THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKIYE

SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

CROSSING THE FRONTIER: CHARACTERISTICS AND CONDITIONS OF AFGHAN IRREGULAR MIGRATION AT THE IRANIAN-TURKISH BORDER

Master's Thesis

KAWSAR DEHISTANI

Master of Arts in International Relations

July 2024

THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKIYE

SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

CROSSING THE FRONTIER: CHARACTERISTICS AND CONDITIONS OF AFGHAN IRREGULAR MIGRATION AT THE IRANIAN-TURKISH BORDER

Master's Thesis

KAWSAR DEHISTANI

Supervisor

ASST.PROF.DR. Kadir Onur UNUTULMAZ

Master of Arts in International Relations

July 2024

DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented in this thesis, titled CROSSING THE FRONTIER: Characteristics and Conditions of Afghan Irregular Migration at the Iranian-Turkish Border, is my original effort, except where acknowledged. I have appropriately cited and referenced all sources used. This work has not been submitted elsewhere for academic purposes. I am fully responsible for the content and conclusions presented.

Kawsar Dehistani
July, 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I begin by expressing my profound gratitude to my esteemed supervisor, Asst.Prof.DR. Kadir Onur Unutulmaz. Your guidance, support, and expert insights have illuminated every step of my thesis journey. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the participants who willingly devoted their time and shared their valuable insights during the interviews. This study would not have been feasible without their cooperation.

To every person that contributed to this thesis in ways big and small, thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

In exploring the irregular journey of Afghan migrants through Iran to Türkiye, this thesis delves into the narratives shaped by political upheavals and economic restrictions in their homeland. Forced displacement due to political disruption has compelled millions of Afghans to seek refuge beyond their borders. The research examines the intricate factors influencing this irregular journey, seeking to deepen our understanding of the migration experiences endured by Afghans as they make their way to Türkiye. A detailed analysis is provided, shedding light on the multifaceted motivations of Afghan migration and the nuanced influences guiding their decision-making process. The focus remains on the challenging journey through Iran, revealing the challenges faced by Afghan migrants along this dangerous path.

Utilizing a comprehensive methodology, the study combines primary data from in-depth interviews with Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye and secondary data sources helping to address the research questions of the thesis.

The primary research questions guiding this thesis include:

- What are the difficulties and challenges faced by Afghan migrants during their journey to Türkiye?
- What are the primary motivations and push/pull factors influencing Afghan migrants to embark on the irregular journey to Turkey through Iran?
- What are the common routes taken by Afghan irregular migrants through Iran to reach Turkey, and what are the key dynamics and risks associated with these routes?

Key findings reveal that Afghan migrants face numerous challenges, including harsh weather conditions, physical exhaustion, threats from human smugglers, and the constant risk of detention and deportation. The motivations driving these migrants are multifaceted, encompassing a mix of push factors such as ongoing violence, political instability, and economic hardship in Afghanistan, and pull factors like perceived safety, better economic opportunities, and a more stable socio-political environment in Türkiye. The study maps out the common routes taken by these migrants, highlighting the treacherous terrain and significant risks involved, including encounters with border security forces and reliance on dangerous smuggling networks.

Emphasizing both the push and pull factors in the origin and destination countries, the thesis contributes to a nuanced comprehension of the motivations driving Afghan immigration to Türkiye. Unfortunately, legal migration constraints have compelled many Afghans to resort to illegal methods, including smuggling networks and illegal border crossings. This research not

only adds depth to academic discourse but also serves as a testament to the resilience and determination of those seeking a safer and more promising future.

In summary, 'Every migration is a story,' is exemplified in this thesis which unfolds the narratives of Afghan migrants offering valuable insights into their challenges, aspirations, and the complex web of factors influencing their migration decision.

Keywords: Irregular Migration, Push and Pull Factors, Journey, Afghanistan, Türki

ÖZET

Afgan göçmenlerinin İran üzerinden Türkiye'ye olan düzensiz yolculuğunu keşfederken, bu tez vatanlarında siyasi çalkantılar ve ekonomik kısıtlamalar tarafından şekillendirilen anlatılara dalıyor. Siyasi kesintiler nedeniyle zorla yerinden edilme, milyonlarca Afgan'ı sınırlarının ötesinde sığınmaya zorlamıştır. Araştırma, bu düzensiz yolculuğu etkileyen karmaşık faktörleri inceleyerek, Afganların Türkiye'ye varışları sırasında yaşadıkları göç deneyimlerine derinlik kazandırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Afgan göçmenlerinin bu tehlikeli patika boyunca karşılaştığı zorlukları ortaya koyarak, detaylı bir analiz sunulmuştur.

Kapsamlı bir metodoloji kullanarak, çalışma Türkiye'deki Afgan mültecilerle yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelerden elde edilen birincil verileri ve tezin araştırma sorusuna yanıt bulmada yardımcı olan ikincil veri kaynaklarını birleştirmektedir.

Bu teze yön veren temel araştırma soruları şunlardır:

- Afgan göçmenlerin Türkiye'ye yolculuklarında karşılaştıkları zorluklar nelerdir?
- Afgan göçmenleri İran üzerinden Türkiye'ye düzensiz yolculuğa iten temel motivasyonlar ve itici/çekici faktörler nelerdir?
- Afgan düzensiz göçmenlerin İran üzerinden Türkiye'ye ulaşmak için kullandıkları ortak güzergahlar nelerdir ve bu güzergahlarla ilgili temel dinamikler ve riskler nelerdir?

Temel bulgular, Afgan göçmenlerin zorlu hava koşulları, fiziksel yorgunluk, insan kaçakçılarının tehditleri ve sürekli gözaltına alınma ve sınır dışı edilme riski dahil olmak üzere çok sayıda zorlukla karşı karşıya olduğunu ortaya koyuyor. Bu göçmenleri yönlendiren motivasyonlar çok yönlü olup, Afganistan'da devam eden şiddet, siyasi istikrarsızlık ve ekonomik zorluklar gibi itici faktörler ile Türkiye'de algılanan güvenlik, daha iyi ekonomik fırsatlar ve daha istikrarlı bir sosyo-politik ortam gibi çekici faktörlerin bir karışımını kapsamaktadır. Çalışma, bu göçmenlerin kullandığı ortak rotaları haritalandırıyor, tehlikeli araziyi ve sınır güvenlik güçleriyle karşılaşma ve tehlikeli kaçakçılık ağlarına güvenme dahil önemli riskleri vurguluyor.

Göçmenlerin köken ve varış ülkelerindeki itme ve çekme faktörlerini vurgulayarak, tez Afgan göçmenlerin Türkiye'ye göç etmelerini yönlendiren motivasyonların nüanslı bir anlayışına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Maalesef, yasal göç kısıtlamaları birçok Afgan'ı kaçak yöntemlere, kaçakçılık ağlarına ve yasadışı sınır geçişlerine başvurmaya zorlamıştır. Bu araştırma sadece

akademik tartışmalara derinlik katmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda daha güvenli ve umut vaat eden bir gelecek arayanların direncinin ve kararlılığının bir tanığı olarak hizmet eder.

Özetle, 'Her göç bir hikayedir,' bu tezde Afgan göçmenlerin hikayelerini açığa çıkararak, onların zorlukları, beklentileri ve göç kararlarını etkileyen karmaşık faktörler ağına değerli bir içgörü sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Düzensiz Göç, İtici ve Çekici Faktörler, Yolculuk, Afganistan, Türkiye

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASAM	Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants
DGMM	Directorate General for Migration Management, Republic of Türkiye
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IOs	International Organizations
LFIP	The Turkish Law on Foreigners and International protection
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRC	The Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PDMM	Provincial Directorates of Migration Management
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	The United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For many of the 281 million people living outside their country of origin in 2020 (IOM, 2020), migration means the opportunity for a better life for themselves and their families. Yet, for many others, the search for such an extreme opportunity comes at an extremely high cost, as they face unimaginable and fatal dangers along their journeys. Due to the fragile state, interminable war, and so on, some are willing to take these risks and spend their lifetime savings or take on debt for a new start. Death is a risk worth taking in desperate situations of violence, persecution, and war for a glimpse of a decent life.

Currently, it is widely recognized that even though nation-states make forceful and sometimes hostile efforts to maintain authority over who enters and remains within their boundaries, millions of individuals each year live under the status of irregular migrants. The substantial migration of people across borders has undoubtedly increased in recent decades due to various factors in their countries of origin (Içduygu, 2012). The migration trend in Afghanistan has accelerated due to decades of foreign occupation, civil war, the Taliban regime, suicide bombings, and the government's failure (Jurat, 2022).

Based on the UNHCR (2020) report, Türkiye is the top refugee-hosting country with nearly 3.7 million refugees, and Afghanistan is the top third sender state with 2.6 million refugees. Türkiye's and Afghanistan's neighboring country, Iran, has become a transit hub for Afghan refugees (Wissink, Düvell, and Eerdewijik, 2013). Hence, this is a crucial case study to analyze the irregular migration trend (Jurat, 2022).

The combined push and pull factors explain the motivations for the irregular migration of Afghan people to Türkiye. Despite enduring difficult and traumatic journeys, these migrants were hoping for a better life and future in Türkiye, but unfortunately, they often faced exploitation and post-migration trauma.

Afghanistan has been grappling with internal conflict and instability for decades, leading to more Afghans seeking refuge in other countries. Türkiye has become a popular destination for Afghan irregular migrants, with many of them traveling through Iran to get there. This route is fraught with danger, and migrants often face numerous challenges and hardships along the way. In this context, understanding the factors driving Afghan migration to Türkiye, and the risks faced by migrants are crucial. In this thesis I will provide a glimpse into the complex phenomenon of irregular Afghan migration through Iran to Türkiye, which has become a significant humanitarian challenge in the region.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

In this thesis I aim to determine the conditions and patterns of the Afghan migrants' irregular journey to Türkiye, emphasizing the passage stretch between Iran and Türkiye and their road stories and narratives. The concept of the journey, or, in other words, the narratives of the journey, might encompass not merely an act of mobility across borders but as tied to life events. In this study I explore the reasons behind their irregular migration and highlight the structure of their journey and any people involved. I aim to improve understanding of the migration experiences of Afghans during their journey to Türkiye and the challenges they face along the way.

1.2. Research Questions

The research Questions are:

- What are the difficulties and challenges faced by Afghan migrants during their journey to Türkiye?
- What are the primary motivations and push/pull factors influencing Afghan migrants to embark on the irregular journey to Turkey through Iran?
- What are the common routes taken by Afghan irregular migrants through Iran to reach Turkey, and what are the key dynamics and risks associated with these routes?

1.3. Contribution of the Thesis

Irregular migration from Afghanistan to Türkiye through Iran has been a complex phenomenon, with various push and pull factors driving the movement. A thesis exploring the experiences of Afghan migrants on this route could provide valuable insights into their motives, challenges, and coping mechanisms.

Such a study could contribute to a better understanding of Afghanistan's socio-economic and political dynamics that lead people to migrate irregularly, as well as the obstacles they face in transit. Some possible contributions are:

First, shedding light on the push and pull factors of Afghan migration: by examining the reasons why Afghans leave their home country and why they choose to migrate irregularly through Iran to Türkiye, the thesis can provide insights into the economic, social, and political factors that drive or attract Afghan migrants. This can help to design more effective interventions to address the root causes of migration and provide better protection and assistance to migrants.

Second, analyzing the routes and dynamics of irregular migration: by mapping the routes that irregular Afghan migrants take through Iran to Türkiye and by examining the actors and networks involved in the smuggling and trafficking of migrants, the thesis can contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms and risks of irregular migration. This can inform efforts to prevent and combat smuggling and trafficking, as well as improve the safety and rights of migrants.

Third, assessing the impacts of irregular migration on migrants and host communities: by investigating the experiences and outcomes of Afghan migrants who pass through Iran to Türkiye, the thesis can provide evidence of the social, economic, and legal challenges that migrants face, as well as on the impacts of migration on the host communities in Türkiye. This can inform policies and programs that aim to enhance the integration and protection of migrants and address migration's social and economic impacts on host communities.

Last but not least, identifying gaps in policy and practice: by analyzing the policy and legal frameworks governing irregular migration in transit and destination countries and examining the practices of authorities and service providers concerning Afghan migrants, the thesis can identify gaps and challenges in the protection and assistance of migrants. This can inform recommendations for policy and practice improvements that ensure the human rights and dignity of migrants and promote more effective and inclusive migration governance.

Overall, a thesis related to the irregular Afghan migration through Iran to Türkiye can contribute to a better understanding of one of the most pressing migration challenges in the region and can

provide valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and academics working on migration issues.

1.4. Limitations of the study

This research, like any other, has its limitations. Here are some potential limitations of the study:

First of all, data limitations: obtaining reliable data on the actual number of Afghan migrants and their movements can be challenging due to the illegal nature of irregular migration.

Secondly, generalization: the findings of the study focused on Afghan irregular migration through Iran to Türkiye and may not be generalizable to other contexts or populations beyond the specific sample studied. Cultural, social, economic, and political factors can vary widely across different migration routes, countries of origin, and host countries.

Finally, resource constraints: the study may be limited by time and resource constraints, which may impact the depth and breadth of the analysis conducted. Thus, further studies can be conducted on this topic.

1.5. Plan of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter serves as the introduction, providing a general overview of the topic, including the aims and contributions of the study, research questions, and study limitations.

In the second chapter, I delve into the analytical and conceptual background of the thesis, which includes definitions of concepts, historical background, and a review of other relevant studies.

The third chapter focuses on the methodology and theoretical framework. It outlines the methods used to answer the research questions and explains the data collection methods, which include interviews and secondary data. The theoretical framework integrates conflict theory, world system theory, and network theory to provide a deeper explanation of the thesis.

Chapter four presents the findings of the study, organized by themes and categories. It analyzes the data and draws conclusions about the reasons for the Afghan irregular journey, their experiences along the way, how their journey took place, and the challenges they faced.
The fifth chapter provides an analysis, offering contributions to the literature, identifying any possible gaps, and making recommendations. Additionally, it analyzes the findings of the thesis.

Finally, the sixth chapter focuses on the discussion and conclusion. It presents the implications of the findings, considers the limitations of the study, summarizes the main conclusions of the thesis, and suggests directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: ANALYTICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter I examine the analytical and conceptual background of the thesis. The analytical background comprises definitions of related concepts, a historical background, and a literature review.

The analytical background of this paper is stated as follows. In the first part, I embody a basic conceptual overview of irregular migration, outlining essential definitions and contributing factors. Next, I illustrate an overview of the Afghan migration movement in the historical process in order to better understand the context within which our study is embedded. Lastly, I give a quick outline of irregular Afghan migration in Türkiye. The second part engages in a comprehensive review of the relevant academic literature, as well as policy documents and reports produced by NGOs.

2.1. Irregular Migration: terminology and definition

Globally, many people migrate without going through official channels or formal processes. Yet, the exact statistics on irregular migration are lacking. The rise of the concept of “irregular migration” or “illegal migration” traces back to 1920, 1930, and 1940, it was then occasionally applied during the 1970s, before becoming widely used from the late 1980s and especially from the 1990s onwards (Düvell, F. 2006). Sometimes there is no clear definition of irregular migration, so what is irregular is the result of what is considered or defined as regular. Nevertheless, the definitions are usually based on a mix of references to illegal crossing of borders, irregular entry or stay, lack of residence permit, and lack of work permit.

A whole array of terms is used for those migrants who do not have the required legal documentation or authorization to enter and/or reside within a given territory. Terms such as: illegal, unauthorized, undocumented, and irregular are a few commonly used by states in this context (IOM, 2019, p.102). The use of "irregular" or "undocumented" as alternatives to the term "illegal" has been endorsed by the international community on numerous occasions. The

United Nations General Assembly recognized that the term "illegal" should not be used to designate migrants in an irregular situation in Resolution 3449 (Measures to Ensure the Human Rights and Dignity of All Migrant Workers, December 9, 1975). As opposed to "illegal," which is derogatory to migrants' dignity and weakens their ability to have their human rights respected, "irregular" is a better term to employ. As with any human being, migrants can never be considered to be in an illegal status; they may, however, be in an irregular circumstance.

Although there isn't a single, widely agreed definition of what constitutes irregular migration, the term is typically used to refer to those who go outside the established migration channels. Furthermore, unaccompanied migrant children, victims of human trafficking, and other groups of migrants may be forced to use irregular migration channels. According to the International Organization of Migration (2019, p. 116), irregular migration is:

> "..... the movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit, or destination."

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families defines irregular migration as:

> "..... the movement of a person who moves or has moved across an international border and is not authorized to enter or to stay in a State pursuant to the law of that State and to international agreements to which that State is a party. (adopted 18 December 1990, entered into force 1 July 2003) 2220 UNTS 3, Art. 5."

However, it is important to note that the fact that they migrate illegally does not mean that states are not required to grant them some types of protection under international law, such as access to international protection for those seeking refuge due to persecution, war, or generalized violence. Additionally, under the Convention, refugees are shielded from punishment for entering or remaining in countries without authorization under international law (Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted 28 July 1951, entered into force 22 April 1954) 189 UNTS 137, Art. 31(1)). Therefore, even when in an irregular situation, migrants are still entitled to the respect, protection, and fulfillment of their human rights (Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, General Comment No.

2 on the Rights of Migrant Workers in an Irregular Situation and Members of Their Families (28 August 2013), UN Doc. CMW/C/GC/2).

Moreover, refugees are to be granted access to international protection and protected against being penalized for unauthorized entry or stay if they have traveled from a place where they were at risk (Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted 28 July 1951, entered into force 22 April 1954) 189 UNTS 137, Art. 31(1)).

Beyond terminology, one must understand that, in the majority of cases, migration, in general, is not driven by a single motivating factor but rather a range of factors that span social, economic, environmental, and political considerations when considering what may cause someone to migrate irregularly (De Haas, 2011; Koser, 2013).

A person may, for example, seek asylum abroad due to political persecution due to a long-running war in a nation. Still, the impetus to move at a particular time may come from another issue, like a lack of employment possibilities, leading to a mixed migratory motivation. Another illustration is when a person decides to work in an industrialized country's undocumented informal sector because they have a strong desire to be with their family. Despite the wide range of factors that influence both regular and irregular migration, it appears likely that economic motives and security play a key role in the decision-making process (IADB, 2008).

Additionally, while examining irregular migration in particular, it is important to recognize the similarities between it and regular migration since both are expected to be closely tied to the linked social, political, and economic variables at play in both the sending and receiving countries (Van Hear et al., 2012). People frequently create their own informal and inventive ways to meet that demand when, for instance, the supply of labor migration does not meet the demand for foreign labor through legal routes. Indeed, according to Portes (1978: 472), one of the main characteristics of unauthorized immigration to the United States is that it consists of individuals who move solely with the aim of selling their work capacity. This ultimately leads to the conclusion that the attraction of a favorable labor market drives both regular and irregular migration, making it difficult to clearly identify the factors that mainly influence irregular migration.

2.2. Historical Background of Afghan Migration

Afghanistan has been the most prominent country of origin for refugees for nearly four decades, from the late 1970s to early 2021, due to the permanence of conflict, war, and bloodshed, which has compelled millions of its residents to seek shelter elsewhere. There have been five peak movements of Afghan refugees:

The first displacement occurred in 1979-1989. It resulted from the creation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in April 1978, when Nur Mohammad Taraki seized power and attempted to establish a socialist state, and the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviets intervened in 1979, which gave various parties, including, Mujahideen, tribal factions, and intellectuals, a common enemy. This ten years crisis resulted in a mass movement, and the number of refugees peaked at 6.2 million in 1989(Oxford:2000). A total of 2 million people are estimated to have been internally displaced during the 1980s Soviet occupation, during which an estimated 5.8 million people migrated to Pakistan and Iran (CMI, 2008; Kuschminder and Dora, 2009). Although those seeking asylum abroad experienced a brief reprieve after the Soviet Union withdrew at the end of the decade, optimism for peace was immediately dashed by intense warfare between competing mujahedeen factions and the Soviet-backed Najibullah regime. The official refugee count peaked in the years prior to the government's eventual overthrow in 1992 at around 6.3 million people (UNHCR, 2013a). Therefore, we can say the largest and most massive migration in the history of Afghanistan started with the USSR invasion of Afghanistan, causing millions of people to flee their country during the Soviet Union invasion.

The second wave of refugees (1989-1992) was the outcome of the armed confrontation between Najibullah and Mujahideen forces following the withdrawal of Soviet Union forces. This mass migration was due to chaos caused by groups of people who could not share the power (Dashti, 2021). By 1990, peak of refugee outflow was seen in Afghanistan by 6.2 million refugees as Najibullah stayed in power. And, then, with the fall of the Najibullah government in 1992, the Mujahideen, who were fighting against the common enemy due to the disagreements in power sharing, turned their weapons against each other and thus a civil war broke out that would drag the country into chaos (Oğuz, 1999). With the devastating effects of the war, the poverty rate had increased in Afghanistan. Thus, a new wave of people was displaced (possibly up to a

million), a majority of whom remained within Afghanistan's borders as internally displaced people (UNHCR, 1994).

Following the Taliban's seizure of the government in 1996, there was a third wave of refugees. Women, educated people, moderate politicians, and religious minorities—Afghans most impacted by the Taliban's restrictive code—departed the country again during this era (Noor, 2006). The Taliban's seizure of power in Afghanistan in the 1990s had far-reaching consequences, not only for the Afghan people but also for the region as a whole. There were, in 1994-2000, between 3 million (officially) and 5 million (Unofficially) Afghan Refugees worldwide.

The Fourth phase is post-9/11 attacks and the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. The aftermath of 9/11 and the resultant US air strikes in Afghanistan exacerbated the volatility, leaving hundreds of thousands of destitute Afghans with no option but mass migration. In September 2001, out of a total population of 26 million, four million were refugees, mainly in Pakistan and Iran; and one million were internally displaced persons (Helton, 2002).

Finally, the fifth wave is the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, adding hundreds of thousands more Afghan migrants to the world. After the withdrawal of NATO and US forces from Afghanistan on July 22, 2021, and the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan on August 22, 2021, we could witness another mass migration. According to the UNHCR, by mid 2021, about 2.6 million Afghans had left their countries. Many Afghans have already fled the country as a result of the Taliban's takeover of power. Economic deterioration and the oppressive Taliban regime, where human rights abuses are common, compelled hundreds of thousands of Afghans to flee their country once again.

In recent years, Afghanistan has experienced significant migration flows driven by ongoing conflict, political instability, economic hardship, and natural disasters. The situation worsened following the Taliban's takeover in 2021, which intensified insecurity and persecution fears, prompting many to seek refuge abroad. Economic conditions are dire, with high unemployment, poverty, and a lack of basic services, exacerbated by the collapse of the previous government and the freeze on international aid. Consequently, many Afghans migrate in search of better opportunities. Internally, millions are displaced due to conflict and economic conditions, facing severe hardships such as inadequate shelter and food insecurity.

All in all, we can say that since 1979, Afghanistan has been one of the world's leading generators of refugees. In other words, migration is an integral part of survival and livelihood in Afghanistan (Kuschminder, 2017).

Table 1

AFGHAN REFUGEES, 1980-2001

Year	Figure	Description
1980	600,000	UN calls for immediate withdrawal of foreign forces
1983	3.9 million	Civil war intensifies as Mujahideen receives arms
1987	5.1 million	Babrak Karmal replaced by Najibullah
1988	5.9 million	Geneva Accords call for withdrawal of Soviet troops
1990	6.2 million	Peak of refugee outflow as Najibullah remains in power

Source: UNHCR, 2001.

2.3. Push factors behind the mass migration of Afghans

Afghans have been migrating for decades and often give different and plural reasons for their migration decisions. I will list the push factors that led Afghans to flee their homes. Nevertheless, I am aware that migration is an individual decision and perception. The reasons listed here might be a factor for some individuals to flee Afghanistan, but at the same time, those factors for others cannot be a reason to leave the country.

Political and economic instability are the most important factors driving Afghan migration. An interminable war and instability in the country for more than forty years have forced people to migrate internally and externally. Many young families tend to go abroad, usually crossing

borders illegally and moving step by step through transit passage over Iran and Türkiye (Içduygu and Karadağ: 2018).

2.3.1. Political Instability and Lack of Security

Several studies have been conducted on the core reasons for migration, one of them being a “fragile state.” In research from Içduygu and Karadağ (2018), the term 'fragile state' describes the states that are unable to protect their inhabitants' rights and livelihoods while still maintaining administrative and regulatory control over their territory. In this context, one might regard Afghanistan as a 'fragile state,' where its inhabitants confront a genuine threat of instability and seek refuge outside their homeland. It is apparent that the idea of a "fragile state" may be used as an analytical tool to characterize long-term refugee migrations caused by a state's failure to operate effectively in the context of conflict. A fragile state is one in which there is a lack of physical control of territory or a loss of monopoly and authority over the legitimate use of force. It is expected that long-term political tensions, a lack of security, and the government's incapacity to deliver essential services to citizens would impede self-sufficiency and, as a result, lead to forced displacement. Three primary groupings of indicators determine the fragility level of a state, which are:

The first group is the social indicators; demographic pressure, internally displaced, breakdown of the social infrastructure of the state. In order to better understand the fact that many of these indicators have been clearly noticeable in Afghanistan, it is imperative to give some examples of each. Demographic pressure refers to the strain that a growing population can place on a country’s resources and infrastructure. When a country has a large and rapidly growing population, like Afghanistan, it can be difficult for the government to provide basic necessities such as housing, education, and healthcare for all of its citizens. Afghanistan is a fragile state with a long history of conflict, which has caused many people to be displaced within the country. These internally displaced Afghans often face difficult living conditions and limited access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare (Schmeidl, 2011). The ongoing violence and instability in Afghanistan make it difficult for these displaced people to return to their homes, leading to a cycle of poverty and suffering. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as of December 2020, there were approximately 2.7 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in Afghanistan.

The second group is the economic indicators: economic decline in the state. Afghanistan has experienced a significant economic decline in recent years. The Afghan economy is heavily reliant on foreign aid and the illicit opium trade, and has struggled to diversify and grow. Unemployment and poverty rates are high, and the country faces significant challenges in terms of infrastructure development and access to basic services. The economic decline in Afghanistan has had a negative impact on the overall well-being of the population and has contributed to the ongoing instability and conflict in the country.

And the last group is the political indicators: widespread violation of human rights, fictionalized elites, the intervention of other states or external political actors—all of these criteria make it possible for us to see and consider Afghanistan as a fragile state due to its long duration of conflicts and protracted process of displacement of its people (Içduygu and Karadağ: 2018). The Afghan government has failed to protect the basic human rights of its nationals due to several challenges domestically and internationally (Sana Talwasa: 2020).

The Taliban: the Taliban, a fundamentalist group, has had a significant impact on the political instability in Afghanistan. The group emerged in the 1990s and quickly gained control over much of the country, implementing a strict and oppressive form of Islamic law (Goodhand, J, et al., 2015). The Taliban's rule is characterized by widespread human rights abuses, including the suppression of women's rights and the persecution of minority groups. The Taliban's rule was eventually ended by the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, but the group has continued to carry out insurgency operations against the Afghan government and coalition forces. The ongoing conflict has contributed to a climate of political instability and insecurity in the country. On August 15, 2021, the Taliban took over the government for the second time, starting their brutal regime once again. The instability caused by the Taliban has had a number of negative consequences for Afghanistan and its people. One significant impact has been the mass migration of Afghans from the country. Many Afghans have been forced to flee their homes due to the violence and insecurity caused by the Taliban's insurgency and the ongoing conflict. As noted by Schmeidl, this has led to a large population of internally displaced people within Afghanistan, as well as a significant number of Afghan refugees in neighboring countries (İçduygu, A.1996). The mass migration of Afghans has had a number of negative consequences for the country. It has led to a loss of skilled labor and a brain drain, as many educated and talented Afghans have been forced to leave the country.

Overall, the Taliban's actions have had a significant negative impact on Afghanistan's stability and have contributed to the ongoing conflict and instability in the country. The group's hardline ideology and its use of violence to achieve its goals have hindered efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution to the conflict and have contributed to a cycle of violence and suffering for the Afghan people.

2.3.2.Economic Instability

Dzivimbo, (2003), World Bank (2003), and Makakala (2015) argue that limited job opportunities and unemployment are some of the push factors contributing to migration in developing countries. When a country's economy fails, there are often few job opportunities available. This can lead people to seek out opportunities in other countries. It's important to note that people often migrate to places where they believe they can improve their economic and social prospects (Miheretu, 2011). Research done by Odorige (2016) shows that unemployment and poverty are often key factors driving migration. The International Labor Organization has found that a significant number of international migrants, over 100 million people, leave their home countries in search of employment opportunities.

The economic instability of Afghans has been a major factor in the mass migration of people from the country. One of the main reasons for the economic instability of Afghans is the ongoing conflict in the country. For decades, Afghanistan has been embroiled in a war, with various factions fighting for control. This conflict has disrupted the country's economy, infrastructure, and social fabric, making it difficult for people to lead stable and prosperous lives. The war has also caused widespread displacement, with many Afghans being forced to flee their homes and seek refuge in other countries.

Another reason for the economic instability of Afghans is the country's reliance on foreign aid. Afghanistan has been heavily reliant on international aid for decades, and this has created a dependency culture that has made it difficult for the country to develop its own economy. The aid has also been accompanied by corruption, with many Afghan officials taking advantage of the aid to line their own pockets rather than investing it in the country's development.

The lack of job opportunities is also a major factor in the economic instability of Afghans. In addition, Afghanistan's employment system is marked by corruption and nepotism, which can make it difficult for ordinary citizens to achieve social mobility or attain positions of power and influence. Afghanistan has a high unemployment rate, and many people struggle to find work that pays enough to support themselves and their families. This lack of job opportunities has forced many Afghans to seek work abroad, often in low-paying and dangerous jobs.

The economic instability of Afghans has also been exacerbated by the country's poor infrastructure. Afghanistan has a limited transportation network, which makes it difficult for people to access markets and sell their goods. The country also has a limited electricity supply, which makes it difficult for businesses to operate and for people to access basic services.

To sum up, the economic instability of Afghans has been a major factor in the mass migration of people from the country. The ongoing conflict, reliance on foreign aid, lack of job opportunities, and poor infrastructure have all contributed to this instability, making it difficult for people to lead stable and prosperous lives in Afghanistan.

2.4. Türkiye and Migration: Conceptual Framework and Legal Regulations

After describing and discussing some main push factors, we can now turn to the receiving context and the main pull factors that attract Afghan migrants to it. Therefore, in this section, I will start describing the context in Türkiye regarding migration.

The 2510 legislation on settlement, which was adopted in 1934, is the first law governing immigration and asylum in Türkiye. This rule limited persons of Turkish heritage and ethnicity's stated right to refugee status and immigration. Later, in the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees, a UN document outlines the definition of what constitutes a "refugee" and the legal protections, assistance, and social rights to which refugees are entitled. Türkiye, however, abides by a "geographical constraint" defined in the treaty, which restricts its ability to award refugee status to non-Europeans. As a result of this stipulation, Türkiye now has a two-tiered asylum system where people are either considered "convention refugee" (Europeans), or "non-convention refugees" (Non-Europeans). Nevertheless, following the 1980s, the increased number of irregular immigrants who do not come from the Council of

Europe member countries brought a new law on the agenda in 1944: settlement and asylum regulation (NEE,2017a).
According to article 3 of this regulation, an asylum seeker is defined as (T.C Resmi Gazete, 1994,p.7):

> "An asylum seeker is a person who as a result of events occurring in their countries and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his citizenship and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

Following the Syrian civil war outbreak in 2011, the need for temporary protection rules that particularly addressed second-tier asylum applicants increased. The Turkish government approved the law on foreigners and international protection (Law No. 6458) on April 4, 2013, to handle the processes for foreigners' entry, departure, and stay. This is the first law to deal with Türkiye's asylum and immigration system, including the control of approved and unauthorized humanitarian migration and programs for refugee integration. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection established the executive branch body responsible for managing migration, the Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM).This framework established infrastructure for three categories of foreigners seeking international protection: refugees; conditional refugees (those who are stated to be resettled in a third country), and individuals under subsidiary temporary protection (anyone who does not fit the above two categories, but who would be at risk if returned to his/her country of origin).

According to Article 61 of the LFIP (2013, p. 58), the concept of refugee refers to:

> "A person who as a result of events occurring in European countries and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his citizenship and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and

being outside the country of his former residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it, shall be granted refugee status upon completion of the refugee status determination process."

According to Article 62 of the LFIP (2013, p. 58), the concept of conditional refugees is defined as:

"a person who as a result of events occurring outside European countries and owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it, shall be granted conditional refugee status upon completion of the refugee status determination process. Conditional refugees shall be allowed to reside in Türkiye temporarily until they are resettled to a third country."

According to Article 63 of the LFIP (2013, p. 59), the concept of subsidiary protection refers to:

"unwilling people to return their country of origin who are foreigner or stateless and could not be granted by the status of refugee or conditional refugee could staying Türkiye under the subsidiary protection, since if returned to the country of origin be sentenced to death, torture, or violence."

As seen above, the status of refugee is not granted for non-Europeans, therefore, other citizens are either under temporary protection or conditional refugees waiting for their third countries resettlement. And, Afghans have international protection status or applications in Türkiye.

2.4.1. Historical Background of Afghan Migration to Turkey

Afghan migration to Turkey has a long and multifaceted history, reflecting the broader socio-political dynamics of the region. The migration can be traced back to several key periods, each

marked by distinct waves of refugees and migrants driven by various factors such as conflict, political changes, and economic challenges.

Early Migration Waves (1980s-1990s): Turkey first officially encountered Afghan immigration in 1982. Following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, Afghans sought refuge in Pakistan and legally immigrated to Turkey in 1982. These immigrants have been living as citizens of the Republic of Turkey for 42 years. Among them are leaders of ethnic groups with Turkish lineages, including Turkmen, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Kazakhs (ANKASAM, 2021). Between August 3 and 24, 1982, Afghan migrants, identified under Law No. 2641[1], were transported from Karachi-Islamabad Airports to Adana Airport using planes provided by the United Nations (UN). Initially housed in temporary settlement areas, these immigrants were later relocated to permanent settlements after considering the region's climatic conditions similar to Afghanistan, as well as their professions and abilities, while maintaining their family and kinship structures. In this context, Turkmen were settled in Tokat, Uzbeks in Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, and Hatay, Kyrgyz in Van, and Kazakhs in Kayseri.

Post-Soviet Withdrawal (1989-1992): The withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989 and the subsequent internal conflicts, including the power struggle between Najibullah's government and the Mujahideen forces, led to another significant wave of Afghan refugees. Many Afghans fled to Turkey during this time to escape the ensuing chaos and violence. The instability and lack of security in Afghanistan during this period compelled numerous families and individuals to seek refuge in Turkey, which offered a relatively more stable and secure environment (Şimşek, 2021).

Taliban Regime and Early 2000s: The rise of the Taliban in the mid-1990s and their control over Afghanistan until the early 2000s led to further displacement. The repressive policies of the Taliban regime, along with ongoing conflict, forced many Afghans to leave their country. Turkey continued to be a preferred destination due to its geopolitical position and more lenient

[1] Due to the existing settlement laws at that time were not sufficient, the “Draft Law on the Admission and Settlement of Turkish Noble Immigrants from Afghanistan to Pakistan” was accepted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) as the settlement law numbered 2641 on 19 March 1982 and published in the Government gazette. According to this law, which was enacted to be applied only once, it was obligatory to apply to the Turkish Embassy in Islamabad and authorities until 31 December 1982 in order to be accepted to Turkey.

asylum policies compared to other countries in the region. This period also saw Turkey strengthening its role as both a transit and host country for Afghan migrants.

Recent Years (Post-2014): The withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2014, and more recently in 2021, marked another critical period in Afghan migration. The return of the Taliban to power in August 2021 created a new surge of refugees fleeing persecution and seeking asylum in safer countries. Turkey has continued to play a crucial role as a destination and transit country for Afghan migrants. The Turkish government's response, legal regulations, and humanitarian efforts have evolved to address the increasing number of asylum seekers and irregular migrants from Afghanistan.

Contemporary Migration Dynamics: Today, Afghan migration to Turkey is influenced by a combination of factors, including ongoing conflict, economic difficulties, and the quest for better living conditions. The country's geographical location, cultural ties, and relative economic stability make it a viable option for many Afghans. Turkey's policies and international cooperation efforts continue to shape the experiences of Afghan migrants within its borders.

In summary, the historical background of Afghan migration to Turkey is marked by multiple waves driven by conflict, political upheaval, and economic necessity. Each period has contributed to the current dynamics of Afghan migration, influencing the bureaucratic processes, legal frameworks, and the experiences of Afghan migrants in Turkey.

2.4.2. Bureaucratic process of refugee status determination for Afghan migrants in Türkiye

The growing refugee population has become the top political issue in Türkiye. Therefore, it does affect the process of determining refugee status. Türkiye allows non-European refugees to remain within the country until they are either resettled to a third country or repatriated by the UNHCR (Kirisci,2003). Afghan migrants are subject to a parallel procedure and are interviewed for refugee determination by the Turkish authorities and by the UNHCR (Biehl, 2015). Therefore, it is through the UNHCR's involvement that Afghan migrants can be resettled in third countries. Turkish government authorities would send migrants to cities in the country's interior, away from the capital and big cities; these cities are referred to as satellite cities. Hence, these migrants would be sent to these "satellite cities" by government officials

to wait for the results of their resettlement claims. To be eligible for third-country resettlement, refugees must apply via IOS. Afghans who came to Türkiye by plane with legal documents later registered with UNHCR as “temporary refugees,” waiting to go to their third country destination. If their asylum application is granted, they can temporarily stay in Türkiye. At the same time, they wait for a third country, such as the United States, Canada, or a European country, to give them permanent resettlement. Refugees are placed in a small town or city in Türkiye throughout this procedure and cannot leave. The average wait time for the whole resettlement procedure, from entering Türkiye to being placed in a third country, is three years. There is some validity to this for some refugee groups. However, due to insufficient quotas for Afghans in resettlement countries, the majority of Afghans have been waiting for resettlement for six years and counting.

Resettlement is based on international law (1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol), so refugees must go through registration and refugee status determination, which basically affirms that a refugee is indeed a refugee, and eligible or suitable for resettlement at all. Once their status is determined, refugees are subjected to background security, and, health screenings before being accepted (Jenna M. Loyd et al., 2018). Moreover, the national asylum procedure for international protection has changed. Before September 2018, the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Ankara registered asylum seekers of various nationalities and issued Refugee Status Determinations (RSD). However, UNHCR ended the registration process in Türkiye in September 2018, and it handed over registration to Türkiye's Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM). The method is known as the "Temporary Protection Regulation, and" it is the foundation of UNHCR policy. As a result, Afghan asylum seekers must be questioned, registered, and issued official credentials demonstrating their conditional international protection.

Murat Erdoğan (2022) states that the government has advocated a province-based protection system, mandating refugees to register with the local authorities in the city where the government settles them in order to reduce the number of refugees in each province and ease social tensions between refugees and citizens. Under this system, refugees can only access services and rights in the cities where they have registered, and they need licenses to travel between cities. However, many immigrants find it challenging to live and work in these places and prefer to move to larger cities like Istanbul and Izmir, where they may find employment and start enterprises (Besire Korkmaz, 2021).

It is preferable to address how Türkiye is managing Afghan migration at the border between Türkiye and Iran in this section of the literature. Türkiye and the EU are working together with Iran and its western border with Greece to combat "illegal migration" and “cross-border crime”. Ankara is erecting a wall along its border with Iran to strengthen its frontiers, and the government has promised to put a "complete stop" to migrant crossings. Most visibly, Türkiye has upgraded its border control with Iran to prevent potential Afghan migration. In August 2021, Türkiye's defense minister, Hulusi Akar, announced that Türkiye had sent more troops to its eastern border in addition to completing the concrete wall along the border in Van (AP news, 2021).

Türkiye has also launched a new coast guard command unit, night vision cameras, and radar and sonar devices on Lake Van to prevent migrant smuggling by boat. However, those Afghans who manage to escape the Taliban's rule are subject to increased surveillance at the border and in essential transit hubs in Eastern Türkiye, which also leads to significant pushbacks to Iran due to the fear of a "new crisis" and newly strengthened border controls. The severity of Afghans’ pushback to Iran has worsened since Türkiye halted deportations to Afghanistan on humanitarian grounds. According to the protections outlined in the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, when a non -Eruopean and non-Syrian person, for example, an Afghan, arrives in Türkiye and wishes to apply for international protection, they are instructed to go to the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMM) to register (UNHCR, 2021).

Another important part that should not be neglected is that Afghan migration to Türkiye has two faces: asylum seekers (third countries) and illegal migrants. While some were urged to travel to Türkiye to go to other areas of the world, namely Europe, others were encouraged to come to Türkiye to join networks of family and friends in Türkiye. In other words, Türkiye became a part of the migratory system that runs via Afghanistan, Iran, Türkiye, and Europe, serving as a host/destination and a stepping stone for Afghan asylum seekers and irregular migrants seeking to enter Europe.

2.4.3. Irregular Afghan migrants in Türkiye

Three major immigrant groups are brought to Türkiye through irregular migration flows (Içduygu, 2001). The first is the influx of foreigners looking for work who migrate to Türkiye from Eastern European nations like Romania and Moldavia. For instance, some Turkish farmers and businesspeople in western areas increasingly depend on labor migrants from Eastern Europe. Transit migrants, primarily from the Middle East (particularly Iranians and Iraqis), and the second kind of irregular migration to Türkiye are from different Asian (such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka) and African (such as Nigeria, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) nations. These refugees see Türkiye as a transit country on their way to Western industrialized nations. This category includes immigrants who enter and exit the transit country illegally, as well as those who overstay their permitted visa period. The third category of irregular immigrants consists of turned-down asylum seekers who are hesitant to go back home. Typically, they are searching for ways to make money and opportunities to immigrate to another country.

According to the Turkish Law on Foreigners and International Protection (2013, p. 18),

> "Irregular migration refers whereby foreigners enter into, stay in or exit from Türkiye through illegal channels to work in Türkiye without a permit or seek international protection."

In this regard, the concept of irregular migration refers to immigrants who are not legally allowed to remain in the country. In this context, since Afghan asylum seekers arrived in Türkiye due to conflicts and instabilities in their country and through illegal channels, they can be considered international, irregular, and forced immigrants. However, their legal status is different because Afghan asylum seekers fled to Türkiye so as to benefit from international protection. Thus, irregular migration includes various irregularities that are perceived as a national threat in Türkiye (Atasu-Topcuoglu, 2016). Among the "illegal migrants", there may be asylum seekers too. Although Turkish officials have less tolerance for illegal migrants who fit the criteria of an asylum seeker, differentiating between the two is not easy. Hence, some irregular migrants who applied for asylum-seeking were rejected by the Turkish authorities and/or UNHCR and became illegal migrants. After their application is denied, they may refuse to return to their home country and stay in Türkiye without any documents. Once again, it is

noteworthy that it is challenging to know what happens to these people if they leave the country or stay since it does not have a legal record (Kirisci, 200).

2.5. Pull factors: reasons for Afghan immigration to Türkiye

We've explored the push factors propelling Afghans to migrate, and now I'll delve into the pull factors drawing them towards Turkey. Many Afghans are driven to migrate to Türkiye due to a variety of push factors, such as poverty, conflict, and political instability in their home country, as well as pull factors that attract migrants to Türkiye. In this thesis, I aim to examine the motivations, experiences, and outcomes of irregular Afghan migrants in Türkiye, in order to understand the complex factors that influence their decision to migrate.

There are several reasons why Afghan migrants choose Türkiye; that being said, this choice could be questioned from the international human rights perspective, whether they choose to stay in Türkiye due to decent living conditions or they see themselves ‘stuck in transit’ (Talwasa, 2020). Feeling secure and safe, employment opportunities, a chance to make more money, family members living in Türkiye, and cultural similarity can be the main reasons for Afghans to come to Türkiye (Kuschminder, 2017).

2.5.1. Economic opportunities

One major pull factor is the availability of economic opportunity in Türkiye. Afghanistan has a high unemployment rate and a struggling economy, while Türkiye has a growing economy and a demand for low-skilled labor. Afghan migrants may be drawn to Türkiye in search of employment and the possibility of improving their economic circumstances (Pouya, 2022). Türkiye has a more developed economy compared to Afghanistan and offers greater opportunities for employment and financial stability. Studies have shown that unemployment and poverty are significant drivers of migration. The International Labor Organization has found that a large number of international migrants—over 100 million people—leave their home countries in search of employment opportunities. Afghan migrants may be motivated by similar considerations, seeking out economic opportunities that are not available to them in Afghanistan. The demand for low-skilled labor in Türkiye has also contributed to the migration of Afghans to the country. Türkiye's growing economy has created a need for workers in industries such as construction, agriculture, and manufacturing. Afghan migrants may be

attracted to these sectors as a source of employment and an opportunity to earn a higher income. These sectors often require a large number of low-skilled workers to perform tasks such as manual labor and assembly line work. The demand for low-skilled labor in Türkiye has also been facilitated by the country's immigration policies. In addition to the availability of employment opportunities, the wages offered in these sectors in Türkiye may also be higher than those available in Afghanistan. Djafar and Hassan (2012) support this finding, stating that income and unemployment are the primary reasons that persuade people to migrate. Other studies (Dzivimbo, 2003; Kainth, 2009; Kurekova. 2012; De la Rica et al., 2013) confirm that striking disparity in the labor market due to wage differences is the main reason for migration, and most people are attracted to other countries because of the better salaries offered. This can be a strong incentive for Afghan migrants who are seeking to improve their economic circumstances and provide for their families. Türkiye has historically been a destination for migrant labor, and the government has implemented policies to attract foreign workers to the country. This has created a more favorable environment for Afghan migrants seeking employment.

2.5.2. Safety

Safety is a major factor that drives Afghan migrants to come to Türkiye. Afghanistan has been embroiled in conflict for decades, and many Afghans have fled the country to escape violence, persecution, and poverty. Türkiye, on the other hand, is seen as a safe haven, and Afghan migrants are attracted to the country because of its relative stability and security.

One reason why safety is a pull factor for Afghan migrants in Türkiye is the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. The country has been at war for over 40 years, and there is no end in sight to the fighting. This has led to widespread violence, destruction, and displacement. Many Afghans have lost their homes, their loved ones, and their livelihoods as a result of the conflict. In addition, various armed groups are operating in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, which have been responsible for numerous attacks on civilians (Metcalfe-Hough, 2015). As a result, many Afghans feel unsafe and seek to escape to a safer place. Türkiye is seen as a safer alternative to Afghanistan because it is stable and secure. For Afghan migrants, this makes Türkiye an attractive destination.

Another reason why safety is a pull factor for Afghan migrants in Türkiye is the lack of security in other neighboring countries. Many Afghans flee to Pakistan and Iran in search of safety, but these countries have their own challenges. Both Pakistan and Iran have large Afghan refugee populations, and these refugees often face discrimination, abuse, and exploitation (Fatemeh Aman, 2021). In addition, both countries have been involved in conflicts and have experienced significant political instability. As a result, many Afghan migrants prefer to go to Türkiye instead.

2.5.3. Cultural familiarity

Cultural familiarity is one of the pull factors that drives Afghan migrants to come to Türkiye. Afghanistan and Türkiye have a long history of cultural exchange and shared cultural traditions, which make Afghan migrants feel more at home in Türkiye compared to other countries.
One reason why cultural familiarity is a pull factor for Afghan migrants in Türkiye is the shared linguistic and religious traditions between the two countries. Afghanistan and Türkiye are both predominantly Muslim countries, and many Afghans speak Turkish or a Turkish dialect as a second language. This makes it easier for Afghan migrants to communicate and integrate into Turkish society, as they already have a shared cultural and linguistic foundation.

In addition to shared linguistic and religious traditions, there are also shared cultural practices and traditions between Afghanistan and Türkiye. For example, both countries have a strong tradition of hospitality, and Afghans and Turks both value family and community. These shared cultural practices can make it easier for Afghan migrants to adapt to life in Türkiye, as they are already familiar with many of the customs and traditions of Turkish society.

Another reason why cultural familiarity is a pull factor for Afghan migrants in Türkiye is the presence of Afghan communities in the country. Networks play a significant role in influencing migration. According to Ogujiuba Kanayo, Patience Anjofui, and Nancy Stiegler (2019), most migrants are influenced by friends, relatives, and traffickers. Parents encourage their children to migrate because they see it as better than staying in their country, where there is no sign of a better future. There are already significant numbers of Afghans living in Türkiye, and this creates a sense of belonging and community for new Afghan migrants. These communities provide support and a sense of belonging for Afghan migrants, which can be particularly important for those who have lost their homes and families due to the conflict in Afghanistan.

In addition to the support of Afghan communities, the presence of other migrant communities in Türkiye can also help Afghan migrants feel more at home. Türkiye is a diverse country, and many different migrant communities are living in the country. This means that Afghan migrants are not alone, and they can find support and a sense of belonging among other migrants from similar cultural backgrounds.

2.6. Review of other relevant studies

In this section, I explore the current body of literature regarding the irregular migration of Afghan nationals traveling from Iran to Türkiye. First, I will explain the relationship between irregular migrants and smugglers; then, I will discuss the geography of migrants' physical journeys.

2.6.1. Relationship between irregular migrants and smugglers

Migrants face significant challenges to their fundamental international human rights, including physical and verbal abuse by smugglers during their journey. Considerable literature exists on the challenges and difficulties faced by Afghans during their illegal journey. Esra Kaytaz (2016) states that most migrants travel from Afghanistan through Iran to Türkiye. The Iranian land route frequently stops at Urmiye or Salmas, close to the Turkish border. Van, a Turkish border city, serves as a transit point for refugees entering Türkiye through Iran. Migrants are taken to Van after crossing the border and then continue on their journey according to their arrangements with smugglers (Merve Tahiroglu, 2022). If Afghan migrants have made arrangements to continue their journey, they are transported to Istanbul, where the next phase is planned. While some people go through Pakistan first, others pass through Iran by land, either by foot or by bus (Noah Arjomand, 2016). Most Afghan refugees go to Tehran after they arrive in Iran. By navigating the mountainous border region, migrants and refugees are smuggled into Türkiye. Once they enter Türkiye, they're driven in buses and minivans towards the western cities, particularly Istanbul and Izmir. Smugglers frequently provide migrants with fake travel documents to avoid issues during their regular police checks.

Noah Arjomand (2016) highlights the smugglers' profile and organization. Most Afghan migrants seem to plan their journeys progressively, utilizing personal networks in each country they go through. At first, they rely on the local smuggler, who will organize the initial portion

of the expedition, namely the route from Afghanistan to Iran. Local smugglers originate from the same town, neighborhood, or district as their clients and are given to them by friends or family. Local smugglers are often part of a transnational network whereby the main smugglers manage the business from outside Afghanistan and local smuggler "agents" recruit the clients and organize their journey in Afghanistan and transit countries. Local smugglers are often citizens of the nation in which they operate, both in transit and destination countries. Or, sometimes, smugglers are migrants who were smuggled along the same route on which they operate. In other words, sometimes smuggled migrants become smugglers in their destination country.

According to Frontex (2013), Afghan migrants from Tehran travel to the mountainous areas near Urmia and Salmas, close to the Turkish border, usually by taxi in groups of two to five. Migrants smuggled along these routes regroup there before crossing into Türkiye. The border crossing is done on foot in large groups of up to 1000 people; two or more smugglers usually assist with the crossing, which takes 12-15 hours. Moreover, the conditions of the journey, including its duration and ease of travel, greatly depend on the smuggler that migrants may access and how the migrants handle their interactions with the smugglers. Smugglers sometimes captivate family members to ensure that they get their payments. In addition to detaining migrants to ensure payment or to exact more money, smugglers are also hostile towards their clients during the journey (IOM, mixed migration flows in the Mediterranean and beyond, 2016).

2.6.2. Geography of migrants' physical journey

Mostly, migrants travel to Türkiye from Afghanistan through Iran, sometimes preceded by a brief journey into Pakistan. In Iran, they would take the route of two cities with borders with Türkiye, which are Urmiye and Salmas. From there, they would enter the Turkish border (Van). The Iran-Türkiye border has been serving as an entry point for Afghans escaping to or via Türkiye since the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s. Today, the threat entangled with the violence, and economic and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan has pushed more people to flee via this border (Karolina Augustova, 2021). Undoubtedly, it is imperative to elaborate on the confrontation of fear, suffering, and even death on the road. For those who are physically less capable of crossing, the border between Iran and Türkiye is exceedingly tough to cross due to its mountainous and rocky terrain. Several migrants took children on their travels while they

were severely ill or pregnant. The journey of the migrants from Iran to Türkiye would typically take several days. These severe conditions make migrants emotionally distressed and devastating. The fact that smugglers often mislead participants prior to border crossing about the conditions and length of the travel, and treat them poorly during the entire journey adds to these feelings of distress. Furthermore, some migrants are separated from their loved ones, lose their money, and are assaulted, kidnapped, raped, and beaten up. Smugglers combine and separate groups; the reason is vague, but one guess is that they want to control the number of people crossing the border. Smugglers can divide men and women, and this process can lead to family members getting separated from one another and never being reunited. Numerous migrants admit to being scared by the bandits they encounter while traveling. However, since the smugglers were also said to be hostile and even kidnap migrants, it was unclear whether the bandits and the smugglers interacted or worked together. The bandit is allegedly responsible for kidnapping, robbing, and violently abusing migrant workers (Esra Kaytaz, 2016).

Another experience that migrants may have during their journey is being surrounded by security forces at borders, which is also crucial for migrants. While some families can get through security forces, others cannot and get arrested, beaten up, and deported back. Some may spend some time at the detention camp. The police might feel sympathy for some families and let them cross the border, and some families may be beaten up and unable to make the journey.

According to research done by Noah Arjomand (2016), security forces in eastern Türkiye search passenger cars and interrogate locals, but they do not stop the bus carrying numerous illegal immigrants. However, it is vivid that the time when security forces let irregular migrants at the border between Iran and Türkiye pass through unharmed is long gone (Fabrizo, 2022). In Türkiye's eastern wastelands, they now appear intent on seizing and holding any migrants they can. However, not even a three-meter concrete wall could stop Afghan migrants from passing. There will always be regions that are too rocky or steep to be walled, as well as migrants who can physically jump over the wall, dig underneath it, or offer bribes that are too alluring for truck drivers to refuse. However, border security was increased in the months after Kabul's collapse in August 2021, and officials appear to have been successful in apprehending the majority of migrants either immediately upon entering Turkish territory or while traveling (Liz Cookman, 2021).

All in all, refugees and asylum seekers are at the center of the contemporary world's social and political thought; however, most qualitative literature has focused on the refugees' experiences in the host countries, not their journeys.

While a great deal of research attention has been paid to Afghan immigrants residing in Türkiye, there has been very little consistent research on the irregular journeys they have made to Türkiye. Hence, in this research I will highlight the challenges they face on their route to this country.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, I present the approach I took in conducting this study. First, I explain the methodology and empirical setup of the study. Then, I present the study's design and the methods I used to collect and analyze the data. Finally, I explain the theoretical framework, which consists of two parts: the first part considers theoretical considerations, while the second part draws on the theoretical frameworks adopted in this thesis.

3.1. Research design

The methodology of this study relied on primary data collection through in-depth interviews with Afghan migrants, in addition to examining relevant academic and secondary sources. In this thesis, I chose interviews as an instrument of data collection because interviews are expected to explain participants perceptions of a particular phenomenon. In this study I utilized both secondary and primary data and I used a qualitative method by utilizing the existing data and information to understand the Afghans' migration to Türkiye and their challenges.

A qualitative approach is more flexible and inductive, allowing the author to adjust the approach based on the findings emerging throughout the research process. Furthermore, since the topic of irregular migrants journeys is still novel, few studies have been made. A qualitative approach is fitting because it gives a deeper understanding of the immigrants' journey and experiences. Moreover, qualitative methods allow for flexibility and openness to generate deep insights. Rubin and Rubin (2004) recommend the use of qualitative methods "if what needs to be found out cannot be answered simply or briefly" (p. 3).

Migration is a complex journey and process involving migrants, transit countries, destination countries, and smugglers that requires in-depth explanation, examples, and descriptions of experiences to be fully explained. By reading and studying various articles, journals, and books, this method allowed me to contribute to the existing literature and evaluate Afghan immigration, its challenges, and the root causes of flows. The research for this study was based on the analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted with 20 Afghan asylum seekers residing in Türkiye.

Relevant reports by UNHCR and the scholarly literature on Afghan migration were examined. A semi-structured interview was conducted with the Afghan migrants residing in Türkiye. The benefit of the semi-structured interview is that it was conducted directly in the native language (Farsi) without translation. Moreover, semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for respondents to share as much detail as they wished.

The format of the interviews was semi-structured, and they consisted of open-ended questions that were designed to encourage participants to reply honestly and naturally. It also made it possible to get further information by asking follow-up questions depending on the responses provided by the interviewees. This method will help the readers to understand deeply the struggles that immigrants have as well as gain more knowledge about their processes in Türkiye.

3.2. Interview setting

In accordance with a semi-structured interview methodology, all interviewees were asked a set of questions, with additional clarification or exploratory questions added during the interview. The study aimed to understand the difficulties that Afghan migrants face during their journey from Iran to Türkiye. To achieve this goal, I conducted in-depth interviews with Afghan migrants living in Türkiye. As Rubin and Rubin (2004) mentioned, it is important to interview people with experience and knowledge in the field of research because it adds credibility and quality to the study. Therefore, listening to the narratives of the participants first-hand is the most suitable approach to gaining the most comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. To get the best possible result, interviewees were selected based on the following criteria:

- Afghan migrants having experience of irregular journey through Iran to Türkiye
- Afghan migrants living in Türkiye

A purposive sample of twenty Afghans participated in interviews conducted in the Farsi language. Participants were (male and female) ranging in age from 23 to 45 and a length of residence in Türkiye ranging from 3 years to 10. To find qualified respondents, I searched for Afghan migrants residing in Ankara, Türkiye first, and through them, I could get to find some other potential interviewees. Then I contacted them and invited them for an interview. The interview started with an introduction of myself and the research topic to make the interviewee more familiar with me and have a better sense of what was expected of them during the interview. In our interviews, Afghan migrants in Türkiye were relatively young, married, from

diverse national and ethnic backgrounds with a considerable degree of formal education and an urban/rural background.

3.3. Data Collection

Based on the mentioned criteria, I selected and invited twenty interviewees to participate in the research. I conducted the interviews via Zoom, phone calls, and in person. Each interview took between 30-60 minutes. It took me almost three and a half months to finish conducting the interviews. I started conducting interviews in September and ended in early December. I recorded all interviews to make it easier for me to focus on the interview content and verbal prompts during the interview. This also made it possible for me to generate a 'verbatim transcript' of all interviews for analysis purposes. Per the prior agreement, all interviewees will remain anonymous and only be referred to by their interview code name. I developed an interview guide, including topics like:

- Reasons for leaving Afghanistan
- The role of smugglers
- Challenges faced during the crossing to Türkiye
- Aspirations of the future

Regarding the ethics of this research, I ensured that the respondents remained anonymous. I was transparent about the reasons for my research. Also, at the beginning of the interview, I asked the interviewee's permission to record the interview solely to be able to transcribe it afterward. Then I read the transcript while listening to the recording once more to ensure no information was lost or misplaced during the transcription.

3.3.1. Review of the secondary sources

I conducted relevant readings and studies of various articles, journals, books, and documents. I illustrated the secondary sources in two main categories: Afghans in the literature and Türkiye in the literature. I studied global literature on Afghan migrants and outlined studies related to the main themes of the thesis in the literature review section of the analytical background and conceptual framework chapter.

The following sources of secondary data were fundamental to my research: reports and publications from international organizations, academic sources such as books, journal articles, and news and media reports. Given the complexities and sensitivity of irregular migration, I utilized secondary data along with primary data to ensure a thorough, ethical, and safe process. This approach allowed me to gain a comprehensive view by drawing on a wide range of credible sources. I thoroughly checked all sources to confirm their relevance and accuracy.

3.4. Theoretical framework

My theoretical framework for this work consists of two parts. In the first part, I examine the theoretical aspects of the topic, and in the second part, I build upon the theoretical frameworks adopted in this thesis.

3.4.1. Introduction

Several theories have been presented to explain why migration occurs. Notable among them is conflict theory. The conflict theory of international migration, specifically, has not been attributed to any individual. Instead, it has emerged as a way to understand and analyze the complex and often contradictory forces that shape migration and mobility patterns. The conflict theory of international migration draws on a range of ideas and concepts from various fields, including sociology, political science, economics, and anthropology, and has been developed and refined by many researchers and scholars over time. Therefore, I preferred the conflict theory to use in this thesis to seek answers to the research questions as a theoretical background. In this thesis, conflict's role in migration is often emphasized. At the same time, conflict theory sees conflict as a core dynamic force determining and shaping transnational human movements (Sirkeci, 2009). Refugees and asylum seekers are prime examples of the development of a conflict-oriented migration model because these two groups exemplify various conflict situations. For example, asylum seekers and refugees (perhaps all displaced populations) are often the main targets of different threats, paving the way for strong human insecurity (Sirkeci, 2009).

3.4.2 Conflict Theory

Conflict theory as a broad social science perspective has its roots in the work of Karl Marx, who argued that social and economic systems are characterized by conflicts between different classes of people. The conflict theory of international migration is a perspective that views migration as a result of conflicts and inequalities in the societies and countries of origin.

According to this theory, individuals and groups migrate because they are forced to leave their home countries due to political, economic, or social conflicts, or because they are seeking to escape poverty, persecution, or other forms of inequality. The conflict theory of international migration suggests that migration is often driven by a desire to improve one's circumstances or to escape unfavorable conditions in the country of origin, rather than by a simple desire to move to a new place. This theory can be used to explain the motivations behind various forms of migration, including voluntary and involuntary migration, as well as short-term and long-term migration.

Ralf Dahrendorf's (1959) definition of conflict theory does not necessarily equate to violence, but it embraces a range of conflict situations, from latent tensions to violent conflicts. In other words, according to him, conflict is not only about manifest clashes like revolts, wars, and armed conflict but also contests, competitions, disputes, and tensions (Dahrendorf,1959). Naude (2008) indicated that an additional year of conflict will raise the net migration rate by 1.35 per thousand, while an additional natural disaster will increase it by 0.6 per thousand. Thus, one obvious source to promote migration is violent and armed conflicts (Sirkeci, 2009).

To sum up, the conflict theory of international migration offers a useful perspective for understanding and analyzing the forces that shape patterns of migration and mobility. This theory indicates that migration is often driven by conflicts such as civil wars, political repression, economic collapse, or other forms of instability. These conflicts can create conditions that make it difficult or impossible for individuals to live a stable, secure life, and may motivate them to migrate in search of safety, security, or a better life elsewhere.

3.4.3. Justification for Adopting Conflict Theory

A conceptualization of international migration that focuses on conflict can help us understand how the process works and recognize that it is constantly changing. By considering how different types of conflicts or different aspects of conflicts may influence migration patterns, we can create typologies of international migration that take into account the regulatory and broader environmental context in which these patterns occur (Sirkeci, 2009). In this context, conflict theory was preferred to be adopted because the conflict theory of international migration can also help explain the complex dynamics of irregular migration. For example, the

risks and challenges faced by irregular migrants can vary depending on their country of origin, the country they are migrating to, and the specific reasons for their migration. In some cases, irregular migrants may be able to access resources and support networks that help them navigate the challenges of irregular migration, while in other cases they may be more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

There are several reasons why the conflict theory of international migration is particularly relevant for understanding the experiences and motivations of Afghan migrants' journey to Türkiye.

First, Afghanistan has a long history of conflict and instability, which has had a significant impact on the country's population. The ongoing war in Afghanistan, as well as previous conflicts such as the Soviet invasion and the civil war of the 1990s, have led to widespread displacement and migration. Many Afghans have been forced to flee their homes due to violence, persecution, or other forms of instability and have sought safety and security in other countries.

Second, Afghanistan also has high levels of poverty and inequality, which can create incentives for people to migrate in search of better opportunities. The country has a relatively low gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and a high poverty rate, and many Afghans lack access to basic services such as education, health care, and clean water. These conditions can make it difficult for people to improve their circumstances within Afghanistan and may motivate them to migrate in search of better prospects elsewhere.

The conflict theory of international migration can help shed light on the complex and often contradictory forces that shape patterns of migration and mobility. By understanding the root causes of irregular migration, policymakers and other stakeholders can work to address the conflicts and inequalities that drive migration and develop more effective and humane approaches to managing migration flows. In the case of Afghan migrants in Türkiye, this might involve addressing the conflicts and inequalities within Afghanistan that contribute to migration.

Overall, adapting the conflict theory of international migration can provide a useful framework for understanding the core reason for Afghans fleeing their countries. By recognizing the

complex and often interconnected factors that drive migration, policymakers and other stakeholders can develop more effective and humane approaches to managing migration flows and supporting migrants in their destination countries.

3.5. World System Theory

Conflict theory is seen to describe why Afghan people mostly migrate, but it does not explore the historical background of this "conflict". Therefore, world system theory is also adopted in this thesis in order to incorporate structural aspects of this conflict, such as Afghanistan's geography and location, as well as to go deeper and explain why this conflict happened. This conflict needs to be seen in the international context of foreign interventions in that country. Therefore, it can be grasped that not only the civil war and the Taliban make Afghanistan unstable, but foreign interventions also do.

World systems theory is a framework for analyzing the global economic and political structures that have emerged since the 16th century. It was developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, a sociologist and economic historian, in the 1970s and 1980s (Portes and Wallton, 1981; Petras, 1981; Castells, 1989; Sassen, 1988, 1991; Morawska, 1990). According to world systems theory, the world is divided into a core of wealthy and industrialized countries, a periphery of poor and underdeveloped countries, and a semi-periphery of countries that are in between the two. The core countries control the global economy and dominate the periphery and semi-periphery countries. The core exploits the periphery and semi-periphery by extracting resources and labor, creating a relationship of dependency.

The conflict in Afghanistan has been ongoing for decades and has had a profound impact on the country and its people. World system theory provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of conflict and its causes. According to this theory, the world is divided into core, semi-periphery, and periphery countries, with the core countries dominating the global economic and political systems. In the context of the conflict in Afghanistan, world system theory can help explain the involvement of the major powers and their competition for influence in the region, as well as the consequences of this intervention for the people of Afghanistan. By examining the conflict through the lens of world system theory, we can gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics that have shaped the conflict and its evolution over time.

3.5.1. Examining the USSR and US Involvement in Afghanistan through the Lens of World System Theory

The Soviet Union and the United States both intervened in Afghanistan in the late 20th century, a conflict that has had a lasting impact on the country and its people. In order to understand the motivations behind these interventions, it is useful to examine the conflict through the lens of world system theory.

According to world system theory, the interventions of the U.S. and USSR in Afghanistan can be understood as part of their competition for global power and influence within the world system. As core countries, both the U.S. and USSR saw Afghanistan as a strategic location for geopolitical interests and sought to advance their own power and influence by supporting proxy forces in the region. The Soviet intervention, for example, aimed to maintain a military presence there and influence other countries. The U.S. intervened to counter Soviet influence and support anti-Soviet militants. The intervention ultimately contributed to the destabilization of Afghanistan and the growth of terrorist groups in the region. The conflict in Afghanistan during the Cold War can be seen as part of the larger struggle for global dominance between the U.S. and the USSR, with each country trying to expand its sphere of influence and counter others advances.

Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the country has been a significant focal point in the Cold War between the U.S. and the USSR. These two superpowers engaged in a proxy war in Afghanistan, at the expense of the Afghan people (Misdaq, 2006). Known as the "Afghan Jihad" in Western sources, the war resulted in 1.5 to 2 million deaths and the displacement of millions of people as refugees (Sivard, 1993; Bercovitch and Jackson, 1997; Smith et al., 1997; Kohn, 1999). The war also had a devastating impact on the country's social, political, and economic conditions. In just 25 years, Afghanistan was transformed from a peaceful society (Maley 2002; Olesen 1995) into a culture dominated by armed militants, warlords, drug lords, and terrorists (Vogelsang 2002).

The World System Theory argues that in the Cold War international system, the superpowers' involvement in third-world countries was formed as a competition between East and West, with strategic areas being sought after for the purpose of gaining influence (Snow, 1991). The Cold War alliance system led to polarization and deadlock in the international system, which relegated countries like Afghanistan on the periphery of the world system to the role of buffer

zones and battlegrounds (Leeds 1973; Bergesen 1989). The conflict centered around control over these peripheral areas, with the superpowers competing to establish economic and political dominance and prevent their rivals from doing the same in the third world (Bergesen, 1989). This resulted in a series of confrontations that had disastrous consequences for the countries that became battlegrounds (Falk, 1980).

Geography and location are critical factors in world system theory, as they can greatly influence a country's position within the international system. Afghanistan is located in a strategic location at the crossroads of Central and South Asia, making it an important pivot point for influence and control in the region. Additionally, its proximity to the energy-rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia made it an attractive target for the major powers seeking to secure their energy supplies.

In the context of the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States were in direct competition for influence and control over the Third World. In the late 1970s, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to bolster a floundering Marxist regime, which was seen as a critical ally in the region. According to world system theory, this intervention can be understood as an attempt by the Soviet Union to gain a foothold in the periphery and establish a sphere of influence in the region. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan also had implications for the wider international system, as it challenged the existing balance of power between the two superpowers. The United States saw the Soviet invasion as a direct threat to its own sphere of influence in the region and responded by supporting anti-Soviet forces in Afghanistan, which led to a long and bloody conflict that lasted for over a decade.

The United States' intervention in Afghanistan can be understood as an attempt to counter the Soviet Union's expansionist aims and maintain its own influence in the region. According to world system theory, the US intervention was driven by a desire to maintain the existing balance of power and prevent the Soviet Union from gaining an advantage in the Third World. The conflict in Afghanistan had a profound impact on the country and its people. Additionally, the war intensified the existing social and economic inequalities in the country and created a power vacuum that was filled by warlords and other armed groups, who ruled with an iron fist and perpetuated violence and instability. In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, the United States abandoned Afghanistan, leaving the country to fend for itself in the aftermath of the war. This abandonment can be understood within the context of world system theory, as

the US no longer saw Afghanistan as a critical front in the struggle against the Soviet Union. Additionally, the US was facing its own domestic and international challenges, which led to a shift in priorities and a decreased focus on Afghanistan.

In conclusion, geography is destiny, and it has set the course of Afghan history for millennia (Barfield, 2022). The Soviet Union's and the United States' interventions in Afghanistan can be understood through the lens of world system theory, which helps to explain the motivations behind these interventions and their impact on the country and its people. Afghanistan's location and geography, as well as its importance as a pivot point for influence and control in the region, made it an attractive target for the major powers during the Cold War. However, the conflict had devastating consequences for the people of Afghanistan, who have faced violence, instability, and poverty for decades.

3.5.2. US Intervention Post 9/11 in Afghanistan: Another Spark for Conflict

As previously discussed, it is evident that the instability in Afghanistan is not solely attributed to the Taliban and civil war, but also to outside interventions such as the USSR invasion during the Cold War and the US involvement in the 1970s. This trend of foreign intervention continued with the US invasion of Afghanistan post-9/11. This invasion has resulted in further conflict and has contributed to the production of refugees in the country. In this section, I will analyze the US invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11 through the lens of world system theory.

Afghanistan has been a country plagued by conflict and insecurity for decades, with its peripheral status in the world system being one of the key reasons behind its current state of insecurity. World system theory provides a useful framework for understanding the reasons behind Afghanistan's insecurity by examining the relationships between different countries in the global system and their roles in the world. According to world system theory, the world is divided into core, semi-periphery, and periphery countries, based on their levels of economic and political power (Douglas, 1993 et al.). Core countries, such as the US and other Western powers, have significant levels of economic and political power in the world system and exercise a dominant influence over periphery and semi-periphery countries (Massey, 1989). Periphery countries, on the other hand, are typically characterized by low levels of economic and political power, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation by more

powerful countries (Wallerstein,1974). Afghanistan is considered a peripheral country with a low level of economic and political power in the world system. This peripheral status has made Afghanistan vulnerable to the influence of outside powers, including the US and other countries in the region. The country has been embroiled in conflict and instability for decades, as different groups have sought to gain control of the country and its resources. This conflict has resulted in widespread violence, displacement, and human suffering, as well as a breakdown of the country's institutions and infrastructure. The US intervention in Afghanistan after 9/11 can be seen as an attempt to integrate Afghanistan into the world system. The US intervention had heavy consequences, as it increased the level of conflict and instability in the country. The US intervention has also had a destabilizing effect on the region, as it has resulted in increased opposition to the US power and changes to the relationships between countries in the region.

Additionally, Afghanistan's peripheral status in the world system has made it difficult for the country to develop the resources and infrastructure necessary to maintain stability and security. Periphery countries often lack the resources and infrastructure necessary to promote economic growth and development, which exacerbates their insecurity and allows core countries to enter developing countries and take advantage (Arango, 1993 et al.). In the case of Afghanistan, this lack of resources and infrastructure has contributed to its vulnerability to conflict and instability, as different groups have sought to gain control of the country and its resources, paving the way for foreign countries to enter and exploit its natural resources.

According to world-system theory, the US invasion of Afghanistan following the September 11th attacks can be seen as a response to the changing dynamics of the world-system and the desire of the US to maintain its dominant position as a core state. The attacks on September 11th were perceived as a significant challenge to the US global power, and the US responded by invading Afghanistan to disrupt the operations of Al-Qaeda and reassert its dominance in the region.

Additionally, world-system theory emphasizes that the US invasion of Afghanistan can also be seen as an attempt to secure access to the country's resources, particularly oil and natural gas, and to protect its interests.

In summary, the utilization of world system theory has provided us with a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons for conflicts, particularly in Afghanistan. By examining the situation

through this theoretical framework, we gain insight into how the actions of the US and USSR, through their invasions, caused a massive displacement of people who were forced to leave their homes and become refugees. This highlights the impact and consequences of larger global political events on the lives of ordinary people. Through this understanding, we can better grasp the complexities of conflicts and their aftermath.

3.6. Migration Networks Theory

I have employed conflict and world system theory in this thesis to understand the reasons behind Afghan migration. However, it is crucial to also consider a theory that encompasses the maintenance and continuation aspects that enable these migration flows to persist for an extended period. Hence, I am incorporating migration networks theory into our analysis, as it appears imperative when questioning Afghan migrants about their choice of destination, which is Türkiye, and their journey to reach here.

Boyd (1989) and Massey et al. (1987) formulated a new approach to migration on the basis of networks (Haug, 2008). The concept of social networks is based on economic sociology (Granovetter, 1973). A migration network can be defined as a composite of interpersonal relations in which migrants interact with their family and friends (Haug, 2008). Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin (Massey et al., 1993). Social networks provide a platform for the dissemination of information and assistance. Interactions within social networks facilitate migration as they lower the costs and hazards associated with moving and pave the way for establishing transnational migration networks (Faist, 1997; Pries, 2004). Furthermore, migration networks enable migrants to cross borders, legally or illegally (Böcker, 1994; IOM, 2003:14). According to migration research, social networks are usually an important determinant of migration plans and the choice of destination (Banerjee, 1983; Böcker, 1994; Boyd, 1989; Bührer, 1997; Faist, 1997; Fawcett, 1989; Toney, 1978; Wilpert, 1992). Ultimately, this theory acknowledges that international migration decisions are made by individuals or households. However, it also asserts that once these migration actions are initiated, they change the subsequent environment in which future migration choices are considered, enhancing the probability that decision-makers will opt to migrate.

3.6.1. Network Theory's Influence on Understanding Afghans' Migration

After many years, transnational networks became a major element in the social, cultural, and economic lives of Afghans (Monsutti, 2008). E. Marx (1990) has effectively demonstrated the relevance of the 'network' concept in understanding the experience of refugees who are building social relationships across different locations. In the Afghan case, this entailed going beyond the significance of family ties and relationships based on ancestry, tribe, or ethnicity. Instead, it was critical to highlight the actual collaborative ties that people formed in the context of insecurity (Monustti, 2008).

Harpviken (2009) mentioned that every individual is connected to a larger number of other people via social networks, and such networks are crucial in determining who has access to various resources, such as information, different sorts of material resources, and security. In the Afghan context, networks rooted in kinship are key, and the household (and to some degree the extended family) is the basic social and economic unit.

Network theory emphasizes the role of information dissemination within networks (Castles and Miller, 2003; Levitt, 2001; Portes, 2001). Afghans who have already migrated began streaming their lived experiences back to their communities in Afghanistan by providing information about opportunities at the destination site. Relatives or friends in Türkiye relay back information about job opportunities, living conditions, and even routes to take. For instance, Afghan migrants often claim that they learned about UNHCR, their procedure, and their acceptance via a friend in Türkiye; that's how, after arriving in Türkiye, they went and registered with UNHCR.

Moreover, an Afghan family pondering the idea of fleeing to Türkiye would always rely on stories, advice, or warnings from someone who has already made the journey. Another important point is the safety nets and support structures; once Afghan migrants reach Türkiye, their initial survival and adjustment hinge on these networks. These connections help them find shelter, understand local customs, etc. In other words, networks are not just sources of information in the origin country but also sources of tangible lifelines in the destination country.

CHAPTER 4: DRIVERS AND DYNAMICS OF AFGHAN MIGRATION

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings from the interviews with Afghan asylum seekers. Their responses to questions about their host country experience, circumstances in their home country, choice of destination, and the physical journey they undertook reveal the complex and multifaceted nature of their migration journey. I primarily focus on the push and pull factors driving Afghans to migrate and their journey across the border between Iran and Türkiye, since most participants came to Türkiye through Iran from Afghanistan. I detail the challenges refugees encountered from the terrain, their smugglers, the weather, security forces on the border, and more. Lastly, I present the future plans and aspirations of the Afghan asylum seekers.

4.2. Motivations

In this section, I explore the motivations behind the migration of Afghan asylum seekers, as revealed through the interviews, incorporating both push and pull factors. The primary drivers, or push factors, include pervasive insecurity and violence in Afghanistan, economic hardship, and limited access to education and healthcare. Many participants highlighted the constant threat posed by ongoing conflict and political instability, which left them with no choice but to seek safety elsewhere. Additionally, economic deprivation, characterized by unemployment and poverty, forced many to look for better opportunities abroad. On the other hand, pull factors also played a significant role in their migration decisions. These included the prospect of safety, better economic opportunities in the destination country, Türkiye. Personal aspirations for a more stable and prosperous future were crucial, with many families desiring to provide a safer environment and better education for their children. Together, these motivations illustrate the pressing and complex factors driving Afghans to undertake dangerous journeys in pursuit of a better future.

4.2.1. Push Factors

If individuals move long distances, leaving their families and communities behind and crossing national, ethical, or cultural boundaries, then there must be some extraordinary forces compelling them to do this. As Kunz stated, it is true that "push factors are the decisive ones, and pull factors may often play a role in the choice of an (at least temporary) host country". The hazardous journey of Afghan migrants to Türkiye is driven by a variety of factors that compel individuals to flee their homeland. In this part, we look at the push factors as expressed by 20 Afghan asylum seekers living in Türkiye. Their stories provide light on the intricate interaction of sociopolitical, economic, and personal conditions that inspire such irregular journeys.

The findings of this research indicate that Afghan migrants were mostly triggered to leave Afghanistan by the country's violence, lack of job opportunities, and restrictions on access to rights.

Among the multitude of push factors, respondents consistently highlighted narratives centered around personal safety concerns, perceived dangers within their homeland, limited economic opportunities, and an overarching sense of hopelessness as critical components influencing their desire to migrate. The push factors identified by the refugees can be categorized as follows:

- Political Instability/conflict: refugees frequently mention political insecurity and conflict in their home countries as strong reasons for seeking different environments. The threat of political instability and the related hazards influenced their choice to relocate.
- Economic Conditions/ Job opportunities: participants expressed dissatisfaction with the economic situation in their home countries, making the state of the economy an urgent push factor. The lack of realistic economic options drove their desire to look for alternatives abroad. respondents regularly mentioned a general lack of job possibilities. The scarcity of employment opportunities, as well as the accompanying obstacles in getting steady and meaningful work, shaped their migrating aspirations. By examining these push factors, encompassing political instability, economic conditions, and job opportunities, I yearn in this study to understand the reasons why Afghan migrants decided to emigrate.

4.2.1.1. Conflict

Our findings show that conflict in Afghanistan is the primary push factor for our participants to seek refuge outside of their home country. The conflict reflects the volatile four decades of war and instability, with the Taliban looming large. In response to the question, "What motivated you to migrate? Are there any specific events that triggered your departure?" Participants shared

harrowing narratives of their homes being bombed, the tragic loss of family members in explosions, schools becoming targets of violence, and villages transforming into battlegrounds in the protracted conflict between the government and the Taliban.

One respondent vividly expressed the impact of conflict on her decision to leave Afghanistan: Raihana told me:

> "On 18th September 2018, near Maiwand gym, an explosion happened, and the place was attacked; my son was there and busy playing football with his classmates when the blast occurred; my son got injured by the incident, which triggered me to leave Afghanistan."

Arash stated:

> "The reason is apparent, which is the security issue mainly from the Taliban. When the USSR invaded Afghanistan, our house was destroyed, my uncles died, and my mom got injured. Then, we migrated to Pakistan until 2001, and when the Taliban regime fell, we returned to Afghanistan."

Another interviewee stated:

> "The overall security situation of the country, bomb blasts, and explosions were our daily life routine. We did not know if we could make it every day back home. While leaving our house, we'd say goodbye as if it could be our last time saying bye. Because students left for school and never came back, professors' cars were targeted and blasted. The road I was going to school, Marefat High School, was a hub for most explosions."

The personal account of one participant from Panjshir, Azeeta, sheds light on the profound impact of Afghanistan's evolving political landscape and escalating conflict on the lives of ordinary citizens. Her narrative encapsulates the disintegration of a once ordinary and peaceful life, where her husband, a dedicated teacher in their hometown, aspired for progress, particularly for the education of girls. The participant recounts how, over time, Afghanistan's political climate shifted from one of predictability to one of widespread insecurity. Once faraway nightmares, the echoes of gunfires and bombings became an unavoidable reality for the entire neighborhood. The Taliban's presence, a constant threat, has grown stronger with each passing year, invading cities and villages and casting a shadow of fear over daily life.

She stated:

> "My husband was a teacher in our hometown, Panjshir, our life was an ordinary, normal life. People respected us, and my husband always wanted a progressed Afghanistan, especially for girls. But as you may know, as the years went by, Afghanistan's political situation turned unpredictable and not very safe; the sound of gunfires and bombs became a nightmare for all of us. The existence of the Taliban was always a danger but it was getting severe year by year, and they (the Taliban) started infiltrating cities and villages. The schools especially for girls were at constant risk. My husband was threatened multiple times to stop teaching girls."

She continued:

> "The specific incident that made us decide that we can not live in our place anymore was the direct threat of violence by a group of extremists, they tried to abduct my daughter on her way to school to make an example out of girls who dared to study. That night my husband Khaliq said we need to leave the country."

The personal narrative of a widow who lost her husband in a Taliban attack in Kabul in 2018 shows the heartbreaking impact of conflict. Her husband, a poor street vendor with a vegetable cart, was killed in an explosion in the 6 Darak area, Kabul, Afghanistan, beginning a heartbreaking path for her and her three young sons. Haleema was dealing with the persistent instability and growing violence that characterizes life in modern Afghanistan. The frequency of bombings, explosions, and suicide strikes casts a permanent shadow over their daily lives. She feared for the safety of her sons, knowing all the risks that lay in the war-torn geography, determined not to see them suffer the same awful destiny as their father.

> "My husband was killed in Kabul in one of the explosions at 6 Darak back in 2018. He had a vegetable cart on the street selling them. One day, an explosion happened there, and the Taliban killed him. That was the starting point; I was all alone by myself and had three young sons; it is tough for a single parent to live in Afghanistan, especially with young children. My sons were at school, and in primary grade, I wanted them to study and not work. Safety was a matter; the security situation aggravated insecurity and war. Every day someplace is bombarded or exploded; suicide attacks have happened a lot lately. I didn't want to lose my kids like their father."

Hafeez, a mechanic in Afghanistan, explained his motivation:

> "The Taliban burnt my hand and beat me up, everyday explosions and car blasts. One explosion happened right one block away from my workplace in Dashte Barchi".

Many asylum seekers cited specific reasons for leaving their homes, including the severe disruptions experienced in remote villages, the dangers that employees of foreign companies faced, and the targeted persecution of Shia Hazara communities. Each of these factors contributes significantly to the urgent need for many Afghan families to seek refuge and safety beyond their homeland.

Here, I have included some of the personal incidents that these asylum seekers experienced. These incidents primarily occurred because they were working with foreign companies, living in rural areas where the Taliban had already infiltrated, or belonging to a specific ethnicity, the Hazara, who faced discrimination and targeted attacks due to their ethnic background.

- The Impact on Remote Villages:

Participants from Takhar and Kunduz provinces, in particular, offered a bleak picture of their daily lives. Their towns became the center of combat, with a repeated pattern of Taliban occupation followed by government recapture, a cycle that lasted years. The relentless nature of this situation left them desperate, not only for their own survival but also for the safety of their families.

Abdulhakeem's respond to the question why you left Afghanistan was:

> "Because of the war and instability, and uncertainty. I am from Takhar, Afghanistan, my village was the center of the conflict, I lost my family to a bomb strike when I was really young, I did not have anyone there that's why I decided to migrate when things escalated, I heard the tales of places where I could rebuild and live in peace. Nothing was left in Afghanistan for me, It was not certain, If you leave your house in the morning would you make it alive back in the afternoon."

Fareed shared a similar sentiment, stating:

> " Our district's name is Dasht Gala, Takhar province; the Taliban took over the district.[2] One day, they entered our house forcefully; we were so scared that we left

[2] Keep in mind that the regime did not fall at the time, and it was administered by the Islamic republic government.

Takhar and moved to Kunduz, stayed there for two months, and then the Taliban took over Kunduz as well."

Manal shared her reason for leaving her home:

> "Back in my country, I studied in Kunduz city but could not continue because of security reasons. Kunduz, at the time, one day was controlled by the government and the next day by the Taliban. There was conflict and bombs; we were not safe. I did not have parents; I was raised by my uncle and got married when I was 22."

- Employees of Foreign Companies Face Dangers:

Furthermore, those working for foreign companies in Afghanistan faced special challenges. Their professional endeavors made them regular targets, with threats to resign from their jobs accompanied by the perilous ultimatum that failing to do so would jeopardize not just their lives but also the lives of their families. This increased vulnerability complicated their decision-making by forcing them to weigh the safety and well-being of their loved ones against the backdrop of their employment.

Kimyagul was one of the participants that were involved with the foreign troops, especially the Americans. Her father owned a marble stone factory in her town, Polkhumri, and they owned houses equipped with furniture, water, and electricity that they rented to the American soldiers. She said:

> "In our city, Polkhumri, we owned a marble stone company; we had a house because the house was filled with electricity and water. When the U.S invaded, they needed accommodation, that's why the U.S troops rented out our house for years and used it as a camp; later, the Taliban started harassing us and also people in our town; they blamed us and would call us "servants of the Americans". Anyway, our company was hit by a rocket from the Taliban; our machines and equipment were all destroyed. We had to leave our town and move to Kabul, but even in Kabul, we could not stay for security reasons."

Another participant, Marzia, indicated that the reason for their migration was their job with foreign companies. She said:

> "My brother used to work with a foreign company as a cook; that is why we were receiving several threats from the Taliban, calling us infidels and accusing us of traitors. And also, my sister was also working with the Americans as a translator, which was also a risk for our family."

Mahtab, also shared her reason for fleeing the country was the insecurity that she was facing because of her job. She said:

> "In Afghanistan, the situation got aggravated, with restrictions against women, especially for those women who were educated. For instance, I was a teacher in literacy courses in Afghanistan for older people aligned with a foreign organization called 'NRC', but once the Taliban took over, they wouldn't allow us to work".

The story of Salma, who worked as a defense attorney and consultant in Afghanistan provides light on the difficult circumstances that people dedicated to raising awareness and campaigning for justice, particularly in rural regions, confront. Participating with organizations backed by foreign entities, particularly Germany, the individual experienced threats from local authorities determined to hinder efforts to address the needs of vulnerable people. Working relentlessly to raise awareness and navigate the complex system of justice, Salma faced multiple threats from local officials who were opposed to the work. The efforts to shed light on the issues confronting rural people brought unwanted attention, jeopardizing both professional and personal lives. The situation escalated tragically when news arrived that her husband was shot and killed in their car. Salma said:

> "When I was working in Afghanistan as a defense attorney and a consultant, my job was to raise awareness for rural people and work in organizations funded by foreign companies, particularly Germany. That's why I was threatened by many local authorities to stop working. One day, I got the news that my husband was shot in his car, and they killed my husband. I went to the police and reported, but I knew the city was no longer safe for me and my kids."

Another participant, Mohibullah, stated that he lost his parents as a result of his employment with foreign forces. He stated:

> "In 2010, my parents were killed by the Taliban because my brothers were working with the Canadians as a translator; we were living in a rural district of Herat. I was also working with the Americans. My brothers left for Canada after my parent's death, me and my sister were left alone in Afghanistan. The Taliban were threatening us, saying we should not work for foreigners, infidels, and safety became a concern for me, and then we decided to leave the country."

- Shia Hazara Communities Face Targeted Persecution:

Within the larger context of Afghanistan's conflict, a particularly painful component emerges as our findings provide light on the Taliban's specific persecution of Shia Hazara people. Shia Hazaras, a religious minority population, have found themselves in the crosshairs of violence, facing threats that exacerbate the already terrible circumstances that have driven migration.

In response to questions about their migratory intentions, several participants from the Shia Hazara religious minority gave very disturbing tales. Their communities have faced religious and ethnic persecution, with the Taliban singling them out because of their particular beliefs and cultural identity.

Naweed illustrated his reason for migrating:

> "I am Hazara and Shiia, a religious minority group in Afghanistan, mainly Shia and Ismaili, and the Taliban has always had problems with this particular group; that's why back home, I was witnessing ill treatment from this terrorist group." He continued "The Taliban, they were not in power, but they had already infiltrated the remote villages and cities. Hence, to save my life at once, I decided to leave my country and migrate."

In the end, combining these narratives reveals that the multifaceted nature of conflict, which spans decades and dominates various aspects of daily life, has compelled individuals to make the difficult decision to embark on an irregular journey in search of safety, security, and the promise of a better future. Our participants' stories serve as reminders of the human toll exacted by prolonged violence.

4.2.1.2. Economic Instability

As we explore the many motives driving the irregular migration of Afghan asylum seekers to Türkiye, our participants' stories shed light on a common and strong push factor: economic insecurity. The desire for financial security emerges as an important factor motivating individuals and families to go on risky journeys. In order to have a complete picture of our participants' migration decisions, it is necessary to examine the economic landscape that served as the background to their daily lives. Economic insecurity, as manifested by inflation, unemployment, irregular income, and limited job options, emerges as a formidable force, influencing the decisions of persons living in conflict zones. The irregularity of their major breadwinner's income proved a difficult obstacle for many individuals. The participants in this

setting highlighted the fact that their husband's pay, while insufficient for even basic needs, was the family's main financial lifeline. The choice of abandoning their jobs for safety reasons was a luxury they couldn't afford, demonstrating the inextricable link between economic security and conflict. Azeeta stated:

> "The economic situation was no better. Inflation, unemployment, my husband's salary was irregular and hardly enough to feed the family so even if he wanted to quit his job due to security reasons he could not."

According to Najib, 26 years old, Afghanistan's job market was extremely constricted, with farming appearing to be the only viable alternative. Individuals like Najib were prevented from investigating alternate professional routes or businesses that could offer better financial prospects. Furthermore, Najib highlights the economic inadequacies of farming as a source of income. He pointed out that the payment was insufficient to compensate for his efforts. This economic battle produced a substantial barrier, making traditional employment within the country difficult for individuals to sustain themselves and their families. Faced with these economic difficulties, Najib made the life-changing decision to relocate to Iran. The rationale for this migration was clear: he wanted to pursue job opportunities that he couldn't find in Afghanistan. The objective was to find a position that would not only provide a more stable income but would also allow him to support his family back home. Najib stated:

> "Due to the financial instability of the country, the only job available for me was farming, which was not enough to feed my entire family, therefore, I decided to go to Iran, work, and send money back to my family".

Najib's story reflects the broader subject of economic insecurity as a powerful motivator for migration. It emphasizes the need for individuals looking for chances outside of their own country when faced with limited career opportunities and inadequate pay.

The narratives shared by our participants not only highlight the economic struggles within Afghanistan but also underscore the profound and detrimental effects of conflict and insecurity on job opportunities and employment. According to one participant, Riza, the choice to flee was influenced by a combination of economic challenges and the rising violence between the Taliban and Afghanistan's former government. A traumatic event, the Taliban's destruction of their school, disrupted the participants' willingness to work and contribute economically. This act of violence not only deprived individuals of educational chances, but it also had a long-term

influence on the community's economic situation. With his education in ruins and few other possibilities, the participant went to farming. The problems of sustaining a livelihood through agriculture, on the other hand, proved overwhelming. Riza stated:

> "It was because of the economic, financial reasons. I wanted to work as well, as the Taliban exploded our school after that, our school got destroyed. I was farming and couldn't make it there, so I emigrated. War/conflict between the Taliban and the former government was at its highest level."

Haleema, who has lost her husband in one of the explosions, stated:

> "Financially, we were really poor. My husband was the only breadwinner but wasn't with us anymore. My sons were at school, and in primary grade, I wanted them to study and not work. That's why I started working as a cleaner at some restaurants, but it was not enough."

Manal shared her opinion, stating that her husband's job was affected by the security situation in the country. She said:

> "My husband's income was not very good, and the security situation affected his job."

In this exploration of economic instability as a push factor, the participants' narratives provide different experiences. These experiences highlight the urgency and complexities of migration decisions in the face of economic difficulty, from irregular income to limited work options and the far-reaching impacts of conflict. Our narratives also illustrate that conflict and insecurity in the country have negatively affected job opportunities and employment.

4.2.2. Pull Factors

In this part of the study, I aim to understand why Afghan migrants choose Türkiye as a vital destination in their search for a better life. My goal is to provide insight into the pull factors that shape this migration pattern. I focus on not just the 'where' but also the 'why'—why Türkiye attracts Afghans seeking refuge and opportunity. I asked the participants, "Why did you come to Türkiye? What about Türkiye pulled you here?" Twenty Afghan asylum seekers in Türkiye answered these questions by giving different reasons for opting Türkiye.

The findings of this study are expected to reveal that for many Afghan migrants, their choice of Türkiye as a destination country was influenced by geography, safety, lucrative job opportunities, available travel routes, having some families in Türkiye, and, in the end, the chance of getting to Europe.

We can divide the findings of the pull factor driving Afghans to Türkiye as follows:

- Economic opportunities: one of the main motivations for Afghan migrants to undertake the irregular journey to Türkiye is economic necessity.
- Safety: as their home country suffers from insecurity, nearly all participants shared that they were not safe back in Afghanistan. And, seeking refuge in Türkiye emerges as a safer haven for them.
- Feasible Travel Routes /Intentions of Further Journey Westward: by feasibility, the participants meant it was possible for them to get to Türkiye through Iran rather than going to Europe. So, even to go to Europe, they had to come to Türkiye first and go to Europe from this country. Türkiye becomes the gateway, a practical starting point, making the journey more feasible.
- Cultural compatibility/family and friends ties; half of the participants were of Uzbek origin and had a culture and language similar to Turkish. So, coming to Türkiye, they would not face any language barrier or cultural shock and would integrate faster than in other countries. Additionally, kinship ties play a significant role, with families already established in Türkiye, making migration smoother and more cost-effective.

So, the narratives revealed that motives for migration to Türkiye are mostly driven by the humanitarian need for protection and economic deprivation in their original country. In other words, the push factors are also the pull factors driving them to a safer, and more developed place.

4.2.2.1. Economic Opportunities

These experiences expressed by participants highlight the significant importance of economic necessity as a driving force. Afghanistan's economic challenges, as expressed in the participants' remarks, convert into a magnetic force attracting them towards the promise of opportunity in Türkiye. The journey becomes more than just a physical relocation; it becomes a search for more stable economic opportunities.

Mohammad, an Afghan migrant, summarizes the economic motivation behind the journey by saying:

> "Back home, the economic struggle was constant. For me, Türkiye represented an opportunity to break out from that pattern and pursue chances unavailable in Afghanistan."

Zahra, another respondent, echoes these sentiments:

> "The decision to come to Türkiye wasn't just about escaping danger; it was about finding economic stability. Türkiye represented a doorway to a better financial future for my family and me."

Ali, a 26-year-old Afghan migrant, offers the economic factors that drew him to Türkiye. He said:

> "I thought it had more opportunities for me as a young boy, and I could have stable jobs and be someone for myself because Türkiye's economy at that time was really good and progressing."

Najib revealed his story that shows the economy as a reason to be pulled to a more developed country:

> "I migrated to Iran first for work and was there for three years. Coming to Türkiye was not my plan at all; I worked in Iran, but then the Iranian currency also lost its value and dropped; the economic situation in Türkiye was better, so I decided to come."

Migration from Afghanistan to Türkiye is undeniably motivated by economic need due to Afghanistan's inadequate socioeconomic conditions. With high poverty rates and limited employment options, Afghans are pulled to seek better opportunities abroad; in this case, Türkiye plays an important role as a destination country.

Riza stated:

> "Back in Afghanistan, finding a stable job was like searching for water in a desert. The economic conditions pushed me to consider alternative options, and Türkiye seemed like a more feasible destination."

Therefore, the stories provided by our participants highlight the importance of economic necessity as a driving force in the migratory journey from Afghanistan to Türkiye. According to the participants' accounts, as seen above, Afghanistan's economic difficulties, and limited job opportunities, convert into a magnetic force that draws them to the promise of opportunity in Türkiye.

4.2.2.2. Safety

One of the primary reasons for every refugee to leave their home country is the fact of not being safe, and Afghans are no exception. It is no surprise that Afghanistan, for an extended period, has been recognized by war and conflict.

The findings from our study vividly affirm this reality. In the interview, when I asked 20 refugees, "Why did you come to Türkiye? What about Türkiye pulled you here?" the vast majority agreed on one point: Türkiye is perceived as a safe haven. For these individuals, safety is not just an abstract concept; it translates into freedom from the constant threat of gunshots, the haunting fear of losing loved ones in explosions, and the insecurity that has doomed Afghanistan for decades. So, the safety pull factor, highlighted by participants, is indeed decisive.

In this context, Türkiye emerges as an indicator of hope for Afghan migrants. The protection it provides becomes an essential characteristic, pulling away from Afghanistan's war-torn terrain. The stories gathered represent a communal sigh of relief, an escape from the daily tension that comes with living in a conflict-torn country and living under better refugee conditions.

Naweed's response to the question "Why did you come to Türkiye?" offers a remarkable insight into the human component of migration, surpassing geographical borders and capturing the essence of seeking life and security. His statement was:

> "My hope from coming to this country was to gain hope again, to be alive. In my country, we live, but we are not alive; security is the main issue; every day, somewhere is exploded, and explosions, bombings, and suicide attacks happen all the time."

Naweed's testimony adds a highly human dimension to our understanding of safety as a pull factor. It demonstrates that for people like him, the decision to migrate is about restoring the essence of life, the opportunity to live without a constant shadow of insecurity. His thoughts reflect the collective state of many who travel to Türkiye for a life where hope can be restored and the basic act of living is no longer by the looming fear of violence.

The statement below also emphasizes the narrative:

Najwa said:

> "Initially, we wanted to stay in Iran because our relatives were there, but then our visa expired, and we applied for an extension, which they rejected. That's why we

knew we could not stay there, and also, there weren't such organizations where we could register ourselves. The refugee condition was not good in Iran. That is why we decided to come to Türkiye, as we heard that in Türkiye, we could register with UNHCR[3] and be resettled in a third country later on. And if you compare Iran and Türkiye, Türkiye was better in every dimension, economy, and location, and security"

Najwas's narrative brings together themes of safety and opportunity. The realization that staying in Iran would be difficult due to visa problems and poor refugee conditions led to the consideration of Türkiye as an alternative. The impression of Türkiye as a safer destination and the possibility of registering with UNHCR and being resettled in a third country shows safety as a strategic decision-making consideration.

Manal's point of view also provide an additional layer to the interplay of safety and better refugee conditions as pull factors heading to Türkiye. She articulated:

"We had the chance to register with UNHCR; the refugee conditions were better than Iran, and Pakistan and with a hope of going to a third country, we decided to come to Türkiye."

Zahra, a 39-year-old divorcee with two children, mentioned her reason for choosing Türkiye as follow:

"I knew Türkiye was a better place for a person like me. Türkiye has laws and regulations. I knew I'd be protected in Türkiye."

Zahra's statement illustrates the recognition of Türkiye as a safe haven not only for physical safety but also for legal protection. It emphasizes the interaction of elements that influence individuals' migration decisions, with each component contributing to Türkiye's overall impression as a place offering comprehensive security and assistance.

Finally, the narratives of these individuals jointly emphasize that safety, hope, and opportunity are intertwined components driving Afghan asylum seekers' migratory decisions in Türkiye. The decision to migrate to Türkiye represents a desire for total security, a safe haven where people can reconstruct their lives free from the threats they face in their home country.

[3] When Najwa and her family came in 2017, refugees could register with UNHCR; however, UNHCR closed this program and handed over the refugee registration to PDMM of Türkiye .

4.2.2.3. Feasible Travel Routes /Intentions of Further Journey Westward

Another pull factor pointed out by participants was the availability of travel routes to Türkiye and its feasibility. They mentioned they knew they could go to Türkiye through Iran by crossing the border between them. However, while some intended to remain in Türkiye, others intended to continue their journey to Europe.

According to participants, the decision to travel to Türkiye is based on the feasibility of the availability of smugglers to serve as guides throughout the journey and Türkiye's strategic positioning as a gateway to Europe. The feasibility of this path, made possible by easily accessible smugglers, becomes a critical pull factor.

Fareed said:

> "We came to Türkiye because it is feasible; smugglers are available to take you there, and you can go to Europe from Türkiye."

The strategic geographical location of Türkiye emerges as a critical pull factor for Afghan migrants. Türkiye, which shares a border with Iran, has become a popular transit route for Afghans. Beyond being just a mark on the map, Türkiye is recognized as a transit country, strategically positioned as a gateway to Europe. The statement below emphasizes this:

Arash stated:

> "Because of its geographical proximity, Türkiye shares a border with Iran, which serves as a common transit route for Afghans. Besides, Türkiye is considered a transit country that can be used as a gateway to Europe."

In 2010, Kimyagul, 27 years old at the time, embarked on a migration journey to Türkiye with the intention of reaching Canada. Her experience explains the evolving nature of migration routes and conditions over time. Kimyagul found the migration road in Türkiye to be relatively easy back then, free of most problems that characterize modern journeys. Looking back on her experience, she noticed a sense of comfort that contrasts with the more packed experiences she hears from modern migrants. Kimyagul emphasized that her journey was safer and more comfortable compared to current stories. Importantly, Kimyagul reveals a deal with a smuggler to reach Canada, emphasizing Türkiye as a critical stop on the migratory route. The smuggler's advice brought them to Türkiye first, placing it as a stopover on their way to Canada. However,

due to an unexpected turn of circumstances, Kimyagul and her family were forced to remain in Türkiye, with the smuggler abandoning the plan. She stated:

> "Back in 2010, the migration road in Türkiye was relatively easy, not busy and crowded. We came more comfortably than the people I hear their stories with nowadays. If I compare my journey, we came safer. We had a deal to go to Canada, so the smuggler told us we had to go to Türkiye first and from there to Canada."

Türkiye's status as a neighboring country sharing a border with Iran becomes a crucial and advantageous factor for Afghan migrants. Türkiye's strategic proximity to Iran, which shares a border with Afghanistan, generates a favorable interconnection.

Ali's reason for coming to Türkiye affirms this statement:

> "Türkiye is a neighbor country to Iran and very close, so we could cross the border and enter Türkiye." He continued "Going to another country from Türkiye would be easier than going from Iran."

Mahtab's initial reason for coming to Türkiye was to reach Germany, where her family resides eventually. However, the unexpected closure of borders changed Mahtab's plans. Despite initially intending to use Türkiye as a path to Germany, she had to stay in Türkiye. She said :

> "My entire family is in Germany; my parents, my aunts, uncles so I told my husband let's go to Germany that's why we came to Türkiye to go to Germany. Still, we couldn't go because the border is closed now."

In examining the pull factor of feasible travel routes and intentions of further journey westward among Afghan migrants, participants highlighted the availability and accessibility of routes leading to Türkiye as pull factors in their migration decisions. Notably, this practicality had a dual purpose, with some migrants planning to settle in Türkiye and others seeing it as their gateway to Europe.

4.2.2.4. Cultural Compatibility/Family and Friends Ties

The majority of participants revealed that the reason they came to Türkiye was their family and friends ties in Türkiye; for most of them, their families were already settled in Türkiye, which would make it easier and cheaper for these migrants to choose Türkiye. Also, cultural compatibility played a significant role in answering why you chose Türkiye. Now, indeed, Turkish culture and Afghan culture are not the same. However, there are some similarities between them, making Afghan migrants in Türkiye not feel strange or completely culturally

shocked. In Afghanistan, there are Uzbek and Turkmen origin, basically of Turkic origin. Some of the Participants that I interviewed were Uzbek. Hence, their language is also similar to Turkish, making it much easier for them to learn Turkish and not have a language barrier.
Family and social ties are powerful motivators, and having established communities in Türkiye can indeed make the transition smoother for migrants. Cultural similarities, such as linguistic connections between Turkish and certain Afghan communities, such as the Uzbeks, can add greatly to a sense of familiarity and ease of integration. Language is essential for communication and interaction, and linguistic similarities can reduce some of the difficulties associated with learning a new language in a foreign country.

Abdulhakeem's experience demonstrates the value of personal connections as well as networks during the migration process. Having friends who are already in Türkiye who can provide information about the lifestyle, expectations, and even help with finding employment can make the transition much easier for migrants.
Abdulhakeem articulated:

> "The language was also easier for me because Turkish culture is close to ours, and I am of Uzbek origin. Also, I had some friends in Türkiye who informed me about the lifestyle of Türkiye, what I should expect, and even the job now that I have, my friends have arranged that for me."

So, it demonstrates the importance of social networks in migration, as they can provide valuable information, assistance, and a sense of belonging. This experience also highlights the diversity within migrant communities, where individuals may face various challenges, but common cultural backgrounds or connections can build a sense of familiarity and solidarity.
Another participant, Azeeta, also shared the same statement:

> "We chose Türkiye because we have heard about the country. Now, even in Afghanistan, we have Turkic origin, we have Uzbek and Turkmen ethnicities; we thought we would not feel like strangers, although we are not Uzbek or Turkmen ourselves. Culturally, we thought we wouldn't have a problem integrating into society."

Mohibullah said:

> "Culturally, I did not feel strange or weird because we share more or less the same culture."

Cultural comfort is important in the adaptation process for migrants. When people discover resembles in traditions, they can develop a sense of belonging and make adjusting to another country easier. The sense of shared culture can serve as a bridge, allowing individuals to integrate into their new society with relative ease.

Raihana's decision to move to Türkiye because of the presence of a family member, her second cousin, demonstrates the importance of social networks and support systems in the migration process. The fact that her cousin was legally in Türkiye gave Raihana a sense of assurance and a familiar contact in the destination country. Raihana stated:

> "My second cousin, my aunt's grandchild, was in Türkiye before me. She was in Erzincan with her husband-son, that's why I decided to go here since I have someone I know."

Salma stated:

> "My brother and my parents were in Türkiye. That's why I chose Türkiye. My parents told me I could come here and get my kimlik and wait for the third-country resettlement."

Salma's decision to migrate to Türkiye was influenced by familial ties and the presence of her brother and parents in the country at the time. This familial tie most certainly influenced her decision-making process. The mention of acquiring a "kimlik"[4] implies that Salma's objective was not just to join her family but also to go through Türkiye's legal processes.

Lastly, the participants' narratives illustrate a multidimensional interaction of reasons influencing their decision to migrate to Türkiye. Family and social ties appear as significant motivators, with Türkiye's established communities giving practical and emotional support. Despite differences between Turkish and Afghan cultures, cultural compatibility plays an important role in providing a sense of familiarity. The language linkages that exist between certain Afghan communities, such as the Uzbeks, and Turkish, lead to a more seamless transition. The experiences of Abdulhakeem and Azeeta highlight the value of personal ties and social networks, demonstrating how friends and family in Türkiye may provide crucial information and assistance. Mohibullah's remark emphasizes the comfort obtained from common cultural components, but Raihana and Salma's decisions underline the importance of familial ties and legal formalities in the migration path. These stories, taken together, highlight

[4] The "kimlik" refers to a residence permit or identification document, indicating a desire to establish legal status in the country.

the complexities of migration decisions and the critical role that social, cultural, and familial considerations play in shaping the lives of people seeking a new life in Türkiye.

4.3. Journey

Since legal pathways for Afghans to migrate are hard to come by, they often adopt irregular methods to embark on their journeys. To better understand the experiences of participants, I aim to identify their migration histories. In this section of the findings, I discuss the journey paths migrants took to reach Türkiye, including the borders and countries they passed through. This part also covers their experiences, challenges, and interactions with smugglers. I focus particularly on the border crossing between Iran and Türkiye, as most participants traveled through Iran from Afghanistan to reach Türkiye. Additionally, I detail the challenges these migrants encountered along the way. I asked 20 Afghan migrants who made the irregular journey from Afghanistan through Iran, "Can you tell me about your experiences during your journey?" and "What risks did you take to arrive in Türkiye?"

Journeys were one of the only topics of the interview where participants told stories about their lives. In contrast, some participants merely described the travel between Iran-Türkiye and wouldn't give much detail; others embedded the journey in broader narratives and gave information, naming each border and city, the ease and length of the journey, and the experiences.

Therefore, this section, based on the participant's responses to the question, is divided by:

- Routes, means and conditions of travel
- Smugglers
- Challenges

4.3.1. Routes, Means and Conditions of Travel:

The border between Türkiye and Iran is mountainous and rocky, making it very difficult to cross. Several participants traveled with their children while being pregnant or very sick. Some migrants were given horses during the journey to make it easier for them, especially elderly people. Their journey from Afghanistan to Türkiye would take 20 to 30 days. Most respondents did not obtain information on the routes, destinations, costs, conditions, and risks associated with their trips before they left, but some of them had an idea of how the journey might look like through their friends and families who already made the journey. They mentioned that they would imagine it would not be easy, but then it was worse and beyond their imagination. Among

the respondents, the majority arrived in Türkiye after taking irregular trips through Iran, and only one of them went to Pakistan and, from there, entered Iran.

The majority relied upon smugglers, mainly used to cross international borders. Afghans reported seeing death, physical violence, and family division along the journey, in addition to difficulties brought on by the harsh weather and the physically demanding nature of the hilly route, which was mostly traveled on foot.

The first stop from Afghanistan, from which most of the participants crossed the border, was Nimroz[5] and rarely Helmand, and then they said they would enter the Iranian border, go to Tehran or Mashhad, and from there either to Urumiye, Salma, or Bazargan[6] borders. The first destinations in Türkiye are often the cities of Van and Tatvan, from which they would go to Istanbul, where they remain till the next step. At each destination, participants would stay over at the smuggler's house or arrange accommodation with the smuggler for quite some time. They would continue their journey after the smuggler had arranged everything and ensured it was the right time to leave.

Some participants went to Iran legally by obtaining a visa, but most of them entered Iran illegally. All participants recounted 24-36 hours of treks by foot through the Iranian deserts, mountain passes, rough terrain and also being locked in vehicle trunks with large containers for days in order to evade Iranian authorities. They said they would rest during the day and walk and continue their journey at night so that they would not be caught by the police. They would come in mass groups by other families joint as well around 100 to 200 people. Some described beatings by smugglers when merely asking to rest, and being deprived of food and water during the journey.

Ali Reza shared his experience with me:

> "In July 2017, I came from Afghanistan to Iran. I crossed the Iranian border. It took two weeks to reach Türkiye." he continued "I traveled from Kabul to Nimorz (Afghanistan) by car. There, my aunt found a smuggler to get me to Türkiye. I entered Iran, and the smuggler took us to Tehran (maidan shahr). We went to the

[5] Zaranj city of Nimroz province is the border between Afghanistan and the southern part of Sestan Baluchistan province of Iran.
[6] Bazargan is a city in, and the capital of, Bazargan District of Maku County, West Azerbaijan province, Iran.

Bazargan border by car from there by our feet for some days, passing through mountains, hiding during the day, and managed to enter Van."

Raihana shared her experience, stating:

"We came illegally to Türkiye, traveled to Iran first legally, got the Iranian visa, from there, found a smuggler, and were smuggled to Türkiye." She continued, "I do not remember how many days exactly we walked, but I recall vividly when I could not walk anymore; I was old, I could not keep pace with others, and I told my son to leave me there and continue their journey without me. My son went to the smuggler and asked him if it's possible for him to help me. Surprisingly, the smuggler managed a horse for me, and I rode the horse through the journey."

Marzia's response also illustrates the fact that horses were given to the elderly people:

"My mother could not walk fast, so the smuggler arranged a horse for her".

Abdulhakeem shared his narrative:

"I got the Iranian visa and entered Iran; from Urumiye to Van, it took 12 hours by car; other families also joined us. We did not have enough water or food during the journey, and people were getting angry and disappointed. We were inside a forest, constantly afraid of being caught." He continued "The smuggler took us to Tehran first and then to Salma, where we stayed in his own house for about eight days; his family was also there. He had a lorry or little van, and he got us on that vehicle with other families as well. After 5 hours of driving, we reached the mountains and had to walk there for about 4 or 5 hours. This time, we succeeded in getting Van City and stayed in dorm[7] for one night until my friend sent me the money; I booked the ticket and came to Ankara."

Najwa's journey is illustrative of a majority of the participant's experiences of the journey from Afghanistan to Türkiye thorugh Iran. Her journey began with obtaining an Iranian visa, made possible by a relative's connection, and started with transit from Kabul to Mashhad. As a result, a train from Mashhad to Tehran was booked. In Tehran, a smuggler was hired, who demanded $400 per person to ease the travel to Türkiye. A one-week stopover at the smuggler's home in

[7] The term "khabgah" in Farsi, used by participants, refers to a place or house where they are taken, often associated with the practice of smugglers. These smugglers typically maintain apartments or dormitories, where refugees are temporarily housed upon entering Van, a city in Türkiye. The arrangement involves a period of stay for the refugees, lasting usually for a night or two. During this time, the refugees are expected to pay the smugglers their agreed-upon fees. Once the payment is made, the refugees are granted permission to leave Van and continue their journey.

Urumiye preceded the start of the journey's second phase. This phase consisted of 30 days of walking and driving. A 6-hour ride with the smuggler followed, concluding in a two-night stay in a dorm with 200 men and women. The final stage of the journey required solo navigation from Sivas to Ankara, which was made possible by online resources like Google.

> "When we decided to leave Afghanistan, we asked for the help of one of our relatives who had a position in the Ministry of Defense; he told us: if you want, I can help you to go to Iran; I can take you to the embassy and get the visa. We went to the Iranian embassy in Kabul, and after two days, we received our visa. Then we traveled to Mashhad, Iran. When we arrived in Mashahad, we booked our train to Tehran because our relatives were residing in Tehran. We went to Tehran and tried to figure out how to get to Türkiye. We found a smuggler in exchange for 400$ per person to get us to Türkiye. We went to Urumiye, and for one week, we stayed over at the smuggler's house; after a week, the journey started." She continued "For three days and nights, we walked over the mountains until we arrived at the border. For about 6 hours, the smuggler took us somewhere and kept us in a dorm. There were 200 women and men in that place, and we stayed there for two nights. We were about to come to Ankara, and he left us(smugglers) on the way. We googled how to get a bus from Sivas to Ankara"

Kimyagul stated:

> "Firstly, we went to Helmand, we were taken to Mashhad by a truck, stayed there for some days, and then went to Tehran and Urumiye. We had to walk, at that time, we were young, and we had not experienced such a thing in our entire life. It became our trauma for the rest of our lives. I remember walking for hours. The smuggler took us to a house for one and a half weeks; we stayed and rested. We arrived in Van; we were taken to a dorm; there was one man and two women, and we stayed there for less than a week. The smuggler booked an Istanbul ticket for us".

Riza, 23 years old, said:

> "Coming to Türkiye, on our way, the smuggler packed us and seated 23 people in one Toyota car, which we couldn't fit. Everyone was sitting on each other's lap, and my knees got hurt. I came to Iran and was in Iran for three months, then came to Türkiye, 13/14 people in the same car, and when I complained and said my knee/ hand was hurting, he'd beat me up. after reaching Van, the smuggler took us to a dorm with no food and no water in there. and after entering Van, the smuggler put 40 people on the dolmus until Ankara."

Haleema came to Türkiye by going to Pakistan first and from there entered Iran.

> "From Afghanistan to Pakistan we went by car then from Pakistan to Iran again by car, crossing the borders we would wait. For example, crossing the Turkish border, we walked for two nights and two days until we reached Van, and then by bus, we came to Ankara. There were 25/30 families with us."

Salma said:

> "I got an Iranian visa and travelled to Iran legally with my passport. I traveled from Kabul to Mashhad and stayed in Mashahad for 18 days, after a week, on our way to the border in the village, the smuggler's house was there, and we stayed at his house until he was sure that everything was okay and we could continue our journey. We started climbing on the tall mountain at night, around 6 pm until 10 pm. We came down, and the smuggler told us we couldn't cross the border tonight and had to climb back. I had a kid and was pregnant. I said to the smuggler, no, I want to cross the border tonight, and I continue my journey without him with two other Afghan families."

Mohibullah also shared the same statement:

> "I entered Iran legally with a visa, but from Iran to Türkiye, I came illegally with my sister. We went to Tehran first, and a car picked us up. We stayed over at the smuggler's house for a few nights and then went to Salma, and from there, we went to Van."

Hafez stated:

> "After two days with the car from Kabul to Nimroz city, we changed the truck and crossed the Iranian border. From Urumiye, we entered Van; I walked two nights until I reached Van. I remember we were about 400 people in the truck after we spent three nights in the van at a dorm. Twenty-four hours until Istanbul and then to Ankara by bus".

Individuals such as Ali Reza, Raihana, Abdulhakeem, Najwa, Kimyagul, Riza, Haleema, Salma, and Hafez effectively portray a variety of migratory patterns and the enormous obstacles they face. The perseverance these migrants show, including unexpected support such as Raihana obtaining a horse to lighten her journey, demonstrates this difficult migratory route's complexity.

4.3.2. Smugglers

Conversations with participants revealed smugglers' crucial role in bringing Afghans to Türkiye. The narratives given by participants highlight the critical role that smugglers play in facilitating the journey to Türkiye. Each individual interviewed for this study acknowledged their reliance on smugglers. This section of the findings dives into the findings of smugglers, the money transactions involved, and the potential exploitation experienced by migrants. Through a lens focused on the questions of 'How did you find the smuggler?', 'how much did you pay?', 'How did you come up with the money to pay smugglers?', and 'Did you experience some exploitation, such as money or physical abuse?' We aim to uncover the complex interplay between migrants and the smugglers.

- Finding the Smuggler:

Participants commonly found smugglers through word of mouth within Afghan communities and among friends. Personal recommendations and trusted networks were crucial in connecting with reliable smugglers, often facilitated by acquaintances who had previously made the journey. In some cases, family members or local contacts provided information on where to find these smugglers, such as specific areas in cities known for such activities. The smuggling network operates in a decentralized and secretive manner, with smugglers maintaining anonymity to avoid detection. Participants found smugglers through word of mouth within Afghan communities and friends.

Mahtab:

> "My friend introduced the smuggler; she vouched for him and said he was successful."

Fareed:

> "We found smugglers through some friends; actually, finding a smuggler is not that hard."

Some found smugglers through acquaintances and local connections.

Azeeta:

> "My husband found the smuggler through his friend who already made the journey. He met up with the smuggler at the local bazaar, the smuggler told his name to us, Rahim."

Ali:

> “My uncle heard in the refugee community and learned of an area in the city of Mashhad where those 'people' could be found.”

Najib's perspective provides a spotlight on the shifting and secretive nature of the smugglers. The smugglers' goal to remain anonymous adds to the dynamic character of the smuggling network. These people remain mysterious, cloaked by the anonymity of each region as they operate decentralized.

> “By the way, the smugglers change; in every province, the smuggler is unknown; you don’t see the smuggler himself; they work in a network. For example, the smuggler is sitting at home but coordinating with those people (most of them have cars).”

Participants made payments ranging from $400 to $1000 or the equivalent in Iranian Tomans.

> “I paid an overall 800$.” (Naweed)
>
> “I paid 900$” (Abdulhakeem)
>
> “For the payment, he asked for 1000$ per person, it included the journey through Iran and Türkiye.”(Azeeta)
>
> “We paid the smuggler 32,000,000 tomans equivalent to 525.67 $” (Mahtab)
>
> “I paid 20,000,000 tomans equivalent to 328.54$ to the smuggler.” (Salma)
>
> “I paid 2,000,000 Tomans equivalent to 32.85$for each person.” (Mohammad Ashraf)

In order to come up with the smuggler’s money, migrants sold property, land, and jewelry to come up with the money and some borrowed money.

> “I sold our house and land. I had some jewelry as well, heirlooms from my mother.” (Azeeta)
>
> “I sold the shop, furniture, and things I built in Afghanistan.”(Abdulhakeem)
>
> “I sold my family house in Baghlan[8] and everything we had” (Mohammad Ashraf)
>
> “I borrowed some money from my aunt and had some savings.” (Haleema)
>
> “We were both working back then, so we had money.”(Mahtab)

[8] Baghlan is one of the thirty-four provinces of Afghanistan. It is in the north of the country.

- Exploitation Experienced:

Smugglers often changed behaviors during the journey. Most participants revealed that the smugglers would be good with them at the beginning of the journey but then change their behaviors.

> "He was good at first, but then he started threatening us, saying he would leave us alone." (Naweed)
>
> "The smuggler deceived me by saying that it'd be all families with us during the journey, but with us, it was all men, and I was the only woman among them." (Mahtab)

Families were detained until they could pay, showcasing exploitation.

> *"*There was a family with us, a family of three, husband and wife and their daughter; when we arrived in Van, the smuggler took us to a dorm; he wanted his money. The family could not pay him right away, so the smuggler got furious and detained the daughter in a room and let the husband go and find the money and told him: until you find the money, don't come back and if you want to see your daughter again you better be fast and bring me that money." (Raihana)

Another exploitation mentioned by some participants is bailing on the migrants and leaving them by their own half the way.

> "And I know some people who were left and abandoned by their smugglers half the way, telling them to continue the journey by themselves." (Raihana)

It seems based on these narratives; smugglers will captivate the families for days even weeks until they get paid.

Marziah, a 27-year-old translator at ASAM[9], shared a distressing story. A girl, referred to as Nilofar, endured three years of captivity, rape, and pregnancy by a smuggler. Marziah recounted how Nilofar eventually escaped with her children and sought refuge at ASAM. She said:

> "She was raped by men there and kept captive for three years by the smuggler; she got pregnant from the smuggler"

After being captivated for three years by the smuggler, she found a way to escape with her children and came to ASAM.

[9] (Association for solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants)

Finally, these asylum seekers' experiences expose the interconnecting realms of desperation, sacrifice, and exploitation. The journey, most of the time, is planned by smugglers.

4.3.3. Challenges

As Afghan migrants embark on the irregular journey to Türkiye, they encounter numerous challenges and risks during border crossings. It is crucial to acknowledge that the situation may have evolved over time; I rely on the firsthand narratives of refugees up until 2022 for this thesis. In this section, I will carefully examine the harsh terrain and dire weather conditions, the threats of arrest and deportation, interactions with police and border security guards, struggles with accessing basic needs, and the issue of family separation. Participants described the challenges they had while crossing borders; some shared with me the loss of family members, and some were arrested and deported back to Iran. From there, they resumed their journey for the second time; the rugged terrain of the steep mountains and plains caused some participants to get physically unwell. The weather on the entire journey was either extremely hot or freezing, and one participant told me that he witnessed a baby pass away due to the freezing weather. Therefore, In this section I seek to provide a deeper understanding of the severe challenges encountered by people seeking refuge.

- Harsh terrain, Dire Weather Conditions and Lack of Access to Basic Needs

Afghan migrants had to travel over harsh terrain, such as mountains, deserts, and other difficult regions. Long walks are required, exposing them to extreme weather conditions such as heat, and cold. Lack of proper clothing, shelter, and resources intensifies the vulnerability of migrants to harsh weather. Extreme temperatures can lead to exhaustion, dehydration, and other health issues. Afghan migrants frequently struggle to obtain basic essentials such as food, clean water, healthcare, and sanitation facilities during their journey.

Naweed highlights the impact of the environment, reflecting on his fortune:

> "I was lucky it was not winter; otherwise, I would have died from the cold and frozen temperature. However, it was hot, and I was thirsty and starving."

Raihana agrees with this sentiment:

> "During the day, the temperature was so hot, making it impossible to travel" (Raihana)

Fareed elaborates on the difficulties encountered within Iran's borders, emphasizing the barren plains and mountains. He clearly shows climate extremes, such as hot days and cold nights, emphasizing the water shortage:

> "The challenge is, of course, the route itself. we managed to cross the Iranian border; once inside Iran, the landscape posed its own set of difficulties, such as the plains, mountains, rocks and the fear of death. During the day, the temperatures soared, making it almost impossible to travel. On the other hand, the nights were freezing, and water was scarce. You only knew the value of water once you experienced what I have. I thought we may die from hunger and thirst."

Arash said:

> "Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, we reached the tall mountains that marked the border between Iran and Türkiye. Climbing was tough, especially with the kids"

The stories continue, each adding to a story that emphasizes the rugged terrain and harsh weather conditions. Kimyagul recalls the cold and her shoes ripping off, while Marziyah reflects on hours of traveling plains, mountains, and rocks. Azeeta emphasizes the scarcity of water amid rugged terrain.

> "It was cold; I remember we were freezing, and my shoes ripped off" (Kimyagul)
>
> "After passing through plains, mountains, and rocks, we walked for 3 hours." (Marziyah)
>
> "It was mountainous, the terrain was challenging for me because I had young kids. We had to travel by foot, hiding and being very careful. We occasionally hitched rides in trucks and hid ourselves between sacks of goods. And water was scarce" (Azeeta)
>
> "The journey was fraught with danger. I passed through mountains, at times food and water ran low. Some nights were so cold that I'd freeze to death. As we neared the border, we immediately got what people were saying about their harsh, unpredictable climate and the terrain. Perhaps the most haunting experience of mine was coming across the remnants of past refugee groups. Abandoned belongings, a child's shoe. The weather was so cold, that I did not have suitable clothes for that kind of weather" (Ali)
>
> "Reaching the Turkish border, I fell off the mountain twice, and I was pregnant at that time. My husband got so worried that he started crying. Running from one mountain to another while I was pregnant was really hard" (Mahtab)

> “When coming to Türkiye, it was freezing. There were lots of snow, we were 100 Afghan people walking over snow. After sometimes I started losing my feelings for my legs, and it still hurts. We were freezing. A 7-year-old baby passed away on the way due to extreme cold weather.” (Riza)
>
> “I fell off the cliffs and hurt my hips, also I lost my eyesight for some time. Imagine every time we climbed the mountains with a broken hip and three kids, the temperature was really hot, and we all were burnt and thirsty, we would sleep over mountains and plains.” (Haleema)

Lastly, the constant interplay of tough terrain, poor weather, and the struggle for basic needs emerges as a powerful backdrop to the Afghan migrants' journey to Türkiye.

- Arrest and Deportation, police and border security guards:

In their journey to Türkiye, Afghan migrants contend with the constant specter of arrest and deportation, encountering challenges posed by police and border security guards.

Some interviewees, particularly women with children, stated that the police and border guards would let them pass and cross the border. Some of them were released after paying a little sum of money. Participants indicated that they were attempting to conceal and avoid detection by the police.

Naweed highlighted the risk posed by Turkish and Iranian police forces along both sides of the border:

> “The risks I faced while entering Türkiye were the Turkish and Iranian police on both sides. It was difficult for us; I had to try my best to avoid the Iranian border and internal security forces. There were checkpoints at regular intervals, and I had heard the stories of illegal migrants being detained, beaten, or sent back to Afghanistan.”

Naweed shared a personal experience involving an uncle and nephew that he knew which highlights the risk of deportation and arrest:

> “I came with an uncle and nephew. We arrived in Türkiye together. Unfortunately, the uncle got caught by the Turkish police while he was waiting for the train in Istanbul. The nephew managed to escape, and a few months later, I heard that he had reached Germany.”

Raihana's story highlights the widespread fear of police arrest and the strategies used by migrants to navigate this difficult terrain, Raihana shared:

> "It was a nightmare journey; I was with my children; the smuggler tells you to avoid walking and moving with mass groups to hide from the security forces and guards."

Abdulhakeem told me that he was caught and sent back to Iran:

> "One morning, in the middle of Iran-Türkiye, I was getting close to reaching Van, but unfortunately, I got caught by the police of Türkiye and was sent back to Iran, back to Urumiye."

Najwa's narrative also indicates the fact of being arrested by the police and being released after paying a sum amount of money, she stated:

> "Iranian police arrested us and kept us for one night; they had aggressive behavior, demanding that we should clean restrooms, etc. They asked if anyone with money could come, and then we could release them. They asked 50$ per person, we paid the money, and they took us to Tehran. There, they checked our passports and visas and released us."

The sense of impending danger is vividly portrayed by Fareed, who said:

> "You do your best to avoid the Iranian security force. In one particular instance, the smuggler hitched a ride for us with a local Iranian trucker; we were stopped at a makeshift checkpoint. I thought at that very moment that our life was over. We tried our best to slow our breathing and prayed that the guard would not check. That day, luck was on our side, and the truck moved on without a thorough search."

Arash was also among the participants who were detained and released later, he articulated:

> "I did not have a passport, so on the road, they detained me. I gave them money, and they released me. At the Iranian border for about 15 minutes, the security forces took me out of the car, checked inside the car, and asked for my passport and money."

Kimyagul's narrative affirms the fact that the police let them pass the border because of her single mother and young siblings:

> "When it was time to cross the border; I recall hiding behind rocks. Two police came to us, but they saw we were all kids with a single mom. They did not say anything and let us cross the border."

Mahtab and her husband were also caught by the police:

> "On the Iranian border, police caught us, took money from us, and after that allowed us to pass, they caught us two times. We gave 50,000 Toman each equivalent to 1.64$ (me and my husband) in 2021."

Haleema's story shows the ill-treatment of some police at the border of Balochistan and being caught by the Turkish police four times before getting to Türkiye:

> "Balochistan and Turkish Police caught us; Balochistan Police beat me up so hard, he was punching and kicking my sons and asking for money. The Turkish Police caught us four times and sent us back to Iran."

Salma told me that the police let her pass the border due to the fact that she was pregnant and had a young son with her:

> "When we were walking, the Iranian police caught us and told us we had to go up and climb again, but I begged the police for pity and decided to take us to the Turkish border, and he made us promise not to tell anyone that he helped us. We arrived at the border, and there was a checkpoint. And the Turkish police and their dogs saw us and barked at us, but the police didn't do anything."

In the end, the widespread fear of arrest is evident based on the above narratives. The subject of arrest and deportation looms big in the horrific journey of Afghan migrants to Türkiye, casting a shadow of uncertainty and risk. The respondents' accounts clearly show the ongoing problems they endure as they fight with the enormous challenges given by police and border security guards. The stories range from detention and eventual release following money transactions to the heartbreaking personal experiences of family members who have fallen victim.

- Separation from Family Members:

Families often face separation during the migration process, either due to deliberate choices or unforeseen circumstances. Separation can occur during border crossings, arrests, or other challenging situations. The emotional cost of family separation adds another layer of hardship to the migrants' experiences, impacting their mental well-being and adding stress to an already challenging journey.

Among the participants, three mentioned losing their family members or witnessing others losing their family members along the way.

Azeeta's narrative serves as a testament to the human cost of irregular migration, exposing the vulnerability of families and the profound emotional toll:

> "The unexpected thing that happened was, I lost my 11-year-old daughter, it's been six years and still now I cannot sleep, I've become a mad woman. I lost my daughter on our way to cross to the western part of Iran, nearing the Turkish border. A guard was approaching so the smuggler warned us to run and hide. All of us went

somewhere when we got back together, my daughter was nowhere to be found. I started screaming, yelling, crying, asking the smuggler to search her and find her, I begged him, but he did not listen. I lost myself, but I had other children as well, I had to be strong for them."

Haleema witnessed a mother being lost and three kids becoming orphans on their way to the border:

"One time a policeman came to us and the smuggler yelled and told us to run while running at night a woman fell off the mountain, she had three kids we begged the smuggler to find her, but he didn't. Still, sometimes I wonder what happened to those three kids and that woman."

Manal lost her brother on the way to Türkiye:

"At the border, the smuggler told us to change the cars while getting close to Van; he separated men and women. I thought my husband and my brother would be in the same car, but they were not, and my brother went missing. Since 2016, I have no idea if he's alive or dead."

The theme of family separation, a reality faced by migrants during their journey, emerges as a profound and emotionally charged aspect of the migration experience. Families being torn apart due to unique reasons serve as a testament to the human cost of irregular migration.

4.4. future aspirations

The last part and conclusion part of the findings are future plans and aspirations. At the end of the interview, I asked the participants two last questions: What are your plans for the future? And was it worth it (enduring all those difficulties while coming irregularly)?

Nearly all participants cited having no hope for a safe and productive future in Afghanistan due to poverty and economic distress as well as lack of security, the Taliban's regime, especially for women. Their responses underscore the dire circumstances that compelled them to leave and their determination to build a better life elsewhere. Naweed reflected on the necessity of his departure, stating he could not live under the Taliban's regime. Najwa, a single woman, echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the impossibility of living under Taliban rule. Fareed, concerned for his family's future, affirmed he would make the journey again if necessary. Kimyagul highlighted the severe risks women face in Afghanistan, including rape and the increasing difficulty of crossing borders due to government measures. Haleema, a widow with three sons, feared forced marriage and recruitment of her sons by the Taliban. These narratives

vividly illustrate the migrants' resolve to seek a better future, despite the immense challenges they endured. The statements below emphasize these narratives:

> "But now that the Taliban is in power again, I think I did a good thing by leaving. I could not live under their vicious regime; you cannot live there" (Naweed)
>
> "Now, because of the Taliban; I am a single woman, and I cannot live there."(Najwa)
>
> "My wife and kid do not have any future now in Afghanistan, and If I had to do it again, I would have done it again." (Fareed)
>
> "In Afghanistan, surviving is a challenge, especially for women; at least we are alive here. If I go back now, it is tough to make the journey and cross the border; women are being raped on the way, and the governments are building walls at the border" (Kimyagul)
>
> "Living in Afghanistan would be impossible for me now that I am a widow with three sons. If I were in Afghanistan with the Taliban in power, they might force me to marry and recruit my young sons" (Haleema)

In terms of their plans in Türkiye, a significant number of participants expressed their intention to wait for third-country resettlement consideration. Some have already progressed in the process of resettlement to countries like France, Australia, and Canada. They have undergone interviews, medical examinations, and screenings, anticipating the issuance of visas for their departure.

> "I will go to the USA or Canada; I am waiting for my third country resettlement" (Arash)
>
> "I will go to Canada, my case was referred, and was accepted. I will learn English, integrate into their society, and maybe continue my education. Finally, I will be able to run my own business one day and be a successful businessman" (Ali)
>
> "Our case was referred to France as a third-country resettlement. We did our interview, biometrics and medical, and I await my visa and travel. If I go there, I know I'll be less stressed." (Haleema)
>
> "I want to go to a third country, learn their language, go to the university, continue my education, get an MA degree, and then Ph.D. I wish to study law and become a lawyer in that country as well and for my children to go to school and not worry about life." (Salma)
>
> "I am waiting for my application to Canada to be accepted and reunite with my brothers after a long time, to have a peaceful life and be happy with my family." (Mohibullah)

"We are waiting for our departure to Australia very soon." (Manal)

The temporary nature of their stay in Türkiye, along with their inability to secure citizenship even after years of residency, has prompted many to seek a permanent place of residence elsewhere.

> "I think all the refugees now are leaving Türkiye legally or illegally. I don't think anyone wants to stay here because our status is temporary" (Abdulhakeem)
>
> "I plan to study and go somewhere that I can stay there permanently and become a citizen of the country. "(Najwa)
>
> "While Türkiye is our sanctuary for now, it is a safe country, we have a legal status but in the long term, it is not ideal. So, like all other refugees, we are waiting for our third country resettlement with better opportunities and staying permanently." (Azeeta)
>
> "For now, nothing. Waiting to leave Türkiye to a country where I could be permanently accepted and got their passport. I am tired of being homeless." (Zahra)

In response to the question: was it worth it? the participants said the challenges and difficulties faced during their irregular journey to Türkiye are seen as worth enduring in the pursuit of a better life and greater opportunities.

> "We die every day back home, you never know when will your home, yourself, and your family get killed or be in a suicide bombing, you leave home as if you may never return, therefore, it does worth it, instead of dying every day you die once". (Abdulhakeem)
>
> "The world may never understand the life we go through except people in the warzone. I never think you would be afraid of going out in abroad because of an explosion or a rocket." (Zahra)
>
> "If I evaluate my journey, I'd say we, as humans, grasp the fact that once your life is in danger, you do anything. Those things that I experienced on the road. If anyone had told me before, I'd say no, but you never know what life is planning for you." (Naweed)

Lastly, the future plans and aspirations of the participants paint a vivid picture of their determination to escape the challenges they faced in Afghanistan and their pursuit of a more secure and promising future. As seen above, the participants shared their dreams and aspirations for a better life in the third countries they are hoping to resettle. Some express a desire to learn

languages, continue education, establish businesses, and reunite with family members. The hope is not just for personal success but also for a peaceful and secure life for their families, free from the uncertainties and dangers they faced in Afghanistan.

CHAPTER 5: DECODING MIGRATION PATTERNS: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I thoroughly analyze the findings collected from interviews with asylum seekers in Türkiye, exploring the various details of their irregular journey across the Iranian-Turkish border. I explain these findings within the theoretical framework of network and conflict theories. My goal is to interpret these findings by emphasizing their significant implications for academic discourse, provide recommendations, and identify gaps in the research.

5.1. Contributions to the Literature

The findings of this study add to the current literature on irregular migration, offering insight into the experiences of Afghan migrants traveling to Türkiye via Iran. This study adds to our understanding of the details of irregular migration by closely looking into push factors as well as the dynamics of the journey itself. The majority of qualitative research has concentrated on refugees' experiences in host countries rather than their journeys. While much attention has been paid to Afghan immigrants living in Türkiye, there has been very little comprehensive study on their irregular journey to Türkiye. As a result, this study highlighted the difficulties they encountered on their way to cross this country.

The significance of this research lies not only in its exploration of the challenges encountered by Afghan migrants but also in the methodological approach adopted. Conducting interviews with 20 asylum seekers' in their native language, Farsi distinguishes this study by offering a direct conduit to the voices and experiences of those who have lived through the repugnant journey. By engaging with individuals who have firsthand knowledge of the repugnant challenges encountered on their way to Türkiye, this research amplifies the authenticity and depth of the narratives shared. In the end, who would explain the challenges and experiences they have encountered better than themselves?

In this part, I examine the findings of the research closely and state how some of the findings contributed to the literature.

Push factors:

Analyzing the root causes of Afghans' migration from their country reveals that economic instability and conflict are the main driving forces. Although the literature has been influenced by this notion, a deeper look uncovers the depths and complexity that raise the issue of irregular migration from Afghanistan.

- Conflict as a Multi-faceted Push Factor:

While the identification of conflict as the main push factor is consistent with established literature, it provides further context by highlighting the complex aspects in which conflict influences migration decisions. The accounts of Afghan migrants advance our knowledge of how conflict influences migration patterns more thoroughly. Beyond being a mere state of war, conflict, as depicted by the narratives of Afghan migrants, encapsulates the profound human losses endured—wives losing husbands, mothers losing children, and families torn apart. Hence, conflict is a multi-faceted push factor. By contextualizing conflict in these deeply personal terms, the research amplifies our understanding of how conflict shapes migration patterns.

This research adds to the body of literature by focusing on the human side of conflict rather than just its geopolitical dimensions. Our theoretical framework is enhanced by the portrayal of conflict as a driving force behind migration, providing a more comprehensive understanding that is in line with the lived experiences of individuals who are directly impacted.

- The Interplay of Conflict and Economic Insecurity:

The findings imply that rather than being mutually exclusive, conflict and economic insecurity are closely related. Despite having abundant natural resources and agricultural potential, Afghanistan yet faces poverty. According to the research, conflict is a major factor in impeding economic development and the use of these resources. Job opportunities are overshadowed by safety concerns, making economic stability unattainable. The interplay of conflict and economic challenges underscores the complexity of migration decisions, where even viable job opportunities might be disregarded in the face of constant threats to well-being.

By offering a perspective on the relationship between conflict and economic instability, this study contributes to the body of literature. Examining how conflict hinders economic development adds to the conversation about how conflict affects society in ways that go beyond its immediate tangible consequences.

In essence, the push factors prompting Afghans to leave their homeland extend beyond a mere categorization. Conflict and economic instability, as revealed by this research, are not isolated determinants but rather components of a dynamic interplay that shapes migration decisions.

- Journey:

This study contributes by providing a detailed examination of the practicalities of the journey, including routes, means, and conditions. Providing narratives of asylum seekers' about how they make it, how long it takes, passing through which cities, which borders, how many hours they walked, and how many people they were all together offers insights into the logistical challenges of the irregular journey, enriching the literature on the physical aspects of the irregular migration.

Moreover, identifying numerous challenges encountered, such as losing their family members during the journey, contributes to the literature by providing a firsthand account of the obstacles they faced. This insight enhances our understanding of the risks and hardships associated with irregular migration.

Finally, the study enriches the literature by offering various insights into the push factors and the journey itself. It contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the irregular Afghan migrants' journey and patterns.

5.2. Explanation of the Findings within the Theoretical Framework

Employing network and conflict theories in this thesis breathes life into the findings of this thesis, illuminating the multidimensional aspects of irregular migration. The narratives affirm the theoretical foundations, providing a richer understanding of how these different factors shape migration decisions and experiences. While conflict acts as the initial driver for migration, network dynamics become instrumental in shaping the choice of destination and influencing the overall migration experience. Many participants highlighted that the decision to settle in Türkiye was, in part, influenced by the presence of established communities, primarily family and friends, who could offer a sense of familiarity, guidance, and material support.

The findings of this thesis highlight how conflict and network theories interact closely to shape the migratory patterns of Afghans to Türkiye. Migrating from a war-ridden country to a new place requires making difficult choices, with network connections being helpful in overcoming the obstacles of migration and conflict acting as a trigger.

In the framework of network theory, the analysis deconstructs the elements shaping migration decisions, specifically the selection of the destination country. Examining the social networks theory not only uncovers the pathways for information dissemination but also influences the impact these networks wield on decision-making. This influence extends from familial bonds to connections within communities, including those facilitating the engagement of smugglers. Therefore, the narratives of asylum seekers' did demonstrate how interpersonal ties become essential in navigating to choose Türkiye as a destination country even temporarily, supporting the theoretical foundations of network theory.

Participants recalled that friends helped them secure employment opportunities, showcasing the tangible impact of social connections on practical aspects of their migration. Influential elements also included knowledge of Turkish culture and way of life, which was transmitted through family connections in Türkiye. These results align with the fundamental principles of network theory, highlighting the critical role that social networks play in supporting people on their migratory journeys and destinations.

Furthermore, the narratives reveal a dynamic information-sharing process within social networks. Afghan migrants who had already relocated shared their lived experiences with their communities in Afghanistan, disseminating information about opportunities at the destination site. This exchange included details about job prospects, living conditions, and even finding the smugglers. The reliance on information from relatives or friends in Türkiye was evident, with Afghan migrants often citing instances where they learned about organizations like UNHCR and their procedures through friends in Türkiye.

Overall, the findings of this thesis carefully integrate the network theory framework around the narrative of Afghan migration to Türkiye. The participants' stories powerfully demonstrate how social networks which include relationships with family, contacts within the community, and even interactions with smugglers have a significant influence on migration decisions. The theory's central claim that social networks play a crucial role in the migration process is

reinforced by the effects of relationships on obtaining job opportunities and passing along cultural information. The experiences of asylum seekers shed light on the dynamic process of information-sharing within these networks, which supports the theoretical underpinnings of network theory.

In the end, this study highlights the fact that social networks are more than just informational channels; they also function as vital navigational aids, helping Afghan asylum seekers make sense of the difficult journey to Türkiye and influencing their final destination.

The use of conflict theory helps the research in more depth by highlighting the forces that are present in the stories of Afghan migrants. The analysis covers the long-term effects of conflict on economic stability in addition to its immediate repercussions. The findings confirm the theory's applicability in comprehending conflict's immediate causes as well as long-term effects on migration decisions.

The findings of the thesis underline the significant impact of conflict as the main factor forcing Afghan migrants to flee their country of origin. Participants frequently cited the unstable security environment in Afghanistan as the main reason for their decision to migrate. The stories vividly depict the obvious and physical dangers that conflict poses. These accounts affirm the core principle of conflict theory, emphasizing that adverse and unsafe conditions within a home country are a potent cause for migration.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights the long-lasting effects of conflict on economic stability, supporting the theory's central claim that socioeconomic variables are closely related to migration brought on by conflict. Participants described how the conflict had ruined lives, limited prospects for employment, and produced an overall climate of uncertainty. This economic instability became a strong motivator for people to flee to safer areas, strengthening conflict theory's core idea that conflict plays a crucial role in influencing migration choices.

Additionally, the analysis sheds light on the systemic inequalities and power struggles within conflict-ridden environments, illustrating how these factors further contribute to the migration dynamics. The narratives highlight how individuals, often marginalized or vulnerable in the context of conflict, perceive migration as a strategy to escape oppressive circumstances and pursue improved opportunities elsewhere. This aspect aligns with conflict theory, which posits

that power imbalances and systemic inequalities can drive individuals to seek refuge in environments perceived as more secure and promising.

These theoretical frameworks explain Afghan migration by showing how social networks and conflict dynamics influence migration choices and patterns. The findings confirm that although social networks are essential for making the migration journey easier and easing the choice of destination, conflict is the primary factor that drives people to leave their homeland. The interaction of these theories clarifies the complexity of migration, emphasizing that people seek safety in a new and attractive environment due to the existence of social links and imperatives produced by conflict rather than a single factor.

5.3. Implications for Policy and Practice

In this section, I present a set of recommendations derived from the findings of my research on Afghan irregular migration to Türkiye through Iran. The following recommendations build upon the findings and the analysis of this thesis and aim to provide avenues for further research and policy considerations.

- Humanitarian aid and support:

I advocate for the development of targeted humanitarian aid programs addressing the root causes of irregular migration, focusing on socio-economic development, education, and economic stability in Afghanistan. International organizations could also play a crucial role in providing support for refugees and migrants along the migration route.

Most of the people leaving Afghanistan are young people seeking better opportunities abroad. Afghanistan is losing its youth force and it is experiencing a drain brain of young skilled people leaving the country. So, the Afghan government and international organizations can develop targeted employment and education initiatives that focus on the specific needs and aspirations of the youth population. This can include vocational training programs, entrepreneurship support, and incentives for businesses to hire young talents.

The Afghan government can foster collaboration with international organizations to amplify the impact of humanitarian aid efforts. It can engage with organizations such as UN agencies,

NGOs, and international donors to pool resources, share expertise, and implement comprehensive programs addressing the multifaceted challenges leading to irregular migration. Direct investments towards sectors that align with the skills of the Afghan workforce is another suggestion. Encourage public-private partnerships to create job opportunities in technology, healthcare, and other high-demand fields, would reduce the incentive for skilled individuals to migrate.

- Legal pathways and regularization:

I recommend the establishment of legal pathways for migration to provide viable alternatives for individuals seeking improved opportunities. These pathways could include employment visas, educational opportunities, and family reunification programs, providing structured and legal means for Afghans to pursue their aspirations.

Additionally, regularization programs can be implemented to integrate irregular migrants into the formal system, ensuring their access to basic rights and services.

Implementing regularization programs aimed at integrating irregular migrants into the formal system of the destination country is another aspect. This involves providing legal status for those who have entered irregularly, ensuring that they have access to basic rights, healthcare, education, and other essential services. Regularization contributes to social cohesion and reduces the vulnerabilities associated with undocumented status.

Irregular migration persists due to limited legal pathways and opportunities in Afghanistan. Now, the Afghan government can engage in diplomatic efforts with destination countries, particularly Türkiye, to establish clear and accessible legal migration pathways. Bilateral agreements can prioritize education and employment opportunities for Afghan migrants, reducing reliance on irregular channels.

- Public awareness and educational campaign:

I emphasize the significance of public awareness campaigns in both origin and transit countries to inform potential migrants about the risks and dangers of irregular migration. Educational programs should be designed to highlight legal migration options, dispelling prevalent myths and misconceptions. The Afghan government can collaborate with destination countries and international organizations to conduct public awareness campaigns. These campaigns should

inform potential migrants about the existence of legal pathways, dispelling misconceptions and highlighting the advantages of pursuing legal migration options. It should recognize the need to address misconceptions surrounding irregular migration. Public awareness campaigns should specifically target prevalent myths and misinformation, providing evidence-based information to counteract false narratives that may contribute to the wile of irregular migration.

Many migrants are unaware of the risks associated with irregular migration. Therefore, launching comprehensive public awareness campaigns highlighting the dangers and challenges of irregular migration can be useful. The potential legal consequences, health risks, and exploitation faced by migrants can be emphasized to discourage illegal journeys.

Many migrants, especially the youth, may be unaware of the legal consequences associated with irregular migration. Launching comprehensive awareness campaigns that explicitly highlight the potential legal ramifications of engaging in irregular journeys. This includes the risks of detention, deportation, and other legal complications.

- Further research, data collection:

Further research can delve into the long-term psychological impacts of conflict on migrants. Understanding the lasting effects of personal losses and family separations can inform mental health support programs for Afghan migrants. Also, future research could focus on the role of intermediaries and networks in facilitating irregular migration.

Understanding the mechanisms employed by migrants during their journey, including communication networks and support systems, would provide a detailed perspective on the socio-economic aspects of migration. This research would provide a detailed perspective on the socio-economic aspects of migration. Understanding how migrants navigate their journeys, connect with support networks, and rely on intermediaries can contribute to more informed policy and intervention strategies.

Undertaking comprehensive research on the psychological and emotional costs of the journey, particularly those associated with a loved one's loss and family separation is another recommendation. This research may contribute to the development of mental health support services for migrants, providing specialized interventions for those who have experienced traumatic events while traveling. This research could contribute valuable insights into the

emotional cost experienced by migrants, informing the development of mental health support services. It may also shed light on the coping mechanisms employed by migrants and identify resilience factors.

The recommendations presented in this section stem from a thorough examination of Afghan irregular migration to Türkiye through Iran. These proposals are grounded in the findings and analysis of this thesis, aiming to contribute not only to academic discourse but also to actionable avenues for policy considerations and further research.

5.4. Identification of gaps

The exploration of Afghan irregular migration to Türkiye through Iran has yielded valuable insights, but certain gaps persist, and the limitations of the data collected should be acknowledged:

- Limited Examination of Destination Country Perspectives:

The current research primarily focuses on the experiences of Afghan migrants, with limited exploration of the perspectives and policies of destination countries, especially Türkiye. Understanding the dynamics from the host country's standpoint is essential for crafting more comprehensive and collaborative solutions. The emphasis on the Afghan migrants' experiences, while crucial, has created a void in our understanding of how Türkiye, as the host country, perceives and addresses the challenges posed by irregular migration. To formulate a more comprehensive analysis, it is imperative to consider not only Türkiye's policies, regulatory frameworks, and socio-economic dynamics but also the perspectives of the Turkish public and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in migration-related activities.
Additionally, exploring the challenges and opportunities faced by Türkiye in managing and integrating Afghan migrants into its society is pivotal for crafting effective bilateral or regional strategies.

- Gender-Specific Dimensions of Irregular Migration:

While the analysis touches upon the impact of conflict on families, there is a gap in addressing gender-specific dimensions of irregular migration. Future research can explore how gender dynamics shape migration decisions, experiences, and vulnerabilities, providing a more nuanced understanding. The journey itself is often marked by various hardships, and gender can significantly impact these experiences. Future research can investigate how gender

influences the conditions, risks, and coping mechanisms during irregular migration. This includes exploring the specific challenges faced by women, who may encounter different forms of exploitation, violence, or discrimination. The role of traditional gender roles in shaping migration experiences cannot be overstated. Future research can be done into how these expectations influence the decision-making processes, experiences, and outcomes of Afghan women and men undertaking irregular journeys.

- Lack of Real-Time Data on Migration Routes and Networks:

Another gap in this research is the absence of real-time data on migration routes and networks. Relying on retrospective data and narratives limits the study's ability to offer a timely and dynamic understanding of the evolving dynamics of irregular migration. The study's reliance on historical data and individual narratives introduces limitations in capturing the contemporary complexity of irregular migration. Migration routes and networks are subject to constant shifts, influenced by geopolitical changes, policy adjustments, and adaptations by migrants and facilitators. As a result, the research may not fully cover the most recent developments, hindering its capacity to inform present-day policy and intervention strategies.

- Data Limitations:

The thesis is based on interviews with 20 Afghan individuals, a relatively small sample size. While these interviews offer valuable qualitative insights, they may not fully capture the diversity of experiences within the broader Afghan migrant population. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings to the larger population of Afghan migrants. Variations in experiences, motivations, and challenges may exist among different subgroups, and a larger sample size would better represent this diversity.

Most interviews were conducted online, limiting the researcher's ability to read non-verbal clues and fully understand the participants' emotional states. In-person interviews might provide a more comprehensive understanding of the migrants' feelings and experiences. Online interactions may limit the depth of understanding and connection between the researcher and participants.

Online interviews might miss subtle non-verbal expressions that could provide richer insights into the emotional and psychological dimensions of the migrants' experiences. Facial expressions, body language, and other non-verbal clues can be crucial elements in understanding the full scope of the migration journey.

Lastly, in the exploration of Afghan irregular migration to Türkiye through Iran, the research has undoubtedly contributed valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of this complex phenomenon. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the existing gaps and limitations within the study.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, I complete the research journey undertaken to explore the complex dynamics of Afghan irregular migration through Iran to Türkiye. In the preceding chapters, I examined the motivations, routes, and challenges faced by Afghan migrants, shedding light on complex irregular migration patterns. As I navigate through the final stage of this exploration, I will revisit the initial research objectives, summarize key findings, provide a comprehensive overview of the thesis, and openly acknowledge the study's limitations.

6.1. Recap of Research Objectives and Questions

My main goals in this study were to understand the conditions of Afghan migrants' irregular journeys to Türkiye, focusing on the part of their journey between Iran and Türkiye, and to explore their road stories and narratives. I aimed to show that the concept of the journey, or the narratives of the journey, encompasses not merely an act of mobility across borders but also significant life events. I divided the main goals into two categories to address two essential components of irregular migration from Afghanistan.

First and foremost, I sought to identify the conditions that define Afghan migrants' irregular journeys. This required a thorough examination of the complex reasons behind irregular migration, illuminating the socioeconomic and political forces that motivate people to embark on such journeys. Second, I aimed to emphasize the road stories and narratives from the Afghan migrants themselves. I recognized these stories as more than just personal tales; they are crucial elements that contribute to a deeper understanding of migration.

To achieve these objectives, I employed a comprehensive research methodology that blended primary and secondary data. I chose a semi-structured interview approach, involving 20 Afghan migrants residing in Türkiye who had firsthand experience with irregular migration from Afghanistan through Iran to Türkiye. These individuals provided invaluable insights into the challenges, motivations, and structural elements characterizing their journeys. The richness of their narratives added a qualitative depth to the study, complementing the data obtained through a detailed literature review.

We can grasp that Afghan migrants who undertake the irregular journey to Türkiye through illegal passages do indeed face numerous challenges and risks, including exploitation, abuse at the hands of smugglers, exposure to harsh terrain and weather, and the heartbreaking possibility of losing their family members. Despite these risks, many are compelled to migrate due to a variety of push factors such as conflict, economic instability, and political upheaval in their home country. In the pursuit of a comprehensive understanding, the research questions were instrumental in shaping the inquiry. The main questions, “What are the difficulties and challenges faced by Afghan migrants during their journey to Türkiye?”, “What are the primary motivations and push/pull factors influencing Afghan migrants to embark on the irregular journey to Turkey through Iran?” “What are the common routes taken by Afghan irregular migrants through Iran to reach Turkey, and what are the key dynamics and risks associated with these routes?” guided the research.

I further extended the research to examine the structural components that define the journey by breaking down the routes, transit locations, means of travel, and duration of travel that affect the migration process. I also aimed to explore the roles played by key individuals and networks in either facilitating or impeding the upward mobility of Afghan migrants. This required studying the community structures, human smugglers, and networks that influence the irregular migrants' journey.

As I read through the stories of the Afghan migrants, it became clear that the idea of the journey goes far beyond its physical aspects. It captures a comprehensive view of the difficulties these people have faced, viewing them not just as obstacles to overcome but also as life-changing events that profoundly affect the fundamental fabric of their existence. My aim is not only to outline the difficulties faced during migration but, more importantly, to recognize and value the journey as a complex and diverse phenomenon that molds and reshapes the lives of individuals who embark upon it.

6.2. Summary of Key Findings

In the conclusion chapter of my thesis, I will synthesize the key findings derived from interviews with asylum seekers, cracking the nature of their migration journey, such as circumstances in their home country, choice of destination, and the physical journey. I focused the study on the interplay of sociopolitical, economic, and personal conditions influencing

Afghan migrants' decisions. I identified the primary push factors as political instability and conflict, economic instability, and limited job opportunities. The research revealed that political instability and conflict in Afghanistan were major motivators for migration. Participants shared brutal experiences of their homes being bombed, the tragic loss of family members, and the persistent threat of the Taliban. The impact on remote villages, particularly in Takhar and Kunduz provinces, presented a bleak picture of daily life characterized by a cyclical pattern of Taliban occupation and government recapture, leaving residents desperate for their own survival and that of their families.

Economic instability emerged as another significant push factor, with participants highlighting unemployment, irregular income, and limited job options. The irregularity of the primary breadwinner's income posed a formidable obstacle, as many families struggled with insufficient budgets for basic needs. The narratives also underlined the far-reaching impacts of conflict, revealing that insecurity in the country had negatively affected job opportunities and employment.

I provided a comprehensive understanding of the push factors that compelled Afghan refugees to migrate, emphasizing the interconnectedness of political and economic factors. I highlighted narratives of conflict, coupled with the challenges faced by those working for foreign companies, to demonstrate the vulnerability of individuals and families. Interestingly, the push factors that led Afghans away from Afghanistan also became the pull factors drawing them to a safer and more developed destination, Türkiye. The pull factors identified were:

Economic Opportunities: economic necessity emerged as a pull factor for Afghan migrants, pulling them on the irregular journey to Türkiye. The study highlighted the significant pull of Türkiye's promise of better economic prospects, serving as a source of hope amid Afghanistan's economic challenges.

Safety: the general insecurity in Afghanistan served as a compelling reason for nearly all participants to seek refuge in Türkiye. Safety emerged as a prominent pull factor, representing a perceived haven free from the constant threat of violence, the fear of losing loved ones, and the pervasive insecurity endured in Afghanistan.

Feasible Travel Routes / Intentions of Further Journey Westward: participants emphasized the practicality of traveling to Türkiye through Iran, making it a feasible starting point even for those intending to continue their European journey. Türkiye, positioned as a gateway, became a strategic and accessible path, thereby becoming a critical pull factor.

Cultural Compatibility / Family and Friends Ties: most participants cited family and friends ties as a significant reason for choosing Türkiye, with established communities facilitating a smoother transition. Cultural compatibility, particularly linguistic connections between Turkish and certain Afghan communities like the Uzbeks, played an important role in creating a sense of familiarity and easing the integration process.

Another critical key finding was about Afghan migrants' migration journey. To comprehensively grasp the participants' experiences, delving into their migration histories became imperative, shedding light on the journey paths they took to reach Türkiye, border crossings, and the associated challenges with smugglers, terrain, weather, etc.

Afghan migrants found the journey to Türkiye, which involved crossing the rocky and mountainous border between Iran and Türkiye, to be difficult and dangerous. The challenging terrain was more difficult for some participants, including pregnant women and those with illnesses travelling with their children. In an effort to ease the journey, horses were provided to certain migrants, especially older people. Lasting 20 to 30 days, the journey involved limited information on routes, destinations, costs, and risks beforehand, with only a few participants drawing on insights from friends and family who had previously undertaken similar journeys. The main route taken by participants was an irregular journey through Iran, with only one individual entering from Pakistan.

Smugglers played a significant role in this risky journey, which involved death, violence, and separation from loved ones. The harsh weather and physically demanding terrain added to the challenges, as most of the journey was done on foot through hilly areas. The participants crossed the border into Iran from Nimroz or occasionally Helmand in Afghanistan, heading towards Tehran or Mashhad, and then onward to the borders of Urumiye, Salma, or Bazargan. They would typically make their way to Van and Tatvan in Türkiye before reaching Istanbul, where they would usually stay until the next phase of their journey. Accommodations were arranged at each stop with the help of the smugglers. While some participants entered Iran legally, the

majority did illegally, 24-36 hour treks through deserts, mountain passes, and rough terrain until crossing the Turkish border. To avoid any security forces, migrants rested during the day and walked at night. Mass group movements involving 100 to 200 people were common, with some recounting beatings by smugglers for requesting rest and enduring deprivation of food and water throughout the journey.

Continuing the exploration of migrants' journeys, crucial insights were gathered from conversations with participants, emphasizing the significant role smugglers played in facilitating the passage of Afghans to Türkiye. Many people in Afghanistan found smugglers through personal recommendations within their community or through friends. The financial transactions usually require a payment of between $400 to $1000. Some people have had to sell their property, land, or jewelry, while others have borrowed money or used their personal savings to cover the costs.

The relationship between smugglers and migrants was complex and evolved over the course of the journey. Initially, the smuggler would be nice, but as time passed, his behavior would shift towards using coercion, telling lies, and exploitative actions. Detainment of families until payment, instances of abandonment mid-journey, and distressing cases of exploitation highlighted the extreme vulnerability faced by migrants.

Afghan migrants on their way to Türkiye faced various obstacles that made their journey even more challenging. They had to navigate through difficult terrains that included mountains and deserts, exposing themselves to harsh weather conditions such as extreme heat and cold. Due to the lack of appropriate clothing, shelter, and resources, they were more sensitive to these elements and experienced exhaustion, dehydration, and health problems. Additionally, getting access to basic necessities like food, clean water, healthcare, and sanitation facilities proved to be a constant challenge for these individuals.

One of the difficulties that families faced during the migration process was losing their family members. This separation had a significant emotional impact on migrants, adding to the already stressful and challenging journey.

The final section of the findings of the thesis centers on the future hopes and goals of Afghan migrants. Participants shared a common feeling of hopelessness regarding their prospects for a

better and safer future in Afghanistan. They mentioned factors such as poverty, economic difficulties, and security problems, particularly for women, under the Taliban's rule. Despite the challenges, the respondents expressed a strong determination to leave Afghanistan in search of a more stable and prosperous life. Their dreams included personal growth, such as learning new languages, pursuing education, starting their own businesses, and reuniting with their families.

6.3. Limitations of the Thesis

This research, like any other, has its limitations. Here are some limitations of the study:

- Data limitations: obtaining reliable data on the actual number of Afghan migrants and their movements can be challenging due to the illegal nature of irregular migration.
- Generalization: the findings of the study focused on Afghan irregular migration through Iran to Türkiye and may not be generalizable to other contexts or populations beyond the specific sample studied. Cultural, social, economic, and political factors can vary widely across different migration routes, countries of origin, and host countries.
- Resource constraints: the study may be limited by time and resource constraints, which may impact the depth and breadth of the analysis conducted. Thus, further studies can be conducted on this topic.
- Dynamic Context: the nature of migration is constantly changing and can be influenced by various factors like politics, economy, and society. The study focused on a specific period of Afghan irregular migration, so any changes in these factors could impact the accuracy and relevance of the findings. It's important to keep in mind that the dynamic nature of migration means that there are temporal limitations to the study's conclusions.
- Ethical Considerations in Data Collection: the study's focus on sensitive subjects, like irregular migration, presents ethical dilemmas when it comes to collecting data. The process of finding participants was difficult since they were reluctant to share certain details about their journey, mainly because of the fear of legal repercussions or societal stigma regarding their migration status.

Just like any academic research, these limitations offer opportunities for further exploration to improve research methodology, address gaps, and strengthen the reliability of empirical studies on the complex subject of irregular migration.

6.4. Summary of the Thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters.

In the first chapter, I provided a general overview of the topic, explaining the study's objectives and contributions, identifying research questions, and pointing out any limitations of the study.

The second chapter encompassed the analytical and conceptual background of the thesis, including definitions of relevant concepts, a historical backdrop, and a comprehensive review of relevant studies in the field.

In the third chapter, I delved into the methodology and theoretical framework. I outlined the methods employed to address research questions, specifying interviews and secondary data as the data collection methods. The theoretical framework incorporated conflict theory, world system theory, and network theory to provide a profound understanding of the thesis.

In Chapter Four, I discussed the study's findings, sorting them into themes and categories. I carefully analyzed the data to identify the motivations behind Afghan irregular journeys, the participants' experiences during the journey, the nature of the journey, and the challenges encountered by the individuals.

The fifth chapter focused on analysis, offering contributions to the literature, identifying potential gaps, and presenting recommendations. I also analyzed the thesis findings in this chapter.

The sixth chapter centered on discussion and conclusion. I explored the implications of the findings, acknowledged study limitations, and encouraged further exploration in future research directions.

In conclusion, this thesis embarked on a comprehensive exploration of the conditions and patterns characterizing the irregular journey of Afghan migrants to Türkiye, with a specific emphasis on the stretch between Iran and Türkiye. Instead of simply examining the movement of individuals across borders, I explored the personal narratives and experiences that reflect the

idea of the journey, aiming to untangle the complex connections between the journey and significant life events.

My primary aim was to discern the motivations and challenges behind Afghan migrants towards irregular migration, highlighting the structural aspects of their journey and the key actors involved. At the core was the aspiration to enhance understanding regarding the migration experiences of Afghans on their way to Türkiye and the formidable challenges they face along the way.

The analytical and conceptual background, detailed in the second chapter, provided a foundational understanding of irregular migration, historical contextualization of the Afghan migration movement, and an extensive review of academic literature and relevant policy documents. In methodology I employed a qualitative approach, relying on in-depth interviews with Afghan migrants, complemented by a thorough examination of academic and secondary sources.

The research conducted through interviews revealed a complex web of reasons behind Afghan migration. The study particularly looked at the border crossing between Iran and Türkiye, shedding light on the difficulties faced due to the terrain, smugglers, weather, and security forces. Moreover, the findings also depicted the hopes and ambitions of Afghan asylum seekers, showcasing their determination to forge a more secure and promising future beyond the adversities faced in Afghanistan.

This thesis endeavors to contribute to the ongoing scholarly dialogue around irregular migration. By delving into the complex journey of Afghan migrants, I shed light on the various challenges, aspirations, and factors that influence their migration decisions. My research highlights the need for further nuanced exploration in the field of migration studies to better understand the dynamic landscape of migration and its impact on individuals and societies.

REFERENCES

Administrator, W. (2023, January 17). The impact of the Afghanistan crisis on migration: Increasingly securitized borders will only make migration riskier and more dangerous. https://mixedmigration.org/articles/the-impact-of-the-afghanistan-crisis-on-migration/

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *21*(2), 166–191. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016

Aikins, M. (2022). The naked don't fear the water : an underground journey with afghan refugees (First). Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, New York, NY, 2022.

Aksel, & İÇDUYGU. (2012). TÜRKİYE'DE DÜZENSİZ GÖÇ. *http://madde14.org/images/1/15/IOMTurkiyeDuzensizGoc.pdf*. International Organization for Migration .

Alemi, Q., Montgomery, S., & Stempel, C. (2018). A Qualitative Study Exploring the Psychosocial Needs of Male Undocumented Afghan Migrants in Istanbul, Turkey. *Societies*, *8*(2), 22. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc8020022

Alemi, Q., Stempel, C., Baek, K., Lares, L., Villa, P., Danis, D., & Montgomery, S. (2016, September 28). Impact of Postmigration Living Difficulties on the Mental Health of Afghan Migrants Residing in Istanbul. *International Journal of Population Research*, *2016*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1155/2016/7690697

Alemi, Q., Stempel, C., Koga, P., Smith, V., Danis, D., Baek, K., & Montgomery, S. (2017, February 17). Determinants of Health Care Services Utilization among First Generation Afghan Migrants in Istanbul. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *14*(2), 201. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14020201

Alimia, S. (2014, October 1). Afghan (Re)Migration from Pakistan to Turkey: Transnational Norms and the 'Pull' of Pax-Ottomanica? https://www.insightturkey.com/articles/afghan-remigration-from-pakistan-to-turkey-transnational-norms-and-the-pull-of-pax-ottomanica

Anderson, J. W. (2010). Thomas Barfield, Afghanistan: a cultural and political history. *Contemporary Islam*, *6*(1), 95–97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-010-0137-4

Arjomand, N. (2016, September 10). Smuggling networks, migration and settlement patterns in Turkey. *Afghan Exodus*

Atesok, Z. O., Komsuoglu, A., & Ozer, Y. Y. (2019). An Evaluation of Refugees' Access To Higher Education: Case of Turkey and Istanbul University. *Journal of International and Comparative Education*, *8*(2), 119–136. https://doi.org/10.14425/jice.2019.8.2.119

Augustová. (2021, September). THE BORDER LANDSCAPE IN EASTERN TURKEY AFTER THE TALIBAN'S TAKEOVER OF AFGHANISTAN. *https://ipc.sabanciuniv.edu/Content/Images/CKeditorImages/20210913-23092252.pdf*. IPC–MERCATOR ANALYSIS .

BAHADIR, Z., AY, F. A., Faruk, A. Y., & BAŞIBÜYÜK, G. Ö. (2023). Evaluation of Life Satisfaction Levels of Elderly Immigrants Who Migrated From Afghanistan, Syria, And Iraq to Sivas (Türkiye). *Journal of Human and Social Sciences*, *6*(Education Special Issue), 238-260.

Basit, A. (2022). Af-Pak: One Year Since the Taliban's Return to Power. *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, *14*(4), 7–15. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48682652

Belabbas, S., Bijak, J., Modirrousta-Galian, A., & Nurse, S. (2022). From Conflict Zones to Europe: Syrian and Afghan Refugees' Journeys, Stories, and Strategies. *Social Inclusion*, *10*(4). https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v10i4.5731

Biehl, K. S. (2015). Governing through Uncertainty: Experiences of Being a Refugee in Turkey as a Country for Temporary Asylum. *Social Analysis* *59*(1). https://doi.org/10.3167/sa.2015.590104

Boquet, Y. (2011). Cédric Audebert, Mohamed Kamel Doraï : Migration in a globalised world. *Espace Populations Sociétés*, (2011/1), 163–164. https://doi.org/10.4000/eps.4408

Brettell, C. B., & Hollifield, J. F. (2014). *Migration Theory*. Routledge. http://books.google.ie/books?id=wERHBAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Brettell,+C.+B.,+%26+Hollifield,+J.+F.+(Eds.).+(2022).+Migration+theory:+Talking+across+disciplines.+Routledge.&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api

Brian , T., & Laczko, F. (Eds.). (2014). Fatal Journeys Tracking Lives Lost during Migration . *https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/migrated_files/pbn/docs/Fatal-Journeys-Tracking-Lives-Lost-during-Migration-2014.pdf*. International Organization for Migration.

Canpolat, M. D. (2020). Harmonisation process of Afghan asylum-seekers: a case study of Sivas satellite city. *Cappadocia Journal of Area Studies*, *2*(2), 188-215.

Canpolat, M. D. (2020). The perception of local people towards the integration process of Afgan asylum seekers into Sivas (Master's thesis, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü).

ÇARMIKLI, E. Ö., KADER, M. U., ŞEN, S. E., ÖZGİRGİN, E. E., & ÖNCAN, M. O. (2016). MIGRANT SMUGGLING IN TURKEY: THE "OTHER" SIDE OF THE REFUGEE CRISIS. In *Migrant Smuggling in Turkey: The 'Other' Side of the Refugee Crisis* (pp. 21–38). International Strategic Research Organization (USAK). http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep02580.7

Castles, S., Miller, M. J., & Ammendola, G. (2005). The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World. *American Foreign Policy Interests*, *27*(6), 537–542. https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920500434037

Cordesman, A. H. (2016). Afghanistan: The Uncertain Impact of a Year of Transition. *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23383

Cordesman, A. H. (2018). Afghanistan: Conflict Metrics 2000-2018. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep22477

Crawley, H., & Jones, K. (2020). Beyond here and there: (re)conceptualising migrant journeys and the 'in-between.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *47*(14), 3226–3242. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2020.1804190

Crawley, H., & Kaytaz, E. S. (2022). Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Afghan Migration to Europe From Iran. *Social Inclusion*, *10*(3). https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v10i3.5234

Dashti, Z. (2022). Afghan External Migration Movements in the Historical Process. *Asya Studies*, *6*(20), 301–314. https://doi.org/10.31455/asya.1055791

DEĞİRMENCİ, M. (2023). TÜRKİYE'NİN YERELDE GÖÇ YÖNETİMİ ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME. *Anadolu Üniversitesi İktisadi Ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi, 24*(3), 470-497. https://doi.org/10.53443/anadoluibfd.1161520

Destination Unknown: Afghans on the move in Turkey | Mixed Migration Centre. (2022, December 8). https://mixedmigration.org/resource/destination-unknown-afghans-on-the-move-in-turkey/

Dimitriadi, A. (2013). Migration from Afghanistan to third countries and Greece. *IRMA Background Report*, 1-34.

Dorronsoro, G. (2011). AFGHANISTAN: THE IMPOSSIBLE TRANSITION. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12732

Düvell, F. (2006). *Illegal Immigration in Europe*. Springer. http://books.google.ie/books?id=dFN9DAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Illegal+Immigration+in+Europe+Beyond+Control&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api

Düvell, F. (2011). Paths into Irregularity: The Legal and Political Construction of Irregular Migration, *European Journal of Migration and Law, 13*(3), 275-295. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/157181611X587856

Ellis-Petersen, H., Baloch, S. M., & Tondo, L. (2021, August 26). Pathway to freedom: hostile journey awaits Afghans fleeing the Taliban. The Guardian. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com

ERDOĞAN, M. M. (2020). “Securitization from Society” and “Social Acceptance”: Political Party-Based Approaches in Turkey to Syrian Refugees. *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, *17*(68), 73-92. https://doi.org/10.33458/uidergisi.883022

Goldbaum, C. & Akbary, Y. (2022) The Smugglers’ Paradise of Afghanistan. The New York Times

Goldbaum, C., Akbary, Y. & Hayeri, K. (2022) Over a million flee as Afghanistan’s economy collapses. The New York Times.

Goodhand, J., & Sedra, M. (2016). *The Afghan Conundrum: intervention, statebuilding and resistance*. Routledge. http://books.google.ie/books?id=M4D7CwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Afghan+Conundrum:+intervention,+statebuilding+and+resistance+Edited+By+Jonathan+Goodhand,+Mark+Sedra&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api

Güler, E. T. (2019). The Experiences of refugee women: findings from a community-based participatory research (Master's thesis, Middle East Technical University).

Guzel, M. (2021, August 18). Fearing Afghan refugee influx, Turkey reinforces border | AP News. https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-middle-east-health-europe-migration-ae11f13429ab6e393bf82faeb33a3f4a

Habibullah, F. (2021). Social Integration of Afghan Migrant Women Living in Zeytinburnu (Doctoral dissertation, Marmara Universitesi (Turkey)).

Hakim, A. A., & Abdul Ghafoor Hatifie . (2020). Why Turkey? Afghans heartwarming migrating destination. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, *9*, 559–566. https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v9i1.1031

Harpviken, K. (2009). *Social Networks and Migration in Wartime Afghanistan*. Springer. http://books.google.ie/books?id=J--ADAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Harpviken,+K.+B.+(2009).+Social+Networks+and+Migration+in+Wartime+Afghanistan.+https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230234208&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api

Haug, S. (2008). Migration Networks and Migration Decision-Making. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *34*(4), 585–605. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830801961605

Helton, A. C. (2002). Rescuing the Refugees. *Foreign Affairs*, *81*(2), 71–82. https://doi.org/10.2307/20033085

İçduygu, A. (2006, December 31). A Panorama of the International Migration Regime in Turkey https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.3221

İçduygu, A. (2008). Rethinking irregular migration in Turkey: some demo-economic reflections.

Içduygu, A., & Karadağ, S. (2018). Afghan migration through Turkey to Europe: seeking refuge, forming diaspora, and becoming citizens. *Turkish Studies*,*19*(3), 482-502 https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2018.1454317

Ikizoglu Erensu, A. (2016). Notes from a refugee protest: ambivalences of resisting and desiring citizenship. *Citizenship Studies*, *20*(5), 664–677. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2016.1182677

International Organization for Migration. (2019). International Migration Law No. 34 - Glossary on Migration. *https://publications.iom.int/books/international-migration-law-ndeg34-glossary-migration*.

IOM (2016) Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: A global review of the emerging evidence base

İRAM. (2019). Türkiye'ye Düzensiz Afgan Göçü ve İran'ın Göç Politikaları. *https://iramcenter.org/uploads/files/turkiyeye-duzensiz-afgan-gocu-ve-iranin-goc-politikalari.pdf*.

Jarahzadeh, K. (2013). Identity at the Fringes of Citizenship: Experiences of Afghan Refugees in Turkey. *Berkeley Undergraduate Journal*, *26*(3). https://doi.org/10.5070/b3263024772

Jones, S. G. (2020). "War and Peace in Afghanistan*." Center for Strategic and International Studies* (CSIS). http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep37625

Jurat, A. Y. (2022). The tragedy of irregular migration: the case of Afghans in Turkey. *Central Asian Survey*, *42*(2), 274–292. https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2022.2144806

Kanayo, O., Anjofui, P., & Stiegler, N. (2019). Push and Pull Factors of International Migration: Evidence from Migrants in South Africa. *Journal of African Union Studies*, *8*(2), 219–250. https://doi.org/10.31920/2050-4306/2019/8n2a12

Kaytaz, E. (2015). The resigned, the restless and the resilient: risk perceptions among Afghan migrants in Turkey (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford).

Kaytaz, E. S. (2016). Afghan Journeys to Turkey: Narratives of Immobility, Travel and Transformation. *Geopolitics*, *21*(2), 284–302. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2016.1151874

Key Migration Terms | International Organization for Migration. (2019, July 5). https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms

Kirisci, K. (1991). The Legal Status of Asylum Seekers in Turkey: Problems and Prospects. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, *3*(3), 510–528. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/3.3.510

KiriŞci, K. (2007). Turkey: A Country of Transition from Emigration to Immigration. *Mediterranean Politics*, *12*(1), 91–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/13629390601136871

Kırmızıgül, Ç. M. (2013). "Experiences of Asylum Seekers in Turkey" *International Journal of Social Inquiry. 6*(2): 39-55.

Koser, K. (2009). Dimensions and dynamics of irregular migration. *Population, Space and Place*, *16*(3), 181–193. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.587

Koser. (2014). TRANSITION, CRISIS AND MOBILITY IN AFGHANISTAN: RHETORIC AND REALITY. *https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/2018-07/Transition-Crisis-and-Mobility-in-Afghanistan-2014.pdf*. International Organization for Migration.

Kuschminder, K. (2017). Afghan Refugee Journeys: Onwards Migration Decision-Making in Greece and Turkey. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *31*(4), 566–587. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fex043

Law on Foreigners and International Protection (Law No: 6458). (2013). Ankara,Turkey.

Loft. (2021). Afghanistan: Refugees and displaced people in 2021. *https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9296/CBP-9296.pdf*. House of Common Library.

LOSCHMANN, , KUSCHMINDER, & SIEGEL. (2017). The root causes of movement : exploring the determinants of irregular migration from Afghanistan. In *Marie MCAULIFFE and Khalid KOSER (eds), A long way to go : irregular migration patterns, processes, drivers and decision making* (pp. 77–102). ANU Press. https://doi.org/10.22459/LWG.12.2017

Loyd, J. M., Ehrkamp, P., & Secor, A. J. (2018, March 12). A geopolitics of trauma: Refugee administration and protracted uncertainty in Turkey. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *43*(3), 377–389. https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12234

Maqul, S. A., GüneŞ, S., & Akin, T. (2020, November 1). The Comparative Analysis of Life Satisfaction Among Syrian, Iranian, and Afghan refugees in Turkey: The case of Denizli. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *34*(2), 2376–2393. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaa055

Mashal, M. (2018, June 20). Their Road to Turkey Was Long and Grueling, but the Short Flight Home Was Crueler. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/16/world/asia/afghan-migrants-deported-turkey.html

Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal. Population and Development Review, 19(3), 431–466. https://doi.org/10.2307/2938462

McAuliffe, M. (2022) Struggling to Survive: Gender, Displacement, and Migration in Taliban-Controlled Afghanistan. Center for Strategic and International Studies

MCAULIFFE, M., & KOSER, K. (Eds.). (2017). A Long Way to Go: Irregular Migration Patterns, Processes, Drivers and Decision-making. *ANU Press*. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt20krxxh

Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean and Beyond - Analysis: Flow Monitoring Surveys, July 2017 - World. (2017, July 25). https://reliefweb.int/report/world/mixed-migration-flows-mediterranean-and-beyond-analysis-flow-monitoring-surveys-july

Monsutti, A. (2008). Afghan migratory strategies and the three Solutions to the refugee problem. *Refugee Survey Quarterly, 27*(1), 58–73. https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdn007

Monsutti, A. (2010). [Review of Social Networks and Migration in Wartime Afghanistan, by K. B. Harpviken]. *Journal of Peace Research, 47*(2), 254–254. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25654570

MOTAFAKER, M. J. (2018). POST-TALİBAN DÖNEMİ AFGANİSTAN DAKİ TERÖR GRUPLARININ SOSYAL BOŞLUK VE AYRIŞMALAR BAĞLAMINDA İNCELENMESİ: TALİBAN ÖRNEĞİ. *Journal of International Social Research*, *11*(61), 583–595. https://doi.org/10.17719/jisr.2018.2949

National asylum procedures for international protection - UNHCR Türkiye. (n.d.). https://help.unhcr.org/turkiye/information-for-non-syrians/national-asylum-procedures-ip/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAzJOtBhALEiwAtwj8tnp0UAnnQECrEOAMPIJL1Hc7SZFs9jZ6eVqnuLDeUZW1j3QXROBCZhoCNkYQAvD_BwE

Noor,S. (2006). Afghan Refugees After 9/11. *Pakistan Horizon, 59*(1), 59–78. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41394381

Parkes, R. (2015). Migration: new 'push' and 'pull' dynamics. *European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)*. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06863

Pouya, J. (2022). The Causes of Afghan Immigration to Türkiye a Sociological Perspective. *Ortadoğu ve Göç, 12*(2). ss. 286- 310

Reis Eken, S. (2019). *Two worlds meeting in one neighborhood: receiving society members-Afghan workers relations in Yenimahalle, İstanbul* (Doctoral dissertation).

Registration and RSD with UNHCR,." (2021, April 12). UNHCR HELP | Turkey

Seefar. (2018, July). Pushed Towards Migration: Understanding how irregular migration dynamics and attitudes are evolving in Afghanistan. *https://seefar.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Seefar-Afghan-panels-wave-2-Pushed-towards-migration.pdf*.

Sidky, H. (2007). War, changing patterns of warfare, state collapse, and transnational violence in Afghanistan: 1978–2001. *Modern Asian Studies, 41*(4), 849-888.

Sirkeci, I. (2009). Transnational mobility and conflict. *Migration Letters*, *6*(1), 3-14.

Stone, R. (2021). Afghan scholars despair after Taliban's takeover. *Science*, *373*(6558), 948–949. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.373.6558.948

Talwasa, S. (2020). Türkiye'de "Daha İyi Bir Yaşam" Peşinde: Türkiye'deki Afgan Mültecilerin Durumunun İnsan Hakları Açısından Değerlendirilmesi. *Üsküdar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, *2020*(11), 245–274.https://doi.org/10.32739/uskudarsbd.6.11.76

The Afghan refugee crisis: What does it mean for Iran? (n.d.). https://www.mei.edu/publications/afghan-refugee-crisis-what-does-it-mean-iran

The role of smugglers in Afghans' irregular journeys to Türkiye. (2022, October). MMC Asia 4Mi Snapshot.

The State of The World's Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action | UNHCR. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.unhcr.org/publications/state-worlds-refugees-2000-fifty-years-humanitarian-action

Third Way. (2020). 2020 Country Brief: Afghanistan. Third Way. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26160

UNHCR. (2019). *UNHCR Turkey Statistics.* https://www.unhcr.org/tr/unhcr-turkiye-istatistikleri

UNHRC. (2020). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019.* Retrieved June 19,2020, from https://www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37/

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2018). Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants 2018. *https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glosom/GLOSOM_2018_web_small.pdf*. United Nations publication.

Üstübici, A., Kirişçioğlu, E., & Elçi, E. (2021). Migration and Development: Measuring migration aspirations and the impact of refugee assistance in Turkey. *ADMIGOV Deliverable*, *6*.

Wissink, M., Düvell, F., & van Eerdewijk, A. (2013). Dynamic Migration Intentions and the Impact of Socio-Institutional Environments: A Transit Migration Hub in Turkey. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *39*(7), 1087–1105. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2013.778026

"You Cannot Exist in This Place:" Lack of Registration Denies Afghan Refugees Protection in Turkey - Refugees International. (2023, April 18). https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/you-cannot-exist-in-this-place-lack-of-registration-denies-afghan-refugees-protection-in-turkey/

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Interview guide and interview questions.

"Good morning/afternoon/evening! Thank you for joining us today. We appreciate your time and willingness to participate in this interview. My name is Kawsar Dehistani. I am a 2nd year Masters student at the Social Sciences University of Ankara, and I am writing my thesis on Afghan migrants in Turkey and their journeys to get here. With your permission, I will be conducting a semi-structured interview, the purpose of which is to gather insights and valuable information from your experiences and perspectives on your journey coming from Iran. Your input is crucial in helping us gain a deeper understanding of irregular Afghan migrants and its various aspects. Please feel free to express your thoughts openly and honestly. Before we begin, I want to assure you that your responses will remain confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study/research. The academic publications will not include any of your personal details. If you have any questions or concerns at any point, please don't hesitate to let me know. Shall we proceed?"

Warm-up Questions:

Can you please introduce yourself and provide a brief overview of your educational and professional background?

How old are you?

When did you come to Turkey?

How did you come to Turkey?

Did you come to Turkey by yourself?

How long does the journey last?

When did you leave Afghanistan?

What do you do in Turkey?

1. **Motivations: pull and push factors;** what motivated you to migrate? Are there any specific events that triggered your departure?

2. Why did you come to Turkey? What about Turkey pulled you here?

3. Did you have any information before departing on your journey about the routes, destinations, costs, conditions, and risks that your trips would entail? What do/did you hope to gain by relocating here?

Challenges:

4. What are the risks that you took in order to arrive in Turkey?

5. Experiences: Can you tell me about your experiences during your journey?

6. Did you face any bandits while traveling?

7. Was any smuggler involved? if yes, how did you find the smuggler? how much did you pay? how did you come up with the money to pay smugglers? did you experience some exploitation, such as money, physical abuse, and sexual exploitation, especially for women? Did you obtain enough information before embarking on their journey? If not, the below question will be asked

8. Do you know anybody who used/paid a smuggler to come to Turkey? Have you heard about any individuals or institutions/companies/websites that help people move from Afghanistan to Turkey?

Conclusion:

9. Are you happy with your decision to move to Turkey? If you could go back in time, would you do it again? Is it possible for you to evaluate the process and see which parts were particularly significant for you?

10. Would you recommend anyone in Afghanistan move to Turkey through Iran? Why or why not?

11. If someone else in Afghanistan contacted you to help them move, what would you do? How would you help?

12. How do you see the future for yourself, your family, and other Afghan migrants in Turkey? Will it be better, worse, or the same? How do you see the numbers changing in the future?

13. What are your plans for the future?