

What We Know About the Hmong Refugee Crisis of Decades Past and how it Relates to the Current Syrian Refugee Crisis

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Abstract

This comparative case study links the current Syria crisis to the historical conflict in Laos during the early 1960s until the late 1970s. The Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) involvement with the Free Syrian Army and the Hmong tribesmen is discussed to fill the gap in literature to understand the importance of their paralleled relationship with the agency and how the United States of America uses the CIA to conceal their involvement in foreign wars. Content analysis using coverage from the New York Times, along with media coverage of Hmong refugees from 1975 to 1990 and of Syrian refugees from 2012 to 2015 will illustrate that major patterns in the Hmong case are similar to Syria's current refugee crisis. Both Hmong and Syrian refugees experienced chemical warfare from regimes backed by the Russian military. They encounter persecutions when crossing international borders and waterways causing increased civilian mortality. In both cases, regime violence targeted key United States allies and collaborators. This paper argues that the crisis of the two countries is significant to understanding the devastating impact that developed nations have in developing countries and how its national interest in foreign affairs can lead poor nations to destruction, thus causing a global refugee influx. Most of which is done through proxy wars by recruiting vulnerable local villagers, tribesmen, and rebels to fight. The study therefore concludes that the Hmong case could be a useful benchmark in determining the outcome of Syrian refugees.

Keywords: Hmong, Hmong refugee, Secret War in Laos, Syrian, Syrians, Syrian refugees, refugee resettlement, Syrian War, Syrian Crisis, CIA, Central Intelligence Agency, Operation Momentum, Operation Timber Sycamore, Laos, International Relations, Comparative Politics

³ For my grandfather, Curtis Kay Fang, who served as Captain to the CIA's Operation Momentum's Special Guerilla Unit (SGU) in Laos and to his soldiers. For my mother, Catherine, who sacrificed her education, so I can be educated in the USA as a First-Generation Hmong-American student. For my father, Sam, who delayed his education for my future. Lots of thanks to my peer mentor Tom Jamieson for all his support, patience, and advice in writing a peer-reviewed article.

Introduction

The purpose of this case study is to link the current Syrian crisis to the historical context of the conflict in Laos during the early 1960s. The Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) involvement with the Free Syrian Army and the Hmong tribesmen is discussed to fill the gap in literature to understand the importance of their paralleled relationship with the intelligence agency and how the United States of America (US) uses the CIA to conceal its involvement in foreign wars. Further, media analysis is studied to capture patterns between the Syrian refugees from 2011 to 2015 and the Hmong refugees from 1978 to 1988 in the New York Times archive. The analysis is based on the question, what comparisons does the national newspaper, The New York Times, capture between the Syrian refugees and Hmong refugees? This paper argues that the crisis of the two countries is significant to understanding the devastating impact that developed nations have in developing countries and how its national interest in foreign affairs can lead poor nations to destruction, thus causing a global refugee influx. Much of which is done through proxy wars. In addition, the Hmong case could be a useful benchmark in identifying the possible outcome for Syrian defectors and refugees since this study reveals that both the Hmong and Syrian refugees experienced chemical warfare from regimes backed by the Russian military. Both groups also encounter persecutions when crossing international borders and waterways. Overall, in both cases regime violence targeted key US allies and collaborators.

Literature Review

While studies have been published about the civil war in Syria, Syrian refugees, and Syrian defectors, not much research has connected the Syrian crisis to the conflict in Laos, the Hmong refugees, or the Hmong tribesmen. This area also calls for further research investigating the global refugee influx resulting from the influences of wealthy foreign nations. By conducting a

comparative study between the Hmong displacement during the post Vietnam War era and the current Syrian refugee displacement, this article will fill in the gap in understanding the devastating impact that developed nations have in developing countries and how their national interest in foreign affairs can lead poor nations to destruction.

The Syrian Crisis, Syrian Defectors and the Syrian Opposition Group's relationship with the CIA

Syria is a country divided by many actors acting according to their own interests. Nonetheless, Syrian emergency law continually remained intact for more than forty-five years. The Syrian Emergency Law of 1962 continued to give the government nearly unlimited authority to restrict individual freedoms and investigate and detain suspects when national security and public safety are deemed at risk (Hadid, 2009). This means that emergency law restricts “public gatherings and the free movement of individuals” (Abouzeid, 2011) and allows government to arrest suspected individuals or groups who threaten security. It also permits the state to monitor their citizens, their citizens' personal communications, and to implement media censorship. As a result of the censorship, humanitarian aid from foreign countries becomes difficult which coincidentally results in the oppression of human rights (Hadid, 2009).

After the Arab Spring, which was a pro-democracy movement that enveloped several large Muslim countries and spread across the Middle East in Spring 2011, Syria's presidential advisor, Buthaina Shaaban, told several journalists that the emergency law would be repealed (Hueller, 2017). During the Arab Spring, activists assembled in grassroot protests with the goal of increased democracy and cultural freedom. The revolt reflected a domino effect beginning in December 2010 with Tunisian vendor, Mohammed Bouazzi's, protest against the arbitrary seizing of his vegetable stand, after he failed to obtain a permit, where Bouazzi set himself on fire (Hueller,

2017). In Syria on the other hand, many Syrians were oppressed by high unemployment, corruption and a lack of political freedom under the emergency law and Assad's corruption (Hueller, 2017). Pro-democracy protests thus erupted in the southern city of Deraa, Syria in 2011, where people called for the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad. Assad's government then responded with deadly force and increased violence which escalated to a civil war.

During the civil war, the Syrian Opposition Group (SO) fought against ISIS to deter the threat ISIS posed to the people. The Free Syrian Army (FSA) was then formed in 2011 in response to the Syrian Armed Forces' violence against civilians (Hueller, 2017). Subsequently, former military officials defected from the army with the ulterior goal of bringing down al-Assad's government (Al-bahra, 2014). Moreover, considering the compactness of the the Middle East, many groups and countries are involved and have their own agendas in the area, which consequently makes the situation more complicated. However, President Assad's greatest support was Russia and Iran, so Russia launched an air campaign in 2015 supporting President Assad which has been crucial in supporting his regime (Al-bahra, 2014).

Meanwhile, other rebels have been backed by the US and Turkey, and since 2014 Western countries have also formed a global coalition to carry out airstrikes against ISIS militants Al-bahra, 2014). Additionally, national security impetus were implemented for the US to support and arm the SO to halt and defeat ISIS's campaign, which also substantiated the need for airstrikes in Syria to strike at the heart of ISIS. To defeat them, the Syrian Opposition Group and the Free Syrian Army needed US support, thus the two groups also became allies (Al-bahra, 2014). But, ISIS is a major threat because "ISIS is trying to aid the advances by pushing deeper into areas in the north that were liberated during the revolution against the regime" (Al-bahra, 2014, p. 13) and poses a direct threat to SO and US interest. As such, President Barack Obama proposed an investment of

\$500,000,000 for military training and equipment for FSA and SO to defend homes, towns, and villages from air bombardment and military assault (Al-bahra, 2014, p. 13). The secret CIA operation Timber Sycamore then launched in 2013 to provide training, salaries, and weaponry to “vetted” rebels waging war on Assad and ISIS (Hueller, 2017). The program was intended to build a moderate rebel force that could apply serious military pressure on the regime, and force Assad to step aside as part of the political negotiation process (Hueller, 2017). Coincidentally, this also concurs with America’s interest.

After President Donald Trump’s election, he ordered the termination of an American covert program to arm and train Syrian rebels, mainly the FSA, who were fighting against the Assad regime (Hueller, 2017). It is believed that President Trump’s decision is related to an interest in working collaboratively in Syria with President Vladimir Putin, as such this changed US interests in Syria (Hueller, 2017). Although, Hueller (2017) argues that, “These factions likely have enough cash and weapons stores to go for a few months, but not much longer. There is a possibility that these rebel groups may migrate to jihadist’s support” (para. 27). Another issue arising is the removal of the CIA funded program for the FSA because there is a fear that the US’ absence in Syria will motivate some actors to act destructively.

The Secret War in Laos and the Hmong tribesmen’s relationship with the CIA

In the next case study, Post-World War II China built an alliance with Russia with the goal of conquering Asia and Southeast Asia. Subsequently, Laos was established as an independent and neutral state according to the 1954 Geneva Agreement. This occurred, according to Vang (2014), “On July 23, 1962 through a formal Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos... signed in Geneva... that provided for a coalition government and the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country by October 7, 1962” (Vang, 2014, p.1). However, it became apparent that the North Vietnam Army

(NVA) had not left Laos, but instead expanded within the territory of Laos. So, it became clear that Communist Soviet Union did not follow their signatory part as the US (Vang, 2014).

To keep the US from violating the 1954 Geneva Accord that required the Royal Lao Monarchy to remain neutral and to prevent foreign governments from intervening, CIA officials sought assistance from the Royal Lao Army (RLA) official Vang Pao. So they funded Vang and his troops through the CIA's Special Guerilla Unit of the RLA, the Hmong. This initiative served the interest of the United States in preventing the Communist regime from infiltrating Laos (Pao & Lair, 2010).

Pao Vue (2015) mentions that the Hmong were first recruited in the early 1960s by the CIA as a guerilla unit to fight against the Pathet Lao Army (PLA) and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) to stop the communist regime from spreading. Then Vang Pao became the general for the Operation Momentum campaign with his forces armed, pay-rolled, and tasked by the US to defend their land. Through the CIA and the American Airforce, the US "provided training, money, and logistical support in a covert operation against the PLA" (Vang, 2014, p. 1) and its ally the NVA, thus resulting in a Secret War in Laos. From 1961 to 1973, the Hmong served under RLA and its Special Guerilla Unit (SGU), but were directly supported by the CIA. Due to the alliance between the US and the Hmong, there was an implicit agreement that the Hmong could resettle in the US if the Vietnam War went badly for the Hmong people (Waters, 1990).

However, after the peace treaty agreement between the US and the Pathet Lao, "the US withdrew all funding to the Royal Lao Monarchy and the RLA, of which the SGU had been a subset, and left the region ...and its allies entirely on their own to defend for themselves" (Vang, 2014, p. 1). The American military evacuated on May 14, 1975 since a day prior communists took over Vietnam, and since the Communist PLA took over American territory. Furthermore, the PLA

arrested the remainder of the RLA and the SGU's high-ranking officials. The King and Queen of Laos were also sent to re-education camps (Pao & Lair, 2010). The Hmong who sided with the US and CIA were later branded as traitors, singled out for retaliation, and faced violence from the new communist government (Vue, 2015). Consequently, many people fled to Thailand for refuge.

A small number of soldiers from the losing side along with neutralists launched armed resistance against the newly formed Communist Pathet Lao country in 1975. The groups hid in jungles, and today the predominantly Hmong groups in jungles are either descendants or the remaining members of these factions. Starved and barely surviving, they no longer appear to be a threat to the government, but these destitute Hmong are still evading military persecution in the Laotian jungle. The Pathet Lao military continuously utilizes violence through rape, hunger, and massacre as a weapon against them ("Destitute Hmong Still Running", 2007).

The Global Refugee Influx

After the Vietnam War, an influx of refugees and migrants sought refuge along the Thai border by the Mekong River where some refugee camps had been created. One of these groups was the Hmong tribesmen and their family members who became primary targets of persecution and massacre escaping the communist regime.

Thirty years after the Vietnam War, another global refugee influx emerged from Syria to neighboring refugee camps. Syrian refugees also face similar obstacles now that their Hmong counterparts did. Even more so with President Trump's recent order to eliminate the CIA's program to fund the FSA and other SOs, it becomes clearer that Syrian defectors face the same trials as the Hmong tribesmen. Moreover, like the Hmong, Syrian refugees face persecution when they attempt to cross international waters and land borders, and have even been attacked via chemical warfare by a Russian supported military.

Defining a Refugee

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention defines a refugee as a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fears” is unwilling to return (The Editors, 2016, para. 9). The UNHCR is in charge of providing relief to dislocated people, and thus classifies and protects them from refoulment and deportation to their countries of origin. Dawn Chatty (2010) states that the ‘conventional refugee’ is granted asylum meanwhile others who are found to be ‘economic migrants’ within the determination process are excluded from entry to Western states and sent back to their countries (Chatty, 2010). Therefore, refugee camps are created as a state of emergency and perceived as exceptional temporary measures to be taken before normalcy is restored. Turner (2010) describes the refugee camp as “an exceptional space that is put in place to deal with populations that disturb the national order of things” (p.139). A preferred means of containing people displaced by violence, war, or natural disaster, are camps established by a host state, NGOs, or UN agencies. Refugees are individuals displaced due to chaos and disasters that have been labelled as emergency measures because of exceptional, temporary, and often grey zone situations.

When investigating what really motivates peoples’ decisions to migrate or to stay in their home countries during situations of political violence and war, it is clear that their decisions rely heavily on consulting family and other close-knit communities. They then base these decisions on rational choices while evaluating their available options (Chatty, 2010). Even so, Hmong refugees were placed in Thai refugee camps where the UNHCR, humanitarian organizations, and faith-based organizations classified them as refugees. This categorization had been automatic because

of the Laotian Pathet Lao Party's motive to exterminate the Hmong tribespeople who had sided with the US during the Vietnam War. Due to the policy change after the Indochina crisis, categorizing displaced persons as refugees has become the responsibility of the UNHCR. Thus, Syrian refugees have been categorized by the UNHCR. Amy Slaughter found that "leading up to the mid-1990s, resettlement was actively driven by a few resettlement countries for mixed humanitarian and foreign policy motives" (Slaughter, 2017, p. 32). Prior to the mid-1990s, NGOs worked closely with governments and were responsible for the bulk of refugee identifications and referrals. Before that, states had handled receiving refugees on their own with little involvement from the UNHCR. The shift towards the UNHCR's greater involvement in resettlement came in the mid-1990s following the Cold War (Slaughter, 2017). During and post-Vietnam War/Indochina crisis, the UNHCR's primary role was acting as a broker for receiving countries (Slaughter, 2017). In particular, the US changed its policy in 1995 to give priority to the UNHCR's referrals as opposed to their earlier process where a list of specific groups of refugees of a concern to the US could apply directly through an American NGO (Slaughter, 2017).

In the past, faith-based organizations and other humanitarian organizations had also been the first points of contact for refugees seeking asylum. However, due to the influx of economic migrants during the Indochina refugee crisis, a new system was created. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was instilled to refer the most vulnerable refugees to receiving nations. Additionally, a new comprehensive plan was put in place to differentiate between economic migrants and refugees in 1989, known as the Refugee Status Determination (RSD). Since then, the US has only considered refugees referred by the UNHCR.

From the mid-1970s until the mid-1990s, refugee flows played an important role in Indochina. Thailand was one of the main countries to first provide asylum to refugees from Cambodia,

Laos, and Vietnam. Thai refugee camps then exhausted their capacity to integrate refugees and suffered from overcrowded camps. But by the end of the 1980s, it became clear that the influx of refugee camps was primarily occupied by economic migrants seeking asylum to Western countries because of an attraction to the quasi-automatic resettlement that included government benefits.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has been the only international aid organization working on all fronts of the crisis through emergency relief and long-term support such as healthcare, protection of vulnerable groups like women and children, education, and economic recovery and development since the mid-1990s. Within the US, there are twenty-eight offices across the country for resettlement that provide “immediate aid to refugees, including food and shelter, as well as access to the tools of self-reliance: housing, job placement and employment skills, clothing, medical attention, education, English-language classes and community orientation” (Rescue.org, 2017, How the U.S. refugee vetting and resettlement process really works, para. 3). Although refugee status is determined by the UNHCR, the US accepts a limited quota of refugees per year.

While the Obama administration agreed to resettle 111,000 refugees, the current Trump administration has decided to resettle 45,000 refugees which is approximately half the former number of refugees (Rescue.org, 2017, How the U.S. refugee vetting and resettlement process really works, & Rescue.org, 2017, What is the travel ban? What does it mean for refugees?). The IRC has been working through legal complications under the order of President Trump’s refugee ban and slash refugee admissions in half (“How the U.S. Refugee Vetting”, 2018), yet the IRC stresses that the American resettlement system is the strongest in the world.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A comparative case study was the research method used to analyze data between the Hmong and Syrian refugees. Content was extracted from the Historical New York Times Archival online domain about both Hmong refugees and Syrian refugees to note similarities in both cases. Content analysis were then based on the following question: what comparisons does the national newspaper, The New York Times (NYT), capture between the Syrian refugees and Hmong refugees? The characteristics used to compare the two groups involved crossing land borders, crossing waterways, chemical warfare, and being attacked with violence from the military supported by the Soviet Union and Russia. These characteristics illustrate how US-supported defectors and mercenary arms are targets of mortality by Soviet, and now Russian, supported nations. Additionally, this demonstrates how the US identifies certain refugee groups as most vulnerable in comparison to other groups and how it affects refugee resettlement to the US. The scope of the data collected is limited by the years used to narrow the research. The Hmong case was investigated from 1970 to 1987. This totaled to 17 years after the Laos Secret War crisis of refugees escaping to Thai refugee camps. The Syrian case is limited to only four years from 2012 to 2015. The limited data available on the Syrian refugee crisis is due to the ongoing status of their refugee crisis. It began in 2012, and data is available up to 2015 when the case was investigated. By contrast, there is much more information through studies of the Hmong refugee crisis due to it occurring over 35 years ago, and for a much longer time period. The scope of the study is limited to NYT journalist's practices more than the crises itself since content analysis is from articles written for the NYT.

The Hmong case was studied first, so the years used to analyze Hmong refugees were between 1970 and 1987 with a search of the keyword Hmong refugees, in the singular and without

quotes to maximize results. The years used to analyze Syrian refugees were between 2012 and 2015 with the keyword Syrian refugees in the singular, and without quotes, to maximize results. Due to how recent the Syrian civil war is, the scope was limited to four years compared to the post-Vietnam War chaos which was a decade ago. Sources for both the Hmong and Syrian refugees were examined in chronological order and then catalogued.

Cataloguing was done by summarizing the depiction of Hmong and Syrian refugees within the articles. Other measures included US allies of Hmong tribesmen and Syrian refugees or defectors targeted by violence from Russian allies like the Pathet Lao Army and Syrian armed forces. As such, regarding the Hmong case, the Pathet Lao Republic and Communist Vietnamese military were backed by the Soviet Union. In Syria's case, the Assad regime is heavily and publicly reliant on Russia's support. Therefore, Syria's case is investigated slightly differently from the Hmong case because the defectors are officials and members who were formerly soldiers or military members of Assad's armed forces but later defected and became a part of troops supported by the United States such as the Free Syrian Army. To investigate how deeply involved the Soviet Union and Russia were in both cases, the terms Soviet and Russia were also recorded in chronological order by year.

In addition, a list of chemical agents was organized in chronological order by year to examine similarities between both cases. To establish patterns between the Hmong and Syrian refugees, findings were input onto a spreadsheet. Data from the spreadsheet was then analyzed to determine how the Hmong and Syrian cases compared. This will provide a quantitative measure for the two cases.

Last, to identify whether there is a difference in the way refugees are portrayed in the two crises, content was analyzed in coded articles by searching the terms persecute, persecuted,

persecution, victim, victimized, massacre, massacred, attack, US, United States ally, and allies.

The significance of this is to see how each group was sympathized in national articles.

Research Findings

Based on findings about the Hmong and Syrian refugees, both groups faced chemical warfare and genocide at the hands of Russian allied regimes. They also encountered obstacles when crossing international border and waterways, and these obstacles increased the mortality of civilians. In both cases, regime violence targeted key American allies and collaborators. The total number of articles analyzed for both groups is 80 with the Hmong case of 44 articles coded and 36 articles coded for the Syrian case. Chemical weapons and chemical warfare are mentioned in the Hmong case a total of 23 times where the word or words “chemical weapons” or “chemical warfare” were mentioned from 1978 to 1987 (See table 1). A total of 6 times “chemical weapons” or “chemical warfare” were mentioned for Syrian refugees between the years of 2012 and 2015 (See table 2).

Table 1: Hmong Chemical Warfare		Table 2: Syrian Chemical Warfare	
Year	Number of Times	Year	Number of Times
1978	1	2012	0
1979	4	2013	4
1980	4	2014	1
1981	1	2015	1
1982	5	Total	6
1983	3		
1984	2		
1985	1		
1986	1		
1987	1		
Total	23		

Crossing international borders was in the two subfields land border crossing and water border crossing. For land crossing, Hmong crossing totaled 13 times where “border + land” was

mentioned between 1978 and 1987 (See table 3). Syrian refugees crossing land border totaled at 22 from 2012 to 2015 (See table 4). In water border crossing, Hmong refugees mentioned “border + water” crossing a total of 7 times between 1978 to 1987 (See table 5). Syrian refugees were mentioned a total of 22 times from 2012 to 2015 (See table 6).

Table 3: Hmong Land Crossing		Table 4: Syrian Land Crossing	
Year	Number of Times	Year	Number of Times
1978	1	2012	12
1979	1	2013	2
1980	1	2014	5
1981	0	2015	3
1982	1	Total	22
1983	0		
1984	3		
1985	2		
1986	0		
1987	4		
Total	13		

Table 5: Hmong Water Crossing		Table 6: Syrian Water Crossing	
Year	Number of Times	Year	Number of Times
1978	1	2012	12
1979	1	2013	2
1980	1	2014	5
1981	0	2015	3
1982	0	Total	22
1983	0		
1984	2		
1985	2		
1986	0		
1987	0		
Total	7		

Hmong US allies targeted with violence was mentioned 25 times between the years of 1978 and 1987 (See table 7). Syrian refugees and defectors targeted with violence due to defecting or

allying with the US was mentioned 11 times (See table 8). The total number of times the Soviet Union or Russia were mentioned within the Hmong case was 11, with 6 times for the Syrian case (See table 9). Articles concerning Hmong refugees mentioned land mines once in 1982, and articles concerning Syrian refugees mentioned land mines a total of 6 times with 2013 being the greatest year Syrian refugees came across land mines.

Table 7: Hmong US Allies Targeted w/ Violence		Table 8: Syrian US Allies Targeted w/ Violence	
Year	Number of Times	Year	Number of Times
1978	1	2012	8
1979	5	2013	1
1980	5	2014	2
1981	0	2015	0
1982	3	Total	11
1983	1		
1984	3		
1985	0		
1986	2		
1987	5		
Total	25		

The Hmong refugees were attacked with approximately 16 different chemical and biological agents. Meanwhile, Syrian refugees were struck by approximately 6 different types of chemical or biological agents. Within both cases, nerve agents, chlorine, and mustard gas were used. This illustrates the high use of illegal chemical and biological agents that has thus contributed to an increased mortality rate.

Table 9: Number of Times Soviet Union or Russia mentioned			
Hmong Refugees		Syrian Refugees	
Year	Number of Times	Year	Number of Times
1978	0	2012	0
1979	2	2013	4
1980	3	2014	1
1981	0	2015	1
1982	4	Total	6
1983	1		
1984	0		
1985	1		
1986	0		
1987	0		
Total	11		

Lastly, a deeper investigation into the differences of how refugees are portrayed between the two cases were examined. It appears that the United States showed greater sympathy towards the Hmong refugees versus Syrian refugees (See table 10). For the Hmong case, persecute, persecuted, or persecution were mentioned 4 times in coded articles, while victim or victimized were mentioned 11 times, and massacre or massacred were mentioned twice. Furthermore, attack was mentioned 23 times and US or United States ally was mentioned once. In the Syrian case, persecute, persecuted, or persecution and US or United States ally were not mentioned in coded articles. But victim or victimized was mentioned 3 times and attack was mentioned 23 times.

Table 10: How Hmong and Syrian Refugees were portrayed in Articles			
Hmong Refugees		Syrian Refugees	
Persecute/persecuted	4	Persecute/persecuted	0
Victim/victimized	11	Victim/victimized	3
Massacre	2	Massacre	1
Attack	23	Attack	8
US/United States Ally	1	US/ United States Ally	0
Total	41	Total	12

Discussion

This study found that major patterns in the Hmong case are similar to Syria's current crisis. This is because the refugees studied faced similar experiences when crossing international borders, crossing waterways, and when confronted with violence from militias supported by the Soviet Union and Russia. Further, the case of the Hmong tribesmen's relationship to the US is parallel with Free Syrian Army's relationship with the US. Both groups were funded by the US in a covert operation through the CIA to interrupt the interest of the Soviet Union and Russia, and to support US interests. The FSA are former military officials and former members who defected from Assad's Syrian Armed Forces and waged combat against government forces and ISIS militants. Vang's Operation Momentum Army remain members of the Royal Lao Army and serve as a subset of the SGU. Likewise, the Hmong tribesmen remained loyal to their Royal Lao monarch in the post-Vietnam War period. However, the Hmong tribesmen did not defect, but instead fought to defeat Communism from entering the independent Laotian state. The Pathet Lao Army is like ISIS, in that its motive is to gain governance of a weak ruling state. Nonetheless, the Hmong and the Syrian cases lost US and CIA support after US interest towards the war changed. During the Vietnam War, Hmong refugees were portrayed as vulnerable, under attack, and allies to the US. Journalists depicted Hmong refugees as a group of great concern regarding receiving asylum to the US. State officials met continuously in the 1980s to resolve the issue of Hmong tribesmen being massacred when crossing the Mekong River. The Hmong people, like the Syrian refugees did not pose a threat to the US.

Moreover, this study found that while Hmong refugees and Syrian refugees face the same persecutions when escaping violence and war, US collaborators are hit hardest with violence and persecution due to the opposing militias' relationship with Russia. Syria and PLA are backed by

Russia and the Soviet Union. Consequently, mercenary arms funded by the US are at a loss to begin with due to the impediment of US's unreliable continuous support for mercenaries.

Additionally, Hmong refugees remained in refugee camps for approximately thirty years since the fall of Saigon and Vientiane, the capital of Laos. Given the continuous flow of refugees from Syria to neighboring countries and Europe, the refugee camps put in place for Syrian refugees may remain quasi-permanent like the refugee camps in Thailand. Further research about refugee camps alongside Syria and its refugees' relationship with the US will assist with immigration policy internationally and nationally. The US had a strong relationship with the Hmong tribesmen. Media sources demonstrate US officials' motivation to assist the Hmong tribesmen from persecution. The great length of measures taken by US legislators and experts illustrates that Hmong refugees are a group of great concern to America and so are highly considered for Asylum.

As for Syrian refugees, the intensified ISIS terrorist attacks throughout Europe and Syria have greatly affected the view of middle eastern refugees. The fear of another terrorist attack infiltrating the US has prevented Syrian refugee from being on the list of concerned groups to be considered for asylum in America. Even more, considering President Trump's decision to reduce the number of refugees in 2018 (Rescue.org, n.d.). As such, the concern for Syrian refugees has deflected due to a fear of refugees in America.

With the continuous fear of Syrian refugees resettling in the US, understanding the Hmong tribesmen and Syrian defectors' relationship with the CIA will help identify possible outcomes for Syrian refugees. In the past, the CIA safeguarded the US from intervening in the war in Laos by arming the Hmong people to do the fighting. Recently, the CIA has done the same in Syria by providing funds to the FSA and other SOs. The Hmong people were eventually left to fight for themselves after the US withdrew in 1975. Similarly, the FSA and other SOs are affected by

President Trump's 2017 decision to withdraw the CIA's secret programs (Hueller, 2017). The correlation between the two cases illustrates the purpose of the CIA's secret programs to safeguard the US from entering a conventional war by funding mercenary arms as a safety measure from political conflict in international affairs. It also reveals that mercenary arms have worked in the past with the intention of setting refugee camps along its neighboring countries as a means of escaping US funded militia groups. Connecting the two cases will allow officials to determine ways in which to provide alternative aid for US supported mercenary arms following CIA withdrawal in foreign wars.

Conclusion

Given the drastic change in the refugee identification and resettlement process, the Secret War in Laos is a good predictor for the current Syria's crisis. The crises of the two countries is significant in understanding the devastating impact that developed nations such as the US, the Soviet Union, and Russia have in developing countries and how their national interest in foreign affairs can lead a poor nation to crumbling chaos and destitution. Much of which is done through proxy wars between the US fighting against the Soviet Union and Russia thus creating a great influx of refugees dislocated within these regions. The Secret War in Laos was America's response to the fear of Russian communists' domino effect in Southeast Asia. Despite the 1954 Geneva Accord for the newly established neutral agreement in Laos, the PLA and the NVA continued to fight for a communist regime. In contrary, Syria has been under extreme oppression by its current Assad government identified as restricting the human rights of its people and censoring communication with the outside world. Nevertheless, the Arab Spring's pro-democratic domino effect led to a civil war in Syria.

Further, the US continues to project a neutral appearance to the public press as not involved in Syria's conflict. However, the US covertly support militants targeted by Russian support troops such as the FSA and SO through CIA's secret programs. The CIA pay-rolled, trained, and provided logistic supplies to the militants. Similarly, it happened in Laos during the early 1960s where the US covertly fought the Soviet Union through the CIA's secret program that had Hmong tribesmen doing the fighting. While the FSA and SO want to bring down President al-Assad in the current Syria crisis, the Hmong tribesmen fought to protect their former Royal Lao Monarchy during the Secret War in Laos. Regardless, the US' intentions remained the same. After signing a peace treaty between the US and Pathet Lao Communist party, the US withdrew its support and left the Hmong tribesmen to seek refuge in Thai refugee camps. Recently, President Trump's decision to shut down the CIA's secret programs in Syria in order to make amends with President Putin left the FSA and SO to seek refuge in neighboring refugee camps or continue fighting aligning with Syrian rebel groups. After the Secret War in Laos, a faction of soldiers and neutralists launched armed resistance in the northern jungles of Laos. Today, they are still resisting the Communist Pathet Lao regime and continue to face persecution. As for the FSA and SO, it is believed that the FSA have joined the jihadist faction. A destitution creating displaced refugees and migrants. Nonetheless, both refugee groups experienced similar persecutions from military backed by Russia.

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