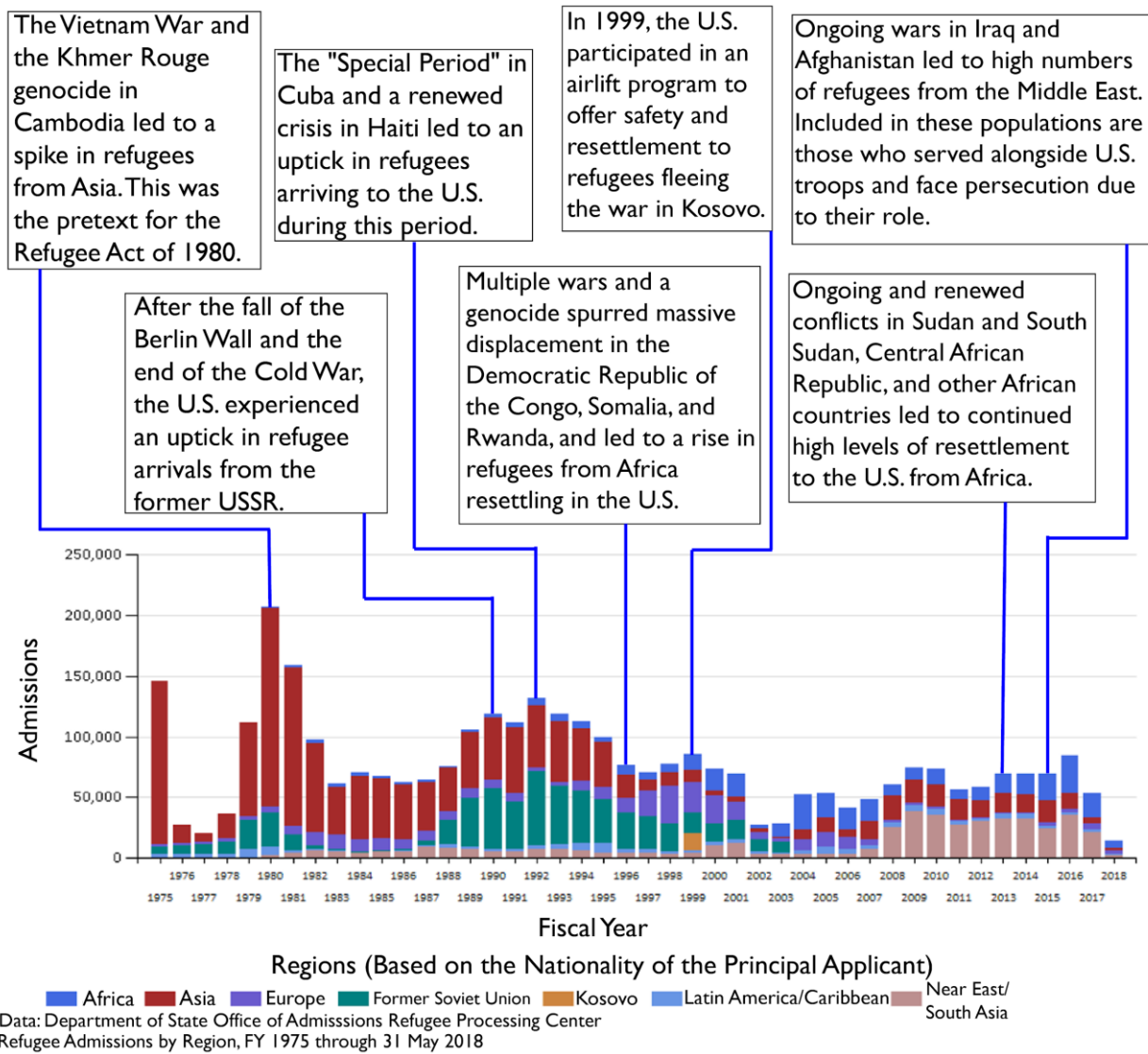


## Migration, Displacement and US Response Through History

**Background:** Throughout history, armed conflict, environmental crises and other catastrophic events have caused massive displacement around the world. While there have been ebbs and flows as situations resolve or worsen, migration in pursuit of safety remains a constant phenomenon. Over time, the United States has continuously offered protection to those seeking refuge through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. Regardless of geopolitics or domestic politics, the U.S. has continuously exhibited a faithful and steady bipartisan commitment to the full implementation of the 1980 Refugee Act which helped to construct the USRAP network of agencies across the country who provide structured support to help refugees fully integrate into their new communities and find success. Due to the cyclical nature of migration and the events that trigger displacement, through both Republican and Democratic Presidential Administrations, the U.S. has developed and maintained a baseline capacity to respond to emergencies as they arise. While not an exhaustive list, below are examples of a few major events over the past century which have driven massive waves of migration, and how the United States has responded to preserve America's legacy of welcome.

## Historic Bipartisan Commitment to Refugee Resettlement in Response to Global Need



The Vietnam War and the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia led to a spike in refugees from Asia. This was the pretext for the Refugee Act of 1980.

The "Special Period" in Cuba and a renewed crisis in Haiti led to an uptick in refugees arriving to the U.S. during this period.

In 1999, the U.S. participated in an airlift program to offer safety and resettlement to refugees fleeing the war in Kosovo.

Ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan led to high numbers of refugees from the Middle East. Included in these populations are those who served alongside U.S. troops and face persecution due to their role.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, the U.S. experienced an uptick in refugee arrivals from the former USSR.

Multiple wars and a genocide spurred massive displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and Rwanda, and led to a rise in refugees from Africa resettling in the U.S.

Ongoing and renewed conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan, Central African Republic, and other African countries led to continued high levels of resettlement to the U.S. from Africa.

## Migration, Displacement and US Response Through History

**1945 - World War II** : When World War II ended in May 1945, more than 60 million persons were displaced worldwide.<sup>1</sup> In 1948, Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act, authorizing 200,000 displaced persons to enter the United States without being counted against the immigration quotas. Between 1945 and 1952, more than 80,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors immigrated to the United States under the terms of the **Displaced Persons Act of 1948**, many with the aid of Jewish relief organizations.<sup>2</sup>

**1975 - Vietnam War** : Large-scale Vietnamese migration to the United States started as an influx of refugees following the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Early refugees were part of a U.S.-sponsored evacuation and consisted mainly of military personnel and urban, well-educated professionals associated with the U.S. military or the South Vietnamese government.<sup>3</sup> President Gerald Ford signed the **Indochina Migration and Refugee Act of 1975**, which granted Vietnamese refugees special status to enter the country and established a domestic resettlement program.<sup>4</sup>

**1980 - 1992 Cuban "Special Period"** : The "Mariel Boatlift" of April-October 1980 saw 125,000 Cuban refugees being admitted to the United States, as well as a subsequent continued openness to Cubans refugees being admitted over a period spanning both the Carter and Reagan presidencies. In 1986, the **Cuban-Haitian Entrant Program (CHEP)** was created and provides reception and resettlement services to newly arriving Cuban and Haitian Entrants (Cubans and Haitians paroled into the US by immigration authorities).<sup>5</sup>

**1980 - Refugee Act**: This bipartisan legislation passed unanimously and marked the creation of the federal U.S Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).<sup>6</sup> Notable bill text: "*Congress declares that it is the historic policy of the United States to respond to the urgent needs of persons subject to persecution in their homelands, including [...] efforts to promote opportunities for resettlement or voluntary repatriation, aid for [...] admission to this country of refugees of special humanitarian concern to the United States.*"

**1990s - Refugees in Africa and Eastern Europe**: Conflicts in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the Former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda were all displacement-producing crises that saw a robust response from the international community. The resettlement of refugees from those regions (namely Africa and Eastern Europe) to the United States in the 1990s **increased steadily**.<sup>7</sup> Many of these wars flared up again in the 2010s, as well as conflict in the Central African Republic, and resettlement of refugees from these regions rises again correspondingly.<sup>8</sup> After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, **the U.S. admitted an increased number of refugees** from the region fleeing political persecution, and in 1999, the United States participated in an airlift operation to resettle refugees from Kosovo.

**Early 2000s - Afghanistan and Iraq**: The ongoing wars and terror in both Afghanistan and Iraq have driven significant displacement. Afghan and Iraqi allies who have served alongside U.S. troops, diplomats, and other government employees in those conflicts have regrettably become the targets threats, abductions, and assassinations for these relationships. Since 2006, Congress has enacted a series of legislative provisions including the **bipartisan Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act of 2008**, creating two pathways to resettle these individuals in the United States: the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program, and direct access (P2) program to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).<sup>9</sup> These provisions make Iraqis and Afghans who have served alongside U.S. missions eligible for relocation to the United States.<sup>10</sup>

**2008 and onward - Arab Spring**: During a wave of protests throughout the region, the unrest in Syria escalated to one of the deadliest and most destructive civil wars in recent history, and the U.N. estimates that more than 6 million Syrians have fled the country, while another 10 million have been internally displaced. The collapse of the Libyan state has also produced a wave of Libyan refugees, while migrants from sub-Saharan Africa continue to transit through Libya and depart from there and other parts of the North African littoral en route to Europe. The war in Yemen has also produced massive internal displacement, even if a naval and land blockade has prevented most from fleeing the country.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://graphics.wsj.com/migrant-crisis-a-history-of-displacement/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007094>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/vietnamese-immigrants-united-states>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ilw.com/articles/2006\\_0313-campi.shtm](https://www.ilw.com/articles/2006_0313-campi.shtm)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/migrants-refugees-and-travelers/cuban-refugees/programs-for-cubans-and-haitians.cfm>

<sup>6</sup> [https://archive.org/stream/refugeeactof198000unit\\_0/refugeeactof198000unit\\_0\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/refugeeactof198000unit_0/refugeeactof198000unit_0_djvu.txt)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>

<sup>8</sup> Idem

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/P2-SIV-Iraqis-Factsheet.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/library/P8979.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/03/29/refugees-and-displacement-in-middle-east-pub-68479>