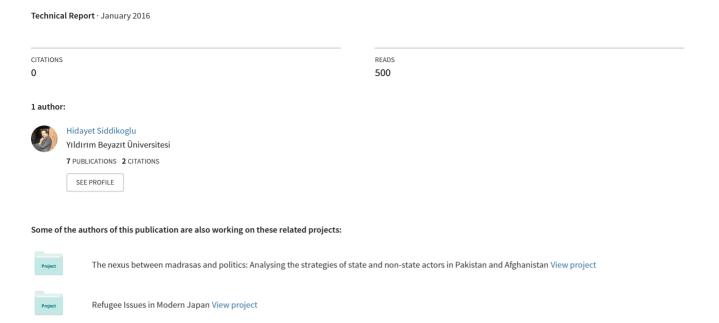
Pakistan's Inconsistent Refugee Policy: Identity and Cultural Crisis of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan



PAKISTAN'S INCONSISTENT REFUGEE POLICIES: IDENTITY AND CULTURAL CRISIS OF AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN



REPORT:

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REPORT

Pakistan's Inconsistent Refugee Policies: Identity and Cultural Crisis for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

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Overview

Despite the fact that Pakistan is not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, it has been housing the largest number of Afghan refugees since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the number of registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan by 2014 was 1.61 million. Additionally, there are nearly one million undocumented Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. Although the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan has remained variable under the protracted exodus due to civil wars ensuing from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as well as repatriations under the regime changes (such as the collapse of the communist regime in 1992) and the United States (US) and its allies' intervention in Afghanistan following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks (hereafter 9/11) on the US, today Pakistan continues to host the largest number of Afghan refugees compared to any other country around the world.

For nearly four decades, Afghan refugees in Pakistan have remained subject to the varying refugee policies of the government of Pakistan. For example, Pakistan's Afghan refugee policies have changed from being friendly and benevolent in the late 1970s, to restrictive during the 1990s, to abusive for the most part in the contemporary era. Pakistan's Afghan refugee policies have remained inconsistent with respect to both changing political and strategic situations in the region and to changing circumstances of international humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees in the post-Cold War era. The most important reasons were the demise of the Soviet Union, which diminished the strategic and political importance of the region in the international community, particularly to a large extent with regard to US interests, which negatively impacted the economic assistance and aid flow to Afghans refugees. In the same way, the emergence of new deadly conflicts in Africa, (Rwanda, Somali) and Eastern Europe (Bosnian war) in the post-Cold War era have shifted humanitarian

¹ See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Pakistan: Refugee Operation 2014, http://unhcrpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/UNHCR-Pakistan-Refugee- Operations-Leaflet2.pdf, (accessed December 21, 2015).

² See Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Afghan Refugees and Returnees: Corruption and Lack of Afghan Ministerial Capacity Have Prevented Implementation of a Long-term Refugee Strategy," August 2015, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR-15-83-AR.pdf, (accessed December 21, 2015), 1.

and political attention from Afghan refugees in Pakistan to Africa and Eastern Europe. Consequently, the largest UNHCR operating office in Pakistan³ with a lack of political and economic support from donor countries found itself incapable of providing the requisite protection to Afghan refugees.⁴

Seen from the above-stated perspective, what matters here are not the refugee policies of Pakistan or the execution of such policies, but rather what is important to know is how the strategic and politically inspired inconsistent refugee policies of Pakistan have influenced the social and cultural identities of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Notably, what is equally important to understand is that for millions of Afghans, Pakistan symbolises the country of origin in which they were born and where they have spent the most important moments of their lives (childhood, marriage, setting up businesses, raising their children) irrespective of either the friendly or brutal refugee policies of Pakistan. Viewed in this light, the central issue is how to reintegrate millions of Afghan refugees who from their births onwards have been raised practicing a culture, tradition and education in Pakistani societies which differs from the country of origin in which their ancestors were born. It is equally important to look into the economic, social, cultural and security backlashes of Pakistan's Afghan refugee strategies on Pakistani societies. Seen from this aspect, this report focuses on the political and security concerns of Pakistan as well as on the identity and cultural crisis of Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Before starting with the next part, it is useful to have some clarity about what we take the term 'refugee' to be in this report. 'Refugee' in this paper refers to a person who is forced to leave his or her home for reasons such as prosecution (because of race, religion, nationality), fear of being killed, looted and sexually assaulted. It is also important to elaborate why for millions of Afghans Pakistan has become a favourite destination in which to seek refuge. There were at least two important factors that made Pakistan a favourite destination for Afghan refugees. First, was the ethnic and religious proximity of Pakistan to Afghans (particularly,

³ See Rudiger Schoch, "Afghan Refugees in Pakistan during the 1980s: Cold War Politics and Registration Practice," *UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service*, Research Paper no.157, June 2008, http://www.unhcr.org/4868daad2.html, (accessed, January 9, 2016), 1.

⁴ See Daniel Langenkamp, "The Victory of Expediency Afghan Refugees and Pakistan in the 1990s," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 27 (2003), 230.

Pashtuns) and second was Pakistan's benevolent refugee policy, *prima facie*, during the Cold War. Nevertheless, there are series of accusations on the part of Pakistan that her benevolence and generous attitude towards Afghan refugees, which has allowed them to live and work freely across the country, was a part of its national strategic agenda.⁵

Historical Background

The constitutional amendment in 1964 adapted a modern governing system that allowed for the formation of political parties, parliament, and an independent judiciary department in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, with more than 90% of the population being illiterate, the new reform had little or no impact on the everyday lives of predominantly rural and tradition-bound Afghans. According to Katzman, even today, people prefer to practice customary law (about 80% of cases are decided in the informal justice system). The number was even higher during the 1960s when there were merely 50 secondary schools with a total enrolment of 16,650 students (about 3,060 of which were female students) in the entire country. In fact, what is important to note in this context is the way in which Afghans living in cultural and religiously bound tribal cocoons were not ready to embrace modernisation. The Afghan politburo's miscalculated, ad hoc and impromptu efforts to modernise the Afghan nation state, in fact, have become one of the root causes of political instability that has gradually jeopardised the raison d'être and threatened the very existence and sovereignty of Afghanistan during the Cold War and in the post-Cold War epochs.

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⁵ Langenkamp, "The Victory of Expediency Afghan Refugees and Pakistan in the 1990s," 230 also see page, 232 -233.

⁶ See Angelo Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan a Modern History*, (New Delhi: Brijbasi Art Press Ltd. 2011), 40.

⁷ Rasanayagam, Afghanistan a Modern History, 41.

⁸ See Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance." *Congressional Research Service*, 12 January 2015 http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21922.pdf (accessed July 25, 2014), 13.

⁹ See Saif R., Samady, 'Education and Afghan Society in the Twentieth Century', *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Education Sector*, November 2001 http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001246/124627E.pdf, 43.

The new constitution that Shankar calls 'new democracy' allowed Marxist and communist leaders to form the first Afghan political party, the so-called People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in the 1960s. ¹⁰ Additionally, easing the censorship on press under the promulgation of Press Law in 1965 paid lip service to the growing political movement against the constitutional monarchy in Afghanistan. ¹¹ The PDPA eventually overthrew the self-appointed President, Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan, who came to power ousting his cousin monarch, King Zaher Shah, in 1973, during a political mutiny called the Saur Revolution in 1978. The revolution fragmented political unity in Afghanistan. The PDPA was divided into conflicting political parties of PDPA *Khalq* (people) and *Parcham* (flag). Furthermore, some new political parties representing different ethnic groups such as '*Shu'la-yi-Jawed* (Eternal Flame)', led by Hazara minority, and '*Setam-i-Milli* (Against National Oppression)', headed by Tajik, ¹² emerged and joined the political conflict in the country.

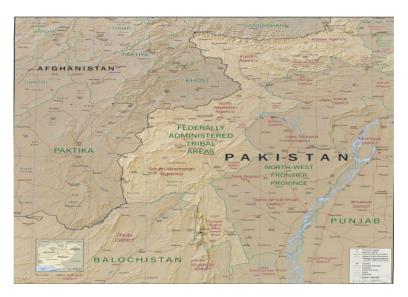
In late 1970s, Afghanistan fell in the thrall of domestic (social, economic, refugee) and external geopolitical challenges (Cold War politics). This phenomenon convinced Pakistani decision makers and strategists that it was expedient to respond to Afghanistan's irredentist claims on its Pashtun inhabitant territories (Pashtunistan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, FATA, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, formerly known as North-West Frontier Province, NWFP) (see Map.1). Thus, it was timely for the strategic thinkers in Pakistan to intrude and meddle in the domestic politics of Afghanistan. For such strategic encroachment on Afghanistan Pakistani decision makers had two strong and important reasons, the religion of Islam and ethnic proximity. As a result, Pakistan's strategic encroachments into Afghanistan during the Cold War and later years became highly provocative.

¹⁰ Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan a Modern History*, 48, also see Uma Shankar, 'Problem and Prospects of Constitutional Government in Afghanistan' in K. Warikoo ed. *Afghanistan Challenges and Opportunities* Vol.2 (India: Pentagon press 2007),56.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² See Paul Fitzgerald, and Elizabeth Gould, *Invisible History, Afghanistan's Untold Story* (United States: City light 2009),106.

Map.1: Afghanistan – Pakistan: Central Border



Source: University of Texas University¹³

The Cold War proxies under the banners of Islamic jihad and accentuated by external forces, such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the US had gained political momentum and transformed the political conflict into a military version of warfare across the country. Religiously motivated wars, so-called Afghan jihad, prevailed across the country. Importantly, mujahedin (those who fight for the sake of Islam) primarily conducted jihad in rural areas (80% of the population lives in rural areas ¹⁴), particularly in the south-eastern regions bordering Pakistan. Consequently, the mujahedin led wars ravaged and destructed mass populated rural areas, which forced hundreds of thousands of Afghans to flee their homes. As a result, during the early jihad between 1978 and 1979, prior to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, about 400,000 Afghans fled into Pakistan. ¹⁵

Importantly, in light of the above-stated perspective, it would be a mistake to say that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was the first and foremost cause of tens of thousands of Afghans being forced to leave their homes, localities, villages, and cities

See University of Texas University, 2008, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/txu-oclc-308991615-afghan_pakistan_2008.jpg (accessed, January, 9, 2016).

¹⁴ Samadi, 'Education and Afghan Society in the Twentieth Century', 14.

¹⁵ See Hassan-Askari Rizvi, "Afghan Refugees in Pakistan: Influx, Humanitarian Assistance and Implications," *Pakistan Horizon* 37, no.1 (First Quarter 1984), 42.

in late 1970s. In fact, what forced Afghans to flee their homes when seeking refuge within and/or outside their country was the start of religiously motivated wars, jihad, against the Afghan government that sparked religious sectarian violence across Afghanistan. The Afghan religious leaders, supported by regional and international powers (in the context of the Cold War), initiated sectarian war under the auspices of the Islamic doctrine of jihad to control central power in the state. At the same time in so doing, they served the interests of regional and international powers under the Cold War politics in Afghanistan. However, this is not to say that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was not the main catalyst for the influx of millions of Afghan refugees to neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and Iran. Nonetheless, what is important to note here is to emphasise that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was not, first and foremost, the reason that forced Afghans to flee their homeland; rather, it was the exposure of internal problems such as political conflict, ethnic issues and religious concerns to external geopolitical pressure under Cold War politics, as Gupta suggested in her book, *Afghanistan Politics, Economics and Society*. In the service of the service of the politics, as Gupta suggested in her book, *Afghanistan Politics, Economics and Society*.

Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, 1979–1989

The world witnessed unprecedented movement of refugees when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Within a year, over six million Afghans were forced to leave their homeland in search of refuge in different countries around the world. Within this context, as stated earlier, Pakistan housed the largest number of Afghan refugees in the world. Most of the Afghan refugees were placed in refugee camps built in the frontier regions of Pakistan such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Peshawar, and Quetta provinces. In 1995 there were about 300 refugee camps (70% were in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province formerly known as North-West Frontier Post, NWFP and 25% were in Baluchistan province 18), which were mainly inhabited

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¹⁶ See Bhavani Sen Gupta, *Afghanistan Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Frances Publishers Ltd 1986), 3.

¹⁷ See Hiegemann, Valentina, 'Repatriation of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan; Voluntary?', *Oxford Monitor of Forced Migration* 4/1 (May 2014),42.

¹⁸ See Shireen Issa, et al., 'Pakistan: Refugee History of Pakistan: An Afghan Case Study', in Uma A. Segal, Doreen Elliott and Nazneen S. Mayadas *Immigration Worldwide: Policies, Practices and Trends* (New York: Oxford University Press), 178.

by Afghan Pashtuns (for example, in 2005 Afghan Pashtuns comprised 81.5% of Afghan refugees in Pakistan¹⁹).

A decisive moment for Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, when the Afghans lost their sovereignty. Under General Mohammad Zia-ul Haq's policy — then president of Pakistan — the Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI), Pakistan's intelligence agency, with the help of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), began covert religious warfare, training Afghan refugees to fight against Soviet and Afghan troops in Afghanistan.²⁰ The phenomenon of Afghan jihad, training young Afghans to fight against the Soviets and Afghan government forces, has become an important aspect of the defence policy for Pakistan. Given the importance of strong religious faith among Afghan refugees, Pakistani strategists have utilised Islam as a variable force to pursue its strategic policies towards Afghanistan. Consequently, Pakistani Pashtun generals (General Akhtar Abdul Rahman and General Nasrullah Babur) and religious political parties (Jamaat-e Islami Pakistan) have used Afghan refugees to execute their strategic policies towards Afghanistan. For instance, Pakistan's support of the Taliban (an Afghan radical religious political group predominantly formed of Pashtuns) sought 'strategic depth against India' in Afghanistan.²¹ Viewed from this perspective, it can be said that throughout the history of Pakistan, Islam, as a political and strategic tool, has played an important role in the defence policy of Pakistan towards Afghanistan. The security strategy of Pakistan was formulated under the perception that the Afghan irredentist claims (Durand Line and Pashtunistan) posed major threats to the sovereignty and existence of Pakistan during the Cold War era. Under such politically and strategically loaded policies, Afghan refugees' cultural and social identities have been shaped in Pakistan.

Within this context, it is significant to note that education has also played an important role equal to that of Islam in constructing the social and cultural identities of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The curriculum imparted to Afghan refugees in

¹⁹ Ibid

 $^{^{20}}$ Rasanayagam, $Afghanistan\ a\ Modern\ History$, 48, also see Ahmed Rashid, Taliban: The Story of the $Afghan\ Warlords$ (London: Pan Books, 2001), 130.

²¹ Rasanayagam, Afghanistan a Modern History, 142-143.

various refugee schools and madrasas were designed by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) at the University of Nebraska to provide religious endorsement for armed struggle in the defence of Islam. ²² Since these madrasas and schools were not built as centres to promote education, particularly modern knowledge or even genuine religious education, but rather the allocation of masses of young recruits to fight for the cause of the Cold War under the rhetoric of jihad as the ultimate Islamic duty was the important task. 'Neither teachers nor students [in refugee schools and madrasas] had any formal grounding in math, science, history or geography and many of these warriors did not even know the history of their own country or the story of the jihad against the Soviets.'23 What mattered in this context was the way in which the history of Afghanistan, particularly political, had to be remodelled to meet the strategic interests of Pakistan and its allies. For example, the last king of Afghanistan who is entitled the 'father of the nation' in the current Afghan constitution was portrayed as a treacherous, disloyal, and corrupt Afghan leader. Further, almost all political leaders including Amir Amanullah Khan, who gained Afghanistan's independence over its foreign affairs from British Colonial India in 1919, and the President Sardar Muhammad Daoud Khan, founder of democracy in 1973, were depicted as traitorous corrupt leaders. Marketing desired models of pedagogy, mass religious education in particular has gradually eliminated the notion of patriotism, nationalism and sentiments of pan-Afghanism amongst the new generation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

It is also important to note that Afghan refugees were not only religiously and culturally manipulated forces against the Afghan state and Soviet troops during the Cold War, but Afghan refugees were also politically and ethnically divided into over half a dozen conflicting Islamic factions which were supported by different state and non-state Islamic groups. The implementation of such a policy was an attempt by Pakistani strategists to make sure that Afghan refugees did not establish a unanimous nationalist identity.²⁴ As a result, each Islamic faction, aside from being a resisting

²² See Sarah Ashraf, "Lesson Learnt: Religious education and training provided by madrasa," December 2012, http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/What-We-Do/Strengthen-research- impact/Inform-public-policy/Documents/Religious_Education.pdf, (accessed 12 December 2014), 19.

²³ Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords*, 32.

²⁴ See Peter, Tomsen, Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflict, and the Failure of Great Powers (USA: PublicAffairs 2011), 252.

force against the Soviet and Afghan state forces, was a conduit for the strategic and political interests of regional and international states. For example, the Hizb-I Islami (Islamic Party) faction was led by Gulbeddin Hekmatyar, supported by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia; Jamiat Islami (Islamic Society), led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, was supported by Pakistan, Iran and, later India (during the Afghan civil war); Hizb-I Islami Khalish (Islamic Party Khalis), led by Mohammad Younus Khalis, was supported by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan; Ittihad-I Islami (Islamic Union), led by Abdulrab Rasul Sayyaf, was mainly supported by Saudi Arabia; and Hizb-I Wahdat Islami (Party of Islamic Union), led by Abdul Ali Mazari, was supported by Iran.²⁵ The US unilaterally supported all factions through Pakistan's secret service, ISI.²⁶ Each Islamic faction set up separate schools, madrasas, and universities that instructed mainly religiously motivated jihadi pedagogies. As stated earlier, the curriculum of these madrasas was designed and developed at the University of Nebraska under the auspices of the USAID.²⁷ Throughout this period, education centres became conduits to leverage the political and strategic interests of regional and international powers. Additionally, each faction provided registration cards which, besides providing political affiliation to a particular faction, enabled Afghan refugees to receive monthly rations.²⁸ Thus, for many Afghan refugees, joining factions and taking part in jihad meant earning a living. ²⁹ These kinds of violations of refugee rights by Afghan factions were generally overlooked by the UNHCR and other non-governmental humanitarian agencies.³⁰

Nevertheless, irrespective of political manipulation, during the Cold War epoch, Pakistan's attitude towards Afghan refugees remained generous in general. For example, between 1978 and 1980 Pakistan, with its own resources, not only allowed

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²⁵ See Oliver Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 128-148, also see Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A history of struggle and survival* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2004), 210-213.

²⁶ See Steve Coll, *GHOST WARS: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001* (United States of America: Penguin Group, 2004) 59-70.

²⁷ Ashraf, "Lesson Learnt: Religious education and training provided by madrasa,"19.

²⁸ See Nasreen Ghufran, "The Role of UNHCR and Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," *Strategic Analysis* 35, no.6 (2011), 947.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

millions of Afghan refugees to enter the country, but also allocated spaces for them to create their own communities.³¹ The Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR) — established in each camp by the government of Pakistan — registered and controlled refugee communities.³² The CARs were governmental institutions that issued identity papers known as *Shinakhty Pass*, to the head of each refugee family (see Figure 1).

Figure.1: Afghan Refugee Identity Pass



Source: From author

The identity passes allowed Afghan refugees to move freely and work in informal sectors in Pakistan.³³ Working in an informal sector meant that none of the refugee's assets were officially registered under governmental or non-governmental organisations. For example, the pass did not allow Afghan refugees to own immoveable properties, vehicles such as trucks— although the majority of Afghan refugees worked in transportation as truck drivers, none of them officially owned their

³¹ See Frederic Grare and William Maley, "The Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," *Fondation pour la Recheche Strategique*, Middle East Institute June 2011, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_1647.pdf (accessed December 21, 2015), 3.

³² Langenkamp, "The Victory of Expediency Afghan Refugees and Pakistan in the 1990s," 232.

³³ Grare and William Maley, "The Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," 4.

trucks—and establish official businesses.³⁴ Thus, viewed in this light, it can be said that although in general the Pakistani government's policy towards Afghan refugees remained benevolent during the Cold War, Afghan refugees' legal status remained ambivalent under the inconsistent policies of Pakistani authorities such as harassment by police, denial of provision of access to courts and the insecurity of businesses and assets with no legal registrations. The drastic change in Pakistan's Afghan refugee policy occurred when the strategic importance of the region in world politics declined with Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, particularly after the last communist regime in Afghanistan collapsed in 1992. The evaporation of the strategic importance of the region for the West, particularly to US interests after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, stemmed the flow of aid to Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Consequently, Pakistan's generosity towards refugees dried up.

Afghan Civil War

Following the collapse of the last communist regime headed by President Muhammad Najibullah in 1992, under the UNHCR incentive repatriation programme that granted each returning family \$100 cash and 300 kilograms of wheat³⁵, about 1.4 million Afghan refugees from different camps around Pakistan returned to Afghanistan in a short period of time.³⁶ However, the UNHCR's incentive repatriation programme did not last long. Despite the government of Pakistan and the UNHCR's efforts to encourage voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees to their home country in 1993³⁷, the internal conflicts between the Afghans' Islamic factions to control central power in Kabul from 1992 onwards did not pave the way for most of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan to repatriate to their home country. To jettison the refugee burden, Pakistani strategists have alternatively started exerting harsh measures on refugees such as abusing refugee rights, detentions and harassment.

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ghufran, "The Role of UNHCR and Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," 949.

³⁶ Hiegemann, 'Repatriation of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan; Voluntary?'42

³⁷ See Marjoleine Zieck, "The Legal Status of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan, a Story of Eight Agreements and Two Suppressed Premises," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 20 no. 2 (April, 2008), 256-258.

The turning point in the context of civil war was the emergence of the Taliban (Students), who by portraying and implementing a self-styled rigid version of Islam, such as denouncing women's rights to gain an education, further escalated internal war and crimes against humanity in the country which then forced hundreds of thousands of additional Afghans to enter Pakistan. During this epoch Afghan refugees endured the agony of humiliation, extortion, harassment, and although they had been granted identity passes have remained subject to fines and 'refouler'—to forcibly return a refugee to a country where his or her life is threatened.³⁸ From 1992 onwards Pakistan followed a dual strategy policy towards Afghans. On the one hand, by supporting the Taliban, Pakistani strategists wanted to ensure the regime that controls power in Afghanistan remains friendly to Pakistan. On the other hand, by exerting harsh and strict policies towards Afghan refugees in the country they forced millions of Afghans to repatriate. Although the situation for millions of Afghan refugees was inhumane in Pakistan, drought, mass killings, sectarian violence, and serious violation of human rights stopped millions of Afghan refugees from repatriation to Afghanistan during the Taliban era. According to Langenkamp about '5 million Afghans during the Taliban were dependent on food aid to survive and mortality rates were skyrocketing, with one in four children dying before the age of 5 and thus it was clear that the country was on the verge of a full-blown humanitarian emergency.' 39 Consequently, Pakistan preserved its status quo as home for the largest number of Afghan refugees in the 1990s. However, the worst epoch for Afghan refugees in Pakistan was the time when the UNHCR and World Food Programme announced that they would terminate their operations in Pakistan by 1998.⁴⁰ In fact, this was the most desperate time for Afghan refugees when their country fell almost entirely under the control of the Taliban. Consequently, the fate of millions of Afghan refugees was left to the mercy of Pakistan in the late 1990s.

The third wave of hundreds of thousands of Afghans searching for shelter started with the US intervention in Afghanistan in 2001. The conviction that

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³⁸ Langenkamp, "The Victory of Expediency Afghan Refugees and Pakistan in the 1990s," 243.

³⁹ Langenkamp, "The Victory of Expediency Afghan Refugees and Pakistan in the 1990s," 46

⁴⁰ Langenkamp, "The Victory of Expediency Afghan Refugees and Pakistan in the 1990s," 236.

considered that the terrorist attacks on the US on 11 September 2001 were masterminded and planed in Afghanistan led the US together with its allies to intervene in Afghanistan in 2001. The 2001 intervention, so-called Operation Enduring Freedom, once more forced nearly one million Afghans to leave their homes in search of refuge in neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan.⁴¹

However, after spending multi billions of dollars, the international community led by the US has failed to build a strong, prosperous, functioning state in Afghanistan. As a result, Afghanistan has remained entangled in a series of acute challenges such as sectarian violence, economic downturn, corruption and the absence of rule of law. Within this context, the enduring Taliban led insurgencies, and suicidal terrorist attacks have gained momentum and remained one of the main factors that have impeded refugee repatriation to Afghanistan. Consequently, despite the fact that Afghan refugees in Pakistan have remained subject to harassment and inconsistent refugee policies, they are reluctant to repatriate to Afghanistan.

Legal Status of Afghan Refugees and Existing Challenges

As stated earlier, the UNHCR and the government of Pakistan have never granted Afghan refugees in Pakistan a constant legal status. The *shinakhti pass*, or later provided Afghan Citizen Cards were merely used to provide proof of registration. In other words, the refugee cards were used to provide statistical information. Significantly, the accurate number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan has remained in disarray. Notably, the number of refugees in Pakistan plays a potential political and economic (aid) role in state and non-state organisations' (such as UNHCR and other humanitarian non-governmental agencies) refugee policies.

Importantly, as noted previously, the refugee documents have not provided any legal status to Afghan refugees to legally reside and work in Pakistan. In addition to ambiguity of legal status, interestingly, when the public and state perception of Afghan refugees in Pakistan is examined, it can be said that there is no discrimination between those who were born and lived there for almost three decades and those

⁴¹ See Hiram Ruiz and Emery, Marget, 'Afghanistan's Refugee Crisis', *Middle East Research and Information Project* http://www.merip.org/mero/mero092401, (accessed September 2, 2015).

refugees who have newly escaped from the war zones in Afghanistan. This is partly due to the vulnerability of Afghan Citizen Cards to fraud by Pakistani authorities (corruption) as well as by Afghan refugees (not returning cards after repatriation, and replacement of a demised refugee's card by an unregistered refugee).⁴²

When Pakistan's refugee policy is viewed from a legal perspective, it can be said that the provision of refugee status under the law of *prima facie* by Pakistani strategists and decision makers⁴³ has never guaranteed any consistent legal status for Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Pakistan's Afghan refugee policies have remained inconsistent in line with its changing strategic preferences and political interests. However, according to Zieck, the status of *prima facie* does not legally justify Pakistan's irresponsible Afghan refugee policies⁴⁴ because according to the UNHCR, a refugee under the status of *prima facie* qualifies for the status of refugee under the UN convention.⁴⁵ Viewed in this light, Afghan refugees should be given official status in Pakistan.

Notably, those Afghans who refuse to return to Afghanistan are culturally and socially more Pakistani than Afghan. The history they have experienced, the culture in which they grow up and the diet they consume accentuate a Pakistani, and not Afghani, identity. Consequently, despite the fact that Afghan refugees have become a scapegoat for virtually any problem in Pakistan at any time, their cultural and social affiliations with Pakistani society make them stay in Pakistan rather than return to their home country.

Given the fact that the economic and security situations of Pakistani cities where Afghan refugees live en masse (Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi) are not better

⁴² Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Afghan Refugees and Returnees: Corruption and Lack of Afghan Ministerial Capacity Have Prevented Implementation of a Long-term Refugee Strategy," 5.

⁴³ Zieck, "The Legal Status of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan, a Story of Eight Agreements and Two Suppressed Premises," 254-255.

⁴⁴ Zieck, "The Legal Status of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan, a Story of Eight Agreements and Two Suppressed Premises," 256.

⁴⁵ UNHCR Guideline on the Application in Mass Influx Situation of the Exclusion Clauses of Article 1F of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, *UNHCR* February 2006, http://www.refworld.org/docid/43f48c0b4.html (accessed January 15, 2016), 3.

off than most of the cities such as Jalal Abad, Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif in Afghanistan, for a considerable number of Afghan refugees the prime concern regarding repatriation to Afghanistan is not insecurity but rather cultural and social factors restrict Afghan refugees from repatriating to Afghanistan. Seen from this angle, it can be said that after spending nearly four decades in Pakistan, most of the Afghan refugees have lost their feeling of belonging to Afghanistan—patriotism, and pan-Afghanism.

What matters here is not to say that cultural and social elements are the sole factors that restrict repatriation of Afghan refugees to their country, but what is important to emphasise is that cultural and social factors are enduring catalysts that impede Afghan refugees from returning to their home country. Since the cultural and social diversity of Afghan refugees is the product of a history in which they have been born and raised, the impact likewise remains long lasting. Given the fact that most Afghan refugees living in Pakistan belong to rural areas, villages and provinces that have been the most volatile and insecure regions where Taliban-led insurgencies frequently happen, such as Helmand, Paktiya, Qunduz and Jalal Abad, security concerns have also remained a catalyst beside the cultural and social factors that have impeded considerable numbers of Afghan refugees from repatriation. Although UNHCR once again has launched an incentive voluntary repatriation programme based on encashment of Afghan Citizen Cards (granting an amount up to \$500 for vulnerable cases⁴⁶), in the light of the above-stated challenges, Afghan refugees are reluctant to return to their home country.

Pakistan's Afghan Refugee Policies and Backlashes

In the wake of its creation, Pakistan was crippled by a series of border and ethnic disputes with both of its immediate neighbours, India and Afghanistan. Likewise, Pakistan had to tackle a series of domestic challenges, including sectarian violence, ethnic issues, and problematic civil and military relations.⁴⁷ According to Maley,

⁴⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, 'The 2015 Afghan Refugee and Returnee Overview',

https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Afghanistan/2015%20Afghanistan%20Refugee%20 and%20Returnee%20Overview.pdf (accessed September 15, 2015), 88.

⁴⁷ See Feroz Hassan Khan, "Comparative Strategic Culture: The Case of Pakistan." *Strategic Insights* 4, no.10, (October 2005), 2.

Pakistan was created as 'an insecurity state.' ⁴⁸ Given the precarious political, strategic, and complex security environments, the Pakistan military not only became the sole guarantor of security and protection for the sovereignty of the nation, but it also dictated Pakistani foreign affairs and governed the strategic decision-making body.

The watershed in the context of Afghan-Pak (Afghanistan and Pakistan) relations was the time when Prime Minister Daoud, by gaining Soviet and Indian support on the issue of Pashtunistan, propelled the agenda into the international arena. This made Pakistani generals perceive the Afghan irredentist claims as a security threat to their state sovereignty and existence. Thus, Pakistan's strategy towards Afghanistan has developed to reflect such perceptions. As stated earlier, the turning point for Pakistani strategists to contain Afghanistan's Pashtunistan policy towards Pakistan occurred when President Daoud was killed in a political mutiny, the Saur Revolution, in April 1978. After the coup of 1978, the country fell into a state of domestic political turmoil. Pakistani strategists perceived the political unrest in Afghanistan as an inevitable strategic opportunity in response to Afghanistan's Pashtunistan policy. In this context, Pakistan used Islam as a tool to intrude into Afghan domestic issues. Within this context what matters is why Pakistani decision makers opted for Islam as a strategic tool to construct their policies towards Afghanistan. In observing the role of Islam in the political history of Pakistan, it can be said that:

Islam is integral to Pakistan's strategic culture because it contributed to shaping societal dispositions and the orientations of policymakers. Islam is closely associated with the establishment of the state and the constitution designates the state as an 'Islamic Republic,' with an emphasis on the Islamic character of Pakistani identity and a stipulation that no law can be enacted that violated the basic principles and teachings of Islam. Islam figures prominently in political and military discourse.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ See William Maley. *Twentieth-Century Wars: The Afghanistan Wars* 2nd ed. (China: Palgrave Macmilan, 2009), 56.

⁴⁹ See Hasan Askari Rizvi "Pakistan's Strategic Culture." In *South Aisa in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, edited by Micheal R. Chambers, 305-328, (United States: The University of Michigan, 2002), 319.

Thus, given the fact that Afghans have a strong affinity for Islam and on account of the rise of some anti-government Islamic movements in the early 1970s, for Pakistani strategists it was timely to use Islam as a strategic tool towards Afghanistan. ⁵⁰ Consequently, the Afghan religious activists such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Burhanuddin Rabbani, backed by the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Jamaat-e Islami Pakistan (one of the strongest Islamic political parties in Pakistan) ⁵¹, started political and military warfare against the Afghan government under the religious justification that the Afghan politburo's friendly policies towards the Soviet Union were contrary to the tenets of Islam.

The early jihad forced nearly 400,000 Afghans, mostly from south-eastern regions bordering Pakistan, to flee to Pakistan.⁵² This number was exacerbated into millions when Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan in 1979. General Muhammad Zia-ul Haq, who was then the President of Pakistan, named Afghan refugees in Pakistan as Muhajirin (qualified refugee status under Islamic law) and Mujahedin (those who fight for the sake of Islam) and appealed to Pakistanis to have religious commiseration with them.⁵³ Since Zia's jihadic strategy, in which he considered Afghan refugees as a secret tactical weapon,⁵⁴ was not going to win the war against the Soviet and Afghan states on its own, he allowed 'some 35,000 Muslim radicals from forty-three countries, in the Middle East, North and East Africa, Central Asia and Far East Asia to pass their baptism under the fire with the Afghan Mujahidin.'⁵⁵

However, Pakistan's policy of using Afghan refugees as a shield under the guise of strategic interests came with a cost. Pakistan paid the price with the 'proliferation of arms all over the country; Kalashnikov culture...terrorism' that destabilised the security of the nation. ⁵⁶ Consequently, the backlash from Zia's

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⁵⁰ Rasanayagam, Afghanistan a Modern History, 59.

⁵¹ Tomsen, *The Wars of Afghanistan*, 100-102.

⁵² Rizvi, "Afghan Refugees in Pakistan: Influx, Humanitarian Assistance and Implications," 42.

⁵³ Ghufran, "The Role of UNHCR and Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," 948.

⁵⁴ Coll, GHOST WARS: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001, 61.

⁵⁵ Rashid, Taliban, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia, 130.

⁵⁶ See Shahid M. Amin, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: A reappraisal* 2 ed. (Pakistan: Oxford University Press 2011),100.

Afghan policy to Pakistan's politics, security, culture, and economy has remained immense. In fact, what Pakistan faces in the context of the militancy of the religious parties, extremism, drug-trafficking, Kalashnikov culture, and Islamic terrorism today, are the outcomes of Zia's policies towards Afghanistan during the Cold War. In addition to this, the inconsistent Afghan refugee policies, particularly after the Cold War, harassment, violation of basic refugee rights, and using refugees in line with economic and strategic interests hampered the formation of a friendly state in Afghanistan post 9/11. For example, although the majority of Afghan politicians, strategists and decision makers in today's Afghan government were refugees in Pakistan in the past such as Hamid Karzai, the former President of Afghanistan, due to the serious abuse of basic rights, inhumane behaviours by Pakistani authorities, and the misuse of Afghan refugees as a strategic tool in the past, their political and strategic stance towards Pakistan has generally remained unfriendly.

In the public sector, although Pakistanis have cultural, religious, and ethnic proximity to Afghans, the remarkable influx of millions of Afghan refugees into Pakistan in a short period of time caused frustration and hostility among Pakistanis towards Afghans.⁵⁷ Such resentment by the Pakistani people was a reflection of the economic, social, cultural, and political burden of Afghan refugees in Pakistani society. Given the importance of very significant political, economic and security challenges due to the declaration of Eastern Pakistan as an independent state of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in 1971 after a bloody war, in which the Pakistani military was accused of crimes against humanity⁵⁸ and the establishment of martial law under a military coup d'état in 1977 by General Zia-ul Haq, people in Pakistan were already suffering from a series of economic, social and political constraints, without the encumbrance of millions of Afghan refugees in a short period of time to share limitedly provided social services in the country. This proportionately negatively affected the Pakistani people's attitudes towards Afghan refugees. People in Pakistan started blaming Afghan refugees for the economic downturn and deteriorating security in the country. The Pakistanis' accusations may have been true if one observes how madrasas by preaching jihad, and by some, such as Lal Masjid

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ See Macdermot Naill, 'Crime against humanity in Bangladesh' *International Lawyer* 7 no. 2 (April 1973), 476-78.

(Red Mosque), providing military training under the auspices of jihad against the secular state have mushroomed across the country.⁵⁹ Although the centres training young Afghan refugees, mujahedin, and the accumulation of thousands of radical Islamists from all around the world was part of a well-calculated strategic policy that was choreographed by the Pakistani government and its military establishment, including the secret services, to pursue Pakistan's strategic interests in the region,⁶⁰ it is the people of Pakistan who have been suffering from Islamic radicalisation, terrorism, insecurity and sectarian violence in the country over the last three decades.

Conclusion and Policy Implication

No matter how much Pakistan is accused of having hidden political or strategic agendas in its policy towards Afghan refugees in Pakistan, the one truth that is not open to debate is that millions of Afghan men, women, and children found Pakistan to be their second home, and a country in which they have been living for over three decades. Likewise, it is also true to say that Pakistan has borne the burden of economic, social, political, and security challenges by housing millions of Afghan refugees since the late 1970s. In a press conference the Pakistani Minister for State and Frontier Regions, Abdul Qadir Baloch, stated that Pakistan has spent more than \$200 billion US for Afghan refugees in the last three decades.⁶¹

However, in the same way, no matter how Pakistani strategists and decision makers accentuate that their policies toward Afghan refugees were righteous, they have substantially failed to win the hearts and minds of millions of Afghans in Pakistan. Particularly, since the termination of the ambivalent *prima facie* policy (closure of refugee camps, cessation of basic rights such as education, continuous harassment) in late 1990s, Afghan refugees were left in a full-blown humanitarian crisis in Pakistan. For example, in 2001 the Federal State of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ordered the police authorities in each zone to indiscriminately detain and deport 10 to

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⁵⁹ For detailed analysis on Red Mosque, see Qandeel Siddique, "The Red Mosque Operation and Its Impact on the Growth of the Pakistani Taliban", *Norwegian Defence Research Establishment*, (October 2008), https://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/08-01915.pdf, 13.

⁶⁰ Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan a Modern History*, 54-57; also see Rashid, *Taliban, Oil, and the New Great Game in Central Asia*, 130.

⁶¹ See The Express Tribune, with the International New York Times, 'Burdened economy: 'Pakistan has spent \$200b on Afghan refugees', http://tribune.com.pk/story/622518/burdened-economy-pakistan-has-spent-200b-on- afghan-refugees/

15 Afghan refugee men each day.⁶² Given the responsibility of a man to guard the physical and economic wellbeing of his family, the abrupt disappearance of refugee men—under Pakistan's *refouler* policies—have left thousands of refugee families with even more severe economic and security conditions.

Although Afghan refugees in Pakistan, even today after spending over three decades there face a series of acute challenges such as insecurity, harassment, being subject to racial bias, and inequalities in terms of receiving social services such as the provision of standard education, their cultural and social lifestyle accentuate a Pakistani rather than Afghani identity. Important within this context is the absence of a nationalist sentiment amongst Afghan refugees in Pakistan. In other words, Afghan refugees lack the notion of patriotism, pan-Afghanism. This can easily be observed if one scrutinises how Afghan refugees are reluctant to be part of national reconstruction and development programmes in Afghanistan. In the context of repatriation issues, although existing literatures, governmental statements, inter-governmental and nongovernmental humanitarian organisations, societal organisations, including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and media reports have repeatedly shown and advocated that security concerns, corruption, economic concerns, religious extremism, gender inequality, ethnic bias and Islamic terrorism in Afghanistan are the main catalysts that prohibit Afghan refugees from repatriating to their home country, surprisingly, it cannot be denied that the life condition for Afghan refugees in Pakistan in the context of security, corruption, economic constraints, religious extremism and terrorism, gender inequality, and ethnic bias is not better, but rather worse in some regions in Pakistan (FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) than in Afghanistan. Viewed in this light, it can be said that for a considerable number of Afghan refugees who prefer to stay in Pakistan the prime concerns of repatriation to Afghanistan are not solely insecurity, corruption, gender inequality or ethnic bias, but rather it is socio-cultural diversity that encumbers their reunification to their homeland.

In the context of Pakistan, it cannot be denied that the protracted presence of millions of Afghan refugees has been negatively affecting the social, cultural, political and security structure of the country. Given the fact that Kalashnikov culture, radical extremism, jihadism and terrorism are expanding to be a potential security threat to the state and its citizens, Pakistan is in the thrall of serious security challenges, in addition to bearing the burden of millions of Afghan refugees in the country.

⁶² Langenkamp, "The Victory of Expediency Afghan Refugees and Pakistan in the 1990s," 243.

Additionally, in the last ten years Pakistan was the victim of heavy natural disasters such as the Kashmir earthquake in 2005 and a flood in 2010. As a result of such natural calamities, tens of millions of people in the country have become internally displaced. Moreover, Pakistan military operations against terrorist groups in FATA have deteriorated and exacerbated already tense situations by increasing the size of the internally displaced population in the country. With such challenges at hand, Pakistan is incapable of providing adequate humanitarian assistance to its own citizens, let alone providing humanitarian assistance to nearly two million Afghan refugees in the country. Consequently, the international community has a greater responsibility to assist the government of Pakistan to take responsibility for the provision of basic humanitarian assistance not only to its own citizens but also to Afghan refugees.

A positive solution to the issue of Afghan refugees in Pakistan would be to build a constant bona fide refugee policy to the degree to which the official documents provided to Afghan refugees would be credentials in the eyes of both the public and government. The current identity cards provided with the help of UNHCR to Afghan refugees are just proof of identification that distinguishes them from Pakistani nationals. Although the Afghan refugee Proof of Registration card states that it 'protects against risks such as extortion, arbitrary arrest and detention' 63 the cardholders have continuously remained the victims of illegal detentions and extortion by Pakistani authorities. 64 Given the fact that the population dwelling along the over 2,500 km long mountainous Afghan-Pak borders have their siblings across borders, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for both Afghanistan and Pakistan to stop or control cross-border movements. Thus, it is necessary for both Afghanistan and Pakistan to take some important steps to change their de facto policy towards Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Afghanistan, with the help of UN agencies, can build refugee camps in the relatively peaceful provinces of the country such as Mazar-e Sharif, Samangan, Farah, and Herat similar to those built in Pakistani cities during the Cold War. This will enable Afghan refugees to build their own societies within Afghanistan. This will be an incentive programme, particularly for those Afghan refugees who have lost their homes during the protracted wars, or have no land on which to build homes or are unable to pay expensive rents in major cities such as

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⁶³ See UN News Centre http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47225#.VhEHCXskIeM.

⁶⁴ See Sharon Bern, 'UN: Afghan refugees Harassed in Pakistan' *Voice of America* http://www.voanews.com/content/un-says-afghan-refugees-harassed-in pakistan/1776166.html,

Kabul. For those Afghan refugees who prefer to stay in Pakistan, the provision of credible identity documents such as residence permits (credentials to open bank accounts, businesses and to establish legal companies, become entrepreneurs, as well as enabling re-entry to Pakistan) to refugees will help boost the economy of Pakistan (increase in trans-border trade and tax levies) and will allow for better scrutiny of illegal activities.

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