Third World Quarterly, Vol 23, No 1, pp 7–29, 2002

Carfax Publishing
Taylor & Francis Group

(Human) security dilemmas: long-term implications of the Afghan refugee crisis

SUSANNE SCHMEIDL

ABSTRACT *Large-scale refugee movements clearly pose a threat to human, state, and societal security. Balancing the different levels of security threats is difficult. The case of the Afghan refugees is interesting, as (forced) migration was not linked to security until years after the initial displacement, and during a time when refugee numbers were not at their peak. Furthermore, countries with smaller numbers of refugees felt more threatened than those bearing the bulk. This article sets out to explore this interesting security puzzle, trying to answer the question whether the South Asian security dilemma can be linked to migration and displacement in the region, or other factors. The article concludes that a security-migration linkage seems to be based more on the duration than the size of displacement. Furthermore, policies by regional and international actors toward Afghan refugees contributed to the development of refugee warrior communities linked to state and international security concerns. Finally, power politics and geo-strategic as well as economic interests also contributed to the security dilemma. All these factors need to be considered in future refugee assistance in order to assume that human security is not sacrificed for that of states, and that the victims (refugees) are not the only ones held responsible.*

Security in the 'neglected' region of South Asia can be described overall as a complicated game with multiple players which began with the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 and reached its height during the Afghan war. Nevertheless, one country (Afghanistan) and one movement (the Taliban) have been singled out as seemingly affecting the balance of an entire region and, as the reactions to the 11 September 2001 attack on the USA shows, the entire world. The name of the threat is Talibanisation and it appears that the fears are similar to those felt during the Soviet expansion in the Cold War. Then it was feared that one country after another would fall to Communism; today, it is feared that Islamic extremism[1] (with its radical and terrorist tendencies) is spreading across South and also Central Asia, emanating from Taliban-held Afghanistan.

While nobody would disagree that large-scale refugee movements pose a certain threat to state security, the fear of Talibanisation goes deeper, inviting a closer look at the link between migration and security. Even though terrorism and

Susanne Schmeidl works in the Institute for Conflict Resolution at the Swiss Peace Foundation, Gerechtigkeitstrasse 12, Bern 8, Switzerland. E-mail: susanne.schmeidl@swisspeace.unibe.ch.

ISSN 0143-6597 print/ISSN 1360-2241 online/02/010007-23
DOI: 10.1080/01436590120114328

Islamic militantism, closely linked to groups favouring the fundamentalist principles of the *jihad* (holy war), are on the rise in South Asia, particularly in Kashmir, this does not indicate that the blame lies with the refugee and migrant community. It is equally possible that still-current policies that were adapted in the past by the very states that have supported and hosted the refugees bear part of the responsibility for the present security dilemma. Furthermore, the fact that some refugees have decided to take up arms does not make all refugees warriors, nor all warriors terrorists. One could argue that this modern day 'witch hunt' against those harbouring terrorists has victimised refugees further, since they now suffer a lack of protection because of the international action against the Taliban. The perceived threat against state and regional (and for some even international) security has therefore clearly superseded the human security of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPS) in Afghanistan.

Before continuing, it is crucial to state that I also deplore the archaic interpretation of Sharia law that the Taliban practices, especially as it links to human rights violations of women and children, as well as the terrorist attacks on the USA. Nevertheless, as scholars we have to move beyond the game of scapegoating in order to learn from the mistakes and missed opportunities made in the past by local and external actors. Rather than entering (or adding to) the blaming game that is currently going on, this article seeks to elaborate on how the current security impasse was created, and whether migration per se can be considered as the destabilising force, or whether it is the policies that dealt with (but did not adequately address) the migration–security dilemma that are at fault. This is an important distinction, as refugees in general flee political turmoil and violence and do not have as their prime directive the destabilisation of the country that provides them with safe haven. With the US/UK bombardment, Afghanistan is yet again faced with the task of nation building, and Pakistan is on the brink of a possible collapse. If we want to prevent this from happening, understanding and learning from history is the only way forward.

Background—forced migration in South Asia

Before entering into an in-depth discussion of the specific case of the Afghan refugees, it is worth briefly discussing the history of forced migration in the region and emergent links to security. South Asia has been plagued with some of the largest population displacements in modern history thanks to 'the reorganization of political communities' (Zolberg *et al*, 1989:126). This process occurred faster and with finality in some cases (Bangladesh), while it has been slow and protracted in other cases (Afghanistan) or stagnant all together in the Indo-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir.

The first mass migration in South Asia occurred during the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 and emerged just before the creation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the international protection body called the Refugee Regime. Until 1951 about 14 million people were displaced, making this exodus 'probably the largest and most concentrated in time … recorded in modern history' (Zolberg *et al*, 1989:129). As the partition was roughly along Hindu–Muslim lines, the population exchange followed the

same demarcations, with Hindus moving to India and Muslims to the new state of Pakistan. Despite the fact that both states had to cope with receiving large numbers of refugees, no real security threat was felt then. It was more the human (physical) security of the refugees that was threatened, as they were literally forced from their homes and attacked en route. Partition clearly remains one of the more violent episodes in South Asian history.

It is interesting to note the lack of will within the international community to assist India and Pakistan during this first mass migration and associated humanitarian crisis. Despite the magnitude of displacement and continuous calls for assistance from both countries, little aid was given and no specialised agency was created to help the newly independent states to accommodate the displaced population. 'Refugees on the Indian subcontinent clearly did not fall within the purview of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and unlike the Koreans and the Palestinians, they were not viewed by the United States and the West as geopolitically important refugee populations' (Loescher, 1993: 62).

A first link between migration and security emerged later in Pakistan, with the Muslim refugees from India not only becoming a specific population group in the national census but also a thriving political force with its own party, the Mutthahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and power base in urban Sindh (Karachi), resorting, *inter alia*, to terrorist practices in their struggle against various Pakistani governments. Already here the question is whether this can be linked purely to hostile migrants, or also to the lack of social and political integration of the *mujahir* refugees.

Partition in general, while not migrants in particular, has caused three subsequent wars (and displacements) between India and Pakistan, with the first two associated with the disputed territory of Kashmir in October 1947 and September 1965, respectively. The second major mass displacement (about 10 million) in South Asia came with the third war between India and Pakistan (1971)—the war that led to the division of Pakistan (and secession of Bangladesh) between East and West, with Pakistan loosing a great portion of its territory and about half its population. In contrast to the previous mass displacement, this one received international attention and assistance, even though it was taxing on UNHCR.[2] No clear security dilemma can be linked to these examples of forced migration, even though they have added to the difficult situation between India and Pakistan. Nevertheless, the Kashmir conflict has led to displacement on both sides of the line of control, with violence linked to militants crossing into the Indian-occupied side. Also, much of the instability in India's northeast has been associated with a steady migration stream from Bangladesh. But in some ways it seems that the Indian government has welcomed the migrants in order to diffuse separatist tendencies within the local population, particularly in Assam—thus contributing to the mixing of immigrants and locals and hence to conflict.[3]

Regardless of these past mass movements in South Asia, it was not until more recently that a clear link between migration and security was made. The perceived and actual threat emerged from the Afghan war that started in the late 1970s. The ensuing refugee exodus was marked by several characteristics: a) large-scale displacements of the magnitude of 6.2 million during peak years; b) long-term displacement because of protracted conflict (still ongoing, even though

the players have changed over time); c) the emergence of two refugee warrior communities (the *mujahedin* and the Taliban) in the tradition of the Palestinian Liberation army; and d) intense international interest (and manipulation) from regional and international actors. This varied constellation, inviting a deeper analysis of the actors involved in the security dilemma, is the focus of this article.

Overview of the Afghan war

For the purposes of this article, the Afghan war and associated forced migration can be divided into four rough phases which help structure the analysis. Phase one began after the Saur Revolution in April 1978 brought a secular regime to power that threatened the beliefs of Islamic forces within Afghanistan—mainly by imposing changes from above without taking traditional sentiments into consideration, particularly in rural areas—leading to immediate resistance from the Muslim Brotherhood who declared a *jihad.* But it was only when the former Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in autumn 1979 in support of the new secular regime that the whole crisis was catapulted onto the international stage, as Middle Eastern countries, the USA and China began lengthy support for the Afghan resistance.

In the beginning, the exodus of Afghan refugees was moderate (around 400 000 at the end of 1979) until the war intensified in 1983 because of increasing arms flow to the *mujahedin* rebels (3.9 million refugees in 1983). 'The case of the Afghan refugees … is unique in the twentieth century: they make up the greatest population of the same origin ever transplanted outside their own borders—an exodus from the south to the south, or the poor towards other poor' (Centlivres & Centlivres-Demont, 1988: 71). At the height of displacement, the Afghan refugees constituted up to 60% of the entire world refugee population. Figure 1 illustrates the constant growth of the Afghan refugee population over the past 20 years and its dispersal in the main countries of asylum (Pakistan and Iran).

Phase two began roughly in 1989 when the last Soviet soldier withdrew from Afghanistan and repatriation into an ongoing war situation began (see Figure 2). In particular, the conquest of Kabul in 1992 by *mujahedin* fighters led to 'a huge surge of collective optimism which resulted in no fewer than 1.2 million Afghans returning from Pakistan in six months—of them assisted by an extremely stretched UNHCR' (Colville, 1997: 6). However, the Afghan war did not end then as 'between 1992 and 1996, resistance factions, joined later by the Taliban, locked themselves into a kaleidoscopic power struggle that resulted in the obliteration of huge swathes of southern and eastern Kabul and considerable damage to much of the rest of the city on a scale that even Beirut and Sarajevo veterans can scarce believe' (Colville, 1997: 7).

The entry of the Taliban into the Afghan war led to a dual movement of people: while large numbers of refugees returned to Afghanistan despite the overall 'insecure' situation, new refugees left the country. By 2000 about 1.7 million Afghans had been repatriated, still leaving the largest portion (over four million) in exile, with new movements strongly emerging in 2000.

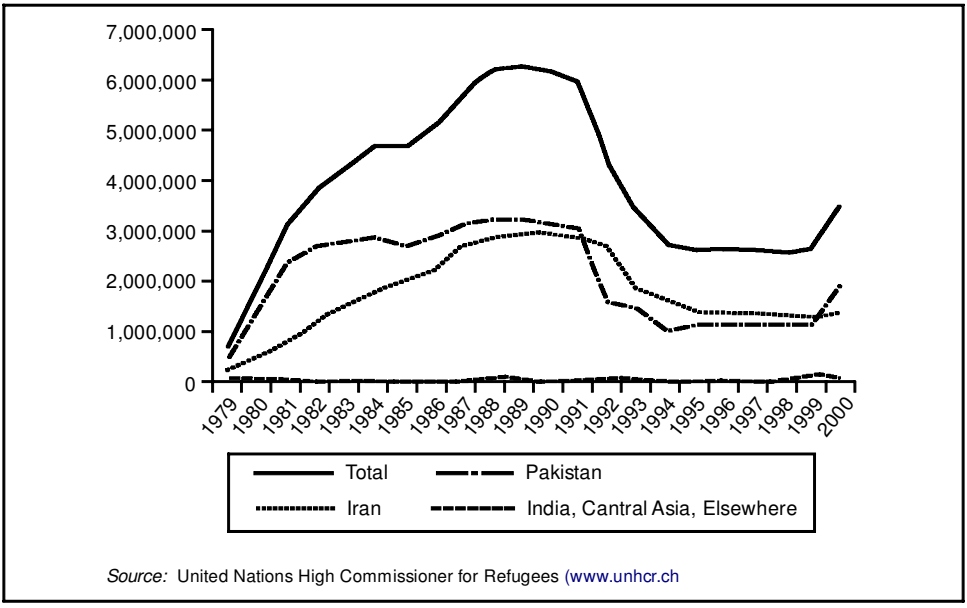

FIGURE 1
Afghan Refugee Population, 1979–2001 (September)

The start of Phase three came in 1996 when the Taliban gained control of Kabul and the majority of Afghan territory (90%). However, the civil war continued, with *mujahedin* factions joining together to form the United Front to combat the Taliban. In addition, the Taliban soon began to be known for installing a repressive regime based on archaic interpretations of Sharia laws in their quest for a pure Islamic society. Human rights violations, particularly of

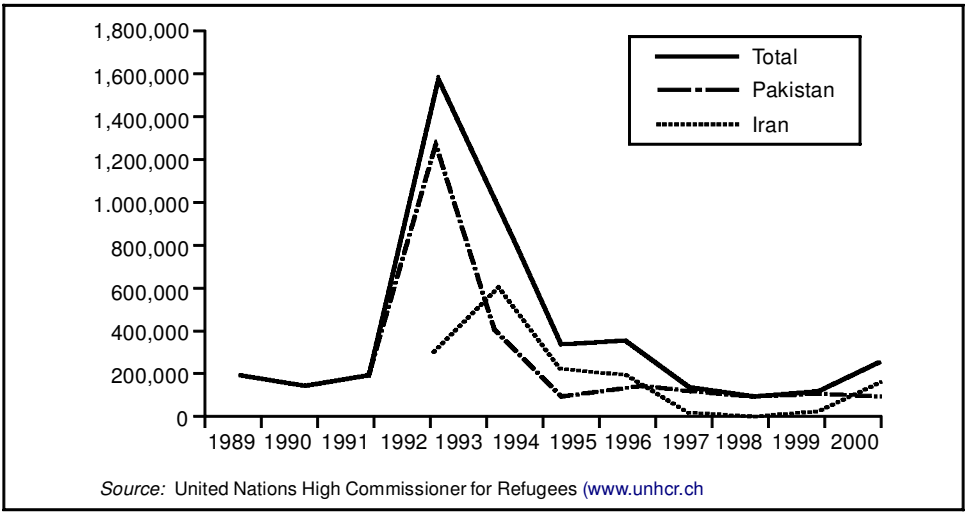

FIGURE 2
Afghan Repatriation Statistics, 1988/89–2000

women's rights, as well as poppy production, led to the imposition of two rounds of UN sanctions on the Taliban regime, with the second one in December 2001 including a one-sided arms embargo (pushed for mainly by the USA and Russia). This has not only proven counterproductive to UN-led peace efforts in Afghanistan, it has also contributed to a continuation of the war and a further radicalisation of the Taliban (United Nations, 2001a, 2001b). The political situation was exacerbated in 2001 by the worst drought in 30 years, leading to acute food and water shortages. All this has led to new refugee movements from Afghanistan, beginning in June 2000 with a drastic increase in October 2000, to increased internal displacement (see Figure 3), and to an overall precarious humanitarian situation. The latest figures report that around two million Afghan refugees are still residing in Pakistan, with another 1.5 million in Iran.

Phase four began in September 2001 after the attacks on the USA were linked to the al-Qaida terrorist network run by Osama bin Laden who resides in Afghanistan. Afghans began fleeing in fear of a US attack that did in fact begin on 7 October 2001. Since then the humanitarian situation has spun out of control, with refugees largely trapped inside Afghanistan because of closed borders in neighboring countries. A 27 September 2001 report by the UN Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs put the vulnerable population in Afghanistan at about 5.3 million with projections of up to 7.5 million people in danger if the situation did not improve (UNOCHA, 2001a). Added to the existing population of forced migrants would come about 1.1 million more idps and 1.5 million refugees. The situation is indeed grave and the refugee dilemma far from resolved.

Security and migration in South Asia—whose security

Depending on one's point of departure, security can be defined in many ways.

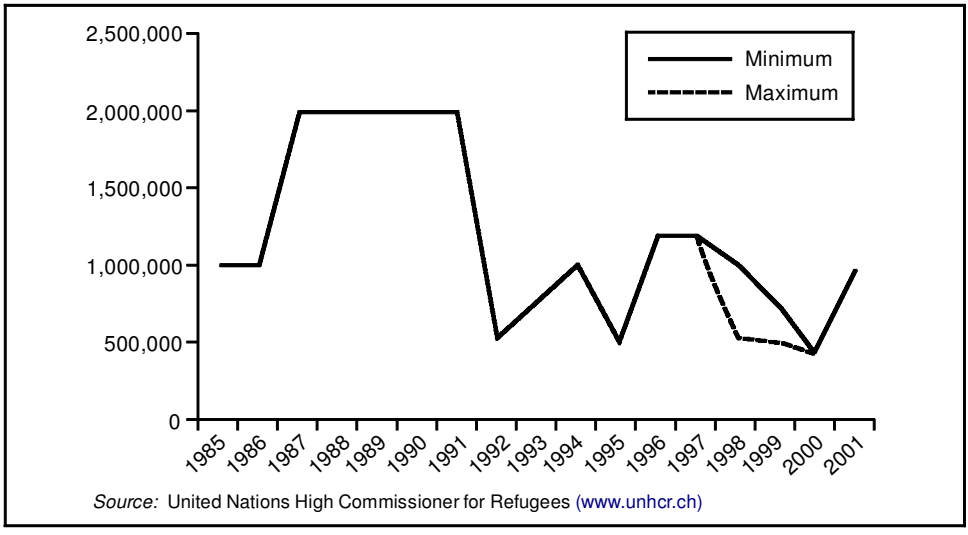

FIGURE 3
Number of Internally Displaced Persons in Afghanistan, 1985–2001 (September)

Security concerns are not always linked to hard facts but also to perceptions of threats, and in this way can be used for political purposes.

Refugee scholars are traditionally concerned with the human security of refugees as they often flee highly volatile areas and are in need of protection. Furthermore, the security of refugees is often threatened in host countries if there is a lack of assistance and integration. From the perspective of a security scholar, however, the main focus is on the security of the host society (citizens and state). This is important, as feelings of threat by the receiving society can translate into hostility against the refugees and practices that in turn may threaten the migrants (forced repatriation, confinement to small areas, etc.). While the human or societal security dilemma seems evident, we still need to shed light on the arguments that have (indirectly) linked displacement and migration in South Asia to social, national and, with the 11 September terrorist attack, clearly even international, security—even if such linkages were not made until Phase three of the Afghan refugee crisis. The basic question is: to what degree has migration as such or the counterproductive way in which regional and international actors have chosen to address the situation been responsible for the outcome? The timing of when a threat began to be felt, as well as the issue of real vs perceived threats are considered.

Human security

The above discussion has illustrated the human security dilemma of Afghans over the past 20-plus years of the Afghan war. Many refugees have been displaced up to four times by the invasion of the Soviet army, the war among rival *mujahedin* factions, the repressive Taliban regime combined with the ongoing war between the Taliban and the United Front and the worst droughts in Afghan history, and finally by the US and UK air attacks. The human security of the displaced Afghan population, however, has drastically decreased since early October 2001. Over the past few years, the Afghan population has become increasingly dependent on a lifeline of international support, one that was almost severed when aid workers withdrew before the US air strikes commenced.[4] Thus, the controversial US policy of dropping food alongside bombs appears nothing more than a media campaign similar to the French *Operation Turquoise* in Rwanda, aimed at bolstering their own image rather than feeding refugees. This is particularly the case in the northern areas, where the United Front gobbles up most drops and refugees are afraid to open packages for fear of booby-traps meant for the Taliban, or because of the similar appearance of cluster bombs to food drops (Human Rights Watch, 2001a). As of mid-October 2001 barely one-third of needed funds had been raised, and the World Food Programme has only been able to distribute under a quarter of needed food aid (UNOCHA, 2001b). The death of over 100 Afghan IDPS from lack of shelter and freezing weather conditions when they were stranded at the closed border with Tajikistan at the beginning of 2001 may be only a taste of what could happen during winter 2001/2002.

This slow deterioration of the human security of Afghan refugees is clearly a more recent phenomenon, as Afghan refugees are only now no longer welcome

in Pakistan, Iran, or elsewhere in the region.[5] Pakistan closed its border to newly arriving refugees for the first time in November 2000 and since then has kept a closed-door policy. This stands in stark contrast to its earlier behaviour, as in the beginning Pakistan (and to a lesser degree Iran) was extremely generous in receiving the refugees and settling them in largely self-sufficient villages (as opposed to camps). Several facts, some having to do with local tradition and culture and some with geopolitical considerations can explain this. First, there is a general Muslim tradition of granting asylum to those displaced in defence of their religion (*mohajir*, as was shown to the Muslims displaced during Indian partition). In the case of the Afghan refugees this was linked to the hospitality of Pashtuns, who follow a tribal code called *pashtunwali* (essentially similar to the idea of *mohajir*). Second, a large amount of international assistance was made available to the Afghan refugees. Third, there were greater political considerations among regional (mainly Pakistan) but also international (mainly the USA) actors.

One exception to the above rule, in terms of physical security, was the plight of female refugees. 'Whereas a woman would have gone out quite freely in her home village, with her face uncovered, to work in the fields or visit her neighbors, in the refugee villages she was surrounded by strangers, and became much more confined to her family's compound for fear of endangering the all-important family honor. In addition, local attitudes to women in North West Frontier Province … and Baluchistan were similar to those in rural Afghanistan, with the result that Afghan women in Pakistan did not benefit from liberalizing social pressures in the same ways as their cousins in Iran' (Colville, 1997: 5–6). Furthermore, because single female heads of households often fall outside the traditional tribal support structure, there has been a problem with Afghan women being forced to prostitute themselves for sheer survival.

Societal security

As with human security concerns, threats to societal security were not initially felt in receiving countries. "In general, the refugees in Pakistan were treated with tremendous generosity both by the government and the local population (particularly in the NWFP where the majority of the local population belonged to the same Pashtun ethnic group). By the late 1980s, there were more than 350 refugee villages—some more like small cities—mostly scattered throughout NWFP and Baluchistan, with a relatively small proportion in the other two Pakistani provinces of Sind and Punjab' (Colville, 1997: 6).

Albeit the Afghan refugees received an extraordinary amount of assistance, the protracted nature of their displacement was taxing on the patience of both the host society as well as the refugees. Thus, the initial generous reception, which in a way paralleled an extended honeymoon for the Afghan refugees in Pakistan, slowly came to an end in the late 1990s as Pakistan began to increasingly blame refugees 'for Peshawar's and other cities' growing social ills, including crime, the widespread availability of weapons, drug abuse, prostitution, and the decline in the Pakistan economy' (Ruiz, 2001: 4).

First of all, the sheer volume of the refugees, but also the duration of displace-

ment, soon began to exceed the capacity of tribal and religious hospitality (Centlivres & Centlivres-Demont, 1988; Rogers, 1987). Second, international assistance slowly began to dwindle, with Pakistan having to pick up the tab for Afghan refugees (Cheema, 1988). The relatively self-sufficient nature of Afghan refugees justified a slow decrease in assistance in 1992, with a complete stop in 1995 (except for vulnerable cases). Donor fatigue contributed to the fact that assistance has so far never regained past levels.

Third, Afghans became a point of controversy in the labour market for having kept wages down and pushing the bottom level of Pakistanis out of work. A rise in unemployment began further to pit refugees against citizens, creating resentment among Pakistanis, who argued that during the cold war days Afghan refugees used to lead a better life with the help of international assistance, while at the same time stealing jobs and inflating rents in urban areas (Ruiz, 2001:.2). In some ways this can be seen as the type of competition over scarce resources that refugees and local citizens are often engaged in (Rogers, 1987).

Fourth, while refugees were initially largely concentrated in the rural area of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) at the border with Afghanistan, and in Peshawar, they later began to disperse further into Pakistan, especially to the cities, with the second largest concentration emerging in the southern coastal town (and trading centre) Karachi. This led to two curious statistics: 1) in 1985 one in every six people in the NWFP was an Afghan refugee (Centlivres & Centlivres-Demont, 1988: 72); and 2) Karachi and Peshawar are the cities with the largest Pashtun populations after Kabul (Rubin, 2000; Ruiz, 2001).[6] The Pakistani government initially ignored urban refugees, as they continued to receive international assistance. 'Additionally, many urban refugees were opening small businesses that helped boost the economy, particularly in Peshawar, and others provided cheap labor for Pakistani businesses' (Ruiz, 2001: 4). Yet they were also blamed for increasing rents and property prices since they were willing (and able) to pay more than Pakistanis (Cheema, 1988).

Fifth, Pakistani officials have argued that Afghan refugees have contributed to an overall criminalisation of Pakistani society (Ruiz, 2001; Cheema, 1988). Even though this is a general aspersion cast on refugees and immigrants by many governments around the world, it is true that 'the war in Afghanistan introduced massive quantities of small arms into Pakistan and provided capital for investment in smuggling' (Rubin *et al*, 2001: 9). Many Pashtuns began to create ethnic trading networks, largely illegal (smuggling of goods, arms and drugs), between Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also with other Middle Eastern countries (Cheema, 1988).

In the light of the above developments, ambivalent feelings began to grow among the Pakistani population. On the one hand, Pakistanis do see the Afghan refugees as Muslim brothers and sisters but, on the other hand, the refugees are easily scapegoated into bearing all responsibility for the hardship that the Pakistani population has to face; this created tensions and distrust. Outside the NWFP (traditional Pashtun territory), Afghan refugees are not as welcome as in the past and are looked upon with increasing suspicion.

State or national security

Nobody can deny the fact that having a war waged from one's territory can jeopardise domestic security. However, the security issue was not initially felt and no complaints were made against the *mujahedin* fighters, as they were actively supported and strengthened. Nevertheless, over time, as Afghan refugees began to extend their trading and smuggling activities, especially with weapons and drugs, theit influence on Pakistan's internal security could not be neglected (Kutch & Noelte, 1988). Aside from the fact that many *mujahedin* groups were based in Pakistan and there was an increased flow of arms into the country, reasonable argument for a threat against national security can be made on three grounds.

First, during the war against the Soviet Union, Pakistan's involvement in providing a base for refugee warriors made it vulnerable to Soviet retaliation. This pressure was indirectly caused by the Soviet Army attacking *mujahedin* closed to the NWFP border and also directly by the Soviet Union trying to exploit the internal situation in Pakistan in order to weaken an ally of the *mujahedin* (Rogers, 1987: 424; Cheema, 1988: 41).

Second, the larger influx of Sunni Muslims from Afghanistan into the NWFP, which began to offset the numerical preponderance of Shias, has contributed to existing tensions between Shia and Sunnis in Pakistan. In other cases the migration of Hazara Shias led to a numerical preponderance of Shias in traditionally Sunni-dominated localities. This has induced as well as provoked aggression in the Shias and violent encounters between the Sunnis and Shias are becoming a routine affair. Similarly, large-scale in-migration of Pashtuns into Baluchistan led to fears that the Baluchi predominance could be slowly eroded (Cheema, 1988: 35).

Third, the issue of Talibanisation, or a creeping radicalisation of Islam in Pakistan should also not be neglected. Until recently radical Islamic groups never had much of a chance in Pakistani politics, and mainly functioned as a nuisance factor. The rise of the Taliban, however, has boosted an aggressive version of Sunni Islam from the *Deobandi* schools, which has increased tensions that could boil over in the present situation, in which the Pakistani government is supporting the USA in its campaign against Afghanistan (Kutch & Noelte, 1988). Here, however, it is important to consider the chicken and the egg' problem. Was it migrants who began fuelling Islamic radicalisation in Pakistan, or is it a potentially reinforcing dynamic that may have originated from within a society that now feels threatened? The latter might be closer to the truth if we consider the following description of the Taliban.

> Their military advisory structure includes Pakistani officers. Their decision-making process includes routine consultation with Pakistani Deobandi religious leaders. Their foreign relations depend on Pakistani advice and logistical assistance. Their military force recruits fighters from Pakistani madrasas, whose students are estimated to form as much as 20-30 percent of the total. Extremist Pakistani Deobandi organizations (Sipah-i Sahaba, Lashkar-i Jhangvi, Harakat-ul-Mujahidin) have bases in areas under their control. Their economic base depends on economic networks linked to the Pashtun diaspora in Karachi and Dubai, as well as the

> Pakistani administration in the NWFP and Baluchistan … The integration of Pakistani elements into the Taliban and IEA at all levels is not simply a result of a policy of the Pakistani government or military. Rather, the latter use and respond to pressures from these transnational links, which reflect deep changes in the social and political structures of the region (Rubin *et al*, 2001: 18).

Regional and international security

The above quotation shows the complicated nature of security in South Asia, which has slowly begun to transcend Afghan borders thanks to out-, as well as in-migration. As security inside Pakistan may be more affected by Afghan refugees, security elsewhere in the region began to be affected by the fact that the Taliban in Afghanistan began to grant refuge to various groups ranging from separatist and resistance fighters to terrorists such as bin Laden. For example, 'members of a repressed Islamist group in Uzbekistan's Ferghana Valley … reorganized as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, established bases in opposition-controlled areas of Tajikistan as well as in Afghanistan' (Rubin *et al*, 2001: 10). This has led to fears of Talibanisation in Central Asia, a fear that seems to have led to further repressive measures in some states, especially Uzbekistan. China also fears further unrest among Uygur separatists who have also begun to seek a haven in Taliban-controlled territories. Because of its conflict with Pakistan over Kashmir, India has long been troubled by growing Islamic extremism, with a link to Afghanistan demonstrated by two events in 1999. First, the fact that *mujahedin* fighters trained in, or from, Afghanistan participated in the May 1999 Kargil invasion in Kashmir, led to clear fears of an Afghanistan–Pakistan–Kashmir (terrorist) connection. Second, the ease with which the December 1999 Kashmir separatist hijackers of an Indian Airlines plane moved from Afghanistan (via Pakistan) back into Kashmir added to this concern.

Threats to international security, or at least to countries outside South Asia, were first voiced when the 1998 bombing of US embassies in Africa was linked to Osama bin Laden, who had found refuge in Afghanistan. However, since 11 September the Huntingtonian scenario of a 'clash of civilizations' seems all too real, leading the USA to make no difference between terrorists and those who harbour them, at the expenses of civilian lives if necessary.

Understanding the security dilemma—power politics, mistakes and missed opportunities

As we have seen, there is clearly a complicated mosaic of security issues at stake in South Asia. One cannot neglect the fact that presently an entire region is threatened with instability, with far reaching implications. Despite existing humanitarian concerns, the terrorist attack on 11 September gave traditional security thinking an edge, making alternative arguments and explanations increasingly difficult. This makes refugees, and their security, of little concern now, at least not to major players. For these reasons it is important to understand the deeper issues involved and to begin to question whether forced displacement

or a complicated combination of mistakes, missed opportunities and power politics by local and external players has contributed to the current sense of insecurity in the region and the world. As much of the current situation has been blamed on the war in Afghanistan and the associated forced migration, the examination of two refugee warrior communities (the *mujahidin* and the Tailban) as well as of policies of international refugee assistance, camp set-up, and the role of external actors is also important.

The politics of refugee assistance in Pakistan: refugee camps and refugee warrior communities

In remarkable contrast to most refugee situations was the 'open door' policy and unparalleled generosity shown by Pakistan and Iran[7] in receiving large numbers of refugees in the 1980s. By settling the refugees among their ethnic cousins, mainly in the NWFP, the Pakistani authorities could also ensure national acceptance of their refugee policy. Local arrangements for Afghan refugees in Pakistan were also strikingly different from traditional refugee camps. Most refugees were situated in 'refugee villages' that 'were not closed off from the outside world. The Afghans were allowed to move freely in and out of the refugee villages, to find work and set up businesses' (Colville, 1997: 4). The local set-up of more-or-less self-sufficient refugee camps, championed by Pakistan, led to the fact that food was distributed through Afghan middlemen, leaving control with powerful elements among the Afghan refugees, not aid agencies.[8] 'The UNHCR and the World Food Program had no way of ensuring that food went exclusively to noncombatants, since the camps were used by the mujaheddin as headquarters between the military raids' (Loescher, 1993: 88–89). Even though a certain level of self-sufficiency among refugees is desirable, it is important to avoid supporting armed elements, a task that is hard to master. Thus, while the set-up of the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan did not lead to the emergence of the first refugee warrior community—the *mujahedin*—it contributed to their power base.[9]

More clearly, however, long-term refugee displacement, protracted civil war in Afghanistan, power politics, and a lacking long-term structure of refugee camps clearly contributed to the emergence of the second set of refugee-warriors: the Taliban. While the first generation of refugee warriors had grown up in Afghanistan and thus 'could recount their tribal and clan lineage, remembered their abandoned farms and valleys with nostalgia and recounted legends and stories from Afghan history', the Taliban emerged from a generation that never knew their homeland, or peace (Rashid, 2000: 32). Thus, in contrast to the *mujahedin*, Rashid (2000) fittingly describes the Taliban as having

> no memories of their tribes, their elders, their neighbours nor the complex ethnic mix of peoples that often made up their villages and their homeland. These boys were what the war had thrown up like the sea's surrender at the beach of history. They had no memories of the past, no plans for the future while the present was everything. They were literally orphans of the war, the rootless and the restless, the jobless and the economically deprived with little self-knowledge. They admired war because it was the only occupation they could possibly adapt to. Their simple belief

> in a messianic, puritan Islam which had been drummed into them by simple village mullahs was the only prop they could held on to and which gave their lives some meaning. Untrained in anything, even the traditional occupation of their forefathers such as farming, herding or the making of handicrafts they were what Karl Marx would have termed Afghanistan's lumpen proletariat. (p. 32)

Using the above description of *mujahedin* and Taliban refugee warriors, together with the knowledge that Afghan displacement has lasted over 20 years, some lessons in planning refugee camps and assistance can be drawn. First, in displacement, especially during protracted wars, trauma is clearly an issue that needs to be addressed. Yet in most refugee situations the physical protection of refugees from external threats, as well as providing food and shelter for their physical well-being still tends to predominate over attending to emotional and psychological needs. Yet, while this may be more problematic during the first volatile phases of a refugee situation, the Afghan exodus lasted long enough to consider such facilities. Nevertheless, the children who later became the Taliban literally fell through the cracks of international refugee assistance. Without alternatives offered to them, 'they … willingly gathered under the all-male brotherhood that the Taliban leaders were set on creating, because they knew of nothing else … The male brotherhood offered these youngsters not just a religious cause to fight for, but a whole way of life to fully embrace and make their existence meaningful. Ironically, the Taliban were a direct throwback to the military religious orders that arose in Christendom during the Crusades to fight Islam—disciplined, motivated and ruthless in attaining their aims' (Rashid, 2000: 32). Ten years after the initial displacement scholars and practitioners started issuing warnings about the long-term implications of camp life for children (including a loss of contact with Afghan culture), arguing for increased support to women in order to counter-balance a harsh environment (Smyke, 1988: 28).

A second feature of camp life, the strict segregation of men and women, the result of throwing traditional societies into a new (and threatening) environment, added to the problem. The Taliban literally 'were orphans who had grown up without women—mothers, sisters or cousins. Others were madrassa students or had lived in strict confines of segregated refugee camp life, where the normal comings and goings of female relatives were curtailed … They had simply never known the company of women' (Rashid, 2000: 32–33). It is not uncommon for traditional ways to be accentuated abroad, as refugees or migrants try to protect their culture from outside influences or attempt to cope with imposed stress. Just as Turks in Germany most likely allow their women less space to move around, so were the lives of women in Afghan refugee camps more restricted than at home in (Pashtun) villages. This knowledge, again, is a clear lesson for refugee assistance. Especially during long-term displacement, more durable solutions should be found, where refugees can return to a more normal way of life, with less extreme applications of traditions.

A third factor contributing to the nature of the emerging refugee warriors, here both *mujahedin* and Taliban, is the issue of education in refugee camps. Smyke (1988) points to problems of a focus on quantity over quality education in refugee camps, especially the fact that 'the political influence … in some schools tend[s] to reinforce a somewhat simplistic view of the world where everyone is

either friend or enemy, nothing in between' (p. 33). Thus, while Afghan refugee children did not receive a proper education, there was also never a focus on introducing peace education, or lessons on non-violent conflict resolution into the curriculum of schools in refugee camps. The latter idea may actually be a novel consideration that could be learnt from the Afghan lesson, something to be considered for future education curricula in refugee camps. In sum, one could even argue that the *madrassas* educating the Taliban were able to take advantage of a mistake made by international refugee assistance, which was to consider the Afghan refugee camps as temporary and thus to fail to integrate a systematic education system.

The importance of teaching refugees about non-violent conflict revolution might be best illustrated by the lost opportunity in 1992 when the *mujahedin* conquered Kabul. Rather than trying to resolve the internal dispute in Afghanistan through non-military means, or encouraging such discourse among the refugee-warrior communities, Pakistan and the international community had focused simply on providing arms and other military assistance. Thus, the refugees simply had no knowledge of politics: all they knew was war and how to fight.

Taking the history of Afghan refugee camps as an important lesson learned (pointing to several missed opportunities), it is crucial not to treat refugee camps as uniform. Planning needs to be based on an in-depth assessment of the situation at hand, on the needs and capacities of both refugees as well as receiving societies. This includes taking into account the issue of refugee warriors, trauma and education needs and how traditional structures can be maintained without exacerbating the isolation of vulnerable groups (eg women and children). Protracted refugee situations have become more a norm than an exception and with it first asylum (or refugee camps) and long-term dependency on the international relief system have become the *de facto* permanent solution for millions of refugees. The Afghan case shows that using temporary refugee camps for long-term refugee populations often raises more problems than it solves such as the creation of refugee-warrior communities, and a lack of protection for inhabitants.

International refugee assistance: using humanitarian assistance for political goals

'Perhaps more clearly than in other refugee situations, the humanitarian and political dimensions of the Afghan refugee situation were mutually reinforcing' (Zolberg *et al*, 1989: 154). In other words, there was not simply a muddling between humanitarian and military assistance to the Afghan refugees, the two were politically linked. In many ways, the Afghan exodus was a 'welcome' migration that could be used to discredit the Soviet expansion and intervention in other countries and refugees became (partially willing) pawns in a regional and international power game. While the goal for the USA and its Western allies was based on a cold war mentality (fighting Communism), Muslim states saw a suppression of their belief system that could not be tolerated, and Pakistan a possibility to gain strategic depth by influencing the shape of the future political

regime in Afghanistan in order to create a friendly neighbour. This led to a situation in which the same countries that contributed to refugee assistance also channelled military support to the *mujahedin* rebels, blurring the lines of what the money was actually used for. The liberal camp set-up which had charged refugees with the distribution of assistance facilitated this further:

> After Pakistan asked in April 1979 for UNHCR assistance, the latter coordinated much of the international aid to the refugees, but the camps were administered by Pakistan authorities. The UNHCR-channeled aid averaged nearly $75 million annually. The other main relief agency was the United Nations' World Food Program, with an annual budget of $100 million … The lead financier in this massive relief apparatus was the United States, which by the end of the fiscal year 1986 had contributed over half a billion dollars for the Afghan refugees … Other major donors to the UN relief program were US allies (West Germany, Canada, Japan, and Australia), and conservative Islamic states in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states). (Zolberg *et al*, 1989: 154).

The political use of Afghan refugee assistance becomes ever more apparent if it is contrasted with the fact that Iranian refugees who fled the regime of Ayatollah Kohmeini were not as well supported: 'there were no camps, no mass relief, and little official recognition' (Zolberg *et al*, 1989: 154). Thus, while an Afghan resistance, or refugee warriors operating out of, and with the support of, Pakistan, already existed, they did not become an important player until the Soviet invasion and subsequent international support. Unfortunately, the link between humanitarian and military goals in Afghanistan is by no means an exception, given that the same happened on the Thai border with Cambodian refugees, and also in Central America (Nicaragua), where the USA supported the Contra rebels in Honduras and Costa Rica. This shows, how slowly (if at all) lessons seem to be learned by actors with a clear self-interest. It also shows the impossibility for international aid agencies of withdrawing from the wicked game of linking military with humanitarian aid (the recent US food drops alongside the bombs is an additional example here).[10]

Aside from the arming of subsequent refugee warrior communities (*mujahedin* and Taliban) to serve political goals, power politics also contributed to ignoring the potential danger of providing legitimacy to an increasingly narrow Islamic ideology by supporting a *jihad* against the Soviets in Afghanistan. As the Soviets threatened an Islamic way of life, the link between religion and the liberation struggle was evident, and possibly unavoidable. Thus it was not just tribal khans, but also mullahs who declared a *jihad* against the infidel communists (Rashid, 2000). Yet the resistance movement was able to gather momentum and its underlying Islamic ideology able to gain increasing legitimacy only thanks to US support and Pakistani guidance. The passionate involvement of the traditional Mullah made the movement very orthodox and backward-looking. The traditional *ulema* also changed their roles and acted as deputies to or intermediaries for the *mujahidin.*

The role of (external) actors: neglect, meddling and power politics

While it is true that Afghanistan has long suffered from the influence of external

actors, it is also important to acknowledge the role from within the Afghan diaspora, namely the refugee warriors, at least during Phase three of the Afghan civil war, when Kabul was conquered by the *mujahedin* and the differences among the factions (political, ideological, ethnic) came to the fore.[11] Colville (1997) considers that 'the period between the Soviet withdrawal and the outbreak of civil war in 1993 represented a lost opportunity, though the political seeds of failure had probably been sown much earlier because of the greed and opportunism of the competing mujahedeen groups and the manipulation of foreign backers' (p.7).

Here it is important to understand the ethnic diversity of Afghanistan. According to Schetter (2001) a German analysis came up with 50 ethnic groups, while a Russian one counted 200. The lack of a census, the war, and possibly even an absence of clear self-identification make it difficult to provide a sound estimate. Despite disagreements, the larger groups that are now also reflected in rival *mujahedin* factions tend to be Uzbek, Tajik, Hazaras and Pashtun—with a divide between the large Pashtun group and the rest (Maass, 2001). Although largely Muslim (with Hindu, Christian and Buddhist minorities), both Shia and Sunni groups are represented in Afghanistan, with not all Pashtuns being Sunni and all non-Pashtuns Shia, making a clear divide even more difficult. Finally, there are linguistic divides that do not necessarily correspond to ethnic groups, such as the fact that some non-Pashtuns speak the Pashtu language, while some Pashtuns do not (Schetter, 2001); however, Farsi and Pashtu are the main languages in the country, with Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen and Baluch being of a more regional nature.

Rashid (2000) argues that 'much of Afghanistan's subsequent civil war was to be determined by the fact that Kabul fell, not to the well-armed and bickering Pashtun parties based in Peshawar, but to the better organized and more united Tajik forces of Burhanuddin Rabbani and his military commander Ahmad Shah Masud and to the Uzbek forces from the north under General Rashid Dostum. It was a devastating psychological blow because for the first time in 300 years the Pashtuns had lost control of the capital' (p. 21). Ethnic, tribal and ideological difference, as well as a disinclination to share power among *mujahedin* factions trained as fighters and not as politicians, led to a further deterioration of Afghan citizens' human security through looting, murder and destruction. Most of the destruction of Kabul was not caused by the Soviets but through the *mujahedin* struggle for power. Thus, 'the country was divided into warlord fiefdoms and all the warlords had fought, switched sides and fought again in a bewildering array of alliances, betrayal and bloodshed' (Rashid, 2000: 21). Such a level of betrayal, looting and rape had never existed, particularly not under the Pashtun honour code represented in the *pashtunwali*; disgust with it gave rise to and support for the new emerging political force: the Taliban. While the primary goal of the *mujahedin* had been the liberation of their country from the Soviet invaders and the reinstallation of an Afghan government, the Taliban emerged out of a deeply felt compassion for the plight of Afghanistan, and the destruction the *mujahedin* faction were inflicting upon their own country after the Soviet withdrawal. Trained in *Deobandi madrassas*, the Taliban benefited from their homogeneous Pashtun background and the fact that their ethnic group had traditionally ruled Afghanistan.

Aside from the role of Afghan actors, however, the power politics of multiple regional and outside actors need to be considered. These include Pakistan, neighbouring countries in Central Asia, as well as Russia, India and China. Here ethnicity is less important than the geographic position of Afghanistan, situated at the crossroads of South, West and Central Asia. Despite being landlocked, it is strategically located between Pakistan (the Durand Line is the country's longest border), Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and China. This has made Afghanistan, and the Hindu Kush, an important trade route between Central and South Asia, with many outsiders struggling to control the territory, an activity known during the war with the British as the 'Great Game'. This led Ahmed Rashid (2000) to draw a parallel between the past and today, calling his influential book *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*. This new Great Game had the Soviet Union, Pakistan, the USA, Iran and Central Asian countries as the major players, with oil riches dominating the trading agenda.

Before discussing individual motives, a brief overview of this period is important. As discussed above, external influence began with support for the *mujahedin* against the Soviet invasion. Rubin *et al* (2001) argue that 'the US, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia … [armed] several previously marginal Islamist extremist groups, which predominated among the mujahidin organizations that fought the Soviets and Afghan Communists. The combination of these approaches led to the final collapse of the Afghan state in 1992. Both the Soviet-supported communists and the US-supported Islamists attacked and destroyed the educated elites that had ruled the country and provided it with some coherence, setting the stage for the advent of the Taliban' (p. 8).

The politicisation of the entire situation did not stop with aid to the *mujahedin* guerrillas or when Kabul was conquered in 1992. It continued directly with support for the Taliban, even though here economic and geostrategic concerns had begun to supersede political interests. Regardless of the conservative nature of the Taliban,[12] they were supported by Pakistan, local Afghan traders, and indirectly by the USA in order to bring stability to the country. The reasons for such support were manifold, but the fate of Afghan citizens was less important than economic considerations: the new Great Game and oil politics had begun. By 1995 'the Pakistan military and the ISI were backing the Taliban to open up a southern transportation route via Kandahar, Herat to Turkmenistan' (Rashid, 2000: 159). The Argentinean Oil Company, Bridas, had similar ambitions to build a pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan. Negotiations were expanded to include the Californian oil company Unocal Corporation, and now the US government's interest in: a) supporting US expansion and investment in Central Asia; b) developing political clout in the region (to counter that of Russia); and c) undermining Iran's pipeline ambitions and upholding the embargo on that country became a crucial part of the negotiations. Finally in 1995 Unocal, together with the Saudi Arabian-owned Delta Oil company, beat out the Bridas company, with the Great Game coming fully into play.

Rashid (2000) recounts how difficult it was to look into these new power politics, which were far more covert than the old CIA–ISI connection during the time of the *mujahedin*. Yet it is important to note that in this struggle two

coalitions emerged, coalitions whose importance might still be felt. 'The US [is] lining up alongside Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan and encouraging its allies—Israel, Turkey, and Pakistan—to invest there, while the Russians retain their grip on Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan' (Rashid, 2000: 163). Rashid's investigations further show that, when the Taliban first took Kabul, both Unocal and the US State Department seemed to be interested in economic and diplomatic relations with the Taliban, statements that were soon retracted. Nevertheless, 'it only further convinced Iran, Russia, and the CARS, the anti-Taliban alliance and most Pakistanis and Afghans that the US–Unocal partnership was backing the Taliban' (Rashid, 2000: 166). After continued battles between Unocal and Bridas over the control of the pipeline project, US politics shifted under Madeleine Albright in 1997 because of fears of drug smuggling, terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, and also because of a strong gender lobby against Taliban policies towards women. The relationship finally went sour after the August 1998 bombing of US embassies in Africa that were linked to Osama bin Laden, who resided in Afghanistan. Thus, the USA had managed to make a U-turn from supporting the Taliban to completely rejecting them (Rashid, 2000: 170–182).

The combination of concerns over the Taliban's human rights policies with fears of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism across the region, linked to international terrorism, led to policies of isolation, with only three countries accepting the Taliban. Past developments and the actions of the Taliban seem to confirm that the UN sanctions have given hardliners an opportunity to purge accommodating opinions among the moderates in the Taliban regime. Given that there is nothing more to lose in the politically and economically devastated country, hardline forces (heavily influenced by radical non-Afghan mercenaries within the ruling 'clique' around Mullah Omar) increasingly misused the movement for their extremist goals. 'The Taliban are also linked, increasingly as their isolation from the global mainstream grows, to the transnational fringe of global Islamist politics, including Usama Bin Ladin. They also provide a haven to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, some Chechens and Uyghurs, and assorted militants from other countries. While these links began opportunistically, as they persist, they too become complemented with various forms of structural integration' (Rubin *et al*, 2001: 18). In addition, the religious police (Amr-bil-Maruf or the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice) under Mullah Abdul Wali had also grown stronger. While more moderate local Taliban representatives often recognised the usefulness of international aid agencies, the ruling group around Mullah Omar tended to differ.

Here may lie yet another missed opportunity to engage politically and attempt a political education process with the Taliban while moderates still had some leverage in the movement. Over time, however, this small window of possible engagement became even smaller as the Taliban abandoned their initial quest of liberating only Afghanistan, growing hungrier for control and power, and their decision making became more inclusive post-1996/97 (Rubin *et al*, 2001). The liberators of Afghanistan had turned into another repressive regime, which is now being purged from Afghan soil by the US war on terrorism.

The above illustrates the level to which certain actors have meddled in

Afghanistan's affairs, either out of their own political and economic interests, or in order to counter the meddling of other states. Support for the *mujahedin* was only a beginning, then followed the Taliban and it will be interesting to see those interests play out in a post-Taliban Afghanistan. The United Nation's 'six plus two' effort has acknowledged the role of the external actors by involving all neighbouring states (Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and China) plus the USA and Russia. In order to understand the situation, individual state motivations need to be surveyed.

The two 'partitions' in South Asia significantly shaped the political scene of the subcontinent, particularly the precarious relations between India and Pakistan, albeit 'the regional power structure moved further in favor of India' (Zolberg *et al*, 1989: 135). Given India's relative size, Pakistan could only win with power politics and 'the use of 'asymmetric strategies' such as support for insurgencies and extremist groups (techniques learned from the US during the Afghan war), and the quest for 'strategic depth'—links and alliances with parts of the Muslim world to the west. This quest for 'strategic depth' has defined Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan and then Central Asia for decades' (Rubin *et al*, 2000: 7). In other words, in order to balance out India's power, Pakistan has always tried to create a friendly Islamic regime in Afghanistan.[13] This led to its support for the *mujahedin* and later on the Taliban and will most likely influence Pakistan's position towards a future Afghan government as well.

Thus, during Phases one and two, the more Afghan refugees Pakistan hosted, and the more generous its assistance, the more power it could potentially gain as a crucial ally in the fight to curb Soviet expansion. Furthermore, by supporting refugees it could play a crucial role in who was to rule Afghanistan. Today, with the USA challenging Pakistan's long-term involvement with the Taliban and Afghanistan, these foreign policies may ultimately backfire. William Maley (1999) has described this relationship as 'holding a Tiger by its tail', with the risk of being savaged when one lets go. Ultimately Afghanistan will survive the Taliban; the question remains of whether Pakistan will do so as well. Pakistani policy has in many ways influenced India's stake in the game. Thus Delhi sees any kind of sympathetic regime in Afghanistan as a direct threat to itself. In addition, there is concern over instability in Kashmir which has been greatly fuelled along religious lines (Muslims vs Hindus). In a way, the old concerns of partition are still alive, vividly influencing foreign politics.

Islamic states such as Iran and Saudi Arabia supported the emergence of the *mujahedin* rebels as a means of defending Islam. Saudi Arabia, however, withdrew its support after 1998 because of the Taliban's support for the wanted terrorist Osama bin Laden. Iran's interest has also changed thanks to the emergence of the largely Sunni Taliban; it has been a major supporter of the United Front. In addition, Iran also has economic interests, at least as a counter to US influence in the region.

The role of Russia which, together with the USA, has supported sanctions against the Taliban and which has also been a major weapons supplier to the United Front is also interesting. After all, it was involved as major force in the Afghan war during the last 10 years of the Soviet empire. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's goal has been to regain strategic control over the

region. Here the Taliban have in many ways been instrumental in justifying their southward expansion. Rubin *et al* (2001) argue that 'Russia plays both an Islamic card (aspiring to be the protector of Central Asia from fundamentalists) and an ethnic card (protecting Tajiks from both Pashtuns and Uzbeks)' (p. 27). Thus, since Russia would like to regain its influence in Central Asia, it can use the Taliban threat as a welcome excuse to offer military help to its needy neighbours.

Needless to say, the tactic seems to be working as fears of Islamic militants are indeed great in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, there are some counter-movements as well. Before the UN sanctions, a less hostile attitude to the Taliban began to appear within the Central Asian neighborhood, mainly Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, emanating from Russian meddling. How this will develop now is not clear. Thus, Central Asian states have shown an ambivalent position towards Afghanistan. While Uzbekistan can also use the fear of Talibanisation or the fact that the IMU partially operates from Afghan territory, as a means to support its repressive regime, it is also wary of growing Russian influence within its borders. Turkmenistan seems to feel little threat, and has more economic interests in the region (see the pipeline discussion above).

China's role has also been rather minor, and to some degree ambivalent. In general it liked to keep relationships friendly, but felt a certain threat because Uygur separatists operate from Afghan territory. But China is also wary of both Russian, and especially US, expansion in the region. This could lead to interesting alliances over both fighting terrorism and rebuilding the region.

The role of the USA, currently spearheading the bombing of the region, despite not even being a regional actor itself, is very interesting. Its initial involvement, with that of the other Western powers was the result of a clear cold war mentality aimed at curbing Soviet expansion. Later the USA gave up control of the region, dropping support for rebel factions and the Taliban. This loss of geopolitical influence might be something the USA now regrets more than its early support for the *mujahedin* and Taliban forces. Thus, while the main reason for US air strikes on Afghanistan may have been the 11 September attacks; history also suggests some underlying geopolitical motives.

Their strategic location has brought the Afghans nothing but war, destruction and death. Given the intense political and economic interests of external actors in Afghan history, one cannot help but wonder whether such international actors will now be able to allow peace-building efforts to restore the country and assure the repatriation of Afghan refugees, thus ending the vicious cycle of security and migration.

Conclusion

This article set out to answer the question of whether the security dilemma felt in South Asia (and the world as a whole) could be linked to migration and displacement in the region. The analysis has been able to provide some interesting findings. First, thanks to the two refugee-warrior communities, one has to acknowledge that migrants have indeed contributed to a decaying security situation. However, it is important to point out that, despite the sheer volume of refugee flows from Afghanistan to Pakistan, which could have threatened

security through an exhaustion of local capacities, Pakistan and the region did not perceive a threat to their own security until years after the initial exodus. The threat actually came at a time when the volume of refugees was the lowest it had been in the history of Afghan refugees. Rather than the size of the refugee population, it is the duration of displacement that seems to be the critical factor here.

Second, the countries that felt most threatened—Russia, the USA, India and Central Asia— were not the countries that hosted the majority of Afghan refuges and, in the case of the USA, were not even in the region. This poses the question of whether real or perceived threats are more important, and whether the rhetoric of Talibanisation was merely a political strategy to deal with other domestic problems.

Third, and maybe most importantly, the way local, regional and international actors responded to the refugee crisis seems to have contributed equally, or even more to the security dilemma, than the migration itself. While it is clear that Afghan refugees would have taken up arms to defend their home country, they were not prevented from doing so, but actually encouraged. In many ways, external actors used them as pawns to advance their own political goals. This game worked until the willing pawns became independent, ie the Taliban began to spurn most of those who had supported them.

In sum, as in many political settings, migration streams can be exploited by elements from among the migrants themselves, as well as by the host society and the international community. The interesting issue in the South Asian case is that ultimately some of the players have lost control of their manipulation, to the cost of the people—both citizens and migrants. In many ways, traditional security concerns have always ruled the game, not the security of the refugees. If the external actors had paid as much attention to the political–educational plight of the refugees as to positioning themselves regionally (Pakistan) or to fighting communist expansion (US) or later to economic considerations (US, oil companies) a security impasse could potentially have been avoided.

Given the precarious situation of Afghan refugees at present, the only solution seems to be a dual treatment of all levels of security. With the Taliban currently being defeated (November 2001), there seems to be a new chance to achieve this balance, but only if we are willing to learn from our past failures and missed opportunities and are able to make changes in the future.

If we want to prevent a third or fourth generation of refugee warriors and avoid driving refugees into the arms of terrorist groups, we have to consider two main issues: missed opportunities and the politics of refugee assistance; and power politics and neglect by national and international actors. While it might be difficult to influence power politics much, we can try to consider the lessons for international refugee assistance. Nevertheless, any change in politics also needs to address the roles of different players (in the Afghan case especially Pakistan) and to attempt to engage them constructively by:

- avoiding the mixing of humanitarian with military assistance;
- assessing the political situation of displacement and plan accordingly (balancing short-term with long-term considerations);

- avoiding making refugee camps a *de facto* permanent solution and searching for more durable solutions;
- addressing the emotional and psychological well-being of refugees alongside the provision of food and shelter this should include education, especially in politics and peaceful conflict resolution;
- engaging refugees in the planning, layout, and administration of refugee camps, as long as they do not belong to armed groups; here the involvement of women may be an innovative way to get around the problem of supporting armed elements;
- working on political education processes in the camps, and including the Afghan diaspora (not just warriors) in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Notes

This article reflects the views of the author and not necessarily that of the Swiss Peace Foundation. This paper emerged as part of a project on security and migration put together in collaboration with Emily Copeland. I would like to thank J. Craig Jenkins and especially Daniel Schwarz for helpful comments.

[1] While the general discourse uses the word Islamic fundamentalism, I choose to use the word extremism in order to differentiate the fact that most groups called fundamentalist have in no way returned to the fundamentalist and traditional values and principles of Islam, but choose a more extreme interpretation than most pious Muslims would adhere to or agree with. This makes Islamic extremism a better word to describe these groups than Islamic fundamentalism.

[2] 'In response, the UN Secretary-General set up a separate international relief apparatus under a special coordination organization … Fortunately after the defeat of the Pakistani forces, the 10 million people who had taken refuge in India quickly returned home to the newly independent Bangladesh' (Loescher, 1993: 84).

[3] A more detailed discussion of the migration–security link in Kashmir and India's northeast, however, would warrant a separate discussion and is not the focus of this article.

[4] Noam Chomsky called this a silent genocide in Afghanistan, one the world was watching more or less indifferently, during a lecture on 'The new war against terror' at MIT, 18 October 2001.

[5] One has to admit, however, that in order to balance the needs of its population with that of the refugees, 'beginning in 1982, the Pakistani government wished to remove a certain number of AR [Afghan refugees]—especially new arrivals—from the Afghan–Pakistan border areas, to avoid their numbers exceeding those of the locals and to be better able to control them' (Centlivres & Centlivres-Demont, 1988: 75). Thus, repatriation was a solution favoured by the Pakistani administration, even if the security of the returnees was not fully guaranteed. However, this is by no means comparable with the current situation.

[6] 'Until 1984, the Pashtuns made up to 80 percent of the AR in Pakistan' (Centlivres & Centlivres-Demont, 1988: 73).

[7] The generosity was mainly visible in Pakistan, as Afghan refugees in Iran are said to have been exploited for their labour power. It has also been claimed that Iran may inflate the actual number of Afghan refugees in the country (personal email exchange with Centlivres & Centlivres Demont, 2001).

[8] 'Underlying this "double-bind" then is a basic disjuncture between the Pakhtun ethos of self-determination and the necessity of adapting to an unprecedented social framework in which they, as refugees, are no longer autonomous actors.' (Edwards, 1986: 324).

[9] Under Islamic tradition, Muslims have two choices when they feel their beliefs are being threatened. They can either become 'the *mujahidin*, who fight for their homeland and Islam … or the *muhajirin*, who sacrificed their homes to preserve Islam' (Edwards,1986: 324). The Afghan refugee community actually divided itself between *mujahedin* and *muhajirin*, as not all the displaced population chose to take up arms (Centlivres & Centlivres-Demont, 2001). In this, one has to draw a fine line between those Afghans who were, are and will be refugees, and those who chose to fight. Such a separation makes sense inasmuch as under the 1951 UNCHR Convention definition, an individual who takes up arms cannot claim the label of a refugee. Nevertheless, it still provides a link between security and migration, as mujahidin fighters nevertheless migrated from Afghanistan.

[10] See Minear (2001) and Terry (2001) for a further discussion on the danger of mixing military with humanitarian aid.

[11] 'In Kandahar the struggle against the Soviets was a tribal jihad [Durrani] led by clan chiefs and *ulema* (senior religious scholars) rather than an ideological jihad led by Islamists' (Rashid, 2000: 36??)

[12] With the emergence of the Taliban, even the more traditional *mujahedin* grouping appeared liberal in comparison.

[13] The Afghan–Pakistan link has still not been fully severed, and it supplies the Taliban with new religious fighters and mullahs.

References

Centlivre, P & Centlivre-Demont, M (1988a) 'The Afghan refugees in Pakistan: a nation in exile, *Current Sociology*, 36, pp 71–92.

Centlivre, P & Centlivre-Demont, M (1988b) The Afghan refugees in Pakistan: an ambiguous identity, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 1 (2), pp 141–152.

Centlivre, P & Centlivre-Demont, M (2001) personal email exchange.

Cheema, PI (1988) Impact of the Afghan war on Pakistan, *Pakistan Horizon*, 41 (1), pp 23–45.

Chomsky, N (2001) The new war against terror, lecture delivered at MIT, 18 October 2001 (http://www.zmag.org/GlobalWatch/chomskymit.htm).

Colville, R (1997) The biggest caseload in the world, *Refugees*, 108 (2), pp 3–9.

Edwards, DB (1986) Marginality and migration: cultural dimensions of the Afghan refugee problem, *International Migration Review*, 20 (2), pp 313–325.

Human Rights Watch (2001) *Cluster Bombs in Afghanistan: A Human Rights Watch Backgrounder*, 31 October (http://www.reliefweb.int).

Kutch, K & Noelte, E (1988) Economic, political and social impacts of Afghan refugees on Pakistan, *Transnational Perspectives*, 14(1), pp18–27.

Loescher, G (1993) *Beyond Charity: International Cooperation and the Global Refugee Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Maass, C (2001) Kabuler Kabalen, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13–14 October.

Maley, W (1999) Comments made during the First South Asia Workshop, Swiss Peace Foundation, Bern, 19 November.

Minear, L (2001) Our do-gooder delusions in Afghanistan are in for a shock, *Los Angeles Times*, 9 October.

Rashid, A (2000) *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (London: IB Tauris).

Rogers, T (1987) Afghan refugees and the stability of Pakistan, *Survival*, September/October, pp 416–429.

Rubin, BR (2000) The political economy of war and peace in Afghanistan, *World Development*, 28 (10), pp 1789–1803.

Rubin, BR, Ghani, A, Maley, W, Rashid, A & Roy, O (2001) *Afghanistan: Reconstruction and Peacebuilding in a Regional Framework*, KOFF Peacebuilding Report 1/2001 (Bern: Swiss Peace Foundation).

Ruiz, HA (2001) Afghan refugees in Pakistan at risk, *Refugee Reports*, 22 (7), pp 1–8.

Schetter, C (2001) Die Schimäre der Ethnie in Afghanistan, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 26 October.

Smyke, P (1988) Afghan refugee children in Pakistan, *Transnational Perspectives*, 14 (1), pp 28–37.

Terry, F (2001) Military involvement in refugee crises: a positive evolution?, *Lancet*, 5 May.

United Nations (2001a) *The Situation In Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security*, Report of the Secretary-General (New York: United Nations), 19 April.

United Nations (2001b) *Report of the Secretary-General on the Humanitarian Implications of the Measures imposed by Security Council Resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1333 (2000) on Afghanistan*, New York: United Nations) 13 July.

UNOCHA (2001a) Donor alert: to support an inter-agency emergency humanitarian assistance plan for Afghans in Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries (October 2001–Mar 2002), 27 September 2001 (http://www.reliefweb.int).

UNOCHA (2001b) *Situation Report 15*, 24 October (http://www.reliefweb.int).

Zolberg, A, Suhrke, A & Aguayo, S (1989) *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* (New York: Oxford University Press).