

A Technical and Socio-Political Analysis of 'In the Sea There Are Crocodiles': The Journey of Enaiatollah Akbari

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The publication of **In the Sea There Are Crocodiles** (original title: *Nel mare ci sono i coccodrilli*) by Fabio Geda in 2010 marked a significant moment in contemporary migration literature. Unlike traditional memoirs, this work is the result of a collaborative narrative process between an Italian novelist and an Afghan refugee, **Enaiatollah Akbari**. The text serves as more than a mere biographical account; it is a granular documentation of the **humanitarian corridors**, the logistics of human smuggling, and the systemic failures of international border policies during the early 21st century. This article provides an in-depth technical analysis of the journey, the geopolitical environment of the time, and the literary framework employed by Geda to translate Akbari's lived experience into a global educational tool.

1. Historical and Geopolitical Context: The Hazara Persecution

To understand the impetus behind Enaiatollah's journey, one must analyze the socio-political landscape of Afghanistan in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Enaiatollah belongs to the **Hazara** ethnic group, a Persian-speaking minority predominantly practicing Shia Islam in a country where the majority is Sunni. The technical classification of the Hazara situation during this period often borders on the definition of systemic ethnic cleansing.

The Rise of the Taliban and the 2000 Shift

When the Taliban consolidated power, the Hazara population faced extreme marginalization. In early 2000, as mentioned in the JSON data, villages like Nava—Enaiatollah's home—became targets for resource extraction and labor conscription. The **theoretical framework** of displacement here is categorized as 'forced migration due to state-sponsored persecution.' The technical reality for a ten-year-old child like Enaiatollah was that his remaining in the village presented an existential threat to the family's survival, leading his mother to make the harrowing decision to smuggle him across the border into Pakistan.

2. Technical Breakdown of the Migration Route

Enaiatollah's journey spans five countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Greece, eventually concluding in Italy. Each segment of this journey involves specific **logistical hurdles**, financial costs, and survival mechanics. Below is a breakdown of the primary transit segments documented in the narrative.

Segment A: The Afghan-Pakistan Border (Ghazni to Quetta)

The initial phase of the journey relies on the 'pedestrian porousness' of the border. Enaiatollah's mother utilizes a **smuggling network** to transport him to Quetta, Pakistan. In technical migration terms, Quetta serves as a 'transit hub' where migrants are aggregated before being dispatched to higher-risk routes. This segment is characterized by the loss of the primary caregiver, forcing the subject to transition from a dependent minor to an autonomous economic agent.

Segment B: The Iranian Industrial Labor Phase

Iran represented a period of 'interim settlement.' For several years, Enaiatollah worked in the construction industry. This phase highlights the **informal economy** of migrant labor. Technical analysis of this period reveals: **Wage Theft**

Vulnerability: Lack of legal status meant employers could withhold pay without recourse.**Police Evasion Tactics:** The development of urban survival skills and 'situational awareness' to avoid deportation.**Resource Accumulation:** The necessity of saving 'passage capital' to pay the next tier of human smugglers (Coyotes/Passatori).

Segment C: The Iranian-Turkish Mountain Crossing

This is arguably the most physically grueling part of the journey. The trek across the mountains between Iran and Turkey involves high-altitude exposure and extreme physical exertion. Many migrants perish due to hypothermia or exhaustion. The **mathematical probability**of survival in these groups is often diminished by the smugglers' strategy of 'over-saturation,' where large groups are moved simultaneously to ensure that even if some are caught, others will bypass the border patrols.

3. Comparison of Border Logistics and Risk Factors

The following table evaluates the different stages of the journey based on risk intensity, primary transit method, and the nature of the obstacles encountered.

Transit Segment	Primary Transport Mode	Key Risk Factor	Logistical Complexity	Duration/Scale
Nava to Quetta	Bus / Pedestrian	Border Patrols	Low	Days
Iran (Stay)	Manual Labor	Deportation / Exploitation	Medium	Years
Iran to Turkey	Night Trekking	Exposure / Hypothermia	High	Weeks
Turkey to Greece	Inflatable Dinghy	Drowning / Maritime Law	Extreme	Hours/Days
Greece to Italy	Freight Container	Asphyxiation	High	Days

4. The Maritime Mechanics: 'In the Sea There Are Crocodiles'

The title of the book refers to a specific psychological coping mechanism and a literal fear. When Enaiatollah and other boys are tasked with crossing the sea to Greece in a small, unseaworthy boat, the 'crocodiles' represent the unknown dangers of the deep. Technically, this refers to the **Mediterranean Migration Crisis**.

The Physics of Small Vessel Crossings

The crossing from Turkey to Greece (often towards islands like Lesbos) involves significant maritime risks. Factors include: **Buoyancy Limits**: Smugglers often overload inflatable vessels far beyond their rated capacity (weight limit = Volume × Water Density). **Navigation Deficits**: Migrants are frequently left to pilot the boats themselves with minimal training or GPS equipment. **Hydrological Conditions**: High sea states and unpredictable currents in the Aegean Sea.

The technical failure mode in these instances is typically **capsizing** or structural failure of the vessel's floorboards. Enaiatollah's survival in this segment is attributed to a combination of physical resilience and the intervention of luck—a non-quantifiable but ever-present variable in refugee studies.

5. The Freight Logistics of the Greece-Italy Segment

The final major hurdle was the journey from Greece to Italy, often accomplished by hiding in the false bottoms of trucks or inside shipping containers on ferries. This is a common method in **clandestine logistics**. The risks here are primarily physiological: **Hypercapnia** (CO2 poisoning) and **hypoxia** (lack of oxygen).

Calculation of Air Exchange in Confined Spaces

In a sealed container, the available oxygen (O_2) is a function of the volume of the container (V_{total}) minus the volume occupied by the occupants (V_{occ}) and their metabolic rate. For a group of four people in a small compartment, the 'safe' duration can be as low as a few hours without ventilation. Enaiatollah's account of 'the hole' in the truck underscores the extreme measures taken to secure a breathable atmosphere while remaining undetected by CO2 sensors or thermal imaging used by port authorities.

6. Literary Methodology: Collaborative Non-Fiction

As a Senior Technical Writer, it is crucial to analyze the **methodological approach** Fabio Geda took in writing this

book. He did not write a biography in the third person; he utilized a 'collaborative first-person' narrative. This creates an **Authenticity Framework** that bridges the gap between the subject (Enaiatollah) and the reader.

Structural Components of the Narrative

1. Interview-Based Data Collection: Geda spent months interviewing Akbari in Turin, recording oral histories.
2. Transliteration of Voice: The prose maintains a childlike simplicity in the early chapters, evolving in complexity as Enaiatollah ages, reflecting his cognitive and linguistic development.
3. Interjection and Meta-Commentary: The text occasionally breaks the 'fourth wall' where Fabio and Enaiatollah discuss the storytelling process itself, ensuring the reader remains aware that this is a curated reconstruction of memory.

7. Legal Framework and the Dublin Regulation

Enaiatollah's arrival in Italy brings him into contact with the European legal system. The **Dublin Regulation** (specifically Dublin II at the time) dictates that the first EU member state where a migrant's fingerprints are taken is responsible for processing their asylum claim. This creates a technical 'bottleneck' in border countries like Greece and Italy.

Asylum Application Workflow

The process Enaiatollah underwent involves several technical legal steps:**Identification and Registration:** Determining age (crucial for minor status protections).**Manifestation of Intent:** Formally requesting international protection.**Status Determination:** Proving 'well-founded fear of persecution' based on the 1951 Refugee Convention.

The success of Enaiatollah's case was bolstered by his status as an **Unaccompanied Minor**, which, under Italian law, provides additional safeguards against deportation and facilitates access to education and social integration programs.

8. Educational Impact and Broader Implications

The pedagogical value of *In the Sea There Are Crocodiles* lies in its ability to humanize **migration statistics**. In a technical or academic setting, the book serves as a primary source for 'human-centric' data on the refugee experience. It highlights the discrepancy between international human rights law and the practical reality of border enforcement.

Case Study: Resilience and Integration

Enaiatollah's eventual integration into Italian society—learning the language, securing employment, and maintaining his cultural heritage—serves as a model for successful **social inclusion strategies**. It proves that providing 'legal pathways' and support systems for refugees results in positive social capital for the host country.

Ultimately, the story of Enaiatollah Akbari is not just a tale of survival; it is a critical examination of the **global mobility divide**. While the title alludes to mythical dangers in the water, the true 'crocodiles' identified in the technical analysis are the systemic barriers, the predatory smuggling networks, and the legislative vacuums that force children into life-threatening journeys. By documenting these mechanics through a clear, objective, and deeply personal lens, Geda and Akbari have provided a foundational text for understanding the complexities of 21st-century displacement.

As we analyze the current state of global migration, the lessons from Nava to Turin remain strikingly relevant. The infrastructure of smuggling has become more sophisticated, yet the fundamental drivers—persecution, economic

necessity, and the search for safety—remain unchanged. This narrative stands as a testament to the endurance of the human spirit when confronted with the most rigorous of technical and physical challenges.

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