Congressional Research Service
Informing the legislative debate since 1914

Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy

December 13, 2017

Congressional Research Service
https://crsreports.congress.gov
RL30588

CRS REPORT
Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

Summary

The United States, partner countries, and the Afghan government are attempting to reverse recent gains made by the resilient Taliban-led insurgency since the December 2014 transition to a smaller international mission consisting primarily of training and advising the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). The Afghan government has come under increasing domestic criticism not only for failing to prevent insurgent gains but also for its internal divisions that have spurred the establishment of new political opposition coalitions. In September 2014, the United States brokered a compromise to address a dispute over the 2014 presidential election, but a September 2016 deadline was not met for enacting election reforms and deciding whether to elevate the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) position to a prime ministership. The Afghan government has made some measurable progress in reducing corruption and implementing its budgetary and other commitments. It has adopted measures that would enable it to proceed with new parliamentary elections, but no election date has been set.

The number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, which peaked at about 100,000 in 2011, is reportedly about 15,000, of which most are assigned to the NATO-led "Resolute Support Mission" (RSM) that trains, assists, and advises the ANDSF. About 2,000 of the U.S. contingent are involved in combat against Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, including the Afghanistan branch of the Islamic State organization (ISIL-Khorasan), under "Operation Freedom's Sentinel" (OFS). In August 2017, after several months of deliberation, President Trump announced a new strategy that includes several thousand additional U.S. forces to help Afghan forces break a "stalemate" in combat against insurgent groups, as well as expanded authorities to strike Taliban targets. The strategy also appears to signal a U.S. intent to more assertively pressure Pakistan to deny safe haven to Afghan militants.

U.S. officials assert that insurgents control or contest about 40% of Afghan territory, but still are not positioned to overturn the government. In May 2016, the vulnerabilities of the Taliban were exposed when the United States tracked and killed with an unmanned aerial vehicle strike the head of the Taliban, Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour. However, the successor Taliban leadership has continued to produce battlefield gains and rejects new settlement talks with the government. One small insurgent group reached a settlement with the government in late September 2016, but the agreement has not, to date, broadened to other groups. Afghanistan's minorities and women's groups assert concerns that a settlement with the Taliban might erode post-2001 human rights gains. U.S. forces have helped Afghan units kill several successive leaders of the Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan, but without defeating the group outright.

A component of U.S. policy to help establish a self-sustaining Afghanistan is to encourage economic development and integration into regional trading patterns. However, Afghanistan will remain dependent on foreign aid for many years. Through the end of FY2016, the United States provided about $111 billion to Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, of which about 60% has been to equip and train the ANDSF. These figures do not include funds for U.S. military operations in Afghanistan. The FY2017 appropriation for the ANDSF is $4.2 billion; allocations to Afghanistan from economic assistance account appropriations have not yet been finalized. For FY2018, the Trump Administration has requested $4.9 billion for the ANDSF, as well as funding for a number of other priorities, including $650 million in economic support.

Contents

Background 1
18th Century to the early 20th Century 1
Independence and the Cold War Era 1
Soviet Invasion and Occupation Period 2
The Seven Major "*Mujahedin*" Parties and Their Activities 2
Geneva Accords (1988) and Soviet Withdrawal 3
The *Mujahedin* Government and Rise of the Taliban 3
Taliban Rule (September 1996-November 2001) 4
U.S. Policy toward the Taliban Regime and its Hosting of Bin Laden 4
The "Northern Alliance" Congeals 5
Bush Administration Afghanistan Policy Before the September 11 Attacks 6
September 11 Attacks and Operation Enduring Freedom 6
Major Combat Operations: 2001-2003 7
Afghan Governance 7
"National Unity Government" of Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah 9
Growing Fragmentation 10
Way Forward for the NUG 11
U.S. and International Civilian Policy Structure 12
General Human Rights Issues 14
Advancement of Women 14
Religious Freedoms 16
Human Trafficking 16
Security Policy: Transition and Beyond 18
Who Is "The Enemy"? 18
The Taliban 18
Al Qaeda and Associated Groups 19
The Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP) 21
Haqqani Network 22
Insurgent Tactics 23
Insurgent Financing: Narcotics Trafficking and Other Methods 24
The Anti-Taliban Military Effort: 2003-2009 24
Obama Administration Policy: "Surge," Transition, and Drawdown 25
Transition and Drawdown: Afghans in the Lead, 2011-2014 26
Resolute Support Mission (RSM) and Further Drawdowns 26
Adjustments to Force Levels in Light of Security Deterioration 27
Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) 31
Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) 31
Building Afghan Forces and Establishing Rule of Law 32
Size and Other Features of the ANDSF 33
ANDSF Funding 34
The Afghan National Army (ANA) 34
Afghan Air Force (AAF) 35
Afghan National Police (ANP) 36
Rule of Law/Criminal Justice Sector 37
Reintegration and Potential Reconciliation with Insurgents 38
Hikmatyar Faction (HIG) and its Reconciliation with the Government 39

Reintegration 40
Regional Dimension 42
Pakistan 44
U.S.-Pakistan Cooperation on Afghanistan 46
Iran 47
Iran's Development Aid for Afghanistan 48
India 48
Russia, Central Asian States, and China 50
Russia 50
Central Asian States 51
China 53
Persian Gulf States 54
Aid and Economic Development 55
U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan 55
Aid Oversight and Conditionality 56
Aid Authorization: Afghanistan Freedom Support Act 56
Direct Support to the Afghan Government 57
Other Donor Aid/Oversight/Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework 58
Development in Key Sectors 59
Education 59
Health 60
Roads 60
Bridges 61
Railways 61
Electricity 61
Agriculture 62
Telecommunications 63
Airlines 63
Mining and Gems 63
Oil, Gas, and Related Pipelines 64
Trade Promotion/Reconstruction Opportunity Zones 66

Figures

Figure 1. Map of Afghanistan 75
Figure 2. Map of Afghan Ethnicities 76

Tables

Table 1. Post-Taliban Political Process Milestones 8
Table 2. U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) 13
Table 3. Background on NATO Participation and U.N. Mandate 25
Table 4. Summary of U.S. Strategy and Implementation 33
Table 5. Major Security-Related Indicators 41
Table 6. Afghan and Regional Facilities Used for Operations in and Supply Lines to Afghanistan 44

Table 7. Major Reporting Requirements 67
Table 8. Comparative Social and Economic Statistics 68
Table 9. U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan, FY1978-FY1998 69
Table 10. U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan, FY1999-FY2001 70
Table 11. Post-Taliban U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan 71
Table 12. NATO/ISAF and RSM Contributing Nations 73
Table 13. Major Factions/Leaders in Afghanistan 74

Contacts

Author Information 76

Background

Afghanistan has a history of a high degree of decentralization, and resistance to foreign invasion and occupation. Some have termed it the "graveyard of empires."

18th Century to the early 20th Century

Afghanistan's modern history is generally considered to begin with the 1747 foundation of the Durrani Empire by Ahmad Shah Durrani, a Pashtun military commander in the army of the Persian ruler Nadir Shah. After Nadir's assassination, Durrani carved out an Afghan empire, dominated by Pashtuns, between Persia and the Mughal Empire (a Muslim-ruled empire that controlled much of the Indian subcontinent from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries).

After the collapse of the Durrani Empire in 1823, a strong ruler, Dost Muhammad Khan, emerged in Kabul in 1826, becoming the emir (or ruler) of Afghanistan and founding the Barakzai dynasty. For much of the nineteenth century, Afghanistan served as a sort of buffer in the 'Great Game' between the Russian and British empires as they solidified control over Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent, respectively. British fears of Russian expansion southward sparked three Anglo-Afghan wars over eighty years (from 1839 until Afghan independence in 1919) as the British sought to expand their own sphere of influence northward, and Afghan rulers periodically appealed to the Russian Empire for support. In the First World War, the Afghan government remained neutral, resisting popular pressure to respond to the Ottoman Empire's call for pan-Islamic solidarity against Russia and Great Britain.

Independence and the Cold War Era

King Amanullah Khan (1919-1929) launched attacks on British forces in Afghanistan (in what is referred to as the Third Anglo-Afghan War) shortly after taking power and won complete independence from Britain as recognized in the Treaty of Rawalpindi (August 8, 1919). He was considered a secular modernizer presiding over a government in which all ethnic minorities participated. After a brief seizure of power by an ethnic Tajik, King Habibullah Kalakani, King Mohammad Nadir Shah reasserted Barakzai rule, and was succeeded by his son Mohammad Zahir Shah in 1933. The last king of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah (1933-1973) is remembered fondly by some older Afghans for promulgating a constitution in 1964 that established a national legislature and promoting freedoms for women.

Zahir Shah sought U.S. support to counterbalance a newly assertive Soviet Union, and Afghanistan successfully played the Cold War rivals off each other to win military and development assistance from both. The Soviets built large infrastructure projects in Afghanistan during Zahir Shah's time, such as the north-south Salang Tunnel and Bagram airfield. For its part, the United States provided agricultural and other development assistance; among the major U.S.-funded projects was a large USAID-led irrigation and hydroelectric effort in Helmand Province, Kajaki Dam (see below).

Afghanistan's slide into instability began in the 1970s, during the Nixon Administration, when the diametrically opposed Communist Party and Islamic movements grew in strength. While receiving medical treatment in Italy in 1973, Zahir Shah was overthrown by his cousin, Mohammad Daoud, who abolished the monarchy, declaring himself the first President of Afghanistan, and established a dictatorship with strong state involvement in the economy. Daoud was overthrown and killed in April 1978 by military officers under the direction of two People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) leaders, Hafizullah Amin and Nur Mohammad Taraki,

in the *Saur* (April) Revolution. Taraki became president, but was himself displaced in a September 1979 coup led by Amin. Both leaders came from the Khalq ("Masses") faction of the PDPA, drawing their strength from rural ethnic Pashtuns, and tried to impose radical socialist change on a traditional society, in part by redistributing land and bringing more women into government. The attempt at rapid modernization sparked rebellion by Islamic parties opposed to such moves.

Soviet Invasion and Occupation Period

The Soviet Union sent troops into Afghanistan on December 27, 1979, to prevent further gains by the Islamic militias, known as the *mujahedin* (Islamic fighters). Upon their invasion, the Soviets replaced Amin with another PDPA Saur Revolution leader who the Soviets apparently perceived as pliable, Babrak Karmal, leader of the Parcham ("Banner") faction of the PDPA.

Soviet occupation forces numbered about 120,000. They were assisted by Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) military forces of about 25,000-40,000, supplemented by about 20,000 paramilitary and tribal militia forces, including a paramilitary organization called the *Sarandoy*. Soviet and Afghan forces were not able to pacify rural areas, in part because DRA forces were plagued by desertions. The *mujahedin* benefited from U.S. weapons, provided through the CIA in cooperation with Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate (ISI).

The Seven Major "*Mujahedin*" Parties and Their Activities

The *mujahedin* were also relatively well organized and coordinated by seven major parties that in early 1989 formed what they claimed was a government-in-exile—a Peshawar-based "Afghan Interim Government" (AIG). The seven party leaders and their parties—sometimes referred to as the "Peshawar 7"—were:

- Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi (Islamic Revolutionary Movement of Afghanistan);
- Sibghatullah Mojaddedi (Afghan National Liberation Front);
- Gulbuddin Hikmatyar (Hezb-i-Islam—Gulbuddin, Islamic Party of Gulbuddin, HIG);
- Burhanuddin Rabbani (Jamiat-Islami/Islamic Society);
- Yunus Khalis (Hezb-i-Islam);
- Abd-i-Rab Rasul Sayyaf (*Ittihad Islami*/Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan); and
- Pir (religious honorific) Ahmed Gaylani (National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, NIFA).[1]

The *mujahedin* weaponry included U.S.-supplied portable shoulder-fired anti-aircraft systems called "Stingers," which proved highly effective against Soviet aircraft. The United States decided in 1985 to provide these weapons to the *mujahedin* after substantial debate within the Reagan Administration over whether they could be used effectively. Some warned that a post-Soviet occupation power structure in Afghanistan could be adverse to U.S. interests because much of the covert aid was being channeled to the Islamist groups.

[1] Mohammadi, Khalis, and Gaylani died of natural causes in 2002, 2006, and 2017, respectively, and Rabbani was assassinated in September 2011. The others are still active in Afghan politics and governance.

Partly because of the effectiveness of the Stinger in shooting down Soviet helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, the Soviet Union's losses mounted—about 13,400 Soviet soldiers were killed in the war, according to Soviet figures—turning Soviet domestic opinion against the war. In 1986, after the reformist Mikhail Gorbachev became leader, the Soviets replaced Karmal with the director of Afghan intelligence, Najibullah Ahmedzai (known by his first name)—a Ghilzai Pashtun from the Parcham faction of the PDPA.[2]

Geneva Accords (1988) and Soviet Withdrawal

On April 14, 1988, then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to a U.N.-brokered accord (the Geneva Accords) requiring the Soviet Union to withdraw. The withdrawal was completed by February 15, 1989, leaving in place the weak Najibullah government. A warming of relations moved the United States and Soviet Union to try for a political settlement to the Afghan conflict, a trend accelerated by the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, which reduced Moscow's capacity for supporting communist regimes abroad. On September 13, 1991, Moscow and Washington agreed to a joint cutoff of military aid to the Afghan combatants as of January 1, 1992.

The State Department has said that a total of about $3 billion in economic and covert military assistance was provided by the United States to the Afghan *mujahedin* from 1980 until the end of the Soviet occupation in 1989. Press reports say the covert aid program grew from about $20 million per year in FY1980 to about $300 million per year during FY1986-FY1990.[3] The Soviet pullout was viewed as a decisive U.S. "victory." The Soviet pullout caused a reduction in subsequent covert funding and, as indicated in **Table 9**, U.S. assistance to Afghanistan remained at relatively low levels because support for a major effort to rebuild Afghanistan's economy was lacking. The United States closed its embassy in Kabul in January 1989, as the Soviet Union was completing its pullout, and it remained so until the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

Despite the Soviet troop withdrawal in 1989, Najibullah still enjoyed Soviet financial and advisory support and he defied expectations that his government would collapse soon after a Soviet withdrawal. However, his position weakened subsequently after the Soviets cut off financial and advisory support as of January 1, 1992. On March 18, 1992, Najibullah publicly agreed to step down once an interim government was formed, an announcement set off by rebellions by Uzbek and Tajik militia commanders in northern Afghanistan (particularly Abdul Rashid Dostam) who joined prominent *mujahedin* commander Ahmad Shah Masoud of the Islamic Society, a largely Tajik party headed by Burhannudin Rabbani. Masoud was revered for preventing the Soviets from conquering his power base in the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul. Najibullah fell, and the *mujahedin* regime began April 18, 1992.[4]

The *Mujahedin* Government and Rise of the Taliban

The fall of Najibullah exposed rifts among the *mujahedin* parties. The leader of one of the smaller parties (Afghan National Liberation Front), Islamic scholar Sibghatullah Mojadeddi, was president during April-May 1992. Under an agreement among the major parties, Rabbani became president in June 1992 with agreement that he would serve until December 1994. He refused to

[2] Ghilzai Pashtuns predominate in eastern Afghanistan. They are rivals of the Durrani Pashtuns, who are predominant in the south.

[3] For FY1991, Congress reportedly cut covert aid appropriations to the *mujahedin* from $300 million the previous year to $250 million, with half the aid withheld until the second half of the fiscal year. See "Country Fact Sheet: Afghanistan," in *U.S. Department of State Dispatch,* vol. 5, no. 23 (June 6, 1994), p. 377.

[4] After failing to flee, Najibullah, his brother, and aides remained at a U.N. facility in Kabul until the Taliban movement seized control in 1996 and hanged them.

step down at that time, saying that political authority would disintegrate without a clear successor. That decision was strongly opposed by other *mujahedin* leaders, including Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, a Pashtun, and leader of the Islamist conservative Hizb-e-Islam Gulbuddin *mujahedin* party. Hikmatyar and several allied factions fought unsuccessfully to dislodge Rabbani. Rabbani reached an agreement for Hikmatyar to serve as Prime Minister, but because of mutual mistrust, Hikmatyar never formally took office and fighting eventually destroyed much of west Kabul.

In 1993-1994, Afghan Islamic clerics and students, mostly of rural, Pashtun origin, formed the Taliban movement. Many were former *mujahedin* who had become disillusioned with conflict among *mujahedin* parties and had moved into Pakistan to study in Islamic seminaries ("madrassas") mainly of the "Deobandi" school of Islam.[5] Some say this interpretation of Islam is similar to the "Wahhabism" that is practiced in Saudi Arabia. Taliban practices were also consonant with conservative Pashtun tribal traditions. The Taliban's leader, Mullah Muhammad Umar, had been a fighter in Khalis's Hezb-i-Islam party during the anti-Soviet war, even though Khalis' party was generally seen as moderately Islamist at that time. Like Umar, most of the senior figures in the Taliban regime were Ghilzai Pashtuns.

The Taliban viewed the Rabbani government as weak, corrupt, and anti-Pashtun, and the four years of civil war between the *mujahedin* groups (1992-1996) created popular support for the Taliban as able to deliver stability. With the help of defections, the Taliban took control of the southern city of Qandahar in November 1994. Umar reportedly entered the Qandahar shrine containing a purported cloak used by the Prophet Mohammad and donned it in front of hundreds of followers.[6] By February 1995, the movement's fighters were near Kabul. In September 1995, the Taliban captured Herat province, bordering Iran, and imprisoned its Tajik governor, Ismail Khan (ally of Rabbani and Masoud), who later escaped to Iran. In September 1996, Taliban victories near Kabul led to the withdrawal of Rabbani and Masoud to the Panjshir Valley (north of Kabul); the Taliban took control of Kabul on September 27, 1996. Taliban gunmen entered the U.N. facility in Kabul that was sheltering Najibullah, his brother, and aides, and hanged them.

Taliban Rule (September 1996-November 2001)

During the Taliban regime, Mullah Umar held the title of Head of State and "Commander of the Faithful." He remained in the Taliban power base in Qandahar and made no public appearances, although he did occasionally meet foreign officials.

The Taliban lost international and domestic support as it imposed strict adherence to Islamic customs in areas it controlled and employed harsh punishments, including executions. The Taliban authorized its "Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice" to use physical punishments to enforce strict Islamic practices, including bans on television, Western music, and dancing. It prohibited women from attending school or working outside the home, except in health care, and it publicly executed some women for adultery. In March 2001 the Taliban blew up Buddha statues carved into hills above Bamiyan city, considering them idols.

U.S. Policy toward the Taliban Regime and its Hosting of Bin Laden

The Clinton Administration opened talks with the Taliban after it captured Qandahar in 1994 and continued to engage the movement after it took power. However, the Administration was unable

[5] The Deobandi school began in 1867 in a seminary in Uttar Pradesh, in British-controlled India, that was set up to train Islamic clerics and to counter the British educational model.

[6] According to press reports in December 2012, the cloak remains in the shrine, which is guarded by a family of caretakers who, despite professions of political neutrality, have suffered several assassinations over the years.

to moderate the Taliban's policies, and the United States withheld recognition of the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, formally recognizing no faction as the government. The United Nations continued to seat the Rabbani government. The State Department ordered the Afghan embassy in Washington, DC, closed in August 1997. U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1193 (August 28, 1998) and 1214 (December 8, 1998) urged the Taliban to end discrimination against women. Women's rights groups urged the Clinton Administration not to recognize the Taliban government. In May 1999, the Senate-passed S.Res. 68 called on the President not to recognize an Afghan government that oppresses women.

The Taliban's hosting of Al Qaeda's leadership gradually became the Clinton Administration's overriding agenda item with the Taliban. Umar reportedly forged a political and personal bond with Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, who relocated to Afghanistan from Sudan in May 1996, and refused U.S. demands to extradite him. In April 1998, then-U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson headed a small U.S. delegation to Afghanistan, but the group did not meet Mullah Umar or persuade the Taliban to hand over Bin Laden. After the August 7, 1998, Al Qaeda bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the Clinton Administration increased pressure on the Taliban to extradite him by imposing U.S. sanctions on Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and achieving adoption of some U.N. sanctions as well. On August 20, 1998, the United States fired cruise missiles at Al Qaeda training camps in eastern Afghanistan.[7] Some observers assert that the Administration missed several opportunities to strike Bin Laden, including a purported sighting of him by an unarmed Predator drone at a location called Tarnak Farm in the fall of 2000.[8] Clinton Administration officials asserted that U.S. domestic and international support for U.S. intervention to oust the Taliban militarily at that time was lacking.

The "Northern Alliance" Congeals

The Taliban's policies caused different Afghan factions to ally with the Tajik core of the anti-Taliban opposition—the ousted President Rabbani, Ahmad Shah Masoud, and their ally in the Herat area, Ismail Khan. Joining the Tajik factions in the broader "Northern Alliance" were Uzbek, Hazara Shiite, and even some Pashtun Islamist factions discussed below. Virtually all these figures remain key players in politics in Afghanistan.

- **Uzbeks/General Dostam.** One major faction of the Northern Alliance was the Uzbek militia (the *Junbush-Melli*, or National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan) of General Abdul Rashid Dostam. Frequently referred to by some Afghans as one of the "warlords" who gained power during the anti-Soviet war, Dostam first joined those seeking to oust Rabbani during his 1992-1996 presidency, but later joined him and the other Northern Alliance factions opposed to the Taliban.
- **Hazara Shiites.** Members of Hazara tribes, mostly Shiite Muslims, are prominent in Bamiyan, Dai Kundi, and Ghazni provinces of central Afghanistan, as well as Kabul city. The main Hazara Shiite militia in the Northern Alliance was Hizb-e-Wahdat (Unity Party, composed of eight groups). In 1995, the Taliban captured and killed Hizb-e-Wahdat's leader Abdul Ali Mazari. The most prominent current Hazara faction leader is Mohammad Mohaqeq.

[7] A pharmaceutical plant in Sudan (Al Shifa) believed to be producing chemical weapons for Al Qaeda also was struck that day, although U.S. reviews later corroborated Sudan's assertions that the plant was strictly civilian in nature.

[8] Lisa Myers, "Osama bin Laden: missed opportunities," NBC News, March 17, 2004.

- **Pashtun Islamists/Sayyaf.** Among the Pashtuns that joined the Northern Alliance was a conservative Islamist *mujahedin* faction, *Ittihad Islami*, headed by Abd-i-Rab Rasul Sayyaf. He accused the Taliban of allying with Al Qaeda.

Bush Administration Afghanistan Policy Before the September 11 Attacks

Bush Administration policy initially continued the existing policy of applying economic and political pressure on the Taliban while retaining some dialogue with it, and refraining from militarily assisting the Northern Alliance. The September 11 Commission report said that, prior to the September 11 attacks, Administration officials leaned toward providing such aid, as well as aiding anti-Taliban Pashtuns. Additional covert options were reportedly also under consideration.[9] In accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1333, in February 2001 the State Department ordered the Taliban representative office in New York closed, although a Taliban representative continued to operate informally in the New York area.[10] In March 2001, Administration officials received a Taliban envoy to discuss bilateral issues, and the Administration stepped up engagement with Pakistan to try to reduce its support for the Taliban, amid widespread allegations that Pakistani military advisers were helping the Taliban.

Even though the Northern Alliance was supplied with Iranian, Russian, and Indian financial and military support, the Taliban continued to gain ground, even in areas not inhabited by Pashtuns. By the time of the September 11 attacks, the Taliban controlled at least 75% of the country, including almost all provincial capitals. The Northern Alliance suffered a major setback on September 9, 2001 (two days before, and possibly linked to the September 11 attacks), when Ahmad Shah Masoud was assassinated by Al Qaeda operatives posing as journalists. He was succeeded by a top lieutenant, Muhammad Fahim, a veteran Tajik figure (Fahim died of natural causes in 2014 while serving as First Vice President).

September 11 Attacks and Operation Enduring Freedom

After the September 11 attacks, the Bush Administration decided to militarily overthrow the Taliban when it refused a U.S. demand to extradite Bin Laden. President Bush articulated a policy that equated those who harbor terrorists to terrorists themselves, and asserted that a friendly regime in Kabul was needed to enable U.S. forces to search for Al Qaeda members there.

The Administration sought U.N. backing for military action. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1368 of September 12, 2001, said that the Council "expresses its readiness to take all necessary steps to respond (implying force) to the September 11 attacks." This was widely interpreted as a U.N. authorization for military action in response to the attacks, but it did not explicitly authorize Operation Enduring Freedom or reference Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, which allows for responses to threats to international peace and security.

In Congress, S.J.Res. 23 (passed 98-0 in the Senate and with no objections in the House, P.L. 107-40, signed September 18, 2011) authorized[11]

[9] Drogin, Bob. "U.S. Had Plan for Covert Afghan Options Before 9/11." *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 2002.

[10] Mujahid has reconciled with the current Afghan government, and serves as one of the deputy leaders of the 70-member High Peace Council on political reconciliation.

[11] Another law (P.L. 107-148) established a "Radio Free Afghanistan" under RFE/RL, providing $17 million in funding for it for FY2002.

> all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001 *or harbored such organizations or persons*.

Major Combat Operations: 2001-2003

Major combat in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom, OEF) began on October 7, 2001. The U.S. effort initially consisted primarily of U.S. air-strikes on Taliban and Al Qaeda forces, facilitated by the cooperation between reported small numbers (about 1,000) of U.S. special operations forces and Central Intelligence Agency operatives. The purpose of these operations was to help the Northern Alliance and Pashtun anti-Taliban forces advance by directing U.S. air strikes on Taliban positions. In October 2001, about 1,300 Marines were deployed to pressure the Taliban at Qandahar, but there were few U.S.-Taliban pitched battles.

The Taliban regime unraveled after it lost Mazar-e-Sharif on November 9, 2001, to forces led by Dostam.[12] Northern Alliance forces—despite promises to the United States that they would not enter Kabul—did so on November 12, 2001, to popular jubilation. The Taliban subsequently lost the south and east to U.S.-supported Pashtun leaders, including Hamid Karzai. The Taliban regime ended completely on December 9, 2001, when the Taliban and Mullah Umar fled Qandahar, leaving it under tribal law. Subsequently, U.S. and Afghan forces conducted "Operation Anaconda" in Paktia Province in March 2002. On May 1, 2003, U.S. officials declared an end to "major combat."

Afghan Governance[13]

The George W. Bush Administration argued that the U.S. departure from the region after the 1989 Soviet pullout contributed to Afghanistan's descent into chaos. After the Taliban regime was deposed in 2001, the Administration and its international partners decided to build a relatively strong, democratic, Afghan central government. The effort, which many outside experts described as "nation-building," was supported by the United Nations. The Obama Administration's strategy review in late 2009 initially narrowed official U.S. goals to preventing terrorism safe haven in Afghanistan, but policy in some ways expanded the preexisting nation-building effort. Building the capacity of and reforming Afghan governance have been consistently judged to be key to the success of U.S. policy, even after the 2014 security transition to Afghan lead. **Table 1** briefly depicts the process and events that led to the formation of the post-Taliban government of Afghanistan and subsequent developments.

[12] In the process, Dostam captured Taliban fighters and imprisoned them in freight containers, causing many to suffocate. They were buried in a mass grave at *Dasht-e-Laili*.

[13] Detail on governance issues is provided in CRS Report RS21922, *Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance*, by Kenneth Katzman.

Table 1. Post-Taliban Political Process Milestones

Interim Administration	Formed by Bonn Agreement. Headed by Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun, but key security positions dominated by mostly minority "Northern Alliance." Karzai reaffirmed as leader by June 2002 "emergency *loya jirga*." (A *jirga* is a traditional Afghan assembly.)
Constitution	Approved by January 2004 "Constitutional *Loya Jirga*" (CLJ). Set up strong presidency without a prime ministership to balance presidential power, but gave parliament significant powers to compensate. Gives men and women equal rights under the law, allows for political parties as long as they are not "un-Islamic;" allows for court rulings according to Hanafi (Sunni) Islam (Chapter 7, Article 15). Named ex-King Zahir Shah to non-hereditary position of "Father of the Nation;" he died July 23, 2007.
Presidential Election	Elections for president and two vice presidents, for five-year term, held October 9, 2004. Turnout was 80% of 10.5 million registered. Karzai and running mates (Ahmad Zia Masoud, a Tajik and brother of legendary *mujahedin* commander Ahmad Shah Masoud, who was assassinated by Al Qaeda two days before the September 11 attacks, and Karim Khalili, a Hazara) elected with 55% against 16 opponents, including a female. Funding: $90 million from donors, including $40 million from U.S. (FY2004, P.L. 108-106).
Parliamentary Elections	Elections held September 18, 2005, on "Single Non-Transferable Vote" System; candidates stood as individuals, not in party list. Parliament consists of a 249 elected lower house (*Wolesi Jirga*, House of the People) and a selected 102 seat upper house (*Meshrano Jirga*, House of Elders). 2,815 candidates for *Wolesi Jirga*, including 347 women. Turnout was 57% (6.8 million voters) of 12.5 million registered. Upper house is appointed by the president (34 seats, half of which are to be women), and by the provincial councils (68 seats). When district councils are elected, they will appoint 34 of those 68 seats. Funded by $160 million in aid, including $45 million from U.S. (FY2005 supplemental, P.L. 109-13).
First Provincial Elections	Provincial elections held September 18, 2005, simultaneous with parliamentary elections. Powers vague, but have taken the lead in deciding local reconstruction. Provincial council sizes range from 9 to the 29 seats on the Kabul provincial council. Total seats are 420, of which 121 held by women. 13,185 candidates, including 279 women. District elections not held due to complexity and potential tensions of drawing district boundaries.
Second Presidential/Provincial Elections	Presidential and provincial elections were held August 20, 2009, but required a runoff because no candidate received over 50% in certified results. Runoff cancelled when Dr. Abdullah dropped out. Election costs: $300 million.
Second Parliamentary Elections	Held September 18, 2010. Result disputed but resolved through Afghan negotiations that overturned results in some districts. Abdul Raouf Ibrahimi, an ethnic Uzbek, is lower house speaker, and upper house speaker is Muslim Yaar, a Pashtun.
Third Presidential/Provincial Election	First round held on April 5, 2014, and runoff between Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani held on June 14. Allegations of widespread fraud not fully resolved by a full recount, but Ghani was declared the winner on September 22 pursuant to a U.S.-brokered power-sharing agreement between Abdullah and Ghani under which Ghani became President and Abdullah became Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Ghani was sworn in on September 29. The two did not nominate a new cabinet until January 12, 2015. Under the agreement, a constitutional *loya jirga* (Afghan assembly) was to convene within two years (by the end of September 2016) to decide whether to convert the CEO position into a position of Prime Minister, but holding a constitutional *loya jirga* is contingent on first holding parliamentary elections (below). The next presidential election is to be held in 2019.
Third Parliamentary Elections	Initially scheduled for October 15, 2016, but required election reforms were not finalized and elections were not held. Nor was a *loya jirga* held to review the NUG agreement and CEO position, planned for September 2016. The existing parliament remains in office, but the passage of an election law and appointments to electoral bodies in late 2016 have removed the major impediments to scheduling the vote. No new election date has been set.

"National Unity Government" of Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah

Virtually every U.S. and outside assessment has concluded that Afghanistan's central and local governments have increased their capacity since 2001. However, the 2014 U.S.-brokered leadership partnership (national unity government, or NUG) between President Ashraf Ghani and CEO Dr. Abdullah Abdullah has encountered difficulties to the point where Dr. Abdullah publicly accused Ghani in August 2016 of acting unilaterally and refusing to meet regularly with him, reportedly saying, "if someone does not have the patience for discussion, then they are not fit for the presidency, either."[14] Outward signs of tensions seem to have receded since as the two have since met on several occasions to try to resolve their mutual differences and complaints, and the NUG has remained intact.

When the NUG was formed, Ghani and Abdullah agreed to share the role of appointing a cabinet and to try to balance competence and factional interests. However, their differences over appointments caused the first cabinet nominations to be delayed well beyond the constitutionally required 30-day period for such nominations (October 28, 2014).[15] In April 2016, Ghani and Abdullah completed appointments to the 34 provincial governorships and the major ambassadorships. In April 2016, the National Assembly confirmed an Interior Minister, Taj Mohammad Jahid, to replace ex-Communist military leader Nur-ul-Haq Ulumi, who resigned in February 2016, and an Attorney General.

The appointment of a Defense Minister has long eluded consensus. The chief of staff of the Afghanistan National Army (ANA), Sher Mohammad Karimi, was the original nominee, but he was voted down in large part because Tajik parliamentarians argued that Pashtuns were dominating appointments to the security institutions. In May 2015, Ghani and Abdullah nominated Masoom Stanekzai, who headed the government's insurgent fighter reintegration program (discussed below). However, he, too, is an ethnic Pashtun and non-Pashtuns in the National Assembly led a successful effort to vote him down in June 2015. He served as acting Defense Minister until May 2016, when he was nominated to become the next Intelligence Director (head of the National Directorate for Security, NDS). Also in May 2016, Ghani nominated General Abdullah Habibi as Minister of Defense. In July 2016, the National Assembly confirmed both Habibi and Stanekzai to their new positions. However, Habibi, along with the Afghan army chief of staff, was forced to resign after a major Taliban infiltration of an Afghan military base in normally quiet Mazar-e-Sharif in April 2017. The acting Minister of Defense is General Tariq Shah Bahrami.

The NUG has been somewhat more active than was the Karzai administration on corruption issues. The government has sought to enforce court punishments of the convicted perpetrators of the Kabul Bank scandal. And, press reports indicate that the Major Crimes Task Force has become more active in investigating officials accused of corruption. Ghani also has established a High Council for the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption and, with U.S. financial help and advice, is establishing an anti-corruption justice center. These steps, as well as Ghani's insistence on holding to account those responsible for the 2011 near failure of the Kabul Bank, were praised by the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Ambassador Richard Olson in testimony on September 15, 2016. On the other hand, the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction stated in a September 2016 report that Afghanistan's long-standing

[14] Mujib Mashal. "Senior official in Afghanistan Calls President Unfit to Serve." *New York Times*, August 12, 2016.

[15] Sources include various press reports and author conversations with Kabul and Europe-based Afghan observers. January 2015.

anti-corruption body, the High Office of Oversight (HOO), suffers from a lack of independence, authority, and capability to fulfill its mandate.

Growing Fragmentation

A trend that worries some experts is increasing fragmentation along ethnic and ideological lines—fractures that were largely contained during Karzai's presidency. A number of high profile attacks, most claimed by ISKP (see below), have targeted the ethnic Hazara minority. In August 2016, gunmen loyal to First Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostam attacked Tajiks who were reburying in a prominent burial site the body of ex-King Habibullah Kalakani (see above). In October 2016, Dostam indirectly threatened an armed challenge against the NUG unless he and his Uzbek constituencies were accorded greater respect. Perhaps suggesting that Dostam and other regional leaders are taking advantage of central government weakness, Dostam also has been accused of beating up and detaining a political rival in his northern redoubt. Some experts assert that the fragmentation might be due, in part, to Ghani's apparent focus on applying principles of governance, such as anti-corruption and establishing formal advisory structures, and his apparent distaste for the consistent engagement with power brokers and ethnic leaders that characterized Karzai's presidency.[16]

Dostam himself left Afghanistan for Turkey, where he has sought refuge in the past, in May 2017; Dostam allies and Afghan government officials attributed the move to health concerns and "medical tests," but others speculate that his departure was an attempt to evade facing justice in Afghanistan.[17] His return to Afghanistan in late July 2017 was blocked by the government.[18] Earlier that month, representatives of several other ethnic parties, all senior government officials, visited Dostam and announced from Ankara the formation of a new coalition (termed the "Coalition for the Salvation of Afghanistan") made up of Dostam's Uzbek-majority Junbish-e-Milli party; the Tajik Jamaat-e-Islami party (led by Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani); and the Hazara Hizb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami party. The group called on President Ghani to implement political reforms and introduce a less-centralized decisionmaking process.

While some have cast doubt on the coalition's long-term viability and claim that its creation is motivated by political expediency, it represents a challenge to President Ghani's authority at a time when public discontent with his government is high[19] and clashes among the militias loyal to figures nominally supporting the central government have accelerated. A May 31, 2017, bombing in central Kabul left over 150 dead (likely the most deadly such attack in Afghan history) and led to large anti-government protests in which several demonstrators were killed by security forces. Those protesters coalesced into a group calling itself the Uprising for Change Movement. The group, which does not align with any political party, has held several more rallies in Kabul to call for the resignation of the Interior Minister and other officials and for security sector and governance reforms.[20]

Another group, called Mehwar-e Mardom-e Afghanistan (the People's Axis of Afghanistan), was formed in July 2017 and criticizes the NUG as "unconstitutional" because of overdue elections

[16] Ghani's Management Style Under Scrutiny. Tolo News, August 31, 2016.

[17] "Afghan Vice-President Dostum flies to Turkey amid torture claims," BBC, May 20, 2017.

[18] Mujib Mashal and Najim Rahim, "Afghan Vice President's Return Thwarted as Plane Is Turned Back," *New York Times*, July 18, 2017.

[19] Pamela Constable, "Political storm brews in Afghanistan as officials from ethnic minorities break with president, call for reforms and protests," *Washington Post*, July 1, 2017.

[20] Sherif Amiri, "Uprising for Change Movement Hold Peaceful Rally In Kabul," Tolo News, July 3, 2017.

and other unmet conditions of the September 2014 agreement. Mehwar is seen as being aligned with former president Karzai, who may harbor ambitions to return to power and has been an increasingly vocal critic in recent months of the NUG, as well as of the United States and its operations in Afghanistan.[21]

Way Forward for the NUG

Abdullah loyalists insist on adhering to the terms of the NUG agreement and holding a constitutional *loya jirga* (an Afghan assembly) that would convert Abdullah's post into a formal prime ministership. With the *loya jirga* not held by its planned deadline of September 2016, some Afghan figures centered around ex-President Karzai seek to hold a traditional *loya jirga* instead. The delegates of a traditional *loya jirga* would be subject to the prerogatives of the conveners of the assembly, and the format far less structured than a constitutional *loya jirga*. Such a meeting could potentially yield unpredictable outcomes such as the replacement of the NUG entirely and the selection of new leadership. Some perceive that Karzai and his allies might seek to engineer his return as leader from such a meeting. Some Abdullah supporters criticized Secretary of State Kerry's comments in April 2016 that the NUG is intended to be of a five-year duration (the length of a presidential term) as opposing a government restructuring by the planned *loya jirga.*

The holding of a constitutional *loya jirga* is contingent on the holding of parliamentary elections as well as district elections, which still have not been held in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Parliamentarians and district council members constitute part of the attendance of a constitutional loya jirga. A deadline that the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) set in January 2016 for new parliamentary elections—October 15, 2016—was not met. A commission on election reform ("Special Electoral Reform Commission") was established and Ghani accepted 7 of its 10 recommendations, but the lower house of parliament voted them down. However, in late 2016, a new IEC and Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) were appointed and an election law was enacted—appearing to remove key impediments to holding the required parliamentary and district elections.

Going forward, parliamentary and district council elections are scheduled for July 7, 2018. However, in light of the current delay (parliament's mandate expired in June 2015 but was extended indefinitely by a presidential decree due to security concerns), some are skeptical of that timeline.[22] Continued contention among electoral commissioners may further reduce confidence in the government's ability to hold elections next year.[23] Some observers have called for district council elections to be delayed further and held alongside the 2019 presidential election, arguing that holding them next year, before broader questions of local governance and autonomy are answered, "risks perpetuating the long-standing fallacy in Afghan statebuilding: if subnational structures are built on paper, state legitimacy will follow."[24]

[21] Ayaz Gul, "Karzai: Trump's Afghan Strategy Fueling War, Regional Rivalries," Voice of America, October 12, 2017.

[22] Pamela Constable, "Disputes have put Afghan elections in jeopardy. Is the country's democracy also at risk?" *Washington Post*, December 12, 2017.

[23] Ali Yawar Adili, "Afghanistan Election Conundrum (1): Political pressure on commissioners puts 2018 vote in doubt." Afghanistan Analysts Network, November 18, 2017.

[24] Frances Z. Brown, "Local Governance Reform in Afghanistan and the 2018 Elections," United States Institute of Peace, November 9, 2017.

Ashraf Ghani and Dr. Abdullah

On September 29, 2014, Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmedzai was inaugurated as President, and he appointed Dr. Abdullah Abdullah as CEO.

Ashraf Ghani, born in 1949, is from Lowgar Province. He is from a prominent tribe, belonging to the Ghilzai Pashtun tribal confederation, that has supplied many past Afghan leaders, including the last Soviet-installed leader, Dr. Najibullah Ahmedzai. Ghani attended university at the American University of Beirut, and received a Ph.D. degree in Cultural Anthropology from Columbia University. He joined the World Bank in 1991, where he helped several countries manage development and institutional transformation projects. During 2002-2004, he served as Finance Minister in Karzai's first cabinet and was credited with extensive reforms and institution of the National Solidarity Program of locally driven economic development. During 2004-2005, he served as chancellor of Kabul University. He subsequently founded the Institute for State Effectiveness, which helps countries undergoing transition build institutions. After 2009, he served as an advisor to Karzai on various initiatives, including institutional reform and relations with the U.S.-led coalition helping secure Afghanistan.

He is married to Rula Ghani, and they have two children. Mrs. Ghani was a Christian when they met at university in Beirut in the 1970s, and some Afghan clerics allege that there is no public record of her converting to Islam.

Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, born in 1960 in Kabul, is an eye doctor by training. His mother was an ethnic Tajik and his father was a Pashtun from Qandahar. However, he is widely identified politically as a Tajik because he was a top aide to legendary Tajik mujahedin commander and Northern Alliance military leader Ahmad Shah Masoud, who was assassinated by Al Qaeda two days before the September 11 attacks on the United States. During the Northern Alliance's political struggle against the Taliban during 1996-2001, Abdullah served as the Northern Alliance's foreign minister—Masoud's international envoy. He served as Foreign Minister during 2001-2006, a time when the Northern Alliance's influence on Karzai was substantial. Karzai dismissed him in an early 2006 cabinet reshuffle.

As noted above, Abdullah lost the 2009 presidential election to Karzai, despite widespread confirmed allegations of fraud in that vote. He subsequently became chief opposition leader in Afghanistan.

Sources: Various press reporting, author conversations with Afghan figures in Afghanistan and Washington, DC, 2001-2014. Photographs from http://www.facebook.com/ashrafghani and http://www.facebook.com/Dr.AbdullahAbdullah, respectively.

U.S. and International Civilian Policy Structure

U.S. and international civilian institutions have helped build the capacity of the Afghan government. The U.S. embassy in Kabul, which had closed in 1989 when the Soviets pulled out of Afghanistan and was guarded by Afghan caretakers, reopened in late 2001. The post of U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan is currently unfilled, but the Trump Administration announced in July

2017 its intention to nominate career foreign service officer John Bass (currently ambassador to Turkey) to the position. In February 2009, the Obama Administration set up the position of an appointed "Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan" (SRAP), occupied first by Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, reporting to the Secretary of State. The position was reportedly slated for elimination by the Trump administration, though Secretary Tillerson announced in July 2017 that Acting Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Alice Wells would also serve as acting SRAP, and it was subsequently reported that Secretary Tillerson proposes to integrate the SRAP position into the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs.[25]

In line with the U.S. military drawdown, the Administration has sought to "normalize" its presence in Afghanistan. From 2009 to 2014, the U.S. civilian presence expanded to over 1,300 U.S. civilian officials—up from only about 400 in 2009—of which about one-third were serving outside Kabul. Staff levels dropped by about 20% by the completion of the transition in December 2014. As of September 2017, there are currently 568 total U.S. direct hires supporting U.S. Embassy operations in Afghanistan (mostly from the State Department and USAID), who work alongside 1,500 U.S. contractors.

Consulates. In June 2010, Deputy Secretary of State William Burns formally inaugurated a U.S. consulate in Herat city, a location considered pivotal to U.S. engagement with the Tajik and Uzbek minorities of Afghanistan. The facility was attacked by the Taliban in September 2013, and its staff were relocated to ISAF's Camp Arena; it is unclear what the mission's current status is. The State Department spent about $80 million on a facility in Mazar-e-Sharif that was slated to replace the existing facility, but the new site was abandoned in 2012 because of concerns about security and plans for consulates in other cities like Qandahar and Jalalabad appear to be on hold, perhaps indefinitely.[26]

Table 2. U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

The United Nations is extensively involved in Afghan governance and national building, primarily in factional conflict resolution and coordination of development assistance. The coordinator of U.N. efforts is the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). During October 2014 until March 2016, the head of UNAMA was Nicholas Haysom, of South Africa. He was succeeded by Tadamichi Yamamoto of Japan. UNAMA's mandate is subject to Security Council renewal, in the form of a U.N. Security Council resolution, at the end of March of each year.
U.N. Security Council Resolution 1806 of March 20, 2008, expanded UNAMA's authority to strengthen cooperation between the international peacekeeping force (ISAF, see below) and the Afghan government. In concert with the Obama Administration's emphasis on Afghan policy, UNAMA opened offices in many of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. Resolution 2096 of March 2013 reiterates the expanded UNAMA mandate, while noting that UNAMA and the international community are moving to a supporting role rather than as direct deliverers of services in Afghanistan. Resolution 2096 restated UNAMA's coordinating role with other high-level representatives in Afghanistan and election support role, as well as its role in reintegration of surrendering insurgent fighters through a "Salaam (Peace) Support Group" that coordinates with Afghanistan's High Peace Council (that is promoting reconciliation and reintegration). UNAMA has always been involved in local dispute resolution and disarmament of local militias,
UNAMA is also playing a growing role in engaging regional actors in Afghan stability. It was a co-convener of the January 28, 2010, and July 20, 2010, London and Kabul Conferences, respectively. Along with Turkey, UNAMA chairs a "Regional Working Group" to enlist regional support for Afghan integration.
On development, UNAMA co-chairs the joint Afghan-international community coordination body called the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), and is helping implement Afghanistan's development strategy. However, UNAMA's donor coordination role did not materialize because of the large numbers and size of donor-run projects in Afghanistan.

[25] Anwar Iqbal, "US to keep special representative's office, at least for now," *Dawn*, July 23, 2017.

[26] Ernesto Londono. "U.S. Abandons Consulate Plan in Northern Afghanistan." *Washington Post*, May 6, 2012.

See CRS Report R40747, *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan: Background and Policy Issues*, by Rhoda Margesson.

General Human Rights Issues

U.S. policy has been to establish and empower human rights institutions in Afghanistan and to promote the government's adherence to international standards of human rights practices. As do previous years' State Department human rights reports on Afghanistan, the report for 2016 attributes most of Afghanistan's human rights deficiencies to overall lack of security, loose control over the actions of Afghan security forces, corruption, and cultural attitudes such as discrimination against women. The State Department and UNAMA reports cite torture, rape, and other abuses by officials, security forces, detention center authorities, and police.

One of the institutional human rights developments since the fall of the Taliban has been the establishment of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), an oversight body on human rights practices, but its members are appointed by the government and some believe it is not independent. In addition, there has been a proliferation of Afghan organizations that demand transparency about human rights deficiencies and have sometimes produced government responses, for example by establishing "human rights units" in security institutions. Such groups include the Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization, and the Equality for Peace and Democracy organization.

Countering the influence of institutions such as the AIHRC are traditional bodies such as the National Ulema Council. The Council consists of the 150 most widely followed clerics throughout Afghanistan, who represent about 3,000 clerics nationwide. It has taken conservative positions on free expression and social freedoms, such as the type of television and other media programs available in Afghanistan. Clerics sometimes ban performances by Afghan singers and other performers whose acts they consider inconsistent with Islamic values. On the other hand, some rock bands have been allowed to perform high profile shows since 2011. Because of the power of Islamist conservatives, alcohol is increasingly difficult to obtain in restaurants and stores, although it is not banned for sale to non-Muslims. According to recent State Department reports on human rights, there continue to be intimidation and some violence against journalists who criticize the central government or powerful local leaders, and some news organizations and newspapers have been closed for incorrect or derogatory reporting on high officials.

Advancement of Women

Women's groups are a large component of Afghan civil society. Freedoms for women have greatly expanded since the fall of the Taliban with their elections to the parliament and their service at many levels of government. The Afghan government pursues a policy of promoting equality for women under its National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA). The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework requires Afghanistan to implement the NAPWA and all of its past commitments and laws to strengthen the rights of women and provide services to them.

The major institutional development was the formation in 2002 of a Ministry of Women's Affairs dedicated to improving women's rights. Its primary function is to promote public awareness of relevant laws and regulations concerning women's rights. It plays a key role in trying to protect women from domestic abuse by overseeing the running of as many as 29 women's shelters across Afghanistan. The Afghanistan Freedom Support Act of 2002 (AFSA, P.L. 107-327) authorized $15 million per year (FY2003-FY2006) for the Ministry of Women's Affairs (Economic Support Funds controlled by USAID). The United States has continued to donate to the Ministry since AFSA expired.

One of the most prominent civil society groups is the Afghanistan Women's Network. It has at least 3,500 members and its leaders say that 125 nongovernmental organizations work under its auspices. In addition, the AIHRC and outside Afghan human rights groups focus extensively on rights for Afghan women.

Among the most notable accomplishments since 2001 is that women are performing jobs that were rarely held by women even before the Taliban came to power in 1996. The civil service is 22% female, although that is below the 30% target level set in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. About 4,388 women serve in the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), making up around 1.4% of the force, though the Afghan government has set a goal to increase the number of women in the ANDSF to 10%. There are over 260 female judges, up from 50 in 2003, and several hundred female journalists nationwide. Women constitute over one-third of the seats of the nationwide Community Development Councils (CDCs, discussed above), in part because each CDC is required to have two women in its executive bodies. Women are legally permitted to drive and, mainly in larger cities, they exercise that right regularly. Wearing the full body covering called the *burqa* is no longer obligatory, but many women still wear it, in part to protect themselves from sexual advances. Some women in rural areas are reportedly advancing in social and economic status through agricultural cooperatives prevalent in several areas.

Despite the gains since 2001, numerous abuses, such as denial of educational and employment opportunities, continue primarily because of Afghanistan's conservative traditions. Among the most widespread abuses reported are the following:

- More than 70% of marriages in Afghanistan are forced, despite laws banning the practice, and a majority of brides are younger than the legal marriage age of 16.
- The practice of *baad*, in which women are given away to marry someone from another clan to settle a dispute, remains prevalent.
- There is no law banning sexual harassment, and women are routinely jailed for a crime under the penal code called *zina.* The term means adultery, but under Afghan law includes defying family choice of a spouse, eloping, or fleeing domestic violence. Women can be jailed for having a child outside wedlock, even if the child is a product of rape.
- Under the penal code, a man who is convicted of "honor killing" (killing a wife who commits adultery) can be sentenced to no more than two years in prison.
- Women's rights activists have been assassinated on several occasions.

In an effort to prevent these abuses, on August 6, 2009, then-President Karzai issued, as a decree, the "Elimination of Violence Against Women" (EVAW) law that makes many of the practices above unlawful. Partly as a result of the decree, prosecutions of abuses against women are increasingly obtaining convictions. A "High Commission for the Elimination of Violence Against Women" has been established to oversee implementation of the EVAW, and provincial offices of the commission have been established in each province.

On the other hand, despite the EVAW decree, only a small percentage of reports of violence against women are registered with the judicial system, and about one-third of those proceed to trial.[27] The number of women jailed for "moral crimes" has increased by 50% since 2011. Efforts by the National Assembly to enact the EVAW in December 2010 and in May 2013 failed due to opposition from Islamic conservatives who assert that males should decide family issues.

[27] Alissa Rubin, "Slow Gains in Justice for Afghan Women," *New York Times*, December 12, 2012, http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Qy9mDiEa5Rw%3d&tabid=12254&language=en-US.

President Ghani has signaled his strong support for women's rights by publicly highlighting the support he receives from his wife, despite the Afghan cultural taboo about mentioning wives and female family members in public. Ghani nominated a female to Afghanistan's Supreme Court, but the National Assembly rejected her nomination in July 2015. He has also appointed two female governors—one more than was the case during Karzai's presidency—in Ghor and in Daykundi provinces. There are four female ministers.

Religious Freedoms

According to State Department reports on international religious freedom, the constitution and government to some extent restrict religious freedom.[28] The government (Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs) is involved in regulating religious practices. Of Afghanistan's approximately 150,000 mosques, 50,000 are registered and funded by the government. Clerics in these mosques, paid about $100 per month, are expected to promote the government's views. There are around 5,000 of these clerics, out of an estimated nationwide total of 300,000, though the Ministry says that it does not have the resources to comprehensively register all of the country's mosques or clerics.

Members of minority religions, including Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, and Baha'i's, often face discrimination, but members of these communities sometimes serve at high levels of government. Baha'is fare worse than members of some of the other minorities because the Afghan Supreme Court declared the Baha'i faith to be a form of blasphemy in May 2007, and blasphemy is a capital offense. There are no public Christian churches but Afghan Christians can worship in small congregations in private homes. Still, several conversion cases drew harsh punishments and earned international attention. There are four synagogues, but they are not used because there is only one Afghan national who is Jewish. There are three active *gurdwaras* (Sikh places of worship) and five Hindu *mandirs* (temples). Buddhist foreigners are free to worship in Hindu temples.

The Hazaras and other Afghan Shiites tend to be less religious and more socially open than their co-religionists in Iran. Afghan Shiite leaders appreciated the July 2009 enactment and "gazetting" of a "Shiite Personal Status Law" that gave Afghan Shiites the same degree of recognition as the Sunni majority, and provided a legal framework for Shiite family law issues. Afghan Shiites are able to celebrate their holidays openly and some have held high positions, but some Pashtuns have become resentful of the open celebrations and some clashes have resulted. The Shiite community has also been aggressively targeted by ISKP.

Human Trafficking

Afghanistan was ranked as "Tier 2" in the State Department *Trafficking in Persons Report* for 2017, an improvement from 2016 when Afghanistan was ranked as "Tier 2: Watch List" on the grounds that the Afghan government was not complying with minimum standards for eliminating trafficking and did not demonstrate increased efforts against trafficking since the prior reporting period.[29] As part of the government's significant efforts to combat trafficking, the 2017 report cites increased law enforcement and new victim protection measures, including the reopening of a short term shelter for trafficking victims in Kabul. However, the report says that women from China, some countries in Africa, Iran, and some countries in Central Asia are being trafficked into Afghanistan for sexual exploitation, although trafficking within Afghanistan is more prevalent

[28] The report for 2016 can be accessed at https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/.

[29] The 2017 report can be accessed at https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/271339.pdf.

than trafficking across its borders. The report asserts that some families knowingly sell their children for forced prostitution, including for *bacha bazi*, a practice in which wealthy men use groups of young boys for social and sexual entertainment (see textbox below) and in which some ANDSF have allegedly participated. Other reports say that many women have resorted to prostitution, despite the risk of social and religious ostracism or punishment, to cope with economic hardship.

Bacha Bazi[30]

Bacha bazi, which translates as "boy play," is a form of child sexual abuse that has been reported among Afghanistan's military and defense forces. While there is no clear legal definition of the term, a DOD Inspector General report from 2017 describes *bacha bazi* as the practice of men sexually abusing boys who are trained to dance in girls' clothing. [31]This type of abuse is said to have a long history in Central Asia, and some who practice it report seeing it as a sign of social status, but Afghan society at large reportedly disapproves strongly.

The Taliban strongly oppose *bacha bazi* (despite their own use of children for frontline fighting), and had largely eradicated it when they controlled the country. A former Marine who had served in Afghanistan noted that the Taliban have used reports of rapes committed by government agents as a recruiting tool.[32] The current Afghan government, after initially failing to address *bacha bazi*, has pledged to tackle the problem.[33] The Department of State's 2018 Trafficking in Persons report credits the Ghani Government with some strides toward criminalizing *bacha bazi* and enforcing those laws, but the practice continues to be widespread.[34]

This issue attracted significant congressional concern after *the New York Times* reported in 2015 that U.S. soldiers serving in Afghanistan were being punished for protesting against the sexual abuse of boys on military bases.[35] Some Members intervened on behalf of several individual soldiers, and 93 Members asked SIGAR to investigate the problem and the enforcement of Leahy Laws in Afghanistan. The resulting SIGAR report and a subsequent report by the DOD Inspector General documented an ongoing problem, including a lack of clear guidance for U.S. forces to report and counter cases of abuse.[36] Moreover, some Afghan units receive U.S. assistance despite committing "gross violation of human rights," because of the "notwithstanding clause" that allows for exceptions to the Leahy Laws, and because of procedural flaws in the way Leahy Laws are managed in Afghanistan.[37]

[30] This textbox was written by Carmelina Palmer, Research Intern, and Zoe Danon, Section Research Manager.

[31] Office of the Inspector General, *Implementing of the DoD Leahy Law Regarding Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse by Members of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces*, U.S. Department of Defense, DODIG-2018-018, 2017.

[32] Aaron Maclean, "Bacha Bazi and the Afghan Drawdown," *Weekly Standard*, October 5, 2015.

[33] Matthew Rosenberg, "Ashraf Ghani, Afghan President, Vows to Crack Down on Abuse of Boys," *New York Times*, (2015).

[34] U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2017*; the Afghan legislation is Law Prohibiting Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (1395/11/10) [2017].

[35] Joseph Goldstein, "U.S. Soldiers Told to Ignore Sexual Abuse of Boys by Afghan Allies," *New York Times*, September 20, 2015.

[36] SIGAR 17-47-IP, "Child Sexual Assault in Afghanistan: Implementation of the Leahy Laws and Reports of Assault by Afghan Security Forces;" Office of the Inspector General, "Implementing of the DoD Leahy Law Regarding Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse by Members of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces," U.S. Department of Defense, DODIG-2018-018, 2017.

[37] For more see CRS Report R43361, *"Leahy Law" Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview*, coordinated by Nina M. Serafino, Legal Sidebar *Legal Obligation of U.S. Armed Forces to Intervene in Acts of Bacha Bazi in Afghanistan*, and CRS In Focus IF10575, *Human Rights Issues: Security Forces Vetting ("Leahy Laws")*, by Liana W. Rosen.

Security Policy: Transition and Beyond

The stated Obama Administration goal in Afghanistan was to prevent terrorist organizations that can plan attacks against the U.S. homeland, partners, and interests from regaining safe haven in Afghanistan. To accomplish that goal, U.S. policy is to enable the Afghan government and security forces to defend the country against the insurgency and to govern effectively and transparently. In an August 2017 speech, President Trump articulated an intent to reorient Afghanistan policy around a conditions-based approach, forsaking timelines and public discussion of troop levels and other benchmarks. The strategy articulated by the President also appeared to emphasize pressure on Pakistan to deny safe haven to Afghan militants, as well as an explicit repudiation of past U.S. efforts to "nation-build" in Afghanistan and to build Western-style institutions there.

Who Is "The Enemy"?

The insurgent challenge to stability in Afghanistan has been sustained by a number of factors, including (1) the small numbers of security forces in many rural areas; (2) logistical and other shortfalls on the part of the ANDSF; (3) safe haven enjoyed by militants in Pakistan; (4) a backlash against civilian casualties caused by military operations; and (5) unrealized public expectations of economic performance and the effectiveness and integrity of Afghan governance.

There are numerous insurgent groups in Afghanistan, all of which are generally—although not always—allied with each other. U.S. rules of engagement allow for operations against Al Qaeda, the Islamic State (as of January 2016), and associated groups by affiliation, and against the Taliban and other insurgent groups if they pose an imminent threat to U.S. forces or the ANDSF and the Afghan government (since June 2016).[38] Prior to the June 2016 decision by the Obama administration to loosen rules of engagement, direct U.S. action was limited to defending U.S. and Afghan government forces under imminent threat by the Taliban. In a January 2017 hearing, General Nicholson described the new rules of engagement as "instrumental to our successes."[39] In August 2017, President Trump declared that he would further expand battlefield authorities "to target the terrorist and criminal networks that sow violence and chaos throughout Afghanistan;" exactly which groups that might fall into these categories (and that are not already authorized U.S. military targets) is a subject of some speculation.[40] For additional information on Al Qaeda- and Islamic State-related groups, see CRS In Focus IF10604, *Al Qaeda and Islamic State Affiliates in Afghanistan*, by Clayton Thomas.

The Taliban

The insurgency is still led primarily by the Taliban movement. The death in 2013 of its original leader, Mullah Umar, was revealed in a July 2015 Taliban announcement. In a disputed selection process, he was succeeded by Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, who in turn was killed by a U.S. unmanned aerial vehicle strike on May 21, 2016. Several days later, the Taliban confirmed his death and announced the selection of one of his deputies, Haibatullah Akhunzadeh, as the new

[38] Matthew Rosenberg, "Obama Loosens Restrictions on U.S. Forces Fighting Taliban in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, June 10, 2016.

[39] Jim Michaels, "General: More U.S. advisers needed in Afghanistan," *USA Today*, February 9, 2017.

[40] Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia, The White House, August 21, 2017.

Taliban leader. The group announced two deputies: Mullah Yaqub (son of Mullah Umar) and Sirajuddin Haqqani (operational commander of the Haqqani Network).

Non-Pashtun Taliban. Some press reports also note that non-Pashtun (e.g. Tajik or Uzbek) anti-government groups are operating in non-Pashtun areas (particularly northern Afghanistan) and are increasingly affiliating themselves with the Taliban; some reports also note new Taliban efforts to recruit among non-Pashtun populations.[41] The Taliban's temporary seizure of the northern city of Konduz in October 2015 was seen by many observers as a consequence of this trend, and a possible harbinger of greater activity in the region.[42] These factions are said to be less ideological than is the core of the Taliban movement in implementing Islamic law and other restrictions in areas under their control. However, the rise of an Islamic State affiliate (see below), many members of which are Uzbek, "constitutes a challenge to the Taleban recruitment strategy among non-Pashtuns."[43]

Pakistani Taliban. A major Pakistani group, the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, TTP), is now thought to be beset with infighting following a contentious leadership succession in 2013 and number of prominent splits within the organization in 2014. Some TTP fighters reportedly operate from safe havens in Taliban-controlled areas on the Afghan side of the border, where many have defected and joined the nascent Islamic State- Khorasan Province (below). The State Department designated the TTP as an FTO on September 2, 2010.

Al Qaeda and Associated Groups

In May 1996, shortly before the Taliban entered Kabul, Osama bin Laden relocated from Sudan to Afghanistan, where he had been a recruiter of Arab fighters during the anti-Soviet war. He initially settled in territory in Nangarhar province (near Jalalabad city), but later had freer reign as the Taliban captured additional territory in Afghanistan. After the September 11 attacks, Al Qaeda was largely driven out of Afghanistan by U.S.-supported Afghan forces that ousted the Taliban from power.

The post-2014 U.S. counterterrorism mission in Afghanistan focuses largely on Al Qaeda and its affiliates. From 2001 until 2015, Al Qaeda was considered by U.S. officials to have only a minimal presence (fewer than 100) in Afghanistan itself, operating mostly as a facilitator for insurgent groups and mainly in the northeast. However, in late 2015 U.S. Special Operations forces and their ANDSF partners discovered and destroyed a large Al Qaeda training camp in Qandahar Province—a discovery that indicated that Al Qaeda had expanded its presence in Afghanistan. In April 2016, U.S. commanders publicly raised their estimates of Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan to 100-300, and said that relations between Al Qaeda and the Taliban are increasingly close.[44] Afghan officials put the number of Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan at 300-500.[45] Some have noted cooperation between Al Qaeda and the Taliban, particularly in the east.[46]

---

[41] Shamil Shams, "Who is fighting in northern Afghanistan?" *Deutsche Welle*, October 7, 2015.

[42] Akhilesh Pillalamarri, "Here's the Most Disturbing Thing About the Taliban Takeover of Kunduz," *The Diplomat*, October 2, 2015.

[43] Obaid Ali, "Non-Pashtun Taleban of the North (4): A case study from Jawzjan," Afghanistan Analysts Network, September 18, 2017.

[44] Press briefing by Resolute Support Mission Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications Brig. Gen. Charles Cleveland. April 14, 2016.

[45] Mujib Mashal and Eric Schmitt, "Afghan Security Crisis Sets Stage for Terrorists' Resurgence," *New York Times*, December 2, 2016.

[46] Hollie McKay, "Al Qaeda in Afghanistan: How terror group survives, thrives," Fox News World, June 16, 2017.

Until the killing of Bin Laden by U.S. Special Operations Forces in Pakistan on May 1, 2011, there had been frustration within the U.S. government with the search for Al Qaeda's top leaders. In December 2001, in the course of the post-September 11 major combat effort, U.S. Special Operations Forces and CIA operatives reportedly narrowed Bin Laden's location to the Tora Bora mountains (30 miles west of the Khyber Pass), but Afghan militia fighters failed to prevent his escape.

U.S. efforts to find remaining senior Al Qaeda leaders reportedly focus on Bin Laden's successor Ayman al-Zawahiri, who is presumed to be on the Pakistani side of the border. A U.S. strike reportedly missed Zawahiri by a few hours in the village of Damadola, Pakistan, in January 2006.[47] Some senior Al Qaeda leaders had been in Iran, including operational chief Sayf al Adl and Sulayman Abu Ghaith, son-in-law of bin Laden and Al Qaeda spokesperson, but both reportedly were forced out of Iran in 2013. Abu Ghaith was subsequently captured by U.S. authorities, but Adl reportedly was traded to Al Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen for Iranians diplomats held there.

U.S. efforts have killed numerous other senior Al Qaeda operatives in recent years, including chemical weapons expert Abu Khabab al-Masri (August 2008); two senior operatives allegedly involved in the 1998 embassy bombings in Africa (January 2009); top leaders Attiyah Abd al-Rahman and Abu Yahya al-Libi (killed in Pakistan by reported U.S. drone strikes in 2011 and 2012); operative Abu Bara Al Kuwaiti (October 2014, in Nangarhar Province); and Al Qaeda's commander for northeastern Afghanistan, Faruq Qahtani (October 2016).

Al Qaeda Affiliated Groups

Some groups that operate in Afghanistan have been affiliated with Al Qaeda.

Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). AQIS is subfaction of Al Qaeda based in and including members from various terrorist groups in the countries of South and Central Asia. Its formation was announced by Zawahiri in 2014. In June 2016, the State Department designated the group as an FTO and its leader, Asim Umar, as a specially-designated global terrorist.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) originated as a militant group active primarily against the authoritarian government in Uzbekistan. In Afghanistan, the IMU has been affiliated with Al Qaeda, although some of its fighters have realigned with the Islamic State branch there. The group is active throughout northern Afghanistan and some of its estimated 300 fighters in Konduz Province took part in the September 2015 capture of Konduz city. The IMU contingent in Afghanistan reportedly is led by Qari Balal, who escaped from a Pakistani jail in 2010.[48] A splinter group, the Jamaat Ansarullah, is active in Central Asia and northern Afghanistan.[49]

Lashkar-e-Tayyiba. A Pakistani Islamist militant group said to be increasingly active inside Afghanistan is Laskhar-e-Tayyiba (LET, or Army of the Righteous). LET was initially focused on operations against Indian control of Kashmir, but reportedly is increasingly active elsewhere in South Asia and elsewhere. The State Department has stated that the group was responsible for the May 23, 2014, attack on India's consulate in Herat.

---

[47] Gall, Carlotta and Ismail Khan. "U.S. Drone Attack Missed Zawahiri by Hours." *New York Times*, November 10, 2006.

[48] Bill Roggio. "U.S. Military Continues to Claim Al Qaeda is 'Restricted' to 'Isolated Areas of Northeastern Afghanistan." Long War Journal, November 19, 2014.

[49] U.N. report by the sanctions monitoring team established by U.N. resolutions sanctioning the Taliban. U.N. Security Council Document S/2014/888. December 11, 2014.

Lashkar-i-Janghvi. Another Pakistan-based group that is somewhat active in Afghanistan is Lashkar-i-Janghvi. It has conducted some suicide attacks in Afghanistan and was accused of several attacks on Afghanistan's Hazara Shiite community during 2011-2012.

Harakat ul-Jihad Islami (Movement of Islamic Jihad) is a Pakistan-based militant group that trained in Al Qaeda camps. Its former leader, Ilyas Kashmiri, was killed in U.S. drone strike in June 2011. He had earlier been indicted in the United States for supporting LET operative David Coleman Headley, who planned a terrorist attack on Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*.

The Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP)

An Islamic State affiliate—Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP, often also referred to as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan, ISIL-K), named after an area that once included parts of what is now Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan—has been active in Afghanistan since mid-2014. ISKP was named as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the State Department on January 14, 2016. Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi reportedly lived in Kabul during the Taliban regime and cooperated with Al Qaeda there.[50] The group's presence in Afghanistan has crystallized from several small Afghan Taliban and other militant factions—such as Da Fidayano Mahaz and Tora Bora Mahaz—that announced affiliation with the organization in 2013. The Islamic State presence grew further as additional Taliban factions defected to the group and captured some small areas primarily in eastern Afghanistan. Its members also reportedly include former fighters of the Taliban faction in Pakistan, which is discussed above. Afghan affiliates of the Islamic State have reportedly received financial assistance from the core organization located in the self-declared "caliphate" in parts of Iraq and Syria.[51] U.S. commanders narrowed their estimate of ISKP fighters in Afghanistan to 1,200-1,300 in September 2016 and again to 700 in April 2017.[52] U.S. officials say the Islamic State's goal in Afghanistan is to expand its presence further in northeastern Afghanistan (where it is reportedly active in Jowzjan and Sar-i-Pol provinces)[53] and Qandahar.

To address the ISKP threat, as of December 2015 U.S. commanders have authorization to combat ISKP fighters by affiliation, whether or not these fighters pose an immediate threat to U.S. and allied forces. According to General Nicholson on September 23, 2016, cited above, U.S. airstrikes and other combat against ISKP had reduced the group's primary presence to one province, Nangarhar, and their fighters by approximately 25 percent. The group's leaders have repeatedly been targeted by U.S. operations, with three killed in less than a year: Hafiz Saeed Khan died in a July 2016 U.S. airstrike and successors Abdul Hasib and Abu Sayed were killed in April and July 2017, respectively. Still, ISKP has survived these leadership deaths and appears to be a growing factor in U.S. and Afghan strategic planning. ISKP was the target of the much publicized April 2017 use of a GBU-43 (also known as a Massive Ordnance Air Blast, or MOAB), the first such use of the weapon in combat. Of the ten U.S. battlefield casualties in 2017 (as of August), seven

[50] Ibid. p. 12.

[51] Michael Gordon. "Islamic State Building 'Nests' in Afghanistan, U.S. Says." *New York Times*, December 19, 2015.

[52] Department of Defense Press Briefing by General Nicholson via Teleconference from Afghanistan, September 23, 2016. Transcript available at https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/954839/department-of-defense-press-briefing-by-general-nicholson-via-teleconference-fr.

[53] Noor Zahid and Mohammad Habibzada, "IS Destroys Schools, Bars Female Students in Restive Afghan District." VOA, July 3, 2017.

were killed in anti-ISKP operations.[54] At least two CIA personnel have also been killed in clashes with ISKP in 2017.[55]

Press reports indicate that Afghans consider the Taliban's practices in areas of their control as moderate compared to the brutality practiced by Islamic State adherents. ISKP and Taliban fighters have sometimes clashed over control over territory or because of political or other differences. However, at least one Afghan source claims that the two groups conducted a joint operation in Sar-i-Pol province in August 2017 (a claim the Taliban denied), perhaps an indication of the increasingly fluid and complex militant landscape in the north.[56] ISKP has claimed responsibility for a number of large-scale attacks, particularly in Kabul, including multiple bombings targeting Afghanistan's Shi'ite minority and armed assaults against government targets.

Haqqani Network

The "Haqqani Network," founded by Jalaludin Haqqani, a *mujahedin* commander and U.S. ally during the U.S.-backed war against the Soviet occupation, is often cited by U.S. officials as a potent threat to U.S. and allied forces and interests, and a "critical enabler of Al Qaeda."[57] Jalaluddin Haqqani served in the Taliban regime as Minister of Tribal Affairs, and his network has fought against the current Afghan government. Over the past few years, Jalaludin's son Sirajuddin has largely taken over the group's operations and has become increasingly influential in setting overall insurgency strategy. As noted above, Sirajuddin remains deputy leader of the Taliban under the new leader, Mullah Akhunzadeh. Two of Sirajuddin's brothers, Badruddin and Nasruddin, were killed by U.S. and Pakistani operations in 2012-2013. Another, Anas, is held by the Afghan government and has been sentenced to death.

Some see the Haqqani Network as on the decline. The Haqqani Network had about 3,000 fighters and supporters at its zenith during 2004-2010, but it is believed to have far fewer currently. However, the network is still capable of carrying out operations, particularly in Kabul city, where it allegedly carried out the devastating May 2017 bombing in Kabul's diplomatic district that left over 150 dead and sparked violent protests against the government. The network earns funds through licit and illicit businesses in the areas of Afghanistan where it has a presence as well as in Pakistan and the Persian Gulf. The group apparently has turned increasingly to kidnapping to perhaps earn funds and publicize its significance. It reportedly holds two professors (Timothy Weeks, an Australian, and American citizen Kevin King, who is reportedly seriously ill)[58] kidnapped from the American University of Afghanistan in August 2016; and a journalist (Paul Overby) seized in 2014 after crossing into Afghanistan to try to interview the Haqqani leadership. American citizen Caitlan Coleman, along with her Canadian husband Joshua Boyle and the three children to whom she gave birth during the family's five-year captivity, were freed in October 2017 by what the Pakistani military called an "intelligence-based operation" conducted in conjunction with the United States.[59]

---

[54] Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "Pentagon identifies Special Forces soldier killed battling Islamic State in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, August 18, 2017.

[55] Adam Goldman and Matthew Rosenberg, "A Funeral of 2 Friends: C.I.A. Deaths Rise in Secret Afghan War," *New York Times*, September 6, 2017.

[56] "Taliban, ISIS cooperated on Afghan village attack: rights group," Reuters, August 11, 2017.

[57] DOD report on Afghan stability, April 2014. p. 12.

[58] "Afghan Taliban say kidnapped U.S. professor is seriously ill," Reuters, October 30, 2017.

[59] Adam Goldman, "American Woman and Family Held for 5 Years in Afghanistan Freed From Militants," *New York Times*, October 12, 2017.

Suggesting it often acts as a tool of Pakistani interests, the Haqqani network has targeted several Indian interests in Afghanistan. The network claimed responsibility for two attacks on India's embassy in Kabul (July 2008 and October 2009), and is widely suspected of conducting the August 4, 2013, attack on India's consulate in Jalalabad. U.S. officials also attributed to the group the June 28, 2011, attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul; a September 10, 2011, truck bombing in Wardak Province (which injured 77 U.S. soldiers); and attacks on the U.S. Embassy and ISAF headquarters in Kabul on September 13, 2011. Then Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mullen, following September 2011 attacks on U.S. Embassy Kabul, testified (Senate Armed Services Committee, September 22, 2011) that the Haqqani network acts "as a veritable arm" of the Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI). Other U.S. officials issued more cautious versions of that assertion. Some reports also attribute to the group a major January 10, 2017, attack at the Qandahar governor's compound that killed at least six UAE diplomats, including the UAE ambassador to Afghanistan, and several Afghan officials.

Haqqani commanders have told journalists that the Haqqani Network would participate in a political settlement with the Afghan government if the Taliban decided to accept such an agreement.[60] However, the faction's participation in a settlement could potentially be complicated by its designation as an FTO under the Immigration and Naturalization Act. That designation was made on September 9, 2012, after the 112th Congress enacted S. 1959 (Haqqani Network Terrorist Designation Act of 2012, P.L. 112-168 that required an Administration report on whether the group meets the criteria for FTO designation.

Insurgent Tactics

Insurgent groups often shift their tactics and targets to accomplish a variety of objectives. In addition to straightforward combat, insurgent groups have made use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), surface-to-air missiles, suicide bombs hidden in clothing, and "insider attacks" using infiltrators or recruiting sympathizers among the ANDSF.[61] Suicide bombers killed former President Rabbani on September 20, 2011, and then-President Karzai's cousin Hashmat Karzai on July 29, 2014. Insider attacks were particularly frequent in 2012 constituting nearly half of the approximately 100 that outside groups have assessed to have occurred to date. In August 2014, an insider attack killed Major General Harold Greene during his visit to a prestigious Afghan military academy. U.S. commanders have said they have verified some use of surface-to-air missiles,[62] although missiles apparently were not used in the Taliban's downing of a U.S. Chinook helicopter that killed 30 U.S. soldiers on August 6, 2011. In January 2010, then-President Karzai issued a decree banning importation of fertilizer chemicals (ammonium nitrate) commonly used for the roadside bombs, but there reportedly is informal circumvention of the ban for certain civilian uses, and the material still comes into Afghanistan from production plants in Pakistan. It has also been reported that U.S. arms provided to the Afghan military have, through both corruption and battlefield losses, been obtained by the Taliban; these weapons, including Humvees and night vision devices, have reportedly given Taliban forces an advantage in some provinces over less-well armed ANDSF units.[63]

---

[60] Jibran Ahmad. "Afghan Haqqani Factions Would Consider Talks Under Taliban." Reuters, November 13, 2012.

[61] For more information on the insider attack, see CRS General Distribution memorandum "Insider Attacks in Afghanistan," October 1, 2012, available to congressional clients on request.

[62] Major General John Campbell, commander of RC-E, July 28, 2010, press briefing.

[63] Shawn Snow, "US weapons complicate Afghan war," *Military Times*, July 25, 2017. A 2014 SIGAR investigation found that 43% of weapons recorded in DOD information systems had missing information and/or duplication, and recommended a number of reforms to better track weapons supplied to the ANDSF. SIGAR 14-84 Audit Report,

Insurgent Financing: Narcotics Trafficking and Other Methods[64]

All of the insurgent groups in Afghanistan benefit, at least in part, from narcotics trafficking. However, the adverse effects are not limited to funding insurgents; the trafficking also undermines rule of law within government ranks. The trafficking generates an estimated $70 million-$100 million per year for insurgents—perhaps about 25% of the insurgents' budgets that is estimated by some U.N. officials at about $400 million. In November 2017, the United Nations reported that the total area used for poppy cultivation in 2017 was 328,000 hectares, an increase of 63% from 2016 and 46% higher than the previous record in 2014; similarly, opium production increased by 87%.[65] Taliban drug production facilities are a major new focus of the Trump Administration's strategy in Afghanistan, and late 2017 has seen a number of high-profile strikes on Taliban narcotics laboratories and other related sites.[66] For a detailed analysis of narcotics issue and U.S. and coalition counternarcotics efforts, see CRS Report R43540, *Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition*, by Liana W. Rosen and Kenneth Katzman.

The Obama Administration sought to reduce other sources of Taliban funding, including continued donations from wealthy residents of the Persian Gulf. On June 29, 2012, the Administration sanctioned (by designating them as terrorism supporting entities under Executive Order 13224) two money exchange networks (*hawalas*) in Afghanistan and Pakistan allegedly used by the Taliban to move its funds earned from narcotics and other sources.

The Anti-Taliban Military Effort: 2003-2009

During 2003 to mid-2006, U.S. forces and Afghan troops fought relatively low levels of insurgent violence with focused combat operations mainly in the south and east where ethnic Pashtuns predominate. These included "Operation Mountain Viper" (August 2003); "Operation Avalanche" (December 2003); "Operation Mountain Storm" (March-July 2004); "Operation Lightning Freedom" (December 2004-February 2005); and "Operation Pil" (Elephant, October 2005). By late 2005, U.S. and partner commanders considered the insurgency mostly defeated and NATO/ISAF assumed lead responsibility for security in all of Afghanistan during 2005-2006. The optimistic assessments proved misplaced when violence increased significantly in mid-2006. NATO-led operations during 2006-2008 cleared key districts but did not prevent subsequent reinfiltration. Nor did preemptive combat and increased development work produce durable success.

Taking into account security deterioration, the United States and its partners increased force levels. U.S. troop levels started 2006 at 30,000 and increased to 39,000 by April 2009. Partner forces also increased during that period to 39,000 at the end of 2009—rough parity with U.S. forces. In September 2008, the U.S. military and NATO each began strategy reviews, which were briefed to the incoming Obama Administration.

"Afghan National Security Forces: Actions Needed to Improve Weapons Accountability," July 2014.

[64] For detail on the issue of Afghanistan counternarcotics, see CRS Report R43540, *Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition*, by Liana W. Rosen and Kenneth Katzman.

[65] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotics, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017: Cultivation and Production," November 2017.

[66] Dan Lamothe, "The U.S. beings bombing Taliban drug labs as Trump's Afghanistan strategy takes hold," *Washington Post*, November 20, 2017.

Table 3. Background on NATO Participation and U.N. Mandate

Partner forces have always been key to the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. During 2006-2014, most U.S. troops in Afghanistan served in the NATO-led "International Security Assistance Force" (ISAF), which consisted of all 28 NATO members states plus partner countries—a total of 50 countries. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which ended its mission at the end of 2014, was created by the Bonn Agreement and U.N. Security Council Resolution 1386 (December 20, 2001, a Chapter 7 resolution).[67] The mission was initially limited to Kabul but, in October 2003, Germany's contribution of an additional 450 military personnel enabled ISAF to expand to Konduz and to other cities, an expanded mission authorized on October 14, 2003, by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1510. In August 2003, NATO took over command of ISAF—previously the ISAF command rotated among donor forces including Turkey and Britain.
NATO/ISAF's responsibilities broadened significantly in 2004 with NATO/ISAF's assumption of security responsibility for northern and western Afghanistan (Stage 1, Regional Command North, in 2004 and Stage 2, Regional Command West, in 2005, respectively). The transition process continued on July 31, 2006, with the formal handover of the security mission in southern Afghanistan to NATO/ISAF control. As part of this "Stage 3," a British/Canadian/Dutch-led "Regional Command South" (RC-S) was formed for Helmand, Qandahar, and Uruzgan, the command of which rotated among the three. "Stage 4," the assumption of NATO/ISAF command of peacekeeping in 14 provinces of eastern Afghanistan (and thus all of Afghanistan) was completed in October 2006.
The ISAF mission was renewed yearly by U.N. Security Council resolutions. Resolution 2069 of October 10, 2013, was the last renewal until the ISAF mission ended at the end of 2014. Resolution 2189 of December 12, 2014, welcomed the establishment of the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) as the follow-on to ISAF.

Obama Administration Policy: "Surge," Transition, and Drawdown

Upon taking office, the Obama Administration articulated that the Afghanistan mission was a high priority, but that the U.S. level of effort there needed to be reduced over time. The Administration integrated the late 2008 policy reviews into a 60-day inter-agency "strategy review," chaired by South Asia expert Bruce Riedel and co-chaired by then-SRAP Holbrooke and then-Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy. President Obama announced a "comprehensive" strategy on March 27, 2009,[68] that announced deployment of an additional 21,000 U.S. forces.

In June 2009, General Stanley McChrystal, who headed U.S. Special Operations forces from 2003 to 2008, replaced General McKiernan as top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan. In August 2009, General McChrystal delivered a strategy assessment that recommended that the goal of the U.S. military should be to protect the population rather than to focus on searching out and combating Taliban concentrations, warning of the potential for "mission failure" in the absence of a fully resourced, comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy. His assessment stated that about 44,000 additional U.S. combat troops would be needed to provide the greatest chance for success.[69]

The assessment set off debate within the Administration and another policy review. Some senior U.S. officials argued that adding many more U.S. forces could produce a potentially counterproductive sense of "U.S. occupation." President Obama announced the following at West Point academy on December 1, 2009:[70]

[67] Its mandate was extended until October 13, 2006, by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1623 (September 13, 2005); and until October 13, 2007, by Resolution 1707 (September 12, 2006).

[68] "White Paper," http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Afghanistan-Pakistan_White_Paper.pdf.

[69] Commander NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, and U.S. Forces, Afghanistan. "Commander's Initial Assessment." August 30, 2009, available at http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?.

[70] President Obama speech, op. cit. Testimony of Secretary Gates, Secretary Clinton, and Admiral Mullen before the Senate Armed Services Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee. December 2, 2009.

- That 30,000 additional U.S. forces (a "surge") would be sent to "reverse the Taliban's momentum" and strengthen the ANDSF. The addition brought U.S. force levels to 100,000, with most of the additional forces deployed to the south.
- Beginning in July 2011, there would be a transition to Afghan security leadership and a corresponding drawdown of U.S. forces. The Administration argued this transition would focus the Afghan government on training its own forces. To address Afghan concerns that the deadline signaled decreasing U.S. involvement,[71] a November 2010 NATO summit in Lisbon decided on a gradual transition to Afghan leadership that would be completed by the end of 2014.

When the surge was announced, the Afghan Interior Ministry estimated that the government controlled about 30% of the country, while insurgents controlled 4% (13 out of 364 districts) and influenced or operated in another 30%, and tribes and local groups with varying degrees of loyalty to the central government controlled the remainder. The Taliban had named "shadow governors" in 33 out of 34 of Afghanistan's provinces, although some were merely symbolic.

Transition and Drawdown: Afghans in the Lead, 2011-2014

The surge was assessed as having reduced areas under Taliban control substantially and the transition to Afghan security leadership began on schedule in July 2011. The process culminated with June 18, 2013, U.S. and Afghan announcements that Afghan forces were now in the security lead throughout Afghanistan. In concert with the transition, and asserting that the killing of Osama Bin Laden represented a key accomplishment of the core U.S. mission, on June 22, 2011, President Obama announced that

- U.S. force levels would fall to 90,000 (from 100,000) by the end of 2011.
- That U.S. force levels would drop to 68,000 by September 2012.

In the February 12, 2013, State of the Union message, President Obama announced that the U.S. force level would drop to 34,000 by February 2014, which subsequently occurred. Partner countries drew down their forces at roughly the same rate and proportion as the U.S. drawdown, despite public pressure in the European countries to end or reduce military involvement in Afghanistan. During 2010-2012, the Netherlands, Canada, and France, respectively, ended their combat missions, but they continued to train the ANDSF until the end of 2014. As noted in **Table 12**, several countries are contributing trainers and advisers to the Resolute Support Mission.

Resolute Support Mission (RSM) and Further Drawdowns

As international forces were reduced in 2014, Afghan and international officials expressed uncertainty about U.S. and partner plans for the post-2014 period. On May 27, 2014, President Obama clarified Administration plans by announcing the size of the post-2014 U.S. force and plan for a U.S. military exit. Asserting that a full U.S. military departure from Afghanistan would continue to focus the Afghans on improving their skills, the President announced in May 2014[72]

[71] Commander NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan, and U.S. Forces, Afghanistan. Commander's Initial Assessment." August 30, 2009, available at http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf. White House. Remarks by the President In Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan. December 1, 2009.

[72] White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Statement by the President on Afghanistan," May 27, 2014. Available at https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/27/statement-president-afghanistan.

- The U.S. military contingent in Afghanistan would be 9,800 in 2015, deployed in various parts of Afghanistan, consisting mostly of trainers in the "Resolute Support Mission" (RSM). About 2,000 of the U.S. force would be Special Operations Forces, of which half would conduct counterterrorism missions.[73] The U.S. military renamed the Afghanistan and related operations "Operation Freedom's Sentinel"—replacing the post-September 11 mission Operation Enduring Freedom.
- The U.S. force would decline to about 5,000 by the end of 2016 and to consolidate in Kabul and at Bagram Airfield.
- After 2016, the U.S. military presence would be consistent with normal security relations with Afghanistan (about 1,000 military personnel) under U.S. Embassy authority (without a separate military chain of command in country). Their mission would be to protect U.S. installations, process Foreign Military Sales (FMS) of weaponry to Afghanistan, and train the Afghans on that weaponry.

During 2014, the United States and its partners prepared for the end of the ISAF mission. U.S. airpower in country was reduced, ISAF turned over the vast majority of the about 800 bases to the ANDSF, and the provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) were turned over to Afghan institutions.[74]

Adjustments to Force Levels in Light of Security Deterioration

U.S. and other concerns about the post-2014 drawdown plan intensified after the June 2014 offensive in Iraq by Islamic State fighters. Critics of Administration plans for Afghanistan force levels asserted that the decision to leave no significant residual troop force in Iraq after 2011 contributed to the growth of the Islamic State there, and that similar events could happen in Afghanistan if U.S. forces leave.

Despite assertions by U.S. commanders that the ANDSF is performing well despite taking heavy casualties, concerns of U.S. commanders and outside observers have grown since early 2015. The Taliban has made gains in Helmand Province, and the Taliban's week-long capture of Konduz city in September 2015 was the first seizure of a significant city since the Taliban regime fell in 2001. It has captured parts of that city and encroached on population centers in several parts of southern and eastern Afghanistan since, although many such gains were quickly reversed by the ANDSF. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford testified in September 2016 that the battlefield situations represented "roughly a stalemate," an assessment that was echoed by General Nicholson in February 2017 and again in November 2017.

[73] Votel Pledges Support for Special Operations Forces. DOD News, July 10, 2014.

[74] Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were enclaves of U.S. or partner forces and civilian officials that provided safe havens for international aid workers to help with reconstruction and to extend the writ of the Kabul government. First formed in December 2002, PRTs performed activities ranging from resolving local disputes to coordinating local reconstruction projects, although PRTs in combat-heavy areas focused on counterinsurgency. During his presidency, Karzai consistently criticized the PRTs as holding back Afghan capacity-building and repeatedly called them "parallel governing structures."

Growing Taliban gains were further highlighted with their purported capture of Helmand's Sangin district in March 2017, though some Afghan and U.S. officials disputed that narrative and described the actions as a preplanned, orderly withdrawal. Sangin is important both strategically, as a link between Helmand and Qandahar, and symbolically, as one of the most deadly districts in all of Afghanistan- according to *The New York Times*, "more British troops and, later, American marines died in Sangin than in any of Afghanistan's roughly 400 districts" through 2013.[75] By most measures, the amount of territory controlled or contested by the Taliban has grown in recent years, and that trend may be accelerating. In December 2016, General Nicholson estimated that 64% of the Afghan population lived under government control, a decrease from September 2016 when he put the figure at 68-70%.[76] According to the most recent SIGAR report (October 2017), just under 60% of Afghan districts are under government control or influence.

In the past several months, multiple U.S. commanders have warned of increased levels of assistance, and perhaps even material support, for the Taliban from Russia and Iran.[77] Both nations were opposed to the Taliban government of the late 1990s, but reportedly see the Taliban as a useful point of leverage vis-a-vis the United States. Russia and Iran publicly cite the growth of IS-aligned fighters in Afghanistan (more below) to justify their involvement, though in some cases their assessments of IS strength far outpace those offered by U.S. and Afghan officials.[78]

U.S. Commanders in Afghanistan since 2009

June 2009-June 2010: General Stanley McChrystal

July 2010-July 2011: General David Petraeus

July 2011-February 2013: General John Allen

February 2013-August 2014: General Joseph Dunford

August 2014-March 2016: General John Campbell (as ISAF commander through December 2014, afterwards as RSM commander)

March 2016-present: General John Nicholson

Still, no U.S. official has publicly assessed that the insurgency, by itself, poses a threat to overturn the Afghan governing structure. And, the killing of Taliban leader Mullah Mansour by a U.S. strike in May 2016 demonstrates Taliban vulnerabilities to U.S. intelligence and combat capabilities, although it has not to date had a measurable effect on Taliban effectiveness.

Alterations to the 2016-2017 Drawdown Schedule and Rules of Engagement

Concerns about insurgent gains have led to several alterations to the U.S. mission in recent years under both the Obama and Trump Administrations.

- On March 24, 2015, in concert with the visit to Washington, DC, of Ghani and Abdullah, the President announced that U.S. forces would remain at a level of about 9,800 for all of 2015, rather than reduce to 5,500 by the end of the year, as originally announced.
- In January 2016, U.S. commanders in Afghanistan were authorized to attack ISKP forces by affiliation, as noted above.
- In June 2016, the President authorized U.S. forces to conduct preemptive combat. According to Secretary of Defense Carter on July 12, 2016, U.S. forces can now "anticipate battlefield dynamics and ... deploy and employ their forces together

[75] Taimoor Shah and Rod Norland, "Taliban Take an Afghan District, Sangin, That Many Marines Died to Keep," *New York Times*, March 23, 2017.

[76] Department of Defense Press Briefing by General Nicholson in the Pentagon Briefing Room, December 2, 2016.

[77] Phil Steward and Idrees Ali, "Russia may be helping supply Taliban insurgents: U.S. general," Reuters, March 23, 2017.

[78] Najib Sharifi, "Russia's new game in Afghanistan," *Al Jazeera*, February 26, 2017.

[with the ANDSF] in a way that stops a situation from deteriorating; interrupts an enemy in the early stages of planning and formulating an attack." Some have also interpreted this authority as additional latitude to use more airstrikes.

- On July 6, 2016, President Obama again adjusted planned U.S. force levels, stating that U.S. force levels would drop to 8,400 at the end of 2016—and not drop to the 5,500 that was previously announced. The announcement took into account General Nicholson's initial assessment, which he reportedly submitted to his superiors in June 2016. The announcement differed from Section 1215 of the House-passed FY2017 Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4909) that expressed the sense of Congress to keep U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan at 9,800 after 2016.
- The communique of the NATO summit in Warsaw, Poland (July 8-9, 2016), announced that other NATO countries would continue to support RSM beyond 2016, both with force contributions and donations to the ANDSF (the latter until 2020). No numbers were specified in the declaration, but the announcement appeared to imply that other countries would continue to contribute a total of about 6,000 forces to RSM and about $1.25 billion per year to the ANDSF.

Developments During the Trump Administration

At a February 2017 Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, General Nicholson indicated that the United States has a "shortfall of a few thousand" troops that, if fulfilled, could help break the "stalemate." He further clarified that while the number of Special Operations forces is sufficient to conduct operations, more troops are needed for advising and training Afghan forces, particularly at lower levels in the chain of command.[79] Initial reports indicated that the Trump Administration was likely to approve Nicholson's request, in whole or in part, while perhaps also indicating that more U.S. forces will not, in and of themselves, resolve the Afghanistan conflict. However, an NSC-led review of U.S. strategy that included plans for more troops was reportedly held up due to disagreements within the administration over the path forward in Afghanistan.[80] Some expressed skepticism that a few thousand more troops could meaningfully impact dynamics on the ground, pointing to previous 'surges' that did not do so, and raised concerns about an open-ended U.S. commitment in a country where U.S. troops have already been deployed for nearly two decades. Others countered that the relative cost of the U.S. commitment in Afghanistan is a worthy investment when viewed against the cost of a terrorist attack U.S. forces' absence could allow, comparing it to "term-life insurance."[81]

The Pentagon long reported the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan at the authorized level of 8,400, but in August 2017 it was reported that the actual figure, due to units rotating in and out of theater, is actually between 11,000 and 12,000 on any given day.[82] Secretary Mattis seemed to confirm this discrepancy when he stated a need that same month to "account for everyone that is on the ground there now" before approving new troops;[83] the level was officially confirmed by

[79] Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. General Seeks 'a Few Thousand' More Troops in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, February 9, 2017.

[80] Susan Glasser, "The Trump White House's War Within," *Politico*, July 24, 2017.

[81] Asawin Suebsaeng and Spencer Ackerman, "$700 Billion and 16 Years at War Is a 'Modest Amount,' U.S. Officers Say," *Daily Beast*, July 24, 2017.

[82] Gordon Lubold and Nancy Youssef, "U.S. Has More Troops in Afghanistan Than Publicly Disclosed," *Wall Street Journal*, August 22, 2017.

[83] Tara Copp, "Mattis: DOD to account for actual number of forces in Afghanistan before asking for more," *Military Times*, August 22, 2017.

the Pentagon in August 2017. President Trump delegated the authority to set force levels, reportedly limited to around 3,900 additional troops, in June 2017.[84] As of November 2017, those additional forces (all of which are dedicated to RSM) have arrived in Afghanistan, putting the total number of troops in the country at around 15,000.[85] NATO also announced plans that month to increase its own forces in Afghanistan by around 3,000, bringing the RSM level to about 16,000.[86]

In a national address on August 21, 2017, President Trump announced a "new strategy" for Afghanistan and South Asia that includes several pillars: abandoning timetables in favor of a conditions-based approach; integrating diplomatic and economic assets into the military effort; and a revised regional approach that features a more aggressive stance toward Pakistan and further development of a strategic partnership with India. Some of these elements appear similar to facets of the Obama Administration's approach. Despite widespread expectations that he would describe specific elements of his new strategy, particularly the prospects for additional troops, President Trump declared "we will not talk about numbers of troops or our plans for further military activities."[87] Some have criticized the strategy as "short on details" and argue that its focus on diplomatic engagement is contradicted by the deep cuts the administration has proposed to the State Department.[88] Others welcomed the decision, contrasting it favorably with proposed alternatives such as a full withdrawal of U.S. forces (which President Trump conceded was his "original instinct") or heavy reliance on contractors.[89]

Beyond additional troops, the strategy also features broader authority for U.S. forces to operate independently of Afghan forces and "attack the enemy across the breadth and depth of the battle space," expanding the list of targets to include those related to "revenue streams, support infrastructure, training bases, infiltration lanes."[90] This was demonstrated in a series of strikes against Taliban drug labs in Helmand province in late 2017. Those strikes, highlighted by U.S. and Afghan officials, have sought to combat what is widely viewed as one of the Taliban's most important sources of revenue, namely the cultivation, production, and trafficking of narcotics. Operations have been carried out by U.S. B-52 and F-22 combat aircraft (the first use of the latter in combat in Afghanistan) alongside Afghan A-29s. General John Nicholson, the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, has cited both new troops and expanded authorities in saying that, with the new strategy, "we've set all the conditions to win."[91]

---

[84] Jim Garamone, "President Gives Mattis Authority to Set U.S. Troop Strength in Afghanistan," Department of Defense, June 14, 2017.

[85] Dan Lamothe, "Trump added troops in Afghanistan. But NATO is still short of meeting its goal," *Washington Post*, November 9, 2017.

[86] Robin Emmott, "NATO to send more troops to Afghanistan after U.S. shift," Reuters, November 7, 2017.

[87] For more on the debate around the merits of revealing troop levels, see Jon Donnelly, "Analysis: Why Won't Trump Discuss Troop Numbers?" *CQ News*, August 23, 2017.

[88] Rebecca Kheel, "Dems: Trump 'has no strategy" for Afghanistan," *The Hill*, August 21, 2017.

[89] Thomas Joscelyn and Bill Roggio, "Sending more troops to Afghanistan is a good start," *Long War Journal*, August 21, 2017; Philip Rucker and Robert Costa, "'It's a hard problem': Inside Trump's decision to send more troops to Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, August 21, 2017.

[90] Department of Defense Press Briefing by General Nicholson via teleconference from Kabul, Afghanistan, November 20, 2017.

[91] Hans Nichols and Jonathan Allen, "'Still in a stalemate,' top U.S. commander in Afghanistan says," NBC News, November 24, 2017.

Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA)

The post-2014 U.S. military presence is based on a Bilateral Security Accord (BSA), which includes the U.S. demand for legal immunities for U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The immunity was authorized by a special *loya jirga* in November 2013.[92] On September 30, 2014, almost immediately after Ghani took office, the BSA—as well as a similar document providing for the presence of NATO forces—was signed between then U.S. Ambassador Cunningham and National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar. Afghanistan's parliament ratified the BSA in late November 2014, and it was considered by the Administration as an executive agreement and was not submitted for U.S. Senate ratification. During the March 2015 visit of Ghani and Abdullah, the Administration announced that the U.S and Afghan governments agreed to form the bilateral Joint Commission stipulated by the BSA to oversee its implementation.

Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA)

The BSA followed a broader "Strategic Partnership Agreement" (SPA) signed by President Obama and President Karzai in Afghanistan on May 1, 2012. The SPA, which terminates at the end of 2024, signaled an extended U.S. commitment to Afghan stability. It was signed after a long negotiation that focused on resolving Afghan insistence on control over detention centers and a halt to or control over nighttime raids on insurgents by U.S. forces.

Major SPA provisions include[93]

- A commitment to continue to foster U.S.-Afghan "close cooperation" to secure Afghanistan. This strongly implied, but did not state outright, that U.S. troops would remain in Afghanistan after 2014, but no U.S. troop number was specified.
- A U.S. commitment to request appropriations to provide training and arms to the Afghan security forces. No dollar amounts or weapons systems were specified.
- U.S. designation of Afghanistan as a "Major Non-NATO Ally," a designation reserved for close U.S. allies. In keeping with that pledge, on July 7, 2012, then-Secretary Clinton announced that designation, opening Afghanistan to extensive defense research cooperation with the United States and facilitating U.S. training and leasing of defense articles to Afghanistan.
- A U.S. pledge not to establish "permanent" U.S. bases or use Afghan facilities against neighboring countries. The agreement allows long-term U.S. use of Afghan facilities. Successive National Defense Authorizations have contained provisions prohibiting the establishment of permanent U.S. bases in Afghanistan.
- A U.S. commitment to request economic aid for Afghanistan for the duration of the agreement (2014-2024). No dollar amounts were specified.
- A commitment to form a U.S.-Afghanistan Bilateral Commission to monitor implementation of the SPA. Secretary of State Kerry's visit to Kabul on April 9, 2016, was partly to reconvene the commission after a three-year hiatus.

[92] Anne Gearan, "U.S., Afghanistan Reach Post-2014 Security Accord," *Washington Post*, October 13, 2013.

[93] "Security and Defense Cooperation Agreement Between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan," Available at https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/244487.pdf.

The final SPA was ratified by the Afghanistan National Assembly on May 26, 2012, by a vote of 180-4 after previous approval by a *loya jirga* called by Karzai.[94]

Building Afghan Forces and Establishing Rule of Law

Key to the security of Afghanistan is the effectiveness of the ANDSF, which consists primarily of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP). Among the major concerns raised in DOD and other reports are (1) absenteeism and the fact that about 35% of the force does not reenlist each year, and the rapid recruitment might dilute the force's quality;[95] (2) widespread illiteracy within it, which prompted an increasing focus on providing literacy training (as of 2010); (3) casualty rates that U.S. commanders call "unsustainable," including over 6,700 combat deaths in 2016 (up from 5,500 the previous year), (4) inconsistent leadership that sometimes causes Afghan commanders to overestimate insurgent strength or to panic at the first sign of insurgent assault; and (5) a deficit of logistical capabilities, such as airlift, medical evacuation, resupply, and other associated functions. Many units also still suffer from a shortfall in weaponry, spare parts, and fuel. Some key metrics related to ANDSF performance, such as casualties, attrition rates, and personnel strength, were newly classified by U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) in the October 2017 SIGAR quarterly report; SIGAR previously published those and related metrics as part of its quarterly reports.[96] The training component of RSM supersedes the prior training institutions such as the "Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan" (CSTC-A) and the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A). In 2012, CSTC-A's mission was reoriented to building the capacity of the Afghan Defense and Interior Ministries and to provide financial resources to the ANDSF. CSTC-A pays the salaries of the ANA and provides financial and advisory input to the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA), discussed below, that pays the Afghan police.

[94] The SPA replaced an earlier, more limited strategic partnership agreement established on May 23, 2005, when Karzai and President Bush issued a "joint declaration." The declaration provided for U.S. forces to have access to Afghan military facilities, in order to prosecute "the war against international terror and the struggle against violent extremism." Karzai's signing of the declaration was supported by a consultative *jirga* in Kabul in May 2005. The *jirga* supported an indefinite presence of international forces to maintain security but urged Karzai to delay a firm decision to request such a presence.

[95] An October 2017 SIGAR report revealed that nearly half of all foreign military trainees that went absent without leave (AWOL) while in U.S.-based training (152 of 320). Those 152 AWOL Afghan trainees make up around 6% of the 2,537 Afghans who came to the U.S. for training between 2005 and 2017, compared with just .07% of trainees from other countries. SIGAR-18-03-SP, "U.S.-Based Training for Afghanistan Security Personnel: Trainees Who Go Absent Without Leave Hurt Readiness and Morale, And May Create Security Risks," October 17, 2017.

[96] Shawn Snow, "Report: US officials classify crucial metrics on Afghan casualties, readiness," *Military Times*, October 30, 2017.

Table 4. Summary of U.S. Strategy and Implementation

Stated and Implied Goals: To prevent Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups from using Afghanistan to plan attacks on the United States, and to prevent the Taliban insurgency from overthrowing the Afghan government.
U.S. Strategy Implementation: U.S. forces train, advise, and assist the ANDSF to secure Afghanistan and to conduct counterterrorism operations against Al Qaeda and the Islamic State-Khorasan Province. Combat is also authorized to counter imminent Taliban and other insurgent threats to U.S. forces and to Afghan forces and the Afghan government.
Drawdown and Provision of U.S. Enablers: Following the 2009 "surge," U.S. force levels reached a high of 100,000 in mid-2011, then fell to 68,000 ("surge recovery) by September 20, 2012, and to 34,000 by February 2014. Current U.S. force level is about 9,800 plus about 6,400 forces from NATO partners in the "Resolute Support Mission." The U.S. force remained at 9,800 during 2015-16 and declined to 8,400 (the current authorized level) at the end of 2016. It was reportedly in August 2017 that the actual number of U.S. troops serving in Afghanistan averages between 11,000 and 12,000 at any given time, a product of units overlapping as they transition in and out of the country.[97] No subsequent drawdowns have been stipulated by the Trump Administration, which authorized Secretary of Defense James Mattis in June 2017 to send around 4,000 additional troops to the country.
Long-Term Broad Engagement: The SPA (see above) pledges U.S. security and economic assistance to Afghanistan until 2024. U.S. economic and Afghan force train and equip funding pledged by U.S. to remain roughly at current levels through at least FY2017.
Political Settlement/Pakistan Cooperation: U.S. policy is to support a political settlement between the Afghan government and the Taliban. As part of that effort, U.S. officials attempt to enlist Pakistan's commitment to deny safe haven in Pakistan to Afghan militants and to promote talks between the Afghan government and Taliban representatives.
Economic Development: U.S. policy supports Afghan efforts to build an economy that can be self-sufficient by 2024 by further developing agriculture, collecting corporate taxes and customs duties, exploiting vast mineral deposits, expanding small industries, and integrating Afghanistan into regional diplomatic and trading and investment structures.

Size and Other Features of the ANDSF

On January 21, 2010, a joint U.N.-Afghan "Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board" (JCMB) decided that the ANA would expand to 171,600 and the ANP to about 134,000, (total ANDSF of 305,600) before the end of 2011. In August 2011, a larger target size of 358,000 (196,000 ANA and 162,000 ANP) was set, to be reached by November 2012. The size of the forces—which do not include the approximately 30,000 local security forces discussed below—is about 330,000, roughly 8% below target levels. Both higher and lower ANDSF target sizes (378,000 and 228,000) were discussed within NATO but not adopted over various concerns.

Ethnic Composition of the ANDSF. After the 2001 ousting of the Taliban regime, Northern Alliance (see above) figures took key security positions and weighted recruitment toward ethnic Tajiks. Many Pashtuns, in reaction, refused recruitment, but the naming of a Pashtun as Defense Minister in December 2004 mitigated that difficulty. The problem was further alleviated with better pay and other reforms, and the force composition is now roughly in line with that of the Afghan population. Tajiks are still slightly overrepresented in the command ranks. Some of the difficulties in forming a new cabinet after the NUG was formed in September 2014 concerned maintaining ethnic balance in the leadership of security institutions.

Literacy Issues. Regarding literacy, the U.S. goal was to have all ANDSF have at least first-grade literacy, and half to have third-grade literacy, by the end of 2014. It is unclear whether those goals were met, though literacy in the ANDSF has been improved by the program, by some accounts. However, a SIGAR audit from January 2014 cautioned that the goals were "unrealistic" and

[97] Courtney Kube, "U.S. Has Thousands More Troops in Afghanistan Than the Pentagon Admits," NBC News, August 23, 2017.

"unattainable" given authorized force levels, and warned that efforts to measure the effectiveness of ANDSF literacy programs were limited.[98]

ANDSF Funding

It costs an estimated $5 billion per year to fund the ANDSF. The Administration contributed $4.1 billion for the ANDSF for FY2015 and $3.65 billion for FY2016 (Consolidated Appropriation for FY2016, P.L. 114-113)—slightly lower than the $3.75 billion requested by the Administration. For FY2017, the Obama Administration requested about $3.45 billion for the ANDSF. At the NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016, U.S. partners pledged $1 billion annually for the ANDSF during 2017-2020.[99] Afghanistan is assessed by U.S. officials as contributing its pledged funds—$500 million (as calculated in Afghan currency)—despite budgetary difficulties. U.S. funding is authorized yearly in the National Defense Authorization. The FY2017 NDAA (S. 2943P.L. 114-328) extended authority to provide Afghan Security Forces Funding (ASFF) for the ANDSF, and both bills set as a goal the use of $25 million to increase the recruitment of women to the ANDSF.

NATO Trust Fund for the ANA and Law and Order Trust Fund for the ANP

Some of the donations for the ANDSF are channeled through Trust Funds. In 2007, ISAF set up a Trust Fund for the ANA, used to fund the transportation of donated military equipment and training of the ANA. The fund's mandate was expanded in 2009 to include sustainment costs and in 2010 to support literacy training for the ANA. Since inception, 26 donor nations have given the ANA Trust Fund over $1.5 billion, according to the DOD report on Afghanistan issued in June 2016.

There is also a separate "Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan" (LOTFA), run by the U.N. Development Program (UNDP). It pays salaries of the ANP as well as food costs. Since 2002, donors have contributed $4.96 billion to the Fund, of which the United States contributed about $1.7 billion. Japan contributes about $250 million per year and South Korea contributes about $100 million per year. The fund is in the process of transition from management by UNDP to the Afghan government.

Other Bilateral Donations. Other bilateral donations to the ANDSF, both in funds and in arms and equipment donations, include the "NATO Equipment Donation Program" through which donor countries supply the ANDSF with equipment. Since 2002, over $3 billion in assistance to the ANDSF has come from these sources. There is also a NATO-Russia Council Helicopter Maintenance Trust Fund. Launched in March 2011, this fund provides maintenance and repair capacity to the Afghan Air Force helicopter fleet, much of which is Russian-made.

The Afghan National Army (ANA)

The Afghan National Army has been built "from scratch" since 2002—it is not a direct continuation of the national army that existed from the 1880s until the Taliban era. That army disintegrated entirely during the 1992-1996 *mujahedin* civil war and the 1996-2001 Taliban period. The ANA is reportedly highly regarded by Afghans as a symbol of nationhood and factional nonalignment.

---

[98] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Afghan National Security Forces: Despite Reported Successes, Concerns Remain about Literacy Program Results, Contract Oversight, Transition, and Sustainment," SIGAR 14-30 Audit Report, January 2014.

[99] Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Afghanistan. September 15, 2016.

Of its authorized size of 195,000, the ANA (all components) has about 170,000 personnel. Its special operations component, trained by U.S. Special Operations Forces, numbers nearly 21,000, and U.S. commanders say it might be one of the most proficient special forces in the region.[100] Afghan special forces are utilized extensively to reverse Taliban gains, and their efforts reportedly make up 70 to 80 percent of the fighting.[101]

The problem of absenteeism within the ANA is in large part because soldiers do not serve in their provinces of residence. Many in the ANA take long trips to their home towns to remit funds to their families. However, absenteeism has eased somewhat in recent years because almost all of the ANA is now paid electronically.

The United States and other donors have given the ANA primarily light weapons rather than large numbers of heavy arms such as tanks. The ANA operates a few hundred Russian-built T-55 and T-62 tanks left over from the Soviet occupation. The United States is also helping the ANDSF build up an indigenous weapons production capability. However, in line with U.S. efforts to cut costs for the ANDSF, the Defense Department shifted in 2013 from providing new equipment to maintaining existing equipment.

Afghan Air Force (AAF)

Afghanistan's Air Force is emerging as a key component of the ANDSF's efforts to combat the insurgency. It has been mostly a support force but, since 2014, has progressively increased its bombing operations in support of coalition ground forces, mainly using the Brazil-made A-29 Super Tucano discussed below. The force is a carryover from the Afghan Air Force that existed prior to the Soviet invasion, and its equipment was virtually eliminated in the 2001-2002 U.S. combat against the Taliban regime. It has about 8,400 personnel, matching its target size. Since FY2010, the United States has obligated over $3.2 billion for the AAF, including nearly $1 billion for equipment and aircraft. Still, equipment, maintenance, logistical difficulties, and defections continue to plague the Afghan Air Force.

The Afghan Air Force has about 104 aircraft including four C-130 transport planes and 46 Mi-17 (Russian-made) helicopters. The target size of its fleet is 140 total aircraft. Defense Department purchases for the AAF of 56 Mi-17s has been mostly implemented to date. The AAF also has taken delivery of the first eight out of 20 A-29 Super Tucano aircraft that it has purchased. Other platforms available to the AAF include the MD-530 helicopter, and 3 Cheetah helicopters donated by India. The FY2016 Consolidated Appropriation (P.L. 114-113) prohibits U.S. funding of any additional C-130s (acquisition of four more is planned by the AAF) until DOD provides a report on Afghanistan's airlift requirements, a provision maintained in Sec. 9020 of the FY2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 115-31). U.S. plans do not include supply of fixed-wing combat aircraft such as F-16s, which Afghanistan wants to acquire eventually, according to U.S. officials.

Afghanistan also is seeking the return of 26 aircraft, including some MiG-2s that were flown to safety in Pakistan and Uzbekistan during the past conflicts in Afghanistan. In 2010, Russia and Germany supplied MI-8 helicopters to the Afghan Air Force.

[100] Author conversations with U.S. commanders in Afghanistan, visiting Washington DC, September 2016.

[101] Helene Cooper, "Afghan Forces Are Praised, Despite Still Relying Heavily on U.S. Help," *New York Times*, August 20, 2017.

Afghan National Police (ANP)

U.S. and Afghan officials believe that a credible and capable national police force is critical to combating the insurgency. DOD reports on Afghanistan assess that there have been "significant strides [that] have been made in professionalizing the ANP." However, many outside assessments of the ANP are negative, asserting that there is rampant corruption to the point where citizens mistrust and fear the ANP. DOD reports acknowledge that the force has a far higher desertion rate (about 2% a month) than does the ANA; substantial illiteracy; and involvement in local factional or ethnic disputes because the ANP works in the communities its personnel come from.

The target size of the ANP, including all forces under the ANP umbrella (except the Afghan Local Police), is 162,000 personnel. The force has about 154,000 personnel. About 3,110 ANP are women, and in January 2014—for the first time—a woman was appointed as a district police commander.

The ANP is increasingly being provided with heavy weapons and now have about 5,000 armored vehicles countrywide. Still, most police units lack adequate ammunition and vehicles. In some cases, equipment requisitioned by their commanders was sold and the funds pocketed by the police officers.

The U.S. police training effort was first led by State Department/Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), but DOD took over the lead role in April 2005. Police training has been highlighted by SIGAR and others as a potentially problematic area where greater interagency cooperation is needed.[102]

Supplements to the National Police: Afghan Local Police (ALP) and Others

In 2008, the failure of several police training efforts led to a decision to develop local forces to protect their communities, despite long-standing hesitance to recreate militias prone to committing abuses and arbitrary execution of justice. To try to mitigate that risk, the United States and Afghanistan placed the newly empowered local forces firmly under Afghan Ministry of Interior control. Among these forces (which are in addition to the ANP forces) are the following:

- *Afghan Local Police (ALP)*. The ALP concept grew out of earlier programs. In 2008, the "Afghan Provincial Protection Program," funded with DOD (CERP) monies, was implemented in a district of Wardak Province in 2009 with 100 recruits, and was eventually expanded to 1,200 personnel. U.S. commanders said that weapons were supplied to the militias by the Afghan government, using U.S. funds. Participants were given $200 per month in salary. In February 2010, a similar effort called Village Stability Operations (VSO) began in Qandahar Province when U.S. Special Operations Forces organized about 25 villagers into a local armed watch group. The program was expanded in 2012 into the ALP program in which the U.S. Special Operations Forces set up and trained local security organs of about 300 members each, under the control of district police chiefs. Each fighter is vetted by local elders as well as Afghan intelligence. The current number of ALP members (known as "guardians") is around 29,000, close to the Defense Department's target of 30,000. The ALP have the authority to detain criminals or insurgents temporarily, and transfer them to the ANP or ANA, but the ALP have been cited by Human Rights Watch and other human rights

[102] Alex Horton, "Some U.S. troops watch 'Cops' to train Afghan police. That's a problem, watchdog says," *Washington Post*, September 21, 2017.

groups, as well as by DOD investigations, for killings, rapes, arbitrary detentions, land grabs, and sexual abuse of young boys.[103] Others characterize ALP forces as unaccountable militias serving the interests of local strongmen, criticizing the ALP as incompatible with the goal of creating nationalized defense and security forces.[104] The ALP are completely funded by the United States (ASFF funds disbursed by CSTC-A) at around $90 million a year.

- *Afghan Public Protection Force*. This force, operating as a state-owned enterprise under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior, guards sites and convoys. It was formed to implement Karzai's August 17, 2010, decree (No. 62) that private security contractor forces be disbanded and their functions performed by official Afghan government forces by March 20, 2012. The unit, which bills customers for contracted work, numbers about 22,000, but there is no formal target size.

The local security forces above resemble but are not traditional local security structures called *arbaki,* which are private tribal militias with no connection to national institutions. Some believe that the *arbaki* concept should be revived as a means of securing Afghanistan, as they did during and prior to the reign of Zahir Shah.[105] The programs discussed above somewhat reverse earlier efforts to disarm local sources of armed force.[106]

Rule of Law/Criminal Justice Sector

Many experts believe that an effective justice sector is vital to Afghan governance. Some of the criticisms and allegations of corruption at all levels of the Afghan bureaucracy have been discussed throughout this report. U.S. justice sector programs generally focus on promoting rule of law and building capacity of the judicial system, including police training and court construction. The FY2016 consolidated appropriation (P.L. 114-113) requires that at least $50 million in Economic Support Funds or International Narcotics and Law Enforcement funding be used for rule of law programs in Afghanistan in FY2016; the FY2017 measure makes $7 million available for such programs to a number of countries including Afghanistan. The rule of law issue is covered in CRS Report RS21922, *Afghanistan: Politics, Elections, and Government Performance*, by Kenneth Katzman, and CRS Report R41484, *Afghanistan: U.S. Rule of Law and Justice Sector Assistance*, by Liana W. Rosen and Kenneth Katzman.

[103] Ernesto Londono, "U.S. Cites Local Afghan Police Abuses," *Washington Post*, December 16, 2011.

[104] Mujib Mashal, "Afghan Plan to Expand Militia Raises Abuse Concerns," *New York Times*, October 16, 2015.

[105] See, for example, Ali Seraj, "The Arbaki can secure Afghanistan better than the US," Al Jazeera, November 5, 2014.

[106] The main program, run by UNAMA, was called the "DDR" program—Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration—and it formally concluded on June 30, 2006. The major donor for the program was Japan, which contributed about $140 million. The DDR program was initially expected to demobilize 100,000 fighters. Of those demobilized, 55,800 former fighters exercised reintegration options provided by the program: starting small businesses, farming, and other options. Some studies criticized the DDR program for failing to prevent a certain amount of rearmament of militiamen or stockpiling of weapons and for the rehiring of some militiamen. For an analysis of the DDR program, see Christian Dennys. *Disarmament, Demobilization and Rearmament?*, June 6, 2005, http://www.jca.apc.org/~jann/Documents/Disarmament%20demobilization%20rearmament.pdf.

Reintegration and Potential Reconciliation with Insurgents

For years, the U.S., the Afghan government, and various neighboring states have engaged in efforts to bring about a political settlement with insurgents that could involve Taliban figures' obtaining ministerial posts, seats in parliament, or control over territory.

On September 5, 2010, an "Afghan High Peace Council" (HPC) was formed to oversee the settlement and reintegration process. Then-President Karzai appointed former President/Northern Alliance political leader Burhanuddin Rabbani to head it, largely to gain Northern Alliance support for negotiations with the Taliban. On September 20, 2011, Rabbani was assassinated and his son, Salahuddin Rabbani, was named by the HPC to succeed him in April 2012. Rabbani is currently Foreign Minister in the NUG cabinet; his successor as HPC head, Ahmad Gaylani (a Pashtun former *mujahedin* party leader mentioned earlier), died of natural causes in January 2017.

In 2011, U.S. diplomats held their first meetings with Taliban officials, and subsequent U.S.-Taliban meetings discussed proposals for the United States to transfer five senior Taliban captives from the Guantanamo detention facility to a form of house arrest in Qatar; and the Taliban would release the one U.S. prisoner of war it held, Bowe Bergdahl. The talks broke off in March 2012 but were resurrected in 2013, and, in June 2013, the Taliban opened a representative office in Qatar and issued a statement refusing future ties to international terrorist groups. However, the Taliban violated understandings with the United States and Qatar by raising a flag of the former Taliban regime and calling the facility the office of the "Islamic Emirate" of Afghanistan—the name the Taliban regime gave for Afghanistan during its rule. These actions prompted U.S. officials, through Qatar, to compel the Taliban to close the office. However, the Taliban officials remained in Qatar, and indirect U.S.-Taliban talks through Qatari mediation revived in mid-2014. These indirect talks led to the May 31, 2014, exchange of Bergdahl for the release to Qatar of the five Taliban figures, with the stipulation that they cannot travel outside Qatar for at least one year.[107] That ban expired on June 1, 2015, but Qatar extended the ban until there is an agreed solution that would ensure the five do not rejoin the Taliban insurgency.

President Ghani was elected in 2014 pledging to prioritize forging a reconciliation agreement with the insurgency, despite skepticism from many Afghan figures over the Taliban's intentions as well as those of Pakistan. A settlement will undoubtedly require compromises that could adversely affect the human rights situation because the insurgents are Islamists who seek strict adherence to Islamic law. The Obama Administration initially withheld endorsement of the concept over concerns about concessions to the Taliban, but eventually backed it under the stipulation that any settlement require insurgent leaders, as an outcome,[108] to (1) cease fighting, (2) accept the Afghan constitution, and (3) sever any ties to Al Qaeda or other terrorist groups. The Taliban reportedly submitted a political platform that signaled acceptance of some aspects of human rights and women's rights provisions of the current constitution at a meeting between senior Taliban figures and members of the Northern Alliance faction held in France (December 20-21, 2012).[109]

[107] The five figures, and their positions during the Taliban's period of rule, were Mullah Mohammad Fazl, the chief of staff of the Taliban's military; Noorullah Noori, the Taliban commander in northern Afghanistan; Khairullah Khairkhwa, the Taliban regime Interior Minister; Mohammad Nabi Omari, a Taliban official; and Abdul Haq Wasiq, the Taliban regime's deputy intelligence chief.

[108] The concept that this stipulation could be an "outcome" of negotiations was advanced by Secretary of State Clinton at the first annual Richard C. Holbrooke Memorial Address. February 18, 2011.

[109] Author conversations with Afghan officials and U.S. experts. 2012-2013.

Ghani's trips as President to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and China have focused on building support among these regional powers for talks; these countries are perceived as holding some leverage over the Taliban movement (or, in the case of China, over Pakistan). In May 2015, the Pugwash International Conference on Science and World Affairs convened talks in Qatar between Taliban representatives and Afghan officials, acting in their personal capacities. The Pugwash meetings, which reportedly have continued despite formal Taliban rejection of further negotiations, may have resulted in agreement for the Taliban to reopen its office in Qatar, to serve as a location for further talks, and for possible amendments to the Afghan constitution should a settlement be reached—a concept previously rejected by the Afghan government. Later that month, a member of the HPC met in western China with three former Taliban regime figures—a meeting convened by China reportedly with assistance from Pakistan.[110]

The government reportedly hopes that the political settlement with HIG signed in September 2016 (more below) will prompt the Taliban to agree to a political settlement. Subsequently, press reports indicated that some Taliban figures continue to favor a settlement and integration into the Afghan political process, at least in part to distance the movement from Pakistani influence.

Talks have been supported by regional governments. In late 2015, the United States, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China formed a working group to try to restart government-Taliban negotiations; the four have held several meetings that ended with pledges to continue efforts toward that end. In December 2015, Ghani received a warm reception in Islamabad to attend a Heart of Asia process regional meeting, and during that visit Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States agreed that settlement talks should resume. However, meetings in late 2016 between Russia, China, and Pakistan angered the Afghan government, which was not invited to join.

It is unclear what role reconciliation plays in President Trump's new approach to Afghanistan. In his August 21, 2017, speech laying out the new strategy, he referred to a "political settlement" as an outcome of an "effective military effort," but did not elaborate on what U.S. goals or conditions might be as part of this putative political process. In remarks the next day, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson rejected the idea of preconditioning talks on the Taliban's acceptance of certain arrangements, saying "the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban representatives need to sit down and sort this out. It's not for the U.S. to tell them it must be this particular model, it must be under these conditions."[111] There have been no recent indications that the Taliban leadership is contemplating new talks with the Afghan government. President Trump and others within the U.S. and Afghan governments may support closing the Taliban's Qatar office, citing its evident failure to contribute to a meaningful political settlement.[112] Others warn that doing so could strengthen the hands of hardliners within the Taliban who argue that the Afghan government is not serious about talks.[113]

Hikmatyar Faction (HIG) and its Reconciliation with the Government

The recent reconciliation with the government of one insurgent faction, Hizb-e-Islami-Gulbuddin (HIG), led by former *mujahedin* party leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, has been seen as a possible template for further work toward a political settlement. HIG received extensive U.S. support

[110] "Taliban Representatives Meet with Afghan Envoy in China." *New York Times*, May 26, 2015.

[111] Secretary of State Rex Tillerson Press Availability, Department of State, August 22, 2017.

[112] Stephanie Kirchgaessner, Sune Engel Rasmussen, and Julian Borger, "Trump pushing Afghan president to close Taliban office in Qatar, sources say," *Guardian*, September 26, 2017.

[113] Noor Zahid, "Concern Grows That Closing Taliban Office in Qatar Could Undermine Peace Talks," Voice of America, October 7, 2017.

against the Soviet Union, but turned against its *mujahedin* colleagues after the Communist government fell in 1992. Hekmatyar is accused of human rights abuses, most notably indiscriminate shelling in Kabul that left thousands dead, as part of his role in the civil war. In the post-Taliban period, HIG allied with the Taliban, while sometimes clashing with it north and east of Kabul. HIG was not a major factor on the Afghanistan battlefield and focused primarily on high-profile attacks, such as a suicide bombing on September 18, 2012, which killed 12 perople, including 8 South African nationals working for a USAID-chartered air service. HIG also killed six Americans (two soldiers and four contractors) in a suicide bombing in Kabul on May 16, 2013. On February 19, 2003, the U.S. government designated Hikmatyar as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist," under Executive Order 13224, subjecting it to a freeze of any U.S.-based assets. The group is not designated as a "Foreign Terrorist Organization" (FTO).

In January 2010, Hikmatyar signaled his openness to reconciliation with Kabul by setting a number of conditions, including elections under a neutral caretaker government following a U.S. withdrawal. Some HIG members attended the government's consultative "peace jirga" on June 2-4, 2010, which discussed the issue of reconciliation. HIG figures met Afghan government representatives at a June 2012 conference in Paris and a meeting in Chantilly, France, in December 2012. In January 2014, Hikmatyar instructed followers to vote in the April 5, 2014, Afghan presidential elections. After months of negotiations, a 25-point reconciliation agreement was signed between Afghan officials and Hikmatyar representatives on September 22, 2016, and reportedly includes Hikmatyar eventually obtaining a ceremonial government post and Afghan efforts to obtain the lifting of U.S. sanctions against him; U.N. sanctions against him were dropped in February 2017. In May 2017, Hekmatyar returned to Kabul, rallying thousands of supporters at a speech in which he criticized the NUG, leading to concerns about how constructive or destabilizing a role he might play in Afghan politics going forward.[114]

Reintegration

A concept related to reconciliation is "reintegration"—an effort to induce insurgent fighters to stop fighting. A reintegration plan was drafted by the Afghan government and adopted by a "peace *loya jirga*" during June 2-4, 2010,[115] providing for surrendering fighters to receive jobs, amnesty, protection, and an opportunity to be part of the security architecture for their communities.

About 11,000 fighters have been reintegrated since 2010, a majority of whom are from the north and west. The program depended on donations: Britain, Japan, and several other countries, including the United States, have donated about $200 million, of which the U.S. contribution has been about half the total (CERP funds).[116] Overall funding shortfalls slowed the program in 2014 and, during the Ghani and Abdullah visit in March 2015, the United States announced an additional $10 million to support the reintegration program. However, funding largely stopped in early 2016 and payments to reintegrated fighters were halted as donors reassessed the value of the program.[117] Funding for the HPC and related reintegration work continues. The United States spent about $33 million in FY2016 on programs to counter violent extremism, including cultural,

[114] Hamid Shalizi, "Afghan former warlord Hekmatyar rallies supporters in Kabul," Reuters, May 5, 2017.

[115] Afghanistan National Security Council. "Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program." April 2010.

[116] The National Defense Authorization Act for FY2010 (P.L. 111-84)) authorized the use of CERP funds to win local support, to "reintegrate" Taliban fighters.

[117] Tim Craig and Mohammad Sharif. "U.S.-Afghan Plan to Buy Peace Might Be Failing." *Washington Post*, May 18, 2016.

entertainment, and educational efforts.[118] Some observers say there have been cases in which reintegrated fighters have committed human rights abuses against women and others, suggesting that the reintegration process might have unintended consequences. Earlier reintegration efforts had marginal success. A "Program for Strengthening Peace and Reconciliation" (referred to in Afghanistan by its Pashto acronym "PTS") operated during 2003-2008, headed by then-*Meshrano Jirga* speaker Sibghatullah Mojadeddi and then-Vice President Karim Khalili, and overseen by Karzai's National Security Council. The program persuaded 9,000 Taliban figures and commanders to renounce violence and join the political process, but made little impact on the tenacity or strength of the insurgency.

Removing Taliban Figures from U.N. Sanctions Lists. A key Taliban demand in negotiations is the removal of the names of some Taliban figures from U.N. lists of terrorists. These lists were established pursuant to Resolution 1267 and Resolution 1333 (October 15, 1999, and December 19, 2000, both pre-September 11 sanctions against the Taliban and Al Qaeda) and Resolution 1390 (January 16, 2002). The Afghan government has submitted a list of 50 Taliban figures it wants taken off the list, which includes about 140 Taliban-related persons or entities. On January 26, 2010, Russia, previously a hold-out against such a process, dropped opposition to removing five Taliban-era figures from these sanctions lists, paving the way for their de-listing: those removed included Taliban-era foreign minister Wakil Mutawwakil and representative to the United States Abdul Hakim Mujahid. Mujahid is now on the HPC.

On June 17, 2011, in concert with U.S. confirmations of talks with Taliban figures, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolutions 1988 and 1989. The resolutions drew a separation between the Taliban and Al Qaeda with regard to the sanctions. However, a decision on whether to remove the 50 Taliban figures from the list, as suggested by Afghanistan, was deferred. On July 21, 2011, 14 Taliban figures were removed from the "1267" sanctions list; among them were four members of the HPC (including Arsala Rahmani, mentioned above).

Table 5. Major Security-Related Indicators

Force	Current Level
Total Foreign Forces in Afghanistan	About 15,000: 8,400 U.S. and 6,400 partner forces from 39 nations in RSM (6,900 U.S. forces are authorized as part of RSM, the remainder part of OFS), though the U.S. level is reportedly higher, between 11,000 and 12,000, at any given time. The peak was 140,000 international forces in 2011. The U.S. total was 25,000 in 2005; 16,000 in 2003; 5,000 in 2002.
U.S. Casualties in Afghanistan	2,216 killed in OEF, and 35 killed in Operation Freedom's Sentinel (post-2014). Additional 130 U.S. military deaths in other OEF theaters. 150 U.S. killed from October 2001-January 2003. 500+ killed in 2010.
Afghan National Army (ANA), including Afghan Air Force	About 178,000, of a 197,000 target size.
Afghan National Police (ANP)	About 154,000, near the target size of 162,000.
Afghan Local Police	About 29,000, close to the target size of 30,000.
ANDSF Salaries	About $1.6 billion per year, paid by donor countries bilaterally or via trust funds
Al Qaeda in Afghanistan	Between 100-300 members in Afghanistan (Afghan official estimates are higher), plus small numbers of affiliated Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, IMU, AQIS, and others
Number of Taliban fighters	Up to 30,000, plus about 3,000 Haqqani network

[118] Ibid.

Force	Current Level
Islamic State-affiliated forces	Estimated 700-1,000, plus some affiliated IMU

Sources: CRS; testimony and public statements by DOD officials; media reports.

Regional Dimension

The United States has encouraged Afghanistan's neighbors to support a stable and economically viable Afghanistan and to include Afghanistan in regional security and economic organizations and platforms. The Trump Administration has specifically linked U.S. policy in Afghanistan to broader regional dynamics, particularly as they relate to South Asia, and in particular signaled that the Administration plans to assertively pressure Pakistan to deny safe haven to Afghan militants.

The Administration first obtained formal pledges from Afghanistan's neighbors to noninterference in Afghanistan at an international meeting on Afghanistan in Istanbul on November 2, 2011 ("Istanbul Declaration") and again at the December 5, 2011, Bonn Conference (held on the 10th anniversary of the Bonn Conference that formed the post-Taliban government). As a follow-up to the Istanbul Declaration, confidence-building measures by Afghanistan's neighbors were discussed at a Kabul ministerial conference on June 14, 2012, which is now known as the "Heart of Asia" ministerial process. The Heart of Asia process involves 14 regional countries, 14 supporting countries, and 11 regional and international organizations that agreed to jointly fight terrorism and drug trafficking and pursue economic development.[119] The most recent Heart of Asia meetings were in Islamabad in December 2015 and Amritsar, India, on December 4, 2016; the next annual conference (the seventh) is to be held in Azerbaijan.

Afghanistan has sought to increase its integration with neighboring states through participation in other international fora, including

- South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which Afghanistan joined in November 2005;
- the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a security coordination body that includes Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, to which Afghanistan was granted full observer status in June 2012;
- the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA), which was launched in 2005, last met in November 2016 in Istanbul, and is to be hosted by Turkmenistan in Ashkabad in 2017;
- a "Regional Working Group" initiative, co-chaired by Turkey and UNAMA, which organized the November 2011 Istanbul meeting mentioned above;
- a "Kabul Silk Road" initiative, led by UNAMA, to promote regional cooperation on Afghanistan; and
- the still-expanding 50-nation "International Contact Group," through which U.S. officials have sought to enlist regional and greater international support for Afghanistan.

In addition, several regional meetings series have been established between the leaders of Afghanistan and neighboring countries. These include summit meetings between Afghanistan,

[119] Participating were Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, UAE, and Uzbekistan.

Pakistan, and Turkey; between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the U.S., and China (the Quadrilateral Coordination Group, or QCG); and between Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. However, this latter forum ended in mid-2012 after Afghanistan signed the SPA with the United States, which Iran strongly opposed. The Quadrilateral Coordination Group met for the sixth time in October 2017.[120] Russia convened a meeting with Pakistan and China to discuss Afghanistan in December 2016 (more below), drawing harsh condemnation from the Afghan government, which was not invited to participate; Afghanistan was invited to, and attended, the second (February 2017) and third (April 2017) meetings, though the United States declined to attend.

Economically, the U.S. has emphasized the development of a Central Asia-South Asia trading hub—part of a "New Silk Road" (NSR)—in an effort to keep Afghanistan stable and economically vibrant as donors wind down their involvement. The FY2014 omnibus appropriation, (P.L. 113-76) provided up to $150 million to promote Afghanistan's links within its region. The FY2016 Consolidated Appropriation (P.L. 114-113) contains a provision that an unspecified amount of Economic Support Funds (ESF) appropriated for Afghanistan be used "for programs in South and Central Asia to expand linkages between Afghanistan and countries in the region."

[120] "Four Nations Meet in Oman To Try To Restart Afghan Peace Talks," Radio Free Europe, October 17, 2017.

Table 6. Afghan and Regional Facilities Used for Operations in and Supply Lines to Afghanistan

Facility	Use
Bagram Air Base	50 miles north of Kabul, the operational hub of U.S. and NATO forces and aircraft in Afghanistan. Hospital constructed, one of the first permanent structures there.
Qandahar Airfield	The hub of military operations in southern Afghanistan.
Shindand Air Base	In Farah province, about 20 miles from Iran border. Used by U.S. and partner forces and combat aircraft since October 2004
Peter Ganci Base: Manas, Kyrgyzstan	Was used by 1,200 U.S. military personnel supporting operations in Afghanistan. Kyrgyz governments on several occasions demanded large increase in U.S. payments for its use. Kyrgyz parliament voted in June 2013 not to extend the U.S. lease beyond 2014 and U.S. forces vacated the facility on June 4, 2014.
Incirlik Air Base, Turkey	About 2,000 U.S. military personnel there; U.S. aircraft supply U.S. forces in Afghanistan.
Al Dhafra, UAE	Several thousand U.S. military personnel there support regional operations, including Afghanistan.
Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar	Largest air facility used by U.S. in region. Houses central air operations coordination center for U.S. missions in Afghanistan and against the Islamic State, and hosts CENTCOM forward headquarters.
Naval Support Facility, Bahrain	U.S. naval command headquarters for regional anti-smuggling, anti-terrorism, and anti-proliferation naval search missions. About 5,000 U.S. military personnel there.
Uzbekistan	Karsi-Khanabad Air Base not used by U.S. after September 2005, following U.S.-Uzbek dispute over May 2005 Uzbek crackdown on unrest in Andijon. Some U.S. shipments through Uzbekistan resumed in 2009 through Navoi airfield in central Uzbekistan.
Tajikistan	Some use of air bases and other facilities by coalition partners, and emergency use by U.S. permitted. India also uses Tajikistan air bases under separate agreement.
Pakistan	The main U.S. land supply route to Afghanistan.
Russia	Allowed nonlethal equipment bound for Afghanistan to transit Russia by rail during 2006-2014, as part of "Northern Distribution Network."

Pakistan

The neighbor that is considered most crucial to Afghanistan's security is Pakistan. Experts and officials of many countries debate the extent to which Pakistan is committed to Afghan stability versus attempting to exert control of Afghanistan through ties to insurgent groups. DOD reports on Afghanistan's stability repeatedly have identified Afghan militant safe havens in Pakistan as a threat to Afghan stability, and some DOD reports have stated that Pakistan uses proxy forces in Afghanistan to counter Indian influence there. President Trump, in announcing a new Afghanistan strategy in August 2017, declared that "we can no longer be silent about Pakistan's safe haven for terrorist organizations," and that while "in the past, Pakistan has been a valued partner ... it is time for Pakistan to demonstrate its commitment to civilization, order, and to peace."[121] Some argue that Pakistan sees Afghanistan as potentially providing it with strategic depth against India.[122] Traditional Pakistani concerns over Indian activities in Afghanistan could be compounded by President Trump's pledge to further develop the United States' strategic partnership with India as

[121] Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia, The White House, August 21, 2017.

[122] "Delhi's Road to Kabul Runs through Kashmir," Royal United Services Institute, March 25, 2014.

part of the new U.S. approach to Afghanistan and South Asia. However, Pakistan's leaders appear to increasingly believe that instability in Afghanistan could rebound to Pakistan's detriment. At a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on September 15, 2016, U.S. officials testified that Pakistan's military leaders directed their subordinates to deny safehaven to Afghan militant groups, but that the Pakistani military is overburdened by fighting Pakistani militant groups and cannot always focus adequately on fighting Afghan groups. About 2 million Afghan refugees have returned from Pakistan since the Taliban fell, but as many as another 2 million might still remain in Pakistan and Pakistan is pressing many of them to return to Afghanistan by the end of 2017; the forced return of several hundred thousand so far has exacerbated humanitarian problems in Afghanistan.[123]

Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement

U.S. efforts to persuade Pakistan to forge a "transit trade" agreement with Afghanistan bore success with the signature of a trade agreement between the two on July 18, 2010, though implementation has been uneven. The agreement allows for easier exportation via Pakistan of Afghan products, which are mostly agricultural products that depend on rapid transit and are key to Afghanistan's economy. Under the agreement, Afghan goods have access to Pakistani markets and ports, but cannot reach India directly. Afghan efforts to secure Pakistani approval for land transit of Afghan goods to India have been unsuccessful, a frequent irritant in the countries' relations. In May 2016, Afghanistan signed the "Chahbahar Agreement" with Iran and India under which India will invest $500 million to develop Iran's Chahbahar port on the Arabian Sea, facilitating increased trade between India and Afghanistan and bypassing Pakistan.

Total trade between the two is around $2 billion, but Pakistan is much more important for Afghanistan than the reverse. Afghanistan is the fifth largest destination for Pakistani exports, comprising about 6% of the total, while nearly 40% of all Afghan exports are to Pakistan.

Ghani has visited Pakistan and hosted visiting Pakistani officials several times as President in a concerted effort to improve relations. Pakistan has begun training small numbers of ANDSF officers in Pakistan and, in May 2015, improved cooperation manifested as a Memorandum of Understanding for Afghanistan's NDS intelligence service to be trained by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), its key intelligence arm. Pakistan appears to anticipate that improved relations with Afghanistan's leadership will also limit India's influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan has long asserted that India is using its Embassy and four consulates in Afghanistan (Pakistan says India has nine consulates) to recruit anti-Pakistan insurgents, and that India is using its aid programs only to build influence there.

Many Afghans had viewed positively Pakistan's role as the hub for U.S. backing of the *mujahedin* that forced the Soviet withdrawal in 1988-1989, but later came to resent Pakistan as one of only three countries to formally recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government (Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are the others). Relations improved after military leader President Pervez Musharraf left office in 2008. However, the September 2011 insurgent attacks on the U.S. Embassy and killing of former President Rabbani caused then president Karzai to move demonstrably closer to India.

International Border Question. There are no indications the two countries are close to settling the long-standing issue of their border. Pakistan has long sought that Afghanistan formally recognize as the border the "Durand Line," a border agreement reached between Britain (signed by Sir Henry Mortimer Durand) and then-Afghan leader Amir Abdul Rahman Khan in 1893, separating Afghanistan from what was then British-controlled India (later Pakistan after the 1947 partition). The border is recognized by the United Nations, but Afghanistan continues to indicate that the border was drawn unfairly to separate Pashtun tribes and should be renegotiated. Afghan leaders criticized October 21, 2012, comments by then-SRAP Grossman that U.S. "policy is that border

[123] Asad Hashim, "Afghan refugees return home amid Pakistan crackdown," Al Jazeera, February 26, 2017.

is the international border," even though that is the long-standing U.S. position. Tensions between the two neighbors have erupted several times in recent years, most recently in May 2017, when clashes at the Chaman border crossing over several days reportedly led to civilian and military casualties on both sides. Previous agreements led to efforts to deconflict the situation, but such bilateral mechanisms have evidently proven insufficient.[124]

U.S.-Pakistan Cooperation on Afghanistan

In the several years after the September 11, 2001, attacks, Pakistani cooperation against Al Qaeda was considered by U.S. officials to be relatively effective. Pakistan arrested over 700 Al Qaeda figures after the September 11 attacks[125] and allowed U.S. access to Pakistani airspace, some ports, and some airfields for the major combat phase of OEF. In April 2008, in an extension of the work of the Tripartite Commission (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and ISAF), the three countries agreed to set up five "border coordination centers" (BCCs) that include radar nodes to give liaison officers a common view of the border area. Four were established, but all were on the Afghan side of the border and Pakistan did not fulfill a pledge to establish one on the Pakistani side of the border, causing the BCC process to wither. However, according to DOD, as of mid-2015, there is an RSM Tripartite Joint Operations Center at which Afghan and Pakistan military liaison officers meet monthly. DOD reports that Afghanistan and Pakistan have conducted some high-level dialogues on countering the threat from the ISK-P.

The May 1, 2011, U.S. raid that killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan added to preexisting strains caused by Pakistan's refusal to crack down on the Haqqani network. Relations worsened further after a November 26, 2011, incident in which a U.S. airstrike killed 24 Pakistani soldiers, and Pakistan responded by closing border crossings, suspending participation in the border coordination centers, and boycotting the December 2011 Bonn Conference. U.S.-Pakistan cooperation on Afghanistan has since improved, but continued concerns over insufficient Pakistani action against the Haqqanis have led the Pentagon to withhold some U.S. security aid to Pakistan.[126] It is unclear how President Trump's stated intent to "change the approach and how to deal with Pakistan" might impact this assistance or other elements of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship. Senior administration officials have raised the issue of aid (which has been withheld in the past, evidently to little effect), as well as such measures as reexamining Pakistan's status as a major non-NATO ally, increasing U.S. drone strikes on targets within Pakistan, and imposing sanctions on Pakistani officials.[127] Others warn such measures could be counterproductive, highlighting the potential geopolitical costs of increasing pressure on Pakistan, especially as they relate to U.S. counterterrorism efforts and Pakistan's critical role in facilitating U.S. ground and air lines of communication to landlocked Afghanistan.[128] Successful Pakistani efforts to secure the release of several Americans held by the Haqqanis in Afghanistan in October 2017 (see "Haqqani Network") were hailed by U.S. officials, including President Trump who described the

[124] Shamil Shams, "Worst border clashes in years: Are Afghanistan and Pakistan at war?" *Deutsche Welle*, May 7, 2017.

[125] Among those captured by Pakistan are top bin Laden aide Abu Zubaydah (captured April 2002); alleged September 11 plotter Ramzi bin Al Shibh (September 11, 2002); top Al Qaeda planner Khalid Shaikh Mohammed (March 2003); and a top planner, Abu Faraj al-Libbi (May 2005).

[126] Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Dan Lamothe, "Mattis decides to withhold U.S. cash from key Pakistani military fund," *Washington Post*, July 21, 2017.

[127] Felicia Schwartz and Saeed Shah, "U.S. Readies New Steps to Pressure Pakistan," *Wall Street Journal*, August 22, 2017.

[128] Christopher Clary, "Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Limits of U.S. Influence," *War on the Rocks*, August 23, 2017.

operation as "a sign that [Pakistan] is honoring America's wishes for it to do more to provide security in the region."[129]

Iran

Iran apparently seeks to exert its historic influence over western Afghanistan and to protect Afghanistan's Shiite and other Persian-speaking minorities. Iran also seeks to ensure that U.S. forces cannot use Afghanistan as a base from which to pressure or attack Iran, to the point where Iran strenuously but unsuccessfully sought to scuttle the May 1, 2012, U.S.-Afghanistan SPA and BSA. According to General Nicholson in February 2017, Iran is backing Taliban insurgent elements in western Afghanistan. Iran has allowed a Taliban office to open in Iran, and high-level Taliban figures have visited Iran.[130] While some see the contacts as Iranian support of the insurgency, others see them as an effort to exert some influence over reconciliation efforts. Iran previously allowed Taliban figures to attend conferences in Iran attended by Afghan figures, including late High Peace Council head Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Some experts see inconsistency in Iran's support of Taliban fighters who are Pashtun, because Iran has traditionally supported the non-Pashtun Persian-speaking and Shiite factions in Afghanistan. Iran has funded pro-Iranian armed groups in the west. It has supported Hazara Shiites in Kabul and in Hazara-inhabited central Afghanistan, in part by providing scholarships and funding for technical institutes as well as mosques. There are consistent allegations that Iran has funded Afghan provincial council and parliamentary candidates in areas dominated by the Persian-speaking and Shiite minorities.[131] These efforts have helped Iran retain close ties with Afghanistan's leading Shiite cleric, Ayatollah Mohammad Mohseni, as well as Hazara political leader Mohammad Mohaqiq. Iran's ties to the Shiite community in Afghanistan have also facilitated Iran's recruitment of Afghan Shiites to fight on behalf of the Asad regime in Syria.

Iran also opposed the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which Iran saw that regime as a threat to its interests in Afghanistan, especially after Taliban forces captured Herat in September 1995. Iran subsequently drew even closer to the Northern Alliance than previously, providing its groups with fuel, funds, and ammunition.[132] In September 1998, Iranian and Taliban forces nearly came into direct conflict when Iran discovered that nine of its diplomats were killed in the course of the Taliban's offensive in northern Afghanistan. Iran massed forces at the border and threatened military action, but the crisis cooled without a major clash, possibly out of fear that Pakistan would support the Taliban. Iran offered search and rescue assistance in Afghanistan during the U.S.-led war to topple the Taliban, and it also allowed U.S. humanitarian aid to the Afghan people to transit Iran. Iran helped broker Afghanistan's first post-Taliban government, in cooperation with the United States, at the December 2001 "Bonn Conference." In February 2002, Iran expelled Gulbuddin Hikmatyar (see above).

Even as it funds anti-government groups as a means of pressuring the United States, Iran has built extensive ties to the Afghan government. Ghani has generally endorsed the approach of his predecessor on Iran, which was to call Iran a "friend" of Afghanistan and to assert that

[129] White House, "Statement From President Donald J. Trump on Recovering the Boyle-Coleman Family from Captivity in Pakistan," October 12, 2017.

[130] Maria Abi-Habib, "Iranians Build Up Afghan Clout," *Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 2012; Afghan Taliban Reportedly Sends Delegation to Iran for Talks. CBSnews.com, June 3, 2013.

[131] Laura King, "In Western Afghan City, Iran Makes Itself Felt," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 2010.

[132] Jonathon Steel, "America Includes Iran in Talks on Ending War in Afghanistan," *Washington Times*, December 15, 1997.

Afghanistan must not become an arena for disputes between the United States and Iran.[133] Ghani visited Tehran in April 2015 and, following meetings with President Rouhani and Supreme Leader Ali Khamene'i, there was agreement to work jointly against the Islamic State organization. Iran is helping combat that organization in Iraq and, to a lesser extent, in Syria. The two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on broader security and economic cooperation in August 2013, and in December 2013 expanded that pact into a strategic cooperation agreement. In October 2010, then-President Karzai acknowledged accepting about $2 million per year in cash payments from Iran, but Iran reportedly ceased the payments after the Karzai government signed the SPA with the United States in May 2012.

At other times, Afghanistan and Iran have had disputes over Iran's efforts to expel Afghan refugees. There are 1 million registered Afghan refugees in Iran, and about 1.4 million Afghan migrants living there. A crisis erupted in May 2007 when Iran expelled about 50,000 into Afghanistan. About 300,000 Afghan refugees have returned from Iran since the Taliban fell. Iran reportedly is recruiting Shiite Afghans to fight on behalf of the Asad regime in Syria.

The Obama Administration saw Iran as potentially helpful to its strategy for Afghanistan. Iran was invited to the U.N.-led meeting on Afghanistan at The Hague on March 31, 2009, at which Iran pledged cooperation on combating Afghan narcotics and in helping economic development in Afghanistan—both policies Iran is pursuing to a large degree. The United States supported Iran's attendance of the October 18, 2010, meeting of the International Contact Group on Afghanistan, held in Rome. The United States and Iran took similar positions on drug trafficking across the Afghan border at a U.N. meeting in Geneva in February 2010. Iran did not attend the January 28, 2010, London conference on Afghanistan, but it did attend the July 28, 2010, Kabul conference, the 2011 Bonn Conference, and several of the other donors' conferences.

Iran's Development Aid for Afghanistan

Iran's economic aid to Afghanistan does not conflict with U.S. efforts to develop Afghanistan. Iran has pledged about $1 billion in aid to Afghanistan, of which about $500 million has been provided to date. The funds have been used mostly to build roads and bridges in western Afghanistan. In cooperation with India, Iran has been building roads that would connect western Afghanistan to Iran's port of Chahbahar, and provide Afghan and other goods an easier outlet to the Persian Gulf. In July 2013, Iran and Afghanistan signed an agreement allowing Afghanistan to use the port, and this agreement was expanded in May 2016. Iran has developed power transmission lines in the provinces bordering Iran. Some of the funds reportedly are funneled through the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, which provides charity worldwide.

India

India's goals in Afghanistan appear to be, at least in part, to limit Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan. India saw the Afghan Taliban's hosting of Al Qaeda during 1996-2001 as a major threat because of Al Qaeda's association with radical Islamic organizations in Pakistan that seek to end India's control of part of the disputed territories of Jammu and Kashmir. Some of these groups have committed major acts of terrorism in India, including the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008 and in July 2011.

Afghanistan has sought close ties to India—in large part to access India's large and rapidly growing economy—but without causing a backlash from Pakistan. In October 2011, Afghanistan and India signed a "Strategic Partnership." The pact affirmed Pakistani fears by giving India, for

[133] Comments by President Karzai at the Brookings Institution. May 5, 2009.

the first time, a formal role in Afghan security by providing for India to train ANDSF personnel, of whom thousands have been trained since 2011.[134] As noted above, India has donated three Cheetah military helicopters to the Afghan Air Force.

In the immediate aftermath of Afghanistan-Pakistan border clashes in May 2013, Karzai visited India to seek sales of Indian artillery, aircraft, and other systems that would help it better defend its border with Pakistan,[135] but India resisted in order not to become ever more directly involved in the conflict in Afghanistan or alarm Pakistan. Ghani cancelled that request, as discussed above, apparently to avoid complicating his outreach to Pakistan. Ghani visited India in April 2015 to engage directly with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has expressed concerns about Ghani's emphasis on engaging Pakistani leaders.

India's past involvement in Afghanistan reflects its long-standing concerns about potential Pakistani influence and Islamic extremism emanating from Afghanistan. India supported the Northern Alliance against the Taliban in the mid-1990s and retains ties to Alliance figures. Many Northern Alliance figures have lived in India, although Indian diplomats stress they have close connections to Afghanistan's Pashtuns as well.

Development. Prior to 2011, India limited its involvement in Afghanistan to development issues. India is the fifth-largest single country donor to Afghan reconstruction, funding projects worth over $2 billion. At the NATO summit in Brussels in October 2016, India pledged an additional $1 billion for Afghanistan development needs. Indian officials assert that their projects are focused on civilian, not military, development and are in line with the development priorities set by the Afghan government. As part of the new U.S. strategy for Afghanistan, President Trump called for India to "help us more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development."

Prime Minister Modi visited Afghanistan in December 2015 and June 2016 to inaugurate India-sponsored projects (a new parliament complex in Kabul and the Afghan-India Friendship Dam in Herat province, respectively). In addition, India,

- along with the Asian Development Bank, financed a $300 million project, mentioned above, to bring electricity from Central Asia to Afghanistan.
- renovated the well-known Habibia High School in Kabul.
- signed, in May 2016, with Iran and Afghanistan, the "Chahbahar Agreement" under which India will invest $500 million to develop Iran's Chahbahar port on the Arabian Sea. That port is designed to facilitate increased trade between India and Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan.
- In December 2011, the Indian firm Steel Authority of India, Ltd. (SAIL) won a bid for three of four blocs of the Hajji Gak iron ore project in Bamiyan Province.
- helped Afghanistan's Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) with its efforts to build local governance organizations, and it provides 1,000 scholarships per year for Afghans to undergo higher education in India. Some Afghans want to enlist even more Indian assistance in training Afghan bureaucrats in accounting, forensic accounting, oversight, and other disciplines that will promote transparency in Afghan governance.

[134] "Afghans push India for more arms, despite Pakistan's wary eye," *The Indian Express*, August 23, 2016.

[135] Hamid Shalzi. "Afghanistan's Karzai Seeks Indian Military Aid Amid Tensions with Pakistan." Reuters, May 19, 2013.

Russia, Central Asian States, and China

Some regional states take an active interest not only in Afghan stability, but in the U.S. military posture that supports U.S. operations in Afghanistan. The region to the north of Afghanistan has been a key factor in U.S. efforts to rely less on routes through Pakistan to access Afghanistan.

Russia

Russia seeks to contain U.S. influence in Central Asia, but for years tacitly accepted the U.S. presence in Afghanistan as furthering the battle against radical Islamists in the region. Russia cooperated in developing the Northern Distribution Network supply line to Afghanistan and, in February 2009, ended a one-year suspension—related to differences over Russia's conflict with Georgia—on the shipment of nonlethal equipment into Afghanistan through Russia. About half of all ground cargo for U.S. forces in Afghanistan flowed through the Northern Distribution Network from 2011 to 2014, despite the extra costs as compared to the Pakistan route. However, Russian-U.S. collaboration in Afghanistan, a relative (and rare, perhaps singular) bright spot in the two countries' relationship, has suffered in light of a more general deterioration of bilateral ties.

Moscow has taken a markedly more assertive role in Afghanistan since at least late 2015, and while U.S. officials have differed in how they characterize both the nature of and motivation behind Russia's actions, there appears to be widespread agreement that they represent a challenge to U.S. goals there. The clearest apparent confirmation of material support by Russia to the Taliban came in April 2017, when General Nicholson explicitly declined, in response to a question, to refute reports that "they [the Russians] are sending weapons to the Taliban."[136] *The Washington Post*, citing unnamed U.S. defense officials, subsequently reported that Russia has provided weapons (including heavy machine guns) to the Taliban ostensibly to be used against the Islamic State affiliated fighters, but that the weapons had surfaced in places far from ISKP strongholds, like Helmand province.[137] Russia had previously condemned such claims as "groundless" and "absurd fabrications;" a Taliban spokesman also denied the reports, saying "our contacts with Russia are for political and diplomatic purposes only."[138] It can be argued that Russian supply of weaponry to the Taliban is counter-intuitive, insofar as the Taliban represents a Sunni extremist faction that is allied with other Sunni groups, such as affiliates of Al Qaeda, that have conducted attacks inside Russia itself.

Russia has also sought to establish itself as a player in Afghanistan by its efforts to bring about a negotiated settlement. In December 2016, Moscow hosted Chinese and Pakistani officials in a meeting that excluded Afghan representatives, drawing harsh condemnation from the Afghan government. Afghanistan was included in the second meeting (February 2017), and the United States was invited to the third (April 2017), though the United States declined to attend. Some analysts speculated that U.S. wariness about Russian goals and a reluctance to legitimize Russian efforts were behind the refusal to participate.[139] Afghan officials have been more accepting,

[136] Department of Defense, "Press Conference by Secretary Mattis in Afghanistan," April 24, 2017.

[137] Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "Russia is sending weapons to Taliban, top U.S. general confirms," *Washington Post,* April 24, 2017.

[138] Erin Cunningham, "While the U.S. wasn't looking, Russia and Iran began carving out a bigger role in Afghanistan," *Washington Post,* April 13, 2017.

[139] Phillip Walter Wellman, "Russia's Afghan peace initiative seen as undermining NATO mission," *Stars and Stripes,* April 11, 2017.

describing Russian efforts as complementary to ongoing processes, some of which include the United States.

U.S. officials largely frame Russia's growing role in Afghanistan in terms of the broader U.S.-Russian rivalry. Secretary Mattis has characterized the Russian effort as "choosing to be strategic competitors" with the United States,[140] and General Nicholson earlier said the Russians were motivated simply by a desire to "undermine the United States and NATO."[141] Other analysts note Russian anxieties about a potential long-term U.S. military presence in what has traditionally been Moscow's sphere of influence.[142] The Russian government frames its renewed interest in Afghanistan as a reaction to the growth of ISKP, for which Russia faults the United States. However, Russian descriptions of ISKP strength and geographic location far surpass estimates by the United States and others, perhaps overstating the threat to justify supporting the Taliban, which Russia sees as less of a direct danger.[143]

Afghan views of Russia are also colored by the legacy of the Soviet occupation. However, in line with Russian official comments in June 2010 that more economic and social assistance is needed there, Russia is investing $1 billion in Afghanistan to develop its electricity capacity and build out other infrastructure. The investments implement an agreement, reached during a Karzai visit to Moscow on January 22, 2011, for Russia to resume long dormant Soviet occupation-era projects such as expanding the Salang Tunnel connecting the Panjshir Valley to Kabul, hydroelectric facilities in Kabul and Baghlan provinces, a customs terminal, and a university in Kabul. Russia also raised its profile with a $25 million investment in the Kabul Housebuilding Factory, the country's largest factory, and a $20 million project to renovate the former "Soviet House of Science and Culture" as the "Russian Cultural Center" in 2014.[144] In November 2010, in its first significant intervention in Afghanistan since its occupation, Russian officers reportedly joined U.S. and Afghan forces attempting to interdict narcotics trafficking in Afghanistan.

During the 1990s, after its 1989 withdrawal and the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia supported the Northern Alliance against the Taliban with some military equipment and technical assistance in order to blunt Islamic militancy emanating from Afghanistan.[145] The Taliban government was the only one in the world to recognize Chechnya's independence, and some Chechen fighters fighting alongside Taliban/Al Qaeda forces have been captured or killed.

Central Asian States

These states are potentially crucial to Afghanistan stability and to the success of the New Silk Road (NSR) strategy that seeks to help Afghanistan become a trade crossroads between South and Central Asia. An increasing amount of trade is flowing from Afghanistan to and through the Central Asian states, and Afghanistan earns transit fees and customs duties from this commerce. The revival of a long-standing plan to establish Afghanistan as a transit hub for Central Asian natural gas (*TAPI* pipeline) is discussed later in this report under "Development in Key Sectors." Central Asian states are also concerned about any potential ISKP expansion in Afghanistan, given the high number of Central Asian fighters who could be returning to the region as the group's

[140] "Press Conference by Secretary Mattis in Afghanistan," April 24, 2017.

[141] Philip Ewing, "Why Is Russia Helping Anti-U.S. Insurgents In Afghanistan?" NPR, February 13, 2017.

[142] Barnett Rubin, "It's Much Bigger Than Afghanistan: U.S. Strategy For A Transformed Region," *War on the Rocks*, April 25, 2017.

[143] Brian Todd and Steve Almasy, "Russia, Taliban share intelligence in fight against ISIS," CNN, December 25, 2015.

[144] Frud Bezhan, "Restoring Its Legacy, Moscow Invests In Future In Afghanistan," Radio Free Europe, March 31, 2014.

[145] Risen, James. "Russians Are Back in Afghanistan, Aiding Rebels." *New York Times*, July 27, 1998.

territorial holdings in the Middle East diminish. In 1996, several of the Central Asian states banded together with Russia and China into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization because of the perceived Taliban threat.

- *Kazakhstan*. Since 2001, Kazakhstan has allowed the use of its air facilities for operations in Afghanistan but only in case of emergency. In May 2011, Kazakhstan became the first Central Asian state to pledge forces to Afghanistan (four noncombat troops). In 2010, Kazakhstan agreed to allow U.S. over flights of lethal military equipment to Afghanistan, enabling U.S. aircraft to fly materiel directly from the United States to Bagram Airfield. Kazakhstan funded a $50 million program to develop Afghan professionals.
- *Tajikistan*. Roughly a quarter of Afghanistan's population is made up of ethnic Tajiks, and the two nations have deep historical and cultural ties. Tajikistan supported the Northern Alliance against the Taliban, and received significant U.S. security assistance in the years after the fall of the Taliban, particularly after it allowed for the transit of non-military supplies to NATO forces in Afghanistan in 2009. The Panj bridge, built largely with U.S. funds, has become a major thoroughfare for goods to move between Afghanistan and Tajikistan.
- *Uzbekistan*. There has been no evident change in Uzbekistan's policy since the transfer of power in late 2016 following the death of longtime President Islam Karimov. The country has been a backer of ethnic Uzbek faction leader Abdul Rashid Dostam, who is under investigation for his altercation with a rival faction leader. Uzbekistan allowed use of Karshi-Khanabad air base by OEF forces from October 2001 until a rift emerged in May 2005 over Uzbekistan's crackdown against riots in Andijon. Uzbekistan's March 2008 agreement with Germany for it to use Karshi-Khanabad air base temporarily, for the first time since the rift with the United States, suggested potential for resumed U.S.-Uzbek cooperation on Afghanistan. In early 2009 Uzbekistan allowed the use of its Navoi airfield for shipment of U.S./NATO goods into Afghanistan. As noted below, railway lines have been built from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan. The Al Qaeda-linked IMU, which was responsible for four simultaneous February 1999 bombings in Tashkent that nearly killed then-President Islam Karimov, is active in Afghanistan.[146] One of its leaders, Juma Namangani, reportedly was killed while commanding Taliban/Al Qaeda forces in Konduz in November 2001.
- *Turkmenistan*. Turkmenistan has taken a position of "positive neutrality" on Afghanistan, continuing the policy Turkmenistan had when the Taliban was in power. It does not allow its territory to be used by U.S. and NATO forces for operations or logistics in Afghanistan. Turkmenistan was the only Central Asian state to actively engage the Taliban regime, viewing engagement as a means of preventing spillover of radical Islamic activity from Afghanistan. The country also saw Taliban control as facilitating construction of the TAPI natural gas pipeline that was under consideration during Taliban rule. Still, the September 11 attacks on the United States stoked Turkmenistan's fears of the Taliban and its Al Qaeda guests and caused the country to publicly support the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan.

[146] The IMU was named a foreign terrorist organization by the State Department in September 2000.

China[147]

China's involvement in Afghanistan has been primarily to secure access to Afghan minerals and other resources; to help its ally Pakistan avoid encirclement by India; and to reduce the Islamist militant threat to China itself. China is concerned about the potential for Islamic militants who operate in Afghanistan to assist China's restive Uighur (Muslim) community. The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) is an opposition group in China, some of whose operatives are based in Afghanistan. A major organizer of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China has a small border with a sparsely inhabited sliver of Afghanistan known as the "Wakhan Corridor," and it is building border access routes and supply depots to facilitate China's access to Afghanistan through the corridor.

Since 2012, China has deepened its involvement in Afghan security issues and, as noted, has taken on a more prominent role as a potential mediator in Afghan reconciliation. In September 2012, China and Afghanistan signed security and economic agreements. In 2012, China signed a series of agreements with Afghanistan, one of which reportedly promised Chinese training and funding for Afghan policy, though some reports, citing participants, question how beneficial that training is.[148] It also has offered training for ANDSF officers at People's Liberation Army training colleges and universities. In October 2014, China hosted Ghani for bilateral meetings and attendance at the "Heart of Asia" (Istanbul process) ministerial meeting in Beijing. During Ghani's visit in 2014, China agreed to train 3,000 Afghan bureaucrats and to provide an additional $330 million in bilateral aid over the coming three years. As a consequence of that visit, some Taliban figures reportedly visited China, apparently accompanied by Pakistani security officials, as part of an effort to promote an Afghan political settlement.[149] Perhaps because of China's growing role in Afghanistan's affairs, CEO Abdullah said in May 2016 that Afghanistan supports China's position on the South China Sea and China's efforts to resolve South China Sea issues through peaceful means. However, the statement—which conflicts to some extent with the U.S. position—might not have been vetted throughout the Afghan government. In March 2017, the Pentagon confirmed for the first time the presence of Chinese troops operating within Afghanistan, reportedly as part of joint counterterror patrols with Afghan forces along the nations' shared border.[150]

Still, many experts see China's activities in Afghanistan as primarily economically driven. From 2002 to 2014, China provided about $255 million in economic aid to Afghanistan. Chinese delegations continue to assess the potential for new investments in such sectors as mining and energy.[151] The cornerstone of China's investment to date has been the development of the Aynak copper mine south of Kabul, but that project is stalled over security issues surrounding the mine site. In 2012, China National Petroleum Co. was awarded the rights to develop oil deposits in the Amu Darya basin (for more on both, see below). Transportation and trade routes through Afghanistan comport with China's vision of a "One Belt, One Road" regional network linking East, Central, and South Asia—China's version of the U.S.-led New Silk Road.

During the Taliban era, in December 2000, reflecting concern about Taliban policies, a Chinese official delegation met with Mullah Umar. However, China did not enthusiastically support U.S.

---

[147] For more information, see CRS Report RL33001, *U.S.-China Counterterrorism Cooperation: Issues for U.S. Policy*, by Shirley A. Kan.

[148] Andrew Small, "China's Afghan Moment," *Foreign Policy*, October 3, 2012.

[149] Edward Wong. "Exploring a New Role: Peacemaker in Afghanistan." *New York Times*, January 14, 2015.

[150] Shawn Snow, "Chinese troops appear to be operating in Afghanistan, and the Pentagon is OK with it," *Military Times*, March 5, 2017.

[151] CRS conversations with Chinese officials in Beijing. August 2007.

military action against the Taliban, possibly because China was wary of a U.S. military buildup nearby.

Persian Gulf States

The Gulf states have, at times, been considered a key part of the effort to stabilize Afghanistan. As noted, the late Ambassador Holbrooke focused substantial U.S. attention—and formed a multilateral task force—to try to curb continuing Gulf resident donations to the Taliban in Afghanistan. He maintained that these donations are a larger source of Taliban funding than is the narcotics trade. The Gulf states have also been a source of development funds and for influence with some Afghan clerics and factions.

- *Saudi Arabia*. Saudi Arabia has a long history of involvement in Afghanistan; it channeled hundreds of millions of dollars to the *mujahedin* during the war against the Soviet occupation and Saudi Arabia was one of three countries to formally recognize the Taliban government. Saudi Arabia broke diplomatic relations with the Taliban in September 2001 and permitted the United States to use a Saudi base for command of U.S. air operations over Afghanistan, but it did not permit U.S. airstrikes from the base. Saudi Arabia later brokered some of the negotiations between the Afghan government and "moderate" Taliban figures. More recently, however, Saudi officials have described the Taliban as "armed terrorists,"[152] though some allege that the kingdom has not taken measures to stop the flow of what is considered to be a high level of financial support for the Taliban.[153]
- *UAE*. The United Arab Emirates, another country that recognized the Taliban regime, is emerging as another major donor to Afghanistan. The UAE deployed both troops and six F-16s to support NATO security missions in southern Afghanistan. The UAE has donated over $250 million to Afghanistan since 2002, for housing, health care, and education projects.[154] UAE officials were discussing the UAE aid program for southern Afghanistan at the time of the January 10, 2017, bombing at the Qandahar governor's guest house that killed at least six UAE diplomats, including the UAE's Ambassador to Afghanistan.
- *Qatar*. Until 2011, Qatar was not regarded as a significant player on the Afghanistan issue. It did not recognize the Taliban regime when it was in power. Beginning in 2010, Qatar's mediation contributed to the release of Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, discussed above (see "Reintegration and Potential Reconciliation with Insurgents"). Senior Taliban figures opened an informal "political office" in Doha with U.S. acquiescence as part of efforts to establish talks with the Taliban. According to at least one media report, President Trump may support closure of the office.[155]

[152] Samuel Ramani, "What's Behind Saudi Arabia's Turn Away From the Taliban?" *Diplomat*, September 7, 2017.

[153] Carlotta Gall, "Saudis Bankroll Taliban, Even as King Officially Support Afghan Government," *New York Times*, December 6, 2016.

[154] "UAE humanitarian aid to Afghanistan touches new heights," *Gulf Today*, January 14, 2017.

[155] Stephanie Kirchgaessner, Sune Engel Rasmussen, and Julian Borger, "Trump pushing Afghan president to close Taliban office in Qatar, sources say," *Guardian*, September 26, 2017.

- *Bahrain*. In January 2009, Bahrain sent 100 police officers to Afghanistan to help U.S./NATO-led stabilization operations there. That tour extended until the end of the ISAF mission at the end of 2014.
- *Oman*. Oman hosted the sixth meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) in October 2017, and some speculate that it could play the same kind of role in hosting talks between the Taliban and others as it did years earlier in hosting Iranian and U.S. diplomats in the years before the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA, or Iran Deal).[156]

Aid and Economic Development

Experts have long asserted that economic development is pivotal to Afghanistan's long-term stability. The economy is struggling against a donor drawdown. The economy (Gross Domestic Product, GDP) has grown an average of 9% per year since 2001, although aid cutbacks and political uncertainty about the post-2104 security situation caused a slowing to 4% growth in 2013 and a further slowing to below 2% in 2014, 2015, and 2016, with a slight recovery forecast for 2017. On the other hand, the Afghan government is assessed by the international community as increasingly able to execute parts of its budget and deliver basic goods and services. Afghan government revenue comes mostly through taxation (which rose by nearly 27% from FY2015 to FY2016), including through a 20% corporate tax rate, and most of the remainder from customs duties. The tax system has been computerized.

Since the international community intervened in Afghanistan in 2001, there have been debates over many aspects of aid to Afghanistan, including amounts, mechanisms for delivery, donor coordination, and distribution within Afghanistan. Donor aid accounts for more than 95% of Afghanistan's GDP and at least two-thirds of total Afghan government expenditures (operating budget and development budget). Some economic sectors in Afghanistan have been developed largely with private investment, including by well-connected Afghan officials or former officials who founded companies. Therefore, it is often difficult to determine the effects on Afghanistan's economy of aid, as compared to the effects of investment, trade, and other variables. As noted above, in 2011 the United States articulated a vision of greater Afghan economic integration in the region and its role in a "New Silk Road" trading pattern that would presumably accelerate Afghan private sector growth and customs revenue receipts. However, implementation has been slow due to political differences within the region and the difficult security situation regionally.

Further hindering Afghanistan is that its economy and society are still fragile after decades of warfare that left about 2 million dead, 700,000 widows and orphans, and about 1 million Afghan children raised in refugee camps outside Afghanistan. Millions of Afghan refugees have since returned, although as many as 2.7 million remain outside Afghanistan (mostly in Pakistan and Iran). In October 2016, Afghanistan and the European Union signed an accord under which Afghan refugees who have recently been resettled in the EU countries would return to Afghanistan. The literacy rate is very low and Afghanistan has a small, although growing, pool of skilled labor, middle managers, accountants, and information professionals.

U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan

During the 1990s, the United States was the largest single provider of assistance to the Afghan people even though no U.S. aid went directly to the Taliban government when it was in power

[156] Giorgio Cafiero, "Oman's Diplomatic Bridge in Afghanistan," LobeLog, November 1, 2017.

during 1996-2001; monies were provided through relief organizations. Between 1985 and 1994, the United States had a cross-border aid program for Afghanistan, implemented by USAID personnel based in Pakistan. Citing the difficulty of administering this program, there was no USAID mission for Afghanistan from the end of FY1994 until the reopening of the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan in late 2001. **Table 11** at the end of this report portrays U.S. assistance to Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban. The cited figures do not include costs for U.S. combat operations.

Aid Oversight and Conditionality

Some laws have required the withholding of U.S. aid subject to Administration certification of Afghan compliance on a variety of issues, including counternarcotics efforts, corruption, vetting of the Afghan security forces, Afghan human rights practices and protection of women's rights, and other issues. All required certifications have been made and virtually no U.S. funds have been withheld from Afghanistan. The FY2017 Consolidated Appropriation (P.L. 115-31) conditions ESF and INCLE funding to Afghanistan on various requirements, including the submission of an interagency strategy for U.S. policy in Afghanistan, and the certification, by the Secretary of State, that the Afghan government is meeting certain benchmarks related to various metrics including corruption, democratic development, and women's rights. The Secretary is required to submit biannual reports (with the first due 90 days after passage) on these benchmarks. Separately, the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 114-328) extends a number of reporting requirements, with an added provision on the implementation of the Afghan Personnel and Pay System (P.L. 114-92). Separately, U.S. officials have been able to use such U.S.-provided benefits as fuel supplies and advice on institutions that control Afghan pay scales to exercise some leverage over Afghans suspected of corruption.

The FY2008 defense authorization bill (P.L. 110-181) established a "Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction" (SIGAR) modeled on a similar outside auditor for Iraq. The SIGAR issues quarterly reports and specific audits of aspects of Afghan governance and security, with particular attention to how U.S.-provided funds have been used. The SIGAR, as of October 2017, is John Sopko. Some executive branch agencies, including USAID, have criticized some SIGAR audits as inaccurate or as highlighting problems that the agencies are already correcting. For example, DOD took strong exception to a December 4, 2013, audit by the SIGAR that asserted that the U.S. military had failed to adequately manage risk accounting for $3 billion in DOD funds for the ANDSF.[157] The FY2017 Consolidated Appropriation, referenced above, provides $54.9 million for SIGAR operations in FY2017.

Aid Authorization: Afghanistan Freedom Support Act

A key post-Taliban aid authorization bill, S. 2712, the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act (AFSA) of 2002 (P.L. 107-327, December 4, 2002), as amended, authorized about $3.7 billion in U.S. civilian aid for FY2003-FY2006. The law, whose authority has now expired, was intended to create a central source for allocating funds; that aid strategy was not implemented. However, some of the humanitarian, counternarcotics, and governance assistance targets authorized by the act were met or exceeded by appropriations. The act authorized the following:

- $15 million per year in counternarcotics assistance (FY2003-FY2006);

[157] David Zucchino. "Watchdog Faults U.S. Military's Oversight of Aid to Afghanistan." *Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 2013.

- $10 million per year for FY2003-FY2005 for political development, including national, regional, and local elections;
- $80 million total to benefit women and for Afghan human rights oversight ($15 million per year for FY2003-FY2006 for the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs, and $5 million per year for FY2003-FY2006 to the Human Rights Commission of Afghanistan);
- $425 million per year for FY2003-FY2006 in humanitarian and development aid;
- $300 million for an Enterprise Fund; and
- $550 million in drawdowns of defense articles and services for Afghanistan and regional militaries. (The original law provided for $300 million in drawdowns. That was increased by subsequent appropriations laws.)

A subsequent law (P.L. 108-458, December 17, 2004), implementing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, contained "The Afghanistan Freedom Support Act Amendments of 2004." The subtitle mandated the appointment of a U.S. coordinator of policy on Afghanistan and requires additional Administration reports to Congress.

A bill in the 110th Congress to reauthorize AFSA, H.R. 2446, passed by the House on June 6, 2007 (406-10). It would have authorized about $1.7 billion in U.S. economic aid and $320 million in military aid (including drawdowns of equipment) per year for several years. A Senate version (S. 3531), with fewer provisions than the House bill, was not taken up by the full Senate.

Direct Support to the Afghan Government

Currently, the United States disburses about 50% of its donated aid funds through the Afghan government. That percentage meets the goal set by the international community in 2010. USAID has approved over a dozen Afghan ministries to receive direct U.S. aid, some of which is channeled through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), run by the World Bank. Donors have contributed about $6 billion to the ARTF, the funds of which are about equally split between funding Afghan salaries and priority development investments.

No "enterprise fund" that was envisioned in the Afghanistan Freedom Support Act was ever established. However, small amounts of USAID funds have been used to assist a few Afghan enterprises, at least partially fulfilling the intent of the legislation.

In an effort to increase cooperation with the Afghan government in assisting development, during the Ghani visit to Washington, DC, the Administration announced an $800 million "New Development Partnership." The funds, which will come from already appropriated funds (not representing a request for additional funding), will be overseen by USAID, and will be disbursed on programs in Afghanistan "only after agreed reforms or development results have been accomplished, as measured by clear and objective indicators of achievement."[158]

National Solidarity Program

Through the ARTF, the United States supports an Afghan government program—implemented through the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development—that promotes local decision making on development—the "National Solidarity Program" (NSP). Donors have provided the program with over $600 million, about 90% of which has been U.S. funding. The program

[158] State Department factsheet, "Strengthening the Strategic Partnership of the United States and Afghanistan." March 24, 2015.

provides block grants of up to $60,000 per project to local councils to implement their priority projects. The program has given at least 20,000 grants to a total of 21,600 villages that participate in the program—participation requires setting up a Community Development Council (CDC) to help decide on what projects should be funded. The Afghan Funds from the NSP have brought bridges, water wells, and some hydroelectric power to numerous villages. The program has been widely hailed by many institutions as a highly effective, Afghan-run program. U.S. funds for the program are drawn from a broad category of ESF for "good governance."[159]

Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund

The Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund was set up in early 2013 to channel an additional percentage of U.S. aid directly to Afghanistan. The multilateral fund is managed by the Asian Development Bank. An initial U.S. contribution of $45 million was made in March 2013, but was supplemented by tens of millions more to support a power grid project running north-south; the total U.S. contribution is around $153 million. (This is not the same program as the U.S. "Afghanistan Infrastructure Fund," which is a DOD-State program to fund Afghan infrastructure projects.)

Other Donor Aid/Oversight/Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework

Non-U.S. donors, including such institutions as the EU and the Asian Development Bank, provide much of the funds for Afghanistan's development. Major pledges have been made primarily at donor conferences such as Tokyo (2002), Berlin (April 2004), Kabul (April 2005), London (February 2006), Paris (June 2008), London (January 2010), Tokyo (July 2012), and Brussels (October 4-5, 2016).

Tokyo Conference and Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF). The Tokyo conference (July 8, 2012) focused on identifying sources of post-2014 assistance (2012-2022 is termed the "transformation decade").[160] At the conference, the United States and its partners pledged a total of $16 billion in aid to Afghanistan through 2015 ($4 billion per year for 2012-2015) and agreed to sustain support through 2017 at levels at or near the past decade. As part of that overall pledge, at the conference, then-Secretary Clinton said the Obama Administration would ask Congress to sustain U.S. aid to Afghanistan at roughly the levels it has been through 2017. Among other major pledges, Japan pledged $5 billion over five years (2012-2017), and Germany pledged $550 million over four years (2014-2016).

The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) that resulted from the conference stipulated requirements of the Afghan government in governance, anti-corruption, holding free and fair elections, and human rights practices. As an incentive, if Afghanistan meets the benchmarks, the TMAF increases (to 10% by 2014 and to 20% by 2024) the percentage of aid provided through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and other mechanisms that gives Kabul discretion in the use of donated funds. A senior officials meeting held in Kabul on July 3, 2013, to review the Afghan performance found that the Afghan government had met only a few of the stipulated benchmarks and was making slow progress on most of the others. A follow-up to the Tokyo conference was the London Conference that was held on December 4, 2014, and which was attended by 60 countries, including Pakistan.[161]

---

[159] "Gunmen in Afghanistan Kill 9 Local Aid Workers." *New York Times*, June 3, 2015.

[160] http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/article/the-tokyo-declaration-partnership-for-self-reliance-in-afghanistan-from-transition-to-trandsf.

[161] Michael Gordon. "Meeting Afghan Leaders, Donors Pledge Support." *New York Times*, December 5, 2014.

Brussels Conference. Donors met again to assess progress on the TMAF benchmarks and pledged more funds for Afghanistan at a donors meeting in Brussels on October 4-5, 2016. The conference welcomed Afghanistan's new "National Peace and Development Framework" and its efforts to fight corruption. At the conclusion of the meeting, donors announced pledges of $15.2 billion for the period of 2017-2020 (about $5 billion per year), of which about 20% will be provided by the United States.

Among multilateral lending institutions, the World Bank has been key to Afghanistan's development. In May 2002, the World Bank reopened its office in Afghanistan after 20 years. Its projects have been concentrated in the telecommunications and road and sewage sectors. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has also been playing a major role in Afghanistan, including in financing railway construction. The ADB funded the paving of a road from Qandahar to the border with Pakistan and contributed to a project to bring electricity from Central Asia to Afghanistan. On the eve of the London donor's conference of January 28, 2010, the IMF and World Bank announced $1.6 billion in Afghanistan debt relief.

Development in Key Sectors

Efforts to build the legitimate economy are showing some results, by some accounts. Some sectors, discussed below, are being developed primarily (although not exclusively) with private investment funding. Private investment has been the main driver of much of the new construction evident particularly in Kabul, including luxury hotels; a $25 million Coca Cola bottling factory (opened in September 2006); apartment and office buildings; and marriage halls and other structures. The bottling factory is located near the Bagrami office park (another private initiative), which includes several other factories. The Serena luxury hotel was built by the Agha Khan foundation, a major investor in Afghanistan. A multi-billion dollar development near the Kabul airport, called "New Kabul City," has been constructed.

An arm of DOD, called the Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO), sought to facilitate additional private investment in Afghanistan. However, A SIGAR report of November 2014 assessed that the Task Force's efforts yielded very little result. The TFBSO concluded its operations in March 2015 after its authorities expired the previous year. Funding for the Task Force is included in **Table 11** at the end of this report.

Uncertainty about the post-2014 political and security situation caused some Afghan businessmen to relocate outside the country, or to develop external components of their business in case the situation in Afghanistan deteriorates. The following sections outline what has been accomplished with U.S. and international donor funds and private investment.

Education

Continuing Taliban attacks on schools have caused some ("over 1,000" according to a January 2017 address by the acting Minister of Education)[162] to close and hindered efforts to enroll Afghan students. While most sources give a figure of 9 million children enrolled in school, the January 2017 SIGAR report relays a December 18, 2016, interview with the Afghan Minister of Education, who said that "after adjusting numbers for more than three million permanently absent registered students from school records, only six million students were actually attending classes in Afghanistan." Afghanistan's university system is said to be highly underfunded, in part because Afghans are entitled to free higher education (to the B.A. level) by the Constitution, which means that demand for the higher education far outstrips Afghan resources. The shortfall is impeding the

[162] "More Than 1,000 Schools Closed Across Afghanistan," Tolo News, January 2, 2017.

development of a large enough pool of skilled workers for the Afghan government. Afghanistan requires about $35 million to operate its universities and institutes for one year.

Health

The health care sector has made considerable gains in reducing infant mortality and giving about 85% of the population at least some access to health professionals. Still, according to some outside groups, nearly 20% of all Afghans have had a close relative or friend who died because of the inability to quickly reach medical care or unaffordable cost, even though health care technically should be free according to Afghan law and regulations.[163] USAID funds for health have gone directly to the Ministry of Health to contract with international NGOs to buy medical supplies for clinics. Egypt operates a 65-person field hospital at Bagram Air Base that instructs Afghan physicians, and Jordan operates a similar facility in Mazar-e-Sharif. A $236 million USAID program called "Partnership Contracts for Health" provided immunizations, prenatal exams, and equipment and salaries in 13 provinces.

Roads

Road building has been a priority; as former commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan General Eikenberry (later Ambassador) has said, "where the roads end, the Taliban begin." At least 10,000 miles of roads have been built since 2001 by all donors, of which about half was funded by the United States. Road construction has been USAID's largest project category there, accounting for about $2.8 billion in U.S. spending since the fall of the Taliban, according to a SIGAR report of October 2016. Roads are considered key to enabling Afghan farmers to bring legitimate produce to market in a timely fashion; in several of the most restive provinces, U.S. funds, including CERP, have been used to build small roads linking farming communities to the markets for their products. The major road, the Ring Road (including Highway One from Qandahar to Kabul), has been completely repaved using funds from various donors, including substantial funds from the Asian Development Bank, at a total expense of about $4 billion (all donors).

Other major projects include

- a road from Qandahar to Tarin Kowt (Uruzgan province) built by U.S. military personnel, inaugurated in 2005;
- a road linking the Panjshir Valley to Kabul;
- a Salang Bypass Road through Bamiyan province; and
- an East-West road across Afghanistan, from Herat to Kabul, though funding for only a few segments (Herat to Chest-e-Sharif, and Maidany Shar to Bamiyan, and Bamiyan City to Yakowlang in that same province) has been identified (from Italy and Japan).

Some observers warn that the Afghan government lacks the resources to adequately maintain the roads built with international funds. Many of the roads built have fallen into disrepair and are marked with major potholes, as discussed in detail in the SIGAR report on U.S.-funded road projects in Afghanistan released in October 2016.

[163] Rod Nordland. "Aid Group Sees Daunting Obstacles to Health Care for Afghans." *New York Times*, February 26, 2014.

Bridges

Afghan officials say that trade with Central Asia increased after a bridge over the Panj River, connecting Afghanistan and Tajikistan, opened in late 2007. The bridge was built with $33 million in (FY2005) U.S. assistance. The bridge is helping what press reports say is robust reconstruction and economic development in the relatively peaceful and ethnically homogenous province of Panjshir, the political base of the Northern Alliance, though others claim it has facilitated drug trafficking.[164]

Railways

Afghanistan is beginning to develop a rail system—a sector it lacked as a legacy of security policy during the late 19th century that perceived railroads as facilitating invasion of Afghanistan. Rail is considered increasingly crucial to Afghanistan's ability to develop its mineral wealth because it is the means by which minerals can be exported to neighboring countries. In particular, China has committed to building a rail line from its Mes Aynak copper mine project to the northern border and it is conducting a feasibility study for that railway as of mid-2014. A spur to the Hajji Gak iron mine would be funded by India (about $1 billion) as part of its project there. However, there are indications India and China might opt instead truck their minerals out, a process that would slow full exploitation of these mines. There are also plans to build a line from Herat and Kabul to Qandahar, and then on to the border with Pakistan. The planned railways will link Afghanistan to the former Soviet railway system in Central Asia, and to Pakistan's railway system, increasing Afghanistan's economic integration in the region. In September 2012, the government established the Afghan Rail Authority to maintain and regulate this sector.

Electricity

Energy sector development is considered crucial to economic growth and political stability in Afghanistan, but considerable U.S. efforts in this area over the past fifteen years have arguably yielded mixed results. While the percentage of Afghans with access to electricity has increased due to these and other development efforts, by most estimates the large majority remains without grid-connected power.[165]

Afghanistan has a complex power system, operating in nine separate, unconnected grids, and is still largely dependent on the sale of surplus power from its neighbors, importing 77% of its energy. The vast majority (95%) of Afghanistan's domestically generated electricity is provided by hydropower.[166] The United States has worked to create more independent and cohesive system by assisting in the development of indigenous power production and management capabilities and by connecting Afghanistan's disparate power grids. According to the most recent quarterly Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report, total U.S. disbursements for power projects total over $2 billion, including:

---

[164] Tom Lasseter, "U.S.-built bridge is windfall—for illegal Afghan drug trade," McClatchy, June 28, 2009.

[165] Most estimates put the number of Afghans with access to the power grid around 25%; they are concentrated mostly in urban areas, in which nearly 89% of residents have access to power, compared with 11% of rural Afghans. Amanullah Ghalib, "Afghanistan's Energy Sector Development Plans," Afghanistan Ministry of Energy and Water, February 1, 2017.

[166] World Bank, Afghanistan Country Snapshot, October 1, 2017. One of the main U.S. power projects has been the Kajaki Dam, in Helmand Province, where USAID assisted in the October 2016 installation of a long-awaited third turbine, increasing the generation capacity of the damn by nearly 60%. The Afghan national power utility (Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat, or DABS) assumed full responsibly for operation of the facility in April 2017.

- over $1.5 billion in USAID Economic Support Funds (ESF) since FY2002;
- approximately $180 million in DOD Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds as of July 2015; and
- about $467 million in DOD Afghanistan Infrastructure Funds as of June 2017.[167]

Some have raised concerns about the sustainability of these efforts. In April 2014, SIGAR John Sopko said in congressional testimony that "the problem of planning and implementing programs without considering the cost and feasibility of sustaining them is, perhaps, no more strikingly evident than in the U.S. government's efforts to develop Afghanistan's energy sector."[168] He highlighted the $355 million Kabul Power Plant (also known as the Tarakhil Power Plant), which a subsequent SIGAR audit found was operating at less than one percent of its capacity.[169] That audit described the plant as "severely underutilized," though more recent reports indicate it has occasionally fulfilled Kabul's electricity needs when the city's usual sources of power are unavailable.[170]

Agriculture

Even though only about 12.5% of Afghanistan's land is arable, about 80% of Afghans live in rural areas and the agriculture sector has always been key to Afghanistan's economy and stability. About 25% of Afghanistan's GDP is contributed by agriculture. The late Ambassador Holbrooke, including in his January 2010 strategy document, outlined U.S. policy to boost Afghanistan's agriculture sector not only to reduce drug production but also as an engine of economic growth. Prior to the turmoil that engulfed Afghanistan in the late 1970s, Afghanistan was a major exporter of agricultural products. USAID programs have helped Afghanistan double its legitimate agricultural output over the past five years, particularly through the export of commodities like pomegranates, saffron, and raisins. Since 2002, USAID has disbursed over $2 billion to build capacity at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), increase access to markets, and provide alternatives to poppy growing, according to a January 2017 SIGAR report. U.S. strategy has addressed not only crop choice but also trying to construct the entirety of the infrastructure needed for a healthy legitimate agriculture sector, including road building, security of the routes to agriculture markets, refrigeration, storage, transit through Pakistan and other transportation of produce, building legitimate sources of financing, and other aspects of the industry. Select U.S. projects include

- a $150 million program for the relatively safe areas of Afghanistan to continue to develop licit crops. The Incentives Driving Economic Alternatives for the North, East, and West (IDEA-NEW) program ran through FY2014.
- a $474 million program in southern and eastern areas of the country where counterinsurgency operations are ongoing, Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Production in Agriculture (AVIPA-Plus). The program ran through FY2011 and included initiatives coordinated with U.S. counterinsurgency operations in Helmand and Qandahar provinces. The program provided vouchers for wheat

[167] SIGAR, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, July 30, 2017.

[168] John Sopko, "Lessons Learned from Oversight of the U.S. Agency for International Development's Efforts in Afghanistan," Testimony before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, April 3, 2014.

[169] SIGAR-15-80-SP Review: Tarakhil Power Plant, August 7, 2015.

[170] USAID, "Afghanistan Sector Accomplishments: 2015-2016," January 2, 2017.

seed, fertilizer, and tools, in addition to supporting cash for work programs and small grants to local cooperatives.

Telecommunications

Several Afghan telecommunications firms (e.g., Roshan, MTN, and Afghan Wireless) have been formed since 2002 and over $2 billion in private investment has flowed into this sector, according to a 2016 SIGAR report.[171] Cellular networks now reach approximately 90% of Afghans, and the Asia Foundation found in 2016 that 89% of respondents reported that their household owned at least one mobile phone, up from 52% in 2009. This rapid development, aided by tens of millions of dollars in support from DOD, State, and USAID, has made telecommunications a key driver of the Afghan economy. The telecommunications sector has been assessed by various government agencies as contributing billions in tax revenues to the Afghan government, and providing employment to tens of thousands of Afghans.

Airlines

The 62-year-old national airline, Ariana, is said to be in significant financial trouble due to corruption that has affected its safety ratings and left it unable to service a heavy debt load. There are new privately run airlines, such as Safi Air (run by the Safi Group, which has built a modern mall in Kabul) and Kam Air, but they, along with Ariana Afghan Airlines, have been banned from EU airspace since 2010 due to safety concerns.[172] In January 2013, the U.S. military ceased contracting with Kam Air on the grounds that it was helping traffic opium; the U.S. military rescinded the ruling after Afghan complaints that questioned the allegation.[173]

Mining and Gems

Afghanistan's mining sector has been largely dormant since the Soviet invasion. Some Afghan leaders complain that not enough has been done to revive such potentially lucrative industries as minerals mining, such as of copper and lapis lazuli (a stone used in jewelry). The issue became more urgent in June 2010 when the DOD Task Force for Business and Stability Operations announced, based on surveys, that Afghanistan may have untapped minerals worth over $1 trillion.[174] Although copper and iron are the largest categories by value, there are believed to also be significant reserves in Western Afghanistan of such minerals as lithium, which is a crucial component in batteries. However, as noted above, the expected revenue from this sector has not materialized to date because investors have not built rail lines needed to export the minerals from Afghanistan in large volumes. Some experts assert that U.S. hopes for this sector as a driver of long-term economic sustenance for Afghanistan, as several senior U.S. officials have expressed,[175] are misplaced.[176] An additional brake on investment is the lack of legislative action

[171] "Afghanistan's Information and Communications Technology Sector: U.S. Agencies Obligated Over $2.6 Billion to the Sector, but the Full Scope of U.S. Efforts is Unknown," Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, July 2016.

[172] Pete Harrison, "Europe bans all Afghan airlines from its airspace," Reuters, November 23, 2010.

[173] Dan Murphy, "Dubious Afghan airline Kam Air circles back into US orbit," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 23, 2014.

[174] Risen, James. "U.S. Identifies Mineral Riches in Afghanistan." *New York Times*, June 14, 2010.

[175] Elias Groll, "Despite Risks, Trump Administration Moves Forward With Afghanistan Mining Plan," *Foreign Policy*, August 29, 2017.

[176] Tim Worstall, "Dear President Trump, Afghanistan's Minerals Aren't Very Valuable, They're Really Not," *Forbes*, July 27, 2017.

on a new Law on Mines. The Afghan Cabinet approved a draft in February 2013 and sent it to the National Assembly in July 2013, but the Assembly has not acted on it to date.

Mes Aynak Copper Field. A major project, signed in November 2007, is with China Metallurgical Group for the company to invest $3.0 billion to develop Afghanistan's Mes Aynak copper field in Lowgar Province. The agreement, viewed as generous to the point where it might not be commercially profitable for China Metallurgical Group, includes construction of two coal-fired electric power plants (one of which will supply more electricity to Kabul city); a segment of railway (discussed above); and a road from the project to Kabul. Work was slowed by various factors, including the need to clear mines in the area and to excavate ancient Buddhist artifacts that local activists insist be preserved. Actual extraction was expected to begin in mid-2012, and still has not begun. U.S. forces do not directly protect the project, but U.S. forces have set up small bases on some of the roads leading to the mine project to provide general stability there.

Hajji Gak Iron Ore Project. In September 2011 seven bids were submitted for another large mining project, the Hajji Gak iron ore mine (which may contain 60 billion tons of iron ore) in Bamiyan Province. The bids—from Chinese, Indian, and other firms—were evaluated and, in late 2011, the Steel Authority for India Ltd. (SAIL) was awarded the largest share of the project. One of the four blocs of the project was awarded to Kilo Gold of Canada. The project, involving an investment of nearly $11 billion, is expected to generate $200 million in annual government revenues when fully operational (by 2017), although this level might not be reached unless the associated rail lines are built to allow export in high volumes. SAIL denied reports in May 2015 that it would not proceed with the project, saying only that it had completed an assessment of the costs and benefits of the project.

Other mining projects have been awarded (subject to finalized contract negotiations):

- The Balkhab coooper mine in Sar-i-Pol Province, awarded to Afghan Gold and Minerals Co.;
- The Shaida copper mine in Herat Province, awarded to Afghan Minerals Group.;
- The Badakshan gold project, in that province, awarded to Turkish-Afghan Mining Co.; and
- Zarkashan copper and gold project (Ghazni Province), awarded to Sterling Mining/Belhasa International LLC.

Oil, Gas, and Related Pipelines

Years of war have stunted developed of a hydrocarbons energy sector in Afghanistan. The country has no hydrocarbons export industry and a small refining sector that provides some of Afghanistan's needs for gasoline or other fuels. Most of Afghanistan's fuel comes from neighboring states; oil and gas account for about a quarter of all imports. However, Afghanistan's prospects in this sector appeared to brighten by the announcement in March 2006 of an estimated 3.6 billion barrels of oil and 36.5 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves, amounts that could make Afghanistan self-sufficient in energy or even able to export. Major projects and contracts include

- the Angot field in northern Afghanistan, part of a field that may contain 60 million barrels of oil, originally let by the Afghan government to a local firm (Ghazanfar Neft Gas);
- the Amu Darya basin (northern Afghanistan) oil fields, the development rights to which were awarded to China National Petroleum Co. in 2012. The field began producing at about 5,000 barrels per day in early 2013, with a longer-term

potential of 145,000 barrels per day. The $3 billion development has a local partner, the Watan Group, owned by Karzai relatives Rashid and Rateb Popal;

- the "Afghan-Tajik Basin," estimated to hold 950 million barrels of oil, 7 trillion cubic feet of gas, and other gas liquids (an agreement on extraction was signed in October 2013 with Turkey's state owned TPIC, UAE's Drago Oil, and Ghazanfar); and
- large oil fields in Balkh Province (which includes Angot field), estimated to hold 1.8 billion barrels of oil; a contract for their development was awarded to China National Petroleum Company.

USAID has funded test projects to develop gas resources in northern Afghanistan. One key project was the Shehbergan Gas Development Project, which consisted of a number of gas wells and, in partnership with the private sector, building a 200 megawatt gas-fired thermal plant and associated transmission lines in northern Afghanistan (linking Afghanistan's natural gas field in Shehbergan to the population center in Mazar-e-Sharif). A contract was awarded to the Turkish Petroleum Company to conduct gas drilling, and test drills indicated that commercial amounts of gas exist, though production will likely take 5-7 years once professional exploration begins. USAID's contribution to the roughly $580 million project, which ended in 2016, was $120 million. Another pilot project, funded by the Task Force for Business and Stability Operations, is to develop filling stations and convert cars to use compressed natural gas (CNG), which is produced in the gas field in Shehbergan and could provide an inexpensive source of fuel in the future.

During the March 2015 Ghani visit to Washington, DC, the United States and Afghanistan announced forming a "Joint Working Group" to explore ways to support Afghanistan's integration into regional energy markets.

TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) Gas Pipeline Project.

Another long-stalled major energy project apparently has begun to move forward. During 1996-1998, the Clinton Administration supported proposed natural gas and oil pipelines through western Afghanistan as an incentive for the warring factions to cooperate. A consortium led by Los Angeles-based Unocal Corporation proposed a $7.5 billion Central Asia Gas Pipeline that would originate in southern Turkmenistan and pass through Afghanistan to Pakistan, with possible extensions into India.[177] The deterioration in U.S.-Taliban relations after 1998 suspended hopes for the pipeline projects. In May 2002, the leaders of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan signed preliminary agreements on the project and, in 2011, the Asian Development Bank agreed to finance the project. On July 8, 2014, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India signed an operational agreement on the $10 billion pipeline under which Pakistan and India would each get 42% of the gas transported and Afghanistan would get the remainder. India is a large customer for natural gas and its participation is considered crucial to making the venture commercially viable.[178] The leaders of the four countries involved formally "broke ground" on the pipeline at a ceremony in Turkmenistan on December 15, 2015, and work on the Pakistani section began in March 2017. While originally scheduled for completion in 2019, Afghan

[177] Other participants in the Unocal consortium include Delta of Saudi Arabia, Hyundai of South Korea, Crescent Steel of Pakistan, Itochu Corporation and INPEX of Japan, and the government of Turkmenistan. Some accounts say Russia's Gazprom would probably receive a stake in the project. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Moscow), October 30, 1997, p. 3.

[178] "Operational Accord on Tapi Gas Pipeline Signed." Dawn.com, July 18, 2014.

officials now assess production will begin in 2021.[179] U.S. officials view this project as superior to a proposed gas pipeline from Iran to India, transiting Pakistan.

Trade Promotion/Reconstruction Opportunity Zones

The key to U.S. economic strategy, as exemplified by the New Silk Road strategy, is to encourage Afghanistan's trade relationships. The United States is promoting regional economic integration, discussed above, as well as bilateral economic agreements between Afghanistan and its neighbors. A key to the strategy was accomplished in 2011 when Afghanistan and Pakistan finalized provisions to implement their 2010 transit trade agreement. To facilitate Afghanistan's ability to increase trade, USAID funded a five-year project ($63 million total during 2010-2014) to simplify the customs clearance process. This includes new import procedures that have reduced the time needed for imports to clear customs by 45%.

Afghanistan took a major step forward on building its trade relationships with its July 29, 2016, accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Afghanistan applied for membership in 2003 and, in December 2004, the countries of the WTO voted to start membership talks with Afghanistan.

Earlier, in September 2004, the United States and Afghanistan signed a bilateral trade and investment framework agreement (TIFA), and most of Afghanistan's exports are eligible for duty free treatment under the enhanced Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program. The Administration economic strategy report of December 2011 says the Administration is reaching out to Afghan exporters and U.S. importers of Afghan products to make increased use of the GSP program. The TIFA is seen as a prelude to a broader and more complex bilateral free trade agreement, but negotiations on an FTA have not begun. The TIFA is monitored by a joint TIFA "Council" that meets periodically.

Another initiative supported by the United States is the establishment of joint Afghan-Pakistani "Reconstruction Opportunity Zones" (ROZs) which would be modeled after "Qualified Industrial Zones" run by Israel and Jordan in which goods produced in the zones receive duty free treatment for import into the United States. Bills in the 110th Congress, S. 2776 and H.R. 6387, would have authorized the President to proclaim duty-free treatment for imports from ROZs to be designated by the President. In the 111th Congress, a version of these bills was introduced (S. 496 and H.R. 1318), and President Obama specifically endorsed their passage during his March 2009 strategy announcement. H.R. 1318 was incorporated into H.R. 1886, a major Pakistan aid appropriation, but the version of the major Pakistan aid bill that became law (P.L. 111-73) did not authorize ROZs.

[179] "TAPI Engineering Design Agreement Signed," Tolo News, February 21, 2017.

Table 7. Major Reporting Requirements

Several provisions require Administration reports on numerous aspects of U.S. strategy, assistance, and related issues.

- P.L. 108-458, The Afghanistan Freedom Support Act Amendments required, through the end of FY2010, an overarching annual report on U.S. strategy in Afghanistan. Other reporting requirements expired, including required reports (1) on long-term U.S. strategy and progress of reconstruction; (2) on how U.S. assistance is being used; (3) on U.S. efforts to persuade other countries to participate in Afghan peacekeeping; and (4) a joint State and DOD report on U.S. counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan.
- P.L. 110-181 (Section 1230), FY2008 Defense Authorization Act, required a quarterly DOD report on the security situation in Afghanistan through FY2011; the first was submitted in June 2008. Section 1231 required a report on the Afghan national defense and security forces through the end of FY2010. The FY2012 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 112-81) amended the reporting requirement to semi-annually, and the requirement has been extended in subsequent National Defense Authorization Acts since. The reports are entitled "Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan."
- Section 1229 of the same law required a quarterly report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). In the October 2017 quarterly report, its thirty seventh, SIGAR relayed that "U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) classified or otherwise restricted information SIGAR has until now publicly reported," including various metrics related to ANDSF performance.
- P.L. 111-8 (Omnibus Appropriation, explanatory statement) required a State Department report on the use of funds to address the needs of Afghan women and girls (submitted by September 30, 2009).
- P.L. 111-32, FY2009 Supplemental Appropriation (Section 1116), required a White House report, by the time of the FY2011 budget submission, on whether Afghanistan and Pakistan are cooperating with U.S. policy sufficiently to warrant a continuation of Administration policy toward both countries, as well as efforts by these governments to curb corruption, their efforts to develop a counterinsurgency strategy, the level of political consensus in the two countries to confront security challenges, and U.S. government efforts to achieve these objectives. The report was released with a date of September 30, 2010.
- The same law (Section 1117) required a report, by September 23, 2009, on metrics to be used to assess progress on Afghanistan and Pakistan strategy. A progress report measured against those metrics is to be submitted by March 30, 2010, and every six months thereafter, until the end of FY2011.
- Section 1228 of the FY2010 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 111-84) required a report, within 120 days, on the Afghan Provincial Protection Program and other local security initiatives. Section 1235 authorized a DOD-funded study of U.S. force levels needed for eastern and southern Afghanistan, and Section 1226 required a Comptroller General report on the U.S. "campaign plan" for the Afghanistan (and Iraq) effort.
- Sections 1212-1226 of the FY2013 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4310, P.L. 112-239) contained several reporting or congressional notification requirements on Afghanistan, on issues such as women's rights, an independent assessment of the performance of the ANDSF, negotiations on the bilateral security agreement, the political reconciliation and insurgent reintegration process, the U.S. campaign plan, insider attacks, any changes to U.S. troop levels, and other issues. These sections also contained authorities on use of some DOD funds in Afghanistan, such as CERP and funding for the reintegration process.

Table 8. Comparative Social and Economic Statistics

Population	33.3 million. Kabul population is over 3 million, up from 500,000 in Taliban era.
Ethnicities/Religions	Pashtun 42%; Tajik 27%; Uzbek 9%; Hazara 9%; Aimak 4%; Turkmen 3%; Baluch 2%.
Size of Religious Minorities	Religions: Sunni (Hanafi school) 80%; Shiite (Hazaras, Qizilbash, and Isma'ilis) 19%; other 1% Christians-estimated 500-8,000 people; Sikh and Hindu-3,000 people; Bahai's-400 (declared blasphemous in May 2007); Jews-1 person; Buddhist- small numbers. No Christian or Jewish schools. One church.
Literacy Rate	38% of population over 15 years of age. 51.5% of males; 23.9% of females.
GDP, and GDP Growth and Unemployment Rates	$62.62 billion purchasing power parity (PPP) in 2015. 98th in the world. Per capita: $1,925 purchasing power parity. 193rd in the world. Growth has averaged about 9% per year every year since Taliban rule, but fell to 3.1% in 2013 and around 1% in 2015, where it has remained. Growth is forecast to accelerate to 2.4% for 2017 by the World Bank. GDP was about $10 billion (PPP) during last year of Taliban rule. Unemployment rate is about 8%, but underemployment rate may be nearly 50%.
Children in School/Schools Built since 2002	9 million enrolled but only 6 million regularly attending classes, of which 40% are girls. Up from 900,000 boys in school during Taliban era. 4,000 schools built (all donors) and 140,000 teachers hired since Taliban era. 17 universities, up from 2 in 2002. 75,000 Afghans in universities in Afghanistan (35% female); 5,000 when Taliban was in power.
Afghans With Access to Health Coverage	85% with basic health services access-compared to 9% during Taliban era. Infant mortality down to 73 per 1,000 live births, from over a hundred under the Taliban. 680 clinics built.
Roads Built	About 3,000 miles paved post-Taliban, including repaving of "Ring Road" that circles the country. Kabul-Qandahar drive reduced to 6 hours. About 1,500 additional miles still under construction.
Judges/Courts	Over 1,000 judges (incl. 200 women) trained since fall of Taliban.
Banks Operating	17, including branches in some rural areas, but about 90% of the population still use *hawalas* (informal money transfer services). No banks existed during Taliban era. Some limited credit card use. Some Afghan police now paid by cell phone (E-Paisa).
Access to Electricity	89.5% of the population. Much of its electricity imported from neighboring states.
Government Revenues (excl. donor funds)	About $2 billion in 2016 compared to $200 million in 2002. Total Afghan budget is about $7.3 billion (including development funds)—shortfall covered by foreign donors, including through Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund.
Financial Reserves/Debt	About $6.9 billion, up from $180 million in 2002. Includes amounts due Central Bank. $7 billion total external debt. U.S. forgave $108 million in debt in 2004, and $1.6 billion forgiven by other creditors in March 2010.
Foreign/Private Investment	About $500 million to $1 billion per year. Five Afghan airlines: Ariana (national) plus several privately owned, including Safi and Kam. A number of international carriers, including Emirates, Turkish Air, and India Air, fly to Kabul.
Legal Exports/ Agriculture	80% of the population is involved in agriculture. Self-sufficiency in wheat production as of May 2009 (first time in 30 years). Exports: $400 million+ (2011): fruits, raisins, melons, pomegranate juice (Anar), nuts, carpets, lapis lazuli gems, marble tile, timber products.
Oil Proven Reserves	3.6 billion barrels of oil, 36.5 trillion cubic feet of gas. Current oil production negligible, but USAID funding project to revive oil and gas facilities in the north.
Cellphones/Tourism	About 18 million cellphone subscribers, up from negligible amounts during Taliban era. Tourism: National park opened in Bamiyan June 2009. Increasing tourist visits.

Sources: CIA, *The World Factbook*; various press and U.S. government official testimony; IMF and World Bank estimates.

Table 9. U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan, FY1978-FY1998

($ in millions)

Fiscal Year	Devel. Assist.	Econ. Supp. (ESF)	P.L. 480 (Title I and II)	Military	Other (Incl. Regional Refugee Aid)	Total
1978	4.989	—	5.742	0.269	0.789	11.789
1979	3.074	—	7.195	—	0.347	10.616
1980	—	(Soviet invasion-December 1979)			—	—
1981	—	—	—	—	—	—
1982	—	—	—	—	—	—
1983	—	—	—	—	—	—
1984	—	—	—	—	—	—
1985	3.369	—	—	—	—	3.369
1986	—	—	8.9	—	—	8.9
1987	17.8	12.1	2.6	—	—	32.5
1988	22.5	22.5	29.9	—	—	74.9
1989	22.5	22.5	32.6	—	—	77.6
1990	35.0	35.0	18.1	—	—	88.1
1991	30	30	20.1	—	—	80.1
1992	25.0	25.0	31.4	—	—	81.4
1993	10	10	18.0	—	30.2	68.2
1994	3.4	2.0	9.0	—	27.9	42.3
1995	1.8	—	12.4	—	31.6	45.8
1996	—	—	16.1	—	26.4	42.5
1997	—	—	18.0	—	31.9[a]	49.9
1998	—	—	3.6	—	49.14[b]	52.74

Source: Department of State.

a. Includes $3 million for demining and $1.2 million for counternarcotics.

b. Includes $3.3 million in projects targeted for Afghan women and girls, $7 million in earthquake relief aid, 100,000 tons of 416B wheat worth about $15 million, $2 million for demining, and $1.54 million for counternarcotics.

Table 10. U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan, FY1999-FY2001

($ in millions)

	FY1999	FY2000	FY2001
U.S. Department of Agriculture (DOA) and USAID Food For Peace (FFP), via World Food Program(WFP)	42.0 worth of wheat (100,000 metric tons under "416(b)" program.)	68.875 for 165,000 metric tons. (60,000 tons for May 2000 drought relief)	131.1 (300,000 metric tons under P.L. 480, Title II, and 416(b))
State/Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) via UNHCR and ICRC	16.95 for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and to assist their repatriation	14.03 for the same purposes	22.03 for similar purposes
State Department/ Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)	7.0 to various NGOs to aid Afghans inside Afghanistan	6.68 for drought relief and health, water, and sanitation programs	18.934 for similar programs
State Department/HDP (Humanitarian Demining Program)	2.615	3.0	2.8
Aid to Afghan Refugees in Pakistan (through various NGOs)	5.44 (2.789 for health, training—Afghan females in Pakistan)	6.169, of which $3.82 went to similar purposes	5.31 for similar purposes
Counternarcotics			1.50
USAID/Office of Transition Initiatives			0.45 (Afghan women in Pakistan)
DOD			
Foreign Military Financing			
Anti-Terrorism			
Economic Support Funds (E.S.F)			
Peacekeeping			
Totals	**76.6**	**113.2**	**182.6**

Source: CRS.

Table 11. Post-Taliban U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan

(appropriations/allocations in $ millions)

Fiscal Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
ESF	117	239	894	1280	473	1211	1400	2088	3346	2168	1837	1850	851	831	633	650	650**
DA	18.3	42.5	153	170	185	167	149	.4	.3	0	0	0					
GHCS	7.5	49.7	33.4	38	41.5	101	63	58.	92	70	0	0					
Refugee Accounts	160	61	63	47	42	54	44	77	82	65	99	13					
Food Aid	206	74	99	97	108	70	231	82	32	19	0.6	0					
IDA	197	86	11	4	0	0	17	27	30	66	61	14					
INCLE	60	0	220	709	216	252	308	484	589	400	324	6.1	225	250	185	160	95**
NADR	44	34.7	67	38.	18.2	37	27	49	58	69	65	54		43.5	38	37	37**
IMET	0.2	0.4	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.7	1.4	1.8	1.6	2	0.8	.51	1.05	.86	0.8	.8**
FMF	57	191	414	397	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
Other	33	23	36	18	0.2	0.1	21	5	5.8	7.4	8	0					
DOD—ASSF	0	0	0	995	1908	7406	2750	5607	9167	10619	9200	5124	4727	4109	3652	4262	4938**
DOD—CERP	0	0	40	136	215	209	488	551	1000	400	400	200	30	15		5	5**
Infrastructure Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	299	400	325	199	0			
Business Task Force	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	59	239	242	179	64	5			
DOD—CN	0	0	72	225	108	291	193	230	392	376	421	372					
DOD—Other	7.5	165	285	540	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					
DEA Counternarc	0.6	2.9	3.7	17	23.7	20	41	19	0	0	0	0					
Total U.S. Assistance	909	970	2392	4712	3339	9818	5732	9292	14854	14800	13058	8084	6097	5725	5165	4267*	

Sources and Notes: Prepared by Curt Tarnoff, Specialist in Foreign Assistance. Department of State budget, SIGAR reports, and CRS calculations. Does not include USG operational expenses (over $5 billion since 2002). Food aid includes P.L.480 Title II and other programs. "Other" = Office of Transition Initiatives, Treasury Assistance, and Peacekeeping. ESF = Economic Support Funds; DA = Development Assistance; GHCS = Global Health/Child Survival; FMF = Foreign Military Financing; NADR = Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, De-Mining, and Related: IMET = International Military Education and Training; INCLE = International Narcotics and Law Enforcement; ASSF = Afghan Security Forces Funding; IDA = International Disaster Assistance. Includes stipulated levels in FY2016 Consolidated Appropriation (P.L. 114-113).

* Denotes Administration request for FY2017, as FY2017 country funding estimates are not yet available. Final allocations are determined through the 653(a) process per Section 653(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended. ** FY2018 numbers are from the President's Budget request.

Table 12. NATO/ISAF and RSM Contributing Nations

(ISAF figures: just prior to the end of the ISAF mission. RSM figures are current levels)

NATO Countries			Non-NATO Partners		
	ISAF*	RSM		ISAF	RSM
Belgium	160	62	Albania	22	43
Bulgaria	320	86	Armenia	121	121
Canada	0	0	Australia	273	270
Czech Republic	227	214	Austria	3	12
Denmark	145	97	Azerbaijan	94	94
Estonia	4	4	Bahrain	0	0
France	88	0	Bosnia-Herzegovina	8	55
Germany	1,599	980	Croatia	153	96
Greece	9	4	Finland	88	29
Hungary	101	90	Georgia	755	870
Iceland	2	2	Ireland	7	0
Italy	1,411	1,037	Jordan	626	0
Latvia	11	22	Macedonia	152	39
Lithuania	84	21	Malaysia	2	0
Luxemburg	1	1	Mongolia	40	120
Netherlands	30	84	Montenegro	25	18
Norway	57	42	New Zealand	1	10
Poland	304	182	South Korea	0	0
Portugal	37	10	Sweden	13	25
Romania	327	588	Ukraine	10	10
Slovakia	277	40	United Arab Emirates	35	0
Slovenia	2	7	Tonga	0	0
Spain	181	8			
Turkey	393	532			
United Kingdom	3,906	450			
United States	20,000	6941			
Total Listed (approximate): ISAF: 32,000 RSM: 13,332					

Sources: ISAF and RSM "Placemat," press reports; and country announcements; DOD reports.

Notes: Some countries might be contributing additional forces not under ISAF command.

Table 13. Major Factions/Leaders in Afghanistan

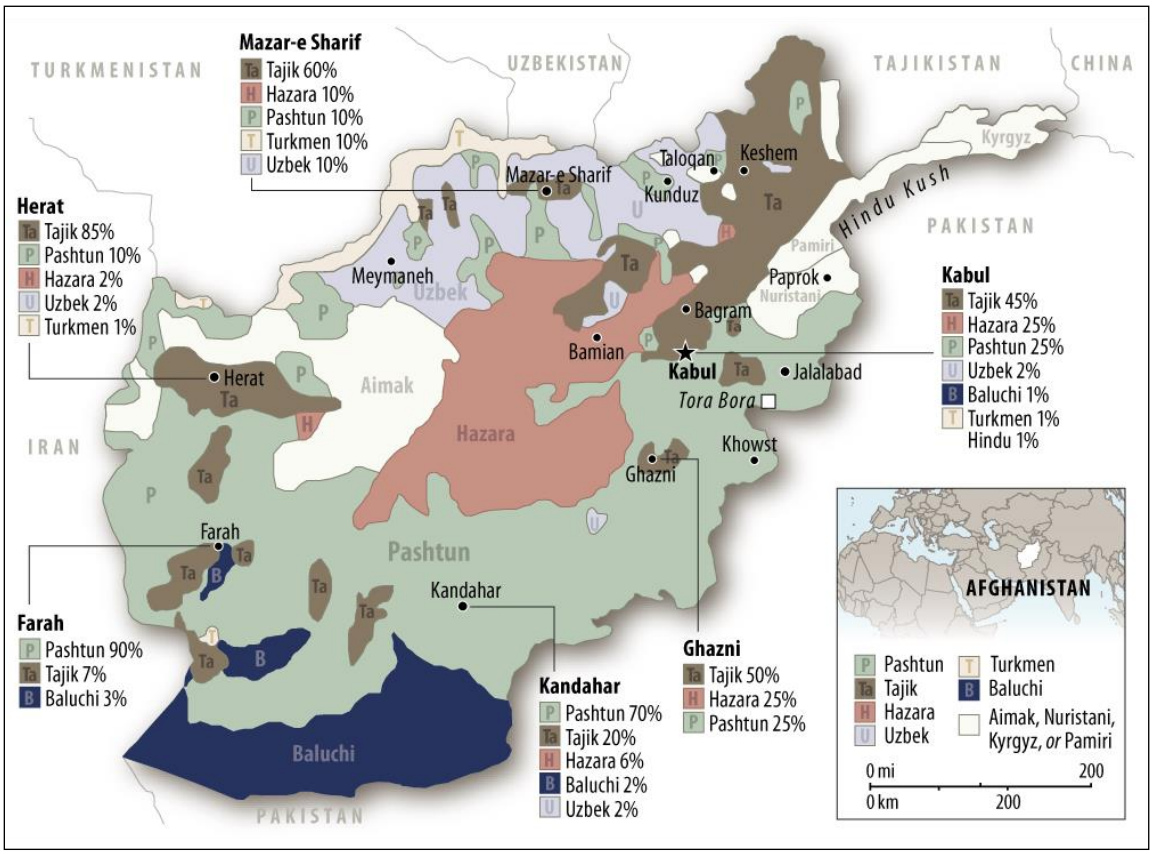
Party/ Leader	Leader	Ideology/ Ethnicity	Regional Base
Taliban	Mullah (Islamic cleric) Haibatullah Akhundzadeh ; succeeded Mullah Mansour, who was killed by a U.S. drone strike in May 2016. Mullah Umar, the group's founder and longtime leader, was killed in 2013, though the Taliban did not admit his death until 2015 with the selection of Mansour.	Ultra-orthodox Islamic, Pashtun	Throughout south and east. Small numbers elsewhere.
Haqqani Network	Jalaludin (who is rumored, without evidence, to have died in 2014) and his son Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is also deputy leader of the Taliban. Allied with Taliban and Al Qaeda. Said to be supported, or at least tolerated, by Pakistani ISI.	Same as above	Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Kabul
Islamic Society (leader of "Northern Alliance")	Party founder, Prof. Burhanuddi Rabbani, assassinated by Taliban in September 2011. Replaced as party head by son, Salahuddin, who is also Foreign Minister. Other key members are CEO Dr. Abdullah, former parliament lower house speaker Yunus Qanooni, and Ismail Khan (Herat area).	Moderate Islamic, mostly Tajik	Much of northern and western Afghanistan, including Kabul
National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan	Abdul Rashid Dostam. Was Karzai rival in October 2004 presidential election, then his top "security adviser." Currently first Vice President, left Afghanistan for Turkey in May 2017 under disputed circumstances.	Secular, left-leaning, Uzbek	Jowzjan, Balkh, Faryab, Sar-i-Pol, and Samangan provinces.
Hizb-e-Wahdat	Composed of Shiite Hazara tribes from central Afghanistan. Former members Karim Khalili is vice president, but Mohammad Mohaqiq is Karzai rival. Generally pro-Iranian. Was part of Rabbani 1992-1996 government, and fought unsuccessfully with Taliban over Bamiyan. Still revered by Hazaras is the former leader of the group, Abdul Ali Mazari, who was captured and killed by the Taliban in March 1995.	Shiite, Hazara tribes	Bamiyan, Ghazni, Dai Kundi province
Pashtun tribal/regional leaders	Various regional governors and local leaders in the east and south; central government led by Ashraf Ghani. Karzai family prominent in Qandahar Province.	Moderate Islamic, Pashtun	Dominant in the south and east
Hizb-e-Islam Gulbuddin (HIG)	*Mujahedin* party leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar. Was part of Soviet-era U.S.-backed "Afghan Interim Government" based in Peshawar, Pakistan. Was nominal "prime minister" in 1992-1996 mujahedin government but never actually took office. Lost power base around Jalalabad to the Taliban in 1994, and fled to Iran before being expelled in 2002. Signed peace agreement with government in 2016 accord seen as potential template for broader reconciliation. Leader of a rival Hizb-e-Islam faction, Yunus Khalis, the mentor of Mullah Umar, died July 2006.	Orthodox Islamic, Pashtun	Small groups in Nangarhar, Nuristan, and Kunar provinces
Islamic Union	Abd-I-Rab Rasul Sayyaf. Islamic conservative, leads Islamic conservatives in parliament. Lived many years in and politically close to Saudi Arabia, which shares his "Wahhabi" ideology. During anti-Soviet war, Sayyaf's faction, with Hikmatyar, was a principal recipient of U.S. weaponry. Criticized the U.S.-led war against Saddam Hussein after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.	orthodox Islamic, Pashtun	Paghman (west of Kabul)

Source: CRS.

Figure 1. Map of Afghanistan

Source: Map Resources. Adapted by CRS.

Figure 2. Map of Afghan Ethnicities



Source: 2003 National Geographic Society. http://www.afghan-network.net/maps/Afghanistan-Map.pdf. Adapted by Amber Wilhelm, CRS Graphics.

Notes: This map is intended to be illustrative of the approximate demographic distribution by region of Afghanistan. CRS has no way to confirm exact population distributions.

Author Information

Kenneth Katzman
Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs

Clayton Thomas
Analyst in Middle Eastern Affairs

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or

material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.