Catalysts of Movement:
Positive and Negative

Human movement often results from a perception that conditions are better, safer, freer, or in some way superior at some other distant destination. Positive perceptions of distant areas generate **pull factors** toward that destination. These forces were at work when Europeans set out into the vast oceans to seek better fortunes in the 1500s. These forces were also at work when thousands of desperate peasants sought better opportunities in the cities providing cheap labor for the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain during the late 1700s. These forces are still at work today as millions of Mexicans make their way into the United States to find a better opportunity.

Negative influences in a region – a loss of a job, civil unrest, or a natural disaster – generate **push factors**, inducing people to move away from their home base. These forces were at work when thousands of Huguenots fled France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in the 1600s. These forces were at work when thousands of people fled from the Nazis during the 1930s and 1940s. And these forces are still at work today in the Darfur region of the Sudan, as thousands of people are fleeing for their lives. To understand the motives and routes of historic and current migratory patterns is to understand why the world functions as it does.

The **absolute distance** is the distance between two places (i.e., the origin and destination of a migrant). It may be measured on a map by a straight line. The distance may be much shorter than the effective, **relative distance**. Research has shown that people's perception of distance is often quite distorted.

The process of **migration** involves the long-term relocation of an individual, household, or larger group to a new locale outside the community of origin.

Theories About Migration

Under what circumstances do people migrate? As long ago as 1885, British demographer Ernst Ravenstein studied the internal migration in England. He proposed several "laws" of migration, of which are still relevant today.

1. *Net migration amounts to a fraction of the gross migration between two places.* Every migration flow generates a **return** or **counter migration**.

2. *The majority of migrants move a short distance.* Step migration, which occurs in stages (e.g., from a farm to a nearby village, and later to a town or city), still prevails today.

3. *Migrants who move longer distances tend to choose big-city destinations.* London was the great magnet in Ravenstein's time; this is largely due to its great centrality (pull), availability of jobs, and name recognition.

4. *Urban residents are less migratory than inhabitants of rural areas.* Urbanization draws people toward towns and cities. This phenomenon is alive and well today, especially in the developing countries.

5. *Families are less likely to make international moves than young adults.* Throughout the world young adults are the most mobile population group. Having a family "grows roots" in an area.

Ravenstein also posited an inverse relationship between the volume of migration and the distance between source and destination. This proposal anticipated the gravity model, which predicts that spatial interaction (such as migration) is directly related to the populations and inversely related to the distance between them.

$$I_{ij} = \frac{P_i P_j}{d_{ij}^2}$$

The formula above is a simplified version of the gravity model in which Iij = the interaction between point I (origin) and point j (destination). Pi = the population of the origin, Pj = the population of the destination, and dij = the distance between the points of origin and destination. Note: the impact of distance is greater than the impact of population. This is

Mean Center of Population for the United States: 1790 to 2000
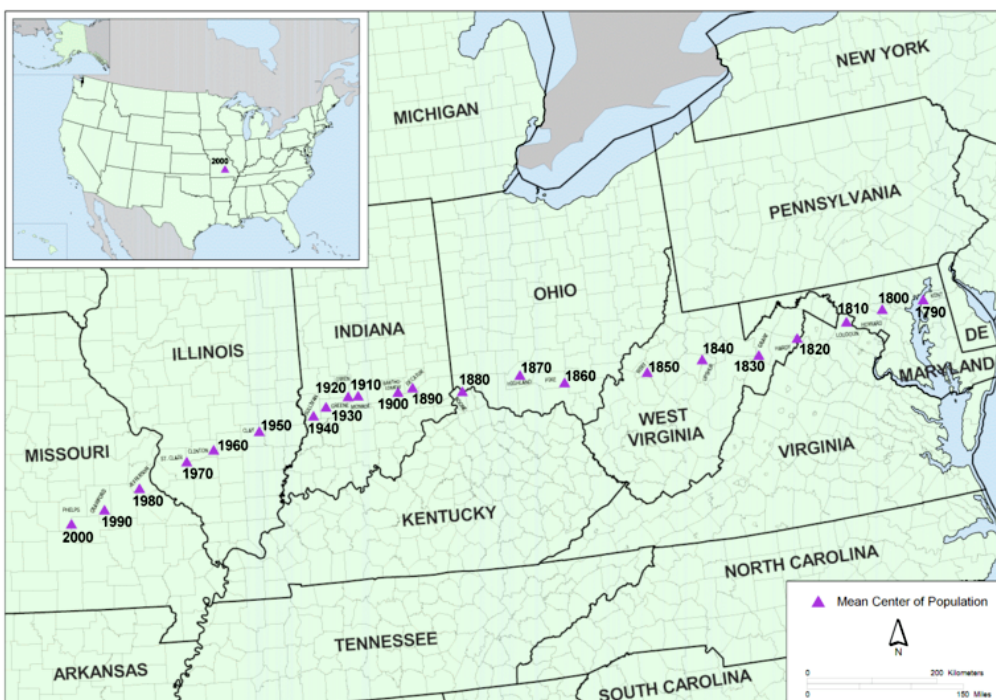
clearly indicated by the fact that the distance between the two points *is squared*. This is also illustrated in the graph.


Catalysts of Migration

Research has shown that it is usually not one factor that impels people to move, but a combination of factors. In this section we look briefly at several key factors:

1. **Economic Conditions –** European colonialism helped establish **islands of development** throughout the world, where the vast majority of paying jobs are located, and infrastructure is concentrated. In peripheral states like Nigeria, these islands of development are often coastal cities because they were established to facilitate trade. In the 1970s, migrants travelled to Nigeria from Togo, Benin, and Ghana, often seeking jobs in the booming oil industry. When the oil economy took a fall in the 1980s, the Nigerian government forcibly pushed out 2 million foreign workers.

2. **Political Circumstances –** throughout history oppressive regimes have engendered migration streams. In 1947 India gained its independence, however it was split between Hindu India, and Muslim Pakistan. Millions of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs migrated between the two newly demarcated states. Elsewhere, in 1972 Uganda's dictator, Idi Amin, expelled 50,000 Asians and Ugandans with Asian decent from his country. More than 125,000 Cubans left their country in 1980 on the "Mariel Boatlift" to escape communist dictatorship.

3. **Armed Conflict and Civil War -** a dreadful conflict that engulfed the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s drove as many a 3 million people from their homes. Many of those people became permanent emigrants, unable to return home. A brutal civil war ravaged
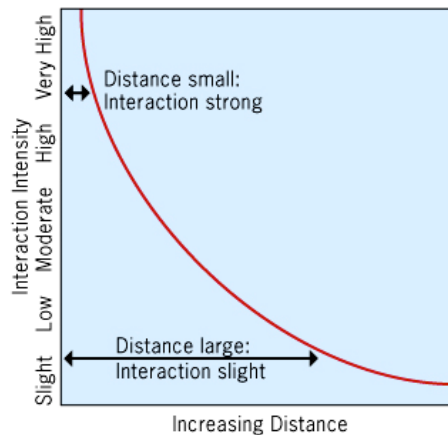
Rwanda in 1994 that pitted militant Hutu against "moderate" Hutu and the Tutsi minority. More than 800,000 people may have been killed and perhaps more than 2 million Rwandans migrated into neighboring Congo and Tanzania.

4. **Environmental Conditions –** a major example of migration induced by environmental factors was the movement of perhaps 1 million Irish citizens to the New World during the 1840s. Crises such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcanic eruptions stimulate migrations.

5. **Culture and Traditions –** people often fear that their way of life will not survive a major political transition. When British India was partitioned into a mainly Hindu India and an almost exclusively Muslim Pakistan, millions of people emigrated out of both states. Similarly, in the 1990s after decades of Soviet obstruction, more than 2 million Jews left the former USSR for Israel and other destinations.

6. **Technological Advances –** for many migrants emigration is no longer the hazardous journey it used to be. More modern forms of transportation can encourage migration in of itself. For example, it has been suggested that the growing availability of air conditioning greatly reduced return migration from the Sunbelt back to the North in the U.S. Modern technology also enables the **flow of information** to travel much faster, further, and cheaper than ever before. Thus Turks quickly heard about Germany's need for immigrant labor, and Haitians knew that a "Little Haiti" had sprung up in the Miami area.

7. **Distance Decay –** prospective migrants are likely to have more complete and accurate perceptions of nearer places than of farther ones. Indeed, many migration streams that appear on maps as long, unbroken routes, in fact, consist of a series of stages, a phenomenon known as **step migration**. A peasant family in Brazil would be likely to move first to a village, then to a nearby town, later to a city, and then to a metropolis such as São Paolo or Rio de Janeiro.

8. **Intervening Opportunity –** not all migrants complete all the steps toward their intended destinations. Along the way the majority are captured by **intervening opportunities**. Like distance decay, intervening opportunity is a geographic principle that is relevant to the study of migration. A special type of temporary migrants – **tourists** – respond to these opportunities. Cost and convenience encourage many Floridians to choose Orlando as a prime destination as opposed to more distant ones.

9. **Chain Migration -** migration that is assisted by those already living in an area (relatives, friends). In many cases, an entire family cannot afford to make a move to another locale. It is not unusual for one person (i.e., the father) to migrate to another area, earn money, send some of it back to the family (**remittances**), and then send other members over when it becomes more

affordable for the family. The family members can "spread roots" in the area they reside in. It is very understandable that people tend to immigrate to areas where they find connections and a measure of familiarity.

Types of Movement

Human mobility takes several forms. The great majority of people have a daily routine that takes them through a regular sequence of short moves. These moves create one's **activity** (or **action**) **space**. North American's activity space, on average, is very large compared to that of, say, Africans or Southwest Asians. Technology has vastly expanded daily activity spaces.

It is useful to categorize movement into three types. The first, **cyclic movement**, defines your activity space. Cyclic movement involves journeys that begin at our home base and bring us back to it. Suburb-to-city **commuting**, whether for a job or to go to school, is one type. **Reverse commuting** is when a person journeys from city-to-suburb, and then back again. This has become more common with the rise of jobs in the tertiary, quaternary, and quinary sectors. A different form of cyclic movement is **seasonal movement**. Avery fall, hundreds of thousands of travelers ("Snowbirds") leave their homes from the northern parts of the United States and Canada to seek the winter sun in Florida and other Sunbelt states. Still another type of cyclic movement is **nomadism**. This practice, dwindling but still prevalent in parts of Asia and Africa, is sometimes viewed as aimless wandering. In actuality, nomadic movement tends to take place along long-familiar routes repeated over and over again.

When movement involves less back-and-forth mobility but a longer period of residence away from the home base, it is referred to as **periodic movement**. Attending college and residing in a dorm for extended periods of time, military service that requires relocation or long tours of duty are examples of periodic movement. Another type is **migrant labor**, involving millions of workers in the United States and tens of millions worldwide. A specialized form of periodic movement is **transhumance**. This refers to a system of pastoral farming in which livestock and their keepers move according to the seasonal availability of pastures. This is periodic movement because it involves a long period if residential relocation (unlike classic nomadism). Transhumance occurs in places like Switzerland, and in the "Horn" of Northeast Africa.

When movement results in permanent relocation across significant distances, it is classified as **migration**. **International mi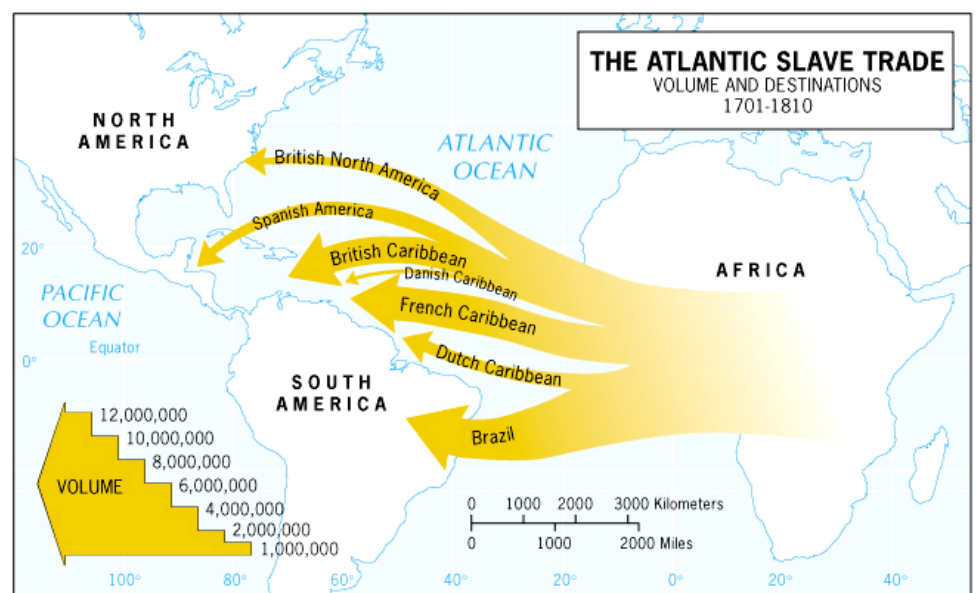gration**, movement across country borders, is also called transnational migration. When a person leaves the home country, he or she is classified as an **emigrant**, whereas moving into a country makes a person an **immigrant**. The growth of a country involves not only the natural increase (births – deaths), but immigration and emigration. Countries also experience **internal migration** that occurs within a single country's borders, often in well-defined streams that change over time. Early in 20th century America, a major migration stream took tens of thousands of African-American families from the South to the industrializing cities of the Northeast and Midwest. Today, major movements are carrying migrants from East to West and from North to South, the latter marked by the "Sunbelt" attraction of warmer States. Migration leads to a smaller but sometimes significant **return migration** by those unable to adjust to life in the place of destination.

Major Modern Migrations (Pre-1945)

Human history is the history of migration. There have been numerous mass migrations over the past five centuries. Some migrants had the luxury of choice, leading to **voluntary migration**; the role of pull and push factors were at work. Other migrations dealt with the fear and misfortune of compulsion, producing **forced migrations** that render theoretical issues irrelevant.

The largest and most devastating forced migration in human history was the **North Atlantic slave trade**. How many Africans were sold into slavery will never be known (estimates range from 12 million to 30 million). The vast majority were taken to the Caribbean, to coastal Middle America, and to Brazil. Perhaps only 10% of the slaves were transported to North America.

Although nothing compares to the slave trade, other forced migrations have changed the world's demographic map. For around 50 years starting in 1788, tens of thousands of British convicts were sent to **Australia**. In the 1800s, thousands of Native Americans were forced off their homelands in the United States. Under Stalin's ruthless rule, millions of non-Russians were forcibly

THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE
VOLUME AND DESTINATIONS
1701-1810

NORTH AMERICA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
British North America
Spanish America
British Caribbean
Danish Caribbean
French Caribbean
Dutch Caribbean
PACIFIC OCEAN
Equator
AFRICA
SOUTH AMERICA
Brazil

VOLUME
12,000,000
10,000,000
8,000,000
6,000,000
4,000,000
2,000,000
1,000,000

0 1000 2000 3000 Kilometers
0 1000 2000 Miles

(after P.D. Curtin)

moved from their homes to remote parts of Central Asia and Siberia for political purposes.

Among the greatest human migrations in recent centuries was the flow from **Europe to the Americas**. Before the 1830s, perhaps fewer than 3 million Europeans had left to settle overseas. After that, however, the rate of emigration increased sharply; between 1835 and 1935, perhaps as many as 75 million departed for the New World and other overseas territories. Although millions of Europeans eventually returned to their homelands, the net outflow from Europe was truly enormous.

Every one of the migrations discussed previously may be referred to as **interregional migrations**: not only did the migrants cross international borders, but they moved (or were moved) from one geographic realm to another. It is also appropriate to distinguish between **external** and **internal** migrations. In the U.S., a massive migration stream has for more than two centuries carried the center of population westward (and more recently southward). This internal migration, numerically exceeded another important internal stream, which carried millions of African-Americans from south to north. This northward movement gathered momentum during Word War I,

when immigration from Europe was interrupted and northern labor markets grew rapidly. It continued during the 1920s, declined during the depression years, and then resumed its upward climb. In 1900, only about 10 percent of the U.S. black population lived outside the South; in 2000. the proportion exceeded 50 percent.
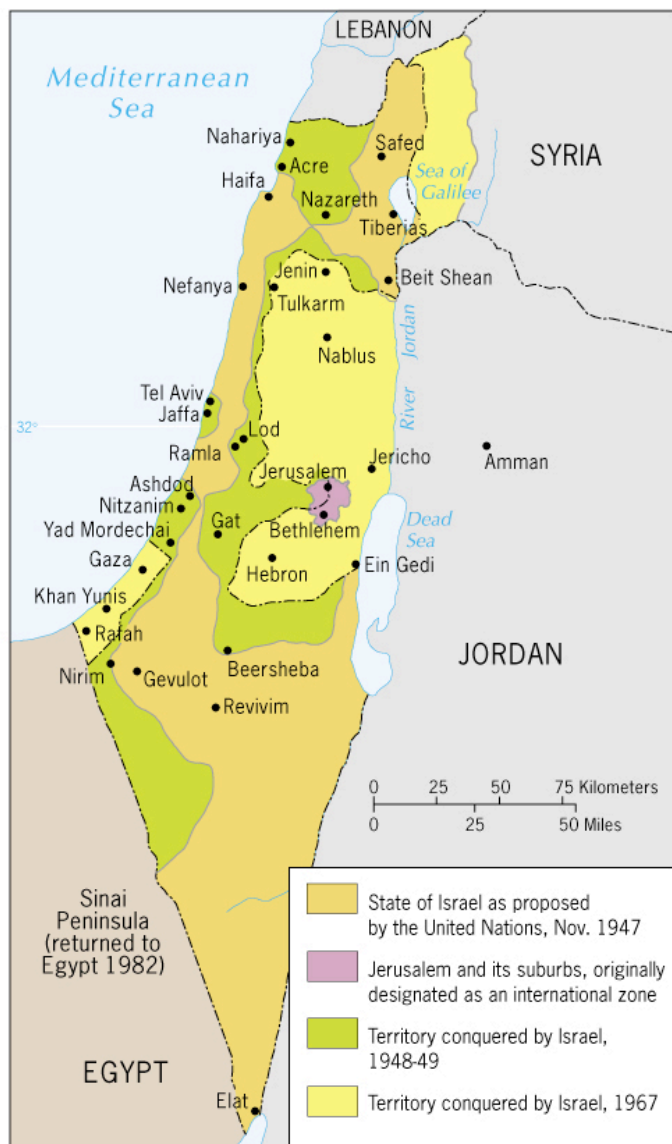
Major Modern Migrations (Post-1945)

Although the second half of the twentieth century witnessed no external migrations comparable to those earlier, the aftermath of World War II and the Cold War had a major impact on the international order. A migration stream of enormous significance was the flow of **Jewish immigrants to Israel**. In 1900, there were probably fewer than 50,000 Jewish residents in what was then Palestine. From 1919 to 1948 the U.K. held a mandate over Palestine, originally under the auspices of the League of Nations. By 1948 there were perhaps 750,000 Jewish residents in Palestine, and an independent Israel was established through UN intervention and the partition of the area. This in turn led to another migration stream: the displacement of 600,000 Palestinian Arabs who sought refuge in neighboring Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and elsewhere.
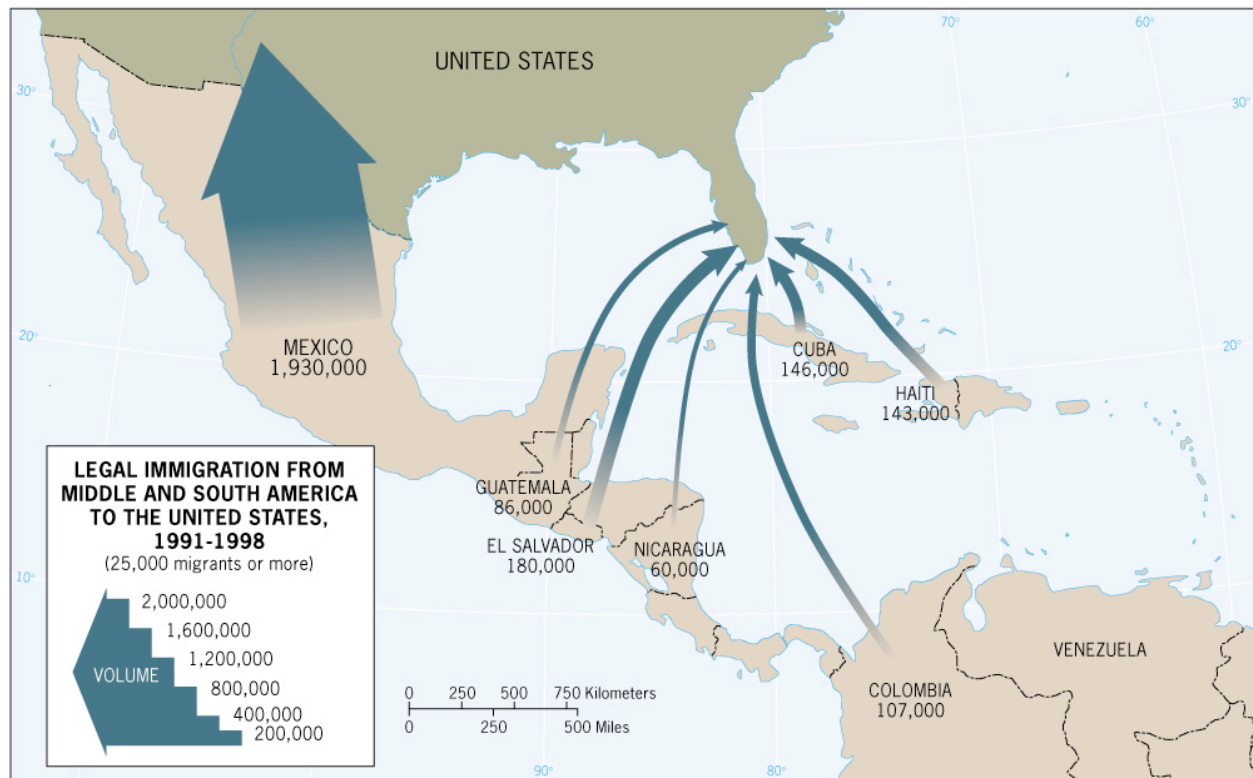
Jewish migrants continued to arrive from North America, South Africa, Europe, and the former Soviet Union. Today Israel's population of 6.4 million (including about 1 million Arab citizens) continues to grow. The presence of a vigorous and growing Israel near the heart of the Muslim Arab realm has sparked many issues ranging from the fate of Jerusalem to the future of Jewish settlements in the conquered West Bank and Gaza Strip. The state of Iran has continued to issue stark warnings that Israel should be wiped from the map of the earth, and has even made claims doubting the occurrence of the Holocaust. It is safe to say that perhaps no one involved in the establishment of the Jewish state foresaw the intensity of the crisis that lay ahead or the dimensions of the population movements it would generate.

Another conflict-induced population movement occurred after the end of World War II, when as many as 15 million **Germans migrated westward**, either voluntarily or because they were forced to leave. Before the Berlin Wall went up and the Iron Curtain was lowered across Eastern Europe, millions of migrants left Europe altogether to go overseas.

Recently, an even larger immigration stream reached the **southwest U.S. from Mexico**. So much movement has been unauthorized that demographer cannot estimate its magnitude even within hundreds of thousands. During the 1990s, legal immigration from Mexico approached 2 million. This migration stream continues to transform the southwestern borderland of the United States.

Even before Cuba became a communist state, thousands of Cuban citizens arrived and remained mostly in the greater Miami area. During the 1960s, this migration was formalized as the **Cuban Airlift**, an authorized movement of people desiring to flee from Fidel Castro and a communist regime. In 1980, another massive, organized

LEBANON
Mediterranean Sea
Nahariya
Safed
Acre
Haifa
Nazareth
SYRIA
Sea of Galilee
Tiberias
Jenin
Nefanya
Beit Shean
Tulkarm
Nablus
Tel Aviv
Jaffa
Lod
Ramla
Jericho
Amman
Ashdod
Jerusalem
Nitzanim
Gat
Dead Sea
Yad Mordechai
Bethlehem
Gaza
Ein Gedi
Hebron
Khan Yunis
Rafah
JORDAN
Nirim
Gevulot
Beersheba
Revivim
Jordan River

0   25   50   75 Kilometers
0   25   50 Miles

Sinai Peninsula (returned to Egypt 1982)

EGYPT
Elat

State of Israel as proposed by the United Nations, Nov. 1947

Jerusalem and its suburbs, originally designated as an international zone

Territory conquered by Israel, 1948-49

Territory conquered by Israel, 1967

LEGAL IMMIGRATION FROM MIDDLE AND SOUTH AMERICA TO THE UNITED STATES, 1991-1998 (25,000 migrants or more)

exodus occurred during the **Mariel Boatlift**, which brought more than 100,000 thousand Cubans to U.S. shores. Today, the official, legal number of Cuban arrivals has exceeded 500,000. In southern Florida they developed a core of Hispanic culture, and in due course Dade County declared itself bicultural and bilingual.

A major peak of immigration to the U.S. during the early 1900s was discussed previously. This migration came mostly from Europe and many **push factors** were involved: political instability, a lack of jobs, religious persecution (i.e., pogroms – Jewish massacres occurring in Russia and other countries), and even overpopulation. Several **pull factors** also induced many migrants to come to the U.S.: a general shift toward a secondary economy (agriculture to industry), increased job opportunity, and the hope for a better future.

A second major peak of immigration into the U.S. began in the late 1980s. This migration came mainly from Latin America (e.g., Mexico, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Haiti, etc.) and Asia (e.g., China, India, Philippines, Korea, etc.).

IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED TO THE UNITED STATES: 1900-1998

Several push factors responsible for this movement have been the end of the Cold War, overpopulation in certain areas, political instability, as well as ethnic and religious strife. Several pull factors attracting people to the U.S. then and now continue to be a shift to a more tertiary economy (industry to service), an increased demand for low-wage jobs (e.g., domestic services and retail), the growth of agribusiness (many Mexicans come to the U.S. for these types of jobs), and the expansion of the information technology industries (many Indians come to the U.S. for these types of jobs).

Migration and Dislocation: The Refugee Problem

Large-scale population movements tend to produce major social problems, especially when such migrations happen suddenly, forced by international conflict, ethnic strife, or environmental disaster. The UN agency that monitors the refugee problem is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It organizes and funds international relief efforts and negotiates with governments and regimes on behalf of the refugees. Perhaps the biggest problem in defining a refugee has to do with internal refugees. The UN distinguishes between **international refugees**, who have crossed one or more international borders, and **intranational refugees**, who have abandoned their homes but remain in their own countries.

When a refugee meets official criteria, he or she becomes eligible for assistance, including possible asylum, to which other migrants are not entitled. In Jordan, for example, Palestinian refugees have become so integrated into the host country's national life that they are regarded as
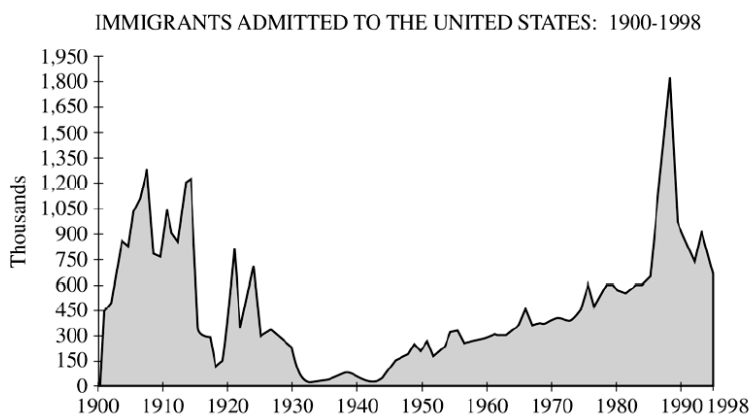
permanent refugees, but in Lebanon other Palestinians wait in refugee camps for resettlement and still qualify as **temporary refugees**.

Refugees can typically be identified by at least three characteristics, individual or aggregate:

1. Most refugees move without any more tangible property than what they can carry or transport with them.
2. Most refugees make their first "step" on foot, by bicycle, wagon, or open boat (in other words, the technological factor that facilitates modern migration is inoperative).
3. Refugees usually move without the official documents that accompany channeled migration.

Regions of Dislocation

The refugee situation changes frequently as some refugees return home, conditions permitting, and as other, new streams suddenly form. **Sub-Saharan Africa** is the most severely afflicted region concerning dislocation – with more than 8 million "official" refugees and millions more who are intranational refugees. The outbreak of violence in Rwanda between the Hutu and Tutsi in 1994 led to a disastrous exodus of refugees into neighboring Zaire (Congo today), Tanzania, and Uganda. In Sudan, which for decades has been Africa's worst refugee locale, a continuing conflict condemns more than 4 million people to refugee status. In West Africa, civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone sent hundreds of thousands of refugees streaming into Guinea and Ivory Coast; more than 1.5 million in this small corner of Africa.

North Africa and Southwest Asia extending from Morocco in the west to Afghanistan in the east, is the second-most affected area of the world concerning dislocation. The Arabs displaced from Israel is an obvious issue in the "Middle East." During the 1980s Afghanistan was caught in the Soviets' last imperialist campaign. At the height of the exodus, as many as 6 million Afghans were refugees in neighboring Iran and Pakistan alone. In the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991, around 2.5 million Kurds were displaced f4om northern Iraq to Turkey and Iran. Afghanistan was struck again in 1996 by an Islamic Fundamentalist movement brought on by the Taliban regime. The resulting refugee exodus reached at least 2.5 million in Iran. Eventually, Afghanistan became a base for anti-Western terrorist operations, which reached a climax in the attack on the U.S. on September 11, 2001.

South Asia is the third-ranking geographic realm concerning dislocation, mainly due to Pakistan's role in accepting refuges from neighboring Afghanistan. The other major refugee issue stems from a civil war in Sri Lanka. This conflict between the minority Tamils for an independent state on the Sinhalese-dominated island has cost tens of thousands of lives. Perhaps more than 1 million intranational refugees are in Sri Lanka today.

Southeast Asia saw a major stream of between 1 and 2 million "boat people" leaving Vietnam for Indochina in the aftermath of the Vietnam War that ended in 1975. In the early 1990s, it was Cambodia that produced more than 300,000 refugees fleeing to Thailand. Today, the largest problem stems from a repressive regime in Myanmar, seeking to subjugate the country's minorities.

Europe's worst recent refugee crisis came at the feet of the collapse of Yugoslavia. In 1995, the UNHCR reported than more than 6 million refugees. Even after the cessation of armed conflict and the implementation of a peace agreement called the Dayton Accords, as many as 1 million refugees still remain throughout Europe from this conflict.

In the **Western Hemisphere**, only Colombia in 1997 had a serious refugee problem, caused by the country's chronic instability associated with its struggle against narcotics, drug lords, and a wave of kidnappings. Refugees continue to stream into the southern U.S. from Cuba and Haiti, but these numbers pale in comparison to streams of dislocation elsewhere.

People who abandon their familiar surroundings because conditions there have become unlivable perform an ultimate act of desperation. The Earth's refugee population is a barometer of the world's future.

LOCATION OF REFUGEES, 2000
(thousands)

Mainly International Refugees
Mainly Intranational Refugees

0   1000   2000   3000 Kilometers
0   1000   2000 Miles

Source: UNHCR, 2000; USCR, 2000