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# Conflict and Food Insecurity

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## ABSTRACT

The intersection of conflict and food insecurity presents a specific challenge for policy-makers, and is one of the key obstacles to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals target of Zero Hunger by 2030. This policy paper works to provide a new perspective for policy-makers, moving beyond direct conflict-associated drivers of food insecurity and incorporating a range of policy areas, including environmental, agricultural, political and economic considerations. This framework is outlined in section II of this paper and covers six categories of analysis across two case studies, accounting for direct and tangential links to food insecurity as well as drivers that are both endogenous and exogenous to the conflict situation itself. Sections III and IV provide case studies of Afghanistan and Iraq respectively, while Section V explains this paper's recommendations for how to ameliorate current policy. Analysis showed that key areas for improvement to improve the food security situation in Iraq include the development of new sustainable water management strategies and the replacement of the Public Distribution System with mobile cash transfers. In Afghanistan, potential improvements to food security could be accrued through increasing the involvement of civil society in the development of new agricultural, land and water management programs as part of a broader peacebuilding strategy, as well as increased vocational skills support for vulnerable groups such as female heads of households and internally-displaced persons. Section VI discusses broader lessons for the policy-making community, specifically, how the incorporation of local knowledge, holistic peacebuilding strategies and cross-cutting policy in food insecurity mitigation strategies could help to improve best practices towards food security policy in conflict-affected areas.

## ACRONYMS

**AFSeN:** Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Strategic Plan

**ANDS:** Afghanistan National Development Strategy

**ANDSF:** Afghan National Defense and Security Forces.

**ANPDF:** Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework

**CARD-F:** Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Facility

**ELRP:** Emergency Livelihoods Response Plan

**ERWs:** Explosive Remnants of War

**FAO:** Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

**GRFC:** Global Report on Food Crises

**HRP:** Humanitarian Response Plan

**IDP:** Internally displaced persons

**NDP:** Iraqi National Development Plan

**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organisation

**PDS:** Public Distribution System

**UXO:** Unexploded Ordnance

**WFP:** World Food Programme

## KEY DEFINITIONS

### Civil society

Civil society refers to a wide array of organisations, community groups, non-governmental organisations [NGOs], labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and foundations.<sup>1</sup> Civil society is distinct from government or business.

### Community resilience

Community resilience is the sustained ability of a community to use available resources (energy, communication, transportation, food, etc.) to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations (e.g. economic collapse to global catastrophic risks).<sup>2</sup> Multi-generational social, psychological and spiritual factors can also come into play, particularly in areas of long-running conflict.

### Critical infrastructure

Those facilities, systems, sites, information, people, networks and processes necessary for a country to function and upon which daily life depends. Critical infrastructure also includes some functions, sites and organisations which are not critical to the maintenance of essential services, but which need protection due to the potential danger to the public.<sup>3</sup>

### Deficiency

A nutritional deficiency occurs when the body does not absorb or get from food the necessary amount of a nutrient. Deficiencies can lead to a variety of health problems, including digestion problems, skin disorders, stunted or defective bone growth and even dementia.<sup>4</sup> Deficiencies can be more apparent, such as energy-protein undernourishment, or less visible, such as micronutrient deficiency which is also known as ‘hidden hunger’.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A Jezard, ‘Who And What Is ‘Civil Society?’’, World Economic Forum (2018). Available online: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/what-is-civil-society/>, accessed 22 March 2021.

<sup>2</sup> L Boshier and K Chmutina, *Disaster Risk Reduction for the Built Environment* (Wiley-Blackwell 2017) p.32.

<sup>3</sup> CPNI, ‘Critical National Infrastructure’ (*Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure*); Available online: <https://www.cpni.gov.uk/critical-national-infrastructure-0>, accessed 22 March 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Healthline, ‘Nutritional Deficiencies (Malnutrition)’ <https://www.healthline.com/health/malnutrition>, accessed 22 March 2021.

<sup>5</sup> H Ritchie and M Roser, *Micronutrient Deficiency* (2020). Published online at OurWorldInData.org. Retrieved 11 November 2020, from <https://ourworldindata.org/micronutrient-deficiency>.

## Food access

Access by individuals to adequate resources (entitlements) for acquiring appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. Entitlements are defined as the set of all commodity bundles over which a person can establish command given the legal, political, economic and social arrangements of the community in which they live (including traditional rights such as access to common resources).<sup>6</sup>

## Food price shocks

Food price shocks – also known as agricultural commodity price shocks – are significant types of economic shock where there is a sudden, radical change in the price of basic foodstuffs.<sup>7</sup>

## Patronage

Patronage is the appointment or hiring of a person to a government post on the basis of political loyalty. Elected officials at the national, state, and local levels of government use such appointments to reward the people who help them win and maintain office.<sup>8</sup>

## Social cohesion

Social cohesion refers to the extent of connectedness and solidarity among groups in society. It identifies two main dimensions: the sense of belonging in a community and the relationships among members within the community itself.<sup>9</sup>

## Weak state

A state that is weak in its core functions of providing security to its citizens (security gap), providing basic services – including adequate food security – to its citizens (capacity gap), and having legitimacy among its people (legitimacy gap).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> FAO, 'Food Security' (*Policy Brief*, June 2006)

[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/faoit/aly/documents/pdf/pdf\\_Food\\_Security\\_Concept\\_Note.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/faoit/aly/documents/pdf/pdf_Food_Security_Concept_Note.pdf) – accessed 22 March 2021.

<sup>7</sup> T Addison, A Ghoshray, M P Stamatogiannis, 'Agricultural Commodity Price Shocks and Their Effect on Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Journal of Agricultural Economics* 67:1 (2016), pp.47–61.

<sup>8</sup> D Baracska, 'Political Patronage' (*THE FIRST AMENDMENT ENCYCLOPEDIA*, 2009) <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1140/political-patronage> – accessed 22 March 2021.

<sup>9</sup> A Manca, 'Social Cohesion' (*Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*, 2014) [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-94-007-0753-5\\_2739](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-94-007-0753-5_2739) – accessed 22 March 2021

<sup>10</sup> J Tyagi, 'Weak States' (*The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization*, 29 February 2012) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog809> – accessed 22 March 2021.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper explores the causes of food insecurity in Afghanistan and Iraq and analyses current actions taken to mitigate that insecurity. The paper then identifies specific policy recommendations in order to improve the food security situation in Afghanistan and Iraq.

This paper assesses both conflict-related and non-conflict-related factors through a framework of six different policy areas. Key ongoing threats to food security identified across both countries included the impacts of corruption, depleting groundwater resources and limited livelihood resilience among the most vulnerable groups.

In order to close identified gaps in policy, the authors of this paper recommend the implementation of several key proposals in Afghanistan, including:

- Increased engagement of civil society in the development of new agricultural programmes, land entitlements and water-user associations, as part of a multi-dimensional peacebuilding programme.
- Economic and technological support for female-headed households employed within the agricultural industry.
- Quarterly audits of the Afghan Personnel and Pay System (APPS) to ensure increased financial accountability and transparency in order to combat corruption in the military.

The authors recommend the following key proposals be implemented in Iraq:

- Creation of anti-corruption institutions in order to reduce military corruption, in line with efforts to reduce corruption among public officials.
- Establishment of a sustainable water resource management strategy, which would include transferable pumping permits and increased engagement between water-users and stakeholders to discuss water-conserving agricultural technologies.
- Replacement of the Public Distribution System (PDS) with mobile cash transfer systems to lead to implementation of a more efficient and welfare-enhancing food security support mechanism.

As a result of the analysis conducted in the context of Afghanistan and Iraq, the authors of this paper also highlight some key considerations relevant to policy-makers when formulating policy to improve food security in conflict areas:

- Firstly, the nuance and specificity of particular contexts of conflict necessitates multifaceted approaches to policy-making that not only go beyond directly conflict-related policy areas, but specifically seek out areas of integration in non-conflict-related sectors.
- There are a series of challenges in the balancing of short-term (crisis-response) and long-term (development) needs for food-secure policy-making in conflict zones. Policy-making in conflict zones currently tends towards the crisis-response rather than the longer term.
- There is evidence to support the increased efficacy of both food security policy and peacebuilding policy when the two are combined effectively. Increased joint ownership between national governments and civil society with regards to policy implementation can reduce the likelihood of social grievances. This strengthening of civil society, through a peacebuilding approach, may also reduce the impact of government and military corruption, aid dependency and the long-term food security of households.

Finally, we must also recognise the influence of the writers' western positionality in the production of this policy paper. In order to incorporate existing local practices and challenges into the policy recommendations, this paper includes local knowledge in Iraq and Afghanistan from peer-reviewed academic sources. Through this, the paper seeks to find an intersection between existing global practices and specific local challenges in order to recommend the most appropriate, context-sensitive policies.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity is a global issue, and one that remains critical despite efforts to combat it. While from a historical perspective food insecurity has declined, in the last few years there has been an unfortunate resurgence. This is in spite of an increase in humanitarian assistance spending, which rose by over \$1 billion between 2016 and 2018.<sup>11</sup> Rising global food insecurity comes in conjunction with an increase in instances of violent conflict – a correlation that has attracted a significant amount of research and analysis.<sup>12</sup> As of 2019, all 19 countries that the FAO classifies as being in a “protracted food crisis” are also impacted by conflict.<sup>13</sup> In this paper, analysis of food insecurity in conflict will be carried out within a newly-developed framework of six policy areas. These six categories are direct conflict factors, environmental factors, structural and market factors, agricultural factors, exogenous shock factors and political factors. This categorisation, while not exhaustive, allows for a robust and holistic analysis of where improvements to food security can be made.

This paper will use case studies of Afghanistan and Iraq to assess current approaches to improving food security in conflict-affected states and draw out practical recommendations for future improvements. Both of these countries were identified in the 2020 Global Report on Food Crises as being acutely food insecure as well as experiencing violent conflict. These two cases are useful for a comparative approach: Afghanistan and Iraq experience similar drivers of conflict (including corruption,<sup>14</sup> poor governance,<sup>15</sup> weak military forces,<sup>16</sup> foreign intervention and sectarianism), are affected by similar climactic concerns and are both long-term recipients of

<sup>11</sup> FAO, '2020 Global report on food crises: Joint analysis for better decisions', (*Food Security Information Network (FSIN)*, 2020) <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2020-global-report-food-crises-joint-analysis-better-decisions>, p.6 – accessed 22 March 2021.

<sup>12</sup> FAO, '2020 Global report on food crises: Joint analysis for better decisions', (*Food Security Information Network (FSIN)*, 2020) <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2020-global-report-food-crises-joint-analysis-better-decisions> p.3 – accessed 22 March 2021.

<sup>13</sup> C Martin-shields and W Stojetz, 'Food security and conflict: Empirical challenges and future opportunities for research and policy making on food security and conflict' FAO AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS WORKING PAPER 18-04 (September 2018), <<http://www.fao.org/3/CA1587EN/ca1587en.pdf>> - accessed 22 March 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 'U.S. Lessons Learned In Afghanistan' (2020); 'Arab Barometer V; Iraq Country Report' (Arab Barometer 2019) <[https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV\\_Iraq\\_Report\\_Public-Opinion\\_2019.pdf](https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV_Iraq_Report_Public-Opinion_2019.pdf)> accessed 17 August 2020.

<sup>15</sup> N Poole, C Echavez and D Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' (2018) 10 Food Security; Iraq Country Report' (Arab Barometer 2019) <[https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV\\_Iraq\\_Report\\_Public-Opinion\\_2019.pdf](https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV_Iraq_Report_Public-Opinion_2019.pdf)> accessed 17 August 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 'U.S. Lessons Learned In Afghanistan' (2020); A Cordesman, 'Iraq as a Failed State', Center For Strategic and International Studies 1,1 (2019),

foreign aid. They therefore provide ideal contexts in which to investigate and analyse previous policy decisions. However, there are important differences between the food insecurity situations in both countries. As such, this paper provides a separate list of recommendations for each country. However, the final section of this paper will move beyond the case studies themselves to draw broader practical lessons for future policymaking from this research exercise.

## II. FOOD INSECURITY AND CONFLICT

### II.I. THE GROWING PROBLEM OF FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity has increased in recent years.<sup>17</sup> In 2019, estimates showed that 690 million people worldwide were undernourished – a figure that had increased by 10 million in only one year, and 60 million in the last five years.<sup>18</sup> Of those 690 million people, 135 million were acutely food insecure – that is, classified as ‘in crisis’ or worse.<sup>19</sup> This figure, too, had increased since previous assessments of the same type.<sup>20</sup> As such, in spite of rising humanitarian assistance, the world does not appear set to meet the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals – specifically, Zero Hunger by 2030.<sup>21</sup> The growing problem of food insecurity can be particularly attributed to a combination of increasing cases of conflict,<sup>22</sup> an increase in the protraction of those conflicts and multiple climate-related shocks.<sup>23</sup> In 2020, there were unprecedented challenges to achieving the aims of reducing hunger, insecurity and malnutrition, in the forms of record-breaking Desert

<sup>17</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, ‘The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020’, <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9692en>, p. xviii. Accessed 5 March 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, ‘The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020’, <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9692en>. P. xvi. Accessed 5 March 2021.

<sup>19</sup> FAO, ‘2020 Global report on food crises: Joint analysis for better decisions’ (*Food Security Information Network (FSIN)*, 2020) <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2020-global-report-food-crises-joint-analysis-better-decisions> p. 2. Accessed 24 March 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Tilman Brück and Marco D’errico, ‘Food security and violent conflict: Introduction to the special issue’ *World Development* 117(2019), 167-171.

<sup>21</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, ‘The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020’, <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9692en>.

<sup>22</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, ‘The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020’, <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9692en>, p. xviii.

<sup>23</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, ‘The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020’, <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9692en>, p. xviii.

Locust outbreaks and the ongoing, disastrous COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>24</sup> These challenges have exacerbated what is already a complex issue.

The FAO defines food security as when “all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”<sup>25</sup> This definition necessitates a multifaceted approach to understanding food insecurity which goes further than a mere lack of food. Food might be available but inaccessible (be it economic or physical inaccessibility), unsafe for consumption or nutritionally inadequate for a healthy and active lifestyle. The future stability of the food supply is, additionally, central to food security (including, for example, physical supply chains or food-related futures prices), as the concept entails the idea that “vulnerable population groups and individuals [must] receive adequate food even in times of severe resource constraints”.<sup>26</sup> Food security must also be considered on different geographical levels: the national, regional, local and household. Food security is not uniform, and people may be more food insecure in less agriculturally-productive regions or less food insecure in a household with multiple livelihood options. Individual circumstances are also a consideration in food security: for example, child dependency may limit security due to financial constraints, and what might be sufficiently nutritious for an adult male may not provide adequate healthy nutrition for a pregnant female.

Undertaking an analysis of food security necessitates an understanding of the scope of the problem, and the mechanisms behind it. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is an initiative designed to provide a cohesive analysis of food insecurity in different countries across the world.<sup>27</sup> This is a useful framework for analysis as it accounts for local contexts as well as “food availability, access, utilization and stability, and vulnerability and hazards”, and does not consider states as monoliths in terms of food security.<sup>28</sup> Data collated on food insecurity in Afghanistan showed a total of 11.3 million people in IPC category 3 (Crisis) or

<sup>24</sup> FAO, '2020 Global report on food crises: Joint analysis for better decisions' (*Food Security Information Network (FSIN)*, 2020) <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2020-global-report-food-crises-joint-analysis-better-decisions> - accessed 24 March 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Food climate research network (FCRN), 'What is food security?' (*Foodsource*, 12 March 2018) <https://foodsource.org.uk/building-blocks/what-food-security> - accessed 24 March 2021.

<sup>26</sup> HLPE (2020). *Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security*. Rome. Retrieved 6 December 2020, from <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9731en/ca9731en.pdf> p.7

<sup>27</sup> IPC, 'IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY CLASSIFICATION' (*IPC*, 2019) <<http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/ipc-overview-and-classification-system/ipc-acute-food-insecurity-classification/en/>> - accessed 24 March 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

above.<sup>29</sup> Iraq, however, has not been assessed yet in this way. The Global Report on Food Crises 2020 identified 1.8 million people in Iraq who were in need of urgent assistance, however the same report noted that data was not available for the ‘marginally food insecure’.<sup>30</sup>

Despite major international efforts in Afghanistan, and some progress in Iraq since the defeat of ISIS in 2017, both states remain extremely vulnerable in terms of food security and face severe challenges in the quest to reduce hunger. In Afghanistan, “complex and protracted conflicts” in addition to climactic changes, underemployment and its associated financial insecurity, as well as corruption are the key contributing factors to this growing problem.<sup>31</sup> For Iraq, in addition to the violence and insecurity in the remaining conflict-affected regions of the country, the World Food Programme (WFP) highlights the “political and security transitions, economic instability, and social unrest due to rising unemployment, eroded public services and persistent low standards of living” as central challenges to food security.<sup>32</sup>

## II.II. THE FOOD INSECURITY-CONFLICT NEXUS

While there are multiple factors influencing food insecurity, the mutually-interactive processes between conflict and food insecurity are of particular concern to this paper. Of those suffering from hunger and food insecurity globally, approximately 60% live in countries that are affected by conflict.<sup>33</sup> Conflict can bring about food insecurity and food insecurity can perpetuate conflict – creating a vicious cycle, and a unique challenge for policy analysis and implementation. Recent changes in the character of war – termed ‘new wars’<sup>34</sup> – have increased the risk of food insecurity which, particularly when exacerbated by climactic changes and exogenous shocks, in turn increases the chances of further conflict.

Modern conflicts are increasingly protracted, thus extending conflict-related food insecurity, partly due to the increased proliferation of actors in war. Conflict is no longer simply the purview

<sup>29</sup> FAO, '2020 Global report on food crises: Joint analysis for better decisions' (*Food Security Information Network (FSIN)*, 2020) <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2020-global-report-food-crises-joint-analysis-better-decisions>, p.52 – accessed 24 March 2021.

<sup>30</sup> FAO, '2020 Global report on food crises: Joint analysis for better decisions' (*Food Security Information Network (FSIN)*, 2020) <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2020-global-report-food-crises-joint-analysis-better-decisions>, p.109 – accessed 24 March 2021.

<sup>31</sup> World Food Programme, 'Afghanistan' <<https://www.wfp.org/countries/afghanistan>> accessed 4 March 2021

<sup>32</sup> World Food Programme, 'Iraq' <<https://www.wfp.org/countries/afghanistan>> accessed 4 March 2021

<sup>33</sup> World food programme, 'Fact Sheet: Hunger & Conflict' (12 June 2019) <<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP-0000105972.pdf>> accessed 4 March 2021

<sup>34</sup> Mary Kaldor, 'In Defence of New Wars', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2:1 (2013), 1-16

of states, but of warlords and local militias too. The expansion of conflict outside the realms of the state means that achieving peace is increasingly difficult and that war has a more destructive effect on state institutions. Indeed, “the processes which made war central to European state building are making war a major obstacle for state building in the developing world today,”<sup>35</sup> as new wars, occurring in the context of declining state capacity, act to speed up that decline. Conflict actors are increasingly diffused among society, and as a result ceasefires and peace processes are harder to achieve. Additionally, forms of financing warfare have changed along with this shift in actors. The lack of tax revenue available in fragile states means alternative forms of finance are sought out – one such new predatory finance method is the ‘taxation’, or forcible seizure, of humanitarian aid which has led to an increased vulnerability to fluctuations in food supply and prices.<sup>36</sup> This protraction of conflict, combined with weakening state functionality, places an ongoing strain on food supply systems with little recourse for improvement as long as the conflict continues.

The conduct of modern war often involves forced displacement, representing another aspect of ‘new war’ that heightens the risk of food insecurity. The concept of ‘decisive battles’ has waned as actors and methods of warfare have diversified. Violence against civilians and forcible displacement have become common tactics to gain control of territory. As noted by Abbey Steele, strategic sectarian violence in Iraq caused population displacement even within city boundaries and the creation of segregated communities.<sup>37</sup> These tactics have a knock-on effect on food security as forced, often sudden, changes in regional populations affect the dynamics of supply and demand and can create localised food crises.

Conflict can also occur as a consequence of food insecurity. Population displacement – be it as a tactic or indirect consequence of war – can create new potential sites of conflict between settled individuals, displaced persons and returnees. Rural populations are particularly vulnerable to this issue.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, food insecurity can motivate conflicts when inequalities in food access and rising food prices increase perceived marginalisation, which can spark violence when this is

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<sup>35</sup> Anna Leander, “Wars and the un-making of states: taking Tilly seriously in the contemporary world”, in S. Guzzini and D. Jung (eds), *Copenhagen Peace Research: Conceptual Innovations and Contemporary Security Analysis* (London and New York: Routledge 2004), pp.69-80.

<sup>36</sup> Mary Kaldor, ‘In Defence of New Wars’, *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2:1 (2013), p.3

<sup>37</sup> Abbey Steele, ‘Civilian resettlement patterns in civil war’, *Journal of Peace Research* 56:1 (2019), 28–41

<sup>38</sup> Héctor Morales-Muñoz, S Jha, M Bonnatti, H Alff, S Kurtenbach, S Sieber, ‘Exploring Connections—Environmental Change, Food Security And Violence As Drivers Of Migration—A Critical Review Of Research’, *Sustainability* 12:14 (2020).

formed along extant axes of social cleavage and disrupted social cohesion.<sup>39</sup> It is worth noting that in some cases, severe food insecurity can reduce engagement in conflict due to a reduced resource base.<sup>40</sup> Despite this, the longer-term causes of the violent conflict would remain in such a case, and be likely to spark up again as soon as resources allow.

As such, it is no wonder that the increase in conflicts in the past four or so years correlates so strongly with an increase in hunger.<sup>41</sup> Conflict's influence over food security cannot be underestimated and policy-making must take these complex linkages and reciprocal effects into account when trying to improve food security in conflict-affected areas. It is not solely the direct impacts of war, however, that are so significant when considering this nexus, but also the vulnerability to other drivers of food insecurity that conflict creates. The limited state functionality and reduced resource base created by war means that resilience and adaptability in the face of non-conflict related drivers of food insecurity, particularly exogenous shocks, are greatly diminished. Price volatility in food-related commodity futures, global pandemics, economic depressions and climate change-driven weather events are just some of the key issues that interact with, and have their impacts exacerbated by, the food insecurity-conflict nexus. Therefore, the dynamics of food security and conflict cannot be considered just in terms of conflict. Rather, effective policymaking requires holistic analyses of the various drivers of food insecurity, situated within the context of conflict.

### II.III. SIX DRIVERS OF FOOD INSECURITY IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED STATES

The view that a lack of food is the primary driver of food insecurity – known as the ‘Food Availability Decline’ (FAD) approach – is too simplistic to be useful in contextualised policymaking.<sup>42</sup> The institutions and systems that bar access to food must also be considered. Amartya Sen developed this alternative concept – the ‘Entitlement Failure Approach’ – in his 1983 work ‘Poverty and Famines’,<sup>43</sup> blaming “poverty for the inability of people to gain access to

<sup>39</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, ‘Conflict, Migration And Food Security: The Role Of Agriculture And Rural Development’ (International Food Policy Research Institute 2017).

<sup>40</sup> C Hendrix, and H Brinkman, ‘Food Insecurity And Conflict Dynamics: Causal Linkages And Complex Feedbacks’, *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 2 (2013).

<sup>41</sup> Tilman Brück and Marco D'errico, ‘Food security and violent conflict: Introduction to the special issue’, *World Development* 117 (2019), 167-171

<sup>42</sup> Joseph Yaro, ‘Theorizing food insecurity: building a livelihood vulnerability framework for researching food insecurity’, *Norwegian Journal of Geography* 58:1 (2004), 23-37

<sup>43</sup> Amartya Sen, ‘Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation’ [1983].

food” and incorporating an understanding of economic systems and human rights into food security.<sup>44</sup> More recently, there has also been recognition of the need to “tackle issues of poverty, malnutrition, and food security in a holistic way”.<sup>45</sup> This has led to the ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Approach’ for understanding household food insecurity. This framework focuses on the “experiences of people in differentiated environments to influence the analysis of social phenomena”,<sup>46</sup> moving away from considering states, or even regions, as a monolith. It takes into account the causal factors, such as government, laws and policies, behind the ‘livelihood strategies’ that individuals choose to follow – which is an important acknowledgement of individual agency and adaptation within systems.<sup>47</sup> Although existing approaches, as well as recent OECD frameworks<sup>48</sup> and FAO publications, have their merits, this paper puts forward a new framework for considering food insecurity in conflict-affected areas. In doing so the authors of this paper do not seek to replace existing methods of analysing food insecurity, but rather provide a complement to them through a new, solution-oriented and holistic framework.

The framework developed by the authors of this paper proposes six ‘policy categories’ of drivers of food insecurity in conflict-affected areas. These six drivers are direct conflict factors, environmental factors, structural and market factors, agricultural factors, exogenous shock factors and political factors. Existing literature on food insecurity from the FAO,<sup>49</sup> OECD<sup>50</sup> and DFID<sup>51</sup>, as well as various academic journal publications, has repeatedly emphasised the destruction caused by war, climate change, economic and supply chain issues, vulnerability to shocks and declining state capacity as key issues for consideration. These six categories incorporate these ideas and group them not in terms of drivers of insecurity, but rather in terms of how policy might be designed to respond to them. For example, climate change is a single ‘causal factor’ that

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 24-5

<sup>45</sup> Jessup-Varnum, Megan, "Food Security and the Sustainable Livelihood Approach to Development in Uganda", University Honors Theses (2018), Paper 556.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p.27.

<sup>47</sup> O Serrat, *The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach*. In: *Knowledge Solutions* (Springer, Singapore, 2017).

<sup>48</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016. ‘The Framework for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Thematic Module - Food Security’. SG/PCD(2016)2. Available <

[http://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/Framework\\_Thematic%20Module\\_Food%20Security\\_PCD\(2016\)2.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/Framework_Thematic%20Module_Food%20Security_PCD(2016)2.pdf)> p. 5 – accessed 25 March 2021.

<sup>49</sup> FAO, '2020 Global report on food crises: Joint analysis for better decisions' (*Food Security Information Network (FSIN)*, 2020) <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2020-global-report-food-crises-joint-analysis-better-decisions> – accessed 25 March 2021.

<sup>50</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2016. ‘The Framework for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development Thematic Module - Food Security’. SG/PCD(2016)2. Available <

[http://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/Framework\\_Thematic%20Module\\_Food%20Security\\_PCD\(2016\)2.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/Framework_Thematic%20Module_Food%20Security_PCD(2016)2.pdf)> - accessed 25 March 2021.

<sup>51</sup> H Wright, P Kristjanson, G Bhatta, ‘Understanding Adaptive Capacity: Sustainable Livelihoods and Food Security in Coastal Bangladesh’, CCAFS Working Paper No. 32 (2012), CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS).

necessitates policy responses across agricultural policy and environmental policy, as well as targeted resilience-building policies to combat shock weather events. This framework thus allows for the current response to climate change-related food security to be assessed holistically against these different standards, providing a flexible yet targeted approach to policy recommendations.

The six categories are by no means exhaustive, however most aspects of the topic can fit into one of these categories. Additionally, it facilitates a flexible approach to developing policy recommendations within and across distinct policy sectors, helping to maintain horizontal coherence. It is hoped that by placing direct conflict factors in line with – rather than above – other policy areas, this paper can contribute to existing literature by highlighting the vast array of drivers of food insecurity in conflict-affected areas as well as demonstrating the benefits of conducting horizontally-coherent analysis across agricultural, development, environmental, security and peacebuilding sectors.

The following six sections will now define what is meant by each category in turn. These six categories will then continue to be used as a framework throughout the rest of the paper, firstly in laying out the specific context of food insecurity in Afghanistan and Iraq, and then in categorizing the policy recommendations proposed in this paper.

## **i. Direct conflict factors**

Direct conflict factors reflect the impact of the destructive nature of conflict on food. This can be understood in terms of the human cost and the physical impacts of conflict including the loss of lives – particularly of young, working-age individuals who might otherwise have contributed to agriculture, and the economy. Population displacement, both as a tactic of contemporary conflicts and a consequence, is another way that conflict might influence food security. Additionally, long-term impacts on mental and physical health as a consequence of conflict can impact the ability of individuals to ensure a sustainable livelihood for themselves.

Conflict also has tangible, physical impacts on the land which affect food security. Discharge of ammunition can create local insecurity which obstructs normal economic and agricultural activity. Shelling, airstrikes and other heavy artillery discharge can also lead to the destruction of crops in the short term, while the creation of minefields and chemical leaching from weapons use may

reduce the availability of arable land in the long run.<sup>52</sup> In addition to the effect of conflict on farming land, it also has an effect on critical infrastructure and state services that in turn may impact the long-term capacity for resilience in the face of food shortages.

## ii. Environmental factors

Environmental factors are the geographical, climactic and ecological constraints on food production. This may be due to terrain being unsuitable for agriculture, lack of rain or an otherwise difficult climate making it difficult to grow a wide enough variety of crops to ensure adequate nutrition. A significant and ongoing environmental threat to food security globally is climate change. The FAO's Climate Change and Food Security Framework highlights rising temperatures, changes in precipitation, the increasing likelihood of unexpected weather events and an "increase in the frequency, duration and intensity of droughts"<sup>53</sup> as among the most likely outcomes of climate change. These changes, over time, will also bring about other environmental changes in turn, for example increasing desertification seen across the Middle East and Asia,<sup>54</sup> as "agricultural sustainability is increasingly compromised by climate change".<sup>55</sup> Environmental drivers of food insecurity may also lie in the existence of rainy or growing seasons versus dry or lean seasons.<sup>56</sup> Environmental seasonality can represent a significant threat to food security during the periods where local agriculture is not possible – an effect that is compounded by climate change reducing the period of the year during which agriculture is viable.

## iii. Structural and market factors

Structural and market factors relate to the availability of food for purchase, the efficacy of supply chains and the economic power required to ensure food security across all different levels. Consideration of these factors is necessary for a holistic view of economic limitations, on an individual, national and international scale. On the individual level, structural and market factors may affect the availability of nutritious food for a given individual to buy – in terms of both cost and accessibility. A holistic approach to economic limitations also incorporates a livelihood-

<sup>52</sup> J Trevelyan, 'Farming minefields: economics of remediating land with moderate landmine and UXO contamination' (2002). Available at: [http://web.mit.edu/demining/assignments/farming\\_minefields-uwa.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/demining/assignments/farming_minefields-uwa.pdf) – accessed 25 March 2021.

<sup>53</sup> FAO interdepartmental working group on climate change, 'Climate change and food security: a framework' (2008), p.12. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/k2595e/k2595e00.pdf> – accessed 25 March 2021.

<sup>54</sup> C Malek, 'Desertification an imminent threat, creating unstable grounds for development' (*Arab News*, 17 October 2018) <<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1389081/middle-east>> accessed 10 September 2020.

<sup>55</sup> See N Poole, H Amiri, S Muhammad Amiri, I Farhank and G Zanella, 'Food production and consumption in Bamiyan Province, Afghanistan: the challenges of sustainability and seasonality for dietary diversity' *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability* 17(6) (2019), p. 413.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p. 414

based understanding of food insecurity, wherein lack of spending power and job security impacts the ability of a household to access nutritious food at all times. On the local and national scale, one might consider how supply chains operate, if food is effectively distributed across the country and if the country's economy is able to sustain necessary imports. On the international scale, one can look to global supply chains and global economic power. The presence and efficacy of international aid is a related factor with knock-on effects for supply and demand.

#### iv. Agricultural factors

Agricultural factors relate to the overall efficiency and efficacy of the agricultural sector. Limits to food security due to agricultural factors include outmoded farming technology, the use of techniques or seeds that do not provide optimum yields, and the use of arable land for non-edible products in a manner that compromises food security. This last example is of particular concern in conflict zones due to the value of 'cash crops' to the war economy – especially to insurgent leaders – over nutritious, edible varieties. Inequalities in land ownership, due to both formal and customary land rights, also present a legal constraint to effective farming practices. For example, limitations on plot sizes and division of inherited land may reduce the possible efficiency of farming methods.

The advent of Genetically Modified (GM) crops is additionally a significant factor in considering food security, as a “subject of public controversy”.<sup>57</sup> Research has shown that the use of GM crops on smallholder farms has helped reduce food insecurity, in particular as ‘cash crops’.<sup>58</sup>

Other relevant considerations include the availability of crops, any legislative barriers to the implementation of high-yield GM crops and, perhaps most significantly, issues surrounding corporate monopoly of some GM seeds that renders them inaccessible to local farmers.

#### v. Exogenous shock factors

Exogenous shocks are external and unpredictable events that have a significant impact on the economic performance and food security of a country. Such shocks might include black swan events,<sup>59</sup> freak weather events, natural disasters, global financial crises and public health shocks. Globalisation – while in many cases a boon for importing and exporting food – presents its own

<sup>57</sup> Qaim, Matin, and Shahzad Kouser. “Genetically modified crops and food security.” *PLoS one* vol. 8,6 e64879. 5 Jun. 2013, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0064879

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> J Chappelow, 'Black Swan' (*Investopedia*, 17 August 2020) <<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/blackswan.asp>> accessed 10 September 2020.

threats due to the economic interdependence it cultivates. Global cooperation is not always guaranteed and there has been a rise in protectionist tendencies in recent years, with some governments imposing restrictions on their exports in times of crisis.

The 2007-8 food crisis is an example of one such an ‘exogenous shock’, wherein a sudden rise in oil prices caused a drastic increase in fertilizer prices, and thus created global food price shocks. Between 2006 and 2008, world average prices rose by over 100% for wheat, corn and soybeans – and over 200% for rice.<sup>60</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic is a more recent example of an exogenous shock. Health analysts predict that this virus will continue to circulate for at least one or two more years,<sup>61</sup> as current vaccines require low storage temperatures, relying on infrastructure that many developing nations do not have.<sup>62</sup> The threat to life and health is only one aspect of the threat this pandemic presents to food security. There have been major disruptions to food supply chains in the wake of lockdown measures, which have affected the availability, pricing, and quality of food.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a global economic recession which has resulted in a dramatic loss of livelihoods and income on a global scale.<sup>64</sup> As a result of these impacts, the World Food Programme estimates that an additional 130 million people will face acute hunger as a result of the crisis, nearly doubling the current figure of 135 million.<sup>65</sup> With the projected increased likelihood of future pandemics,<sup>66</sup> resilience to exogenous shocks are of increasing significance to food security.

## vi. Political factors

Political factors relate to leadership-specific influences that can create issues for food security. This includes mismanagement or ineffective political decisions despite ‘best intentions’, as well as outright corruption. This might take the form of top-down pressure on farmers or economic incentives to produce specific crops, or inefficient governance practices, as well as the political

<sup>60</sup> A Mazhirov, 'Climate Change to Exacerbate Rising Food Prices' (*State of the Planet blog, Columbia University*, 22 March 2011) <<https://blogs.ei.columbia.edu/2011/03/22/climate-change-to-exacerbate-rising-food-prices/>> accessed 12 September 2020.

<sup>61</sup> Megan Scudellari, 'How the pandemic might play out in 2021 and beyond' [2020] *Nature* 1, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Alice Cuddy, 'Coronavirus vaccines: Will any countries get left out?' (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-54961045> 2020) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-54961045>> accessed 05 December 2020.

<sup>63</sup> C Barrett, 'Actions now can curb food systems fallout from Covid-19' [2020] *Nature* 1, 319.

<sup>64</sup> 'Global Economic Prospects' (World Bank 2020) <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects#overview>> accessed 05 December 2020.

<sup>65</sup> Peyvand Khorsandi, 'WFP chief warns of '\hunger pandemic\' as Global Food Crises Report launched' (World Food Programme Insight 2020) <<https://insight.wfp.org/wfp-chief-warns-of-hunger-pandemic-as-global-food-crises-report-launched-3ee3edb38e47>> accessed 05 December 2020.

<sup>66</sup> Victoria Gill, 'Coronavirus: This is not the last pandemic' (*BBC News*, 6 June 2020) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-52775386>> accessed 4 March 2021.

marginalisation of certain groups that exacerbates their insecurity. Negative political consequences of aid provision, including aid dependency, inefficient allocation of aid and political decisions that actively harm local markets and production in the name of short-term provision, also fall into this category. It should also be noted that food can be used as a political weapon in conflicts, with strategic distribution of supplies among combatants.

### III. CASE STUDY: AFGHANISTAN

#### III.I. CONTEXT

Conflict in Afghanistan is ongoing, although a peace agreement between the US and the Taliban has been reached.<sup>67</sup> There is no official cease-fire in place and as such violence has continued across the country, with air strikes carried out by the US and attacks on Afghan government and ANDSF targets by the Taliban, including high-profile attacks in Kabul.<sup>68</sup> Violence appears likely to continue and some observers have predicted a potential increase particularly in violence against civilians and non-combatants.<sup>69</sup> An uneasy withdrawal process might also exacerbate tensions - in some cases in the absence of US troops, and in other cases as a result of their continued presence.

This ongoing conflict places Afghanistan in its 40<sup>th</sup> unbroken year of such violence, and even prior to that, moments of peace have not always been long-lived. As a result, approximately a quarter of the Afghan labour force is unemployed, half of the population is below the national poverty line and food insecurity is rife.<sup>70</sup>

##### i. Current Levels of Food Insecurity

Over the past several years, food insecurity in Afghanistan has increased steadily in line with poverty levels. According to the World Food Program 54% of the Afghan population lives in poverty and, as of 2019, over 13 million Afghans, roughly 45% of the population, were food insecure.<sup>71</sup> USAID has labelled Afghanistan's current situation a "complex emergency" and even prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 estimated that 10.9 million people living in Afghanistan are expected to experience severe acute food insecurity in 2020.<sup>72</sup> In addition to inadequate

<sup>67</sup> Lyse Doucet, 'Afghan conflict: US and Taliban sign deal to end 18-year war' (*BBC News*, 29 February 2020) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-51689443> - accessed 25 March 2021.

<sup>68</sup> Council on foreign relations, 'War in Afghanistan' (*Global Conflict Tracker*, 2020) <<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-afghanistan>> - accessed 25 March 2021.

<sup>69</sup> Aced data, 'TEN CONFLICTS TO WORRY ABOUT IN 2020' (*The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project*, 29 January 2020) <https://acleddata.com/2020/01/23/ten-conflicts-to-worry-about-in-2020/> - accessed 25 March 2021.

<sup>70</sup> FAO, '2020 Global report on food crises: Joint analysis for better decisions' (*Food Security Information Network (FSIN)*, 2020) <<https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2020-global-report-food-crises-joint-analysis-better-decisions>> p. 53 - accessed 25 March 2021.

<sup>71</sup> Nandini Krishnan, Zihao Wang and Christina Wieser, 'Hunger before the Drought: Food Insecurity in Afghanistan' (The World Bank 2019) <<https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail>> accessed 17 August 2020; 'Afghanistan | World Food Programme' <<https://www.wfp.org/countries/afghanistan>> accessed 17 August 2020.

<sup>72</sup> 'Afghanistan -Complex Emergency (Fact Sheet)' (United States Agency for International Development 2020).

quantities of food, the diet of the Afghan population is also relatively nutritionally poor.<sup>73</sup> Many Afghans rely heavily on cereals as a source of cheap calories,<sup>74</sup> which, when not supplemented by non-cereal foods, can lead to micronutrient deficiencies. Afghan children are particularly vulnerable to this, with 60% of children under the age of five experiencing malnutrition.<sup>75</sup>

Food insecurity in Afghanistan is shaped by a myriad of social, environmental and geopolitical factors. A recent study conducted in the eastern region of Afghanistan found that insecurity, poverty, unsustainable livelihoods, lack of job opportunities, low wage and income, landlessness in rural areas and a huge influx of refugees and migration of internally displaced people (IDPs) have all been contributing factors.<sup>76</sup> The increase in poverty and associated lack of sustainable income is of particular concern.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, individual exposure to food insecurity is affected by gender, with female-headed households twice as likely to be food insecure compared to male-headed households.<sup>78</sup>

Food insecurity in Afghanistan also has spatial and seasonal dimensions, as it is heavily concentrated in rural areas and increases in the winter months.<sup>79</sup> The spatial dimension is heightened by the fact that 12% of the population live in areas with low accessibility to markets and therefore do much worse in terms of food security outcomes. Over half of the households with low accessibility to markets are deficient in calories and 45% are protein deficient.<sup>80</sup> The interplay between the spatial and seasonal aspects of food insecurity in Afghanistan comes into play particularly in the lean season – and while a positive correlation between availability of diverse foods and markets exists, it is during the lean season that this is most influential in dietary diversity.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Nandini Krishnan, Zihao Wang and Christina Wieser, 'Hunger before the Drought : Food Insecurity in Afghanistan' (The World Bank 2019) <<https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail>> accessed 17 August 2020;

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Cuma Akbay and Asif Khan Ahmadzai, 'The Factors Affecting Food Insecurity in Eastern Afghanistan' [2020] Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi Tarım ve Doğa Dergisi 468 <<https://dergipark.org.tr/doi/10.18016/ksutarimdogavi.596442>> accessed 18 August 2020.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid 467.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid 468.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid 469.

<sup>79</sup> Nandini Krishnan, Zihao Wang and Christina Wieser, 'Hunger before the Drought : Food Insecurity in Afghanistan' (The World Bank 2019) <<https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail>> accessed 17 August 2020; 'Afghanistan | World Food Programme' <<https://www.wfp.org/countries/afghanistan>> accessed 17 August 2020.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> G Zanello, B Shankar, and N Poole, 'Buy or make? Agricultural production diversity, markets and dietary diversity in Afghanistan'. *Food Policy* 87: 101731 (2019).

## ii. Current Intervention

USAID has provided nearly \$107 million in the 2020 fiscal year in humanitarian funding. Of the USAID budget, 65% goes to local, regional and international procurement, 20% to complementary services, 8% to us-in kind food aid and the remainder to cash transfers for food (7%).<sup>82</sup> USAID's primary project is intended to accelerate market-led growth in agriculture in order to improve food security, agricultural productivity, rural employment and family incomes and well-being. This would also help to reduce pressures on the poor to grow opium poppy.<sup>83</sup> As part of this program, USAID has distributed vouchers for seed, fertilizer and other tools to jumpstart production and has increased access to credit and financial products through the Agriculture Development Fund.<sup>84</sup> Finally, USAID has helped to connect farmers to international packaging and shipping so as to improve access to international customers.<sup>85</sup>

The FAO has implemented an Emergency Livelihoods Response Plan (ELRP) in Afghanistan to “support farming communities affected by floods during the spring and summer seasons through the rehabilitation and construction of community-based assets (canals, water harvesting schemes, protection walls, etc.) and the provision of agricultural inputs”.<sup>86</sup> The ELRP includes “FAO’s 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and additional activities to further enhance community resilience, such as restoring and rebuilding community assets to improve flood/drought control”.<sup>87</sup>

The government of Afghanistan has also come up with its own plan to tackle malnutrition: The Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Strategic Plan 2019-2023.<sup>88</sup> It provides a comprehensive plan to tackle food insecurity, most notably through employment creation and income opportunities, expansion of social protection and safety nets, development of strategic food reserves.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> ‘Afghanistan -Complex Emergency (Fact Sheet)’ (n 2).

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> United States Agency for International Development, ‘A Field Guide for USAID Democracy and Governance Officers: Assistance to Civilian Law Enforcement in Developing Countries’.

<sup>86</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation, ‘Afghanistan Emergency Livelihoods Response Plan’ [2019] United Nations World Food Programme 1, 2

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Dr A. Adbullah, ‘Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Strategic Plan’ [ 2019] United Nations World Food Programme 1, 2

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

### iii. Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 outbreak saw a sharp increase in food insecurity, from 10.9 million people estimated to be acutely food insecure in April-May 2020<sup>90</sup> to 11.15 million people by October 2020.<sup>91</sup> Food insecurity is expected to increase because of COVID-19 and related containment measures, as the widespread loss of income sources coincides with rising food prices. Food prices in Afghanistan are estimated to have increased by 17% in April 2020 compared to the previous year due to border controls and lockdown measures in major urban centres.<sup>92</sup> Urban areas have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic, with casual work opportunities considerably lower compared to the same period in 2019.<sup>93</sup> COVID-19 mitigation measures have had a range of cascading effects, including disrupting domestic economic activity, regional trade and remittance flows. As a result, the World Bank estimates that the poverty rate in Afghanistan will rise to 72% in 2020 from 55% in 2016.<sup>94</sup> The unemployment rate is expected to increase by 1.4% by the end of 2020 compared to 2019.<sup>95</sup> During a recent assessment conducted by World Vision in Afghanistan, 47.7% of respondents reported having lost their jobs or income due to the pandemic.<sup>96</sup> COVID-19 in the context of a conflict zone additionally creates new and specific dynamics of insecurity. Afghanistan lacks adequate public health infrastructure and is expected to see increased contagion because of the difficulty of enforcing a lockdown.

The Government of Pakistan initially closed border crossings between Pakistan and Afghanistan to prevent the spread of COVID-19, meaning Afghan farmers were unable to sell their goods across the border and causing concern that repeated border interruptions would lead to dangerous food price shocks.<sup>97</sup> Although many border crossings have since been

<sup>90</sup> 'Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation April - May 2020 and Projection for June 2020' (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification 2020) <<http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1152636/?iso3=AFG>> accessed 05 December 2020

<sup>91</sup> 'Afghanistan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation April - May 2020 and Projection for June - November 2020' (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification 2020) <<http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1152907/?iso3=AFG>> accessed 05 December 2020

<sup>92</sup> 'Surviving The Storm' (World Bank Group 2020) <<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Afghanistan-Development-Update-Surviving-the-Storm.pdf>> accessed 05 December 2020

<sup>93</sup> 'Main wheat harvest is complete in most areas, while food prices remain above average' (Famine Early Warning Systems Network 2020) <<https://fews.net/central-asia/afghanistan/key-message-update/july-2020>> accessed 05 December 2020

<sup>94</sup> 'Surviving The Storm' (World Bank Group 2020) <<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Afghanistan-Development-Update-Surviving-the-Storm.pdf>> accessed 05 December 2020

<sup>95</sup> Arif Husain, 'Populations at risk: Implications of COVID-19 for hunger, migration and displacement' [2020] World Food Programme 1, 35

<sup>96</sup> 'The Assessment of Socio-Economic Impact of Covid-19 on the Most Vulnerable Families of Afghanistan' (World Vision 2020) <<https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/Assessment.pdf>> accessed 05 December 2020

<sup>97</sup> 'Food Prices Soar under Coronavirus Threat in Afghanistan' (*The New Humanitarian*, 7 April 2020) <<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/04/07/afghanistan-food-insecurity-coronavirus>> accessed 18 August 2020.

reopened, relief actors in the region have underscored the importance of maintaining a reliable flow of humanitarian cargo and the need for special consideration to ensure safe and quick passage of food and relief commodities through the border.<sup>98</sup> The WFP is reorganising its distribution to incorporate physical distancing guidelines and encourage proper hygiene to prevent the spread of the virus.<sup>99</sup>

As a result of the implications for food security, the FAO is looking to scale up support by providing certified wheat seeds, including varieties resistant to most wheat rusts, and quality fertilisers coupled with technical training.<sup>100</sup> It is also providing ‘livestock protection packages’ comprised of concentrate animal feed, fodder seeds, deworming medicine and training to support livestock production.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, it is looking to improve the purchasing power of vulnerable rural households through agricultural input vouchers and trade fairs, enhancing social safety nets and unconditional cash transfers.<sup>102</sup>

### III.II. KEY THREATS TO FOOD SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN

#### i. Direct conflict factors

Conflict directly impacts food security in Afghanistan through the destruction of food supplies, distribution networks and markets.<sup>103</sup> The primary causes of such impacts include a weak military presence as a result of extensive corruption, and the widespread presence of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERWs). However, corruption is arguably the most crucial factor that has led to widespread conflict in Afghanistan,<sup>104</sup> and thus this corruption is also a risk multiplier of food insecurity.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, improving the capacity of the Afghanistan military would play a role in stabilising the situation in terms of reducing conflict, thereby reducing food insecurity.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>98</sup> ‘Afghanistan -Complex Emergency (Fact Sheet)’ (n 2).

<sup>99</sup> United States Agency for International Development (n 5).

<sup>100</sup> ‘Afghanistan | Revised humanitarian response (May–December 2020): Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) [2020] Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations 1, 4

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Anna D’Souza and Dean Jolliffe, ‘Conflict, Food Price Shocks, And Food Insecurity: The Experience Of Afghan Households’ *Food Policy* 42 (2013).

<sup>104</sup> Carter Malkasian, ‘How the Good War Went Bad’ (Foreign Affairs 2020)

<<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2020-02-10/how-good-war-went-bad>> accessed 13th February 2021

<sup>105</sup> Ellen Messer and Marc J. Cohen, ‘Breaking The Links Between Conflict And Hunger Redux’ *World Medical & Health Policy* 7 (2015).

<sup>106</sup> Florence Ngozi Uchendu and Olatumbosun Abolarin Thaddeus, ‘Corrupt practices negatively influenced food security and live expectancy in developing countries.’ *The Pan African medical journal* vol. 20 110. (6 Feb. 2015).

In terms of reducing the instances of minefields and Explosive Remnants of War (ERWs), there are multiple NGOs currently working to address this issue. These operations are funded by the United States Bureau of Political-Military Affairs Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA).<sup>107</sup> However, ERWs remain a significant problem for the population of Afghanistan, as while some efforts have been successful, there is not enough funding for programmes to be truly effective. Two key funding gaps which account for this are: (i) insufficient funding from the PM/WRA and (ii) the ongoing reduction of international donor funds to the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA). As of March 31, 2019, PM/WRA has only allocated \$8.4 million to fund NGOs working on this problem.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, from a peak of \$113 million in 2010, MAPA's budget decreased to \$51 million in 2018. This is despite the ongoing threat that ERWs present for Afghan citizens.<sup>109</sup>

Additionally, once a city or town has been re-occupied by government forces and international aid organisations, it is necessary to explore how food security can be further strengthened during times of peace. This requires engagement with locals, however the efforts of the Afghan government have largely failed in this regard because the government is seen as “tainted by its alignment with foreign occupiers”.<sup>110</sup> Despite this, local peace councils have played essential roles in resolving disputes and supporting justice, working with traditional *jirgas*<sup>111</sup> (assembly of village elders) and *shuras*<sup>112</sup> (councils) to fill gaps in the formal justice architecture. Coordinating with these institutions in joint peace initiatives has helped to promote non-violent resolution methods, preventing local outbreaks of violence.<sup>113</sup> An external assessment conducted by Thousand Plateaus Consultancy Services highlighted how effective such councils were in

<sup>107</sup> United States Political-Military Affairs Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA), response to Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction's data call, 6/17/2020

<sup>108</sup> United States Political-Military Affairs Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA), response to Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction's data call, 6/17/2020

<sup>109</sup> United States Political-Military Affairs Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA), response to Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction's vetting, 4/11/2019

<sup>110</sup> Carter Malkasian, 'How the Good War Went Bad' ( Foreign Affairs 2020)

<<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2020-02-10/how-good-war-went-bad>> accessed 13th February 2021

<sup>111</sup> Major Jim Gant and MAC McCallister, 'Tribal Engagement Tutorial: The Jirga and the Shura' (Steven Pressfield 2010) <<https://stevenpressfield.com/2010/03/tribal-engagement-tutorial-the-jirga-and-the-shura/>> accessed 04 December 2020

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> J, Nader and F. Roberts, 'Inclusive local peacebuilding in Afghanistan: Lessons from practice' *Conciliation Resources* 1, 1 (2018).

preventing and resolving community-based conflicts.<sup>114</sup> The importance of local ownership in sustainable peace is widely recognised, but thus far not matched by concrete support.<sup>115</sup>

It should be noted that the Afghan government has already recognised the limitations to the military's capacity to provide adequate security due to corruption. In its "National Strategy for Combating Corruption",<sup>116</sup> it aimed to develop its anti-corruption security institutions. Additionally, the U.S. military has institutionalised an Afghan Personnel and Pay System (APPS) to enhance the financial accountability of the ANDSF, however there have not yet been observable substantial positive effects.<sup>117</sup> A reason for this might be due to insufficient auditing to ensure that all army personnel are registered on the system and paid through a banking system.

## ii. Environmental factors

Afghanistan has experienced a mean temperature rise of 1.8C between 1951 and 2010. This is significantly higher than the mean rise in global temperatures across the same period.<sup>118</sup> This, together with multiple years of below-average rainfall, is adversely impacting food production systems and crop yields in Afghanistan.<sup>119</sup> Drought conditions resulting from the rising temperatures have reduced both calorie intake and income-generation for rural households.<sup>120</sup> The significant extent of this impact is due to the high dependence of rural households on self-production of food. As a result, droughts within the Nooristan, Ghor and Badghis provinces have had particularly significant impacts on food security.<sup>121</sup>

The rising temperatures have also resulted in increased risk of flash flooding due to more rapid, and earlier, spring snowmelt.<sup>122</sup> This flood risk has been intensified by the relatively poor soil absorption and reduced vegetation cover caused by the ongoing drought conditions in

<sup>114</sup> Nader & Roberts, 'How have local peacebuilding initiatives contributed to inclusive peace in Afghanistan?' (Conciliation Resources 2018) <<https://www.c-r.org/accord/afghanistan/inclusive-local-peacebuilding-afghanistan-lessons-practice>> accessed 23rd February 2021

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> 'National Strategy for Combating Corruption' (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2018) <[https://www.sacs.gov.af/uploads/strategy\\_pdf/Strategy\\_en.pdf](https://www.sacs.gov.af/uploads/strategy_pdf/Strategy_en.pdf)> accessed 21 August 2020

<sup>117</sup> John F Sopko, 'Quarterly Report' (2020) Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction 1, 8

<sup>118</sup> Andrej Přivara and Magdaléna Přivarová, 'Nexus Between Climate Change, Displacement And Conflict: Afghanistan Case' *Sustainability* 11 (2019).

<sup>119</sup> Héctor Morales-Muñoz, S Jha, M Bonnatti, H Alfi, S Kurtenbach, S Sieber, 'Exploring Connections—Environmental Change, Food Security And Violence As Drivers Of Migration—A Critical Review Of Research', *Sustainability* 12:14 (2020).

<sup>120</sup> The World Bank, 'Hunger Before The Drought: Food Insecurity In Afghanistan No. 139670' (2019).

<sup>121</sup> The World Bank, 'Hunger Before The Drought: Food Insecurity In Afghanistan No. 139670' (2019).

<sup>122</sup> Andrej Přivara and Magdaléna Přivarová, 'Nexus Between Climate Change, Displacement And Conflict: Afghanistan Case' *Sustainability* 11 (2019).

Afghanistan.<sup>123</sup> Consequently, rural households within the aforementioned Afghan provinces, among others, are particularly vulnerable to increased food insecurity that results from the complex impacts of climate change. Thus, environmental risks to food insecurity in Afghanistan tend to stem from lack of resilience and weak government environmental legislation. Repeated occurrences of severe drought within Afghanistan have obstructed food production and diminished the livelihoods of farmers, resulting in significant medium-term food insecurity for rural households, while efforts to combat this remain inadequate.<sup>124</sup>

By July 2019, the most recent severe drought had displaced around 287,000 people from the north-western and western regions of Afghanistan.<sup>125</sup> As such, expansive informal settlements of IDPs have formed around larger cities, including Herat, as individuals have sought emergency food assistance from the government. Moreover, the large influx of IDPs has been associated with growing social tensions and conflict within Afghanistan, such as that between the settled Hazara and nomadic Kuchi in the central Afghan highlands.<sup>126</sup> However, weakening of governmental authority as a result of the ongoing conflict has led to an absence of current policy for the effective management of water and land.<sup>127</sup> Thus, the lack of sustainable land and water management strategies, accompanied by limited government support for displaced households, has contributed to worsening food insecurity in the country.

### iii. Structural and market factors

Around 12% of the population in Afghanistan has limited market access, which is defined as households which live more than 12 hours walking or cycling distance from the nearest market.<sup>128</sup> 45% of households with low market accessibility are protein deficient compared to an average of 36% of Afghans across the nation in 2016-17.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, there is a demonstrable relationship between weak market access and poor food security. This is exacerbated when it intersects with

<sup>123</sup> Andrej Přivara and Magdaléna Přivarová, 'Nexus Between Climate Change, Displacement And Conflict: Afghanistan Case' *Sustainability* 11 (2019).

<sup>124</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' *Food Security* 10 (2018).

<sup>125</sup> Andrej Přivara and Magdaléna Přivarová, 'Nexus Between Climate Change, Displacement And Conflict: Afghanistan Case' *Sustainability* 11 (2019).

<sup>126</sup> Andrej Přivara and Magdaléna Přivarová, 'Nexus Between Climate Change, Displacement And Conflict: Afghanistan Case' *Sustainability* 11 (2019).

<sup>127</sup> Héctor Morales-Muñoz, S Jha, M Bonnatti, H Alf, S Kurtenbach, S Sieber, 'Exploring Connections—Environmental Change, Food Security And Violence As Drivers Of Migration—A Critical Review Of Research', *Sustainability* 12:14 (2020).

<sup>128</sup> The World Bank, 'Hunger Before The Drought: Food Insecurity In Afghanistan No. 139670' (2019).

<sup>129</sup> The World Bank, 'Hunger Before The Drought: Food Insecurity In Afghanistan No. 139670' (2019).

other points of vulnerability, such as for female-headed households, young people, households within informal settlements of IDPs and returning refugees.<sup>130</sup>

Conflict has been shown to increase the proportion of households that lack market access. This is due to the direct impacts of conflict, including destruction of transport connections and key infrastructure.<sup>131</sup> In addition, the withdrawal of International Security Assistance Forces in 2014, together with a resurgence of non-state armed groups since 2015, has led to a rise in fragility of markets, public services and regional integration.<sup>132</sup> Women and young people within rural Afghan households have disproportionately experienced the most adverse impacts of this rise in market fragility.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, the large influx of IDPs and returning refugees from Pakistan and Iran has led to a significant rise in informal camps in eastern Afghanistan. The informality of these camps means there is a lack of robust supply chains and therefore people within these camps have relatively limited food market access.<sup>134</sup> Afghan national policy has, thus far, failed to increase market engagement for IDPs and returning refugees in rural regions. Consequently, this has negatively impacted the short-term food security of such groups amid climate-related shocks and growing water scarcity.

Opium cultivation has significantly contributed to the growth of Afghanistan's economy over recent decades.<sup>135</sup> Despite this, existing research has demonstrated that revenue from opium trading has often been harnessed by insurgency groups, such as the Taliban, to gain support.<sup>136</sup> Together with this, the financial profits from opium trade have disproportionately benefitted the economies of neighbouring countries, where opium is transformed into heroin or morphine.<sup>137</sup> Consequently, opium cultivation has been a relatively inefficient driver of the Afghan economy, since the economic opportunities from the opium trade have fuelled support for further conflict and opium production takes valuable land and water from food production.

<sup>130</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 'Conflict, Migration And Food Security: The Role Of Agriculture And Rural Development' (International Food Policy Research Institute 2017).

<sup>131</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 'Conflict, Migration And Food Security: The Role Of Agriculture And Rural Development' (International Food Policy Research Institute 2017).

<sup>132</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' (2018) 10 Food Security.

<sup>133</sup> Cuma Akbay and Asif Khan Ahmadzai, 'Afganistan'ın Doğu Bölgesinde Gıda Güvenliğini Etkileyen Faktörler' (2020) 23 Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi Tarım ve Doğa Dergisi.

<sup>134</sup> Cuma Akbay and Asif Khan Ahmadzai, 'Afganistan'ın Doğu Bölgesinde Gıda Güvenliğini Etkileyen Faktörler' (2020) 23 Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi Tarım ve Doğa Dergisi.

<sup>135</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime & Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2019. *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2018: Challenges To Sustainable Development, Peace And Security*.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid

<sup>137</sup> Ibid

In addition to all these factors, it must be noted that data examining Afghan household food security has tended to be aggregated at the national level.<sup>138</sup> Nationally-aggregated data limits the scope for analysis into micro-level spatial trends in food security. Thus, poor market access together with inadequate information to target support on a household level has limited previous efforts to improve food security.

#### iv. Agricultural factors

Over 80% of the Afghan population are employed in farming and agriculture.<sup>139</sup> Therefore, a significant majority of the Afghan population rely on agricultural production for their income and food supply. However, women are disproportionately involved in and dependent upon agricultural activities, whilst men tend to have more diversified sources of income.<sup>140</sup> As a result, female-headed households are more than twice as likely to experience long-term food insecurity compared to male-headed households.<sup>141</sup>

Although government policies have frequently stated plans to increase gender equality in the agricultural sector, there remains a lack of sufficient support for female-headed households relative to their disproportionately high participation in agricultural production.<sup>142</sup> Alongside this, there is little to no evidence of government officials engaging with civil society organisations during the design and implementation of technology-based projects in the agricultural sector.<sup>143</sup> Thus, there remains a lack of civil society trust and support for such projects.<sup>144</sup>

Beyond this, from 2008 to 2013 the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) had seven Priority Programmes aimed at reducing poverty levels within the nation.<sup>145</sup> Five of these seven were focused on increasing agricultural productivity and improving resource management. For example, the Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Facility (CARD-F)

<sup>138</sup> 'Food Security And Conflict: Empirical Challenges And Future Opportunities For Research And Policy Making On Food Security And Conflict', pp. 20, (FAO, 2018) <<http://www.fao.org/3/ca1587en/CA1587EN.pdf>> accessed 25 August 2020.

<sup>139</sup> Héctor Morales-Muñoz, S Jha, M Bonnatti, H Alfi, S Kurtenbach, S Sieber, 'Exploring Connections—Environmental Change, Food Security And Violence As Drivers Of Migration—A Critical Review Of Research', *Sustainability* 12:14 (2020).

<sup>140</sup> Cuma Akbay and Asif Khan Ahmadzai, 'Afganistan'ın Doğu Bölgesinde Gıda Güvenliğini Etkileyen Faktörler' (2020) 23 *Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi Tarih ve Doğa Dergisi*.

<sup>141</sup> 'Food Security And Conflict: Empirical Challenges And Future Opportunities For Research And Policy Making On Food Security And Conflict' (FAO, 2018) <<http://www.fao.org/3/ca1587en/CA1587EN.pdf>> accessed 25 August 2020

<sup>142</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' *Food Security* 10 (2018), pp.1582.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid

<sup>144</sup> Ibid

<sup>145</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' *Food Security* 10 (2018), pp.1582.

consisted of investments to diversify the sources of income for farmers, together with improving farmers' capacity through training provision and increased market access.<sup>146</sup> More recently the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), covering 2017 to 2021, has a continued focus on developing the agriculture sector.<sup>147</sup> However, under current policies, investments in agriculture have been increasingly framed by the government as a source of opportunities for increased employment, business creation and national exports. This framing obscures the role that peacebuilding and gender-sensitive programmes must play in supporting the growth of the agricultural sector and securing food security for vulnerable Afghan households.

Moreover, a persistent lack of regulated and sustainable agricultural land management has contributed to widespread land degradation.<sup>148</sup> In particular, relatively fast population growth, together with a large influx of returning refugees, has accelerated land degradation.<sup>149</sup> Alongside this, the rise of informal settlements has resulted in growing social tensions over land use due to the lack of a formal system of land rights in Afghanistan. Such social grievances and land degradation have been associated with worsening violent conflict and increased long-term food insecurity for Afghan households.

In addition, as recognised in the previous section, opium cultivation has had negative impacts for food security. Large landowners have increasingly leased land to low-income households to specifically support opium production. Whilst this does help to diversify the livelihoods of low-income households, in the long run opium cultivation will continue to exacerbate class inequalities and conflict in the nation.<sup>150</sup>

## v. Exogenous shock factors

While low market engagement can have negative implications for dietary diversity, it can provide a 'buffer' for some rural households in the face of exogenous shocks.<sup>151</sup> In this way, the self-reliance of rural households in the production of food shelters them to some extent from external market volatilities relating to food prices and supply. In contrast, the ability of urban Afghan

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid

<sup>147</sup> Ibid

<sup>148</sup> Héctor Morales-Muñoz, S Jha, M Bonnatti, H Alfi, S Kurtenbach, S Sieber, 'Exploring Connections—Environmental Change, Food Security And Violence As Drivers Of Migration—A Critical Review Of Research', *Sustainability* 12:14 (2020).

<sup>149</sup> 'Food Security And Conflict: Empirical Challenges And Future Opportunities For Research And Policy Making On Food Security And Conflict' (FAO, 2018) <<http://www.fao.org/3/ca1587en/CA1587EN.pdf>> accessed 25 August 2020

<sup>150</sup> D Mansfield, *A state built on sand: How opium undermined Afghanistan*, (Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>151</sup> Andrej Přivara and Magdaléna Přivarová, 'Nexus Between Climate Change, Displacement And Conflict: Afghanistan Case' *Sustainability* 11 (2019).

households to purchase and access food is clearly impacted by exogenous factors such as public health shocks.<sup>152</sup>

Academic literature has already begun examining the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the food security of Afghan households.<sup>153</sup> Severe disruptions to food imports along with price shocks have occurred following border closures with Pakistan and Iran. In particular, from mid-March to the start of July the Afghan-Pakistan border has been closed to the majority of transport and trade. This was particularly concerning as, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan was one of Afghanistan's primary food suppliers.<sup>154</sup> As such, border closures severely impacted food availability within Afghan markets due to disruption to food imports. Moreover, the prices of basic foods are estimated to have increased by 10% to 20% as a result of the pandemic, therefore severely impacting the food security of low-income urban households despite aid efforts.<sup>155</sup>

Urban Afghan households are particularly vulnerable to exogenous shocks as they have relatively high levels of market engagement. Therefore, food price shocks due to economic and public health crises, together with disruptions to food imports and trading following border closures, can have immediate negative impacts on the availability of and access to basic food commodities for urban communities. However, while humanitarian intervention can help to ensure short term food security, the recurrence of this issue for urban households demonstrates the clear need for a longer-term approach focused on building resilience to shocks in the future.

## vi. Political factors

Afghanistan faces substantial political issues, namely significant political instability, a high dependence on humanitarian aid and a weak capacity to perform basic delivery of governance and public services.<sup>156</sup> Corruption is a central issue in all this. While measures to prosecute corrupt officials have recently been employed by the government, the impact of previous corruption has led to an increase in the government's reliance on humanitarian aid, creating a

<sup>152</sup> Héctor Morales-Muñoz, S Jha, M Bonnatti, H Alff, S Kurtenbach, S Sieber, 'Exploring Connections—Environmental Change, Food Security And Violence As Drivers Of Migration—A Critical Review Of Research', *Sustainability* 12:14 (2020).

<sup>153</sup> Andrej Přivara and Magdaléna Přivarová, 'Nexus Between Climate Change, Displacement And Conflict: Afghanistan Case' *Sustainability* 11 (2019)..

<sup>154</sup> C Hendrix C, and H Brinkman, 'Food Insecurity And Conflict Dynamics: Causal Linkages And Complex Feedbacks', *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 2 (2013).

<sup>155</sup> Andrej Přivara and Magdaléna Přivarová, 'Nexus Between Climate Change, Displacement And Conflict: Afghanistan Case' *Sustainability* 11 (2019).

<sup>156</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' *Food Security* 10 (2018).

new issue: international donors now have significant influence on the national policy of Afghanistan due to the input of large quantities of international aid and the lack of “technical capacity and financial independence” on the part of the Government of Afghanistan.<sup>157</sup> Each year, as of 2019, international donors provide just under \$5 billion in security assistance and around \$3.5 billion in civilian aid.<sup>158</sup>

Moreover, enduring corruption within the nation partly exists due to the patronage-based system that allows Afghan power holders, from President Ghani downwards, to buy and maintain loyalty.<sup>159</sup> Thus, substantial monetary losses from corrupt officials, together with the weak state presence, has exacerbated long-term food insecurity for Afghan households. This is because households have received less support for basic food provisions than would be expected in light of the humanitarian aid the nation has received.

Corruption also reduces the political legitimacy of the government, impinges on government agencies’ ability to deliver public services, and increases the government’s reliance on humanitarian aid as the state budget may be siphoned off by corrupt officials. In its “National Strategy for Combating Corruption”, the government outlined its plans to introduce new legislation to prosecute corrupt officials and consolidate anti-corruption bodies under the office of the Attorney General.<sup>160</sup> The government has also designed initiatives such as awards, whistleblower protection, adjustments to upper echelon salary scales and benefits, using forfeitures from asset seizures to reward reform teams, and independent audits of hiring and firing practices.<sup>161</sup> This is all in addition to an existing Code of Conduct that highlights the expectations of civil servants.<sup>162</sup> However, more needs to be done for the situation to improve. Although the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre (ACJC), a specialised anti-corruption court, has been established, out of 171 warrants that the Afghan authorities executed, all but four defendants were released.<sup>163</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' *Food Security* 10 (2018), pp.1588.

<sup>158</sup> Mujib Mashal, 'Afghanistan Needs Billions In Aid Even After A Peace Deal, World Bank Says' (*The New York Times*, 2020) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/05/world/asia/afghanistan-aid-world-bank.html>> accessed 25 August 2020.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid

<sup>160</sup> 'National Strategy for Combating Corruption' (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2018) <[https://www.sacs.gov.af/uploads/strategy\\_pdf/Strategy\\_en.pdf](https://www.sacs.gov.af/uploads/strategy_pdf/Strategy_en.pdf)> accessed 21 August 2020

<sup>161</sup> 'National Strategy for Combating Corruption' (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2018) <[https://www.sacs.gov.af/uploads/strategy\\_pdf/Strategy\\_en.pdf](https://www.sacs.gov.af/uploads/strategy_pdf/Strategy_en.pdf)> accessed 21 August 2020

<sup>162</sup> Ibid

<sup>163</sup> 'Afghanistan's Fight against Corruption: Crucial for Peace and Prosperity' (United Nations 2020) <[https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan\\_fight\\_against\\_corruption\\_groundwork\\_for\\_peace\\_and\\_prosperity-20\\_may\\_2019-english.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_fight_against_corruption_groundwork_for_peace_and_prosperity-20_may_2019-english.pdf)> accessed 21 August 2020

Lastly, it is important to bear in mind that the presidential system adopted under the 2004 constitution has exacerbated the weakness of judicial institutions. More specifically, the lack of a clearly defined arbiter of the constitution has undercut the authority of the Supreme Court. This is because the president has often turned to the court to settle political disputes, substantially weakening perceptions of its independence.<sup>164</sup> In stable societies with strong public institutions, it is rare that the president should be able to use the courts as a platform to exert his or her power.<sup>165</sup> Therefore, constitutional reform might be necessary to increase trust and stability.

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<sup>164</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, 'Afghanistan: A War in Crisis!' *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)* 1, 233 (2019)

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

## IV. CASE STUDY: IRAQ

### IV.I. CONTEXT

Iraq is no longer in a state of full-scale war, however conflict within the country continues. The current nature of the conflict is one of low-level insurgency and ongoing localised violence. This particular phase of the conflict is considered to have begun in 2017 and is known as the ‘Iraqi Insurgency’, rather than the Iraq War.

Multiple Iraqi and proxy militias remain active, as well as US and UK troops whose main missions are counterterrorism,<sup>166</sup> training and support.<sup>167</sup> Both countries are gradually reducing their presence in Iraq and the training mission is on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>168</sup>

The ongoing instability and violence largely takes the form of Turkish and Iranian air and ground operations against Kurdistan Worker’s Party positions in northern Iraq,<sup>169</sup> increasing violence along the lines of proxy conflict between the US and Iran, which is set to worsen,<sup>170</sup> and in terms of ongoing protests, especially in Iraq’s southernmost provinces. Over 700 have been killed so far during these protests, which are largely against corruption, unemployment and inefficient public services.<sup>171</sup>

The country continues to face additional social, ethnic and sectarian tensions and as such remains at ‘very high risk’ of a humanitarian crisis, while food insecurity remains ‘acute’ despite Iraq being an upper middle-income country – making it something of an anomaly.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>166</sup> Alissa Rubin, ‘ISIS Attacks Surge in Iraq Amid Debate on US Troop Levels’ (*The New York Times*, 10 June 2020) <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/10/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-strategic-dialogue-troops.html> - accessed 28 March 2021.

<sup>167</sup> The British Army, ‘Iraq’ (*Deployments*, 2020) <<https://www.army.mod.uk/deployments/iraq/>>

<sup>168</sup> Forces network, ‘British Personnel To Drawdown From Iraq’ (*IRAQ*, 19 March 2020) <<https://www.forces.net/news/british-personnel-drawdown-iraq>> - accessed 28 March 2021.

<sup>169</sup> Bethan Mckernan, ‘Turkey launches major attack on Kurdish militants in Iraq’ (*The Guardian*, 17 June 2020) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/17/turkey-launches-major-attack-on-kurdish-militants-in-iraq> - accessed 28 March 2021.

<sup>170</sup> Kimberly Kagan, ‘Iran’s proxy war against the United States and the Iraqi Government’ (*Institute for the Study of War*, 20 August 2007) <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/reports/IraqReport06.pdf> - accessed 28 March 2021.

<sup>171</sup> Renad Mansour, ‘Iraq protests: What’s behind the anger?’ (*BBC News*, 7 October 2019) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-49960677>> - accessed 28 March 2021.

<sup>172</sup> FAO, ‘2020 Global report on food crises: Joint analysis for better decisions’ (*Food Security Information Network (FSIN)*, 2020) <https://www.ifpri.org/publication/2020-global-report-food-crises-joint-analysis-better-decisions> - accessed 28 March 2021.

### i. Current Levels of Food Insecurity

Food insecurity in Iraq has been shaped by the country's economic dependence on oil, poor governance, over three decades of violent conflict and climate related shocks.<sup>173</sup>

The Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, followed by the first Gulf War and the multilateral sanctions regime in the 1990s, all had a devastating effect on food insecurity in Iraq.<sup>174</sup> Although the Iraqi government managed to maintain food supplies during the war in the 1980s, food security deteriorated massively as a result of UN sanctions imposed following the Kuwait Invasion, and by the mid-1990s parts of the population were on the verge of starvation.<sup>175</sup> This was slightly alleviated by the Oil for Food Program which began in 1996.<sup>176</sup>

The effects of UN sanctions and ongoing conflict necessitated the creation of the Public Distribution System (PDS) in 1990. The PDS is still in operation today and is the world's largest food program.<sup>177</sup> It ensures that the essential quantities of basic food commodities are made available at 'nominal' prices. Under the PDS, food commodities and other items are redistributed to households on a monthly basis, requiring up to 10% of the Iraqi GDP and 21% of public income. Until 1996, the PDS relied mainly on domestically-produced food, as sanctions removed much of the ability to finance imports. There were significant government attempts to revitalize domestic agriculture, which prior to 1990 accounted for only 30% of the country's food consumption needs. Although the PDS was not perfect, it was crucial in safeguarding a minimum of food accessibility, and between 1997 and 2003 accounted for 80% of cereal availability – which is particularly significant as cereals accounted for 60% of the dietary intake of Iraqis.<sup>178</sup> Indeed, existing literature has evaluated the PDS as protecting around half of the Iraqi population from severe food shortages.

Food security in Iraq improved after the end of the UN embargo in 2003. In particular, food availability improved and economic growth helped food accessibility; nevertheless, issues of utilization and stability persisted, and Iraq has since seen a downturn in food insecurity. Sectarian conflict in Iraq in the late 2000s led to an increasing number of people having to flee their homes

<sup>173</sup> Eckart Woertz, 'Food Security in Iraq: Results from Quantitative and Qualitative Surveys' (2017) 9 Food Security 511; 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020' (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO 2020) 18 <<http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9692en>> accessed 23 August 2020.

<sup>174</sup> Woertz (n 33).

<sup>175</sup> Ibid 513.

<sup>176</sup> Woertz (n 33).

<sup>177</sup> Ibid 511.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid 513.

and widespread violence.<sup>179</sup> The onslaught of ISIS significantly exacerbated the problem. The number of IDPs rose dramatically to over 3 million by 2015, and there has also been a large influx of refugees from northern Syria.<sup>180</sup> IDPs and refugees are particularly vulnerable as they have lost their livelihoods and are forced to rely on unsustainable strategies such as living off debt.<sup>181</sup> The World Food Program has found that in Iraq, the prevalence of food insecurity is twice as high among internally displaced families compared to those remaining in their homes.<sup>182</sup>

In addition to the effect of conflicts, food insecurity in Iraq has also been exacerbated by long-term poor governance and weak institutional capacity - both of which are closely correlated with the impacts of conflict themselves. According to a study by Eckart Woertz, “agriculture and food security have been part of a system of patronage that increasingly complemented weak state institutions in the late Saddam years”.<sup>183</sup> This is exemplified by the PDS program which at one point also served as a means of population control as “rations could be withdrawn from opponents, deserters and their families and cronies were rewarded via the smuggling business and kickbacks”.<sup>184</sup> Additionally, patronage is particularly significant in Iraqi Kurdistan and, as noted by Saleem and Skelton (2020), “in the absence of sustained pressure from the public or international community, the political order will continue to rest upon a two-party patronage system, leaving the region vulnerable to instability”.<sup>185</sup>

The collapse of the global oil market in April 2020 has had serious implications for Iraq’s capacity to import food. Approximately 90% of the Government’s income derives from oil revenue. The Government built the state budget under the assumption that oil would trade at USD 56 per barrel. Therefore, there are concerns relating to the funding of social protection programmes.<sup>186</sup> Since Iraq imports roughly 50 percent of the country’s food, this import dependency leaves Iraq vulnerable to food shortages or major price increases.<sup>187</sup> This, combined

<sup>179</sup> Héctor Morales-Muñoz, S Jha, M Bonnatti, H Alfi, S Kurtenbach, S Sieber, ‘Exploring Connections—Environmental Change, Food Security And Violence As Drivers Of Migration—A Critical Review Of Research’, *Sustainability* 12:14 (2020), 5702.

<sup>180</sup> Woertz (n 33) 514.

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> Abeer Etefa, ‘More Than Half Of Iraq’s Population At Risk Of Food Insecurity - Government - WFP Analysis’ (*World Food Programme Analysis*, 10 April 2017) <<https://www.wfp.org/news/more-half-iraqs-population-risk-food-insecurity-government-wfp-analysis>> accessed 23 August 2020.

<sup>183</sup> Woertz (n 33) 511.

<sup>184</sup> *ibid* 514.

<sup>185</sup> Zmkan Saleem and Mac Skelton, ‘Assessing Iraqi Kurdistan’s Stability: How Patronage Shapes Conflict’, LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series, 38. (July 2020). Available at:

[http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/105775/1/MEC\\_assessing\\_iraqi\\_kurdistans\\_stability\\_published.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/105775/1/MEC_assessing_iraqi_kurdistans_stability_published.pdf). Retrieved 6 December 2020

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

with mounting budgetary pressure, has placed significant stress on the nation's Public Distribution System (PDS). Iraq primarily depends on imports to fulfil the basket of food entitlements under PDS and although local wheat production will meet PDS demand for 2020, the Government only has 190,000 tonnes of rice in reserve, enough to cover only two distribution cycles.<sup>188</sup>

## ii. Current Intervention

In order to reduce food insecurity, successive administrations have implemented policies encouraging domestic production by subsidising key crops and making food affordable through providing staple commodities.<sup>189</sup> However, it has been argued that some of the Iraqi government's policies have negative effects because they place the country's fiscal budget under additional pressure and are detrimental to water demand in an already water scarce country.<sup>190</sup> The impact on the country's budget is particularly concerning - the Iraqi government has a \$40 billion budget deficit due to fallen oil prices, which further increases the risk of food insecurity.<sup>191</sup>

Of particular note in current intervention is USAID's gradually decreasing involvement. In the 2018 fiscal year, USAID provided \$1.2 billion worth of humanitarian aid. In the 2019 fiscal year, this was more than halved to \$500 million. Due to these cutbacks, USAID in Iraq has been forced to reduce staff numbers, including the removal of 80% of non-Iraqi staff.<sup>192</sup> Additionally, USAID now has no staff based permanently in Iraq to oversee operations, leaving it unable to effectively manage its own vast aid programmes.<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, the Trump administration systematically placed pressure on the agency to support minority-Christian groups, even when these groups did not appear effective or experienced at making use of funding.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Raed Abulhay Ibrahim Alani, 'Distorting Agri-Food Policies In Iraq: Implication For Crop Production, Food Security And Water Use' (PhD, Reading 2019) <<http://centaur.reading.ac.uk/86920/>> accessed 23 August 2020.

<sup>190</sup> Alani (n 46).

<sup>191</sup> 'Insecurity' (*Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*) <<https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/81976>> accessed 23 August 2020.

<sup>192</sup> Robbie Gramer, 'Fears Mount as Trump Administration Guts USAID's Iraq Presence' (*Foreign Policy*, 6 March 2020) <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/06/iraq-aid-instability-us-agency-for-international-development-usaid-middle-east-stability/>> - accessed 29 March 2021.

<sup>193</sup> Robbie Gramer, 'Fears Mount as Trump Administration Guts USAID's Iraq Presence' (*Foreign Policy*, 6 March 2020) <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/06/iraq-aid-instability-us-agency-for-international-development-usaid-middle-east-stability/> - accessed 29 March 2021.

<sup>194</sup> Yeganeh Torbati, 'The Trump Administration Guttled the Staff Overseeing \$1 Billion in Aid to Iraq A Watchdog Is Raising Red Flags' (*ProPublica*, 22 November 2019) <https://www.propublica.org/article/the-trump-administration-guttled-the-staff-overseeing-1-billion-in-aid-to-iraq-a-watchdog-is-raising-red-flags> - accessed 29 March 2021.

Since 2014, the EU has provided over €478 million in humanitarian aid to displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugees inside Iraq.<sup>195</sup> The FAO, meanwhile, has been focusing on resilience-building activities for vulnerable households (including IDPs and returnees) to strengthen livelihoods, diversify food production, rehabilitate agricultural infrastructure and restore agricultural value chains.<sup>196</sup> As part of its 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan, FAO plans to distribute agricultural inputs and animal fodder to vulnerable smallholder farmers and livestock owners.<sup>197</sup> It has also been prioritising distribution of vegetable seeds and associated supplies to allow multiple harvests, regardless of the season.<sup>198</sup> Additionally, it has implemented cash+ schemes to add another layer of social protection for vulnerable smallholder farmers by providing an immediate influx of unconditional cash to support household consumption patterns.<sup>199</sup>

### iii. Impact of COVID-19

Iraq is one of the worst hit countries in the Middle East, with 475,000 cases of COVID-19 registered since the start of the pandemic and an average of more than 3,100 cases per day by mid-October 2020.<sup>200</sup> The upsurge is partially attributed to the country's limited response capacity and challenges in enforcing public health measures such as physical distancing, movement restrictions and the use of masks.<sup>201</sup> Additionally, the consequences for employment have been severe. In a Displacement Tracking Metric impact survey conducted in June 2020, 59% of key informants reported that most people in their areas had lost their jobs and face financial difficulty. The populations in the conflict-stricken governorates of Anbar, Basrah and Dahuk have suffered substantial job losses,<sup>202</sup> with daily labourers and IDPs most affected.<sup>203</sup> The World Food Programme's monitoring indicates between 5.1 and 9.4% of households had insufficient food consumption between April and August 2020.<sup>204</sup> These figures are much higher than the rates observed in 2016, when insufficient food consumption affected only 1.5% of households.<sup>205</sup> In light of the coronavirus outbreak in Iraq, the EU has directed €27.5 million out of €35 million

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> 'Iraq | Revised humanitarian response (May–December 2020): Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)' [2020] Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations 1, 1

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Arif Husain, 'Populations at risk: Implications of COVID-19 for hunger, migration and displacement' [2020] World Food Programme 1, 32

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> 'Impact survey' (Displacement Tracking Metric 2020) <<http://iraqdtm.iom.int/COVID19>> accessed 05 December 2020

<sup>204</sup> 'Iraq Covid-19 Food Security Monitor' (World Food Programme 2020) <<https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000118739/download/>> accessed 05 December 2020

<sup>205</sup> Linda Stephen, 'Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis' [2016] World Food Programme 1, 3

in aid to humanitarian programmes responding fully or partially to the pandemic, reaching more than 400,000 people.<sup>206</sup>

Iraq is particularly vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19 due to pre-existing vulnerabilities, including poverty, dwindling natural resources and ongoing displacement due to past conflicts.<sup>207</sup> Returnees and IDPs are less resilient to shocks and are therefore especially vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19, along with the elderly, young children, and pregnant women. Women's engagement in economic activities, especially in the agricultural sector, may be threatened by the pandemic as opportunities dwindle, exacerbating the existing gender gap. As people lose income due to movement restrictions, they will also suffer from diminished purchasing power. Overall health and future labour productivity will also suffer.<sup>208</sup>

## IV.II. KEY THREATS TO FOOD SECURITY IN IRAQ

### i. Direct conflict factors

Current drivers of conflict within Iraq include widespread military corruption, poor delivery of basic services and a lack of investment in critical infrastructure.<sup>209</sup> Military corruption has most notably led to a lack of sufficient equipment, which reduced the Iraqi military's ability to prevent the rise of militia such as ISIS and the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Corruption is a crucial issue as it limits the potential funding for and efficacy of peacebuilding projects. Additionally, there is currently little evidence of government reform aimed at reducing corruption within the military. Iraq's resistance to reform, including on the point of military corruption, has amongst other drivers led Iraqi citizens to engage in protests against the state, resulting in violent clashes.<sup>210</sup>

This, coupled with the ongoing insurgency by militia groups such as ISIS and the PMF, has detrimentally impacted the short- to medium-term food security of Iraqi citizens.<sup>211</sup> For example,

<sup>206</sup> 'Iraq' (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations 2020) <[https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/iraq\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/iraq_en)> accessed 07 December 2020

<sup>207</sup> 'Iraq | Revised humanitarian response (May–December 2020): Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).' [2020] Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations 1, 1

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Anthony Cordesman, 'Iraq as a Failed State' *Center For Strategic & International Studies* 1, 1(2019)

<sup>210</sup> Murtaja Lateef, 'More Protests In Iraq As Anger Over Services Grows' (Aljazeera 2020) <<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/pictures-protests-iraq-anger-services-grows-200728062257945.html>> accessed 17 August 2020.

<sup>211</sup> Branca, Goldwyn, Milante, 'The World's Food Programme Contribution To Improving The Prospects For Peace In Iraq' [2020] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 1, 2

insurgent attacks have reduced the ability of vulnerable groups to safely secure market access or a stable source of food production to support their short-term food requirements.<sup>212</sup> However, it is also important to consider that there have been no direct connections between exacerbation of food insecurity and the recruitment of individuals to violent extremist groups within Iraq, according to the World Food Programme.<sup>213</sup> Thus, as mentioned in previous sections of this policy paper, the unique relationship that emerges between conflict and food security within Iraq is highly context-specific.

## ii. Environmental factors

Water scarcity and reduced soil fertility due to desertification are the primary environmental concerns for the medium- to long-term food security of Iraqi households.<sup>214</sup> Unreliable water supplies and droughts have had a significant impact on agricultural productivity as the sector relies on national freshwater supplies for over 90% of production.<sup>215</sup> As such, climate-related shocks and surface water shortages have increased dependence on groundwater sources to meet the water demands of the agricultural sector.

However, the relative absence of policies to address sustainable groundwater use has exacerbated challenges for farmers, particularly when demand for water outstrips supply. With a lack of science-based policy, farmers in Iraq have faced challenges in securing agricultural efficiency, despite growing environmental concerns.<sup>216</sup> Although agricultural land is relatively fertile, the lack of sustainably managed water supplies is already impacting – and will continue to impact – crop yields. As a result, to meet food demands of Iraqi households during adverse climatic conditions, basic food commodities, such as wheat, are imported from neighbouring countries.<sup>217</sup> This reliance on imports heightens vulnerability to short-term food insecurity due to exposure to market volatility from exogenous shocks.

<sup>212</sup> Branca, Goldwyn, Milante, 'The World's Food Programme Contribution To Improving The Prospects For Peace In Iraq' [2020] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 1, 2

<sup>213</sup> Branca, Goldwyn, Milante, 'The World's Food Programme Contribution To Improving The Prospects For Peace In Iraq' [2020] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 1, 2

<sup>214</sup> Roz Price, 'Climate Change As A Driver Of Conflict In Afghanistan And Other Fragile And Conflict Affected States' (2019).

<sup>215</sup> Climate Change In Iraq' (*Reliefweb.int*, 2020)

<<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Climate%20change%20In%20Iraq%20Fact%20sheet%20-%20English.pdf>> accessed 20 August 2020.

<sup>216</sup> Ali A. Obeed Al-Azawi and Frank A. Ward, 'Groundwater Use And Policy Options For Sustainable Management In Southern Iraq' (2016) 33 *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, pp.629.

<sup>217</sup> Ali A. Obeed Al-Azawi and Frank A. Ward, 'Groundwater Use And Policy Options For Sustainable Management In Southern Iraq' (2016) 33 *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, pp.629.

Systematic use of water as a weapon in conflict has compounded the effects of water insecurity. During Islamic State's territorial expansion along the Tigris and the Euphrates, the group controlled dams and caused intentional water shortages, water oversupply and water contamination at different, strategic points.<sup>218</sup> While eventually water behind dams was released in order to produce and sell hydroelectric power, the instability of water supply had long-term knock-on effects on agriculture and livelihoods. For example, in 2014, an artificial flood caused by IS keeping the Fallujah dam floodgates shut meant that "over 10,000 houses and around 200 square kilometres of fertile farmland were destroyed; almost the entire harvest was wiped out; and livestock was killed. Up to 60,000 locals who had lost their livelihood in the flood were displaced".<sup>219</sup> Thus, concerns over water scarcity affecting the long-term food security of Iraqi households have significantly grown as a result of enduring conflict.

### iii. Structural and market factors

The dependency of the Iraqi economy on oil revenues, together with relatively inefficient internal market mechanisms, has led to a significant reliance of Iraqi households on the Public Distribution System (PDS).<sup>220</sup> The PDS is therefore important for the food security of many households due to repeated failures of the internal market systems.<sup>221</sup> Such failures have included large price volatility of basic agricultural commodities within conflict zones, along with the inflation of imported supplies.<sup>222</sup> As such, the impacts of these factors have exacerbated the medium-term food insecurity of Iraqi households. Moreover, such impacts affect a diverse range of households, largely independent of their financial situation, as they have led to a widespread decrease in supply of basic food commodities.<sup>223</sup> Thus, the PDS has been crucial in providing a 'safety net' to secure and buffer the short-term food requirements of a large proportion of Iraqi households.<sup>224</sup>

<sup>218</sup> Tobias von Lossow, 'Water as Weapon: IS on the Euphrates and Tigris', SWP Comments, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (January 2016), p. 2.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>220</sup> Raed Abulhay Ibrahim Alani, 'Distorting Agri-Food Policies In Iraq: Implication For Crop Production, Food Security And Water Use' (PhD, Reading 2019).

<sup>221</sup> United Nations World Food Programme, 'National Strategic Review Of Food Security And Nutrition In Iraq' (United Nations World Food Programme 2018).

<sup>222</sup> United Nations World Food Programme, 'National Strategic Review Of Food Security And Nutrition In Iraq' (United Nations World Food Programme 2018).

<sup>223</sup> United Nations World Food Programme, 'National Strategic Review Of Food Security And Nutrition In Iraq' (United Nations World Food Programme 2018).

<sup>224</sup> Arsalan San Ahmed and Garth John Holloway, 'Calories, Conflict And Correlates: Redistributive Food Security In Post-Conflict Iraq' (2017) 68 Food Policy, pp.90.

Despite this, it is important to note that the PDS has obscured the persistence of weak market mechanisms. The substantial societal redistribution of food commodities involves a large transfer cost - one that is significantly larger than the majority of public interventions in other nations across the world. More specifically, under the PDS in Iraq in 2005, the World Bank estimated a cost of \$US 6.30 to transfer only \$US 1.00.<sup>225</sup> In addition to this, the current PDS is largely inaccessible to IDPs because access to the redistributed prices depends largely upon an individual's residency status.<sup>226</sup> Furthermore, poor coordination and different reporting lines among the myriad security actors means IDPs may receive clearance from the authorities to return, only to be blocked by the tribal leaders.<sup>227</sup> This is one of the major reasons why IDPs have not been successfully reintegrated back into their communities. Thus, the PDS has had relatively uneven benefits for different households across Iraq, largely based on their residency status.

#### iv. Agricultural factors

The national economy of Iraq has become decreasingly diversified throughout the 21st century.<sup>228</sup> The nation has become increasingly dependent on oil revenues, yet the oil sector employs only 1% of the workforce.<sup>229</sup> As a result, the Iraqi government has sought to transition towards increased domestic agricultural production within the Iraqi National Development Plan (NDP).<sup>230</sup> This has been expected to increase employment opportunities and improve medium-term food security.<sup>231</sup> For example, the Government increased the affordability of basic food through subsidies,<sup>232</sup> with the aim of enhancing non-oil related economic growth, whilst providing increased employment opportunities and increasing the income and medium-term food security of Iraqi households.<sup>233</sup> The NDP therefore also aimed to increase domestic supplies of basic

<sup>225</sup> Arsalan San Ahmed and Garth John Holloway, 'Calories, Conflict And Correlates: Redistributive Food Security In Post-Conflict Iraq' (2017) 68 Food Policy, pp.90.

<sup>226</sup> Eckart Woertz, 'Food Security In Iraq: Results From Quantitative And Qualitative Surveys' (2017) 9 Food Security, pp.515.

<sup>227</sup> IDPs and humanitarian workers from Anbar, Nineveh, and Baghdad, interviews with Haley Bobseine, Anbar, Baghdad, and WhatsApp calls, March-May 2019.

<sup>228</sup> Raed Abulhay Ibrahim Alani, 'Distorting Agri-Food Policies In Iraq: Implication For Crop Production, Food Security And Water Use' (PhD, Reading 2019).

<sup>229</sup> Raed Abulhay Ibrahim Alani, 'Distorting Agri-Food Policies In Iraq: Implication For Crop Production, Food Security And Water Use' (PhD, Reading 2019).

<sup>230</sup> Ibid

<sup>231</sup> Raed Abulhay Ibrahim Alani, 'Distorting Agri-Food Policies In Iraq: Implication For Crop Production, Food Security And Water Use' (PhD, Reading 2019).

<sup>232</sup> Ibid

<sup>233</sup> Ibid

food commodities, together with reducing poverty and improving income distribution throughout the country.<sup>234</sup>

However, Iraq's NDP for 2013 to 2017, despite setting out to increase domestic agricultural production, may instead have contributed to the exacerbation of water insecurity within the country through unsustainable groundwater use.<sup>235</sup> Moreover, an underappreciated potential contribution to food security of Iraqi households in rural areas is the knowledge of indigenous women who apply their understanding of traditional food systems to increase agricultural productivity.<sup>236</sup> For example, traditional techniques for food preservation learnt over time, including salting, drying methods and storing food in cool places, can ensure the food availability for households with limited market access during seasonal reductions in food production.<sup>237</sup>

## v. Exogenous shock factors

Iraq's oil-based economy heightens the nation's vulnerability to exogenous shocks.<sup>238</sup> For example, the COVID-19 pandemic's influence on oil prices in early 2020 has led to a state budget deficit of over \$40 billion.<sup>239</sup> Moreover, Iraq's dependence on imports for around 50% of national food supplies means that disruptions to borders with neighbouring countries have detrimental effects on short-term food security of Iraqi households.<sup>240</sup>

Therefore, the reductions in food supplies due to border closures amid the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with rising prices of basic food commodities,<sup>241</sup> have further exacerbated the food insecurity of Iraqi households.<sup>242</sup> The example of the COVID-19 pandemic therefore illustrates the vulnerability of the Iraqi economy. The fall in the state budget deficit

<sup>234</sup> Ibid

<sup>235</sup> Ibid

<sup>236</sup> Hamasalih, Chawan, Hemin Neima, Rezhen Harun, and Kazhan Hasan. 'Rural women indigenous knowledge of traditional food and household food security in Kurdistan Regional Government, Iraq.' *ProEnvironment/ProMediu* 12, no. 39 (2019).

<sup>237</sup> Ibid

<sup>238</sup> Eckart Woertz, 'Food Security In Iraq: Results From Quantitative And Qualitative Surveys' *Food Security* 9 (2017).

<sup>239</sup> Hadi Fathallah, 'Iraq'S Governance Crisis And Food Insecurity' (*Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2020) <<https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/81976>> accessed 20 August 2020.

<sup>240</sup> Mercy Corps, 'How Good Governance Can Diminish Support For Violent Extremism' (Mercy Corps 2015) <[https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Investing%20in%20Iraqs%20Peace\\_Final%20Report.pdf](https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Investing%20in%20Iraqs%20Peace_Final%20Report.pdf)> accessed 20 August 2020.

<sup>241</sup> Omar Dewachi and Chantal Berman, *Dewachi, Omar, And Chantal Berman. "Insecurity, Displacement And Public Health Impacts Of The American Invasion Of Iraq* (Watson Institute, Brown University 2011)

<<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2011/DewachiIraqiRefugees.pdf>> accessed 20 August 2020.

<sup>242</sup> Hadi Fathallah, 'Iraq'S Governance Crisis And Food Insecurity' (*Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2020) <<https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/81976>> accessed 20 August 2020.

due to the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the state's capacity to fund the PDS within Iraq. With around 9.4% of the Iraqi population fully reliant upon PDS food supplies, and around half of Iraqi households depending on the PDS to some extent,<sup>243</sup> public health shocks can have a detrimental impact on the short-term food security of low-income Iraqi households.

The EU and the FAO have been rendering help to Iraq in light of the pandemic, with the EU proving €27.5 million in aid to humanitarian programmes reaching more than 400,000 people,<sup>244</sup> and the FAO, among other assistance, providing 'Cash+' schemes to add an additional layer of social protection for vulnerable smallholder farmers by providing an immediate influx of unconditional cash to smooth household consumption pattern.<sup>245</sup> Such short-term policies have proved effective – however, they also illustrate the need for reliance and adaptability to be built into longer term projects.

## vi. Political factors

Political factors that have significantly contributed to the long-term food insecurity of Iraqi households include corruption, poor delivery of basic public services and acute structural poverty.<sup>246</sup> A survey conducted with Iraqi citizens in 2019 found that 32% and 13% stated the most important challenges within the nation to be corruption and public services respectively, with only 10% highlighting the fight against terrorism.<sup>247</sup>

Similarly to Afghanistan, the root cause of many of Iraq's political problems can indeed, as this survey suggests, be traced back to the issue of corruption. The lack of political legitimacy has indirectly exacerbated the conflict situation as it has led to widespread protests. Due to the scale of the unrest, a new Prime Minister was appointed in May 2020.<sup>248</sup> Mustafa al-Kadhimi's appointment represents hope for Iraqi citizens as this means that new reforms can be

<sup>243</sup> Omar Dewachi and Chantal Berman, *Dewachi, Omar, And Chantal Berman. "Insecurity, Displacement And Public Health Impacts Of The American Invasion Of Iraq* (Watson Institute, Brown University 2011)

<<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2011/DewachiIraqiRefugees.pdf>> accessed 20 August 2020.

<sup>244</sup> 'Iraq' (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations 2020) <[https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/iraq\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/middle-east/iraq_en)> accessed 07 December 2020

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> 'Arab Barometer V: Iraq Country Report' (Arab Barometer 2019) <[https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV\\_Iraq\\_Report\\_Public-Opinion\\_2019.pdf](https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV_Iraq_Report_Public-Opinion_2019.pdf)> accessed 17 August 2020.

<sup>247</sup> 'Arab Barometer V: Iraq Country Report' (Arab Barometer 2019) <[https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV\\_Iraq\\_Report\\_Public-Opinion\\_2019.pdf](https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV_Iraq_Report_Public-Opinion_2019.pdf)> accessed 17 August 2020.

<sup>248</sup> 'New Iraq prime minister after five months of deadlock' (British Broadcasting Corporation 2020) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-52571220>> accessed 23 August 2020

implemented to improve the capability of public agencies to deliver for the people and to reduce corruption.

In addition, the civil service is currently built on an informal patronage system which indirectly contributes to widespread corruption in the sector. Reining in a culture of patronage requires a bottom-up approach that emphasises personnel management reforms, such as transparent and merit-based recruitment.<sup>249</sup> There are well-established links between merit appointments, increased bureaucratic performance, reduced corruption, and improved public trust.<sup>250</sup> Some forms of merit-based selection already exist in Iraq, albeit in limited numbers. For example, the top-performing university graduates across the country are guaranteed public sector jobs by law.<sup>251</sup> Furthermore, a past international government scholarship scheme introduced in 2009, known as the Higher Commission for Education Development in Iraq (HCED), was widely admired for its professional approach. Students were awarded scholarships based on a combination of strong academic performance and a face-to-face interview assessment.<sup>252</sup> Replicating such engagement in public sector employment may help to curb corruption.

A potential opportunity for civil service reform emerged recently, after Iraq's Parliament elected members of the constitutionally mandated Federal Public Service Council (FPSC).<sup>253</sup> The FPSC's remit is codified in law, charging it with planning authority over the civil service; overseeing training and development of staff; consolidating and unifying the grades of vacant posts in-line with government priorities; reviewing pay scales and recommending adjustments; and overseeing recruitment along merit-based standards in a fair and transparent way. The council enjoys financial and administrative independence and reports directly to Parliament, while the head of the FPSC holds ministerial powers.<sup>254</sup> The advent of the FPSC is promising, although may not go far enough.

<sup>249</sup> Steven Benjamin Web, 'Public Sector Reform: What Works and Why?' Independent Evaluation Group Studies 1, 6 [2008]

<sup>250</sup> W McCourt, 'Public Appointments: From Patronate to Merit' (2000) Manchester Institute for Development Policy Management 1, 9

<sup>251</sup> Ali Al-Mawlawi, 'Public Sector Reform in Iraq' (2020) Middle East and North Africa Programme 1, 10

<sup>252</sup> Ibid

<sup>253</sup> 'Iraqi Constitution, Article 107' (Constitute Project 2005)

<[https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iraq\\_2005.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iraq_2005.pdf?lang=en)> accessed 23 August 2020

<sup>254</sup> 'Federal Public Service Council Law' (Iraqi Council of Representatives 2009) <<https://bit.ly/38W6NSG>> accessed 23 August 2020

## V. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper offers a number of recommendations within each of the six areas of analysis, for both Afghanistan and Iraq. However, it must be noted that despite the efforts of the authors to ensure implementable policy, the feasibility of implementation is necessarily uncertain, for two main reasons. Firstly, due to the high stakes and rapidly changing nature of conflict, it must be acknowledged that changes in the situation may render some recommendations impractical. Secondly, many of these suggestions depend upon funding being made available. While the authors are able to suggest some potential funding methods, it must be noted that the political will necessary to enact such funding changes is by no means guaranteed.

### V.I. AFGHANISTAN

#### i. Policy recommendations to combat direct conflict factors

##### *I. Quarterly audits of the APPS system to improve efficacy of the system.*

This proposes that annual audit checks of personnel on the APPS system be replaced by quarterly checks. The increased frequency would serve to ensure further financial transparency of the military and enable the diffusion of its usage. This should increase trust in the ANDSF.

Given that the ANDSF already conducts annual audits on the APPS system, and it has significant support from the US military in stemming corruption, the authors see this as an eminently feasible adjustment.

##### *II. Increased funding for operations working on the removal of ERWs and landmines.*

Such funding should be directed towards the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA) to ensure efficacy of operations. This could be complemented with lobbying of the international community, and advocacy through international organisations such as the World Bank, to increase funding contributions to the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA) in order to return funding to 2010 levels or above. A reduction in the presence of ERWs is important to ensure the existence of safe and robust supply chains and market access. In the long-term, a reduction in ERWs and landmines would also lead to increased land for agriculture, which, in turn, helps to ameliorate the food security situation.

**III. *Establish a formal Code of Conduct for military personnel, in line with anti-corruption standards in the International Code of Conduct for Public Officials.***

The Afghan government should create a set of official guidelines that could be entered into on a voluntary basis. These guidelines could impact individual and corporate behaviour to complement the preventive power of the current coercive measures against corruption.<sup>255</sup> In particular, the government could incorporate aspects of the International Code of Conduct for Public Officials<sup>256</sup> - a particularly thorough and a trusted standard - such as conflict of interest and disclosure of assets, into a Code of Conduct for military servicemen. There is an existing Code of Conduct for civil servants, which could be used as a guideline to explicitly highlight expectations for service personnel. However, as NATO observes, a Code of Conduct for military service personnel specifically would be more effective given the highly specialised nature of the military.

**IV. *Increase emphasis on engaging with locals in peacebuilding operations.***

Finally, this paper recommends that international organisations in Afghanistan should work with local peace councils to develop community-based peacebuilding mechanisms, as this is an area that strongly requires the focus of more resources. In particular, peace councils could be consulted to analyse the drivers of conflict that are impacting their particular community, advise on how to address these, and play a mediation role. This would help to engage communities in non-violent resolution mechanisms.

**ii. Policy recommendations to combat environmental factors**

**I. *Establish mobile cash transfer systems to support food accessibility.***

These can support the food security of returning refugees and IDPs within camps.<sup>257</sup> Whilst the systems would primarily work towards allowing the secure purchase of food from local vendors in camps, this may also help to ensure more sustainable land use by migrant populations within

<sup>255</sup> Todor Tagarev, 'Building Integrity and Reducing Corruption in Defence: A Compendium of Best Practices' (2012) Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces 1, 185

<sup>256</sup> 'International Code of Conduct for Public Officials' (UN General Assembly in resolution 51/59) (12 December 1996) <[www.un.org/documents/ga/res/51/a51r059.htm](http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/51/a51r059.htm)> accessed 21 August 2020

<sup>257</sup> 'Food Security And Conflict: Empirical Challenges And Future Opportunities For Research And Policy Making On Food Security And Conflict' (FAO, 2018) <<http://www.fao.org/3/ca1587en/CA1587EN.pdf>> accessed 25 August 2020

the camps by reducing reliance on intensive household-level food production.<sup>258</sup> This would help to reduce environmental degradation and the desertification of land. Furthermore, mobile cash transfer systems will reduce competition for land, which may also reduce the likelihood of social tensions and conflict occurring amid the large inflows of returning refugees and IDPs. Thus, mobile cash transfer systems could reduce the likelihood of both environmentally-driven violence and short-term food insecurity for returning refugees and IDPs in the nation.

It is important to note that although mobile phone coverage is unlikely to be widely available for those in rural refugee camps, international institutions are increasingly working towards increasing the availability of mobile phone networks and increasing phone affordability.<sup>259</sup> Therefore, in establishing such mobile cash transfer systems, the Afghan government is likely to benefit greatly from support from institutions such as the United Nations Refugee Agency and Accenture to enhance the connectivity of IDPs.<sup>260</sup>

## II. *Development of an adaptive safety net programme.*

This programme should prioritise the most vulnerable – particularly those lacking adequate market access or those most exposed to climate-related shocks.<sup>261</sup> Moreover, due to the seasonal dimension of food insecurity risks within Afghanistan, associated with strong seasonal trends in violent conflict, a safety net programme may provide increased community resilience to climate-related shocks throughout the year.<sup>262</sup> As such, the programme may reduce the risk of worsening food insecurity while also addressing one of the root causes of violent conflict in the nation, by providing a more sustainable source of income for rural Afghan households.

Moreover, the World Bank implemented a Pension Administration and Safety Net Project from 2010 to 2017. The project's aims included to improve the administration of the public pension scheme and to develop administrative systems for safety net interventions, with a focus on targeting and benefit payment delivery.<sup>263</sup> The programme yielded moderately satisfactory results

<sup>258</sup> Héctor Morales-Muñoz, S Jha, M Bonnatti, H Alff, S Kurtenbach, S Sieber, 'Exploring Connections—Environmental Change, Food Security And Violence As Drivers Of Migration—A Critical Review Of Research', *Sustainability* 12:14 (2020)..

<sup>259</sup> UNHCR, 'Mobile connectivity a lifeline for refugees, report finds' (*The UN Refugee Agency*, 14 September 2016) <<https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/9/57d7d4478/mobile-connectivity-lifeline-refugees-report-finds.html>> accessed 23 February 2021

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>261</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 'Conflict, Migration And Food Security: The Role Of Agriculture And Rural Development' (International Food Policy Research Institute 2017).

<sup>262</sup> Héctor Morales-Muñoz and others, 'Exploring Connections—Environmental Change, Food Security And Violence As Drivers Of Migration—A Critical Review Of Research' *Sustainability* 12 (2020).

<sup>263</sup> Judyth L. Twigg, 'Afghanistan - AF: Pension Admin and Safety Net' [2018] World Bank 1, 1

in terms of improved food security and an increased number of households indicating that they had recovered from the shocks they experienced.<sup>264</sup> Therefore, in light of these results, the paper strongly recommends implementing a similar project to help households cope with the seasonal dimension of food insecurity.

### *III. Development of a multi-dimensional food-secure peace-building programme.*

This is in line with policy recommendation IV for Direct Conflict Factors. The programme suggested here would focus specifically on social cohesion and non-violent resolution mechanisms, conducted through jirgas and shuras, along with the development of a more formalised legal system of land rights. Such a programme could be horizontally integrated across different projects. For example, establishment of water-user associations within Afghanistan could enhance regional ownership and cooperation. It is important to acknowledge that peacebuilding efforts are already significant in Afghanistan, and so such a programme is not an entirely new suggestion. However, currently there is a lack of a coordinated approach to social cohesion that takes into account traditional local governance as well as the cooperation opportunities presented by new associations.

Such a programme would be difficult to implement and would require funding that is not currently available. As such, the authors of this paper propose that the starting point for such a programme be the gradual coordination of various extant peacebuilding and food security projects, alongside increased local involvement in the implementation of these projects.

### **iii. Policy recommendations to combat structural and market factors**

#### *I. Identify localised market trends to target international aid more efficiently*

Mobile phone surveys can provide the ability to observe micro-scale market trends,<sup>265</sup> rather than relying on nationally aggregated data on markets in Afghanistan. This would allow smaller-scale trends in food security to be analysed without the requirement for in-person field visits where the risks of harm due to violent conflict may reduce the likelihood of certain regions being surveyed. Moreover, seasonal trends in food security could be examined as data from mobile phone surveys could be collected throughout the year, and particular groups could be targeted through

<sup>264</sup> R. Cooper, 'Social Safety Nets in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States' [2018] The Cash Learning Partnership 1, 9

<sup>265</sup> 'Food Security And Conflict: Empirical Challenges And Future Opportunities For Research And Policy Making On Food Security And Conflict', pp. 20, (FAO, 2018) <<http://www.fao.org/3/ca1587en/CA1587EN.pdf>> accessed 25 August 2020.

such surveys to allow for comparative assessment. More specifically, vulnerable groups could be identified more effectively.

Whilst mobile phone coverage is unlikely to be widely available for those in rural refugee camps, international institutions are working towards increasing mobile phone connectivity and phone affordability.<sup>266</sup> Therefore, while this might not be immediately practical, the Afghan government is likely to receive support from institutions such as the United Nations Refugee Agency and Accenture to enhance the connectivity of IDPs.<sup>267</sup>

## ***II. Establish local bazaar days in rural villages.***

This recommendation can provide a more reliable source of income for farmers, as well as increasing the access and affordability of basic food commodities for rural Afghan households, particularly for growing numbers of IDPs and returning refugees in eastern Afghanistan.<sup>268</sup> Specifically, local bazaar days would encourage increased sale of farmers' produce on a regular schedule to secure a more reliable income. Additionally, vulnerable rural households, such as IDPs and returning refugees in the region would have faster and more affordable access to basic food commodities. A further consequence of supported bazaar days in rural regions is that it would increase the diversified livelihood opportunities within agriculture for young people in the region. Such opportunities would reduce the likelihood of young people being recruited to armed groups. Thus, supporting food markets in rural regions would also address a root cause of support for violent conflict in Afghanistan.

## ***III. Government implementation of vocational training workshops to diversify livelihood skills of heads of households.***

The workshops should be largely targeted at low-income rural households in order to provide them with a more sustainable source of income throughout the year.<sup>269</sup> They could teach certain livelihood skills, including beekeeping and rug-weaving, to heads of households. These

<sup>266</sup> UNHCR, 'Mobile connectivity a lifeline for refugees, report finds' (*The UN Refugee Agency*, 14 September 2016) <<https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/9/57d7d4478/mobile-connectivity-lifeline-refugees-report-finds.html>> accessed 23 February 2021

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Cuma Akbay and Asif Khan Ahmadzai, 'Afganistan'ın Doğu Bölgesinde Gıda Güvenliğini Etkileyen Faktörler' (2020) 23 Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi Tarım ve Doğa Dergisi. pp.475.

<sup>269</sup> Cuma Akbay and Asif Khan Ahmadzai, 'Afganistan'ın Doğu Bölgesinde Gıda Güvenliğini Etkileyen Faktörler' (2020) 23 Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi Tarım ve Doğa Dergisi. pp.475

workshops may also provide a means of entry to new markets to diversify income sources, helping to improve food security particularly in the face of shocks. Moreover, the opportunity for alternative sources of income might allow some households to move away from opium cultivation.<sup>270</sup>

#### iv. Policy recommendations to combat agricultural factors

##### *I. Increased emphasis on civil society participation in agricultural projects.*

This proposal is to compensate for the relatively limited engagement with civil society in the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF). This would comprise the development of new, agriculturally targeted, community-based organisations under advisement from existing local groups and community leaders. This would operate as part of a multi-dimensional peacebuilding programme, to increase the participation of civil society in the development and implementation of new agricultural programmes, and as such would incorporate democratic and peaceful resolution mechanisms. Moreover, focus group discussions with local community leaders could increase awareness of local knowledge in new agricultural projects. Through this, more effective implementation of new agricultural policy and technology can be achieved through allowing a wider population to contribute towards the design of Afghan agricultural programmes. In this way, the programmes are more likely to be tailored to the specific food demands and agricultural requirements that are needed within specialist areas such as IDP camps. This might also help to promote local ownership of and support for agricultural programmes – that is, local ‘buy-in’ – making the effects of projects more likely to diffuse into the community.

##### *II. Provision of new agricultural technology and training to female-headed households.*

This targeting of female-headed households is due to the fact evidence has shown that women often experience a significant burden in meeting the demands of agricultural production, especially as current policy is not meeting gender-specific demands. An increase in agricultural productivity as a result of new technology, such as more efficient irrigation systems and genetically engineered crops, is likely to increase the medium-term food security of Afghan households. Such technologies would also increase households’ capacity to generate more income in the

<sup>270</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime & Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2019. *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2018: Challenges To Sustainable Development, Peace And Security.*

future through increased crop yields and irrigation efficiency. Additionally, such agricultural training programmes and technologies would target a sustainable livelihoods approach to food security. This would offer a more preventative approach to medium-term food insecurity, in contrast to the curative focus of current policy.

### *III. Decentralisation of sectoral responsibility for land rights to provincial levels.*

This would promote more inclusive consultations with Afghan citizens, particularly regarding land entitlements. Through such consultations, social grievances over land rights can be reduced, including violent conflict, within the context of increasing numbers of IDPs and refugees returning to eastern Afghanistan.<sup>271</sup> Decentralisation of sectoral authority and responsibility of land rights to the provincial level would result in a more inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach to the development of sustainable land management programmes.<sup>272</sup> Moreover, inclusive consultations in the design of land entitlements present opportunities for low-income farmers to obtain a more stable source of income and food security beyond the reliance on opium cultivation for land access.<sup>273</sup>

## **v. Policy recommendations to combat exogenous shock factors**

### *I. The introduction of adaptive safety net programmes, particularly for provinces with higher levels of market engagement and subsequent vulnerabilities to food price shocks.*

The paper recommends the implementation of an adaptive safety net programme, focused on developing a food security buffer.<sup>274</sup> In particular, this adaptive safety net programme envisages integrating basic social protection interventions with disaster risk management policies, similar to the World Bank's Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program.<sup>275</sup> Specifically, the paper recommends implementing complementary "productive inclusion" interventions like community savings and loan group or life skills and entrepreneurship training for beneficiaries

<sup>271</sup> Andrej Přivara and Magdaléna Přivarová, 'Nexus Between Climate Change, Displacement And Conflict: Afghanistan Case' *Sustainability* 11 (2019), pp.14.

<sup>272</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' *Food Security* 10 (2018), pp.1598.

<sup>273</sup> Christopher Ward, David Mansfield, Peter Oldham, and William Byrd. "Afghanistan: economic incentives and development initiatives to reduce opium production." (2008).

<sup>274</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 'Conflict, Migration And Food Security: The Role Of Agriculture And Rural Development' (International Food Policy Research Institute 2017).

<sup>275</sup> 'Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program (ASPP)' (World Bank 2020) <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/sahel-adaptive-social-protection-program-trust-fund>> accessed 23 February 2021.

to reinforce their adaptive capabilities. This would reduce vulnerability to shocks on a long-term basis, complimenting FAO's existing short-term intervention well.

There are budgetary constraints associated with this proposal. Therefore, the paper recommends targeting the most vulnerable households to ensure maximum efficient use of the existing, limited resources of the Afghanistan government.

## *II. Workshops for household food production diversification programmes.*

Such programmes and workshops should be targeted specifically at heads of vulnerable households – such as female-led, IDP households, and large family units. While this already exists to a certain extent, with the FAO supporting women to engage in backyard poultry-rearing in addition to other livelihood activities,<sup>276</sup> this paper suggests that this might be expanded further. This suggestion links with the livelihood diversification workshops mentioned previously in the Structural and Market Factors section, but emphasises the need not just for income diversification, but also food supply diversification. Poultry-rearing, beekeeping and aquaponics being some examples.

## **vi. Policy recommendations to combat political factors**

### *I. State agencies should be subject to annual audits to reduce corruption.*

The government needs to carry out audits on other government agencies, beyond the selective state agencies that are currently audited, such as state airlines and electricity companies.<sup>277</sup> According to a UN report in 2020, while more public officials declared their assets in recent years, improvements to the verification of these declarations were marginal.<sup>278</sup> Auditing is a key step towards increasing government transparency and highlighting discrepancies, without which the fight against corruption is largely ineffective.

<sup>276</sup> FAO in Afghanistan, 'From vulnerability to resilience in Afghanistan' (*FAO*, 22 May 2020) <<http://www.fao.org/emergencies/fao-in-action/stories/stories-detail/en/c/1277061/>> accessed 2 September 2020

<sup>277</sup> 'National Strategy for Combating Corruption' (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan 2018) <[https://www.sacs.gov.af/uploads/strategy\\_pdf/Strategy\\_en.pdf](https://www.sacs.gov.af/uploads/strategy_pdf/Strategy_en.pdf)> accessed 21 August 2020; 'Afghanistan's National Strategy for Combating Corruption: An Assessment' (2019) Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organisation 1, 2

<sup>278</sup> 'Afghanistan's Fight against Corruption: Crucial for Peace and Prosperity' (United Nations 2020) <[https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan\\_fight\\_against\\_corruption\\_groundwork\\_for\\_peace\\_and\\_prosperity-20\\_may\\_2019-english.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_fight_against_corruption_groundwork_for_peace_and_prosperity-20_may_2019-english.pdf)> accessed 21 August 2020

The paper recognises that it would require significant resources to audit all state agencies. Therefore, in the short-term, it is recommended that the Supreme Audit Office ensures that audits focus on high-risk areas for corruption whilst continuously working towards the long-term goal of auditing all state agencies. If resource constraints are still a concern in the long run, it is possible for the Audit Office to work with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to identify and investigate alleged corruption complaints through the Citizen Engagement Mechanism.<sup>279</sup>

**II. *Establishment of an anti-corruption section in the Code of Conduct for civil servants.***

The current Code of Conduct does not contain a specific anti-corruption section. Therefore, this paper recommends that the government considers amending the Code of Conduct for civil servants to include an anti-corruption section as this would send a strong signal to civil servants about the lack of tolerance for corruption. In particular, the government could consider incorporating some aspects of the International Code of Conduct for Public Officials,<sup>280</sup> such as the portions on conflict of interest, disclosure of assets, and acceptance of gifts or other favours, into a Code of Conduct for military servicemen to explicitly highlight the expectations for civil servants.

**III. *Implementation of punitive systems for cases of minor fraud to address corruption.***

It is recommended that the Afghan government implement punitive measures when civil servants are found to have taken bribes, such as removing them from their positions or delaying promotions. Punitive measures are important tools for sending a strong signal to all public servants that the government has a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption.

**IV. *Introduce constitutional reform to ensure greater separation between the executive and the judiciary.***

The Afghan government could enforce a stricter version of the separation of powers to create a more independent Supreme Court, one that would not be unduly influenced by the president. Such substantive change would likely require constitutional reform, as it is unrealistic to expect the president to promote reform that would significantly constrain their powers. This could

<sup>279</sup> Prof. Dr. Mohammad Sharif Shari, 'SAO Afghanistan Efforts To Fight Corruption' (<http://intosajournal.org/sao-afghanistan-efforts-to-fight-corruption/> 2016) <<http://intosajournal.org/sao-afghanistan-efforts-to-fight-corruption/>> accessed 21 February 2021

<sup>280</sup> 'International Code of Conduct for Public Officials' (UN General Assembly in resolution 51/59) (12 December 1996) <[www.un.org/documents/ga/res/51/a51r059.htm](http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/51/a51r059.htm)> accessed 21 August 2020

encourage an increasingly independent justice system to help reduce corruption and improve public confidence in the political and judiciary systems. Therefore, the paper recommends that the National Assembly would be the institution best placed to push for such reforms. The National Assembly could legislate for a greater separation of powers between the branches of government, through its ability to make amendments to the constitution. This would strengthen the rule of law, which requires that questions of legal rights and liability should ordinarily be resolved by application of the law and not the exercise of discretion. This would require the courts to be independent.<sup>281</sup>

The paper recognises the difficulties associated with the implementation of such change, and while this paper can recommend such an action be taken, it is the National Assembly that must be the willing enactors of such legislation, with the consent of the general public. Protests have occurred intermittently over the past few years along a common theme of anti-corruption and lack of faith in current governance.<sup>282</sup> As such, as an initial step towards this recommendation, the government could carry out a survey among legislators to establish if there is support for such a change.

## V.II. IRAQ

### i. Policy recommendations to combat direct conflict factors

#### I. *Implement a comprehensive military personnel tracking and standardized payment system through the national banking system.*

It is recommended that the Iraqi military considers implementing a similar system to Afghanistan's APPS. This would entail ensuring that all army personnel are recorded on a biometric registration system, paying all army personnel through the banking system, and conducting regular audits. This system, if implemented properly, could eliminate the problem of ghost soldiers and prevent high-ranking officials from embezzling public funding in the payment pipeline.

However, while modelled on APPS, this system should maintain its own functions specific to the needs of the Iraqi military. Given that the Afghanistan military was able to implement a biometric

<sup>281</sup> Lord Bingham, *The Rule of Law* (1st, Penguin Books, United Kingdom 2010) 48

<sup>282</sup> Sayed Salahuddin, 'Afghan protesters, journalist killed during unrest over 'unjust food distribution' (*Arab News*, 9 May 2020) <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1672151/world> - accessed 30 March 2021.

system, with some assistance from the US military, the paper expects this policy to be similarly practically implementable in Iraq as the military defence spending in Iraq is several times that of Afghanistan.<sup>283</sup> Despite funding and practicability, however, political will for such an action is not certain.

## ***II. Develop guidelines to facilitate peaceful protests for citizens to reduce violence.***

The military should develop guidelines to facilitate peaceful protests. Some recommended guidelines include the general prohibition of the use of firearms and the graduated use of force.<sup>284</sup> For the former, the use of firearms cannot be justified merely because a particular gathering is authorised and has to be dispersed, or to protect property. An example the military could consider is the principle of “maximum protection” in the Philippines, which means that the military, police and other law enforcement authorities shall observe “the highest degree of protection... during a public assembly including the dispersal of the same”.<sup>285</sup> For the latter, clear protocols should be established on appropriately graduated use of force, taking into account significant risks that arise when certain “less-lethal” weapons, such as tear gas, are used to control crowds and riots. Additionally, training should be provided to promote de-escalation in response to protests.

## ***III. Reduce corruption in the military through:***

- i) The publication of a detailed military budget to improve transparency and accountability.**
- ii) Creation of a Code of Conduct for military personnel.**

This paper recommends that the military creates a detailed budget to ensure transparency for its expenditure. The military should also conduct frequent audits from independent agencies and international bodies, to ensure financial accountability. As part of this, there should be some level of oversight for secret procurements. Where the secrecy of detailed information would pose a threat to national security, the publication of detailed oversight mechanisms could serve in the

<sup>283</sup> 'Military Expenditure' (World Bank 2019) accessed 23 February 2021

<sup>284</sup> Milena Costas Trascasas, 'Facilitating Peaceful Protests' [2014] Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights 1, 21

<sup>285</sup> 'Strengthening The Right Of The People To Free Expression' (House of Representatives, Philippines 2016) <<https://policehumanrightsresources.org/content/uploads/2019/07/Phillipines-New-Public-Assembly-Act-2016.pdf?x39143>> accessed 21 August 2020

stead of specific data. Additionally, Parliament should be provided with detailed audit reports related to the defence and security sectors.

Coupled with this, it is strongly recommended that the government incorporate some aspects of the International Code of Conduct for Public Officials, such as its guidelines on conflict of interest, disclosure of assets, and acceptance of gifts or other favours. By creating a code of conduct for military servicemen, it would explicitly highlight the expectations that citizens and the Iraqi government have of them. Overall, by reducing military corruption, it serves a twofold purpose of increasing the military's capability to promote security and increasing public trust in military operations.

## ii. Policy recommendations to combat environmental factors

### I. *Multi-stakeholder discussions in establishment and implementation of future water management strategies.*

Such discussions could increase inclusivity in the development of future water management strategies.<sup>286</sup> Increased engagement between stakeholders, such as local water users, government officials and farmers should involve regular meetings to balance the short- and long-term benefits of new water use programmes for different stakeholders. Such discussions could also involve more science-formulated modelling approaches of system dynamics and economic projections for agricultural productivity. As a result, stakeholders may be more likely to support the implementation of additional water-conserving technologies, such as drip or sprinkler irrigation systems rather than continued use of flood irrigation in Iraq. Moreover, these discussions could include input from a variety of ethnic and sectarian groups, which could contribute to building social cohesion to address the root causes of conflict, whilst also addressing water scarcity.

### II. *Implementation of transferable pumping permits based on a voluntary market trading system.*

This recommendation forms part of an inclusive water resource management strategy in order to combat water scarcity and the weaponisation of water by militant groups. Transferable pumping permits would involve the sale and purchase of water pumping rights between existing

<sup>286</sup> Ali A. Obeed Al-Azawi and Frank A. Ward, 'Groundwater Use And Policy Options For Sustainable Management In Southern Iraq' *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 33 (2016), pp.641.

permit holders on a voluntary market trading system.<sup>287</sup> Importantly, the permits would also ensure each groundwater user is accountable for their water use behaviours and so encourage cooperation in a sustainable management strategy of jointly-used groundwater resources. Therefore, the permits are likely to reduce the current economic costs of water shortages, while also encouraging more sustainable use of water basins to support domestic agricultural production. Moreover, this system could reduce the likelihood of basin depletion beyond the irreversible threshold of water storage.<sup>288</sup> As a result, the medium- to long-term food security of rural Iraqi households is likely to be increased as their vulnerability to adverse environmental impacts of water scarcities and desertification are reduced.

### iii. Policy recommendations to combat structural and market factors

#### I. *Establish local bazaar days in within IDP and refugee camps.*

For IDPs and returning refugees living in camps, such as the Domiz camp in northern Iraq, households may be further supported through structural and social integration of the camps by increased market engagement.<sup>289</sup> Increased market engagement may be achieved through the establishment of local bazaar days within camps where returning refugees and IDPs could sell their agricultural produce for income generation, alongside increasing the accessibility and affordability of basic food commodities for other households.<sup>290</sup> This could increase the visibility of household gardens to markets as a means of strengthening support for household-level agricultural production, whilst increasing the medium-term food security of vulnerable households who may not have access to the PDS.

Furthermore, as refugee camps are increasingly becoming unintentional permanent settlements within Iraq, improved market engagement may encourage incorporation of urban agriculture to promote further integration of the camps.<sup>291</sup> This recommendation is intended to promote self-

<sup>287</sup> Ali A. Obeed Al-Azawi and Frank A. Ward, 'Groundwater Use And Policy Options For Sustainable Management In Southern Iraq' *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 33 (2016), pp.641.

<sup>288</sup> Ali A. Obeed Al-Azawi and Frank A. Ward, 'Groundwater Use And Policy Options For Sustainable Management In Southern Iraq' *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 33 (2016), pp.641.

<sup>289</sup> M Tomkins, S Yousef, A Adam-Bradford, C Perkins, E Grosrenaud, M McTough, A Viljoen, *Cultivating Refuge: The Role Of Urban Agriculture Amongst Refugees And Forced Migrants In The Kurdistan Region Of Iraq*, in *Urban Agriculture and City Sustainability* (WIT Press 2019).

<sup>290</sup> Cuma Akbay and Asif Khan Ahmadzai, 'Afganistan'ın Doğu Bölgesinde Gıda Güvenliğini Etkileyen Faktörler' (2020) 23 *Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi Tarım ve Doğa Dergisi*. pp.475

<sup>291</sup> M Tomkins, S Yousef, A Adam-Bradford, C Perkins, E Grosrenaud, M McTough, A Viljoen, *Cultivating Refuge: The Role Of Urban Agriculture Amongst Refugees And Forced Migrants In The Kurdistan Region Of Iraq*, in *Urban Agriculture and City Sustainability* (WIT Press 2019).

control in the management of refugee and IDPs' livelihoods, and reduce support for armed groups for income generation. In this way, the bazaar days will also provide a more reliable source of income for farmers and offer greater agricultural livelihood opportunities for young IDPs.

## *II. Structural change of the PDS to increase accessibility to food commodities.*

The extant form of the PDS is somewhat outdated and thus fails to make efficient use of technology. As such, the PDS could be restructured to incorporate a more direct form of cash transfer to Iraqi households where this is feasible, which could be a more efficient and welfare-enhancing policy intervention in the long-term.<sup>292</sup> This would comprise a reduction in transfer costs to redistribute food commodities and a widening of accessibility by introducing mobile cash-transfer systems where possible. This should ensure that food assistance can support IDPs in less easily accessible regions of Iraq while costs are reduced in the more accessible areas. Additionally, the mobile transfer system could provide useful information regarding purchasing practices throughout the year.<sup>293</sup> Information from the mobile cash-transfer systems may be analysed to provide pricing suggestions based on demand to increase market efficiency, as well as new opportunities for agricultural production based on market gaps to allow domestic food production to compete more effectively with food imports.

While this proposal is promising, the risk to food security during the restructuring of the PDS should not be ignored.<sup>294</sup> Therefore, if appropriate temporary safety nets, such as food vouchers to maintain caloric intake, could be implemented during the replacement period,<sup>295</sup> replacement of the PDS with a more efficient, 21<sup>st</sup> century-appropriate system would be worthwhile.

## *III. Vocational training workshops to diversify livelihood skills of heads of households.*

The creation and support of vocational training workshops to teach new livelihood skills to heads of households is an applicable suggestion in Iraq, as in Afghanistan. Such workshops could target households with reduced market access in rural regions to diversify household income sources

<sup>292</sup> Arsalan San Ahmed and Garth John Holloway, 'Calories, Conflict And Correlates: Redistributive Food Security In Post-Conflict Iraq' *Food Policy* 68 (2017), pp.98.

<sup>293</sup> 'Food Security And Conflict: Empirical Challenges And Future Opportunities For Research And Policy Making On Food Security And Conflict', pp. 21, (FAO, 2018) <<http://www.fao.org/3/ca1587en/CA1587EN.pdf>> accessed 25 August 2020.

<sup>294</sup> Arsalan San Ahmed and Garth John Holloway, 'Calories, Conflict And Correlates: Redistributive Food Security In Post-Conflict Iraq' *Food Policy* 68 (2017), pp.98.

<sup>295</sup> FAO, 'Social Safety Nets and the Food Security Crisis' (FAO, 2011) <[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/ISFP/Social\\_safety\\_nets.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ISFP/Social_safety_nets.pdf)> accessed 23 February 2021

by offering a means of entry to new markets. These workshops could also be targeted to young people in Iraq to reduce the likelihood of growth of support for armed groups outside of the harvest season when the demand for agricultural labour is reduced.<sup>296</sup>

#### iv. Policy recommendations to combat agricultural factors

##### I. *Multi-stakeholder discussions on future water conservation strategies.*

This would involve regular and inclusive stakeholder meetings to gain user knowledge and promote investment in water-conserving technology. In particular, discussions may include negotiations around new agricultural technologies to support greater irrigation efficiency, along with new seed varieties and nutrient management practices to increase crop yields and food production whilst ensuring more sustainable use of groundwater resources. This recommendation should complement strategies that aim to increase domestic agricultural production to ensure more sustainable water use in the future. The increased production of domestic food supplies would be coupled with the balancing of the supply and demand of groundwater sources within the nation. This policy recommendation therefore supports growth of domestic agricultural production in a more sustainable approach that diversifies the national economy and increases household capacity to purchase basic food commodities.

##### II. *Increased incorporation of indigenous knowledge in strategies for food production and preservation.*

This has the potential to increase the sustainability of domestically produced food during seasonal shortages or climate-related shocks, particularly within Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>297</sup> This recommendation is in-line with the sustainable livelihoods approach of food security theorisations. Previous research has demonstrated that indigenous rural women have unique knowledge concerning the processing and preservation of food supplies that can increase food security for rural Iraqi households.<sup>298</sup> As such, indigenous knowledge of agricultural production,

<sup>296</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' *Food Security* 10 (2018).

<sup>297</sup> Hamasalih, Chawan, Hemin Neima, Rezhen Harun, and Kazhan Hasan. 'Rural women indigenous knowledge of traditional food and household food security in Kurdistan Regional Government, Iraq.' *ProEnvironment/ProMediu* 12, no. 39 (2019), pp. 262.

<sup>298</sup> Hamasalih, Chawan, Hemin Neima, Rezhen Harun, and Kazhan Hasan. 'Rural women indigenous knowledge of traditional food and household food security in Kurdistan Regional Government, Iraq.' *ProEnvironment/ProMediu* 12, no. 39 (2019), pp. 262.

based on extensive involvement in food systems over time, can contribute to medium-term food security during reductions in agricultural production.

To maximise engagement with local populations, there should be increased discussions with tribal leaders. Such leaders exert strong authority over their communities, especially at times when the government is weak.<sup>299</sup> Additionally, tribal customs continue to influence day-to-day life in Iraq, and many Iraqis may resort to their tribe when seeking physical and economic security or the mediation of disputes.<sup>300</sup> As such, it is crucial to engage with tribes in order to successfully improve the incorporation of indigenous knowledge of food systems within discussions concerning the agricultural sector.

### *III. Decentralisation of sectoral responsibility for land rights to the provincial levels.*

This recommendation links to previous recommendations regarding the development of a multi-dimensional peacebuilding programme that involves inclusive land entitlement consultations with Iraqi households. This should be facilitated through the decentralisation of sectoral responsibility for land rights to provincial levels for a more multi-stakeholder approach between the national government and civil society in the management of agricultural land.<sup>301</sup> In particular, this could reduce the risk of social grievances developing as a result of tensions over land access amid increasing numbers of IDPs and settlement of returning refugees. In this way, such a programme could improve social cohesion and address the root causes of conflict within the nation to further reduce the risk of long-term food insecurity for vulnerable Iraqi households.

However, as already noted, such a multi-dimensional programme is not a simple task. The coordination and funding that such a project would require presents significant challenges to its implementation. Despite this, the integration and coordination between different policy areas that such a programme could provide makes it vital. As such, it is recommended that funding priorities are reassessed and local leaders, along with a variety of stakeholders, are incorporated into future land entitlement consultations.

<sup>299</sup> Hosham Dawod, 'The Sunni Tribes in Iraq' [2015] Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre 1, 5

<sup>300</sup> Haley Bobseine, 'Tribal Justice in a Fragile Iraq' [2019] The Century Foundation 1, 3

<sup>301</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' *Food Security* 10 (2018), pp.1598.

## v. Policy recommendations to combat exogenous shock factors

### I. *Implement an adaptive safety net programme to build resilience to exogenous shocks.*

The paper recommends an adaptive safety net programme to reduce the future vulnerabilities of Iraqi households to short-term food insecurity due to exogenous shocks. Such a programme would involve increasing domestic food production and developing policies for food storage and hedging, as well as integrating basic social protection interventions within disaster risk management policies, similar to the World Bank's Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program.<sup>302</sup> Specifically, the paper recommends implementing complementary “productive inclusion” interventions like community savings and loan group or life skills and entrepreneurship training for beneficiaries to reinforce their adaptive capabilities. This would reduce vulnerability to shocks on a long-term basis, complimenting existing the FAO's short-term intervention well.

There are budgetary constraints associated with the implementation of this programme. Therefore, the paper recommends targeting the households that rely most heavily on the PDS to ensure maximum efficient use of the existing limited resources of the Iraqi government.

### II. *Implement a sustainable groundwater management programme to increase food production.*

Food production can be increased through supporting the agricultural productivity of Iraqi farmers with sustainable groundwater management.<sup>303</sup> The programme would be targeted at provinces that significantly depend on the PDS to meet their food demands and those with high market engagement in urban areas. The latter heightens the impact of food price shocks on the relative food security of Iraqi households. Therefore, a safety net programme would increase domestic food production. This would lead to enhanced community resilience to exogenous shocks, including public health crises, through creation of a food supply buffer.<sup>35</sup> The importance of coupling increased domestic agricultural production with sustainable water management, in order to encourage social cohesion and reduce exacerbation of regional water scarcities, is highlighted in ‘Environmental Factors’.

<sup>302</sup> 'Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program (ASPP)' (World Bank 2020) <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/sahel-adaptive-social-protection-program-trust-fund>> accessed 23 February 2021

<sup>303</sup> Eckart Woertz, 'Food Security In Iraq: Results From Quantitative And Qualitative Surveys' *Food Security* 9 (2017), pp.519.

**III. *Build resilience for households through promotion of education and opportunities to diversify income sources.***

As highlighted in 'Agricultural Factors', vocational training workshops on alternative livelihood skills would increase household resilience to exogenous shocks. It would be particularly beneficial to provide workshops targeted at women who lead households, as these households spend a statistically higher proportion of income on basic food commodities. Reducing this high reliance on purchased commodities would build household resilience to food price shocks. This should be coupled with engagement with tribal leaders. Traditionally, tribal leaders play an important role in protecting their tribesmen from harm, guaranteeing a basic level of economic well-being, mediating disputes and making peace.<sup>304</sup> The successful implementation of vocational workshops depends heavily on the willingness of tribal leaders to allow members of their tribes to attend such workshops. To convince them of the necessity of such ideas, securing their consent is paramount. Therefore, the Iraqi authorities should look for people who have a deep understanding of different tribal communities to successfully discuss implementable strategies with the tribal leaders.

**vi. Policy recommendations to combat political factors**

**I. *Establish a government taskforce to ensure efficient implementation of new policies.***

Iraq requires a delivery unit to build up effective administrative capabilities. The existing mechanisms for follow-up of executive decisions are scattered and disconnected, with a vast number of committees and agencies responsible for coordinating between the various arms of government.<sup>305</sup> This has meant that, although strategic plans do exist, they are limited in practice. Therefore, a recommended policy is that a delivery unit should be at the centre of government, responsible for ensuring the implementation of the country's policy priorities.<sup>306</sup>

A specialised delivery unit can achieve this objective because typically it is a small, agile unit which is mandated to use the authority of the chief executive to improve public service delivery by pursuing a select number of policy priorities and ensuring their implementation.<sup>307</sup> The delivery unit team looks at the delivery process and works to unblock any obstacles that prevent state agencies from working together to deliver the government's priorities, thus enabling strong

<sup>304</sup> Sharon Otterman, 'Iraq: The Role of Tribes' [2005] Council on Foreign Relations 1, 2

<sup>305</sup> Ibid

<sup>306</sup> Ibid

<sup>307</sup> Ibid

horizontal coherence. Where there are shortfalls in institutional capacity, the delivery unit's task would be to figure out how to pool resources and incentivize collaboration across the public sector.

***II. Establish a data analytics unit to improve data accuracy across government departments.***

This would mean, when the infrastructure is available to support it, establishing e-government platforms, to collect data for the data analytics unit, which would then be used by the various ministries to plan better policies. The current primary body responsible for data collection is the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) located within the Ministry of Planning. However, because ministries tend to operate in silos, data is inefficiently shared across government and the CSO's limited authority restricts its ability to consolidate information from other parts of the government.<sup>308</sup>

Instead of expecting ministries to share data with the CSO, there should be a centralised data analytics unit placed within the cabinet or the Council of Ministers. This would offer impact analysis and enable policy-makers to understand the efficacy of policy decisions across all government agencies in real time, thereby helping improve the policy-making process.<sup>309</sup> A functioning data analytics unit, however, would require the establishment of e-government platforms across all key ministries and agencies.<sup>310</sup> Although this might not be possible in the short-term, it is important to lay the technical groundwork for what may become possible further down the line.

***III. Introduction of a merit-based recruitment system to help eliminate nepotism and corruption to promote good governance.***

The FPSC's top priority should be to establish a centralised employment census for all public sector employees. Crucially, it should incorporate workers within state-owned enterprises, an area that has notoriously represented a black hole for public spending.<sup>311</sup> Every individual

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<sup>308</sup> Ali Al-Mawlawi, 'Public Sector Reform in Iraq' (2020) Middle East and North Africa Programme 1, 6

<sup>309</sup> Ibid

<sup>310</sup> Ibid

<sup>311</sup> Ali Al-Mawlawi, 'Public Sector Reform in Iraq' (2020) Middle East and North Africa Programme 1, 11

receiving remunerations from the state should be assigned a unique identification number so that the government can root out ghost employees and double entries.

Additionally, analysis of employment census data could be used to identify skills gaps and women's representation within the workforce. This would feed into the proposed data analytics unit, enabling policymakers to plan for future employment grades and training programmes. The FPSC should also aspire to gradually implement merit-based recruitment. The gradual nature of this suggestion, however, is key. As the UNDP cautions, “moving too fast toward a merit-based system of recruitment might even undermine state credibility” and a “pragmatic compromise” should be pursued.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Matjaz Salovan, 'Iraq Public Sector Modernisation Programme' (2019) United Nations Development Programme Evaluation 1, 28

## VI. LESSONS FOR FOOD-SECURE POLICYMAKING IN CONFLICT ZONES

### VI.I. BALANCING CRISIS-RESPONSE AND DEVELOPMENT

This policy paper has highlighted a series of challenges that arise in the balancing of short-term (crisis-response) and long-term (development) needs for food-secure policy making in conflict zones. For example the PDS in Iraq, which, despite the life-saving aid it provides, also helps to disguise longer-term economic weaknesses and suffers from overall inefficiency. These challenges become evident in examining the complex relationships between the factors driving food insecurity and conflict. In this way, general recommendations for balancing food security in the short- and long-term in conflict zones will be suggested. However, it must be recognised that these relationships are specific to the social, environmental and economic contexts in which they are explored. Therefore, the extent to which new food-secure policy recommendations are successfully adopted will vary between conflict zones in different countries and regions. Different states will have varying priorities for security and therefore varying levels of implementation.

Both national case studies have demonstrated that the environmental conditions in which the policy recommendations are implemented must be considered in order to increase both short- and long-term food security of households. Within Afghanistan, the need to accommodate rising numbers of IDPs and returning refugees has been associated with exacerbation of desertification and land degradation<sup>313</sup>. This association is partially due to growing reliance on household-level agricultural production for short-term food security. In order to reduce the likelihood of social tension and conflict over land entitlements within this context, a sustainable land management strategy is recommended. This can balance the short-term food requirements of Afghan households, especially those within IDP and refugee camps, with increasing the long-term food security and stability of the wider population. Furthermore, in Iraq, policy recommendations include strategies to support increasing domestic agricultural production. Such policy recommendations can diversify the national economy and boost short-term food security through increasing the national food supply and reducing the vulnerability of those Iraqi households with high market access to exogenous shocks. However, whilst increasing domestic agricultural productivity will increase food security in the short-term, it can exacerbate regional water

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<sup>313</sup> Héctor Morales-Muñoz and others, 'Exploring Connections—Environmental Change, Food Security And Violence As Drivers Of Migration—A Critical Review Of Research' *Sustainability* 12 (2020).

scarcities.<sup>314</sup> More specifically, if increased domestic agricultural production is not coupled with a sustainable groundwater management strategy, such as transferable pumping permits, it is likely that the groundwater supply will be depleted.<sup>315</sup> Unsustainable groundwater use and depletion will lead to significantly reduced long-term food security for Iraqi households. Therefore, both case studies have demonstrated that the environmental context must be deeply considered in policy making to balance short- and long-term food security needs. It is in the environmental context in particular that short term gains might have to be sacrificed for longer-term benefit. The full impacts of climate change are yet to be seen, and non-environmentally friendly ‘shortcuts’ appear appealing in current crisis situations. However, it must be recognised that this poses a severe threat in the long run. Iraq, for example, has made it a priority to diversify away from fossil fuels. Environmentally-considerate policy priorities – such as this – must be implemented in order to avoid more acute crises in the future.

It is clear that the economic contexts of both Afghanistan and Iraq have implications for the long-term food security of households. For example, corruption and conflict have led to economic instability in both countries. This, in turn, has resulted in a heavy reliance on international aid,<sup>316</sup> which can have significant impacts on food security once international funding for such programmes is reduced as states do not have the economic power to make up for the shortfall in international funding. In Afghanistan, an example of this is the lower level of funding now available and subsequent reduction in capacity for organisations dedicated to removing ERWs. This has significantly slowed progress of the removal of ERWs within the country as the Afghan government has not been able to cover the funding deficit on its own. In Iraq, the recent reduction in U.S. foreign aid programmes might lead to a destabilisation in the country, and this has led one senior U.S. Democratic lawmaker to comment that it might pave the way for a comeback by the Islamic State.<sup>317</sup> This could potentially exacerbate the conflict situation in the country, which would gravely affect the food security situation in Iraq. These examples

<sup>314</sup> Raed Abulhay Ibrahim Alani, 'Distorting Agri-Food Policies In Iraq: Implication For Crop Production, Food Security And Water Use' (PhD, Reading 2019).

<sup>315</sup> Ali A. Obeed Al-Azawi and Frank A. Ward, 'Groundwater Use And Policy Options For Sustainable Management In Southern Iraq' *International Journal of Water Resources Development* 33 (2016), pp.641.

<sup>316</sup> Mohammad Samim, 'Afghanistan's Addiction to Foreign Aid' (The Diplomat 2016) <<https://thediplomat.com/2016/05/afghanistans-addiction-to-foreign-aid/>> accessed 09 September 2020; Robbie Gramer, 'Fears Mount as Trump Administration Guts USAID's Iraq Presence' (Foreign Policy 2020) <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/06/iraq-aid-instability-us-agency-for-international-development-usaid-middle-east-stability/>> accessed 09 September 2020

<sup>317</sup> Robbie Gramer, 'Fears Mount as Trump Administration Guts USAID's Iraq Presence' (Foreign Policy 2020) <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/06/iraq-aid-instability-us-agency-for-international-development-usaid-middle-east-stability/>> accessed 09 September 2020

demonstrate how the economic contexts of both countries must be taken into account when making policy recommendations.

Importantly, the difficult economic climate that both countries are experiencing means that some policy recommendations have to be long term in nature, as the respective governments are not able to channel funding towards certain initiatives in the short term. More generally, these challenges demonstrate that short-term policy recommendations for food security in conflict zones may be unsuccessful if they are not coupled with longer-term peacebuilding strategies.<sup>318</sup> For example, the decentralisation of sectoral authority and responsibility through the establishment of new community-based organisations may strengthen the influence of civil society in order to tackle the root causes of conflict and reduce the impact of corruption on national international aid dependence and the long-term food security of households.<sup>319</sup> This has been proven to work. For example, in the Blolequin area of Côte d'Ivoire, tensions with returning refugees were solved through community-led bridge building projects that were tied into the distribution of food supplies.<sup>320</sup> USAID's Country Development Cooperation Strategy in Afghanistan presents such a shift in thinking away from large infrastructure-based aid towards private sector and community-aimed projects.<sup>321</sup> It is in such a capacity that single projects can combine short-term emergency food aid with longer-term developmental goals. Successful community-based programmes are those that permeate into society and have positive impacts that last beyond project implementation itself.

## VI.II. INCORPORATING PEACEBUILDING INTO FOOD SECURITY

As this paper has demonstrated, the relationship between food security and conflict is nuanced and complex. In Afghanistan, conflict can act as a short-term risk-multiplier of food insecurity,<sup>322</sup> yet there are discrepancies between areas experiencing the highest levels of conflict and areas experiencing the highest levels of food insecurity.<sup>323</sup> The picture is similarly complicated in Iraq,

<sup>318</sup> Eckart Woertz, 'Food Security In Iraq: Results From Quantitative And Qualitative Surveys' (2017) 9 *Food Security*, pp.511.

<sup>319</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' *Food Security* 10 (2018), pp.1598.

<sup>320</sup> C Hendrix, C. and H J Brinkman, H.J, 'Food insecurity and conflict dynamics: Causal linkages and complex feedbacks'. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(2) (2013), p.12

<sup>321</sup> USAID, 'Afghanistan Country Development Cooperation Strategy: Fiscal Year 2019-2023' [2018]

<sup>322</sup> Ellen Messer and Marc J. Cohen, 'Breaking The Links Between Conflict And Hunger Redux' *World Medical & Health Policy* 7 (2015).

<sup>323</sup> Anna D'Souza and Dean Jolliffe, 'Conflict, Food Price Shocks, And Food Insecurity: The Experience Of Afghan Households' *Food Policy* 42 (2013).

as the ongoing insurgency has negatively impacted short- to medium-term food security,<sup>324</sup> but there have not been any direct connections between food insecurity and the recruitment of individuals to violent extremist groups.<sup>325</sup>

Evidence has shown that the incorporation of peacebuilding into food security practices and vice versa can yield tangible results. Water resource management in Kyrgyzstan by different ethnic groups has helped to contribute to reconciliation, and a peacebuilding programme in Ethiopia focused on pastoralists was intended to reduce levels of conflict but also had the unintended consequence of improving community resilience in the face of drought by building social cohesion.<sup>326</sup> Peacebuilding can also directly tackle conflict-driven food insecurity – for example, the forcible seizure and strategic redistribution of food aid by combatants.<sup>327</sup>

Adopting a more holistic perspective and examining other factors, one can see that there are other drivers of conflict in both countries, such as corruption,<sup>328</sup> poor governance<sup>329</sup> and a weak military force.<sup>330</sup> These additional factors provide greater clarity when considering some of the aforementioned discrepancies. Therefore, simply recommending policies to improve food security or resolve conflict is insufficient – policy makers need to adopt a multi-faceted approach that takes into account other factors, such as exogenous shocks, political factors, environmental factors, agricultural factors, and structural and market factors, in order to simultaneously tackle food insecurity and conflict effectively.

In order to incorporate peacebuilding within efforts for improving long-term food security within Iraq and Afghanistan, this paper's policy recommendations also include strategies for civil society building. Through a more civil society-led approach, such as the decentralisation of sectoral authority over land rights to provincial levels within Afghanistan<sup>331</sup> and the formation of water-

<sup>324</sup> Branca, Goldwyn, Milante, 'The World's Food Programme Contribution To Improving The Prospects For Peace In Iraq' [2020] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 1, 2

<sup>325</sup> Branca, Goldwyn, Milante, 'The World's Food Programme Contribution To Improving The Prospects For Peace In Iraq' [2020] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 1, 3

<sup>326</sup> C Hendrix, C. and H J Brinkman, 'Food insecurity and conflict dynamics: Causal linkages and complex feedbacks', *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(2) (2013), p.12

<sup>327</sup> José Ciro Martínez and Brent Eng, 'The unintended consequences of emergency food aid: neutrality, sovereignty and politics in the Syrian civil war, 2012-15' [2016]

<sup>328</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 'U.S. Lessons Learned In Afghanistan' (2020); 'Arab Barometer V; Iraq Country Report' (Arab Barometer 2019) <[https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV\\_Iraq\\_Report\\_Public-Opinion\\_2019.pdf](https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV_Iraq_Report_Public-Opinion_2019.pdf)> accessed 17 August 2020.

<sup>329</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' (2018) 10 Food Security; Iraq Country Report' (Arab Barometer 2019) <[https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV\\_Iraq\\_Report\\_Public-Opinion\\_2019.pdf](https://www.arabbarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/ABV_Iraq_Report_Public-Opinion_2019.pdf)> accessed 17 August 2020.

<sup>330</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 'U.S. Lessons Learned In Afghanistan' (2020); Anthony Cordesman, 'Iraq as a Failed State' (2019) Center For Strategic & International Studies 1, 1

<sup>331</sup> Nigel Poole, Chona Echavez and Dominic Rowland, 'Are Agriculture And Nutrition Policies And Practice Coherent? Stakeholder Evidence From Afghanistan' *Food Security* 10 (2018), pp.1598.

user associations within Iraq, the root causes of conflict may be addressed. More specifically, a joint approach between the national governments and civil society would reduce the likelihood of social grievances developing over management of natural resources and land access. Thus, it is the expectation of the authors that the inclusion of a peacebuilding approach in this paper has produced recommendations that will also increase the long-term food security for Afghan and Iraqi households.

## VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ending food insecurity, while the ultimate goal of projects such as these, is by no means easily achievable. Afghanistan and Iraq's continuing food insecure status is not for lack of trying on the part of policy-makers, nor is it for lack of cutting-edge research, or funding. Moreover, it is not expected that the policy recommendations within this paper will solve this endemic problem. The ongoing crises within these countries go much further than food insecurity, and they are now compounded by the global implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As such, instead of aiming to end food insecurity, the aim of this paper is to take another step in the right direction by providing a new framework for considering food insecurity in conflict zones beyond the eponymous focus on food and conflict. The six-pronged framework, wherein direct conflict factors and agricultural factors are considered alongside environmental factors, market and structural factors and political factors allows for a broadening of the scope of food policy to include livelihood, climate and social factors as well as a focus on solutions, and horizontal coherence. Additionally, the idea of 'exogenous shocks' is included as its own category in this paper in a conscious effort to emphasise the unique approach required to build resilience to the unexpected into policy.

Through the use of this framework, and analysis of two case studies, this paper has been able to identify gaps in current policy and produce recommendations for future policy. The policy recommendations within this paper vary in their scope. Major policy change suggestions in Afghanistan included the development of a new agricultural programme, land entitlements and water-user associations, as part of a multi-dimensional peacebuilding programme, as well as implementing quarterly audits of the Afghan Personnel and Pay System (APPS) in order to reduce corruption. In Iraq, the most significant suggestions included recommending the replacement of the Public Distribution System (PDS) with mobile cash transfer systems to allow the implementation of a more profitable and welfare-enhancing food security support mechanism. Additionally, the authors of this paper suggest the establishment of a sustainable water resource management strategy, which would include transferable pumping permits and increased engagement between water users and stakeholders. The recommendations within this paper are designed to be real, implementable solutions that can fit into, or expand upon, existing aid frameworks, government mechanisms and technology within the case study countries.

It is important to recognise both the local context and the influence of international factors. The newly-elected Biden administration is likely to result in the phased withdrawal of U.S. forces in

Afghanistan in 2021, in line with the Doha agreement.<sup>332</sup> With Mr. Biden having stated that the U.S. has “zero responsibility” if the Taliban come back to power after withdrawal, such a resurgence is increasingly likely.<sup>333</sup> In addition, President Biden has put forward strategies to reduce the U.S. troop presence in Iraq.<sup>334</sup> It is likely that a small U.S. troop presence will continue in both countries as a counterterrorism measure to protect the U.S., however the potential impact of a foreign election on Afghanistan and Iraq’s security must be acknowledged.

Continued uncertainty surrounding the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic must also be noted. Expected reductions in both Afghanistan’s and Iraq’s GDP in 2020 as a result of the pandemic, and associated surges in national poverty rates, will present severe issues for food security in the future as well as prompting further foreign assistance.<sup>335</sup> For example, USAID partnered with local Iraqi organisations in May 2020 to provide additional food assistance to over 85,000 people experiencing financial difficulties in Iraq’s Ninewa Province.<sup>336</sup> The long-term structural impacts of the pandemic, however, such as disruption to livelihoods and social protection programmes, may have significant effects for the future nutrition of children in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>337</sup> Therefore, reductions in violent conflict must be coupled with significant foreign assistance for food security and social protection programmes in both nations to result in an increase in short-, medium- and long-term food security in Afghanistan and Iraq amid the transition to the Biden administration and the ongoing structural impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to specific policy recommendations, this paper sought to identify key areas for consideration when creating policy to improve food security in conflict zones. The key ideas identified concern the balancing-act between crisis response and development, and the usefulness of peacebuilding in food security. It is important to acknowledge that the relationship between food security and conflict is highly nuanced, context-specific and complex. Whilst

<sup>332</sup> Qazi, S., 2020. *Will Biden Stay On The Course Set By Trump In Afghanistan?*. [online] Aljazeera.com. Available at: <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/11/11/biden-won-the-us-election-what-next-for-afghanistan>> [Accessed 7 December 2020].

<sup>333</sup> Ibid

<sup>334</sup> Usher B Plett Usher, 2020. *US Election 2020: How Will Biden Change Foreign Policy?*. [online] BBC News. Available at: <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-us-2020-54472696>> [Accessed 7 December 2020].

<sup>335</sup> UNDP. 2020. *In Afghanistan, COVID-19 Demands Warring Sides Unite Against A Common Enemy, UNDP Report Says / UNDP*. [online] Available at: <[https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2020/Report\\_Afghanistan\\_COVID19\\_demands\\_warring\\_sides\\_unite.html](https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2020/Report_Afghanistan_COVID19_demands_warring_sides_unite.html)> [Accessed 7 December 2020].

<sup>336</sup> U.S. Embassy & Consulates in Iraq. 2020. *USAID Delivers Food Assistance In Northern Iraq Amid COVID-19 Pandemic / U.S. Embassy & Consulates In Iraq*. [online] Available at: <<https://iq.usembassy.gov/usaids-delivers-food-assistance-in-northern-iraq-amid-covid-19-pandemic/>> [Accessed 7 December 2020].

<sup>337</sup> Usaid.gov. 2020. *The Reverberating Impact Of COVID-19 On Nutrition*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.usaid.gov/feed-the-future/documents/reverberating-impact-covid-19-nutrition>> [Accessed 7 December 2020].

conflict can act as a short-term risk multiplier of food insecurity, it is also important to examine other drivers of food insecurity including corruption, poor governance and weak military force. As such, the social, economic and environmental context, in which the relationships between drivers of food insecurity and conflict occur must be considered in the creation of new policy recommendations. This reflects a strong need for local knowledge, civil society involvement and a sense of local ownership within internationally-driven programmes. This paper must therefore recognise the influence of the writers' Western positionality on their policy analysis and recommendations. To incorporate existing local practices and challenges into the policy recommendations, in order to increase the likelihood of their successful adoption, the authors of this paper have included local knowledge in Iraq and Afghanistan from peer-reviewed academic sources where possible. This has allowed for an intersection between existing global practices and specific local challenges in order to recommend the most appropriate, context-sensitive policies. However, it must be noted that primary data collection and direct insight from those whom the policy recommendations may affect is vital in taking this analysis further.

The challenges highlighted in this policy paper have demonstrated that recommending independent policies to improve food security or resolve conflict is insufficient. More distal connections must be considered when working to combat food security, and the linkages between different areas of policy must not be ignored. Rather, a multi-faceted approach must be adopted. An approach that considers other factors, such as the political situation, environmental conditions, structural and market factors, agricultural practices and exogenous shocks is needed in order to tackle both food insecurity and conflict effectively.

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