



Is It Reasonable to Resettle Refugees in America?

January 2016

The Syrian refugee crisis coinciding with America's Presidential Campaigns has brought the emotional debate over refugees into the political arenas of nearly every state and over the internet. Candidates and conservative journalists have placed fear of terrorism and radicalization in front of voters while liberals in this country and abroad use compassion and sympathy in an attempt to play the heartstrings of ordinarily big-hearted Americans. While Women of the World obviously believes in our capacity to serve refugees and ensure their benefit to society and has few barriers to the amazing stories of survival of our new refugee neighbors, we want to win both hearts and minds, to show that it is reasonable to resettle refugees in America.

One of the first forays into understanding if it is reasonable to resettle refugees in America was [Intelligence Squared's debate](#) on the subject of *Should the US let in 100,000 Syrian Refugees?* Intelligence Squared Debates are Oxford-style debates where two debaters argue for the motion and two debaters argue against the motion. In this case, Robert Ford (Sr. Fellow, Middle East Inst. & Fmr. U.S. Ambassador to Syria) and David Miliband (President & CEO, International Rescue Committee & Fmr. U.K. Foreign Secretary) argued for the motion while David Frum (Senior Editor, The Atlantic) and Jessica Vaughan (Dir. of Policy Studies, Center for Immigration Studies) argued against.

While there were still a great number of appeals to emotion in this debate, the team for the motion, especially David Miliband took on the difficult side of his argument, that it was reasonable to resettle refugees in America. He argued that "it's right thing to do, that it's a practical thing to do, and that it's a smart thing to do."

The Economic Benefits of Refugee Resettlement

It is the right thing to do, not only morally, but because of the benefit that refugees have brought to our country. Rationally it is unfair to cherry pick the few violent or the entrepreneurial geniuses in either the first or second generation but instead understand the trends of refugee resettlement in the bulk of the distribution. That analysis in a 2012 Cleveland, Ohio study of resettled refugees showed a [10-fold](#)

[economic benefit above the cost of refugee services](#) and a similar study in 2014 in Denmark also yielded positive economic benefit. Only Jordan netted an economic detriment from the local refugee camp structure where instead of putting individuals to work in local communities (by the numbers an impossible task), infrastructure like water was overwhelmed by large numerical increases. Women of the World is working on an innovative way to track these hard numbers for resettled refugees in Utah, a state where low unemployment makes job advancement even more difficult for workers with fewer native skills.

Efficient and Effective Refugee Service

Women of the World and other service providers are accountable to the second part of Mr. Miliband's argument, that it is practical to take in refugees. Communities across America have organizations across the public, private, non-profit, and religious spectrum that *give refuge* to the disenfranchised and poor. If there is a homelessness issue or high unemployment, a community will not be burdened beyond its means. In Utah, organizations like Mr. Miliband's [IRC](#) and the [Catholic Community Service](#) resettle refugees, organizations like Women of the World and numerous LDS institutions help to take care of basic needs, employment, and service in transition from resettlement to active citizenship. Organizations like the [Utah Health and Human Rights](#) further serve needs like PTSD therapy and the [Maliheh Clinic](#) serves basic physiological health issues.

Like all activities in the for-profit and non-profit sectors, refugee service must perform its business processes both efficiently and effectively, that is it must meet budgets and schedules (efficient) and achieve outcomes (effective). Successful non-profits produce results with the lowest possible overhead and have diverse funding sources to ensure continued success in challenging political or economic times. As the below quoted stat from Mr. Miliband shows, refugee service is certainly efficient...

The direct federal cost of services and benefits associated with resettling 100,000 refugees in this country — let me tell you what it is. It's 1.4 cents per American per day. That's the direct federal cost of services and benefits. It's true that that doesn't include health care costs or school costs. But nor does it include the taxes that Syrians pay when they work.

Hearts and Minds

Finally, Mr. Miliband argues that it is reasonable to resettle refugees in America because it the smart thing to do, a strategic globalization ploy to eliminate ISIS *marketing* that theirs is a campaign for Muslims against the anti-Muslim west. Accepting refugees begins to win the *hearts and minds* counterinsurgency campaign. This is a long-term play that, like building schools for girls in the Muslim world, will not make large gains in the near term, but is likely the only way to secure the peace.

While I feel this was a well-argued and ultimately successful debate on the side of both reason and emotion for the pro refugee resettlement team, it was not the best performance by the *against* side. The appeal to fear was far too great and their strongest argument, that refugee assistance is hyper-local and what works for Salt Lake City or Cleveland may not work for Atlanta or Phoenix was debated but the

figures that were given, Foodstamp assistance, was well-parried in the rebuttal round that showed that self-reliance was improving through time, a similar result to what Women of the World has seen.

THE U.S. SHOULD LET IN 100,000 SYRIAN REFUGEES

Next Debate

Previous Debate

DEBATE DETAILS

THE PANEL

RESULTS

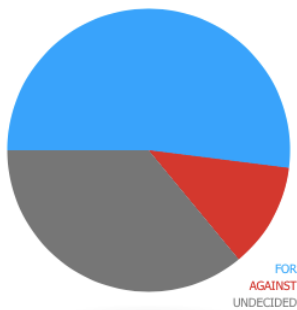
THE RESEARCH

VIDEO / AUDIO

DECLARED WINNER: FOR THE MOTION

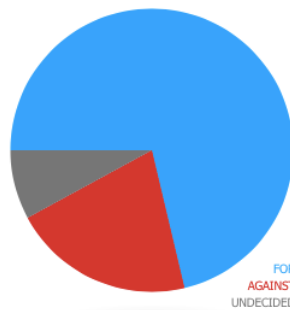
PRE-DEBATE POLL RESULTS

52% FOR | 12% AGAINST | 36% UNDECIDED



POST-DEBATE POLL RESULTS

72% FOR | 21% AGAINST | 8% UNDECIDED



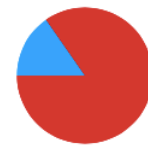
ONLINE VOTING

ONLINE VOTING RESULTS

15% FOR | 85% AGAINST

610 votes

3373 votes



WE RECEIVED YOUR VOTE.
THANK YOU!

[CHANGE YOUR VOTE](#)

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Arguing both the hearts and minds of this argument does not yield a clear victory. As the online poll and comments show a decided objection to resettling refugees in America. The opponents largely will forego the economic and counterinsurgency positive outcome effectiveness delivered efficiently in time and cost for a greater sense of security.

The world is being terrorized and fear and a desire for security are legitimate emotions or reactions. Our allies and the United States are taking military and diplomatic actions to address threats. The conversation that America needs to be having is where do we legitimately draw the line where our collective fear is going to cause us to act or not act, across all of the military, diplomatic, and humanitarian issues. Are the potential benefits and ethical upsides of humanitarian action reasonable to expect and *worth it* against the threat of the potential security losses? I am interested in having this conversation and believe that Americans are good neighbors, courageous, and in possession of the greatest ideal a country has ever been built upon. This is our American exceptionalism and the wellspring that will make America *continue to be great*.