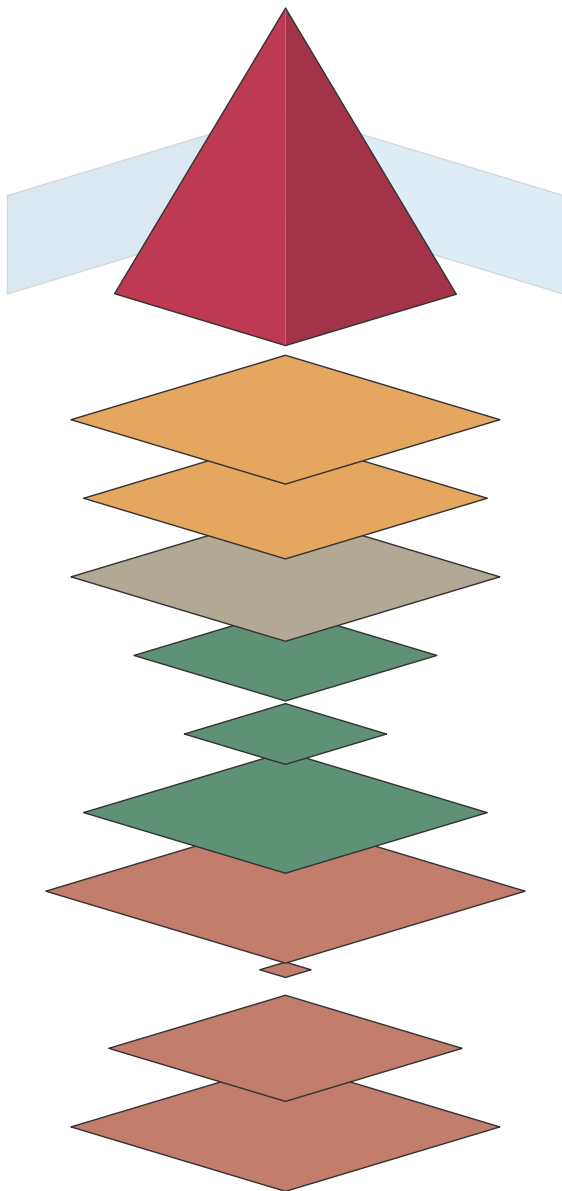




AFGHANISTAN



7.08 CRIMINALITY SCORE

7th of 193 countries
3rd of 46 Asian countries
1st of 8 Southern Asian countries



CRIMINAL MARKETS 6.90

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	8.50
HUMAN SMUGGLING	8.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	8.50
FLORA CRIMES	6.00
FAUNA CRIMES	4.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	8.00
HEROIN TRADE	9.50
COCAINE TRADE	1.00
CANNABIS TRADE	7.00
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	8.50



CRIMINAL ACTORS 7.25

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	7.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	8.50
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	9.00
FOREIGN ACTORS	4.00



2.67 RESILIENCE SCORE

172nd of 193 countries
41st of 46 Asian countries
8th of 8 Southern Asian countries



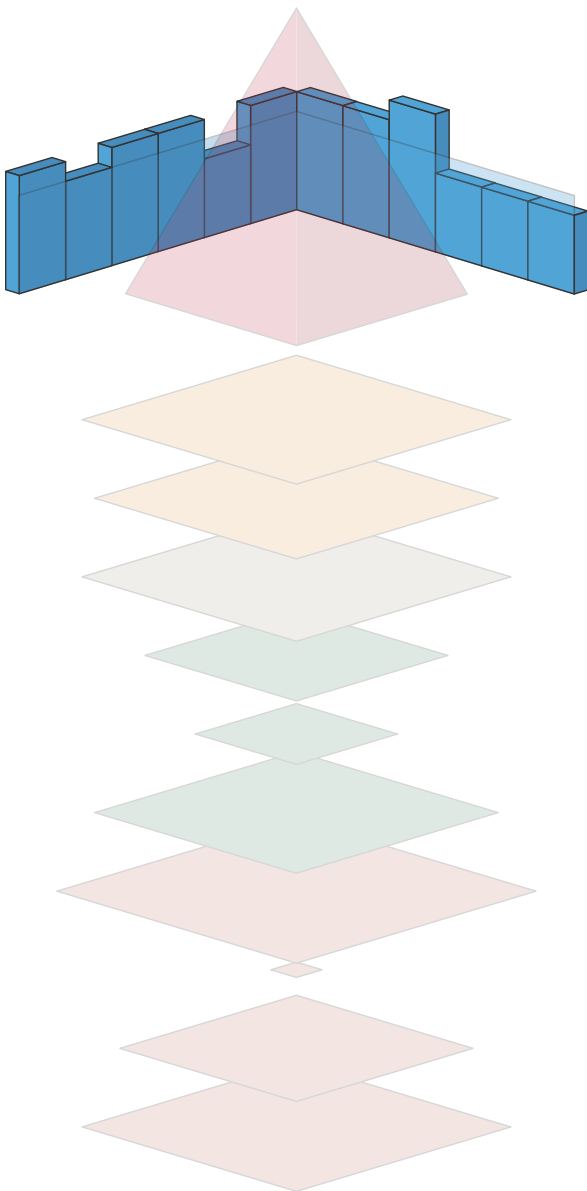
Funding provided by the United States Government.



ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.



AFGHANISTAN



2.67

RESILIENCE SCORE

172nd of 193 countries
41st of 46 Asian countries
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POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	3.00
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	2.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	3.00
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	3.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	2.00
LAW ENFORCEMENT	3.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	3.00
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	3.00
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	3.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	2.00
PREVENTION	2.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	2.00



7.08

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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Human trafficking is a significant issue in Afghanistan and while most occurs internally, a considerable portion also takes place transnationally. Most victims are subjected to sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced begging and forced recruitment into armed groups. However, human trafficking for the purposes of forced marriage and organ smuggling are also known to occur. An important driver of many of the most prevalent forms of human trafficking is debt bondage. Child trafficking is particularly rampant, with victims being sold to traffickers by their families or organized criminal groups. The trafficking of children is largely driven by a practice of sexual abuse of young boys known as Bacha Bazi. State and non-state armed forces also exploit children in combat, and many victims have been deployed abroad in conflicts across the Middle East, or forced to participate in terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda or ISIL-Khorasan. Foreign victims from neighbouring countries and elsewhere in Asia are trafficked into Afghanistan primarily for sexual exploitation or participation in war. Corrupt government officials play a significant role in facilitating Afghanistan's human trafficking market.

Due to widespread insecurity and the scarcity of economic opportunity, Afghanistan is the second-largest source country of refugees globally. Since NATO's 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, the country's human smuggling market has grown consistently, resulting in more and more organized-criminal groups engaging in human smuggling in recent years. The escalation of conflict and insecurity in 2020 is the primary driver of the outflow of migrants and consequent reliance on human smuggling networks. It is often difficult to distinguish between Afghanistan's human trafficking and human smuggling markets because many people smuggled to neighbouring countries subsequently fall prey to human trafficking. Some regions of Afghanistan are highly dependent on the human smuggling economy. Human smuggling to Iran in particular is a major industry that generates significant profits and is linked to various other illicit smuggling enterprises. Smugglers often move individuals into the Balochistan province of Pakistan first and then across the border into Iranian Sistan and Balochistan Province, highlighting the porosity at the convergence point of the three international borders. As with the human trafficking market, corrupt government officials facilitate the human smuggling market, often through the black-market sale of foreign visas.

TRADE

More than four decades of conflict have resulted in arms trafficking becoming a serious problem in Afghanistan. High levels of insecurity engender great demand for weapons and create easy access to black-market weapons for militias, insurgents and civilians. While older weapons from previous conflicts remain in circulation, the oversupply of foreign weapons to Afghan security forces in recent years, mainly from Western countries, has contributed greatly to arms proliferation. Another major issue is the diversion, through raids and the infiltration of military barracks, of high-quality foreign weapons to insurgent and terrorist groups. On top of this, low wages act as an incentive for corrupt military officials to sell weapons to insurgents and locals. The arms trade is also fed from beyond Afghanistan's borders, with weapons being trafficked into the country from elsewhere in Central Asia. The widespread negative influence yielded by the illicit arms trade on nearly all parts of society is evident in the use of trafficked weapons by insurgents in continuous and ongoing attacks on domestic targets, including civilians, government, and international organizations.

ENVIRONMENT

Illicit logging and mining are large contributors to Afghanistan's illicit economy. As key sources of profit for insurgent and terrorist groups such as the Taliban and ISIL-Khorasan, these commodities also fuel the country's war economy. The lack of effective mining regulation in Afghanistan renders most mining operations artisanal, and enables the smuggling of minerals to neighbouring countries. Mineral exports are significantly under-reported in official government export data, which fuels significant corruption within the Afghan government while also enriching insurgents (e.g. Taliban), crime groups and other illicit actors and extremists. Simultaneously, proceeds of illicit mining are distributed along patronage networks and are a lifeline for many rural communities.

Afghanistan's illicit logging market is similarly pervasive, as many locals rely on it to generate income. Due to lack of electricity in parts of Afghanistan, the market is driven in considerable part by demand for firewood as a heating source. High-value illicit timber, such as Afghan cedar, is smuggled into neighbouring Pakistan for rebranding and international export. This also occurs with Afghan talc, the trade of which is largely controlled by the Taliban and ISIL-Khorasan. Although not on a widespread scale, market-related violence surrounding high-value timber species occurs. The illicit logging market has accelerated deforestation, with an estimated half of Afghanistan's forest cover having been destroyed in recent years. Corrupt

Afghan officials facilitate both the illicit logging and illicit mining markets.

While Afghanistan's fauna crimes market is far less pervasive than the logging or mining markets, poaching remains an important feature of Afghanistan's illicit economy. The Asiatic cheetah and the snow leopard are among the country's most endangered species. Rare birds, including various falcon species, are also smuggled out of Afghanistan to Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Locals and organized criminal groups engage in the market, and corrupt government officials facilitate hunting trips for foreign visitors targeting rare and endangered species.

DRUGS

The heroin and synthetic drug trades are by far the most pervasive drug markets in Afghanistan, and both are to a large extent facilitated by corrupt government officials. Afghanistan's heroin market is the largest worldwide: almost all global production of opium occurs in the country. Afghan heroin is exported to every region in the world except Latin America. New transport routes have also opened in recent years to better serve various Asian, Middle Eastern and African, and to a lesser extent Nordic, markets. Opium production expanded dramatically after NATO's 2001 invasion, making the heroin trade a key source of income for many Afghans; poppy cultivation is particularly prominent in southern Afghanistan in regions such as Helmand. Various criminal and insurgent groups, and warlords engage in and profit from the heroin trade, making the opiate economy a significant driver of conflict across the country, and a potential threat to peace negotiations.

As with the heroin trade, Afghanistan's synthetic drug trade generates revenue for various organized-criminal groups. However, insurgent and terrorist groups, such as the Taliban and ISIL-Khorasan, are not significantly involved. New synthetic street drugs have emerged in recent years and have become popular among the Afghan middle and upper classes – in particular the widely available 'tablet K', favoured by younger generations, which enters Afghanistan from abroad, primarily from neighbouring countries and elsewhere in Central Asia. Afghanistan is also becoming a major methamphetamine production hub, largely due to the discovery that wild ephedra plants, widespread across the country, provide the key ingredient for the drug ephedrine. Afghan methamphetamine is produced mainly in the western province of Herat and trafficked out of Afghanistan to neighbouring countries and elsewhere in Central Asia. As with heroin, many poor Afghans rely on methamphetamine production to generate income, especially in Ghourian, where nearly all households are involved in the trade. Emerging evidence indicates that Afghan methamphetamine is also supplied around the world, suggesting that, with continued growth, the market has the potential to rival the country's heroin trade.

The cocaine market in Afghanistan is almost non-existent, but the illicit cannabis trade, an important source of income for Afghan farmers, remains highly pervasive. A significant proportion of the cannabis produced in Afghanistan is consumed domestically, sold most in the form of gorda powder. However, considerable volumes reach other external markets, including European markets. Huge volumes of hashish are also trafficked into Pakistan and Iran, often shipped alongside opium or, occasionally, heroin.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

Loose and decentralized criminal networks operate in all Afghanistan's criminal markets. Many of these networks have links to corrupt state-embedded actors and other high-level political figures, as well as to warlords, insurgent groups, terrorist groups and foreign criminals. Corrupt state-embedded actors thus facilitate elite involvement in organized crime, also wielding much influence over Afghanistan's democratic process. Almost half of all parliamentarians are thought to have connections to the illicit drug trade and other smuggling industries. Criminal networks are the main (non-state) drivers of organized crime in Afghanistan, controlling markets for arms and human trafficking. Although they also operate across the country, due to links with counterparts in neighbouring countries these networks are most active along the Afghan borderlands.

Many politically motivated actors in Afghanistan, including various warlords, the Taliban and ISIL-Khorasan, exhibit characteristics of mafia-style groups. While mafia-style players such as the Taliban dominate Afghanistan's heroin and illicit mining markets, the extent of their involvement in other criminal markets remains unknown. Mafia-style groups tend to be self-financed through taxation, have access to sophisticated weaponry, wield substantial control over territory, and cause high levels of violence. Many state-embedded actors also exhibit mafia-style tendencies. With the exception of Iranian participants in the methamphetamine market in Herat province, foreign actors do not control any of Afghanistan's criminal markets. However, foreign criminal influence in some regions and markets is, nonetheless, substantial.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Afghanistan has an adequate legal framework covering a number of forms of organized crime, including human trafficking, drug trafficking and environmental crimes. Furthermore, the country has ratified all relevant treaties and conventions related to organized crime, with the exception of the Arms Trade Treaty. However, lack of political will means that enforcement is a significant challenge. Rampant corruption severely restricts the rule of law, making Afghanistan one of the world's most fragile states. Despite expressed intentions to combat organized crime and terrorism, the efficacy of the Afghan government's response has been limited, not least because certain warlords involved in organized crime and human-rights abuses have been appointed to key government positions. As a result, the state is largely captured by organized criminals involved in patronage networks that control and abuse state resources, and many government officials simply lack the political will to crack down on their own criminal enterprises. Anti-corruption institutions are also inefficient, hindered by internal corruption and lack of capacity and political independence, with many anti-corruption officials themselves being involved in Afghanistan's criminal markets. While the legal framework for public access to information is robust, it is not implemented, and most government institutions lack transparency.

Nevertheless, the Afghan government maintains positive diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries and various international partners, participating in international coalitions such as INTERPOL. Afghanistan has also signed extradition treaties with a number of countries and has, in the past, extradited drug traffickers and warlords. The country is a major recipient of technical assistance and intelligence sharing, and is one of the largest recipient states of development assistance worldwide. Most of this aid is directed at enhancing the Afghan security sector and strengthening law-enforcement capacity. However, much of this aid has been diverted from its original purpose, instead benefiting power brokers, non-state militias, organized criminals and even the Taliban.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

Corruption runs rampant in Afghanistan's judicial and law-enforcement systems, and judges are influenced by bribery. Since state-controlled courts are lacking in some regions, many Afghans rely on local dispute-settlement mechanisms such as the shura (consultation). Moreover, a higher level of trust in Taliban-controlled, rather than state-controlled, courts has been reported. Afghan police also lack adequate training and have poor salaries, relying on international donors for funding. Throughout 2020, but in

particular in the final few months of the year, lethal attacks on police officers increased, further damaging the already low morale across the Afghan police force. Although special law-enforcement units focused on combating organized crime exist, corruption and lack of political will hinder their efficacy. In addition, public trust in the police is low, and only an estimated half the population perceives the police as acting according to the law. As a result, local counter-insurgent militias play a key role in international stabilization strategies in Afghanistan. However, even these groups are corrupt, and have been accused of involvement in both illegal taxation and local conflict. Against this backdrop, in recent years the Afghan government has increased its efforts to improve its law enforcement capacity, strengthen ties between Afghan police and locals, and cooperate with community-based justice providers.

Prison conditions in the country are poor, with torture, violence, overcrowding, lack of sanitation, food shortages and power cuts all being significant issues. Corrupt prison officials have even been known to embezzle funds intended for improving prison conditions. The Afghan government controls just over half the country's districts, which leaves the rest either contested or under the control of non-state actors such as the Taliban. In addition, armed opposition and foreign interference from neighbouring countries prevent government efforts at regaining control over all corners of the country. This lack of territorial control is a major impediment to countering organized crime.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Afghanistan's economy significantly expanded after the 2001 NATO invasion, growing nearly five times in size. However, this has done little to improve life for Afghans, with more than half the population living under the national poverty line. The economy's performance is one of the worst worldwide, with foreign development aid being its main driver of growth. This makes Afghanistan one of the most difficult countries globally in which to do business, and most businesses operate informally. Despite recent government efforts to boost the private sector, the implementation of such programmes has done little to improve the economic environment.

Afghanistan also has among the highest risks of money laundering and terrorist financing worldwide. The country's anti-money-laundering framework is inefficient, and the national economy is largely cash-based, reliant on criminal markets and driven by corruption. However, Afghanistan's anti-money-laundering efforts have improved slightly in recent years through the introduction of cash-carrying limits on international flights, as well as more documentation requirements for large bank deposits and wire transfers.

Nevertheless, due to the massive size of Afghanistan's illicit economy, money laundering and reliance on the hawala (money broker) system for regional financial transfers persist.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Afghan government seems to focus on reactive rather than preventative approaches to combating organized crime. Prevention activities in the country concentrate on violent extremism, although this may indirectly extend to various forms of organized crime. Victim-support services are also severely lacking and most existing services are provided by NGOs. State-controlled drug-rehabilitation services are found across the country but most victims treated in these facilities have fallen into relapse. Private rehabilitation centres also treat a limited number of people who use drugs. Afghanistan recently joined the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants initiative, which is expected to result in an increase in support services for human-trafficking victims. However, to date, implementation of the programme remains weak.

Local peace councils established by NGOs have proven successful in reducing local conflict and creating channels for dialogue between local communities, militias and insurgents, alleviating some of the impacts of organized crime. However, formal institutional processes are lacking and the activity of non-state actors in peacebuilding initiatives has been criticized for limiting the government's capacity to intervene. Afghanistan has one of the worst media environments worldwide and media freedom is severely limited. Attacks on, and assassinations of, journalists – especially women journalists – have risen in recent years. Furthermore, human rights defenders are extremely vulnerable to attacks, at least 17 of whom were killed in 2020. Many, if not the majority, of lethal attacks of journalists and human rights defenders are thought to have been carried out by the Taliban.

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