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What happens post-deportation? The experience of deported Afghans

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Abstract

Deportation, understood as the physical removal of someone against their will from the territory of one state to that of another, has moved to the forefront of academic and policy agendas. Although there is a growing literature on legislation and policy, there is very little in-depth data on what happens post-deportation. In this article, we examine possible post-deportation outcomes. We argue that, whatever reasons existed for people to migrate in the first place, deportation adds to these and creates at least three additional reasons that make adjustment, integration, or reintegration difficult, if not impossible. These include the impossibility of repaying debts incurred by migration, the existence of transnational and local ties, the shame of failure, and the perceptions of 'contamination'. We draw on a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data gathered in Europe and Afghanistan to argue that many deported Afghans attempt and succeed in re-migrating.

Keywords: deportation, Afghanistan, Iran, Europe

1. Introduction

The beginning of the twenty-first century has seen a sharp rise in a practice acknowledged to be brutal, expensive, and ineffective (Schuster 2005; Gibney and Hansen 2003; Collyer 2012). States have increased the use of deportation arguing that is it a necessary weapon in the battle against undocumented migration, a means to remove those with no right to remain within a given territory, and a deterrent to others intending to circumvent migration controls[1] although there is no evidence to support this and, as we will show, growing evidence to the contrary. Undocumented migration continues apace, and many of those deported re-migrate, leading us to question the justifiability and utility of deportation.

Academic literature on deportation has tended to focus on the earlier stages of the process, exploring the difficulties of removing rejected asylum seekers (Noll 1997, 1999; Phuong 2005), resistance against deportation (Nyers 2003), and the dangers and injustices

of the deportation experience (Fekete 2005; Tazreiter 2006; Kanstroom 2007). There is also a growing body of literature on the place of deportation in the state's anti-migration arsenal (Ellerman 2008, 2009; Schuster 2005) and increasingly on the theoretical implications of the 'normalization' of deportation (Bloch and Schuster 2005) or what Gibney (2008) has referred to as the 'deportation turn' (see also De Genova and Peutz 2010). With Zilberg (2011: 4), we note that much of the theorizing on deportation configures it as a means of rendering undesirable people immobile. However, what emerges from the empirical data presented here is that deportation cannot render people permanently immobile, that though individual capacity for action and mobility is constrained by state action, it is not eradicated.

All of the above studies and the recent special issue of Citizenship Studies (2011) have tended to focus on flaws in the pre-deportation system that lead to people being unjustly removed, potentially to danger. Experiences pre- and during deportation, and the injustices that may accompany them, shape what happens to people post-deportation and are clearly important. However, in spite of some excellent studies, including by Brotherton (2008), Brotherton and Barrios (2009), the Edmund Rice Centre (2006), Khosravi (2009), and Peutz (2006, 2010), relatively little is known about what happens to people in the months and years that follow deportation (Collyer 2012), that is, whether once removed they stay away, or whether other potential migrants are discouraged from migration. Whereas there is an established and expanding body of literature on what happens to people who decide to return to their countries of birth or previous residence (Dumon 1986; Hammond 1999; Arowolo 2000; Cassarino 2004; Hughes 2011) and on those returned as part of an INGO sponsored programme (Marsden 1999; Black, Collyer, and Somerville 2011), the work on those returned against their will is more limited, though growing (Ruben, Van Houte and Davids 2009). Given the claims made by states about the centrality of deportation to migration controls and to 'maintaining the integrity of the asylum system' (NAO 2005: 10), and the recommendation in the EU Returns Directive that there should be post-deportation monitoring, this lack of emphasis on what happens after forced return may seem surprising.[2]

Our focus, therefore, is on post-deportation, that is, what happens to people who are removed as part of migration controls from one country to another (not always their country of origin)[3] against their will, and why so many re-migrate.[4] Our argument is that the experience of deportation is likely to make adjustment, integration, or reintegration difficult if not impossible, and creates three additional reasons to re-migrate. These include deepening economic opportunity losses and the impossibility of repaying debts incurred by the initial departure, the social existence or lack thereof of transnational and local ties and responsibilities, and finally the socio-cultural shame of failure and the suspicions of the community.

The focus on Afghanistan in our research and in this article is explained both by the country's position among the top three refugee-producing countries in the world (UNHCR 2012a), and by the high number of people deported to that country in recent years. Afghanistan has a long and complex migration history. Migration has been integral to this region for centuries, creating links and ties that unite communities across relatively recent borders (Schmeidl and Maley 2008; Majidi 2009; Koser and Martin 2011). This movement has never been unidirectional; instead trade, employment, and marriage have

seen people move back and forth, often returning to Afghanistan only to leave again or to see younger generations leave. Overlaying this complex migration history is the forced migration occasioned by more than 30 years of more or less intense conflict which has massively increased the numbers of people leaving—forced migrations that have been followed at different points by forced returns as neighbouring states have from time to time pushed people back (Harpviken et al. 2004; IPS 2009; Schuster 2010). As conflict has ebbed and flowed, almost six million people have returned with and without the assistance of UN-sponsored voluntary assisted programmes, increasing the population of a country with little infrastructure by 25% (UNHCR 2012a).[5] This period also saw many Afghans travelling further afield, seeking asylum in Europe, North America, and Australasia, and a sharp increase in the number of deportations from those regions. This situation is likely to worsen given the pressures on the security situation throughout Afghanistan, the lack of any political resolution to the ongoing conflict in the country, and the upcoming transition phase of 2014 when foreign troops will withdraw leaving Afghans facing an uncertain and volatile economic and political future.

The permanent challenge of tracking and monitoring migrants (Peutz 2006) and the lack of reliable figures on those forcibly returned remain key obstacles to a thorough assessment of return. This article is not based on a single piece of research, but rather on different pieces of research conducted over the last 4 years by Majidi in Afghanistan and on ongoing work by Schuster in France, the UK, and Afghanistan, as well as insights gained by both authors in the course of advocacy and campaign work in Afghanistan, France, and the UK and conversations with the families of those deported. All interlocutors were clear that Schuster and Majidi were researchers and would write about their experiences. Some saw and commented on an early version of this article. Our interlocutors could and did specify what, if any, personal information could be used. All the names have been changed, but ages (where available), gender, and family situation are accurate.

Majidi's research with 100 returnees (of whom fifty had been deported) using closed-ended questionnaires and a team of interviewers in three provinces of Afghanistan (Kabul, Nangarhar, and Balkh) in 2009 and 2011 offers a longitudinal perspective on a small sample of people deported who had been assisted through the UK Return and Reintegration Fund. These studies were conducted for the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and carried out as part of a study into the outcomes of the UK Return and Reintegration Fund and the activities of its operational partners on the ground, the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The methodology was based on a quantitative survey with forced returnees randomly selected from available beneficiary listings, and completed with a qualitative survey with focus group discussions and individual case studies. Those selected in 2009 were then re-interviewed in 2011 to obtain a longitudinal perspective of their post-deportation experience.

Schuster's multi-country fieldwork from 2008 to the present with thirty young men in Paris and six of their extended families in Afghanistan provides a more in-depth qualitative view of return experiences. Schuster's findings emerge from conversations with Afghans in a variety of situations in France over a period of 4 years and over three visits to Afghanistan and with some of their families over a 15-month period. The ongoing relationships in Paris allowed more complex and nuanced accounts of the post-deportation experience to emerge, and facilitated the creation of relationships of

trust in Afghanistan. Initially contact with families was for the purpose of delivering gifts from family members in Paris, but Schuster's description of her work and research interests in response to queries would inevitably lead to discussions. Subsequently consent to use this information—anonymized—was sought and granted. The conversations were recorded in a detailed diary as soon as possible afterwards, and findings and questions that emerged during the writing of the diary would be raised with the speaker and/or other Afghans in person or by phone subsequently as a way of validating and triangulating the conclusions.

Those interviewed, formally and informally, are overwhelmingly young males, since very few Afghan women travel independently outside the country, but the commonality ends there. These young men (the oldest is 40) are a heterogeneous group: the length of time out of Afghanistan before deportation varied from 3 months to 8 years, some were university educated and some illiterate, some were returned to the country in which they had been born and grown up, whereas others were returned to a country they did not know at all, having been born and raised in Iran or in a refugee camp in Pakistan. Among the interviewees, those deported from Iran tended to be poorer and less educated, whereas those deported from Europe were more mixed in socio-economic terms including a high proportion of educated young men. We cite a small number of women in the article, but cannot yet draw firm conclusions on the impact that gender makes to the post-deportation experience because the number is so small.

Scholars working on those deported to Cameroon (Alpes 2012), Cape Verde (Drotbohm 2011), the Dominican Republic (Brotherton and Barrios 2011), El Salvador (Hagen, Eschbach, and Rodriguez 2008; Zilberg 2011), Somaliland (Peutz 2006), and Sri Lanka (Collyer 2012), as well as Afghanistan, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Vietnam,[6] have found that the majority of those who are deported want to, will attempt to, and often do leave again. Frequently, their stay or sojourn in the countries to which they are deported represents a temporary return or break before a new phase in the migration cycle (Peutz 2006; Hagen, Eschbach, and Rodriguez 2008). In part this is due to what Cassarino (2004) identifies as returnee preparedness and returnee resource mobilization—people are more likely to be able to settle if they have been able to prepare their return, to convert assets and send them home, or to set up opportunities or support structures. Those who are deported are those who are returned against their will—they do not want to go and so these migrants are not prepared for their return and do not have access to resources that would facilitate or justify such a return. As de Haas (2005) notes, it is unrealistic to expect those deported to settle somewhere they do not want to be. As we will show below, this frequently creates an impulse to re-migrate in order to achieve goals thwarted by deportation. Some of these use their enforced return to rest, recuperate, catch up with their families and discuss the further investment required by another migration attempt. Others leave almost immediately or at least as soon as they can, avoiding making contact with family or friends. In what follows, we explore some of the factors that make a difference as to whether people deported manage to stay and make a life in Afghanistan, or leave to try and make one elsewhere (the most common attempted scenario), before considering some cases where people have settled.

2. Factors inhibiting sustainable return and encouraging re-migration

As noted above, the existing data from scholars and studies across the world indicate that most of those deported want, and will attempt, to leave again. If, following deportation, there has been little or no structural improvement to security, the economy, the political situation, or their individual perspectives, then the push to leave a country will be the same as before, especially if people are forced to return before they are ready, or before they choose to do so themselves.[7]

The argument in this article is that whatever reasons existed for people to migrate in the first place, deportation adds to these and creates at least three additional reasons that make adjustment, integration, or reintegration difficult if not impossible. These include deepening economic opportunity losses and the impossibility of repaying debts incurred by the initial departure, the social existence (or lack thereof) of transnational and local ties and responsibilities, and finally the socio-cultural shame of failure and the suspicions of the community.

Afghanistan's economy remains fragile and unable to support its population and absorb the high numbers of refugees and migrants that have returned in the past 10 years. Large numbers of Afghans continue to migrate or remain abroad. Iran, where wages are up to four times higher than in Afghanistan (Majidi 2008), is a key destination for irregular Afghan migrant workers, even though deportation is almost an occupational hazard. In 2007, the government of Iran recorded over 400,000 deportations; in 2011 the number had decreased to 211,023 (UNHCR 2012b), which nonetheless represents a deportation figure of 578 per day from Iran. Afghans recognize the high risk of deportation. Some have been deported once, twice, or even three times but continue this migration for its economic benefits, sending back regular remittances to their families in Afghanistan who are either entirely or highly dependent on this income (Majidi 2008).

Against this backdrop of forced economic migration, a report by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO 2012) showed that in 2011, 28,000 Afghans applied for asylum in the EU, the highest number in the decade since the beginning of the war. In 2012, these figures reached an all-time high with more than 30,000 asylum applications, with actual numbers for those leaving likely to be far higher than those seeking asylum (The Telegraph 2012). These numbers are undoubtedly increasing. Afghanistan remains one of the top three refugee-producing countries in the world, with record asylum applications in Europe in 2012. Whereas most of those deported from Iran are undocumented workers, most of those deported from outside the region are those whose claims for asylum on the basis of persecution have been rejected. However, an impressive piece of work by the Edmund Rice Centre in Australia (ERC 2006) followed rejected asylum seekers, including 40 Afghans, and found that some of those rejected by the Australian government were returned to Afghanistan but forced to flee again to Pakistan. It found evidence that nine of those returned had been killed. Clearly, those who do not wish to return because of fear of persecution will leave again if that is possible. Majidi's research has shown that when family members sent abroad to safety are deported, the family will respond by sending

them away again—in some cases further away. This is especially the case for unaccompanied minors.[8]

Whereas those migrating to neighbouring states often plan to return after 2 or 3 years, this seems to be less the case with those migrating outside the region. Rather than concentrating on earning as much money as possible, those deported from Europe seem to have been more willing to enrol in school or university, to spend time on training courses, and to have stable employment, planning to settle permanently. Families are increasingly sending to Europe at least one of their sons as an investment on their future. Alternatively, heads of households leave their young families behind with their parents or in-laws while they apply for asylum, hoping then for family reunification. In these cases, the intention to migrate is long-term with the expectations and hopes of entire families resting on one person's journey. As we will show below, such projects are unlikely to be abandoned even post-deportation.

Attempts by INGOs and foreign governments to create the structures that will encourage Afghans to return and remain have tended to focus on individuals deported from Europe, though some, such as HELP in Herat, are working with those deported from Iran. First AGEF, and now IOM, have been contracted to offer small payments and courses to improve skills in the hope that people might set up businesses, enrol in qualification training courses to learn computer skills or English, or undertake vocational training programmes that will teach them a specific technical skill in just 6 months. However, problems ranging from the inadequacy of these programmes to fit with the profile of returnees and local contexts, to their inability to create or maintain the infrastructures that would allow these individuals to capitalize on the limited resources provided, mean that many of the participants in such programmes will once again see migration as an appropriate survival strategy (Majidi 2008, 2009).[9]

In addition to the conflict and poverty that caused people to leave in the first place, deportation adds three factors that make re-migration even more likely: the loss of economic and educational opportunities and the impossibility of repaying debts incurred by earlier attempts to migrate; transnational and local ties in the countries of destination, exile, and return; and a socio-cultural feeling of shame and perceptions of 'contamination'. We shall discuss each of these issues in turn.

2.1 Economic opportunity loss and debt

International migration is an expensive business, one that usually requires family support. An early study by Ilahi and Jafarey (1999) found that 46 per cent of migrants from Pakistan relied on family loans. For those who are leaving because of under- or unemployment, it often entails borrowing money that is to be repaid once employment has been found in the destination country. Sending a family member abroad, especially out of the region, constitutes a major investment on the part of the family, who may sell land, goods, or valuables on the assumption they will be repaid one day through the labours of the member abroad (Carling and Carratero 2006). For many families, these assets are an insurance against adversity, or a form of saving for the next generation. New arrivals in Paris told Schuster of the fine calculations that had been made as to what the family back home could afford and how they would survive in the 2 or 3 years it may take someone to establish themselves.

However, people travelling overland often find that they run out of money on the way and are obliged to request further loans from other family members to complete their journey.

> We thought the journey would take one or two months, but we were stuck for four months in Greece and a month in Serbia – the whole journey took eight months. When we left we paid E8,000 for all of us to get to Europe. But we did not know what Greece was like. We have to keep calling home and asking for more money. Now we owe E25,000. How can we pay this back? (Tamana,[10] 24)

> After my husband died, we sent my eldest son to Sweden. It was quick for him and did not cost so much, so it was decided I should follow with the other two children – but it was different for us.[11] It has been a year and it has cost E40,000. (Nooria, 37)

Deportation represents a crisis for such families, not just the individual involved—a crisis that must be resolved. If someone is deported before debts can be repaid, and if they are unlikely to be able to repay it post-deportation, there is a strong incentive to re-migrate, even if that means increasing the original debt. Debts, whether to family members or to more formal lenders, cannot be written off and those lenders recognize that their best chance of repayment is through financing re-migration. Smugglers provide different packages for re-migration to facilitate and provide an incentive to leave again. They can either loan the money directly and recuperate it against wages in the country of destination (usually Iran) or loan the money to the migrant and obtain a reimbursement from an employer in the country of destination, leading to situations of bonded labour. These packages frequently offer two or three attempts to cross a given border (Majidi 2008). These 'multiple attempts packages' are a way to respond to setbacks en route and to deportation.

Young Afghans in Paris explained that the first money borrowed was on the basis of unrealistic expectations, but that now they had actually made the journey, and understood what was and was not possible in Europe, they were more confident of being able to repay the debt. When questioned about the difficulty of regularizing their situation a second time round because their fingerprints would be in the Schengen Information System (a European fingerprint database), there was acceptance that they would have to work without papers, but as one interviewee put it, 'In UK I can get money to pay in two years – there [Afghanistan] it will never be possible'. When this young man was asked about the danger of being deported again, he replied that he would come again, though it would take him longer to pay his debts: 'I cannot stay in Afghanistan – there is no future for me there' (Amiri, 23).

However, taking loans or incurring debts is a common coping strategy for all Afghan households, whether urban or rural, poor, or middle-class, in a country with no proper banking system. Households rely on relatives and friends for debts to pay for migration, but also to build a home, obtain medical treatment, send children to school, purchase a car, or (for the most destitute) purchase food. But deportation represents a particular economic setback because of the opportunities foregone by migrants. Deported Afghans are for the most part young males, who left to find a better life, work, and a stable situation abroad, at a time when instead they could have attended school, university, learned a skill, or found employment. The key formative years, between the ages of sixteen and thirty, are spent preparing for migration, travelling a dangerous irregular route, then spending another few years in the asylum system in Europe, or working on construction sites in Iran. Once

deported, sometimes after five, ten, or more years abroad, they come back with no improvement in their education, skills, or working experience. They come back to the same, or worsening, structural conditions, without any improvement in their own potential. The feeling of having 'wasted time' and lost opportunities that could have been, in hindsight, more interesting in Afghanistan, is a reality that they have a difficult time adapting to. In part to convince themselves that they did not leave for nothing in the first place, they decide to leave again.

> I left Kabul before starting university. I had very good grades and could have gone to university, but I preferred, and my family agreed, to go to the university in Europe. I decided to go to the UK at the age of 18 hoping that I would get enrolled there. But it never happened. Six years later, I was deported. All I had ever done was deliver food. This is not a skill I can use here in Kabul. I realize there is nothing I learned that can be used here for an income. I have no education, no skills, I am the same person as I was when I left, but almost ten years older now. (Qais, 27)

The economic and educational opportunity loss has a broader impact than just on the individual. Its repercussions are collective. When debts are incurred to send one person abroad, that is, a young promising son, the expectations at home are that this will be the solution to the many—mostly economic—problems of the household. Often, especially in the case of Afghans deported from Iran, families that stayed behind depended exclusively on that person's remittances. The expectation is that of a quick, if not immediate, return on investment. This is often times easily achieved with migrants to Iran (Majidi 2008) repaying the cost of their migration within a week or a month, before sending regular remittances. However, those deported from Europe face a tougher reality: in many cases, not only have their skills not improved, they have been unable to send regular remittances, and have not been able to repay debts. When they return empty handed, it is the entire family that bears the indebtedness and economic losses. This leads to a downgrading of the family's assets and strategies, hence justifying and necessitating incurring more debts to fulfil another migration attempt.

2.2 Transnational and local ties

Deportation can occur at any time, from hours after arrival to many years later (Peutz 2006; Kanstroom 2007; Hagan, Eschbach and Rodriguez 2008). If the person being deported has close family in the deporting country, especially if he or she is responsible for those left behind such as children, the impulse to return is very strong. Scholars such as those just mentioned have interviewed people deported from the USA, who have families there to whom they are determined to return. Hagan, Eschbach, and Rodriguez (2008) note that whether the person deported is supporting family in the country of origin or the deporting country, deportation means their families are left without support. There is much less work done on those families in Europe who have been separated by deportation, but similar concerns and questions are raised. It is, for example, very difficult for a parent who has been deported to maintain contact with children left behind in Europe, much less support them when they have been returned to poverty. Such separations make (re)-settling in Afghanistan almost impossible.

In the case of Iran, ties in the deporting country are even more complex and entrenched, due to decades of migration and cross-border movements between the two countries. The act of deporting migrants to countries of origin, or countries of citizenship, assumes that this country constitutes 'home' for the person deported, or that it is where his or her family and support system are located. Ties to the country of return, in the case of Afghanistan, are complicated by multiple migration and displacement episodes over many decades. Many migrants who are picked up in Europe have not come directly from Afghanistan: they lived in Iran either as refugees with their families or irregularly on their own before heading west. Their families and homes are not in their country of origin, they may actually still be living as refugees in exile. In the specific case of unaccompanied minors, a large number of Afghans interviewed in France grew up as refugees in Iran and as a result look, sound, and act more Iranian than Afghan. Isaq (aged 26), interviewed in Paris, is teased by friends for his Isfahani accent and the alleged acquisition of the 'famed' Isfahani miserliness. For many, their parents, siblings, grandparents, and cousins are in Iran and Pakistan, and to a lesser extent European countries. Their forced return to Afghanistan is not a return to family or 'home', and is often unsustainable without the proper support system that these minors or young adults need to survive in their country of origin. Deporting individuals 'home' to distant relatives and village elders in Afghanistan makes no sense in this context. Their decision then is to migrate back as soon as feasible to the country of exile if their families are still there, or to the country of most recent residence where their siblings and other relatives might be working, albeit irregularly. It was therefore not uncommon, in our research, to meet one family with brothers and cousins dispersed in Iran, Europe, Australia, and Afghanistan, as illustrated by Besmellah.

> I was deported two years ago; my cousin participated in your research yesterday since he was deported from the UK too, less than six months ago. The rest of our family is in Iran, while one of my brothers is in Holland, where he was deported to because that is where he had his first fingers prints taken. But we also have another brother who succeeded to get his case approved, he lives in London. We will try to go back to him and attempt to submit a new case. He will help us when we arrive there, I can stay with him, before I find a situation of my own. (Besmellah, 33)

Majidi's research on those deported from the UK shows strong ties often remain—either through relatives, friends, or intimate relationships in the deporting country (Majidi 2011). Afghans who have migrated in recent years either have uncles and cousins from previous migration waves living in the UK, or have travelled together with their brothers. Many of those deported from the UK leave behind a brother, cousin, or uncle. That tie still serves as a pull factor and, during the time when they are back home, as a source of financial and material support, as in the case of Ebadullah.

> I am not going to stay here for long, I fear for my life. We are four brothers, three of us have been deported, but one remains in the UK. He has been able to get his papers. He sends us money to help us live while we find a solution. (Ebadullah, 29)

In other cases, it is an intimate relationship, with a girlfriend, fiancée or wife, that sustains the hope of return to the UK, and that allows the person deported, again through

financial and material resources sent from abroad, to survive the time that they have to be in Afghanistan before they can re-migrate.

> I arrived two months ago and I am planning to go back since my fiancée is in the UK. She is there waiting for me. She sends me money here so that I don't have to work. Now I want to go back soon, what is there for me to do here? (Baryalai, 27)

In addition to the pull of extensive transnational networks of families and friends, there is the pull of the informal labour market. Iranian employers actively recruit Afghan irregular workers in the construction or agricultural sectors (Majidi 2008). Once a good working relationship had been established some employers went out of their way to stay in contact with workers after they were deported. Some sent on belongings or wages that they were not able to collect before being forcefully removed from their workplace. Others kept in touch by phone, informing them of possibilities to re-join their workforce. The economic ties with Iran are solid as both employers and workers know of the existing labour demand and of the low financial and logistical costs to crossing the border into Iran. The cost of migration is usually repaid by Afghan migrants within the first month of their arrival in Iran (Majidi 2008).[12]

In recent interviews (2012), living again in the country of origin was often not accepted as an option, whether the young men had been returned 2 months or 2 years prior to the interview. Even after return, there is a refusal to accept the inevitability of return or the need to reintegrate, because of strong psychological, physical, and ideological divides that have been reinforced by the migration experience. Many spoke of the rampant corruption in their country, within the government, and within the labour market. Some refuse to work, either because of ties in deporting countries that sustain them or because their perception of corruption and nepotism in the country makes the search for work seem futile. One young man rejected working for someone who had voluntarily returned from abroad to set up in business and take advantage of the possibilities afforded by reconstruction:

> What is the political future of our country? These dual nationals know about factories, electricity, roads abroad. But they did not do anything here. They have only built buildings that they rent to make money. They have the money to invest in the private sector but it only benefits them. I can't work permanently in Afghanistan because the rules are so biased here. (Mustafa, 28)

Having seen how life is 'over there' renders them unwilling to accept how life is 'over here'. As Emal (aged 33) put it: 'What is there for me to do here? At least in the UK they give you a chance, while here every one fights for their own good, for their survival, there is no humanity.' There is a disdain for their country of origin, and for ways of life that have become alien to them. Even though these young men have been deported from the UK, their personal experience of Britain (or France or Germany or the USA) makes it difficult to accept life in a harsher environment and pushes them to leave again.

2.3 Shame and 'contamination'

The power of shame should not be underestimated and creates further pressure to migrate. Young men in Paris after re-migrating post-deportation to Afghanistan spoke bitterly of

their families' lack of comprehension of what they had suffered en route to and in Europe, and of the difficulties they faced. They had found it very hard to explain European bureaucracy, or that they would have been deported even though they had committed no crime. In addition, there are comparisons with the sons of other families who regularly send back money or equipment, giving rise to the question: 'If he could take care of his family, why can't you?' Carling and Carratero in the context of Senegalese migrants echo these feelings: 'Returnees are not only frustrated and angry but also speak of a sense of shame in relation to having failed and coming home empty-handed' (2006: 4, see also Alpes 2012).[13] An Afghan in Paris explained to nods of approval 'those words are sharper than blades, and the wounds do not heal' (Nemat, 40). The shame is felt not just by the individual deported but by the whole family and the only opportunity to purge it is through re-migration.

A focus group with young men deported from the UK in Kabul highlighted a common experience: having fingers pointed at them, and being called 'the deportee' (also noted by Drotbohm in relation to those deported to Haiti 2011). In a country where neighbours know everything about each other and there is very little room for privacy it is difficult to hide a deportation. In Afghanistan, Majidi (2009) has found similar responses to those found by Peutz in Somaliland: 'those who are returned to Somaliland are potential spoilers of the true culture at home' (2006: 227). Life in the West is sometimes seen by community members as having 'contaminated' the teenagers and young adults who left for the UK at a young age and returned with visible and invisible signs of their cultural change (clothing, behaviour, accent etc.). Life in the UK is perceived as having had a negative impact on their development. In the case of one young man interviewed in 2009 and again in 2011, from Paghman district in Kabul province, his return home led to clashes arising from his changed perspectives:

> They all bother me because I went to the UK. They say I lost my culture, became a kafir . . . all sorts of insults. Another deportee – Habib – returned and was killed in our village last year. I left because I no longer felt safe. But now I have no employment, no stable income, no skills, no future and no family by my side. (Najib, 22)

'Internal relocation' is often proposed by courts in Europe as a solution for those who cannot be returned to their areas of origin, or to their homes. However, 'internal relocation' is not feasible in the Afghan context due the essential role played by family networks. Where those deported are seen as shamed or contaminated, access to such networks may be withdrawn. Without networks to offer support and employment opportunities, integration into a community is almost impossible. A report published in 2007 by Saito and Hunte shows the challenges of complex reintegration, which include the risks of social exclusion and discrimination, the lack of any skills that could fit with the Afghan labour market even if there were employment opportunities, and the difficulties of meeting material needs during 'reintegration'. In Afghanistan, there is little other choice but to go back to where individuals have social connections. In this case, if someone is rejected by his community, re-migration may be the only option given the socio-economic infeasibility of local integration.

In the light of these factors, re-migration is often a rational choice—a rational alternative to staying and suffering. In the Hagan, Eschbach, and Rodriguez study (2008) 23% of the sample had experienced multiple deportations; some of the research subjects had been

deported three times. In the Afghan context, Majidi has noted that most chose to 'rest and recuperate' following deportation, spending time and catching up with friends and family before deciding the 'next steps' and making preparations to leave again. Given the difficult conditions under which Afghans live in Iran—frequently living on their worksite, in buildings under construction, and without any opportunity for leisure or even to walk outside of their workplace—the period after return, whether by force or by choice, is an opportunity to get some rest and see their loved ones. In Schuster's research, it is difficult to tell how prevalent this experience is, since deportation was only one of a number of issues being considered, but a number of young men had returned to Paris after being deported to Afghanistan. The average time spent in Afghanistan was 3 months for those deported from Iran, and 6 months for those from the UK.

The experience of deportation from the UK is commonly lived as a shock and a catastrophe, the worst case scenario. Having been removed and returned to Afghanistan by force, some buffer time to plan the next steps is needed. As noted above, some enrol in assistance programmes, initially provided by AGEF and now by IOM. The support and money provided are, contrary to the aims of the programmes, sometimes used to 'buy time' before leaving again. After the period of assistance and recuperation (usually 6 months) ends, many decide to leave and make a new attempt at migration.

> He was always thinking about how to gather the money to leave to the UK again. He has not been back in the past year: after he was deported, he used to work in a shop next to me. Before closing off his business, he told me he had plans to go to Iran, work there for a while, until he had money to pay a smuggler to go back to the UK. It took him a few months to make up his mind, but once he had decided, that was it, he left the next day. He has not been back since or else I would have known. (Abdul Wahed)

Many of those deported, whether or not they accept the assistance packages, will leave again. Interviewing the same group of individuals in 2009 and 2011, Majidi found that three in four had left again—unsure of their destination, but certain that they could not 'reintegrate' in their place of return.

3. Factors that facilitate staying

Although most people who have migrated and are deported seem to leave again, or plan to, not all do. A majority of deportations to Afghanistan are from Iran.[14] Some people who have been forced to return (either directly or indirectly) are now settled in Afghanistan in spite of the ongoing lack of security and fluctuating levels of threat, and in spite of the limited opportunities that cause many thousands of migrants to leave each year. Reflecting on meetings with such deportees and their families in 2011, it seemed that although very many deported Afghans return again to Iran, some stay and build a life in Afghanistan. The proportion who do appears higher among those deported from Iran than among those who had been deported from further away. If this is the case, what factors might explain this?

Migration to Iran is relatively inexpensive, about US$500 for a single adult male (significantly more for families travelling with women and children), although prices have been going up over the last few years due to stricter border controls, and wages are often four

times higher than in Afghanistan (Majidi 2008). This means that the family that remains in Afghanistan is not under the same pressure to re-migrate to recoup their investment and it may make more sense for the family to remain in Afghanistan post-deportation, just sending one male member back (usually without papers) to Iran or further afield to earn enough to remit to the family. Part of the calculation may be that given the higher cost of living in those countries, the discrimination experienced and the lack of access to higher education for children, it makes more sense for one male member to return. In this case, it is the wage of the person who re-migrates post-deportation that facilitates the reintegration of the family.

Just as on arrival in a new country, access to networks of family and friends able and willing to assist, to accommodate, and to offer support facilitates the integration of new migrants into receiving countries (Cassarino 2004), it seems reasonable to assume that such networks will also be important in the first months after deportation. The existence of opportunities to work and or go to school would seem important in cushioning return and facilitating the construction of a future, as would transferable capital. In order to try to create opportunities for those deported, some NGOs and some deporting governments have set up programmes to create livelihoods and encourage sustainable return (Majidi 2009). There is some evidence that this is having limited success:

> I have an income of 9,000 Afghanis [US$180] for the 6 of us, mostly from livestock. IOM provided me with cattle, a few mother sheep, which I still use today for income. This has allowed me to have some level of trade that is still operational, so at least the help I received then has sustained me to this day and it has already been three years. But I do not help in the reconstruction of my country, it is about day-to-day survival here. (Shingul, 26)

> My time in the UK was wasted; I did not learn any skill or receive any education that I could use when I returned to Afghanistan in 2009. Instead, it is through IOM's support that I enrolled in a private institute and learned the computer skills that have allowed me to become a technician in this internet company, and to be recently promoted to manager. Ironically, it is in Afghanistan, not in the UK, that I learned to use a keyboard, a computer, to send emails and go on the internet. (Ibrahim, 32)

Money is clearly important in ensuring survival, as seen from Shingul's comment above, but so too are skills learnt abroad that can be applied 'at home'. Some Afghans in London and Paris, for example, commented enviously on a friend's language skills:

> Listen to him – he speaks French, English, Greek and Turkish. If I was him, I could go home and make a fortune – I could work with all the foreign people 'hey – you need anything – you just ask me'. (Mushtaba, 30)

In another case, a young man, deported from the UK in 2009, used his English language skills to turn his forced return into a positive and thriving social and economic experience at home. Samim quickly found a job as a driver for the German government's aid agency, GIZ, in Kabul. He was placed in this job by AGEF, the organization in charge of his 'reintegration', and now has a stable income and is able to provide for his immediate family. However, his ability to capitalize on skills learnt abroad meant that his deportation may have encouraged other family members to leave. His brother subsequently went to the UK and was later deported, leaving behind his fiancée. For this brother, that fiancée

constitutes a strong incentive to leave again, although re-entry will have to be clandestine, with all the attendant high financial cost and human risks.

Some who stay in Afghanistan post-deportation do not thrive but are unable to leave again. Some individuals do not have access to family networks and remain isolated. This group has no access to the resources necessary to re-commence the journey, which may also lead to psychological damage, in some cases worsening the damage inflicted by deportation. The 'loss of face' occasioned by deportation means that some people do not contact their family, but remain in the city to which they have been returned (e.g. Kabul). Some will scratch around trying to find odd jobs until they can raise the funds to leave again.[15]

Staying may mean something akin to confinement, an involuntary immobility, where the would-be migrant cannot adjust, integrate, or reintegrate but cannot migrate again. We use these terms while acknowledging, with Hammond (1999) and Black and Gent (2006), their inadequacy. As far as we know, there are no studies that examine the successful reintegration of deported people back into their (real or supposed) communities of origin, so little is known about how or why this happens. Even relatively positive experiences following deportation, such as those of Ibrahim and Samim, may have ambiguous outcomes. It is important to note that even when people decide not to leave again post-deportation, contrary to the assumption of policymakers there does not seem to be a simple correlation between deportation and deterring future migration. Managing to survive on a day-to-day basis may not offer much of a perspective for future generations, so that migration, especially given how tightly it is woven into the history of Afghanistan, continues to be seen as a possible strategy for other family members for improving family fortunes.

4. Conclusion

Whether people stay or leave again post-deportation depends on a complex array of factors, such as accumulated debt, the loss of opportunities and time, the forging of transnational links, and the pressure of shame, factors that state policies do not take into account. Current frameworks of deportation by European states include packages of 'return and reintegration', focusing on training courses and financial assistance. However, these concentrate on the individual as a unit of assistance, taking a very narrow view of the existing needs that are for the most part collective and structural. The programmes provided by intergovernmental agencies and international NGOs to persuade forcibly returned migrants to stay cannot compete with the pressures on them to leave. States create simplifying fictions (Scott 1999) that facilitate the control and management of populations (Hindess 2000), and those large agencies and NGOs are subject to the same logic. However, short-term (typically 6 months) and simple solutions such as training and business development courses cannot provide solutions to the complex issues outlined above.

As Scott (1999) more generally, and Castles (2004) in relation to migration, have shown these simplified state policies lead to perverse outcomes and to failure, even judged in their own terms. Deportation does not deter undocumented migration, because the rational calculations made by migrants and the migratory pressures to which they are subject are far

more complex than a simple risk analysis of the likelihood of being caught and deported. It would seem that for those who have been deported, factors such as the need to repay debts and remit to dependents, the shame of failure and the difficulties of settling outweigh the risks of further deportations, and in fact create additional pressures to leave again.

Putting this in the context of Afghanistan (although there are clear echoes in the work of other scholars cited in this article), deportation is absorbed into the cycle of migration, and of return, that is part of the history of Afghanistan and its people. Forced return will not deter further undocumented migration, even of those who have themselves been deported. This then inevitably raises questions about the justifiability of deportation policies, in particular to insecure countries like Afghanistan, especially when 2014 promises even greater insecurity and uncertainty for its population. It also raises the question of the role of humanitarian and aid organizations depoliticizing this inherently violent state practice (Collyer 2012). The authors understand with Gibney and Hansen (2003) that deportation has more symbolic than real intentions, that governments are more concerned with the perceptions of their electorate than pursuing effective policies. Unfortunately, given the significance deportation has acquired as a 'technology of citizenship', a means of drawing distinctions between citizens and foreigners, perhaps the most that can be hoped for in the Afghan context is a moratorium on deportations until at least 2015 to allow the new government to find its feet. The present international and Afghan political and economic contexts make further research that explores the outcomes of deportation for those deported, the families, and their communities, and critically engages with deportation policies urgently necessary.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Elsewhere Collyer (2012) and others have persuasively argued that deportation is actually about reinforcing the citizen–state relationship and in drawing distinctions between citizens and non-citizens.
2. Or perhaps not—since a clear body of evidence on the inefficacy of deportations would make them harder to justify, and as Collyer notes 'would almost certainly highlight a

range of issues around ill treatment of deportees that it is in the interests of European states to overlook' (2012: 282).

3. Though we have encountered this less in the case of Afghans, in ongoing work in Uganda, Schuster has encountered Tanzanians and Congolese asylum seekers returned to that country from the UK.

4. We do not insist that those removed have been physically coerced, but that they have no choice about returning (see discussion in Collyer 2012).

5. Because of the circular and constant nature of Afghan migration, it is very difficult to cite statistics with any confidence.

6. Most, though not all, of these studies are on deportations from the USA and Canada. Though it is too early to be certain, it seems that whereas European states do deport non-citizens with convictions, the proportion of those deported following a conviction is higher from North America, and there is a higher proportion of refused asylum seekers and undocumented migrants from Europe. There also seems to be a higher percentage of people who have been in the USA for many years, often most if not all of their lives, whereas a greater proportion of those deported from Europe seem to have been there for <10 years (these conclusions are tentative because statistical data on deportations are limited and unreliable). This may simply be due to the fact that proportionately North America has fewer asylum seekers than Europe.

7. Many countries depend heavily on remittances from migrants abroad. The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Acra noted that 'returning migrants meant not just the possible burden of society supporting them to reintegrate, but a reduction in remittances which had hitherto supported households and in some cases been the mainstay of local economies as was the case in some communities in the BrongAhafo Region'. Source: http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=213702.

8. For this group, to safety concerns may be added the cost and or lack of access to education. This additional concern does not negate the former. Unaccompanied minors in France explained to Majidi that after deportation from Iran, a decision is made taking into account the age, capabilities, economic resources of, and potential risk to the youth in question to send him or occasionally her further abroad, often to Europe.

9. The picture offered here is somewhat reductive and does not reflect the complexity of the reasons why Afghans and others migrate, including adventure, curiosity, marriage, and progress to adulthood.

10. All names have been changed.

11. The greater expense was related partly to Nooria's age and gender, but more to being accompanied by two children, all of which made safer, and therefore more expensive, modes of travel necessary.

12. This report shows that, on average, Afghans migrating to Iran find employment within 11 days; and most within a month. As a result they are able to immediately pay back the cost of their migration, that is, within the first month.

13. Similar comments were made by sub-Saharan Africans in Oujda during fieldwork in 2004. Nathan, from Nigeria, had been deported three times, twice to Lagos and once to Morocco. On the last two occasions, the deportations were from Spain and between those two deportations his partner had given birth to a child. He explained that he

had been away from Nigeria for 8 years and so his family in Spain were all he had. When asked about deciding to leave Lagos again, he responded that he had left Lagos each time within a couple of hours—shame preventing him from contacting his family there: 'When I left I wore a suit and had a watch on my wrist and rings on fingers. How could I let my family see me like this?' and he pointed to his tattered tee shirt and jeans and his split trainers.

14. Although in June 2012 the Government of Pakistan announced its intention to deport 1 million undocumented Afghans from its territory back to Afghanistan.

15. For some who have been deported, including a handful of people from the UK with whom the Refugee Law Project in Kampala are working, deportation sees them trapped in a city, cut off from family networks and support, and leads to alcoholism, destitution, physical and psychological ill health, sex work and its attendant risks (disease, beatings, robbery), and early death.

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