



May 2025 / Issue No.18

NEWSLETTER

AFGHAN RESEARCH INITIATIVE

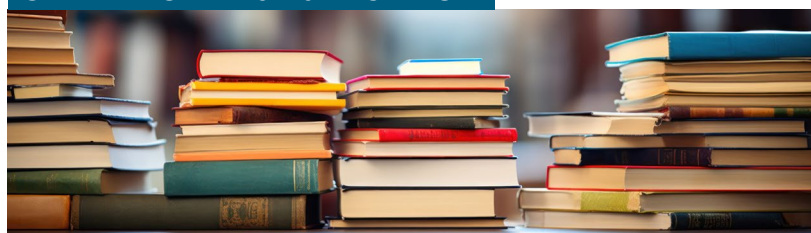
Afghanistan Research Initiative

The University of Central Asia's Afghanistan Research Initiative (ARI) aims to help sustain the research and capacity gains made over the last decade and continue producing knowledge critical to the country's present and future. ARI, a programme of the University's Graduate School of Development, is supported by a three-year grant from Canada's International Development Research Centre and the Aga Khan Foundation of Canada. ARI is based at the University's main office in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic (ari@ucentralasia.org).

Doctoral Grant Holder Graduates

Mohammad Reza Ehsan, PhD, Department of Economics, South Asian University, April 2025. *Essays on rural livelihood: A household level study in Afghanistan.*

GRANT HOLDERS PUBLICATION



February 2025: Hidden Treasure of Biodiversity in Afghanistan: Ichthyofauna. *Afghan Journal of Science*.
Authors: Hamdard, H. H., et al.

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February 2025: Governance and Public Administration Under the Taliban. *Asian Affairs*.
Authors: Hamoon, W., Krawchenko, B., & Krawchenko, T.

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

March 2025: Opportunities and Challenges in Agricultural Product Marketing: A Sociological Analysis of Bamyan Province, Afghanistan. *Journal of Economics, Innovative Management, and Entrepreneurship*.
Author: Ahmadi, R.

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April 2025: Empowerment or Exploitation? The Dual Role of Informal Work in Women's Lives in Afghanistan's Carpet Sector Post-2021. *South Asian Journal of Social Studies and Economics*.
Authors: Noori, M. & Vemuri, S.

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May 2025: A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Access Crop Mapping and Farmer Strategies in Drylands of Bamyan, Afghanistan. *Agricultural Systems*.
Authors: Caiserman, A., et al.

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31 publications to date.

IN THIS ISSUE:

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The University of Central Asia is a private, not-for-profit, secular, regional university founded in 2000 through an International Treaty signed by the Presidents of Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, and His Highness the Aga Khan, ratified by their respective parliaments and registered with the United Nations. The Graduate School of Development is the home for multi-disciplinary research on Central Asia's social, economic, and cultural development conducted by five entities (www.ucentralasia.org).



Dr. Murid Partaw

Dr. Murid Partaw obtained in BA in International Studies and MA in Political Science. He received his PhD from the School of Interdisciplinary Global Studies (SIGS) at University of South Florida.

His research interests lie at the intersection of Comparative Politics and IR, specializing in security studies, democratization, legitimization, and state-building and currently teaches at University of Tampa as a Political Science Senior Lecturer.

Dr. Partaw research has appeared in the ranked journals of Political Science and IR such as *Journal of Political Science and Public Affairs*, *Democracy and Security*, *The British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, and *Small Wars and Insurgencies*. In addition, he has taught courses in International Security, IR, Comparative Politics, Conflict in the World, Politics of the Middle East, Globalization, including American Government at University of South Florida and University of Tampa. Before joining the academia, Dr. Partaw served as Afghanistan Senior National Representative to the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM), where he worked with a broad coalition of 60 nations in the “War against Terror.”

Dr. Partaw currently serves as a fellow at the Center for Eastern and Central European Russian and Eurasian Studies (CECERES) at Troy University.



Dr. Naser Lessani

Dr. Naser Lessani is a third-year PhD student in Geographic Information Science (GIScience) at The Pennsylvania State University, USA. He holds an MSc in GIS from Central South University,

China. His research focuses on geospatial big data analytics, spatial modeling, and the integration of generative AI in GIS tool.

Currently, Naser works as a Research Assistant alongside his PhD studies and was recently awarded the *William and Mary Easterling Outstanding Graduate Research Assistant Award* by Penn State’s College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, Department of Geography. Over the past three years, he has collaborated with research teams from different institutions including Harvard Medical School, the University of Southern California, the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina, Temple University, and the Department of Public Health at Jinan University in China. He also serves as the Student Director of the Cyberinfrastructure Specialty Group within the American Association of Geographers. Additionally, he is a reviewer for several international journals, including the *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*. He has published 15 research articles as both first author and co-author, with his work covering topics such as spatial modeling, human mobility, sexually transmitted infectious diseases, and Generative AI in the realm of GIS.



Dr. Abbas Ali Hussein

Dr Abbas Ali Hussein is an accomplished researcher specializing in molecular epidemiology, biotechnology, and biomedical sciences. With a PhD in

Biotechnology from Ankara University, his research focuses on the genetic and environmental determinants of cancer susceptibility, particularly within the Turkish population. His work spans molecular diagnostics, bioinformatics, and the development of inno-

vative biosensors and genetic screening tools for disease detection.

Dr. Hussein has led multiple TÜBİTAK and institutional research projects, investigating GST gene polymorphisms, cancer biomarker discovery, and machine learning applications in oncology. He has published extensively in peer-reviewed journals on topics ranging from viral epidemiology to advanced diagnostic methodologies.

His expertise in bio-statistics, molecular genetics, and translational medicine positions him at the forefront of personalized cancer research, striving to bridge the gap between genetic predisposition and clinical outcomes.

ARI PUBLIC LECTURES

24 April 2025

Institutional Continuity and Incremental Change: Models of Economic Development in Post-Intervention Societies

Speaker: Dr. Lutfi Rahimi, Non-Resident Research Fellow at ARI.

Discussant: Prof. Michael Cox, Founding Director of International Relations at the London School of Economics (LSE), UK.

The economic transition in Afghanistan in 2001 was marked by institutional discontinuity. Afghanistan adopted a market-led, enabler-state framework, radically departing from the past, heavily influenced by neoliberal ideology and donor-driven aspirations. This shift ignored deeply ingrained public expectations of state economic roles, the absence of pre-existing market mechanisms, and the strong legacy of dirigisme. The imposed model disrupted and antagonised existing structures without fostering a coherent economic governance system. This lecture explores how these factors, compounded by corruption, insecurity, and fragility, led to suboptimal economic performance and policy failures. Watch the full lecture [here](#).

10 March 2025

Deforestation, Biodiversity Loss and Restoration Challenges in Afghanistan

Speaker: Mujib Rahman Ahmadzai, Lecturer, Faculty of Environment, Kabul University.

Discussant: Dr. Maksim Kulikov, Research Fellow, UCA's Mountain Societies Research Institute.

Afghanistan's forests and biodiversity face severe threats from deforestation caused by fuelwood collection, agricultural expansion, illegal logging, and conflict. Climate-related factors, such as droughts and fires, exacerbate these issues, leading to ecological degradation that includes habitat loss, soil erosion, and disrupted water cycles. This presentation explores the causes and consequences of deforestation and biodiversity loss, emphasising socio-economic impacts on forest-dependent communities. It highlights sustainable restoration strategies, such as agroforestry, community-led reforestation, and improved governance. The presentation concludes with actionable recommendations to ensure the long-term health and resilience of Afghanistan's ecosystems.

Watch the full lecture [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENT

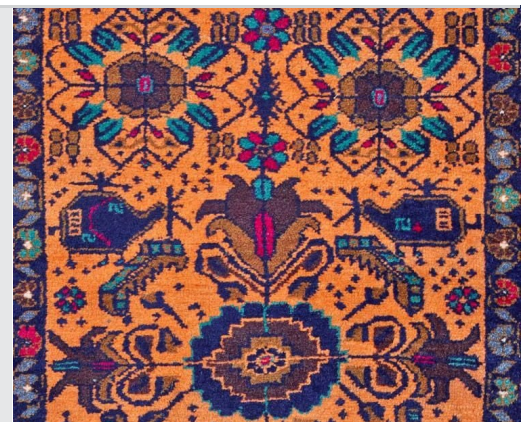
War Rugs: Afghanistan's Knotted History

Organizer: British Museum.

The Afghani women artists will share their individual exhibitions of paintings. They will also discuss what it is like as artists, as women creatives, living in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule.

Date: Open until 29 June 2025.

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PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

9 May 2023: The end of US aid to Afghanistan: What will it mean for families, services and the economy? *Afghanistan Analysts Network*.

Author: Filkins, L.

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9 May 2025: Studying public perception and attitudes toward the banning of the university and high school for Afghan's girls. *Caderno de Relações Internacionais*, 15(29).

Authors: Ghulami, H. R., Rasuli, J., Saadat, S., Fauntleroy, C., Ejaz, E., Jafari, M., Nazari, M., & Joya, M.

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13 May 2025: Foreign military aid, war-induced economy, and terrorism in Afghanistan. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism. Advance Online Publication*.

Authors: Ghafoori, N., Meng, C., & Yolchi, J.

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2025: Taliban's ban on female education and its relation to young Afghans' migration flows to Europe. *European Institute for Policy Research and Human Rights*.

Author: Bieliauskaite, G.

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UPCOMING EVENT



REFUGEE WEEK FESTIVAL 2025

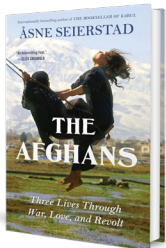
Organizer: [Afghanistan and Central Asian Association](#).

Celebrate the Rich Cultures of Afghanistan, Iran & Central Asia at Refugee Week Festival 2025!

Date: 22 June 2025 | 10 am – 8 pm (GMT+1).

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NEW BOOKS



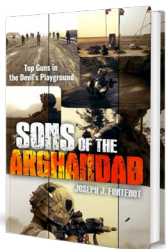
The Afghans: Three Lives through War, Love, and Revolt

By Åsne Seierstad

The *Afghans* is a sweeping and intimate portrait of modern Afghanistan told through the intertwined lives of a young woman whose dreams collapsed with the fall of Kabul.

Publication date: August 2025.

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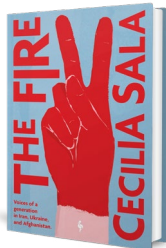
Sons of the Arghandab: Top Guns in the Devil's Playground

By Joseph J. Fontenot

This is the harrowing, firsthand account of artillerymen turned provisional infantry, who fought to survive in one of Afghanistan's most hostile regions.

Publication date: June 2025.

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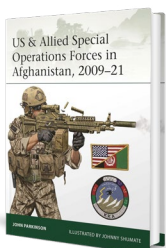
The Fire: Voices of a Generation in Iran, Ukraine, & Afghanistan

By Cecilia Sala

The author shares the powerful stories of young people like a Ukrainian soldier, an Iranian protester, an Afghan activist, and a queer Muslim athlete.

Publication date: November 2025.

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Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan, 2009–22

By John Parkinson

Drawing on first-hand experience, the study traces how the developments contributed to the eventual fall of Kabul in 2021, illustrated with rare photographs.

Publication date: January 2026.

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SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



Honours Scholarships for International Students

Study Level: Masters, PhD.

Fields: Various.

Availability: Afghans and other nationalities.

Fund: Fully funded.

Deadline: September & December 2025.

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MTCP SCHOLARSHIP 2025 FULLY FUNDED IN MALAYSIA!



MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT MTCP SCHOLARSHIP

Study Level: Masters.

Fields: Various.

Availability: Afghans and other nationalities.

Fund: Fully funded.

Deadline: 30 June 2025.

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MASTER'S SCHOLARSHIPS FOR PUBLIC POLICY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Study Level: Masters.

Fund: Fully funded.

Availability: Afghans and other nationalities.

Deadline: July 2025.

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