

Wa'ed Alshoubaki

Navigating Integration Policies of Forced Migration in the United States

The Case of Syrian Refugees

 Springer

Navigating Integration Policies of Forced Migration in the United States

Wa'ed Alshoubaki

Navigating Integration Policies of Forced Migration in the United States

The Case of Syrian Refugees

 Springer

Wa'ed Alshoubaki
Department of Public Administration
The University of Jordan
Amman, Jordan

ISBN 978-3-031-58790-0 ISBN 978-3-031-58791-7 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-58791-7>

US-Jordan Fulbright Commission PS00332365 U.S. Department of State

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2024

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Paper in this product is recyclable.

*To those who roam the land in pursuit of
security, liberty, and better living conditions.*

Foreword

It was on Thursday, June 10, 2021, that I received an email reach out requesting to meet over Skype or Zoom and discuss the potential of hosting a researcher focusing “on the integration policies for forced migrants in the United States through the Jordanian Fulbright Scholar Research Award.” The request was from Dr. Wa’ed Alshoubaki, and, not knowing anything about the person or the project, I reluctantly accepted the request to meet.

What followed was not just an engaging conversation on the issue of forced migration and refugee resettlement and integration in the United States, but it was also an enduring professional relationship. First, offering to host the researcher for her application purposes and, once her application was selected for the award, hosting her on behalf of the School of Public Affairs and Administration that I directed (at that time) at Western Michigan University during her stay and study from September 2022 to May 2023, in Michigan in general and Kalamazoo in particular.

During the course of those nine months, we would discuss passionately her ongoing research from instrument development, sampling, and the Institutional Review Board application and approval to her public presentations at the university and to a whole host of topics on the disciplinary trends and developments in public administration and policy as well as the research and practice of international development and social policies more broadly. As a person interested in social policies, international political economy, and labor migration more specifically, I was glad to host her with a dedicated office space and access to all university resources and discuss with many of her promising research ideas. In retrospect, I am delighted to have contributed, at least indirectly, to her ambitious and now accomplished research project. Congratulations Dr. Alshoubaki for getting the job well done!

This monograph is in part a product of the author’s extensive experience with the policies and practices of Syrian refugee crisis and their migration processes in her home country Jordan and other neighboring countries. According to UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, the civil war of Syria beginning in 2011 that hitherto has no end in sight has created the largest ever single-country population displacement in the world, leaving over one-half (or 12 million) of the Syrian people forcibly displaced. The massive 7.8-magnitude earthquake of 2023 destroyed homes and vital

infrastructure, making the forcible displacement even worse. While about one-half of the affected people are internally displaced and in acute need of humanitarian aid within Syria, another half have sought refuge in other countries. The neighboring countries including Jordan, Lebanon, and especially Turkey have hosted most of the Syrian refugees, with European countries led by Germany hosting close to one million. While the United States has taken on a small fraction of Syrian refugees (close to 10,000), the author's attempts to cast the United States' experience with refugee resettlement and integration as well as the experiences of the Syrian refugees themselves into the larger context of immigration and immigrant struggle can be very insightful for the global audience of researchers, policymakers, practitioners, students, and the general public interested in the topic.

Drawing from her academic training in public administration and policy, the author traces historical developments in the experience with forced migration and policies to address them in the United States and globally as well as the legal and institutional frameworks that have been developed and practiced for the resettlement of Syrian refugees more specifically. Given the fragmented and patchwork approach to refugee resettlement and integration using the "pluralist" perspective, the US government collaborates with the UNHCR externally and various nongovernment partners and refugee advocacy organizations. So far, as refugee resettlement and integration manifests the model and strength of the underlying governance system, the author contrasts the loosely framed, laissez-faire approach of the United States with the project-based approaches involving and coordinating across multiple levels of government in Germany and Switzerland. While the United States has a long history with immigration, including the efforts to resettle and integrate refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam to Congo and Sudan, the author argues for potential effectiveness of the model of multi-level governance as a "durable solution" to this emerging problem of forced displacement globally.

The author draws on her command of social science research in designing and executing the data collection and analysis plans that are appropriate for the given context. While historical changes in the policy and practice of refugee resettlement provide a great deal of insights into the contemporary developments, the selection of Michigan as the site and focus on reaching out to the Syrian refugees from select cities with their large concentration in the narrative inquiry framework is a strategic move to manage the otherwise highly complicated process of research. The author also utilizes her native Arab background and language to connect with the target population seamlessly, making them feel welcome and comfortable for more accurate data and information. The result is a comprehensive coverage of the refugees' "lived experiences" and the challenges they have faced in gaining a proper footing in the host society with perhaps an unvarnished level of accuracy.

Syrian refugees, just like other quarters of refugees and immigrants, in the United States face major obstacles in their quest for integration in their host communities. Whereas language barriers create an uphill battle in navigating the rough and highly individualized terrain of labor market, health care, social and community life, and legality in the United States, their challenges are compounded by their ongoing mental health issues, financial stress, and social isolation. Equipped with these key

insights from the informant narratives, the author makes a case for a more concerted policy effort at refugee integration through “gender mainstreaming,” “federalization” of the integration process, and an enhanced role of philanthropy especially when it comes to providing services and resources that are helpful in their integration at the community level.

It is not the time for me to rehash the insights offered in Dr. Alshoubaki’s engaging discussions. I will let the pages throughout the book speak for her thoughtful substance, presentation, and style. I am honored to underscore, however, that this project makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the *what*, *how*, and *why* about the resettlement and integration of Syrian refugees in the United States by creating and using the multi-level frame of governance especially with an engaging substantiation from the lived experiences.

Professor and MPA Director
Northern Arizona University
Flagstaff, AZ, USA
February 12, 2024

Udaya R. Wagle

Preface

The forced migration of Syrian refugees is not only a political and humanitarian crisis but also a philosophical challenge that asks us to reflect on the meaning of integration, inclusion, and belonging in a globalized world. As a researcher, I have always been intrigued by the forced migration of Syrian refugees and the different solutions that have been proposed to deal with the refugee crisis. I was particularly interested in the three durable solutions: resettlement, local integration, and voluntary repatriation. Being an academic who had taught and met Syrian refugees at the university, I had heard their stories about the resettlement process to the United States, as some of their relatives and friends had already resettled there. These stories fueled my intellectual curiosity, and I had two primary inquiries in mind regarding the extent to which Syrian refugees in the United States have successfully integrated and the challenges to their integration. I needed to collect primary data from resettled Syrian refugees to address these. I moved to Michigan State, where I was hosted as a research fellow at Western Michigan University. I spent nine months there, dedicated to securing the Institutional Review Board's approval and collecting primary data by conducting interviews with Syrian refugees who had resettled in the United States due to the conflict in Syria.

At the heart of the integration challenge lies the tension between the universal human rights of refugees to seek protection and the particularistic policies of host countries to receive and integrate them. While the United States has a long history of resettling refugees and granting them permanent residence status, the lack of a common denominator among refugee resettlement policies and programs has prompted a critical reflection on the meaning and effectiveness of integration. Moreover, little interest is shown in integration policies, with only small local initiatives being identified. However, resettlement and integration are not mutually exclusive, and, in fact, they complete each other. The book highlights the lack of definition of integration in policy-oriented and its implications for refugees, particularly Syrian refugees, who aim to become integrated members of the American community. From a theoretical standpoint, several definitions of integration and integration frameworks have been introduced to fill such gaps alongside several integration governance models worldwide.

In this book, I argue that integration is not a passive process that refugees undergo but an active and reciprocal one that involves the participation of both refugees and host communities. Integration requires not only the removal of legal and administrative barriers but also the creation of opportunities for refugees to become self-sufficient, productive, and engaged members of their new communities.

In this volume, I sought to make Syrian refugees' voices heard in the integration policy realm by sharing their experiences in three key breakpoints: legal, economic, and socio-cultural integration. In one sense, the integration dimensions are inseparable in nature, and policymakers cannot consider them separately. From this standpoint, the challenges are inextricable and lead to each other. It is vital to ensure that refugees have access to the labor market, improve their language illiteracy, overcome citizenship barriers, provide them with safe and healthy housing, and enable them to build their social network.

This means that policymakers need to enhance and strengthen integration policies in the United States. This will guarantee fairness, welfare, and effective implementation of integration policies. Hence, I draw on my observation about the significance of utilizing advanced technology and artificial intelligence, reconsidering integration mainstreaming in public policy, and enhancing sustainable decisions related to refugee issues through their genuine participation. This book provides a deep analysis of Syrian refugees' integration in the United States and the evolving resettlement policies and programs that affect their integration. It provides actionable insights for enhancing and fortifying integration policies in the United States.

Amman, Jordan

Wa'ed Alshoubaki

Acknowledgment

Wa'ed Alshoubaki gratefully acknowledges the financial support for the research resulting in this book by the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Research Award, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and the Fulbright Commission in Jordan. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Fulbright Program, the Government of the United States, or the Fulbright Commission in Jordan.

About the Book

Navigating Integration Policies of Forced Migration in the United States: The Case of Syrian Refugees investigates the integration of Syrian refugees in the United States and identifies the challenges that hinder their successful integration. After providing a comprehensive analysis of the US legal instruments in national and international laws and obligations to receive forced migrants, the book then highlights the resettlement process and programs as a coordinated interagency process that entails a collaboration between the UN Refugee Agency and the related US departments and agencies and the nongovernmental partners and refugee advocacy organizations. Moreover, it delves into integration as a proxy theory that entails an analytical component from a theoretical lens to understand some aspects of realities that revolve around the resettlement of forced migrants' concepts and principles.

Built on rich qualitative data from Syrian refugees in the United States to understand their resettlement experiences and their integration in multidimensional analysis, the book shows how the lack of federally driven integration policies and institutions in the United States negatively affects just integration. Relying on voluntary organizations leads to uneven outcomes among forced migrants, affecting social equity. Alongside this book's theoretical and practical implications, it highlights the ethical consideration of studying forced migrants and the synergy between forced migrants' vulnerability and cultural sensitivity. Ultimately, the book discusses the roadmap for improving integration policies in the United States.

Contents

1	Introduction: The History of Managing Forced Migration in the U.S.: Political Climate and Global Events	1
1.1	Providing Protection: Between Politics and Policy	1
1.2	The Dynamics of the History of Forced Migrant Movements in the U.S.	3
1.3	The Third Millennium and Refugee Policy	15
1.4	Conclusion	18
1.5	The Structure of the Book	20
	References.	21
2	The U.S. Legal and Institutional Frameworks of the Resettlement of Syrian Refugees.	25
2.1	Multi-actor Resettlement Policy	25
2.2	The Legal Framework	28
2.2.1	The National Law	28
2.2.2	International Laws	29
2.3	The Institutional Framework	31
2.3.1	The Politics of Resettlement in the United States	31
2.3.2	The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Process	33
2.3.3	Resettlement Stages	35
2.3.4	An Overview of the Resettlement Policy Fiscal Structure	42
2.4	Service Provision Variations Across States	45
2.5	The Challenges of the Resettlement Program	46
2.6	Resettlement as a Durable Solution	48
2.7	Conclusion	50
	References.	51

3 Integration as a Proxy Theory and Governance 59

3.1 Integration Conceptualization 59

3.2 Integration Dimensions 64

 3.2.1 The Refugee Integration Framework 65

3.3 Levels of Integration 71

3.4 The Integration Governance. 73

 3.4.1 The U.S. Integration Governance:
 The Laissez-Faire Approach 75

 3.4.2 Germany Integration Governance:
 The Project-Based/Multi-level Approach 79

 3.4.3 Switzerland Integration Governance:
 Temporary Integration Approach. 84

3.5 Conclusion 87

References. 88

**4 Synergizing Vulnerability and Cultural Sensitivity
in Studying Forced Migrants** 95

4.1 Refugee Situation: The Nexus Between Policy and Research. 95

4.2 The Ethical Issues and Principles 97

4.3 The Specificity of Studying Forced Migrants 104

4.4 Challenges of Studying Forced Migration. 110

4.5 Conclusion 113

References. 114

**5 Real Voices from Syrian Refugees in the United States:
State of Michigan** 119

5.1 Background 119

 5.1.1 Methodology and Informants’ Data. 121

5.2 Forced Migrants’ Integration 124

 5.2.1 Legal Integration 124

 5.2.2 Economic Integration. 126

 5.2.3 Sociocultural Integration 141

5.3 Conclusion 143

References. 144

**6 The Syrian Refugees’ Integration Challenges in the U.S.
and the Roadmap for Integration Policies** 147

6.1 The Syrian Refugees’ Integration Challenges 147

6.2 The Roadmap of Integration Policies in the U.S. 151

6.3 Conclusion and Remarks 164

References. 165

Index. 171

List of Figures

Fig. 2.1 Local Refugee Resettlement Agencies..... 39

Fig. 3.1 Integration process actors..... 65

Fig. 5.1 Number of arrivals of Syrian refugees to Michigan state:
FY 2015–2023 120

Fig. 5.2 The codes and subcodes map..... 121

Fig. 6.1 The challenges of Syrian refugee integration in the U.S. 148

Fig. 6.2 The components of the U.S. integration roadmap 152

List of Tables

Table 1.1	The origins of resettled refugees in the United States 2023	19
Table 2.1	The major public benefit programs in selected states	46
Table 3.1	MIPEX Integration score for three selected countries	74
Table 5.1	The characteristics of semi-structured interview participants.....	122

List of Boxes

Box 3.1 The refugee integration framework 66

Box 4.1 Ethical Practices of Studying Syrian Refugees
in the United States 103

Box 4.2 Cultural Hints for Cultural Sensitivity Purposes..... 108

About the Author

Wa'ed Alshoubaki, PhD, is an associate professor of Public Policy and Administration at the University of Jordan, Amman. She has been a visiting scholar at the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Western Michigan University in the 2022–2023 academic year. Her expertise lies in public policy and governance, with ongoing research on immigration and refugee resettlements in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States. Dr. Alshoubaki has several research publications on refugees and governance systems, public procurement, social policies, poverty, and women's rights.

Abbreviations

AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BAMF	The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
CAT	The International Convention Against Torture
CBP	Customs and Border Protection
CDC	The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CIP	Cantonal Integration Programs
CORE	Cultural Orientation Resources Exchange
DHS	The Department of Homeland Security
DOS	The U.S. Department of the State
EASY	Initial Distribution of Asylum Seekers
EC	European Commission
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EES	The Early Employment Services program
FEMA	the Federal Emergency Management Agency
FNIA	Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GCM	Global Compact on Migration
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
HHS	the Department of Health and Human Services
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
IASFM	The International Association for the Study of Forced Migration
ICCPR	The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICE	Immigrations and Customs Enforcement
ICESCR	The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
INS	the Immigration and Naturalization Service
IOM	The International Organization for Migration
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIPEX	Migrant Integration Policy Index
MRA	the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act
NACARA	the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act of 1997