

Afghanistan Refugee Scenario After Taliban Take over: Issues of Inclusiveness - A Study of Pakistan & Iran

Rafiq Ahmad Sofi

Department of Political Science, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, India

Email address:

rafiqahmadsofi@gmail.com

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Abstract: The Afghan refugee scenario is a matter of grave concern across the world, where the soaring number of refugees is increasing day by day. In this regard, the refugee crisis in Afghanistan has focused on the ever-increasing number of refugees. The last 40 years of conflict have forced a majority of people to flee their homes. UNHCR puts the figure at 550,000 people who have been forced to leave their homes, out of which 3.5 million are, internally displaced (IDP). The impact of this crisis is greater on children and women, who make up 80% of refugees and internally displaced people. Neighboring nations like Pakistan and Iran, where 1.5 million took refuge in Pakistan in 2020 alone, while Iran hosted 780,000, according to UNHCR. This major chunk of the Afghan population has been left to face all possible humanitarian crises. Social, political, and economic issues, topped by the issue of Inclusiveness are in the countries where they seek refugee or asylum. The present study will explore the refugee scenario in Afghanistan after the takeover by the Taliban on August 15, 2021, and the issues of Inclusiveness faced by the refugees.

Keywords: Asylum, Inclusive, Crisis, Refugee, Internally Displaced People

1. Introduction

The plight of Afghan refugees is not a novel idea; rather, it is a matter that has been entangled in the complex internal difficulties that are intertwined with the interventionist strategy used by foreign powers. The domestic character of the refugees in Afghanistan has diverted the focus of foreign organizations to address the concerns of out flow of a significant percentage of the Afghan population from its own country to live a life of tyranny and suffering. This has resulted in less attention being paid to the problem. Afghans have been left with grave concerns as a result of the ill-timed decision made by the Biden government to pull back US and NATO troops from Afghanistan and the sudden takeover of power by the Taliban. Afghans are concerned about the country's unpredictable future under the Taliban's rule and the changing the name of Afghanistan as the "Islamic emirate of Afghanistan." On a global scale, one of the most pressing issues of concern is the possibility that a massive refugee crisis may emerge, which might lead to an increase in the number of people who have been driven as a result of war during the past two decades [1].

In just the first half of the last year, more than 558,000 Afghans have been forcibly relocated within the nation, a status known as internal displacement. In the most worst of scenarios, an estimated 515,000 refugees might flee the country by the end of the year. The majorities of Afghans never left Afghanistan and are considered to be internally displaced persons (IDP). There were over three million internally displaced Afghans at the end of 2020, in addition to the 570,000 who were displaced in 2021 [2]. The conflict has harmed the Afghan people for more than 40 years. Due to conflict, bloodshed, and poverty, almost six million Afghans have had to flee their houses and their nation today. In light of the fact that the vast majority of the Afghan people has fled to neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Iran in search of safety, there have been concerns voiced over the inclusiveness of the main refugee camps in these nations [3].

2. Research Methodology

The present study is exploratory cum analytical in nature. The study is qualitative and intends to fulfill the objectives in a structured & defined manner. The data in the study has

been collected from the secondary source including journals, recent news articles and various quality research papers.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives are the selected targets that define the direction in which the research will be carried out. Objectives are the mainstay of the study. In this context, the present study intends to explore the following objectives:

1. To study the conceptual and historical background of refugee scenario in the contemporary context.
2. To explore the reasons behind the refugee crisis in Afghanistan and the challenges thereby.
3. To study the various issues related to Afghan refugees and the inclusive measures thereby.

4. Conceptualizing Refugees

The term "refugee" comes from the definition of "a person, who has been compelled to leave their homeland in order to escape war, persecution, or natural catastrophe," which can be found in the Oxford Dictionary. People who are forced to leave their homes because they cannot ensure their own safety or survival are considered refugees. Home for a refugee could be a nation, a state, or even a particular location. There are many different things that might cause people to become refugees, such as war, tyranny, natural catastrophes, and climate change. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a global organization that serves as a resource for governments that give sanctuary as well as for refugees [4].

5. The Refugee Scenario in Afghanistan

After those who have fled following Syria and Venezuela, internally displaced Afghans make up the third biggest number of people who have been forced to flee their homes throughout the world. Pakistan and Iran continue to shelter more than 1.4 million and 7 lakhs 80,000 documented Afghan refugees accordingly, making up the vast bulk of Afghan refugees who have sought safety outside of their own country. Since the beginning of 2021, there have been an estimated 600,000 Afghans who have been forcibly relocated within the borders of their own nation, the primary causes of which being instability and violence [5]. The Root Causes of Afghanistan's Current Refugee Crisis The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979 sparked political and social unrest in the nation, which led to the country's descent into an internal and civil war [6] which in turn led to a large influx of refugees into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Since 1979, Pakistan has offered safe haven to an estimated 2.7 million Afghan refugees [7].

The provision of rehabilitative help, assistance from the community, and opportunities for self-employment is the primary sources of support for refugees living in camps [8]. At least 3.8 million people who had been displaced had returned to Afghanistan since 2002. There are currently three

million Afghans who are either registered or unregistered as refugees in Pakistan; however, it is believed that the number of unregistered refugees is significantly higher. This is due to the fact that movement across the Pak-Afghan border makes it nearly impossible to give an accurate number of unregistered refugees. After more than 40 years and counting, refugees from Afghanistan continue to constitute one of the largest and longest-lasting displacement situations that fall within the mandate of the UNHCR [9]. The protracted duration of the conflict has resulted in increased attempts to help refugees, and the host communities in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan have accepted these individuals with joy. Because of conflict, bloodshed, and extreme poverty, over 6 million Afghans have been compelled to flee their homes and their nation. Pakistan and Iran, which continue to shelter more than 14 lakh and 7 lakh 80,000 registered Afghan refugees respectively, are home to the vast majority of refugees who have fled their country [10].

As the battle between the Taliban and US forces progressed in 2021, the country began to see some of its greatest bloodshed. More than 5 lakh 50,000 Afghans have been forcibly relocated within their own country since the beginning of the year 2021. The effect the fighting has had on children, particularly females, has been particularly upsetting. Since April 2021, about 3,900,00 Afghans have been displaced within the country; the majority of those affected are young children (80%) [11]. Concerns Regarding the Plight of Afghan Migrants Abuse of human rights committed against Afghan refugees and asylum seekers on official lists has been extensively documented. This includes rapes, assaults, and other forms of physical violence in many of the countries in which migrants are seeking safety [12].

Afghans residing in Iran, for example, have been purposefully prevented from entering public buildings, including schools. Young immigrants, some as young as 14 years old, were given citizenship in exchange for their participation in the war against Iraq and Syria. Afghans were prevented from travelling between nations to see their families and suffered needless delays in the processing of their visas, which may last anywhere from a few months to a few years. Both funerals and commencement exercises at universities are infringing rights, including the right to a family life and the right to effective remedies [13].

Racism, employment at low wages, and slower growth in compensation were all tactics that were widespread throughout Europe. There have been reports of inhumane circumstances at US air bases, and a web post by an Afghan refugee about the food that he was provided at Fort Bliss in 2021 has garnered some nasty replies from individuals in Afghanistan. Acceptance of Afghan Migrants and Refugees With the assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan collaborated in 2012 to develop a working strategy for Afghan refugees to facilitate the voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration, and assistance to host countries (SSAR) [14]. The Strategy

has been utilized as a platform for the forging of consensus, the strengthening of existing links, and the engagement of new members. Since that time, more than 65 government entities, compassionate and progressive members of UN agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been assigned to its implementation. Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan are the three countries that own and operate the SSAR. When it comes to approaching regional conversation and coordinating all aspects of the SSAR, the importance of mutual support and collaboration between the states, including through the SSAR Quadripartite Steering Committee, cannot be overstated. The Strategy strives to mobilize resources and political backing for the three Governments' respective objectives and policies at the national level, and it is aligned with those national priorities and policies [15].

To affirm the protection of refugees, it is necessary for nations to take on the coordinated approach of doing something about the underlying causes of the problem and acting in a more responsible manner toward other nations, in particular when it comes to providing support for policies that aim to generate income and benefit both refugees and the nations that are hosting them through investment opportunities in national and local infrastructure. When compared to other factors, such as expanding requirements and competing refugee situations throughout the world, cost-effectiveness is of utmost significance. A dedicated SSAR Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy and the well-planned country-level Friends of Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (FOSSAR) chains give much-needed flora for the purpose of reaching out to those who are in need [16].

6. The Islamic Republic of Iran

From 2016, in compliance with an order issued by Iran's Supreme Leader, all children, regardless of their verification status, have been accepted to educational institutions and have studied alongside Iranian pupils since that time. In the year 2020, more than 4 lakh 80,000 Afghan children were admitted into elementary and secondary levels of education, while over 1 lakh 30,000 Afghans were not enrolled. Afghans have been given the chance to pursue higher education at university levels [17].

1. Since 2015, the Government and UNHCR have collaborated to construct sixty schools, and the Ministry of Education has paid for their construction.
2. As of the year 2016, no fees of any kind were to be paid by refugees. According to the Iranian Government, the percentage of literate Afghan refugees in Iran has climbed from 6% to 65% since their arrival there. This represents a significant gain.
3. As with the country's original residents, refugees are eligible for free primary medical care. In addition, under the Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI) programme, which is being directed by the government and is receiving assistance from the UNHCR, all refugees have access to basic and specialized health

treatments at minimum prices.

4. COVID-related kits, diagnostics, and hospitalization for COVID-affected refugees were provided to these individuals at no cost.
5. Additionally, refugees have the opportunity to participate in vocational courses and find work with a variety of local businesses. It is possible for refugees to open bank accounts, which is a step toward improving their economic growth [18].

The need of providing refugee children with an education has been acknowledged on a global scale. However, the policies of the nations that are housing refugees may make it impossible for them to acquire education while they are in exile. According to the findings of our study, Iran's macro policy toward and its ties with Afghanistan have had an influence, at least in part, on the educational policies that are in place for Afghan refugees and immigrants living in Iran. After the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, Iran's policy toward Afghanistan was centered on the concept of Islamic solidarity [19].

In the 1980s, while Iran was struggling with the fallout of the Islamic revolution, sanctions imposed by the United States, and a continuing war with Iraq, the country opened its doors to Afghan refugees [20]. Iran's hospitality was promoted during this time to provide sanctuary for Muslim brothers and sisters trying to escape the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. According to some scholars, the open-door policy of the nation during these years was carried out of necessity rather than Islamic solidarity because Iran needed the labor and the newly elected leadership lacked the capacity to manage the border with Afghanistan or handle refugee applications [21]. During these years, education in Iran was only available to Afghans who possessed proper documentation; nonetheless, Afghans who lacked proper documentation were not formally prevented from gaining access to school.

Afghans have the option of enrolling in schools in Iran to study the normal curriculum; however, tuition rates are determined by the administration of each individual institution. Following the conclusion of the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq in the 1990s, the Iranian government's top concern became the rehabilitation of the nation. As a result, the Iranian government's refugee policy moved to focus on border enforcement and encouraging refugees to return home. During this time period, there was not a significant shift in policy addressing the education of Afghans in Iran; the only exception was that people were permitted to construct private schools for foreign nationals. During these years, baby boomers in Iran were reaching the age where they could start attending school, and the nationalized Iranian educational system was straining to keep up with the increased demand for education [22].

Between the years 2000 and 2010, Iran imposed additional barriers that made it more difficult for Afghan refugees to obtain services within the nation. In this particular scenario, restrictive policies were partly the result of Iran's

commitment to the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the establishment of an interim government in the aftermath of the fall of the Taliban, and partly the result of Iran's economy deteriorating as a result of unprecedented international sanctions. The first systematic code of conduct for the education of Afghans in Iran was created in the year 2003. This code of conduct was by far one of the most restrictive education regulations for Afghans living in Iran. This policy not only prevented Afghans who lacked proper documentation from receiving an education in Iran, but it also caused a significant number of Afghan children who did have proper documentation to fail out of school owing to a lack of financial means to meet the increased cost of tuition [23].

During this time period, Iran approved two further policies intended to provide short-term and restricted educational programmes for children who lacked proper documentation. Nevertheless, the lost educational opportunities during this time period have had a lasting impact on generations of Afghans. Additionally, around this time the Iranian government started to crack down on autonomous schools and label them as illegal institutions. The only educational institutions in Iran that gave Afghan children a cultural education and information about Afghan history were self-governing Afghan schools. These educational institutions were the only ones in Iran that taught Afghans about Afghanistan's history, in addition to giving under documented Afghans a way to obtain an education [24].

In spite of the fact that the Iranian government has continued to place a priority on persuading Afghans to return home throughout the course of the previous decade, two developments have resulted in improved access to elementary education for Afghan children living in Iran. The decree issued by the Supreme Leader of Iran in 2015 led to changes in policy that made it possible for undocumented children to enroll in Iranian schools. Additionally, the citizenship bill for children of Iranian mothers who married foreigners was passed in 2020, which gave children of Afghan fathers and Iranian mothers the same access to education as Iranians. Even if there have been some recent advancements, the fact that Iranian schools need additional tuition payments as part of a code of behavior for the education of Afghans continues to prevent many Afghan children from attending Iranian schools. A substantial portion of Afghan homes in Iran are classified as being low-income [25].

The deterioration of Iran's economy, along with the widespread spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, has further reduced the financial capacity of Afghan households, and as a result, the opportunities available to Afghan children for receiving an education in Iran. During the COVID-19 school year, children who choose to get their education online will need consistent access to a mobile device or computer, which will result in increased costs. In recent years, Afghans have had greater access to elementary education than ever before; yet, access to higher education has remained severely limited. In order to re-enter the nation as immigrants on temporary

student visas, refugees are needed to renounce their legal status as refugees and depart the country. Only then may they apply for these visas [26].

7. Islamic Republic of Pakistan

1. In 2017, the government established a Comprehensive Policy on Voluntary Repatriation and Management of Afghan Refugees. This policy focuses on the following areas: voluntary homecoming; extension of the duration of refugee ID/Proof of Registration (PoR) cards; implementation of national refugee law; enhanced migration management; a flexible visa system for refugees; and registering and verification of unregistered Afghans.
2. During the 2017–2018 fiscal years, the Afghan government certified almost 880,000 people who were previously undocumented.
3. Refugees in Pakistan have the same access to the country's national education and healthcare institutions as Pakistani citizens. In refugee communities, the UNHCR is providing funding for schools as well as Mother and Child Health Centers.
4. In February of 2019, the government gave Afghan refugees the ability to create bank accounts, which was a significant step toward increasing their economic participation overall.

More than 12.6 million people, both Afghan refugees and the Pakistani towns that are hosting them, have benefited from the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) initiative since its inception in 2009. Through the RAHA programme, the UNHCR works to improve government facilities in regions that are hosting refugees, which is to the advantage of both the refugees and the communities who are hosting them. These initiatives are being carried out in the prioritized fields of health care, educational opportunities, and sustainable livelihoods.

5. In order to provide Afghan refugees and Pakistani youth with the opportunity to acquire skills that are in demand in the job market, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is working in collaboration with the Government's National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) to enroll them in training programmes at government-run technical and vocational institutes.

In response to the COVID-19, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is providing immediate financial support to some of the most vulnerable Afghan refugees. The urgent financial support provided by the UNHCR is comparable to the emergency cash assistance provided by the government under the Ehsaas programme. Under this initiative, disadvantaged families get Rs.12,000 (about \$77) to cover a period of four months. In addition, UNHCR supplied personal protective equipment (PPE) as well as associated medical equipment to partners and government health authorities. In addition, a variety of WASH programmes were started in order to encourage a

clean and healthy environment in the areas where refugees were living [27].

8. The Obstacles That Prevent Afghan Children Living in Pakistan from Receiving an Education

Access to a good education is one of the most difficult things for Afghan children living in Pakistan, which is one of the largest problems they confront. Since the beginning of this century, there has been a never-ending battle to resolve this issue, and it is currently of the utmost importance that this be done. Although both nations have signed deals pertaining the rights of refugees, such as their right to obtain an education, very little progress has been made in ensuring that these negotiations are properly enforced. This is despite the fact that both countries have signed agreements regarding the rights of refugees.

These problems are not confined to access alone; language also plays a crucial influence in the fact that Afghan children are unable to receive an education that is appropriate to meet their needs. Urdu and English are the two most common languages used as teaching tools in Pakistani schools; yet, the majority of Afghans do not speak either of these languages as their first language. Because of this, even if they are successful in enrolling in a school, it is possible that language hurdles may make it difficult for them to keep up with their coursework. To make matters even more difficult, the vast majority of refugee camps do not have any kind of established educational infrastructure at all, which further exacerbates the issue.

9. The Practice of Solidarity

1. The Support Platform for the Solutions Policy for Afghan Refugees is both a continuance of a long-affirmed comprehensive strategic partnership and a new approach to cooperative action in accordance with the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). Together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, we are working toward greater resiliency and more permanent solutions for Afghan refugees and the communities that host them. We invite all of our partners, both old and new, to join us in this effort. After the launch of the Support Platform in December 2019, a comprehensive portfolio of projects will be presented to key donors and other stakeholders at a High-Level Meeting that will be held on July 6, 2020 [28]. The purpose of this presentation is to achieve the following goals: • Increase the capacity for voluntary repatriation and sustainable reunification in Afghanistan by harnessing humanitarian and developmental partnerships in the Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs).
2. Create conditions that are amenable to voluntary

repatriation by:

- 1) assisting in the allocation of land to returnees in Afghanistan;
 - 2) Investing in the resiliency and portable skills of refugees in host countries in order to improve their chances of successfully reintegrating; and;
 - 3) Customizing assistance in order to make it possible for returnees to establish initial roots upon their return.
3. Channel extra contributions into the national public service delivery systems in the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan (education, healthcare, social welfare, and professional skills development) to promote inclusive policies of the Governments that benefit both host populations and refugees [29].

10. Inclusivity and Accommodation of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

The majority of Afghan refugees are trying to make a living by opening up consumer and retail stores; nevertheless, many establishments have not been registered with the Pakistani government and hence cannot legally operate. There are also refugees who are operating their own enterprises, and among the people who have responded from businesses, there are refugees who work in the leather sector, the carpet industry, and the jewelry industry. The findings contend that an increase in the number of small companies may be attributed to the arrival of refugees. The vast majority of Afghans are employed in informal sector, which has resulted in the displacement of skilled employees in informal sectors. Certoglu [30] found the same thing to be true in the case of Turkey, where the influx of Syrian refugees had the effect of decreasing the amount of informal employment for Turkish workers. In addition to this, workers from Pakistan have been hired by the firms owned by respondents from Afghanistan. The sharing of skills and resources between Afghan refugees and the communities that took them in served to foster social and economic interconnectedness between the two groups [31].

11. Conclusion

The takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban has thereby exposed the already weak populace to a new form of pain and susceptibility, despite the fact that shortly after taking over, the Taliban have displayed a new face of themselves. There has been a good indicator regarding the inclusiveness of the Afghan refugees in many of the nations that are hosting these migrants. This sign has been seen in many of these countries. In as much as a great number of countries have established a system to address the problem and improve their economic conditions, in addition to delivering education to children at the basic level and to adults at the secondary and tertiary levels, it is clear that this is not the only solution. Concerning the establishment of new

enterprises and the energetic participation in the commercial life of the host nations. Help in the form of financial support has been made available to those individuals who are considering moving back to Afghanistan. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a higher portion of the migratory population was going to get free medical treatment and health care during the outbreak. The issue of refugees may be resolved by improved ties between Afghanistan and the nations that are hosting them, which will be good not only for both countries, but most significantly for the refugees themselves.

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