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**THE IMPACT OF PAKISTAN'S REFUGEE POLICY ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF AFGHAN
REFUGEES**

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan's refugee policy, particularly in relation to Afghan refugees, has had profound implications for its international relations, regional security, and domestic socio-economic landscape. Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees, making it one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the world. This paper examines the evolution of Pakistan's refugee policy, focusing on the challenges and opportunities it presents in the context of international relations. The study highlights the humanitarian, economic, and security dimensions of hosting Afghan refugees, emphasizing the strain on Pakistan's resources and infrastructure, as well as the cultural and social integration challenges faced by both refugees and host communities. The paper also explores the geopolitical implications of Pakistan's refugee policy, particularly its impact on diplomatic relations with Afghanistan and other regional and global stakeholders. It analyzes the role of international organizations, such as the UNHCR, in providing humanitarian assistance and the limitations of such aid in addressing the long-term needs of refugees. Furthermore, the study discusses the security concerns associated with hosting Afghan refugees, including the potential for instability and terrorism, which have influenced Pakistan's policy decisions. By comparing Pakistan's refugee policies with those of other countries, the paper identifies best practices and offers recommendations for improving refugee management in line with international norms. The

findings suggest that while Pakistan's refugee policy has been shaped by a mix of humanitarian obligations and national interests, a more sustainable and comprehensive approach is needed to address the protracted refugee crisis and its broader implications for regional and global security.

Keywords: Pakistan, Afghan Refugees, Refugee Policy, International Relations, Humanitarian Assistance, Security Implications, Regional Dynamics, UNHCR, Socio-Economic Impact.

Introduction

Pakistan has experienced multifaceted implications of its refugee policies since 1978, particularly hosting millions of Afghan refugees. The study of these complicated implications is crucial not only to understand the politics between refugee-hosting countries and the international community, but also admirably relevant to the larger framework of regional politics and international relations within the South and Central Asian regions. The Soviet-Afghan War and post-Cold War geopolitical changes have brought about a massive outflow of refugees from Afghanistan to Pakistan, and their protection and management have posed serious difficulties and burdens to this country. (Khan et al., 2022) Since the end of 1979, Pakistan has accepted the largest number of Afghan refugees – about 3 million at their peak in the 1980s – and their situations have fluctuated dynamically with the shifting politics of both Afghanistan and its neighboring countries. Pakistani authorities have variously encouraged Afghan refugees to repatriate as well as blaming them for unrest and economic depression inside Pakistan. Also, making visa policies tougher, detainments, deportations, and repatriation campaigns have been dramatically enforced, especially since 2001.

Generally it is intended to interrogate Pakistan's refugee policy implications by examining both humanitarian concerns for refugees and geopolitical conditions between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other international stakeholders. The current status of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and the challenges they confront will be elaborated to identify the on-going issues in the humanitarian dimension. Security issues affecting the Pakistani government's refugee policy and its impacts on Afghan refugees will then be analyzed, revealing key questions that guide the paper throughout. It has become overly common to analyze the refugee

flows and policies of states almost exclusively on the basis of the national government (Ali et al.2022). The study of refugees in Pakistan, however, demands much more attention to cities, agencies, and actors other than the national government in Islamabad. After a brief interpretive history of the nation-state concept and insights from studies involving refugees of nations in other regions, the study examines the limitations and ambiguities of such concept as applied to Pakistan. A historically focused case study of Afghan refugees in Lahore, the capital of Punjab and the second largest city in Pakistan, will then be used to illustrate the importance of thinking beyond the national framework.

Historical Context of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the first wave of Afghan refugees started taking shelter in the bordering Pakhtunkhwa, Sind and Baluchistan provinces of Pakistan. The mass exodus from Afghanistan due to ongoing conflict and proxy wars between the Soviet Union and the US and the involvement of Pakistan, scared those in majority, who did not support the socialist regime in Afghanistan (Masudi & Mustafa, 2022). In the 1980s, 'jihad', or 'holy war' in Afghanistan against the infidels, was backed by the radical Muslim groups in Pakistan and the Afghan refugees became part of the 'jihad' due to which they were welcome in Pakistani tribal structure of society. In the 1990s, the tribal social structure gradually became outdated and less accommodating towards the radical Islam.

A surge of Afghan refugees, estimated to be a staggering 4.5 million, flowed into Pakistan. The demographic distribution of Afghan refugees, bilaterally approved by the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan, seemed innocent and a little place was given to the political Pashto-speaking Pashtoons of Pakistan to live in Afghanistan and be considered themselves as a separate ethnic group. Additionally, massive demographic changes also took place by the way of Afghan refugees. The radical Islam of the refugees from Peshawar, Kohat, and Rawalpindi prohibited music in meetings, even marriage ceremonies, and arranged parallel schools. The war mongering aspect, which was narrated to Afghan refugees, was a sort of zephyr to worsen Talibanization as a whole in the tribal areas of Pakistan (Sanchez, 2011). Today, a stronger

form of Islam is prevailing among the illiterate and madrassa-educated tribal Pashtoons.

Moreover, Afghan settlements in Patessahra, Munda and Shagi in Nowshera District, and Koz in Lakki Marwat were cautioned by the law-enforcing agencies and evacuated on the suspicion of harboring militancy. Meanwhile, ethnocentrism started growing among the Pashtoons, which resulted in violent ethnic disputes between Mahsud Mahajirs and Qayyum Pahoran Mahajirs in parts of the NWFP and in Karachi, further tarnishing human relations between Pashtoons and the Afghan refugees (Ur Rehman et al., 2021). In essence, Afghan refugees with their hosts have become the victims of Pakistan's Afghan Policy and currently face acute hostility in Pakistan. Soon after the US withdrawal, Afghan society returned to the Amanullah phase of history; the civil war phase emerged in full swing, and the rise of the "iron students" gave birth to the Taliban. In the midst of the above complexities, when the clerical and military establishment of Pakistan had pampered the Pashtoons in jihad, the temporary Afghan refugees became a threat to Pakistani society. In fact, both Pakistan's Afghan Policy and the presence of temporary Afghan refugees in Pakistan have combined together to work as an incurable boil in Pakistan's internal security dynamics, causing the Pashtoon problem on the one side.

Pakistan's Refugee Policy: Evolution and Implementation

Historical perspective on Pakistan's refugee policy: The case study of Afghan refugees. Since the year 1980, Pakistan has experienced the significant and noteworthy arrival of millions of Afghan refugees, a phenomenon that has had profound and lasting implications for the nation and its societal fabric. This monumental event firmly establishes Pakistan as one of the countries that have been a major host for refugees on a global scale, making a significant and indelible mark in the annals of international humanitarian efforts and refugee management initiatives (Anwar et al., 2021). By closely examining Pakistan's refugee policy, which is specifically tailored to address and adapt to the unique and pressing situation of Afghan refugees, one can begin to explore and analyze the broader implications of refugee situations within the intricate and often complex field of

international

relations.

Due to the numerous distinctive characteristics that are inherent in each refugee situation, along with the multifaceted historical, geographical, and cultural factors present within the host country, it becomes increasingly challenging and intricate to generalize about the impacts of refugee hosting on international relations through comparative research methods. Consequently, this research project will be meticulously and rigorously conducted by analyzing the specific refugee policies that have been implemented by Pakistan, which serves as the primary host country, specifically crafted to effectively accommodate Afghan refugees over the years.

This extensive analysis will be executed by identifying, examining, and evaluating the key factors that have significantly shaped and influenced Pakistan's policies, utilizing a multi-method approach to ensure a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the issue. Remarkably, Pakistan ultimately became the biggest host country of refugees in the entire world, successfully overtaking neighboring Iran, thereby highlighting a notable shift in regional dynamics and relationships that have persisted over time (Tariq et al.2024). As illustrated in the detailed case study section, the massive and unprecedented arrival of Afghan refugees in 1980 critically altered and transformed the pre-existing pattern of Pakistan's refugee policy, marking a significant turning point in its historical approach towards refugee management in general.

Before the Afghan mass influx in 1980, Pakistan had witnessed only a few isolated and sporadic incidents of refugees arriving within its borders, which were limited in scale compared to what was to come. When Pakistan was established as a new independent state in 1947, it peacefully emerged from a long history of British colonial rule, facing the dual task of nation-building and ensuring the welfare of diverse communities. Despite the prevailing atmosphere of friendship and assistance between the communities of the newly formed nations, both groups agreed to separate and exist in a framework of peaceful coexistence. However, the preparation of national administration and the

necessary infrastructure to support displaced individuals was not sufficiently robust to accommodate millions effectively, leading to increasingly complex challenges over time.

Pakistan's creation was the culmination of a complex and delicate separation from India, which at that time was one of the largest colonial entities in the region. Due to the arbitrary and often hasty drawing of borders by British authorities, a considerable number of minorities were inadvertently distributed among the two newly created entities. This unintended and unfortunate distribution of populations became a profound source of conflict, violence, and forced migration on both sides following independence. Thus, the emergence of these refugee dynamics continues to shape and define the contours of Pakistan's policies and its intricate international relationships with its neighboring countries and beyond, influencing both past and ongoing interactions in significant ways. The interconnections forged during these times resonate throughout the societal landscape of Pakistan and the complex affairs that govern its relationships with the international community.

International Relations Theories and Concepts

Pakistan's refugee policy in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980 serves as an illustrative example that allows us to gain a deeper understanding of this complex issue. The dynamics surrounding refugees are governed by a range of international regulations, yet the formation of specific policies regarding asylum seekers and refugees can be effectively analyzed through a realist lens. Within this framework, Pakistan's prevailing narrative of lacking sufficient capacity to accommodate refugees, alongside the relatively tepid response from the international community, can be interpreted through a neoliberal perspective that highlights economic implications and self-interest (Imran & Islam, 2021). Constructivist theories come into play by emphasizing the significance of existing institutions and social frameworks in molding state behavior, providing insight into why Pakistan has adopted a relatively lenient stance toward refugee admission. It is important to underscore the inconsistent treatment of refugees over time and among various nations, which further complicates our understanding of these policies.

Neorealism typically regards refugees as a potential menace to the security and stability of host nations. Thus, states often take measures to prevent their own involvement in harboring refugees, which may include intervening within the countries from which refugees flee or incentivizing those nations that are more willing to accept them. In instances where states are compelled to accept refugees, they frequently endeavor to minimize the associated burdens, prioritizing the expulsion of those who are deemed politically problematic or notoriously difficult to integrate into society. To frame it simply, the refugee matter is perceived as lacking intrinsic strategic value and is generally addressed in a manner that prioritizes swift solutions.

Conversely, the liberal perspective posits that refugees are not merely a humanitarian challenge but may also serve to enhance the host nation's interests. There are occasions when asylum-seekers can aid their countries of origin by fostering stability or engaging in economic and military strategies that undermine adversaries. By viewing refugees through this lens, they could be perceived as a significant asset to the military capabilities or political leverage of their host nation. Furthermore, in the immediate term, the well-being of refugee populations is often better safeguarded by delaying prompt repatriation, as such actions can prevent forcing them back into perilous conditions. Welcoming refugees can also improve a state's standing and reputation within the international realm, which further supports the argument for a more compassionate approach.

It is noteworthy, however, that achieving greater efficiency in addressing refugee issues often necessitates a multilateral response, given the interconnectedness of the problem that extends beyond the control of any single government. Yet, this argument is not without its limitations. The reconciliation of national interests with the obligations to uphold human rights remains tenuous, leading governments to frequently prioritize the former when these two elements are in contention. Additionally, the inclination of liberal states toward deeper engagement with humanitarian crises is significantly influenced by a mix of pragmatic realities and

normative considerations, further complicating the landscape of refugee policy and international responses to displacement. (Maria Wojdyla, 2015)

Impact of Afghan Refugees on Pakistan's Economy

As the title of section 5 suggests, it pulls up the economic lens on refugees. In the case of Afghan refugees hosted in Pakistan, it is not a matter of competition between nations for exclusive roles, but a mutual dependence defined by shared history, porous borders, and ethnic and cultural affinities stretching back over centuries something that precedes and conditions diplomatic and strategic considerations. This is why in assessing relations of dependency and interdependence, it makes sense to push further back from geopolitics into the daily struggle of livelihoods and economic survival. In other words, to consider the economic implications of hosting refugees, but also to delineate how they contribute to economic life in ways that are often overlooked (Ur Rehman et al., 2021).

Trying to quantify economic contributions made by refugees, often begin by looking at rates of labor force participation; the proportion of refugees who have been able to start or finance new businesses; or the share of daily wage work supplied by refugees, perhaps focusing on particular ethnicities in some sectors or regions. Equally telling is to think about the economic challenges faced by a host government like Pakistan and its people in trying to maintain and provide services and infrastructure to the world's second largest refugee population. This includes restrictions on the settlement pattern, prohibition on proving ration. Unlike many developing nations that host refugees, Pakistan's doors have remained open to Afghan refugees, but the influxes have strained public services, leading to a drop in quality of these by nearly every metric one could apply and fueling political tensions at the local level.

It makes sense to examine how refugees integrate into Pakistan's informal sector across different regions. Focusing solely on competition overlooks other ways they contribute economically and to local development. The economic narrative in much legal and policy literature paints refugees negatively, presenting them as burdens that drain resources and threaten the economy.

Conversely, progress is defined by the repatriation of enough individuals to promote self-sufficiency and develop an independent economy for local needs. While the dynamics of the war economy and refugee aid distort the broader economic development analysis, the relationship between refugees and the national economy is complex and multifaceted. (Nafari & Ruebottom, 2025) This interplay may yield socio-economic impacts often overlooked, representing an important step toward understanding how refugees influence and are influenced by their new environments, sometimes affecting other groups as well.

Impact of Afghan Refugees on Pakistan's Society and Culture

The presence of Afghan refugees in Pakistan has had important social and cultural implications for the host country. This section discusses how the influx of Afghan refugees in Pakistan has impacted various structures of Pakistani society through cultural exchanges and other means. The dynamics of cultural exchange and integration between host populations and Afghan refugees are analyzed, focusing on the hybridity of their culture and how this has led to the diversification of Pakistani culture.

Since Afghan refugees began residing in Pakistan, an interaction between the host and refugee communities has led to an evolution of new cultural aspects and traditions. Such interactions and modifications in social behavior are reflected in diverse cultural creations—ranging from paintings, carvings, and knitting among different ethnic communities to new culinary techniques. The refugee crisis has also created an opportunity for the international community to address the shortcomings of the educational and health system of host countries, providing cross-border material assistance. Still, the potential for cultural exchange is hard to control and may not lead to cultural integration, thus creating discontent and tension between neighbors due to perceived disturbance of the local way of living (Almohamed et al.2022).

Integration processes not only pertain to the bureaucratic spheres of the nation-state. Such processes continually occur at the level of society, meaning that many “asylum-granting” countries not only acknowledge but also work towards supporting the integration of refugees in their respective social settings. As a result, these supportive social settings develop collaborative networks between

migrants and host communities, which address the diverse and complex needs of migrants on an on-going basis. Host communities and migrants have in return found commonality due to a shared history of refuge and displacement, communication and the process of language acquisition and dialect variation. Such communications have led to the interdependence of a multitude of communities irrespective of national, ethnic, and racial origins. Further, they have negotiated the entry and distribution of resources, such as education, health, security, and social solidarity, and have worked in partnership while navigating resettlement challenges together.

Security Implications of Hosting Afghan Refugees

Pakistan's hosting of Afghan refugees since the late 1970s has had significant impacts on international, political, economic, and social relations with Afghanistan and other regions. The issue has far-reaching implications for global security and international response to refugee crises. This research seeks to investigate the impact of Pakistan's refugee policy on international relations by focusing on the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The security implications of Afghan refugees for Pakistan will be elucidated as well.

Millions of Afghan refugees have been forced to leave their country since the USSR invasion in 1979. The mainstream of them moved to the neighboring states, namely, Iran and Pakistan. Pakistan has proven to be the largest refugee-hosting country in the world. With the total of 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees under the UNHCR, Afghan communities have diversified and settled in various provinces across Pakistan. This refugee crisis has triggered a range of political, economic, and social issues of varying levels of intensity (Jamil, 2022). Security concerns of host countries have been a salient issue among those hosting the waves of refugees since 1978. Both Pakistan and Iran sought the international community's support, more specifically funds, to make their porous borders more secure and additionally economically unviable to refugees. However, with their increasing needs unmet by the international assistance, Pakistan started to enforce a hard-line border policy, with the forced return of Afghan refugees a key part. Even though seen as a policy of last resort, ad

hoc short-term repatriation pressures have nevertheless formed the core of these countries' refugee policies. Into this context, conducting a case study of Afghan refugees now in Pakistan has value, the better to understand Islamabad's complex refugee policy and its wider impact on interstate relations. Of particular interest is the gradual escalation of host-country concerns over the past decade, as spills over effects from Afghan refugees threatened to engulf the state in challenges to national security.

This section seeks to elucidate the security implications of hosting Afghan refugees for Pakistan. To this end, the refugee policy environment will be explored first, followed by a more detailed investigation of the security dimension, a topic of growing concern both within Pakistan and beyond.

Diplomatic Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan

Pakistan and Afghanistan have long maintained a complicated political relationship, characterized by a mix of tension and historical ties. Despite their shared cultural, religious, and geo-economic fabric, the political dynamics between the two nations have been anything but smooth. Central to these complexities is the creation of Pakistan in 1947, which forced Afghanistan to question its own legitimacy and statehood. Until the late 1970s, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan remained relatively cordial, yet the landscape drastically shifted following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (Irfan et al.2023). This pivotal event deepened the rift, as the world witnessed a significant wave of Afghan refugees fleeing into Pakistan, leading to a humanitarian crisis that affected both nations.

By the end of 2015, it was estimated that around 2.4 million Afghan refugees were residing in Pakistan, an ongoing diplomatic issue that has dominated discussions between the two governments since at least the year 2000. The situation has only worsened, as the Taliban issued an ultimatum demanding that "all Afghans leave Pakistani territory," thereby further straining relations. However, many of these Afghan individuals were not recent arrivals; they had already established lives in Pakistan as industrial workers, traders, and students enrolled in various educational institutions. As a result, in the context of diplomatic relations, the

presence of Afghans is regarded as a crucial element influencing the interactions between the two nations.

In Pakistan, there is a widespread perception that Afghan refugees contribute to local instability and terrorism, leading the Pakistani government to treat the Afghan populace as a political tool. Conversely, many Afghans contend that Pakistan uses them as scapegoats, diverting attention from the actual security challenges and the resurgence of separatist movements in regions like Balochistan. The discussions regarding Afghan identification cards underscore the emotional weight of the refugee issue, illustrating the urgent need for a compassionate approach aimed at long-term cooperation. Instead of fostering unity and collaboration towards shared goals, these narratives often perpetuate division, sowing fear and animosity while exacerbating the plight of the already marginalized Afghan community in Pakistan. (Ayaz2023)

Another significant aspect impacting diplomatic dialogues between the two countries pertains to border disputes. Pakistan and Afghanistan grapple with a variety of disagreements about their shared borders, partially stemming from the historical context of the British-imposed Durand Line, which divides Pashtun-majority territories. This border has played a role in facilitating not only the world's largest refugee displacement but also complex family dynamics, as tribal members often have relatives on both sides of the line. The Pashtunwali code of conduct encourages mutual support among tribal families, which sometimes leads to conflicts with the Pakistani authorities.

The established settlements of Afghan refugees have largely taken place near the Durand Line, allowing further mobility across the border. Following the events of September 11, 2001, growing tensions between Islamabad and Washington prompted Afghan President Hamid Karzai to entertain the idea of a formal acknowledgment of the Durand Line, resulting in significant backlash within Pakistan. Sartaj Aziz's visit to Kabul, during which he stated that Pakistan had established refugee camps along the border to assist in repatriation efforts, further illustrated the complexity of this humanitarian crisis. Instead of being viewed

solely as a social challenge, the return of refugees has often been interpreted through a national security lens, complicating efforts for voluntary repatriation.

The Afghan diaspora residing in Pakistan expressed concerns regarding the potential lifting of restrictions on presenting valid documentation to immigration officials, fueling anxiety about their future. Heightened border security measures have been instituted in hopes of stanching new influxes of refugees. To address the intricate challenges of transnational dynamics, both countries sought to formalize collaborative border management practices, aiming to enhance coordination in military and intelligence operations to combat terrorism, thereby striving for mutual peace and security. (Moraa, 2021)

Pakistan harbors considerable apprehension about being encircled by an antagonistic Indian-Afghan alliance, asserting that such a coalition could work against its interests, particularly in the fight against terrorism. With almost 200,000 Afghan military and paramilitary personnel reportedly trained by India, Pakistan's leadership fears that this could lead to a precarious situation, especially as it faces threats on both the eastern and western fronts. The efforts to revitalize the Quadrilateral Coordination Group talks, coupled with external pressure from the United States and the involvement of Russian initiatives regarding discussions with the Taliban, further complicate the already fragile relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

As tensions rise, the imperative for peace between these two nations is underscored by the necessity for regional economic stability. Soon after emerging as a nation, Pakistan aimed to extend its hand to assist Afghanistan across numerous sectors with the vision of fostering economic prosperity. Nonetheless, the historical lessons from Afghanistan suggest that its terrain is not suited for prolonged military engagements. Pakistan must therefore reassess its conventional approaches and develop comprehensive policies that enable both countries to coexist peacefully, effectively addressing the shared conundrum of terrorism and instability. (Maria Wojdyla, 2015)

Regional and Global Perspectives on Afghan Refugees

The Afghan refugee crisis in Pakistan is often viewed narrowly in terms of its impact on Pakistan and Pakistan alone. However, its broader implications for international relations among states and international organizations need to be considered. Despite the clear problem of refugee absorption in Pakistan, the 40 year-long presence of Afghan refugees has also affected policy in neighbouring countries and in the international arena. Comparable events in Iran and to an extent in India reveal a confluence of national interest. Such a study contributes to an overall understanding of the nature of the Afghan refugee crisis, and its existing and potentially broad after-effects on the international order (Ayaz, 2024).

On the one hand, this detailed study will facilitate impartial comparisons among the refugee policies adopted by Pakistan, Iran and India. On the other hand, this study will serve to enhance a more integrated understanding of the Afghan refugee crisis and contribute to the policy planning and implementation of the countries involved. In turn, this may mitigate negative impacts resulting from events in the future. Meanwhile, a deepened understanding of the role played by Afghan refugees in the region will provide a case study of broader international interest. In order to fully appreciate the significance of the Afghan refugee crisis, regional responses and the response of industrialized nations need to be examined in some detail. To this extent, the Afghan refugee crisis may provide broad impetus for redefining international relations, and the development of new international norms.

Humanitarian Assistance and Aid for Afghan Refugees

This section deals with the humanitarian assistance being provided to the Afghan Refugees within Pakistan and looks at how far the aid and assistance contributed to good relations among the actors involved. Due to the forced influx of Afghan refugees within Pakistan, a systematic out-line of plans and policies have adopted for the provision of humanitarian assistance. The arrival of Afghan refugees in 1980 in a big number increased the responsibilities and challenged effectively to handle the situation for Pakistan. The Governments within Pakistan tackled the refugees' situation with

the assistance of donor agencies, national and international NGOs, and international organizations like UNHCR.

In fact the successive and growing influx of Afghan refugees put constraints on Pakistan's resources and affected several sectors. The Refugees as well as the host communities face problems in obtaining social services. Furthermore, their presence also put burdens on the already stressed infrastructure, particularly in the sectors of health and education. The Afghan population in Pakistan looks towards the government and aid organizations for the provision of assistance. Governments provide some relief, but the aid agencies and NGOs are the key actors in the delivery of aid and assistance to refugees (Taye & Ahmed, 2021). However, the relief and assistance are not satisfactory. A number of problems are encountered in delivering timely and adequate aid. Aid agencies and organizations attempted to provide both emergency and long-term development assistance. It is useful to review the situation of social services, such as health, education, and livelihood programs, with the assessment of efforts made so far.

A variety of health care programs target Afghan Refugees and host communities, focusing initially on western and border areas for relief and assistance. Local and national NGOs, funded by multilateral and bilateral sources, implement these programs in refugee camps. The UNHCR supports primary health care needs, with Afghan refugees accessing medical treatment at around 250 health facilities across Pakistan. Education initiatives also operate, including large primary and middle schools along with adult literacy courses. Despite adequate funding, challenges persist, especially in ensuring that funds reach their intended projects. Multiple funding mechanisms, including grants and shared funding, can lead to overlapping aid projects (Naqvi & Baig). The efficiency and accountability of NGOs are increasingly scrutinized, and communities face risks from sudden funding withdrawals. Generally, NGOs tend to serve local areas better than government projects. Community responses to aid can vary, sometimes causing jealousy among affected populations. A coordinated approach to aid distribution is crucial for supporting Afghan Refugees, and exploring new avenues like the Gadoon Amazai Industrial Estate

may yield effective solutions given the protracted nature of their situation.

Challenges and Opportunities in Refugee Policy Implementation

While past research has analyzed regional and global refugee flows (Maria Wojdyla, 2015), implementation of refugee policy at the state level remains vastly understudied. This section identifies key logistical challenges in the execution of Pakistani refugee policy toward Afghan refugees, including resource allocation and bureaucratic hurdles. It illustrates the diversity of provincial and regional Pakistani responses in refugee policy implementation. Important considerations for improving policy implementation are examined, including the involvement of different stakeholders (host government, refugees, international/nongovernmental organizations, and local communities) in the delivery of effective, efficient, and responsive refugee policy. An overview is provided of the different case studies that show how refugee policy is implemented at the state level and the impacts that refugee policy implementation has on refugees. Strategies in strengthening refugee policy implementation at the state level are discussed.

Pakistan has one of the most protracted refugee situations in the world. Since the Saur revolution and the subsequent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1978, millions of Afghans have crossed the porous border with Pakistan. Between 2002-2016, roughly 3.8 million Afghan refugees have voluntarily repatriated under the tripartite agreement between UNHCR, the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees is a joint program by both the Afghan and Pakistani governments and is facilitated by UNHCR. At the global level, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees act as the norms of refugee protection, which Pakistan is not a signatory of. This means that Afghans registered in Pakistan are considered as 'temporary refugees' without access to services provided for registered refugees elsewhere.

Comparative Analysis with Refugee Policies of other Countries

Pakistan has faced significant challenges in managing its 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees. This study highlights the impact of Pakistan's refugee policies on international relations,

offering a historical overview particularly related to Afghan refugees. It compares Pakistan's policies with those of other countries hosting large refugee populations, assessing similarities and differences in their management approaches. Economic, cultural, and political factors influencing states' perceptions and treatment of refugees are examined. Case studies analyze various countries' refugee policies and rights under national law and international norms, revealing strengths and weaknesses in managing refugees. This comparative analysis aims to understand best practices and successful strategies in refugee management while contextualizing Pakistan's experience with Afghan refugees. The paper concludes by suggesting ways to align Pakistan's policies with international norms and recommendations for revising international conventions to enhance accountability for host and donor countries. (Ur Rehman et al., 2021)

The Role of International Organizations in Addressing Afghan Refugee Crisis

Afghan civil war, which intensified after the Soviet invasion, forced millions of people to seek refuge in neighboring countries, particularly in Pakistan and Iran. By 2001, the Pakistani population of Afghan refugees became the largest protracted refugee situation (PRS) in the world. Despite the voluntary repatriation and reintroduction program facilitated by the government in Afghanistan and Pakistan over the years, the significant decrease in the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan has not been achieved. The study will critically analyze why this is the case by concentrating on domestic, local, and international political factors and policies subdivided into less formal and less visible dynamics shaping discourse analysis.

Pakistan's refugee policy and practices would not only affect the treatment of Afghan refugees there but also would influence international relations with the international institutions and donor countries engaging in the Afghan refugee issues there. This study, taking the case of the Afghan population in Pakistan who have taken refuge on a large scale in the historical circumstances which are closely related to cold war politics, will demonstrate how a country's post-colonial foreign policy had been formed by pre-existing historical experiences and strategic thinking due to

geographical location, and how it led to state behavior all along affecting regional peace and security. It will also show the crucial influences of superpower politics on the process, especially in the case of Pakistan which was used as a conduit by the US to support Afghanistan's anti-Soviet insurgency (Maria Wojdyla, 2015).

Future Prospects and Recommendations

The conflict in Afghanistan although not able to see an end but has a significant implosion on the policies of Pakistan in shaping its international relations. The Afghan conflict started after USSR invasion in 1989 has forced thousands of refugees from Afghanistan and majority of them have sought refuge in neighboring Pakistan. It is believed that Afghan refugee issue is a major concern and it is the most extended refugee problem among others. Thus, a comprehensive policy framework is need of the time for handling this issue in a more sensible manner. Management of Afghan refugees, on one hand, has a significant outcome on Pakistan international relations and on the other hand it is a big cause of socio economic issues faced by the peoples of Pakistan (Ur Rehman et al., 2021). According to one estimate, there were around 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan in 1990, which had decreased to 1.6 million and now roughly it is 1 million. Since, it is difficult to accommodate Afghan refugees for a long time, the sustainable policy should be adopted which seems quite nonexistent. With the effect in scenario, it is high time to make analysis of the Pakistan refugee policy towards Afghan refugees. The major questions in this rural probe study are: what is history of Pakistan's refugee policy towards Afghan refugees? How the Afghan conflict paten a frame of reference of this policy? Where does stand Pakistan in global frame of reference on Afghan refugee issue? Thus, the study deals with critical overview of the refugee issue faced by Pakistan followed by an evaluation of Pakistan refugee policy towards Afghan refugees. Finally, a projection is made focusing the future prospects for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and recommendations. There is a gap, accordingly, in policy assessment of the indigenously lensed policies of Pakistan and how these policy decisions are shaped with international relation perspective.

Conclusion

This essay aims to elucidate the impact of Pakistan's refugee policy on international relations by examining a case study of Afghan refugees. It has been shown that Pakistan's refugee policies have complex motivations, balancing humanitarian obligations with national interest. The insights suggest that the refugee issue will continue shaping Pakistan's diplomatic posture and regional security dynamics in the future. The Afghan refugee issue stands out as "perhaps the longest-lasting and largest refugee crisis in the world". Beginning with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, it still lingers to this day. This prolonged presence of refugees has had a profound impact on the social, political and economic environment in Pakistan. Given the immediate and extensive effects of the Afghan conflict refugees in the region, most notably in Pakistan, what is less obvious is the significant regional and global implications that this facet of the conflict is seen to entail.

While the conclusion to reduce the refugee population living in camps indicates a re-prioritization of the Afghan refugee issue in Pakistan, two caveats are in order. Firstly, it is important to note that successive Pakistani governments have had considerable incentive to assert their full control of the phenomenon of Afghan refugees residing on their territory. There can be little doubt that dealing with a population of 3.3 million at its peak, concentrated within refugee camps situated close to the border, was indeed a high priority for Pakistan given the sensitivities and strategic weight of the issue. Second, it may be an oversight to presume that Pakistani authorities perceived the Afghan conflict uniquely through the prism of refugee accommodation. Much of the policy efforts of the Zia regime would have been designed with the broader goals of fostering a post-Soviet Afghan regime favorable to Pakistani interests in mind.

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