



THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE  
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**MIGRATORY EXPERIENCES OF AFGHAN ASYLUM SEEKERS LIVING IN  
ANKARA**

**Master's Thesis**

**SAFIULLAH RAJABI**

**Master of Arts in Migration Studies**

**April 2025**



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## **STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY**

This master's thesis, entitled "Migratory Experiences of Afghan Asylum Seekers Living in Ankara," is my original study. It has been prepared in accordance with academic honesty and scientific ethics. All sources used were properly documented and cited throughout the study, with appropriate citations provided wherever external material was used.



Safiullah RAJABI

April, 2025

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## ABSTRACT

### MIGRATORY EXPERIENCES OF AFGHAN ASYLUM SEEKERS LIVING IN ANKARA

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People leave their countries and migrate worldwide because of war, conflicts, economic and security problems, natural disasters, climate change, and epidemics. In Afghanistan's case, the country's decades of endless war and chaos have led to the emergence of many immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers globally. The endless conflicts and chaos in Afghanistan have led to the migration of Afghans to places where they feel safer. Recently, there has been a significant increase in Afghan mobility to Türkiye, emphasizing the importance of understanding this immigrant group from an academic perspective. Due to their irregular stay or entry, there has been a significant increase in the number of Afghan immigrants apprehended in Türkiye. However, Turkish legislation, Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), states that individuals applying for protection in Türkiye within a reasonable timeframe and explaining their reasons will not face criminal proceedings for irregular entry and stay. The increasing apprehensions of Afghan immigrants seeking protection or asylum in Türkiye, coupled with declining international protection applications by Afghan nationals, have raised concerns about serious violations of individuals' rights to seek protection at both the domestic and international levels. This study explores the migratory experiences of Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara through qualitative research based on in-depth interview data collected from 24 Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara. The obtained data were analyzed using a thematic analysis. Within the scope of this study, this thesis has investigated the reasons for Afghan migration and their preferences for Türkiye, how they navigated the barriers in their migration routes to Türkiye, their post-migratory experiences and life in Ankara, and their survival strategies in Türkiye. Among the basic findings obtained, it is prominent that Afghan asylum seekers have forcibly left their country due to persecution, migrated to Türkiye aiming to reach Western countries one day, faced serious problems before and after migration, did not want to return to Afghanistan, and still tried to migrate to Türkiye no matter what it took them to migrate.

**Keywords:** International Protection, Afghan Immigrants, Asylum Seekers, Conditional Refugee, Forced Migration, Resettlement

## ÖZET

### ANKARA'DA YAŞAYAN AFGAN SİĞINMACILARIN GÖC DENEYİMLERİ

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İnsanlar savaş, çatışmalar, ekonomik ve güvenlik sorunları, doğal afetler, iklim değişikliği ve salgın hastalıklar nedeniyle ülkelerini terk ediyor ve dünya çapında göç ediyor. Afganistan örneğinde, ülkenin on yillardır süren bitmeyen savaş ve kaosu, küresel olarak birçok göçmen, mülteci ve sığınmacı ortayamasına neden olmuştur. Ülkedeki bitmeyen çatışmalar ve kaos, Afganların ülkelerinden kendilerini daha güvende hissettikleri yerlere göç etmelerine yol açmıştır. Son yıllarda, Afganların Türkiye'ye hareketliliğinde önemli bir artış olmuştur ve bu, Afgan göçmen grubunu akademik bir bakış açısıyla anlamanın önemini vurgulamaktadır. Düzensiz kalışları veya girişleri nedeniyle, Türkiye'de yakalanan Afgan göçmen sayısında önemli bir artış olmuştur. Ancak, Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu (YUKK), Türkiye'de makul bir zaman dilimi içinde koruma başvurusunda bulunan ve nedenlerini açıklayan kişilerin düzensiz giriş ve kalış nedeniyle cezai kovuşturmayla karşı karşıya kalmayacağını belirtmektedir. Türkiye'de koruma veya sığınma arayan Afgan göçmenlerin artan tutuklamaları ve Afgan vatandaşları tarafından yapılan uluslararası koruma başvurularının azalması hem yerel hem de uluslararası düzeyde bireylerin koruma arama haklarının ciddi şekilde ihlal edildiği konusunda endişeleri yaratmıştır. Bu çalışma, Ankara'daki 24 Afgan sığınmacıdan toplanan derinlemesine görüşme verilerine dayanan nitel araştırma yoluyla Ankara'daki Afgan sığınmacıların göç deneyimlerini araştırmaktadır. Elde edilen veriler tematik bir analiz kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bu çalışma kapsamında, bu tez Afgan göçünün nedenlerini ve Türkiye'yi tercihlerini, Türkiye'ye göç rotalarındaki engelleri nasıl aşıklarını, göç sonrası deneyimlerini ve Ankara'daki yaşamalarını ve Türkiye'deki hayatı kalma stratejilerini araştırılmıştır. Elde edilen temel bulgular arasında; Afgan sığınmacıların zulüm nedeniyle ülkelerini zorla terk ettikleri, bir gün Batı ülkelerine ulaşmayı hedefleyerek Türkiye'ye göç ettikleri, göç öncesi ve sonrasında ciddi sorunlarla karşılaşıkları, Afganistan'a geri dönmek istemedikleri ve göç etmek için her ne pahasına olursa olsun Türkiye'ye göç etmeye çalışıkları öne çıkmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Uluslararası Koruma, Afgan Göçmenler, Sığınmacılar, Şartlı Mülteci, Zorunlu Göç, Yeniden Yerleştirme

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ASAM</b>	Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>BVOR</b>	Blended Visa Office-Referred
<b>DGMM</b>	Directorate General of Migration Management
<b>ECHR</b>	European Court of Human Rights
<b>ESC</b>	European Social Charter
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GAR</b>	Government-Assisted Refugees
<b>ICJ</b>	International Court of Justice
<b>ICESCR</b>	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ISAF</b>	International Security Assistance Force
<b>LFIP</b>	Law on Foreigners and International Protection
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>OAU</b>	Organisation of African Unity
<b>OEF</b>	Operation Enduring Freedom
<b>PDPA</b>	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
<b>PMM</b>	Presidency of Migration Management
<b>PSR</b>	Private Sponsorship of Refugees
<b>TDK</b>	Türk Dil Kurumu (Turkish Language Association)
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAMA</b>	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>YUKK</b>	Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into five distinct sections. The first section provides a general background to facilitate readers' understanding of the issues discussed in this study. The second and third sections describe the scope, aims, and significance of this study. The fourth section presents the research questions that this study seeks to answer. Finally, the fifth section elucidates the structure of this thesis.

### 1.1. GENERAL BACKGROUND ON THE TOPIC

Human mobility, expressed as migration, has become an important phenomenon in modern society. People have migrated in almost every period of history, sometimes individually and sometimes in groups, due to wars, civil unrest, famines, oppression, and many other reasons, dating back to the early ages of humanity. These migratory movements have sometimes been so large that they have caused the collapse of states, sometimes the formation of the founding foundations of today's states, and even had an intercontinental effect, such as the Migration Period<sup>1</sup>, closing an era and opening a new era. However, the majority of migrations carried out by humans in the last quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are generally due to political instability or conflicts, human rights abuse, repressive governments, civil wars, ethnic conflicts, low demand for labor, economic hardships, unfavorable geographical conditions, and fear of life security. People who flee for such reasons leave their home countries in order to earn at least enough money to live more comfortably, pay off their debts, improve their living conditions, financially support their families, and have a safe life.

Although the phenomenon of migration has an ancient past, especially in human history, international migration began to manifest itself in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Globalization, which has manifested as a decrease in the importance of national borders and an increase in transportation and communication opportunities over the last century, has played an important role in accelerating international migration and asylum movements (A.D. Daniş, 2004). In this case, individuals with financial means and a high level of education choose developed Western countries and complete the migration process more safely, whereas individuals with a low level

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<sup>1</sup> The Migration Period, also known as the Barbarian Invasion, was a period in European history marked by large-scale migration between 350 and 800 AD. It was divided into two periods: The first period included intense border changes between the Western Roman Empire and the Huns, and the second period continued the first period (Hines et al., 1999).

of education or lack of financial means leave their country with the dream of going to neighboring countries, joining the workforce, and moving to European countries after a certain amount of savings. In this context, international migration is a process that causes significant changes in the economic, political, and socioeconomic structures of both source and destination countries.

When this situation is explicitly evaluated for Afghanistan, since the country has been in endless war and chaos for years, it has been the source of the emergence of many immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers worldwide for many years. This process, which started with occupation by the Soviet Union, has stopped occasionally, but it has not entirely ended for Afghanistan, the cornerstone of Eurasia. The situation the country is in threatens the lives and security of the people, as well as causes poverty and diseases to appear together with the war. This endless war and chaos have led to the exile or emigration of people in the country, causing them to migrate to countries where they feel safer. While these exiles and migrations initially followed a course toward Pakistan and Iran, they recently turned toward Türkiye.

According to the 1979 census conducted in Afghanistan, the country's population was 15.6 million. No systematic or accurate census has been conducted in Afghanistan since this period. Analysis of the ethnic composition of the Afghan population reveals that numerous ethnic groups have coexisted throughout the nation's history. Pashtuns constitute 42 percent of Afghanistan's population, making them the most powerful group in terms of their demographic and political influence (Haşimi et al., 2010). Other ethnic groups in Afghanistan include Tajiks (27%), Uzbeks (9%), Hazaras (9%), Aimaq (4%), Turkmens (3%), Baloch (2%), and others (4%) (Haşimi et al., 2010).

In Afghanistan, where Shiites constitute 11 percent of the population, the majority of the population is Sunni (approximately 89 percent). In the country, conflict can sometimes occur between Sunni and Shiite Muslims. This situation has added a different dimension to the migratory movements of people living in Afghanistan, which are generally due to war, threats, and economic reasons, and has also affected the determination of migration routes. It can be said that similarities in religious and ethnic origins play a vital role in the migration of Afghans. For instance, Hazaras, a Shiite ethnic group in Afghanistan, has historically migrated to Iran, where the Shiite population is dense. Similarly, Pashtuns prefer to migrate to Pakistan (İ. Koç, 2017). Other groups, particularly the Uzbeks, prefer to migrate to Türkiye. It is important to note that the migration of Afghans to Türkiye is not a recent phenomenon and can be traced back to the early 1980s, with a subsequent increase in the 2000s.

Türkiye is 560 km away from Iran. Considering the land border and Iran's recent attitude towards refugees and asylum seekers in their country, sanctions such as not providing IDs and imposing heavy penalties on workplaces that employ irregular immigrants have caused an intense migration movement from the Iranian border to Türkiye. Subsequently, a steady increase in the number of Afghan immigrants was observed in Türkiye. Afghans constitute the second-largest immigrant group in Türkiye after Syrians. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 3.2 million refugees and asylum seekers lived in Türkiye as of mid-2024. The number of registered Afghan asylum seekers is 91,373 (UNHCR, 2024b). It is important to note that this figure represents only the number of regular or registered Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye. Although the exact number is unknown, it is thought that the number of irregular immigrants of Afghan origin is much higher.

This study aims to better understand the migratory experiences in the forced migration of Afghan asylum seekers residing in Ankara, Türkiye. The reason for choosing Afghan asylum seekers in this study is that Afghan nationals constitute the second-largest group of immigrants in Türkiye after Syrians. In addition, while the number of Afghan irregular immigrants apprehended in Türkiye remains high and continues to rise, the number of international protection applications or asylum requests made in Türkiye has been declining. This trend and apprehensions occur in a situation where Turkish legislation and regulations, specifically the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) Article 65, states that individuals who apply within a reasonable timeframe, as long as they can explain their reasons, will not face criminal proceedings for their irregular entry and stay in the country's territory, and that the decision regarding this will be evaluated together with the applicant's unique situation and the reason for their arrival. The increasing number of apprehensions of Afghan immigrants fleeing their country to seek protection or asylum in Türkiye, coupled with the declining trend in international protection applications made in Türkiye, particularly by Afghan nationals, has raised concerns about serious violations of individuals' rights to seek protection at both domestic and international levels.

This study, which considers the increasing number of Afghan nationals' apprehensions in Türkiye and the declining trend in international protection applications made in Türkiye as a concerning issue, aims to outline the reasons for Afghan migration and Afghan nationals' preferences for Türkiye and to reveal how Afghan immigrants navigate the barriers in their migration routes to Türkiye under Turkish restrictive policies and combat against irregular migration, post-migratory experiences, the challenges and rights violations they face in

Türkiye, and their lives as asylum seekers in Ankara. It also focuses on the survival strategies of Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye in their daily lives and their intentions to stay in Türkiye or move toward Europe.

## **1.2. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

As old as society's history, migration is most generally defined as the transition of people from one settlement to another at a certain time (Gökulp Aras, 2013; Ünal, 2014). Migration movements throughout history can occur either individually or in masses. While migratory movements affect the current global population distribution, they have shaped the social, political, economic, and cultural structures and development of societies. It can be stated that people have continued their mobility voluntarily or involuntarily throughout history to escape from adverse natural conditions, to escape from pressures, to live in safer environments, to create social environments, and to continue their lives in more suitable conditions (Ünal, 2014). There have been significant changes in the size, scope, and nature of human movement (Castles & Miller, 1998).

Migration movements are generally categorized according to various criteria, including forced and voluntary movements based on their causes, work and asylum based on their purposes, and regular and irregular movements based on the methods used to reach the destination or target countries (A. Yilmaz, 2014). The migration phenomenon, studied across various scientific disciplines in different but interconnected dimensions and assessed as a compilation of these relationships within certain classifications, is likely to reveal a reality that differs from this compilation and may not align with these classifications in social reality (İçduygu & Sirkeci, 1999). Migration is a process that must be perceived and evaluated in terms of its causes, making it difficult to define, explain, and understand, both theoretically and empirically (İçduygu & Sirkeci, 1999).

Today, with the widespread use of technological advances and increased transportation opportunities, the dynamic, complex, and multidimensional characteristics of migration movements in an international context come to the fore. Concepts such as voluntary, forced, legal, and irregular classify fragmented migration types, including various motivations, legal statuses, and employment conditions (Kuschminder, 2018). In this context, it is not sufficient to understand and classify different phenomena or situations that emerge in the social reality of international migration through binary and opposing categories because immigrants or phenomena can be in constant transition from one category to another (Şirin Öner, 2021). A

statement by Gökarp Aras (2013) regarding irregular transit migration exemplifies this situation. By definition, irregular migration is a movement that includes transit, shuttle, and asylum movements, where the direction and time of migration cannot be predicted, and the social, demographic, and economic characteristics of immigrants can change very quickly (Gökarp Aras, 2013; A. Yılmaz, 2014).

When considered in terms of migration intention, the category of transit immigrants who come to a country intending to go to another country and stay there for a while overlaps with various categories, such as clandestine or illegal workers, asylum seekers, and refugees (İçduygu, 2000). In addition, most transit migrants get stuck at the stage of the migration process before reaching the country they aim to reach. These migrants can neither return to their homeland nor reach the country they aim to reach (Gökarp Aras, 2013). Considering all the factors that emerge in social reality, it can be stated that the concept of transit migration should be constructed according to a conceptualization that not only aims to understand the migration intentions of immigrants but also reveals the dynamics and mechanisms of the migration process (İçduygu, 2000). At this point, the concept of transit migration, also referred to as one of the types of immigrant groups examined in this thesis, asylum seekers, needs to be explained. Accordingly, transit migration refers to immigrants temporarily staying in another country on their way to the country they want to reach (A. Yılmaz, 2014). This means being in transit and at one of the intermediate stops of the migration journey, not yet reaching the destination, or being unfinished (Şirin Öner, 2021).

When evaluating Afghan immigrants in Türkiye, it is possible to examine Afghans in Türkiye in three main groups. The first group comprises Afghan nationals who migrated to Türkiye within the scope of regular migration for work, education, buying a house, or various reasons and stayed with a residence permit or work permit. The second group comprises Afghan nationals who migrated to Türkiye and currently have international protection status or are applicants. The last group comprises Afghans who migrated to Türkiye irregularly and stayed in repatriation centers or stayed in the country without any legal right to stay, which we can evaluate within the scope of irregular immigrants outside the first two groups. The grouping of Afghan immigrants was made by considering how individuals stayed in Türkiye.

From a global perspective, Afghanistan has continued to exist as the country of origin for refugees for the last four decades. Afghan immigrants are among the largest refugee groups in Europe (İçduygu & Karadağ, 2018). Examples of countries affected by Afghan displacement include Iran and Pakistan, which are neighbors of Afghanistan, and Türkiye and other European

countries. At this point, Türkiye had hosted many Afghan immigrants since the early 1980s and positioned itself as a transit country for immigrants to reach European countries (İçduygu & Karadağ, 2018). This thesis, titled “Migratory Experiences of Afghan Asylum Seekers Living in Ankara,” will attempt to understand the migratory movements and experiences of Afghan immigrants who fall under the second group of Afghan immigrants in Türkiye, asylum seekers or individuals within the framework of international protection, and are residing in the Ankara province.

### **1.3. AIMS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Migration has recently become an important issue on the agendas of both the world and Türkiye. Türkiye’s position in the migratory movements taking place in a global context cannot be denied. In the international migration flow, individuals moving towards Europe first head towards the peripheral regions of Europe, such as Eastern Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa (İçduygu, 2000). Thousands of immigrants from countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan aim to stay temporarily in Türkiye with the intention of going to the West and developed countries in the Global North<sup>2</sup> (İçduygu, 2000). However, individuals who start their migration mobility with the intention of going to Europe may also position Türkiye as their final stop in the migration process (İçduygu & Yükseker, 2012).

The fact that immigrants cannot reach their target European countries directly from their source countries reveals the concept of transit migration as a strategy (İçduygu & Yükseker, 2012). At this point, Türkiye, the final exit point for the transition to Europe, becomes a country that needs to be addressed in international migration movements (Kuschminder, 2018). The transformation of the asylum policy from a liberal regime promising full social rights and long-term settlement to a short-term stay policy that prevents entry to the target country and restricts status and rights in the country also affects Türkiye, which shares borders with the European Union (İçduygu, 2000). Policies aimed at assisting potential refugees outside EU borders and keeping them close to their countries of origin have been implemented through resettlement decisions in a safe third country. This process affects migration to and from Türkiye (İçduygu, 2000). The procedure for settling in a third country is initiated by granting refugee status to immigrants by the UNHCR and the Ministry of the Interior to settle in a safe third country such as the United States, Canada, Australia, or other developed Western countries. It legalizes a

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<sup>2</sup> The Global North is a concept that describes economically developed, industrialized nations characterized by a high standard of living. This classification predominantly encompasses regions such as Western Europe, North America, Japan, and Australia, which occupy a central position in the global economic structure.

transition that could initially be considered an irregular migration movement by allowing individuals who entered Türkiye irregularly to leave Türkiye legally. However, settling refugees in a third country takes a long time (İçduygu & Yükseker, 2012).

According to the UNHCR data, in Türkiye, 12,549 Afghan refugees and an additional 91,373 Afghan asylum seekers are awaiting resettlement in a third country pending their refugee status determination (UNHCR, 2024b). The fact that these immigrants, who are in Türkiye and have legal statuses such as refugees or asylum seekers, are extended to a transit country through the procedure for settling in a third country causes the link between irregular migration and refugee status to crystallize (Gökalp Aras, 2013). Asylum seekers who apply for refugee status and are resettled in a third country are considered transit migrants. Suppose asylum seekers who apply for refugee status intend to move to a third country but whose applications are rejected want to continue to seek luck in the West and leave Türkiye instead of returning to their own country. In this case, Türkiye will be positioned as a transit country for these asylum seekers. As a result of the policies implemented on migration, it is also possible for asylum seekers and refugees who want to reach Europe through Türkiye to stay there (İçduygu & Yükseker, 2012). This situation caused Türkiye, positioned as a transit country at the beginning of the migration journey, to become the target country over time.

The literature review revealed that Türkiye is currently positioned as a target and transit country. Meanwhile, a large number of Afghan asylum seekers have been waiting for many years to resettle to a third country from Türkiye. Moreover, numerous studies on Afghan immigrants in Türkiye show that asylum seekers endure difficult living conditions while awaiting status determination and resettlement to third countries. Additionally, it has been observed that Türkiye has recently taken significant measures to combat irregular migration and has sped up the deportation of irregular Afghans residing in Türkiye. This highlights the importance of understanding the major reasons behind Afghan migration and their preferences for Türkiye. This also raises questions about how Afghan immigrants navigate barriers in their migration pathways to Türkiye despite strict Turkish policies against irregular migration, how they describe their migration experiences and lives in Türkiye, and what strategies they have developed to cope with these challenges. It is thought that understanding these issues will contribute to understanding the migratory movement of Afghans to Türkiye despite unwelcoming Turkish policies in the area of migration while also contributing significant knowledge to understanding migration to and from Türkiye. Based on this, this thesis research explores how Afghan asylum seekers living in Ankara province, who arrived in Türkiye by

various means and have applied for international protection, perceive and assess their situation regarding the issue. In this context, this thesis aims to explore why Afghan nationals leave their country, the significant factors that led them to choose Türkiye during the migration process, how they navigated the challenges on their journey to Türkiye, how they perceived their lives as asylum seekers in Türkiye, and how they continued their lives in Ankara.

#### **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Although the number of studies on international migration in Türkiye has increased in recent years, most have focused specifically on Syrian immigrants. The notable lack of research on Afghan immigrants in Türkiye is noteworthy. This study aims to better understand the migratory experiences of Afghans in Ankara, Türkiye and address this gap in the literature.

This study aims to reveal the reasons for migration, difficulties, and challenges faced by Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye, explore their motivations for migrating there, highlight the hardships of their journeys and lives as asylum seekers in Ankara, examine how they navigate these issues, and analyze their survival strategies through a specific sample population. In this context, this study seeks to answer the following questions.

- What are the major reasons for Afghans' migration and their preference for Türkiye?
- How do Afghan immigrants navigate the barriers in their migration pathways to Türkiye under the influence of restrictive Turkish policies against irregular migration?
- How do Afghan asylum seekers interpret their post-migratory experiences and lives in Ankara?
- What are the survival strategies for Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye?

#### **1.5. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

This thesis consists of seven sections. The first section is the introduction, which outlines the main points of this study. This includes a general background on the topic, the scope of the study, its aims and significance, the research questions that this thesis seeks to answer, and its structure.

The second section presents the study's analytical background and theoretical framework, providing a comprehensive understanding of the academic and conceptual context of the thesis.

This chapter consists of two parts: analytical background and theoretical framework. The analytical background is further divided into two subsections. The first subsection, the definition of concepts, includes explanations of the main concepts in the field of migration that are frequently referenced throughout the thesis. The second subsection, the literature review, discusses and summarizes relevant studies on the topic, focusing on the literature on Afghan immigrants in general, as well as studies explicitly conducted on Afghan immigrants in Türkiye.

In the second part of the section, theoretical approaches to the phenomenon of migration are discussed to examine their relevance to Afghan migration. After a general understanding of migration theories, the section continues with Ravenstein's migration laws and Lee's push-pull theory, both of which have a significant place in the migration literature. Then, migration theories are examined according to the distinction made by Massey and others, including theories that cause migration to begin and theories related to its continuation.

The third section covers information on Afghanistan as a source country of immigration. This chapter is divided into four sections. It starts with general information about Afghanistan's geography and then continues with information on the ethnic structure, political history, and migration history of Afghanistan. Overall, the chapter examines Afghanistan's ethnic structure and political history and explains the significant events, wars, and turmoil experienced in Afghanistan, migration trends, and the developments that led to mass migration in the country's history, such as the 1970 Soviet invasion, the subsequent civil war, and other events that occurred in Afghanistan's historical course up to the present day.

The fourth section of the thesis explores the migratory patterns of Afghan immigration to Türkiye over different periods. It provides detailed information about Afghan immigrants within the framework of irregular migration, regular migration, and international protection in Türkiye. Thus, this section is further divided into three parts: the migration of Afghans to Türkiye before the 1980s, the migration from 1980 to 2000, and the migration of Afghans to Türkiye after the 2000s.

The fifth section presents information on international protection within the Turkish context. It covers the constitutional framework of international protection in Türkiye, related laws and regulations, and typologies of international protection, such as refugees, conditional refugees, and subsidiary protection. It also details the regulations concerning the exclusion, withdrawal, and termination of international protection for foreigners in Türkiye.

The sixth section outlines the methodological approach of this thesis. It provides details about the research method, universe, sample population, data collection process, methods of data analysis, and challenges encountered during research.

The seventh section presents the findings of semi-structured interviews conducted with Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara as part of this thesis. The section was further divided into four parts, each addressing one of the four research questions of the study. Thus, the first part, entitled Reasons for Afghan Immigration to Türkiye, addresses the first research question of the study: What are the main reasons for Afghan migration and their preferences for Türkiye? The second part, titled Navigating Barriers: Afghan Migration Pathways to Türkiye under Turkish Restrictive Policies Against Irregular Migration, seeks to answer the second research question: How do Afghan immigrants navigate the obstacles in their migration pathways to Türkiye amid restrictive Turkish policies regarding irregular migration? The third part of this section, titled Life in Türkiye: Interpreting Post-Migratory Experiences of Afghan Asylum Seekers in Ankara, relates to the third question of the study: How do Afghan asylum seekers interpret their post-migratory experiences and lives in Ankara? The final part of this section, titled Survival Strategies of Afghan Asylum Seekers in Türkiye, addresses the fourth research question of the thesis: What are the survival strategies employed by Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye? Finally, general evaluations and conclusions are included at the end of the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### ANALYTICAL BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter has two main sections: the analytical background and the theoretical framework of the thesis. The first section examines the analytical background, which consists of two parts: a definition of the concepts related to the thesis topic and a literature review. The second section reviews the theoretical framework, which includes a definition of some general theories in international migration studies within the scope and objectives of the thesis.

#### 2.1. ANALYTICAL BACKGROUND

This section consists of two main parts. The first defines some relevant and frequently employed key concepts in migration studies. The second part, the literature review, presents a comprehensive review of the scholarly literature on Afghan immigrants.

##### 2.1.1. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Understanding the concepts used in this thesis and the interconnections between them is a fundamental aspect of the research presented in this section. Within this framework, certain general concepts in international migration studies, frequently employed throughout this thesis, are explicitly described to provide a foundational understanding of the conceptual framework utilized in this research.

The origins of numerous concepts utilized to comprehend international migration mobility can be traced to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, coinciding with the emergence of social science disciplines (Şirin Öner, 2021). The complex nature of migration patterns and the presence of diverse migration categories have necessitated the development of numerous concepts and classifications to elucidate and analyze international migratory movements. Nevertheless, contemporary discourse on migration mobility posits that certain concepts, including the notion of migration itself, are inadequate to define and elucidate the complexities of the migration phenomenon (Şirin Öner, 2021). In this context, this section of the thesis will analyze the construction of concepts on the migration phenomenon in both the literature and legal contexts and will endeavor to explain the intended meaning behind the utilization of these concepts.

### **2.1.1.1. MIGRANT**

The term “migrant” generally refers to individuals who leave their country for various reasons and enter other countries, using the rights and authorities granted to them by the legislation of that country and continuing their lives in those countries (Erdal & Oeppen, 2018; Güçlüten, 2024). In simple terms, a migrant refers to a person who migrates from the country in which he/she lives to another country to have better living conditions (Güçlüten, 2024). According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a migrant is defined as a person or an individual who leaves his/her regular place of stay, either domestically or internationally, for a number of reasons, either temporarily or permanently (IOM. 2019). The term can be used to distinguish migrants from refugees fleeing persecution and is also used to refer to people who attempt to enter a country without legal permission and/or without a bona fide “good faith” justification using asylum procedure (Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross, 2009).

It can also be asserted that there is no universal definition of the concept of “migrant” in international literature. The concept, in international agreements and texts, generally describes the temporary or permanent displacement of individuals or groups between countries or within a country's borders for various reasons. In this regard, the concept also includes individuals who migrate regularly or irregularly, workers, and international students (Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross, 2009). The most obvious definition of a migrant refers to individuals who decide to migrate of their own free will without any external pressure or coercion (Perruchoud, 1992). Based on the various definitions given above, it can be asserted that there is no generally accepted definition of the concept in international legislation and that nation-states fill this gap according to their domestic regulations.

Various reasons, such as economic difficulties or unfavorable social conditions, lead individuals to migrate. Migrants who migrate for economic reasons may be subject to practices that differ from those of refugees (T. Deniz, 2014). A migrant voluntarily decides to leave his/her country of origin, deciding that he/she has no value to lose in his/her social and economic life. The United Nations (UN) defines a migrant as an individual who resides outside their country of origin for more than one year, irrespective of whether the migration occurs through regular or irregular means or on a voluntary or involuntary basis (Olcay, 2012).

Upon examination of its usage in Türkiye, the concept of migrants was predominantly applied to immigrants of Turkish origin until 1980 and subsequently to immigrants of foreign origin after 1980 (Kara, 2016). An important issue in migrant status is that migrants have the intention to settle in the countries they migrate to (Olcay, 2012). In Turkish legislation,

according to Settlement Law No. 5543, Article 3, a migrant is defined as an individual of Turkish descent or affiliated with Turkish culture who migrates individually or collectively for the purpose of settlement (F.K. Yılmaz & Ergül, 2021). In the Turkish Language Association (TDK) Turkish Dictionary, the term "migrant" is defined as an individual, family, or group that departs from their country of origin to establish residence in another country or as a Muhajir.

The concept of migrants can be expressed using two distinct terms in English: emigrants, individuals who have migrated to a place, and immigrants, those who have migrated from a place. The broader concept of migrants encompasses both asylum seekers and refugees. It is noteworthy that not all migrants are classified as refugees or asylum seekers.

#### **2.1.1.2. FOREIGNER (YABANCI)**

The first generally accepted definition of a foreigner was established in 1892 at the Geneva Meeting organized by the Institute of International Law. According to this definition, people who are not citizens of the host country are considered foreigners, regardless of how they enter the country (Institut de Droit International, 1892). Another definition considers a foreigner as a person who does not have citizenship in a given country (Cambridge, 2024).

The conceptualizations of foreigners in Turkish literature and legal contexts also exhibit substantial similarity with the definition propounded by the Institute of International Law. Accordingly, a foreigner refers to a person who is within a country's borders but not bound by citizenship (Altuğ, 1963; Tekinalp, 2003). A comparable definition was provided in LFIP Article 3, which stipulates that a foreigner is defined as an individual who does not possess a citizenship bond with the Republic of Türkiye (PMM, 2013).

Foreigners can be classified into five types. They can be categorized as citizens of foreign states, stateless persons, refugees, asylum seekers, and foreigners with other statuses. Among the five basic types, the citizens of foreign states are the most popular (Aybay, 2010). Additionally, individuals can simultaneously be citizens of two or more states. These individuals are considered foreigners by states in which they are not affiliated. The concept of dual citizenship has also been accepted in national legislation. In Turkish legislation, dual citizenship is recognized under Article 4 of the Act on International Private Law and Procedural Law (No. 5718) and Article 3 of the Turkish Citizenship Law (No. 5901). Within the framework of these provisions, individuals with more than one citizenship are not treated as foreigners within the borders of Türkiye if they have been granted Turkish citizenship.

Distinguishing between foreigners and minorities is essential. A minority is defined as a group of individuals who perceive themselves as distinct from the majority population within a country's borders, are united by various commonalities such as language, culture, tradition, customs, and religion, and adhere to the prevalent cultural norms of the country. Given that minorities are recognized as citizens within the nation, they are not classified as foreigners. Thus, the determination of foreign status can be equated to the determination of citizenship. An individual lacking citizenship is categorized as a foreigner in a country in accordance with national legal frameworks.

#### **2.1.1.3. MIGRATION**

Migration has been one of the most important social and economic issues since the beginning of human history (McNeill, 1984). Throughout history, various reasons and motivations have led to the migration of the population from one place to another, demonstrating the tendency of humans to move (Castles & Miller, 1998). When we say migration, we first think of people moving to a more developed country or region for economic reasons, such as living a more prosperous life; however, other reasons for migration include poverty, conflict, oppression, and escaping persecution (Tok & Korkut, 2012). However, defining migration only as a change in location is insufficient for understanding the underlying reasons for migration and the changes that occur after migration. Although migration is a physical change of place in the apparent sense, it also refers to changes in the cultural and social lives of individuals and societies (Erdem, 2017).

The desire to live a better life with better economic opportunities and escape from inequalities, political instabilities, and persecution is a part of human nature (Günay et al., 2017). In this context, the concept of migration has been addressed in the literature from many perspectives and defined differently. The concept, which was considered in a narrow sense as an entry and exit activity through borders before the French Revolution<sup>3</sup>, gained political, economic, cultural, and religious meanings after nation-states became the main actors in the international political system during the post-revolutionary period (Aydin, 2018; Sallan-Gül, 2002).

Researchers and experts on international migration have continuously attempted to explain the concept of migration by addressing it from different perspectives. The fact that migration

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<sup>3</sup> French Revolution (1789-1799) refers to the France's revolutions that resulted in the overthrow of absolute monarchy and the establishment of a republic instead.

experts approach and define the concept of migration differently shows that it is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon of human mobility throughout history. Migration, in its most general definition, is the movement of individuals or societies from one place to another for social, economic, religious, cultural, or political reasons, either by crossing an international border or within a state (Castles, 2000). In another definition, migration is defined as a population movement that changes the social structure in its economic, political, or cultural dimensions (İ. Özer, 2004). In another alternative definition, migration is defined as the geographical displacement of individuals between settlement areas such as cities and villages to spend the rest or a part of their future lives (Akkayan, 1979).

IOM defines migration as the movement of an individual from one place to another, either by crossing international borders or within a state (IOM, 2019). It is a population movement in which people change places regardless of their duration, reason, and nature. These movements include the migration of refugees, internally displaced persons, economic migrants, or individuals moving for other purposes, including education and family reunification (Perruchoud, 1992). In an alternative conceptualization, migration is defined as the number of individuals who, within a specified timeframe, voluntarily relocate their residences beyond the boundaries of their original settlement area, as measured against the population residing in a particular settlement region (Tekeli, 2011). Another conceptualization of migration refers to individuals who decide to migrate of their own free will without any external pressure or coercion (Perruchoud, 1992).

The most basic and common feature of migration is geographical change, which is associated with social, legal, cultural, and political contexts. According to TDK, migration is defined as the act of settling, migrating, or moving within or from one country to another by individuals or communities for economic, political, or social reasons (TDK, 2019). However, there is no universal definition of migration in the international literature; the concept of migration, which does not have a clear definition in international agreements and texts, generally describes the temporary or permanent displacement of individuals or groups between countries or within a border for some reason.

As can be seen from the different definitions given above, migration is a phenomenon that should be examined not only as a population movement but also due to the effects it creates in migrant-receiving and migrant-sending countries; it has become a social phenomenon that directs people's lives from economy to cultural and religious life (Castles, 2010). In terms of different conceptual definitions of migration, it can be asserted that migration has immense

diversity and variety. Although migration can constantly change from one form to another or can gain a new form, it can be classified according to general criteria such as crossing or not crossing international borders, period of stay, and the nature of mobility (Yıldız, 2018).

Literature shows that there are many types of migration. Migration can vary according to the way it is performed, its purpose, its situation, and its reasons. The reasons and methods of migration determine the purpose and type of migration. If we need to examine migrations according to their type, migratory movements classified in terms of change in place and distance are divided into internal and external migration. When we look at the distinction between voluntary and involuntary migrations, we come across definitions of forced and voluntary migration. Moreover, the migration or mobility of immigrants from their own country to another country, legally or illegally, is also divided into regular and irregular migration. As this thesis examines the migratory experiences of Afghan-forced immigrants living in Ankara, Türkiye, it is necessary to define these concepts to understand the process.

#### **2.1.1.4. INTERNAL MIGRATION**

Migration can be categorized into two distinct types based on the distance and destination of movement: internal and external (Güçlüten, 2024). In general, internal migration refers to population movement from one place to another within the borders of the same country without the need to cross international or nation-state borders (Güçlüten, 2024). These movements can be temporary or permanent to create a new residence. Since there is movement within the country in terms of internal migration, the population of the country does not change, and differences in population occur only between provinces and regions (M. Erol & Ersever, 2014).

The most common internal migration is rural-urban migration. People migrate to urban areas or cities to seek better job opportunities, receive better education, reach public facilities more easily, or have better living conditions. While internal migration in developing countries refers to population movement from rural to urban areas, in developed countries, it mainly occurs within or between cities (Bayraktar & Özyılmaz, 2017). In this context, this typology of migration can be further divided into four subheadings: seasonal migration, labor migration, forced/voluntary migration, and permanent/temporary migration (Koçak & Terzi, 2012).

Unlike external migration, which involves crossing nation-state borders, individuals in internal migration movements do not encounter legal obstacles or retain their citizenship and related rights. Similarly, people migrating internally may encounter fewer socioeconomic and sociocultural problems than those migrating externally (Bartram et al., 2019).

#### **2.1.1.5. EXTERNAL MIGRATION**

External migration is a complex phenomenon that involves constant motion. They can take different forms in different contexts and geographical conditions. This can be affected by the conditions under which it is. It can undergo various changes and transformations owing to these effects (Şirin Öner, 2021). This type of migration refers to population movements such as entry, exit, and stay at country borders, regularly or irregularly (Toprak, 2016). Another definition of external migration is the migration of individuals living in one country to another, either individually or collectively (Ozankaya, 1984). In simple terms, we can define external migration as the mobility of individuals resulting from their movement between different countries.

While internal migration occurs from one region to another within the borders of a nation-state, external migration occurs from one country to another and encompasses moving beyond nation-state borders (Sağlam, 2006). In this manner, external migrations are relatively long and occur for various reasons depending on the size of the country, level of economic development, and population movements (Akıncı et al., 2015). However, there are various reasons for external migration; individuals generally carry out external migratory movements to meet their needs or to benefit from opportunities that are not available in their own countries.

It can be asserted that this type of migration generally occurs by crossing borders with economically and socially developed countries. Since external migrations that are made to stay, work, or settle in another country for a long time are population movements that occur by crossing nation-state borders, this results in changes in the population size of both migrant-receiving and migrant-sending countries. Meanwhile, individuals in external migration movements encounter larger legal obstacles, such as stay permits and passports, as there might be different legal requirements for entering another country. Similarly, people migrating externally may encounter larger problems in adopting the socioeconomic and sociocultural norms of the host countries.

#### **2.1.1.6. VOLUNTARY MIGRATION**

Throughout human history, migration has persisted due to various factors. The foundation of voluntary migration lies in circumstances wherein individuals willingly relocate from their current place of residence to another location. In simple terms, it can be asserted that voluntary migration is the migration that people choose according to their own will. There is no pressure on individuals to take migratory journeys. It is a type of migration that people make voluntarily,

without being pressured by the state, to have better living conditions, receive better education, benefit from advanced health opportunities, and increase their incomes (Koçak & Terzi, 2012). In this context, individuals and communities plan their voluntary migration or relocation to work, live, or receive a better education than they already have (Kirman, 2017).

Voluntary migration differs from forced migration in several ways. The most important of these differences is that, while forced migrations are not willingly done and do not happen in a planned manner, voluntary migrations are willingly planned where individuals voluntarily plan and decide to migrate. Voluntarily migrating individuals have the time, resources, interests, and willingness to migrate to the country or place of their choice. Similarly, the planning process in this type of migration includes the necessary preliminary research on the place to be migrated and also brings preparation for legal processes. Overall, voluntary migration can be evaluated as the process of choosing new living spaces in a planned and willing manner.

Similar to other types of migration, voluntary migration has also been observed and practiced throughout history. People changing the countries or places in which they live for a better life, mainly for economic reasons, is not a phenomenon specific to our age (Adığuzel, 2024). After World War II, Europe, which was devastated and lost a significant amount of its workforce, tried to meet its workforce needs first from Western Europe and then from Türkiye and North African countries for post-war reconstruction purposes, and paved the way for voluntary migration. This process ensured the emergence and spread of mutual voluntary migration from developing to developed countries around the world. Voluntary migration can also be evaluated as migration carried out for personal purposes, such as seeing new places, experiencing new adventures, seeking better living conditions, improving the status of their family, increasing economic levels, and reaching better employment opportunities (Adığuzel, 2024).

#### **2.1.1.7. FORCED MIGRATION**

Forced migration is a type of migration that is carried out compulsively as a result of events and situations that occur outside people's control (Koçak & Terzi, 2012). It has been observed throughout history that forced migratory movements have different causes and forms. As crises occur against people's will, individuals sometimes have to decide to leave their place of residence and migrate to a country where they will have more mediocre living conditions than before, even though they do not want to (Massey et al., 1993). People tend to migrate involuntarily or are forced to do so due to reasons such as war, civil unrest, natural disasters,

terrorism, and escape from persecution. In this type of migration, individuals or groups do not want to migrate under normal circumstances but are forced to move (Yıldız, 2018).

IOM defines forced migration as a migratory movement that involves force, coercion, or compulsion that can originate from diverse underlying reasons (Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross, 2009). In other words, forced migration is a type of migratory movement that occurs due to threats to life and welfare, especially life security, due to political, natural, social, or cultural reasons (Kirman, 2017). In a simple definition, forced migration can be explained as the situation where individuals or groups have to leave the village, city, region, or country against their will or what they would not do under normal circumstances. It is significant to mention that forced migration may occur as a result of state sanctions due to social, political, and economic reasons (Kirman, 2017; Thorburn, 1996).

Today, it is seen that forced migratory movements can occur due to factors such as education, culture, politics, health, religion, industrialization, war, civil unrest, and climatic conditions (Wood, 1994). However, many factors may lead people to undertake forced migratory movements, and when we look at human history in general, we note that the most common and important factor causing forced migration is war. Forced migration is a phenomenon that emerges unexpectedly and rapidly develops in immigrant societies. As a result, forced migration can result in social, cultural, economic, and psychological problems.

In forced migration, the situation and the place in which individuals or groups are living are under threat. Under the pressure of this threat, individuals and groups develop a tendency and the desire to move to the nearest safer area that seems possible for them. According to Abadan-Unat (2017), forced migration emerged as a result of nationalist approaches that were effective in the formation of the world's fifth-largest migration wave, which emerged with the emergence of nation-states at the end of World War II. While nationalist approaches ensured the emergence of new states in this process, the harsh population policies implemented by these states also caused mass displacement. In this context, the most defining feature of forced migration is that individuals and groups that are overshadowed by the violent mechanisms of sovereign states decide to leave the nation-state to survive (Abadan-Unat, 2024).

Security concerns constitute a fundamental aspect of forced migration. For instance, when we examine the migration of Afghans by referring to the definitions and underlying reasons for forced migration, it is quite easy to achieve a clear understanding of the motives and reasons for their migratory movements. On the other hand, the developments seen in world economies and new opportunities in the industrialized world have not been sufficient to make the world

safer. On the contrary, developments in the technical, economic, and transportation fields, while making every corner of the world accessible, can also make these areas unsafe. These security threats and life concerns have made migration a result of necessity rather than simple displacement. In this context, it can be asserted that forced migration has social, political, cultural, and economic consequences for both the origin and host countries at national and international levels. For instance, prolonged conflicts and civil unrest in Afghanistan have caused the death of thousands of civilians and forced millions of people to move to safer places. The forced migration of Afghan nationals has significantly impacted the economic and social structures of neighboring countries, including Pakistan, Iran, as well as Türkiye, with ongoing consequences (Alamyar & Boz, 2022).

#### **2.1.1.8. ASYLUM SEEKERS**

The term "asylum seekers," which is often confused with refugees, refers to individuals who have an ongoing refugee application but whose status or refugee claim has not yet been finalized (IOM, 2019). We can define an asylum seeker as a person who seeks safety in a country other than his/her country of origin to avoid persecution or serious harm and is awaiting a decision on his/her application for refugee status under the relevant national or international documents (IOM, 2019). Although calling an asylum seeker a refugee is not problematic in terms of daily language, it is problematic in terms of legal language. The asylum seeker status is temporary, and in the event of a negative decision, these individuals must leave the host country. If they are not granted permission to remain in the country on a humanitarian basis or other grounds for a residence permit, they may be deported like any other alien who resides in the country in an irregular or unlawful situation (P. Kara & Korkut, 2010; Martin, 1982; Perruchoud & Redpath-Cross, 2009).

It is generally seen that asylum seekers seek legal and international protection in the countries they are located in, and their applications for refugee status are evaluated by the hosting government or the UNHCR. In this context, the status of asylum seekers is determined by special legal regulations persisting in countries where they have applied and are broadly accepted as not being citizens, refugees, and unlawful residents (Lüleci-Sula, 2022). Although the legal status of these persons awaiting a decision on their refugee status determination application is not officially recognized, asylum seekers cannot be forcibly returned to their country of origin, and their rights must be protected by the country of asylum (Tokuzlu, 2016).

It can be said that the asylum process is very problematic, both in terms of the person seeking asylum and the country of asylum. While asylum seekers who are waiting for a decision on their international protection or refugee status in the country of asylum can benefit from fundamental human rights as well as the right to non-refoulement, those who could not be determined as refugees or whose applications declined in need of international protection after the necessary evaluations are returned to their countries of origin (Önal & Keklik, 2016). According to Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), everyone has the right to seek asylum in other countries and benefits from asylum opportunities because of persecution in their own country (United Nations, 1948). Since an asylum seeker is a person waiting for a decision regarding their asylum application, they should be able to benefit from the most fundamental principles of refugee protection, nonrefoulement, and humane treatment (Ergüven & Özturanolı, 2013).

#### **2.1.1.9. REFUGEES**

The concept of “refugee,” which is mistakenly used synonymously with the concepts of asylum seekers and immigrants by national and international media outlets, has a different meaning, and its misuse can lead to problems in terms of legal regulations (Çakran & Eren, 2017). In the shortest and clearest terms, the concept of refugee refers to a person who seeks asylum and has been granted refugee status because of social, political, and economic events in society (IOM, 2019). In other words, a refugee refers to a foreigner whose refugee status has been legally determined and approved (IOM, 2019). In other words, refugees are people who have left their country and seek safety or protection in another country, not due to their desires or personal preferences, but due to compelling reasons (Bozbeyoğlu, 2015).

The definition of refugees, which is accepted in international law, was made in the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Legal Status of Refugees. According to the refugee definition in the 1951 Convention, a refugee is a person who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion and leaves his/her country due to these reasons and is not willing to return because of his/her fear. Since the definition of refugees in the 1951 Geneva Convention was restricted in terms of time and place, it was accepted that individuals who sought refuge due to events that occurred in Europe before January 1, 1951, could benefit from refugee status (Çiçekli, 2016). Due to these restrictions, it was insufficient to address refugee crises in other parts of the world. The 1951 Geneva Convention was later amended by a protocol accepted by the UN General

Assembly and entered into force on October 4, 1967 (Çiçekli, 2016). Subsequently, time and place limitations were removed from the text of the convention, ensuring that it would be applied to all refugee movements without limitations in time or geographical locations.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU), subsequently transformed into the African Union (AU) in 2002, which addresses refugee issues at the regional level, has also contributed to the definition and protection of refugees. Adopted by the OAU, the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (also known as the Banjul Charter), while not explicitly defining "refugee" in the same manner as the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, addresses the protection of refugees in general terms under Article 12. The relevant article stipulates that every individual shall have the right, when persecuted, to seek and obtain asylum in other countries in accordance with the laws of those countries and international conventions (OAU, 1981).

Another international text that defines refugees is the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, adopted by the Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico, and Panama. Accordingly, individuals who have been displaced from their places of residence due to internal conflicts, widespread acts of violence throughout the country, serious human rights violations, and external conflicts are considered refugees (OAS, 1984). Although the Cartagena Declaration is not an agreement with international validity, it is of particular importance as it is implemented in Central American geography (Ganiyeva, 2014).

Overall, the concept of refugees generally refers to people trying to escape the unbearably harsh conditions of their country of origin. The biggest reason for such an escape is the need for security and freedom (Steinbock, 1998). Moreover, the 1951 Geneva Convention, which is accepted as the main source of refugee rights, emphasizes that "not all individuals who change their place of residence within their own country for compelling reasons can be considered refugees" (Gençler, 2005). The general principles accepted in the 1951 Convention regarding the status of refugees are as follows:

- The principle of non-refoulement: Refugees should not be returned to their country of origin that they left because of persecution or risk of persecution (Article 33).
- The principle of non-discrimination: The protection provided to individuals in terms of refugee status should be applied equally to all refugees without discrimination (Article 3).

- Principle of international cooperation: It is anticipated that granting the right to asylum may create a heavy burden for some countries. Therefore, a satisfactory solution to the refugee problem is possible only with international cooperation (Article 35).
- The principle of non-punishment for irregular migration: Persons fleeing from persecution or the risk of persecution cannot leave their country of origin regularly or legally. Such people cannot be legally requested to enter the country. Therefore, refugees who enter a country illegally are not criminally liable (Article 31).

Accordingly, every refugee has the right to international protection and safe asylum, which includes more than just physical security. The host country must give refugees at least as many equal rights, assistance, and basic needs as other foreigners who are legally residing in the country. Similarly, social and economic rights should be granted to all refugees as they are granted to other individuals. Every refugee must be able to benefit from health services, educational institutions, and the right to work.

It has been argued that legitimate fear is very effective in refugees' decisions regarding migration. Although fear has a small effect on immigrants' decisions to migrate, the effect of economic reasons is dominant (Steinbock, 1998). However, individuals benefit from the protection provided to them by the right of citizenship in their own countries; they migrate by believing that the protection in question is insufficient in social and economic terms (Massey et al., 1993; E. Uzun, 2016).

The ties between the state and the citizen, which stem from loyalty, trust, assistance, and protection, also form the basis of society. In the case of refugee status, these ties are cut off (E. Uzun, 2016). It is stated that the physical signs of the cut in these ties are "persecution" and "alienation." In terms of refugee status, while persecution and alienation are deemed sufficient to gain refugee status, certain conditions must also be met according to the legal legislation of the host country. These conditions include migration as a result of persecution or the risk of persecution due to religion, language, race, a certain social membership, or political opinion (Öztürk, 2016). Additionally, the individual must be outside the country of origin or the country to which he/she claims to be persecuted or at risk of persecution and to which he/she is bound by citizenship at the time of applying for refugee status. A person must be deprived of his/her country of origin, unwilling to benefit from this protection, or unable or unwilling to return to the country of origin (E. Uzun, 2016).

In the case of Türkiye, for a foreigner to be accepted as a refugee, the event that caused the individual to claim refuge must take place in European countries (Ergüven & Özturanlı, 2013). The definition of a refugee in Turkish legislation is described in Article 61 of Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, dated 11.04.2013, and is based on the 1951 Geneva Convention (Ergüven & Özturanlı, 2013; Ermumcu, 2013). Türkiye signed the 1951 Geneva Convention and ratified it under its domestic law in 1961. An additional protocol, which included provisions expanding the framework of the Convention and was accepted in 1967, was ratified in 1968. Türkiye, although a party to this protocol, also stated that geographical limitations continue to be valid and that only those coming from Europe will be considered refugees in Türkiye (Ergüven & Özturanlı, 2013). According to this reservation, individuals who come from a country outside European geography and apply for asylum are not accepted as refugees. Türkiye only grants refugee status to individuals who come from Europe and apply for refugee status (Ermumcu, 2013).

#### **2.1.1.10. CONDITIONAL REFUGEES**

Conditional Refugees are defined under Article 62 of the LFIP. The status granted to individuals who have requested international protection from Türkiye to seek asylum in third countries by claiming that they meet the criteria in the refugee definition as a result of events occurring outside of the European geography is called conditional refugees (PMM, 2013). The concept of asylum seekers included in Regulation No. 1994/6169 on the Procedures and Principles related to Possible Population Movements and Aliens Arriving in Turkey either as Individuals or in Groups Wishing to Seek Asylum either from Turkey or Requesting Residence Permission in order to Seek Asylum From Another Country is not included in the LFIP and is described as conditional refugees. The difference between conditional refugees and refugees is that refugee status is granted only to those who arrive in Türkiye because of events occurring in Europe. Conditional refugee status is still granted to those who arrive outside European countries, while only allowing them to stay in Türkiye until they are resettled in a third country.

#### **2.1.1.11. TEMPORARY PROTECTION**

When we look at the practices carried out by states in the international arena, it is seen that the concept of temporary protection was first expressed with concepts such as “temporary asylum” and “temporary refuge.” When the concept first emerged, it was foreseen that the use of the term temporary asylum could lead to confusion, and it was suggested that it would be

more accurate to use the term temporary protection instead (Dalboy, 2020). The refugees who took refuge in Austria from Hungary in 1956, Pakistani immigrants who took refuge in India in 1971, refugees who took refuge in Southeast Asia between 1975 and 1980, and the legal protection provided to people from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos are examples of temporary protection practices known today. When these examples are examined, it is seen that all these migration movements were asylum cases that occurred as a result of mass influx. Temporary protection status emerges later than the other concepts accepted in the understanding of migration (Arslan et al., 2016).

Temporary protection is seen as a way for states to escape the obligations stipulated by the 1951 Geneva Convention. In such cases, the prohibition of non-refoulement plays a role in reconciling entry into a country and finding a permanent solution. It is also seen that the UNHCR Executive Committee evaluates the temporary protection application as a “flexible and pragmatic method” in terms of providing international protection (Çicekli, 2016). Additionally, this status is regulated by EU Temporary Protection Directive No. 2011/55/EC, which was issued as a result of studies conducted within the European Union. According to this directive, the status in question refers to people who come from a third country and cannot return to their own country (Gülerce, 2024).

The regulation of this issue in Türkiye is defined in LFIP Article 91. The Temporary Protection Regulation, which was approved by the Council of Ministers on October 13, 2014, and entered into force on October 22, 2014, regulates the acceptance of individuals who migrate to Türkiye in masses, the conditions of their stay, the rights, duties, and obligations they will acquire, the situation they will be deported, exit procedures, and the duties and authorities of national institutions and organizations directly or indirectly related to migration management. Accordingly, temporary protection status is given to foreigners who have been displaced due to acts of violence in their country, who have no chance of returning to their country, and who want to enter or have already entered the borders of the Republic of Türkiye in masses to find urgent and temporary protection.

Temporary protection is not international protection but a measure specific to Turkish domestic laws and has been defined by distinctive features of temporary protection regulation. Article 1 of the temporary protection regulation determines which temporary protection can be applied. Accordingly, as of 28.04.2011, due to events that occurred in the Syrian Arab Republic, Syrian Arab Republic citizens, stateless persons, and refugees who have arrived or passed Turkish borders in masses or individually for urgent and temporary protection have been placed

under temporary protection. Some general principles described for temporary protection status consist of the principle of free acceptance, meaning not to face any coercive measures upon entering the country's borders, and non-refoulement, meaning not to be deported unless the exceptions specified in the legislation are violated after entering the country's borders, and meeting the basic needs (Çiçekli, 2016). It is also important to mention that temporary protection is not a protection for individuals but rather a protection provided to those who migrate en masse urgently and temporarily, regardless of whether they have an international protection request (İzmirli, 2017).

#### **2.1.1.12. SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION (İKİNCİL KORUMA)**

The subsidiary protection status, referred to as complementary protection in the literature, is a status that was introduced with the LFIP and is applied in individual migration cases (Ekşi, 2016). According to Article 63 of the LFIP, subsidiary protection is the status given to individuals who are not in the category of refugees or conditional refugees, but who are likely to be subjected to the death penalty, torture, persecution, or serious acts of violence if they return to the country they reside in.

According to Article 63 of the LFIP, if a foreigner or stateless person cannot be considered a refugee or conditional refugee but is sent back to his/her country of origin or residence, which consequently faces the situations mentioned below, he/she will be granted a subsidiary protection status after the status determination procedures. The general conditions mentioned in the LFIP for granting subsidiary protection are as follows:

- a) The individual will be sentenced to the death penalty, or the death penalty will be executed.
- b) The individual is subject to torture, inhumanity, or degrading punishment or treatment.
- c) The individual will face a serious threat to his/her person because of indiscriminate acts of violence in international or national armed conflict situations and cannot benefit from the protection of his/her country of origin or residence or does not want to benefit from the protection of his/her country of origin or residence due to such threat.

## **2.1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Although the topic of Afghan migration has received significant attention in migration studies and academia, there are still gaps in the literature on this topic. In this context, this section of the thesis aims to provide a comprehensive literature review of existing studies on Afghan migration and examines the gaps in the literature on Afghan migration. Although this thesis's fieldwork was conducted in Ankara, Türkiye, and Turkish literature was predominantly utilized in its composition, broader global studies on Afghan migrations, as well as research conducted specifically on Afghan immigrants in Türkiye and their findings, are incorporated throughout this thesis. In this manner, the literature section of the thesis is categorized into two subsections, encompassing a general review of the studies on Afghan migration in the literature and studies on Afghan immigrants in Türkiye. Accordingly, while the first part of the literature examines some general aspects of Afghan migrations from a broader perspective, the second part examines studies on the issue of Afghan immigrants in Türkiye.

### **2.1.2.1. A GENERAL REVIEW OF THE STUDIES ON AFGHAN MIGRATIONS IN THE LITERATURE**

Afghanistan has a long history of migration. The migratory patterns of Afghan nationals have emerged as a significant area of inquiry in migration studies. Scholarly research has extensively explored various dimensions of Afghan migration, including its historical context, root causes, individual rationales, encountered difficulties, and the multifaceted nature of their transnational movements (e.g., Alamyar & Boz, 2022; Çakır, 2020; Hashemi & Ünlü, 2021; İçduygu & Karadağ, 2018; İdiz, 2019; Obayd, 2020; Öksüz, 2021; Pouya, 2022b; Rasooly, 2020). In this manner, in a study conducted by Koç and Eryurt in 2017, the authors addressed the historical external migration of Afghans and divided their migratory movements into three periods as follows: the period before 1979, the period between 1979-2001, and the period after 2001 (İ. Koç & Eryurt, 2017).

Similarly, in a study conducted on Afghan immigrants, Karakaya and Karakaya (2021) analyzed the historical migration of Afghans out of the world and Türkiye. Their study posited that Afghanistan's history of migration stems from ethnic events that date back to 1979. The Durand Border, established in 1893 as a border between British India and Afghanistan, led to the separation of the Pashtun region and ethnic migration between countries before 1979 (Kuschminder & Dora, 2009). In addition, Hazaras, an ethnic group in Afghanistan, migrated

to Iran, where the Shiite population is predominant, owing to their religious similarities (Marchand et al., 2014).

Furthermore, in a quantitative study conducted by Erol and Mohammad Ali (2022), the factors contributing to Afghan migration were investigated. Research conducted by the aforementioned scholars demonstrated that Afghan migration was a consequence of the adverse events that transpired in Afghanistan between 1979 and 2019. Their findings indicate that the majority of Afghan immigrants who migrated from Afghanistan were male, as they were compelled to traverse perilous routes to Pakistan, Iran, Türkiye, and several European countries.

Additional research on Afghan migration has examined the economic factors influencing Afghan migratory patterns. Afghan citizens migrated to neighboring countries, such as Iran and Pakistan, where there were better and higher economic and educational opportunities (Monsutti, 2006). The main purpose of these migrations is to benefit from job and educational opportunities, earn more income, and access the social opportunities of attractive city life. In addition, the widespread drought in the 1970s, which led to a decrease in agricultural production in Afghanistan, and the oil crisis of 1973 also caused an increase in the number of Afghans migrating to Iran and other Middle Eastern countries to seek better labor opportunities (Kuschminder & Dora, 2009; Monsutti, 2006; Stigter, 2006).

Further research has focused on the conflict aspects of Afghan migration. Geyik Yıldırım (2018) asserts that the conflict between the Taliban and allies supported by the United States in 2001 precipitated an intense wave of migration both within and out of Afghanistan. As a consequence of United States military operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan, Afghan citizens continued to emigrate to neighboring countries following the Taliban's loss of power in December 2001. Later, a new political order, supported by the international community, was established to ensure the return of Afghan migrants.

Furthermore, substantial research on Afghan migration has focused on examining the regional variations in migration patterns. For example, an analysis of Hazara immigrants in Iran conducted by Monsutti (2007) suggests that Hazaras, being believers of Shia Islam, have established extensive networks in Iran while seeking refuge from drought, conflicts, poverty, and political instability in Afghanistan. Monsutti concluded that Hazaras were able to improve their socioeconomic conditions and mitigate poverty through the establishment of powerful migrant networks, which facilitated the transmission of remittances from Iran.

In a similar study on Afghan immigrants, Scalettaris (2010) examined the approach of the UNHCR to Afghan immigrants residing in Iran and Pakistan while investigating the status of Afghan immigrants in these countries. Her study asserts that Afghan asylum seekers in Iran and Pakistan have become political instruments, a situation that does not apply to Afghans in Türkiye.

Moreover, a substantial body of scholarly research has focused on the journeys and experiences of Afghan immigrants during irregular migratory movements (e.g., Jurat, 2023; Kaytaz, 2016; Lonning, 2020). In this context, numerous scholarly articles have been published to document the conditions and nature of the irregular migration of Afghan immigrants, focusing particularly on travel between Iran and Türkiye. As demonstrated by Kaytaz (2016), based on her qualitative research findings on Afghan journeys to Türkiye, the arrival of Afghans to Türkiye was preceded by non-linear travel characterized by uncertainty and extended periods of immobility. Kaytaz concluded that the migratory patterns of Afghans are characterized not solely by unidirectional movement but also by circular migration, encompassing both forward and backward movements across various national borders, including Iran, Türkiye, Pakistan, and several Eastern European countries. During this process, Afghan immigrants who have undertaken irregular migratory journeys in an attempt to reach their destination countries have encountered various adverse circumstances during their transit, including maritime disasters, apprehension by law enforcement, sexual victimization, human trafficking, fraudulent practices by migrant smugglers, and exposure to gunfire at border crossings (Andishmand et al., 2019; Kaytaz, 2016).

Additional research has focused on the living conditions of Afghan asylum seekers in transit countries such as Türkiye. Talwasa (2020) asserted that Türkiye and international refugee advocates prioritized the legal protection of Syrian refugees, resulting in significant violations of fundamental human rights for Afghan refugees during their journey to Türkiye and subsequent attempts to obtain refugee status.

Comparable studies have focused on the social challenges Afghan asylum seekers face in Türkiye. Alamyar and Boz (2022) conducted a study on the socioeconomic characteristics of Afghan immigrants residing in Konya, İstanbul, Sakarya, and Uşak. Based on the migration experiences of Afghans, Alamyar and Boz examined the motivations for immigration and the challenges encountered in Turkish society. Their research noted that new immigrants face difficulties such as linguistic and cultural disparities, inability to afford housing, employment issues, and limited access to healthcare and education. Furthermore, they demonstrated that to

address these challenges, Afghan immigrants often engage in labor-intensive and dangerous occupations with low wages.

Furthermore, there has been an increase in the number of studies examining Afghan migration through the lens of gender and investigating the impact of migration on Afghan women. In the analysis of gender and migration within the context of Afghan women immigrants, numerous studies have focused on labor, mental health, gender differences, psychological effects, feminization of Afghan migration, and the challenges that Afghan women immigrants encounter in the process of migration (e.g., Avcil, 2021; Ena, 2022; Fitzpatrick & Kelly, 1998; Hyndman & Giles, 2011; Pelaez et al., 2017). For instance, in a study conducted by Asztalos Morell and Darvishpour (2018) on Afghan adolescent girls in Sweden, the authors analyzed the challenging experiences of asylum-seeking processes for application, securitization of asylum-seeking, and decision-making processes regarding Afghan girls' asylum applications. The authors further posited that insufficient consideration of Afghan girls' vulnerabilities in the asylum process may result in increased securitization of the asylum-seeking process.

Broader studies have focused on second-generation Afghan immigrants living in foreign countries (e.g., Abbasi Shavazi et al., 2008; Keshavarzi et al., 2024; Saito & Hunt, 2007; Zandi Navgran et al., 2023). For instance, in a qualitative study conducted by Keshavarzi et al. (2024) on second-generation Afghan immigrants, the researchers aimed to understand the reasons behind the concealment of the identities of second-generation Afghan immigrants living in Mashhad, Iran. Based on the research findings, the reasons why second-generation Afghan immigrant participants conceal their identities are discussed in three main semantic categories. These are the socialization, structural, and communication barriers in Iran. As a result of being Afghan, they are faced with structural and objective obstacles created by the official and political order of Iranian society, and therefore, they prefer to hide their Afghan identity and choose a camouflage strategy.

### **2.1.2.2. STUDIES ON AFGHAN IMMIGRANTS IN TÜRKİYE**

Türkiye, due to its attractive geographical location, relatively better economic opportunities compared to countries in the region, and recent flexible changes in its asylum regime implemented since 2013, has become an appealing option for persons in need of protection, mainly coming from Middle Eastern countries and among Afghan citizens (Altıntaş, 2018;

Özgün, 2021). Türkiye hosts the largest number of refugees<sup>4</sup> in the world. Nearly 3.2 million people in need of protection, mainly Syrian, Afghan, and Iraqi nationals, reside in Türkiye (UNHCR, 2024b). Syrian and Afghan nationals constitute the largest number of refugees and asylum seekers in Türkiye, with Syrian refugees comprising the majority (UNHCR, 2024b). As the majority of the refugees in Türkiye are Syrian nationals, less attention has been paid to improving the legal status, social conditions, and processing of asylum applications of Afghan nationals than any other refugee groups in Türkiye (Talwasa, 2020). Similarly, limited studies and research in academia have been conducted on the issues relating to Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye.

Afghan nationals constitute the second-largest group of immigrants after Syrians in Türkiye (UNHCR, 2024b). However, less attention has been paid to improving the living conditions and status of Afghan asylum seekers residing in Türkiye, some significant studies in the literature have addressed the issue of Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye in terms of forms of migration from Afghanistan to Türkiye, the influence of irregular entry of Afghans to Türkiye, reasons for migration, social and economic integration perspectives of Afghan immigrants, and gender-based experiences of migration for Afghan women immigrants in Türkiye, which will be examined separately in the following paragraphs.

#### *a) Forms of Migration from Afghanistan to Türkiye*

In a qualitative study conducted on Afghan immigrants in Türkiye, Ekmekcioğlu (2021) examined the role of border security in managing irregular migration. The universe of the study was determined as Afghan immigrants entering Türkiye from the Iranian border through the Van province border in Türkiye. From his research, it was found that the relationship between irregular migration and border security is meaningful. He also asserted that the phenomenon of irregular migration threatens the security of borders, and significant attention should be paid to regulating security issues and cheap labor demands in the management of irregular migration.

In 2018, Mehmet Koç's research titled "*Illegal Afghan Immigration to Turkey and Iran's Immigration Policies*" posited that Afghans migrated to Türkiye in two ways. The first is from Iran, and the second is from Afghanistan. These immigrants aimed to either stay in Türkiye or use Türkiye as a transit country to reach Europe (M. Koç, 2019). He also referred to the chronic

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<sup>4</sup> The term "refugees" here mainly refers to Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye. However, Türkiye does not grant official refugee status to Syrians because of the geographical limitations it holds in the 1951 Geneva Convention. In this study, the term is used to refer to Syrians based on the definition of refugee by the UNHCR.

instability prevailing in Afghanistan and the increasingly deteriorating economic situation in Iran as the reasons for these migrations. Moreover, Koç added that as a result of heavy sanctions on Iran, the migration movement will not only be limited to Afghan immigrants using Iran as a transit country from Afghanistan but will also push Afghan migrants in Iran to move to the West (M. Koç, 2019).

Other studies have examined the forms of migration from Afghanistan to Türkiye, Iran, Pakistan, and other countries as a result of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) invasion in 1979. The ideological war that continued in Afghanistan between developed countries during the Cold War brought about racial groupings in the region and led to wars breaking out (B. Aras & Toktaş, 2008). As a result of Soviet intervention, more than five million Afghan nationals migrated from Afghanistan to neighboring countries between 1979 and 1980 (Dashti, 2022). Social ties, kinship relations, and financial interactions, especially between Pakistani and Afghan citizens, have facilitated the transition to Pakistan for Afghan citizens (Grawert & Mielke, 2018). After the 1990s, 3.3 million Afghans sought asylum in Pakistan, and three million Afghans sought asylum in Iran (Wickramasekara et al., 2006).

Deniz (2015) described the routes that Afghan irregular migrants use to reach Türkiye. Deniz posits that irregular immigrants using the Türkiye-Iran border use certain centers in Iran and Türkiye as gathering places. These are Maku, Hoy, Salmas, and Urmia on the Iranian side, and Doğubeyazıt, Yüksekova, and Van cities on the Turkish side.

#### *b) Influences of Irregular Entry of Afghans to Türkiye*

Several studies have examined the influence of the irregular entry of Afghans into Türkiye (e.g., Genç, 2018; İçduygu & Karadağ, 2018; Kirişçi, 2007; Ozcurumez & Şenses, 2011; Ozcurumez & Yetkin, 2014). For instance, Pouya (2022a) has particularly examined the influence of Iran on the irregular entry of Afghan immigrants into Türkiye via Iran and described it as an undeniable fact. Similarly, Pouya, in his other study on Afghan immigrants in Iran, posited that Afghan irregular immigrants prefer to cross from Iran to Türkiye for reasons such as being employed in difficult labor at low wages, lack of citizenship rights, lack of sufficient health and employment insurance, lack of social rights, and being detained without cause (Pouya, 2022b). Iran, on the other hand, does not prevent the irregular entry of Afghan immigrants into Türkiye within its borders and sometimes opens its borders to let Afghans leave for Türkiye (Pouya, 2022b).

Şahin (2021), in his study titled “*From Transit Country to Target Country: Transformation of Afghan Migration to Turkey after 2000 and its Effects on Turkey*,” examined the consequences of Türkiye being the new destination country of migrants migrating from Afghanistan due to war and economic reasons. As a result, it was concluded that due to the positive view of the local people in Türkiye towards Afghans, the government’s positive migration policies, health services, and the availability of labor, migrants planned to stay in Türkiye for many years and considered settling in Türkiye if they obtained citizenship.

In the same manner, Rasooly (2020), in his study titled “*An Analysis of the Socio-Economic and Cultural Characteristics of Afghan Migrants: The Case of Istanbul*,” analyzed the economic and social consequences of Afghan migrants choosing Türkiye and continuing their lives in Türkiye. Rasooly concluded that the problems experienced by immigrants in terms of their own identities lead to socioeconomic and cultural interaction problems. In this study, it has also been recommended that governments develop serious policies for Afghans to cope with these problems.

Doghan (2018), in his study titled “*Immigration Processes and Adaptation Problems of Afghan Turkemens Settled in Turkey After 1980*,” discussed the effects of Afghan Turkmen immigrants in the Yeşilyurt district of Tokat and the Tatlıcak villages of Konya, Türkiye, on socio-cultural, economic, and family structure. The research was conducted through interviews with 40 Turkmen immigrants living in the region where Afghan Turkmen immigrants reside. As a result, attention was drawn to the cultural and traditional changes that the Turkmens experienced after migration, as well as their successes in the field of education.

### *c) Reasons for Migration*

Some other studies on Afghan immigrants in Türkiye have focused on the reasons for Afghan migration to Türkiye (e.g., Akman, 2021; Hashemi & Ünlü, 2021; İdiz, 2019; Obayd, 2020; Raof, 2017; Suh, 2021). Suh (2021), in her study titled “*Migration with Reasons and Motives: Afghan Migrants in Istanbul*,” conducted 19 in-depth interviews with Afghan irregular immigrants who were living in Istanbul, Türkiye, and addressed the motivations of Afghans to migrate, the routes they use, and smuggling networks. As a result, it was concluded that Afghan immigrants experienced serious difficulties in their migration path while entering Türkiye with the help of human smugglers and went through dangerous journeys not only as a response to war and insecurity in Afghanistan but also as a positive livelihood strategy for many poor families.

In another study titled “*Gender Based Violence Experiences as a Reason of Immigration in Female Asylum Seekers of Afghanistan Nationality: A Phenomenological Study*” by Akman (2021), the author examined the effect of gender-based violence on the reasons for the migration of Afghan women asylum seekers in Türkiye. The study was conducted in 2021 with 15 Afghan women asylum seekers who applied to the Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization (ASAM) in Amasya. Data collection involved a socio-demographic questionnaire with a semi-structured interview form, and the interviews were conducted using an online individual interview method. As a result of the fieldwork conducted by Akman, it was stated that the society in Afghanistan has a negative view of women and the fact that a vast number of women in Afghanistan are subjected to physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence, they have no say or option than to leave their country. Overall, it has been emphasized that violence is an important factor in the migration movement of Afghan women.

Obayd (2020), in his study titled “*The Immigration Problem in Afghanistan*,” investigated the reasons why Afghans migrate to Türkiye. As a result, it was concluded that the most important reason for Afghan immigrants to migrate to Türkiye is the trust and closeness that the Turkish government and the Turkish people have for Afghans.

In another study conducted by Hashemi and Ünlü (2021) titled “*An Analysis of Opportunities and Challenges towards the Afghan Immigrants in Turkey*,” the reasons for Afghan migration to Türkiye and the current situation of the immigrants were discussed, and the opportunities and challenges of Afghan immigrants were examined in a descriptive and analytical framework. It was determined that thousands of immigrants use Türkiye as a transit country every year, especially Afghans who want to go to European countries, and those with legal documents or stay permits benefit from education, work, and health opportunities in Türkiye.

İdiz (2019), in his study titled “*Afghans Invisible Immigrants: Turkey as a Bridge or as a Destination?*” has discussed the reasons for the migration of Afghans from Afghanistan and Bosnia. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 17 irregular Afghan immigrants to discuss their immigration to Türkiye and examine why they came to Türkiye and what their plans were. As a result, it was concluded that the biggest reason for Afghan immigration to Türkiye was the economic challenges prevailing in Afghanistan.

In a similar study conducted by Raof (2017) titled “*Afghan Migrations to Turkey after 11 September 2001 and its Impact on Turkey*”, the author examined the reasons that Afghan immigrants migrate to Türkiye, the challenges and difficulties that they face in Türkiye, and the positive and negative effects of immigrants on the host country. As a result, the most important

factors for Afghan immigrant migration were evaluated as security problems, social violence, harsh living conditions in Afghanistan, and economic and security opportunities.

Ayas (2022), in her master's thesis titled "*Analysis of Afghan Irregular Migration to Turkey*", examined the example of Afghanistan within the scope of irregular migration. She emphasized that Afghans preferred to leave Afghanistan due to political instability, civil wars, economic problems, and the authoritarian attitude of the Taliban administration and that this situation closely affected Türkiye. Ayaş continued by trying to reveal the dynamics of Afghan migration, the situations and problems created by migration, the profiles of migrants living in Türkiye, and the projects that have been and can be implemented to prevent migration.

#### *d) Integration*

Additional studies in the literature have focused on the integration perspective of Afghan immigrants living in Türkiye (e.g., Arıcı, 2021; Canpolat, 2020; Doğan, 2020; Habibullah, 2021). Arıcı (2021), in her study titled "*A Research on the Social, Economic Problems and Political Opinions of Afghan Migrants Living in Erzincan*," aimed to reveal the integration of Afghan immigrants living in Erzincan into social, cultural, and economic areas; the problems they encounter as immigrants in terms of housing, education, health, and language; their political tendencies, including their views on secularism and the EU; and their plans and expectations. As a result, Arıcı concluded that Afghan immigrants living in Erzincan experience economic challenges, their isolated lives have kept them away from interactions with locals in socio-cultural terms, they have language problems, and a large part of these immigrants see Türkiye as a transit country to go to European countries through Türkiye.

Habibullah (2021), in her study titled "*Social Integration of Afghan Migrant Women Living in Zeytinburnu*," discussed the factors affecting the social integration of Afghan women in Türkiye. As a result of fieldwork conducted by interviewing 37 Afghan women living in the Zeytinburnu district of Istanbul, it was determined that Afghan women do not sufficiently adapt to appropriate support systems regarding their social integration at the local level, the support system was not sufficient, they experienced economic problems, and they needed a safe social environment.

In another study, by Canpolat (2020), titled "*Migration, Integration and Perception: A Case Study of Afghan Asylum Seekers in Sivas*," using a mixed research method of both quantitative and qualitative, the author analyzed the perceptions of the people of Sivas towards the integration process of Afghans in Sivas, Türkiye. The results showed that the local people have

concerns regarding their cultural disintegration, job loss, deterioration of their Turkish identity, involvement of Afghans in politics, and economic damage caused by Afghan immigrants.

Doğan (2020), in her study titled “*The Migration of Afghanistan Hazaras to Turkey in the Context of Theories on International Migration and Integration: Case of Trabzon*,” has addressed the migration experiences and integration levels of Hazaras residing in Trabzon, Türkiye. As a result of the study, it has been highlighted that Hazaras entered Türkiye irregularly and experienced serious problems such as housing, employment, health, and education before and after migration, that they did not want to return to Afghanistan, and that the social and systematic integration of Hazaras residing in Trabzon province has not yet been achieved.

#### *e) Gender-based experiences of Migration for Afghan Women Immigrants*

The role of gender in gender-based experiences of migration for Afghan women immigrants has also been an interesting topic that has received attention in academia. According to Avcıl (2021), who conducted studies in Ağrı, Türkiye, on Afghan irregular female immigrants, Afghan women's migratory movements generally occur under the influence of dependent migration<sup>5</sup>. In this context, Afghan women who lived in Iran for a while and then migrated to Türkiye had different reasons for migrating to Türkiye. However, many Afghan women stated that they were marginalized and that they could not benefit from social rights in Iran. The prominent reasons for Afghan women's migration in the first place are the legal system in Afghanistan, unemployment, a lack of life and property security, and an endless conflict environment (Avcıl, 2021).

In a similar study by Çakır (2020) titled “*Afghan Women in Ağrı: A Case Study of Irregular Migration*,” the migration motivations and experiences of Afghan women migrants who came to Türkiye for the first time were examined. It was observed that the female Afghan immigrants' biggest concerns were that they were unregistered, had fears of sudden deportation, and had experienced health, education, and economic difficulties.

Apart from the above-mentioned aspects of Afghan immigrants in Türkiye, some additional studies on Afghan immigrants in Türkiye have focused on broader issues, such as demographic structures, mental well-being, spatial clustering, and unaccompanied children of Afghan immigrants in Türkiye (e.g., Açıkgöz, 2018; Ahmadi, 2020; Bozok & Bozok, 2018; Öksüz,

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<sup>5</sup> Dependent migration is referred to as the reunification of family members who have been separated from each other due to migration to another country.

2021; Özgün, 2021). Özgün (2021), in his study titled “*A Research on Afghan Immigrants Profile: Case Study for Trabzon*,” addressed the demographic structure of Afghan immigrants in Trabzon, the migration process, the employment status of immigrants after migration to Türkiye, and the local people’s perspective regarding these immigrants. In this manner, the determination of immigrants’ education and language knowledge, health status, identification of their children’s educational problems, and their thoughts about the future were investigated. As a result of the study, the author asserted that Afghan immigrants have experienced problems such as health, education, unemployment, and difficulties in harsh working conditions, and a significant number of those who migrated to Türkiye wanted to go to Western countries.

When the studies in question are further examined, some researchers have analyzed the position of Türkiye for immigrants and whether these immigrants assume Türkiye as a target or transit country. Öksüz (2021), in a study titled “*Turkey’s Position in the Migration Process from Afghanistan to Western Countries: A Study on Afghans in Trabzon*,” posited that Afghan-origin immigrants who migrated from Afghanistan to Türkiye and resided in Trabzon Province positioned Türkiye as a transit country in their transition to Western countries.

Ahmadi (2020) in his study titled “*Evaluation of the Mental Well-Being and Related Factors of Afghan Migrants in Ankara*,” addressed the determination of the mental well-being of 160 Afghan immigrants living in Ankara, Türkiye, and the factors associated with possible mental disorders. According to the analysis, gender, educational level, employment status, financial assistance status, household income, housing conditions, Turkish language proficiency, and participants’ decisions to stay in Türkiye, move to a third country, or return to Afghanistan were the main factors determining the mental health of Afghan immigrants.

Açıkgoz (2018), in her study titled “*Spatial Cluster Dynamics of Irregular Migrants in Metropolitan Cities: Beykoz-Yenimalle Afghans Examples*,” discussed the spatial clustering experienced by Afghan immigrants residing in Yenimahalle, Istanbul. This study examined the demographic structure of Afghans living irregularly in Beykoz-Yenimahalle, their adaptation processes to Türkiye and Yenimahalle, their reasons for migration, spatial clustering dynamics, relations with neighbors, economic status, and plans. The study collected data by applying a semi-structured questionnaire to ten people, six from Afghanistan and four from Yenimahalle, and a survey of 100 people. The study concluded that while Afghans who lived in the same spatial environment were not completely isolated from the local people, they were in close contact with their kinsmen.

The existing literature outlined above presents a picture that focuses on issues such as migration experiences, problems encountered after migration, socioeconomic integration, gender-based problems experienced by women refugees, border security and difficulties experienced while crossing borders, reasons for migration, challenges and difficulties in working conditions, country preferences of immigrants, spatial clustering, and general post-migration experiences of Afghan immigrants. However, the existing studies either focus on a specific aspect of Afghan immigrants in Türkiye or evaluate them through general migration dynamics.

This thesis fills a significant gap in the literature by comprehensively addressing the migratory experiences of Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara, Türkiye. Starting from the reasons for Afghan migration and their preferences for Türkiye in the process of migration, the thesis examines barriers they face in their migration route to Türkiye and how they navigate these barriers amid recent restrictive Turkish policies and combat against irregular migration, how they interpret their lives as asylum seekers in Ankara, and what strategies they have developed to survive or sustain their living in Türkiye, thus enabling the migration process to be evaluated within a holistic framework. Additionally, this thesis is of significant importance as it evaluates the migratory experiences of Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye within the framework of migration policies and related migration legislations, thus providing a new perspective for both academics and policymakers. It aims to contribute to the development of more effective solutions in migration management by providing an in-depth analysis of how Türkiye's policies toward irregular migration shape the decisions and lives of immigrants.

## **2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

No single comprehensive theory explains migration, which is widespread and multifaceted (Güllüpinar, 2012). Understanding migration theories developed using different concepts and assumptions will contribute to a better understanding of migration movements. Although no single international migration theory can solely describe the overall multidimensional and complex phenomena of Afghan migration to Türkiye, this thesis addresses several migration theories by examining the sociocultural, economic, and political reasons behind the international migration of Afghans to Türkiye. In this manner, this section of the thesis will explain some of the general international migration theories and reveal how migration theories have been shaped from the past to the present and how migration has been addressed in sociological terms. Concerning the scope and objectives of the thesis, starting from

Ravenstein's laws of migration, then the push and pull theory of migration developed by Everett Lee, neoclassical macro and micro theories of migration, world systems theory of migration, new economic theory of migration, migration system theory, and finally social networks theory of international migration will be explained in following sections.

### **2.2.1. MIGRATION THEORIES**

Migration theories evaluate the migration phenomenon in terms of decisions made by individuals who are considering changing their current residence (Green, 1994). It can be said that most of the basic ideas that emerge from migration theories created with this idea are formed based on opportunities and limitations that affect people's decisions to change their place of residence. The basic facts proposed by migration theories to explain the structure and reasons for migratory movements are generally shaped by basic ideas that affect an individual's migration decisions. However, many variables can affect an individual's decision to migrate, and migration is not a phenomenon that can be examined using a single theory (Tekeli & Erder, 1978). Since the migration phenomenon has different reasons, such as economic, social, cultural, familial, religious, and political, it is difficult to have a general migration theory that covers all of these aspects (Gezgin, 2011).

Migration theories generally form hypotheses based on the distance migrants are willing to endure when making their migration decisions, reasons for initiating a migratory journey, the number of years they will stay in the host country, the economic opportunities of the places they migrate to, government policies, whether they have relatives or ties in the place they migrate to, and migrants' individual, ethnic, gender, and religious beliefs (Özcan, 2016). Given that migration is a multifaceted and pervasive phenomenon, numerous theoretical frameworks have been proposed to elucidate the various aspects of migration and immigrant experiences. Therefore, explaining migration theories and analyzing the characteristics of Afghan immigrants and Türkiye as a host country within the framework of various international migration theories will facilitate a comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of the migratory movements of Afghans toward Türkiye.

### **2.2.2. RAVENSTEIN: THE LAWS OF MIGRATION**

The initial attempts to provide theoretical explanations for migration can be traced back to 1885 when Ravenstein published his article "*The Laws of Migration*." As a seminal study in the field of migration, Ravenstein's Laws of Migration established the foundation for

subsequent research (Grigg, 1977). In his study, Ernst Georg Ravenstein identified seven immigration laws based on British census statistics of 1871 and 1881.

The theoretical basis of Ravenstein's study, which is an important step in migration studies, is formed by the concepts of urbanization and industrialization in line with developments in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Developing and increasing communication, transportation, and job opportunities have encouraged people to migrate (Çağlayan, 2006). Migration theories began with industrialization and urbanization. As migration has accelerated with industrialization and urbanization, theorists have turned their attention to migratory movements. Ravenstein argues that the migration issue is based on the following seven laws (Ravenstein, 1889):

1. The majority of individuals tend to migrate to places or areas that are close to their current locations. These migratory movements are generally towards central business and trade areas, where job opportunities are abundant. As a result of this movement, there will be an immigration wave and population displacement in migrants' host areas. To calculate the criteria for such population displacement mobility, the host population density in migrated places must also be calculated.
2. The effect of migration was observed throughout the country. As a result of rapid economic growth and development in any part of the country or city, it has begun to receive immigrants from nearby regions. The population decrease in the migrant-sending region is filled by people coming from further away. Thus, the economic development and growth that occur in a city or a certain region of a country gradually make themselves felt throughout the country. The labor shortage in the migrant-sending region is filled by people coming from nearby locations. Opportunities for a growing city spread gradually throughout the country.
3. Migration is not the sole purpose. People who migrate do not migrate because they want to change places. The purpose is to obtain a share of the developed economy in the city and to have better living conditions. In this respect, the phases that occur after the act of migration, the phase in which the migration spreads throughout the country, and the phase that absorbs or swallows it are compatible with each other, as they have the same purpose. The processes of spreading and absorption can only reach their goals through the act of migration. The city, with a developing economy,

meets its labor force needs by receiving immigrants, while the immigrants themselves obtain the jobs they need.

4. Each migratory flow causes another migratory flow that balances itself. In other words, Ravenstein states that each migratory movement creates a chain effect, creating other migratory movements, and is a process that, once started, repeats itself continuously. This situation can be likened to the rings of a chain, also called the domino effect of migration, as a region where there has been an intense inflow of immigrants also begins to send emigrants.
5. Those who choose to migrate over long distances usually move towards larger industrial and commercial centers. These places of migration are not close to the regions where migrants live. Unlike the second law mentioned by Ravenstein, long-distance migrations are made directly to large industrial and commercial centers.
6. While people who live in rural areas have a greater tendency to migrate, the local population in any migrant-receiving city is less inclined to migrate. Since the population living in cities sees themselves as the owners of the city, they are much less inclined to migrate than the population living in rural areas. Additionally, migration from rural to urban areas did not significantly change urban dynamics. By contrast, migration from rural-to-rural areas changes the dynamics of those living in rural areas. Therefore, cascading waves of migration can be created.
7. Ravenstein's argument, which he presents as the seventh law, is related to gender and migration. He states that when it comes to short-distance migration, women are more likely to migrate than men. By contrast, men are more inclined and active in long-distance and outward migration.

According to Ravenstein, although there are migrations due to natural disasters, oppressive regimes, and wars, they should not be confused with migrations by people seeking better material lives and economic opportunities. Migration is an increasingly unstoppable action. According to Yalçın, this situation is due to the continuous increase in industrial and commercial centers (Yalçın, 2004). Even if industrial and commercial growth ceases, personal and psychological factors come into play, and migration will continue. Ravenstein's approach to migration also confirms that migration is a phenomenon that will continue unabated.

Ravenstein, in his article, posits that the main reason for the migration of individuals is to improve their economic and living standards, and other reasons are not as effective and should be considered secondary. His analysis is a very good presentation of the period in which he lived. Although Ravenstein's theory and arguments are not sufficiently comprehensive to elucidate contemporary multilayered, multidimensional, and complex migration phenomena, the most significant aspect and contribution of Ravenstein's migration law is its function as a foundational framework for subsequent migration studies and research. These laws, which explained the period very well, also revealed the need for new theories in subsequent periods.

Moreover, from the seven immigration rules determined by Ravenstein, we understand that these laws were determined according to England's economic conditions at the time they were written. Therefore, these laws are insufficient to explain the concept of immigration, which has become a more complex and multifaceted dimension today. Although Ravenstein's migration laws are insufficient in explaining the concept of migration today, they played an important role in the emergence of the migration theories that came after them (Çağlayan, 2006). Since the laws developed by Ravenstein were envisaged for England at that time, it is thought that they would be insufficient to explain the migration movements to Türkiye, especially Afghan migration, because the conditions in Türkiye and the profile of immigrants coming to Türkiye differed from those in England at that time. In addition, when the seven rules put forward by Ravenstein are examined individually, it is understood that these rules are no longer valid today and will be insufficient in explaining Afghan migration. For example, Ravenstein states in his article that the vast majority of immigrants prefer to migrate a short distance. However, although Afghan immigrants primarily migrated to their border neighbors, Iran and Pakistan, after the Soviet invasion, they are now migrating to many countries that are farther away. One such country is Türkiye.

### **2.2.3. EVERETT LEE: PUSH AND PULL THEORY OF MIGRATION**

The theory proposed by Everett Lee in 1966, in the publication "*A Theory of Migration*," posits that both origin and destination locations exhibit attractive and repulsive factors. While Lee focused on migration rather than immigrants in his migration theory, he also asserted that the phenomenon of immigrants should not be disregarded (Çağlayan, 2006).

Lee argues that regardless of whether migration is a long or short distance and whether it is easy or difficult, there will be a series of obstacles in movement between the source country

and the destination country, including the distance between them. The four basic factors affecting the migration decision and process described by Lee (1966) are as follows:

1. Factors associated with the area of origin
2. Factors associated with the area of destination
3. Intervening obstacles
4. Personal factors

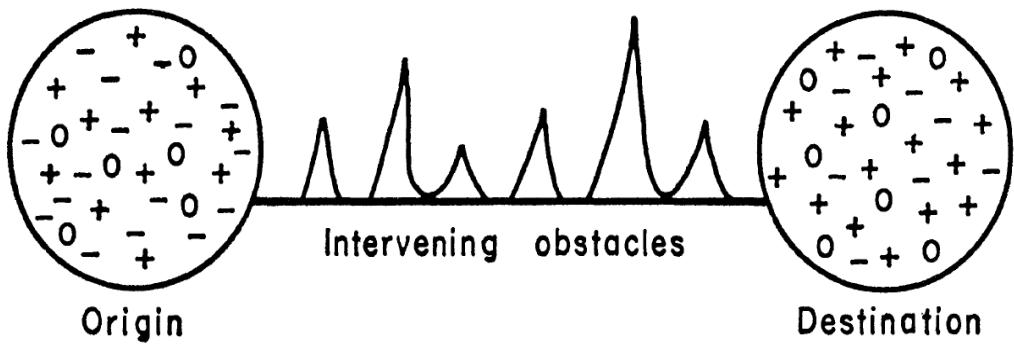
According to Lee, there are no definite push-and-pull factors at any point. Push and pull factors depend on more than one factor. The push and pull factors of the places of origin and destination should be considered as a whole. Another important point is that the determinants of migration are considered on two bases: individual or micro factors and non-individual or macro factors. Settled individuals are considered migrant candidates or potential migrants. Since these individuals know very well the positive and negative aspects of the places they are living in, they can calculate the push and pull factors for migrating very well. However, uncertainties such as not knowing what will happen, the social and societal structure, and various risks in the destination are determining factors for migrant candidates (Çağlayan, 2006). In this context, migration is a state of uncertainty and a complex process.

Ravenstein and Lee generally argued the classical economic model based on the findings in their studies. According to this model, immigrants evaluate their economic situation, have sufficient information about the economic structures of their countries of origin and destination, and evaluate this information rationally within the framework of a cost-benefit analysis. Within the framework of their analyses, Ravenstein and Lee predict that individuals will voluntarily migrate to the country or region where their labor is needed.

In Figure 1, “+” s for migration indicates positive factors, “-” s indicates negative factors, and “0” s indicates neutral factors. In Lee’s theory, positive factors indicate a pull towards migration, while negative factors indicate a push. In addition, neutral values have the same effect on all individuals and do not contribute to migration in any way. Lee’s theory emphasizes that the place of origin and destination contain positive and negative factors, which are push and pull factors. Social, economic, cultural, familial, or other personal factors may vary from individual to individual. For instance, while a family with children sees educational standards

at the destination as an attractive factor, this situation may be ineffective or neutral for a single person or a childless family (Lee, 1966).

**Figure 1: Origin and Destination Factors and Intervening Obstacles in Migration**



Source: Lee, 1966

In the context of Afghan migration to Türkiye, numerous push and pull factors influence the decision-making process of Afghan immigrants. The push factors originating from Afghanistan include political instability, economic challenges, the Taliban threat, risks to life and security, geopolitical interests of major powers, and a persistent conflict environment. It is important to note that these factors can vary over time. Complementing these push factors is the pull factor associated with Türkiye, including its higher level of development, superior economic conditions, and enhanced safety measures, which serve as attractants for Afghan immigrants (İ. Koç & Eryurt, 2017). Therefore, the push factors that compel Afghan immigrants to migrate to Türkiye simultaneously serve as pull factors.

#### 2.2.4. NEOCLASSICAL MACRO THEORY OF MIGRATION

Neoclassical macro theory, one of the oldest and first systematic theories on international migration, is based on the fact that the difference in the balance of supply and demand in the labor market varies from country to country. The foundations of this theory were laid at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Arthur Lewis made the first study on neoclassical economics in 1954 with his work titled "*Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour*." According to this model, immigrants play an important role in the development processes in "dual economies." Here, "dual economies" are economies that are freed from colonialism,

enter the development process, try to establish relations with the outside world, and at the same time continue their agricultural activities (Arango, 2000).

Neoclassical macro theory emphasizes the geographically unequal distribution of labor and capital. Accordingly, countries with more labor than capital have a lower wage market. In contrast, a shortage or limit in the labor force results in a high wage level. Due to the gap between low and high wages in countries, workers in low-wage or labor-rich countries migrate to countries with high wages and a limited labor force. As a result of this population movement, there is a decrease in the labor market of countries that are rich in labor, so wages increase, and in a way, in countries that are rich in capital, labor supply increases while wages decrease. Consequently, this creates a balance between countries in terms of wage levels (Abadan-Unat, 2024).

The most important assumption of this theory is that labor costs automatically adjust because of immigration and emigration in the long term. In addition, in this theory, the labor market appears to be a balancing element of international migration. It is predicted that if wage equality between the source and destination countries continues, it will theoretically cause international migratory movements to decrease and stop (Abadan-Unat, 2024; Bozdağ & Atan, 2009). This explanation of neoclassical economists on international migration has influenced the public opinion of host countries for a long period and shaped policies regarding migration. The assumptions on which this theory is based are as follows (Abadan-Unat, 2024; Massey, 1999):

- Wage differences between countries have led workers to migrate internationally.
- Labor migration ends if wage differences are eliminated.
- The migration of skilled or highly qualified workers is seen in a different way than that of unskilled workers.
- The labor market acts as the primary mechanism in international migration, while other markets are not that important.
- The duty of the source and destination states is to examine and supervise the labor market.

## 2.2.5. NEOCLASSICAL MICRO THEORY OF MIGRATION

Neoclassical micro theory, by taking individual preferences into account, works together with macroeconomics. According to this theory, the factors that cause international migration are not only macro facts in the labor market but also the individuals themselves. In this model developed by Todaro, Borjas, and Sjastad, the reasons why individuals react to differences between countries in making migratory decisions were examined. Accordingly, rationally thinking individuals voluntarily decide to migrate by comparing the costs and benefits of migration (Toksoz, 2006).

Individuals decide to migrate at the point where they expect that migration will provide positive net returns, especially in monetary terms (Massey, 1999), and they tend to be the country that will provide the highest return among the countries they plan to migrate to (Arango, 2000). Individuals prefer to migrate to places where they are most productive and use their skills in the best way while also expecting high profits (Massey, 1999). However, immigrants face problems in some areas before they achieve the benefits of high wages and other opportunities. These include travel and moving costs, learning a new language, difficulties in adapting to a new culture and labor market, and the psychological costs of adapting. In addition, individuals who decide to migrate irregularly must consider possibilities such as deportation and imprisonment (Abadan-Unat, 2024).

The assumptions on which this theory is based are as follows (Abadan-Unat, 2024; Massey, 1999):

- International migration movements differ in terms of income and employment.
- If other factors are equal, characteristics such as education, skills, experience, foreign language knowledge, and job training will make it easy for immigrants to find jobs.
- Social conditions, individual characteristics, and technologies that reduce the cost of migration have the potential to increase gains achieved as a result of migration.
- Migration flows between countries are the collective result of cost-benefit calculations by individuals.
- International migration occurs because of employment and income differences between countries.
- Labor market imbalances give rise to international migratory movements.

- If the working conditions of the target countries are psychologically attractive, the expenditure cost is considered negative. Therefore, migration can be ended by reducing or eliminating these attractive working conditions.
- The state controls migratory flows through measures that affect earnings in source and destination countries. For example, allocating long-term developmental credits to migrant-sending countries to increase income or imposing heavy fines on employers in the case of illegal employment.

When analyzing the migration of Afghan nationals to Türkiye, it can be asserted that a large number of Afghans have left their country for economic reasons, to find a job, and to make financial savings. However, it would be overgeneralized to attribute Afghan immigration to Türkiye merely to wage differences and employment opportunities available in the hosting country. Beyond these economic factors, ongoing civil conflict, Taliban rule, and persistent security issues in Afghanistan serve as significant reasons for migration. As a result, the decision to migrate often stems from necessity rather than individual preferences, underscoring the complex nature of Afghan migratory patterns to Türkiye.

#### **2.2.6. NEW ECONOMIC THEORY OF MIGRATION**

Stark & Bloom (1985) developed the new economic theory in the early 1990s as a reaction to the assumptions of neoclassical economic theory, which focused on the individual and did not consider other factors, such as family ties and cultural affiliation when making migration decisions. Accordingly, the decision to migrate is not a decision made by individuals alone, but a collective decision made by the entire family and sometimes by larger units that are related to each other. It is emphasized that not only the individuals themselves but also the households or communities in the production and consumption areas in which they are members should be considered as the main unit in migration studies (Güney et al., 2013). Families in underdeveloped and developing countries sometimes include one or more family members in the migration process to obtain a higher income, live a more prosperous life, and sometimes make investments. With the migration decision, the family not only maximizes the family's expected income but also minimizes the risks related to income and increases their status and prestige in the social order (Abadan-Unat, 2024).

According to new economic theory, three basic factors cause migration. The first of these is altruism. The decision to migrate is made by considering the interests of the family of which the individual is a member. Financial security is the second most important factor (Bozdağ & Atan, 2009). This is the assurance of household income against possible risks by diversifying income sources. In this way, the family's income is not only secured against possible risks but also a situation of relative superiority compared to other households. This situation can be experienced even if there is no real increase in household income. Therefore, household migration is used to improve their position compared to other households and to reduce their deprivation compared to the groups they refer to. This improvement in income and decrease in relative deprivation also encourage other households to migrate internationally (Massey et al., 1993; Stark & Bloom, 1985).

In developed countries, household income is generally secured against risk through private insurance markets or government programs. By contrast, in developing countries, these institutional mechanisms are either non-existent or inaccessible to poor households (Massey, 1999). Households, like individuals, try to control risks by diversifying the distribution of their labor force potential to improve their economic situation and minimize risks to their well-being. To this end, some household members choose to work within the country, while others choose to work abroad and adopt different strategies in the face of economic crises. In cases where the homeland economy deteriorates, household income is balanced through remittances sent by migrants (Güllüpinar, 2012). The third factor is the investment. It is the creation of a unit of wealth in a country in which the family lives with the income obtained from the migrant individual (Bozdağ & Atan, 2009). These factors are addressed in the literature as insecurity, relative poverty, risk reduction, and the diversification of income sources (Toksoz, 2006).

The new economic theory makes the following assumptions (Güllüpinar, 2012; Massey et al., 1993):

- In international migration studies, the basis should be households, families, or communities that are united in the field of consumption and production and not individuals.
- Wage differences are not necessary for international migration. Households may decide to migrate to reduce possible risks even in the absence of wage differences.

- Even if wage differences between countries are eliminated, international migration will continue as long as there are inequalities and imbalances in the sending countries' markets.
- Households can also support initiatives that increase local employment or production while participating in international migration. It can even be considered a solution to meet capital needs and prevent possible risks due to foreign exchange inflow. In this way, migration contributes to regional economic development while international migration is also sustained.
- Even if expected equality in income is achieved for households in different positions in the income distribution or for households subject to different income distributions within themselves, it will not affect the probability of migration of the household. This is because the expectations of communities with different income distributions also differ.
- The pace of migration is affected by policies that affect the labor market as well as policies that regulate insurance, capital, and futures markets.
- Government policies and new economic structures affecting income distribution may affect some families' thoughts about poverty and change their desire to migrate.
- As long as poor households cannot benefit from government policies implemented in the source country, the desire to migrate will increase; similarly, if rich households cannot benefit from a higher income, the desire to migrate will decrease.

Within the framework of the new economic theory of migration, Afghan migration to Türkiye can be explained in the context of household economic strategies, although this theory may not encompass all migrant experiences. According to this theory, Afghan migrants may migrate to Türkiye not only to increase their incomes but also to mitigate their families' economic risks and provide financial diversification. It can be observed that those who enter irregularly aim to access third countries with legal resettlement programs by utilizing migration as an investment strategy. However, the majority of those who enter irregularly also migrate for non-economic reasons, such as war, security threats, or political pressures, which may limit the explanatory capacity of the new economic theory of migration. Furthermore, factors such as legal uncertainties, insecurity in the labor market, and the risk of deportation faced by Afghan

immigrants in Türkiye may challenge the assumptions of the theory by impeding immigrants' ability to achieve their anticipated economic gains. Therefore, while certain aspects of Afghan migration can be explained by the new economic theory of migration, a more comprehensive framework incorporating political, social, and legal dynamics may also be necessitated.

## **2.2.7. WORLD SYSTEMS THEORY OF MIGRATION**

According to the world systems theory, the expansion of the established capitalist structure and its entry into non-capitalist societies in search of raw materials, markets, and labor force causes migration. The exploitation carried out by colonial regimes in the past continues today with the exploitation of cheap labor. The spread of the capitalist economy from centers to wider areas has negatively affected the social and economic structures of the surrounding countries and forced people to migrate (Toksoz, 2006).

According to this theory, structural change occurring in the world market is accepted as a determinant of migration. This theory interprets migration as a function of globalization with the increase in the interdependence of the economy and the emergence of new production methods (Yücedağ, 2020). As a result of such an interdependent system, the core countries meet their raw material and market needs and cheap labor from the peripheral countries, while the peripheral countries try to increase their welfare levels by completing their capitalist development. Core countries use the labor force in peripheral countries to reduce labor costs and filter the qualified labor force by implementing various policies (Yaman, 2019). The increase in export-oriented production and agricultural exports in developed countries is directly related to investment in developing and developed economies. One result is the distribution of traditional business structures and the forced migration of people (Yücedağ, 2020).

According to Wallerstein's work, in this theory, while the capitalist structure invests in peripheral countries, the labor force migrates in the opposite direction for capital (Abadan-Unat, 2024). However, the labor force flowing to the core countries consists not only of the agricultural sector but also of qualified and skilled labor. This situation creates a labor force deficit in peripheral countries and negatively affects their development. Since the relationship between the core and periphery generally works in favor of, and according to, the interests of the core countries, it has a one-sided exploitative nature (Gezgin, 2011). As can be seen, the theory focuses on the impact of the globalizing economy on migration by focusing on capital, while it is far from a micro-level evaluation, such as the individual and family.

The assumptions on which this theory is based are as follows (Abadan-Unat, 2024; Massey, 1999):

- International migration results from the expansion of the global economy into peripheral regions.
- The flow of international labor follows the flow of international goods and capital but in the opposite direction.
- International migration is driven by the structure and dynamics of the global economy, and it has little to do with the differences in wages and employment rates across countries.
- The administrative, financial, cultural, transportation, and communication ties established between colonial countries and their colonies have caused international migration.
- When the political and military interventions of the governments of capitalist countries to protect investments in neighboring countries and to support governments that view the development of the global market positively fail, instability arises in neighboring countries, which, in turn, gives rise to refugee movements, another form of international migration.

World Systems Theory can help explain the migration of Afghan immigrants to Türkiye within the framework of global economic and political dynamics, but this theory may not cover all aspects of the Afghan migration experience. According to this theory, semi-peripheral countries like Türkiye act as a bridge between the central and peripheral countries in the global economic system, becoming a transit point for migrants from peripheral countries. Economic dependency in Afghanistan, political instability, and imbalances in the global capitalist system may be among the factors forcing people to migrate. In addition, Türkiye's integration into the global economy may encourage Afghan migrants to target Türkiye by increasing the demand for low-cost migrant labor. However, this theory may fail to adequately explain individual migration motivations, family decisions, or personal security concerns. Factors such as the irregular living conditions of Afghan immigrants in Türkiye, the uncertainty of legal status, and individual resistance strategies require considering migration not only with the dynamics of the global economic system but also with personal, social, and political factors. Therefore, although

the world systems theory can explain some aspects of Afghan migration, complementary theories may also be needed to understand individual and micro-level experiences.

## **2.2.8. MIGRATION SYSTEMS THEORY**

According to the migration system theory, population movements do not only have an economic dimension. Migration systems theory, which is evaluated in two wings based on economic and political systems, focuses on the relations between countries and migration movements that occur as a result of these relations. In this theory, the distance between source and destination countries does not play a decisive role in the formation of migratory movements. Economic and political relations between countries from past to present, “colonial movements, political interactions, trade, investment, and cultural ties” have played leading roles in the formation of migratory movements (Çağlayan, 2006; Güllüpinar, 2012).

Therefore, according to this theory, there is no requirement for geographical proximity between countries for international migration. The existence of past social, political, and economic ties is more important than the geographical proximity of countries. To speak of the existence of a migration system, there must be at least two nation-states connected by human flows within the system in question. The exchange agreement between Mexico and the US considers both individual and household decision-making processes, evaluates the international migration movement as a dynamic process consisting of a series of events based on the past, and explains the direction and process of international migration by focusing on both macro and micro-level factors (Sert, 2016). The assumptions of this theory are as follows (Abadan-Unat, 2024; Massey et al., 1993):

- Although the geographical closeness of countries facilitates migration, political and economic relations between countries are truly important.
- Some countries can be included in multiple migration systems. A country can be both a source and a destination country.
- Countries can leave one migration system and join another in parallel with the economic and political developments and transformations they experience.

While migration theories, initially based on economics, focused primarily on the causes of migration, especially after the 1980s, international migratory movements tried to be interpreted through various theories by examining them from different ideological perspectives. There is

no hierarchical relationship between these theories (Demirel, 2015). Therefore, the assumptions of these theories should not be evaluated as alternatives to each other but as complements (Toksoz, 2006).

When analyzing the Afghan migration to Türkiye within the framework of migration systems theory, as a result of the political and cultural relations between Türkiye and Afghanistan that started a century ago, the fact that Afghan immigrants prefer Türkiye, even though the distance between them is far, can be better understood in relation to this theory. The migration system theory can explain the migration of Afghan immigrants in Türkiye within the framework of historical, economic, political, and social ties between the two countries, but it may not cover all migration processes. According to this theory, migrant networks, historical relations, trade, common cultural elements, and previous migration movements that have developed over time between Afghanistan and Türkiye shape new migration flows. While the existence of large groups of Afghan immigrants in Türkiye may constitute a center of attraction for new arrivals, migrant smuggling networks and irregular migration routes have also become part of this system. In addition, Türkiye's policies to manage irregular migration and changes in international migration regimes may directly affect the Afghan migration movements. However, this theory may be limited to explaining individual migration motivations and personal experiences.

### **2.2.9. SOCIAL NETWORKS THEORY**

Most migration theories have an economic basis and tend to adopt an approach to migration in terms of time and history. However, in addition to the historical and economic perspectives on international migration, the current migration phenomenon is important in terms of its social characteristics. In this context, the social networks theory of migration attempts to shed light on how international migration is affected by social ties and relations. Unlike other international migration theories, the social network theory provides the opportunity to examine migration in terms of migrants and migrant relations (Çağlayan, 2006).

While other international migration theories examine the reasons for the initiation of migration, the social network theory focuses on the perpetuation of international migratory movements. This theory draws attention to those who have previously migrated and the effect of formal and informal networks between them and potential migrants on the system to ensure the continuity of migration flow. In this context, social network theory, which tries to explain

the direction of international migration and why it becomes continuous once it has started, has an important place among migration theories.

The social network theory of international migration refers to interpersonal relations, such as race, kinship, friendship, and other close ties formed between immigrants living in the country of immigration and individuals in the country of emigration, newly arrived immigrants, and non-immigrants (Abadan-Unat, 2024). Such ties are a type of social capital that allows immigrants to get help, find jobs, and solve problems related to migration. These networks reduce the risks and costs of the migration process and lead to the formation of a migration chain over time. Over time, these networks of relations spread throughout other layers of migrant-sending countries. If people who migrate for the first time do not have a network of relationships where they can find help, they can try irregular ways through migrant smugglers at a high cost. Once the international migratory movement is initiated, immigrants can influence other people around them (Güllüpinar, 2012).

There is no social network from which the first immigrant who decides to migrate to a new place can benefit. The absence of a network of relationships from which immigrants can get help during migration, whether regular or irregular, significantly increases the cost of migration. The first immigrants create a network that connects their hometown with the new geographical location they have migrated to using their migratory experiences. New people who want to participate in the migration process can easily overcome obstacles in the migration process by using this network. Since each new immigrant after the first immigrant will receive support from a previous immigrant based on kinship, family relations, or other ties, migration costs will decrease. Developing networks ensures that migration occurs safely by informing the community about jobs and opportunities in the destination country. Migration networks, which reduce both costs and risks, are a type of social capital that immigrants can use to find jobs, places to stay in, or any other issue related to migration (Massey et al., 1993).

Whether the act of migration is a result of a decision taken to maximize the benefits of individuals or groups they are members of or to minimize risks, the structural inequalities and differences in the labor market or the globalizing world, or environmental problems, the main actor in the act of migration is always human. Communication is important for people's existence (Sert, 2016). Communication creates networks between migrants and non-migrants in both the source and destination countries. With the rapid development of communication technologies, it is becoming easier for immigrants to maintain their relationships with source and destination countries. In this way, people can travel easily and regularly to places where

they are connected by economic, social, and cultural ties, which consequently expands international migratory movements. The assumptions on which the theory is based are as follows (Massey et al., 1993):

- After international migration begins, migrant networks that are formed encourage further migration of people, thus increasing their desire to migrate.
- Wage differences or employment opportunities between source and origin countries lose importance with the formation of migrant networks because migrant networks reduce the costs and possible risks of migration.
- International migration rapidly becomes independent of the structural or individual reasons that initially caused migration as migrant networks are formed and strengthened.
- As migrant networks expand and strengthen, the socio-economic reasons behind migration become less clear.
- Once migrant networks are established, governments face difficulties in controlling and supervising these networks. Even if a destination country intensifies its migration policies, these networks continue to form.
- Migration policies can serve the purpose of controlling migration. For instance, policies that encourage family reunification strengthen these networks by granting special entry priorities to people with blood ties.
- Migrant social networks affect where migration will begin and where the destination will be. This determines the number of people that will migrate. In addition, it significantly changes the speed and magnitude of migration.

Social network theory can provide an important framework for understanding the migration of Afghan immigrants to Türkiye, but it may be insufficient to explain all immigration processes. According to this approach, Afghan immigrants who previously migrated to Türkiye created social networks that facilitated migration processes by providing both information sources and material and moral support for new arrivals. Family members, friends, and ties from the hometown can support the settlement, employment, and integration of new immigrants. Especially for immigrants who arrive irregularly, these networks can be decisive

in many aspects, from establishing connections with smugglers to accessing the labor market. However, explaining Afghan migration solely through social networks carries the risk of ignoring individual decisions, state policies, and other structural factors. Changing migration policies, border controls, and uncertainties in status acquisition in Türkiye may limit the impact of social networks and prevent new migration movements. Therefore, although social networks theory explains some aspects of Afghan migration, it needs to be evaluated together with other theories to understand the institutional, economic, and political dynamics that immigrants face. Overall, the phenomenon of migration has been analyzed in different dimensions, and theories have been developed using an interdisciplinary approach. Although these theories appear to have a modular structure, it can be said that they are more meaningful when evaluated as a whole.



## CHAPTER 3

### AFGHANISTAN AS A SOURCE COUNTRY OF IMMIGRATION

This section explains the migratory dynamics of the Afghans and Afghanistan's position as a country of origin of immigrants. To this end, we comprehensively examined Afghanistan's geography, ethnic structure, political evolution, and historical migration patterns. Additionally, this chapter strives to offer a concise chronology of significant events that have unfolded within the nation's territorial boundaries throughout its history to the extent feasible.

#### **3.1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT AFGHANISTAN'S GEOGRAPHY**

Situated at the crossroads between Central Asia and the Middle East, Afghanistan is strategically important. The nation's territorial boundaries encompass Pakistan to its south and east; Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan along its northern frontier; and Iran to the west. Afghanistan's landmass spans 652,864 square kilometers, and its capital city, Kabul, serves as the country's political and cultural center. Recent demographic estimates from 2023 indicate that the Afghan population has reached approximately 42.24 million inhabitants (World Bank, 2023).

The country's geography generally comprises high mountains. Because there are many famous mountain ranges, such as Safed Koh, Spin Ghar, Band-e Turkestan, and Pamir, which are continuations of the Himalayas and extend from east to west, the country is virtually divided by mountains. In the south of the country, barren lands and deserts cover a large area, as well as plains suitable for agriculture, although less so in some parts of the country. Afghanistan has a harsh continental climate with hot and dry summers and cold winters. The effect of monsoon rains can be observed in a small part of the south of the country (Mutanoğlu, 2006).

#### **3.2. ETHNIC STRUCTURE OF AFGHANISTAN**

An understanding of Afghanistan's social and ethnic composition is essential for understanding its emigration patterns and political instability. The most important reason for conflict and political instability in Afghanistan, which has led to the emigration of Afghans, is the inability to establish political unity due to ethnic differences and conflicts between ethnic groups in the country (Bayır, 2022).

Afghanistan exhibits a multicultural and ethnically diverse social structure comprising 34 provinces. The nation is characterized by two distinct societal types. The first is the "marginal"

desert civilization, which is predicated on agriculture and animal husbandry and is organized around the concept of kinship (Barfield, 2010). Kinship ties are extremely important in every aspect of Afghan life. The second Afghan society is sedentary and based on agricultural production (Barfield, 2010). Human settlements are predominantly located along riverbanks and in urban areas. These societies are characterized by stratified social hierarchies.

The tribal concepts that emerged together with ethnicity in Afghanistan prevented and continue to prevent the formation of the concept of a nation-state (Yawar, 2023). To understand Afghanistan, it is necessary to understand the different ethnic groups in Afghanistan, the tribes that emerged from these groups, and the political struggles. The politics and society in Afghanistan are intertwined. Established governments have always needed the support of ethnic elements and tribes to establish authority over society (Qeyam, 2012). In addition, ethnic rulers continued the policy of divide and rule to prevent ethnic groups from forming a force opposing absolute authoritarian political power. This situation prevented the emergence of a force that rebelled against the government in the short term and transformed ethnic divisions into ethnic conflicts in the long term (Yawar, 2023).

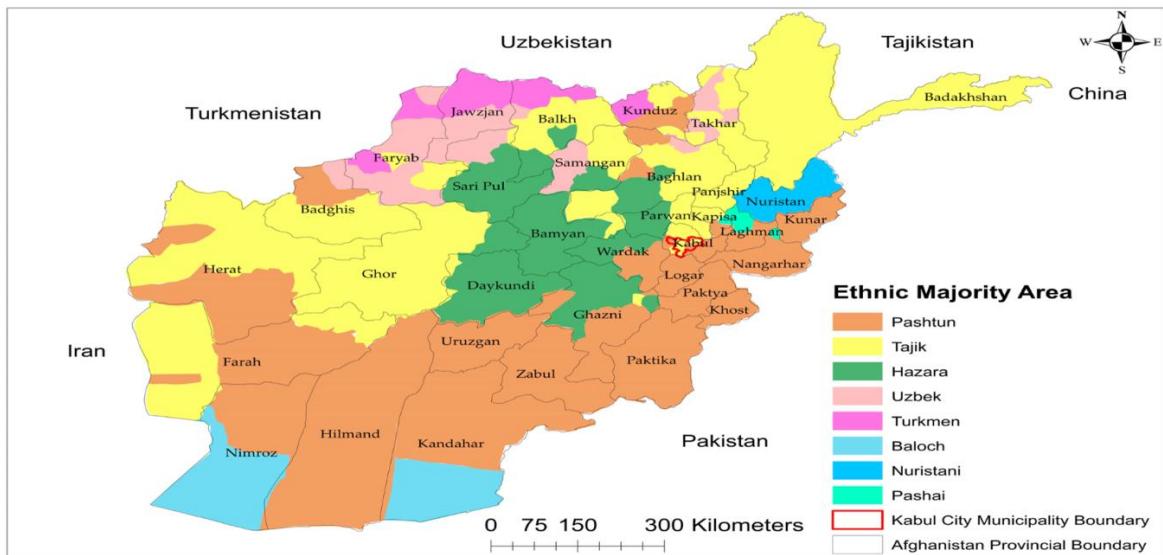
The population of the country and the number of different ethnic groups are not fully known. The available information is contradictory, and there are many different opinions. There are two main reasons for this. First, in recent years, the Afghan government has not conducted a comprehensive census of the population. Second, a detailed population study could not be conducted because of endless conflicts and civil war in the country. Therefore, there are no precise statistics regarding the population of the country.

Many ethnic groups live together in Afghanistan, and it is not exactly known how many ethnic groups exist. It is estimated that at least 50 ethnic groups exist in Afghanistan. Although some of these ethnic groups are numerically prominent in the country's political and social lives, others do not even have a say in the country's administration. Pashtuns comprise the majority of the Afghan population. In addition, Pashto, which is spoken by 35% of the population, is the official language, along with Dari, which is spoken by 50%. Other ethnic groups are listed as Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens, and others (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). As can be seen, Afghanistan hosts different ethnic groups speaking different languages in its difficult geography.

The Pashtuns are the most powerful group in terms of both demographic and political influence, with a population of 12.5 million, comprising 42% of the ethnic groups. Although there is no nation called "Afghan" in the country, this title is generally attributed to the Pashtuns

(Lieven, 2021). Meanwhile, other ethnic groups in Afghanistan, such as the Tajiks, also call themselves Afghans. However, when Afghans are mentioned in Afghanistan, the Pashtuns are the first to come to mind (Haşimi et al., 2010). Other ethnic groups in Afghanistan include Tajiks (27%), Uzbeks (9%), Hazaras (9%), Aimaq (4%), Turkmens (3%), Baloch (2%), and others (4%) (Haşimi et al., 2010).

**Figure 2: Map of Ethnic Distributions in Afghanistan**



Source: United States Central Intelligence Agency, 1979

### 3.2.1. PASHTUNS

There is no definite information about where the Pashtuns originated. The Pashtuns, whose origins are based on the Arian race, live in nomadic societies. They speak Pashto. They are the most densely populated ethnic group in Afghanistan (Lieven, 2021). Today, Pashtuns live mostly in Kandahar, Nangarhar, Paktika, Farah, Ghazni, and Kabul. While the Pashtuns who live in the city are educated, those who live in tents continue to live as nomads. 99% of the Pashtuns are Sunni. It is also possible to see Shia Pashtuns, although their numbers are small (Hajiyarali, 2011).

Pashtuns give importance to the tribes. The tribe has an existing tradition among Pashtuns. According to this tradition, there is the right to claim tribal heritage, the right to speak in the tribal council, and the right to use tribal lands. Disputes within the tribes are resolved between the families and tribal elders, and if not resolved, they turn into blood feuds. If the blood feud is not resolved, it will continue for generations (Hajiyarali, 2011). In Afghanistan's history, the

Pashtuns established the Afghan state in 1747, and despite the country's ethnic heterogeneity, maintained its dominance until 1992 (Ahady, 1995). During this period, when the Pashtuns were in power, other ethnic groups were excluded (Khawarnasab & Avcı, 2023). As of 2021, Pashtuns regained power through the Taliban (Lieven, 2021).

### **3.2.2. TAJIKS**

Tajiks are the second-largest ethnic group in Afghanistan in terms of population. They speak the "Dari" dialect of Persian. They generally live in Kabul, Baghlan, Takhar, Samangan, Parwan, Panjshir, Dushi, Herat, Farah, or Kunduz (Oğuz, 2001). Tajiks settled more quickly than other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. 99% of Tajiks are Sunni. Being of Tajik origin in Afghanistan is considered a privilege because it is thought to be more civilized (Hajiyarali, 2011).

Tajiks were left out of the army and bureaucracy of the Afghan government under the rule of Pashtuns. However, they were able to gain political power twice throughout Afghanistan's history. In its first attempt, Habibullah Kalakani, also known as Bachai Sakao, an ethnic Tajik, captured Kabul in 1929. While no country recognized Kalakani as the ruler of Afghanistan, he was in power for only nine months, from January 17 to October 1929. The second time Tajiks gained power in Afghanistan was in 1992, after the collapse of the Najibullah government, when Tajiks and Pashtuns fought to gain control of the government (Çınarlı, 2012). This conflict was also a civil war between Afghan Mujahideen and Afghans with a Soviet mentality.

Many European and Arab countries, including Pakistan, Russia, the United States, China, and Saudi Arabia, began to provide small amounts of financial and military aid for the civil war. Young men of Afghan origin from Arab countries and those living in refugee camps in Afghanistan came to support the war (Çınarlı, 2012). Osama Bin Laden was among those who came from Saudi Arabia to support the civil war in 1979. Despite his young age, his wealth and the sharing of wealth for the sake of the struggle caused him to be accepted and respected by higher-ranking commanders. Both times the Tajiks seized power, they were met with a reaction from the Pashtuns, and their rule ended (Çınarlı, 2012). This conflict forms the basis of the civil war that continues to this day.

### **3.2.3. UZBEKS**

Uzbeks are the third most densely populated ethnic group in Afghanistan. They mostly live in the country's northern regions, such as Kunduz, Sheberghan, Kholm, Balkh, Meymene, and

Bala Morgab (Çınarlı, 2012). They speak the Uzbek dialect of Oghuz Turkish and belong to the Sunni sect. There is an important distinction between the Uzbeks who lived in Afghanistan for centuries and those who came here from the north to escape Russian oppression. The Uzbeks who came as refugees were called “muhajir” and formed their sub-identity (Glatzer, 1998). In Afghanistan, Uzbeks, who had no say in the country’s administration and army, took advantage of the 1979 Soviet invasion period and declared their independence, taking their place on the side of the pro-Soviet government.

### **3.2.4. HAZARAS**

The Hazaras are another group that is subject to the Shia sect, except for the Hazaras living in the Badghis and Panjshir provinces of Afghanistan (Mohammadi, 2015). Hazaras earn a living through agriculture and animal husbandry. Their speaking language is a Dari dialect of Persian consisting of Turkish words and Mongolian idioms, which they call Hazaragi. There are several theories regarding the origins of the Hazaras. One of the most accepted theories is that the Hazaras are descendants of Genghis Khan’s army. There is an opinion that they are Mongols because of their unique facial features. However, since the Central Asian human type has the same expression and features, this opinion is not definite. The Hazaras live in Ghor, Ghazni, Wardak, Balkh, Samangan, Baghlan, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pol, Bamyan, and the Afshar District of Kabul. While Hazaras live in different regions of Afghanistan, the majority live in Bamyan, which is known as the homeland of the Hazaras, called Hazarajat.

Hazaras have been one of the most persecuted communities by the government, namely the Pashtuns. Throughout the Afghan state’s history, the Pashtun kings’ hostility towards Hazaras resulted in massacres and the usurpation of lands and properties. The reason for this oppression was nothing more than that of Hazaras being Shia. On the other hand, the Hazaras rebelled against the government twice. The first was during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan when the taxes of the Hazaras were increased by five holds, they were forcibly relocated to the provinces of Baghlan and Bamyan, and their lands were divided among Pashtuns (Çınarlı, 2012). After this oppression, the Hazaras rebelled. The civil war continued from 1890 to 1893, after which the king sent a letter to the Pashtun tribes mentioning that whoever took the women, children, men, and property of the Hazaras, according to the Islamic religion, could send one-fifth of it to the state and own the rest. Thousands of Hazara women and children were killed, and those who were not killed were sold as slaves. Soldiers forcibly entered homes and raped women in front of their husbands (Mohammadi, 2015). The main reason for this was that the

Pashtun ruler of Afghanistan believed that Hazaras were atheists and infidels because they were Shia.

After the assassination of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan by his son Habibullah Khan in 1901, an amnesty was issued to the Hazaras. The lands given to the Pashtuns were returned, and some of the Hazaras returned to Hazarajat, a mountainous region in Afghanistan also known as the homeland of the Hazara people. However, the oppression of the Hazaras in Afghanistan was adopted as a state policy, and the system has not changed over the years. Hazaras were not given official duties in government offices, Hazara youth were not subject to military service, and there were no government representatives from the Hazaras (Mohammadi, 2015).

The second rebellion of the Hazaras was in 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and they rose against the Red Army. This date goes down in history as the second rebellion of the Hazaras, not only against the Russians but also against the Afghan government. With the temporary end of the Taliban regime in 2001, they were able to have a say in government for the first time. In the newly formed government, while the first vice president of Afghanistan was from the Tajik ethnic group, Mohammad Qasim Fahim, the second vice president of Afghanistan under the presidency of Hamid Karzai was a Hazara leader, Karim Khalili.

### **3.2.5. TURKMENS**

Turkmen are also an ethnic group in Afghanistan. North Afghanistan is known as the Afghan Turkestan (Çınarlı, 2012). They mostly lived in Kunduz, Jowzjan, and Herat. They also have a tribal system that is fundamental to Turkmen society (Adamec, 1991; Oğuz, 2001). The Turkmen people of Afghanistan earn a living through farming and animal husbandry. Sheep breeding and the famous trade in lambskin are of great importance in the formation of Turkmen's source of income. Turkmen in Afghanistan live in deprived regions with drinking water shortages, drought, and a lack of schools, hospitals, and electricity. Meanwhile, Turkmen contributed greatly to the country's economy in the production of leather, wool, and wool carpets. However, Afghan governments have always oppressed the Turkmen people, and they have never had a say in politics. (Adamec, 1991; Oğuz, 2001).

### **3.2.6. OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS**

The Kyrgyz people, predominantly residing in Badakhshan Province and the Pamir Mountain region in northern Afghanistan, constitute one of the minority ethnic groups within

the country. The Kyrgyz population inhabits isolated areas and is primarily engaged in animal husbandry and agriculture. In 1979, because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a significant number of nomadic Kyrgyz people migrated to Pakistan, accompanied by their tents and livestock. Furthermore, a subset of the Kyrgyz population relocated to Türkiye in 1982, establishing settlements in Van (Öztek, 2003).

Kazakhs constitute another ethnic group dispersed across the provinces of Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz, Baghlan, and Badghis. The Kazakhs, who sought refuge from the restrictive policies of the Soviet Union, established settlements in the Herat province. The Kazakh population, which coexists with Uzbeks, is estimated to be approximately 100,000. In terms of cultural assimilation, numerous Kazakhs adopted Uzbek customs. Kazakh, which is linguistically related to Uzbek Turkish, is spoken by the Kazakh population. A significant number of Kazakhs from the Jowzjan province emigrated from Afghanistan to Kazakhstan in response to Kazakhstan's recent policy of granting citizenship to augment its population. (Hajiyarali, 2011).

Qizilbash or Afshar people are another Persian-speaking ethnic group in Afghanistan who are mainly residing in Herat, Kabul, and Kandahar. The name Qizilbash, meaning redhead, was given to state officials and military commanders in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and described the red cap worn by Turkoman tribesman who backed Shaykh Haydar, the leader of the Safavid order of Iran from 1460-1488. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Afshar people began to enter the Shia sect under the influence of Shah Ismail's missionary policies. Moreover, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, their lineage continued when soldiers of the Afshar emperor Nadir Afshar stayed in Afghanistan. Some Afshar people live in the Afshar District of Kabul. Others live in isolation in the Foladi Valley of the Hazarajat region of Afghanistan. While some Afshar people define themselves as Turkish, others define themselves as Hazara (Adamec, 1991; Oğuz, 2001).

Aimaq people, who speak Persian and Uzbek and are Sunni, are also an ethnic group living in Afghanistan. Their livelihoods were based on agriculture and animal husbandry. However, today, they have moved to city life; they have had a nomadic culture in the past. The Aimaq people are related to the Hazaras, and their number is estimated to be approximately 450,000 (Oğuz, 2001).

An additional ethnic group called Pashayi or Pashai lives in the Laghman, Nangarhar, and Kapisa provinces of Afghanistan. They speak the Pashai language. Their language, which contains many Pashto words, is the active language spoken in Afghanistan. While many Pashai

people still live in Afghanistan, there is no information on the historical sources of the region or the origins of the Pashai people (Çınarlı, 2012).

Balochs, who are Sunni and speak Balochi, are another ethnic group living in Afghanistan. They believe that religious practices should remain in private life and have a secular view. It is estimated that their population is approximately one hundred thousand. The Baloch people live in a tribal system. There is no private property in the tribe. Tribes have a management style in which an old male is the leader. However, due to changing economic and political conditions, individualism has become prominent, and the power of the tribal culture has decreased compared to the past (Hajiyarali, 2011).

Nuristanis, who are claimed to be descendants of Alexander the Great's army, live an isolated life in the Nuristan province of Afghanistan and constitute a small number of ethnic groups in Afghanistan. During the reign of Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, a region known as Kafiristan, the “land of infidels” in Afghanistan, was invaded by the king's armies, and the people of Kafiristan were made to accept Islam. Thus, the king changed the name of Kafiristan to Nuristan. Nuristan has a forested and rugged terrain. Nuristan's people live in mountainous regions and valleys that can be reached on foot. Other Nuristanis also live in the provinces of Laghman, Nangarhar, and Kunar around Kabul and are Sunni (Oğuz, 2001).

### **3.3. POLITICAL HISTORY OF AFGHANISTAN**

The foundations of the Afghan state were laid by Ahmad Shah Durrani, also known as Ahmad Shah Abdali, from the Abdali tribe of the Durranis, who brought together the Afghan tribes that remained independent after the assassination of Nader Shah Afshar of Iran in 1747. As a result of the power vacuum after the death of Nader Shah Afshar of Iran, Ahmad Shah Durrani, who was a commander in Nader Shah's army, had the opportunity to rise. Ahmad Shah gathered support from Pashtun tribal leaders, captured Kandahar after Nadir Shah's death, and was declared ruler at a tribal assembly (jirga) in Kandahar. Ahmad Shah soon took Kabul and its surroundings under his rule, subjecting the other ethnic groups and tribes in the country to himself and becoming the sole ruler of Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah gathered the Afghan tribes together and established the State of Afghanistan, “meaning land of the Afghans,” and went down in history as the person who established the first national Afghan state (Akkurt, 2005). Since the establishment of the Afghan state in 1747 by Ahmad Shah Durrani, Afghanistan has been ruled by Pashtuns (Çınarlı, 2012). The rulers who came to power after Ahmad Shah

Durrani were not successful in ensuring the country's stability, and internal conflicts never ended.

### **3.3.1. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE OF AFGHANISTAN**

In 1885, Russians attacked Afghanistan and captured the north of Herat, which led the British to send troops to the region. The Afghan Shah, Adur Rahman Khan, barely managed to avoid this threat and signed a treaty known as the “Durand Line” with the British in 1893. As a result of the agreement, the Durand Line was accepted to serve as the official border between Afghanistan and Pakistan for more than 100 years, but it has caused controversy for the people who live there. When the Durand Line, also known as the Afghanistan–Pakistan border, was created in 1893, Pakistan remained a part of India. While this border problem continues as a national problem for Afghanistan, the Durand Line treaty marked the beginning of the developments that led to Afghanistan’s disaster (Akkurt, 2005).

Although Abdur Rahman Khan attempted to establish a centralized state, he could not establish a fully centralized administration because of the interests of the British and Russians in the region. After Abdur Rahman Khan’s death, his son Habibullah Khan succeeded his father and became the Amir of Afghanistan from 1901 until his assassination in 1919. After Habibullah Khan’s death, his son, Amanullah Khan, who succeeded him, fought against the British. At the end of the war, Afghanistan won the war of independence by signing the Treaty of Rawalpindi on August 19, 1919. Afterward, Afghanistan’s independence was recognized by many states, and Afghanistan began bilateral relations with other states (Akkurt, 2005).

Following a pro-Western policy, attempts to modernize Afghanistan along Western lines were among the significant political and social developments that occurred during Amanullah Khan’s rule in Afghanistan. However, Amanullah Khan could not fully succeed in achieving his modernization objectives due to uprisings in the country against him. One of the most important of these was a rebellion by Habibullah Kalakani and his followers. Consequently, many uprisings occurred within society and disturbed the modernization efforts of Amanullah Khan in Afghanistan. As a result of these uprisings, on January 14, 1929, Amanullah Khan was dethroned and fled to neighboring British India as the Afghan Civil War began to escalate (Yegin, 2015).

### **3.3.2. SOVIET OCCUPATION AND AFTERMATH**

In Afghanistan, on July 17, 1973, Mohammad Daoud Khan, with the help of communists, carried out a military coup known as the Coup of 26 Saratan and abolished the monarchy by declaring a republic in its place. Later, during his rule, Daoud Khan began to purge communists from the cabinet, and as a result, he was killed by the communists on April 27, 1978. From this date, the communist government began to rule the country. In Afghanistan, where the majority of the population is Muslim, rebellions soon began against the communist regime, and even a jihad was launched against the regime under the leadership of one of Afghanistan's important religious figures, Sibghatullah Mojaddedi (Yegin, 2015).

During the period when the communist regime was in power, the struggle for power between parties within the regime did not end. As a result, the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan on December 27, 1979. With the entry of the 120,000 Russian Army into Afghanistan, a long period of resistance began, known as the period of uprisings and jihad (Yegin, 2015). During the presidency of Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai, also known as Dr. Najib, between 1987 and 1992, uprisings increased and spread throughout the country. Eventually, the Mujahideen took control of 80 percent of the country's population. With the Mujahideen taking control of most of the country and Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union who was against the presence of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan, coming to power, Russia withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 (Yegin, 2015).

With the withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Afghanistan, the Mujahideen established a temporary government in Peshawar and began to attack Afghanistan (Yegin, 2015). The country was effectively divided into two groups, with the Mujahideen groups opposing the central government gaining power. As a result of the siege of the central government from both sides by the North Alliance and the Mujahideen, Abdul Rahim Hatif, who assumed the presidency by proxy, handed over the administration to the Mujahideen on April 21, 1992. Thus, after the temporary government established in Peshawar moved to Kabul, the communist regime collapsed, and Mujahideen began to dominate the country (Yegin, 2015).

### **3.3.3. THE FIRST PERIOD OF TALIBAN RULE**

The Taliban entered the Afghan scene with an attack on a town on the Pakistani border in southern Afghanistan during the struggle between Mujahideen groups in Afghanistan. The Taliban quickly captured Kandahar, Ghazni, and the southern regions of Afghanistan, reaching Kabul and establishing dominance within the country in a short time (Yegin, 2015).

Immediately after the Taliban took over, they began to establish a state structure based on a radical interpretation of Islam<sup>6</sup>. With the end of the civil war in the country and the Taliban taking over the administration, the positive thoughts and discourses about the administration began to change negatively due to the Taliban's attitude (B. Aras & Toktaş, 2008).

Following the September 11 attacks in the United States, the presence of the Al-Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden, in Afghanistan brought the Taliban face-to-face with the international community, especially the United States. The United States held Bin Laden responsible for bombings at its embassies in Africa and the September 11 attacks. On October 7, 2001, the United States and its allies began occupying Afghanistan with Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)<sup>7</sup>. In a short time, the Taliban withdrew from Kabul, and with the withdrawal of the Taliban, the Rabbani government was established in the country (Yegin, 2015).

Following the overthrow of the Taliban on November 27, 2001, a 14-day conference led by the United Nations in Bonn attempted to determine Afghanistan's fate (Yegin, 2015). After the Bonn Conference, elections were held in Afghanistan in 2004, a government was established under the leadership of Hamid Karzai, and a new era began in Afghanistan. During this period, when Hamid Karzai was the president, representatives of all ethnic groups were included in the government. However, after some time, these people used their authority in line with special relationships, and the Afghan cabinet could not achieve the desired success (Lüleci Karadere, 2015). Stability could not be achieved in Afghanistan during the new period, and as a result, the Taliban's influence in the country gradually increased.

### **3.3.4. THE SECOND PERIOD OF TALIBAN RULE**

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), established by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), has carried out many operations together with the Afghan government since the last quarter of 2001; however, the Taliban's presence in Afghanistan has not been eliminated. Despite all its operations, the Taliban has increased its effectiveness and remains a major obstacle to stability in the country. As of 2014, the withdrawal of NATO-led

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<sup>6</sup> Radical interpretation of Islam by the Taliban in Afghanistan has been referred to as the strict and extreme understanding and application of Islamic teaching and laws associated with harsh punishment, severe restrictions, and violations of women's rights such as education and employment, and intolerance of religious and cultural diversity. The interpretations and applications of Islamic law (Sharia) by the Taliban in Afghanistan have been significantly divergent from the mainstream or more moderate interpretations and applications of Islamic law followed by Muslims around the world.

<sup>7</sup> In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States initiated a military intervention in Afghanistan with the objectives of deposing the Taliban regime and eradicating Al Qaeda, designated as Operation Enduring Freedom.

forces from the country and their transfer of responsibility to the government in terms of ensuring security have caused the Taliban to regain control in many parts of the country (Gök, 2021).

When countries supporting Afghanistan, especially the United States, realized that they could not end the Taliban by force, they sat at the negotiation table with the Taliban. In the last negotiations held in February 2020, an agreement was signed between the United States and Taliban officials, but negotiations between the Taliban and Afghan governments did not yield any results. As a result of the agreement, NATO soldiers decided to withdraw from Afghanistan, and consequently, the Taliban regained complete control in Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, and a new era began (Gök, 2021).

As can be seen, Afghanistan's recent history has been marked by war, civil conflict, and political instability. In this unstable environment, people find a solution to migrate to other countries. Afghans, who first migrated to neighboring Pakistan and Iran, have since dispersed to almost every part of the world. Afghans are anticipated to continue to emigrate as long as they do not recover from this unstable environment.

### **3.4. AFGHANISTAN'S MIGRATION HISTORY**

Afghanistan's history, full of wars, civil conflicts, and occupations, has inevitably had consequences for the country. The main reasons for forced migration, such as war, civil unrest, and political instability, have shown themselves in almost every period throughout Afghanistan's history. Afghans migrated for various reasons from ancient times to the present day. Afghans have been leaving their country voluntarily for many years to obtain a better education, find a job, and live a better life, but they have also been forced to leave their countries for reasons such as war, famine, economic conditions, political instabilities, and religious pressures.

In the last 40 years of Afghanistan's history, the phenomenon of migration has become familiar within the country. Afghanistan has experienced both internal and external migration many times in history due to its location on the route from Asia to Europe and its unfavorable geopolitical and geographical conditions. The wave of migration in Afghanistan, which began with the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979, has been one of the most prolonged migratory movements in the last 40 years. In this regard, Afghanistan has been one of the countries that has produced the most refugees in the world since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and continues to produce.

To better understand the Afghan migration process, we examine it by dividing it into three different periods based on the reasons and characteristics of these migratory journeys in different periods. These three periods include (i) migratory movements before 1980, (ii) migratory movements between 1980 and 2000, and (iii) migratory movements after 2000 (Geyik Yıldırım, 2018; Noor, 2006).

### **3.4.1. MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS BEFORE 1980**

As in many other areas, it is quite difficult to find reliable data sources for old periods in the field of migration. Although migratory movements are generally included in historical records, they are generally stated in general terms, and because there are no institutions or mechanisms for registering migration, reliable data cannot be obtained. For this reason, it is difficult to find reliable and comprehensive sources of the history of Afghanistan's migration.

According to the available sources of Afghan migration, the first known migration movement in the history of Afghanistan was in 1890. Hazaras, who fled the country in masses for political reasons as a result of the ethnic and religious oppression and massacre carried out by the ruler of the period, Abdur Rahman Khan, against the Hazaras living in the country, was recorded as the first mass-political migratory movement from Afghanistan as a source country (Yegin, 2015). As a result of the Hazara Genocide<sup>8</sup> by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan in Afghanistan, thousands of Hazaras migrated to Pakistan, Iran, and other nearby and neighboring countries. However, nearly 5,000 families settled in Jam and Bakharz in Iran because of natural disasters and other reasons before the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan. The actual mass migration event occurred between 1880 and 1903, and it is estimated that the number of migrants during this period was approximately 168,000 (Geyik Yıldırım, 2018).

The policy of the Pashtunization of Afghanistan, which was carried out for many years by the ruling powers that came to power in Afghanistan, continued in later periods, and Hazaras were marginalized by the state and society because of their religious beliefs about being Shia Muslims. Occasionally, Pashtun religious leaders emphasized that killing Hazaras was a religious commandment; many Hazaras were killed, and many were forced to migrate

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<sup>8</sup> Hazara Genocide: A process of ethnic cleansing and mass murder initiated by the Emir of Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman Khan, in the 1890s. The Hazaras were forcibly displaced, enslaved, and largely massacred. Approximately 60% of their population was killed or exiled. Their lands were confiscated, their women and children were enslaved, and they were subjected to religious and cultural oppression (Ehsassi & El-Khoury, 2024).

(Mohammadi, 2015). Consequently, Afghan migration to Iran and Pakistan has increased over the years.

The only reason for the increase in migration to these countries is not geographical proximity and neighborhood, but the similarities between the ethnic structures in Pakistan and Iran and those migrating from Afghanistan are important factors. While economic reasons constitute an important dimension of Afghan migration toward Pakistan, religious similarities of Shiite Hazaras in Afghanistan have come to the fore in migration toward Iran (İ. Koç, 2017). On the other hand, the chaos and unrest experienced in Afghanistan have prevented the development of the Afghan economy, and industrialization has remained at a very low level. When sufficient work areas were not available to the increasing urban population, living conditions became increasingly difficult, and this was a pushing factor for Afghan migration in the period before 1979.

In addition, the drought experienced in the country since the beginning of the 1970s disturbed agricultural production and affected those who relied on agriculture. Subsequently, famine has increased migration. Moreover, rising oil prices after the 1973 oil crisis directed Afghan economic migrants to Middle Eastern oil-exporting countries. With increasing oil prices, Iran accepted more Afghan migrants and thus closed the labor gap that occurred as a result of the increase in demand (Geyik Yıldırım, 2018).

As stated in the first paragraph, although we do not have detailed records of migration origination from Afghanistan before 1980 or the period before the Soviet occupation of the country, the migratory movements that occurred from Afghanistan to Iran and Pakistan were pioneers of other political and economic migrations that occurred in the following years and prepared the ground for new migratory waves (İ. Koç, 2017). The connections that immigrants established between the destination country and the source country strengthened over time, and even later, the destination countries evolved into a new dimension in the migration process as transit countries for new migration.

### **3.4.2. MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS BETWEEN 1980-2000**

During this period, Afghans mostly continued to migrate to neighboring countries, such as Iran and Pakistan. This period was slightly different from previous periods. Migration in this period was not due to reasons such as increasing the level of welfare, seeking better job opportunities, and Hazara Shiites escaping from persecution, as in the previous period, but as migrations that caused people to flee the country as a result of wider conflicts and political

instability (İ. Koç & Eryurt, 2017). The first wave of migration, which occurred as a result of the 1978 coup of the Marxist Democratic Party of Afghanistan, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), was followed by Soviet occupation that occurred between 1979 and 1989 (Karakaya & Karakaya, 2021). At the beginning of the Soviet occupation, Afghans were forced to leave their country en masse, resulting in millions of Afghans migrating to neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Iran (Oğuz, 1998).

Meanwhile, tensions during the Cold War were also reflected in Afghanistan. Religious and ethnic divisions in the country have resulted in wars and conflicts among groups with different views (B. Aras & Toktaş, 2008). Afghanistan, which came under the influence of the USSR, began to renew and modernize in the following period and began land reform, but later encountered violations of human rights and murders of political and religious leaders (H. Yılmaz, 2023). The migration wave caused by the 1979 Soviet invasion was a migratory movement of a kind that had never been seen before in any period of history. The number of people who migrated from Afghanistan, whose population was around 18 million at the time, exceeded 6 million due to the invasion (Castles et al., 2008). This means that one-third of Afghanistan was forced to leave.

The first stop of Afghans fleeing Soviet occupation was Pakistan and Iran. According to official figures, as of 1990, approximately 3.3 million Afghans migrated to Pakistan, and approximately 3.1 million Afghans migrated to Iran (Castles et al., 2008). The factors that facilitated this migration were the proximity of the borders as well as the religious, social, and cultural closeness of the people of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. In addition, social networks, kinship ties, and economic ties that Afghan immigrants use when moving to these countries also facilitate migration (Castles et al., 2008). During this period, Iran and Pakistan were positive about immigrants staying in their countries. Although Pakistan received economic, military, and diplomatic aid and support from the United States in return for the immigrants staying in their countries, Iran received very little foreign aid for the refugees during this period (Castles et al., 2008).

The second migration wave that took place during this period was the start of the civil war after the Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan in February 1989 (Karakaya & Karakaya, 2021). The Communist Party of Afghanistan maintained its power until the rebels captured Kabul in 1992. As a result of the victory of the Taliban in 1992, Shia Muslims and other religious minority groups, such as Sikhs and Hindus, were forced to leave their country. The majority of migrants during this period were urban and educated middle-class. In addition, the

attitudes of Pakistan and Iran towards Afghan immigrants began to change, and they were not keen on accepting refugees. Although Pakistan accepted approximately 300,000 refugees during this wave of Afghan migration, Iran closed its doors (Castles et al., 2008).

The civil war that took place during that period went down as one of the bloodiest wars in the history of Afghanistan. Although the civil war initially focused on Kabul, it spread to many cities as some groups joined. Political uncertainty and the wrong political moves led by the Taliban, which forced Afghanistan to enter a civil war, also harmed Afghanistan's financial structure. During this period, Afghanistan began to lose its agricultural production capacity. With the drought problem, millions of people are forced to migrate both within and to other countries (Přívara & Přívarová, 2019).

### **3.4.3. MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS AFTER 2000**

After the terrorist attack in the United States on September 11, 2001, the conflict between the US and coalition forces and the Taliban in Afghanistan caused a third wave of migration to Afghanistan, which would continue for many years. As in the previous periods, migration has come to the agenda again with US intervention, but contrary to expectations, this time, there has not been a very large migration movement. The main reason for this is that the UN, the UNHCR, and many other international organizations have taken various measures to foresee possible migratory movements. These measures and projects prevented migratory movements at the very beginning. In addition, contrary to their previous attitudes, Iran and Pakistan have closed their borders to Afghan immigrants and have not allowed passage. The Taliban's rapid defeat and departure from important cities in Afghanistan have been another factor that prevented large-scale migration movements (Castles et al., 2008).

The mass migratory movement to Pakistan and Iran began to decrease in 2001. According to the 2001 estimates, the total number of Afghan refugees in the two countries was estimated to be 3.7 million (Castles et al., 2008). However, with the decreases experienced over the years, it first decreased to 2 million in 2006 and then to 1.7 million in 2013. According to the UNHCR's estimated data during the same period, the number of refugees returning to Afghanistan was approximately 6.2 million (İ. Koç, 2017). Nevertheless, upon their repatriation, numerous refugees who were unable to find the anticipated secure environment in their country of origin due to persistent unrest were compelled to emigrate once more. Subsequently, a considerable number returned to Iran. According to official Iranian data, as of 2016, 1,583,979 officially registered Afghan immigrants lived in Iran (Baytar, 2022).

Although no data can be found for Pakistan, it is thought that there is a similar situation. There are a total of 2.8 million registered Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. There are also Afghan refugees in Tajikistan and India, whose numbers can be measured in the tens of thousands (Baytar, 2022). Although there are various numbers of Afghan refugees living regularly or irregularly in countries such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Russia, Türkiye, and Kazakhstan, the fact that refugees' concerns when migrating is not only about security but also about their search for economic and social welfare has led the vast majority of Afghans to turn their migration routes to Europe.

When the source countries of migration in the world are evaluated in general, it can be seen that the most important common reasons are war and internal unrest. Afghanistan continues to be one of the most important sources of migration, with wars and internal unrest that have never been absent throughout its history. In this context, migration, which is seen as a way for most Afghans to survive, has become and continues to be an ordinary situation. For Afghans, whose numbers are expressed in millions, it seems that the migration adventure will continue if the political, economic, and social situation in the country does not improve.

## CHAPTER 4

### AFGHAN MIGRATION TO TÜRKİYE

This chapter examines the historical background of Afghan migration in the context of Türkiye and its progression over different periods. Initially, under the heading of Context and Background, the general framework of Afghan migration and the fundamental dynamics influencing these migration movements are provided. Subsequently, under the heading of Afghan Migration to Türkiye in the Pre-1980 Period, the first waves of Afghan migration to Türkiye and the characteristics of this period are evaluated. Within the scope of Afghan Migration to Türkiye in the Period 1980-2000, the increasing migration movements and Türkiye's stance in this process are addressed. Finally, under the heading of Afghan Migration to Türkiye in the Period 2000 and after, the transformation of Afghan migration in recent years, changes in migration policies, and current trends will be discussed.

#### 4.1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Migration is an integral part of Afghanistan's survival and livelihood (Kuschminder, 2018). Afghanistan has a complex and long migration history stemming from various reasons such as trade, employment, marriage, and security (Monsutti, 2008). Migration is defined as a part of Afghanistan's social and cultural life and even as a founding element. Migration is considered an effective survival strategy for many individuals of Afghan origin (Monsutti, 2008).

When evaluated worldwide, it is stated that there are approximately 6.1 million refugees of Afghan origin (UNHCR, 2024a). Afghan refugees constitute the fourth-largest refugee population in the world after the Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela, and Ukraine (UNHCR, 2024a). Regarding migration to Europe, Afghan immigrants are among the largest refugee groups (İçduygu & Karadağ, 2018; Kuschminder, 2018). The ongoing conflict environment, war, and violence in Afghanistan have caused millions of Afghan immigrants to seek asylum in other countries. When the literature is reviewed, Pakistan and Iran, which are neighbors of Afghanistan, appear to be the countries directly affected by the migratory movements of Afghans. This migration movement has also affected other countries worldwide. Türkiye has hosted thousands of Afghan immigrants since the early 1980s and helped them reach various European countries (İçduygu & Karadağ, 2018).

Afghanistan has always had close relations with Türkiye despite not having a border with Türkiye. Similarities in many areas, especially in history, culture, ethnicity, and religion, have

made the two countries neighbors in the geography of heart, if not in physical geography. Afghanistan, which has a history of unfortunate wars, invasions, and chaos, is an important source country of immigration in the world, and Türkiye has encountered Afghan migration in different periods of history and intensities. The historical course of Afghan migration to Türkiye is similar to that of Afghan migration history. For this reason, it is helpful to examine Afghan migration to Türkiye during three periods: before 1980, between 1980 and 2000, and from 2000 to the present.

#### **4.2. AFGHAN MIGRATION TO TÜRKİYE IN THE PRE-1980 PERIOD**

Since the migration policies established in the early years of the Republic in 1923 and later were on the axis of creating a unitary Turkish and Muslim nation-state from the multinational empire left by the Ottomans, the records created are mostly related to these policies. During this period, 1.3 million Muslims migrated to Türkiye, while over three million foreigners from other religions and nations left (Geyik Yıldırım, 2018). For this reason, although there were large migration movements in the early period of the Republic, no specific numbers or records could be found regarding Afghan migration.

Another important issue that should be mentioned regarding the Republic's first year was the Settlement Law enacted in 1923. The "*Ministry of Exchange, Construction, and Settlement*" was established with the Settlement Law. Although a significant part of the ministry's transactions consisted of the Turkish-Greek population exchange, Settlement Law No. 2510 is important in the history of the Republic of Türkiye as it includes comprehensive regulations regarding refugees, such as the participation of those who exchange in production and the allocation of agricultural lands with the amendments made until 1934 and as of June 14, 1934, it is the first general regulatory document in terms of asylum legislation in the history of the Republic of Türkiye (Ş. Uzun, 2024). While the Settlement Law foresees that those of Turkish origin but not citizens of the Republic of Türkiye can easily be accepted for citizenship, it has been made more difficult for those who do not have a Turkish ethnic origin to become citizens.

Overall, when the migration movements of Afghan nationals to Türkiye in the period pre-1980 were examined, it was seen that these movements were carried out through bilateral agreements between Türkiye and Afghanistan. When the contents of the movements before the 1980s are examined, it can be stated that a small number of students or civil servants of Afghan origin temporarily migrated to Türkiye in scattered ways. Although this movement can be

described as stable, it is a small movement that has led to the formation of an Afghan immigrant community in Türkiye.

#### **4.3. AFGHAN MIGRATION TO TÜRKIYE IN THE PERIOD BETWEEN 1980-2000**

The military coup of September 12, 1980, in Türkiye precipitated significant alterations in the nation's migration policy, which subsequently had profound implications across multiple domains, particularly in the political and economic spheres. The liberal policies implemented by the civilian administration that came to power after the coup can be called the non-intervention period, in contrast to the intervention policies implemented between 1960 and 1980. The policy of sending workers abroad, which had been encouraged by the state since the 1960s to reduce unemployment and provide foreign exchange inflow, was abandoned. Later, there was a serious migration of workers to Türkiye from countries separated from the Soviet Union, whose situation worsened and collapsed in 1991 (Çalı, 2012).

As mentioned in detail in the previous sections, with the beginning of Soviet occupation, Afghans were forced to leave their country in masses, resulting in millions of Afghans migrating to neighboring countries. Pakistan was one of the countries most affected by the great migration movement of the Soviet Union, which invaded Afghanistan in 1979. During the occupation, the Kyrgyz living in Afghanistan first settled in the regions of Pamir Mountain in northern Afghanistan. However, in the later years of their occupation, they could not find shelter there and were forced to migrate to Pakistan. Following this situation, Kyrgyz-origin Afghan immigrants applied to the Turkish Embassy in Pakistan and requested to migrate to Türkiye (Nurullah, 2017).

In 1982, the then-president of the Republic of Türkiye, Kenan Evren, visited Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan and led the aid movement for displaced Afghans of Turkmen, Hazara, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz ethnicity, whom he described as having "Turkish origin and culture" and living in Afghanistan. Subsequently, he decided that 4,165 Afghan immigrants of Turkish origin would be accepted as refugees. They then planned to settle in various places in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia (Nurullah, 2017). The aid movement was based on the 1934 Settlement Law. According to the 1951 Geneva Convention, to which Türkiye was also a signatory, refugee status was not granted to immigrants from outside Europe. Based on this, the Turkish government implemented a legal domestic arrangement and formulated transportation and settlement plans for immigrants, in accordance with the 1933 Settlement Law. This legislation regulated the settlement of Afghan immigrants in Türkiye under the classification of "Turkish

origin and cultural" status within the scope of the relevant law. This study aimed to address the geographical limitations imposed by the Geneva Convention.

As the refugees brought to Türkiye were of different ethnic origins, their distribution to various provinces was ensured according to their ethnic origins. A group of 1,981 Uzbeks settled in Hatay, Şanlıurfa, and Gaziantep, a group of 1,137 Kyrgyz settled in Van, a group of 925 Turkmen settled in Tokat, and another group of 308 Kazakhs settled in the designated places in Kayseri (Erman, 2017).

The issue of coming to Türkiye caused great excitement and joy among Afghan refugees. After coming to Türkiye, which they saw as close to them in many ways, especially in terms of ethnic and cultural closeness, they did not feel alienated from the values of Turkish people in the regions where they settled, and they quickly adapted to social life. However, in later periods, they moved to big cities by breaking away from the regions where they were settled, thinking they could develop themselves more economically in big cities, such as Istanbul and Izmir (Çağrı, 2006). Even though Afghan refugees were obliged to reside for seven years in the place they were resettled and many facilities such as land and plots were provided to them, their tendency towards big cities was because they thought they could develop themselves more in the fields they knew before and were engaged in before coming to Türkiye, such as leatherworking, carpet making, and clothing; after a while, they left their lands and headed towards big cities. Although Afghan immigrants' interest in and orientation toward Türkiye has always maintained their existence, it can be said that their entry into Türkiye through irregular means has increased, especially since 1995.

The observed numerical values were not deemed to be significantly high when considering the influx of Afghan immigrants to Türkiye from the 1980s to the 1990s. However, the migration from Afghanistan to Türkiye during this period was continuous. The movement of Afghan immigrants, which is not limited to Türkiye but extends beyond it, especially to Europe, is a striking feature of this period. This mobility, which can be expressed as two-stage migratory mobility, has been proven directly or indirectly in many studies. In the two-stage migration system, some Afghan refugees and irregular immigrants coming to Türkiye joined other Afghan communities in the country and settled there. However, some intended to move to a third country. Türkiye is positioned as a stepping stone or transit to reach the final goal of Afghan refugees and irregular immigrants, who aim to move to a third country, which is primarily a European country. Later, from the 1990s to the 2000s, it was observed that the migration flow between Afghanistan and Türkiye, which was the first stage of the two-stage migration system,

and the migration flow from Afghanistan to Türkiye and from there to Europe, which was the second stage, strengthened (İçduygu & Karadağ, 2018).

**Table 1: Irregular Afghan Immigrants Captured Between 1995 and 2008**

Years	Numbers
1995	24
1996	68
1997	81
1998	921
1999	2,476
2000	8,746
2001	9,701
2002	4,246
2003	2,178
2004	3,442
2005	2,363
2006	3,665
2007	6,614
2008	10,839
Total	55,364

*Source: İçduygu et al., 2014*

#### **4.4. AFGHAN MIGRATION TO TÜRKİYE IN THE PERIOD 2000 AND AFTER**

With the start of Türkiye's EU accession negotiations in 2005, migration policies in Türkiye became stricter, and border crossing became more restrictive. However, despite restrictive policies at border crossings, there has been a significant increase in the size of Afghan migration to Türkiye since the early 2010s (Karakaya & Karakaya, 2021). After 2011, Syrian migration became the main factor in Türkiye's migration policy and relaxed border policy. Türkiye's reduction in border security with Greece and the opening of border gates to migrants are some of the most compelling reasons for this. In this manner, with the increase in the inflow of Syrian immigrants in Türkiye, the migration movement of Afghan immigrants also became easier because of this relaxed border policy. Indeed, it was observed that the immigrants who came to Türkiye and were included in the research group of this thesis came mostly after 2010. By 2015, Türkiye had been positioned as a transit country for EU member states. In the summer of 2015, 25% of the approximately one million people aiming to cross Europe through Türkiye were Afghan immigrants (İçduygu & Karadağ, 2018).

According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) report, 2018 was the year with the highest number of civilian deaths in Afghanistan since 2001 (BBC, 2024). Consequently, there was a significant increase in Afghans reaching Türkiye during this period. While 45,259 irregular Afghans were apprehended in Türkiye in 2017, this number reached 100,841 in 2018 (PMM, 2024c). The number of irregular Afghan immigrants apprehended in 2019 was twice that of the previous year, reaching 201,437, the highest level in history (PMM, 2024c). As the exact number of irregular immigrants coming from Afghanistan to Türkiye is unknown, the immigrants apprehended are considered the number of irregular immigrants coming to Türkiye.

Following the significant increase in Afghans entering the country in September 2018, the UNHCR transferred the registration and status determination processes to PMM, making it the sole authorized institution. Provincial Directorates of Migration Management closed the registration of immigrants and directed irregular immigrants entering the country to another provincial directorate, ensuring that they became unregistered. While immigrants coming as family members have priority in registration, Afghan men who enter the country as individuals are exposed to abuse without registration. While the number of unregistered individuals continues to increase daily, the number of immigrants deported is also increasing proportionally (Tümtaş, 2022).

In 2021, the United States decided to withdraw from Afghanistan, resulting in the transfer of control from government forces to the Taliban without military engagement. Following the Taliban's ascension to power through the establishment of a government that misinterpreted Islamic principles, numerous instances of oppression and injustice emerged. Consequently, individuals concerned about the implementation of double standards continued to emigrate (BBC, 2024). This was reflected in the number of irregular Afghan immigrants apprehended in Türkiye in 2021 and 2022, which increased again. In 2021, Türkiye experienced a significant increase in racially motivated violence against immigrants, which marked a notable shift in the country's social dynamics. Indeed, speculative content such as Afghans entering Türkiye in masses and lowering the Turkish flag in 2021 has incited resentment and hatred toward immigrants in Turkish society (Aykurt & Kılınç, 2023). As of 2021, prejudiced perceptions and negative, even hostile, attitudes toward immigrants have become increasingly dominant in Turkish society (D. Danış et al., 2023).

Afghan migration to Türkiye increased significantly after the 2000s, and a substantial proportion of Afghans resided in the country under various statuses and conditions. To facilitate

a more comprehensive understanding of Afghan migration to Türkiye, the following section examines Afghan immigrants living in Türkiye by categorizing them into three groups: irregular migration, regular migration, and international protection.

#### **4.4.1. AFGHANS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN TÜRKİYE**

People are forced to leave their homes and countries and go to safer places for various reasons, such as natural disasters, wars, and internal conflicts. Although migration movements have occurred since ancient times, it has been very recent for states to consider this issue. Ongoing political instability in many countries, ethnic conflicts, fluctuations in international policies, and even environmental factors such as climate change, which have recently become more common, further complicate irregular migratory movements (Hazan, 2021). In general, irregular migration increased in the late 1980s, and the need to manage it has been one of the most important agenda items in the world since then (Şirin Öner, 2021).

Irregular migration, defined as crossing a country's borders illegally or being in that country irregularly, is the most common type of migration encountered by Türkiye in recent years. Since the establishment of the Directorate of Migration Management, this institution has begun keeping irregular migration statistics for Türkiye and regularly sharing them on its official website.

In terms of irregular migration, Türkiye is not only a source country but also a transit and destination country (Atasü Topçuoğlu, 2021). In Türkiye, which is a transit country for some immigrants, the number of irregular immigrants captured trying to cross Europe via land and sea has been increasing on a daily basis since 2013. Although irregular migration is limited due to the pandemic, the number of irregular immigrants caught in 2019 and 2020 exceeded 300 thousand.

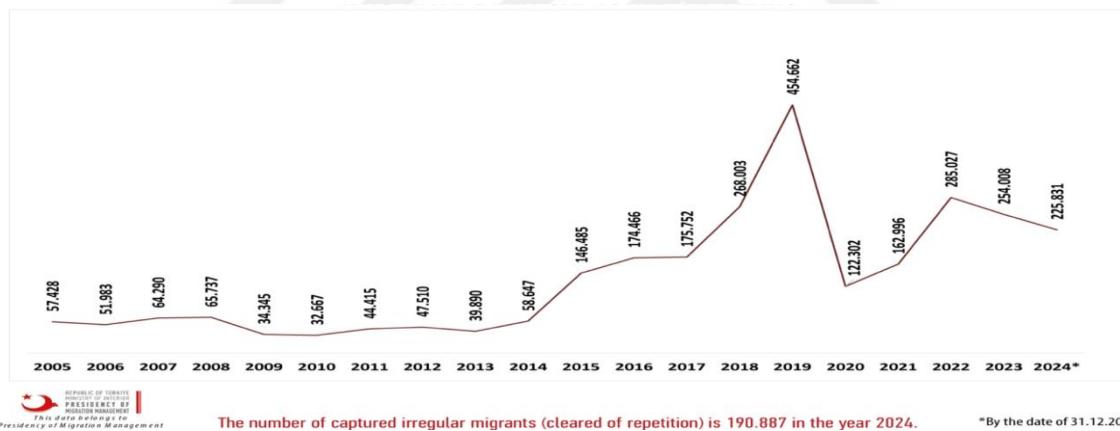
Türkiye is largely exposed to irregular migration from Afghanistan (Karakaya & Karakaya, 2021). Since official procedures and visa conditions are very difficult for Afghan immigrants due to financial inadequacy, they usually migrate irregularly to Türkiye. Afghan immigrants mostly enter Türkiye irregularly through Pakistan and Iran (Buz et al., 2021). In addition to immigrants who set off directly from Afghanistan, Afghans living in Iran and Pakistan in recent years have also migrated to Türkiye due to unemployment, labor exploitation, financial difficulties, and other social difficulties experienced in Iran and Pakistan (Doğan, 2019). Therefore, Afghan immigrants who face financial difficulties mostly come to Türkiye

irregularly through migrant smugglers. For this reason, the number of irregular Afghan immigrants captured in Türkiye was relatively high.

Figure 3 shows the number of irregular immigrants captured in Türkiye from 2005 to 2024. The flow of irregular migration to the country has gradually increased since 2014, peaking at 454,662 apprehensions in 2019. Despite the pandemic beginning in 2020, the number of irregular immigrants was relatively high.

In recent years, the predominant proportion of undocumented immigrants apprehended in Türkiye has been comprised of Afghan nationals. There has been a significant increase in irregular migration from Afghanistan, especially between 2018 and 2024 (PMM, 2024c). The number of Afghan immigrants caught in 2019 during the pre-pandemic period was 201,437. As can be seen, the number of Afghan immigrants caught within the scope of irregular migration is increasing daily, and approximately half of the irregular immigrants captured are Afghan nationals.

**Figure 3: Number of Irregular Immigrants Captured in Türkiye by Years**

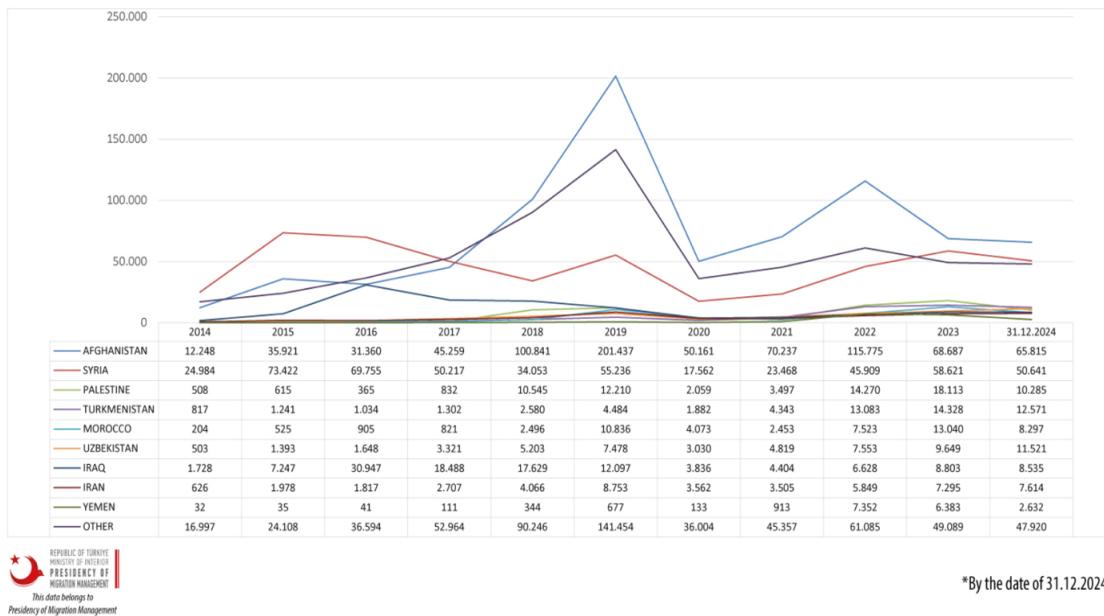


Source: PMM, 2024b

Afghan immigrants who came to Türkiye irregularly and were captured can be examined in three groups: irregular immigrants who see Türkiye as a transit country, irregular immigrants who came to Türkiye for economic reasons and did not apply for international protection, and irregular immigrants whose international protection application was rejected and who are expected to leave Türkiye (İçduygu & Aksel, 2012). Since Afghans are mostly irregular immigrants in Türkiye, official data can only be accessed through the statistics of irregular immigrants captured, so it is not known exactly how many irregular immigrants exist (Adığüzel, 2020). The irregular immigrant numbers shared by the PMM do not show the number of Afghan

immigrants staying in Türkiye irregularly but only the number of Afghan immigrants caught. As can be seen, the number of irregular Afghan immigrants in Türkiye has continued to increase every year. Political instability in the country and the economic situation also indicate that the number of Afghan immigrants will not decrease in the coming years.

**Figure 4: Distribution of Irregular Migrants by Citizenship by Year**



Source: PMM, 2024b

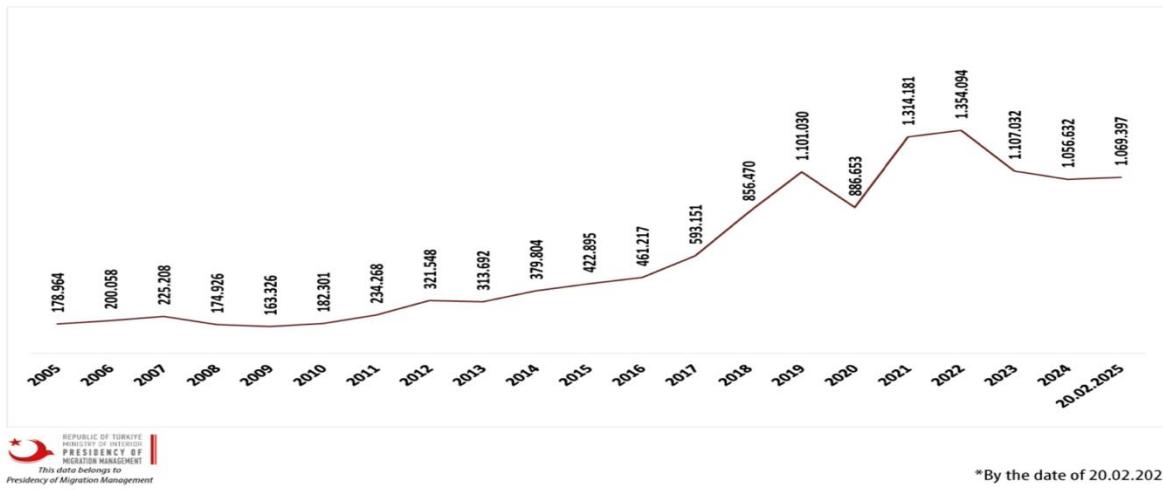
#### 4.4.2. AFGHANS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF REGULAR MIGRATION IN TÜRKİYE

There has been a significant increase in the number of foreigners coming to Türkiye within the scope of regular migration, which is considered the process of immigration using legal means, in recent years. Although the majority of Afghan immigrants migrate to Türkiye irregularly, many Afghan immigrants come and stay in Türkiye with visas within the scope of regular migration. For Afghan citizens to legally come to Türkiye, they must obtain a visa from a Turkish representative in Afghanistan or from a Turkish representative of the country they reside legally. Afghan immigrants who come to Türkiye by obtaining one of the various visa types must obtain one of the residence types or a work permit specified in the LFIP to continue to stay legally in Türkiye.

While more than one million foreign nationals held residence permits in Türkiye as of February 2025, Afghan immigrants are not among the predominant nationalities represented in residence permit statistics due to their predominantly irregular status. Nevertheless, Afghan immigrants in Türkiye are not solely categorized under international protection or as irregular

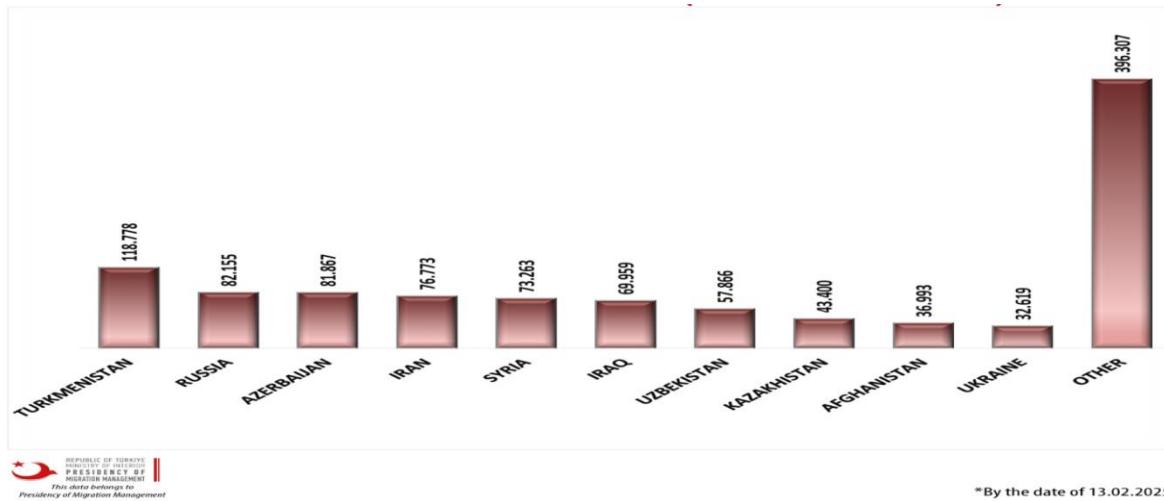
immigrants. Legally, they also enter Türkiye from Afghanistan and reside in the country with valid residence permits. As illustrated in Figure 6, according to data published by the PMM, 36,993 Afghan nationals were granted residence permits in Türkiye as of February 2025. This figure encompasses short-term, student, long-term, family, work, and humanitarian residence permits<sup>9</sup>.

**Figure 5: Annual Total Numbers of Foreigners with Turkish Residence Permits**



Source: PMM, 2024c

**Figure 6: Foreigners who have been in Türkiye with a Residence Permit in 2025**



Source: PMM, 2024c

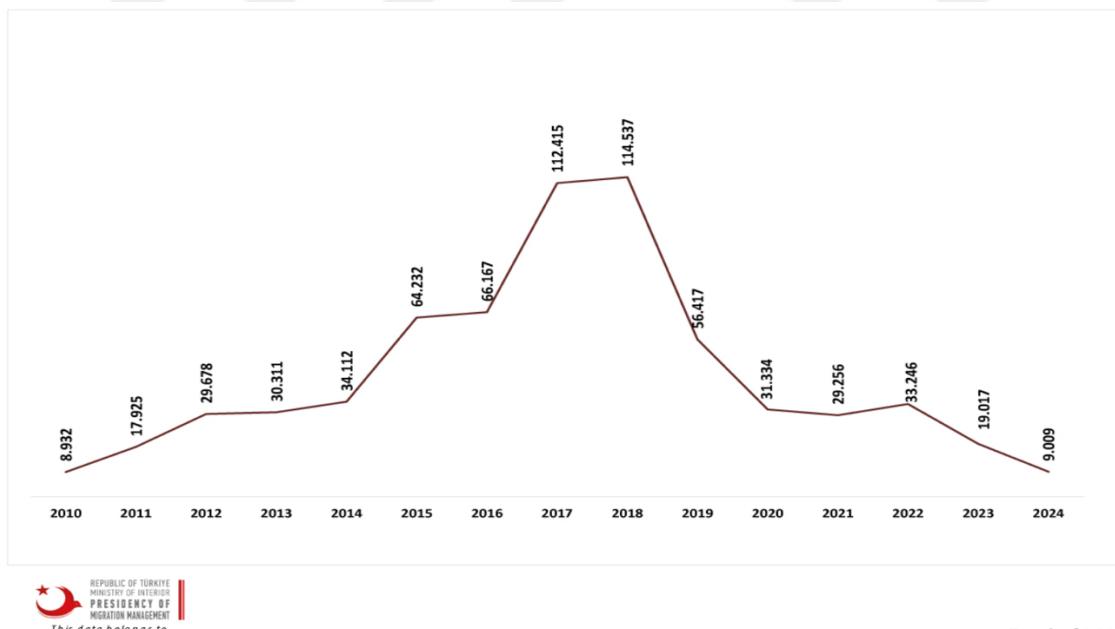
<sup>9</sup> Humanitarian Residence Permit is a special type of residence granted by the Ministry of Interior after evaluations are made in emergency or extraordinary situations where individuals cannot leave Türkiye for various reasons. It is important to note that it should not be mistaken for international protection as they are different from each other.

#### 4.4.3. AFGHANS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN TÜRKİYE

Approximately 200,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers are under international protection from various countries in Türkiye, excluding Syrians who are temporarily protected. These people, who have a wide range of nationalities, stay in satellite cities<sup>10</sup>, as determined by the Ministry of Interior in Türkiye. The number of foreigners applying for international protection has increased annually since 2013, peaking at 114,537 in 2018.

The PMM does not disclose detailed statistics on international protection applicants in Türkiye. However, the UNHCR reports that there are 194,637 asylum seekers under international protection in Türkiye (UNHCR, 2024b). Most foreigners who apply for asylum in Türkiye are Afghan and Iraqi nationals. According to UNHCR data, while 89,397 Iraqi nationals have applied for international protection in Türkiye, this number is 91,373 when mentioning Afghan nationals who have applied for international protection in Türkiye (UNHCR, 2024b). Based on these numbers and the data provided by the UNHCR, the majority of foreigners who applied for international protection were Afghans.

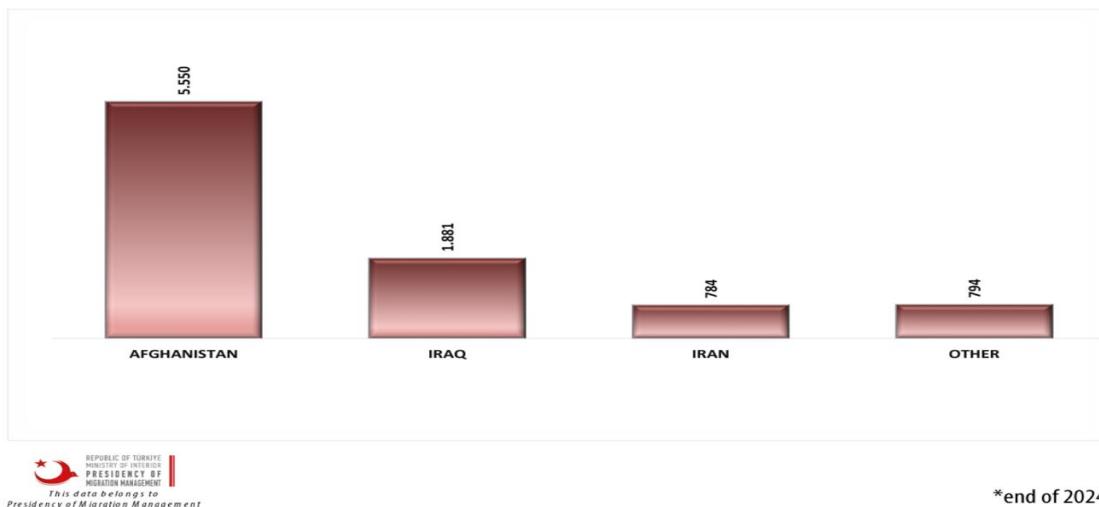
**Figure 7: International Protection Application by Years**



Source: PMM, 2024a

<sup>10</sup> Satellite Cities are settlements or cities where foreigners who apply for asylum in Türkiye must reside until their asylum applications are finalized (Güler, 2020).

*Figure 8: First Three Nationalities Application for International Protection*



*Source: PMM, 2024a*

According to data provided by the PMM, over 5,000 Afghan nationals sought international protection in Türkiye in 2024. Following Afghan nationals, Iraqi and Iranian immigrants submitted the highest number of international protection applications. Overall, according to data published by the PMM and UNHCR, Afghans are the second-most-crowded immigrant group in Türkiye after Syrian nationals.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DYNAMICS OF TURKISH MIGRATION POLICIES AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION LEGISLATION IN TÜRKİYE**

As a result of human rights violations resulting from armed conflicts or authoritarian regimes, natural disasters, and climatic conditions, individuals struggling to survive have initiated both individual and large-scale population movements. The inability or unwillingness of nations to safeguard individuals affected by population displacement has necessitated the development of international protection regulations and institutions. States are obligated to protect and secure their citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms both at the national and international levels. In cases where these rights and freedoms are not or cannot be protected by the country of origin, the countries in which the person seeks asylum are obliged to provide protection and secure the rights of the person seeking asylum (Aybay, 2010).

In this context, considering the migratory movements from the eastern regions as the starting point or source countries and the western region as the ending point or destination countries, Türkiye is a bridge for such movements because of its geographical location that connects the Eastern and Western worlds (Öksüz, 2021). Situated at a strategic intersection, Türkiye has experienced a substantial influx of foreign nationals due to events transpiring in neighboring nations. In terms of international law, it is not possible to send people who are fleeing from war and persecution back to countries where they are in danger or threat, or to deport them. States must ensure that these people have the same rights as other foreigners living in their countries without discrimination (Ekşî, 2018). These obligations arise from humanitarian law, international agreements to which they are party, and court decisions, such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Consequently, in terms of forced migratory movements in Türkiye, it is necessary to regulate people who come from different regions at different times.

In the case of policies on the issue of migration in Türkiye, the country in the early years of the Republic implemented legal measures to encourage the migration of Turkish and Muslim populations to the country, aligning with its policy of Turkification and Islamization of the population within its borders. Türkiye maintained this policy until the 1960s, after which it underwent a shift influenced by global development, subsequently permitting the immigration of non-Turkish populations from conflict-affected regions. During the 1990s, Türkiye responded to geopolitical events in neighboring countries, including Bulgaria, Iraq, Iran, and

the Balkan nations of Kosovo and Bosnia. Consequently, Türkiye implemented policies to accommodate foreign nationals forced to migrate from these regions.

In the 2000s, Türkiye enacted legislative measures to fulfill the criteria for European Union membership. Following the Arab Spring<sup>11</sup> in 2011, Türkiye adopted an open-door policy for individuals displaced by the Syrian civil war. In this context, a significant development in Türkiye's migration management occurred with the establishment of the DGMM through the LFIP, which aimed to specialize in migration-related matters. To align with Türkiye's evolving migration policies, the DGMM was subsequently transformed to PMM in 2021 with an elevated status. Overall, Türkiye's migration policy from the foundation of the Republic in 1923 to the present can be analyzed in four distinct periods: (i) 1923-1960, (ii) 1960-1990, (iii) 1990-2000, and (iv) post-2000.

**(i) The Period Between 1923-1960:** In the Republic's early years, Türkiye took steps to facilitate the migration of those of Turkish origin and culture to Turkify and Islamize the population living on its borders. In this context, Türkiye implemented a settlement policy within the scope of the Exchange Agreement signed with Greece in 1923 and adopted a policy aimed at settling Free Immigrants<sup>12</sup> who were not included in the scope of this agreement (Kaldik, 2022). Under the Agreement and Protocol on the Turkish and Rum Population Exchange on January 30, 1923, compulsory exchange was conducted between Orthodox subjects living in Anatolia outside Istanbul and Muslim subjects outside Western Thrace in Greece. More than one million Greeks went to Greece in this context, while approximately 500,000 Turks came to Türkiye (Ari, 1992). The non-Muslim population in Türkiye, 19% in 1914, decreased to 3% in 1927 and then to 1% after the population exchange. Furthermore, the Turkish Nationality Law, adopted in 1930, and the Settlement Law, adopted in 1934, accelerated the Turkification and Islamization of the population living in Türkiye (Tatlıcioğlu, 2022). The Settlement Law established the foundation of Türkiye's migration policies. This legislation delineates the terms "immigrant" and "refugee." According to Article 3 of the law, individuals of Turkish descent who are committed to Turkish culture are classified as immigrants (muhacir). In contrast,

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<sup>11</sup> Arab Spring is referred to as a wave of anti-government protests and uprisings that began in Tunisia in late 2010 and quickly spread across the Middle East and North Africa.

<sup>12</sup> According to the Turkish Settlement Law, adopted in 1934, free immigrants are those of Turkish origin who are committed to Turkish culture, who came to Türkiye alone or in groups to settle, and who are accepted into the country on the condition that they do not request settlement aids from the State.

Article 4 of the law stipulates that those not committed to Turkish culture are not considered immigrants (Ekşi, 2018).

**(ii) The Period Between 1960-1990:** Until the 1960s, Türkiye's migration policy was influenced by ethnicity and religion. Between 1923 and 1960, the non-Muslim population migrated from Türkiye, and Turks and/or Muslims migrated to Türkiye. After 1960, Türkiye's migration policy was also affected by international economic and political developments and continued to be effective until the 1990s. For instance, with the Turkish-German Labor Agreement signed between Türkiye and Germany on October 30, 1961, thousands of Turkish citizens migrated to Germany. In the first few years of this agreement, the number of Turkish workers in Germany initially reached 11,758, while in 1971, the number of Turkish workers increased tremendously to 424,400. The labor migration of Turkish workers was not limited to Germany but also reached the Netherlands, France, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, and Australia (S. Özer & Güneş Güllal, 2023). Türkiye initiated the guest worker application, which it signed with some European countries in 1961, and it aimed at guest workers who went to European countries to contribute to the economy through remittances. After European countries reduced their recruitment of workers in 1970, guest worker migration stopped, and migration continued through the emigration of families of guest workers to European countries (Buz, 2021). A new wave of migration to Europe began in 1973 with the granting of family reunification permits to migrant workers. The German government, in response to concerns regarding the escalation of migration, implemented policies to encourage repatriation to Türkiye, resulting in the emigration of 250,000 individuals (Tunca, 2019).

**(iii) The Period Between 1990-2000:** In 1989, due to the pressure exerted by the Bulgarian government, Turkish residents in Bulgaria were compelled to emigrate, and Türkiye accepted 227,000 individuals who arrived en masse within approximately three months as free immigrants, along with an additional 74,000 people until 1995. Consequently, the total number of individuals migrating from Bulgaria between 1989 and 1995 reached 371,000. However, following the fall of the government in 1990, 125,000 immigrants returned to Bulgaria (Adığüzel, 2024).

Meanwhile, because of the Iran-Iraq War<sup>13</sup>, the Halabja Massacre<sup>14</sup>, and the Gulf Crisis between 1988 and 1991, people living in Iraq migrated to Türkiye in masses. Following a policy of welcoming Iraqi migration beyond its borders, Türkiye established a safe zone for immigrants in Northern Iraq with the support of the international community. Those who could enter Turkish borders were placed in refugee camps established in cities close to the border. During this period, migration from Iraq was not permanent, and they returned to their countries after the conflicts in their countries ended. Those who did not return to their countries migrated to third countries (Ş. Uzun, 2024). Due to the Gulf Crisis, Türkiye's migration from Iraq and its settlement-based migration policy has begun to be discussed. Turkmen, Arabs, and Kurds were among those migrating from Iraq. These migrations from Iraq to asylum have made it necessary for Türkiye to change its migration regime. Legal regulations were implemented after observing that Türkiye's geographical reservation of the 1951 Geneva Convention was inadequate against migration for asylum (Ş. Uzun, 2024). In this context, the Regulation on the Procedures and Principles related to Possible Population Movements and Aliens Arriving in Turkey, either as Individuals or in Groups Wishing to Seek Asylum either from Turkey or Requesting Residence Permission to Seek Asylum From Another Country, which entered into force in 1994, has determined the practices for foreigners coming to Türkiye for asylum or wanting to go to the country they want to seek asylum in through Türkiye or for those who will come to the borders of Türkiye in masses. With this regulation, people coming to Türkiye from a state outside of European geography were granted the right to temporary shelter and residence in Türkiye until they went to the state in which they wanted to seek asylum, and it was envisaged that people who were granted refugee status would settle in different countries (Aybay, 2010).

**(iv) The Period After the 2000s:** In the 2000s, Türkiye's accession to the EU affected Türkiye's migration policy and management. In 2001, Türkiye signed an Accession Partnership Document with the EU Commission. This document stated the following regarding migration: "Adopting and implementing EU legislation and practices on

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<sup>13</sup> The war between Iran and Iraq, based on the struggle for territorial and political domination, that took place between 1980 and 1988.

<sup>14</sup> The genocide perpetrated through the use of chemical weapons by Saddam Hussein's regime in Halabja, Iraqi Kurdistan, in 1988.

migration (admission, readmission, deportation) to prevent irregular migration," "Starting to strengthen border management and preparing for the full implementation of the Schengen Agreement," and "Removing the geographical reservation introduced by the 1951 Geneva Convention in the field of asylum and developing residence and social support units for refugees" (Directorate for EU Affairs, 2001). With the start of the EU membership process in October 2005, Türkiye tried to adapt to the EU *acquis*, and migration policies gained an important place in the harmonization process. Türkiye amended the 1994 regulation in 2006 because of the EU membership process. However, this amendment continued the geographical reservation it had brought to the 1951 Geneva Convention and stated that the migration of foreigners to Türkiye would not be encouraged during EU accession and that it would be lifted if EU member states provided the necessary support in terms of burden sharing. Settlement Law No. 2510, which entered into force in 1934, was renewed in 2006, and Settlement Law No. 5543 entered into force. In this law, immigrants provided with settlement assistance are defined as settled immigrants, whereas those not provided with settlement assistance are defined as free immigrants. Most importantly, one of the migration policies that Türkiye has implemented since the 2000s is readmission agreements. Readmission agreements ensure that irregular migrants are sent back to their home countries through an agreement between the parties that signed the agreement. In this context, Türkiye signed readmission agreements with the EU, Syria, Greece, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Ukraine, Pakistan, Russia, Nigeria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Yemen, Moldova, Belarus, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Norway (PMM, 2024e). Readmission agreements are an important tool for the safe return of irregular immigrants to their countries and an incentive practice for state parties to protect their borders in combating irregular migration.

Türkiye possesses a 7,816-kilometer sea border and a 2,949-kilometer land border due to its geographical position as a peninsula encompassed by the sea on three sides. Within the framework of the "Border Physical Security Systems" initiative implemented in 2015, physical security measures at borders have been enhanced. A barrier was constructed along 830 km of the 911-kilometer Syrian border, accompanied by the installation of lighting systems and the establishment of patrol routes. In addition, border posts were reinforced, and technological equipment that monitors the opposite side of the border began to be used (F. Ç. Aras, 2023). Border security systems consist of physical, electronic, and additional elements. The physical

elements include modular concrete walls, patrol roads, watchtowers, and reinforced cage systems. Electronic elements include camera systems, unmanned aerial vehicles, and radar systems (F. Ç. Aras, 2023). Modular concrete walls and patrol roads were constructed on the 81.3-kilometer section of the 84-kilometer Ağrı-Iran border. The sections where the walls could not be constructed due to topographical constraints were secured using wire mesh enclosures and monitoring devices. In addition, electro-optic, Lego, ballistic, and life towers were built (TRT News, 2023). The construction of modular walls on 127 km of the 180-kilometer section of the Van-Iran border and a security road on the 160-kilometer section were completed. In addition, 71% of the planned electro-optic towers have been completed, and thermal cameras, radar systems, lighting systems, and armored vehicles are being used for patrols (Anadolu Agency, 2023). On the Iranian border, the construction and installation of walls, patrol roads, lighting, cameras, and thermal sensors were completed on the 191-kilometer section of the border where Ağrı, Hakkari, İğdır, and Van provinces are located. In addition, wall and patrol road construction works continue on the Hakkari and Van borders. With the completion of 211 watchtowers, 130 communication towers, and an electro-optic tower system on the eastern and western borders, the borders will be monitored uninterruptedly (Anadolu Agency, 2023).

In addition to measures against irregular migration at border points, initiatives were also taken to detect irregular immigrants inside the cities by installing Mobile Migration Vehicles in crowded parts of the cities. These Mobile Migration Vehicles have facilitated and accelerated the detection of irregular immigrants. The security forces inside cities check the identities of foreigners when deemed necessary. Those who cannot present their IDs are taken to the mobile migration vehicle. The foreigners are fingerprinted in the vehicle, and the necessary checks are made. If the foreigner is an irregular immigrant, he/she is sent directly to the repatriation center for deportation procedures to be carried out (PMM, 2024a). As seen from the ever-changing historical migration policies of Türkiye, it can be said that Türkiye approached the issue of migration and immigrants differently in response to the events of the time. It is also clearly seen that Türkiye, after the 2000s, adopted a strict policy regarding its combat against irregular migration, especially in the second decade of the 2000s.

In light of Türkiye's dynamic migration policies and its obligations in the field of protecting persons in need of protection arising from humanitarian law, international agreements to which the country is a party and organizations to which the country is a member, the following section in this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the provisions regarding international protection in Turkish legislation. The discussion encompasses the constitutional

framework of international protection, relevant legal regulations, and various types of protection. Initially, the constitutional foundations of international protection in Türkiye will be examined under the title "Constitutional Framework of International Protection." Subsequently, within the scope of "Regulations Regarding International Protection," the legal framework of international protection in Türkiye will be evaluated. The section titled "Typologies of International Protection" elucidates the different protection statuses and their legal bases. Furthermore, the discussion addresses the criteria for exclusion from protection and the circumstances under which the protection status may be withdrawn or terminated. In this context, the fundamental elements of the international protection regime and the legal processes encountered in practice will be analyzed in detail.

## 5.1. CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

The right to asylum has not been regulated in any constitution adopted throughout the history of the Republic of Türkiye, and it is not regulated in the 1982 Constitution. Although the UDHR was one of the sources taken as a basis during the preparation of the 1982 Constitution, the fact that the opportunity to asylum included in the Declaration was not regulated avoids regulating the right to asylum as a subjective public right (Özcan, 2017). The reason for this is Türkiye's tendency to receive uncontrolled migration due to its location (Ekşi, 2018).

Article 16 mentions the most important provision of the 1982 Constitution concerning persons under international protection. In this article, the situation of foreigners regarding fundamental rights and freedom is regulated as follows: "*The fundamental rights and freedoms in respect to aliens may be restricted by law compatible with international law.*" This article stipulates that relevant laws can restrict the fundamental rights and freedom of foreigners. Persons within the scope of international protection are also included in the definition of foreigners mentioned in the law (I. Özkan, 2018). It is also clearly understood from the article that restrictions will only be imposed by law. This forms the basis of international protection and determines the limits regarding the rights and freedoms of individuals subject to protection (Turan, 2020).

Additionally, Article 90/5<sup>15</sup> of the 1982 Constitution is the constitutional provision that serves as the foundation for international protection. This research demonstrates that

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<sup>15</sup> As stipulated in the fifth paragraph of Article 90 of the 1982 Constitution, in the event of a conflict between international agreements and domestic laws concerning fundamental rights and freedoms, the international agreement shall be deemed to take precedence (Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, 1982. Art. 90/5).

international agreements concerning fundamental rights and freedoms should be considered in instances of conflict between international agreements and domestic laws. It has been established that the provisions of international agreements should take precedence over domestic laws on these matters.

Another document to be incorporated into Türkiye's legislation on international protection is the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol, to which Türkiye was a signatory. In accordance with the relevant constitutional provisions, the provisions in this Convention shall have the force of law and take precedence in the event of conflict with any law on this matter. It is imperative to note that Türkiye signed the initial version of the 1951 Geneva Convention with reservations and declarations. The relevant reservation states that no provision of the Convention can be interpreted as granting refugees more rights than Turkish nationals in Türkiye (Ekşi, 2018). Considering that the Convention also includes persons recognized as refugees under previous treaties in the definition of refugees, the declaration states that Türkiye was not a party to the Arrangement of May 12, 1926, relating to the Issue of Identity Certificates to Russian and Armenian Refugees and the Arrangement of June 30, 1928, relating to the Legal Status of Russian and Armenian Refugees. Consequently, the government of the Republic of Türkiye considered the Convention on July 28, 1951, independent of the aforementioned arrangements (Ekşi, 2018). Furthermore, in this declaration, it was noted that in cases where refugee status terminates, the individual voluntarily benefits from the protection of the country in which he/she is a citizen or voluntarily regains citizenship after losing it, and the individual's benefit from the protection and acquisition of citizenship is subject to the consent of the relevant state (Özkan, 2018).

Apart from this, Türkiye used the authority granted to the parties at the signing of the agreement to set geographical boundaries. Accordingly, it was indicated in the declaration under Article 1/B-1 that the issue referring to refugees would be understood as events occurring in Europe before January 1, 1951, or events occurring in Europe or elsewhere before January 1, 1951. The reasons for the introduction of a geographical limitation in the Convention are the risk of Türkiye becoming a buffer zone, the problems it has in ensuring border security due to the physical condition of its land border, authority disputes experienced at coastal borders, security problems originating from terrorism, limited financial resources, ongoing wars and conflicts in neighboring countries, problems created by mass immigration from these countries, the absence of readmission agreements with the countries of the region that send immigrants,

and the imbalances that have occurred in international burden-sharing issues related to refugees (Aybay, 2010; Ekşi, 2018).

Türkiye has also become a party to the 1967 Protocol, which expands the definition of the Convention in terms of time and subject, with the same reservations and declarations valid (Eryaman, 2020). For this reason, by accepting that the relevant expression in the article of the Convention defining refugees is to be understood as events occurring in Europe, the time limitation has been abolished in terms of Turkish law, while the geographical limitation has been maintained (Ekşi, 2018; Gemalmaz, 2012).

## **5.2. REGULATIONS REGARDING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION**

Although there have been legal regulations regarding international protection in Turkish law for a long time, it has been stated that they were not at a sufficient level until recently (Ekşi, 2018). The situation continued in the same way for a long time after the adaptation of the 1951 Geneva Convention, and finally, in 1994, the Asylum and Refugee Regulation was issued, and procedures regarding international protection gained a legal basis (BMMYK & İçişleri Bakanlığı, 2005). In this regulation, based on the geographical limitations imposed when becoming a party to the 1951 Geneva Convention, the status of refugees was foreseen for those coming from Europe with a justified fear of persecution. For those coming from outside Europe, the status of an asylum seeker, whose resettlement to a safe third country was targeted by the UNHCR (BMMYK & İçişleri Bakanlığı, 2005).

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an important part of the efforts towards Türkiye's accession to the EU was to harmonize Türkiye's legislation on foreigners, immigration, and asylum with the EU (Ekşi, 2018). In this context, the gap created by the scattered presence of asylum and foreigner-related issues in various Turkish laws and the lack of a specific law on the subject was filled by the Law of Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), which was enacted on 04/04/2013 (Dardağan Kibar, 2013). The law created a solid legal basis for the management of migration and asylum and created a legal framework in line with international standards regarding the rights of immigrants and refugees (Ekşi, 2018).

One of the fundamental principles of LFIP is the principle of non-refoulement. This principle is regulated in part 1, section 2, under article 4, titled "non-refoulement." This article states that persons within the scope of this law cannot be sent to a place where they will be subjected to torture, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment or where their life or freedom will be threatened because of their race, religion, nationality, membership to a certain social group, or

political opinion. Although the principle of non-refoulement is regulated only in terms of refugees in Article 33 of the 1951 Geneva Convention, which has also been incorporated into Turkish Law, the principle has become a rule of customary international law and does not cover those who do not meet the necessary conditions for refugee status. However, it was thought that this article of the Convention could create confusion in practice, and for this reason, the expression "*no one within the scope of this law shall be returned*" was used as the subject of non-refoulement in Article 4 of the LFIP (Ekşi, 2018).

Another principle of law concerning persons under international protection is the principle of reciprocity. Under the general principles concerning rights and obligations, Section 3, Article 88/1 of the LFIP, it is regulated that persons with international protection status shall not be subject to the reciprocity principle. It is crucial to note that persons who are still in the application phase for international protection will not benefit from this exemption (Ekşi, 2018). Another principle of the LFIP is that the rights and benefits provided to international protection applicants, those whose applications have been rejected, or those who were granted international protection status, as regulated by Article 88/2, should not be construed as providing more rights and benefits than those accorded to Turkish citizens. With this provision, the reservation made by Türkiye when accepting the 1951 Geneva Convention has found its place at a legal level in Turkish law.

Some important initiatives have occurred in the Turkish legal system with the LFIP. Under this law, the principle of non-refoulement, which could previously only be requested based on the provisions of the treaties to which it was a party, was legally regulated. A new unit called the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), affiliated with the Ministry of Interior Affairs, was established to carry out procedures in the field of asylum and migration (I. Özkan, 2018). The term conditional refugee was used for the status previously regulated as an asylum seeker for foreigners coming from outside Europe and seeking international protection (Özcan, 2017). Additionally, in addition to refugee and conditional refugee statuses, subsidiary protection and temporary protection statuses were regulated, and stateless persons were included within the scope of the law. An accelerated procedure has been envisaged for international protection applications. The effects of the deportation decision and principles regarding the surveillance of foreigners to be deported have been determined, and provisions regarding the supervision of repatriation centers have been included in this context.

### **5.3. TYPOLOGIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION**

Three different types of international protection are mentioned in the LFIP. These include refugee, conditional refugee, and subsidiary protection, which are regulated in the first section titled “*Types of International Protection, Exclusion from International Protection*” of part three titled “*International Protection*” under Articles 61, 62, and 63 of the LFIP.

#### **5.3.1. REFUGEE**

According to Article 61 of the LFIP, refugee status is granted to a foreigner who is outside the country of his/her citizenship due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted due to his/her race, religion, nationality, membership to a certain social group or political opinion due to events occurring in European countries and who cannot benefit from the protection of that country or does not want to benefit from the protection of that country due to such fear, or to a stateless person who is outside the country of his previous residence as a result of such events and cannot return there or does not want to return due to such fear, after the status determination procedures (Ekşî, 2018; I. Özkan, 2018). This regulation is the same as the refugee definition in the 1951 Geneva Convention, except for geographical limitations (Çiçekli, 2016). The content of the expression “European countries” is explained in Article 3/1-b of the LFIP as the member states of the Council of Europe as well as other countries to be determined by the Council of Ministers.

Refugee status is an individual and personal status; therefore, it is not a status given to those who apply for asylum in a mass influx. For migratory movements in mass groups, an additional status called temporary protection was arranged to regulate the status of these people in Türkiye. Although Syrian nationals who came to Türkiye due to ongoing conflicts in Syria are referred to as refugees by the public, they are not within the scope of refugee status. The reason for this is that they are outside the geographical reservation because of their location and have come into the masses.

#### **5.3.2. CONDITIONAL REFUGEE**

Before the LFIP, international protection status was regulated by the repealed Asylum and Refuge Regulation of 1994. Through this regulation, the status of people coming from outside European countries and meeting the criteria in the refugee definition mentioned in the 1951 Geneva Convention were defined as asylum seekers. In the LFIP, keeping the same content, this status is regulated in Article 62, with only the name being changed to conditional refugee

(Ekşi, 2018). Accordingly, conditional refugee status is granted to a foreigner who is outside the country of his/her nationality and cannot benefit from the protection of that country, or who does not want to benefit from the protection of that country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, or to a stateless person who is outside the country of his/her previous residence as a result of such events and cannot return there or does not want to return due to such fear.

The difference between refugee and conditional refugee status is explained in the last sentence of Article 62 of the LFIP, which states that conditional refugees will be allowed to stay in Türkiye temporarily until they are resettled to a third country. The process of resettlement into a safe third country was carried out through the UNHCR. Evaluations regarding the third country and the person in question regarding the person's resettlement to a safe third country will be made specifically for each application. Canada, Australia, Sweden, Finland, and Norway have recently accepted a small number of resettlements carried out by Türkiye as safe third countries. In addition, in 2007, the US implemented a resettlement program only for Iraqi refugees. Nevertheless, there is no certainty regarding resettlement in a safe third country, and the number of conditional refugees resettled in practice is low (Ekşi, 2018). In particular, in the recent period, the possibility of resettlement has gradually decreased with an increase in the number of applications (Soykan, 2012).

### **5.3.3. SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION**

Subsidiary protection status is the manifestation of the complementary protection regime in Turkish law, which was developed to protect people who do not meet the criteria for refugee or conditional refugee status but need international protection. The repealed Asylum and Refugee Regulation of 1994, which was in effect before the LFIP, did not include any regulations regarding people facing serious human rights violations if they were sent back to their country of origin. In this context, the legal status of these people, who could not be considered refugees or conditional refugees under Turkish law, remained uncertain. Therefore, the way they would be treated during their stay in the country is also questionable (Öztürk, 2015). Subsequently, the uncertainty regarding the stay and legal status of these people has been resolved by developing a new status, "subsidiary protection," in LFIP Article 63.

The provision regarding the subsidiary protection regulated in Article 63 of the LFIP stipulates that a foreigner or a stateless person who cannot be considered a refugee or

conditional refugee but who, if returned to the country of origin, (a) would be sentenced to death or would be subject to execution of the death penalty; (b) would be subject to torture, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment; (c) would face a serious threat to himself or herself due to indiscriminate acts of violence in international or national armed conflict situations, and therefore cannot benefit or is unwilling to benefit from the protection of the country of origin or country of former habitual residence will be granted subsidiary protection status after the status determination procedures.

What distinguishes subsidiary protection status from refugee or conditional refugee status is that the well-founded fear of persecution is not foreseen as a criterion in this protection status. Another aspect of the subsidiary protection status that distinguishes it from a refugee or conditional refugee is that the situation that determines a person's need for protection does not have to be based on specific reasons such as race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. In this respect, it can be said that subsidiary protection status offers more comprehensive protection (Öztürk, 2015).

#### **5.4. FOREIGNERS EXCLUDED FROM INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION**

According to the LFIP, a person who is subject to international protection shall be excluded from international protection if he/she is in certain circumstances. Article 64 of the LFIP explains these circumstances. Accordingly, the applicant should be excluded from international protection if:

- a) Receiving protection or assistance from organs or agencies of the UN other than the UNHCR.
- b) Recognized by the country of former habitual residence as having the same rights and freedoms as the citizens of that country.
- c) Those who are strongly believed to be guilty of the acts specified in Article 1/F of the 1951 Geneva Convention.

The second paragraph of the article states that those who receive protection or assistance from another UN organ or agency may benefit from the protection provided by this law in the event of the termination of this protection or assistance.

Paragraph 3 of the article states that if there is evidence to believe that the applicant committed inhuman acts for any reason outside Türkiye before the international protection claim, the applicant will be evaluated within the scope of paragraph 1/c of this article.

The fourth paragraph of the article states that those who instigate or otherwise participate in the commission of the crimes mentioned in subparagraph 1/c or paragraph three shall be excluded from the scope of international protection.

According to the provisions in the fifth paragraph of the same article, foreigners or stateless persons who pose serious signs of danger or threat to public order or public security, those who have committed a crime that would require imprisonment in Türkiye, and have solely left their country of origin or country of former residence to avoid the implementation of the penalty or punishment for that crime shall be excluded from subsidiary protection.

Finally, in the last paragraph of the article, it is clearly stated that the exclusion of the applicant from international protection shall not require the exclusion of their family members, provided that none of the reasons for exclusion apply to other family members.

## **5.5. WITHDRAWAL AND TERMINATION OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION**

Article 77 of the LFIP regulates the terms in which the international protection application can be withdrawn and the assessment should be terminated. Accordingly, for the international protection application to be withdrawn, the applicant must:

- a) Declare in writing that the applicant has withdrawn from his/her application.
- b) Failure to attend the interview three consecutive times without excuse.
- c) Escape from the place where he/she is held under administrative detention.
- d) Failure to comply with the reporting obligation three times a row without an excuse, failure to not show up in the designated place of residence, or leave the place of residence without permission.
- e) Objects to the collection of personal data.
- f) Failing to comply with their registration and interview obligations, the application will be deemed to have been withdrawn, and the evaluation will be stopped.

The situations in which international protection status granted within the scope of the LFIP can be terminated are regulated in Article 85. Accordingly, international protection status terminates in cases where the beneficiary if/when:

- a) Voluntarily avails himself/herself of the protection of the country in which he/she is a citizen.
- b) Voluntarily regains lost citizenship.
- c) Acquires new nationality and benefits from the protection of the country of her/his new nationality.
- d) Voluntarily returns to the country he/she has fled or stayed outside because of fear of persecution.
- e) He/she can benefit from the protection of the country of citizenship as the conditions that provided for the granting of the status have ceased to exist.
- f) Having been a stateless person would be able to return to the country of residence where he/she formerly lived because the conditions that led to the granting of status had been terminated.

The first four of the six situations regulated in the article are reasons based on the person's own will but are subject to more concrete criteria. However, the other two situations require the administration to make an assessment based on its discretionary power, which is stipulated in Article 85/2 of the LFIP to be made by considering whether the conditions that led to the granting of status have disappeared or have changed significantly and permanently. In addition, a paragraph regarding the termination of subsidiary protection status is included in the article. Accordingly, Article 85/3 states that status will terminate when the conditions that led to the granting of subsidiary protection status are eliminated or changed to the degree that no longer requires protection. Nevertheless, in the evaluation of the elimination and change of circumstances that led to the granting of subsidiary protection, whether they are of a significant and permanent nature should be taken into consideration.

The article also regulated the situations where the applicant could make an objection to the assessment of his/her application and ask for a re-evaluation of the status. As stipulated in Article 84/4 of the LFIP, if the aforementioned situations occur, the international protection status of the concerned foreigner will be re-evaluated. However, the foreigner will be informed

that his/her status is being evaluated, together with the reasons, and will be allowed to submit his/her objections in writing or verbally if he/she wishes to maintain his/her status. Finally, as regulated in Article 85/5, in the event of a termination decision, this decision shall be notified to the concerned foreigner, his/her legal representative, or lawyer, together with material reasons and legal grounds. If the concerned person does not have a lawyer, the person or her legal representative shall be informed of the consequences of the decision, procedures, and time limits for appeal.

Additionally, as regulated in Article 86 of the LFIP, international protection can be canceled if the applicant:

- a) Presented false documents, fraud, deceit, or withholding of facts that led to the granting of status.
- b) Those who were understood to be excluded within the framework of Article 64 after status was granted.

The second paragraph of the same article stipulates that the decision for the cancellation of the international protection status, together with the reasons and justifications, shall be notified to the concerned foreigner, his/her legal representative, or lawyer, and if he/she is not represented by a lawyer, the person or his/her legal representative shall be informed of the consequences of the decision, procedures, and time limits for appeal.

According to a September 2024 report prepared by the UNHCR, there are around 194,637<sup>16</sup> people subject to international protection in Türkiye, of whom only about 25000 are status holders (UNHCR, 2024). When we look at the nationality rates among those subject to international protection in Türkiye, we see that 91,373 were from Afghanistan, 89,397 were from Iraq, 9,280 were from Iran, and the remaining were from other nationalities, including Ukrainian citizens (UNHCR, 2024). The vast majority of submitted applications and individuals granted status remained outside the purview of refugee status due to geographical restrictions. Consequently, these individuals are accommodated in Türkiye with conditional refugee or subsidiary protection status.

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<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that these numbers do not reflect the number of Syrians in Türkiye as they are being assessed under the temporary protection framework rather than international protection.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES OF THE THESIS**

This chapter outlines the methodological approach employed throughout the research process and the data collection techniques utilized. It provides information regarding the research universe and sample population and discusses the participant selection process and the scope of the study. The data collection process is described, and the instruments employed in this process are illustrated. The data analysis methods are explained, and the evaluation procedure for the obtained data is emphasized. In addition, the limitations and challenges encountered during the research process are addressed, and their potential implications for the research findings are discussed. This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the methods used to ensure the reliability and validity of this study.

#### **6.1. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used qualitative research to evaluate and describe the challenges faced by Afghan asylum seekers in the Ankara Province. According to Neuman (2014), qualitative research includes a more detailed examination of social life events and aims to provide original comments. Qualitative research generally refers to a process that includes observations, interviews, and document analysis. This method aims to develop field-specific explanations or theories by examining the meanings and events of participants in a natural context (Baltacı, 2019).

Qualitative research uses an interpretive approach to examine the subject of the study from an interdisciplinary, holistic perspective. This research is based on facts and events evaluated regarding the meanings individuals attribute to the topics they discuss in their contexts. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is mostly interested in how individuals create and interpret the world around them and how these interpretations affect their actions, identities, and experiences in daily life (Fossey et al., 2002). Therefore, in qualitative research, there has been an effort to obtain in-depth information about the subject. In this context, the researcher assumes the role of an explorer by investigating reality with additional questions and emphasizing the subjective perspective of the interlocutor. Meanwhile, the researcher spends time in the field, directly interviews the people who participate in the research, gains experience, and uses the experiences gained in the field to analyze the findings obtained at the end of the research (Neuman, 2014).

This study employed a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach is a qualitative research method that reveals participants' emotions and thoughts through their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this context, the phenomenological approach aimed to demonstrate the existing situation by considering participants' experiences throughout their migratory journey and settling in a new country.

Furthermore, in this study, an interview technique, a qualitative research technique, was used to collect qualitative research data. Interviews can be defined as techniques for collecting information on a topic to be researched through mutual conversations (Fossey et al., 2002). The main purpose of the interviews was to understand the interviewees. It is to listen to the interviewee's words, story, perspective, and perceptions in their own words (Neuman, 2014). Although the interview technique is widely used in various research forms, it is indispensable to reach vulnerable groups of people on the move and for migration studies (Karahan et al., 2022).

A semi-structured interview form was prepared and used as the data collection instrument. Semi-structured interviews necessitate a more specific framework because of the focused nature of the research interests and questions. Nevertheless, the researcher ensures that the interviewee maintains focus on the topic while allowing sufficient latitude to expand the discussion and introduce relevant topics to the interview, thereby enhancing its explanatory nature and collective knowledge production (Fedyuk & Zentai, 2019).

Qualitative methods in migration research have attempted to reveal the migration experiences of individuals since the 1990s. To examine the actions of migrants and their relationship with wider social structures in a more participatory way, it is highly preferable to work in the field by spending longer periods observing new areas and including people in the research. Through interviews, it is possible to obtain information on issues such as migration stories of migrants, the processes in the countries they go to, the difficulties they experience there, the aid or support they receive, their networks with people who migrated before them, and the effects of migration on the individual's social world (Kümbetoğlu, 2021). Therefore, using the interview technique, the feelings, worldviews, thoughts, beliefs, and reactions of migrants are seen in more detail, and people are allowed to express themselves in their own words.

## 6.2. UNIVERSE AND SAMPLE POPULATION OF THE RESEARCH

The research universe consisted of Afghans under the international protection framework defined and regulated under the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) in Türkiye, and the sample group consisted of those living in Ankara. One of the primary reasons for selecting Ankara as the study location was the significant presence of Afghan asylum seekers in the province. Additionally, the paucity of research on Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara further justifies this choice. While numerous studies have examined Afghans residing in Ankara from a broader perspective under the concept of immigrants, this research focuses on a more specific subset of Afghan immigrants, namely those living in Ankara as international protection applicants or status holders.

The research sampling technique employed was a purposive sampling technique of the qualitative research method. In purposive sampling, the researcher deliberately selects a specific group of individuals or units for analysis based on their characteristics, knowledge, experience, or other criteria relevant to the research question. Essentially, researchers in purposive sampling intentionally select individuals and research locations to investigate or comprehend the central phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The purposive sampling method involves the researcher's deliberate effort to identify and include the most appropriate cases or subjects for the study (Erdoğan & Uyan Semerci, 2021). Purposive sampling is commonly employed in qualitative research. This sampling technique is particularly advantageous when the research focuses on a specific case and the researcher has a clear understanding of the intended outcomes. In contrast to other sampling methods, this approach necessitates the predetermination of the characteristics of the individuals to be interviewed prior to field engagement.(Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Furthermore, the selection of interview participants was conducted utilizing the maximum variation sampling method, a subset of purposive sampling techniques developed by Patton. Maximum variation sampling involves purposefully creating a relatively small sample and reflecting the maximum diversity in selecting people who can participate in the research problem within the sample (Patton, 2005). In this thesis, utilizing the maximum variation sampling method has significantly helped to enrich the research by gathering deep and valuable information from the sample population included in the research group. In this regard, the maximum variation sampling method has allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth information on different aspects of the migratory journey of Afghan asylum seekers living in Ankara from a holistic perspective.

Moreover, snowball sampling was used to reach the participants in the study. Snowball sampling, also known as chain sampling or network sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher determines cases of interest from people who know which cases are information-rich and then continues based on referrals from those participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This process continued until the researcher reached the desired sample or saturation point.

Participants who were willing to engage in snowball sampling were gathered from the vicinity of the Ankara Provincial Directorate of Migration Management Additional Service Building, which Afghan asylum seekers visit for various administrative purposes. These purposes include resolving issues with documentation, renewing their kimlik "stay permit," fulfilling monthly signature obligations, and addressing other administrative matters. Several participants were willing to contribute to the snowball sampling and facilitated access to additional participants through their networks. However, some individuals in the field declined to be interviewed. The primary reason for this reluctance appears to be their concerns regarding potential apprehension or deportation resulting from information disclosed during their interviews with the researcher. This concern is also related to the limitations of snowball sampling. Even when individuals consented to be interviewed, they hesitated to recommend others to their acquaintances. To address this issue, participants were provided with comprehensive information about the research prior to the interviews to establish rapport and trust. They were assured that their participation was voluntary and that their identity would remain confidential. Furthermore, it was emphasized that while this study might not directly improve participants' living conditions, it could serve as a valuable source of information and contribute to enhancing the circumstances of individuals in similar situations in the future.

The number of people included in the sample during the data collection process was not limited, owing to the nature of qualitative research. Accordingly, reaching the saturation point was the criterion for continuing or ending the in-depth interviews. Since in-depth interviews are conducted in qualitative research, and observations support these interviews, there is no need for a large sample. After a certain point, the data were repeated. This point is referred to as the saturation point. Data saturation is reached when information begins to repeat itself, new information cannot be obtained, and no further coding can be done (Fusch & Ness, 2015). After interviewing 24 Afghan asylum seekers within the scope of the research, the interviews were terminated when the data obtained from the participants started to repeat themselves, considering that the research reached a saturation point.

*Table 2: Profile of Participants*

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY	DETAILS
<b>Gender</b>	Male	19
	Female	5
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Tajik	10
	Hazara	6
	Pashtun	5
	Turkmen	2
	Uzbek	1
<b>Religion &amp; Sect</b>	Muslim	24
	Sunni	18
	Shiite	6
<b>Age</b>	Average Age	33.96
	Minimum Age	24
	Maximum Age	48
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	13
	Single	9
	Widow	1
	Divorced	1
<b>Education Level</b>	High School Diploma	13
	No Formal Education	6
	Undergraduate Degree	3
	Undergraduate Student	1
	Graduate Student	1
<b>Employment Status</b>	Informal Sector Workers	18
	Unemployed	5
	Employer (Business Owner)	1
<b>Entry Method to Türkiye</b>	Entered Irregularly	22
	⇒ With Human Smugglers	17
	⇒ With Fraudulent Visas	5
	Entered Legally	2
<b>Length of Stay in Türkiye</b>	Average Stay (In Years)	7.1
	Minimum Stay (In Years)	4
	Maximum Stay (In Years)	11
<b>Legal Status in Türkiye</b>	International Protection Applicants	14
	Conditional Refugees	8
	Refused Applicants	2
<b>Total Participants</b>	24	

In the study, a total of 24 people of different ages, professions, ethnic origins, and sects were interviewed, including 10 Tajiks (8 males and 2 females), 6 Hazara men, 5 Pashtun (2 males and 3 females), 2 Turkmen men, and 1 Uzbek man. All participants are Muslim, and except for Hazara participants, all ethnic groups are Sunni. The average age of the participants was

calculated as 33.96, with a minimum value of 24 and a maximum value of 48. While most of the participants were men, only five women of Tajik and Pashtun ethnicity participated. Thirteen participants were married, nine were single, one was a widow, and one was divorced. Thirteen of the interviewees were high school graduates, six had no formal education, three were university graduates, one was an undergraduate student, and one was a graduate student. In addition to five unemployed interviewees, eighteen were employed in the informal sector without permits, and one was a restaurant owner at the time of the interviews.

The majority of participants migrated to Türkiye via irregular means with the help of a human smuggler or by using a fraudulent visa obtained from the black markets in Afghanistan. Accordingly, only two of the participants entered Türkiye with legally obtained visas, and the remaining 22 interviewees entered Türkiye irregularly. While 5 of those who entered Türkiye irregularly used fraudulent visas, the remaining 17 participants entered Türkiye with the help of a human smuggler.

The average length of stay of participants in Türkiye was 7.1 years, with a minimum value of 4 and a maximum value of 11. All of the participants were staying in Türkiye under the framework of international protection. Fourteen participants were international protection applicants, eight were conditional refugees, and two were refused applicants.

The table below provides comprehensive information on the participants. For confidentiality and ethical reasons, pseudonyms were used for the participants throughout the research.

*Table 3: Demographic Information of Participants*

No	Participant's Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Household Population	Ethnic Group	Educational Level	Occupation	Length of Stay in Türkiye	Mode of Entry to Türkiye	Legal Status
1	Mustafa	M	39	Married	5	Tajik	Undergraduate Degree	Unemployed	8	Fraud Visa	International Protection Applicant
2	Bashir	M	47	Married	7	Hazara	High School	Carpenter	9	Irregularly	Conditional Refugee
3	Musa	M	32	Married	5	Tajik	High School	Construction Worker	5	Irregularly	International Protection Applicant
4	Mastora	F	28	Single	7	Pashtun	Undergraduate Degree	Waitress	7	Fraud Visa	International Protection Applicant

5	Farshad	M	48	Married	5	Hazara	No Formal Education	Textile Worker	8	Irregularly	Refused International Protection
6	Sajad	M	32	Single	1	Tajik	High School	Construction Worker	7	Irregularly	International Protection Applicant
7	Baryalai	M	42	Married	9	Tajik	No Formal Education	Working in a Chicken Farm	11	Irregularly	Conditional Refugee
8	Sami	M	25	Single	1	Hazara	High School	Garson	6	Regularly	International Protection Applicant
9	Nawab	M	25	Single	5	Pashtun	High School	Unemployed	8	Visa Fraud	International Protection Applicant
10	Meena	F	26	Divorced	1	Tajik	High School	Textile Worker	7	Visa Fraud	Conditional Refugee
11	Samira	F	24	Single	6	Tajik	Undergraduate Student	Unemployed	4	Irregularly	International Protection Applicant
12	Zarmina	F	32	Widow	3	Pashtun	No Formal Education	Textile Worker	8	Irregularly	Conditional Refugee
13	Farhad	M	38	Married	6	Hazara	High School	Unemployed	8	Irregularly	International Protection Applicant
14	Tawab	M	40	Married	5	Tajik	Undergraduate Degree	Working in a Local Market	6	Visa Fraud	Refused International Protection
15	Rohullah	M	48	Married	5	Hazara	No Formal Education	Construction Worker	5	Irregularly	Conditional Refugee
16	Jamshid	M	28	Single	3	Hazara	High School	Garson	9	Irregularly	Conditional Refugee
17	Fahad	M	32	Married	5	Tajik	High School	Textile Worker	5	Irregularly	International Protection Applicant
18	Nasir	M	30	Married	6	Uzbek	No Formal Education	Construction Worker	10	Irregularly	Conditional Refugee
19	Abdullah	M	45	Married	4	Pashtun	High School	Restaurant Owner	6	Regularly	International Protection Applicant
20	Elham	M	30	Married	7	Tajik	High School	Textile Worker	5	Irregularly	International Protection Applicant
21	Zilgay	M	29	Single	5	Turkmen	High School	Construction Worker	9	Irregularly	International Protection Applicant
22	Omran	M	24	Single	1	Tajik	High School	Garson	5	Irregularly	International Protection Applicant
23	Marya	F	27	Single	7	Pashtun	Graduate Student	Unemployed	9	Irregularly	Conditional Refugee
24	Mirza	M	44	Married	7	Turkmen	No Formal Education	Working in a Bakery	6	Irregularly	International Protection Applicant

### **6.3. DATA COLLECTION PROCESS OF THE RESEARCH**

Field research can provide information about people's thoughts, opinions, and experiences rather than superficial information. In this context, in-depth interviews were conducted on what kinds of life stories the interviewees had in Afghanistan, why they had to migrate from Afghanistan, what they experienced in their journeys, how they experienced the refugee situation, their expectations and hopes, their vision of the future, and how they expressed their situations and lives in Türkiye. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara. The interview forms were prepared in Turkish, English, and Dari. The semi-structured interview consisted of seven main parts: sociodemographic information, life before migration, migration decision and pre-migration preparations, post-migration experiences and life in Ankara, communication with Turkish local authorities, institutional integration, and future plans.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face and one-on-one in public areas. Some interviews were very short, such as 20-25 minutes, while others lasted between 30 and 60 minutes on average. Although the short interviews did not contain as much detail as the long ones, they played a helpful role in confirming or discussing the findings obtained from the long interviews. The focus group of the research study comprised Afghan asylum seekers residing in Ankara, and the researcher, being an Afghan national, conducted all the interview sessions in Dari without requiring an interpreter. The data collected through in-depth interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's consent, transcribed in a secure computing environment, converted into a textual format, and subsequently destroyed upon completion of the analysis due to ethical considerations and confidentiality requirements.

The well-being of the participants was a primary concern when identifying them for the study. In each interview, the subject of the research and its purpose were first explained to the candidates, and their consent was obtained to participate in the interview. In this context, before starting the interview session, the confidentiality of the interviews, the voluntary nature of participation, and the rights of participants, such as not answering questions that made them feel uncomfortable and that they could leave the interview session at any point they wished without being faced with sanctions, were explained and reminded. In addition, a consent form mentioning the scope, aims, data collection methods, rights of the participants, and confidentiality of the information provided by the participants written in Dari was provided to the participants before starting the interview session.

For a successful interview process, the researcher must provide a safe environment where the participants can feel comfortable before and during the interview (Knott et al., 2022). In this context, an attempt was made to conduct interviews so that the interviewees could express themselves comfortably. Finally, considering that the research sample consisted of Afghan asylum seekers who had come to Türkiye from Afghanistan because of forced migration and that they were likely to be subjected to persecution and ill-treatment in their countries of origin, or they may fear that the interview may have negative effects or outcomes on their asylum application or stay in Türkiye, it was repeatedly reminded that it was up to them to decide how much detail they would include and that the information they provided would be kept confidential. The storage and confidentiality of the obtained data was ensured by Law No. 6698 on the Protection of Personal Data dated 24.03.2016. Additionally, to ensure that the research complied with ethical standards, permission to conduct the study and interview participants was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Social Sciences University of Ankara (*see Annex 8*).

#### **6.4. METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

This study used thematic analysis to analyze the data obtained from fieldwork. Thematic analysis, a reporting method that identifies and analyzes patterns in the data, includes six stages: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and reporting or writing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data obtained from the interviews with the participants following these stages were analyzed through interview notes, observation notes, and audio recordings. No computer program was used for data analysis. First, the audio recordings were deciphered, transferred to a Word file, and combined with interview notes. The document contained data written in dialogues, often read, and coded for research purposes. Using thematic coding, each line was read and coded one by one and then converted into codes, categories, and main themes. Because coding is a dynamic process, there were cases where new codes and themes were created, or codes and themes were deleted or combined until the analysis was completed. Finally, the findings were supported by the literature and observations during the analysis and aligned with the determined themes.

#### **6.5. LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES**

Because the data collection methods frequently used in qualitative research are interviews and observations, it is impossible to work with a large sample group in terms of time and cost. In addition, if the sample group is large, it is difficult to analyze the large-scale data obtained

through observation and interviews. Therefore, in qualitative studies, an attempt is made to obtain a holistic picture representing all the diversity, differences, and contradictions likely to be found in the universe as much as possible without any concern for generalization (Neuman, 2014). Accordingly, a relatively small number of participants and sample sizes were selected for the research. The number of participants or the sample size is relatively small in case studies because it is a detailed, in-depth research method (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Individuals arrange meetings with all groups and examine all documents in the context of the general ideas of the subject they are studying. As a result, it is important that the study is conducted in a qualified manner, not that it is generalizable or consists of a large sample (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

However, some difficulties were encountered while conducting fieldwork. Many reasons make it difficult to research especially vulnerable or hard-to-reach groups of migrants. Due to the clandestine nature of their experiences and fragile legal status, asylum seekers are not likely to participate or get involved in any activity or research that may endanger or threaten their asylum application or life in the country of asylum. In addition, it is difficult to reach people who have fully legal status but whose lifestyles and daily lives are severely affected by difficult working conditions, long working hours, and precarious environments (Fedyuk & Zentai, 2019). For this reason, it was difficult to find volunteers for the study in this research, as they feared possible legal penalties or outcomes that they might encounter due to their participation in the interview.

While finding participants was a major challenge when conducting fieldwork, the issue persisted in another form, even after finding volunteer participants. This occurs when participants do not want to provide detailed information about their experiences or lives, fearing that it might expose their plans, such as embarking on another migratory journey to European countries. To overcome this challenge, I built trust with the participants and emphasized that I would fully respect their confidentiality. I told them that their safety and privacy were my top priorities. By ensuring that the interviews were conducted in a relaxed environment, I made sure to create a space where participants could express themselves freely. I also directed the questions in a more general way, allowing them to provide valuable information without fear of revealing private or sensitive information. This approach helped participants share their experiences more openly.

Another issue experienced during fieldwork is the challenge of reaching participants using the snowball technique. Before the interviews, the aim was to reach participants using the snowball technique; however, despite their promises, some participants refused to participate

in the study, putting forward some concerns or not showing up at all for the interview. Meanwhile, the break in the snowball technique led to difficulties in the subsequent interviews. The new participants hesitated to provide detailed answers, as they were initially unfamiliar with the researcher.

Another significant limitation encountered within the scope of this research is that the number of Afghan asylum seekers residing in Türkiye, particularly in Ankara, is not fully known and is not disclosed by official institutions. Furthermore, although the study initially aimed for an equal number of female and male participants, the number of female participants remained low due to the reluctance of Afghan female asylum seekers to participate in interviews, attributed to cultural and religious factors.

## CHAPTER 7

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the fieldwork conducted within the scope of this thesis. In accordance with the predetermined research questions, the data collected from in-depth semi-structured interviews with 24 Afghan asylum seekers residing in Ankara were analyzed under the following four main themes:

- i. Reasons for Afghan Immigration to Türkiye
  - *What are the major reasons for Afghans' migration and their preference for Türkiye?*
- ii. Navigating Barriers: Afghan Migration Pathways to Türkiye under Turkish Restrictive Policies Against Irregular Migration
  - *How do Afghan immigrants navigate the obstacles in their migration pathways to Türkiye amid restrictive Turkish policies regarding irregular migration?*
- iii. Life in Türkiye: Interpreting Post-Migratory Experiences of Afghan Asylum Seekers in Ankara
  - *How do Afghan asylum seekers interpret their post-migratory experiences and lives in Ankara?*
- iv. Survival Strategies of Afghan Asylum Seekers in Türkiye
  - *What are the survival strategies employed by Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye?*

#### 7.1. REASONS FOR AFGHAN IMMIGRATION TO TÜRKİYE

The long-standing war and conflict environment in Afghanistan is stated as the reason why Afghans leave their country. Kuschminder (2018) proposed the ongoing war and conflict environment in Afghanistan as the reason why Afghanistan is one of the countries that produces the most refugees in the world, and why Afghan immigrants are one of the largest groups seeking asylum in Europe. Similarly, İçduygu and Karadağ (2018) posit that the factors that cause Afghan immigrants to leave their country are the ongoing war and conflict environment

in Afghanistan. According to them, ethnic groups living in Afghanistan today still face security problems and are forced to leave their homes.

Monsutti (2008) suggested that Afghan citizens leave their country for various reasons in more detail. Other factors that Monsutti lists for the citizens of Afghanistan who leave their country are reflections of the social realities of war and conflict. He suggests that the physical, political, economic, and ethnic reflections of war should also be considered as reasons why citizens of Afghan origin leave their country. Based on this, he listed political conflict and violence, natural disasters, and economic migration as the main factors that could be the main reasons for population movement from Afghanistan.

In terms of Afghan immigrants in Türkiye, when the relevant literature is reviewed, more than half of Afghan asylum seekers living in Türkiye under international protection have left their country because of war, civil conflict, political, religious, or ethnic reasons, or blood feuds. Afghan asylum seekers also leave their countries for economic, health, or educational reasons. Additionally, in studies conducted on Afghan asylum seekers, the reasons for their migration to Türkiye are generally classified as Soviet occupation, Taliban oppression, and economic reasons (e.g., Erman, 2018; Geyik Yıldırım, 2018; Gök, 2021; İ. Koç & Eryurt, 2017; Mohammadi, 2015). Öksüz (2021), in a study conducted on Afghan asylum seekers in Trabzon, concluded that Afghan asylum seekers migrated because of war, security, religious reasons, and health problems. Similarly, in other studies examining Afghan refugees' experiences in Iran, researchers have concluded that increasing marginalization in Iran compelled Afghans to migrate. Concurrently, unemployment, labor exploitation, financial difficulties, and other challenges in social life have accelerated the migration of Afghan refugees from Iran to Türkiye (Doğan, 2019; Gözübüyük Tamer, 2019).

This study, conducted on Afghan immigrants residing in Ankara, Türkiye, under the international protection framework, identifies the factors that precipitated their migration. Taliban pressure and threats, lack of personal security, and economic factors are among the primary reasons for Afghan migration. Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that Afghan women, in particular, migrate due to gender-based violence in addition to other factors. The research also revealed that Afghans migrated to Türkiye for various purposes, including transit or resettlement to a third country, and have preferred Türkiye because the neighboring countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, which historically hosted Afghan immigrants, have diminished in value as migratory options for Afghans. Consequently, the reasons for Afghan migration and their preference for Türkiye can be categorized as follows:

### 7.1.1. TALIBAN PRESSURE AND THREAT

The primary factors contributing to the interviewees' departure from Afghanistan were Taliban pressure and threats. According to the participants' narratives, conflicts between the government and the Taliban impeded Afghans, particularly those residing in rural areas, from accessing essential services such as education, employment, and healthcare. Several participants reported that they migrated due to political instability and civil war in the country, as well as coercion from the Taliban. Interviewees indicated that Taliban pressure restricted their ability to venture out in the evenings and attend educational institutions, with this limitation reportedly being more severe for female students. They were compelled to join the movement, and the Taliban extorted money from family members. Additionally, individuals were subjected to threats because of their associations with state institutions and American entities.

Mustafa, a former interpreter, stated that he decided to depart from Afghanistan due to threats from the Taliban, which was a consequence of his employment as an interpreter for American military personnel in Afghanistan. Mustafa narrated his experiences as follows:

*"I was working as an interpreter with Americans. I was traveling to different provinces of Afghanistan with American soldiers as part of my job as an interpreter. I earned good money. The Americans paid me a lot. My economic situation was good. I had a beautiful house in Kabul with all the facilities and equipment. I was happy, but my life was in danger as the Taliban constantly threatened me. Everyone in our neighborhood knew that I was working with Americans, which made it easier for the Taliban to find my address and family. While I was traveling to other provinces of Afghanistan with Americans, it was normal for me to face direct Taliban attacks such as fire shots and exploding bombs. The Taliban was shooting and bombarding American military cars, which I was inside. However, I was not facing these types of direct threats from the Taliban in Kabul; I was constantly receiving threats from unknown numbers, telling me that I was an infidel and that they would find and kill me and my family." (Mustafa, Male, 39 Y.O.)*

Mustafa's stories showed that a series of trigger events facilitated and accelerated his decision to leave Afghanistan. These events are usually related to conflict, insecurity, and livelihoods and are sudden events that cause people to lose touch with their current situation. Bashir, who said he migrated to Türkiye with his family irregularly, similar to Mustafa's stories, shared that while he was living in his village in Afghanistan with his family, he witnessed a scene of the Taliban murdering the people in his neighborhood. Threats and pressures from the Taliban, the brutality of the Taliban, and its influence in the village led Bashir to migrate. He described his experiences as follows:

*“We were living in our village in Wardak. The Taliban was always threatening because we were Shia. From time to time, the Taliban came to our village and beat our people randomly, even killing them if they reacted. Once, I saw how the Taliban murdered the husband of our neighbor, who came against the wishes of the Taliban. They were always armed with many people and were going to houses randomly and forcibly, making us cook for and treat them well. Once they enter a house, it does not matter if the owner has something to cook. We must find something good for them to cook for. Otherwise, they would beat us to death. They were eating all we had in our house, and when leaving, they were also taking our sheep and cows with them by force.” (Bashir, Male, 47 Y.O.)*

A comparable incident transpired for Musa, a civil servant employed by Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While the Taliban threatened Mustafa as a consequence of his collaboration with Americans, Musa was compelled to depart Afghanistan because of Taliban threats resulting from his association with state institutions.

*“I was a civil servant in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan in Kabul. My job was to address visitors' problems and guide them through paperwork. I was not a high-ranking official. I was only a common worker dealing with low-level problems of visitors to the ministry. However, the reality of my job, which was in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, regardless of what I did or what my position or job was, was the main reason the Taliban threatened me. The neighborhood in which I was living was full of people who had ties, even family bonds, with the Taliban. I was not safe at home. People from our neighborhood whom I knew had ties with the Taliban were always threatening to quit my job and telling me that I was a traitor. One night, while we were sleeping, I heard the loud sound of a hand-grenade exploding in the garden of my house. When I woke up, I saw fire and a lot of smoke in my house. I woke up in a hurry and ensured my family was safe. After that event, I could not risk the life of me and my family, and we decided to leave Afghanistan.” (Musa, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

Similarly, in another case, the trigger for Mastora and her family's decision to emigrate from Afghanistan was the Taliban violence. Mastora, who was an undergraduate student at Kabul University and was also working part-time in a telecom company in Afghanistan, decided to leave Afghanistan after her older sister was kidnapped and murdered by the Taliban. However, there is no evidence to prove that her sister was kidnapped and killed by the Taliban. Mastora and her family believed that the Taliban had murdered her sister. Mastora mentioned that they had a calm life, and they had no enemy or blood feud with anyone that would lead to the killing or harming of their family. Mastora described her experiences as follows:

*“I was an undergraduate student at Kabul University. I also worked part-time in a telecom company in Kabul. My older sister worked full-time at the same company. One day, when I had an off day from my job, my sister had to come home alone. It was almost dark, and I worried about my sister because she was late and did not answer her phone. We did not receive any call or news from her for a week until my father received a phone call from the*

*police saying that they had found the dead body of my sister. We did not have an enemy or anything that allowed anyone to kidnap or kill my sister. We believe that she was kidnapped and killed by the Taliban because they are against education and working of girls outdoors.” (Mastora, Female, 28 Y.O.)*

Numerous participants stated that their migration was precipitated by Taliban-induced pressures and threats in Afghanistan. Given the potential for abduction or execution of relatives or family members by the Taliban, ensuring personal safety has emerged as a primary motivating factor for Afghans to initiate the migration process. Notably, some participants were exposed to threats due to their occupational roles. These roles encompassed civil servants employed in governmental offices, individuals perceived to be collaborating with American entities, and female employees whose outdoor work was deemed religiously inappropriate by the Taliban. It was ascertained that Afghan asylum seekers migrated due to factors such as direct Taliban threats and the absence of personal security.

#### **7.1.2. LACK OF LIFE SECURITY**

Some interviewees in the research group stated that they did not have security of life because of the indirect Taliban threat. However, some interviewees stated that they faced Taliban threats or pressure directly for various reasons, such as their engagement with government institutions, working as civil servants, or collaborating with the American army in Afghanistan. By contrast, others stated that they left Afghanistan because they did not have life security, even though the Taliban did not directly threaten them.

Sami, who was not engaged in any activity or employment that may have directly led him to receive threats from the Taliban, mentioned that his family forced him to leave Afghanistan immediately after graduating from high school in Kabul. He described his experiences as follows:

*“I was the only son of the family. I lived with my four sisters and my parents. My parents, especially my mother, always worried about me. The situation in Afghanistan is poor. Every day, at least one bomb exploded in the city and killed innocent people. Although my parents were worried about the safety of all of us, they were much more sensitive to my safety because I was the family's only son, and I was an outgoing person. Because our economic situation was poor, we could not obtain visas for all of us to migrate to Türkiye. We could not risk migrating irregularly because the journey was unsafe, especially for my sisters. We thought of going to Iran or Pakistan together but decided not to go to Pakistan or Iran because the situation was not good for Afghan refugees. Finally, immediately after graduating high school, my parent decided to send me to Türkiye alone.” (Sami, Male, 25 Y.O.)*

As can be seen from the stories of Sami, a lack of life security, which is in some way related to Taliban pressure and conflict in Afghanistan, is another reason why interviewees left Afghanistan. On the other hand, the unfavorable situations for Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan are also contributing factors in the decision of interviewees to migrate to Türkiye. Nawab describes a similar story. He describes his migratory experience as follows:

*“We were a very happy family. Everything was going well until one day when an old person about the same age as my father came to our home and asked my father to let my sister marry him. My father was shocked and was unable to say anything. After the man left our home, my father asked my sister if she knew him, and my sister said that she had never seen him anywhere and did not know him. We still do not know how he found my sister. He was an old man and a wealthy person with ties to the government. The next time he came to our house, my father said that he would not give him my sister. After hearing my father’s negative answer, the man started to threaten us with death if we did not give him our sister. We knew that he was rich and had ties with the government and that he could easily erase us from the world. On the other hand, my father could not risk the life of my sister, so we decided to escape from Afghanistan, and we came to Türkiye because it is safer than Iran and Pakistan.” (Nawab, Male, 25 Y.O.)*

Nawab’s stories are similar to those of Sami. Both decided to leave Afghanistan due to a lack of security. However, Sami left Afghanistan due to indirect Taliban pressure or the lack of life security within the country as a result of the constant suicide bombings; Nawab had left Afghanistan because of the same reason of lack of life security but with the additional factor of personal hostility that they had in Afghanistan. Similarly, both have decided to migrate to Türkiye because of its favorable economic situation and better safety than neighboring countries close to Afghanistan. In general, political instability, a lack of life security within the country, constant suicide bombings, terrorist acts in public areas, and personal hostility are among the reasons for migration. On the other hand, better living situations in terms of economy, employment, and safety were contributing factors that led interviewees to migrate to Türkiye rather than to other countries close to them, especially Afghan refugees hosting the governments of Iran and Pakistan.

### **7.1.3. ECONOMIC REASONS**

Apart from Taliban pressures and threats, one of the most critical factors that led participants to leave Afghanistan was the increasing unemployment and poverty. All interviewees had migrated to Türkiye before 2021, before the Taliban took complete control of Afghanistan in August 2021. The primary challenge during the period preceding the Taliban's complete control of Afghanistan was the former Afghan government's engagement in corruption rather than the

effective distribution of aid resources to the people, which subsequently resulted in widespread unemployment and poverty.

Afghanistan's population is young and dynamic. Afghan citizens seek opportunities abroad because of economic constraints and limited prospects in their home countries. Specifically, Afghan youth perceive migration as a means of escaping unemployment and poverty, initially attempting to migrate to neighboring countries, Iran and Pakistan, before considering Western countries. This study revealed that some interviewees reported their initial migration experience in Iran before migrating to Türkiye. During this process, the evolving and increasingly stringent attitudes and policies of countries hosting Afghan refugees have made it challenging for Afghans to reside in them, even in the absence of conflict. Consequently, these circumstances precipitated a new wave of migration.

Nakanishi (2008) states that Afghans living in Iran have different statuses. He stated that Afghans living in Iran generally have three legal statuses, with the first being blue card holders. This card was given especially to those who came to Iran from Afghanistan before 1992, and it was stated that those who had this card benefited from state services such as residence, health, and education and were even allowed to work in some sectors. The second type was the temporary cards given to Afghans who came to Iran between 1992 and 1994. Although these cards lost their validity in 1996, they are still in use. Most of these cardholders have continued to stay in Iran. The third type was given to people from Afghanistan after 1996, on short-term permits. Only a few Afghans who came to Iran after 1996 stated that they could obtain a legal permit. Some refugees in this situation and those included in the research group noted the following reasons for migration:

*“There is always war in Afghanistan. When there is a war, there is no security of life. By life security, I refer to more than just physical safety. We have no employment or economic security. Only those with ties or connections to the government can find suitable employment and jobs. We did not know someone in the government or any strong people to help us find a job. As a result of the constant war in Afghanistan, lack of life security, and economic difficulties, I migrated to Iran, where I worked in construction. By the time more Afghans came to Iran and the economic situation of Iran was declining, Iranians had started to mistreat us. The situation for Afghans has worsened daily. There was no job for us anymore. Meanwhile, we were constantly harassed by Iranians. As a result, we decided to leave Iran and migrate to Türkiye with the hope of resettlement to a third safe country via UNHCR.” (Farshad, Male, 48 Y.O.)*

Farshad's stories show that security is vital for life and economic security. He described his situation in Afghanistan as being caught between life security or Taliban pressure and

unemployment stipulated by this situation. Additionally, he referred to an essential issue regarding his economic situation in Afghanistan by mentioning the Afghan government's failure to provide fair job opportunities. Sajad described a similar experience. Sajad, currently working in the construction sector in Türkiye, also describes economic hardships as the reason for his migration.

*"I left my country and family when I was 20. War and unemployment in Afghanistan were the main reasons that forced me to leave Afghanistan and go to Iran to work. I stayed in Iran for almost 5 years. I worked in harsh and dirty jobs in Iran. I was doing so because I had no other option. I had to work and make money to return to my family in Afghanistan. I worked long hours and received a low salary. I had no option other than to accept this because I had no work permits in Iran. One day, I had an argument with some Iranians in my workplace that caused me to lose my job. At that time, I had some savings and used that money to pay for the human smugglers to take me to Türkiye. Although Iranians always mistreated me, I tolerated the situation. But when I lost my job, I decided to leave Iran, go to Türkiye, and work there for good wages." (Sajad, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

The stories of Farshad and Sajad shed light on poverty and the economic reasons for emigration from Afghanistan because of a lack of employment security and corruption. However, some participants mentioned drought as a factor that caused unemployment, which ultimately forced them to migrate. As can be seen from the stories of the interviewees in this study, drought is another factor that causes unemployment, poverty, and the emigration of Afghans. When drought occurs in Afghanistan, Afghans have difficulty feeding their animals. As they do not have modern irrigation systems, they cannot irrigate their fields, so they cannot receive the yield of what they plant. In such cases, people who cannot earn a living in the field are forced to travel abroad or to other cities.

Barylai, who lived in his village, said that he had to leave his village in Herat. He could no longer make a living from the money he was earning from his agricultural products because his products were too low due to the drought. He described his experiences as follows:

*"I had some land in my village, which I inherited from my father. The only property I had in my life was that of land. The products of our land were the only source of family income. However, when the drought hit us, we could no longer maintain our lives from the products of our lands. As I mentioned, my only property was the land I had inherited from my father. I am illiterate. I cannot do any other jobs. The only job I could do was removed from me because of drought. Taliban and war from one side and the drought from the other side forced me to leave Afghanistan." (Barylai, Male, 42 Y.O.)*

The Taliban threat mentioned above, along with economic problems such as unemployment, the inability to practice one's profession, and financial problems originating from drought, have

caused Afghans to migrate. The migration process, which began to ensure life security, led to various issues. In particular, although individuals coming to Iran from Afghanistan have ensured their life security, they face many problems in Iran, such as unemployment and discrimination. When the answers given by the participants were analyzed, another striking issue was the alienating attitude of the Iranian people and the government in parallel with the increasing number of Afghan refugees in Iran. In the study conducted by Doğan (2019), Afghan immigrants who came to Türkiye from Iran and participated in the research stated that they came because of unemployment, education, and health problems, as well as the alienating attitudes of the Iranian people.

#### **7.1.4. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Violence is a significant public health problem affecting every aspect of human life and is increasing worldwide (Waalen et al., 2000). Gender-based violence is defined as an indication of structural gender inequality, a structural phenomenon that has roots in the unequal power relations between men and women in patriarchal societies (Sarışın, 2022). It is also an expression of male power used by men to reproduce and preserve their position and control over women. Gender-based violence or violence against women can be seen in different forms, including psychological, physical, sexual, economic, and social (Sarışın, 2022). Women may encounter such violence in both public and private spaces. In particular, violence by a spouse or partner is the most common form of gender-based violence (van Daalen et al., 2022). Women are constantly exposed to gender-based violence in different environments, “private and public spaces,” and by different people, “family members, friends, close relatives, strangers” in many ways. These forms and types of violence are related to power imbalances between women and men, and these forms of violence are resorted to further strengthen this imbalance (Sarışın, 2022).

In general, the exploitation and abuse of people and groups by other people are suitable environments for violence to develop, use, and spread by future generations. The socio-economic and sociocultural structure of Afghanistan, the culture of obedience to values and norms, tyranny and ethnographic elements, tribal-power relations, cultural and sectarian conflicts, and religious fanaticism are all essential elements that cause violence against women to become chronic in Afghanistan.

Meena, who is Tajik and married a Pashtun man in Afghanistan, stated the following regarding this situation and reasons for her migration:

*"I am Tajik but married to a Pashtun man. My husband was good before our marriage. However, this was not the case. He was pretending to be good. In Afghanistan, marriage between different ethnic groups is not too common, and I think this was why he was pretending to be a good person. Although all of our relatives were saying no to marrying a Pashtun man, we did not listen to them. Before my marriage, my husband was like an angel. He was so good that we could never think of anything negative about him. However, the situation changed after marriage. My husband was rude. He always hits me without reason. Without his permission, I could not attend school, work, or even go to my parents' home... My mother worked with Americans, and my family moved to America. I was left alone in Afghanistan and could no longer tolerate my husband's mistreatment... With the financial help of my family, I was able to escape from my husband and Afghanistan."* **(Meena, Female, 26 Y.O.)**

The narratives of Meena can be analyzed from multiple dimensions that lead to gender-based violence and, ultimately, migration. While the sociocultural and socioeconomic structures of Afghanistan and the obedience to traditional norms and values were the main reasons that led to gender-based violence in the case of Meena, the reality of her early marriage at a young age was also an important factor in this case.

*"I was only 16 when I married. My father was not against marriage at an early age. For him, sixteen was considered too late to marry. Although my father was not against early marriage, he tried to find a good match. As I mentioned earlier, my husband was pretending to be an angel, which made me and my father not come against this marriage despite differences in our ethnic groups."* **(Meena, Female, 26 Y.O.)**

Early marriages refer to the formation of a bond by marrying two people, at least one of whom is under the age of 18, illegally or unofficially (Nygren et al., 2018). Early marriage is defined as marriage that occurs before the individual has completed his/her development and education and is ready to assume the responsibilities that come with marriage. Since every individual is considered a child before age 18, the critical age limit for early marriages is also accepted as 18 (Nasrullah et al., 2014). Early marriages are situations in which individuals are deprived of the right to choose their marriage. As these marriages occur during childhood, they should be considered the most common form of sexual abuse, especially against girls, and are examples of human rights violations (Naved et al., 2022).

In Afghanistan, early marriages and the fact that half of married girls are under the legal age are prevalent. Fariba Nawa, an Afghan journalist, in her book, described how farmers who grow opium for their high returns marry young girls to drug traffickers in exchange for debt or other reasons (Nawa, 2011). The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reported that 87% of Afghan women have been subjected to physical, sexual, or psychological violence, and 62%

have been subjected to more than one type of abuse (UNFPA, 1998). In addition, although global data indicate that male suicides are more common than female suicides, nearly 80% of suicide attempts in Afghanistan are made by women. Particularly in rural areas, suicide cases are hidden from authorities, and because taking one's own life is considered an unforgivable sin in Islam, incidents remain within the family (Safi, 2018). There are various reasons for the high number of suicide attempts among Afghan women; mental health problems, domestic violence, forced marriages, and increasing social pressures on women are just a few of them (Safi, 2018).

In this study, it was observed that violence against women was widespread in Afghanistan. Although in the case of Meena, she was not forced to marry by her family, some interviewees stated that they were subjected to violence when they objected to their families marrying them off to someone much older than them or with someone they did not wish to marry. Samira, an undergraduate student in Ankara, described her experiences regarding this situation as follows:

*“My father wanted me to marry someone old and rich he knew. He arranged everything for my marriage without asking for permission. When I objected to my marriage, my father used violence to threaten me. Fortunately, something happened between my father and the man he wanted me to marry, and our marriage was canceled. Soon afterward, my father, who was working with Americans and was not feeling safe in Kabul, decided to leave Afghanistan.” (Samira, Female, 24 Y.O.)*

Apart from this, it is seen that the levirate marriage<sup>17</sup> is still quite common in Afghanistan. One interviewee stated that her husband lost his life in a bomb attack and her husband's family forced her to marry her brother-in-law. When she resisted, she was subjected to violence and had to flee with her two children. The problems that women experience before the migration process and those that will be experienced afterward leave immigrant women in a more difficult situation and cause them to struggle for a more difficult life, both as refugees and as women. In addition, immigrant women who are divorced or alone may encounter different situations, such as sexual harassment during the migration process and in the destination country.

Based on the participants' statements, it would not be wrong to say that Afghans have different reasons for migration. While some participants indicated the Taliban threat as the sole reason for their decision to migrate, others suggested that the presence of the Taliban did not constitute the sole reason behind their decision to migrate. It is understood that individuals decided to migrate because of the lack of employment opportunities in the country, together

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<sup>17</sup> Levirate marriage in Afghanistan is a traditional practice where a widow is expected or forced to marry her deceased husband's brother.

with Taliban violence, making it impossible for them to live and sustain their livelihood. In addition, migration from Afghanistan has resulted due to a lack of economic confidence. In other words, poverty, security, and migration are related. The interconnection of the financial and security reasons leads to a complexity between the refugee “forced migration” and labor migration “voluntary migration” status of Afghan migrants in the countries they go to. They rarely indicated a single reason for migrating from Afghanistan; therefore, classical migration categories are far from meeting the reality of Afghans, and limited categories need to be reconsidered.

#### **7.1.5. REASONS FOR PREFERRING TÜRKİYE**

Social issues, such as increasing poverty, political instability, conflict, and war, generally contribute to migration. Consequently, individual or mass migration movements occur in regions experiencing the aforementioned problems to areas with relatively more favorable conditions. Türkiye is an important country for transit and permanent migration movements because of its location. Türkiye, which has hosted millions of Syrian refugees<sup>18</sup> since 2011 due to the civil war in Syria, has been exposed to regular and irregular migratory movements from countries on the Asian continent in recent years due to poverty, political instability, conflict, and war. The largest proportion of irregular migration in Türkiye comprises Afghan immigrants, with 65,815 apprehensions in 2024 and a maximum of 201,437 in 2019 (PMM, 2024c). In this context, Afghanistan is at the top of the list of countries that have migrated to Türkiye.

Afghanistan has many ethnocultural and religious differences, and conflicts never cease because of power struggles between different groups. Its history is full of political and economic instability and migration. The prolonged nature of civil unrest, financial and political instability, violence against ethnic and religious minority groups, restrictions on women’s education, and the overall violent environment in Afghanistan have forced people to migrate within and out of the country for reasons such as life security, unemployment, poverty, and gender-based violence. Despite not being a border neighbor with Türkiye, historical, religious, and cultural ties are essential motivations for Afghans to migrate to Türkiye. In this context, Türkiye is the third country hosting the most significant number of Afghan asylum seekers and immigrants after Pakistan and Iran.

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<sup>18</sup> Although Syrians are not legally recognized as refugees in Türkiye, the term "refugee" for Syrians in this study is utilized in accordance with the refugee definition in the Geneva Convention.

The findings of this study reveal two primary factors influencing Afghan immigrants' preference for Türkiye. The first factor is their aspiration to relocate to a third country. The second factor, particularly salient for those emigrating from Iran and Pakistan, is the unfavorable economic conditions and experiences of racial discrimination and social exclusion in those countries.

#### **7.1.5.1. MOVING TO A THIRD COUNTRY**

The majority of participants stated that their reason for choosing Türkiye was to move to a third country either via regular means, such as private sponsorship programs of some Western countries, such as Canada and Australia, resettlement to a third country via UNHCR, or irregular ways via migrant smugglers to European countries. Some interviewees described their reasons for preferring Türkiye as follows:

*“One day, my brother, who lives in Canada and is a Canadian citizen, told me that if you can go to Türkiye, I can sponsor you via Canada's private refugee sponsorship program. He also mentioned that going to Türkiye makes the process easier and faster. We knew of people who were living in Pakistan and had been waiting to be resettled in Canada under the same program for many years. However, my brother said that he could sponsor us to go to Canada from Türkiye in less than three years. Finally, with my brother's financial help and support, we decided to move to Türkiye.” (Farhad, Male, 38 Y.O.)*

*“I decided to move to Türkiye because the UNHCR office in Ankara is active and is helping refugees to resettle in a third country. I knew it might take lengthy years to resettle via the UNHCR, but this was my best option. I thought that if I went to Pakistan and could not resettle in a third country via the UNHCR, it would require many more resources to make another journey from Pakistan to Europe. Türkiye was the best option. I thought if I went to Türkiye, there was the possibility of resettling via UNHCR, and if not, it would be easier to go to Europe from Türkiye.” (Tawab, Male, 40 Y.O.)*

*“Well, actually, we had two goals. I can say that without these goals, I would never have decided to migrate anywhere. I experienced the most severe phase of war in Afghanistan during the first period of the Taliban in the late 1990s, and I did not leave Afghanistan during those times. This time, my goal was clear. I said I would go to Türkiye and apply for resettlement in a third country through the UNHCR. I also thought that if this goal was not achieved, we could easily go to Germany via Türkiye with the help of human smugglers.” (Rohullah, Male, 48 Y.O.)*

*“I had relatives who were living in Pakistan, and they told me that UNHCR is not taking refugee applications anymore, and if they did so, the resettlement is almost impossible from Pakistan. When I migrated in 2015, too many Afghans went to Türkiye. When I learned that UNHCR in Ankara is taking applications and the resettlement is not as lengthy as in*

*Pakistan or India, I decided to move to Türkiye with my two brothers.” (Jamshid, Male, 28 Y.O.)*

Participants preferred Türkiye when making their migratory decisions because of the presence of the UNHCR in Türkiye and Türkiye's geographical location, which is close to that of European countries. It would not be wrong to say that they positioned Türkiye as a transit country or a temporary stop in their migratory journey. Türkiye's geographical location is close to the immigrant source countries and the EU member countries or the destination countries, which is why immigrants position Türkiye as a transit country (İçduygu & Yükseker, 2012; Kartal & Başçı, 2014). The participants who stated that they preferred Türkiye because of the presence of the UNHCR in Türkiye primarily wanted to implement their resettlement strategies in a third country through the UNHCR. Based on this, it can be stated that the participants wanted to legally travel to Western countries at the beginning of their migration process. It can also be noted that participants would change their strategies to go to Western countries irregularly, depending on whether their applications were accepted or rejected, how much time their resettlement would take, and the time needed to become financially ready for another journey. While the participants were sure to apply their second strategy immediately after their applications were denied, they were unsure about the time limit they could wait for their resettlement before initiating their second strategy, which was moving to Western countries irregularly. Most importantly, the possible scenarios are either to stay in Türkiye and wait for their resettlement to a third country or to go to European countries irregularly.

#### **7.1.5.2. LOSING VALUES OF OTHER MIGRATORY OPTIONS: PAKISTAN & IRAN**

Historically, Afghan immigrants and refugees have lived in the neighboring countries of Iran and Pakistan for many years. However, the most significant number of Afghan refugees reside in Pakistan and Iran; neither country offers stable and secure economic, legal, or physical protection mechanisms for Afghan refugees within their borders. Beginning in the late 1970s, neighboring countries of Afghanistan, particularly Pakistan and Iran, were the main hosts of Afghan immigrants. According to a late 2023 report published by the UNHCR, there are estimated to be around 4.5 million Afghan nationals residing in Iran and another 3.7 million in Pakistan (UNHCR, 2023). Unfortunately, while hoping to achieve a better life by migrating and seeking protection in Iran and Pakistan, Afghan refugees face severe challenges and violations of human rights, such as the risks of forced deportations, inhumane treatment, discrimination, and lack of economic and social liberties. Consequently, these challenging environments and

the shrinking humanitarian and financial situation in Iran and Pakistan have led Afghan refugees to find alternatives for their migratory journeys (Schmeidl, 2019).

Pakistan, where 3.7 million Afghans had previously taken refuge, is now a distant possibility for Afghans. This is not only an economic but also a social situation. All Afghans who participated in the study spoke negatively about Pakistan. Afghans no longer prefer Pakistan because of its weak economic situation and its experiences of racism and exclusion. Some participants stated the following regarding this issue:

*“We thought of going to Iran or Pakistan together, but decided not to go to Pakistan or Iran because the situation was not good for Afghan refugees.” (Sami, Male, 25 Y.O.)*

*“I lived in Pakistan for 3 years, and that was the worst experience of my life. I had to work like an animal without any days off, for low wages. The work was too harsh. I was working under the burning sun for long hours, but in the end, I was not receiving what I had to receive.” (Fahad, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

*“Migration is not easy, especially for Afghans. We cannot even go to neighboring countries with Afghani passports. Even for Pakistan and Iran, we must obtain visas from black markets. Migration requires both money and resources. I did not want to use my money to go to Pakistan. Pakistanis hate us. They discriminate against us. They do not want Afghan refugees in their country. I am aware of the discrimination and ill-treatment of Pakistanis and their police with Afghan refugees, and Pakistan was never an option for me.” (Nasir, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

Similarly, the interviewees also expressed negative thoughts about migrating to Iran. Iran, which hosts approximately 4.5 million Afghans, is also now an unfavorable option for Afghans. In this context, the same reasons stated for Afghans' unwillingness to migrate to Pakistan can also be seen in the case of Iran. Sajad and Farshad, who have experience living and working in Iran, described their story regarding the issue as follows:

*“I stayed in Iran for almost 5 years. I worked in harsh and dirty jobs in Iran. I was doing so because I had no other option. I had to work and make money to return to my family in Afghanistan. I was working long hours and was receiving a very low salary. Although Iranians always mistreated me, I tolerated the situation. But when I lost my job, I decided to leave Iran, go to Türkiye, and work there for good wages.” (Sajad, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

*“I lived in Iran and worked in the construction sector. By the time more Afghans came to Iran and the economic situation of Iran was declining, Iranians had started to mistreat us. The situation for Afghans has worsened daily. There was no job for us anymore. Meanwhile, we were always harassed by the Iranians.” (Farshad, Male, 48 Y.O.)*

It was observed that Afghan immigrants select their destination based on social security, economic factors, and their long-term objectives of resettlement to a third country. Although Pakistan and Iran are the most accessible options in terms of visa acquisition and proximity, they are not preferred because of economic and social considerations and have diminished in importance owing to their policies towards Afghan refugees. While a significant proportion of Afghan refugees continue to reside in Iran and Pakistan, Türkiye, due to its advantageous geographical location in proximity to European countries, superior economic conditions in the region, enhanced resettlement opportunities, and flexible modifications to its asylum regime commencing in 2013 with the implementation of the LFIP has emerged as an attractive option for Afghan asylum seekers and immigrants.

## **7.2. NAVIGATING BARRIERS: AFGHAN MIGRATION PATHWAYS TO TÜRKIYE UNDER TURKISH RESTRICTIVE POLICIES AGAINST IRREGULAR MIGRATION**

As the dynamics of Turkish migration policies described earlier in Chapter 5, it was observed that Türkiye approached the issue of migration and immigrants differently in response to the events of the time. It was also observed that Türkiye, in the period after the 2000s, especially in its second decade, adopted a strict policy regarding its combat against irregular migration. Considering Turkish restrictive policies and combating irregular migration, the following sections describe how Afghan asylum seekers navigated these barriers in their migration pathways to Türkiye. In this context, the narratives of Afghan asylum seekers are analyzed and described in terms of the methods of their migratory journey, such as regular and irregular immigration, and the challenges they face throughout their journeys.

### **7.2.1. REGULAR OR LEGAL IMMIGRATION TO TÜRKIYE**

Afghan nationals holding diplomatic, ordinary, service, and special passports are subject to a visa to enter Türkiye (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). In this context, Afghan nationals who reside in Afghanistan or outside Afghanistan and wish to come to Türkiye via regular or legal means must first apply for a visa from the relevant Turkish authorities where they reside in or can obtain e-Visas if they meet certain criteria. However, it is almost impossible for most Afghan immigrants to fulfill these requirements to obtain a Turkish visa. Because official procedures for obtaining a visa are difficult and costly, Afghan immigrants avoid obtaining a visa. In addition, most Afghan immigrants do not meet Türkiye's visa criteria. One of the

participants who stated that he had to migrate irregularly because he was not able to meet the criteria determined by Türkiye to obtain a visa described his experiences as follows:

*“I am married and have a family of five. I am not single, and we are a large family. At first, I thought I could obtain a Turkish visa because I worked at the Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan. I have a regular income and a good balance in my bank account. However, when I applied for a visa, I was not granted one. The criteria determined by the embassy were very high. No one can obtain a visa unless they are a millionaire or a businessman in Afghanistan.” (Musa, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

Although most participants migrated to Türkiye irregularly, only two participants, Abdullah and Sami, stated that they migrated to Türkiye via regular means. Abdullah and Sami described their visa procedures as follows:

*“I had a great life in Afghanistan. I had three restaurants in Afghanistan, and my financial situation was good. I also had some businesses outside Afghanistan, and I occasionally traveled to different countries. Although my economic situation was good, I had no life security in Afghanistan and decided to migrate to Türkiye. I applied for a visa to the Turkish embassy in Kabul, and because I had good bank credit and stamps of different countries in my passport, I and my family were granted Turkish visas.” (Abdullah, Male, 45 Y.O.)*

*“As mentioned earlier, our economic situation was not good enough to go to Türkiye via regular means. Going to Iran or Pakistan was not an option for us. I could only go to Türkiye regularly if I had an acceptance letter from a university there. I mean via student visas. We could not obtain other types of visas because it was too difficult as I could not meet their eligibility criteria. After going through many difficult procedures, I was able to get accepted to a university in Istanbul through which I could apply and obtain a student visa.” (Sami, Male, 25 Y.O.)*

While almost all interviewees entered Türkiye via irregular means, only two who had exceptional situations, such as good economic situations and student visas, could enter Türkiye regularly. Although both interviewees who entered Türkiye were periodically able to reside in Türkiye with different stay permits, they stated that applying for asylum was their main purpose and that they had no intention of applying for other types of residence permits in Türkiye. Overall, as can be seen from the stories of participants in the study, it can be stated that only those Afghans who were in a good economic situation or had exceptional supportive documents, such as an acceptance letter to a Turkish university, could migrate via regular means. It was also observed that participants in the study group preferred to migrate to Türkiye via irregular means due to the complex procedures and high criteria determined by Türkiye to obtain a visa.

## 7.2.2. IRREGULAR IMMIGRATION TO TÜRKİYE

In the neoliberal era, the possibility of navigating the borders of nation-states is available and encouraged by the global market. However, as seen from the participants' experiences in this study, this situation is legally limited to a small class. For refugees and irregular migrants, especially migrants originating from the Global South, there is a restrictive global migration regime. For example, as seen in the case of Türkiye, Türkiye only recognizes the right to become a refugee to those coming from Europe while granting conditional refugee or temporary protection rights to the rest.

Most Afghan immigrants lack legal documents that allow them to cross international borders legally. However, this legal insecurity does not mean that Afghans will remain immobile. They use their social networks and resources to overcome the border barrier, which is where human smugglers come into play (Alimia, 2014). Although human smugglers are not responsible for the reasons for migration, they are defined as organizations responsible for increasing the migration crisis (Reitano & Tinti, 2015). In Article 3 of the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, of which Türkiye is also a signatory, smuggling of migrants is defined as "*the procurement, to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.*" According to Article 79 of the Turkish Penal Code, migrant smuggling is defined as "*any person who, by illegal means and to obtain, directly or indirectly, a material gain: a) enables a non-citizen to enter, or remain, in the country, or b) enables a Turkish citizen or a non-citizen to go abroad.*" In addition, the same article stipulates that the penalty for human smuggling is imprisonment for three to eight years and a judicial fine of up to ten thousand days (Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey, 2004).

When migrants realize that they cannot move without assistance, they require the services of human smugglers. Countries' strict border policies, expensive and lengthy procedures for obtaining documents required for regular migration, migrants' lack of sufficient information about countries' current migration policies, advertising and misinformation about irregular migration by human smugglers, and other factors determine the demand for migrants to resort to illegal routes and use the method of human smuggling. In this context, the second method by which Afghan immigrants come to Türkiye is through irregular means with the help of a human smuggler.

In this study, the use of irregular means mainly refers to the use of human smugglers as well as obtaining visas from the black market or entering the country with a fraudulent visa. Of the 24 participants who participated in the research, 22 entered Türkiye irregularly. While 5 of those who entered Türkiye irregularly used fraudulent visas, the remaining 17 participants entered Türkiye with the help of a human smuggler. Some participants who entered Türkiye with a fraudulent visa described their experiences as follows:

*“Obtaining a visa through regular processes is almost impossible for Afghans. In Afghanistan, some agencies or people offer people a Turkish visa in return for a high amount of money. I knew someone who went to Türkiye this way, and I asked him to give me the address and phone number of the agency... After we received our visas, I paid four thousand dollars for each of my family members’ visas as we had agreed.” (Tawab, Male, 40 Y.O.)*

*“When I moved to Türkiye 8 years ago, obtaining a fraudulent visa with the help of agencies was very easy. There were thousands of agencies in Kabul, all advertising Turkish visas on their websites and the mirrors and doors of their offices. At that time, the price of the visas was also low. Currently, it is almost impossible for anyone to obtain a Turkish visa from the black markets in Afghanistan. At that time, it was rational to obtain a fraudulent visa. While human smugglers were asking for about 800-1000 dollars to get people to Istanbul, with a small difference, we could go to Türkiye much more easily with the help of agencies. I paid 1500 dollars for each visa, which was better than going irregularly with the help of a human smuggler.” (Mustafa, Male, 39 Y.O.)*

From the stories of those who entered Türkiye with a fraudulent visa, it can be observed that they had a better economic situation than those who preferred to enter Türkiye irregularly with the help of human smugglers. It was also observed that all of these participants migrated to Türkiye directly from Afghanistan, and no other country was used for transit. In contrast, of the 17 participants who migrated to Türkiye by crossing borders with the help of human smugglers, it was observed that they organized their smugglers in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran.

The participants who organized their smugglers in Afghanistan to reach Türkiye irregularly had to cross the Iranian border on the migration route to Türkiye. The participants, who were already living in Iran for different purposes and statuses, organized their human smugglers from Iran. The last group of participants, who were living in Afghanistan and could not cross the Iranian border, had organized their human smugglers in Pakistan, crossed into Iran irregularly from the Pakistan-Iran border, and were then able to continue their route from Iran to Türkiye. Elham, who migrated to Türkiye from Afghanistan using the Pakistan and Iran routes, described his migration journey as follows:

*“Because I was planning to migrate to Türkiye with all my family members, including my old mother, I had to find a safe route. There are several routes to Iran and Türkiye. I had to select the easiest and safest option. I found a trustworthy human smuggler, and he told me that taking the Afghanistan-Iran border route was very risky, as there were many patrols and difficult passages. He then said that he could take us to Iran from the Pakistan-Iran border... Then, I went to Nimruz province, which was near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and from there, I first entered Pakistan.” (Elham, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

Elham, who wanted to come to Türkiye from Afghanistan, first stopped in Pakistan. During his journey, he first went to the province of Nimruz, which is on the Pakistani border, and then to Pakistan.

*“We arrived in Nimruz at night, and the human smuggler who was waiting for us in Nimruz put us in a car. After getting into the car, we first went to Pakistan. There were both men and women in the car. The driver was moving too fast. We traveled through the night in Afghanistan and arrived in Pakistan early in the morning. When we arrived in Pakistan, we only took water with us, continued our journey, and went to cities near the Iranian border. We tried five times to cross the Pakistan-Iran border. We tried once each day, and finally, on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, we could enter Iran.” (Elham, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

The second destination of Elham after entering Pakistan was Iran. Afghan immigrants first enter the Iranian border from Pakistan, travel to different cities in Iran, and finally to regions close to Türkiye.

*“Then we went to Tehran, where we had to meet the person helping us cross the Iran-Türkiye border. The Iranian human smuggler took us to Urmia, which is near the Turkish border, and Van. The real challenge started when we attempted to cross the Turkish border. The weather was too cold, and we were afraid that there would be too many border patrols. We also occasionally heard the sounds of the gunshots. We stayed near the Türkiye border for 20 days, and finally, we could cross the Turkish border, and we first entered the Van province.” (Elham, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

One of the most difficult processes for immigrants from Iran is to enter Türkiye. For immigrants who have left difficult roads in Pakistan and Iran, a new challenge is crossing the borders of Türkiye-Iran. Most of the time, immigrants wait for days near the border to enter Türkiye.

*“The human smugglers were changing constantly throughout the journey. They pass us from one person to another. Each of them was responsible for coming with us or passing us from a certain point, and then another person would continue the route. After we entered Van, another person arrived and took us to his car. We came to Ankara in his car. There was also another empty car with no passengers in it. That car was like a security car; going a few kilometers ahead to check the road for possible police patrols or checkpoints. He was constantly reporting to the driver of our car with messages or phone calls about the situation on the road. In this way, we arrived in Ankara in 3 days. Throughout the route*

*from Van to Ankara, we stopped by many places because there were police controls, and we had to wait.” (Elham, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

The migration journey of immigrants who come to Türkiye, mostly through Ağrı and Van, does not end after they enter Türkiye. Afghan immigrants want to travel to the western provinces of Türkiye. Therefore, after Afghan immigrants enter Türkiye, they must go to the provinces they want to live in Türkiye without being caught. While some are caught by security forces at the border or inside the country and are taken to repatriation centers, others are sent to Ankara or Istanbul by smugglers via Erzurum-Bitlis or a different direction without being caught.

In the interviews, participants stated that their migration journey, originating in Afghanistan, proceeding through Iran, and culminating in Türkiye, spanned 25 to 45 days. The average duration for an immigrant to traverse from Afghanistan to Türkiye was approximately one month. As evidenced by the participants' narratives, the process of reaching Türkiye was arduous and protracted for immigrants. The fact that participants who entered Türkiye irregularly with the help of human smugglers were able to organize their migrant smugglers in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran can be attributed to the proliferation of factors, such as technological advancements and increased transportation accessibility. The diverse countries in which participants arranged their migrant smuggling services and the experiences they acquired during this process exemplify the dynamic, complex, and multidimensional nature of international migration (Kuschminder, 2018).

### **7.2.3. CHALLENGES DURING JOURNEY**

All participants stated that they traveled irregularly with the help of a human smuggler and went on a difficult journey to reach Türkiye. Since interviewees migrated irregularly by crossing international borders, such as Iran, Pakistan, and Türkiye, their journeys were quite difficult, laborious, and painful. Those who participated in the interviews were successful ones. However, there was also death on the way. Some participants said they saw dead bodies on the way, and two of them said they witnessed death. Sajad says that he witnessed people die of hunger and cold on the way:

*“I saw two men die with my own eyes. Both of them were Afghans. I am young and can tolerate cold and hunger. I was lucky and strong enough to be able to make my way to Türkiye, but those who died were around 50 or 55 years old and too old and weak to complete their journey. Their body could not stay any longer in that freezing weather without food and water, and they died eventually.” (Sajad, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

Farhad also stated that some people died from hunger, frozen weather, and difficult passages during their journeys. He states the following regarding this situation:

*"The journey is not as easy as others think. The route is not safe. If you are not clever or strong, you cannot overcome the challenges of the route. I knew that the journey was risky, and it was especially challenging for me because I was traveling with all my family members. We are a family of 6. I knew it would be a tough journey, but I did not expect many harsh routes and difficult passages. We returned from death many times during our journey, but crossing the highly frozen mountains was the most difficult part. The rocks cut the feet like knives. Sometimes, we must pass through high rocks and cliffs. Not everyone is fortunate enough to achieve this goal. A woman who was with us throughout the trip lost her balance and fell off the cliff just a few steps before me. No one paid attention to her, and they continued their journey without even looking at her." (Farhad, Male, 38 Y.O.)*

It is also understood that human smugglers use hunger and thirst as weapons along the way. Participants said that those who ran out of water and food had to pay dollars for a loaf of bread. Those with no money were abandoned. Meanwhile, human smugglers maintain their authority and power and create fear with the weapons they carry. In addition, the fact that they only know the way is another disadvantage for immigrants. Samira described her experiences as follows:

*"I was with my family through the journey. We were trying our best not to separate from each other. We were fortunate that we did not lose one another along the way. We tried our best to follow the human smugglers without losing their traces. He was the only person who knew about the route. He was our only hope... There is no good faith in these types of journeys. No one cares about others. You have to be smart to take enough food and water because if you run out of water or food, you have to pay an arm for a loaf of bread only if you were lucky to find some." (Samira, Female, 24 Y.O.)*

Passing dangerous routes and a lack of basic needs such as water and food were not the only challenges the participants faced in their journey. Fear of arrest or being caught by police patrols is another challenging issue among immigrants. Almost all of the participants stated that they always feared being caught by the police throughout their journeys. Rohullah and Zarmina stated the following regarding this situation:

*"I can say that I experienced the most difficult days of my life during my journey to Türkiye. I overcame all of these difficulties to reach Türkiye... I was constantly afraid of getting caught by the police patrols because if I got caught, all of my efforts and the difficulties I bore would be multiplied to zero." (Rohullah, Male, 48 Y.O.)*

*"I escaped from the family of my late husband... If border police caught me on the way to Türkiye, they would deport me back to Afghanistan. If I returned, there would be no option for me but to marry my deceased husband's brother. I was ready to accept death, but not to get caught by the police and sent back to Afghanistan. Getting caught by the police was*

*my only fear in my journey to Türkiye because I could not risk being deported or sent back to Afghanistan.” (Zarmina, Female, 32 Y.O.)*

Some interviewees stated that they were caught by the border police in Türkiye while crossing the border or were caught after successfully crossing the border. However, in both cases, they attempted to move and succeeded. The reasons for migrating, the money spent on migration, and the financial expectations of their families outweigh all other risks and concerns. Therefore, even if immigrants are caught and sent back to Afghanistan or Iran, they attempt to migrate and cross borders repeatedly.

*“Turkish border police caught me two times and sent me back to Iran. I started my journey from the beginning because I could not cross the border. We used different routes each time, and on my third attempt, I could successfully cross the border.” (Zilgay, Male, 29 Y.O.)*

*“After finishing the most critical part of the journey by crossing the Iran-Türkiye border, I was so happy that I could cross the border and enter Türkiye. After I had crossed the border, the human smugglers sent us to a home in the town near the border and said we must wait overnight until they could transfer us to Istanbul... It was late at night when police officers came to the house we were in and took us to the detention center. From there, they took some fingerprints and sent us back to Iran.” (Omran, Male, 24 Y.O.)*

One of the questions sought to be answered throughout the study was how Afghan immigrants navigated barriers in their migration pathways to Türkiye under the influence of Turkish restrictive policies against irregular migration. The interviews conducted with Afghan asylum seekers in this study showed that the participants were aware of the challenges they faced throughout their journey to Türkiye before starting their trip. All interviewees said that they had known people who had migrated to Türkiye irregularly and that they were aware of the risks in the journey, including death. It was also observed that the participants were aware of the risk of being caught and that they would be deported if arrested. Despite this, the participants said that they were ready to take risks and decided to migrate to Türkiye. The only issue they were worried about was their long waiting periods near border cities due to strict border patrols. It was observed that participants tried to overcome this issue by carrying more cash, food, and water, which would help them survive long waiting periods when crossing borders. In addition, all participants said they would still try to come to Türkiye, no matter how difficult it was.

### **7.3. LIFE IN TÜRKİYE: INTERPRETING POST-MIGRATORY EXPERIENCES OF AFGHAN ASYLUM SEEKERS IN ANKARA**

This section analyzes the post-migratory experiences of Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara based on data collected from fieldwork conducted within the scope of this thesis. It highlights the socioeconomic and legal challenges, as well as institutional security and uncertainties in the international protection processes faced by Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara. Regarding socioeconomic and legal issues, this section examines challenges pertaining to the status of Afghan asylum seekers, barriers to accessing health services, difficulties encountered in the educational process, housing problems, obstacles encountered in employment, and restrictions on freedom of movement. Furthermore, in terms of institutional security concerns and uncertainties in the international protection process, this section addresses the difficulties arising from unfamiliarity with immigration laws in Türkiye, fear of apprehension and deportation of Afghan asylum seekers when applying for international protection, uncertainties in the status acquisition process, and bureaucratic obstacles encountered when accessing rights.

#### **7.3.1. SOCIOECONOMIC AND LEGAL CHALLENGES**

This section examines the primary challenges most frequently expressed by Afghan asylum seekers residing in Ankara, based on interview data. Participants experienced significant difficulties in various domains, including uncertainty regarding their legal status in Türkiye, limited access to health services, obstacles in the educational process or access to educational institutions, housing issues, employment challenges, and restrictions on freedom of travel within the country. Within this context, the socioeconomic and legal challenges faced by Afghans are explained, and the structural barriers they encounter, along with their impact on daily life, are analyzed.

##### **7.3.1.1. STATUS PROBLEM**

Afghan asylum seekers residing in Türkiye encounter numerous challenges in their endeavors to establish their presence in the country and obtain official recognition as refugees or achieve a permanent solution to their problems as asylum seekers. The most significant issues faced by Afghan asylum seekers include the protracted duration of their resettlement to a third country, limited quotas for approval by third countries, uncertainty regarding status acquisition, lack of work permits, and inability to access public services (Güler, 2020; Kahraman, 2017; Karakaya & Karakaya, 2021).

Afghan nationals seeking asylum in Türkiye are facing a parallel dual system. On one side of this system is the international protection procedure where individuals can be recognized as “conditional refugees,” and on the other side is the status that includes the determination of refugee status and resettlement in a third country, accessible to very few people. Musa, who has been living in Türkiye for five years and is an international protection applicant, described his experiences regarding the issue as follows:

*“It has been 5 years since I applied for international protection in Türkiye, but I have still not received any answer. My status as an international protection applicant remains unchanged. This status is risky. I cannot rely on this because there is always a probability that my case can be rejected and that I will be deported to Afghanistan. Suppose they provide me with a conditional refugee or an international protection status. In that case, I will leave Türkiye as soon as possible because my relatives living in Canada can sponsor me as a refugee only if I have conditional refugee status.” (Musa, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

Abdullah, who had been living in Türkiye for six years, also mentioned a similar situation. He described his situation as follows:

*“I am stuck in Türkiye. I am not expecting any person or organization to resettle me in a third country. I have my resources. I have friends in Canada who can sponsor me privately through refugee sponsorship programs. However, because I do not have refugee or international protection status, I cannot apply for that program. If I had been granted that status, I would have gone to Canada years ago.” (Abdullah, Male, 45 Y.O.)*

From the interviews, it was observed that one of the problems frequently mentioned by the interviewees was the lack of reliable status and the long processing times of their international protection applications in Türkiye. It was also observed that interviewees were sure of their plans if they had been granted international protection or conditional refugee status, with the help of which they could make their way to migrate legally to third countries. In this context, Canada was one of the most frequently mentioned destination countries, where participants mentioned that they could migrate using their private resources and social ties. Canada is one of the most interesting destination countries for refugees and immigrants because of its friendly immigration policies. Canada has announced different immigration programs to attract immigrants from all over the globe. As of a 2023 report, Canada has welcomed 471,808 immigrants via different streams (IRCC, 2024a). These programs include economic, familial, refugee, humanitarian, and other categories. However, most Afghan asylum seekers residing in Türkiye are unskilled or unable to meet the criteria for economic or skilled immigration to Canada. Consequently, they have attempted to migrate to Canada under refugee schemas. Under this schema, the Canadian government introduced diverse ways of bringing refugees to the

country, such as resettlement under Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR), Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR), and Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) programs. In this context, the majority of Afghans who migrated to Canada mainly consisted of those who entered Canada through the PSR program. The PSR program allows private groups to sponsor eligible refugees abroad under the condition that the private sponsor must support the refugee financially, socially, and emotionally for the sponsorship period, usually up to one year after the refugees arrive in Canada (IRCC, 2024b). In this study, although participants mentioned that they had resources or ties in Canada and wished to sponsor themselves to Canada via PSR, they could not proceed with their application because of their lack of status as refugees, international protection status holders, or conditional refugees in Türkiye.

Concurrently, addressing the issue of the absence of refugee status, certain participants who indicated a lack of resources or connections to facilitate relocation to third countries expressed that their sole prospect lies in being designated as refugees by the UNHCR and subsequently resettled to a third country. Zilgay, who had been living in Türkiye for six years and is an international protection applicant, described his story regarding this situation as follows:

*"I am working in the construction sector in Ankara. I do not know anyone rich or someone who lives in America or anywhere else. My friends in my workplace are also in the same situation. Only one of my friends, whose uncle was living in Australia, could go to Australia with his uncle's assistance. I do not have such ties or resources. I hope to be granted refugee status by UNHCR and resettlement in a third country. However, this is almost impossible. I have been waiting to be resettled or granted refugee status for six years, but there has been no improvement. My current status is no use. Türkiye can deport me anytime they wish to. There is no guarantee." (Zilgay, Male, 29 Y.O.)*

Afghan asylum seekers do not perceive their residence in Türkiye to be permanent, and their primary motivation is to avail themselves of opportunities in third countries. Nevertheless, owing to constrained resettlement quotas, protracted processes, and a lack of refugee or conditional refugee status, Afghan asylum seekers' prospects for resettlement in third countries are diminishing.

### **7.3.1.2. HEALTHCARE PROBLEMS**

Article 25 of the UDHR, adopted in 1948, regarding the right to health, states that: "*1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services, as well as the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood,*

*old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control; 2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.*" This article shows that the right to health is included within the framework of the right to life, which is one of the most fundamental rights.

The following statements are included in Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, one of the other important documents besides the UDHR, regarding the right to health: "*1. The State Parties to the Present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; 2. The measures to be taken by the State Parties to the present Covenant to fully realize this right shall also include measures to a) Provision to reduce the existing birth rate and infant mortality and ensure the healthy development of children; b) Improve all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene; c) Prevent, treat and control epidemic, endemic, occupational and other disease; d) Create the necessary conditions for the provision of all kinds of health service and care in case of illness.*" When we examine Article 12 of the Covenant, we see that the right to health is clearly defined as a right.

The right to health is regulated under the title of "The Right to Protection of Health" in Article 11 of the European Social Charter, which entered into force in 1965. The relevant article includes the following statements: "*To ensure the effective exercise of the right to protection of health, the Contracting Parties undertake, either directly or in cooperation with a public or private organization, to take appropriate measures designed to: 1- Eliminate, as far as possible, the causes of deterioration in health; 2- Provide education and counseling facilities to promote health and increase personal responsibility in health matters; 3- Prevent, as far as possible, epidemics and another disease.*"

Türkiye signed the Revised European Social Charter on October 6, 2004, and took its place among party states. Part 1, Article 11 of the Revised European Social Charter regarding the right to health is regulated as "*Everyone has the right to benefit from all measures enabling him to enjoy the highest possible standard of health attainable.*"

In the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the right to health is included in Article 35 under the title of "Health Care" and is expressed as follows: "*Everyone has the right to benefit from preventive health services and medical treatment within the framework of the conditions specified in national laws and practices. A high level of human health protection must be ensured in the definition and implementation of all Union policies and activities.*" As

can be seen in this article, the right to health is emphasized, and human health is evaluated in the category of rights that must be prioritized.

As can be seen from the international documents mentioned above, in which Türkiye is also a party, access to health services is one of the most urgent problems for Afghan asylum seekers (Buz et al., 2020). The general health insurance of international protection applicants and status holders who do not have any health insurance in Türkiye and cannot afford to pay is covered by the PMM for one year from the date of registration of the international protection application. Although there is no 1-year limitation for those with special needs, for others, at the end of the 1 year, they are required to pay high fees for their treatment or to give up treatment (Leghtas & Sullivan, 2016).

Nasir, one of the interviewees who had been living in Türkiye for ten years and was a construction worker, stated the following regarding his access to healthcare services:

*“My mother is old, and I do not have enough money to take her to the hospital. The same can be said of my wife. I am a man. I can tolerate sickness and pain. However, my wife and old mother were unable to tolerate the pain. They must visit a doctor and receive the appropriate treatment. We do not have any health insurance. Without health insurance, it is impossible for me, who works in construction, to pay doctors’ fees. One time, my wife was very sick, and I had to take her to the hospital. The doctor checked her and asked us to visit him again after three months, but I could not visit the doctor again because I could not afford it. The problem is not only with visiting a doctor. The doctors gave us too many expensive check-ups, and I could not afford them. Apart from these expenses, we cannot buy medicines either because it costs an arm for us.” (Nasir, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

Another problem faced by Afghan asylum seekers is the language barrier in communicating with healthcare personnel in healthcare facilities. One of the limitations is the difficulty in finding a translator who speaks Persian, Dari, or Pashto. Although civil society organizations, such as ASAM and the Turkish Red Crescent, provide support to Afghan immigrants to overcome the language barrier, this support is often insufficient (Buz et al., 2020; Leghtas & Sullivan, 2016). Marya, an interviewee who has lost her mother in Türkiye, described her story regarding the issue as follows:

*“We migrated to Türkiye irregularly. We faced many difficulties reaching Türkiye. We thought that after arriving in Türkiye, we would have a good life. However, this was not the case. When we arrived, we slept on the floor in cold weather for several months. My mother, who had a serious heart disease in Afghanistan, started going badly. At that time, we did not know Turkish. I did not know where to go or how to tell my doctor about my mother’s issues. When we visited the doctor, he wrote some medicines for my mother and said that she would improve. However, my mother’s situation worsened, and we were unable to treat her. We were unable to find good treatment for her, and she died. After my*

*mother died, my father was so upset that he could not treat my mother in Türkiye. He was very angry and said that he would not bury my mother in Türkiye. Eventually, my father deported himself to Afghanistan and took my mother to bury her. Since then, my father has been in Afghanistan, and my other siblings are living in Türkiye.” (Marya, Female, 27 Y.O.)*

Certain participants experienced pre-existing health conditions before their migration and were unable to obtain adequate treatment in Türkiye or were compelled to discontinue treatment due to a lack of health insurance and elevated healthcare costs. The interviewees also reported that Afghan individuals with international protection identification were eligible for healthcare services for only one year. Participants further indicated that a committee report was necessary to extend healthcare insurance, and those who were unable to submit such a report were at a disadvantage. Moreover, some participants reported difficulties in communicating their health concerns due to the absence of interpreters in healthcare facilities, resulting in suboptimal treatment. In this manner, several participants noted challenges in accessing health services due to language barriers and a lack of interpreters in relevant healthcare institutions.

### **7.3.1.3. EDUCATION PROBLEMS**

Article 22 of the 1951 Geneva Convention states that “*1. Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as they accord with their nationals concerning elementary education; 2. The Contracting States shall accord to refugees’ treatment as favorable as possible and, in any event, not less favorable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, concerning education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and the award of scholarships.*”

Article 26 of the UDHR states that “*1. Everyone has the right to education. Education should be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Therefore, elementary school education is compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be available, and higher education shall be equally accessible to all based on merit; 2. Education should be directed toward the full development of human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom. All nations shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among racial or religious communities and shall further the UN’s activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace; 3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.*”

Other agreements and articles related to this subject include the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Articles 11/1, 13/1, and 14; the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), Article 2; and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Article 17.

Education is an important element for immigrants who have sought asylum in Türkiye to integrate with society, adapt, and live a life of cultural integrity during their stay. Therefore, national and international agreements state that education is a natural right for refugees. In this context, in Türkiye, individuals who apply for international protection or have international protection status can participate in education with their international protection identity documents (Güler, 2020). Therefore, the desire to access better educational opportunities is one of the reasons why Afghan nationals migrate to Türkiye (Buz et al., 2020). Although Afghan asylum seekers with international protection identity documents have the right to continue their education, they also have problems participating in education. (Kahraman, 2017). Language barriers and difficulties in meeting school expenses (e.g., transportation, stationery, school uniform, etc.) negatively affect attendance (Buz et al., 2020). In addition, not being able to participate in the education process increases the risk of Afghan children becoming child laborers (Kahraman, 2017).

When asked about the educational situation of the participants in this study, some interviewees stated that they or their children could not attend school for reasons such as arbitrary practices of personnel working in educational institutions, schools not being open to cooperation, difficulties in equivalence procedures, being separated from school for a long time, and child labor. Some interviewees' statements regarding these situations are as follows:

*“My son, who was going to grade 11 in Afghanistan, could not go to school here. After arriving in Türkiye, my son and I went to the Provincial Directorate of National Education in Ankara to register for a high school. When we entered the building, a man rudely said that we were not allowed to enter. When I asked why, he replied rudely and said not to waste time because my documents were not valid. Incidentally, I was able to enter this facility. When I entered the main building and went to the responsible person, he said that my son should take an exam and that his Afghanistan documents were not valid there. They then said that my son should go to Grade 9. My son refused to go to grade 9, and since then, he has not been enrolled in any educational institution.” (Mustafa, Male, 39 Y.O.)*

*“When I wanted to enroll my daughter in school, the principal, who was also a woman, said that she was not able to accept my child because there was no place left. I knew she was lying. This was clear from the way she talked to me. She was lying. Still, she insisted that she was unable to enroll my daughter... After a very lengthy conversation, the principal accepted and enrolled my daughter in school.” (Zarmina, Female, 32 Y.O.)*

*“At first, I thought that we would not stay in Türkiye for long, and because of this, I did not enroll my children in school. But after passing 3 years, when I realized that we could not go to Canada or elsewhere anytime soon, I told my children to go to school, but because it had been years that they did not go to school, they refused to start school after such a long break.” (Abdullah, Male, 45 Y.O.)*

From the study group, two participants, Samira and Marya, who were enrolled in the university, stated that they faced financial difficulties in paying high tuition fees.

*“When I started university 4 years ago, although the tuition fee was high, it was still affordable. However, due to inflation in Türkiye and other issues, tuition fees have increased by multiple times. Last year, because I could not pay the tuition fees, I had to freeze my university and take a one-year break.” (Samira, Female, 24 Y.O.)*

*“It was said to us that the tuition fee would not increase and that it would remain the same until you graduated unless you had exceeded the normal educational period. However, this was not the case. When I enrolled at the university last year, I was paying 7500 Liras, but now I have to pay 25000 Liras, which is difficult for me to pay.” (Marya, Female, 27 Y.O.)*

Similarly, Jamshid, one of the participants, also stated that he wanted to receive a university education, but he could not benefit from this education because the tuition fees of the universities were too high.

*“I also had dreams to go to university like any other young man. However, there is nothing I can do. I cannot pay much for university tuition. I do not have a good job. The money I receive hardly covers my basic needs... I hope one day, if I can resettle to another country, I will continue my education.” (Jamshid, Male, 28 Y.O.)*

Consequently, it can be asserted that Afghan asylum seekers possess the right to access education in Türkiye. However, various factors have either impeded or precluded their participation in educational institutions. These factors include the procedures of public institutions regarding the schooling of Afghan immigrant children, the absence of acceptable equivalence documentation, arbitrary practices of educational institutions, prolonged separation from formal schooling, child labor, financial constraints, and excessive tuition fees in the case of higher education.

#### **7.3.1.4. HOUSING PROBLEMS**

Part 1 of Article 25 of the UDHR states the right to adequate housing as a part of the right to a satisfactory standard of living as follows: *“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including clothing, food,*

*housing, medical care, and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”*

Another international document that states the right to housing is indicated in Article 11 of the ICESCR as follows: *“The State Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The State Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international cooperation based on free consent.”*

According to the LFIP, individuals who apply for international protection or have protection status must meet their housing needs by themselves. However, Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye have difficulty finding a place to stay and paying rent. In addition, some asylum seekers experience social and economic problems due to a lack of support or acquaintances in the satellite cities to which they are directed (Leghtas & Sullivan, 2016). In the satellite cities where they have to reside, asylum seekers are expected to find their accommodation and pay for the rent of these accommodations from their budgets (Kartal & Başçı, 2014). In this study, participants stated the following regarding housing problems:

*“The house owner said that he has made some restorations in the home and that the price is now higher. He asked for a higher price than it would be. Wherever I went to see, all of them brought some issue and asked for more rent than it was mentioned in the advertisement.” (Zilgay, Male, 29 Y.O.)*

*“The majority of them asked me for a guarantor to rent their home, but how can I find someone to be my guarantor? They don’t think that I am foreign, and I do not know anyone to help me with this issue.” (Rohullah, Male, 48 Y.O.)*

*“I found an apartment on the internet and called the number which was written there. I think he understood that I am a foreigner because my Turkish is not good. Then, without giving any information, he said that the house owner did want to rent the apartment to a foreigner.” (Tawab, Male, 40 Y.O.)*

*“It was obvious that his house had been empty for months because it was in very bad condition. But when he found a foreigner who was in need, he asked for a higher price.” (Bashir, Male, 47 Y.O.)*

While Zilgay and Bashir stated that high amounts were demanded in the case of renting a house to a foreigner in Türkiye, Rohullah stated that he faced problems finding a guarantor

when trying to rent a house. Similarly, Tawab described his experience of renting a house to a foreigner. A similar problem was experienced by Fahad, who described his experiences as follows:

*“After finding a suitable apartment, when I went to the Directorate of Migration Management in Ankara, they said that you cannot register your address in this neighborhood because it is closed.” (Fahad, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

Fahad’s problem was another challenge faced by foreigners in terms of housing. Türkiye limited the number of foreigners residing in a neighborhood to prevent them from concentrating in certain regions. Although the number of foreigners who could reside in a neighborhood was regulated to not exceed 25 percent of the Turkish nationals residing in the same neighborhood, this decreased to 20 percent as of July 1, 2022 (Ministry of the Interior, 2022). Accordingly, foreigners no longer reside in regions or neighborhoods that have completed this quota.

Overall, the interviews conducted with Afghan asylum seekers in this study revealed that the participants’ issues regarding accommodation opportunities in Türkiye included not renting a house to foreigners, high rents, requests for guarantors, and quotas in which foreigners could reside in a region or neighborhood.

#### **7.3.1.5. CHALLENGES IN EMPLOYMENT**

When we look at international sources, we see that the right to work is accepted as a fundamental human right (Büyükçalık, 2014). In international law, we see the first regulation on the right to work in the UDHR. Article 23 of the UDHR clearly states that everyone has the right to work, to freely choose their employment, to just and favorable conditions of work, and to be protected against unemployment. In this respect, it constitutes an important right for human rights and freedom. Although everyone needs a job and income to sustain their lives, they must live in a social order that protects their dignity and allows their personality to develop. The right to work is defined within this framework as the right of everyone able and willing to work to earn an income that benefits their human dignity (Kaya & Ertuğrul Yılmazer, 2016).

Another text regulating the right to work is the ICESCR. Part III of this Covenant, under Article 6, states that: *“1. The State Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work, which he freely chooses or accepts and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right; 2. The steps to be taken by a State Party to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include technical and vocational guidance and training programs, policies, and*

*techniques to achieve steady economic, social, and cultural development and full and productive employment under conditions safeguarding fundamental political and economic freedoms to the individual.”*

The right to work is also included in the European Social Charter. The first article in the second part of the European Social Charter (ESC) is as follows: *“1. To accept as one of their primary aims and responsibilities the achievement and maintenance of a high and stable level of employment as possible, with a view to the attainment of full employment; 2. To effectively protect the right of the worker to earn a living in an occupation freely entered upon; 3. To establish or maintain free employment services for all workers; 4. To provide or promote appropriate vocational guidance, training, and rehabilitation.”*

As can be seen from the international documents regarding the right to work, it can be stated that the right to work is not limited to having a job. Along with having a job, the working environment and working conditions are also important. In this context, the right to work security; the right to demand that workplaces be suitable for working and health conditions; the right to demand that working hours be kept at appropriate levels; the right to fair wages; the right to paid holidays; the right to rest; the right to have free time; the right to demand that jobs are suitable for one's age, strength, and gender; and the right to social security can be listed (Kaya & Ertuğrul Yılmazer, 2016).

In Türkiye, international protection applicants and status holders can only obtain a work permit with legal status six months after their international protection application date. In addition, the employer must make work permit applications to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and the employer must submit other documents, including the income and expense balance sheet for the previous month approved by the related authorities (Karakaya & Karakaya, 2021). It is also mandatory for the workplace to employ five Turkish citizens for every foreign employee (Leghtas & Sullivan, 2016). However, many studies have determined that employers are reluctant to employ Afghan asylum seekers. The majority of Afghan asylum seekers work in daily jobs or informal sectors such as construction, shepherding, factories, and textile workshops (Buz et al., 2020).

Although there are no legal obstacles for Afghan asylum seekers to obtain a work permit six months after the date of their international protection application, there are many difficulties in accessing the right to work. The fact that application procedures take time, it is a process that depends on employers, and employers are reluctant to apply for work permits makes it difficult for Afghan asylum seekers to access this right. Consequently, this situation forced Afghan

asylum seekers to work in an unsecured manner in the informal sector. In this manner, since Afghan asylum seekers do not have work permits, their labor is exploited by employers. As understood from the participants' experiences and statements, it was observed that Afghan asylum seekers receive low wages, sometimes their money is not paid by employers or is paid late, and individuals who have had a work accident cannot meet any demands. Some participants stated the following regarding this situation:

*“Most of the time, I work more than 12 hours a day, but I do not receive what I have to. There are three more Afghans in my workplace, and none of them are paid well.” (Musa, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

*“Although my salary is below minimum wage, I have never received my salary on time. The restaurant is always extremely crowded. Customers are always present. But whenever I ask for my salary, they say that we do not have money now and that I should wait for a few days.” (Mastora, Female, 28 Y.O.)*

*“Once, I broke my right leg on the construction site where I was working formerly, but I did not receive anything. I even had to pay for hospital expenses from my pocket. I had to pay a large amount of money to the hospital because I did not have health insurance, and my employers also did not cover any of the expenses.” (Rohullah, Male, 48 Y.O.)*

*“However, my job is not that difficult compared to my job while I was living in Pakistan, I am still not happy about the payment I am receiving. The economic situation in Türkiye is poor. Everything is expensive, and because I am underpaid, I face difficulties in affording my life.” (Fahad, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

From the fieldwork, it was also observed that the participants were reluctant to defend themselves against the exploitations they faced and to apply a complaint mechanism for reasons such as their asylum applications being affected and concerns about being sent back because they were working without a work permit. Rohullah, who broke his legs while working at a construction site and did not receive any help from his employer, stated that he did not intend to complain about his employer because he was working unofficially and was afraid that he might be sent back to Afghanistan. He described his experience with this situation as follows:

*“I could not risk the life of my family by registering a complaint against my employer. I knew nothing would happen to my employer. In a worse situation, he had to pay a fine and continue his work and life again. He was rich, and paying a fine was nothing for him, but for me, I could not risk it. Because I was working without a work permit or insurance, I was afraid that I would get deported if I filed a complaint.” (Rohullah, Male, 48 Y.O.)*

Among the participants, there were also some undergraduate as well as graduate students. Some of them had completed their undergraduate education in Afghanistan, and some in

Türkiye. Marya, who is a graduate student and has also completed her undergraduate degree in Ankara, stated the following regarding her experiences with employment:

*"I can speak Dari, Pashto, Turkish, and English very well and fluently. I have completed my undergraduate education in Ankara, and I am now about to complete my thesis and receive my graduate degree. I have many certificates. However, because I am a foreigner and an Afghan asylum seeker, none of the employers preferred me. I have applied to hundreds of jobs, but none of them has even shortlisted me for an interview. Employers with well-paid jobs and insurance do not prefer asylum seekers or foreign workers. They always prefer their citizens. They only need us in jobs with low payments where they can skip insurance and taxes. In large institutions or organizations, because they cannot skip taxes or cannot hire someone illegally, they never prefer to hire a foreigner, and if you are an Afghan and asylum seeker, this makes the situation even worse." (Marya, Female, 27 Y.O.)*

Afghan asylum seekers generally experience severe employment problems. According to the interviews, it can be stated that Afghan asylum seekers work for very low wages, their money is not paid by employers or is paid late, individuals who have a work accident cannot make any demand, they avoid applying to a complaint mechanism in case they face any problem regarding their employment due to their fear of being deported because they do not have a work permit, and employers prefer to hire Turkish citizens instead of Afghans or foreigners in well-paid jobs or jobs with insurance.

#### **7.3.1.6. ISSUES RELATED TO FREEDOM OF TRAVEL**

Article 13 of the UDHR states that "*1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state; 2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to their country.*"

As a result of the interviews conducted with Afghan asylum seekers in this study, one of the problems that participants frequently mentioned was related to freedom of travel. Some participants stated the following regarding this situation:

*"I could not go to Istanbul because the Migration Management did not give me a travel permit. The construction job in Istanbul was only for three months, and they were paying two times higher than what I was earning in Ankara." (Nasir, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

*"They rejected my application to change my province from Ankara. They said that they would change it only if I had a work permit and insurance. Because I did not have a work permit, I was not able to change my province." (Omran, Male, 24 Y.O.)*

*“It is like a prison. I cannot go to another province to visit my friends because they do not give me a travel permit. Even not for one day.” (Nawab, Male, 25 Y.O.)*

Afghan asylum seekers or Afghans subject to the international protection regulated in LFIP who seek to change their current province of residence or registration must submit an application to the provincial directorate of immigration management in their respective provinces to request a change in province. Only those who met the criteria can change their provinces upon the completion of the evaluations. Meanwhile, international protection applicants or status holders are subject to travel permits to temporarily leave their provinces of residence. People who want to move within the country must obtain a permit from the provincial directorate of immigration management in the province they are in and show it during a possible check on the road. Otherwise, they may face the risk of deportation.

Based on the interviewees' statements, the issues faced by participants in this regard can be categorized into two forms: the issue related to permanently changing the provinces in which they are registered, and the issue of obtaining a travel permit to leave their registered provinces for short periods for various purposes, such as visiting friends residing in another province, or other reasons that may necessitate temporary departure from their registered provinces. It was observed that some participants applied to change their provinces of residence; however, their applications were either not concluded or were concluded negatively, and they were unable to affect the change in question unless they met the necessary conditions for changing provinces. It was determined that freedom of movement was restricted, and even if participants found employment opportunities in another province, they could not meet the conditions for applying for a change in the province or temporarily leaving their registered provinces because of their inability to obtain travel permits from the relevant authorities. Consequently, it has been posited that Afghan asylum seekers' freedom of movement is constrained.

### **7.3.2. INSTITUTIONAL SECURITY AND UNCERTAINTIES IN THE ASYLUM PROCESS**

This section examines the institutional security challenges and uncertainties encountered by Afghan asylum seekers during the asylum process based on the findings of the field study. The discrepancies or omissions between immigration laws in Türkiye, specifically LFIP, and their implementation cause individuals in need of protection to experience significant uncertainty regarding their legal status and the future. This situation raises various concerns, such as difficulties encountered in the international protection application process due to immigrants'

unfamiliarity with the country's immigration laws, uncertainties in status acquisition, obstacles encountered in accessing rights, and apprehension or deportation of individuals in need of protection when applying for protection in Türkiye because the majority of people who apply for protection in Türkiye enter the country irregularly. In this context, the institutional insecurities experienced by Afghan asylum seekers and the challenges in comprehending legal processes are examined in detail.

### **7.3.2.1. BEING STRANGER TO IMMIGRATION LAWS**

National legislation, LFIP Article 70, guarantees that applicants are informed about the procedures to be followed, their rights and obligations, how to fulfill them, the consequences of not fulfilling their obligations or refusing to cooperate with the authorities, and the procedures and time limits for appeal. The same article also stated that interpretation services should be provided to applicants upon request.

The interviews conducted with Afghan asylum seekers in this study revealed that they were unfamiliar with the immigration laws and legal systems in Türkiye. Immigrants constantly seek information to eliminate the uncertainty they experience (Horst & Grabska, 2015). However, the study concluded that the only source that responded to immigrants' search for information was the community or people close to them. When official authorities sufficiently disseminate no informative resources to asylum seekers, this adds to the extremely limited verbal rejection that visitors receive when they go to the administration to apply, stating that registration procedures are closed or that they cannot register.

Nawab, who had been living in Ankara for eight years as an international protection applicant, and Elham, who had been living in Ankara for five years, stated the following regarding the situation:

*"We had the UNHCR document in our hand that clearly stated to refer to Ankara Provincial Directorate of Migration Management to register for international protection. But when we went there, the officer told us that they were no longer making new registrations in Ankara." (Nawab, Male, 25 Y.O.)*

*"Their negative response destroyed me for a moment when they said I cannot apply for international protection. I thought I had gone through these challenging routes for nothing. However, another Afghan who was sitting there approached me and told me to come tomorrow. The man said that today, it was Monday, and it was too crowded here because it was at the start of the week. When I visited there again the next day, they registered my application without any problem." (Elham, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

According to LFIP Article 65, to be included in the international protection procedure in Türkiye and to apply for international protection, individuals must apply in person to the governorate. One interviewee was unfamiliar with the registration procedure in Türkiye because he did not know that each family member should be present in person in the immigration administration when making an international protection application. He believed that he could apply this to his children and wife because that was how he did things in Afghanistan.

*“I went to the immigration office with my son. The officer began to ask questions about my family. When he asked where they were, I said, at the house of my relative near the immigration office. The officer then asked again if they were in Türkiye, and I replied yes. The officer then began to talk nervously and told me to bring all of them to the immigration office. In Afghanistan, I can do the work of my children and wife without them being present. I thought the same was also true here: I thought I could register, and there was no need for them to come with me. I did not know of the rules that worked differently. My relatives living there were also unaware of these rules. They could not help me or inform me about the rules because, at that time, they were living irregularly. There was no one to inform me about the rules here.” (Mirza, Male, 44 Y.O.)*

Similarly, another interviewee who had entered Türkiye via irregular means believed that only those who had entered Türkiye legally or with a visa could apply for international protection. Barylalai, who entered Türkiye irregularly 11 years ago, stated that he did not apply for international protection just after his entry to Türkiye. He mentioned that he made his international protection application a few months after he entered Türkiye because he thought that an international protection application was only for those who had entered Türkiye legally. He stated the following regarding this situation:

*“I met an Afghan who came here irregularly and had an international protection ID card. After a conversation with the guy, I decided to go to the migration office and register for international protection. This is a different feeling. For the entire period, I was living in fear of getting caught by the police because I did not have any documents or ID. All the other Afghans in my workplace were in the same situation. None of us had any ID or international protection application, thinking that it was not for us.” (Barylalai, Male, 42 Y.O.)*

Another research participant who migrated to Türkiye irregularly with the assistance of a human smuggler stated that instead of applying for international protection, he paid a person to apply for a touristic residence permit in Türkiye. While a tourist residence permit is typically issued to those who enter Türkiye legally and fulfill certain criteria for obtaining such a residence permit, it constitutes a distinct type of stay from those who reside in Türkiye under

an international protection framework. However, the interviewee indicated that he was offered a tourist-type residence permit in exchange for a substantial amount of money. He narrated his experiences as follows:

*“He said that with international protection ID or Kimlik, you cannot travel freely. He told me that he could get me a tourist-type residence permit if I paid him money. He convinced me to pay him. But after he took my money, he disappeared after a few days.” (Omran, Male, 24 Y.O.)*

The study concludes that asylum seekers are susceptible to fraud and irregularities due to their insufficient knowledge of immigration laws and regulations. Furthermore, it was observed that immigrants who were unable to access information regarding immigration laws and systems might resort to their immediate communities or surrounding individuals for guidance, potentially leading to victimization through fraud or the commission of additional irregularities in the host country.

#### **7.3.2.2. FEAR OF DEPORTATION WHEN APPLYING FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION**

Article 4 of the LFIP stipulates that no one within the scope of this law may be sent to a place where he/she will be subject to torture, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment, or where his/her life or freedom is threatened because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. In this manner, the LFIP has, in principle, guaranteed the prohibition of refoulement and regulated foreigners who will be subject to the prohibition of refoulement in a manner that is compatible with the Geneva Convention and its definition of a refugee.

In line with Geneva Convention Article 31, national legislation, LFIP Article 65, has ruled that asylum seekers who apply within a reasonable period, provided that they can explain their reasons, will not be subject to criminal proceedings for their irregular entry and stay in the country's territory and that the decision regarding this will be evaluated together with the applicant's unique situation and the reason for their arrival. Therefore, national and international legislation are in harmony in that asylum seekers who arrive in foreign countries irregularly because of the risk of persecution from their countries of origin are evaluated within the scope of asylum law, not within the scope of criminal law.

As mentioned above, according to national legislation, asylum seekers will be provided with all types of facilities to effectively carry out their applications when they explain their irregular

stay to the competent authority with reasonable justifications within a reasonable period. However, in-depth interviews revealed that this is not the case in immigration practice. Being deported because they are detected in irregular situations during the application is a serious concern, and this is the extreme fear of asylum seekers in irregular situations.

*“Because I heard people were arrested in the migration administration when they wanted to make international protection applications, I thought it was only for those who entered Türkiye legally. With the fear of deportation, I refrained from going to that place. However, after a lengthy conversation with that guy, I decided to go to the migration office and make an international protection application.” (Baryalai, Male, 42 Y.O.)*

*“I was afraid that if I went to the immigration office, they would capture me and deport me to Afghanistan because I did not have a visa.” (Omran, Male, 24 Y.O.)*

*“I was in contact with some of the Afghans who were with us during our migration journey. Some were directly deported when they went to the immigration administration of the city where they resided. I was also afraid that this would happen to me, and I was afraid to visit the immigration administration. But then some other Afghans who were living there told me that because I am not single and I am with my family, there is a possibility that they would not deport me.” (Fahad, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

Some participants in the same situation developed different solutions to overcome this challenge. For instance, one of the interviewees mentioned that he often sent friends who were living legally in Türkiye to the directorate of immigration management to obtain information regarding the issue before visiting the facility in person.

*“We could not risk deportation. Before we went to the immigration office in person, we sent someone trustworthy to ask about the issue and observe the situation there.” (Samira, Female, 24 Y.O.)*

*“It was not rational to just enter the building without knowing what would happen to you. In particular, it is not after arriving at Türkiye by passing these dangerous routes. Of course, I sent someone to bring me information about the situation in the immigration office beforehand.” (Rohullah, Male, 48 Y.O.)*

Based on the interviews, almost all participants who entered Türkiye irregularly doubted the validity of the legislation’s legal requirements. The main reason for this can be described as negligence in the practice of these laws. This situation generally concludes that the obstacles to effective application and fear of deportation that block the right to effective application have not been eliminated.

### 7.3.2.3. UNCERTAINTY IN STATUS ACQUISITION PROCESSES AND NAVIGATING RIGHTS

According to Article 75 of LFIP, it has been ruled that an interview should be conducted with the applicant within 30 days from the date of registration to render an efficient and fair decision. As previously mentioned, status determination can be conducted through interviews with individuals. In this respect, the interview mentioned in the LFIP was a status-determination interview. In this context, it has been stated that the applicants will be interviewed within 30 days, and the date and place of the interview should be notified to the applicant.

Recording asylum seekers' claims, investigating the accuracy of their statements, and deciding on them is, as expected, a very important stage for asylum seekers. The national legislation, LFIP Article 78, also states that the status determination interview or international protection applications should be finalized by the General Directorate within six months of registration. Additionally, the applicant must be informed that a decision cannot be made within this period.

As stated under the title of General Procedures, it is stipulated in the law that status determination interviews regarding international protection applications should be held within 30 days after the application (Article 75 of the LFIP) and that the interview should be concluded within six months (Article 78 of the LFIP). However, studies have shown that one of the main sources of uncertainty experienced by Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye is that international protection applicants do not have information about when, where, and under what conditions the status determination interview, which determines their future, will be held (Biner & Biner, 2019). Fieldwork has shown that interviewees have experienced this uncertain process for a long time.

The participants in this study, Sami, who has been living in Türkiye for six years, and Farhad, who has been living in Türkiye for eight years, are international protection applicants who have been waiting for a decision on their application in uncertainty for many years. While Sami and Farhad are living in uncertainty as they are waiting for their status-determination interviews, which will determine their future, the cases of Tawab and Farshad, other participants in this study, are different, as they have moved to another step of uncertainty due to the rejection of their international protection applications. They describe their experiences as follows:

*"It has been 6 years, and I am still waiting for an interview. I do not know when they will call me for an interview and how much more I should wait for it." (Sami, Male, 25 Y.O.)*

*“My brother said that refugee status determination was needed for him to sponsor me to Canada. However, when I went to immigration management and asked them to take an interview, they simply told me to wait. But it never happened.” (Farhad, Male, 38 Y.O.)*

*“After waiting 6 years, finally they called me for an interview. However, this was not as expected. At the end of the interview, they asked me to bring some documents from Afghanistan, which I could not bring, and eventually, my application was refused.” (Tawab, Male, 40 Y.O.)*

*“It has been a few days since I received the negative decision of my interview. The interview decision, which I have been waiting for all these years, is unfortunately negative, and I am soon to be deported. I do not know what to do now. Going to Europe is difficult and expensive. I also do not have enough time because they said to me that I have to leave Türkiye in 15 days.” (Farshad, Male, 48 Y.O.)*

The findings obtained from the interviews conducted in this study showed that one of the most serious reasons for the severity of uncertainty experienced by Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye is the fear of deportation and that these fears are not eliminated by any authority. As can be seen from the experiences of Farshad, who had been given a negative status decision, he stated that after being called to the administration to be notified of the decision, he was told to leave Türkiye without mentioning his right to appeal by the officers. However, national legislation, LFIP Article 70, stipulates that applicants should be informed of the procedure, rights, and obligations. As can be seen from the case of Farshad, these provisions have been problematic in practice. Meanwhile, according to LFIP Article 80, if the decision given after the evaluation of the applicant is negative, the applicant is given the right to make an administrative appeal to the International Protection Assessment Commission or a judicial appeal to the Administrative Court within a specific period. In addition, according to the national legislation LFIP Article 80/e, asylum seekers who have used administrative appeals or judicial remedies against the negative decision given about asylum seekers are allowed to stay in the country until the appeal is concluded. Therefore, asylum seekers who have made their asylum application to the official authorities but whose application has been given a negative decision as a result of the evaluation cannot be deported until the decision is finalized in the administrative appeal or judicial remedy.

As mentioned above, when there is a lack of information on immigration laws, the negligence of authorities in informing immigrants about their rights, not implementing rights given to immigrants, and the lack of sufficient information on the issue are added to the immigration practices that have caused years of uncertainty to Afghan asylum seekers in

Türkiye, serious violations of rights emerge. The procedures and practices that asylum seekers encounter during the asylum process, which cost their lives, are highly related to the field of law as they are subject to legal bases. As observed from the experiences of the participants in this study, the field of law has symbolic power in the asylum field. The field of law, which has historically played a functional role in shaping social life and the process of legitimizing the authority of the sovereign, is an instrument of symbolic violence in terms of assigning legal positions to social actors (Özpolat, 2023).

When asylum seekers, as subjects of a process they have never experienced before in a foreign country, are not informed about immigration laws since the beginning of the post-migration process, and the fact that this lack of knowledge is not remedied by relevant authorities is added, it is unfortunately not surprising that asylum seekers are subject to legal rights losses and are subject to irregularities and negligence by those whose knowledge and experience they seek in the hope of attaining the rights. In this context, it is pertinent to note that the practices of authorized authorities within the migration management system contribute to the experiences of asylum seekers who encounter difficulties in effectively accessing their rights and are subjected to rights violations and procedural irregularities.

## **7.4. SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF AFGHAN ASYLUM SEEKERS IN TÜRKİYE**

In the preceding section, the post-migratory challenges encountered by the participants regarding their socioeconomic circumstances, legal obstacles, institutional security, and uncertainties in the asylum process were examined based on their subjective narratives. This section discusses the strategies developed to address these difficulties. Based on the findings from the fieldwork conducted in this study, the strategies developed by the participants can be analyzed using short-term and long-term survival strategies. Short-term strategies encompass the methods developed by participants to sustain their daily lives in Türkiye, whereas long-term strategies comprise the future aspirations of participants that guided their lives in Türkiye.

### **7.4.1. SHORT-TERM SURVIVAL STRATEGIES**

In this part of the study, based on the daily life narratives of participants, the survival strategies developed by asylum seekers were described by examining the skills they use, tactics, and the resistance styles they apply. Considering that almost all the participants considered their stay in Türkiye as temporary, they developed some short-term strategies to deal with the problems they encountered during their stay in Türkiye as asylum seekers. These strategies can

be described as tactics developed to deal with the issues they face in their daily lives, tactics in dealing with challenges in working life, and tactics to solve the problems they face in their social lives.

#### 7.4.1.1. TACTICS IN DAILY LIFE

Immigrants generally remain silent against the insults and words spoken to them on the street or at work, or they do not consciously react negatively and remain neutral when they cannot receive wages from the workplace they work in. In this study, for instance, one of the interviewees, Sami, stated that he did not have any problems with any local people, but he stated that other people in his workplace who knew that he was from Afghanistan and an asylum seeker constantly teased him with negative comments.

*“I know if I show a reaction, most probably they would fire me. I am sure nothing would happen to my Turkish colleagues. Therefore, the best method is to ignore these factors. Although I feel bad when they tease me, I always hide my emotions and ignore what they say.” (Sami, Male, 25 Y.O.)*

Sami stated that although he was upset and angry with the comments made by people around him in his workplace, he did not react in any way. When he responded to these teasing and negative comments or argued with the people in question, he consciously chose to ignore them because he thought that there would be an attitude towards him at his workplace, and he could lose his job.

Similarly, another interviewee, Fahad, who worked in the textile industry, stated that some of his local colleagues said bad things to him. However, he remained silent because he did not want to create a problem.

*“Besides the economic situation in Türkiye and receiving lower wages than I deserve, I also have to tolerate the bad words of the Turks in my workplace. I am trying my best not to react. I never want to create a problem, and that is why I just listen to what they say without showing any reaction.” (Fahad, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

Jamshid, who is working in a restaurant, said that he was subjected to statements such as “You took our bread from us” by other employees at his workplace. He said that he either remained silent or tried to respond by doing well because he did not want a fight to break out in response to what was said to him. He was afraid that if the issue became larger and the police came, he would be deported to Afghanistan because he was working without a work permit. He also stated that he preferred to remain silent and leave the conversation because he had recently

received conditional refugee status and was waiting for resettlement in a third country. He mentioned that sooner or later, he would be resettled in another country, and until that time, he would try his best not to engage in any type of argument with local people in his workplace or anywhere else.

*“At least once a day, I hear the sentence saying that you took our bread from us. It is normal for me to hear these words from other employees in my workplace, but sometimes, I hear the same words from customers in the restaurant. The only thing I do is remain silent. I cannot risk entering into an argument because if a fight broke out, the police would come and deport me. Apart from the topic of our argument, they would deport me because I do not have a work permit. In addition, I have recently received conditional refugee status and will go to another country sooner or later; and I do not want to risk it by entering an argument.” (Jamshid, Male, 28 Y.O.)*

Marya, who is a graduate student and international protection status holder, stated that she is pretending not to hear the negative comments her classmates make about her. She described her experiences as follows:

*“All of my classmates are educated people. However, they still do not know how to talk to a girl or how to make comments in the classroom. They are always trying to tease me directly or indirectly in class. In class, I always hear sentences saying that foreigners have come to our country and can enter our universities easily and freely. I know they are saying these words to me because I am the only foreigner in the class, but I pretend not to hear them because I do not want to argue with them. I know them very well. Their purpose is to start an argument, but I prefer not to respond because I know they are all graduate students and are well aware of the laws.” (Marya, Female, 27 Y.O.)*

Abdullah, an international protection applicant who runs a small business in Ankara, stated that he always tries to change the subject and refrains from starting conversations with locals about immigrants or refugees. He also mentioned that he did not want to risk his business or life in Türkiye. He highlighted that he hoped to resettle in a third country and that these tactics were good ways to deal with the situation until he left Türkiye.

*“I try my best to do the same until I go to a third country. I cannot risk my business and the future of my family, which is why I always try to change the subject and refrain from talking about refugees. This is the best option for me. I am running a business, and I am constantly in contact with locals. I can't ignore them completely, but I can change the topic or refrain from talking about sensitive issues.” (Abdullah, Male, 45 Y.O.)*

As can be seen, the behaviors of the participants, such as keeping quiet, remaining silent, maintaining composite, pretending not to hear, not engaging in discussion, not responding to taunts, changing the subject, and leaving the environment, can be mentioned as tactics

developed by asylum seekers to deal with the problems they face in their daily lives. It was also observed that participants preferred or developed these tactics by considering them a short-term strategy to sustain their lives in Türkiye. They highlighted their intentions to leave Türkiye or follow these strategies until they were resettled in a third country or left Türkiye.

#### **7.4.1.2. TACTICS IN WORKING LIFE**

The fact that asylum seekers have to work to sustain their lives where they settle directs them to find any job they can as soon as possible. As mentioned in the previous section under the title of challenge in employment, it was seen that Afghan asylum seekers work for very low wages, their money is not paid by employers or is paid late, and individuals who have a work accident cannot make any demand; they avoid applying to a complaint mechanism in case they face any problem regarding their employment due to the fear of deportation, and employers' preferences in hiring Turkish citizens instead of Afghans or foreigners in well-paid jobs. When asylum seekers who somehow come to Ankara start working, they resort to tactics to deal with some of the problems they face in their employment lives.

Sajad, a construction worker in Ankara, explained his good performance as a tactic to attract his employer's attention and gain his trust. Consequently, his good performance led his employer to avoid risking losing his best employee, and he was offered an increase in his salary.

*“I can say I am the most favorite employee of my employer. No one else in my workplace can do their job as well as I can. I think this is the only reason my employer raised my salary. This was because he could not risk losing his best employee. After all, he knew I was receiving too many job offers with good payments from others.” (Sajad, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

As stated earlier, some of the participants had problems, such as not receiving their wages or their wages being paid late by employers. To cope with this situation, the participants developed some tactics. For instance, asylum seekers started to prefer jobs where wages were paid weekly or daily rather than jobs where wages were paid monthly, or they demanded to receive their payments daily or weekly when making an agreement with employers. Some of the participants stated the following regarding the situation:

*“I told some lies to my employer and convinced him to pay me my salary weekly.” (Bashir, Male, 47 Y.O.)*

*“It has been a few months since I started to receive my salary daily. Although the salary for my previous months is still due, at least now I am receiving my salary on time. I do not leave the restaurant until I receive my daily payments. Sometimes the manager comes late,*

*but I wait for him for hours until he arrives and gives my money.” (Mastora, Female, 28 Y.O.)*

*“When I worked in the textile sector, they paid the salaries monthly. This was the main reason I left and started working in a bakery. In the baking sector, most people are paid weekly or daily. Only those who are experts and are permanent employees receive their salaries monthly because their salary is too high, and they also have insurance.” (Mirza, Male, 44 Y.O.)*

In addition, some interviewees stated that when they could not receive money, they asked for help from their friends who had come before them and knew the environment better. Tawab, who works in a local market, stated the following regarding the situation:

*“My friend advised me to wait a few months. He said that after the summer holidays, most employees would leave their jobs because of their school. He told me to wait until that time, and when the time comes that there is no one left to work or when I realize they need employees, I can ask for my salary or threaten my employer by leaving the job.” (Tawab, Male, 40 Y.O.)*

As almost all participants had experienced not being paid or being paid late, they started to tactically choose jobs where they could receive only weekly or daily wages. When they cannot receive wages at the end of the week or day, they immediately quit that job and start looking for another person or ask for advice from friends with better experience dealing with these issues.

On the other hand, in cases where participants cannot make any demand due to a workplace injury or accident, employers do not prefer foreigners for well-paid jobs, or employees cannot use any complaint mechanism, they give up struggling and leave justice to God.

*“I am not capable of doing anything. I leave it to God. God will ask him the questions that I could not ask.” (Rohullah, Male, 48 Y.O.)*

As can be seen, asylum seekers developed tactics such as asking for help from people who were more experienced than themselves when they could not receive their wages, attracting the attention of their employers by working harder and better or showing good work performance, preferring to work in short-term and daily jobs to overcome the issue of not being paid or being paid late, getting their wages in advance, and, when seeking justice is not possible, putting up with it, and leaving the situation to God.

#### 7.4.1.3. TACTICS IN SOCIAL LIFE

While the tactics or strategies developed to address the challenges Afghan asylum seekers encounter in employment and daily life play a crucial role in the survival of asylum seekers in the host country, their survival strategies extend far beyond these domains. Although the strategies employed by participants to manage the difficulties they face in their daily lives and employment are described in the preceding sections, this section interprets a broader array of approaches that participants have developed to navigate the challenges they encounter in their social lives, the asylum process, and other aspects of their lives as asylum seekers.

The majority of the participants stated that they intended to present themselves as more victimized than they were to meet their needs or receive some kind of aid from humanitarian aid associations. Some participants stated the following regarding the issue:

*“IHH<sup>19</sup> helps only people with needs. That is why I always try to show that I need help putting forward that I am unemployed.” (Farhad, Male, 38 Y.O.)*

*“There are some generous and rich people whom I know from the mosque. Because I am always talking about the hardships of my life, they sometimes give me cash or buy something for my house.” (Elham, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

*“My wife knows some humanitarian organizations that are providing aid to refugees. I am working, and my salary is enough to run our lives, but my wife is always pretending and showing that we are more victimized or in need of help.” (Mirza, Male, 44 Y.O.)*

In the same manner, some participants stated that they had presented themselves as having more needs or showed themselves as deserving of receiving more aid or attention at the immigration office to gain legal status. They prepare themselves by learning the answers they need to give and the subtleties of the subject from their friends who had previously gone to the immigration office to obtain an ID or who had been interviewed to determine their status. Rohullah, an international protection status holder, stated that he had found and taken advice from people who had passed their interview or had received their conditional refugee status before going to his interview. Rohullah mentioned the following statements regarding this issue:

*“I could not risk going to the interview without preparation. I found and spoke with many Afghans who had passed their interviews and asked them to give me advice on what to say*

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<sup>19</sup> IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation (İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı), or Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief Foundation, is a humanitarian aid organization in Türkiye that is providing aid to people who have experienced a catastrophe, who are victims of war, or who need help.

*“during my interview in the immigration office. Their advice was helpful. I think I would not be granted conditional refugee status without their advice.” (Rohullah, Male, 48 Y.O.)*

Almost all the participants who had passed their status determination interview or were international protection status holders made statements similar to Rohullah’s. Meena, another international protection status holder and participant in this study, stated that listening to the experiences of her friends who had passed the interviews was helpful for her to pass the interviews successfully. Meena stated that she constantly mentioned her family living in the US during the interview, in line with the instructions given by her friends, and that she stated many times during the interview that she would leave Türkiye if she was granted conditional refugee status, and that her family could sponsor her as a refugee in the US or Canada.

*“My friends said that if you mention your family who are living in the US, there is a greater probability of being granted status. The fact that my family lives in the US makes them believe that I have no life in Afghanistan. This will also help the immigration officer believe that I would leave Türkiye because my family, who is living in the US, would be able to sponsor me or support me to leave Türkiye and resettle in the US or Canada if I was granted refugee status. My friends also said if you mention that you are going to leave Türkiye as soon as you are granted status, this will help you to pass an easy interview.” (Meena, Female, 26 Y.O.)*

When immigrants are seen as flawed, unsuccessful, stigmatized, and dangerous in the country in which they reside, they want to learn how the system works and secure themselves. Indeed, immigrants feel that they are under surveillance by the local people in every environment, such as workplaces, public institutions, markets, shopping malls, and streets. In this case, they start to develop tactics to secure themselves by learning how the system works. To do this, they try to find local people who can be their references and make them like them. In this context, one tactic that immigrants use when going to official institutions such as the immigration office is to try to put the people they know from the local people in between. Elham and Zilgay stated the following regarding this situation:

*“Once, I had a problem regarding registering my address with the immigration office. I tried my best to solve this issue by myself, but I failed. The officer at the immigration office did not listen to my problems. I discussed the issue with a person I knew from the mosque, who was helping me financially from time to time, and he said that he would come with me to the immigration office and try to solve my problem. Surprisingly, the problem that I could not solve in weeks was then solved in 5 minutes.” (Elham, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

*“There was a one-week construction job in another city. I tried to obtain a travel permit many times, but the immigration office did not accept my request. The reason was that I did not have a work permit, and I could not provide them with a valid reason for my travel*

*purpose. But when my employer went there with me and asked them to give me a travel permit, they agreed.” (Zilgay, Male, 29 Y.O.)*

Another important problem for Afghan asylum seekers, especially those without health insurance, is that they cannot receive treatment because they cannot pay high amounts when they become sick. When such problems occur, they ask for help from people they know, from the local people or their employers. Tawab, who had been living in Türkiye for six years, stated that with the help of his Turkish friends, he was able to receive treatment in the name of his friend, who had insurance. He stated the following regarding the situation:

*“If you know someone who has health insurance, they can help you when you visit a doctor. I have experienced this once. I asked my friend, and he said that he knew a doctor and that he could help me get treatment using his health insurance.” (Tawab, Male, 40 Y.O.)*

It has been observed that asylum seekers have developed certain tactics against the marginalization and stigmatization they encounter in their social lives. To overcome this issue, participants stated that they have always tried to avoid behaviors that would reveal their identities or legal status in Türkiye. Abdullah, who is running a business and has a work permit in addition to having an international protection ID or Kimlik, has become privileged over other asylum seekers with this card. The interviewee stated that he only carried his work permit and not the kimlik given to him to hide his legal status from the people around him. He said that the IDs given to Afghan asylum seekers are very large and different from the student or tourist IDs given to other immigrants residing in Türkiye, which makes it easier for people to understand his legal status as an asylum seeker. He also asserted that possessing his work permit identification, which is deemed an acceptable form of identification when visiting certain official institutions or when encountering police officers during random checks within the city, has served as a privilege for him and a means to conceal his status as a refugee or asylum seeker. He also stated that because having a work permit is not a very common situation for asylum seekers in Türkiye, this situation attracted everyone's attention in the institutions he went to. He stated the following regarding the situation:

*“My Kimlik is too large. The designs are also different. Anyone can understand that I am a refugee by seeing the shape of my Kimlik, which is why I always carry my work permit ID card instead. My work permit ID card is like a blessing for me. This helps me hide my status as a refugee. It is also very helpful in solving my issues smoothly in governmental organizations.” (Abdullah, Male, 45 Y.O.)*

Sami also made statements similar to Abdullah's. He stated that he prefers to carry his driving license with him and show it in a possible police check, entering places that ask for ID cards, such as museums or libraries, and other places to hide his identity or the fact that he is an asylum seeker in Türkiye.

*"Showing a driver's license or driving ID card is also acceptable in most places. Using this opportunity, I prefer to carry my driving license all the time. I do not want people to know that I am a refugee. When I visit some place or when there is a police check and I am with my Turkish friends, I always show them my driving license." (Sami, Male, 25 Y.O.)*

Marya, who is a graduate student, also gave similar statements. Marya, who experienced the negativities of being a foreigner and the uncertainty about how she would be treated due to the problems of exclusion and misunderstanding she experienced in her life in Türkiye, did not tell anyone that she was an asylum seeker when she first met with her classmates or teachers. She hid her legal status and the purpose of her stay in Türkiye with the advantage of her student ID card. The interviewee, who successfully continued the same tactic for a long time, said that she used it to prevent hearing negative comments or to prevent prejudice against her as an asylum seeker.

*"They know that I am a foreigner, but they still do not know that I am a refugee. If my classmates discover that I am a refugee, they will start to mistreat me or make even more negative comments about me. As previously mentioned, they always talk negatively about foreigners. I cannot imagine their words or attitudes after they know I am also a refugee." (Marya, Female, 27 Y.O.)*

As can be seen, Afghan asylum seekers show themselves more victimized than they are to meet their needs or receive aid from humanitarian aid associations or foundations, show themselves as having more needs or deserving more aid or attention at the immigration office to gain legal status by learning the answers they need to give and the subtleties of the subject from their experienced friends, develop tactics to secure themselves by understanding how the system works by trying to find people from the local people who can be their references, try to get help from people who have health insurance for treatment purposes, and avoid behaviors that would reveal one's identity and legal status when communicating with the locals.

#### **7.4.2. LONG-TERM SURVIVAL STRATEGIES**

In this section, participants' future aspirations, which led them to survive in Türkiye, are discussed and evaluated as a long-term strategy that has motivated participants to deal with the

problems and uncertainties they encounter. As described in the previous section on short-term survival strategies, participants have developed some tactics to deal with the issues they encounter in their daily lives in Türkiye as asylum seekers. However, in this section, participants' future aspirations and intentions regarding their ideas of going to Europe were analyzed as a long-term strategy that inspired them to survive in Türkiye. Thus, we tried to understand the main reasons that have led Afghan asylum seekers to continue their struggle to survive in Türkiye despite the problems they face.

Toward the end of the interviews, the participants were asked about their future plans, whether they had a second plan if they were not accepted to resettle in a third country, and their expectations from the institutions in Türkiye. When the narratives shaped within the framework of these questions were examined, it was determined that the uncertainties in life, the challenges they faced as asylum seekers in Türkiye, and their hopelessness in the acquisition of status and resettlement affected the way they perceived another migratory journey to Europe as a long-term strategy and solution to their problems. In this context, one of the critical findings that the interviewees agreed on in their solution proposals was their intention to travel to Europe via irregular means. Some participants stated the following regarding the issue:

*“I cannot wait in uncertainty for the whole of my life. I will go to Europe if I cannot see any progress in my application.” (Sajad, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

*“After I received conditional refugee status, I was hoping to resettle to another country soon, but I do not think this would happen any time soon. Now, if I cannot be resettled, I am thinking of going to Europe.” (Nasir, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

*“The only remaining option is to find a human smuggler and go to Greece.” (Nawab, Male, 25 Y.O.)*

*“Each month, I am trying to save an amount of money to gather the money to go to Europe. Once I reached there, everything would be solved in my life.” (Zilgay, Male, 29 Y.O.)*

Some of the participants, who had been waiting for a status determination interview in Türkiye for many years, stated that obtaining status in Türkiye is very slow and that accelerating the process would benefit both the applicant and the Turkish state.

*“I know Turkish people do not like Afghan refugees. If Türkiye gives me refugee status, I will soon leave Türkiye with the help of my brother. I am stuck in Türkiye. Because I do not have conditional refugee status, my brother cannot sponsor me as a refugee in Canada. If they accelerate the process, I am sure it would be a win-win situation for both sides.” (Farhad, Male, 38 Y.O.)*

*“As far as I know, the number of Afghans in Türkiye is minimal compared to Syrians. However, I do not know why it takes years to call us for an interview and give us refugee status. They work very slowly. Most Afghans, including me, will leave Türkiye if they give them status.” (Musa, Male, 32 Y.O.)*

*“I have an ongoing private refugee sponsorship application in Canada. It has been a few months since my relatives in Canada applied to sponsor us. I hope that I will resettle in Canada. If Türkiye had issued conditional refugee status earlier, I would not have had to wait for many years to leave Türkiye. I have received conditional refugee after waiting for years, but I hope Türkiye speeds up this process and helps others to reach their goals.” (Marya, Female, 27 Y.O.)*

Some interviewees who had lived in Türkiye for many years, since 2015 or before, stated that if they could not be resettled to a third country soon, they would leave Türkiye for Europe once they had gathered the money needed to pay human smugglers. When asked if they see Türkiye as a permanent home or have plans to return to Afghanistan or move elsewhere, the interviewees responded, *“If I cannot be resettled soon and have enough money to pay for human smugglers, I will leave.”* The participants stated that they did not leave Türkiye even in 2015, when Europe opened its doors, although they were not expecting to wait for decades to obtain status and resettle to a third country. Some participants stated the following regarding the issue:

*“I lost one chance when European borders were opened in 2015. At that time, I had recently arrived in Türkiye, and I did not have the financial capacity to take another journey. But the most important reason I did not leave then was my hope for resettlement... I am ready to take any risk and go to Europe.” (Bashir, Male, 47 Y.O.)*

*“Most of my friends left Türkiye in 2015 and 2016 when Europe opened its doors, but I remained because I did not have enough money. We are a big family of nine, and it costs us an arm to pay for human smugglers. If I could gather enough money to pay for a good human smuggler, I would go to Europe and end this uncertainty.” (Baryalai, Male, 42 Y.O.)*

*“Now, if I cannot be resettled, I am thinking about going to Europe. However, there is also the issue of money. As I mentioned earlier, I did not have enough money to pay for my mother’s treatment, which was very small compared to the amount we needed to pay to go to Europe. I cannot save money because of economic problems and the high prices in Türkiye. Once I gather enough money, I will see.” (Nasir, Male, 30 Y.O.)*

Additionally, it is important to note that the option of traveling to European countries irregularly was also an important factor when participants first decided to migrate to Türkiye. As described earlier in the section titled *“Reasons for Preferring Türkiye,”* participants clearly stated that their reason for choosing Türkiye was to move to a third country either regularly or

irregularly. It was also stated that participants would initiate their second strategy, which was migration to Europe irregularly, once they had lost their hope in resettlement in normal ways and they had arranged the money needed to pay for their journey. Thus, it would not be false to say that participants' intentions to migrate to Europe irregularly were always a long-term strategy for immigrants when there were no other options left.

During the fieldwork, it was observed that almost all the participants intended to leave Türkiye as soon as they could gather money to pay for another journey to reach Europe via irregular means. Waiting for resettlement via regular means has also lost its importance for participants, as the majority are looking for ways to reach Europe once they are financially ready for the journey. Most importantly, we can state that the participants' intentions or future aspirations of migrating to Europe irregularly have been a crucial motivation for them to continue living in Türkiye despite their difficulties. It is also important to note that the participants considered moving to Europe as a sustainable or permanent solution to their problems. They also consider it a long-term strategy because gathering money to initiate this journey takes years.

## CONCLUSION

Migration is defined as the movement of an individual from their current residence to another living space. Humanity has been migrating for a long time, sometimes to seek a better life and sometimes out of necessity, as in the case of conflict, civil war, and climate change. According to the latest report published by the UNHCR, as of June 2024, there were 122.6 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, marking an increase of 5 percent, or 5.3 million, compared to the end of 2023. One of the countries that sends the most migrants today is Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, where war and conflict, political instability, social unrest, and financial difficulties have persisted for decades, people have migrated in search of a more comfortable life and higher living standards.

Afghanistan, a part of the international migration wave for decades, has had the highest number of immigrants globally and continues to experience out-migration. With a 300-year history, Afghanistan is situated at the historic intersection of the Silk Road. Due to the ongoing unrest for nearly four decades, it has become a primary source of immigrants. Its geopolitical and geostrategic position as the center of ancient Turkestan and Khorasan has led to struggles and conflicts among hegemonic powers at various points in history. These lands, invaded by great powers throughout the ages, have experienced occupations by prominent forces, such as the Empire of Alexander the Great, the Mongol Empire, the British Empire, and the Soviet Union.

Afghanistan, which began to experience politically unstable days with the Soviet Union invasion, later found itself in the middle of a war. The Soviet invasion, ensuing civil war, initial Taliban rule, and intervention by the US and its allies at the start of the 2000s, followed by two decades of war against the Taliban, culminated in the recent Taliban recapture of Afghanistan in August 2021, has contributed to a spiral of instability that has persisted for over four decades. This situation has led many Afghan nationals to become migrants, both within and outside the country. Many people have been compelled to leave and seek a better life. Afghan nationals who have lost hope for the country to achieve stability are increasingly adding to the number of those who have left their homeland.

In the early years, Afghan migration was towards Pakistan and Iran, both because they were neighbors and because of ethnic and religious reasons. However, as time went by, Türkiye was also included in this process due to the changing perspectives of these countries towards immigrants and the fact that Afghan immigrants were heading towards European countries.

Additionally, although Afghanistan is geographically distant from Türkiye, it is close in history, politics, and culture. Türkiye has become the center of attention of the country's people with a sincere stance due to friendship from history. Given the background of this sincerity and friendship between the two countries, the fact that Afghanistan was the first Muslim country to recognize the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye is of special importance.

However, Türkiye, which was initially a transit country for Afghan immigrants to Europe, has now become a target country. There has been a significant increase in Afghan immigration to Türkiye, especially over the last decade. When the statistics published by the PMM are examined, it can be seen that there has been a significant increase in the number of Afghan immigrants coming to Türkiye from Afghanistan, both regularly and irregularly, in recent years. Afghan immigrants stay in Türkiye with various statuses, such as residence permits, work permits, international protection applicants, and status holders. Apart from these, some Afghan immigrants stay in Türkiye unregistered as irregular immigrants, whose numbers are unknown.

Although many studies have focused on migration following the Syrian migration that began in 2011, there has not been sufficient research on Afghan immigrants, particularly Afghan asylum seekers, because Syrian immigrants are more prominent and widely discussed. Moreover, when examining academic studies on Afghan migration to Türkiye, we have not found any studies that cover the entire migration process of Afghan immigrants. Furthermore, this study is unique in that it focuses specifically on Afghan asylum seekers and examines the entire migration process.

Within the scope of this study, a literature review was conducted on migration, particularly the Afghan migration to Türkiye. This review primarily examined books and articles related to international migration and Afghan migration in more detail. Additionally, statistical data shared in this field, specifically from the PMM and UNHCR, were examined. Afterward, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 Afghan asylum seekers residing in Ankara under the framework of international protection. Using a phenomenological approach, a qualitative research method that aims to illustrate the current situation by examining participants' emotions and thoughts through their experiences, the data gathered from the interviews were analyzed using the thematic analysis technique.

This study, conducted specifically for Ankara, examined the migration experiences of Afghan asylum seekers, including the reasons for their migration, the key factors that led them to choose Türkiye during the process, the challenges they faced in their journey to Türkiye amid restrictive migration policies, how they perceived their lives as asylum seekers or their post-

migratory experiences in Ankara, Türkiye, and the survival strategies employed by Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara.

Given the current situation in Afghanistan and analyzing it through the data obtained from the fieldwork conducted in this study, the Afghan asylum seekers in the research group faced the most significant security issues related to Taliban threats and pressure, lack of life security, economic instability, and gender-based violence in the case of Afghan women. When analyzing the reasons for Afghan migration due to Taliban pressure and threats, many participants indicated that they left because of direct Taliban threats related to their professions or occupations. These included civil servants in former government institutions, individuals believed to collaborate with Americans or work with American military or non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan, and female workers considered unsuitable for outdoor work on religious grounds. Considering the various threats experienced by participants, such as kidnapping or murder of relatives by the Taliban, the need for safety has emerged as a primary reason for the migration process among Afghans in the research group.

Additionally, it was determined that Afghans migrated, showing that they lacked security in their daily lives due to indirect threats from the Taliban and the country's overall security situation. In addition to individuals who faced direct threats from the Taliban due to their occupation or collaboration with Americans in Afghanistan, there were also Afghans who left the country because they lacked safety, even though the Taliban did not directly threaten them. Political instability and the overall security situation in the country, which has led to Afghan citizens losing their lives due to ongoing suicide bombings, terrorist attacks in public spaces, and personal hostility, are among the indirect threats that have compelled many Afghans to leave their homeland. It should be emphasized that the threat element is crucial and originates from the Taliban. Its significance highlights the security issues impacting the migration decisions of Afghan-origin immigrants, whereas its origin in the Taliban reflects the realities of war and conflict in social contexts.

Besides the direct or indirect threats from the Taliban that prompted the emigration of Afghans in the research group, other factors, such as rising unemployment and poverty, have also been significant in Afghan migration. Youth in Afghanistan view migration as a means of escaping the unemployment and poverty they face. All participants in this study left their country before 2021 prior to the Taliban gaining complete control of Afghanistan on 15 August 2021. Fieldwork determined that the primary issue related to economic hardships was the previous Afghan government's engagement in corruption instead of providing essential

resources and aid and that the failure to offer fair job opportunities led to widespread unemployment and poverty. Another issue related to economic hardship that results in unemployment and poverty is drought. Participants identified drought as a factor that led to unemployment, ultimately forcing them to migrate. Drought contributes to unemployment, poverty, and the emigration of Afghans. When a drought strikes Afghanistan, many Afghans struggle to feed their animals. They cannot effectively irrigate their fields without modern irrigation systems, thus preventing them from obtaining yield from their crops. In such situations, those unable to earn a living from their land are compelled to move to another city.

When examining the reasons for the emigration of Afghan women who participated in the study, gender-based violence emerged as a significant public health issue affecting every aspect of women's lives in Afghanistan, ultimately prompting them to leave the country. Afghan women experience gender-based violence in various environments, including "private and public spaces," and from different individuals, such as "family members, friends, close relatives, and strangers," in numerous ways. These forms of violence are linked to power imbalances between women and men, and such violence is used to reinforce this imbalance. The socioeconomic and sociocultural structure of Afghanistan, the culture of obedience to values and norms, tyranny and ethnographic elements, tribal power relations, cultural and sectarian conflicts, and religious fanaticism are all essential factors that cause violence against women to become chronic in Afghanistan. The sociocultural and socioeconomic frameworks in Afghanistan, along with adherence to traditional norms and values, are primary contributors to gender-based violence, ultimately driving Afghan women to leave the country. Factors related to these issues include early marriages and levirate marriages, which are common in Afghanistan. This study indicates that women experience severe violence when they resist early marriages or forced levirate marriages, which suggests that leaving the country or escaping the situation is a potential solution to their predicament.

Overall, when examining the reasons for Afghan migration, it becomes clear that direct Taliban threats related to practicing certain professions and occupations, engagement with former local government institutions, and collaboration with foreign organizations in Afghanistan have resulted in Afghans included in this research group leaving the country in search of safety. In addition to direct threats by the Taliban, some participants faced indirect Taliban threats such as lack of personal security due to political instability, frequent suicide bombings, kidnappings, terrorist attacks, personal hostility, and economic issues such as unemployment, poverty stemming from widespread corruption, limited job opportunities, and

drought, which have resulted in many Afghans leaving their country and seeking asylum or protection abroad.

The study also examined the key factors that led Afghans to migrate to Türkiye, or the primary reasons participants chose to migrate specifically to Türkiye. In this context, two main motivations emerged for their choice to migrate. These motivations included the desire to move to a third country from Türkiye, in addition to the challenging social and economic conditions in the neighboring countries of Pakistan and Iran, which have historically hosted Afghan immigrants. In this context, when the participants' desire to move to a third country was examined, it was determined that Afghan asylum seekers preferred Türkiye because of the presence of the UNHCR in Türkiye, as well as Türkiye's geographical location close to European countries. Almost all the participants stated that they had intentions to move to a third country either via regular means, such as private sponsorship programs of some Western countries, resettlement to a third country via UNHCR or make their way to reach European countries through irregular means with the help of human smugglers. As a result, these factors have made Türkiye an appealing option for Afghan asylum seekers to achieve their goals, given its geographical location near European countries and the potential for participants' legal resettlement through the UNHCR in Türkiye or various refugee sponsorship programs in some Western countries, particularly Canada.

Another reason Afghan immigrants prefer to migrate to Türkiye is the challenging social and economic conditions in Afghanistan's neighboring countries, Pakistan and Iran, which are the largest and most historically significant hosts for Afghan immigrants. It can be said that Afghans choose their destination based on factors like distance, peace, economic opportunities, and their long-term resettlement goals to a third country. Although Pakistan and Iran are the easiest options, they are not favored for economic and social reasons, and their importance has diminished because of their attitudes towards Afghan refugees. While a considerable number of Afghan refugees still reside in Iran and Pakistan, Türkiye has emerged as an attractive option for Afghan asylum seekers and immigrants because of its favorable geographical location, stronger economic conditions in the region, better treatment of Afghan immigrants compared to Pakistan and Iran, and flexible changes in its asylum regime that began in 2013 with the implementation of LFIP.

Another important issue discussed throughout the study was the migratory experiences of Afghan asylum seekers on their journey to Türkiye, particularly in light of Türkiye's restrictive migration policies and recent severe actions against irregular migration, which predominantly

affected Afghan asylum seekers and the focus group of this study. As seen from the ever-changing historical migration policies of Türkiye, it can be said that Türkiye approached the issue of migration and immigrants differently in response to the events of the time. It is also evident that Türkiye, in the period following the 2000s, adopted a stringent policy to combat irregular migration, particularly in the second decade of the 2000s. In this context, throughout this thesis, we described how Afghan asylum seekers navigated these barriers in their migration to Türkiye. To shed light on this issue, this study examined the narratives of Afghan asylum seekers regarding the methods of their migratory journeys, including regular and irregular immigration, and the challenges they encountered along the way.

In the neoliberal era, the global market encouraged the navigation of the borders of nation-states. However, regarding Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye, this study's findings have indicated that this situation is legally restricted to a small class. Afghan nationals who reside in Afghanistan or outside Afghanistan and wish to come to Türkiye via regular or legal means must first apply for a visa from the relevant Turkish authorities in which they reside or can obtain e-visas if they meet certain conditions. However, it is almost impossible for most Afghan immigrants to fulfill these requirements to obtain a Turkish visa. Because official procedures for obtaining a visa are difficult and costly, Afghan immigrants avoid obtaining a visa. In addition, most Afghan immigrants do not meet Türkiye's visa criteria. Consequently, it can be stated that only Afghans in a better economic position or possessing exceptional supportive documents, such as an acceptance letter from a Turkish university, could migrate through regular means.

However, when migrants realize that they cannot move regularly, they need the services of human smugglers. Countries' strict border policies, expensive and lengthy procedures for obtaining documents required for regular migration, migrants' lack of sufficient information about countries' current migration policies, advertising and misinformation about irregular migration by human smugglers, and other factors determine the demand for migrants to resort to illegal routes and use the method of human smuggling. In this study on Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye, crossing nation-state borders through illegal means was not only limited to using services provided by migrant smugglers but also included obtaining fraudulent visas from the black market. As a result of the fieldwork, the study posits that only those in neither good nor bad economic situations have sought to obtain fraudulent visas. This occurs because they are not wealthy enough to acquire a visa legally, yet they are also not so poor as to risk their lives and their families' lives by crossing borders with the help of human smugglers. It was also

observed that Afghans with legal visas and those with fraudulent visas migrated to Türkiye directly from Afghanistan. No other country was used as a transit. However, in the case of Afghans who migrated to Türkiye by crossing borders with the help of human smugglers, it was observed that they organized their smugglers in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran.

The narratives of participants who entered Türkiye through irregular means with the assistance of a human smuggler revealed that crossing international borders was difficult, laborious, and painful. All the participants who experienced irregular travel with the assistance of a human smuggler faced a difficult journey to reach Türkiye. The challenges of this journey included hunger, freezing weather that made the journey unbearable, difficult passages, a lack of necessities such as water and food, and the exploitation of these necessities as weapons against immigrants by human smugglers. Immigrants also encountered disadvantages due to their unfamiliarity with the route without the aid of smugglers, as well as fear of arrest or apprehension by border police patrols. In addition, the study revealed that the participants were aware of the challenges they faced in their journey to Türkiye before starting their trip. It was also observed that the immigrants were aware of the difficulties of the journey and knew that there was a risk of being caught and subsequently deported. Despite this, immigrants continued on their path and were willing to risk their lives despite the harsh conditions of the journey. The sole concern expressed by immigrants was the lengthy waiting times in border cities, which were caused by strict border patrols due to Türkiye's increased efforts against irregular migration. Participants sought to address this issue by carrying extra cash, food, and water to help them endure lengthy waits while crossing borders. Additionally, the study suggested that regardless of how challenging or restrictive the journeys become due to Türkiye's strict policies and their battle against irregular migration, Afghans would still try to reach Türkiye, irrespective of the conditions. In this manner, it would not be wrong to say that imposing severe practices and policies against irregular migration by allocating more resources to prevent unauthorized entry at borders is not a sustainable method to limit or deter immigrants from undertaking such a journey.

This study delves deeply into the issue and has further examined the post-migratory experiences of Afghan asylum seekers residing in Ankara. In this context, the study explored the socioeconomic and legal challenges, institutional security, and uncertainties encountered by Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara as part of their lives in Türkiye, reflecting their post-migratory experiences after their arrival in Türkiye. When examining the experiences of these immigrants through the lens of the socio-economic and legal challenges they encountered, it

became clear that Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara faced significant issues related to their status in Türkiye, access to healthcare systems, education, housing, employment, and problems concerning freedom of travel within the country.

Among the issues concerning Afghan asylum seekers, lengthy processing times or waiting periods, often exceeding five years, for decisions on their international protection applications, along with the lack of reliable documents such as refugee status or conditional refugee status within the Turkish context, posed significant challenges in assessing their status-related issues. While Afghan asylum seekers consider their stay temporary or a stepping stone to Western countries, the absence of refugee status or conditional refugee status has hindered their progress toward resettlement in a third country, whether through UNHCR or private sponsorship programs. The majority of participants stated that if they had been granted international protection status or conditional refugee status upon evaluation of their international protection applications by Türkiye, they could make their way using their private resources and ties to resettle to a third country, mainly Canada, via the PSR. However, this cannot happen without international protection or conditional refugee status, which has left Afghan asylum seekers stuck in Türkiye for many years.

Similarly, Afghan asylum seekers face significant challenges regarding healthcare access, including the inability to afford high treatment fees and lack of health insurance. These factors often compel them to forgo treatment or avoid visiting healthcare facilities, unless they are extremely needed. Additionally, language barriers hinder effective communication with healthcare personnel because of difficulties in identifying translators. Another challenging area was seen as issues related to education. Education is essential for refugees and immigrants seeking asylum in Türkiye to integrate with society, adapt, and live a life of cultural integrity during their stay in the country. Therefore, national and international agreements have stated that education is a natural right for refugees. However, Afghan asylum seekers with identification documents, including those issued to international protection applicants, have the right to continue their education. Nonetheless, Afghan immigrants face significant challenges in accessing education due to language barriers, the burden of high tuition fees for universities, various issues such as arbitrary practices by educational staff, lack of cooperation from schools, difficulties with equivalence procedures, and child labor.

Furthermore, examining the housing challenges faced by Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara revealed that accommodation issues in Türkiye included the reluctance of homeowners to rent to foreigners, high rental prices when it was known that the tenant was a foreigner, the

requirement for guarantors, and government quotas on the number of foreigners allowed to reside in a specific area or neighborhood. Similarly, considerable challenges were noted regarding employment-related issues faced by Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara. Although there are no legal obstacles for Afghan asylum seekers working in Türkiye after obtaining a work permit, the issue arises from difficulties in accessing this right or obtaining a work permit from related government institutions. The main reasons for this are that application procedures take time, the process depends on employers, employers are reluctant to apply for work permits, and there is a quota for hiring foreigners that allows only one foreign employee for five Turkish citizens in the workplace. Consequently, these factors forced Afghan asylum seekers to work in an insecure manner within the informal sectors. This ultimately results in Afghan asylum seekers working for very low wages, facing delays in payments or not being paid at all, being unable to make demands in case of work accidents due to the illegal nature of their work and lack of work permits, avoiding complaint mechanisms out of fear of deportation because they do not possess work permits, and employers preferring to hire Turkish citizens over Afghans or foreigners for well-paid jobs or those offering insurance.

Another challenge that Afghan asylum seekers encounter in Türkiye is the issue of travel freedom within the country. Whether temporarily or permanently, international protection applicants or status holders in Türkiye must obtain travel permits to leave their provinces of residence. Those who want to move within the country must obtain a permit from the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management Office and show it during possible police checks on the road. Otherwise, they may face the risk of deportation. It has been observed that the immigration office is hesitant to issue such a permit or approve a change of province for Afghan asylum seekers, stating that these individuals have not provided acceptable documentation for such requests. This challenge can be attributed to applicants' lack of reliable documents, such as work permits needed for changing provinces for employment purposes, as well as other supporting documents when requesting temporary leave. In this manner, the study posited that the challenges faced by Afghans in this regard can be divided into two forms. It includes the issues related to permanently changing the provinces they are registered in and the problems regarding obtaining a travel permit to leave their registered provinces temporarily for purposes such as visiting friends residing in another province or other reasons that may require them to leave their registered provinces temporarily.

Furthermore, when examining the institutional security and uncertainties faced by Afghan asylum seekers and delving deeply into immigrants' post-migratory experiences, the main

challenges described included issues stemming from a lack of familiarity with immigration laws, fear of deportation when applying for international protection in Türkiye, uncertainties in the status acquisition process, and a lack of understanding of their rights. The study revealed that Afghan asylum seekers were largely unfamiliar with immigration laws and the legal system because of the inadequate distribution of informative resources, which has consequently made them vulnerable to fraud and irregularities. This occurs when immigrants who cannot access information about immigration laws and systems turn to their close community or the people around them, which leads them to become victims of fraud or commit other irregularities in the host country.

Another challenge observed throughout the study was issues originating from negligence in the implementation of national immigration laws. Legislation on migration, particularly the LFIP in Türkiye, has ensured the prohibition of refoulement in a manner that closely aligns with the Geneva Convention. It also stipulates that individuals or asylum seekers who have entered the country irregularly should receive all the necessary support to effectively submit their applications when they inform the relevant authority of their irregular status with reasonable justifications and within an appropriate timeframe. However, this study indicated that these regulations are rarely implemented in practice. As a result, Afghans who entered the country seeking asylum or protection experienced significant concerns about potential deportation during their application process due to the nature of their irregular entry. Although regulations were established in the Turkish legislation regarding immigration for individuals to effectively submit their applications for protection or asylum in the country, this study concluded that barriers to practical application have not been removed.

A similar situation was also observed in the uncertainties regarding the status acquisition process and navigation of rights for Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye. As stipulated in national legislation, the law states that status determination interviews for international protection applications should be held within 30 days of the application, according to Article 75 of the LFIP. Additionally, these interviews should be concluded within six months, as outlined in Article 78 of the LFIP. However, this study has indicated that one of the primary sources of uncertainty for Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye is the lack of information regarding when, where, and under what conditions their status-determination interviews, decisive for their future, will take place. Many applicants have faced this uncertainty for an extended period, often exceeding five years.

Meanwhile, Afghan asylum seekers face challenges owing to a lack of information about procedures, rights, and obligations. Although these issues are regulated by national legislation, they are not upheld. When asylum seekers, as individuals navigating a process they have never encountered in a foreign country, are not informed about immigration laws from the start of their post-migration journey, and this lack of knowledge remains unaddressed by the relevant authorities, it is sadly not surprising that they face losses in legal rights, as well as experience irregularities and negligence from those whose knowledge and experience they depend on in hopes of securing their rights.

Finally, the study explores and illuminates the survival strategies developed by Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara. After carefully listening to the narratives of participants and examining the skills, tactics, and resistance styles that Afghan asylum seekers have employed to continue their lives in Ankara despite their past and ongoing experiences, it finds that Afghan asylum seekers in Ankara develop two types of strategies —long-term and short-term— to address the challenges they face. While Afghan asylum seekers' short-term survival strategies stem from their belief in a temporary stay in the country and involve tactics to tackle daily challenges, workplace issues, and social problems, their long-term survival strategies consist mainly of aspirations and intentions to migrate to Europe or other Western countries. These aspirations and intentions inspired them to endure the challenges and uncertainties.

The tactics developed by Afghan asylum seekers to address the challenges they encounter in their daily lives as a short-term survival strategy include behaviors such as keeping quiet, remaining silent, maintaining composure, pretending not to hear, avoiding discussion, not responding to taunts, changing the subject, and leaving the environment. Similarly, Afghan asylum seekers who arrived in Ankara and began working there employed various tactics to address the challenges they encountered in their professional lives. These short-term tactics in the workplace included asking for help from those more experienced when they faced delayed or missing wages, drawing their employers' attention by working harder and more effectively, favoring short-term and daily jobs to mitigate issues of unpaid or late payments, requesting wages in advance, and when seeking justice is not possible, enduring the situation and leaving it to God.

While tactics developed by participants to address the challenges they face in employment and daily life are crucial for the survival of asylum seekers in the host country, their survival strategies extend far beyond these areas. These include tactics for navigating challenges in their social lives, the asylum process, and other aspects of their lives as asylum seekers in Türkiye.

In this context, it was observed that Afghan asylum seekers tend to portray themselves as more victimized than they are to meet their needs or receive aid from humanitarian organizations or foundations. They present themselves as having greater needs or deserving more support at the immigration office to gain legal status and learn the necessary responses and nuances of the subject from their experienced friends. They develop strategies to protect themselves by understanding how the system operates and seek out local individuals who can serve as references. They also try to obtain help from individuals with health insurance for medical treatment and avoid behaviors that could reveal their identity or legal status during interactions with the locals. Overall, it is essential to note that Afghan asylum seekers have adopted these tactics, viewing them as a short-term strategy to sustain their lives in Türkiye based on temporary stay assumptions or intentions to leave Türkiye soon.

When examining the long-term survival strategies of the focus group in this study, it was determined that the uncertainties of life, the challenges they faced as asylum seekers in Türkiye, and their hopelessness about obtaining status and resettlement influenced their perception of another migratory journey to Europe as a long-term strategy and solution to their problems. Meanwhile, it is accurate to say that the future aspirations of Afghan asylum seekers, such as migrating to Europe or Western countries, whether regularly or irregularly, play a motivational role in helping them endure the challenges and uncertainties they face. In this context, this study found that Afghan asylum seekers perceive moving to Europe via irregular means, when there is no hope left for resettlement options, as a sustainable and permanent solution. It is also important to note that they consider this option a long-term strategy because gathering the funds required to initiate this journey can take years.

There is no clear indication that migration from Afghanistan to Türkiye or any other country will soon decline. The ongoing insecurity and conflict in the country persist, and the number of civilians affected continues to rise. The struggling economy, exacerbated by conflict, is driving up unemployment, making it difficult for people to access sources of income. In addition, certain minority groups and women face discrimination and threats. In light of this situation, the response of young Afghans in particular is to migrate, regardless of what it costs them, just as previous generations did. Many participants did not plan to return, at least not in the near future, and some even expressed a desire to move further. Therefore, it can be said that they had no intention of returning to Afghanistan. Moreover, Afghan movements are neither temporary nor permanent, and it is impossible to discuss the final destination country.

The Afghan migration issue is not one that can be solved all at once. Various parties should share the responsibility to address this ongoing challenge, which has persisted for nearly four decades. To effectively tackle the issue of Afghan migration and reduce the flow of migrants, changes must first be implemented at the source of migration. Specifically, Afghanistan needed increased economic support during this period. To prevent further migration flows, international aid organizations should enhance their humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, international partners should also take steps to increase annual quotas for the resettlement of Afghan refugees. On the other hand, to meet the needs of and overcome the challenges faced by Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye, the country should accelerate the evaluation processes of international protection applications made in the country, re-regulate their migration policies, particularly those concerning the employment of foreign nationals by removing quotas for foreign employees in workplaces, and develop a well-structured mechanism to ensure the fair implementation or practice of laws in the area of international protection. This will help prevent the loss of individuals' rights and ensure a smoother asylum procedure.

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## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1: CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW IN ENGLISH

Dear Participant,

The research titled "*Migratory Experiences in the Forced Migration of Immigrants Living in Türkiye: The Case of Afghan Asylum Seekers in Ankara*" is an MA Thesis conducted by a master's student in the Social Sciences University of Ankara. The thesis aims to evaluate and describe the challenges and complexities that Afghan asylum seekers are facing in Türkiye. In this context, the interactions of Afghan immigrants with local authorities, the survival strategies of Afghans in Ankara, and the legal frameworks regarding the status and rights of Afghan forced immigrants in Türkiye are evaluated.

The ultimate objective of the thesis is to create a comprehensive and reliable empirical data source and an understanding of the challenges that Afghan forced immigrants face in Türkiye and how they cope with these problems. Its methodology includes an analytical review of academic secondary sources on migration. Its primary data collection method includes qualitative research design utilizing semi-structured interviews with Afghan asylum-seekers living in Ankara, Türkiye.

In this context, I would like to invite you to voluntarily take part in an interview. The interview will take nearly an hour, and it is pretty confidential in terms of not including your name, signature, or any personal information that may expose your identity or endanger your safety.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the interview at any time you wish during the interview without being subject to any penalty or sanction. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your life or status in Türkiye positively or negatively. You will not be paid or charged any fees for taking part in the study. You have the right not to answer any question you do not want to answer.

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact me via .....  
email address.

Your participation will be highly valuable for the research.

**Thank you for your valuable contribution!**

#### **Participant's Consent**

I have been invited to voluntarily participate in an MA thesis titled "*Migratory Experiences in the Forced Migration of Immigrants Living in Türkiye: The Case of Afghan Asylum Seekers in Ankara*" conducted by Safiullah RAJABI, a master's student in the Social Sciences University of Ankara.

I have carefully read and understood the above information provided regarding the aims, scope, and objectives of the research. I understand that participation in the study is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time during the interview session. I also understand that the information that I provide will be treated in confidence. Therefore, I give consent to participate in this research and provide honest answers to my best knowledge and experience.

Participant's Pseudonym:

Duration of Interview:

Place:

Date:

## ANNEX 2: CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW IN DARI

### فورم رضایت برای مصاحبه

اشتراک گننده گرامی،  
تحقیق تحت عنوان "تجارب مهاجرتی در مهاجرت های اجباری مهاجرین مقیم ترکیه: قضیه پناهجویان افغان در انقره" یک پایان نامه ماستری است که توسط یک محصل ماستری در پو هنتون علوم اجتماعی انقره انجام میشود. هدف این پایان نامه ارزیابی و تشریح چالش ها و پیچیدگی هایی است که پناهجویان افغان در ترکیه با آن رویرو هستند. در این زمینه، تعاملات مهاجرین افغان با مقامات محلی، استراتژی های بقای افغان ها در انقره، و چارچوب های قانونی در مورد وضعیت و حقوق مهاجرین اجباری افغان در ترکیه ارزیابی میشود.

هدف نهایی این پایان نامه ایجاد یک منبع معلوماتی و تجربی جامع و قابل اعتماد و درک چالش هایی است که مهاجرین اجباری افغان در ترکیه با آن مواجه هستند و چگونه با این مشکلات کنار می آیند. میتواند این تحقیق شامل بررسی تحلیلی منابع ثانویه اکادمیک در مورد مهاجرت میباشد. روش اولیه جمع آوری معلومات آن شامل طرح تحقیق کیفی با استفاده از مصاحبه های نیمه ساختاری با پناهجویان افغان که در انقره، ترکیه زندگی میکنند میباشد.

در این زمینه از شمادعوت میکنم که داوطلبانه در یک مصاحبه شرکت کنید. مصاحبه نزدیک به یک ساعت طول خواهد کشید و از نظر عدم درج نام، امضاء، یا هر گونه اطلاعات شخصی که ممکن است هویت شما را افشا نماید و یا امنیت شما را به خطر بیندازد کاملاً محترمانه میباشد.

اشتراک شما کاملاً داوطلبانه بوده و شما میتوانید در هر زمان که بخواهید در جریان مصاحبه بدون اینکه در معرض مجازات یا تحریم قرار بگیرید از مصاحبه انصراف دهید. تصمیم شما برای اشتراک و یا عدم اشتراک در این مصاحبه بالای زندگی یا وضعیت شما در ترکیه بشکل مثبت و یا منفی تاثیری نخواهد گذاشت. برای اشتراک در مطالعه به شما هیچ مبلغی پرداخت با اخذ نخواهد گردید. شما حق دارید که به هر سوالی که نمیخواهید پاسخ دهید پاسخ ندهید.

برای اطلاعات بیشتر، لطفاً از طریق آدرس ایمیل ذکر شده ذیل با من تماس بگیرید:

مشارکت شما برای پایان نامه و تحقیق بسیار ارزشمند خواهد بود.  
تشکر از سهم ارزشمندتان!

رضایت اشتراک گننده  
از من دعوت شده است تا داوطلبانه در یک پایان نامه ماستری تحت عنوان "تجارب مهاجرتی در مهاجرت های اجباری مهاجرین مقیم ترکیه: قضیه پناهجویان افغان در انقره" که توسط صفتی الله رجبی، محصل ماستری در پو هنتون علوم اجتماعی انقره انجام میگیرد، اشتراک گنم.

من معلومات فوق را که در مورد اهداف، دامنه و مقاصد تحقیق ارائه شده است با دقت خوانده و درک کردم. من میدانم که شرکت در مطالعه داوطلبانه بوده و من میتوانم در هر زمان در طول جلسه مصاحبه انصراف بدهم. همچنین میدانم که اطلاعاتی که ارائه میدهم محترمانه با آنها برخورد خواهد گردید. بنابراین، من رضایت میدهم تا در این تحقیق اشتراک گردد و بهترین دانش و تجربه خود پاسخ های صادقانه ارائه نمایم.

نام مستعار اشتراک گننده:  
مدت زمان مصاحبه:  
مکان:  
تاریخ:

## ANNEX 3: CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW IN TURKISH

### GÖRÜŞME İÇİN ONAY FORMU

Değerli Katılımcı,

**“Türkiye'de Yaşayan Göçmenlerin Zorunlu Göç Deneyimleri: Ankara'daki Afgan Sığınmacıların Örneği”** başlıklı araştırma, Ankara Sosyal Bilimler Üniversitesi'nde bir yüksek lisans öğrencisi tarafından yürütülen bir Yüksek Lisans Tezidir. Bu tezin amacı, Afgan sığınmacıların Türkiye'de karşılaşlıklarını zorlukları ve karmaşıklıkları değerlendirmek ve tanımlamaktır. Bu bağlamda, Afgan göçmenlerin yerel yetkililerle etkileşimleri, Ankara'daki Afganların hayatı kalma stratejileri ve Türkiye'deki Afgan zorunlu göçmenlerin statüsü ve haklarına ilişkin yasal çerçeveleri değerlendirmektedir.

Tezin nihai amacı, kapsamlı ve güvenilir bir empirik veri kaynağı oluşturmak ve Afgan zorunlu göçmenlerin Türkiye'de karşılaşlıklarını zorluklar ve bunlarla nasıl başa çıktıkları konusunda bir anlayış oluşturmaktır. Metodolojisi göçle ilgili akademik ikincil kaynakların analitik incelemesini içermektedir. Birincil veri toplama yöntemi, Ankara, Türkiye'de yaşayan Afgan sığınmacılarla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler kullanan nitel araştırma tasarımmını içerir.

Bu bağlamda, sizi gönüllü olarak bir mülakata katılmaya davet etmek istiyorum. Mülakat yaklaşık bir saat sürecek ve adınızı, imzınızı veya kimliğinizi ifşa edebilecek veya güvenliğiniz tehlikeye atabilecek herhangi bir kişisel bilgiyi içermemesi açısından oldukça gizlidir.

Katılımınız tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır ve görüşme sırasında herhangi bir ceza veya yaptırıma tabi olmaksızın dileğiniz zaman görüşmeden çekilebilirsiniz. Katılıp katılmama kararınız Türkiye'deki hayatınızı veya statünüzü olumlu veya olumsuz yönde etkilemeyecektir. Çalışmaya katılımınız için size herhangi bir ücret ödenmeyecek veya sizden tahsil edilmeyecektir. Cevaplamak istemediğiniz herhangi bir soruya cevaplamama hakkına sahipsiniz.

Daha detaylı bilgi için ..... e-posta adresimden benimle iletişime geçmekten çekinmeyin.

Katılımınız tezim için çok değerli olacaktır.

**Değerli katkılarınız için teşekkür ederiz!**

#### Katılımcının Onayı

Ankara Sosyal Bilimler Üniversitesi'nde yüksek lisans öğrencisi olan Safiullah RAJABI'nin yürüttüğü **“Türkiye'de Yaşayan Göçmenlerin Zorunlu Göç Deneyimleri: Ankara'daki Afgan Sığınmacıların Örneği”** başlıklı yüksek lisans tez çalışmasına gönüllü olarak katılmak üzere davet edildim.

Yukarıda araştırmannın amaçları, kapsamı ve hedefleri ile ilgili verilen bilgileri dikkatlice okudum ve anladım. Çalışmaya katılımın gönüllü olduğunu ve görüşme oturumu sırasında istediğim zaman geri çekilebileceğimi anlıyorum. Ayrıca sağladığım bilgilerin gizli tutulacağını da anlıyorum. Bu nedenle, bu araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorum ve en iyi bilgi ve deneyimime göre dürüst cevaplar veriyorum.

Katılımcının Takma Adı:

Mülakat Süresi:

Yer:

Tarih:

## ANNEX 4: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH

Participant's Pseudonym		Educational Level	
Age		Occupation in Afghanistan	
Gender		Occupation in Türkiye	
Marital Status		Year of Migration to Türkiye	
Household Population		Legal Status	

### 1. Questions Regarding Life Before Migration

- 1.1. Can you please tell me about your life in Afghanistan?
- 1.2. Can you please tell me in detail about your education life in Afghanistan?
- 1.3. Can you please tell me in detail about your working life in Afghanistan?
- 1.4. Can you please tell me about your socioeconomic and sociocultural life in Afghanistan?
- 1.5. In general, how would you assess your life back in Afghanistan?

### 2. Questions Regarding Migration Decision and Pre-Migration Preparations

- 2.1. How did you decide to leave Afghanistan?
- 2.2. How did you choose to migrate to Türkiye? Was Türkiye your first option?
- 2.3. Can you tell me about the nature and experiences of your entry to Türkiye?
- 2.4. How much did you know about life and asylum procedures in Türkiye?
- 2.5. Have you ever applied for a visa to visit Türkiye?
- 2.6. Do you have friends, family members, or relatives already in Türkiye?
- 2.7. What were your plans in Türkiye?
- 2.8. Can you tell me about your experiences of living in countries other than Türkiye? (if any)
- 2.9. Can you compare your previous experience/s of migration with that of Türkiye? (if any)

### 3. Questions Regarding Post-Migration Experiences and Life in Ankara

- 3.1. Can you tell me about your life in Türkiye, particularly in Ankara?
- 3.2. Can you tell me about the neighborhood you live in Ankara?
- 3.3. Is there any association or NGO that assists you in your life in Ankara?

- 3.4. How much migration to Türkiye fulfilled your expectations?
- 3.5. Have your views on Türkiye changed since you arrived?
- 3.6. Do you fear deportation?
- 3.7. Would you like to encourage your friends to migrate to Türkiye?

#### **4. Questions Regarding Communication with Turkish Local Authorities**

- 4.1. Do you visit any public institution in Türkiye occasionally?
- 4.2. Can you share your experiences visiting any local Turkish authority or institution?
- 4.3. Do you feel safe when contacting local Turkish authorities?
- 4.4. Do you feel that Turkish public institutions treat Afghan immigrants fairly and equally compared to other immigrant groups?
- 4.5. Have you ever felt treated differently because of your identity as Afghan? Can you share an example?
- 4.6. In general, how would you assess the nature of your communication and interactions with local authorities?

#### **5. Questions Regarding Institutional Integration**

- 5.1. How much do you know about your rights as a foreigner and asylum seeker in Türkiye?
- 5.2. How much do you know about your legal obligations as a foreigner and asylum seeker in Türkiye?
- 5.3. Do you feel informed about your rights and obligations as an asylum seeker in Türkiye?
- 5.4. Can you tell me about your experience of applying for asylum in Türkiye?
- 5.5. Have you faced any challenges in navigating the legal system?
- 5.6. Can you tell me about any experience of how you resolved a legal or institutional issue you faced in Türkiye?
- 5.7. Do you have signature obligations? Can you tell me how you find this obligation?

#### **6. Questions Regarding Future Plans**

- 6.1. What are your future expectations or goals?
- 6.2. Do you see Türkiye as a permanent home or do you plan to return to Afghanistan or move elsewhere?
- 6.3. What do you think about Türkiye's immigration policy and practice?
- 6.4. What are your expectations from the public institutions in Türkiye?

- 6.5. Overall, what have been the most challenging and rewarding aspects of your life in Türkiye?
- 6.6. If you could change one thing to make life easier for Afghan asylum seekers, what would it be?
- 6.7. Overall, how do you assess your life in Türkiye?
- 6.8. Finally, do you have anything to add or ask?



## ANNEX 5: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN DARI

### سوالات نیمه ساختاری مصاحبه

نام مستعار شرکت کننده	سطح تحصیلی	
سن	شغل در افغانستان	
جنسیت	شغل در ترکیه	
وضعیت مدنی	سال مهاجرت به ترکیه	
جمعیت خانواده	وضعیت حقوقی	

### 1. سوالات مربوط به زندگی قبل از مهاجرت

1. آیا لطفاً میتوانید در مورد زندگی خود در افغانستان بگویید؟
2. میشود در مورد زندگی تحصیلی خود در افغانستان به من توضیح دهید؟
3. میتوانید در مورد زندگی کاری خود در افغانستان به تفصیل توضیح دهید؟
4. آیا میتوانید در مورد زندگی اقتصادی و فرهنگی خود در افغانستان معلومات بدهید؟
5. به طور کلی زندگی خود را در افغانستان چگونه ارزیابی میکنید؟

### 2. سوالات مربوط به تصمیم گیری مهاجرت و آمادگی های قبل از مهاجرت

1. چگونه تصمیم به ترک افغانستان را گرفتید؟
2. چگونه مهاجرت به ترکیه را انتخاب کردید؟ آیا ترکیه گزینه اول شما بود؟
3. آیا میتوانید در مورد ماهیت و تجارب ورود تان به ترکیه به من بگویید؟
4. شما از قبل در مورد زندگی و پرسه های پناهندگی در ترکیه چقدر معلومات داشتید؟
5. آیا شما گاهی برای ویزه ترکیه جهت بازدید از این کشور درخواست داده بودید؟
6. آیا شما دوستان، اعضای خانواده، و یا خویشاوندان از قبل موجود در ترکیه داشتید؟
7. برنامه های شما در ترکیه چی بود؟
8. آیا میتوانید از تجربیات خود از زندگی در کشورهای دیگر به جز ترکیه بگویید؟ (در صورت وجود)
9. آیا میتوانید تجربیات مهاجرتی قبلی خود را با مهاجرت در ترکیه مقایسه کنید؟ (در صورت وجود)

### 3. سوالات مربوط به تجربیات پس از مهاجرت و زندگی در انقره

1. آیا شما میتوانید در مورد زندگی خود در ترکیه و مخصوصاً در انقره به من بگویید؟
2. آیا شما میتوانید در مورد محلی که شما در انقره زندگی میکنید برایم بگویید؟
3. آیا کدام انجمن یا سازمان غیردولتی وجود دارد که در زندگی شما در انقره به شما کمک نماید؟
4. مهاجرت به ترکیه چقدر از انتظارات شما را برآورده کرده است؟

3.5. آیا دیدگاه شما نسبت به ترکیه از زمان ورود تان به این کشور تغییر کرده است؟

3.6. آیا ترسی از اخراج شدن اجباری (رد مرز) دارید؟

3.7. آیا میخواهید دوستان خود را تشویق به مهاجرت به ترکیه نمایید؟

#### 4. سوالات در مورد ارتباط با مقامات محلی ترکیه

4.1. آیا هر از چند گاهی از مؤسسه های عامه و یا دولتی در ترکیه بازدید میکنید؟

4.2. آیا میتوانید تجارب خود را از بازدید به یکی از اداره یا نهاد محلی ترکیه با من شریک سازید؟

4.3. آیا هنگام تماس با مقامات محلی ترکیه احساس امنیت میکنید؟

4.4. آیا شما احساس میکنید که نهاد های دولتی ترکیه با مهاجرین افغان در مقایسه با سایر گروه های مهاجر رفتار عادلانه و یکسان دارند؟

4.5. آیا تا به حال احساس کرده اید که به دلیل هویت شما به عنوان یک افغان با شما رفتار متفاوتی صورت میگیرد؟ آیا میتوانید یک مثال به اشتراک بگذارید؟

4.6. به طور کلی ماهیت ارتباطات و تعاملات خود را با مقامات محلی چگونه ارزیابی میکنید؟

#### 5. سوالات در مورد ادغام نهادی

5.1. در مورد حقوق خود به عنوان یک خارجی و یک پناهجو در ترکیه چقدر معلومات دارید؟

5.2. در مورد مکلفیت های قانونی خود به عنوان یک خارجی و یک پناهجو در ترکیه چقدر می دانید؟

5.3. آیا احساس میکنید از حقوق و مکلفیت های خود به عنوان یک پناهجو در ترکیه به اندازه کافی مطلع هستید؟

5.4. آیا میتوانید در مورد تجارب خود در مورد درخواست پناهندگی در ترکیه به من بگویید؟

5.5. آیا شما در تعقیب کردن سیستم حقوقی و یا قانونی با چالشی روبرو گردیده اید؟

5.6. آیا میتوانید در مورد یک تجربه از نحوه حل یک مسئله حقوقی یا اداری که در ترکیه با آن مواجه شده بودید به من بگویید؟

5.7. آیا شما مکلفیت امضاء دارید؟ آیا میتوانید بگویید که این مکلفیت را چگونه ارزیابی میکنید؟

#### 6. سوالات مربوط به پلان های آینده

6.1. توقعات یا اهداف شما برای آینده چی ها میباشد؟

6.2. آیا شما ترکیه را به عنوان یک خانه دائمی می بینید، یا قصد دارید به افغانستان برگردید و یا به جای دیگری نقل مکان نمایید؟

6.3. نظر شما در مورد سیاست ها و شیوه های مهاجرتی ترکیه چیست؟

6.4. انتظارات شما از نهادهای دولتی در ترکیه چیست؟

6.5. در کل، چالش برانگیزترین و پر منفعت ترین جنبه زندگی شما در ترکیه چی بوده است؟

6.6. اگر بتوانید یک چیز را تغییر دهید تا زندگی برای پناهجویان افغان راحت تر شود، آن چی خواهد بود؟

6.7. به طور کلی، زندگی خود را در ترکیه چگونه ارزیابی میکنید؟

6.8. در آخر، آیا چیزی برای اضافه کردن و یا پرسیدن دارید؟

**ANNEX 6: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN TURKISH****YARI YAPILANDIRILMIŞ MÜLAKAT SORULARI**

Katılımcının Takma Adı		Eğitim Seviyesi	
Yaş		Afganistan'daki Meslek	
Cinsiyet		Türkiye'deki Meslek	
Medeni Durum		Türkiye'ye Göç Yılı	
Hanehalkı Nüfusu		Yasal Durum	

**1. Göç Öncesi Yaşamla İlgili Sorular**

- 1.1. Afganistan'daki hayatınızdan bahseder misiniz?
- 1.2. Afganistan'daki eğitim hayatınız hakkında detaylı bilgi verebilir misiniz?
- 1.3. Afganistan'daki çalışma hayatınız hakkında detaylı bilgi verebilir misiniz?
- 1.4. Afganistan'daki sosyoekonomik ve sosyokültürel hayatınızdan bahseder misiniz?
- 1.5. Afganistan'daki hayatınızı genel olarak nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

**2. Göç Kararı ve Göç Öncesi Hazırlıklara İlişkin Sorular**

- 2.1. Afganistan'dan ayrılmaya nasıl karar verdiniz?
- 2.2. Türkiye'ye göç etmeyi nasıl seçtiniz? Türkiye ilk seçeneğiniz miydi?
- 2.3. Türkiye'ye girişinizin niteliği ve deneyimlerinizden bahseder misiniz?
- 2.4. Türkiye'deki yaşam ve sıhınma prosedürleri hakkında ne kadar bilginiz vardı?
- 2.5. Türkiye'yi ziyaret etmek için herhangi bir vize türüne başvurduğunuz mu?
- 2.6. Türkiye'de arkadaşlarınız, aile üyeleriniz veya akrabalarınız var mı?
- 2.7. Türkiye'deki planlarınız nelerdi?
- 2.8. Türkiye dışındaki ülkelerdeki yaşam deneyimlerinizi anlatır misiniz? (Eğer varsa)
- 2.9. Önceki göç deneyimlerinizi Türkiye'deki deneyiminizle karşılaştırabilir misiniz? (Eğer varsa)

**3. Göç Sonrası Deneyimler ve Ankara'daki Yaşamla İlgili Sorular**

- 3.1. Türkiye'deki ve özellikle Ankara'daki hayatınızdan bahseder misiniz?
- 3.2. Ankara'da yaşadığınız mahalleden bahseder misiniz?
- 3.3. Ankara'da hayatınızda size yardımcı olan bir dernek veya sivil toplum örgütü var mı?

- 3.4. Türkiye'ye göç beklentilerinizi ne kadar karşıladı?
- 3.5. Türkiye'ye bakış a@Resource sizden beri değişti mi?
- 3.6. Sınır dışı edilme korkunuz var mı?
- 3.7. Arkadaşlarınızı Türkiye'ye göç etmeye teşvik etmek ister misiniz?

#### **4. Türk Yerel Yönetimlerle İletişime İlişkin Sorular**

- 4.1. Türkiye'de zaman zaman herhangi bir kamu kuruluşunu ziyaret ediyor musunuz?
- 4.2. Herhangi bir Türk yerel yönetimini veya kurumunu ziyaret etme deneyimlerinizi bizimle paylaşabilir misiniz?
- 4.3. Türkiye'deki yerel makamlarla iletişimde geçtiğinizde kendinizi güvende hissediyor musunuz?
- 4.4. Türkiye'deki kamu kurumlarının Afgan göçmenlere diğer göçmen gruplarına kıyasla adil ve eşit davranışını düşünüyor musunuz?
- 4.5. Afgan kimliğiniz nedeniyle farklı muamele gördüğünüzü hiç hissettiniz mi? Bir örnek paylaşabilir misiniz?
- 4.6. Genel olarak yerel yetkililerle olan iletişimiminiz ve etkileşimlerinizin niteliğini nasıl değerlendirdiriyorsunuz?

#### **5. Kurumsal Entegrasyona İlişkin Sorular**

- 5.1. Türkiye'de bir yabancı ve sığınmacı olarak haklarınız hakkında ne kadar bilginiz var?
- 5.2. Türkiye'de bir yabancı ve sığınmacı olarak yasal yükümlülükleriniz hakkında ne kadar bilginiz var?
- 5.3. Türkiye'de sığınmacı olarak haklarınız ve yükümlülükleriniz konusunda bilgilendirildiğinizi düşünüyor musunuz?
- 5.4. Türkiye'de iltica başvurusunda bulunma deneyimlerinizi anlatabilir misiniz?
- 5.5. Hukuk sisteminde yol alırken herhangi bir zorlukla karşılaşınız mı?
- 5.6. Türkiye'de karşılaşığınız hukuki veya kurumsal bir sorunu nasıl çözdüğünüz dair bir deneyiminizi anlatabilir misiniz?
- 5.7. İmza yükümlülüğünüz var mı? Bu yükümlülüğünüz nasıl bulduğunuzu söyleyebilir misiniz?

#### **6. Gelecek Planlarına İlişkin Sorular**

- 6.1. Geleceğe yönelik beklentileriniz veya hedefleriniz nelerdir?
- 6.2. Türkiye'yi kalıcı bir yuva olarak mı görüyorsunuz, yoksa Afganistan'a dönmeyi ya da başka bir yere taşınmayı mı düşünüyorsunuz?

- 6.3. Türkiye'nin göç politikaları ve uygulamaları hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- 6.4. Türkiye'deki kamu kurumlarından bekłentileriniz nelerdir?
- 6.5. Türkiye'deki hayatınızın genel olarak en zorlayıcı ve en ödüllendirici yanı neydi?
- 6.6. Afgan sığınmacıların hayatını kolaylaştırmak için bir şeyi değiştirebilseydiniz, bu ne olurdu?
- 6.7. Türkiye'deki hayatınızı genel olarak nasıl değerlendirdiyorsunuz?
- 6.8. Son olarak eklemek veya sormak istediğiniz bir şey var mı?



**ANNEX 7: THESIS TITLE CHANGE PROPOSAL FORM (DURING DEFENSE)**



**ANNEX 8: ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

