

People's Democratic Republic of
Algeria Ministry of Higher Education and
Scientific Research

UNIVERSITY OF 8 MAI 1945 / GUELMA
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**How to Make America Secure? The United States Refugee Policy
during Barack Obama and Donald Trump's Presidencies
The Case of Syrian Refugees**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and
Culture

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June 2022

Dedication

I dedicate this humble work to my dear mother who is my supporter and my source of comfort, to my dear father who is my source of inspiration.

All your prayers and hard work will linger in my memory and no matter what I do is not enough to pay you back,

I love you to the moon and never back.

To my older sister Rima who is my second mother and my greatest friend. To my sweet older brother Rami and the chocolate bars, you bought for me when I was working on this dissertation. To my annoying sweet brother Mazene, I love you.

And to my little sweet girls Iline & Minna.

To my brother-in-law Sabri, and my sister-in-law Chaima who are the greatest additions to our family.

Dikra and Ilhem my soulmates, my partner Nachoua, and my dear friends Ahlem, Chahra, Ghada, Hadil Tarfa, Malek, Meriem, Rahma, Rawda, Soundes, Zahra and my genshin impact friends.

And finally, to all my beloveds and to the memory of my great teacher Bekakria Houda (may Allah put her in heaven).

Amani

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my Mom and Dad “Khadidja and Farouk” who with love and effort have accompanied me in this process, without hesitating at any moment of seeing my dreams come true, which are also their dream.

To “Nesrine and Ikram” my beautiful sisters, who have been my support in the difficulties, I LOVE YOU. To my annoying little brother “Taim Allah” thank you for your disturbance. I also dedicate this work to my butterfly “Ismahane” you are my forever and my everything!

To my ZOKERS “Rafik, Selim, Hafid, Mariem, l’Hadi and Sassi” spending time with you was so precious, I love every minute we’ve spent together.

To my Godfather “Djazil” thank you for being my human diary, for listening without judging, and for always letting me know you’re there if I need you.

You will always be special to me. To my treasure “Iheb” thank you for bullying me all the time, I’m proud that I had a friend like you in the past 4 years. Iheb... Djazil... Run! The bus of life is waiting for us!

I also dedicate this work to “Yasser, Aymen and Akram” thank you for everything. Much love to my partner “Amani” too, I’m proud of you! Special thanks to “Amoula” and my classmates, G3 you’re the best!

To my buddy “Ismail Kherif” remember my friend that KDB is the best midfielder in the world.

Last but not least I want to appreciate my team Manchester City, loving you was the best decision I have ever made.

Nachoua

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, we would like to thank God for helping and giving us the ability to accomplish this work.

We would like to express our sincere thanks and how much we are indebted to our mentor and supervisor Mrs. Amiar Mounira who inspired us for this research work, and for her endless patience and precious advice, and undeniable hard work. She believed in us more than we ever believed in ourselves.

We also owe sincere gratitude to the panel of examiners who devoted their precious time for reading and evaluating the end-product of the study.

Completing this work would have been more difficult without the support and encouragement of our parents, our beloved supervisor, and great friends. We have to offer our special thanks to all teachers who gave us support when at moments we felt depressed.

Abstract

This work aims to explore the different definitions of the term “refugee” and to investigate the political view on the refugee policy. The dissertation attempts to explain refugees' influence on the US security system. The study of the subject is motivated by the significant impact of the refugee's admission to the US before and after 9/11. More to the point, this work compares the two featured presidents of the United States, President Barack Obama, and President Donald Trump, and their opposite policies. Syria was the most affected country by the Arab Spring resulting in a massive displacement crisis around the globe. Accordingly, it is taken as a case study in this research which helps at highlighting Syrian refugee crisis. The latter happened due to the civil war that scattered a whole country resulting to one of the most major crises in the world.

المخلص

يهدف هذا العمل إلى استكشاف التعاريف المختلفة لمصطلح اللاجئين والتحقيق في وجهة النظر السياسية حول سياسة اللاجئين. تحاول الأطروحة شرح تأثير اللاجئين على نظام الأمن الأمريكي. وقد كان الواقع لدراسة الموضوع مدفوعاً بالتأثير الكبير لقبول اللاجئين في الولايات المتحدة قبل وبعد 11 سبتمبر. كما يقارن هذا العمل الرئيسيين المميزين للولايات المتحدة، الرئيس باراك أوباما، والرئيس دونالد ترامب، وسياساتهما المعاكسة. كانت سوريا البلد الأكثر تضرراً من الربيع العربي مما أدى إلى أزمة نزوح واسعة النطاق في جميع أنحاء العالم. وبناءً على ذلك، تم أخذها كحالة للدراسة في هذا البحث مما يساعد في تسليط الضوء على أزمة اللاجئين السوريين. حدثت هذه الأخيرة بسبب الحرب الأهلية التي شنت بلدًا بأكمله مما أدى إلى واحدة من أكبر الأزمات في العالم .

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FY	Fiscal Year
GOP	Grand Old Party
ICE	Immigration and Customs Enforcement
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
IRO	International Refugee Organization
IS	the Islamic State
ISI	the Islamic State of Iraq
ISIL	the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NTC	National Targeting Center
SSSC	the Supreme State Security Court
UN	the United Nations
UNDP	the United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States
USBP	U.S. Border Patrol
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
USRAP	United States Refugee Admission Program
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WW II	World War Two

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Introduction

The United States has been a land of immigrants since the ice age as history records. People crossed their borders to the new world to achieve better conditions of life. Political, religious, and economic insecurity pushed them to take refuge in America and the process is still continuing. However, the US refugee admission was not quite as welcoming as the land did for the Europeans in the 17th century. The terrorist attacks that took place in September 11th, 2001 and resulted in the most devastating event in US history, led to the initiation of counterterrorism policy or what was known as the “War on Terror”. Many countries in the Middle East were under the US attack that aimed at ensuring national security. In this respect, the United States has also started to reconsider its refugee policy towards the region.

Since America is the most powerful leader in the world, it was seen as a land of salvation by all people. Thus, people always sought refuge on its soil especially over the last decades. Every year, refugee admission is offered to the people who are in need of it by presidential approval. Certainly, particular but not complicated procedures were taken into consideration. However, after 9/11 attacks, American presidents became strict in opening the borders of the country to the newcomers.

September the 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks took the lives of 2,977 people and forever changed the United States’ policy towards the world. It had a permanent impact on the country's security system, making the government reconsider its defense strategy, counterterrorism policy, and refugee admission system. Even though no admissions system is flawless, the US immigration and refugee admission systems have substantially improved after 9/11, and the US refugee admissions program has likely become the safest in the world.

The number of admitted refugees has shifted over time going up and down with the change of presidents, President Barack Obama and Donald Trump, for instance, shared the same perspective of following a severe refugee system but had different strategies and policies.

Obama took a more humanitarian stand toward refugees and did not distinguish between people of any ethnic group. In contrast, Trump showed his aggressive view toward immigrants in general and the refugees coming from the Middle East countries in specific. Syria, particularly, provides a good example to examine how the American refugee policy had changed with the changing of the two Presidents' administrations. The latter showed different views in regards to Syrian refugees whose number has highly increased after the Arab Spring that led millions of people to seek refuge in America.

The significance of the present study is to examine how the refugee policy works in the US during different points of time before and after 9/11 and its impact on the immigration system as a whole. This could be achieved by providing a comparison between the policies of two most influential presidents in the United States. When the US faced critical issues related to terrorism on its lands, new security measures have been taken to keep it safe. This research highlights the refugee policies during the administrations of Barack Obama and Donald Trump. It also aims to compare the numbers of refugees admitted to the country from 2012 to 2021. By the end of the dissertation, a clear view could be shaped to understand whether the issue of security can be directly related to the immigration and refugee admission systems.

This work provides answers to some questions that help to understand the United States' refugee policies during Obama's and Trump's presidencies, taking Syria as a case study. Therefore, the research questions are: what are the refugee policies that were undertaken by both presidents? How does the refugee policy play a role in the security system of the US? How did the refugee policy change before, after 9/11, and the Arab spring? How many Syrian refugees were admitted to the US during Obama and Trump presidencies? What policies did they take into consideration? How secure is the US during Obama and Trump administrations?

The subject in study is tackled in three main chapters. Under the title “The United States Refugee Policy before and after 9/11 Attacks”, the first chapter sheds light on the different definitions of the term refugee by different organizations and analysts and explains how the concept has changed over time. The work also clarifies how the policy of refugee admission was viewed before and after 9/11. The second chapter entitled “The Arab Spring in Syria: Causes and Consequences” examines the issue of the Arab spring highlighting its causes and its consequences and explaining how the peaceful demonstrations turned into a horrific bloodbath that fired a civil war leading millions of people to flee. In the last chapter entitled “Two Different Perspectives: Barack Obama and Donald Trump's Refugee Policies in Syria”, the policies of the two featured presidents are analyzed and compared.

The topic under discussion is one of the primary studies that have sparked a wide range of opinions among academics and researchers. Numerous articles and books have tackled this topic. In their article, “The US on Track to Reach Obama Administration’s Goal of Resettling 110,000 Refugees this Year”, Philip C and Jens M Krogstad, define refugees as people who have crossed international borders to receive protection from persecution, war, or violence. They also provide a set of information about the number of refugees accepted under both Obama and Trump presidencies, mentioning the ideological tests for those entering the U.S. from ISIS-affected countries, such as Syria.

In his address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Obama referred to the worldwide refugee situation as a test to humanity. He asked all governments to do more to help refugees fleeing war, especially in Syria and other Middle Eastern and African countries. Maya Rhodan states in her article “President Obama: U.S. Will Accept 110,000 Refugees from around the World” that the international leaders took 360,000 refugees from war-torn nations in 2017, with Germany and Canada taking the most. The United States accepted 110,000 additional refugees in the Fiscal Year 2017, which began on October the 1st. She

argues that President Barack Obama and Democratic challenger Hillary Clinton have both been blasted by Republican presidential contender Donald Trump over their refugee policies. While Obama said that refugees were thoroughly screened, Trump has referred to them as the modern-day "Trojan Horses," particularly those from Syria. Instead of embracing them, Trump has advocated a ban on all Muslims.

Eugene Kiely states in her article "Fact check: Trump's Immigration Policy vs. Obama's" that on January 27, President Trump signed Executive Orders restricting Syrian refugees from entering the United States and all other refugees from entering for 120 days. Trump campaigned on a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States. However, in response to criticism of his Executive Order, Trump said that his policy was not about religion but about keeping the country safe from terrorism.

Jenkins Brian, in his article "Bush, Obama, And Trump: The Evolution of U.S. Counterterrorist Policy Since 9/11", notices that after 9/11, the fear of terrorism has become a permanent part of the minds of the Americans which played an important role for an immense increase in executive power and national security systems. The same apprehension has contributed to causing a crucial shift in the people's attitude toward the idea of immigration since Trump portrayed radical Islamic terrorism (both ISIS and Al-Qaeda) as a foreign threat that America must defend against with tighter borders, travel restrictions, lower refugee numbers, immigration flows, and thorough vetting of individuals seeking to enter the country.

Since this work focuses on both analyzing the refugee policy during the custody of two presidents and its relationship with the security system in the US, a qualitative method is used as the nature of such research requires. The research includes a comparison between Donald Trump's and Barack Obama's presidencies taking numbers and statistics into consideration. It is important also to note that the comparative approach is relevant in this study. Because the

research involves Syria as a case study, the historical approach is greatly emphasized in the context of the research where one should be aware of the history of the refugees in Syria and America. In order to go further in the investigation, the data collection is required to the topic in which different sources as website articles, books, journals, and political discourse are used.

Chapter One

The United States Refugee Policy before and after 9/11

After WWII, the United States as a dominant force and an economic superpower has expanded and the scope of its foreign policy spread to all corners of the globe. This made it an appealing destination for many immigrants. America was not only seen as a land of security and human rights but also where one would anticipate international refugee protection. Refugee crises forced world leaders to sign a Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. As soon as the twentieth century came to an end, the United States was under attack by a terrorist organization called Al-Qaeda when September 11th was a turning point in the US immigrants and refugees policy. The laws that were passed after the attacks had a major impact on the world refugees.

1. Definitions of the Term 'Refugee'

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United States offers protection to all foreigners who are currently in the United States or who are on their way to the country and fit the international law criteria of "refugee." A refugee is defined by the United Nations 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol as all the individuals who ran away from their countries that are unable or unwilling to provide them with the needed safety and good living conditions. Others included are those who suffer concern of future persecution because of race, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion ("What Is a Refugee?").

The word refugee was included in US immigration law by the Refugee Act of 1980. The country has a legal obligation to give protection as a signatory to the 1967 Protocol and under US immigration law as it is clearly stated on their official website: "the Refugee Act of 1980, enacted by Congress, adopted this term into US immigration law. As a signatory to the 1967

Protocol and under U.S. immigration law, the United States has a legal duty to provide protection (“Asylum in the United States”).

The European view on refugees and asylum seekers is not very different. However, it insists on the third-world countries for being the most countries that need asylum and suffer from war and persecution. As the European Union Commission states according to the Geneva Refugee Convention and Protocol, to the EU, a third-country or stateless person is the one who has applied for protection under the Geneva Refugee Convention and Protocol but has not yet received a final judgment (“Asylum Seeker”).

The term refugee is also defined as the person who has been forced to leave his country to escape the rages of war, persecution, or a natural disaster. In the view of the world, refugees are people who have fled their home country due to fear of persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disrupted public order and, as a result, require international protection (“Definitions”). Recently, the movement of people is mainly caused by wars more than any other reason when people are forced to leave their own countries and seek to resettle in another safe place for better future.

Human Rights Organization views the word ‘refugee’ as a technical term providing many conditions to consider a person as a refugee. The individual must be outside his country, and the harm feared must be for reasons of race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a specific social circumstances. Natural disaster victims are typically excluded, and the reasons for the Convention focus on civil or political status rather than economic or social disenfranchisement (Cantor and Burson). Accordingly, the pushing factors that led people to leave their country, not stated by Human Rights Organization, would not make a person a refugee in the view of the host country.

The United States Official Council of Refugees defines the refugees under its law as the people who are located outside the United States or are of particular humanitarian concern to

the United States as well as proving that they are living under persecution or a reason that threatens their lives (“Refugees”). Thus, anyone out of this definition cannot be considered a refugee and then will have no privilege.

1.1. Legal and Illegal Refugees

The process for a human being to flee to another country because of war is argued to be either legal or illegal. However, it is safe to say that refugees are totally considered legal unlike immigrants for the sole reason that refugees do not intend to leave their homes, and by definition, they forcibly and without a choice had to flee from war or oppression. In addition, in the case of war or any persecution in the government system, the refugee’s government will not give permission, passports, visa, or any legal way to cross the national borders (“Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Migrants.”). Accordingly, a refugee is not categorized under the law as illegal immigrant because the latter has all the chances to get a visa and is not under pressure to leave his home country. Worth mentioning, the meaning of a refugee by definition can embrace many categories of immigrants. Thus, there was a need to provide a clarification concerning the difference between the term refugees and other terms such as asylum seekers.

1.2. The Difference between ‘Refugee’ and ‘Asylum Seeker’

In her book entitled “*Refugees, Asylum Seekers and the Rule of Law Comparative Perspectives*”, Susan Kneebone defines asylum seekers as :

a person seeking asylum from persecution who has yet to be recognized as a refugee as in the definition of the Refugee Convention. But note that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) takes the view that a person who satisfies that definition is a refugee without the need for a determination to that effect.

According to the definition of the two terms, there is a clear difference; an asylum seeker is someone who claims to be a refugee but his claim has not yet been evaluated. This person

would have sought asylum because returning to his or her home country would expose him or her to persecution based on race, religion, nationality, or political beliefs. As long as an asylum application is pending, the individual is considered an asylum seeker (Phillips). As a result, while not every asylum seeker is accepted as a refugee, every refugee is an asylum seeker.

According to Amnesty International, the humanist organization, an asylum-seeker is :

a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right. This means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum. ("Refugee, Asylum-Seeker and Migrants)

Persecution is the main reason why asylum helps people, The American Immigration Council works to help people flee this kind of persecution and the Council states in its official website that anyone who is granted Asylum has the right to stay in the US and has the permission to work and apply for Social Security card. Even though an asylee has the right to stay, an asylum seeker can travel, overseas in addition, may file a request to close relatives to the US with the help of certain government programs. The Council adds that anyone can officially become partially a citizen if they have the required conditions which are applying for a permanent residence after one year of waiting to get a green card. The next step is to wait another four years to apply for citizenship ("Asylum in the United States").

Asylum applicants must go through a lengthy and difficult process that may include many government entities. Those granted asylum can apply to stay in the United States permanently and work their way up the citizenship ladder, as well as a petition for their spouse and children to join them. However, at this point, they do not have the same rights as refugees. A

person continues to be an asylum seeker as long as their application is still unaccepted by the U.S. authorities (“Refugee vs. Asylum Seeker”). Not everyone is successful in their claim, either. So, while not every asylum seeker is accepted as a refugee, every refugee is classified as an asylum seeker at some point in time.

Between its formal establishment in 1946 and its termination in January 1952, the International Refugee Organization (IRO) was a temporary specialized agency of the United Nations that assisted refugees and displaced persons in many European and Asian countries who were either unable to return to their countries of origin or were unwilling to return for political reasons (“International Refugee Organization”).

2. Refugee Policy in the US History

Many people sought refuge in the US and the numbers kept increasing since the first decade of the twenty-first century. Numerous laws and acts were passed to help and save the people who were by the definition of the term refugee escaped the rages of war and were in need of shelter. Yet, after many terror attacks that threatened peace in the US, it was the duty of the American presidents to protect their land and people from any danger. To do so, they had passed many laws and changed their policies with the changing of circumstances.

Over one million Syrian asylum-seekers and refugees are fleeing to European nations. Still, two countries host 70% of them; Germany and Sweden. With almost 1 million people in total, Germany is the sixth largest host country in the world required by the Geneva Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol which are legal documents that necessitate 149 State parties to take in refugees, the convention defines the term 'refugee' and outlines the rights of refugees, besides the legal obligations of all the States to protect them (High Commissioner for Refugees).

According to the organization Save the Children, the scale of refugees is growing and the numbers are increasing to a higher level, especially from the Syrians who are more than 6.6

million since 2012 resulting to a global refugee crisis. Ten years passed after the start of the civil war in Syria, in addition to the conflict in Afghanistan and South Sudan, these three regions are considered the deadliest for children. This organization wants to save both the fleeing children and the children born and raised in camps, precisely Syrians, which by number are half of the world's refugees (What Is a Refugee).

The US has historically admitted people who would be classified as refugees under contemporary international law. Following WWII, the US created its first refugee legislation to supervise the resettlement of around 650,000 displaced Europeans. The US took in refugees escaping communist regimes in Eastern Europe, China, and Cuba during the Cold War. The US Refugee Admission Program (USRAP), the country's official federal effort to relocate refugees, was not established until the Refugee Act of 1980 was passed (Felter et al.).

2. 1. Refugee Policy before 9/11

Immigration has not always been an important part of the security agenda. This idea first surfaced in the 1980s when large-scale immigrant settlements were seen as a danger to public order, cultural identity, societal stability, and the labor market. Nonetheless, not long ago, European countries valued working migrants greatly. Immigrants provided an extra workforce in the 1950s and 1960s, filling a need for low-cost and provided flexible labor that was not available on the local market. Many nations fostered migration via their policies in this environment, and while they attempted, the legal position of immigrants was not a significant issue to restrict (Umansky,4). In short, migration before the end of the twenties century was not seen as a threat but rather as a benefit to the economic system, especially for countries that suffered from the legacies and distractions of the two World Wars.

In 1891, immigration rules did not restrict the number of immigrants the country would accept. There were no distinct regulations for refugee admissions, and they were free to resettle in the United States as long as they satisfied the standard conditions for immigrant

admissions. Then, in 1910, thousands of Mexican refugees crossed the US-Mexico border due to the bloodshed and political chaos triggered by the Mexican Revolution; a prolonged and deadly fight between numerous factions with continuously shifting alliances that ended in the fall of Mexico's 30-year dictatorship and the foundation of a constitutional republic ("Mexican Revolution").

While some refugees were denied admission under basic immigration regulations, the majority were investigated and granted legal residency by Immigration Bureau inspectors, who allowed for "humane considerations" when evaluating these restrictions. But, all immigrants aged 16 and above were obliged to demonstrate their ability to read under the Immigration Act of 1917 to avoid religious persecution and other problems that would threaten the stability of the country. Later, the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924 established explicit limitations on the number of immigrants that the United States would accept from each country each year ("Refugee Timeline").

These laws made it easy for northern and western Europeans to immigrate while making it considerably more difficult for immigrants from the rest of Europe and other countries. The severe restrictions later added to the difficulties experienced by many Jews seeking safety in the U.S. from persecution abroad during and after World War II and the Holocaust. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 was intended to alleviate the almost 7 million people who had been displaced in Europe as a result of WWII. The Act made it possible for refugees to enter the United States while abiding by the current quota system. The statute required accepted refugees to locate a place to reside in the U.S. as well as a job that did not compete with existing workers in the nation ("Refugee Timeline")

The Cuban Revolution unleashed the greatest refugee exodus to US in history in 1959, with about 1.4 million people leaving the island after Fidel Castro's guerrilla forces toppled tyrant Fulgencio Batista (Duany). Likewise, thousands of Cubans fled to the United States

after Fidel Castro was elected President of Cuba on January 1, 1959. In 1952, the Displaced Persons Act was repealed and more than 350,000 displaced persons were allowed to come to the U.S. Under the attorney general's parole power, 58,000 Cubans entered the US via this operation between 1961 and 1962 (“Refugee Timeline”). In this case, Cubans were not seen as a threat and were allowed to enter the soil of the United States taking into account that Cuba was a country that was allied with before WWII and during the first phase of the Cold War.

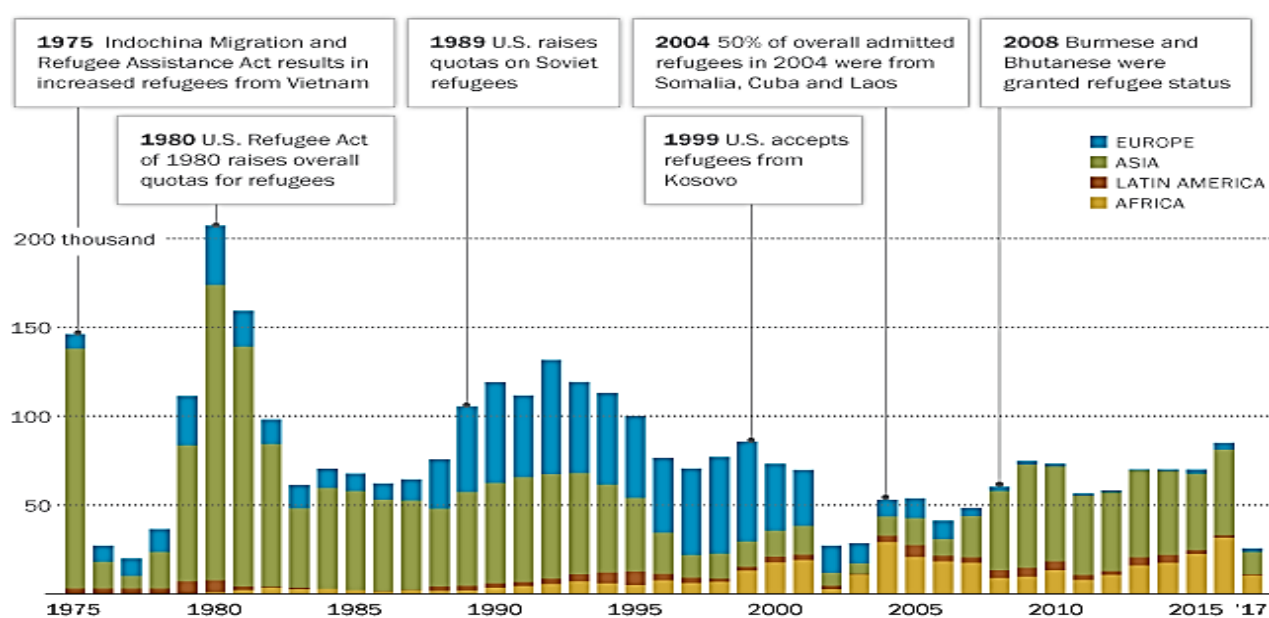


Fig.1. The Shifting Origin of Refugees to the US over Time.

Source: “The Shifting Origins of Refugees to the U.S. over Time.” *Pew Research Center* www.pewresearch.org, 15 Sept. 2016, Accessed 22 Apr. 2022.

Figure 1 explains the shifting origins of refugees to the U.S. over time. During the second half of the twentieth century in 1975, the number of refugees admitted is almost 150 thousand, mainly from Europe and Asia, due to the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act. In 1980, after the Refugee Act of 1980, the annual admittance increases noticeably to over 200 thousand people. The largest number of admitted refugees in the history of the US is from Asia and Europe with a growing number of Latin Americans. Between 1989 and 1999, the

number of admitted refugees from Europe and Asia is between 70 thousand and almost 150 thousand. The number of Latin Americans slightly increases over the years, while the gap between Asian and European refugees is widening. Fewer Asians are being accepted in the US by the end of the twentieth century.

2. 2. Refugee Act of 1980

Following the Vietnam War, thousands of Vietnamese and Cambodians fled social chaos and physical danger in their homelands, highlighting the need for a shift in American refugee policy. Between 1975 and 1979, around 300,000 of these refugees were allowed to enter the United States thanks to presidential intervention, as refugee admissions were restricted at the time.

The Refugee Act of 1980 revised the previous Immigration and Nationality Act and the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act and was passed unanimously by the Senate in late 1979 and signed into law by President Jimmy Carter in early 1980. It increased the yearly refugee ceiling from 17,400 to 50,000, established a framework for assessing and changing the refugee ceiling in the event of an emergency, and mandated annual dialogue between Congress and the President ("Refugee Act of 1980").

The definition of "refugee" was also amended at that time to include any person who has a "well-founded fear of persecution," as defined by United Nations agreements and protocols. The Federal Refugee Resettlement Program was also established by the Refugee Act of 1980 to ensure the efficient resettlement of refugees and to help them in achieving economic self-sufficiency as fast as possible following their arrival in the United States ("Refugee Act of 1980").

Despite being previously portrayed as humanitarian concerns, refugees started to be increasingly considered as a security risk. Since the late 1980s, security experts have been interested in migration and refugee problems, particularly those concerned with the "identity

security" of host countries. They examined the society with the arrival of individuals from different cultures or ethnic origins and depicted Refugees as no longer seen as victims of larger geopolitical battles, but as participants in them (Ahimbisibwe).

To sum up, the United States position as the world leader made it hard for its leaders to reject refugees at that time. They established the Financial Reporting Review Panel (FRRP) and other laws that were passed to ensure that those people would have a place to settle in after fleeing wars or corrupted governments. The United States was clearly leading the globe in this area, which made a large number of refugees enter the country during that period of time. However, this did not last for long with the spread of the idea that refugees might form a great danger to the security of the nation especially after 9/11 attacks that were a turning point in the American history.

3. Refugee Policy After 9/11

The 11th of September 2001, known as 9/11, is the most horrific date in US history. It refers to the terrorist attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center in New York City, killing 2750 people as well as the Pentagon, which was the second target and caused the deaths of 184 victims. 40 passengers died in the third hijacked plane that landed in Pennsylvania, which was expected to fall on the White House in the capital (Bergen).

The hijacked airliner hit the North Tower of New York City's World Trade Center shortly before 9:00 a.m. on September 11, 2001. A second airliner hit the other Twin Tower, a third crashed into the Pentagon, and a fourth, that was heading straight to the Capitol Building in Washington, DC, was brought down in rural Pennsylvania by brave passengers before the morning was over. The attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., caused widespread death and devastation and sparked a massive counter-terrorism campaign in the United States. New York's police and fire agencies were particularly badly impacted, with hundreds of officers rushing to the scene (Bergen).

The CIA quickly identified al Qaeda as the perpetrator of the disaster, which killed more people than the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. This event changed the perception of the United States towards the whole world as it was shocked by one of the most disastrous incidents (Immerman). The incident left all Americans terrified doubting the security system of their government. Accordingly, the American Refugee policy clearly changed, and this can be noticed in the decreasing number of refugees coming from the regions supposed to present a danger to the security of the United States.

9/11 date was the point that led the US President at that time to totally change the country's foreign policy. George W. Bush has launched a new policy called the counterterrorism strategy known also as the "war on terror" against international terrorism. The term "war on terrorism" refers to the international counterterrorism operation conducted by the United States in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Since that day, the US began to reconsider the nature of the new terrorism, and counterterrorism has become the focus of its national security.

Under the guise of "national security" and "defending freedom," the US waged a global "war on terror," dividing countries into various camps and even overthrowing other countries' governments. The war on terrorism policy included also the Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF), which was passed as a legislative Act by both chambers of Congress on September 14, 2001, and signed by President Bush on September 18, 2001. The AUMF empowers the President to "use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or individuals who he defines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks of September 11th, or fostered such groups or persons (Thimm). This force could be used against not only nations but also organizations and individuals. This Resolution authorized the start of a foreign invasion of Afghanistan.

George W. Bush demanded that Afghanistan's Taliban government handed up all al-Qaeda members on its land, especially Bin Laden, and told the world that "either you are with us or you are with the terrorists." (qtd in. "U.S. War in Afghanistan"). Bush swore to take vengeance for the catastrophe that took place in very sensitive places in the U.S. and killed more than 2000 citizens. As a response, Bush administration's counterterrorism policy began in October 2001 with the formal initiation of Operation Enduring Freedom which included the invasion of Afghanistan (Stohl).

The goals of Operation Enduring Freedom consisted of countering and destroying the threat of Islamic extremists supported by bin Laden and the Taliban to Central Asian countries (Immerman). Military action, law enforcement, the freezing of financial assets, and repeated demands for international collaboration were all combined to establish an effective and comprehensive counter-terror program to battle al-Qaida and Taliban control in the United States (Taddeo).

The Policy and the Global War against Terrorism has continued. By the end of the same year, Bush's attention was shifted to Iraq especially after the declaration of the victory in Afghanistan ("Timeline"). Iraq had been invaded for many reasons. Each carried importance for both the Bush administration and the public. Yet, the basic reason for waging the war was the belief in Iraq's development of WMD and the possession of a nuclear program in addition to its link with terrorism. In many occasions, Bush voiced his concerns about Saddam's development of WMD and noted that using such weapons could lead to a devastating action that the United States could witness in its history. In a speech in Cincinnati, Ohio, in October 2002, He showed Saddam as a dictator who must not be permitted to threaten the world with horrible poisons, diseases, gasses, and atomic weapons ("President Bush Outlines"). Accordingly, President Bush aimed at reducing the threat of Saddam by taking a serious action against Iraq.

After invading Iraq causing devastating results on all levels, the President could not prove the existence of the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and Saddam's ties to al-Qaeda were discovered to be false. This took away the legitimacy of the invasion especially following the initial military operation that resulted in the death of 134,000 Iraqi people and the bloodshed continued (Gompert et al.).

In fact, the counter-terrorism policy followed by the United States to thwart expected terrorist attacks took many strategies to ensure safety. In addition to the Preemptive Strikes on Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States started to focus on reconsidering its policy toward accepting newcomers to enter its land. Immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, all were put under a high degree of restrictions and checks.

Following 9/11 Attacks, a two-month suspension on refugee admissions was imposed while a thorough assessment of policies was conducted. As a result, several new security measures were implemented, including conducting additional security checks on applicants. The government found itself in a position where its policy regarding strangers who entered the soil of the US needed to be changed. Various methods were taken into account immediately in airports and harbors. They ranged from verifying the identity of all refugees and legal travelers in new ways before they board flights to the United States, to fingerprinting all authorized applicants, either before exit or after arrival in the United States. That was the first layer of the whole reaction to the attacks (Dewey). The next step taken as a reaction to the aftermath of the terroristic tragedy was the Patriot Act, signed by President G.W. Bush, which was commonly known as a way of countering terrorism and protecting the American people against terrorists.

3. 1. US Patriot Act

The US Patriot Act was adopted in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. It redefined terror and the legal reasons for excluding someone from entering the United States if he is suspected of

being involved in an indirect way of terrorism. The attacks also influenced the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the separation of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) into three organizations: US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and US Customs and Border Patrol (USCIS, 2018), which enhanced a national focus on undocumented immigrants and potential terror threats (Wilson).

The Patriot Act, which was signed into law on October 26, 2001, was crucial in preventing another terrorist strike on American soil. It updated the federal government's investigative tools to match current technology, remove barriers to homeland security investigations, and provide national security investigators with the same facilities that non-national security investigators have long had ("Life and Liberty Archive"). In other words, the act gave the police or any defense and security system an access to use upgraded tools such as spying to ensure the safety of the citizens against any threat.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States have led to significant changes in the US immigration and refugee procedures. More thorough screening and vetting of people seeking entry was increased, border enforcements and broader justifications for illegal entry were added, and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created. The latter expanded the requirements and conditions of admission. The United States has also formed a National Targeting Center (NTC) to detect high-risk individuals before boarding flights ("The Migration-Related"). The changes made an upgrade in the admission system making it safer for the American citizens and enabling the US to keep accepting refugees after the attacks.

Some politicians were using the media to portray that the refugee resettlement program and the admission system were a threat to the national security. Others made statements saying that after the changes in the policy it would be the worst idea for terrorists to enter as refugees ("The Migration-Related"). Therefore, despite the fact that no refugee admission program in

the world can be perfect, the United States was able to establish the most effective and secure programs on the globe after the attacks.

4. US Refugee Protection Policy Ten Years after 9/11 Attacks

After 9/11 Attacks, immigration security measures, along with border enforcement and other policies, were adjusted to prevent asylum-seekers from arriving in the United States. Since 9/11, the US has shared national security and law enforcement information and made passport checks stronger, and those applicants who were required for nonimmigrant visas should submit to personal interviews at the level of the consulate and be biometrically screened. Increasing the Border Patrol's strength and upgrading border security technology were efforts to improve security while reducing illegal migration (Kerwin).

People fleeing persecution, commonly use fake travel documents, but others cross the border illegally or get temporary visas and do not want to return home. All of the restrictions mentioned above have made it exceedingly difficult to use these "illegal" methods, resulting in significant declines in asylum petitions since 9/11. The Department of Homeland Security/US Citizenship and Immigration Services did not grant unlimited affirmative asylum requests. However, between Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 (74,634) and FY 2010, the number of asylum submissions made in the immigration court system decreased considerably (32,961). Within the same time period, totally positive and defensive asylum grants fell from 36,923 to 21,113 (Kerwin).

Between 2001 and 2003, the number of accepted refugees decreased dramatically, particularly from Asia and the Middle East. Following 9/11, immigration security measures, border enforcement, and other procedures were altered to prevent asylum applicants from entering the United States. The terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, resulted in substantial changes in US immigration and refugee processes. The Patriot Act, passed into law on October 26, 2001, played a critical role in avoiding another terrorist attack

on American territory. The Refugee Act of 1980 was passed unanimously by the Senate in late 1979 and signed into law by President Jimmy Carter. It updated the earlier Immigration and Nationality Act and the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act.

In the last decade, refugees' number has increased especially after many movements around the world and noticeably after the Arab spring resulting in a huge wave of immigrants. Many Arabs sought refuge in different countries. Syrians, in particular, escaped from the consequences of the "spring's wars" to safer countries that could provide a good shelter for them. For many, America, with its traditional name as a land of freedom and dreams, was viewed as a better refuge.

Chapter Two

The Arab Spring in Syria: Reasons and Consequences

In late 2010 and early 2011, the Arab countries witnessed massive demonstrations that took place in the streets. People rejected the political and social conditions and called for change. They asked for the overthrow of the ruling regimes and the trial of their symbols in charges of corrupting political life and harming the interests of the country. Among the most prominent countries, these revolutions erupted in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and finally Syria.

The wave of Arab Spring reached Syria in March 2011, where Syrian people demanded freedom, justice and the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad's regime in a series of peaceful demonstrations around the country. Ensuring dignity and freedom was what Syrians thought of their uprising before all their dreams turned into nightmares. Peace has been faced with violence by the regime, and the Arab Spring turned into a civil war that took lives of hundreds of thousands Syrians. In a period of 10 years, nearly 400,000 people died, and millions of people were displaced.

The death toll of civilians is the highest, especially if thousands of citizens who died under torture in prisons of the Syrian regime, and who were kidnapped by ISIS, were added. The war also resulted in million people with permanent disabilities. Women, men and children were desperately in need of education and a good health; especially those children who left their studies and became sheltered living somehow in dire conditions concerning their mental health. Generally, Syrian children were the most vulnerable to psychological problems since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, as they lived through the harshest situations a person might experience in his childhood.

1. Arab Spring: Definition and Origin

The term "Arab Spring" is a reference to the 1848 Revolutions that swept Europe and became known as the "People's Spring". Since then, the term "spring" has been used to describe democratic movements such as the 1968 "Prague Spring" in Czechoslovakia, and in 2011, the term "Arab Spring" became popular in Western media. Some wonder why these movements took the name spring and not winter, since most of the Arab revolutions and demonstrations took place in winter. Well, the word spring is a metaphor that refers to renewal, recovery, change, and growth (Hobbs). These characteristics are what spring in its political sense should bring to the Arab world including especially freedom and democracy.

Erin Blakemore, a journalist and author from Boulder, Colorado, defines the Arab Spring as a wave of protests, upheavals, and turmoil that swept North Africa and the Middle East's Arabic-speaking countries. Pro-democracy rallies spread quickly thanks to social media. Facebook, Twitter and other social networks contributed greatly to the transmission of images and information inside and outside the Arab world (O'Donnell). They also contributed to give greater freedom to express different opinions about the miserable conditions experienced by Arab countries and dictatorial governments that did not accept broadcasting opinions.

A great number of political scientists investigated and evaluated the events of the Arab Spring upheavals trying to figure out what caused them at the first place. They were able to pinpoint several factors that led people to revolt against the ruling regimes. However, what was the first spark that started the Arab Spring? December the 17th, 2010 was the day that sparked the Arab Spring. On that day, a street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi burned himself in front of all the citizens in his small town, Sidi Bouzid, in Tunisia, demonstrating corruption and brutality of officials in his country. The nature of his job as a vegetable and fruit vendor exposed him to many harassments by the police and market inspectors, who often

asked for bribes. On the same day as the burning incident, market inspectors confiscated the vegetable and fruit cart of Mohamed Bouazizi, claiming that he lacked some selling permits.

As a result, Skirmishes increased and a policewoman came and insulted him in front of everyone's eyes, some said that she slapped him. Feeling anger, Muhammad went to meet the governor of his province to complain about the oppression that he was exposed to. However, his request to meet the governor was rejected. As a form of protest against corruption and underemployment, he set fire on his body outside the governor's office ("Mohamed Bouazizi").

After this case, a series of demonstrations began in Tunisia demanding the ouster of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Eventually, he was deposed 28 days after the incident of Mohamed Bouazizi. He was the first Arab president to be overthrown by the Arab Spring revolutions, followed by the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and then Libyan Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, and finally the Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The demonstrations and people's anger expanded to the Middle East region against regimes that oppressed its citizens. Syria also witnessed an Arab Spring to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad. However, his regime has not been overthrown yet, which made the Arab Spring in Syria the longest, bloodiest and complex one. Manifestations turned into a civil war especially after the intervention of the Syrian army to suppress the revolutionaries and the protesters. So what were the real reasons behind the spread of these revolutions against the Arab rulers in general and in Syria in specific?

2. The Arab Spring in Syria

The Syrian population lived for forty years under the rule of the Assad family's clan, which belongs to the Alawite minority, a branch of Shiites. This dynasty knows only one law: ruling without sharing power with anyone (Rosen). Syrians watched the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions in one country after another, hoping that their turn would come to obtain change

and overthrow the dictatorial regime of President Bashar al-Assad. But the President had a different opinion. He tried to thwart any attempt to protest and demonstrate against him in the street.

Bashar al-Assad's regime was so dictatorial to the extent that it imprisoned and tortured a group of children in Daraa governorate in the South just because they wrote some graffiti against the regime. Their arrest angered the people who took to the street for the first time in March, 2011 to protest for the release of the detainees and to ask for social, economic and political reforms. The regime's response was harsh and brutal when the security forces intervened by beating and arresting the protesters. These cruel actions by the security forces came as a confirmation of what the demonstrators were demanding.

A series of manifestations started to spread across many regions of the country hoping to bring down the regime peacefully. Unfortunately, things did not go as planned, as the regime of Bashar al-Assad declared that all civilians who wanted to change the regime through peaceful demonstrations were terrorists. He ordered the soldiers and security forces to suppress the demonstrations. This move led to the transformation of peaceful public demonstrations into a civil war ("Syrian Civil War").

2.1. Causes of the Revolution

2.1.1. Political Repression

After the death of President Hafez al-Assad and the accession of his son Bashar al-Assad to power, the hopes of the Syrian people rose for change. They waited for lifting Syria from the bottoms of poverty, fear and tyranny, as Bashar al-Assad was a well-informed, educated young man with extensive experience. The 34 years old President came before Syria's parliament and spoke of "the dire need for constructive criticism," "transparency," and "democracy" more than 20 years ago. Many Syrians trusted the Assad's promises in his

opening speech, sparking a brief wave of debate about the need for reform (Houry). However, they paid a high price for their faith in his claims.

Bashar al- Assad showed his true face just after a short period of his rule, like it was true that was the first months of his presidency period, the so-called “Damascus Spring”. The latter was a name given to the period of time during which Syria witnessed political, intellectual, and social openness. Soon, the period turned into “Damascus Autumn” in which Syria saw a drastic decline in the standard of living with a massive rise of unemployment and illiteracy (“Assad's 20-year rule”). The Syrian President was also accused of his relation to events that caused assassinations of prominent figures in Syria and in the region in general. Many politicians said that he was involved in the assassination of the President of Lebanon, Rafik Hariri, but it was not proven (Blanford). All this happened in the first decade of his presidency.

Bashar al-Assad distributed power and positions among his family members, turning Syria into a private property that belongs to him and his family. This action angered people and some tried to oppose the regime, but Assad's repression silenced the mouths of all those who dared to oppose him. He began arresting opponents and political activists, and for all those who spoke out, they ended up imprisoned or killed (Goyal). The Syrian Regime did not hesitate to kill its people if the case required it in order to maintain its position. It used stated situations of emergency and anti-terrorism legislation to legitimize its grave crimes against people, such as kidnappings, involuntary disappearances, unjustified arrests, torture, unfair trials, and even illegal executions.

2.1.2. Corruption

Corruption is a global phenomenon that spreads in all societies regardless of their progress or development. The effects of this phenomenon are negatively reflected on society by perpetuating the principle of inequality and injustice, in addition to violating various human

rights. It is also considered as the main reason for the decline in economic performance and the increase in the level of unemployment and poverty rate. Transparency International has released its Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2010, ranking 180 countries on their perceived levels of public sector corruption, where Syria ranked 134th out of 178 countries in the world before the crisis (“The 2010 Corruption Perceptions”).

Corruption could be found in every sector, institution, ministry, and, most notably in the judicial system. It has gotten to the point where Syrian citizens believed that bribes were at the heart of all laws and that they could not obtain their rights without them. "Whoever pays more wins the case," one judge said, expressing the status of the Syrian justice (Bitar). Actually even judges paid a bribe to get their position and were appointed illegally and unfairly. The choice fell on who belonged to the party that served the state system.

Moreover, and according to Soleiman Nehili, a Syrian lawyer and poet, one of the reasons of the corruption of the Syrian judiciary is the lack of separation of the executive from the legislative authority. In fact, it is unreasonable for the president to be responsible for both. The separation of the two authorities is an absolute necessity to achieve freedom, impartiality and integrity in work.

In fact, political tyranny and the ‘one-man rule’ of President Bashar al-Assad and his followers is a major cause of corruption in all fields. The President is surrounded by senior politicians and statesmen who have been tempted with many privileges in exchange for their loyalty to the ruler (“Assad's Son, Math”). Therefore, tyrannical and dictatorial governments are the main and first cause of corruption. If the head of the state in itself is corrupt, the integrity of the rest of the departments and individuals are also under doubt.

2.1.3. Minority Rule

Syria is a mainly a Sunni Muslim country, and Sunnis made up the majority of individuals who participated in the Syrian revolt at first. However, the Alawite minority, a Shiite religious

minority to which the Assad family belongs, controls the key posts in the security system. A large number of Sunni protesters were violently attacked by the same security forces. Most Syrians feel pride as they live in diverse religious environment with tolerance. At the same time, Sunnis detest the fact that few Alawite families wield significant influence in religiously mixed places like Homs. A protest movement made up of Sunnis and an Alawite-dominated army contributed to the increase of tension and turmoil in the country (Manfreda).

2.1.4. State Violence against the Freedom of Expression

Human rights violations played a major role in the Arab Spring revolutions, where some individual rights were taken away such as freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of organization and freedom of association. The regimes dominated and monopolized means of mass communication, no one was allowed to disagree with the regime's opinion (Osman).

Syria has witnessed substantial levels of internal state violence directed at its own inhabitants, both in the form of the on-going, structural violence of mass recruitment of troops and brutality against innocent civilians. Any participant in opposition to the regime would be criminalized (Shaery-Yazdi and Ümit Üngör). Besides, the powerful Syrian Intelligence has had its share of violence inflicted on the people as it has hands in all aspects of society (Manfreda).

The Syrian regime has always practiced its brutality against the people, represented in cases of disappearance, arbitrary arrest, killing and general repression, in addition to torture for all those who stand against the ruling heads of the state. Freedom of speech in Syria before the Arab Spring was strictly prohibited, the authorities punished and prosecuted all those who expressed negative opinions about the state system and President Bashar al-Assad, including citizens, bloggers, and journalists. Most of them were tried in the State Security Court (SSSC) ("If the dead could").

Journalists, human rights activists, and legislators who opposed Bashar were also targeted by the Regime. Government officials put them under accusation of criticizing the government and fuelling problems. Consequently, a series of harassment started. Opponents of the regime were prosecuted on spurious charges, placed under constant surveillance, blackmailed, and occasionally physically abused. Journalists, in particular, have been condemned to long prison terms as well as the loss of their employment after being subjected to unjust trials (Osman).

So it could be said that the authoritarian government in Syria have been particularly brutal in their persecution of journalists. In 2009, the Committee to Protect Journalists in Syria (CPJ) ranked third in a list of the ten worst countries in which bloggers and journalists were subjected to arrests and harassment for what they wrote (“Human Rights in Syria”).

2.1.5. Economic and Social Problems

Unemployment, according to many analysts, is a major stimulus of the Arab Spring. Over the previous two decades, unemployment has grown dramatically, increasing unhappiness among young people, particularly university graduates. According to World Bank and UN estimates, the Arab region's population has increased by 70 million since the Arab Spring, and is predicted to expand by another 120 million by 2030 before stabilizing in the decades beyond (Sly). At the start of 2011, dissatisfaction among the unemployed young spilled into the streets in Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen, resulting in rebellions against established governmental regimes. Strikes and social unrest have exacerbated the problem, lowering the possibility of a speedy economic recovery (Drine). Under these circumstances, it was highly expected that the people would explode a revolution against the regimes.

Life satisfaction was also low on the eve of the Arab Spring and unhappiness with life was mounting. People in the Arab Spring countries, especially Syria, were among the least happy people in the world by 2010. Moreover, the Middle East region was the only area in the globe with heavy losses in self-well-being at the end of first decade of the 21st century. Statistics

showed an increase in people's dissatisfaction with the quality of services provided by the government, which had an impact on quality of life of the citizen. Several people also expressed their dissatisfaction with the public transportation, health care, and the availability of quality jobs (“Middle-Class Frustration”).

During the reigns of al-Assad, the father (1970-2000) and his successor al-Assad the son (2000-2022), the Baathist regime was characterized by a flagrant policy of pillage and exploitation, which was respectively practiced in the two eras, which led to a high rate of poverty among Syrians. In 2007, 33% of the Syrian population were classified under the poverty line, which means nearly seven million people out of 19 million were poor, while 30% of them were slightly above this average (Shaoul). The proportion of poverty was higher in the countryside (62 percent) than in the cities (38 percent).

President Bashar al-Assad launched the liberalization of the Syrian economy in the 2000s, which aimed at transforming the country's central economy towards a greater degree of freedom in market. Some economic reforms were introduced, such as the establishment of a stock exchange and the opening of banking sector to private banks. But the water shortage, the decline in oil production, the high budget deficit and the high unemployment rate have all obstructed the economic growth. President Bashar al-Assad has blamed the country's economic malaise on global food inflation, as well as the surge of Iraqi refugees, believing that all of that has increased pressure on the Syrian economy (Feilding-Smith and Saigol).

2.1.6. Population Surge

Arab countries have been sitting on a demographic time bomb for decades. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the population of Arab countries has quadrupled between 1975 and 2005, reaching 314 million people. The political and economic advancement of most Arab governments simply could not keep up with the fast increase of their people (Guercio 14). In Syria, estimates indicated that the population explosion was the

main cause of the outbreak of the revolt against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, where large areas of Syria were living in extreme poverty (Abou-Jalala).

Syria began experiencing one of the fastest population growth rates in the world from the sixties until the early nineties of the last century. Foreign Policy magazine explains that the country's population doubled from 5.3 million in 1963 to 10.6 million in 1986, and then increased by more than the double during the past 25 years, reaching about 23 million. Furthermore, and at the time of the country's peak population, 44 Syrian children were born for every 1,000 people, according to World Bank data. The danger of this random increase was reflected in the country's deficit, forcing it to spend its reserves and borrow more to provide the necessary requirements for living such as food, medicine, and clothing (Kenner). So, this random increase in population contributed significantly to the spread of poverty, unemployment, social instability and economic backwardness (Fielding-smith and Saigol).

3. Consequences of the Arab Spring

More than ten years have passed since the start of the Arab Spring, the popular dream that was associated with freedom and change, was buried in its beginning and shattered on the rock of the domination of the ruling regimes. In fact, the revolutions have succeeded to overthrow many presidents such as Hosni Mubarak, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Muammar Gaddafi, and Ali Abdullah Saleh. The second wave ended the rule of Omar al-Bashir and Abdelaziz Bouteflika's regimes. However, as many believe, the regimes that took power after them may be more repressive of freedoms. So, can it be said that the Arab Spring revolutions were a failure when comparing between the positive achievements and the negative impacts they have left?

3.1 Achievements of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring's most significant accomplishment was proving that Arab rulers could be deposed through popular uprisings rather than military coups or foreign intervention, as it

was the case in the past (war on Iraq 2003). By the end of 2011, public revolts had overthrown governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. Even though many other authoritarian dictators have managed to hold on, they can no longer rely on the masses' consent. Governments around the region have been pushed to reform, knowing that corruption, inefficiency, and police violence will no longer go unpunished (Manfreda).

The Syrian revolution was the only one that has failed, because the problems that generated it at first are still taking place and have become more critical. Ten years of the civil war have devastated the lives of millions of people and continue to drive thousands to flee. The economic crisis cut off any hope of improvement. The revolution took another path and new players entered the war deviating it from its aim which was overthrowing the regime and improving the economic conditions.

3.2 Negative Impact of the Arab Spring

Even if the full results of the Arab Spring may not be known in many places for at least a generation, its influence on the Middle East has been profound. Early 2011 protests that swept throughout the area began a long period of political and social change that was primarily characterized in its early stages by political unrest, economic hardship, and even conflicts.

The Arab Spring revolutions resulted in the complete collapse of three Arab countries: Yemen, Libya and finally Syria, this was a result of:

3.2.1. Conflict and Civil War

Some parts in Arab countries did not consider the Arab Spring as an occasion of actual regime change but as a good time to apply their political and ideological agenda in the region. As a result, the civil fighting between rival powers and the central government became endless without giving importance to people's lives. Over 387,000 people died including almost 118,000 civilians and 22,000 children, and about 13 million were displaced. 40 percent

of the building stocks were destroyed. Eleven years later, the dramatic outcome of the conflict in Syria, the bloodiest civil war of the century, is continuing (“Syria war deaths”).

As a response to people’s uprising, the Syrian government has used violence trying to limit the demonstrations using not only the police, but also the military and paramilitaries. The opposition militias were formed in 2011 and in 2012 the conflict turned into a real civil war (“Guide: Syria crisis”). In the months that followed, some of these militias armed themselves and formed small groups of rebels and during these clashes there were more than 60,000 deaths in the first 18 months of the conflict (“More than 60,000”).

Among the most terrible crimes that occurred during this war was the use of chemical weapons against the people. At the beginning, there were doubts about the use of these weapons, but recently, it has been proven by the United Nations in its final report on the gas attacks in Syria. The report assumed that chemical weapons were used 27 times in the Syrian civil war, causing death to 1400 people in 2013 (“UN: Syrian regime”). He turned his country into a cemetery; hundreds of thousands of innocent people were killed, including 25,000 children. Millions more have been forced to flee. Various and horrific crimes, in addition to different kinds of torture, random bombing and chemical attacks, all were committed in the name of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to remain in power.

3.2.2. Spread of Acts of Sabotage and Terrorism

Many critics of the Arab Spring saw that it contributed in one way or another in the rise of subversion as a political weapon in the struggle for political goals. However, it is important to distinguish between the Arab street protests movements that characterized the beginnings of the Arab Spring and other groups' use of sabotage to achieve goals that differ significantly from the Arab Spring protesters' demands. Syria is a prominent example of this. The country witnessed many terrorist attacks and a number of thieving seeking to obtain profit of the political and social chaos.

Talking about terrorist attacks, the Arab Spring and the civil war in Syria paved the ground and set a favorable atmosphere for the appearance of what became called the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Under many names such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Daesh in Arabic, ISIS is an Islamic jihadist organization active mainly between Iraq and Syria. It is directly related to Al-Qaeda and became a branch of it, it was commonly known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (“Islamic State in Iraq”).

Formed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2004, this organization’s aim was to fight US-led forces and their Iraqi allies following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003. Daesh was established in 2006 with the name of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). After the outbreak of the Syrian civil war (2011), it got separated from Al-Qaeda, and now controls areas of Iraq and Syria, taking the name of “the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria” (ISIS), under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (“Isis”).

In June 2014, al-Baghdadi declared the establishment of the Caliphate in the conquered territories in Iraq, around the city of Mosul and east Syria, with the aim of extending its authority all over the lands inhabited by Muslims. At that moment, the group changed its name again, to become simply IS (Islamic State). IS was considered as a terrorist organization by the UN and several states as it practiced the most monstrous crimes against people. These crimes were represented in slaughtering hundreds of people, torturing and killing children, raping and kidnapping women, committing mass massacres by shooting the victims in the heads, then throwing their bodies in the valleys. In addition to crucifixion, stoning and all kinds of brutal torture on all those who disagreed with them were committed under the name of Islam (“Islamic State in Iraq”).

Massacres were not committed on people only, but also on the cultural and civilizational heritage. Syria was proud of its cultural heritage, but the brutality of ISIS has vandalized and destroyed it by bombing temples and cities. It stole and looted treasures from museums using

Roman theatres to carry out mass executions in addition to the destruction of all the remaining historical monuments that were not destroyed by the war (“Report Documents Severe”).

3.2.3. Economic and Social Effects

Countries of the Arab Spring that were affected by civil wars saw a complete collapse in the economy, affecting the neighboring economies as well. This was a result of the decline in the number of workforce due to death, disability, displacement and destruction of the country’s infrastructure. Poverty and unemployment made the country unable to provide the basic public services to citizens (Ianchovichina). According to data from the UN and other international agencies, the overall losses incurred by Arab nations as a result of these events totaled 600 billion dollars (“Arab Spring 'Cost”) , with more than 22 million jobless people. The UN also estimated that it would require approximately more than \$250 billion to reconstruct what conflicts have destroyed in Syria (Calamur).

People in Syria are experiencing the worst social and economic crisis since the war began. The prolonged armed conflict, drought, the economic crisis in neighboring countries, in addition to the recent Covid-19 pandemic all of which led to the decline of the local currency. Consequently, inflation spread and food insecurity became high (“The World Bank”). According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Syrian families spend almost all of their small income on food purchases. In some areas of the country, food costs can exceed more than 50% of expenses overall of a family (“Survey of Syrian farmers”). Of course the poorest families were the hardest hit. The poverty rate has risen eerily in 2022 with 90% of the population were living below the poverty line, compared to 28% in 2010. That is, 14.6 million out of 16 million Syrians who suffered from food insecurity and poverty, were not able to meet basic needs (“Syria factsheet”).

The bloody conflict has had a direct impact on Syria's healthcare facilities and staff. The public healthcare system has been destroyed, resulting in serious population health crisis.

Infectious and non-communicable disease risks increased. Other problems included serious maternal and child health challenges, conflict-related trauma and mental health issues, as well as an exodus of Syrian healthcare workers seeking to flee the conflict (Cousins).

Apart from this, the civil war in Syria has caused the loss of billions of dollars, nearly one million people seriously injured, and many left without jobs or support. Oil and gas fields have been attacked and became no longer operational and some become no longer under the regime's control ("How has war"). Factories were looted and destroyed, same for schools and hospitals, business owners and entrepreneurs fled the country. All of that was accompanied with an extreme level of corruption and the fall of the Syrian currency to the bottom ("Explained: The cost").

3.2.4. The Increase in Number of Emigrants and Refugees

Every war produces negative effects including the displacement of people or pushing them indirectly to choose asylum in other countries. What Bashar's regime and ISIS have negatively caused to the people in Syria was beyond limits. The world knew the largest wave of refugees since World War II. Everything happened because of the extreme violence practiced by the regime's forces and allied militias. The latter bombed cities, made people starving, and committed the most heinous crimes against humanity. All these circumstances contributed to the flight of Syrians outside the walls of their country. ISIS also played an important role in displacing Syrians from areas that were controlled by the organization. It forced people to adopt its ideology; otherwise the punishment would be beheading, flogging, burning and all kinds of torture (Beauchamp).

Over half of Syria's pre-war population of 22 million people has been forced to evacuate their homes in search of safety and life opportunities since 2011. Families in Syria are still battling to live and satisfy their basic needs; 13.5 million people require humanitarian aid including 6.7 million internally displaced persons, 6.8 million refugees and asylum-seekers,

and over 2.5 million children were homeless (Reid). As for the internally displaced in Syria, Syrians lived in crowded settlements and damaged or abandoned buildings, overwhelmed by disease, starvation, and siege. They fled to areas where they thought they would be safe, but they were surprised to find themselves caught up in the crossfire again (“The facts”).

Refugees and asylum seekers outside the country have left to many countries, most notably the neighboring states in the Middle East. Turkey ranked first with receiving more than 3.6 million refugees in 2018 who settled in big cities such as Istanbul, searching for jobs and a better life. Lebanon, a small coastal state, took the second place, had nearly one million refugees in 2018. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), one out of every six people in Lebanon was a refugee, which is the highest density in the world. Jordan, Egypt and Iraq are also a favorite destination for Syrian refugees as well as North Africa. While the rest preferred to cross the sea to European countries such as Germany and Sweden in addition to many other nations (Todd).

Moving and escaping from wars to other countries will not guarantee a better life. The majority of refugees lived in camps as the case in one of the most overcrowded camp in Jordan, which sheltered 80,000 people. The majority of tents leaked water and some other shelters were in need of upgrades and maintenance. Refugees in other areas nearby were staying in makeshift housing, enduring a harsh winter without any toilets or water. This suffering was not limited to the camps in the Middle East only, but even in other countries, such as a camp in Berlin which lacked infrastructure and bathrooms. In Greece as well, refugees were transferred to warehouses that did not have water or electricity. Besides, Syrian refugees faced the problems of extreme heat and cold inside the tents, which were not considered as a suitable place to live inside for months and years (Starvaggi).

As the number of refugees in neighboring nations' camps has grown, some have begun to resort to other countries, including the United States of America. Opinions differed between

supporters and opponents of the entry of Syrian refugees to America, but in general, Syrians were able to enter. About 21,000 have been resettled and about 8,000 people resided on the basis of the temporary protection program. The latter has granted immigrants who faced wars or disasters in their countries the right to reside and work in the US for a specific period (Connor).

Conclusion

Before the crisis in March 2011, Syria's many ethnicities and shades coexisted in peace. Millions of people moved from their homes to other locations during the start of the conflict in an effort to achieve calm and peace between themselves and the other communities, where they ultimately ended up becoming refugees. The refugee crisis has turned into a global humanitarian crisis. For the refugees, the conflict created a host of issues as they struggled to adapt to their new circumstances.

Syrian refugees left the horrors of war and deadly battles as the desperate situation in their nation and the camps of neighbors, especially Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, worsened. They also sought countries across the Mediterranean as the distress within Syria grew. The majority of refugees who have settled in the camps, on the other hand, are in appalling health and educational situations, especially the children who have not finished their education due to repeated communal clashes. As the number of refugees in camps in nearby nations has grown, some have started turning to nations that migrate people to Europe and the US. The latter is one of the countries who have served those Syrian refugees since the beginning of the crisis, especially under the president Barak Obama.

Chapter Three

Opposite Policies: Barack Obama and Donald Trump's Refugee Policies in Syria

Barack Obama, the 44th president of the US, ran for presidency on a platform of change. He became the first African American to hold office in the history of the United States for eight years (2008-2016). During his presidency, America has seen significant adjustments in government policy and public opinion. Because of his achievements, President Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009 for his exceptional efforts to improve international diplomacy and people-to-people interaction.

The African American President was known for implementing strict immigration policies, as he deported 2.7 million illegal immigrants from the United States in 8 years (Gonzalez). Nevertheless, his policy towards refugees was not alike. During his presidency, Obama permitted America to receive a significant number of refugees from different nationalities and religions in general and from Syria in specific. As a result of his policy towards Syria, the President was subjected to many criticisms.

Contrary to Obama's view toward refugees, Donald Trump, the upcoming President would pursue a different path. In many occasions, Trump showed his hatred toward immigrants and refugees, and interpreted this obsession into Orders that hindered their entrance to America for security reasons. Syria has got the lion's share of his critical and unfavorable policy towards refugees as it was a country that, in his view, has embraced the United States' everlasting enemy; terrorism, which should be fought with all means.

1. Barack Obama Refugee Policy

President Barack Obama's perspective towards the refugee file was favorable in general. He dealt with the refugee crisis in a peaceful and tolerant manner, demanding and calling for

humanitarian help. This was clear in his speech in September 20th, 2016 at Leaders' Summit, through which he revealed his intention to raise the number of refugees coming to America as this category of people were severely affected by violence in their original countries. At the same time, Obama addressed those who had fears and doubts about the problems that refugees could bring. Accepting refugees, in Obama's policy, would go a hand in hand with the assurance of American security as a priority. He said:

In recent years, in the United States, we've worked to put in intensive screening and security checks, so we can welcome refugees and ensure our security -- in fact, refugees are subject to more rigorous screening than the average tourist. We've seen in America, hardworking, patriotic refugees serve in our military, and start new businesses and help revitalize communities. I believe refugees can make us stronger. ("President Obama Participates in a Refugee Summit")

Table.1. Refugee Admissions, First Three Years of Obama's Terms

Obama Administration					
First Term			Second Term		
January 20, 2009, to January 20, 2012			January 20, 2013, to January 20, 2016		
Total Admissions	202,705		Total Admissions	206,445	
By Religion	Number	Percent	By Religion	Number	Percent
Christian	94,445	46.6%	Christian	87,801	42.5%
Muslim	45,670	22.5%	Muslim	82,848	40.1%
Buddhist	29,559	14.6%	Buddhist	13,974	6.8%
Hindu	15,085	7.4%	Hindu	9,114	4.4%
All Others	17,946	8.9%	All Others	12,678	6.1%
Top 15 Nationalities	Number	Percent	Top 15 Nationalities	Number	Percent
Burma	53,083	26.2%	Iraq	49,152	23.8%
Iraq	43,775	21.6%	Burma	48,144	23.3%
Bhutan	41,810	20.6%	Somalia	25,442	12.3%
Somalia	12,341	6.1%	Bhutan	22,207	10.8%
Cuba	11,730	5.8%	DRC	16,271	7.9%
Iran	10,373	5.1%	Cuba	8,797	4.3%
Eritrea	6,278	3.1%	Iran	8,599	4.2%
DRC	5,517	2.7%	Sudan	4,762	2.3%
Vietnam	2,290	1.1%	Eritrea	4,636	2.2%
Sudan	1,676	0.8%	Ukraine	2,702	1.3%
Ethiopia	1,625	0.8%	Syria	2,621	1.3%
Ukraine	1,454	0.7%	Afghanistan	2,599	1.3%
Afghanistan	1,285	0.6%	Ethiopia	2,046	1.0%
Palestine	1,270	0.6%	Colombia	1,101	0.5%
Burundi	1,172	0.6%	CAR	624	0.3%
All Others	7,026	3.5%	All Others	6,742	3.3%

Source: Rush, Nayla. "Refugee Resettlement Admissions." *CIS.org*, 7 Aug. 2020
cis.org/Rush/Refugee-Resettlement-Admissions. Accessed 21 April. 2022

In his first three years of the first term (from January 20th, 2009 to January 20th 2012), President Obama showed no hesitation to make America receive 202,705 refugees from countries around the world. Table 01 above explains the distribution of refugees according to religion and nationality respectively. Christianity ranked first with 47%, followed by Islam with 23%, then Hinduism and Buddhism with 22%. In terms of countries and nationalities, the following countries: Burma (26.2%), Iraq (21.6%), Bhutan (20.6%), Somalia (6.1%) and Cuba (5.8%) were the top five countries, in terms of the number of refugees in the US (Rush). During Obama's first three years of the second term (from January 20th, 2013 to January 20th, 2016), the United States received about 206,445 refugees, as it is also clear in Table 01 below refugees are distributed as follows: Religion: Christianity ranked first with 43%, followed by Islam with 40%, then Hinduism and Buddhism with 11%. Nationalities: In terms of countries and nationalities, the following countries: Iraq (23.8%), Burma (23.3%), Somalia (12.3%), Bhutan (10.8%) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (7.9%) were the top five countries, in terms of the number of refugees in the US (Rush).

Following consultation with representatives of the Council of Ministers and members of the House of Representatives and Senate Judicial Committees, the President set the yearly number of refugees admitted to the nation under Article 207 of the Immigration National Act. Section 207 enabled the admittance of extra refugees in the case of emergency refugees once the presidential final decision for the fiscal year was made (Bouziane).

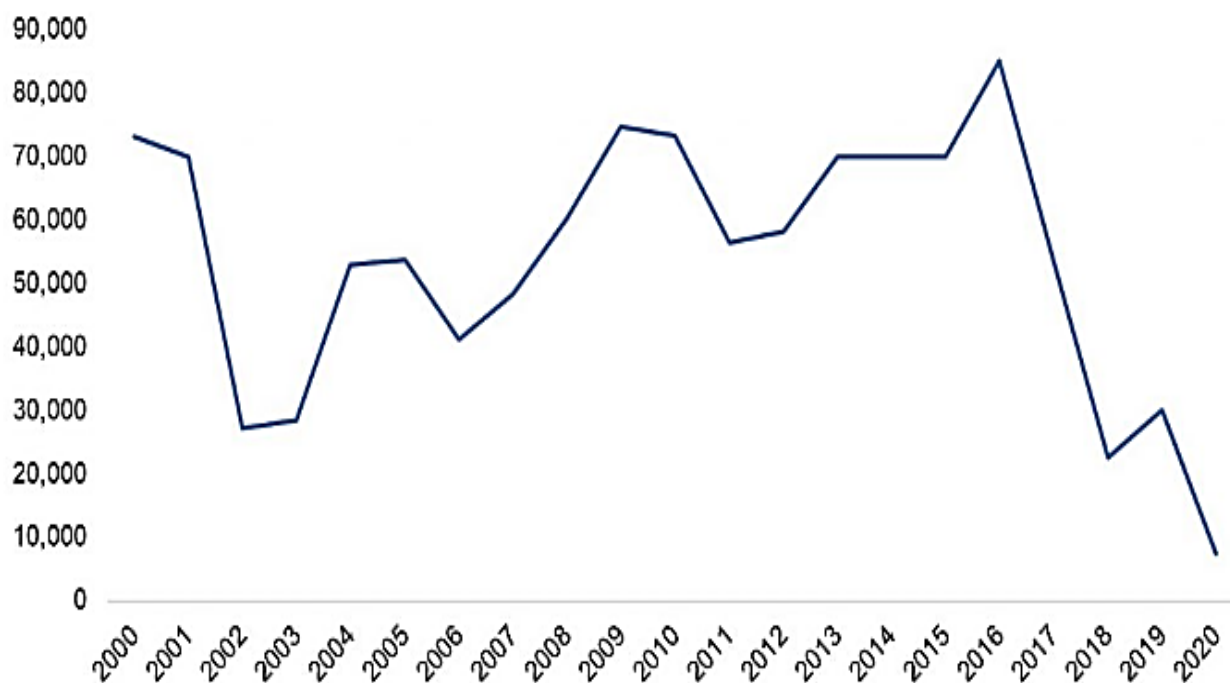


Fig. 2. Number of Refugees Admitted, by Fiscal Year

Source: “Attitudes toward Refugees Remain Stable despite Dramatic Changes in U.S.

Asylum Policy.” *PRRI*, 18 June 2020, www.pri.org/spotlight/attitudes-toward-refugees-remain-stable-despite-dramatic-changes-in-u-s-asylum-policy/. Accessed 22

April, 2022

During his two terms in office, President Obama held the refugees admission roof at 80,000. Figure 02 above displays the number of refugees from all over the world that the US has received from 2000 to 2020. The figure shows that Obama’s administration welcomes 74,654 refugees in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, the highest number in over 10 years. Despite stable refugee admissions in FY 2009 and FY 2010, the numbers of refugees receive in the United States in FY 2011 fell to 56,424 people. Following that, Obama administration reduces the refugee admission ceiling to 76,000 in FY 2012, then to 70,000 in FY 2013. Due to considerable political resistance in Congress and individual states, the refugee admissions ceiling is lowered and the number of refugees entering the United States is decreased. Obama lifts the cap to 85,000 in his final year in office and 84,994 refugees enter the country.

1.2 Obama's Favorable Policy towards the Syrian Refugee Crisis

The civil war in Syria caused catastrophic results in the whole society on all scales. As an escape, Syrians left their homes to flee wars, death and poverty that were haunting them. Consequently, the number of refugees increased and people looked for new shelters in neighboring countries, North Africa, Europe and even to the United States of America. In the first years of the conflict, the United States did not receive a lot of Syrian refugees as the number reached only 172 refugees in three years (2012- 2013-2014). However, the United States and under the presidency of Barack Obama started to open its doors to Syrian refugees, when their number went from 105 in 2014 to 1682 refugees in 2015 (see figure 03).

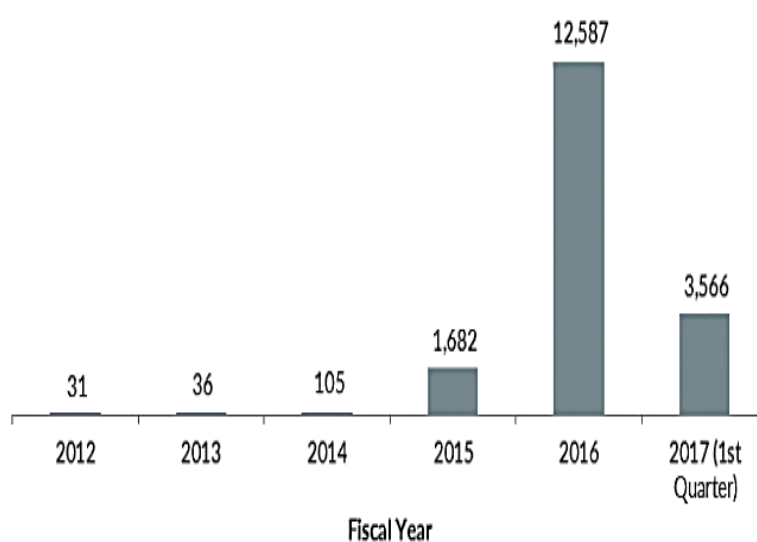


Fig.3. Syrian Refugees Resettled in the United States, FY 2012-17

Source : Batalova, Jeanne, and Jie Zong. "Syrian Refugees in the United States."

Migrationpolicy.org, 16 Sept. 2021, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/syrian-refugees-united-states-2017. Accessed 23 April. 2022.

1.2.1 President Barack Obama's Goal of Resettling 10,000 Syrian Refugees in the US

On November 15th, 2015 at the G-20, President Barack Obama addressed leaders' Summit in Antalya, Turkey, about the need of the US continuation to welcome Syrian refugees fleeing conflict and terrorist violence. He made the following declaration:

The people who are fleeing Syria are the most harmed by terrorism; they are the most vulnerable as a consequence of civil war and strife. They are parents, they are children, they are orphans. And it is very important and I was glad to see that this was affirmed again and again by the G20 that we do not close our hearts to these victims of such violence and somehow start equating the issue of refugees with the issue of terrorism. (qtd. in Byrd)

This step of welcoming more refugees was considered as a reaction to the pressure imposed on the United States to increase their number due to the refugee crisis in Europe. Barack Obama praised all countries that received refugees saying that opening the borders to Syrian refugees “is a signal of their belief in a common humanity. And so we have to, each of us, do our part. And the United States has to step up and do its part” (qtd in “Obama Calls It”). So, in Obama’s view, it was a moral obligation for America to follow the same path.

In dealing with the subject of refugees, it appeared that President Obama was helping individuals who had been hurt as a result of terroristic activities. He explained that as a person, he believed that individuals entering Europe or his nation should be supported, especially because neighboring countries were working hard to provide security to those refugees.

President Obama has set his goal of receiving 10,000 Syrian refugees in September 2015; he has pledged to do so with his administration before the end of fiscal year 2016. This was announced by Josh Earnest, Obama’s Spokesman and the White House Press Secretary. Earnest declared briefly that the President has instructed his staff to make preparations to take in "at least 10,000" Syrian refugees with the beginning of October 2015 (Harris et al.)

1.3 Reactions to Obama's Plan

The announcement of the US goal of receiving at least 10,000 Syrian refugees has inspired varied reactions. At least six states have announced that they would continue to accept Syrian refugees, describing the administration's decision as distinct and appropriate given to the size of the American economy and population. Washington was one of those states, whose Governor, Jay Inslee, fully supported the President's decision, stating "We have been and will continue to be a state that embraces compassion and eschews fear mongering" (qtd. in Kroman).

Obama's intentions to receive more refugees left a negative impression for some people who showed their disagreements. There was an extensive criticism on Obama's goal, as his decision sparked an outrage among the country's politicians, especially after the terrorist attacks on Paris. The attacks were committed by some people belonging to ISIS organization, where they killed at least 130 people on November 13th, 2015 (Seibt). Twenty two Republican-led states, GOP presidential candidates and key members of Congress, in addition to one Democratic governor, disagreed with the decision. They threatened to prepare a legislation to suspend the US refugee program for Syrians, because according to them, Syrian refugees could present a risk to the country's security (Harris et al.).

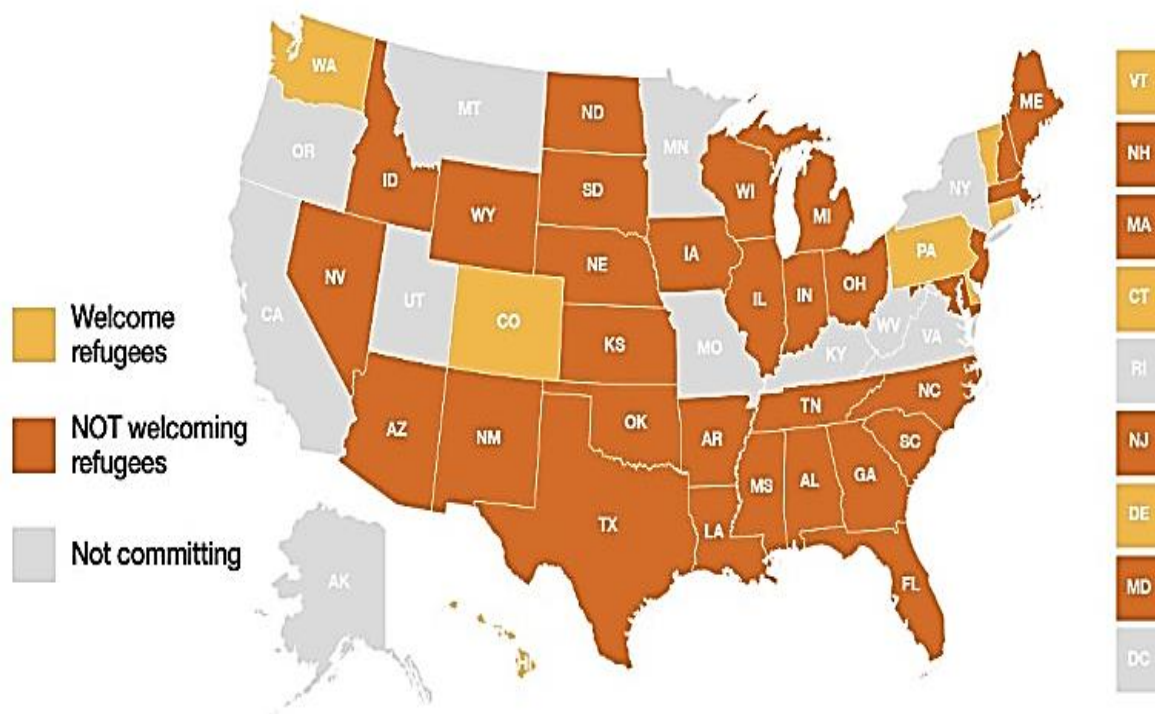


Fig.4. Every State Accepting and Refusing Syrian Refugees

Source: Fantz, Ashley, and Ben Brumfield. "Syrian Refugees Not Welcome in 31 U.S. States." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 19 Nov. 2015, www.edition.cnn.com/2015/11/16/world/paris-attacks-syrian-refugees-backlash/index.html

Figure 04 above shows where every state stands on by either accepting or refusing the Syrian refugees. Thirty-one governors oppose accepting Syrian refugees in their states. Alabama and Georgia were among these states, as were Texas and Arizona, Michigan, Illinois, Maine and New Hampshire. They all had Republican governors except one state (Fantz and Brumfield). While only 7 states whose governors said they would accept refugees.

A wave of statements started to spread on TV screens and social media by Republicans, where they showed their opposition to the entrance of Syrian refugees to the US. They were claiming that the vetting system was 'a total joke' and terrorists would have the chance to enter the country easily. Peter T. King, Republican of New York, said "Our enemy now is Islamic terrorism, and these people are coming from a country filled with Islamic terrorists"

(qtd. in Harris et al.). He added: "Unless we know who they are, we cannot allow them in. My job is to protect Americans, not to feel good about myself" (qtd. in Birnbaum).

Opposition also came from Donald Trump who shared his opinion on Twitter on November the 17th, 2015, by tweeting the following: "Refugees from Syria are now pouring into our great country. Who knows who they are - some could be ISIS. Is our president insane?" (qtd. in Birnbaum). Georgia's governor, Republican Nathan Deal, said in a statement that Georgia will not accept any Syrian refugee "until the federal government and Congress conducts a thorough review of current screening procedures and background checks." (qtd. in Fantz et al.).

The statements and protests against Obama's decision and the vetting system continued to spread between the Republicans, until President Obama came out and spoke about this issue to silence his opponents. His administration explained the details of its refugee vetting system. Obama noted that all refugees coming to the United States were screened by intelligence agencies over a period of 18 to 24 months, before they were given the full approval to enter the country (Eilperin and Morello). Besides, a statement was also issued by the White House clarifying that all refugees, including Syrians, are subject to the most stringent security screening (Johnson).

According to the statement, the process to accept refugees included multiple federal intelligence, security and Law Enforcement Organizations, including the National Counterterrorism Center, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Departments of Homeland Security (HDS), State, and Defense. All were involved in the screening process; "All aimed at ensuring that those admitted do not pose a threat to our country," the statement explained (qtd. in France 24). That was to reassure all skeptics and all those who were concerned about the state's security. Obama as well has said that banning a group of poor refugees from entering the United States would not spread security, but rather it risked

weakening the United States' standing abroad. "Apparently they are scared of widows and orphans coming into the United States of America," Obama said of Republicans. "At first, they were too scared of the press being too tough on them in the debates. Now they are scared of three year old orphans. That doesn't seem so tough to me" (qtd. in Mitchell).

Additionally, the President believed in equal treatment between Muslims and Christians as well, like it was unreasonable to treat all Muslims as terrorists and ban them from entering the country and accept only Christians. This act was considered contrary to the principles of the United States in his point of view saying that "it's shameful" and "not American" (qtd. in Arter).

Despite the criticism that he was receiving throughout that period, President Obama was able to fulfill his promise of receiving at least 10,000 Syrian refugees. He proved to all skeptics his successful diplomacy, as he was able to receive 12,587 Syrian refugees in FY2016 while maintaining the country's security. "As President, I've increased the number of refugees we are resettling to 85,000 this year, which includes 10,000 Syrian refugees -- a goal we've exceeded even as we've upheld our rigorous screening" said President Barack Obama in his presidential speech in September 20th, 2016 ("President Obama Participates in a Refugee Summit").

Although the admission of 10,000 Syrian refugees in FY 2016 has already sparked controversy in the presidential race, before leaving the office in 2017, Obama, planned again to allow 110,000 refugees from around the world in FY 2017, including Syrians. Obama did his best to embrace all refugees in general and defending his arguments in favor of Syrians in specific. However, this situation would not last for long as the next US President, Donald Trump, would change the policy. During the 2016 presidential race, Trump, harshly criticized Obama's refugee policy as he made immigration the basic file of his election campaign. He promised if he was chosen as president of the United States, he would prevent refugees and

immigrants from certain countries such as Mexico, Syria and Iraq from entering his land (Toosi and Kim). This would certainly create unfavorable atmosphere within the US government.

Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States from 2017 to 2021, won the elections against the Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton with a percentage of 46.1%. His presidency was described as populist, protectionist, and isolationist because of his particular policies. He made a huge clamor in the world with his controversial statements and proclamations concerning refugee admission in America (Chishti and Bolter). The new President was recognized for being strict in accepting and receiving refugees entering the country, shacking the belief in America as the land and shelter of oppressed people around the globe.

2. Trump's Refugee Policy

Since his presidential campaign in 2016, migration has been one of Trump administration's top priorities. His first declarations to put a wall along the border with Mexico and demolish the asylum system showed that his future decisions would be tough on people who sought refuge in America. This quickly became a national policy which his administration followed. They have devoted time and effort to provide restricted conditions for immigrants and refugees to arrive to the country particularly those who belonged to the Middle East region (Jarrar). The strategy pursued at that time worked to destroy the refugee system in America hiding under the pretext of preventing any risks that might harm the land.

Trump insisted on preventing specifically those who came from Muslim regions to enter the country which made the Republicans point out that issue. The President did not hesitate to change how he addressed those people and instead called them terrorists referring to refugees from barred countries (Daugirdas and Julian 764). This was interpreted by many analysts that the decrease in the number of refugees in America was due to Trump's strategy.

Figure 5 below is a line graph that displays the numbers of the Refugee Admission Ceiling by presidential approval and the numbers that were admitted starting from 2009 until 2021. The figure makes it obvious to notice the clear change in the admitted number of refugees during different administrations. In the period from 2009 to 2016, during Obama's administration, the refugee admission ceiling reach 85,000 and is set at 110,000 for the following year. However, in 2017 when Donald Trump was inaugurated, the Immigration Council notes, as it is indicated in the statistics, that the ceiling is eventually reduced to 50,000.

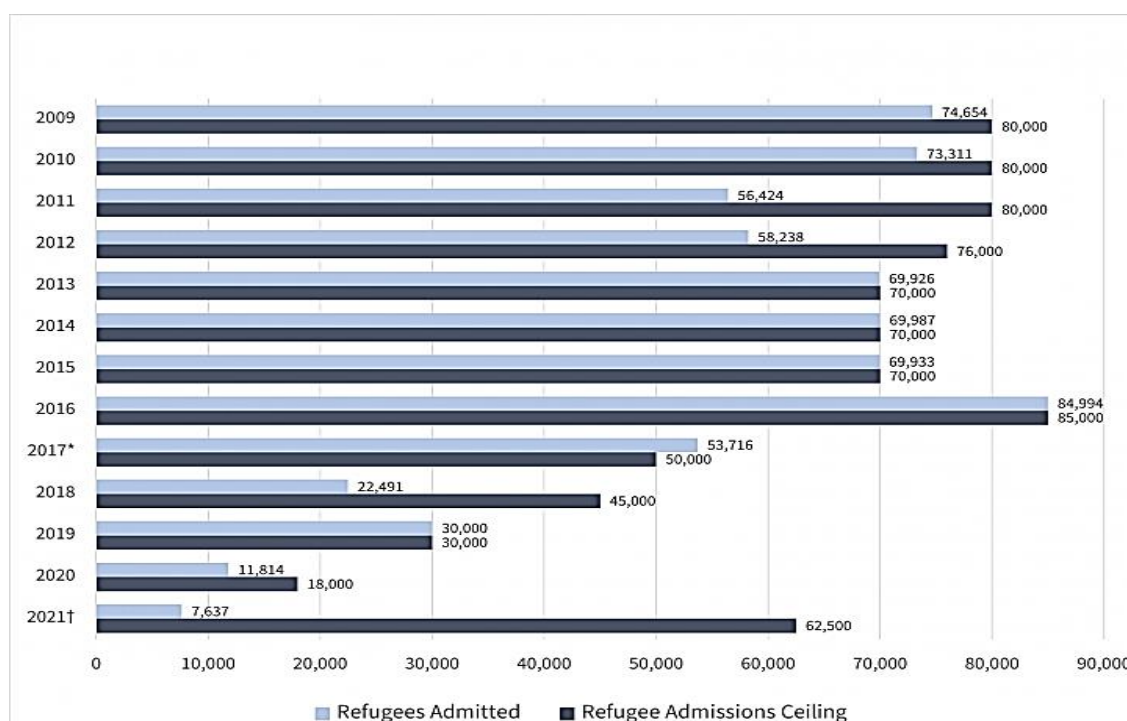


Figure 05: Refugee Admission Ceiling and Refugees Admitted, FY 2009 to August 31, 2021

Source: “An Overview of U.S. Refugee Law and Policy.” *American Immigration Council*, 18 Nov. 2015, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/overview-us-refugee-law-and-policy>. Accessed 15 May 2022.

2.1. Trump's War on Refugees

The refugee policy went hand in hand with the counterterrorism policy that Trump put as priority and a motivation to close the country's borders. In a speech in Phoenix, Arizona, he criticized those who did not enforce the security systems noting the increasing number of

deaths caused by the instability of the system; in the speech, he gave about his immigration policy in Phoenix he insisted on the matter of security issues in which he played with emotions of the listeners and talked about the countless innocent American lives who have been lost. Moreover, Trump blamed the politicians who did not commit to their duties in protecting the borders and enforcing laws (“Watch Donald Trump’s Immigration Policy Speech in Phoenix”). As a result, a number of Orders were initiated to lessen the number of people coming to the country.

2.2. Trump’s Executive Orders

After his inauguration in January 2017, President Trump immediately started passing Orders on the issue of illegal immigration which has been noticeably highlighted during his campaign to guarantee to his people that he was working for the security of his homeland. The Orders concerning immigration targeted many regions like Mexico and other Latin American countries, yet they focused on the Muslim countries and Middle East region.

During the week that Trump first entered the office, 687 refugees from the six prohibited nations entered the United States, accounting for 34% of all refugee admissions. From Jan. 28th to Feb. 3rd, refugee admissions from the six prohibited nations (Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) were nearly ceased the next week after Trump's initial Executive Order on limits was fully applied. However, the admissions resumed quickly after a district judge in Washington state halted major sections of Trump's inaugural order and removed the travel restrictions on Feb. 3, a decision supported by a federal appeals court (Radford and Connor).

2.2.1 Executive Order of January, 27th

On January 27th, 2017, President Trump issued an Executive Order prohibiting immigrants and nonimmigrants from seven countries from entering the United States for 90 days. These countries were Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. In addition, all refugee

admissions were halted for 120 days. The security offices worked on fulfilling the orders to keep the risks of any security dangers outside the U.S. (“Immigration Resources”). This order came to secure the country on the basis that these seven countries were highly dangerous and had a history of terroristic acts that might or would threaten the life of the American citizens.

2.2.2. Executive Order of March, 6th

On the 6th of March, 2017, Trump administration revoked the first Executive Order and published a revised version, and sought to restrain the number of admitted refugees to the United States. Six of the initial seven countries were temporarily banned from entering the United States under the new Executive Order of January 27th (Iraq was taken off the list). Citizens of Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen would be banned from entering the United States for 90 days (“Immigration Resources”). These strict Orders came to claim that the safety of American citizens and the security of their homeland came first as a policy and a strategy that Trump used. The latter aimed to avert any of the security problems that the former presidents dealt with or the event that the world was witnessing such as the terrorist attacks in France.

2.2.3. Executive Order of June, 28th

This Order insisted on the visa acceptance for applicants mainly from Islamic countries and those who enter the United States with the claims of having a family tie or a relationship with an American citizen. In this context, only those who were in a relationship that includes parents, spouse, child, adult son or daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, or sibling were allowed in the U.S. Whereas, those who had relations with Grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, brothers-in-laws, sisters-in-law, and fiancées were immediately rejected (“Immigration Resources”). This Order came to prevent those who wanted to enter the States through family ties; it narrowed down the scope of accepting refugees through family connections and only prioritized strong and direct blood relations.

3. Republican and Democratic Reactions to Trump's Orders

As President Trump started initiating the Executing Orders concerning the refugee admission to the United States, he received large objections from both parties. On many occasions, Trump has repeatedly clarified his intentions and policies toward immigration and refugee resettlement during his campaign, especially for Muslims. However, a number of Republicans who firstly supported his claims and favored him in 2016 asked for opening the door to refugees in opposition to the new Order. On January the 2nd, 39 governors of both parties and especially the prominent Republican Party from around the United States expressed their will to take in refugees (Ewing). In other words, despite the fact that he was a Republican, Trump did not receive a complete alliance from his party's politicians regarding this matter; since they saw it from a human perspective to accept refugees.

Trump's policy was not approved by many politicians and Congress members. Senator Lindsey Graham, for instance, defined his legacy as a "consequential presidency" to explain the President's failure and non-confidence in managing the issue in a wise way (qtd in Ayson). Governors in 41 states and leaders in 86 local municipalities have decided to admit refugees, but seven Republican governors have yet to make a decision. If the municipalities did not respond by January 21, financing for refugees would be cut off, resulting in no resettlement. Two local governments have deliberately chosen to reject migrants, despite the fact that no action was required to prevent resettlement (Ewing).

The White House organized a conference call with governors in November to explain Trump's Executive Order and reminded them that they were not required to take any proactive steps. The conference call featured Andrew Veprek, a top Department of State official, in charge of refugee policy. As a result, requests for comment were not returned by the White House or the State Department (Strickler and Luce).

4. Syrian Refugees during Trump's Administration

During a conference in Phoenix, Trump talked about the Syrian refugees saying: "We have no clue who these people are, where they come from" (qtd. in Gambino). His statements include indirect accusations implementing that the Syrian refugees were people of unknown origins and unknown intentions which he described as the Trojan Horse (CNBC). In other words, he wanted to say that America was facing an 'enemy within' when accepting refugees from Syria since the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria members (ISIS) could slip into the grounds of the United States.

Despite the Syrians being the most population in need of refuge in the world because of the war, in 2018, the U.S. admitted only 62 people. Trump administration completely wrecked the minimum number of admitted refugees in the history of the country (Zezima). Therefore, Trump did not want Syrians in specific to enter the United States because he did not want the 9/11 attacks history to repeat itself during his custody through the new terrorist group ISIS.

In an article entitled "Trump Says 'Keeping Syrian Refugees in Region is 'Best Way to Help Most People'", Amy Held cited what Trump saw as a way to help the Syrians and solve the Refugee crisis. During a Joint Rose Garden Press conference on Tuesday, Jul 25, 2017, President Trump appeared beside Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri and said that the US was assisting Syrian refugees by resettling them near their home of origin: "Our approach to supporting the humanitarian needs of displaced Syrian citizens as close to their home country as possible is the best way to help most people"(qtd in. Held). This speech was the simplest definition of his perspective and policy toward the Syrian refugees.

Thereby, all what Trump did was to tell Syrian refugee applicants to seek resettlement in another nation. In this way, America would be safe from 'terrorists' entering the country in the disguise of refugees, and at the same time the united States would help Syria's

neighboring countries to provide shelters and good conditions for them. He addressed as follows:

We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their interests first. We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow. (“January 20, 2017: Inaugural Address”)

To strengthen the American security system, Trump claimed that he had to close the door in the face of strangers to avoid any possible terror acts. The second was to eliminate the sources of the terrorism which America determined to be from the Middle East in general and from Syria and Iraq in specific. "We have to stop the tremendous flow of Syrian refugees into the United States," Trump said (qtd. in Kelemen).

In fact, Trump's fear of Syrian refugees as a source of terrorism was not justified since any Syrian entering the country passed under a severe security system to omit any suspicion. In the same context, the U.S. State Department insisted that its system of vetting the refugees was one of a kind. The system for Syrians was even more extreme since they had to wait for over 18 months of screening and went through checks from officials. The refugee applicants should pass through the State Department, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Defense Department to be accepted (Gambino). It was clear that admitting refugees was not that easy to make sure who these people were and fulfill complete checks on every one of them.

The US Department also answered the question “are Syrian refugees likely to be Isis sympathizers?” arguing that these people who were heavily coming to a land that they saw as a safe place to resettle were no other than the victims of both Islamic state itself and Assad government (Gambino). Another argument that some analysts provided in favor of accepting

refugees was that by refusing Syrian migrants, American politicians were assisting ISIS.

When the US closed the door on Syrian Muslims, it would indirectly support Isis's claims that the West was unwilling to help them and that they despised Islam. On that basis, ISIS would justify their attacks. Not only that, but it also gave the Syrian people no choice but to take the side of the presumptuous terrorist group (Gambino). In fact, politicians and analysts wanted America to appear as an advocate for oppressed people to provide a good image for people around the world and for Muslims and Arabs in particular.

5. Muslims under the Refugee System

After 9/11 attacks, many countries were cautious in accepting 'Muslim' immigrants and refugees entering to their lands. This category of people, in comparison to other religious groups, was generally unwelcomed throughout the world and in America specifically. In the Fiscal Year of 2019, the number of Christians admitted to US reached 79 percent of all refugees who arrived in the United States. Around 23,800 Christians were allowed to the United States in contrast to 4,900 Muslims and fewer other religious minorities. In 2016 the number of Muslim refugees who were accepted reached 4,900, which was pre-dominated by the number of the Christian migrants (about 23,800) (Krogstad).

The big gap between the numbers of Muslim and Christian refugees showed the real intentions of the new policy in which Trump was trying to eliminate the number of Muslims in the country. He declared: "I'm establishing new vetting measures to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States of America. Don't want them here" (qtd in. Stephenson and Rosenberg). However, he announced that there would be an exception concerning Christian minorities who lived in Syria and that they would help them to flee the civil war there (Stephenson and Rosenberg). Trump did not see harm and 'shame' when openly declaring his intolerant view toward Muslim refugees who were not guilty of any reason.

6. Trump's Policy Supporters

Obviously, many Republicans would likely to support their 'Republican' President that the US should not take the responsibility to accept refugees. However, a number of Democrats who did not favor Trump's ideas during his campaign surprisingly changed their view and few of them shifted to the idea of not welcoming strangers (Hartig). This change came to support the President's suggestions to enforce his refugee policy especially toward Syrians.

Supporters of Trump's declared that the priority to deal with refugee policy must include more security measures and were in favored of the Orders of shutting down the admission for certain countries and securing the borders. Others believed that there was a possibility to accept some refugees under certain conditions. A big number, however, thought that there must be a balance between the two approaches in which they were later asked to choose between the two. The majority (78%) prioritized strengthening the security system and shutting down borders (Doherty).

Undoubtedly, Trump's policy toward the refugees was controversial. The President made it clear that he was willing to help refugees in different ways, rather than taking the risk of letting them inside the States. Despite that, because of human rights concerns, he was seen as a 'racist' from the perspective of the whole world. In fact, Both Presidents Obama and Trump were working to make their country great again after the legacy of 9/11. One can say that Trump's decision to shut down refugees was mainly a strategy that he followed to achieve more security and prevent any kind of problems that would endanger the safety of his homeland. However, Obama did not seek for his country to be under any threat, yet he opened the door for many Syrian refugees hoping to confirm the good role of America as world leader and savor.

Conclusion

Syria's growing situation is one of the most challenging, complicated, and urgent crises that the world has faced in the last decade. The Syrian Revolution began when a group of individuals rose up against the government, demanding many political reforms within the regime. However, the demonstrations grew and swept across the country, but the response was harsh from the government of President Bashar al-Assad. The use of violence was the only tool in the hand of the government against its own people, transforming the peaceful demonstrations into a bloody civil war that has cost many lives.

The Syrian revolution has resulted in one of the world's most serious problems; residents have begun to flee their homes in search of quiet, peace, and safety. More than six million refugees have been displaced within the country, mostly along the country's borders. However, this crisis has grown to unprecedented proportions of people fleeing to neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, costing them various amounts of money. Worth mentioning, the governments of these countries imposed rules for accepting refugees, which included security checks and providing better conditions inside camps as much as possible.

The United States has also received many Syrian refugees including women, children, religious minorities, and victims of violence or torture. They have left to avoid the cruelty of both Islamic State, or Isis, and Assad regime. The US accepted an unprecedented number of Syrian refugees in 2016 (12785 refugees). The country has not moved to suspend President Barack Obama's resettlement program or even to put a cap on the number of arrivals, compared with Donald Trump who, after winning the elections in 2017, called to ban Muslims and Syrian refugees from entering the country. Another reason to seek refuge in the US is that these people, who lost their homes, are looking for safer environment to raise their children instead of living in camps or exile.

In their policies, Obama and Bush made huge changes in foreign policy toward the Middle East, including diplomatic and military tactics. This research offers the major strategies and policy followed by President Obama's administration towards the Syrian refugee issue. Obama dealt with this issue by providing humanitarian help. In his speeches, the President defended his policy of letting Syrian refugees into the United States of America, emphasizing that the issue must be addressed by both the US and other countries. He urged the American people to help Syrian refugees who are seeking asylum in their country. Furthermore, many ruling leaders inside Obama's administration backed this idea of accepting more refugees. Nevertheless, Obama's policy toward Syrian refugees has been harshly criticized by a number of political leaders, especially Republicans, who were claiming that receiving Syrian refugees would provide an opportunity for terrorists to enter the country.

For the sake of embracing more refugees, Obama imposed security checks and saw this as a challenge to protecting his own country from terrorist attacks. This followed policy left the United States' doors opened to humanitarian aid for refugees from all across the world, particularly Syrians. The government has helped 12,585 Syrian refugees, and in general, this policy has been as beneficial as possible to the refugees. Obama's plan to fix the number of admitted to 110,000 with a substantial number of Syrian refugees has succeeded. During his two terms (2009-2017) the number of Syrian refugees increased from 25 in 2009 refugee to 12,585.

Despite his contradicting views, President Donald Trump made it clear in his inaugural address that he was working to build a friendly relationship with all nations of the world including the Middle East, but he insisted that the US would always come first and as a President, he would not hesitate to make any decision to protect it. Refugee policy in his view was a security issue that should be managed carefully without haste. The number of Syrian refugees he admitted was lower than their number during the custody of Obama, with a

maximum of 6557 refugees accepted in 2017 and a minimum of 76 in 2018. In other words, Trump did not want any foreigners to resettle in the US especially Syrians to avoid any suspicious entries or terroristic threats.

Thereby, Trump initiated different Executive Orders that temporarily ban Muslims and Arabs including Syria from the US for 120 days. Other Orders were concerned with banning the maximum number of Muslims and Arabs who sought refuge with the claim of having family ties in the US. The Executive Order of January 27th that came as an extension of the 120 bans to seven countries for other 90 days. In the Orders concerning the Fiscal Year 2018, he lowered the number of admitted refugees and only accepted 76 Syrian refugees.

Both presidents had different mindsets which affected their management of the refugee policy, especially concerning the Syrian crisis because, in many people's view, it has a relation to terrorist issues and Isis. Consequently, the only victim is the Syrian, who is struggling in a country that is not his own to provide the minimum living standard for himself and his family. In doing so, he is suffering from different problems of racism and marginalization due to his religious belonging.

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