

Post 2014 Trajectory of Afghan Migration

A Critical Insight

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Abstract: This paper tries to look into the effectiveness of the Afghan Government policy framework for the returnees primarily based on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme initiative of reintegration and capacity-building for the nation. It explores the pros and cons of the Afghan people returning mainly from Pakistan and Iran from 2014 onward. The Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) is in touch with the Governments of Pakistan and Iran to monitor, assist and negotiate voluntary return of the Afghans from these countries. This is to minimize the cases of deportation and defuse forceful returns of the Afghans staying there. The overarching objective of the Afghan Government is to help promote the repatriation and sustainable reintegration with the host communities in their places of origin. The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), is giving much importance to well-planned and managed settlement as sine qua non for reintegration. In this light, the coming back of the Afghans registers a firm way to uphold the rights of citizenship in constructing the interstices of the nation. Hence, the Afghan Government is attempting a wholesome measure to amalgamate the returnees into the social and economic fabric of the country.

Index Terms- Afghanistan; Returnees; Pakistan; Iran; Migration; Diaspora

Introduction

Migration is a perennial part of Afghan history. But the nature of Afghan migration is a complex phenomenon. Very scant data are available about the number of Afghans migrating and returning to their place of origin. According to the report of the International Committee of Red Cross almost seventy-five percent of the population has experienced movement in some point of their life due to armed conflict, persecution, poverty and relative deprivation as well as environmental degradation and often a combination of these factors (McAuliffe, 2016, p.2). In general, it has been seen that during the Soviet occupation from 1979 until 1989, a large number of Afghans left the country mostly for Iran and Pakistan. Between 1990 and 1995 this reversed and as the strength of Taliban rule grew during 1995 and 2000, this rate again sank (Marchand et al. 2014, p.22). In this context, the return migration back to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran are mainly forced in nature. Some of these returnees left their country decades ago and some of them a few years back. Whatever may be the nature of their shift, they are ought to face a huge challenge in the reintegration process back in their home country. In the 21st century the first flow of returnee's movement started in 2002 when the international community launched a war on terrorism from the Afghan soil. During the initial phases most of the returnees were refugees. This was considered the largest refugee repatriation programme coordinated under the supervision of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees till date¹. When the international community committed billions as aid for Afghanistan, the refugees began to return to their place of birth, igniting the flame of hope within their hearts for a better and brighter future. However, over the years the flames began to douse as there has been no conspicuous economic growth coupled with a fast deteriorating security condition. Given this situation, the Afghan refugees started seeking asylums in the neighbouring countries as their new destinations even when an unprecedented number of Afghan refugees are facing huge

¹ Nearly 3 million Afghans have returned since 2002, while an estimated over 2 million remain in Pakistan. The lack of shelter, employment and basic facilities back home are so grave as to make them nonchalant about returning. Presently, an overwhelming number of refugees in Pakistan are Pashtuns and they live outside the refugee camps.

reintegration challenges in Afghanistan which is further made worse by on-going internal conflict and humanitarian crisis. This makes Afghan refugee situation far more complex in its neighbouring area where various types of movements form the texture of a fluid society: voluntary returns, cross-border migration, internal displacement, forced returns, human trafficking or rural to urban migration (Hall, 2014, p.14). Iran and Pakistan are pressurizing Afghanistan to take back refugees who are living in that country for decades. In the post 2014 period, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan deteriorated and it has a huge impact on the Afghans living in Pakistan. They are facing an insecure and unstable condition in Pakistan. The situation created a huge economic, psychological and social pressure on the Afghan refugees.

The objective of this article is to look into the effectiveness of the Afghan Government policy framework for the returnees from Iran and Pakistan. It is primarily based on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme initiative of reintegration and capacity-building for the nation. These include projects to help the returnees to establish their social and economic foothold. Moreover, the government has to consider the opinions of various stakeholders as regards the fallout of the process of reintegration. Often the leaders of the powerful communities show no interest in treating the returnees as one of their own. In this light it explores the pros and cons of the Afghan people returning mainly from Pakistan and Iran from 2014 onward. More often than not, the returnees have to deal with the internal opposition coming from within their communities. So, one of the main tasks of the local and international organisations are to smoothen up this process of re-mingling.

Recent Studies and the Research Gap

The Afghan returnee issue has been dealt through the various perspectives of politics, society, economy, psychosocial elements, cultural moorings, clan ideology and human rights considerations. These approaches have made the field enriching, diverse and deeply engrossing. Scholars like Barakat and Strand (2000) has specifically linked migration with humanitarian assistance. The authors have focused on the legal complexities which were more often than not manipulated by the countries sheltering the refugees to induce them to go back to their country of origin. Hence, their work is not related to the condition of the Afghan refugees in the neighbouring countries of Iran and Pakistan.

Goodhand and Schmeidl (2002) voice the political, military and the security issues around Afghanistan in the post-Taliban period. It looks into the condition of the state, the people and the society at large. However, their work is in no way connected to the ordeals of the Afghan returnees and the entire paraphernalia of domestic and external affairs negotiating the entire exercise leading to the creation of warrior refugees occurring through initial displacement.

Abbasi-Shazavi et al. (2005) have discussed the condition of the Afghan people in Iran. They started their inquiry following the attack of USSR in Afghanistan within the broader backdrop of the Cold War. They were of the opinion that the then Iranian authorities did not much oppose the settling of the Afghans as they saw in them a ready workforce which could strengthen their own economy. However, soon problems began to crop up as to the nature of their settlements. It is true that many Afghans lived in makeshift slums, areas that were designated as refugee camps, yet many tried to establish their foothold within the Iranian society. Despite their commendable effort they have not dealt with the government policies of both Iran and Afghanistan and/or the element of social acceptance and cultural assimilation in seeing how the forces of alienation and reintegration worked in the lives of the migrants.

Ozerdem and Sofizada (2006) have fundamentally attempted to situate the Afghan returnees within the framework of sustainability. The interplay of the local stakeholders negotiating with the international organizations in maintaining the reintegration process remains outside the parameters of this study with that of the politico-social and cultural terms.

The broader issues of shrinking job market, international diplomacy, ideological changes particularly in the political arena, mental and physical health factors as well as the migratory particularity of the Hazara community along with the change of the Iranian authority toward the Afghan migrants has been dealt in the studies of Adelkhan and Olszewska, Tober and Monsutti (2007). They however, do not look into the various obstacles faced by those Afghans who were compelled to leave that country and return to Afghanistan. Moreover, the air of acceptance within the home country and the nitty-gritties of the political stakeholders, agents and authorities in determining the state of existence of the returnees remain unanswered.

Weinbaum and Harder (2008) attempts to explain the Afghan migration into Pakistan as a way to strengthen the nationalist urge of the Pashtuns. They do not delve into the condition of the returnees back in Afghanistan and restricts their study in bringing out the dichotomous approach of the Pakistan authorities in dealing with the Afghan refugees.

Ashutosh and Mountz as also Ghufuran (2011) attempted to discuss the effectiveness of the International Organization for Migration and the role of the UNHCR in dealing with the cycle of Afghan migration. In doing so, they have not given much importance to the diplomatic dialogues between that of Afghanistan and Iran as well as Pakistan as regards the issue of asylum seeking and repatriation. The challenges faced by these people among their community also remain unanswered.

Houte (2014) tries to interrogate the assumption of the returnees assisting as a resource in the growth and stability of their place of origin. The whole question of reintegration and normalization is left wide open given the fact that neither the country where the refugees go nor back in their land of birth they are able to build up their identity.

Schuster and Majidi (2015) have tried to examine the element of force leading to the phenomenon of re-migration. In their work, the issue of deportation is the chief driver rather than reintegration and cultural assimilation of the returnees into their respective communities.

Borthakur (2017) in her work has concentrated on the attitude of the government of Pakistan toward the Afghan refugees. The author has deftly weaved into her study the elements of cultural and ethnic affinity existing between the two countries as one of the key factors determining the fate of the refugees. But she has made no point on the efforts of the human rights commission, the International organization for Migration and the government of Pakistan is making to guide the Afghans back home.

Heara et al. (2018) try to fathom the drivers that continuously make a section of the people to move out of their own land. They interrogate the push-pull plus drivers which are ways to understand the flows of migration. Their study is a general analysis of the phenomenon rather than an area specific approach. It gives valuable insights into the various components that are at work inducing the dislocation of population from a particular country. Naturally, the framework of mediation becomes more important than any structural ingredient. However, it does not deal with any particular cases like that of the Afghan returnees from either Iran or Pakistan.

Khakpour et al. (2019) has endeavoured to study the food security status of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. They have tried to connect the quality of life the refugees are having under the provisions made by the government of Pakistan. It is a driver to assess the overall ecological balance of the country through the utilization of the resources by the migrant population. Obviously, the policy of the international organizations and the home government toward the returnees falls outside the ambit of their work.

Bloch and Scalettari (2020) in their respective studies theorize the phenomenon of migration situating it within the parameters of political legitimacy in the tussle between the UNHCR and the Afghan Ministry of Refugees over policy matters. While doing so, they failed to discuss the various procedural troubles that the returnees face on their home soil.

The compelling issues pertaining to the Afghan returnees that need to be addressed are the government policies of both Iran and Pakistan vis-à-vis Afghanistan in seeing how the forces of alienation and reintegration worked in the lives of the migrants. In congruence with that the element of social acceptance and cultural assimilation

should also be taken into consideration. This is related to the various obstacles faced by those Afghans who were compelled to leave those countries and return to Afghanistan. The nature of acceptance in their own country should be seen in the light of the experiences that lead to a continuous stream of Afghan populace going back to Iran and Pakistan. This has much to do with observing and determining the particular issue of the government of Afghanistan inducing more of migration and/or facilitating returns as part of governance. In this connection, the diplomatic dialogues between that of Afghanistan and Iran as well as Pakistan as regards the issue of asylum seeking and repatriation gains importance. More often than not dichotomy dwells between the agency and stakeholders with the particularity of Afghan migration. This is further magnified through the manifold manipulations of the domestic and foreign authorities in determining the trajectories of the returnees. The interplay of the local stakeholders negotiating with the international organizations in maintaining the reintegration process remains a vital dimension.

Gravitations in Return from Pakistan and Iran

In 2014, when the international troops decided to leave Afghanistan and the security responsibility was taken over by the Afghan officials, the hunch of a trouble led to another flow of migration that started into Afghanistan. In 2014, more than half of the populace are adolescents having Pakistan as their place of birth reflecting the benign refugee policy (Khan 2017, p.7). Further, it has been noted that almost at the end of 2016, most of the Afghans who were returning to their country from Pakistan entered through the Torkham border crossing at the Nangarhar province (Humanitarian Information Unit, 2017, p.1). This pervasive nature of mobility became a strategy for Afghans in dealing with insecurity in their own country². In this light, the Afghan policy makers too, failed to provide opportunities to the returnees. In an interview conducted by Samuel Hall it is seen that, one of three returnees in Afghanistan from Iran went back immediately. In the last decade voluntary return was rampant but in the current decade that was replaced by government led return. In the latter half of 2016 more than 410000 Afghan refugees returned from Iran whereas at the same time 253000 refugees were forcibly returned from Pakistan. In early 2017, 1,000-1,500 Afghans were returning to Afghanistan from Iran every day with periods of even higher inflows. A total of 395,000 Afghans returned from Iran by the end of that year. The initial months of the following year saw 73,390 Afghans returning from the same destination (Baag-Enna, 2018, p.2). In Pakistan, legal uncertainty over the expiration of *Proof of Registration* (PoR) cards (now extended to June 2019), rumours of mass deportation and integration challenges influenced many Afghans who were living there for decades to return. Moreover, permission to remain is often extended only for months at a time. In Iran, political and economic changes (such as currency devaluation) have hit vulnerable groups hardest, including children and women who are typically more marginalised. Worsening economic conditions and integration challenges often combine to make it difficult for Afghans to stay (Mixed Migration Centre, 2019, p.22). Under such circumstances, in 2017, the United Nations estimated that additional 1 million refugees will come back to their home country in the upcoming months from neighbouring countries. In this context, the International Organization for Migration (2020, pp. 1-2) in its weekly situational report has shown that the overall assisted and undocumented return of Afghans from Pakistan is 488,578. The number and the diversity of Afghan refugees are growing in Afghanistan. While Afghanistan is taking a huge number of refugees back to its land, capacity remains limited as the government is not likely to spend more money in the refugee budget.

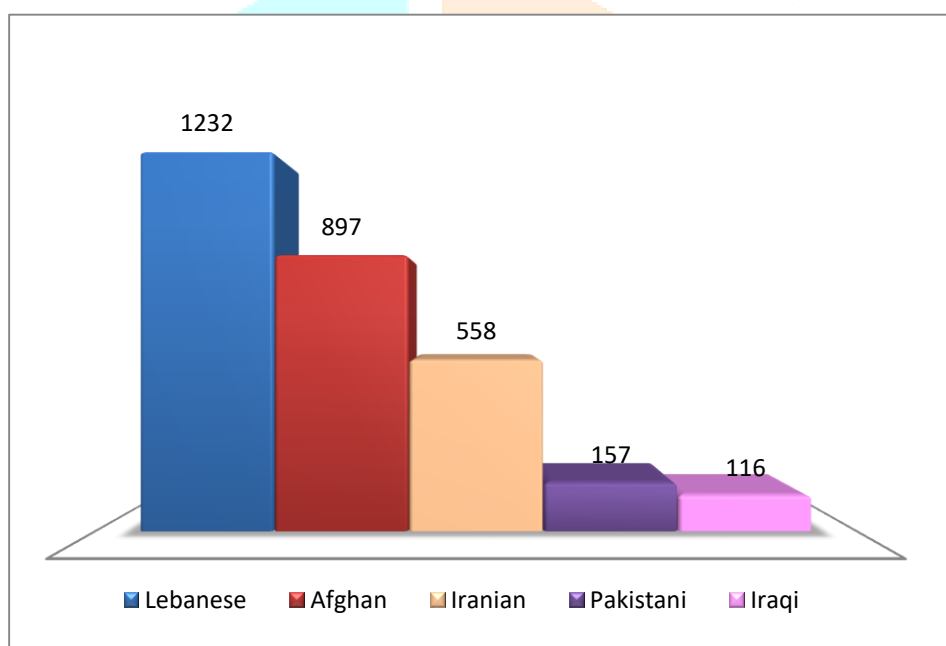
There is largely an anomaly in the containment of the administration with that of the requirements of the refugee populations. The largest number of returnees especially from Iran and Pakistan resulted in a protected displacement in Afghanistan. On the other side of the border both the Iranian and Pakistani government put pressure on the Afghan government to take back returnees back into their land. Nearly 3 million unregistered Afghan refugees living in Pakistan are facing threat of deportation. Till now the largest number of forced returns is occurring from Iran. Since 2008 nearly 400000 Afghan which includes workers, minors, children and women are returning from Iran every year and in 2016 the number rose up to 444000 which was highest in recent years. From Iran refugees are returning back mainly from two border points i.e. Herat and Nimroz. The returnees are checked thoroughly at the borders. If the officials find any vulnerable refugees, they are given

² The 25th Tripartite Commission in Islamabad agreed that, though the full and effective reintegration will be a gradual and challenging endeavour, linked to Afghanistan's absorption capacity yet, concrete measures can be taken to support this process, including by empowering returnees at an individual level by strengthening their self-reliance and coping mechanisms upon return.

minimal assistance and send to return home or any urban care centre where sometimes they receive further assistance sometimes, they don't receive. When the returnees come as a family at the border, they are provided little financial assistance to reach their home in Afghanistan (Majidi, 2017, pp.8-9). If the officials find any unaccompanied children, they are guided by the *International Organization of Migration* (IOM) and later on they are transferred to local guardianship. Post-2014, the returnees coming from Iran and Pakistan are on the rise. Returnees from Iran and Pakistan have different experience in the host countries and need different kind of support and assistance.

In the case of Iran, from 2014, the government suggested that all the companies, government or private should employ the Iranians with some rare exceptions. Some authorities within the government think that the international sanctions are one of the reasons behind the deteriorating situations of Afghan refugees. In 2015, The U.S. Treasury Department slapped new sanctions on Iran related to its ballistic-missile program. In this scenario the Afghan refugee crisis became all the more complex as the former was deeply involved in the Afghan state-building programme. The Afghan refugees also for long are coerced into fighting the war in Syria. This has been vindicated by the 2016 report of Human Rights Watch. The same year the Iranian government declared citizenship to families of foreign 'martyrs', fighting for the Islamic Republic, but was never adhered to diligently. The *Comprehensive Regularization Plan* (CRP) is also no substitute for a system that would allow newly arriving Afghans to lodge refugee claims.

Figure:1



Afghan Refugee Casualty in the Syrian War (They fought alongside Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps and the Fatemiyoun)

Source: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/shia-afghan-fighters-in-syria>

Figure 1 shows that the Afghan refugees are the second-largest group who died fighting alongside the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps and the Fatemiyoun in the battlefields of Syria. The government of Iran promised to look after their families, but in the long run they did very little which is of no consequence for the near and dear ones of the deceased.

In the case of Pakistan, the government began to take a strict policy toward the Afghan refugees following the June 2014 attack on the Karachi international airport by *Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP), which it carried out along with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Al-Qaeda. Things worsened when the very next year an attack was made in an Army Public School at Peshawar again by TTP. This made the government to launch *Zarb-e-Azab* (Hit the TTP) and deport many Afghans from their soil. From then on, the refugees who were having no residential proof in Pakistan are facing threats, extortion and harassments from the government

officials. However, to put their face up while addressing the Asia Pacific Security Conference, *Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee* (CJCS) General Zubair Hayat stated that, Pakistan has been always supportive of regional peace and security. Such dichotomy has been criticized by the Human Rights Watch stating that the UN agency hand-in-glove in the voluntary repatriation programme of the Pak authorities. Further, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) started a scheme for the Afghan refugees doubling their cash support giving US\$ 400 to each Afghan returnee. This scheme was also criticized on the ground that the UN agency tried to persuade the Afghans to deport from Pakistan. Again, cordial relations between India and Afghanistan have made the life of the Afghan refugees difficult in Pakistan. Under international pressure, the government is taking some initiatives like the Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy as a way for reintegration in 2014 and The Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) scheme linked with the 2030 agenda of sustainable development and its main motto in leaving no one behind.

The diversity among the returnees need long term and variegated social, psychological and financial help. However, the Afghan government could not come up a long-term planning for the returnees so far. In the last decade most of the returnees from Iran and Pakistan were labour migrants consist mainly male members of the family. But in the recent years the returnees are women, children, and second or even third generation people. The combination of forced and voluntary returns led to this kind of complex situation. Voluntary rerun under the age of 18 rose up during 2015-2016. The Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme organised by the IOM estimated that in 2015 252 minors returned Afghanistan and in 2016 the number was 2101. The government needs to develop a new support framework to handle the new returnee situation. Afghans those are coming from Iran and Pakistan have so many minors and youths in their group. Most of them migrated to neighbouring countries and Europe for jobs and livelihood options. Most of the youth are between 15 to 17 years old and others are as tender as below ten. These minors and youths are easy targets of international smugglers. These minors are protected by the International Conventions so that they cannot be sending back to the risky places and provide them educations and psychological services. Those families who have no legal documents in staying in the host countries were also deported. An interview conducted by the Samuel Hall suggests that ten to thirty percent of deportees with whom he had a dialogue in Herat and Nimroz provinces respectively a year or two back has been family persons. Families from the neighbouring countries are being deported to Afghanistan. These families need financial, psychological, and social support in order to integrate themselves into the Afghan society. Nevertheless, some families are bold enough to tackle whatever adverse situation on their own while some has been receiving help from the global organization and transferred to safe places receiving morsels and other basic needs. Most of the refugees were single male adult. Separated from family and resources they most of the time remain in trauma. Most of them needed immediate assistance after returning back to their home country. The highest number of forced migrations took place in 2016-2017. The National Policy Framework for Returnees represents a silver lining carrying resolutions to take care of the condition of vulnerable people from Iran and Pakistan.

Table 1: Estimated Number of Returnees since January 2015

Year	Total Returnees	From Iran	From Pakistan
2015	6,80,967	510,395	170,572
2016	1,058,475	438,541	619,934
2017	562,173	407,986*	**154,187
Total	2,301,615	1,356,922	944,693

*For Iran, the number of undocumented³ returnees in 2017 was recorded up to 25 November. The number of documented returnees [only a fraction of the total at 320] was recorded up to 3 June. **Recorded up to 25 November 2017 [The table is based on various sources: International Organization for Migration (IOM); UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA)]; United States Institute of Peace [USIP]; Afghanistan Analysts Network [AAN], OXFAM Report, 2018).

Table 1 shows that the number of people deported or returning out of their own will has been quite high and in all probability, it will be on the rise. The Oxfam report states that Iran in the beginning has been planning more or less to deport six lakh Afghans by the end of 2017. Pakistan divulged a plan in November 2015 to deport

³ Undocumented returnees are understood here as those who were not registered as refugees in Iran, which means they do not have the official refugee status and the protection it entails under international law as stated in the OXFAM Report.

less than two million Afghans before the close of 2017 (Oxfam report 2018, p.10). Indeed, the constitution of Afghanistan speaks about the rights of the people returning, but not much is seen in the inking of the National Policy Framework. The dossier iterates *sustainable integration*⁴ and express eagerness to assist those who are coming back in making them of value and trying to weave them inextricably into the body-politic of the Afghans (Policy Framework for Returnees and IDPs, 2017). The Terms of Reference of the *Displacement and Returnees Executive Committee* (DiREC) gives more specifications. It has the authority to take of the returnees both at the country and local stages so as to create an ambiance of amicability with the stock population. This would enhance the chances of reintegration in a productive manner (Majidi, 2017, p.12). This approach has given the international actors the confidence to interact with the executive and presidential offices to formulate ways and means to guide, fuse and engage the returns into the socio-economic fabric of the nation.

Surmising Reintegration Fundamentals

The dynamicity and the increase in the flow of returnees have been compelling the Afghan government to come up with strategies to make them acceptable to the community at large. This mean devising step not only to reintegrate them in providing the basic necessities of life, but to make them feel the ease of staying in their place of origin (Blake et al. 2006, p.23). In most cases, it is done through either helping them with fund and/or train them in some vocations. Wishes, objectives and focus of the returnees become diverse depending upon their experiences while staying away from the land of birth. Findings points out the terrible pain through which the deportees go through when coerce to return. This leads to psychological trauma for many making them more isolate, condemnable and peripheral (Schuster et al 2015, p.7). The narration of some of the returnees proves the fragility of the government approach to mix them into the larger body of the Afghans. For example, one male returnee aged 29 from Nangarhar said, “Additionally, some people mistreat returnees because they think that they have done something bad by leaving the country.” (Seefar, 2019, p.42).

In many cases, there is actually no home to return to for many an Afghan especially for the generations born in host lands. As the tragedy is writ large in remarks which dissociate Afghans from their soil, it reflects the inadequacy of the government strategies to guide the returnees to their own country. It could not drive out the sense of un-belonging from the hearts of the resident population. This differentiation has in some ways given the returnees a chance to go back to their homeland, but never their *home*⁵. Given the absence of a clear-cut strategy unaccompanied minors and adolescents born in Iran or elsewhere face the danger of psycho-physical trauma if they happen to come to Afghanistan. Under such conditions, staying becomes volatile and untenable. However, one must also realise that leaving and/or repatriation is also dependent on financial means. Hence, amidst the pressure of deportation one could see the involvement of the Afghan refugees is preferred by the Iranians in industrial and agrarian precincts (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018, p.2). Many Afghan refugees who are there for more than one generation naturally cultivate cordial business bonhomie with the Iranian proprietors. Porous frontiers have been maintaining connection with the Afghans. This has encouraged many returnees to indulge in circular migration which in turn, help them to overcome financial liabilities and find work for sustenance. Back at home these returnees are often socially segregated family-wise as also community-wise which they tend to accept as a price of deportation. However, this also increases economic compulsion making them to go back to migratory zones. Such practices have given rise to the phenomenon of re-migration (Schuster et al 2013, p.13). One could not also ignore the difficult condition of the migrants who neither has the pleasure to live with family nor has the peace of friends and/or partners. Talks with many such individuals reveal the psycho-social and economic compulsions which made them to revert back to deported zones. There they have the dividend of emotional quotient. They oscillate between this push and pull factors in the absence of a coherent policy among the nations. Many deportees feel that the host and the country of origin are exploiting their palpable condition. Under such circumstances, migrants are increasingly quarantined from the civic rights toward education, health, job and residence (Majidi 2017, p.15). In most cases, males are deported by the host country in the expectation that soon his spouse and offspring will

⁴ It aims toward the development of a participatory process to enhance the scope of the returnees in the place of origin in the domain of employment and other basic necessities to lead a life.

⁵ Here home means the country of one's birth or origin.

re-join sooner than later. However, such strategies have also backfired in face of security and economic concerns. Many have chosen the perilous path of re-migration through whatever ways possible.

Opportunities for youth in Afghanistan are telescopic, given the soaring number of youthful returnees. Every year, more than four lakhs of such are inducted into the labour sector, mostly in and around the cities though almost all are un-skilled (Hall, 2016, p.7). The lack of options for jobs and chances of monetary gains makes them to migrate. Moreover, given the overall atmosphere of instability they choose to leave for survival rather than stay and perish in combat. The position of the returnees in Afghanistan remains economically unviable with no particular security in the job market (Hall, 2016, p.8). Hence, they could contribute very little to their near and dear ones. Sometimes absence of and at other the misplacement of skills not only affected the working ability of the mature males but has made many young returnees to fall into the loop of depression. Surveys made in 2016 have shown that many such have experienced trauma (Hall, 2016, p.18). In target-class conversations many registered *post-traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD). In addition, pressure due to socio-economic problems, conflict situation in Afghanistan and the lack of ability to go after studies have affected mental health of many young returnees (Majidi, 2016, p.14). Still the Afghan government remains lukewarm in matters of education and health for the young and the adolescents (Hall, 2016, p.16). Though psychological care is the need of the hour in light of the separation from home and hearth yet, the government shows no such interest (Hall, 2016, p.18). A survey of 2016 has brought out the precarious mental-health condition of the young deportees over that of the migrants who have returned out of their own (Hall, 2016, p.24). An overwhelming number of youths have expressed the desire to have some kind of socio-mental support from the state to stave-off their existential crisis. The state needs to come up with welfare measures to assuage the pains of the returnees in every possible way. Providing the basic necessities of life and assuring a secure future would have restricted the waves of re-migration making the country human resource-wise potential and happening.

Indentations in Reintegration

In recent times, the Afghan strategies toward creating a cordial relation between the resident population and the returnees suffers from a lack of understanding as to how best the latter could be socio-economically secured (such as the suggestions from experts as also using state-of-the art facilities). Moreover, the inability to manage the scope and pace of voluntary returns make it difficult to plan for reintegration. This snowballs into encouraging internal displacement and with the international pressure to accept returnees remaining persistent forces a country of origin to receive its population without having the capacity to absorb them into society as full members (Petrin, 2002, p.7). In this light, more of a focused programme is the need of the hour for Afghanistan in discarding a comprehensive plan. In every case, the first of month of stay for the returnees influences their decision to stay or leave. Hence, government policies should be effective enough to instil confidence in them within that time in mustering up all the expertise of the think-tanks, entrepreneurs, persons having an interest, professionals and the civic bodies. In many instances, the returnees are more eager to be socially accepted and/or have some kind of stability in job. Such diverse expectations require a variegated approach on the part of the state to assess, accumulate and dispense the resources which would cement the future of the returnees. In doing so, it should be specific about the urban and rural requirements and provide the returnees the means for survival. Yet pre-return counselling and help is, at best, restricted to planning and monetary matters and at a more serious level, absent. Moreover, the type of life the returnees are having back at their place of birth should also be kept under the lens. The government should be fair enough to satisfy the needs of every type and groups of people regardless of creed and gender. The IOM is of the opinion that the government is indifferent toward the need of the youth and female returnees' health, education and social reintegration-wise (Hall, 2016, p.21).

Capacity and ability of maintaining the needs of the returnees in Afghanistan has manifold means of improvement. First of all, a comprehensive plan of assistance with compassion should be adopted toward the returnees. They should not only get the necessities of livelihood, but the mental peace and happiness in finding them one among their many brethren. This would give them a life apart from all technicalities and harmonise their psycho-social existence. In such an atmosphere, reintegration becomes seamless and engenders sustainability. Secondly, one should sketch-up a minimum starting point of the socio-economic and security

conditions area-wise which would inform the returnees the feasibility of stay in those localities. It would help both the government and non-government bodies to frame strategies for the returnees. The returnees in turn, could also assess the chances of stay based on such information and be prepared likewise. For instance, the *Multi-Dimensional Integration Index* (MDI) developed for the *Reintegration Working Group* (RWG), now the *Durable Solutions Working Group* (DSWG) in Afghanistan, run jointly by UNHCR and MoRR reveal that the process of integration should allow stakeholders to monitor interventions in each area to further improve area-based approaches along economic, social, safety and security dimensions (Hall, 2017, p.8). It is an accepted stricture to understand and map the possibilities of inclusion of the returnees on the data collected in compliance with global standards (e.g., those set by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, IASC). It tries to combine the condition in local and host groups on the basis of information accrued about politico-social and economic situation. It is one of the better ways to keep up the link between the government, global groups and other such organisations working for the settlement of returnees. This enhances the possibility of reintegrating the returnees in an amicable manner.

Conclusion

Given the propensity of the returnees in Afghanistan, proper assessment of return and sustainable reintegration becomes significant for policy and program planning. Mismanagement would hamper sustainability and crumble people-oriented approach. This in turn, could give rise to disharmony and insecurity both at individual and collective levels. A multiplicity of factors is responsible in making return and reintegration interventions in Afghanistan particularly challenging. Firstly, the country is experiencing an unmatched wave of forceful return and deportations from Pakistan and Iran. It includes unguarded groups, like families and children. This is going on in juxtaposition to an unrivalled level of civilian casualties. One must also keep in mind that the attacks in the country in 2017 are the highest since 2009. Naturally, the returnees have a whole lot of difficulties to cope with in their land of origin. Secondly, a single view-point of return is could not address the ground reality of multiple challenges in Afghanistan. Hence, policies framed on it can jeopardise the existence of the population in more than one way. Historically speaking, the Afghans have relied more on moving about in difficult times of war and strife. In recent times, this trend continues in the wake of insurgency, attack and regressive economy. This has propelled the cycle of migration, return and re-migration making implementation of reintegration and sustainability strategies difficult. Lastly, one should always try to involve the local communities while trying to assimilate the returnees into the social fabric. This should go hand in hand with a proper recording of the local situation so as to avoid occurrences of any untoward incident on the returnees. Cooperation and networking is crucial in establishing the rights of the returnees which could lead to a healthy process of harmonisation. Representatives of returnees, government officials and non-government bodies should be in active communication to reduce the incidence of re-migration which is of nobody's gain.

One must always think about the needs of the returnees and devise programmes likewise. This would ensure proper use of the resources and stave-off bickering. For instance, the IOM, have people working in groups world-wide to reintegrate returnees and encourage voluntary returns. Afghanistan, at present, has the UNHCR and the Durable Solutions Working Group chaired by officials from the government and Samuel Hall trying to build up the Multi-Dimensional Integration Index (MDI)⁶ with the objective of making it a viable solution to put at rest the troubles faced by the returnees. It is an inaugural effort to frame a measuring mean to reintegrate returning migrants and refugees, including those who are born in host countries or whose places of living has been obliterated by conflict. It would aim to make a connection between securitisation and prolong resistance in gauging the chances of safe staying following return and inform the state and international bodies likewise. It tries to cater to the needs and requirements of the specific groups among the returnees like men, women, children and youth and endorse transparency as neither the government of Iran nor Pakistan share full information on return plans with Afghan authorities. Moreover, one should go for framing common standards

⁶ It was developed as an inter-agency approach with the Government, the United Nations and NGOs commonly agreeing on a standardised tool to measure integration levels of returnees in Afghanistan. The rationale of the index depends on the assumption that the returnees are indistinguishably integrated with the local host community. The indicators are basically taken from socio-economic and security dimensions. For detail see: <https://www.oecd.org/migration/forum-migration-statistics/4.Stefanie-Barratt.pdf>

and support packages which tend to ease bilateral negotiations. In the process, it helps in expending on definite means and ensures the de-escalation of re-migration.

Government authorities and international organisations working for the migrants should address the pros and cons to those who want to return or are deported. This would drive out much of their anxiety and help in taking a concrete decision. However, as of now counselling and guidance is an expensive mechanism hampering pre-departure grooming, but it could go long way in making reintegration a success. Apart from the persons to plan before taking a step should be followed by bodies working for the betterment of the migrant population worldwide. It leads to realistic framing of policies based on the information derived from the host countries and relaying those to individuals and/or groups who are voluntarily or involuntarily going back to their country.

In the present scenario, conflict, violence and insurgency has made many of the returnees to adopt dangerous and illegal means to revert back to Pakistan and/or Iran. Lack of initiative on the part of the Afghan government and inadequate support from the international organisations is putting them under trying situations. Very little has been accomplished in the legal sector to guide such people safely to their destination or through meetings among the affected and host countries to make proper arrangements for the returnees. Efforts are on to develop a legal framework to acknowledge the condition of the migrants not only in the host countries but also in country of origin. It would enable them to enjoy all the fruits of civic life. In the broader spectrum, repatriation and emigration would not dilute the identity of the mobile population making it a normal way of life and livelihood. The National Labour Migration Strategy, launched by the Afghan government in December 2016, aims to facilitate regular and well-governed migration⁷ could be holistic if only it has tinge of ethical approach in devising migration measures. Only then such initiatives could be considered as the vanguards of wellness for those travelling in search of protection and stability as also supporting the long-term and comprehensive reintegration of those who choose to return to Afghanistan. Forceful returns could never create a positive impact on the migrants and fail to gain the expected results of social bonhomie. It can only accelerate the phenomenon of re-migration. Thus, transparency, political dialogue between the neighbouring countries and impartiality in framing policies could be plausible criteria to monitor and control migration, re-migration, repatriation and overall benefit of the returnees.

The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan needs to be improved in the near future. Hence, the returnees issue is going to be continued as an issue in their bilateral relationship. Somehow, the issues of the returnees are being ignored in the country as the country has many other priorities to address such as security. This has become more important given the fact that the Taliban are gaining more strength within the country. This, in turn, has flickered political divisiveness with differences of opinion cropping between the President and the local stakeholders. The government of Afghanistan is also not strong enough to control all the stakeholders within the country against discrimination toward the returnees. This, in turn, is leading to re-migration and dislocation at the borders of Pakistan and Iran. The corrupt practices of the concerned authorities within the country have spoiled much of the efforts of the international actors through development cooperation in dealing with the refugee issue.

⁷ There are a number of determinants assessing those who migrate. Among those integrating possibilities, availability of work, state infrastructure, familial ambience and ties within the community are vital indicators. International Organization for Migration has the Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF) which monitors how the mass is compelled to move out from their country of origin and tries to give them legal protection. For detail see: <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/migration-policies-and-governance>

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