



SOCIETY FOR POLICY STUDIES
www.spsindia.in

SPS Paper

**Afghan Refugees and Pakistan's
Internal Security Concerns**

Chayanika Saxena



Society for Policy Studies (SPS)
J-1824, Chittaranjan Park, New Delhi
E: feedback@spsindia.in W: www.spsindia.in

Afghan Refugees and Pakistan's Internal Security Concerns

Located in a region that is touted as one of the hotbeds of religious extremism and political volatility, the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan remain tepid despite their history of cultural closeness. This proximity that was once reflected in the unconditional acceptance of the millions of Afghans fleeing decades-long war by Pakistan stands questioned today, and even resented. Claimed to be impinging on the internal security of Pakistan, the Afghan refugees no longer remain the same visitors who were welcomed many years ago.

Evidenced or otherwise, the heightening perceptions of insecurity and apprehensions related to the presence of millions of Afghan refugees have created a sense of discomfort between the two nations and the two communities. The Dera Ghazi Bombing and the attacks on Manawan Police Training school and the involvement of Afghans to which they have claimed; illegal smuggling of goods and trafficking of human beings, or for that matter, quibbles over access to social-economic resources are stiffening the already tense stand-off.

That internal security of Pakistan is being challenged by the very presence of the Afghan refugees has become a rallying point for seeking their 'repatriation'. Religious radicalism and terrorism, drug smuggling, human trafficking, illegal trade in goods and other law and order issues are some of the major grievances that the government and people of Pakistan have come to pile on those who came from across the Durand Line.

Even as waves of *repatriation* proceed, millions of Afghans continue to reside in Pakistan as registered and unregistered refugees, creating both institutional stress and popular resentment. Their vast numbers aside, the mounting claims that suggest their purported involvement in the spread of the above-mentioned issues have left Pakistan in a precarious position, particularly as it sees these refugees affecting its internal security as also its relations with the neighbor across the Durand Line. Affecting the institutional apparatuses and popular living alike, the heightened apprehensions and insecurity that surround the continuous presence of Afghan refugees has become a major trouble-spot in a relationship that is being pushed on an 'upward trajectory' as General Raheel Sharif would like to call it.

Assessing such claims of harmful doings against the Afghan refugees, this article will highlight what Pakistan believes are the internal security challenges it faces from these refugees on social, economic, cultural and law-and-order fronts. In doing so, this article will provide an evolutionary account of decades-long displacement—the causes, the different waves and the implications that these influxes have created for the internal security of the host. Beginning at the source, this article will provide glimpses of the 'push-and-pull' factors that compelled millions to flee Afghanistan at different stages in the last four decades. Resultant to this mass movement of people, the article will then proceed to provide a demographic profile of the Afghans who chose to take refuge in Pakistan. In keeping with a 'broader' view of security, the final section of this article will highlight the various dimensions in which the internal security of Pakistan has stood challenged by the presence of millions of Afghan refugees.

Refugee Influx

One of the common determinants of the present is how the past has been lived. The present-day affairs, both within and between Afghanistan and Pakistan have evolved into their current shape having passed through many ups and downs. A lineage of popular association aside, these two countries find themselves tied in an intricate relationship that breathes heavy on their national security concerns, such that today neither of the two countries can seek to achieve internal security without the support of the other.

Sharing borders of thousands of miles, the Durand Line has become a source of concern for both Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly on the ground of security. Apart from the resentment that surrounds this foreign-drawn demarcation, particularly amongst the Pashtuns in Afghanistan, the relatively little governmental control that lie on both the sides of the Durand have resulted in under-checked, popular movements.

The contemporary porosity of the borders was preceded by the cultural and economic exchanges that occurred along the Durand Line, propelled largely by the ethnic similarities that continue to be strewn around it. Movement of people between the modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan has been unmistakably ancient, with folklores to archeological material bearing testimony to it. However, as these movements continue into the present-day, their formats have assumed different shape.

The coming in of the Westphalian order with its rigid sovereign boundaries imputed different connotations to the popular movements that were not seen so stingingly in the past. As identities were transformed and rigidified on the basis of nationalities, so were the movements christened in legal jargons, with one of them being the term, 'refugees'. Not a modern political phenomenon by any standard, however, the movement of people between Afghanistan and Pakistan and particularly from the former to the latter was stamped with a different label under changing circumstances. These circumstances were the Saur Revolution of 1978 and the subsequent Soviet Invasion and Occupation that began in 1979, only to be terminated with the defeat of the Communist giant a decade later.

The First Wave: Saur Revolt and the Soviet Invasion

Spelling the end of monarchic regimes and aristocratic tie-ups that had for long been the ordering principle of politics in Afghanistan, the Saur Revolution of 1978 marked the beginning of a new phase in the life of the Land of the Hindu Kush. It was not only revolutionary insofar that it brought to power—and for the first time—a group that was not of royal lineage, but also because it laid the basis for the future of the country.

Communism that had 'secretly' been in the ascendancy from the days of the first Republic of Mohammed Daoud Khan came out in the open, and quite violently with the Saur Revolution. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA; composed of the Khalq and Parcham factions) took the reins of Kabul, and with that, laid ground for the Soviet intervention that rapidly graduated from latter's indirect control to its invasion and occupation in an year's time.

The Soviet invasion of 1979, which is purported to have been 'requested' at the behest of the flailing Communist government in Kabul, marked the beginning of what was to affect Afghanistan adversely to this date. The marching in of the Soviet troops into the many cities and countryside of Afghanistan was met by rising calls for jihad that were attended to adequately. Violence became the ground reality that rendered millions of Afghans displaced and ousting equally many to the many countries that surround it. One of the major recipients of this fleeing population of Afghanistan was its neighbor in the East: Pakistan.

It will not be incorrect to say that the invasion of Afghanistan by the forces of the former Soviet Union compounded the political volatility of the region. Pakistan, which had already witnessed two wars, one of which had a direct implication on its territorial integrity, was now staring at a neighbor where one of the Superpowers was involved in a bitter fight with the natives. Pakistan's internal political circumstances bore no good signs either, with repression of democracy, freedom and justice by Zia's government fostering domestic resentment. And, to add to it all was a foreign policy that welcomed the fleeing population from Afghanistan for more than just a humanitarian intent, but with the purpose of providing itself strategic depth.

As the Soviets began restoring the major cities and lines of communication to the Communist government under Babrak Karmal, urban uprisings and lashkars (tribal armed groupings) began mounting their jihad against the incoming forces of the 'atheist Communists'. Supported by many countries—both near and far-off—the battle within Afghanistan flared between the Soviets on the one hand and the Peshawar Seven and Tehran Eight on the other. Sponsored by Pakistan and Iran respectively, these two major groups along with the other native belligerents came to be known as the mujahedeen. Drawing more than just neighborly interest towards them, the mujahedeen and their cause had many countries, including Saudi Arabia, Peoples Republic of China and the United States involve themselves in this battle for their own reasons.

Brought into the folds of the Cold War, swathes and swathes of Afghanistan were soon caught-up in the cross-fire between the Soviets and the foreign-backed mujahedeen. As collateral damage and for conscious policies that were followed by both the sides, it is estimated that about 8.5 million-15 million Afghans got killed in the war. A vast portion of the population stood internally displaced. Refugees from Afghanistan were soaring in the different parts of the world at an equally high pace, with Pakistan alone taking in 3.5 million people from its strife-ridden neighbor. In fact, as per estimates, the fleeing Afghan population composed half of the world's refugee population in the decade of 1980s. "In all, approximately one-third of Afghanistan's pre-war population of 15 million stood uprooted and scattered."

Despite the sheer material and demographic devastation the war had unleashed on Afghanistan, the Soviets were compelled to withdraw from the country almost a decade after it had marched its troops through it. However, even as Communism got discredited in Afghanistan, it was still not time for it to be disowned. Backed by the Soviet Union, the PDPA was once again put into power led by the erstwhile leader of the KHAD—the secret services of Afghanistan—Dr. Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai.

The Second Wave: Mohammad Najibullah's Reign and the Civil War

Expecting the fall of the Najibullah government no sooner than it was installed into power, however, to the amazement of many, it continued for a good four years with the Soviet food and arsenal supplies and the support it had received from Jombesh-e-Melli of Abdul Rashid Dostum. But, even as it defied the predictions that were being made of its short existence, life under the PDPA government was far from being stable, and least of all secure and peaceful.

Put into power at a time when the Soviet withdrawal was still three years away, the revitalized PDPA was given the reins of the country to 'complete the Saur Revolution in its new phase.' Amongst other promises that were made to stabilize the polity of Afghanistan, it was the 'contact program with the counter-revolutionaries that was initiated to promote nation-wide reconciliation' that reposed the faith of many in Kabul in their new government. However, not even five days into the departure of the Reds from the soil of Afghanistan, the PDPA imposed a state of emergency throughout the country. Curbing freedom of expression and movement, the promises of national reconciliation that were made with the establishment of the National Compromise Commission were soon thrown by the way-side. Imprisonments and executions became regular administrative practices, with the Islamisation of the country irking many in the intelligentsia who were hoping to find some respite in what they thought was a promising government.

Across the boundary, having waited for long, the Peshawar Seven sitting in Pakistan finally found the opportunity to transform their military alliances into something that was more political. Vying for what was perceived as the seat of central political control of Afghanistan, the mujahedeen within Pakistan struck the Peshawar Accords in the hope of circulating power between the many 'legitimate' claimants of it. However, quite unlike what was hoped for, the many claimants to political power soon got embroiled in a bloody struggle for control.

Trying to dislodge the Communist government in Afghanistan on the one hand, the violence that got unleashed in the process was compounded by the significant internal rivalries that brewed between two major camps: the Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the Jamiat-e-Islami of Burhanuddin Rabbani. The Battle for Jalalabad that was one of the strikingly violent phases of this battle for control saw amongst other things massive civilian casualty. Scores of people were left displaced, wounded and dead in Kabul—a place that was not so severely affected even as the Soviets were running their course. Caught in the cross-fire between the two rivaling camps, many in Kabul were also made into deliberate victims of heinous human rights violations.

Aggravating these assaults was the dilapidated condition of the economy of Afghanistan. Destruction of highways, droughts and damage to the mainstay of the agrarian economy—farmlands and peasants—had reduced the economic condition of the country into shambles. And to top it all, the growing opium production in whatever little that remained of the agriculturally suitable land within Afghanistan further helped in abetting the deadly Civil War.

With the circumstances turning for the worst in light of such internal feuds, the Civil War in Afghanistan that lasted from 1989 until the control of the Taliban in 1996 sent the country back in time—both proverbially and literally. Exodus of people from Afghanistan which was expected to have been minimized with the withdrawal of the Soviet Union was far-off the mark. In fact, the movements to safer haven in the neighboring countries of Afghanistan continued, with both Pakistan and Iran receiving the maximum of these fleeing individuals and families. Estimates indicate that even as the last decade of the 20th century opened, almost 1.5 million refugees of Afghan origin were registered as living either in the refugee camps, or urban settlements.

The Third Wave: The Taliban Years and Post 9/11

As the infighting continued and the victimization of the innocent population of Afghanistan prevailed at an increasing rate, the rise of the Taliban in 1996 came to be seen as a source of respite; but, not for long. Having captured almost 90% of the total territory, Afghanistan, for the first time in its independent history came under a unitary, central rule. Eliminating feuds and 'restoring' law and order in the rural and urban pockets of the country alike, the Taliban soon webbed its own means and methods of control.

A group of hard-lined conservatives, they transformed the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan into an Emirate, with laws that could remind one of the dark, medieval ages. Repressive and archaic laws were introduced in the whole of the country that dealt the biggest blow on the rights of women and freedom of the progressive circles of Afghanistan. Massacres too were deployed as regular tools to bring the rebelling population in different parts of the country under control.

The cessation of the Civil War meant that the economic situation in Afghanistan was given a chance to resuscitate; but, this too did not last for long. The economic policies that were imposed by the Taliban were staggeringly stinging and punitive. Taxes charged of those who could conduct business in the country were as high as 50%, with those failing to pay being subjected to attacks. Imports into the country too were levied with 6% of tax, and the points of entry were made into hubs of extreme Taliban control and monopoly. Opium production, which was declared as anti-Islamic continued to flourish under the Taliban rule, and in fact, so much so that it became one of the mainstays of the Taliban regime. Smuggling of goods and trafficking of human beings, particularly abetted with the help of Pakistan—which was one of the major benefactors of the Taliban—had a major impact on the economy and the living of ordinary men and women.

A gruesome five years that were spent under the Taliban again prompted many to flee from Afghanistan. The continued influx of population from Afghanistan into different parts of Pakistan was reflected in the massive

rise in the number of refugees that were hosted within the latter's territory. From 12 lakh, which was the UNHCR estimate of the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan at the close of the year in 1996, it swelled to a staggering 22 lakh (almost) in the year 2001.

However contestable and debatable it might be, but the attack on the Twin-Towers in the United States was made to constitute as a watershed event that came to organize time into pre and post 9/11 eras. The launch of attacks against the 'evil axis', as the then president of the U.S., George W. Bush, had addressed the association of the Taliban with the Al-Qaeda as, became the final assault on the already suffering population of Afghanistan. Displacement, both within and to other countries continued to asunder whatever that was left of the popular base in this country. As more and more Afghans escaping the drone attacks and their violent retaliations took to Pakistan for refuge, the swelling community of refugees within this country soon began to break its back.

Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

Close to 95% of the Afghans fleeing their country in the wake of political, economic and social destruction found shelter in the countries flanking the eastern and western borders of Afghanistan: Pakistan and Iran, respectively. The movement of the people to either of the countries was determined majorly by the physical proximity of the country of arrival from the point of departure. Added to which, the ethnic and linguistic similarities and cultural congruence made the eastern side of Afghanistan look to greater chances of assimilation and comfort in Pakistan, while the western side of the country headed to Iran for the same. Thus, the distance of travel and potential for finding greater amenable circumstances directed the movement of people to either of the neighboring countries, with the consequence being the concentration of nearly 6 million Afghan refugees within Iran and Pakistan (combined) by the beginning of 1980s.

Despite not being a signatory to either the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, Pakistan became home to many Afghans who were fleeing to escape real, or potential persecution. While there exists contention over the 'official' and 'unofficial' numbers of Afghan refugees that did and continue to live within the boundaries of Pakistan, however, a staggering estimate of repatriation suggested that close to 5.7 million Afghans had returned to their homes by the close of 2002!

Of a total of (recorded and registered) 3.5 million Afghans who were Pakistan-bound at different stages during the Soviet invasion in particular, an overwhelming majority of them were ethnically Pashtuns. While it will be erroneous to treat the Pashtuns as monolithic, however, for the ease of reference it can be claimed that almost 81% of the refugees heading in the east from Afghanistan belonged to the same ethnic bloc. The Pashtuns were followed in numbers by the Tajiks and then by the Hazaras, Turkmen and Balochis in the same order. The geographical spread of the Afghan refugees within Pakistan was (and is) equally skewed in expanse, with larger and denser concentrations found around the North-Western part of the host country and relatively scanty presence in its remaining parts.

In terms of the nature of the settlements, the registered refugees from Afghanistan can be located either in the refugee camps (36%) run by the Government of Pakistan and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), or in urban dwellings (63%) that generally take the shape of urban slums. Located in and around the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its provincial capital of Peshawar, some of the largest camps for refugees, such as the now-dissolved Jalozai Camp, continue to be operated here.

Following the dense concentration of the largely Pashtun refugees from Afghanistan within the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (62.1%), the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) comes close on heels as areas

for Pashtun refuge. Amongst pockets of refugee inhabitation that are scattered through FATA, it is the Kurram Valley and North Waziristan that house a sizeable influx of refugees from the neighbour on the West.

The refuge-seeking Hazara and Baloch Afghans found shelter in Quetta, the capital of the Balochistan (20.3%) province in Pakistan. The Tajiks coming from Afghanistan found themselves flocking the capital city of Sindh—Karachi (4.2%) with many of those who had landed, finding themselves occupying the urban slums that have come about this major city. The province of Punjab also came to house as many Afghan refugees, with the Islamabad Capital Territory hosting almost 2% of the incoming people from across the border. Some Afghan refugees, particularly those of the Kirghiz descent coming from Pamir in the Afghan province of Badakhshan, made their way into Gilgit, a part of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

A sectorial dissection of those coming from Afghanistan into Pakistan as refugees can be instructive in informing us about the circumstances they had to face wherever they were settled. As the scope of this paper does not permit an extensive discussion on the same, the following information will be sufficiently indicative of the economic privileges, or perils that had befallen the Afghans and the social consequences that had followed.

Landlord and Businessmen

Forming a very small proportion of the refugees from Afghanistan, the landed gentry and businessmen “fled (their country) after the 1978 pro-Soviet coup and subsequent Soviet invasion, bringing their cattle, personal belongings, vehicles and money. According to the UNHCR's report, ‘a large number of the coloured buses, painted trucks and auto-rickshaws that whiz in and out of traffic and along the national motorways are registered with this group of refugees’”. With refugee accommodation not on their mind, these classes headed directly for the major cities of Pakistan, including Peshawar, Karachi and Islamabad.

Intelligentsia

More than the businessmen and landed classes, it was the intelligentsia that left Afghanistan in throngs to escape severely violent political persecution. However, on not being able to find an environment that was amenable to their ‘progressive, radical thoughts’ even within Pakistan, a number of the refugee-intellectuals departed to Western countries.

Peasant and Farmers

The majority of the Afghan refugees who were pouring into Pakistan belonged to a socio-economic stratum that could neither enjoy the privilege of riches, or education. Illiterate and with bare economic resources, most of these peasant and farmers from Afghanistan who crossed into Pakistan found themselves occupying either the urban shanties, or the refugee camps. With economic deprivation that was rampant owing to little, or no economically gainful jobs and the social necessities of life, such as education, being inadequately met, the future generations of these refugees were made to brave similar abysmal circumstances.

The situation as it stands today does not speak of any massive improvement in the living standards of the many Afghans who continue to live in Pakistan as registered refugees. The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) of Pakistan that is the nodal agency maintaining records of the Afghan refugees has estimated that almost 1.7 million refugees from Afghanistan continue to live in Pakistan with a legal status (obtained via securing a Proof of Registration (PoR)). The estimates of those who are unregistered, the NADRA and the Government of Pakistan believe, can be higher for reasons that vary from lack of information to obtaining fake Pakistani Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs).

Over-Stayed their Stay

For a strange marriage of geography and circumstances, Pakistan finds itself straddling with a neighbour on the West that has often somersaulted in its face. From the quarrels over 'Pashtunistan' to its proximity with India, the strategic depth that Pakistan sought to get by creating an Afghanistan in its own image ended up backfiring, to say the least. Today, the internal security of Pakistan finds itself in a volatile alliance with circumstances that are extraneous either in their entirety—the foreign involvement in Afghanistan—or, in parts—the refugees from Afghanistan being one of them. It is the latter that this paper concerns itself with as the clamour for the 'repatriation' of the 'visitors' is getting intensified, and on grounds that concern the internal security of Pakistan.

Fleeing the many strenuous circumstances that were created over decades of foreign interference and violent domestic retaliation, as millions of Afghans were compelled to find refuge in their neighbouring country—Pakistan—their stay that was initially welcomed, soon became a bone of contention between them and the host. Both at the popular and governmental level, the hordes of Afghans who had made their way into Pakistan, both legally and illegally, became the sources of concern and resentment and for a variety of reasons.

Socio-economic and cultural tensions soon became rife as refugees continued to deluge the towns and rural areas of a country that had its own share of domestic struggles to deal with. Added to this, the political atmosphere that was getting radicalized, partly due to the free-hand given to extremist elements within Pakistan by successive governments, heightened the woes of many natives of the host country. And, soon enough, the radicalism that was fanned by the conscious endeavours of many came to burn those very hands that fed them!

Believing that the factors that were seen as abetting refugee-ism amongst the Afghans are now gone, calls are now being made to send the 'visitors' back to their homeland. For factors that are being offered in variety—from economics, to politics, to cultural and to the situation of law and order—the refugees from Afghanistan are being asked to repatriate to the country to 'which they belong'.

Taking a larger view of security that goes beyond the caches of arsenal, it cannot be denied that all the facets of a polity's existence—be it economics, politics, or socio-cultural—are crucially tied to the concern of security. Popular resentment which can affect the internal security of any country as much as any external threat can necessitates that such popular concerns be factored-in while taking stock of a nation's internal security situation. Thus, in trying to understand the impact that the refugees from Afghanistan have had on the internal security of Pakistan, it becomes crucial to have it assessed over a broad spectrum of areas. Economics, social and cultural issues and law and-order situation and terrorism are but a few, however, crucial aspects over which this assessment needs to be conducted.

Wide-ranging Ramifications

The sheer number of Afghans staying as refugees within Pakistan has been a source of concern both for the institutional challenges they create, as well as the intense disaffection and resentment they have created among the local population. In the following paragraphs, the cross-sectional and multifarious ramifications that Afghan refugees are said to have created are assessed—ranging from economic to social, cultural and law-and-order issues.

Stress on Pakistan's Economy

A problem of a vast magnitude, taxing the energies and resources of the people and the Government of Pakistan, is rather unfortunately, the colossal problem of refugees. During the (many) years of its existence, the country has been facing its periodic occurrence... Experience shows that this problem has created socio-economic and even security and political complications—(having) serious implications in the long run.

With the scenes of devastation and violence making millions to flee from Afghanistan at different stages in the last three decades, a majority of people (about 1/4th of the Afghan population) who could make it to Pakistan did so with little or no resources. While some could manage to get their cattle, and other valuables, however, this segment constituted the least of those who were compelled to escape the violent ambushes in their homeland.

Faced with millions of shelter-less, unemployed and even illiterate people, the economics of Pakistan began exhibiting signs of stress early-on. The rehabilitation of many Afghan refugees directly fell on the shoulders of the economy of Pakistan, with the UNHCR helping only as much as 23% of the Afghans who had taken refuge in its shelter-camps. The rest of the Afghan refugees who had proceeded into the urban shanties and the country-side were to be directly managed by the host nation, with only some support from the outside. In fact, In the beginning, for nearly two years (April 1978 to January 1980), the Government and people of Pakistan bore the main brunt of refugee-care practically single-handed. The expenses were met majorly by two sources... federal government and voluntary cash contributions.

Competition over Resources and Employment Opportunities

Popular resentment often reflected itself in issues that affected the immediate economic activities of the locals whose areas of residence and neighbourhood have had a major concentration of the refugees. It has been noted that tensions on account of deforestation and grazing of cattle, sheep and goats on local pastures and land (have) led to conflicts. A contentious but a natural question has also been the demand of the land-owners for compensation of the land on which the refugees have pegged their tents.

At another level, the compulsions working on the Afghan refugees to take up petty jobs and work of manual labour at lower wages impacted the inhabitants of Pakistan in two ways. One, it meant a decline in the overall wage scenario for such jobs in the towns of Pakistan, and secondly, these lower wages resulted in the usurpation of jobs that the inhabitants of Pakistan thought were their legitimate claim first.

Also, local population has complained that the refugees enjoyed facilities which most local people lacked and that government was unwilling to provide them with similar facilities. The refugees who are getting ration and nominal cash assistance have been seeking employment as agricultural labour.

As the population of Afghan refugees within Pakistan grew, the signs of stress on its economics soon gave way to signs of fatigue. Popular and governmental resentment against the many non-citizens— began being reflected in calls for the refugees to head-back to their country of origin. Of significant concern to the economy of Pakistan were the issues of cross-border smuggling and that the income of the rich and flourishing traders of Afghan-origin were till lately outside of its domestic taxation net.

Cross-Border Smuggling

Sharing a boundary that is 2,430 km-long, the Durand Line between Afghanistan and Pakistan is notorious for the ease of access it provides to those who smuggle goods and people between the two countries. With little administrative control that dots this boundary on both its sides, smuggling has been one of the constant sources of tension between the two countries, and primarily for economic and security reasons. In fact,

According to Afghanistan's official statistics, legally imported goods from Pakistan are worth \$2.1 billion annually, while smuggled goods into Afghanistan makes up to \$300 million annually. Meanwhile, according to the tradesman, it is estimated that up to \$550-600 million worth of goods are smuggled into Pakistan from Afghanistan annually.

Varieties of goods make their way into Pakistan from across the border and are sold in its market without ever being taxed. From old electronic machines to new computers; carpets and timber, the market for smuggled goods in Pakistan has resulted in loss of millions of rupees for the host country. In fact, so intense and vast is the movement of these goods that 'depots' for such products are not only found along the border of the two countries, but have also made their way deep into the major towns of Pakistan. One of them, which go by the name of Karkhano Market in Peshawar, has even made it on to the list of marketplaces on Lonely Planet!

Socio-Cultural Issues and Law and Order

Apart from having severe economic consequences, smuggling has also had a major impact on the social fabric of the host country in general and on the state of law and order in particular. There are three major fronts on which the ease of accessibility of markets to smuggled goods has resulted in deleterious impacts on Pakistan: growing addiction to opium, human trafficking and proliferation of small weapons from across the border.

Opium Addiction

As the world's largest producer of illicit opium, Afghanistan has been one of the biggest contributor to the drug market that thrives in Pakistan. It is estimated that almost 40% of the opiates found within Pakistan have their origin in Afghanistan; a concern which is compounded both by the presence of land under poppy production in FATA and the refineries that are strewn in this province. Lack of effective administrative control in this particular region, as also along major parts of its border with Afghanistan has implied that the authorities in Pakistan can do little to curb both the production and proliferation of opium into its market and abroad.

The menace of drug abuse has intensified over the years in Pakistan, creating troubles that have had both immediate familial consequences as well as larger social ramifications. If estimates are taken as effective indicators of the problem at hand, the jump in the number of addicts in Pakistan has been manifold. In 1982 it was reported that out of 1.3 million addicts in Pakistan, roughly about 100,000 were heroin hooked and in 1986 the number of heroin addicts exceeded 450,000. In 1987 the official count of addicts rose to 19, 01,225 which included 6, 57,842 heroin addicts.

The situation as it stands today indicates at the existence of a thriving drug-culture in Pakistan, with about 6.7 million affected by addiction; an estimate that also includes counts and counts of children who have been exposed to illicit drug-abuse. Posing a tome of problems, the issue of smuggling however, is not limited to the illegal movement of both illicit and licit commodities from across the border. The relatively greater porosity of the borders has also implied greater ease in the 'trade' of living, human beings—which in common parlance is known as human trafficking.

Human Trafficking

Finding itself both as a destination and a transit in the global nexus of human trafficking, one of the pressing concerns of Pakistan has emerged in the form of this illegal transfer of people either into its own dominion, or with the intent of further transfer them to other countries around the world. In fact, reflecting on the graveness of the issue the UNODC highlighted how the "human smuggling networks in Pakistan are (becoming) 'more organized and sophisticated,' encouraging not only locals but people from middle eastern nations to use the country as a transit destination for illegal migration."

Assuming the forms of illegal migration, human smuggling and trafficking, the reasons behind this illicit transfer of people are many. Indentured and then sold, slavery, sexual exploitation and forced commissioning into the terrorist fronts across the world are some of the causes and consequences of this illicit trade in human lives. Those at the lower-most strata of the social ladder, such as the Afghan refugees, find themselves particularly at risk from such smuggling cartels.

The economics of this 'trade' too is equally lucrative, giving a major push to its continuance. As estimated by the UNODC, 'the criminal networks operating in Pakistan—and which are some 1000 in number—could generate about \$927 million through human trafficking and migrant smuggling in 2013 alone.'

Smuggling of Weapons

The proliferation of small weapons from across the border has been another source of worry for Pakistan. A development that was sponsored and abetted in the name of driving the Soviets out created an almost open access to caches of ammunitions, which then also made their way into the under-ground markets of Pakistan. This gun-culture—that was promoted with the intent to provide the mujahedeen some teeth came to bite the hands of its feeder, and so much so that it had a major impact on the crime rate within the country. In fact, it cannot be ruled out that the ease in the diffusion of arms and ammunitions around the frontier regions of Pakistan had a major impact on limiting the governmental control of these areas. The intensifying acts of terror and unscrupulous violence—which will be dealt in greater detail below—can also be seen as an outgrowth of this phenomenon.

Ethnic Rivalries and Violent Struggles between Afghan Refugees

Apart from such material-induced issues that are believed to have the scores of Afghan refugees at their heart, the presence of ethnic factionalism within this community of immigrants has also created its unique set of issues both for them and their host country. Afghanistan, which is known as the land of many tribes, has been a witness to many ethnic feuds that have been of economic, cultural and political nature. And, as the same came out in the form of the deadly Civil War with the fall of the last Communist government in 1992, similar rivalries also had the exiled Afghans livid within Pakistan.

Even as a vast proportion of the Afghan refugees within Pakistan belong to the same ethnic group—which is that of Pashtuns—the regular competition for power between them was hardly ever missed. Right from the era of the Soviet invasion to the Civil War and beyond, rivalries within ethnic communities and between them often took violent turns. The ethnic similarities between the host and the hosted also implied that the citizens of Pakistan too got drawn in these feuds, which often ended in a lot of bloodshed.

Terrorism

Affecting the life of Pakistan as a sovereign nation in many ways—from economics to politics to its domestic security—terrorism has become one of the most troubling issues for the country. In both direct and indirect manners, the spread of terror-related activities within Pakistan has been responsible for throwing its internal affairs into significant disarray, hitting its security in an adverse fashion. Losses to life and property and the governmental authority and legitimacy that it cuts into, terrorism within Pakistan is not only internally rooted, but is aggravated by the political instability and insecurity that is found next door.

Pakistan continues to pay a heavy price both in the economic and security terms due to this situation and a substantial portion of precious national resources both men and material, have been diverted to address the emerging security challenges for the last several years. The rise of violent extremism and increase in terrorism in Pakistan due to instability in Afghanistan not only caused serious damage to Pakistan's economy but has also been responsible for wide-spread human suffering due to indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population.

Impacted by extreme volatility that has flared for close to three decades now, the trickle-down effect—of such insecurity emanating from Afghanistan has been felt substantially within the boundaries of the countries around

it—including Pakistan. The human face on the impact of terrorism has been gruesome, while the economic hit borne by Pakistan has been heavy.

(Estimates of the impact) includes a loss of \$24.86 billion in over two years, a government document revealed on Monday. The Economic Survey 2013-14 reveals that Pakistan suffered a mega economic loss of \$28459.89 million from January 2011 to March 2013. The figures jointly compiled by the ministries of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Interior, and incorporated in the survey, suggest that of the \$102.51 billion or Rs 8264.40 million loss, \$23.77 billion loss was reported in 2010-11, \$13.56 billion in 2009-10, \$11.98 billion in 2011-12, \$9.97 billion in 2012-13, Rs 701.26 million in the first three months of 2013, Rs 720.60 billion in 2008-09, and \$27.36 billion from January 2001 to December 2007.

Apart from a volatile neighbour falling heavy on the internal dynamics of a nation, the indirectness of such instability has also transmuted itself into direct complications for Pakistan—with migration of population from Afghanistan being one of them. Away from effective administrative control, the ease of movement of people, ammunitions and other commodities sustaining such activities have been conducive to the emergence and sustenance of anti-social elements along the Durand Line, and much to the detriment of Pakistan's internal security. Through the course of the last three decades, a constant surge in the presence of Afghan refugees within the shores of Pakistan had created its own set of challenges whose economic, social and law-and-order manifestations were discussed above. However, going beyond these concerns, evidence has also pointed to the involvement of the Afghan refugees in the terror-related activities that have affected the whole of Pakistan.

Besides providing sanctuaries to terrorist organizations along the Durand Line, the direct involvement of people from across the border in such activities has given Pakistan credible evidence to highlight the security troubles the refugees can potentially be. The Peshawar School massacre that had claimed the lives of 134 school-going kids had been one such incident where the use of Afghan soil as sanctuaries for terrorist organizations stood evinced.

As one of the deadliest attacks that opened the new-year for Pakistan, the brutal massacre of school-going children in Peshawar left the world numb, particularly for the ferocity and conscious choice of targets that this attack came to reflect, and that as many as five of the suspects behind it were arrested in Afghanistan. This trans-national conspiring and execution of terror plans came to testify to the indirect and direct bearing the volatility next-door could have on the internal security of Pakistan, and how. Also, as its major fall-out, the repatriation of Afghan refugees that happened in the wake of this attack too came to underline the heightening governmental and popular suspicion against the 'visitors who overstayed their visit'.

While the Peshawar School massacre made indirect victims out of the Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, however, the terror-bids in the past did bring out evidence to the effect of proving the direct involvement of some its members in their execution. Two such incidents that were reported to have been carried-out by members of this refugee community include, the attacks on the Manawan Police Training School (Lahore: 2009) and the Dera Ghazi Bombing (2011).

As a part of a triad-terror attack which had the Regional Headquarters of the Federal Investigation Agency and the Elite Police Academy as its target too, the attack on the Manawan Police Training School dealt a serious blow to Pakistan back in 2009. Referred to as the October 2009 Lahore Attacks in entirety, not only did these attacks exact a toll on lives and property, but they also raised questions about the credibility of the Pakistani authorities that are in-charge of protecting its citizens. But, besides creating ripples of concern and dismay over the domestic state-of-affairs, the attack on the Manawan Police Training School brought another issue to sight—and, which was the involvement of Afghan refugees in the execution of these terror bids.

An Afghan national named Hijratullah was found guilty for having attacked the Manawan Police Academy as a part of the larger Lahore Attacks. Although the available reports hinted little on the status of the Afghan national—that is if he was indeed a refugee, however, it went to do little in allaying the fears of the Pakistani authorities and the larger masses who were already viewing the Afghan refugees with intensifying suspicion. Two years down the line, the suicide-attacks on the Dera Ghazi Shrine in 2011 substantiated these apprehensions. One of the suicide bombers, named Umar (Fida Hussain), who could not execute the plan and was caught alive was traced back to a community of Afghan refugees staying in ‘tribal areas of North-West Pakistan’.

Questions on the Repatriation

For whatever strategic or humanitarian reasons that Pakistan decided to open its doors to lakhs of fleeing Afghans, it cannot be denied that despite not being a signatory to the Refugee Convention, Pakistan allowed its soil to become home for many. Generations of Afghan refugees have found shelter across the borders of their own homeland, making Pakistan host to the largest number of refugees around the world in the process.

Yet, as calls to send the ‘visitors’ back to their country are mounting, questions are being asked both within Pakistan and outside of it—if it is indeed the time to send the refugees back to the country to which they belong. The drawdown of the international security forces from Afghanistan has unleashed a series of violent onslaughts as was predicted, with the Spring Offensive in Kabul being constitutive of the many waves of attacks that have once begun to rock this country. As the security situation becomes alarming, the tensions surrounding the political circumstances in Afghanistan are adding to the dismal conditions. The social vitiations remain, with little economic development and a heightened sense of insecurity making the process of re-development of Afghanistan a tough process.

On the other side of the Afghan border, Pakistan's economic, political and social circumstances no longer appear to be amenable to the millions of refugees it had initially welcomed. Pakistan's weariness on account of a strained economy, disenchanting popular constituencies and rising issues of law and order—including terrorism—are making the additional non-citizens appear to be a burden. Demands are being made to send the refugees back to Afghanistan, especially with the war on terror getting wound up.

With the two sides straddling with their own set of interconnected issues, the fate of millions of Afghan refugees still hangs in the balance. This article, which highlighted the internal security struggles of Pakistan, is a reflection of the larger issues that need to be addressed. Through the concerns that are symptomatic of the bigger, problematic picture, it is time to debate on matters that have many destinies in their tow.

About the author

Chayanika Saxena is a President's Scholar from the South Asian University, New Delhi, where she concluded her Master's in International Relations in 2014. Maintaining an academic interest in the processes of governance in Afghanistan, she is researching on the waves of State-building and local governmental aspects as a build-up to her doctoral research.

References

- Aljazeera.com, 'Drugged Up Pakistan' (2014)
<<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/101east/2014/10/drugged-up-pakistan-201410810920503625.html>>
accessed 5 May 2015
- Amstutz J, Afghanistan: Past And Present (DIANE Publishing 1994)
- Baha L, 'Orgafghan Refugees: Socioeconomic Implications' (1986) 25 Islamic Studies
- Bhatti H, 'Human Smuggling Bid Thwarted, 17 Afghan Children Rescued' (Dawn.com, 2015)
<<http://www.dawn.com/news/1168432>> accessed 5 May 2015
- Cheema P, 'Impact of the Afghan War On Pakistan' (1988) 41 Pakistan Horizon
- Centre For Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), 'Pakistan's Concept of Strategic Depth,' (2015)
<<http://www.claws.in/publication-detail.php?PID=60>> accessed 5 May 2015
- Dawn.com, 'Manawan Attack: Afghan Jailed For 10 Years' (2009)
<<http://www.dawn.com/news/879220/manawan-attack-afghan-jailed-for-10-years>> accessed 5 May 2015
- Dorronsor G, Revolution Unending (Columbia University Press in association with the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, Paris 2005)
- Enterprise for Business & Development Management, 'Baseline Study On Illegal Migration, Human Smuggling And Trafficking In Pakistan' (The European Union 2015) <<http://www.befare.org/Baseline%20Survey.pdf>>
accessed 5 May 2015
- European Resettlement Network, 'Afghan Refugees in Iran and Pakistan' (2013)
<<http://www.resettlement.eu/page/afghanrefugeesiranpakistan0>> accessed 24 March 2015
- Gul A, 'UN: Human Trafficking Increasing In Pakistan' (Voice of America, 2015) <<http://UN: Human Trafficking Increasing in Pakistan>> accessed 5 May 2015
- Hafizullah E, 'Resettlement Pattern: The Afghan Refugees In Pakistan' (Cultural Survival, 2010)
<<http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/afghanistan/resettlement-pattern-afghan-refugees-pakistan>> accessed 5 May 2015
- Haider M, 'Pakistan World's Largest Host Of Refugees: UNHCR' (Dawn.com, 2014)
<<http://www.dawn.com/news/1114057/pakistan-worlds-largest-host-of-refugees-unhcr>> accessed 5 May 2015
- Hopkins B, The Making Of Modern Afghanistan (Palgrave Macmillan 2008)
- Kanwal G, 'Pakistan's Internal Security Challenges: Will The Military Cope? (IPCS Issue Brief#230, August 2013)' (Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies-, 2013) <<http://www.ipcs.org/issue-brief/pakistan/pakistans-internal-security-challenges-will-the-military-cope-230.html>> accessed 5 May 2015

Khan Z, 'Three Million Afghans To Be Expelled By December - The Express Tribune' (The Express Tribune, 2012) <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/409809/three-million-afghans-to-be-expelled-by-december/>> accessed 5 May 2015

Lansford T, 9/11 And The Wars In Afghanistan And Iraq: A Chronology And Reference Guide (ABC-CLIO 2011)

Malhuret C, Report From Afghanistan (1st edn, Paul Bogdanor 1983)
<<http://www.paulbogdanor.com/left/afghan/report.pdf>> accessed 5 May 2015

Margesson R, Afghan Refugees: Current Status and Future Prospects (1st edn, Congressional Research Service 2007) <<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33851.pdf>> accessed 5 May 2015

Ministry of Finance, 'Impact of War In Afghanistan And Ensuing Terrorism On Pakistan's Economy' (2015)
<http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_14/Annex_3.pdf> accessed 5 May 2015

Refugees U, '2005 UNHCR Statistical Yearbook Country Data Sheet - Pakistan' (UNHCR, 2015)
<<http://www.unhcr.org/4641beb60.html>> accessed 5 May 2015

Saikal A, Modern Afghanistan (IB Tauris 2004)

Shaheen S, 'Pakistan Lost Rs 8,264 Billion In ~War On Terror' (Daily Times, 2015)
<<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/03-Jun-2014/pakistan-lost-rs-8-264-billion-in-war-on-terror>> accessed 5 May 2015

Tahir M, 'Pakistan Remains Host To World's Largest Refugee Population' (Xinhuanet, 2011)
<http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-06/19/c_13938241.htm> accessed 5 May 2015

The Express Tribune, 'DG Khan Shrine Bombing: Death Toll Reaches 50 - The Express Tribune' (2011)
<<http://tribune.com.pk/story/142210/militants-attack-shrine-in-dg-khan-3-dead/>> accessed 5 May 2015

The Express Tribune, 'Dual Nationality: 278 Afghans Held for Possessing Pak CNICs - The Express Tribune' (2012) <<http://tribune.com.pk/story/378429/dual-nationality-278-afghans-held-for-possessing-pak-cnics/>> accessed 5 May 2015

UNHCR, 'Convention And Protocol Relating to the Status Of Refugees' (2015)
<<http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html>> accessed 5 May 2015

Unodc.org, 'Country Profile' (2015) <<http://www.unodc.org/pakistan/en/country-profile.html>> accessed 5 May 2015

Zeb S, 'Smuggling Impeding Pak-Afghan Trade' (The Nation, 2014) <<http://nation.com.pk/national/06Jul2014/smuggling-impeding-pak-afghan-trade>> accessed 19 April 2015

SPS

The Society for Policy Studies (SPS) is an independent think tank focused on public policy, international relations and human development and their strategic, security, economic and social impact on India and the larger South Asian region. It helps foster dialogue among opinion leaders and provides a non-partisan forum to engage with critical issues, affecting India and South Asia.

As this region grapples with mounting challenges from feeding its poor to providing healthcare and education, protecting the environment, meeting its security challenges and fostering accountability and transparency in governance, the experiments in democratic engagement and policy design in India and other South Asian countries, including, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Bhutan and Afghanistan, as well as the contiguous region, offer valuable lessons.

SPS, with its intellectual resources and convening power, is uniquely positioned to bring together policy makers, diplomats, officials, academics, analysts and journalists from India and the region to facilitate new thinking and provide more informed and objective perspectives to current policy debates and offer alternative approaches, viewpoints and even solutions to some intractable problems.

SPS believes in the power of knowledge, ideas and skills in today's information-driven society and works to disseminate, debate and develop them through association with thought leaders, resource persons and domain experts in various fields.



Society for Policy Studies (SPS)
J-1824, Chittaranjan Park, New Delhi
E: feedback@spsindia.in W: www.spsindia.in Tel.: 011-41071299