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Presence, methods and tactics of actors

COMMON ANALYSIS
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After the end of the conflict with the former government and the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate, the Taliban are reported to be in control of all Afghan districts and provinces [Country Focus 2023, 1.1.1., pp. 17-18; Security 2022, 1.2.1., p. 23; 2.1, p. 36].

Soon after their takeover of power, the Taliban started to establish a military structure [Security 2022, 2.1.1.(a), p. 37; 2.1.1.(b), pp. 38-39].

Some internal divisions among the Taliban were reported, e.g. in Faryab in January 2022 and in Sar-e Pul in June 2022 [Country Focus 2023, 2.2.4., pp. 35-36; Security 2022, 2.1.3., pp. 41-43].

Although the Taliban control all of Afghan territory, two main conflicts related to other actors remain active in the country:

Other armed groups opposing the Taliban

ISKP

Other armed groups opposing the Taliban

[Main COI references: COI Update 2024, 4., pp. 4-7; Country Focus 2023, 2.2., pp. 31-32; COI Update 2022, 3., p. 6; Security 2022, 2.2., pp. 44-49]

A number of different groups are opposing the Taliban, of which the NRF is the most prominent. The NRF and affiliated groups have been operating mainly in Panjshir and adjacent areas in the northeast of the country, with most events taking place in Badakhshan, Baghlan, Kapisa, Panjshir, Parwan and Takhar. It is reported that the size and capabilities of the various resistance groups, as well as coordination and cooperation between them, are limited. After an

intensification of armed opposition activities against the Taliban in 2022, a drop in activities by armed groups opposing the Taliban has been reported in 2023.

NRF resorts mainly to tactics of guerrilla warfare and to hit-and-run attacks targeting Taliban checkpoints and outposts. NRF has been described as weak after Taliban operations against the group.

In the last months of 2023, an increasing number of attacks by the AFF against Taliban targets was reported. Most attacks were claimed to have been carried out in Kabul, and the northeastern provinces of Laghman, Kapisa, Parwan and Takhar.

ISKP

[Main COI references: COI Update 2024, 4., pp. 4-7; Country Focus 2023, 1.1.1., p. 17; 2.2., pp. 32-34; 4.3.2., pp. 67-68; 4.5.3., pp. 85-88; Security 2022, 2.3., pp. 49-54; 3.1., pp. 59-62; COI Update 2022, 3., pp. 7-9]

After the takeover of power by the Taliban, ISKP fighters have been involved in attacks against Taliban members as well as against civilians, such as Shia Hazara.

As of September 2023, it is reported that ISKP has not been able to hold significant territory in Afghanistan. Its activities are concentrated in Kabul, in areas in its former stronghold in Kunar and Nangarhar and in some northern areas. Attacks claimed by ISKP were also reported beyond the above-mentioned areas. ISKP's activities have decreased significantly after Taliban operations against the group, and the latter is reported to operate through fewer and smaller cells in 2022 and 2023.

ISKP has been targeting Taliban fighters, Taliban officials and religious leaders in its strive to undermine Taliban rule. In its activities against the Taliban, ISKP resorts to attacks on security convoys, checkpoints and personnel, often making use of IEDs.

Taliban's crackdown on suspected ISKP affiliates, mainly in October and November 2021, included setting up checkpoints, conducting house-to-house searches as well as killings and forced disappearances of suspected ISKP members, including members of Salafist communities. Actions against suspected ISKP members decreased during the reference period between July 2022 and January 2024. Killings, forced disappearances and arbitrary arrests have however been reported.

ISKP's deadliest attacks have been directed to members of the Hazara minority in urban areas, using IED and suicide attacks. In 2023, the number of attacks against the Shia Hazara community decreased, and no major attacks were reported between January and September 2023. However, ISKP claimed responsibility for a suicide attack against a Shia Mosque in Pul-e Kumri in Baghlan province in October 2023. UNAMA reported 21 deaths and 30 injured. Between October 2023 and mid-January 2024, ISKP also claimed responsibility for a string of IED attacks in Dasht-e Barchi, a Hazara dominated area in Kabul city. Estimates vary, however around 100

casualties, killing at least 19 people, were reported by UNAMA, and examples of incidents' locations included a sport club, two minibuses and a commercial centre.

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