



Program for Culture and Conflict Studies

BAGHLAN PROVINCE

The Program for Culture & Conflict Studies

Naval Postgraduate School

Monterey, CA

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GOVERNOR: SULTAN MOHAMMAD EBADI

POPULATION ESTIMATE: 863,700

AREA IN SQUARE KILOMETERS: 21,112

CAPITAL: PULI KHUMRI

DISTRICTS: Baghlan-e-Jadid, Burka, Puli Khumri, Nahrain, Khwaja Hijran, Guzra-a-Noor, Dana-e-Ghoari, Deh Salah, Khost-Farang, Pul-e-Hisar, Andarab, Khinjan, Dushi, Tala-Barfak.

ETHNIC GROUPS: 52% Tajik, 20% Pashtun, 15% Hazara, 12% Uzbek, 1% Tatar.

TRIBAL GROUPS: 20% Ghilzai Pashtun

RELIGIOUS GROUPS: 85% Sunni, 15% Shi'a¹

OCCUPATION OF POPULATION: Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, some Factory Work, some Private Business, and some Manual Labor (in the Pul-i-Khumri District).

CROPS/LIVESTOCK: Wheat, Rice, Cotton, Potato, Fodder, Consumer Vegetables, Farm Forestry, Fruits; Dairy and Beef Cows, Sheep (for wool production), Poultry (in the high elevation areas).

LITERACY RATE: 20%²

TOTAL # OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: 330³

PRIMARY SCHOOLS: 70

LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS: 161

HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS: 77

ISLAMIC: 19

TECH/VOCATIONAL: 2

COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES: 2; Baghlan University (Department of Physics, Social Science, and Literature in Pul-e-Khumri), Departments of Agriculture and Industry in Baghlan, Teacher Training Center (in Pul-e-Khumri).

ACTIVE NGOS IN THE PROVINCE: UNHCR, FAO, WHO, IOM, UNOPS, UNICEF, ANBP, ACTED, AKF/AFDN, CONCERN, HALO TRUST, ICARDA, SCA, BRAC, ABC, KRBP, CFA, SWCRA, AACRP.

¹ Afghan Information Management Services, Baghlan District Profiles.

² Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007, United Nations Development Program, 2007, 164.

³ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Education: School Survey Summary Report, 2007.

TRANSPORTATION: Primary- Route 2 Kabul-Pol-e-Khumri-Sher Khan Highway, Route A76 Pol-e-Khumri-Kholm-Mazar-e-Sharif Highway, Secondary- Route 104 Dushi-Khamard Highway, Track- Khenjan-Andarab Road, Pul-e-Khumri-Nahrin Road, Baghlani Jadid-Burka-Khost-wa-Firing Road.

ESTIMATED POPULATION WITH ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY: 17%⁴; The province has one power generation station. The majority of residents rely on public electricity. Access to electricity is much greater in the urban area where 65% of households have access to electricity.⁵

HOSPITALS: 1 in Pul-i-Khumri⁶

CLINICS: 46

SOURCES/AVAILABILITY OF DRINKING WATER: Rivers, Streas, Canals and Springs provide non-potable water for the majority of the population. Most residents must walk a considerable distance to access safe drinking water. The availability of potable water is 7%, defines as Piped Water, Public Tap, Public Well, Protected Spring, Well, or Rain Water.⁷

RIVERS: The Kunduz/Khanabad River passes through Kunduz, Baghlan and Takhar provinces and is the most important and vital source of water for the North East region of Afghanistan. It is fed primarily by snow-melt and is heavily utilized for agricultural irrigation. The river and its tributaries also serve as the primary source of drinking water for many communities and their livestock.

TOPOGRAPHICAL FEATURES: 60% of the province is considered mountainous or semi-mountainous, while 40% is classified as flat or semi-flat.

PRIMARY POLITICAL PARTIES

JAMIAT-E ISLAMI (ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF AFGHANISTAN)

Led by Burhanuddin Rabbani. It is predominately a Tajik political party which was active in the anti-Soviet jihad and a major political player in the Northern Alliance. Today Rabbani supports Karzai. Yunus Qanuni's Hezb-e Afghanistan Naween broke away from Jamiat-e Islami. The vast majority of Baghlan's District Chiefs are affiliated with Jamiat.

SHURIA-E NAZAR

The party was founded by Ahmed Shah Masood in an effort to offset the power of Pashtun ethnic majority in Afghanistan. The Shuria-e-Nezar group was a key player in the Afghan Civil war that followed the Anti-Soviet Jihad. After the Taliban were removed from power in 2001, this same group re-emerged in Afghan

⁴ MRRD, NRVA Survey Results: Access to Electricity Report, 2005.

⁵ MRRD Provincial Development Plan, Baghlan: Provincial Profile, 2005.

⁶ USAID, AFghanistan: Baghlan Health Facilities Map, June 2005.

⁷ Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007, United Nations Development Program, 2007, 166.

politics and has continued to seek power for their former Northern Alliance patrons. Many Afghan observers believe that groups like Shuria-e Nazar serve to alienate the Pashtun majority and inadvertently undermine U.S. anti-terror and counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan.⁸

HEZB-E WAHDAT (ISLAMIC UNITY PARTY OF AFGHANISTAN)

Hazara umbrella organization led by Mohammad Karim Khalili. Hezb-e Wahdat is an offshoot and successor to a party of the same name that was established in 1990 when several Iran-based, Shi'a jihadi parties merged. Khalili was chosen to lead the party after the Taliban killed Abdul Ali Mazari, the head of original Wahdat party, in 1995. Khalili's drift toward an alliance with the Taliban is generally blamed for his party's factional disintegration. Khalili has served as second vice president in President Karzai's government and wields particular influence among Hazaras in central Afghanistan. His party's success or failure might be viewed as an indicator of the degree to which Hazaras believe the current government reflects their aspirations.⁹

ISLAMIC UNITY PARTY OF THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN (HIZB-E WAHDAT-E ISLAMI-YE MARDUM-E AFGHANISTAN)

Led by Mohammad Mohaqeq, The Islamic Unity Party of the People of Afghanistan, like Khalili's party, is an offshoot of the original Wahdat entity formed with the merger of Iran-based, Shi'a Jihadi groups. Mohaqeq was Wahdat's main representative in northern Afghanistan once the Taliban gained control of Kabul in 1996, becoming an ally of the United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (aka the Northern Alliance). In the post-Bonn Interim Administration, Mohaqeq served as a Karzai deputy and minister of planning. Mohaqeq placed third in the presidential ballot with 11.7 percent of the vote. Mohaqeq's party is expected to participate in a powerful opposition bloc in the National Assembly.¹⁰

HEZB-E ISLAMI GULBUDDIN (HIG)

Mujahideen party active since the Soviet invasion; led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. HiG was famous for its shifting loyalties, and was the favorite party of Pakistan's ISI until the rise of the Taliban. Former members continue to wield considerable influence. Thus far, HiG has been actively opposed to US-led and Afghan national forces. Hekmatyar is a Kharoti Ghilzai and, therefore, less influential than the much more respected and powerful Khugianis, such as Haji Din Mohammad and Anwarul Haq Mohammad.¹¹ The HIG has been frequently accused of fomenting instability and lawlessness in Baghlan by its political and military rivals.

⁸ Afghan Meli Tolena: US and the Warlords in Afghanistan. Available at: <http://afghanmelitolena.com/html/warlords.html> (accessed July 28, 2008)

⁹ Afghanistan Votes: Political Parties, Major Parties. Available at: <http://www.azadiradio.org/en/specials/elections/parties.asp> (accessed July 24, 2008)

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Chris Mason, *Tora Bora Nizami Mahaz*.

HUMAN TERRAIN

TAJIKS

Tajiks are the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan after the Pashtuns and comprise between 25-30% of the population. In Baghlan, Tajiks are the majority ethnic group and represent over 50% of the population. The Tajiks in Afghanistan tend to live in settled communities as opposed to a nomadic lifestyle. Pashtuns refer to them as *Farsiwan*, or speakers of Farsi, the lingua franca of Afghanistan (50% of Afghanistan speaks Farsi, as opposed to only 35% for Pashtu). Between the Tajiks and Pashtuns there has been significant animosity in recent years. Forming the backbone of the Northern Alliance, they also have a base in the nation of Tajikistan. They held out fiercely against the Taliban. Most Tajik are Sunni Muslims, but a few are Shi'a. Tajiks made up the majority of the Northern Alliance, both in terms of membership and leadership. Tribal ties have largely broken down among the Tajiks; therefore, social organization is defined primarily by geography. Despite their lack of cohesiveness the Tajiks are often brought together due to the perceived common threat posed by the Pashtuns.¹² Currently, Tajik warlords vie for control of illicit opium and arms transport with competing Uzbek, and Ismaili militias throughout Baghlan Province.

PASTHUN

Pashtuns are located in a small pocket extending from north of Doshi through Pul-e Khumri and north through the City of Baghlan in Baghlan province. They are the majority group in Baghlan Jadid district in the northwestern corner of the province and comprise roughly 20% of the population of Baghlan as a whole. The largest single ethnicity of Afghanistan, the Pashtun, and in particular the largest tribe of Said, the Ghilzai, formed the backbone of the Taliban movement. Traditionally beholden to the moral code of *Pashtunwali* ("the way of the Pashtun"), they can easily be deeply offended by breaches of the code and carry the grudge for generations. Several Pashtun communities were grafted into Tajik-dominated Baghlan in the Nineteenth Century as part of the king's 'pashtunization' policy. In general, Pashtuns have been slow to adapt to post-Taliban Afghanistan. Jadid district, north of Pul-i-Khumri, is dominated by Pashtuns and was a Taliban stronghold as late as 2001. At the outset of OEF, the U.S. backed Northern Alliance advance towards Kabul resulted in reported atrocities against Pashtun communities in Jadid district. Additionally, Jadid District is still dominated by former Prime Minister Hekmatyar's fundamentalist Hizb-i-Islami party, which has resisted the Karzai government. Over the course of American involvement in Afghanistan, Pashtun enclaves in Baghlan have been more susceptible to infiltration by anti-government elements than Tajik and Uzbek dominated areas. Tajiks and Uzbeks in Baghlan blame Pashtun elements or members of the HIG for

¹² 2007 CIA World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (accessed June 28, 2007).

most of the security incidents which have taken place in the province since 2001. Finally, the continuous state of armed conflict which has characterized Afghanistan for the past three decades has resulted in frequent displacements and subsequent land disputes between the Tajik majority and Pashtun minority in Baghlan province. These disputes have yet to be successfully resolved and serve to fuel longstanding animosity between the Pashtun and their neighbors within Baghlan.¹³

Gilzhai Pashtun

The largest single tribe of the Pashtun ethnicity, the Ghalji or Ghilzai, and in particular the Hotaki clan, formed the backbone of the early Taliban movement. Long resentful of the power the Duranni tribe (of which Karzai and Zahir Shah are members), the Ghilzai are fiercely independent and often view themselves, as the largest grouping of Pashtuns in the country and the rightful leaders of Afghanistan. [Ghilzai Tree \(PDF\)](#) Baghlan's Pashtun minority is primarily Gilzhai.

HAZARA

In Baghlan, the Hazara comprise approximately 15% of the population. As a distinct minority ethnic and religious group within the population of Afghanistan; they have often been the target of discriminatory and violent repression. Most likely descended from the Mongols of Genghis Khan, (there is also a strong argument that they are of Eastern Turkic origin), the Hazara are noticeably different in physical appearance when compared to the Pashtun majority. In terms of religion, the vast majority of the Hazara are of the Shia Muslim faith, again in contrast to the Pashtuns who are Sunni Muslim. Due to these differences, “the Hazara have experienced discrimination at the hands of the Pashtun-dominated government throughout the history of modern Afghanistan.”¹⁴ As the traditional underclass of Afghan society, Hazara were exploited and made to work as servants and laborers. As a result, there tends to be an anti-government and anti-Pashtun bias among the Hazara. In present day Afghanistan, the Hazara are divided geographically into two main groups: the Hazarajat Hazara and those who live outside the Hazarajat. The Hazarajat is located in the Hindu Kush Mountains in central Afghanistan and is “centered on Bamiyan province and include[s] areas of Ghor, Uruzgan, Wardak, and Ghazni province.”¹⁵ The Hazara living outside of the Hazarajat live in and around Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif and Samangan province. Due to atrocities committed against them by the Taliban, the Hazara by and large are opposed to the Taliban. In August 1998, the Taliban massacred approximately 4,000 Hazara in Mazara-e Sharif; this massacre was followed by another the next month when the Taliban killed another 500 Hazara in Bamiyan.

¹³ Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies: Baghlan Commentary, November 2007. Available at <http://www.rusi.org/research/militarysciences/defence/commentary/rss/ref:C47334FB2B6F7F/> (accessed August 7, 2008)

¹⁴ US State Department Afghanistan Culture and Ethnic Studies, 2004.

¹⁵ US State Department Afghanistan Culture and Ethnic Studies, 2004.

The Hezb-e Wahdat (Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan) is an umbrella political organization which commands the support of large numbers of Hazara. The Hazara are also often at odds with the Kuchi population within the Hazarajat.

UZBEK

The Uzbek people of Afghanistan are found north of the Hindu Kush in Afghan Turkistan. In Afghanistan, they number approximately 1.6 million and comprise around 12% of the population of Baghlan Province. The presence of the Uzbek people in this region was facilitated by the frequent invasion of Central Asian Turks throughout history. Uzbeks are the most populous Turkish group in Afghanistan and are recognizable by their broad, flat faces and lighter skin when compared to the Pashtuns. They are historically farmers and stockmen, breeding the karakul sheep and an excellent type of Turkman horse. Their kinsmen reside in the central Asian republic of Uzbekistan. Many Uzbeks fled into northern Afghanistan in the 1920s to escape the suppression when the Soviet government was trying to stamp out their customs and Moslem religion.¹⁶ Uzbek militias represent one piece of a perennially complicated security puzzle within the province.

TATAR

The Tatar people comprise roughly 1% of the population of Baghlan. They are classified as Turkic in origin and exist in significant concentrations in many former Soviet Republics. Their native tongue is Kazan Tatar (meaning archer). The physical appearance of the Tatar varies from blue-eyed blondes to that of typical Central Asian peoples. Generally, they have oval faces with little facial hair. Historically, the Tatar people have existed as an identifiable group since the tenth century. They have weathered the Mongol conquest of the thirteenth century and domination by the Russian empire and subsequent Soviet Union beginning in the sixteenth century. Today, the Tatar people are settled (as opposed to nomadic) and are generally peasants and merchants with no traditional tribal structure. The father is the legal head of the household in Tatar families and holds sole decision making authority within the family, which frequently includes up to three generations in one household. Most Tatar people are Sunni Hanafite Muslim. However, many pre-Islamic practices persist such as; Celebration of the "Rites of Spring", honoring of saints and holy places, belief in the power of "the evil eye", eating of pork, and not observing Islamic fasts.¹⁷

SECURITY LANDSCAPE

WARLORDS

The Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) process is operated on a

¹⁶ The Afghan Network: Ethnic Group Profiles, The Turkish Groups of Afghanistan. Available at <http://www.afghan-network.net/Ethnic-Groups/uzbeks-turkmen.html> (accessed July 24, 2008)

¹⁷ The Joshua Project, People-in-Country Profile: Afghanistan, Tatar. Available at <http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rog3=AF&rop3=109874> (accessed August 7, 2008)

voluntary basis. Therefore, only a few commanders in the province have submitted small quantities of functional weapons. This reality amounts to a token gesture on the part of various warlords and should not be misinterpreted as evidence of anything other than business as usual in the Afghan hinterland. Efforts to target independent militias under the control of provincial commanders are ongoing but are likely to meet with limited success. Warlords continue to dominate public life and are involved in various criminal enterprises. Evidence exist that Baghlan and its associated highways serves as an area of safe transit for opium is from Badakhshan, destined for Central Asia weapons caches bound for insurgent held areas in southern Afghanistan. Uzbek, Tajik and Ismaili militias are locked in conflict for control of the strategic routes from Baghlan Province to Kabul, Herat and beyond. This ongoing competition has led to widespread lawlessness in the province. In 2007, Baghlan's provincial governor was replaced three times as a result of their inability or unwillingness to reign in warring factions within the province. Baghlan's local administration suffers from division, corruption, and factional infiltration, further complicating efforts to promote stability and security.¹⁸ The customary alliances between the U.S. backed Karzai government and various northern warlords is a fundamental element which now serves to de-legitimize the Afghan government in provinces like Baghlan.

Currently, fighters allied with the Taliban, Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami and Baghlan based criminal organizations pose the most serious threat to Baghlan's security. A rash of suicide bombings against foreign forces have been concentrated on the Kundiz-Baghlan highway and government centers since 2008.

CHRONOLOGY OF RECENT SUICIDE BOMBINGS

- **January 29, 2009-** A suicide bomber wounded seven people including a senior police official after he detonated his explosive-vest at the home of Baghlan district police chief, Afzal Khan.
- **November 26, 2008-** A suicide car bomber detonated near a German ISAF vehicle in Pul-i-Khumri, killing one Afghan civilian and wounding 12 others, including one German soldier. Taliban spokesmen later took responsibility for the attack.
- **October 27-** A man dressed in Afghan Army fatigues penetrated the Provincial police headquarters and detonated near a group of US soldiers tasked with advising the provincial police personnel, killing two US soldiers and a child. Three other soldiers were reportedly injured in the blast. Taliban spokesmen later claimed responsibility for the attack.

¹⁸ Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies: Baghlan Commentary, November 2007. Available at <http://www.rusi.org/research/militarysciences/defence/commentary/rss/ref:C47334FB2B6F7F/> (accessed August 7, 2008)

- **August 6-** Four German ISAF soldiers were wounded after a suicide bomber riding a motorbike detonated near their vehicle while traveling the Baghlan-Kunduz Highway.

DRUGS

Poppy eradication efforts have met with few problems in many districts. Opium crops in Burka, Nahrein and Khonjan districts have been successfully eradicated. There are ongoing campaigns in Tale Va Barfak district. Andarab district remains un-engaged by the eradication program. Unfortunately, the geographical location of the Baghlan Province and the existence of a major north-south highway (Route 2) make it a major drug route from southern Afghanistan to Central Asia and Europe.¹⁹ Sources have indicated that Bibi Aysha (aka The Kaftar) was allied with a recently escaped local Taliban commander, Mullah Dad-e Khuda, and another local warlord, Imam-e Sabz (the Green Imam) in the control of the drug trafficking routes within Baghlan Province as late as July 2008.

TALIBAN/INSURGENT/WARLORD COMMANDERS IN BAGHLAN

MULLAH DAD-E KHUDA

Local Taliban commander noted for his escape from a prison in Bagram in the summer of 2008. He is linked with the control of drug trafficking routes within Baghlan and elsewhere.

IMAM-E SABZ (THE GREEN IMAM)

Reputed to be heavily involved in control of drug and arms trafficking routes in Baghlan.

MULLAH DAUD

Local insurgent commander believed to have been responsible for the November 2007 “Baghlan Massacre” in which a suicide bombing and subsequent machine gun fire from security officials killed approximately 68 people (mostly civilians) at a Baghlan sugar factory. Additionally, Daud and his men allegedly facilitated the deadly suicide bombing attack against Baghlans’ Provincial police headquarters in October 2008. Two US soldiers were killed and three others were wounded in that attack. ANA commandos and Coalition forces raided Mullah Daud’s residence on December 24, 2008 and apprehended Daud while he slept.

MULLAH HAFIZULLAH

A reputed Taliban commander from the De Salah district, Hafizullah turned

¹⁹ MRRD Provincial Development Plan, Baghlan: Provincial Profile, 2005. Available at <http://www.mrrd.gov.af/nabdp/Provincial%20Profiles/Baghlan%20PDP%20Provincial%20profile.pdf> (accessed August 4, 2008)

himself in along with ten fighters to police on May 4, 2008 in response to the government's national reconciliation program. Hafizullah and his men were outsourced by Taliban commander Mullah Dad-e-Khuda and paid \$20 a month to launch attacks against Afghan police from a mountainous hideout in the De Salah district.²⁰

BIBI AYSHA (KAFTAR, IE THE PIGEON)

A female warlord who fought against the Soviets, the Taliban and the current government until she surrendered to Baghlan authorities in July 2008. Shortly before her surrender, Kaftar led a band of some 150 men in the Nahrin district; four of Kaftar's surviving sons served as her key lieutenants.



Source: BBC, Bibi Aysha soon after her surrender.

ABDUL "AWAL"

A notorious bandit in Baghlan who preys upon travelers using the Kunduz-Baghlan highway.

GUL ZAMAN

He is suspected in a string of robberies, home invasions and highway robberies in the vicinity of the Baghlan-Nahrin Highway area. Zaman was reportedly killed during an Afghan police operation on June 1, 2008.²¹

MULLAH SALAM

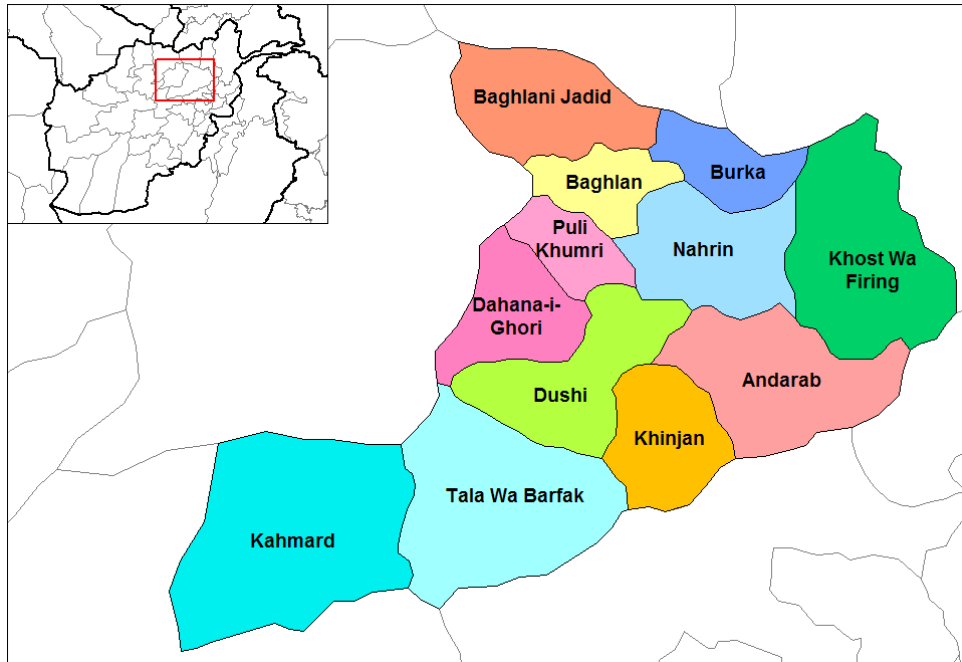
Former Taliban era governor of Baghlan Province and leader of the Taliban's Herat Corp. He surrendered to Afghan authorities in Herat on May 6, 2008 under the national reconciliation program and denounced violence.

²⁰ Sher Muhammad Jahish, "Taliban Group Surrenders in Baghlan," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, May 4, 2008. Available at

<http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=54433> (accessed February 9, 2009)

²¹ Akram Noorzai, Sher Muhammad Jahish, "Two policemen perish in Helmand attacks," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, June 2, 2008. Available at <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=56011> (accessed February 10, 2009)

BAGHLAN DISTRICT MAP



REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE MAP

