

# **COUNTRY FACT SHEET**

## **AFGHANISTAN**

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Research Directorate  
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## **1. GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Official name**

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

### **Geography**

A landlocked state in southern Asia, Afghanistan shares borders with China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The Hindu Kush mountain range is located in the country's northeast and deserts are found along the western border. In the southwest, summer temperatures can reach 49 C, while in the Hind Kush mountains in the northeast, winter temperatures can fall to -26 C. The total area of Afghanistan is 647,500 km.<sup>2</sup>

### **Population and density**

Population: 31,056,997 people (July 2006 estimate).

Density: 34.6 people per km<sup>2</sup> (2006).

### **Principal cities and populations (estimated settled population in 2006)**

Kabul (capital) 2,536,300; Qandahar (Kandahar) 450,300; Herat 349,000; Mazar-i-Sharif 300,600; Kunduz 264,100; Pul-e-Khomri 180,800; Jalalabad 168,600; Baghlan 149,300; Ghazni 141,000; Maymana 67,800.

### **Languages**

Pushtu and Dari are the country's official languages. In various regions of the country, the Baluchi, Nuristani, Pamiri, Pashai, Turkmani or Uzbeki language may serve as a third official language.

Afghan, Persian or Dari: 50%, Pashtu: 35%, Turkic languages (including Uzbek and Turkmen): 11%. There are also about 30 minor languages that are spoken by 4% of the population.

### **Religions**

Islam (state religion) is practised by approximately 99% of the population (Sunni 80-84%, Shia 15-19%). The remaining 1% of the population practise Hinduism, Sikhism or Judaism.

### **Ethnic groups**

Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%, Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%, Aimak 4%, Turkmen 3%, Baloch 2%, and other 4%.

### **Demographics (2006 estimate, unless otherwise indicated)**

Population growth rate: 2.67%.

Infant mortality rate: 160.23 deaths/1,000 live births.

Life expectancy at birth: 43.34 years.

Fertility rate: 6.69 children born/woman.

Literacy rate (% aged 15 and older who can read and write): 43.1% of men, 12.6% of women (2004 estimate).

### **Currency**

Afghanistan Afghani (AFN)

Afghanistan Afghani 42.62 = 1.00<sup>1</sup>Canadian dollar

### **National holidays** <sup>i</sup>

Please note that the Afghan year 1385 runs from 21 March 2006 to 20 March 2007. The Afghan year 1386 runs from 21 March 2007 to 19 March 2008.

**2007:** 29 January (Ashura, Martyrdom of Imam Husayn); 1 February (Arafat Day); 15 February (Liberation Day, commemoration of mujahidin struggle against Soviet occupation and withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989); 21 March (Nauroz: New Year's Day, Iranian calendar); 31 March (Roze-Maulud, Birth of Prophet Muhammad); 28 April (Loss of the Muslim Nation); 1 May (Workers' Day); 19 August (Independence Day); 13 September (first day of Ramadan); 13 October (Id al-Fitr, end of Ramadan); 20 December (Id al-Adha, Feast of the Sacrifice).

**2008:** 19 January (Ashura, Martyrdom of Imam Husayn); 1 February (Arafat Day); 15 February (Liberation Day, commemoration of mujahidin struggle against Soviet occupation and withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989); 20 March (Roze-Maulud, Birth of Prophet Muhammad); 21 March (Nauroz: New Year's Day, Iranian calendar); 28 April (Loss of the Muslim Nation); 1 May (Workers' Day); 19 August (Independence Day); 1 September (first day of Ramadan); 1 October (Id al-Fitr, end of Ramadan); 8 December (Id al-Adha, Feast of the Sacrifice).

### **Head of state and government**

President Hamid Karzai (since 5 December 2001).

### **Form of government**

Afghanistan is a presidential, Islamic republic. The president, who is directly elected to a five-year term, is both the head of state and government. The president may serve no more than two terms in office.

### **Legislative structure**

The National Assembly (*Meli Shura*) is bicameral. It is composed of the House of Representatives (*Wolasi Jirga*), which is the lower house, and the House of Elders (*Meshrano Jirga*), which is the upper house. The Wolasi Jirga comprises no more than 249 members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms. Women are allotted 68 seats. The Meshrano Jirga, is composed of 102 members. Provincial councils elect one-

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<sup>i</sup> Some dates may vary by several days from one year to the next due to variations in the correspondences between the Afghan, Islamic and Western calendars.

third of the members of the Meshrano Jirga to four-year terms. District councils elect one-third to three-year terms and the president selects the remaining third to serve five-year terms. Half of the members nominated by the president must be women.

### **Administrative divisions**

Afghanistan has 34 provinces (*veleyat*): Badakhshan, Badghis, Baghlan, Balkh, Bamian (Bamyan), Daykondi, Farah, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghowr (Ghor), Helmand, Herat, Jowzjan, Kabul (Kabul), Kandahar (Qhandahar), Kapisa, Khowst (Khost), Konar (Kunar, Kunaraha), Konduz (Kunduz), Laghman, Lowgar (Loghar, Logar), Nangarhar, Nimruz (Nimroz), Nurestan (Nuristan), Oruzgan (Uruzgan), Paktia (Paktya), Paktika, Panjshir, Parvan (Parwan), Samangan, Sar-e Pol, Takhar, Vardak (Wardak) and Zabol (Zabul).

### **Judicial system**

The judiciary comprises the Supreme Court (*Stera Mahkama*), appeals courts and primary courts. With the approval of the House of Representatives, the president appoints nine Supreme Court justices to serve ten-year terms. Afghanistan also has a minister of justice and an independent human rights commission.

### **Elections**

All Afghan citizens aged 18 years or older are eligible to vote. A presidential election was held 9 October 2004 with the following results: Hamid Karzai 55.4%, Yunus Qanooni (Qanuni) 16.3%, Ustad Mohammad Mohaqeq (Mohaqqeo) 11.6%, Abdul Rashid Dostam 10%, Abdul Latif Pedram 1.4% and Masood Jalal 1.2%. The majority of candidates were not affiliated with a political party; they stood as independents.

The first elections for both the House of Representatives (Wolesi Jirga) and the House of Elders (Meshrano Jirga) took place on 18 September 2005.

### **Defence**

Men and women 22 years of age or older are eligible to serve four-year terms in the Afghan military. The Afghan military comprises the Afghan National Army, the Afghan Air Force and the Afghan National Guard. The defence budget for the Afghan year 1386 (21 March 2007 to 19 March 2008) is 178.5 million US dollars.

In 2003, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began commanding the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, which was deployed in 2001. ISAF comprises approximately 8,000 troops from 36 NATO countries, 9 partner and 2 non-NATO / non-partner countries.

### **Media**

Article 34 of Afghanistan's 2004 constitution affirms freedom of expression. Prominent daily newspapers in Afghanistan include the following: *Anis* (Friendship) (government-funded); *Kabul Times* (government-funded); *Erada* (independently owned); *Arman-i-Malli*; *Hewad* (Homeland); *Estah* (government-funded); and *Cheragh* (independently owned). Weekly newspapers include *Payam-i-Mujahid* (Holy Warrior's Message) and *Kabul Weekly*. In 2005, there were approximately 30,000 Internet users in Afghanistan.

Bakhtar News Agency is Afghanistan's official domestic news agency.

While in power, the Taliban shut down Kabul TV and replaced Radio Afghanistan with Voice of Shari'a . In 2001, television service was resumed, to a limited extent, in Kabul. Several private radio stations also began broadcasting. In addition, the Taliban has reportedly resumed occasional broadcasts of Voice of Sharia' a from an unknown location.

**United Nations Human Development Index and Country Rank<sup>ii</sup>**

Value: 0.345 (2007).

Rank: 174 out of 178 countries (2007).

**Gender-related Development Index and Country Rank<sup>iii</sup>**

Value: 0.310 (2007).

Rank - not available.

**Population below the poverty line**

53% (2003).

**Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)<sup>iv</sup>**

Score 1.8/10 (2007).

Rank: 172 out of 180 countries surveyed (2007).

**Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB)<sup>v</sup>**

Information not available.

**[Information compiled from: Afghanistan 1 Nov. 2006; Afghanistan 2004; CPHD 2007; *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* 2005; *Europa* 2006 2006; *Europa World Online* 2007; NATO 5 July 2007; *PHW* 2007 2007; TI 6 Dec. 2007; TI 26 Sept. 2007; UN 2006; US 8 Feb. 2007; XE.com 21 Dec. 2006]**

**2. POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

In September 1996, the Taliban militia took power in Afghanistan and the following year renamed the country the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> In October 2001, the United

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<sup>ii</sup> The HDI is a composite measurement of human development in a country, based on life expectancy, levels of literacy and education, and standard of living. Values are: 0.800 and higher (high human development), 0.500-0.799 (medium human development) and 0.500 and under (low development index). Countries are ranked in descending order by their HDI value.

<sup>iii</sup> The GDI adjusts the rating of the HDI to reflect inequalities between men and women.

<sup>iv</sup> The CPI 2007 is calculated using data from 14 surveys of business people and 12 assessments from independent institutions. The data reflect the perceptions of resident and non-resident business people and country analysts regarding the overall extent of corruption (frequency and/or size of bribes) in the public and political sectors. Scores range from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean). According to their score, countries are ranked in order from least corrupt (1) to most corrupt (180).

<sup>v</sup> The Transparency International GCB is a public opinion survey used to gauge people's perceptions of corruption within their own state. Scores range from 1 (not corrupt) to 5 (extremely corrupt).

States (US) led a military operation against the Taliban regime, following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.<sup>3</sup> On 13 November 2002, the military operation took control of Kabul.<sup>4</sup> However, the Taliban began launching guerrilla attacks against the US military and new Afghani army.<sup>5</sup> An International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) arrived in Afghanistan to help maintain security in and around Kabul.<sup>6</sup> In 2003, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took over control of the ISAF.<sup>7</sup>

### **Interim government**

On 27 November 2001, representatives from the major political factions opposed to the Taliban came together for an internationally brokered conference held in Bonn, Germany.<sup>8</sup> On 5 December 2001, an agreement setting out plans for re-establishing government institutions in Afghanistan<sup>9</sup> was signed.<sup>10</sup> The agreement - known as the Bonn Agreement - specifies, among other things, that an interim government should hold power until a transitional authority could be established.<sup>11</sup> Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun tribal chief, became the leader of the Afghan Interim Authority.<sup>12</sup> In June 2002, Karzai was elected head of the Afghanistan Transitional Authority by members of the Emergency Loya Jirga.<sup>13</sup> On 4 January 2004, a new constitution was ratified by the Loya Jirga.<sup>14</sup>

### **Elections**

Afghanistan held its first national presidential election on 9 October 2004.<sup>15</sup> It was considered to be "relatively free and fair," in spite of allegations of intimidation and voting irregularities.<sup>16</sup> Hamid Karzai garnered 55.4% of the vote.<sup>17</sup>

On 18 September 2005, Afghanistan held its first parliamentary and provincial elections in more than 30 years.<sup>18</sup> Many of those who were elected to the lower house of parliament (Wolesi Jirga) were "powerful factional leaders" who ran in the election as independents.<sup>19</sup>

### **Afghanistan Compact**

In January 2006, the government of Afghanistan and the international community agreed to the Afghanistan Compact, a document which succeeded the Bonn Agreement.<sup>20</sup> The Afghanistan Compact outlines a process for coordinating Afghan and international efforts to create peace, good governance and sustainable economic development.<sup>21</sup> The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), which comprises representatives from the Afghan government and the international community, is responsible for implementing the Afghanistan Compact.<sup>22</sup>

### **Border security**

The Afghanistan government has stated that there are at least 167 unofficial points where border crossing takes place.<sup>23</sup> Some parts of the border are well-protected; however, other sections are quite porous, particularly in the southern region.<sup>24</sup> It is easy for illegal

activity to take place in the Baluchistan region, which is located near the borders of Pakistan and Iran.<sup>25</sup> The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has proposed a plan to address Afghanistan's border security.<sup>26</sup>

Ongoing land disputes are a problem in Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup> In some cases, land has been illegally confiscated from returned refugees and ownership rights are often unclear.<sup>28</sup>

Since November 2001, Afghan insurgent forces - primarily Taliban, Herb-e Islami, and allied anti-government groups - have been responsible for thousands of attacks on the Afghan government, US coalition and NATO forces, as well as the civilian population.<sup>29</sup> Civilians have also died as a result of military operations against insurgents conducted by international and Afghan military forces.<sup>30</sup> Suicide attacks have soared in recent years.<sup>31</sup>

### 3. POLITICAL PARTIES

The constitution prohibits political parties in Afghanistan from basing their platforms on ethnicity, language, religious sects or geographic areas.<sup>32</sup> They are also prohibited from having armed wings.<sup>33</sup> The Afghan political party system is complicated and fluctuates rapidly<sup>34</sup> - the majority of candidates in the legislative election of 18 September 2005 ran as independents.<sup>35</sup>

**Afghan Nation (also known as the Afghan Social Democratic Party) (Afghan Mellat):** The Afghan Nation was registered as a political party by the Transitional Administration on 16 May 2004<sup>36</sup> although it previously existed during King Zahir Shah's reign.<sup>37</sup> Originally established as a Pushtun nationalist group, the party has allegedly split.<sup>38</sup> One of the splinter groups backed Hamid Karzai in the 2004 presidential election and is led by Anwar al-Haq Ahadi.<sup>39</sup> In 2004, Ahadi was appointed minister of finance.<sup>40</sup>

**Islamic Afghan Society (Jamaat-i-Islami Afghanistan):** The Islamic Afghan Society, reputed to have approximately 60,000 supporters,<sup>41</sup> is primarily endorsed by Tajiks in the northern region of Afghanistan.<sup>42</sup> The leaders of the Islamic Afghan Society are Burhanuddin Rabbani, past president of the Islamic State, Abdul Hafez Mansur and Munawar Hasan (secretary general).<sup>43</sup> In 2005, Rabbani won a seat in the Wolesi Jirga.<sup>44</sup>

**Islamic Party (Hizb-i-Islami):** The Islamic Party, with Pashtun, Turkmen and Tajik membership, has roughly 50,000 supporters.<sup>45</sup> Its leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar commanded insurgent forces against the previous Soviet-backed communist government with support from the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.<sup>46</sup> Hekmatyar is also a past prime minister of Afghanistan, a supporter of the jihad against American military forces<sup>47</sup> and is listed as a terrorist on Public Safety Canada's website.<sup>48</sup> Some Islamic Party members who disagreed with Hekmatyar's anti-American stance took part in the 2005 legislative election.<sup>49</sup>



**Islamic Unity (Ittihad-i-Islami):** Supported by Saudi Arabia, Islamic Unity was established by "ultra-orthodox Sunni Muslims."<sup>50</sup> Islamic Unity supported President Karzai's 2004 presidential campaign.<sup>51</sup> The party is led by Abdul Rasul Sayaf.<sup>52</sup>

**Islamic Unity Party (Hizb-i-Wahdat-i-Islami):** In 1987, the Islamic Unity Party was established by a number of Iranian groups known as the Tehran Eight.<sup>53</sup> Led by Mohammad Karim Khalili, the party advocates on behalf of the Afghan Shia minority.<sup>54</sup> Khalili was Karzai's deputy of the Afghan transitional administration and selection for second vice president in the 2004 presidential campaign.<sup>55</sup>

**National Islamic Front (Mahaz-i-Milli-i-Islami):** The National Islamic Front is a moderate, leftist party.<sup>56</sup> It is led by Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, who is "the spiritual leader of the Sufi Muslims."<sup>57</sup> The National Islamic Front has approximately 15,000 supporters.<sup>58</sup>

**National Front (Jumbish-i-Milli):** The National Front is an Uzbek political party led by General Abdul Rashid Dostam.<sup>59</sup> Dostam was opposed to the selection of Hamid Karzai as the chair of the Afghan transitional administration.<sup>60</sup> In April 2005, Dostam assumed the position of chief of staff of the high command of the armed forces.<sup>61</sup>

**National Liberation Front (Jabh-i-Nijat-i-Milli):** Established to promote Afghan self-determination and free elections, the National Liberation Front is led by Imam Sibghatullah Mojadedi, the former president of the government-in-exile.<sup>62</sup> In 2005, Mojadedi was elected as speaker of the House of Elders.<sup>63</sup>

**National Understanding Front (NUF) (Jabha-i-Tafahon-i-Milli):** The NUF was established in early 2005 by roughly 11 political parties.<sup>64</sup> The NUF secured approximately 60 to 80 seats in the 2005 Wolesi Jirga election.<sup>65</sup> Ahmad Shah Ahmadzay and Mohammed Mohaqeq are the leaders of the NUF.<sup>66</sup> Ahmadzay is the leader of the **National Islamic Empowerment Party (Iqtedar-i-Milli-Islami)** and Mohaqeq is the leader of the **Islamic Unity Party of the People of Afghanistan (Hizb-i-Wahdat-i-Islami Mardom-i-Afghanistan)**.<sup>67</sup> Mohammad Yunos Qanuni, the leader of one of NUF's member organizations, the **New Afghanistan Party (Hizb-i-Afghanistan-i-Nawin)**, is reputed to be the most significant political opponent to President Karzai.<sup>68</sup>

Other NUF members are the **Islamic Revolutionary Movement Party (Hizb-i-Harakat-i-Inquilah-i-Islami)**, the **National Islamic Party of Afghanistan (Hezb-e-Mili Islami-e-Afghanistan)**, the **New Islamic Party of Afghanistan (Hizb-i-Islami Nawin-i-Afghanistan)**, the **Afghanistan Islamic Peace and Brotherhood (Hizb-i-Solh wa Ukhwat-i-Islami Afghanistan)**, the **Afghanistan Ethnic Unity Party (Hizb-i-Wahdat-i-Aqwam-i-Afghanistan)** and the **Afghanistan National Independence Party (Hizb-i-Istiqlal-i-Milli Afghanistan)**.<sup>69</sup>

**Other parties:**<sup>70</sup>

De Afghan Watan Islami Gond, De Afghanistan De Mili Mubarizeeno Islami Gond, De Afghanistan De Mili Wahdat Wolesi Tahreek, De Afghanistan De Solay Ghorzang Gond (Afghanistan Peace Movement), De Afghanistan De Solay Mili Islami Gond, Harakat-i-Islami Mardon-i (Afghanistan People's Islamic Movement of Afghanistan), Harakat-e-Islami-ye Afghanistan (Islamic Movement of Afghanistan), Hezb-e-Aarman-e-Mardom-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Aazadee Khwahan Mardom-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Afghan Melat, Hezb-e-Afghanistan-e-Wahid (United Afghanistan Party), Hezb-e-Azadee-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Hambastagee Mili Aqwam-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Jamihat-e-Islami, Hezb-e-Paiwand Mihahani Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Democracy Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Domcrat-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Eatedal-e-Mili Islami-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Eqtedar-e-Mili, Hezb-e-Esteqlal-e-Mili Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Falah-e-Mardom-e-Afghanistan (Islamic Movement Party of the People of Afghanistan), Hezb-e-Hambastagee-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Harakat-e-Islami-e-Afghanistan (Islamic Movement of Afghanistan), Hezb-e-Harakat-e-Islami Mardom-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Harakat-e-Mili Wahdat-e-Afghanistan (National Movement for the Unity of Afghanistan), Hezb-e-Ifazat Az Uqooq-e-Bashar Wa Inkishaf-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Islami-e-Afghanistan-e-Jawan, Hezb-e-Isteqlal-e-Afghanistan (Islamic Independence Party of Afghanistan), Hezb-e-Jamahat-ul-Dawat ilal Quran-wa-Sunat-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Junbish Democracy Mardom-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Junbish Mili Islami-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Kangra-e-Mili-e-Afghanistan (National Congress Party of Afghanistan), Hezb-e-Kar Wa Tawsiha-e-Afghanistan (Labour and Democracy Party), Hezb-e-Lebral-e-Aazadee Khwa-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Majmeh Mili Faleen-Sulh-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Mardom-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Mardom-e-Mosalman-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Mili Heward, Hezb-e-Mili Wahdat-e-Aqwam-e-Islami-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Mutahed Mili, Hezb-e-Nahzat-e-Aazadee Wa Democracy-e-Afghanistan (Movement for Democracy and Freedom Afghanistan), Hezb-e-Nahzat-e-Hambastagee Mili-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Nakhbagan-e-Mardom-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Paiwand Mili Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Rastakhaiz-e-Mardom-e-Afghanistan (Renaissance Party of the People of Afghanistan), Hezb-e-Refah-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Refah-e-Mardom-e-Afghanistann (Party of Welfare of the People of Afghanistan), Hezb-e-Refah-e-Mili Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Resalat-e-Mardom-e-Afghanistan (Welfare Popular Party of Afghanistan), Hezb-e-Sahadat-e-Mardom-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Sahadat-e-Mili Islami-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Subat-e-Mili Islami-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Sulh Wa Wahdat-e-Mili-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Sulh-e-Mili Islami Aqwam-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Tafahum Wa Democracy-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Tahreek Wahdat-e-Mili-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Tahreek Wahdat-ul-Musimeen Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Tanzim Jabha Mili Nejat-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Taraqee Democrat Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Taraqee Mili Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Umat-e-Islam-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami-e-Melat-e-Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Wahdat-e-Mili Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Wahdat-e-Mili Islami-e-Afghanistan, Hizb-i Adalat-i Islami-i Afghanistan (Islamic Justice Party of Afghanistan), Hizb-i-Azadi (Freedom Party), Hizb-i Azadi Khwahan Maihan (National Freedom Seekers Party), Hizb-i-Istiqlal-i Afghanistan (Afghanistan Independence Party), Hizb-e-Junbish-e-Melli-ye Afghanistan (National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan), Hizb-i-Hambastagi-i-Milli-i-Jawanan-i-Afghanistan (Youth Solidarity Party of Afghanistan) Hizb-i-Jamhuri Khwahan (Republican Party), Hizb-i-Milli (National Party), Hizb-i-Nahzat-i-Milli-i-Afghanistan (National Movement of Afghanistan), Hizb-i-Watan (Homeland Party), Jumbish-i-Milli-i

Solk (National Movement for Peace), Mili Dreez Gong, Nahzat-e-Hakemyat-e-Mardome-Afghanistan, Tabrik-i-Wahdat-i Milli (National Unity Movement), Tanzim Daawat-e-Islami-e-Afghanistan, Zazman-i Inqilabi Zahmatkishanan-i Afghanistan (Revolutionary Organization of the Toilers of Afghanistan).

#### 4. ARMED GROUPS AND OTHER NON-STATE ACTORS

**Taliban:** Subsequent to being deposed from power by the US-led military operation, the Taliban began guerrilla attacks against US troops and the new Afghan army.<sup>71</sup> The Taliban is described as having significant ties to drug smuggling operations.<sup>72</sup> Mullah Mohammad Omar (former Emir) is the leader of a 10-man Taliban leadership council.<sup>73</sup>

**Al-Qaeda:** Osama bin Laden established the Al-Qaeda network around 1988.<sup>74</sup> In 1998, the terrorist network joined with other militant organizations and became the International Islamic Front.<sup>75</sup> After being expelled from Sudan in 1996, bin Laden established a base in Afghanistan.<sup>76</sup> Bin Laden was named as the mastermind of the terrorist attacks on the United States that occurred on 11 September 2001.<sup>77</sup> When the Taliban government refused to turn bin Laden over for prosecution, the US launched a military operation against Afghanistan.<sup>78</sup>

**Herb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HIG):** Led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, this terrorist group aims to overthrow the Afghan government in order to create a fundamentalist Islamic state.<sup>79</sup> HIG has engaged in terrorist activities inside Afghanistan.<sup>80</sup>

#### 5. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Widespread corruption at all levels of authority is a serious problem in Afghanistan.<sup>81</sup> The country's opium economy is considered to be a major contributor to corruption.<sup>82</sup> In 2007, Afghanistan produced 8,200 tons of opium and there were 193,000 hectares of opium poppies under cultivation in 2007.<sup>83</sup> Afghanistan is the world's leading producer of opium.<sup>84</sup>

Presidential and parliamentary elections are due to be held in 2009.<sup>85</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Xe.com 21 Dec. 2006.

<sup>2</sup> *Political Parties of the World* 2005, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Political Parties of the World* 2005, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Europa 2006* 2006, 458.

<sup>7</sup> *Europa 2006* 2006, 458.

<sup>8</sup> *Political Parties of the World* 2005, 1.

<sup>9</sup> AREU Nov. 2006.

<sup>10</sup> *Europa 2006* 2006, 454.

<sup>11</sup> AREU Nov. 2006.

<sup>12</sup> *Europa 2006* 2006, 454.

<sup>13</sup> AREU Nov. 2006.

<sup>14</sup> US May 2007.

<sup>15</sup> UK 30 Oct. 2007.

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- <sup>16</sup> Freedom House 2006.  
<sup>17</sup> UK 30 Oct. 2007.  
<sup>18</sup> UK 30 Oct. 2007.  
<sup>19</sup> *Europa 2006* 2006, 457.  
<sup>20</sup> UK 31 Jan.-1 Feb. 2006  
<sup>21</sup> UK n.d.  
<sup>22</sup> Afghanistan n.d.  
<sup>23</sup> UN Aug. 2007, 21.  
<sup>24</sup> UN 26 Feb. 2007.  
<sup>25</sup> UN 26 Feb. 2007.  
<sup>26</sup> UN 26 Feb. 2007.  
<sup>27</sup> *Forced Migration Review* 3 May 2006.  
<sup>28</sup> *Forced Migration Review* 3 May 2006.  
<sup>29</sup> HRW Apr. 2007.  
<sup>30</sup> HRW Apr. 2007.  
<sup>31</sup> UN 12 Oct. 2007  
<sup>32</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 7.  
<sup>33</sup> *PHW 2007*, 2006, 7.  
<sup>34</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 7.  
<sup>35</sup> US 8 Feb. 2007.  
<sup>36</sup> *Political Parties of the World* 2005, 2.  
<sup>37</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 9.  
<sup>38</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 9.  
<sup>39</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 9.  
<sup>40</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 9.  
<sup>41</sup> *Europa 2006* 2006, 466.  
<sup>42</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 7.  
<sup>43</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 8.  
<sup>44</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 8.  
<sup>45</sup> *Europa 2006* 2006, 466.  
<sup>46</sup> HRW Apr. 2007.  
<sup>47</sup> Global Security 7 June 2005.  
<sup>48</sup> Canada 9 Nov. 2006, 8.  
<sup>49</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 8.  
<sup>50</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 9.  
<sup>51</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 9.  
<sup>52</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 9.  
<sup>53</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 8.  
<sup>54</sup> *Political Parties of the World* 2005, 3.  
<sup>55</sup> *Political Parties of the World* 2005, 3.  
<sup>56</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 8.  
<sup>57</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 8.  
<sup>58</sup> *Europa 2006* 2006, 467.  
<sup>59</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 8.  
<sup>60</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 8.  
<sup>61</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 8.  
<sup>62</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 9.  
<sup>63</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 9.  
<sup>64</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 7.  
<sup>65</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 7.  
<sup>66</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 7.  
<sup>67</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 7.  
<sup>68</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 7.  
<sup>69</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 7.  
<sup>70</sup> Information compiled from US 8 Feb. 2007, *PHW 2007* 2006, *Political Parties of the World* 2005.

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- <sup>71</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 10.  
<sup>72</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 10.  
<sup>73</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 10.  
<sup>74</sup> CFR 7 July 2005.  
<sup>75</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 10.  
<sup>76</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 10.  
<sup>77</sup> CFR 7 July 2005.  
<sup>78</sup> *PHW 2007* 2006, 10.  
<sup>79</sup> Canada 9 Nov. 2006.  
<sup>80</sup> Canada 9 Nov. 2006.  
<sup>81</sup> ADB et al 16 Feb. 2007, 1.  
<sup>82</sup> ADB et al 16 Feb. 2007, 1.  
<sup>83</sup> UN Aug. 2007.  
<sup>84</sup> BBC 12 Apr. 2007.  
<sup>85</sup> IFES n.d.

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