



AFGHAN REFUGEES: IMPLICATIONS ON PAKISTAN

Sohail Anwar

Lecturer

Department of International Relations

BUIITEMS, Quetta, Balochistan

sohail.anwar@buitms.edu.pk

Muhammad Hassan

Lecturer

Department of International Relations

BUIITEMS, Quetta, Balochistan

mohammad.hassan@buitms.edu.pk

Dr Allauddin Kakar

Assistant Professor/DS Research

Command and Staff Collage

Quetta, Balochistan

allauddin_kakar@yahoo.com

Abstract

The paper discuss that refugees present in host state has potential economic, social, political, security and environmental impacts and create chaos and conflicts in the host state. It examines that Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has resulted massive migration of Afghan refugees, which broke out disastrous economic, social, political and environmental impacts on Pakistan. As a main recipient Pakistan placed more than three million refugees which had painful corollaries and implications on its society. The project analyses, the exodus of Afghan is one of the main causes of terrorism, inflation, child labor, drugs trade and many diseases such as poliomyelitis, Malaria etc. Furthermore, refugee influxes created environmental problems by over exploitation of natural resources, land erosion, deforestation, hunting and foraging. The economic and socio-political impacts creating unemployment, anger, prejudices and xenophobia among locals, which is leading society towards conflict. In this detailed analysis some examples of displaced population, its consequences and durable solutions have been identified and correlational study of refugees' implications in other countries are also



analyzed to figure out the relativity. The case of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and their implications in the country has been analyzed and it is found that withdrawal of refugees will help to maintain peace and stability in the host state.

Key words: Poliomyelitis, Xenophobia, deforestation, foraging

INTRODUCTION:

Conflict is one of the major reasons of displacement of millions around the globe. Refugees arrive in host states with vulnerable state of mind and lose their resources behind due to conflict and violence. Majority of refugee populations move towards nearest state to find shelter. This creates difficulties for refugees and implications for host states which have to compromise by facilitating refugees in large numbers (Altındağ, Bakış, & Rozo, 2020).

With the change in world powers relations from late 1970's to 1980, weakening relations of United States and Soviet Union and shutoff of the era of detente, World experienced proxy wars and regional conflicts were promoted by super powers due to the hostile relations. United States has modified its containment policy to indirect involvement and support to the insurgent movements in communist regime. With other developing world same Policy was applied on Afghanistan to counter Soviet invasion in 1979. Soviet invasion in Afghanistan resulted disastrous changes, political and economic instability, critical law and order situation and massive migration in world history. In this journey of competition by super power, Asian states faced mass exodus, Pakistan, Iran and India faced migration in large numbers (Cheema, 1988).

For the policy makers of state, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was an opportunity to end the global seclusion which took place because of ongoing nuclear research. Political atmosphere of Asia was not in favor of western block after the ousting of Shah of Iran. It was in the interests of both United States and Pakistan to be on same page against Soviet Union to fulfill their national aims. Despite of having territorial dispute with Afghanistan, the government opened its borders to place millions of Afghan refugees and became main recipient of refugees. The region badly suffered due to political agenda of United States and Government of Pakistan as these states instrumentalised Afghan refugees. United states by excluding USSR strengthen its own base in the region and Pakistan favored Afghan resistance to balance its regional position and form an amicable government in Afghanistan that protect its national interest (Schoch, 2008).



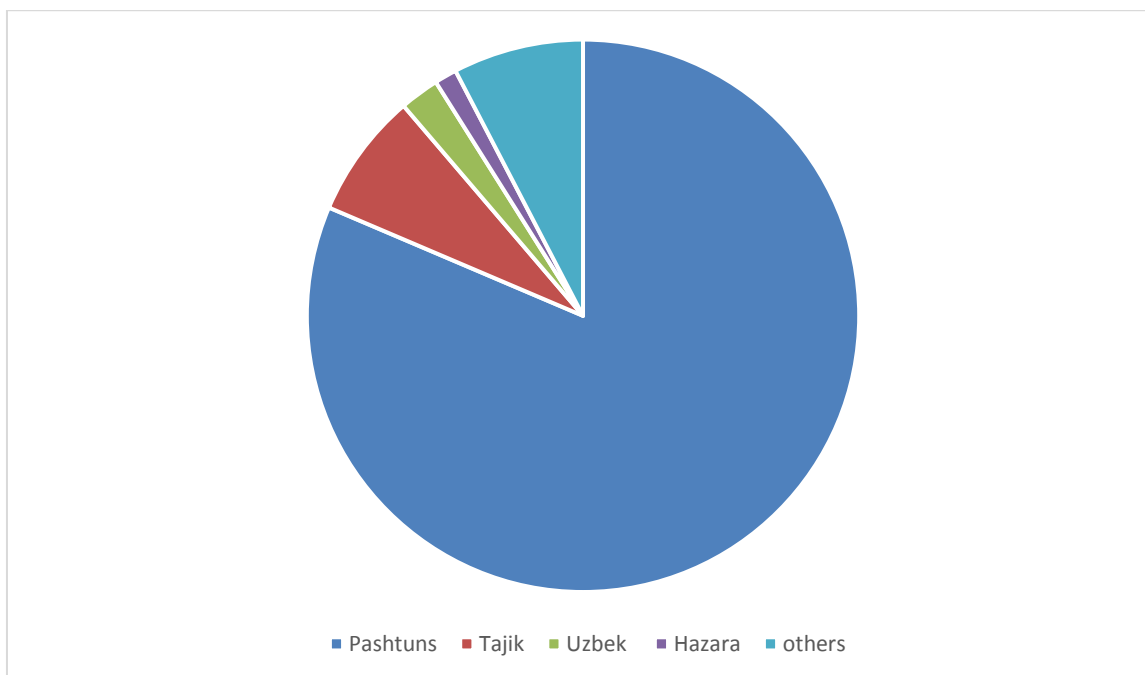
The article discusses that Afghan war reasoning massive migration had aching corollaries, and implications particularly on Pakistan. It shows a light on major and long term economic, social, political and environmental implications of Afghan refugees on Pakistani society. It is not only a challenge for internal and external security but created political, social and economic instability in the state. Pakistan currently placing 1.7 million registered with over all 3.7 million Afghan refugees in two of its provinces bordered Afghanistan, Khaiber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. (Cheema, 1988).

The government of Pakistan accepted refugees with open heart but soon after dearth of resources invited UNHCR to assist the country but with unobtrusive and unnoticeable way to control of refugee operations. UNHCR established permanent office in Pakistan and started largest supporting program ever taken over before. Ultimately there were more than 3 million refugees awaited for supplying solace goods such as food, clothing and shelter. UNHCR became key supporter of refugees by delivering building materials for refugee camps, supplying clean drinking water, veterinary services for their livestock and non-material support such as free education and health facilities. No doubt UNHCR and international donors were involved in refugee assistance program but implications of migration on Pakistani society are fatal and calamitous (Schoch, 2008).

After September 11 attacks, United States and allied forces launched a war against Taliban government of Afghanistan which pushed the country once again into conflict zone. Anarchy, crisis and unrest once again coerced a large Afghan population to cross the borders and take refuge in Pakistan. According to an estimation by the end of 2001, the number of Afghan refugees increased to nearly five million which brought more challenges for government of Pakistan (Khan, 2016). The government believes that these refugees pose a security threat to the country as they are involved in smuggling of goods and individuals across the border. It is reported that Afghan refugees cross the border on daily basis and the Government does not have resources to control this flow (Margesson, 2007, January).

Population Data:

UNHCR and the Government of Pakistan conducted a census of Afghan population in Pakistan in 2002. That found 3,049,268 Afghans are living in Pakistan, in which 42% are living in camps and 58% are living in urban areas. Moreover, among these 81% of the Afghans were Pashtuns, with much smaller percentages of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen, and other ethnic groups (Census of Afghans in Pakistan, 2005).



Source: Margesson, (2007, January). *Afghan Refugees: current status and Future Prospects*.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS:

It is found in a research that arrival of refugees had either no effect or have positive implications on economy of host country. For instance, Cuban migrants into Miami did not affect the employment of locals but only rose in average low skill wages and Soviet refugees in Israel raised country's population 12 percent in four years that directly affected the country's employment (Clemens, 2017, September 14).

Soon after arrival of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, a competition was started between refugees and local citizens over resources, water, land, food and property. This created a gap between refugees and citizens of two provinces of Pakistan i.e. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan where refugees in large numbers were being hosted. With the passage of time and decades, refugees demand on resources, education, energy, transportation and employment were also increased which further created anger among locals of the two provinces (Aslam, 2001, Oct 28).



Both the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan are poor and claimed deprivation on their rights, and this exodus of Afghan really affected economic interests of locals of these two provinces. Economic activities of refugees might be beneficial for a particular class or government but for poor class and those depending on monthly incomes it is violation of their rights. Refugees work as a cheap labor which affect local labors as market follows profit and prefer cheap labor for their economic interests. Refugees are also one of the reasons of inflation, as presence of refugees in large numbers also accelerate demands of a product, if demand of resources increases than surely price of commodities also rise. These activities are profitable for market but locals suffer from inflation which accumulate fury among them. (Aslam, 2001, Oct 28).

There are also economic concerns that most Afghan traders have their business in different cities of Pakistan but do not pay taxes. For instance, In Peshawar alone, these traders became billionaire but still acquitted themselves from paying taxes. Such things created burden for local tax payers and businessman, and growth of revenue collection is also badly affected (Roehrs, 2015).

Economic impact of refugees on host countries may also be positive, economic growth of country may generate and lead to the development. For instance, Much of Afghanistan's livestock too shifted to Pakistan with the refugees which is estimated almost 2.5 million, according to the United Nations high commissioner for refugees, Afghan brought with them 45,000 camels, 35,000 cows, and 25,000 donkeys etc. due to which local market of meat and milk was boosted up and local purchase of food increased. Because of refugee's assistance programs supplying of relief items by international agencies are also positive signs for local economies. Foreign funded projects and Aid organizations disburse their resources for building infrastructure and development of host state. Therefore, there are also positive aspects but large scale presence of refugees is really a burden on host country, especially for less developed countries (Aslam, 2001, Oct 28).

SOCIAL IMPACTS:

Refugees have direct and indirect impacts on the lives of locals. If refugees belong to the same ethnicity than a kind of sympathy generate among locals and people offer them shelters with open heart. In case of Yugoslavia, where almost 400,000 refugees were placed in their houses by locals just because of ethnic nationalism. And, if refugees belong to different ethnicity and linguistic group than many problems occur due to the clash of interests. In case of Balochistan, Local Baloch population consider refugees as a threat to imbalance their population, People here believe that many refugees



have made their CNIC and adopted Pakistani identity which will challenge their majority status. Therefore, they consider refugees may become cause of demographic change which will convert local Baloch population into minority. Baloch nationalists in Pakistan are one of the main forces that demand to send refugees back to Afghanistan (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, 1997).

Sometimes when interest of refugees and local population clashes than locals in saving their interests take stance against refugees as happened in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan. Local citizens in KPK initially welcomed Afghan refugees with open arms due to belonging to the same ethnicity i.e. Pashtun (Marsden, 1992). But when the interests of local citizens clashed with Afghan refugees and they felt that refugees are one of the causes of instability in the province than KPK government has decided to send refugees back to their native state due to their involvement in anti-state activities (Roehrs, 2015).

Afghan refugees in Pakistan begat security issues and added terrorism, crime rates, murders ransom and other social problems which are Child labor, prostitution, Drugs trade and Alcoholism. According to an estimation, in Pakistan one quarter of country's work force are children, which enter in the profession in the age of 5 to 7 years. Most of these children belong to the families which migrated from Afghanistan. Afghan children are working in hotels, as laborer, boot polishers and car washers etc. Because of their poor living conditions children work more than 16 hours in a day. Moreover, Terrorist organizations in the region also take advantages of these children by using them as facilitator or brainwashes them for suicide bombing (Margesson, 2007, January).

Another Social problem was increasing crime rate and ethnic clashes that occurred due to Afghan refugees. Afghan war introduced Kalashnikov culture to Pakistan. Refugees in pursuing their economic interests have started smuggling of illegal weapons from Afghanistan to Pakistan that contributed in ethnic and tribal clashes and increased rate of crimes. It was reported that from 1981 to 1991, 481,948 crimes were committed, in which 361,461 have been committed by Refugees (Cheema, 1994).

Furthermore, expanding drugs trade in last few decades also raised questions on the presence of refugees. Pakistan's senate standing committee on interior and narcotics control in a briefing stated in 2011, that around seven million people in the country are drugs addicted, while nearly 700 people die every day because of drugs related diseases. According to a research report on drug use conducted with combine study by government of Pakistan's ministry of interior and narcotics control, Pakistan bureau of statistics and United nations office on drugs and crime, the highest opiate users in Pakistan belongs to province of Balochistan and KPK. Both



the provinces are hub of Afghan refugees and these refugees are mostly involved in drugs trade and creating many social problems for host state (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2013, March 12).

POLITICAL IMPACTS:

Third major impact is political and security impacts. Which mostly left negative impact on host state, where security risks prevail because of refugees. The political affiliation of refugees with their mother country creates disturbance in host state, same is the case in Pakistan. Afghans living in Pakistan were directly supporting Taliban movement against Soviet Union and still they are involving in anti-state activities in current Afghan war against United States. This created conflict, chaos and terrorism and these activities of refugees have destabilized the host State as well as the region. The province of Balochistan, KPK and Tribal areas of Pakistan are largely affected in this dirty war of terrorism and millions of people have faced intra state migration. Institutions in Tribal areas were destroyed, schools and hospitals were bombarded and masses were compelled to leave their native areas (World Development Report, 2011)

After the Soviet Invasion in Afghanistan refugees those settled in camps in Blochistan and Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa were directly involved in Afghan war. Madrassahs were established to educate and train them against Soviet Union and funding for these refugees and Madrassahs came from United States and Saudi Arabia. Thus these investments promoted fundamentalism and intolerance among Afghan refugees. Madrassahs were used to brainwash children on the name of Jihad and religion. These fundamentalist approach were the main reason of increasing intolerance in refugees that too affected local population in host state. Madrassahs in Pakistan still have their links and sympathies with Taliban against United States and its allies. This is one of the major reasons of instability and disorder in the Country (Tariq, 2011).

Last government of Pakistan (PML N) stated that in most of the cases of terrorism Afghan refugees are directly or indirectly involved. Refugee camps situated near to the boundary of their native soil are mostly used by rebels as their hideouts and bases to launch their operations. Rebels carry out their operations with the support of refugees living in host states and sometimes host state itself in pursuing their national interests assist these groups that are adjoining to refugees. For example, during Afghan war, refugees were logistically supported, militarily trained and underpinned in all methods by Pakistani government. Therefore, Refugee camps near borders of mother country breeds political instability in host state (Khan, 2015).



If meetness on Political ideas of refugees with the country of their origin occur than interferences take place in the host state. The killing of former Ameer of Afghan Taliban Mullah Akhtar Mansoor in drone attacks by United States opened a new Pandora box. On the place of incidence, his Pakistani national identity card has been found, which was an enough proof that Afghan leader was being supported by elements living in Pakistan. And, it was shocking to see how making CNIC in Pakistan is too much easy as Afghan Ameer faced no hurdle towards it. This irresponsibility of state make the situation more vulnerable which promote uncertainty in the region. Assistance by refugees to rebel groups create instability and insecurity for the party-giver. Therefore, refugees' political ideas and involvement is too much hazardous for host states. According to Gil Loescher, a professor at the refugee studies centre at the University of Oxford, says,

"Too often refugees are perceived as a matter of international Charity organizations, and not as political and security problem
Yet refugees are in fact intensely political. The presence of refugees accelerates existing internal conflicts in the host countries"
(Kirui, & Mwaruie, 2012, April).

Refugees create problems, when they serve as domestic opposition or support of one party agenda against other community. Under such condition a kind of mistrust takes place among locals which lead towards crisis. In case of Balochistan, an extreme mistrust is deeply rooted in the minds of local Baloch population. They have concerns and reservations that refugees are being part of an agenda to bring demographical change in the Province, which will make them into minority. This feeling of threat to be convert into minority in their own province created anger and fury among locals. Therefore, nationalist forces in the province demanded withdrawal of refugees back to their mother country (Loescher, 1996).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

The influx of Afghan in Pakistan resulted bad implications on the environment due to which spread of different diseases occurred. Disease shifted from border areas to different part of country particularly in its provinces of KPK and Balochistan. Moreover, migration of Afghan refugees in north of Pakistan is one of the major reasons for failure of eradication of poliomyelitis from Pakistan. There is no expedient way to eradicate poliomyelitis as millions of refugees unvaccinated because of migration. Continuous cross border migration from Afghanistan to Pakistan is the main cause of polio diseases



in the country and polio cases in Pakistan are mainly emerging from border areas (Roehrs, 2015, March 9).

Refugees need resources to live, such as Food, shelter, water, land and fuel as their basic needs with long term implications on sustainable reanimation. The environmental problems created by refugees are land erosion and decrease of land fertility. Cutting of woods and Food collection through hunting and foraging by refugee's increase pressure on environment. Moreover, human waste disposal may befoul ground water and become reason of spread of many diseases. In Pakistan more than three million refugees have contributed in the damage of roads and canals. Wood resources are used in large numbers to build shelter camps and for food purposes (Unite Nations Environment Program., 2005).

Refugees in Pakistan are living almost more than three decades, so now the camps are changed into villages and the need for woods are increasing with the passage of time, which has created pressure on woodland resources. Afghan refugees brought with them more than 2 million livestock which grazed near their camps. Families fulfilled their basic needs by foraging and involve in over grazing and resulting in soil erosion. Moreover, removal of Fodder and usage of fuel also create serious threat to the capacity of environment to renew its ground water resources (Unite Nations Environment Program, 2005).

According to an environmental assessment by United Nations environment program 2005, In Sudan, presence of large number of refugees caused serious environmental degradation and desertification. The report says the impacts on environment are related to the settlements of massive refugees and enumerated most evident impacts, such as; (i) Land degradation (ii) Deforestation and firewood depletion (iii) water pollution, and (iv) Sustainable groundwater extraction. In addition, human waste disposal by refugees can pollute and contaminate ground water, which cause dissemination of diseases and pose threat to create favorable condition to the growth of microbial pathogens. Therefore, such impacts may affect the long term opportunities of both refugees and local population (Unite Nations Environment Program, 2005).

Sustainable Solution:

Refugees leave both positive and negative impacts on host states. According to world development report on refugees, experiences in Pakistan, Lebanon, Tanzania and Zambia suggest that effective approach should be taken to build up positive contribution of



refugees. U.N.D.P, U.N.H.C.R, and international agencies are involving in these process but world community need to take more initiatives for sustainable solutions. Assistance programs should be initiated to assist displaced persons for the development and safe return to their native states be guaranteed. Effective framework for Developmental projects and peace promotion activities will be conducive to preserve stability in the region. Refugees need to be involve in glabrous and smooth activities. Projects to generate income is helpful to keep them safe from illegal activities. The government should repair their damages and protect their livestock and other living materials and do flood control works and assist them in irrigation. A report conducted by World Bank, evaluated that income generating projects are impressive for facilitating refugees and creating employment opportunities (Brosché & Nilsson, 2005).

State of Zambia in 2003 launched multi sector rural development program that targeted refugees and host community. For instance, works to alleviate poverty, provide health and educational facilities, agriculture and infrastructure development and water and forestry resources to support refugees, due to which burden of government changed into opportunities. Therefore, Host states have to invest for sustainable solution of this refugee's dilemma (Brosché & Nilsson, 2005).

The major affected country of Afghan crisis is Pakistan. Refugee presence in such a large number created many complexities, such as demographic change and political and security issues. In spite of all these complications the Government of Pakistan with the assistance of World community is facilitating Afghan refugees more than three decades and applied all the resources and methods for sustainable solution. The government of Pakistan has borne half of the cost of maintenance of Afghan refugees and other half was paid by donors (Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, 1994). Former Minister of States and Frontier Regions Abdul Qadir Baloch said, the state of Paksitan has spent \$200 billion on refugees in last three decades (The Express Tribune, Oct 26, 2013). Therefore, the Government has already invested a lot in the provision of facilities of Afghan refugees and the current economic condition of State does not allow any further investment on Afghan Refugees and, the future stability and development of Pakistan is depended with the withdrawal of Afghan refugees as economic condition of the country is already vulnerable and disorder and instability is already affected all sectors of the country. Therefore, ultimate sustainable solution can be dignified departure of Afghan refugees to their mother country.

CONCLUSION

The state of Pakistan has already done its part of adjustment and humanitarian support. After the stoppage of international aid for Afghan refugees Pakistan with weak economic



condition cannot alone bear this burden of millions of refugees. Afghanistan is experiencing law and order issues since 1979. World aid and humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees has decreased within passage of time and it is not possible for Pakistan alone to aid Afghan refugees with its vulnerable economic conditions.

Afghan refugees are living in Pakistan more than three decades, States and international organizations have already done a lot for their development but still issue of their safe return need to be solved. The economic and socio-political impacts of refugees are increasing tensions among locals and environmental impacts are creating serious challenges of water pollution, massive erosion and biodiversity damages in the country. Many cases of smuggling of drugs and weapons and issues of child labor and Ransom have the footprints of refugees and these became one of the reasons behind instability in the country. In addition, for a state where inflation, unemployment and rising cost of living has already hit all sectors of society, any further economic investment on Refugees will pose serious threat to state security.

The current wave of terrorism in the country is too linked to Afghanistan, where conflict is continuing more than three decades and spread of intolerance and fundamentalism in Pakistan is one way or the other linked to Afghanistan. Therefore, it is evident that exclusion of Afghan refugees has become necessary for future stability of the host State. The government has two options either forced exclusion or voluntary withdrawal of refugees, second thought will be more favorable for sustainable integrated cooperative policies with Afghanistan and for the promotion of peace in the region.



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