## Afghan Attitudes towards Migration and Returnees

Although often overshadowed by ongoing violence and corruption, the issues of migrants, refugees, and returnees continue to present a major challenge for Afghanistan. Two dynamics have emerged over the past year which merit examination. While more than three decades of war have already caused millions of Afghans to flee abroad, mostly to Pakistan and Iran, but also to Europe, the Gulf States, and North America, evidence indicates that as the Taliban gains strength and the Islamic State, also known as Da'esh, makes inroads into Afghanistan, more Afghans are contemplating leaving, or already attempting to flee the country. Secondly, at the same time, Pakistan has stepped up its repatriation of unregistered Afghan refugees amid intensifying violence on its side of the border. Having nowhere else to go, the refugees are returning to Afghanistan at a time of economic decline and limited job opportunities. Further complicating matters, these crises are taking place amid an environment of diminishing foreign aid and waning international interest in Afghanistan.

The actual numbers of refugees and migrants are uncertain, but it is clear that large numbers of people are involved. As of 2014, there were 1.6 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, with possibly another 1.5 million unregistered.[1] Population flows back and forth across the border to escape violence or search for work are frequent and difficult to track with any precision. Both the Afghan and Pakistani governments have difficulty controlling their border regions, a prime example being the lawless state of the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) on the Pakistani side of the border.

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[1] Blank, Jonah, Christopher Clary and Brian Nichiporuk. Drivers of Long-Term Insecurity and Instability in Pakistan: Urbanization. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014. http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR644. Also available in print form.

Intentions to Migrate

Over a third of Afghans say it is very or somewhat likely that they or a family member will attempt to leave the country in the next six months, **almost half say it is** unlikely, **and 14% say** they will never leave.

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Very/somewhat likely	35%
Very/somewhat unlikely	49%
14% Will never leave (vol.)	

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%
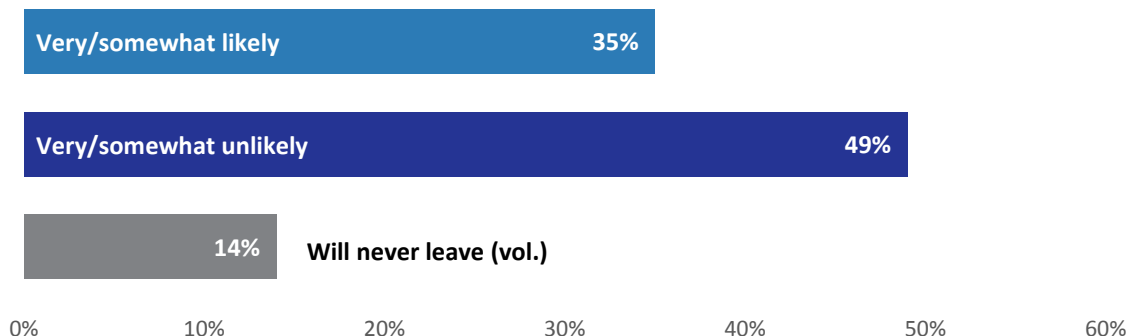
The 2015 Afghan Futures Survey included questions about migration for the first time. When asked how likely it was that the respondent or a family member would attempt to leave Afghanistan within the next six months, 8 percent say it was "very likely", while 27 percent say it was "somewhat likely". Forty-nine percent said it was "very" or "somewhat" unlikely, and 14 percent say they would never leave. Respondents were also asked about their views on returnees, and views were mixed: 29 percent feel that returnees were having a "very" or "somewhat" positive impact, 25 percent say returnees were having a "very" or "somewhat" negative impact, and 39 percent report those who have returned as having neither a positive nor a negative impact. When asked whether or not returnees were more or less to blame than other groups for economic problems in Afghanistan, 36 percent say returnees were more to blame, while 60 percent said that returnees were no more to blame than other groups.

Likely Determinants of Migration

Afghans are split as to the economic impact of returnees.

Positive Impact	Neither positive nor negative	Negative Impact
36%	39%	25%
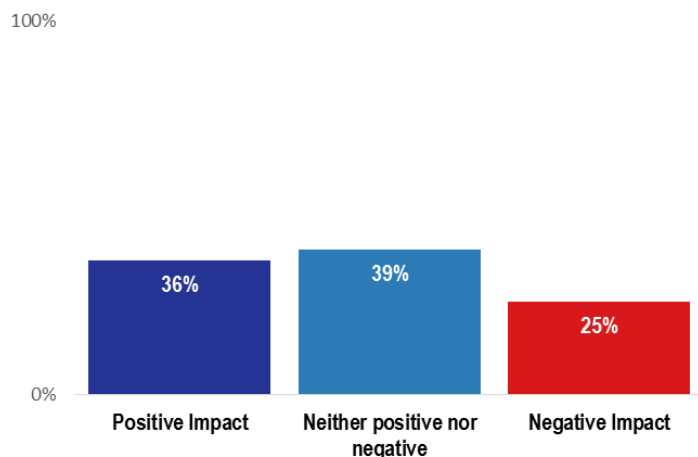
Most Afghans do not blame returnees for economic problems more than other groups.

Returnees are more to blame	Returnees are no more to blame
36%	60%
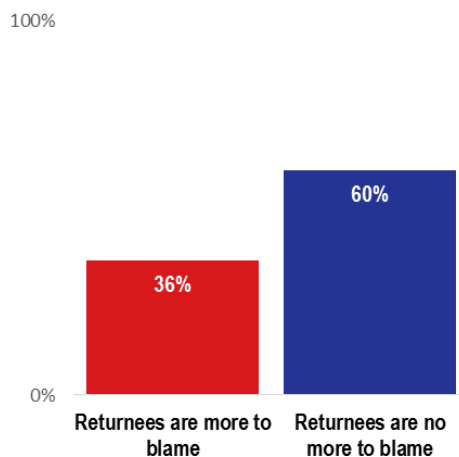
Exploratory logistic regression was used to evaluate determinants of possible future migrant status using variables captured in the latest wave of Afghan Futures.[2]

The first model seeks to identify likely determinants of future migrant status, based on respondents' perceptions of Taliban strengthening, concern about Da'esh, household economic status, and ethnicity (coded as Other/Unknown vs. Hazara for this model).

Many of the migrants seeking to reach Europe are Afghan, and a large number are from the country's Hazara minority.[3] The Hazara suffered terribly under Taliban rule in the late 1990s and early 2000s. An Afghan of Hazara ethnicity is 1.74 times more likely than members of the country's other ethnic groups to say that they or someone in their family is considering leaving the country in the coming six months. Due to their Shia faith and different physical appearance from other Afghans, Hazara are especially at risk from violence by Da'esh and the Taliban, especially considering their history as an oppressed minority in Afghanistan. Indeed, Afghans who are concerned about Da'esh gaining territory are 1.66 times more likely to have plans to migrate. However, the expectation that the Afghan National Unity Government (NUG) might fail was not a significant factor in explaining plans to migrate.[4] This suggests that while there is worry that the Unity Government will fail, this concern is not strong enough to prompt Afghans to consider leaving the country.

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[2] For this analysis, binary net variables for all independent and dependent variables were recoded based off of the original variables from the survey for use in the modeling. The complex design is accounted for in the exploratory models through the survey package in R. Three multi-variable logistic regression models fitted with variables of interest using stepwise Akaike Information Criterion (AIC). Significant predictors at the $\alpha=0.05$ level are included in the final fitted models. The fitted logistic regression model can be expressed as follows: Migration_Status ~ Taliban_Stronger + Daesh_Concern + Financial_Sit + Hazara_Ethnicity

[3] Kuzmez, Kevin. "Desperate journeys: Persecuted Hazara flee Afghanistan." Al Jazeera.com. November 1, 2015. http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/10/desperate-journeys-persecuted-hazara-flee-afghanistan-151026101701042.html (accessed November 1, 2015).

[4] These factors were also included in an initial model, but were ultimately removed according to the stepwise AIC. The initial exploratory model was Migration_Status ~ Expects_NUG_Failure + Taliban_Stronger + Daesh_Concern + Financial_Sit + Nat_Economy_Sit + Hazara_Ethnicity

Afghans who report excellent or good household financial situations are more likely to have plans to leave the country than those with a fair or poor financial situation. A possible explanation is that those with a better financial situation are more likely to have the means to leave the country if the security situation deteriorates, whereas those with fewer financial resources will be more or less trapped. Another possible explanation is that those with higher financial status are more likely to have relatives already living abroad, who might be able to help them emigrate and establish themselves in another country.

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The second model seeks to ascertain determinants of views of whether returnees are having a positive or negative effect.[5] The results of this model are not particularly surprising: respondents who rate *Afghanistan's* economy as excellent or good are significantly more likely to think that returnees from other countries are having a positive impact, and those who rate their *household's* financial situation as good or excellent are also more likely to think their impact is positive. Those who rate their household's financial situation as "excellent" (3% of the total sample) are most likely to say that migrants are having a "very" or "somewhat" *positive* impact (51%), while those who describe their household's financial situation as "poor" (31% of the total sample) are most likely to say that migrants are having a "very" or "somewhat" *negative* impact (34%). These results are not surprising in the context of a slowing economy and high unemployment: those with more precarious financial situations are most likely to feel negatively about migrants because they are most likely to be in direct competition with them for jobs and resources.

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In contrast, according to the model, ethnicity is not a predictive factor for views on the economic impact of returnees: Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and others are not more or less likely to think that returnees were having a positive effect.[6] This may suggest that no one ethnic group feels itself to be disproportionately impacted by returnees. This suggests that views towards returnees are driven more by economic rather than ethnic motivations.

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[5] The final fitted model can be expressed with the following equation: Migrant_Impact ~ Financial_Sit + Nat_Economy_Sit + Pashtun_Ethnicity

[6] The initial exploratory model was Migrant_Impact ~ Financial_Sit + Blame_Migrants + Nat_Economy_Sit + Pashtun_Ethnicity + Employment_Status. Some factors were removed from the model according to the stepwise AIC.

The third and final model seeks to identify factors which might lead respondents to believe that returnees are more to blame for economic problems than other groups.[7] Respondents who describe their household's financial situation as excellent or good are more likely to blame returnees for economic problems than those who describe their situation as fair or poor. The seemingly contradictory finding that those with a better financial situation are more likely to think that returnees are having a positive impact while at the same time believing that they are more to blame for economic problems may be due to confounding variables, but identifying these will require further exploratory modeling. One possible explanation is that respondents who are financially better off may believe that migrants are more to blame for economic problems than others, but still feel that their presence is a net positive, perhaps just not as positive as other groups. These findings may also reflect the experience of many less prosperous Afghans as internally displaced people or refugees, who may have had to move in search of safety, arable land, water, or other goods essential to life, and who therefore have sympathy for returnees. In fact, some may even be in a difficult financial situation because they themselves have been forced to migrate.

Views on the economic situation in Afghanistan as a whole are not a significant factor in determining views on whether refugees are more to blame than others for economic problems. Among the country's ethnic groups, only Uzbeks are significantly more likely than Pashtuns to blame returnees more than other groups for economic problems. Tajiks, Hazaras, and others are not significantly more or less likely to do so.[8]

Methodology

Afghan Futures is self-funded by the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research (ACSOR-Surveys), a D3 Systems, Inc. subsidiary. Results are based on in-person interviews conducted in Dari and Pashto among a random national sample of 2,066 Afghan adults from September 15-20, 2015. For more information please see the full methodology report at www.d3systems.com.

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[7] The model is expressed as follows: Blame_Migrants ~ Financial_Sit + Nat_Economy_Sit + Pashtun_Ethnicity
[8] The initial exploratory model was Blame_Migrants ~ Financial_Sit + Migrant_Impact + Nat_Economy_Sit + Pashtun_Ethnicity + Employment_Status. Some factors were removed from the model according to the stepwise AIC.

Appendix: Logistic Regression Models

Model 1: Determinants of Migration Status

Migration_Status ~ as_factor(q19_NET) + as_factor(q28_NET) + as_factor(q39_NET) + hazara_NET

	B	SE	Sig	Odds Ratio	95% CI for odds ratio Lower	95% CI for odds ratio Upper
(Intercept)	-1.13	0.14	*	0.32	0.25	0.43
(q19_NET)Grown stronger	0.17	0.13		1.18	0.91	1.53
(q28_NET)Concerned	0.51	0.17	*	1.66	1.18	2.34
(q39_NET)Excellent/Good	0.36	0.13	*	1.44	1.11	1.86
hazara_NET	0.55	0.21	*	1.74	1.15	2.63

Model 2: Impact of Returnees

Migrant_Impact ~ as_factor(q38_NET) + as_factor(q39_NET) + as_factor(d9a_NET)

	B	SE	Sig	Odds Ratio	95% CI for odds ratio Lower	95% CI for odds ratio Upper
(Intercept)	0.25	0.03	*	1.28	1.22	1.35
(q38_NET)Excellent/Good	0.21	0.04	*	1.23	1.14	1.33
(q39_NET)Excellent/Good	0.1	0.03	*	1.1	1.03	1.18
(d9a_NET)Tajik	-0.04	0.03		0.96	0.9	1.03
(d9a_NET)Uzbek	-0.07	0.06		0.93	0.83	1.04
(d9a_NET)Hazara	0.09	0.05		1.1	1	1.21
(d9a_NET)Other/Unknown	-0.08	0.06		0.93	0.83	1.03

Model 3: Blame Returnees for Economic Problems

Blame_Migrants ~ as_factor(q38_NET) + as_factor(q39_NET) + as_factor(d9a_NET)

	B	SE	Sig	Odds Ratio	95% CI for odds ratio Lower	95% CI for odds ratio Upper
(Intercept)	1.31	0.03	*	3.72	3.52	3.92
as_factor(q38_NET)Excellent/Good	0.05	0.03		1.05	0.99	1.13
as_factor(q39_NET)Excellent/Good	0.08	0.03	*	1.08	1.02	1.14
as_factor(d9a_NET)Tajik	0.03	0.03		1.03	0.96	1.1
as_factor(d9a_NET)Uzbek	0.11	0.05	*	1.11	1	1.23
as_factor(d9a_NET)Hazara	0.11	0.09		1.11	0.93	1.33
as_factor(d9a_NET)Other/Unknown	-0.11	0.08		0.89	0.77	1.04