

## IRAN-AFGHANISTAN BORDER MANAGEMENT AND MIGRATION CHALLENGES: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

**Aim:** The aim of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Iran-Afghanistan border management and migration challenges.

**Methods:** The research methodology involved content analysis to identify key themes and patterns, followed by framework analysis. Non-probability sampling was used to obtain in-depth insights, and relevant news articles, research articles, and books were selected based on relevance and credibility.

**Results:** The results indicate that Iran plans to establish a joint free trade center with Afghanistan, facilitates visas for Afghan traders and workers to prevent illegal migration, shares historical and cultural bonds, implements security measures at the border, announces plans to block parts of the border, and engages in coordination efforts to resolve border problems and ensure smooth cross-border movement.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, the analysis reveals the importance of collaborative economic integration, border facilitation, historical and cultural bonds, while also highlighting the need for balanced border security measures and coordinated efforts to address border challenges.

**Recommendation:** Foster economic integration, enhance border facilitation, strengthen cultural bonds, balance border security measures, promote bilateral coordination, seek mutual understanding on border closure, and emphasize regional security cooperation.

**Keywords:** Iran, Afghanistan, border management, migration challenges, comprehensive analysis.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The management of borders plays a critical role in regulating the movement of people, goods, and ideas between countries. One such border of significant importance is the Iran-Afghanistan border, which has witnessed a complex interplay of border management and migration challenges. This comprehensive analysis aims to delve into the intricacies of Iran-Afghanistan border management and explore the multifaceted migration challenges that have emerged in this context.

Being a shared border between two neighboring countries, Iran and Afghanistan, the Iran-Afghanistan border serves as a crucial transit point for various types of migration. The

movement of individuals across this border encompasses diverse forms, including economic migration, asylum-seeking, and forced displacement due to conflicts and political instability. As such, the border management policies and practices in place have a direct impact on the facilitation or restriction of migration flows.

Understanding the complexities of Iran-Afghanistan border management requires an examination of the existing policies and practices governing the movement of people and goods. This analysis will explore the effectiveness of border control mechanisms, visa regulations, and the cooperation between the two countries in

managing and securing the border. By examining these aspects, we can identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current border management framework.

Migration challenges at the Iran-Afghanistan border are multifaceted and demand a comprehensive analysis to gain insights into their nature and implications. Factors such as socio-economic disparities, political instability, and security concerns in Afghanistan contribute to the patterns and dynamics of migration at this border. It is crucial to examine the push and pull factors influencing migration decisions, the demographics of migrants, and the social, economic, and cultural consequences for both the sending and receiving communities.

The introduction is to provide a holistic understanding of the migration challenges faced at the Iran-Afghanistan border, shedding light on the experiences of migrants, their vulnerabilities, and the impact on local communities. By comprehensively assessing migration patterns and their implications, we can develop a nuanced understanding of the social, economic, and political ramifications of migration at the border.

### **Research Questions:**

What are the economic benefits and job opportunities associated with establishing a joint free trade center between Iran and Afghanistan border?

How do Iran's border facilitation measures, such as visa facilitation for Afghan traders and workers, contribute to preventing illegal migration and facilitating cross-border travel?

What is the significance of historical and cultural bonds between Afghanistan and Iran, and how do they influence language, communication, and cultural practices?

What are the implications of Iran's border security measures, including the extension of barbed wire and the plan to block the border, on the security dynamics and bilateral relations between Iran and Afghanistan?

### **Objectives of the Research:**

Analyze collaborative economic integration through a joint trade center between Iran and Afghanistan.

Assess the impact of border facilitation measures on cross-border mobility and migration prevention.

Explore the historical and cultural bonds between Afghanistan and Iran.

Examine the implications of border security measures on the Iran-Afghanistan border.

Evaluate the effectiveness of border coordination in resolving issues and facilitating smooth cross-border movement.

### **2. Literature Review:**

Alaedini, P., & Mirzaei, A. (2021) highlights the limited research on minors and borders in Iran, with a focus on the situation of Afghans between the border and Tehran. The chapter by Alaedini and Mirzaei provides insights into the policies related to migration and borders in Iran, as well as the welfare and inequality issues in urban neighborhoods. The Nimruz border region, located in the lawless desert of southwestern Afghanistan, serves as a crucial gateway for unaccompanied children and youth, as acknowledged by the International Organization for Migration. However, concerns arise regarding the compulsory deportation of Afghan children, which has led to the creation of new displaced families. This chapter explores the connections between these children and the broader framework of itineraries with families concentrated in specific neighborhoods of Tehran since the Iranian revolution. Analyzing these connections is a central focus of the, examining the experiences of youngsters between the border and the metropolis.

Adelkhah, F., & Olszewska, Z. (2007) highlights Afghan emigration to Iran due to socio-political circumstances and economic factors. The settlement of Afghans in Iran dates back to the 19th century, and immigration intensified in the 1970s. The Iranian policies towards this population have been inconsistent, with recent emphasis on repatriation. The Afghan presence in Iran has brought about social changes and fuels debates on citizenship.

Koser, K., & Martin, S. (2011) highlights the complex migration and displacement situation in Afghanistan, characterized by a protracted refugee crisis, large-scale repatriation, cross-border movements, and various categories of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Some

refugees have chosen not to return and have become irregular migrants, often resorting to smugglers for further migration. These movements occur amidst a deteriorating and unstable situation in Afghanistan, with dire living conditions and significant socio-economic challenges.

Monsutti, A. (2008) This article presents three main arguments regarding migration in and around Afghanistan. Firstly, it emphasizes the normality of movements and the existence of pre-established transnational networks in the region. Secondly, it highlights the resilience and resourcefulness of the Afghan population, particularly demonstrated through the remittance system. Thirdly, it underscores the significance of migratory movements and transnational networks for the country's reconstruction and regional stability. In contrast, the article criticizes the UNHCR's three solutions for refugees, which assume that solutions are found when movements cease. Instead, it suggests that mobility is a crucial livelihood strategy. The article calls for a more comprehensive approach that considers the diverse strategies and responses developed by the Afghan population, including the back-and-forth movements between Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and other areas.

Rohani, S. P., & Rohani, S. (2014) explained the critical issue of the presence of Afghans in Iran and the challenges it poses for the Iranian government. It highlights that a significant population of Afghans entered Iran during the Open Door Policy without official monitoring. Many of these individuals got married and had children, but their marriages were not registered in either Iran or Afghanistan, leading to numerous cases of illegitimate marriages and children. The paper aims to explain the reasons for Afghan migration to Iran, their current situation in the country, and the consequences of their presence for the Iranian government. The article emphasizes the urgency of addressing this problem promptly, emphasizing its critical nature.

Saddiqi 1st, M. E., Ekhlās, F., & Rahmani, H. (2020) Highlights The Continuous Nature Of Migration, its impact on human evolution and culture, and the importance of positive identification in forensic investigations. It also mentions the challenges faced by destination

countries in managing human mobility and the situation of Afghan migrants in Pakistan and Iran, including undocumented individuals without legal refugee status.

Monsutti, A. (2007) it explores the continuous nature of migration in Afghan society, focusing specifically on Hazara male migrants traveling between Central Afghanistan's mountains and cities in Iran. Migration serves as an opportunity for young men to expand their social networks beyond kinship and neighborhood ties. It is seen as a necessary step towards adulthood and manhood, involving a spatial and social separation from their families and homes. Their stay in Iran represents a liminal period where they must demonstrate resilience and save money while working in temporary teams. Upon their return to their village, they are reintegrated as adult men eligible for marriage, yet they continue to commute between Afghanistan and Iran throughout their lives.

Karimi Moughari, Z. (2008) highlights the significant presence of Afghan refugees in Iran, where they comprise a large portion of the labor force. These Afghan workers primarily engage in low-skilled jobs and work illegally without permission. Their presence has contributed to a surplus of labor in Iran over the past two decades, resulting in sluggish wage growth, particularly in construction work. Research indicates that Afghan workers are drawn to prosperous provinces with high demand for unskilled labor. While their presence in cities like Tehran, Isfahan, and Khorasan has not caused increased unemployment rates, the overall unemployment rate in the country has risen. The passage suggests that if Afghan immigrants were to leave Iran, the unemployment rate would decrease, and wages for unskilled workers would significantly rise.

Asghari, S. (2024) examines the governance of Afghan migration in Iran, highlighting the reliance on rule by decree. It argues that the lack of a consultative process and ad hoc decrees result in a lack of legal certainty for migrants. The study analyzes laws regulating Afghan migrants' rights based on documentation status. It utilizes desk research and qualitative interviews due to limited written sources.

Wickramasekara, P., & Baruah, N. (2013) discusses the transition from a refugee and informal movement system to formal labor

migration in Afghanistan. It examines migration trends, highlights vulnerability among Afghan migrants, and identifies challenges in governance and protection. The paper emphasizes the country's lagging infrastructure and government capacity compared to other Asian origin countries.

Zandi-Navgran, L., Askari-Nodoushan, A., & Afrasiabi, H. (2023) explores the emotional experiences of Afghan migrants in Iran during their migration, settlement, and assimilation. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, data was collected from 45 participants through fieldwork. The data was analyzed using grounded theory, resulting in the identification of seven main categories such as "Sense of Hopelessness," "Fear of Deportation," and "Regret and Frustration." The core category of "Emotional Disparity" emerged, indicating that Afghan immigrants in Iran experience more negative emotions than positive ones. Overall, the emotional responses of migrants suggest a sense of emotional disintegration.

This article examines the relationship between politics and borders in the context of human movement between states. It suggests that the concept of "border" is being redefined in both migration management approaches and public perception of immigration. The article explores how the image of the border projected by politics influences the management of borders and shapes the perception of migration. It argues for the need to establish a Political Theory of Borders by considering the border as a concept, an approach, and a political category. The article also discusses arguments related to human mobility and border control.

#### **Research Methodology and Data Analysis:**

In this research study, content analysis used to analyze the raw data, to identify key themes and patterns. These themes and patterns can then be further organized and analyzed using a framework analysis approach. The framework analysis provides a structured framework for categorizing and interpreting the data, allowing for a systematic examination of the research objectives.

#### **Sampling and Data Collection:**

In this study the sampling technique used is non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is commonly employed in qualitative research methods, where the goal is to obtain a rich and diverse range of information rather than to generalize findings to a larger population, the focus is on obtaining in-depth insights and understanding of the topic.

In this study, the researcher selected the relevant news articles, research articles, and books based on the relevance to the research topic of Iran-Afghanistan border management and migration challenges. The selection is based on the expertise of the researcher, the credibility of the sources, and the richness of information provided. Where articles, news and books are chosen based on their perceived relevance and quality of information.

#### **Result:**

Content analysis and framework analysis approach are used analysis of relevant news, research articles and books. Here defining the research objectives, selected the data sample, developed coding categories, coded the data, analyzing the coded data, and drawing the relevant themes, than charting the relevant themes into the framework.

#### **Themes related to Iran-Afghanistan border and Migration**

##### **Collaborative Economic Integration**

According Taand.(2023) which reported that Iran to build a trade center with Afghanistan. Iranian President's special envoy and ambassador to Kabul Hassan Kazi Qami stated that. *"The Iranian ambassador also emphasized for the establishment of a 20 km joint free trade center in order to find jobs for both countries' exports and imports and to find jobs on both sides of the border."*

##### **Border facilitation**

According to Pajhwok (2023) which reported that Iran facilitates visas for Afghan traders and workers. During the meeting Iran ambassador stated with foreign minister of Afghanistan. *"all Iranian consulates in Afghanistan will immediately implement visas for Afghans in need which will help prevent Afghans from going*

*illegally to Iran and facilitate their travel in to border.”*

### **Historical and Cultural Bonds**

According to ps.Wikipedia (2024) which reported that Relations between Afghanistan and Iran began in 1935 during the reign of Shah Zahir Shah and the reign of King Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran *“although relations between the two countries have existed for thousands of years. As a result many Afghans speak Persian in Dari as it is considered one of the official languages of Afghanistan and many people in Afghanistan celebrate Nawroz which is considered the Persian New Year”*.

### **Border Security**

According to tolonews (2024) which reported that Iran's decision to extend barbed wire in vulnerable parts of Afghanistan, *“The deputy commander of The Iranian Police Sardar Qasem Rezaei said he would not extend the fence line across the entire border between Iran and Afghanistan but would extend it only to vulnerable areas”*. The government of Afghanistan *“welcomed the security measures by Iran at the border and added that it would be done in coordination between Afghanistan and Iran”*. Moreover *“Some military and political analysts believe that there is no need to extend the fence between Afghanistan and Iran in the current situation.”*

According to Tolonews. (2024). Reported that Iran announces plans for Afghanistan, Pakistan borders. *“Iran's interior minister added that some*

*parts of the border between Afghanistan and Iran are misused and this issue is dangerous for Iran”*. He added that *“The plan to block the border is a complete plan that has different dimensions and is not just a wall, and various things are done to block the border, and it is carried out by the General Staff of the Armed Forces and by various military and police forces at the border.”* At the same time the government of Afghanistan *“said that there is no danger from Afghanistan to the neighboring countries, including Iran, and the neighboring countries should also pay attention to the security of their borders”*.

### **Border Closure for Security Purposes**

According to tolonews (2023) which reported that Afghan-Iranian border must be closed on the basis of both sides' agreement *“the commander of Iran's ground forces called the closure of Iran's border with Afghanistan a national plan and said the goal of the border was to ensure security”*. On the other hand *“Some military analysts have differing views on the border between the two countries, Iran has the right to build it for itself if it reaches an agreement with the Afghan border”*

### **Border coordination**

According to Bakhranews. (2024). a meeting was held in the Iranian Commissariat with the participation of border representatives of Iran and Afghanistan to resolve border problems and strengthen coordination. In meeting decide *“it was decided to solve these problems and the passenger will cross the border normally”*.



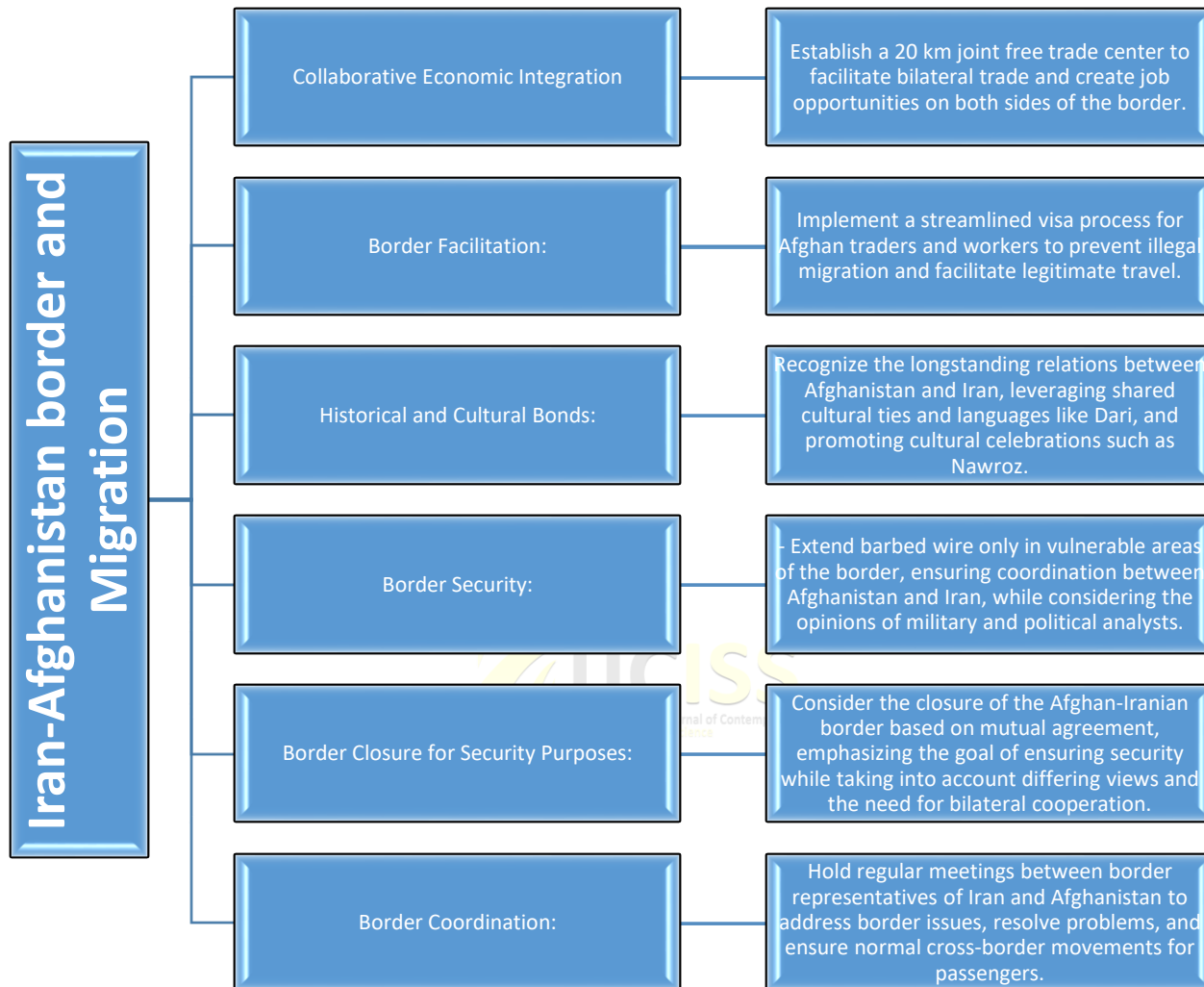


Figure 1. Framework analysis approach.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the analysis of Iran-Afghanistan border management and migration challenges reveals several key findings. The collaborative economic integration efforts, including the establishment of a joint free trade center, hold the potential for fostering economic growth and job

creation on both sides of the border. Border facilitation measures, such as visa facilitation for Afghan traders and workers, aim to prevent illegal migration and enhance cross-border travel. The historical and cultural bonds between the two countries contribute to linguistic and cultural connections, as evidenced by the prevalence of

Persian in Afghanistan and the celebration of Nawroz. Border security measures, including the extension of barbed wire in vulnerable areas, receive mixed reactions, with Afghanistan welcoming the coordination with Iran while some analysts question the necessity of extensive fencing. Iran's announcement of plans to block parts of the border for security reasons raises concerns about its impact on bilateral relations, although Afghanistan emphasizes the need for mutual border security efforts. Despite divergent views on border closure, efforts towards border coordination through meetings and problem-solving endeavors demonstrate a commitment to resolving border issues and facilitating normal cross-border movements.

### **Recommendations:**

**Foster Collaborative Economic Integration:** Both Iran and Afghanistan should actively pursue the establishment of the joint free trade center, as proposed, to promote economic growth, job creation, and mutually beneficial trade opportunities for both countries.

**Enhance Border Facilitation:** Iran should continue facilitating visas for Afghan traders and workers, ensuring a streamlined process that prevents illegal migration while enabling legitimate travel and trade across the border.

**Strengthen Historical and Cultural Bonds:** Iran and Afghanistan should recognize and leverage their shared historical and cultural ties, including the use of Persian language and the celebration of Nawroz, to foster closer cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections.

**Balanced Approach to Border Security:** Iran should carefully assess the necessity and effectiveness of extending barbed wire along the border, considering input from military and political analysts and ensuring that security measures focus on vulnerable areas while avoiding unnecessary division.

**Promote Bilateral Border Coordination:** Regular meetings and communication between border representatives of Iran and Afghanistan should be encouraged to address border challenges, resolve issues, and enhance coordination, with a focus on ensuring smooth and secure cross-border movement for passengers.

**Seek Mutual Understanding on Border Closure:** Iran and Afghanistan should engage in diplomatic discussions to reach a mutual understanding regarding border closure, considering security

concerns while also taking into account the potential impact on bilateral relations and the need for coordinated border security efforts among neighboring countries.

**Emphasize Regional Border Security Cooperation:** Both Iran and Afghanistan should collaborate with neighboring countries to prioritize and strengthen overall regional border security, recognizing that security threats can transcend national borders and require collective efforts to address effectively.

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