

REFUGEE CHALLENGES BEYOND BORDERS: AFGHAN DISPLACEMENT AND PAKISTAN POLICY RESPONSE IN THE POST-2021 ERA

Muhammad Islam*

Safiullah Ahmadzai**

Abstract

Since the fall of the Afghan government in 2021, Pakistan has faced renewed humanitarian challenges as thousands of Afghans fled across the border. This study examines Pakistan's policy response through a human security lens, using thematic analysis of interviews with refugees, aid workers, and policymakers, alongside policy documents and media sources. Findings show that Pakistan's initial focus prioritized border control and repatriation, driven by security concerns and resource constraints. Afghan refugees report major hardships, including limited access to documentation, healthcare, education, and employment. Despite these gaps, Pakistan's historical role as a major refugee-hosting country and its ongoing collaboration with international agencies reflect significant humanitarian efforts. Officials cite legitimate security and economic pressures shaping their policies. Applying the human security framework reveals

* Research Associate at the International Islamic University, Islamabad Pakistan.

** President of the Afghan initiative society at the university of Lahore

how current approaches impact the economic, health, and political well-being of displaced populations. The study recommends easing registration processes, expanding livelihood opportunities, and deepening regional cooperation to balance humanitarian needs with security priorities. Limitations include the qualitative case study design and the rapidly changing regional dynamics. Nonetheless, this research offers a nuanced understanding of Pakistan's evolving refugee policy and stresses the need for rights based, multi-dimensional strategies to address displacement challenges in the post-2021 era.

Keywords: Afghan Refugees; Pakistan Policy; Post 2021 Displacement; Qualitative Research; Human Security.

Introduction:

The years of warfare in Afghanistan have led to multiple displacement crises most remarkably since the Taliban took control in August 2021 (*Instability in Afghanistan | Global Conflict Tracker*, n.d.). The U.S. military disengagement and Afghan government instability initiated massive refugee movements that led people to find refuge in Pakistan and other neighbors (Amir & Alqama, 2025).

The increased number of Afghan refugees are posing challenges to Pakistan as it seeks to protect its security while handling

restricted finances alongside international treaties (Anwar et al., 2021).

The situation of Afghan refugees extends beyond border migrations because it directly affects regional stability and security as well as human rights protection (*Afghanistan*, 2025). When Afghan people fled their homes, it created a significant social and economic consequence for host communities whose labor markets and services alongside their economic base suffered devastating effects. Refugees frequently became a matter of political interference which led nations to develop security-related statements and to create a new policy framework for protection of their borders. The continuous domestic economic turmoil alongside geopolitical stresses thereafter faced by Pakistan forced it to adopt major changes to its refugee policies while demanding scholarly attention to this matter (*Pakistan's Hard Policy Choices in Afghanistan* | *International Crisis Group*, n.d.).

Understanding the complete humanitarian nature of the Afghan refugee crisis depends on both economic and security factors. The refugees suffer severe challenges because they do not have access to fundamental needs which include educational possibilities combined with medical care (Sumra et al., 2025) and legal defense (*Paving Pathways for Refugee Inclusion*, n.d.). The

solution demands a broad policy structure which combines national interests of Pakistan with humanitarian perspective.

Methodology:

The present study used the qualitative exploratory design which was rooted in the inductive approach in investigating the complex nature of the Afghan displacement and the changing policy solutions present across Pakistan. The qualitative inquiry was the choice because it is more inclined to live experiences, policy interpretation, and analysis of expert attitudes due to its focus on contextual depth instead of generalization.

Two main groups of people were involved in the collection of primary data: Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, Afghan officials, national experts, policymakers, and security analysts. These people were interviewed using a semi structured approach. Through a purposive sample, interviewees were chosen based on an aspect of ensuring diverse opinions in terms of humanitarian, socio-economic, or security ideas. Individual and institutional perspectives into the refugee situation were sought in the interviews which were open ended.

NVivo was used in systematic coding and thematic organization with use of reflexive thematic analysis to bring out some known

patterns in some crucial domains. The coding was repeated, and it was therefore analytically deep according to the purpose of the research. Informed consent and confidentiality were adhered to and ethical clearance was also granted.

Limitations and Future Directions:

Though this research presents useful information about the Afghan exiles in Pakistan, it is narrow in quality since it is limited by legal and security aspects that inhibited access to some of such population. Regardless of the backing in NVivo, such an analysis as thematic analysis is subjective at least to a certain degree. There is an influence on data consistency based on the changing refugee policies and invisibility of the undocumented groups. Further studies are urged to incorporate the use of the AI tools and participatory approaches, particularly in regions that are poorly represented in the borders. There is need of longitudinal studies to determine the intergenerational effects. Successful refugee governance requires an organized collaboration of the policymakers, the technologists, and the local level participants.

Literature Review:

The migration of Afghan refugees, particularly in Pakistan, has always been a very complicated issue to the host states. In scholarly literature, this phenomenon of refugee influxes has been highlighted as producing multidimensional effects including

those of economic capacity, social cohesion, and political stability of the host nations (Jacobsen, 2002; Kosher, 2007). Institutional strength, domestic political will, and a changing geopolitical interest, all tend to influence the response of the host state (Zetter, 2007; Schmeidl, 2003). Although small numbers of refugees are partly informally absorbed into low wage labor markets, overall, there is little system wide integration and attendance to increase refugee access beyond long term patterns of marginalization and ambiguity in policy (Turton & Marsden, 2002; Loescher & Milner, 2005). According to Loescher and Milner, it can hardly be called altruism when accepting refugees, but it is performed rather strategically to fulfill foreign policy goals.

Other recent literature also emphasizes the securitization of refugee flows as the states are increasingly responding to this population, less based on humanitarian principles and more on security based ones (Bigo, 2002); (Huysmans, 2006). These stories have justified the challenging legal provisions, ad-mixture repatriation, and refusal of permanent residency or citizenship rights. These processes are consistent with the global patterns where the mood toward refugees is determined by the perceived dangers on sovereignty and internal prosperity (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014). In addition, securitization lens re-designs the social construction of refugees not only as victims of any conflict but as suspicious ones who oppose their access to

protection and permanent solutions. Some researchers have focused on the resilience of transnational kinship networks and informal forms of coping (Monsutti, 2008), at the same time as the dominant policy strategy tends more towards a more logic of deterrence and containment and a shift away from integration or inclusion.

In order to conceptualize this tension between security and humanitarianism, the human security framework, especially that expounded by Barry Buzan (Crust, n.d.), presents a strong analytical tool. As compared to conventional paradigms of security that entail the stability of the state and territorial borders, human security is concerned with the dignity and safety of individuals and particularly those vulnerable groups like refugees. This has been the method used by scholars who criticize the disparities between state-focused discourses of security and realities of displacement (Newman, 2010; Krause & Williams, 1997). Such circumstances demonstrate a large disparity between the rhetorical pledges of hospitality, and the proceduralization of refugee rights. Human security, as a theoretical framework, therefore, shifts the focus of the analysis to the structural weaknesses of displaced communities instead of the state sovereignty, providing more comprehensive insight into refugee governance in post-2021 Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework:

The research investigates the many security threats affecting Afghan refugees in Pakistan through the theoretical framework presented in Barry Buzan's Human Security Theory (*Security According to Buzan*, n.d.). The Buzan's security framework redirects security analysis from state-based threats into individual community safety which creates vital ways to study refugees' vulnerable lives. The extended view of security provided by Human Security Theory enables thorough research of vulnerabilities across military and political frameworks and socio-economic circumstances of refugees (Alkire, 2016).

Human security according to Barry Buzan represents a multidimensional security concept which belongs to the Copenhagen School of Security Studies (Mcsweeney, 1996).

Such a paradigm moves beyond state focused approaches to embrace seven fundamental security aspects which include economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. Economic security exists when a person can find and keep suitable work and achieve financial stability besides acquiring sustainable ways to earn a living yet food security ensures people can access and afford necessary nutrition. Health security includes provision of medical services combined with disease protection while environmental security represents the

influence on natural elements on refugee health status (Vasile, 2024).

Personal safety includes shielding people from violence and crime together with safeguarding human rights while community security works to maintain ethnic and cultural elements along with fighting against religious-based discrimination. Political security addresses the twofold challenge of obtaining formal legal status along with efficient government treatment and freedom from all forms of political persecution or exclusion.

Human Security Theory offers a pertinent analytical framework to assess the precarious conditions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, wherein restrictive legal and systemic socio-economic exclusion undermine their essential rights and human dignity (Ali et al., 2022). Analyzing challenges through Buzan's theoretical foundation provides a better understanding that links individual issues into comprehensive assessments. This research aims at delivering an academic review through human security examination of Afghan displacement and demonstrating Pakistan's refugee policy effects. These refugee policies show how they either help reduce or intensify the existing security challenges for displaced people which enables better policy development.

The research study utilizes Human Security Theory to develop systematic methods to analyze the Afghan refugee socioeconomic

conditions in Pakistan. This research examines Pakistan's policy effectiveness while assessing its refugee policies using seven security dimensions in addition to studying the worldwide political and compassion-related impacts. This study integrates theoretical comprehension into the analysis to construct academic arguments between present-day security studies and refugee governance policies which can reinforce sustainable and inclusive management for displaced people.

Analysis and Major Findings:

The following section presents information obtained through extensive interviews with Afghan refugees together with Pakistani experts and Afghan officials. The analysis divided the collected data into separate themes which spontaneously occurred during the interviews. The section relates findings through direct quotations while following the participant-generated issues. Following is the individual examination of the five themes that are identified from the thematic analysis of the interviews to get a nuanced understanding of the data.

i. Educational and Economic Motivations for Migration:

Educational and employment barriers within Afghanistan specifically targeting girls and women function as the primary force pushing people to leave their home country. The participants directly stated that the Taliban prohibition against

women attending school eliminated their chances for future possibilities in Afghanistan. For instance, Ismail explained that:

“The Taliban's ban on girls' education compelled them to leave Afghanistan,” a sentiment echoed by others. (Ismail Muhammad, Interview, Dec 12, 2024)

Zainab mentioned that, *“restrictions on female education and employment influenced her decision to seek refuge in Pakistan,”* (Khan Zainab, Interview, Sep 25, 2024) highlighting her concerns about being deprived of educational opportunities if forced to return. Saima, similarly, stated that the

“ban on girls' education and women's employment left her with no future prospects,” prompting her migration. (Khan Saima, Interview, Sep 27, 2024)

The participants Salman and Ayesha clarified that educational barriers resulted in joblessness and financial dependence. Salman stated his family moved to a Pakistan because of these three main reasons.

“better educational and economic opportunities,” . while Ayesha expressed that her

“dreams of education became impossible under the Taliban's rule.” . (Khan Ayesha, Interview, Sep 27, 2024)

Thus, the interviews collectively indicate that the dual pressures of educational deprivation and economic uncertainty have significantly influenced the decision-making process for many Afghan refugees.

ii. Uncertainty Arising from Policy Changes and Suspension of Resettlement Programs:

External policy shifts routinely produce uncertainty in refugees and especially contribute to the indefinite suspension of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. The suspension established a prolonged state of uncertainty which refugees used to assess their possibilities for resettlement. Ismail pointed out that the suspension resulted in three main consequences:

“has been devastating, increasing uncertainty” . (Khan Zainab, Interview, Sep 25, 2024) for his family.

Despite maintaining hope Zainab now investigates multiple *“alternative pathway”*. (Khan Zainab, Interview, Sep 25, 2024) possibilities including scholarships and employment-based visas because of the policy changes introduced by the United States. The temporary halt imposed by the U.S. policy pushed Saima and Salman to search for asylum in Pakistan or other countries which made their plans for stability harder to achieve.

Multiple interviewees show growing anxiety about their resettlement pathway which lacks clarity and reliability. This situation motivates them to explore various alternative options according to the interviews.

iii. Legal and Administrative Challenges in Documentation:

Refugees interviewed about their experiences expressed legal document-related issues because of alterations to Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) and Proof of Registration (PoR) policies. Ismail characterized the changing policies as “*unfair*” and explained they brought large amounts of stress to refugees.

The interviewees Zainab and Saima highlighted the difficulties they faced in keeping their paperwork current because policies kept changing explains Saima:

“complicate accessing essential services like healthcare, education, and legal rights.” . (Khan Saima, Interview, Sep 27, 2024)

In his account Salman described the difficulties regarding documents renewals that led to problems with accessing essential community services.

The comments show that legal and administrative hurdles have developed into severe limitations which hinder Afghan refugees' ability to receive and sustain legal status in Pakistan.

iv. Psychological Impact and Fear of Deportation:

The collected interviews showcase widespread among Afghan refugees a combination of fear and mental distress due to persistent fears of removal from the United States. The participants described their daily life as a constant state of emotional distress because of their worries about police arrests and raids. Saira described how:

“the fear of deportation creates immense stress,”. (Khan Saira, Interview, Sep 29, 2024)

The researchers demonstrated how perpetual anxiety impacts people from different age groups according to Ayesha and Khadija. The features of prolonged insecurity and anxiety can inflict severe mental health problems because of the recent tragedy explained by Dr. Attaullah in an interview, conducted by the author, where he explained how the ongoing deportation process is creating immense anxieties and difficulties for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Research reveals that deportation threats create considerable effects beyond administrative and legal dimensions because they constitute a deep concern for these Afghan families.

v. Gaps in NGO and Community Support:

Several key themes have emerged in the gathered data about the functions of NGOs alongside assistance from local communities. A few participants thanked aid programs but many observed major deficiencies in existing assistance networks. Zainab noted that she:

“appreciates the support from the Afghan community and NGOs”. (Khan Zainab, Interview, Sep 25, 2024)

The services provided crucial assistance regarding food distribution and shelter protection as well as legal assistance but she emphasized the missing elements which prevent “*long-term stability*” including employment opportunities and legal documentation. The respondents rely on both local networks and NGOs according to Saima and Ayesha but they also point out that:

“gaps in healthcare, legal assistance, and refugee rights.” . (Khan Ayesha & Khan Saima, Interview, Sep 27, 2024)

Salman and Khadija emphasized that community help has been useful yet the absence of durable complete assistance measures creates future worry for numerous refugees. Although temporary assistance exists now there is an essential requirement for lasting structured assistance systems.

Expert Perspectives on Security, Diplomatic, and Long Term Policy Challenges:

Additional insights into the dynamic situation emerge from interviews with both Pakistani experts and Afghan officials, who offer valuable perspectives on the intersection of national security, diplomacy, and the economic considerations surrounding Afghan refugees. As these experts explain, the policy atmosphere in Pakistan is shaped by a complex interplay of national security imperatives, diplomatic realignments, and economic challenges.

Pakistani analyst Ihsanullah Tipu articulated the delicate position Pakistan faces, standing between its moral obligation to provide shelter for Afghan refugees and its national security responsibilities. As he noted, *"Pakistan finds itself at a crossroads, torn between its humanitarian duty and the pressing need to secure its borders against the potential threats posed by militant groups."* (Tipu Ihsanullah, Interview, March 03, 2025)

Further elaborating on these challenges, Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad and Tahir Khan both underscored the complications arising from cross-border militancy and the changing diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. According to Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad, policy shifts within Pakistan were driven by *"increasing fears of extremist groups and the growing security concerns that often necessitate security-driven measures such as deportations."* (Prof. Dr. Ahmad Ishtiaq, Interview, May 04, 2025)

He emphasized that these policies, initially designed to counter extremism, have now become a source of tension between the state and Afghan refugees.

In line with Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad comments, Tahir Khan expanded on Pakistan's deportation procedures, explaining that they are *"framed within the context of national security and economic stability."* (Prof. Dr. Ahmad Ishtiaq, Interview, May 04, 2025)

Khan's perspective highlights the broader consequences of these policies, which frequently impact Afghan refugees' daily lives. The deportation measures, designed to enhance security, often place Afghan refugees in precarious positions, with little recourse to alternative forms of legal protection or residency.

The suspension of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and other international policies, according to expert analysis, have compounded these challenges, particularly concerning Pakistan's

capacity to manage the influx of Afghan refugees. Experts expressed significant doubts regarding the long-term prospects of foreign integration efforts for Afghan refugees, citing issues related to work permits, citizenship, and the broader economic challenges facing the host nation. As Dr. Rabia Akhtar explained, *"The uncertainty surrounding refugee status and employment rights exacerbates the vulnerability of Afghan refugees in Pakistan, making it difficult for them to integrate economically and socially."* . (Dr. Akhtar Rabia, Interview, May 10, 2025)

Moreover, the management of Afghan refugees requires robust diplomatic relationships between Afghanistan and its neighboring countries. Afghan officials, along with Akhtar, emphasized the importance of cooperation between Pakistan, Tajikistan, the UAE, and other regional players in formulating a comprehensive refugee management strategy. (Dr. Akhtar Rabia, Interview, May 10, 2025), (Afghan Official, Interview, May 15, 2025)

As Dr. Rabia Akhtar stated, *"A multi-lateral approach involving not just Pakistan but also other regional stakeholders like Tajikistan and the UAE is essential for the success of refugee management efforts."* . (Dr. Akhtar Rabia, Interview, May 10, 2025)

These collaborations are crucial for alleviating some of the burden on Pakistan while ensuring that Afghan refugees receive the support they need during their displacement.

In conclusion, the challenges surrounding the management of Afghan refugees in Pakistan are deeply intertwined with broader security, diplomatic, and economic concerns. The policy shifts and security driven measures, including deportations, alongside regional and international diplomacy, form the crux of the ongoing discourse. The contributions of scholars such as Tipu, Dr. Ahmad, Khan, Akhtar, and Afghan officials provide valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of these challenges and the need for a coordinated, long term solution to address the plight of Afghan refugees.

Discussion on Major Findings: (Pakistan Refugee Policy in Context)

People mainly migrate because they desire better educational opportunities and better economic opportunities. Throughout the world people move to improve their access to top-quality educational programs which build both their professional and economic futures (Haas et al., 2020). The accessibility to higher quality educational services available in destination countries drives migrants to acquire better jobs and achieve greater wage potential as they become agents for economic growth and sector transformations (*Education at a Glance 2016*, 2016). The

combination of poor domestic employment conditions and monetary stagnation drives people to look for locations that can strengthen their life quality through education and employment market benefits (*Migration and Development: A Theoretical PerspectiveI* - Hein de Haas, 2010, n.d.). Educational goals intertwine with economic aspirations to form the complex nature of migration thus requiring policies that should support academic and professional objectives.

Migrants together with asylum seekers experience major uncertainty due to policy changes which freezes resettlement programs that ultimately harms their migration plans while intensifying their vulnerabilities. When immigration policies change rapidly through stronger border enforcement and reduced refugee acceptance numbers, it pushes numerous population groups into dangerous situations while trapping them between countries and facing possible forced returns (Issari et al., 2021). Political instability combined with economic crises causes resettlement program suspensions which pushes forward both the integration process and mental stress of displaced communities (Gibney, 2018).

These disruptions create multiple geopolitical and humanitarian problems through international strain and cause host countries to face elevated refugee pressures (Hollifield et al., 2014). Assembling inconsistent policies combined with unexpected

modifications damages the established protection systems that resettlement programs aim to establish (BenEzer & Zetter, 2015).

The current digital age elevates documentation-related legal and administrative obstacles since organizations need to fulfill rigorous compliance requirements to oversee expanding electronic alongside paper document collections. Contemporary documentation follows three main challenges: to maintain record authenticity and integrity while delivering secure access and to achieve system integration of outdated methods with updated digital frameworks to achieve proper record backup protocols for litigation prevention and regulatory penalty prevention (*7 Biggest Document Management Challenges | TechTarget*, n.d.). The implementation of documentation practices becomes more intricate because of administrative burdens such as audit trail development and retention policy enforcement and cybersecurity training for personnel which requires substantial technological investments and employee training efforts (*Document Review Challenges: Strategies for Law Firm Litigation Professionals in 2024 | Integreon*, n.d.). Organizations face the need to develop flexible documentation methods that combine data protection through encryption as well as controlled access with open disclosure and responsibility in law-related operations because of fast-moving privacy regulations and data protection standards (*Considerations of Disclosing GenAI in ESI Protocols — Is Silence Golden? | Reuters*, n.d.).

Psychological effects on undocumented immigrants result from their fear of deportation and create ongoing stress together with feelings of anxiety and depression. Policies that encourage increased surveillance together with immigration enforcement create worse emotional distress because undocumented immigrants feel uncertain and alone (Bailey et al., 2021). Data shows that undocumented children along with families encounter traumatic experiences because of deportation scares which create emotional strain while impacting their mental health negatively. Furthermore the fear of deportation drives people to avoid seeking health care, education or legal help because of their concern about possible exposure (Hacker et al., 2011). The extended period of distress affecting immigrants creates social consequences by reducing community unit and deepening social economic disparities. The resolution of psychological effects demands government policies which offer immigration access combined with mental healthcare resources for population groups at risk.

Stakeholders identify perceived gaps in NGO and community support as a major issue because NGOs struggle to meet their objectives despite attempts to fill the service gap between government provision and local requirements because of resource allocation mismatches and coordination difficulties and cultural connectivity obstacles (Nsah, 2023). The gaps are notably present in areas where local organizations operate more effectively than

international agencies even though they face unlimited funds alongside an absence of enduring operational systems (Ahmed, 2025). Moreover, recent examples from conflict-affected areas like Sudan illustrate how grassroots support networks have stepped in to provide essential services when both governmental and NGO interventions have fallen short (*Locals in Sudan Are Saving Lives Aid Agencies Can't Reach* | *TIME*, n.d.). The experts advocate for an updated system that strengthens local community involvement and transparency with strategic coordination because they want support to correctly match community requirements (*Systems Thinking*, n.d.).

Experts emphasize the necessity of developing a thorough method which unites national sovereignty with worldwide peace through their studies about security and diplomacy together with policy-making issues. Expert analysts suggest modern security risks function globally so nations must cooperate to overcome them instead of fighting alone (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). Since diplomacy functions as a statecraft tool it needs to change in order to solve contemporary challenges that include cyber dangers along with economic relations and worldwide strategic competitions (Nye, 2011). Long-term policy planning plays a vital role in fighting against the risks arising from climate change alongside resource shortage and population reorganisations (Walt, 2019). States that unify security studies with diplomatic

strategies gain abilities to handle global complexities through enduring international relations.

Pakistan policy response to refugees:

The situation with Afghan refugees in Pakistan demonstrates multiple social and economic challenges that affected both refugees and the native population. The labor power of Afghan refugees operates throughout construction, agricultural sectors, and the informal trading sector but simultaneously generate local resource limitations, cause price increases, increased joblessness, and inflation within susceptible areas. Researches from international publications demonstrate that refugee presence strengthens regional economies at the same time uncontrolled refugee camps increase criminal activities and social tensions which affect national security. Research such as the (*Socio-Economic Analysis of Afghan Refugees Repatriation from Pakistan: A 2023 Case Study* | *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, n.d.) and field surveys conducted by UNHCR (*Market Systems Analysis for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan* | *International Labour Organization*, 2018) illustrate these dynamics and stress the need for robust policy responses to manage the economic and security challenges for both communities and refugees.

The Pakistani response to Afghan refugees has evolved notably during various decades as the country considered geopolitical

factors plus economic conditions and security requirements. Pakistan implemented an open-door policy throughout the 1980s Soviet-Afghan war period (*Socio-Economic Analysis of Afghan Refugees Repatriation from Pakistan: A 2023 Case Study* | *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, n.d.), driven by Islamic solidarity, historical ties, and humanitarian principles. The country hosted millions of Afghan refugees (Y. Ali et al., 2019), providing them with shelter, food, and basic amenities through refugee camps established along the border with support from international organizations like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (*"The Mujahidin Middleman: Pakistan's Role in the Afghan Crisis and the "* by *Peter A. Pentz*, n.d.). Pakistan instituted this policy to demonstrate its Islamic and cultural ties with Afghanistan while strengthening Afghan guerrilla actions against Soviet military forces. The extended stay of Afghan refugees placed too much pressure on Pakistan's resources which created multiple social and economic problems including job competition and decreased healthcare availability and increased security threats (Salman et al., 2024).

After the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 Pakistan experienced another influx of Afghan refugees which added to already existing problems of sustaining one of the world's largest refugee groups (Hussain, n.d.). Pakistan enforced compelled repatriation of its citizens in 2023 because of existing security

threats as well as economic contraction and evolving political conditions (Fahrney, n.d.). Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasizes that Pakistan requires international acknowledgment of its refugee hosting support. At his meeting with Filippo Grandi on July 9, 2024 the Prime Minister said the international system needs to realize Pakistan's refugee burden and show unified commitment to the situation. The Prime Minister stressed that Pakistan has treated Afghan refugees with impressive dignity despite facing numerous challenges (*PM Shehbaz Urges Collective Responsibility, Int'l Recognition of Afghan Refugee 'Burden' - Pakistan - DAWN.COM*, n.d.). Similarly, Former President Arif Alvi highlighted the need for international support, asserting, during his VOA Urdu interview on November 16, 2023, that Pakistan needed international backing because it had hosted Afghan refugees for four decades. President Alvi revealed the way the prolonged refugee situation has substantially damaged Pakistan's economic standing and way of life (*Hosting Afghans a Huge Burden, Pakistani President Says*, n.d.). The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) also reiterated the security rationale behind the policy, noting that unregulated movement and the presence of undocumented individuals pose a significant threat to national security (*UN Special Rapporteurs Urge Pakistan to Stop Planned Mass Deportation of Afghans*, n.d.). The policy switch took Pakistan in a different direction from its historical humanitarian position leading international human

rights organizations to condemn the sudden decision because it neglected both societal integration of refugees and their longstanding economic impact within Pakistan (*The Forced Return of Afghan Refugees and Implications for Stability*, n.d.).

The Pakistani approach to Afghan refugees demonstrates how states face difficulties when they prioritize national interests with their humanitarian responsibilities. Pakistan changed its migrant policy from open immigration to coercion-based expulsion because of adjusting regional political conditions and internal demands. The healthiest solution to address this humanitarian crisis demands a three-part strategy composed of international support combined with global diplomatic participation and human rights expansion. For Pakistan to successfully handle this crucial point in time it needs to pursue mechanisms which maintain the dignified and sustainable reintegration of Afghan refugees and enhance regional stability through cooperative diplomacy.

Moreover, several studies reveal that while refugees can bolster local economies, unregulated settlements may also foster criminal activities and social tensions that compromise internal security. Research such as the “Socio-Economic Analysis of Afghan Refugees Repatriation from Pakistan” (Nisar et al., 2024) and field surveys conducted by the ILO illustrate these dynamics and stress the need for robust policy responses to manage the economic and security challenges for both communities and

refugees (*Market Systems Analysis for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan* | *International Labour Organization*, 2018).

Recommendations:

The proposed policy framework adopts a four-part approach between legislative enhancement, technological innovation, and international alliances to improve Pakistan's refugee administrative procedures. Pakistan must adopt new refugee legislation across the entire nation to honor standards from the 1951 Refugee Convention by officially accepting Afghan refugees through all government departments with standardized 'Proof of Registration' to protect refugees from arbitrary detention or deportation. UNHCR with IOM partnership should launch a resettlement support center in Islamabad to speed up P-1/P-2 cases for resettlement purposes and offer combined legal aid to vulnerable refugees who need resettlement services. AI-based blockchain systems for refugee management operations would establish protected electronic registration data systems that prevent fraudulent behavior while creating combined service settings for healthcare opportunities and education services and job placement support. Better donor-UNHCR-IOM coordination needs to develop funding flexibility and technical supervision capabilities to create adaptable programs with impact assessments for accountable delivery. Such integrated initiatives would turn Pakistan into a country that embraces rights-based governance instead of delivering periodic humanitarian aid and implementing

cross-national security arrangements with international protection frameworks.

Conclusion:

This research implements Barry Buzan's human security framework to examine various challenges facing Afghan refugees in Pakistan after 2021 while studying displacement patterns alongside policy changes with social and political conditions. The data shows how Pakistan's evolving refugee management structure formed from economic constraints at home and security requirements and shifts in world politics created adverse conditions for disenfranchised persons. Limited access to documentation together with restricted formal livelihood opportunities and inadequate service delivery pipelines constitutes the primary difficulties against refugee social and economic integration. Pakistan has transitioned from being a humanitarian host nation to a state that focuses on repatriation through policies reflecting domestic necessities. The detailed evaluation shows ensuring national security requires long lasting protective institutions that fulfill international refugee requirements and enhance regional cooperation by utilizing modern technology to achieve governance clarity. Multistakeholder partnerships and rights-based approaches allow Pakistan to tackle displacement challenges of refugees because they foster peaceful conditions and stability in the region. Research focused on non-traditional security provide beneficial

academic input because it demonstrates the requirement for adaptive interventional strategies that unite aid-based solutions with prolonged displaced populations during modern globalization.

AUTHORS

Muhammad Islam: is a Research Associate at the International Islamic University, Islamabad. His research critically engages with issues of terrorism, counterterrorism, radicalization, border management, and national security, with a regional focus on South Asia and the Middle East. His work examines the operational dynamics of militant networks, the ideological underpinnings of extremism, and the implications of state security policies. He contributes regularly to scholarly debates on Pakistan, Afghanistan, and broader regional security architectures.

Safiullah Ahmadzai co- author :holds a degree in Politics and International Relations from the University of Lahore. His academic interests are grounded in postmodern approaches to international affairs, with particular emphasis on global politics and human rights. As an Afghan national, he brings a grounded perspective to transnational political discourses. He currently serves as President of the Afghan Initiative Society at the

University of Lahore, promoting dialogue on socio-political issues affecting the Afghan community and the wider region.

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