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Aya H. Mohamed

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UNDERSTANDING THE AFGHAN DIASPORA: EXPLORING THE FACTORS DRIVING
MIGRATION AND THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION POLICIES ON RECENT AFGHAN
EVACUEES RESETTLING IN THE UNITED STATES

by

AYA MOHAMED

A master's capstone project submitted to the Graduate Faculty in International Migration Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of
New York

2023

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APPROVAL

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in
International Migrations in satisfaction of the thesis requirement
for the degree of Master of Arts.

Approved: June 2023

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING THE AFGHAN DIASPORA: EXPLORING THE FACTORS DRIVING MIGRATION AND THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION POLICIES ON RECENT AFGHAN EVACUEES RESETTLING IN THE UNITED STATES

By

Aya Mohamed

Advisor: Prof. Philip Kasinitz

Afghanistan has been at war with the West since the late 1900's, remaining in a state of constant turmoil. During the Cold War (1979), Afghanistan had fought a war with the Soviet Union, known as the Soviet- Afghan War. During this time, Afghanistan was invaded by both the Soviet and US, creating a ground for terrorism and the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. In order to then eradicate the terrorist regime, the Taliban, the United States went to war with Afghanistan in 2001. The Taliban were suppressed by U.S. forces until August 2021, during which President Biden executed a sudden exit plan which removed all US troops from the country. As a result, the Taliban was given the opportunity to again seize control of the country. The overall poor economic status, inequality, and rocky political transition of Afghanistan can, hence, be explained by the decades of conflict, foreign intervention, and instability. For the purpose of this capstone I will be splitting my paper into two parts. For the first part of this paper, I will examine the factors that forced immigrants to flee their homes from Afghanistan, particularly prior to the Soviet- Afghan war. This will lead me into my research and understanding of how foreign intervention in Afghanistan, specifically the Soviet-Afghan war, initiated the Afghan diaspora. Through studying the forces that force Afghan immigrants out of

their country, I will be able to further explore the underlying inequalities within Afghanistan. This study, overall, will allow me to examine political instability, ethnic and gender inequalities, and the evolution of ethnic divisions within the Afghan state.

As previously mentioned, the Soviet-Afghan war gave rise to the extremist Taliban regime which led to a diaspora. The UNHCR has also reported that Afghan refugees entail one of the world's largest refugee populations with more than 2.2 million refugees (How Many Refugees, 2021). Although there was a massive Afghan diaspora after the Taliban took control, a larger migration was triggered upon the U.S withdrawal of Afghanistan in 2021. At this time, more than 600,000 Afghans were forced to flee their homes (How Many Refugees, 2021). It is important to note that as of today, approximately six million total Afghans have been driven from their home, marking the U.S withdrawal from Afghanistan as one of the largest Afghan diasporas in history. For the purpose of this paper, I will be examining the state of Afghanistan during the early 1900's, during the Soviet-Afghan war, and during the U.S withdrawal of Afghanistan in 2021.

The analysis in the first part of my paper will lead into the second part of my capstone in which I examine the challenges Afghan evacuees faced in the United States since 2021. I will scrutinize how migration policies have affected social, legal, cultural, and economic integration in the United States depending on what legal category Afghans arrive under: for example, Refugees, Humanitarian Paroles, or Special Immigrant Visa holders. Hence, I examine what challenges recent Afghan evacuees face in the United States and how these particular groups of Afghans are affected by migration policies during their period of integration. Moreover, I will also identify how the newly arrived Afghans rely on the older established Afghan communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to acknowledge the individuals who have played a pivotal role in the completion of this research paper. Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Professor Philip Kasinitz, for his patience and endless guidance. His assistance throughout my time at the International Migration Studies program at the Graduate Center has had a significant impact on my research and ability to construct a well-developed research paper.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Dr. Els de Graauw and her course in Migration Policy which played an important role in refining my research. Her continuous support, encouragement and evaluations allowed me to stay on task and motivated throughout the program. I am eternally grateful for the time and effort Dr. de Graauw has invested in my development. I would also like to acknowledge Professor Richard Ocejo for his confidence and inspiration which guided me throughout the process of completing this project. I appreciate all the kind words and understanding during the time I took to complete this project.

Lastly, I am forever thankful for my family who have supported this journey. My husband, Sharifullah, an Afghan refugee himself, has been a huge inspiration behind this paper. You have been my driving force and the reason behind my success. This journey is dedicated to you, and I am blessed to have you as my partner in life. I look forward to many more years together, as we continue to work towards helping refugees across the globe.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction.	1
Chapter 2: Afghanistan before the Soviet Afghan War (1960's-1970's).	3
Chapter 3: Factors Leading to the Afghan Diaspora.	7
Overview of Inequalities: Discrimination of Ethnic Groups.	8
Hazaras.	9
Uzbeks.	14
Tajiks.	16
Chapter 4: Soviet- Afghan War.	20
The Rise of the Taliban's.	22
Consequences of Foreign Intervention in Afghanistan: The Case of Women.	25
Reaction of Host Countries Towards Afghan Refugees.	27
Chapter 5: The Afghan Diaspora – U.S Withdrawal from Afghanistan.	33
Resettlement in the United States.	34
Chapter 6: Literature Review.	37
Chapter 7: Resettlement & Community and Cultural Understanding.	43
Chapter 8: Do some Afghan Groups have more access than Others.	52
Research Procedures and Data.	56
Legal Integration: Case of Special Immigrant Visa Holders.	62
Legal Integration: Case of Priority-1 & Priority- 2 Refugees.	66
Legal Integration: Case of Humanitarian Parolees.	68
Economic Integration	70
Economic Integration: Case of Special Immigrant Visa Holders.	72

Economic Integration: Case of Refugees.	74
Economic Integration: Case of Humanitarian Parolees.	76
Chapter 9: Key Findings.	78
Do Afghan Evacuees Want to be in the West.	80
Chapter 10: Conclusion.	81
References.	83

TABLES

TABLE 1: Immigration and Public Benefits for Afghan Arrivals by Legal Status.	59
TABLE 2: Different Legal Categories Afghan Evacuees have been Received Under	60
TABLE 3: Benefits SIV Holders, Refugees, and Paroles are Entitled to upon Arrival to the U.S.	60

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The state of Afghanistan has undergone several periods of change, from the country's Golden Age during the early and mid-1900s to its current state of destruction and instability. In this study, I examine the factors that led to the Afghan diaspora, particularly focusing on ethnic, political, and gender inequalities as well as war. The paper argues that the Soviet-Afghan war and the subsequent rise of the Taliban, as well as the U.S. war in Afghanistan, have contributed to the Afghan diaspora, leading to millions of Afghans seeking refuge in neighboring countries and the United States. In the second part of this study, I examine the U.S withdrawal of Afghanistan in 2021 which has led to a massive growth in Afghan diaspora with Afghans seeking refuge in neighboring states, Europe, and the West. Hence, I examine what challenges do recent Afghan evacuees who evacuated to the United states in 2021 face and how these particular groups of Afghans are affected by migration policies during their period of integration?

In this paper, I examine how immigration policy plays a critical role in determining the conditions of integration for Afghan evacuees. Different visa categories, such as Special Immigrant Visas, Humanitarian Paroles, and refugee status, determine the rights and benefits that evacuees receive upon arrival in the United States. As such, policy decisions directly impact economic and legal integration for these groups. I argue that immigration policy matters because it perfectly defines the conditions of integration. Policy decisions and visa categories classify migrants as legal permanent residents, temporary non-immigrants, or humanitarian migrants. As a result of the immigration policy and visa categories that immigrants are received under, policy decisions determine the rights that each class of migrant enjoys. Policy decisions have a direct

impact on immigrants' economic and legal integration. Immigrants will receive different benefits and face different difficulties with integration depending on their visa category, i.e. some visas impose limitations on immigrant rights and membership. Afghan evacuees have been accepted in the United States under one of the following legal categories: Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), SI Parolees (pending applications for SIV status), Refugee, or Humanitarian Parolee. This paper illustrates how immigrants who arrive under different legal categories forge different connections to civil organizations; thus, driving different integration trajectories for immigrants. Also, throughout the cases of Afghan SIV holders, Refugees, and Humanitarian Parolees, I analyze how U.S. resettlement programs, refugee agencies, and federally contracted resettlement nonprofits have profound effects on economic and legal integration for certain groups of immigrants.

Despite the limited availability of data on this novel research topic, I utilize existing scholarship, peer-reviewed articles, and gray literature to draw conclusions and answer research questions. The research design and data collection plan include both quantitative and qualitative data, examining secondary data, media sources, and government policy reports. This study includes snippets of interviews with Afghan evacuees published in news articles, journal articles, and podcasts to provide insight into their integration experiences in the United States.

This capstone paper highlights the importance of immigration policy in the integration of Afghan evacuees into the United States. By examining existing scholarship and conducting data analysis, I provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to the Afghan diaspora and the challenges faced by recent Afghan evacuees during their integration process in the United States. Though my study is comprehensive, it is also novel due to limited resources.

CHAPTER 2

Afghanistan before the Soviet Afghan War (1960's-1970's)

A question that emerges is: what was the state of Afghanistan like before the Cold War? I would like to make note that there is very little literature that discusses the state of Afghanistan before the Soviet-Afghan war, making it difficult to document the economic, cultural, and political state of Afghanistan before the 1970's. However, a few journalists and photographers have documented and provided some insight into the state of Afghanistan during its Golden Age in the early and mid 1900's. Geoffrey Ingersoll, a journalist and photographer, discusses how liberal Afghanistan was in the 1960's. His work is revealed in the article "Astonishing Pictures Of Afghanistan From Before The Wars." Ingersoll provided photographs to the Denver Post to illustrate the beauty and prosperity of Afghanistan before foreign intervention. Ingersoll states "Before the U.S. invasion, before the Russian war, before the Marxist revolution, Afghanistan used to be a pretty nice place". A photo reveals his daughter in a pleasant park in 1967 in contrast with the park looking like a deserted military battle ground in 2007.



Ingersoll, Geoffrey. “On the left is a picture showing the photographer's daughter in a pleasant park. On the right is that same park 40 years later” (Ingersoll, 2013).

The photographs taken in the 1960’s reveal a lot about the treatment of women in Afghan culture and society at that time. As seen in the photographs and text, Afghan women were thriving as they were pursuing lab research work, going to school, and wore Western clothing without their hair being fully covered. It is apparent that they weren’t oppressed by military or political forces at that time. Not only were they freely welcome to study at Kabul University, but they were also allowed to talk to men and the opposite gender freely. During the early and mid 1900’s, Afghan women did not have to worry about having their studying privileges revoked as obtaining education was expected for everyone. There was no stress from extremists at that point in time (Ingersoll, 2013). As a result, we understand that Afghan women before 1979, particularly before the Soviet-Afghan war were granted many rights and were able to exercise freedom under a constitutional monarchy ruled by Zahir Shah.

Furthermore, Ingersolla reports that Afghanistan had a modern military that ensured the nation’s security, developed under King Amanullah Khan in the 1920s. The roads were also well maintained and Western influence was evident in the infrastructure. Not only did the Afghans craft beautiful homes and businesses, they created appealing theaters, libraries and advanced

chemistry labs that would make their country look charming. Ingersolla notes that during the 1950's and 1960's, visitors to Afghanistan would be taken aback by the beauties that were offered not only by the natural terrain but also by the man-made landscapes. The 1960s was deemed a Golden Age and the economy was booming as Afghans were on the way to building a well-rounded, stable country.

Furthermore, in the text *Crossing the River Kabul*, author Kevin Mclean narrates the true story of an Afghan family all through the sixties, seventies, the Russian invasion of 1979 and the arrival of the Taliban in 1994. Baryalai Popal, the son of a politically influential family, takes you through not only his own story but also those of his grandfather and father in Afghanistan. Popal, the protagonist, discusses the problems and disastrous effects of war and how powerful countries play with the lives of the people of poorer countries, transforming what was once a stable country into chaos. When Popal was a young boy in high school, he reported that Afghanistan was a stable country:

Zahir Shah has been king since 1933, the longest anyone had ruled Afghanistan without being deposed or assassinated. We had good relations with the countries of the West, including France, Germany, and the United States, all of which sent professors to teach at Kabul University. And there were schools such as the American School set up for the children of Americans and others working in Afghanistan. Many of my neighbors in Karta- I-Char were from the United States. Grocery stores sprang up to feed them, the shelves full of strange foods. I became addicted to Kellogg's Corn Flakes (Mclean 86).

It is evident that Afghanistan used to have good relations with Western states and the country was running exceptionally well under a constitutional monarchy. For some time, the state of Afghanistan was prospering until the Soviet Union invaded the country in an effort to transform the flourishing monarchy into a communist regime (Mclean 88). A question that arises is what led to broken and deadly relations between Afghanistan and the United States, and why did

Afghans flee their country when it was in a state of prosperity? In further discussion, I will acknowledge the beginning and progression of the tension between the West and Afghanistan.

CHAPTER 3

Factors Leading to the Afghan Diaspora

There are many factors that force immigrants and refugees to flee their homes. Factors that influence migration from one's own country include but are not limited to war, conflict, food scarcity, poverty, foreign invasion, political instability, and discrimination/persecution due to ethnic, religious, political, and social differences. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees defined a refugee in the 1951 Refugee Convention as "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UNHCR). In the case of Afghanistan, it has become evident that there are many underlying factors that forced immigrants to flee their homes. Hence, in particular, war and conflict, persecution due to political beliefs and ethnicity, economic hardship, and political instability are dominant factors that have led to the Afghan diaspora.

Overview of Inequalities: Discrimination of Ethnic Groups

Inequalities within Afghanistan is one of the first factors that led to Afghans fleeing their homes. Afghanistan houses many ethnic groups; however, Pashtuns and Tajiks are the two dominant ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Pashtuns constitute 42% of the population and Tajiks constitute 27% of the population. The third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan are Hazaras and they compose 10% of the Afghan population (Statista, 2021). Unlike other ethnic groups, Hazaras have faced many inequalities in Afghanistan (Minority Rights, 2021). The Taliban regime that emerged post-Soviet Afghan war of 1979 became notorious for its inhumane law, its ill treatment of women and ethnic minority groups of Afghanistan.

A question that emerges is what is the Taliban and how is the Taliban extremist group affecting Afghanistan and Afghan nationals? First and foremost, the Taliban was born out of the mujahideen fighters (guerrilla fighters) who opposed the Russians during the soviet invasion. The Taliban was initially formed by a group of madrassas (Islamic students) who were heated at the looting and depredations of the warlords in the civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. Nonetheless, the group's influence quickly spread over two years, gaining massive support from many of the Pashtuns. The Taliban group formed in 1994, founded by Mullah Mohammad Omar, a local imam in Kandahar, in 1994 made up of Afghan resistance fighters known as Mujahedeen, aimed to impose their interpretation of Islamic Law on the state of Afghanistan- and attempted to remove any foreign influence or western ideology in the Islamic state of Afghanistan. I would like to draw out that the Taliban are portrayed by the Western media to be employing an interpretation of Islamic Sharia Law. However, the Taliban have issued their own harsh and sometimes esoteric interpretation of Islamic law that goes against the Islamic religion. In fact, the Taliban has implemented laws and guidance of life inspired by the

Pashtun tribal code, the Pashtunwali. The Taliban regime since their emergence in 1994 until the present day have carried out mass persecution and oppression of both women and ethnic minority groups in Afghanistan. In this section of the paper, I will examine how ethnic discrimination of minority groups has been inflicted due to the rise of the Taliban, particularly focusing on the time period of U.S withdrawal in Afghanistan in 2021.

Hazaras

Hazaras are segregated from Pashtuns and other ethnic groups, with the majority of Hazaras living in Hazarajat, a region located in the central highlands of Afghanistan amongst the mountains. Moreover, their language and distinctive Asiatic features have set them apart from other Afghans and predominantly the Pashtuns. Furthermore, Hazara's religious sect has been a leading factor in setting them apart from other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Sunni and Shia Islam are the two prominent denominations of Islam; however, the majority of Muslims are Sunni (Minority Rights, 2021). As well, in Afghanistan the majority of the population, roughly 90% is Muslim-Sunni. However, the other 10% of the population constitute Hazaras, who are practicing Muslim- Shias. Due to their different beliefs, Hazara Shias have encountered persecution and systematic discrimination. Sayed Askar Mousavi an Afghan writer and novelist reports in his text *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study* that persecution towards Hazaras in Afghanistan started in the 1890s when Pashtun, Emir Abdul Rahman Khan was king, and continued further with the rise of the Taliban. Hazaras faced persecution and repression due to differences in race and religious beliefs (Mousavi, 1997, pp.43). This history of repression has led to Hazaras being at the bottom of the ladder and suffering the most over centuries.

The Hazaras of Afghanistan, who constitute 10% of the population, have faced decade-long violent persecution under the Taliban regime between 1991 until the present day. With the rise of the Taliban once again in August 2021, Hazaras, a minority group in the country, trembled with fear. Although the Taliban claim to be inclusive of all religions, solely seeing Afghans based on their nationality, their actions towards minority groups state otherwise. Out of all the minority groups in Afghanistan, Hazaras have experienced at least a century of ethnic cleansing making it difficult for them to trust or accept the Taliban regime. As they differ from the other sub-groups in Afghan in their basic cultural norms, language, and distinctive Asiatic features have set them apart from other Afghans and predominantly the Pashtuns. Therefore, despite preaching of inclusivity, the Taliban have made Hazara a clear target.

Furthermore, the Taliban, supported mainly by the Pashtuns, continued to persecute, lynch, and commit genocide against Hazaras. As a result of the fragile democracy that was implemented in Afghanistan in 2001, Hazaras were given the chance to fight discrimination that has been heavily molded into Afghan society in places like the work environment, schools, health facilities, and government sectors (Minority Rights, 2021). They were able to represent themselves more in politics and improve their economic positions. They grew at odds with the Taliban in terms of their ideology by giving women more rights and enforcing a democracy. Unfortunately, with the Taliban retaking control over Afghanistan, Hazaras have faced even more discrimination. This event is also evident that since August 31st, 2021 in which there were already 20 events of discrimination against Shia/Hazaras that led to the death of over 100 and to the injury of over 300 people (Mullen, 2021). In another instance, “In May 2020, Taliban gunmen killed 24 people, including women and babies, at a maternity hospital within a predominantly Hazara community” (Mullen, 2021). Hence, the rise of the Taliban has not only

impacted the democracy that had been in place for the past 20 years, but it has also created dangerous conditions for Afghanistan's ethnic minorities.

Also, when the Taliban came back into power in August 2021, they started to attack Hazara communities. According to Amnesty International, the Taliban have cut mobile and internet service in many of the areas captured, controlling which videos and photographs would be released to the media. However, on August 19, 2021 even before the United States completed their withdrawal from Afghanistan, Amnesty International reported that Taliban fighters have massacred a number of Afghan men, women, and children. Amnesty International reports the murder of nine Hazara men, this is estimated to be just a small fraction of the targeted murders done by the Taliban (Afghanistan, 2021). Agnes Callamard, a human rights expert in the secretary General of Amnesty International argues, "The cold-blooded brutality of these killings is a reminder of the Taliban's past record, and a horrifying indicator of what Taliban rule may bring" (Afghanistan, 2021). These targeted killings are proof that ethnic and religious minorities remain at particular risk under Taliban rule in Afghanistan (Afghanistan, 2021).

Amnesty International documents photographs and interviews revealing Hazara killings. When the Taliban grew, they raided many areas and on July 3rd, 2021, they forced 30 families of villagers to flee their homes and into mountains where they could shelter. Amnesty International interviewed witnesses who reported that the next morning on July 4th, a group of five men and four women had returned to their village to gather food, and supplies, however, they had found that their homes had been looted and that the Taliban had conquered their homes. Amnesty International reports the incident of one man, 45-year old Wahed Qaraman, a Hazara who was beaten by the Taliban. The Taliban had broken his legs and arm, shot him in the right leg, pulled every strand of his hair out, and then utilized a blunt object to disfigure his face.

Correspondingly, 63-year-old Jaffar Rahimi, a Hazara was severely beaten and accused of working for the Afghan government, since cash was found in his pocket. Assuming that the elder man was lying, the Afghan government refused to hear the older man out and strangled him to death with his own scarf (Afghanistan, 2021). An eyewitness who assisted with the burials of the Hazaras who were killed by the Taliban, asked the Taliban why they did this, and they responded “When it is the time of conflict, everyone dies, it doesn’t matter if you have guns or not. It is the time of war” (Afghanistan, 2021). The Taliban cabinet is full of illiterate mullahs (Sunni-Muslim Clergy) who know nothing but war and destruction. Ethnic minorities do not have the right to demonstrate, live, work, educate, or breathe as they are flogged daily by the Taliban. It is evident that the religious extremist group came to power with the degenerate ideas of tribalism and ethnicity and went back to the age of the Stone Age, killing, persecuting, and discriminating against innocent civilians solely for no cause.

Moreover, according to the United Nations, the Taliban forces were responsible for approximately 40 percent of injuries and civilian deaths in the first six months of 2021, although a large number of incidents went unclaimed. It has been also reported the children and women compromised nearly half of all civilian casualties; attacks by the radical Taliban group included a number of deadly bombings as well as assassinations. Additionally, the United Nations has documented that the attacks targeted ethnic minority groups, in particular Hazara Shia communities. On May 8th, 2021, three explosions at the Sayed al-Shuhada school in Hazara dominant areas occurred which killed 90 and injured 240 individuals. The killed civilians include 42 girls and 28 women. Further, the United Nations reports a separate incident that occurred on October 8th, 2021 in which a suicide bombing during Friday prayer at a Shia mosque in Kunduz, injured over 140 Hazara civilians and killed at least 72 Hazar’s. Furthermore, Amnesty

International reports that on June 26, 2022, the Taliban executed and unlawfully executed four men during a night raid operation in a search of a former security official. Amnesty International reports that a Hazara woman and 12-year-old girl were also killed during the raid. These targeted events on the hand of the Taliban were part of a general attack towards their adversaries (Afghanistan, 2022). Thus, the Taliban regime has been accused of harshly persecuting the beleaguered minority. The fighting is tinged by ethnic tensions as many Taliban leaders are ethnic Pashtuns. Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, constituting nearly half of the country's estimated 30 million people, while Hazaras make up some 10 percent of the population and have been persecuted historically (Afghanistan, 2022). UNHCR, and Amnesty International report that recent violence has forced more than thousands of Hazara families to seek shelter in neighboring states and third world countries. It has become clear that Afghanistan is not safe for ethnic minorities, women, children, or men. The regime has been abusive towards members of the state, however, ethnic minorities such as Hazaras have faced systematic discrimination and ethnic cleansing. Hence, Hazaras have been pleading to the international actors to take them out of the corrupt country run by the Taliban.

Furthermore, the rise of the Taliban has also impacted the economics of Afghanistan. The World Bank reported that economic inequality has increased over the past decade. While Pashtuns held the highest economic status, there were large discrepancies between the jobs that every ethnic group was able to hold. Pashtuns were able to hold government jobs while Hazaras, at the lowest status, were unable to afford the basic needs of food and water. Hazaras were unable to even find jobs or obtain a proper education after the rise of the Taliban in the early 1900's up until this date. Hazaras are the poorest, smallest, and weakest group in

Afghanistan, making them easily subjected to ethnic cleansing, thus, leading them to seek refuge in neighboring countries and the West.

Uzbeks

Moreover, looking at the case of Uzbeks in Afghanistan, the ethnic group allocates nearly nine percent of the Afghan population in Afghanistan; and ironically this minority group in Afghanistan is showing extreme support to the new Afghan regime. Many countries are still cautious with their positions on the new transit of government in Afghanistan, however, Uzbekistan has taken an alternative turn. Reporter Bruce Pannier reports that Uzbekistan has shown interest in forming a relationship with the new government run under the Taliban (Pannier, 2021). Late September of 2021, Ismatulla Irgashev, the president of Uzbekistan stated that he wants railway and road connections with Afghanistan to resume operation in order to ship medical supplies, and food. Although the Uzbekistan government recognizes the new government under the Taliban to an extent, it's important to draw out that there are Uzbeks in Afghanistan who are members of various extremist groups, allied with Taliban post-Soviet-Afghan war. On the other hand, there are a great number of Uzbeks in Afghanistan who refuse to support or recognize the extremist group.

A question that tends to arise is what is the nature of the relationship between the Taliban and the Uzbek minority group? There is evidence to suggest that the Uzbek minority group is attempting to form an alliance with the Taliban in order to protect themselves from abuse. However, it appears that the Taliban is using the Uzbeks for their own strategic gains. The exact form of this relationship is unclear and may continue to evolve over time.

According to the Washington Post, Uzbek commanders who fought the U.S. and Afghan forces for two decades alongside the Taliban, were arrested by the group that they supported

during the 20- year war. For example, Makhdoom Alam was a Taliban stalwart, and his fighters from Uzbek descent helped seize three northern provinces, helping to pave the way for the Taliban to take over the nation in late August 2021 (Raghavan, 2022). However, it was in late January of 2022, when the Taliban arrested Alam; according to the eyewitness reports, the reasons for Makhdoom Alams arrest was not clear, however, local reporters argue that the amount of heavy weaponry Alam and his roughly 4,000 fighters possessed inflicted fear, since the Taliban did not want Uzbeks, an ethnic minority, to gain power or a reputation in the state of Afghanistan (Raghavan, 2022).

Moreover, the Taliban is also run by the ethnic minority of Afghanistan, Pashtuns. Regardless of Uzbeks or ethnic minority groups supporting or resisting the Taliban, the Taliban will respond brutally towards any minority group as it has been documented through a number of instances. Some individuals took to rallying as well to warn the Uzbeks that they would not be able to obtain high ranks under the Taliban regime. Protesters reported “Be careful, Uzbeks. They will arrest you all, one by one, one protester shouted in a video taken on that day. “If they can arrest a person who fought for them for 20 years, they can arrest you, too” (Raghavan, 2022). The demonstrations and acts inflicted by the Taliban on the ethnic minority groups sent a clear message to Afghan citizens and the central government that Pashtuns are the only ethnic group that will hold power in the grounds of Afghanistan. Furthermore, a professor of politics at Faryab University who spoke on the condition of anonymity for security reasons, reported “If they continue discriminatory policies, they will face a popular reaction that will create problems for the Taliban to rule this province and neighboring provinces...It could also inspire other ethnic groups to rise up against them and their policies” (Raghavan, 2022). In the case of Tajiks, we have seen Tajiks rising against the Taliban's policies and refusing to build trust or relations with

the barbarous group, and as a result they have been arrested and killed. A question that arises is whether Uzbeks will resist the new radical regime and will Uzbekistan's president Ismatullah Irgashev change his stance and resist the Taliban or will he continue to partner with them?

Even so, Taliban fighters have been accused of forcibly evicting more than a thousand Turkmen and Uzbek from their homes. Some reported to the Shafaq radio that the Taliban had helped Pashtuns seize land, particularly in Jowzan. The seized land was provided to their own followers and served as a punishment for the minorities that were kicked out. The act of forced displacement and distributing lands to Pashtuns was also prevalent during the 1880s, when Pashtun King Abdur Rahman Khan, forcibly relocated thousands of minorities from their homes. One Afghan who asked to remain anonymous reported that Taliban fighters along with Pashtun nomads also forced more than thousands of Uzbeks from their homes and farms in Darzab and Qush Tepa. Uzbeks and Turkmen reported “...nobody could resist, if we raise our voices, we will be killed” (Shafaaq, 2021). It has become clear that history has repeated itself in Afghanistan, and that the ethnic minority groups will have no grounds in a system ruled predominantly by a Pashtun regime.

Tajiks

After the US withdrew its army from Afghanistan in 2021, Taliban control over the country had exponentially grown and had also become an issue for neighboring countries. Many states neighboring Afghanistan had considered the possibility of the militant Taliban group seizing power once again in Afghanistan, however, neighboring states were not prepared for the fast transition. Neighboring states suddenly needed to publicly state what their policy toward the new Afghan regime would be under the Taliban. For example, journalist Bruce Pannier reports to Gandhara news that “Generally, the response was that the Taliban in charge was the reality and

the neighboring countries were willing to at least talk with these new leaders of Afghanistan, except one state, Tajikistan” (Pannier, 2021). Pakistan on the other hand, was one of the first states to proudly welcome the group's success in Afghanistan, as they've been a long supporter of the radical group. Moreover, Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and China have all come to realize that there was nothing they could do about Afghan internal politics and decided to form a partnership to a certain extent with the Taliban. However, Tajik authorities have taken a different approach and refused to recognize or cooperate with the Taliban group. President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, has always established his stance on the Taliban regime, Emomali Rahmon has made it clear that he does not support the Taliban in any way. It was early on, in the late 1990's in which Rahmon fought against the Taliban. It has been reported that Emomali Rahmon supported ethnic Tajiks in Afghanistan who were fighting the Taliban during the late 1900's (Pannier, 2021). Rahmon has given moral support to ethnic Tajiks in Afghanistan then and now and continues to oppose the Taliban rule due to past and ongoing ethnic discrimination and violence towards Tajiks.

Even more than that, in late August of 2021, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan published an appeal to the government of the Republic and international organizations to shelter in Tajik refugees. In the statement, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan called the Taliban's activities in Afghanistan “...genocide against the non-Pashtun Peoples of this country” (Khan, 2021). The statement strictly emphasized that residents of Tajik speaking regions were in the most danger solely because Tajiks make up 25% of Afghanistan's population. Hence, a great deal of Tajiks in Tajikistan feels a strong connection to their brothers and sisters in Afghanistan, thus, refusing to unite or have any type of relationship with the radical group.

Throughout a number of news articles, journal articles, and NPR podcasts, I document the experiences that different ethnic groups go through from the Taliban regime. In the case of Tajiks, Reporter Sonia Sarkar reports to *This Week in Asia* that many young Tajiks want to leave the country, after the minority group was targeted by the Taliban in the past. Sonia Sarkar reports that past trauma has caused mistrust from ethnic groups and has led to increased fear from the extremist group. Moreover, a Tajik lawyer reports that the Taliban group has not changed as they had promised; Afghans are reporting that the Taliban group is still targeting minorities for being ethnically different from the Pashtuns. For example, a Tajik lawyer reports that he has received threat letters and was attacked by criminals released from jails after the Taliban had taken over (Sarkar, 2021). Moreover, reported by BBC news, the Taliban has been accused of killing Tajik civilians who resisted their regime or those who refuse to recognize the new regime under the Taliban. As well, due to the fact that Tajikistan's president publicly announced that he will not recognize the Taliban and refuses to cooperate with the radical group, increased tension and discrimination towards Tajiks in Afghanistan has increased.

Panjshir Valley, although located in Afghanistan, is an ethnically diverse region that is home to a large population of ethnic Tajiks. The people of this valley, led by commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, have fought Taliban rule and refuse to surrender from the late 1900's until this date. BBC news reports that although communications in the valley have been cut off by the Taliban, making reporting difficult, BBC has confirmed that at least twenty innocent civilians have been killed by the Taliban despite promises of restraint (Afghanistan Crisis, 2021). Reported by BBC news, one of the victims Abdul Sami was a shopkeeper and father of two who would not flee his shop when the Taliban had advanced. Local sources report that Sami told the Taliban "I'm just a poor shop owner and have nothing to do with war" but the Taliban arrested

Sami and accused him of selling sim cards to Tajik resistance fighters. It was only day later when Sami's body was dumped near his home, and witnesses report that the victims' body showed signs of torture (Afghanistan Crisis, 2021). Amnesty International has reported that there have been cases of many Tajiks being killed and arrested by the Taliban, however, the numbers are difficult to obtain.

Decades of war and intervention in Afghanistan has led to long lasting consequences, mainly targeting ethnic minority groups, women and children. We have seen throughout history until the present day that Pashtuns, mainly comprising the Taliban, want to maintain their ethnic hegemony in the state of Afghanistan, limiting other ethnic groups to practice their faith, exist, and exercise fundamental rights in their country. Throughout my research, I have come to understand that ethnic minority groups such as Tajiks, Hazara, Uzbeks, and the other groups in Afghanistan do not conflict with one another and co-exist with one another without any tensions or problems. However, the same cannot be said about a number of Pashtuns who comprise the extremist radical group, the Taliban. The Taliban's lifestyle and mentality are incompatible with basic civic values. The Taliban's aim is to cleanse ethnic groups from Afghanistan and make Afghanistan a more Pashtun state. Under the Taliban, it has become clear that the ethnic group constituting Hazaras, have suffered the most. The mental, emotional, and physical health of ethnic minority groups will only deteriorate more than they already have after spending their lives in a war-torn country living under radical rule. Although the United States, Iran, Pakistan, and some European states have sheltered thousands of Afghan refugees, millions and millions of Afghans are left behind.

CHAPTER 4

Soviet-Afghan War

Progress in Afghanistan began to diminish quickly in the 70's, due to a rise in violence in the state. This violence has continued onward to date, throwing Afghanistan further into the past (Akseer). The Soviet-Afghan War particularly marked a turning point in Afghan history and has been a major factor in instigating the Afghan diaspora. The Soviet-Afghanistan War waged between Soviet communists and Afghan rebels, called the Mujahideen, during the Cold War. The war began in 1979 and though it ended in 1988, Soviet and U.S intervention in Afghanistan set the stage for the Taliban's takeover and a second war in Afghanistan that continues till this day. The Soviet-Afghan War destroyed much of the country's infrastructure, leading Afghanistan to become one of the poorest nations in the world. As a result of the war, millions of Afghans had to flee the country and seek refuge in neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and Europe (Lall, 2021). However, many refugees were received with hatred in these foreign countries due to the sheer multitude of people that required help. Hence, the Soviet-Afghan war precipitated not only the rise of the Taliban, but the US war with Afghanistan, rising tensions with host countries, and the Afghan diaspora.

Why did the Soviets invade Afghanistan? The Soviets invaded Afghanistan for two ultimate reasons. First and foremost, the Soviets entered Afghanistan in 1979 with the aim of establishing a key position in Asia and the Middle East, one with trade possibilities and access to Gulf oil. Odd Arne Westad, a historian expert on the Cold War, states in his text *The Cold War: A World History* that the West, in particular the United States and the Soviet Union, had “the obsession with securing Middle Eastern oil supplies” (Westad 472). After World War II, both the United States and the Soviet Union competed for global power and resources. With the United

States establishing ties with neighboring countries, the Soviet Union had to get involved in their own country (Westad 475). Moreover, having a military presence in Asia also allowed the Soviets to keep an eye on the U.S. military bases. The United States and the Soviet Union wanted to be rich in oil and strategic minerals, and their control of these resources helped establish their power. Secondly, the Soviet Union feared the loss of its communist proxy in Afghanistan, therefore they invaded the country to reestablish the Communist People Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Over the nine-year time frame of the war, 15,000 Soviet soldiers were killed and about two million Afghan civilians were killed (Westad 498). The conflict between the Mujahideen, Afghan soldiers, and Soviet soldiers resulted in the formation of an unstable environment that was difficult for families and the working class.

The Rise of the Taliban

The rise of the Taliban from the ashes of Afghanistan's post-Soviet Civil War and US intervention contributed to the creation of a diaspora of millions of Afghans (Girardent, 1986, pp.32). Ed Girardent, an American journalist and author, highlights in his text *Afghanistan: The Soviet War* that all of the issues that revolve around Afghanistan surfaced after the Taliban's appearance. Girardent further highlights that the Soviets and US are at fault for the Taliban's rise. It's important to note that the Taliban are students from Eastern/Southern Afghanistan who had fought as Mujahideen's during the Soviet-Afghan War. While the Soviet Union wanted to maintain the hegemony of its Communist regime against the will of the people, the United States supported the Afghan rebels to overthrow the Communist government and to prevent the spread of Communism. In a bid to weaken Soviet influence in Afghanistan, the Central Intelligence Agency funded the local leaders and Mujahideen rebels in Afghanistan with monetary funds and military aid (Girardet,1986,pp. 175). The U.S supported the Taliban with military weapons and training in order for them to defeat the Soviet soldiers. Though U.S training and military aid helped the Mujahideen win the war, their aid also led to the birth of terrorism.

Additionally, it's important to note that the Taliban group is predominantly Pashtun. Pashtuns are historically the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, comprising 42 percent of the population (Statista, 2021). Several Pashtun tribes are known to have moved from Afghanistan to Pakistan during the 13th and 16th centuries. Moreover, Pashtuns have become the second-largest ethnic group in Pakistan. The Taliban are predominantly Pashtun, Islamic fundamentalists that have created a very powerful militia group. The US Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, estimates suggest that the Taliban consists of a core strength of 60,000 fighters. Moreover, it's estimated that with the addition of other militia groups and supporters, the numbers can exceed 200,000 (Beale, 2021).

A question that arises is who is supporting the Taliban? The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency has supported the Taliban with training, weapons, and money (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). From an early point in history the Taliban were supported financially and militarily by Pakistan and the United States, both of which desired to defeat and remove Soviet presence from Afghanistan. Nonetheless, it became imperative for Afghanistan to have a Pakistan-friendly government established to secure its borders and to allow Pakistan to continue to support the Taliban regime. Simply, the origins of Taliban and Al-Qaeda can all be traced back to the Soviet-Afghan War. Hence, the Soviet-Afghan War led to the U.S war in Afghanistan, the rise of Taliban, and security in Afghanistan being completely wiped out.

The rise of the Taliban from the ashes of Afghanistan's post-Soviet Civil War contributed to the diaspora of millions of Afghans (Girardent, 1986, pp.32). Tabasum Akseer, a postdoctoral research fellow at the Center for International and Defense Policy, was directly impacted by the Afghan diaspora and is able to give her eyewitness details in the news article "A view from the Afghan diaspora." Akseer provides a familial perspective of the refugees fleeing from Afghanistan to the West or the neighboring countries Pakistan and Iran. Akseer notes,

During the Soviet war in Afghanistan from 1979 until 1989, over five million Afghans – including my immediate family – fled abroad. My parents settled in Canada in 1989 but, like many others, our family returns as regularly as possible to maintain our ties with our community and family back in Afghanistan (Akseer, 2).

Akseer further notes that although some refugees returned after the end of the Soviet-Afghan war, a civil war erupted soon after in 2001. The Afghan rebels, the Mujahideen, had usurped control of many of the major cities in Afghanistan. As a result, many Afghans who wanted to return to their homeland couldn't due to fear of the Taliban. The head of the United Nations refugee agency estimates that "Approximately, as of 2021, six million Afghans do not live in their homes, fleeing deadly conflict, poverty, unemployment and a worsening drought in

Afghanistan... the numbers can be far higher” (How Many Refugees, 2021). Hence, the Soviet-Afghan War and the U.S War in Afghanistan created a large Afghan diaspora across Europe, United States, and Asia.

Consequences of Foreign Intervention in Afghanistan: The Case of Women

A question that arises is what is it like to be a woman in Afghanistan? Prior to the Soviet-Afghan War, U.S intervention, and the rise of the Taliban, women in Afghanistan were able to exercise many rights. Nick Cullather, an American historian and professor of history at Indiana University, researches the role of the CIA in coups and the Cold War. In Cullather's text "Damming Afghanistan: Modernization in a Buffer State," he reports the role of women before foreign invasions. During the 1960's, Afghan women were thriving as they were pursuing lab research work, working, attending school, and were freely allowed to dress as they liked (Cullather, 2002). During this time period women were employed in universities, airlines, private corporations, and as doctors, and nurses (Bhutta, 2002.pp.7). Women weren't oppressed by military or political forces. Not only were they freely welcome to study at Kabul and American University, they were also allowed to engage with the opposite sex freely. Moreover, Afghan women were able to vote and hold government positions based on the 1964 constitution (Amowitz, 2004). Additionally, women at that time were able to choose their own husbands and were able to make their own choices. Thus, there was no stress from extremists at that point in time.

However, the rise of the Taliban in 1994 and its return recently in 2021 has targeted women predominantly. The rise of the Taliban precipitated a war against women. As a result of the presence of the Taliban, girls and women of Afghanistan face widespread discrimination and human rights abuse. Gender inequality in Afghanistan has become a universal concern. According to UNICEF Afghan women make up 50% of the population but the literacy rate for women is the lowest globally (UNICEF, 2018). The Taliban have particularly been against females obtaining education in Afghanistan, ranking the lowest on a global Gender Inequality

Index (UNICEF, 2018). A question that arises is what is the recent Taliban's treatment of women and girls? UN experts have reported

In recent months, violations of women and girls' fundamental rights and freedoms in Afghanistan, already the most severe and unacceptable in the world, have sharply increased. While girls remain excluded from secondary education, women have been further stopped from entering public places such as parks and gyms, and recently blocked from entering university. Banning women's access to parks also denies children the opportunity for leisure and exercise and their right to engage in play and recreational activities. Confining women to their homes is tantamount to imprisonment and is likely leading to increased levels of domestic violence and mental health challenges. Men accompanying women wearing colorful clothing, or without a face covering, have been brutally beaten by Taliban officers. The Taliban are removing women and girls' agency by punishing male relatives for the purported offences of women, and instrumentalizing one gender against another by encouraging men and boys to control the behavior, attire and movement of women and girls in their circles. We are deeply concerned that such actions are intended to compel men and boys to punish women and girls who resist the Taliban's erasure of them, further depriving them of their rights, and normalizing violence against them (OHCHR, 2022).

From the quote, it is evident that the Taliban does not hold women in high regard and hinder them from advancing themselves. Women in Afghanistan are not allowed basic rights that were otherwise provided previously. The Taliban would actively make it harder for women to go to school, by physically attacking the schools, making the spaces unusable, or by harassing the teachers into not coming to school. "Some letters warned that failure to comply with the demand would lead to retribution, such as acid or gas attacks" (Shayan, 2015). Furthermore, while previously women had comprised 21.6% of the labor force, today, they remain home after the Taliban gained control (Trading Economics, 2020). Women are not only stripped of their education and workforce rights; they are stripped of their social rights. Afghan women are required to travel with a male and are forced to wear Burqas when out in public. Given these conditions, Afghans have decided to flee their countries and to resettle in neighboring states, Europe, and the U.S.

Reaction of Host Countries Towards Afghan Refugees

Jimmy Carter, the 39th U.S president, identified the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as “an extremely serious threat to peace” (Westad 465). President Carter stated that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was going to cause more destruction than the structure the Soviets pledged to implement. Carter notes, “A Soviet-occupied Afghanistan threatens both Iran and Pakistan” (Westad 465). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was not only a military threat to Afghans, but to Pakistan and Iran also, as they faced the forced migration head on (Fernandez, 2021). It is important to note that Pakistan is host to the third largest Afghan refugee population, with over 1.4 million documented and roughly 1 million undocumented refugees residing in their country. Though they have access to social services, refugees are unable to work, obtain citizenship, get education, buy land, or obtain healthcare access (Zubair, 2021, pp.13-15). Afghans were issued “proof of registration” cards that they needed in order to travel (Zubair, 2021, pp.20). Pakistan has become so overwhelmed that in 2021 they were refusing entry of any additional Afghan refugees and evacuees. Starting after the withdrawal of U.S troops from Afghanistan in 2021, Iran and Pakistan have been closing entry for Afghan refugees and turning them back, leading to a humanitarian crisis for Afghan citizens all over the world (Fernandez, 2021). Additionally, many countries are not well receiving or fond of the refugees in the first place, turning them away. For instance, Uzbekistan closed its entrances to provide security for their own nation. They have stated that they will help host Afghans in third countries but otherwise are unwilling to provide refuge for them (Burroughs, 2021, pp.32). With the UN trying to aid Afghans, it has been increasingly difficult with noncompliance from neighboring countries. International aid for the refugees also withered in the 1990s, with financing

decreasing by millions of dollars, further deterring countries from helping (Burroughs, 2021, pp.16).

Similar to Pakistan, Iran has also been a refuge for many Afghans that fled the country. Nasim Sadat Hosseini Divkolaye, a graduate at the Faculty of Public Health and Policy in the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, discusses the situation of Afghan migrants in Iran in his text “The Enduring Health Challenges of Afghan Immigrants and Refugees in Iran.” A report from the Ministry of Interior mentions that Iran hosts approximately 3 million refugees, including both documented and undocumented. Although Afghans in Iran are protected by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and are given a form of legal status, there have been many forceful deportations since 2006. Divkolaye notes there have been hate crimes against Afghan refugees that sparked major protests in their home country. Iran has returned refugees to Afghanistan solely because refugees have been costly to the country's economy. It is understood that Afghan refugees have impacted the country's economy and security in a negative light, with an immediate cost for their rehabilitation (food, housing, basic infrastructure.). The huge numbers of Afghan refugees entering into Iran through illegal methods have put a huge strain on the infrastructure, housing, economy, and created a need for increased police and protection services. As a result, Iran has implemented crucial procedures and rules to limit the number of Afghan refugees entering their country.

Furthermore, Hafiz Ahmad Miakhel, spokesman for the Afghanistan Ministry of Refugees and Returnees reported that in 2020 alone, approximately 10,000 Afghan refugees returned from Iran. The report notes that of those 10,000, 60-65 percent were deported involuntarily and that “The majority of them were young individuals, but some were families, including women and children” (Bezhan, 2020). Involuntarily deportation was enacted without hearing the cases of the refugees. Furthermore, Miakhel reported there is documented physical

abuse in detention camps and mental abuse, such as separation of families. Furthermore, according to Iran's Humanitarian Red Crescent NGO reports, Iran's government is unwilling to house the refugees more than necessary. They issue that the refugees return to their country as soon as Afghanistan's condition improves. Iran's violation of Afghan refugee and migrant rights illustrates that there previously was a flaw within the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) system, and a lack of funding and support from the United Nations in hosting Afghan evacuees.

However, due to the disturbances in August 2021 in Afghanistan, the need for international protection increased significantly. Various governments approximate that 500,000-1,000,000 Afghans have fled to Iran to escape the crumbling situation in Afghanistan and are going to the UNHCR for protection and assistance, specifically food and shelter. The UNHCR provides third-country solutions for Afghan refugees to date and in 2021 the UNCHR in Iran had received no quota for resettlement. In 2022, the UNCHR in Iran and the Iranian Government are collaboratively working to resettle 3,000 refugees alongside resettlement partners to meet the growing protection needs and increase any security concerns. (Refugees in Iran, 2022). Despite Iran accepting 780,000 documented and 2.2 million undocumented Afghan refugees, the country has seen a rise in anti-Afghan sentiment causing the vulnerable undocumented Afghan workers to be exploited and abused by the hands of police and criminal gangs. Numerous cases of mistreatment were highlighted by human rights agencies. Abdul Mutalib Haqqani, a Taliban spokesman, came on the news channel *Arab News* to discuss the multiple cases of abuse and killings involving Afghan refugees. Abdul Mutalib Haqqani, expressed how the Taliban were concerned for the Afghans' wellbeing in Iran and they have attempted to show some sort of hospitality to their citizens in Iran. (The New Arab, 2021). Hence, although there is a great

number of Afghans in Iran and the Taliban has made advances to ensure their safety, Afghans are still victims of hate and prejudice in both states.

After the Soviet-Afghan War, millions of Afghans struggled to find shelter. Although in the late 1900s, Pakistan and Iran have sheltered millions of Afghans, both countries have recently started to deport and unwelcome Afghan refugees. As one of the world's largest protracted refugee populations, Afghans have been forced to live in chaos. According to the UNHCR, there are around 2.6 million registered refugees from Afghanistan globally. The majority—2.2 million—are in Iran and Pakistan (Lederer, 2021). However, it's important to note that this number does not cover the undocumented Afghans globally. Thus, only a few of those who have made it to the West have been able to truly escape the horrors surrounding being an Afghan refugee. Many Afghan refugees decided to migrate to Europe and the United States as Iran and Pakistan were closing their doors.

It becomes clear that neighboring states have not been very welcoming and fond of Afghan evacuees, however, are western states welcoming of Afghan evacuees? As of September 2021, the Biden Administration has reported that they evacuated roughly 130,000 civilians from Afghanistan (Burroughs, 2021). Out of that number, at least 37,000 Afghan refugees were approved for resettlement in the United States (Burrough, 2021). Sources from the State Department also cite, "As of September, there were more than 53,000 Afghan evacuees at eight military installations across the U.S. mainland that are serving as temporary housing sites while the new arrivals complete immigration paperwork, as well as vaccination against measles and COVID-19" (Burroughs, 2021). Furthermore, in the UK, they have crafted a plan to welcome 5,000 refugees yearly while Canada has also stated that they will take in 20,000 Afghans (Burroughs, 2021). Hence, these individuals have been able to escape the inevitable return back to Afghanistan that most refugees in Pakistan, Iran, and neighboring countries face. However,

there's a large number of Afghans who are currently in limbo, living in uncertainty, and having no place to call home.

Since the Soviets and the United States intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 until this day, Afghans all over the world are facing many challenges. The country overall has taken many hits due to the many wars that have ravaged its people and the country. Over half of Afghanistan's population, as noted in the journal "Challenges and Opportunities for Humanitarian Relief in Afghanistan", do not even have a stable source of food, water, electricity, money, or health care (Khan, 2021). According to an international forum, some Afghans have gotten so desperate for a meal that they sold their kids. "The combined 90% of Afghans reporting such financial hardship is the highest on record for Afghanistan -- and was the highest in the world last year" (Christine Roehrs, 2021). Due to the lack of proper employment for many, there was reason to worry that some of the returning refugees would turn to militant groups such as the Taliban for guidance and support. Due to the limited resources now needing to be spread across a larger group of individuals, there is a fear that crime rates would also increase (McCarthy 332). It's important to note that Afghanistan is a place of astounding natural beauty, and it could have been a booming tourist economy where people could just enjoy the unique and tranquil natural landscape if it wasn't for the Soviet and US intervention. Soviet and US intervention has left Afghanistan at war due to foreign invasion, internal discord among different ethnic groups, interference of foreign proxies, extremism, and terrorism. Hence, 40 years of unrest and anarchy have ruined almost all national institutions responsible for nation-building and prosperity.

Nevertheless, who is responsible for Afghanistan's current situation and the war in Afghanistan? To understand the situation and have a clear picture of the status quo, we have to go back to the roots when the seeds of violence were sown. The fact that we see Afghanistan as a failed state has direct and clear links towards the policies adopted by governments of both Soviet

Russia and the United States. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 and absolutely demolished the place. Afghanistan was a fairly competent and even progressive place until foreign intervention. The U.S supported the Mujahideen in the naive belief that anything must be better than the Soviets, with the Soviets responding simply with constantly escalating brutality. Therefore, can we blame both the Soviets and the U.S. for Afghanistan's current situation? It's clearly evident that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan during the Cold War and the U.S. intervention, from the late 1970s till this date, has demolished Afghanistan. The Soviet War in Afghanistan has had profound effects on Afghans and their country. As a result of the war, millions of Afghans have fled to neighboring countries and to the west for security and shelter.

For those who remained in Afghanistan after the Cold War, they shortly followed the steps of their fellow citizens, as a second war in Afghanistan erupted. Today, millions of Afghans have sought refuge in Pakistan, Iran, and the West. While some Afghans have received asylum in these countries, others remain undocumented, and there are millions of other Afghans whose cases have not been heard and have been deported to a country that's run by a Taliban regime. The Cold War and western countries imperial projects led to a long history of wars and conflict within Afghanistan, throwing the country into a backwards spiral remaining today. Moving forward, my study focuses on the next steps for Afghans who were able to successfully make it to Western countries like the United States.

Part Two

CHAPTER 5

The Afghan Diaspora – U.S Withdrawal from Afghanistan

A large number of Afghans started to migrate to the United States in the early 1980's, secondary to the 1970 Soviet-Afghan war and a subsequent U.S war in Afghanistan. Foreign and political intervention in the country led to many Afghan migrants fleeing their country, relocating in neighboring countries and seeking refuge in Western states until this date. There were few numbers of Afghans who immigrated to the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s but due to the rise of the Taliban after the 2001 US war, the number of Afghans migrating to the US has skyrocketed. In the first part of my research, I've examined the factors that lead to Afghan immigration, particularly the repercussions of foreign intervention from the world's superpowers. The 1979 Soviet-Afghan War, ethnic and gender inequalities, U.S intervention in Afghanistan, and the rise of the Taliban have all contributed to the Afghan diaspora. For the second part of my paper, I will focus on Afghans who migrated to the United States after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. Specifically, I will examine how different migration policies have impacted the integration of Afghans in the US, depending on the category under which they arrived, such as Special Immigrant Visa, Refugee, or Humanitarian Parole. I will also study the challenges faced by recent Afghan evacuees in the US and analyze how these specific groups of Afghans are affected by migration policies during their integration period.

Resettlement in the United States

Afghan Americans have a history of immigrating to the United States, with the first handful of Afghans arriving into the United States in the early 1860s reportedly. During the 1860's, Afghanistan and the United States were establishing relationships with one another. However, early records of Afghans reaching the United States Shores is pretty vague and before 1953, statistics were virtually nonexistent (Champagne). Moreover, any data that virtually did exist grouped Afghans and others in a category entitled "Other Asians". Therefore, the lack of detail and country of origin makes it difficult to examine when Afghans first arrived in America. (Champagne). However, it's estimated that approximately 200 Pashtuns, an Afghan ethnic group that constitutes the majority of the population, arrived in the United States in the 1920's or 1930's (Batolva, 2021). Many Afghans who immigrated to the US in those times were originally from British India. Records indicate that these individuals were elite class members, often highly educated people from medical, business professions, diplomatic, and engineering backgrounds who were married to Europeans (Batolva, 2021). Once they arrived in the U.S states, many of the immigrants populated the East and West coastlines.

Furthermore, in the mid 1900's between 1953 and 1963, the U.S Immigration and Naturalization Service reported that greater numbers of Afghans immigrated into the country for education opportunities- particularly men (Eigo). Eventually, a majority of those who came to study, stayed and sent for their families and wives to resettle with them. Though women also immigrated to study, they were less likely to stay in the United States. However, the period between the mid 1970s and the early 1980s saw the most significant number of Afghan migrants into the United States following political instability due to the Soviet-Afghan War. The U.S

Immigration and Naturalization Service has reported that in the last 20th century, over 40,000 Afghans immigrated to and established permanent residency in the United States (Champagne). Nonetheless, after the events of 9/11, the Afghan population became further displaced not only within Afghanistan but also in America, and Europe (Studia, 2017).

As the U.S presence in Afghanistan increased in early 2000, more and more Afghans worked for the U.S forces as interpreters, translators, and government officials. Such individuals who helped the United States or associated themselves with the Americans became exposed to significant danger. As a result, in 2009, the U.S Congress crafted a Special Immigrant Visa in order to allow for Afghans that helped the government and their families to have residency privileges. The implementation of the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) precipitated further immigration and caused thousands of individuals to apply for green cards and come to America. Reportedly, the State Department has noted that “The average green cards distributed to Afghans between 2001 and 2013, was approximately an average of 2,300. Between 2014 and 2019, this number increased to 12,300...” (Batalova, 2021). Correspondingly, there has been an increase in the number of Afghan permanent settlers in the United States due to the rise of green card distributions to Afghan nationals. Thus, access to a Green Card has given thousands of Afghans new membership rights, giving them the right to live and work permanently in the U.S.

On the other hand, following the rise of the Taliban regime in August 2021 and the collapse of the former government, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, under former President Ashraf Ghani, a significant number of Afghans were forced to flee the country. While some settled in neighboring countries and third countries, some migrated to the West. According to the Pentagon and Homeland Security, the United States evacuated approximately of the 65,000 Afghans in the month of August 2021(Ferris, 2021). Of the 65,000 Afghans, $\frac{1}{3}$ now reside in the US, $\frac{1}{3}$ are in other countries, and the remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ are in US military bases (Ferris, 2021).

Furthermore, recent data has reported that the Biden Administration has reported that as of February 2022, approximately 65,000 Afghans evacuated during the U.S withdrawal, several hundred still remain on military bases and nearly 2,800 are still waiting on U.S bases abroad (Breen, 2022). The Home-Land Security has reported that a large portion of Afghan evacuees are going through tough vetting procedures before they can settle in the United States. Moreover, some Afghans have Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs); while others are admitted as temporary parolees, or refugees. For the purpose of my research, I study in particular challenges Afghan evacuees face in the United States since the 2021 evacuee. I scrutinize how migration policies have affected Afghan integration in the United States depending on what category Afghans arrive under: for example, Refugees, Humanitarian Paroles, or Special Immigrant Visa holders. Hence, I examine what challenges do recent Afghan evacuees face in the United States and how these particular groups of Afghans are affected by migration policies during their period of integration?

CHAPTER 6

Literature Review

Political scientists Wayne Cornelius and Marc Rosenblum discuss the role of immigration policy (visa category) in theorizing trajectories of immigrant integration. Scholars argue that immigration policy matters because it perfectly defines the conditions of integration. Rosenblum and Cornelius argue that policy decisions and visa categories that immigrants are received under classify migrants as legal permanent residents, temporary non-immigrants, or humanitarian migrants (Cornellius, pp.112, 2022). As a result of the immigration policy and visa categories that immigrants are received under, policy decisions determine the rights that each class of migrant enjoys. Policy decisions have a direct impact on immigrants' economic and legal integration. Moreover, Cornelius and Rosenblum argue that “Policies that impose additional limits on migrants’ rights of membership and/or their ability to become citizens also exacerbate income inequality and more generally inhibit immigrant assimilation while promoting societal polarization” (Cornellius, pp.112, 2022). Hence, it is evident that immigrants will face different difficulties with integration depending on the visa category received under. Some visas impose limitations on immigrant rights and membership. Moreover, throughout my research, I have discovered that prior scholarship hasn’t paid much attention to the role of immigration policy in theorizing trajectories of immigrant integration, however, utilizing the available literature I draw conclusions to answer my research question.

I wish to point out that there is limited literature review on the state of recent Afghan evacuees who evacuated in August 2021. Therefore, I am utilizing research regarding prior Afghan evacuees in the United States to further supplement my paper. Scholar Mahmood

Aafreen discusses that there are pre-and post-migration stressors that highly affect immigrant integration in the United States. Pre-migration stressors include many factors such as traumatic events, family loss, disrupted social networks, and harsh camp conditions. Post- migration stressors include the loss of social support, discrimination, unemployment, housing instability, waiting asylum approval, fear of deportation, acquiring legal status, and dependence upon family and local, state, and governmental support systems. Sociologist Mahmood Aafreen explores different stressors that can impact incoming Afghan evacuees. “Assessing Predictors of Emotional Distress by Immigrant Type” examines predictors of elevated distress among Humanitarian Paroles, Refugees, and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders in Maryland. For the purpose of this study, a secondary analysis of Refugee Health Screener from a total of 4385 evacuees arriving in Maryland from 2014 to 2017 was conducted (Mahmood, pp.51, 2019). An additional mental health screening analysis was taken within 90 days of arrival from the Humanitarian Immigrants’ Domestic Health Assessments which was started by qualified federal health centers and local health departments. This research was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Boards at MDH and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH). The cross-sectional study revealed that Humanitarian Parolees had insecure residency status causing them increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD, due to the fact that Parolee status only grants Afghans temporary status in the United States. On the other hand, Special Immigrant Visa Holders are granted Green Cards immediately upon arrival to the United States and Refugees obtain Green Card status after remaining in the country for at least one year. Humanitarian parolees are the only group without direct access to citizenship, hence, this is one of the factors underlying why their levels of stress and anxiety were higher than their comparative groups (Mahmood, pp.55, 2019). Aafreen argues that of the three humanitarian

immigrant groups, Special Immigrant Visa holders, followed by Refugees, had the most secure immigration status and the highest positive screening predictors.

Furthermore, scholars argue that immigrants rely heavily on resettlement programs. Resettlement programs directly affect immigrant integration in the economic sectors. Academic scholars Katharine Donato and Elizabeth Ferris look at several studies to examine immigrant integration in the United States, such as the New Immigrant Survey (NIS), a large-scale, comprehensive, and longitudinal study. The study reveals that U.S. resettlement programs have profound effects on employment. Shockingly, the New Immigrant Survey and International Rescue Committee have disclosed that in the long run, refugee men had higher employment rates than U.S. native men (Donato, pp. 20, 2020). This is particularly due to the resettlement schemes aiding them in successful legal integration. Supporting Donato's and Ferris's argument, sociologist Chris Lee argues that aside from the length of time needed for integration, government policies, resettlement agencies, and existing ethnic communities play a major role in the process of assimilation and long-term successful integration for immigrants in the economic field (Lee, pp.738, 2009).

Moreover, sociologist Chris Lee examines the cases of political refugees and previous immigrants through examining the classical assimilation theory and segmented assimilation theory. Lee argues that the outcomes for immigrants who arrived under Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) or Refugee status often result in upward assimilation (Lee. pp. 734, 2009). This is possible due to Refugees and Special Immigrant Visa holders' access to a variety of government supported programs that offer assistance and benefits in the social, economic, housing, and legal sectors. Therefore, there is significant evidence pointing towards different visa categories such as

Special Immigrant Visas and LPR status for Refugees, being more beneficial to those groups of designated immigrants in comparison to immigrants being received under Humanitarian Parole.

On the other hand, sociologist Mahmood Aafreen makes a crucial point and challenges scholars Chris Lee, Katharine Donato, and Elizabeth Ferris's argument in regard to U.S. resettlement programs inflicting positive immigrant integration. Mahmood Aafreen argues that U.S. resettlement programs only provide short-term assistance and not long-term assistance, regardless of legal status. Aafreen argues that all immigrants, regardless of visas, must immediately find secure housing, begin employment, and adjust their statuses independently. He states that government assistance as well as local and state benefits are temporary, leaving immigrants to be solely independent when securing a job, house, and obtaining Legal Permanent Residency (Mahmood, pp. 59, 2019). We can agree that resettlement programs highly affect successful immigrant integration for particular groups. However, what happens when the funds and resettlement benefits come to an end? Throughout my research and data collection, I have found that in the case of Refugees and Special Immigrant holders who benefited under resettlement programs, remained stable for only the first three months post-arrival to the United States. Once the local, state, and federal benefits all come to an end, evacuees are left to be independent. As a result, integration and assimilation after resettlement become challenging in the economic and legal sectors due to the end of resources and networks initially provided.

Furthermore, "Charting a Course to Rebuild and Strengthen the US Refugee Admissions Program (2020)" analyzes the US Refugee Admissions program (USRAP). This report leverages data from a national survey of resettlement stakeholders conducted in 2020 by examining 559 refugee respondents from different national origins. The survey analyzes the

challenges and benefits that refugees face once they arrive in the United States. The survey revealed a number of key findings:

- Most refugee respondents identified USRAP's main purpose(s) as giving refugees new opportunities, helping them to integrate.
- High percentages of refugees reported that the program allowed them to support themselves soon after arrival (92 percent), helped them to integrate (77 percent), and had a positive economic impact on local communities (71 percent).
- Refugee respondents also reported that the program encourages them to work in jobs that do not match their skills and credentials (56 percent), does not provide enough integration support after three months (54 percent), does not offer sufficient financial help during their first three months (49 percent), and reunites families too slowly (47 percent).
- Refugee respondents reported using public benefits to meet basic needs, such as medical care, food, and housing.
- Refugees reported that the biggest challenge in their first year was to find employment that matched their educational or skill levels or backgrounds.
- Refugee men reported needing assistance during their first three months in finding employment (68 percent), English Language Learning (ELL) courses (59 percent), and orientation services (56 percent), while refugee women reported needing orientation services (81 percent) and assistance in securing childcare (64 percent), finding ELL courses (53 percent), and enrolling children in school (49 percent).
- Refugee respondents identified as obstacles to the integration of women: lack of childcare and affordable housing, the different cultural roles of women in the United States, lack of affordable driver's education classes, a shortage of ESL classes for those with low literacy or the illiterate, digital literacy challenges, difficulty navigating their children's education and school systems, transportation problems, poorly paying jobs, and lack of friendships with US residents (Kerwin, pp. 2-3, 2021).

It is evident that refugees regardless of national origin rely heavily on the US Refugee Admissions Program. The US Refugee Admissions Program has been linked to positive economic impact on immigrant integration. However, more than half of the respondents have revealed that the program does not help refugees find employment in their respective fields. In

comparison to my research, Jeanne Batlova Senior Policy Analyst at the Migration Policy Institute and Michael Fix, president of the Migration Policy Institute argue that Special Immigrant Visa holders from Afghanistan face greater obstacles in economic integration, solely because they can't find jobs corresponding to their levels of education and skills (Batlova, pp.17, 2022). Although the majority of Afghan evacuees are limited by their lack of legal status (see **table three**), scholars acknowledge that this cannot serve as a complete explanation for immigrant underemployment.

CHAPTER 7

Resettlement & Community and Cultural Understanding

Two major elements that impact successful immigrant integration are community and cultural understanding. Sociologist Chris Lee examines major theoretical frameworks utilized by sociologists in examining the process by which immigrants are integrated in host societies in “Sociological Theories of Immigration: Pathways to Integration for U.S Immigrants.” Major theorists who have expertise in the field of immigration and examined immigrant assimilation in the United States included Richard Alba, Victor Nee, Alejandro Portes, Herbert Gans, Min Zhou, and Douglas Massey. Current sociological theories of immigration mostly build upon classical assimilation theory. Lee notes that the assimilation theory was first introduced in the social sciences by members of the Chicago School of Sociology. Assimilation was broadly defined as the “the social process that brings ethnic minorities into the mainstream of American life” (Lee 732). Social theorists, Richard Alba and Victor Nee have argued that the route to integration in the United States was seen as linear, with one clear path and outcome. However, modern assimilation theory argues that assimilation is no longer considered a single universal outcome for immigrants, but rather an incremental process occurring generations in different ways for different groups.

Theorists do agree that contrasting ethnic characteristics such as language, religion and customs were viewed as flaws which needed to be amended in order to fully acclimate into American Society. Based on an implicit deficit model, theorists such as Richard Alba and Victor Nee have encouraged that popular notions of immigrants achieving success in America was by “overcoming their cultural and linguistic “deficits,” learning English and acquiring common American customs” (Lee 732). For my research I examine how migration policies affect the

integration of Afghan evacuees. If not all, most Afghans received in the United States are Muslim who practice different customs and traditions. Afghan refugees are Muslims from a country that is strongly associated in the U.S. media with fundamentalist Islam and Islamic terrorism, making them targets of significant discrimination. Therefore, adapting to western norms and western society will not be easy and make integration in western society even more challenging. Moreover, many of the Afghans being received under the United States resettlement scheme are Afghan women who visibly introduce their Afghan and Muslim identity through the hijab and traditional clothing. Afghan women who have received legal entrance into the United States do not have any understanding of the English language. UNESCO reports that Afghanistan's illiterate population (age 15 and above) has been estimated at 12 million (7.2 million female, 4.8 million male) from a total population of 39.6 million people. We can expect that many of the women who have been relocated in the United States are illiterate, therefore, their minimum or no understanding of English will make it difficult for them to assimilate into a western host society.

However, aside from the length of time needed for integration of immigrants, government policies and existing ethnic communities play a major role in the process of assimilation. Lee examines the cases of political refugees and previous immigrants and argues that the outcomes for immigrants who relocated to states and cities with an ethnic tie led to upward assimilation (Lee 734). Existing ethnic communities play a major role in welcoming newly arrived immigrants by providing immigrants with extensive resources and social networks. Immigrants who are positively received by communities in the host society and connect immediately with resources and networks often fare better in the integration process in contrast to those without support. However, if an ethnic community does not already exist, new immigrants face the social

and economic environment on their own making integration harder. For example, although a number of Afghan evacuees have relocated with families in the United States, many Afghan evacuees were not prepared to leave and have absolutely no social ties to the US.

In addition to government policies and existing ethnic communities, social values and biases greatly affect immigrants' path to successful or upward assimilation as Lee notes. Prejudice and biases of a particular social environment often relate to physical appearance, skin color, and religion. Theorist Min Zhou, notes that the experience of moving into a new social environment that does not embrace differentiation can cause negative or downward assimilation experiences for immigrants, and prejudice acts as a barrier for advancement. In contrast, immigrants moving into locations with high immigrant populations already will have an easier time assimilating and will have a more positive experience overall. Lastly, Lee notes that immigrant characteristics affect the process of assimilation. Characteristics include history, acculturation rates, cultural and economic barriers, and family and community resources. The availability of access to family of community resources can help curtail the barriers facing immigrant groups in their paths to integration. Sociologist Chris Lee deduced that ethnic niche and ties linked to positive acclimatization. Now, I will explore the specific regions where the Afghan communities have established themselves and compare those locations to regions where newly evacuated Afghans are resettled. This will help understand whether they are able to develop their social networks and acclimate as needed.

The Center of Immigration Studies has reported that in 2019, there were 133,000 individuals of Afghan descent in the United States. The majority of the Afghans in the United States live in California, Virginia, and Texas. They have particularly populated the major cities of Washington DC, San Francisco, Sacramento, New York, and Los Angeles (Bedard, 2021).

Governor of New York, Katy Hochul has reported that New York has approximately 7,500 Afghans living in New York as of 2020. However, she reports that the number of Afghans residing in New York will increase due to the recent evacuation in Afghanistan in August 2021 (Taddeo, 2021). Population data for New York State FFY 2022 has reported that as of September 28, 2022 a number of

- 2,544 Afghan evacuees have been resettled to New York State through the federal Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) to local resettlement affiliates or community partners. The breakout of resettlement is as follows: Albany 413, Amityville 47, Buffalo 538, Niagara Falls 44, New York City 379, Rochester 336, Syracuse 592, Utica 155, Binghamton (Southern Tier) 17, and Mid/Lower Hudson Valley 23.
- 1775 Refugees and Special Immigrant Visa holders (SIVs) resettled in New York State let alone in FFY 2022
- Upstate New York resettled 1208 refugees (91% of all refugees resettled in FFY 2022) and 345 SIVs (88% of total)
- New York City resettled 174 refugees (9% of total) and 48 SIVs (12% of total) ((Population Date for New York State, 2022)).

Afghan evacuees gravitate to states, and cities that are largely populated with Afghan communities. Many of the Afghan evacuees have asked their resettlement agencies to relocate them to big cities such as California or Washington D.C, since both states are populated with a vast number of Afghan nationals (Camilo, 2021). Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan discuss in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* that human beings tend to like people who are similar to them. Both authors argue that ethnic groups and nationalities tend to enjoy each other's company as they have many things in common. For example, common thinking in terms of cultural and religious understanding gravitates humans to one another and creates a friendly bond. Hence, Afghans like many other nationalities, are naturally attracted to their own ethnicities.

The Biden administration had notified state authorities the number of Afghan evacuees each state received. Upon analyzing the Internal Department Statistics, a portion of Afghan evacuees will resettle in Afghan communities but those who resettle in communities and states

that have an extremely low Afghan population will tend to have a healthier economic standard of living due to the availability of resources. For example, cities such as Fargo in North Dakota and Tulsa in Oklahoma will have a better economical standard of living for Afghan refugees. A majority of the mid-western states such as North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Tulsa have higher unemployment rates, and cheaper housing; therefore, ideally these states would be better for refugees. However, although their economic needs might be met, the social needs will not be met due to hostility, communication barriers, and limited access to social services.

According to the Internal State Department statistics as of February 22, more than 67,000 Afghans have left military bases and settled across the country. Three states that have received a large number of Afghan from military bases are Texas, California, and Virginia. They, respectively, have welcomed 10,494, 8,301 and 5,171 Afghans to build their homes in their states. Other states that have also welcomed around 2,000 Afghans include Washington, Pennsylvania, New York, Florida and Arizona. Lastly, receiving close to 1,000 Afghans are Maryland, Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Missouri, Michigan, Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, Minnesota, Nebraska and Kentucky. All together, these listed states welcomed most of the Afghans that were living at military bases upon arrival. Since then, those military bases have been disbanded (Afghan Resettlement, 2022).

Some states, particularly Republican states, are not opening their arms widely to immigration, as many of them have embedded anti-immigration ideas. Additionally, former president Donald Trump's anti-refugee rhetoric contributed to the low record of refugees resettling into the U.S, greatly affecting the Republican states policies in accepting immigrants. However, according to the 2019 U.S census, the majority of democratic states, such as California, New York, Virginia, Maryland, and Arizona have a great proportion of Afghans, additionally they will be receiving a significant number of Afghan refugees. However, other

states such as Oklahoma, Missouri, North Carolina, and Georgia have a low population of Afghans. As reported by the 2019 census, the Afghan population within such states is roughly around 1000~1850 (Afghan Resettlement, 2022). Although these states will be receiving a few hundreds of Afghan evacuees, it's evident that it will be harder for these Afghans to assimilate and integrate into states that have a relatively low Afghan population.

Moreover, although the Afghan population within Oklahoma, Missouri, North Carolina, and Georgia might be on the lower end, these states have more resources and job opportunities for the refugees. Many of these states have the least expensive housing markets as well. However, the administration official acknowledged the housing shortage in states that are highly populated with Afghans. Therefore, the U.S government has been advocating for shifts in population to states with less immigrants using incentives of subsidized housing. Nonetheless, southern states such as Mississippi and Alabama will receive such a low number of Afghan evacuees, approximately ten Afghan evacuees. Thus, Afghans who do resettle in these particular states will have a tougher time blending in and adjusting to western life due to the lack of Afghan community and ethnic enclaves. Ethnic enclaves in major cities have helped new immigrants in many ways by assisting them in finding employment in the forms of self-made jobs and high-end jobs (Waldinger, 1995). Waldinger states "A central assumption of the hypothesis is that the ethnic enclave mobilizes ethnic solidarity to create opportunities for immigrant workers" (Waldinger, 1995, pp.20). Hence, many immigrants face problems of integration and self-identity with the absence of ethnic niches and enclaves.

California is one of the states with the largest Afghan population, the state of California approximately already has 54,000 Afghans (Camilo, 2021). As well, the state of California received an additional 8,301 Afghan evacuees, the most of any state (Afghan Resettlement, 2022). The city of Fremont, known to many Afghans as Little Kabul, holds the largest Afghan

population constituting 30,000 of the population. Harris Mojadedi, an Afghan American, reports to the NY Times that his parents had fled the Afghan-Soviet war and arrived as refugees in San Francisco in 1986 (Shear, 2021). As they and many others resettled in Fremont, the city was transformed to their cultural liking and they created an ethnic enclave. The city is surrounded by halal restaurants, mosques, and has become an affordable place to raise a family for thousands of other Afghans. Mojadedi reports

‘When I went to school, I saw other Afghan kids. I knew about my culture, and I felt a sense of, like, that my community was part of Fremont,’ Mr. Mojadedi recalled recently over a game of teka and chapli kebabs during lunch with other young Afghans from the area (Shear, 2021).

It becomes evident that there’s many benefits of being part of a community that shares similar cultural values, traditions, and religious understanding. First and foremost, a community that shares similar cultural beliefs has a greater influence on one’s physical and mental health. Moreover, a sense of community that speaks the same language, dresses similarly, shares similar practices, and has similar moral beliefs is important to establish harmony and peace among the society. The feeling of association, togetherness, and cooperation- establishes a healthy atmosphere filled with unity, friendship, and harmony (Glazer, 1995).

On the other hand, what happens to those who live in communities that lack cultural understanding and unity? As human beings, being part of a community is vital to our well-being, success, and health. John Ogbu notes in *Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning* that the lack of community and understanding will affect us mentally, emotionally, and physically. In particular, for those who are strangers or newcomers to a new country, state, or city, the lack of community will affect social life greatly (Ogbu, 1992). Many refugees experience settlement challenges when arriving in a

mysterious state. For example, language and communication barriers make it harder to assimilate and integrate into Western society. Nevertheless, communication barriers make it harder to obtain a job in a society that doesn't understand you. Moreover, community attitudes are a major challenge many refugees face due to the presence of racism and discrimination (Ogbu, 1992, pp. 18). Majority of the Afghan refugees who are being resettled into the US are Muslims, who visibly express their religion through traditional clothing such as the Hijab and carry on Muslim names. Many of the Afghan newcomers will experience cases of Islamophobia, racism, and discrimination in communities that lack their cultural belonging, anti-immigration, and Islamophobic. Nonetheless, the hunt for employment and housing in areas becomes even more difficult for refugees who are placed in secluded areas.

Although many of the Afghan evacuees would hope to be resettled in cities that have a surplus number of Afghan residents and cultural support, they become blinded by many of the other challenges. For instance, the cost of living within Fremont, “little Kabul”, is exponentially higher in comparison with other cities in the US. With wage gaps also preexisting in the city, Fremont is difficult to make a proper living in and to raise a family in (Team, 2021). The difficulty obtaining a job will be later discussed but the states offer Afghan evacuees “...a one-time payment of up to \$1,225 per person for food assistance, rent, furniture and a very small amount of spending money” (Afghan Resettlement, 2022). Though this may sound like a lot, it is not enough to cover housing, food, education, and any other expenses that an individual will have. Therefore, when financial help ends from resettlement agencies, many of the Afghan immigrants will end up homeless.

Moreover, it's evident that most of the refugees that arrived don't have sufficient cash to furnish an apartment, acquire a phone or pay security deposit on utilities.

Although the government has been able to mobilize some emergency funds to small grants to refugees and secure them 30 days access to Medicaid, the reality is that these grants will eventually run out. The aid being provided by resettlement agencies cannot fulfill a livable life in the US. Many of the Afghan evacuees will have no other choice but to rely on their skills and work to provide for their families. Hence, although Fremont, California seems like a utopia for many refugees, in reality it's a dystopia for Afghan evacuees.

CHAPTER 8

Do some Afghan Groups have more access than Others?

Although many Americans support the resettlement of Afghan refugees in the US, the majority of Americans considerably welcome Afghans who worked directly alongside US troops during the 20-year war in Afghanistan. A poll conducted in mid-September 2021 by Vox and Data for Progress has discovered that 74% of voters (including 78% Democrats, and 66% Republicans) favored resettling Afghans who were US military allies. Voters favored resettling Afghans who worked as special forces and translators. The Vox and Data progress poll has reported that 58% of people polled (73% Democratic & 40% Republican), supported resettling Afghans in the US, who fled persecution and violence from the extremist Taliban (Narea, 2021). Although the number is a majority of the voters, the polls do indicate that Americans prioritize Afghan evacuees who had direct ties to the US military rather than the vulnerable refugees who fled Afghanistan due to fear of persecution from the Taliban. It's apparent that many Americans are willing to vouch for Afghans who have shown loyalty to the country but there are still a select few who hold very conservative stances regarding immigration. This has been exacerbated by the recent conservative leadership particularly under former President Donald Trump. Many Republicans have aligned terrorism with Muslim refugees and are in disfavor of resettling Muslim immigrants into the US. However, those who argue that arriving Afghan refugees are not vetted properly, are in fact incorrect. In fact, all Afghan evacuees are forced to have security checks before they enter the United States. Afghan evacuees go through tough screening and vetting that can take for months before they enter the US in addition to vaccinations and health screenings (Population Data, 2022). Therefore, it becomes evident

that most hostility towards Afghans is secondary to their religion and has only increased since after the 9/11 attacks, making resettling difficult for Muslim immigrants.

A question that arises is whether Afghan evacuees will remain in the US permanently or temporary? While some Afghan evacuees will be able to remain permanently in the US, for others they will live unsettled and face a backlog in the immigration system. In August 2021, the State Department announced a program that would grant permanent residency for those who worked with the United States, with a US Refugee Admissions program. Under this policy, the United States will grant the opportunity for refugee resettlement for thousands of Afghans who are not eligible for a Special Immigrant Visa but may be at risk due to their US affiliation. The state department has reported individuals eligible for the P-2 program:

- Afghans who do not meet the minimum time-in-service for a SIV but who work or worked as employees of contractors, locally employed staff, interpreters/translators for the U.S. Government, United States Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), or Resolute Support;
- Afghans who work or worked for a U.S. government-funded program or project in Afghanistan supported through a U.S. government grant or cooperative agreement;
- Afghans who are or were employed in Afghanistan by a U.S.-based media organization or non-governmental organization (U.S Refugee, 2021).

Afghan evacuees entering the United States have different statuses, therefore, they will receive different benefits. While some evacuees entered the US with a Special Immigrant Visa, others entered through SI parolees (pending applications for SIV status), others entered the US as refugees, and there are yet others who still hope to seek asylum. The most advantaged group is those who entered the US with SIVs since they qualify for lawful permanent residence and will be receiving a green card based on admission to the US. Moreover, the second advantaged group is refugees who can become citizens after

staying in the country for 1 year. Nonetheless, Parolees will have a challenging time in receiving permanent residency since they do not have a path to a green card. However, Parolees will need to seek asylum, and enter an immigration system of severe backlogs.

Furthermore, Afghan men make up most of the interpreters and officers who worked for the United States over the 20-year war. Men were predominantly the ones to obtain a Special Immigrant Visa due to their US affiliation, therefore, men have dominated Afghan women in evacuating Afghanistan with an SIV or refugee status (Jakes, 2021). Although the majority of the Afghan evacuees are men, women and children are the most vulnerable of Afghanistan's political, economic, and social instability. With the Taliban takeover, women are no longer able to obtain education, enter the working field and to be equals to men. Women of Afghanistan are constantly threatened by the Taliban, as they're forbidden to work and attend school. Moreover, violence towards women has increased, while many Afghan women are being kidnapped, assassinated, tortured and raped by the extremist group. Democrats and two Republicans in the Senate urged the Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and homeland security secretary, Alejandro N. Mayorkas, to rush Afghan women under a temporary status. Many Afghan- Female activists, journalists, and those who worked for the media entered the US on humanitarian parole (National Immigration, 2021). Although, it's not clear how many evacuees are women, it's been reported by the United Nations High Commissioner that women entering the US came with their husbands who have US affiliation. Nonetheless, other women who entered the US have been granted access through Humanitarian Parole, a temporary resettlement that has limited benefits (Jakes, 2021). As reported in **Table 3**, Afghans that entered the US on Humanitarian parole don't have a

path to a green card, do not have access to Office for Refugee Resettlement social services, funded cash, and medical assistance. Moreover, adults do not receive any welfare for food such as SNAP, and the majority of the Parolees are not eligible for Medicare, except on an exceptional basis declared by the state. Parolees also fall short of temporary assistance, and supplemental security income. Hence, Afghans who entered the US on Parolee experience great difficulty due to the lack of assistance and support given to them by the state.

Research Procedures and Data

For my research, I rely mostly on existing scholarship - both peers reviewed and gray scholarship to help me find answers to my research questions. My research design and data collection plan examine a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data. I examine secondary data as well as media sources. First, I examine existing literature on immigrant integration in the United States to investigate migration policies and their effects on integration. Secondly, I explore peer-reviewed articles that analyze how resettlement programs aid in immigrant integration. Thus, data collected from scholarly peer-reviewed journals has allowed me to situate my research. After situating my research, I move on to the next step of retrieving data revolving around my research topic. Since my research topic is very novel, data is very limited and not widely available. Therefore, I've retrieved data from a number of governmental policy reports, as well as the National Immigration Forum, an immigrant advocacy group. Lastly, I examine a number of snippets of interviews published in news articles and podcasts to obtain experiences of Afghan Special Immigrant Visa holders, Refugees, and Humanitarian Parolees in their integration in the economic and legal categories.

Additionally, I tackled my research question by utilizing a number of different search engines. For example, for my literature review and scholarly peer-reviewed articles, I utilized Google Scholar, JSTOR, and the CUNY Graduates University Library- providing access to article databases that cover more social science. In the search engine, I particularly searched for "Afghan evacuees in the United States," "Special Immigrant Visa Holders," "Afghan Humanitarian Parolees," "What leads to successful immigrant integration," "Migration policies and integration trajectories," "resettlement programs and immigrant integration." For the most part, I specifically narrowed my search to the time period between 2021-2022. However, as I

realized that much scholarly data is not available since my research project is novel, I widened my search to different time periods. I was then able to explore a number of peer-reviewed articles and literature reviews that aligned with my research topic.

After situating my literature review, I tackled a number of governmental policy reports utilizing the Department of Homeland Security website. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has the latest updates about Afghan evacuees. Moreover, the DHS coordinates with other federal agencies to ensure that Afghan Refugees and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Holders have sufficient support to enable their successful resettlement in the U.S. When searching for “Afghans” in the search engine of the DHS website, I was directed to governmental policy reports from the “Department of Homeland Security Operation Allies welcomes Afghan evacuees” report, and the “Families administration” report where I was able to collect my own data (see the **tables 2 and 3** below).

Furthermore, since my research topic is situated around the resettlement of Afghan evacuees, I explored the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) website. The ORR published multiple reports regarding Afghan evacuees, so I narrowed down my search by examining reports such as: “Benefits for Afghan Humanitarian Parolees,” “Benefits for Afghans and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa Holders,” and “Eligibility documentation for Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Holders, Parolees, and Refugees.” Additionally, on the same site of the ORR website, on the right hand section there's a column that states “Partners” and lists all reports from the Department of Homeland Security, Department of State, Department of Justice, Department of Education, and U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants; I was then able to narrow my search down to Afghan immigrants specifically. I analyzed all these reports and created a table below with the data I retrieved. With these sources, I further created two tables that can allow me

to analyze how migration policies affect immigrant integration in the two dimensions of integration that I focus on.

Lastly, to further elaborate on the data I have collected from the literature review, governmental policy reports, and the National Immigration Forum, I tackled news articles, journal articles, and podcasts. I retrieved the news articles by exploring two databases: Access World News and Factiva. I was able to narrow my search to the United States and the time period between 2021-2022, the time period of my study. I retrieved data from snippets of interviews within news articles such as CBS news, New York Times, BBC, The Conversation, Washington Post, etc., These articles documented the experiences Special Immigrant Visa holders, Refugees, and Humanitarian Parolees face in the two dimensions of integration that I examine: economic and legal integration.

TABLES

Table 1: Immigration and Public Benefits for Afghan Arrivals by Legal Status:

	Refugees and SIVs	SQ/SI Parolees	All Other Parolees
Immigration status conferred	SIVs immediately receive a green card; refugees are eligible after one year. Both groups can apply for citizenship after five years.	Receive a green card if the SIV application is approved; could then apply for citizenship after five years.	No path to a green card unless they can establish another basis, such as qualifying for asylum.
Reception and Placement Services	Yes	Yes	Afghan Parolee Support Program is intended to be substantial equivalent.
ORR Social Services	Yes	Yes	No
ORR-funded Cash and Medical Assistance	Yes	Yes	No
Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)	Yes	Yes	Only children are eligible.
Medicaid	Yes	Yes	Only for pregnant women and children and youth under 21 at state's option.
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	Yes	Yes	No
Child Care	Yes	Yes	Yes
Head Start; Early Head Start; Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV); Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Workforce services under <i>Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes for Title I services if individual is work authorized Yes for Title II services whether or not work authorized, unless restricted by state.

Source: Greenberg, M. C. R. (2021, October 12). *Different Statuses, Different Benefits:*

Determining Federal Assistance for Afghan Evacuees. Migrationpolicy.Org.

Table 2: Different Legal Categories Afghan Evacuees have been Received Under

	Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) status program	Priority 1 & 2 Direct Access Refugee Program	Humanitarian Parole
Immigration status	Provides LPR (green cards) for interpreters, embassy workers, and others who have directly supported U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan for a significant period.	Provides special access to the U.S. refugee resettlement program for vulnerable Afghans working for U.S. military contractors or U.S. non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are not eligible for SIV status.	Humanitarian Parole allows the entrance to the U.S. to vulnerable Afghans who may otherwise be eligible for either SIV or refugee status but have not yet completed their visa processing.

Table 3: Benefits SIV Holders, Refugees, and Paroles are Entitled to upon Arrival to the U.S.

	Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) status holders	Priority 1 & 2 Direct Access Refugee Program	Humanitarian Parole
Benefits			
Green card status	Yes	Yes (After 1 year)	NO (Temporary status)
Work authorization	Yes	Yes	Yes, but must apply
Transportation and childcare support	Yes	Yes	NO
Refugee Medical Assistance	Yes	Yes	NO
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	Yes	Yes	NO
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	Yes	Yes	NO
Population evacuated	3,290	4050	70,192
SIV applicants	36,821		
Application timeline & vetting	2-3 years from start to finish	Two years or more	Days, weeks, or even months

Table three, highlights that 4% percent of Afghan evacuees were granted Special Immigrant Visas, 5% percent were granted Refugee status, and 91% were granted Humanitarian Parole. It is important to note that there is a large pool of Afghan evacuees who are eligible for Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) but are waiting for their application to be processed by USCIS. The process has been delayed due to severe backlogs. With the majority of Afghan evacuees entering under Humanitarian Parole, it becomes evident that they do not receive the same benefits as Refugees and SIV holders making overall integration in the legal and economic sectors more difficult. Moreover, gender dynamics are important in studying refugee and immigrant integration, but unfortunately there is no data available on gender. I wish to point out that news reporters, podcasts, and resettlement agencies have documented that Afghan men constitute most of the evacuees (Galvez, 2022).

Legal Integration - Case of Special Immigrant Visa Holders

A question that arises is what is the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program and which particular Afghans are eligible for a SIV. Afghan evacuees are eligible for a Special Immigrant Visas if they worked as interpreters or translators with the U.S. Armed Forces for at least one year. Afghans who worked for the U.S. embassy or the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) must have been serving the U.S. for a period of at least two years. Moreover, Afghans who worked for the United States and are experiencing an ongoing, serious threat as a consequence of their employment are eligible to apply for the SIV program (Nagler, 2022).

Throughout my data collection, I have come to realize that the majority of Afghan evacuees are eligible for SIVs, but the program has been facing a severe backlog. Severe backlog in the SIV program forces more Humanitarian Parole applications, as it is more efficient and quicker, as shown in **table 3**. According to the United States Department of State, "...Unless otherwise known, all applications in process are considered to be from applicants within Afghanistan. However, the Department has confirmed that 1,903 (12 percent) of 15,678 Afghan SIV applicants are in the United States or in third countries... processing times ranged from to 24.6 months" (Information Report, 2022). Statistically, according to the Office of the Inspector General, there are approximately 15,678 SIV pending applications with at least a 2 years processing time. In the case of Arian Ali, an Afghan immigrant, he waited for seven years until his SIV application was approved. New York Times reporter Lara Jakes reports the experience of Arian Ali, an Afghan immigrant who evacuated Afghanistan on a Special Immigrant Visa. Mr. Ali, age 43, qualified for the SIV by working with the U.S. government in a number of jobs during the 20-year war. He waited since 2014 for approval of a SIV and it was not until October

2021, a month after the Biden administration left Afghanistan, that he was informed his visa could be picked up at any American embassy (Jakes, 2021).

Moreover, due to the severe backlogs in the SIV process, many eligible SIV applicants have no other choice but to apply for Humanitarian Parole. As a result of the severe backlogs in the SIV program, 36, 821+ eligible Afghan evacuees had no other choice but to apply for Humanitarian Parole. Therefore, as a result, Parolees who are actually eligible for SIV must readjust their status to a Special Immigrant Visa. As I have noted above and in **table 3**, the SIV program is facing many problems. Adam Bates, a policy counsel at the International Refugee Assistance Project, reported to NY1 that even Afghans who qualify for Special Immigrant Visas face an uncertain road (Colvin, 2021). Besides the backlogs, visa processing for the program takes a minimum of two years on average, meaning that some Afghans may not get their Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) case approved by the time their Humanitarian Parole expires.

Moreover, the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) is very difficult to obtain as the fourteen-step process is arduous. For example, an Afghan ally applying for a SIV visa must obtain evidence that there are ongoing threats as a result of working for the U.S. government. Afghan allies must obtain a letter of recommendation from a U.S. Citizen supervisor, and many applicants are unable to do so because they haven't been in contact or they no longer work with U.S employers. Additionally, a final step of the SIV visa consists of security and background clearance, health screening, and an interview that can stretch on for months or years. It is evident that the Special Immigrant Visa process is not sufficient for bringing Afghan allies to safety in time.

For example, Afghans who are eligible for SIV face challenges in obtaining the documents needed to apply. For example, an Afghan Parole who is eligible for a Special Immigrant Visa reported to the Huffington Post:

‘I feel abandoned and confused,’ Sultanzai said. He said his American supervisors guaranteed him an SIV when he worked with them. He has enough certificates and photos to prove that he worked with the Americans, but he is unable to obtain a letter of support from them because he has been out of his post for several years and he lost his contacts. Sultanzai reports that his American supervisors, ‘They vanished, no email address, no phone number’ (Ahmadi, 2022).

Many Paroles like Sultanzai are wary about their legal status and fear that insufficient documents provided to USCIS will have them removed from the country. Hence, entering through parole leaves Afghan evacuees in an unstable, insecure, confusing legal limbo.

Furthermore, another case revealing the issues paroles face arose from a female Afghan evacuee, Ms. Nazar. She had applied for a SIV in 2020, but it was not approved in the following year and as a result she had no other choice but to apply for Humanitarian Parole in Qatar. Under parolee status, she was required to live on a National Guard base in Indiana and wait for refugee resettlement officials to take her case. Ms. Nazar stated that the camps ran out of food in the early days and she faced extreme stress and anxiety. Beyond that, she reported that base officials struggled to keep a record of Afghans in the camp. In one instance, a military public affairs officer insisted that Ms. Nazar had already left Camp Atterbury when she hadn’t. We can assume that base officials did not appropriately care for the vulnerable victims and keep track of their location. Humanitarian parolees like Ms. Nazar are anxious about when they might be moved off bases and into homes. They are not provided proper answers by officials and therefore, are stuck in camps with no prospects of what is coming next.

It is important to note that once an Afghan is granted a Special Immigrant Visa, they are automatically granted legal permanent residency (LPR). Once SIV’s are admitted to the United

States they are mailed a Permanent Resident Card also known as a Green Card. Following, five years of residency in the United States Special Immigrant Visa holders can apply to become a citizen. As a result, SIV holders report that legal integration for them has been an easy process for them, due to the fact that they are granted green card status upon arrival in the United States (McDevitt, 2022). However, the biggest concern SIV holders have is reuniting with their families. Translator and cultural mentor Ali Scotten reports to the Las Cruces Sun-News that “Special Immigrant Visa Holders spent their entire adult lives fighting the Taliban and supporting US troops and the one thing that they want more than anything is to have their families come and they want people to pressure the government, and for the government to try and speed up the process” (McDevitt, 2022). Across articles, it has become clear that SIV holders do not encounter any problems with legal integration itself but rather have trouble with family reunification due to rigorous backlogs.

Legal Integration - Case of Priority-1 & Priority- 2 Refugees

Furthermore, Afghan evacuees who are not eligible for a SIV are eligible to apply for refugee status in the United States. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “A refugee is a noncitizen who generally is outside their home country and has experienced past persecution or has a well-founded fear of future persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion” (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2022). Afghan nationals seeking refugee resettlement are able to apply for one of the three categories: Priority 1 (P-1), Priority 2 (P-2), or Priority 3 (P-3). The department has classified:

- **Priority 1:** Cases are identified and referred to the program by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a U.S. embassy, or a designated non-governmental organization. P-1 referrals must establish past persecution or a credible fear of future persecution from the country from which they fled.
- **Priority 2:** On Aug. 2, 2021, the Department of State announced a new Priority 2 Designation for certain Afghan nationals and eligible family members. Three categories of Afghan nationals qualify for P-2 status:
 - Afghans who do not meet the minimum time-in-service for a SIV but who work or worked as employees of contractors, locally employed staff, interpreters/translators for the U.S. Government, United States Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), or Resolute Support.
 - Afghans who work or worked for a U.S. government-funded program or project in Afghanistan supported through a U.S. government grant or cooperative agreement.
 - Afghans who are or were employed in Afghanistan by a U.S. based media organization or non-governmental organization.
- **Priority 3:** Family Reunification: Spouses, unmarried children under the age of 21, or parents of individuals already admitted to the U.S. as refugees or asylees are in this category (Relief for Afghans, 2022).

In the case of Priority 2 designation, each year the program decides which country requires the most humanitarian aid and shelter from the United States. However, with the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and the rise of the Taliban, the State Department created a new Priority 2 designation that catered specifically to Afghan nationals. This new program's goals revolved

around relocating Afghans who could not obtain SIVs. However, this was a lengthy process as Afghans were required to travel to a third world country first and then wait 12-14 months for their application to be processed (What is the US Priority-2, 2022). Refugees, regardless of being admitted under P1, P2, or P3, are granted indefinite status upon admission and work authorization. Moreover, if the refugee had a spouse or unmarried children under the age of 21, they could accompany the principal refugee and receive certain social and health service benefits. I would like to note that Priority 1 refugees are “regular” refugees, such as the ones described in the 1980 Refugee Act. Priority 2 and Priority 3 differ from the “regular” 1980 Refugee Act, since these categories are limited to designated groups and nationalities.

Similarly, to Afghan SIV holders, refugees are finding legal integration to be a less chaotic process since they are secured through P1 and P2 designations. This designation provides eligibility to apply for permanent residence within one year of arrival and the ability to apply for U.S. citizenship after five years of residency. Furthermore, refugees also have been experiencing difficulties in accessing the United States legal system and reuniting with loved ones (Seddiq, 2021). Salem, a newly arrived Afghan refugee, remains concerned for the lives of his parents and brother, a former Afghan special- forces officer. Salem reports to Insider News, “I was the lucky person,” alluding to his evacuation from Afghanistan and being received under refugee status (Seddiq, 2021). Salem states, "It's really impossible. We don't know how to bring them out.” Hence, although refugees are granted secure status, they face difficulty in accessing and understanding the legal system that will allow them to reunite with their families.

Legal Integration - Case of Humanitarian Paroles

As shown in **table 2**, Humanitarian Parole allows entrance to the U.S. to vulnerable Afghans who may be eligible for either SIV or refugee status but have yet not completed their visa processing. Also, according to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, “Humanitarian Parole is granted to a foreign national (who is otherwise inadmissible) to temporarily enter the United States due to an emergency and urgent humanitarian reason or significant public benefit” (U.S Customs and Border Protection, 2022). 91% of Afghan evacuees who have been received in the United States have been received under Parole. As shown in **table 3**, timeline and vetting procedure for Parolees is the most efficient and fastest process. Although Afghan evacuees come to the United States within days or weeks, Parolees do not have direct access to Legal Permanent Residency status. Parole status is not recognized as an immigration status. As a result, Humanitarian Parole allows Afghans to live and work in the U.S. for two years but provides no guarantee of permanent residency. Parolees are expected to apply for asylum within one year of entry if they are not eligible to readjust their status to SIV. However, the asylum system as well as the SIV system are facing severe backlogs as I have stated above, therefore, Parolees' major concern is how to obtain permanent status in the United States? For Afghans who are unable to adjust their status before Parole expires, they become at risk of becoming undocumented and thus facing deportation (Jakes, 2021). Hence, legal integration for Parolees introduces mass uncertainty and stress, forging a tenuous path to integrate within the United States.

Moreover, in states like New Mexico, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and other states Afghan Parolees have been resettled in, Parolees are finding it difficult to find lawyers to help them readjust their statuses to Special Immigrant Visas or apply for asylum. In **table 3**, it is emphasized that Parolees are not granted any of the benefits that SIV holders and refugees are

entitled to, putting them at a disadvantage. As reported across a number of articles, many cities like Las Cruces, New Mexico and others are declaring the government to provide more legal resources to Afghan Parolees. Syed Rafique Ahmed, director of the Southern New Mexico Islamic Center, reports, “We need more resources from the government, especially in New Mexico. We need more immigration lawyers” (McDevitt, 2022). Afghan Parolees have reported across a number of states that they rarely had access to an attorney to help them apply for a Special Immigrant Visa or asylum, therefore, making legal integration inaccessible (Williams, 2022).

Furthermore, Andrew Byrd, the Lutheran Family Services coordinator for Southern New Mexico, reported that “...helping an influx of Afghans, each with complicated asylum cases, requires an overabundance of immigration attorneys that the state just doesn’t have” (McDevitt, 2022). According to the federal agency, Byrd further explains that there are 400,000 plus asylum cases pending with the United States Center for Immigration Services, plus at least 60,000 Special Immigrant Visa applications. Previous cases have taken several years which puts pressure on evacuees as Parole status expires within two years of entry in the United States. Afghan Parolee, Abdul Amir Qaruzada, told Source New Mexico that he is stuck in legal limbo with the rest of the 70,000 plus Paroles due to both the lack of legal assistance and backlog (McDevitt, 2022). Whether or not Afghans can live their American dreams depends solely upon securing Legal Permanent Residency. Hence, Parolees temporary status leaves them vulnerable to future deportation.

Economic Integration

Sociologist Carl Stempel and Qais Alemi examine the economic integration of Afghan refugees resettled in the US in “Challenges to the Economic Integration of Afghan Refugees in the US.” Utilizing the modified segmented assimilation theory, Alemi and Stempel use the U.S Census and American Community Survey data in order to go about their research. Alemi and Stempel present new empirical analysis mapping general economic patterns, comparing Afghans to other immigrant, refugee, and racial groups. Their findings reveal that Afghan refugee’s earned incomes are the lowest of seven refugee/immigrant comparison groups. They state that Afghan refugees' economic challenges are explained by anti-Muslim notions, and that Afghans higher education and professional credentials received from Afghanistan cannot get them recognized or supplemented in the U.S.

Moreover, Stempel and Alemi note that the first-wave of Afghan refugees who have been received in the US during the Soviet-Afghan war in 1980’s made significant gains in income and employment. While their poverty rates and reliance on government assistance decreased dramatically. The first wave of Afghans who arrived in the U.S, acquired high rates of college degrees and fluent English-speaking skills. Despite their skill set, finding employment that successfully matches their qualifications is difficult for the majority of educated Afghan refugees. However, many Afghan evacuees that have been received in the most recent wave will most likely experience difficulties in finding employment due to their credentials. Although, Afghan evacuees who have been received under a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) or a pending SIV visa will have a better pathway to finding employment and working as interpreters and translators; women will have a challenging time to have their credentials recognized since

majority of the women received under the resettlement scheme have been received under Humanitarian Parole.

Economic Integration - Special Immigrant Visa holders

I have discovered throughout interview snippets published in news articles, journal articles, and NPR podcasts that many Afghans in the SIV program are educated and skilled, yet they end up in low wage jobs (HSU, 2021). A majority of Afghan SIV holders are reporting that educational credentials taken in Afghanistan are not accepted by neither American institutes nor the U.S. economy. SIV holders are experiencing trouble finding well paid stable jobs that fit their expertise. For example, Andrea Hsu, NPR's labor and workplace correspondent, interviews a number of SIV holders and examines their economic integration thus far in the United States.

In the case of one Afghan SIV holder Ahmad Zai, an immigrant who worked as an interpreter for U.S. forces, he was a fuel delivery company manager and travel agency owner in Afghanistan. However, in late 2021, Ahmad had no other choice but to leave Afghanistan as the Taliban started to target his family for having relations with the United States. Ahmad arrived in the U.S. with his wife and three kids and got some initial help from a refugee resettlement agency. However, when it came to look for a job, he discovered he was largely on his own. The Afghan community in northern Virginia advised him to start working part of Door Dash, UberEATS, etc., during the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Zai reports that resettlement agencies told SIV holders, "...the best way to start is to get a license, get a car and start your food delivery" (HSU, 2021). Zai had to provide for his family and had no other choice but to work for Door Dash and Grub hub. He worked for 12 hours 7 days a week and soon became limited in his family time. Given the high cost of driving, he began to work at McDonald's but found the \$10/hour salary insufficient to cover his expenses. He also tried Wal-Mart but also faced trouble supporting his family with the pay. He stated, "So I was trying to find a job in some of the IT

fields, but I couldn't get a chance because my certificate just doesn't work here.” Hence, it has been difficult for Afghan migrants to find jobs apt for their certifications.

Economic Integration - Refugees

Moreover, Afghan Refugees received under P-1 or P-2 visas are experiencing similar economic challenges in finding jobs that fit their expertise. There are many Afghan Refugees who cannot obtain jobs in their expertise because they need additional education and training, unlike SIV holders. Even with the help of resettlement agencies, they are unable to find adequate educational opportunities (Landis, 2022).

Additionally, some Afghan Refugees are experiencing difficulties in finding and maintaining jobs due to the high costs of living in areas they have been resettled to in the Northeastern region like New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania as well as Western Coast states like California, Nevada, and Washington where the unemployment rate is high. Some Afghan Refugees are reporting that without a steady job, it's difficult to meet living standards and to pay back loans to the State Department that were initially taken prior to their arrival in the United States. Hence, immigrating to the United States provides a safe haven for many Afghans but also can lead to economic burdens for those who can't secure a well-paid stable job.

Many other Afghan Refugees have reported that they are able to find jobs in the West North Central states. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation reports that Wisconsin needs refugees and immigrants to help fill thousands of open positions statewide. In the case of an Afghan refugee, Ali Akbar Gholami, he entered the United States in September 2021 and previously had worked in Kabul International Airport. Gholami brought skills and work ethic that American employers would desire in the state of Wisconsin. Gholami's top priority upon arriving in the United States was the same as any other Afghan Refugee: find a job before his initial three months of federal resettlement aid ran out. In his case, a non-profit organization helped him secure a job in BelGioioso Cheese packing mozzarella blocks. Although the job does

not match his expertise, Gholami makes \$24 per hour allowing him to be fully independent (Wang, 2022).

Moreover, Bojana Zoric Martinez, director of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families Bureau of Refugee Programs, stated that many employers have expressed high interest in hiring Afghan SIV holders and Afghan Refugees. Martinez reports “We’re very pleased, at least from what I’m hearing, with how employment is going, there are a lot of employment opportunities all across the state.” (Wang, 2022). Nonetheless, in Gholami’s case, his new employer loaned him money to buy a car. Additionally, Mike Ruminski, a Green Bay resident, has helped Gholami and seven other Afghan evacuees obtain their driver’s licenses, enroll in English classes, and connect with job specialists. Similarly, Refugee resettlement agencies have helped clients build resumes and prepare for interviews. Overall, through analysis of several news articles, NPR podcasts, and snippets of interviews, some Afghan Refugees are doing pretty well in economic integration. Hence, I have discovered that Afghan Refugees have easier economic integration in comparison to SIV holders, but they also face difficulties including high living expenses, repayment of loans, and high unemployment rates.

Economic Integration - Humanitarian Parolees

Out of all the three groups, Humanitarian Parolees are experiencing the most difficulties in economic integration. Paroles are not granted work authorization straight upon arrival in the United States like SIV holders and Refugees. Parolees are eligible to work but must first apply for Form 1-765, Application for Work Authorization, before you can legally work in the United States. The filing fee for an application is \$410 according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Additionally, Afghan Paroles are not eligible for the fee exemption. Majority of the Humanitarian Paroles have fled Afghanistan with no money in their pockets, relying on donations from NGOs and others to survive (Vang, 2022). Furthermore, recently the U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) released a new alert March 31st, 2023 affecting Afghan Humanitarian Paroles. USCIS announced on their website “ If you are an Afghan national paroled into the United States and you are applying for employment authorization, you will need a Social Security number (SSN) to work in the United States” (USCIS, 2023). Though there are opportunities available for Humanitarian Paroles to obtain jobs, the process of getting there is evidently very rigorous, extensive, and difficult.

Moreover, as shown in **table three**, Afghan Parolees are self-reliant as they do not receive any governmental benefits like SIV holders and Refugees. Additionally, according to the USCIS site, Paroles are required to pay the 1-765 fee “...with a money order, personal check, or cashier’s check. When filing at a USCIS Lockbox facility, you may also pay by credit card” (Information for Afghan Nationals, 2022). It is important to note that Afghan Paroles do not have access to bank accounts, checks, nor withhold credit cards making it challenging for them to file for work authorization (Williams, 2022). Nonetheless, the majority of Afghan evacuees are illiterate making it difficult to file forms and understand how to navigate credit cards, money

orders, and checks. A majority of Afghan Parolees will need to consult a lawyer to help them apply for work authorization, SSN and adjust their status from Parole to SIV or asylum, however, this leads to further financial constraints when they can't secure a job to begin with.

For example, an Afghan Parole going by the name Aziz reports to MSN News that it has been difficult for him and many other parolees to find a stable job. He states when he applies for a job and receives a call, the first question asked is "What's your status? Are you an American Citizen or Green Card Holder? Do you have an SSN?" Aziz responds "None, Humanitarian Parole" (Vang, 2022). Many employers are uncertain of their status and they think people like Aziz are undocumented and aren't able to work legally, rejecting them employment. Hence, economic integration for Parolee becomes extremely rigorous due to the lack of aid from resettlement agencies, unsecure legal status, inability to secure a job due to mistrust and long waits to obtain work authorization.

CHAPTER 9

Key Findings

Overall, immigrants who arrive under different legal categories, forge different connections to civil organizations; thus, driving different integration trajectories for immigrants. Also, throughout the cases of Afghan SIV holders, Refugees, and Humanitarian Parolees, it is clear that U.S. resettlement programs, refugee agencies, and federally contracted resettlement nonprofits have profound effects on economic and legal integration for certain groups of immigrants. Throughout my research, I have also discovered that resettlement agencies aren't equipped to address all employment barriers, leaving immigrants to be self-standing.

Also, it has become clear that U.S. resettlement programs only provide short term assistance leaving all groups of Afghans to be self-supporting after a certain time. Moreover, I have concluded that immigrants experience challenges in converting their human capital skills to social skills. As well, certain immigrant groups find it tough to find jobs that align with their skills and field of experience due to the fact that the U.S. economy and employers don't trust foreign degree programs, especially ones in developing countries. Lastly, some groups of Afghans integrate substantially depending on where they have resettled. States with high unemployment rates as well as high living standards have made economic and legal integration even more difficult for certain groups of Afghan evacuees compared to states with low unemployment rates. What I found to be ironic is that although SIV holders had more successful legal integration than refugees, refugees had easier economic integration. I assume that refugees did better than SIV holders in economic integration because many refugees were resettled to states with low unemployment rates with cheaper standards of living. Yet, I have come to the conclusion that Humanitarian Parolees are the most disadvantaged group of Afghan evacuees

and they have done far worse than Refugees and SIV holders due to migration policies and limited membership rights.

Do Afghan Evacuees Want to be in the West?

In reality, many of the Afghan evacuees had no plans to leave their home country and settle in neighboring states or in the west. Thousands and thousands of Afghan families fled their home country, leaving behind their life, families, friends, and businesses. President Biden stated, "I know there are concerns about why we did not begin evacuating Afghan civilians sooner... Part of the answer is some of the Afghans did not want to leave earlier. Still hopeful for their country." In reality, many Afghans wanted to leave their country months before, however, the immigration system failed in saving those who begged to be saved. Although the immigration system failed many Afghans, many Afghans did have hope for their country and people. In early August, with the withdrawal of the US troops and rise of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan's government had hoped for political settlement with the Taliban. Ambassador Adela Raz stated, "There is no deal yet, but we are not giving up hope, we are not giving up hope on peace, we are not giving up hope on prosperity and stability. The Afghan people had hoped for a power-sharing deal that would ensure equal constitutional rights for men, women and minorities and a representative democracy" (Afghanistan, 2021). The people of Afghanistan had hoped for peace, and restoration in Afghanistan through a mutual agreement between the Taliban regime and the former Republic of Afghanistan ruled by former President Ashraf Ghani. However, as the Taliban regained control of the country, and utilized violence once again towards its people, and former President Ashraf Ghani fled the country it became evident to the people of Afghanistan that there was minimal hope for restoration and unity. As the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan got worse, Afghans became in dire need of immediate assistance such as food, medical treatment, facilities, and shelter; leaving no choice but to flee a war-torn country.

CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

Decades of war and intervention in Afghanistan has led to long lasting consequences particularly affecting the most vulnerable groups, children and women. As discussed, the first part of this research, ethnic and gender inequalities, the Soviet-Invasion of 1979 to the US war in Afghanistan have caused political, economic, and social instability in Afghanistan. The vast majority of the population are starved of the basic necessities including food, proper education, jobs, and a secure health care system. The results of forty plus years of war in Afghanistan can be seen in the Afghan diaspora that has led to many Afghans seeking refuge in Pakistan, Iran, many third countries, Europe and the United States. The rise of the extremist group in August 2021 in Afghanistan has forced many countries to open their borders to thousands and thousands of Afghans.

Throughout history until present day, immigrants have been received in the United States under different legal categories. Migration policies within the United States have affected both economic and legal integration depending on the visa an immigrant obtains. Migration policies can either limit your opportunities in integration or extend your chances in assimilating in a host country permanently. I study Afghan evacuees because of the recent migration as they have been designated different legal statuses despite them coming from the same country. Interestingly, Afghans have been received under a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), Priority-1 (P-1) or Priority 2 (P-2) Refugee status, or Humanitarian Parole. As examined in my paper, migration policies have contributed to the overall economic and legal integration of these three groups. I come to the conclusion that there are differences between all three groups and that Special Immigrant Visa holders and Refugees are better off than HPs. Thus, Humanitarian Parolees are the most

disadvantaged group and the legal category they have been received under has made permanent integration impractical in comparison to SIV holders and Refugees.

Thus, United States intervention in Afghanistan and subsequent diplomatic failure conveys a message that the United States is in debt to the people of Afghanistan. We collectively could work to better the lives of Afghans and help our brothers and sisters around the globe. It is up to Americans to be welcoming of all of our immigrants, including Afghans who resettled in the United States. It has become a moral obligation for us to do the minimum and ensure that every child and every family is fed. We must ensure that no child, woman, disabled person, or anyone is left behind. It is crucial to ensure their safety from discrimination and help them adapt to Western society. We must ensure that each Afghan family that is resettled into the US is granted the rights that they have been deprived of, and are entitled to freedom of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.

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