Conflict analysis: Kunduz city, Kunduz province
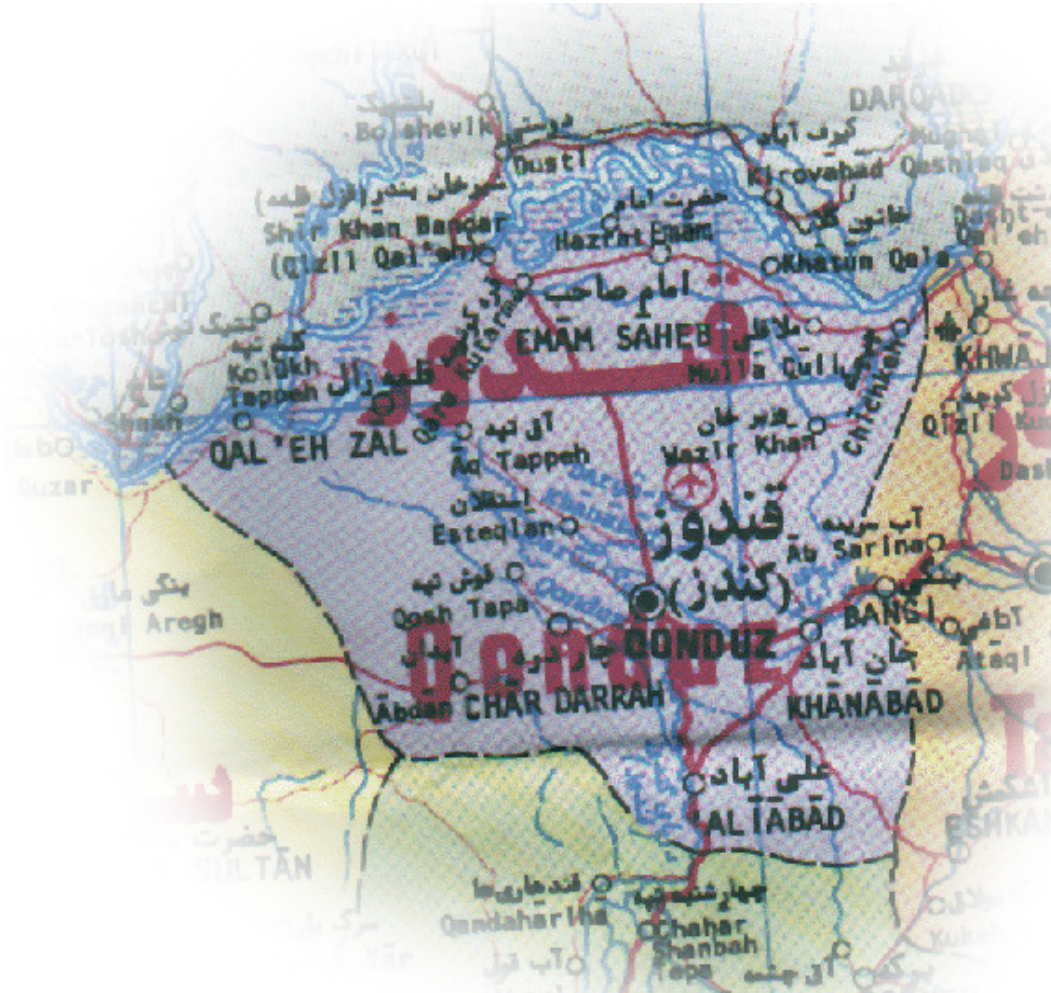
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Cooperation for Peace and Unity

CPAU

Acknowledgment

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Glossary

AGE	Anti Government Element
AMF	Afghan Military Force
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANBP	Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
BBC	British Broadcast Cooperation
CCR	Crude Conflict Rate
CDC	Community Development Councils
CPAU	Cooperation for Peace and Unity
DDR	Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development
DIAG	Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IMF	International Military Forces
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
NSP	National Solidarity Program
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom

PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PTS	Programme Tahkim-i Sulh
SCN	Security Council of the North
UN	United Nation
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

Dari and Pashto terms

Ailoqs	Summer pastureland
Arbab	Community leader or power broker
Boi / Bai	Uzbek
Hizb	Party
Pashtunwali	Code of conduct amongst Pashtuns
Rawaj	Tradition
Shabnamah	Night letters
Shura	Council
Toyana	Bride price

List of Parties

Harakat-i Islami

Hizb-i Islami (Hekmetyar)

Hizb-i Islami (Khalis)

Hizb-i-Tanzim Dawat-i Islami-i Afghanistan (Sayaf)

Hizb-i Wahdat

Ittihad-i Islami (Sayaf)

Jamiat Islami Afghanistan

Junbesh-i-Melli

Shura-i Nazar

1. Introduction

This report is a conflict analysis for Kunduz Province and Kunduz City and suggests that promoting solutions to land conflicts should be central to attempts to reduce violent conflict in the region. The historical background of conflict in the province, the fragmentation of authority through small local commanders, a proliferation of parties, ethnic diversity and a thriving licit (and illicit) economy poses a series of challenges to ensuring stability and security for the majority of the population. Resolving land conflict must therefore be central to promoting stability.

Conflict data from Peace Councils and security incidents point to a city and province which is struggling to resolve key issues allowing a range of actors to promote instability and conflict for their own ends. At the heart of this are land conflicts involving inheritance and returning refugees. Historical land conflicts between Pashtuns on the one hand and Uzbeks and Tajiks on the other, combined with the current alienation of Pashtuns from secure land tenure by commanders could potentially lead to a further reinforcement of ethnic polarization and new waves of conflict. This creates conditions in which networks of commanders linked to regional warlords, and the Taleban, could draw on ethnicised conflicts to rally local support.

Local conflict in Kunduz city continues to follow the agricultural seasons and is dominated by land conflict. There is also a significant amount of financial related conflict, indicating that the mixed economy in Kunduz city continues to provide potential for conflict. The economic activity in the city seems to attract a higher level of criminality in comparison with the wider province which presents challenges to state authority, particularly the police.
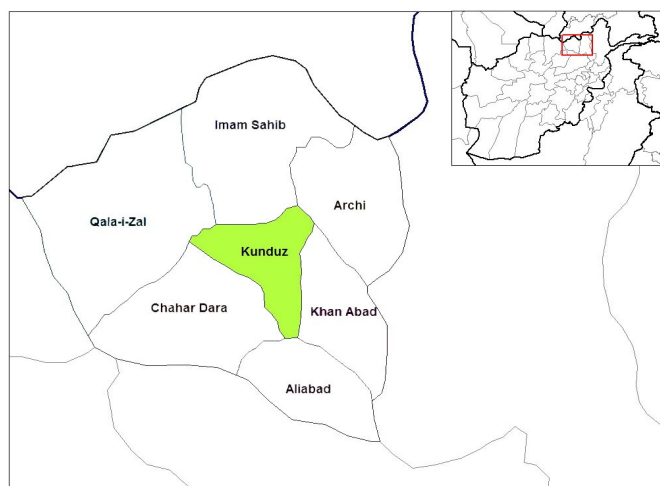
Figure 1 Map of Kunduz Province

Current trends have not been positive and in the context of increasing local conflict, criminality and higher order conflict there is a need to undermine the drivers of conflict. Ethnicity is only part of the story but it represents a significant potential way of escalating underlying conflicts. In order to stop conflicts from being ethnicised a policy to stabilise Kunduz, therefore, first of all needs to address the issue of landownership. But it also needs to ensure that corruption is addressed, provide alternative livelihoods and a higher level of security for the general population.

2. Definitions and Methodology

Definitions

The definitions applied in this project reflect the perception of conflict as defined by the Peace Councils. This has been adopted in place of an externally applied definition so as to reflect an Afghan interpretation of their experiences of conflict. This led to several categorical and definitional challenges and therefore coding of conflicts, who was involved and what was the cause of the conflict have been driven by what the councils reported rather than a pre-defined list set by CPAU. This step is crucial to the process of understanding what conflict is in Afghanistan.

Conflict

'Conflict' in the context of this study is an incident that has been brought to a Peace Council run by CPAU in the districts under investigation. The range of conflicts is diverse, including everything from fights over parking; access to pasture land; control of water resources; domestic violence; kidnapping; murder; debt amongst others. Further conflicts are not recorded in terms of the number of times they are brought to a council for resolution, nor the length of the conflict (though some records note that conflicts have been present for a number of years). In addition the councils do not record whether this is a conflict that had been addressed by another body, or been considered dormant by the parties.

These limitations mean that we cannot make any judgements on how many times the Peace Council must meet to address a conflict, how long conflicts last or what is the rate at which they are dormant but then re-emerge at a later date. These are issues that could be looked at in future studies but are beyond the ability of the current data-set.

Parties

'Parties' to the conflict recorded are individuals or groups that are directly engaged in the conflict. The councils recorded not only the individuals involved but also their affiliation and relation to other parties in the conflicts, including both individual and communal groups. The team created a separation between conflicts within families (intra-family), between 2 families (inter-family), between families in the same community (intra-community) and finally between different communities (inter-community).

Cause

Conflict is often caused by more than one factor, and conflicts can continue over many episodes (see definition above). When the data was collected the councils were asked to identify the *primary* reason or cause for the conflict that they recorded. The team then formed categories based on the themes that came out from the data. They include conflicts caused by water, land, weddings/marriages, debt/financial, murder/blood feud and domestic violence. These 6 categories captured 82% of the conflicts recorded. Another category of 28 'other' conflicts was created as well as one for the 18 'interpersonal' conflicts (11% and 7% respectively of the total included in the data set). The 'interpersonal' conflicts were all recorded in one district and 'other/interpersonal' is considered one category in the analysis – though the reason why one district would have a large number of different interpersonal conflicts should be investigated further.

Conflict rate

The 'conflict rate' that is applied in some of the quantitative data analysis and graphs is based on the calculation of crude mortality rates used in humanitarian situations such as refugee camps to identify the severity of the health issues facing a community. The rationale behind the use of the 'crude conflict rate' is to address some of the perennial data issues in Afghanistan. Firstly, there is an extreme variation in population sizes between districts – within this sample alone the range is from 15,000 – 249,000. Secondly, simple counting of conflicts provides no indication about how severe a situation could be. As an example we could imagine the report 'a car accident on a road killed 3 people and injured 7'. The accident itself doesn't tell us

anything about how dangerous the area where the accident happened actually is. Is it a one off accident, or the latest in a series of accidents?

Similarly, in an example using conflict, if there are 15 cases of conflict in a district with 250,000 people how do we know whether or not this is as severe as 15 conflict cases in a district with 15,000 people? This indicates how simple reporting of conflicts tells us very little which is why, for the purposes of the project, we devised a Crude Conflict Rate to provide some empirical basis for qualitative and quantitative data.

The crude conflict rate indicates severity allowing greater comparability between districts with differing populations. By indicating severity over time we can also identify which conflicts are affected by other conflict drivers. Replacing deaths with 'conflicts' results in the following calculation;

$$Crude\ Conflict\ Rate\ (CCR) = \frac{Crude\ Conflict\ Rate\ x\ Population\ of\ District}{100,000}$$

The 'crude' in the title is important – this is a crude indicator, and conflict is not as finite as mortality, so caution should be exercised in taking the analysis too far. This is particularly important because the CCR does not differentiate the seriousness between the different causes or parties – a murder is given the same importance as a debt related conflict. What it can help with is analysing which districts are affected by a very high rate of conflict – from which, using other data and analysis, strategies can then be developed to mitigate, address and reduce conflict.

Primary sources

CPAU monitoring

The key primary resource is a data-set of the monitoring carried out by CPAU Peace Councils in 6 of the 8 target districts. Once the data was cleaned and re-coded the data for 5 districts was significant and include 256 unique conflict incidents in 5 of 8 districts. One district, Chak, had only 8 incidents so was dropped from the quantitative analysis. However it was retained in the analysis as a null category, along with Sayedabad and Jaghori which had no monitoring data collected, to identify whether the CPAU monitoring made a significant difference to our understanding of conflict in the district.

The remaining districts provide information over the period 2005-2008 (first half). Not all districts had data for all years – and Baharak had a gap in reporting for one year between August 2006 – June 2007, though this did not affect the trends noted in the analysis. The analysis of Chak, Sayedabad and Jaghori districts continued without the quantitative data, in effect creating a null category where a conflict analysis is done with qualitative data only. This is important in demonstrating the value added by using quantitative data in support of qualitative analysis.

The data for Kunduz consists of 77 conflicts which were addressed by the 6 Peace Councils in Kunduz city between February 2006 and June 2008. The data is a comprehensive set of what the Peace Councils experienced but from interviews with Peace Council members and reviewing the data it is clear that a) the councils are not reporting all of the incidents they deal with b) they are not reporting many incidents they fail to 'resolve'. These issues are discussed in greater depth in Implications for Peace Building Programming later in this synthesis paper.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire was sent to CPAU staff to assist with political, social and economic understanding of each district under investigation. The questionnaire covered a number of areas including the political affiliations of key individuals in the district and province; movements of nomadic groups; presence of armed groups and functioning of state institutions. The questionnaires were also designed to fill gaps in knowledge about the relationships between district level conflicts and provincial level conflicts and / or dynamics. For some districts

where information was difficult to verify additional organisations and individuals were contacted to provide further analysis.

Secondary sources

Each of the researchers reviewed literature specific to their region, province and district to investigate the historical conflict trends in that area. This included a range of academic and policy related information and was summarised in a background paper for each district (Provinces where two districts were under investigation were combined into 1 paper). Further the team was able to access a media database covering 2002-2008 for all of the target districts. This allowed the staff to corroborate academic material, the security databases and the CPAU monitoring against reporting from that area.

Security databases

The team has access to 2 security datasets which are not public. They cover 2002-5 for all provinces/districts and 2007-8 for some of the districts. The two datasets are not comparable.

They provide a benchmark to investigate the statistical linkages between local conflicts (as reported by the CPAU Peace Councils) and higher order conflicts – though simple inferences should not be made and causality can only be made from further qualitative data.

Analytical frameworks

In order to assist in the ordering, prioritisation and critique of the large amount of data generated by the project various frameworks were developed in the process of the project. Of these two were selected to help provide an appreciation of the dynamics of conflict and another for the dimensions of conflict.

The framework for dimensions of conflict was developed to represent the international/regional, national, provincial and local dynamics and factors in conflicts that had emerged out of the various data sources. The types of conflicts, such as land or water, were inserted into the matrix and the team was asked to identify the links that the major conflicts in their areas had with other actors.

The dynamics of conflict framework is adapted from the Department for International Development's (DfID) Conflict assessment tool developed by the Conflict Security and Development Group (Goodhand 2001). The dynamics framework uses the same list of major conflicts that were in the dimensions framework and asks questions about the relation of the conflict to economic, social, political, and security elements. It has been modified in this project to include space for discussing the policy implications of each section where relations are identified and is presented only in the synthesis paper.

3. Conflict history in Kunduz

Kunduz is a province in the north of Afghanistan bordering Tajikistan and has historically been an important economic region. The capital of Kunduz province is Kunduz city which is one of the largest Afghan cities. The province is bordered by the Amu Darya river to the north and the northern fringes of the Hindu Kush to the south. The province has undergone of enormous change, physically, culturally and politically over the last century and has a high degree of ethnic diversity. Population movements and land disputes are important and seem the overriding conflict issue within the province. The majority of inward migration has been by Pashtun populations which has led to tensions with other existing groups in the province and city including the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Arabs, Baluchis and Turkmen.

Kunduz city is the capital of Kunduz province and operates with a mixed economy dominated by farming in rural areas and a large amount of transit trade. There is a thriving economy in cross border trade and the economic power has been historically linked to both violent and political power. Kunduz city has a population of approximately 247,450 while the province as a whole has a population of some 773,387 people.

The legal economy of Kunduz is essentially agrarian and importantly driven by the extensive irrigation system constructed in the 20th century. Kunduz is also an important trafficking route for the country's opium, with the opium coming from both the south and more traditional opium cultivating areas such as Badakhshan, and this flow of high value commodity leads to criminality and further taxation, while enriching a minority group. However Kunduz has historically not been and presently is not a large opium producer itself. It may be due to power and politics, with certain central powerful commanders shutting down production to win support from both the central government and the German Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) (Pain 2006). Political power is also underpinned by the fact that the Kunduz area has a good level of food security and reasonable water access. More recently the hike in food prices has created both opportunities and suffering for the people of Kunduz. The sharp rise in flour prices (some 100% in the first 3 months of 2008) led to riots and the theft of food aid (Gopal 2008).

Table 1 General information - Kunduz

	Population[1]	Area (km²)[2]	Major ethnicities and tribal groups[3]	Major political parties[4]	Major agricultural products[5]
Kunduz Province	773,387	8,088	Pashtun, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Arabs, Baluch, Turkmen	Jamiat and Junbesh	Wheat, corn, rice, maize, beans, peas, Melons, almonds, grapes, cotton
Kunduz city	247,450	654,75	Pashtun, Tajiks, Uzbeks	Jamiat and Junbesh	Wheat, corn, rice, maize, beans, peas, Melons, almonds, grapes, cotton

Pre-1978

Conflict-dynamics in Kunduz have been shaped by land-allocation schemes and resettlement undertaken in the course of large-scale irrigation projects. These were set up within Kunduz province from the 1920s, and further developed in the late 1960s and 1970s with World Bank funding (Pain 2006). The irrigation projects thoroughly re-shaped agricultural production in the province, enabling the production of wheat, grain and particularly cotton.

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[1] CSO and UNFPA 2003
[2] Taken from the 398 district model for Afghanistan held by author.
[3] Various sources including CPAU questionnaire August 2008
[4] Various sources
[5] CSO and UNFPA 2003

In the 1920s, the irrigation-project took place in combination with the large scale voluntary and forced resettlement of Pashtun families (who were primarily Shinwari) (Dorronsoro 2005), which settled within the Kunduz province and settled on arable land. The settlement of Pashtuns from southern Afghanistan was complimented by settlements of some Turkic refugees from Russia arriving after 1935. Nomadism has historically been present in Kunduz, but local Arab nomadism in the north was dwarfed by the large numbers of Pashtun nomadic settlements by 1947 (Barfield 1981, 30-1). The large resettlement and parallel irrigation schemes helped to make Kunduz the breadbasket of Afghanistan since the 1960s (Mielke and Schetter 2007).

Conflicts between hosts and the settlers were frequent, especially over land. With the confiscation of the Uzbek landholdings, there was also a profound shift in the power base of the Kunduz province, which had been predominantly Uzbek with a number other ethnicities (particularly Tajiks and Arabs). This process was accelerated by Nadir Khan's choice of governor for Qataghan, of which Kunduz was part (Barfield 1981, 29-30).[6] The Pashtun settlers were also given Shiwa land (in Badakhshan) as grants of summer pastures, and there were frequent conflicts over *ailoq* ownership (Patterson 2004). A particular problem has been the expansion of rice and cotton cultivation upstream which has subsequently led to water scarcity downstream and resultant tensions (Lee 2006).

The various ethnic groups in Kunduz have had a variety of strategies for dealing with local conflict, these have generally been weakened by the conflict and social change of the last 30 years, but in some ways remain quite different. The Arabs had a system of Bai's (or boi) who were consensually appointed by the clan and could assist in the resolution of internal conflicts. There was also an arbab (or arbob) who was essentially a government employee, though chosen by the local population and *confirmed* by the government in position. Their role focused on relations between the clan and the government, or conflicts between the clan and other groups – though the lines between the two positions were sometimes blurred (Barfield 1981, 62-8).

There was also not a set code through which conflicts should be resolved unlike in the case of the Pashtun settlers (who referred to *Pashtunwali*) and the Tajiks (who referred to a looser code of *rawaj* – or literally tradition). As is the case now, there seems to have been a significant amount of bribery associated with obtaining the 'necessary' resolution to a conflict, including cases of murder or buying government permissions for buying land (Barfield 1981, 154,158)

1978 – 2001

The main resistance groups operating during the Soviet era were Hizb-i Islami, led by Hekmetyar with a strong base in Pashtun-dominated areas of Kunduz, and Rabbani-led Jamiat-i Islami group, which was mainly made up of educated Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens (Amin 1984).Mujahideen groups in Kunduz were part of Massoud's Security Council of the North (SCN) (Nojumi 2002) and in August 1988 Kunduz fell into Mujahideen hands (Dorronsoro 2005, 227). During the subsequent period from 1992-1995 Kunduz experienced an increasing fragmentation of military control between numerous commanders including Dostum and the Kunduz Shura dominated by Jamiat and Ittihad (Rubin 2002). This fragmentation led to intensified conflict over access to *ailoqs,* which is reflective of more general patterns of non-Pashtun - Pashtun polarization, the (Pashtun) Kuchis often found themselves subject to intimidation, forcible displacement and theft of their livestock by a plethora of small commanders along their seasonal migratory routes (Pain 2006, Patterson 2004).

However Commander's decisions about which party to support were also driven by other considerations. Local commanders in the province were mostly affiliated to Hizb-i Islami and Jamiat but the rise of Junbesh-i-Milli in Kunduz challenged the status quo and it was clear that overall local political relations, rather than any overriding ethnic affiliation, tended to dictate shifting relations on the ground (Bhatia and Sedra 2008). Junbesh was therefore able to win support through material incentives and not just appeal to its Uzbek base.

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[6] Qataghan gradually shrank over the 20th century, but at the time of Shir Khan's appointment included the current provinces of Kunduz, Baghlan and Taloqan,

Its increasing strength unsettled opposition groups and culminated in Autumn 1993 with clashes between Junbesh's new recruits and commanders of the provincial Shura, resulting in further polarization between Turkmens, Pashtuns and Tajiks (Wardak, Zaman and Nawabi 2007). Clashes continued thereafter including in the autumn of 1994 when Junbesh forces clashed with those of Ittihad (Dorronsoro 2005, 243).

The Taleban's subsequent success in the area also rested on the exploitation of provincial level divisions as well as by gaining support amongst the Pashtun sections of the population. In 1996, Abdel Rashid Dostum's Junbesh had repelled the Taleban in the North by allying with Jamiat and Hizb-i Wahdat. However the Taliban eventually exploited splits between the three groups and took Kunduz City in 1999 – partly through the defection of Arif Khan a Pashtun from Zakhel village in Kunduz province who had been prominent in the resistance against the Soviets and supported Jamiat-i Islami (Dorronsoro 2005, BBC 2000). Once he defected to the Taliban he was selected as governor of Kunduz, but was gunned down in Peshawar in 2000 (General Assembly UNSC 2000).

2001 – Present

In late November 2001, the Taleban were driven from Kunduz by the Mujahedeen commanders Dostum, Atta and Ustad Mohaqqeq, with support of Operation Enduring Freedom (Radu 2001). Conflict dynamics in Kunduz after 2001 were thus importantly shaped by the subsequent violent competition between Dostum's Junbesh-i Milli and General Daoud, but also the re-establishment of domination by individuals affiliated with political parties in the city which has been interrupted by the Taliban take over.

Initially following the fall of the Taliban there was a wave of ethnic persecution of the Northern Pashtun groups. The new regime left Pashtuns marginalised and the government was unable to reign in actions by local commanders of Jamiat-i Islami and Junbesh. Human Rights Watch warned in 2004 of pre-election violence carried out in the North due to police, military and intelligence force alignment with Junbesh, Jamiat and Hizb-i Wahdat commanders (HRW 2004). As a result of these tensions at least 20,000 Pashtuns were forced south from the north in 2002 and there was growing political affiliation along ethnic lines (AFP 2002). By 2003 it was estimated that over 50,000 Pashtuns were internally displaced from the north and living in southern Afghanistan (IRIN 2003).[7]

Unlike the Mujahedeen period which has seen a high degree of heterogeneity amongst the membership of political parties, groups have become increasing ethnically polarised, initially resisting the Taliban (Pashtun-non-Pashtun division) and subsequently in the infighting which characterised renewed competition for power and resources with the establishment of the new Kabul regime. Therefore Jamiat was Tajik dominated, Junbesh Uzbek dominated and the Hizb-i Islami and Ittihad-i Islami and Afghan Millat are Pashtun dominated (Bhatia and Sedra 2008).

The local security architecture emerging out of the power-vacuum left by the ousting of the Taleban in Kunduz is characterised by a high level of fragmentation of military control and a relatively high autonomy of local commanders from the population. In effect, the province can be seen as an assembly of mini-fiefdoms with localised 'rules of law' and the overall 'rule of the gun' in which each village is ruled by a 'big man' (Schetter, Glassner and Karokhail 2007).

The link between commanders and militiamen remains very strong in Kunduz. Within the city the police are seen in control whereas in the rural areas individual security arrangements dictate with arrangements between individual warlords that differ from district to district. For instance in the Imam Sahib district the 'Ibrahimis family' rule in a 'quasi-feudalistic' manner with control for resources and small warlords being directly related to the family. These loose interconnections of small 'big men' has been indicative of the post-

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[7] Though it is worth remembering that Mujahedeen infighting caused displacement as early as 1987 (Bhatia and Sedra 2008 citing Giustozzi)

Taliban fragmentation within the district as increasing ethnic polarisation has further undermined the lack of communal institutions. This breeds an environment of direct competition between big men with little control exercised by the local population. However, local commanders are not entirely autonomous, as they remain part of loose networks affiliated to regional warlords equally competing for supremacy (Schetter, Glassner and Karokhail 2007).

Political parties and actors

There seems to be a lack of power of local elders and community leaders in and around Kunduz, which almost certainly impacts the ways in which other actors; i.e. political parties, operate in the province and city (Bhatia and Sedra 2008; Dorronsoro 2005). It also impacts on the kinds of co0licts that occur and who is involved in them (see below).

Almost all of the major political parties still maintain offices in the area, though many are said to be dormant and are not armed – at least in the city (CPAU Interview May 2008). Whilst the parties in government have fought over control of economic and political resources other groups have also mobilised in the area. HiG was believed to have sent emissaries to Kunduz in 2004. In November 2006 weapons were distributed to local commanders by pro-Taliban elements, followed in 2006 by the arrest of 23 suspected insurgents who were part of a 250 strong network with links in to Baghlan (Giustozzi 2007, 130-1).[8]

Table 2 Summary of key Government actors in Kunduz

	Name	Known current affiliation	Known previous affiliation	Any known relations between officials
Governor	Engineer Mohammad Omer	Hizb-i Tanzim Dawat-i Islami-i Afghanistan (Sayaf)	Previously a commander of Jihad	
Police Chief	Daqarwal Abdul Rasiq		Possibly Najib regime	

4. Kunduz City

Kunduz City is situated in the centre of Kunduz Province. According to UNHCR the district has good roads with accessibility to all villages. Much like the wider province the district has an agriculturally dominated economy with most of the land in good condition due to irrigation. Other than the agricultural market there are also growing informal cash based markets due to the influx of returning refugees. Kunduz district has lower unemployment than the other districts.

The justice system in Kunduz is barely functioning and instead the local population prefers to use the informal justice system due to its speed, cost-effectiveness and capabilities of offering compensation.[9] This reliance upon informal institutions has been born from the previous two decades of war in which there was no formal government in place. As such the head of the Civil Law Hajji Abdul Qodos Khan deliberately tries to reduce the number of cases going to court by encouraging mediation because the formal system is ineffective. In 2005, The Public Security department of the Public Security and Special Crimes Court had 29 cases of corruption, drug smuggling, kidnapping and perjury. The number of cases were down by some 90% when compared to the Mujahideen period, but given that a large number of cases are resolved informally it is not possible to provide a full picture of the issues addressed by the formal system (Barfield 2006).

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[8] The reference to Baghlan is important, and is also made in other work which describes the security apparatus of Kunduz in the context of its linkages to Takhar and Baghlan (Bhatia and Sedra 2008).
[9] This compares favourably with the assertion in Afghanistan's Human Development Report 2007 that 80% of Afghans prefer using informal mechanisms to access justice (A. Wardak 2007).

5. Conflict dynamics

Local level conflict resolution[10]

CPAU has six peace councils in Kunduz City and these Shuras have recorded the incidents of conflict that they have dealt with over the previous 3 years (a total of 77 conflicts). The councils recorded the reason for the conflict, the resolution of the conflict, the parties to the conflicts and the date. As in all the districts in the project there are on average between 20-30 members of each council. In Kunduz there are 4 male only councils and 2 female only councils. Kunduz city is the only urban setting in the districts being studied, and it demonstrates some interesting and unique trends in the ways in which conflicts at a local level seem to be driven and addressed.

For the purposes of this study the population figure used in the analysis was 247,450 (CSO and UNFPA 2003) – given the highly transitory nature of the city, given its trade links and the issues with a significant amount of out migration even in recent years it allows a level of comparison with the other districts. Kunduz is the largest district by population, though not the smallest in size (which is Kalakan, Kabul province, at just over 40 sq km).

The overall level of conflicts recorded by the Peace Shuras can be seen to rise steeply from 2006 to 2007 and stagnate from 2007 to 2008 (see Figure 2). Within this overall increase, which mirrors other sources measuring general insecurity, there is an almost linear increase in conflicts relating to the access to land and water, with the rate rising significantly from 2006 to 2008. In 2008, land and water conflicts thus make up about half of the overall conflicts.
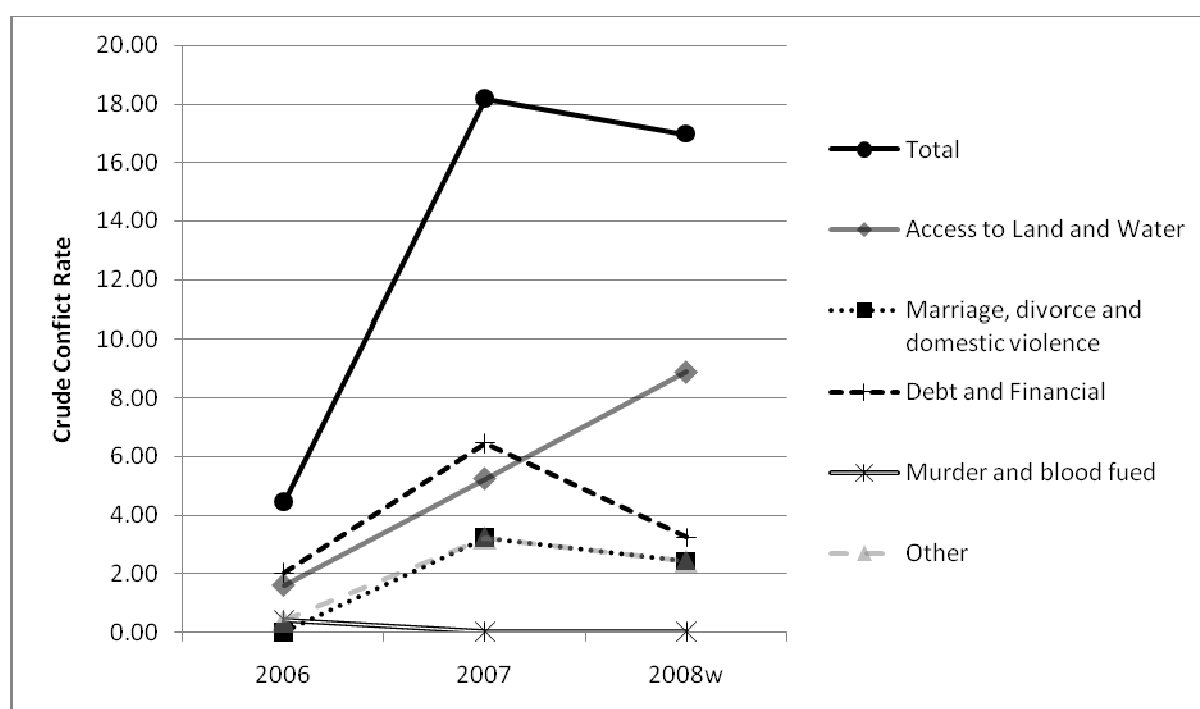
Figure 2 Causes of conflict in Kunduz city – CPAU monitoring

Also of note are the increases in conflicts relating to Financial / Debt issues in 2007, and the concurrent increase in Marriages / Divorce / Domestic violence conflicts. There is a link between marriage conflicts and financial conflicts in that they often relate to *toyana* – an issue which is of great concern to many Afghans

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[10] Please see the methodology section for explanations of how terms such as 'conflict', 'party', 'cause' and 'conflict rate' are used.

because of the financial burden it places on families.[11] But this does not answer the question as to why 2007 was higher than 2008 or 2006? It is believed that the drought experienced in 2006 may have pushed a number of families in to further debt, and that some of the increase in conflicts may be related to debts taken out for *toyana* payments which could not be made in 2006, but were then called in during 2007.[12]

However purely looking at the causes of the conflicts is not sufficient, and the parties to the conflict further add to understanding the drivers of conflicts in Kunduz. If the conflicts are disaggregated by year and parties involved, intra-family disputes can be seen to rise steeply from 2006 to 2007 and to stagnate from 2007 to 2008 (see Figure 3). Inter-family disputes rise only by about 50 % from 2006 to 2007, but more than double from 2007 to 2008, leaving the overall rate in 2008 dominated by conflicts within one family, or between two families. A breakdown of the land and water disputes as the most prominent cause of conflict by parties involved reveals them to be equally split between the family parties to conflicts.
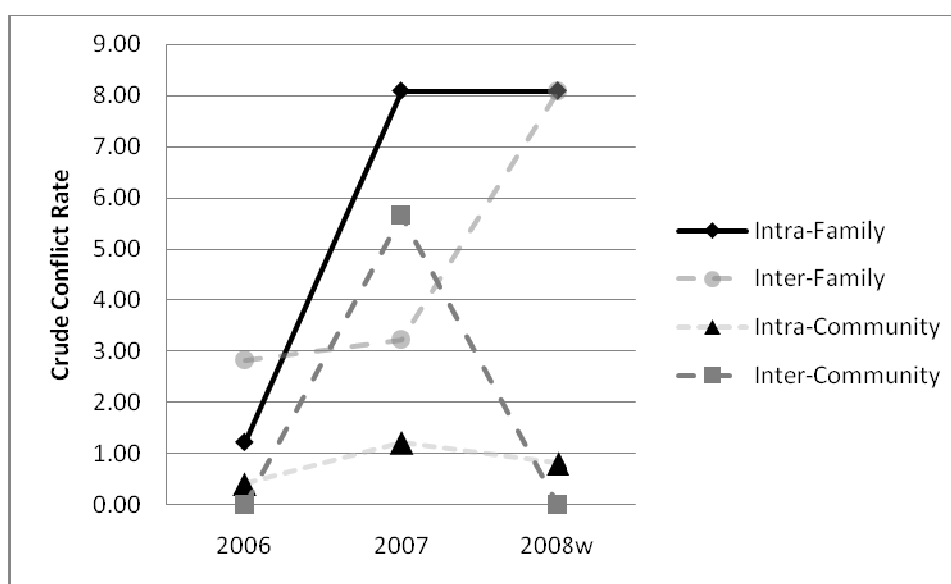

Figure 3 Parties involved in conflicts in Kunduz – CPAU monitoring

The equal split of land-conflicts between as well as within families suggests that there are two distinct categories of conflicts. In the province, land-conflicts make up the bulk of civil litigation cases. Most of them are related to illegal occupation and selling of land by commanders, but an increasing proportion also arises between family members over inheritance. This is reflected in the clear increase between 2007 and 2008 in the number of inter-family conflicts.

This is encouraging as the councils seem to respond to what are widely regarded as the key drivers of conflict in Kunduz. However, Kunduz seems to show the exact opposite of trends compared with the other districts in the sample, showing increasing familial conflict rather than communal conflict, the low levels of communal conflict are significant. This seems to be counter-intuitive as it would almost be expected for communal conflict to become more pronounced in an urban setting where communities are vying for resources in a compact area, particularly one as ethnically heterogeneous as Kunduz.

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[11] An unpublished survey of conflict causes in 5 provinces shows a very high level of concern amongst Afghans about increasing *toyana* prices and the financial implications that the payments entail.

[12] It is important to recognise that there has been a chronic drought situation in much of Afghanistan over the last 8 years – some years are better than others, and 2006 was considered to be particularly bad in northern Afghanistan which saw a 9% reduction in cereal production (UNAMA 2007). The drought also caused a population migration across northern Afghanistan, with additional people heading to Kunduz which would put additional strain on resources (Ibrahimi 2006)

This has led to two inferences which can't be verified from the data available and require further research. Firstly, the Peace Councils may not be seen as being credible in dealing with communal conflicts in an urban environment (or perhaps the Kunduz environment specifically). It is not clear why this would be the case and the councils do not differ in any significant way from councils in the other districts.

Secondly, communal conflicts in Kunduz may be dealt with in other fora – not covered by the data available. There are a large number of parties active in Kunduz, many with strong linkages in to communities through local 'big men' (as described above) but also to the central government. Communal conflicts may be dealt with through those mechanisms rather than the councils or formal structures such as the courts.

Seasonality

Local conflict in Afghanistan is highly seasonal – and Kunduz shows similar patterns to those found in other districts – though with some slight variation (see Figure 4). The breakdown of causes and parties to conflict by month reveals general hikes in the conflict rate around harvesting times in spring and autumn, with the former far more prominent than the latter. The most important contributor to the hikes is land and water conflicts, followed by debt / financial and marriage / divorce / domestic violence conflicts.

There are two spikes in Land and Water conflicts, May and October, in other districts a third spike has been noted around March, which is normally reflective of water conflicts specifically. This indicates it is possibly not water supply that is causing conflicts in Kunduz city – but land access. Kunduz benefits from the significant Kunduz river basin irrigation system, in to which millions of dollars of aid have been spent upgrading facilities (through the Kunduz River Basin Programme). While there are reports of villages using the system being in conflict they are not in the 'city' district and are not covered by this dataset (Roe 2008).[13]

Interestingly, and possibly re-enforcing the link between Financial / Debt conflicts and Marriage conflicts, both causes have small spikes in May and August.
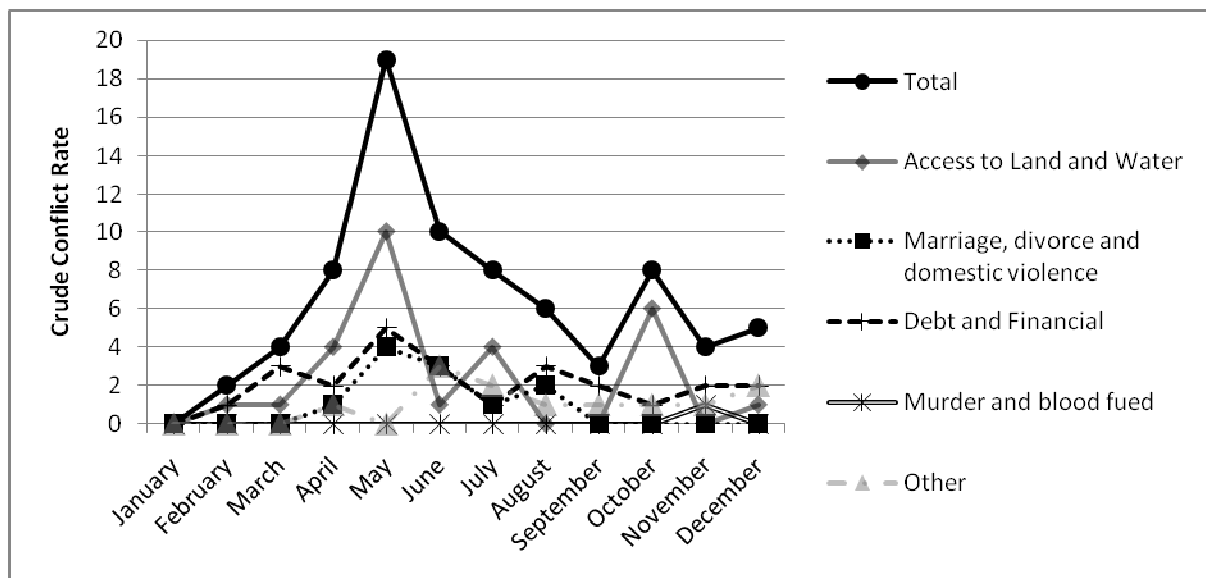
Figure 4 Causes of conflict by month – CPAU monitoring

Reviewing the same conflicts across the annual cycle but by party again suggests the highly familial nature of the conflicts addressed by the Peace Councils in Kunduz – which are tied to the land and water conflict cycle (see Figure 5). There are two points of note, firstly the spike in Financial / Debt and Marriage conflicts in

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[13] Please note that while Kunduz district is considered a municipality (an urban centre) there are still crops grown in parts of the district.

August is almost entirely involving intra-family conflicts, further re-enforcing links regarding *toyana*. Secondly communal conflict does not seem to escalate through the annual cycle and is at a consistently low level – though this may be because it is not captured by the Peace Council activities (see above).
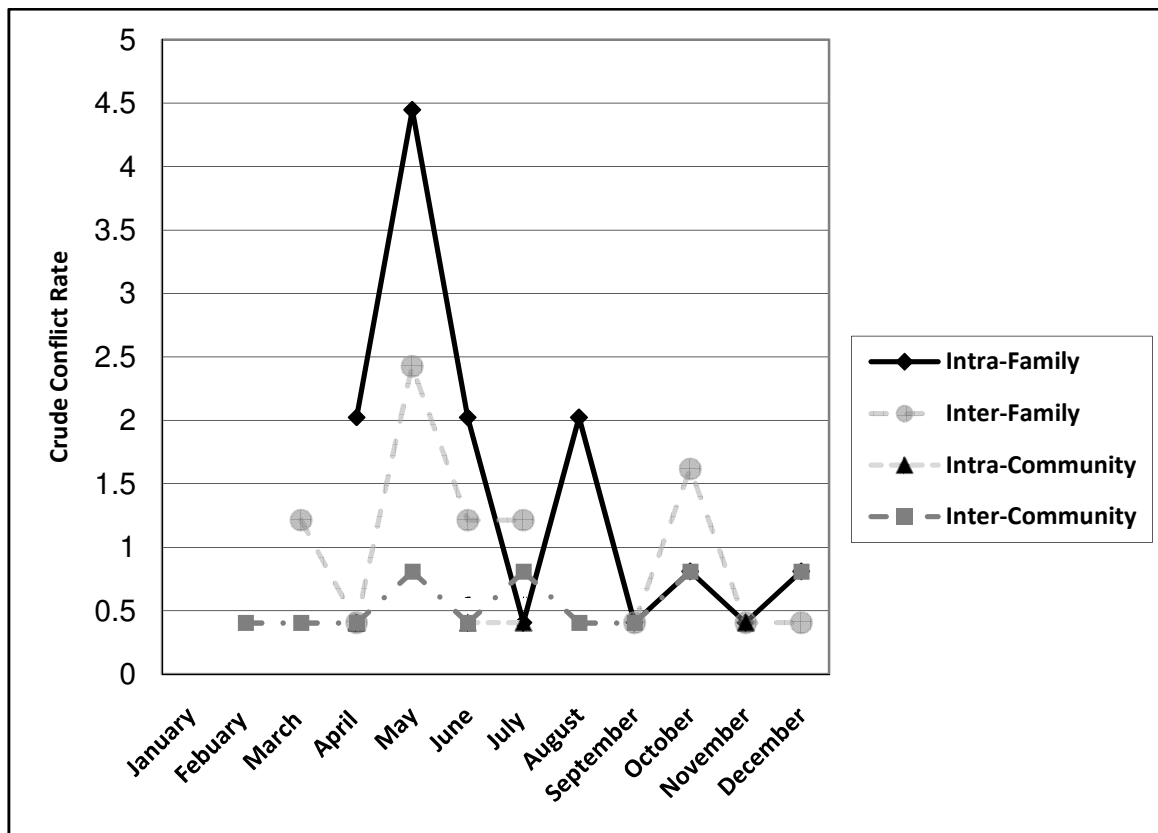
Figure 5 Parties to conflict by month – CPAU monitoring

It is clear from the CPAU monitoring (see Figure 5) that familial disputes have an unprecedented importance in comparison with community based conflicts in Kunduz. This seems to be different from other areas under investigation and there could be a variety of reasons. Firstly Kunduz city is an urban area, meaning that social relations in an urban environment in Afghanistan differ significantly from those of rural areas. Secondly, because it is an urban area, with a larger number of economic opportunities, the types of conflicts that are important may differ from rural areas. In this dataset one set of conflict causes has been used across the board, but it would be worth considering in more detail the causes of conflict to see whether they are different from those in rural areas (i.e. do cash economy based livelihoods differ in their conflict dynamics?)

Figure 6 Total parties to conflict – CPAU monitoring

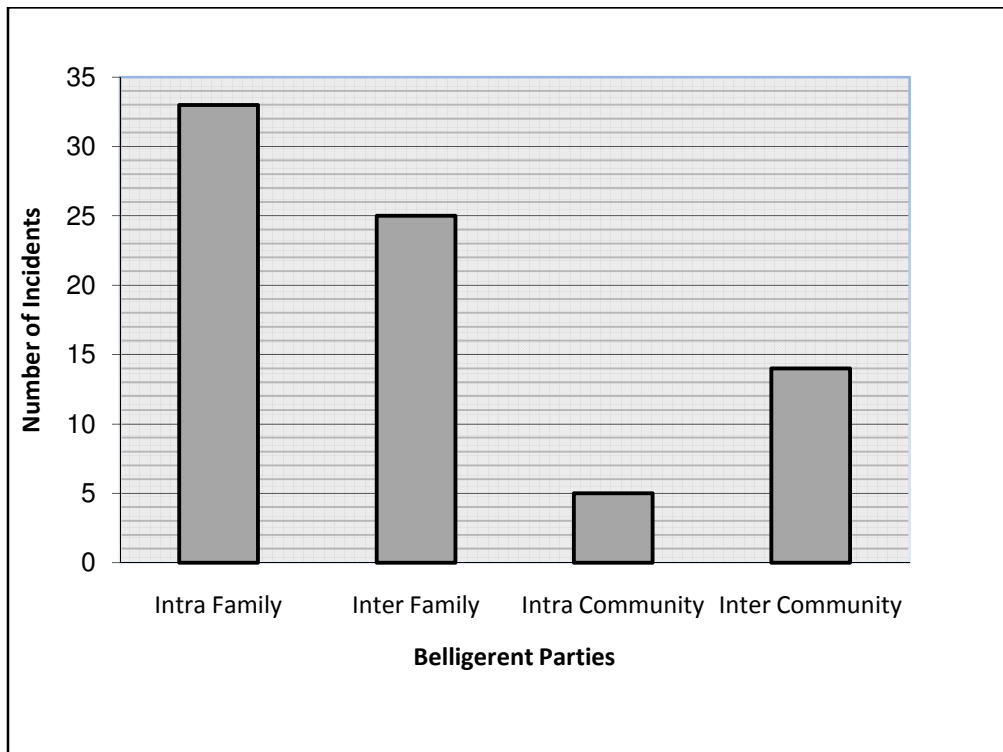The land-seizures of local commanders are also connected to the recent displacement of large numbers of Pashtuns. These can be small scale incidents involving individual cases but there are still incidents where entire communities were discriminated against in 2008 causing displacement, though on a lower scale than those in 2002-3 (Pajhwok 2008). These conflicts are significant – as is the fact that they are not captured solely by the Peace Council dataset. Accordingly, ownership over this land and the land of returning pre-2001 refugees is now contested as refugees are returning from Pakistan or internal displacement to find their land either occupied by commanders or by other people, often relatives, who are now unwilling to accept the returnees' claims to ownership (Mielke and Schetter 2007).

A second and connected factor is the rapid growth of the population, which contributes to an increasing scarcity of land and intra-family conflicts, as inherited plots become ever smaller and are often insufficient for subsistence (Mielke and Schetter 2007). While land relations thus appear to be a major area of contention overall, it appears that the relations between the sedentary population and Kuchi is relatively well regulated and use-rights relatively uncontested in comparison.

6. Insecurity, criminality and conflict

This section examines higher level conflict dynamics. The following graphs show breakdowns of security incidents recorded by Security Database 1. The overall rate of incidents from the Security Database 1 data shows the conflict rate for Kunduz province to be clearly on the rise, with an escalation from 1.16 in 2003 to 3.49 in 2004 and a further rise to 4.14 in 2005.

At the provincial level, incidents related to criminal activities, particularly robberies, and resistance against both the government and international presence have consistently made up more than two thirds of the yearly incidents. These constitute the main dynamic behind the steep rise in incidents between 2003 and 2005. While international military forces and aid agencies constituted the main target of resistance groups in 2004 these attacks appear to be redirected at government forces in 2005. While the precise causes of this shift remain unknown, it suggests quite clearly that attacks on international actors and government forces follow

distinct logics. Another notable feature is the low but persistent rate for clashes between different factions of commanders, which, as well as the overall rise between 2003 and 2004, primarily connected to the violent competition between Dostum and General Daoud at that time.
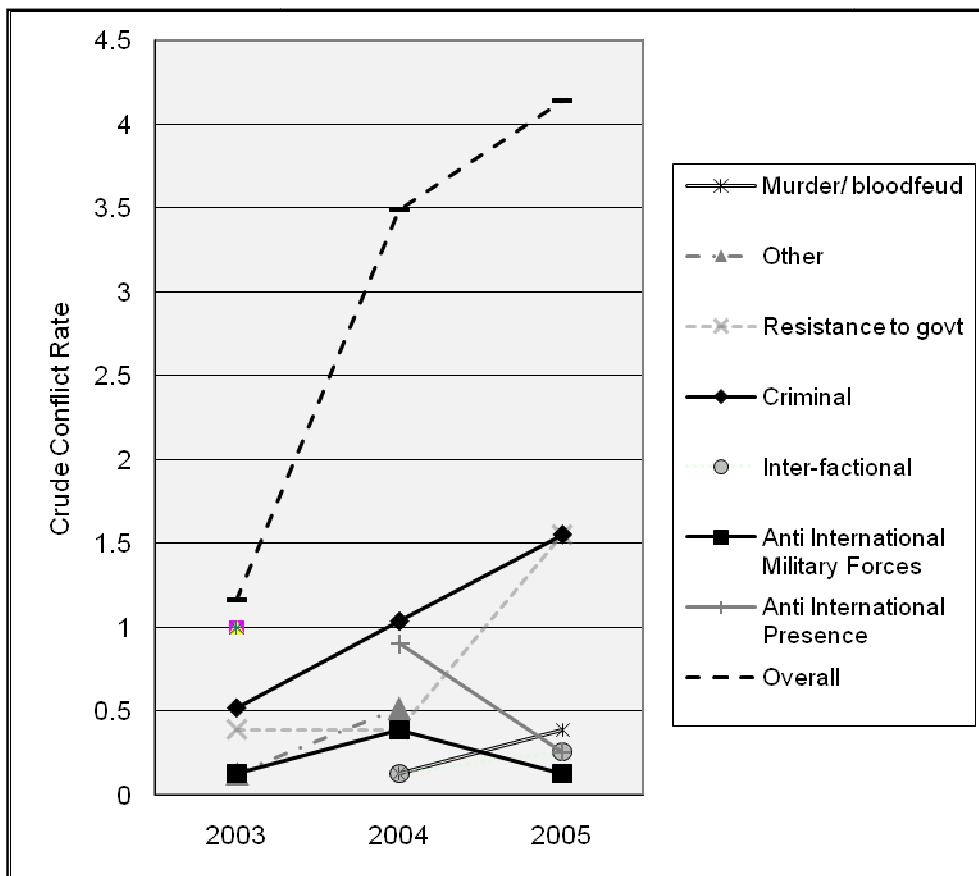

Figure 7 Causes of conflict Security Database 1 (Kunduz province)

In Kunduz city, the rise in resistance against the government has been pronounced, but far less extreme than at the provincial level. Furthermore, the development is linear, with the steep hike from 2003 to 2004 missing. The rise in the crime rate, particularly robberies, has been steep. In combination with the linear rise at provincial level, this suggests that rising crime in urban areas is the main contributor to the general trend. Whilst there seemed to be a lull in attacks against international actors and the Afghan government they have increased in Kunduz in 2008, this has included suicide attacks against military forces and attempted assassinations of government officials (Campbell and Shapiro 2008; Pajhwok 2008a; Pajhwok 2008b). Notable by its absence in 2008 has been open inter-factional fighting.

The city has also found itself under increasing urban pressures because of the increasing population due to refugee repatriation. The struggle for subsistence and the development of a cash based economy has driven segments of the population into debt, in the context of fragile livelihoods and limited options for legitimate advancement there is a tendency for individuals and groups to exploit the weak security environment to carry out criminal activities.

The increasing crime rates may also be indicative of the poor policing in Kunduz. As noted the police in Kunduz seem to operate as private militias for the modern day small 'big men' and it can be inferred that the police collusion may be higher in the provincial capital than out in the hinterland (Schetter, Glassner and Karokhail, 2007). Local resolution through the Peace Councils is reported to be very successful indicating that while

Kunduz city suffers extreme crime rates it has also concomitantly developed a parallel and trusted justice system – that uses both formal and informal methods.[14]
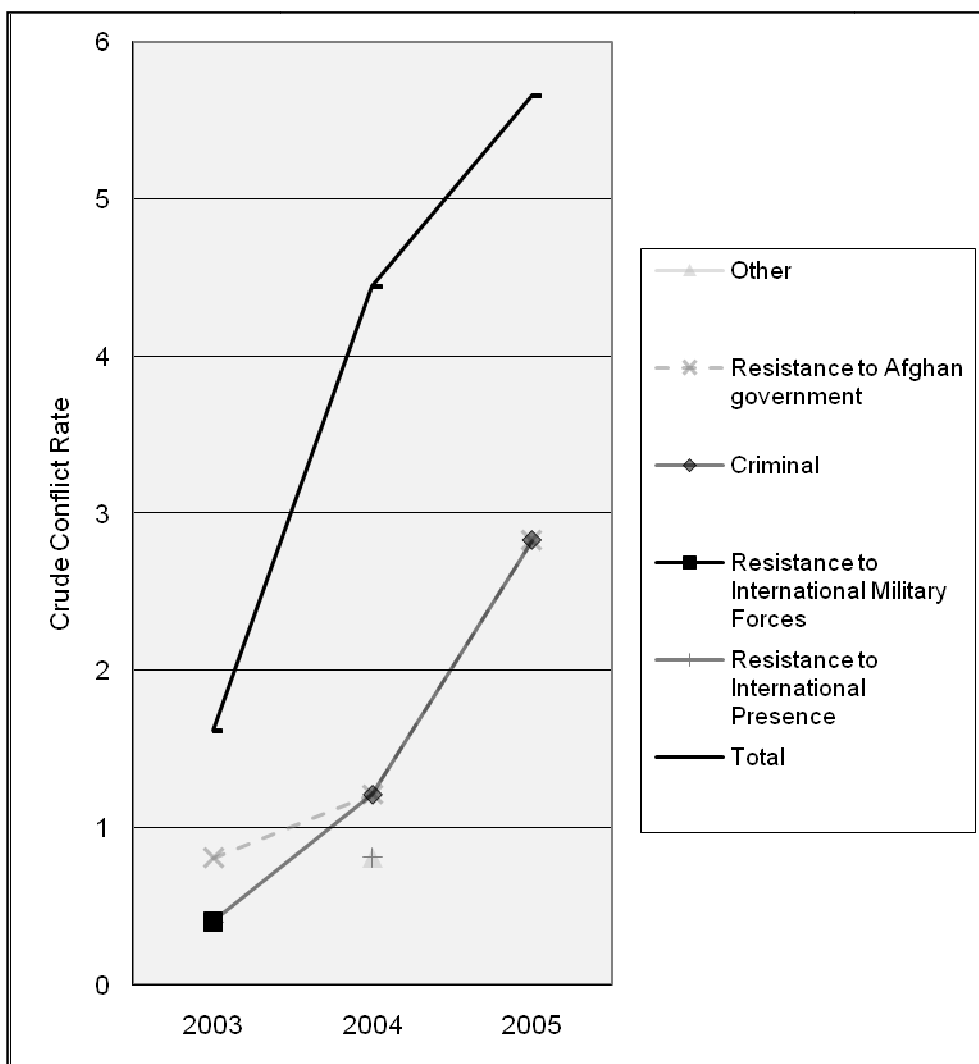
Figure 8 Causes of conflict Security Database 1 (Kunduz city)

Other actors and conflict

Conflict has also been affected by a range of other actors and processes, this brief section attempts to outline some of the most significant issues. Since 2002 approximately 20% of the population of Kunduz has returned (close to 50,000 people), which compares well to the average total of returns to the province of 22% of the population. However Kunduz's returns were initially not highly significant (2002), and only became an increasing share of total returns to the province from 2003 as retunes to the rest of the province began to decline (UNHCR 2008). Conflicts relating to returning refugees (and the creation of new IDPs, see above) have been a recurrent feature of Kunduz's conflict landscape and have contributed to local conflict in a significant manner.

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[14] As an example the Norwegian Refugee Council has been assisting returning refugees and IDP's with legal aid for land disputes in the formal system, whilst CPAU has supported local Peace Councils which generally seeks resolutions informally.

Table 3 Assisted returns of Kunduz city and Province (% of annual returns) (UNHCR 2008)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Kunduz city	6,196 (6.7%)	6,946 (26.2%)	17,094 (30.4%)	6,951 (21.1%)	3,150 (19.4%)	4,369 (32.6%)	4,401 (24.1%)	49,107 (19.2%)
Kunduz Province	91,798	26,526	56,139	32,941	16,272	13,386	18,229	255,291

Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG)

The DDR programme, which was officially completed countrywide in June 2006, included Kunduz which was the site of one of the 9 Corps of Afghan Military Force (AMF) that was 'formed' out of forces that fought against the Taleban in 2001. The AMF structure heavily reflected the Soviet structure that had been used for the Afghan army in the 1980's and early 1990's.

In total 14 units consisting of 3,000 personnel were supposed to be disarmed in Kunduz (ANBP 2004).[15] Kunduz being the site of one of the Corps also covered a number of provinces including Takhar, Badakhshan and Baghlan.

Kunduz's 6th Corps Forces were under the control of Shura-i Nazar (Rossi and Giustozzi 2006) and ended up accounting for 11.30% or 7,160 personnel, of all disarmed combatants in the programme and in excess of the original targets. However since a large proportion of all combatants who entered the programme were should not have been eligible it seems unlikely that the numbers disarmed actually altered the status or armed groups in the region significantly (Dennys 2005).

The DIAG programme does not seem to have been active in Kunduz, and there are no known records of commanders handing in weapons in the city or province. Large stockpiles of weapons have also been collected in Kunduz including over 100Mt of stable and unstable material in Imam Sahib in September 2006 (ANBP 2006c). The lack of progress in DIAG is in contrast to the fact that Kunduz was believed to have a large number of illegally armed groups. In early 2005, based on initial mapping of illegally armed groups a UN map indicated that there were between 87 - 179 IAGs in Kunduz province, (Kunduz city had between 11 – 20). Interestingly 6 – 10 groups were considered to be a threat to counter-narcotics efforts and up to 15 groups were a threat to the Parliamentary elections in 2005.[16]

Programme Tahkim-i Sulh (PTS)

The Programme Tahkim-i Sulh (PTS or in English, Afghanistan National Independent Peace and Reconciliation Commission) was started in 2005 and has an office in Kunduz. In 2008 it was claimed that the PTS has 7,106 insurgents have been reconciled, with 30% of them handing over weapons (PTS 2008). It has not been possible to ascertain how many individuals have participated in the programme by province, though there are widespread concerns about the programme. This has led an unnamed International official to doubt that most of the individuals who reconciled were Taliban or even sympathisers with the resistance and suggested that participants were motivated by financial gain. There are however reports that some Taliban who participated are now no longer able to return home because of fears of retribution (Wijeyarantne 2008, 8).

National Solidarity Program (NSP)

Data from the MRRD indicates that the NSP has been carried out in carried out in 7 districts of Kunduz Province encompassing some 595 Community Development Councils (CDCs) and 1,304 completed or ongoing projects

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[15] An additional unit, the 190th Artillery Unit from Baghlan may have been included in the 6th Corps for disarmament.

[16] The mapping exercise conducted for IAGs was known to have included around 1800 IAGs which ranged in size from groups with a handful of men and small numbers of arms, to those with hundreds of personnel. Interestingly no groups in Ghazni were considered of significant threat generally, or to counter narcotics efforts or governance specifically. One groups in Jaghori was considered a threat to the elections. Source: UN maps held by author.

across 8 sectors with a total value of USD $ 20,944,158. Kunduz District has had a total of 189 individual projects (MRRD 2008).

In conflict terms the NSP projects have not been entirely neutral. In the area of Meir Ali the location of a proposed bridge, funded by the NSP was a cause of local land conflict. Whilst the issue was resolved it is a reminder that developmental projects can be conflictual, and require sensitivity in their implementation. Interestingly the Peace Council recorded that the conflict had been addressed by other bodies before but not successfully.

The importance of sensitivity is key, but the NSP in effect has led to a territorialisation of the rural areas into communities or villages of some 25 – 300 people, which has proved problematic as such categorisations are based largely on outdated and incorrect information (Mielke and Schetter 2007). The structuring feature for the province as a whole is not an outdated map but instead tends to be along the irrigation system that has largely survived the intervening years of war. As such there is no real level of solidarity in the region and the NSP implemented through the Community Development Councils has not taken into account that identity is largely based on face-to-face interactions rather than through affiliation to a mythical village.

Links between local conflict and higher order conflict

Compared to the security threats in the South, the North and Kunduz appear to be more secure and less conflictual. However, the high rates of (often violent) crime, attacks against the government and international presence and factional fighting are a persistent feature of the overall security situation.

A particular but not exclusive focus of attacks directed against international presence is the German PRT, which was set up on 24th October 2003. It originally won a level of local support having undertaken important roles in the building of schools and also encouraging interaction with the local Ulema (Schetter 2003). Throughout 2004 the PRT had security concerns, for instance coming under fire on September 29th 2004. Earlier that year on June 10th and 16th there were Taleban attacks including the killing of 11 Chinese construction workers and injuring a further 5, in the bloodiest attack on foreigners in the region claimed by the Taleban (Schetter 2004, The China Daily 2004).

Afterwards attacks against international actors dropped significantly in 2005, but they have picked up again significantly in 2007 and 2008. May 2007 saw the first ever attack on the German PRT by a suicide bomber in Kunduz, killing 3 German soldiers, and seriously injuring 5 while 7 Afghan civilians were killed and 13 injured. The early months of 2008 have seen the killing of 6 development workers and three attacks against the German military; these alarming developments coupled with three attacks on civilians helping in reconstruction efforts, killing 7, indicate a much more unstable environment is emerging (Gebauer 2008). The PRT base in Kunduz has also frequently shelled with rockets and the persistent attacks has led to a reduction in patrols by the PRT possibly leading to further reductions in security levels and leading calls in German policy circles for increased troop numbers and paramilitary training of Afghan police units (German Foreign Policy 2008).

The fact that crime and anti-government attacks developed similarly for Kunduz city and the province, but attacks against international presence predominantly took place outside the city, suggest that distinct sets of players are responsible for attacks against international presence. The Taleban in Kunduz appears not to have emerged out of local structures, but rather to have infiltrated from the outside and operate with local assistance (Mielke and Schetter 2007). While this set of incidents seems to follow distinct dynamics, the blurred lines between commanders and their militias, government agents and the security forces and their involvement in criminal networks renders the distinction between criminal violence, anti-government activities and factional fighting difficult at times.

As has been pointed out above, politico-military authority in Kunduz is highly fragmented, differing often from village to village. Differing from other areas in Afghanistan, their authority rests not on local legitimacy and a certain accountability to the population, but almost exclusively on their capacity for violence and the ability to appropriate and distribute resources to their clients and militias (Schetter, Glassner and Karokhail 2007).

There are two important sources for resources, one are illegal activities, and the other the state itself. Particularly important for the first category are the illegal cross-border trade, especially the trade in drugs, and its regulation, the illegal appropriation of land and the informal regulation of the real estate market. At the same time the former Jihadi commanders are closely tied to the state, often holding office and having transferred their militias into the security forces, particularly the police. As a result, the state in general and the police in particular are widely perceived as private enforcement agencies and sources of insecurity, rather than stability (Mielke and Schetter 2007).

The fragmented pattern of local control, however, is structured by upward-allegiances of local commanders to the regional warlords like Dostum, General Daoud and Hekmetyar.[17] A lot of the local violence appears to be linked to the competition between their respective networks of commanders. For example clashes between forces of Dostum and Daoud date back to at least 2003, but occur constantly throughout 2004 and 2005, into early 2007. Given that many commanders are influential government officials and command informal militia-networks in the security forces, it is very difficult to disentangle factional clashes from attacks on government agents as such. With the dominance of the US sponsored commanders that defeated the Taliban bringing constant insecurity there has been a growing trend of local populations arming for self-protection (Orsini Undated)

There has clearly been a dramatic increase in insecurity and flashpoints within Kunduz over the last 6 years. Both the security and Peace Council datasets show this clearly and seem to reflect this deterioration. The links between the different kinds of conflicts seem to require further explanation as the data implies that while the higher level conflict plays out and armed resistance mounted against the international forces increases a similar pressure is passed on to the everyday level of insecurity and conflict – causing stresses on local level conflicts which are then dealt with outside official governance mechanisms.

It is difficult to attribute this to one direct causal mechanism. There are certainly links between the local commanders and the regional commanders of Dostum and Daoud who have clashed and this insecurity percolates down to the local level. The complex relationships between commanders and officials means the state can be seen as a threat to security itself. Combined with the influx of the Taleban one can draw certain relationships between the higher level incidents and the local level flashpoints. Whilst not currently at the forefront of local conflict, the ethnic dimension of Kunduz and the contests of land need to be considered more fully in addressing local conflict.

7. Dimensions of Conflict

Through this study it is clear that there are numerous interlinking factors that lead to and impact on conflict trends. Local or district-level conflicts that have been discussed on the basis of CPAU Peace Council data can be understood as linked to causes at provincial, national, and even regional levels. Effectively pursuing an agenda of local-level conflict resolution thus requires an examination and understanding of the often complex higher level conflicts and factors of influence. The table below aims to consolidate and present some of the numerous possible causal links between local conflict and contributing higher level factors, which are outlined as they apply to the categories of 'Regional', 'National' and 'Provincial'.

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[17] It is interesting to note that Gulbuddin Hekmetyar comes from Imam Sahib a district north of Kunduz city (Rubin 2002).

Table 4 Dimensions of conflict - Kunduz[18]

Local Conflict	Regional	National	Provincial
1. Land and water conflicts – Type 1 - localised livelihoods	N/A	N/A	Improved access to water (i.e. irrigation) gives Kunduz a different nature of water related conflict
2. Land conflict – Type 2 – Land acquisition	N/A	Return of Pashtuns displaced after 2001 and return of other refugees increasing land disputes	Local commanders holding the refugees' alienated land

Local strongmen controlling the irrigation system possibly affiliated to some dominant families |
| **3. Land conflict – Type 3 – migration of nomadic groups** | | Kuchi movements (potentially – but appear unproblematic at the moment) | Kuchi movements (potentially – but appear unproblematic at the moment) |
| **4. Activity of government opposition groups** | Unknown | Unknown | Some kind of local support – possibly in Aliabad

External labeling of the Pashtun population as 'Taliban' could be self-enforcing and escalate ethnic tensions |
| **5. Inter-party or factional conflicts** | | Conflict between national level commanders | Respective networks of commanders in violent competition

Insecurity at the local level and possibly armament as a reaction |
| **6. Criminal activities** | Cross-border commodity chains, e.g. for opium, cars, etc. | National opium trading networks | Networks of commanders/ government officials regulating illegal economic activities |
| **7. Debt and financial conflicts** | N/A | N/A | The urban nature of Kunduz's economy may promote different kinds of financial conflicts (such as over business interests) |
| **8. Marriage and domestic violence** | N/A | Engagement disputes can cause larger public conflicts and feuds; family disputes over land | Wedding costs and *Toyana* generate economic hardship and debt

Gender relations and inheritance customs perpetuate inequities |

Whilst there are conflicts involving different ethnic groups, they currently do not seem to be mobilised along ethnic lines – i.e. the ethnicity of the groups involved is incidental and not the driving factor of conflict. It is

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[18] The design of this table was inspired by (Autesserre 2006) who argued that in addressing conflicts in Eastern Congo the national and regional conflicts and their linkages to and expression in local conflict must be understood. The table here adds another dimension, the Province, which is critical to the state apparatus in Afghanistan.

access to resources, regardless of ethnicity, and historical local political networks which seem to be the determining factors. However, this is not the only dimension of land conflicts, as a significant proportion takes place within families over inheritance. While important factors for the escalation of land and water conflicts are located at the national level, key decision makers do sit at the provincial level and important alliances Can be crafted there to reduce local conflict.

The regulation of criminal activities including the cross-border trade by networks of local commanders also potentially constitutes a key element for understanding violence at the local and provincial level. Cross border trade is paramount for the continuing patronage-role of local commanders and as different networks appear to compete for lucrative sectors, this is probably linked to factional conflicts – though as noted above it is often difficult to distinguish factional conflicts, and conflict involving the state and other armed actors.

The current state of affairs in the factional conflict between the networks of Dostum and Gen. Daoud is somewhat unclear given Dostum's current stay in Turkey. The current position of a Pashtun governor, a Pashtun and member of Hizb-i Tanzim Dawat-i Islami-i Afghanistan (Sayaf), appears to represent some sort of accommodation along party lines, rather than ethnic ones. The overriding concern for the local population is whether this accommodation could change with the increasing criminality and anti-government activities which along with factional fighting fuels insecurity for the general population. As government officials and commanders are closely linked, the state is not always seen as source of protection, there is a risk that sections of the population may arm themselves and / or turn to third parties for protection. This may tie into local support for external Anti-Government Elements (AGEs).

The causes and consequences of the clearly escalating Taleban activities in Kunduz cannot be properly assessed without further information. It appears, however, that the movement is not deeply rooted in the local society, but rather has struck some loose alliances for support. This could be linked to the continuing alienation of parts of the Pashtun population against the multi-ethnic groups that have taken control of local power structures. The external labelling of Pashtuns as 'Taleban' could turn out to be self-enforcing with the potential consequence that increased Taleban presence further increases of the risk of an ethnicisation and violent escalation of land conflicts which have become somewhat de-ethnicised in the last few years (Bhatia and Sedra 2008).

8. Conclusion

The conflicts most likely to trigger violent escalation in Kunduz are land conflicts. In as far as the land of Pashtuns displaced post-2001 is concerned, the land-conflicts have taken on some ethnic characteristics, but are in essence conflicts over resources but set within the context of factional groups being heavily involved in local governance structures. The danger of current developments seems to be that political parties at the provincial level are trying to position themselves as protectors of Tajik and Uzbek interests and contribute to an escalation of land conflicts. In apposition the Taleban are then able to present themselves as protectors of Pashtun interests in Kunduz.

Solving the land conflicts in Kunduz depends on achieving political settlements between local strongmen and influential Pashtun and non-Pashtun families at the district level and between different political factions within the provincial government. Particularly the relationships between the (Pashtun) governor, the Chief of Police and the informal leaders in the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) demand attention.

In order to thwart future attempts at capitalising on land issues in Kunduz, a rapid settlement of the cases of land alienated from refugees needs to be achieved. A response to land conflicts would have to rest on three pillars. 1) Local Peace Councils could act as effective conflict resolution bodies that can defuse some of the inheritance conflicts related to land. 2) To a limited degree, they could also put pressure on local commanders to negotiate settlements regarding returning refugees and IDPs' access to land. This settlement, however, is at

its core legal and political and may have to be negotiated at the district or provincial level with the participation of local elders and the political parties, to whom local commanders may be accountable to a limited degree. 3) Open up additional non-agrarian livelihood opportunities to reduce the dependency on land.

Whilst the core conflict axis into which most other conflict dynamics tie is land disputes solving land disputes will not solve other conflict dimensions automatically, but it will reduce the risk of their further escalation. There are two major areas of other conflicts which need to be considered; the links between criminality and the economy and factional fighting.

Criminality is increasing and in the case of Kunduz is more significant than resistance to government. Crime, including the illegal cross-border trade, seems to directly feed into the political authority of local commanders, thus making it very hard to tackle. It feeds in to a growing perception that the government is self-serving and unlikely to respond to the needs of local people. This is not helped by the fact that many of the people alleged to have been involved in illegal trade are also involved in land related conflicts. This then threatens the government's ability to function and increases the potential of disgruntled elements of society siding with resistance groups or para-statal structures run by political parties.

Factional fighting itself is equally hard to address and an issue for long-term state-building. Factional conflict, in Kunduz's case primarily between parties, has tied into communal divides in the past and might do so again. There seems to be a dynamism where ethnicity can be used for mobilising certain groups against others (especially Pashtuns – non-Pashtuns) but in other periods mobilising of armed forces seems to be around economic or familial connection rather than ethnic ones. In the current period, as in the Mujahideen period there has been a tendency for non-ethnicised mobilisation but this may be shifting towards an increasingly ethnicised division between groups included and excluded from government and other positions of authority.

There is currently little evidence of armed confrontation between parties in Kunduz (though some of the clashes involving government forces may be proxies for those conflicts), but the high number of illegally armed groups, the former presence of the 6th Corps of the AMF, and the long term presence of a number of political parties would seem to indicate that open clashes are a possibility. This has significant implications for countering the increasing activities of the Taleban which are spreading in some districts in the province. The general degree of ethnic polarization facilitates the generic labelling of Pashtuns as Taleban, which risks being self-enforcing suggesting that part of a strategy to counter the Taleban thus has to be to counter the alienation of Kunduz' Pashtuns, both through solving the land issues and providing security.

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