

THE CAUSES OF AFGHAN IMMIGRATION TO TÜRKİYE

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to find out the causes of Afghan immigration to Türkiye. Because of the fact that Afghan migrants move to Turkey all together as a group recently. Afghan migrants and refugees are second largest group in Türkiye after Syrian refugees. Therefore, this study examines the socio economic and cultural, historical and safety causes of Afghan immigration. Prolonged conflicts, civil war and ethnical tension in Afghanistan forced Afghans to migrate in different stages mostly to neighbouring countries and beyond. Therefore, Afghanistan's history intertwined with migration and mobility to become parts of its history. Moreover, in this article the reasons of Afghan immigration to Türkiye will be discussed based on pull and push factors on both countries of origin and destination. In the last couple of months, Afghan migrants are faced with challenges of deportation and uncertainty while the extremist group Taliban took power in Afghanistan. Finally, this article is also a contribution to the field of immigration and for those who research on this issue.

Key words: Afghan, immigration, reasons, Türkiye, push and pull factors.

AFGANLARIN TÜRKİYE'YE GÖÇ ETME NEDENLERİ

SOSYOLOJİK BİR BAKIŞ AÇISI

Öz

Bu makalenin amacı, son zamanlarda kitlesel halde Türkiye'ye gelen Afgan göçünün nedenlerini anlamaya çalışmaktır. Afganlı göçmenler ve sığınmacılar, Suriyeli sığınmacılardan sonra Türkiye'deki en büyük ikinci gruptur. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, Afgan göçünün sosyo-ekonomik, kültürel, tarihsel nedenleri ile güvenlik boyutuna odaklanır. Afganistan'da uzun süren çatışmalar, iç karışıklıklar ve etnik gerilimler, Afganlıları çeşitli şekillerde, çoğunluğunu komşu ülkelere ve ötesine olmak suretiyle göç etmeye mecbur bırakmıştır. Bu nedenle, Afganistan'ın tarihi, göç ve hareketlilik ile iç içe geçmiş ve tarihinin bir parçası olmuştur. Dahası, Afgan göçünün nedenleri, kaynak ülkedeki ve hedef ülkedeki koşulların itme ve çekme faktörleri kuramı üzerinden ele alınması suretiyle tartışılacaktır. Özellikle son birkaç ayda, aşırılık yanlısı Taliban Afganistan'da iktidarı ele geçirdiği için Afgan göçmenler sınır dışı edilme ve belirsizlik durumlarıyla karşı karşıya kalmaktadır. Nihayetinde bu makale, göç alanındaki çalışmacılara ve göç meselelerine çözüm bulmaya katkı sağlamaya çalışmaktadır. Son birkaç ayda, aşırılık yanlısı Taliban Afganistan'da iktidarı ele geçirdiği için Afgan göçmenler sınır dışı edilme ve belirsizlik durumlarıyla karşı karşıya kalmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Afgan, göç, Türkiye, itme, çekme faktörleri kuramı.

Introduction

Afghanistan is the only country where all its citizens have experienced displacement and one third of its citizens have migrated to foreign countries once or several times in their lifetime. “Mobility has been a fundamental coping and survival strategy for Afghans over the last 35 years. 10 million Afghans – or about one in three of the population – has been a refugee at least once during this period (Koser, 2014, p. 9). “Records show that Afghans have been migrating to the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan for centuries” (Marchant, et al., 2014, p. 29). Afghanistan is a country that has consistently originated immigrants for centuries due to its geographical location, ethnic structure and constant internal disturbance (Şimşek, 2021). Protracted ethnic conflicts and wars, terrorism and most important social exclusion forced Afghans to flee their country in different phases and took refuge in neighbouring countries and beyond.

After the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the first wave of Afghan forced migration occurred in 1979, and in 1989 more than 6.2 million Afghans fled to neighboring countries Iran and Pakistan. As a result of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in May 1989, 4 million Afghan refugees voluntarily returned to Afghanistan (UNHCR, 1999).

The second wave of Afghan migration took place after the withdrawal of Soviet forces, which led to a civil war between various jihadist groups in 1989-1998 years, and according to the International Migration Organization report (Koser, 2014, p. 11), 6 million Afghans migrated to Pakistan and Iran.

After the Taliban took power over Kabul in 1995 and rule Afghanistan (1996- 2001) hundred thousand Afghan fled Afghanistan (Goodson, 2001) with 1.5 million internally displaced persons. “Pakistan closed its border to prevent another massive refugee flow, which led to a dramatic swelling of the IDP1 population in Afghanistan” (Goodson, 2001, p. 94).

There have been waves of refugee flows and returns from and back to Afghanistan since the Communist coup in April 1978, broadly paralleling the phases of conflict in that country. According to the International Organization for Migration, (Koser, 2014, p. 10;11) after the overthrow of the Taliban regime in September 2001, Afghanistan experienced a wave of reverse migration with more than 5.7 million Afghan refugee returned to Afghanistan.

The third wave of immigration from Afghanistan began gradually after former US President Barack Obama announced in 2014 (Landler, 2014) that he would withdraw US troops from Afghanistan by 2016. As a result of treacherous so-called peace agreement under the name of “Doha peace agreement”² was signed between USA government and Taliban Hundreds of thousands of Afghans were fleeing Afghanistan to Iran every day, and a big number of them entered Türkiye through Iran. Due to its geographical location, Türkiye acts as a transit country as

1 Internal displacement population.

2 Under the so-called Doha 2020 peace agreement signed in February 2020 between the United States and the Taliban, set date for the US withdrawal troops from Afghanistan, and the Taliban have pledged not to attack US and not to allow the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and other affiliated terrorist group to attack USA and its allies from Afghanistan.

well as a destination country for Afghan refugees and immigrants. “Aghan migration to Türkiye commenced during the early 1980s ater the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and the downfall of the monarchic regime. A limited number of Afghan migrants were officially invited in Türkiye by the Turkish government in the early 1980s. These were Afghans of Uzbek and Turkmen ethnicity, individuals were officially settled in various regions of the country” (İçduyugu and Kirişci, 2009, p, 445-446).

The fourth wave of Afghan migration was massive when the Taliban extremist group captured Kabul in mid-August 2021 without a single shot, causing the nation, from ordinary citizens to Afghan leaders, to flee Afghanistan. According to the recent Gallop survey (Ray, 2022) 53% of Afghans want to leave their country and Türkiye is their top favorite destination for Afghan potential immigrants, flowed by Germany Canada and the United States of America. In this study the causes of Afghan immigration to Türkiye as a push factor in the country of origin (Afghanistan) and pull factor in the country of host (Türkiye) are evaluated in detail.

Theoretical framework

Push- pull model

In the field of migration studies, there is no common theory of migration among scholars because “research on migration is interdisciplinary: sociology, anthropology, political science, history, economics, geography, demography, psychology, cultural studies, law, archaeology and the humanities are all relevant” (de Haas et al, 2020, p. 44). “Sociology’s foundation

as an academic discipline coincided with waves of mass migration at the turn of the twentieth century. Sociology is a discipline based on the classic works of social thinkers (Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Marx Weber) and social relations tend to be emphasized as central to understanding the processes of immigration and migration. However, sociology is interested in the causes of emigration. According to sociology studies begin with the question of why people migrate who migrates and what will be happened to immigrants on their arrival in the country of origin” (Brettell and Hollifield, 2015, p. 115).

“The migration theory consists of a microlevel and a macrolevel of consideration. The microlevel consists of single individuals moving from an origin to a destination region at certain times, and the macrolevel is defined by a few aggregate variables: regional population numbers and interregional population flows” (Weidlich and Haag, 1988, p. 7). As the causes of Afghan immigration to Türkiye are the main topic of this study, the theoretical framework of this research is based on the push-pull model of migration theory, which examines the factors (causes) of migration in a functional and macro level both in the country of origin and in the host country. “Push-pull model identify economic, environmental, and demographic factors which are assumed to push people out of places of origin and pull them into destination places 'Push factors' usually include population growth and population density, lack of economic opportunities and political repression, while 'pull factors' usually include demand for labour, availability of land, economic opportunities, and political freedoms” (Castle et al, 2014, p. 29).

Method, data collection and field of study

In this essay quantitative and qualitative methods are applied. The research was conducted for data collection in three provinces of Istanbul, Trabzon and Konya where large numbers of Afghan immigrants and refugees are living. Istanbul with a high number of Afghan migrants' population is followed by Konya and Trabzon. The geographical distribution and identification of Afghan migrants is unclear, as most of them are illegal immigrants who are not registered to be traced for conducting the research based on most populated areas.

The primary data were collected personally from 25 Afghan interviewers based on in-depth interviews with Afghan migrants in three above mentioned cities. At the same time, a questionnaire consists of 300 respondents distributed randomly among Afghan immigrants, consists of illegal Afghan migrants, Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in the three cities of Istanbul, Konya and Trabzon. Secondary data were used from books, magazines, newspapers and reports and all data were analyzed by SPSS program and used in this article.

Push factors: The reasons of Afghan immigration to Türkiye

Migration is often a collective action, arising out of social, economic and political change and affecting entire communities and societies in both origin and destination areas (de Haas, Castles & Miller, 2020, p. 42). The causes of Afghan immigration to Türkiye which push Afghans out of their homeland and country are security, economic, political and

religious reasons. These push factors of Afghan immigration to Türkiye considered based on macrolevel of migration study, because every day big numbers of Afghans are fleeing their country by any route and means. “Every day, thousands of people are fleeing the Taliban through the last open route out of Afghanistan. It's their last hope to escape poverty and desperation” (Reuter & Busch , 2022).

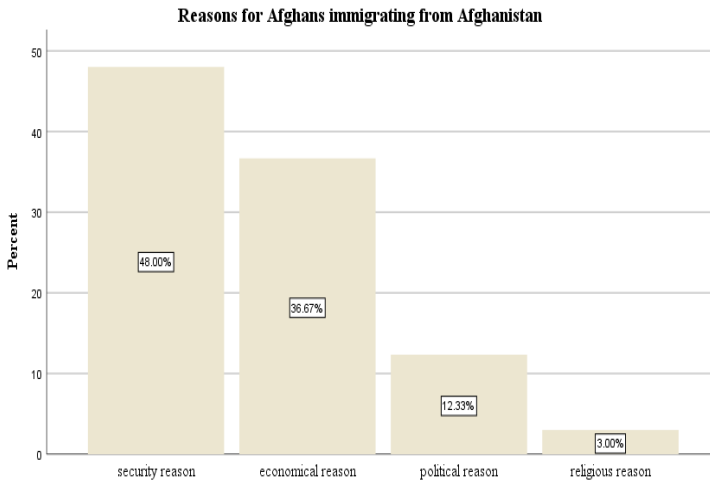


Figure 1. Source: 300 questionnaires of Afghan migrant participants in three cities of Istanbul, Konya and Trabzon March-June 2021

According to Figure 1, security is the most important reason for Afghans migrating from Afghanistan. The data show that more than 40% of Afghan migrants and refugee have migrated from Afghanistan due to insecurity in Afghanistan. Prior to the fall of Kabul to the radical Taliban group, Afghanistan's rural areas were the most insecure place in Afghanistan, and majority of Afghan migrants immigrated to Türkiye from rural areas of Afghanistan. “Since the Taliban took overpower last August, they have been joined by farmers, engineers, public servants and entire families with children seeking to make it to Iran or beyond” (Reuter & Busch , 2022).

“My hometown in Afghanistan is Nahrin Baghlan province, which is the most insecure and dangerous area in the north. Due to the war and conflict in our area, I left there and immigrated to Türkiye. My father, who is an intelligence officer, has also left and intends to immigrate to Türkiye” (P1, male, 25, 2021).

Based on data provided, the economy has been the second leading cause of Afghan migration from Afghanistan to Türkiye. More than 36% of Afghan migrants are driven by economic factors to emigrate. Afghanistan's economy was heavily dependent on international aid and funding, so when NATO forces announced³ their withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, security deteriorated alongside the economic situation, caused to widespread Afghan migration.

According to Asian Development Bank data (ADB, 2020), 49.4% of Afghanistan's population lived under the national poverty line in 2020. It is noteworthy that poverty rose sharply after the government collapsed in August 2021, and the International Monetary Fund (Rice, 2021) warned that Afghanistan's economic situation could lead to a refugee crisis, impacting its neighbouring countries, as well as Türkiye and Europe.

³ On May 27, 2014, former President Barack Obama announced a timetable for the withdrawal of more US troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2016. US troops remained beyond the timetable until August 29, 2021, when Major General Chris Donahue the last US soldier boarded a C-130 military aircraft at Kabul airport, while the Taliban control Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan.

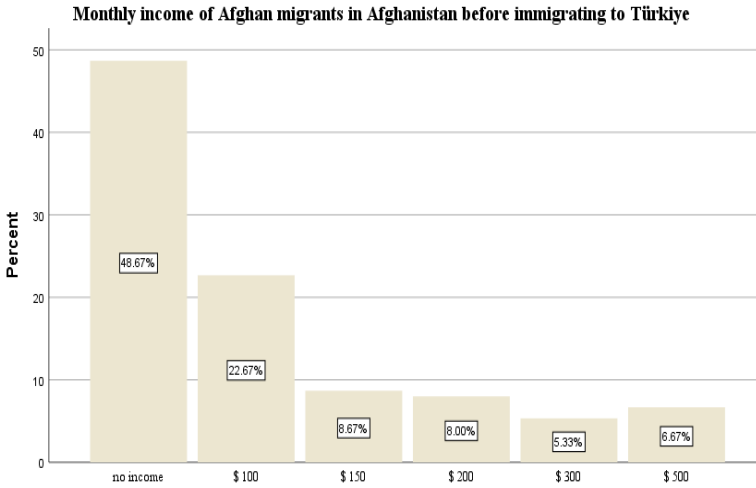


Figure 2. Source: 300 questionnaires of Afghan migrant participants in three cities of Istanbul, Konya and Trabzon, March - June 2021.

Field data from Figure 2 shows that more than 48% of Afghans had no income before migrating to Türkiye. The second largest group, 22%, earned only 100 dollar a month. And followed by 8.67 percent had \$ 150, 8 percent \$ 200, 5 percent, \$ 300 and the last group more than 6 percent had the highest income with \$ 500 per month.

Political reason is the third factor that forced Afghan immigrants to flee Afghanistan. According to Figure 1, more than 12% emigrate for political reasons. Political causes include political affiliations and former police officers, Afghan National Army and government intelligence officers who were on the Taliban's target list to be hunted down. The Reuters News Agency reported (Stewart et al, 2021) the assassination of Afghan Air Force pilots by the Taliban extremist group in July 2021.

The fourth reason for Afghans migrating from Afghanistan is religious. According to the data, 3% of Afghans have emigrated

for religious reasons. Those Afghans who have migrated for religious reasons are Shiite Hazaras who are regularly attacked by suicide bombers because of their faith. After the Taliban took power, they are being targeted regularly in mosques and schools as well.

Occupations of Afghans in Afghanistan

It is very difficult to classify jobs in a society, but since Afghanistan is not an industrialized country, most Afghans are engaged in white-collar jobs such as farming, labor, and some as employees in private and governmental organizations.

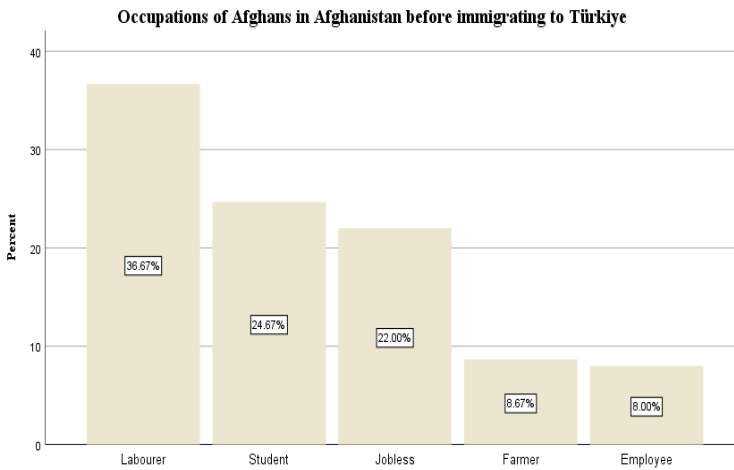


Figure 3. Source: 300 questionnaires of Afghan migrant participants in three cities of Istanbul, Konya and Trabzon, March -June 2021.

According to the data, a majority of 36% of Afghans in Afghanistan worked as laborers before migrating to Türkiye. The second largest group are students, who make up more than 22% of Afghan migrants, some of whom have dropped out of school and some who have graduated and then emigrated to Türkiye. Based on data, 22% of Afghans were unemployed

before migrating to Türkiye. More than 8% of Afghans were farmers and 8% were employees of public and private organizations. According to the provided data and interviews, most of Afghan migrants were dissatisfied with their jobs in Afghanistan due to low wages and salaries.

The age of Afghan migrants

Apart from African countries, Afghanistan has the youngest population in the world due to high fertility rate. More than 70% of Afghanistan's population are under the age of 25 (Glass & Salih, 2013). In Afghanistan, when the son in a family reaches the age of eighteen, in some cases even at a younger age, his parents encourage him to emigrate to support the family in the future.

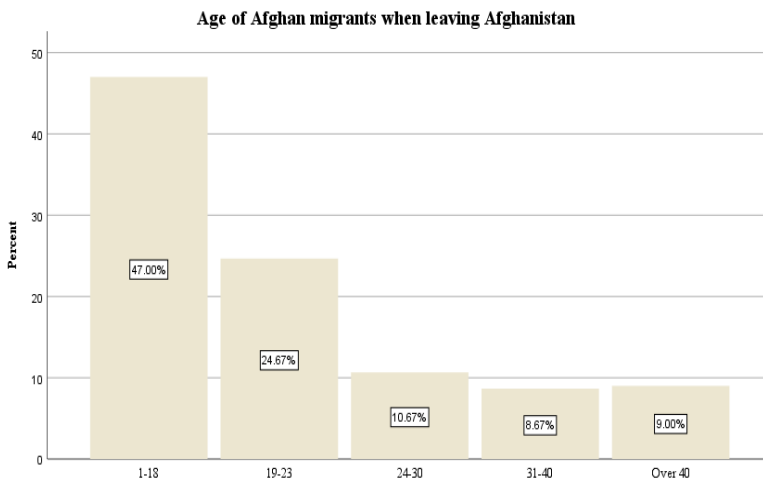


Figure 4. Source: 300 questionnaires of Afghan migrant participants in three cities of Istanbul, Konya and Trabzon, March -June 2021.

As the data in Figure 4 shows, 47% of Afghan refugees and migrants are sixteen years old or under sixteen. When the

younger generation of Afghans, after graduating from school, could not enter university and find the job they wanted, their only way was [is] to emigrate. According to the above data, more than 24% of Afghans were between 19 and 23 years old when migrating from Afghanistan. More than 10% of Afghans were between 24 and 30 years old at the time of leaving Afghanistan. And more than 8% were between 31 and 40 years old. The last group, 9% who were over 40 years old while leaving Afghanistan.

Pull factor: Causes of Afghan immigration to Türkiye

Afghanistan's migration history dates back to the 1980s, when Afghanistan was occupied by the former Soviet Union and millions of Afghans took refuge to Pakistan and Iran. The history of Afghan migration to Türkiye dates back to when more than 4,000 Afghan Turkish origin (Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz) were brought to Türkiye legally and collectively under 1982 year's settlement law (İskan Kanunu) passed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Şimşek, 2021). "Türkiye, known as a sending country in the second half of the twentieth century, has transformed into a receiving and transit country in the last few decades" Until 2010, "Türkiye has become a destination and a transit country for asylum seekers since the early 1990s" (Olga and Saskia, 2020, p. 144; 160) Türkiye has been a transit country or gateway to European countries for Afghans but has recently become an ideal destination and place for Afghan politicians, traders, investors and artists and ordinary Afghans for residing. The mass migration of Afghans to Türkiye in recent years has raised concerns among politicians and Turks about how to deal with the large numbers of Afghan refugees and

undocumented migrants. There are no exact statistics on Afghan undocumented migrants in Türkiye, as there is no record due to can not be tracked. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, once rejecting the claim of his political opponent CHP political leader claim that there are 1.5 million Afghan migrants in Türkiye, President Erdoğan said, “There are currently 300,000 registered and unregistered Afghan migrants in our police records in Türkiye” (Sevinç et al, 2021). In case of registered Afghan migrants “There are more than 170,000 Afghan refugees registered here in Türkiye and Afghan refugees are the second biggest group after Syrians” (Olga & askia, 2020).

Apart from the fact that Türkiye acts as a transit country for Afghan immigrants and refugees, the question is why Afghans migrate to Türkiye and what factors pull Afghans to migrate to Türkiye? In answering to this question, first “conventional wisdom holds that migration is driven by geographical differences in income, employment and other opportunities” (de Haas et al, 2020, p. 42). Second if “persistent inequalities in wealth between rich and poor countries will continue to impel large numbers of people to move in search of better living standards” (Castles et al, 2014, p. 7). Then, what are the motivations and opportunities for Afghans to migrate to Türkiye, finally, pull factors are examined based on provided data in detail hereinafter:

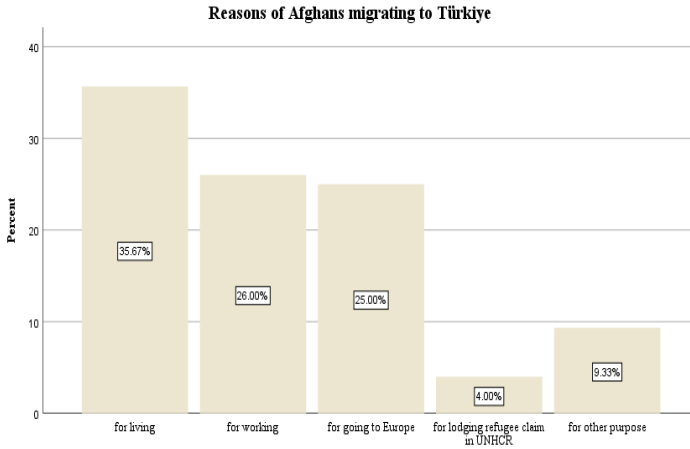


Figure 5. Source: 300 questionnaires of Afghan migrant participants in three cities of Istanbul, Konya and Trabzon, March -June 2021

The reason of migration for living

According to the data provided, 40% of Afghans left their country for security reasons, in other words, insecurity was the first main reason forcing Afghan people to flee their country. Based on Figure 5 data, more than 36% of Afghans immigrated to Türkiye for the purpose of living in Türkiye. The purpose of migration depends on the economic and social conditions of the host country. Sometimes the target country become a transit country after migration or vice versa. Four decades of war and conflict in Afghanistan have created a situation where everyone is trying to flee Afghanistan to find a place to reside with their families.

Do you think there will be security and peace in near future in Afghanistan?

Table 1. source: 300 questionnaires of Afghan migrant participants in three cities of Istanbul, Konya and Trabzon, March - June 2021.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	107	35.7%	35.7%	35.7%
no	193	64.3%	64.3%	100.0%
Total	300	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In a questionnaire of 300 Afghan migrant participants in the three cities of Istanbul, Konya and Trabzon, from March to June 2021, Afghan migrants were asked whether security and peace would be established in Afghanistan. According to Table 1 data, out of 300 participants, 193 respondents (64.3%) answered "no" there will be no security in Afghanistan in near future, and 107 respondents (35.7%) answered "yes" security and peace will be established in Afghanistan.

The reason of migration for working

According to the data, more than 48% of Afghans were unemployed in Afghanistan before migrating to Türkiye, which shows that almost half of the population was unemployed. According to Figure 5, 26% of Afghans have migrated to Türkiye for work. Contrary to popular belief in Türkiye that Afghan migrants are mostly economic migrants, the data shows that only 26% of Afghan migrants are economic migrants. Most of the Afghans who came to Türkiye to work are those whose fiancées, spouses, children and parents are in Afghanistan. They came just to Türkiye to work and intend to return to Afghanistan after saving or sending an amount of money.

If peace and security achieved in Afghanistan, will you return to your country?

Table 2. source: 300 questionnaires of Afghan migrant participants in three cities of Istanbul, Konya and Trabzon, March - June 2021.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	107	35.7%	35.7%	35.7%
no	193	64.3%	64.3%	100.0%
Total	300	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

According to Table 2, more than seventy-five (75.7%) respondents believed that if security and stability were restored, we would return to Afghanistan, while (24.3%) believed that they would not return to Afghanistan even after security was restored there. It is noteworthy that the data collected before the fall of the government. After the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in mid-August 2021, Afghans are not reluctant to return to Afghanistan anymore.

Reason for migration of Europe

According to Figure 5, 25% of Afghans have migrated to Türkiye to reach to European countries. In another words, 25% of Afghan migrants are transit migrants. It is very difficult to determine what percentage of Afghan migrants in Türkiye prefer to go to European countries, because most migrants do not easily express their intention going to European countries based on some reasons. The first main reason why Afghan migrants do not prefer to go to European countries is the tightening of border controls by Frontex⁴ with the adoption of pushbacks⁵ migrants at sea.

“My two children (daughter 10 and son 12) and I tried to cross the sea and land 7 times to reach Greece, but we could not get there because all the time we were intercepted in the middle of the sea by Greek and

⁴ The European Border and Coast Guard Agency- tasked with border control of the European Schengen zone in coordination of coastal guard.

⁵ Pushbacks are illegal violation of human rights violation that Greek coastal police have used in recent years to force migrants back over sea and land border. There have even been numerous reports of migrants being released in the middle of the sea, which has been condemned by human rights organizations.

Turkish coastal guards and police and then returned to Türkiye” (P2, female, 35, 2021).

After seven-month contacting her through phone call, participant said, she arrived in Germany with her two children living in a refugee camp. The participant was able to reach Germany after paying large sums of money to smugglers who went directly to Italy instead of Greece after several unsuccessful attempts. Hundreds of thousands of Afghan immigrants are stranded in Türkiye because they cannot afford to pay for human traffickers to reach European countries.

Transit migrants from Asian and African countries in their waiting period to reach European countries, they start working for affording the human trafficking cost, as a result, they become part of informal employment in different sectors of economic activities. In case of no success in going to Europe continent, Türkiye slowly becomes a country of destination (Olga & Saskia, 2020).

The cost of human trafficking has increased in recent years after tightening border controls by Greece and Türkiye. The cost of human trafficking from Türkiye to Greece \$2500 and from Türkiye to Italy \$10,000 per person. Only those who have a sponsor in one of the western countries come to us for game (P3, male, 39, 2021). (Game is a term used among migrants for going to Greece and Italy)

It is very difficult to provide an accurate figure for the percentage of Afghan migrants willing to go to Europe, because the results of the statistics depend on the types of questions and conditions.

If you granted permanent residential permit, would you stay in Türkiye or go to Europe?

Table 2. source: 300 questionnaires of Afghan migrant participants in three cities of Istanbul, Konya and Trabzon, March - June 2021.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
I prefer to go	126	42.0%	42.0%	42.0 %
I prefer to stay	174	58.0%	58.0%	100.0%
Total	300	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

According to the collected data, 58% of the participants prefer to stay in Türkiye if granted a residence permit, while 42% prefer to go to European countries even if they have been granted a residence permit. In a two-choice question despite having permanent residence in Türkiye, more than 48% of Afghan immigrants if they have the opportunity prefer to go to European countries.

Reason of migration for other purposes

According to the data in Figure 5, more than 9% of Afghan migrants have immigrated to Türkiye for other purposes. The other purposes include obtaining a residence permit, increasing income, obtaining Turkish citizenship, and receiving medical treatment in Türkiye. During the data collection and interviews, there were many Afghan migrants who came to Türkiye only for treatment because Afghanistan had no general health insurance with the weakest health care sector before the fall of government in mid-August 2021.

“My age is 60 and I was in Taliban’s prison in Baghlan Province in a very bad condition under Taliban torture, two of my spines were fractured, I could not stand in Afghanistan. Luckily after a year and a half of treatment in Türkiye, I can stand and now it's getting better day by day. I came to Türkiye only for my treatment” (P4, male, 60, 2021).

The reason of migration for asylum seeking

Applying for asylum at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is another goal of Afghans migrating to various countries. According to Figure 5 data, 4% of Afghan refugees have come to Türkiye to apply for asylum seeking at the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees office. Based on (UNCHR-Turkey, 2022) data, more than 115,000 Afghan asylum seekers have been registered in Turkey as refugee at UN High Commissioner for Refugees office in Türkiye.

Afghans have traditionally sought asylum in Pakistan and Iran over the past four decades, but in recent years, they have increasingly sought asylum in Türkiye and Malaysia and India due to the lack of processing of their cases in Pakistan and Iran. There are 1.4 million Afghans have been registered in Pakistan as refugee, and 780,000 (UNCHR, 2022) Afghans have also registered as refugee in Iran.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Migration is an integral part of Afghanistan people's history, and mobility is a survival strategy for Afghans during the war and conflicts in Afghanistan. Prolonged multifactorial conflict, war and ethnic tensions in Afghanistan have forced Afghans

to leave their country with multiple waves of immigration, from the Soviet invasion to the last Taliban extremist group that came to power in Afghanistan in mid-August 2021.

The main driving factors forcing the people of Afghanistan to leave their country are insecurity, bad economic situation, instability and political tension and restriction and terrorist attack on certain religious group and social hospitality respectively.

The main reason for the mass exodus of Afghan people was the announcement and withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan in 2014. After the sociopolitical situation deteriorated, Türkiye became the main destination of migration for Afghans. Meanwhile, Türkiye remains a crucial transit country for many nationalities including Afghan illegal immigrants enroute to Europe.

The micro and individual objectives of migration are diverse, but at the macro level the reasons for Afghan migration to Türkiye are settling in for long term, job opportunities and Turkey's geographical location for the entry of Afghan immigrants to European countries. In addition to that, another reason for migration is to apply for asylum at the UNHCR Turkey-based UNHCR office to seek short-term refugee status and resettle in a third country as a long-term goal.

According to statistics, Türkiye experienced the largest illegal immigrants between 2019-2020, mostly from Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan. Recently the number of illegal immigrants has decreased after tightening border control, identity checks in cities and deportation of illegal immigrants. Türkiye

deported more than one hundred thousand illegal immigrants in 2022, the largest numbers in its history, most of them from Afghanistan.

Türkiye is one of the main supporters of Afghanistan especially under the umbrella of TİKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency), which carried out many developmental humanitarian projects in Afghanistan. To support those deportees or voluntarily returnees to Afghanistan, Türkiye can create job opportunities by establishing micro-businesses in Afghanistan. At the same time, Türkiye with world community can cooperate more on bringing lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

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