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# Journey to Kentucky: A Look at Migration Patterns from the Middle East to American and Kentucky

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Journey to Kentucky:

A Look at Migration Patterns from the Middle East to America and Kentucky

By

Hannah Parker

Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the

Bachelor of Integrated Studies Degree

Murray State University

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## Chapter 1

### 1 A. Introduction

A young, single Syrian mother chooses to leave all she has ever known and make a new beginning in a small town in Kentucky for her and her three small children. An elderly Iranian man leaves the home and farm land he has worked hard to cultivate for decades to begin a new home in a new land. A young Egyptian family leaves a country they love to arrive in a new country with nothing but the clothes they are wearing and a few belongings in a suitcase. What caused these people to leave their homes and their families—the people and places they hold dear? What circumstances made them choose Kentucky as the place they would immigrate to when they had many other places that they could choose to settle in? These are the questions that can be answered by studying migration patterns from the Middle East to Kentucky.

Understanding what makes people migrate from one country to another is an important thing to analyze to gain a clear picture of the history of nations and ethnic groups. The migration of Arabs to the United States is a particularly fascinating trend to follow. It is important to note that the term ‘Arab’ previously included anyone who lived within the Middle East whether or not they ethnically identified as Arab. Understanding the history behind Arab migration to the United States, and Kentucky specifically, can help people see the truth behind the narrative of the Arabs in the United States. It can help highlight parts of the narrative in media that may be false and, ultimately, help Americans understand how they can be a part of helping immigrants settle into their new lives in the United States. Understanding migration patterns and the causes behind why people choose to migrate is also important to policy makers; knowing why and where people are migrating from can help government officials understand how they can provide

assistance to other countries and people groups so that people have the option to remain in their home countries and thrive should they choose to do so. It is important to understand what has influenced Arab migration to the United States—and Kentucky in particular—so that we as Kentuckians can not only understand our neighbors' stories but help them to flourish in their new-found homes.

The question that I hope to answer through this analysis is, how does the migration of Arabs to Kentucky fit into the larger patterns of Arabs migrating to the United States? We will see how this pattern of Arab migration to Kentucky fits into the larger pattern of Arabs migrating to the United States and whether it truly does fit into the norm of places for Arabs to settle or if it's an outlier. In looking at the history of Arab migration, what made Arabs choose to settle in Kentucky? Was it simply an easy stop on the way to places with more opportunities, or was there a stronger draw to Kentucky? In answering these questions, a clearer understanding of the history between the Middle East and the United States will become apparent.

My approach to answering these questions will be to analyze the existing theories of migration. To understand what has made Arabs decide to migrate to the United States over the past couple of hundred years it is most helpful to begin by looking at various theories of migration and how those theories have shifted over the past twenty years. The primary theories of migration that I will be analyzing are various economic theories, such as migrant network theory, and political theories such as forced migration theory. Forced migration theory relates specifically to refugees and provides a framework for understanding what causes someone to seek refugee status in another country.

After analyzing migration theories, I will then look at the specific waves of migration from the Middle East to the United States and thoroughly analyze them. Throughout this analysis

of Middle Eastern migration, I will be looking specifically at three areas in the Middle East that people have chosen to migrate from: the Levant (Israel, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon), Egypt, and Iran. While looking at these waves, I will specifically pull out information about people migrating directly to Kentucky and will analyze those particular migration patterns in light of the broader patterns to the United States.

I became interested in this particular topic after living abroad in South Asia where I met many people who had migrated there from countries in the Middle East. Most of the people I met migrated for economic reasons, though some were refugees displaced by civil war in their home country. After returning to Kentucky to finish my undergraduate studies, I continued my research into the history of the Middle East. Through my research and meeting fellow students who came to study at my university from the Middle East, I became interested in understanding what makes people choose Kentucky when they migrate to the United States. I knew that the best way for me to better understand the stories of my new friends from the Middle East was to understand their history.

Through my research I have found areas that need further research within this particular topic. With the rise of civil wars in countries throughout the Middle East, a current refugee crisis has ensued. This refugee crisis is most prominently seen in the recent conflict between the Syrian government of Bashar al Assad and various other parties.<sup>1</sup> Though there has been an increase in interest on the research topic of people migrating from the Middle East to the United States as a result of the current refugee crisis, particularly in Syria, there has not been any significant research done specifically on the migration of Arabs to Kentucky. Because Kentucky does not

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<sup>1</sup> Joellyn Sheehy, "How did we let it happen? The Syrian Refugee Crisis: A logistic and human disaster," *Torch Magazine*, Fall 2014, 33-34.

have cities of significant population such as New York or Chicago, it would seem that it is a strange place for people to choose to resettle. With the specific case of forced migration (refugee resettlement), the placement of people in Kentucky comes from government determined policies. But with the case of people migrating voluntarily to Kentucky it is much harder to determine a causal factor because the research is much less significant in this field.

### 1 B. Theories of Migration (General)

A clear definition of migration is not always agreed upon by researchers in a field. Some researchers and governments define migration very specifically, and include provisions for temporary or semi-permanent migrants, such as migratory workers or those who move for holidays. One researcher chooses to use a simple definition, “a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence.”<sup>2</sup> Jackson defines migration as “moves from rural areas to cities for employment; moves from one part of the country to another with the entire family; moves from one country to another often over long distances”.<sup>3</sup> While the United Nations defines a migrant as “someone who changes his or her country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status. Generally, a distinction is made between short-term or temporary migration, covering movements with a duration between three and 12 months, and long-term or permanent migration, referring to a change of country of residence for a duration of one year or more.”<sup>4</sup> The varied definitions of migration and a migrant highlight the complexities that are

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<sup>2</sup> Everett S. Lee, “A Theory of Migration”, in *Migration*, ed. J.A. Jackson (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 285.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Jackson, “Introduction,” in *Migration*, ed. J.A. Jackson (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> “Definitions | Refugees and Migrants,” *United Nations*, <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/definitions>, (accessed November 25, 2018).

involved in developing an understanding of this process. Most researchers and scholars in the field add the caveat that migration includes moving past international borders.

Understanding migration patterns and the causes behind migration can also be a difficult thing. Migration is a complex subject to understand, due in large part to the fact that a person does not often migrate for one specific reason. There may be a variety of small reasons that cause one person to decide to migrate. Someone could be interested in seeking better education opportunities as an initial reason to move to a new country, but ultimately decide to migrate as a result of severe economic difficulties.<sup>5</sup>

The theories found in migration research are as varied as the reasons for migration. Some theories focus on the economic factors that prompted people to migrate, while others focus on factors such as war. Economic theories of migration like “migrant network theory” or “social capital theory” can help to explain many of the pull factors of migration. Political theories such as “forced migration theory” help to paint a broader picture of the push factors of migration. These varied theories are helpful in some instances, but the fact that much of the research in the field of migration studies focus on one narrow view of the subject can often create an “incoherent and disjointed” understanding of the field.<sup>6</sup>

### *Economic Theories*

Economic theories of migration include a variety of theories focused on the financial reasons that cause people to migrate. Economic reasons include better opportunities for higher education, better opportunities for entrepreneurial endeavors, and better job opportunities.

Regarding the economic reasons that people choose to migrate internationally, Massey finds that

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2014), 26.

<sup>6</sup> A.A.I.N. Wickramasinghe, “International Migration and Migration Theories,” *Social Affairs* 1, no.5 (2016): 14.

one primary reason that people choose to migrate is that they find that they can earn a better wage in the market of a developed nation than the market in their home countries. Massey refers to this practice as “selling their labor.” This type of migration involves workers moving from under-populated areas to larger cities with higher demand for workers.<sup>7</sup> Once laborers arrive to a particular city, they are the only ones in their families who are sent to work in this new labor market and their income is sent back to their families in their home country. This strong connection between the people who have already migrated and those who they left behind will eventually lead to friends and families migrating to this new city to work with them.

While this phenomenon begins as economic incentive, Baudasse points out that the trend of migration in this particular instance will continue long after the economic incentive decreases, thereby making continued migration a social incentive instead of solely an economic one.<sup>8</sup> Within migration theories this is referred to as “social capital theory” or, to some researchers, “migrant network theory”.<sup>9</sup> Social capital can be thought of in terms of the resources that a network of relationships can provide. This social capital and the network that it provides is what attracts many people to immigrate. Pierre Bourdieu, the sociologist that developed the idea of social capital, defines it as, “the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network...which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital.”<sup>10</sup> For example, a person who migrates from the Middle East to a city in the United States where many people in their family have already migrated will have an easier time acclimating than someone who is the first to migrate from their network. One way that they

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<sup>7</sup> Douglas Massey, “A Missing Element in Migration Theories,” *Migration Letters*, (September, 2015), 283.

<sup>8</sup> Thierry Baudasse, “International Migration: The Teaching of Economic Theory,” *Analisis Economico*, 2008, 73.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2014), 40.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital* (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1986), 51.

have a better time adjusting and acclimating is that the network of people that they have in place in their new home is able to provide connections for them to attain housing more quickly.

Anytime that you have a wide network of people you will also be able to find more job opportunities. Migrant network theory is both a push and a pull theory—it begins with a push where someone is looking for better opportunities in another country than they can find in their own, but it later shifts to a pull where those still living in a particular country are now drawn to this new country as a result of people within their networks who have found better job, housing, and education opportunities and can connect them to those resources.<sup>11</sup>

The theories mentioned thus far are all theories that fall under the umbrella of economic “functionalist theories”.<sup>12</sup> While these theories provide invaluable information that help to paint a picture of the reasons behind why many people choose or must emigrate, they do not provide accurate reasons for why all people emigrate.<sup>13</sup> Another economic theory that helps to illuminate other reasons is known as “migrant transition theory”. Some researchers, when looking at the reasons that people choose to emigrate, will point to significant problems, like push factors such as famine and drought, civil war, political instability or oppression, or religious persecution that caused them to move from their home country. However, these researchers argue that many people choose to emigrate simply because they want to, not because of any major issue that they are facing in their home country. Several of the countries that have the highest number of people emigrate annually are not at the top of the list of poorest countries in the world. Castles, et.al., uses that fact and points out that, as a result of increased globalization, many people choose to

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2014), 40.

<sup>12</sup> Castles, et. al., *The Age of Migration*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Castles, et. al., *The Age of Migration*, 28-29.

emigrate simply because they can.<sup>14</sup> A critique of migrant transition theory is that it does not fully explain the reasons that people most often choose to migrate, and it is not robust enough to capture the complexities of migration.

### *Political Theories*

Political theories of migration research tend to focus more on the legislative side of events. Political theories also focus heavily on conflict within a region to help explain why people emigrate. The prominent political theory within migration research is “forced migration theory”. Political theory contains significant research on the topic of refugee status. Political theories of migration research often have an ethnic or religious bias and show only a small piece of the larger picture of migration patterns.

While previous theories have primarily focused on financial gain and economic reasons for migration as a pull factor, “forced migration theory” focuses on what reasons might cause people to involuntarily migrate to other countries. These events are typically civil wars but can also be people migrating because they are seeking political asylum or refuge from religious persecution. People who fall under the forced migration category are referred to as refugees. As defined by the *United Nations Refugee Agency*,

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.<sup>15</sup>

It was not until the late 1940s that the United States began to separately recognize those seeking to immigrate and those seeking asylum. This recognition came through the “Displaced

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<sup>14</sup> Castles, et. al., *The Age of Migration*, 40.

<sup>15</sup> “What Is a Refugee?” *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>, (accessed November 9, 2018).

Persons Act” in 1948, which limited the number of asylum seekers entering the United States seeking refuge.<sup>16</sup> Following this decision, in 1951 the United Nations established the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees which laid out the definition of refugees and outlined the freedoms and privileges that they should be offered.<sup>17</sup> The establishment of this Convention is where the early framework was laid for the aforementioned UN refugee definition.

According to migration research conducted by researchers looking specifically at the causes of refugee migration, the idea of refugees has come about rather recently.<sup>18</sup> As a new field of research, the data is more limited than the information available for economic theories of migration. However, the trend of migration has shifted in the last twenty years or so to be primarily a result of forced migration. A newer focus of study in the field of migration research is ecological reasons. While there are many people who are considered refugees as a result of severe famine, drought, or natural disasters, the majority of those who are considered refugees are a result of violence within a country; refugees most often choose, or are forced, to emigrate as a result of “push” factors, rather than “pull” factors.<sup>19</sup> Research on forced migration indicates a higher severity of violence in a country will cause more people to seek refugee status in another country. This is a higher cause of people emigrating than those who emigrate for purely economic reasons.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “History of Refugee Resettlement in America: Timeline of U.S. Laws and Policies Affecting Refugees,” *Congressional Digest* (January 2016), 2.

<sup>17</sup> “History of Refugee Resettlement in America: Timeline of U.S. Laws and Policies Affecting Refugees,” *Congressional Digest* (January 2016), 2.

<sup>18</sup> Black, R. “Fifty Years of Refugee Study: From Theory to Policy,” *International Migration Review* 35, no. 1 (2001): 57.

<sup>19</sup> Christian A. Davenport, Will H. Moore, and Steven C. Poe, “Sometimes You Just Have to Leave: Domestic Threats and Forced Migration, 1964-1989,” *International Interactions*, 29 (2003): 29.

<sup>20</sup> Susanne Schmeidl, “Exploring the Causes of Forced Migration: A Pooled Time-Series Analysis, 1971-1990,” *Social Science Quarterly* 78, no.2 (1997): 306.

With the recent refugee crisis in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries taking the focus of many migration researchers, the narrative of migration has become skewed to the perspective that forced migration is only the result of significant violence. Much of the research currently being done on forced migration places the majority of the causality on violence in conflicts. Taking this perspective causes a shift in the overall understanding of refugee research and does not take into account other perspectives that can ultimately lead people to migrate. Keeping a holistic approach is important in fully understanding the complex reasons behind forced migration.

Forced migration is important to study because of the rising trend in overall migration as a result of civil wars, political persecution, and regional disputes. Not to be dismissed are the ecological reasons (famine, drought, natural disasters) that cause forced migration. Within this paper we are only looking at refugees who seek asylum in another country, however, it is worth noting that a number of people who fall under the recognized refugee category are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). IDPs are those who are forced to leave their homes as a result of regional conflict, significant economic hardship, or development, but who do not leave that country.<sup>21</sup>

### *Holistic Approach*

To produce a clear understanding of the causes and flow of migration, a holistic approach must be taken in research. The combination of each theory must be used to fully understand the complexities that are present in researching migration. Using one specific approach to try to explain such a complicated issue will result in an unclear and unfinished picture of migration. Relying on one specific approach can also create a biased view of historical events. Some

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2014), 222.

approaches that are being utilized currently in the field of migration research only look at specific causes or outcomes. The holistic approach is one that combines each approach and uses each one to understand different aspects of migration. This is a more desirable method of understanding migration. Migration research is such a complex topic that a fully researched approach is necessary. To really understand exactly why people choose to migrate you must look at all causes and effects. The holistic approach is the only approach that clearly defines and explains migration patterns.

### 1 C. Outline

Migration from the Middle East to the United States is not clearly recorded in the early history of the United States. However, many historical records seem to indicate that this migration began in the late 1800s. Arab migration to the United States comes in three distinct waves. The first wave began in the early 1870s and continued through the early 1920s. This wave saw the fall of the Ottoman Empire which significantly impacted emigration from the Middle East. Arab migration to Kentucky during this time period is a result of transitory migrants deciding to settle in a place where they have developed strong relationships within communities. This first wave is characterized by both push and pull factors with some immigrants coming to the United States as a result of the hope that they would find better economic opportunities, while others came to escape political oppression. This wave of migration also saw a significant amount of people returning to their homelands.<sup>22</sup>

The second wave of migration began in the late 1920s and lasted until the 1960s. This wave fell during the second World War and saw an increase in people seeking asylum, but also

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<sup>22</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 48-70.

saw an increase in those wanting better opportunities and freedoms. During this time period many chose to migrate to the United States because they could receive a better education and could freely participate in democratic processes. World War II and its aftermath also left many seeking opportunities to make more money for their families and seeking to rebuild what they had lost during the war. During this period the definition of what constituted a refugee was defined by both the United States and international organizations like the United Nations. It was also during this wave that the United States really began to change their policies on immigration.

The third wave of Arab migration began in the mid to late 1960s and continues through the present day. This particular wave has seen the most change in the reasons for migration and the immigration policies of the United States. This wave is marked by significant conflict in the Middle East, which is considered to be the primary reason for migration during this time period. However, it was not solely conflict that has defined this time period. The advances in higher education at institutions across the United States during this time period led to a significant increase in migration as a result of students studying at universities as international students. While Kentucky has seen a significant increase in international students studying at universities, many of these students have finished their degrees at Kentucky institutions and left the state for better opportunities elsewhere. Changes in immigration policies during this wave have proved to complicate the process for people desiring to migrate to the United States which has caused a decrease in recent years in the number of Arabs migrating to the United States.

## Chapter 2: Migration Wave #1

### 2 A. Section Overview

Migration from the Middle East has primarily come during concentrated time periods often referred to as waves. These waves of migration have come as a result of many different reasons. Each wave also seems to have either a “push” reason or a “pull” reason. A push would be something that prompts people to begin migrating out of necessity. This could be civil war, economic oppression, political or religious persecution, poverty, etc. A pull would be something that is enticing in another nation, such as better economic opportunities or education opportunities, among other examples. In this chapter we will look at the first clear wave of migration from the Middle East to the United States occurring in the late 1800s and continuing through the early 1920s. This wave includes both a push and a pull reason for migrating. It was during this time period that significant upheaval happened throughout the Middle East creating a push factor that caused many to seek shelter in neighboring countries, and the United States. While, simultaneously, many people were seeing that there were much better economic opportunities available in the United States, such as jobs and education.

While there is substantial research on Arab migration to the United States during the second and third wave, there is little scholarly research done on the first part of the first wave. There is very little research done on the migration of Arabs to Kentucky during any of the three waves. As a result of this, the sources that are used in this project are not always purely academic. Using a variety of sources, such as interactive mapping projects, and stories from primary sources, this project presents a holistic viewpoint of Arab migration to Kentucky. One small example of a unique source used in this project is a mapping project called “Mapping the Mahjar”. In 1908, two Arabs released documentation of Syrian American businesses across

America as a way to chronicle the history of Arabs in America. This project, called *The Syrian Business Directory*, was used by migration researchers at North Carolina State University to develop “Mapping the Mahjar”.<sup>23</sup> This is an important tool in understanding the migration patterns of Arabs to America.<sup>24</sup> This tool is particularly helpful when trying to understand early Arab migration to the United States.

## 2 B. Historical Overview

The first wave of migration from the Middle East is impacted most significantly by the fall of the Ottoman Empire during the late 1800s through the 1920s. The Ottoman Empire was a powerful empire spanning much of the Middle East, Central Asia, part North Africa and Europe. It was an empire that ruled for hundreds of years, beginning in the late 1200s and not officially ending until 1922. Over the course of more than 600 years, the Empire saw nearly 40 rulers come to power. However, by the late nineteenth century, the destabilization of the empire began to be evident. As a result of power being distributed throughout the empire to various regional leaders, the central government of the Empire began to lose its effectiveness.<sup>25</sup> In the mid-1800s, the leaders of the empire wanted to bring the empire to a place where it could compete on an international level with other large economies, particularly Europe ones or the United States. They began instituting government reforms and policy changes.<sup>26</sup> The Tanzimat, this period of

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<sup>23</sup> “Why Did They Leave? Reasons for Early Lebanese Migration,” *Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies*, accessed November 25, 2018. <https://lebanesestudies.news.chass.ncsu.edu/2016/06/06/mapping-the-mahjar-understanding-the-life-and-work-of-lebanese-american-business-owners-in-the-1900s/>

<sup>24</sup> “Mapping the Mahjar,” *Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies*, <https://ncsu.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=557f6c3ae8004de08f1eedebfda952da>. (accessed November 10, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> M. Sukru, Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 6-7.

<sup>26</sup> Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *American Historical Review*, (2002): 770.

restructuring and reform, was a period of significant activism and government activity.<sup>27</sup> These changes the Ottoman government instituted were successful in establishing reform, however, the changes would not bring lasting stability. One significant thing that happened during the Tanzimat was the passing of the Ottoman Constitution of 1876. This Constitution was an attempt to establish legitimacy for the Ottoman government on a global platform.<sup>28</sup> Very quickly after the establishment of the Constitution, a new sultan obtained power within the Ottoman government and rendered null the Constitution for a period of several decades.<sup>29</sup> In the early 1900s, a group of Turkish revolutionaries sought to bring more democratic processes to the government and removed the rule of the Sultans. Known as the Young Turks, they sought “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Justice” and used that phrase as their slogan.<sup>30</sup> The group began an official uprising in 1908 known as The Young Turk Revolution. While this revolution played a part in creating division throughout the Ottoman Empire, which led to increased destabilization, there were many other factors that also led to the collapse. The largest factor that led to the collapse of the Empire was the Ottoman government’s involvement in World War I. The Ottoman’s chose to enter the war alongside the Germans and did not anticipate the strong reaction from Allied forces. By the end of the war, the Ottoman Empire was ultimately divided into separate nations under the control of Britain and France.<sup>31</sup> With the increase of modernization within the empire, many wanted to see political processes, like those in democratic nations, implemented throughout the empire. Many people within the Ottoman

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<sup>27</sup> William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), 75-76.

<sup>28</sup> Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 79.

<sup>29</sup> William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), 80.

<sup>30</sup> M. Sukru, Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 150.

<sup>31</sup> Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 137-138.

Empire also faced significant economic hardship as a result of oppression by the government. This added to the unrest that was already moving throughout the Empire. The Empire would go on to face pressure from the outside, with nations surrounding the empire vying for land and wanting to see justice for those inside the empire. The empire faced significant pressure from within, from the Young Turks who wanted to see political freedom, and various ethnic groups that wanted to establish independence. Overall, the Ottoman Empire, while able to maintain power for many centuries, also saw significant tension from both within its borders, and outside. It was this tension that ultimately led to its dissolution in 1922.

### 2 C. Analysis of First Wave

This first wave of migration from the Middle East to the United States shows clearly the complexity of the entire field of study of migration. It was not any one determining factor that led many people during this time period to migrate, but a number of factors. The Ottoman Empire was administered by many different rulers over the course of its existence and the rise and fall of these various leaders brought different forms of oppression to many groups of people. People groups throughout the Empire were persecuted or oppressed because of their religious beliefs, ethnic background, and political positions.

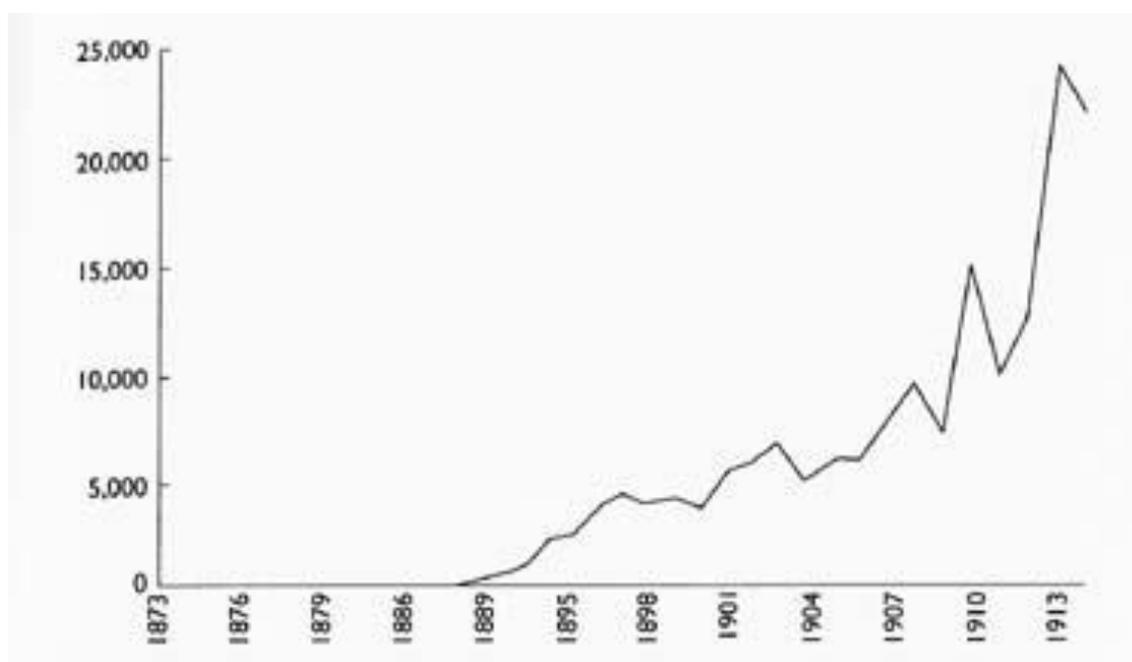


Figure 1. Rate of Lebanese emigration to the United States. Source: Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission: Statistical Review of Immigration, 1820-1910*, in *Inventing Home* (Khater)<sup>32</sup>

The largest group of people that migrated during this first wave were Syrian Christians living in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>33</sup> This migration of Christians took place for a variety of reasons. Some Christians were oppressed for their religious and political views. However, this narrative is not the primary reason for the overall migration that took place during this time period. Religious persecution during this time period was not as significant as some groups claimed.

The motivating factors behind why Syrians began to immigrate to the United States seems to be disputed, with some claiming purely economic reasons like better job and education opportunities, and others pointing to the significant upheaval caused by the Druze uprising and the starvation that many faced during World War I.<sup>34</sup> Syria during this time period included both

<sup>32</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 48-70.

<sup>33</sup> Amir Marvasti and Karyn D. McKinney, *Middle Eastern Lives in America* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 11.

<sup>34</sup> Gregory Orfalea, *Before the Flames* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 51-52.

Syria and modern-day Lebanon. Many Syrians chose to migrate to the United States, hoping that they would one day return. After the War and the widespread destruction that plagued the Middle East during this time period, many Arabs were no longer able to return to their homeland and ended up making America their permanent home.<sup>35</sup> Because of this hope that they had to ultimately return to their homeland, many of these early Arabs did not want to make permanent living arrangements in the United States. Many chose to remain in small clusters and not assimilate into American culture, or even the culture of other Arabs around them. This was due in part to the fact that many of them had very different cultures than other Arabs around them and they wanted to work to preserve their own culture and heritage, because they assumed, they would soon be returning home.<sup>36</sup>

One group that claimed significant persecution from the empire was a group of Syrian Christians known as the Maronites. A sect of Catholics, the Maronites were primarily from Lebanon. The Turkish leaders of the Ottoman Empire wanted to diminish the role that the Maronites' religion played in their daily practices and become the primary thing that defined them. The Maronites' wanted to preserve their ethnic and religious heritage and practices. The empire placed restrictions on the Maronites and created an atmosphere that made remaining in the empire difficult for them. The Maronites quickly began to emigrate to other countries and would become one of the largest groups to leave the empire. Throughout this process the Maronites spread the narrative that they experienced significant persecution, when in reality the tension between this religious group and the government was a result of the Maronites wanting

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<sup>35</sup> Gregory Orfalea, *Before the Flames* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 52.

<sup>36</sup> Amir Marvasti and Karyn D. McKinney, *Middle Eastern Lives in America* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 8.

to have their own territory.<sup>37</sup> Soon after the rise of the Ottomans to power in the late 1200s, the first group of Maronites left Lebanon for Cyprus.<sup>38</sup> Many of those who emigrated during this first wave did so as a result of pull factors, rather than push factors. The economic pull to the United States during this first wave of migration was strong. Many people left in search of better jobs or the ability to make more money. Others left in search for an adventure.<sup>39</sup> Were the basis of the migration of these first Arabs really religious persecution, it would have been evident in how these Arabs migrated. However, many of these Arabs chose to return home after a period of time, which would not have happened if they had left as a result of significant religious persecution.

The migration of Arabs from the Middle East to the United States began in the late 1800s, also as a result of religious and political persecution by the Ottoman Empire. The first documented family to immigrate to the United States was the Awad family who immigrated from Syria, by way of Lebanon.<sup>40</sup> The Awad's first immigrated to Lebanon from Syria following the Druze uprising during the 1860s. During this time many people on both sides of this conflict died, and Joseph Awad Arbeely moved his family to Lebanon for safety. Following their immigration to Lebanon they soon decided to head for the United States in hopes of better economic opportunities. They arrived in the United States in 1878.<sup>41</sup>

## 2 D. Immigration Law and Policies During Wave #1

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<sup>37</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 49-50.

<sup>38</sup> Gregory Orfalea, *Before the Flames* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 51.

<sup>39</sup> Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920*, 51-52.

<sup>40</sup> Orfalea, *Before the Flames*, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Orfalea, *Before the Flames*, 9.

It was during this time period that the United States first established any kind of legislation on immigration. In 1891 the government enacted The Immigration Act of 1891 which outlined what could constitute as behavior worthy of being deported, the process of deporting illegal immigrants, and establishing immigration based on what nationality you were.<sup>42</sup> In 1903 the government elaborated on what qualified someone to be deported, and who could not enter the United States.<sup>43</sup> In 1917 the government added more clarification on the deportation process and extended the groups of people who could be deported.<sup>44</sup> Though the government did see the necessity behind developing clear legislation on immigration during this time period the legislation remained narrow, focusing primarily on the removal of immigrants, rather than their assimilation. However, because the government had yet to implement any kind of comprehensive immigration legislation, migration between the Middle East and the United States remained open.

## 2 E. Arab Migration to Kentucky During the First Wave

While most people who migrate from the Middle East to the United States choose to migrate to larger cities like New York, Los Angeles, or Detroit, there are a number who choose to settle in smaller cities and towns throughout America. One reason that they may choose not to move to large cities is that they want to settle in a place similar to the small city or village that they left in their home country. Other factors include those discussed in migrant network theory and various government resettlement policies. Though migration to Kentucky from the Middle East is an under-researched area, according to most documentation, Arabs began migrating here

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<sup>42</sup> “Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012,” *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 3.

<sup>43</sup> “Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012,” *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 3.

<sup>44</sup> “Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012,” *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 3.

during the late 1800s during this first wave.<sup>45</sup> During this time period, many Arabs immigrated to Kentucky to find better job opportunities, or to join other members of their families that had already settled here. Many came to America as peddlers who traveled throughout many states before settling in Kentucky to open stores.<sup>46</sup>

The resource, Mapping the Mahjar, is important in seeing clearly this wave as it pertains to migration to Kentucky. Using this tool, we can see that during the early 1900s many people migrated from Lebanon and Syria to Kentucky to open dry goods stores, clothing stores, and sweets shops among others. Skilled professionals such as doctors also migrated to Kentucky to open practices. Dumit Simon Sphire, a doctor from a village in northern Lebanon, migrated to Mooleyville, Kentucky, a small town southwest of Louisville, Kentucky, to open a practice.<sup>47</sup>

The migration of Arabs to Kentucky during this time period is most notably defined by its transitory nature. Arabs came to the United States seeking better employment and living opportunities, with some coming only to work for a few years to save money before returning to settle back into their homelands.<sup>48</sup> Those who ended up settling in Kentucky did so primarily as a result of traveling through and observing opportunities or becoming involved in small town communities, rather than migrating from the Middle East specifically to settle in Kentucky.

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<sup>45</sup> Nora Rose Moosnick, *Arab and Jewish Women in Kentucky* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 4.

<sup>46</sup> Moosnick, *Arab and Jewish Women in Kentucky*, 156.

<sup>47</sup> "Mapping the Mahjar," *Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies*, accessed November 10, 2018.

<sup>48</sup> Akram Fouad Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 61-62.

## Chapter 3: Migration Wave #2

### 3 A. Section Overview

The end of the first World War, saw the rise in conflict throughout the Middle East. Regional conflicts left many people displaced from their homes that resulted in the second clear wave of migration to the United States. The rise in conflict also led to destabilization of economies throughout the region which caused some to choose to migrate to find work. This second wave took place primarily during the late 1920s to the 1960s.

### 3 B. Historical Overview

The Great Syrian Revolt was an uprising aimed at establishing independent control of Syria rather than being controlled by the French who had gained control of the region following World War I. The Great Syrian Revolt began in 1924 and last for three years. Syria had just a few years before been established as a country, but France still controlled much of what happened within the country.<sup>49</sup> Many ethnic people groups within the country wanted to maintain their Arab heritage and culture, while outside forces wanted to dominate them. This revolt would end up being one of the most significant revolts in history in terms of violence.<sup>50</sup> As a result of the scope of this revolt, many Syrians ended up as refugees.

In 1939, World War II began which would lead to a number of people seeking asylum, refugee status, and choosing to immigrate to the United States for economic reasons. This war involved more of the Middle East and its players than the previous World War did, leading to more displaced people and significant economic strain placed upon several countries, leading

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<sup>49</sup> Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 1-2.

<sup>50</sup> Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism*, 12.

many people within those countries to seek better opportunities elsewhere. World War II saw a greater number of refugees than did World War I. One reason for the substantial increase in refugees during this time period was the exponentially greater incidents of violence throughout the war. It was largely due to this fact that the definition of the refugee became prominent during this time. A large influx of refugees, coupled with very little research on refugees, led to an increase in interest of refugee research. This interest created a deeper understanding of refugees and led to an increase in legislation aimed at protecting and helping refugees. It was during this time period that both the United Nations and the United States created legislation that clearly defined refugee rights and freedoms. The establishment of the “Displaced Persons Act” in 1948 by the United States was the beginning of the development of legislation pertaining to refugees.

Another significant contributor to the conflict throughout the Middle East during this time period was the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. This war marked the independence of Israel as a nation state. It was during this time period that significant unrest began to be apparent throughout the Palestinian region and surrounding nations. The Arab-Israeli War and subsequent wars caused significant destruction and left many Palestinians as refugees. Though there were people on both sides of this conflict who sought asylum in the United States as a result of political oppression, the overwhelming majority of refugees following this war were Palestinians.

This second wave of migration was influenced by a significant and turbulent period of history within Iran. After World War I Iran experienced a period of unrest as a result of changing connections with global leaders and the economic effects of the war on the nation. World leaders feared that Iran would ally with German forces, so Britain stepped in and made an agreement with Iran to offer protection and technology in exchange for loyalty against Germany.<sup>51</sup> This

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<sup>51</sup> Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 404.

agreement, signed in 1919, did little to provide stability for the region. Many Iranians wanted to ensure the safety of their nation in a time when many other countries around them were being dissolved and divided up for various world powers to oversee.<sup>52</sup> The rise of power of Reza Khan in 1921 was an event that illuminated the Iranian people's desire to see complete independence established. Primarily a military leader, Khan remained in leadership until 1925 when he established himself as the Shah of Iran, a political leader position.<sup>53</sup> His time as Shah saw many minority groups oppressed as a result of political or religious opposition.

During this time period there were many different pieces of legislation created and passed concerning immigrants in the United States. As a result of the rise in international conflicts and the significant economic crisis of the Great Depression, the United States sought to curtail immigration to the United States. Initially they did this through the "Emergency Quota Act," but they continued to change and establish more permanent and clear policies on immigration over the next several decades.

### 3 C. Analysis of Second Wave

There are a number of significant differences between the second wave of migration and the first wave. First, the second wave of people migrating from the Middle East to the United States saw many more Muslims migrating, creating a mix of both Muslim and Christians migrating throughout this wave.<sup>54</sup> Second, many more of the second wave immigrants were well-educated and sought professional jobs when they settled in America.<sup>55</sup> Third, the amount of people immigrating during this second wave was significantly reduced as a result of American

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<sup>52</sup> Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 415-416.

<sup>53</sup> Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History*, 423.

<sup>54</sup> Amir Marvasti and Karyn D. McKinney, *Middle Eastern Lives in America* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 11.

<sup>55</sup> Marvasti and McKinney, *Middle Eastern Lives in America*, 19.

government policies put into place in the mid-1920s. Many people were afraid that the number of people immigrating to the United States during this time would only add to the economic hardships the nation was facing. Americans were afraid that immigrants would take jobs from them during a time when jobs were scarce. Fourth, this second wave of migration is seen largely as a result of push factors as a result of upheaval in countries throughout the Middle East including the Arab-Israeli War. During the first part of this wave, many of this immigrating to the United States were from Iran. Following Reza Khan's ascension to power, there were many people who emigrated as a result of political oppression. These were often more skilled workers who emigrated during this time period and the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 was helpful in allowing many of these immigrants to obtain jobs by making it easier for skilled workers to obtain visas through special exemptions.<sup>56</sup> As a result of the upheaval that the War created throughout the Middle East, many of the people who immigrated to the United States during the latter part of this wave were Palestinians.

### 3 D. Immigration Law and Policies During Wave #2

Prior to the 1920s immigration in America was virtually unrestricted, allowing almost anyone to immigrate if they wanted to. In 1921 the United States government enacted the Emergency Quota Act, restricting the number of people who could immigrate annually. The major reasoning for passing this legislation was the economic depression that the United States entered into following World War I.<sup>57</sup> The restrictions that came with the Emergency Quota Act significantly decrease Arab migration to the United States. Many Arabs would have gladly

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<sup>56</sup> "Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012," *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 3.

<sup>57</sup> Claudia Goldin, "The Political Economy of Immigration Restriction in the United States, 1890 to 1921," in *The Regulated Economy: A Historical Approach to Political Economy*, ed. Claudia Goldin and Gary D. Libecap (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 239.

migrated during this time period, but this Quota prevented large numbers of them from doing so. The Immigration Act of 1924 was the first comprehensive piece of legislation on immigration. It solidified the quota set forth in the Emergency Quota Act and added restrictions and outlined preferential acceptance of certain people. This particular Act put into place restrictions that removed the ability for many Arabs to migrate to the United States. The Alien Registration Act passed in 1940 outlined requirement for aliens and allowed for some people to leave the country instead of being deported.<sup>58</sup> The same year the Nationality Act was passed and clearly defined the naturalization process for those wanting to become citizens.<sup>59</sup> In 1946 additional spousal benefits were added to existing immigration laws.<sup>60</sup> In 1948 the Displaced Persons Act was passed which was the first piece of legislation that the United States passed specifically focused on refugees. The establishment of the “Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952” combined and clarified previous legislation. Following this piece of legislation, the rule established by the Emergency Quota Act involving national origin was removed.<sup>61</sup>

The United States continued to modify and clarify immigration policy, and in 1965 they established a process that would encourage more professionals to immigrate to the United States.<sup>62</sup> The Immigration and Naturalization Act passed in 1965 changed the number of immigrants allowed into the United States annually. It removed a stipulation on the nation of origin and provided for the allowance of skilled workers who were in high demand.<sup>63</sup> During this time period the United States experienced significant changes in its economic status. It was

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<sup>58</sup> “Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012,” *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 3.

<sup>59</sup> “Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012,” *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 3.

<sup>60</sup> “Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012,” *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 3.

<sup>61</sup> “Historical Overview of Immigration Policy,” Center for Immigration Studies, <https://cis.org/Historical-Overview-Immigration-Policy>, (Accessed November 14, 2018).

<sup>62</sup> “Historical Overview of Immigration Policy,” Center for Immigration Studies, 2018, <https://cis.org/Historical-Overview-Immigration-Policy>, (Accessed November 14).

<sup>63</sup> “History of Refugee Resettlement in America: Timeline of U.S. Laws and Policies Affecting Refugees,” *Congressional Digest* (January 2016), 2.

during this time that the need for professional and skilled workers led government officials to amend policies to encourage people to migrate to fill these positions. However, throughout this time period, as the United States began to refine their immigration policies, the trend of Arab migration to the United States begins to decrease. This decrease comes primarily as a result of the tightening of immigration legislation.

### 3 E. Arab Migration to Kentucky During Second Wave

This second wave, lasting from the 1920s through the 1960s, was a wave marked by unrest and tension throughout the Middle East. When looking specifically at Arab migration to Kentucky from the Middle East during this time period it is difficult to find accurate information because it was not officially recorded until many years later.<sup>64</sup> During this time period the most significant conflict to influence the migration of people from the Middle East to the United States was World War II. Following the conflict, the Middle East still experienced significant unrest and would continue to throughout this time period.

It was during this time period that Mohammad Shams chose to migrate to Kentucky. Originally from Tehran, Iran, Shams came to Kentucky in 1964 to attend university. During this time period many people were migrating from Iran as a result of political and economic oppression. Shams began classes in the fall of 1964 at Murray State University. Murray State was an easier school to get into for many international students because they did not have the same stringent requirements that many other universities did at the time.<sup>65</sup> After graduating from Murray State, he worked as a teacher at a school in Paducah, Kentucky. Later in life Shams

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<sup>64</sup> Aimee Zaring, *Flavors From Home: Refugees in Kentucky Share Their Stories and Comfort Food* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015).

<sup>65</sup> David Shams, "An Iranian-American 'Pioneer' Celebrates 50 Years in America," *The Huffington Post*, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-shams/an-iranianamerican-pioneer\\_b\\_4708017.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-shams/an-iranianamerican-pioneer_b_4708017.html). (Accessed November 25, 2018).

moved to Bardstown, Kentucky where he became deeply involved in the community and is remembered as a prominent member of society there. Although Shams intentions after graduating were to move out of Kentucky to seek better economic opportunities, he soon developed strong ties to Kentucky leading him to remain in Kentucky permanently.<sup>66</sup>

## **Chapter 4: Migration Wave #3**

### 4 A. Section Overview

The third wave of migration of people from the Middle East to the United States focuses on the 1970s-present day. This wave, marked by political tension, seems to be both a result of civil wars, regional disputes, and economic pull. It was during this time period that significant policy changes were made regarding immigrants. This wave also shows shifts in the overall culture and assimilation of those immigrating to the United States from the Middle East.

### 4 B. Historical Overview

While the Middle East has seen many different wars, uprisings, and has experienced significant political tension in the past, it was during this time period that many of the conflicts led to an increase in emigration from countries and regions that were extremely unstable. There are enough conflicts that happen over this time period to fill multiple volumes, however, we will look at just a few that have led to the largest numbers of people immigrating to other countries. Many of the conflicts were inter-connected. This inter-connectedness of conflicts has often led to escalation of violence in conflicts and the spread of conflict across borders. Conflicts that span

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<sup>66</sup> David Shams, "An Iranian-American 'Pioneer' Celebrates 50 Years in America," *The Huffington Post*, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-shams/an-iranianamerican-pioneer\\_b\\_4708017.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-shams/an-iranianamerican-pioneer_b_4708017.html). (Accessed November 25, 2018).

larger regions and experience higher rates of violence are conflicts that lead to the largest numbers of refugees. While some of the refugees created by these conflicts have been able to return to their homelands following the end of the conflicts, many sought permanent residence in countries around the world. The idea of refugees was first established prior to this third wave of immigration from the Middle East to the United States, however, with the increase of conflicts throughout the region during this time period, it is in this third wave of immigration that we see the largest number of refugees coming from the Middle East to the United States. It was also during this time period, in 1975, that the United States government first started recording refugee statistics through the establishment of the Refugee Processing Center.<sup>67</sup>

A continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Six-Day War was fought in June of 1967. Israel declared independence as a nation in May of 1948, though this declaration did not result in stability throughout the region as some had hoped. The creation of a nation state only led to an increase in conflict throughout the region because it displaced many people, particularly in the Palestinian region. The primary cause of this war was over land in the Israel-Palestine region. While this conflict was not as violent in terms of number of casualties, as the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, there were still significant losses, particularly Egyptians.<sup>68</sup> One reason that there were less casualties in this war was the fact that it was a substantially shorter conflict than previous Arab-Israeli conflicts. The Six-Day War ended on June 10, 1967 leaving behind strong tensions between Israel and surrounding Arab nations. The war ended with Israel retaining control of Palestinian land, creating tension between Israelis and Palestinians who both laid claim to the same land, even after the war was officially declared over. This conflict also left behind a

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<sup>67</sup> “About us” Refugee Processing Center, <http://www.wrapsnet.org/about-us/about/>. (Accessed November 13, 2018).

<sup>68</sup> Chaim Herzog and Shlomo Gazit. *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East from the War of Independence to the Present*. (Greenhill, 2004), 165.

significant number of refugees. The destruction that the war caused, and the division of Palestinian land forced many to seek refugee status in other countries. The tension that was created following the Six-Day War remains today and Palestinians continue to be forced to seek asylum in other countries.

In the early 1960s there began to be unrest throughout Iran. Many people living in Iran wanted to see a return to “pure Islam” because they were opposed to the lavish lifestyle that the Shah lived. They felt that his lifestyle and the way that he oversaw the government ran in direction opposition to true Muslim ideals and practices. Revolutionaries soon began to stage protests throughout Iran. The protests and unrest continued throughout the 1960s and eventually led up to the Iranian Revolution in 1979. The revolution was unlike most others in that it was a relatively peaceful protest and lacked the characteristic elements of extreme violence that most revolutions have. Many Iranians were displeased with their leader, the Shah Reza. They felt that he was allowing too much western influence into the country and they wanted to protect their customs and culture.<sup>69</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini, a conservative Muslim leader, was able to bring the opposition together, successfully stage a revolution, and establish an Islamic Republic. With the establishment of this new Islamic Republic, came many displaced people. Primarily, these displaced people were those who had prominent positions in government prior to the Revolution, more moderate Muslims, and non-Muslims; most of the people who became refugees following the Revolution did so as a result of their political or religious positions. This led many to seek refuge in the United States as political refugees. The United States supported the Shah during the Revolution, so following the Revolution many chose to seek asylum in the United States. Like previous conflicts within Iran, this conflict led many people to choose to migrate to the United

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<sup>69</sup> Brendan January, *The Iranian Revolution* (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2008), 10, 16, 17.

States as the result of, primarily push factors. Many were seeking refugee status in the United States and were able to migrate because of the changing immigration legislation on both skilled workers and refugees. The United States made concessions for people like the Iranians, allowing them to migrate during this time period.<sup>70</sup>

Though officially lasting for eight years from 1980 through 1988, the Iran-Iraq War created and escalated tensions that have reverberated throughout the twenty-first century. With the establishment of the Islamic Republic in the Iranian Revolution came rising tensions between a more conservative Iran and the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Hussein, a dictator, wanted to stop the Islamic Revolution and preserve his absolute rule throughout Iraq.<sup>71</sup> Originally, Hussein had hoped that creating or escalating internal unrest would lead to the fall of the Islamic Republic rule of Iran, he quickly understood that any rebel groups within Iran would be quelled by the Revolutionary forces.<sup>72</sup> In September of 1980 Hussein officially declared war on Iran.<sup>73</sup> The following eight years would see significant bloodshed, devastation of homes and villages, and people forced to seek refuge in other countries.

A conflict that lasted more than a decade, the Lebanese Civil War was a conflict in the Middle East that created a large number of refugees. Beginning in 1975 and lasting until October 1990, the conflict created hundreds of thousands of refugees. Following World War I, the borders of Lebanon significantly changed. This change brought many tensions between ethnic and religious groups. Prior to the border change the major religion in Lebanon was Christian, but after the change Christians moved into a minority position. The realignment of the border split

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<sup>70</sup> "Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012," *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 3.

<sup>71</sup> Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War* (London: Harvard University Press, 2015), 4-6.

<sup>72</sup> Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War* (London: Harvard University Press, 2015), 6.

<sup>73</sup> Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War* (London: Harvard University Press, 2015), 13.

some ethnic groups, while putting other groups that had preexisting tensions together.<sup>74</sup> Political instability was a major problem that Lebanon experienced during the years leading up to and throughout the Civil War. One reason for this instability was the fact that the constitution and other important pieces of legislation that were enacted during the shifting of Lebanon's borders did not clearly explain the rights, duties, or responsibilities of citizens and leaders.<sup>75</sup> Political instability and tensions between ethnic and religious groups led to a violent conflict throughout the Civil War. Another reason for the instability is the perspective that the different opposing groups had. Some groups wanted to remain in a status quo state where little to nothing changed, other groups wanted to establish clear connections between political and religious rule. While some other groups wanted to take a more progressive route and establish change while maintaining freedom politically and religiously.<sup>76</sup> With so many opposing views on nearly every level, it is no surprise that the conflict arose and lasted for as long as it did. The length of the conflict contributed significantly to the number of refugees and casualties that resulted from the conflict.

One ethnic group that has experienced more upheaval than most groups are the Kurdish people. Primarily spread across Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, this group has faced significant tension between themselves and the various governments of the countries in which they dwell. Within the ethnic group there are people who want to see a specific Kurdish state established, while others within the group tend to assimilate into the culture of their home country.<sup>77</sup> During the Iran-Iraq War, the Kurdish people faced significant persecution at the hands of Saddam

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<sup>74</sup> Joseph Chamie, "The Lebanese Civil War: An Investigation Into the Causes," *World Affairs* (2001): 171.

<sup>75</sup> Chamie, "The Lebanese Civil War: An Investigation Into the Causes," 173.

<sup>76</sup> Chamie, "The Lebanese Civil War: An Investigation Into the Causes," 177.

<sup>77</sup> David Romano and Mehmet Gurses, *Conflict, Democratization, and the Kurds in the Middle East: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria* (New York: Palgrave, 2014), 8.

Hussein. While the Kurds have faced varying degrees of conflict with Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, there have been a few conflicts that have seen significant violence. In 1978 the tensions between the Kurdish and the Turkish people escalated following a bombing instigated by Kurdish rebels in Ankara.<sup>78</sup> Because the Kurds are a separate ethnic group, but live across several nations, they receive minority status in each of the nations that they live. As minorities they often face discrimination and oppression.

In August of 1990, the United States responded to Saddam Hussein invading Kuwait by declaring war against them. The Gulf War would only last for a few months but would bring devastating losses across Iraq and Kuwait. Hussein wanted to annex Kuwait into Iraq and obtain control of their government, so he initiated an invasion. The region and world were outraged at his brazenness and immediately wanted to seek retaliation. The United States responded in a full attack on all fronts. The Iraqi military was outmaneuvered by the force that the United States military responded with.<sup>79</sup> While they initially experienced a setback, Iraq still was able to hold off troops and even attempted an invasion of Saudi Arabia. This attempt at invading Saudi Arabia was planned before the initial conflict started, and Hussein just decided to continue with his original plan. The invasion of Saudi Arabia by Iraq was held off by a coalition of forces from nearly forty countries.<sup>80</sup> A cease-fire was declared in January of 1991 and the war officially ended in February of 1991. While the war did officially end, troops remained for many years, and tensions throughout the region did also. Saddam Hussein maintained control of Iraq and Kuwait

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<sup>78</sup> Romano and Gurses, *Conflict, Democratization, and the Kurds in the Middle East: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria*, 26.

<sup>79</sup> Richard S. Lowry, *The Gulf War Chronicles: A Military History of the First War with Iraq* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2003), 2.

<sup>80</sup> "Gulf War Fast Facts," CNN, August 02, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/09/15/world/meast/gulf-war-fast-facts/index.html>, (Accessed November 14, 2018).

maintained their independence. The conflict created many refugees throughout Kuwait as a result of the violence and destruction by forces on both sides.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush declared a “War on Terror”. This declaration led to a crackdown on behavior considered to be terrorism throughout the world. This global War on Terror ultimately led the United States to declare war on Iraq in March of 2003. This conflict would last nearly a decade before being officially declared over in December of 2011. The conflict saw numerous casualties on all sides and created refugees throughout the Middle East. The capture of Saddam Hussein came by the end of the year in 2003, but the war began to escalate as a result of violence that erupted throughout the country by rebel forces.<sup>81</sup> Coalition forces and civilians saw many casualties and people throughout Iraq, particularly in the Kurdistan region of Northern Iraq, were made refugees. Forces remained in the country for years in an effort to stabilize the country. While the Iraq War was officially declared over in 2011, the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) brought renewed conflict to the area. The United States and other countries increased their military presence throughout the country and experienced violent encounters with ISIL as they tried to overtake various cities throughout Iraq. The violence that ISIL brought to the region created a significant increase in refugees throughout Iraq and surrounding countries where ISIL was also active.

The Syrian Civil War began in March of 2011 following uprisings by groups wanting to see a more democratic government put in place in Syria. These uprisings were a part of the Arab Spring that swept through the Middle East bringing protests focusing on establishing democracy

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<sup>81</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Iraq War,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, December 06, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Iraq-War>, (Accessed November 14, 2018).

and providing more freedoms.<sup>82</sup> Protestors throughout the country wanted to see the authoritarian President Bashar al Assad removed from office. Assad ruled Syria with force and responded to the uprisings with significant force. The force in which Assad responded with created enormous problems throughout Syria for civilians and left entire cities in rubble. Numbering in the millions, the refugee crisis of Syria is the largest the world has ever seen. This conflict in Syria is still not over and the region still experiences substantial violence even today.

This third wave of migration was marked by conflict throughout the Middle East. Conflict within borders like the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and the Iraqi-Kurdish conflict in Northern Iraq caused many people to seek asylum in the United States. Many of the conflicts that started during this time period still continue today. These push factors of migration are a significant contributor to the fact that it was during this time period that the United States saw the largest growth in migration from the Middle East.<sup>83</sup> Regional disputes have also led to economic disparity in places like Syria, another contributor to the current refugee crisis.

#### 4 C. Analysis of Third Wave

The third wave of migration from the Middle East to the United States is a wave marked by conflict. Where previous waves have been a result of primarily “pull” factors, or a combination of both “push” and “pull” factors, this wave is, a result of “push” factors. This can be seen in the number of refugees migrating to the United States during this time period. While there are significant numbers of people coming to the United States during this time period as a

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<sup>82</sup> Maya Bhardwaj, “Development of Conflict in Arab Spring Libya and Syria: From Revolution to Civil War,” *The Washington University International Review* (spring 2012): 77.

<sup>83</sup> “Historical Arrivals Broken Down by Region (1975-Present),” Refugee Processing Center, 2018, <http://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>, (Accessed November 14, 2018).

result of better job and education opportunities, the number of refugees admitted rose substantially, particularly in the later part of this time period.

One significant group that immigrated to the United States as a mix of both “push” and “pull” factors were Iranians. Prior to the Iranian Revolution many Iranians came to the United States to seek better jobs and higher education opportunities. After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, many Iranians immigrated to the United States, or chose to stay in the United States. The immigration statistics for 1981-1990 more than tripled when compared to the statistics from 1971-1980. From 1971-1980 more than 150,000 Iranians immigrated to the United States. Following 2000, the influx of Iranians immigrating to the United States begins to decrease with only a little more than 55,000 immigrating during the four-year time period between 2001-2005.

Following the conflict with Syria and the Syrian refugee crisis of 2014, the United States admitted 84,994 refugees. That number, when compared with the statistics from 2013—the year before the Syrian Civil War broke out—is much higher. The total number of refugees resettled during 2013 is 69,926. A large part of this increase is a result of Syrian refugees being resettled in the United States. In 2016 more than 12,500 Syrian refugees were resettled by the United States, compared to less than 2,000 in 2015.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, “Syrian Refugees in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, March 02, 2017, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/syrian-refugees-united-states>. (Accessed November 14, 2018).

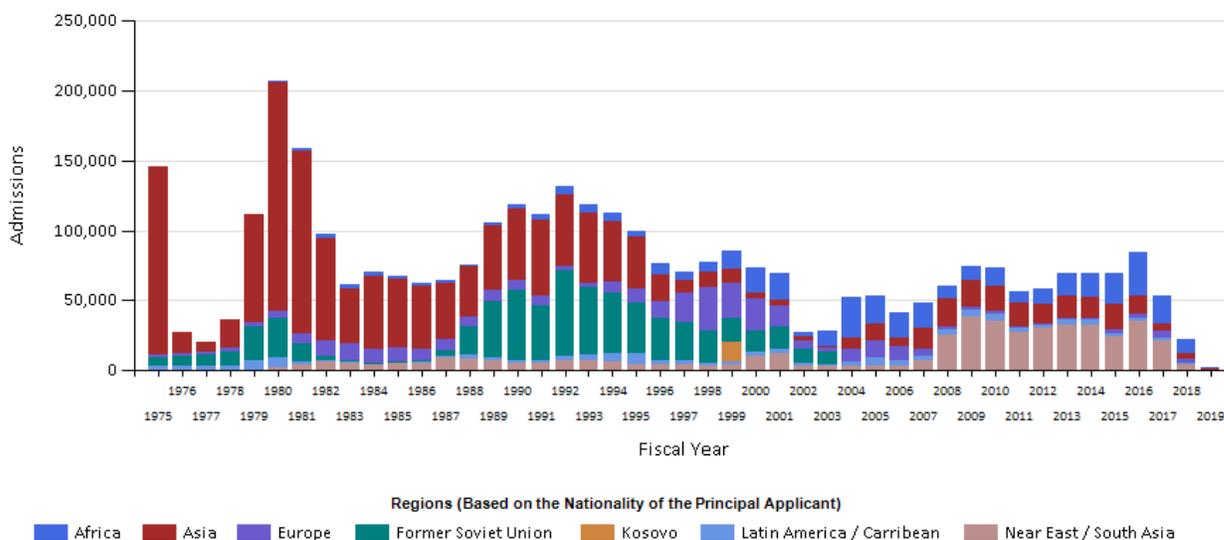


Figure 2. “Refugee Admittance based on Regions (1975-Present).”  
 Source: United States Department of State, Refugee Processing Center (2018).<sup>85</sup>

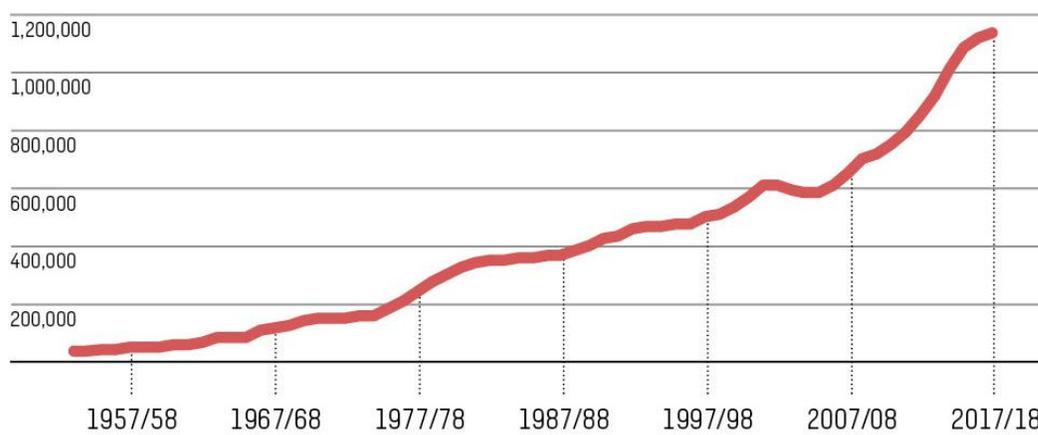
Following the events of 9/11 and the subsequent conflicts throughout the Middle East, the number of Iraqi refugees has risen substantially. Prior to 9/11 this number was on a course for steady increase, primarily due to the oppressive regime, instability created throughout the region following the Gulf War, and economic resources available in the United States. In 1980 the number of Iraqi immigrants living in the United States was a little more than 30,000. By 2007 that number had increased to more than 100,000.<sup>86</sup> The most significant part of the increase in Iraqi immigrants to the United States can be seen after the year 2000.

One interesting piece of information to examine when considering migration to the United States from the Middle East is higher education. Many students come to the United States to study at universities because better education may be available in the United States than in

<sup>85</sup> “Historical Arrivals Broken Down by Region (1975-Present),” Refugee Processing Center, 2018, <http://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>, (Accessed November 14, 2018).

<sup>86</sup> Aaron Terrazas, “Iraqi Immigrants in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, March 05, 2009, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/syrian-refugees-united-states>. (Accessed November 14, 2018).

their home countries. During this time period we can see an increase in international students studying at universities across the United States.



In 2017/18 there was an **increase of 1.5%** over the prior year in the number of international students enrolled in academic programs.

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*Figure 3. "International Students in the U.S. 1953/54-2017/18"*  
 Source: *Open Doors/U.S. State Dept (2018)*.<sup>87</sup>

This increase can be seen most clearly from 2000 through 2012 when the international student population in the United States more than quadrupled. Primarily, these students were from Asian countries and Saudi Arabia.<sup>88</sup> One reason for the significant increase in students from Saudi Arabia is the fact that the Saudi government allowed students in the STEM majors to study in the United States for free, paying their tuition and living expenses. That government program recently ended as a result of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia tightening their budget, causing the

<sup>87</sup> Open Doors Report, *International Students in U.S. Over Time*, U.S. State Department.

<sup>88</sup> Neil G. Ruiz, "The Geography of Foreign Students in U.S. Higher Education: Origins and Destinations," Brookings, July 29, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/interactives/the-geography-of-foreign-students-in-u-s-higher-education-origins-and-destinations/>. (Accessed November 14, 2018).

number of Saudi students to decrease in the past 2-3 years. Many students from other Middle Eastern countries have also chosen to obtain higher education in the United States. Following their time in higher education in the United States, many of these students have the opportunity to apply for an extended visa allowing them to work in the field in which they obtained their degree. This extension typically lasts for one year, however sometimes this arrangement leads to the students remaining in the United States permanently.

However, recent changes in immigration policy has created considerable change in both the number of immigrants accepted into the United States, and the originating countries. After Donald Trump was elected President in 2016, he enacted immigration policy changes that prohibited immigration from several Middle Eastern countries. Many Americans protested and lobbied for months to get the restrictions lifted, resulting in a partial ban instead of a full ban of all immigrants from those countries. Organizations and other countries continue to lobby for policy change to allow more refugees to be resettled.

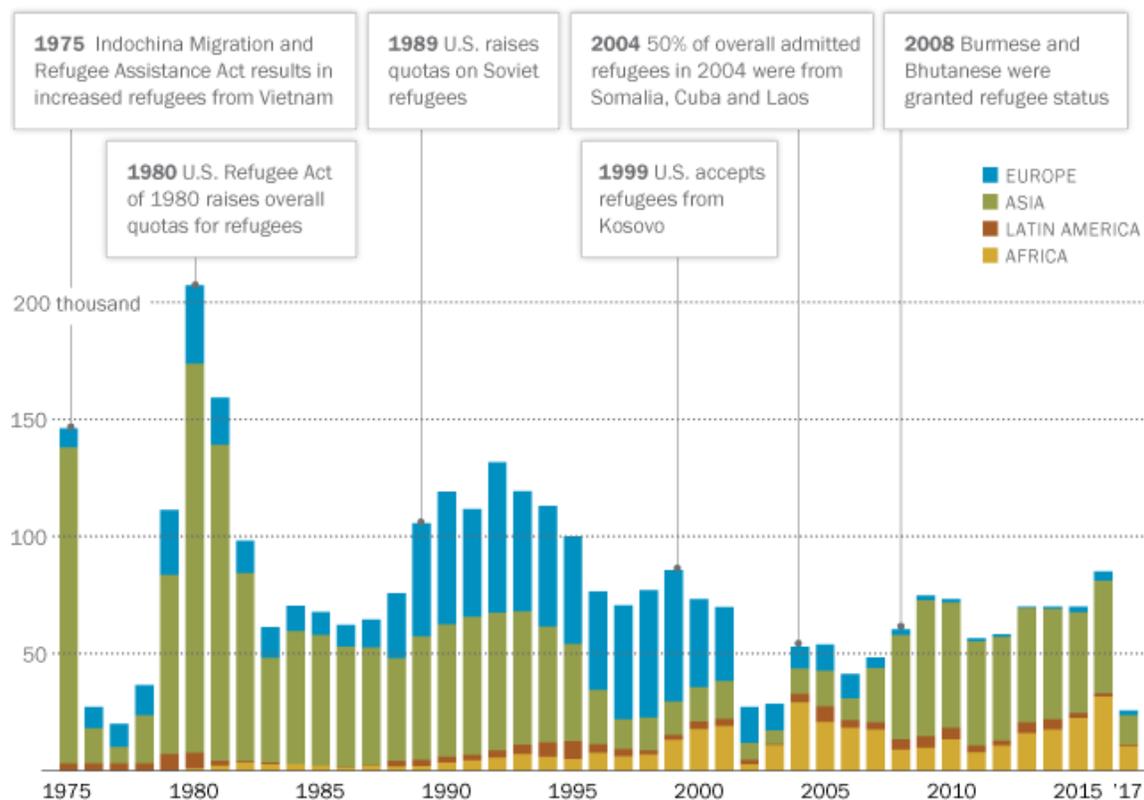


Figure 4. "The Shifting Origins of Refugees to the U.S. Over Time,"  
Source: Refugee Processing Center via Pew Research Center<sup>89</sup>

#### 4 D. Immigration Laws and Policies During Wave #3

The Refugee Act of 1980 became the primary piece of legislation that outlined the refugee resettlement process in the United States.<sup>90</sup> Prior to this the legislation for refugees was rather weak and unclear. In 1986 The Immigration Reform and Control Act was passed which allowed many illegal aliens to obtain legal status.<sup>91</sup> The Immigration Act of 1990 allowed a greater number of people to immigrate.<sup>92</sup> It was following this Act that an increase in

<sup>89</sup> Jens Manuel Krogstad and Jynnah Radford, "Key Facts About Refugees to the U.S.," Pew Research Center, January 30, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/30/key-facts-about-refugees-to-the-u-s/>. (Accessed November 14, 2018).

<sup>90</sup> "Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012," *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 3.

<sup>91</sup> "Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012," *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 4.

<sup>92</sup> "Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012," *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 4.

immigration from the Middle East can be seen. 1996 brought significant restructuring to the immigration process with the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. This Act increased the policing of immigrant living in the United States and those trying to come in. It also removed many government benefits for immigrants.<sup>93</sup> After the events of 9/11, The United States government passed the US Patriot Act which eliminated the possibility of immigration for people who had any kind of connection to known terrorists or terror groups.<sup>94</sup> Recent legislation passed by the Trump administration, known as the Muslim Ban, halted immigration from specific Middle Eastern countries. While this time period saw the most sweeping immigration policies put into place, for the majority immigration was on the rise, particularly from Middle Eastern countries. With the passing of the Muslim Ban in 2016 there has been a steady decrease in migration from Middle Eastern countries to the United States.

#### 4 E. Arab Migration to Kentucky During Third Wave

During this third wave of migration is when Kentucky sees the greatest increase in immigration overall. From 2000-2016 Kentucky was ranked number two in the top five states with the most growth of immigrants.<sup>95</sup> The highest number of immigrants settling in Kentucky over this time period are from Asian countries, including Middle Eastern countries. Between 2012 and 2017, Kentucky fell in the mid-range for average number of Syrian refugee resettlement when compared with the rest of the United States; this means that, for this time

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<sup>93</sup> “Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012,” *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 4.

<sup>94</sup> “Immigration Law Timeline: 1891-2012,” *Congressional Digest* (April 2018), 4.

<sup>95</sup> Jie Zong, Jeanne Batalova, and Jeffrey Hallock, “Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, February 27, 2018, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states#Refugees>. (Accessed November 14, 2018).

period, Kentucky resettled between 100 and 500 Syrian refugees.<sup>96</sup> Most refugees in Kentucky settled in Bowling Green or Louisville, as both areas have ready access to public transportation and shopping necessities. Both areas also have companies that provide immigrant workers with jobs.

Another major player in bringing immigrants from the Middle East to Kentucky is higher education. According to the 2018 *Open Doors* report, the annual report published by the United States State Department on international students in the U.S., there are currently nearly 10,000 international students studying in Kentucky. Of those students, 9.8% are from Saudi Arabia, with students from other Middle Eastern countries coming in at lower percentages. This is the third largest group of international students in the state.<sup>97</sup> The top five schools with the highest enrollment of international students in Kentucky are Campbellsville (3,440), University of Kentucky (2,028), Western Kentucky University (969), Murray State University (821), and University of Louisville (706).<sup>98</sup> Many students studying at universities throughout Kentucky choose to stay in the United States and find work using their Optional Practical Training (OPT) extension on their visas. OPT is available for any qualifying student with an F-1 visa. It allows students to remain in the United States after they have completed their international studies and obtain valuable work experience and training.<sup>99</sup> While these students often do find employers to be able to utilize these extended visas, most students are not able to find employment at places

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<sup>96</sup> Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, "Syrian Refugees in the United States," Migration Policy Institute, March 02, 2017, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/syrian-refugees-united-states>. (Accessed November 14, 2018)

<sup>97</sup> "Open Doors Report, Kentucky, 2018," *U.S. State Dept.*, <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Fact-Sheets-and-Infographics/Data-by-State-Fact-Sheets>, (Accessed November 10, 2018)

<sup>98</sup> "Open Doors Report, Kentucky, 2018," *U.S. State Dept.*

<sup>99</sup> "Guide to Student Work Visas," *NACE* (May 2013): 12.

within Kentucky so most settle outside of Kentucky. However, the enrollment of international students in Kentucky has steadily been declining over the past few years.<sup>100</sup>

<b><u>Immigrants by Country of Origin</u></b>	
<b>Jordan</b>	576
<b>Egypt</b>	449
<b>Iraq</b>	358
<b>Morocco</b>	307
<b>Sudan</b>	251

*Figure 5. "Arab American Population in Kentucky."  
Source: Arab American Institute Foundation (2011).<sup>101</sup>*

The current Arab population in Kentucky stands at an estimated 28,000.<sup>102</sup> The majority of that population lives in Jefferson County. The top three countries with highest rates of migration are Jordan, Egypt, Iraq.<sup>103</sup> Though Kentucky is not seen as a destination spot for most immigrants, data places the state among the top states in Arab American population growth.<sup>104</sup>

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

For some, the choice to emigrate from their homeland came as a result of economic reasons. They realized that the opportunities that they would be afforded in a new country were far more promising than what was offered in their homeland, and they wanted to provide better opportunities for their children. For others, they were escaping extreme violence in civil war,

<sup>100</sup> Kentucky Fall Enrollment Report, September, 2015. Council on Post-Secondary Education.

<sup>101</sup> "Where Do Kentuckian Arab Americans Live?" *Arab American Institute Foundation, 2011.*

<sup>102</sup> "Where Do Kentuckian Arab Americans Live?" *Arab American Institute Foundation, 2011.*

<sup>103</sup> "Where Do Kentuckian Arab Americans Live?" *Arab American Institute Foundation, 2011.*

<sup>104</sup> "Where Do Kentuckian Arab Americans Live?" *Arab American Institute Foundation, 2011.*

tribal disputes, or international conflicts. For some, the opportunity to rejoin family who had emigrated before them was so attractive that they left behind what they had spent years creating. In all cases, it is clear to see that to truly understand someone you need to understand their history. Understanding the history of Arab migration allows me to better understand the stories of my friends.

The process of migration is an important field to study. While migration from the Middle East to the United States is a complex subject, it is important to understand the necessity of different perspectives to truly understand what is happening. In looking at the different narratives that are available for each wave of migration, it is important to see that not all narratives may be true. Taking a holistic approach to researching these waves can help clarify and remove false narratives.

Migration specifically to Kentucky seems to happen almost accidentally. Early on there were many peddlers who traveled throughout different states who ended up settling in Kentucky because of relationships established there, or economic draws such as better education opportunities or better job opportunities. There seems to be very little evidence of people coming to the United States to move specifically to Kentucky, unless there was already an established network there. Later on, Kentucky seems to be more of a stepping stone to other places. Students may come to attend university here, planning to ultimately settle in the United States, but they quickly move on to better economic opportunities following graduation. In the overall migration pattern of people from the Middle East to the United States, Kentucky is a transitory space, allowing for opportunities for those on their way to bigger and better things.

The gaps in research on Arab migration to Kentucky are significant and should be filled in with further research. A prominent gap in research is the fact that it is very difficult to obtain

accurate historical records for Arab migration to Kentucky prior to the 1940s and 1950s.

Kentucky statistical data is almost non-existent in the early years of Arab migration to the United States. In the future I plan to research these forgotten areas, hoping to shed light on a complex topic and create a more complete understanding of my Arab neighbors.

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