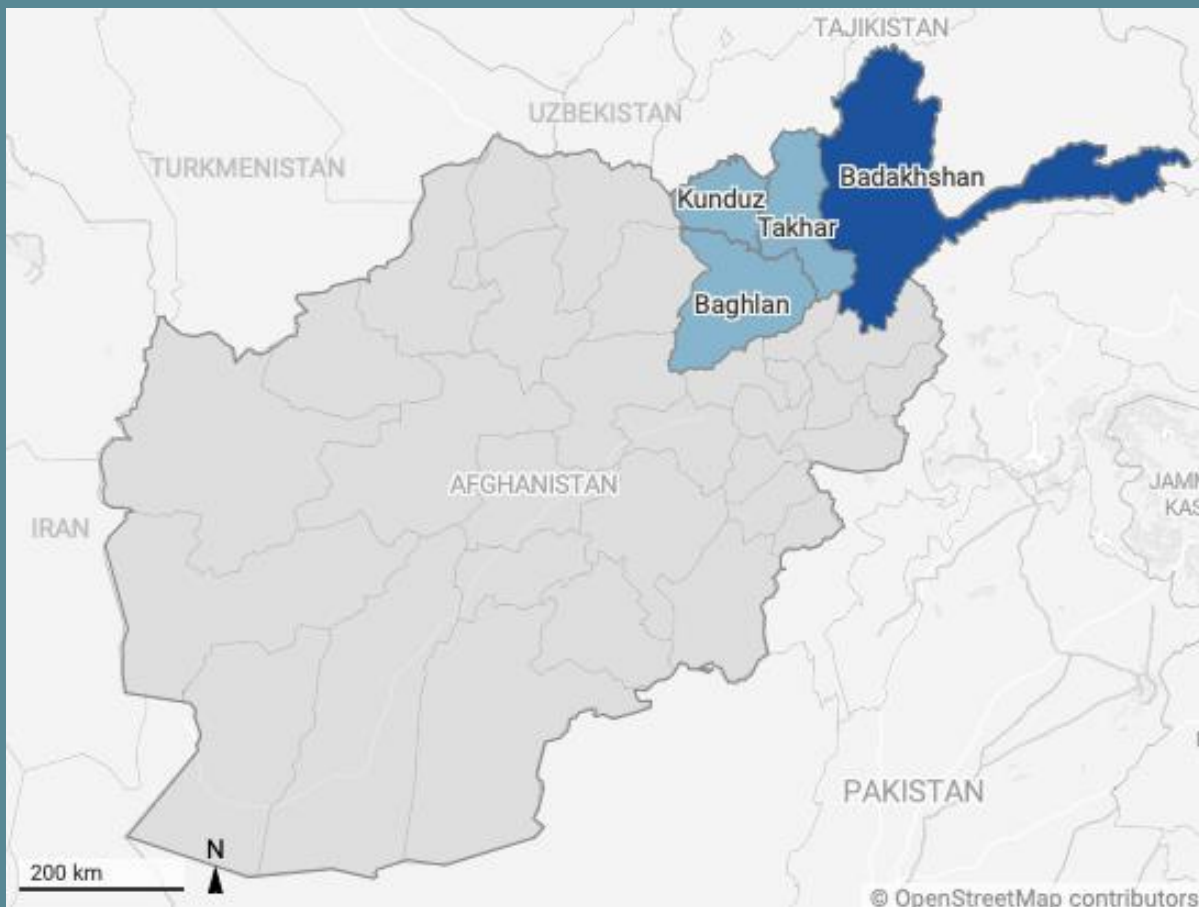




Local Dynamics of Conflict and Peace in North-East Afghanistan

Findings from a Local Forum for Peace



July 2021

Reaching Out for Peace is a joint project of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Afghanistan, Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (APPRO) and Mediothek Afghanistan for Development and Peace Organization (MADPO).

The project is designed to facilitate regular community level exchanges on local impediments to and opportunities for peace in and between seven regional nodes: Kandahar, Herat, Balkh, Badakhshan, Bamyān, Nangarhar, and Kabul.

Local forums for peace are held to engage Afghans “where they are” on ways to overcome conflict through dialogue, exchange, and activism. As such, these events encourage active participation at the community level in efforts to build a common vision for peace. Ensuing publications and visual media outputs help to inform sub-national, national, and international stakeholders and provide recommendations for future engagement.

This brief was prepared by Lucile Martin, Saeed Parto, and Martha Le Grand as part of a partnership between FES, MADPO, and APPRO.

On May 24th, 2021, a local forum for peace was held in Faizabad, Badakhshan. The forum brought together civil society representatives from four provinces in North-East Afghanistan: Badakhshan, Baghlan, Takhar, and Kunduz. An overview of basic demographic, geographic, economic and conflict features of each province is provided below, followed by an overview of proceedings of the forum. The brief ends with general conclusions from the discussions.

Background

All four provinces are overwhelmingly rural, with the highest concentration of population in Kunduz city and around Pol-e Khomri in Baghlan (See Figures 1 and 2). Subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry constitute the main livelihoods for most inhabitants, with mining constituting an additional source of income for some rural communities in Badakhshan and Takhar (WFP, November 2016; AAD, 2011, Samuel Hall, 2010). Rural livelihoods are vulnerable to droughts and floods – which have, in recent years, depleted food crops and diminished livestock (Climate Center, April 2021).

Poverty rates are the highest in Kunduz at 77%, followed by Badakhshan at 65%, Baghlan at 58% and Takhar at the national average of 52% (UNDP, 2020). In 2018, Takhar and Badakhshan were among the ten provinces in the country with the highest rates of food insecurity (CSO, 2018).

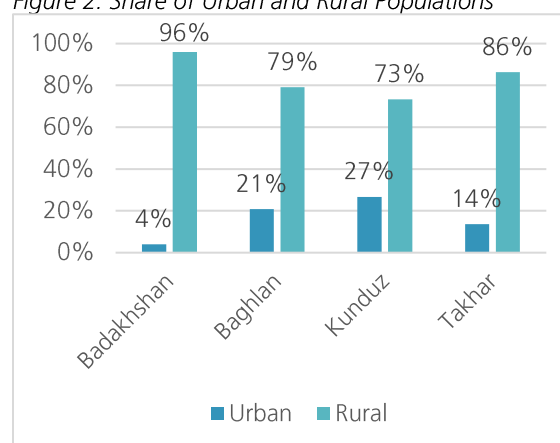
Figure 1: Population Estimates (2020)

Province	Total	Urban	Rural
Badakhshan	1,054,087	42,900	1,011,187
Baghlan	1,014,634	211,105	803,529
Kunduz	1,136,677	303,255	833,422
Takhar	1,093,092	148,600	944,492

¹ Estimates are based on government figures. There are indications actual numbers might be higher.

Source: NSIA (2021)¹

Figure 2: Share of Urban and Rural Populations



Based on NSIA (2021).

There has been ongoing violence between armed opposition groups (AOGs) and the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) in all four provinces throughout 2020 and the first half of 2021, leading to several occurrences of displacement (OCHA, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2021).

In 2020, Kunduz and Baghlan were among the five provinces in Afghanistan with the most civilian casualties attributed to pro-government forces. In the same year, human rights defenders and media reporters were victims of attacks by AOGs (UNAMA, 2021). There have further been repeated reports of Afghan Local Police (ALP) involvement in human rights violations in Takhar, Kunduz and Baghlan (Clark, November 14, 2019).

The provinces of Badakhshan, Kunduz and Takhar, located along the northern drug trafficking route crossing the border into Tajikistan, are affected by

factional competition between local power brokers over the control of drug trade (*ibid.*).

During the single month of June 2021, six districts in Kunduz, eleven in Takhar, eight in Baghlan, and two in Badakhshan were attacked and overrun by AOGs.

Kunduz province borders Takhar to the east, Baghlan to the south, Balkh to the west and shares an international border with Tajikistan to the north. Main languages of inhabitants include Pashto (over 40% of inhabitants), Dari (26%), Uzbeki (20%), and Turkmeni speaking minorities (CSO 2005).

The province has been the scene of major Taliban offensives in 2015, 2018, and 2019. A strategic supply axis for the Taliban, Kunduz has been used as a staging ground for their campaigns in the north of the country since 2015, when the Taliban first took over the provincial capital (UNSG, 12 March 2021; Ali and Ruttig, 11 September 2019; Ali, 30 January 2016; RFE/RL, ND). In 2020, Kunduz had the highest number of civilian casualties of the four provinces of interest (UNAMA, 2021).

To the south of Kunduz, **Baghlan** borders Samangan to the west, Bamyan to the southwest, Parwan to the south, Panjshir to the south-east and Takhar to the east. Dari is the main language of 70% of the population, followed by Pashto (over 20%), and minorities of Uzbeki speakers (CSO, 2005).

The province is located along the trans-Hindu-Kush highway, the major transportation axis connecting Kabul to the North, and a pivotal road for the transit of goods, fuel, and troops. Taliban pressure on northern stretches of the highway, which splits into two branches in the provincial capital Pol-e Khomri, towards Kunduz and Balkh respectively, has hampered government access to and control over the north of the country (UNSG, March 12, 2021).

Security in the province has sharply declined since 2016. In September 2019, the Taliban launched a coordinated offensive on Kunduz city and Pol-e Khomri, the provincial capital of Baghlan. The Taliban have since held at least partial control of all districts in both provinces (Ali, 30 October 2019).

Takhar is located east of Kunduz, along the northern international border with Tajikistan. It borders Baghlan to the southwest, Panjshir to the south and Badakhshan to the east. Dari and Uzbeki are

the two main languages spoken (at around 45% each), followed by Pashto (CSO, 2005).

Takhar is a mineral rich province, with resources including coal, gypsum, salt, and gold. Mines are at the heart of heavy competition between local powerholders, with the government struggling or unable to exploit them due to insecurity. The Taliban allegedly draw important resources from the exploitation of gold mines in the province (Kakar, 27 April 2021; MOMP, n.d.).

Taliban presence has grown in Takhar since 2019, and violent confrontations have been reported between the Taliban and the ANSF throughout 2020 (Ali and Ruttig, *op.cit.*; UNAMA, *op.cit.*). Ground engagement, air strikes and targeted killings against members of the government are among the main causes of civilian casualties, which increased by 25% in 2020 as compared to 2019. Taliban attacks on local schools and ANSF airstrikes destroying education buildings, killing students and personnel, have also been reported (UNAMA, *op.cit.*). Conflict dynamics are further complicated by factional rivalry between a mosaic of armed groups belonging to local strongmen, and the importance of the drug economy (Clark, November 14, 2019).

On the north-eastern tip of Afghanistan, **Badakhshan** shares a long international border with Tajikistan to the north. To the east, the Wakhan corridor stretches north of Pakistan's Chitral and Gilgit Baltistan, towards the border with China. Dari is the main language of over 80% of the population, followed by Uzbeki at over 10%, and a minority of Kyrgyz speakers in the Wakhan corridor.

The province is mountainous and semi-mountainous on over 90% of its area, with communities dispersed and isolated, particularly in the winter. These conditions, compounded by poor infrastructure, curtail opportunities for trade – accounting, at least in part, for the relative importance in livelihoods of informal trade and smuggling (Fishstein, 2014).

The province is also famous for its highly valued mineral resources: lapis lazuli, gold, rubies, diamonds, copper, limestone, iron, mica, and coal, among others (Pajhwok, 14 January 2014; Fishstein, 2014). The development of a formal mining industry has remained limited, however. Illegal mining has been denounced as a cause of severe safety concern for workers (BBC, 6 January 2019).

Control of mines by illegal or insurgent armed groups is also a source of insecurity.

In June 2021, at least 22 of the 28 districts in the province were reported as contested and 2 fully under Taliban control. Civilian casualties surged by 75% in 2020 as compared to 2019 – mostly due to ground engagement, targeted killing and non-suicide IEDs (UNAMA, *op.cit*).

Badakhshan Forum for Peace: An Overview

Seventy individuals, with an equal representation of men and women, attended the local peace forum in Faizabad. Participants included representatives of civil society, the private sector, local government, academia, and religious institutions from the four aforementioned provinces.

In each local forum, participants discuss among themselves and identify key drivers of conflict at the community level. These drivers are presented to panelists tasked to suggest ways in which these drivers can be addressed through local, community-level initiatives.

In Faizabad, four panelists responded to participants' observations on drivers of conflict in north-east Afghanistan. The panelists, two men and two women, consisted of one civil society representative and defender of women's rights, a children's rights defender, a professor of technical apprenticeship, and a local representative of the Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs.



© FES, MADPO, APPRO/ Jalil Poya

Another component of the local forums for peace is an open discussion among participants on expectations surrounding peace and the potential advent of a negotiated deal between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban. Expectations for

peace and factors of local conflict identified by participants are outlined below.

Participants' Expectations About Peace

Participants in the Badakhshan forum for peace expressed some hope a negotiated deal would have positive consequences – albeit tied to the explicit conditions that the deal would 1) effectively put an end to violent conflict, and 2) preserve existing constitutional rights. These expectations can be grouped into three thematic areas:

- A more favorable economic environment;
- Better governance, notably a decrease in corruptive practices and a fairer implementation of the law;
- Increased social cohesion.

The above expectations are based on the anticipation that the integration of the Taliban within the formal political system would result in a reduction of combat and targeted killings, and create conditions for structural reforms.

Some participants reckon an effective implementation of Islamic Law would entail more social justice and better governance – including through the removal of corrupt elements within the government. More generally, participants expect political stability resulting from the absence of conflict and more effective governance mechanisms would attract economic investments – particularly in road infrastructure and the formal mining sector.

That said, significant doubts were also expressed about whether the two conditions outlined above (an end to the conflict, and the preservation of constitutional rights) would be the outcome of a negotiated deal. Specific rights mentioned as requiring dedicated protection include access to education for all, freedom of expression, and women's access to the public space and labor. Both female panelists strongly maintained it would be unacceptable for women to pay the "price of peace."

The uncertainty surrounding the type of relationship between state and civil society in the event of a partly or fully Taliban government was also raised as a source of alarm. Finally, concern was expressed about the advent of ideological strife between the more liberal and the more conservative among the population – with citizens sharply divided in their perceptions of society and their definitions of what constitutes an appropriate interpretation of Islamic law.

Local Factors of Conflict

The four main factors of conflict identified by participants in the forum for peace in Faizabad were:

- Lack of rule of law
- Proliferation of weapons
- Illegal mining
- Weak economy

The key features of each factor, as outlined by participants, are detailed below.



© FES, MADPO, APPRO/ Jalil Poya

Issue 1: Lack of Rule of Law

Poor enforcement of the law and unfair treatment of citizens by the justice system were considered by participants as adversely affecting government legitimacy and fueling conflict within communities. Some segments of the population were identified as particularly vulnerable to abuse by the administration and judiciary, including women, youth, and minority groups.

Participants further raised widespread administrative corruption as a factor contributing to the weakening of an already dysfunctional justice system perceived as serving the powerful and disadvantaging the vulnerable. A panelist concurred:

We might have the best legal framework in the region, starting with the Constitution and including the series of laws, decrees and bills that have been passed. Unfortunately, if there is one thing that is not implemented in this country, it is the law. Lawmakers themselves violate the law. [...] There are people who will not let you set a foot in their office unless you pay them 500 Afghani. We have hit rock bottom. The situation has seriously deteriorated, and the change is beyond belief. The root of all our misfortunes is four decades of conflict, and in particular the last two decades— Female panelist 1.

Starting to address bad governance and lack of rule of law, according to group members, required a combination of awareness of citizens about the law and legal procedures, a more active involvement of civil society and the media in monitoring of the judiciary, and a structural reform of state institutions. For instance:

The role of oversight bodies and civil society is, at the very least, to observe the activities of the judiciary, and monitor the extent to which verdicts are in accordance with the framework of the law. All cases need to be judged in conformity with the law and carried out in due time so that people are reassured, and that mutual trust is woven between the people and the state. – Male panelist 1, civil society.

It was suggested civic rights should be part of the education curriculum from a low age to institutionalize understanding of rights and duties and empower future citizens to resist unfair treatment.

Some also considered religious leaders needed to be more actively engaged in defending rights of citizens and monitoring law enforcement.

Finally, group members raised transitional justice as a condition for setting the basis for social cohesion. They underlined the importance of developing a framework to account to victims and bring perpetrators of atrocities and war crimes to justice.

Issue 2: Proliferation of Weapons

A second factor of conflict identified by participants was the proliferation of arms. Widespread ownership of weapons by much of population, explained participants, contributes to the quick escalation of small-scale conflicts, and easy access to arms institutionalizes violence as a means to an end – particularly among male youth. In a context where opportunities for income-earning are scarce, guns are perceived as readily available tools to earn a living by joining armed militias and AOGs.

Compounding and correlate to the dissemination of weapons is the spread of armed groups and militias. The Afghan Local Police (ALP) is also seen as contributing to the generalization of violence:

This government created the ALP, sometimes providing them with a salary, sometimes not paying them and distributing weapons, and they bred militias. These groups have been a trouble from the onset. [...] If we had focused on strengthening the police and the army instead,

there would have been no need for the ALP. They [ALP] rob, loot, block roads and conduct other exactions, and they are protected by the Minister, the Governor, or the Head of Police – Male panelist 2, religious leader.

Group members raised the possibility of providing financial compensation in exchange for weapons as a means to reduce the availability of arms among the population. Yet others reckoned the issue of arms ownership was complex and would be unlikely to be solved by handing out money. One participant illustrated the challenges as follows:

If I have a weapon, I have the power, I can grab land and water resources, and eventually, I rule over people. So, who will come and hand in their weapons? Let me tell you an interesting story that happened during Eid. I made the remark to one of my neighbors that many shots had been fired from his house on the night of Eid. He said: "I shoot so neighbors know that I am armed, and that I have power, so they never attempt to intimidate me." Solving such an issue in this society will require a prolonged effort. – Male participant 1, civil society.

Longer-term ways forward outlined by group members focused on education and awareness raising. It was proposed to discuss the dangers associated with weapons in schools, and debunk the positive image associated with gun ownership among children. At the community level, participants suggested awareness campaigns mobilizing civil society institutions understood in a broad manner (from NGOs to religious leaders, the media and community councils) to inform about the harm caused by lone gunmen or armed groups, discuss the issue with communities and regulate the use of arms at the local level.



© FES, MADPO, APPRO/ Jalil Poya

Issue 3: Illegal Mining

The third cause of conflict raised by participants related to the illegal exploitation of mines. Two aspects were covered by the group. First, informal mining by local communities to secure alternative livelihoods. Second, the exploitation of mines by powerholders who smuggle precious minerals and use revenue derived from their sale to fund warfare:

For years, people from local communities have lost control over gold and lapis lazuli mines. When minerals are extracted, they are extracted by strongmen who deprive local people from everything but day laboring, and who extract lapis for other people at dirt cheap rates. – Female panelist 1, civil society.

In the view of group members, legalizing existing informal low-tech mining and investing in local exploitations would contribute to pacify the mining industry in mineral-rich provinces such as Badakhshan and Takhar, and provide stable income opportunities for local communities. The group representative noted:

On the one hand we have a government that either does not have the ability to exploit the mines under our feet, or that does not have the power to do so, and on the other hand the same government explains that those who do exploit them are illegal. Then those who are told they are illegal take up arms against the government. – Male participant 2, civil society.

If the government legalized existing mines and protected the workers, noted group members, incentives for local communities to arm themselves or rely on armed militias for protection would be reduced, and government legitimacy strengthened. Formalizing the informal mining sector and professionalizing it was also seen as a way to generate revenue that could then be invested back into local communities to build infrastructure, support small businesses, and upgrade education facilities.

Emphasis was placed on improving the working conditions of miners, including by legal prosecution of infringements to rights to decent labor. Participants also stressed the importance of securing access to mines by investing in road infrastructure and safe extraction technology.

A key obstacle to the formalization of illegal mining, however, is the management of mines by well-connected powerholders who monopolize means

of production and control access to resources. Participants argued mines should be considered as the common good of the people and restituted to local communities. But they doubted the government alone could back communities in their endeavor. As such:

Local communities should cooperate and mobilize people so they understand the mines are their property, that they should not accept their appropriation by private interests. – Male participant 2, civil society.

Among actors identified as potentially playing a positive role were the media, religious leaders, and some government institutions – all having, to date, played only a limited role in supporting communities which depend on mining for at least part of their livelihoods.

The participants notably explained religious leaders could be effective advocates for community rights over their resources, and in favor of decent working conditions. One panelist, a religious leader himself, agreed:

The ulema have a responsibility to ensure citizens' rights are not alienated. We are all shareholders in this [mineral] capital: women, men, elders. [...] So far, only a handful of people who have taken control of our mineral resources by coercion – whether they belong to the government's abusive armed forces or are simply rascals, have laid their hands on this capital. It is a duty for us, not just women and men, but for all Afghans and especially the ulema, to raise awareness among all citizens so that we are not deprived of our rights. – Male panelist 1, religious leader.

Finally, participants called for more involvement of relevant government institutions such as the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum for professionalizing miners and upgrading mining techniques, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to ensure decent working conditions, and provincial authorities to participate in the monitoring of mining projects.

Issue 4: Weak Economy

Underpinning the two previous issues is that of lack of livelihoods. Poverty and unemployment pressure households to resort to risky labor in often-extreme conditions. They also drive discontent toward the government, and anger at corrupt elites who amass wealth through questionable means. As above, lack of income-earning opportunities is considered as one of the main drivers of male youth involvement with illegal armed groups.

Nepotism and corruption in access to employment was also raised as a factor detrimental to economic growth, benefitting well-connected but inexperienced individuals to the detriment of hard-working qualified personnel.

Group members stressed the need to support local production. They placed specific emphasis on investments in infrastructures of production at the local level:

Labor force and water resources are available in Badakhshan, for instance. The problem is we do not have cold houses to store our crops so they can be consumed in different seasons. We also lack factories in all provinces to drive domestic production of manufactured goods. Provided it is possible, investing in infrastructure would create jobs and make youth less likely to join AOGs. – Female participant 1, civil society.

Participants notably hoped a negotiated deal between the Islamic Republic and the Taliban would stabilize the conflict and encourage domestic and foreign investments in the local economy. They also raised the need for a new government to break away with past practices of resources accumulation and of capital flight organized by political elites.

Another way forward considered was the provision of grants to small entrepreneurs to boost small and medium scale enterprises.

Conclusions

Four key observations can be drawn from the discussions that took place at the Badakhshan forum for peace.

A first observation is the prominence of economic aspects in discussions about lasting peace – underpinned by strong discontent about enormous disparities in distribution of wealth. Poverty and under/unemployment are regularly brought up as both as consequences and aggravating factors of conflict. Notions of social justice and solidarity are recurrent in discussions about conditions for establishing peace, and economic stability is explicitly associated to the stabilization of conflict.

A related observation is a ceasefire while a pre-condition for peace, is considered insufficient to ensure the effective advent of long-term stability should heavy investments not be made to support the improvement of economic conditions of citizens, reduce inequalities and abolish unwarranted privileges of a corrupt elite.

Second, participants expressed strong disillusionment and disappointment in the regime in place since 2001. The institutionalization of corruption as a mode of governance is described as a key driver of conflict at the local level. Government officials are seen as disinterested in resolving sources of conflict and often, in fact, contributing to their aggravation – as corrupt political elites immune to prosecution and punishment ignore the needs of citizens and often abuse their rights. Bad governance is notably considered as being responsible for the lack of legitimacy of formal structures of government, and the spread of armed groups and militias.

Against this background, the perspective of a new regime is a source of a mix of strong concern, and flashes of hope that governance will improve. One key demand of participants was to ensure more transparency and accountability from government institutions.

That said, strong uncertainty about the shape a new government would take, generates anxieties. A third observation is indeed the long shadow cast by the ongoing negotiations in Doha, Qatar, over discussions about peace at the local level. Unpredictability makes it difficult to envisage what form the actions of civil society, broadly understood, could take to strengthen social cohesion, and

create conditions for peace. Some actors – in particular NGOs and activists of human rights who have received the support of international donors over the past two decades, are particularly alarmed about how their role would be defined under a government partly or fully controlled by the Taliban. The place women would have in the public space is another important question mark against the backdrop of ambiguities concerning how Islamic law will be interpreted, and skepticism about the effectiveness of women's representation in Doha.

Finally, a negotiated agreement between the Taliban and the Islamic Republic is not seen as necessarily putting an end to the conflict. Some expressed strong doubts that the Taliban would effectively drop their weapons after the withdrawal of foreign troops in September 2021.

There are also concerns over how reconciliation would take place in a society deeply divided by over four decades of conflict – a divide further aggravated by the accrued ethnicization of politics in the past twenty years, and deep ideological rifts between different segments of the population.

Acknowledgement

Front cover photograph taken by Mohammad Aref Karimi

Legal Notice and Disclaimer

© 2021 APPRO, MADPO and FES – all rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior permission in writing from APPRO (www.appro.org.af), MADPO (www.mediothek-afghanistan.org) and FES (www.afghanistan.fes.de)

References

- Afghan Aid (AAID) (2011). Dryness Impact Survey Report – Badakhshan. AAID. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report-afghanistan/dryness-impact-survey-report-badakhshan>
- Ali, Obaid, and Ruttig, Thomas (2019). Taliban attacks on Kunduz and Pul-e Khumri: Symbolic Operations Afghanistan Analysts Networks (AAN). 11 September. Available at: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/war-and-peace/taliban-attacks-on-kunduz-and-pul-e-khumri-symbolic-operations/>
- Ali, Obaid (201a) Afghanistan's 2019 Election (22): Glances at Kunduz, Baghlan, Samangan. Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), 30 October. Available at <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/political-landscape/afghanistans-2019-election-22-glances-at-kunduz-baghlan-samangan/>
- Ali, Obaid (2016). The 2016 Insurgency in the North: Beyond Kunduz city – lessons (not taken) from the Taliban takeover. Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), 30 January. Available at: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/war-and-peace/the-2016-insurgency-in-the-north-beyond-kunduz-city-lessons-not-taken-from-the-taliban-takeover/>
- Clark, Kate (2019). A Maelstrom of Militias: Takhar, A Case Study of Strongmen Co-opting the ALP. Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), 14 November. Available at: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/war-and-peace/a-maelstrom-of-militias-takhar-a-case-study-of-strongmen-co-opting-the-alp/>
- BBC News (2019). Afghanistan gold mine collapse in Badakhshan kills 30. 6 January 6. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46772155>
- Climate Center (2021). 13 million Afghans lack food as drought crisis intensifies. 21 April. Available at: <https://www.climatecentre.org/3968/13-million-afghans-lack-food-as-drought-crisis-intensifies/>
- Fishstein, Paul (2014). Evolving Terrain: Opium Poppy Cultivation in Balkh and Badakhshan Provinces in 2013. Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU).
- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Central Statistics Organization (2018). Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016-17. Kabul: CSO.
- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (n.d.). Takhar Province Mineral Appearances. Available at: <https://momp.gov.af/takhar-province-mineral-appearances>
- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, National Statistics and Information Authority (2021). *Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2020*. Issue No: 42. Available at: <https://www.nsia.gov.af:8080/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Afghanistan-Statistical-Yearbook-first-Version.pdf>
- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Central Statistics Organization, and United Nations Population Fund (2005). Afghanistan. A Socio-Economic Demographic Profile.
- Kakar, Ajmal (2021). Takhar: Taliban earn millions of afghanis from illegal mining. Pajhwok Afghan News, 27 April 27. Available at: <https://pajhwok.com/2021/04/27/takhar-taliban-earn-millions-of-afghanis-from-illegal-mining/>
- Pajhwok reporter (2014). Mineral resources of Badakhshan province. Pajhwok Afghan News. 14 January. Available at: <https://mines.pajhwok.com/news/mineral-resources-badakhshan-province>
- Samuel Hall (2010). *Review of Country Strategy (Badakhshan and Takhar)*. October. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cfe2c8927234e0001688343/t/5d1de4ba345aa60001cfe3a0/1562240198554/Review-of-Country-Strategy-Mission-East.pdf>
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2020). *Pitfalls and Promise: Minerals Extraction in Afghanistan*. Afghanistan Human Development Report 2020. Available at: https://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/library/human_development/NHDR-2020.html

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2021). *Afghanistan: Weekly Humanitarian Update (24-30 May 2021)*. Situation Report, 2 June. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-weekly-humanitarian-update-24-30-may-2021>

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2020a). *Takhar Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting*. 13 April. Available at: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/afg_minutes_20200413_oct_ner_takhar.pdf

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2020b). *Kunduz Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting*. 12 August. Available at: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/afg_minutes_20200812_oct_ner_kunduz.pdf

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2020c). *Baghlan Operational Coordination Team (OCT) Meeting*. Inter-Cluster. 17 November. Available at: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/afg_minutes_20201117_oct_ner_baghlan.pdf

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (2021). *Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. Annual report 2021*. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/afghanistan_protection_of_civilians_report_2020.pdf

United Nations, Secretary General (2021). *The Situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*. UN Doc. A/75/811 – S/2021/252. 12 March. Available at: https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2021_252_E.pdf

United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Afghanistan's National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) (2016). *Climate Change in Afghanistan: What does it mean for rural livelihoods and food security?* November. Available at: https://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/Afghanistan/Afg_CC_RuralLivelihoodsFoodSecurity_Nov2016.pdf

Zucchini, David (2019). *Captives and Defectors? Taliban Fighters Tell Conflicting Tales*. 7 November. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/07/world/asia/taliban-afghanistan-defectors.html>