

# Afghan (Re)Migration from Pakistan to Turkey: Transnational Norms and the 'Pull' of Pax-Ottomanica?

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*ABSTRACT* Many Afghans, often male, in Pakistan are migrating (again) and increasingly toward 'new' destinations such as Turkey. Transnational lives are not unusual for Afghans as a method of survival, as well as a space for 'self-making'. However, these migrations are also the result of Turkey's own regional ambitions and projection of itself as a modern neoliberal 'Muslim' state. Moreover, increased migration is also a result of the historic role that cheap labor migrants, particularly from Central/South Asia, have played in the development of rising neoliberal economies. Thus in the 2000s and 2010s, as Turkey's 'star' rises, so too does Turkey find itself shifting from a migrant sending to a migrant receiving state.

## Introduction

Since the onset of conflicts in Afghanistan in the 1970s, for Afghans of a particular class, namely the rural and urban poor, Iran, Pakistan, and increasingly the Middle Eastern Gulf States have been the primary locales of Afghan migration and a focus of a research, policy making, and artistic and cultural imaginings. However, limited attention has been paid toward increased Afghan and wider Central and South Asian migration towards Turkey. Similarly, in recent years significant academic and public attention has been given to Turkey as a recipient state of migrants, but this has been limited to refugees fleeing war in bordering Iraq and Syria. In part this focus (or lack of) is because Turkey has not traditionally been understood as a 'migrant' destination per se and in fact has been understood as a migrant sending state (in particular to European states such as Germany). However, this process appears to be changing, as increasing numbers of 'new' migrants from the Global South, in particular from Asia and Africa, move to Turkey. This paper explores the processes by which increased numbers of poor Afghans in Pakistan, usually

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young males who are already refugees or irregular migrants in Pakistan, migrate (for a third or more time) toward Turkey.

This paper discusses, first, how Afghan migration patterns are increasingly shaped by what is referred to as the ‘transnational moment’ in migration studies, where transnational norms have come to shape the lives of many in a globalized world. This is particularly salient for Afghans, whose migration patterns have been framed by conditions of continued wars within Afghanistan since the 1970s. Second, this paper questions the traditional viewpoint employed by migration scholarship that analyze the motivations of migrants through “rational” dimensions (seeking economic opportunity or escaping

political persecution) or notions of “helplessness.” Rather, this paper uncovers a more complex picture, whereby migration patterns are also shaped by constructions and experiences of masculinity, selfhood, and emotions. Third, this paper explores how the rise of Turkey’s regional power – in economic, political, and cultural terms – across the regions off Middle East, Central and South Asia, and the wider Muslim world, drives, intertwines, and benefits from these transnational norms and personalized motivations to make Turkey a migration destination through the Afghan example. In particular, this paper highlights how increased (and often irregular) migration from Global South countries potentially provides Turkey with a cheap labor pool to consolidate its own neoliberal project and is a subject that should be further explored.

### Methodology

This paper is based on ethnographic research and case studies using oral history interviews that have been conducted in Pakistan since 2010 with Afghans, primarily from urban poor backgrounds in Peshawar and Karachi in Pakistan. The paper is also based on interviews conducted in Istanbul during 2012 and 2014 and telephone interviews with Afghans first interviewed in Pakistan, as they were *en route* to a third, fourth, and sometime fifth or more, country of resettlement, which included Turkey. Interviews were predominantly conducted with male respondents – although some Afghan women were interviewed in Pakistan. However, no women were interviewed in Turkey, which is a shortcoming that must be accounted for if a fuller picture of migration and its impacts are to be understood. Interviews usually semi-structured in format and were recorded either using a Dictaphone or by taking notes during the interviews. Ethnographic observations were recorded though note-taking processes.

## Afghans in Pakistan: Geopolitical Migrants

Millions of Afghans have been living in Pakistan since the onset of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and because of the continued conflicts in Afghanistan thereafter. Since 2001, approximately 3.77 million Afghans have repatriated to Afghanistan, 'however, approximately 3-to-4 million Afghans remain in Pakistan, of which 1.6 million are registered as refugees with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the rest are irregular migrants.'<sup>2</sup>

Historically, cross-border migration between Afghanistan and Pakistan has not been unusual. However, as a number of post-colonial scholars have demonstrated,<sup>3</sup> encounters with the colonial and post-colonial states in Afghanistan, British India, and post-Partition Pakistan acted to consolidate and normalize constructions and practices of the "absolute" territorial sovereign nation-state. Other scholars of migration, such as Liisa Malkki,<sup>4</sup> also highlight how this has impacted current hegemonic norms of "sedentarized" living, i.e., of being "rooted" in one place. Assumptions of "rootedness" Malkki highlights, however, are not an inherent fact but are rather a modern phenomenon that developed alongside constructions of the modern territorial nation-state.

In the current global order, national spaces are believed to represent distinct realms of "fixed" belonging in singular spaces. These spaces are upheld by vast technologies of policing and control – from passports, visas, work permits, to securitized borders. The motto of "*a state for everyone and everyone in a state*"<sup>5</sup> assumes everyone has the security of belonging to *one* state. To underscore this principle, the UDHR states that "everyone has the right to *a* nationality."<sup>6</sup> However, in the current neoliberal age, possibilities to navigate these notions of fixity do exist and are explicitly encouraged by the economic market and the numerous multinational corporations complex. But this explicit encouragement exists only for certain upper and upwardly mobile middle classes. Further, a number of scholars have shown, it also is limited to certain "races."<sup>7</sup> The greater forms of social, cultural, and economic capital that one possesses, the greater the chances of being able to navigate through these borders with ease.

For migrants of a lower class, refugees or irregular migrants, and those with less variants of "capital," however, the possibilities of navigation are restricted and stigmatized. In fact these "undesirable" migrants are imagined "pathological"<sup>8</sup> threats against the "purity" of the modern nation-state and its citizens. They are bodies that are constructed as physical and legal threats that cannot be contained and managed by the bureaucratic technologies of the modern state and, in fact, challenge it. International humanitarian norms, laws, and institutions have gone some way in creating a space of moral politics in which expectations of safeguarding basic rights for *all* humans irrespective of citizenship. Yet, even

then the “refugee” and certainly the “irregular migrant” remain as unresolved and always, representing undesired<sup>9</sup> anomalies that must be contained. The spatial segregation of detention centers and refugee camps, with barbed wires and placements on urban outskirts or rural hinterlands, point to symbolic and technological processes that ensure that refugees and irregular migrants are kept separate from “society proper.” Moreover, the international migration regime is premised around the logic of finding “solutions” that will lead these individuals and families toward a “normal” sedentary life.<sup>10</sup>

In Pakistan, Afghan refugees have been managed by the Government of Pakistan (GOP) since 1978 and in cooperation with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) since 1980. Irregular migrants have no institutional systems of support, although the International Organization of

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Migration (IOM) has recently increased its activities in Pakistan. During the 2000s and 2010s, the GOP, the UNHCR, and other implementing partner states and organizations have prioritized the repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan to Afghanistan. This is influenced by a number of factors. At the macro level, it is underpinned by the wider aforementioned structural norms of migration, whereby all refugees are constructed as

threats to the nation-state. Further, Afghan repatriation has been strongly encouraged post-2001 by the international migration regime and the USA-led, recently ended, counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan (of which Turkey is a part via NATO). It is part of a wider public relations campaign to win Afghan “hearts and minds” via the reconstruction of the Afghan state. In this context, refugees are imagined as a vital source of human capital that can help “rebuild” Afghanistan - as well as legitimating the “moral” character of the USA, as a foreign occupier in Afghanistan.

At the level of Pakistani politics, pressure for Afghan repatriation is informed by geopolitical concerns of the military dominated Pakistani state and its relationship with imperial allies, such as the USA. During the Afghan-Soviet War, for example, Afghans, refugees and *mujahideen* members, were welcomed in Pakistan by the state and Pakistan’s international allies, most notably the USA, as useful human, intelligence, and propaganda resources that could help defeat the Soviet Union in the context of the Cold War. Once the Soviet Union was defeated, interest in Afghan migrants waned, yet it has only been after the September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington DC, in which Gener-



al Musharraf<sup>11</sup> quickly allied with the USA, that Pakistan's hostility towards Afghan migrants has significantly increased. The Pakistani military-political leadership is keen on making clear the distinction between the "Bad Muslim"<sup>12</sup> Afghan state and the "Good Muslim" Pakistani state, which included their people. In addition, Afghan repatriation has also been encouraged as a tactic of political mobilization for local politics, whereby migrants are scapegoated by key political parties, such as Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a province that is home to a high number of Afghans, in order to consolidate votes and/or deflect from local political failures.

Subsequently then, the 2000s and 2010s have been years marked by hegemonic discourses in Pakistan, which constructed "Afghans" in negative terms. Often, newspapers and television reports blindly blame Afghans for criminality, terrorism, or resource shortages even when no Afghan involvement is evidenced, and in fact when the state and economic structures are the real culprits. Moreover, state actors have been at the forefront of encouraging Afghan repatriation, but often in coercive terms. This has included a steep rise in everyday state harassment and humiliation tactics, which includes instances of mass arrests, arbitrary detention, stop and searches, and in some cases deportations. As I conducted interviews and ethnographic observations in enumeration centers, check-posts, and police cells, it was evident that increased state harassment was being used as a mechanism by which to "discipline" Afghans in to leaving Pakistan by creating emotional responses of humiliation, stress, and fear. A

Directorate General of Migration Management and Turkish Red Crescent members are photographed with an Afghan refugee family in Kırşehir, Turkey.

AA / Tuğba Yardımcı Mısı

number of scholars speak about how the male body,<sup>13</sup> particularly the young body, is constructed as a biological threat, and during my fieldwork it was often the case that frequently young men were subject to arrests and stop and searches in their everyday life. I conducted in-depth interviews with Suleiman Azzam, a 28-year-old factory worker living in Peshawar since 1991. He is the eldest son of seven siblings, which include younger brothers and sisters, all of whom live together, alongside their mother in a shared rented house portion in Peshawar. Suleiman Azzam's father died when he was a teenager and he is the male head of the household. In the interview he said,

“Everyday, on my way to work, on my way back to work, on my way to the shops, on the way back from the shops... Every day we are stopped and asked for our identity cards and work permits. They [the police] call us terrorists. I work in a factory. I put cloth in to a machine. How can I be a terrorist? But they will never be happy until they insult us... When the conditions get bad [after a bombing] the young men of the house don't even go the shops, because we know we will get harassed [by the police]. Instead the children or women go.”

For Suleiman Azzam, day-to-day life in Pakistan is met with stressors that question his sense of selfhood and masculinity and ability to provide for his family; they are also punctuated with restrictions on his mobility. As an urban poor man, Suleiman Azzam has no option but to go to work, despite cases of state harassment, and yet frequently he must rely on his younger siblings and sisters to go to do chores that usually fall within his “male” domain. An increasing number of men, like Suleiman Azzam, face heightened forms of pressure by the Pakistani state to leave. These forms of pressure put into question their sense of security, selfhood, and masculinity and thus, increasingly Afghans emigrate out of Pakistan.

In addition to increased state-based harassment, certain minority Afghan groups, such as Afghan Hazaras, are also subjected to the ethnic and sectarian violence that has spread across Pakistan in recent years. Afghan Hazaras are predominantly Ismaili Shia and have been repeatedly targeted by Sunni militant groups in a number of high-impact violent murders and bombings, which includes the bombing of the town of Hazara in Quetta in 2013,<sup>14</sup> the bombing of the town of Abbas in Karachi in 2013,<sup>15</sup> and targeted killings of individuals. As I conducted interviews with Afghan Hazaras living in Karachi, many were applying to emigrate out of Pakistan because of the rise of anti-Shia violence. During one interview with Fareeda Jan, a 27-year-old Afghan Hazara woman, who was living with her three brothers in an apartment complex in the city, she said, “I worry for my brothers, they know we are Hazara and can tell by our features, I just want them to get out and be safe.” In other cases, certain Afghan ethnic groups, who look noticeably different from Pashtuns, such as Turkmens, Uzbeks, and Tajiks have also been targeted by sectarian groups.

A final macro-level “push” factor that must be accounted for is how migration patterns are also a response to global structural asymmetries and Pakistan’s peripheral position in the world system. As states such as Pakistan are unable to provide economic, physical, and social security for the citizens, refugees, and migrants a driving “push” out of these states is created, im-

impacting citizens and non-citizens alike. In the case of Pakistan, a body of scholarship explores how institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund’s and World Bank’s structural adjustment programs and increased economic liberalization, which has been pursued in the 2000s and 2010s by Pakistan’s military-bureaucratic elite, has resulted in economic insecurity, food insecurity, and utilities insecurity.<sup>16</sup> This has combined with the Pakistan’s military alliance with the USA in the “Global War on Terror,” to reinforce the strength of the military commercial class in Pakistan to ensure the 2000s and 2010s have been years in which, to borrow from Saadia Toor,<sup>17</sup> Pakistan has emerged as a neoliberal security state. Conversely, however, this has resulted in massive everyday lived insecurities in Pakistan for ordinary residents (citizens and non-citizens) – from daily “spectacular” bombings and violence by militant non-state actors, military operations, increased check-posts, and increased state violence. Within Pakistan, thus, a common saying that has emerged is, “*Pakistan Zindabad, ya Pakistan se Zinda bhag?*”/ “Long live Pakistan, or run away from Pakistan, alive?”<sup>18</sup> In addition, and as will be discussed shortly, Global South migration is also encouraged as a means to build the economies of richer states (Gulf States, Europe, and now perhaps Turkey).

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### **Transnational Lives: Survival, Selfhood, and Dignity**

There is then a diverse myriad of push factors that encourage Afghan migration out of Pakistan. As noted earlier, millions of Afghans have repatriated to Afghanistan and continue to leave. In many instances, Afghans in Pakistan cannot and will not return to Afghanistan. Since 2010, I have been uncovering the ways in which Afghans and Pakistanis of a certain class – the urban underclass – live shared lives in “informal,” less regulated, urban spaces in Pakistan, which has involved challenging notions of the everyday lived experiences of two seemingly different legal groups, non-citizen Afghan refugees and undocumented migrants versus the (urban poor) Pakistani citizen.<sup>19</sup> As noted earlier, millions of Afghans have repatriated to Afghanistan and continue to leave. In many cases, the Afghans, who do remain in Pakistan, are increasingly vulner-

able, particularly if belonging to lower classes while those with enough social, economic, and cultural capital often find ways of navigating out of these forms of state-based harassment.

Yet, as I was undertaking my research I was struck by the patterns, numbers, and norms of transnational lives and migration, particularly amongst Afghans

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who were already migrants in Pakistan yet migrating again, not returning to Afghanistan but still moving outside of Pakistan, or who had one or more family and/or kin or clan members living abroad. Very quickly I began tracing individuals, relationships, and family units, nuclear and extended, that were dotted across cities in permanent and transitory capacities within Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, India, the Gulf States, and Saudi Arabia, in particular, as well as Turkey, Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Transnational norms shape the

lived reality of many Afghans. Whilst the current neoliberal order stigmatizes the migration of refugees and irregular migrants, extensive networks and strategies do exist that both enable and encourage migration practices.

Traditional migration policy-making and public discourse around refugees and irregular migrants imagine them as one-dimensional sub-humans, either as “threats” or “helpless” victims fleeing war and persecution. Barbara Harrell-Bond<sup>20</sup> criticizes the international refugee relief system and highlights that the sweeping generalizations made by western aid agencies regarding the “helpless” refugee promote a negative approach to dealing with refugees, whilst Malkki discusses how the word “refugee” itself produces

“...homogenizing, humanitarian images of refugees [that] work to obscure their actual socio-political circumstances – erasing the specific, historical, local politics of particular refugees, and retreating instead to the depoliticizing, dehistoricizing registering of a more abstract and universal suffering.”<sup>21</sup>

Yet, assumptions that refugees are simply “waiting to return home,” or live cordoned-off in refugee camps, or are “helpless” victims are challenged by the increasing literature on refugees, migrants, and transnationalism,<sup>22</sup> who refer to the transnational moment in migration studies. In particular for Afghans, whose state has faced years of conflict, akin to Somalis or Palestinians, diaspora realities are a hallmark, and survival technique, of family and social organization. In addition to this, in his body of work on Afghan migration, anthropologist Alessandro Monsutti,<sup>23</sup> influenced by Malkki’s frameworks on transnationalism, points to the ‘transnational turn’ in migration studies and states in his work that for many Afghans, such as Afghan Hazaras, migration



is not an anomalous act but a “way of life,” and, increasingly, also a “rite of passage” towards manhood, whereby the act of migration itself provides “a way to achieve a certain idea of their personal autonomy.”<sup>24</sup>

During 2010-to-2014, I conducted a series of in-depth interviews with Nooruddin, a (now) 43-year-old Afghan Uzbek, and his extended family in Karachi, whose family structures indicate this very form of a transnational dispersion of social organization. Nooruddin has kin and clan members living in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia. For him and his kin and clan networks, a transnational existence is the norm rather than aberration. His family migrated to Pakistan during the 1980s and has a longer history of migration from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan. In 2013, as I continued to meet Nooruddin and engage in interviews and discussions with him he said, “Our families have been living like this for years now... This is what we know now.” He, however, added that as a result of increased insecurity in Pakistan, which includes a greater targeting of Afghans by state officials, that, “we are now thinking of moving to Turkey, and will go if we can get things in place.”

In 2010, I also started conducting interviews with a (now) 25-year-old Afghan Tajik called Zuhair and his family in Karachi, who were also familiar with Nooruddin as Zuhair’s father, Amin Jan, worked in the same neighborhood as Nooruddin. Interviews quickly morphed in to process of ethnographic observations as I worked intermittently alongside Amin Jan in a school behind a health clinic in an “informal” refugee camp on the outskirts of the city. Over the years, I documented Zuhair’s journey from Karachi, to Tehran, then to Istanbul. His parents, siblings, and extended family members moved from Kunduz province, Afghanistan and settled in Quetta and then Karachi (both in Pakistan) during the mid-1980s. He explained to me, “I have to go outside (abroad) and find work. If our family is in different places we can manage this.” For Zuhair and his family, a recent continued process of migration was a cognitively accepted norm (“we can *manage* with this”). As Zuhair travelled outside of Pakistan he tried to send financial support back to his father, who is partially disabled, and his family. For Amin Jan, being separated from his eldest son is not without its emotional and economic strains, yet he outlines that this a necessary step for Zuhair, especially in light of restricted economic opportunities within Pakistan. “He is compelled (*majboor*) to do this,” Amin Jan said. In an interview with Zuhair in 2013 he recalled his reasons for moving to Istanbul. He said,

“There is nothing for me in Pakistan. My father, mother, sisters, and brothers are there, but I cannot find any work in Karachi. I can speak English, I went to college, but I couldn’t find a job. On top of that the conditions (of security) are just not good. I have Pakistani documents, but I look Afghan, so the way we get harassed by state actors is worse. This is why I had to go to Iran. I worked in a factory there...”

Then I was put in touch with someone who was organizing movement to Turkey... This is how I ended up in Istanbul, working in a factory.”

For Zuhair an interplay of factors, thus, appear to shape his reasons for leaving Pakistan, which include economic motivations, shifting patterns of (in)security in Pakistan, which specifically targets Afghans in Pakistan, and norms of transnationalism. His ability to speak English, go to college, yet remain unemployed also indicates that the imaginings of prosperity that Zuhair envisions for himself are not being met in Pakistan. Coupled with heightened state-based harassment and instances in which Zuhair reports he was mistaken as being Hazara, both of which challenge notions of masculinity and personal security. Thus, migration provides a chance in which Zuhair can remake himself, his masculinity, social world, and sense of security – this also combines with the opportunities offered to him in Turkey (‘pull’ factors) and will be discussed in more detail shortly.

### **The Route to Istanbul: Social Networks, Middlemen, and Risk**

In many cases then, through an interplay of factors, many Afghans are leaving Pakistan or are planning to do so in the future. Already facing conditions in Pakistan in which citizens are migrating, as undesired (and geopolitically significant) migrants, Afghans are under increased pressures to leave Pakistan. In the current neoliberal age possibilities to navigate borders and norms of the nation-state exist and are explicitly encouraged by the economic market but, as mentioned, legally limited to the upwardly mobile middle classes. For refugees and irregular migrants, particularly those emerging from the global South, greater restrictive measures are experienced as a result to also indicate a racialized global migration regime. Turkey’s asylum laws, for example, grant refuge only to migrants from Europe. Non-European refugees are granted access to “temporary asylum” while they await a determination of their status by the UNHCR and those who do not register with UNHCR face expulsion. Permanent legal residence, or local integration, is not an option.<sup>25</sup>

Yet despite this refugees and irregular migrants, do migrate and challenge borders. How is this possible? The remainder of this paper analyzes the meso-level and macro-level processes, which facilitate the journeys from Pakistan to Turkey using the case study of Zuhair and other interviewees.

Pierre Bourdieu understands social capital as the “sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of [more or] less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.”<sup>26</sup> Building on this approach, significant social network literatures explore how social networks, particularly “strong ties” of

family networks,<sup>27</sup> as well as “weak ties” with middlemen,<sup>28</sup> are essential in enabling migratory movements, both legal and irregular. People who use both strong and weak social ties<sup>29</sup> are often best positioned in order to be able to access public and private goods, services, and opportunities, such as migration. Afghan refugees and irregular migrants do not possess the legal documents that allow them to legally cross international borders. This legal precariousness, however, does not mean that Afghans remain immobile. Rather Afghans pool resources and use social networks in order to cross borders.

During my interviews with Zuhair I asked him how he planned to travel abroad in view of the fact that he only had an Afghan refugee card (Proof of Registration Afghan Citizen Card) and no Afghan or Pakistani passport. His answer was simple. He and Amin Jan had saved up money that they gave to a middleman, who then provided them with counterfeit documents that enabled them to cross the Pakistan-Iran border. His movements were premised on the ability to access, first, the social and financial capital provided by his father and their pooling of resources and, second, “informal” channels and brokers. Zuhair later travelled to Tehran with his cousin, partly by road, and partly by foot, where he was put in touch with a “contact” in Tehran made through the *dallal* (a middleman) in Karachi. As I kept in touch with him on the phone he said, “We’ll find work through him.” For Zuhair, then, as with many others, the *dallal* has a key role in creating movement, which is only, however, possible by the *dallal*’s networks and connections with official actors and institutions.

Informal channels also intersect with, and in fact rely on, official actors and institutions that turn a blind-eye and/or directly benefit from irregular migratory practices. Irregular migration and human trafficking is a huge economic market and source of profit for the actors involved and is contingent on the presence and participation of state representatives, despite the fact that they contradict the precepts of the nation-state and border controls. Moreover, the global demand for “informal” labor in formal and informal economies, both of which are in fact two-sides of the same coin,<sup>30</sup> also shapes the success and ability of “middlemen” networks and irregular migration channels to continue and survive. Even a cursory glance at the capitalist projects in the Gulf and Middle Eastern States provide evidence of this trend. In the *Illegal Traveller*, Shahram Khosravi<sup>31</sup> details how middlemen economies intertwine with labor markets to provide huge sources of revenue for those involved, and for migrants, the “clients” a huge expense. Thus, while strong ties of family can provide economic as well as altruistic and emotional forms of capital, weaker ties



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of the middleman are essential “enablers.” However, more often than not they are exploitative and very costly.

In the case of Zuhair, his first migration was to Tehran. His narratives, however, outline key challenges migration and employment produce for migrants. In a telephone call with Zuhair he said,

“There’s about eight of us, all in one room... The conditions are not good. But what can we do? I need the work here and we don’t know many others... so we stay here... I have made good friends, though. Being away from home is hard here for us... you know how they treat Afghans in Iran.”

When Zuhair next moved from Tehran to Istanbul, he moved through the reliance of a middleman but was also accompanied by his cousin who joined him from Pakistan – which represented a form of emotional, social, and economic support. The middleman, however, simply provided access, and often of a risky type. In Istanbul, as he recalled his migratory journey he said,

“The journey was long. There were a few of us going together, through this man. We had to walk a lot, night after night. When we finally got here, we didn’t know anyone, but we soon were introduced to other Afghans, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, through the factory (we work in) and are living with them now.”

Again, the middleman is a key link that provides the bridge that enables physical movement. In addition, it is evident that “ethno-linguistic groups” were being introduced to each other in order to form systems of support that cannot be provided by any other form of regulatory bodies.

For others, however, such as Nooruddin and his family, their (future) plans of moving to Turkey are based on existing, more trusted, strong ties and networks within Turkey. Nooruddin said,

“Some of our family members are already there, laying the ground work, so when we move, we can all come together.”

However, even for Nooruddin, being connected to middlemen in Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey is also a critical step in enabling mobility. Without access to a wider net of “weak” ties the possibilities of upward social mobility and more complex migratory potentials, i.e., the movement of Nooruddin’s entire family, are less likely.

While some scholars speak of “informal” mechanisms and channels, as spaces in which the poor and downtrodden are able to improve the conditions of their lives, it is clear that informal migratory channels are riddled with chal-

allenges, from high payments to intermediaries and officials, as well as challenging working and living conditions once a destination has been reached. The act of migration, specifically if it is irregular, also involves risky, life-threatening activities for the travelers. In December 2012, 11 people (some Afghan) were killed at the Iran-Pakistan border.<sup>32</sup> In 2011, an “illegal immigration agent,” reportedly set on fire seven Pakistanis, who he had smuggled to Turkey.<sup>33</sup> In 2014, a boat of undocumented immigrants (including Afghans) sank off the coast of Turkey – killing 11 people, as migrants attempted to reach Greece.<sup>34</sup> For those migrants that do survive, psychological stressors remain in place, either of being irregular migrants and fearing police crackdowns, or of cramped living conditions, and a lack of predictability, as illustrations of the multiple material and non-material impacts of migration. “I’m scared. I try not to be. It’s difficult... *Bas* (that’s it),” Zuhair said. In 2014, as I conducted a set of group interviews in old Istanbul, which is home to migrants from across Central and South Asia – Afghan, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi – as well as Africa. Participants (all young men) outlined how they rotate sleeping patterns according to work hours and in an effort to save money on rent. In a small internet café in old Istanbul I sat as one man in his early twenties, Farooq, said,

“We have no space in our rooms, so we come here to this café, pay for tea, and sit with our friends if we want to have some space to talk and hang out or go online... It’s not easy. I miss home. But what can you do?”

## A “Turkic” Connection

Despite the difficulties outlined above, many Afghans – amongst others – have continued to migrate to Turkey. I was intrigued as how, time and time again, Turkey was referred to as a “chosen” and “desired” space to migrate toward by those I interviewed. Why is Turkey becoming a choice for Afghans and others in surrounding regions? What are the “pull” factors?

In large part, migration to Turkey is the result of Turkey acting as a transit base before migrants attempt to move to Europe, often via Italy or Greece. Indeed, Europe and North America’s hegemonic position in an international system that is structured with deep power asymmetries means that the Global North is idealized as a region in which a “better life” can be secured and creates an

**In February 2014, Turkey hosted the eighth Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Summit on the theme of “Sustainable Peace in the Heart of Asia,” with Erdogan, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, and Nawaz Sharif in attendance**

Some illegal Afghan immigrants sit in police bus on their way to a police station for deportation, late 27 September 2005, downtown Istanbul.

AFP / Mustafa Özer



impetus to move towards these regions. This, of course, is also coupled by the very real material conditions of a greater concentration of wealth and resources in these states.

In other instances, however, in the narratives I collected in Peshawar, Karachi, Istanbul, and telephone interviews, an undertone of a “Turkic” affinity to Turkey was also articulated, particularly amongst Afghan Turkmens and Uzbeks (Turkic speaking) as well as Afghan Hazaras, Tajiks (Persian speaking), and even Pashtuns (Pashto speaking). Linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and religious affinities are well documented as being “pull” factors for Afghan migration toward Iran and Pakistan based. Yet, during my fieldwork in Pakistan I was struck by how respondents expressed affinities to Turkey, via articulations of a shared historic and ethno-linguistic past. In explaining why he and his family wanted to move to Turkey, Nooruddin said,

“We are thinking of moving to Turkey. We have our people, from our family (network) already in Turkey. We, Uzbeks, are connected to Turkey. Our people, our pasts, our languages. And if we move we will all go, the whole house, all the relatives. We have to go as a house (family), together. We will bring our women and move together, as we always have done.”

Here, Nooruddin refers to an imagined commonality with a shared “Turkic”-“Turkish” past – “*Our people, our pasts, our languages.*” Similarly, during interviews with a family of Afghan Turkmens who were planning to move from

Karachi to Istanbul I was told, “We are the original Turks, of course, we feel attached to Turkey.” Despite differences between “Turkish” as a national group versus “Turkic” communities, expressions of belonging, familiarity, and affinity among Afghans and the modern Turkish state are clear motivating factors in answering the question, “Why Turkey?”

### **Pax Ottomanica and the Neoliberal Rise of “Muslim” and “Modern” Turkey**

However, more than the micro-level motivations of a shared Turkic affinity, in recent years migration “pulls” toward Turkey are also shaped by the powerful reimagining of Turkey that has been internally developed within Turkey and externally projected through the exertion of both “soft” and “hard” power in what has popularly been coined as “Neo-Ottomanism” or “Pax Ottomanica.” Under the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP) party and premiership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan,<sup>35</sup> a rhetoric of a “Muslim,” neoliberal, “modernization” plan is increasingly being articulated. Focusing on the Arab world Cihan Tugal<sup>36</sup> discusses how in the 2000s “three developments were starting to cast Turkey in a more positive, if still subdued light,” which included, first, a shift to “neoliberalism with a partial democratization” (unlike neoliberalizing Arab regimes who continued on in an authoritarian mold); second, “economic recovery from the crash of 2001,” which meant “Turkey enjoyed record inflows of FDI, not least from Gulf states, and started posting higher growth figures—though also faster-widening inequalities;” and third the “projection of AKP leaders as demonstratively pious (Muslims),” which had been absent in previous Kemalist politics of Turkey’s ruling classes.

Importantly, however, the reimagining and new projections of Turkey are not restricted to the Arab world or other former Ottoman territories in the Balkans and Caucuses. It is not simply a case of nostalgia for a past Ottoman imperial glory but is also shaped by contemporary regional geopolitical and geoeconomic rivalries, which is visible through the wider projection of Turkish power in states such as Pakistan and Afghanistan. In Pakistan or Afghanistan, for example, in recent history it has been Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, or Iran wielding influence through the media, religious seminaries, schools, state-backed nongovernmental organizations, or capital exchange. However, increasingly Turkey is competing for this lucrative role and entering Pakistan, as well as Afghanistan and other states in “new” ways to also carve out its own space as a regional “superpower.”

Turkish forces have been a part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in post-2001 Afghanistan. This role, in alliance with the USA could have been problematic for Turkey within Afghani and Pakistani

discourses where, despite elite military and bureaucratic alliances with the USA, a predominantly (and volatile) anti-USA/anti-imperialist public opinion is evident. However, as Turkey confined its role to “non-combatant forces” with a focus on “development assistance” this has been somewhat quelled. Tugal highlights how Vice Prime Minister Bülent Arınç explained that the Turkish military is in Afghanistan to help NATO “protect peace.”<sup>37</sup> While Islamic conservatives “argue that the Turkish contingent of ISAF is there to protect Afghans from the excesses of Western imperialism—an excuse frequently used when defending Turkey’s participation in US-led occupations. They also emphasize the need to protect the Turkish model of Islam against an alleged al-Qaeda version”<sup>38</sup> —and it could be added that Turkey also has a regional

interest in limiting the power and influence of its Iranian and Saudi competitors in the project of “Muslim” imperialism.

In economic terms, Turkey is also pushing for and being received as a key strategic ally in the region. In a visit to Lahore, Pakistan in December 2013, Erdogan met with Pakistani Prime Minister and businessman Nawaz Sharif, where they both vowed to strengthen “bilateral,

trade, cultural, political, and economic relations.”<sup>39</sup> In February 2014, Turkey hosted the eighth Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Summit on the theme of “Sustainable Peace in the Heart of Asia,” with Erdogan, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, and Nawaz Sharif in attendance.<sup>40</sup> Newspaper reports and television reports frequently comment on the increased “constructive” presence of Turkish trade in the region. The Turkish articulation and practice of a “Muslim” neoliberal modernity is increasingly being put forward. Further, this model is also well received in neoliberal Pakistan’s wider public discourses as well as the neoliberal peace building norms that shape post-2001 Afghanistan. Thus, as Turkey projects its image and forms of influence in the region, as one of opportunity, it also represents a beacon of desirability as an immigrant recipient-state for Afghans living in Pakistan and elsewhere.

In addition, the network of Turkish (state and non-state) sponsored private schools, such as the “Pak-Turk” schools, and Afghan refugee schools, “Pak-Turk” schools, and Afghan refugee schools are forms of Turkish “soft power” that create an impression that Turkey is a welcoming host country. Turkey is constructed as a country, is a “progressive” space and a place for opportunity where immigrants have a chance for social and cultural mobility. During my fieldwork, it was evident that the network of Turkish schools in urban and

## **Increased migration patterns to Turkey, however, cannot be separated from the wider global political economy and the power differences between Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, and the classes within them**



rural areas across Pakistan appeared to be rapidly increasing. It was commonplace to see on school walls Pakistani, Afghani, and Turkish flags. In a series of interviews with a headmaster of an Afghan school sponsored by private Turkish actors in Islamabad, I was told,

“The Turkish people are good to Afghans and Pakistanis – I have encouraged many of my students to go Turkey... Turkey has helped us a lot and always sends people to come and visit the schools. Next week a delegation from Turkey is coming to visit the school for our annual assembly...”

The headmaster proceeded to show me photographs of previous year’s assemblies with delegation from Turkey, which included Turkish dignitaries. In one image, the presentation of gifts from Turkey was visible to symbolize the exertion of a “soft” Turkish power, while in student group discussions, teenage boys and girls, spoke of their plans and desire to visit Turkey.

Within Pakistan –as well as Afghanistan, the Middle East, and North Africa–, the visibility of Turkish media –i.e., dramas translated in to Urdu–, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), increased flights to and from Istanbul, as well as state-sponsored education initiatives, are just some examples of how Turkey’s “soft power” has entered the Afghani and Pakistani imagination within Pakistan. Media landscapes act as discursive tools by which a particular imaging of Turkey is globally projected. From *Ishq-e-Mamnoon* (*Ask-ı Memnu*), to *Meera Sultan* (*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*), to *Asi* (*Asi ve Demir*), Turkish dramas have captured television and online audiences in Pakistan, particularly of young men (and women) who are of migratory age. From venerating the Muslim Ottoman Empire to introducing different concepts of dating, different to the cultural contexts in Pakistan, Turkish dramas have captured Pakistan’s Afghani and Pakistani (and other) audiences, particularly since 2012/13. Even widely watched Pakistani television dramas such as *Ashq* was filmed and shot in large parts in Turkey. In this series, Turkey appears as a land of a modern metropolis of tall buildings with a dynamic nightlife where dating takes place, in comparison with the rural setting of Pakistan. As Ali Nobil Ahmad demonstrates in his work, migration is often not just about economic opportunity or escaping insecurity.<sup>41</sup> It is also about exploration, fun, and sexuality. For many Afghan (and Pakistani) migrants, Turkey offers the potentials for new relationships, love, or, in the very least, the potentials for an improved social standing for the competitive marriage market back home. During my interview with Farooq, he referred to how this “improved social standing” would help him find a partner at home. “My mother has said she will find me someone nice from our home (area). I am outside and earning, so I hope she finds someone good.” As the interviews continued, Farooq probingly asked questions about my position as a Muslim woman, such as if I had been to Istanbul’s nightclubs and visited Taksim. “It is different to Pakistan,” he half-warned, half-encouraged me.

Similarly for Zuhair, he and his friends, a network of Afghan and Pakistanis, participate in football matches and local sports competitions in ways he could not in Pakistan. Although he is fearful of the immigration police, he feels safe from threats of sectarian violence toward him in Turkey. Still, sometimes mistaken for a Hazara, he knows that because there is a significantly lower chance of falling victim to forms of state and non-state violence he is able to explore his social and personal spaces in new ways.

The examples of Zuhair and Farooq are interesting as they also reveal how it is men who generally move and explore their “selfhood” in migration, while Afghan women of the same class are noticeably absent and often stay “behind.” This in itself opens up more questions that should be analyzed as to what happens to the women who stay behind and how do they construct notions of selfhood and their social worlds?

The themes of leisure, sexual exploration, and constructions of gender (male and female) that can engender social change are beyond the scope of this paper. However, they reveal the important ways in which migration and the opportunities that accompany it are not simply about one-dimensional economic “push” and “pull” factors but are also spaces in which migrants also define themselves and their social worlds whilst also being aware of the structural realities and systems of exploitation they face.

## **The Political Economy of Migrants in Turkey**

Increased migration patterns to Turkey, however, cannot be separated from the wider global political economy and the power differences between Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, and the classes within them. As has been discussed earlier, irregular migration and labor migration regimes represent considerable sectors of the economy and sources of profit in of themselves. In addition, cheap labor, often from migrants and often informal, form a vital resource pool for the modernization projects of private companies, state initiatives, and informal and formal economies. As a number of scholars on informal economies outline, the formal and informal urban economies are often two sides of the same coin, and can be connected to formal and informal economies of migration.

There is, of course, a long history of pre-existing trade networks of Afghan, Pakistani, i.e., Central and South Asian, and Turkish communities, particularly with attention to handicrafts, carpets, gemstones, and textiles. However, currently, a labor economy (formal and informal) appears to be deeply intertwined with the sending and receiving of state policies and neoliberal modernization projects. Pakistan’s peripheral position in the international economic system means it cannot provide the goods and rights its citizens, let alone migrants

and refugees, are due. Against this backdrop migration is both, officially, via government labor contracts where manpower is hired out for other states, and unofficially a strategy for economic growth.

Exploring South Asian labor migration patterns in *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora*,<sup>42</sup> Rana outlines the role of indentured labor of the colonies as being crucial in global capitalism and the success story of European and North American claims to modernity. Rana shows how South Asian labor Diasporas were moved to South Africa, East Africa, and the West Indies to provide the labor for colonial projects – building railroads, working in agriculture, and so on. Rana then explores how South Asian labor migrants were encouraged to migrate to the United Kingdom after World War II and were an essential part of post-war industrial recovery by providing a cheap labor force. Similar parallels to migrants from the Global South enabling post-war European recovery can be seen in the case of North and West African migrants in France or Turkish migrants in West Germany.

Rana goes on to discuss how the Pakistani state has continually, since the 1970s, itself encouraged labor migrations out of Pakistan as a way of dealing with unemployment, underemployment, and populations it could not manage, such as refugees. Interconnected to this and a beneficiary of this, significant literature and policy reports from international NGOs analyzes how Central and South Asian labor migrants have formed the backbone and the “darker side” of modernization projects, initiated by the Gulf States, such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as well as Europe and the Global North.<sup>43</sup> Thus, today’s modernization projects continue to be dependent on the cheap labor of peripheral states.

As Turkey’s economic star rises a number of neoliberal modernization, economic, and architectural, and construction projects, particularly in new urban spaces – from parks to shopping malls to new businesses – are visible. Yet, further quantitative and qualitative research is required on the relationship between these migrants (legal and irregular) and their positions in Turkey’s interconnected formal and informal labor economies. While academic and activists discuss how Turkey’s working classes contribute to Turkey’s recent economic development, a question must be asked as to how do migrant laborers, which come from “new” spaces in the Global South, fit into Turkey’s landscape? As Turkey undergoes its own economic transformation and diversification of production, how do migrants fit into Turkey’s economy and so-



**Since the 2000s and 2010s, Turkey has witnessed a diversification in migrants, which have increasingly drawn from the African and Central and South Asian Global South**

## The Afghan migration story is not simply one of “helplessness,” but also offers a space to appreciate how migration the chance for “self-making”

ciety by providing cheap labor? And what does this reveal about Turkey’s changing position in the global market? A link between economic liberalization, decreased regulatory practices, and the growth of the Turkish economy with the growing presence of migration to Turkey appears to be emerging.

Since the 2000s and 2010s, Turkey has witnessed a diversification in migrants, which have increasingly drawn from the African and Central and South Asian Global South. While accurate figures and locations of these migrants are difficult to gauge and require fur-

ther analysis, what is clear, however, is that many of these migrants are pushed to secure work through unregulated and undocumented contracts. Turkey’s asylum laws grant refuge only to migrants from Europe. Non-European refugees are granted access to “temporary asylum” while they await a determination of their status by the UNHCR; those who do not register with UNHCR face expulsion. Currently, in conjunction with UNHCR assistance, Turkey hosts a massive refugee population of Syrians who are in an “emergency phase” of migration and has previously hosted large numbers of Iraqi refugees, particularly after the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Here, infrastructural structures (refugee camps, food rations, temporary schools) for this emergency phase are in place, although those too are riddled with a number of difficulties. For Afghans, however, a smaller population who are not political refugees nor in the same “emergency” phase as the Syrians have limited support by the migration system in place in Turkey. For Afghans who do register with the UNHCR, the organization tries to resettle refugees to a third country. This process is long, drawn-out, and bureaucratic with uncertain outcomes. Permanent legal residence is not possible. It appears that Afghans in Turkey, who are not refugees or upper and middle class legal travelers, are usually irregular migrants. Further, even for those, who are legally recognized as refugees, work permits are rarely given. This lack of legal status forces migrants in to informal and unregulated economies,<sup>44</sup> but for these irregular migrants this is the only recourse to employment.

In my work, Zuhair’s employment in Istanbul has been contingent on him working in factories for the production of consumer goods and textiles. He works with different, nearly always undocumented, nationalities. He said,

“I have friends that are Afghan. Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Iranian, Syrian... you name it, we are all here together.”

Similarly, in the group interviews I conducted in Istanbul I was told of the different jobs that these young men did, from working in construction companies, to nightclubs, and factories. Farooq himself was working in a small

factory and added, "I have done many jobs... construction, cleaning, ... any job we can get. There are a lot of us from outside who are working in the city. We get jobs because we are strong and work hard, but also because they (the employers) know they can pay us less." In a true-life documentary *In This World*, a film directed by Michael Winterbottom, audiences are taken on the journey of two cousins (Afghan refugees), Enayatullah and Jamal Udin Torabi (the former played by himself) on their *irregular* migration journey from an Afghan refugee camp in Peshawar to Europe.<sup>45</sup> Istanbul features as a critical stop before Europe. Scenes of Jamal and Enayatullah – and other migrants from across the region – working in a metal factory, clocking metal in and out of machines, symbolizes the mundane and cheap labor that is part and parcel of transforming Turkey. As the two cousins walk across Istanbul, tightly packed neighborhoods with African, Asian, and other migrants, as well as Turkish populations indicate a darker side of Turkey's economic development. Zuhair, his co-workers, Farooq and the others were interviewed in Istanbul, along with Enayatullah and Jamal Udin Torabi, and others form a cheap labor class because they are irregular immigrants but also as they are an integral part of Turkey's production chain that is enabling Turkey's economic rise.

### **Concluding Remarks: Turkey, the Regional "Receiving" State?**

The motivations for (re)migration by non-elite Afghans in Pakistan are in part a story of survival in the context of protracted migration displacement, increased state harassment in Pakistan, and structural and physical violence in Pakistan. However, it is misleading to assume that the story stops there. The Afghan migration story is not simply one of "helplessness," but also offers a space to appreciate how migration the chance for "self-making." Moreover, while the migration regime conceptualizes refugees and irregular migrants as unusual entities, who are "longing for home," for many migrants transnational norms are an important mode of survival and opportunity. These factors, of transnational norms and opportunities for self-making, interact with macro-level "pull" factors to shape Afghan migratory patterns to Turkey. However, the case of Afghan migration to Turkey also indicates that greater attention towards global economic drivers and power asymmetries in the global system is needed to better contextualize and understand why increased migration from the Global South is impacting Turkey. Migration patterns do not take place in localized vacuums that are simply the result of local politics and local "push" factors of the failings in of Afghanistan and Pakistan, as important as these are. Turkey is shifting from being a migrant sending state to a migrant receiving state and this is influenced by how Turkey is delving in to the politics of being a new (or renewed) leader of the Muslim world, which is combined with a neoliberal approach at both the domestic and international levels. As the AKP develops its modernization and development vision in and outside

of Turkey it also creates a demand (“pull”) for cheap labor, in which migrant labor from states under Turkey’s sphere of influence, such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, have an important role. Thus, refugees and irregular migrants are contributing to the rapid development and modernization projects of Turkey’s expanding economy. This low-cost-labor “pull” is also shaped by Turkey’s “soft power” and its hegemonic influence over Muslim (and other) states through the media, religion, educational institutions, trade, and alliances with those states’s own business and military elites. Turkey, it appears, is thus well on the way of updating Pax Ottomanica for the neoliberal age. ■

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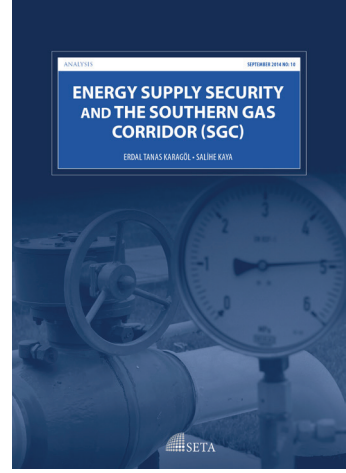


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# Energy Supply Security and the Southern Gas Corridor



By ERDAL TANAS KARAGÖL , SALİHE KAYA

***This analysis focuses on the concept of energy supply security and SGC project that have been developed to provide energy supply security with Turkmenistan, Iran, KRG, and the East Mediterranean.***

In the 21st century, natural gas has become a strategic source , one of the most discussed and a “top of the agenda” item with its advantages and risks. Increasing cost and import of natural gas to an unsustainable level in the EU countries have brought the issue of energy supply security into the European agenda, as Russia exploits the dependency of Europe on Russian natural gas. In short, the EU countries seek new alternatives in the face of the Russian – Ukrainian dispute and Russian threat against Ukraine to cut the gas flow in the absence of an agreement.

South Gas Corridor (SGC) is gaining in importance day by day for EU, heading towards different supplies, and for Turkey who aims to take more effective role in the new market. Inauguration of TANAP and TAP, planned to transfer Azeri natural gas found in the Caspian Region to Europe via Turkey, is important in terms of supply security both for Turkey and Europe. As a transit country in energy and a bridge between the East with the West , Turkey has been presented with golden opportunities by these projects to become an energy hub and an actor in the region.

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