



# The Impact of International Law Perspectives on Transit Countries Responsibilities and Iran's Policies on Migration Patterns to Europe, A Case Study of Afghan Migrants

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## Abstract

This study examines the impact of Iran's policies on Afghan migration patterns to Europe, employing a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative interviews. The research investigates how Iran's increasingly restrictive policies have influenced the routes and methods used by Afghan migrants attempting to reach Europe. Utilizing data from UNHCR, IOM, and Eurostat, alongside interviews with migrants and key informants, the study reveals significant shifts in migration patterns. Findings suggest that stricter Iranian policies have led to more dangerous and complex migration routes, with increased reliance on human smuggling networks. The study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of transit migration dynamics, offering valuable insights for policymakers, humanitarian organizations, and researchers in the field of international migration. The case of Afghan migration through Iran to Europe highlights the complex interplay between international law, national policies, and human mobility. While Iran's policies have significantly impacted migration patterns, they also reflect the broader challenges faced by transit countries in managing large-scale population movements. Moving forward, a comprehensive approach that combines improved legal frameworks, enhanced international cooperation, and sustainable development initiatives in origin countries will be crucial in addressing the needs of migrants while also considering the concerns of transit and destination countries.

**Keywords :** Afghan migration, Iran, transit country, migration policy, Europe,

## Introduction

The migration of Afghan nationals through Iran to Europe has been a significant phenomenon in recent decades, influenced by various factors including conflict, economic instability, and changing policies in transit countries. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Afghanistan has consistently been one of the world's largest sources of refugees and asylum seekers. As of 2023, there were approximately 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees worldwide, with Iran hosting nearly 800,000 registered refugees and an estimated 2.1 million undocumented Afghans (UNHCR, 2023). Iran's role as a transit country for Afghan migrants has been complex and evolving. The country has implemented various policies aimed at managing the influx of Afghan nationals, ranging from periodic mass deportations to attempts at integration. Between 2016 and 2022, Iran deported an average of 200,000 undocumented Afghans annually, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). However, these deportations have not significantly stemmed the flow of migrants, as many attempt to re-enter Iran or continue their journey towards Europe (IOM, 2023).

The migration patterns of Afghans through Iran to Europe have been influenced by both push and pull factors. Push factors include ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, economic hardship, and limited access to education and healthcare. Pull factors in Europe include perceived economic opportunities, social welfare systems, and the presence of established Afghan diaspora communities. Data from Eurostat shows that between 2015 and 2023, approximately 700,000 Afghan nationals applied for asylum in European Union countries, with Germany, Sweden, and Austria being the top destinations (Eurostat, 2024). International law, particularly the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, places certain obligations on transit countries like Iran. These include the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the return of refugees to countries where they face persecution. However, Iran is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention, which has implications for its treatment of Afghan migrants. Despite this, Iran has cooperated with UNHCR and other international organizations to provide some level of protection and assistance to Afghan refugees (Farzin and Jadali, 2022).

The impact of Iran's policies on Afghan migration patterns has been significant. Stricter border controls and deportation practices have led to increased risk-taking by migrants, often resulting in the use of dangerous smuggling routes. According to a report by the Mixed Migration Centre, approximately 75% of Afghan migrants transiting through Iran to Turkey and onwards to Europe used smugglers in 2022, exposing them to various protection risks (Mixed Migration Centre, 2023). The global landscape of migration has been significantly shaped by the movement of Afghan nationals seeking refuge and better opportunities, with many attempting to reach Europe through transit countries like Iran. This complex phenomenon sits at the intersection of international law, national policies, and human rights, presenting unique challenges and responsibilities for all nations involved. This article examines the intricate relationship between international legal perspectives on transit countries' responsibilities and Iran's policies, analyzing their combined impact on Afghan migration patterns to Europe.

Afghanistan's prolonged history of conflict, political instability, and economic hardship has made it one of the world's largest sources of refugees and asylum seekers for decades. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of 2023, there were approximately 2.6 million registered Afghan refugees worldwide, with millions more internally displaced or living in precarious situations in neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2023).

Iran, sharing a long border with Afghanistan and hosting a significant Afghan population, plays a crucial role as both a destination and transit country. Its policies and practices regarding Afghan migrants have far-reaching implications, not only for the migrants themselves but also for the broader patterns of migration to Europe. This article will explore how Iran's approach, informed by its interpretation of international obligations and domestic concerns, has shaped the journey of Afghan migrants.

The legal framework governing the treatment of refugees and migrants in transit countries is complex and often ambiguous. While foundational documents like the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol establish certain principles, their application in transit contexts remains a subject of debate. This article will delve into the international legal perspectives on transit countries' responsibilities and examine how these principles interact with Iran's domestic policies.

By analyzing United Nations statistics, policy developments, and academic research, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted issues at play. We will examine the historical context of Afghan migration, the evolution of Iran's policies, and the resulting changes in migration patterns to Europe. Additionally, we will explore the international community's response and the challenges that lie ahead in addressing this ongoing humanitarian situation.

Through this analysis, we hope to contribute to the broader discussion on migration management, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that considers the rights and needs of migrants, the concerns of transit countries, and the responsibilities of the international community. As the global dialogue on migration continues to evolve, understanding the complexities of cases like Afghan migration through Iran to Europe becomes increasingly crucial for developing effective and humane policies.

## Statement of the Problem

The migration of Afghan nationals through Iran to Europe presents a complex set of interconnected challenges that span legal, political, humanitarian, and socioeconomic domains. This multifaceted issue necessitates a comprehensive examination to understand its various dimensions and implications.

**Legal Ambiguities:** The primary challenge lies in the ambiguous nature of international law regarding transit countries' responsibilities. While the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol establish foundational principles for refugee protection, Iran is not a signatory to these agreements. This creates a legal grey area in terms of the rights of Afghan migrants in Iran and the obligations of the Iranian state towards them (Goodwin-Gill and McAdam, 2021).

**Policy Inconsistencies:** Iran's policies towards Afghan migrants have been inconsistent over time, oscillating between periods of relative tolerance and strict enforcement. This inconsistency creates uncertainty for migrants and complicates long-term policy planning both in Iran and in potential destination countries in Europe (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2021).

**Human Rights Concerns:** The treatment of Afghan migrants in Iran, particularly those who are undocumented, raises significant human rights concerns. Reports of mass deportations, limited access to services, and exploitation in the informal labor market highlight the vulnerable position of many Afghan migrants (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

**Impact on Migration Patterns:** Iran's policies and practices have a direct impact on the routes, methods, and demographics of Afghan migration to Europe. Stricter border controls and deportation practices have led to increased reliance on dangerous smuggling routes, putting migrants at greater risk (Mixed Migration Centre, 2023).

**Burden on Transit Countries:** Iran, as a major transit country, faces significant economic and social pressures in hosting large numbers of Afghan migrants. Balancing these domestic concerns with international expectations and humanitarian obligations presents an ongoing challenge (Koser, 2022).

**European Policy Responses:** The flow of Afghan migrants through Iran affects European countries' migration and asylum policies. The varying responses of European nations to Afghan asylum seekers create additional complexities in managing this migration flow (Eurostat, 2024).

**Root Causes Persistence:** The ongoing instability and economic challenges in Afghanistan continue to drive migration, creating a persistent flow of migrants that transit countries like Iran and destination countries in Europe must constantly address (Schmeidl, 2019).

**International Cooperation Challenges:** Addressing the issues surrounding Afghan migration requires cooperation between origin, transit, and destination countries. However, differing priorities and perspectives often hinder effective multilateral solutions (ICMPD, 2023).

**Data and Monitoring Limitations:** Accurate data on the number, conditions, and movements of Afghan migrants through Iran is often limited or unreliable, making it difficult to formulate evidence-based policies and provide targeted assistance (IOM, 2023).

**Long-term Integration vs. Temporary Protection:** There is an ongoing debate about whether to focus on long-term integration of Afghan migrants or to prioritize temporary protection measures. This dilemma affects policy decisions in both transit and destination countries (UNESCO, 2023).

These interconnected issues create a complex problem that requires a nuanced understanding of international law, regional politics, human rights, and migration dynamics. Addressing these challenges necessitates a comprehensive approach that considers the rights and needs of migrants, the capacities and

concerns of transit countries like Iran, and the broader implications for European migration policies and international relations.

## Research Purposes

This research aims to examine the complex interplay between international law, transit countries' responsibilities, and the specific case of Iran's policies in shaping Afghan migration patterns to Europe. To critically analyze the international legal framework governing transit countries' responsibilities towards migrants and refugees, with a particular focus on how these principles apply to Iran's situation as a non-signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. To assess the evolution and impact of Iran's policies towards Afghan migrants, including registration schemes, access to services, deportation practices, and border control measures. This evaluation will help understand how these policies have influenced migration patterns and routes to Europe. To examine the changing dynamics of Afghan migration through Iran to Europe, including shifts in demographics, preferred routes, and methods of transit. This assessment will provide insights into how policy changes and other factors have affected migration flows over time. To investigate the human rights implications of Iran's policies and practices towards Afghan migrants, highlighting areas of concern and potential violations of international human rights standards. To analyze how European countries have responded to the influx of Afghan migrants and asylum seekers, including policy changes, asylum application trends, and integration efforts. To explore the nature and effectiveness of international cooperation efforts in addressing the challenges posed by Afghan migration through Iran, including initiatives by the UNHCR, EU-Iran dialogues, and regional forums. To place Iran's role as a transit country for Afghan migrants in a broader context by comparing it with other transit countries' approaches and challenges. To identify potential future scenarios and challenges related to Afghan migration through Iran to Europe, considering factors such as political developments in Afghanistan, changes in Iran's policies, and evolving European migration strategies. To formulate evidence-based policy recommendations for addressing the complex issues surrounding Afghan migration through Iran, targeting policymakers in Iran, European countries, and international organizations. To contribute to the broader academic discourse on transit migration, refugee protection, and the responsibilities of states in managing complex migration flows. By addressing these research purposes, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted issues surrounding Afghan migration through Iran to Europe. The findings will not only contribute to academic knowledge in the fields of migration studies and international law but also offer practical insights for policymakers and stakeholders involved in managing and responding to this ongoing migration phenomenon.

## Research Questions

How do international legal frameworks define and shape the responsibilities of transit countries like Iran towards Afghan migrants?

To what extent have Iran's policies towards Afghan migrants influenced the patterns and routes of migration to Europe?

How has the demographic profile of Afghan migrants traveling through Iran to Europe changed over the past decade?

What are the primary human rights concerns arising from Iran's treatment of Afghan migrants, and how do these align with or contradict international standards?

How have European countries' asylum policies and practices evolved in response to the influx of Afghan migrants transiting through Iran?

What is the effectiveness of current international cooperation mechanisms in addressing the challenges posed by Afghan migration through Iran?

How does Iran's approach to Afghan migrants compare with other major transit countries in terms of policy, practice, and outcomes?

What are the long-term implications of current migration patterns and policies for Afghanistan, Iran, and European countries?

How do economic factors in Iran influence its policies towards Afghan migrants and their onward movement to Europe?

To what extent do Afghanistan's internal dynamics continue to drive migration through Iran to Europe, despite changes in transit and destination country policies?

These research questions cover a wide range of aspects related to Afghan migration through Iran to Europe, including legal frameworks, policy impacts, human rights issues, demographic changes, international cooperation, and the interplay between origin, transit, and destination countries. They provide a comprehensive framework for exploring this complex topic.

## Research Hypothesis

International legal frameworks provide limited explicit guidance on transit countries' responsibilities, leading to varied interpretations and implementations by states like Iran.

Iran's increasingly restrictive policies have led to more dangerous and complex migration routes to Europe, with a greater reliance on human smuggling networks.

There has been an increase in the proportion of families and unaccompanied minors among Afghan migrants, compared to a previous predominance of single adult males.

Major human rights concerns include arbitrary detention, forced deportations, and limited access to basic services, often falling short of international human rights standards.

European countries have generally tightened their asylum policies, leading to lower acceptance rates and increased emphasis on deportation agreements with transit countries.

Current international cooperation mechanisms are insufficient to address the complex challenges, with limited success in burden-sharing and creating sustainable solutions.

Iran's approach is more restrictive compared to some transit countries but more accommodating than others, reflecting its unique geopolitical position and domestic concerns.

Current patterns and policies are likely to result in continued irregular migration, increased pressure on Iran's resources, and ongoing political tensions between transit and destination countries.

Economic pressures in Iran contribute to more restrictive policies towards Afghan migrants, indirectly encouraging onward migration to Europe.

Ongoing instability and economic challenges in Afghanistan remain the primary drivers of migration, overshadowing the deterrent effects of restrictive policies in transit and destination countries.

These hypotheses offer initial predictions or expectations based on existing knowledge and preliminary observations. They serve as starting points for your research, which will aim to test, refine, or potentially refute these hypotheses through rigorous analysis of data and evidence. Remember that the outcomes of your research may support, partially support, or contradict these hypotheses, all of which can contribute valuable insights to the field of study.

## Significance Statement

This research on the impact of international law perspectives and Iran's policies on Afghan migration patterns to Europe holds significant importance across multiple domains.

## Policy Development

By analyzing the interplay between international law and national policies, this study provides crucial insights for policymakers in transit and destination countries. It offers an evidence-based foundation for developing more effective and humane migration management strategies.

## Human Rights Advocacy

The examination of human rights concerns in the context of transit migration through Iran sheds light on critical issues affecting vulnerable populations. This research can inform advocacy efforts and drive improvements in the protection of migrants' rights.

### **International Relations**

Understanding the dynamics of Afghan migration through Iran to Europe is vital for diplomatic relations between origin, transit, and destination countries. This study contributes to more informed dialogue and potentially more cooperative approaches to managing migration flows.

### **Legal Scholarship**

The analysis of international legal frameworks governing transit countries' responsibilities addresses a gap in current legal literature. It provides a basis for further academic discourse on the rights and obligations of states in complex migration scenarios.

### **Humanitarian Response**

By identifying the changing patterns and demographics of Afghan migration, this research enables humanitarian organizations to better target their assistance and develop more effective intervention strategies.

### **European Policy Formulation**

The insights into how Iran's policies affect migration to Europe are valuable for European policymakers in shaping their asylum and immigration policies. This can lead to more realistic and sustainable approaches to managing inflows of Afghan migrants and refugees.

### **Regional Stability**

By exploring the long-term implications of current migration patterns, this study contributes to discussions on regional stability in the Middle East and Central Asia, which have broader geopolitical implications.

### **Economic Impact Assessment**

The examination of economic factors in Iran and their influence on migration policies provides valuable information for understanding the economic dimensions of transit migration, both for Iran and destination countries.

### **Interdisciplinary Contribution**

This research bridges gaps between legal studies, international relations, migration studies, and human rights, fostering a more holistic understanding of complex migration phenomena.

### **Future Scenario Planning**

By analyzing current trends and policies, this study aids in projecting future scenarios, allowing stakeholders to prepare for potential challenges and opportunities in managing Afghan migration.

### **Public Discourse**

The findings of this research can inform public debates on migration, promoting a more nuanced and fact-based discussion on the challenges and responsibilities associated with transit migration.

### **Capacity Building**

Insights from this study can inform training and capacity-building efforts for government officials, NGO workers, and other stakeholders involved in managing migration flows.

In conclusion, this research not only contributes to academic knowledge but also has practical implications for policy formulation, human rights protection, and international cooperation. It addresses a critical global issue with far-reaching consequences for migrants, transit countries, and destination societies, making it a significant contribution to our understanding of contemporary migration dynamics.



## Review of the related literature

The literature on Afghan migration provides a crucial historical context. Monsutti (2008) traces the long history of Afghan mobility, emphasizing that current migration patterns are part of a broader historical trend. Schmeidl (2019) analyzes the complex drivers of Afghan migration, including conflict, economic instability, and environmental factors. These studies highlight the multifaceted nature of Afghan migration, which is essential for understanding current flows through Iran to Europe. Iran's position as a major transit country for Afghan migrants has been extensively studied. Abbasi-Shavazi et al. (2021) provide a comprehensive overview of Iran's policies towards Afghan refugees and migrants over the past four decades. Their work highlights the evolving nature of these policies and their impact on migration patterns. Farzin and Jadali (2022) examine the legal and social status of Afghans in Iran, discussing the challenges faced by both documented and undocumented migrants. The international legal framework governing transit countries' responsibilities is a critical area of study. Goodwin-Gill and McAdam (2021) offer a comprehensive analysis of international refugee law, including the obligations of transit countries. Gammeltoft-Hansen (2018) explores the concept of responsibility-sharing in refugee protection, which is particularly relevant to transit countries like Iran. These works provide the legal context necessary for understanding Iran's position and actions. Human rights concerns related to Afghan migration through Iran have been documented by both academic researchers and international organizations. Human Rights Watch (2023) has published reports detailing issues such as forced deportations and limited access to services. Academic studies, such as those by Koser (2022), examine the human rights challenges faced by transit migrants and the tensions between state sovereignty and human rights obligations. The response of European countries to Afghan migration has been a subject of significant research. Eurostat (2024) provides comprehensive data on asylum applications and decisions across European countries. Academic studies, such as those by Brekke and Staver (2018), analyze the evolution of European asylum policies in response to increased migration flows, including from Afghanistan. Research on migration routes and methods provides insight into the practical realities of Afghan migration through Iran. Frontex (2023) reports on changing migration routes to Europe, including the Eastern Mediterranean route commonly used by Afghan migrants. The Mixed Migration Centre (2023) offers valuable data on the use of smugglers and the risks faced by migrants on these routes. The economic impact of hosting large migrant populations in transit countries is an important area of study. Koser (2022) examines the economic challenges and opportunities presented by large-scale transit migration. This research is crucial for understanding Iran's policy decisions and their implications for migration patterns. Literature on international cooperation in managing migration flows is relevant to understanding the broader context of Afghan migration through Iran. The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD, 2023) provides analysis of regional initiatives like the Budapest Process. These studies offer insights into the challenges and potential of international cooperation in addressing complex migration issues. The debate between long-term integration and temporary protection strategies is reflected in the literature. Studies by UNESCO (2023) on education access for Afghan refugees in Iran highlight the complexities of integration efforts. This research is crucial for understanding the long-term implications of current policies and practices. Several studies, including those by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2023), discuss the challenges of obtaining accurate data on transit migration. These methodological discussions are important for contextualizing the available data and understanding its limitations. This literature review demonstrates the complex and multifaceted nature of Afghan migration through Iran to Europe. It highlights the interplay between legal frameworks, national policies, human rights concerns, and broader geopolitical factors. While substantial research exists in various aspects of this topic, there remains a need for comprehensive studies that integrate these different perspectives to provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon and its implications for all stakeholders involved.

## The Impact of the Research

The findings of this research can directly inform policymaking processes in transit countries, destination countries, and international organizations. By providing a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness and consequences of current policies, this study can guide the development of more nuanced, humane, and effective migration management strategies. For instance, it may influence Iran's approach to handling Afghan migrants or shape European countries' asylum policies. This study contributes to the ongoing debate on the responsibilities of transit countries under international law. It may influence legal interpretations and potentially contribute to the development of more explicit guidelines or frameworks for transit countries. This could have far-reaching implications for how international law is applied in similar contexts globally. By highlighting human rights concerns in the context of transit migration, this research can strengthen advocacy efforts and potentially lead to improved protection mechanisms for migrants. It may prompt international human rights bodies to focus more attention on the rights of migrants in transit countries. The insights provided by this research can inform diplomatic discussions between origin, transit, and destination countries. It may facilitate more constructive dialogues and potentially lead to improved international cooperation in managing migration flows. This could contribute to more balanced and mutually beneficial agreements between countries affected by Afghan migration. Organizations involved in providing humanitarian assistance to migrants can use the findings of this research to better target their interventions. Understanding the changing patterns and demographics of Afghan migration through Iran can help in developing more effective aid strategies and allocating resources more efficiently. This research can contribute to a more informed public debate on migration issues. By providing evidence-based insights, it can help counter misconceptions and promote a more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in transit migration. This study bridges gaps between different academic disciplines, including international law, migration studies, political science, and human rights. It contributes to the theoretical understanding of transit migration and may open new avenues for interdisciplinary research. The analysis of economic factors influencing migration policies can inform economic planning both in transit countries like Iran and in destination countries in Europe. It may help in predicting and preparing for the economic impacts of migration flows. Insights into migration routes and methods can inform security strategies, potentially leading to more effective and humane border management practices. This could have implications for how countries balance security concerns with humanitarian obligations. By examining current trends and their potential long-term implications, this research can aid in strategic planning for governments and international organizations. It may influence long-term policies on issues such as development aid, conflict resolution, and regional stability. The findings can be incorporated into training programs for government officials, NGO workers, and other professionals working in fields related to migration. This can lead to more informed and sensitive approaches to handling migration issues. This study may identify gaps in current knowledge and suggest new directions for future research, potentially stimulating further studies in this critical area. In conclusion, the impact of this research extends beyond academic circles, potentially influencing policy, practice, and public understanding of Afghan migration through Iran to Europe. By providing a comprehensive analysis of this complex issue, the study contributes to more informed decision-making and potentially more effective and humane approaches to managing one of the most pressing global challenges of our time.

## Research Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative interviews to comprehensively examine the impact of Iran's policies on Afghan migration patterns to Europe.

### Quantitative Data Analysis

#### a) Data Sources:

UNHCR statistical yearbooks (2015-2023)  
IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) reports  
Eurostat asylum seeker data



## Iranian government reports on border crossings and deportations

### b) Variables

Number of registered Afghan refugees in Iran (annual)

Number of deportations from Iran to Afghanistan (annual)

Number of Afghan asylum applications in EU countries (annual)

Detected illegal border crossings on the Eastern Mediterranean route (quarterly)

### c) Statistical Analysis

Time series analysis to identify trends in migration flows before and after significant policy changes in Iran

Correlation analysis between Iranian deportation rates and EU asylum application rates

Regression analysis to assess the relationship between Iran's policy strictness (measured by deportation rates) and detected illegal border crossings

## Qualitative Component

### a) Semi-structured interviews

20 Afghan migrants who have traveled through Iran to Europe (reached through NGOs and snowball sampling)

10 key informants (NGO workers, border officials, migration experts)

### b) Content Analysis

Review of Iranian policy documents related to Afghan migrants (2015-2023)

Analysis of media reports on migration routes and smuggling networks

## Ethical Considerations

Obtain informed consent from all interview participants

Ensure anonymity and confidentiality of migrants

Secure data storage and handling

## Limitations

Potential underreporting in official statistics

Challenges in accessing certain regions for interviews

Potential bias in self-reported data from migrants

## Data Integration

The quantitative and qualitative data will be integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Iran's policies have influenced migration patterns. Statistical trends will be contextualized and explained using insights from interviews and policy analysis.

Timeline:

Data collection: 6 months

Data analysis: 3 months

Writing and peer review: 3 months

## Expected Outcomes

This method is expected to yield both statistical evidence of changing migration patterns and in-depth insights into the experiences of migrants and the mechanisms through which Iran's policies affect migration routes.

### Real Statistics (as of 2023):

According to UNHCR, Iran hosted approximately 800,000 registered Afghan refugees as of 2023.

IOM reported that Iran deported an average of 200,000 undocumented Afghans annually between 2016 and 2022.

Eurostat data shows that approximately 700,000 Afghan nationals applied for asylum in EU countries between 2015 and 2023.

Frontex reported a 50% increase in detected illegal border crossings on the Eastern Mediterranean route between 2020 and 2022, with Afghan nationals being one of the largest groups.

The Mixed Migration Centre (2023) found that approximately 75% of Afghan migrants transiting through Iran to Turkey and onwards to Europe used smugglers in 2022.

These statistics provide a foundation for the quantitative analysis, while the qualitative component will add depth and context to understand the full impact of Iran's policies on Afghan migration patterns to Europe.

### Data Collection

The data collection process for this study will be comprehensive and multifaceted, drawing from both quantitative and qualitative sources to ensure a holistic understanding of the impact of Iran's policies on Afghan migration patterns to Europe. Quantitative data will be gathered from authoritative international organizations and governmental bodies. We will access UNHCR statistical yearbooks spanning from 2015 to 2023, which provide detailed information on registered Afghan refugees in Iran and other countries. The International Organization for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix reports will be utilized to gather data on migration flows and trends. Eurostat databases will be crucial for obtaining precise figures on Afghan asylum applications across European Union countries. Additionally, we will seek to acquire official reports from the Iranian government regarding border crossings and deportations, although access to this data may be limited and will require careful verification.

For the qualitative component, we will conduct semi-structured interviews with two key groups. First, we aim to interview 20 Afghan migrants who have made the journey through Iran to Europe. These participants will be reached through partnerships with non-governmental organizations and using a snowball sampling technique to ensure a diverse range of experiences. Second, we will conduct interviews with 10 key informants, including NGO workers, border officials, and migration experts, to gain professional insights into the situation. All interviews will be recorded (with consent), transcribed, and translated if necessary. Alongside these interviews, we will collect and analyze Iranian policy documents related to Afghan migrants from 2015 to 2023, as well as relevant media reports on migration routes and smuggling networks.

### Data Analysis

The data analysis phase will employ a mixed-methods approach to integrate the quantitative and qualitative data effectively. For the quantitative data, we will use statistical software to conduct time series analysis, examining trends in migration flows before and after significant policy changes in Iran. Correlation analysis will be performed to explore relationships between Iranian deportation rates and EU asylum application rates. Regression analysis will assess the connection between the strictness of Iran's policies (using deportation rates as a proxy) and detected illegal border crossings. These statistical analyses will help us identify patterns and relationships within the numerical data.

For the qualitative data, we will use thematic analysis to process the interview transcripts and policy documents. This will involve coding the data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to migration experiences, policy impacts, and route changes. We will use qualitative data analysis software to assist in organizing and analyzing this rich textual data. The content analysis of media reports will follow a similar process, focusing on identifying trends in reporting on migration routes and smuggling activities. The final stage of analysis will involve integrating the quantitative and qualitative findings. We will use the qualitative data to provide context and explanations for the trends observed in the quantitative analysis. For instance, if the statistical analysis shows an increase in illegal border crossings following a particular policy change in Iran, we can turn to the interview data to understand how migrants experienced this change and adapted their routes or methods. This integration will allow us to construct a comprehensive narrative that not only describes the changes in migration patterns but also explains the mechanisms behind these changes and their implications for migrants, transit countries, and destination countries. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, we will maintain rigorous ethical standards, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants, especially vulnerable migrants. We will also be transparent about the limitations of our data, including potential biases in self-reported information and challenges in accessing certain regions or official data. By combining robust quantitative analysis with rich qualitative insights, this methodology aims to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how Iran's policies have influenced Afghan migration patterns to Europe.

### **The Potential Impact of this study**

This study on the impact of Iran's policies on Afghan migration patterns to Europe has the potential to make significant contributions across multiple domains. The findings could inform more effective and humane migration management strategies in transit and destination countries. Policymakers in Iran, European countries, and international organizations may use these insights to refine their approaches to handling Afghan migration flows. highlighting the consequences of restrictive policies on migrant experiences, this research could strengthen advocacy efforts for improved protection of migrants' rights in transit countries. The study may facilitate more informed dialogues between origin, transit, and destination countries, potentially leading to improved international cooperation in managing migration flows. Organizations providing aid to migrants could use these findings to better target their interventions and allocate resources more efficiently along migration routes. Insights into changing migration routes and methods could inform more effective and humane border management practices, balancing security concerns with humanitarian obligations. This research contributes to the theoretical understanding of transit migration, potentially opening new avenues for interdisciplinary research in migration studies, international relations, and human rights. By providing evidence-based insights, this study could contribute to a more nuanced public understanding of the complexities involved in transit migration, potentially influencing media reporting and public opinion.



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