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Afghan External Migration Movements in the Historical Process*

Tarihsel Süreçte Afgan Dış Göç Hareketleri

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* "COPE-Dergi Editörleri İçin Davranış Kuralları ve En İyi Uygulama İlkeleri" beyanları: Bu çalışma için herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bildirilmemiştir. Bu çalışma için etik kurul onayı gerekmemektedir.

Abstract

Afghan immigration, which has continued uninterruptedly for the last half century, has become an integral part of the country's historical identity. Political and economic instability which has been going on for nearly fifty years, foreign intervention and drought and famine caused by climate change, are the most important factors triggering Afghan migration. The unending war and instability in Afghanistan for more than forty years have seriously affected the living conditions of the Afghan people, forcing them to migrate internally and externally. Afghanistan is one of the countries that produce the most migration due to the internal conflicts, which it has been experiencing for the last forty years as a result of economic crisis and poverty. Especially during and after the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and the civil war in the country, more than 6 million people of Afghanistan had to migrate to neighboring countries such as Iran, Pakistan, the US and the European countries. In this process, there has been a brain drain with the migration of the skilled and educated people that the country needs most. The foreign aid made to the newly established administration after 2001 could not implement useful projects to ensure the safety of the people and to improve the economy. On the other hand, despite the great foreign aid made to the newly established administration after 2001 could not implement useful projects to ensure the safety of the people and to improve the economy due to corruption and governance problems. For the above mentioned reasons, since the people's trust in the state cannot be fully ensured, the safety of life and property constitutes the most basic reasons for out-migration. However, after the fall of the Kabul government in August 2021 and the Taliban's return to power, there was an increase in emigration. In this study, the factors that have caused an increase in external-emigration of people from Afghanistan mainly after 1979, the reasons for the majority of the Afghan migrants preferring Iran, Pakistan and Turkey as their destinations, and the major policies of these countries towards Afghan immigration were examined.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Soviet Invasion, Civil War, Taliban, USA, External Migration

Öz

Son yarım asırdır aralıksız devam eden Afgan göçü, ülkenin tarihî kimliğinin ayrılmaz bir parçası hâline gelmiştir. Yaklaşık elli yıldır devam eden siyasi ve ekonomik istikrarsızlık, dış müdahale ve iklim değişikliğinin neden olduğu kuraklık ve kıtlık Afgan göçünü tetikleyen en önemli faktörlerdir. Afganistan'da kırk yılı aşkın süredir bitmeyen savaş ve istikrarsızlık, Afgan halkının yaşam koşullarını ciddi derecede olumsuz etkilemiş, onları iç ve dış göçe zorlamıştır. Afganistan, ekonomik kriz ve yoksulluğun yanı sıra son kırk yıldır devam eden iç çatışmalar nedeniyle en fazla göç veren ülkelerden biri olmuştur. Özellikle Sovyetler Birliğinin Afganistan'ı İşgali ve akabinde ülkede yaşanan iç savaş esnasında ve sonrasında 6 milyondan fazla insan başta komşu ülkeler, Pakistan ve İran olmak üzere diğer bölge ülkelerine göç etmek zorunda kalmıştır. Bu süreçte ülkenin en çok ihtiyaç duyduğu vasıflı ve eğitilmiş insanların yurt dışına göç etmesi ile beyin göçü yaşanmıştır. 2001 yılından sonra yeni kurulan yönetime yapılan büyük dış yardımlar, yolsuzluklar ve yönetim sorunları nedeniyle halkın güvenliğini sağlamaya ve ekonomiyi iyileştirmeye yönelik faydalı projeler hayata geçirilememiştir. Yukarıda belirtilen nedenlerle halkın devlete olan güveni tam olarak sağlanamadığından, ekonomik sebeplerin yanı sıra can ve mal güvenliği dış göçün en temel nedenlerini oluşturmuştur. Fakat Ağustos 2021 yılında Kabul Hükümetinin düşmesi ile Taliban'ın yeniden iktidara gelmesinin ardından dış göçte artış yaşanmıştır. Bu çalışmada, ağırlıklı olarak 1979 sonrası Afganistan'da dış göçün artmasına neden olan faktörler, Afgan göçmenlerin çoğunluğunun İran, Pakistan ve Türkiye'yi hedef ülke olarak seçme sebepleri ve bu ülkelerin Afgan göçüne yönelik politikaları incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afganistan, Sovyet İşgali, İç Savaş, Taliban, ABD, Dış Göç

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INTRODUCTION

Migration is a phenomenon as old as the history of humanity. Migration is a problem that all societies have faced for different reasons in different periods of time throughout their history. Migration continues to be the biggest challenge of our age due to natural disasters caused by climate change, war and conflicts. People living in unstable, underdeveloped or developing regions of the world migrate to developed countries for better living and working conditions. Afghanistan is one of the countries in the world that produce the most migration due to the internal conflicts which it has been experiencing for the last forty years and have resulted in economic crisis and poverty. Afghans have been migrating abroad continuously for about 50 years.

Although conflicts and security issues are the main drivers of Afghan migration, they are often interlinked and inseparable with economic factors. For instance, conflicts affecting the livelihoods of people in rural areas have forced migration to cities or neighboring countries. Afghans also have unequal opportunities for immigration, depending on their economic and social status. Urban and more educated groups tend to migrate to industrialized countries, while the poorest make up a large part of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Demographic pressure is also a major factor in migration, with a growing number of young Afghans seeking economic opportunities. Meanwhile, women are becoming extremely vulnerable as a result of migration.

The largest and most massive migration in the history of Afghanistan started with the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan. More than 5 million Afghans migrated to neighboring countries between 1979-1989 during the Soviet occupation. Most Afghans had to migrate to Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and other countries. Such a large number corresponded to one-fifth of the country's population at that time. In addition, two million people who were internally displaced had to move within the country. The second largest mass migration was experienced as a result of the chaos caused by the conflict and civil war between the groups that could not share power after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan in 1989 (Dashti, 2021).

After the complete withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan on July, 22 2021, and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, another mass migration was triggered in Afghanistan. The fall of the Kabul government and the ceasement of foreign aid caused the deepening of the economic crisis in Afghanistan and the exacerbation of poverty. The above mentioned reasons forced the Afghan people struggling with hunger to migrate to different countries, in order to secure survival for themselves and their family members.

Afghanistan's Geopolitical Location and Foreign Interventions

In addition to some of the main factors such as internal conflicts and issues concerning security that have continued over the past four decades, drought and famine caused by climate change have directly triggered migration from Afghanistan to abroad. These factors have made Afghans one of the largest migrant communities in the world. Since Afghanistan cannot cope with these challenges, it maintains its place among the countries that produce the most migration in the world for nearly half a century (Dashti, 2021).

In order to understand and analyze the migration mobility originating from Afghanistan, it is useful to first mention the developments that have affected the recent history of the country. With its current geographical location Afghanistan, surrounded by Iran from the west, China from the east, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan republics from the north, and Pakistan from the south. Afghanistan is a mountainous country with an area of 652.225 km² (Dashti, 2021).

Picture 1: Afghanistan Map



Reference: <https://geology.com/world/afghanistan-satellite-image.shtml>, 15.12.2021

Afghanistan, which is located on the old historical Silk Road, is a country that serves as a bridge between Central Asia, the Middle East and South Asia. Due to its geopolitical location, it has been constantly exposed to the intervention of regional and global powers throughout history. The first example of this is the Persian ruler. For the first time in the 5th century BC, the Persian ruler Darius I organized an expedition to the region. It was followed by Alexander the Great, Sakas, Ak-Huns, Arabs, Ghaznavids, Harzemshahs, Guris, Mongols, Mughals, Timurids, and Baburians dominations of this region (Dashti, 2021). Although global and regional powers occupied the region easily, they could not maintain their domination for a long time. The power that dominates the region has been destroyed by the other power that wants to dominate the region. That's why Afghanistan is known as the "Graveyard of Empires" in history (Hamidzada, 2020).

At the beginning of the 19th century, Afghanistan was the scene of the Russian and British struggle for influence, which was called the "Great Game". The British invaded Afghanistan three times in 1842, 1879 and 1919 in order to prevent the Russians from advancing to the South (Runion, 2007). About 60 years later, the country was occupied by the Soviet Union, in an aim of reaching the Indian ocean by keeping Pakistan and Iran under its influence (Hamidzada, 2020). The civil war that broke out shortly after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan 10 years later plunged the country into complete chaos. During this period, the entire infrastructure of the country was destroyed and left wounds that cannot be healed.

The last example is the military intervention of the USA in 2001 to overthrow the Taliban regime. The constant foreign interventions in the history of Afghanistan, as well as devastating results of the struggle for power in the country have triggered migration to a large extent and migration has become a part of the historical identity of the country (Dashti, 2021).

Especially after the drought and famine in the 1970s, with the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, the process of mass migration of Afghans to abroad began and has continued uninterruptedly until today. Thus, migration has turned into one of the phenomena that has never decreased in Afghanistan's recent history.

Afghan Immigration Movements

Soviet Union Invasion of Afghanistan (1979-1989)

The migration movement originating from Afghanistan entered the world migration scene in the middle of the 19th century and the largest mass migration was experienced with the occupation of the Soviet Union.

However sources (İrfani, 2018) indicate that the first Afghan immigration took place in the middle of the 19th century, when the Russian and British struggle for influence continued. With the help of the British government, in 1860 more than 70 Afghan families from Ghazni and Kabul settled in Australia (İrfani, 2018). The migration, which took place in the Afghans' own vehicles, camels and mules, took months. Several families died due to thirst and long journeys. Thus, with the cooperation of Britain, the first Afghan population nucleus was established in Australia (İrfani, 2018; Embassy Of Islamic Republic Of Afghanistan Canberra, Australia, 2021).

In the same period, approximately 5 thousand Hazara families migrated to Iran. In addition, during the reign of Abdurahman Khan (1880-1903), known as the Iron-Fisted Amir, thousands of Hazaras had to migrate to Iran due to the ethnic cleansing policy carried out against the Hazara ethnic group (Shavazi and others, 2005). In the early 1970s, poverty caused by economic and famine had an effect on Afghans' inclination towards Pakistan. This situation shows that seasonal migration towards Pakistan has taken place due to the problems caused by the economic situation in Afghanistan.

However, on April 27, 1978, as a result of the bloody coup of the Soviet-backed Afghan Democratic People's Party, the overthrow of Davut Khan's government and the establishment of a communist government, clashes began between right and left groups in Afghanistan (Misbahzada, 2018: 194). Right-wing groups targeted by the communist government took refuge in Pakistan during this period. The number of Afghans immigrating to Pakistan reached 109,000 by June 1979 (Grare and Maley, 2011). The immigration wave that started with the groups fleeing the persecution of the communist government and their families took refuge in Pakistan, was followed by the immigration during the Soviet occupation and civil war. We see that immigration has been a part of Afghan society throughout history. Especially since 1978, there has been a great increase in the number of Afghan immigrants abroad. (Dashti, 2021).

With the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979, the Cold War turned into a hot conflict. During the occupation, the Washington administration provided weapons to mujahideen groups fighting against the Soviets to avenge the Vietnam War and prevent its further southward advance (Sajjadi, 2018, s.195). Thus Afghanistan, in the second half of the 20th century, once again has been the scene of the great powers' struggle for influence. The occupation, which lasted nearly a decade, had unprecedented devastating consequences in Afghanistan. More than one million civilians lost their lives (Sadid, 2017). During this period, the number of orphans among children aged 9 to 15 years reached 24% (Sadid, 2017).

During the occupation, 25000 Afghans lost their lives only as a result of landmines. In addition, Afghanistan, whose economy is completely based on agriculture, has been dragged into a cocoon with a sharp decrease in agricultural production. Due to increased violence, two million people were displaced within the country (Jackson, 2009: 8).

All these devastating developments have led to the largest migration movement in the history of Afghanistan. During the occupation, 6 million Afghans were forced to migrate to neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Iran due to violence and conflicts (1979-1989). One third of Afghanistan's 18 million population left the country to survive. The vast majority of these people (As of 1990, 3.3 million) immigrated to Afghanistan's southeast neighbor, Pakistan. 3.1 million people immigrated to Afghanistan's western neighbor, Iran (Castles and Miller, 2008). In addition, due to increased violence, two million people were displaced within the country (Jackson, 2009: 8).

According to United Nation (UN) data, at the end of 1979, 400.000 Afghans immigrated to Pakistan, while 200.000 Afghans immigrated to Iran. By the end of 1980, the number of Afghan refugees had risen to 1.9 million. With this number, Afghans constituted the largest refugee group in the world. Throughout the occupation, the number of Afghan migrants continued to increase. From 1985 to 1990, it rose radically, reaching 6.2 million in Iran and Pakistan. With this figure, Afghan refugees made up less than half of the world's total refugee population. With 2.7 million refugees remaining in Iran, Pakistan and other countries in the region by 1997, Afghans remained UNHCR's largest single refugee group in the world for 17 consecutive years (UNHCR, Colville, 1997).

Pakistan and Iran were willing to allow immigrants from Afghanistan to stay in their countries for a long time due to political, humanitarian, religious and cultural reasons. As a result of the Islamabad government's open-door policy, the majority of Afghan immigrants settled in provinces on the Afghanistan border. (Castles and Miller, 2008). In the 1980s and early 1990s, massive migration of Afghans to Pakistan made the country host the highest number of immigrants in the world. However, in 1981, the Islamabad government undertook the task of providing assistance to Afghan refugees under an agreement with the United Nations. In this context, Refugee camps (especially in the North West Frontier Province and Balochistan) were established under the supervision of the Afghan Commissioner for Refugees (Monsutti, 2006).

In addition, the Pakistani government started the official registration process in 1982, with the large increase in the number of immigrants entering from Afghanistan. Accordingly, families who were not officially registered as refugees could not receive the necessary assistance from the government. The reason why these immigrants stay in the border region is to be close to their homeland and to meet their relatives who will come from the country. But wealthy families settled in big cities and urban centers such as Lahore and Rawalpindi. There were a total of 342 refugee camps in Pakistan where refugees were staying (Oğuz, 1999).

Similarly, during the occupation, due to the open-door policy of the Tehran government, there was no obstacle in front of Afghan immigrants entering Iran, and there was no strict control over these immigrants who could settle in the cities they wanted. During this period, the Iranian government issued a green card for political refugees entering Afghanistan, and a blue card for other immigrants. In addition, children were allowed to receive education (Rohani, 2014).

Pakistan and Iran are the countries most affected by the immigration waves during the occupation. The Pakistani government has received significant assistance from the United States in military, economic and diplomatic fields against the influx of refugees originating from Afghanistan. However Iran, despite being one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the world, had received very little assistance (Castles and Miller, 2008).

The main reason why Iran received little help during this period was the establishment of the Islamic Republic in the country after the Islamic revolution in 1979 and the seizure of the US embassy as well as the taking hostage of US citizens, which caused a crisis between the US and Iran. During this period, the USA and its allies were reluctant to finance programs in Iran, even for refugees, while providing all kinds of assistance to Pakistan. At the same time, the Tehran administration did not want Western institutions, including the UNHCR, in Iran. As a result, Afghan refugees in Iran have not been able to benefit from similar aid in Pakistan (Ruiz, 2001).

From October 1979 to 1997, UNHCR provided over 1 billion dollars in aid to Afghan refugees in Pakistan alone, while it provided more than 150 million dollars in aid to Iran. In addition, the World Food Program has spent approximately \$1.4 billion on Afghan refugees in Pakistan alone. In addition, governments have provided aid to international organizations, local and foreign aid organizations. At the same time, host countries have spent billions of dollars on humanitarian aid (UNHCR, Colville, 1997).

During the war, the Afghan elite fled the threat of targeted attack, while the majority of Afghans fled to join the National Army or avoid being caught in the crossfire between the Mujahideen and the army and Soviet forces (Houte, 2016). Between 1980 and 1990, many artists, especially thousands of skilled people, had to migrate to North America or Australia, including Europe. The brain drain from Afghanistan to western countries in this period caused the problem of lack of experts in the rebuilding process started in 2001 (Monsutti, 2006: 8). There has been a brain drain with the migration of people who are known as human capital and who are experts in their fields from Afghanistan.

Civil War and Taliban Era

With the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan in 1989, an estimated 1.2 million Afghans returned from Pakistan alone. But soon after the Soviet withdrawal, war broke out between the Mujahideen and the Soviet-backed Najibullah government (Kuschminder and Dora, 2009). With the fall of the Najibullah government in 1992, the Mujahideen, who were fighting against the common enemy due to the disagreements in power sharing, turned their weapons against each other and thus a civil war broke out that would drag the country into chaos (Oğuz, 1999).

During this period, the Mujahideen was divided into various factions and eventually declared war on each other as a result of disagreements that arose on power sharing. For example, the Pashtun led

faction of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, which controlled parts of the capital Kabul, the Uzbek faction led by Abdul Rashid Dostum, which controlled most of the northern region, Hazara led faction by Abdul Ali Mazari, which controlled most of the central region including Kabul, fought against the central Mujahideen government led by Burhanuddin Rabbani by claiming that they were not fairly represented in the government. Thus, the abovementioned leaders fought against the newly established government and tried to establish their own dominance in their regions. Meanwhile, as the war against the government continued, there were intense ethnic clashes between the Mujahideen commander and Pashtun Abdulrab Rasul Sayyaf and Hazara Abdul Ali Mazari (Hamidzada, 2020). As a result of the conflicts between the mujahideen groups, the infrastructure was destroyed and the economy completely collapsed. Different parts of the country were ruled by certain ethnic groups and the war gained a purely ethnic character.

Human rights violations, including executions, kidnapping, imprisonment, sexual violence and other forms of torture, took place during the civil war (Jackson, 2009). There was no security at that time. Even Kabul had become a stateless state. There were no government agencies, such as the army and the police, to protect government buildings, people's homes, and public and private capital. An estimated 50,000 people died in the war between the factions to take control of Kabul alone, and most of the city was in ruins (Ruiz, 2001).

The second largest mass migration wave in Afghanistan started after 1989 with the outbreak of the civil war. With the devastating effects of the war, the poverty rate had increased in Afghanistan. Afghans, who experienced poverty and violence in their daily lives most severely during the civil war, had to migrate. With the end of the Soviet occupation, approximately 1.5 million refugees returned to the country (Castles and Miller, 2008). By 1997 approximately 4 million Afghans had returned from Pakistan and Iran. At the same time, the escalation of violence led to new out-migration as the fighting moved across Afghanistan (Houte, 2016).

In Afghanistan, which was dragged into chaos by the civil war, in 1994, the Taliban emerged in Kandahar (Mujda, 2003: 19). The Taliban, who promised to end the violence and establish order, quickly gave harsh punishments to the alleged criminals and eliminated the checkpoints made by the Mujahideen commanders. By September 1995, the Taliban had taken control of most of the eastern, western, and southern provinces, and in 1996 captured the capital, Kabul. The Taliban captured most of Afghanistan in a short time and established the "Islami Emarat", which lasted 5 years (Jackson, 2009). Listening to music and watching television were prohibited under Taliban rule. Similarly, girls were prohibited from receiving education and all women except healthcare workers were prohibited from working. The Taliban's takeover of the country also triggered the mass migration wave that started with the civil war (Oğuz, 1999).

Only in 2000, thousands of people left the country due to the severe conflicts in northern Afghanistan as well as the poverty caused by the drought. UNHCR estimated that in 2000 alone, more than 172,000 Afghans immigrated to Pakistan. On the other hand, with the Taliban takeover, most of Kabul's educated elite, including government employees, medical professionals, and teachers, fled to Pakistan. The brain drain that started with the Soviet occupation continued in this period as well (Ruiz, 2001).

However, in December 2000, with the efforts of the United States and Russia, the UN Security Council voted to impose additional sanctions on the Taliban, while the UN, donor governments, and other aid agencies struggled to provide humanitarian aid to vulnerable Afghan civilians. Upon the UN Security Council's approval of sanctions against the Taliban administration, it temporarily withdrew UN personnel from Afghanistan in order not to risk their lives. In this period, the country's economy collapsed and became completely dependent on foreign aid. During the Taliban era, Afghanistan has become a land of solitude, almost fried in its own grease. During the Taliban regime, which was completely closed to foreign countries, the people were condemned to starvation as a result of the drought in the country with the economic embargo applied by the UN (Ruiz, 2001).

The minority Hazaras belonging to the Shia sect are the most affected by the harsh practices of the Taliban in the country. However, during the Taliban era, hundreds of thousands of urban and educated middle-class Afghans had to leave the country as a result of increasing pressure. During this period, especially Hazaras, those belonging to the Shia sect, were exposed to serious discrimination (Jackson, 2009).

During this period, many Hazara families were forced to relocate within the country due to security concerns, while many had to leave the country. In addition with the rise of the Taliban to power

in 1996, it caused a large-scale migration of ethnic Uzbeks. Many young people, including many government officials and their families in the northern region, were forced to immigrate to Iran for fear of persecution. The presence of some family members in Iran has also encouraged others to immigrate to Iran over time (Monsutti, 2006). During this period, many Afghans immigrated to neighboring countries, while many immigrated to western countries. Between 1990 and 2000, 155,000 Afghans applied for asylum in European Union countries (Castles and Miller, 2008).

Along with the ongoing violence in the country, the drought between 1998-2001 caused a new wave of outward migration until 2000. During these years, 1 million people were internally displaced and the number of refugees abroad reached the level of 6 million again (IDPs). But despite the growing number of Afghan migrants, the international community has continued to reduce its assistance to Afghan refugees in neighboring countries. Pakistan and Iran, who could not get the help of the international community, followed a tougher policy against Afghan immigrants (Houte, 2016).

Meanwhile, In addition to conflicts and violence, drought and famine also had a significant impact in increasing migration in the country. Afghanistan which is a landlocked country and has a completely dry climate, has very little precipitation. According to the latest statistics, there are 7.3 million hectares of irrigated and dry agricultural land that can be cultivated in total in Afghanistan. However, only 3.4 million hectares of the lands have been used for cultivation. 2.3 million hectares of the total used land is irrigated and approximately one million is fed by rain (BBC Persian, 2021). However, besides its geographical features, the challenges arising from climate change further affects the dry agricultural lands.

More than 80 percent of Afghanistan's economy is based on agriculture and animal husbandry, and on a yearly basis it's been affected by drought and famine in the country. Drought threatens the livelihoods of families, especially those mainly engaged in agriculture and generally living in rural areas, therefore lowering their incomes. This, subsequently causes an increase in poverty in the country. Afghanistan witnessed one of the most severe droughts of its history in 1999-2010, which left people with catastrophic results (Ministry of disaster management formal page, 2021). Therefore, drought plays a significant role in increasing internal and external migrations in Afghanistan. Most recently severe droughts in the country, have displaced more than 2 million people from provinces such as Paktia, Farah, Nimroz, Badghis, Ghor, Faryab and Samangan to migrate into other neighboring provinces (Kayhan, Ministry of disaster management formal page, 2021).

On the other hand, the continued violence and drought during this period, as well as the destruction of the country's infrastructure, delayed the return of most Afghan refugees to their countries. In the 2000s, Afghans remained the world's largest refugee community (Castles and Miller, 2008).

The labor migration movement that started towards neighboring countries in the early 1970s turned into mass forced migration due to the conflict and violence that started with the Soviet occupation and continued until the period of the mujahideen and then the Taliban. Emigration has become the only option for most Afghans due to the drought and famine problems caused by climate change, as well as armed conflict and security problems. Thus, for the last 40 years, Afghanistan has become a country that consistently produces migrants in the world.

After 2001 Era

The Taliban regime, which reigned the country for about five years, was abolished as a result of the US intervention in Afghanistan, after it was determined that the perpetrators of the attacks against the USA on September 11, 2001, were in Afghanistan. In 2001 the US military intervention caused over 300,000 people to leave Afghanistan. On the other hand, within the scope of the Afghan government's Voluntary Return Program, 4.3 million Afghan immigrants returned to the country between 2002 and 2008, mostly from Pakistan and Iran. These figures represented the largest number of refugee return movements in UNHCR's history. However, the resurgence of the Taliban in 2005 and security problems slowed the return trend (Verduijn, 2020; Lucia, 2015).

The unexpected massive return of Afghans in the new era had severely strained UNHCR's capabilities in Afghanistan. UNHCR had to cut its aid to refugee families returning to the country during this period. Western states, which provided billions of dollars in aid for military intervention in Afghanistan, were reluctant to allocate the necessary funds for the return of refugees. However, although Afghanistan could not fully provide security and stability, Australia, England and other western countries started to send refugees to Afghanistan (Castles and Miller, 2008).

However, the administration established in 2001 failed to produce effective policies to prevent the increasing unemployment and poverty in the country. Millions of dollars of foreign aid made by the international community in the new period did not reach the public due to widespread corruption in public institutions. Underdevelopment combined with years of conflict and war has dragged the country into the worst economic and social conditions. This situation triggered emigration to a great extent (Sajjadi, 2018).

Especially in 2014, with the completion of the process of transferring the security responsibility of Afghanistan by the USA and NATO to the Afghan security forces, a large migration wave started in the country again. After 2014, there was an increase in Afghan immigration due to the increasing explosions and security problems throughout the country, and Afghanistan ranked second in 2011 as the country that produces the most immigration after Syria with 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees worldwide (Sanchez, 2017). In 2014, an estimated 300,000 Afghans were resettled to the United States, at least 150,000 to the United Arab Emirates and to a lesser extent Canada, Australia and other European countries (Houte, 2016).

According to the 2020 report of the Afghanistan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MORR), In the last two years, 5 million people in the country had to leave their places due to ongoing conflict. More than 1 million Afghan immigrants returned to the country in 2020 alone. Inadequate health services and inability to reach health services in countries such as Iran and Pakistan during the Covid-19 epidemic period have been effective in the increase in the number of returns (MoRR, 2020 Report).

According to the reports published by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations of Afghanistan (MORR), the travel restrictions imposed on unregistered Afghan immigrants in Iran, the lack of access to legal services for Afghan immigrants, detention and forced return of undocumented Afghans, the charging exorbitant fees when extending their residence IDs, in addition to the other problems such as being overpaid, unregistered Afghan patients and the inaccessibility of the injured to health services, the economic sanctions against Iran and the devaluation of the Iranian currency against other foreign currencies in recent years have triggered the wave of migration of Afghans from Iran to Turkey (MoRR, 2020 Report).

According to the reports from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2021 1,170,494 undocumented Afghans have returned from Iran and Pakistan to Afghanistan. The majority of the returnees which includes 1,150,004 Afghan immigrants, returned from Iran alone in 2021, and another 20,490 Afghans returnees from Pakistan (IOM, Afghanistan Situation Report, November, 2021). In comparison to 2020, there has been an increase in the number of returnees to Afghanistan from the neighboring countries.

In 2020, 831,696 Afghan immigrants returned from Iran, while 8,223 Afghans from Pakistan and 11,929 from Turkey returned to the country. The number of people returning to the country had reached one million in 2020. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MoRR), which is responsible for the management of migration in Afghanistan, has not been effective in meeting the initial needs of returning migrants, such as housing, as in the management of internal migration, due to lack of resources. While the government of Afghanistan developed some policies for the voluntary return of immigrants living in Pakistan, Iran and other countries between 2001-2014, it ended the return process as a result of the increase in security problems after the start of the withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan. In this context, the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations declared on 28 July 2021 that the Afghan government called for an end to the deportation of Afghan immigrants from European countries due to the lack of favorable conditions for returnees in the country (MoRR, 2020 Report).

According to the 2020 reports from the Afghanistan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations; There are 6,500,000 Afghan immigrants living around the world. 80% of these immigrants are in neighboring countries such as Iran and Pakistan, 709, 549 refugees and applicants in European countries, 448, 113 workers in the Gulf countries, the rest are scattered in 70 countries. Young people under 24 make up 74% of Afghan immigrants living in Pakistan and Iran. In Pakistan, 2,284, 274 registered Afghan refugees live legally. According to the report of the Ministry, also 500,000 undocumented Afghans live in Pakistan. More than half of the Afghan immigrants immigrated to Pakistan during the Soviet Union occupation and Civil War (MoRR, 2020 Report).

Iran is another country that has taken on the burden of Afghan immigration after Pakistan. Currently, 1,470,000 registered Afghan refugees live legally in Iran 950,000 with refugee identity cards (Amayesh), 450,000 of them live with a family passport, 30,000 with a long-term residence, and 40

thousand with a passport and education residence. According to the datas from the Iranian Ministry, approximately 1 million undocumented Afghan immigrants live in Iran, meanwhile another 500,000 Afghan immigrants living legally with refugee status (MoRR, 2020 Report).

Turkey and Afghan Immigration

Turkey is the third country hosting the most Afghan immigrants after Iran and Pakistan. The history of Afghans' migration to Turkey dates back to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. 4,163 Afghans who fled from Afghanistan to Pakistan during the occupation immigrated to Turkey legally in 1982. The people in question continue their lives by gaining Turkish citizenship (Şimşek, 2021).

In recent years, Turkey has become the preferred country of Afghan immigrants for its geographical location and developing economy, as well as sharing borders with Europe.

With the beginning of the withdrawal process of the US and NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2014, Afghan immigrants turned to Turkey and Europe due to increasing violence and unemployment in the country. In addition, in the same years, many Afghan immigrants living in Iran immigrated to Turkey due to the economic sanctions imposed by the USA against Iran. Most of the Afghans who immigrated to Turkey managed to reach the European Union countries in 2015 as a result of the open door policy of the European Union (Hamsici, 2021).

Most of those who cross into Iran aim to reach European and western countries. However measures have also been stepped up in Turkey, which currently hosts around 4 million Syrian refugees and is a stopping point for many migrants trying to reach Europe. These border measures were increased when the Taliban began to advance in Afghanistan and took over Kabul. Turkish authorities say there are 182,000 registered Afghan immigrants and an estimated 120,000 unregistered Afghan immigrants in Turkey. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged European countries to take responsibility for any new influx and warned that Turkey does not intend to become "Europe's migrant storage unit" (DW, 2021).

On the other hand, Naci Bostancı, Group Chairman of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party), said in a statement on 27 August 2021 that Turkey has no plans to set up camps for Afghan immigrants. According to Bostancı: Turkey hosts more refugees than any other country in the world. Following the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, Turkey adopted an "open door policy" by granting "temporary protection" status to people fleeing the conflict (Dailysabah, 2021).

Turkey is not the only country with a barrier against the new influx of Afghan immigration, other European countries, including Greece, have increased their border measures. Greece has just completed a 40km fence and surveillance system to keep out migrants who have managed to enter Turkey and are trying to reach the European Union (Kucukgocmen, 2021).

Europe and Afghan Immigrants

For many years, Europe has been a target region for Afghan immigrants for reasons such as good living standards, immigrant acceptance conditions, high welfare level and job opportunities. Prolonged conflict and violence has led Afghanistan to remain one of the world's largest refugee-producing countries and one of the largest refugee groups in Europe. According to the reports published by the MoRR in 2020, there are 709,549 Afghan migrants currently living in Europe, which includes refugees and those whose status has not been yet determined (Afghanistan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, 2020 Report).

In 2015, as a result of the open door policy of the European Union countries, 250 thousand Afghan immigrants managed to reach Europe. Germany is the fourth country to host the largest number of Afghan refugees after Turkey. According to the report published in 2020, 148,000 Afghan refugees currently live in Germany (Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Returns, 2020 Report). The remaining Afghan refugees live in European countries such as France, Austria and Sweden. Only 62% of Afghans applying for asylum in the mentioned countries have been granted legal status (Kucuk, 2021).

Afghans formed the second largest irregular migrant group after Syrians who reached Europe as a result of the open door policy of European countries in 2015. Afghans reaching Europe passed through Turkey and the Western Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean route. Parallel to the decline in total arrivals to Europe after 2015, there has been a significant decrease in the number of Afghan arrivals due to policy changes and especially after the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016. Between January and March 2016, a total of 37,494 Afghans crossed into Europe, compared to just 2,778 in the

following nine months. Of the total 178,500 migrants who reached Europe in 2017, only 3,441 were migrants originating from Afghanistan (Verduijn, 2020).

During Second Era of Taliban

The Kabul government collapsed and fell to the Taliban about three weeks after the US announced its complete withdrawal from Afghanistan on July 22, 2021. Although the USA announced that it could hold the Kabul government for at least three months, it was only able to resist the Taliban for three weeks. When the Taliban arrived at the gates of Kabul on August 15, the ex-Afghan president Ashraf Ghani fled the country. Thus, enabling the Taliban to seize power in Afghanistan after twenty years for the second time in their history. With the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the Afghan migration crisis gained momentum once again and hundreds and thousands of Afghans took the path of migration due to security, economic and political reasons (Andishmand, 2021).

According to the reports from the World Food Programme, more than half of the country's 40 million population currently lives below the poverty line. A total of 22.8 million people face acute food insecurity since the beginning of 2021, including hundreds of thousands of people displaced by conflict. Malnutrition particularly affects women, children, displaced persons, returnees, female-headed households, the disabled and the poor. Despite progress in recent years, malnutrition rates are increasing and 2 million children are undernourished (WFP Afghanistan, 2021). According to the reports published by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on August 26, there are currently more than 5 million displaced people across the country. 80% of these people are women and children. According to the IOM report, more than 550,000 Afghans have had to leave their homes since July 2021 (IOM, 2021).

The rapid progress of the Taliban, and the increase of violence in the country triggered another mass migration crisis among Afghan people, and it led to the beginning of another migration movement towards Afghanistan's neighboring countries such as Iran. However, after the Tehran administration announced that it has closed the borders to Afghan immigrants, UNHCR called on the Milak border gate to be kept open due to the developments in Afghanistan and the humanitarian crisis. UNHCR warns that "not keeping that door open could put thousands of lives at risk (UNHCR, 2021)".

Despite all the warnings of the UN, both countries allow entry only to those who have a legal entry document. But despite all these measures, many people are illegally crossing into Pakistan and Iran. The Norwegian Refugee Council has announced that 300,000 Afghan refugees have migrated to Iran since the Taliban took control of Kabul. The Council declared that an average of 4,000 to 5,000 Afghans crossed the border each day. Most of those who enter Iran are children and women who are negatively affected by the developments in the country (BBC Persian, 2021). During this period when people of Afghanistan are confronted with severe poverty and security problems, neighboring countries; such as Pakistan and Iran, Turkey and Europe have been reluctant to accept Afghan immigrants. Almost all countries, including the USA, have declared that they will not accept anyone other than their own citizens and the Afghans working with them and the groups under risk.

After the Taliban entered Kabul, the United States and Western countries were able to evacuate about 130,000 people from Kabul airport in the period of two weeks to August 30. The Washington administration announced that it had evacuated 80,000 civilians, including 5,500 Americans, more than 73,500 Afghans and other foreign nationals from Kabul between 16-29 August, 2021. While the Washington government evacuated some of the Afghans and their families who worked with them to the USA, others evacuated to countries such as Germany, Qatar, Spain, Uganda and Kuwait for the completion of their legal proceedings (BBC, 2021).

Meanwhile, the Canadian government announced on August 13 that it would accept 20,000 vulnerable Afghans threatened by the Taliban and forced to leave Afghanistan. Canadian government announced that;

"Canada will continue to implement the special immigration program for Afghans who contributed to Canada's efforts in Afghanistan. In addition, we will introduce a special program to focus on particularly vulnerable groups that are already welcomed to Canada through existing resettlement streams, including women leaders, human rights defenders, journalists, persecuted religious minorities, LGBTI individuals, and family members of previously resettled interpreters. The program will welcome government-supported and privately sponsored refugees, along with those sponsored by family already in Canada".

Furthermore Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs said;

“Afghans have put their lives at great risk to support Canada in helping Afghans achieve significant democratic, human rights, education, health and security gains over the past twenty years. We owe them a debt of gratitude and we will continue our efforts to bring them to safety (Government of Canada, 2021)”.

On the other hand, the UK government announced on 9 September that it had evacuated more than 15,000 people from Afghanistan between 15-29 August. Of these, more than 8,000 are British citizens and close to 5,000 Afghans working with the British soldiers are particularly vulnerable Afghans, including journalists, human rights activists, women's rights defenders and judges (The UK Parliament, 2021). Besides, the UK government has announced that it plans to resettle a total of 20,000 Afghans in the coming years. The government said the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Plan would prioritize religious and other minorities, as well as women and girls who are most at risk in Afghanistan (Rahman, 2021).

However, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who touched upon the issue of “finding local solutions” against mass migration originating from Afghanistan, emphasized that lessons should be learned from the migration crisis in 2015. Merkel, in her statement, announced that they could evacuate Afghans and their families working with the German forces. In the statement made by the German government on September 4, 4500 people were evacuated to Germany as a result of the evacuation efforts. As can be seen, unlike the immigrant-friendly policy that Germany followed in 2015, it has declared that it will not accept other immigrants except Afghans who have worked with German soldiers, human rights activists and journalists at risk. President of France, Emmanuel Macron, emphasized that “Europe should be protected from a new wave of immigration, therefore financial support should be given to these countries to accommodate the immigrants by contacting Russia and cooperating with countries such as Turkey, Iran and Pakistan.” As it can be seen, although the European Union countries have agreed on the acceptance of Afghans working with them, they have not made any decision so far on the acceptance of new Afghan immigrants (Kayhan, 2021).

However the European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has called on EU member states to provide asylum to more Afghan refugees. Borrell said that, “After the Taliban took control of Kabul, about 22,000 vulnerable Afghans have been relocated to European countries (Azadiradio, 2021)”. Along with the political developments in Afghanistan, the neighboring countries and especially the European countries, which have become a center of attraction for immigrants, are developing policies to prevent new Afghan immigration.

Therefore, Taliban's takeover of power in Afghanistan after 20 years triggered migration once again in the country. With the arrival of the Taliban, the already existing economic crisis deepened and poverty increased in the country. These developments forced Afghans struggling with hunger and poverty to migrate. In particular, there has been a significant increase in the number of people migrating to Afghanistan's neighboring countries such as Iran and Pakistan.

After all these developments, although the UN called on Afghanistan's neighboring countries to keep their borders open to Afghan refugees, on the contrary countries such as Iran, Pakistan and Uzbekistan kept their borders closed in order to prevent migrants entering their countries. Afghanistan's northern neighbor, Uzbekistan, has announced that the main transit point is closed “to ensure security” and has no plans to open it. In the same way both Pakistan and Iran announced that they could not cope with the further influx of Afghan refugees. Officials in both countries said any incoming refugees should stay in camps near the border until they return to Afghanistan. However, Uzbekistan has declared that it will help facilitate the transfer of Afghans to third countries and will only host refugees temporarily. The government of Tajikistan has previously announced that it will accept up to 100,000 refugees, but it is not yet clear whether any have been allowed to enter the country. Turkmenistan also said its airspace could be used for evacuation flights, but did not commit to accepting the refugees (BBC, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of migration has become an inseparable part of Afghanistan's historical identity, which has been in conflict for many years. Consequently, prolonged conflicts in Afghanistan, which have created an uncertain economic and political situation, as well as the drought and famine caused by climate change, has forced nearly 7 million Afghans to leave their homeland in pursuit of a better life and flee the on-going bloodletting in their homeland. Afghanistan is one of the countries that produce the most migration due to the internal conflicts, which it has been experiencing for the last forty years.

The largest and most massive migration in the history of Afghanistan started with the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan. More than 5 million Afghans were displaced and migrated to neighboring countries between 1979-1989 during the Soviet occupation. The second largest mass migration was experienced as a result of the chaos and instability created by the Afghan Civil War.

As a result of the devastation caused by the Civil War, more than 6 million Afghan immigrants were forced to migrate to Iran, Pakistan and European countries. Thus, Afghans formed the largest immigrant group in the world. Currently, the largest group of Afghan immigrants live in Pakistan and Iran. Afghan immigrants turned to Turkey in order to reach Europe with the deterioration of security in the country in 2014. Currently, Afghans constitute the second largest immigrant group in Turkey after Syrians. Foreign aids made to the newly established administration after 2001 failed to implement useful projects aimed at ensuring the safety of the people and improving the economy. The deteriorating security and economic situation during this period were the most important factors behind the migration of Afghans.

After the complete withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan on July 22, and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan on August 15, another mass migration was triggered in Afghanistan. The fall of the Kabul government and the ceasement of foreign aid caused the deepening of the economic crisis in Afghanistan and the exacerbation of poverty. These developments triggered the influx of external migration in the country once again. In particular, the migration of qualified people who can contribute to the development of the country in these years has had irreversible results in the country. In order to prevent the Afghan migration crisis that has been going-on for years, first of all, it is necessary to ensure political and economic stability in the country is established.

In order to ensure economic and political stability in the country, first of all, an inclusive and unifying government that includes all ethnic groups must be established. In terms of economy, since the country's economy is mainly based on agriculture, agricultural policies and schemes should be developed and farmers should be supported. In addition, development projects that will provide employment and promote equal growth in all regions of the country, including rural areas should be implemented. Otherwise, the Afghan immigration influx, which affects almost the whole world, will continue indefinitely.

Authorship Contribution / Yazarlık Katkısı

All of this research was carried out by a single author. / Bu araştırmanın tamamı tek yazar tarafından gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Ethics Committee Approval Information / Etik Kurul Onay Bilgileri

This research does not require ethics committee approval. / Bu araştırma, etik kurul izni gerektirmemektedir.

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