

Afghanistan Under the Taliban: The Global Jihadist Threat to Europe and the Middle East



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Acting Afghan Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani (centre) and Deputy Prime Minister of the Taliban Abdul Salam Hanafi (left) attend a graduation ceremony for new Afghan police recruits at the police academy in Kabul. Picture from AFP, recovered from: 'Key Taliban Leader Sirajuddin Haqqani Makes First Public Appearance', [Dawn](#), 5 March 2022.

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Introduction

More than eighteen months after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan on 15 August 2021, it is time to assess the level of threat deriving from the jihadist groups based in the country.

One should always bear in mind that all of these groups were present in Afghanistan before the Taliban takeover and they have not expanded significantly since. All that changed is the regime in Kabul.

Even in terms of counter-terrorism, there are not many obvious changes, given that after the US withdrew the bulk of its forces in 2014, operations against jihadist groups have been limited to drone and air strikes and that the Afghan security forces were contributing little, absorbed as they were in a fight for survival against the Taliban.

After an apparent lull of a few months after the total withdrawal in the summer of 2021, US drones have reappeared on Afghanistan's skies, in all likelihood following a basing agreement with Pakistan, even if the Pakistani authorities deny it. Indeed, it was at the end of July 2022 that finally, the [US managed to nab Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) with a drone strike in Kabul.

This report, therefore, is not merely about the threat represented by Afghanistan-based jihadist groups to European and Middle Eastern countries, but also about the level of that threat, compared to what it was before 15 August 2021.

The Jihadist Landscape of Afghanistan

There are several jihadist groups present in Afghanistan that potentially represent threats toward European and/or Middle Eastern countries. The two most important ones are, by a large margin, the Islamic State in Khorasan or the Islamic State's Khorasan Province (ISKP) and Al-Qa'ida, but there are several others, such as the Chechen Kavkaz Emarat (Caucasus Emirate), the Tajikistani Jamaat Ansarullah (now renamed Tehrik Taliban Tajikistan), various Uzbekistani factions, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), its splinter the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), and the Imaam Bukhari Jamaat, and several Pakistani jihadist groups, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad. Since they all are closely connected to the global jihadist groups, they will be discussed below as two blocs. As Lashkar-e Taiba and Jaish-e Mohammad have their headquarters in Pakistan and have no need to use Afghanistan as a base for operations elsewhere, they will not be discussed below.

Al-Qa'ida (AQ)

AQ is present in Afghanistan with its central headquarters, usually referred to as Al-Qa'ida Central (AQC), and with its South Asian branch, known as Al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). Together, the two count on several hundreds of members in Afghanistan, in the past mostly busy advising or training the Taliban and protecting or assisting AQ leaders (in the case of AQC). The United Nations reports, based on member state sources, have been assessing the strength of AQ in Afghanistan at about 400 to 600 members.¹ The UN monitoring team also estimated AQIS specifically at 180 to 400 members in 2022.² AQ sources put the number of cadres inside Afghanistan at 300 as of the end of 2021.³ The UN monitoring team also noted that very few of the core members of AQC/AQIS are Afghans, but there is a significant number of Pakistanis in AQIS. Most members of AQC are Arabs.⁴

AQIS can also count on several hundreds of fighters in groups affiliated to AQ, which it coordinates and perhaps even leads. The main concentration is in Badakhshan, in the far north-east of Afghanistan near the border with Tajikistan, where according to local Taliban sources it has a mix of about 900 Central Asians (from IMU, Imaam Bukhari, IJU, and Jamaat Ansarullah). It is also worth mentioning here Kavkaz Emarat, which has

¹ United Nations Security Council, '[Letter ... from the Chair of the Security Council Committee](#) Established pursuant to Resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals, Groups, Undertakings and Entities', January 2020.

² UN Security Council, '[Thirtieth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team](#) submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities', July 2022, p. 16.

³ Interview with AQ cadre, Afghanistan, January 2022.

⁴ United Nations Security Council, '[Letter dated 31 December 2020 from the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team](#) in accordance with paragraph (a) of annex I to resolution 2368 (2017) addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee ...', 3 February 2021, p. 13.

some tens of members in Afghanistan. AQ has been acting as a fund-raising hub and administrator, assigning funds based on each organisation's contribution to global jihad, as evaluated by the AQ leadership. AQ hands over a budget to AQIS, which then distributes it to local jihadist groups.⁵

Although UN reports assess that AQC/AQIS maintain close relations with the Taliban, this should be qualified: AQC/AQIS's relationship is with specific sections or factions of the Taliban.⁶ The relationship is also far from being unchallenged, and friction between AQ and the Taliban has occurred repeatedly; it is well documented at least until 2011.⁷ ISKP and Taliban sources indicate that significant numbers of AQC/AQIS members defected to ISKP in late 2022 or early 2023, apparently due at least in part to fears of growing AQ alignment with Iran, as [the Iran-based Sayf al-Adel](#) was emerging as the de facto leader of the organisation.⁸

Islamic State

ISKP is by far the largest of the global jihadist groups based in Afghanistan. The latest UN estimate of ISKP strength dates to June 2021 and was of 1,500 to 2,200 "fighters" in the eastern provinces of Kunar and Nangarhar, along the border with Pakistan. The UN report did mention the presence of ISKP in "smaller groups" in Badakhshan, Kunduz (north), and Sar-e-Pol (north-west), but without providing numbers. It also reported claims by the Afghan security agencies that ISKP had an additional, strong presence in Balkh, where Afghanistan borders Turkmenistan in the north.⁹

Oddly, the report did not mention ISKP activities in Kabul, even though these were making the headlines. In September 2021, Taliban intelligence sources in Kabul put the strength of ISKP in the capital at 200 to 300 fighters, plus support elements. An ISKP source offered similar numbers in March 2022. In February 2022, another UN report mentioned an overall ISKP strength of 4,000.¹⁰ It is not clear whether these should be understood as fighters only, or as a total figure, but it is likely to be the former.

ISKP claimed almost 8,000 members in September 2022, of which about one third are non-combatants. A substantial portion of the claimed 5,000-plus fighters are villagers,

⁵ Various sources in the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, interviewed in north-western, north-eastern and eastern Afghanistan in January-April 2022.

⁶ United Nations Security Council, ['Letter dated 31 December 2020 from the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team](#) in accordance with paragraph (a) of annex I to resolution 2368 (2017) addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee ...', 3 February 2021.

⁷ Antonio Giustozzi, 'Al-Qa'ida and the Taliban: Are They on Diverging Paths?', *RUSI Journal*, 6 December 2022.

⁸ Mentions of this episode surfaced on IS social media, but were confirmed by Taliban sources in Badakhshan in January 2023.

⁹ UN Security Council, ['Letter dated 20 May 2021 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee](#) established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council', June 2021 (S/2021/486).

¹⁰ UN Security Council, ['Twenty-ninth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team](#) submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities', New York, February 2022, p. 16.

organised in local militias around the main bases of ISKP, and are as such very difficult to detect and even more so to count for intelligence agencies, on whose data the UN reports are based. Taking this into account, the figures provided by ISKP sources are therefore not far from external estimates and appear plausible. An internal source says that more than half of ISKP's members are Afghans and over a quarter are Pakistanis, with a few hundred Arabs, around one thousand Central Asians, and small number of others. The Europeans are just thirty, according to these sources, of whom ten are from France, four from Belgium, and sixteen from Germany. There are also a handful of Chechens.¹¹ ISKP appears to have been losing members recently, as in January 2023 an internal source put the number of members in Afghanistan at 7,000, although this is in part likely to be due to hundreds of Pakistani members moving into Pakistan.¹²

ISKP does not at present have significant allies in Afghanistan, despite having approached repeatedly various Central Asian and Pakistani jihadist groups. It is very busy trying to survive against the Taliban and has adopted a strategy of “the best defence is a good offence”, trying to catch the Taliban off-balance. Its main bases in eastern Afghanistan are under threat and the group does not have any spare capability for supporting major operations abroad.¹³



¹¹ Interview with ISKP cadre, Afghanistan, September 2022.

¹² Interview with ISKP cadre, Afghanistan, January 2023.

¹³ Antonio Giustozzi, 'Wilayat Khorasan's Wave of Terror', *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor* [forthcoming].

Direct Current Threats from Afghanistan

Do any of the jihadist groups discussed above have the intent and capability of supporting or planning attacks in Europe or the Middle East from Afghanistan?

Al-Qa'ida's propaganda now seems to accept that the organisation will not be able to use Afghanistan as a launchpad for attacks abroad, contrary to what it had been hoping in the past.¹⁴ For about a year after the Taliban's takeover, AQ appears to have been manoeuvring to engineer the takeover of the Emirate by a coalition more favourable to its interests, centred around the Haqqani Network. It struggled from the start due to tribal, ethnic, and personal rivalries among AQ's allies. AQ and the Haqqanis might well have moved tens if not hundreds of Arabs and Central Asians to Kabul in the spring of 2022 to provoke intra-Taliban tensions, with the assumption that the mass of the Taliban would side with the foreign jihadists. The killing of Al-Zawahiri and the subsequent reactions by Taliban groups showed that AQ's plan had completely failed, if indeed that was the intent. Although the Haqqanis organised demonstrations after the strike that killed Al-Zawahiri, other Taliban factions did not follow. Most of the Arabs had to quit Kabul in a hurry, marking the end of their attempts to push for the Emirate to agree to AQ resuming long-range operations out of Afghanistan.¹⁵

Rather than exporting fighters, AQ was at least until recently busier bringing in more, to boost its position vis-à-vis other groups.¹⁶ Overall, the inflow appears so far to have been limited to tens of new members, being therefore essentially negligible. The UN monitoring reporting suggests that members of the AQ branch in Syria, Tanzim Hurras al-Din, were asked to move to Afghanistan, but were unable or unwilling to do so.¹⁷

AQ could have some planning capabilities in Afghanistan, considering that its leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was based there before being killed in a US drone strike on 31 July 2022. Although the rest of the AQ leadership is believed to be dispersed across countries and continents, Al-Zawahiri would in all likelihood have had at his disposal some support staff, as well as a protection unit. However, there is little evidence that AQC has played much of a role in planning any attacks after the 9/11 ones, as it appears to have decentralised operations. Compared to 2001, AQ has now an established presence in multiple countries and it is certainly in a stronger position in Mali and Somalia than in Afghanistan. Elements of its leadership are also believed to enjoy a safe haven in Iran.¹⁸

¹⁴ Kyle Orton, 'Is Al-Qaeda Capable of Global Terrorism Any More?', [European Eye on Radicalization Report](#), 23 February 2023.

¹⁵ Antonio Giustozzi, 'Al-Qa'ida and the Taliban: Are They on Diverging Paths?', [RUSI Journal](#), 6 December 2022.

¹⁶ Interview with AQ cadre, Afghanistan, January 2021.

¹⁷ UN Security Council, '[Thirtieth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team](#) submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities', July 2022, p. 12.

¹⁸ Jassim Mohamad, 'Iran-Al-Qaeda Relation: A Marriage of Convenience', [Majalla](#), 5 March 2022.

There is no particular need for AQ in Afghanistan to plan attacks in Europe or the Middle East, even if it wanted to go against the will of the leadership of the Emirate.

ISKP is, of course, not bound by AQ's commitment not to use Afghanistan for launching attacks abroad and it did use Afghan territory for launching three rocket attacks into Central Asian countries during 2022.¹⁹ As in the case of AQ, however, the flow of members appears to be largely towards Afghanistan, not out of it. It is mostly Central Asians who travel to Afghanistan from Syria, Iraq, and Turkey, with small numbers of Arabs and Europeans joining them as well. ISKP is still dependent on flows of cash from its mother organisation in Iraq and Syria, which relies on a financial hub in Turkey to support ISKP financially.²⁰

The only Middle Eastern country within the purview of ISKP is Iran and indeed it claimed the attack on a shrine in Shiraz on 27 October 2022.²¹ In reality, it is unlikely that IS forces in Afghanistan had anything to do with that attack. ISKP-Iran is a de facto separate branch and is more connected logistically and operationally with IS-Central, through Iraq (one of the two main routes of infiltration into Iran is via Kurdistan) and with IS-Pakistan, via Baluchistan. ISKP has repeatedly tried, even in 2022, to establish a presence on Afghanistan's western border. Sources in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) say that the Taliban cooperate with its in chasing ISKP along the border between the two countries, rather effectively, and ISKP sources confirm that even their latest expansion westwards was a failure, like previous such efforts during the 2015 to 2020 period.²²

In the past, infiltration by IS into Iran has taken place via Pakistan and Iraq and consisted of Iranian citizens (Kurds, Baluchis, and Farsi-speaking Sunnis). Both borders are now well-guarded by the Iranian border guards and by the IRGC, so from the point of view of IS it would make sense to open a new infiltration route via Afghanistan. In practice, it would be hard to manage logistically, as the heartlands of ISKP are very remote from the Iranian border (in fact, at the other end of Afghanistan). The best IS could manage would be to stage a few symbolic attacks across the border, which is perhaps what it intended to do when it deployed cells in the provinces of Herat and Farah in the past. According to an ISKP source, there are only a handful of Iranians with it in Afghanistan.²³ Infiltrating foreign fighters (non-Iranian) would not be feasible, given the strict controls exercised by the Iranian authorities.

¹⁹ Sudha Ramachandran, 'ISKP Attacks in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan', [The Central Asia and Caucasus Analyst](#), 31 August 2022.

²⁰ Interviews with three ISKP cadres, Afghanistan, September 2022.

²¹ 'Iran: Daesh claims responsibility for 'terrorist attack' on Shiraz shrine that killed 15', [Gulf News](#), 26 October 2022.

²² Interview with Sepah-e Pasdaran officer in Kermanshah, June 2022.

²³ Central Asian commander of ISKP, from Uzbekistan, operating in northern Afghanistan, September 2022.

As mentioned above already, AQ currently has good relations with Iran and has no reason to threaten it. Even leaving aside its limited manpower, clearly from Afghanistan AQ cannot threaten Saudi Arabia or other Gulf monarchies directly.

The Taliban's Emirate has good relations with the Turkish government, although a slight decline occurred after the United Arab Emirates won the contract for the security of Afghanistan's international airports and Turkey relaxed the ban on political activities for émigré politicians from Afghanistan. In March, however, Turkey sent a completely different signal, handing over control of the Afghan Embassy in Ankara to the Emirate. Despite a crackdown on ISKP hubs in Turkey in 2022, culminating in the dismantling of its money transfer hub in November, and threats issued against the Turkish authorities, ISKP does not seem to have much interest in attacking Turkey at present, if only because it and IS-Central retain an underground presence there and would not want to attract attention towards them.²⁴

ISKP is not even expected by anybody within the mother organisation to support the mother organisation in Iraq, Syria, and other Middle Eastern locations, nor Europe, in any way. Not even in the wildest dreams of the leaders of ISKP will their organisation ever be able to have a financial surplus, enabling it to support operations beyond its immediate neighbourhood.²⁵

In terms of logistical support, IS has rather successful branches in West Africa and as already discussed an underground presence in Turkey, from where operations in Europe could be supported more easily and effectively than Afghanistan. Both AQ and IS could in principle be well positioned to exploit the migrant routes that start from Afghanistan and reach Europe via Iran and Turkey in order to move their members and might well have done so in the past already, having them pose as migrants. The European passport holders with ISKP are reportedly in the low tens, as discussed above already, and moreover they have likely been transferred to Afghanistan because it was deemed too risky to move them to Europe, or to keep them in Syria or Turkey. Since IS seems to be able to move members into Turkey in a manner that is relatively easily, although not *totally* risk-free, it would have made much better sense for IS to “park” any cell aimed at striking Europe there, rather than send them to Afghanistan, from which travelling to Europe would be much more complicated.

Both AQ and especially IS are still likely to have members in Syria and Turkey who would be better positioned to try entering Europe: Syrians, Turks, and probably even some volunteers with European passports.²⁶ The same could also be true of the African route,

²⁴ Interviews with three ISKP cadres, Afghanistan, September 2022; Abdullah Bozkurt, ‘Turkey’s Counterespionage Chief Linked to Al-Qaeda Group, Harbors Antisemitic Views’, [Nordic Monitor](#), 22 September 2022; ‘The Jihadi Threat: ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Beyond’, [United States Institute of Peace](#) (USIP), December 2016, p. 17 ; and, Thomas Joscelyn, ‘U.S. Treasury Sanctions Al-Qaeda Facilitators in Turkey’, [The Long War Journal](#), 16 September 2021.

²⁵ Communication with IS cadre, Kunar, September 2018.

²⁶ Merve Tahiroglu and Jonathan Schanzer, ‘Islamic State Networks in Turkey’, [Foundation for the Defence of Democracies](#) (FDD), 2017.

with branches in West Africa being well positioned to send members to Europe via Libya, if either organisation felt the need to boost its presence in Europe. In other words, neither organisation particularly needs Afghanistan to move members to Europe.

The small numbers of Chechens with ISKP and with AQ, as well as the Central Asians within the two organisations, could represent a threat to Russia, although ISKP sources never mention any current plan to send trained members to Russia to boost operations there. Smuggling people into Russia would be complicated, though not impossible.



Indirect Current Threats from Afghanistan

The victory of the Taliban represents a rare victory of jihadist and Islamic fundamentalist groups and as such it seems to have encouraged ultra-conservative Muslim groups and individuals in Europe. There are not many European Muslims who completely subscribe to the Taliban's brand of political Islam – the main exception being small Deobandi communities, mostly of Pakistani origins. However, some other brands of political Islam have viewed the Taliban takeover positively, for lack of other success stories that could support their narratives. This is primarily the case with the Muslim Brotherhood and similar groups.²⁷ They have serious reservations, mainly when it comes to the Taliban's attitude to women's education and other strictures that the Taliban have imposed, and on the clerical character of the new regime, but they like the assertion of independence made by the Taliban and their imposition of shari'a.

The Salafis, who have been growing in importance in Europe over the years, have by contrast shown little appreciation of the Emirate and are likely to be mostly hostile to the Emirate, because of the troubled relationship between the Taliban and the Afghan Salafis. The Taliban, claiming with some good reason that many Salafis support the Islamic State, have repeatedly engaged in repressive measures against the entire Salafi community in Afghanistan. Since the Salafis are among the most conservative Muslims, and quite numerous too, this friction limits considerably the impact of the Taliban takeover among European Muslims. Of course, followers of other Islamic tendencies, generally classified as moderate, as well as more liberal or secular Muslims, who are also numerous across the European continent, have seen the Taliban takeover in largely negative terms. The main exception here are the Pakistani communities, many members of which have been driven by a sense of national pride for the role of Pakistan in fostering the Taliban's victory into rejoicing for the fall of Kabul. This is unlikely to translate into a large-scale security threat in any European country, but it is worth noting that the Pakistani man who carried out an attack against the old office of Charlie Hebdo in September 2020 did not have a global jihadist background, but was linked to radical Barelvi group Tehrik-e Labbaik Pakistan. Several other individuals linked to this cell were later detained in Spain and Italy.²⁸

In the Middle East, the Taliban seem to be quite popular with the Al-Qa'ida-derived Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group in Syria, as it has been praising their takeover as a model to follow. The Taliban have not reciprocated, probably in order not to upset AQ. However, HTS is probably right that its position was strengthened by the Taliban

²⁷ Zara Riffler, 'Islamverbände Schweigen Über Die Taliban-Herrschaft in Afghanistan,' [Tichys Einblick](#), 7 September 2021; 'Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021', [Verfassungsschutz Baden-Württemberg](#), 14 July 2022; Luis F. Quintero, 'La asociación de Musulmanes contra la Islamofobia celebra la victoria talibán: "Aman a su país",' [Libertad Digital](#), 23 August 2021.

²⁸ Giovanni Giacalone, 'The Barelvi Transnational Terrorist Network Behind the September 2020 Charlie Hebdo Attack: A New and Dynamic Threat Reaches Europe', [European Eye on Radicalization](#), 27 September 2022.

takeover. This is not appreciated by the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad, even if HTS no longer represents more of a threat to Assad.²⁹

In a wider perspective, the Taliban takeover is also likely to reinforce groups advocating the enforcement of Islamic Law and opposing Western influence. Some clerical groups have been vocal in this regard.³⁰



²⁹ Antonio Giustozzi, 'Al-Qa'ida and the Taliban: Are They on Diverging Paths?', [RUSI Journal](#), 6 December 2022.

³⁰ See, for example: Ana Sayfa, 'Afghanistan's Zabiullah Mujahid attends Islamic scholars meeting in Turkey', [Ilkha](#), 15 October 2022.

Conclusion

The level of threat to Europe and the Middle East by the jihadist groups based in Afghanistan has not changed significantly, compared to the situation pre-August 2021. AQ is still abiding by its agreement with the Taliban not to export jihad out of Afghanistan, and ISKP is as focused on its struggle against the Taliban as ever. That could change in the future.

The relocation of a growing number of members of IS to Afghanistan appears to be a pragmatic decision, due to the little use that foreign fighters have now in Syria and Iraq, with IS having to fight a guerrilla war there. The availability of the option of relocating to Afghanistan does not strengthen the threat represented by IS in either country. That could change if ISKP was ever able to consolidate its position in Afghanistan, to the extent of being able to re-export trained personnel to Europe and the Middle East. It should be considered, in any case, that according to sources in ISKP, the organisation would primarily export jihad to neighbouring countries, if it had the capability. It is not the task of ISKP to get involved with organising or planning attacks as far as Europe or most of the Middle East.

ISKP could of course have an impact on IS in Europe and the Middle East, even without providing any kind of direct support. If ISKP turned into some kind of success story, it would boost the morale of other branches and also fund-raising. At the moment, the organisation is rather busy trying to survive, but the collapse of the Emirate in Afghanistan, possibly on economic grounds or due to infighting, is not unfathomable. For the foreseeable future, however, ISKP will be supported from the Middle East and even Europe, so, arguably, it will be the Middle East and Europe that will represent a threat to Afghanistan, rather than vice versa!

As for AQ, a pro-AQ regime in Afghanistan would be seen as an implicit threat and as a geopolitical defeat for Saudi Arabia in particular within the Middle East, as well as of course for European countries. Such an outcome seems unlikely at present, but the intra-Taliban power struggles are still ongoing and the final outcome is hard to predict. As argued above, any direct threat arising from Afghanistan in the future will be of modest if not negligible entity, compared to threats arising from Middle Eastern countries (including Turkey) and African ones.

It is indeed important to understand that the global jihadist environment of 2022 differs very substantially from that of 2001, when AQ reached celebrity status with its Twin Tower attack in New York. At that time, AQ was a very small organisation, limited almost entirely to Afghanistan and with very limited capabilities. Today, both AQ and IS have much wider footprints, with a strong presence in several countries in the Middle East and Africa, as well as Pakistan. The question has therefore to be asked, why would either of them need Afghanistan for whatever plans they might have for Europe and the Middle

East. Even if either of them decided at one point to deploy somebody trained in Afghanistan westwards, the role of Afghanistan as an operational base would be marginal and dispensable. If both organisations were somehow wiped out of Afghanistan, the ability of AQ and IS to strike in Europe and the Middle East would hardly be affected.

The US government and to a lesser extent those European ones, which contributed significantly to the NATO mission in Afghanistan, are likely worried about the internal political consequences of any jihadist attack in their homelands, which could be credibly claimed to have something to do with Afghanistan. This is an image issue and an internal politics matter and has little to do with counter-terrorism *per se*. From the considerations above, it derives that any counter-terrorism approach to Afghanistan should take into account the wider picture.

