

# Finishing Strong

## Seeking a Proper Exit from Afghanistan

By Daniel Runde and Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne

FEBRUARY 2019

### THE ISSUE

A precipitous U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan would endanger many of the social, political, economic, and health gains that have been achieved in Afghanistan over nearly 20 years. Afghanistan has a myriad of problems, including corruption, violence, and poverty, but these challenges often overshadow improvements in mortality rates, media and cellular access, tax collection, and women and girls' education and political freedoms, among others. To prevent these gains from dissipating, the international community should encourage the Afghan government to meet certain governance benchmarks and continue on its path to self-reliance. The United States and its international allies should also consider a gradual withdrawal of troops, funding for the Afghan security forces, and economic assistance, based on a timeline that reflects facts on the ground and progress on peace negotiations.

### INTRODUCTION

U.S. support to Afghanistan can be categorized into three buckets: **a) troops and related support personnel on the ground; b) financial support to the Afghan security forces; and c) economic, development, and governance support (e.g., traditional foreign aid).** U.S. contributions to all of these buckets have been dropping as Afghanistan's authorities have assumed greater responsibility of the country's security and development.

The United States should pursue an exit strategy that is based on realistic timelines, supports a viable peace process that achieves a legitimate, representative Afghan government, seeks to protect the political and social gains made over almost 20 years, and provides reasonable assurance that Afghanistan will not again become a base for international terrorism.

Since 2001, the United States has made significant economic and military commitments to Afghanistan. The costs have been high, security achievements have been mixed, divisions and corruption have plagued the Afghan

government, and U.S. domestic support has faltered. Nevertheless, significant socioeconomic and political gains have been made. Afghanistan today has a vibrant civil society with an educated generation of young leaders, women, and girls. Afghans want peace and more economic development and they highly value their democracy, with polling showing that they have little sympathy for the Taliban.<sup>1</sup> This should not be ignored or sacrificed.

All of these gains and the relative strategic stability in the region will be at risk if U.S. forces, U.S. support for the Afghan forces, and U.S. foreign aid are withdrawn precipitously. A hasty withdrawal would threaten the socioeconomic and military progress that the United States has fought long and hard to obtain. It would likely spur a quick reduction of other international assistance, encourage factionalism and weakened government authority in Afghanistan, encourage political intervention by regional powers, widen civil strife, leave space for terrorist groups, and send signals of U.S. weakness to allies and adversaries.<sup>2</sup>

Instead, the United States should finish strong and remain a reliable partner to Afghanistan, while responsibly helping to negotiate a path to peace, which brings the Taliban into the political arena through negotiations among Afghan parties.

In the best-case scenario, the United States would gradually phase out some or all of the U.S. troops still present in Afghanistan with the pace and mix depending on the course of peace negotiations. Some believe the United States should seek to retain residual counterterrorism (CT) presence for some time, and one could imagine a peace agreement, which includes an ongoing international and even U.S. presence.<sup>3</sup> In the absence of peace, the United States and the international community could also withdraw troops as the Afghan forces become more self-reliant over time. In any case, the withdrawal debate deserves further careful deliberation, and no decision should be carried out on an artificial or precipitous timeline.

U.S. and international economic assistance would continue but gradually reduce over the next decade, although this foreign assistance is likely to be needed through 2030 according to the World Bank.<sup>4</sup> With a successful peace negotiation, donors could be asked to boost assistance to help with a transition to peace. In any scenario short of a rapid departure, the United States and its partners must push Afghanistan to set and meet governance benchmarks in exchange for sustained foreign assistance in both security and economic areas.

## **EXAMINING 17 YEARS OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN**

### **U.S. TROOPS LEVELS**

The current U.S. military and related civilian contractor presence in Afghanistan is relatively small. It is largely dedicated to training and assisting the Afghan security forces—especially with air support—and also undertaking CT operations. U.S. casualties have been low in the last four years and are expected to remain low, as the Afghan forces do most of the fighting.<sup>5</sup> The U.S. presence in Afghanistan has dramatically decreased, from over 110,000 troops in 2011 to 14,000 in 2018 (figure 1), plus 10,000 U.S. contract support personnel.<sup>6</sup>

The United States needs to develop contingency plans for reducing troop presence over several years that are tailored to its current assistance and CT missions. If peace negotiations advance, the United States should consider whether to fully withdraw troops or maintain a small presence and continued access to bases, at least in the context of maintaining a CT and intelligence capacity given the 20 or so terrorist groups believed to be operating in

Afghanistan, even if the Taliban were to commit to work against such groups.<sup>7</sup> If peace negotiations fail, the United States should still weigh the pros and cons of withdrawal and consider maintaining its troops until the Afghan forces are more self-reliant. Such deliberations and any decisions should be undertaken in close collaboration with Afghan and international partners. Regardless of the peace negotiation outcomes, U.S. withdrawal should not be carried out on a poorly thought-out or overly rapid timeline that could well contribute to a deterioration of Afghanistan's security situation. This is an issue that deserves careful discussion and deliberation.

### **U.S. SPENDING FOR AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES**

The United States and other international partners fund around 90 percent of the budget for the Afghan army, police and intelligence forces, collectively known as the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).<sup>8</sup> U.S. funds are critical to Afghan security and, if removed abruptly, would endanger Afghanistan's ability to maintain security and unified national forces.<sup>9</sup> The lesson from the withdrawal of Soviet Forces in 1989 is appropriate; the withdrawal had a major impact, but ultimately the cessation of security assistance led to the collapse of the Najibullah regime.. Regardless of anything else, U.S. support for financing a competent security force should remain an important priority.

The number of Afghan army and police personnel has increased over time, to over 313,000 members reported in mid-2018 (figure 1).<sup>10</sup> Afghanistan's forces have severe operational shortcomings, including a still fledgling air force and serious retention problems, but they have not shied away from taking heavy casualties in battling the Taliban.<sup>11</sup> Depending on the course of peace negotiations, the United States should maintain funding levels to these forces, while continuing to insist on and support performance improvements. Financial support for Afghan security forces should not be conflated with the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. There should be broad support for financing the Afghan forces as long as they remain effective and work in ways consistent with U.S. objectives.

*The lesson from the withdrawal of Soviet Forces in 1989 is appropriate; the withdrawal had a major impact, but ultimately the cessation of security assistance led to the collapse of the Najibullah regime.*



The United States has made important contributions to funding and training the Afghan security forces, as have NATO members, the United Nations, and other international players. The United States has committed a yearly average of \$4.4 billion since 2013 to the ANDSF through the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF), down from over \$10 billion in 2011 (figure 2).<sup>12</sup> Given these cuts and as Afghanistan's economy, tax collection, and management of funds improve, the U.S. tab for Afghan security should remain steady or even drop in the medium term. Indeed, President Ghani of Afghanistan has reportedly offered to help cut costs for the U.S. presence in Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> The exact evolution of these costs and the size and composition of Afghan forces will depend on the content and pace of any peace negotiations.<sup>14</sup>

*Financial support for Afghan security forces should not be conflated with the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. There should be broad support for financing the Afghan forces as long as they remain effective and work in ways consistent with U.S. objectives.*

#### **U.S. ECONOMIC, DEVELOPMENT, AND GOVERNANCE ASSISTANCE—“FOREIGN AID”**

The United States, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and other international players have invested significant resources for reconstruction and economic development in Afghanistan. The global level of foreign aid committed has steadily decreased, as the Afghans have collected more taxes to pay for Afghanistan's social and economic needs. In 2016, donors pledged \$15.2 billion for reconstruction until 2020.<sup>15</sup> This is a decrease from the \$16 billion pledged in 2012 and the \$20 billion pledged in 2008.<sup>16</sup> This reflects that the international community wants Afghanistan to assume more responsibility for covering its own expenses, and donors seek to take a more focused, results-oriented approach, spending less aid.

Donors may be able to decrease foreign aid by 20 or 30 percent over the next five years and even further beyond that, but the World Bank has estimated that the Afghan government will be dependent on international assistance until 2030.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) pledged \$2.5 billion to Afghanistan in 2010

and now commits \$977 million annually (figure 3).<sup>18</sup> This reduction is in part due to the Afghan government's increased ability to collect domestic revenue (meaning taxes, social contributions, and other fees and government income, excluding grants) from the formal economy, as it has pursued a “self-reliance” strategy since 2014, as announced at the London Conference, to increase its own revenue collection to move towards revenue self-sufficiency over time.<sup>19</sup> The Afghan government collected \$10 million in government revenue in 2002. By 2016, this figure exploded to \$2.4 billion—equal to 12 percent of GDP (figure 5).<sup>20</sup> The total is projected to surpass \$4 billion by 2023.<sup>21</sup> As Afghanistan collects more domestic revenue and continues to improve its ability to spend funds well, it can pay for more basic needs like education and health as it increasingly has (figure 3).<sup>22</sup>

The United States and the international community are still going to have development interests in Afghanistan for decades. Afghanistan has a serious problem of corruption and is one of the poorest countries in the world, with poverty increasing over the past several years due to a series of economic problems including drought. Thus, the United States should expect to continue giving development assistance, albeit at lower levels. A comparatively poor country like Malawi, with a population of 19 million people, received \$250 million from USAID in 2017.<sup>23</sup> Bangladesh, also a South Asian country, received \$178 million from USAID in 2017.<sup>24</sup> Since the United States has considerably greater security interests in a stable Afghanistan than in either Malawi or Bangladesh, it is reasonable that, beyond 2024, USAID will spend \$300 to \$500 million every year in Afghanistan and further decrease to levels comparable to Malawi or Bangladesh if peace ensues.

### **AFGHAN PROGRESS TO DATE: ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL GAINS**

#### **ECONOMIC GAINS**

There has been significant economic progress in Afghanistan since 2001, which is not sufficiently recognized. For example, Afghanistan advanced more than any other country in the Ease of Doing Business ranking from 2018 to 2019, although it still ranks 167 out of 190.<sup>25</sup> GDP per capita has tripled since 2001 (figure 5).<sup>26</sup> As mentioned earlier, there have been significant gains in domestic revenue collection (figure 4), in line with the agreed partnership strategy focused on realizing self-reliance.<sup>27</sup> This is important because, to the extent to which Afghanistan can collect taxes, it can increasingly pay for its own defense and development.

## *Afghanistan advanced more than any other country in the Ease of Doing Business ranking from 2018 to 2019.*

Another indicator of economic progress is decreasing reliance on foreign aid. Official development assistance (ODA) as a percentage of central government expenditure decreased from 206 percent in 2006 to 59 percent in 2015 (figure 6).<sup>28</sup> In 2016, net ODA received was \$4 billion—a sharp decrease from a peak of nearly \$6.9 billion in 2011.<sup>29</sup> These figures indicate that Afghanistan is increasingly financially self-reliant and in need of less foreign funds.

Afghanistan is in a dangerous but central part of the world. It is starting to take advantage of a series of economic opportunities and could have a successful future given peace and stability. The country has the potential to serve as a transit route for energy from Central Asia to South Asia. Moreover, Afghanistan is rich in minerals and water resources and has the potential for specialty agriculture. Afghanistan could even develop a sizeable tourism industry in a peaceful future.

### **SOCIAL AND POLITICAL GAINS**

Social, political, and health indicators in Afghanistan have vastly improved. The under-five mortality rate and maternal mortality rate have nearly halved since 2000 (figures 7 and 8).<sup>30</sup> Virtually no one in Afghanistan had access to electricity in 2000, and by 2016, nearly 85 percent of the population had electricity (figure 9).<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the percentage of people using at least basic sanitation services increased from 23 percent to 40 percent from 2000 to 2015 (figure 10) and the percentage of people with access to safe drinking water increased from 27 percent in 2007-2008 to 65 percent in 2013-2014.<sup>32</sup> There has also been tremendous progress in information and communication technology (ICT). The number of cellular subscriptions has surged (figure 11) – there were no mobile phones in Afghanistan in 2002, and now there are 27.5 million.<sup>33</sup> Phones are being used for mobile payments, among other functions, which can help fight corruption.<sup>34</sup> All of these are important and tangible results that have vastly improved Afghans' well-being.

Additionally, immense progress has been made in terms of women's education, which was virtually nonexistent during Taliban rule. In 2017, 3.5 million girls were enrolled in school.<sup>35</sup> More than four-fifths of primary-aged girls are enrolled in school; however, the Afghan government counts children as being in school until they have not attended for up to three years, so the number of girls actually in

school is probably lower than this (figure 12).<sup>36</sup> One-third of students enrolled in universities are women, and 84 percent of Afghans agree that women should have the same educational opportunities as men (figure 13).<sup>37</sup>

Political freedoms have improved. Three out of five Afghans are satisfied with the way democracy works in Afghanistan (figure 14), and 8 million people voted in the presidential elections in 2014.<sup>38</sup> Freedom House ranked Press Freedom in Afghanistan as "Partly Free" in 2017, an improvement due to legal changes to provide greater protection to the media and an increase in diversity in the media.<sup>39</sup> One hundred and seventy radio stations, hundreds of print media outlets, and dozens of TV stations have opened since 2001.<sup>40</sup> A very free media, cell phones, the Internet and television have transformed Afghan society. The 2018 parliamentary elections, though flawed, attracted 4 million voters and demonstrated a proliferation of younger candidates and the willingness of Afghans to vote despite the threats of violence.<sup>41</sup>

### **RECOGNIZING THE CHALLENGES**

Afghanistan has a myriad of challenges that are well-documented and often get the most media attention. These challenges are important and must be addressed. However, studies that point out Afghanistan's problems often downplay or ignore the considerable and important progress made to date. Key problems include:

- **Insurgent Territory Control:** 35 percent of the Afghan population lives in areas controlled by insurgents.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, in 2018, the Asia Foundation's Survey of the Afghan People found that 82 percent of the population does not sympathize with the Taliban and over 90 percent would fear encountering the Taliban (figure 15).<sup>43</sup> The Asia Foundation survey has found these numbers holding steady even as Afghans strongly hope for peace. Afghans are uncertain about the prospect of peace, with only 53 percent believing that reconciliation with the Taliban is possible.<sup>44</sup>
- **Corruption:** Afghanistan ranked 172 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index. 82 percent of Afghans believe corruption is a major problem.<sup>45</sup> This has been an enduring issue.
- **Violence:** Taliban and Islamic State attacks have been intense over the past two years and civilian casualties high. Over 8,000 civilians are killed or injured each year and numbers are increasing, with 2,798 deaths reported in the first nine months of 2018—the second-

highest number of casualties recorded over that period in the past 10 years.<sup>46</sup> Afghan combatant casualties are classified, but it is estimated that 30 to 40 troops die in conflict each day.<sup>47</sup>

- **Poverty:** Afghanistan has the tenth lowest GDP per capita in the world at \$550 (figure 5).<sup>48</sup> More than half of the population lives on less than \$1 a day—a significant increase from 38 percent of the population in 2011, when international aid and troop levels peaked and provided a significant stimulus to the economy.<sup>49</sup> Poor economic growth, employment opportunities, infrastructure, and public services are big issues, but the economy has stabilized, and the IMF predicts modest growth.<sup>50</sup>
- **Forced Migration:** There are 2.6 million Afghan refugees worldwide—half of which are children—and over 2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to conflict and disaster, including severe drought.<sup>51</sup> While over 5.2 million refugees have returned to Afghanistan since 2002, outmigration could still increase if insecurity, unemployment, and poverty rise, impacting an already strained global migration system.<sup>52</sup>
- **Opium Production:** 328,000 hectares, estimated to be worth \$1.4 billion, were cultivated for opium poppy in 2017—a 63 percent increase from the previous year.<sup>53</sup> Opium cultivation provides the equivalent of 590,000 full-time jobs, which is more than the combined employment of the Afghan army and police.<sup>54</sup> Many reports indicate that the Taliban has taken increased control over the illegal drug sector, receiving approximately 65 percent of their income from narcotics.<sup>55</sup>

## THE BEST-CASE SCENARIO FOR EXIT: A GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL

The United States should carefully consider withdrawing its troops and economic support from Afghanistan in a gradual and phased manner that does not undermine all that the United States has helped to build. Absent a successful peace negotiation, a U.S. force draw-down should be tied to Afghanistan meeting performance and governance benchmarks and tied to conditions on the ground, as was the approach taken in the U.S. policy announced in August 2017.<sup>56</sup>

Afghanistan has made considerable economic, social, and political gains that are worth preserving. There is clearly much more to do to improve security force performance and governance, to eliminate corruption, to spark economic growth, and to assure that Afghanistan does not again

become a base for international terrorism targeting the United States. The U.S. Senate recognized the importance of these gains in its 68 to 23 vote opposing a “precipitous” troop withdrawal on January 31, 2019, and a January 2019 Rand Corporation study astutely details and analyzes the very costly effects of a precipitous withdrawal.<sup>57</sup>

Such a troop withdrawal would further undermine the U.S. leverage to press ahead in talks with the Taliban and to help foster serious Afghan-to-Afghan negotiations over the underlying political causes of the conflict. It will doubtless be difficult to devise the confidence-building steps and mechanisms needed to establish a peace process where the Taliban and other Afghan political forces are participating in a functioning government.<sup>58</sup> There are a host of serious issues to be worked through among and between Afghan parties, including what to do about the upcoming Afghan presidential elections slated for later this year.<sup>59</sup>

To be successful, peace negotiations will have to overcome many hurdles over an extended period of time. There will be divisions on each side during the process, and certainly, the Afghan government’s side will be more effective with a leader who has rallied a large, representative coalition and united much of civil society behind him.

Success on the path to peace thus requires strategic patience by the United States and others. The United States can be a more effective player if it does not signal its departure from Afghanistan, but rather underscores its commitment to maintaining a military presence and security and economic assistance conditional on a solid peace accord and process. However, the United States should expect to see reductions in the size and costs of security and development aid in the years ahead under a near-term peace scenario or a longer-term alternative.

The United States, Afghanistan, and allies have invested too much blood and treasure to depart precipitously. The progress, which gets little if any coverage in the press, is real and embodied in millions of Afghans, as is the desire for peace among the Afghan people and their international friends. It is good to have an open and frank debate in Washington about Afghanistan options. Those who would argue for a rapid withdrawal from Afghanistan should ask themselves whether they are prepared to sacrifice hard-won gains, see the loss of political and economic freedoms and of education gained by Afghan women and youth, and risk having Afghanistan once again become a training ground for terrorists.

The best outcome would doubtless be a serious peace process accompanied by a ceasefire and a thorough give and take negotiation wherein the Taliban eventually joins in a

democratic process. Even if that fails, the United States, its partners, and Afghan leaders can foster a situation whereby the Afghan government and political system improves in effectiveness and legitimacy over the next several years while the U.S. burden continues to decrease. A gradual reduction of security, economic and military support over a five-year period on a timeline based on progress and increased burden-sharing by the Afghans is a scenario that the United States and its partners should be willing to support. U.S. allies and adversaries are watching closely what the United States does in Afghanistan. History will judge if the United States can make reasonable and good decisions. It is worth the effort to proceed with wisdom and careful deliberation. ■

***Earl Anthony Wayne** is a senior adviser (non-resident) with the Project on Prosperity and Development (PPD) at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C. He served as a diplomat from 1975 to 2015. **Daniel F. Runde** is senior vice president, director of the PPD and holds the William A. Schreyer Chair in Global Analysis at CSIS. The authors would like to thank Carmen Garcia Gallego for her research support.*

*This brief is made possible by general support to CSIS. No direct sponsorship contributed to this brief.*

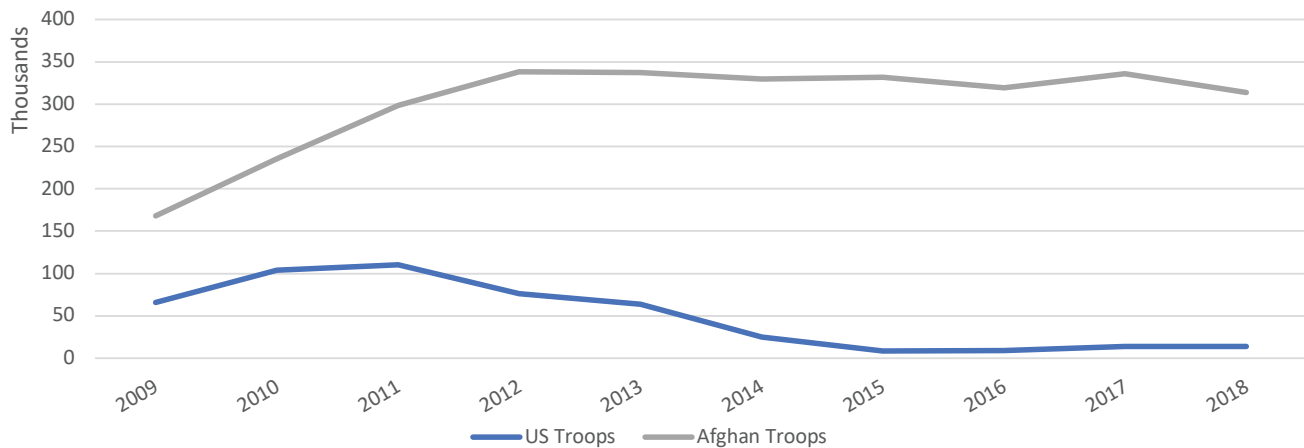
---

**CSIS BRIEFS** are produced by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a private, tax-exempt institution focusing on international public policy issues. Its research is nonpartisan and nonproprietary. CSIS does not take specific policy positions. Accordingly, all views, positions, and conclusions expressed in this publication should be understood to be solely those of the author(s). © 2019 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. All rights reserved.

Cover Photo: WAKIL KOHSAR/AFP/Getty Images

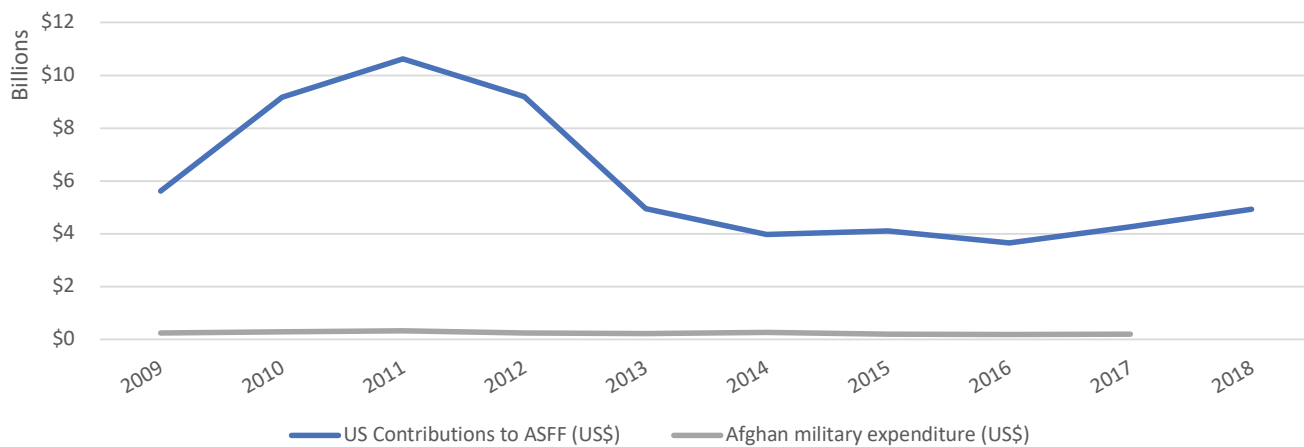
## APPENDIX: AFGHANISTAN'S PROGRESS BY THE NUMBERS

Figure 1: US Troop Strength Drops as Afghan Forces Surpass 300,000



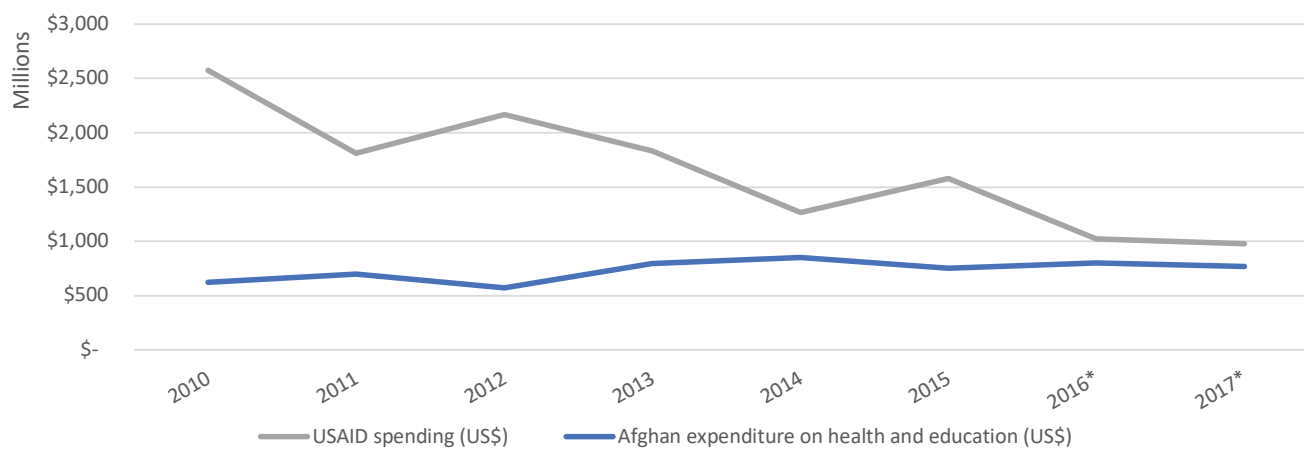
Source: SIGAR Quarterly Report to Congress, Mid-year estimates, April 2009-2018

U.S. Contributions to the Afghanistan Security Forces Drop



Source: Security Assistance Monitor, World Bank Development Indicators

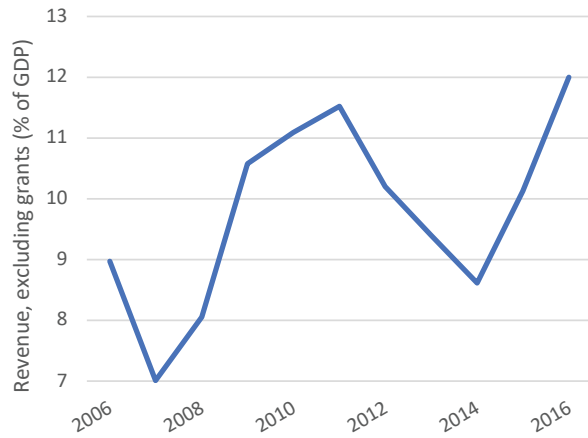
USAID Foreign Aid Obligations to Afghanistan Drop



Source: USAID, U.S. Foreign Aid by Country, World Bank Development Indicators. \* Missing health expenditures for 2016 and 2017

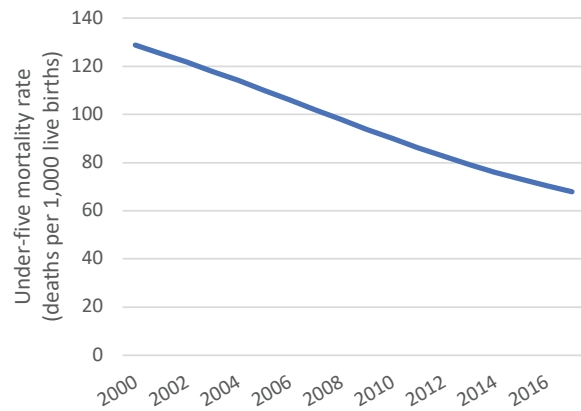


Figure 4: Afghan tax collection surges



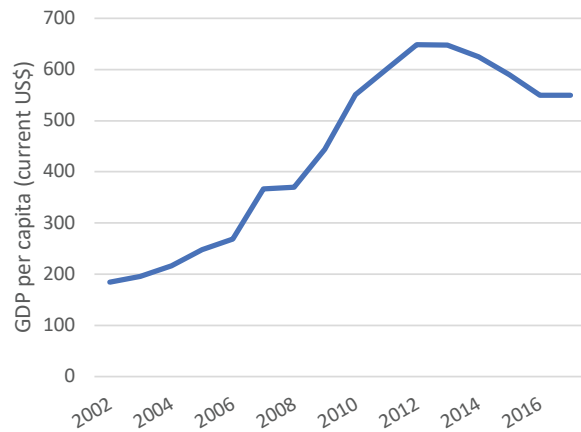
Source: World Bank Development Indicators and USAID, "Domestic Resource Mobilization: Case Study of Afghanistan"

Figure 7: Afghan under-five mortality rate halves



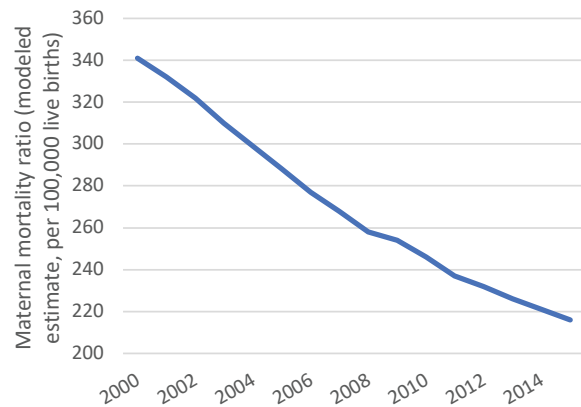
Source: World Bank Development Indicators

Figure 5: Afghan GDP per capita triples



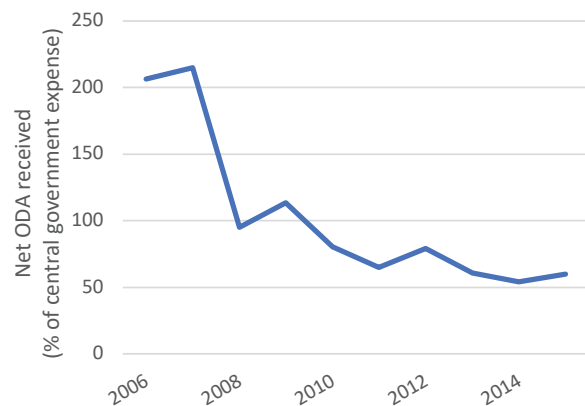
Source: World Bank Development Indicators

Figure 8: Significant decreases in maternal mortality



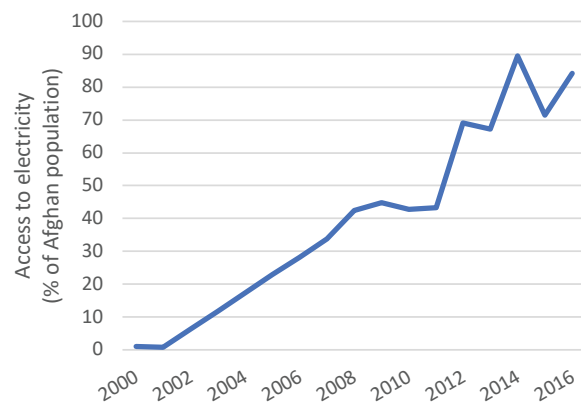
Source: World Bank Development Indicators

Figure 6: Significant decreases in Afghanistan's reliance on ODA



Source: World Bank Development Indicators

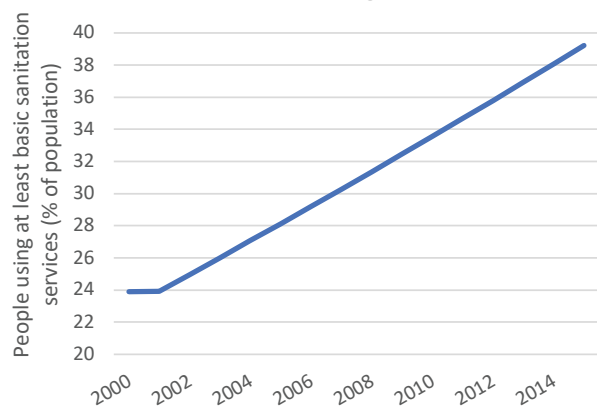
Figure 9: Dramatic increase in Afghan access to electricity



Source: World Bank Development Indicators

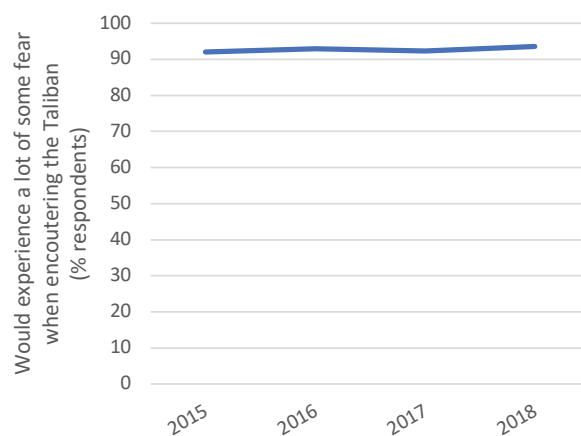


Figure 10: Considerable increase in use of basic sanitation in Afghanistan



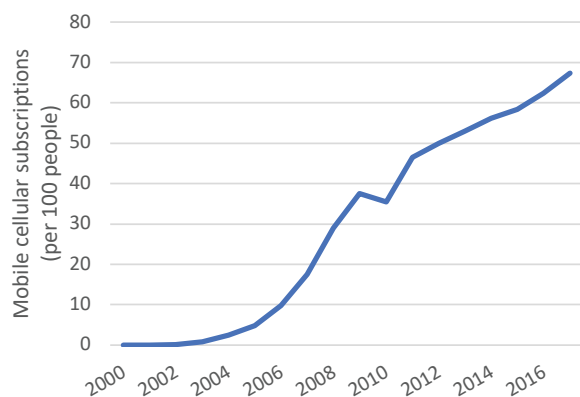
Source: World Bank Development Indicators

Figure 13: Most Afghans fear the Taliban



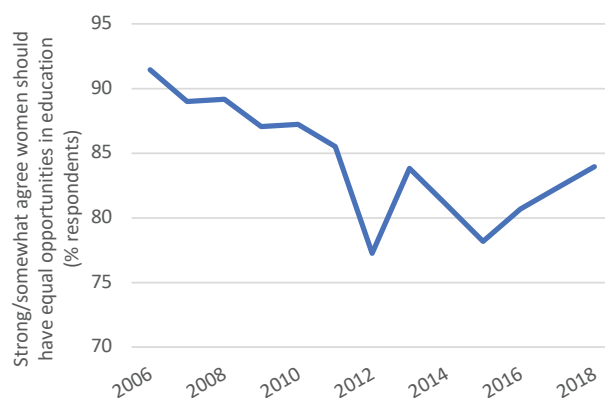
Source: The Asia Foundation

Figure 11: Mobile cellular subscriptions in Afghanistan skyrocket



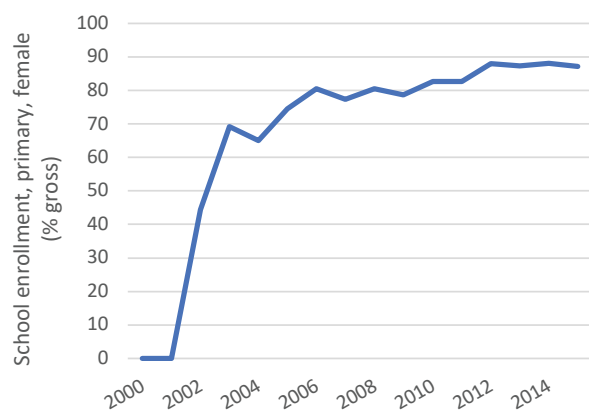
Source: World Bank Development Indicators

Figure 14: Most Afghans agree that women should have equal opportunities education



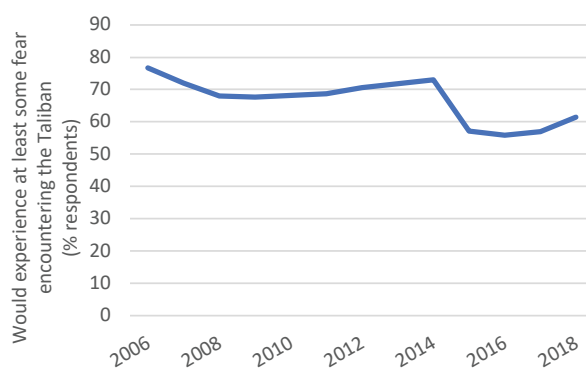
Source: World Bank Development Indicators

Figure 12: Primary school enrollment of Afghan girls surges



Source: World Bank Development Indicators

Figure 15: Afghan satisfaction with democracy, while not at an all-time high, sees modest rise



Source: World Bank Development Indicators

## ENDNOTES

- 1 The Asia Foundation, *A Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan in 2018* (San Francisco: The Asia Foundation, 2018), [https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018\\_Afghan-Survey\\_fullReport-12.4.18.pdf](https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018_Afghan-Survey_fullReport-12.4.18.pdf);
- 2 James Dobbins, Jason H. Campbell, Sean Mann, and Laurel E. Miller, “Consequences of a Precipitous U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan,” RAND Corporation, 2019, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE326.html>.
- 3 Mark Landler, Helene Cooper, and Eric Schmitt, “Taliban Talks Raise Question of What U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan Could Mean,” *New York Times*, January 28, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/28/us/politics/us-withdrawal-afghanistan-taliban.html>.
- 4 World Bank, *Afghanistan to 2030: Priorities for Economic Development under Fragility* (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2016), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/156881533220723730/pdf/129161-WP-P157288-Afghanistan-to-2030-PUBLIC.pdf>.
- 5 “Fatalities by year and country,” iCasualties, 2019, <http://icasualties.org/>.
- 6 SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress April 2018* (Arlington, VA: SIGAR, April 2018), <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2018-04-30qr.pdf>; SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress October 2018* (Arlington, VA: SIGAR, October 30, 2018), <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2018-10-30qr.pdf>; Anthony H. Cordesman, “Afghanistan as Vietnam Redux: Bomb, Declare Peace, and Leave?” CSIS, January 15, 2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/afghanistan-vietnam-redux-bomb-declare-peace-and-leave>.
- 7 Landler, Cooper, and Schmitt, “Taliban Talks Raise Question.”
- 8 Dobbins, Campbell, Mann, and Miller, “Consequences of a Precipitous U.S. Withdrawal.”
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 SIGAR May/June estimates. See 2009-2017 July Quarterly Reports, <https://www.sigar.mil/quarterlyreports/>.
- 11 Cordesman, “Afghanistan as Vietnam Redux.”
- 12 “Afghanistan Security Forces Fund,” Security Assistance Monitor, 2019, <https://securityassistance.org/content/afghanistan%20security%20forces%20fund?year=->; World Bank Development Indicators, *Military expenditure (current US\$)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.CD?locations=AF>.
- 13 Ibid; Mujib Mashal, “To Slow U.S. Exit, Afghanistan Leader Offers Trump a Cost Reduction,” *New York Times*, January 30, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/30/world/asia/afghan-ghani-trump-letter.html>.
- 14 Vanda Felbab-Brown, “The U.S.-Taliban negotiations breakthrough: What it means and what lies ahead,” Brookings Institution, January 29, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/01/29/the-us-taliban-negotiations-breakthrough-what-it-means-and-what-lies-ahead/>.
- 15 Council of the EU, “Brussels Conference of Afghanistan: main results,” Council of the EU, October 5, 2016, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/10/05/bca-main-results/>.
- 16 UN Office on Drugs and Crime, “Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan,” United Nations, July 8, 2012, <http://www.unodc.org/afghanistan/en/Events/tokyo-conference-on-afghanistan.html>; Francois Murphy and Arshad Mohammed, “Donors pledge around \$20 billion for Afghanistan,” Reuters, June 12, 2008, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-34038820080612>.
- 17 World Bank, *Afghanistan to 2030: Priorities for Economic Development*.
- 18 “U.S. Foreign Aid by Country, Afghanistan,” USAID, 2017, <https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/AFG>.
- 19 Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, “Realizing Self-Reliance: Commitments to Reforms and Renewed Partnership,” December 2014, <http://staging-af-ghanembassy.us/contents/2016/04/documents/Realizing-Self-Reliance.pdf>.
- 20 USAID, “Domestic Resource Mobilization: Case Study of Afghanistan, 2003-2016,” [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/Afghanistan\\_DRM\\_case\\_study\\_briefing\\_note\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/Afghanistan_DRM_case_study_briefing_note_FINAL.pdf); World Bank Development Indicators, *Revenue excluding grants (% of GDP), Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/GC.REV.XGRT.GD.ZS?locations=AF&view=chart>.
- 21 2023 estimate from IMF, converted from Afghanis to USD as of February 3, 2019. See International Monetary Fund, “Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: Fourth Review Under the Extended Credit Facility Arrangement,” December 11, 2018, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2018/12/11/Islamic-Republic-of-Afghanistan-Fourth-Review-Under-the-Extended-Credit-Facility-Arrangement-46455>.
- 22 Own estimates from World Bank Development Indicators. See World Bank Development Indicators, *GDP (current US\$)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=AF>; World Bank Development Indicators, *Domestic general government health expenditure (% of GDP)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.GHED.GD.ZS?locations=AF&view=chart>; World Bank Development Indicators, *Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=AF&view=chart>.
- 23 “Foreign Aid by Country, Malawi,” USAID, 2017, <https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/MWI>.
- 24 “Foreign Aid by Country, Bangladesh,” USAID, 2017, <https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/BGD>.
- 25 World Bank, *Doing Business 2019* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2019), [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB2019-report\\_web-version.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB2019-report_web-version.pdf).
- 26 World Bank Development Indicators, *GDP per capita (current US\$), Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?end=2017&locations=AF&start=1999>.
- 27 World Bank Development Indicators, *Revenue, excluding grants (% of GDP)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/GC.REV.XGRT.GD.ZS?end=2015&locations=AF&start=2006>; USAID, “Domestic Resource Mobilization: Case Study of Afghanistan.”
- 28 World Bank Development Indicators, *Net ODA received (% of central government expense), Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ODAT.XP.ZS?locations=AF>.
- 29 World Bank Development Indicators, *Net official development assistance received (current US\$), Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2016), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ODAT.CD?locations=AF>.
- 30 UN Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME), “Under-five mortality rate,” UNICEF, October 2018, <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-survival/under-five-mortality/>; World Bank Development Indicators, *Maternal mortality ratio (modeled estimate, per 100,000 live births)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.MMRT>.
- 31 World Bank Development Indicators, *Access to electricity (% of population)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2016), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS?locations=AF>.
- 32 World Bank Development Indicators, *People using at least basic sanitation services ((% of population)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2016), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.BASS.ZS?locations=AF>; World Bank, “Afghanistan: Poverty Gaining Ground,” World Bank Group, 2017, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/300161493795316212/pdf/114741->

WP-v2-P159553-PUBLIC-2-5-2017-10-59-52-AfghanistanInfographicDec.pdf.

33 World Bank Development Indicators, *Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2017), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.CEL.SETS.P2?locations=AF&view=chart>.

34 Elise Sidamon-Eristoff and Andrew Hull, “How Mobile Money Can Cut Down on Corruption in Afghanistan,” *Chemonics*, June 28, 2016, <https://www.chemonics.com/how-mobile-money-can-cut-down-on-corruption-in-afghanistan/>

35 “Afghanistan: Education,” USAID, 2018, <https://www.usaid.gov/afghanistan/education>.

36 World Bank Development Indicators, *School enrollment, primary, female (% gross)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.ENRR.FE?locations=AF>; Human Rights Watch, “I Won’t Be a Doctor, and One Day You’ll Be Sick: Girls’ Access to Education in Afghanistan,” October 17, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/10/17/i-wont-be-doctor-and-one-day-youll-be-sick/girls-access-education-afghanistan#>.

37 “Afghanistan: Education”; The Asia Foundation, *Afghanistan: A Survey of the Afghan People 2006-2018* (San Francisco: The Asia Foundation, 2018), <http://surveys.asiafoundation.org/d?SurveyCode=AGSAP1&SampleName=G-P&SectionName=Default&LanguageName=English>.

38 Ibid; “Voter Turnout by Election Type: Afghanistan,” International IDEA, 2018, <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/country-view/44/40>.

39 “Freedom of the Press 2017: Afghanistan Profile,” Freedom House, 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/afghanistan>.

40 Olof Blomqvist, “Afghanistan’s Media Is a Success Story. Two Attacks Show It Must Be Protected,” *Time*, May 1, 2018, <http://time.com/5260614/afghanistan-journalists-media-bombing-afp-bbc/>.

41 “Voter Turnout by Election Type: Afghanistan”; Adam Gallagher, “Afghan Voters Exhibit Enthusiasm Despite Election Flaws,” US Institute of Peace, November 6, 2018, <https://www.usip.org/blog/2018/11/afghan-voters-exhibit-enthusiasm-despite-election-flaws>.

42 SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress October 2018*.

43 The Asia Foundation, *Afghanistan: A Survey of the Afghan People 2006-2018*.

44 Ibid; The Asia Foundation, *A Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan in 2018*.

45 “Corruption Perceptions Index 2018,” Transparency International, January 2019, [https://www.transparency.org/files/content/pages/2018\\_CPI\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.transparency.org/files/content/pages/2018_CPI_Executive_Summary.pdf); The Asia Foundation, *A Survey of the Afghan People 2018*.

46 “Quarterly Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 1 January to 30 September 2018,” UNAMA, October 10, 2018, [https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama\\_protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_in\\_armed\\_conflict\\_3rd\\_quarter\\_report\\_2018\\_10\\_oct.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_protection_of_civilians_in_armed_conflict_3rd_quarter_report_2018_10_oct.pdf).

47 Clayton Thomas, “Afghanistan: Background and U.S. Policy in Brief,” Congressional Research Service, January 16, 2019, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R45122.pdf>.

48 World Bank Development Indicators, *GDP per capita (current US\$), Afghanistan*.

49 SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress October 2018*.

50 “IMF Staff Completes Fourth ECF Review Mission for Afghanistan,” International Monetary Fund, October 5, 2018, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/10/05/pr187382-imf-staff-completes-fourth-ecf-review-mission-for-afghanistan>.

51 UNHCR, *Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2018), <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/2018-2019%20Solutions%20Strategy%20for%20Afghan%20Refugees%20-%20October%202018.pdf>;

UN OCHA, “Afghanistan: Drought Response Situation Response No. 2,” UN OCHA, September 20, 2018, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180920\\_afghanistan\\_drought\\_sitrep\\_no\\_2.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180920_afghanistan_drought_sitrep_no_2.pdf).

52 Ibid.

53 UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017 Cultivation and Production* (Vienna: United Nations, November 2017), [https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan\\_opium\\_survey\\_2017\\_cult\\_prod\\_web.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_opium_survey_2017_cult_prod_web.pdf).

54 SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress October 2018*.

55 Ibid.

56 Earl Anthony Wayne, “The New Afghanistan Policy Is Set. The Question Is How to Implement It,” *The National Interest*, September 13, 2017, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-new-afghanistan-policy-set-the-question-how-implement-it-22285>.

57 Dobbins, Campbell, Mann, and Miller, “Consequences of a Precipitous U.S. Withdrawal.”

58 Scott Worden, “U.S.-Taliban Talks Make ‘Significant Progress’: What’s Next?” US Institute of Peace, January 31, 2019, <http://usip.org/publications/2019/01/us-taliban-talks-make-significant-progress-whats-next>.

59 Vanda Felbab-Brown, “The U.S.-Taliban negotiations breakthrough.”