

Afghan Migration and Iran's Waning Hospitality: 1979–today
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The short and bitter history of migrant illegality in Iran can be traced back to March 2001, when Iranian government officials announced that the ‘open door’ between Iran and Afghanistan was ‘sealed shut’. This marked the culmination (and official confirmation) of a gradual but relentless shift to the way in which Afghan migrants and refugees were discursively located within the Islamic Republic of Iran. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the newly established Islamic regime in Tehran welcomed Afghan refugees as *mohajerin*, thereby reinforcing its own Islamic credentials and forcefully upholding the pan-Islamic vision of the Khomeini government. In turn, many Afghan migrants to the Islamic Republic enthusiastically adopted the religious practices and sensibilities of the revolution. Today, however, the movement of Afghans into Iran and their continuing presence within the country, is increasingly conflated with a range of national security and epidemiological risks. The narrative of a borderless Islam has given way to new constructions of ethno-nationalism, in which Afghan refugees are identified as inherently Other and literally or metaphorically pushed to the margins.

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