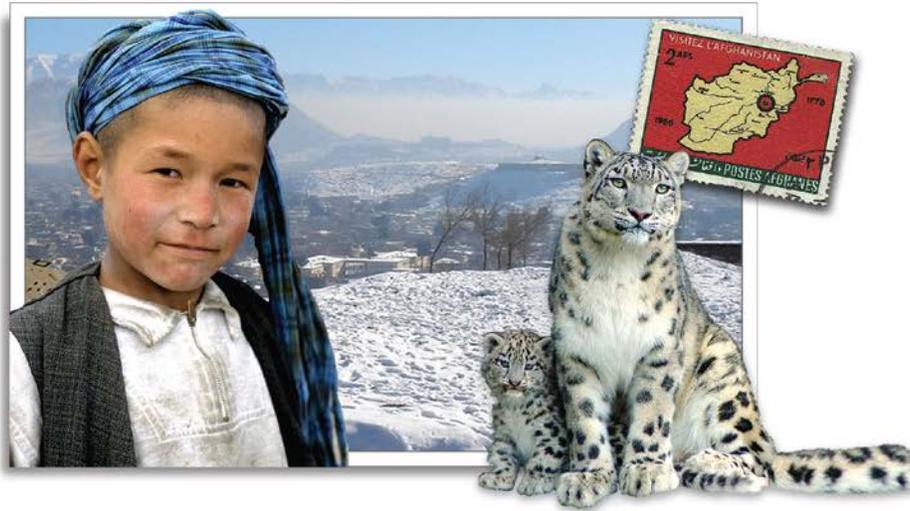


Afghanistan in Perspective

An Orientation Guide



Technology Integration Division
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DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

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CHAPTER 1: GEOGRAPHY

Introduction

Afghanistan is a hauntingly beautiful land of stark contrasts, majestic mountains, and punishing deserts. It is a challenge to cross today, just as it was thousands of years ago. Completely landlocked, Afghanistan lies about 482 km (300 mi) north of the Arabian Sea, which abuts Pakistan. Shaped like an irregular leaf with the Wakhan Corridor as its stem, Afghanistan is about 652,290 sq km (over 250,000 sq mi), or about the size of Texas.¹ Extending approximately 1,240 km (770 mi) from west to east and 565 km (351 mi) from north to south, much of the country is sparsely populated.



© Victoria Villalobos
Afghan children

Of the total land area, roughly half lies above 2,000 m (6,562 ft).² The Hindu Kush, the dominant mountain system, runs northeast to southwest through the country's middle. It sharply divides Afghanistan into northern and southern border regions. Between these lie interior plateaus and sweeping deserts. The northern border is formed by the Amu Darya River—the river Oxus of antiquity—and its tributary, the Panj. On its eastern and southern borders lies Pakistan, and to the west is Iran. Afghanistan also shares a 76-km (47-mi) border with China in the northeast, along the Wakhan Corridor.

Topographical Features and Geographic Divisions

Mountains with little or no vegetation, which are typical of desert terrain, dominate Afghanistan's topography. The Hindu Kush range bisects the country and isolates the northern region from the rest of Afghanistan. This range dominates the eastern and central regions but gives way to grasslands and plateaus elsewhere. The north is Afghanistan's "bread basket," while land productivity in the south and east is constrained by lack of water.

Afghanistan can be divided into three distinct geographic regions: the Central Highlands, the Southern Plateau, and the Northern Plains.³ The Central Highlands, part of the Himalayan mountain system, includes the Hindu Kush mountain range. It is the most mountainous area in Afghanistan, with deep, narrow valleys, deserts, and



© Brian Griffith
Hindu Kush

¹ Nancy Hatch Dupree and Thomas E. Gouttierre, "Chapter 2: The Soci Country Study, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/aftoc.html>

² Laurie Krieger, "Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: The Natural Environment," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, eds. Richard F. Nyrop and Donald Seekins (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1986), 78, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/aftoc.html>

³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Afghanistan," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan/226121/Physiographic-regions?anchor=ref306572>

some meadows. Of great strategic importance in this area are the high mountain passes. They include the Shebar Pass, northwest of the capital Kabul, and the Khyber Pass, which leads to the Indian subcontinent.

The Southern Plateau contains a variety of desert terrains: salt flats, steppe, stony deserts, and the sandy Registan Desert bordering Pakistan. The southwestern low-lying plateau is known as the Sistan Depression or Basin. The soil in the Southern Plateau region is infertile, except for the river deltas of the Sistan Basin.

The Northern Plains are mostly flat but there are some fertile foothills, where most of the country's food is grown. Vast amounts of mineral deposits and natural gas deposits are also found here.⁴

Climate

Afghanistan experiences extremes of climate and weather. Typical of a semi-arid steppe climate, winters are bitterly cold with heavy snow in the mountains, and summers are hot and dry. In July, temperatures can reach 51°C (124°F) in exposed areas of the southwest. January temperatures may drop to as low as -46°C (-51°F) in the highest mountain areas.⁵



© Oliver P
Boy in the snow

Nevertheless, some regional variations exist. The northeast mountain regions enjoy a sub-arctic climate with dry, cold winters and hot, dry summers. In contrast, the mountainous regions on the Pakistani border experience maritime tropical air masses during the summer monsoon season, bringing increased humidity and rain into the central and southern regions.⁶

Major Cities

Kabul

Kabul is one of the highest capital cities in the world, at an elevation of 1,800 m (5,905 ft) above sea level. In Afghan history, control of Kabul has not necessarily equaled control of the country, but no government has been able to rule without holding the city.⁷ Its proximity to the Khyber



© Munir Squires
Kabul

⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Afghanistan," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan/226121/Physiographic-regions?anchor=ref306572>

⁵ National Climatic Data Center, "Climate of Afghanistan," 20 August 2008,

<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate//afghan/afghan-narrative.html>

⁶ Laurie Krieger, "Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: The Natural Environment," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, eds. Richard F. Nyrop and Donald M. Seekins (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1986), 83, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/aftoc.html>

⁷ Stephen Tanner, "Introduction: Crossroads of Empires," in *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban* (New York: De Capo Press, 2002), 4.

Pass, which allows passage between Afghanistan and Pakistan, makes it central. Kabul fell to the Taliban in 1996 but was liberated in 2001 after the U.S. invasion. Since then, Kabul's population has significantly increased while the city struggles with limited resources and public services. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and other institutions are part of the reconstruction effort and give the city a strong international presence while providing some security and stability. Kabul, where tall buildings abut traditional markets, is the cultural and economic capital of Afghanistan. (Population: 3.289 million)⁸

Kandahar

Conquered by Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C.E. and once capital of the Durrani Empire, Kandahar was contested by India and Persia for its valuable position on the major Central Asian trade route. Today it has numerous bazaars as well as mosques, one of which is said to house Prophet Muhammad's cloak. Along with Peshawar in neighboring Pakistan, it is the urban cultural center of the Pashtun tribe. Kandahar's agriculture-based economy depended on fruit cultivation until poppies became more profitable.⁹ Kandahar and the outlying areas of Kandahar Province were a Taliban stronghold before the government was toppled in 2001. The Taliban continue to have a strong presence in and around the city.¹⁰ (Population 397,500)¹¹

Herat

Herat is the only city with origins in medieval Khorasan (modern eastern Iran) that remains a thriving urban center. It was controlled by a succession of conquerors including Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, and Tamerlane.¹² As a result, it was a place where the peoples of Central Asia mingled, and it linked central Afghanistan's tribal groups to the more cosmopolitan Persian culture of neighboring Iran.¹³ Today, Herat enjoys considerable funding from Iran, including infrastructure projects to supply electricity, paved roads, and a railway linking the city with Iran.^{14, 15} A major highway—part of the so-called Ring Road—links Herat with Kandahar and ultimately Kabul. Reconstruction of this road was completed in 2009 through international aid provided by the



© Jim Kelly
Herat skyline

⁸ Central Statistics Office Afghanistan, "Afghanistan," CityPopulation.de, 8 May 2012, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Afghanistan.html>

⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Kandahar," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/310899/Kandahar>

¹⁰ David Zucchino, "The Challenge of Kandahar," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 July 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jul/02/world/la-fg-afghanistan-kandahar-20100703>

¹¹ Central Statistics Office Afghanistan, "Afghanistan," CityPopulation.de, 8 May 2012, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Afghanistan.html>

¹² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Herat," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/262581/Herat>

¹³ Alissa J. Rubin, "Trouble in Herat: Women's Rights Assailed Anew," *Ms.*, Spring 2003, <http://www.msmagazine.com/mar03/rubin.asp>

¹⁴ Jason Motlagh, "Iran's Spending Spree in Afghanistan," *Time*, 20 May 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1900013,00.html>

¹⁵ Maseh Zarif and Ahmad Majidiyar, "Iranian Influence in Afghanistan: Recent Developments," *Iran Tracker* (American Enterprise Institute), 21 August 2009, <http://www.irantracker.org/analysis/iranian-influence-afghanistan-recent-developments>

United States, Saudi Arabia, and Japan.¹⁶ Herat functions as a trading center for farmers in the surrounding area and is a major source of customs revenue for the Afghan government.¹⁷ (Population: 436,300)¹⁸

Mazar-e Sharif

Mazar-e Sharif (“Tomb of the Chosen One”), a Shi’ite cultural center in Afghanistan, is named for its principal attraction: the Shrine of Hazrat Ali, who was Muhammad’s son-in-law and cousin. He became the fourth Islamic caliph and is recognized as the first Imam by Shi’ite Muslims. His regency was marred by acrimony, and Ali was assassinated in 658 C.E. According to the traditional account, he was buried in Najaf, Iraq.¹⁹ But Afghans believe that his body was secretly spirited away on a camel and that he was buried where the animal dropped dead. Whatever the truth, the blue-tiled mosque marking the tomb and shrine is venerated by all Muslims, especially the Shi’ites. The tomb was buried in dirt to spare it the destruction that Genghis Khan’s invading army inflicted on the other places he conquered in the 13th century. It wasn’t until the late 15th century that the tomb was uncovered. (Population: 368,100)²⁰

Bodies of Water

There are five major rivers in Afghanistan: the Amu Darya, Helmand, Hari Rud, Farah, and Kabul. The Amu Darya was known as the Oxus in ancient times. It is one of the longest rivers in Central Asia, flowing for 2,540 km (1,578 mi).²¹ It rises in the northeastern Pamir Mountains, runs generally west along the northern border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and eventually flows into Turkmenistan.²² Flooding along the Amu Darya often displaces residents and damages agriculture.²³ The Helmand River is 1,150 km (715 mi) long and provides water for irrigation. It rises in the central Hindu Kush mountains west of Kabul and flows into Iran.²⁴ The Hari Rud also originates in the Hindu Kush, with a length of 1,130 km (702 mi). It flows west to Iran, turns north to form part of the Iranian border,



© Carl Montgomery
Lake Band-e Amir

¹⁶ International Institute for Strategic Studies, “Strategic Geography: ISAF Operations in Afghanistan,” in *Strategic Survey 2010*, xiii,

<http://www.iiss.org/EasySiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=61615&type=full&servicetype=Attachment>

¹⁷ BBC News, “Bomb Blast Hits West Afghan City,” 3 August 2009,

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8180832.stm

¹⁸ Central Statistics Office Afghanistan, “Afghanistan,” CityPopulation.de, 8 May 2012,

<http://www.citypopulation.de/Afghanistan.html>

¹⁹ Frank Harold, “Balkh and Mazar-e-Sharif,” Silk Road Seattle, University of Washington, 2006,

<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/cities/afghanistan/balkh.html>

²⁰ Central Statistics Office Afghanistan, “Afghanistan,” CityPopulation.de, 8 May 2012,

<http://www.citypopulation.de/Afghanistan.html>

²¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Amu Darya: River Course and Basin,” 2012, <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-283832>

²² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Amu Darya: River Course and Basin,” 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/21934/Amu-Darya>

²³ IRIN News, “Afghanistan: Flooding Amu River Displaces Hundreds of People,” 4 October 2009,

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/86424/AFGHANISTAN-Flooding-Amu-River-displaces-hundreds-of-people>

²⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Helmand River,” 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/260474/Helmand-River>

and continues flowing northward into Turkmenistan.²⁵ The Farah River rises on the southern slopes of the Hindu Kush and flows southwest into Iran after a course of 560 km (348 mi).²⁶ The Kabul River is the only one of Afghanistan's major rivers to flow generally eastward. It is 700 km (435 mi) long, of which 560 km (348 mi) are in Afghanistan, and passes through the major cities of Kabul and Jalalabad before crossing into Pakistan.²⁷ Unlike most rivers in Afghanistan, which end in inland seas, swamps, or salt flats, the waters of the Kabul River eventually flow into the Arabian Sea via the Indus River in Pakistan.

Afghanistan's lakes are small in size and number. The two most important are Saberi, in the southwest, and the saline Lake Istadeh-ye Moqor, in the southeast.²⁸ The lakes most popular with tourists are the group collectively called Band-e-Amir, located near the Bamiyan Valley. Formed by natural dams high in the Hindu Kush mountains at 3,000 m (9,842 ft), the turquoise waters and red limestone cliffs of the Band-e-Amir have made the region a major tourist attraction. Band-e-Amir became Afghanistan's first national park in April 2009. Prior to becoming a park, it had suffered from habitat destruction and had lost much of its wildlife. The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), along with the government of Afghanistan, has since developed a park management plan, and the 575 sq km (222 sq mi) park is now an established protected area.²⁹

Natural Hazards

Afghanistan is subject to numerous natural hazards such as droughts, floods, avalanches, and earthquakes that affect about 400,000 Afghans each year.³⁰ In some cases these natural hazards are worsened by the negative consequences of human activities. For example, deforestation over the past decades has not only contributed to soil erosion but also increased the destruction caused by landslides and flooding. Floods and mudslides are common in the north, northeast, and west, particularly when the snow begins to melt in the spring. In one typical event during May 2012, flash floods left 26 dead, 60 missing, and thousands homeless in Sar-e Pol and Takhar provinces.³¹



© Remko Tanis
Flooding in Uruzgan Province

²⁵ Environment News Service, "Asian Development Bank Prepares Afghanistan for New Dam," 4 November 2004, <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/nov2004/2004-11-05-02.asp>

²⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Farah River," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/201763/Farah-River>

²⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Kabul River," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/309327/Kabul-River>

²⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Afghanistan: Drainage," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

²⁹ Wildlife Conservation Society, "Afghanistan's First National Park," 2012, <http://www.wcs.org/conservation-challenges/local-livelihoods/recovering-from-conflict-and-disaster/afghanistan-first-national-park.aspx>

³⁰ IRIN News, "Afghanistan: Floods Wreak Havoc in Eastern Provinces of Laghman, Nangarhar," 3 September 2009, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=85988>

³¹ RAWA News (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan), "Deadly Floods Strike North Afghanistan," 20 May 2012, <http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2012/05/20/deadly-floods-strike-north-afghanistan.html>

Avalanches are an ongoing threat in mountainous regions. Avalanches or floods combined with landmines are particularly deadly.³² Floods, mudslides, and avalanches are often triggered by earthquakes, which occur on average around 50 times a year. The strongest earthquakes occur in the Hindu Kush, a mountain range near a zone where two major tectonic plates are colliding (a major fault line). In this region, an average of four earthquakes measuring 5.0 or higher on the Richter scale occur each year.³³ One of the strongest in recent decades was a magnitude 7.4 earthquake that occurred on 3 March 2002, leaving 166 people dead.³⁴ Barely three weeks later, a nearby earthquake of lesser magnitude but much shallower at the epicenter killed more than 1,000 people in Baghlan Province.³⁵

A forceful wind blows almost daily in western and southern Afghanistan during the summer. Known as the “wind of 120 days,” it often produces health issues among the local population as a result of blinding sandstorms, and may also be accompanied by dry heat waves that lead to drought conditions.³⁶ In 2008, heavy dust and sand in Herat Province produced reports of over 8,000 cases of acute respiratory disorder at local health clinics and even more cases of eye damage. In addition, agricultural production suffered as fertile topsoil was either blown away or covered with sand.³⁷



© Ground Report
Firewood

Environmental Concerns

Afghanistan suffers from a variety of environmental woes. The causes are diverse and numerous, with war, poverty, drought, and a population increase from displaced persons and returning refugees all producing environmental stresses.³⁸

Ongoing and widespread deforestation is one threat to Afghanistan’s already fragile environment. Trees, found primarily in the east on the southern slopes of the Hindu Kush, are

³² Francis Caas, Yoko Hagiwara, and David Jensen, “Afghanistan on the Brink of Natural Disaster,” *Environment Times, Poverty Times* #3 (United Nations Environmental Programme), January 2005, <http://www.grida.no/publications/et/ep3/page/2611.aspx>

³³ Simon Fraser, “Hindu Kush: High-Risk Quake Zone,” BBC News, 26 March 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1894867.stm>

³⁴ United States Geological Survey, “Magnitude 7.4 Hindu Kush Region, Afghanistan,” 13 November 2003, http://neic.usgs.gov/neis/eq_depot/2002/eq_020303/

³⁵ United States Geological Survey, “Magnitude 6.1 Hindu Kush Region, Afghanistan,” 13 November 2003, [13 November 2003, http://neic.usgs.gov/neis/eq_depot/2002/eq_020325/](http://neic.usgs.gov/neis/eq_depot/2002/eq_020325/)

³⁶ Laurie Krieger, “Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment,” in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, eds. Richard F. Nyrop and Donald M. Seekins (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1986), 83.

³⁷ IRIN News, “Afghanistan: Dust Storms Cause Health Problems in West,” 20 August 2008, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/79900/AFGHANISTAN-Dust-storms-cause-health-problems-in-west>

³⁸ United Nations Development Programme, “Afghanistan: Environment and Energy for Sustainable Development,” 2003, <http://www.undp.org.af/WhatWeDo/ee.htm>

felled for fuel and building material.^{39, 40} Illegal commercial logging is also a threat.⁴¹ Estimates indicate that roughly 2% (about 1.0 to 1.3 million ha, or 2.5 to 3.2 million acres) of Afghanistan's land has forest cover—only about one-third the total forest area of the mid-20th century.⁴²

An increasing shortage of fresh water is another major environmental and health problem. Poor management of water resources and frequent droughts are causing water shortages in an already arid landscape.⁴³ Centuries ago, Afghans created an intricate system of tunnels to transport water from the mountains to the drier basins. These aqueducts (*karez*s) supplied the population with fresh water.⁴⁴ The wars of the last century caused many of the *karez*s to cease functioning because of destruction and neglect. Furthermore, the growing population's use of groundwater is depleting the remaining water tables and aquifers.^{45, 46} Today, only 27% of the population has access to safe drinking water, with this proportion dropping to 20% in rural areas.^{47, 48}



© Spangleddrongo / flickr.com
Water tower in lake near Kabul

Most of the 5.6 million Afghan refugees that have returned to the country since 2002 have moved to cities. About 70% of Afghanistan's urban population (80% in Kabul) now reside in illegal or unplanned housing, which typically has no access to water and sanitation services.⁴⁹ These new populations overburden the cities' already limited services and infrastructure, creating

³⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Hindu Kush: Plant Life," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/266291/Hindu-Kush>

⁴⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Hindu Kush: Economy: Resources," 2012, <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-47891>

⁴¹ United Nations Development Programme, "Afghanistan: Ensure Environmental Sustainability (Goal 7)," 2003, <http://www.undp.org.af/MDGs/goal7.htm>

⁴² Centre for Policy and Human Development, Kabul University, "Afghanistan Human Development Report 2011: The Forgotten Front: Water Security and the Crisis in Sanitation," 2011, 79, <http://www.cphd.af/nhdr/nhdr2010/Complete%20NHDR%202011%20final.pdf>

⁴³ Centre for Policy and Human Development, Kabul University, "Afghanistan Human Development Report 2011: The Forgotten Front: Water Security and the Crisis in Sanitation," 2011, 7, <http://www.cphd.af/nhdr/nhdr2010/Complete%20NHDR%202011%20final.pdf>

⁴⁴ University of California, Berkeley, "Traditional Aqueducts, Afghanistan," n.d., <http://geoimages.berkeley.edu/GeoImages/Powell/Afghan/092.html>

⁴⁵ IRIN News, "Afghanistan: Groundwater Overuse Could Cause Severe Water Shortage," 14 September 2008, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=80337>

⁴⁶ University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, "UNCE to Help National Guard Help Afghan Farmers," 18 June 2010, <http://www.unce.unr.edu/news/article.asp?ID=1487>

⁴⁷ World Bank, "Afghanistan Country Overview 2012," 2011, <http://www.worldbank.org.af/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/AFGHANISTANEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20154015~menuPK:305992~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:305985,00.html>

⁴⁸ Centre for Policy and Human Development, Kabul University, "Afghanistan Human Development Report 2011: The Forgotten Front: Water Security and the Crisis in Sanitation," 2011, 94, <http://www.cphd.af/nhdr/nhdr2010/Complete%20NHDR%202011%20final.pdf>

⁴⁹ Centre for Policy and Human Development, Kabul University, "Afghanistan Human Development Report 2011: The Forgotten Front: Water Security and the Crisis in Sanitation," 2011, 94, <http://www.cphd.af/nhdr/nhdr2010/Complete%20NHDR%202011%20final.pdf>

unhealthy living conditions.⁵⁰ Access to improved sanitation in Afghanistan is the worst in the world, with only 5% of the total population and 1% of the rural population having such accessibility. As a result, about 37 Afghan children out of 1,000 die from the effects of water-borne diseases before the age of 5—an exceptionally high mortality rate.⁵¹

⁵⁰ United Nations Environment Programme, “Afghanistan’s Environmental Recovery: A Post-Conflict Plan for People and Their Natural Resources,” August 2006, 2, http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/UNEP_afghanistan_lr.pdf

⁵¹ Centre for Policy and Human Development, Kabul University, “Afghanistan Human Development Report 2011: The Forgotten Front: Water Security and the Crisis in Sanitation,” 2011, 94, <http://www.cphd.af/nhdr/nhdr2010/Complete%20NHDR%202011%20final.pdf>

Chapter 1 Assessment

1. Afghanistan can be divided into three distinct geographic regions.

TRUE

Afghanistan can be divided into three distinct geographic regions: the Central Highlands, the Southern Plateau, and the Northern Plains.

2. There are no major rivers in Afghanistan.

FALSE

There are five major rivers in Afghanistan: the Amu Darya, Helmand, Hari Rud, Farah, and Kabul. The Amu Darya was known as the Oxus in ancient times. It is one of the longest rivers in Central Asia, flowing for 2,540 km (1,578 mi).

3. About half of Afghanistan's population has access to fresh drinking water.

FALSE

Increasingly scarce fresh water is a major environmental and health problem in Afghanistan. Today, only 27% of the population has access to safe drinking water, with this proportion dropping to 20% in rural areas.

4. Afghanistan's climate is tropical and mild.

FALSE

In July, temperatures can reach 51°C (124°F) in exposed areas of the southwest. January temperatures may drop to as low as -46°C (-51°F) in the highest mountain areas.

5. One of Afghanistan's major environmental concerns is the continued clearing of its forest areas.

TRUE

Trees, found primarily in the east on the southern slopes of the Hindu Kush, are felled for fuel and building material. Illegal commercial logging is also a threat.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY

Introduction

Afghanistan is often called the crossroads of Central Asia. Its strategically important location has made it an ideal trade and invasion route for centuries. As a result, its history has been turbulent. Conquerors from the West passed through this region to reach the Indian subcontinent and Hindu empires extended their territories from the East through the same routes. The armies of King Darius, Alexander the Great, Kushan King Kanishka, Genghis Khan, the Shahi rulers of India, Muslim rulers, and the British left their boot prints in pursuit of holding these lands and those beyond.



© SnoRke / flickr.com
Wall relief from Persepolis

Modern Afghanistan traces its roots to 1747 as part of Ahmad Shah Durrani's empire, in a monarchy that lasted until 1973. During the 19th century, Afghanistan was the buffer between the British and Russian empires in their "Great Game." But after defeating them in three wars, Afghanistan gained independence from Britain in 1919. Successive Pashtun kings ruled until 1973, when a coup brought about a brief 5 year period during which Afghanistan was officially a republic. It marked the beginning of today's civil war. The Soviet occupation of 1979–1989 ushered in a period of instability and insecurity that continues, in some areas at least, to the present day. The Taliban regime (1996–2001) brought some peace to the nation after a chaotic 4 years when local warlords vied for power. But security came at the cost of brutal suppression and numerous human rights violations against the Afghan populace. Today, the Afghanistan government, with the assistance of a U.S.-led NATO alliance, continues to battle a Taliban insurgency that has increasingly turned to terrorist techniques in the cities and countryside.

Early History

Early humans most likely lived in Afghanistan as long as 100,000 years ago, but the earliest archeological evidence dates to about 30,000 years ago. These earliest discoveries include skull bones and some primitive tools in a cave in the Pamir Mountains in Badakhshan Province. Caves near Aq Kupruk, close to the Balkh River, provide evidence of an early Neolithic culture (8,000–11,000 years ago) that may have been one of the first to grow plants and tend animals in daily life.^{52, 53}

The Vedic Aryans

The Vedic Aryans invaded the Indus Valley from the Iranian plateau and steadily conquered or absorbed prior populations.⁵⁴ It is generally accepted that the *Rig Veda*, part of a larger collection

⁵² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Afghanistan: History: Prehistory," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

⁵³ Afghanan.net, "Prehistory," 2012, <http://www.afghanan.net/afghanistan/prehistory.htm>

⁵⁴ Peter N. Stearns, ed., "[South Asia, to 72 B.C.E.](#)," in *The Encyclopedia of World History*, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001)

of poems or hymns, was composed between 1500 and 1200 B.C.E.⁵⁵ These sacred Sanskrit verses tell about the Aryans, an agricultural, patriarchal society that fought among themselves and with indigenous tribes.⁵⁶

In time, the Aryans established the Achaemenid Empire, which extended from the Indus River in the east to Greece in the west.⁵⁷ The religion founded by the prophet Zoroaster, whose legendary birthplace was Balkh in modern northern Afghanistan, was influential during the rise of the Achaemenids.⁵⁸ An early monotheistic faith, Zoroastrianism's tenets can be summarized as "Good Words, Good Thoughts, and Good Deeds."⁵⁹ Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid dynasty (549–331 B.C.E.) and a follower of Zoroastrian beliefs, is remembered as one of history's most successful yet tolerant conquerors.⁶⁰

The Persians

During the Achaemenid dynasty, Darius I (522–486 B.C.E.) was well known for his strong administrative capabilities. He is also remembered for his architectural legacy, with the famous palaces at Susa and Persepolis as two leading examples whose ruins can be seen today. He built the Royal Road, which expanded trade toward the East, and conquered the area of modern Afghanistan.⁶¹ Though he tried to expand the borders of the empire into Greece, he was unsuccessful.⁶²



© Taifighta / flickr.com
Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great

In 332 B.C.E., Alexander, the 24-year-old king of Macedonia, peacefully took over Egypt and planned further invasions toward the east. The Persian soldiers fell easily before his well-trained and organized army, which conquered Afghanistan and marched undefeated toward the Indus River. Alexander reached India and defeated the Hindu armies as well. Upon returning to Babylon, he made it the capital of his huge empire. Alexander encouraged his soldiers to marry women from the conquered territories in order to strengthen his power there. To set an example, Alexander married a Persian princess.⁶³ His rule over one of the largest empires in history was abruptly terminated by his premature death at the age of 33. Alexander the Great died in Babylon

⁵⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Veda," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/624383/Veda>

⁵⁶ Peter N. Stearns, ed., "[South Asia, to 72 B.C.E.](#)," in *The Encyclopedia of World History*, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001)

⁵⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Map of the Achaemenid Empire, 6th–5th Century B.C.E.," 2012, <http://search.eb.com/eb/art-95281/Egypt-as-part-of-Achaemenid-Empire-6th-5th-century-BC>

⁵⁸ *Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed., "Balkh," 2011, *Encyclopedia.com*, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Balkh.aspx>

⁵⁹ Mary Rourke, "'Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds,'" *Los Angeles Times*, 12 July 1998, <http://articles.latimes.com/1998/jul/12/news/ls-2869>

⁶⁰ BBC Religions, "The Archaemenian," 2 October 2009, http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/zoroastrian/history/persia_1.shtml

⁶¹ K. Kris Hirst, "The Royal Road: The Royal Road of the Achaemenid Dynasty," *About.com*, 2012, http://archaeology.about.com/od/rterms/qt/royal_road.htm

⁶² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Darius I," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/151591/Darius-I>

⁶³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Alexander the Great," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/14224/Alexander-the-Great>

in 323 B.C.E., probably of malaria, although some historians suspect he may have been poisoned.⁶⁴

Waves of Invaders

After Alexander's death, the Mauryan dynasty of India quickly recaptured the Indus Valley and Punjab territories that Alexander had taken. They also acquired new territories in southern and eastern Afghanistan through a peace treaty with Seleucus, Alexander's successor in the eastern parts of the Alexandrian Empire.⁶⁵ At around the same time, Bactria in the north managed to become independent. Bactrians were standard-bearers of Greek culture, although they had their own language. The Tajiks of modern Afghanistan are considered their descendants. The Bactrian Empire lasted until 135 B.C.E. when the Yuezhi, a Central Asian tribal group, moved westward from modern western China and took over. A Yuezhi chieftain who ruled part of Bactria subsequently consolidated his power to establish the Kushan dynasty, which thrived for over 150 years. The capital of the Kushan dynasty was Peshawar (in modern Pakistan), from where it ruled over vast lands from the Aral Sea to northern India, including most of Afghanistan. The Kushans were instrumental in bringing Buddhism to these regions.^{66, 67}



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Bactrian goddess statuettes

In the third century C.E., the Sassanids of Persia overpowered the Kushan Empire. In the centuries that followed, the Hephthalites, or White Huns, conquered Afghanistan.⁶⁸ Their rule lasted until the beginning of the sixth century, when the revitalized Sassanids defeated them with the help of the Western Turks.^{69, 70} In the following century, Hinduism and Buddhism regained popularity until Islamic conquerors from the West arrived with a new religion.

The Muslim Conquest

Just a few years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, Arab Muslims defeated the Persian Sassanids in the battles of Qadisiya and Nahawand in 637 and 642 C.E., respectively. Thus began the Islamic expansion into the lands east of Persia. The Muslim conquest was a prolonged struggle in modern Afghanistan. Herat was first captured in 651 C.E., while the first raid into

⁶⁴ Donald Engels, "Notes and Discussions: A Note on Alexander's Death," *Classical Philology* 73, no. 3 (July 1978): 224, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/268333>

⁶⁵ Livius.org., "Maurya Dynasty," J.E.J., *Calliope*, "The Mauryan Dynasty," January 2000, http://find.galegroup.com/gtx/start.do?prodId=GRCM&userGroupName=cfsc_remote

⁶⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Afghanistan: History: Historical Beginnings (to the 7th Century CE)," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

⁶⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Kushan Dynasty," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/325483/Kushan-dynasty>

⁶⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Hephthalite," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/262325/Hephthalite>

⁶⁹ *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, "[White Huns or Hephthalites](#)," Columbia University Press, 2007, The Free Dictionary, <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/White+Huns>

⁷⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Afghanistan: History: Historical Beginnings (to the 7th Century CE)," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

Kandahar took place almost 50 years later.^{71, 72} In the ensuing years, the Umayyad caliph's power grew in the region until local Afghan rulers served them.⁷³ By the middle of the eighth century, the Abbasids defeated the Umayyads, took full control of the Arab-Islamic Empire, and moved the seat of the Caliphate from Damascus to Baghdad. From there, a more systematic expansion began throughout all of Afghanistan.

Over a period of several centuries, the preexisting religions in Central Asia, such as Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, were supplanted by Islam. By the ninth century, the majority of people in Afghanistan, Pakistan, the southern areas in and around Russia, and parts of northern India embraced Sunni Islam.⁷⁴ More Muslim rulers settled in the new territories and established their power there. By the 10th century, Mahmud, the son of a slave, created his own sultanate in the city of Ghazni and came to be viewed as a military genius. Mahmud of Ghazni conquered the entire Hindu Kush and reached the Punjab area of India, extending his power to territories north of the Amu Darya River.^{75, 76} With the Indian heirlooms he plundered, Mahmud transformed Ghazni into a cultural center rivaling Baghdad.



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni

The Mongol Invasion

In the 1220s, the Islamic lands of Central Asia, including most parts of Afghanistan, were invaded by Mongol forces under the command of Genghis Khan (1162–1227).⁷⁷ Although he destroyed many civilizations and ruled China to the Caspian Sea, Islam's strength defied him. By the end of the 13th century, his family had become Muslims too.⁷⁸

After Genghis Khan's death in 1227, the lands that he conquered were divided between his sons and their descendants. The Mongol rulers found it difficult to retain all their territories, and not until the rise of Timur (Tamerlane) did a period of empire consolidation occur again. Timur, from his capital in Samarkand, regained an area that extended from India to Turkey by the late 14th century. One of Timur's sons, Shah Rukh, moved the Timurid capital to Herat in the 15th century, which thereafter



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Genghis Khan

⁷¹ Frank Harold, "Herat," Silk Road Seattle, University of Washington, 2006,

<http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/cities/afghanistan/herat.html>

⁷² Sally Ann Baynard, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Islamic Conquest," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 9.

⁷³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Umayyad Dynasty," 2009, <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9074193>

⁷⁴ Sally Ann Baynard, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Islamic Conquest," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 9.

⁷⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Mahmud," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/358248/Mahmud>

⁷⁶ Sally Ann Baynard, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Islamic Conquest," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 9.

⁷⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Genghis Khan," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/229093/Genghis-Khan>

⁷⁸ Sally Ann Baynard, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Islamic Conquest," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 10–11.

became a center of Islamic scholarship and art.^{79, 80}

But the early 16th century, the Timurids were driven out of Herat, their last stronghold. Babur, a northern Timurid prince who was a descendant of Genghis Khan and Timur, pushed his armies southward to Kabul, which he seized and used as his base for raids into modern Pakistan and India. He conquered Delhi in 1526, which later became the capital of the great Moghul Empire founded by Babur.⁸¹

The Safavids

The Safavids of Persia (Iran) had their origins in a Sufi order that flourished in the region of modern Azerbaijan from the 14th century.⁸² They first conquered Herat in 1510, then Kandahar in 1545, but the Uzbeks, the Moghuls, and the Ghilzai Afghans also fought for control of those cities.⁸³ The Safavid hegemony lasted for over 200 years, but their power in the area was always tenuous. In 1716, Herat rebelled against the Safavids and, with the help of the Ghilzai Afghans, forced their retreat. The Afghan fighters pursued the Safavid troops all the way to Isfahan (in modern Iran), where they were ultimately vanquished, triggering the demise of the Safavid dynasty.^{84, 85}

The Beginnings of Afghan Independence

Afghan independence gained ground in the early 18th century with the defeat of the Safavids. But by the 1730s, internal fighting had weakened the successful Ghilzai Afghan kingdom, and Persian forces were once again poised to take over.

In 1732, Nadir Beg, who later became Nadir Shah of Persia, invaded Herat. Kandahar and Kabul fell to his armies a few years later.^{86, 87} By 1739, his empire extended into India, occupying Delhi. Nadir's troops pillaged Hindu palaces, and his war trophies included the Koh-i-Noor



© The British Library Board
Afghan nobles of the Durrani tribe

⁷⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “History of Central Asia: Timur,” 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/102315/history-of-Central-Asia>

⁸⁰ Sally Ann Baynard, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Islamic Conquest,” in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 10–11.

⁸¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Babur,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/47524/Babur>

⁸² Sufism is a mystical practice with unique rituals that guide practitioners to a direct encounter with God. Its followers consider it inherently Islamic. See *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Sufism,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/571823/Sufism>

⁸³ The Ghilzai is one of the two largest Pashtun tribes.

⁸⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Safavid Dynasty,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/516019/Safavid-Dynasty>

⁸⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Afghanistan: History: Last Afghan Empire,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

⁸⁶ Sally Ann Baynard, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Islamic Conquest,” in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 13.

⁸⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Afghanistan: History: Last Afghan Empire,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

(Mountain of Light) diamond and the Peacock Throne. Nadir Shah was assassinated in 1747, triggering the collapse of his empire.⁸⁸

Ahmad Khan, the commander of Nadir Shah's bodyguards, emerged shortly thereafter as the next ruler. He proclaimed himself Ahmad Shah Durrani and extended his control into a vast area: from the Arabian Sea in the south to the Abu Darya in the north, and from Delhi and Kashmir in the east to easternmost Iran in the west. The Durrani dynasty lasted into the 19th century, by which time the British were looking to expand their land holdings beyond what they had acquired through the East India Company.⁸⁹

The Anglo-Afghan Wars

“The Great Game,” the struggle for empire in Central Asia, began during the early 19th century. It involved the Russians, the French, the British, and the local empires competing to control territories there.

Shah Shoja, who ruled Afghanistan from 1803 until 1809, lost the throne during an internal tribal power struggle. Shah Shoja's deposition from power came shortly after signing a treaty of friendship with the British.⁹⁰

⁹¹ The First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–1842) aimed to establish a pro-British government in Afghanistan through Shah Shoja, to prevent the Russians from encroaching on India. The British reinstated Shah Shoja in power, but were soon under heavy attack from the Afghan fighters. The British troops and civilian camp followers at Kabul were massacred while they tried to retreat to the British fort at Jalalabad; few survived.⁹² Shah Shoja was subsequently assassinated.



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Ahmad Shah Durrani

The British consider the defeat in the First Anglo-Afghan War as one of the biggest in their history. It is frequently referred to as “Auckland's Folly,” a reference to the British governor-general of India who advocated British military intervention in Afghanistan.⁹³

The Second Anglo-Afghan War

In 1879, the British initiated the Second Anglo-Afghan War in order to halt Russian encroachment in Afghanistan. To end the war, King Ya'qub Khan ceded control of Afghan

⁸⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Afghanistan: History: Last Afghan Empire,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

⁸⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Afghanistan: History: Last Afghan Empire,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

⁹⁰ Sally Ann Baynard, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Ahmad Shad and the Durraini Dynasty,” in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 21.

⁹¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Afghanistan: History: Last Afghan Empire,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

⁹² BritishBattles.com, “The Battle of Kabul and the Retreat to Gandamak,” 2012, <http://www.britishbattles.com/first-afghan-war/kabul-gandamak.htm>

⁹³ Sally Ann Baynard, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting: The First Anglo-Afghan War,” in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 27–30.

foreign policy to the British. But hostility toward the British quickly ended the occupation. Ya'qub Khan abdicated in 1880, ceding power to Abdur Rahman Khan. Khan established a centralized government by persuading the tribes and ethnic groups to unite under his rule. Abdur Rahman Khan is thus considered to be the founder of modern Afghanistan. In 1887, the Abu Darya River was established as the border between Afghanistan and Tsarist Russia. British India negotiated its border with Afghanistan 6 years later. Called the Durand Line, it is the current Pakistan-Afghanistan border, a porous boundary that divides Pashtun tribal areas along most of its length.⁹⁴

Later, Abdur Rahman Khan's son Habibullah became the ruler, continuing his father's project of modernizing Afghanistan. He embraced Western influence in government and society. But he was murdered in Kabul in 1919 by anti-British groups.^{95, 96}

The Third Anglo-Afghan War

Habibullah's son Amanullah inherited the throne. In the early years, he fought hard for Afghan independence. In 1919, Amanullah launched the month-long Third Anglo-Afghan War against the British. It ended with the Treaty of Rawalpindi, which granted Afghanistan control of its foreign affairs. Today, Afghan Independence Day, celebrated on 19 August, commemorates the signing of this treaty.⁹⁷



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Ameer Abdurrahman Khan

In 1921, the Afghan government signed a treaty of friendship with the newly established Soviet Union (USSR), which became the first country to diplomatically recognize Afghanistan.^{98, 99} The Soviet-Afghan relationship remained undisturbed until the Soviet invasion nearly 60 years later.

Turbulent Post-WWI Years

The country remained an absolute monarchy until 1922, when a state assembly and legislature were established and ministers appointed to a cabinet. Yet Amanullah's use of scarce resources for economic development and his push for Western-style social reforms rendered him vulnerable to revolt. His government disintegrated in January 1929 after a decade in power,

⁹⁴ Tariq Mahmood, "The Durand Line: South Asia's Next Trouble Spot" (thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2005), 16–19, http://edocs.nps.edu/npspubs/scholarly/theses/2005/Jun/05Jun_Mahmood.pdf

⁹⁵ Sally Ann Baynard, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Reign of Habibullah, 1901–19," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 38–40.

⁹⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Afghanistan: History: Modern Afghanistan," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

⁹⁷ Matthew Holehouse, "Afghanistan Suicide Bomb: Attack Marks Independence Day," *Telegraph* (UK), 19 August 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/8710583/Afghanistan-suicide-bomb-attack-marks-independence-day.html>

⁹⁸ Leon B. Poullada, "Afghanistan and the United States: The Crucial Years," *Middle East Journal* 35, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 179, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4326198?seq=1>

⁹⁹ Frank Clements, "Chronology," in *Conflict in Afghanistan: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: 2003), 288.

when a rebel army led by Habibullah Kalakani arrived at the gates of Kabul.^{100, 101} Afghanistan was ruled by Habibullah Amanullah, an ethnic Tajik, for the next 9 months, the only period between the mid-18th century and the fall of the monarchy in 1978 that Afghanistan had a non-Pashtun leader. Habibullah's tenacious but tenuous hold on power ended when Nadir Shah, a Pashtun leader from the Peshawar region (in modern Pakistan), took control of Kabul, possibly with indirect assistance from the British.¹⁰²

Nadir Shah introduced further changes in the political structure and, in 1931, crafted a new constitution. Under his leadership, the government reunified Afghanistan before opponents assassinated him in 1933. Nadir Shah's son, 19-year-old Zahir Shah, succeeded him and began a 40-year reign, by far the longest in Afghanistan's modern history. But Zahir Shah's uncles and cousin were the actual power behind the throne for the first 30 of those years.¹⁰³

Zahir Shah

During Zahir Shah's reign, the "Pashtun Question" became the center of international focus. After India was granted independence and the state of Pakistan was created, tensions immediately flared. Zahir's government insisted that because Pakistan was a new state and not a successor to colonial India, all border agreements drawn by the British (including the Durand Line) were nullified. Kabul wanted self-determination for the Pashtun tribal territories that spanned the existing border. Border skirmishes, supported by both Kabul and Islamabad, proliferated. Because Pakistan aligned with the United States, Afghanistan sought military training assistance from the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, Afghanistan maintained an official policy of nonalignment during the early decades of the Cold War.



Courtesy of Wikipedia
King Zahir Shah

The political climate became even more liberal during Zahir Shah's reign. From 1946 to 1952, the liberal-leaning parliament under Prime Minister Sardar Shah Mahmud Khan sanctioned greater political pluralism. In 1953, religious leaders and conservatives backed the successful efforts of Lieutenant General Mohammed Daoud Khan, Zahir Shah's cousin, to become prime minister. In a surprising move, after becoming prime minister, Daoud approached the Soviet Union for support. The Soviets, looking to extend their influence toward the southeast, became a major trading partner in the ensuing years. Social and educational changes were introduced, but the political climate remained rigid.

¹⁰⁰ Sally Ann Baynard, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Reign of King Amanullah, 1919–29," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 44–46.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Barfield, "Chapter 4: In the Twentieth Century," in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 189–191.

¹⁰² Sally Ann Baynard, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Reign of King Amanullah, 1919–29/Tajik Rule, January–October 1929," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 46–48.

¹⁰³ Sally Ann Baynard, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: King Muhammad Zahir Shah, 1933–73," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 49.

¹⁰⁴ Sally Ann Baynard, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: King Muhammad Zahir Shah, 1933–73," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 51–56.

Further tensions developed along the Pakistani border in subsequent years, leading to Daoud's resignation in 1963.¹⁰⁵ As a result, Zahir Shah was for the first time the true holder of power in Afghanistan. The position of prime minister changed hands repeatedly over the next 10 years, reflecting an increasingly unstable political environment.¹⁰⁶

In 1964, a new constitution was drafted. Among other things, it specified free elections, female emancipation, and universal suffrage.¹⁰⁷ It also prohibited members of the royal family from being appointed to ministerial positions—perhaps an attempt by Zahir Shah to keep his uncles and cousins from trying to regain power.¹⁰⁸ Competitive multiparty elections were held and journalists were given wide latitude to write about political developments. But the reforms put Zahir Shah at odds with religious leaders and conservatives.

The Afghan Republic (1973–1978)

In 1973, Daoud Khan seized an opportunity to stage a bloodless coup and regain power from his cousin. He disbanded the Afghanistan monarchy, declared Afghanistan a republic, and named himself president. Despite name changes, Afghanistan's government leadership remained dynastic, with one cousin having simply replaced another.¹⁰⁹ Daoud's once-close ties to the Soviets increasingly diminished during his 5 years in power.¹¹⁰ In 1977, Daoud's visit to Moscow ended abruptly after he told Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev: "...we will never allow you to dictate to us how to run our country and whom to employ in Afghanistan. ...Afghanistan shall remain poor, if necessary, but free in its acts and decisions."¹¹¹ Daoud's life and Afghanistan's independence did not last long after. Afghan Communists, who had begun to emerge on the political stage 10 years earlier, were opposed to Daoud and his policies. In 1978, Daoud was assassinated in a Communist-led coup, and the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) took control of the country.¹¹²



© James A. Cudney
King Zahir Shah

¹⁰⁵ Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 99.

¹⁰⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Afghanistan: History: Modern Afghanistan," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

¹⁰⁷ BBC News, "Profile: Ex-King Zahir Shah," 1 October 2001, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1573181.stm

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Barfield, "Chapter 4: In the Twentieth Century," in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 200.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Barfield, "Chapter 4: In the Twentieth Century," in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 215.

¹¹⁰ Sally Ann Baynard, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Daoud's Republic, 1973–78," in *Afghanistan: A Country Study*, ed. Peter R. Blood (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 68–71.

¹¹¹ Abdul Samad Ghaus, *The Fall of Afghanistan: An Insider's Account* (Oxford, UK: Brassey's Ltd., 1988), 178–180.

¹¹² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Afghanistan: History: Afghanistan Since 1973," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

The Communist Era in Afghanistan

The PDPA named Soviet-supported Nur Mohammed Taraki to be President of the Revolutionary Council and Prime Minister of the new Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. From the beginning, infighting and bitter rivalries within the PDPA, which was ideologically split between the *Parcham* (“Banner”) and *Khalq* (“People’s”) factions, created a tense internal political situation. In the Afghanistan countryside, the government faced increasing protests and rebellions by Afghanistan’s Muslim population toward the PDPA’s attempts to implement its secular and Marxist policies.¹¹³ During the fall of 1979, Taraki was killed in a coup led by Hafizullah Amin, a rival within the *Khalq* faction.¹¹⁴ As political unrest increased and Moscow began to believe that Amin was making initial moves to abandon his socialist ties, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979.¹¹⁵ Within days Amin was dead, and Soviet-supported PDPA *Parcham* leader Babrak Karmal was head of Afghanistan’s government.



© Mikhail Evstafiev
Soviet Army headquarters in Kabul, 1987

Moscow grossly underestimated the domestic economic and political costs of invasion and occupation. The Karmal government never controlled much beyond Kabul, forcing the Soviets to shoulder the costs for security and administration. Moscow also met with strong opposition to the occupation from the West and the Islamic world. By 1987, the Afghan rebel fighters (*mujahideen*) had fought the Soviet forces to a stalemate. Moreover, the USSR had been unable to install a government in Kabul that could elicit strong support from the Afghan people.¹¹⁶ Those factors, coupled with Pakistani support for both U.S. interests and the Afghan resistance, ultimately brought the Soviets to the bargaining table in Geneva. In 1989, the USSR withdrew its troops from Afghanistan.

The Taliban Movement

The Islamic movement grew in strength and number during the Soviet occupation. The U.S. and other governments, hoping to weaken Soviet influence, supported the movement’s *mujahideen* rebel fighters.¹¹⁷ From Pakistan, the *mujahideen* recruited large numbers of fighters from the refugee camps and acquired better weapons.



© WFP/Nina Bergman
Woman wearing burka

¹¹³ Thomas Barfield, “Chapter 4: In the Twentieth Century,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 229–230.

¹¹⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Hafizullah Amin,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/20639/Hafizullah-Amin>

¹¹⁵ Thomas Barfield, “Chapter 4: In the Twentieth Century,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 234.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Department of State Bulletin, “Afghanistan: Soviet Occupation and Withdrawal—Report of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research—Transcript,” March 1989, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1079/is_n2144_v89/ai_7537775

¹¹⁷ The word *mujahideen* is Arabic for “those who engage in *jihad*.” They are Muslim guerrilla fighters.

After Soviet troops left Afghanistan in 1989, the Soviet government still provided aid and assistance to the regime of Afghan President Mohammad Najibullah, who had been picked by Moscow to replace Karmal in 1986.¹¹⁸ Najibullah's government survived for 2 more years, largely because he leveraged Soviet-supplied money, arms, and other assistance to *mujahideen* militias, in return for their loyalty to the government or at least their agreement to a cease-fire.¹¹⁹ By 1991, nearly half of Najibullah's military forces were militia members.¹²⁰ After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, this aid dried up, making the collapse of the Najibullah regime inevitable. Further internal struggle, fighting, and a lawless state emerged in the aftermath of Najibullah's fall in April 1992. Warlords and militia leaders, who profited from the sale of illegal drugs, took over the countryside and parts of the larger cities. Kabul in particular suffered greatly as it became a battlefield in a lengthy power struggle between Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani and rival political/militia leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar and his allies for control of the central government.^{121, 122}

In the fall of 1994, a new Islamic group emerged from the Kandahar region: the Taliban. The Taliban's basic ideology enforced a purist way of life based on their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. They received support from like-minded Islamist groups in the Middle East and Pakistan. The only opposition to the Taliban within Afghanistan was the Northern Alliance, which fought hard to establish and expand control over territories, mainly in northern Afghanistan. Despite resistance, the Taliban managed to control the entire country except a small portion of northern Afghanistan by 2001.¹²³

Al-Qaeda and the Taliban

Out of the Afghan resistance of the 1980s evolved an Islamic terrorist organization that became known as al-Qaeda ("The Base"). Its founder was Osama bin Laden.¹²⁴ He first came to Afghanistan shortly after the Soviet invasion in 1979 to assist in the *mujahideen*'s fight against the Soviets.¹²⁵ Backed by his family's fortune, bin Laden subsequently founded the *Maktab al Khidmat* (MAK), or "Services Office," a resistance organization with a Jordanian Palestinian partner.¹²⁶ The



DoD image
Poster of Osama Bin Laden

¹¹⁸ AfghanLand.com, "Babrak Karmal," 2000, <http://www.afghanland.com/history/karmal.html>

¹¹⁹ Thomas Barfield, "Chapter 4: In the Twentieth Century," in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 245.

¹²⁰ Thomas Barfield, "Chapter 4: In the Twentieth Century," in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 243–245.

¹²¹ Thomas Barfield, "Chapter 4: In the Twentieth Century," in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 250–251.

¹²² Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 4–5, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

¹²³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Taliban," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/734615/Taliban>

¹²⁴ CBC News InDepth, "Who is Osama bin Laden?" 19 January 2006,

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/osamabinladen/>

¹²⁵ Kate Zernike and Michael T. Kaufman, "The Most Wanted Face of Terrorism," *New York Times*, 2 May 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/02osama-bin-laden-obituary.html?_r=1&hp=&pagewanted=all

¹²⁶ HistoryCommons.org, "Context of '1985–1989: Precursor to Al-Qaeda Puts Down US Roots,'" n.d.,

<http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=a85azzam>

MAK helped to recruit and transport to Peshawar, Pakistan any would-be *mujahideen* from the Middle East and other Muslim countries—these fighters were colloquially called “Afghan Arabs.” From Peshawar, some of these recruits subsequently received training at the camp in Afghanistan that was financed by bin Laden.^{127, 128}

Toward the end of the Soviet occupation, bin Laden formed an independent group, al-Qaeda, with the intent of expanding resistance operations from an anti-Soviet *jihād* to a global *jihād* targeting the U.S. and its allies, who were perceived to be supporters of “infidel” governments.¹²⁹ Al-Qaeda soon strengthened its ties to other radical Islamic organizations—most notably, the Egyptian *Al-Jihad* (Islamic Jihad) organization headed by current al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. Until approximately 1991, al-Qaeda was based in Afghanistan and Peshawar, Pakistan. It then relocated to Sudan where it remained for approximately 5 years until bin Laden and other top leaders returned to Afghanistan.¹³⁰

In 1996, Osama bin Laden established ties with the Taliban, which shared his anti-Western views. To strengthen his influence in Afghanistan, bin Laden provided the Taliban with USD 100 million and some of al-Qaeda’s most committed assault forces.¹³¹ In return, the Taliban provided shelter for al-Qaeda and refused subsequent U.S. requests for bin Laden’s extradition.

Ahmed Shah Massoud

Known as the “Lion of Panjshir” for his success in resisting Soviet efforts to seize the strategic Panjshir Valley, Ahmed Shah Massoud was Minister of Defense in the first government formed after the fall of the Najibullah regime.

He subsequently led the “Northern Alliance,” a group of anti-Taliban militias mostly fighting in the northern and western parts of the country. By September 2001, Massoud’s forces held virtually all parts of Afghanistan that were not under Taliban control.¹³² He became a hero in his country as a symbol of resistance against the Taliban. On 9 September 2001, two al-Qaeda members posing as Algerian journalists



© Erwin Franzen
Three mujahideen in Asmar, 1985

¹²⁷ Kate Zernike and Michael T. Kaufman, “The Most Wanted Face of Terrorism,” *New York Times*, 2 May 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/02/world/02osama-bin-laden-obituary.html?_r=1&hp=&pagewanted=all

¹²⁸ Lawrence Wright, “Chapter 5: The Miracles,” in *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 128.

¹²⁹ *Jihad* is an Islamic term which refers to “struggle.” This can include the inner struggle to achieve complete spiritual self-awareness. But in the contemporary context, it generally refers to armed struggle mounted in defense of Islam.

¹³⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Congressional Testimony of J.T. Caruso, Acting Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division, FBI, Before the Subcommittee on International Operations and Terrorism, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate,” 8 December 2001, <http://www.fbi.gov/news/testimony/al-qaeda-international>

¹³¹ Bob Woodward, “Bin Laden Said to ‘Own’ The Taliban,” *Washington Post*, 11 October 2001, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&contentId=A40211-2001Oct10¬Found=true>

¹³² Barry Bearak, “Rebel Chief Who Fought the Taliban is Buried,” *New York Times*, 16 September 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/17/world/rebel-chief-who-fought-the-taliban-is-buried.html?ref=ahmedshahmassoud>

managed to get permission to meet Massoud face-to-face for an interview. The bomb that ended Massoud's life was hidden in their camera. Today, September 9 is celebrated as a national holiday in Afghanistan, known officially as "The Day of the Martyrdom of Ahmad Shah Massoud."¹³³

September 11, 2001

By 2001, al-Qaeda had 5,000 trained militants and cells in 50 countries. The organization functioned much like a corporation or a combination of strategic partnerships.¹³⁴ Among its terrorist actions, al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (2001), the attack on the USS Cole (2000), and the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania (1998). It is believed that the target selection, preparation, and planning was confined to bin Laden (the "contractor") and a handful of al-Qaeda leaders.¹³⁵

After the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Washington focused its attention on Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. In October 2001, coalition forces invaded Afghanistan as part of their "War on Terror" campaign. The aim was to target Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network, as well as the Taliban government. In November, with the help of allied troops, the Northern Alliance advanced on Kabul and overthrew the Taliban government. By December, the Taliban's authority collapsed. But Osama Bin Laden and the Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar escaped. In May 2011, bin Laden was killed during a raid by elite US forces on his family compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.¹³⁶ Mullah Omar's whereabouts remain a mystery.¹³⁷

Recent Events

In late 2004, Hamid Karzai was elected president in Afghanistan's first democratic elections. Within a few months, he had appointed his cabinet, and the 502-member *Loya Jirga* (Grand Council) passed the 160-article Afghan Constitution. The September 2005 parliamentary and provincial elections provided another political milestone, representing the first time Afghan citizens had gone to the polls to elect representatives in over 30 years.¹³⁸



© Jawad Jalali (UNAMA)
Kabul elections

¹³³ TOLONews.com, "Parliament Returns Massoud's Name to Sept 9 Holiday," 19 May 2012, [http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/6275-september-9-declared-national-holiday-to-honour-massoud-](http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/6275-september-9-declared-national-holiday-to-honour-massoud)

¹³⁴ CNN, "Al Qaeda Has Complex Terrorist Networks," 5 October 2001, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/10/02/inv.binladen.friends/>

¹³⁵ Sreeram Chaulia, review of *Osama's Universe: Inside Al Qaeda, Global Network of Terror*, by Rohan Gunaratna, *Asia Times Online*, 12 October 2002, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/DJ12Ak03.html

¹³⁶ CBSNews.com, "Osama bin Laden Is Dead," 1 May 2011, http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-201_162-20058777.html

¹³⁷ Mujib Mashal, "The Myth of Mullah Omar," *Al Jazeera*, 6 June 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/06/20126665650415526.html>

¹³⁸ BBC News, "Afghanistan Profile," 29 May 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12024253>

But 2005 and 2006 saw a sharp rise in attacks by Afghan insurgency groups, including the first concentrated wave of suicide bombings since 2001.^{139, 140} The main insurgent parties included the Taliban, whose leadership were believed to be in Quetta, the capital of Pakistan's Baluchistan Province; the so-called Haqqani network, based further north in the tribal areas of Pakistan; and the Hikmatyar Faction, a group led by ex-*mujahideen* leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar that was most active in the regions east of Kabul.¹⁴¹ The military leadership of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which in 2005–2006 took control of security operations for all Afghanistan, requested additional forces in 2008 to counter the worsening security situation in the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan. The following year, U.S. President Barack Obama announced that a “surge” of 30,000 U.S. forces would be sent to Afghanistan to assist in countering the insurgency and providing stabilization for an eventual transition to Afghanistan forces taking the lead on providing security.¹⁴² By 2012, these troop levels began to be drawn down. Presently, NATO's combat mission is scheduled to reach completion in 2014, and some military responsibilities (detention, night raids) have already been handed to the Afghan armed forces.¹⁴³

On the political front, Hamid Karzai was reelected in a 2009 presidential election that was marred by security concerns, low voter turnout, and charges of electoral fraud.¹⁴⁴

Similar problems beset Afghanistan's parliamentary elections the following year.¹⁴⁵ The next Afghanistan presidential election is scheduled for 2014, although President Karzai has proposed moving it up a year to avoid overlap with the NATO pull-out. Afghanistan's constitution prohibits Karzai from running for a third term.¹⁴⁶



DoD image / Master Sgt Jerry Morrison
President Hamid Karzai

¹³⁹ Emily Hsu and Beth Cole, “Afghan Insurgency Still a Potent Force,” United States Institute for Peace, February 2006, <http://www.usip.org/publications/afghan-insurgency-still-potent-force>

¹⁴⁰ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 19, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

¹⁴¹ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 14–18, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

¹⁴² Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 20–22, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

¹⁴³ Sangar Rahmi and Alissa J. Rubin, “Days After an Order to Restrict Them, Afghanistan Calls for Airstrikes to End,” *New York Times*, 12 June 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/13/world/asia/afghan-president-karzai-calls-for-an-end-to-airstrikes.html?_r=1&ref=afghanistan

¹⁴⁴ Ian Pannell, “Afghan Election Fraud is Unearthed,” BBC News, 18 August 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8207315.stm

¹⁴⁵ Paul Tait and Sayed Salahuddin, “Fraud and Turnout Weigh on ‘Miracle’ Afghan Poll,” Reuters, 19 September 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/09/19/us-afghanistan-election-idUSTRE68F27N20100919>

¹⁴⁶ Javid Ahmad, “Election 2014: Afghanistan's Chance to Get It Right?” *Foreign Policy*, 10 May 2012, http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/05/10/election_2014_afghanistans_chance_to_get_it_right

Chapter 2 Assessment

1. The so-called “Great Game” involved the Germans, the French, and the Dutch.
FALSE
“The Great Game,” the struggle for empire in Central Asia, began during the early 19th century. It involved the Russians, the French, the British, and the local empires competing to control territories there.
2. The Islamic terrorist organization al-Qaeda evolved from the Afghan resistance movement of the 1980s.
TRUE
The Afghan resistance movement of the 1980s spawned an Islamic terrorist organization that became known as al-Qaeda (“The Base”). Its founder was Osama bin Laden.
3. Afghanistan gained independence from Britain in 1919.
TRUE
In 1919, Amanullah launched the month-long Third Anglo-Afghan War against the British. It ended with the Treaty of Rawalpindi, which granted Afghanistan control of its foreign affairs.
4. The Taliban founded the Afghanistan Republic in 1975.
FALSE
In 1973, Daoud Khan staged a bloodless coup and regained power from his cousin. He disbanded the Afghanistan monarchy, declared Afghanistan to be a republic, and named himself president.
5. Afghanistan’s first democratic elections in over 30 years were held in 2008.
FALSE
In late 2004, Hamid Karzai was elected president in Afghanistan’s first democratic presidential election. Within a few months, he had appointed his cabinet, and the 502-member *Loya Jirga* (Grand Council) passed the 160-article Afghan Constitution.

CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY

Introduction

After decades of war, Afghanistan's economy is growing, albeit from quite a low base. Since 1979, when the Afghan-Soviet war began, the loss of capital and labor along with breakdowns in trade, transport, and security have made Afghanistan one of the poorest countries in the world. Millions of Afghans are unable to meet basic needs such as employment, food, medical care, electricity, and safe drinking water. A lack of security, weak governance, corruption, and drought have hampered economic growth. Yet with international assistance and national resolve, significant progress has been made in a variety of sectors such as energy, transport, public administration, infrastructure, and finance through foreign aid and investment.



DoD image: TSgt. F. Govea II
Rural transportation

Afghanistan's economic performance has shown measurable improvement over the last decade. Since 2002, Afghanistan's gross domestic product (GDP) has averaged over 10% growth, although large yearly fluctuations in GDP growth that mirror annual crop yield performance have been the norm.¹⁴⁷ Afghanistan's economy now depends heavily on agriculture, trade with regional countries, and foreign aid. About 90% of the Afghan government budget comes from international donors.¹⁴⁸ Government revenues could increase significantly if Afghanistan's largely untapped mineral resources were to be exploited. But mining is a sector that adds little in terms of employment growth. Mining risks environmental damage and greater social divisiveness if the mineral revenues do not improve the quality of life of Afghanistan's poor in the mining regions.¹⁴⁹

Agriculture

Until the Soviet invasion, farming had sustained the Afghan population and agriculture was the foundation of the nation's economy, representing about 50% of GDP prior to 1979. Even then, only 30% of Afghanistan's total arable land was in cultivation.¹⁵⁰ But years of war laid waste to the nation's farmlands. In 2001, Afghanistan was estimated to be the world's most landmine-contaminated nation, and many of those mines were laid in former areas



DoD image: CPL A. Hunt
Young fruit vendor in Delaram

¹⁴⁷ World Bank, "Growth in Afghanistan," February 2011, <http://go.worldbank.org/JN66MR9750>

¹⁴⁸ Jason Ukman, "U.S., Other Donors Supported 90 Percent of Afghan Budget Over Five Years, GAO Finds," 20 September 2011, *Washington Post*, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/checkpoint-washington/post/us-other-donors-supported-90-percent-of-afghan-budget-over-five-years/2011/09/20/gIQArlDmiK_blog.html

¹⁴⁹ World Bank, "Growth in Afghanistan," February 2011, <http://go.worldbank.org/JN66MR9750>

¹⁵⁰ Encyclopedia of the Nations, "Afghanistan—Agriculture," n.d., <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Asia-and-the-Pacific/Afghanistan-AGRICULTURE.html>

of cultivation.¹⁵¹ Also, the nation's once widespread irrigation systems and *karezes* (gravity-fed wells) were damaged or had fallen into disrepair. Roughly half of Afghanistan's cultivated farmland is now irrigated, down from roughly 66% in 1978.^{152, 153} The remaining rain-fed farmlands are particularly vulnerable to periods of drought or low rainfall.

Although less than 6% of the land is cultivated today, agriculture (excluding opium production) accounted for roughly 30% of GDP in 2010.^{154, 155} Wheat is the primary grain grown, mostly on irrigated fields in the northern provinces.¹⁵⁶ Barley, maize, and rice are the other cereal crops produced in Afghanistan.¹⁵⁷ Numerous fruits and nuts are grown, with grapes, melons, mulberries, almonds, apricots, apples, pomegranates, pistachios, and walnuts the dominant crops.¹⁵⁸ Potatoes, onions, and tomatoes are Afghanistan's primary vegetable crops.¹⁵⁹ Production of cotton, once an important cash crop, has declined, with poppies replacing cotton in some southern provinces such as Helmand.¹⁶⁰

Livestock grazing is important in mountain areas of Afghanistan that are considered unsuitable for growing crops. Nomadic herding and overgrazing the available land have led to total and partial losses of grazing lands.¹⁶¹ Likewise, the use of ground cover (shrubs or trees) for fuel depletes the vegetation for grazing, thus worsening the losses.

¹⁵¹ Tim Friend, "Millions of Land Mines Hinder Afghan Recovery," *USA Today*, 27 November 2011, <http://www.usatoday.com/news/attack/2001/11/28/landmines-usatcov.htm>

¹⁵² IRIN, "Afghanistan: Low Rainfall Affecting Agricultural Production—FAO," 9 June 2008, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/78642/AFGHANISTAN-Low-rainfall-affecting-agricultural-production-FAO>

¹⁵³ Asad Sarwar Qureshi, "1.3 Agriculture," in *Water Resources Management in Afghanistan: The Issues and Options*, IWMI Working Paper 49, no. 14, June 2002, <http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/92703/2/WOR49.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ GlobalEconomy.com, "Afghanistan: Agriculture Sector," 2012, <http://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Afghanistan/indicator-NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS/>

¹⁵⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Agriculture in Afghanistan," 2012, <http://www.fas.usda.gov/country/afghanistan/us-afghanistan.asp>

¹⁵⁶ Hussain Sharifi and Mark Bell, "Wheat—Overview," University of California, Davis, College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, December 2011, http://afghanag.ucdavis.edu/b_field-crops/wheat-1/IS_Wheat_Overview.pdf

¹⁵⁷ Hussain Sharifi and Mark Bell, "Maize Overview," University of California, Davis, College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences June 2012, http://afghanag.ucdavis.edu/b_field-crops/maize-1/IS_Maize_Overview.pdf

¹⁵⁸ Altai Consulting, "Market Sector Assessment in Horticulture—Presentation," June 2004, 20, http://afghanag.ucdavis.edu/other-topic/markets/marketing-presentations-ppt/marketing-ppt-english/Market_Assess_Hort_Phase_1_Altai.pdf

¹⁵⁹ Altai Consulting, "Market Sector Assessment in Horticulture—Presentation," June 2004, 20, http://afghanag.ucdavis.edu/other-topic/markets/marketing-presentations-ppt/marketing-ppt-english/Market_Assess_Hort_Phase_1_Altai.pdf

¹⁶⁰ Hussain Sharifi and Mark Bell, "Cotton Overview," 2012, University of California, Davis, College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, http://afghanag.ucdavis.edu/b_field-crops/cotton/IS_Cotton_Overview.pdf

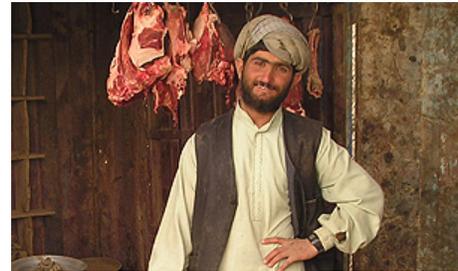
¹⁶¹ John Groninger et al., "Challenges in Protecting Afghanistan's Grazing Lands," University of California, Davis, College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, 2012, http://afghanag.ucdavis.edu/c_livestock/factsheets/FS_Live_Grazing_Challenges_Afghan.pdf

Industry

Afghanistan's industrial sector, including manufacturing, mining, construction, energy, and water, contributed about 23% of GDP as of 2010.¹⁶² Manufacturing contributed more than half this value.¹⁶³ Processed foods, cement, furniture, soap, wool and cotton textiles, and woven rugs are among the items manufactured.¹⁶⁴

Economic Indicators

Afghanistan has experienced a strong level of economic growth since 2002, averaging over 10% growth in GDP per year. In 2009–2010, GDP increased by over 20%.¹⁶⁵ The primary engine of this growth has been private consumption, fueled both by the large demand for goods and services by the security operations in the country and by spending generated by donor nations and organizations. The services sector and agriculture have generated the bulk of GDP growth, with service subsectors such as communications, finance and insurance, and transport all averaging better than 20% annual growth.¹⁶⁶



© Michael Smith
Butcher in his shop

It is doubtful that Afghanistan can maintain this growth because its large dependence on foreign aid (47% of GDP) has helped offset a continuing trade imbalance and a relatively low rate of private investment in the economy. In addition, some of the private consumption in Afghanistan is fueled by opium trade revenues, which are excluded from the official GDP. To create sustainable growth, an alternative income source must be developed.¹⁶⁷

Opium Economy

The largest obstacle to Afghanistan's development is the country's dependence on the opium poppy, the source of the drug heroin. Besides supporting farmers and drug traffickers, the crop benefits district officials, who tax (*ushr*) it to fill local government coffers. Cultivation of the opium poppy has increased rapidly since the fall of the



Photo by ISAF Public Affairs
Poppy field in Farah Province

¹⁶² GlobalEconomy.com, "Afghanistan: Industry," 2012, <http://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Afghanistan/indicator-NV.IND.TOTL.ZS/> <http://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Afghanistan/indicator-NV.IND.TOTL.ZS/>

¹⁶³ GlobalEconomy.com, "Afghanistan: Manufacturing," 2012, <http://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Afghanistan/indicator-NV.IND.MANF.ZS/>

¹⁶⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Afghanistan: Economy: Manufacturing," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/7798/Afghanistan>

¹⁶⁵ GlobalEconomy.com, "Afghanistan: Economic Growth," 2012, <http://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Afghanistan/indicator-NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG/>

¹⁶⁶ World Bank, "Growth in Afghanistan," February 2011, <http://go.worldbank.org/JN66MR9750>

¹⁶⁷ World Bank, "Growth in Afghanistan," February 2011, <http://go.worldbank.org/JN66MR9750>

Taliban in 2001, with production peaking in 2007.¹⁶⁸ Ironically, the Taliban has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the increased opium production, taking a cut of different aspects of the trade as a means of financially supporting their insurgency.¹⁶⁹

Rising opium prices and a much higher yield led to a 61% increase in opium production in 2011 over the previous year.¹⁷⁰ But the total area under opium cultivation increased by a much smaller 7%.¹⁷¹

In the absence of a viable alternative livelihood, it is difficult for farmers to stop growing opium poppies. Depending on the year, growing poppies can yield an income that can be as much as 11 times that of wheat cultivation.¹⁷² High opium prices tend to stimulate production, and areas of greater insecurity correlate with higher opium production. Much of the opium in Afghanistan is now grown in the southern and southwestern provinces of the country, where the Taliban has been particularly active. The four provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Farah, and Uruzgan contain over 90% of Afghanistan's opium fields.¹⁷³ It is now estimated that Afghanistan produces almost two-thirds of the world's opium.¹⁷⁴

Trade

Excluding opium, Afghanistan's major exports are hand-woven carpets and rugs, raisins, vegetable saps and extracts, nuts (e.g., almonds, pistachios, walnuts), fresh fruits (e.g., grapes, apricots), figs, oilseeds (primarily sesame), spices (cumin, saffron), and stone marble.^{175, 176} In 2010, the leading markets for Afghanistan's exports were Pakistan, India, Turkey, Iran, and Russia.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2010," December 2011, 12, http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afg_opium_survey_2010_exsum_web.pdf

¹⁶⁹ BBC News, "Afghan Opium Production 'Rises by 61%' Compared with 2010," 11 October 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-15254788>

¹⁷⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2011," December 2011, 3, http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2011_web.pdf

¹⁷¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2011," December 2011, 3, http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2011_web.pdf

¹⁷² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2011," December 2011, 3, http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2011_web.pdf

¹⁷³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2011," December 2011, 17, http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2011_web.pdf

¹⁷⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2011," December 2011, 15, http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2011_web.pdf

¹⁷⁵ International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Afghanistan (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012, http://legacy.intracem.org/appli/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI.aspx?RP=004&YR=2010

¹⁷⁶ Additional sub-level trade detail obtained from United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database (e.g., <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=ComTrade&f=11Code%3A09>)

¹⁷⁷ International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Afghanistan—00 All Industries (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012, http://legacy.intracem.org/appli/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=004&YR=2010&IL=00%20%20All%20Industries&TY=T

Trade in Afghanistan is hampered by transportation and infrastructure limitations, weak business capacity, fees imposed by local authorities, and complex custom clearances.¹⁷⁸ Informal trade conducted by people traveling back and forth from Afghanistan to Iran or to Pakistan—a practice known as *shuttle trade*—is still a large part of the Afghan economy. The International Monetary Fund estimates that shuttle trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2009–10 was as much as USD 1.8 billion.

Afghanistan's trade is unusual because the value of illicit narcotic exports may be higher than total legal exports. Also, there is a black market for goods being re-exported into the protected markets of neighboring countries such as Pakistan.¹⁷⁹



© Munir Squires
Carpet vendor in Kabul

The value of Afghanistan's exports is dwarfed by that of its imports, which include basic goods such as medicines, construction materials, machinery and equipment, textiles, petroleum products, and food.¹⁸⁰ Uzbekistan is Afghanistan's largest source of imports, much of which comprise petroleum products and electricity.¹⁸¹ Other principal import partners are China, Pakistan, Japan, and Germany.¹⁸² Recent years have witnessed an increasing amount of trade between Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbors to the north. Kazakhstan, although not along a border with Afghanistan, now rivals Pakistan as an exporter of wheat and wheat products to Afghanistan.¹⁸³ Much of this wheat from Kazakhstan transits through Uzbekistan, which since early 2012 has been connected to the northern Afghan city of Mazar e-Sharif by rail.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸ Adam Pappas, "Trade Promotion in Afghanistan: Roles for Infrastructure and Institutions," School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 24 April 2009, 2, <http://www.sais-jhu.edu/academics/regional-studies/southasia/pdf/Pappas%20Afghan%20Policy%20Paper%20v5.1.pdf>

¹⁷⁹ Adam Pappas, "Trade Promotion in Afghanistan: Roles for Infrastructure and Institutions," School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 24 April 2009, 4–5, <http://www.sais-jhu.edu/academics/regional-studies/southasia/pdf/Pappas%20Afghan%20Policy%20Paper%20v5.1.pdf>

¹⁸⁰ International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Imports of Afghanistan (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012, http://legacy.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_IP_CI_P.aspx?IN=00&RP=004&YR=2007&IL=00%20%20All%20industries&TY=I

¹⁸¹ International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Imports of Afghanistan—27 Mineral Fuels, Oils, Distillation Products, Etc (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012, http://legacy.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_IP_CI_P.aspx?IN=27&RP=004&YR=2010&IL=27%20%20Minera1%20fuels,%20oils,%20distillation%20products,%20etc&TY=I

¹⁸² International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Imports of Afghanistan—00 All Industries (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012, http://legacy.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_IP_CI.aspx?RP=004&YR=2010

¹⁸³ Philippe Chabot and Fabien Tondel, USAID, "A Regional View of Wheat Markets and Food Security in Central Asia, with a Focus on Afghanistan and Tajikistan," July 2011, http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/Regional_View_of_Wheat_Markets_in_Central_Asia_July_2011.pdf

¹⁸⁴ Fozil Mashrab, "Afghan Rail Link Marks a Break-Out Moment," *Asia Times*, 11 January 2012, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/NA11Ag01.html

Foreign Aid

After the overthrow of the Taliban regime, foreign assistance was necessary to rebuild Afghanistan's war-torn economy. Basic facilities, services, and installations had been damaged, leaving the country the world's poorest outside of sub-Saharan Africa. Today, 92% of Afghanistan's public spending comes from foreign aid.¹⁸⁵ The international donor community provided USD 15.7 billion in aid in 2011, the majority of it coming from the United States.¹⁸⁶ Even with the assumption that

Afghanistan's government revenues will increase sharply in the future because of mining projects just now ramping up, the World Bank estimates that the Afghanistan government will face a shortfall in its budget of roughly 25% of GDP by 2021–22.¹⁸⁷



Photo by ISAF Public Affairs
Medical supplies

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank are key players in Afghanistan's reconstruction. As of the end of 2011, ADB had extended Afghanistan cumulative loans of USD 952 million to boost its economy and reduce poverty by supporting the public administration, financial, energy, and transport sectors. Afghanistan received an additional USD 232 million in grants from the ADB in 2011.¹⁸⁸ As of April 2012, the World Bank has commitments of USD 1.1 billion toward 25 active projects in Afghanistan serving the transportation, infrastructure, public administration, and agriculture sectors.¹⁸⁹ The World Bank manages the multi-donor Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), among many other projects. Donor countries include the United States, Japan, Britain, Canada, the European Union, the Netherlands, Germany, and 26 others.¹⁹⁰ Funds have gone toward development and reconstruction needs: grants to communities for local government projects, reducing poverty and vulnerability of the displaced and disabled, rehabilitation of power plants, and water supply and sanitation. USAID is the biggest bilateral aid program for Afghanistan, with more than USD 15 billion spent on development assistance since 2002.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Joshua Partlow, "Afghanistan to Need Billions in Aid For Years, World Bank Says," *Washington Post*, 22 November 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/afghanistan-to-need-billions-in-aid-for-years-world-bank-says/2011/11/22/gIQA14zOIN_story.html

¹⁸⁶ Joshua Partlow, "Afghanistan to Need Billions in Aid For Years, World Bank Says," *Washington Post*, 22 November 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/afghanistan-to-need-billions-in-aid-for-years-world-bank-says/2011/11/22/gIQA14zOIN_story.html

¹⁸⁷ World Bank, "Presentation: Transition in Afghanistan: Looking Beyond 2014," *Washington Post*, 2012, 7, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/documents/presentation-transition-in-afghanistan.html>

¹⁸⁸ Asian Development Bank and Afghanistan, "Factsheet," 31 December 2011, <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/pub/2012/AFG.pdf>

¹⁸⁹ World Bank, "Afghanistan Country Overview 2012," April 2012, 4, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/Afghanistan-Reconstructional-Trust-Fund/ARTF_Financial_Status_April_19_2012.pdf
<http://www.worldbank.org.af/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/AFGHANISTANEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20154015~menuPK:305992~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:305985,00.html>

¹⁹⁰ World Bank, "ARTF: Administrator's Report on Financial Status," 19 April 2012, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/Afghanistan-Reconstructional-Trust-Fund/ARTF_Financial_Status_April_19_2012.pdf

¹⁹¹ USAID, "About USAID/Afghanistan," 21 June 2012, http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/about/about_usaid_afghanistan

Foreign Investment

Private investment in Afghanistan remains limited. Since 2006, high-profile attacks by the Taliban on hotels and other public locations in Afghanistan's cities have had a chilling effect on foreign investment. The security concerns created by this violence have effectively eliminated most interest by foreign companies in carrying out large-scale industrial projects.¹⁹² One notable exception is the mining sector, with companies from India and China bidding to get valuable contracts to extract Afghanistan's substantial mineral resources.¹⁹³



© Munir Squires
Signs in rural Afghanistan

Even without the security concerns, Afghanistan is daunting to many foreign investors. A World Bank 2012 survey on the “ease of doing business” ranked Afghanistan 160th out of 183 countries, and rated it the worst in terms of protecting investors.¹⁹⁴ Pervasive corruption is frequently pointed to as one of the biggest obstacles (besides security concerns) to attracting foreign investment in Afghanistan.¹⁹⁵

Still, there have been some success stories. One key area for foreign investment has been telecommunications. Spearheaded by the multinational Roshan and by Afghan Wireless, a U.S.–Afghan joint venture, telecommunications represents one of the largest sources of direct foreign investment in Afghanistan. Because the country had severely limited domestic landlines and no mobile network, telecommunications quickly became a hot market for investors beginning in 2002. Until the final years of Taliban rule, Afghans had to travel to Pakistan for international calls.¹⁹⁶ As of late 2011, 86% of the Afghanistan population has coverage by either landlines or mobile phone service.¹⁹⁷

Banking

Informal Sector

Most of the Afghan financial system is still in the hands of *hawala* networks. *Hawala* (“transfer”) is an ancient, informal system of money transfer that existed in South Asia long before Western banking provided an alternative.¹⁹⁸ Transactions involve *hawala* brokers

¹⁹² Ghanzada, “Foreign Investments Affected by Unstable Security Situation,” Khaama Press, 21 August 2011, <http://www.khaama.com/foreign-investments-affected-by-unstable-security-situation>

¹⁹³ Sanjeev Miglani, “Indian Firms Eye Huge Mining Investment in Afghanistan,” Reuters, 14 September 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/14/afghanistan-india-idUSL3E7KB02A20110914>

¹⁹⁴ International Finance Corporation/World Bank, “Ease of Doing Business in Afghanistan,” 2012, <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/afghanistan/>

¹⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, “2012 Investment Climate Statement—Afghanistan,” June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191093.htm>

¹⁹⁶ BBC News, “Afghanistan Joins Mobile Age,” 19 February 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1827993.stm>

¹⁹⁷ Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, “MCIT’s Major Achievements (2011 & 2012),” 2012, <http://mcit.gov.af/en/page/5619>

¹⁹⁸ Other translations of this form of money transfer are “exchange,” “trust” [Hindi], or “reference.” The Arabic root is “change” or “transform.” The system is sometimes referred to as *hundi*. See Patrick M. Jost and Jarjit Singh

(*hawaladar*) accepting a client's money and then contacting a counterpart in the area where the client wants the money delivered. The counterpart pays out the sum (minus a small percentage) to the designated recipient. This arrangement is based on mutual trust: brokers and clients are often members of the same family, village, clan, or ethnic group. In short, *hawala* relies on a high degree of social capital among those who use it. It is less expensive than formal bank transfers, which deduct higher transaction fees, and it leaves little or no paper trail.¹⁹⁹ Because of the possibilities for misuse, by either terrorist groups or those looking to avoid taxes or move illicitly earned money, many governments deem it illegal.²⁰⁰ Though *hawala* is legal in Afghanistan, at least one large *hawala* network—the New Ansari Money Exchange—has been closed down on graft charges, including money-laundering operations for the Taliban.²⁰¹ The U.S. Department of Treasury placed financial sanctions on New Ansari that prohibit anyone in the United States from conducting business with the firm.²⁰²



© Olaf Kellerhoff
Kabul National Bank

Formal Sector

Afghanistan's formal banking system has made considerable advances since 2002, although there have been some bumps in the road. The Central Banking and Commercial Banking laws passed in September 2003 cleared the way for licensing new commercial banks by Afghanistan's Central Bank (DAB, Da Afghanistan Bank). To date, 17 banks have been chartered, offering a variety of specialty services including microfinancial lending and *shari'a*-Islamic banking (in compliance with *shari'a* law, lending products that do not involve interest payments).²⁰³ Five of these banks are branches of foreign banks, while two are state-owned.²⁰⁴ As of August 2011, total deposits were USD 3.22 billion and total assets at USD 4.52 billion.²⁰⁵

Sandhu, "The Hawala Alternative Remittance System and Its Role in Money Laundering," Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, n.d., 15, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/terrorist-illicit-finance/Documents/FinCEN-Hawala-rpt.pdf>

¹⁹⁹ Patrick M. Jost and Jarjit Singh Sandhu, "The Hawala Alternative Remittance System and Its Role in Money Laundering," Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, n.d., 15, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/terrorist-illicit-finance/Documents/FinCEN-Hawala-rpt.pdf>

²⁰⁰ Joshua Kleymeyer, "Hawala: An Alternative Banking System and Its Connection to Blood Diamonds, Terrorism, and Child Soldiers," TED Case Studies, July 2003, <http://www.american.edu/TED/hawala.htm>

²⁰¹ *Times of India*, "Afghan Hawala Ring Tied to Karzai Kin," 13 August 2010, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-08-13/south-asia/28294507_1_sensitive-investigative-unit-anti-corruption-major-crimes-task-force

²⁰² Joe Palazzolo, "Treasury Sanctions Afghan's Largest Hawala," *Wall Street Journal*, 18 February 2011, <http://blogs.wsj.com/corruption-currents/2011/02/18/treasury-sanctions-afghans-largest-hawala/>

²⁰³ Da Afghanistan Bank, "Licensed Financial Institutions," 2012, <http://www.centralbank.gov.af/licensed-financial-institutions.php>

²⁰⁴ Da Afghanistan Bank, "Summary Analysis of Condition and Performance of the Banking System as of Assad 1390—August 2011," August 2011, 2–9,

<http://www.centralbank.gov.af/pdf/MonthlyBankingSector%20ReportEngAug.2011.pdf>

²⁰⁵ Madalina Iacob, "Banking on Afghanistan," *Forbes*, 18 April 2009,

<http://www.forbes.com/2009/04/17/afghanistan-banking-business-wall-street-afghanistan.html>

The Afghanistan banking industry was shaken in the second half of 2010 by reports of large losses and financial irregularities by leading shareholders and bank officers at Kabul Bank, the nation's largest bank. Ultimately, the losses were revealed to be a staggering USD 900 billion. The DAB was forced to step in and take control of the bank, dividing it into a "bad bank" holding the bad debt and a "good bank" that held the viable assets.^{206, 207} In June 2012, an Afghanistan special tribunal returned 21 indictments in the Kabul Bank case, including the former chief executive officer and chairman of the board.²⁰⁸

Energy

Electricity

During the years of war, roughly 30% of Afghanistan's power infrastructure was destroyed.²⁰⁹ Improvements to the power system have been made since 2001, but power generation, transmission, and distribution remain critical problems. In 2012, the United Nations estimated that only 30% of Afghans had access to electricity of any sort, although the situation was much better in Kabul and some of the major cities of the north.²¹⁰



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Gasoline vendor in rural Afghanistan

From 2006 to 2011, Afghanistan's electricity supply increased nearly 250%, even though internal production (primarily hydroelectric power and a steadily decreasing amount of power generated by plants run on fossil fuels) stayed relatively flat.²¹¹ The increase comes from a rapidly growing supply of power imported from Afghanistan's neighboring countries to the north and west (Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan). By 2011 these four countries were providing over 72% of Afghanistan's power supply.²¹² Though an external supply of electricity is now in place, local power networks in many areas have yet to be upgraded so that they can handle the needed load. As a result, a large city such as Mazar-e Sharif, close to the Uzbekistan border, was receiving only a few hours of electricity per day in 2011.²¹³

²⁰⁶ Alissa J. Rubin and James Risen, "Losses at Afghan Bank Could Be \$900 Million," *New York Times*, 30 January 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/31/world/asia/31kabul.html?pagewanted=all>

²⁰⁷ Graham Bowley, "Afghanistan Widens Effort to Recoup Bank's Assets," *New York Times*, 3 January 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/04/world/asia/afghanistan-steps-up-efforts-to-recover-kabul-banks-losses.html?ref=kabulbank>

²⁰⁸ Alissa J. Rubin, "Bank Case Gets Tribunal at Behest of Karzai," *New York Times*, 3 June 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/04/world/asia/bank-case-gets-special-tribunal-at-behest-of-karzai.html>

²⁰⁹ Vladislav Vucetic and Venkataraman Krishnaswamy, "Development of Electricity Trade in Central Asia—South Asia Region," World Bank, n.d., <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSOUTHASIA/556101-1100091707765/21358230/AfghanistanElectricityTradePaperforDelhiRECC%28111006%29.pdf>

²¹⁰ United Nations, "Afghanistan Country Overview 2012," 2012, <http://www.worldbank.org.af/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/AFGHANISTANEXTN/0..contentMDK:20154015~menuPK:305992~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:305985.00.html>

²¹¹ USAID, Afghan Energy Information Center, "Annual Power Production (MWH) from 2006 to 2011," 2012, http://www.afghaneic.org/database/view_annual_all.php

²¹² USAID, Afghan Energy Information Center, "Annual Production Report (MWH) 2011," 2012, <http://www.afghaneic.org/Data/Annual%20Production%20Reports/Annual%20Production%20Report%202011.pdf>

²¹³ Abdul Latif Sahak, "Powers of Darkness in North Afghanistan," Institute for War & Peace Reporting, 5 July 2011, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/powers-darkness-north-afghanistan>

The U.S.-funded, 100-MW Tarakhil diesel power plant was opened in August 2009, capable eventually of providing power to about 600,000 residents in Kabul and the surrounding region.²¹⁴ But it has mostly sat idle in the intervening years and used primarily as a back-up system, because of the high cost of trucking imported diesel fuel through a war zone.²¹⁵ Two rehabilitated power turbines at the Kajaki Dam in Helmand Province are the largest source of electricity for Afghanistan's southern regions.²¹⁶

Oil and Gas

According to the Afghanistan Ministry of Mines and the U.S. Geological Survey, Afghanistan's northern basins near the borders of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan could contain as much as 1.6 billion barrels of crude oil, 16 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 562 million barrels of natural gas liquids.^{217, 218} As of early 2012, one oil field and three gas fields in this region were under production. Several other blocks are under exploration or in the process of being bid out for exploration.²¹⁹ All the operating gas fields are located near Sheberghan, the Jowzjan provincial capital.

Most of Afghanistan's crude oil is believed to lie in the Afghan-Tajik basin, while the natural gas reserves primarily lie in the Amu Darya basin to the west of the Afghan-Tajik basin. In December 2011 a consortium of an Afghan company, Watan Oil and Gas, and the Chinese National Petroleum Company successfully bid on a USD 3 billion, 25-year contract to explore and develop the Amu Darya oil fields in Sar-e Pul and Faryab provinces. The Watan participation in the deal drew criticism from anti-corruption groups because it is part of a corporate group controlled by two of Hamid Karzai's cousins.²²⁰

Coal

Coal reserves are substantial (by some estimates 400 million tons) and well distributed throughout Afghanistan, though quality varies with location. Research is dangerous but also difficult because data (if any) are outdated and some deposits are buried quite deep.²²¹ Most of

²¹⁴ USAID, "Afghanistan: Tarakhil Power Plant," 26 June 2012,

http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/USAID/Activity/225/Tarakhil_Power_Plant

²¹⁵ Glenn Zorpette, "Struggling for Power in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 5 July 2011,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/06/opinion/06zorpette.html?pagewanted=all>

²¹⁶ USAID, Afghan Energy Information Center, "Annual Production Report (MWH) 2011," 2012,

<http://www.afghaneic.org/Data/Annual%20Production%20Reports/Annual%20Production%20Report%202011.pdf>

²¹⁷ Stuart Elliott, "At the Wellhead: The Outlook for Afghanistan's Oil and Gas Potential," Platt's Oilgram News, 25 April 2011, http://www.platts.com/weblog/oilblog/2011/04/25/at_the_wellhead.html

²¹⁸ U.S. Geological Survey, "USGS Assessment Significantly Increases Afghanistan Petroleum Resource Base," 14 March 2006, http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=1473#.T-slEPkn_Ec

²¹⁹ Ministry of Mines, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "Oil & Gas Development in Afghanistan: Industry Background Presentation," 21 February 2012,

<http://www.internationalpavilion.com/NAPE%202012%20Presentations/F%203.00-3.12%20Tuesday%20Afghanistan.pdf>

²²⁰ Ben Farmer and Dean Nelson, "Hamid Karzai Government Under Fire for Oil Deal with Company Run by Cousin," *Telegraph* (UK), 20 June 2012,

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/9344450/Hamid-Karzai-government-under-fire-for-oil-deal-with-company-run-by-cousin.html>

²²¹ Rex Dalton, "Geology: Mine Games," *Nature* 449 (October 2007): 968–971,

<http://www.nature.com/news/2007/071022/full/449968a.html>

the explored coal areas lie in the north-central region referred to as the “North Coal District.”²²² In the past, coal supplied primary fuel for small industrial concerns, as well as for heating and cooking.²²³ Today coal mines provide fuel for home heating and cooking, but the mines are in disrepair and dangerous.²²⁴ Coal mining is largely unregulated in Afghanistan, and there are illegal primitive operations in different provinces using child laborers in unsafe conditions.²²⁵

Energy Transit Corridor

Because of its location between the oil and natural gas reserves of the Caspian Basin and the large population centers of South Asia, Afghanistan has long been the focus of discussion as a potential pipeline route. Such a pipeline would stretch from resource-rich Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan. During the Taliban years, discussions broke down, but in April 2008, India joined the project and planning was revived in March 2009.²²⁶ Called TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) for the countries it would pass through, the project would go through the volatile Kandahar region in Afghanistan, stretch 1,680 km (1,043 mi), and cost USD 7.6 billion. In May 2012, the four countries signed an agreement in which Turkmenistan agreed to sell the pipeline’s daily capacity (90 million cubic meters of gas) to the three downstream partner nations.²²⁷ Under the agreement, Afghanistan would receive 14 million cubic meters (494 million cubic feet) a day, with Pakistan and India splitting the remainder.²²⁸ Details concerning the financing and construction of the TAPI pipeline still remain to be negotiated, and some skeptics question the pipeline’s feasibility because of the Taliban insurgency in the southern Afghanistan provinces along its route.²²⁹ Nevertheless, the TAPI project is strongly endorsed by the United States and the Asian Development Bank. The latter has been the major sponsor of the pipeline project in recent years.

Mineral Resources

Although there was some mineral production during the 1970s and 1980s, Afghanistan’s abundant mineral wealth is virtually unexploited. Afghanistan’s numerous types of mineral deposits include copper, chromium, iron ore, gold, talc, sulfur, nickel, lead, zinc, lithium, and gemstones such as rubies and lapis lazuli.²³⁰ Afghanistan also has significant amounts of

²²² Trent M. Hare et al., “Large-Scale Digital Geologic Map Databases and Reports of the North Coal District in Afghanistan,” U.S. Geological Survey, 2008, <http://pubs.usgs.gov/ds/317/>

²²³ U.S. Geological Survey/USAID, “Assessing the Coal Resources of Afghanistan,” June 2005, <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2005/3073/2005-3073.pdf>

²²⁴ Quentin Sommerville, “Inside a Crumbling Afghan Coal Mine,” BBC News, 25 June 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10413183>

²²⁵ IRIN News, “Afghanistan: Risking One’s Health for a Pittance,” 26 May 2009, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=84551>

²²⁶ *Forbes*, “India Formally Joins Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan Gas Pipeline Project,” 25 April 2008, <http://www.forbes.com/feeds/afx/2008/04/25/afx4933107.html>

²²⁷ EurasiaNet.org, “Turkmenistan: TAPI Pipeline Discussion Ends on Upbeat Note,” 26 March 2009, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/news/articles/eav032609c.shtml>

²²⁸ *Indian Express*, “TAPI Pipeline: Turkmenistan Signs Gas Sale Pact With India, Pak,” 23 May 2012, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/tapi-pipeline-turkmenistan-signs-gas-sale-pact-with-india-pak/952986/>

²²⁹ Agence France Presse, “TAPI Pipeline: Turkmenistan Signs First Contracts with India, Pakistan,” *Express Tribune* (Pakistan), 23 May 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/382952/tapi-pipeline-turkmenistan-signs-first-contracts-with-india-pakistan/>

²³⁰ Chin S. Kuo, “Afghanistan,” in *2010 Minerals Yearbook*, U.S. Geological Survey, August 2011, <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2010/myb3-2010-af.pdf>

construction minerals, including marble, gravel, sand, and limestone. With abundant deposits and little institutional building capacity, the industry has declined but has been replaced by the illegal production and smuggling of materials. Legal mining activity is limited, although production data are difficult to obtain. Insecurity, poor infrastructure, and lack of skilled labor impede development and mining.²³¹



© Steve Blyskal
Lapis lazuli from Afghanistan

Recent years have seen the beginnings of several large-scale mining projects in Afghanistan. In November 2007, in the largest investment in Afghan history, a joint-venture group led by China's Metallurgical Group Corporation signed a contract for USD 3 billion to extract copper from the Aynak deposit, which is said to contain about 11.3 million metric tons of copper. The mine is scheduled to begin production in 2014, and annual royalties to the Afghan government are expected to total more than USD 300 million.²³² Two gold mines are under development in the northern part of the country, and one is financed by a local company, Afghan Krystal Natural Resources. In November 2011, a consortium of Indian mining companies won the bid to develop Afghanistan's Hajigak iron ore deposit, one of the world's largest.²³³

Transportation

Roads

For Afghanistan to develop its natural resources and boost trade with its neighbors, it needs the ability to transport goods. Lack of transportation infrastructure is a major obstacle to increased commerce in this landlocked country and has been a major element of the reconstruction effort. Roads throughout the country are generally in poor shape. Pack animals—camels, donkeys, and horses—are still the primary means of transport in many parts of the country.



© Rob Bakker
Afghan family on a bicycle

A road and tunnel under the Salang Pass, built in 1964 by the Russians, provides a short, all-weather route between north and south Afghanistan. There are 42,150 km (26,190 mi) of roadways in Afghanistan, of which only 12,350 km (7,673 mi) are paved.²³⁴ Work to improve roadways as well as border crossings has progressed, albeit with delays caused by militant attacks. Construction of the 1,925 km (1,196 mi) "Ring Road," a two-lane loop highway that connects most of the major cities of northern and southern Afghanistan,

²³¹ Chin S. Kuo, "Afghanistan," in *2010 Minerals Yearbook*, U.S. Geological Survey, August 2011, <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2010/myb3-2010-af.pdf>

²³² Chin S. Kuo, "Afghanistan," in *2010 Minerals Yearbook*, U.S. Geological Survey, August 2011, <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2010/myb3-2010-af.pdf>

²³³ Andrew Topf, "Iron Ore, Check; Indian Companies Now Looking to Bid on Afghan Copper, Gold Deposits," *Mining.com*, 9 February 2012, <http://www.mining.com/2012/02/09/iron-ore-check-indian-companies-now-looking-to-bid-on-afghan-copper-gold-deposits/>

²³⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Afghanistan: Transportation," in *The World Factbook*, 20 June 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

has been a primary focus of rehabilitation efforts. All but a segment in the northwestern part of the country is now paved, although IED attacks and other security concerns are a persistent problem on several parts of the completed segments of the highway.^{235, 236}

River and Rail Transportation

Other forms of overland travel in Afghanistan are limited. Barges travel along the Amu Darya River, which forms part of Afghanistan's border with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Hairatan and Shir Khan Bandar are the ports on the Afghanistan side.²³⁷ Until recently, Afghanistan had only a few kilometers of railway built in the Soviet era that was in a state of disrepair. In August 2011, the first major section of railway opened that connects the Hairatan border crossing with Uzbekistan to the northern Afghanistan city of Mazar e-Sharif. The 75-km line was built by UTY, the Uzbekistan national railway, with funding assistance from the Asian Development Bank.²³⁸ Afghanistan's only other currently operating rail section is a short spur line that crosses the Turkmenistan border at Towraghondi.²³⁹ An Iran-Afghanistan standard gauge line to connect Iran with Herat is under construction, but progress has been slow.²⁴⁰

Airports

There are 52 airports in Afghanistan, of which 23 have paved runways. Only four airports have paved runways over 3,047 m (1.89 mi).²⁴¹ Kabul International Airport is the port of entry for the majority of travelers to Afghanistan. Its international terminal, funded in major part by Japan, was completed in November 2008. Kandahar International Airport is the only other Afghan airport to receive international commercial flights. Domestic and foreign airlines operate in Afghanistan. The domestic commercial carriers as of 2012 are Kam Air, Safi Airways, and Ariana Afghan Airlines, the Afghan national carrier.²⁴²

Air travel in Afghanistan remains unreliable at best. Delays and re-routing are not uncommon. The European Union has banned all Afghan airlines from flying into their airports because of

²³⁵ Peter Wonacott, "Afghan Road Project Shows Bump in Drive for Stability," *Wall Street Journal*, 17 August 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125046546672735403.html>

²³⁶ Evan W. Medina, University of Pennsylvania, "Roads of War: Paved Highways and the Rise of IED Attacks in Afghanistan," 8 April 2010, <http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1165&context=curej&sei-redir=1&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Furl%3Fsa%3Dt%26rct%3Dj%26q%3Dsecurity%2520ring%2520road%2520afghanistan%25202011%26source%3Dweb%26cd%3D12%26ved%3D0CFAQFjABOAO%26url%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Frepository.upenn.edu%252Fcgi%252Fviewcontent.cgi%253Farticle%253D1165%2526context%253Dcurej%26ei%3D3qLrT6T1Ncf1rAH8mYTbBQ%26usq%3DAFQjCNEFbWP2H9vzb4Ic2IFb6nPm17RmA#search=%22security%20ring%20road%20afghanistan%202011%22>

²³⁷ Bartłomiej Kaminski and Saumya Mitra, "Ch. 3: Border Trade at the 'Periphery': Afghanistan's Trade with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan," in *Borderless Bazaars and Regional Integration in Central Asia: Emerging Patterns of Trade and Cross-Border Cooperation* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2012), 41–49.

²³⁸ Railway Gazette International, "First Major Afghan Railway Opens," 25 August 2011, <http://www.railwaygazette.com/nc/news/single-view/view/first-major-afghan-railway-opens.html>

²³⁹ Andrew Grantham, "Railways of Afghanistan: Torghundi and the Railway from Turkmenistan," 2012, <http://www.andrewgrantham.co.uk/afghanistan/railways/torghundi-and-the-railway-from-turkmenistan/#fn-4217-5>

²⁴⁰ Andrew Grantham, "Railways of Afghanistan: Herat Railway Still some Way off," 19 April 2010, <http://www.andrewgrantham.co.uk/afghanistan/2516/herat-railway-still-some-way-off/>

²⁴¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Afghanistan: Transportation," in *The World Factbook*, 20 June 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

²⁴² Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "Air Operators," n.d., <http://www.motca.gov.af/index.php?id=137>

“safety deficiencies,” although these airlines can fly into Europe if they use chartered aircraft that are registered in the EU.²⁴³ U.S. government personnel are not allowed to travel on most Afghan airlines for similar reasons of safety.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Agence France Presse, “All Afghan Airlines Banned From Flying in Europe,” 23 November 2010, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gHT5uA1FRhX5j8Ba5jIBtbWlNy-g?docId=CNG.96ecfea487008ffc34493b0ae2fc16d0.2c1>

²⁴⁴ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Afghanistan: Country Specific Information,” 7 February 2012, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1056.html#traffic_safety

Chapter 3 Assessment

1. Shuttle trade, in which individuals carry goods back and forth across the border, is a large, informal part of Afghanistan's trade.

TRUE

Informal trade conducted by people traveling back and forth from Afghanistan to Iran or to Pakistan—a practice known as *shuttle trade*—is still a large part of the Afghan economy. The International Monetary Fund estimates that shuttle trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2009–10 was as much as USD 1.8 billion.

2. *Hawala*, an ancient, informal system of money transfer, is still used by Afghans.

TRUE

Most of the Afghan financial system is still in the hands of *hawala* networks. *Hawala* (“transfer”) is an ancient, informal system of money transfer that existed in South Asia long before Western banking provided an alternative.

3. All banks in Afghanistan comply with Islamic *shari'a* law.

FALSE

The Central Banking and Commercial Banking laws passed in September 2003 cleared the way for licensing new commercial banks by Afghanistan's Central Bank (DAB, Da Afghanistan Bank). To date, 17 banks have been chartered, and 7 offer *shari'a*-Islamic banking.

4. Afghanistan's gross domestic product has been averaging double-digit growth since 2002.

TRUE

Afghanistan has experienced a strong level of economic growth since 2003, averaging over 10% growth in GDP per year. In 2009–2010, GDP increased by over 20%.

5. Pack animals are still the primary means of transport in many parts of Afghanistan.

TRUE

Roads throughout the country are generally in poor shape. Pack animals—camels, donkeys, and horses—are still the primary means of transport in many parts of the country.

CHAPTER 4: SOCIETY

Introduction

Afghanistan lost many of its cultural artifacts in nearly three decades of war and conflict. After the Soviets withdrew in 1989, the *mujahideen* (Afghan rebel fighters) plundered museums, galleries, and theaters. At least 70% of the Kabul Museum’s holdings—a collection spanning 50,000 years—was sold on the international market.²⁴⁵ During the Taliban regime, countless treasures including statues, paintings, and other priceless works of art were systematically destroyed. The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues was one of the most dramatic and devastating losses during this time: not only to the Afghan people, but to the world heritage of arts and culture.²⁴⁶ At the height of the destruction, Afghans and foreigners rescued and hid as much as they could. Since then, many artifacts have been returned to the country, or are being safeguarded by museums and organizations outside of Afghanistan.²⁴⁷

Many Afghan traditions were banned during the Taliban reign but have endured the test of time and flourish today. Afghan music, dance, kite fighting, and *buzkashi* tournaments are again celebrated events, reinforcing traditions from the many tribes and languages throughout the country.

Ethnic Groups and Languages

Afghanistan is an ethnically diverse nation. Even the term “Afghan” can lead to some ethnic confusion, because it is still used to refer to the Pashtun ethnic group, particularly within Afghanistan. Outside Afghanistan, “Afghan” is more often used to refer to any citizen of Afghanistan.^{248, 249} Ethnic divisions in Afghanistan are reflected in different tribal and cultural traditions as well as the numerous languages.

Pashtuns

Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, representing 40–42% of the population by most estimates. (Note that no census has ever been carried out in Afghanistan, so any population statistics are



© Abdurahman Warsame
Elderly man in Kabul

²⁴⁵ John F. Burns, “Kabul’s Museum: The Past Ruined by the Present,” *New York Times*, 30 November 1996, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/11/30/world/kabul-s-museum-the-past-ruined-by-the-present.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

²⁴⁶ American Institute of Indian Studies, Center for Art and Archaeology, University of Chicago, “Photo Archive: Bamiyan,” 29 September 2009, <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/images/aiis/bamiyan/>

²⁴⁷ Visiting Arts Cultural Profiles Project, “Afghanistan,” 4 April 2011, <http://www.visitingarts.org.uk/content/afghanistan-cultural-profile-re-launch>

²⁴⁸ Sayed Askar Mousavi, “Preface,” in *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), xv.

²⁴⁹ Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, “Ch. 1: Land and People,” in *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2007), 13.

“validated more through repetition than by any data.”)^{250, 251} The Pashtun tribal code, known as *Pashtunwali*, values honor above all and has played a significant role in the formation of modern Afghanistan.²⁵² The Pashtun language, Pashto, is one of Afghanistan’s two official languages (the other is Afghani Persian, or Dari).²⁵³

The Pashtuns traditionally trace their lineage from a single ancestor through the sons. A Pashtun group contains those people descended from a common ancestor four generations ago: the same great-great-great grandparents. The largest of these groups are the Durrani and the Ghilzais. Members of the Durrani branch ruled Afghanistan from Ahmad Shah Durrani’s rule in 1747 until the communist coup in 1978. Conversely, Afghan political leaders during the communist and Taliban eras were generally Ghilzai Pashtuns. Current Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai is from the same clan of the Durrani as Ahmad Shah Durrani.²⁵⁴

Pashtuns are the dominant ethnic group in a wide crescent from Herat Province in the west to Konar Province in the east, a region encompassing much of western, southern, and eastern Afghanistan.²⁵⁵ Ethnic Pashtuns form a large percentage of the population on the Pakistani side of Afghanistan’s eastern border, and this division of the Pashtun population between the two states has long been a point of contention between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Tajiks

After Pashtuns, Tajiks form the second-largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. The Tajik group comprises many tribal groups, often with distinct dialects, and accounts for 25–30% of Afghanistan’s population.^{256, 257} Tajiks speak regional dialects of Dari, and traditionally have been the dominant group in the northeast mountain areas (in the region closest to Tajikistan) and the large cities of Kabul, Mazar e-Sharif, and Herat.²⁵⁸ In the cities, Tajiks have formed a large portion of the merchant class, government bureaucrats, and the better educated Muslim clergy.²⁵⁹ Like Pashtuns, most Tajiks are Sunni Muslim.

²⁵⁰ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 1: People and Places,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 23.

²⁵¹ Reuters, “Afghan Census Postponed for Two Years: U.N.,” 8 June 2008,

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/06/08/us-afghan-census-idUSISL267420080608>

²⁵² Palwasha Kakar, “Tribal Law of Pashtunwali and Women’s Legislative Authority,” Islamic Legal Studies Program at Harvard Law School, n.d., <http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/ilsp/research/kakar.pdf>

²⁵³ Central Intelligence Agency, “Afghanistan: People and Society,” in *The World Factbook*, 20 June 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

²⁵⁴ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 5: In the Twenty-First Century,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 284.

²⁵⁵ Arturo G. Munoz, “Pashtun Tribalism and Ethnic Nationalism,” Tribal Analysis Center, 24–26 March 2010, <http://www.tribalanalysiscenter.com/PDF-TAC/Pashtun%20Tribalism%20and%20Ethnic%20Nationalism.pdf>

²⁵⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, “Afghanistan: People and Society,” in *The World Factbook*, 20 June 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

²⁵⁷ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 1: People and Places,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 26.

²⁵⁸ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 1: People and Places,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 26.

²⁵⁹ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 1: People and Places,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 26.

Hazaras

Hazarajat, the mountainous and relatively isolated central region of Afghanistan, has been the traditional heartland of the Hazara population, which represents about 15% of the population. The Hazaras speak Hazaragi, a dialect of Dari that has over 1,000 Turkic and Mongol loanwords.²⁶⁰ Unlike most other Afghan ethnic groups, the Hazaras are Shi'a Muslims. They have faced more prejudice and discrimination than other groups because of their Shi'a beliefs and because many Hazara bear resemblances to the Mongols—presumably inherited from Genghis Khan's armies or the Mongol farmers who followed.^{261, 262} The Hazaras suffered severely during the late 1990s and early 2000s under the Taliban, when whole Hazara villages were razed and some massacred. The famed stone Buddhas of Bamiyan, world historical treasures in the heart of Hazarajat, were destroyed in 2001 by the Taliban because they considered the statues a symbol of infidels within a region of Islamic “heretics.”²⁶³

Uzbeks and Turkmen

North of Hazarajat, in the irrigated valleys and grass-covered steppes of northern Afghanistan that lie south of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, live the majority of Afghanistan's Uzbek and Turkmen populations. Combined, these two groups make up about 10% of Afghanistan's population. Naturally, the Afghan Uzbeks and Turkmen are southern extensions of larger ethnic populations in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to the north. The Russian revolution and subsequent Stalinist era caused many forebears of the present Uzbeks and Turkmen to flee to Afghanistan. Both groups are predominantly Sunni Muslim and speak Turkic languages.

Other Ethnic Groups

The Aimaqs are a tribal group that has lived in the region between Hazarajat to the east and Herat to the west. Representing about 4% of the Afghan population, the Sunni Muslim Aimaqs speak a Dari dialect and, unlike other rural groups in Afghanistan, allow women to have a much greater say in group matters and marital decisions.²⁶⁴

In desert-like southern Afghanistan, the Baluchis carve out a pastoral nomadic existence, in some cases augmented through cross-border smuggling.²⁶⁵ Much larger populations of ethnic Baluchis live across the Pakistan border in Balochistan Province and in adjacent areas of southeastern Iran.²⁶⁶ The Baluchi language is related to Pashto and Kurdish.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁰ M. Kerr, “Hazaras,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 311–312.

²⁶¹ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 1: People and Places,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 26.

²⁶² Paul Clammer, “Population: Hazaras,” in *Afghanistan* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 45.

²⁶³ Phil Zabriskie, “Hazaras: Afghanistan's Outsiders,” *National Geographic*, February 2008,

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/02/afghanistan-hazara/phil-zabriskie-text/1>

²⁶⁴ Everyculture.com, *Countries and Their Cultures*, “Aimaq,” 2012, <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Aimaq.html>

²⁶⁵ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 1: People and Places,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 29.

²⁶⁶ D. O. Lodrick, “Baluchi,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 97–102.

²⁶⁷ D. O. Lodrick, “Baluchi,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (Detroit: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 97–102.

Nuristani is a catch-all term describing the tribal residents of the mountain valleys of Nuristan Province in northeastern Afghanistan.²⁶⁸ Along with the Pashai tribes in the mountain valleys to their south, the Nuristani tribes speak related Indo-Aryan languages that are completely different than any in Afghanistan.^{269, 270} The Nuristani tribes practiced a polytheistic religion until the end of the 19th century, when they were forced to convert to Sunni Islam by Afghan Emir Abdur Rahman Khan. (The Pashais converted to Islam at an earlier time.) The fair, European-like features of some Nuristanis (e.g., blond or red hair, blue eyes) have raised several theories about their ancestry and place of origin, but nothing definitive is known.²⁷¹

Religion

Islam

Islam is the second-largest religion in the world, with over 1 billion followers.²⁷² The word “Islam” means “to submit” or “surrender.” Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, is a monotheistic religion and recognizes the validity of the Old and New Testaments. But Muslims believe that the final revelations were made to Muhammad, the last prophet. The Quran, the Muslim’s sacred text, is considered the record of Allah’s (God’s) revelations to Muhammad. Muslims worship Allah directly without the intermediary of clergy, although a mosque has a prayer leader (*imam*). The five pillars of Islam are 1) belief in *Allah* and that Muhammad is his prophet, 2) praying at five set times each day, 3) almsgiving, 4) fasting from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan, and 5) performing the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once. A Muslim is encouraged to lead a healthy life that exemplifies the qualities of kindness, chastity, honesty, mercy, courage, patience, and politeness.



© Steve Evans
Blue Mosque in Mazar-e Sharif

Sunni and Shi’a Islam

Sunni and Shi’a are two major denominations within the Islamic religion. The division occurred upon Muhammad’s death as the community debated over how to select a new leader. Some believed religious leadership should be based on merit. They saw leadership as an earned trust. Another group believed leadership should descend from Muhammad’s lineage. They believed that to live in unity with the truth of Islam, people need the help of divinely chosen individuals, those of the Prophet’s lineage. Ali, the last of the four caliphs who ruled after Muhammad, was the closest relative to the Prophet among them (sometimes referred to as the “four righteous caliphs”). Those who believe that Ali should have been the Prophet’s initial successor are called Shi’a, short for *Shi’a-t Ali*, or “party of Ali.” The Shi’a believe in a line of *imams* descended

²⁶⁸ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 1: People and Places,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 28–29.

²⁶⁹ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 1: People and Places,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 28–29.

²⁷⁰ M. Paul Lewis, ed., “Languages of Afghanistan,” in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th ed. (Dallas: SIL International, 2009), http://www.ethnologue.com/show_map.asp?name=AF&seq=10

²⁷¹ Richard F. Strand, “Peoples and Languages of Nuristan,” 2011, <http://nuristan.info/Nuristani/Nuristanis1.html>

²⁷² Adherents.com, “Major Religions of the World Ranked by Number of Adherents,” 9 August 2007, http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html

from Muhammad, whereas Sunni Muslims have no such hierarchy in their leadership.

Islam in Afghanistan

About 99% of Afghans are Muslim. Sunni Muslims make up 80% and Shi'a Muslims 19% percent; other religious groups are the remaining 1%.²⁷³ Islam arrived in Afghanistan in the seventh century, eventually becoming a strong cultural and social bond between the ethnic groups. After the Soviet-supported People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) communists overthrew President Mohammed Daoud Khan in 1978, the opposition was united by their strong faith. It declared a *jihad* (an armed struggle in defense of Islam) to drive the occupying atheist Soviet forces out of the country. After the Soviet-supported Najibullah government fell in 1992, an Islamic state was declared. But the struggle for power divided the country along ethnic and sectarian lines, and different sides were funded by Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and Saudi Arabia.²⁷⁴



Photo by ISAF Public Affairs
Man praying, Helmand Province

The Taliban's hard-line interpretation of Islam, stemming from the Wahhabism²⁷⁵ of Islamist Osama bin Laden's native country, Saudi Arabia, brought some peace and security to the country in the late 1990s, but the Islamist group quickly became known for supporting and committing acts of terrorism. The term "Islamist," not to be confused with "Islamic," refers to a practitioner of political Islam who seeks to end the secular state and replace it with religious control. It evolved from the term "Islamic fundamentalism," or using Islamic ideas in the political realm by creating a theocratic Islamic state in which *shari'a* or Islamic law is the law of the land. Recent U.S. intelligence reports suggest that religious ideology is not necessarily the primary motivator for the current Afghanistan insurgency. These reports list control over territory, natural resources, and smuggling routes as the main reasons for the resistance, and they note that some of the current insurgent groups actually opposed the Taliban when it ruled Afghanistan during the late 1990s and early 2000s.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, *2010 International Religious Freedom Report*, "Afghanistan," 13 September 2011, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/171751.pdf>

²⁷⁴ Institute for the Study of War, "Iran and Afghanistan," 2007, <http://www.understandingwar.org/themenode/iran-and-afghanistan>

²⁷⁵ Wahhabism is a movement in Islam that stresses that the Qu'ran and Hadith (collections describing the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) are the sole authoritative texts of Islam. Wahhabists interpret the Qu'ran literally and call for the establishment of a strictly Muslim state that is governed by a rigid interpretation of Islamic law.

²⁷⁶ Bryan Bender, "Taliban Not Main Afghan Enemy," *Boston Globe*, 9 October 2009, http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2009/10/09/most_insurgents_in_afghanistan_not_religiously_motivated_military_reports_say/

Gender Issues

Gender Equity and Political Representation

Gender equity is a controversial issue in Afghanistan, and many politicians avoid taking a firm position on women's issues for fear of backlash from conservative groups.²⁷⁷ Though some progress has been made in recent years at the policy level, the emphasis has been on urban and educated women, who were most affected by the Taliban's practices. For uneducated and rural Afghan women, little has changed. In 2011, for example, Afghanistan ranked 172 out of 187 countries in the United Nations Development Programme's Gender Inequality Index, a measure both of gender gaps in areas such as employment and education and of the extent of access to reproductive health services.²⁷⁸

The number of Afghan women in some roles of governmental leadership is growing. By constitutional requirement, 68 seats (27%) of the Afghan National Assembly are set aside for women, although 69 women currently serve because the top two vote-getters in Nimroz Province in the 2010 parliamentary elections were women candidates. (Only one of Nimroz's two parliamentary seats had been reserved for women.)²⁷⁹ There are currently three women in President Karzai's 30-member cabinet: Minister of Women's Affairs Dr. Husn Banu Ghazanfar, Minister of Public Health Suraya Dalil, and Minister of Work, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and the Disabled Amena Afzali.²⁸⁰ In 2005, Karzai appointed the former Minister of Women's Affairs, Habiba Sorabi, to the position of governor of Bamiyan Province. She remains the only woman provincial governor in Afghanistan.²⁸¹



© Munir Squires
Children in Kunduz

Purdah

Fathers, husbands, village elders, and local *jirgas* have absolute authority over women's lives in Afghanistan. And while Afghan men increasingly use the language of democracy when talking with outsiders, this generally does not apply to women. For centuries, the conduct of women (and men) has been strictly governed by the traditional tribal and group codes of behavior, as much as by Islamic law. In particular, *purdah* (Urdu for "veil") establishes the physical boundaries between men and women. In Afghanistan, female seclusion is considered necessary for the protection of family



© United Nations Photo
Afghan women in literacy class

²⁷⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Afghanistan: Women Under Attack for Asserting Rights," 4 October 2004, <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2004/10/04/afghan9436.htm>

²⁷⁸ United Nations Development Programme, "Table 4: Gender Inequality Index and Related Indicators," 2011, http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Table4.pdf

²⁷⁹ National Democratic Institute, "Afghan Women Take Seats in Parliament, Prepare for Road Ahead," 9 February 2011, http://www.ndi.org/afghan_women_seated_in_parliament

²⁸⁰ Embassy of Afghanistan, Washington, DC, "Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: The Cabinet," 2012, <http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/page/ministers-of-the-islamic-republic-of-afghanistan>

²⁸¹ Aunohita Mojumdar, "Afghanistan's First and Only Woman Governor," Panos, 8 March 2012, <http://panos.org.uk/features/afghanistans-first-and-only-woman-governor/>

honor. The most visible display of *purdah* is the *chadri* (the Afghani *burqa*), which nearly all women in rural areas still don when going out in public.²⁸² For the 1 million Afghan widows (average age 35) and for the 2% of women who are heads of households, *purdah* makes it particularly hard to provide for themselves and their families.²⁸³

At its most extreme, *purdah* bars women from education, healthcare, and more. Roughly 87% of Afghan women above the age of 15 are illiterate.²⁸⁴ About two-thirds of tuberculosis cases in the country occur in women, who spend much of their lives sequestered in their homes with no access to healthcare.²⁸⁵ Moreover, violence is used to enforce female adherence to *purdah* norms.²⁸⁶ Honor killings, arranged marriages, and spousal abuse are not uncommon.^{287, 288} Between 70% and 80% of Afghan women are forced into marriage, and over half of married girls were married before the legal age of 16.²⁸⁹ Since the fall of the Taliban, hundreds of women have resorted to self-immolation, or burning themselves to death, largely out of despair over their situation.²⁹⁰

Arts

Literature

Poetry is a major part of Afghan culture. One of the most famous Afghan poets is Jalal al-Din Rumi of Balkh, also known by the honorific Mawlana. Rumi was born in 1207 and died in 1273 at the age of 66. He combined poetry, music, and dance into a sophisticated spiritual art form. Rumi emerged from the Sufi tradition, an Islamic strain that emphasizes reaching a deeply personal relationship with Allah. It is sometimes referred to in shorthand descriptions as “Islamic mysticism.” His most famous work is the *Masnavi-yi Ma’navi*, a collection of tens of thousands of couplets.²⁹¹ Rumi’s religious dances were the roots of the dancing (or “whirling”) dervishes. The tradition of these dancing dervishes has survived and is practiced by followers of Rumi today. The dervish



© Eliza Tasbihi
Drawing of Rumi

²⁸² Alissa J. Rubin, “My First Afghan Burqa,” *New York Times*, 5 May 2011,

<http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/05/my-first-afghan-burqa/>

²⁸³ UNIFEM, “Afghanistan Fact Sheet 2008,” 2008, <http://afghanistan.unifem.org/media/pubs/08/factsheet.html>

²⁸⁴ Najla Ayubi, “Women’s Biggest Problems in Afghanistan,” Asia Foundation, 27 January 2010,

<http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2010/01/27/womens-biggest-problems-in-afghanistan/>

²⁸⁵ Xinhua, “TB Remains Serious Public Health Threat in Afghanistan: Official,” 3 April 2012,

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/health/2012-04/03/c_131505871.htm

²⁸⁶ Andrew North, “Silence over Afghan Women’s Rights,” BBC News, 7 October 2004,

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/3721932.stm

²⁸⁷ Golnaz Esfandiari, “Afghanistan: Interview with UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 26 July 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/07/99775c66-b885-4308-a3dc-16f9051643a9.html>

²⁸⁸ Quil Lawrence and Ahmad Shafi, “Facing Death, Afghan Girl Runs to U.S. Military,” National Public Radio, 1 May 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2012/05/01/151768550/facing-death-afghan-girl-runs-to-u-s-military>

²⁸⁹ IRIN News, “Afghanistan: Women’s Hopes for Equality Fade,” 8 March 2007,

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=70569>

²⁹⁰ Jason Motlagh, “Self-Immolation Tragically Frequent among Afghan Women,” *World Politics Review*, 22 June 2007, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/873/self-immolation-tragically-frequent-among-afghan-women>

²⁹¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Rumi,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/299621/Rumi>

ceremonies, and mystical Islam in general, are opposed by the Ulema Shura (Council of Clerics) in Afghanistan, although in practice they are tolerated as long as they are kept private.²⁹² Lately, this ecstatic dance and the corresponding poetry have become admired in Western cultures.²⁹³

Dari literature can be traced to the ancient Persian poets, of whom Omar Khayyam is the most famous. His quatrains (four-line rhyming verses) created the basis of poetic works in the Dari language for most Afghan poets. The 17th-century warrior-poet Kushal Khan Khattak is regarded as the national poet of modern Afghanistan. His poems, written in Pashto, are full of energy and power. The Pashto language is also famous for the *landay* form of poetry, a 2-line verse with 9 and 13 syllables, respectively, using internal rhymes.²⁹⁴ Transmitted orally across the generations, the anonymous *landay* poems are often sung and may be written to be recited by either men or women.²⁹⁵

Traditional Music

Afghanistan's musical traditions, as well as its traditional instruments, have similarities with those of neighboring countries.²⁹⁶ (For example, the *rebab*, sometimes considered the national instrument of Afghanistan, is the lute-like forerunner of the Indian *sarod*.)²⁹⁷ Afghan classical music, like that of Central Asia, has a tradition of sung poetry (*ghazals*) as well as instrumental music (*ragas*, *naghmehs*).²⁹⁸ Similar in some ways to Indian *ragas*, Afghan *ragas* are more rhythmic and are traditionally played with percussion instruments such as the *daira*, *dhol*, or *zerbaghali*, although Indian *tablas* are now frequently used instead.²⁹⁹

The *daira* (or *doira*) is a single-headed hand drum shaped somewhat like a large tambourine and is played mostly by women. The *dhol* is a round, medium-size, double-headed drum made out of wood. The *zerbaghali* is a goblet-shaped drum with a baked clay base and a tight skin attached to the widened top part of the instrument. The other most common instruments used today in traditional Afghan music include the *tula*, a flute similar to a recorder; the sitar-shaped *tambur* and the short-necked *rebab*, which are 18-string instruments; and the *richak*.³⁰⁰ The *richak* (or

²⁹² Jason Athanasiadis, "Afghanistan: Sufi Mysticism Makes a Comeback in Kabul," Eurasianet.org, 26 August 2011, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64095>

²⁹³ Leslie Wines, "Ch. 1: The Poet of Love and Tumult," in *Rumi: A Spiritual Biography* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 2000), <http://www.buy.com/prod/rumi/30545617.html>

²⁹⁴ Cultural Orientation Project, "Afghans—Their History and Culture: Music and Literature," 30 June 2002, <http://www.cal.org/co/afghan/amus.html>

²⁹⁵ Hafizullah Emadi, "Ch. 3: Literature and the Arts," in *Culture and Customs of Afghanistan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 85.

²⁹⁶ Afghan-Network.net, "Afghan Musical Instruments," 2001, <http://www.afghan-network.net/Culture/instruments.html>

²⁹⁷ Veronica Doubleday, "Afghanistan: Red Light at the Crossroads," in *World Music: Latin and North America, Caribbean, India, Asia and Pacific*, vol. 2, eds. Mark Ellingham, Orla Duane, and James McConnachie (London: Rough Guides, 2000), 4.

²⁹⁸ VirtualAfghans.com, "Ghazal Poetry, Definition and Details," 2011, <http://www.virtualafghans.com/culture/poetry/ghazal.asp>

²⁹⁹ Veronica Doubleday, "Afghanistan: Red Light at the Crossroads," in *World Music: Latin and North America, Caribbean, India, Asia and Pacific*, vol. 2, eds. Mark Ellingham, Orla Duane, and James McConnachie (London: Rough Guides, 2000), 3.

³⁰⁰ Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, "Ch. 1: Land and People," in *A Brief History of Afghanistan* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2007), 20.

ghichak), a type of spike fiddle, has only two strings. Improvised versions of the *richak* may even include a tin can as the resonance box through which the wood spike passes.³⁰¹

Popular Music

Popular music arose in Afghanistan during the 1950s when radio broadcasting began to reach most of the country.³⁰² The king of Afghan popular music is the legendary singer, songwriter, and composer Ahmad Zahir. He came onto the scene when Afghanistan was entering a new phase of Western-influenced music. He had a style all his own—passionate, poetic, and patriotic. In all, he recorded 22 albums and toured internationally, inspiring and appealing to people through his charismatic and free-spirited personality. He died in 1979 on the day his daughter was born, and is believed by many Afghans to have been assassinated on the orders of communist party officials.^{303, 304}

Other popular Afghan singers include Sarban, Nashenas, Ahad Wali, Hangama, Mahwash, and Haidar Salim, all of whom first became popular during the 1960s and 1970s prior to the communist takeover.³⁰⁵ One of the most famous Afghan contemporary musicians is Farhad Darya. Darya, who sings in Dari, Pashto, Hazaragi, and Uzbek, left Afghanistan around the time the Taliban came to power, but he has never stopped writing and performing music from and about his native country. His compositions are well known in Afghanistan, and his song “*Kabul Jaan*” (“Beloved Kabul”) was the first song played on Kabul Radio after the Taliban’s defeat.³⁰⁶

Other Afghan musicians have found their way to fame since the fall of the Taliban. Even rap, a style of music that would seem incompatible with strongly conservative Afghani society, has made recent inroads in Afghanistan, at least in urban Kabul. But Afghanistan’s most famous rap artist, DJ Besho, is careful to tailor his rhymes to themes that do not conflict with Afghanistan’s religious and cultural norms, while even occasionally mixing in some text lines from the Quran.^{307, 308}

Cuisine

Culinary traditions in Afghanistan reflect the country’s ethnic and cultural diversity, drawing from all along the Silk Road. Afghan dishes share similarities with Greek, Turkish, Middle Eastern, Persian, Central Asian, and Indian foods and dishes, from baklava to Indian-style ice creams.

³⁰¹ University Libraries Digital Collections, University of Washington, “Ethnomusicology Musical Instrument Collection: Ghichak,” n.d.,

http://content.lib.washington.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/ethnomusic&CISOPTR=116

³⁰² Afghan Council UK, “Music,” 2008, <http://www.afghancounciluk.org/music.php>

³⁰³ Farid Maiwandi, “Ahmad Zahir—A Biography in Brief,” 2009, <http://www.ahmadzahir.com/sub/biography.html>

³⁰⁴ Amy Waldman, “Kabul Journal; The Afghan Elvis ‘Lives’ 24 Years after His Death,” *New York Times*, 20 March 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/20/world/kabul-journal-the-afghan-elvis-lives-24-years-after-his-death.html>

³⁰⁵ Afghan Council UK, “Music,” 2008, <http://www.afghancounciluk.org/music.php>

³⁰⁶ FarhadDarya.info, “Biography,” 2004, http://www.farhaddarya.info/biography_english.htm

³⁰⁷ Abdul Saboor, “Afghan Rapper Wins Fans with Message of Peace,” *Daily Times* (Pakistan), 13 May 2006, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2006\05\13\story_13-5-2006_pg4_28

³⁰⁸ Tom Coghlan, “Gangsta Rap, Afghan Style,” 10 May 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4755701.stm

The everyday diet of Afghans is partly determined by the variety of crops in the region, chiefly wheat, corn, barley, and rice. Other staples include beef, lamb, chicken, cheese, *chai* (tea), *naan* (flatbread), fruits such as grapes, melons, and apricots, and vegetables such as eggplant, leeks, and carrots.³⁰⁹ Pistachios and almonds are favorite snacks. A range of spices are used in Afghan cooking: anise, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, cumin, dill seed, black pepper, poppy seeds, ginger, sesame seeds, green and red chilies, cilantro seeds, and saffron.

On religious days, festivals, and celebrations, a large number of dishes and specialties are prepared, such as *aush* (noodle soup with meat, peas, beans, and yogurt), *aushak* (ravioli stuffed with leeks and topped with yogurt and meat), *boulanee* (potato and meat turnovers), kebabs, *qabili pilau* (traditional dish of brown rice with lamb, carrots, and raisins), *firni* (milk custard topped with pistachios), *bouranee kadu* (sweet pumpkin), pastries, and fruit. Some foods and desserts are prepared only in certain seasons.

Typical for spring is homemade ice cream such as *sheer yakh* and *faluda* (rice, shaved ice, and ice cream), and *kishmish panir*, a white uncured cheese served with red raisins. During winter, it is common to see street vendors selling such snacks as *shor nakhod* (naan stuffed with cooked chickpeas, mint sauce, samosas, falafel, and salad) and deep-fried *mahi* (fish).³¹⁰



© Munir Squires
Afghan kebab meal

Traditional Dress

Following Islamic and tribal customs, traditional Afghan dress is conservative. Afghan men generally wear full-length pants (*tomban*) and a long shirt (*payran*) that reaches to their knees. The shirt is generally not tucked into the pants, and both of these items are loose-fitting. (But in northern Afghanistan, the trousers may be a tighter fit because many residents are ethnic Tajik, Uzbek, and Turkmen, who trace their ancestry to the horse-riding cultures of the Central Asia steppes.)³¹¹ A vest (*waskat*) is worn over the shirt, and it is common for men to carry a shawl-like garment on their shoulders. This piece of cloth is often used as a rug for prayer. Turbans, which consist of a long strip of cloth (*lungee*) wrapped around the head, are common among Pashtun men, who often leave a loose end hanging over the shoulder. Other ethnic groups tie the *lungee* in their own characteristic styles. A skullcap (*kullah*) is another popular form of headgear; it is generally worn underneath the turban. In the Nuristan regions, men and boys often wear a distinctive beret-like cap (*pawkul*) that is round on top and has a long cylindrical section below it that can be rolled up in the summer and rolled down to cover the ears in the winter.³¹² Wool shirts and coats are worn in colder, high-altitude areas.

³⁰⁹ South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), “Food in Afghanistan,” 2009, <http://afghanistan.saarctourism.org/food.html>

³¹⁰ Paul Clammer, “Food & Drink: Staples and Specialties,” in *Afghanistan* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 60.

³¹¹ WatanAfghanistan.com, “Dress and Ornaments,” n.d., <http://watanafghanistan.tripod.com/afghanistan/history/life/dress.htm>

³¹² Denise E. Williams, “Afghan *Pawkul* Hat,” Itsalladesign, n.d., <http://home.earthlink.net/~itsalladesign/afghanhats/afghanhats.html>

In public, Afghan women are often completely concealed in accordance with the *purdah* custom. They typically wear baggy cotton pants and a long, loose-fitting shirt. A headscarf or shawl (*chadra*) is used to cover the hair and, when necessary, the face. (This garment may be quickly placed over the face when a woman encounters an unfamiliar man.) When in public, especially in rural areas, many Afghan women wear a *chadri*, the Afghani *burqa*. It is an extensive, loose-fitting garment that covers the entire body. Lattice-work openings near the eyes allow women to see out of the *chadri*.³¹³

Sports and Recreation

Afghans are quite fond of modern sports such as cricket, chess, football (soccer), and basketball, while traditional players still play the games of *Buzkashi* and *Gudiparan Bazi*. Afghanistan's sports associations and federations help players compete internationally as well. Cricket and football are the most popular sports among those in which the nation competes internationally.^{314, 315} Afghanistan's cricket team made it to the 2009 World Cup Qualifier and barely missed qualifying for the 2011 World Cup. The national football team has generally been less successful but has shown signs of improvement since early 2011, having moved up over 30 places in the FIFA rankings between March 2011 and July 2012.³¹⁶

Over the last decade, urban areas in Afghanistan have witnessed an expansion of sports and fitness opportunities for men and women. Many gyms have opened since 2002, particularly in Kabul, where men pursue bodybuilding.³¹⁷ A bodybuilding club for women was opened in Parwan Province in December 2007.³¹⁸ Wrestling and boxing are also popular in Afghanistan, and these activities are no longer just for men.³¹⁹ The Afghan Women's Boxing Federation now trains young women in boxing, and in February 2012 one of these boxers, Sadaf Rahimi, qualified for the 2012 Olympics, the only Afghan woman to compete in the Games.³²⁰

Afghanistan has sent small delegations to most Summer Olympics since 1936. In 1999, the national team was banned from competing in the 2000 Olympics in Sydney because of the Taliban's discrimination against women athletes. The suspension was lifted in 2002 after the fall of the Taliban government, and an Afghan woman participated in the Olympics for the first time

³¹³ WatanAfghanistan.com, "Dress and Ornaments," n.d.,

<http://watanafghanistan.tripod.com/afghanistan/history/life/dress.htm>

³¹⁴ *Telegraph* (UK), "London 2012," 2012,

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/countries/8662606/Afghanistan-London-2012-Olympics.html>

³¹⁵ Paul Clammer, "Sport," in *Afghanistan* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 57.

³¹⁶ FIFA.com, "Afghanistan," July 2012,

<http://www.fifa.com/associations/association=afg/ranking/gender=m/index.html>

³¹⁷ Oliver Broudy, "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Biceps," *Men's Health*, 5 June 2007,

<http://www.menshealth.com/best-life/body-building-afghanistan>

³¹⁸ *RIA Novosti*, "Women's Bodybuilding Club Opens in Afghanistan," 29 December 2007,

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20071229/94680847.html>

³¹⁹ Paul Clammer, "Sport," in *Afghanistan* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2007), 57.

³²⁰ CBS News, "Teen Girl from Afghanistan to Box at Olympics," 10 February 2010.

in 2004.³²¹ The national team has won one medal in its Olympics history, a 2008 bronze medal won by Rohullah Nikpai in taekwondo.^{322, 323}

Buzkashi

Buzkashi is the most traditional and popular of Afghan sports, especially in northern Afghanistan.³²⁴ *Buzkashi* means “goat grabbing” in Dari. This game originated in the era of the Mongol conquest, when the Mongol riders would hunt, kill, and pick up goats without dismounting their horses. Afghan horsemen learned to fight back and took back their animals from the Mongolians who wanted to ride away with their prey.



© Luke Powell

Today *buzkashi* is played on a large open field with a varying number of horsemen, known as *chapandazan*. Sometimes the *chapandazan* are divided into teams and sometimes not. The basic idea of the game is simple: A *chapandaz* attempts to pick up the headless carcass of a calf or goat, which weighs up to 68 kg (150 lbs), transport it the length of a football field or more, circle a pole at the other end, and return to deposit the carcass in a circle near the starting area. Other *chapandazan*, meanwhile, use various techniques (some not strictly legal) to ensure that the *chapandaz* with the carcass does not make it to the circle.^{325, 326}

In bigger cities such as Kabul and Mazar e-Sharif, tournaments are played in stadiums, often sponsored by the wealthiest and most powerful men of Afghanistan.³²⁷ As with other sports around the world, gambling on the results is part of the festivities.³²⁸ The rules forbid the use of knives or any direct physical attack of the person carrying the carcass, although a veteran *chapandaz*'s hands often carry scars from whippings by other riders. It is a rough sport that requires exceptional riding skills and well-trained horses. Many riders leave the game with broken ribs and other injuries. *Buzkashi* is typically played on special occasions, such as the

³²¹ Aryn Baker, “A Run to the Future,” *Time*, 11 April 2004,

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,901040419-610030,00.html>

³²² *Telegraph* (UK), “London 2012,” 2012,

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/countries/8662606/Afghanistan-London-2012-Olympics.html>

³²³ Abdullah Qazi, “Afghan Sports History: A Chronological History of Sports in Afghanistan,” Afghan Web, 25 February 2012, http://www.afghan-web.com/sports/sports_history.html

³²⁴ Mark Memmott, “Afghans Revive ‘Buzkashi,’” *USA Today*, 9 December 2002,

http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2002-12-09-goat-game-usat_x.htm

³²⁵ Carl Hoffman, “Rider in the Storm,” *ESPN The Magazine*, 11 September 2011,

http://espn.go.com/espn/story/_/id/6944843/afghanistan-national-sport-buzkashi-evolves-post-9-11-world-espn-magazine

³²⁶ Simon Robinson, “Afghanistan: By Their Sports, Ye Shall Know Them,” *Time*, 22 March 2002,

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,219661,00.html>

³²⁷ Carl Hoffman, “Rider in the Storm,” *ESPN The Magazine*, 11 September 2011,

http://espn.go.com/espn/story/_/id/6944843/afghanistan-national-sport-buzkashi-evolves-post-9-11-world-espn-magazine

³²⁸ *Wall Street Journal*, “Afghanistan’s ‘Goat Grabbing’ Game,” 12 April 2011,

<http://blogs.wsj.com/photojournal/2011/04/12/afghanistan%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98goat-grabbing%E2%80%99-game/>

Afghan New Year (*Nowruz*), Eid, and weddings, although women typically are not allowed to watch.

Gudiparan Bazi—Kite Fighting

Kite fighting is a national pastime in Afghanistan. It was popular before the Taliban stopped all activities deemed anti-Islamic, including kite fighting. With new freedom, old customs like kite fighting have returned and have become a big business. Winners on the kite flying contest circuit, which has reemerged since the fall of the Taliban, can earn good money.³²⁹ The beautifully colored kites, called *gudiparan* or “flying dolls,” take different shapes and forms. The average wingspan is approximately 1 m (3.5 ft), but some can be as wide as 1.5 m (5 ft). These kites are built by stretching thin paper over a light bamboo frame.^{330, 331}



© Michael Foley
Kite Fighting

The *gudiparan* are unique because of the string they are held by. Preparation of this special kite string may take hours. The goal is a string that is light and strong, and has a surface that can cut like a razor blade. To achieve this, a special coating of ground glass is applied to the surface of the string with adhesive. Leather gloves or finger protectors are worn to protect the flyers’ hands from these “cutter” strings. The kite fight starts with flying two kites in proximity. The goal is to cut the string of the other kite. The kite that remains on a string is the winner. Usually the winner gets the loser’s kite and whatever else is at stake. If the losing kite is carried away by the wind, it will belong to whoever finds it when it falls to the ground.

³²⁹ *Time*, “The Kite Maker,” 22 February 2007,
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1592857,00.html>

³³⁰ Gina Hsiung, “Afghan Fighters,” California State University, Northridge, 7 February 2005,
<http://www.csun.edu/~ghsiung/fighters3.html>

³³¹ David Sahar, “The Art of Gudiparan Bazi,” Afghana.com, 15 January 2001,
<http://afghana.com/Entertainment/Gudiparanbazi.htm>

Chapter 4 Assessment

1. The Tajiks are the main ethnic group in Afghanistan that is primarily Shi'a Muslim.
FALSE
 Like Pashtuns, most Tajiks are Sunni Muslim. Unlike most other Afghan ethnic groups, the Hazaras are Shi'a Muslims.

2. About 80% of Afghans are Shi'a Muslims.
FALSE
 About 99% of Afghans are Muslim. Sunni Muslims make up 80% and Shi'a Muslims 19%; other religious groups are the remaining 1%.

3. Since the middle of the 18th century, Afghanistan has almost exclusively had ethnic Pashtun rulers or leaders.
TRUE
 The largest of the Pashtun groups are the Durrani and the Ghilzais. Members of the Durrani branch ruled Afghanistan from Ahmad Shah Durrani's rule in 1747 until the communist coup in 1978. Conversely, Afghan political leaders during the communist and Taliban eras were generally Ghilzai Pashtuns. Current Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai is from the same Durrani clan as Ahmad Shah Durrani.

4. Because of the harsh agricultural climate, grains and vegetables are not commonly found in Afghan cuisine.
FALSE
 The everyday diet of Afghans is partly determined by the variety of crops in the region, chiefly wheat, corn, barley, and rice. Other staples include *naan* (flatbread), fruits such as grapes, melons, and apricots, and vegetables such as eggplant, leeks, and carrots.

5. The *daira*, *dohl*, and *zerbaghali* are the three most popular forms of traditional Afghanistan poetry.
FALSE
 The *daira* (or *doira*) is a single-headed hand drum shaped somewhat like a large tambourine and is played mostly by women. The *dhol* is a round, medium-size, double-headed drum made out of wood. The *zerbaghali* is a goblet-shaped drum with a baked clay base and a tight skin attached to the widened top part of the instrument.

CHAPTER 5: SECURITY

Introduction

After the Russian invasion and occupation of Afghanistan from 1979–1989 and the years of civil war and Taliban rule, building a viable government has proven a challenging task. After the fall of the Taliban, prominent Afghan leaders and members of the diaspora reached an agreement in Bonn that laid out the country’s current political system.³³² Hamid Karzai was elected chairman of the interim government and in October 2004 became Afghanistan’s first democratically elected president. In 2006, the elected Afghan government and the international community reached an agreement on the Afghanistan Compact, a framework for the reconstruction and development of the country. This ambitious document was loaded with numerous benchmarks on security, governance, and social and economic development, some of which were more hopes than realistic goals, especially in the midst of a deteriorating security situation.³³³ By 2008, the Afghanistan Compact was viewed as an ineffective roadmap for implementing or tracking reforms in Afghanistan.³³⁴

Developing Afghanistan’s governmental capacity has remained a priority among international and U.S. partners because of numerous assessments that the nation will remain vulnerable to terrorist groups using it as a safe haven until a strong, effective government is in place.³³⁵ But spiraling insurgent-driven violence, corruption, and opium trade made progress difficult. In mid-2009, General Stanley McChrystal, then head of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), cautioned that there was the potential for “mission failure” in Afghanistan unless a counterinsurgency strategy involving roughly 44,000 additional U.S. forces was put into place. The subsequent increase, or “surge,” of U.S. forces to Afghanistan, announced in late 2009 by President Barack Obama, led to some improvements in security in the southern part of Afghanistan, although some high-profile attacks in Kabul, Kandahar, and other cities show that the progress is fragile.³³⁶

U.S.–Afghan Relations

A tribally based country without a strong sense of nationhood, Afghanistan had been deemed of lesser strategic significance than its neighboring states by successive administrations in

³³² Peter J. Middlebrook and Mark Sedra, “Revisioning the International Compact for Afghanistan,” *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 2 November 2005, http://www.fpif.org/reports/revisioning_the_international_compact_for_afghanistan

³³³ Christina Bennett, “Case Studies: Afghanistan,” in *Aid Effectiveness in Fragile States: Lessons from the First Generation of Transition Compacts* (New York: International Peace Institute, April 2012), 21, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ipi_e_pub_aid_effectiveness.pdf

³³⁴ Christina Bennett, “Case Studies: Afghanistan,” in *Aid Effectiveness in Fragile States: Lessons from the First Generation of Transition Compacts* (New York: International Peace Institute, April 2012), 22, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ipi_e_pub_aid_effectiveness.pdf

³³⁵ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 11, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

³³⁶ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 20–23, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

Washington throughout most of the first half of the 20th century.³³⁷ This state of relative neglect began to change after World War II when the United States and the Soviet Union vied for influence via economic and military aid. For example, about half of the original Ring Road was built by the U.S., the other half by the Soviets.³³⁸ The U.S.-Afghan relationship changed abruptly in 1979 after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, initiating “the bloodiest and costliest superpower proxy war” in the final decade of the Cold War.³³⁹ In all, the U.S. contributed about USD 3 billion in economic and covert military aid to the *mujahideen* resistance forces during the Soviet occupation, which ended in 1989.³⁴⁰

After the Soviet armies left, U.S. assistance to Afghanistan was limited during the next 12 years, mostly coming in the form of support for the Food for Peace program and refugee aid.³⁴¹ Then, on 11 September 2001, everything changed. In an attack planned by the radical Islamist terrorist group al-Qaeda, whose members were hosted by the Taliban government of Afghanistan, hijacked passenger planes were flown into the two towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, killing nearly 3,000 people.³⁴² After the Taliban leadership refused the U.S.’s final request to turn over Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda operatives, President George W. Bush’s administration quickly decided that the Taliban leaders, by harboring terrorists, were in effect terrorists themselves and must be overthrown if the al-Qaeda members were to be brought to justice. A UN Security Resolution expressing “readiness to take all necessary steps to respond to the September 11 attacks” and U.S. Congressional approval for military action were obtained soon thereafter.³⁴³



DoD image
Afghan President Hamid Karzai, U.S. commanders

The Taliban government was quickly toppled by coalition forces during Operation Enduring Freedom in late 2001. Twelve years later, Afghanistan continues to be of vital national security interest to the U.S. because of the continued security threats posed by the Taliban and other insurgency groups. Between 2002 and 2012, the U.S. has funneled nearly USD 83 billion in developmental and military assistance to Afghanistan, of which over USD 50 billion has gone toward operations to train, supply, and support the Afghan security forces.³⁴⁴

³³⁷ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 4: In the Twentieth Century,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 207.

³³⁸ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 4: In the Twentieth Century,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 208–210.

³³⁹ George Washington University, National Security Archives, “Afghanistan 1973–1990,” March 1991, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/publications/afghanistan/afghanistan.html>

³⁴⁰ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 3, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

³⁴¹ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 76–77, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

³⁴² A fourth plane targeting the U.S. Capitol in Washington was flown into the ground by the hijackers when its passengers tried to regain control of the plane.

³⁴³ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 7–8, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

³⁴⁴ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 78, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

Foreign Relations with Neighboring Countries

Pakistan

In 1893, Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman begrudgingly agreed with British India Foreign Secretary Henry Mortimer Durand on the borders between British India, Afghanistan, and the Pashtun-controlled, British-administered lands between the two.^{345, 346} Historians have noted that the “boundary” was more a delineation of spheres of influence within the Pashtun tribal regions rather than a formal border.³⁴⁷ Yet ever since Pakistan declared its independence in 1947, the so-called Durand Line has separated Afghanistan and Pakistan as a *de facto* border. It has been an ongoing source of contention between the two countries.³⁴⁸ Ethnic Pashtuns (and some ethnic Baluchis) live on both sides of this border and, like the Afghan government, they have never recognized it as a formal international border. Periodically, the Afghanistan government has voiced support for Pakistani Pashtun nationalists’ demands to separate from Pakistan. The demand to establish an autonomous Pashtunistan state contributes to frequent border clashes and strained relations between the two nations.^{349, 350}



© Talk Radio News Service
Pakistan border

Another complication in the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been the millions of Afghani refugees into Pakistan, beginning with the Soviet invasion in December 1979.³⁵¹ The refugee camps became recruitment centers for the *mujahideen* militias during the 1980s. Young Afghan refugee youths, educated in religiously conservative *madrassas* in Pakistan, became the nucleus of the Taliban forces during the 1990s. Although many Afghan refugees returned after the Taliban government fell in 2001, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that over 1.7 million Afghan refugees remain in Pakistan as of 2012, the largest refugee population in any nation.^{352, 353}

Pakistan’s tribal areas contain several factions of Taliban fighters, both Afghani and Pakistani. From the Afghan perspective, the most dangerous group is the Haqqani network, which has

³⁴⁵ Jayshree Bajoria, “The Troubled Afghan-Pakistani Border,” Council on Foreign Relations, 20 March 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/troubled-afghan-pakistani-border/p14905>

³⁴⁶ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 3: Anglo-Afghan Wars and State Building,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 154.

³⁴⁷ Thomas Barfield, “Ch. 3: Anglo-Afghan Wars and State Building,” in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 154.

³⁴⁸ Jayshree Bajoria, “The Troubled Afghan-Pakistani Border,” Council on Foreign Relations, 20 March 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/troubled-afghan-pakistani-border/p14905>

³⁴⁹ Khurshid Hasan, “Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations,” *Asian Survey* 2, no. 7 (September 1962), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3023688?seq=1>

³⁵⁰ Ron Synovitz, “Pakistan: Analyst Discusses Controversial ‘Pashtunistan’ Proposal,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 25 January 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1074272.html>

³⁵¹ Rhoda Margesson, “Afghan Refugees: Current Status and Future Prospects,” Congressional Research Service, 26 January 2007, 2, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33851.pdf>

³⁵² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Pakistan,” 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/4ec231040.html>

³⁵³ PBS News Hour, “Refugee Hot Zones Around the World,” 21 June 2011, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/multimedia/refugees_0621/6.html

launched several highly publicized attacks on targets in Afghanistan, including the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. In September 2011, top U.S. officials publicly accused the Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of providing support to the Haqqani group. The Pakistan government denied the charges.³⁵⁴ Numerous intelligence reports over the years have linked Pakistan's intelligence community to the Taliban. But some analysts feel that any Pakistan-Taliban connection is less ideological than strategic, and is intended to influence Afghan politics and keep India from strengthening its relations with Kabul.³⁵⁵

Iran

Afghanistan's connections to Iran run deep, especially in the western, central, and northern regions. During the 15th century, Herat was a capital of the Persian-influenced Timurid Dynasty, and until 1863, Persian armies attempted to wrest it from the Afghan amir's control.^{356, 357} More recently, Iran has been a refuge for Afghans during both the Soviet occupation and the Taliban era. Over 1 million refugees remained in Iran as of 2012, although Iran has recently repatriated a large number of undocumented Afghans.^{358, 359}

Iran has supported the Afghan government's efforts to rebuild since 2001, although several issues, such as the U.S. presence in Afghanistan, have sometimes clouded an otherwise collaborative relationship.³⁶⁰ Because of its often tense relationship with Pakistan, Afghanistan has increasingly relied on its border with Iran to receive critical imports from around the world, including about 50% of its oil.³⁶¹ Iran has contributed greatly to the security and development of Afghanistan through joint cultural, trade, investment, transportation infrastructure, and energy projects, mostly in the western provinces.³⁶²

On the other hand, Iran has deep concerns over the U.S.-Afghanistan relationship that are heightened by the tense international stand-off over Iran's nuclear program and Iran's perceptions that the U.S. is supporting a Baluchi insurgency in Iran's western Sistan va Baluchistan Province. These have led Tehran to undermine the U.S. mission in Afghanistan in different ways. Iran has provided a "measured" amount of support to the Taliban, despite that

³⁵⁴ Jane Perlez, "Pakistan Scorns U.S. Scolding on Terrorism," *New York Times*, 23 September 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/24/world/asia/pakistan-shows-no-sign-of-heeding-us-scolding-on-terrorism.html?pagewanted=all>

³⁵⁵ Ron Moreau, "With Friends Like These...", *Newsweek*, 31 July 2010,

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2010/07/31/with-friends-like-these.html>

³⁵⁶ Thomas Barfield, "Ch. 1: People and Places," in *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 49–50.

³⁵⁷ Greg Bruno and Lionel Beehner, "Iran and the Future of Afghanistan," Council on Foreign Relations, 30 March 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/iran-future-afghanistan/p13578>

³⁵⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Islamic Republic of Iran: 2012 UNHCR Country Operations Profile," 2012, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486f96&submit=GO>

³⁵⁹ Ahmad Quraishi, "Iran Expels Thousands of Afghan Refugees," *Pajwok Afghan News*, 7 February 2011, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2011/02/07/iran-expels-thousands-afghan-refugees>

³⁶⁰ Alireza Nader and Joya Laha, "Iran's Balancing Act in Afghanistan," RAND National Defense Research Institute, 1, 2011, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2011/RAND_OP322.pdf

³⁶¹ Joshua Hersh, "Afghanistan's Trade Deal with Iran Complicates U.S. Aims," *Huffington Post*, 9 May 2012,

³⁶² Aryaman Bhatnagar, e-Ariana, "Iran's Influence in Afghanistan: Implications of the Iran-US Stand-Off," *Eurasia Review*, 29 June 2012, <http://www.e-ariana.com/ariana/eariana.nsf/allDocs/DE36ACB58E817E7687257A2C002EC0F1?OpenDocument>

group's hostility to the Shi'ites and Shi'a-dominated Iran.³⁶³ In May 2012, Tehran threatened to deport the remaining Afghan refugees in Iran in retaliation for Afghanistan's 10-year strategic agreement with the United States.³⁶⁴ These and other attempts to sabotage the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan have drawn criticism of Iran from the Afghan parliament.³⁶⁵

Other thorny issues between Afghanistan and Iran include the historical dispute over water rights from the Helmand River, narcotics, and rebels. The narcotics flow across the Afghanistan-Iran border is a major problem because Iran's population includes over 1 million opium and heroin addicts.³⁶⁶ Perhaps 30% of Afghanistan's opium is smuggled across Iran's border.³⁶⁷ Iran is building a border "wall" (trenches and barbed wire in some stretches) to halt opium smugglers and Baluchi rebel groups.³⁶⁸

China

Afghanistan shares its shortest land border with China, in a particularly remote section of the Hindu Kush. China also has the smallest Muslim population of any of Afghanistan's neighbors. Only 1–2% of China's 1.3 billion citizens are Muslims.³⁶⁹ One of the largest of China's Muslim minorities, the Uighurs, inhabit Xinjiang, an autonomous region that borders Afghanistan. The Uighurs complain of discrimination and marginalization because of their ethnicity and religion. Their frustrations sparked a city riot in July 2009, forcing a government crackdown that left more than 150 people dead.³⁷⁰

Limiting the spread of fundamentalist Islam into Xinjiang and reducing separatist sentiment among the Turkic-descended Uighurs is a high priority for Beijing. Although Afghanistan has not provided any support to Uighur separatists, some Uighurs are known to have traveled into Afghanistan since the



www.kremlin.ru
President of the People's
Republic of China Hu Jintao

³⁶³ Alireza Nader and Joya Laha, "Iran's Balancing Act in Afghanistan," RAND National Defense Research Institute, ix, 2011, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2011/RAND_OP322.pdf

³⁶⁴ Ben Farmer, "Iran Threatens to Expel Afghan Refugees if Kabul Ratifies US Strategic Partnership," *Telegraph* (UK), 10 May 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/9256602/Iran-threatens-to-expel-Afghan-refugees-if-Kabul-ratifies-US-strategic-partnership.html>

³⁶⁵ Ben Farmer, "Iran Threatens to Expel Afghan Refugees if Kabul Ratifies US Strategic Partnership," *Telegraph* (UK), 10 May 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/9256602/Iran-threatens-to-expel-Afghan-refugees-if-Kabul-ratifies-US-strategic-partnership.html>

³⁶⁶ Alireza Nader and Joya Laha, "Iran's Balancing Act in Afghanistan," RAND National Defense Research Institute, 13, 2011, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2011/RAND_OP322.pdf

³⁶⁷ UN Office on Drugs and Crime, "Addiction, Crime and Insurgency: The Transnational Threat of Afghan Opium," 11, October 2009, http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/Addiction_Crime_and_Insurgency_The_transnational_threat_of_Afghan_opium.pdf

³⁶⁸ Agence France-Presse, "Iran's Eastern Border to Be Sealed Off by 2015 to Prevent Smuggling, Infiltration," *Al Arabiya News*, 2 July 2011, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/07/02/155830.html>

³⁶⁹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "China (Includes Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau)," *2010 International Religious Freedom Report*, 13 September 2011, http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168351.htm

³⁷⁰ BBC News, "Troops Flood into China Riot City," 8 July 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8139065.stm>

1980s, mostly via the Pakistan tribal regions, to fight for the Taliban and other militias.^{371, 372} Curbing the flow of such Uighur militants who have Pakistan training and Afghanistan battle experience remains a priority for China in the Xinjiang region.³⁷³

Despite China's comparatively small contribution to rebuilding Afghanistan, China has provided humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan since 2001. On 19 June 2006, Chinese President Hu Jintao and President Karzai signed the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighborly Relations, which took effect 18 August 2008. Under this treaty, both countries pledged to work together to combat terrorism and drug crimes and to expand trade.³⁷⁴ In terms of economic cooperation, Chinese companies have shown interest in working with Afghan partners to develop the nation's extensive mineral resources. In 2007, the Chinese Metallurgical Group Corporation outbid other international consortia to acquire rights to explore and develop Afghanistan's largest copper deposit at Aynak in Logar Province, in a USD 3.5-billion contract that was awarded a year later. This is the largest investment in the history of Afghanistan and includes the construction of an electrical plant and railway from Tajikistan to Pakistan.³⁷⁵ Initial development of the mine site has been delayed 3 years while archaeologists rush to excavate the ruins of the Buddhist temple site that sits atop the copper deposits.³⁷⁶

Tajikistan

Cultural and ethnic ties bind Afghanistan to its northern neighbor, Tajikistan. Relations were complicated in the 1990s by a civil war that broke out soon after Tajikistan gained independence from the Soviet Union.

Approximately 100,000 refugees from Tajikistan flowed into Afghanistan, and Tajik insurgents set up bases there.³⁷⁷ The UN brokered a peace agreement in 1997. Since then, one of the main problems between the two countries has been the thriving narcotics trade, which threatens

Tajikistan's fragile domestic stability by promoting a culture of corruption and violence.³⁷⁸ Armed drug smugglers cross the rugged but porous border illegally from Afghanistan, because



© Ground Report
Tajikistan border crossing

³⁷¹ Preeti Bhattacharji, "Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region," Council on Foreign Relations, 29 May 2012, <http://www.cfr.org/china/uighurs-chinas-xinjiang-region/p16870>

³⁷² Manu Pubby, "Uighur Militants Have Been Getting Training, Support in Pak: US Reports," *Indian Express*, 3 August 2011, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/uighur-militants-have-been-getting-training-support-in-pak-us-reports/826320/2>

³⁷³ BBC News Asia, "Russian and China Eye Role in Afghanistan and Pakistan," 6 June 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-18342888>

³⁷⁴ Xinhua News Agency, "China Ratifies Pacts with Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Australia, Azerbaijan," 1 November 2006, <http://japanese.china.org.cn/english/international/187172.htm>

³⁷⁵ Niklas Norling, "The Emerging China-Afghan Relationship," *Analyst* (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute), 14 May 2008, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4858>

³⁷⁶ Aryn Baker, "Deciding Between Heritage and Hard Cash in Afghanistan," *Time*, 17 November 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2099676,00.html>

³⁷⁷ Institute for Afghan Studies, "Foreign Relations," n.d., http://www.institute-for-afghan-studies.org/ForeignAffairs/overview_0.htm

³⁷⁸ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Tajikistan," 24 January 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5775.htm>

Tajikistan lies on the route to the Russian and Western European markets.³⁷⁹ The problem has unfortunately been exacerbated by the opening of a mostly U.S.-funded bridge constructed over the Panj River in August 2007.³⁸⁰ Although legal trade between the two countries has increased by 340% since the bridge's opening, the increased cross-border traffic has created greater opportunities to smuggle narcotics and other illegal goods.³⁸¹

Turkmenistan

Afghanistan and Turkmenistan have been attempting to solidify political and economic ties in recent years. In 2008, President Karzai met with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov and signed agreements on enhancing political, economic, and cultural cooperation. The main points of agreement were cooperation in fighting terrorism and narcotics, reconstruction projects, a rail link extension between the two countries, and Turkmen electricity exports.³⁸² Subsequent presidential-level meetings have followed up on these goals and themes.³⁸³ The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline remains the most ambitious and highest priority project linking the two nations, but a timetable for its construction has yet to be set and the security issues along its Afghanistan segment are significant.³⁸⁴



© Joseph Shemuel
President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has been a strong proponent of bringing stability and security to Afghanistan, in part because northern Afghanistan became one of the bases of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) during the Taliban era in the early 2000s. The IMU aims to replace the government of Uzbekistan with an Islamic state based on *shari'a* law, similar to what their hosts, the Taliban, had done in Afghanistan. Before the commencement of Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001, IMU activities were focused on targets in Uzbekistan and southern Kyrgyzstan, but later the group fled to Pakistan's tribal areas. Today, they are believed to be a greater threat to Pakistan than to other Central Asian nations.^{385, 386}

³⁷⁹ BBC News, "Country Profile: Tajikistan," 21 October 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1296639.stm

³⁸⁰ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Rajikistan/Afghanistan: Road Bridge Opens with Aim of Strengthening Trade," 26 August 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1078359.html>

³⁸¹ Payrav Chorshanbiyev, "Customs Barriers Impede Tajik-Afghan Trade Cooperation," *Asia-Plus*, 28 February 2012, <http://news.tj/en/news/customs-barriers-impede-tajik-afghan-trade-cooperation-says-tajik-official>

³⁸² John C. K. Daly, "Afghan-Turkmen Relations Improve," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (Jamestown Foundation) 5, no. 103 (29 May 2008),

[http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=33678&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=166&no_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=33678&tx_ttnews[backPid]=166&no_cache=1)

³⁸³ Turkmenistan.ru, "Turkmen-Afghan High Level Talks Held in Turkmenbashi," 26 January 2012, <http://www.turkmenistan.ru/en/articles/15830.html>

³⁸⁴ Alexandros Petersen, "TAPI Pipeline: Bigger is Not Better," *Foreign Policy*, 12 June 2012, http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/06/12/tapi_pipeline_bigger_is_not_better

³⁸⁵ Alisher Sidikov, "Pakistan Blames IMU Militants for Afghan Border Unrest," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2 July 2008, http://www.rferl.org/content/Pakistan_IMU_Militants_Afghan_Border_Unrest/1181286.html

³⁸⁶ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State, "Ch. 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," *Country Reports on Terrorism 2010*, 18 August 2011, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2010/170264.htm>

Since 2008, Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan's longstanding ruler, has promoted the creation of UN-sponsored "6+3" peace talks for Afghanistan, including the six neighboring countries of Afghanistan plus the United States, Russia, and NATO.³⁸⁷ The Uzbek government has also been supportive of U.S./NATO anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan and, to this end, has approved the transfer of non-lethal materials by rail across its territory into Afghanistan as part of NATO's Northern Distribution Network (NDN) to Afghanistan. It also provides access to an airbase in southern Uzbekistan to NATO member state Germany.³⁸⁸

The railroad and stations used by the NDN to transport goods from the Uzbek-Afghan border crossing at Hairatan to the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e Sharif were built by Uzbekistan Temir Yullari, the national rail company of Uzbekistan, with primary funding coming from the Asian Development Bank.³⁸⁹ Uzbekistan has also been involved in other projects that have assisted development in northern Afghanistan (where most of Afghanistan's ethnic Uzbeks live), including the high-voltage line carrying electricity from Uzbekistan to Kabul as well as the reconstruction of the road linking Mazar-e Sharif with Kabul.^{390, 391, 392} Uzbekistan's large population and its proximity to Afghanistan mean it has a pivotal role to play in the geopolitics and energy development of the region.

Security Forces

Over the 20th century, Afghan state-society relations reflected an evolution: from a loose conglomerate of tribes and ethnic communities over which central government control varied at different times, to a nation-state. Until the mid-20th century, an Afghan central government was not even strong enough to create a set of institutions through which governance could be carried out.³⁹³ This lack of national cohesion traditionally left defense to communities that relied on militias made up of tribal recruits. To build an army to replace the tribal militias, men's intense loyalty for their tribe must be transferred to the more removed concept of a nation-state. This has proved problematic, though there has been progress. Currently, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF),



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Security guards

³⁸⁷ Guli I. Yuldasheva, "Uzbekistan and the Afghan Reconciliation Process," *Vatandosh.us*, 1 June 2012, <http://vatandosh.uz/2012/07/professor-guli-i-yuldasheva-uzbekistan-and-the-afghan-reconciliation-process/>

³⁸⁸ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Uzbekistan," 31 January 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2924.htm>

³⁸⁹ Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation, "Hairatan-Mazar-e-Sharif Railway Opens, Highlights Country-to-Country Cooperation," 18 May 2012, <http://www.carecprogram.org/index.php?page=feature-archive&year=2012>

³⁹⁰ Ben Farmer, "Kabul Television Sales Up as Electricity from Uzbekistan Surges," *Telegraph* (UK), 1 February 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/4413745/Kabul-television-sales-up-as-electricity-from-Uzbekistan-surges.html>

³⁹¹ John C. K. Daly, "Outside View: Uzbek, Afghanistan Proposal Relevant and Timely," *UPI.com*, 5 November 2009, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Analysis/Outside-View/2009/11/05/Outside-View-Uzbek-Afghanistan-proposal-relevant-and-timely/UPI-71691257429600/

³⁹² Guli I. Yuldasheva, "Uzbekistan and the Afghan Reconciliation Process," *Vatandosh.us*, 1 June 2012, <http://vatandosh.uz/2012/07/professor-guli-i-yuldasheva-uzbekistan-and-the-afghan-reconciliation-process/>

³⁹³ Ali A. Jalali, "Rebuilding Afghanistan's National Army," *Parameters* (US Army War College), Autumn 2002, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/parameters/Articles/02autumn/jalali.pdf>

which consist of the Afghan National Police (ANP), have been established, and the Afghan military comprises the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan Air Force (AAF).

Afghan National Police

As of April 2012, the Afghan National Police has a force of roughly 150,000.³⁹⁴ The ANP is divided into Afghan Uniformed Police, the Afghan Border Police, the Afghan National Civil Order Police, and the Afghan Highway Police.³⁹⁵ The U.S. and ISAF train and mentor police units and provide the necessary equipment and infrastructure. But ANP quality is questioned for its quick hiring and training process (5 to 8 weeks) because of high demand.³⁹⁶ Thus, the ANP is less capable than the ANA in mission readiness. Corruption, disloyalty, a lack of trainers, and a need for institutional reform are additional causes for concern.^{397, 398} Police Mentor Teams are needed at approximately three-quarters of the National Police organizations and units throughout the country.³⁹⁹ There are also reports that members of the ANP help the Taliban and warlords smuggle opium and heroin out of Afghanistan. Many ANP are drug users, and there are reports of sexual abuse.⁴⁰⁰ Efforts to curb corruption include registering police members, issuing identification cards, and using an electronic pay system.

Military

The Afghan National Army (ANA) was created by the United States and NATO allies after the overthrow of the Taliban.⁴⁰¹ It operates from five regional commands, or corps, located in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Gardez, and Mazar-e Sharif. It is divided into battalions called *kandaks*, usually infantry, as the basic units.⁴⁰² Keeping the desertion rate low and recruiting an ethnically diverse army was a major challenge in the beginning. Although the desertion rate has dropped to 20% over the years and the ethnic



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Afghan military

³⁹⁴ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 32, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

³⁹⁵ INTERPOL, “Afghanistan,” 2012, <http://www.interpol.int/Member-countries/Asia-South-Pacific/Afghanistan>

³⁹⁶ Thomas Harding and James Kirkup, “Afghan National Police Penetrated by Taliban at ‘Every Level,’” *Telegraph* (UK), 4 November 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6502175/Afghan-National-Police-penetrated-by-Taliban-at-every-level.html>

³⁹⁷ C. J. Radin, “Afghan Police Update: February 2009,” *The Long War Journal*, 26 February 2009, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/02/afghan_police_update.php

³⁹⁸ Mirwais Harooni, “Billions Spent on Afghan Police but Brutality, Corruption Prevail,” Reuters, 24 August 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/24/us-afghanistan-police-crime-idUSTRE77N10U20110824>

³⁹⁹ C. J. Radin, “Afghan Police Update: February 2009,” *The Long War Journal*, 26 February 2009, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/02/afghan_police_update.php

⁴⁰⁰ Thomas Harding and James Kirkup, “Afghan National Police Penetrated by Taliban at ‘Every Level,’” *Telegraph* (UK), 4 November 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6502175/Afghan-National-Police-penetrated-by-Taliban-at-every-level.html>
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6502175/Afghan-National-Police-penetrated-by-Taliban-at-every-level.html>

⁴⁰¹ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 34, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

⁴⁰² Institute for the Study of War, “Afghanistan National Army (ANA),” 2010, <http://www.understandingwar.org/themenode/afghanistan-national-army-ana>

percentages are now roughly comparable to the nation as a whole, many ANA units continue to work at roughly 50% of their operational strength and face equipment shortages.⁴⁰³ As of April 2012, the total ANA force consisted of 195,000 personnel and is not planned to grow beyond this level.⁴⁰⁴ A goal of the U.S. and allied forces is training the ANSF in anticipation of a 2014 pullout of the majority of international forces. As of May 2012, ANSF units were the lead in about 40% of combat operations.⁴⁰⁵ The ANA is considered superior to the police force in terms of professional capability; however, obstacles including illiteracy, homesickness, new equipment, and the reluctance of some personnel to fight other Muslims continue to be addressed.⁴⁰⁶

The Afghan Air Force (AAF) operates from airfields in Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat, and Gardez.⁴⁰⁷ The AAF engages primarily in support missions to escort and transport passengers and supplies and humanitarian assistance.⁴⁰⁸ It has made significant progress in organizational effectiveness because of training and donations from the international community. Training and equipment is provided partly by the ISAF under the U.S.-led Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan.⁴⁰⁹ With 400 pilots, 86 aircraft, and a total of 5,240 personnel, the AAF is steadily expanding to a planned fleet of 145 aircraft and 8,000 personnel by 2016. The AAF's progress has helped make the ANA nearly self-sufficient in its airlift operations.⁴¹⁰

Terrorist Groups and Activities

Taliban

The Taliban (literally, “students”), a multi-ethnic but predominantly Pashtun Islamist group headed by Mullah Mohammed Omar, ruled Afghanistan for 5 years until it was ousted by the U.S. invasion in 2001. During the mid-1990s, the international community and Afghans initially hoped that the Taliban would restore order in Afghanistan after decades of war and civil strife. In a country weary of violence and brutality, the Taliban's promise of a return to Islamic values appealed to the Afghan people. But the Taliban's extreme fundamentalist interpretation of Islam alienated Afghans and caused even more suffering through human rights abuses, particularly against women and girls. Many Taliban followers were students recruited from the Saudi-supported religious schools, or *madrassas*, in Pakistan's refugee camps, where a mix of

⁴⁰³ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 34–35, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

⁴⁰⁴ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 32, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

⁴⁰⁵ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 31, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

⁴⁰⁶ Pamela Constable, “With U.S. and British Backing, Afghan Army Steps Up Training to Battle Taliban,” *Washington Post*, 2 August 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/01/AR2009080101923.html?sid=ST2009080101925>

⁴⁰⁷ C. J. Radin, “Afghan National Army Air Corps: February 2009,” *The Long War Journal*, 26 February 2009, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/02/afghan_national_army.php

⁴⁰⁸ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 35, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

⁴⁰⁹ International Security Assistance Force, NATO, “ISAF's Support to the Afghan National Army Air Corps,” 29 April 2009, <http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/anaac/index.html>

⁴¹⁰ Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 35, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

ultraconservative Pakistani Deobandi and Saudi Wahabbi beliefs formed the base of the curriculum.⁴¹¹ The Taliban's human rights violations, its sheltering of al-Qaeda's leader Osama bin Laden, and its support of international terrorism soon made the group targets in the international "war against terror."

Since their ouster in 2001, the Taliban continues guerrilla fighting in the mountainous regions along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border. They are also active in the provinces of southern Afghanistan. Mullah Omar and other members of the Taliban leadership are now believed to be based in the city of Quetta, in Pakistan's Balochistan Province. Since 2007, the Taliban has effectively become two mutually supportive organizations with separate targets—the original Afghan Taliban and the more recent Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP). The TTP has focused its attacks on military and governmental targets in Pakistan, and is most noted for controlling much of Pakistan's Swat Valley between 2007 and 2009.⁴¹² The TTP has established links to the remnants of al-Qaeda who left Afghanistan for Pakistan during Operation Enduring Freedom in late 2001. In exchange for al-Qaeda organizational and tactical support, the TTP has provided safe haven for al-Qaeda members in its strongholds in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).^{413, 414}

Haqqani Network

Recent years have seen an escalation of suicide bombings and brazen daylight attacks on embassy buildings, five-star hotels, banks, and other high-profile targets in Kabul and other cities. It is believed that most of these have been carried out by the so-called Haqqani network, whose namesake, Jalluddin Haqqani, was one of the *mujahideen* militia leaders during the Afghan War against the Soviet occupation. During the 1980s, Haqqani was hailed as a "freedom fighter" by many and even joined several other *mujahideen* leaders in a visit with President Ronald Reagan at the White House.^{415, 416}

Today, Haqqani's militant organization, based out of North Waziristan in Pakistan's FATA Province, has been described as "perhaps the most potent threat to Afghan security."⁴¹⁷ The aging Haqqani has now passed along much of the daily operations of his group to his sons Sirajuddin and Badruddin, who maintain close ties with the Taliban and al-Qaeda but often act

⁴¹¹ Ahmed Rashid, "The Taliban: Exporting Extremism," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1999, <http://www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/Rashid99.html#p2>

⁴¹² Tara McKelvey, "A Return to Hell in Swat," *Foreign Policy*, 2 March 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/02/a_return_to_hell_in_swat

⁴¹³ Gonzalo Fernández, "The Taliban-Pakistan Movement and the Challenges for Security in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)," Grupo de Estudios Internacionales Contemporáneos, 2011, 4, <http://www.geic.com.ar/2010/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/AI-022-2011.pdf>

⁴¹⁴ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Ch. 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," *Country Reports on Terrorism 2010*, 18 August 2011, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2010/170264.htm>

⁴¹⁵ Reuters, "Haqqani: From White House Guest to Staunch U.S. Enemy," 31 May 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/14/us-kabul-attack-haqqani-idUSTRE78D1UG20110914>

⁴¹⁶ Mark Mazzetti, Scott Shane, and Alissa J. Rubin, "Brutal Haqqani Crime Clan Bedevils U.S. in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 24 September 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/25/world/asia/brutal-haqqani-clan-bedevils-united-states-in-afghanistan.html?_r=2&sq=haqqani&st=cse&scp=2&pagewanted=print

⁴¹⁷ Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, 15, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

independently of them. In fact, the Haqqanis have been accused of being more closely aligned to the needs and wishes of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) than those of Mullah Omar or other Taliban leaders.⁴¹⁸ Kidnappings, extortion, and smuggling operations are some of the other activities that the Haqqani network carries out, making it unclear whether the Haqqanis are a true radical Islam group or an opportunistic crime syndicate open for hire.⁴¹⁹

Issues Affecting Stability

Opium Production

Shortly before it was overthrown, the Taliban government outlawed poppy cultivation and threatened those who violated this prohibition with harsh consequences.⁴²⁰ This was seen by some experts as a marketing strategy. By keeping production low, the Taliban kept their stockpile's international price high.^{421, 422, 423}

Since the regime was ousted from power, the Taliban and associated insurgent groups have actively encouraged farmers to plant poppy, a cash crop, as a means to finance their own activities. The ethical concerns of farmers have been allayed on the grounds that the end users are non-Muslims.⁴²⁴



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Opium Production

President Hamid Karzai acknowledged the magnitude of the problem by declaring *jihad* on poppy cultivation, opium production, and drug trafficking shortly after his inauguration in December 2004.⁴²⁵ This commitment to ridding the nation of the opium trade had little effect. In 2011, as many hectares of land were under poppy cultivation as in 2004.⁴²⁶ Although 15 provinces were opium-free in 2012 and opium cultivation was significant in several others, 4 southern and western provinces (Helmand, Kandahar, Farah, and Uruzgan) continued to see high

⁴¹⁸ Mark Mazzetti, Scott Shane, and Alissa J. Rubin, "Brutal Haqqani Crime Clan Bedevils U.S. in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 24 September 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/25/world/asia/brutal-haqqani-clan-bedevils-united-states-in-afghanistan.html?_r=2&sq=haqqani&st=cse&scp=2&pagewanted=print

⁴¹⁹ Mark Mazzetti, Scott Shane, and Alissa J. Rubin, "Brutal Haqqani Crime Clan Bedevils U.S. in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 24 September 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/25/world/asia/brutal-haqqani-clan-bedevils-united-states-in-afghanistan.html?_r=2&sq=haqqani&st=cse&scp=2&pagewanted=print

⁴²⁰ Opioids.com, "Afghanistan, Opium and the Taliban," 15 February 2001, <http://opioids.com/afghanistan/index.html>

⁴²¹ Mir Hekmatullah Sadat, "Chasing the Dragon in the Golden Crescent: Story of Afghan Opium," *Afghan Magazine*, August 2004, http://www.afghanmagazine.com/2004_08/articles/hsadat.shtml

⁴²² *Economist*, "Another Powder Trail," 18 October 2001, <http://www.economist.com/node/822303>

⁴²³ Gretchen Peters, "How Opium Profits the Taliban," United States Institute of Peace, August 2009, 14, http://www.usip.org/files/resources/taliban_opium_1.pdf

⁴²⁴ Tom Coghlan, "Ch. 6: The Taliban in Helmand: An Oral History," in *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights From the Afghan Field* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 201–202.

⁴²⁵ Alexia Mikhos, "Analysis: Afghanistan's Drugs Challenge," *NATO Review*, Spring 2006, <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2006/issue1/english/analysis.html>

⁴²⁶ UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "Ch. I: Recent Statistics and Trend Analysis of Illicit Drug Markets," *World Drug Report 2012*, 2012, 28, http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2012/WDR_2012_web_small.pdf

levels of cultivation, and 5 other provinces (Nangarhar, Nimruz, Badghis, Badakhan, Day Kundi) had moderate levels of cultivation.⁴²⁷

Afghanistan is the leading producer of opium, making about 80–90% of the world's total.^{428, 429} According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime data, the Taliban may make an annual revenue of as much as USD 500 million from every stage of the drug trade.⁴³⁰

In addition to destroying crops on the ground, donor countries are promoting alternative crops, and the U.S. is deploying increasing numbers of Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agents to target drug networks.⁴³¹ Afghanistan's justice system is also being developed to punish drug traffickers within the rule of law.⁴³² Nearly 40% of the heroin from Afghanistan is trafficked through the porous border into Pakistan, approximately 30% into Iran, and 25% into Central Asia.⁴³³

Poverty

Rampant poverty and lack of employment opportunities provides recruitment opportunities for the Taliban. Many young Afghans join the Taliban because the insurgent group can offer a little spending money and other basic incentives.⁴³⁴ Afghanistan ranks as one of the world's poorest nations in numerous measures. According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, about one-third of Afghans live in severe poverty, while another 37% teeter on the brink of this category.⁴³⁵ Afghanistan has the world's lowest human



DoD image: SGT Jennifer Cohen
Elderly Afghan woman

⁴²⁷ UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2012 (Phases 1 & 2)," April 2012, 7, http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/ORAS_report_2012.pdf

⁴²⁸ UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "Addiction, Crime and Insurgency: The Transnational Threat of Afghan Opium," 1, 10, October 2009, http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan//Counter_Narcotics/Addiction_Crime_and_Insurgency_The_transnational_threat_of_Afghan_opium.pdf

⁴²⁹ UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "Ch.1: Recent Statistics and Trend Analysis of Illicit Drug Markets," *World Drug Report 2012*, 2012, 28, http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2012/WDR_2012_web_small.pdf

⁴³⁰ Gretchen Peters, "How Opium Profits the Taliban," United States Institute of Peace, August 2009, 23–24, http://www.usip.org/files/resources/taliban_opium_1.pdf The New York Times. "Taliban." 19 October 2009. <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/t/taliban/index.html>

⁴³¹ Josh Meyer, "US Increasing Counter-Narcotics Efforts in Afghanistan," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 July 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jul/20/world/fg-dea-afghan20>

⁴³² National Public Radio, "US Targets Taliban-Drug Trade Link in Afghanistan," 21 August 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=111790387>

⁴³³ UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "Addiction, Crime and Insurgency: The Transnational Threat of Afghan Opium," 1, 11, October 2009, http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan//Counter_Narcotics/Addiction_Crime_and_Insurgency_The_transnational_threat_of_Afghan_opium.pdf

⁴³⁴ IRIN News, "Afghanistan: Poverty Pushing Youth into Arms of Taliban?" 27 February 2008, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=76986>

⁴³⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Human Rights Dimension of Poverty in Afghanistan," March 2010, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4bbc313d2.pdf>

development index score among non-African countries in the UN's 2011 Human Development Report. The average life expectancy at birth for Afghans is 49.7 years, which is strikingly low because the only countries with similar values are sub-Saharan nations where the AIDS epidemic has markedly reduced longevity.⁴³⁶ In 2010, a British research agency listed Afghanistan as the country with the world's most vulnerable food supply.⁴³⁷ A recent United Nations report estimated that 68% of the Afghan population suffered from some form of food insecurity.⁴³⁸

Frustration is high for returning refugees because of the difficulty finding a job in their homeland. The unemployment rate was estimated to be 35% in 2008 and as high as 60% in parts of the country.^{439, 440}

Water Security

Decades of war and internal conflict have destroyed much of Afghanistan's irrigation system and infrastructure, and weakened institutions that manage water resources. As a result, Afghanistan cannot meet its domestic, industrial, and agricultural water needs at current water levels.

Afghanistan's water shortage also stems from the inefficient and inappropriate use of basins, watersheds, and aquifers, partly for reasons of poverty and because of tribal territorial conflicts.^{441, 442}

The Afghanistan government fully understands the importance of effectively and fairly utilizing its valuable water resources, so a National Water Law was passed in 2009 that provides the basis for best practices for integrated water resource management.⁴⁴³

Extreme weather and climate conditions are a significant factor in Afghanistan's overall water security. Floods, which are common during periods of heavy rain or fast snowmelt, damage irrigation systems and destroy agricultural land and infrastructure.⁴⁴⁴ Afghanistan also suffers from regular, often long periods of drought. The nation's last major drought lasted from 1997 to 2009, and resulted from diminished snow packs, warmer temperatures (less precipitation as snow



© Munir Squires
Warning sign at lake

⁴³⁶ United Nations Development Programme, "Table 1—Human Development Index and Its Components," 2011 *Human Development Reports*, 2012, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/103106.html>

⁴³⁷ CNN, "Afghanistan, Africa Most at Risk for Food Shortage, UN Says," 19 August 2010, http://articles.cnn.com/2010-08-19/world/world.food.shortage_1_food-shortage-african-nations-food-insecurity?_s=PM:WORLD

⁴³⁸ United Nations Consolidated Appeals Process, "Consolidated Appeal for Afghanistan 2011," 20 July 2011, <http://ochaonline.un.org/humanitarianappeal/webpage.asp?Page=1956>

⁴³⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Afghanistan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 20 June 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

⁴⁴⁰ IRIN News, "Afghanistan: Poverty Pushing Youth into Arms of Taliban?" 27 February 2008, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=76986>

⁴⁴¹ USAID, "Afghanistan Water, Agriculture, and Technology Transfer Project," n.d., <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/Activity.110.aspx>

⁴⁴² Environment News Service, "Water Management Key to Lifting Afghanistan Out of Poverty," 8 July 2009, <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/jul2009/2009-07-08-02.asp>

⁴⁴³ Matthew King and Benjamin Sturtewagen, "Introduction," in *Making the Most of Afghanistan's River Basins: Opportunities for Regional Cooperation* (New York: EastWest Institute, February 2010), 3.

⁴⁴⁴ USAID, "Restoring Watersheds Helps Farmers," 17 April 2011, http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/USAID/Article/2200/Restoring_Watersheds_Helps_Farmers

rather than rain), and low precipitation.⁴⁴⁵ More recently, drought conditions occurred during 2011, leaving 2.6 million people in northern and central provinces in need of food assistance.⁴⁴⁶ Afghanistan's relative shortage of water-storage facilities increases its susceptibility to drought and flood conditions during periods of precipitation extremes.⁴⁴⁷ Although large-scale structures such as dams are most common today, Afghanistan has had success in the past using snow-harvesting pits, water-harvesting ponds, and *karezes* as means of storing water.⁴⁴⁸

Water security is essential for the prosperity and growth of Afghanistan's agricultural sector. Agriculture provides a livelihood for about 80% of the Afghan population and accounts for more than one-third of GDP.⁴⁴⁹ The agricultural sector is also responsible for about 95% of Afghanistan's water usage.⁴⁵⁰ Irrigation water traditionally has been a major component of Afghanistan's agricultural productivity, but its contribution has been declining over the last three or four decades. The amount of land irrigated in 2011 is only 60% of the total acreage under irrigation during the mid-1970s.⁴⁵¹

Outlook

Afghanistan is undergoing a transition as its security forces increasing their lead role in combat operations, while U.S. and allied forces move toward a training and support role. Present plans are for the majority of U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan to be out by 2014. The looming deadline has generated several concerns. Foremost is that the security gains of recent years could be jeopardized as the Afghan forces face both a well-funded insurgency with safe havens in Pakistan and eroding support for a central government that many Afghans view as weak and corrupt.⁴⁵²

Talk of a political solution to the Afghan insurgency have increased since 2011, with several attempts by both the U.S. and Afghanistan to bring the Taliban into peace talks. Pakistan is viewed by Afghanistan as potentially playing a key role in facilitating the peace discussions.⁴⁵³ As of mid-2012, these efforts have not borne any fruit, although there are signs that discussions

⁴⁴⁵ David B. Williams, "Finding Water in the Heart of Darkness: Afghanistan's Ongoing Water Challenges," *Earth*, July 2009, <http://www.earthmagazine.org/article/finding-water-heart-darkness-afghanistans-ongoing-water-challenges>

⁴⁴⁶ BBC News, "Afghanistan Appeals for Aid as Drought Looms," 5 October 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-15193573>

⁴⁴⁷ Centre for Policy and Human Development, Kabul University, "Afghanistan Human Development Report 2011: The Forgotten Front: Water Security and the Crisis in Sanitation," 2011, 5.

⁴⁴⁸ Centre for Policy and Human Development, Kabul University, "Afghanistan Human Development Report 2011: The Forgotten Front: Water Security and the Crisis in Sanitation," 2011, 8.

⁴⁴⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Afghanistan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 20 June 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

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⁴⁵² Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy: Summary," Congressional Research Service, 3 May 2012, iii, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>

⁴⁵³ Tom Wright, "Pakistan Urges Taliban to Participate in Talks," *Wall Street Journal*, 25 February 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203918304577242863046312048.html>

with militant leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who operates out of eastern Pakistan, may prove more successful.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁴ Karen DeYoung, “As U.S.-Taliban Talks Stall, Hope for Political Solution Dims,” *Washington Post*, 9 May 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/as-us-taliban-talks-stall-hope-for-political-solution-dims/2012/05/09/gIQArTLMCU_story.html

Chapter 5 Assessment

1. Iran has contributed to the rebuilding of Afghanistan's economy and infrastructure.

TRUE

Iran has supported the Afghan government's efforts to rebuild since 2001. Because of its often tense relationship with Pakistan, Afghanistan has increasingly relied on its border with Iran to receive critical imports from around the world, including about 50% of its oil. Iran has contributed greatly to the security and development of Afghanistan through joint cultural, trade, investment, transportation infrastructure, and energy projects, mostly in the western provinces.

2. The Afghan National Army (ANA) was created by the United States and NATO allies after the overthrow of the Taliban.

TRUE

The Afghan National Army (ANA) was created by the United States and NATO allies after the overthrow of the Taliban. It operates from five regional commands, or corps, located in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Gardez, and Mazar-e Sharif.

3. The Afghan National Marine Corps (ANMC) engages primarily in support missions to escort and transport passengers and supplies.

FALSE

The Afghan Air Force (AAF) operates from airfields in Kabul, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat, and Gardez. The AAF engages primarily in support missions to escort and transport passengers and supplies and humanitarian assistance.

4. The Afghan refugees remaining in Iran represent the world's largest refugee population in any one nation.

FALSE

Millions of Afghani refugees fled into Pakistan, beginning with the Soviet invasion in December 1979. Although many Afghan refugees returned after the Taliban government fell in 2001, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) estimates that over 1.7 million Afghan refugees remain in Pakistan as of 2012, the largest refugee population in any nation.

5. About one-third of Afghans live in severe poverty.

TRUE

According to the UNHCR, about one-third of Afghans live in severe poverty, while another 37% teeter on the brink of this category.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. Afghanistan's major port is in Herat.
TRUE / FALSE
2. About four earthquakes of Richter magnitude 5.0 or above occur each year in the Hindu Kush region of Afghanistan.
TRUE / FALSE
3. About 400,000 people in Afghanistan are affected by natural disasters annually.
TRUE / FALSE
4. About one-tenth of Afghanistan's area is covered with forest.
TRUE / FALSE
5. The lack of access to water resources and sanitation is almost exclusively a rural problem in Afghanistan.
TRUE / FALSE
6. The Muslim conquest of Afghanistan took less than 50 years.
TRUE / FALSE
7. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan right after the 1973 coup.
TRUE / FALSE
8. By the ninth century, most inhabitants in what is now Afghanistan had converted to Shi'a Islam.
TRUE / FALSE
9. The main opposition to the Taliban within Afghanistan was the Northern Alliance.
TRUE / FALSE
10. The security situation in Afghanistan improved after the 2005 elections.
TRUE / FALSE
11. Less than one-tenth of Afghanistan's land area is cultivated.
TRUE / FALSE
12. In 2010, the majority of Afghanistan's exports went to China.
TRUE / FALSE
13. Much of Afghanistan's increasing power supply since 2006 has come from electricity purchased from neighboring countries.
TRUE / FALSE

14. About 90% of the Afghan government budget comes from international donors.
TRUE / FALSE
15. Opium production has decreased markedly since the fall of the Taliban in 2001.
TRUE / FALSE
16. The division between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims occurred in the 18th century during the colonial period.
TRUE / FALSE
17. *Buzkashi* is a popular Pashtun dish made with goat meat.
TRUE / FALSE
18. The Taliban stopped all activities deemed anti-Islamic, including kite fighting.
TRUE / FALSE
19. Omar Khayyam is considered the national poet of modern Afghanistan.
TRUE / FALSE
20. The many Afghan women who follow the *purdah* custom by concealing themselves in public often wear the *chadri*, a garment that covers the entire body except the eyes.
TRUE / FALSE
21. China has refused to provide humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan.
TRUE / FALSE
22. The Taliban continues to be active in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
TRUE / FALSE
23. The Haqqani network is a crime syndicate that smuggles opium and heroin out of Afghanistan via Iran.
TRUE / FALSE
24. The Taliban government outlawed poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.
TRUE / FALSE
25. Afghanistan is the world's leading producer of opium.
TRUE / FALSE

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