A Different Way of Thinking About Refugees: Relocation and Settlement of Expatriate Syrian Business People

Chang, Ching-An

Article

A Different Way of Thinking About Refugees: Relocation and Settlement of Expatriate Syrian Business People

Ching-An Chang

Department of Arabic Language and Culture, National Chengchi University, Taiwan (R.O.C.); chingan@nccu.edu.tw

Abstract

The 2011 Syrian uprising resulted in millions of Syrians fleeing to neighboring countries such as Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, while others chose to relocate to Egypt. Among this unprecedented refugee wave, thousands were upper-middle or upper-class business people in pre-uprising Syria. This article examines how the Syrian refugee business people's social class affected their relocation and settlement in Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan. The data in this research are based on the analysis of ten months of fieldwork in Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan with 213 in-depth interviews of Syrian business people conducted by the author. The findings suggest that, first, the political relations between the host–home countries and the economic structure of the host countries affect what type of political or economic business people are relocating. Second, Syrian business people are more resilient than other refugees in balancing the challenges they meet in host societies, mainly based on their economic capital and status as business professionals. This article argues that the relocation choice and settlement process of the Syrian business people are closely related to their class as business professionals since both their relocation and settlement are affected or facilitated by their professions. This case shows how refugees' relocation and settlement processes go through a class-based orientation, depending on the specific resources they have and the related considerations regarding their professions. Keeping in mind the various social compositions among the massive refugee waves or forced migration, which might affect the results of relocation and settlement, this further suggests that refugee policymaking should be more "customized," taking the refugees and forced migrants' social classes into consideration.

1. Introduction

This article examines how the expatriate Syrian business people's social class affected their relocation and settlement in Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan. Among the millions of Syrian refugees who fled Syria to neighboring countries, thousands belonged to the upper-middle class and were professional business people in pre-uprising Syria. This group had a much wealthier stance and were professionals with business investments. However, they experienced the same disaster as their fellow countrymen and clearly showed their resilience during their reloca-

tion and settlement. Their resilience can be found in their activities in the host countries, such as the establishment of more than 10,000 Syrian companies in Turkey, and further hundreds of factories and workshops in Egypt and Jordan ("15 thousand Syrian investors," 2012; "Number of Syrian companies," 2015; "Syrian food culture," 2015). However, very limited academic studies have addressed the existence and development of these economic elites of refugees during the war. The Syrians who left Syria after the 2011 uprising were, in general, considered and treated as refugees, while governmental think tanks or academic research neglected the

diversified nature of the socio-economic composition among refugees. Despite the literature on refugees' relocation and settlement recognizing the importance of refugee entrepreneurs, they either attribute their relocation and settlement to their social networks (Arango, 2000, p. 291; Boyd, 1989, p. 645; Ghosh, 2007, p. 225; Shah & Menon, 1999, p. 370; Smith et al., 1991, p. 254) or mostly show the problems for refugee entrepreneurs' settlement without further investigating how they deal with these issues (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Ayadurai, 2010; Heilbrunn, 2019; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). This article contributes to filling the gap of the understudied yet economically important group of refugees in terms of how their relocation and settlement have been made.

After reviewing the literature on relocation choice and settlement challenges of refugees/migrants, the methods for data collection used in this research are explained. Then, the relocation rationales of expatriate Syrian business people are discussed. It moves to analyze their settlement process by demonstrating the strategies they applied to settle in the host countries. The findings suggest that, first, the political relations between the host–home countries and the economic structure of the host countries affected what type of political or economic business people were relocating. Second, Syrian business people were more resilient than other refugees in balancing the challenges they met in the host societies. This article argues that the relocation choice and settlement processes of the Syrian business people were closely related to their class as business professionals since both their relocation and settlement were affected or facilitated by their professions. This case shows how refugees' relocation and settlement processes go through a class-based orientation, depending on the specific resources they have and the related considerations regarding their professions. Keeping in mind the various social compositions among the massive refugee waves of forced migration, which might affect the results of relocation and settlement, this further suggests that refugee policymaking in terms of resettlement should be more "customized," taking refugees' and forced migrants' social classes into consideration.

2. Relocation Choosing and Settlement Challenges

In terms of refugees' and migrants's relocation choice, previous literature suggests that (a) the social networks of refugees/migrants, (b) the relations of migrants with their host or home countries, (c) the host countries' entrance regulations towards refugees/migrants, and (d) economic factors are the factors that most affect refugees/migrants' relocation choice. Previous studies on migration widely recognize that social networks such as kinships and friendships facilitate the further emigration of people to host countries (Arango, 2000, p. 291; Boyd, 1989, p. 645; Ghosh, 2007, p. 225; Shah & Menon, 1999, p. 370; Smith et al., 1991, p. 254). Since the

social ties of refugees in certain locations have been considered to positively support refugees' later settlement in host countries, this has increased the chance for refugees to seek refuge in those countries where they have acquittances or families. Additionally, other studies have shown how the relations between the home/host countries and the refugees/migrants play an important role in the settlement process of the latter (Akesson & Coupland, 2018; Castles & Miller, 1998, p. 22; Fabbe et al., 2017; Horst, 2006). Refugees forced to flee their homes due to conflict in their home country are attracted by the various features of the host countries that may increase their motivation to relocate, such as cultural similarities or geographic proximity. Furthermore, the entrance regulations of potential host countries have been shown to directly decide whether refugees or migrants can enter (Adwani et al., 2021; Al-Miqdad, 2007). Finally, for migrant/refugee entrepreneurs, location is an important part of having a successful business (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). To achieve a better business future, they have greater motivation to relocate to areas where there is a higher population of migrants (Kloosterman & van der Leun, 1999).

Although these four aspects of discussion have interpreted the relocation rationales of refugees/migrants in different manners respectively, there is a lack of comprehensive comparison regarding how these four factors affect refugees/migrants' decision-making for relocation, and how these four factors can be interrelated with one another regarding the relocation choice. Furthermore, although relations of migrants with their host countries or home countries have been studied in terms of how they affect the migrants' relocation choice, how the host–home relations influence this is missing. In addition, the literature on the relocation rationales of refugees rarely pays attention to the various classes of refugees, except the literature on refugee and migrant entrepreneurs.

Different from the literature on the relocation rationales that have less focus on the various classes of refugees, literature on the settlement challenges of refugees has received more attention in the field of refugee entrepreneurs. Mainly, the settlement challenges that refugee entrepreneurs have encountered during their settlement include legal constraints, social difficulties, and lack of economic capital. Concerning legal constraints, the literature mainly focuses on how the institutional constraints further impede refugee entrepreneurs from achieving their goals (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Ayadurai, 2010; Heilbrunn, 2019; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). The language barrier and social hostility are two other difficulties that refugee entrepreneurs are required to deal with while operating their businesses in the host country from a social perspective (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Ayadurai, 2010; Lyon et al., 2007). Finally, since refugee entrepreneurs mostly emerge from a context of conflict, the scarcity of capital for them to establish a business or inaccessibility to

local banks' loans are common phenomena that impede their businesses (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Ayadurai, 2010; Lyon et al., 2007; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). However, the lack of capital has already been suggested as not being the main difficulty in opening a business for Istanbul-based Syrian business people (Chang, 2022).

The studies regarding refugee entrepreneurs' settlement process in host countries have demonstrated the difficulties encountered in the host country, and some indicate that refugee entrepreneurs have countered these problems with their social networks (Bizri 2017; Sandberg et al., 2019; Zehra & Usmani, 2021). Nevertheless, most literature notes the problems for refugee entrepreneurs' settlement without further investigating the possibilities of how refugee entrepreneurs might deal with these issues and how these issues affect their operations.

3. Methods

The data for this research were collected through three rounds of field research in Turkey (Istanbul, Gaziantep, and Mersin), Egypt (Al-Obour, sixth of October, Cairo, and al-Badr), and Jordan (Amman). The author personally conducted the first two field studies between mid-2014 and the end of 2015 and between mid-January and mid-February 2020. However, due to the pandemic situation, the third field study was conducted through WhatsApp by interviewing 11 Gaziantep-based Syrian business people. In total, 213 Syrian business people were interviewed, 75 Istanbul-based, 56 Gaziantep-based, 20 Mersin-based, five Al-Obour-based, 18 sixth of October-based, 15 Cairo-based, one al-Badr-based, and 23 in Amman. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, conducted mostly in standard or Levantine Arabic by the author, and each interview lasted at least between one and two hours with some interviewees being interviewed more than once. Ethics approval was gained from the University of Edinburgh and the National Chengchi University's ethics committee, while the names of interviewees were anonymized at their request. After data collection, a thematic analysis approach for data analysis was applied. Thematic analysis is used to identify various patterns among data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The author wrote down what the interviewees stated during the interviews. Once the interviews were finished, the author transcribed the written notes onto a computer. After the author had collected and typed all the data onto the computer, the author read through the notes various times to differentiate the main themes that routinely showed up from the interviews. In doing so, the author could delineate and analyze the various factors that affected expatriate Syrian business people's relocation and settlement. In terms of relocation, four themes repeatedly appeared from the data, that is, the roles of pre-existing networks, entrance regulations, politics, and profits. In addition, Syrian business people showed similarities concerning the challenges they encountered in

legal, political, and social perspectives during their settlement. Nevertheless, the main limitation of the research method in this study was that only three out of the 213 interviewees were females. This was mainly due to the difficult accessibility of a male researcher for conducting interviews with female members in Arab society. This may lead to negligence of the role of businesswomen regarding their relocation and settlement.

4. Relocation Choosing: Pre-Existing Networks, Entrance Regulations, Politics, and Profits

Regarding the relocation choice of Syrian business people, there were four main reasons for choosing a specific place for relocation: pre-existing networks of business people in host countries; entrance regulations; political relations between the host and home governments; and the economic structures in the host countries.

4.1. Pre-Existing Networks

Before expatriation, Syrian business people had business activities, business partners, and relatives in other countries in the Middle East. These networks were one of the pull factors in attracting Syrian business people to emigrate and can be considered as bridges taking Syrian business people out of Syria. Pre-existing networks in host countries increased the motivations for other potential migrants to move (Arango, 2000; Boyd, 1989). This was true, to a certain extent, for Syrian business people, who decided to move to another host country where they had friends, relatives, or acquaintances when choosing a relocation destination. For example, Turkey was Syria's seventh-largest exporter and third-largest importer in 2011 (Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011). This suggests that before 2011, strong bilateral trade between Syria and Turkey was active and that some Syrian business people who had business in Turkey may have had Turkish business partners or Turkish business acquaintances. One Damascene box industrialist moved to Turkey because his family business had a Turkish business partner. He said: "I first went to Hatay, but the market there was not good enough for my business. Then I contacted our family's former Turkish business partner, he suggested I move to Istanbul." He eventually sought help from his father's old business partner and later built up a business partnership with him. Another similar case happened to another Damascene clothes businessman in Istanbul, who stated: "I opened my company here in Istanbul because my friend came here before me and told me that my field has a chance here."

The pre-existing ties of potential migrants in host countries can be considered a pull factor for motivating relocation to the countries where their networks existed; nevertheless, the fact of the existence of long-term exiled Syrian diasporas indicates a different perspective. The Syrian business community experienced different degrees of emigration due to the government's

nationalization policy in the 1960s, and many business people went to Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia at that time (Mouawad, 2001; Perthes, 1991; Picard, 2006). At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, the Syrian regime suppressed a domestic branch of the Muslim Brotherhood insurgency and later forced thousands of Muslim Brotherhood leaders and members to leave Syria for Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Turkey (Lefèvre, 2013, 2014). This indicates that Syrian diasporas had begun to spread to other countries long before the 2011 uprising. Nevertheless, once Syrian business people decided to leave Syria, most did not head to Saudi Arabia where there were already a great number of Syrians prior to their departures. This suggests that pre-existing ties of potential migrants in host countries alone are not enough to explain the rationales of relocation choice for migrants, even if it, to a certain extent, affected Syrian business people's decision-making processes.

4.2. Entrance Regulations of the Host Countries

As mentioned earlier, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia both held a great number of Syrian diasporas prior to 2011. Nevertheless, the number of Syrian business people who chose to move to these countries was not as great as Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan. The various regulations regarding the entrance of Syrians into their countries may be an explanation for this phenomenon. The host countries' regulations affected migrants' decisions about whether or not to settle in that country. For instance, Gulf countries put in place prohibitions or restrictions to prevent Syrians from entering their countries as a consequence of the conflict. As an Aleppan food industrialist in Gaziantep stated:

> Saudi Arabia prohibits Syrians from traveling in and out unless you have a residence permit. Egypt is ousting our people out of their lands. Jordan [is] afraid our arrival may have an impact on their local economy. You can see how the other Arab countries hate the Syrians through this war. It is the Turks who are helping us now. Such a shame for the Arabs.

After the eruption of the 2011 uprising, Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan held an open-door policy regarding the entry of Syrians into their lands. Turkey had applied an "open-door" policy regarding the entry of Syrians into the country since the beginning of 2011 (Ahmadoun, 2014). During that period, Syrians could easily enter Turkey without restrictions, and even without bringing any personal official documents if they entered through the Turkish-Syrian border. The situation in Egypt was similar to that of Turkey at the beginning of 2011, as Syrians could enter Egypt easily with their passports (Kortam, 2013). Egyptian policy welcomed Syrians, especially under the rule of Mohammad Morsi between mid-2012 and mid-2013. Jordan received great praise for their open-border policy towards Syrians at the begin-

ning of 2011, whereby Syrians could simply enter Jordan with their passports (Achilli, 2015). Nevertheless, following 2011, these three countries have either slightly or dramatically tightened their borders against the entry of Syrians into their countries.

In Turkey, regulations did not change massively until 6 January 2016 when the government issued new visa regulations for Syrians, whereby Syrians who wanted to travel to Turkey were required to have a visa, except those traveling through the Turkish-Syrian border in southern Turkey ("Turkey does a U-turn," 2015). The Egyptian and Jordanian governments either tightened their border control or even closed off their borders against Syrians after the 2011 uprising. After the coup in Egypt in mid-2013, when Mohammad Morsi was replaced by the pro-Assad Sisi regime, Egyptian policy on Syrians experienced a 180-degree turnaround. On 9 July 2013, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Syrians who attempted to enter Egypt would be required to have a visa (Kortam, 2013). The Jordanian government officially announced the closure of the borders with Syria in June 2016, due to the escalation of conflict in Syria and the fear that the conflict would extend into Jordan. Since the entry requirements for Syrian business people became more difficult in Egypt and Jordan as of mid-2013, some Syrian business people who had already relocated to Egypt and Jordan after the 2011 uprising had to re-emigrate to Turkey. This shows that entrance regulations directly determined whether Syrian business people could enter host countries, and how easy it was to cross the borders.

4.3. The Political Relations Between the Host and Home Governments

The Turkish, Egyptian, and Jordanian governments held different political views toward the Assad regime after the 2011 uprising. It has been argued that once the local public opinions against the migrants were negative, the livelihood of the migrants could be more difficult, and vice versa (Fussell, 2014). However, how the political relations between host–home governments affected the settlement or relocation of migrants has been less discussed.

Political relations between home–host governments were a double-edged sword in influencing the decision-making of Syrian business people regarding relocation. On the one hand, the emigration of Syrian business people suggests that when the political orientation of the host government was contrary to that of the home government, the motivations for the business people to immigrate were higher. On the other hand, Syrian business people chose to move to a host country whose government's political ideology was closer to their own political leanings. For instance, the Turkish government did not cut off official ties with the Syrian regime at the beginning of the uprising, but rather they were attempting to be a mediator through official talks between the regime and the rebels. Nevertheless, the Turkish government

changed its position and publicly condemned the Assad regime in mid-2011 (Phillips, 2012). This change of political position led to a more welcoming stance towards the arrival of Syrians into the country and large numbers of Syrian business people were received. In Egypt, between mid-2012 and mid-2013, Muhammad Morsi's government publicly condemned the Assad regime, maintained an outspoken and strong anti-Assad regime position and policies regarding the entrance of Syrians to the country were not difficult to comply with. Nevertheless, after Abdel Fatah al-Sisi came into power in mid-2013, the Egyptian policies towards the entrance of Syrians became stricter and many Egypt-based Syrian business people fled to Turkey (Abdul-Aziz, 2015). Jordan's policy on the Syrian uprising was seen as ambiguous since they were more centered on their own internal stability at the time. The Jordanian government was mostly cautious about the Syrian event, neither supporting the Syrian regime nor standing with the opposition (Satik & Mahmoud, 2013).

The Turkey-based Syrian business people were mostly anti-regime, which meant that their political ideas were closer to the Turkish government. In Gaziantep, the Syrian Interim Government, the Syrian National Coalition, and the Al-Waad Party—which is a Muslim Brotherhood political party—also had business people participating in anti-regime activities (Chang, 2018). In Egypt, during the Morsi period, the country witnessed a high number of Syrian business people moving into the country. Once the pro-Assad Sisi regime came into power in mid-2013, this led the Egypt-based Syrian business people to flee again to Turkey ("Turkey Syrians paradise," 2013). At least eight out of the 151 Turkey-based Syrian business people in this research said they fled from Egypt to Turkey due to the coup, and another 12 claimed that they knew other business people who fled to Turkey because of the coup. Most Egypt-based Syrian business people who did not flee the country either had closer political orientations to the Syrian regime or were self-declared as politically neutral. For example, the president of the Syrian Business People's Assembly in Egypt, Khaldūn al-Muwaqqʿ, took an official business delegation to visit the Syrian Minister of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection, Samīr Qāḍī Amīn ("Commerce Minister meets," 2014). This kind of visit from the Egypt-based Syrian business people to the Assad regime was never reported under the reign of Morsi. Thus, the political relations between the host–home governments indicate that the nature of political relations affects the political type of business people relocating. That is to say, business people choose to relocate to a host country where the government's political position is closer to their own political orientation.

4.4. Economic Structure: A Reality Related to Potential Profits

The meaning of economic structure here includes the cost of labor and the markets. The cost of labor in the host countries is important to consider if business people are planning to open a business after resettling, be it commercial or industrial. Calculations of the local economic structure further influence the type of business people (industrial or commercial) who were going to settle in which country. The minimum wages per month in Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon in 2012 were $115, $226, $443, and $450 respectively (see the minimum wage datasets at http://minimum-wage.org and http://www.tradingeconomics.com; see also Social Security, 2017). A low minimum wage indicates that Egypt provided cheaper labor forces compared to Jordan and Turkey. As a result, most Syrian industrialists chose to settle in Egypt since they required a higher labor number.

Another economic consideration was the markets that Syrian business people could access, especially for those who attempted to maintain former foreign customers after settlement. Before the conflict, Syrian business people had customers in various countries, in addition to these three main host countries, such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Iraq and Saudi Arabia were two of the top five export partners of Syria between 2006 and 2010. Iraq was ranked fourth in 2006 and 2007, and first from 2008 to 2010. Saudi Arabia was ranked third in 2006 and 2007, and fifth from 2008 to 2010. Most trading between these two countries was in the field of consumer goods, raw materials, textiles, and clothing (World Bank, 2022). Nevertheless, due to the difficulties that Syrian business people encountered in moving to these countries, as mentioned above, they chose other host countries from where they could continue transporting their goods. For instance, an Aleppan plastic industrialist who relocated to Istanbul and Gaziantep after the conflict and used to export his products from Syria to Iraq but now continues selling his products from Turkey to Iraq said:

> It is important for industrialists to preserve their customers. If you do not continue to sell your products to them, they may buy from others. It is easy to preserve my old customers here [in Gaziantep] since I can easily send my products by trucks through the borders.

Those business people who had customers in Gulf countries preferred to move to Jordan or Egypt to maintain the routes of product transportation through the ports of Aqaba or Alexandria. Different from a consideration of social ties, even within a business family, brothers might not flee to the same destination unless they were working in the same business field. As stated by an Aleppan food restaurateur in Gaziantep: "We have five business brothers in the family, two went to the US, one went to Ghana, and two came to Turkey. Because we need to go to the places where we can continue to work in our fields." Business people who were working in the same field had a higher chance of fleeing to the same destination if they were able to trust each other enough or if they had had stable business with each other in the pre-uprising period. Thus, evaluating the economic

structure of host countries was another factor for Syrian business people when choosing a relocation destination. Additionally, the economic structure affected the type of business people who went where, since this was an issue closely related to their business operation and profits in the host countries.

Studies suggest that personal networks of potential migrants in host countries before emigration enhanced the possibilities of attracting them to relocate to specific countries where they already had acquaintances (Arango, 2000; Boyd, 1989; Ghosh, 2007; Shah & Menon, 1999; Smith et al., 1991). Nevertheless, the examination of the relocation choices of Syrian business people suggests that entrance regulations are decisive for refugees regarding entering the host countries or not in the first place. More importantly, the investigation of the political relations between host–home countries and the economic structure of the host countries shows other dimensions regarding refugees' choice of location. Namely, the political relations between the host-home countries and the economic structure of the host countries affect what political or economic type of business people are going where. First, Syrian business people might choose to settle in a host country where the government possesses a more similar political position as them. This also means that on the one hand, positive relations between the home–host governments could limit the appeal of a host country; on the other hand, negative relations could attract more business people to relocate to the host country. Second, Syrian business people take the host countries' economic structure into serious consideration prior to their relocation, since they need to plan how they will continue their business operations after their relocation to the host country. This leads to the relocation choice being conducted under economic considerations.

5. The Settlement Challenges: Residence and Business Regulations, Language, and Discrimination

After the Syrian business people made their decision about which country they would go to, they encountered various legal and social challenges from the host countries. Legally, Syrian business people needed to deal with local regulations issued by local authorities before and after their entry into the country. Socially, they needed to engage in the host countries by interacting with the local communities.

5.1. Legal Perspective: Residence and Business Regulations

Most Syrians, after relocating to the host countries, applied for residential permits as refugees, students, or tourists. However, the business people did not apply for the same types of residential permits as their fellow countrymen; Rather, they applied mostly for investment residential permits. This was mainly because, if

they wanted to establish companies and register those companies in the host countries, having an investment residential permit was a condition to do so. Additionally, the Syrian business people who relocated to Turkey could not purchase real estate as Syrian citizens, but rather through their companies that were registered in Turkey.

The main differences in business regulations among the three host countries were the amount of capital required for establishing a company and regulations regarding the establishment of a commercial company. There was no minimum capital requirement in Egypt to start a limited liability company, while in Turkey it costs at least 10,000 Turkish lire (around $3000) and 50,000 Jordanian dinars (around $70,430) in Jordan (ADMD Law Office, n.d.; LexMundi, 2018; PKF, 2011). This suggests that if Syrian business people wanted to establish new companies in one of these three countries, Egypt provided the lowest threshold for opening a new investment project, followed by Turkey and Jordan. Moreover, the corporate income tax for foreign companies in Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt was 10%, 20%, and 22.5%, respectively in 2016 (PWC, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c). This shows that Jordan had the lowest requirements of tax payment for Syrian companies such that the tax to be paid in Jordan was only half of that in Turkey or Egypt. Since refugee entrepreneurs usually do not have the chance to access local bank credit (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008), the business regulations for the payment of business establishment indicates that those Syrian business people can manage the amount of money for starting up their businesses in the host country.

In addition, the regulations for foreign investors to establish a commercial company in Turkey were different from those in Egypt and Jordan. The regulation in Egypt allowed foreign investors to have 100% ownership of the companies; nevertheless, neither the limited liability company nor joint stock company allowed their foreign investors to conduct importation from outside of Egypt (PWC, 2022c). For Jordan, foreign investors could hold 100% of the share of their companies, but "foreign entities may not…have ownership [over] 50% of construction and certain other commercial ventures," according to Jordanian investment law (PKF, 2011). Only the regulations in Turkey did not have any of the above-mentioned limitations (Investment Office, 2022). This suggests that the more welcoming regulations for establishing a commercial company in Turkey attracted more Syrian commercialists to relocate there since this lowered the cost for them to embark on their commercial enterprises. A Damascene real estate investor in Istanbul explained how this difference in regulations affected Syrian business people's investment types:

> I do not think many Syrian business people would like to open a commercial company in Jordan or Egypt since they cannot control the whole company by themselves because of local regulations. Unless they

know somebody there, they will not open a commercial company.

Investigating the residential permits and business regulations demonstrates the different degrees of difficulty that Syrian business people had, and the amount of money Syrian business people were required to pay for settling in. Although Syrian business people emigrated under the context of war, the successful registration of their companies in these three countries suggested that they could encounter legal challenges through the economic abilities they possessed. In addition, the business regulations of the host countries could influence what economic type of business people were settling in.

5.2. Social Perspective: Language Barriers and Attitudes of Local Communities Towards Syrian Business People

Since Syrian business people do not know Turkish prior to their relocation into the country, and the locals' official language in Turkey is Turkish, communicating with the locals is one of the challenges they are required to deal with during their stay in the country. This not only became a problem for the business people while managing their businesses, but it also made their daily life harder. Both the Syrians and the Turkish community could not communicate with each other easily: "I tried to learn Turkish and speak with the local people. Once, when I was using Turkish to communicate with a Turkish guy, I mistakenly used a word which has a negative meaning, and he was furious and just left the office," stated an Aleppan businessman who owned a design company. Nevertheless, there were some business people who could speak intermediate to advanced Turkish because of their former business experiences in the country. For them, the language was less of an issue. The majority of Syrian business people, however, did not understand Turkish, but they clearly understood the importance of having the language skills necessary for doing business with the local business people. As such, they would recruit translators, either Turkmen Syrians who also left Syria for Turkey, or other Syrians who could speak Turkish.

In addition to the language barrier, the attitudes of locals in host countries towards refugees are another influential factor that affects the settlement of the latter (Ayadurai, 2010; Lyon et al., 2007). As such, local public opinions about the arrival of Syrians did indeed affect their settlement. On the one hand, host governments may have their own political stances towards the Syrian uprising which affected the settlement process of Syrian business people; on the other hand, public opinions may or may not be in accordance with the policies of their governments. Thus, the expatriate Syrian business people needed to deal with contradictory attitudes between the host governments and the locals in the host countries.

The public opinions of the Turkish population towards the Syrians were, in some cases, not as friendly as those of the Turkish government. There were many protests against having Syrians in the country (Jamāl, 2014). In turn, many Syrians were aggravated and insulted by the local Turks ("A group of Turks," 2016; "Hundreds of Turks demonstrate," 2014). This anti-Syrian atmosphere was not restricted to Syrians from lower social strata, as Syrian business people who had established companies were not immune from local aggression. Furthermore, Syrian business people experienced additional discrimination, complaining that Turkish people were not willing to rent houses to them, even those who had the money. "We would pay two or three times the normal rent. However, many Turkish landlords just refused to rent their houses to us once they knew that we are from Syria," stated an Aleppan packaging industrialist in Istanbul. As stated by various Syrian business people, one of the main strategies for them to counter this unfriendly manner was to show the locals that they were richer than them. "You need to let them know that you have money with you, like the decent dressing, the expensive watches or cars you own," stated an Aleppan instruction company owner in Istanbul. As claimed by the Syrian business people, this could at least receive some respect from the locals.

Following the ousting of Morsi and the rise of Sisi in Egypt, the political atmosphere changed from anti-Assad to pro-Assad. Moreover, Syrians became considered to be supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. Obviously, the life of Syrians in Egypt became extremely difficult during this period. As stated by an Aleppan plastic industrialist who was based in the city of sixth of October:

> Many of my Syrian business friends' cars were stolen after Sisi came into power, and many of them have even been robbed on the streets or in shopping malls. Once, a business friend was driving in the city sixth of October. Three guys got off their tuktuk with a gun and robbed him of all his money and car.

Syrian business people were generally considered by the local Egyptians to be "rich people," even though many of them were not as wealthy as the local Egyptians had believed. During fieldwork in the Gisr El-Suez area of Cairo, where many textile workshops and stores are located, the author was walking on the street looking for Syrian-owned shops. The author went into an Egyptian clothes shop and asked the owner where the Syrian shops were. He responded: "Why do you want to do research on the Syrians? They are wealthy. They are richer than us." This suggests that the local Egyptians might consider that the Syrians in their country are "normal" people who are in a good economic situation. Egyptians' general impressions of Syrians negatively impacted the lives of the Syrian business people since they could be remnants of the Muslim Brotherhood, but at the same time, they are wealthy people who came to their country and established businesses.

Syrian business people based in Jordan had less tense relationships with the local communities than those in Turkey or Egypt. Jordanians, in general, did

not discriminate or have as many prejudices as some Turks or Egyptians did. Since some famous Syrian dessert shops' names were well known in Jordan before 2011, some Jordanian business people even used Syrian commercial brands to raise their own visibility in the market. For example, an ice cream shop and a *kunafa* store called Bakdāsh and Nafīsa respectively were located on Makka Street in Amman. The signs outside the shop were very "Syrian," using pictures of the al-Umawi mosque or the Aleppo castle. The names of the shop and the images on the signs made customers believe that they were branches of the famous Bakdāsh and Nafīsa shops in Damascus, both being well-known in Jordan. A Damascene bookshop owner and printing industrialist explained why he thought the relationship between the Jordanians and the Syrians was comparatively better:

> Jordanians used to consider Syria as heaven. Jordan imports almost everything from abroad, including from Syria. Before the war, Jordanians even depended on smuggled meat from Syria. So, the Jordanians are not unfamiliar with our products. Furthermore, the Jordanians used to come to Damascus for weekends to go shopping. They have very good impressions of Syrians.

The language barrier and unfriendly atmosphere against Syrian refugees also negatively affected Syrian business people's daily lives in the host countries. Syrian refugee business people were not exclusively immune from those social impediments in the host societies. Nevertheless, to a certain extent, some could balance these challenges with the money they possessed by recruiting translators, showing their strong economic abilities to the locals, or receiving respect from the locals as wealthy people. Others could counter these unpleasant treatments from the locals through their status as professional business people. Finally, it shows that how the locals treat the refugees may not follow their governments' position.

Syrian business people also encountered various challenges from the legal and social perspectives of other non-business Syrians in the host countries. However, how they leverage these challenges indicates a different story from other Syrians. Since they are business people and have established and operated their businesses in the host countries, this provides them with more economic capital and social status as business professionals. Applying the economic resources they have and exploiting their image as business professionals has helped them manage the general difficulties that refugees may meet in host societies.

6. Conclusion

Previous studies on refugees or forced migrants were usually conducted under the framework of "refugees" or "forced migrants" as a whole, without differentiating among the social class background of the people.

Although refugees and forced migrants were considered as being in a weaker social position, the analysis of the relocation and settlement of expatriate Syrian business people demonstrates a different picture in terms of refugees' relocation and settlement. First, the political relations between the host–home countries and the economic structure of the host countries affect what political or economic type of business people are relocating to where. This not only moves beyond the discussion on the impact of refugees' pre-existing ties on their relocation but also adds to the understudied influence of host–home countries toward refugees' relocation. Second, Syrian business people have shown their resilience in balancing the challenges through the money or status they possessed. The ways in which they leveraged the difficulties were attributed to the money or status they possessed for their relocation choice, they could not only afford to travel again but also stand the loss of what they had established in the first host country and re-establish again in a second host country. The economic resources and status further assisted them in countering the other social challenges they faced in the host societies. The two findings demonstrate that in terms of Syrian business peoples' relocation and settlement, the economic factor affects both processes. Not only can the economic consideration affect what type of business people are going where, but also the Syrian business people could alleviate or withstand the difficulties they encountered from the hosts with the economic abilities they possessed. Thus, the article argues that the relocation choice and settlement processes of Syrian business people are closely related to their class as business professionals since both their relocation and settlement are affected by their professions. This case shows how refugees' relocation and settlement processes go through a class-based orientation, depending on the specific resources they have and the related considerations regarding their professions. This suggests that refugee policy in terms of resettlement should be more "customized," taking the refugees and forced migrants' social classes into consideration since their relocation and settlement are related to their socio-economic compositions. Taking the socioeconomic compositions of refugees and forced migrants into consideration can facilitate the delineation of resettlement policies for refugees and forced migrants, since the backgrounds of refugees and forced migrants impact where and how they choose to relocate and settle. This research has demonstrated how Syrian business people's relocation choices and settlement process are closely related to their class. Future research could further analyze how the different ways or resources mutually affect the relocation and settlement of refugees and forced migrants.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

15 thousand Syrian investors in Egypt and food industries topping their investments. (2012, December 24). *Aliqtisadi*. http://shorturl.at/doHM0

A group of Turks attack Syrian shops in Ankara. (2016, July 18). *RT*. http://shorturl.at/BCDNQ

Abdul-Aziz, H. (2015, May 28). The Egyptian policy on the Syrian crisis. *MEMO*. https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20150528-the-egyptian-policy-on-the-syrian-crisis

Achilli, L. (2015). *Syrian refugees in Jordan a reality check* (Policy Brief). Migration Policy Centre, EUI.

ADMD Law Office. (n.d.). *How to incorporate in Turkey*. www.admdlaw.com/how-to-incorporate-in-turkey/#.WSzEGmiGM2w

Adwani, A., Rosmawati, R., & Aiyub Kadir, M. Y. (2021). The responsibility in protecting the Rohingya refugees in Aceh Province, Indonesia: An international refugees law perspective. *IIUM Law Journal*, *29*(S2). https://doi.org/10.31436/iiumlj.v29i(S2).677

Ahmadoun, S. (2014). *Turkey's policy toward Syrian refugees: Domestic repercussions and the need for international support* (SWP Comment 2014/C 47). Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/turkeys-policy-toward-syrian-refugees

Akesson, B., & Coupland, K. (2018). *Without choice? Understanding war-affected Syrian families' decisions to leave home*. International Organization for Migration. https://publications.iom.int/books/mrs-no-54-without-choice-understanding-war-affected-syrian-families-decisions-leave-home

Al-Miqdad, F. (2007). *Iraqi refugees in Syria.* Forced Migration Review. https://www.fmreview.org/fr/node/4769

Alrawadieh, Z., Karayilan, E., & Cetin, G. (2019). Understanding the challenges of refugee entrepreneurship in tourism and hospitality. *The Service Industries Journal*, *39*. https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2018.1440550

Arango, J. (2000). Explaining migration: A critical view. *International Social Science Journal*, *52*(165). https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2451.00259

Ayadurai, S. (2010, September 16–17). *Challenges faced by women refugees in initiating entrepreneurial ventures in a host country: Case study of UNHCR women refugees in Malaysia* [Paper presentation]. European Conference on Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Athens, Greece. https://www.proquest.com/docview/880058379

Bizri, R. M. (2017). Refugee-entrepreneurship: a social capital perspective. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *29*(9/10). https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2017.1364787

Boyd, M. (1989). Family and personal networks in international migration: Recent developments and new agendas. *The International Migration Review*, *23*(3), 638–670.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2). https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Castles, s., & Miller, M. J. (1998). *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world.* Macmillan Press.

Chang, C.-A. (2018). Expatriate Syrian businessmen in anti-Assad political organizations. *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, *41*(3). https://doi.org/10.1353/jsa.2018.0013

Chang, C.-A. (2022). The economically rich refugees: A case study of the business operations of Istanbul-based Syrian refugee businesspeople. *International Migration*, *60*(3). https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12886

Commerce Minister meets Syrian Business group in Egypt's delegation. (2014, February 10). *Aliqtisadi.* http://shorturl.at/ejLUV

Fabbe, K., Hazlett, C., & Sinmazdemir, T. (2017). *Displaced Loyalties: The effects of indiscriminate violence on attitudes among Syrian refugees in Turkey* (Harvard Business School Working Paper No. 18-024). Harvard Business School. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3039099

Fussell, E. (2014). Warmth of the welcome: Attitudes toward Immigrants and Immigration Policy. *Annual Review Social*, *40*. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071913-043325

Ghosh, S. (2007). Transnational ties and intra-immigrant group settlement experiences. *GeoJournal*, *68*(2). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-007-9072-1

Heilbrunn, S. (2019). Against all odds: Refugees bricoleuring in the void. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, *25*(5). https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-10-2017-0393

Horst, C. (2006). Refugee livelihoods: Continuity and transformations. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, *25*(2). https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdi0122

Hundreds of Turks demonstrate against the Syrians, destroying their property to demand their deportation. (2017, July 15). *Alquds*. http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=193025

Investment Office. (2022). *Establishing a business in Turkey*. https://www.invest.gov.tr/en/investmentguide/pages/establishing-a-business.aspx

Jamāl, I. (2014, July 15). Hundreds of Turks demonstrate against the Syrians, destroying their property

to demand their deportation. *Alquds*. http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=193025

Kloosterman, R. C., & van der Leun, J. P. (1999). Just for starters: Commercial gentrification by immigrant entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Rotterdam neighbourhoods. *Housing Studies*, *14*(5). https://doi.org/10.1080/02673039982669

Kortam, H. (2013, July 10). New requirements for entry of Syrians: Entry requirements include having a prior visa. *Daily News Egypt*. www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/07/10/new-requirements-for-entry-of-syrians

Lefèvre, R. (2013). *Ashes of Hama: The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria.* Hurst & Company.

Lefèvre, R. (2014). *Can Syria's Muslim Brotherhood salvage its relations with Riyadh?* Carnegie Middle East Center. http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/55052

LexMundi. (2018). *Guide to doing business: Egypt*. https://www.lexmundi.com/common/Uploaded%20files/GTDB/Guide_Egypt.pdf

Lyon, F., Sepulveda, L., & Syrett, S. (2007). Enterprising refugees: Contributions and challenges in deprived urban areas. *Local Economy: The Journal of the Local Economy Policy Unit*, *22*(4). https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/id/eprint/1114

Mouawad, R. J. (2001). Syria and Iraq—Repression: Disappearing Christians of the Middle East. *Middle East Quarterly*, *8*(1). https://www.meforum.org/17/syria-and-iraq-repression

Number of Syrian companies in Turkey exceeds 10,000 companies. (2015, December 4). *Turk Press*. http://www.turkpress.co/node/12286

Perthes, V. (1991). A look at Syria's upper class: The bourgeoisie and the Ba'th. *Middle East Report*, *170*, 31–37.

Phillips, C. (2012). *Into the Quagmire: Turkey's frustrated Syria policy* (Briefing Paper). Chatham House.

Picard, E. (2006). Managing identities among expatriate business across the Syrian-Lebanese boundary. In I. Brandell (Ed.), *State Frontiers: Borders and Boundaries in the Middle East* (pp. 75–100). I. B. Tauris.

PKF. (2011). *Doing business in Jordan*. http://www.pkf.com.tw/Doing%20Business%20in%20doing%20business%20in%20jordan.pdf

PWC. (2022a). *Jordan: Corporate—Taxes on corporate income*. https://taxsummaries.pwc.com/jordan/corporate/taxes-on-corporate-income

PWC. (2022b). *Turkey: Corporate—Taxes on corporate income*. https://taxsummaries.pwc.com/turkey/corporate/taxes-on-corporate-income

PWC. (2022c). *Egypt: Corporate—Taxes on corporate income*. https://taxsummaries.pwc.com/egypt/corporate/taxes-on-corporate-income

Sandberg, S., Immonen, R., & Kok, S. (2019). Refugee entrepreneurship: Taking a social network view on immigrants with refugee backgrounds starting transnational businesses in Sweden. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, *36*(1/2). https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2019.096967

Satik, N., & Mahmoud, K. W. (2013). The Syrian crisis: An analysis of neighboring countries' stances. *Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies*, *16*. https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/lists/ACRPS-PDFDocumentLibrary/Syrian_Crisis_and_Neighboring_Countries.pdf

Shah, N. M., & Menon, I. (1999). Chain migration through the social network: Experience of labour migrants in Kuwait. *International Migration*, *37*(2). https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2435.00076

Smith, M. P., Tarallo, B., & Kagiwada, G. (1991). Colouring California: New Asian immigrant households, social networks and the local state. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *15*(2). https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1991.tb00633.x

Social Security. (2017). *Office of retirement and disability—Jordan*. https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/progdesc/ssptw/2012-2013/asia/jordan.html

Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics. (2011). *Imports and exports by countries 2006–2011*. http://www.cbssyr.sy/trade/Foreign-Trade/2011/Trade-State2.htm

Syrian food culture overrun in Jordanian cities through 1100 restaurants. (2015, April 13). *Eqtsad*. https://www.eqtsad.net/news/article/10033

Turkey does a U-turn, imposes entry visas on Syrians. (2015, December 29). *The New Arab*. https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2015/12/29/turkey-does-a-u-turn-imposes-entry-visas-on-syrians

Turkey Syrians paradise? What is between the financial overflowing and the refugees—Why? And until when? (2013, October 8). *Eqtsad*. http://www.eqtsad.net/read/5392

Wauters, B., & Lambrecht, J. (2008). Barriers to refugee entrepreneurship in Belgium: Towards an explanatory model. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *34*(6). https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830802211190

World Bank. (2022). *World integrated trade solution*. http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/SYR/Year/LTST/TradeFlow/Export/Partner/all

Zehra, K., & Usmani, S. (2021). Not without family: Refugee family entrepreneurship and economic integration process. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*. Advance online publication. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JEC-03-2020-0044/full/html

About the Author

Ching-An Chang is an associate professor at the Department of Arabic Language and Culture at the National Chengchi University in Taiwan (R.O.C.). His research focuses on migration- and refugee-related issues in the Middle East. He is currently working on the project Non-Poor Refugees: The Impact of the Economic Elite Refugees on Host Countries—Syrian Refugee Business Community in Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan, which is funded by the Young Scholar Fellowship from the National Science and Technology Council in Taiwan.