

## One Big Way the US Can Mitigate the Afghanistan Disaster

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August 18, 2021

The scenes coming out of Afghanistan right now are nothing short of brutal. Amid the much-belated withdrawal of US troops, the Taliban has once again seized control of much of the nation, as the alternative government the US spent decades trying to prop up quickly collapsed.

From the renewed subjugation of women and desperate attempts to flee by Afghans who fear Taliban retribution for assisting the US, predictable tragedies have ensued amid the chaos.

Unfortunately, the political reaction to these terrible scenes has immediately been consumed by the debate over whether US military withdrawal was a mistake. This is a complex debate, but there's one way to help the Afghan people we should all be able to agree on: Opening our doors to refugees.

The Cato Institute's Alex Nowrasteh estimates that somewhere between 400,000 and 2 million Afghans could flee as refugees due to the current crisis. The large majority of these refugees will flee to neighboring countries. But the US should still accept tens of thousands and welcome them to our shores. It would be a win-win for both the Afghans fleeing tyranny and the US economy, and Americans have a particular moral obligation to the Afghan people due to the role the US's military interventions played in destabilizing their homeland.

Of course, people have understandable concerns about refugee resettlement. First and foremost among these concerns is security: *How can we be sure that no terrorists or other dangerous individuals are able to infiltrate our country among the refugees?*

The good news is that we already have an extensive and effective vetting system in place for refugees that come to this country. It works well.

According to Cato, we have accepted tens of thousands of Afghan refugees over the last two decades, and more than 76,000 Afghans through special visa programs. Yet, Nowrasteh reports, "from 1975–2017, zero people were murdered by Afghans in terror attacks on U.S. soil."

So, we could bring Afghan refugees to territories such as Guam and evaluate them using the same safety procedures that have worked well in the past. While an understandable concern, safety is no obstacle to helping the Afghan people.

On the economic front, studies show that immigrants create roughly 1.2 jobs for every job they “take,” because they add human capital and make our economy more productive. And while refugees do consume more welfare benefits than other immigrants, that’s a reason to scale back those programs, not deny them potentially life-saving refuge in the US.

“The United States should make an open-ended commitment to evacuate and resettle Afghans in the United States, cognizant of legitimate security and health concerns,” Nowrasteh concludes. “If ever there were a situation where the refugee system should be expanded rapidly to account for larger numbers of people facing death, this is it.”