A Persistently Weak, Below-Subsistence Economy with Large Humanitarian Aid Needs and No Improvement in Sight

By William Byrd

Byrd is a senior expert at the U.S. Institute of Peace (the views expressed are his own). At USIP and earlier at the World Bank, since 2001 he has focused on Afghanistan, after working on China, India, and Pakistan. His Afghanistan publications cover topics such as macroeconomics, public finance, governance, corruption, political economy, mining, and counternarcotics.

Abstract

The chapter examines the economic decline and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan following the Taliban's takeover in August 2021. Utilizing data from the World Bank, United Nations, and other sources, it outlines the initial free-fall of the Afghan economy caused by the abrupt end of foreign aid and the disconnect from international financial institutions. The chapter argues that despite some stabilization through effective macroeconomic management by the Taliban and the inflow of humanitarian aid, the economy remains fragile, with many Afghans living below the subsistence level. New economic shocks, in 2023, including reduced humanitarian aid and the Taliban's opium ban, threaten further decline. The chapter concludes with recommendations for donors to ensure gradual aid reduction, improve aid efficiency, and support economic activities, while urging the Taliban to adjust harmful policies.

To cite this chapter: Byrd, W. A. (2024). "A Persistently Weak, Below-Subsistence Economy with Large Humanitarian Aid Needs and No Improvement in Sight." In Jens Vesterlund Mathiesen and David Vestenskov (Eds.), *Still Here – Understanding and Engaging with Afghanistan after August 2021* (pp. 140–155). SMS Press.

The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 precipitated an economic crisis stemming from the abrupt stoppage of some $8 billion per year of foreign aid (equivalent to around 40% of the country's GDP), plus large international military expenditures in-country. This enormous shock was exacerbated by the interruption of international financial transactions, the incipient collapse of the banking system, existing U.S. and UN sanctions, and the freezing of Afghanistan's approximately $9 billion foreign exchange reserves (more than $7 billion held in the United States; editor's note: in front of this, so it reads. "editor's note: see chapter by Rigsby in this anthology for more on this issue.).

Though macroeconomic data on Afghanistan are limited, especially in the current situation, the World Bank (2023c, p. 18) estimates that Afghanistan's GDP dropped by 21% in 2021 and by a further 6% in 2022. The economic decline was concentrated in the bloated, aid-fueled service sector, and urban areas suffered disproportionately compared to rural areas, many of which benefited at least to some extent from the end of violent armed conflict. Average per-capita income dropped sharply, erasing the gains of the past decade-and-a-half and plunging large numbers of Afghans below the subsistence level. Inflation shot up, peaking for basic household goods at over 40% per annum (World Bank 2022a, p. 11), the Afghani currency continued to weaken (at one point depreciating by as much as 50% against the U.S. dollar), and imports collapsed by 47% in the second half of 2021 due to lack of domestic demand, the aid stoppage, and blockages on international payments.

This chapter argues that the Afghan economy, which reached a precarious low-level equilibrium after months of free-fall in late 2021 and early 2022, is currently suffering from new economic shocks that will exacerbate human suffering and may destabilize the economy once again. Donors and the Taliban regime cannot reverse the economic decline, but can take modest steps to mitigate it. The first section provides background on developments over the past two-and-a-half years and on the current situation, including Taliban management of the economy. The second section looks at humanitarian aid and the need for change, and at other international responses. Then, after listing new and continuing problems that the Afghan economy faces, the chapter puts forward some recommendations for the Taliban regime, international donors, and regional countries.

While economic data on Afghanistan are limited and incomplete, they can be used to assess broad trends and the overall macroeconomic situation. Basic national accounts statistics continue to be compiled by the country's National Statistics and Information Authority and are summarized by the World Bank. This information can be supplemented by surveys conducted by the World Bank and others, as well as other data such as exchange rate information. In analyzing the Afghan economy, this chapter draws on recent papers by the author as well as documents of the World Bank and other organizations, news reports, and some innovative satellite imagery-based analysis of the opium sector.

Background and Current Situation

After a number of months of free-fall as described above, the economy stabilized at a precarious lower-level equilibrium during 2022 and into 2023. This reflected:

- Severe limits on withdrawals to stop runs on banks, and strong restrictions against the capital flight which had been rampant under the previous Islamic Republic government.
- Effective macroeconomic management by the Taliban in other respects as well – notably maintaining a stable exchange rate through regulatory controls and holding foreign currency auctions from time to time to meet market demand for dollars.
- Elimination of numerous checkpoints on transport routes, reductions in associated bribes, and the end of major conflict, which together brought about improvements in the business environment despite more aggressive tax collection by the Taliban.
- Ramping up of humanitarian assistance, which due to international financial restrictions is being transferred through U.S. dollar cash shipments – totaling $1.8 billion during their first year in effect (UNAMA, 2023); the war's end allowed aid to reach previously inaccessible parts of the country, though Taliban restrictions against women working complicated the delivery of aid.
- More generally, the ongoing, painful, still incomplete but essential shift away from the artificial aid-fueled service economy, with agriculture and industry declining but by lesser margins than services.

Despite the modicum of stability achieved, the economy remains weak and unable to generate the jobs and livelihoods needed to accommodate the growing population and labor force – hence unemployment and under-employment are widespread and increasing (Byrd, 2022c). Insufficient demand for their products is the most important constraint cited by Afghan businesses (World Bank, 2022b), ahead of insecurity and corruption which tended to be their most important concerns prior to the Taliban takeover.

Poverty remains very high, and according to the World Bank (2023b, p. 6) household survey, as of April–June 2023, 37% of Afghan households reported not having enough income to pay for food alone, and another 25% insufficient income to cover other basic needs. Hence it is not unreasonable to term the situation a below-subsistence equilibrium or even a "famine equilibrium" (Byrd, 2022a), under which even though the economy is stable, large numbers of households struggle to survive and require humanitarian aid or other outside assistance to make ends meet.

Afghan households have responded to their worsening economic straits by increasing labor participation – from 75% in 2020 to 86% for males and from 16% to 43% for females (World Bank, 2023b, p. 12). Women's increased labor participation has translated into more employment – albeit in rural and home-based activities with marginal earnings, reflecting also the massive loss of women's jobs in the formal sector due to Taliban restrictions. Increased male labor participation has been accompanied by sharply rising unemployment, as job opportunities are hard to come by. In addition to secondary education becoming impossible for girls due to Taliban restrictions, many boys and young men have been dropping out of school and entering the labor market to help meet households' basic needs. Other coping mechanisms that are harmful to households include selling off assets (including livestock), eating less and lower-quality food, and eschewing medical care even when needed (Byrd 2022c). Some send a household member out of the country to find work abroad and send back remittances.

Macroeconomic management since the Taliban took power has been more effective than expected, and far better than when the Taliban were previously in power during 1996–2001. The influx of humanitarian aid and UN cash shipments have been an important factor in stabilizing the economy by supporting the balance of payments and buttressing aggregate demand while also meeting urgent humanitarian needs. But Taliban macroeconomic policies also contributed to exchange rate stability, declining inflation, good revenue performance, control over expenditures, and survival of the banking system. Specifically with regard to revenue collection, the Taliban cracked down on previously pervasive corruption in customs departments, resulting in buoyant revenues from taxes levied on international trade (the largest source of revenue). They enforced strict withdrawal limits from bank accounts; stabilized the exchange rate through regular foreign currency auctions as well as restrictions against capital flight and regulation of informal money transfer (*hawala*) dealers; and – partly reflecting constraints hindering transactions with foreign money-printing companies – they have not resorted to excessive monetary creation, let alone hyperinflation, of the kind that was prevalent in the 1990s.

The Taliban have also made some mistakes in economic management. The bans on girls' secondary education and women working in many fields, in addition to the direct harms they cause to women, are bad for Afghanistan's economic development. No country can achieve sustained long-term economic growth, let alone reach middle-income status, if half of the population is excluded from post-primary education and participation in the formal sector of the economy. These bans, widely criticized internationally, also undermine international willingness to provide aid. The Taliban's opium ban is harming people's livelihoods, taking away more than $1 billion of annual income from poorer rural households (Byrd, 2023c; 2023e), a loss which the economy can ill afford.[1] The current negative inflation and substantial appreciation of the exchange rate (see below) are symptoms of and risk exacerbating the economic recession, which calls for looser monetary and exchange rate policies.

Humanitarian Aid Issues and Other International Responses to the Economic Crisis

The international aid community effectively responded to the worsening economic and humanitarian crisis in late 2021 and early 2022 by sending in large amounts of humanitarian assistance. As noted earlier, by providing much-needed inflows of foreign exchange, this response helped stabilize the economy, but at a considerably lower level than before, leaving much of the Afghan population unable to meet their food and other basic requirements and chronically in need of humanitarian aid.

For 2022 as a whole, humanitarian aid funding reached $3.3 billion

1 The disruption of the ephedra/methamphetamine industry has had similar adverse effects on the rural highland populations, for whom it is a rare income-earning opportunity (Mansfield, 2023a).

under the Humanitarian Response Plan – an impressive 76% response to the $4.4 billion requirement put forward in the UN humanitarian appeal for that year. With more than half a billion dollars of other funding, the total reached $3.9 billion (UNOCHA, 2023). This is similar to annual civilian non-humanitarian aid to Afghanistan in the final years of the previous Islamic Republic regime; for example, $3.8 billion in 2018 according to the World Bank (2021, p. 10).[2] However, nothing replaced the earlier massive security assistance (close to $5 billion in 2018) and the very large in-country international military expenditures.

Food security was by far the largest component of humanitarian assistance in 2022, comprising close to 40% of the total, followed by health and nutrition at nearly 22% (UNOCHA, 2023). Correspondingly, the agency that handled the most aid was the UN's World Food Program (45% of the total), followed by UNICEF (18%). Most aid was delivered to beneficiaries by NGOs.

The UN shipments of cash U.S. dollars – totaling some $2.9 billion since they started around the end of 2021 (SIGAR, 2024) – are costly and carry significant security and other risks. Originally seen as a temporary expedient after the stoppage of normal international financial transactions, these shipments have been continuing for well over two years with no end in sight. Beyond paying for humanitarian activities, these shipments, of a similar order of magnitude as the amount of cash U.S. dollars brought into the country by Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB), Afghanistan's central bank, during the previous Islamic Republic regime (DAB, 2020), have buttressed Afghanistan's balance of payments and helped support macroeconomic stability.[3]

Current humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and the modalities of its delivery are unsustainable, costly, and inefficient (Byrd, 2023a). International humanitarian aid is critical in responding to natural disasters and other short-term emergencies, but such aid is not well positioned to respond to, let alone resolve, a prolonged economic crisis like that faced by Afghanistan (Byrd, 2023b). The wave of humanitarian aid following the Taliban takeover in August 2021 has crested and is now in decline (see following section). While probably accelerated by Taliban restrictions against

2 This was derived by multiplying the GDP share of civilian grants in Table 1 by nominal GDP expressed in U.S. dollars. The same applies for security assistance.

3 Though not strictly comparable, Da Afghanistan Bank sold a total of $2.1 billion at its regular foreign currency auctions during 2020 (DAB, 2021, p. 2).

female education and women working, this trend is only natural. Donors cannot be expected to maintain humanitarian aid indefinitely – instead, it should be viewed as a temporary cushion to dampen the immediate economic shock and its human consequences. However, humanitarian needs will not decline in the near future – on the contrary, the situation may well worsen. And nor, given the Taliban regime's gender restrictions and other violations of international norms, are there prospects for substantial development assistance to replace humanitarian aid.

The United States and the UN have engaged in some initiatives to ease policy-related constraints on economic activity in Afghanistan, including clarification of the limited scope of sanctions, which neither apply to Afghanistan as a country, to the Afghan state, government ministries and agencies, nor to Afghan businesses or private and public banks. They target only the sanctioned individuals and groups. Clarifications culminated with the U.S. Treasury's General License 20 of February 2022 (OFAC, 2022).[4] Aid-related and most commercial transactions (excluding certain luxury goods) are explicitly permitted, as well as payment of normal taxes and fees to government agencies, as long as payments don't go to sanctioned individuals or groups.

However, international financial transactions remain severely impeded, due to (1) foreign banks' concerns about running afoul of anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) laws; (2) the small amounts and limited profits to be reaped; and, perhaps, (3) concerns over reputational risks to foreign banks due to the Taliban's internationally toxic restrictions against women and girls. In all these respects there was a sea-change from the situation before August 2021, when banks could point to AML/CFT monitoring by DAB – even if that was highly imperfect in practice; there were large profits from transactions associated with massive aid and international military expenditures in-country; and the previous government did not impose formal gender restrictions.

The U.S. government also took actions to protect $3.5 billion of the more than $7 billion of Afghan central bank assets in the United States from lawsuits by 9/11 victims' families, and in September 2022 moved these funds into a Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan established as a foundation in Switzerland (Byrd, 2022b). So far, beyond establishing the

4 See also the associated Frequently Asked Questions in OFAC, 2022.

Fund and operationalizing its basic structure (Afghan Fund, 2023), as of the time of writing no actions have been taken to disburse any of the funds to benefit the Afghan people as per the Fund's charter.

New and Continuing Problems

Both new and continuing, intensifying, economic challenges lie ahead for Afghanistan, threatening to precipitate a further downward spiral from the recent precarious equilibrium (Byrd, 2023d):

- Falling humanitarian aid funding, which in 2023 dropped precipitously by 57% to $1.7 billion, representing an anemic 46% response to the (already downwardly revised) UN humanitarian appeal;[5] UN cash shipments to fund this aid, which help prop up the macro-economy, will with a lag fall commensurately.
- The Taliban opium ban – a serious mistake from the economic perspective (Byrd, 2023c) – which is continuing (Mansfield, 2023b) and will reduce incomes of poorer rural households by more than $1 billion for a second year in a row, further aggravating poverty and deprivation. (See also Mansfield's contribution in this anthology.)
- Abnormally low precipitation earlier during the 2023–2024 winter season (FEWS NET, 2024), potentially resulting in continued drought in parts of the country. Even though there was more precipitation later, such suboptimal timing of precipitation also can be harmful for Afghan agriculture in addition to resulting in damaging flooding.
- Forced returns of many Afghans from Pakistan – the Taliban stated that over a million Afghans returned from foreign countries in 2023 (TOLO News, 2024). From Pakistan alone over 500,000 of the estimated 1.7 million undocumented Afghans there reportedly were returned under pressure from the Pakistani authorities (Gul 2023). This is the wrong policy in the current economic situation where returnees will be unable to find jobs and other income-earning opportunities. Instead, more Afghans should be working in other countries and sending back remittances.
- Substantial price deflation – prices were down by 9.7% in 2023 as

5 The 2023 UN humanitarian appeal requirement was originally set at $4.6 billion (Reliefweb 2023), but subsequently this was reduced to $3.2 billion, due *inter alia* to limitations on the funding expected to be available (UNOCHA 2024).

a whole – and exchange rate appreciation, with the afghani up by 27% against the U.S. dollar (World Bank 2024, p. 2). These are both symptoms of the economic recession, reflecting other restrictions and constraints,[6] and represent an inappropriate macroeconomic policy stance. The money supply should, rather, have been expanded by putting more currency in circulation, recognizing that this would have required printing afghani notes outside the country in larger volumes than has been done so far.

- Sharply declining export growth, with exports increasing by only 0.4% in 2023, largely attributable to a 46% drop in coal exports, which had led earlier export growth since the Taliban takeover (World Bank, 2024, p. 2). This compares with the over 120% increase in total exports in 2022 (World Bank, 2023a, p. 2).
- Fairly weak revenue growth, up by 5.7% during the first 10 months of Afghan fiscal year 2023–24, which runs from March 21 to March 20 (World Bank, 2024, p. 2). Revenue collection may have begun to plateau, and future increases will depend on the resumption of robust economic growth which is unlikely in the short run.

What Can be Done?

Overall, the economic outlook for Afghanistan is bleak. As long as the Taliban maintain their bans on female education and women working, prospects for normal international relations, let alone much more aid, will be dim. Humanitarian aid inevitably is on a declining trend, the only questions being how fast it further falls (after the sharp drop in 2023), and whether the efficiency and effectiveness of the remaining aid can be improved. Below are examples of actions that the Taliban, Western donors, and regional countries could take to modestly ameliorate the situation, though they will not fundamentally change the outlook.

Short of making major social policy changes or governance reforms, which are most unlikely in the short run, the Taliban nevertheless can further improve their macroeconomic management and correct some of their economic mistakes.

6 Effective restrictions against capital flight and limited amounts of Afghani currency may well also contribute to deflation and exchange rate appreciation.

First, the Taliban should halt price deflation and reverse recent exchange rate appreciation. This can be accomplished by increasing the amount of Afghani currency in circulation (including by printing more afghani banknotes as needed, which may require international facilitation), temporarily reducing or stopping DAB's foreign currency auctions that have been putting dollars into circulation, and if necessary perhaps even buying some dollars from the market.[7] While neither high inflation nor open-ended currency depreciation are advisable, inflation should return to low positive territory, and the exchange rate to where it was prior to the Taliban takeover, some 20% lower against the U.S. dollar than currently.

Second, avoid overtaxing the private sector. The regime has been successful in mobilizing tax revenue, especially Customs receipts. However, actually collecting all the taxes on the books, which the previous government did not exploit due to lax effort and corruption, would impose too heavy a burden on the private sector and further dampen economic activity. Hence the Taliban should review the existing panoply of taxes, simplify by abolishing duplicate and excessive taxes, and not impose new levies.

Third, the Taliban need to limit the economic damage from their opium ban. Given that an outright reversal may not be politically feasible for the regime, perhaps enforcement of the ban can be relaxed in the poorest, most land-poor areas where farmers have no viable alternatives to cultivating poppy. Durable, sustained elimination of opium poppy cultivation will only be possible with the broad-based rural development and robust economic growth that can provide licit livelihoods for farmers and wage laborers displaced by a poppy ban. There is no prospect for such economic progress in the near future, so a complete opium ban will be very difficult to sustain beyond two to three years; the longer it continues in the current economic environment, the greater the damage to rural livelihoods and the rural economy. And standalone "alternative livelihoods" projects, sometimes advocated by foreign donors, have been shown by experience in Afghanistan during the previous two decades to be ineffective and unsustainable (Byrd, 2023c; 2023e).

Donors also can help mitigate the crisis. They should reduce total aid gradually and on a predictable trend, not abruptly. If humanitarian assis-

7 The recommended reduction in DAB's sales of dollars could result in DAB accumulating cash foreign exchange reserves in-country, which would provide DAB flexibility and a cushion to manage foreign exchange markets.

tance drops sharply, it should be partly replaced by non-humanitarian aid for livelihoods and rural development, etc.

Donors should also arrange for third-party monitoring of compliance with AML/CFT laws, to give foreign banks greater confidence to engage in financial transactions with Afghanistan. DAB itself no longer has the capacity to do this monitoring, and in any case, it could not credibly monitor its own sanctioned leadership or other sanctioned Taliban officials. So a qualitied private sector entity is needed to carry out this important function, commissioned and supervised by an appropriate international institution.

Further, a modest portion of the frozen foreign exchange reserves in the Swiss-based Afghan Fund should be deployed to ease Afghanistan's macroeconomic problems and support the private sector (Byrd, 2022b), while not directly benefiting the Taliban.

Infrastructure projects financed by the Taliban from their own budget resources or other sources make good sense, as long as they are well-designed and don't entail sovereign debt, which Afghanistan can ill-afford to build up.[8] Also, there are a number of nearly completed donor-funded infrastructure projects that should be finished, for small additional cost.

Donor countries can facilitate smooth flows of remittances into Afghanistan from Afghans working in other countries. These have been an important safety net in the past when the country went through wars and droughts but avoided mass starvation, and will continue to be important in the near future as well.

In the humanitarian aid realm, changes are needed (Byrd, 2023b). Donors should gradually reduce reliance on the UN cash shipments by progressively replacing them with normal banking transactions as well as innovative workarounds such as private sector-run swap arrangements, more use of digital currency to deliver aid, etc. Increasingly constrained humanitarian aid funds should be better prioritized by the UN and donors, to maximize (1) the number of lives saved per dollar spent; and (2) aid's positive impact on economic activity through supporting livelihoods and delivering more aid through the Afghan private sector.

Further, some of the multiple overheads that reduce the amount of

8 A positive characteristic of aid to Afghanistan during 2001–2021 was that the bulk was in the form of grants not loans, leaving the country without the large debt burdens that plague many developing countries.

aid actually delivered from each dollar of assistance funding should be eliminated. For example, aid funding by multilateral development banks (the World Bank and Asian Development Bank) and associated trust funds should be directly channeled through implementing entities (NGOs and the private sector), rather than through intermediaries such as UN agencies which levy significant overhead costs.

These actions would be facilitated by a regular portfolio review to assess the cost-effectiveness of different interventions. Better aid coordination to minimize duplication and waste and greater reliance on pooled funding, which is the strongest modality for aid coordination, should be prioritized. The World Bank-administered Afghanistan Reslience Trust Fund would be a good vehicle for effective pooled funding of aid.

Regional countries have important roles to play as well. Pakistan should facilitate Afghan exports (most of which go to or through Pakistan), not create roadblocks hindering them, and should facilitate transit trade, which, as per normal international practice for landlocked countries, should not be taxed or impeded.

Deportations of Afghans back to Afghanistan are harmful from an economic and humanitarian perspective and are not likely to be beneficial for Pakistan's economy, either (Aamir, 2023). It appears the deportations are being used to put political pressure on the Taliban (Mir, 2023). Hence stopping them makes good sense from an economic perspective. And more generally, countries should temper their praise for the Taliban's continuing opium ban, which in addition to the other problems it causes is spurring outmigration from Afghanistan both to regional countries and farther abroad (Byrd, 2023e).

Energy transmission through Afghanistan from Central Asia to South Asia has great potential, since energy can be produced much more cheaply in the former than the latter. The CASA-1000 electricity transmission project from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan was well developed prior to August 2021 (CASA-1000, 2023). This project will benefit Central Asian countries and Pakistan more than Afghanistan, and the transit fees accruing to the latter can be segregated for specific purposes (e.g., infrastructure maintenance or basic livelihoods projects), not turned over to the Taliban.

Finally, water management is an area for much-needed investment by Afghanistan as well as cooperation from regional countries. After decades of being unable to engage in new large-scale water conservancy projects (in part due to regional countries' assertion of their downstream riparian rights), the Taliban regime is going ahead with at least one significant project (the Qush Tepa canal in northern Afghanistan), entirely funded from the Afghan national budget so far (Jalalzai, 2023). Such projects need to be technically sound in order to make effective use of Afghanistan's water – the country's critical and scarce resource. There are also opportunities for win-win projects in Afghanistan that would benefit regional countries. For example, irrigation and hydel projects along the Kunar River in eastern Afghanistan could also benefit Pakistan by enabling better management of water flows in the important Indus River basin and providing electricity (World Bank, 2014, p. 11).

To conclude, this chapter has argued that the fragile, below-subsistence equilibrium into which the Afghan economy descended after several months of free-fall following the Taliban takeover in August 2021 is now threatened by new shocks – most notably a sharp decline in humanitarian aid and the Taliban's opium poppy cultivation ban. There are no "silver bullets" that will revive Afghanistan's economy, let alone stimulate the robust economic growth that is essential for national development over the longer term. But this chapter recommends actions that the Taliban, Western donors, and regional countries could take to modestly ameliorate the situation and to help stabilize the Afghan economy – albeit at a low level.

Aamir, A. (2023, November 29). Pakistan makes Afghan refugees pay the price for the economic crisis. *Nikkei Asia*. https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/The-Big-Story/Pakistan-makes-Afghan-refugees-pay-the-price-for-economic-crisis#:~:text=%22From%20an%20economic%20standpoint%2C%20the,the%20economist%20from%20Bucknell%20University

Afghan Fund. (2023). Fund for the Afghan People. Retrieved December 3, 2023, from https://afghanfund.ch/#:~:text=The%20Fund%20for%20the%20Afghan,benefit%20of%20the%20Afghan%20people.

Byrd, W. (2022a, August 8). One year later, Taliban unable to reverse Afghanistan's economic decline. *United States Institute of Peace*. https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/one-year-later-taliban-unable-reverse-afghanistans-economic-decline

Byrd, W. (2022b, September 28). U.S. to move Afghanistan's frozen central bank reserves to new Swiss fund. *United States Institute of Peace*. https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/09/us-move-afghanistans-frozen-central-bank-reserves-new-swiss-fund

Byrd, W. (2022c, November 30). Afghans adapting to economic decline, social restrictions. *United States Institute of Peace*. https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/11/afghans-adapting-economic-decline-social-restrictions

Byrd, W. (2023a, January 25). Wrestling with a humanitarian dilemma in Afghanistan. *United States Institute of Peace*. https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/01/wrestling-humanitarian-dilemma-afghanistan

Byrd, W. (2023b, March 29). Afghanistan requires a change from humanitarian business as usual. *Lawfare*. https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/afghanistan-requires-change-humanitarian-business-usual

Byrd, W. (2023c, June 8). The Taliban's successful opium ban is bad for Afghans and the world. *United States Institute of Peace*. https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/06/talibans-successful-opium-ban-bad-afghans-and-world

Byrd, W. (2023d, August 10). Two years into Taliban rule, new shocks weaken Afghan economy. *United States Institute of Peace*. https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/08/two-years-taliban-rule-new-shocks-weaken-afghan-economy

Byrd, W. (2023e, December 19). How much opium did Afghans harvest in 2023 after the Taliban ban? The answer, which isn't straightforward, tells us about the Taliban's enforcement capabilities and raises questions about the poppy ban's future. *Lawfare*. https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/how-much-opium-did-afghans-harvest-in-2023-after-the-taliban-ban

CASA-1000. (2023). CASA-1000: Increasing clean energy availability and access in Central and South Asia. https://www.casa-1000.org/

DAB. (2020, December). DAB monetary policy department monthly report December 2020. https://dab.gov.af/sites/default/files/2021-02/MPD-%20Monthly%20report%20-%20English%20-%20December.pdf

FEWS NET. (2024, January). Historic precipitation deficits are likely to dissipate with precipitation in mid-to-late January. https://fews.net/middle-east-and-asia/afghanistan/key-message-update/january-2024

Gul, A. (2023, December 6). Pakistan says 450,000 undocumented Afghans returned home. *Voice of America*. https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-says-450-000-undocumented-afghans-returned-home/7386907.html

Jalalzai, F. (2023, December 1). The Qosh Tepa canal: A source of hope in Afghanistan. *The*

Diplomat. https://thediplomat.com/2023/12/the-qosh-tepa-canal-a-source-of-hope-in-afghanistan/

Mansfield, D. (2023a, September 15). This is not the ephedra you are looking for. https://www.alcis.org/post/unodc-report

Mansfield, D. (2023b, November 2). Uncharted territory: Does the Taliban's new edict signal a crackdown on the drugs trade is looming? https://www.alcis.org/post/taliban-drug-crackdown

Mir, A. (2023, November 16). In a major rift, Pakistan ramps up pressure on the Taliban. *United States Institute of Peace*. https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/11/major-rift-pakistan-ramps-pressure-taliban

OFAC. (2022, February 25). General license no. 20: Authorizing transactions involving Afghanistan or governing institutions in Afghanistan. https://ofac.treasury.gov/media/918776/download?inline

Reliefweb. (2023, March 9). Afghanistan humanitarian response plan 2023 (March 2023). https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-humanitarian-response-plan-2023-march-2023

SIGAR. (2024, January 26). Cash shipments to Afghanistan: The UN has purchased and transported more than $2.9 billion to Afghanistan to implement humanitarian assistance. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-24-12-IP.pdf

TOLO News. (2024, January 23). Over a million refugees deported in 2023: MoRR. https://tolonews.com/afghanistan-187091

UNAMA. (2023, January 9). Cash shipments to the UN in Afghanistan–Info Sheet. https://unama.unmissions.org/cash-shipments-un-afghanistan-%E2%80%93-info-sheet

UNOCHA. (2023, November 27). Afghanistan 2022 / Financial Tracking Service. https://fts.unocha.org/countries/1/summary/2022

UNOCHA. (2024, February 7). Afghanistan 2023 / Financial Tracking Service. https://fts.unocha.org/countries/1/summary/2023

World Bank. (2014). South Asia Water Initiative: Annual report from the World Bank to trust fund donors–July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/465161468187476067/pdf/103875-AR-SAWI-Progress-Report-FY14-PUBLIC.pdf

World Bank. (2021, May 27). A proposed Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund grant in the amount of US$300 million to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for a 2021 incentive program development policy grant. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/529621624845739555/pdf/Afghanistan-2021-Incentive-Program-Development-Policy-Grant.pdf

World Bank. (2022a, April). Afghanistan Development Update April 2022. https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/5f01165822f3639224e0d483ba1861fc-0310062022/original/ADU-2022-FINAL-CLEARED.pdf

World Bank. (2022b, September). Afghanistan Private Sector Rapid Survey—Round 2. https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/25bc69f199bac8b41cc393c9d964e40f-0310012022/original/AFG-PSRS-R2-Report-Final.pdf

World Bank. (2023a, February 24). Afghanistan Economic Monitor. https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/0d0d44b773d41184dfb9d7064016dea5-0310012023/original/Afghanistan-Economic-Monitor-24-February-2023.pdf

World Bank. (2023b, October 1). Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey, Round 3. https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/975d25c52634db31c504a2c6bee44d22-0310012023/original/Afghanistan-Welfare-Monitoring-Survey-3.pdf

World Bank. (2023c, October 3). Afghanistan Development Update: Uncertainty after fleeting stability. https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/210d5f24dc33a3460beff3447fcead-cf-0310012023/original/Afghanistan-Development-Update-20231003-final.pdf

World Bank. (2024, January 31). Afghanistan Economic Monitor. https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/804528b1d98fc6a3012fb1754ba4bd45-0090012024/original/Afghanistan-Economic-Monitor-January-2024-002.pdf