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## **Securitization of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan after 9/11**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Afghan refugee-warrior community which was considered as Pakistan's strategic asset during the decade of 1990's was later on transformed in the form of a strategic threat as a consequence of Pakistan's proactive participation in Afghan war against terrorism after 9/11. This study is an attempt to analyze the causes, effects and implications of securitization of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan after 9/11.

**Keywords:** *Afghan refugees, Pakistan, Afghanistan, 9/11 Securitization*

### **Introduction**

Pakistan has been hosting the Afghan refugees for 4 decades since 1979. Due to the asymmetrical and guerilla nature of the Afghan war, Afghan resistance forces were also seeking shelter inside Pakistan under the guise of refugees. This resultantly created a refugee-warrior community inside Pakistan. Afghan refugee-warrior community which was considered as Pakistan's strategic asset during the decade of 1990's was later on transformed in the form of a strategic threat as a consequence of Pakistan's proactive participation in Afghan war against terrorism after 9/11. This strategic shift in strategy led to the emergence of neo-existential security threats in the form of non-state violent terrorist organizations inside Pakistan. These non-state militant organizations in Pakistan gained their footing due to the unsettled nature of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan. Non-state terrorist organizations due to their diffusive nature found leverage in the porous nature of Pak-Afghan border and used it as a base for cross-border insurgency in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In that very context, in the aftermath of 9/11, Pakistan's open border and supportive policy for Afghans vying for cross-migration across Pakistan and Afghanistan transitioned and transformed to close borders and non-supportive for refuge inside Pakistan with the added encouragement from the government to motivate the residing refugees to go back to their homeland. In lieu of migration-security nexus, Pakistan went for an aggressive posturing regarding its labeling of Pakistani Afghan

refugee community as a probable source or supply line for terrorist incursions in its home terrain.

Strategic reasons were all there for Pakistan in lieu of the aftereffects of Afghan war against terrorism to securitize the existence of Pakistani Afghan refugee community. It was the terrorist attacks from TTP on Army Public School (APS) Peshawar on 16th December, 2014 which became an immediate reason for an immediate emergency response to terrorist nexus with the illicit undocumented Afghan presence (Khan, Taliban massacre 131 schoolchildren: Principal among 141 dead in attack on Army Public School, Peshawar, 2014). 144 innocent souls and 144 families suffered catastrophe cum tragedy and their coffins were a lot heavier to carry as almost most of them were the students of the school (Dawn, 2018).

In that aforementioned context, Pakistan was compelled to review its existing security framework and went for a new security framework outlined by a document known as the National Action Plan.

### **National Action Plan (NAP)**

National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) in the year 2014 adopted a new security framework of action known as National Action Plan (NAP) in order to deal with the emergence of neo-existential security threats particularly in the context of non-state extremist militant organizations at the internal front (Government of Pakistan, 2017). Point 19 of the NAP provides the narrative securitization of Afghan refugee presence as a security risk referent inside Pakistan which states that “formulation of a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with registration of all refugees” (Government of Pakistan, 2017; Khattak, 2015).

In view of the NISP (2014-2018) and point 19 of the NAP, main principle governing tenants of Pakistan’s securitization policy concerning its Afghan community given below:

- Registration
- Repatriation
- Border management

### **Registration**

In lieu of 9/11, NAP specifically focuses on getting all Afghans registered inside Pakistan to eliminate the difference between documented and illicit Afghans. Under NAP, the duty to register Afghan refugees inside Pakistan was given to National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). NADRA was to collect data in terms of biometric info which would later be displayed in their identification in the form of Proof of Registration (POR) cards (SIGAR, 2015). This process of providing Afghan refugees with POR cards began in the year 2006 (Abraham, 2013). In this regard, Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) developed a mobile software application for the biometric verification of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan (PITB, 2019)

POR cards and biometric verification system for Afghan refugees inside Pakistan served the main purpose of making a distinction between legal or documented or registered and illegal or undocumented or unregistered Afghan refugees living

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inside Pakistan. POR cards and biometric verification also helped the government of Pakistan in tracing those Afghans who were living inside Pakistan as its citizens or tracing those Pakistanis who were posing themselves as Afghan refugees to get the benefits of monetary aid given in dollars by international donor agencies. In this context, NADRA has claimed to block 155,000 fake Citizen National Identity Cards (CNICs) (Ahmed, 2019). According to 2019 NADRA statistics, since the starting of Afghan registration program after 9/11, 2.8 million have been registered and there are 1.6 million who hold POR cards (NADRA, 2019).

### **Repatriation**

In lieu of 9/11 and the spirit of the Bonn agreement achieved in the year 2001 regarding the establishment of transitional government inside Afghanistan, many Afghan refugees inside Pakistan became hopeful for the prospects of peaceful Afghanistan and resultantly went for voluntary repatriation in large numbers in the year 2002. In order to facilitate Afghan refugees for voluntary repatriation back to their homeland, UNHCR came into an agreement with the Pakistan and Afghanistan in order to establish a commission for assisting voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and that commission came to be known as the Tripartite commission established in the year 2003 (Zieck, 2008). Tripartite commission envisioned two main purposes given below:

- Voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan
- Resettlement and reintegration of Afghan repatriates inside Afghanistan

In the year 2004, to make the Afghan voluntary repatriation program successful, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between Pakistan and UNHCR, which served three main purposes given below (Zieck, 2008):

- Registration of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan
- Census of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan

It was deemed necessary that the statistical modules of registration and census would help in speeding up the process of voluntary repatriation. Another MOU was signed by UNHCR and Pakistan in the year 2006 for the continuation of Afghan refugee registration process with a view to strengthen the tripartite commission commitment on voluntary repatriation (Zieck, 2008). Tripartite commission of the year 2003 had its time framework limited to 3 years and in order to extend its mandate for further time period, a new agreement was envisaged in the year 2007 to extend the stay of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan (Zieck, 2008). The duration mandate of tripartite commission on voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan has been extended at multiple times and in the latest agreement signed on 18th of June, 2019, the Federal Government of Pakistan decided on 27th June 2019 that their stay is going to be extended till 30th June, 2020 (Government of Punjab, Pakistan, 2019).

**Table 1** *Number of Afghan refugees opting for voluntary repatriation from the year 1990 to the year 2018*

<b>Sr. no.</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan</b>
1.	1990	19, 290
2.	1991	175, 000
3.	1992	1, 360, 000
4.	1994	102, 658
5.	1995	153, 274
6.	1996	140, 390
7.	1997	84, 500
8.	1998	93, 000
9.	1999	91, 834
10.	2000	76, 773
11.	2001	8, 000
12.	2002	1, 565, 095
13.	2003	343, 074
14.	2004	383, 598
15.	2005	449, 520
16.	2006	133, 015
17.	2007	364, 476
18.	2008	282, 496
19.	2009	51, 290
20.	2010	109, 383
21.	2011	52, 096
22.	2012	83, 427
23.	2013	31, 224
24.	2014	12, 991
25.	2015	58, 211
26.	2016	381, 275
27.	2017	59, 020
28.	2018	14, 017

**Source:** Population statistics, UNHCR, 2019; Pakistan, Operational Portal Refugee Situations, UNHCR, 2019.

Repatriation or return of refugees from the destination of refuge to the place of their origin can be categorized into two types depending upon the manner in which they are conducted. They are:

- Voluntary repatriation
- Forced repatriation

Pakistan officially claims the ongoing repatriation program as voluntary in character whereas there are independent watchdogs such as Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) (Geo News, 2017; HRCP, 2009).

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In order to analyze the forced or voluntary nature of repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, we need to understand the conditions required for the voluntary repatriation. Following are the pre-requisite conditions for voluntary repatriation in any region given below (Wood, 1989):

- Political stability at the place of refugee origin
- Military stability at the place of refugee origin
- Infrastructural capacity for resettlement and reintegration
- Number of returning refugees

In lieu of the aforementioned conditions, an analysis of the repatriation of Afghan refugees as a consequence of their securitization by the Government of Pakistan in the aftermath of 9/11 can be made to determine whether it is voluntary or forced in character.

As far as political and military stability of Afghanistan is concerned, Ruud Lubbers, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees while commenting on the ongoing repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan to Afghanistan has expressed his concerns regarding the security situation inside Afghanistan (Ghufran, 2006). In the context of infrastructural capacity for resettlement and reintegration of Afghan refugees inside Afghanistan, Tom Koenigs, who headed the UN assistance mission for Afghanistan, opines that “every extra person who comes here will only increase the poverty” (Ghufran, 2006). He further says that “the economic opportunities for someone returning to Afghanistan are exactly zero” (Ghufran, 2006). Additionally, there is the added factor of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as a result of 4 decades of war inside Afghanistan. As of 31st December, 2018, there were 2, 598, 000 persons were placed under the category of IDPs inside Afghanistan (iDMC, 2018). Aforementioned opinions from those who have been quite close to the ground situation demonstrates the fact that situation inside Afghanistan is not becoming better for voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. Garry Simpson, who is a senior researcher on refugee issues at HRW, has also expressed his concerns over the anti-refugee crackdowns inside Pakistan against Afghan refugees which make the current repatriation more forced in character as compared to voluntary in nature (Geo News, 2017). Moreover, the added factors of cross-insurgency, terrorist attacks, border closures, winter season, trust deficit, families existing on both sides of the border and a war without an end in sight inside Afghanistan are some of the factors which are hampering the repatriation schedule.

### **Border Management**

In this context of NAP objectives and the need of an effective border management system along Pakistan’s Afghan border in particular, Pakistan has completely fenced its border with Afghanistan with salient features given below (CGTN America, 2017; BBC News Urdu, 2017):

- Border fencing with barbed wires
- 750 border forts
- Biegel radars
- IMSAR radars

- CCTV cameras for surveillance
- Search lights for night patrolling
- 151 check posts

### **Causes**

In this research study, following causes have been associated with reference to the causal explanation of the securitization of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan after 9/11 given below:

- Militancy, sectarianism and terrorism
- Crime and weaponization
- Human trafficking and drug smuggling
- Undocumented presence and Fake CNICs
- Pak-Afghan relations after 9/11
- Indian factor

Militancy, sectarianism and terrorism

Pakistan's policy of Talibanization of Kabul and supporting non-state militant groups added to the culture of militarization of society inside Pakistan (Afzal, 2019). Taliban's ultra-Sunni posture against the Shi'ites of Afghanistan also had its implications on the sectarian configuration of Pakistani society during the 1990's. The formation of Sunni and Shia non-state militant groups inside Pakistan can be associated with the government's neglect over unchecked militarization of foreign policy based upon supporting the Afghan militant groups during the decades of 1980's and 1990's.

Pakistan's strategic calculus over its support for Talibanization of Afghanistan and non-state militant groups under the covert assistance to Afghan refugees inside Pakistan haunted its national security framework in the aftermath of 9/11 and US sponsored global war against terrorism. Taliban and non-state militant groups which used to easily move across the Pak-Afghan border and were considered as strategic assets under the strategic depth doctrine of Pakistan were now deemed as enemies of the states and international peace and order. This change in Pakistan's policy led to a wave of terrorist related incidents inside Pakistan in the later years.

In this aforementioned context, the state and government of Pakistan officially announced the presence of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan as a security threat in view of the objectives of Pakistan's national security framework (Geo News, 2017). This securitization of Afghan refugees based upon their connection with terrorist and militant elements gaining sanctuary has been endorsed in NAP and NISP 2014-2018.

Munir Akram, Pakistan's ambassador to UN, wrote in a letter to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in the year 2007, explaining the nexus between non-state militant elements and Pakistani Afghans in the following words that "The problem of cross-border militancy is closely related to the presence of over 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan ... These camps have often given rise to complaints that they

provide shelter to undesirable elements and Taliban” (HRCP, 2009). This view regarding the link between terrorism and Afghan refugee population and camps was also endorsed by a Newsweek article published in the year 2007 claiming that Afghan refugee camps have in fact become sanctuaries for Jihadist elements in the region (HRCP, 2009). International community blames Pakistan for providing sanctuaries for Taliban inside Pakistan in the form of Afghan refugee camps (Skodo, 2018). APS attack is one major example wherein investigations found a linkage between terrorists founding sanctuary inside Afghan settlements. Foreign Office of Pakistan, former advisor to Prime Minister of Pakistan on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and former Interior minister Ch. Nisar Ali Khan have also endorsed the connection of Afghan refugee population and terrorist related incidents inside Pakistan (Baabar, 2016; ANI, 2016; Mukhtar, 2017).

In lieu of the blame game from the international community with reference to providing sanctuary to terrorist and non-state militant groups inside Pakistan, and domestic incidents of terrorism, it compelled the government to formulate a policy which securitizes Pakistani Afghan refugee community.

International organizations such as UNHCR have concluded that such a policy adopted by Pakistan is wrong as there is no concrete evidence which points to the direction of connection existing between militant groups and the Pakistani Afghan refugees (Abbas, 2012). These refugees who have been living inside camps are easy to be managed and traced out than those who are living outside the camps and living through illicit, illegal means making their presence undocumented in character. For this very reason, UNHCR has advised stake holders not to base their stance on a tautology with reference to some Afghans related in terrorist incidents and labeling the whole community as a threat to the national security of Pakistan as it would be an injustice to the already helpless community which requires humanitarian attention (Gul, 2016).

### **Crime and Weaponization**

Although militancy and terrorism are considered as the primary reasons associated with the causal explanation of Pakistan’s current policy on Afghan refugee community, yet there are other causal factors as well in lieu of Pakistan’s existential national security framework. Among them, the security risk facets of crime and weaponization of society are often associated with the presence of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan acting as agents of supply lines for border related diffusive activities of crime and transfer of weapons in a to and fro movement across Pak-Afghan border.

As far as the claims regarding the involvement of Afghan refugees in crimes related activities, the narrative can be explained with the help of following two perspectives. One yes Afghan refugees inside Pakistan in one way or the other are involved in criminal activities or are a source of criminal activities inside Pakistan. Such a perspective can be further on elaborated with the help of statements given by national and provincial politicians. Imran Khan, current Prime minister of Pakistan, while he was part of the opposition commented on the connection between crime and the presence of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan in the following words that “The problem is that the locals complain about the crime, which is coming in from refugee camps” (The News, 2016). Pervez Khattak, current defense minister and former Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) said in one statement while he

was the Chief Minister of KP that “Afghan refugees and their mobility is the constant source of crime in the province” (Zee News, 2014). Similarly, Mushtaq Ghani, current speaker of KP provincial assemble and former information minister of KP government said in a statement while he was the minister in KP government that “about 80 % of the crimes in KP are committed by Afghans” (Roehrs, 2015).

On the other hand, there are those who do not buy the idea of Afghan-crime nexus inside Pakistan. They are of the view that it is a fallacy to associate Afghan refugee with crime related activities inside Pakistan as the empirical evidence affirms that Afghan refugees account for a bare minimum of crime related activities in KP and rest of the Pakistan. Data from KP prosecution department from the year 2014 to the year 2016 highlights that there were 11, 685 cases which were being put up in their respective judicial court and out of those 11, 685 cases registered, a mere 134 cases were related to the presence of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan which amounts to 1.27 % of the total cases registered (Khan, 2017). Statistically speaking, there is not much of a connection in proving permanent and constant relationship between criminal activities and Pakistani Afghan community.

The second charge on Afghan refugees regarding the weaponization of society is rooted in the history of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Proxy involvement from US as a global power and Pakistan as a regional power in arming and weaponizing Afghans against their resistance for liberation from Soviet occupation of Afghanistan turned its head upside down in the aftermath of post-Soviet Afghan terrain. In this context, instead of working on reintegration, de-weaponization, nation building, peace and conflict resolution among the Afghans, US left the region as an orphan with Pakistan incapacitated to tackle the problem on its own. This resulted in the form of protracted civil warfare inside Afghanistan, regional proxy warfare across the region and the germination of non-state radical militant and sectarian organizations in the South Asian region in general and Pakistan in particular. As a consequence, Kalashankov became a symbol of weapon culture inside Afghanistan and Pakistan particularly among the Pashtun population (Borthakur, 2017). This in turn weakened the peace loving Pashtunwali culture in the region and led towards the germination of factions representing state within the state. US negligence in this regard haunted it in the form of 9/11 and global war against terrorism.

Afghan refugee camps can easily be managed with reference to the tackling the problem of crime and weaponization within the Pakistan but it is the undocumented and dispersed nature of Afghans and Afghan refugees inside Pakistan which is still a source of risk with reference to the national security framework of Pakistan.

### **Human trafficking and drug smuggling**

Human trafficking and drug smuggling are also considered as factors leading towards the securitization of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan after 9/11. Out of the total world production of opium, Afghanistan contributes 92 % which makes it a safe haven of drug smuggling (Grare & Maley, 2011). In this regard, Pakistan being the neighbor of Afghanistan has to face two fold challenges. It not only has to curtail the spread of drugs within its society but it also has to keep in check that the Afghan drug business does not create its chains and networking within its sovereign terrain. Karachi is one such example in this regard. Afghan basti located in Sohrab Goth at one time was considered as the biggest drug supplying station in Asia (Borthakur,



2017). The business of drug trafficking does not revolve around drugs alone as to supplement its lifeline, those involved in such illicit activities are also involved in other activities such as human trafficking, kidnapping, terrorist activities etc. Again it is the undocumented and unregistered nature of Afghan refugees and Afghan settlements which are a source of security concern in this regard. In the aftermath of NAP and the introduction of new border management system across Pak-Afghan border, there has been a reduction in both human and drug trafficking (ISPR, 2018).

### **Undocumented presence and Fake CNICs**

Undocumented Afghans living illicitly within the settled areas of Pakistan either through fake CNICS or without recognizing the due course of law are a major source of security concern for the security establishment of Pakistan. Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, former Interior minister of Federal government of Pakistan also acknowledged the fact that how unregistered Afghan refugees have been illicitly getting fake CNICS and how it might act as a deterrent in achieving the goals set by national security framework of Pakistan (Khan I. A., 2016). NADRA chairman on multiple occasions has also expressed concerns over issuance of fake CNICs to Afghans (The Express Tribune, 2018). Senator Talha Mahmood on this account further highlighted the gravity of the problem when he pointed out that fake CNICs have not only been issued to any normal Afghans but also to some of the Afghan spy officials by mistake, which points out the flaws in the existing registration process of Pakistan (The Express Tribune, 2019). In this regard, NADRA has blocked the fraudulent CNICs of around 100, 000 Afghans living inside Pakistan (Khan A., 2017). When Mullah Mansoor who replaced Mullah Omer as the next chief of Afghan Taliban, was killed as a result of drone strike, among his left possessions, there was his Pakistani passport and CNIC. This really alarmed the security establishment and made it review its existing procedures for registration.

### **Pak-Afghan relations after 9/11**

The highs and lows in the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan have also contributed towards the introduction of a national security policy which encapsulated the Pakistani Afghan refugee community as a probable source of security concern. Lack of trust and limited presence of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) have led to mutual mistrust between the two neighboring countries of the South Asian region. There are those who are of the view Pakistan has framed Afghans as a source of security concern in order to use them as a bargaining chip in Pakistan's foreign relations with the state of Afghanistan to maximize its interests in the region and counter nefarious designs against its interest in the region (Siddiqui, 2019). There are also those who treat the narrative of securitization of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan after 9/11 from a purely security and strategic perspective. They are of the view that the unaccounted nature of aliens in any country can prove to be a security risk for national security framework and this notion also applies to the unregistered or undocumented Afghans who have been living illicitly within the terrain of Pakistan without recognizing the due course of law. Non-state militant organizations can find leverage in that regard.

### **Indian factor**

Indian factor is also considered as a major reason associated with the security framing of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan after 9/11 as officials within the security apparatus of the government are of the view that there is a nexus between Indian intelligence agencies and Afghan intelligence agencies who might utilize the presence of undocumented nature of Afghans inside Pakistan for their strategic goals. As has been mentioned above, Senator Talha pointed out the issuance of CNICs to Afghan spy officials through illicit means (The Express Tribune, 2019). 6 Afghan spies who were living as refugees were caught inside by Pakistani forces in Balochistan in the year 2016 regarding which Sarfraz Bugti, then interior minister of Balochistan claimed that their presence was meant to sponsor terrorist activities inside the province in particular and in Pakistan in general (Dawn, 2016). It is widely believed within the official security circles of Pakistani establishment that the Indian presence within Afghanistan is meant to sponsor terrorist related activities inside Pakistan and to strengthen the idea of pincer effect against Pakistan's national security framework. Any security policy of Pakistan has historically been conditioned by the Indian factor on its eastern front. In lieu of security framing of Afghans inside Pakistan, the ever growing relationship between Kabul and New Dehli and the proxy engagement of regional players with reference to global war against terrorism in the region, it seems logical that Indian factor in view of Kabul-Dehli nexus has also contributed towards the security framing of Afghan refugees by Pakistani security establishment. Indian proxy involvement inside Afghanistan with intent to instill instability in Pakistan has also been recognized by Chuck Hagel, former Secretary of Defense, USA and US General (retired) Stanly A. McCrystal.

### **Effects**

In lieu of 9/11, Pakistan's security framing of its Afghan community had its considerable causes as well as effects. Effects of securitization policy on the presence of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan in the aftermath of 9/11 are given below:

- Harassment
- Cases and arrests
- Forced migration and deportation

### **Harassment**

Under the policy of securitizing Afghan refugees inside Pakistan after 9/11, in spite of Government of Pakistan's official stance on demonstrating commitment to voluntary repatriation, yet there have been reports and assessments which are in contradiction to Government's official claims. Such assessments have been widely reported by domestic and international forums on human rights. HRCP has provided an assessment wherein they have recorded harassment against Afghan refugees inside Pakistan. HRW group has also provided an assessment wherein they have recorded anti-refugee crackdown against the presence of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan in the aftermath of 9/11 (Human Rights Watch, 2017). In this regard, Garry Simpson who has served as the senior researcher on refugee issues at HRW is of the view that the ongoing repatriation program administered by Pakistanis is forced in character (Geo News, 2017). Internationally, US department of state has also made

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an assessment wherein harassment charges targeting Pakistani Afghan refugees by police and state agencies has been recorded and observed by the US department of state (Grare & Maley, 2011).

Harassment against Afghan refugees is both random and systematic in character. Random harassment against Afghan refugees inside Pakistan is in the form of discrimination and threats by police for extortion purposes (The Express Tribune, 2012). Systematic harassment against Afghan refugees inside Pakistan is in the form of constant threat of expulsion or deportation or arrest on account of illegal settlement (Geo News, 2017).

### **Cases and arrests**

Under the policy of security framing of Pakistani Afghan refugee community in lieu of 9/11, there have been cases registered against Afghan refugees inside Pakistan and subsequent arrests as well. There have been raids conducted against Afghan refugees all around Pakistan. 7,872 Afghans were taken into custody from Peshawar and 4, 139 cases were registered against Afghans on account of illegal settlement in the year 2016 (Khan J. A., 2016). In the year 2015, 1133 illegal Afghan refugees were arrested in a singular coordinated operation from Punjab in lieu of violating Foreigner's Act (Punjab Police, Pakistan, 2015).

### **Forced migration and deportation**

Under the policy of securitizing the presence of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan after 9/11, in lieu of pressure from state apparatus, harassment, cases and arrests targeting the Afghan refugees, the 'voluntary' character that has been promised by the Tripartite Commission on voluntary repatriation program has appeared to be highly questionable with reference to Afghan refugees inside Pakistan. There have been mass arrests and deportations reported with reference to Afghan refugees inside Pakistan (Alimia, Afghans in Pakistan face a perilous future, 2012) (Alimia, 2017). In the year 2016 alone 22, 559 Afghans were deported on charges of illegal stay within Pakistan (Hashim, 2017). Gerry Simpson at HRW as his views have been mentioned above has categorically termed the ongoing Afghan repatriation program as forced in character. Such an environment produces push motivations for Afghans to leave Pakistan as a result of coercion from state and government of Pakistan.

### **Implications**

Implications of security framing of Pakistani Afghan community can be accessed with the help of following frames given below:

- Public opinion
- Political parties for and against the presence of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan
- Pak-Afghan relations

### **Public opinion**

In the aftermath of 9/11, Gallup Pakistan conducted a survey on Afghan refugee presence inside Pakistan, according to which 52 % Pakistanis were in favor of banning the entry of Afghans within Pakistani terrain (Javed, 2015). In a survey

conducted by Gallup in the aftermath of APS attacks in the year 2015, 80 % of Pakistanis were supportive of the opinion that Afghan refugees living inside Pakistan should return back to their home country (Gallup Pakistan, 2015). In another survey conducted by Gallup Pakistan in the year 2015, 51 % Pakistanis were of the perception that with the repatriation of Afghan back to their homeland, there will be a positive impact on the outlook of Pakistan's economy (Gallup Pakistan, 2015).

In comparison to the decade of 1979 to 1989, in the aftermath of 9/11, public opinion has been gradually declining in favor of Pakistani Afghan refugees and more so in favor of their return back to Afghanistan. Government of Pakistan is also favor the posture of Afghan refugee exit from Pakistan (Khan, 2016).

### **Pakistani Political parties for and against Afghan refugee community**

There is a divided opinion among the mainstream, ethno-cultural and religious political parties on the future of Pakistani Afghan refugee community and its status. Mainstream national level parties support the demand that it is about time that they should return back to their homeland whereas religious and Pashtun ethno national political parties are against the repatriation policy of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan.

Pakistani mainstream national level parties who support the Afghan repatriation are given below:

- Pakistan Tehriek-e-Insaf (PTI)
- Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N)
- Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)

There are ethno national parties who are also in favor of speedy Afghan repatriation program. They are:

- Balochistan National Party Mengal group (BNP-M)
- Balochistan Awami Party (BAP)
- National Party
- Mutahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P)
- Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q)

Following Pashtun ethno national political parties are not in favor of security framing of Pakistani Afghan refugee community and their immediate return, given below:

- Awami National Party (ANP)
- Pakhtunkhuwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP)

Following religious parties are not in favor of security framing of Pakistani Afghan refugee community and their immediate return, given below:

- Jamiat-e-Ulmai Islam Fazal ur Rehman group (JUI-F)
- Jamat-e-Islami (JI)

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PML-N, PPP and PTI in lieu of NAP are of the view that in the context of Pakistan's security concerns, it is imperative for the state of Pakistan to go for immediate repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan as early as possible (Borthakur, 2017). Shireen Mizari, Minister for Human Rights and key member of ruling PTI government, on the question of Afghan refugee presence inside Pakistan, commented "Recommendation 1.6(c) of the Parliament's joint resolution on terrorism is that it should be the major priority of the government to repatriate the refugees" (Rehman & Shahzad, 2009, p. 32). Mian Raza Rabbani, former Chairman Senate and a key figure head of PPP is also of the view that it is quiet ideal for that an immediate Afghan repatriation process gets completed but regional context should always be upheld if any policy has to be implemented keeping in lieu the strategic national interests of Pakistan (Rehman & Shahzad, 2009). It was during the government of PML-N from the year 2013 to the 2018 that the policy of framing Afghan refugees as a security risk was being introduced.

BNP-M and BAP in Baluchistan support repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan due to their concerns related to ethno-national imbalance in population of Baluchistan particularly in the context of Baluch and Pashtun demographics of Balochistan. Akhtar Mengal, head of BNP-M group has expressed his concerns in the following words that "If we are unable to provide jobs to our own people, how can we lift the load of surplus refugees" (Siddiqui, 2019). Jam Kamal, current Chief Minister of Balochistan and head of BAP has expressed his concerns in the following words that "there is proof of refugee involvement in terrorist activities" (Siddiqui, 2019).

MQM-P has also expressed its concerns regarding the presence of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan on two accounts i. e. a risk for national security and a burden on national economy (Chaudhry, 2017). Furthermore, MQM-P main support base lies within Karachi in general and Urdu speaking Mohajir community in particular. In this regard, MQM-P believes that the population of Afghan refugees inside Karachi creates a demographic imbalance. PML-Q has also supported the narrative that there is a source alignment between proxy sponsored terrorist activities inside Pakistan and Pakistani Afghan refugee community, which necessitates the decision that those refugees should be repatriated eventually as soon as possible (Dawn, 2015).

ANP, PKMAP, JUI-F and JI have supported the argument that Afghan refugee community should be dealt with in accordance with the conceptual confines of humanitarian responsibility rather than a security concern and for that reason, keeping in view of the regional constraints, they oppose Afghan repatriation as Afghanistan is still in a state of ongoing war. Asfandiyar Wali Khan has termed the security framing of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan as a racial act by the government against the Pashtun population of Pakistan particularly with reference to eviction of Afghan refugees from Punjab in particular (Muhammad, 2017). Mahmood Khan Achakzai, head of PKMAP has also expressed concerns against the ongoing process of Afghan refugee repatriation inside Pakistan as he argues that Afghans deserve to stay in Pakistan as much as other Pashtuns as it is part of Pakhtunwali code (Business Recorder, 2016). Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Maulana Fazl ur Rehman who is the head of JUI-F have granted their support to citizenship demand of Afghan refugees inside Pakistan (Borthakur, 2017). JI is of the view that if regional security situation does not improve, no repatriation of Afghan refugees should be carried out from Pakistan (Rehman & Shahzad, 2009).

## **Pak-Afghan Relations**

In view of historical contextualization, Pakistan and Afghanistan for the most of their mutual history have shared tense relationship as neighboring countries. Securitization of Afghan refugees as a security risk to the national security framework of Pakistan adds another feather in the tense relationship between two neighboring countries.

Security framing of Afghan refugees as a source of national security concern is not only pivoted in domestic compulsions but it also has a pivot of foreign policy objectives. There are those who believe that Pakistan intends to gain maximization of its national interests by using Afghan refugee community as a source of bargaining chip in its foreign policy interactions (Siddiqui, 2019). This policy has its repercussions for Pakistan as well as it can cost the economic migrants and laborers of Pakistan who are working inside Afghanistan for their employment. Additionally, the regional outlook and approach of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in particular and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in general can also be negatively impacted by escalation of tension in Pak-Afghan relations. Moreover, the dreaded threat of Pincer effect may again get reinvigorated due to Afghanistan and its government strengthening its ties with the India and its government in response to Pakistan's policy of securitizing Afghan refugees and their presence inside Pakistan as a security risk to the national security framework of Pakistan.

Brigadier (retired) M. Saad Khan, highlighted the predicament created by the tense nature of Pak-Afghan relations and its negative impact on the presence of Afghan refugees in the following words that "the ups and downs in the relationship between the two countries is reflected in the status of Afghan refugees. When relations between two countries go south, Pakistan usually says they won't renew POR cards, threatens to send refugees back and when they are slightly better-like right now- the government extends the validity of these cards" (Siddiqui, 2019).

From an alternative point of view keeping in lieu the tense relationship of Pakistan and Afghanistan as neighboring countries, Afghan refugees have usually acted as peace ambassadors for Pakistan's goodwill. Pakistan should capitalize on its history of goodwill with reference to providing accommodation to Afghan refugees. Any haste in the management and repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan can roller coast the positive history created by Pakistan's 40 years of humanitarian services provided to Afghan refugees.

## **Appraisal**

Historically speaking, Pakistani Afghan refugees have been traditionally viewed from a perspective of humanitarian responsibility both by the government of Pakistan and the international community instead of being viewed from a security prism. The transformation of Afghan refugees as a humanitarian concern to a security concern happened in the aftermath of 9/11 and Pakistan's war against terrorism. This transformation from humanitarian to security concern has overshadowed the positive aspects about Pakistani Afghan refugee community. Pakistan is considered as a second home by the scores of Afghan community living peacefully. They are willing to stay here and not leave Pakistan as the situation in Afghanistan is still in turmoil. Without the cessation of war inside Afghanistan, their return back to Afghanistan would not only have negative implication for their own

## Securitization of Afghan refugees in Pakistan after 9/11

sustenance and livelihood but it would also worsen the security situation inside Afghanistan, leading to the creation of more refugees as compared to minimizing their numbers.

For a long time, Afghan refugees have been acting as ambassadors of Pakistan's goodwill towards Afghanistan not only as a neighboring country but as a brotherly Muslim nation, having common historical, religious and ethno-national affinities. During their stay here inside Pakistan, they have contributed to the labor market, transport, carpet weaving industry and other economic ventures as well. Although few Afghans have been involved in illicit activities but this does not label the whole community as a security risk in character as they are as much peace loving and respected community of individuals as any community living in any place on the entire globe.

Afghan refugee community has been peacefully in Pakistan for four decades since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. During their stay here, they have contributed towards the economy and infrastructure of Pakistan. Although Pakistan has a problem of over-population but the burden of population density can't be labeled solely on the shoulders of the Afghan refugee community living within Pakistan as they have tried to earn an honorable living no matter how poor their circumstances are.

During their stay here in Pakistan, Afghan refugees have also developed family ties with their Pashtun brothers living inside Pakistan. For this very reason and also in view of the citizen right based upon the sections of Naturalization Act, Imran Khan, Pakistani prime minister during the very first months of his term, announced the right to citizenship for Afghans living inside Pakistan (Barker, 2018). Prime Minister Imran Khan also pledged to provide banking facilities to all those who have registered themselves as documented refugees (Dawn, 2019). Unfortunately, Prime Minister Imran Khan has failed to materialize the promises that he had made to the Pakistani Afghan refugee community.

The manner in which the state and the government of Pakistan will deal with Afghan refugee community in the near future can act as a make or break avenue in the ongoing tense Pak-Afghan relationship. Pakistan and Afghanistan should be able to utilize the goodwill they have been able to build since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan due to the hospitality Pakistan has given to its Afghan brethren.

Ideally speaking, if the war inside Afghanistan comes to a peace settlement, it is in the interest of all stake holders that members of Afghan refugee community should repatriate back. Until and unless situation in Afghanistan does not improve, it is imperative for Pakistan, Afghanistan, other regional stake holders and the international organizations and international community that they should follow a collaborative approach to deal with the future of Afghan refugees living inside Pakistan. Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) is one such approach which acts as a collaborative platform for the collective management of the affairs and future of Afghan refugees living inside Pakistan.

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