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**The Impact of Afghan Migrants on Host
Nations' Democratic Processes: A Comparative
Study of Pakistan and the UK**

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Abstract

The movement of Afghan refugees directly affected democracy in both Pakistan and the UK. Pakistan has permitted Afghan refugees to enter its borders since ancient times but the government fluctuated between hosting and limiting their temporary stays. The United Kingdom attempted to support refugee executives by adding different pathways but those methods now function as stricter barriers. The investigation examines how Afghan refugees become involved with politics and influence national policies while dealing with integration challenges in both Pakistan and the United Kingdom. The research employs qualitative method to study both fresh interview along with official documents and scholarly works. By creating more inclusive administrative frameworks migrants can better become part of the political system in Pakistan and the UK while their security and democracy needs remain supported.

Keywords: Afghan migrants, UK policy, Pakistan Policy, Democratic Process

INTRODUCTION

The migration process influences political governance as well as social organization while Afghan refugees encounter distinctive challenges compared to other migration groups (Kemp, 2023). The period since 1979 brought Afghanistan through nine consecutive military conflicts which started with the Soviet invasion and continued through civil wars until the establishment of Taliban rule before U.S. involvement and ended with the Taliban's second rise to power in 2021 (Jamil, 2022). These crises between 1979 and 2021 resulted in millions of Afghan people becoming refugees by requiring them to move to Pakistan and the United Kingdom which have established diverse regulatory approaches for Afghan migrants (Mogiani et al., 2024). Afghan refugees have lived in Pakistan since 1980 and the UK launched two programs for asylum seekers and family reunifications that shaped migration irregularities (Ali et al., 2022).

The Afghan refugee population in Pakistan reached 3.5 million refugees in 1990 while most refugees settled in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan (Gazdar, 2024). Although having spent many years in Pakistan Afghan refugees cannot participate in the political system because they lack citizenship rights. The Pakistani refugee regulations maintain a close connection to security needs and Afghanistan diplomatic relations. The Afghan refugee border crossings have directed major changes to Pakistan's government operations and border security system along with shaping foreign relations policies (Kaleem et al., 2025).

Afghan migration in the UK is handled through documented asylum procedures and resettlement systems leading to citizenship eligibility. The demography of Afghan migrants in the UK consists of different groups who fled their homes at different times during the various waves of displacement (Marsden, 2024). The political rights of British citizenship owners allow them to vote yet their involvement in public life depends on their financial status as well as their social standing and immigration-related public opinion. Systemic difficulties stemming from racism along with insufficient political access prevent Afghan migrants from achieving total democratic inclusion (York et al., 2022).

Both Pakistan and the UK develop political strategies due to the population of Afghan migrants in their territories. Voter support for political parties in Pakistan and the UK involves either advocating for deporting Afghan refugees or developing integration policies. Immigration discussions mirror the wider public discourse about defining the nation as well as integrating newcomers and handling economic burdens (Costello et al., 2020). The Afghan migrant population utilizes advocacy groups as well as community organizations to participate in democratic systems. The government of Pakistan faces restrictions regarding its policies toward Afghan refugees yet Afghan population-led organizations maintain active dialogue which helps them obtain enhanced living arrangements and social assistance programs (Humayun et al., 2023). UK Afghan community leaders conduct public activism which combines refugee rights advocacy with demonstrations to show both social and economic problems facing their communities.

Political participation functions as a barrier for Afghan migrants at both Pakistan and the UK. The absence of legal frameworks regarding refugee citizenship in Pakistan creates

limitations for their political participation according to Jamil et al. (2022). Even though Afghan migrants possess their political rights in UK territory they continue to endure economic and societal challenges. Political institutions fail to recognize the valuable work of Afghan community members which therefore leads to their scarcity in major policy shaping activities.

Migration from Afghanistan transforms democratic institutions and creates economic possibilities as well as modifies international diplomatic relations in host countries. The lasting relationship between Afghan diasporas and their home country affects the way their target states make foreign policy choices. Various political barriers along with legal and economic restrictions limit Afghan migrants from taking a full role in democratic processes. Historical and legal studies concerning Pakistan and the UK demonstrate that Afghan migration fundamentally influences political structures (Marsden, 2024).

RATIONALE FOR STUDY

This research analyzes Afghan migrants' effect on democratic procedures between Pakistan and the United Kingdom since these nations have different refugee integration rules. The policy of Pakistan toward Afghan refugees lacks political rights but the UK manages refugee entries through their citizenship and political participation programs. The comparison of these political approaches will show how administration systems affect migration participants' inclusion in democratic platforms. This research investigates political participation and policy actions together with migrant organization efforts so it advances academic knowledge in migration research and democratic institutions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research delivers clear findings about Afghan migrant interaction with democracy throughout Pakistan and United Kingdom along with their encountered legal barriers together with social and economic challenges for political participation. Research findings established by this study will assist authorities and advocacy groups and NGOs to develop improved programs for refugee adaptation that offer fair representation within democratic structures and political freedoms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

IMPACT OF AFGHAN MIGRANTS ON HOST NATIONS' DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

The political procedures in Pakistan and UK changed due to Afghan colonization but in different ways because their democratic systems vary greatly.

Since 1979 Afghan refugees have been residing in Pakistan through Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa areas (Dashti et al., 2022). The citizens stay overseas but they cannot neither vote nor run for public office. Leaders use the status of their migrant community members to gain political advantages within local political circles. Security together with economic reasons led Pakistan to enforce strict border management as well as deportation procedures (Ali et al., 2025).

Afghan migrants in the UK can apply for citizenship which enables them to exercise political rights through voting and office candidacy. The 2025 policy which restricts citizenship rights for undocumented migrants establishes new challenges to their political involvement (Chaiwat et al., 2024). Although UK policies support formal inclusion, challenges remain, whereas in Pakistan, Afghan refugees impact politics informally without legal recognition. Both countries struggle with balancing migrant integration and national security concerns, shaping how Afghan migrants engage with democracy (Scholten et al., 2020).

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLICY RESPONSES TO AFGHAN MIGRATION

Governments in both Pakistan and the UK adjusted their Afghan immigration guidelines because these nations respond to their security needs and international obligations while supporting their domestic requirements. The level of management given to Afghan immigrants depends on important political, social, and economic factors of each country.

PAKISTAN'S POLICY EVOLUTION

During 1979 the Soviets occupied Afghanistan leading to Pakistan becoming the main place for Afghan refugees to escape to. Right after the war started Pakistan opened its borders without limits to accept Afghan refugees. The historical link between Afghanistan and Pakistan plus shared religion let many refugees settle in these territories during Cold War periods (Nazeer et al., 2024). Afghan refugees chose to live in Pakistan for many years straight and the growing numbers equaled 3 million people which overwhelmed social systems and made security harder throughout Pakistan. People living in Rawalpindi and Islamabad experience both increased stress on their city services and safety problems coming from Afghan people (Khan et al., 2022). Pakistan acted through arrests and forced the deportation of illegal Afghan refugees. The following month of 2025 marked Pakistan's intensification of Afghan Citizen Card holder

deportations during the nation's subsequent phase of repatriation. Several human rights bodies and diplomatic partners of Pakistan and Afghanistan experience ongoing difficulties due to this fresh approach with Afghan refugees (Shah et al., 2022).

UNITED KINGDOM'S POLICY EVOLUTION

Since January 2022 the UK established its Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme to evacuate Afghan nationals who helped British military staff from Afghanistan. During the program's beginning the British procedures accepted two groups of persons in Afghanistan: those who supported British military operations and people who faced danger because of their gender identities or ethnicity. During Year 1 the government planned to move 5000 people and continue the program to bring 20000 more residents to the country in future years (Partridge et al., 2020). The UK government increased immigration controls at the start of February 2025. Under new rules the government wanted to stop people from getting British citizenship through unauthorized boat or lorry immigration. Regardless of poor rights protection and weaker social connection with British society many court members opposed this policy. The public conflict focused mainly on the struggle between immigration controls and helping refugees according to international conventions (Quie et al., 2024).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. I analyse how policy frameworks of Pakistan and UK influence Afghan migrants' political participation in order to analyse the impact of Afghan migrants on democratic processes in Pakistan and the UK.
2. This would examine the effect on the democratic process in Pakistan and the UK from Afghan migrants.
3. To take up the role of migration policies in forming the political participation of Afghan refugees in both host countries.
4. It will accordingly compare the legal frameworks around Afghan migrants in Pakistan and in the UK and assess how they shape their democratic integration.
5. It aimed to identify what challenges the Afghan refugees are facing in political inclusion and participation in both countries.
6. Specific political systems in both UK and Pakistan were analysed to see how possible the potential is for higher political involvement for Afghan migrants with reforms to both of these systems.

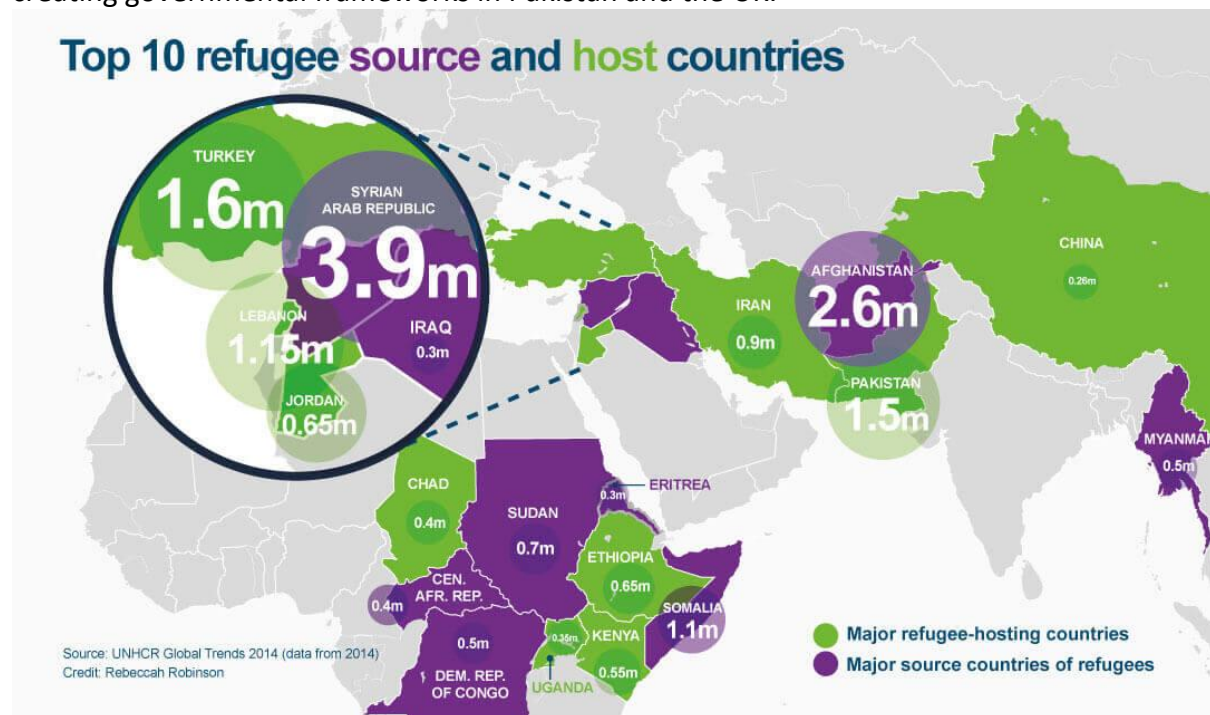
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. In the UK and Pakistan, Afghan migrants influence democratic processes and policy frameworks shape their political participation.
2. Afghan migrants affect the democratic process in Pakistan and the UK how?
3. What are the main determinants of Afghan migrant's political participation in the UK and Pakistan?
4. In what way does Pakistani and British immigration and citizenship policy affect Afghan migrant's possibility of becoming engaged in a democratic process?

5. With that, what challenges do Afghan migrants face in both countries when it comes to their integration into both the political and social systems?
6. How can the political participation and integration of Afghan migrants into the democratic processes of their host states be improved?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DEMOCRATIC THEORY

Democratic theory is an established subfield of political theory that is primarily concerned with examining the definition and meaning of the concept of democracy, as well as the moral foundations, obligations, challenges, and overall desirability of democratic governance. Democratic theory analyzes political institutions through their dimensions of participation and representative mechanisms alongside civil liberties purposes. Public engagement with decision-making processes happens through voting and activism together with public discussions (Vittori et al., 2022). The two principles of democratic governance include deliberative democracy for policy dialogue and representative democracy where public officials function as community representatives (Yaqoobi et al., 2022; Gazdar et al., 2024). The essential principles act as instruments to evaluate Afghan refugees' institutional relationships with democracy while creating governmental frameworks in Pakistan and the UK.



The worldwide spread of refugees and the nations that host the biggest amount of refugee citizens. Particularly, Afghanistan becomes a key source country (2.6 million), and Pakistan (1.5 million) is a major host country. This map directly relates to your article as it visualizes the genesis of this Afghan migration and how Pakistan hosts Afghan migrants playing

a pivotal role in affecting Pakistan's democracy based on challenges of accommodating Afghanistan people in the country.

Afghan migrants encounter different avenues to encounter democratic systems while living between Pakistan and UK territories (Chandrachud et al., 2020). The Pakistani government fails to supply Afghan refugees with legal voting rights therefore blocking their participation in political elections and democratic representation (Kemp et al., 2023). Afghans in the UK have limited authority to shape policy but retain the capability to seek changes to political decisions (Yaqoobi et al., 2022). The limited democratic participation of Afghan migrants creates essential implications regarding the support democracy provides to displaced persons across different political contexts (Gazdar et al., 2024).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design selects qualitative methods to study Afghan migration impacts on democratic models within Pakistan and UK. The study uses comparison techniques to assess political involvement alongside policy effects on democratic involvement between Afghan migrants present in Pakistan and UK.

Data Collection Methods

The research will acquire its data from both primary and secondary sources. The research uses personal interviews together with focus group interviews and surveys as its main data collection technique. Secondary data collection focuses on government reports together with different policies as well as newspaper articles and journal-based articles.

DATA SOURCES

PRIMARY DATA

An interview process will gather information from Afghan migrants who obtained UK citizenship alongside Afghan business owners from Pakistan and leaders from the community because these targets exhibit both accessibility and interview readiness. An evaluation will include discussions involving NGO workers helping Afghan refugees together with social activists and university researchers whose area of expertise is migration studies. People who work as local journalists about refugee matters will serve as data sources since they possess important policy knowledge. Afghan students studying in Pakistan and working shopkeepers will participate in Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions due to their regular informal political discourse.

SECONDARY DATA

The study will analyse official documents including government reports alongside legal documents and policy papers to comprehend the official responses toward Afghan migration. Media articles together with academic studies will deliver information about public discourse and historical migration developments between Pakistan and the UK.

DATA ANALYSIS

The research will utilize thematic analysis to detect significant patterns from interview and FGD data concerning Afghan migrants' political activities. The evaluation of government policies together with media reports through content analysis aims to track policy responses between

Pakistan and the UK. The combined analysis method provides an extensive comprehension of democratic participation for migrants.

RESULT FINDINGS

The research findings show the Afghan migrants in Pakistan and the UK have been politically excluded differently. In Pakistan, Afghan refugees lack citizenship rights and, therefore, are not part of the political process. Even though refugees live and have lived in the country for decades, they are denied the right to vote and stand for public office. The main reason for this exclusion is coupled with national security risk in Pakistan and Pakistan Afghanistan diplomatic relation which ultimately causes Pakistani government to treat Afghan refugees as temporary residents rather than permanent members of the society. Except for Pakistani Afghan, who engages in political life mainly through informal channels and generally in line with the political groups advocating to ameliorate living conditions or for Afghan political status to be recognized.

On the other hand, there are more inclusive policies towards Afghan refugees in the UK that could lead to naturalization and political participation. Afghan migrants who have become British citizens will be able to vote and stand as candidates for public office. However, economic inequality, racism, and problems of social integration are barriers to their full participation in the democratic processes. However, many Afghan migrants, in particular those who came within the last months on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, still grapple with the hurdle of moving into a new political and cultural environment. Afghan refugees living in the UK, facing all of these obstacles, use activism and advocacy, particularly through community organisations and NGOs, to influence public opinion and policy change on migration and refugee rights.

Both countries face the same challenges, including the securitisation of refugees and the political status of the migrant communities in terms of election cycles. In each case, Afghan migrants became political subjects, to be exploited by political parties for party gain toward, or away from the growing refugee population. Nevertheless, there are more routes available for integration in the UK, and migrants in the UK are more involved in the formal political process in the UK as compared to Pakistan where the primary concern is still refugee management rather than inclusion.

DISCUSSION

Both Afghan migrants in Pakistan and the UK have limited political participation through active participation in the host countries' migration and refugee policies which are respectively broad and straying far from their promise. The approach of Pakistan, largely, has been influenced by its national security concerns and Afghanistan refugees were seen as temporary presence and strategic value. Due to this perception, Afghan refugees have not been able to become active in the political life of Pakistan. On the other hand, the UK has a more structured migration policy whereby the Afghan refugees are later to be naturalized, but within a framework of obstacles.

It is a comparative study and reveals that the policy frameworks play a major role in deciding the scope of political participation to Afghan migrants. Without legal rights, political participation in Pakistan becomes something akin to survival, with refugees fighting to earn

better living conditions and rights informally. At the same time, in the United Kingdom, while refugees may have the formal political right, but their economic and social integration encounters difficulties, leading to the fact that their ability to fully interact with the democratic process is restricted.

Both countries struggle with how much they can limit the rights of migrants in the name of national security. Pakistan is hesitant to give political rights to Afghan refugees due to the historical security concerns, but the UK is more forthright in integrating refugees, especially those who have aided the UK in fighting in Afghanistan. Nevertheless recent moves by the UK to limit asylum pathways and harden immigration controls have become increasingly necessary to resist growing political and public aversion to the inclusion of refugees – exacerbated by the rise of nationalism and anti-immigrant sentiment.

Of one thing we can be certain from this study: the economic and social integration of Afghan refugees is just as important as their legal and political inclusion. Afghan refugees in both countries are discriminated against and stigmatized and are thus unable to fully participate in public life. In Pakistan the secondary marginalization is made worse by their transitory legal status and in the UK their lack of citizenship pathways are compounded by economic inequalities and social isolation preventing them being a meaningful contributor in the democratic process.

CONCLUSION

This research analyses democratic participation among Afghan migrants between Pakistan and the UK through an assessment of their different political involvement as well as legal frameworks along with policy structures. Pakistani government supports migrant participation within UK space although official channels remain restricted due to national security risks. The research results help build migration policies that fully account for every participant.

While Afghan migrants have differing effects on democratic processes of host countries such as Pakistan and the UK, on account of differing legal, social, and political contexts in which they dwell in exile, we see that the Palestinian case has the most far reaching consequences for the institution of democracy in host countries. However, Afghan refugees have no legal rights in Pakistan and have been largely left out of the formal political process. Afghan refugees, who have lived in Pakistan for decades, have faced barriers to full integration into Pakistani society in the form of being excluded from political participation. Initially, Afghan migrants had not had any political rights nor any access to basic humanitarian needs to contribute to the democratic processes of the host nation. Nonetheless, informal forms of political engagement in the form of advocacy and community organizations is very important strategy to bring political influence. But in the UK it is a markedly different situation. Refugee Afghan that are given citizenships are being given the right to vote and take part in elections, allowing for a channel of political participation. Challenges of economic disparities, racism and social exclusion, however, have impeded their integration into British democracy. Nevertheless, Afghan refugees in the UK have made visible intervention into public life through activism, advocacy and membership in local

community organisations. Indeed, there is a need to raise awareness on the needs and challenges of refugees and migrants particularly concerning integration policies.

Similarly, Pakistan and the UK are caught between national security interests and the incorporation of refugees in that delicate balancing act. While the UK has seen success in enabling refugees to be political, thorny issues remain ... as seen recently with a new, restrictive asylum policy signed. Elsewhere — inside Pakistan — Afghan refugees are politically excluded through the country's restrictive policies, confirming their outsider status. However, the work underscores that agreement on enabling policy measures needed to resolve refugees' security concerns and enable refugees to take part in the democratic processes of their host states is important.

After decades of both violence and neglect, Pakistan and the UK should reform to allow Afghan migrants to be fully a part of democratic processes, protect their rights and better manage the socio economic challenge they pose for these communities. Yet, Afghan refugees will integrate better into the host nations, improving chances for becoming part of democratic processes and possibly causally bettering societal cohesion.

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