

**2**  
**2023**

# Afghanistan Monitor

February 2023

**FRIEDRICH  
EBERT**   
**STIFTUNG**  
PAKISTAN OFFICE



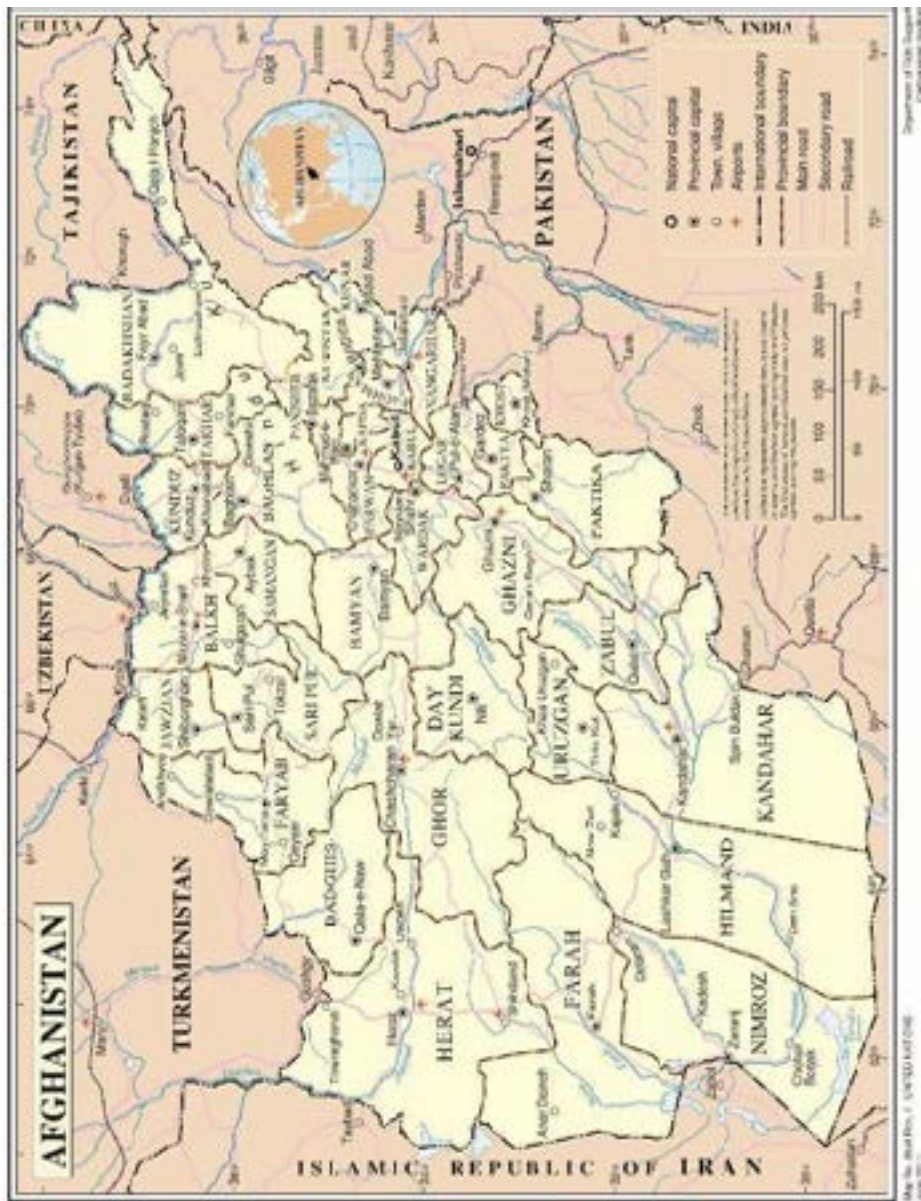
# **Afghanistan Monitor**

February 2023



# Contents

Introduction .....	1
Political situation .....	3
Ongoing projects under the de facto authorities .....	4
Humanitarian situation.....	5
Economic situation.....	6
Foreign engagement.....	9
Security situation .....	10
Human rights and women’s rights.....	12
Opinion corner .....	14
The situation in Afghanistan: A German perspective .....	14
Afghanistan – avoiding the curse of history .....	17
End notes .....	20



Afghanistan, Map No. 3958 Rev. 7, June 2011, United Nations

## Introduction

The Afghanistan Monitor is a regular publication from Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Pakistan that covers the political, economic and humanitarian situation since the Taliban takeover. Each issue features experts' analysis of the country's latest developments. The second issue summarizes the events from October to January 2023.

Since the Taliban's assumption of power in August 2021 as Afghanistan's de facto authorities, their performance has been extensively debated by observers, critics, and politicians.<sup>1</sup> Despite some positive developments in terms of security and pragmatism with regards to economic activity, there remain major concerns regarding political inclusion, social cohesion, and the development of political structures. Moreover, their oppressive policies towards women remains a central issue, reminding the world of the Taliban of two decades ago. Furthermore, challenges posed and exacerbated by the pressures of transnational terrorist groups continue to challenge the future of the country.

Despite being the only recognizable group controlling the country, the Taliban are still trying to consolidate their position. Given the concerns in their own ranks as well as within the populace, it is clear that governance is a huge challenge. After all, even

as the group managed to strong-arm its way into a position of authority at the helm of affairs in Afghanistan, its weaknesses in terms of lacking the expertise, resources, and ability to effectively run the bureaucracy and ministries have become all the more evident. One reason behind this is a lack of human resources – the majority of educated Afghans who had the resources and opportunity have left the country. In addition to their own weaknesses and liabilities, the Taliban have also inherited weak institutions, an almost non-existent economy, an ongoing humanitarian crisis, and adverse effects of natural calamities.

While the Taliban have been able to deliver some results in terms of attaining relative security throughout the country, reducing corruption and generating revenue, they have not been able to deliver on their pledges of reform pertaining to women and human rights, establishing an inclusive government as well as delivering on counter-terrorism assurances.

A major concern in Afghanistan is the issue of representation. Ethnic minorities and women have been disadvantaged and suppressed, and have time and again faced discrimination and oppression resulting in valid grievances against the de facto authorities. The Taliban government is also overwhelmingly Pashtun, and while some token non-

Pashtun members from other ethnic factions have been added to the cabinet, including the appointment of Sheikh Madar Ali Karimi Bamiani, an ethnic Hazara, as Deputy Minister of Urban Development in December 2022, the governing structure in place fails to adequately represent all ethnicities in Afghanistan. It has also failed to give representation to women, let alone opportunities. It thus fails to represent an inclusive setup as had been promised.

The de facto authorities continue to run the country through ministries established during the previous Afghan government. Despite pledges of reform and moderation pertaining to honouring women's role in public life and their right to education, the space and role of Afghan women has been shrinking as the Taliban have reverted back to their oppressive policies towards women, including restrictions on women's rights, dress code, freedom of movement (accompanied only by a *mahram* – a close male relative i.e. husband, father or brother) and other conducts. The ban on women's education at the university level as well as the deprivation of their right to work have further put into question the Taliban's credibility as a reliable partner and their ability or willingness to reform. Accordingly, the recent curbing of women's rights has received widespread opposition, domestically as well as from the

international community, clearly demonstrating a unified domestic and international approach towards the Taliban's repressive policies, undermining the Taliban's relationship with the international community.<sup>2</sup>

While there is no doubt that the security situation within the country has improved with significant declines in armed conflict and civilian casualties, the rising threat posed by the Daesh regional affiliate Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), is a major issue of concern not only for the country itself but the immediate neighbourhood. Despite repeated assurances from the Taliban that Afghan soil will not be used as a safe haven for international terrorist groups, the spike in attacks by the ISKP calls into question the Taliban's willingness and ability to counter such threats. While the attacks were initially confined within Afghanistan's borders, primarily against the Taliban (the ISKP has targeted prominent Taliban and pro-Taliban religious scholars, as well as minorities, mostly the Shia community) over the past several months, the ISKP has begun to conduct attacks against those countries that are engaging with the Taliban, such as Pakistan, China, Russia and Uzbekistan, and has aligned itself with other transnational terrorist groups in an apparent attempt to deter international engagement with the Taliban. This adds further international pressure on the Taliban,



while hindering any progress made in governance.

The Taliban's refusal to adhere to promises made in the Doha process<sup>3</sup> is resulting in a growing sense of frustration from the international community towards the group. If the de facto authorities continue to follow this trajectory, it will become increasingly difficult for those countries that are openly engaging with the group to continue to do so.

## Political situation

The Taliban continue to function under an interim setup that was established soon after they assumed power in August 2021. Since then, there has been no formal structure of governance nor any formalized constitution. The group continues to run the country through ministries established during the previous Afghan government. With the exception of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which has been replaced by the Ministry of Vice and Virtue, no other ministry has been abolished. Despite the widespread discrimination against women by the Taliban government, the overwhelmingly female Ministry of Health employees continue to work.

The Taliban government's Minister of Justice Sheikh Abdul Kareem Haider has expressed confidence

that, if directed by the Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, a comprehensive Islamic constitution based on the Hanafi school of jurisprudence can be established. But there appears to be no progress on this front, nor any clear desire to do so. This indicates that the group is comfortable functioning and governing as an authoritative entity without a formal procedure guiding and regulating its work. This is also reflected in the way that the Taliban have begun to institute policies influenced by their interpretation of the Sharia, such as public floggings.<sup>4</sup> With the Taliban in power Afghanistan has seen a significant improvement in security – partially due to the fact the Taliban themselves were the largest security threat before their takeover – as well as the establishment of a relatively stable and centralized rule throughout the country.

The cabinet with no female representation is overwhelmingly Pashtun and thus fails to represent an inclusive setup, as the group initially had agreed to form. However, in December 2022 Sheikh Madar Ali Karimi Bamiani, an ethnic Hazara, was appointed as Deputy Minister of Urban Development. While the group has failed to deliver on inclusivity, it claims that an estimated 370 Afghan individuals including ministers, deputies, members of parliament, national security employees, journalists and prominent political

figures have returned to Afghanistan since the establishment of the de facto authorities' Commission of Liaison and Repatriation of Afghan Personalities,<sup>5</sup> including Ahmad Hussain, the adviser on religious affairs of the second assistant to former President Ashraf Ghani. Additionally, the Taliban claim to have been holding regular meetings with political, ethnic and religious groups from different parts of the country including Hindu and Sikh minorities to discuss the state of affairs of the country, and to "continue seeking advice for the solidarity of the people and strengthening of the Islamic system in Afghanistan".<sup>6</sup>

In addition, the de facto authorities have begun to establish *ulema* (senior scholars') councils to oversee the functioning of the local government, advise local officials on governance and handle legal issues through direct contact with Taliban leadership. All *ulema* councils are made up of religious scholars and elders of the respective province. The chairman of the councils has direct access to the Taliban's Supreme Leader Mullah Akhundzada.<sup>7</sup>

## Ongoing projects under the de facto authorities

Within governance, the primary focus of the Taliban has been economic governance, by clamping down on corruption and generating revenue through taxation, customs, collecting payments on electricity bills, etc.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the group has rolled back administrative expenses.<sup>9</sup> Apart from economics, the Taliban have focused on infrastructure development by constructing and repairing roads, highways (i.e. the Kandahar-Herat, Kandahar-Uruzgan and Parwan-Bamyan highways), bridges, building and repairing canals, wells as well as solar-powered water supply networks.<sup>10</sup> The de facto authorities claim to have repaired 2,000 km of highways and that the Ministry of Public Works is currently constructing a network of roads.<sup>11</sup> The de facto authorities have also initiated a number of clean-water projects in different parts of the country, with the latest one completed in Helmand in December 2022.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the Taliban claim to have improved the transportation sector by creating a unified transport system that is tasked to control vehicle activity, accumulate statistics and ensure vehicle security. A Transportation Management Commission was established, which has decided that trucks, taxis, and

buses should be equipped with GPS systems.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from infrastructure, the Taliban have also been focusing on increasing the size and potential of their government's security forces. Recently, 129 students of the 1st Battalion graduated from the Military School of the Ministry of National Defense.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Ministry of Interior Affairs has initiated a training series for special forces in which a batch of 180 personnel graduated from the Shekaar Qala Training Center in the province of Logar.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, 424 policemen graduated from a police training centre in Wardak after completing their training.<sup>16</sup>

## Humanitarian situation

Prior to August 2021, Afghanistan had been amongst one of the world's largest and most complex humanitarian emergencies.<sup>17</sup> This was primarily due to decades of instability and war, weak governance, poverty, natural disasters, food insecurity and COVID-19, resulting in millions of Afghans in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

Afghanistan continues to suffer from economic instability aggravated by sanctions, the loss of international assistance and aid, rising inflation,

limited means of livelihood, widespread food insecurity and repercussions of climate change. The country is on the brink of a humanitarian crisis and during a cold winter many people find it increasingly difficult to survive. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), a record 28.3 million people will need humanitarian and protection assistance in 2023, up from 24.4 million in 2022 and 18.4 million in 2021.<sup>18</sup>

According to a World Bank report of November 2022, living conditions remain difficult for Afghan families as two-thirds of households in the country continue to struggle to meet their basic food and non-food needs.<sup>19</sup> According to UNOCHA, the Humanitarian Response Plan for Afghanistan has a gap of USD 3.14 billion, and there is urgent need of around USD 614 million to support priority winter preparedness.<sup>20</sup>

Despite these challenges, the employment levels of household heads were recently rising according to the World Bank, though this is partially due to a seasonal bump in employment over the summer months.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, observers claim that there has been a substantial increase in labour force participation in the adult population, which includes those working or looking for work. According to a

World Food Program report, it is estimated that 6 in 10 households face shrinking incomes. Moreover, it is further estimated that 18.9 million people in all 34 provinces—almost half of Afghanistan’s population—are suffering from acute food insecurity and that almost 92 percent of their income is spent on food.<sup>22</sup>

While the de facto authorities struggle to cope with the ongoing humanitarian situation, they claim to have undertaken several of their own social policy initiatives such as the establishment of a 50-bed hospital in Makilstan at a cost of 100 million AFN (USD 1.13 million). The de facto authorities also allegedly established a Vocational Training Centre for people with disabilities in Ghazni. Moreover, 48 houses are reported to be commissioned in Paktika for victims of a recent earthquake.<sup>23</sup> In Kabul a 45-day treatment programme for drug addicts at the Avicenna Medical Hospital for Drug Treatment was said to be set up.<sup>24</sup> A Beggar Collecting Committee in Kabul under the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs is claimed to have admitted people in need and unaccompanied children to care and training centres of the Ministry of Labour, where they are said to be provided with livelihood and education.<sup>25</sup> The Afghan Red Crescent says it has begun distributing cash to hundreds of deserving poor.<sup>26</sup>

While these efforts might stabilize some parts of Afghan society, they are trivial compared to the grand challenges facing the country.

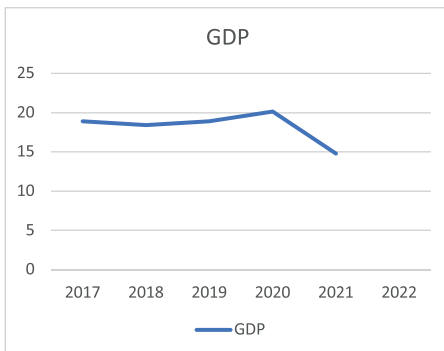
The international community has continued to provide humanitarian aid. Japan recently donated USD 106 million in aid. In November 2022, Germany announced a new aid package of EUR 90 million to be used by the World Food Programme and the United Nations Development Programme in Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup>

However, the Taliban’s latest announcement of banning women from working in non-governmental organizations is threatening the continuation of aid programmes in Afghanistan.<sup>28</sup> Influential donors, Germany included, are planning to suspend their assistance if the policy is not reversed.<sup>29</sup>

## Economic situation

Since the group assumed control, the Taliban have been focusing on the economy. With the coming to power of the Taliban, foreign aid came almost to a halt, leading to a massive drop in public spending, while household incomes and consumption declined. The banking sector has also suffered from a trust deficit. The suspension of the international aid that was supporting between 45 to 50 percent of Afghanistan’s gross

domestic product (GDP), around USD 7 to 8 billion entering Afghanistan, has played a significant role in causing unemployment throughout the country.<sup>30</sup> A World Bank report based on the second round of a survey conducted from June to August 2022 revealed that the drop in secondary school enrolment for both girls and boys is aligned with an increase in the proportion of teenage Afghans joining the labour force, as nearly half of the girls become economically active, either working from home or on the family farms.<sup>31</sup> In sum, although official GDP statistics are not being produced, according to the World Bank, the Afghan economy has shrunk by 20 to 30 per cent since the Taliban takeover.<sup>32</sup> However, according to the World Bank, the economy appears to be adjusting itself following the “aid bubble” it found itself in over the years by focussing on domestic production e.g. a new cotton processing factory in Kandahar and an oil production facility in Lashkar Gah.<sup>33</sup>



Afghanistan GDP (\$ U.S.)

Thus, the Afghan economy is in deep crisis. Despite rising inflation and poverty threatening to further exacerbate the economic conditions, there have been some positives. Independent reports suggest that the Taliban have been focusing on fighting corruption with some success since corruption in revenue collection has apparently decreased.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the de facto authorities also established the National Procurement Commission, headed by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, in December 2022 where it was decided that no administration would be allowed to award projects without the approval of the Commission. In its first meeting, 13 contracts and procurement-related issues were discussed, in which seven contracts regarding services, purchasing of goods, reconstruction of the Ministries of Public Health and of Finance, and of the Kabul Municipality, were approved, one was pending, whereas five were rejected. Additionally, the Taliban government has recently established a High Commission for Anti Money Laundering and there has been a relatively healthy collection of domestic revenue through customs, tariff duties and increased export of natural resources, such as coal.<sup>35</sup>

In a bid to encourage businesses as well as the collection of taxes throughout the country, the Economic Commission of the Taliban government decided

to reduce the sales tax rate from 1.5 per cent to 0.5 per cent. This is designed to mitigate the effects of the continued high inflation.<sup>36</sup> To further incentivize tax honesty a waiver for those not paying taxes in the past was granted.<sup>37</sup>

To revive the economy the Taliban government has been actively engaging with a number of international stakeholders in pursuit of seeking foreign investment, such as Russia (provisional deal where Russia will supply gasoline, diesel, gas and wheat to Afghanistan),<sup>38</sup> United Arab Emirates (a contract was signed on the GAAC Holding running Afghanistan's airports)<sup>39</sup> and on the Trans-Afghanistan railway between Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>40</sup> Under the Afghan chambers of commerce and investment and without international assistance, the de facto authorities organized the first international trade exhibition in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover, the Imam Abu Hanifa Expo held on 9 December 2022 in Kabul. According to reports more than 600 Afghan businesses showcased local products. On the international front, the Taliban participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> China (Chengdu) International Supply Chain and Logistic Expo in November 2022, where Afghan products were showcased. The Taliban's Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, also participated virtually in the Sixth

Exhibition of Economic Cooperation, Trade and Investment between China and South Asian countries (China Kunming Import and Export Fair) in November 2022, offering transit and transfer of commercial goods from South Asia to Central Asia through Afghanistan.<sup>41</sup> Focusing on trade, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce signed a trade agreement with India in October 2022 to resume the air corridor between Afghanistan and India for trade between the two sides.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, according to the Ministry of Transport and Aviation, Flydubai, a low-cost airline from the United Arab Emirates, and Turkish Airlines are expected to resume its flights to Afghanistan within the next few months.<sup>43</sup>

Despite economic interest from a few countries into investing in Afghanistan, all signals point to a tough near and long-term future for the Afghan economy. Low growth of 2-2.4 per cent is predicted for the next two years, while growth prospects are further decreased due to the rigidity of the Taliban regime's policies towards women. A main cause for Afghanistan's economic struggle is the inability of its Central Bank to conduct monetary policy and manage payment systems due to the freeze of offshore assets and the Central Bank's inability to print new Afghan currency notes. Asset freezes and international anti-money laundering provisions as well as concerns over

the financing of terrorism continue to hamper correspondent banking relations between Afghan and foreign banks.<sup>44</sup> In order to give money back to Afghanistan's Central Bank, US authorities tried to reach a compromise with the Taliban leaders which was rejected by the latter. The compromise would have allowed the technocrats at the Central Bank to utilise funds. In addition, to reclaim the funds the Central Bank was required to ensure political independence from the Taliban, implement anti-money-laundering guidelines, and establish a third-party monitoring mechanism.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the lack of cooperation from the Taliban, the United States, through the Department of the Treasury and the Department of State, in coordination with international partners including the government of Switzerland and Afghan economic experts, set up the Fund for the Afghan People to disburse USD 3.5 billion of the Afghan Central Bank's frozen funds for the greater good of the Afghan people and economy.<sup>46</sup> The fund will support the exchange rate and will provide liquidity to the banking sector. It will also help to pay for essential banking services such as SWIFT payments. In addition, payments for critical imports such as electricity will be made through the fund.<sup>47</sup>

## Foreign engagement

Although the Taliban government has yet to attain international recognition, the de facto authorities since coming into power have been extensively engaging with the immediate neighbourhood as well as the larger international community. Since assuming power, the de facto authorities have been extensively engaging with a wide range of foreign delegations, be it with incoming delegations, foreign visits by officials of the de facto authorities and their participation in international and regional initiatives, such as their engagement with more than 30 foreign delegations during the Tashkent Conference held in July 2022.<sup>48</sup> At the beginning of 2023, not only are many international stakeholders actively engaging with the Taliban, furthermore, many countries and organizations have resumed their diplomatic missions in Kabul (e.g. Pakistan, Iran, China, Russia, India, Central African Republic, Turkey, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Japan as well as the EU, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and other international aid agencies). Some have signed agreements with the de facto authorities pertaining to connectivity, trade, infrastructure, education, professional and vocational training and healthcare.<sup>49</sup>

On December 5, 2022, the Defence Minister of the Taliban government, Mullah Yakooab, paid a visit to the United Arab Emirates where he held talks with the UAE's president in a rare encounter between a senior Taliban official and a foreign head of state.<sup>50</sup> The airport deal between Afghanistan and GAAC Holding and the well-being of Afghan working migrants were discussed. Yakooab also met with US Special Envoy for Afghanistan Thomas West during his visit to the United Arab Emirates.<sup>51</sup>

While initially the Taliban would raise the issue of international recognition, however, one year into their rule, the demand for international recognition seems to have withered away and it appears the Taliban are comfortable with the current status quo.

## Security situation

Since the establishment of the Taliban government there has been an improvement in the overall security situation in the country though this is partially due to the Taliban, as the new de facto authorities, ceasing to be the security threat they have been in the past. The noticeable reduction in civilian casualties allowed humanitarian and trade access throughout the country including areas which were inaccessible in the past.<sup>52</sup> According to the World Bank in December 2022, perceptions

of security have also improved amongst Afghans, with two-thirds of households reporting that they feel safer than a year ago. However, in the Central and West-Central regions of the country more households felt less safe than a year ago.<sup>53</sup> According to a rapid assessment conducted by the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) already from August-December 2021 in all 34 provinces, among 153,700 households in 333 districts, 791,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) returned home because they felt the situation in the country had stabilized.<sup>54</sup> In 2022, UNHCR recorded over 1 million IDPs who have already voluntarily returned since the end of the conflict and an estimated 60,000 refugee returnees and 680,000 IDP returnees are anticipated in 2023.<sup>55</sup>

But in recent months the Taliban government has faced severe setbacks in improving the overall security in the country. The Taliban's attempt to crack down on ISKP cells initially weakened the capacity of the group in Kabul, Kunar, Nangarhar, Logar, Nuristan, Farah and Badakshan. But the situation has changed and the ISKP has appeared to be making a steady comeback as indicated by the recent spike in its attacks. Initially the ISKP's attacks were confined within Afghanistan's borders, primarily against prominent Taliban and representatives of their government like the provincial police chief of



Badakshan, pro-Taliban religious scholars as well as the Shia community and other religious minorities. However, over the past several months, the ISKP has expanded its scope and begun to conduct attacks against countries engaging with the Taliban. The ISKP carried out these attacks either alone or by aligning itself with other transnational terrorist groups.

Since August 2021, the ISKP independently and in collaboration with the Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP) began cross-border attacks against Pakistani security forces.<sup>56</sup> This was followed by attacks on Uzbekistan where the ISKP fired 10 rockets from Hairatan, Balkh towards an Uzbek military base in Termez, and Tajikistan where the ISKP fired rockets from the Khawaja Ghar district in Takhar Province toward Tajikistan on 7 May 2022.<sup>57</sup> These events showed that the Taliban government was either not able or not willing to deliver on their commitment of Afghanistan's soil not being used by non-state actors to conduct terrorist activities in other countries. Within Afghanistan, the first attack against international presence was in September 2022, outside the Russian Embassy.<sup>58</sup> This was followed by a sniper attack on the Pakistani ambassador on 2 December 2022, which left one guard wounded and for which the ISKP claimed responsibility.<sup>59</sup> On the same

day of the visit of Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to Kabul, former Prime Minister Gukbuddin Hekhmattyar was attacked. The attack injured two workers of his party Hezb-e-Islami.<sup>60</sup> Observers assume that the attack was designed to disrupt the meetings where several issues of common interest between Afghanistan and Pakistan were discussed including cooperation in education, health, agriculture, trade and investment, regional connectivity, people-to-people contacts and socio-economic projects.<sup>61</sup> The most recent ISKP attack was on the Longan Hotel in Kabul, a Chinese-run hotel and residential compound, on 12 December 2022. The attack took place one day after the Chinese Ambassador Wang Yu held meetings with the Taliban's Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanakzai and other Taliban officials demanding additional security for the Chinese Embassy as well as Chinese nationals.

The attacks on Russian, Chinese, Pakistani and other targets seem to aim at deterring the diplomatic or commercial presence of countries in Afghanistan that appear to be amenable towards the Taliban. By creating an inhospitable environment for those open to work with the Taliban, ISKP and other terrorist groups aim at discouraging foreign investment in Afghanistan, alienating potential partners from the Taliban

and isolating the country from its immediate neighbours. And the attacks are indeed showing some of the intended effects. After the attack on its embassy in September 2022 Russia suspended its consular services.<sup>62</sup> Pakistan too has reduced its staff and limited visa activities. At the time of writing it was yet to decide if Pakistan's ambassador will return to Kabul. Likewise, the Chinese Embassy issued warnings, advising its citizens to leave Afghanistan as soon as possible after the attack on the Longan Hotel. This has put the Taliban government in a tough spot since it cannot afford to be abandoned by the few countries that provide diplomatic and much-needed economic support.

All of this shows that the ISKP is becoming a major threat for the Taliban. This is not limited to armed attacks alone since the ISKP has begun to adopt cyber-warfare tactics in addition to its sustained conventional attacks such as bombs, suicide attacks and snipers.<sup>63</sup> The ISKP's cyber-warfare and social-media propaganda have been instrumental in getting recruits and funding from South and Central Asia.<sup>64</sup> Its propaganda wing, Al-Azaim Foundation for Media Productions and Communications, has been publishing and disseminating the group's activities in English, Arabic and many local languages on Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook and many other platforms. The ISKP has been waging an intense campaign against

the Taliban, not only accusing them of establishing ties with Western governments and, more recently, India, but also presenting itself as a movement open to all schools and sects within Islam, not just as a Salafi movement. This appears to be a clear effort to encourage wider alliances and recruits in a growing alliance with the likes of the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) / the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Additionally, there have been rumours that the ISKP has begun to infiltrate within the ranks of the Taliban and its security forces.

The growing threat posed by the ISKP is resulting in an increasing sense of frustration amongst Afghanistan's neighbours towards the Taliban especially Pakistan, regarding the Taliban's reluctance or inability to deter terrorist attacks.

## Human rights and women's rights

Despite promises and pledges of reform the Taliban have backtracked on their promises regarding women's rights. Since August 2021, the Taliban have pushed for a gradual curtailment of human and women's rights and engaged in efforts to reduce the role of women in the public space

by denying women their due role in the society through the abolition of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, curtailing their right to education through banning girls and women from higher education and restricting their freedom of movement.

Particularly the ban of women from universities, on the false pretext that the de facto authorities are trying to create appropriate conditions and facilities for them to safely attend universities, has not only put into question the Taliban's willingness to honour their pledges of reform, but also has revealed differences and divisions within the group: Certain members of the group, most importantly Anas Haqqani, brother of the Taliban's Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, have opposed the recent ban on women's education. It has also been reported that the majority of the Taliban support women's education with the exception of the top tier leadership of the group (consisting of five individuals headed by Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada).<sup>65</sup>

The de facto authorities also banned women from working in local and international organizations. This move has not only deprived many women of their livelihood but could further exacerbate the already existing humanitarian crises if humanitarian organizations suspend their operations in Afghanistan.<sup>66</sup> Already four organizations, the

Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children, CARE and the International Rescue Committee, have suspended their work, announcing that without their female staff they are not able to do work within the country.<sup>67</sup>

A further deterioration in the human rights situation is due to the increasing pressure on Afghan media, which had made tremendous gains during the two decades before the Taliban takeover. The Taliban's newly formed General Directorate of Intelligence, replacing the previous National Directorate of Security, has warned the Afghan media against publishing and broadcasting what they term "false news and baseless rumours." The de facto authorities announced a broad framework for journalists to follow, including 11 new publishing rules that stress Islamic values and national interest, and a requirement that they coordinate with the Government Media and Information Centre when preparing content.<sup>68</sup>

## Opinion corner

### The situation in Afghanistan: A German perspective

**Christian Wagner**

Since the takeover by the Taliban in August 2021, the situation in Afghanistan has turned from bad to worse. Politically, the Taliban have not been able to set up a functioning system of governance. The present power constellation within the Taliban indicates that the hardliners have won the upper hand over the moderates in their internal power struggles. The ideas of Taliban 2.0, which were anticipated to represent a moderate version compared with the first Taliban regime in the late 1990s, have not materialized so far. The prosecution of former government employees, the restrictions on women's freedom of movement, and on their access to education and employment, have driven more and more educated Afghans to flee the country.

The security situation has only improved partially after August 2021. There are only sporadic reports of clashes between the Taliban and the National Resistance Front, which consists of members of the former government and armed forces.

The far bigger challenge for the Taliban is the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), with its strongholds in eastern Afghanistan. Even if the Taliban outnumber the ISKP cadres, its attacks in various parts of the country in recent months have underlined that the security situation remains fragile in many parts. The killing of al Qaida chief Al Zawahiri in Kabul in August 2022 showed that the Taliban have not loosened their links to international terror groups. This is a gross violation of the Doha agreement and will further strain the relations of the Taliban with the international community.

The economic situation has further worsened since August 2021. Economic reconstruction was already a major challenge after 2001. Since then, Afghanistan's budget remained dependent to a great extent on external financial assistance. The international community spent around 8.5 billion U.S. Dollars per year for Afghanistan, which was more than 40 percent of the country's GDP. The international sanctions that followed the Taliban takeover, the Taliban's mismanagement, and the persistent drought have led to an economic disaster. Poverty and hunger have increased and the majority of the Afghan population is dependent on international humanitarian aid. Although the Taliban banned opium production in spring 2022, reports indicate that

the poppy production has increased in reaction to the economic crisis. The lack of international recognition, a lack of governance structures and infrastructure, and the difficult security situation deter external investors.

Germany was one of the most important donors in Afghanistan and active in different fields. In the 20-year period from 2001 to 2021, Germany spent more than 17.3 billion Euros. Militarily, Germany was among the largest troop contributors in Afghanistan. Fifty-nine German soldiers lost their lives. This was the biggest loss for the armed forces in foreign missions in recent history. Moreover, Germany trained more than 80,000 police personnel.

Germany was also active in the inner-Afghan peace process, especially after 2018. The German government supported an inclusive peace process with all stakeholders. A special focus was placed on the participation of women and the strengthening of civil society. Moreover, the German government also played a major role in international efforts to facilitate talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government. Germany was also the coordinator for the International Contact Group and an active promoter of a multilateral approach on the regional level. Germany supported several regional initiatives such as the Heart of Asia

process or Istanbul process and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan.

The massive international support for Afghanistan after 2001 led to major improvements in the fields of education, health and in the participation of women. Many socio-economic indicators showed a positive development. Life expectancy for instance rose from 44 to 61 years by 2017. The number of children going to school increased from less than one million in 2001 to more than eight million in 2017, of which more than one third were girls. Moreover, the physical infrastructure improved, with the reconstruction of roads, bridges and irrigation systems and better access to electricity and drinking water, improving the living standards of large parts of the population.

Even after the withdrawal of Germany's military in August 2021, Afghanistan remains an important topic in its foreign policy. The main political issue is the question how to secure the emigration of former Afghan employees of the German armed forces to Germany. So far, only a fraction of these employees could be brought to Germany. The German government has declared that it will support the international sanctions for as long as there remain restrictions by the Taliban against women.

Finally, the country's largest recent military mission abroad will also be scrutinized. The German parliament has set up two committees with different mandates in order to first evaluate the reasons for the hasty withdrawal in August 2021 and second to reach an overall assessment of the mission from 2001 to 2021. Hence, the experiences of the Afghanistan mission will shape the foreign policy discourse in Germany for a long time.

One year of Taliban rule has demonstrated that the group has firm control over the country. Assessments of imminent civil war, Taliban factionalization, and a full return to the dystopian emirate of the late 1990s have proved exaggerated for now. But the Taliban have gradually introduced increasingly draconian measures—particularly for women—and Afghanistan continues to face significant threats and stressors. These include terrorist attacks, economic isolation, severe gender discrimination, and hunger.

*Christian Wagner is a Senior Fellow at The German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)*

## Afghanistan – avoiding the curse of history

### Jawed Ludin

There is a way to see the Taliban's rise to power—the second in less than three decades—as a fated inevitability in Afghanistan's troubled history. For well over a century, Afghanistan's attempts to modernize and build a functioning state have suffered defeat from within, as well as pressures from outside. Afghanistan's history is littered with failed attempts at modernization and state building, from King Amanullah in the 1920s to King Zahir Shah in the 1960s, from the communist revolution in the 1980s to the most recent experiment with liberal democracy over the past decades. All these episodes in history have one thing in common: They include defeats suffered by leaders and state builders at the hands of entrenched traditions and ideological reaction. External forces have played a critical role, but more often than not only as contributory factors.

Crucially, the reactionary forces that almost always succeed in toppling states are seldom able to rule effectively or recreate a state, even one that is formed in their own image. Many a time in Afghanistan's state building history, opposition forces have prevailed in their armed struggle and capturing power, only to preside over the unravelling of

state and setting their own demise in motion. The tribal and religious forces that overthrew Amanullah toppled the young, modernizing kingdom but could not rule for even a year; the Mujahideen of 1980s not only defeated Soviet occupation but also destroyed a relatively well-developed state apparatus; neither the Mujahideen, nor the Taliban that came after them ever managed to build or operate a functioning state.

By all accounts, the Taliban's defeat of the Islamic Republic and the takeover of state control in August 2021 fits this cursed pattern of Afghanistan's history. And if history is a guide, signs are already not good for what lies ahead for Afghanistan. The Taliban may have comprehensively defeated the Republic and derailed its state-building programme, but their current approach to governance will almost certainly share the doomed fate of other state-toppling forces in history.

Here is why I believe the Taliban are fated to repeat history painfully: They have consistently shown little ability or desire to adapt to new realities in Afghanistan or the country's changed place in the world. Their exclusionary approach to political power, heavy-handed crackdown on civic and political freedoms, and draconian policies related to women, including the restrictions on girls' education, are unsustainable for any government in the 21st Century. Despite claims

of ending the war, the Taliban have failed to translate their military victory into a legitimate, forward-looking dispensation that could guarantee peace. Their brutal suppression of dissent and resistance, including the reported killing of prisoners, shows a dangerous pattern of violence which is usually observed in societies that are sliding into war rather than those that are emerging from conflict. And unless this trend changes, the Afghan society will slide into another war.

But history should be seen as a guide, not a helpless curse. To arrest Afghanistan's drift into deeper crisis and more war, the Taliban government will have to be drastically jolted out of its default position where it rules by decree and enforces by coercion. The Taliban must recognise that they cannot act and rule alone. Rescuing Afghanistan's future will require an active role by all Afghans, as well as Afghanistan's neighbours and regional partners and the international community, all aligned in a collaborative effort.

The non-Taliban Afghan political community must urgently unite, organize and seek a space to operate in. Under the Ghani government, the Republic suffered a systematic drain on its fortunes, both in terms of legitimacy and capacity. As a result, when the final push came, the collapse of the Republic took place in the most devastating manner, leaving

behind no heir. Today, the non-Taliban political community, including a new generation of courageous leaders that include women and youth, is largely displaced and woefully unprepared to contest political influence.

For the Taliban to even begin to legitimize their rule, it is important that they recognise divergent political voices as legitimate, allow space for such voices, and begin meaningful engagement and dialogue. Proper legitimization of power will require the full participation of all segments of the Afghan society, including women, and the restoration of key institutions of state to ensure representation and the dispensation of justice.

Millions of Afghans are facing extreme poverty and a bleak future. After four decades of war and violence, Afghans need an opportunity to rebuild their lives and this can only be done through economic activity, connectivity and trade with the region and support from the wider international community. The Taliban must not be fooled to see the transactional engagement they have had with regional countries and international powers over the last year as precursor to formal recognition. Total international isolation is equally a possibility. What Afghanistan needs to achieve peace and prosperity is not isolation but mutual respect and the opportunity to fully participate as a member of the international community.



In particular, the role of Afghanistan's neighbours and regional players to come together in unity and foster consensus for a regional approach will be critical to Afghanistan's future. Today there is unprecedented agreement for a regional approach. This approach must not only focus on how to engage with the Taliban but also leverage the role the region can play in support of Afghanistan.

To succeed, this potential regional consensus must be translated into an effective, multilateral mechanism for engagement and dialogue. So far countries have largely pursued bilateral interactions narrowly focused on their specific interests and goals. This approach has allowed the Taliban government, adept as it is in regional diplomacy, to engage in selective, transactional relationships, playing off regional rifts and interests to avoid responsibility. To ensure a meaningful regional approach, countries of the region must try a multilateral track.

Beyond the region, the wider international community must also jolt itself out of the awkward "engage but not engage" relationship with the Taliban. In particular, the United States should lead the way by fundamentally reviewing and rationalizing its goals and approaches for engagement with the Taliban. While the imperative of a humanitarian response remains paramount, it is time that the engagement agenda goes beyond

the humanitarian response and meaningfully address other priorities such as political inclusivity, regional security, and economic connectivity.

Overall, international engagement with the Taliban must be premised on agreement among regional and international stakeholders on specific goals and the strategy of applying available leverage points towards achieving those goals. Security is a key priority on which regional and international agreement is possible. Despite widespread interest, the world knows precious little about ways in which the Taliban's victory and rise to power have impacted regional and global security. Nonetheless, recent evidence, including the presence of Al Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul, point to a potentially dangerous trend, with far-reaching implications for regional and global security. The region and the world may be divided or distracted by other issues and crises, such as the war in Ukraine, but when it comes to holding the Taliban government accountable for its regional security and counter-terrorism commitments there should be common cause to act. The future of Afghanistan depends on this.

*Jawed Ludin is founder and president of the Heart of Asia Society Kabul, an Afghan Think Tank*

## End notes

1. Khan, Amina, "Afghanistan Monitor", [fes.de/lnk/afghanistan-monitor-1](https://fes.de/lnk/afghanistan-monitor-1).
2. "Taliban says women banned from universities in Afghanistan," Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/20/taliban-says-women-banned-from-universities-in-afghanistan>, accessed December 23, 2022.
3. The "Doha Process" refers to talks held around The Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, commonly known as the US–Taliban deal or the Doha Agreement, which was signed by the United States and the Taliban on 29 February 2020 in the Qatari capital.
4. Ayaz Gul, "Afghan Taliban announced new round of Public Floggings", Voice of America, <https://www.voanews.com/a/afghan-taliban-announce-new-round-of-public-floggings-in-defiance-of-un-outcry-/6882697.html>, accessed December 21, 2022.
5. "370 Afghan Personalities so far Returned Back to Country", Alemarah, <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/370-afghan-personalities-returned-back-to-country/>, accessed October 22, 2022.
6. "Deputy PM Meets Hazara Tribe Elders", Alemarah, <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/deputy-pm-meets-influentials-of-hazara-tribe/>, accessed November 22, 2022; "Deputy PM Kabir Meets Elders of Badakhshan", Bakhtar News, <https://bakhtarnews.af/en/deputy-pm-kabir-meets-elders-of-badakhshan>, accessed November 22, 2022; "Kabul Mayor Meets Hindu Community Leaders", Assures Cooperation, <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/kabul-mayor-meets-hindu-community-leaders-assures-cooperation/>, accessed October 09, 2022; "IEA Receives Any Constructive Criticism And Advice: Kabir", Bakhtar News, <https://bakhtarnews.af/en/iea-receives-any-constructive-criticism-and-advice-kabir/>, accessed , December 16, 2022; "IEA Valued Scholars Advice for the Solidarity of People and Strengthening Islamic System: Kabir", Bakhtar News, <https://www.bakhtarnews.af/en/iea-valued-scholars-advice-for-the-solidarity-of-people-and-strengthening-islamic-system-kabir/>, accessed November 27, 2022.
7. "Based upon decree of Amir-ul-Mumineen, Baghlan council of scholars established", <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/based-upon-decree-of-amir-ul-mumineen-baghlan-council-of-scholars-established/>, accessed December 23, 2022.
8. "The Taliban government has proved surprisingly good at raising money", The Economist, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2022/06/08/the-taliban-government-has-proved-surprisingly-good-at-raising-money>, accessed November 13, 2022.
9. "Afghanistan dispatches: Taliban government reduces civil servant salaries", JURIST, <https://www.jurist.org/news/2021/12/afghanistan-dispatches-taliban-government-reduces-civil-servant-salaries/>, accessed December 7, 2022.
10. "Major highway being reconstructed in southern Afghanistan", Xinhua, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202210/1276800.shtml>, accessed October 10, 2022; "Reconstruction Works of Uruzgan-Kandahar Highway Starts" , Bakhtar news, <https://bakhtarnews.af/en/repair-work-of-uruzgan-kandahar-highway-kicks-off/>, accessed October 17, 2022; "Repair of 24.9 km roads of Parwan-Bamyan highway kicks off", Alemarah, <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/repair-of-24-9-km-roads-of-parwan-bamyan-highway-kicks-off/>, accessed October 06, 2022; "Qushtipa Canal, a Concrete Step Towards Self-sufficient", Alemarah, <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/qoshtipa-canal-a-step-towards-self-sufficient-afghanistan/>, accessed November 23, 2022; " Infrastructure Projects worth 72 million AFN starts in Laghman" , Alemarah, <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/infrastructure-projects-worth-72-million-afn-starts-in-laghman/>, accessed November 17, 2022.

11. For these and other claims see the Ministry of Public Works Twitter-Account: [https://twitter.com/mopw\\_afg](https://twitter.com/mopw_afg).
12. *"Clean water projects completed in Helmand"*, Alemarah, <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/clean-water-project-commissioned-in-helmand/>, accessed December 03, 2022.
13. Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, [https://twitter.com/FDPM\\_AFG/status/1604065957365760000](https://twitter.com/FDPM_AFG/status/1604065957365760000), accessed December 17, 2022.
14. *"129 Cadets Graduated from Harbi School"*, Bakhtar News, <https://bakhtarnews.af/en/129-cadets-graduated-from-harbi-school/>, accessed December 15, 2022.
15. *"180 Special Force troops graduate in Logar"*, Alemarah, <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/180-spacial-force-troops-graduate-in-logar/>, accessed December 19, 2022.
16. *"424 Policemen Graduate in Wardak"*, Alemarah, <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/53787-2/>, accessed November 24, 2022.
17. *"Afghanistan Humanitarian Crises"*, Center for Disaster Philanthropy, <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/disasters/afghanistan-humanitarian-crisis>, accessed December 19, 2022.
18. Report, *"Afghanistan Humanitarian Crises"*, Center for Disaster Philanthropy, <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/disasters/afghanistan-humanitarian-crisis>, accessed December 17, 2022.
19. *"Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey"*, World Bank Group, <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/216404d237c14ce6c333cbac5315092d-0310012022/original/WB-Afghanistan-AWMS-Brief-R2-Aug2022-V5.pdf>, accessed December 19, 2022.
20. The Humanitarian Response Plan is a strategic response plan under the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), that prepares for a protracted or sudden onset emergency that requires international humanitarian assistance: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/document/afghanistan-humanitarian-response-plan-2022>; Bibi Amina Hakimi, *"Afghan Aid Plan Has Staggering \$3.14 billion Gap"*, <https://tolonews.com/business-180456>, accessed October 27, 2022.
21. *"Living Conditions Remain Dire for the Afghan People"*, World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/22/world-bank-survey-living-conditions-remain-dire-for-the-afghan-people>, accessed January 21, 2023.
22. *"Situation Report"*, World Food Programme, <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/wfp-afghanistan-situation-report-31-october-2022>, accessed December 26, 2022; *"Afghanistan food security update-September to October 2022"*, World Food Programme, <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-food-security-update-september-october-2022>, accessed December 15, 2022.
23. *"48 houses commissioned for earthquake victims in Paktika"*, Alemarah, <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/48-houses-commissioned-for-earthquake-victims-in-paktika/>, accessed December 13, 2022.
24. Samya Kullab, Mstyslav Chernov and Felipe Dana, *"Taliban set sights on Afghan drug underworld"*, AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/business-only-on-ap-taliban-kabul-afghanistan-312374ad26aa5741394b2308bfd99487>, accessed October 7, 2022.
25. *"The Beggar Collection Committee Has Collected 6900 Beggars Until September 17, 2022"*, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, <https://dpmea.gov.af/index.php/beggar-collection-committee-has-collected-6900-beggars-until-september-17-2022>, accessed September 18, 2022.
26. *"Distribution Of Cash Assistance By ARCS To 413 Flood-Hit Families In Sarkh District Of Logar Province"*, Reliefweb, <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/distribution-cash-assistance-arcs-413-flood-hit-families-sarkh-district-logar-province>, accessed January 21, 2023.

27. Bibi Amina Hakimi, *"Germany Announces 90 Million in Aid for Afghanistan"*, Tolo News, <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-180897>, accessed January 21, 2023.
28. Riazat Butt, *"4 NGOs suspend work on Afghanistan after Taliban bar women"*, AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-taliban-7c81e60a50f40a3a011354fa3a26e78d>, accessed December 26, 2022.
29. Ben Knight, *"Germany to suspend humanitarian aid for Afghanistan"* Deutsche Welle, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-to-suspend-humanitarian-aid-for-afghanistan/a-64223915>, accessed December 26, 2022.
30. Bibi Amina Hakimi *"Two-Thirds of Afghan Households Struggle to Meet Basic Needs: World Bank"*, Tolo News, <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-180876>, accessed November 23, 2022.
31. *"Living conditions remain dire for the Afghan people"*, World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/22/world-bank-survey-living-conditions-remain-dire-for-the-afghan-people>, accessed December 9, 2022.
32. *"Afghanistan"*, World Bank, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099003304242217623/pdf>, accessed December 17, 2022.
33. *"The World Bank in Afghanistan"*, World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/overview>, accessed December 12, 2022; *"New cooking oil, cotton processing factories opened in Lashkargha,"* Pajhwok, <https://pajhwok.com/2022/11/04/new-cooking-oil-cotton-processing-factories-opened-in-lashkargha>, accessed November 4, 2022.
34. William Byrd, *"One Year Later, Taliban Unable to Reverse Afghanistan's Economic Decline"*, USIP, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/one-year-later-taliban-unable-reverse-afghanistans-economic-decline>, accessed December 12, 2022; Barnett R. Rubin, *"Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation"*, Stimson Centre, <https://www.stimson.org/2022/afghanistan-under-the-taliban-findings-on-the-current-situation/>, accessed October 20, 2022.
35. William Byrd, *"One Year Later, Taliban Unable to Reverse Afghanistan's Economic Decline"*, USIP <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/one-year-later-taliban-unable-reverse-afghanistans-economic-decline>, accessed August 15, 2022.
36. Hasrat, *"Taxes reduced, shopkeepers must lower prices: Officials"*, Pajhwok, <https://pajhwok.com/2022/09/20/pay-taxes-contribute-to-afghanistans-uplift-minister/>, accessed November 13, 2022.
37. Hijratullah Kakar, *"Tax penalties waived off for firms & individuals"*, Pajhwok, <https://pajhwok.com/2022/12/26/tax-penalties-waived-off-for-firms-individuals/>, accessed January 21, 2023.
38. Mohammad Yunus Yawar and Charlotte Greenfield, *"EXCLUSIVE Afghan Taliban sign deal for Russian oil products, gas and wheat"*, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/exclusive-afghan-taliban-sign-deal-russian-oil-products-gas-wheat-2022-09-27/>, accessed November 28, 2022.
39. Mohammad Yunus Yawar, *"Taliban to sign contract with UAE's GAAC Holding over airspace control at Afghan airports"*, Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-sign-contract-with-uaes-gaac-holding-over-airspace-control-afghan-2022-09-08/>, accessed November 28, 2022.
40. Charles Szumski, *"Trans-Afghanistan railway to further link Central Asia with South Asia"*, Euractiv, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/central-asia/news/trans-afghanistan-railway-to-further-link-central-asia-with-south-asia/>, accessed 18 January 2023.
41. *"The Deputy Prime Minister For Economic Affairs, Hajji Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, Delivered A Video Speech Today At The Opening Ceremony Of The Sixth Exhibition Of Economic*

*Cooperation, Trade And Investment Between China And South Asian Countries*", Ministry of Economy, <https://moec.gov.af/en/deputy-prime-minister-economic-affairs-hajji-mullah-abdulghani-baradar-akhund-delivered-video>, accessed November 20 2022.

42. "Air Corridor Reopens between Afghanistan and India", <https://www.alemarahenglish.af/air-corridor-reopens-between-afghanistan-and-india/>, accessed October 31, 2022.
43. Bibi Amina Hakimi, Fly Dubai to Resume Flights to Afghanistan Within One Month: MoTCA" Tolo News, <https://tolonews.com/business-180117>, accessed 31 October 2022.
44. World Bank, "Afghanistan Overview", <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/overview>, accessed December 1, 2022.
45. Jeff Stein, "U.S. to redirect Afghanistan's Frozen assets after Taliban rejects deal", <https://www.washingtonpost.com/us-policy/2022/09/14/taliban-frozen-assets-afghanistan-biden/>, accessed October 23, 2022.
46. Media Note, "The United States and Partners Announce Establishment of Fund for the People of Afghanistan", <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-and-partners-announce-establishment-of-fund-for-the-people-of-afghanistan/>, accessed December 5, 2022.
47. William Byrd, "U.S. to Move Afghanistan's Frozen Central Bank Reserves to New Swiss Fund", USIP, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/09/us-move-afghanistans-frozen-central-bank-reserves-new-swiss-fund>, accessed November 1, 2022.
48. Taliban have been engaging with visiting foreign delegations from Europe, US, immediate neighbourhood, Qatar, UAE, Turkey and international aid agencies on a regular basis; Navbahor Imamova, "Nearly 30 Nations Engage With Taliban at Tashkent Conference", VOA, <https://www.voanews.com/a/almost-30-nations-engage-with-taliban-at-tashkent-conference>, accessed November 27, 2022; Imran Danish, "Acting Min. Muttaqi Meets with Norwegian Charge d'Affaires," Tolo News, <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-18084>, accessed November 21, 2022; Ali M Latif, "Afghanistan: Taliban uses Hamas meeting to send a message to the Muslim world", Middle East Eye, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/afghanistan-taliban-hamas-meeting-send-message-muslim-world>, accessed October 28, 2022.
49. Charles Szumski, "Trans-Afghanistan railway to further link Central Asia with South Asia", EURACTIV, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/central-asia/news/trans-afghanistan-railway-to-further-link-central-asia-with-south-asia>, accessed November 15, 2022; Mohammad Yunus Yawar and Charlotte Greenfield, "EXCLUSIVE Afghan Taliban sign deal for Russian oil products, gas and wheat," Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/exclusive-afghan-taliban-sign-deal-russian-oil-products-gas-wheat-2022-09-27>, accessed September 28, 2022; "Pakistan to provide over 4500 scholarships to Afghan students next year", Radio Pakistan, <https://www.radio.gov.pk/19-11-2022/pakistan-to-provide-over-4500-scholarships-to-afghan-students-next-year>, accessed November 19, 2022; Khurshid Ahmed, "Pakistan mulls options to keep Afghan banking system afloat", Aran News, <https://www.arabnews.pk/node/1938686/pakistan>, accessed September 30, 2022; Saqalain Eqbal, "Pakistan Commits to Continuing to Support Pakistan-Built Hospitals in Afghanistan", Khaama, <https://www.khaama.com/pakistan-commits-to-continuing-to-support-pakistan-built-hospitals-in-afghanistan-346654>, accessed November 19, 2022.
50. "Taliban acting defence minister holds talks with UAE president", Express Tribune, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2389596/taliban-acting-defence-minister-holds-talks-with-uae-president>, accessed December 5, 2022.
51. Zameer Safi, "Acting Defense Minister Meets US Special Envoy in UAE", Tolo News, <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-181069>, accessed December 6, 2022.

52. "Afghanistan Situation", UNHCR, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/afghansitu><https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/afghanistan-taliban-hamas-meeting-send-message-muslim-worldtion>, accessed December 13, 2022.
53. "Living conditions remain dire for the Afghan people", World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/22/world-bank-survey-living-conditions-remain-dire-for-the-afghan-people>, accessed December 9, 2022.
54. Global Report 2021, "Afghanistan situation", UNHCR, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/afghanistansituation>, accessed November 15, 2022.
55. World Bank Survey, "Living conditions remain dire for the Afghan people", World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/22/world-bank-survey-living-conditions-remain-dire-for-the-afghan-people>, accessed December 9, 2022.
56. Vinay Kaura, "Pushed over the edge: Political and military dynamics at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border", Middle Est Institute, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/pushed-over-edge-political-and-military-dynamics-afghanistan-pakistan-border>, accessed October 3, 2022.
57. Ayaz Gul, "Islamic State Khorasan Claims Rocket Attack on Uzbekistan", VOA, <https://www.voanews.com/a/islamic-state-khorasan-claims-rocket-attack-on-uzbekistan-/6534866>, accessed November 13, 2022; "Taliban Investigating Report That Islamic State Fired Rockets Into Tajikistan", RFE/RL's Tajik Service, <https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-islamic-state-tajikistan-rockets/31839638>, accessed November 17, 2022.
58. Muhammad Younas Yawar, "Two Russian embassy staff dead, four others killed in suicide bomb blast in Kabul", Reuters, [www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghan-police-report-suicide-bomb-blast-near-russian-embassy-kabul-2022-09-05](http://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghan-police-report-suicide-bomb-blast-near-russian-embassy-kabul-2022-09-05), accessed October 30, 2022.
59. "Islamic State claims responsibility for attack on Pakistani embassy in Kabul", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/islamic-state-claims-responsibility-attack-pakistani-embassy-kabul-2022-12-04/>, accessed January 21, 2023.
60. "Afghan capital hit by attacks near ex-PM Hekmatyar's office, Pakistan Embassy", Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/kabul-hit-by-attack-near-office-former-afghan-pm-hekmatyar-sources-2022-12-02/>, accessed December 3, 2022.
61. "Visit of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to Afghanistan", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://mofa.gov.pk/visit-of-the-minister-of-state-for-foreign-affairs-to-afghanistan-29-november-2022>, accessed 29 November 2022.
62. Saqalain Eqbal, "Russian Embassy in Kabul Suspends Services after Embassy Bombing", Khaama, <https://www.khaama.com/russian-embassy-in-kabul-suspends-services-after-embassy-bombing-67475/>, accessed January 20, 2023
63. Lucas Webber and Riccardo Valle, "Islamic State Khorasan's Expanded Vision in South and Central Asia," The Diplomat, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/08/islamic-state-khorasans-expanded-vision-in-south-and-central-asia/>, accessed November 25, 2022.
64. Dante Schulz, "ISKP's Propaganda Threatens Asia's Security Apparatus", Stimson, <https://www.stimson.org/2022/iskps-propaganda-threatens-asias-security-apparatus/>, accessed November 27, 2022.
65. "Haqqani Network Leader Expresses Dissatisfaction with Afghanistan's Current Situation", Afghanistan International, <https://www.afintl.com/en/202212232537>, accessed December 25, 2022.

66. Christina Goldbaum, Safiullah Padshah and Najim Rahim, *"Taliban Bar Women From NGOs, Threatening to Worsen Crisis"*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/24/world/asia/taliban-women-ngos-afghanistan>, accessed December 25, 2022.
67. Zameer Safi, *Four Organizations Suspend Operations amid Ban on Women Employees*, Tolo News, <https://tolonews.com/index.php/afghanistan-181348>, accessed December 26, 2022.
68. Waliullah Rahmani and Steven Butler, *"Afghanistan's intelligence agency emerges as new threat to independent media"*, <https://cpj.org/2022/03/afghanistans-intelligence-agency-emerges-as-new-threat-to-independent-media>, accessed October 19, 2022.

Author: Amina Khan  
Research Assistant: Muhammad Murtaza Ali

Imprint  
© 2023 Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES),  
Pakistan Office  
1st Floor, 66-W, Junaid Plaza, Jinnah Avenue,  
Blue Area, P.O Box 1289, Islamabad, Pakistan

Responsible:  
**Dr. Niels Hegewisch** | Country Director  
**Hamayoun Khan** | Program Advisor

Phone: +92 51 2803391-4  
Website: [pakistan.fes.de](http://pakistan.fes.de)  
Facebook: @FESPakistanOffice  
Twitter: @FES\_PAK

To order publication:  
[info.pakistan@fes.de](mailto:info.pakistan@fes.de)

**The views expressed in this publication  
are not necessarily those of the  
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.**

Commercial use of all media published by the  
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is not permitted  
without the written consent of the FES.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is the oldest political foundation in Germany. The foundation is named after Friedrich Ebert, the first democratically elected president of Germany. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung established its Pakistan Office in 1990. FES focuses on enhancing dialogue for mutual understanding and peaceful development in its international work. Social justice in politics, the economy and in the society is one of our leading principles worldwide. FES operates 107 offices in nearly as many countries. In Pakistan, FES has been carrying out various activities to strengthen the democratic culture through deliberative processes and informed public discourse; promoting and advocating social justice as an integral part of economic development through economic reforms and effective labor governance and enhancing regional cooperation for peace and development in recent years.

ISBN: 978-969-9675-48-5

[pakistan.fes.de](http://pakistan.fes.de)

