Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
Synthesis Paper Series

Searching For My Homeland: Dilemmas Between Borders

EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG AFGHANS RETURNING "HOME" FROM PAKISTAN AND IRAN

Mamiko Saito

July 2009

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Cover Photograph: Mamiko Saito. Afghans in Pakistan preparing to return “home”.

About the Author

Mamiko Saito was the Senior Research Officer for migration at AREU. She began working in Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2003 and has worked with Afghan refugees in Quetta and Peshawar. She holds a master's degree in education and development studies from the University of East Anglia, United Kingdom.

About the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

AREU is an independent research organisation based in Kabul. AREU's mission is to conduct high-quality research that informs and influences policy and practice. AREU also actively promotes a culture of research and learning by strengthening analytical capacity in Afghanistan and facilitating reflection and debate. Fundamental to AREU's vision is that its work should improve Afghan lives.

AREU was established in 2002 by the assistance community working in Afghanistan and has a board of directors with representation from donors, the United Nations and other multilateral agencies, and non-governmental organisations. AREU currently receives core funds from the governments of Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Specific projects have been funded by the Foundation of the Open Society Institute Afghanistan (FOSIA), the Asia Foundation (TAF), the European Commission (EC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the World Bank.

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March 2009
Mamiko Saito

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Acronyms

AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
BAFIA	Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (Iran)
EC	European Commission
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NWFP	North West Frontier Province (Pakistan)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Glossary

Amayesh	a census conducted by the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA) to identify foreign nationals; it is carried out periodically in Iran
azadi	freedom
baghairat	zealous
guna	sin
hamwatan	person from the same area or country, compatriot
hijab	covering women's head and body; being modest and moral
sawab	spiritual reward
madrassa	Islamic religious school
mohajer(in)	refugee(s)
mujahid(din)	holy warrior(s) fighting in jihad (holy war)
Naw Roz	Persian New Year
wasita	relations to powerful people
watan	homeland

Executive Summary

More than two decades of protracted conflict from the late 1970s onward saw Afghan refugee communities settle around the world. At the end of 2007, Afghanistan was still the source of the world's largest number of refugees under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). While Afghans are dispersed among 72 different countries, 96 percent of displaced Afghans remain in Pakistan and Iran.[1] The majority of those who remain in Pakistan and Iran have lived in exile for over 20 years, and half of them are estimated to have been born outside Afghanistan.[2] Currently, around 2.7 million registered Afghan refugees are still living in Pakistan and Iran[3]—the majority are in their second or even third generation of displacement. In Pakistan, 74 percent of the Afghan population is under 28 years old,[4] while 71 percent of the Afghan population in Iran is 29 years old or younger.[5]

In both contexts, these second generation Afghans have grown up in very different circumstances to those of their parents and peers in Afghanistan. For these young refugees, returning to their "homeland" does not necessarily mean returning "home." Understanding the characteristics of this significant group of young Afghans, their perceptions toward return, and their reintegration experiences holds critical importance for policymaking around the issues of: facilitating the return and reintegration of young Afghans; securing the lives and livelihoods of the multiple generations of Afghans remaining in exile; and managing continuing cross-border population movements to the benefit of both the migrants and the sending and receiving countries.

This study delves beneath the surface of refugees' simple "yes" or "no" response as to whether they intend to return, as represented in existing quantitative data. Rather, it illustrates the profound difficulties that they face in weighing the benefits and disadvantages of returning to Afghanistan. It considers the complexities of deciding to return to one's "homeland," the influence of ties to Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, as well as the less visible social and emotional reintegration trajectories of returnee respondents, including the crucial links between these issues and material challenges of reintegration. This study is based on interviews with 199 purposively selected respondents across three countries.

With a focus on gender, this report analyses returning refugees' reactions to the environment in which they find themselves upon returning to Afghanistan and the various adaptation processes through which individuals undergo. It concludes that the way in which individuals find meaning for themselves in relation to Afghanistan as their homeland is one of the crucial factors affecting their perceptions of return and future outlook. The study emphasises the importance of less visible, non-material support for young returnees, and identifies the need for greater external assistance for these young Afghans. The process of reintegration in their "homeland" is not a simple geographical movement of population, and these second-generation Afghan refugees are not homogeneous. They have diverse interests and intentions depending on individual background, experiences, place of residence and opportunities—all of which were influenced by changing political and social dynamics. These elements need to be carefully considered to support their permanent settlement in Afghanistan.

1 UNHCR, *2007 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-Seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2008), 8.

2 UNHCR, *UNHCR Global Appeal 2008-2009* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2007), 260.

3 IRIN News. "Afghanistan: Limited Scope to Absorb More Refugees," 15 March 2009, http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83474 (accessed 5 May 2009).

4 Government of Pakistan and UNHCR, *Registration of Afghans in Pakistan 2007* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan and UNHCR, 2007), 10.

5 Amayesh data 2005, in *Second-Generation Afghans in Iran: Integration, Identity and Return,* ed. M.J. Abbasi-Shavazi et al. (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit [AREU], 2008), 3.

Recommendations

Voluntary return: reducing the risks of reintegration failure

1. ***Improving work skills and access to employment during transition***

- The Government of Afghanistan, in coordination with the governments of Pakistan and Iran and with the support of donors, should engage in continuous efforts to develop the skills of refugee youth, driven by the demand and needs of local labour markets in Afghanistan.
- Existing training centres and technical courses in cities and refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran should be improved with facilities focused on the needs of the Afghan market.

2. ***Facilitate realistic resettlement planning: information and visits***

- In collaboration with the governments of Pakistan and Iran, radio and other media could be used effectively to convey reliable information to refugee youth on support systems available to returnees in Afghanistan.
- The governments of Iran and Afghanistan are encouraged to engage in further bilateral talks to facilitate greater access to preparatory visits for young refugees.

3. ***Education in transition: a key concern for second-generation Afghan refugees***

- Young refugees' fear of losing the opportunity to be educated if they return to Afghanistan must be addressed through improved access to quality education.
- In coordination with the governments of the two host countries, the Afghan Ministry of Education should actively facilitate securing the legal status of Afghan schools in Pakistan and Iran as the places where second-generation Afghan refugees would earn qualifications to prepare themselves for their return.
- Clearer and more accessible procedures should be in place for the approval and acceptance of certification from schools and universities in the neighbouring countries, particularly in Pakistan where the language of instruction may differ from that of Afghanistan.

4. ***Advocacy: positive motivation for return***

- In collaboration with the Pakistani and Iranian governments, the Government of Afghanistan with the support of international agencies should build a comprehensive communications strategy targeting young refugees. The importance of one's own "homeland" should be highlighted in promotional campaigns delivered via a range of media and community outlets.
- It is important to create positive motivation for voluntary return rather than pressure through deportation, which results in strong resistance to returning to Afghanistan.

Complex reintegration: Influencing the balance of factors

1. ***Promoting emotional security: Advocacy for social inclusion and anti-discrimination policies***

- The Government of Afghanistan, together with international agencies, should develop media campaigns advocating for social acceptance and non-discriminatory treatment of all Afghans—including returnees.
- For some returnees, encouragement that facilitates social inclusion has sometimes simply been the result of the generous compassion of others. Education programmes that promote the equal treatment of all people for those in positions of some authority (e.g. teachers, headmasters and mullahs) would improve their ability to positively influence the receiving community, particularly in social spaces such as schools or villages.
- Interaction with fellow returnees and Afghan friends who understand how returnees lived previously should be facilitated. This may offer opportunities for individuals to express the values they formed during refuge, providing a valuable outlet to release some of the tension

resulting from experiences of being unable to fit in.

- As a part of more long-term social and economic programming, the reintegration process of selected second-generation returnees should be monitored not only at the time of initial return but also over the medium and long term. The lessons accumulated from this initiative could be applied to improve further programming for permanent resettlement.

2. Enhancing opportunities for employment

- The outreach of existing employment service centres should be extended to more districts and rural areas. Postings at the employment service centres should be provided in local languages and cover a wider range of positions (unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled) compared to limited postings targeting the skilled and educated. Incentives should be provided as a part of an income-generating programme to encourage employers to post job vacancies at newly established employment centres.
- A more transparent, affirmative-action recruiting system to provide equal access for youth from socially and economically underprivileged backgrounds, in particular returnees who are not familiar with the local environment, is proposed as a priority programme for local government and development organisations. This system could involve actively employing returnees as teachers, literacy trainers and health workers in community organisations where their exposure to new ideas from their experience outside Afghanistan could positively affect local communities.
- Female members of vulnerable returnee families are often unable to work in Afghanistan because of restrictive social norms. This may reduce household responsiveness to crises, prompting remigration. The Ministry of Women's Affairs, along with the ministries of Labour, Social Affairs and Martyrs, and the Disabled as well as NGOs, should improve existing efforts to provide more market-oriented, culturally sensitive livelihood opportunities for economically vulnerable women in rural and urban areas.

3. Meeting material needs during reintegration: access to connections, skills, capital and property

- Second-generation Afghan returnees of a lower socioeconomic status and without skills and basic education should be key beneficiaries of programmes providing material support.
- The right to own property is one of the key pull factors drawing refugees back to Afghanistan. Although challenging, the existing system of land allocation, with the support of an oversight committee, must be further promoted to be realistic, efficient and transparent.
- Urban planning processes should take greater priority given the increase in urban populations related to the influx of returnees and internal migrants. At the same time, attention should be paid to employment generation in both urban and rural areas to reduce challenges related to meeting material needs and to slow the flow of migrants to urban locations.

4. Increasing needs: Quality education as a pull factor

- Donors and civil society must be strongly committed to longer-term funding of post-primary education in both urban and rural areas, reflecting the growing needs of young returnees both with or without formal education and for future generations.
- Opportunities in higher education, which are not readily available to Afghans in Pakistan and Iran, are strong pull factors that could bring educated refugees back to Afghanistan. The Afghan government should: ensure that equal, corruption-free opportunities for higher education in Afghanistan exist; invest in scholarships for returnees; and improve the governance systems that allocate university places, reducing perceived and actual corruption in university admissions processes.

5. *Physical security: Desire for police reform and protection*

- Respondents in this study commonly mentioned concerns about less serious crimes (such as robbery and theft) and uneasiness over the unreliability of the police (related to corruption issues) as factors affecting return decisions and the willingness to stay after return. To improve the performance and public image of the police, the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the international community should increase the pace of police reform and enforce penalties for proven corrupt behaviour.
- Stronger government-led, gender-sensitive social protection efforts may lead to a reduction in the harassment of women in public, providing safeguards similar to those that some respondents benefited from while outside of Afghanistan. The Afghan Ministry of Interior Affairs and the international community should strengthen efforts to recruit female police officers and increase provision of effective and relevant gender training for all police officers. New laws should be adopted and existing laws enforced to protect women's safety and security in both public and private domains.

6. *Managing legal migration: Options for gradual return*

- A focus on managing—rather than limiting or prohibiting—labour migration would better support the successful resettlement of Afghan households. The Afghan government should ensure Afghans can easily obtain a passport. The Government of Afghanistan and those of the host countries should continue their bilateral dialogue to develop laws and agreements facilitating a more manageable migration framework that reduces illegal migration.
- The gradual return of household members is a common strategy used by Afghan families to mitigate the risks associated with repatriation. The Government of Iran in particular, supported by international aid agencies, should facilitate these strategies by providing re-entry visas for those heading to Afghanistan for reconnaissance visits and by maintaining support to vulnerable households that remain in the host country.
- It is important to recognise that not all Afghans in Pakistan and Iran, first- and second-generation alike, will return to Afghanistan voluntarily in the near future; among these cases are those who have protection needs and those who have married Pakistanis or Iranians. Furthermore, the capacity of Afghanistan to absorb the vast numbers of refugees who remain in these neighbouring countries requires continuous, realistic re-examination and a consistent humanitarian approach.

Part 1: Introduction

This report synthesises the findings of case studies conducted in three countries (Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan)[6] as part of AREU's research project focusing on second-generation Afghan refugees living in Pakistan and Iran, and returnees from these neighbouring countries to Afghanistan since 2001. The research project, "Second-Generation Afghan Refugees in Neighbouring Countries,"[7] was administered through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and funded by the European Commission. It was initiated in 2006 and follows on from AREU's work on transnational networks undertaken in 2004-05,[8] which drew attention to a gap in information about the significant number of Afghan youth and young adults currently living in Pakistan and Iran. Many were born or grew up in exile and have little or no experience of living in their "homeland."

Most of this new generation have grown up in a very different environment to that of their parents and to that of their own generation that remained in Afghanistan during prolonged war. They have had significantly greater access to urban facilities and many different experiences as a result of living as refugees among Pakistanis and Iranians while maintaining ties with Afghan communities.

The large-scale return of these young Afghan refugees from neighbouring countries must be seen as a crucial strategy for Afghanistan in rebuilding its society from the grassroots level. This is particularly significant in rural areas where reconstruction is still underway, with limited resources and a lack of educated personnel after the decades of war. Some of the returnee respondents interviewed as part of this research project were found to be covering teacher shortages in remote villages. One was asked by other women in her village to teach them to read and write, even though she had left school at a very early age herself. Whether or not respondents had gone to school in Pakistan or Iran, many reported that they had acquired new technical skills, a better understanding of health and hygiene, and the skills to communicate with different people. Migration impacted on Afghan refugees as a whole[9] but more so for younger generations who grew up in the place of refuge.

Returnees are usually considered less economically vulnerable than those who remained in Afghanistan throughout the conflict years, because of the education and skills that many were able to acquire, as well as the savings some were able to accrue.[10]

Over 2.7 million registered Afghan refugees are still living in neighbouring countries: approximately 1.7 million in Pakistan and 1 million in Iran.

In Pakistan, 74 percent of the Afghan population is under 28 years of age while 71 percent of the Afghan population in Iran is 29 years or under.

Source: *IRIN News, 15 March 2009; Registration of Afghans in Pakistan 2007*, *Amayesh* 2005 data.

6 Fieldwork in Iran was conducted by the University of Tehran in partnership with AREU; see: M.J. Abbasi-Shavazi et al., *Second-Generation Afghans in Iran: Integration, Identity and Return* (Kabul: AREU, 2008). See also: M. Saito and P. Hunte, *To Return or to Remain: The Dilemma of Second-Generation Afghans in Pakistan* (Kabul: AREU, 2007); and M. Saito, *Second-Generation Afghans in Neighbouring Countries: From* Mohajer *to* Hamwatan*: Afghans Return Home* (Kabul: AREU, 2007).

7 Afghanistan is surrounded by six countries, but in this research project, the term "neighbouring countries" refers to Pakistan and Iran, where the majority of Afghans reside. Precisely, the title of the study can be argued as "Second-generation Afghan refugees and migrants in Pakistan and Iran, and those returnees who returned to Afghanistan." The project uses the term "second-generation Afghans" implying the blurred border between refugees and migrants, and continuity among refugees and returnees, and further migration of the individuals.

8 See A. Monsutti, *Afghan Transnational Networks: Looking Beyond Repatriation* (Kabul: AREU, 2006).

9 For example, in AREU research on family dynamics and family violence, changes have been observed in perceptions of the acceptability of violence toward children among both adults and the community as a whole, and respondents often talked about the reason for this as having been their experience of life in "other places"-either as refugees in neighbouring countries or while internally displaced. Deborah J. Smith, *Love, Fear and Discipline: Everyday Violence Towards Children in Afghan Families* (Kabul: AREU, 2008), 57–60.

10 C. Faubert, A. Mojaddedi and A.H. Sofizada, *Repatriation and Reintegration: An Appraisal of Progress in Afghanistan* (Kabul: UNHCR,

Focusing on the less tangible notion of **psychosocial well-being (living contently emotionally and socially, with a positive self-image)**, this study tries to better understand the experiences and ideas of the large number of young Afghan refugees remaining in Pakistan and Iran, as well as those of second-generation returnees, in order to contribute toward facilitating their successful and sustainable return and permanent reintegration.

However, from the point of view of returnees (particularly those of the second generation), repatriation is often accompanied by a complex mix of stresses and emotional struggles, brought on by leaving the place they knew best. Returning may have meant that their experience of being a non-citizen of the country, regardless of the degree of familiarity there, was simply repeated when they returned to their "homeland"; their psychosocial vulnerability (the feeling of "non-belonging," marginality or helplessness) may have been the same or worse than in the place of refuge. While meeting the immediate material needs of this group is highest on the agendas of the government and international actors in relation to bringing young Afghan refugees home, their psychosocial needs—while much less visible—are possibly no less crucial to their successful and permanent reintegration.

The next section looks at the social, cultural and economic context of each of the three countries, highlighting the contrasts in the refugees' environments in Pakistan and Iran. Section 3 reviews the relevant literature on identity and second-generation refugees returning "home" in other contexts, forming a conceptual background for the overall analysis. Section 4 describes the methodology used during field research, followed by a description of the types of interviews conducted for 199 individual second-generation Afghan refugees in three countries, including a limited comparison of quantitative data. In sections 5, 6 and 7, findings and a discussion based on data collected are presented, beginning with respondents' experiences of "learning about Afghanistan" and Afghan identity while growing up in neighbouring countries, leading to complex decision-making about whether or not to return, the reintegration process among returnee respondents, and whether or not they have settled in their homeland. The final sections 8 and 9 conclude the discussion and provide recommendations based on the study's results to the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, to international organisations and to concerned stakeholders.

2005), 11. Also, according to Altai Consulting, *Integration of Returnees in the Afghan Labour Market* (Kabul: International Labour Organization and UNHCR, 2006), 15, the monthly income of returnee households in urban areas is higher than the national average.

Part 2: Context

This section provides an overview of the three countries in which field research was conducted—Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The situational context in which respondents grew up and to which they returned impacts on individual identities: not only the background of each family and community, but the broader issues of state regulation, opportunity and the prevalent values in the society. Firstly, the history of the refugee movement from Afghanistan and the situation of returnees to Afghanistan are discussed. Secondly, the political background and refugee policy of the two comparative host countries are explained. Lastly, the social environments in Pakistan and Iran are contrasted, highlighting the particular situation for Afghan refugees living there. All of these factors affect identity formation processes among young Afghans.

2.1 Afghanistan

Afghan populations are historically highly mobile; continuous multidirectional cross-border movement can be seen as a key household survival strategy through which Afghans can spread risk and diversify their livelihoods. The most significant recent outward population movement from Afghanistan took place in the 1970s, prompted by a combination of severe drought in the country and the oil boom and growth in the construction industry in Iran. This was followed by the massive population movement in the late 1970s when the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan began.[11] By 1992, over six million people—more than 20 percent of the population—had left the country.[12]

Since then, subsequent waves of refugee return to Afghanistan have continued, with notable peaks in 1992 and 2002. Since 2002, over 5.6 million Afghans have been recorded by UNHCR as returning from Pakistan and Iran. They returned through UNHCR's voluntary assisted repatriation programme (4.3 million), of which 46 percent returned to Kabul and Nangarhar provinces, as well as spontaneously (1.3 million).[13] The majority of these early returnees in the 2002 "season" had been in refuge during the past seven years—leaving behind many "old refugees" who had been living in neighbouring countries for decades.[14]

It is not clear, however, what proportion have successfully settled in Afghanistan for the long term. According to a survey conducted across 32 provinces targeting mostly rural residents, 29.4 percent of interviewed returnees mentioned that they were unhappy with their current situation primarily due to unemployment (45 percent), lack of housing (32.8 percent), and lack of access to safe water (10.2 percent).[15] Since 2005, the repatriation trend has declined, reflecting worsening security after the waves of mass repatriation following the establishment of the new government.[16]

2.2 Pakistan and Iran

Refugee policy in Pakistan and Iran

The Afghans who fled to Pakistan during the 1980s and 1990s were predominantly Pashtuns from rural areas, many of whom settled in Pashtun-dominated locations in Pakistan. Initially, Afghans were welcomed as honourable guests within the codes of tribal solidarity; however, the refugee camps'

11 Monsutti, *Afghan Transnational Networks*, 12-13.

12 UNHCR, *Finding Durable Solutions for Refugees and Displacement for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan* (Kabul: UNHCR, 2007), 1.

13 UNHCR, *Operational Information Monthly Summary Report - January 2009*.

14 D. Turton and P. Marsden, *Taking Refugees for a Ride?* (Kabul: AREU, 2002), 49.

15 Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, *Economic and Social Rights in Afghanistan II* (Kabul: AIHRC, 2007), 15. Among 11,186 interviewees, 90.9 percent were from rural areas; 5,277 (47 percent) were returnees and responded to the questions about their satisfaction in relation to return.

16 UNHCR, *Global Appeal 2008-2009*.

political structures and the prolonged refugee situation gradually saw a shift in their status to more dependent "clients of the asylum-giver."[17] By the end of 1990, more than 300 refugee camps had been created by UNHCR in Pakistan, housing over 3.3 million refugees.[18] These camps became the focal points for various Islamic armed resistance groups fighting against Soviet forces, collectively known as *mujahiddin*.

Many Afghan schools both inside and outside the camps have been supported by various donors—although a decline in funding has increased dropout rates, as seen in some respondents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds after mid-1995, when dropouts begin to increase. Similarly, in recent years, lack of funding, particularly for secondary schools, has been reported as a serious problem.[19] Many of this study's respondents benefited from access to education (secular and religious[20]) while living in Pakistan, regardless of whether or not they had legal documents. This, however, depended entirely on each family's situation and values, as well as their community's attitude to education.

The policy of the Government of Pakistan towards refugee education was to maintain a parallel Afghan education system teaching in native languages (Pashto and Dari)—eventually facilitating the reintegration of refugees into the Afghan education system.[21] At the time of fieldwork for this research project, there was one Afghan tertiary institution in Peshawar, although it issued certificates that were not recognised in Afghanistan.[22]

According to this study's respondents, harassment of refugees (usually men) by the police did occur, but this was often not directly related to immediate deportation. They were usually allowed to move freely within Pakistan to seek employment with a degree of relative choice in occupation: some respondents' households were able to continue their previous professions (if available) such as carpet weaving, tailoring, repairing various goods and business. After the fall of the Taliban government in 2001, the policy shift toward the repatriation of all Afghans accelerated, and there was increased emphasis on regulation of refugees through measures such as the Proof of Registration (PoR) cards.[23] However, Pakistan's less strict border control, especially for Pashtuns, is evidenced by many respondents in this study (including women) who had grown up in Pakistan being able to visit Afghanistan prior to return.

The situation of Afghan refugees in Iran—mostly non-Pashtuns from either Herat city or rural areas to the west, north and central region of Afghanistan—contrasts markedly with life for refugees in Pakistan. In Iran, less than 2.5 percent of Afghans settled in refugee camps;[24] the majority resided among Iranians in urban areas. Documentation was provided to the early arrivals, with which they were ensured access to health care and food, and free primary and secondary education (although employment opportunities were mostly restricted to

17 D.B. Edwards, "Marginality and Migration: Cultural Dimensions of the Afghan Refugee Problem," *International Migration Review* 20, no. 2 (1986):313–325.

18 UNHCR, The *State of the World's Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 116.

19 The reduction of funding since 2005, along with the closure and consolidation of camps, dramatically decreased enrolments in refugee village schools (A. Wilder, *Needs Assessment Exercise of Education Sector* [Islamabad: CCAR-UNHCR, 2006], 37).

20 *Madrassas* supported by Zia-ul-Haq's government and various donors including Saudi Arabia and the United States were established, producing support for *jihad*. H. Haqqani, "Islam's Medieval Outposts," *Foreign Policy* 133 (2002):58-64. According to some respondents, well-equipped *madrassas* were well supported (free dormitory, allowances, etc.) and scholarships to study in Saudi Arabia were available for qualified students.

21 Wilder, *Needs Assessment Exercise of Education Sector*, 31.

22 Under the Taliban government, there were four Afghan universities in Peshawar, but these were closed in July 1998 by the local government in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). See: UNHCR, *Impact Study on Closure of Universities on Afghan Students* (Kabul: UNHCR, 1998), 3. The students of the existing Afghan tertiary institution in Peshawar showed earnest hopes that their certificate would be approved in the future; otherwise, they will be discouraged to return to Afghanistan after graduation.

23 Proof of Registration cards were provided by the Government of Pakistan and UNHCR, which demonstrate the status of holders as Afghan nationals temporarily staying in Pakistan and allowed to remain until the end of 2012.

24 UNHCR, *Afghanistan: Challenges to Return* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2004), 9.

Table 1: Refugee context in Pakistan and Iran

Iran		*Pakistan*
Since 1979 Islamic revolution: US$150 million in international assistance	*International assistance*[1]	More than US$1 billion in international assistance (1979-99)
3 million refugees (by 1990) Less than **2.5%** of Afghans settled in camps (as of 2004)	*Refugees' residence*	Over 3.3 million refugees in 300 camps (by 1990) **45%** of Afghans in camps (2007)
Work opportunities **controlled**, limited to 16 manual work categories	*Work opportunities*	**Freedom** to move within Pakistan to seek work
1996: free education for all Afghans ended, with only documented Afghan children allowed to continue attending Iranian schools	*Education*	Access to education regardless of legal documents (both secular Afghan school and *madrassas*)
Necessity of possession of valid documentation, especially since mid-1990s (additional cost to renew) **Tighter border control** (smugglers)	*Legal status*	Required possession of Proof of Registration cards since 2007 **Looser border control**, especially for Pashtuns

manual labour).[25] After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the new Iranian government distanced the policy away from Western countries, resulting in limited international assistance being provided to refugees in Iran—although refugee numbers were estimated at 3 million by 1990.[26]

Since the mid-1990s, access to education has only been provided for documented refugee children. In 2002, the Iranian government declared Afghan self-run schools illegal, on the grounds that they encouraged Afghans to remain in Iran.[27] Among those who did attend school, it was acknowledged that there were limitations on access to higher-level education (except for the limited number who could afford high private tuition fees—this was the same case in Pakistan) especially in recent years. The government's attempts to speed up repatriation have been increasing and have included imposing a charge on extending identity documents, charging fees for all Afghan children, and sharing the cost of health insurance.[28]

Multiple respondents agreed that it was very difficult to get Iranian national identification cards; this was not entirely impossible in Pakistan using the right networks and for the right price, however. The possession of valid legal documents has been an ongoing issue for Afghan refugees, particularly in Iran; this impacts refugees' personal security, access to services and ability to move within Iran (problematic due to required travel documents and limitations on changing registered residences). Systematic control by Iranian authorities resulted in fewer respondents being able to visit Afghanistan prior to repatriation, and increased reliance on smugglers to assist with their return to Iran.[29]

Social environments in the Pakistani and Iranian sphere

Both Pakistan and Iran consist of multiple ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities. However, the two countries have shown slightly different effects of the state's control over different regions in the country. Ayres considers the question of national unity in Pakistan since the establishment of the nation.[30] Urdu, which was originally a minority language,

25 Monsutti, *Afghan Transnational Networks*, 13.

26 UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees*, 118-9.

27 Abbasi-Shavazi et al., *Second-Generation Afghans in Iran*, 19.

28 UNHCR, *Global Report 2003* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2004), 326.

29 Although respondents who grew up in Iran rarely visited Afghanistan while in refuge, many of their fathers had often commuted to Afghanistan to visit relatives, arrange marriages, attend funerals, check on property and to work-as *mujahid*.

30 A. Ayres, "The Politics of Language Policy in Pakistan," in *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia*, ed. M.E. Brown and S. Ganguly (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2003), 51.

has been adopted as a symbol of "the imagined Muslim country," but provincial and regional ethnic tension against the central government has been provocative.[31] Meanwhile, Iran is a country with Persians as the largest ethnic group (51 percent of the population) and a range of minorities and tribes. Samii points to Tehran's sensitivity to any local movement. He argues that minority movement is not entirely caused by cultural issues but also closely linked to the frustrations of unemployment and underdevelopment. Therefore, Persian nationalism and Shia Islam have been emphasised as the state's unifying factors. Iran's central control appears to be somehow effective[32]—at least when compared to Pakistan.

In Iran, non-mainstream groups (who often speak Iranian Persian with an accent) are often the subject of jokes. For example, a few returnee respondents noted that Turkish-Iranians (Iranian nationals but an ethnic minority) were a target of teasing in Iran. Therefore, second-generation Afghans in Iran faced greater pressures to speak Iranian Persian in public (see Section 5.5), which resulted in easily being identified as returnees from Iran upon repatriation to Afghanistan. In addition, the comparatively lower prevalence of English in Iran (although language and computer courses are becoming more popular), and the emphasis on Persian as the national language, resulted in a gap of English proficiency among respondents who grew up in Iran—eventually impacting on the access to well-paid job markets in Afghanistan. The disparity in language proficiency among second-generation Afghan refugees within a country (e.g. urban/rural, regional differences, and between males and females) tends to be greater in Pakistan compared to Iran.

Table 2 highlights the contrast of the two countries: the proportion of the total urban population (versus rural), youth literacy rate, and reproductive health indicators of Pakistanis and Iranians. Remarkably, almost all young Iranian women are estimated to be literate, compared to only half of Pakistani women.[33] Overall, the respondents in this study unanimously described Iranian culture as "modernised," "advanced," or "cultured," often referring to a well-organised public system and order.[34] Such a prevailing "cultured" atmosphere in Iran impacted returnees' reintegration experiences, especially women and those returning from Iran, leading them to view Afghan society as "less cultured" (see Section 7.4). The study data collected during fieldwork in Iran is potentially biased toward more educated urban residents, even though fewer Afghans settled in border provinces where Iranian minorities largely reside (such as in West Azerbaijan, Ilam, Mazandaran[35]). If research had been conducted in Sistan and Balochistan, the least developed province in Iran, different patterns might have emerged.[36]

Integration or assimilation?: Tendency of Pakistani/Iranian sphere

State policies as well as attitudes toward minorities can be broadly classified as integrationist or

31 Sixty years ago, only 7.3 percent of population in Pakistan claimed Urdu as one's first language. Regional movements against central government include the separation of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1971, the Sindhi language movement, and the demand to rename "Pashtunistan" from the NWFP's party in 1998.

32 There is no private TV company in Iran (although satellite is available) and the state controls the programmes broadcast in regional "dialects." However, regarding minorities, its quality and quantity is not always appropriate ("making a parody of our language"). An example was introduced that a professor in Tabriz University confessed that educated individuals could no longer speak Azeri-Turkic properly due to the usage of Persian and English. A.W. Samii, "The Nation and its Minorities: Ethnicity, Unity and State Policy in Iran," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* no. 1&2 (2000): 128-137.

33 In Pakistan, the literacy rate for females aged ten years and above in urban Punjab (66 percent) is five times higher than that of women in rural Baluchistan (13 percent). (Wilder, *Needs Assessment Exercise of Education Sector*, 12).

34 For example, in urban areas in Iran, the government has greater control over public hygiene and sanitation. Public garbage bins are found on many public roads and residents are accustomed to following established social rules and behaviours. In contrast, the opposite scenario largely exists in Pakistan except limited areas.

35 Samii, "The Nation and its Minorities."

36 For instance, perceptions toward reproductive health among Afghan refugees appear to vary depending on location (in selected Afghan communities in Mashhad and Zahedan city) as well as generations. P. Piran, "Effects of Social Interaction between Afghan Refugees and Iranians on Reproductive Health Attitudes," *Disasters* 28, no. 3 (2004):283-293; see also M.J. Abbasi-Shabazi et al., *Return to Afghanistan? A Study of Afghans Living in Zahedan* (Kabul: AREU, 2005), 9-10.

Table 2: Comparative pattern in Pakistani and Iranian society

Iran (greater homogeneity)		*Pakistan (greater regional gap)*
Significance of the **national language,** English utilised less	Language	Prevalence of **local languages,** English important
66.7%	Urban population[2]	34.1%
98.1% for males (15-24 years old) 96.7% for females[3]	Youth literacy[4]	76.7% for males (15-24 years old) 53.1% for females
Urban: 25.2 children Rural: 34.7 children	Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)[5]	Urban: 74.6 children Rural: 102.2 children
Urban: 1.8 children Rural: 2.4 children	Fertility rate (per woman)[6]	Urban: 3.7 children Rural: 5.4 children
Modernisation, centralised control (more **assimilationist**)	Prevalent tendency	Cultural tradition, regional diversity (more **integrationist**)

Note: There is no doubt that both Pakistan and Iran consist of a variety of elements and can hardly be generalised; an easy dichotomy does not exist. However, such broad tendencies influence how young Afghans are brought up. This is a general comparison of two distinctive host countries as a whole.

assimilationist. The integrationist approach involves a state that is supportive of multiculturalism, while the assimilationist model requires minorities to become homogeneous members of the majority of the population. Non-mainstream cultures are viewed as less worthy or even as harmful.[37] As reviewed in this section, regulation by the Pakistani and Iranian authorities of Afghans living in those countries, regional language policies, and social attitudes of the host population all shape the environment of the two host countries. Overall, according to the contexts in which the study's respondents resided and their experiences within host populations, some urban areas of Iran may be viewed as more assimilationist, while Pakistan may be understood as a more integrationist environment.

However, it is important to remember that the situation for individual Afghan refugees who sought asylum in Pakistan and Iran cannot be over-generalised; it differed markedly depending on the place of residence[38], changes experienced over time and the personal situation of the refugees themselves. Youth and young adult Afghans who grew up in the neighbouring countries are not one homogeneous group; rather they are individually distinct in relation to language spoken, degree of religiosity, family attitudes and location of origin and education level, among many other factors. Although respondents in this study may have grown up geographically close to their homeland (in some cases just across the border), they themselves featured a range of different experiences and traits, which were then combined with other characteristics of host populations.

37 S. Castles and M.J. Miller, eds., *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003), 250-51.

38 For example, according to a male Pashtun returnee who grew up among Sunni Iranian neighbours close to the border area, he was familiar with *perahan o tomban* (popular Afghan male dress) in Iran, while another respondent who grew up in Tehran saw this type of dress for the first time upon his first return to Afghanistan. Similarly, Afghans in Torbat-e Jam (eastern Iran) are mostly Sunnis, and are reported to be well-integrated in Iran through mixed marriages. F. Adelkhah and Z. Olszewska, "The Iranian Afghans," *Iranian Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007):137-65.

Part 3: Key Concepts

This section provides key concepts underpinning this research project, reviewing relevant literature from similar studies in other contexts in support of the conceptual framework within which data was analysed and results are presented. Beyond generating a knowledge base for policymaking in relation to the repatriation of Afghan refugees, this research also aims to make a contribution to the academic study of forced migration. More dominant psychiatric approaches study refugee youth in terms of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder; in contrast to these, some recent studies have begun to use an anthropological perspective, viewing the impact of their prolonged displacement on, in particular, their perception of self, homeland, and future outlook.[39]

Still, there is limited literature on the broader outcomes of second-generation refugees' return to their homeland in the context of prolonged forced migration—in particular, not only regarding their initial settlement after repatriation but also the later, complex reintegration process.[40] The study of identity and adaptation among youth and the second generation of diasporas tends to assume greater significance in the Western context, where often the migrant and receiving culture are markedly different.[41] This study of second-generation refugees living in Afghanistan's neighbouring countries attempts to provide greater insight in the case of similar cultural, geographical and regional contexts.

3.1 Struggling to find an identity and the role of "the other"

In anthropology, "identity" is defined on two levels. In one meaning, it refers to the unique qualities of individuals that differentiate them from others. On another social level, it is associated with the sense of sameness "in that persons associate themselves, or be associated by others, with groups or categories on the basis of some salient common feature." The latter social-level identity, which closely correlates with development of individual characteristics, emphasises the linkages with individuals and one's social and cultural environments.[42] In this research project, self-consciousness in a collective sense is focused in relation to how second-generation Afghan refugees position themselves among Pakistanis or Iranians if they grew up in a foreign country, and among those Afghans who grew up in Afghanistan or are from a different cultural background. Upon return to Afghanistan, how their values have transformed or reconstructed is explored in detail.

Ethnicity, an aspect of group relationships between those who consider themselves to be culturally distinct from others, can be explained as one of the social identities.[43] Ethnic identity can be associated not only with biological roots and connections, but also can be utilised as an instrument for political mobilisation in pursuit of benefits and purpose, or understood as an ongoing process that is open to negotiation and modification.[44] Such fluid natures

39 See: D. Chatty, "Researching Refugee Youth in the Middle East: Reflections on the Importance of Comparative Research," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007):265-80; J. Boyden and J. de Berry, *Children and Youth on the Front Line: Ethnography, Armed Conflict and Displacement* (Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).

40 F. Cornish, K. Peltzer and M. MacLachlan, "Returning Strangers: The Children of Malawian Refugees Come 'Home'?," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12, no. 3 (1999):264-83.

41 For example: M. O'Neill and T. Spybey, "Global Refugees, Exile, Displacement and Belonging," *Sociology* 37 (2003): 7-12; M. J. Melia, "Transatlantic Dialogue on Integration of Immigrant Children and Adolescents," *International Migration* 42, no. 4 (2004): 123-39; P.A. Kurien, "Being Young, Brown, and Hindu: The Identity Struggles of Second-Generation Indian Americans," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 34, no. 4 (2005): 434-69; C. Mcauliffe, "Religious Identity and Transnational Relations in the Iranian Diaspora," *Global Networks* 7, no. 3 (2007):307-27.

42 R. Byron, "Identity" in *Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, eds. A. Barnard and J. Spencer, 292 (London: Routledge, 2002).

43 T.H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (Chippenham: Pluto Press, 2002), 12-3.

44 S. Sokolovskii and V. Tishkov, "Ethnicity," in *Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, eds. A. Barnard and J. Spencer (London: Routledge, 2002), 190-2.

of ethnic identity were often observed among our respondents, particularly in how they presented themselves (see Section 5.5) and how they experienced tensions in the face of Pakistani or Iranian social values in pursuit of balance between the Afghan self in exile and the link to Afghanistan (see Section 5.5). Ethnic identity is not fixed; it changes over time when individuals understand themselves in the context of those around them in different circumstances, as Jenkins notes:

> *Neither culture nor ethnicity is "something" that people "have," or indeed, to which they "belong." They are, rather, complex repertoires which people experience, learn and "do" in their daily lives, within which they construct an ongoing sense of themselves and an understanding of their fellows.*[45]

This fluid nature of identity may be influenced to an even greater degree by different environments, particularly in the context of refugees and migrants as minority groups in society: the "other" is not only a member of one's own family, kin or ethnic group, but also a "national other." Relating to a particular group or groups becomes crucial for a sense of belonging in the presence of "others" who are markedly different from one's own identity.

In the case of Afghanistan, Schetter points out that Afghan national consciousness, shared by the majority of non-Pashtun populations, first emerged in response to the fragmentation of the country due to war and the intervention of a foreign power. In particular, Afghans in exile started to perceive the territorial border nostalgically, albeit hardly rooted in common traditions or experiences.[46] However, for second-generation Afghan refugees, the national awareness of themselves as Afghans was often reinforced in the face of Pakistanis or Iranians, rather than via the sentiments and nostalgia of the past days that the first-generation Afghans had experienced in Afghanistan (see Section 5.4).

For second-generation Afghan refugees, the emergence of identity in relation to the subgroups among Afghans in exile (Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, etc.) follows a similar path to that of their identity as refugees. Both identities are formed by encountering differing values over time. It is a common feature of respondents' childhoods that they played with many different children without taking into consideration ethnicity or nationality. Second-generation Afghan refugees would have certain inherited memories of these divisions from their parents. Some experienced conflict over ethnicity or politics that related to their place of origin in Afghanistan during their time in Pakistan or Iran; this, however, was more likely to be an issue for first-generation Afghan refugees (while sometimes transmitted to the second generation), or was more frequently referred to as an issue within Afghanistan—particularly by returnee respondents (see Section 7.3) or those voicing concerns about repatriation.[47] A recent study conducted in two different areas in Isfahan reports that ethnic identity was, at times, considered subordinate to hopes for national unity, due to an understanding of how ethnic religious divides destroyed Afghanistan.[48] Therefore, as refugees born or brought up in Pakistan and Iran, the dominant feeling of "difference" was—as refugees—the sense of being residents of inferior status to the citizens of that country.

Adolescence is often a period during which an individual's identity is further developed—a time that is dominated by issues of positioning oneself in relation to peers, followed by a period of young adulthood.[49] For many youth, particularly those who belong to an ethnic minority, the process of learning about one's own ethnicity takes on great significance, particularly in the context of forced displacement and the effect of having a legal

45 R. Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations* (London: Sage, 1997), 14.

46 C. Schetter, "Ethnoscapes, National Territorialisation, and the Afghan War," *Geopolitics* 10 (2005): 50-75.

47 Concerns about ongoing ethnic tension in Afghanistan (and also in Pakistan/Iran to a various degree) were raised by multiple respondents in Pakistan and Iran regardless of their ethnicity.

48 D. Tober, "My Body is Broken Like My Country: Identity, Nation, and Repatriation among Afghan Refugees in Iran," *Iranian Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007):263-85.

49 C.G. Mooney, *Theories of Childhood: An Introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget, and Vygotsky* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Redleaf Press, 2000), 68.

status different from that of the citizens of the host country. Children who are subject to negative images and perceptions of their ethnic group may encounter challenges in relation to positioning themselves within their external environment. From the social, psychological and child developmental perspectives, a strong ethnic identity is achieved when an individual has positive feelings about his or her group, leading to inner strength and positive psychological well-being.[50] It is a critical point whether these young Afghan refugees can associate any positive meaning with themselves and Afghanistan, as it eventually influences decision-making about return (see Section 5.5).

Unity for Afghans

"I'd like to say that our generation should stop racism. We should stop thinking that I'm from Kabul, or you're from Khost, etc. Racism destroyed our country... We should bring a faith among us that we're Afghans."

— Pashtun male student in Karachi who has never seen his native Kunduz

Identities of young refugees are often contradictory. In a participatory study, common features drawn from comparisons of young Palestinian, Afghan and Sahrawi refugees raised in different contexts are pointed out: possession of multiple and/or contested identities with places; gendered opportunism and agency (for example, acquiring an education alongside helping their family, but often with gender disparity); and resilience in the face of challenges and optimism for the future.[51] The formation of identify of young refugees as they grow up in social contexts with different values is a complex process that can lead to conflicting internal identities.

3.2 Acculturation

Acculturation is the process in which individuals acquire cultural patterns due to intercultural contact.[52] There are two distinct processes of acculturation: psychological adaptation (individual emotional well-being, mental health) and sociocultural adaptation (acquiring culturally appropriate social skills to manage daily life in a particular external context).[53] This is a critical point: many second-generation Afghan refugees have acquired the culture and lifestyle of the host society and are familiar with it, but they are also not entirely free from periodic feelings of "non-belonging" that are rooted in their refugee status (see Section 5.4). Upon repatriation to their "homeland," a similar process of adaptation to the "new" context must again take place: becoming accustomed to Afghanistan, which is not necessarily a familiar environment, from a point of view acquired while growing up in Pakistan or Iran. Some returnees similarly experience the struggles of psychological adaptation even though they have managed to resettle physically and socially.

"I'm neither Iranian nor Afghan."

— 30-year-old male, studying at a postgraduate level in Iran

Furthermore, a quantitative study on the degree of acculturation and adaptation of immigrant youth in 13 (primarily Western) contexts undertaken by Berry et al. suggested that there are four acculturation "profiles" that represent possible outcomes of the acculturation process,[54] as well

50 J. Phinney et al., "Ethnic Identity, Immigration and Wellbeing: An Interactional Perspective," *Journal of Social Issues* 57, no. 3 (2001): 493–510.

51 Chatty, "Researching Refugee Youth in the Middle East," 271-278.

52 J.W. Berry et al., *Immigrant Youth in Cultural Transition: Acculturation, Identity, and Adaptation Across National Context* (New Jersey/London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 212.

53 C. Ward, "Acculturation," in *Handbook of Intercultural Training*, eds. D. Landis and R. Bahagat (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1996), 124-147.

54 These include separating oneself from the host community and mixing largely with their own social group; assimilating through a strong orientation to the host community; integrating by maintaining aspects

as some gender disparity (boys showed slightly greater psychological—but less sociocultural—adaptation than girls). This suggests that female immigrant youth may be more at risk in relation to psychological well-being when they experience a cultural transition. This may be relevant when synthesising the results from the three AREU case studies conducted earlier: many second-generation Afghan refugee respondents exhibited a bi-multicultural outcome (somehow maintaining a balance of their external social sphere with their internal Afghan domain even when facing contradictions),[55] and female returnees did indeed tend to face greater psychological stress during the process of reintegration in their homeland (see Section 7.4).

3.3 The concept of homeland and second-generation refugee return

In the context of forced migration, it is essential to understand how the transnational refugee society maintains its identity and how each individual copes with the changes brought about by displacement. Traditionally, national identity was linked to a territory (the nation) and individuals perceived as rooted in one place. In this model, displacement from one's own soil implies uprootedness, disorder and a loss of emotional connection to a place.[56]

These assumptions have been challenged by recent dramatic increases in the mobility of people and information—driven by globalisation and ongoing situations of forced displacement. Rather than viewing places as fixed, anthropologists now focus on the process of "place-making" and its impact on identity. The focus has turned to how individuals and groups can recreate a "home" that is not necessarily tied to a particular place or space.[57] Thus, focusing on "'places of birth' and degree of nativeness is to ignore the multiplicity of attachments that people form to places through living in, remembering, and imagining them."[58]

Perceptions of "return" and "homeland" among displaced peoples are dependent to a degree on the circumstances that led them to leave their native land, and their experiences and opportunities at their destination.[59] In the case of Afghanistan, it has been noted that, as a Shia minority in the country, Hazara refugees continue to perceive their status in their home country as vulnerable and their life in the asylum country as potentially more prosperous. This analysis is quantitatively supported by the lower percentage of Hazara returns to Afghanistan from Iran compared to refugees of other ethnicities.[60]

Refugee experiences vary by context. In some cases the notion of homeland may lose its territorial affiliation, while in others homeland remains a "territorially anchored identity". It is the place where rights are ensured to equal treatment, freedom of movement and residence, and access to resources, livelihoods and property. When refugees experience displacement, social exclusion or the feeling of non-belonging, this feeling is brought into even sharper focus (as supported by data from this study). Kibreab concludes:

> *[T]he relationship between a territory and*

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of their own and the external host society's customs and culture; or a mix of these, demonstrating uncertainty about their position in society and showing inconsistent attitudes. J.W. Berry et al., "Immigrant Youth: Acculturation, Identity, and Adaptation," *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 55, no.3 (2006): 303-332.

55 In contrast to Berry's quantitative study, this study is based on a qualitative analysis of oral histories; therefore, classification of the acculturation profile of this study's respondents is relative. Second-generation Afghan refugees with complex identities are not easily categorised within a set of profiles.

56 L. Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialisation of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 24-44.

57 D. Turton, "The Meaning of Place in a World of Movement: Lessons from Long-Term Field Research in Southern Ethiopia," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18, no. 3 (2005): 258-280.

58 Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples," 38.

59 G. Kibreab, "Revisiting the Debate on People, Place, Identity and Displacement," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12, no. 4 (1999): 384-410.

60 Hazaras comprise 43 percent of documented Afghans in Iran, while only 25.6 percent of the total number of UNHCR-assisted returns (to August 2005) were Hazaras. M.J. Abbasi-Shavazi and D. Glazebrook, *Continued Protection, Sustainable Reintegration: Afghan Refugees and Migrants in Iran* (Kabul: AREU, 2006), 7. Overall, 25.3 percent of the total UNHCR-assisted returnees from Iran are recorded as Hazaras (as of May 2008) according to statistics acquired from UNHCR, Kabul.

> *identity, not in terms of a link between a people and a soil, as such, but rather in terms of membership of a state occupying a given territory with the right to exclude others from that territory, is significant. People tend to identify strongly with their territories because of the opportunity this offers regarding rights of access to resources and protection by virtue of being a member or citizen of that territory.*[61]

"Returning" to one's "homeland" for second-generation refugees does not necessarily mean an actual return: many have grown up without ever having experienced life in their own homeland. For this group, return intentions are less motivated by recovering an idealised past, kept alive through the stories of relatives and other refugees, than by ideas of rights, access to property, and citizenship.[62] This is an important expectation of their country that many second-generation Afghan refugees embrace upon return. If expectations are great but not met in reality, they experience further disappointment (see Table 7 in Section 7.1).

For younger refugees in particular, life after returning to their "homeland" often presents many new difficulties. Empirical studies of young returnees in other parts of the world have demonstrated the emotional stress experienced after return, primarily in relation to facing "others" who did not leave during the period of conflict or emergency. In the case of Malawian children who were born outside their country when their homeland was under dictatorship, which lasted from 1964 to 1993, young returnees from Zambia exhibited adjustment stress because their experience of being "outsiders" did not end as expected after returning to their homeland. Rather, the stress of still feeling like "outsiders" was combined with a lack of material possessions, education and work opportunities to produce a set of factors that seriously jeopardised their successful reintegration.[63]

It is the balance of multiple experiences that influence the complex reintegration process of young returnees. This was examined in depth among returnee respondents in the Afghanistan case study, the results of which are explored in Section 7.

61 Kibreab, "Revisiting the Debate," 408.

62 R. Zetter, "Reconceptualising the Myth of Return: Continuity and Transition Amongst the Greek-Cypriot Refugees of 1974," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12, no. 1 (1999): 1-22.

63 Cornish et al., "Returning Strangers," 281.

Part 4: Methodology

4.1 Field approach and sampling

The main criteria for selecting second-generation Afghan refugee and returnee respondents, both male and female, were that they:

- were 15-30 years old and had spent more than half of their lives in Pakistan or Iran; and
- for returnees, had returned to Afghanistan after the Afghan Interim Authority was established in late 2001 and had lived in Afghanistan for at least six months.

It was also important to include respondents with diverse demographic characteristics to ensure that a representatively broad range of opportunities, experiences and future perceptions would be reflected in this qualitative study. The following key issues were taken into account in the quota sampling process, based on the assumption that these variables would have been likely to affect the personal experiences and return intentions of young Afghans:

- marital status;
- education level and occupation (of the respondent);
- economic status (of the household);[64]
- ethnicity; and
- location of refuge and return (e.g. Pakistan/Iran, urban/rural/camp, main local language spoken in the area).

In addition, more detailed criteria were used where possible to further diversify the sample, including: degree of religiosity; positive/negative attitude to Pakistanis/Iranians; and mobility of women (for example, women working outside the home versus those not even allowed to visit relatives). In both Pakistan and Iran, at least one case of a mixed ethnicity marriage was identified by each team in each country, and the inclusion of a female-headed household (one where the primary income was earned by females) was also set as a selection criterion for each research site. With this range of considerations in place, identifying "the ideal respondent" was not a simple task.

Fieldwork for this qualitative study was conducted in three countries over different periods during one year, starting in April 2006. The 12-month period included: organising the research team (hiring and training); conducting meetings with local government institutions and related organisations; identifying respondents and obtaining their informed consent; and conducting intensive interviews with respondents and transcribing data collected. AREU's research team conducted fieldwork in Pakistan and Afghanistan, while in Iran, given the difficulties that an independent Afghan organisation would have had in obtaining the required permission to conduct research, AREU entered into a partnership with the University of Tehran to complete the fieldwork. In Pakistan, AREU's partner organisations, which have worked extensively with Afghans in Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi and have accumulated vast experience and local understanding of the prevailing issues, assisted the research team's work there.[65] UNHCR, in cooperation with relevant government authorities, facilitated the research in Pakistan.

AREU's research team was comprised of two two-member teams: a male Afghan team and a female Afghan team. An expatriate supervisor directly managed the work of both teams and a senior research manager oversaw the research project. The research team in Iran was comprised of five university-based academics (three demographers, a sociologist and an anthropologist) and five Afghan interviewers (two males and three females).

64 During the initial identification of respondents, their relative economic status (low, middle, upper) was estimated through observation where possible (dress, belongings, housing) and informal conversation about their families. This information was later used during data analysis to further categorise respondents.

65 AREU's host organisations in Pakistan for this research project were: International Rescue Committee in Peshawar; Save the Children USA in Quetta; and FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance in Karachi.

Table 3: Second-generation Afghan refugee respondents (in-depth interviews)

Country	Research site	FEMALE		MALE		TOTAL
		Single	Married	Single	Married	
Pakistan 71	Peshawar	10	10	8	10	38
	Quetta	4	3	3	4	14
	Karachi	7	3	5	4	19
Iran 80	Tehran	9	7	9	7	32
	Mashhad	9	7	7	9	32
	Isfahan	4	4	6	2	16
Afghanistan 48	Kabul	4	4	4	4	16
	Herat	3	5	4	4	16
	Baghlan	5	3	4	4	16
TOTAL		*55*	*46*	*50*	*48*	*199*
		101		*98*		

The fact that the interviewers were Afghans themselves, in the same age group and speaking the same languages as the interviewees, was particularly important for this study. The research team shared personal memories with respondents, which built trust and encouraged them to share their experiences. Interviews were conducted in the languages with which respondents felt most comfortable, mostly either Dari or Pashto, while a few were done in Urdu and English.[66]

As a result, a total of 199 second-generation Afghan refugees were interviewed in three countries as shown in Table 3.[67] The number of respondents in Afghanistan was reduced in order to explore in greater depth the life histories of each individual: time prior to migration, experiences in the country of refuge, return decision-making, reintegration and future prospects. While efforts were made to ensure that data collected was as comparable as possible, there were certain operational limitations for comparative analysis between the countries. In Iran, respondents with tertiary education and professional employment were over-represented (see "Education" in Annex III). Data limitations from the neighbouring countries and some gaps were mitigated by the strength of data collected among a range of returnees in three geographical areas in Afghanistan (Kabul, Herat and Baghlan), which captured information about respondents who had returned from a range of locations (not predetermined) within Pakistan and Iran—and not only from those fixed research sites in which respondents were interviewed in the neighbouring countries (for example, tribal areas in Pakistan and Torbat-e Jam in Iran).

This qualitative study cannot attempt to represent the full spectrum of experiences of all the second-generation Afghan refugees among either the large populations of refugees remaining in neighbouring countries or the nearly 5.6 million returnees to Afghanistan from neighbouring countries over the past six years. It does, however, aim to understand

66 In Pakistan, one Afghan male and two female interviewers (covering four languages: Dari, Pashto, Urdu and English) were employed and trained at each site, and at least one male and one female interviewer remained unchanged in the three research sites. One permanent AREU staff member (male) undertook fieldwork in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, which was of great value in maintaining continuity and data quality. In Iran, interviewers spoke Dari and Iranian Persian. In Afghanistan, only Dari was used by female interviewers outside Kabul due to the unavailability of Pashto-speaking Afghan female interviewers who were able to travel.

67 The number of respondents in each site varies. Sampling from Quetta was limited because of the suspension of fieldwork after two weeks due to local political tensions and legal issues. Sampling from Peshawar was increased to compensate for the shorter time spent in Quetta. Only two weeks of fieldwork were conducted in Isfahan due to time constraints.

the perceptions about return, reintegration experiences and changing values of a number of individuals from purposively selected groups exhibiting a range of characteristics, and from these, some important insights may be drawn. Some of the key characteristics of the 199 respondents in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan are described in Annex III, and further details appear in each country case study (published separately).[68]

4.2 Selecting the research sites and communities

Each of the three research sites in the three countries studied were selected primarily because of their concentrated Afghan population (either refugees or returnees), along with their balance of linguistic/ethnic groups and logistical feasibility in relation to security for researchers undertaking field work. The locations were also chosen so that there would be as broad a geographical representation as was possible in each country.[69] For the fieldwork carried out in Pakistan and Iran, the sampling approach was initially based on neighbourhood selection, and focused on finding communities in each site with high concentrations of Afghan refugees.

Preliminary findings in Pakistan suggested that Afghans' experiences as refugees there have been strongly influenced by whether they lived in a homogeneous Afghan neighbourhood or in an area with greater exposure to Pakistanis. For this reason, a primary consideration in neighbourhood selection in Pakistan became the neighbourhood's specific characteristics (whether homogeneous, comprised mostly of Afghan residents or otherwise) rather than geographical diversity (urban, peri-urban or rural); later, greater emphasis was placed on highly specified respondent characteristics. This was the case to an even greater extent in locating second-generation Afghan refugees who had returned to Afghanistan—the initial location of the research site simply provided an entry to fieldwork rather than being a key selection criterion itself.

4.3 Seeking "the ideal respondent" in the field

In Peshawar, Pakistan, which has a high concentration of Afghan refugees, the task of identifying young Afghans who fit the quota-sampling criteria was much easier compared to other sites. The male research team initially spent time in the communities talking to elders, shopkeepers, property dealers, restaurant workers and others, asking if they knew any Afghans who had lived in Pakistan for a long time. At the same time, the female research team approached women and children on the street, or sometimes in a health clinic or school, to ask similar questions. Introductions from NGOs, government organisations, various institutions and community leaders were also helpful in accessing certain members of the neighbourhood, particularly when the team needed to identify respondents with more specific criteria.[70]

The identification of second-generation Afghan refugees became more difficult in Quetta and Karachi. In many parts of Karachi, Afghans are very similar to Pakistanis in their physical appearance and manner of dressing. Furthermore, the research team noted that there was significant fear and suspicion directed toward them because of the refugees' ambiguous legal status, and this presented a major obstacle in respondent selection. Potential respondents were reluctant to talk, as many believed that revealing their refugee status could lead to being reported to the police, sent to jail or deported. This was the case among both the low-income group (such as garbage collectors) as well as those who were wealthier (such as businessmen). The research teams made significant efforts to develop a rapport through informal talks within the community.

68 Abbasi-Shavazi et al., *Second-Generation Afghans in Iran*; Saito and Hunte, *The Dilemma of Second-Generation Afghans in Pakistan*; and Saito, *From* Mohajer *to* Hamwatan*: Afghans Return Home*.

69 Further details on site selection are available in the case studies for each country.

70 During fieldwork, education emerged as a key factor in the diverse experiences of second-generation refugees. In the latter stage of fieldwork in Pakistan, highly specific criteria in relation to educational background were used in the selection of respondents, for example, those who had studied entirely in the Pakistani school system or those who had moved from Afghan schools to Pakistani schools and vice versa.

In Iran, an Afghan team manager in the field played a key role in contacting local Afghan networks in the research sites—residents, elders, shops, schools and cultural centres—to identify potentially suitable respondents exhibiting a range of characteristics that would meet the quota-sampling criteria. The research team then arranged interview times with selected respondents in appropriate locations (such as at an Afghan school or at the home of the respondent). Interviewers were provided with a letter from the University of Tehran indicating the purpose of the study, a letter from the agency responsible for funding the research project, and written approval from the relevant Iranian authorities. The confidentiality of information provided by respondents was explained, particularly as some respondents expressed concerns about the interview being recorded.

In Afghanistan, a reduced number of respondents were specifically selected in order to capture detailed and diverse information about returnee experiences. The research team spent a number of weeks networking within the study sites, documenting second-generation returnees they encountered along with any basic information gleaned during informal conversations. After considering potential respondents, the team then selected those who best fulfilled the quota requirements in each location. Where a certain criterion in the quota sampling was not identified as part of this process, researchers continued their attempts to find "the ideal respondent" throughout the fieldwork.

4.4 Research tools

A series of semi-structured interview guides containing highly specific probing questions were prepared for interviewers in Pakistan and Iran in order to facilitate the comparability of data collected. These guides were modified over time during fieldwork, and were further revised for the fieldwork in Afghanistan. Individual interviews in Pakistan and Iran usually took two to 2.5 hours, excluding the time required for a general introduction of the research team, an explanation of the purpose of the project, and acquisition of consent for conducting the interview.[71] In the case of fieldwork in Afghanistan, at least two interviews per individual (of two to 2.5 hours each) were conducted to capture the fullest picture of the life history of respondents.

A total of 12 focus group discussions (six in both Pakistan and Iran) and 14 parental interviews (six in Pakistan, eight in Iran)[72] were conducted in order to explore issues beyond individuals' own experiences and to generate dialogue among second-generation Afghan refugees. However, the individual in-depth interviews were found to be more effective in building an understanding of the context and background of statements made, making focus group discussions a less useful methodology later.

Participant observation was another powerful research tool that complemented the data collected at the community, household and individual levels. Dress, appearance and behaviour of respondents were systematically noted and compared to others in the community, particularly in non-urban areas, as a signal of their degree of integration. When interviews were conducted in respondents' homes, assets and belongings were some other indicators used to estimate the economic status of the household. In particular, the team recorded emotional and behavioural interactions and changes observed during conversations.

71 In Pakistan and Afghanistan, confidential interviews were written down in detailed field notes (one interviewer led the conversation while the other took notes), while digital recorders were used in Iran (one led the conversation while the other recorded and transcribed) after gaining informed consent. Following all interviews, notes and tapes were transcribed and translated, and the transcriptions reviewed for clarity and accuracy.

72 Parental interviewees were selected from among the families of respondents, in particular where respondents had opinions that differed from those of their parents.

Part 5: Growing Up Afghan in Pakistan and Iran: The Formation of Afghan Identity

This section explores respondents' backgrounds in relation to having grown up as Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries. The data analysed is drawn from interviews with refugee youth living in Pakistan and Iran, as well as with returnees in Afghanistan looking back on their lives as refugees prior to return. Understanding that refugees' past experiences directly influence their present situation is crucial to a full exploration of their repatriation to Afghanistan and potential future prospects.

Firstly, the ways in which respondents learned about their homeland while growing up in neighbouring countries are discussed. Secondly, the discrepancies between internal values and the external sphere, and adjustments made to compensate for these, are described. The point is then made that returnees often experience ongoing feelings of "non-belonging" upon their repatriation to Afghanistan. The section concludes with a discussion of comparative formation of Afghan identity in Pakistan and Iran, which link to attitudes to Afghanistan and return.

5.1 Learning about Afghanistan

Family histories told by refugees' parents, elder siblings and grandparents, particularly about the time before fleeing from their homeland, helped many respondents to begin to visualise life in Afghanistan.[73] Afghans' stories of their pre-refugee lives, particularly in relation to their family roots and background, are diverse.[74] They do not simply represent an idealised past and nostalgic thoughts of the "old days"; they often include memories of tough lives in times of poverty and war, the martyrdom of loved ones, physical threats to life, and fear. The same storytellers often had multiple versions of events to tell with many layers of complexity, reflecting their different experiences in Afghanistan at various times in their life. Naturally, their memories and own interpretations of past incidents probably changed over time with the input of additional information and comparison with their new experiences in Pakistan and Iran. A complex and ever-changing interpretation of a family's roots was then passed on to second-generation refugees.

Most of this study's respondents' families had had some degree of interaction with their relatives in Afghanistan while living in exile. Sending letters and cassette tapes through travellers was a common way of keeping in touch with relatives, particularly during the years of war.[75] In more recent years, telephone contact, mostly for special occasions such as family celebrations, has also become popular.[76] Among some educated and wealthier respondents, the use of the internet to communicate from Pakistan and Iran was an important means of maintaining contacts in Afghanistan as well as in other countries.

When encountering visitors and relatives from Afghanistan, respondents were sometimes surprised at the gap between themselves and other Afghans in Afghanistan. It was not limited to those who

73 "Elders are often regarded as symbols of the homeland and represent a physical and immediate connection to the past and family history. Oral history is important to transfer knowledge across the generations." D. Chatty and G. Crivello, *Lessons Learnt Report: Children and Adolescents in Sahrawi and Afghan Refugee Households: Living with the Effects of Prolonged Armed Conflict and Forced Migration* (Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre, 2005), 11.

74 For example, a 21-year-old unemployed male interviewed in a periphery area of Baghlan, who grew up in a remote camp in Pakistan, had heard from his father about their family's previous nomadic life, while the mother of a 23-year-old female college student in Peshawar had described pre-war Kabul as a liberal environment in which women used to work and had relatively equal rights.

75 Even in recent years, sending letters through tribal or village networks still appears to be common practice, particularly to rural areas in Afghanistan without mobile phone coverage.

76 Mobile phones in Afghanistan play a significant role in maintaining direct contact with relatives in foreign countries. In some villages in Afghanistan, a few wealthier villagers had mobiles, and others benefited from this.

were well assimilated into Pakistani and Iranian society, but it also occurred among some second-generation Afghan refugees who remained isolated from the host society and associated only with their own Afghan culture.[77] Stories told by visitors from Afghanistan, representing a mix of individual backgrounds and experiences, are heavily influenced by the ever-changing social, political and security context there.

For these reasons, this study tended to find that it was a minority of second-generation refugees who had heard either entirely positive or entirely negative stories about their homeland. Having absorbed a range of both similar and conflicting retellings of complex pre-refugee experiences, the formation of each respondent's notion of their "homeland" was not straightforward. It was also open to further influence.

5.2 Opportunities to learn about Afghanistan

Impacting on an individual's mobility, residential area and neighbourhood are important elements of a refugee's environment. Respondents who grew up in refugee camps in Pakistan or on the border with Iran where the host population was scarce tended to be cognisant of the fact that they were all Afghans from Afghanistan. This situation provided opportunities to learn through daily interaction with the general public, mostly for males who spent more time outside the home among the community (communicating with Afghan shopkeepers, going to the mosque, attending community gatherings, etc.). Conversations about Afghanistan would start when one individual asked another where he was from, leading to a discussion based on them both being Afghan. These kinds of daily communications reinforced the refugees' awareness of being Afghan.

Many respondents in Pakistan and Iran mentioned that mass media (television, radio, magazines and internet) act as important resources in updating refugees about the current situation in Afghanistan. It was often pointed out, mostly by those with higher levels of education, that the mass media within their host countries tended to exaggerate dramatic events that happened in Afghanistan in relation to war and conflict (and in recent years, in relation to bombings and kidnappings). International news services such as BBC Radio filled gaps in the information available. In some selected areas in Pakistan, some respondents said that they watch Afghan programmes in order to find out about the current situation at home—although not all the respondents had access to television at home.[78] Meanwhile, there was no Afghan programmes officially available in Iran (although satellite is available among well-off families). In both countries, information published in Afghan magazines and newspapers, and by Afghan schools, organisations and even political parties during the war, helped many respondents become more aware of the history, culture and political issues of their homeland.

Among respondents' households, a degree of gender disparity was observed in relation to access to information as well as learning languages—more so in Pakistan where several languages are commonly used. Information filtered into the household from male family members was an important source of learning about the external world, including Afghanistan, for less mobile female respondents. In some family contexts, little was discussed or known about Afghanistan—some parents did not talk much about their past lives because of emotional pain associated with recalling their memories, or concern about upsetting small children and having them focus instead on their current life and future prospects. Not feeling that they knew enough about Afghanistan sometimes discouraged them from talking about their homeland—even with Afghan friends.

77 For example, a 17-year-old girl who grew up in Quetta was essentially living in an Afghan enclave in Pakistan. When she was young, she did not even know what a school was because no one from among her relatives had attended. When her cousin (who was physically dirty and untidy) visited her family from a rural village in Afghanistan two years ago, her perception of Afghanistan deteriorated because her cousin did not know what soup was.

78 For example, a few female respondents were not allowed to watch television because of concerns about cultural inappropriateness. Besides, the family of one highly educated male respondent interviewed in Pakistan did not watch television at home because the male elders did not allow it; however, this respondent had access to information outside the home.

An Afghan cultural institution in Pakistan

Afghan children in Pakistan often attend a madrassa

Photos 1,2 and 3:

Afghan learning in Pakistan

The pin-up board at an Afghan School in Pakistan

The opportunity to attend Afghan schools offered a safe way of becoming familiar with background information about Afghanistan, encouraging students' loyalty to their homeland and offering socialisation among the Afghans—particularly in areas where there were few Afghans in Pakistan and in self-run schools in Iran. Afghan schools in Iran often provide a space in which students feel a sense of safety and belonging.[79] The quality of some Afghan schools was often described as not competitive enough compared to Pakistani and Iranian state schools, which was primarily related to resource constraints (but also more affordable fees for Afghan households). However, the positive aspects of Afghan schools included their use of Afghan textbooks,[80] instruction in Dari and Pashto, and inclusion of appropriate topics and celebrations related to Afghanistan—all of which encouraged refugee students to study hard and to consider ultimately returning to serve their own country.

The clear differences in frequency and reasons for visiting Afghanistan between male and female respondents in this study also highlight the contrast between genders in household responsibility and mobility. The majority of second-generation Afghans who grew up in Iran, particularly women, had rarely visited Afghanistan, particularly during the war, often having overwhelmingly uneasy images of Afghanistan in relation to fear of the unknown. According to multiple respondents, there appears to be uncertainty if they come to Afghanistan temporarily, and returning to Iran could be difficult, influenced by changing policy at times. The most influential element in refugees' formation of realistic perceptions of Afghanistan is going to the country and seeing the situation there for themselves. It was reported by a few respondents that they had first experienced truly missing Afghanistan only after returning from their first visit to the country.

The outcome of such fact-finding missions and what is actually discovered there is necessarily dependent on the location visited, the time at which the visit takes place, and the people encountered. Visits to Afghanistan made around the time of decision-making can potentially persuade refugees to return, by providing an accurate understanding of the current situation in their intended return location—both positive and negative aspects[81]—in addition to allowing them to make practical preparations for return.

> ***"When I returned to my village in Afghanistan, I came to know about Afghanistan and being a real Afghan**. I had heard the name "Afghanistan" and I knew that I belonged to it. When I was asked where I'm from, I would say Kabul. But I had only heard of Kabul as somewhere in Afghanistan. I didn't know about other things there."*
>
> — 19-year-old shopkeeper in rural Baghlan who returned from Pakistan without an education

5.3 Growing up Afghan in Pakistan and Iran: the dilemma of different values

The process of identity formation for second-generation Afghans in Pakistan and Iran is often beset by the tension of conflicting values. This occurs in two concurrent contexts—the Afghan internal sphere and the Pakistani or Iranian social sphere, and it is exacerbated by the individual undergoing the adolescent and young adult developmental stages of life. Figure 1 shows the relationships an individual refugee has with his or her family and external society (both Afghans and host population) while growing up in Pakistan and Iran, all of which would feature different norms

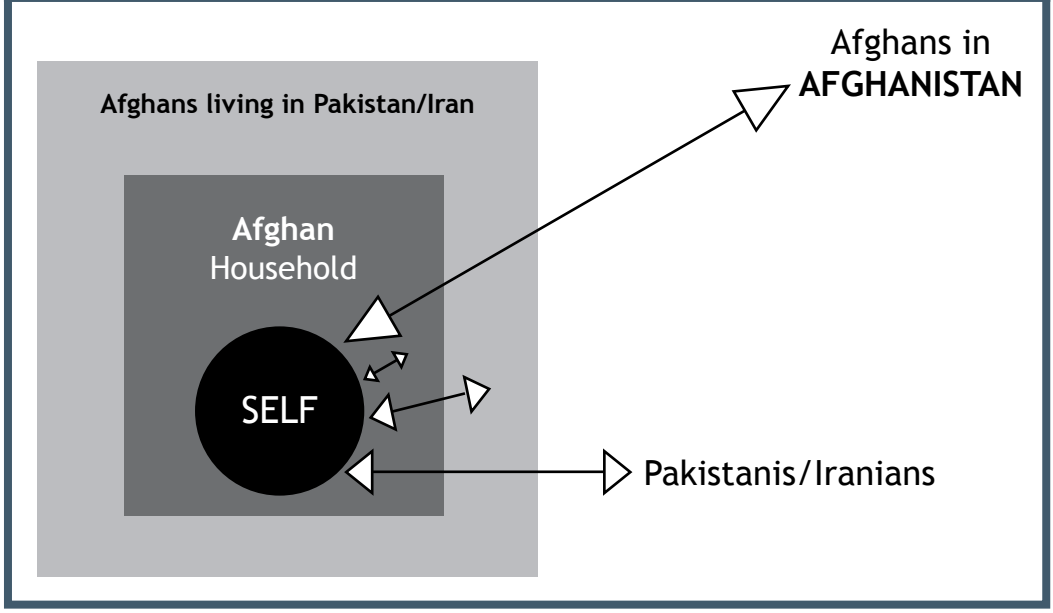
79 Chatty and Crivello, *Lessons Learnt Report*; Chatty, "Researching Refugee Youth," 13.

80 Refugee village respondents in NWFP and Balochistan showed a strong preference for the Afghan curriculum. See: Wilder, *Needs Assessment Exercise of Education Sector*, 50.

81 Several respondents reported that their image of Afghanistan as devastated by war had changed after observing reconstruction efforts, encouraging some to return. On the other hand, negative experiences also discouraged return—not only seeing the high unemployment but also observing corruption and bribery, discrimination, the marginalised poor and powerless, and unfavourable conditions particularly for women.

and values. Respondents almost unanimously reported that among family was where their "own Afghan culture"[82] was first learned. Passing on Afghan culture was an integral part of bringing up boys and girls to be respectful Afghans who would fit in with each family's context. A family's reputation often depends on maintaining modesty—particularly that of its female members—wherever they live. Sometimes the very fact that they were living in a foreign country meant that the desire to preserve and keep pure the family's "own Afghan culture" was even greater, at times expressed in relation to the potential contaminating threat of Pakistani or Iranian culture.[83]

Figure 1: Afghan refugees' social networks in Pakistan/Iran



The social space outside respondents' homes was sometimes very different to that within the home, particularly for those living in predominantly host population areas, where languages other than their own were used. Afghan culture itself has also been transformed over the recent decades of war and large-scale migration, both within Afghanistan and in the countries of exile. The first generation of refugees, fleeing from their homeland, had to adjust to life in asylum countries. This study's respondents, who represent the second-generation of forced displacement, have in most cases developed a much greater attachment to their host society, as it is the place where many were born and that most know best. This difference between the generations causes certain contradictions in values.

Regardless of the extent to which respondents integrated or not with the host society, they sometimes faced contradictions between their internal values and external social norms associated with their Afghan families, relatives, communities, and host societies.[84] In addition, individuals, living in a foreign country among Pakistanis and Iranians, frequently exhibited shifts in behaviour depending on their context (for instance, trying to present themselves as Pakistani or Iranian outside while maintaining their own accent at home). Fundamentally, however, their values were more or less shaped by Afghan norms, and their behaviour, especially within the Afghan domain, was defined by family, relatives and their community.

82 Afghan culture is not homogeneous. Respondents reported considerable diversity among other second-generation Afghans who had grown up in Pakistan or Iran. For example, a 19-year-old male student who grew up in Karachi first heard of *Naw Roz* (New Year) only when his friend at an Afghan course visited Mazar-i-Sharif for New Year celebrations.

83 It was generally perceived by both male and female respondents that Pakistani and Iranian women were often much "freer" in their relationships with men than Afghan women, and that there were benefits associated with the relatively higher social status of those women (greater degree of gender equality, better access to education and work).

84 For example, a 16-year-old uneducated girl, who was born in Karachi but only speaks Dari because she had no relationships with Pakistanis, wanted to wear a *Punjabi* dress like her Afghan friend did, but her mother did not allow it because of considered to be inappropriate to do so in the light of their own culture. This made her aware of her own Afghan dress and the difference between herself and Pakistanis. This is a case of non-assimilation in the host society.

"My mother told me about Pashtun culture—what girls should do in the house and out of house. She was afraid that her daughter might be like a Pakistani if she did not explain anything."

— 19-year-old female with 12th grade education who grew up in Peshawar

*"I was born in Karachi and I feel myself to be a Pakistani. But I have an Afghan family so **I know I am an Afghan, just by name**. I don't have any wish to stay as an Afghan. When I was small and fighting started with children, people called me an Afghan."*

— 23-year-old male worker in Karachi, without education

5.4 Being *mohajerin* in the context of "others"

Another way in which refugees come to learn about Afghanistan is triggered by understanding the meaning of being a *mohajer*[85]—creating further internal complexities as they became aware of the feeling of "non-belonging" in Pakistan or Iran. For example, some respondents—mostly those who were highly assimilated into the host society and who were not conscious of their refugee status in childhood—reported that they thought of themselves as Pakistani or Iranian until they began to notice that their external relationships and environment were different. During childhood, both second-generation Afghan refugees and children of the host population may not have been aware of the differences between each other, but this awareness gradually developed through their interactions with broader society.

This kind of learning not only took place through particular events or moments such as being singled out as refugees by the host population; it also took place in the daily context of living among host communities and gradually discovering similarities and differences there. This often caused second-generation refugees to rethink themselves and their position culturally (language/accent, dress, food, celebrations, religion, gender relations), legally/politically (opportunities, access to services) and economically (ownership of property, income). The external context in which second-generation refugees grow up is a critical factor in how they define themselves. Whether they find similarities, differences, or both depends on a combination of the background of individual respondents and the host society.[86]

However, the simple fact of being a *mohajer*—a legal status that clearly differed to that of the citizens of the host countries—could not be ignored by second-generation Afghan refugees living in Pakistan and Iran, regardless of the similarities they found to their host society and their stated levels of comfort due to having grown up there. The feeling of "non-belonging" can be exacerbated in the face of solidarity among the host population, such as on Pakistan's Independence Day, Iran's Revolution Day, or a state election; refugees do not feel connected to the real meaning of such occasions, and do not prioritise taking time off to celebrate them but rather work and earn money. Similarly, the more advanced systems of law and social order in Pakistan and Iran compared to the less developed situation in Afghanistan (as heard by second-generation refugees from their various sources of information) also tend to bring into sharper focus the complexities that second-generation refugees feel—the uneasiness of being a *mohajer* combined with ambivalence or even anger towards Afghanistan.

85 The terms m*ohajer* (refugee) and *mohajerin* (refugees) imply those who seek asylum for religious reasons, originally used as an honourable term: "when the regime in power does not allow the free practice of Islam… [an individual] who voluntarily goes into exile, and who has severed the ties with his own people and his possessions to take refuge in a land of Islam." P. Centlivers and M. Centlivers-Demont, "The Afghan Refugee in Pakistan: an Ambiguous Identity, *"Journal of Refugee Studies* 1, no. 2 (1988):141-152.

86 For example, a 20-year-old married woman who remained uneducated and had almost no interaction with Pakistanis remembered becoming conscious of being Afghan for the first time when she went to Lahore. Until then, while living in a periphery area of Peshawar, she had not felt that she was in a foreign country—with many of her Afghan relatives living nearby as well as strict Pakistani Pashtun neighbours (whose culture was similar to that of her own family).

> Interviewer: "*What makes it difficult for you when Iranians say 'Afghani' to you, when you are Afghan?*"
>
> Respondent: "*For example, you are sitting in your room now, and someone comes here and yells, 'Tajik!' Isn't that an insult? You are a woman. There is no need to shout that you are a Tajik.*"
>
> — 26-year-old university-educated female returnee from Iran to Kabul

Table 4: Characteristics of respondents in Pakistan and Iran

Iran		*Pakistan*
External **pressures to speak Iranian Persian, relatively less internal control** Less resistance/more willingness to **blend in** with Iranian society's values	*1. Language, education, and cultural response*	External **choice/ diversity** but internal pressure to speak mother tongue Attempts to maintain Afghan culture
Persistent **fear** of deportation, valid ID essential	*2. Identification in public*	Increasing need for valid ID, but used to be less
Shame, denial of being Afghan	*3. Perception of self as Afghan within host society*	Struggle for **honour, self autonomy, pride**
More **passive** or powerless connotations, such as being employed as labourers	*4. Stereotypical characteristics of Afghan-ness*	More **active** connotations, such as zeal, strength, honour (although vulnerable at the same time)

Note: As there is regional diversity within each country as well as among each community/family/individual personality, this table makes generalisations based on tendencies observed among respondents, which are influenced by the cultural and political frameworks within which they primarily grew up (for this reason, for example, the characteristics are mostly a reflection of selected urban areas in Iran).

It was almost unanimously reported by respondents in this study that being labelled as a refugee or "*mohajer*," regardless of their degree of individual integration with the host population, was the greatest factor leading to feelings of marginalisation in exile. This was especially the case during those times when bilateral relationships between the neighbouring countries and Afghanistan were strained. The term "*mohajer*" originally used to refer to refugees who had fled their homes to avoid religious oppression or persecution; however, it does not necessarily retain its original meaning any longer. Some respondents noted that the fact that they were *mohajerin* was not the problem, but rather the way they came to be derogated by the host population as "*mohajer*," and these feelings were often shown to persist even after repatriation. The stress and fear associated with being taunted and labelled with derogatory terms are more acute among children and youth, who face the already difficult situation of growing up among "others" who were different and seeking their own anchor point from which to establish their values and ideas.[87]

Whether done intentionally or not, the repeated abuse that Afghan refugees suffer (even if not directly toward to the respondent, but toward Afghans in general) contributes to their feelings of being foreign—the full realisation of what it means to be a *mohajer*—and points to the inevitability of return. This was commonly understood, even among those respondents who were, at the time of interview, reluctant to return. *Mohajerin* cannot become Pakistani or Iranian citizens, even if they have lived outside their own country for decades and over several generations—unlike some of their relatives who have been able to acquire citizenship in other countries (such as those in the West). The

87 Phinney et al., "Ethnic Identity, Immigration and Wellbeing," 496.

majority of refugees still living in Pakistan and Iran believe that they must ultimately return, although the time has yet to be decided and that there is no place to go but Afghanistan.[88]

5.5 The formation of Afghan identity outside Afghanistan

Based on analysis of individual characteristics, some comparative key aspects emerged (Table 4) that are heavily reflective of the prevailing environment of the two host countries (see Table 1 and 2). These issues necessarily influence the formation of internal values and the basis on which second-generation refugees perceive their own Afghanness, linking to their attitudes toward Afghanistan and later reintegration process.

1. Language, education, and cultural response

Language and accent acquired in childhood, including from schooling, are primary aspects of individual distinctiveness. For this reason, households in Pakistan tended to make greater efforts to ensure that their children should grow up with their parents' mother tongue in the correct accent as a mark of being Afghan. Respondents reported that their use of language and accent depended on context, but that they were particularly careful to use their family's language correctly at home in front of their elders, especially in Pakistan. Similarly, in the case of educating children in Pakistani schools, where the language of instruction was either Urdu or English,[89] the language problem was a critical issue that often meant Afghans were unable to read and write in their family's language. This study even came across a few cases of lack of proficiency in their mother tongue (for example, where they felt more comfortable speaking Urdu than the family's own language, Dari or Pashto).

In contrast, respondents who grew up in Iran needed to speak Iranian Persian outside the home (as seen in Table 2). At home, some parents attempted to maintain their own accent to preserve their Afghan heritage, but this was less common than found within refugee households living in Pakistan.[90] No particular concerns were raised among respondents in Iran about sending Afghan children to Iranian state schools in relation to them "becoming Iranians." Iranian state schools, with their higher quality of education (better facilities, teaching methods and discipline), were recognised as a place for gaining an education, while cultural matters were learnt at home.

> *"Iran was good in terms of this. Afghan refugees learnt something; went to a literacy course, knew more about how to keep house clean and hygiene, but those who remained here don't care about cleanness and hygiene."*
>
> — 24-year-old housewife in Herat who could not attend a formal school in Iran due to not having legal document (but she attended an informal literacy course)

The prevailing social norm in many parts of Iran is to educate boys as well as girls, among both Iranians and Afghans. Iran's evolution in education, which was strongly supported by religious scholars, was perceived by Afghans as the role model for Muslim men and women and as their responsibility.[91] The positive aspects of Iran—a country perceived as being cultured, respectful of women's rights, Islamic and less patriarchal—were praised by the majority of respondents. The literacy rate clearly shows a contrast between the two countries, with

88 The sampling for this study also included those who were looking at the possibilities of moving further afield, mostly to Western countries. See Table 5.

89 In Pakistani private schools, English is often the main teaching language, followed by Urdu. In government schools, Urdu is the main language of instruction. In some government schools where Pashto is predominantly used in the region, Pashto is also used as a teaching language.

90 Among Pashtun respondents, if both parents were Pashtun most families spoke Pashto at home, regardless of their residential area in either Pakistan or Iran.

91 Gender roles among Afghan refugees in Iran have been transformed in various aspects: participating in income-earning activities, more decision-making in reproductive health and marriage, and positions in the family, education, etc. See discussions of H. Hoodfar, "Families on the Move: The Changing Role of Afghan Refugee Women in Iran," *HAWWA: Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World* 2, no. 2 (2004):141-71; Adelkhah and Olszewska, "The Iranian Afghans," 144-148.

links to attitudes towards girls' education, for both the host population and Afghans. While almost all Iranian males and females aged 15 to 24 can read and write, only one in two Pakistani females in the same age bracket (an environment in which second-generation Afghan refugees grew up) can do so. As a whole, the literacy rate of Afghans in Iran evolved dramatically over the decades: from 6.9 percent in 1991 to 69 percent in 2008,[92] in contrast to 70.3 percent of Afghans in Pakistan who were estimated to have no education in 2007—although a gradual rise from generation to generation is seen.[93] Evolution of the literacy rate is a symbolic aspect of transformation of values of the individuals, families, and Afghan social norms in exile, which links to various behaviours and opportunities pursued.

Around one-third of the respondents interviewed in Pakistan did not attend formal schooling. Nevertheless, many of them learnt in *madrassas* or other private learning institutes focused on the teachings of the Quran, including some females whose families regarded it as a big shame for families if girls go outside for schooling. Even though formal schooling was regarded as unacceptable for female household members, many of them were sent to learn the Quran in various ways. Learning the Quran and Islam was generally perceived as a duty and spiritual reward (*sawab*) for Muslims, whereas not knowing about Islam is considered a sin (*guna*). Some *madrassas* appear to be systematic and not that much different from ordinary schools with dormitory facilities. However, the majority of these females were only allowed to study in *madrassas* before reaching puberty; this is in contrast to the general situation in Iran where many Afghan females from religious families often continued studying until higher grades.[94]

Overall, second-generation Afghans in Iran grew up in an environment where Iranian social norms were accepted with less resistance or were more valued; thus, many young Afghans were more willing to (or needed to) blend in. In contrast, the experience of peers in Pakistan had a range of variations, but more attention was paid to ensure that children maintain the characteristics of Afghans regarding proper language and accent; the decision to educate was heavily influenced by the location of residence and family context. In both countries, respondents unanimously voiced the desire to educate themselves and their future children. Educating oneself seems to take on profound meaning, whether it be standard or religious education. The importance of education was acknowledged by males and females, both educated and uneducated. In general, educated people were perceived as being knowledgeable and having favourable characteristics. This is often connected to the ideas of being a good human being and a good Muslim.

2. Identification in public

As seen above, Afghan cultural response to assimilation within the Iranian sphere can be explained due to more positive acceptance by Afghans of Iranian societal norms, but it is also connected to the environmental necessity to do so. To shift one's identification in public through pretending to be an Iranian or Pakistani was observed among respondents in this study, especially when they were seeking some kind of benefit (for example, escaping from police, employment, admission to educational institutions) as a way of managing their daily lives. Trying to be less noticeable as Afghans, either in the short or long term, was seen more frequently among respondents who grew up in Iran compared to those in Pakistan. The fear of being stopped by authorities (Afghans in both countries were often unjustly blamed for committing petty crimes or instigating public unrest) is often a factor in refugees' attempts to blend in in public in response to the situation. This is more so for men who are at greater risk of police harassment; however, women are also aware of this issue from listening to the stories of their male family members. In Iran, Afghans without legal documentation face

92 *Tehran Times*, 24 July 2008. (12.5 percent of the Afghan population living in Iran as refugees) http://www.tehrantimes.com/Index_view.asp?code=173799

93 93.1 percent no education (over 60 years old), 84.5 percent (18-59 years old), 61.6 percent (12-17 years old), and 50.2 percent (5-11 years old). *Registration of Afghans 2007*, 89.

94 In Iran, there were many highly educated women whose fathers were religious scholars, often supporting girls' secondary/tertiary education (either secular or religious). *Howzeha-ye 'elmiyeh* (religious seminaries) in Iran provided various learning opportunities for both Afghan men and women while offering material and financial assistance.

difficulties accessing opportunities in education and work, and are liable to be deported.

The accelerating regulation and control by Iranian authorities even causes some documented Afghan refugees great anxiety about simply being Afghan in Iranian society.[95] Some who were able to blend in well physically among Iranians, with fluent Iranian Persian, denied their Afghan-ness in a range of spaces and contexts, such as at school, in public or in the local neighbourhood—which often caused internal tension between their public and private identities. In Pakistan, there were more diverse opinions among respondents about how to deal with the police: some declare they are Afghan and pay bribes instead of disgracing their honourable Afghan name with a lie,[96] while others pretend to be Pakistani (but in some cases cannot share this with elders at home for fear of their anger about such denial of Afghan-ness).

3. Perception of self as Afghan within host society

Bullying and social exclusion of refugees in all cases of population displacement are common;[97] however, different connotations were observed in the experiences of respondents between the two neighbouring countries. In Pakistan some, if not all, of the non-Pashtun respondents have experienced political discrimination based on stereotypes held by some Pakistanis (often Pashtun Pakistanis) of Afghans from the northern regions. At the same time, one Pashtun respondent in this study said that he had at times experienced a sense of ethnic solidarity with Pakistani Pashtuns in the face of Urdu speakers. Perceptions and stereotypes are heavily influenced by changing political situations, and in recent years, Afghans in Pakistan have also been linked to terrorism (i.e. taken responsibility for attacks, etc.). More positively, being Afghan was reported to not be only associated with vulnerability and helplessness, but also implied zealousness, loyalty to customs and physical strength, sometimes inspiring awe in Pakistanis.

Afghan refugees may take on an Iranian or Pakistani identity to hide their Afghan-ness, either occasionally or permanently:

- **Occasionally** in the short-term occurred among all respondents regardless of their degree of assimilation—related to **fears and the political context**
- **Permanently** pretending to be Iranian/ Pakistani occurred more among respondents who felt a sense of **shame** in relation to their **cultural context** (and also to some extent because of the political context)

However, the perceptions of Afghans in Iran (as reported by respondents) tend to be more linked to a cultural hierarchy, despite the fact that many Afghans who left for Iran also shared religious beliefs as Shia followers.[98] A sense of shame in relation to being Afghan, more commonly observed among refugees in Iran, is another reason cited for refugees keeping a low profile in public. Respondents universally became highly nervous in reaction to the terms of abuse "*Afghani*" or "*Afghani kesafat*"—literally meaning dirty Afghans and implying that they have no culture, no manners, no understanding, and that they are rural people who are backward, barbarian and illiterate. Fitting in with this, however, many respondents indeed saw

95 Due to a massive deportation campaign, about 720,000 people—including men, women, and children—were deported from Iran during 2007 and 2008. "Afghanistan: Plight of Child Deportees from Iran," *IRIN News*, 22 March 2009, http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/RMOI-7QDK23?OpenDocument&query=Iran%20Afghan%20deport.

96 At the time of fieldwork for this study in Pakistan, many respondents were not aware of the introduction of Proof of Registration cards, which shows their status as Afghan citizen temporally living in Pakistan (in 2007). However, in general, many second-generation Afghan refugees in Pakistan have had greater access to education and work-regardless of legal status-while growing up.

97 The traumatic events experienced by young Eritrean refugees in exile include harassment, insults or physical beatings by Sudanese camp guards, police and the military. N. Farwell, "'Onward through Strength': Coping and Psychological Support among Refugee Youth Returning to Eritrea from Sudan," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 14, no. 1 (2001):43-69.

98 There are about 1,500 Afghan religious clerics in Iran; many of them have married Iranian women. This is one of the examples showing that Iran and Afghanistan is made up of a complex transborder environment. Adelkhah and Olszewska, "The Iranian Afghans."

Photos 4 and 5: Afghans in Iran

A painting by an Afghan youth living in Iran

Afghans living in Iran like this man are restricted to certain forms of labour, usually manual

Iranians as more cultured, educated, mannered and wealthier than Afghans—at the same time as they held Afghan nationalist sentiments.

In terms of cultural linkages with Pakistan, some tended to report that many of the customs and ways of life of Pakistanis were largely similar to their own; these respondents comprised those who were highly assimilated (fluent in Urdu, with Pakistani education and Pakistani friends) and a small number who were quite isolated from Pakistani society but saw themselves as similar to the more conservative elements of the Pakistani neighbours who live near their residence. Overall, the presence of a strong Pashtun population in Pakistan, especially in those areas where Pashto is widely spoken as a local language, has an impact on how different Afghans may feel in Pakistan. Some non-Pashtun male respondents commented on the relatively easier access for Pashtun speakers compared to others, often in Peshawar and Quetta.

In contrast to their peers in Pakistan, Afghans in Iran—the majority of whom are Hazaras[99]—do not necessarily appear to have created a positive Afghan identity. This correlates with the situation of the *Khawari,* an ethnic minority in Iran living mostly around Mashhad that migrated from Hazarajad a century ago and has tried to assimilate into Iranian society. A few Afghans who grew up in Mashhad pointed out that "Khawari" or "Barbaris" often put forth extra effort to be seen as Iranians.[100] In general, according to the experiences of our respondents, Pashtun-Pakistanis are often proud of their roots, language and culture (superior self-image, some autonomy from the centralised control), while the situation of "Khawari" in Mashhad shows the contrast—formed by contextual positional difference among minorities in Pakistan and Iran (see Table 2). The prevailing environment of the host society is another factor influencing the formation of identity among second-generation Afghans, as well as whether or not they are able to create positive self-image.

4. Stereotypical characteristics of Afghan-ness

Despite their refugee or undocumented status and uncertain future, second-generation refugees generally appear to have a relatively robust sense of self as Afghans. However, there are some notable differences between respondents interviewed in Pakistan and those in Iran in terms of what it means to be Afghan. In Pakistan, both males and females were able to describe what it meant to them—as a second-generation refugee—to be an Afghan man or woman, most commonly using words associated with honour, such as: (for males) zealous,[101] patriotic, honest, hard-working, kind and sympathetic; and (for females) respectful (of elders), decent, modest, educated, Islamic and adhering to the Afghan dress code. Although internal values may sometimes be seen to be contradictory to those mentioned, most respondents considered these characteristics to be at the core of "being Afghan"—an ideal towards which they strived in spite of facing great challenges over years of growing up in Pakistan.

Dupree points out that Afghans in Pakistan "cling tenaciously to their national identity, upholding traditional values and customs that distinguish them from their neighbour," and this has certainly been borne out by this study.[102] Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont have also noted the generally positive collective self-image that Afghans in Pakistan possess, sometimes expressed as "the basic superiority of being Afghan even in the absence, or at a distance, from the territory of a nation state."[103]

99 Compared to Hazaras, those Afghans in Iran whose appearance can easily blend in with Iranians and who speak Iranian-Persian are perceived to be at an advantage because Iranians cannot distinguish whether they are Afghans or Iranians.

100 A few Hazara Afghans who grew up in Iran mentioned that Hazara-Afghans often feel more relaxed in Mashhad because of being able to blend in with "Barbaris." However, it was pointed out that, compared to other Iranians, "Barbaris" sometimes discriminated against Afghans more. (For example, Barbari neighbours tried to prevent their children from going to Afghans' houses in order not to acquire a Hazaragi accent.)

101 The term *baghairat* was commonly used by males (and also some females); it refers to bravery and the ability to defend one's country, land, property, women, etc.

102 N. Dupree, "Cultural Heritage and National Identity in Afghanistan," *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 5 (2002): 977–89.

103 Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, "The Afghan Refugee in Pakistan."

"The word "Afghan" (افغان), is made from the letters of five meaningful words:

ا – ایمان	Eiman *(Faith)*
ف – فعالیت-	Fa'aliat *(Activity)*
غ – غیرت	Ghairat *(Zeal)*
ا – ادب	Adab *(Politeness)*
ن – ناموس.	Namus *(Protecting female dependents)*

And if these five characteristics are found in a human being, he is a complete Afghan."

— 20-year-old male high school student from Kunduz who grew up in Karachi

In contrast, second-generation Afghan refugees in Iran tend to view "other Afghans" as backward or vulnerable, represented by their parents (the first generation of refugees) and to some extent their peers growing up in Afghanistan, but not themselves. In Iran, words used to describe Afghan-ness were: (for males) hardworking, tolerant of pain and hardship, resigned to their fate, illiterate, long-suffering and zealous (*baghairat*); and (for females) long-suffering, submissive, obedient, hardworking and resilient, along with descriptions of wearing the Afghan *burqa*. As many respondents interviewed in Iran were well educated, they tended to differentiate themselves as having grown up in Iran as opposed to their "lower-status" peers who had remained in Afghanistan, and many were not necessarily referring to themselves when talking about being Afghan but rather describing "the other Afghans" (those of lower socioeconomic status). This pattern is a general tendency observed more among respondents in Iran compared to those in Pakistan, albeit acknowledging some potential bias in selected respondents and researcher's views.[104]

However, even for those refugees who were fiercely passionate about Afghanistan and harboured very negative feelings towards their host country (often due to experiencing social exclusion as a refugee), returning to Afghanistan often meant facing discrimination based on their "non-Afghan-ness" (see Section 7.3). As the label "*Iranigak*" (meaning "little Iran") implies, Afghans who had remained in Afghanistan tended not to be welcoming towards some of their peers returning from Iran.[105] The reaction towards returnees from Pakistan, however, tended to be more diverse, depending on the background and experience of each individual.[106]

The political and cultural context of urban areas in Iran—where minorities, either intentionally or not, are often encouraged to assimilate into mainstream populations—has been shown to hinder the formation and maintenance of a strong positive Afghan identity, compared to the relatively diverse situation of their peers who grew up in Pakistan. This is exacerbated when refugees try to mask their Afghan-ness and status as *mohajerin* to blend in, thus producing a conflict between attempts to assimilate and the ongoing feeling of "non-belonging."[107] Ironically, such an escalating environment has a reverse impact on some respondents who strongly resist any

104 The role of arts and literary activities is reported to help young educated Afghans in Iran be creative, thereby transforming their sense of social exclusion into one of pride in having a shared heritage with Iranians. Z. Olszewska, "'A Desolate Voice': Poetry and Identity among Young Afghan Refugees in Iran," *Iranian Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 203-24.

105 This is a significant concern for many refugees in Iran in relation to returning to Afghanistan: they believe that such changes in their identity may result in social exclusion and discrimination by fellow Afghans when they return home (this is also seen in the study conducted by Chatty). See: Chatty and Crivello, *Lessons Learned Report*.

106 A few returnee respondents spoke of being called "*Pakistani!*" by fellow Afghans in Afghanistan. However, no use of the term "*Pakistanigak*" was reported.

107 For example, a returnee woman from Tehran who still felt that Iran was her "homeland" said that her brother, who was also well assimilated and educated at an Iranian state school, could not marry the Iranian girl he had chosen. Her Iranian family had rejected the proposal because they were Afghan. There have, however, been many cases of mixed marriages between Afghans and members of the host population. Zahedi reports that Iranian women marrying Afghan men are often from low socioeconomic status, and marry for economic reasons or for love. More than 40,000 Iranian women are estimated to have married Afghans, with over 100,000 children without Iranian birth certificates. A. Zahedi, "Transnational Marriages, Gendered Citizenship, and the Dilemma of Iranian Women Married to Afghan Men," *Iranian Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 225-39.

eventual return and deny their links to Afghanistan, which is itself subject to negative influence from tightening government policy and negative social perceptions toward Afghans. For some others, the pressures become too great to bear and they decide to leave Iran. Second-generation refugees in this situation have difficulties forming clear perceptions of Afghanistan, and this in turn makes reintegration upon return a more complex process.

> *"Men from the previous generation wanted an obedient wife who accepted without questioning, for example, if he says "die!", you should die. Regarding my father, I saw the way he mistreated my mother, for example, he used to fight and beat her up. I wish not to be like that."*
>
> — 29-year-old shopkeeper in Mashhad with diploma-level education

Part 6: To Return or To Remain?

This section discusses the issues facing second-generation Afghan refugees leading up to their repatriation to Afghanistan, focusing on personal issues as well as household decision-making. The data presented covers general attitudes toward return among respondents living in Pakistan and Iran. This is followed by an analysis of the range of factors influencing these attitudes, including those issues that are less visible or non-material. Finally, the dynamics of refugee households are explored, focusing on issues of timing, household members' participation in the decision to return, and practical strategies for successful return.

6.1 Intentions to return or to remain

it difficult to generalise about their current influences and motivations. Of this group, there were 44 respondents in Pakistan and 39 in Iran who were actively engaged in the process of deciding whether to return; some expressed a strong desire to go back to Afghanistan, while others were more negative about returning at the time but hoped to repatriate at some point in the future. The common feature of this subgroup was their careful monitoring of the situation in Afghanistan, waiting for a time when the balance of factors—relevant to their individual situations—would lead them to a clear decision to go back. The second subgroup in this category (six respondents in Pakistan, 21 in Iran) had no intention of returning to Afghanistan. Thirteen respondents (ten in Pakistan, three in Iran) focused their attention on plans to go abroad in either the short- or long-term.

Table 5: Second-generation refugees' intentions to return or remain

	Taking action to return to Afghanistan (28)	Not taking action, staying in Pakistan/Iran (110)		Planning to go abroad (13)	*Total respondents (151)*
		In decision-making process	No intention of returning		
Pakistan	11	44	6	10	71
Iran	17	39	21	3	80
Total	28	83	27	13	151

Table 5 broadly categorises the attitudes towards return among the 151 respondents in Iran and Pakistan. The first group (28 respondents) includes those who are in the process of *taking action* to return to Afghanistan. Some of these cases of return do not reflect the individual respondent's own desire but rather that of their household and relatives.

The second and largest category (110 respondents) includes those who were *not taking any action* to return to Afghanistan at the time; this was found to be for a wide range of reasons, making

6.2 Complex attitudes toward return to Afghanistan

Table 6 shows the range of perceptions and experiences of Pakistan and Afghanistan mentioned by the 71 Afghan refugees interviewed in Pakistan (male and female). It prioritises the relative significance of each factor—economic, political, social, cultural and emotional—to respondents.[108]

108 Some of these issues were addressed directly during the formal interview process (such as questions about the opinions of peers and where respondents wanted to raise their children), while

Many experience internal conflict between the positive and negative factors in Afghanistan as well as the country in which they had grown up; this mix of emotions changes with time and in the face of individuals' experiences and the shifting external environment of Afghans living as refugees. The major difference between those who are taking action to return to Afghanistan and those who are not is the *balance* of these interweaving factors; this does not imply that conflict and contradiction do not exist in those opting to return, but that overall, either the positive features of return outweigh all other factors (in the case of voluntary, proactive returns) or push factors outweigh the advantages of remaining as refugees (often among more vulnerable groups).

A greater proportion of women respondents tended to have negative perceptions of return compared to their male counterparts in both countries.[109] The main factors influencing this gendered difference were contextual, such as their limited exposure to accurate information about returning to Afghanistan, limited opportunities to visit there, and perceptions of social norms regarding women in Afghanistan. Reduced mobility and prevalent gender norms, which had been often negatively anticipated, were experienced by many returnee respondents as required of "an honourable Afghan woman" to fit in the local context. It added greater stresses and internal contradictions to some female returnees (see Section 7.4).

One of the key factors that emerged from both Pakistan and Iran was the importance of quality education—not only formal schooling but also Islamic learning and adult education, including among those less-educated respondents who want a better future for their children. For those seeking higher education, the country in which they are able to access the best option (in relation to quality and financial availability) will have a strong pull factor.

Another prominent factor in their decision-making that prevents some people, particularly in Pakistan, from returning to Afghanistan (as mentioned by respondents, see Table 6) has been the presence of foreigners. Although many respondents spoke of their support for the present Karzai government in Afghanistan, others expressed serious cultural concerns about the direction in which they see their country going (in particular, the "non-Islamic environment" which they feel contradicts their national and religious identity). One unique pull factor in Iran, particularly for Shiite Afghans, was the proximity of the Shrine of Imam Reza as a place of pilgrimage in Mashhad. This correlates with some current anxieties about Afghanistan, where religious and ethnic tensions are perceived to be prevalent.[110]

The decision to return is not an easy one to make. But in particular for these young Afghans, because they were brought up in foreign countries as refugees, their attachment to Afghanistan is full of contradictions, expectations and unseen worries since they have roots—but less actual, real experiences—in this place. As a result of this complex relationship with two countries, refugees' identification with Afghanistan and being Afghan is constantly evolving. Whether they can accept themselves as Afghans positively or try to deny their Afghan roots adds great weight and complexity to the decision-making processes that surround the question of return. It is a continuous negotiation between the balance of factors—how the host communities perceive them and how they react and perceive themselves—that determine how second-generation refugees develop their perceptions of,

others emerged during responses to more general questions. For a comparative table of Iran and Afghanistan, see Abbasi-Shavazi et al., "Second-Generation Afghans in Iran," 55.

109 Women are more reluctant than men to return, particularly those living in Iran. See Monsutti, *Afghan Transnational Networks*; Abbasi-Shavazi and Glazebrook, *Continued Protection, Sustainable Reintegration*; and K.B. Harpviken, *Networks in Transition: Wartime Migration in Afghanistan* (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, Oslo University, 2006), 251.

110 In general, the relationship between ethnicity and return among the selected respondents is not strikingly patterned; rather, return is a general concern throughout various ethnicities and is influenced by a set of complex factors. Among respondents interviewed in Iran, relatively more Hazaras (10 out of 46) were taking actions for return, in contrast to Tajik respondents (4 of 30). This is different from the quantitative data of return (see footnote 67), but further examination may be required given the limited number of respondents. In the case of Pakistan, only four Hazara respondents were interviewed in Quetta and Karachi, reflecting both that 2.5 percent of Afghans in Pakistan were Hazaras in the 2007 Registration data, as well as operational constraints. See details in Saito and Hunte, *To Return or To Remain*.

Table 6: Push and pull factors in Pakistan and Afghanistan

Pakistan - PUSH	Afghanistan - PULL
Not a citizen of Pakistan, not "our" country **Hot weather** **No knowledge of homeland**, loss of identity, patriotism, national language **Limited opportunities** (education, employment) **Far from kin** **Police harassment, dislike by Pakistanis** Education fees, poor remain uneducated, students drop out Social pressures as refugees Afghans have a bad reputation Money problems, high cost of living Fear of deportation, closure of camps	**GOOD CLIMATE, BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY** **DREAM TO RAISE CHILDREN IN OWN COUNTRY**(among relatives—will know culture, be healthier and stronger) **Chance to own land and house** **Better peers** (knowledge of culture, patriotic, physically strong, pure language) **Reconstruction happening** (stable government, war ended, work opportunities) **Hospitality, respect of others/elders** **Freedom** (more independence for women, right to education and employment) **Better relatives** (more educated, wealthy) Conservative (pure) Islam Desire to serve to country, help others
Pakistan - PULL	**Afghanistan - PUSH**
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES (quality, English language, Islamic education, skills development, access to information) **FACILITIES** (electricity, gas, sanitation, roads, entertainment) **Comfortable, no harassment, now familiar with environment** Have work and place to live, can survive Pakistanis are kind, do not discriminate **Positive characteristics of peers** (better manners, more sophisticated) No tension, peaceful Islamic environment No ethnic discrimination Lower cost of living Rights of women, law, freedom	**Lack of place to live** **Lack of facilities** (electricity, gas, sanitation) Limited opportunities for education Lack of work **Negative characteristics of peers** (uneducated, rough, no respect, do not know Islam, aggressive) Insecurity (suicide attacks, kidnapping, fighting, robberies) High cost of living Corruption, bribery Ethnic/religious discrimination Presence of foreign military/foreigners, NGOs' (greed for money) Non-Islamic (no prayer, sinful/free women, do not know Islam, improper gender relations, alcohol/drugs) Social pressures, gender honour, restricted environment Enmity, family problems

and give meaning to, a "homeland" that they know less about than the place in which they have grown up as *mohajerin*.

Concerns over increasing forceful repatriation policies and diminishing economic and social opportunities were mentioned in both host countries, but in particular in Iran. Nevertheless, there were relatively more respondents in Iran than Pakistan who had no intention of returning to Afghanistan, although this may reflect differences in this study's sampling in the two countries. What is clear is that some Afghans choose the strategy of invisibility and strongly resist returning because of escalating deportation and associated negative attitudes towards Afghans.

6.3 Household decision-making about return

Among this study's 48 returned refugee respondents interviewed in Afghanistan, some patterns in the conditions leading to return were identifiable. Among recent arrivals (2005–06), many were well prepared for return: they made arrangements for work in advance or returned with enough savings or strong social networks to support themselves, and some did both. The return of others in these recent years occurred under more forced circumstances related to strong push factors, particularly from Iran. In contrast, earlier arrivals (2001–03) were mostly those in the middle to lower economic group who had made fewer plans for employment or housing but returned in response to government calls (the end of war and putting hope in the new government), along with a few well-off households who were responding to strong pull factors (political links, government networks, strong social and family networks) to Afghanistan. The level of land ownership tended to be higher among many of these "early" returnees, in contrast to the "recent" group.

In general, it could be said that for those refugees with fewer social networks, lower economic status and lack of land remaining outside Afghanistan, the prospect of voluntary return and successful reintegration is low. In recent years, it is those who have had the capacity to take on the risk of return and deal successfully with potential problems associated with reintegration who have tended to return voluntarily. This corresponds well with the data from those respondents in Pakistan and Iran who are *taking action* to return.

Support from relatives and other networks in Afghanistan is crucial for acquiring the information needed to make the decision to return, as well as for providing assistance on arrival. This broad support includes telephone or letter communication prior to return, looking after property, providing information about access to employment, facilitating return visits and physical support on return such as accommodation. For those who did not make any arrangements at all before returning, their savings were crucial for survival during the initial stages of resettling. For respondents who were from economically vulnerable returnee households, networks with their own tribe made it possible to access material assistance from organisations.

The adolescent and young adult Afghans interviewed in this study participated to varying degrees in their households' decision-making: some had considerable influence over the decision to return, others gave their opinions by offering comments to other household members, while some were not involved at all. The key decision-making power in the household tended to be held by heads of households or elder male family members (for example, the eldest son if there was no father in the household), and, in a small number of cases, by women (often educated and from households with better economic situations). A number of less educated (along with a few educated) women interviewed in Pakistan mentioned that they were not even aware of discussions taking place in their own households or among their tribe, and only received information about such discussions second-hand.

Not all second-generation refugee teenagers and young adults whose households chose to return were in agreement with that decision. Around a quarter of respondents indicated that they had not been happy with their household's decision to go back to Afghanistan. A few male respondents showed

neutral or less emotional responses to household decision-making on return, stating that they could easily go back to Pakistan or Iran if they did not like Afghanistan. Among those who disagreed with the decision to return, most were women—many educated, although a few less educated also felt this way. Around half of these respondents reported that they had argued against the decision and tried to persuade the power-holders in the household to change their minds. Some major factors leading to strong negative return perceptions among respondents were: the unfavourable timing of return, particularly in relation to education,[111] and the degree of attachment to the place where they grew up compared to their "homeland".

Complex household disagreement over whether to return sometimes occurred between generations (for example, parents of respondents were unwilling to repatriate while second-generation respondents wanted to, and vice versa) as well as among siblings due to their dissimilar individual experiences.[112] Household disagreement in relation to return sometimes resulted in one individual going back to Afghanistan alone to pursue opportunities in higher education or work. There were cases of both male and female educated returnees doing this, with relatives in Afghanistan assisting them by providing accommodation and information. Some educated individuals (including women) left their households in Pakistan and returned alone to secure employment, most frequently with the United Nations, an NGO or a private business. From Iran, it was more common that individual males continued to work in Iran to provide an income while their family members returned to Afghanistan.[113] At the time of interviewing in Afghanistan, more than a quarter of the households had at least one male family member working abroad who was contributing or intending to contribute to the remaining household's income: in Iran (ten), the Arabian peninsula (three), and Western countries (two).[114] In another case, disagreement in relation to return also resulted in the permanent split of one household that used to share the same income.

The gradual return of household members has been a common strategy adopted by families to reduce the risks associated with returning, particularly in recent years. In some cases, this has meant one or more members returning first in order to prepare the way for the rest to arrive at a later point; in others, some household members planned to remain in the country of refuge over the medium- to longer-term in order to diversify livelihoods. This has often been used as a way of supporting economically sustainable return, but it also happens for reasons of security: in case the situation in Afghanistan deteriorates again, connections would in place to seek refuge again.

111 Concerns were raised that return to Afghanistan would end up forcing them to drop out of school. It was a common wish among school-going respondents that at least they would complete some upper grades in neighbouring countries, then return later to Afghanistan.

112 For instance, a 23-year-old girl who studied in an Afghan school in Peshawar was interested in going back to Afghanistan because of her expectations of finding work as a young, English-speaking female. However, her two brothers, who have been studying in Pakistani schools and universities, were opposed to returning because they cannot read and write Dari.

113 Harpviken also points out the different patterns of gradual return among returnees from Pakistan and Iran (*Networks in Transition*, 290).

114 This is also because of the study's high proportion of respondents in Herat with male household members working in Iran. Of the ten households with male family members working in Iran, eight were respondents in Herat. In addition, a jobless male in a periphery of a city in Baghlan, who was supposed to be a respondent for an interview, turned out to have just left home for Kandahar with village men (or if not available, to Karachi or Lahore) to join in poppy agricultural work.

Part 7: From *Mohajer* to *Hamwatan*

For many second-generation refugees, with their varying degrees of attachment to Pakistan or Iran, the day of return is a major turning point in their lives. Some respondents in the Afghanistan study reported that they could remember the exact time they crossed the border, along with many minor events on the way. Some had staunchly resisted return, while others had come back willingly and harboured very negative feelings towards their place of refuge. But for all of them, returning to Afghanistan brought the pain and sadness, to various degrees, of leaving the one place they knew best—perhaps similar sentiments that their parents had felt about leaving Afghanistan years earlier.

After arrival, many respondents found unexpected differences in their new environment and in people compared to life in refuge. But some found Afghanistan more or less what they had been used to; these were mostly males, especially those who had maintained close contact with family in Afghanistan while in exile or had moved to returnee-concentrated areas. However, what other native compatriots deemed as "common sense" was not necessarily naturally understood by those who previously had few or no opportunities to see Afghanistan—even though they had lived in countries geographically nearby. This was the case particularly among those who had left Afghanistan at a very early age or who had been born in exile, seeing the country for the first time only upon their "return." Not surprisingly, for many refugees of the second generation who were used to better urban facilities in Pakistan or Iran, their home life in less developed conditions left them feeling deprived of what they had had in exile. Returning refugees would usually notice: first, changes in material aspects of their new environment; second, differences in social interactions; and later, less visible differences in values discovered through extended interaction with the society. All of these factors, along with an individual's corresponding degree of adjustment, have impacted on subsequent reintegration outcomes.

During the process of reintegration after returning to Afghanistan, many respondents reported having to learn about a new kind of lifestyle and ways to interact—getting by with fewer facilities and coming to understand the "new" social rules, norms and values of Afghans who remained in the country. Some adjusted or adapted to the environment over time without significant stress, while others failed to do so, instead questioning their future in their homeland. These processes involve renegotiating core values about society and people—comparing different lifestyles and ideas in their homeland to those they knew in Pakistan and Iran, and developing new understandings of "home" and their future within it. This final section examines how second-generation returnees have experienced reintegration, as informed by interview data from returnee respondents now living in Afghanistan.

***watan*: "homeland"**

***hamwatan*:** from the same *watan*, meaning "compatriot"

The notion of *watan* relates primarily to a limited geographical area in which individuals are well known to each other. In the diaspora context, however, this notion expands. Any Afghan may be considered a *hamwatan* or belonging to the same *watan*. *Watan* is to be treasured and seen as vulnerable; it must be defended in ways similar to how the women members of a family are protected.

A geographical and social area where I feel at home, where I belong, where my family and my relatives live, where I can rely on the people, and where I feel security and social warmth.

Bernt Glatzer, 2001, "War and Boundaries in Afghanistan: Significance and Relativity of Local and Social Boundaries," *Weld des Islams*, 41(3):379–99.

7.1 The complex reintegration process

Figure 2 shows the complex reintegration process leading to varying degrees of success in return; outcomes fall at different points along a continuum, ranging from desires to settle permanently in Afghanistan to wishes to leave again temporarily or for the long term. This process has material, social and personal dimensions, all of which are influenced by factors such as: individual personality and profile, experiences prior to becoming a refugee, particular circumstances of displacement, experiences in exile, social networks, conditions of return (domestic and political), and a refugee's own interpretations of "home" and "belonging."[115] The long-term outcome of the process—eventual adjustment,[116] adaptation (full reintegration) or failure—is further influenced by how individuals respond to the conflicting ideas they face upon return.

Undoubtedly, basic material needs for survival must be secured first, but the returnee's situation is considerably affected by the degree of social acceptance of returnees exhibited by those Afghans who remained and by Afghan society more generally. Furthermore, if the process is to lead to long-term settlement, there must be an adequate sense of personal fulfilment through which returnees feel at ease and that they fit in. A balance of these three interlinked dimensions (with none significantly lacking) is crucial for successful reintegration in the long term. This study found that re-entry difficulties can potentially be mitigated by more effectively tapping into external support (both material and emotional, from the government, community, and relatives) and nourishing the sense of *watan* in relation to their own identity as a coping mechanism.

Watan: a key "pull factor" in returning to Afghanistan

One of the key motivations in the decision of many refugees to go back to their homeland is the mental and emotional satisfaction they expect to feel there—despite being aware of the material hardships they will experience.[117] The way in which they find personal meaning from living in their own country is therefore crucial. A sense of freedom (*azadi*) was repeatedly mentioned by the respondents in Afghanistan when they spoke of their lives there, regardless of socioeconomic status and particularly in relation to fleeing from their status as *mohajer*. This personal fulfilment experienced in the *watan* actually acts as a key force in motivating many respondents to confront the hardships of their re-integration process. *Watan* is also an important "pull factor" keeping them in Afghanistan—fuelling their inner strength in the face of the difficulties experienced in resettling. The sense of *watan* often seems to ease the pain of material and emotional hardship to some extent, as long as their actual survival is not under threat.

Watan is also the place where returnees may encounter unexpected social exclusion—economically, socially and emotionally. Returning to one's homeland is often accompanied by the hope of elevating one's social status from subordinate refugee (*mohajer)* to respected Afghan in a society made up of Afghans and where one can work with his or her own people to achieve a stable, prosperous future. These hopes are a far greater pull for second-generation Afghan refugees than actual emotional or social connections in Afghanistan: for them, unlike their parents, leaving Iran or Pakistan usually means leaving their friends and the primary—or only—"home" they have known (see 3.2). This crucial pull factor for second-generation refugees—to live in their homeland and to be freed from the feeling of "non-belonging" and inferiority related

115 T. Ghanem, "When Forced Migrants Return 'Home': The Psychosocial Difficulties Returnees Encounter in the Reintegration Process," RSC Working Paper No. 16 (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2003) 24-5. See also: E.F. Kunz, "Exile and Resettlement: Refugee Theory," *International Migration Review* 15, no. 1/2 (1981): 42-51; Altai Consulting, *Integration of Returnees*, 68.

116 In this case study, "adjustment" implies that respondents socially or physically modified their appearance or behaviour in order to fit in with their new context—although they did not necessarily agree with the values these changes expressed. It also has the sense of a short-term, temporary measure. In contrast, "adaptation" connotes long-term changed values and ideas.

117 Ghanem, "When Forced Migrants Return 'Home'," 36. See also: J. Bascom, "The Long, 'Last Step'? Reintegration of Repatriates in Eritrea," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18, no. 2 (2005):165-80.

Figure 2:

Returnee reintegration: the decision-making process

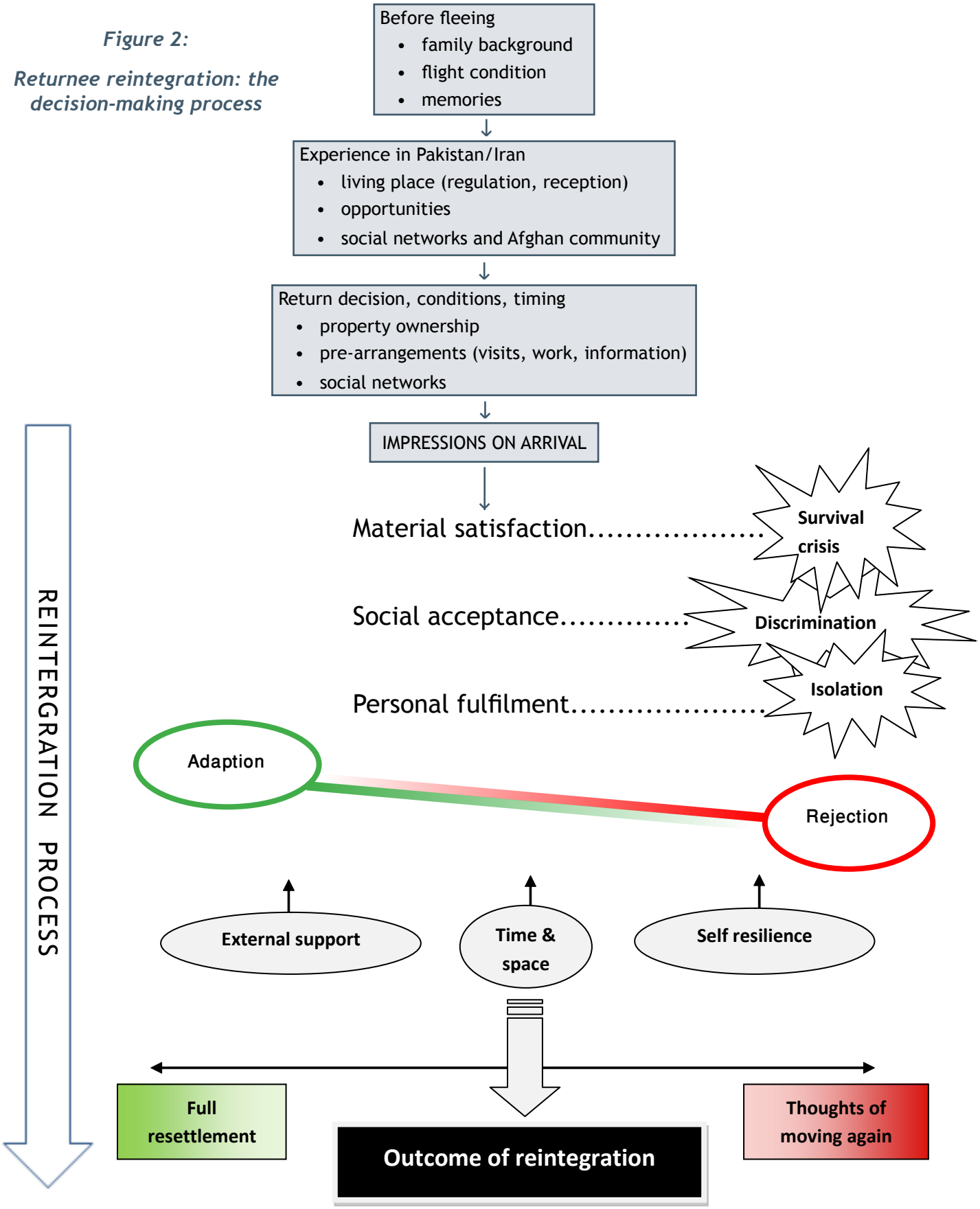


Table 7: Second-generation refugees' expectations of life in watan

	Mohajer in Pakistan/Iran	Expected life in *watan*	Actual life in *watan*
Legal rights and official status	no rights, limited opportunities in education (esp. higher education), limited occupational choice (Iran), unequal access to services, lack of legal status	rights and legal status, property ownership, access to services to be improved	expected life achieved, particularly emotional state of feeling "freedom," internal peace, comfort of living in *watan* but continued ostracism and discrimination (as "returnee," and on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, politics, gender, economic status or lack of *wasita*[7]), realisation of differences to "others" (other Afghans and Afghan values)
Social position and identification as Afghan	inferior, subordinate, outcast, insulted (called a "terrorist" or "criminal") **but** all Afghans are the same refugees	member of a nation where all are Afghans, honour associated with being Afghan	
Emotional state	weak, afraid, tired, worried, uprooted, constant need to defend honour, internal complexity; although highly assimilated, still cannot avoid title and connotations of "refugee"	end of fear, worries and internal conflict, freedom from harassment, abuse and negative labels, own country/territory, safety, the place of their ancestors, with own people	

to their refugee status—continuously evolves in the face of unexpected difficulties experienced after return (see Table 7).

The experience of feeling social exclusion again in *watan*, echoing the experience of their refugee status, hampers psychosocial reintegration, and for those in the poorer socioeconomic categories, it is particularly acute when combined with unfulfilled material needs. Where that process fails and the balance is tipped against remaining in the *watan*, second-generation returnees are likely to experience a strong desire to go back to the country in which they grew up. Over a quarter of this study's respondents interviewed in Afghanistan, both the poor and well-off, had hopes or expectations of leaving again in either the short or long term.

7.2 Finding fulfilment in the *watan* or failing to resettle

Many refugees face material constraints after return, particularly compared to their lives in exile. However, degrees of gradual adaptation to the new environment of Afghanistan can be observed: as they become familiar with the people and surroundings, returnees learning and changing their ideas as well as the less conscious transformation of values over time; these perceptions may be substantially different to returnees' initial impressions. It is also common that returnees' emotional satisfaction with being in their *watan* affords them greater resilience to the challenges of material constraints. This sense of living in their own country was shown to provide some of the more vulnerable respondents in this study with the inner strength to cope with material difficulties, particularly because of their new-found freedom from their previous inferior refugee status.

Lack of employment is a critical concern among many respondents. Creation of work opportunities for Afghans, especially for less skilled and economically vulnerable groups, is an urgent priority for the government and concerned agencies. However, according to returnee respondents, the acquired skills from Pakistan and Iran do not always work beneficially in Afghanistan and, instead, are dependent on market needs, timing, location,[118] possibility of acquiring materials or

118 An existing case study of villages around Herat reports that many skilled returnees from Iran, many of which are young men, are unemployed and seek daily work in Herat city, while some who can afford the travel expenses go to Iran. UNHCR, *Location of Returnees* (Herat: UNHCR, 2006), 6-9.

equipment, availability of initial investment funds, and connections. For example, in the case of two skilled returnees from Iran, one got work as an electrician through a television advertisement when the need for electricians was high in Herat for supplying power in the city, while a man who was working in an Iranian factory as a tailor did not find his skills useful in Afghanistan (he was used to sewing ready-made clothes, which are common in the Iranian market, but he was not used to sewing clothes tailored for individuals as is popular in Afghanistan).[119]

Feeling of marginalisation in rural Afghanistan: *"We are mountain people!"*

"When I saw the neglect of Pakistanis and their government toward us, I thought it was because we were Afghans. ***But now in my country, our government also neglects poor people****, so how should we feel?"*

— 30-year-old housewife in a remote village in Baghlan who returned from a tribal area in Pakistan

Working as a migrant labourer is often used as a livelihood strategy[120] for returnee households trying to adjust to living in their homeland. This was shown to be particularly the case among the average and below-average income respondents in this study. There was a slightly higher number of households with family members working abroad from rural areas compared to urban areas.[121] Facing unemployment and having no means of gaining livelihoods (in rural areas, people had particular concerns about drought and decreased production), some households have no option but to send men away for work, even though it can be illegal and dangerous; it is a proactive way of making adjustments that allow most of a household's members to remain in Afghanistan and have their material needs fulfilled. However, those who migrate for work must have at least enough external support (credit, someone taking care of remaining family and networks or information to find employment) and money to cover travel expenses. If these are not available and all coping strategies have been exhausted while material needs of family members in Afghanistan remain unmet, this study showed that vulnerable returnees are likely to reach a tipping point at which they give up trying to adjust to life in the *watan*.

For instance, two of the lowest-income respondents' households had left Afghanistan after initial repatriation in 2002, then returned again in 2004 in the hope that better circumstances (such as land allocation by the government or financial support from relatives) would allow for their successful resettlement. Indeed, over half of this study's returnee respondents knew someone who had left Afghanistan since the establishment of the new government following their failure to reintegrate.[122] If returnees fail to reintegrate successfully and decide to remigrate and experience a sense of "betrayal" by their beloved *watan,* they are likely to be much more critical of possibilities for future return. It will require even greater pull factors for them to return to Afghanistan a second time.

The psychological and emotional satisfaction of returnees with life in *watan* warrants close attention because it has the potential to impact heavily on the decisions of others to return. A woman who has no decision-making power in the household may still tell negative stories to her children and other relatives—influencing their perceptions of return prospects or desire to remain in Afghanistan. Even among those who currently view their long-term place of residence as Afghanistan, some still advise

119 Skilled returnee women also have different opportunities in Afghanistan. One in Kabul is connected to an organisation supplying carpet materials and markets, while another in rural Baghlan did not weave *gilim* any more because of the high cost of acquiring wool in her village (caused by limited wool production due to drought), the expensive cost of imported materials, and less time being available for weaving *gilim* due to increased housework because of the fewer facilities in rural Afghanistan.

120 Monsutti, *Afghan Transnational Networks*, 35-37.

121 Across Afghanistan generally, these statistics are: 19 percent in rural area and 5 percent in urban areas. MRRD/CSO, *National Risk & Vulnerability Assessment 2005* (Kabul: Government of Afghanistan, 2007), 39.

122 Initially, this information was only recorded for those who mentioned it; a question relating to this issue was then added to the interview guide during the field work.

their relatives in neighbouring countries not to return, primarily due to the lack of employment opportunities but also because of disappointment with their current situation.

7.3 The external environment—social acceptance or rejection

Social rejection by fellow Afghans who had remained during the years of conflict was another difficult experience for some second-generation returnees. This was because the motivation to return to Afghanistan was in many cases related to negative experiences being "outsiders" among the majority populations of Pakistanis and Iranians. There are two major reasons why second-generation refugees experience this social exclusion on return to their homeland: firstly, some returnees may be seen as "intruders" into Afghan society and, secondly, it may be the first time that, as Afghans, they have experienced profound differences among their compatriots based on ethnic or tribal identity.

Social rejection of returnees

Around a quarter of returnee respondents, mostly from Iran but some from Pakistan, spoke of their experiences (or recounted those of their family or friends) of being socially ostracised by fellow Afghans on the basis of having returned from other countries. The respondents who spoke of these incidents were primarily single, educated and female. Returnee women are relatively easily identified by what they wear, and their appearance and behaviour can be at odds with local cultural expectations and social codes. These returnees are clearly "outsiders" and make easy targets for harassment by their peers—both male and female. In particular, where second-generation refugees have been highly integrated into the Pakistani or Iranian way of life, and cannot do, or do not know, what is "normal" for Afghans, they may be perceived with contempt as "spoiled," "loafers" or "not Afghan."

By and large, there appears to be a general negative attitude shown towards some returnees, who are seen by some of those who remained in Afghanistan to have abandoned their country, fled war and enjoyed a prosperous life in exile. One of the reasons linked to such experiences was fear related to competition for resources. The second generation, who are likely to be in a better socioeconomic position than those who remained, are sometimes seen as undesirable intruders by their country fellows whose "territory" in education, work, property ownership and social status is threatened by the large-scale return of refugees. In addition, there seems to exist some stereotypical perceptions toward girls and women who came back to Afghanistan and were exposed to other worlds as tending to be "freer" in the eyes of some "remainees". This is linked to the general perceptions of Afghans towards Pakistani and Iranian women. In the eyes of second-generation Afghan refugees, Pakistani and Iranian women were often seen as more "free". This includes both in a negative sense (e.g. shame related to less moral behaviour) and positive sense (e.g. more access to education and work). These young returnees who grew up in the Pakistani and Iranian sphere were seen in a similar way by those who remained.

> *"Before I was thinking that all people in Afghanistan are one Afghan. ... when I arrived here, I saw Hazara, Tajik, and Pashtun divides. I felt pity and disappointed. I was telling myself that these people were so ignorant."*
>
> — 29-year-old male Hazara returnee in Herat who completed religious study in Qom, Iran

Unequal treatment in the Afghan context

The status of "returnee" is only one of the discouraging experiences faced by refugees returning to Afghanistan. For second-generation refugees, encountering discrimination based on various sectarian lines (ethnic, religious and political) is felt even more intensely than by first-generation refugees or Afghans who had prior experience in Afghanistan and were more aware of this reality. While growing up in Pakistan and Iran, some respondents encountered ethnic discrimination among Afghans by their Afghan teachers at schools; some heard those stories from elders explaining the cause of the war; some others were not fully aware

of the diversity of the Afghan people.[123] While many of them would have inherited certain perceptions of these issues from their parents and relatives, the more dominant feeling of "difference" was—as refugees—the sense of having an inferior status compared to the citizens of that country. As refugees born or brought up in Pakistan and Iran, the Afghan national identity tended to overshadow ethnic, religious or political affiliations.[124]

> *"My brother learnt masonry in Iran and he built our house himself. But in Herat, he says that there is no work for him because it is dominated by groups of construction companies. [...]* ***It doesn't matter if you're returned refugee or not, you just need someone who knows you."***
>
> — 19-year-old female office employee in Herat working as a breadwinner of her household

For returned second-generation Afghan refugees looking for employment, especially those unfamiliar with the local environment, their lack of networks in their new environment is a formidable obstacle. Some familiarity with the job situation in the new context is critical, even when returnees have had the experience of self-employment or acquiring skills during exile. To be successfully self-employed, some kind of guarantee, connections with a partner, capital or a combination of these is needed, particularly for economically vulnerable groups with fewer connections. Notably, respondents who were relatively wealthy and had strong extended family networks did not mention serious concerns about employment.

Similarly, a sense of marginalisation caused by bribery and *wasita* (relations to powerful people) associated with accessing education and work opportunities was often raised as an issue by respondents in this study. Corruption in the context of school exams, university entrance exams and scholarships was reported by educated respondents; they said that only those who had power and money could access more favourable opportunities. Given that many refugees found it difficult to secure satisfactory work during their time in Pakistan or Iran, this apparently—and unexpectedly—unequal situation in their homeland often left them feeling despondent.

Some respondents, often males, said that they experienced social acceptance and a welcoming attitude at a relatively early stage of reintegration among the receiving population—whether or not they themselves felt that they fitted in.[125] Some key factors for this more immediate acceptance were: pre-existing social relationships, strong ties that had been maintained with relatives during exile, and markers of status. If a returnee was a socially respectable person in the community (e.g. in a position of influence, religiously devout, or able to bring benefit to others), he or she was less likely to face harassment. This kind of influence depended on who occupied that shared space, who the returnee was (e.g. not being an obvious target for harassment or physically not fitting in to the local context), and who comprised the population that had remained (such as those who are compassionate, patient and understanding towards newcomers or see some benefit to be gleaned from the returnee).

Importance of external support

Regardless of the social status of returnees, crucial external support has often been provided simply through the generous understanding of others because in some cases, if not most, the receiving population have also experienced displacement of some duration. The positive influence of those in positions of some authority over the receiving communities adds to this, particularly in limited social spaces (such as within a school or village). For

123 For example, an uneducated married male who had returned from Peshawar discovered Uzbeks speaking their own language for the first time when he came to resettle in Kabul.

124 It has been claimed that a homogenous Afghan identity first emerged during the extended periods of exile and through the experience of external threats to Afghanistan. See Dupree, "Cultural Heritage and National Identity in Afghanistan"; Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, "State, National Awareness and Levels of Identity in Afghanistan from Monarchy to Islamic State," *Central Asian Survey* 19, no.3/4 (2000): 419-28; Schetter, "Ethnoscapes, National Territorialisation, and the Afghan War."

125 Not all respondents found themselves either "accepted" or "unaccepted" – their experiences are not clear cut in this way, and were sometimes expressed as more vague or neutral feelings.

example, if teachers introduce returnee students positively to their classmates ("*This student is from Pakistan, don't fight or make arguments*"), give equal punishment for misbehaviour and show acceptance of diversity, respondents are more likely to feel, and be, accepted. As the data from this study shows, some returnees may be excluded and disappointed due to their obviously different appearance, but they may still end up successfully reintegrating—the result of external encouragement, self-resilience, the passage of time and identification with *watan*.

> *"I don't know where I feel at home. I always ask myself this question but I haven't got the answer yet. Still in Afghanistan now I don't feel relaxed, I don't know why. Maybe my real home is somewhere else. I'm still looking for my real home. Maybe in the future, I will find somewhere."*
>
> — 19-year-old female student in Kabul who often thinks of Pakistan

On the other hand, lack of opportunity to find one's own place in Afghanistan, isolation (from family, society, school, workplace, etc.) and associated depressions—combined with other material issues—tend to cause the social exclusion of some returnees, and to escalate remembering the positive aspects of Pakistan and Iran as a better option. For example, a story of a 17-year-old married teacher and her brother highlights the comparative outcomes of returnees' reintegration. Both did not want to leave Iran and upon return to their native village in Hazarajad, they could not eat the local food or communicate with the villagers, and wanted to go back to Iran. While her maternal uncle encouraged them to teach at an informal school, they didn't want to do this because of her difficulties understanding the local dialect. With repeated encouragement from a liberal relative, even in the face of initial community resistance against a female teacher, she gradually became involved in community activities and stopped thinking about Iran while her brother could not make himself participate. She gradually found herself useful in relation to others, but her educated brother left for Iran.

While this female respondent had adapted herself through gradually interacting with villagers and developing attachment to watan, her brother had became more isolated—could not adapt himself in these circumstances, no one understood him, and he had no friend except the one who encouraged him to leave for Iran through smugglers. The difference that divided these siblings, who both had the same quality education in Iran, was the degree of each one's social and personal reintegration within their contexts. The brother remained in isolation, even from family ties, and sought a safe place with a new friend who took him out of Afghanistan by illegal means. In contrast to his sister, who overcame her initial hesitation to teach at an informal school, the brother continued to not interact with others, and his abilities were not utilised; instead, he became de-motivated. Although personality and individual resilience are important in this comparison between sister and brother, the isolation and failure of social and personal adjustment are also critical points to note. These could be potentially mitigated through external relationships and support, including the opportunity to participate among others and share internal struggles and experiences.

7.4 Personal fulfilment

While some returnees managed to live in Afghanistan, some continue to see themselves as not blending in with the environment—as having a "different social self" to those around them. The extent to which returnees come to feel a shared identity with those around them and find that place socially and emotionally comfortable tends to influence their process of adaptation as well as their long-term settlement outcomes. This is a reverse process of what they used to experience: many second-generation Afghan refugees grew up among Pakistanis/Iranians and found familiarity with the environment while continuously questioning themselves as not belonging in a real sense in contrast to other citizens. One notable feature among the respondents in this study is that—with a few exceptions—it is those who are better educated (both males and females) who have tended to face greater social and emotional contradictions during their process of reintegration, which is possibly

linked to more exposure to "open-minded" ideas in their previous lives. Among those who were less educated and of a lower economic status, their primary struggle was against material deficit and physical insecurity, which many of them had faced in exile as well.

Returnee perceptions of Afghans who remained in Afghanistan

Nearly all respondents—regardless of their education, gender, extent of material difficulties and level of social acceptance or emotional contentment—expressed generally negative, stereotypical perceptions of their Afghan counterparts who had grown up in Afghanistan during the war years. Words used to describe their compatriots included: aggressive, rude, uneducated, ill-mannered and physically dirty. While admitting to some weaknesses such as confusion over their self identity, many returnee respondents—both educated and uneducated—saw themselves as more open-minded than those who had remained in Afghanistan, having experienced new people and cultures in Pakistan or Iran. In particular, among educated returnees, criticism of the "inferior" material culture of Afghans who had remained was common. Based on values formed while growing up in Pakistan or Iran, returnees often feel in a position to evaluate the situation in Afghanistan from an outsider's perspective; as an example, some women who had returned from Iran saw many of their female peers in their homeland as un-Islamic. As a result of these differences and feelings of estrangement felt by many returnees in comparison with those who had remained, being socially accepted was not necessarily enough for what could be considered "full" reintegration, in particular for that sense of personal fulfilment and being at ease in an Afghan context.

Conflict with Afghan values and social norms

In order to address or combat feelings of difference, many returnees end up adjusting their behaviour and actions to fit in with the new environment, which occurs either naturally or more intentionally. Personal maturity also influences a returnee's values and may strengthen their internal coping mechanisms. Some respondents in this study described gradual change and adaptation of their ideas with little resistance as time passed, while others spoke of feeling compelled to adjust their public image in response to social norms, while clinging to their own personal values—creating a degree of internal conflict between their private and public personas.

Hatred for *watan*: *"Afghanistan doesn't care for me"*

A 30-year-old single returnee woman from Iran, who fled from two forced marriages and an attempt at a third, does not even know her native province. Through these experiences while in asylum she formed intense feelings of hatred towards Afghans and Afghanistan, believing instead that Iranian men generally behaved respectfully towards women.

"Afghanistan has bad people. I would prefer to live in an Iranian jail than here."

Women reported more profound emotional difficulties on return to Afghanistan because of the stricter social norms and expectations of their behaviour there, an outcome similar to other existing studies observed in the return decision-making. The new situations they faced were generally quite different from those they experienced in Pakistan and Iran. Women's reduced mobility in Afghanistan—subject to issues of security, social norms and availability of facilities (e.g. unreliable public transportation)[126]—exemplifies the unfavourable environment for many women upon return.[127] The behaviours that they had been used to in the country of refuge were commonly perceived as too "free" for women in Afghanistan, where the reputation of the family is largely dependent on the perception of its women as "honourable"

126 Limited infrastructure in Afghanistan except among selected urban settlers reduced access to information, particularly internet usage among some young women in their teens who used to have relatively easy access for communicating with external society at home in Pakistan/Iran.

127 A very small proportion of female respondents were allowed by their families to maintain their relatively high mobility after returning to Afghanistan.

and "Afghan." Particularly in a changing society, women are expected to transfer knowledge of their culture to the next generation, so appearance and attitudes that are perceived as "foreign" are often cited as evidence of women having abandoned their culture.[128]

For those women who have lived in an Afghan enclave in Pakistan or Iran, returning to Afghanistan may not significantly affect their mobility. Women's lives tend to be shaped by contextual factors—not only the space in which they exist, the kind of people and social norms that exist there, but also family context and changes in their status in relation to men (for example, getting married or becoming widowed). Even so, for less mobile women, the sense of living in their own *watan* often gives them the strength to face material difficulties and personal frustrations—if they define *watan* positively in relation to themselves, and as long as the balance of factors affecting resettlement does not dramatically shift to the limit of basic needs.

The stresses and internal contradictions that returnees face during the process of adjustment to their homeland may, if they exist along with other negative factors, reach a tipping point that will lead them to wish to leave again. This is a critical point to note: second-generation refugees may have returned to Afghanistan for now, but they may not necessarily be content there nor feel that they "fit in" to the place where they are supposed to stay for the long term—leaving the potential for future movement to a place where they believe they will be more at ease.

7.5 Reintegration prospects

Table 8 shows some general trends in the intentions of the 48 second-generation Afghan returnees in this study who live in Kabul, Herat and Baghlan provinces. There is no clear-cut pattern to their emotional responses to the reintegration process. Even among those who share a desire to stay in their current place, there is great variation in the detail of that emotion. Some have struggled enormously just to manage to live in their current place and advise their relatives in exile not to come back to Afghanistan. Others, however, are highly satisfied with their current situation (but this does include some who also miss life in Pakistan or Iran, perhaps indicating that they feel emotional ties to more than one homeland).

Furthermore, not all respondents are fixed in their ideas and future intentions. Even while being interviewed, some of their opinions and ideas appeared to be contradictory—revealing their ongoing internal struggles swinging between two spaces at the same time, and lack of clarity about the future. It is, therefore, difficult to classify respondents in terms of their future intentions; it can be said, however, that nearly half intend, at present, to remain in their current place of residence in Afghanistan. These second-generation Afghan returnees tend to maintain strong ties with the place where they grew up and, in terms of their emotional attachment, do not make much of a distinction between the two countries. They exist simultaneously among multiple spaces, influenced by a range of values which define their identities. Regardless of permanent settlement or not, many wish or have plans to visit Pakistan or Iran in the near future, primarily to see relatives and friends (Afghans, Pakistanis and Iranians), to see the place of memories, for work purposes, or because they are bored in Afghanistan.[129]

For the eight respondents who intend to move to an urban location, the primary reason for this is to have better access to facilities and employment. Three male respondents who were living in urban areas had left their villages in order to pursue further education; this is one of the primary reasons that rural respondents (both educated and uneducated) gave for their preference to settle in cities—to have access to education for their children beyond primary school. Over a quarter of respondents still hope or expect to leave Afghanistan in the future,

128 See A. Rayaprol, "Being American, Learning to be Indian: Gender and Generation in the Context of Transnational Migration," in *Women and Migration in Asia, Volume 1*, ed. M. Thapan, (New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London: Sage, 2005), 130-149.

129 Fourteen returnees out of 48, mostly men and from Pakistan, visited Pakistan or Iran after returning to Afghanistan. Visiting Iran includes using both legal and illegal means, due to a lack of legal documentation.

Table 8: Future intentions of 48 returnee respondents

Intention: to stay in Afghanistan		*Intention: to leave Afghanistan*		
Remain in current place	Urbanise, move to another city	Labour migration	Return to Pakistan/ Iran (or move elsewhere in Afghanistan)	Transnational marriage
26 (15 M, 11F)	**8** (3 M, 5 F)	**4** (4 M)	**9** (2 M, 7 F)	**1** (1 F)

Note: This study is based on data collected during just a few interviews over a short period: it is based on respondents' ideas expressed in a particular social environment at the time of the research—a snapshot of their feelings at that time, in that place.

but with many varied reasons for wanting to do so and for their preferred location. In summary, some respondents changed their perceptions of life as a returned refugee in the *watan* during reintegration, in comparison to how they had thought they would respond prior to return. Some who resisted returning to Afghanistan have found a satisfactory life there, primarily because they have been able to find a solution for their own particular problems or discover a path to personal development. In contrast, three of those who were originally willing to return to Afghanistan are now thinking of leaving, mainly because of disappointment related to corruption, isolation and limited work opportunities.

> *It's true that now I'm relaxed and free [in Herat]. Still, I don't forget Iran and want to visit Iran every year. Because my past life and memories are in Iran. [...] I like Afghanistan very much as well. But there is no memory in Afghanistan, because I grew up in Iran. [...] I feel that I'm an Afghan but in real, I feel sometimes that I'm a hybrid.*
>
> — 22-year-old female home-based teacher, grew up in Tehran

Part 8: Conclusion

For second-generation Afghan refugees, returning to their "homeland" as well as efforts at reintegration are highly complex and fluid processes. The meaning of homeland in relation to self-identity is constantly reconstructed through interactions with different people and experiences as life unfolds in their new environment: the majority of second-generation refugees have had little or no experience living in Afghanistan prior to "returning" there. Understanding the characteristics, return intentions and reintegration patterns of this significant population of young Afghans living away from their country is of critical importance to ensuring that both Afghanistan and the young returnees themselves benefit from the experience of return, and that the remaining Afghan population in neighbouring countries and ongoing cross-border movements are managed in the best possible ways.

The formation of identity for second-generation Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran is heavily influenced by their surrounding environments, along with individual personality, family background, ties to relatives and communities, gender and location. The nature of the host society is also of key importance; this is not only related to the refugees' attitude toward it but also in terms of the broader political and cultural issues at play. For youth and young adult refugees in a country that is not considered their own, the complexity of establishing "who they are" is exacerbated by their participation in two concurrent contexts—the Afghan family sphere and the Pakistani or Iranian social sphere—and also by being at the adolescent stage of development. Their values and ideals, shaped by the challenging situations they have faced as refugees who do not have a strong connection with their "home" country, are in many cases markedly different to those of their parents and of their peers who had remained in Afghanistan—having found greater familiarity in living in Pakistan and Iran and the way of life there (although also having interpersonal contradictions at times).

Afghans living as refugees in Pakistan and Iran, particularly those of the second generation, commonly face situations in different contexts and spaces in which they feel they need to adjust their behaviour, either superficially or more profoundly. In cases where refugees have tried to conceal their Afghan-ness and status as *mohajerin* in order to blend into the host society (more frequently in Iran), they often feel conflicted between these attempts to assimilate and the ongoing feelings of social exclusion, due to their legal impossibility of belonging. For some, the energy it takes to blend in are too demanding and they are more motivated to return to Afghanistan. Others, however, strongly resist returning to Afghanistan; as the deportation campaign and negative perceptions toward Afghans in Iran grow, some Afghans increasingly try to choose a strategy of invisibility by denying their links to Afghanistan.

Despite having grown up outside their homeland, the majority of respondents in this study clung to some kind of emotional tie to Afghanistan while in exile. Learning about Afghanistan while living outside was not a straightforward process; many respondents had developed conflicting perceptions of their own country, holding both positive thoughts and negative concerns about how life could be there. The sense of "non-belonging" in Pakistani and Iranian society impacted upon their attitudes toward an idealised national homeland, regardless of their degree of assimilation into the host society. This was also accentuated when they felt that they had been deprived of rights or socially excluded for being "inferior" residents of the host country. Second-generation refugees' experiences in both the private and public spheres, along with the combination of other push and pull factors, deeply affect their perceptions of future prospects in Afghanistan, and, consequently, their intentions related to return.

Based on data collected in this study, most second-generation refugees living in Pakistan and Iran view their lives in exile as non-permanent and accept

the inevitability of return. This is in part because of emotional ties to their homeland (despite little actual experience in the country) and also because of their unfavourable status as *mohajerin* as long as they remain in the host country—a status fundamentally rooted in a legal distinction. For the majority of those remaining in Pakistan and Iran however, a final decision about whether or not to return to Afghanistan has not yet been made and the issue is open to further influence by the constantly evolving mix of factors. Many refugees express great interest in going back at least once to see and experience Afghanistan, but are open to re-migrating if the return is not successful. This optimistic attitude towards return and anticipated continuous population movement across borders are key points to note about second-generation refugees since they exist alongside deep links and emotional ties to the locations in which they grew up.

The return of refugees to their homeland may in fact bring about "the reverse condition of a refugee"[130]—more so for those of the second generation. Upon repatriation, a process of adaptation to the "new" context must take place for returning refugees in which the unease of being in a different environment and adopting unfamiliar societal norms are again the cause of varying degrees of emotional difficulty. For refugees who have lived most or all of their lives outside their own country, the experience of feeling foreign does not necessarily end as expected in their homeland. These stresses combine with a range of interplaying factors to present serious challenges to successful reintegration—materially, socially and emotionally.

The sense of attachment that second-generation refugees feel to the locations they have experienced living in comes from both familiarity with the general environment as well as personal ties they have developed with people there. They often differentiate between Pakistan or Iran as a country (the social structure, physical environment and population in general) and the people who form their daily networks, such as extended families and friends—either Afghans or members of the host population. They are also in a position to see the situation in Afghanistan through the lens of an "outsider" and to compare life there with that in Pakistan and Iran. For those returnees who do not resettle easily into life at "home" in Afghanistan, the temptation to remember the positives about life in Pakistan or Iran is great, and fuels further questioning about where their future will be. This is in a way similar to the decision-making process around whether or not to repatriate.

This study found that the notion of being in one's own *watan* or "homeland" was a key pull factor in encouraging Afghan refugees to return from Pakistan and Iran as expectations that their rights as a citizen would be ensured; this was true even for those younger members of the second generation who in many cases have stronger ties to the country in which they have grown up. The sense of comfort derived from being in their home country, along with appropriate external support, has also been shown to help them confront the difficulties they face in settling down—in often harsher conditions than they had experienced in the country of exile. In returning to their homeland, the expectation of many second-generation Afghan refugees is that they are coming to a place in which their rights to equal treatment and opportunities as respected citizens of the country are ensured, and where they will have freedom of movement and residence, and access to resources, livelihoods and property. This expectation is not always fulfilled.

The degree of an individual's relationship to, and identification with, his or her "homeland" is a critical point when considering the long-term fate of second-generation returnees. Many returnees draw upon the patience and resilience they developed as refugees in their determination to adjust to life in their homeland, and in return they achieve the sense of "freedom" they had sought. However, this coping mechanism for the sake of remaining in the *watan* has a limit: if the balance of factors reaches a tipping point, it can lead to disappointment in the *watan* and re-migration. If this occurs, even stronger pull factors are required to bring refugees back again to Afghanistan.

130 T. Ghanem, "When Forced Migrants Return 'Home'," 15.

The situation for second-generation Afghan refugees who have grown up in regional exile cannot be generalised. They have experienced a broad range of circumstances depending on their particular place of residence influenced by political and social dynamics there, in combination with their personal background and context. The process of reintegration is not a simple movement of population, nor is the group of returnees homogeneous. These differences have to be carefully examined for facilitating their more permanent settlement in Afghanistan.

Part 9: Recommendations

This study's primary aim is to inform existing policy and to contribute to programme development. These final recommendations, therefore, are primarily aimed at the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, along with donors, international organisations and concerned stakeholders. They draw out key points from the foregoing analysis that could potentially shift the fluctuating factors affecting second-generation refugees in favour of voluntary return and positive reintegration experiences. It must be recognised that the prevailing situation for refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and for those who have recently returned to Afghanistan, is in some ways not the same as it was at the time of the research; in fact, being at the intersection of a broad range of interplaying factors, it is indeed always subject to change.

The lessons drawn from this study incorporate suggestions made by senior representatives of the Afghan government, donors, and the aid community, following discussion and feedback received during workshops conducted by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit in Kabul, December 2007.

Voluntary return: reducing the risks of reintegration failure

1. Improving work skills and access to employment during transition: enhancing the capacity to take risks related to return and reintegration

- The Government of Afghanistan, in coordination with those of Pakistan and Iran, and the support of donors, should engage in continuous efforts to develop the skills of refugee youth, driven by the demand and needs of the local labour market in Afghanistan. Many of these youth are expected to be the breadwinner of their household.
- Existing training centres and technical courses in cities and refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran should be improved with facilities focused on the needs of the Afghan market; this is aimed at assisting refugee youth who lack job contacts in Afghanistan to prepare appropriately for the employment market they will face on return. Priority access should be given to vulnerable groups such as those in households headed by women or children, those without formal education, those with disabilities, and those who are jobless in their country of refuge. Local residents of Pakistan and Iran who are economically vulnerable may also benefit from this training.

2. Facilitating realistic resettlement planning: Information and visits

- For those young refugees with fewer social networks and other assets to support themselves after return, it is crucial that reliable sources are used to provide accurate information on support systems available in Afghanistan to returnees (e.g. land allocation, employment services and the National Skills Development Programme) as well as local contacts in Afghanistan in order to access employment information in the location of resettlement. In collaboration with the governments of Pakistan and Iran, this information could be conveyed to refugee youth through radio and other media.
- Realistic resettlement planning is crucial prior to return as evidenced in the data of recent returnees, particularly from Pakistan. The Governments of Iran and Afghanistan are encouraged to engage in further bilateral talks to facilitate greater access to preparatory visits by young refugees, many of whom have overwhelmingly uneasy perceptions toward Afghanistan because of having never seen or experienced it in reality.

3. Education in transition: A key concern for second-generation Afghan refugees

- One key reason that second-generation Afghan refugees do not want to return is because their education could possibly be discontinued. Their fear of losing the opportunity to be educated must be addressed; the Government

of Afghanistan, with support from the international community, should continue to improve access to quality education in Afghanistan (particularly beyond the primary level in rural areas).

- In coordination with the governments of the two host countries, the Afghan government should actively facilitate securing legal status for Afghan schools in Pakistan and Iran as places where second-generation Afghan refugees can prepare themselves with some qualifications for return. Through encouragement by Afghan teachers, these young people may develop a positive Afghan identity that could lead to a desire to serve Afghanistan. Incentives to draw talented students to the country may be provided through vacation-time internship opportunities, offered by the Afghan government, private companies, or civil society.
- Clearer and more accessible procedures should be in place for the approval and acceptance of certifications from schools and universities in the neighbouring countries, particularly in the case of Pakistan where the language of instruction may differ from that of Afghanistan. Currently, standardised and accessible information about these approval procedures is lacking, and at the same time there are many reports of procedures affected by bribery, contributing to returnees' negative perceptions of their homeland. The Government of Afghanistan should establish a "one-stop shop" in the Ministry of Education, staffed by knowledgeable personnel who can provide accurate information about accrediting qualifications and can process certifications efficiently. This service should be openly accessible to students seeking consultations not only inside Afghanistan but also at multiple locations in Pakistan and Iran; this would help students avoid having to return to the neighbouring countries to complete the approval process.

4. Advocacy: Positive motivation for return

- In collaboration with the governments of Pakistan and Iran and with the support of international agencies, the Government of Afghanistan should develop a comprehensive communications strategy targeting young refugees. Promotional campaigns, delivered via a range of media and community outlets, should highlight the importance of one's homeland to motivate young Afghans to return. While acknowledging their diverse backgrounds, the campaigns should also emphasise a sense of unity among Afghans, encouraging them to serve their own country. It is important to create positive motivation for voluntary return rather than from deportation pressure, which leads to strong resistance to returning to Afghanistan.

Complex reintegration: Influencing the balancing of factors

1. Promoting emotional security: Advocacy for social inclusion and anti-discrimination policies

- The process of returning "home" for many second-generation Afghan refugees is often accompanied by great emotional stress (particularly among women), significantly threatening successful long-term resettlement. The Government of Afghanistan, together with international agencies, should develop media campaigns that advocate for social acceptance and non-discriminatory treatment of all Afghans (including returnees). These campaigns should encourage such social inclusion particularly in the public sphere (e.g. schools). Such efforts could increase the receiving communities' understanding of the transition faced by young returnees and help them provide encouragement to returnees adjusting to different values and adapting to being "home". Sustained government-led advocacy to raise awareness of anti-corruption policies could play a key role in promoting solidarity among all Afghans.
- Education programmes that promote the equal treatment of all people should be provided for those in positions of authority in a community (such as teachers, headmasters and *mullahs*). Community-based mechanisms to regulate discrimination against returnees could also be

developed. Concerned government ministries that work with youth (such as the Ministry of Education) can work in close coordination to develop such programmes.

- It is important to reduce the risk of isolation and loneliness among second-generation refugees returning to Afghanistan, particularly for those who have few existing networks there. This could be achieved by supporting NGOs in the formation of community groups. For example, youth *jirgas* could be established for young female and male returnees to share experiences in separate-sex groups and have opportunities for self-development as they also serve their community. These efforts should include promoting support among family members to ensure that girls and women are permitted to participate in these groups.
- As a part of more long-term social and economic programming, the reintegration process of selected second-generation returnees should be monitored not only at the time of initial return but also over the medium and long terms. The lessons accumulated from this initiative could be applied to improve further programming for permanent resettlement.

2. Enhancing opportunities for employment

- The Afghan government, donors, civil society and the private sector must cooperate to create access to jobs for vulnerable groups, particularly those who do not have connections or means to enter the job market in Afghanistan. The outreach of existing employment service centres should be extended to more districts and rural areas; postings should be provided in local languages and for a wider range of positions (unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled) compared to limited postings targeting only the skilled and educated. Local radio stations can be used to disseminate information. Incentives should be provided to employers to post job vacancies at newly established employment centres.
- Affirmative-action recruitment systems may be implemented by the local government and development organisations. This could involve actively employing returnees as teachers, literacy trainers and health workers in community organisations where their exposure to new ideas while in exile could positively affect local communities. In areas of high concentration of returnees, their skills should be specifically identified and recorded by the local government. This information should be effectively mobilised to the benefit of the community as a whole; this may be done in coordination with aid agencies through strategised programming and implementation of development projects. This programme should include not only professional service providers but also those in fields such as business and trade, skilled workers, technicians and others.
- Female members of vulnerable returnee families are often unable to work in Afghanistan because of restrictive social norms. This may reduce household responsiveness to survival crises, prompting remigration. The Ministry of Women's Affairs, along with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled, and NGOs, should improve existing efforts to provide more market-oriented, culturally sensitive livelihood opportunities for economically vulnerable women in rural and urban areas.

3. Meeting material needs during reintegration

- Second-generation Afghan returnees of a lower socioeconomic status and without skills and basic education should be key beneficiaries of programmes providing material support. These include opportunities for the provision of labour-intensive work (such as through water and sanitation programmes), skills training that matches market needs (such as through the National Skills Development Programme), priority access to housing and land allocation, and microcredit and business development services (e.g. the Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan and the National Area-Based Development Programme). In some cases, adjustments to programme requirements could ensure that returnees qualify for, for example, loans through microfinance institutions.

- The right to own property is one of the key pull factors drawing refugees back to Afghanistan. This is true even for second-generation Afghan refugees who have less of a connection to their country based on real living experience but who aspire to own land or a home. Although challenging, the existing system of land allocation should be made more efficient and transparent. To contribute to improving service provision, a system for feedback should be established, incorporating third-party input, including from randomly selected potential beneficiaries—both elders and youth.
- Urban planning processes should take greater priority given the increase in urban populations related to the influx of returnees and internal migrants. At the same time, attention should be paid to employment generation in both urban and rural areas to reduce challenges related to meeting material needs and to slow the flow of migrants to urban locations.

4. Meeting the increasing need for quality education

- Donors and civil society must be strongly committed to longer-term investment in post-primary education in urban and rural areas, reflecting the growing needs of young returnees, both educated and uneducated, and future generations. To attract highly qualified students to rural areas, competitive incentives to enhance access to continuous education could be provided, for example, secure transportation and accommodation.
- Opportunities in higher education, which are not readily available to Afghans in Pakistan and Iran, are strong pull factors in bringing educated refugees back to Afghanistan. The Afghan government should: ensure that equal, corruption-free opportunities for higher education in Afghanistan exist; invest in scholarships for returnees; and improve the governance of systems that allocate university places, reducing the perception and reality of corruption in university admissions processes.
- Improving quality Islamic education in urban and rural Afghanistan similarly needs attention. The Ministry of Education's initiative to approve certificates issued by *madrassas* in Pakistan and Iran should be better communicated to those young refugees remaining in neighbouring countries in order to ensure the availability of quality instructors.

5. Understanding vulnerability: Providing physical security

- For those who seriously intend to remain in Afghanistan over the long term, security is inextricably linked to potential economic development. Concerns about less serious crimes (such as robbery and theft) and uneasiness over the unreliability of the police (related to corruption) were also issues commonly mentioned by respondents in this study. To improve the performance and public image of the police, the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the international community should increase the pace of police reform and enforce penalties for proven corrupt behaviour.
- A major frustration for many young female returnees is their reduced mobility, resulting from prevailing social norms in Afghanistan, the lack of appropriate facilities such as reliable and secure public transportation, and fears of kidnapping and harassment. Returnee women, particularly from Iran, said that stronger government-led social control, such as the presence of policewomen in Iran, helped to reduce harassment against women in public. Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior Affairs and the international community should strengthen efforts to recruit female police officers and increase the provision of effective and relevant gender training for all police officers. New laws should be adopted and existing laws enforced to protect women's safety; this will be required to reduce the anxieties of returnee women.

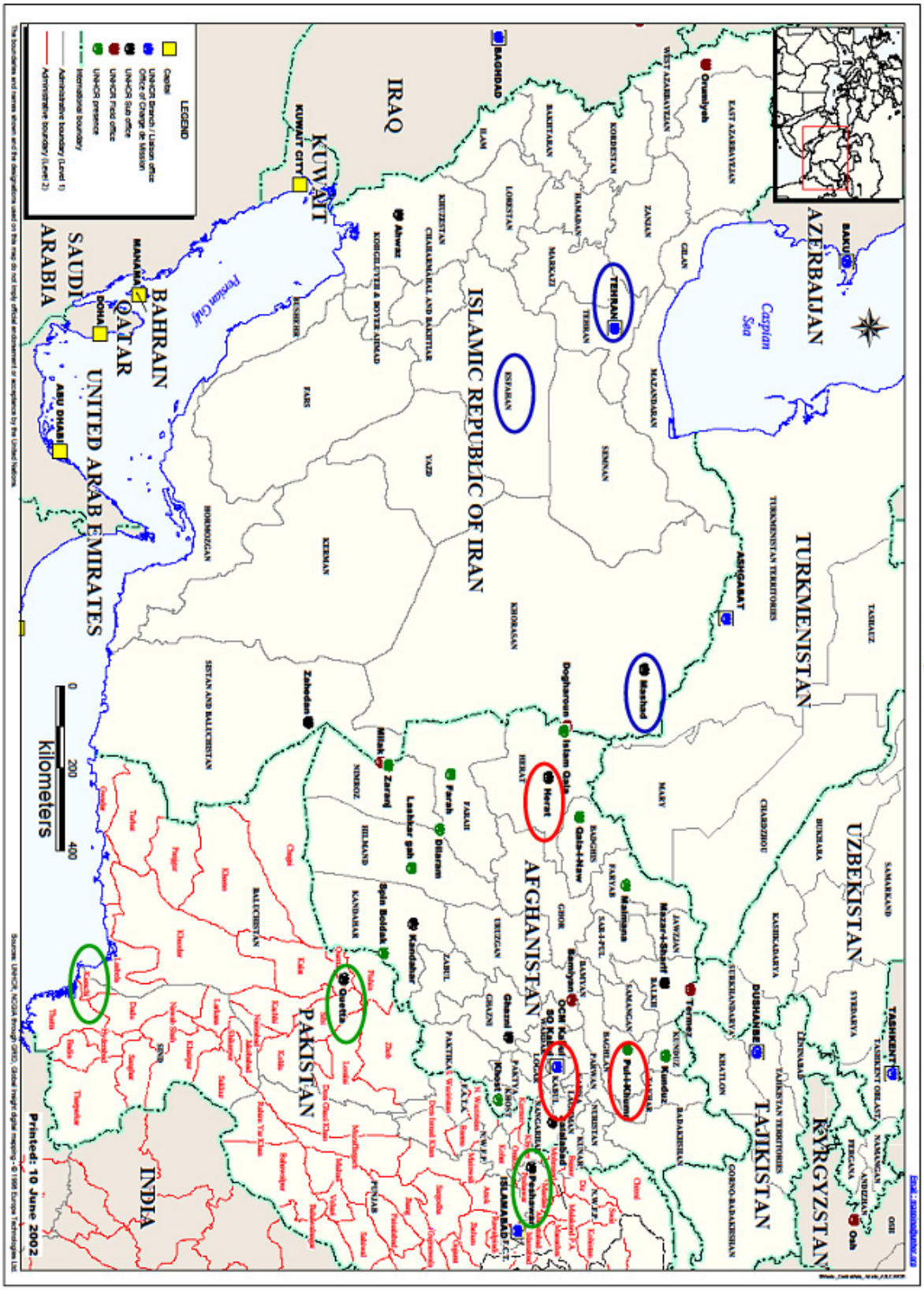
6. Managing legal migration: Options for gradual return

- A focus on managing—rather than limiting or prohibiting labour migration—would better support the successful resettlement of Afghan households. Iran's efforts to stem labour migration, including making access to formal

visas difficult and by deporting undocumented Afghans, simply drive people to illegal migration. The Afghan government should ensure Afghans can easily obtain a passport. The Government of Afghanistan and those of the host countries should continue their bilateral dialogue to develop laws and agreements that facilitate a more manageable migration framework that reduces illegal migration. This framework should recognise that all three countries both send and receive workers.

- The gradual return of households is a common strategy used by Afghan families to mitigate the risks associated with repatriation. The Government of Iran, supported by international aid agencies, should facilitate these strategies by providing re-entry visas to those heading to Afghanistan on reconnaissance visits and by maintaining support to vulnerable households that remain in the host country.
- It is important to recognise that not all Afghans in Pakistan and Iran, first- and second-generation alike, will return to Afghanistan voluntarily in the near future; among these cases are those who have protection needs and those who have married Pakistanis or Iranians. Furthermore, the capacity of Afghanistan to absorb the vast numbers of refugees who remain in these neighbouring countries requires continuous, realistic re-examination and a consistent humanitarian approach.

Annex I: Study Sites in Three Countries



Annex II: Location Descriptions

Pakistan

Peshawar district has been the most important centre for Afghan settlements in Pakistan, and 27.09 percent of all Afghans in Pakistan presently reside there.[131] North West Frontier Province (NWFP)—with Peshawar City as its capital—is traditionally home to Pashto-speaking people and has maintained many common social and economic ties with Afghanistan. **Quetta** district hosts the second-largest Afghan population in Pakistan (10.93 percent of the total). Baluchistan—with Quetta City as its capital—is Pakistan's largest province in land size (44 percent of the national total) and is rich in natural gas, but only seven percent of the country's population lives there. It is the least developed province in Pakistan, with many environmental, economic and human development challenges. **Karachi** is the largest city in Pakistan, estimated to have a population of more than 12 million. It is the centre of financial and industrial activities, having better infrastructure in general, and therefore has historically attracted migrants both from inside and outside the country.[132]

Iran

More than half of registered Afghans in Iran are concentrated in three provinces: Tehran (31 percent), Khorasan—with Mashhad as its centre—(15 percent), and Isfahan (12.6 percent).[133] Afghans have mostly clustered in cities and towns in Iran. **Tehran** is the largest city in Iran and the capital, with over 12 million people in the province.[134] It is the centre of the country's transport network and industries. **Mashhad**, with its literal meaning "the place of martyrdom," is the second-largest city in Iran. It is a famous place for Shia pilgrims, having developed around the tomb of Imam Reza. In contrast to the relatively high numbers of Afghan households in Mashhad, there are fewer single individuals residing there. **Isfahan**, in the south of Tehran, hosts a large population of Afghans resident in outlying or peri-urban areas of the city (e.g. Dolatabad and Rahnan). It is a historic city that flourished in the 16th century; a Persian proverb says, "Isfahan is half of the world."

Afghanistan

The population of **Kabul** city, as the country's capital, increased from 1.7 million in 2000 to around three million in 2003—a result of high refugee return numbers and rural-to-urban migration. The government estimates about 6.4 million people (30 percent of the population) live in cities, and that this will double by 2015.[135] **Herat**, an ancient city in western Afghanistan with much historic architecture, has been the centre of trade to Iran and beyond. The language spoken in the area is called *Herati*, with accents influenced from the Persian of eastern Iran. Urban infrastructure has been relatively well maintained compared to other cities in Afghanistan. Pul-i-Khumri is the centre of **Baghlan** province, and provides a picture of a smaller provincial town with its peri-urban and rural surrounding areas. It has a high concentration of returnees and the unique situation of an active textile industry in its centre, with ethnic diversity and returnees from both Iran and Pakistan.[136]

131 Registration of Afghans in Pakistan 2007.

132 H. Gazdar, "Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation and Regularization," in International Migrants and the City, ed. M.Balbo, 151-185 (Venezia: UN-Habitat and dP dipartimento di Pianificazione, Universita luav di Venezia, 2005).

133 Amayesh 2005. Abbasi-Shavazi, *Second-Generation Afghans in Iran*.

134 IRNA, "Tehran Population Increased by 20 Percent Since Last Statistics," http://www.payvand.com/news/02/nov/1067.html (accessed 7 July 2008).

135 Government of Afghanistan and international agencies, "Technical Annex: Urban Development," in *Securing Afghanistan's Future* (Government of Afghanistan/Asian Development Bank/UNAMA/UNDP/The World Bank Group, 2004), 2.

136 S. Schütte, *Dwindling Industry, Growing Poverty: Urban Livelihoods in Pul-e Khumri* (Kabul: AREU, 2004), 3-4.

Annex III: Key Characteristics of Respondents[137]

Respondents' Household Background	Timing and circumstances of asylum-seeking	Among the 199 respondents' households, roughly two-thirds (134) first arrived in Pakistan or Iran in the 1980s (between 1979 and 1990); the next largest waves took place in the early 1990s (38), before 1979 (24), and the latter part of the 1990s (3). Not all households were motivated to move from their homeland because of war-related issues; other factors included seeking medical treatment, poverty, loss of an income-earning household member, marriage, protection-related reasons (family disputes or political conflict) and higher education or religious study.
	Location of refuge	Given that fewer than 2.5 percent of Afghans settled in camps in Iran, respondents interviewed there were overwhelmingly urban residents (with some peri-urban dwellers in Isfahan). In Pakistan, camp residents comprised about a quarter of the sample, but these camps were within day-trip distance from Peshawar. In both countries, little developed and border areas were not covered during fieldwork due to security concerns and operational feasibility, which was covered by information received from returnees inside Afghanistan.
Respondents' Individual Characteristics	Age	The mean age of respondents across the three countries under study was 23 years (24 for males, 22 for females). The mean age at which they got married was relatively higher among respondents in Iran (23 for males, 19 for females) compared to those in Pakistan (21 for males, 17 for females); this was presumably related to the higher proportion of educated respondents in Iran. However, data regarding returnees from Iran (from interviews conducted in Afghanistan) indicated some notably early marriages, including a female who had been married at 10 years old and a male at 13 years-old. More than one-third of respondents (71) were born outside Afghanistan; most others left at an early age (under 10 years), and a small number left at 10 years or older.
	Education and occupation	Among respondents interviewed in Iran, those who were highly educated were over-represented—a quarter had studied beyond 12th grade. This was because of the use of school and higher education networks to identify respondents, and associated difficulties finding second-generation Afghan refugees without any formal schooling to take part in the study; single male labour migrants often did not meet the criteria of living outside Afghanistan for more than half of their lives). There was also a higher proportion of teachers and office clerks compared to labourers among respondents in Iran. Only four respondents without formal schooling were interviewed in Iran, while this was a characteristic of nearly one-third of respondents interviewed in Pakistan. Among returnees interviewed in Afghanistan, around half of these who did not have any formal secular education belonged to households in the lowest wealth category in this study, but there was also one from the highest wealth category. The household's context (such as its socioeconomic situation and related values) was not the only reason for respondents not attending school; this also depended on the country of refuge.[138] Across each of the three countries studied, roughly a quarter of male respondents were not engaged in paid work at the time of interview (this includes students, unless they were also working as teachers or engaged in another income-earning activity). More than half of female respondents did not work for an income. In terms of mobility, girls and women—both in neighbouring countries and in Afghanistan—were often restricted to spaces considered honourable and safe for females.
	Legal status[139]	Among respondents who had grown up in Iran, the majority had some legal documentation to justify their presence in the country, although there were some who did not have any documentation at all. There were a few cases of respondents in Iran who possessed Iranian national documents (citizenship), as well as some cases of this in Pakistan. At the time of fieldwork in Pakistan, Proof of Registration (PoR) cards had not yet been introduced and very few respondents were aware of the forthcoming registration process. PoR cards were initially provided valid until the end of 2009, which was later extended until the end of 2012.

137 Detailed descriptions and a comparison of respondents' characteristics with existing quantitative data, as well as a focus on the relevance and limitations of the respondent group as a representative sample, are explained in each country case study (published separately).

138 According to an existing household survey, illiteracy among the younger generation of Afghans in Iran is less than that of their elders (70 percent of children aged 6 to 16 go to school; 65 percent of girls and 74 percent of boys), while the illiteracy rate is higher among people over 40 years old (56.5 percent)–particularly among women. Overall, the literacy rate for Afghans in Iran is higher than for those in Pakistan (International Labour Organization, Afghan Households and Workers in Iran (Geneva: ILO, 2006), 42-3.

139 Due to many respondents' sensitivity about the issue, direct questions about legal status were not usually asked. Researchers gathered what information they could about this characteristic, sometimes through an informed guess, in other cases it came up through general conversation, and otherwise it remained unknown. It was clear, however, that the sample included both registered and non-registered refugees in Pakistan and Iran. The legal status of individuals within households also varied. There were some cases where respondents themselves did not possess legal documents, while other members of their household did.

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