the early spring of 2003, aid workers and local Jordanian authorities set up tent camps to prepare for the expected influx of Iraqi refugees fleeing the violence of the U.S.-led invasion. Two camps were constructed near Ruweished, Jordan, approximately 60 kilometers from the Jordanian-Iraqi border. One camp was created to hold 20,000 Iraqis, while the other camp was prepared to hold 5,000 foreign workers who had come to Iraq from countries such as Somalia, Egypt, and the Sudan. Aid agencies readied similar camps in Syria.¹

However, as hundreds of thousands of Iraqis arrived in Jordan, the camps remained largely empty. Instead, the government allowed Iraqis to settle in Amman, Irbid or Zarqa, Jordan’s largest urban areas. Only one thousand refugees entered the camps, most of whom were Palestinians, Somalis, Sudanese, Moroccans, and Iranian-Kurds who were living in Iraq before the war.²

Considering how other developing countries have responded to large refugee populations, one might have thought that the Jordanian government would not be eager to integrate Iraqis into local society. Jordan is a relatively small and resource poor country, and the Iraqi refugees currently represent almost ten percent of the total population.³ In a country with an already overloaded infrastructure, the large number of Iraqis compounded existing problems. Many Jordanians blamed the increased costs of living, traffic congestion, and crime on the sudden influx of Iraqis. The Iraqis not only put a strain on Jordan’s infrastructure but also caused a tremendous increase in housing prices.

In addition, the new refugees imposed massive costs on the government of Jordan, which provides heavily subsidized goods and services to its population. By allowing Iraqis free access

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¹ Ford 2003.
² Relief Web 2006.
³ Alterman 2007.
to these public goods, the government increased its budget expenditures considerably and reduced the quantity and quality of services available to the monarchy’s intended clients, the Jordanian people.

What accounts for the government’s behavior? Why did Jordan not use prepared camps to limit the problems caused by the displaced Iraqis? This paper argues that the government avoided placing Iraqis in camps due to Jordan’s experience with Palestinian refugees, who themselves constitute more than half of Jordan’s population today. Jordan seeks to avoid another long-term refugee situation. To accomplish this, the Jordanian government uses its extensive experience with large refugee populations to place restrictions on those who supply economic assistance (NGOs and other governments) rather than imposing limits on the Iraqis who demanded services. These restrictions allow the government to shape the activities of the international aid community and encourage large amounts of aid to be directed into existing Jordanian government programs. In this way, the government maintains its extensive patronage networks for Jordanian citizens and uses international aid to strengthen those networks.

The discussion proceeds as follows: Section two provides a background into the current Iraqi refugee crisis in Jordan. Section three highlights the surprising nature of Jordan’s decision to allow the urban settlement of Iraqi refugees, given its size and status as a developing country. Section four argues that the experience of Palestinian refugees affected this unexpected policy decision, while section five asserts that Jordan imposes restrictions on the international aid community to avoid another long-term refugee situation.
II. Iraqi Refugees in Jordan

Although seventy-seven percent of the Iraqi refugees currently in Jordan arrived after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, Jordan has hosted Iraqi forced migrants for the past three decades. Human Rights Watch estimates that 250,000-300,000 Iraqi refugees lived in Jordan at the beginning of April 2003. These refugees fled from a variety of earlier circumstances, including the Iran-Iraq War, Operation Desert Storm, and the economic hardships caused by the United Nations sanctions regime. Many of these Iraqis were members of the educated, professionally-oriented classes. The first wave of Iraqis who came in 2003 were also from the upper-classes, but after increasing sectarian violence in 2006, a greater percentage of displaced Iraqis were from the middle- and lower-classes.

The exact number of Iraqi refugees living in Jordan is not known. As of March 1, 2009, the UNHCR’s Amman office reported that it had recorded 53,759 active registrations. Due in part to the Iraqis’ fear that registration will increase their chances of detection and deportation by the Jordanian government, active registrations represent a mere fraction of the total number of Iraqis living in Jordan. Jordan’s Ministry of the Interior has released estimates that range anywhere from 500,000 to one million refugees. In a 2007 report commissioned by the Jordanian government, Norwegian statistics firm Fafo estimated that there were around 450,000-500,000 Iraqi refugees in the Kingdom.

The Jordanian government has granted Iraqi refugees access to the same subsidized public education and health care services provided to Jordanian citizens, which has strained

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4 Sassoon, lecture, 2009.
5 Human Rights Watch 2006.
7 UNHCR 2009b.
Jordan’s overtaxed public resources. In addition, the impact that Iraqis are \textit{perceived} to have on the economic climate shape popular Jordanian opinions regarding their presence. Most Jordanians view Iraqis as affluent and responsible for the Kingdom’s economic woes, such as inflation, skyrocketing housing prices, and high unemployment rates. Although the data do not establish causality between these problems and the presence of Iraqis, Jordan’s monarchy cannot simply dismiss the popular concerns of its clients.

III. What Makes the Jordanian Response to the Iraqi Refugee Crisis Unusual?

Jordan is a small developing country, with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of US $5,000 and a population of 6.3 million people. Poorer developing countries, especially those across Africa, have traditionally responded to refugee crises of the magnitude currently witnessed in Jordan by settling forced migrants in camps away from urban areas. Kibreab explains that most developing countries reject the idea of refugees self-settling in urban areas because their presence is “a factor that exacerbates the urban condition.” Developing-world host countries enact laws requiring encampment to prevent the integration of refugees into local society and limit the strain that refugees can place upon goods intended for local citizens, such as services and employment.

Refugee camps were used in some of the world’s best-known refugee crises, including the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, the Bosnian refugees in the former Yugoslavia, and the Rwandan refugees in neighboring countries such as Tanzania and Burundi. Many developing

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{8} Human Rights Watch 2007
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Former Jordanian official. Interview conducted April 29, 2009.
  \item \textsuperscript{10} CIA 2008.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Hansen 1990; Kibreab 2007.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Kibreab 2007.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid 2007.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Stedman and Tanner 2003.
\end{itemize}
governments have even institutionalized their encampment policies into laws and require that humanitarian assistance be distributed exclusively through the camps.\(^\text{15}\) In such states, forced migrants who decide to self-settle in cities usually experience government harassment, receive little humanitarian assistance, and have their existence at times denied by their host states.\(^\text{16}\)

Jordan has ample experience with refugee camps since it used them to settle the large number of Palestinians displaced in the wake of the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. The events surrounding the creation of the state of Israel forced nearly 480,000 Palestinians to take refuge in Jordan. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and later the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), established tent camps for these refugees, which eventually became permanent.\(^\text{17}\)

Rather than following this camp model to house the massive number of Iraqis displaced by the 2003 invasion, Jordan has allowed them to settle in the country’s urban areas. This decision runs counter to the expected policy response that Jordan would pursue. As mentioned earlier, the Iraqi refugees currently represent ten percent of the kingdom’s entire population; this would be equivalent to the U.S. absorbing a refugee populace equal to the combined populations of Missouri and Texas. Jordan also has a per capita GDP comparable to countries such as Namibia and Guatemala.\(^\text{18}\)

Why, then, would Jordan not prevent Iraqis from burdening their urban resources by separating them in camps, as other developing countries such as Uganda and Kenya have done? In these cases, the UNHCR estimates that refugees and asylum seekers comprise only one

\(^{17}\) UNRWA 2006.  
\(^{18}\) CIA 2008.
percent of the total population. Yet, they have enacted explicit encampment policies and mandated that the UNHCR restrict the delivery of its refugee aid programs exclusively to camp residents. By separating asylum seekers from the urban population and funneling material assistance through camps, Uganda and Kenya have limited the local integration of asylum seekers and reduced the strain they can place on scarce urban resources.

The key lies with examining the rationale underpinning the self-settlement policies of other states. South Africa and Egypt are two of the few developing countries that pursue such a policy. South Africa’s refugee law stems from its apartheid legacy and its relative wealth. During the early 1990s, the waning of the apartheid era resulted in the government bringing its laws in closer conformity to international human rights standards regarding individual freedom of movement. As a result, South Africa’s policy aims to provide all asylum seekers a life of dignity through guaranteed access to basic human rights. Additionally, South Africa is the most developed economy in Africa. This is a probable factor behind its self-settlement policy, as its relative wealth means that refugees likely do not place the level of strain on its urban environments that they would in the poorer countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Since the situation of Jordan differs from that of South Africa, the case of Egypt merits a closer look. Egypt, also a developing state, allows refugees to settle in urban areas because the government has never formulated a national refugee policy. Therefore, it leaves sole responsibility for refugee status determination and assistance with the UNHCR. Grabska suggests that the Egyptian government’s reluctance to formulate a national policy is due, in part, to the negative political connotations of Egypt’s refugee population. Historically, the majority of refugees in Egypt were either Palestinian or Sudanese. Egypt’s identity as an Arab state makes it

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20 Landau 2006.
21 Grabska 2006a.
difficult to develop a blanket refugee policy which treats Palestinians like all other asylum seekers. Moreover, Egypt risks offending the government of Sudan if it gives Sudanese asylum seekers the formal “refugee” label. Therefore, the specific connotations and experiences that Egypt associates with refugees has hindered its development of a national refugee policy, much less a specific encampment policy.

Past experience and political sensitivity shapes a state’s refugee response and proves essential to solving the puzzle of Jordan’s decision to settle Iraqis in urban areas. The experience of the Palestinian refugee crisis largely shaped the modern histories of both Egypt and Jordan, and this experience shapes Jordan’s response to the current Iraqi refugee situation.

IV. The Impact of the Palestinians on Jordan’s Reaction to the Iraqis

Jordan’s experience with the Palestinian refugees fits the typical pattern of refugee camps. However, Jordan has chosen not to repeat the same pattern with the Iraqis because it seeks to avoid another long-term refugee situation. Jordan’s first priority is to prevent the Iraqis from becoming a second set of permanent refugee residents. It does this by not labeling the Iraqis as refugees and by not placing them in camps.

**History of the Palestinian Refugees in Jordan**

With the creation of Israel in 1948, the first wave of Palestinian refugees fled to Jordan. An estimated 100,000 refugees crossed the Jordan River and initially took shelter in temporary camps, in mosques and schools, or in Jordanian towns and villages. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and later the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), established tent camps for these refugees. As

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22 Grabska 2006b.
the conflict continued into the 1950s and it became clear that the Palestinians would not be able to return to their homes, UNRWA replaced these tents with more durable shelters. Following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, approximately 380,000 additional Palestinians flooded into temporary camps in the Jordan Valley. These temporary camps also became permanent as UNRWA later replaced the tents with prefabricated shelters and the refugees themselves replaced the shelters with concrete structures.²³ A third wave of Palestinian refugees came to Jordan following Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. Nearly 300,000 Palestinians (10% of Jordan’s population), who had been working in the Gulf countries, were forced to “return” to Jordan after Yasser Arafat and the PLO publicly supported Iraq instead of Kuwait. Many of these “returnees” had never lived in Jordan. They were second- or third-generation residents of the Gulf, whose only tie to Jordan was the passport they held.²⁴ Most of these people did not have the option to live in the UNWRA camps and instead settled in the cities, where they faced high levels of unemployment and rapidly diminishing savings.²⁵

Today, more than sixty years after the first Palestinians arrived in Jordan, the camps that were originally intended to be temporary are still there. There are ten official UNRWA camps—including five that are still designated as “emergency camps” from the 1967 war—plus three areas considered to be camps by the Government of Jordan and treated as “unofficial” camps by UNRWA. An estimated 65 percent (1.25 million) of the more than 1.9 million Palestinian refugees living in Jordan and registered with UNRWA still live in these camps.²⁶ Palestinians constitute approximately 60 percent of the population of Jordan, leaving the original “East Banker” population a minority in their own country.

²³ UNRWA 2006.
²⁴ Chatelard 2004.
²⁵ Van Hear 1995.
²⁶ UNRWA 2008.
The long duration of the Palestinian refugee situation has been fundamental in shaping the Jordanian government’s attitudes toward the displaced Iraqis. The actions of the Jordanian government indicate that they are anxious to avoid repeating the Palestinian experience.\(^{27}\) Stressing that Jordan is the “number one” host-nation for Palestinian refugees, one Jordanian official explained that the country could not afford to repeat a similar “bad experience.”\(^{28}\) In 2007, Patricia Fagen reported that even though few people seriously expected large numbers of Iraqis to be able to return home in the near future, Jordan was not taking steps to prepare for a long-term Iraqi presence. To the contrary, Jordan is determined not to establish arrangements that might lead to a long-term presence of Iraqis in Jordan.\(^{29}\)

**The Iraqi Stay Must be Temporary**

One of Jordan’s major concerns with a long-term Iraqi presence is what would happen to the demographics of the country. Palestinian refugees make up the bulk of the Jordanian population. The exact percent is unknown because the government has not conducted a formal census due to political sensitivities, but estimates range from 55 percent to as high as 80 percent.\(^{30}\) Although the exact numbers of displaced Iraqis in Jordan is also unknown, it is estimated that they now constitute between ten and fifteen percent of Jordan’s overall population.\(^{31}\) This is a serious concern to the Government of Jordan. As one official explained, Jordan has been generous to both the Palestinians and the Iraqis, but there is a limit to the number that they can allow into the country, otherwise Jordan will be known as “The Hashemite Kingdom of Refugees.”\(^{32}\) Jordan has been “traumatized” by the Palestinian situation and feels

\(^{27}\) Fagen 2007.  
\(^{28}\) Interview 19 March 2009.  
\(^{29}\) Fagen 2007, 5.  
\(^{30}\) Farris 2007, 11.  
\(^{31}\) Alterman 2007; UNHCR 2009a.  
\(^{32}\) Sassoon 2009, 52.
that refugees threaten its national identity. If Jordan allows the Iraqis to permanently settle, what would happen when there is a coup in Syria or a civil war in Lebanon and refugees again come to Jordan? Jordan would quickly cease to be Jordanian.\footnote{Sassoon, interview, 2009; see also Sassoon, The Iraqi Refugees, 2009.} Allowing a long-term Iraqi stay now would reinforce the precedent already set by the Palestinian situation and leave Jordan vulnerable to future refugee crises.

These fears of a long-term Iraqi residency have influenced all of Jordan’s policies toward Iraqis and the aid agencies that are trying to assist them. The government’s intent has always been that Jordan would only be a transit point for Iraqis not a long-term settlement location. In late 2002, when the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was being formulated, Jordanian government officials indicated that they would admit only those Iraqis going through Jordan to a third country, not people who have nowhere else to go.\footnote{Human Rights Watch 2003, 12-13.} Although Jordan ultimately decided to admit Iraqis whether they had another place to go or not, the government still treats the Iraqis as if they are only temporary guests. For this reason, Jordan does not permit the Iraqis to be labeled refugees or attempt to restrict them to refugee camps.

No Permanent Integration

One of the restrictions that the Jordanian government places on the international aid community is that there can be no permanent integration of Iraqis into Jordanian society. A representative of the UNHCR explained that Jordan is very sensitive to the risk of repeating the Palestinian situation and therefore any aid project that contains local integration is an automatic non-starter.\footnote{Ayad 2009.} Mercy Corps, an international aid organization operating in Jordan, also emphasized the importance of not trying to integrate Iraqis. The deputy country director said

\footnote{Sassoon, interview, 2009; see also Sassoon, The Iraqi Refugees, 2009.}\footnote{Human Rights Watch 2003, 12-13.}\footnote{Ayad 2009.}
that there are two rules to abide by to maintain a good relationship with the Jordanian government: no parallel aid system and no permanent settlement in Jordan.\textsuperscript{36}

Jordan’s policy of “no integration” is reflected in its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the UNHCR. The MOU stipulates that the UNHCR should ensure that recognized refugees are resettled within six months of their recognition. Both the Jordanian government and the UNHCR acknowledge that the current situation makes adherence to these terms and conditions unrealistic. There are too many refugees and not enough resettlement options available for this policy to ever be carried out. However, the Government of Jordan has firmly insisted that the UNHCR work within the framework of the MOU.\textsuperscript{37} Though willing to overlook the fact that Iraqis are overstaying their visas and their allotted time as registered asylum seekers, Jordan is not willing to make an official policy extending the six-month limit because this would set a precedent for longer refugee stays in the future.

Jordan’s strong determination not to establish arrangements that might lead to a permanent Iraqi presence deters the government from allowing humanitarian organizations to offer a more secure refuge. Wael Suleiman, executive director of Caritas Jordan, a Catholic charity organization, explained that Jordanian government officials are reluctant to let international nongovernmental organizations offer assistance to Iraqis “because they don’t want to have a repeat of what happened with the Palestinians.”\textsuperscript{38} They do not want Iraqis to become permanent residents. During the Balkans conflict in the 1990s, Western states encouraged the provision of UNHCR relief inside Bosnia to encourage those in dire straits not to seek asylum abroad and avoid having to accept refugees.\textsuperscript{39} Jordan appears to be following the reverse of this

\textsuperscript{36} al-Hmoud 2009.
\textsuperscript{37} UNHCR 2009a.
\textsuperscript{38} n.a. 2007, America
\textsuperscript{39} Forsythe 2001, 6.
policy. By restricting the provision of aid to Iraqis, the government is encouraging them to seek other places to live instead of staying in Jordan. In fact, some Iraqis have left Jordan to go to Syria because the cost of living is more affordable.\(^{40}\)

**Iraqis are Not Refugees**

The memory of the Palestinian refugee experience has determined how the Government of Jordan labels and deals with the Iraqis. Despite near universal international recognition of the externally displaced Iraqis as “refugees,” the Jordanian government is adamant that the Iraqis in Jordan are not refugees but guests and brothers.

In the Arab world, the word “refugee” is an extremely loaded term. It is a legal, social, and political category used almost exclusively for Palestinians.\(^{41}\) Consequently, “neither host states nor the displaced Iraqis wish to see the displacement as a ‘refugee’ crisis since to be a refugee is to be Palestinian.”\(^{42}\) When asked why Jordan does not use the word refugee to refer to the Iraqis, one government official explained that there are two reasons: one, the Iraqis themselves do not like the label, and two, the label evokes the memories of Jordan’s “bad experience” with the Palestinians, who are still in the country six decades later. The message of the Jordanian government is that the Iraqis are our brothers; they do not require a label.\(^{43}\) To many in the government, designating Iraqis as refugees implies acknowledging that Iraq will not recover soon and its refugees may remain in Jordan as long as the Palestinians have.\(^{44}\) By avoiding the term refugee, Jordan seeks to avoid the long-term consequences they have faced with the Palestinian refugee situation.

\(^{40}\) Jordanian official, 18 March 2009.  
\(^{41}\) Sassoon 2009, 52.  
\(^{42}\) Farris 2007, 18.  
\(^{43}\) Interview, 19 March 2009.  
\(^{44}\) Fagen 2007, 2.
Because Jordan refuses to recognize the Iraqis as refugees, their status—or lack thereof—is problematic for the aid community. Jordan is not party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the international treaty that defines who is a refugee, and details the rights of refugees and the responsibilities of host nations. Instead, in 1998, Jordan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the UNHCR, in which Jordan accepted the definition of refugee as it appears in the 1951 Convention as well as the principle of non-refoulement, meaning that refugees cannot be returned to places where their lives or freedoms could be threatened. The MOU grants refugees temporary asylum in Jordan for a maximum period of six months, renewable at the discretion of the authorities.\footnote{See UN High Commissioner for Refugees 1998; Sassoon 2009; Hodson 2007.} However, throughout the MOU, there are two categories of people discussed, asylum seekers and refugees. In the case of the displaced Iraqis, Jordan has agreed with the UNHCR to call them asylum seekers instead of refugees. After registering with the UNHCR in Amman, Iraqis can obtain asylum seeker documents, but they can receive internationally recognized refugee documents and status only if they leave Jordan. Their status as asylum seekers indicates that they are seeking asylum in other places, mainly the United States and Europe, not in Jordan. Hence, resettling Iraqis to third countries is one of UNHCR Jordan’s primary tasks.\footnote{UNHCR Jordan 2009.}

Avoiding Refugee Camps

Jordan has not attempted to restrict the Iraqis to refugee camps because it does not want to admit that the Iraqi situation may be a long-term problem like the Palestinian situation. This motivation is so strong that Jordan does not place Iraqis in camps even though it would help ease the strains on their resources. In 2007, the UNHCR reported that it was considering and discussing with the government the possibility of building emergency camps to host fleeing
Iraqis. These would effectively separate the refugees from the local population and the economy, easing burdens on Jordanian infrastructure and public services. However, Radhouane Nouicer, UNHCR director for the Middle East and North Africa, said that, “The countries neighbouring Iraq would prefer that we establish what they call ‘safety zones’ inside Iraq,” rather than camps inside their borders.\textsuperscript{47} Despite the camps’ economic benefits, Syria and Jordan were not interested in them unless they were on the Iraqi side of the border to ensure that they would not become permanent camps in their own countries.

Syria has a similar history with Palestinian refugees and is also hosting large numbers of Iraqi refugees. The Syrian government has also followed a policy avoiding refugee camps. During research as to whether the Syrian government would decide to ask the UNHCR to establish refugee camps, all interviewees expressed the opinion that camps are a bad idea. “Refugee camps are undesirable not only because they go against the grain ideologically, but also because establishing them would be seen as an admission that the Iraqi presence is long term.”\textsuperscript{48} Each of the countries hosting Palestinian refugees is anxious to avoid repeating this experience with the Iraqis. The memory of \textit{al-Naqba} (the catastrophe) influences their decision to avoid camps at all costs.\textsuperscript{49}

In addition to concerns about the Iraqis’ permanence, Jordan is interested in not placing them in refugee camps because of the risk they pose to Jordan’s security. “Refugee camps, which are often under international protection but do not have international policing, can become sanctuaries for militia groups. Host governments often find it hard to stop these militias, even when they want to, either because they lack the military strength to do so or because fighters hide

\textsuperscript{47} n.a. 2007, \textit{Jordan Times}.
\textsuperscript{48} Fagen 2007, 21.
\textsuperscript{49} Farris 2007, 18.
among innocent civilians.” This is a problem Jordan faced before. During the 1960s, Palestinian militias began carving out a state within a state inside the Palestinian refugee camps. These groups became such a threat to the monarchy that Jordan was forced to drive the militants out of Jordan in a civil war in 1970-71 commonly referred to as Black September. Jordan is anxious to avoid a similar experience with the Iraqis. Jordan already has significant security concerns about some of the Iraqis entering Jordan. In 2005, several hotels were bombed by Iraqi terrorists, leading Jordan to place restrictions on the entrance of young, single Iraqi males into the country. Jordan does not want the Iraqis to live in camps were terrorist cells can hide and Jordanian security forces have limited access.

V. Clientelism: Managing the Aid Community

Jordan’s choice to avoid treating the Iraqis as refugees—including not placing them in camps—means that the Iraqis are living in the cities, adding to the burden on Jordan’s overtaxed infrastructure and accessing heavily subsidized goods and services. However, as a patron state, the Jordanian government relies on these subsidies to maintain its extensive patronage networks, and through them, its grip on power. In order to adjust to the added strains placed by the Iraqis, which decrease the quantity and quality of its patronage, Jordan places restrictions on the aid community operating there.

Jordan as a Patron State

The patron-client system has characterized Jordanian politics throughout its modern history. Traditional clientelism embodies a socioeconomically-unequal relationship between individual entities, wherein a patron offers resources in exchange for the client’s political support.

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50 Byman and Pollack 2006.
Waldner applies the traditional clientelism model to a state framework with what he calls *constituency clientelism*. Constituency clientelism identifies states as the patrons and entire social classes as their clients. The provision of public goods is institutionalized through formal mechanisms such as explicit government policy. Moreover, the patronage offered by the state consists of indivisible, nonexcludable public goods such as price subsidies and minimum wages. Members of a class do not have to engage in collective bargaining to obtain these goods, as the state provides them in exchange for the members’ exclusion from the political process.52

Jordan’s patron-client system combines elements from both traditional and constituency clientelism. Traditional clientelism manifests itself through the interactions of a monarch-patron and his clientele of tribal elites. Even today, the stability of the Jordanian regime continues to depend upon the support of powerful tribal leaders.53 At the same time, the government has used elements of constituency clientelism by dispensing public goods through its array of state institutions. For example, during the 1970s the monarchy subsidized imports to gain political support from the Palestinian-dominated private sector. This policy was prompted by the events of Black September, as the Jordanian government sought to integrate Palestinians into the political structure and diffuse tensions between groups of East and West Bank origin.54 Therefore, Jordan sought support from an entire social group (the Palestinians) through the provision of public goods and institutionalized this exchange as formal public policy.

The current Jordanian monarch, King Abdullah II, has largely maintained the patronage system set forth by his predecessor and father, King Hussein. During his long reign, King

51 Clark 2004.
52 Waldner 1999, 97.
53 Alissa 2007, 10.
54 Moore 2003, 10.
Hussein gained broad political support by subsidizing a wide range of public goods, including education, health care, fuel, and bread.\textsuperscript{55} He also incorporated Jordan’s West Bank (Palestinian) and East Bank (tribal) populations into the state by tailoring his patronage to interests specific to each group. For example, King Hussein used public sector employment to obtain the loyalty of tribal East Bankers while courting the support of the Palestinian-dominated private sector through favorable trade policies (such as the aforementioned import subsidies). Therefore, in addition to decreasing the quality of public goods expected by Jordanian citizens, the presence of Iraqi refugees threatens the delicate balance of patronage distribution among Jordan’s major domestic groups.

It is interesting to observe how circumstances in 1948 parallel the current Iraqi refugee scenario. King Abdullah I enacted policy responses to maintain Amman’s control within the new state and his position as chief patron. He removed all of Jerusalem’s administrative responsibilities and concentrated investment and government-funded infrastructure projects in the East Bank.\textsuperscript{56} Most importantly, the Jordanian government undertook a “policy of strengthening the East Bank at the expense of the West Bank” by diverting the human and financial resources of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).\textsuperscript{57} By 1965, the East Bank produced 75\% of the country’s industrial output.\textsuperscript{58} This is a striking indicator of the success King Abdullah I achieved in providing public goods to his intended clients, the Transjordanian population.

\textit{Managing International Aid}

Jordan is accustomed to receiving aid from the international community for its hospitality

\textsuperscript{55} Alissa 2007, 11.
\textsuperscript{56} Robins 2004, 87. Dann (1989) refers to the economic preference shown to the East Bank as “brazen.”
\textsuperscript{57} Dann 1989.
\textsuperscript{58} Robins 2004, 87.
and care for Palestinian refugees. They have received financial assistance from the international community for hosting the Iraqi refugees and providing them with services. This financial assistance consists of bilateral funding from other states, which the government receives and distributes, and traditional non-governmental aid from organizations such as UNHCR. The government asserts that the international community has not given them enough for hosting the Iraqis. Jordanian officials argue that the government is providing Iraqis with services intended for Jordanians, such as medical care and education. The large numbers of Iraqis have placed great strains on the Jordanian infrastructure, especially the education and medical systems. Jordanian officials estimate that providing these services to the Iraqis costs the government around US $1 billion annually. This burden is especially large for Jordan; it is a small country and does not have abundant natural resources.

Although organizations, such as the UNHCR, have operated in Jordan for many years, the government has placed new restrictions on the ways in which these organizations are able to operate inside the country. The government imposes restrictions on the types of programs implemented by the international NGO community because it does not want to create parallel structures of social services: one for Jordanians and one for Iraqis. “For example, aid can be given to the health sector in Jordan, for the benefit of all citizens, but cannot be directed just to improve the health of the Iraqis.” Rather, Jordan wants the aid from the international community to be directed at its social services as a whole and not specifically focused on providing services to refugees.

Instead of recreating existing structures, such as hospitals and schools, the government suggests that the money should be directed to expanding its structures and programs. These policies can be explained in part by using the patron-client framework. The Jordanian

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59 Sassoon 2009, 58.
government wants to maintain its position as the sole patron to its client population. When the Iraqis moved into the country and dispersed among the urban population, the government became concerned about the refugees’ presence upsetting its position as a patron. Creating of a parallel structure in which the international aid community served as a distributor of resources would disrupt the government’s established patron-client relationship with the Jordanian people. This could also create a new patron-client relationship with the aid community serving as the patron to their Iraqi clients, something the Jordanian government wishes to avoid. Jordan would rather use this money to strengthen the existing patronage networks of government-provided goods and services.

The Jordanian government also wants to prevent feelings of discontentment and anger among their client base, the Jordanian population. If separate social service structures, such as health care and education, were created for the Iraqis in Jordan, they could be better than the services that the government provides for its own citizens. In this case, the government runs the risk of alienating its Jordanian clients and diminishing the reputation of Jordanian clientalism. In order to prevent this, Jordan has instituted restrictive measures on the activities of the international aid community to prevent parallel structures for Iraqis from forming in the country. In an effort to streamline the assistance process, Jordan mandates that all NGOs must have their programs approved by an inter-ministerial committee. This committee consists of representatives from each Ministry that is involved in making policies on Iraqis, such as the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health. This committee examines the project proposals to ensure that the NGOs are not replicating existing programs or structures and that the government’s resources are being used to their maximum capacity.
UNHCR has maintained a presence in Jordan for decades due to the country’s popularity as a destination for refugees throughout the Middle East. As previously mentioned, Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, but it signed an MOU with the UNHCR in 1998. The government has shown generous hospitality to the Iraqis, but their situation is precarious due to their ambiguous residency status and the economic hardship created by the current global economic crisis. In order to assist the Iraqis living in Jordan, the UNHCR’s major objectives are to ensure Iraqis are able to “access national facilities (e.g. in health and education), and to provide safety nets in the form of cash, medical, legal, and other assistance to ensure that refugees do not fall through the cracks.”60 These objectives are quite different than they would be in a typical refugee camp situation because Iraqis in Jordan are dispersed among the urban areas in the country.

In a typical refugee camp situation, international aid groups would create medical facilities for the refugees within the camp, rather than use those of the host country. Due to the urban nature of the Iraqi refugee population, this structure was impossible to recreate because the Iraqis are located throughout the cities and not in one central location. Another reason separate medical services were not created for Iraqis is the “no parallel structure” policy of the Jordanian government. In 2007, the Jordanian government agreed “to allow Iraqis access to primary health care, similar to that provided to uninsured Jordanian citizens, with the commitment that Iraqi patients will not be asked about their residency status.”61 This arrangement illustrates Jordanian government’s desire to control the distribution of services to all segments of the country’s population by restricting the formation of parallel structures.

60 UNHCR Jordan 2009.
61 Sassoon 2009, 43.
Jordan has been able to attract assistance from USAID to expand its medical infrastructure to absorb the large number of Iraqis. USAID partners with Jordan in several areas of the health sector including renovating neo-natal units, reforming the health insurance system, and expanding the physical capacity of hospitals. The estimated total for these infrastructure projects is around U.S. $77 million. These programs not only provide Jordanian government with the necessary funds to cope with the increase in demand for services but the USAID programs will benefit Jordanian citizens, their clients, for years to come.

Along with access to healthcare, Jordan began to allow Iraqi children to attend public schools in 2007. In the previous years, “Jordan’s policy towards Iraqi children enrolling in Jordanian schools was ambiguous, some say deliberately. The policy was that Iraqi children whose families were not registered were not permitted to enroll in public school but allowed to attend private schools.” The ambiguity in the policy most likely stemmed from the government’s concern about the reaction of the Jordanian public. This arrangement worked well at first because many of the early refugees were wealthy and could afford to send their children to private schools. However, most of the Iraqis who arrived in 2006 and the following years were typically middle or working class and were less able to afford tuition for private schools. These Iraqis believed that their stay in Jordan would only last a few months and then they would return home. However, as the security situation in Iraq continued to deteriorate, the Jordanian government began to realize that Iraqis would be staying for a longer period time. In 2007, King Abdullah II decreed that “Iraqis will be allowed to access all types and levels of public education regardless of their parents’ residential status.”

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63 Sassoon 2009, 40.
64 Sassoon 2009, 41.
USAID has also provided Jordan with financial assistance for its education infrastructure. From 2009 to 2011, USAID will help Jordan build 28 new schools and expand 100 existing schools. These infrastructure projects are quite important to alleviate the current pressures on the education system. Schools have been overcrowded and the Ministry of Education divided the school day into two shifts, morning and afternoon. The assistance from the U.S. government enables Jordan to provide education services for both Jordanian and Iraqi students. These school expansion projects cost an estimated US $80 million\(^{65}\) but, as infrastructure investments are permanent, Jordanian children will benefit from these new schools for many generations.

The government also maintains its policy of “no parallel structures” by mandating that the international aid community’s programs include poor Jordanians. UNHCR also fulfills this request by reserving 25% of their programs for this population. For example, UNHCR’s employees in Irbid teach a cooking class in which both Iraqi and poor Jordanian women participate. This class is intended to educate women on catering parties and other special events in order to generate an income for themselves and their families\(^{66}\). Mercy Corps, another NGO that has been working in Jordan since 2002, also includes Jordanians in its programs. Omar al-Hmoud, the Deputy Country Director, shared the example of Mercy Corps’ informal education classes to illustrate how the organization includes poor Jordanians in its programs. The organization offers classes at two different times per day, some in the afternoon and some in the evenings. The evening classes were added because many Jordanians who were interested in attending the classes worked during the day and were unable to take the afternoon classes. Providing a second shift of classes at a time convenient for Jordanians shows that Mercy Corps follows Jordan’s policy of “no parallel structures” for aid programs. The Jordanian


\(^{66}\) Ayad 2009.
government’s emphasis on “no parallel structure” is a larger part of their overall policies for preserving their patron-client relation with the Jordanian people.

VI. Conclusion

This paper began with the image of a largely empty and unused refugee camp near the Iraqi-Jordanian border despite the hundreds of thousands of displaced Iraqis in Jordan. Understanding this anomaly requires recognizing both the impact of Jordan’s Palestinian refugee experience and the government’s ability to manage the aid community. The fact that Jordan is still hosting nearly two million refugees after 60 years fundamentally shapes all of its policies toward the Iraqis. To ensure that their stay is temporary, Jordan does not recognize the Iraqis as refugees or place them in camps, despite the fact that doing so would ease the burden placed on Jordan’s infrastructure and patronage networks. Because Jordan is unwilling to treat the Iraqi situation as a refugee crisis, it accepts the burden of providing them with services. However, it works to mitigate this burden by managing the aid from the international community. By insisting on “no parallel structures,” Jordan directs significant portions of aid into government-run programs and infrastructure projects, strengthening its role as patron.
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