



Sheltering the Ukrainian Refugees: Implications for Poland in the light of Pakistani Experiences

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Abstract

Pakistan has taken in a sizeable number of Afghan refugees ever since the Soviet Union launched its invasion of Afghanistan at the height of the Cold War. This has resulted in significant repercussions for Pakistan. Some examples of this would be things like terrorism, drug trafficking, and human smuggling. As a result of the invasion by Russia, a significant number of Ukrainians will go for refuge in Europe, particularly Poland. They arrive in the tens of thousands at a time. You have the option of taking the bus, the train, or driving your own vehicle. On the Polish side of the border, the Ukrainians who have escaped the Russian bombardment of their cities are greeted with open arms by the Polish administration. In the last several years, there has been a migration of around one million Ukrainians to the United States from other countries, and this current wave of migrants will join them. In light of the fact that the fighting in Ukraine does not seem to be coming to an end any time soon, we investigate the potential long-term consequences for Poland of taking in such a huge number of refugees.

Keywords: Pakistan, Poland, Afghanistan, Ukraine, refugees, war



Introduction

A couple of months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, figures provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicate that the total number of refugees has already topped 12.2 million. There are around 7.3 million persons in the European Union who are classified as refugees. A total of around four million refugees have been provided with a place of temporary protection. Through its borders with Ukraine and Belarus, Poland has taken in the largest number of refugees from that nation than any other country in the world. The number of refugees still present in Poland is estimated by the Polish government to be 1.4 million, which is a significant decrease compared to the initial flood. (Abbasi et. al, 2022)

On the other hand, as a result of the Durand line's recognition as the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan in 1983, thousands of Afghans have been driven to seek asylum in Pakistan. Conflict cycles after the fall of the Taliban administration are well documented, and the country's multi-ethnic population has always made it a volatile region. As a result of their dire situation, Pakistan is obligated to provide humanitarian aid to the 100,000 Afghan urban refugees who entered the country with legitimate visas last month. Globally, information networks have a responsibility to shield countries from catastrophic economic crises by giving them access to vital humanitarian instruments for their protection in a timely manner and making those tools contained in a manner appropriate to the severity of the crisis. (Nagra et. al, 2019) Further dampening economic activity in our nation is the fact that very few studies have acknowledged the significant human capital, foreign assistance, and economic support that this phenomenon produced. Refugees coming to a new nation with nothing to their name, no one they know there to assist them, and no knowledge of the language may wind up spending more than they have trying to settle in. No cohesive plan to deal with the surge of migrants has been developed by our government or its agencies as of yet. Income and consumption gaps exist both within and across groups in Pakistan as a result of the country's volatile economy. Considering the economic and political ties, the present refugee crises need careful policy planning with respect to the mobilisation of these people in the development of a National Plan. If policymakers systematically investigate ways to lower the welfare cost of refugees' contributions to economic performance, they may be able to mitigate the negative effects that refugees have on economic growth. By hosting refugees for



four decades, Pakistan has learned a great deal that it can share with the rest of the world, Poland in particular. (Anwar et. al 2021)

Literature Review

Even after the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, the Pakistani government continued to provide training and financial support to a coalition of Sunni mujahideen factions known as the "Peshawar Seven." It is important to note that Pakistan was not the only country to intervene in the internal affairs of Afghanistan during the period in question. A group in Iran known as the "Tehran Eight," which was mostly comprised of persons from the Shia and Hazara religions, was organised in a manner that was similar to the Arab Spring. Once Pakistan started giving support to the Afghan Taliban, other armed terrorist organisations eventually severed their relations with Pakistan. By the early 1990s, the Afghan Taliban had gained control of a large portion of the country. (Bakhsh & Safdar, 2020)

According to Hotak, "Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan over the past four decades is the key reason that all major segments of Afghan society, whether it be the media, politicians, or civil society activists, are always worried about Pakistan's role and mostly hold Islamabad responsible for destabilising Afghanistan." This is because of Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan over the past four decades. (Farani, 2020)

The primary reason Pakistan continues to have a presence in Afghanistan is to compete with Indian influence in that country. After being elected president of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani allegedly made it a priority to address Pakistan's security concerns and win back the country's confidence shortly after taking office, despite considerable opposition from influential members of his cabinet. During his administration, there was a consistent flow of high-level officials travelling between the two countries in order to attend events that were held jointly by both countries. After being elected president, Ashraf Ghani immediately terminated any contracts with India for the procurement of heavy weapons, as well as any further requests for military assistance that had been made by the previous government of Hamid Karzai.

According to a former official who worked in Afghanistan's Ministry of the Interior, "Ghani cancelled a long-standing request to acquire heavy armaments from India as a step to preserve a balanced relationship with Pakistan." This was done because Karzai had been seeking "tight ties with Pakistan," which was the opposite of what Afghan President Ghani had done. (Ali et. al, 2019).



Possible Implications for Poland in the Light of Pakistan's Experience

Massive Population Growth

As of January 2022, approximately 1.4 million Afghans living in Pakistan have Proof of Registration (PoR) cards, and approximately 840 thousand have Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC). However, it is estimated that there are approximately 775 thousand Afghans living in the country without the appropriate documentation. Afghans who do not have the appropriate papers are at risk of being arrested, imprisoned, and deported, while Afghans who hold proof of residency card or an alien registration card have some protection (mostly against refoulement). In recent years, Pakistan has adopted a new policy towards refugees from Afghanistan. Allegedly with the goal of making it more difficult for anyone to cross the border in either direction, legally or illegally, between the beginning of 2017 and the beginning of 2022, the government walled up almost 90% of the boundary with Afghanistan. Illegal crossings nonetheless continue to take place since the border is so "permeable."

A significant number of refugees from Afghanistan crossed into Pakistan when the United States and its allies withdrew their forces from the country in August 2021 and the Taliban subsequently took control of the government. Between January 2021 and February 2022, the UNHCR documented a total of 117 547 new arrivals from Afghanistan in Pakistan, with the highest monthly total being 35 289 in August 2021. (EUAA, 2022)

Huge Budget Expenditures

According to Abdul Qadir Baloch, Pakistan's Minister for States and Frontier Regions, the nation has spent over \$200 billion over the course of the last 30 years to accommodate Afghan refugees up to 2013. The minister then continued to talk about the decision that the government had made to comply with the request of the UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency) and provide refugees an additional two years to stay in the country. The minister reassured Afghan refugees living in Pakistan that they would continue to get protection from the Pakistani government. However, he also said that the leadership in Afghanistan needed to make reforms to the country before refugees could begin returning. They will not be permitted to return home until such time as there is lasting peace in Afghanistan. Because it may take as long as two months to issue new registration cards, he also issued an order instructing law police to avoid detaining and harassing Afghans who still



held the old ones. In accordance with Baloch's statements, any law enforcement personnel who is seen harassing refugees for no apparent reason would be subject to disciplinary action. (Tribune, 2013)

The ratification of a new strategy to deal with the flood of Afghan refugees has been postponed by Pakistan until the year 2021. This new strategy calls for \$2.2 billion in international funding to take care of 700,000 immigrants and labels them as "externally displaced Afghans" (EDAs) rather than refugees. In addition, this new strategy calls for the immigrants to be referred to as "externally displaced Afghans." As a result of the four meetings that took place between May and July of this year within an inter-ministerial committee, the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions presented the policy to the most recent gathering of the federal cabinet with the purpose of receiving approval. The strategy document stated that the anticipated cost to lodge 700,000 Afghan refugees in secure and exclusive camps would be \$2.2 billion over the course of three years. A part of the cost covers things like the cost of registering for the camp and travel expenditures, as well as the management of the camp and the meal requirements. (Tribune, 2021)

Unemployment and Economic Difficulties

In Afghanistan, the World Bank and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are collaborating on research that is slated to be published in 2020. It demonstrates that economic circumstances are more difficult for Afghan refugees who returned to their homeland between 2014 and 2017 than they were for Afghan refugees who stayed in Pakistan. The World Bank and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Afghanistan have worked together to develop research on the living situations of recent Afghan returnees as well as the choices they have made about where they will reside. This article looks at the issues that have arisen as a result of the large number of Afghan refugees that have returned from Pakistan between the years of 2014 and 2017. (World Bank Group, 2020)

According to the available statistics, the majority of Afghans have moved back to their homes in their home regions, with Kabul and Nangarhar provinces hosting one-fifth of all returnees. According to the findings of the poll, Afghans who have strong ties to their home region are more likely to find a job in that region. The study also underlines the problems encountered by both returning people and host communities owing to a lack of access to healthcare and



educational opportunities. Specifically, the research focuses on the gap that exists between the two. (Javed et. al, 2020)

Henry Kerali, who serves as the country director for Afghanistan at the World Bank, has observed that the living conditions of Afghan returnees are very difficult and need intensive and rapid assistance. Understanding the fundamental needs of Afghan returnees and the problems they experience on a day-to-day basis, as well as coming to an agreement on the most effective ways for overcoming those obstacles, requires having access to trustworthy data and analysis. We developed a report with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to better organise help for Afghans who have returned home. (Malik et. al, 2019)

Caroline Van Buren, the Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Afghanistan, stated that despite the fact that 2019 will mark the 40th anniversary of the displacement of Afghans and that numerous initiatives have been put into place to support returnees and enable their sustainability reintegration in Afghanistan, there is still a great deal of work to be done. As we seek to improve our support for Afghan returnees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and our other partners, in particular the Government of Afghanistan, will find the data and analysis included in this report to be invaluable resources. (Javed et. al, 2020)

The purpose of this study is to analyse the existing challenges and to identify possible solutions in order to allow the sustainable reintegration of Afghan war veterans into the social and economic fabric of the nation. The research advises giving priority to the safe and dignified repatriation of Afghan refugees as a long-term solution to the problem of forced migration. To make this a reality, the Government of Afghanistan and its allies would need to exert some effort. In particular, with respect to programmes that foster self-sufficiency and help in the development of community infrastructure, the findings of the research will assist in expanding the strong relationship that exists between UNHCR and the World Bank. (World Bank Group, 2020)

Physical and Mental Health Crisis

The predicament of Afghan refugees in Pakistan is a complicated one, and it involves a variety of concerns, including access to healthcare, housing and economic opportunities. Some of the people whose homes were damaged had been in the same location for the last



four decades. Peshawar, which serves as the capital of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, is a popular destination for wealthy Afghans seeking medical treatment. Since 1979, ongoing battles in the area have rendered many of the region's hospitals unable to deliver treatment that is up to standard. Women who are refugees from Afghanistan and who live in refugee communities have relatively easy access to medical facilities. This means that they have excellent access to reproductive health (RH) services, with over 85% of pregnancies being attended to by skilled attendants and 60% of births being attended to by skilled attendants.

As a direct consequence of the relentless lobbying efforts of UNHCR, refugees from Afghanistan are now entitled to take part in a wide array of preventive health programmes that are conducted by the government. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is contributing to the HIV prevention efforts of the Baluchistan department of health by funding harm reduction programmes in Quetta for injectable drug users. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has established a state-of-the-art dialysis unit in Quetta, Baluchistan, as part of its Refugee Affected and Hosting Area (RAHA) strategy. (Rehman et. al, 2021) Additionally, the UNHCR is in the process of constructing a specialised cold chain facility in Peshawar for the storage of vaccines, which will serve the entire province of KP. The predicament of Afghan refugees in Pakistan is a complicated one, and it involves a variety of concerns, including access to healthcare, housing, and economic opportunities, as well as protection against harassment and abuse by police. Some of the people whose homes were damaged had been in the same location for the last four decades. Peshawar, which serves as the capital of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan, is a popular destination for wealthy Afghans seeking medical treatment. Since 1979, ongoing battles in the area have rendered many of the region's hospitals unable to deliver treatment that is up to standard.

A great number of Afghans who now live in Pakistan as well as Afghans who have been to Pakistan for purposes such as seeking medical treatment or taking a holiday are dissatisfied with the treatment they have gotten there. Women who are refugees from Afghanistan and who live in refugee communities have relatively easy access to medical facilities. This means that they have excellent access to reproductive health (RH) services, with over 85% of pregnancies being attended to by skilled attendants and 60% of births being attended to by skilled attendants. As a direct consequence of the relentless lobbying efforts of UNHCR,



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Communities all throughout the globe, including those in Pakistan, do not discuss mental health in an open and honest manner. As a result of having been subjected to traumatic events throughout their lives, including early-life conflict, separation from family, and the consequences of war on day-to-day living, mental health problems are a big concern for refugees of all different ethnic origins. People who have survived such terrifying conflict are disproportionately more likely to be afflicted by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Several of the factors discussed in this study, such as poor physical health, restricted access to educational opportunities, extreme poverty, and a sense of alienation, contribute to the deterioration of Afghan refugees' mental health and make it more difficult for them to recover from mental illness. Psychological challenges are experienced by refugees living in both urban and rural environments. However, it may be far more difficult for individuals who live in distant places to seek professional therapy, and a significant number of them never do so. Similar to other types of health data, information on the mental health state of refugees is scarce. Nevertheless, a study that was published in the Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health in 2005 reported on the mental health status of children who were living in refugee camps. This data, while being 15 years old, is very useful for gaining insight into the mental health of today's adults who were Afghan refugees as children. It is vital to get insight into the mental health of today's adults who were Afghan refugees as children. Researchers in Peshawar asked questions to students ranging from seventh to twelfth grade at two refugee schools in order to collect data for this study. (Syed & Wasay, 2022)

The Good Practice

As part of the PoR initiative, the government of Pakistan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) worked together in 2006 to make an attempt to



register and record the personal information of all Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan. As part of the project, extensive and open data gathering and recording of personal information, biometrics, photos, and other relevant information and family links were carried out. The Pakistani federal government makes certain that the Proof of Card Modification (PCM) centres located in each of the country's provinces continue to function normally. These centres are tasked with maintaining the most stringent levels of safety and support while also being responsible for the regular updating of data. Everything involved with the distribution of Afghan Citizen Cards was paid for by the government of Pakistan (ACCs). The government established 21 registration centres around the country and provided them with manpower and resources. These hubs were spread out across the country. Our methodical approach to documenting and registering refugees brings us closer to achieving all four of the objectives outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees. Keeping tabs on one of the most extensive databases of refugee information, which includes personal information, biometric information, and residence addresses, is a component of this. The National Database and Registration Authority of the Pakistani government have conducted the whole procedure in the open, which has earned the country plaudits from people all over the globe. (Farhat, 2022)

Over the course of the last four decades, the government of Pakistan has provided shelter to millions of Afghans who have fled their country. The compassion, friendliness, and helpfulness shown toward their Afghan sisters and brothers by the people of Pakistan are shown by the assistance that was provided to the refugees. Since they were registered and had identity cards, they were eligible for benefits like as free or low-cost public elementary and secondary education, medical treatment, subsidised food and non-food commodities, running water and electricity, and even work. Refugees in Pakistan have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of programmes that are meant to assist them in acquiring employable skills and securing meaningful work. Training in a variety of occupations has been provided to thousands of refugees, both male and female. Needlework, tailoring, computers and information technology, masonry, plumbing, electrical work, and beauty treatment are some examples of these. Afghan refugees who wish to pursue higher education in fields such as medicine, engineering, and information technology at reputable universities can apply for and receive financial assistance through programmes run by the Afghan government. In some cases, these refugees can even earn doctoral degrees. (Farhat, 2022)

Repatriation of Refugees



According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, the number of persons seeking sanctuary in Pakistan has increased since the Taliban assumed control in Kabul, Afghanistan. These individuals are fleeing violence and seeking safety in Pakistan. According to a spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Pakistan, more than 250,000 Afghans have entered Pakistan seeking safety since January 2021. This information was provided by the UNHCR in Pakistan. According to a study by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), contrary to the general belief it would, the number of Afghan refugees returning to their homeland has not grown since the Taliban took control of it. Since the beginning of 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that under the commission's voluntary repatriation scheme, just 850 refugees, or 185 families, have returned to the country that has been ripped apart by conflict. According to estimates provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about 4.4 million refugees have been allowed to return to Afghanistan since the year 2002. On the other hand, many of these migrants, including hundreds of thousands of people who were seeking asylum, have instead chosen to return to Pakistan because of the prevalence of violence, unemployment, and a dearth of educational and medical resources. (Auntu & Promee, 2020)

Since 2002, UNHCR-supported Voluntary Repatriation has brought 5.3 million Afghan refugees home. In 2022, three times more Afghan refugees returned home than in 2020. As of this writing, 1,178 Afghans have returned home, surpassing 2021's 1,148. The UNHCR assistance package, the high cost of living and lack of employment in host countries, the desire to reunite with family, the improved security situation, and the government land allocation program¹ in Afghanistan were the main reasons Iranians and Pakistanis returned. [Cite] 19% of refugees who returned this year settled in Kabul (218), 11% in Kunduz (125), and 9% in Herat (104).

Approximately 1.3 million Afghan refugees are still being housed in Pakistan, not considering the almost same number of people who are residing in the country without the appropriate identification. They are most numerous in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which is located in the country's northwest and serves as a gateway to Afghanistan for many people. More than 300,000 Afghan refugees now call Karachi, Pakistan, home. The vast majority of these individuals are engaged as manual labourers or own and operate small enterprises in neighbourhoods that are mostly Pashtun. So, there is no repatriation in insight



or near future from Pakistan to Afghanistan and on the contrary, the population of Afghan refugees has drastically increased in the last decade. (Khan, 2021)

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Over the course of the last four decades, the government of Pakistan has provided millions of Afghan refugees with asylum and safety on its territory. The compassion, friendliness, and helpfulness shown toward their Afghan sisters and brothers by the people of Pakistan are shown by the assistance that was provided to the refugees. After getting registered and acquiring identity cards, they were eligible for essential services such as free or reduced-cost fundamental education and medical treatment, as well as food, non-food commodities, water, electricity, employment, and other requirements. Now that they are in Pakistan, refugees have access to a range of programmes that are meant to assist them in acquiring skills that are marketable. Training has been offered to thousands of male and female refugees in a broad range of areas, including but not limited to needlework and tailoring; computers and information technology; masonry; plumbing; electrical work; and beauty treatment. Afghan refugees who want to enrol in postsecondary education programmes, such as those in the professions of medicine, engineering, and information technology (IT), as well as acquire doctorates in specified subjects, are eligible for financial assistance via programmes run by the Afghan government.

Thanks to the efforts of the Pakistani government, all legally recognised Afghan refugees in Pakistan are now free to open bank accounts, which will preserve the money they have worked so hard to acquire and enable them to begin the process of rebuilding their economies with confidence. The United States has a long tradition of aiding Afghan refugees in launching and managing their own businesses. This assistance has been provided by the United States. In order to earn a livelihood, they have tried their hand at a number of different occupations, such as weaving carpets, driving a truck, raising bees, etc.

Since 1995, when the government stopped providing food to those who were living in camps, thousands of Afghans have relocated to urban settlements that were hastily constructed in order to relieve strain on the country's infrastructure and population. They now have access to the fundamental services that the government provides, such as healthcare and education. As a result of this, records kept on refugees have been helpful in establishing accurate forecasts



and preparing for the future. In order to make it easier for people to return voluntarily and be reintegrated into society, the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to develop a reliable registration system. As a component of this approach, both governments have created designated zones for the safe and dignified return of their respective populations. Improvements have been made to the fundamental infrastructure located inside Afghanistan as a result of efforts that have been made in this particular area. The reintegration process and the long-term, sustainable, and voluntary return of Afghan refugees are supported by the sharing of data between the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan in accordance with various agreements.

With assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other international organisations, the government of Pakistan has launched a brand-new project that is being referred to as "Refugees Affected and Hosting Areas." More than four thousand different projects have been carried out so far in areas that are now housing refugees in an attempt to maintain social peace amongst the various population subsets. This programme aimed to improve a variety of different areas, including water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services; health; education; livelihoods; agricultural practices; and other sectors. According to an assessment conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), great progress has been made in social integration.

Conclusion

After escaping persecution, refugees have essential requirements such as shelter, food, healthcare, and the opportunity to find work; nonetheless, they may constitute a financial and social burden on the nation that takes in refugees. Such refugees do not even repatriate voluntarily and seek a permanent place in the host country. Due to the fact that Pakistan has been providing shelter to Afghan refugees for the greater part of four decades, the nation has been forced to triumph over tremendous challenges on all fronts. There are a significant number of Afghans who are active participants in criminal organisations and terrorist organisations. Pakistan, meanwhile, has continued to take in an increasing number of refugees in the years after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban. Pakistan offers a plethora of experience and lessons to the world in general and Poland in particular, in light of the fact that Poland is still relatively new to the process of hosting a large influx of Ukrainian refugees after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February of this year.



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