

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

MASTER THESIS

**BETWEEN THE EMBRACE AND THE BOOT:
ANALYSING PAKISTAN'S DEPORTATION OF
AFGHANS IN LIGHT OF GEOPOLITICS AND
ETHNICITY**

SAHAR SADIQ

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
ASSIST. PROF. IDLIR LIKA**

ISTANBUL, 2024

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by

SAHAR SADIQ

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Political Science & International Relations**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
ASSIST. PROF. IDLIR LIKA**

ISTANBUL, 2024

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that, in our opinion, it is fully adequate, on the day of the thesis defense in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Master of Arts in Political Science and International Relations.

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ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ÖZ

KUCAKLAMA VE ÇIZME ARASINDA: PAKİSTAN'IN AFGANLILARI SINIR DIŐI EDİLMESİNİN JEOPOLİTİK VE ETNİKLİK İŐİŐİNDE ANALİZİ

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Temmuz 2024, 85 Sayfa

Bu çalışma, Pakistan'ın Afgan mültecilerini sınır dışı etme sürecini, jeopolitik ve etnik dinamiklerin karmaşık ilişkisi çerçevesinde derinlemesine ele almaktadır. 1974-2023 yılları arasında Pakistan'ın Afgan mültecilerine yönelik politikasındaki deęişimlerin nedenlerini incelemektedir. 1980'ler ve 1990'larda Afgan mültecilerine karşı sıcak bir yaklaşım sergileyen Pakistan, sonraki yıllarda giderek daha katı bir tutum benimsemiş, bu tutum 2016'daki kitlesel sınır dışı etmelerle doruk noktasına ulaşmış ve 2023'ten itibaren devam eden sınır dışı etme süreçleriyle daha da belirgin hale gelmiştir. Bu çalışma, literatürdeki mülteci sınır dışı etmeye yönelik yaygın açıklamalara—örneğin mülteci rantçı devlet teorisi ve politik kurumsal yaklaşımlar—eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşarak, Pakistan'ın Afgan mültecilerine yönelik politikasındaki deęişimin arkasındaki temel etkenin jeopolitik ve etnik dinamiklerin kesişimi olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Araştırmada, Pakistan ile Afganistan arasındaki artan jeopolitik gerilimler ve Pakistan içindeki etnik çatışmaların tırmanması—özellikle Pencaplı elitlerin, Peştun ağırlıklı mülteci nüfusundan ve onların taleplerini destekleyen politikacılardan algıladıkları tehdidin artması—mülteci sınır dışı etmelerini daha olası kıldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Çeşitli kaynaklardan, özellikle hükümet arşivleri, medya raporları ve akademik literatürden yararlanarak yapılan bu çalışma, zorunlu göçün karmaşık ve çok boyutlu doğasını aydınlatmakta ve jeopolitik zorunluluklar ile etnik gerilimlerin mülteci politikalarını nasıl şekillendirdiğini göstermektedir. Bu araştırmanın bulguları, hem politika geliştirme süreçlerine hem de akademik

tartışmalara jeopolitik ve etnik faktörlerin dahil edilmesinin önemini vurgulamakta, mülteci çalışmalarıyla ilgilenen akademisyenler, politika yapıcılar ve uygulayıcılara değerli katkılar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afganistan, Etnik Köken, Jeopolitik, Mülteciler; Pakistan, Sınır Dışı Edilme.



ABSTRACT

BETWEEN THE EMBRACE AND THE BOOT: ANALYSING PAKISTAN'S DEPORTATION OF AFGHANS IN LIGHT OF GEOPOLITICS AND ETHNICITY

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This thesis conducts an in-depth examination of Pakistan's deportation of Afghan refugees, contextualized within the intricate dynamics of geopolitics and ethnicity. It investigates the causes behind the variation in Pakistan's policy toward Afghan refugees in the 1974-2023 period. Pakistan has moved from an open arms policy towards the Afghan refugees in the 1980s and 1990s towards an increasingly unaccommodating stance in the next two decades, reaching a peak with the mass deportations in 2016 and the ongoing deportation since 2023. Challenging influential extant explanations in the literature on the causes of refugee deportation, such as refugee rentier state theory and accounts focusing on political institutions, I argue that the reason behind the variation in Pakistan's policy toward Afghan refugees lies in the nexus between geopolitics and ethnicity. Specifically, I find that periods of increased geopolitical tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan and periods of increased ethnic tensions within Pakistan reflected in the increased threat perceptions of the Punjabi-dominated elites from the Pashtun-majority refugees and Pakistani politicians accommodating refugee demands, make refugee deportations more likely. Drawing from a diverse array of sources, including governmental archives, media reports, and scholarly literature, this study illuminates the nuanced and intersectional nature of forced migration, underscoring the confluence of geopolitical exigencies and ethnic tensions. The reflections stemming from this scholarly endeavor emphasize the

imperative of integrating geopolitical and ethnic considerations into both policy frameworks and academic discourses, offering invaluable contributions to scholars, policymakers, and practitioners engaged in the realm of refugee studies.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Deportation, Ethnicity, Geopolitics Pakistan, Refugees.



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Afghan women, the women of my village, Sherekera, who cannot access proper education, and women and girls around the world deprived of their fundamental right to education due to one excuse given by their society or another. Just like the world cannot do justice to them, this thesis does not do justice to the plight of women's education, but it is a mere drop in the ocean toward progress.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to acknowledge my mother for always supporting me despite our disagreements, being one of the few female role models I was exposed to during my childhood, and cementing my belief that I was as smart—if not smarter—as anyone else around me.

I want to thank my supervisor, Mr. Idir Lika, for his strict but constructive approach in helping me hold my work to higher standards and produce an academic paper that I would be proud of. I would also like to thank my jury members, Ms. Sümeyye Uyar and Mr. Murat Aslan, for their crucial comments and encouragement, which enabled me to progress one step further in my academic journey.

Lastly, I would like to pat myself on the back for finishing this feat. I want to etch this here as a reminder to myself for trudging through all the excruciating times to achieve this degree. You did this, Sahar!

Sahar Sadiq
ISTANBUL, 2024

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Afghan Citizen Card
APS	Army Public School
ANP	Awami National Party
BLA	Balochistan Liberation Army
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COAS	Chief of Army Staff
DG ISPR	Director-General Inter-Services Public Relations
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCR	Frontier Crimes Regulations
ICED	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
IEA	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
IFRP	Illegal Foreigner's Repatriation Plan
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISIS-K	Islamic State – Khorasan Province
ISPR	Inter-Services Public Relations
JUI-F	Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl
LoC	Line of Control
NACTA	National Counter Terrorism Authority Pakistan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PDM	Pakistan Democratic Movement
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf
PTM	Pashtun Tahafuz Movement
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League- Nawaz
POR	Proof of Registration
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SAFRON	Ministry of States and Frontier Regions
TTP	Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republics



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“I spent my entire life here thinking this was my country. As I left my home behind and sold my livestock, I cried. I had just bought a cow and raised it for four months. I had to sell it...When I tore apart the walls of my house and removed the pillars, the wind started blowing, and I sobbed.” – Rahmat Zaman.

“We came empty-handed and made a life for ourselves here, and we will be returning empty-handed.” –Zaman Khan (Hafeez, 2023)

As hundreds of thousands of Afghans pack their livelihood into cloth bags and heave them onto trucks, like Rahmat Zaman, most wonder about a homeland they’ve never known. Despite being born in Pakistan, they are considered aliens and only promoted to a slightly better status if they are documented or undocumented. This illustrates how the nation-state is at play in building an ‘other’ and subjecting it to expulsion despite the ‘other’ being conceived on its own body. On November 1, 2023, the Pakistani government announced that a little-known, British-drafted law on refugee entitlements would be enacted within three months. This surprising move—the first time this law had been implemented in Pakistan’s 80-year history—would upend the lives of Pakistan’s 3.5 million Afghan-origin residents and brought to the fore a series of questions about citizenship, rights, sovereignty, nation, and belonging. The interim Prime Minister referred to its necessity as “illegal aliens play a significant role in fueling unrest in Pakistan.” Still, it was widely understood also to be meant to assuage domestic anxieties in light of a historic economic crisis.

As elaborated below, the issue of refugees has been hitherto understood to be theorized in terms of rentier state, securitization or “terrorism studies,” political institutions, and confessional theory. As the researcher will demonstrate through an analysis of UNHCR figures and US humanitarian aid figures trends, these theories miss something vital about the Afghan refugee crisis in Pakistan. While the researcher draws favorably on the rentier state theory, it fails to explain the timing of deportation adequately. It is argued that inadequate attention to this aspect creates a false sense of predictability and produces a fixed linear outcome between aid and deportation of

refugees by a host country. Before diving into the specificities of this research's argument, the stage will be set regarding the historical, geographical, and diplomatic specificities of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. The conceptual and terminological apparatus necessary to the research's argument will be delved into, and an outline of the thesis will be concluded.

1.1. Background and Context



Figure 1.1. Map of Pakistan and Afghanistan

Source: The New Humanitarian

1.1.1. Soviet Invasion, Taliban Rise to Power, and US Withdrawal

The State of Pakistan has been home to Afghan nationals since 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and displaced 6 million people (Ruiz, 2002). Pakistan, then a solid ally of the USA under the military General Zia-ul-Haq, chose to welcome its Afghan neighbors with open arms. The subsequent departure of Soviet troops from Afghanistan emboldened the Pakistan-trained Mujahideen to take over large swathes of Afghanistan and establish themselves in the capital. Infighting between the Jamiat-e-Islami and Hezb-i-Islami allowed a different group, the Taliban, to surpass them. In

1994, they emerged under Mullah Omar, and by 1996, the Taliban had seized Kabul. Their decision to shelter Osama bin Laden in the wake of the 9/11 attack in the US helped put a target on their back, and they were effectively ousted from power by the end of 2001 by the US-led invasion of Afghanistan.

However, they still waged a 20-year-long war against the US and the US-backed Afghan government, which culminated in the Doha Accords of 2020 between the Taliban and the US. This peace agreement put forth a mechanism for the withdrawal of all NATO troops from Afghanistan in return for a permanent ceasefire and intra-Afghan dialogue, preventing the use of Afghan soil for what the US called “hostile activities against the US and its allies” (U.S. Department of State, 2020). While the withdrawal of NATO troops commenced, intra-Afghan talks were unsuccessful. Without the backing of US forces, the Afghan government quickly collapsed amid the Taliban offensive in 2021. After the conclusion of US-Taliban talks, on August 15, 2021, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was established by the Taliban. These developments were met with jubilation by the Pakistani public, who were vehemently anti-American after the impunity of the U.S.’s drone strikes in their country and the protection given to CIA contractor Raymond Davis after he killed two Pakistani civilians (Mazzetti, 2013).

1.1.2. Pakistan’s Interests

Although Pakistan had officially been allied with the US, it was often accused by the US of playing a ‘double game’ and supporting the jihadist groups for its fears of being surrounded by India (Khan, 2018). With Pakistan being carved out of the Indian subcontinent based on religion, the fear always remained that Hindu-dominant India—despite its claims to secularism—would try to swallow the Pakistani territory back into its pre-partition form (Maqbool & Alam, 2016). This support from the Pakistani establishment towards the Taliban is understandable from a security perspective because any Indian influence in Afghanistan would amount to an existential threat to Pakistan, especially as Afghan rulers—such as Daud Khan, Sebghatullah Mujaddedi, the Taliban in 1996, Karzai, and Ghani—had always taken issue with the colonial-era Durand Line border that bifurcated Pashtun lands between either country (Samim, 2024). This explains why Pakistan pursued a policy of ‘strategic depth’ concerning

Afghanistan to protect itself from a two-front war with India (Parkes, 2019, 18). The then-Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, said in an interview that Afghans had “broken the shackles of slavery” (Rana, 2021). Similarly, the then-director General of the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI, Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, traveled to Afghanistan a month after the Taliban takeover and was seen jovially expressing that “everything would be okay now” (Siddiqui & Rana, 2021).

1.1.3. Birth of TTP

What Pakistan did not seem to prepare itself for adequately was for the Taliban to turn against its benefactor. The violent ideology that was disseminated in madrassas along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border gave birth to other militant groups like the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan who fought alongside the Afghan Taliban and gave an oath to the Taliban leader but professed their goal to be an Islamic Emirate in Pakistan instead of Afghanistan (Joscelyn, 2021). The Pakistani government and establishment were seen as infidels who were abetting the US in fighting against the Taliban, therefore making them targets as well. The 2007 Lal Masjid skirmish between the militants and the Pakistani state was the final nail in the coffin for Pakistan. Soon afterward, 40 militant leaders joined forces in South Waziristan and formed the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, comprising 40,000 fighters at the time (Hussain, 2017). Despite Pakistan’s claims that it was the US presence in Afghanistan and the US-backed Afghan government’s inclination towards India, the restoration of the Afghan Taliban’s power has been concurrent with escalated TTP activity in Pakistan (PICSS, 2023).

1.1.4. Rise in Terror

There has been a steady rise in terrorist attacks on Pakistani soil since the Afghan Taliban came to power in Kabul in 2021. In the literature, the increase in attacks is generally attributed to the Taliban’s re-entry to power and the collapse of a ceasefire between the Pakistani army and the TTP in June 2022 (Asma et al., 2024). The TTP claimed that this was because the Pakistani military was targeting their fighters in the country and had violated their agreement (Hussain, 2022). The uptick in violence comes close to the surge of violence in 2014 before the Pakistan army conducted its Operation Zarb-e-Azab and started flushing out militants from their strongholds in

Waziristan (PICSS, 2023). These attacks are usually attributed to Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Islamic State-Khorasan (ISIS-K), and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). Pakistan believed that the Afghan Taliban were providing a haven to the TTP, even though the Doha Agreement (2020) dictated that Afghanistan must not harbor terrorists who pose a threat to the US or its allies—Pakistan being one of them (Nasar, 2023).

1.1.5. Blaming the Refugees for Terror Attacks

While the interim government of Pakistan failed to justify how exactly the Afghan refugee population was responsible for the escalating attacks, it is plausible that Pakistan has been using its Afghan refugee population as a lever to coerce the Afghan Taliban to reign in TTP. In response, the Afghan Taliban refused the Pakistani claim that the TTP operated from their territory and asked Pakistan to share evidence to back up its claims (Gul, 2023). In an interview with Ariana News, Zabihullah Mujahid—the chief spokesman of the Taliban government—was of the view that Pakistan’s security issues were a homegrown problem originating from 20 years of misplaced policies and military operations in Waziristan. Therefore, he opined that it is an internal issue of Pakistan that it must resolve on its own without blaming the Afghan Taliban. When questioned whether Pakistan had shared such evidence with Afghanistan, Mujahid deflected the question by saying that the security forces would know and reiterated the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’s (IEA) official policy (Ariana News, 2023). The IEA, Mujahid asserted, welcomed the repatriation of refugees from both Pakistan and Afghanistan and was coordinating their return. Their only issue is with the refugees being repatriated all at once, making their resettlement a challenge. Therefore, they tried to get the respective countries to repatriate the refugees gradually and respectfully (Ariana News, 2023).

1.1.6. Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

According to the latest UNHCR findings, Pakistan hosts approximately 3.2 million Afghan refugees, out of which 1.9 million are legally considered to be refugees¹

¹ PoR (Proof of Residence) and ACC (Afghan Citizen Card) are considered refugees while undocumented Afghans are considered to be ‘illegal’.

(UNHCR, 2024). In October 2023, Pakistan's interim government endorsed the Illegal Foreigner's Repatriation Plan (IFRP) to send back all foreigners staying in the country without legal documents. This was done under the Foreigner's Act of 1946² which was used for the first time for this purpose (Radio Pakistan, 2023). This was targeted at Afghans, who make up the bulk of the refugee population in the country. UNHCR documented 500,000 Afghans returning to Afghanistan since that plan was implemented (UNHCR, 2024, 7). While Pakistan was already deporting Afghan refugees, the crackdown in October 2023 led to the number of returnees being twelve times higher than those in 2022 (UNHCR, 2024). This was a unilateral decision- the Afghan authorities were not consulted (Al Jazeera, 2024). This appears to be a continuation of Pakistan's policy to punish whoever administers Kabul whenever there is a terrorist attack presumably involving Afghan nationals on Pakistani soil. The last such major deportation drive took place in 2016 following the 2014 APS Massacre in Peshawar by the TTP. That led to the deportation of around 600,000 people in total. It comprised 370,000 registered refugees and 230,000 undocumented Afghans (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

1.1.7. Oct 2023-June 2024 Deportation Order

Similarly, the crackdown in 2023 occurred in the aftermath of a string of deadly terrorist attacks in September. The interior ministry blamed it on the Afghan nationals residing in the country for "funding, facilitating, and smuggling terrorists" (Associated Press of Pakistan, 2023). The Punjab caretaker Information Minister Amir Mir stated that in 14 out of 24 terror attacks, Afghan nationals had been identified (Ahmed, 2023). Recently, it has come to light that the deportation order of October 2023 was just Phase I of the government's plans and that Phase II will be rolled out after Eid-al-Fitr on April 10. This time, the directive was issued to Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders, unlike the previous drive aimed at 'illegal' migrants (Latifi & Sherzai, 2024). The authorities are actively mapping the ACC holders and expect the process to be completed by 30th April (Khan & Rana, 2024). The next phase will target Proof of Registration Card (PoR) holders, thus sending virtually all Afghan refugees back to Afghanistan (Amnesty International, 2024). The latest extension of the PoR cards by

² A colonial era law stemming from the Foreigner's Act of 1864 and customised by the nations of Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh upon their formation (Batra, 2020).

the Federal Government was 31st March 2024, according to the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON, 2024).

1.2. Objectives and Significance

The significance of this study is that it broadens the current literature on refugees and deportation. It also deepens the current understanding of refugee rentier states. It challenges the refugee rentier state theory from the state-centric argument of securitization. In international migration diplomacy, the focus is mainly on the Global North and especially on host states that are not transitory passages (Tsourapas, 2017). Recently, work has been done to understand the politics of international migration from the perspective of the Global South. The case studies that feature the most in this area are Türkiye, Jordan, and Egypt, as seen in the work of Tsourapas, Ayman Zohry, and Ian. J. Seccombe. By including Pakistan in this framework, I attempt to provide nuance to the aspect of deportation specifically and understand the explanatory power and shortcomings of refugee-rentier state theory.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine, in the frameworks of geopolitics and ethnicity, the expulsion of Afghan refugees by Pakistan. The main goal is to comprehend how Pakistan's deportation policies towards Afghan refugees are shaped by the intersection of geopolitical factors—such as its relationship with Afghanistan and international dynamics—with ethnic considerations. It aims to shed light on the intricate motivations behind the deportation process and its effects on refugee rights, security, and stability in the region by examining these links. Lastly, this research seeks to advance academic scholarship and enhance policy discussions and debates on state sovereignty and refugee protection by deepening our knowledge of the complex interrelationships among geopolitics, ethnicity, and forced migration.

1.3. Research Problem and Question

The deportation of Afghan refugees by Pakistan and its underlying causes, particularly in the context of geopolitics and ethnicity, constitute the research subject this thesis attempts to examine. The central research puzzle of my thesis is: What explains the

variation in the policy of the Pakistani government toward Afghan refugees (1979-2024)?

Pakistan has gone from an open-arms policy to increased hostility toward Afghan refugees, which begs the question, what are the reasons for the change in Pakistan's Afghan refugee policy? By exploring this issue, the study aims to elucidate the complex interplay that shapes the deportation process between governmental goals, ethnic tensions, regional power dynamics, and humanitarian concerns. This study tries to clarify the complex interaction of forces driving the deportation of Afghan refugees and its wider ramifications for regional geopolitics and refugee protection by thoroughly analyzing historical events, governmental decisions, and socio-political circumstances.

There are several explanations for the forced expulsion of Afghans from Pakistan (Naseem, 2023). It is not a new phenomenon but has gotten increasingly hostile and aggressive. Explanations range from cultural, political, economic, and institutional to foreign policy. The security argument is often cited as states claiming that refugees threaten national security when expelling them. However, the reality is far more nuanced than that, especially in Pakistan, where one has an ailing economy dependent on loans and aid from allies coupled with a regime run by the military establishment. Pakistan has gone from an open-arms policy to increased hostility toward Afghan refugees, which begs the question, what are the reasons for the change in Pakistan's Afghan refugee policy? From the offset, it appears that Pakistan is oscillating from hospitality to hostility; however, Derrida's understanding of hospitality impresses upon us the full implications of hospitality, i.e., the presence of hostility (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000). Drawing upon this, I seek to answer two questions: 1) is Pakistan's decision to deport Afghans in October 2023 a continuation of an old policy? and 2) what is the underlying cause for the deportation/s?

1.4. Methodological Limitations

This study has a few limitations that need to be considered. First, even though efforts were made to collect data from various sources, such as government records, news articles, and scholarly works, access to sensitive material could have been improved,

which limited the analysis's depth. Furthermore, by concentrating just on Pakistan's deportation practices for Afghan refugees, it may be possible to ignore the viewpoints and experiences of other parties, including the refugees themselves, different nations, and international organizations. Furthermore, the study's scope is limited by geographical and temporal constraints, primarily emphasizing the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship and the time frame from 1979 to 2024. Because of this, it's possible that the results can't be applied to different situations or eras. Notwithstanding these constraints, the study acknowledges the intricacies and subtleties inherent in the subject matter and attempts to offer a thorough understanding of the deportation process within the specified restrictions.

1.5. Layout

This thesis is laid out chronologically, starting from 1979 to April 2024. Chapter 2 comprises the literature review of this thesis. It first defines standard terms used in this paper to avoid confusion, and then the history of Afghan refugees is broken down into three sections. This is then followed by the legal framework, or the lack thereof, in the deportation orders that exist. The Pakistani government's deportation orders are then explained in detail by dividing the timeline into five sections. This historical configuration is then followed by the major theoretical frameworks in the field of refugee studies, such as securitization, refugee rentier state theory, and political institutions. The limitations of all the alternative theories are noted at the end.

Chapter 3 is on the methodology of this paper which is qualitative in nature and employs process-tracing in a single-case research design. The objectives, significance, and limitations are discussed. Process-tracing is defined, and its hypotheses proposed. The paper then delves into a detailed-chronological analysis of the geopolitical events and ethnic tensions that have influenced deportation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Chapter 4 discusses the findings in light of the alternative theories and proposes further questions for research while restating the main arguments of the paper.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definitions

Some definitions have to be clarified before delving into the literature on Afghan refugee deportations in Pakistan. The 1951 Refugee Convention is the main legal document on refugees, and it states that a refugee is someone who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (UN, 1951). As environmental, political, social, developmental, and economic challenges have increased, so have refugees. This leads to confusion between ‘migrants’ and ‘refugees,’ though it is generally accepted that migrants choose to travel voluntarily, whereas refugees are believed to have been driven by a compelling external force. However, this is a contested topic because researchers agree that there can always be a compelling driver behind someone’s decision to move to another country (Dragonas, 2021, 2). I use the UN definition of refugees in my thesis, which states that “refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection” (UN, n.d.). I choose this definition because the ‘other circumstances’ part embraces people who’ve sought refuge from circumstances other than war because that is not the only reason for fleeing one’s country.

Two other terms are worthy of being differentiated in between. These are ‘deportation’ and ‘repatriation’. The International Organization of Migration, in its *Glossary on Migration*, defines ‘deportation’ as “forced displacement of civilians which is prohibited in times of occupation and non-international armed conflict except when

required for their security or imperative military reasons” while ‘repatriation’ is defined as “the personal right of a prisoner of war, civil detainee, refugee, or of a civilian to return to his or her country of nationality under specific conditions laid down in various international instruments” (IOM, 2019) Within repatriation, there exists ‘voluntary repatriation’ as well which is when refugees make an informed and free decision to return to their country of origin. Organizations like the UNHCR can assist them in making this decision or leave spontaneously without any assistance (IOM, 2019). Therefore, deportation is state-initiated, and repatriation has some aspect of refugee agency. ‘Forced expulsion’ and ‘deportation’ are interchangeable terms (Refugee Council of Australia, 2023).

Lastly, the term ‘undocumented’ will be used throughout this paper as well. Undocumented means those who stay in a country they are not nationals of without the appropriate documentation (IOM, 2019). In Pakistan’s case, this means those who do not hold PoR or ACC cards or those Afghans in the country who do not possess a valid Pakistani visa.

2.2. Afghan Refugee History

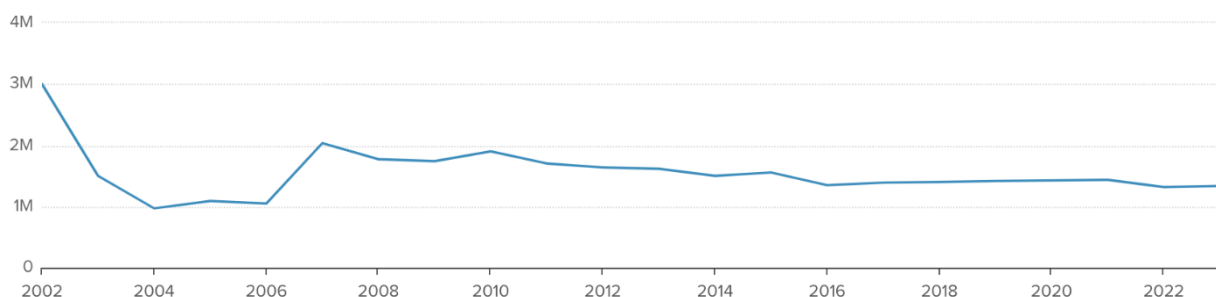


Figure 2.1. Afghan Refugee Population in Pakistan Since 2002

Source: UNHCR

➤ 1970-1990

Afghans started seeking refuge in Pakistan during the 70s when the political situation in their country became extremely precarious due to infighting between the two People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) factions, their antagonization of

the deeply conservative and religious rural population, and the subsequent invasion by the USSR. During that time, Pakistan was ruled by a military regime under General Zia ul Haq, who allied the country with the U.S. over the USSR and, thus, made his country a conduit for weapons and aid that were supposed to help the Afghan rebels—the *mujahideen*³—fight *jihad* against the Soviets. Due to this alignment of interests, Pakistan welcomed the outpour of Afghan refugees with open arms. As the situation worsened between the Socialist Afghan party PDPA’s factions—Khalq and Parcham—around 80,000 refugees reached Pakistan, according to the government (Male, 2023, 149). The Pakistani government supported these refugees with a daily stipend of four rupees despite not being in the best financial straits (Anwar, 1989, 148). By 1980, 3.3 million had fled to Iran and Pakistan (The New Humanitarian, 2012). The refugees were mostly people from the tribal areas who followed their tribal chiefs across the border. This is primarily because the Communist regime in Kabul was aggravating them by making them accept their equitable land reforms and also due to more liberal social changes⁴ that the rural masses were unaccustomed to (Anwar, 1989). The Pakistani government was actively involved in supporting the Afghans trickling into their territory to take sides in the conflict. This was demonstrated by the law, which required Afghans to register with some Afghan political party to get food rations (Lessing, 1987).

➤ 1990-2000

As the Soviets withdrew by 1989, the number of Afghan refugees had reached 3.2 million, with 500,000 considered to be ‘unregistered’ in 1990. In 1980, UNHCR set up its first office in Pakistan, which is why such a term was even employed (The New Humanitarian, 2012). With the victory of the Mujahideen over the Soviets, around 1.4 million Afghans returned to their homeland in 1992 (Hiegemann, 2018). However, infighting between the Mujahideen groups Hezb-i-Islami and Jamiat-e-Islami led to 74,000 more Afghans having to flee to Pakistan once again. The capture of Jalalabad by the Taliban forced 50,000 more Afghans to flee to Pakistan. By 1999, the Taliban

³ A term in Islam used for those who struggle in the way of God. Used by the Afghan militias to denote that they were fighting against the non-Muslim Communists (Brittanica, n.d.).

⁴ Such as Abolition of bride price (*mahr*), raising the marriage age for girls to 16, and making education compulsory for both men and women (Ghosh, 2003, 6)

had complete control over Afghanistan, and with their extreme form of governance, refugee flows to Iran and Pakistan reached 700,000. The Hazaras were particularly persecuted during this period, leading to at least 30,000 fleeing the country (The New Humanitarian, 2012). This period also saw the departure of a lot of Afghanistan's upper and middle-class people amidst the tyrannical Taliban rule. In 2000, a severe drought occurred, exacerbating the humanitarian situation in the country and forcing another 172,000 Afghans to become refugees. With the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the number of Afghans having fled to Pakistan reached a whopping 5 million. After the defeat of the Taliban, 2.7 million Afghans were repatriated, 1.5 million by the UNHCR, and 1.1 million were repatriated without any assistance. The UNHCR records this as the largest refugee return in the world since 1972.

➤ **2000-2021**

Voluntary returns decreased due to a volatile security situation and a lack of livelihood in the country (The New Humanitarian, 2012). A census was conducted in 2002 by the UNHCR and the Pakistani government, and it showed that more than 3 million Afghans resided in Pakistan. Their ethnic makeup was 81% Pashtun, with nominal Turkmen, Tajik, Hazara, and other ethnic groups forming the rest of the population (Noor, 2006). With the refugee population more or less stabilizing post-2007, the phenomenon of 'recycled refugees' also appeared, wherein refugees who had already been repatriated to Afghanistan returned to Pakistan dismayed by the lack of economic prospects, security, and education (Ghufran, 2008). Moreover, the Afghan refugee community had a high growth rate—about 3% according to a 2005 census—which meant that despite large numbers of refugees leaving, the number of refugees remaining in Pakistan remained somewhat unchanged (Kronenfeld, 2008, 48). After the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, 700,000 fled to Pakistan to seek refuge or to find resettlement in third countries. Two hundred thousand out of these were resettled, leaving the rest stuck in Pakistan (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

2.3. Legal Framework and Critiques

When registering Afghan migrants, Pakistan does not formally use the word "refugee." Historically, Afghan migrants have been granted informal asylum and economic access on presumptive humanitarian grounds rather than via a formalized domestic mechanism (Naseem, 2023). Despite hosting the world's fifth-largest number of refugees⁵, Pakistan has not signed any conventions on refugee rights (Zubair et al., 2019, 30). However, even non-signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention are bound by customary law not to expel refugees if their life or freedom is under threat in their country of origin (Chaudhury, 2022). In Pakistan, only partition-related refugees are considered as refugees. Furthermore, it prioritizes Kashmiri refugees⁶ among all the refugees it houses. Thus, Kashmiri refugees have a '*muhajir*'⁷ card, which grants them most of the privileges a basic Pakistani citizen has, and they can also acquire citizenship, unlike other refugees (Sultan, 2022, 9).

Although Pakistan is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, it is a party to the United Nations Convention Against Torture and is under the customary international law principle of nonrefoulement whereby it cannot forcefully return people to countries where there is a clear risk of torture or other forms of persecution (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Civil society members have filed petitions against deportation in the Supreme Court, but a verdict has yet to be given (Bhatti & Omer, 2023). It is important to underline the role of UNHCR since it is the main interlocutor with refugees in Pakistan. In the absence of a national legal framework for refugees in Pakistan, UNHCR conducts refugee status determination (RSD) and offers essential health, education, and non-food item relief, legal help, and repatriation services (Rashid, 2019). UNHCR has officially issued a non-return advisory to states hosting Afghans. However, it has set certain conditions for repatriation. These are as follows: the process being voluntary and the refugees being well-informed, assurance of protection of refugees upon return to home country,

⁵ With Iran hosting the highest number of refugees as of June 2023 (UNHCR, 2024)

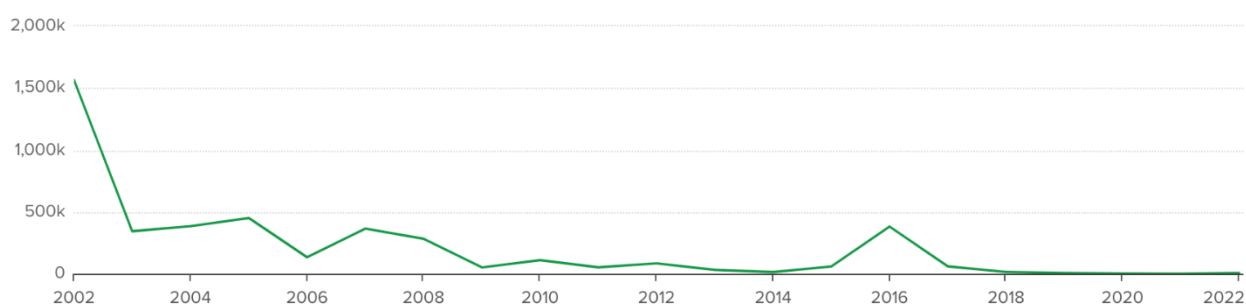
⁶ Kashmiris from the Indian-administered Jammu & Kashmir region who crossed the LoC (Line of Control) during 1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999 (Ali et al., 2019)

⁷ Literally means 'immigrant'. Used in Pakistan to refer to Muslims who migrated from India to Pakistan during the Partition (Brittanica, n.d.).

dignity in return and reintegration, no exploitation in the process, and the principle of family unity and the interests of children being upheld (UNHCR Pakistan, n.d.).

While this research does not dwell analytically on gender and child rights in this essay to prevent diffusion of my focus, it mentions in brief that Pakistan has ratified several international agreements, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICED) since 2004 as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1996), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1996). Regarding women’s rights, the Taliban regime has enacted strict rules on women and girls, such as denying them the right to education past grade 6, denying them the right to work, denying them the right to dress as they wish, closing down beauty parlors, and denying women the right to free movement without a male guardian (Amnesty International, 2023). Pakistan’s deportation of Afghan women then amounts to a violation of its ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as it is essentially sealing the fate of Afghan women to a life of discrimination.

2.4. Policies and Deportation Practices



**Figure 2.2. Voluntary Repatriation of Afghan Refugees
From Pakistan Since 2002**

Source: UNHCR

Although the UNHCR has no official authority in Pakistan, it has been permitted to negotiate on behalf of Afghan refugees. UNHCR-registered Afghan refugees are typically granted indefinite temporary residency cards by the Ministry of SAFRON,

which oversees Afghan refugees in Pakistan. According to the government's official policy, every Afghan refugee covered by the UNHCR mission can take up impermanent residence in Pakistan (Zubair et al., 2019, 29). In coordination with UNHCR, the Pakistani government has issued Proof of Registration cards for all Afghans over five since 2007 (UNHCR & SAFRON/ CCAR, 2012). These cards are the only legal documents that allow refugees to live in Pakistan, and they are subject to expiry unless renewed every few months or years—depending on the whim of the Pakistani government. PoR card holders can open bank accounts, access education and health facilities, obtain a SIM card, rent a home, and have better mobility than non-cardholders (UNHCR, n.d.). They can also receive donor aid through UNHCR, especially in designated refugee camps.

In addition, the Pakistani government carried out a one-time registration of undocumented Afghans and issued them the Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) in 2017. ACC holders numbered around 690,000 at the time and were mapped to help the government eventually repatriate them (Saeed & Shabbir, 2024). Holders of ACC and PoR cards have already completed the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process. They are under the authority of the Chief Commission of Afghan Refugees (CCAR) or UNHCR in Pakistan. However, the UNHCR, CCAR, and Pakistani governments are required to renew the status of each of these groups every few years. In reality, this is often postponed (Mielke et al., 2021). This creates a perpetual risk of statelessness for Afghans whose PoR or ACC cards have expired but have not been provided a date of renewal or extension (Naseem, 2023).

➤ 1979-1990

Attitudes towards Afghan refugees have varied across different periods. From 1979-1989, Pakistan welcomed them with open arms and, in fact, also provided them with monetary aid that equaled \$145 annually, something that was almost the same as Afghanistan's income per capita at the time (Male, 2023, 149). However, some politicians were against the refugee policy, as seen in the case of a former governor of the PPP who called on the government to send refugees back and was endorsed by the daughter of the PPP chairman, Benazir Bhutto as well (Male, 2023, 162).

➤ 1990-2001

From 1990-2001, although Pakistan still took in new refugees, it appeared to be dragging its feet and was signaling that it wanted them to go home. For this, Pakistan cited its struggling economy, reduced financial support for shouldering the weight of the refugees, increased social tensions due to the refugees' presence, the departure of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and its consideration of new refugees as being motivated by the drought in Afghanistan, not war. The then-director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Muhammad Haroon Shaukat, stated that 'donor fatigue' had set in, leading to a dearth of funds, Pakistan was slumped in \$6 billion worth of debt, and on top of that, Pakistan faced sanctions over its nuclear program (Ruiz, 2001). In 1995, UNHCR and WFP ended food aid to refugee camps, leaving refugees to move to urban areas for work, which the Pakistani government claimed was a cause for the unemployment of locals and an increase in rents (Ruiz, 2001).

➤ 2001-2007

Pakistan also stopped approving new sites for refugee camps by 2001 (Ruiz, 2001). It started screening the refugees with the UNHCR in 2001 to determine which refugee camp residents qualified as 'refugees' and which ones were economic migrants or drought victims. The goal of this was to only keep people the military-led Pakistani government considered refugees in the camps, and that too temporarily (Ruiz, 2001). The U.S. Committee for Refugees discovered that as Pakistan's economy declined and international financial support for the refugees decreased in the late 1990s, the public, media, and authorities began to hold refugees more and more responsible for the rising social ills of Peshawar and other cities, such as prostitution, drug abuse, crime, and the easy access to firearms. There was also an upsurge in police harassment faced by urban refugees (UNHCR, 2003). According to Refugee Reports, Pakistan has repeatedly stepped up its campaign of refoulement of Afghan refugees by harassing, detaining, and extorting them since the late 2000s. Pakistan complements this by closing its border and denying entry to Afghans without a valid visa and passport. The refugees that voluntarily repatriate also do so out of fear of not receiving monetary assistance if they are expelled nevertheless (Ruiz, 2001). By 2007, Pakistan refused to register

further Afghan refugees (Human Rights Watch, 2017, 30). Figure 4 below illustrates the dip from 2002 to 2005 in assisted and spontaneous Afghan refugee returns.

Table 2.1. Estimated Afghan Refugee Returns From 2001-2005

Source: (UNHCR, Turton and Marsden)

Estimated Refugee Returns, 2001–2005						
Year	Pakistan		Iran		Other	Total
	assisted	spontaneous	assisted	spontaneous		
2001	0	?	0	?	?	300,000
2002	1,532,664	194,127	259,662	155,248	9,679	2,153,382
2003	341,018	45,125	131,751	119,604	1,099	640,600
2004	383,030	41,103	375,682	76,231	401	878,451
2005	401,791	10,675	63,063	187,996	1,050	666,580
Total	2,658,503	291,030	830,158	539,079	12,229	4,639,013

Sources: Most data are from UNHCR Weekly Statistics Reports. Figures from 2001 are rough estimates in Turton and Marsden (2002: 20), and actually cover the period October 2001 to March 2002, when UNHCR began assisted repatriations.

➤ **2007-2017**

Even though many Afghans did not register for PoR cards by the Pakistani government’s 2007 deadline, they were relatively tolerated and not deported until 2015 (Human Rights Watch, 2017, 31). This can be seen from the number of people deported in 2012, which were about 7500, 300 in 2013, and 10,000 in 2014 (IOM, 2017). In 2016, the Pakistani government, under the center-right PML-N party, oversaw the deportation of around 600,000 Afghan refugees (Human Rights Watch, 2017). The pretext for these deportations was the 2014 APS attack in Peshawar, in which TTP fighters stormed the school and killed 150 children (Khan & Nasir, 2014). The attackers included 1 Chechen, 3 Arabs, and 2 Afghans (Roberts, 2017). The TTP claimed responsibility for the attack and stated that the attack was in retaliation to the Zarb-e-Azab military operation the Pakistani army had undertaken in June 2014 following their attack on Jinnah International Airport in Karachi on 8th June 2014 (Samaa TV, 2023). Human Rights Watch documented that 365,000 registered Afghan refugees and 200,000 undocumented Afghans were forced to leave the country due to

deportation threats and harassment by the Pakistani authorities (Human Rights Watch, 2017). As seen in Figure 5 below, the number of Afghan refugees leaving Pakistan increased exponentially after 2014.

Afghans Returned from Pakistan, 2009 – 2016

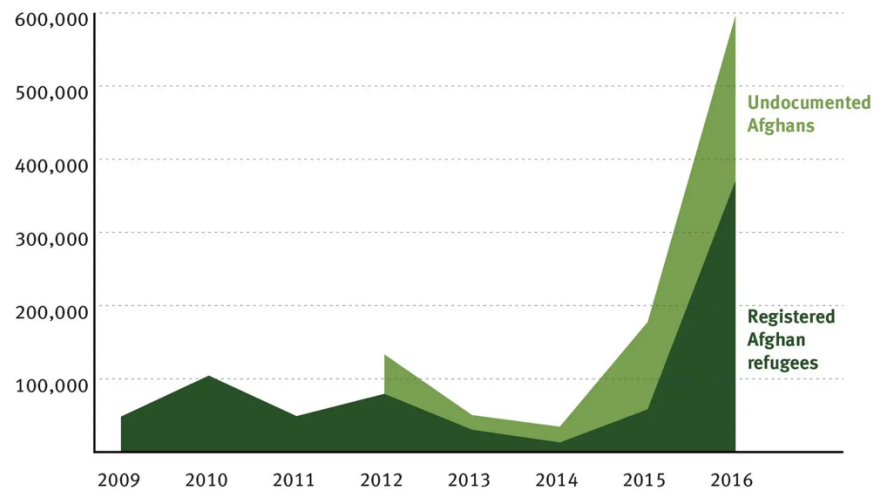


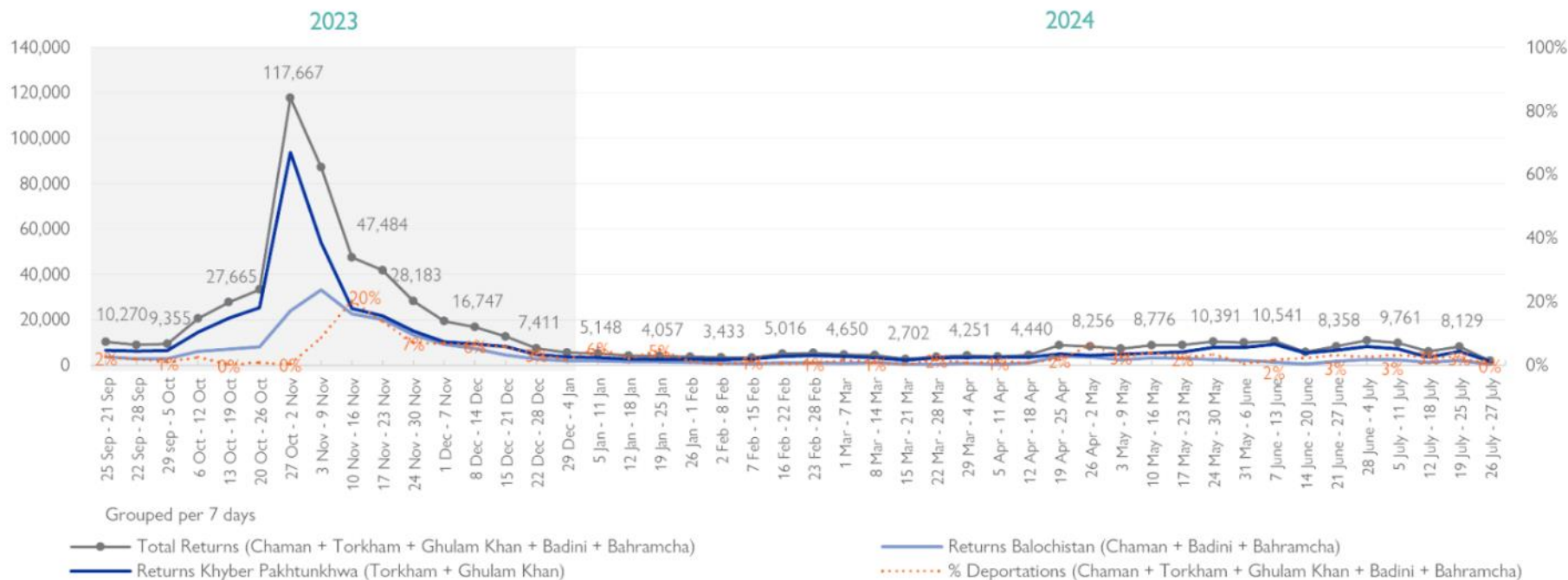
Figure 2.3. Afghans Returned From Pakistan From 2009-2016

Source: HRW

➤ **Oct 2023- June 2024**

The October 2023 deportation drive has resulted in the return of 546,800 refugees till April 2024, with the numbers still increasing (UNHCR, 2024). The deportation orders came amidst an increase in terrorist attacks in 2023 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces by 59 and 39 percent, respectively (Naseem, 2023). The culprit of these attacks is the terrorist organization TTP, which is using Afghanistan as a launching pad for its activities, according to Pakistan (Khan, 2023). Since the caretaker government cited that in 14 out of 24 attacks, Afghan nationals were involved, the whole Afghan community is being scapegoated and facing repercussions for it. Figure 6 illustrates the increase in the deportation of Afghan refugees from September 15, 2023, until July 27, 2024.

TOTAL RETURNS AND % DEPORTATIONS | 15 SEPTEMBER 2023 – 27 JULY 2024



*The number refers to facilitated PoR returns through VRCs who crossed the border during the reporting period.

** This figure refers to PoR holders based on interviews conducted with returnees in Afghanistan.

Figure 2.4. Returns and Deportations From September 2023- July 2024

Source: UNHCR

2.5. Monetary Aid Received

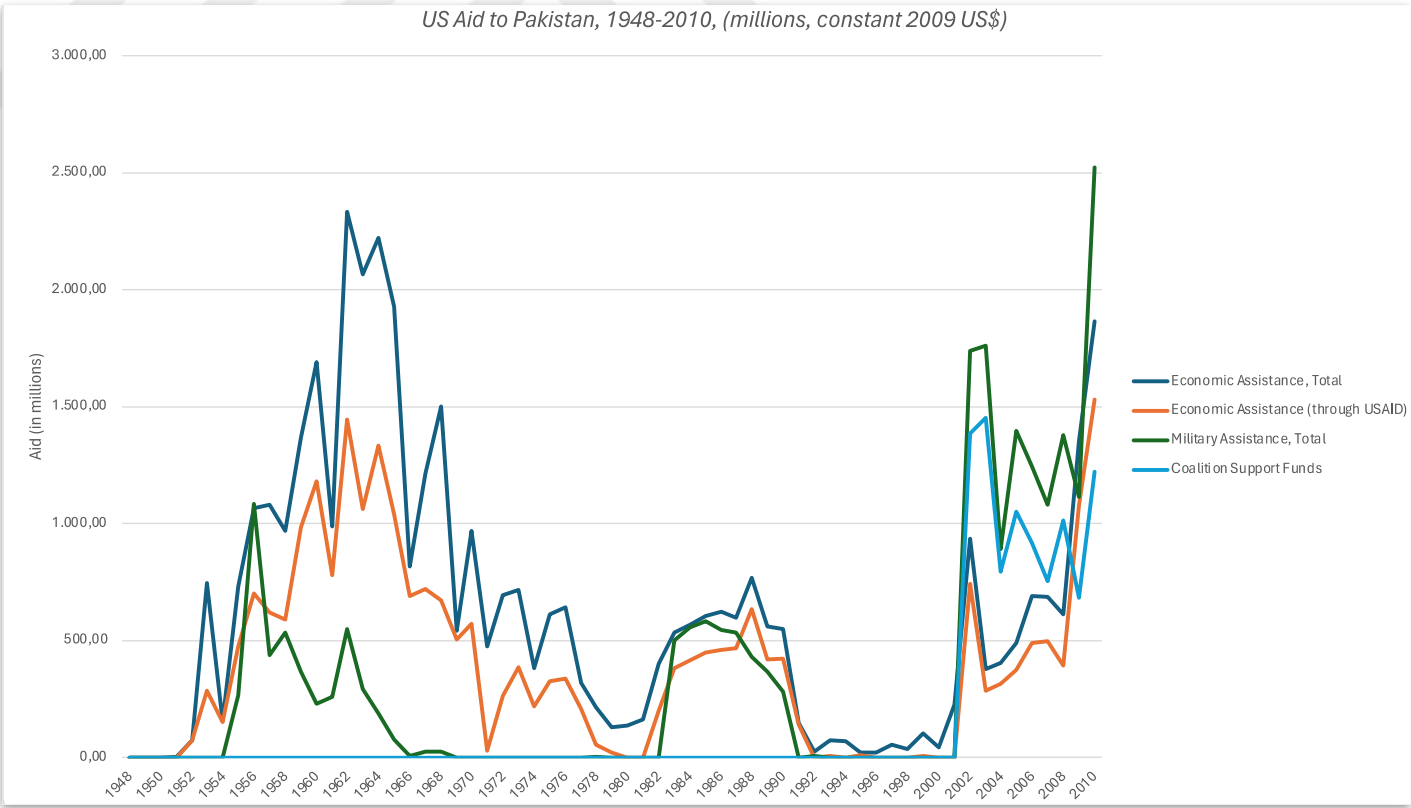


Figure 2.5. US Aid to Pakistan 1948-2010

Source: Guardian, 2011

As illustrated in Figure 2.5, Pakistan has historically received aid from the US in return for security imperatives. This can be seen by the \$2 billion in aid—mostly military—given to Pakistan between 1953 and 1961, which was then cut off as Pakistan pursued its nuclear program (Sweet & Ondiak, 2008). The US embassy proclaimed that since 2002, Pakistan had received more than \$273 million in humanitarian assistance for the Afghan refugees it hosted and for Pakistani host communities (U.S. Embassy, 2023). In 1981, Pakistan’s military ruler, General Zia-ul-Haq, convinced U.S. President Ronald Reagan to provide \$3.2 billion in aid to Pakistan over six years, as well as fast-tracking a deal for forty F-16 jets (Markey, 2013, 95). From 1990-1998, aid from the US dropped to almost negligible amounts (Zaidi, 2011). Meanwhile, from 9/11 until 2008, Pakistan received \$7.89 billion in military aid to reimburse Pakistan for its assistance in the War on Terror (American Progress, 2008). This was the period when the Pakistani state officially turned its back on the Taliban and allied itself with the US. In 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump suspended around \$900 million in security aid to Pakistan for not doing enough to crack down on militant groups (Mohammed & Landay, 2018). Funding for UNHCR in Pakistan is predominantly done by the US (UNHCR, n.d.). However, Figure 2.6 below shows the budget and expenditure trend of the UNHCR for the 2014-2024 period, demonstrating that the budget for the UNHCR does not necessarily rise during increased instances of expulsion.

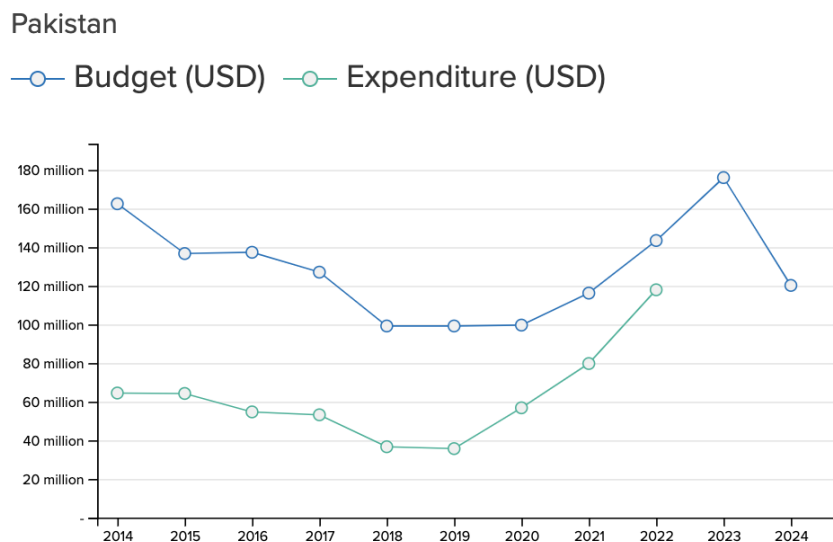


Figure 2.6. Budget and Expenditure Trend of UNHCR in Pakistan

Source: UNHCR 2023

2.6. Alternative Explanations in Literature

2.6.1. Refugee Rentier State Theory (RRST)

The idea of a rentier state has been used in economics to describe a source of national income derived from natural resources. However, it differs from wages or income as it is accrued without actively participating in economic production (Beblawi, 1987). This analysis was generally applied to the Gulf states, which were generating substantial external rents based on oil production without any other meaningful production. However, this theory of rents has also been expanded to mean that states extract aid for military and political purposes. This research builds upon the theory of refugee rentierism developed by Tsourapas in his analysis of the power politics between host countries in the aftermath of the Syrian refugee crisis. Tsourapas critically notes that the domestic elite of the host country plays a great role in using refugees as a source of revenue (Tsourapas, 2019, 465). The military establishment largely dominates Pakistan's elites. Therefore, any decision to render refugees as a source of income or otherwise would have to come from them. While I draw positively from Tsourapas' theory, there are some critical issues in it that help exclude a proper appreciation of the specificity of Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Tsourapas defines refugee rentierism as host states exploiting their geographic closeness to superpowers by threatening the deportation of the refugee population to extract monetary benefits (Tsourapas, 2019, 467). He first applies the workings of migration diplomacy to the Global South, to countries such as Libya, Jordan, and Türkiye. From this, he extracts how states link foreign policy issues to migration and, subsequently, decide to use cooperative or coercive diplomacy to secure foreign policy objectives (Tsourapas, 2017, 2370). This is illuminated by the example of Gaddafi's Libya, wherein Egyptian, Tunisian, Palestinian, and Sudanese migrants were first welcomed as long as their states were supportive of Gaddafi's pan-Arab/ pan-African plans. However, when Egypt and Tunisia changed their mind, Gaddafi set about to expel their entire community—often brutally torturing them first (Tsourapas, 2017, 27-34).

As Tsourapas explains, two strategies that refugee rentier states employ are ‘backscratching’ or ‘blackmailing.’ Blackmail is a threat of action that the blackmailer does not genuinely intend to take, coupled with a conditional promise to withhold that action in exchange for compensation. Back-scratching, on the other hand, is a deal where someone agrees to hold off on doing something they think would benefit them as long as they get paid. It's also threatening to do something that would benefit them unless they get paid not to (Tsourapas, 2019, 467). By rationally calculating its relative position and strength concerning the target state, the refugee rentier state can deduce which strategy to use. This is illustrated in Pakistan’s successful extraction of U.S. aid in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution as well as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Tsourapas, 2019, 468). However, refugee rentierism is reliable as long as the host state has geostrategic importance to a superpower. With the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and the US’s diminished ability to influence internal Afghan affairs along with the US’s ‘pivot to Asia,’ Pakistan has lost its leverage to neighboring India and, therefore, has difficulty extracting rents from the global hegemonic states amidst shifts in the balance of power.

2.6.1.1. The Economic Instrumentalization of Refugee Deportation Threats

Table 2.2. Threats of Refugee Expulsion in Pakistan

	Date	Refugee Population	Outcome	Additional Aid
Pakistan	31 Dec 2012	2 million Afghans	Extended Proof of Registration	\$ 18 million (US)
	31 Dec 2016	1.3 million Afghans	Extended Proof of Registration	\$38 million (US) \$7 million (Japan)
	31 Dec 2018 & Dec 2019	1.4 million Afghans	Extended Proof of Registration	€27 million (EU)

Source: (Micinski, 2023)

As illustrated in Table 2 above, Micinski (2023) shows how, from 2012 to 2019, Pakistan received greater financial assistance in return for extending PoR cards for Afghan refugees. Micinski develops Tsourapas' work by studying the case studies of Kenya and Pakistan from 2012 to 2019 and tries to trace how these countries leveraged their position as regional proxies of a superpower to extract greater aid. He argues that although these states did not share a border with a superpower, they leveraged their role as regional peacekeepers to successfully secure \$300 million in aid from the international community. Micinski challenges the idea that states benevolently host refugees and instead posits that host countries strategically decide to host refugees in a clientelist relationship with superpowers (Micinski, 2023, 530). Deportability is thus described as the possibility of deportation, which is constructed by passing legislation, harassing migrant workers, and raiding their workplaces and homes. Normatively, states are not supposed to deport such a large community of migrants or refugees, which is why states securitize the issue to jump through the legal issues. Once the illegality of the refugee population is set up, states can then justify their actions and negotiate from a better position. In the scenario of the relationship between host nations and superpowers becoming unbalanced, host countries might utilize the threat of refugee deportation to rebalance the stakes in their favor. However, they need their threats to appear credible. Refugee rentier nations can strengthen their negotiation position by repeatedly threatening, harassing, and employing violence against refugees to strengthen the credibility of their threat. Furthermore, attempting to deport whole undocumented communities is logistically unfeasible and costly. Instead, to create fear and compel the 'illegal' migrants to leave, a few deportations are carried out to set an example (De Genova & Peutz, 2010). Refugees are portrayed as a threat to the state, not necessarily to exploit them for labor but rather for leverage in diplomacy. States utilize the legal uncertainty around deportability to harass and inflict violence on refugees, but the primary targets of the threats are the international community, not the refugees. Although the international refugee regime enables nations to threaten deportation to extract greater aid, it also requires politicians and policymakers to act on such incentives. State actors such as politicians, government officials, and police strategically exploit deportation for their purposes (Micinski, 2023, 535). Even though the Pakistani government has provided protection to refugees through the UNHCR and has extended PoR cards repeatedly, refugees have become even more marginalized in society as a result of increased prejudice in public spaces, police raids and surveillance,

and other factors. This helps to perpetuate the stereotype of illegality and deportable refugees daily (Tunaboynu, 2024).

2.6.1.2. Limitations

While RRST provides a solid explanation for how states extract funding from international organizations in return for hosting refugees, it lacks nuance due to its totalizing nature. It is not necessary for a state to always accept financial remuneration to host refugees. Even if it does so, it is a temporary fix. It also dehumanizes refugees as mere commodities that are exchanged for other goods. As a method of analysis for policymakers and international organizations, it does not provide a dependable measure of when exactly deportations will take place. For example, Pakistan's economy has been on a downward trajectory since the 1980s, as shown in Figure 8. If one looks at it in an absolute mathematical sense when the economy is performing poorly, and the state wants to use the refugee population for extracting international aid, then the years 1997, 2008, and 2020 should have seen the highest number of refugee expulsions, but this is not the case. In fact, as seen in Figure 8 below, the economy was improving, not worsening, and this again runs counter to the predictions of the RRST theory.

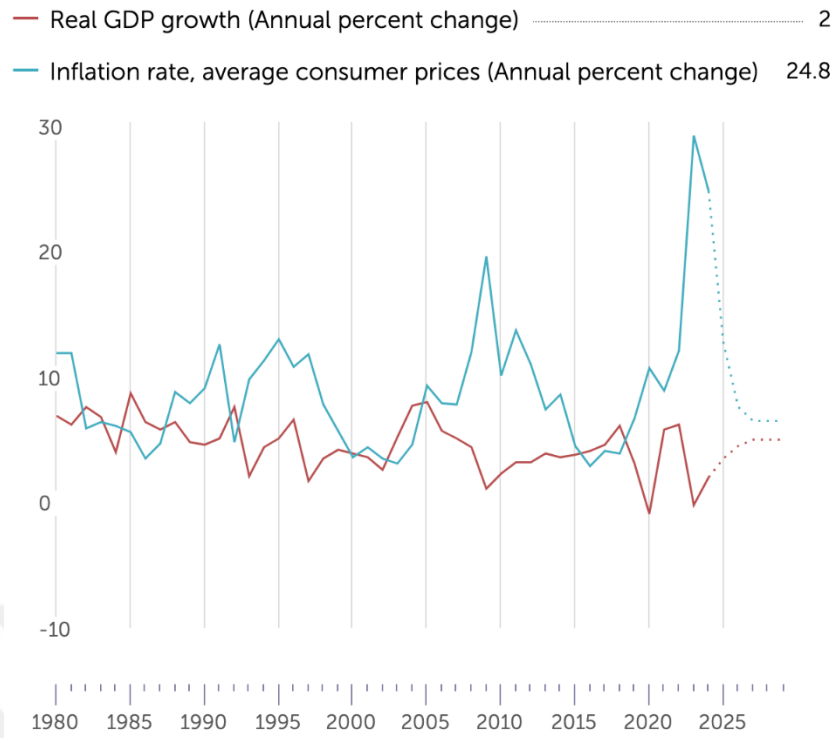


Figure 2.7. Pakistan's GDP Growth and Inflation 1980-2024

Source: IMF

Furthermore, if one only observes the 2023 deportation drive by Pakistan, there has been no increase in funding to the UNHCR as of yet. This can be seen in Figure 9 from the UNHCR's database illustrating that there is in fact a dearth of funding while responsibilities have added up.

Funding Needs (2024)

\$120,210,000

Total appeal

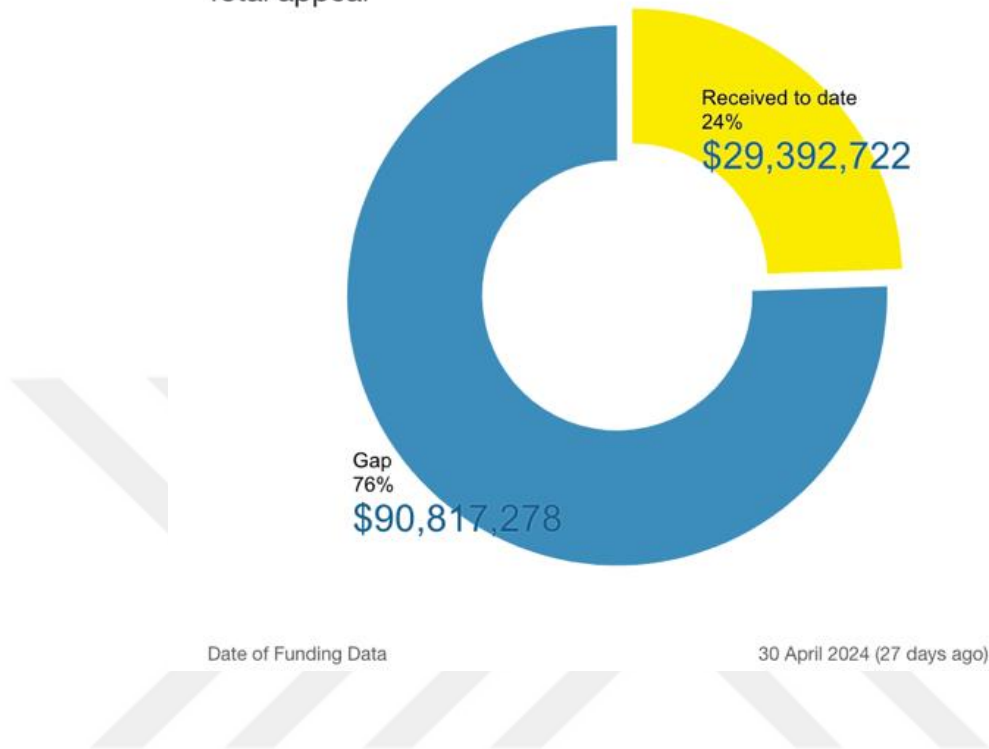


Figure 2.8. Funding needs of UNHCR in Pakistan in April 2024

Source: UNHCR

The language of RRST can also appear critical of states in the Global South who are already struggling financially and can rightfully be complaining about the lack of international support or limited facilities in facilitating refugees. It is vital to note that the criticism of RRST can reduce host states in the developing world to mere extractors of aid, while countries in the Global North who deport refugees due to similar complaints of financial stress are not culpable of it. The UK's plan to keep refugees in a barge or send them to Rwanda does not qualify as antics to extract aid or concessions in foreign policy.

2.6.2. Political Institutions

As the decision-making lies with political institutions, it is important to understand who exactly executes such a policy. Fitzpatrick observes three types of expulsions:

democratic ones passed by the legislative assemblies, state-based expulsions done at the behest of local grievances, and extraconstitutional expulsions ordered by frontier officials (Fitzpatrick, 2015). Ellerman's work builds on this and substantiates that politicians support deportation during elections and the legislative stage. Still, because of criticism from affected communities, elected officials shifted to more liberal attitudes during implementation (Ellermann, 2015). The institution that has the mandate to order such expulsions is not always the legislative body, e.g., in the U.S.; presidents have control over deportation and refugee policies, not Congress (Fitzpatrick, 2015). In Pakistan, the military commands this power. Depending on the threat it faces from India or from the Soviet Union in 1990, the Afghan refugee has been rebranded as a hero, freedom fighter, or a terrorist depending on the Pakistani military's threat perception (Hussain E. , 2022).

2.6.2.1. Domestic Interest Groups

Domestic interest groups, frequently concerned with cultural or economic rivalry, impact how nations handle refugee laws (Micinski, 2023). There can be 'push' and 'pull' factors for retaining migrants and refugees or expelling them from within civil society in the form of business associations, diaspora groups, and labor unions (Cornelius & Rosenblum, 2005). Usually, businesses benefit from the uncertain and deportable status of refugees and migrants because it allows them to recruit a cheap workforce that can retire without any consequences. However, that does not mean that they step in to keep refugees in their state. Changing political atmosphere can also affect the preferences of a previously welcoming government towards refugees and immigrants. This can be seen in the case of Syrian refugees in Türkiye who, although under Temporary Protection, faced mass detention and surveillance following the ruling party's loss in the May 2019 local elections (Tunaboynu, 2024). Political elites can be swayed by the electorate when former refugees who have been granted citizenship in due course make up a significant part of the population of the state (Hayduk & Castañon, 2018). Studies of the impact of refugees on host states have argued that refugees negatively affect the economy of a country through their preference for low-cost rental units and their entry into the informal labor market (Tumen, 2016). Others argue that refugees boost local economies as demand for goods increases and is met by increased production and employment (Garcia et al., 2018).

2.6.2.2. Limitations

Pakistan's is often described as a praetorian state (Kundi, 2003). According to Freedom House, Pakistan is ranked as 'partly free' owing to its authoritarian military, intimidation of media, selective restrictions of civil liberties, and the military's impunity in using indiscriminate or extra-legal force (Freedom House, 2024). As such, Pakistan has experienced four *coups d'états*⁸ and has yet to see a Prime Minister complete their term in its 77 years of existence (Marcinkowska, 2008). Even periods of civilian rule are overshadowed by military interference, the most recent of which was the ouster of former prime minister Imran Khan in April 2022.

As illustrated by Figure 10, Pakistan has existed as an electoral autocracy for the years 1966-77, 1984-1999, 2001-2023 (V-Dem, 2023). According to the political institution's argument, one should observe variations in the treatment of refugees—higher expulsion rates and heightened harassment of refugees—during military coups. However, that is not the case. In fact, the highest number of refugee expulsions were during civilian rule, i.e., in 2016 and 2023. One point to be noted is that during both these periods, the dominant political party had been ousted from power—one after refugee deportation had started and one before—as can be seen, respectively, from the 2017 disqualification of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of the PML-N due to the Panama papers case, and the removal of prime minister Imran Khan of the PTI party from power in 2022 through a vote of no-confidence in Parliament. This shows the level of political interference commanded by the Pakistani army; however, it ignores other factors that might have led to such a decision, such as why did the military establishment not expel Afghan refugees soon after the removal of Khan from office. Why did they wait until November 2023? These are questions better answered by the geopolitical dimension.

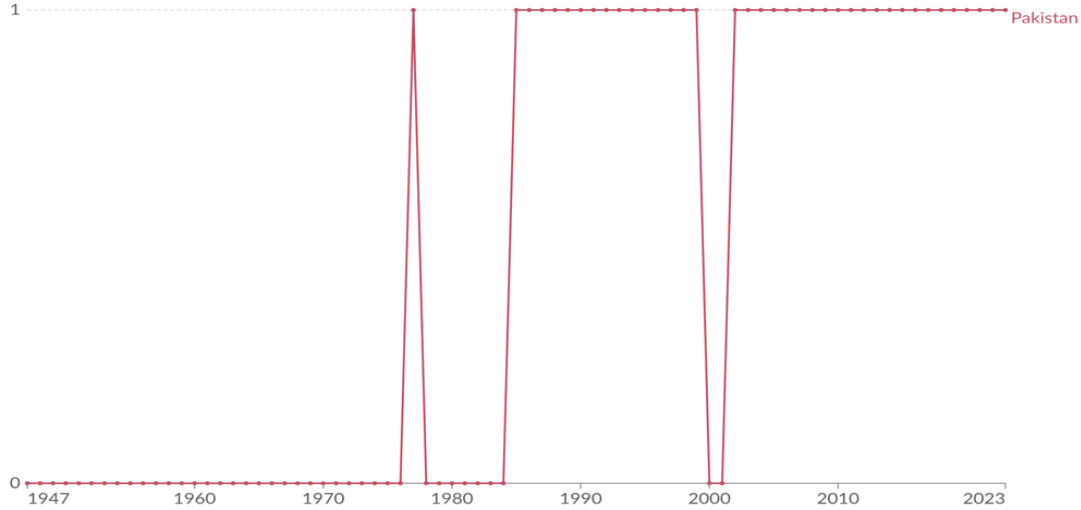
⁸ 1958, 1969, 1977, 1999



Political regime

Our World in Data

Based on the classification¹ by Lührmann et al. (2018) and the estimates by V-Dem²'s experts.



Data source: V-Dem (2024)

OurWorldInData.org/democracy | CC BY

Note: The Chart tab uses numeric values, ranging from 0 for closed autocracies to 3 for liberal democracies.

1. **Regimes of the World's regime classification:** Closed autocracy: citizens do not have the right to choose either the chief executive of the government or the legislature through multi-party elections. Electoral autocracy: citizens have the right to choose the chief executive and the legislature through multi-party elections; but they lack some freedoms, such as the freedoms of association or expression that make the elections meaningful, free, and fair. Electoral democracy: citizens have the right to choose the chief executive and the legislature in meaningful, free and fair, and multi-party elections. Liberal democracy: electoral democracy and citizens enjoy individual and minority rights, are equal before the law, and the actions of the executive are constrained by the legislative and the courts. [Read more in our article: The 'Regimes of the World' data: how do researchers measure democracy?](#)

2. **V-Dem:** The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project publishes data and research on democracy and human rights. It relies on evaluations by around 3,500 country experts and supplementary work by its own researchers to assess political institutions and the protection of rights. The project is managed by the V-Dem Institute, based at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. Learn more: [Democracy data: how do researchers measure democracy?](#) [The 'Varieties of Democracy' data: how do researchers measure democracy?](#) [The 'Varieties of Democracy' data: how do researchers measure human rights?](#)

Figure 2.9. Political Regime of Pakistan Based on Regimes of the World Classification by Political Scientists Anna Lührmann, Marcus Tannenberg, and Staffan Lindberg

Source: V-Dem, 2023

2.6.3. National Security

2.6.3.1. The “fifth-column” Threat

There are security-related arguments for the deportation of refugees and migrants from a territory. It comes under the topic of ‘demographic engineering’ wherein states deliberately settle in or force out a population to elevate one ethnic group over the other or to weaken a rebel minority group. Mylonas and Radnitz’s (2022) work in their book *Enemies Within* sums up the latest literature on the fifth-column threat, and they note that the key scenarios where a state might target a group under this framework is during times of political instability in the face of external threats, in response to social or economic crises, to mobilize public support, and to discredit reform movement. With regard to Pakistan, this framework then justifies the mainstream argument from the Pakistani establishment that the Afghan refugee population serves as a cover for militant groups to commit espionage, sabotage, and spread propaganda. Deportation of said refugees then acts as a good strategy to enhance security, send a geopolitical message of securing one’s borders, and allay public insecurity.

McGarry delves into the significance of this threat by observing that the loyalty of minorities is suspect during high inter-state tension as the state worries about the control of its peripheries and how prepared the minority group would be in case of outright conflict (McGarry, 1998, 625). However, McGarry does situate such expulsions as a necessity of wartime, something that seems to be absent from the case of Pakistan and Afghanistan at the moment. Neither country seems to be on the precipice of war. McGarry also identifies the possibility of an irredentist threat, as seen in the case of Germans in Poland or ethnic tensions in former Yugoslav countries. This can be a legitimate cause of concern in Pakistan as the majority ethnic group of Afghanistan⁹ is the Pashtuns, and Pakistan itself is home to around 40 million Pashto speakers—or around 18% of its population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The Durand Line separating Pakistan and Afghanistan has long been contested by Afghan rulers with the exit of the British from the Indian subcontinent. Due to this, Afghanistan routinely claims for the eastern Pashtun lands inside Pakistan to be a part

⁹ Demographics of Afghanistan are uncertain due to the last official census taking place in 1979.

of 'Pashtunistan' - a Pashtun state- or to join Afghanistan (Bezhan, 2014). The Taliban have followed this tradition, and although the Durand Line is used as the official border, the Taliban challenge its validity. The Taliban themselves comprise mostly of Pashtuns, and this ethnic makeup extends to the TTP as well, who reside in the Waziristan area of Pakistan. Therefore, any efforts at establishing their ethnic territory or even becoming a self-governing area are not far-fetched. The security argument also posits that states undertake 'population transfers' to remove ethnic minorities and consolidate a homogenous ethnic and national identity. This can be seen in the case of the French Huguenots in 1685, Armenians in Türkiye in 1915, Spanish Jews in 1492, and many other cases (Zolberg, 1983).

2.6.3.2. Securitization of Afghan Refugees

Securitization is defined as a 'speech act' by Ole Waever (Buzan et al., 1998). Non-political matters can become a security issue for a state or government agency. Typically, a political leader, through speech acts, positions a particular issue as a threat to survival, which triggers emergency measures, allowing the issue to be dealt with outside of 'normal politics' (Šulović, 2010). According to the Copenhagen school, an issue is first 'politicized', and once the target audience perceives it as an existential threat, the authorities begin implementing emergency measures that are outside the bounds of democracy (Léonard & Kaunert, 2011). After the 2014 APS attack, the language of the Pakistani military establishment (observed through the speeches of the then-Army Chief Raheel Sharif and the DG ISPR Asim Saleem Bajwa) pointed the finger at Afghanistan- then ruled by the US-coalition-supported President Ashraf Ghani- by demanding the handover of the TTP commander Umar Naray whom they claimed masterminded the attack (Haider et al., 2014). The moratorium on the death penalty was removed by Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, reintroducing the death penalty for terrorism-related cases (Doherty & Weaver, 2014). This illustrates how normal democratic procedure is suspended following the securitization of Afghans in the country. According to Human Rights Watch interviews with documented and undocumented Afghan refugees, harassment, detention, random raids on settlements, extorting bribes, and beatings had increased exponentially following the 2014 APS attack, forcing them to leave the country even if they had the right documentation (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

The Paris School further delves into the implementation of securitization by understanding the tools and practices adopted by the securitization agent. This can be seen from the 1990s, when the refugee camps were closed (Ruiz, 2002). This was exacerbated in the aftermath of 9/11 when Pakistan allied itself with the US and signaled that it was not willing to take more Afghan refugees. In the period following TTP's 2014 school attack, the Sharif-led Pakistani government, in harmony with the military establishment, proposed the National Action Plan, which created a framework for further counter-terrorism plans. Some of the policies it included, among others, were the execution of convicted terrorists, the setting up of military courts, reviving the counterterrorism force NACTA, choking terrorist financing, and a comprehensive policy for the deportation of Afghan refugees. (NACTA, 2014). Furthermore, the unilateral fencing of the contested Durand Line by Pakistan- despite protests from the Afghan government- began in 2017 to prevent militants from fleeing military operations, smuggling, illegal migration, drug trafficking, and refugees (Basit, 2021). Afghan's access to labor markets was also securitized, leading them to face prejudice, unemployment, and exploitation (Jamil, 2022, 67).

2.6.3.3. Limitations

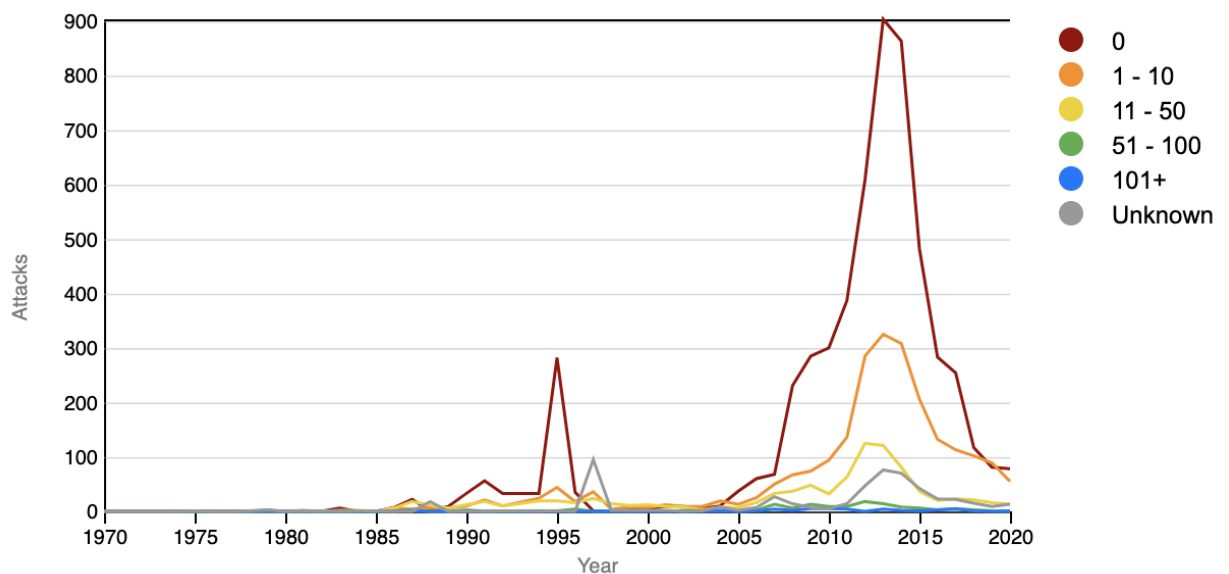


Figure 2.10. Incidences of Terrorist Attacks in Pakistan and Fatalities

Source: University of Maryland, 2020

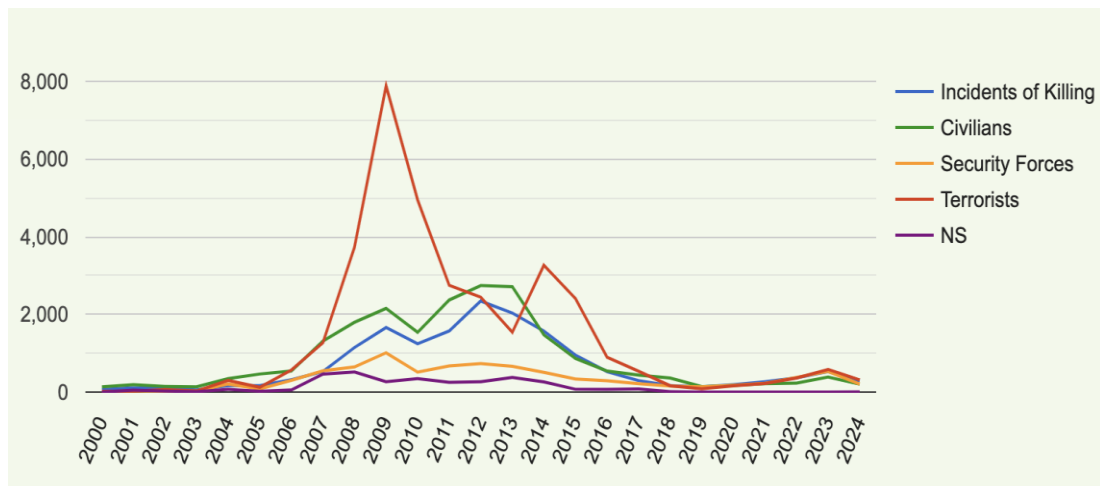


Figure 2.11. Terrorism in Pakistan Yearly View

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2024

Although the securitization theory offers a direct correlation between the rise in security threats and refugee expulsion, in reality, it is not that linear. From Figure 11, one can make out that terrorist attacks in Pakistan have been on the rise since 2005 and peaked in 2014. Figure 12 depicts the highest number of civilian casualties to be in 2012. However, mass expulsion of refugees was not observed until 2014. On the surface, then, it may seem like the 2014-2016 refugee expulsions led to a decrease in terrorist attacks. However, it leaves out the military operation *Zarb-e-Azb* undertaken by the Pakistani military on 15 June 2014 in North Waziristan (earlier than the APS attack later that year which is often mistakenly attributed as the reason for the operation).

2.6.3.3.1. Operation *Zarb-e-Azb*

In light of increasing terrorist attacks¹⁰ military officials like Major General Athar Abbas (envisioned 2010 a military operation in the North Waziristan region however, factors like opening a second front with India through Balochistan, fear of media and civilian backlash, and pressure from the Obama administration prevented such an exercise (Naveed, 2019). Instead, the Pakistani government began talks with the TTP to resolve the issue. A one-month ceasefire was discussed, but the TTP broke it as their

¹⁰ Lakki Marwat suicide bombing 2010, PNS Mehran base attack 2011, Kamra airbase attack 2012, Jinnah international airport attack 2014

demand for a peace zone in FATA¹¹ was unmet. TTP resumed its terrorist activities, and the 2014 Jinnah International Airport attack in Karachi was the straw that finally broke the camel's back. On June 15, 2014, the military commenced Operation Zarb-e-Azb¹².

The operation caused so much damage to the TTP bases in Waziristan, so much so that the TTP carried out the heinous 2014 APS school massacre, killing over 147 schoolchildren in an army school. This led to the government passing the National Action Plan in parliament in which the moratorium on the death penalty was removed and military courts were established among other things (Naveed, 2019). The result of the operation can be seen in Table 3, which shows how much the number of attacks and casualties dropped after 2014 in FATA. Therefore, it is evident that the military operations, not the securitization of refugees, led to a drop in terrorist attacks. Civilian casualties in FATA dropped from 1116 in 2008 to 76 in 2016, while 4467 terrorists were killed from 2014-2017 (SATP, 2017).

This operation was followed by Operation *Radd-ul-Fasaad*¹³ in 2017 to eliminate further sleeper cells and consolidate the gains of Operation *Zarb-e-Azb*. It is still ongoing. The military establishment widely promotes these operations as successful, but it must be kept in mind that the only sources of data are from the military's ISPR (SATP, 2017).

¹¹ A semi-autonomous tribal region governed by the colonial era Frontier Crimes Regulation laws. It has been merged with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2018 and the FCR discontinued.

¹² Meaning the strike of the sword of the Prophet Muhammad used in the battles of Badr and Uhud (Naveed, 2019)

¹³ Meaning elimination of discord

Table 2.3. Fatalities in FATA 2016-2017

Fatalities in FATA: 2006-2017

Years	Civilians	SFs	Terrorists	Total
2006	109	144	337	590
2007	424	243	1014	1681
2008	1116	242	1709	3067
2009	636	350	4252	5238
2010	540	262	4519	5321
2011	488	233	2313	3034
2012	549	306	2046	2901
2013	319	198	1199	1716
2014	159	194	2510	2863
2015	134	106	1642	1882
2016	76	39	315	430
2017	25	0	0	25
Total*	4575	2317	21856	28748

Source: SATP, *Data till January 22, 2017

Source: (SATP, 2017)

CHAPTER III

EMPIRICS

3.1. Methodology

While the existing theories on securitization, refugee rentier states, and political institutions have much to offer in the way of an explanation for the deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, they all have some limitations that have been covered in the literature review chapter. In my methodology chapter, I attempt to intertwine the causal explanations of geopolitics and ethnicity to further elucidate the variation in Pakistan's policies to deport refugees after having accepted them whole-heartedly in the early 80s.

3.1.1. Theoretical Framework

3.1.1.1. The Ethnicity Faultline

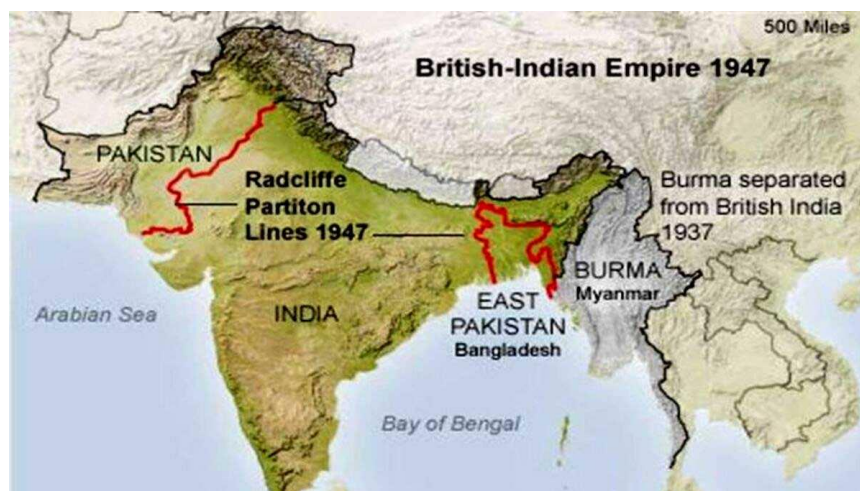


Figure 3.1. Map of the Partition of British India in 1947 Showing the West and East Pakistan Wings

(Source: Jelks, 2022)

In an era of nation-states, states struggle to build a cohesive identity that is distinct from neighboring entities yet similar enough to encompass the diverse people within its boundaries (Smith, 1986). Most states created after World War II were a product of colonial independence struggles (Orvis & Drogus, 2021). States like Algeria, Egypt, and Haiti fought their colonial masters and, once free of them, established their own state within the boundaries the colonial powers had established. Other states like Bangladesh were created out of a language struggle. Some, like Pakistan and Israel, were formed on the basis of religion. Although Pakistan was formed on the basis of Islam, linguistic and ethnic tensions have repeatedly reared their head and eventually led to the creation of Bangladesh from the original body of what was envisioned to be Pakistan, as seen in Figure 13 above.

Pakistan, since its inception, has been dominated by the Punjabi ethnic group who reside in the fertile Punjab province, as can be seen from Figure 14. According to the 2017 census¹⁴ undertaken by the Government of Pakistan, Pakistan's population was about 207,684,626 (Government of Pakistan, 2017). Out of this, 80,536,390 are Punjabi speakers making them account for 39.8% of the population (Government of Pakistan, 2017). Although most of them have adopted Urdu in daily speech—a language similar to Punjabi—the fact remains that most of the landed elite of the country, its military generals, and businessmen come from this ethnic group (Murtaza, 2017). In order to win elections, one simply needs to get the most votes in the Punjab province due to its vast population translating to higher number of seats in Parliament (Paracha, 2024). The Pashtun ethnicity comes second in number with 37,885,441 or 16.1% speakers in the country (Government of Pakistan, 2017). This does not account for Pashto-speaking Afghan refugees in the country.

¹⁴ The 2023 census did not account for a demographic breakdown which is why I have chosen the more comprehensive 2017 census. Pakistan's 2023 population was 241.5 million (GALLUP Pakistan, 2023)

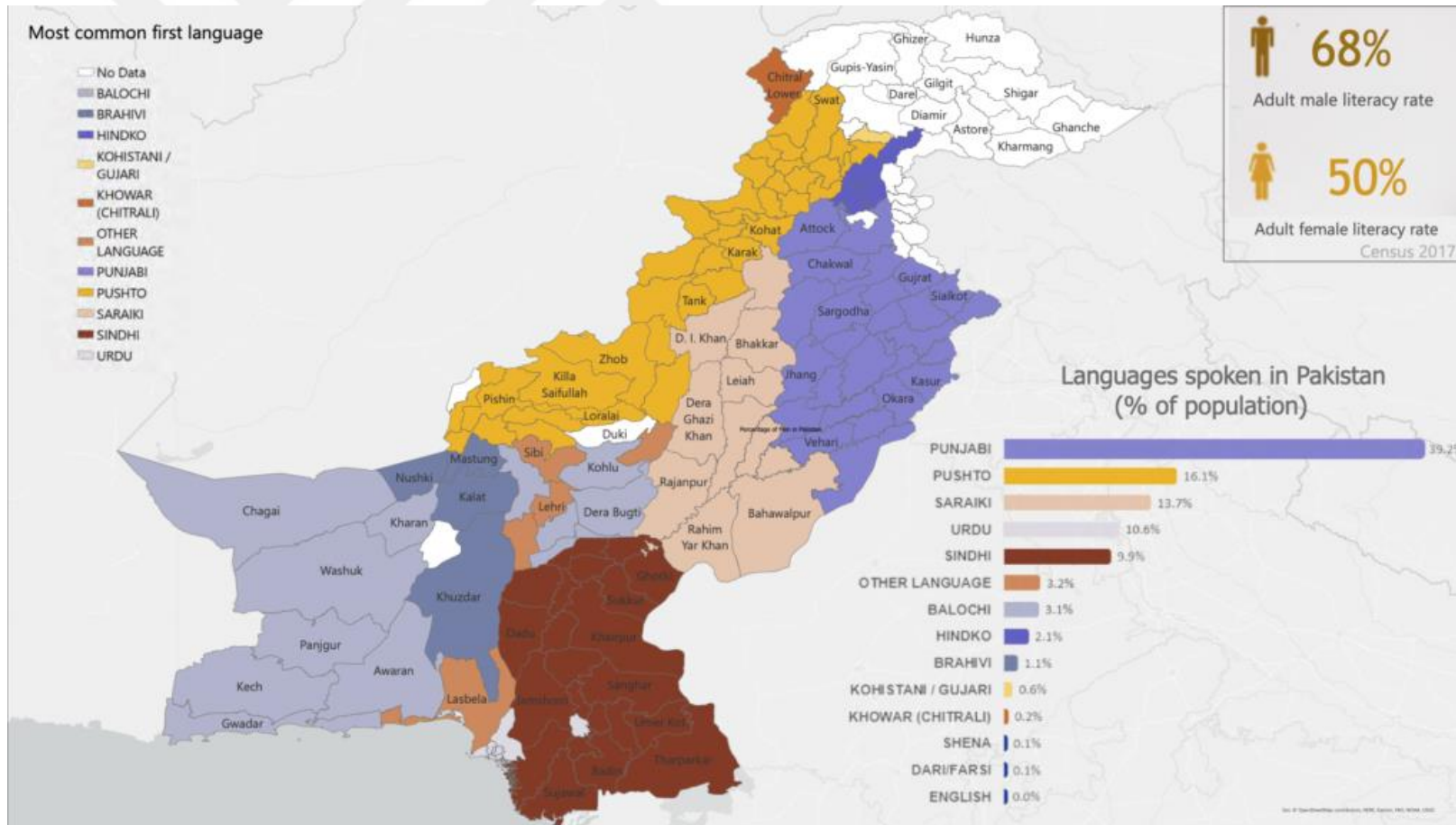


Figure 3.2. Language Map of Pakistan

Source: CLEAR Global, 2023

Most of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan belong to the Pashtun ethnic group (Siddique & Shah, 2023). Their mother tongue is Pashto, and a lot of them have familial relations with Pashtuns across the Durand Line as well. Figure 15 provides a detailed ethnic breakdown of Afghan refugee’s ethnicities. Most Afghan refugees have settled in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces due to their proximity to the Afghan border—specifically their provincial capitals, Peshawar and Quetta (Usman, 2020). However, a lot of them have moved to the coastal mega-city of Karachi for economic reasons. This has obviously stirred resentment from ethnic groups like the Baloch in Balochistan who feel threatened by the burgeoning Pashtun population and see Pakistan’s early welcome of Afghan refugees as demographic engineering (Siddique & Shah, 2023). The Baloch people have their own resentment against the Pakistani state due to their province being the least developed, albeit the biggest territorially. This has led to separatism and the rise of terrorist groups like the BLA (Mir & Yousuf, 2024). Regarding Karachi, the city was already on ethnic fault lines due to its role as the new capital of Pakistan upon the Partition of British India. Therefore, the entry of Afghans—particularly Pashtuns—into that city exacerbated ethnic rivalries even more between the *mohajirs*¹⁵, Sindhis, and Biharis (Gayer, 2003).

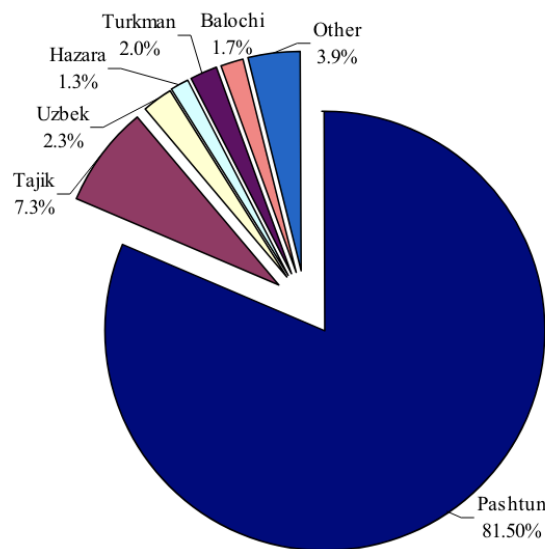


Figure 3.3. Afghans in Pakistan by Ethnicity

Source: Ministry of States and Frontier Regions, 2005

¹⁵ Migrants from India to Pakistan upon Partition in 1947

3.1.1.2. The Geopolitical Faultline

Geopolitics is understood to be the impact of geography on politics and international relations (Devetak, George, & Percy, 2017). Pakistan inhabits a precarious region of the world geopolitically. Out of its four neighbours, it only has positive relations with China, a country culturally and ideologically most dissimilar to it. Iran and Afghanistan are politically isolated from the world, and both have Islamic fundamentalist leaders at the helm with expansionist ideologies. Pakistan and India are actively hostile towards one another over the Kashmir issue, which is one of the most heavily militarized regions in the world due to this (BBC, 2023).

Pakistan's biggest existential threat comes from India with which it has fought four unsuccessful wars (Pokraka, 2019). The main bone of contention is the former princely state of Jammu & Kashmir, which both countries claim in full, but which is divided between them both and some territory with China. Partition trauma, the belief in Islamic military exceptionalism of martial races, and the wars over Kashmir have consolidated fears in the Pakistani establishment's imagination of an irredentist Hindu India (Briskey, 2022). With India territorially and demographically outweighing Pakistan—not to mention its role in facilitating the bifurcation of Pakistan's Eastern wing into Bangladesh—Pakistan's strategic culture has been shaped by this realism, leading it to ally with the US while India was unaligned during the Cold War, or to support the Afghan *mujahideen* with Western support.

The compulsion to obtain strategic depth in Afghanistan is a perspective the Pakistan army inherited from the British, despite modern literature on Pakistan-Afghan relations arguing that the army grew interested in this idea in the late 1970s (Fair, 2014). All of the British army was set up to protect the empire against enemies thought to be entering the Indian subcontinent via Afghanistan. Pakistan inherited a meagre amount from the empire's wealth, but it inherited the whole threat frontier. In addition to having an impact on how the army administers Afghanistan, the army's pursuit of strategic depth has also had a significant impact on the state viewing and interacting with ethnic Pashtuns in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the tribal areas, and Baloch Pakistanis who reside in Balochistan, which borders Afghanistan and Iran with suspicion (Fair, 2014).

Throughout history, India and Afghanistan have enjoyed deep cultural and political links. Up until the Taliban took power in 1996, India and successive Kabul governments enjoyed friendly relations. Like the majority of nations, India had actively supported the Uzbek, Tajik, and other non-Pashtun ethnic groups in the Northern Alliance and never recognized the Islamic emirates (Baqai & Wasi, 2021).

Pakistan was always skeptical of the US-backed Afghan government and thought that it was friendly towards India, and relations between the two constantly consisted of accusing one another of harboring terrorists (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). With the Taliban back in power in 2021, Pakistan felt it was strategically protected since it could not fathom a conservative, hardline-Islamist regime ever allying or cooperating with India. However, the Taliban's harboring of TTP militants and refusal to acknowledge the Durand Line complicated matters for Pakistan and reignited geopolitical concerns for its military establishment (Hussain A.,2024). The newfound tension between Kabul and Islamabad has led India to resume contact with Kabul by sending back its emissaries and making contact with the authorities (International Crisis Group, 2024). India is also exploring trade options but treading very carefully because it does not want Afghanistan to be used as a launching pad for Islamic militancy in Indian-administered Kashmir (International Crisis Group, 2024).

3.1.2. Research Design and Approach

3.1.2.1. Process Tracing

In order to explain the deportation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan from the 2000s to 2024 in light of geopolitics and ethnicity, I undertake the qualitative research method of process tracing. Process tracing is the technique of following the causal mechanism or mechanisms at work in certain instances (Checkel, 2008). It is used to analyze these causal mechanisms in action since it shows a causal chain between the independent and dependent variables (George & Bennett, 2005). From a methodological standpoint, process tracing not only urges one to follow a highly particular, theoretically informed route for tracing the course of events, but it also supplies the knowledge for mechanism-based descriptions of social change. This pushes the search for a sequence of intermediate steps that are predicted theoretically (Checkel, 2008).

Process tracing can be used in conjunction with and as a complement to a variety of other approaches in the empiricist/positivist paradigm, like analytical narratives (Bates et al., 1998).

The literature on migration often cites the character of the nation-state as hostile to accepting new cultures due to its need to distinguish itself from the ‘other.’ While not a new endeavor, this research applies this framework to the phenomenon of Afghan refugee deportation in Pakistan, specifically the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, because the causal mechanism appears to function along the same logic. Determining the exact scope of circumstances that make deportation more likely has proven to be difficult due to a multitude of overlapping factors that conflate correlation with causality. This research implies that the expulsion of Afghan refugees has been taking place as a result of Pakistan's ongoing geopolitical insecurity and the long-standing control of the Punjabi elite. This deductive approach draws on lessons from both geopolitics and ethnicity. Therefore, this research presents two hypotheses that can be proved by process tracing. Therefore, this research has two hypotheses to prove by process tracing, which are that an increase in geopolitical and ethnic tensions makes instances of deportation more likely.

3.1.2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Process tracing primarily uses qualitative data, which might come from historical memoirs, expert surveys, interviews, press articles, and records, among other sources (Gheciu, 2005). For gathering evidence, I use primary data in the form of government records, remarks on deportation policy made by Pakistani authorities, and news articles and media coverage of the subject. Academic books and articles about Pakistan-Afghanistan ties, reports from non-governmental organizations and international organizations about the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan (like UNHCR, IOM, and HRW), and historical evaluations of ethnic relations in Pakistan make up my secondary sources.

Initially, I searched for scholarly work using Google Scholar and entered keywords such as ‘Afghan refugees,’ ‘deportation,’ and ‘reasons’ to cover the existing literature on the topic. The top theories have all been parsed in this research paper. Once the

leading theories were established, I used the keywords ‘geopolitics’ and ‘ethnicity’ alongside the former keywords to extract articles forming the base of her hypothesis. I have used Pakistan’s top English-language newspaper, Dawn, to report official decrees and changes since it is widely considered the authority on important matters. UNHCR reports have been used to collect statistics on refugees as it is the only body mandated to carry out such an exercise in Pakistan. Where required, the official census of Pakistan has been used to provide demographics for ethnic groups. It is important to note that oftentimes, the mother tongue is specified in the census, which signals the ethnic group of the population rather than inquiring about ethnicity. These statistics were accessed through the government website on population. News from Afghanistan was compiled from Ariana and TOLO New, the two leading news sources on Afghanistan. For international coverage, Al Jazeera, BBC, Reuters, The Guardian, Anadolu Agency, and Radio Free Liberty have been used to provide the leading viewpoints from major news broadcasters from around the world. News from Indian sources—such as The Hindu and The Print—and academia have also been added to balance out pro-Pakistani or pro-Afghan voices on the topic.

3.1.2.3. Case Selection

Deportations of refugees is not an uncommon phenomenon in today’s world of nation-states. Be it Syrians in Türkiye, Latin Americans in the USA, Sudanese in Egypt, host and transit countries are grappling with the connectedness provided by globalization and the fallback of war and the failing economies at their borders (Creta & Khalil, 2024). Unlike empires, the nation-state’s identity is built upon fixed characteristics that are challenged by the presence of the ‘other.’ Refugees and migrants are treated either as temporary inhabitants or encroachers onto an exclusive territory. Out of all the refugee deportations and migrant deportations that are taking place in the world, this research looks into the case of Afghan refugees in Pakistan because, firstly, refugee flows within the Global South are overlooked in favor of the Global North’s unease with refugees (Tsourapas, 2017) Secondly, within the Global South host or transit country refugees, the case of Afghan refugees is again overlooked in comparison to the more pressing threat of refugees moving from the peripheral Mediterranean state in the Middle East to Europe. The issue presents a rich backdrop for in-depth examination because of the intricate interplay of geopolitical and ethnic

elements. Good relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are essential to the stability of South Asia due to their positioning between Central Asia, the Middle East, India, and East Asia. Examining this instance clarifies more general geopolitical dynamics.

From a social standpoint, understanding how Afghan refugees are treated can help one better understand Pakistan's social integration and interethnic harmony. One cannot ignore the policy and humanitarian effect of this move as well since deporting refugees is a morally and ethically significant matter since it touches on important human rights issues. This study makes it possible to examine how international refugee rules and conventions are implemented or disregarded in real life. Furthermore, this is a pressing and ongoing issue in Pakistan. It affects a huge population, not to mention the women and girls who will be effectively sentenced to a life of misogyny. As such, this thesis does not pretend to be unmoved by the humanitarian tragedy unfolding by deporting Afghan refugees back. Finally, on a personal note, since a researcher's interests are influenced by their real-life experiences, I selected this topic also because, being a Pashtun and living in Peshawar for most of my life, I failed to grasp why people who spoke the same language as them, dressed the same as me and lived more or less the same as me were threatened with expulsion when they were more 'native' to the land than any other ethnic group in Pakistan (Altenmüller, Lange, & Gollwitzer, 2021). It stems from my lived experience as a Pashtun in Pakistan, where being Pashtun outside of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is met with constant omissions to one's speech and leads to conversations correcting your fellow country-people on myths held about your ethnic group.

3.1.3. Research Limitations

While process tracing excels at answering interaction-related queries, it falls far short in providing structural context (Checkel, 2008). The biggest logistical obstacle is the substantial quantity of time and data needed. Therefore, this thesis too is riddled with a dearth of in-depth data to assess every instance of deportation in detail. While researching the topic, the researcher encountered difficulty in obtaining information from NACTA, the Pakistani government's counter-terrorism authority, due to technical difficulties. A lot of documents from the Pakistani government and the

military's ISPR were inaccessible due to stub links and outdated websites. By depending on government records and not finding documents referred to in secondary sources, this research could be further developed by interviews with focal persons in the military, politicians, and businessmen to assess on the ground whether reality matches the sentiments expressed in reports and on the news. Due to time limitations, this research proposes a hypothesis based on an analysis of published academic material and government and NGO reports. Furthermore, from the anecdotal experience of the researcher living in Pakistan, Punjabi dominance is an experienced reality and the status quo, but it hasn't been sufficiently academically recorded. This is also an area for further study from which to draw inferences.

The researcher also expresses her biases in the form of humanitarian concern for the plight of Afghan refugees, especially girls and women. Despite claims of objectivity to academia, it is quite unrealistic to expect a human researcher to select cases without some interest or concern, which can be at risk of being labeled 'selection biases (George & Bennett, 2005). However, analyzing within-case variation provokes a researcher's concern and provides opportunities to improve qualitative analysis of a certain topic. As with any single-case research design, restricting attention to a single instance hinders the capacity to extrapolate results to different settings or areas. It's possible that Pakistan's particular geopolitical and ethnic factors will not apply elsewhere (George & Bennett, 2005).

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Research Question

What explains the variation in the Pakistan government's policy of deporting Afghan refugees from 1979 to 2024?

3.2.2. Hypotheses

H1: Geopolitical tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan lead to increased deportations.

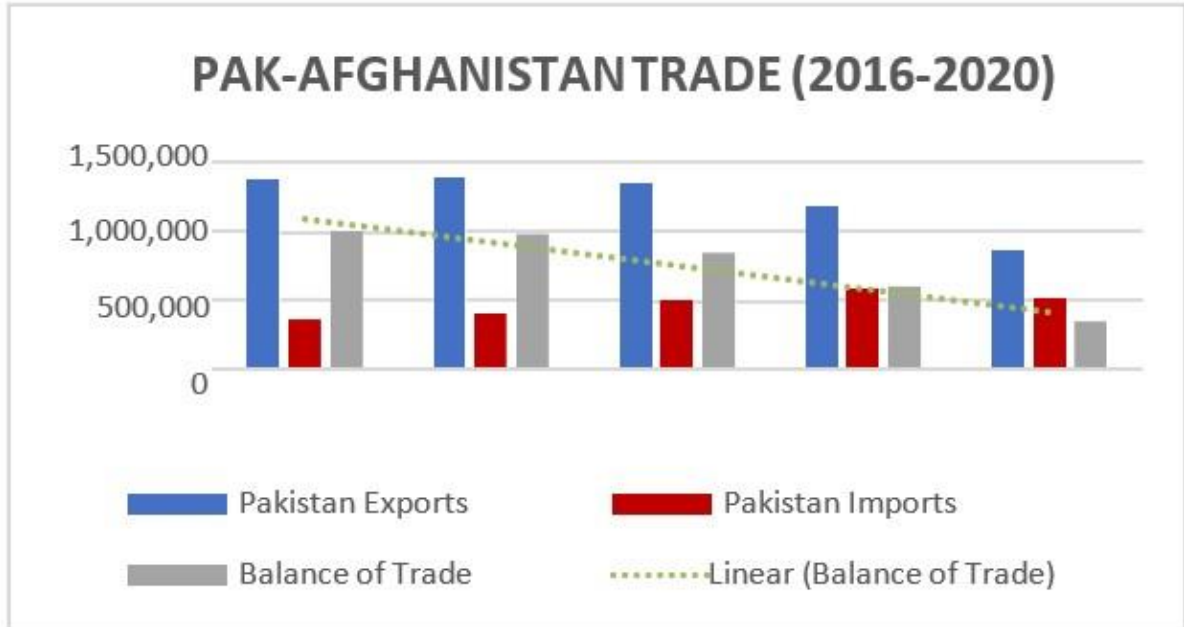


Figure 3.4. Trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan From 2016-2020

Source: Butt, 2021

The figure above illustrates the decline in trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which signifies geopolitical tensions.

➤ **1979 – Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan**

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan's geopolitical significance increased dramatically. Pakistan, a front-line state bordering Afghanistan, emerged as a key player in the dynamics of the Cold War worldwide. In Pakistan, the United States discovered a vital ally for its plan of aiding the Afghan mujahideen opposition as it sought to thwart Soviet advance (Razvi, 1982). Because of this relationship, Pakistan became a major conduit for the mujahideen's receipt of financial and military support from the West, mainly the United States and Saudi Arabia (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). The Afghan fighters relied heavily on Pakistan's strategic position for

training grounds and logistical support. Pakistan's crucial involvement was further highlighted by the influx of Afghan refugees into the country and the installation of massive covert activities (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). Pakistan's status as a major geopolitical player in the area was solidified during this time, and it had a profound impact on the country's foreign and domestic policy paths later.

In the early stages of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Pakistan welcomed Afghan refugees wholeheartedly due to a confluence of geopolitical, strategic, and ideological factors (Rizvi, 1984). The Afghan resistance was viewed considering the broader cause of the Muslim *ummah*¹⁶ and as a *jihad* or Holy war. Strategically, Pakistan saw the influx of refugees to bolster its position against Soviet expansion, aligning itself with the U.S. and its allies in the broader Cold War context. By supporting the Afghan resistance, Pakistan aimed to undermine Soviet influence in the region and foster a friendly, anti-Soviet government in Kabul. Ideologically, Pakistan, under General Zia-ul-Haq, embraced the refugees, viewing them as fellow Muslims fleeing communist oppression (Razvi, 1982). This alignment with the mujahideen's cause also garnered significant financial and military support from the United States and Saudi Arabia, reinforcing Pakistan's geopolitical importance and strengthening its military capabilities (Baqai & Wasi, 2021). The refugee crisis provided an opportunity for Pakistan to project itself as a leader in the Islamic world, rallying Muslim solidarity against a common adversary.

➤ 1989 – Soviet Withdrawal

After the Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989, Pakistan's stance towards accepting Afghan refugees shifted significantly due to changing geopolitical dynamics. The withdrawal of Soviet forces marked the end of the direct Cold War confrontation in the region, diminishing the strategic imperative for Pakistan to support large-scale refugee inflows as a means of countering Soviet influence (Kreft, 2008). The prolonged refugee presence began to strain Pakistan's economic resources and social infrastructure, creating internal challenges and contributing to rising ethnic tensions (Ruiz H. A., 2001). The influx of refugees had also brought security concerns, with the proliferation

¹⁶ Meaning 'nation' in Arabic

of militant groups and weapons affecting Pakistan's internal stability (Ruiz H. A., 2001). Geopolitically, as Afghanistan descended into civil war among the mujahideen factions and later with the rise of the Taliban, Pakistan faced a more complex and less controllable situation. The changing international focus, especially with reduced Western financial support after the Cold War, left Pakistan to bear the refugee burden largely on its own. This led to Pakistan's policy shifting towards managing and limiting new refugee inflows and seeking to balance its internal security and economic stability with its regional strategic interests.

➤ **1994 – Emergence of the Taliban and Taliban Takeover of Kabul**

From the emergence of the Taliban in the early 1990s to their rule in Afghanistan until 2001, Pakistan's policies towards Afghan refugees were deeply intertwined with its geopolitical strategy in the region. Initially, Pakistan supported the Taliban's rise, seeing the group as a stabilizing force that could end the protracted civil war and bring a favorable government to power in Kabul (Khan I. A., 2007). This support extended to the refugee policy, where Pakistan continued to host a significant number of Afghan refugees, many of whom were ethnic Pashtuns with ties to the Taliban. This alignment helped Pakistan maintain its influence in Afghanistan and secure its western border. However, as the Taliban's regime became increasingly isolated internationally due to its fundamentalist policies and harboring of terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, Pakistan faced growing international pressure and criticism (Human Rights Watch, 2001). The refugee camps, often unregulated, became hotbeds for radicalization and militancy, complicating Pakistan's internal security landscape. By the late 1990s, Pakistan began to tighten its refugee policies, implementing stricter controls and attempting to repatriate refugees amid international calls for more robust measures against terrorism (UNHCR, 2000). This period highlighted the delicate balance Pakistan sought to maintain between its geopolitical ambitions in Afghanistan and the complex domestic challenges posed by the refugee situation.

➤ **2001 – 2014 U.S. Invasion of Afghanistan to Operation Zarb-e Azb**

From 2001 to 2014, Pakistan's policies towards Afghan refugees were heavily influenced by the geopolitical shifts following the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan

and the subsequent War on Terror. After the fall of the Taliban regime, Pakistan initially continued to host millions of Afghan refugees, providing a critical humanitarian response while aligning itself with international efforts against terrorism. However, the prolonged presence of these refugees posed significant security, economic, and social challenges for Pakistan. The refugee camps were often seen as breeding grounds for militancy and radicalization, complicating Pakistan's internal security dynamics as it faced growing insurgent activities along its western border (Behuria, 2007). To mitigate these issues, Pakistan, with support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), began advocating for and facilitating voluntary repatriation programs, although many refugees were reluctant to return due to the unstable conditions in Afghanistan. Simultaneously, Pakistan sought to leverage its strategic position to secure substantial international aid and political support, emphasizing its role as a frontline state in the fight against terrorism. Despite these efforts, the slow pace of repatriation and periodic influx of new refugees, especially during peak conflict periods in Afghanistan, continued to strain Pakistan's resources and test its geopolitical strategies.

➤ **2014 - 2021 Operation Zarb-e-Azb to Taliban Takeover of 2021**

As international forces in the Taliban started drawing down, the emboldened Taliban resurged in power and were given further legitimacy by engaging with the US in the Doha peace talks (Ibrahimi, 2022). Pakistan was under growing strain to manage the influx of Afghan refugees while simultaneously managing its own internal security concerns as the security situation in Afghanistan worsened. While Pakistan remained committed to hosting Afghan refugees on humanitarian grounds, the country also sought to balance its geopolitical interests, particularly in relation to its strategic depth vis-à-vis India and its desire for stability along its western border (Ahmed & Bhatnagar, 2007). This period saw Pakistan implementing stricter border controls by fencing the border and stricter registration processes for refugees, as well as periodic repatriation campaigns in collaboration with the UNHCR. However, the protracted conflict in Afghanistan, coupled with economic hardships and political instability, made it difficult for many refugees to return voluntarily.

This move was unpopular with the local Pashtun tribes straddling both sides of the border and impacting their businesses, as well as the Afghan government under President Ashraf Ghani (RFERL, 2021). Afghan officials have long opposed any solidification of the Durand Line as they dispute its validity and see border-fencing as an attempt to cement the border. The then newly sworn Afghan President Ashraf Ghani was initially very eager to cooperate with Pakistan but later adopted a more balanced approach, seeing Pakistan's role in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table with the US government in Qatar, essentially bypassing Kabul (Çakir, 2023). As the US and coalition forces stopped combat activities and put the Afghan forces more on the front line, the sense of vulnerability increased in the Afghan government. Ashraf Ghani made the following remarks in 2015 while visiting Washington D.C: "The problem, fundamentally, is not about peace with Taliban. The problem is fundamentally about peace between Pakistan and Afghanistan" (Threlkeld & Easterly, 2021). This illustrates that Kabul saw Pakistan as the main interlocutor and when the Taliban refused to negotiate with the government in Kabul, it irked them to know that Pakistan could pressurize the Taliban if it wanted to, but it refrained from doing so.

➤ **2021 – 2023 Taliban Takeover of Kabul to Present-Day Deportation Order**

From 2021 to 2023, Pakistan's policies towards Afghan refugees were influenced by a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan. As seen in 1996, with the Taliban taking the reins of Afghanistan once again, Pakistan viewed it as geopolitically favorable to them despite the concerns of Afghan citizens and refugees who feared reprisals from the Taliban for their ethnicity or their involvement with the US forces. The sudden collapse of the Afghan government and the return of Taliban rule led to a significant influx of refugees into Pakistan, posing immediate humanitarian and security challenges. A lot of the refugees fled to Pakistan to seek asylum in third countries, but Western countries slowly started dragging their feet in accepting Afghan personnel they had promised safe passage to their countries (Albrecht, Rude, & Stitteneder, 2021). Pakistan implemented stricter border controls, enhanced registration processes, and increased security measures to address security threats and prevent illegal crossings. It also collaborated with international organizations such as the UNHCR to provide humanitarian assistance

and facilitate voluntary repatriation for Afghan refugees willing to return. Pakistan faced its own internal challenges with its premier, Imran Khan, being ousted from office by a no-confidence vote in Parliament. The reason for this was a falling out between the then-Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Qamar Javed Bajwa and Imran Khan (Hameed & Majeed, 2023). With the military establishment rearing its head into Pakistani politics forcefully once again, the ceasefire between the TTP and the Pakistani government also collapsed. Expecting a cooperative Taliban, the Pakistani government and military turned towards the Afghan Taliban to rein in the TTP; however, they were surprised to see their stalwart party offer deflections, blame, and promises of relocation of TTP fighters instead (Akhtar, 2023). With the rise in terrorist attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan province, the interim government—with the blessing of the military establishment—announced the deportation of ‘illegal aliens’ in Pakistan, widely understood to mean Afghan refugees.

H2: Ethnic tensions within Pakistan increase the likelihood of deporting Afghan refugees.

As has been repeatedly stated in this thesis, although all Afghans are not Pashtuns, the majority of them residing in Pakistan belong to the Pashtun ethnic group (Siddique & Shah, 2023). Due to their close cultural and ethnic ties to the Afghan people, Pashtuns have historically been marginalized and subjected to prejudice in Pakistan, especially when it comes to access to resources, economic inequality, and regional politics (Lamb & Tarzi, 2011). In addition to straining resources and increasing competition for employment and services, the flood of Afghan refugees into Pakistan after the Soviet invasion and the ensuing conflicts also fostered social instability in host towns and heightened ethnic tensions (Ruiz H. A., 2001). Given their considerable population and economic and political clout, Punjabis in Pakistan are the biggest ethnic group with the most developed cities in their province, with the biggest industries on their land, and the provision of electricity from KPK province and gas from poverty-stricken Balochistan to them at the expense of the population of those provinces, causing animosity and grievances towards the Punjabi elite (Yusuf, 2014) (Javid, 2012). Mistrust and anger toward the state and its institutions have been exacerbated by circumstances such as military operations in areas where Pashtuns predominate, claims of violations of human rights, and the belief that Pashtuns and Afghans are

disproportionately targeted in counterterrorism operations (Khan, Wazir, & Khan, 2019). Political instability, socioeconomic inequality, and ineffective governance have hindered efforts to address ethnic tensions and foster interethnic harmony over time. This emphasizes the need for inclusive policies, equitable development, and meaningful dialogue to address the underlying causes of ethnic discord and foster national cohesion in Pakistan.

The researcher has encountered a research gap addressing specifically the Punjabi dominance in the Pakistani establishment, leading to the ostracization of Afghan refugees. Although there exist studies on the role of Pakistani cinema and media in stereotyping Pashtuns as ‘illiterate,’ ‘violent,’ ‘extremist,’ and ‘terrorists,’ the role of the state in ‘otherizing’ them has not been studied so much (Ishaq, Manawar, & Anwar, 2021).

3.2.2.1. Argument for Preferred Ethnicity in Pakistan: Comparison Between Kashmiri Refugees and Afghan Refugees

Besides the obvious ethnic tensions between the Punjabi ethnic group and the rest of the ethnicities of Pakistan, one ethnic group—the Kashmiris—does appear to get preferential treatment from the state when it comes to claiming refuge in the country or their rights. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this paper, Kashmiris from Indian-occupied Kashmir have the right to obtain citizenship of Pakistan because the identity of the Pakistani state is based upon their inclusion (Sultan, 2022). According to Choudhry Rahmat Ali, the person credited with naming the country, the term ‘PAKISTAN’ itself denotes Punjab, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Sindh, and Baluchistan (Aziz, 1987). Note that it includes ‘Afghans’ as well, which means the Pashtuns on the Eastern side of the Durand line reside in what was then called NWFP¹⁷. However, in light of the brutal partition of India, most of the communal violence and cross-border movement happened in the Punjab and Bengal provinces. Therefore, these provinces were the ones with the most deeply imprinted insecurity towards India. With Bangladesh’s subsequent bifurcation from Pakistan, the Bengali question was out of the equation.

¹⁷ North West Frontier Province. Renamed to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010

The Punjabi and *Muhajir* communities of Pakistan—usually attributed with roles in the Pakistani establishment and owners of the most successful businesses in the country—were left as the stalwarts against India. Their fear is rooted in historical fact since they fled India or had to flee across the border to Pakistani Punjab, losing goods and family members along the way (Talbot, 2019). The rest of the Pakistani provinces, such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Sindh, and the Northern princely states, were under no such direct threat. Figure 16 below illustrates the movement of people as well as inter-communal conflicts in 1948, a couple of months after the Partition. In fact, in the case of KPK, the province elected the Hindu-dominated Congress government over the Muslim-dominated Muslim League party (Singh, 2019).

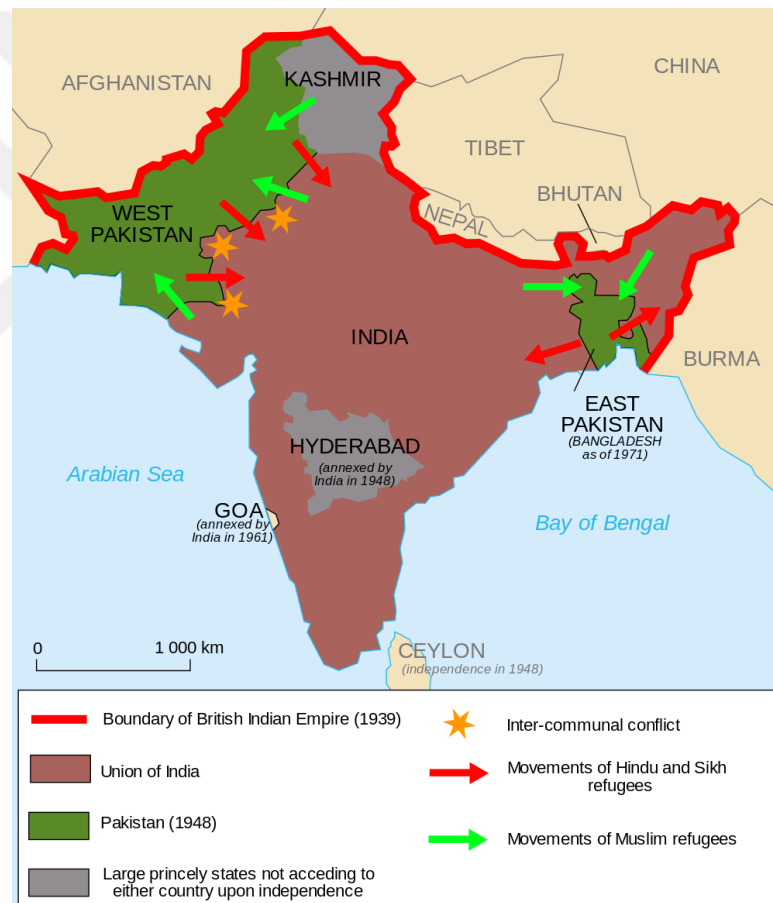


Figure 3.5. Movement of People and Inter-Communal Conflict at the Time of Partition

Source: Strahorn, 2014

3.2.2.2. The Khudai Khidmatgar Movement

Before the Partition of India, the Pashtun activist Bacha Khan¹⁸ formed a movement called *Khudai Khidmatgar*¹⁹ which was an anti-colonial movement fighting for a United India through non-violent means. For this, he was labeled ‘the Frontier Gandhi’ (Korejo, 1993). He was opposed to a separate Muslim state and, in fact, allied himself with the Indian Congress, meeting with leaders like Gandhi instead of Mohammad Ali Jinnah—the stalwart of the Muslim League. In June 1947, Khan and his supporters issued the Bannu Resolution calling for the British authorities to give them the choice of creating a Pashtun state called ‘Pashtunistan’ comprising ethnic Pashtuns. The British refused this, and Khan and his supporters subsequently boycotted the 1947 NWFP referendum (Chaudhry, 2021). By doing so, they paved the way for the Muslim League to win the referendum and join Pakistan (Chawla, 2011). When the Indian Congress accepted the Partition plan of British India, Bacha Khan was recorded as having expressed his disappointment with the sentence, “You have thrown us to the wolves.” With the creation of Pakistan, Khan changed his mission and resorted to creating an independent ‘Pashtunistan.’ His efforts were met with arrests by the Pakistani government. Despite taking an oath of allegiance to the Pakistani state after its creation, Khan was imprisoned from 1948-1954; then he was arrested in 1956, kept in prison until 1964 by the military ruler General Ayub’s regime, and lastly, in 1973 by the democratically-elected Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s government (Ayaz, 2017).

3.2.2.2.1. The Kashmir Issue

In contrast to the independence endeavors of the Pashtun people, the Kashmiri people’s struggle for independence has been markedly different. In brief, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) was ruled by the Dogra-Sikh dynasty, while the majority of its inhabitants were Muslim (Kuszevska, 2022). This dynasty consisted of a large Hindu elite that controlled the Muslim masses, leading to apprehension between the two. Therefore, when the plan for the Partition of India was announced, it was widely believed that J&K would accede to Pakistan due to its Muslim-majority population (Kuszevska, 2022). However, this did not happen, and for reasons I will

¹⁸ Real name Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan

¹⁹ Meaning ‘Servants of God’ in Pashto

not delve much into in this paper due to the dispersing focus, the *maharaja*²⁰ of J&K signed the instrument of accession to India. During this time, predominantly Pashtun tribal people from Pakistan were galvanized by the Pakistani army under the auspices of *jihad*, and they breached the territory of J&K to ‘liberate’ it from infidel rule (Schofield & Tremblay, 2008). Consequently, both countries are now locked in a frozen conflict over the region, with both holding significant portions of the territory. This can be considered the single most important issue that prevents the resolution of conflict between India and Pakistan today. By comparing it to the Pashtun struggle for independence or autonomy, no such movement arose in pre-partition in Kashmir due to its status as a princely state. Kashmiri people today differ in their expression of independence as well, with some desiring an independent Kashmir, some desiring to join Pakistan, and few content with remaining in India’s domain (Khandy, 2020).

3.2.2.3. Ethnic Conflicts in Pakistan

Pakistan has been privy to ethnic conflicts in the form of the competition between West Pakistanis (Punjabis and Muhajirs) and East Pakistanis (Bengalis), which ultimately led to the creation of Bangladesh (Kennedy, 1993). However, there have always been simmering tensions between other ethnic groups and secessionist threats by minority ethnic groups like the Sindhis, Balochis, and Pashtun (Kennedy, 1993). The One Unit Plan of 1955, which condensed Pakistan into two wings, is an example of how the Pakistani establishment has been liberal with its cultural assimilationist strategies. The Urdu language policy of 1947 imposed the Urdu language on the Pakistani populace despite Urdu being the mother tongue of only 7% of the population (Government of Pakistan, 2017). Due to such cleavages, Islam has usually been used as a uniting factor, as seen by the Islamization policies of military ruler General Zia-ul-Haq in 1979. Donald Horowitz posits the ‘locational advantage’ theory, according to which the presence of British administrators in certain main towns afforded the people of that region (such as Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta) access to the corridors of power (Horowitz, 1985).

²⁰ Hindu ruler of a princely state

Within the Pakistani context, the Punjabi and the Bengalis had the most access to the loci of the British administration. The rest of the regions that Pakistan inherited were mostly frontier regions with very little infrastructure or industry. Therefore, it makes sense that upon Partition, the Punjabi and Bengali territories consisted of the crux of the state machinery and could administer the rest of the territories. The British propagation of the ‘martial races²¹’ theory in the aftermath of the failed Indian War of Independence of 1857 also led to Punjabis being over-represented in the colonial military due to their belief that they were inclined to be soldiers (Kennedy, 1993). This has led Punjabis to view themselves as the legitimate rulers of Pakistan, inheriting a martial tradition, well-versed in the bureaucracy, and staunch defenders of Islam (Kennedy, 1993). However, the remaining ethnic groups, including the non-indigenous muhajirs, view this dominance as arrogant and deceitful. It is important to note that the Baloch ethnic group has been apprehensive about the influx of Afghan refugees into Balochistan since the beginning of the Soviet invasion—back when the Pakistani state was welcoming refugees—because they were worried about the demographic balance shifting in favor of the Pashtun over the Baloch (Rizvi, 1984). However, their concerns were not heeded. Today, Quetta—the capital of Balochistan—is considered to host more Pashtuns than Baloch (UNICEF, 2020). This illustrates how demographic concerns of certain ethnic groups are ignored as they themselves present a secessionist threat to the dominant ethnic group.

3.2.2.3.1. Pashtunistan Issue

As mentioned in the section on the *Khudai Khidmatgar* movement, the movement for Pashtunistan has been a constant in the history of Pashtuns even before Partition. In 1893, when the Emir of Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman Khan, signed the Durand Line Agreement with the British after the Second Anglo-Afghan War, it was meant to demarcate the sphere of influence of the British Empire and the Emirate of Afghanistan. It was not meant to stop Pashtun people on either side from intermingling but rather to stop Russian influence from reaching the British Empire’s Indian colony. However, with the succession of the state of Pakistan to the Western frontier of the British Indian empire, Pakistan consolidated the Durand Line as a fixed border.

²¹ The theory that some ethnic communities were better soldiers than others e.g., Punjabis and Pashtuns over Bengalis (Kennedy, 1993)

Successive Afghan governments—like that of Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan and Hamid Karzai—have dismissed Pakistan’s claims over the border during times of tension between the two countries (Rasanayagam, 2003) (Siddiqui N. , 2017). Due to this, the Punjabi-dominated elite has always been uneasy about the aspirations of the Pashtun people, especially now with the Pashtun-origin Taliban occupying the seat of power in Kabul.

The acting foreign minister of the Taliban, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, stated that the Taliban does not recognize the Durand Line, which has divided Afghanistan and Pakistan since 1893 (TOLO News, 2024). He expressed that “half of Afghanistan is separated and is on the other side.” The victory of the Afghan Taliban has clearly bolstered the spirits of the TTP, who aim to adopt a similar regime in the Pashtun heartlands in Pakistan. This can be seen by the surge of TTP fighters by 5,500 in 2022, according to the UN Security Council, although local representatives consider that number to be modest (UNSC, 2022) (O’Donnell, 2024). Despite Pakistan’s initial recruitment and support of tribal Pashtuns to wage *jihad* against the Soviets and India, the Pakistani state is itself susceptible to the very ideological soldier it created, one that is also bound by a distinct ethnicity and has historical claims to the continuity of the territory it inhabits. Studies show that ethnicity is a deciding factor in assessing the Afghan and Pakistani public’s sympathy towards the Taliban (Kaltenhaler & Miller, 2015) (Kaltenthaler, Kruglanski, & Knuppe, 2022). With the British advent into the Indian subcontinent, opportunities for trade increased in Northern India and led to many Pashtuns moving out of their tribal heartlands into India for employment. The creation of Pakistan catapulted Karachi to the rank of its biggest city and economic powerhouse, which attracted Pashtuns who had scarce resources in their cities. This has led people to speculate that Karachi might host the largest number of Pashtuns—more than Kabul, Kandahar, or Peshawar (Lieven, 2021).

3.2.2.3.2. Role of PTI, Imran Khan, and the PTM

Although the Pashtun of Pakistan have their political party called the Awami National Party (ANP) and vote for Pashtun-led religious parties like Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F), their real political fervor was observed in the re-election of the Imran Khan-led PTI government to rule the KPK province in 2018 (Khan I. A., 2013). This was

historical, as the people of KPK had never elected the same political party twice (Hussain N. , 2018). The leader of the party, cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan, belongs to a mixed Punjabi-Pashtun family and has been sympathetic to the struggle of the Afghan Taliban, calling them ‘freedom fighters’ even (Mahajan, 2024). Taking advantage of his Pashtun roots, Khan skillfully addressed the growing resentment among Pashtuns over Punjabi supremacy in the armed forces and government. One way other political parties tried to discredit the massive support Imran Khan received from Pashtuns was by referring to him as ‘Niazi.’ This is because although the former premier’s full name is ‘Imran Ahmed Khan Niazi,’ by calling him ‘Niazi’ instead of ‘Khan,’ they sought to dilute the solidarity Pashtuns associated with him due to his ancestry.

Khan had been largely sympathetic to the situation of Afghan refugees. In 2018, he expressed that Afghan refugees born in Pakistan would be given Pakistani citizenship following the normal procedure other countries adhered to for giving out citizenship (Barke, 2018). However, he was met with backlash from other political parties and had to backtrack his statements. Commentators noted that an increase in registered Pashtuns would bolster Khan’s voting base in cities like Karachi (Barke, 2018). Khan also allowed Afghan refugees to open bank accounts in 2019 (SHARP Pakistan, 2019). Upon hearing about the 2023 expulsion order, Khan criticized it, saying that it would antagonize their neighbor and that an additional 1.5 million refugees were not a burden when Pakistan itself was home to 250 million people (Arain, 2023). With the removal of Khan from power, no other political party has spoken out against the expulsion of Afghan refugees, thus reiterating the idea that ethnicity plays an important role in the deportation of Afghans.

As a proponent of a broad Pakistani identity that transcends provincial boundaries, Khan capitalized on the long-standing frustrations of Pashtun marginalization under Punjabi domination (Mahajan, 2024). He even met with Abdullah Abdullah, Afghanistan’s chief negotiator, multiple times in 2020 (Çakir, 2023). He is a classic example of how some Pashtuns who have reached high positions in the Pakistani government and have sympathy for the Pashtun cause seek to make things better for the community. That does not always bear fruit, as seen by his promise to arrest the killers of Tahir Dawar—a Pashtun police officer abducted in broad daylight from the

capital and later found dead in Afghanistan (Khan, Cheng, Ullah, & Shah, 2020). He even met with Abdullah Abdullah, Afghanistan's chief negotiator, multiple times in 2020 (Çakir, 2023).

Khan was ousted from power in 2022 after falling out with the same military establishment that brought him to power. He currently languishes in Adiala jail in the garrison city of Rawalpindi. One of the reasons for this is his efforts to create a multi-ethnic regime in Pakistan, which was unacceptable to the Punjabi-dominated establishment. However, in 2018, he was still the best candidate to receive the military establishment's blessing as the other main political parties (PMNL-N and PPP) were at that time at loggerheads with the army, having been embroiled in the Panama Papers scandal.

In 2018, a movement emerged in North Waziristan called PTM or Pashtun Tahafuz Movement²² which was calling for the removal of landmines, the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the retrieval of missing individuals and an end to the harassment of Pashtuns at checkpoints (Khan, Cheng, Shah, & Ullah, 2020). In such an environment, Khan was better placed to receive support from the military establishment. While he didn't overtly support the PTM, gestures such as not fielding a candidate in South Waziristan against the PTM candidate Ali Wazir were interpreted positively by Pashtuns (Siddiqui Z. , 2018). The PTM was borne out of simmering discontent and grievances of the population in South Waziristan, but mass protests started under its leader, Manzoor Pashteen, upon hearing of the death of a Pashtun man named Naqeebullah Mehsud in an extrajudicial police encounter in 2018 (Shukla, 2019). PTM started a march to the capital from D.I.Khan and then conducted a massive sit-in in front of the Islamabad Press Club. Imran Khan expressed his support for the march but disagreed with the manner in which the protestors were making their demands (Dawn, 2019). However, one must take his statements from that time with a grain of salt as he did not have much leeway in his politics after having been facilitated to power by the military establishment, as he later revealed (Pakistan Today, 2022). The state responded to the peaceful PTM protests with accusations of being 'engineered' by foreign entities and started arresting its leaders and supporters. Some

²² Movement for the Protection of Pashtuns

supporters, such as PTM activist Arman Luni, were even killed by the police while joining protests. Protests over Luni's death led to the arrests of 20 PTM activists, including Gulalai Ismail, who later sought political asylum in the US after 6 cases were filed against her in Pakistan and her father was abducted and forcibly disappeared (BBC, 2019). The reaction of the Pakistani state against the PTM protests was even met with sharp criticism from Afghan President Ghani, who was, in turn, rebuked by Pakistani state officials (Shukla, 2019). The movement, according to the military, is considered dangerous because it jeopardizes Pakistan's constitution. Many of its members, according to Manzoor Pashteen and his supporters, were detained, assaulted, and killed by police because of what has been a nonviolent demonstration calling for justice and a stop to extrajudicial killings. Several members were arrested for slogans against the state. Pakistan's government asserted that foreign entities, including the Afghan government, had impacted Pashteen's movement; however, Afghan officials denied this. The group has been criticized for being full of traitors, accused of breaking a colonial-era sedition statute that forbade treason, contempt, hostility, and disaffection for the state, and called agents of "enemy governments," yet it has largely been permitted to stage rallies (Jacob, 2022).

The year 2018 seems to be the start of a rise in ethnic tensions between Pashtuns and the Pakistani state. However, it did not immediately result in the deportation of Afghan refugees as Imran Khan was in power and was sympathetic to the cause. With his ouster in 2022, the path was cleared to put pressure on the Taliban firmly established in Kabul by then and also to deal a blow to the vociferous PTM opposition that was somewhat controlled by the optics of a Pashtun leader in a position of power. Khan was replaced by the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) coalition consisting of the mainstream political parties that had made up with the military establishment again. However, the Pakistani public kept demanding elections as they felt that their mandate had been stolen, which led to the interim government being handed over power and the deportation order being announced at a time when the government was simply a mouthpiece for the military establishment. This can be seen in Figure 17 below, which illustrates how the Pakistani public protested from Khan's ouster from power to his disqualification from elections for five years. While data is not available showing the protestor's ethnicity, it is evident that major policy changes were enacted after Khan's

disqualification, which affected the Afghan population, and such policies could not have been enacted with Khan in power.

Demonstrations Involving the PTI

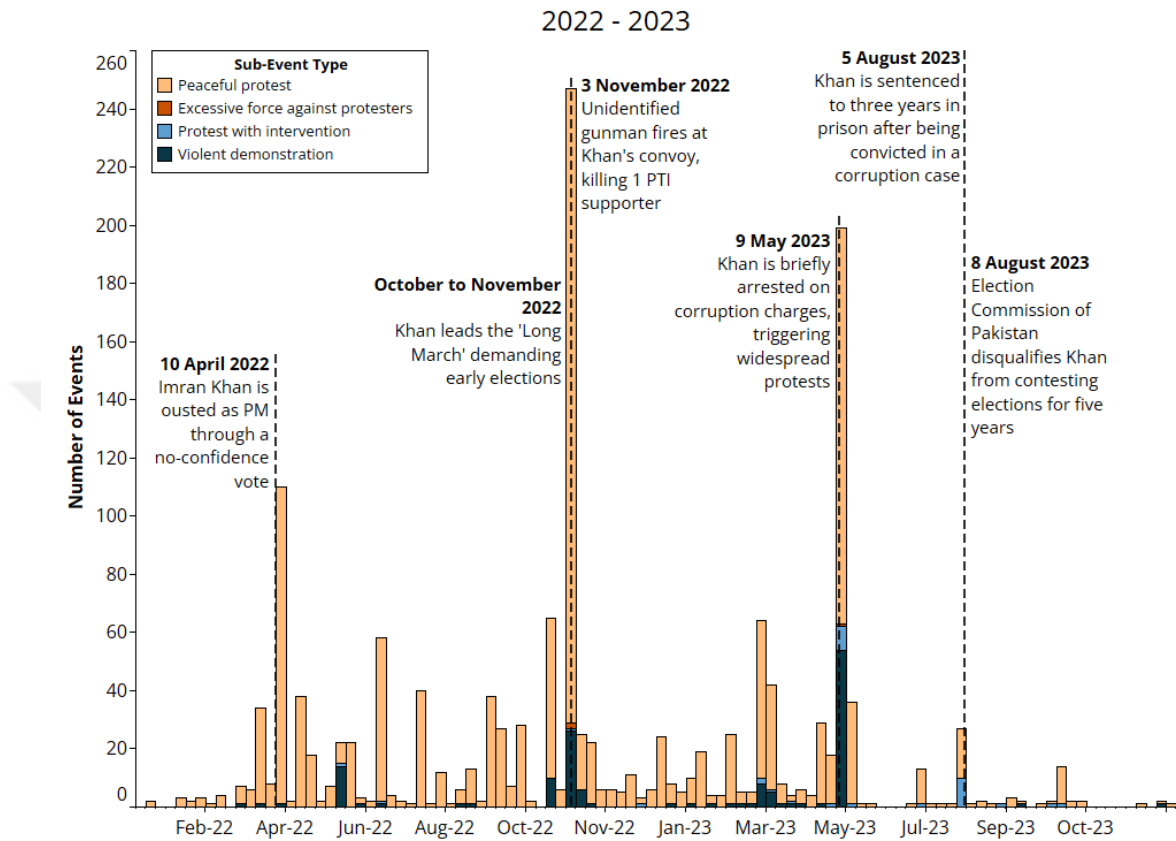


Figure 3.6. Demonstrations Involving the PTI 2022-2023

Source: Pandya, 2024

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

4.1. Key Findings

Assessing the fraught ethnic makeup of Pakistan and the domination of the Punjabi ethnic group in the country's elite, the Afghan refugee problem was bound to be a problem demographically. With most of the Afghan refugees being Pashtuns—and Pashtuns being the second-largest ethnic group in Pakistan—the provision of citizenship to Afghan refugees would have upended the status quo. This reveals then just how much of a controversial proposal Imran Khan made by suggesting Pakistani citizenship to Afghan refugees during his tenure and one of the reasons he became unpopular with the military establishment. Khan's support of the indigenous PTM movement seeking protection of Pashtun lives shows where his sympathies lie, and the fact that the Pashtun population of the KPK province voted twice for his party illustrates one of his biggest support bases. The ouster of Khan from power was met with protests as people felt their mandate was stolen. However, it was only after the military regime installed the coalition government and then barred Khan from reelection, that they were able to enact such major policies as deportation.

The geopolitical angle of the research acts as the other key lever that sets into motion the decision to deport Afghan refugees as shown by the withdrawal of the USSR from Afghanistan, the withdrawal of US/ NATO troops from Afghanistan, the US's pivot to Asia, and the reticence of the Kabul administration (be it Western-backed or the Taliban) to cooperate with Pakistan on some issue illustrates. With the 2001-2003 deportations being more of voluntary repatriations due to the view amongst Afghans that peace had prevailed, most refugees came back to Pakistan upon seeing the reality. Between 2003 and 2014, Afghans were generally tolerated even though Pakistan expressed that it was at full capacity. The Obama administration's decision to reduce US combat troops and hand over operations to Afghan troops emboldened the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban, which resulted in increased attacks, the most tragic

one being the 2014 APS attack in Pakistan. The Pakistani military enforced fencing of the border, which irked Kabul but was met with the mass expulsion of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. The sourness in their relations is illustrated by the decline in their trade with one another, which is significant due to Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan as a major trading partner.

While economic, security, and political arguments dominate the theories on deportation, they all are limited in their real-life application to this case. Economic arguments also tend to carry orientalist overtones by depicting only the Global South with the brush of greed and apathy towards human rights. Such claims are not extended to the Global North, where examples of refugee deportation are manifold. Security arguments are state-centric and justify the state's concerns about its borders; however, while refugee populations can be used by militant groups to hide, it is a problem of governance and failure of state security for not being able to safely screen refugee populations without endangering the life of refugees. Political arguments call for the interest of some groups in deporting refugees, but the iron grip of the Pakistani military over the state leaves little room for the citizenry to rally for the protection of Afghan refugees,

This thesis examines, from the perspectives of geopolitics and ethnicity, the expulsion of Afghan refugees by Pakistan. Its main goal is to analyze the complex relationships between Pakistan's deportation policy regarding Afghan refugees and both internal ethnic dynamics between the Punjabi-dominated elite and the frontier Pashtun ethnic group amid more significant geopolitical concerns. While cultural, economic, security and confessional causes for deportation have been explored by the extant literature, this research identifies the fundamental causes of the deportation process of Afghan refugees from Pakistan to be geopolitically and ethnically motivated, among others, that Kashmiri refugees are granted citizenship while Afghans are not. The geopolitical aspect of Pakistan's Afghan refugee policy has been analyzed chronologically, noting how Pakistan oscillated between hospitality and hostility as Western interests and funds waxed and waned. The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan also provides crucial insight into how Pakistan leveraged the Afghan refugee population against the Taliban once the latter was no longer showing the cooperation that the Pakistani state expected of it.

Nonetheless, there are a number of restrictions on this study. First off, even though the study aims to collect a wide range of data sources, access to some sensitive data might be limited, which could restrict the analysis's depth. Furthermore, by concentrating only on Pakistan's deportation practices, attention may unintentionally ignore the viewpoints and experiences of other parties, including the Afghan refugees themselves, other nations, and international organizations. The research's narrow temporal and spatial scope—which was restricted to a particular time period and the context of Pakistan and Afghanistan—may have limited the findings' applicability to other contexts or time periods. In spite of these obstacles, the study seeks to illuminate the intricate dynamics at work in the intersection by offering a comprehensive view of the deportation process within its prescribed constraints. The deportation order is currently ongoing, so the cutoff point for all information in this study is June 2024.

4.2. Implications

This study explores the oft-ignored factors of ethnicity and geopolitics as possible sources of refugee deportation. Especially situated in the global context of an increase in far-right and nationalist movements, the importance of a nation's identity is a crucial factor influencing a country's foreign policy. In multi-ethnic societies with weak governance, the most populous ethnic group appears to dominate the spectrum and accommodate groups that it doesn't deem a threat (e.g., Kashmiris in the Punjabi elite's mind) while quelling groups that they view as a potential rival (e.g., the Pashtuns and the Balochis). Reflecting on the insights gleaned from this thesis, it becomes apparent that the deportation of Afghan refugees by Pakistan, situated within the nexus of geopolitics and ethnicity, manifests a complex interplay of factors with profound implications. The research elucidates the intricate dynamics wherein state interests, regional power dynamics, and internal ethnic tensions converge to shape deportation policies. It underscores Pakistan's strategic positioning vis-à-vis Afghanistan and the intricate web of ethnic relations within its borders as pivotal determinants in dictating the treatment of Afghan refugees and the trajectory of the deportation process. Moreover, the study elucidates the multifaceted nature of forced migration, elucidating how geopolitical exigencies and ethnic dynamics intersect to yield multifarious outcomes, significantly impacting regional stability and the preservation of refugee rights. This scholarly examination underscores the exigency for a nuanced

understanding of forced displacement, advocating for comprehensive approaches that integrate geopolitical and ethnic considerations into policy frameworks and academic discourse. In sum, the reflections derived from this inquiry underscore the imperative of contextualizing forced migration within broader geopolitical and socio-cultural frameworks, offering invaluable insights for both scholarly inquiry and policy formulation in refugee studies.

4.3. Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies in this field may pursue several directions to enhance our comprehension of the intricate dynamics pertaining to forced migration and refugee policies. In particular, refugee studies urgently need to progress beyond oversimplified explanations based on security and economy, which frequently privilege state narratives. Examining how immigration and refugee concerns are becoming more politicized in democratic nations and contributing to the rise of far-right populist politicians, researchers could critically analyze the nation-state paradigm. Scholars can examine how state identity politics impact national discourse and refugee experiences by closely examining the nexus of nation-building, ethnicity, and refugee policies. It is crucial that elites take the responsibility of addressing issues of nationhood and inclusivity seriously, especially for nations like Pakistan that are struggling with identity crises and internal conflicts. If these problems are not resolved, society will continue to be divided. Pakistan could turn into a safe haven for its elites and leave the underprivileged areas to fend for themselves, adopting a cantonment mindset. In order to provide insights that help guide more inclusive and fair refugee policies and contribute to larger conversations on democracy, nationalism, and social cohesion, future research should, therefore, seek to throw light on these intricate interactions.

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