

6.2.2. Conflicts since 2001

COMMON ANALYSIS
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[[Security 2020](#), 1; [Security June 2021](#), 1]

A US-led coalition ousted the Taliban from power in late 2001, but the conflict in Afghanistan continued. After a fallback in the south and east, the Taliban reorganised and began to increase their presence in other provinces by 2006. Other AGEs operating in Afghanistan included Hezb-e Islami/Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (HIG), the Haqqani Network and Al Qaeda affiliates, including Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e Tayyiba (LeT), Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). This insurgency was characterised by mainly asymmetric warfare: AGEs used roadside and suicide bombs and complex attacks, intimidation of civilians and targeted killings to destabilise the country. This was countered by searches, clearance operations and bombings by the ANSF and international military forces. According to the UNAMA, the security situation deteriorated after 2005. The conflict deepened throughout 2007 and 2008, directly affecting around a third of the country.

From 2010 onwards, the Taliban-led insurgency spread into all regions of Afghanistan. Insurgent violence intensified in the run-up to the presidential elections in 2014. Since then, security sharply deteriorated across Afghanistan.

A 2017 report by UN Secretary General noted that the Taliban had been able to control larger parts of the country and the emergence of ISKP added 'a new, dangerous dimension' to the situation. Human Rights Watch noted that although the Taliban claimed to target government and foreign military facilities only, their indiscriminate use of force killed and injured hundreds of civilians.

On 29 February 2020, the US and the Taliban signed an agreement for bringing peace to Afghanistan. After signing the deal, the Taliban almost immediately resumed and intensified attacks against ANSF. In response to these attacks, ANSF

also resumed their operations against the Taliban. Widespread fighting between the ANSF and Taliban took place in various provinces of the country. Fighting between ANSF and other AGEs was also reported [[Security 2020](#), 1.3, [Security June 2021](#), [Security September 2021](#)].

An overview of the most important actors who may have been involved in excludable acts during this period is given below.

The former Afghan government and pro-government forces

Unlawful and arbitrary arrests, intentional killings, and summary executions by ANSF were reported, targeting particularly members or suspected members of AGEs and their families. ANA and NDS were also responsible for indiscriminate airstrikes causing civilian casualties [[State structure](#), 2.1; [Security 2020](#), 1.3.5].

The use of torture and other ill-treatment during detention were reported from all ANSF facilities, particularly in prisons under the command of NDS in which torture was described as common and systematic practice [[State structure](#), 2.1, 3.6].

Cases of sexual abuse and exploitation of boys, including the practice of bacha bazi perpetrated by members of the ANSF and pro-government militias were reported, as well as child recruitment or use of children in combat or in support role, especially within the ANP and the ALP [[State structure](#), 2.1.1-2.1.3].

Despite the efforts of the government to fight against corruption, it remained a widespread phenomenon in Afghanistan, especially within the ANSF (ANP and ALP are perceived as the most corrupt forces), the judicial system, and some ministries, such as the Ministry of Interior. Reported crimes included extortion, bribery and embezzlement [[State structure](#), 1.8, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 3.4].

Taliban

The Taliban have a hierarchical organisation with strong leadership and operated a parallel government structure ('shadow government') across Afghanistan. During the insurgency, they controlled large parts of Afghanistan and have committed excludable acts in every province. They have been involved in abductions, targeted killings, indiscriminate and deliberate attacks against civilians and civilian objects. The Taliban considered foreign troops and those who worked closely with them (some of the ANSF, interpreters, spies, and contractors) to be top priority targets. Other primary targets included government officials or

employees, as well as their families or those perceived as supporting the government. In areas under their control, the Taliban had established a parallel justice system to handle civil and criminal disputes. Punishments enforced by the Taliban parallel justice system included summary execution, mutilation and stoning to death [[Anti-government elements](#), 2.5, 2.6; [Criminal law and customary justice](#), 1.8, 2.3.3]. See section [1.1 Taliban](#).

ISKP

ISKP, a UN-designated terrorist organisation in Afghanistan, appeared in late 2014 or early 2015. They used indiscriminate and deliberate suicide attacks to target Shia Muslims and other religious minorities like Sikhs, but also government officials and other civilians. UNAMA has indicated that ISKP's attacks on Shia minorities during 2019 constituted serious violations of international law, potentially amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. They also practice summary executions, including through beheadings. ISKP are suspected to receive assistance by the Haqqani Network to plan and carry out high profile attacks [[Anti-government elements](#), 3.2, 3.5, 3.6]. See the section [1.4 ISKP](#).

Other non-State armed groups

Other insurgent groups such as the Haqqani Network, Al Qaeda and foreign AGEs are often linked with either the Taliban or ISKP and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish their acts from those of the Taliban or ISKP. [[Anti-government elements](#), 4.1, 4.2, 4.3]. See [1.3 Haqqani network](#), [1.5 Al Qaeda](#), [1.6 Foreign terrorist groups and fighters](#).

All AGEs recruited children to use them in combat or in support roles during the conflict [[Anti-government elements](#), 2.4.1, 3.4, 4].