

# **An Unbalanced and Challenged Pace of Integration: the Experiences of Second-generation Afghans in Iran**

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## **Abstract:**

In 2005, a little over one million documented Afghans remained in Iran, of whom 44 per cent were second generation, those who born in Iran. Because of different experiences and aspirations, the second-generation Afghans, would be different from their parents, and from their counterparts in Afghanistan. The magnitude of such population and their critical situation are worth for consideration. Using survey data on Afghans in 2005 and qualitative data on integration, identity and repatriation of second-generation Afghans in Mashhad, Tehran and Isfahan in 2006, this paper aims to explore the integration of the second generation into the host society.

Educational attainment, through learning certain dispositions (sociality, moderateness, gender equality, national thinking), having better occupations, and having more positive interaction with Iranians, is positively correlated with integration. Second-generation's concentration in low status occupations has weakened their labor force integration. A majority of respondents perceived Afghanistan as homeland and almost half of them wanted to be buried in Afghanistan. Additionally, a very high number of married respondents have married a relative, reflecting the persistence of Afghan custom and influence of parents on the second generation.

The pace of second-generation Afghans' integration into Iranian society was not so smooth and straightforward. Afghans' improvement in education and consequently ideal and, to somehow, cultural integration into the host society were relatively high while their situation in terms of occupation, for example, did not show considerable attachment to the host society. The unbalanced adaptation to the majority which is mainly due to migrants' characteristics, the host society's policy and attitudes toward them, the overall situation in Afghanistan, and socio-cultural differences between Iranians and Afghans, would have policy implications.

## Introduction

More than one million documented Afghans were living in Iran in 2005. Of them, 44 per cent were second generation, that is, those born in Iran. This figure does not include those Afghans who are not registered, including single Afghan labor migrants, estimated to be 500,000 (US Committee for Refugees 2004). Second-generation migrants comprise a particular demographic whose experiences and aspirations are different from their parent's generation, and from their counterparts in origin and destination places. A more liberal social and cultural environment that offers education and economic opportunity has inspired different values and aspirations in the second generation; some converging with their Iranian counterparts. Limitations (mainly on occupational mobility) posed by the government of the host society, however, have also shaped these opportunities and experiences. The relatively big size of Afghan second-generation population and the importance of their socio-economic situation would have major impacts on their livelihood strategies, and places they are living or intended to live. This paper aims to explore second generation experiences of education, employment and attachment to the host society against a thematic of integration.

## Theoretical background

Since the 1990s, social scientists have focused their attention on the experiences and behavior of the second generation as central to the understanding of immigrant adaptation and progress in the host society. Adaptation models in migration studies tend to theorize that as migrants adapt to the society of destination, their behavior is theorized as converge towards that of the native-born population. Adaptation (social adaptation) is defined as 'the process by which a group or an individual adjusts his behavior to suit his social environment, that is, other groups or the larger society' (Theodorson and Theodorson 1969:5).

Change is expected to occur at the group level, where there may be physical changes such as new types of housing or increased population density, biological changes like new nutritional regimes, economic changes like new forms of employment, cultural changes like alteration or replacement of original linguistic, religious, educational and technical institutions, and social changes like realignment of intergroup relations. Changes may also occur at the individual level changes in values, attitudes, abilities and motives (Berry 1992:70).

Theoretical models of adaptation propose differences in adaptation at the group level and at the individual level. Duration of residence, level of intermarriage, proficiency in the language of the host society, residential segregation and citizenship, have been used as major indicators of migrants' adaptation and or integration to the host society. The marriage of a migrant to a member of the host society (intermarriage) is considered to be an indicator of adaptation at the individual level. Likewise a person's degree of proficiency in the language of the host society if the languages of migrant and host society differ is also claimed as an indicator of adaptation at an individual level. Intermarriage and level of language proficiency can also be measured at a group level, and are arguably more useful when measured at that level. In terms of adaptation at group level, migrant adaptation can be measured by comparing occupational, residential and educational structure with non-migrants (i.e., nationals) as a group.

Afghans' social, economic and demographic characteristics in Iran have been studied and documented by some studies (Ahmadi Movahed 2003; Mamouri and Arghami 1999; Management and Planning Organization 2006; Parvish 2004; Wickramasekara 2006). Based on information about migrants and refugees in Iran, Ahmadi Movahed (2003) showed that Afghans had a lower status compared to other migrants (mainly Iraqis). They had also a much lower status compared to Iranian nationals. Higher levels of demographic indices (the proportion of population under age 15, dependency ratio, CBR, population growth rate, family size and fertility rate) for Afghans compared to Iranians in Mashhad were documented by Mamouri and Arghami (1999). Socio-economic situation of migrant population, with special focus on Afghan migrants, and its effects have been reflected in Country Human Development Report (Management and Planning Organization 2006). Comparing Afghans' fertility with that for Iranians in Mashhad, Parvish (2004) showed a higher fertility for migrants. The relationship between factors showing migrants' adaptation, like the level of contact with Iranians, and fertility was not significant. The effect of duration of residence in Iran on fertility was also not significant in the multivariate analysis. Wickramasekara et al. (2006) studied Afghans' young age structure population, labour force, interaction with Afghanistan and return in a study on Afghan households in Iran.

Some studies on Afghans in Iran were mainly concentrated on repatriation. Jamshidiha and Babaie (2002) in their study on factors affecting voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees in Golshahr area of Mashhad presented preliminary findings on the differential attitudes of Afghans towards return. Afghan willingness to return to Afghanistan under current conditions was determined by: their place of domicile in Afghanistan (rural dwellers were less willing to return than urban dwellers based on hardship and security issues in rural areas); their gender (women were less willing to return than men); their level of education (those with lower educational level were less willing to return than those with higher education); and their occupational-economic security (those whose financial situation had improved in Iran were less willing to return than those whose situation had worsened or not changed). Jamshidiha and Anbari's study on repatriation of Afghan refugees in Iran (2004) proposed that the stronger the social and economic attachment of Afghans to Iran, the weaker the motivation to return to Afghanistan.

Afghan migrants and refugees' livelihood strategies, regional and transnational networks and intentions for repatriation were studied by Abbasi-Shavazi et al. in 2005 (Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). This study explored the experiences of first-generation Afghans who had been living in Iran eight years or more. Using the data, Mahmoudian (2006) examined the effect of migration on socio-demographic characteristics of Afghan migrants. His analysis showed an association between migration to Iran and improvements, especially in terms of education and health, in migrants' situation.

## **Methodology**

The research method in this study is analyzing secondary data (Amayesh<sup>1</sup> data) as well as qualitative data (in-depth interviews and focus group discussions) of the survey on integration, identity and repatriation of second-generation Afghans, which was undertaken in three main concentrations of Afghans in Iran (Mashhad, Tehran

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<sup>1</sup> Amayesh is a census, to identify Afghans in Iran, which is periodically held by Ministry of Interior.

and Isfahan) in 2006<sup>2</sup>. Amayesh data include data on age, sex, education, occupation, religion, ethnicity, date of migration, place of residence in Iran, marital status, income and housing situation.

The research tools used in the survey were semi-structured interviews using an open-ended questionnaire format, focus group discussion, and basic social mapping. Combining individual interviews and focus groups, 145 Afghans participated in the study, of whom 137 (72 females and 65 males) were second-generation Afghans, and eight were the parents of second generation offspring. Of them 80 second-generation Afghans (80 males and 40 females) were interviewed. The main criterion for selecting second generation Afghan respondents was that they be aged 15 to 29 years old, and either born in Iran, or had spent more than half of their lives in Iran. The sampling frame was designed to ensure representation of: both single and married respondents; households reflecting a range of economic status; range of education levels; and range of Afghans ethnicities. The analysis presented here is based on the 80 interviews.

## History of Afghans in Iran

Transitory migration of Afghans to Iran motivated by economic differences has occurred since the nineteenth century. Shiite Afghans have been making pilgrimages to Iran (Mousavi 1997:148) for several hundred years. The first documented movement of Afghans to Iran was in the 1850s when up to 5,000 Hazara households migrated to Iran and settled at Jam and Bakharz. It was recorded that some 15,000 families (approximately 168,000 people) settled in Torbat-e Jam in the east of Mashhad during 1880–1903, constituting up to 90% of the local population.

Major movement of Afghans to Iran occurred as a result of the Soviet invasion from 1979–89. Relative seclusion, stability and peace had been sustained until 1973, while disorder, insecurity and ongoing disputes between left-wing parties led to two coups in 1978 and 1979. The invasion resulted in the influx of 2.9 million Afghans to Iran from 1980–89 (UNHCR 2004:9). During the 1980s, Afghans were said to fill a significant gap in the workforce during the war against Iraq (UNHCR 2004:9). Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and elevation of the resistance movement to power, 1.4 million Afghans returned from Iran in 1992.

The process of voluntary repatriation came to an end with the outbreak of violence: from 1989 when the *mujahedin* were at war with the central government, and after the fall of Kabul in 1992 when civil war broke out. Civil war resulted in a third wave of movement to Iran and Pakistan. In this time, the migrants were particularly from the urban and educated middle class. Reflecting the non-religious motivation for their flight, those Afghans who fled to Iran at that time were classified as *panahandegan* or refugees. The fourth major movement of Afghans to Iran occurred in response to the repressive rule of Taliban militants, and fighting between Taliban and opposition groups between 1994 and 2001. Table 1 shows the number of Afghans in Iran during 1980-2006.

## History of Iranian government policy on Afghans

Iran's early refugee policy towards Afghans was "open door", and refugee status was granted to incoming Afghans on a *prima facie* basis (Turton and Marsden 2002:15).

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<sup>2</sup> This survey, undertaken by a research team (Mohammad Jalal Abbasi Shavazi, Diana Glazebrook, Gholamreza Jamshidiha, Hossein Mahmoudian, and Rasoul Sadeghi) from University of Tehran, was supported by Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

From 1979–92, most Afghans entering Iran were issued with “blue cards” which indicated their status as involuntary migrants or *mohajerin*. Blue card holders were granted indefinite permission to stay in Iran legally. Until 1995, blue card holders had access to subsidized health care and food, and free primary and secondary education, but were barred from owning their own businesses or working as street vendors, and their employment was limited to low-wage, manual labor (Rajaei 2000:56-57).

As a result of domestic economic and social concerns in the 1990s, refugee policy shifted to emphasize prevention of illegal entry and repatriation of Afghan refugees (Rajaei 2000:62). Iran’s first repatriation program for Afghans was formalized in late 1992 with the establishment of a Tripartite Commission (comprising the governments of Afghanistan and Iran, and UNHCR). During 1993, about 600,000 Afghans returned to Afghanistan – over 300,000 of them under the repatriation program.

**Table 1** Number of Afghans in Iran during 1980-2006

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>1980</b>	200,000	<b>1994</b>	1,850,000
<b>1981</b>	500,000	<b>1995</b>	1,623,000
<b>1982</b>	800,000	<b>1996</b>	1,420,000
<b>1983</b>	1,200,000	<b>1997</b>	1,400,000
<b>1984</b>	1,500,000	<b>1998</b>	1,400,000
<b>1985</b>	1,800,000	<b>1999</b>	1,400,000
<b>1986</b>	2,000,000	<b>2000</b>	1,326,000
<b>1987</b>	2,221,000	<b>2001</b>	1,482,000
<b>1988</b>	2,700,000	<b>2002</b>	1,104,909
<b>1989</b>	2,900,000	<b>2003</b>	934,699
<b>1990</b>	2,940,000	<b>2004</b>	952,802
<b>1991</b>	3,000,000	<b>2005*</b>	1,021,202
<b>1992</b>	2,900,000	<b>2006**</b>	1,210,164
<b>1993</b>	2,700,000		

**Source:** UNHCR statistics; \* Amayesh 2005; \*\* Iran 2006 Census

In 1995, the government announced that all Afghan refugees must leave Iran, but later in the year it sealed its border to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, effectively ending repatriation efforts. In 1998, the Iranian government and UNHCR resumed their joint repatriation program.

After installation of the internationally supported interim authority in Kabul in late 2001, UNHCR shifted the focus of its program in Iran to facilitation of Afghan repatriation. The Tripartite Agreement signed by UNHCR and the governments of Iran and Afghanistan in April 2002 planned for the return of 400,000 refugees from Iran during the first year of operation. From 2002 to the end of June 2006, 1,491,832 Afghans returned from Iran with the voluntary repatriation operation (UNHCR 2007). Of them, 863,799 (58 per cent) were assisted by UNHCR. In March 2006, Iran again extended the tripartite repatriation agreement with UNHCR and Afghanistan for a further 12-month period.

## Findings

### ***Second-generation Afghan population***

Table 2 shows the number of registered Afghans living in Iran by sex and birthplace. The number of second-generation Afghans was 446,866 (232,646 males and 217,220 females) or 44% of the total population of Afghans. Nearly all second-generation Afghans were under the age of 30, showing a very young population. The sex ratio for Iran-born Afghans was 107 while it was much higher (125) for the Afghanistan-born. Given the fact that Afghans were migrating to Iran with their families, the lower sex ratio for second-generation Afghans may reflect the higher survival probability of females in second-generation population. This can show the better situation of Iran-born Afghans compared to their Afghanistan-born counterparts.

**Table 2.** Age distribution of Afghan migrants by age and birthplace, Iran, 2005

Age	Male		Female		Total
	Iran	Else*	Iran	Else*	
0-4	49308	2448	47034	2289	<b>101079</b>
5-9	51656	11777	48156	11016	<b>122605</b>
10-14	54884	29266	51685	25784	<b>161619</b>
15-19	46761	28269	42825	23234	<b>141089</b>
20-24	24194	36993	21741	26091	<b>109019</b>
25-29	4839	45455	4425	36330	<b>91049</b>
30-34	550	36428	725	29833	<b>67536</b>
35-39	159	29187	272	25911	<b>55529</b>
40-44	95	28059	145	23258	<b>51557</b>
45-49	51	22576	81	16886	<b>39594</b>
50-54	29	14722	40	10460	<b>25251</b>
55-59	45	10972	22	8771	<b>19810</b>
60-64	17	6459	13	4639	<b>11128</b>
65+	58	15214	56	9009	<b>24337</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>232646</b>	<b>317825</b>	<b>217220</b>	<b>253511</b>	<b>1021202</b>

\* Mainly Afghanistan

Source: Amayesh 2005

### ***Integration into Iranian society***

#### **Education**

Afghanistan has one of the lowest literacy rates of all developing countries: only 28.7 per cent of the population over the age of 15 can read and write, which places Afghanistan on the sixth place from the bottom on the scale. In addition, there remains a tremendous disparity in enrolment between boys and girls: only 30 per cent of the students in 2002 and 40 per cent in 2003 were girls; effectively 1.2 million girls were enrolled compared to 2.5 million boys.

Afghans in Iran had much higher level of education than their counterparts in Afghanistan. Table 3 shows the distribution of Afghan men and women aged 6 years

and over by the level of education and place of birth. As shown, 43 per cent of Afghans were illiterate. This figure is very low compared to the figure for Afghanistan but it is still very high compared to that for Iran. The illiteracy rate among females is higher compared with males. The high illiteracy rate reflects a very low enrolment rate, but the relatively low gender difference might indicate that the educational problems of Afghan migrants and refugees in Iran relate mainly to their long-term and ongoing migration, lack of access to educational facilities during migration, and socio-economic situation. The level of education for 78 per cent of educated Afghans was primary or lower, and males had higher levels of education. Only one per cent of Afghans had university education. Therefore, the chance of proceeding to higher levels of education was very low for Afghans in Iran.

**Table 3.** Percentage of registered Afghan migrants aged 6 years and over, by level of education, birthplace and sex, Iran, 2005

Education status	Male				Female				Total
	Birthplace			Total	Birthplace			Total	
	Iran	Afghanistan	Else		Iran	Afghanistan	Else		
% illiterate	35	48	41	43	35	60	45	50	43
<b>N</b>	<b>108295</b>	<b>188271</b>	<b>1036</b>	<b>297602</b>	<b>97772</b>	<b>134779</b>	<b>968</b>	<b>233519</b>	<b>531121</b>
Primary and lower	81	72	68	76	81	80	79	80	78
Lower secondary	15	15	18	15	15	11	12	13	14
Upper secondary	3	10	10	7	4	8	7	6	7
University education	*	2	2	1	*	1	2	1	1
Religious studies	1	1	2	1	*	*	*	*	*
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>N</b>	<b>70932</b>	<b>97970</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>169510</b>	<b>63188</b>	<b>53547</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>117265</b>	<b>286775</b>

\* less than 1%

**Source:** Amayesh 2005

Afghans born in Iran had lower illiteracy rates than Afghanistan-born migrants and refugees. The gender gap in educational attainment for Iran-born Afghans was also much lower than that for Afghanistan-born migrants. This may reflect the higher level of gender equality in Iran and Afghan adaptation to Iranian society.

Being educated in Iran has led to ideational changes and modified second-generation Afghans' self definition (identity) as opposed to their counterparts raised in Afghanistan. The qualitative data show dispositions learned from an Iranian socio-cultural milieu and perceived as differentiating second-generation Afghans from other Afghans include moderateness and sociality, as well as awareness of civil society, gender equality, and national thinking. While respondents tended to define themselves as modern, they defined 'being Afghan' in terms of dispositions of other Afghans defined as traditional: patriarchal, devout, immoderate, not literate, hard working, and resigned to fate. The label 'Iranian ghaki'<sup>3</sup> alerts second-generation Afghans in Iran to the fact that certain cultural and social practices differentiate them from their counterparts raised in Afghanistan. This would also enhance the role of education in migrants' adaptation and integration.

<sup>3</sup> The label is attributed to Afghans (who returned from Iran) in Afghanistan.

## Employment

Table 4 shows the distribution of Afghan migrants by occupation, birthplace and sex in 2005. As shown, about 60% of Afghan workers were unskilled laborer. The next important percentage belonged to crafts. Males were mainly working as laborer while females were more likely to work as crafts. Iran-born Afghans were less likely to work as laborer than Afghanistan-born migrants. In return, the former group was more likely to be crafts than the latter one. The proportion of Iran-born female employees was more than two times higher than that of Afghanistan-born migrants. This can reflect stronger women empowerment and higher level of gender equality for Iran-born Afghans.

**Table 4.** Percentage of registered Afghan migrants by occupation, birthplace and sex, Iran, 2005

Occupation	Male		Female		Total
	Birthplace		Birthplace		
	Iran	Else*	Iran	Else*	
Crafts	23.7	9.4	37.1	23.7	10.5
Salespersons	3.7	3.3	1.0	0.7	3.2
Farmers	6.3	5.2	8.2	4.0	5.2
Skilled laborers	1.4	2.4	0.0	0.8	2.3
Unskilled laborers	40.5	62.7	19.6	31.6	60.7
Other	24.2	17.0	34.0	39.2	18.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
N	6493	162255	581	5670	174999

\* Mainly Afghanistan

Source: Amayesh 2005

The occupations taken by Afghan migrants are normally categorized as low class jobs, which characterized with low levels of skill and income. The concentration of Afghans in these jobs is mainly due to restrictions posed by Iranian government for migrants to take other jobs. In addition, Afghans' lower levels of education and skill have facilitated their employment in such occupational categories. Moreover, many of such job opportunities like working as simple laborer in construction and husbandry do not attract Iranians workforce. The lack of occupational mobility has led to 'downward assimilation' (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), that is, the assimilation and integration of Afghan migrants into Iran lower socio-economic classes.

Survey data showed that the restrictions did not affect Afghans' job satisfactions. The majority of respondents were satisfied with their job. There was no particular correlation between education level and job satisfaction. Around 72% of respondents across each of the education levels (low, medium and high) claimed to be satisfied with their current occupation. Highest levels of job satisfaction were among those in sales, and employed as professional clerks (85-100% satisfied N=21), followed by trades (66% satisfied N=12), with those employed as laborers registering lowest levels of satisfaction (44% satisfied N=4). Higher job satisfaction was registered by Iran-born Afghans (80% satisfied N=16) compared with their Afghanistan-born counterparts (67%, N=21). A correlation existed between job satisfaction and return intention. Of those second generation respondents who wanted to remain in Iran, 70% (N=26) were satisfied with their current occupation. The satisfaction can reflect the



importance of employment for Afghan migrants in Iran, as it is a very good achievement against perceived unemployment, insecurity and misery in Afghanistan.

### **Attachment to the host society**

Migrants' attachment to the host society can show their adaptation and integration into the host society. This attachment can be measured by the degree of migrants' relation and communication with the people of the host society, attachment to the homeland and desire to return to the origin place. Using the data from the survey, this section aims to examine second-generation Afghans' degree of attachment to the host society.

### **Interaction with Iranians**

Of 80 second-generation Afghans interviewed, 60% (N=48) had interaction with their Iranian neighbors. Of the three forms of interaction, interaction with neighbors was most common, followed by invitation/attendance at ceremonies like weddings and funerals (56% N=45), followed by friendship (49% N=39).

Respondents living in Tehran were more likely to have relations with Iranians across the three categories of personal friendship and neighborliness, followed by Mashhad, and then Isfahan. Afghan women were more likely to have personal friendship with an Iranian than their male counterparts, and significantly less likely to have interaction at a neighborhood level, reflecting the cultural practice of regulating women's social activity and mobility. Iran-born second generation Afghans were significantly more likely to have relations across all three categories compared to their Afghanistan-born counterparts, for example, of those Iran-born respondents (N=31), 58% had a good friend who was Iranian compared with 43% (N=48) of Afghanistan-born respondents. Married respondents (N=40) were more likely (65%) to have interaction with Iranian neighbors compared to their single counterparts (55%) indicating that efforts at neighborliness were extended at the level of the household, whereas single Afghans (N=40) were more likely to sustain a close friendship with an Iranian (52%) than their married counterparts (45%).

There was a very strong relation between high education and high level of interaction with Iranians, and low level of interaction for those with low education levels. While the levels of interaction for Afghans with high and medium-level education were fairly similar, those levels for low-level Afghans were significantly lower. Those respondents with high level of education (N=32) had higher levels of interaction across all three fields, followed by middle-level education (N=35). Afghans with lower levels of education (N=13) had significantly lower levels of interaction across all fields. For example, 65% of highly educated Afghans interacted with their neighbors, compared with 62% of medium educated and 38% of low educated. In terms of socio-economic status (SES), those with medium to high SES and lowest SES were most likely to have higher interaction with Iranians at the neighborhood level, while those with medium to high and high SES were most likely to have friendships with Iranians, and low SES were significantly less likely.

Some relation may exist between interactions with Iranian neighbors and desire to remain in Iran. Of those 60% (N=48) who had good interaction with their Iranian neighbors, 60% (N=36) wished to remain in Iran compared with 40% (N=24) of those who did not have good interaction with their Iranian neighbors, and this is almost identical for those who attend Iranian ceremonies such as weddings and funerals.

No significant differences existed between the level of social interaction for Hazara and Tajik Afghans across any of the categories. If the assumption is made that Tajiks are more likely to be Sunni than Shiite, and Hazara are almost entirely Shiite, this suggests that social relations with (Shiite) Iranians are neither hindered by being Sunni, nor enhanced by being Shiite.

### **Attachment to the homeland**

The majority of respondents (66.7%; N=50) perceived Afghanistan as homeland compared to 26.7% (N=20) who perceived Iran as homeland. Across all education levels, most respondents perceived Afghanistan as homeland, but low-educated respondents were more likely to do so (75% N=10) than their medium and high educated counterparts (65% N=21 and 63% N=19 respectively). Low and medium to low SES were significantly more likely to perceive Afghanistan as homeland than their medium to higher counterparts (78% N=11 and 75% N=22 respectively compared to 50% N=8, 55% N=5 and 57% N=4 respectively).

Iran-born second generation Afghans were more likely to perceive Afghanistan as homeland than Iran (51% N=15 compared to 37% N=11), but significantly more likely than their Afghanistan-born counterparts to perceive Iran as homeland (37.9% N=11 compared to 20% N=9). Afghanistan-born second generation Afghans were almost four times more likely to perceive Afghanistan as home rather than Iran (75% N=34). Second generation men were significantly more likely to perceive Afghanistan as homeland than Iran (76% N=29 compared to 21% N=8), and more likely than their female counterparts to view Afghanistan as homeland (76% N=29 compared to 56% N=21). Shiite Hazara were more likely to perceive Afghanistan as homeland than Iran (54% N=23 compared to 35% N=15), but significantly more likely to perceive Iran as homeland compared to Tajik Afghans (35% N=15 compared to 17% N=5). Almost half of respondents wanted to be buried in Afghanistan, not Iran.

While respondents generally expressed their disapproval of arranged marriage, particularly consanguineous marriage, and implied that this traditional marriage form was preferred by their parents, and was a source of intergenerational tension, it might be assumed that the marriage patterns of the second generation may be seeing convergence with Iranian patterns. However, this was not the case. Of those married respondents interviewed, 72 per cent (N=25), had married a biological relative (consanguineous marriage), reflecting the persistence of Afghan custom and influence of parents on the second generation.

### **Return to Afghanistan**

21 percent (N=17) were taking action to return to Afghanistan with the primary reasons being problems associated with living in a foreign country (job insecurity, residential insecurity, mobility restrictions, derogatory attitudes, raising children in two socio-cultural environments, inability to plan for the future), and their sense of belonging to Afghanistan. 88% (N=15) of those respondents taking current action to return to Afghanistan also perceived Afghanistan as homeland (5% N=1 viewed Iran as homeland), and of those not intending to return to Afghanistan and intending to remain in Iran, 35% (N=6) also perceived Afghanistan as homeland, and 58% (N=6) viewed Iran as homeland. While one-fifth of second generation respondents were taking current action to return to Afghanistan, almost half (44 percent; N=35) aspired to bring up their children in Afghanistan in the future due mainly to their desire for their children to have the legal and political rights, and residential stability that

citizenship status accords. 33 percent (N=26) of all respondents aspired to raise their children in Iran due to better education opportunities, welfare facilities, and living conditions.

26% (N=21) had not intention of returning to Afghanistan. 82 percent (N=54) of all respondents believed their situation would worsen if they returned to Afghanistan due to poor education facilities and teaching, lack of job opportunities which negatively affect standard of living and social position, lack of utilities (water, electricity, gas), and costs of resettlement. 56% (N=39) were undecided about returning to Afghanistan. A majority of respondents undecided about return (71% N=28) also perceived Afghanistan to be homeland, with 20% (N=8) perceiving Iran as homeland.

## **Summary and conclusion**

Although Afghans' migration to Iran dates back to several years ago, its main waves took place after the Soviet invasion. On average, Iran was hosting annually two million Afghan migrants during last two decades. The magnitude and long history of Afghans' migration to Iran have produced a substantial number of second-generation Afghans. The number exceeded a total of 400,000 and constituted 44% of Afghan total population in Iran.

Using quantitative and qualitative data on second-generation Afghans this paper examined second generation experiences of education, employment and attachment to the host society against a thematic of integration. Second-generation Afghans had a much higher level of education compared to that for their parents and that for their counterparts in Afghanistan. It was surprising that the gender equality in educational attainment for second-generation Afghans was very high. Despite the improvements obtained in education, their integration in occupational structure was not considerable. As with their parents, second-generation Afghans were mainly concentrated in low level jobs, although there was slight occupational mobility across the generations. This was mainly due to restrictions posed by Iranian government. In addition, Afghan's lower level of skill and capital hindered their integration into higher level occupations.

Qualitative data showed that second-generation Afghans' attachment to the host society seemed to be at a relatively high level. A majority of them had interactions with Iranians. The interaction was positively related to higher level of education, being born in Iran and less intentions to return to Afghanistan. Only one-fifth of respondents wanted to return to Afghanistan. About one-fourth of the Afghans had no intention to return and the rest could not make any decision about the return.

Along with this attachment, second-generation Afghans showed their sympathy toward Afghanistan to a high extent. Many respondents (two-third) considered Afghanistan as homeland. Males and those born in Afghanistan were more likely to do so. Of those who were undecided about return to Afghanistan, more than 70% considered Afghanistan as homeland. The high level of consanguineous marriage as an indicator of family influence can also show tendencies toward the place of origin.

The unbalanced adaptation and integration into the host society had substantial effects on livelihood strategies of second-generation Afghans. On one hand, they were brought up in a more modern context (compared to that of their homeland) provoking them to learn certain dispositions (sociality, moderateness, gender equality, national thinking) which are not common for their parents and their counterparts in

Afghanistan. The problems in destination place, on the other hand, led to a frustration of destination place and attachment to Afghanistan. While the majority of respondents considered themselves as modern (different from a typical counterpart in Afghanistan) and knew that they would end up with misery upon return to Afghanistan, they showed strong motivations to have their children raised in Afghanistan. Swing between the host and home based on pull and push factors caused the dual identity and uncertainty.

It seems that strong pull factors of the host society (like welfare, moderateness, and gender equality), despite its negative attitude towards Afghan migrants, smooth the progress of the second-generation Afghans' downward assimilation to the Iranian society. Considering the harsh situation in Afghanistan, in terms of job opportunities, education, health and welfare facilities, and housing infrastructure, complying with such assimilation, by migrants, is expected. The sustainability of such assimilation which can be reproduced across generations will, in turn, help marginalization and the emergence of social deviants. In addition, the lack of motivation for mobility may use the social capital (education and skill), in an inverse direction, to bring negative and destructive consequences for the host society. Therefore, in a situation that repatriation is not feasible in the short term, confining migrants to margins would have unwanted social, economic and cultural consequences.

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