ISLAMIC TERRORISM AND THE US POLICY FOR THE RESETTLEMENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES

Igor Henriques Sabino de Farias¹
Alexandre Cesar Cunha Leite²
Andrea Maria Calazans Pacheco Pacífico³

Introduction

This article elaborates a reflection on the US refusal, between 2016 and 2017, to resettle Syrian refugees from the Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011 and is still ongoing. Due to the conflict, a large number of Syrians were forced to move, seeking refuge in neighboring countries or in the West.

In the US, however, despite the national refugee policy, the Syrians have encountered a number of difficulties in obtaining refugee status because they are Arabs and mostly Muslims. This causes them to be perceived as a threat to national security by a large part of the US population in the face of the recent terrorist attacks committed by Islamic radicals in the country. Therefore, the importance of the subject is as much for its contemporaneity as for its treatment as a matter of security, not only national, but, above all,
Thus, this text highlights the way in which the Syrian Civil War has contributed to the current refugee crisis and aims to provide a partial analysis of the reasons why much of US society and President Donald Trump are against the resettlement of Syrian refugees. The hypothesis is that terrorist attacks carried out by Islamic radicals in the US contributed to the increase of prejudice and generalization regarding Arabs and Muslims and, therefore, the Syrian refugees would be conceived as probable threats to the national security.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the Geneva Refugee Convention (1951) will be analyzed aiming to categorize the Syrians as refugees and to emphasize the responsibilities of the international community in their protection. Then, a bibliographical review will be carried out, corroborated by some secondary descriptive data about the perception of the American society on the Syrian and Muslim refugees.

Then it will be discussed how the social constructions Edward Said calls Orientalism and the ideas of a “Clash of Civilizations” formulated by Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis permeate American society, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. These concepts are therefore used to explain the association of Syrian refugees with Islamic terrorism, although there is no evidence to support this association.

**Syrian civil war and the current refugee crisis**

Migrations are a common feature of humans, including the different peoples of the Middle East. A fact that precedes even the formation of the States and the delimitation of national borders, as we know today in the region. Although the causes of these migrations vary, they were mostly motivated by political conflicts and instabilities, especially during periods of colonialism and postcolonialism (Hanafi 2014). So, in most cases, they were forced migrations.

This is the current situation of some 5.5 million Syrian refugees, who, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have since 2011 sought refuge in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey (UNHCR 2017). This has mainly occurred because of the Syrian Civil War that began in March 2011 following protests against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad as part of the wave of political transformation that hit several countries in the Middle East and North Africa in late 2010. This event came to be known as “Arab Spring”.

102 Austral: Brazilian Journal of Strategy & International Relations
v.7, n.13, Jan./Jun. 2018
According to Magalhães (2016), the protests against President Assad began in a peaceful manner, but from the outset they were repressed with brutal violations of human rights by the government. The Arab Spring was therefore unable to overthrow the Syrian government and, after a year and a half of riots in 2012, approximately 31,000 Syrians were killed, mostly civilians, as a result of conflicts between government forces and opposition groups. Add to this a number of 320,000 refugees, which brings the events in Syria to be considered a civil war (Magalhães 2016).

More than five years after the start of the conflict in 2018, the Syrian president still holds power and political stability seems to be something more difficult to achieve. The situation got even worst in 2012, with the emergence of the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, ISIS, occupying regions of the country and further fomenting sectarian conflicts (Lynch 2016).

As a consequence of these events, the international community is currently facing one of the greatest humanitarian crises since World War II (UNHCR 2016; 2017). According to the Syrian Refugees project of the Migration Policy Center of the European University Institute in Florence, it is estimated that 11 million Syrians have been forced to leave their homes since the beginning of the Civil War and currently around 13.5 million of people need humanitarian assistance within the country. Among those who escaped the conflict, most of them sought shelter in neighboring countries to Syria or other regions of the country. As for the refugees, about one million of them sought refuge in Europe, the majority in Germany, with approximately 300,000 requests, followed by Switzerland with 100,000; the two are the main European Union host countries (European University Institute 2017).

The US, in turn, from the beginning of the conflict in 2011 until 2016 had received only about 12,000 refugees (Connor 2016). The trend, however, will be that it will still not receive a greater number than this in the coming years, since when assuming the presidency in January 2017, Donald Trump, signed an Executive Order that suspended, indefinitely, the reception of Syrian refugees (White House 2017). The reasons for this, though, will be discussed throughout the text. Rather, it is necessary to conceptualize what is a refugee and to analyze whether the Syrians can indeed be placed in this category.

According to Article 1A (2) of the 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is any person who

[...fearing of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and cannot or, because of this fear, does not want to rely on the protection of that country, or that if he does not have a nationality and is outside the
country in which he had his habitual residence as a result of such events, he cannot or because of that fear he does not want to return to it.

The Syrians, therefore, fall within the definition of the Convention because they are outside their country of nationality due to a certain fear of persecution and therefore cannot return or rely on the protection of their country of origin. As Andrade points out (2011), they can be considered as refugees because of persecution for belonging to a social group or by political opinion.

Therefore, because they fall into refugee status, Syrians receive UNHCR protection and are allowed to enter countries that are signatories to the 1951 Convention and remain there as refugees.

Pacifico (2014) points out that refugees can be considered an elite in the sense of protection of human rights, mainly because they are protected by a ready and finished international regime, with UNHCR as an international institution and the Geneva Convention of 1951 as binding treaty. In addition to this, there are a number of specific norms of protection at the regional and national levels, such as the American system, the African system and the European system. The existence of all these refugee protection mechanisms, however, has not brought great guarantees to the Syrians, since most of the countries that shelter them – Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt – are not signatories to the 1951 Convention, which significantly limits the performance of UNHCR and the possibility of refugees to stay and integrate into national societies, even though in most cases they have common social elements such as language and religion. Other countries, however, although signatories to the Convention, have placed obstacles in the way of receiving and resetting Syrians, like the United States.

**US refusal to accept Syrian refugees**

The United States created its first refugee law during World War II in order to resettle Europeans fleeing persecution from the conflict. In this way, as the American Immigration Council points out, that the US had become the country that most resettles refugees in the world. After the Vietnam War, in 1975, with the experience of resettlement of Indochinese refugees, Congress adopted the Refugee Act of 1980, a law incorporating the concept of refugee under the 1951 Convention into US law, providing a basis for American Refugee Admissions Program (American Immigration Council 2015).

This program includes individuals who already have refugee status and are in a country other than their country of origin, which undergo a strict
screening process that can last up to two years, passing through all the US security agencies. The objective is to ensure that individuals truly fall into the concept of refugee and do not pose risks to national security (American Immigration Council 2015).

Based on this resettlement program, each year the US president, together with the Congress, determines the number of refugees to be admitted. In fiscal year 2016, this figure was 85,000 (American Immigration Council 2015), of which, according to President Barack Obama, 10,000 would be Syrians. After the terrorist attacks in Paris on November 13, 2015, however, Congress vetoed Obama’s plans (Guly 2015). In addition, more than half of the US governors expressed that they would not resettle any Syrian refugees (Fantz and Brumfield 2015). Yet President Obama has managed to achieve his goal and the US has received more than 10,000 Syrians in 2016 (White House 2016).

As a result, by assuming the presidency in January 2017, Trump announced that the refugee quota for fiscal year 2017 would be 50,000, excluding Syrians and prioritizing minorities who were victims of religious persecution in their home countries. In addition, the decree signed by the new president also suspended the program for the reception of refugees for a period of 120 days, starting on 27 January 2017. The purpose of this suspension was to strengthen national security measures, which aim to make the refugee screening process more rigid (White House 2017).

According to Carlier (2016), the US refusal to receive Syrian refugees can be understood on the basis of four factors: 1) the lack of multicultural policies and the integration of migrants; 2) the increase of Islamophobia; 3) the number of terrorist attacks that have occurred in the country since September 11, 2001; and 4) the polarity of the political system (Calier 2016). In this article we defend the hypothesis that, among these factors, the third is the most influential, the second being a direct consequence of it. Therefore, the factors are not excluded, on the contrary, they are simultaneous.

As Desilvier (2015) points out, historically, US society is resistant to receiving large masses of foreigners fleeing wars and persecutions, regardless of the official policy adopted by the government. What has manifested throughout history through opposition to the resettlement of Jews, Hungarians, Vietnamese and Cubans (Desilvier 2015). More recently, this opposition has been to the Syrians. According to Boomerang Politics (2015), after the Paris bombings in 2015, about 53% of Americans are opposed to the resettlement of Syrians in the United States; 11% would accept only Syrian Christian refugees and 28% would support Obama’s initial proposal to resettle 10,000 Syrians regardless of religious affiliation (Talev 2015). According to the Pew
Islamic Terrorism and the US Policy for the Resettlement of Syrian Refugees

Research Center (2015), however, before the attacks, 51% of Americans were in favor of the president’s decision, while 41% disapproved (Pew Research Center 2015).

Degree of Islamophobia, or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, is another relevant factor in evaluating the responses to the Syrian refugee crisis, as the majority of Syrian refugees are Muslim (“Defining Islamophobia”, n.d.; Kiely et al, 2015). Common defenses to delaying or banning Syrian refugee resettlement have to do with fears of Islamic extremists slipping through the refugee vetting process since ISIS began to occupy large portions of Syria (BBC News, 2015). This fear has increased after the Paris attacks in part because a Syrian passport was found near the body of the attackers, although authorities are almost certain the passport is a fake (Tharoor, 2015b) (Carlier 2016, 54).

According to the Pew Research Center, Americans see Muslims less favorably than any other religious group and Republicans have an even more negative view than the Democrats (Pew Research Center 2015). A survey conducted in 2015 shows that 55% of Americans have a rather unfavorable view of Islam (Kaleem 2015).

The causes for this perception of Muslims by American society come mainly from the incidence of terrorist attacks committed by Islamic radicals in US territory since the fall of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, by al-Qaeda. Gutowski (2015) points out that according to the Washington Free Beacon, there were six bombings, including bombings in the Boston marathon and shots in San Bernardino. The reported attacks include those who were motivated by Islamic radicalism and had at least one death (Gutowski 2015). It is estimated that a total of 3,016 Americans were killed. The number of people injured in the September 11 attacks is not yet known, but the total number of other attacks on US soil is 290 wounded (CNN Library 2016).

It is necessary to emphasize, however, that this sum does not include the Orlando bombing in June 2016, when an Afghan man born in the United States, after swearing allegiance to the ISIS, opened fire in a gay nightclub. The attack was considered the worst since September 11 and killed 49 people, leaving about 53 injured (CNN, 2016). Considering this attack, the number of Americans killed in terrorist attacks with Islamic motivation increases from 3,016 to 3,065, and the number of wounded increases from 290 to 343 people.

Thus, as Carlier (2016) infers, due to the high incidence of Islamic terrorism in the US, there is a tendency between the government and the
civilian population to be more concerned about the occurrence of future terrorist attacks, especially by ISIS and other Islamic extremists (Carlier 2016). Although there are several factors that contribute to the refusal of Syrian refugees, this is one of the causes for this; since many Americans fear that ISIS militants infiltrate the refugee system by pretending to be Syrian refugees. This fear, however, is questionable, since all refugees, before entering the US, undergo a rigorous screening process, which, as stated, can last from a year and a half to two years (Bauman, Soerens and Smeir 2016). In addition, none of the attacks on US soil were authored by a refugee, demonstrating that it is easier for an Islamist extremist to enter the country with a tourist visa than a refugee (Mathias 2017). In this way, it can be inferred that the high incidence of terrorist attacks coupled with the population’s lack of knowledge about the process of receiving refugees in the United States is what leads Americans to oppose the resettlement of Syrian refugees (Carlier 2016).

All these facts, therefore, confirm that the hypothesis defended is contemplated and that an explanatory north is discerned, according to which the fear of the Syrian refugees would be a variable derived from the traumas caused by the Islamic extremism. Thus, it is analyzed whether this phenomenon can be classified as Orientalism, according to the concept elaborated by Said (1990). For this, however, it is necessary first to understand the impact that the idea of the “Clash of Civilizations” has had on American society (Huntington 1993; 1996).

Between the Clash of Civilizations and the Orientalism

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the “Clash of Civilizations” theory advocated by the American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington was popularized in the United States, and in the West in general, in an article first published in 1993 in the journal Foreign Affairs and expanded in 1996 in the book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. According to the author, in the post-Cold War scenario, conflicts would no longer be motivated by ideological or economic issues, but rather by cultural and religious issues. A new world order would emerge in which states, while remaining the central actors of international relations, would essentially be between groups belonging to different civilizations (Huntington 1993).

Huntington points out, however, that one of the main clashes of civilizations is in the line of fracture between the West and Islamic civilizations, an ancient conflict that began along with the rise of Islam and began to intensify even more at the end of the 20th century (Huntington 1993). In his book,
published in 1997, he states that “The borders of Islam are bloody”, and that there is evidence that Muslims have waged more wars than individuals of any other civilization (Huntington 1997, 328).

As Smaili (2015) points out, this view that the East, and in particular the Arab and Muslim countries, were responsible for violence and terror and were declaring war on the West came to be spread throughout the globalized world. According to her, September 11 would serve to show the world that the clash of civilizations is imminent and that, therefore, the Middle East should be indiscriminately occupied and dominated. In this way, millenarian cultures of the East became relativized and reduced, being restricted only to the religious element, especially to the differences between Islam and the West. This further corroborated the promotion of a stereotyped view of Arab and Muslim as uncivilized (Smaili 2015).

So it would be this reductionist conception of the Middle East and Muslims that would justify, for example, the 2003 invasion of Iraq by US and British troops in the name of the “War on Terror” in order to overthrow the autocratic rule of Saddam Hussein and democracy in the region. It would also be the same conception that leads a large part of American society to oppose today the resettlement of Syrian refugees, mostly Muslims.

It is to this social construction that the Palestinian intellectual Edward Said referred, initially in 1978, as “Orientalism”, which would be an institution created by the West to negotiate with the East, being basically a style of Western domination that seeks to dominate, restructure and have authority over the Orient (Said 1990).

As Demant points out (2004), it would be a Western structure of knowledge as a form of power that aims to portray the East, and especially the Muslim world, in an improbable and hostile way, in order to maintain a project of domination that persists even after formal independence of Muslim countries (Demant 2004).

Said goes further and elongates four dogmas that constitute Orientalism: 1) the absolute and systematic difference between the West as superior and the East as inferior; 2) preference for abstractions on the East based on religious texts at the expense of modern oriental reality; 3) the conception that the East is eternal, uniform and incapable of self-definition; and 4) the vision of the Orient as something to be feared or controlled (Said 1990).

Among these dogmas one can observe how at least two of them help in the construction of proto-answers to the problematic of this article: the preference for sacred texts as a definition of the Orient rather than the modern experience of the region and the vision of the Orient as something to be
always feared. Still, it cannot be said that the refusal to receive Syrian refugees would be a way of exercising control and domination over the East, as suggested by the idea of Said’s Orientalism.

Both dogmas manifest themselves, as described, in the unfavorable view of most Americans to Islam. This perception is mainly a consequence of the terrorist attacks committed in the name of Islam. But it was suggested well before them in 1990 when Lewis defended the idea that the conflict between Islam and the West came from the founding of religion, with its ideals of jihad – holy war – and repudiation of Western values. Therefore, it is a conflict initiated by the East itself and not by the West. It is on the basis of this premise that the expression “clash of civilizations” arises, supporting the work of Huntington (Dias 2008, 23).

Lewis, according to Demant (2004), of the internalist school of Islam studies, sees in Islam the central cause of the underdevelopment of the countries of the Middle East and the lack of democracy, predicting still more conflicts between Islam and the West. This view, however, is opposed by the externalist school, which considers this view of Islam as quite reductionist and points to external factors, such as Western interventions, as the causes of violence perpetrated by Muslims. Said is one of the main exponents of this school and therefore one of the greatest critics of Huntington and Lewis (Demant 2004).

This article, in turn, argues that, in addition to Lewis and Huntington’s internalism and Said’s externalism, there is a third alternative with regard to the causes of animosity between the West and Islam, suggesting that it is necessary to consider the religious potential of Islam to legitimize and even incite the violence and negative impacts of imperialism and Western interventions in the Middle East. An example of this would be the very emergence of ISIS, since the group, despite the use of Islamic elements to justify its action, is the result of the US invasion of Iraq (Brancoli and Grinsztajn 2016).

At the same time, it is necessary to recognize that the terrorist attacks and the action of groups like ISIS, reify only the positions of Lewis and Huntington. This occurs, for example, in the group’s use of Quranic texts as a pretext for persecution of Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq. One of these texts used by the group is Surah 9:29 of the Islamic holy book, which states:

I fight against those who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, nor abstain from what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor do they profess the true religion of those who have received the Book, until they gladly pay Jizya (fee or fee paid non-Muslims within the Islamic State) and
Islamic Terrorism and the US Policy for the Resettlement of Syrian Refugees

feel submissive (Koran, Surata 9.29).

When conquering the Iraqi city of Mosul in June 2014, ISIS did just that by forcing Christians to pay taxes, to convert to Islam, to leave their homes or to be killed (Mitchell 2015). This further strengthens the rhetoric of a clash of civilizations between the Christian West and the Islamic Middle East, prompting many to act in an Orientalist fashion, according to Said’s premises, compressing a whole collectivity of Muslims into a single mass, standard the actions of a specific actor and sacred texts of an ancient culture.

Despite this, however, it cannot be inferred that every Muslim and especially Syrian refugees are potential terrorists. This can be seen from their own view of ISIS. As Poushter (2015) points out, in a survey of the Pew Research Center (2015) in 11 Islamic-majority countries, from Nigeria to Jordan and Indonesia, most Muslims are against ISIS actions. In the Arab countries where a large number of Syrian refugees are now likely to be accommodated in the US, rejection of ISIS is almost unanimous. In Lebanon, where ISIS attacks already occurred, 99% of those interviewed said they had a very unfavorable opinion of the group. In Jordan, the opposition is 94% (Poshter 2015).

Therefore, even though the Koran has texts that clearly legitimize violence and there are Islamic groups that use them to do so, this does not justify the fear that all Syrian refugees of Islamic faith are potential terrorists. Believing this is ignoring the reality of thousands of Muslims around the world and even most of the Syrians, many of whom were forced to flee from the horrors committed by ISIS itself. Thus, in the face of the current humanitarian crisis of refugees, it is imperative to adopt measures aimed at effectively combating Islamic extremism, but without thereby generalizing and criminalizing all Muslims, which could happen if the reception of refugees is not seen as a threat, but as a way of maintaining national security.

Refugee protection as national security measure

Despite American resistance to the resettlement of Syrian refugees and fears of Muslim refugees, according to the Pew Research Center (2016), 2016 was the fiscal year in which the United States received more Muslim refugees since 2006 when a large number of Somalis entered the country. In all, of the approximately 85,000 refugees received, almost half of them (46%), 38,901, were Muslims. Of the total number of refugees, 12,486 were Syrians; 9,012 Somalis; 7,853 Iraqis; 3,145 Burmese; 2,664 Afghans; and 3,741 from other nationalities (Connor 2016; Homeland Security 2016).

Soon, President Obama not only succeeded in meeting his goal of set-
tling 10,000 Syrian refugees, but also exceeded it, receiving 12,587 people. Yet, according to Connor (2016), 99% of them were Muslims and less than 1% Christian. According to the author, this was due to the religious distribution of Syrian demography, which in 2010 was made up of 93% by Muslims and 5% by Christians (Connor 2016). However, other experts suggest that the real cause of this disproportionality is the fact that Syrians entering the United States as refugees come from UN-run camps in Jordan, where there are no Christians, who claim to suffer in the camps in the most varied forms of religious persecution, from rapes to kidnappings (Abrmas 2016). In response to this, as pointed out, the Executive Order signed by Trump on January 27, 2017 is clear: in addition to suspending the reception of Syrian refugees for the next 120 days, it also prioritizes religious minorities, among them Christians.

Trump’s actions further reinforce the hypothesis advocated here that terrorist attacks committed by Islamic radicals in the US directly contribute to the criminalization of Arabs and Muslims, especially those who fit into the refugee situation, such as the Syrians. This feeling, however, has been further exacerbated by the fact that jihadist organizations such as the ISIS currently control the main border crossing points on the migratory routes to Europe (Napoleoni 2016). In addition, according to reports from the Quilliam Foundation, a British think tank, ISIS has also been active in refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan, attempting to radicalize young people and unaccompanied minors to carry out terrorist attacks in Europe (Osborne 2017).

Therefore it is appropriate to reiterate once again the rigor and effectiveness of the current US refugee resettlement system, which makes Trump’s measure of excluding Syrian refugees for an indefinite period somewhat unnecessary and which, instead of ensuring national security, can cause more insecurity at the international level. This perception is supported by the reasoning that keeping a large number of Syrian refugees in camps in the Middle East, without infrastructure and without any support, helps to make more young people the target of ISIS jihadist propaganda and more refugees take the routes controlled by the group towards Europe, generating a revenue that may be higher than that obtained from the sale of oil by jihadists (Napoleoni 2016).

Moniz Bandeira (2017) also draws attention to this fact, noting that after the removal of Gaddaffi in 2011, ISIS penetrated into Libya and began to occupy extensive territories in the country, using refugee trafficking as a means to smuggle weapons for Syria, Iraq, Yemen and the Gaza Strip (Moniz Bandeira 2017). In addition, comparing refugees with terrorists is corroborating the ISIS narrative and facilitating its strategy.

It is therefore possible to infer that it can be applied to the USA, since
the country, together with Europe, are the biggest enemies of ISIS. Hence, receiving refugees and integrating them into society would be an effective counter-terrorist measure as this would compromise the jihadists’ narrative that war is necessary to create a place where Muslims will no longer be discriminated because of their faith.

For this to happen, however, American society must be made aware of the political, economic and cultural gains that refugees can bring, dismantling the image that every Arab and Muslim is a terrorist, when many are, in fact, as victims of terrorism as the US has already been.

The deconstruction of these prejudices, however, is not an exclusive task of US government and society, but also of the Arabs and Muslims themselves. For Memmi (2007), Muslim fundamentalists in their struggle against Western imperialism made use of terrorism as a form of resistance, generating distrust of all Arabs and more resentment against the West. However, it is up to the other Muslim Arabs to deconstruct these perceptions, not desiring to live in symbiosis with the West, while being indulgent to those who want to destroy it. In the words of the author, “[t] he normal and desirable destiny of every immigrant is to become a simple citizen, provided that he does not appear as an enemy of his host country” (Memmi, 2007, 181). It is up to Muslims, especially refugees resettled in the West, to condemn the actions of groups such as ISIS and seek to integrate into local customs. It is therefore necessary to dismantle in the West and the Middle East the notion of a violent and unavoidable clash of civilizations.

Finally, it would be of the utmost importance that President Trump rethink his refugee policy and continue the resettlement of Syrian refugees, increasing his quota in the coming fiscal years. According to the UNHCR (2017), six out of ten Syrians were forced to leave their homes, and today there are around 12.5 million Syrian IDPs among refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers (ACNUR 2017). As Arar, Hintz and Norman (2016) point out, although the media have lately focused on the situation of Syrian displaced people in Europe, the number of internally displaced Syrians and neighboring nations is much higher than on the European continent. By mid-2016, some 4.8 million Syrian refugees were living in neighboring Syria, with approximately four in 10 refugees residing in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt or Iraq (Arar, Hintz and Norman 2016). Less than one in ten Syrian refugees are in Europe today, and as has already been pointed out, only a little over 10,000 Syrians were resettled in the United States (Connor and Krogstad 2016).

Thus, by comparing US political and economic conditions with those countries and US strategic interests in the Middle East, it becomes imperative
that the United States act more effectively in the protection of refugees. This should occur not only because of national security, but above all because of human security. To act in this way is the best way to defuse Orientalism and, at the same time, avoid the “Clash of Civilizations”.

Beside South Africa, Ethiopia also set a promising legal precedent when it prosecuted its former President, Mengistu Haile Mariam, finding him guilty and sentencing him to death, albeit in absentia, ironically holed up somewhere in Zimbabwe. On a more positive note, the African Court of Justice and Human Rights sought to establish a Chamber with jurisdiction over persons who commit international crimes in Africa. Like the ICC, the African Court of Justice and Human Rights is a noble idea that can only be evaluated once it has been implemented. At the moment, hope of ending impunity in Africa remains with the ICC. However, the ICC needs to undergo a metamorphosis of some sort if it is to become more relevant and appealing, especially to victims of gross human rights violations in Africa.

Final Remarks

In the present article, it was sought to demonstrate that the Syrians fleeing the Syrian Civil War and the ISIS actions have a well-founded fear of persecution and are therefore conventional refugees. This could be verified by the US government itself, which despite its long screening process for receiving refugees, welcomed in 2016 more than 10,000 Syrians. The effectiveness of the US refugee program towards national security has been proven by the fact that to date no terrorist has been able to enter the country as a refugee.

Added to this, the fact that all terrorist attacks committed in the country, none was committed by a Syrian national. This runs counter to the Executive Order signed by President Trump in January 2017, which suspended the resettlement of Syrian refugees for an indefinite period. The justification for this, according to Trump, would be to prevent foreign terrorists from entering the country, in view of the September 11 attack. However, none of the 19 suspects were Syrian, being mostly from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, two US historical allies in the Middle East and with whom the Trump Administration has increasingly tightened relations, including granting a tourist visa to the citizens of those countries.

In addition, it has also been found that the Syrian refugees are today a very significant contingent of the large number of current displaced persons around the world. According to UNHCR, of the 65.6 million people forced
to leave their homes in 2016, 5.5 million of them were Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2017). This situation, as demonstrated throughout the work, requires the responsibility of the entire international community, especially the states party to the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees. This applies even to the United States, which, in addition to being one of the greatest powers in the contemporary international scene, is also part of the international refugee protection regime.

That said, the hypothesis raised at the beginning of the work shows that the US refusal to accept Syrian refugees is mainly due to traumas related to Arabs and Muslims, as well as national security concerns. Islamophobia in American society would therefore be a direct consequence of the increase in terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists. This was seen on the basis of analysis of secondary data on the perception of US society in relation to Syrian Muslims and refugees as well as on the part of the government which reinforces a non-existent causal link between protection of Syrian refugees and the increase in terrorist attacks.

It is also verified that the sacred book of Islam has violent passages that are used by terrorist groups like ISIS to justify their actions and that this, together with the attacks, in fact reverberates the idea of a clash of civilizations in American society. However, as it has been shown, generalizing about all Syrians on this basis alone is one of the premises of what Said calls Orientalism, although in this particular case it does not go so far as to attempt to colonize and exercise control over the Middle East, either by political and economic interests or simply out of fear of the unknown.

Therefore, it is concluded that it is imperative to debate these ideas. Syrian Muslims are one of the main victims of ISIS actions and therefore, receiving them in the US would be one way to combat the ideology propagated by the group. This could be done through a refugee policy that instead of prohibiting the entry of Syrians, strengthen the screening process and seek to integrate the Syrians into American society.

Such a policy would bring numerous benefits to both the West and the Middle East, ending centuries of conflict between the two regions of the world. For this deconstruction to occur, however, a mutual effort is needed both on the part of American society and the Muslim Arab refugees themselves. Just as Americans need to be able to see the Syrians first as individuals who, like them, are seeking stability and security, Syrian refugees need to continue to demonstrate their willingness to integrate into the host communities and to condemn terrorism.

In the long run, however, the facts do not appear to contribute to this, and the fear of terrorism tends to further strengthen the narrative of the clash.
of civilizations and opposition to the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the United States, especially after the administration of Donald Trump.

REFERENCES

 Abrams, Elliott. 2016. “The U.S. Bars Christian, Not Muslim, Refugees from Syria”. Newsweek. http://www.newsweek.com/us-bars-christian-not-muslim-refugees-syria-497494. Accessed on March 3, 2017.

 Alcorão Sagrado. Os Significados dos Versículos do Alcorão Sagrado. São Paulo, Conselho Superior dos Teólogos e Assuntos Islâmicos do Brasil.

 American Immigration Council. An Overview of U.S. Refugee Policy. 2015. Available from: http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/refugees-fact-sheet. Accessed on January 25, 2017.

 Andrade, George Bronzeado de. 2011. “Guerra Civil Síria e a condição dos refugiados: um antigo problema, ‘reinventado’ pela crueldade de um conflito marcado pela inação da comunidade internacional”. Revista de Estudos Internacionais 2 (2).

 Arar, Rawan, Lisel Hintz and Kelsey P. Norman. 2016. “The real refugee crisis is in the Middle East, not Europe”. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/05/14/the-real-refugee-crisis-is-in-the-middle-east-not-europe/?utm_term=.3e17b5597776. Accessed on April 06, 2018.

 Bauman, Stephan, Matthews Soerens and Issam Smeir. 2016. Seeking Refuge: On the Shores of the Global Refugee Crisis. Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2016. Kindle Edition.

 Brancoli, Fernando, and Carolina Grinsztajn. 2016. “Islã político e mitos de transnacionalidade: narrativas sobre a irmandade muçulmana no Egito e o Estado Islâmico”. In Religião e Relações Internacionais: dos debates teóricos ao papel do Cristianismo e do Islã, by Anna Carletti and Marcos Alan S.V. Ferreira. Curitiba: Juruá Editora.

 Carlier, Melissa. 2016. “Explaining Differences in the Canadian and American Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis”. Virginia Policy Review, 9(2), 56-74.

 CNN. Orlando shooting: 49 killed, shooter pledged ISIS allegiance. June 13, 2016. Available from: http://edition.cnn.com/2016/06/12/us/orlando-nightclub-shooting/. Accessed on January 25, 2017.

 CNN Library. September 11, 2001: Background and timeline of the attacks. Septem-
Islamic Terrorism and the US Policy for the Resettlement of Syrian Refugees

Connor, Phillip. 2016. “U.S. admits record number of Muslim refugees in 2016”. Pew Research Center. Available from: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/05/u-s-admits-record-number-of-muslim-refugees-in-2016/. Accessed on January 25, 2017.

Connor, Phillip, and Jens Manuel Krogstad. 2016. “Key facts about the world’s refugees”. Pew Research Center. Available from: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/05/key-facts-about-the-worlds-refugees/. Accessed on January 25, 2017.

Demant, Peter. 2004. O Mundo Muçulmano. São Paulo: Editora Contexto.

Desilver, D. 2015. “U.S. public seldom has welcomed refugees into country”. Pew Research Center. Available from: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/19/u-s-public-seldom-has-welcomed-refugees-into-country/. Accessed on January 25, 2017.

Dias, Tatiana Silva de Almeida. 2008. “O Choque de Civilizações na Política Internacional Contemporânea”. Course Completion Work (Specialization), Universidade de Brasília.

European University Institute. Syrian Refugees: a snapshot of the crisis – in the Middle East and Europe. Available from: http://syrianrefugees.eu/. Accessed on January 25, 2017.

Fantz, A., and B. Brumfield. Syrian Refugees not welcome in 31 U.S. states. November 29, 2015. Available from: http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/16/world/paris-attacks-syrian-refugees-backlash/. Accessed on January 25, 2017.

Guly, C. “Canada plans to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February”. November 24, 2015. Los Angeles Times. Available from: http://www.latimes.com/world/mexico-americas/la-fg-canada-refugees-20151124-story.html. Accessed on January 25, 2017.

Gutowski, Stephen. 2015. “There Have Been Six Successful Acts of Islamic Terrorism on American Soil Since 9/11”. The Washington Free Beacon. Available from: http://freebeacon.com/issues/there-have-been-six-successful-acts-of-islamic-terrorism-on-american-soil-since-911/. Accessed on July 04, 2017.

Hanafi, Sari. 2014. “Forced Migration in the Middle East and North Africa”. The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 444-55.
Homeland Security. 2016. Table 14. Refugee Arrivals By Region And Country Of Nationality: Fiscal Years 2014 To 2016. Available from: https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2016/table14. Accessed on May 15, 2018.

Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. “The Clash of Civilizations?”. Foreign Affairs 72, 3, 22-49.

______________________. 1997. O Choque de Civilizações e a Recomposição da Ordem Mundial. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva.

Kaleem, J. More than half of Americans have unfavorable view of Islam, poll finds. April 10, 2015. Available from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/10/americans-islam-poll_n_7036574.html. Accessed on January 25, 2017.

Lynch, Marc. 2016. The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and anarchy in the Middle East. New York: Public Affairs. Kindle Edition.

Magalhães, Patrícia Santos. 2016. “A União Europeia e a segurança humana – o caso dos refugiados sírios”. Master’s thesis, Universidade do Minho.

Mathias, Christopher. “There Have Been No Fatal Terror Attacks in The U.S. By Immigrants from the 7 Banned Muslim Countries”. HuffPost. January 28, 2017. Available from: http://www.huffpost.com/entry/no-terror-attacks-muslim-ban-7-countries-trump_us_588b5a1fe4b023oce61b4b93. Accessed on July 04, 2017.

Memmi, Albert. 2007. Retrato do Descolonizado Árabe - Muçulmano e de Alguns Outros. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira.

Mitchell, Chris. 2015. Destination Jerusalem. Forest Hills: C & L Publishing LLC. Kindle edition.

Moniz Bandeira, Luiz Alberto. 2017. A Desordem Mundial: o espectro da total dominação. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

Napoleoni, Loreta. 2016. Mercadores de Homens: como os jihadistas e o Estado Islâmico transformaram sequestros e o tráfico de refugiados em um negócio bilionário. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil.

Organização das Nações Unidas. Convenção Relativa ao Estatuto dos Refugiados, 1951. Available from: http://www.acnur.org/t3/fileadmin/Documents/portugues/BDL/Convencao_relativa_aa_Estatuto_dos_Refugiados.pdf?view=1. Accessed on May 06, 2015.

Osborne, Samuel. 2017. “ISIS pay human traffickers for refugee children in ‘desperate’ attempt to attract more recruits”. Independent. Available from: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-
refugee-children-pay-smugglers-human-traffickers-more-recruits-
islamic-state-iraq-syria-terror-a7565016.html. Accessed on May 03,
2017.

Pacífico, Andrea Pacheco. 2014. “Direitos Humanos e Migração”. In Fraterni-
dade em foco: um ponto de vista político, by Evangelina M. B. De Faria
and M. De Nazaré Zenaide (Org.). João Pessoa: Ideia, 109-38.

Pew Research Center. Mixed views of initial U.S. response to Europe’s migrant
crisis. September 29, 2015. Available from: http://www.people-press.
org/2015/09/29/mixed-views-of-initial-u-s-response-to-europes-mi-
grant-crisis/2/. Accessed on January 25, 2017.

Poushter, Jacob. 2015. “In nations with significant Muslim populations, much
disdain for ISIS”. Pew Research Center. Available from: http://www.pe-
wresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-mus-
lim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/. Accessed on January 25,
2017.

Said, E. W. 1990. Orientalismo: o Oriente como invenção do Ocidente. São Paulo:
Cia das Letras.

Smaili, Soraya S. 2015. “Migrantes, pós-colonialismo e fundamentalismo: en-
laces entre Oriente e Ocidente e a questão do Islã”. Psicologia USP 26,
2, 145-151.

Talev, Margaret. “Bloomberg Politics Poll: Most Americans Oppose Syrian
Refugee Resettlement”. Bloomberg Politics. November 18, 2015. Avail-
able from: https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2015-11-18/
bloomberg-poll-most-americans-oppose-syrian-refugee-resettlement.
Accessed on January 25, 2015.

UNHCR. 2016. Syria conflict at 5 years: the biggest refugee and displacement crisis
of our time demands a huge surge in solidarity. March 15, 2016. Avail-
able from: http://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/press/2016/3/56e6e3249/
syria-conflict-5-years-biggest-refugee-displacement-crisis-time-de-
mands.html. Accessed on July 4, 2017.

_____. 2017. Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016. Available at:
http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5943e8a34/glob-
al-trends-forced-displacement-2016.html. Accessed on July 04, 2017.

White House. Statement by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice on Syri-
an Refugee Admissions. August 29, 2016. Available from: https://
obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/08/29/state-
ment-national-security-advisor-susan-e-rice-syrian-refugee. Accessed
on July 04, 2017.

_____________. Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist
Entry into the United States. January 27, 2017. Available from: https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/27/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states. Accessed on March 03, 2017.

ABSTRACT
This article addresses the refusal of US policy, between 2016 and 2017, to resettle Syrian refugees from the Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011 and has forced millions of Syrians to migrate to neighboring countries or to the West. Thus, the hypothesis defended is that the terrorist attacks by Islamic radicals in the US contributed to the increase of prejudice and generalization regarding Arabs and Muslims and, therefore, the Syrian refugees would be conceived as probable threats to the national security. In order to verify this, we present a bibliographical review confirmed by some secondary descriptive data on the perception of the American society on the Syrian and Muslim refugees. The work of Said (1993) on Orientalism, as well as the writings of Huntington (1993, 1997) on the Clash of Civilizations, are used as theoretical reference. Finally, it is concluded that the US refusal to resettle Syrian refugees is mainly due to traumas related to Arabs and Muslims, as well as national security concerns, albeit unfounded.

KEYWORDS
Refugees, Syrian Civil War, Orientalism.

Received on May 24, 2018.
Approved on July 04, 2018.

Translated by Joana Soares Cordeiro Lopes