

previously limited experience. New communications technology helps modernize their outlook. Radio, television and the cinema convey images of life in richer countries and among richer people in their own communities. Visions of lifestyles abroad may be distorted, but they are perceived as real by potential migrants. These factors, combined with improved levels of education and work experience in the "modern" sector of economies, offer the possibility of better opportunities abroad. Transportation, at home and to other countries, is now widely available and relatively inexpensive.

Migrants are not merely workers, they are people.

But perceptions of different lifestyles and inequalities among and within countries do not fully explain the intensity of migratory flows. Migration is triggered not only by internal developments, but often by political relationships between nations. What begins as an economic expedient, such as labor recruitment, evolves into a social process. In the case of Mexico, workers from across the border played an important part in the economic development of the U.S. Southwest during periods of free labor flows. They worked in mines and agricultural fields and helped lay railroad lines. During the two World Wars, the United States encouraged Mexican labor migration to ease domestic labor shortages. Under the 1942-64 Bracero Program, private U.S. recruiters aggressively searched the Mexican countryside looking for workers. Although this type of migration was intended to be temporary, it acquired a life of its own. Ambitious migrants who were not formally recruited soon realized they could migrate independently. Migrants who settle in the countries where they work are soon joined by relatives and friends. Migrants are not merely workers, they are people. Social networks grow and the temporary migrant often becomes permanent.

Such networks create their own momentum for further migration by informing potential migrants about work opportunities in destination countries. They provide information, job offers, resources to cover migration costs, and a hospitable environment for new arrivals. A strong emigration tradition has emerged from the networks in many Mexican, Central American, and Caribbean communities. For many young men and an increasing number of women, emigration has become a rite of passage. Upon attaining a certain age and level of schooling, many labor force entrants define their economic and cultural options in light of U.S. standards.

Other factors that impel migration are discussed below.

Political Polarization, Conflict and Migration

The serious humanitarian problems confronting the world's 30-35 million refugees and...displaced persons pose a difficult challenge for the United States and the international community.

The increase in economic and social migration during the past decade, particularly from Mexico, was accompanied by an exponential increase in migration from other areas of the world because of political conflict or physical duress. Refugee flows resulted in mass movements from Vietnam and Cuba and large scale population displacements in Africa, Central America, the Middle East, and Asia. Currently, some 15 million refugees are registered with the United Nations—double the number 10 years ago. They include five million Afghans and a similar number of Africans. Smaller numbers of registered refugees are located in Southeast Asia and Central America. Some estimate that another 20 million people are internally displaced or have fled their countries but have not been categorized formally as refugees.*

The serious humanitarian problems confronting the world's 30-35 million refugees and internally and externally displaced persons pose a difficult challenge for the United States and the international community. The primary role for the United States is one of providing leadership and financial support to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to insure refugee protection and care and maintenance, to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and to a wide range of international organizations concerned with humanitarian problems, development and migration. (See Figure 2.4, p. 17.) The United States also offers bilateral assistance to address problems facing persons displaced within their own countries.

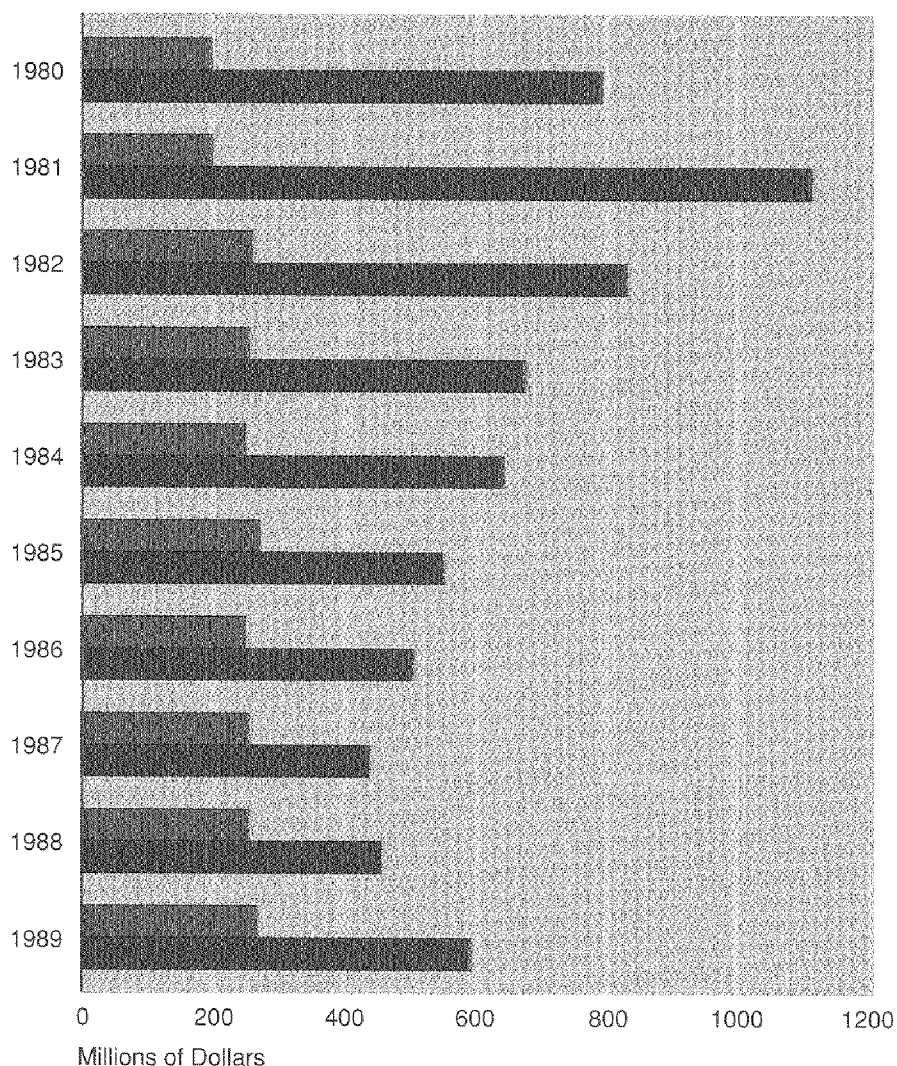
The refugee admissions program of the United States is designed to respond to the resettlement needs of only a small portion of the worldwide refugee population. (See Figure 2.5, p. 18.) The United States has admitted for permanent settlement some three million refugees since World War II, including one million from Southeast Asia since the collapse of U.S.-supported governments in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in 1975. Even after passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, which attempted to eliminate political ideology as the criterion for refugee eligibility, the United States has focused its program on persons fleeing Communist countries. Critics of U.S. policy charge that ideology still dominates asylum and refugee determinations and that few claims are approved when they involve authoritarian governments which enjoy friendly relations with the United States—despite the dictates of the Refugee Act or human rights violations by those governments. Supporters respond that a higher percentage of migrants from communist countries are bona fide refugees. In addition to foreign policy considerations, ethnic

* "Refugees" under both U.S. and international law refer to persons who have fled their home country because they fear persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, as distinguished from other types of international migrants

FIGURE 2.4
*U.S. Refugee Assistance,
 1980 to 1989*

■ U.S. Overseas Assistance
 ■ Cost/Refugee Admission Program*

*Includes costs of processing and transportation of refugees to the United States.

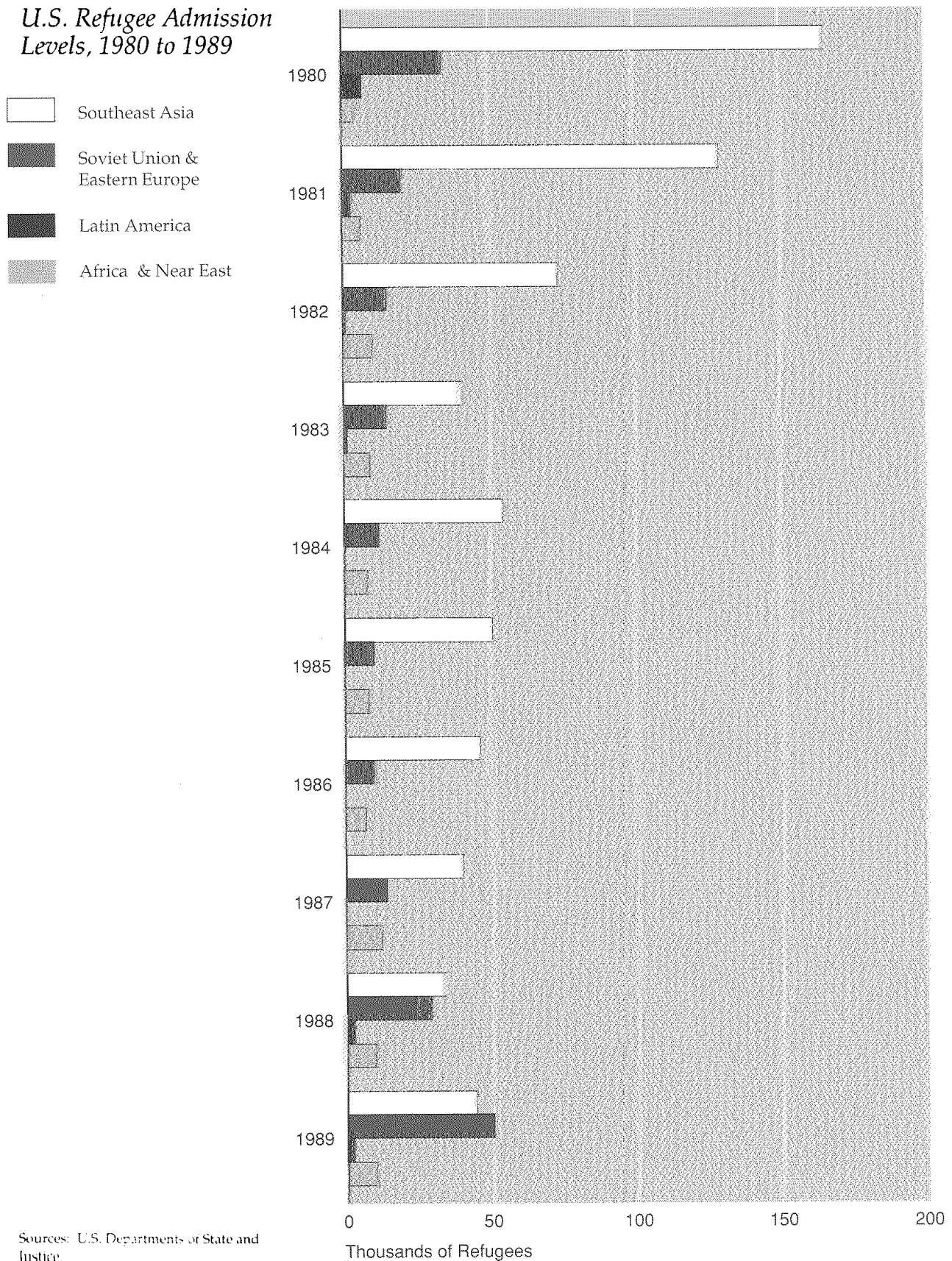


Source: U.S. Department of State.

politics, domestic political pressures and budgetary constraints have greatly influenced the U.S. admissions program on different occasions.

The United States was a receiving country in the 1970s and 1980s for tens of thousands of Haitians and Cubans emigrating because of political or economic conditions in their homelands. Unlike the structured Cuban "freedom flights" of the 1960s, over 125,000 Cubans, some with criminal pasts and psychiatric problems, left Mariel harbor in the spring of 1980 and sailed to Key West where they were processed under stressful conditions and, for the most part, allowed to join friends and relatives in South Florida. Haitians have been entering the United States in large numbers since the mid 1970s—often using Cuba and the Bahamas as transit countries. An interdiction program, still in effect, was instituted in 1982 by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Coast Guard after the United States reached an agreement with the Haitian

FIGURE 2.5
*U.S. Refugee Admission
Levels, 1980 to 1989*



government on this sensitive and controversial issue. Since Congress believed that Cubans and Haitians were leaving similar economic and political conditions, it provided a special legalization program for both categories of migrants in 1986.

The flow of unauthorized Salvadorans, Nicaraguans and other Central Americans crossing the southern border of the United States has increased substantially during the past decade. The number of these people claiming political asylum after entry has also increased sharply. In just one year, from 1987 to 1988, Salvadoran and Guatemalan asylum applications increased tenfold. Total claims by all nationalities during that same period increased from 26,000 to 61,000. Central Americans were emigrating for a variety of reasons, including armed conflict, political repression, and deteriorating economic conditions in their countries. The motivation for emigrating often involved a complex combination of these factors. However, since U.S. refugee law requires refugee and asylum applicants to establish a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion or political opinion, INS officers must attempt to sort out these factors—a difficult if not impossible task.

While the majority of Nicaraguan asylum applicants were approved over the past decade, fewer than five percent of Salvadoran applicants have been successful. Many critics of U.S. asylum policy maintain that foreign policy objectives are directly responsible for this disparity in approval rates. Others hold that the nature and causes of the flow from each country are different. The imbalance has also generated considerable controversy in Congress and led to pressure for the passage of legislation granting undocumented Salvadorans and Nicaraguans temporary relief from deportation through the status of Extended Voluntary Departure (EVD). Legislation of this nature passed the House on several occasions, but did not gain Senate approval.

The large flow of Central American and Caribbean migrants during the 1980s and the disparate treatment of Cubans and Haitians, as well as Nicaraguans and Salvadorans, caused extensive debate over the Executive Branch's implementation of the Refugee Act of 1980. It focused on the procedures used by the Departments of State and Justice to distinguish political refugees and asylees from economic and other types of migrants. This debate undoubtedly will continue in the 1990s and lead to more calls to expand the legal categories of international migrants for temporary or permanent admission. Suggestions have included temporary safe-haven status, special humanitarian migrants along the lines of the Australian and Canadian models, and foreign policy migrants.

The exodus of people from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has intensified the U.S. dilemma. Although the United States had an "open door" policy for Soviet Jews after 1970 and the large majority of fleeing Eastern Europeans have been freely admitted as refugees

over the past 40 years, current budgetary priorities prevent the United States from maintaining a generous admissions policy for the vastly increased number of persons now leaving these countries. Consequently, many legislators and State Department officials were frustrated in 1989 when the years of Congressional prodding through the Jackson-Vanik amendment* and diplomatic efforts through the Helsinki Accords failed to translate into a substantial admissions policy for Soviet and Eastern European nationals. Furthermore, political liberalization in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe raises the question of the propriety, if not the very legality, of using current refugee procedures to admit migrants who are emigrating for economic reasons instead of political persecution.

Some positive developments in the 1990s may ease the pressures of migration under duress. The withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia and Soviet troops from Afghanistan may permit repatriation in these regions of the world, although this is still uncertain. Successful implementation of voluntary repatriation programs may be possible for Vietnamese, Central Americans, Africans, and Afghans. The peace process in Central America, the results of the 1990 election in Nicaragua and diplomatic efforts to bring political stability to Cambodia hold some promise of reducing the levels of politically-generated migration. In addition, last year's U.N.-sponsored Conferences on Indochinese Refugees, held in Geneva, and on the Externally and Internally Displaced in Central America, held in Guatemala, provide some hope for closer regional, resettlement and donor cooperation on forced migration problems.

On the negative side, severe budget problems confront the UNHCR (it carried a \$40 million deficit into 1990), specialized U.N. agencies, and international organizations dealing with development and humanitarian assistance for refugees. (See Box 2.2, p. 21.) This makes it difficult to maintain needed levels of humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons, insure proper refugee protection, or provide sufficient resettlement opportunities for millions of desperate people around the world. These budget constraints have convinced U.N. and donor country officials that there is an urgent need to explore development approaches to migration problems. In particular, the Guatemala Conference examined ways in which traditional development assistance can better address the causes and consequences of migration in Central America.

* The Jackson-Vanik Amendment—named for its authors, former Senator Henry Jackson and former Congressman Charles Vanik—was enacted in 1974 to link trade benefits (i.e., most favored nation status) to a country's emigration policies and practices. It was intended to pressure the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries to liberalize their emigration policies and procedures for Jews and other ethnic and religious minorities.