

## **“Refugees Welcome? Historicizing the Context of Reception in US Resettlement and Asylum Policy”**

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This paper traces the history of the United States as a country of refugee resettlement and first asylum from 1980 until today. Both stemming from the Geneva Convention and the US Refugee Act, asylum and refugee resettlement are two key pathways that allow immigrants to enter the US, ones that open the door to those who can show they have been persecuted or have a fear of being persecuted in their countries of origin due to their political opinion, race, religion, nationality, or membership in a social group. Yet, despite being two sides of the same coin, scholars rarely examine policies governing asylum and refugee resettlement in comparative perspectives to examine the evolving nature of the U.S. context of reception for forced migrants. In this paper, we compare and contrast policy approaches toward resettled refugees – those selected and admitted from countries of asylum in the Global South –and asylum-seekers –those who show up “un-invited,” usually at the US-Mexico border, to apply for asylum in the administrative process or the courts. We reflect on policy developments explaining when and why periods of relative openness have been followed by others of relative restrictiveness, as well as why different groups of people seeking refuge have received differential treatment. We unpack continuities in rights violations past and present, and discuss what has changed and why. We end by reflecting on what the Biden administration has done to revoke harmful Trump policies targeting the asylum system and the refugee resettlement process that advocates decried as the “death of asylum,” but also the broken campaign promises that have left refugee advocates disillusioned and pessimistic for the future of the US as a country of refuge.