

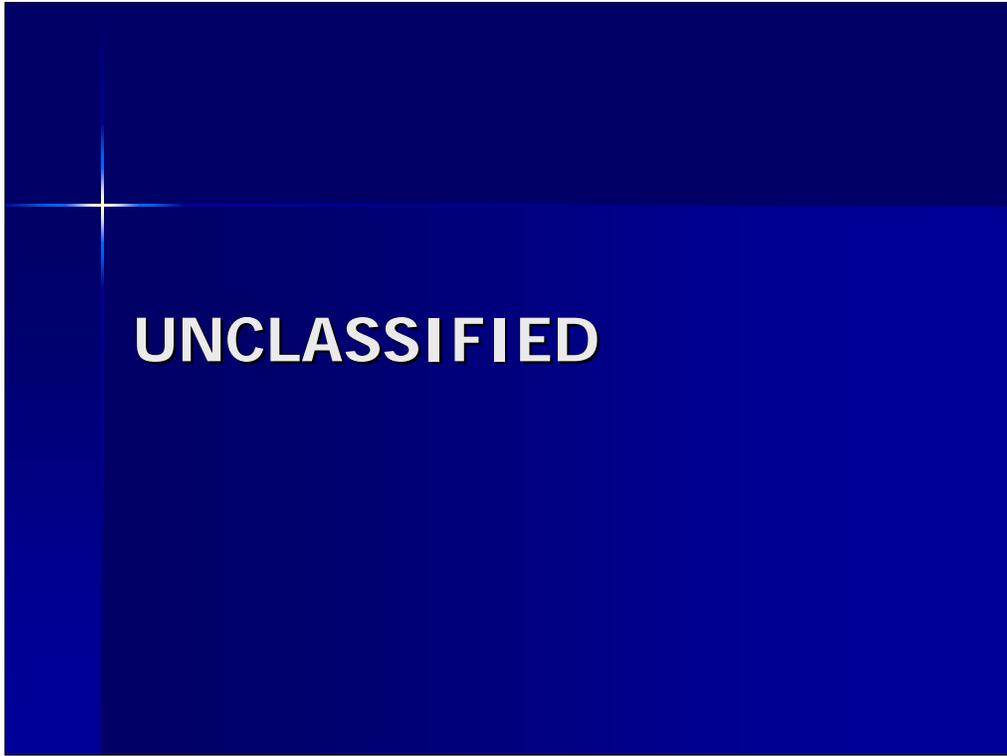
Afghanistan

The Study of a Nation

2004



Afghanistan: The Study of a Nation, 2004



Unclassified

Objective

- Action: Identify key aspects of the History, Geography, Culture, and Government of Afghanistan.
- Conditions: Given student handouts
- Standards: Identified key aspects of the History, Geography, Culture, and Government of Afghanistan.

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Administrative

- There are no safety requirements.
- The risk assessment level is low.
- There are no environmental considerations
- Evaluations Student Checks

Administrative data

There are no safety requirements.

Risk

Assessment Level: The risk assessment level is low.

Environmental

Considerations: There are no environmental considerations.

Evaluation: Student checks

Afghanistan

- Geography
- People
- Culture
- History
- Economy
- Government

Topics to be discussed include:

Geography



■ Overview

- Slightly smaller than Texas
- South Central Asia
- Neighbors
 - Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China
- Varying Geography
 - Similar to Western U.S.

Overview. The country of Afghanistan located in south-central Asia, is a high, landlocked country a little smaller than Texas. It is bordered on the west by Iran and on the east and south by Pakistan. Its northern neighbors are Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan and China lies to the northeast.

There is wide variation in the country's geography, including the fertile mountain valleys in the east, plains and grasslands in the north, a central mountain core, and deserts and semi-deserts in the west and southwest. In terms of its mountain ruggedness and its climate of hot summers and bitterly cold winters, it is much like Wyoming. Temperatures vary according to altitude, but in general the average highs are above 90° F in the summers, and the winter lows drop well below freezing.

Geography

- The Land
 - Landlocked
 - Hindu Kush & Pamir Knot Mtns dominate terrain
 - Avg 16000 ft
 - Frequent Earthquakes

The Land. Located in south-central Asia, Afghanistan is a high, landlocked country a little smaller than Texas. In terms of its mountain ruggedness and its climate of hot summers and bitterly cold winters, it is much like Wyoming. Temperatures vary according to altitude, but in general the average highs are above 90° F in the summers, and the winter lows drop well below freezing.

The mountains of the Hindu Kush and the Pamir Knot dominate the country. The Hindu Kush runs roughly east to west through the central part of Afghanistan, with peaks averaging 15,000 to 16,000 feet. The Pamir Knot is a range of high peaks in the Wakhan Corridor, the finger of territory extending from the northeast part of the country. Well over 80% of the Pamir Knot is above 10,000 feet in altitude, with peaks as high as 24,000 feet. While there are a number of passes through the mountains, primarily the Hindu Kush, most are closed by snow in the winter, and only a few have paved roads. During the summers, the passes are navigable by heavy vehicles, but horses, mules, and camels are probably the most efficient means of transport. The Panjshir Valley runs through the Hindu Kush, north of Kabul.

To the west of the Hindu Kush, the land gradually slopes downward into sparsely inhabited, arid to semiarid rocky deserts, broken only by the river systems – the Amu Darya (Oxus), the Hari Rud, the Hilmand-Arghandab, and the Kabul. Most of the water in Afghanistan comes from these great river systems that carry the snowmelt from the mountains into the lower areas of the country, in yearly floods that frequently destroy crops and villages. It has long been recognized that the river systems have the capability to irrigate extensive drier areas through dams, water storage, and irrigation programs. Afghanistan does not suffer from a lack of water but rather from the inability to control and use the water it has.

Plate-tectonic activity in Afghanistan has contributed to the creation of the geologic riches of the country, but has also produced frequent and sometimes deadly earthquakes. Roughly fifty earthquakes are recorded each year. Although most are relatively mild, the most severe earthquakes in recent history occurred in July 1985 and March 2002. Both measured around 7.2 on the Richter scale with their epicenters sited in the Hindu Kush.

Geography

- Water
 - No lack of water
 - Improper management
 - Amu Darya
 - Hilmand-Arghandab
 - Hari Rud
 - Kabul
 - To the Indus
 - Dams

Water. Afghanistan has many rivers, river basins, lakes, and desert areas. The four major river systems are:

- 1) The Amu Darya, the Oxus of antiquity, which forms the boundary with Central Asia. The portion of the river within Afghanistan is 683.5 miles long.
- 2) The Hilmand-Arghandab, which is 808 miles long.
- 3) the Hari Rud, the Afghanistan portion of which is 404 miles long.
- 4) The Kabul, which is 286 miles long.

Only the Kabul River, which joins the Indus system in Pakistan, leads to the sea. The other rivers and streams empty into other dry portions of the country, expend through evaporation, or flow only seasonally.

There are three major dams in the country that harness these rivers for land reclamation and hydroelectric purposes. They are:

- 1) The Arghandab Dam above Kandahar, which was completed in 1952. At 145 feet high and 1,740 feet long, this dam provides a storage capacity of 388,000 acre-feet of water.
- 2) The Kajakai Dam on the Hilmand River, which was completed in 1953. This dam is 300 feet high and 887 feet long, with a storage capacity of 1,495,000 acre-feet of water.
- 3) The Naglu Dam on the Kabul River west of Jalalabad, which was completed in the 1960s. This dam is 361 feet high and 919 feet long, and stores 304,000 acre-feet of water.

These large dams were not destroyed by war. However, due to lack of maintenance, looted cables, and major silting in the reservoirs, none are functioning at full capacity.

Geography

■ Climate

- Arid to Semiarid Steppe
 - Winters are very Cold
 - Northern Mtns are Sub-Arctic in Winter
 - Summers are very hot
- “Wind of 120 Days”
- Dust Storms
- Effects of Precipitation

Climate. The climate of Afghanistan is typical of an arid or semiarid steppe. The winters are characteristically very cold, with temperatures dropping well below freezing, while the summers are hot and dry. The mountain regions of the northeast are sub-arctic, with dry, cold winters. Along the mountains that border Pakistan, there are some fringe effects from the monsoon, which brings tropical air masses that impact the climate between July and September. These air masses, at times, can advance into central and southern Afghanistan, bringing increased humidity and some rain.

On the intermountain plateaus, the winds do not blow very strongly. However, in the Sistan Basin near Iran, severe blizzards can occur during winter, generally December through February. The “wind of 120 days” is a northerly wind that blows across the western and southern regions of Afghanistan during the summer months of June to September. This wind is usually accompanied by intense heat, drought, and sand storms. In addition, dust and whirlwinds frequently occur during the summer months on the flats in the southern part of the country. Rising at midday or in the early afternoon, these “dust winds” advance at velocities ranging between 60 and 110 miles per hour, raising high clouds of dust.

Temperature and precipitation are controlled by the exchange of air masses. The highest temperatures and the lowest precipitation occur in the southern plateau region where the land is drought-ridden and poorly watered. This region extends over the boundaries into Iran and Pakistan.

The Central Mountains represent another distinct climatic region. From the Koh-e Baba Range to the Pamir Knot, January temperatures may drop to 5 F or lower in the highest mountain areas; July temperatures vary between 32 and 80 F depending on altitude. In the mountains, the annual mean precipitation, most of which is snow, increases eastward. Precipitation in these regions and the eastern monsoon area is about 16 inches per year. Permanent snow covers the highest mountain peaks with depths as much as 6.6 feet during the winter months.

Precipitation generally fluctuates greatly during the course of the year in all parts of the country. Surprise rainstorms often transform the episodically flowing rivers and streams from puddles to torrents; unwary invading armies have been trapped in such flooding more than once in Afghanistan's history. Nomadic and semi-nomadic Afghans have also succumbed to the sudden flooding of their camps.

The climate of the Turkistan Plains, which extend northward from the Northern Foothills, represents a transition between mountain and steppe climates. Aridity increases and temperatures rise with the drop in altitude.

People

■ Overview

- Approx 28 Mil
- Ethnic Mosaic
 - No real boundaries
- First Loyalty to family and tribe
- Afghan Nationalism is an abstract idea
 - Language and culture guide associations
- Share basic qualities

Overview. Afghanistan has never been inhabited by only one ethnic group. Its ethnic mosaic has no precise boundaries, nor is its national culture uniform. Few of its ethnic groups are indigenous and few maintain racial homogeneity. The modern country's boundaries were determined by the interests of foreign powers, and on every side they cut arbitrarily through land traditionally occupied by one ethnic group or another. Its citizens naturally identify with those who speak their language and share their culture. Their loyalty is first to their local leaders and their tribe. Identification with an abstract Afghan nation has always been fragile.

While the different groups differ in language and culture, they also share fundamental qualities. One of the most striking qualities of the Afghan people is their toughness and resilience. Popular culture is based on tradition, steeped in religion and colored by tribal war, romance, and magic.

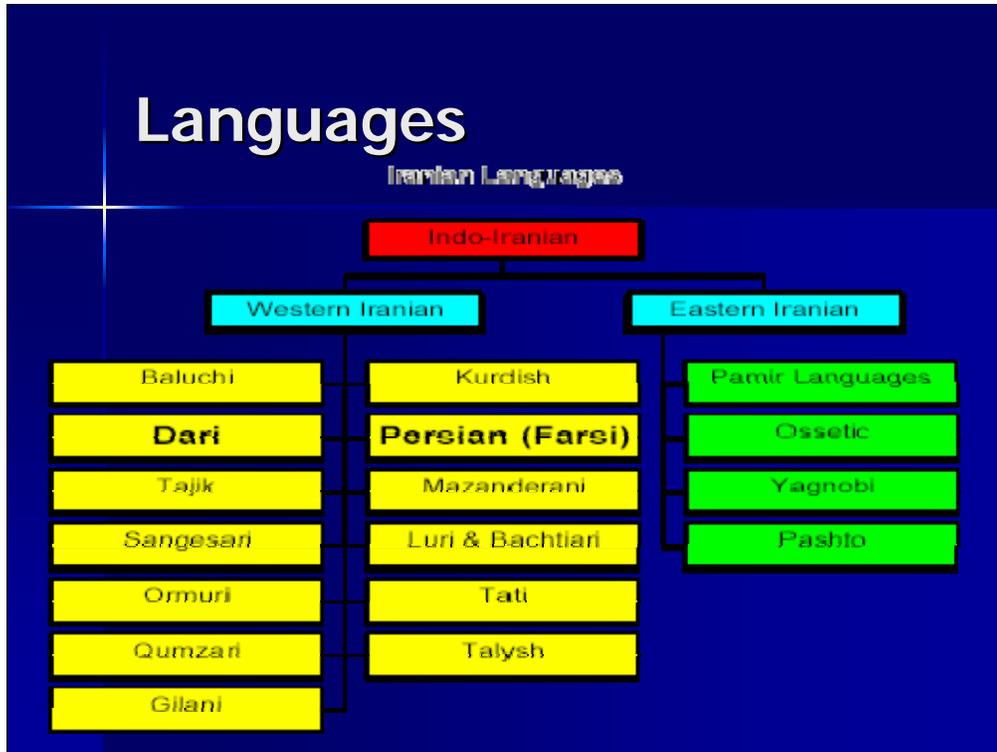
There has never been an accurate population census taken in Afghanistan, but the most common estimate is approximately 28 million. One out of five people are thought to be in refugee camps along the country's borders and in neighboring nations. Pakistan has given refuge to 3 million Afghan refugees.

Ethnicity only plays one part in understanding Afghanistan and its people. Afghanistan is organized according to many other factors. For example, far more Pashtuns were opposed to the Taliban than was generally reported, with two of the United Front's (Northern Alliance's) six factions being comprised primarily of Pashtuns. Afghanistan's **ethnic diversity** should also not hide the many traits which nearly all Afghans share: rugged independence and a generally egalitarian spirit. Afghans are lovers of freedom and are motivated by a common desire to resist outside influence over internal affairs. **Ethnic identities** fade in importance when Afghans sense that they are confronted with a common enemy who seek to control Afghanistan.

■ Notes Continue

Afghanistan's ethnic diversity does not mean that the members of the different ethnic groups do not interact. There is a substantial amount of intermarriage between the ethnic groups. This intermarriage tends to blur lines of loyalty between different ethnic groups. For example, the main Tajik commander around Mazar-e-Sharif, Atta Mohammed, is married to a Pashtun and owes his life to his in-laws who were able to smuggle him out of the area when the Taliban took over. Similarly, the current foreign minister, Dr. Abdullah, had a Pashtun father from Kandahar while his mother was a Tajik from the Panjshir valley. One of the current deputy defense ministers, Zabet Saleh Registani, has a Hazara mother and a Tajik father. The current Tajik Interior Minister, Yunus Qanuni, is married to a Pashtun, and the former Tajik President, Burhanuddin Rabbani, has a Pashtun daughter-in-law. Afghanistan's ethnic diversity is also complicated by the fact that the Afghan notion of ethnicity is different than the view commonly held in the West. Ethnicity or identity, known as *qawm* in Afghanistan, is not only defined by a common cultural or genetic group, but also by tribes, families, and geographic regions, or even occupations. In fact, in many instances an Afghan will not primarily define himself as a "Pashtun" or a "Tajik," but as a member of the "Zadran" tribe or an inhabitant of the "Panjshir" valley. These types of identifiers include a sense of loyalty to a group that is providing the individual with things that are essential to live. The breakdown of the state during and after the Soviet-Afghan war made these types of relationships even more important than they were earlier in this century.

These types of identifiers are not traditionally what westerner's view as ethnic characteristics, but are relevant in understanding how an individual will react in a given situation. This makes it difficult to understand Afghan ethnicity and the relationship of ethnicity to politics and security. While the larger ethnic identities of Pashtuns, Uzbeks, and Tajiks, etc., do exist, and while they are important at a general level in understanding Afghan society, politics, economics, and security, these categories are only general descriptions of how Afghans view themselves and one another. In some areas of Afghanistan, the Western notion of ethnicity has become so politicized that it has become rude to inquire immediately of an Afghan's ethnic identity (i.e. Tajik, Pashtun, Uzbek), similar to asking an American the details of his income.



Language Roots

The two major languages in Afghanistan are *Pashto* and *Persian* (Persian is known as *Dari* in Afghanistan). Both are Iranian languages. The fact that they are related is obvious even to the casual observer, although the historical connection is not very close. Dari is the principal West Iranian language and Pashto the principal East Iranian language. They may have first begun to split apart several centuries B.C.

The Iranian languages form one branch of the Indo-European language family. This family also includes the Romance languages such as French and Spanish and the Germanic languages such as German and English. Pashto and Dari are, therefore, very distantly related to English.

Uzbek and Turkmen, spoken by minorities in the northern areas of Afghanistan, are closely related to Turkish and the languages of the Central Asian republics (formerly the Soviet Socialist Republics). A good number of Afghans, especially from the southern part of the country, also speak and understand Urdu, the official literary language of Pakistan, and Punjabi, the language of Punjab in northwest India.

Although the languages in Afghanistan are written using adaptations of the Arabic alphabet, none of them are related to Arabic. Arabic is a member of the Semitic language family, which also includes Hebrew. The Semitic languages come from completely different roots than the Iranian languages spoken in Afghanistan.

Language Use

In a multi-language environment like Afghanistan, different languages are often favored in different situations. Thus, Dari may be preferred under some circumstances, while Pashto may be preferred in others.

Pashto was designated a national language of Afghanistan by the Pashtuns in the various constitutions. During the period of modernization, all non-Pashto-speaking government workers were required to learn the language. Pashto was also required as a subject in elementary schools where instruction was in Dari. The Pashto language also served as a national symbol because it is commonly associated with Afghanistan, despite the fact that around half its speakers live in Pakistan. Even so, Pashto has never had the status of Dari, which has a vast cultural and literary tradition.

■ Notes Continue

Dari speakers are more diverse. Dari has always been the prestige language in Afghanistan. It is the language used when speakers of different languages need to conduct business or otherwise communicate. In Afghanistan, all education above primary school is conducted in Dari, except specific Pashto language study. Pashto speakers are frequently bilingual in Dari, but Dari speakers rarely learn more than a few words of Pashto. Speakers of other languages in Afghanistan frequently pick up Dari as a matter of course, except in the totally Pashtun areas of the south. Both Dari and Pashto are spoken among Afghans in the United States, although Dari has been more prevalent in recent years.

Features of Dari and Pashto

Both Dari and Pashto are written using the Arabic alphabet. Although they are different languages, they share common roots in the Iranian family of languages. As such, they share common letters and some words, and their word order and verb systems are similar.

Both languages have a basic word order in which the direct object comes before the verb. They also have verb systems that resemble the English verb system in basic ways. Dari nouns have no grammatical gender, but are marked for person and number (singular and plural). Verbs agree with the subject in person and number. Pashto is more complex than Dari in terms of word formation. It has several classes of masculine and feminine nouns and adjectives as well as complex sets of weak and strong pronouns.

Dari and Pashto have many words in common. This overlapping vocabulary is a result of the ancestral words they both share as members of the Iranian language family, as well as the fact that they have been spoken side by side for centuries.

Both languages have a number of words borrowed from Arabic, as do all the languages spoken by Islamic peoples. Also, as is true of all languages, the dialects of Dari and Pashto spoken in areas adjacent to other languages are likely to have more borrowed words from those languages.

Writing Systems

Both languages are written in the Arabic alphabet, which reads from right to left and connects letters in cursive style. Dari has four extra letters to represent sounds that don't occur in Arabic. Pashto has the four extra letters that occur in Dari, plus an additional eight letters. Because the Arabic alphabet does not use symbols to represent vowels (except in the Qur'an), it is impossible to transliterate from Dari or Pashto to English letter by letter, and there are a number of ways to spell the vowels.

People

- Ethnic Groups
- Pashtuns
 - 44% of Population
 - Ethnic Majority
 - Caucasians
 - Fierce Warriors
 - Sunni
 - Distinctive tribal customs

The Pashtuns

The *Pashtuns*, or *Pushtuns*, make up approximately 44% of the population of Afghanistan, and represent the ethnic majority. Though their origin is unclear, their legends say that they are the descendants of Afghana, grandson of King Saul. Most scholars, however, believe that the Pashtuns probably arose from an intermingling of ancient and subsequent invaders.

Pashtuns are Caucasians, of medium height, with strong, straight noses and black hair. Many Pashtuns have dark eyes, although there is also a high incidence of blue, green, and gray eyes: The young girl with the unforgettable blue eyes featured in many *National Geographic* publications and posters is a Pashtun, or *Pashtana*, the feminine form. The language of the Pashtuns is *Pashto* (also spelled *Pushto*, *Pushtu*, *Pashtu*, and sometimes *Paxto*).

When Westerners caution against optimism in battle against the Afghans, it is the Pashtuns they have in mind. The 'Afghans' that the British futilely battled against in the 19th century were the Pashtuns. The majority of the *mujaheddin* ('warriors in a holy war') who ultimately drove the Soviets out of Afghanistan were Pashtuns. Much of the civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal was fought between rival Pashtun leaders, who had amassed weapons and followers during their fight against the Soviets.

Pashtuns are fierce fighters and are known for their marksmanship. They are accustomed to hardship and poverty and can prevail in conditions that would easily defeat others. At the same time, though deeply dedicated to their religious beliefs, they also cultivate nonreligious cultural traditions. They are poets with a wonderful oral literature who can quote poetry by the hour.

The Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims, but their Islamic beliefs and behavior have often been tempered and changed by cultural values. Distinctive tribal customs and traditions form an integral part of the Pashtun society. Pashtun cultural values are reflected in a code of ethics called simply *Pashto* in Pashto, and *Pashtunwali* ('the way of the Pashtun') by non-Pashtuns.

Pashtunwali includes the following practices, which are practiced religiously:

- 1) *badal* - the right of blood feuds or revenge.
- 2) *nunawati* - the right of a fugitive to seek refuge and acceptance of his bona fide offer of peace.
- 3) *melmastya* - hospitality and protection to every guest.
- 4) *isteqamat* – persistence.
- 5) *ghayrat* - defense of property and honor.
- 6) *mamus* - defense of one's female relatives.

■ Notes Continue

These elements govern Pashtun interpersonal and intertribal relationships. It is expected that a Pashtun who has been wronged will exact revenge, no matter how long it takes. It is also expected that a Pashtun who has been wronged be entitled to compensation. Such compensation would be determined by a *loya jirga*, a council of respected men. And finally, it is expected that a Pashtun will protect and shelter the guests in his household. Another feature of traditional Pashtun life is that inheritances are traditionally divided equally among all the sons, in spite of the clear teachings in the Koran that women are to receive an equal share of inheritances.

The Pashtuns have traditionally been small farmers and semi-nomads, although their way of life and their rough tribal governmental system have been completely disrupted by the events of the last 20 years.

Pashtuns -- also known as Pushtuns, Pakhtuns, Pukhtuns, Pathans -- comprise approximately 38% of Afghanistan's population, and are its largest single ethnic group. Since the founding of the modern Afghan state in 1747 by Ahmed Shah Durrani, they have been the country's dominant political group. Much of Afghanistan's early history is known through the association of Westerners -- especially the British -- with Pashtuns, because Great Britain's Indian Empire shared a border with Afghanistan's Pashtun region. More Pashtuns reside in Pakistan than Afghanistan, though they comprise only 8% of Pakistan's total population. In recent years, successive Pakistani governments have attempted to argue for a guiding role in Afghanistan based on the erroneous claim that Pashtuns comprise a majority of Afghanistan's population and that Islamabad is swayed by a large percentage of Pashtuns within its army and intelligence organizations. Historians generally agree that Afghanistan's Pashtuns migrated into Afghanistan from what is now Pakistan starting in the thirteenth century A.D. Pashtuns have generally proven themselves adept at warfare and conquest. They are well known from the British Raj tales of Rudyard Kipling in which they are depicted as good and hardy fighters. In their own oral legend, Pashtuns have claimed to be descended from one of the lost tribes of Israel.

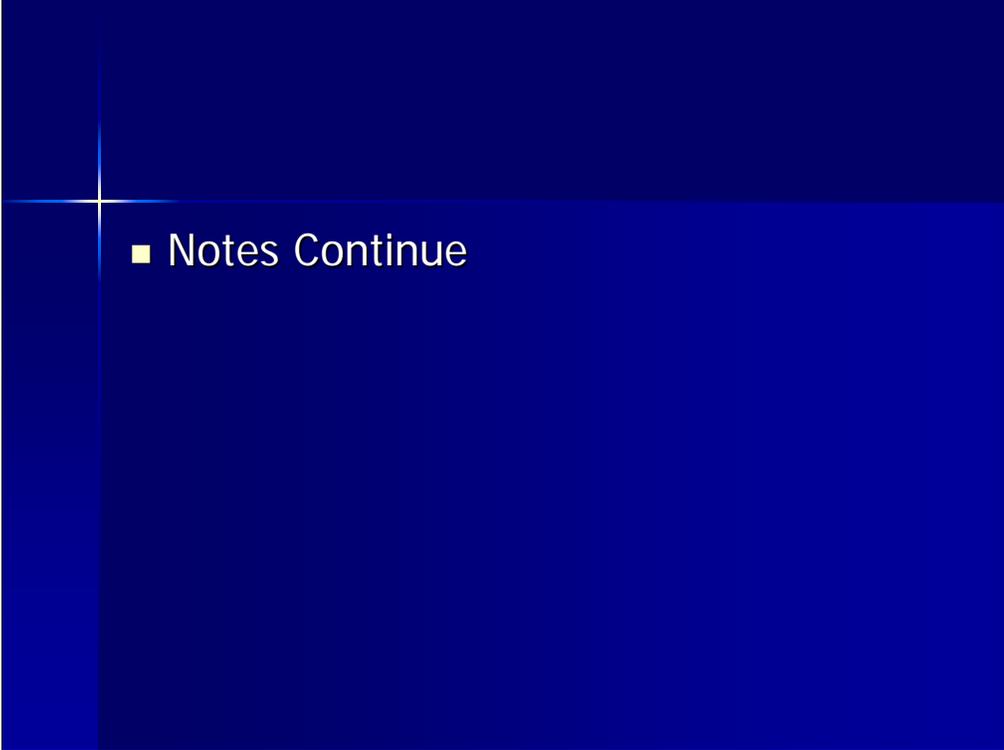
■ Notes Continue

Afghanistan's Pashtuns are divided primarily into two groups: the Ghilzais and the Durranis, with the Ghilzais residing predominantly in the eastern mountainous region of the country, and the Durranis generally present in the southern region centered around Kandahar. Additional pockets of Pashtuns - some of whom were forcibly resettled for their unruliness by past Afghan rulers -- exist in northern Afghanistan. Others -- particularly those in and around urban areas such as the capital, Kabul -- are frequently referred to as "detrribalized Pashtuns" because they have lost much of their individual tribal identification.

Cultural Mindset: The key underpinnings of Pashtun culture derive from a code of conduct known as Pushtunwali, the main elements of which are revenge (*bada*), hospitality (*melmastia*), and honor (*namus*). The concept of honor is particularly related to the behavior of the women in a given family, with that behavior determined by the male head of household (not the government, as the Taliban tried to impose). As the code's name suggests, these concepts are most closely identified with Pashtuns, though they tend to be reflected similarly throughout all of the country's ethnic groups, particularly that of honor and the duty to extend hospitality. It is no exaggeration to claim that even the poorest Afghan refugee may well offer a stranger his last bit of bread and tea and feel proud to do so.

At other times, however, these basic tenets are set aside for political expediency. Examples abound of men hosting a dinner for their rivals only to slay them. Significantly, while the Taliban often cited the requirement to provide hospitality as the reason for their sheltering Usama bin Ladin, such niceties did not extend toward those whom the militia disliked. For instance, the Shi'a Hazara leader Abdul Ali Mazari was killed in 1995 by the Taliban after they had invited him for negotiations.

The Pashtuns have negative views of the Hazaras, who they believe are second class Afghans. The Pashtuns believe that the Hazaras' Shi'a religion and Iranian identity make them untrustworthy. The Pashtuns also have negative views of the Punjabis, the dominant ethnic group in Pakistan.



- Notes Continue

Language: Pashtuns speak an Indo-European tongue of the Iranian family called Pashto (also pronounced Pushtu or Pukhtu). Pashtun leaders have historically promoted Pashtu as a symbol of Pashtun political domination in Afghanistan, even though many Pashtuns may not speak the language as their mother tongue. Instead, many Pashtuns speak Dari, the Afghan version of Persian (known in Iran as Farsi), as their first language. Pashto and Dari remain the two official languages of Afghanistan, and many non-native Dari speakers learn it as a second language.

Religion: Pashtuns are mainly Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school, while a very small number (approximately 5%) are Shi'a, residing mostly in the Kandahar area. Until recent years, Afghans prided themselves on being relatively tolerant, even though most of the people were (and are) conservative Muslims. Mullahs, a title used for both Sunni and Shi'a religious leaders in Afghanistan, tended to be apolitical and were even considered a nuisance by some. Increased contacts with more militant international Muslims starting in the 1980's, however, led to a significant proportion of Afghans, mainly Pashtuns, becoming more hardline in the practice of their religion. The Taliban represent the most extreme example of this trend, which was greatly aided by large infusions of money from other countries such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

People

- Ethnic Groups
- Tajiks & Dari Speakers
 - Historical Influence of Persia
 - Tajiks are largest group
 - Identify with the Valley in which they live
 - Hazaras
 - Farsiwan
 - Qizilbash

The Tajiks and Other Dari-Speaking Groups

The historical influence of Persia, now Iran, on the peoples of Afghanistan can be seen by the number of ethnic groups who speak *Dari*, the name given to the various dialects of Afghan Persian. The Tajiks are the largest and most influential of these groups.

Believed to be the original Persian population of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, the Tajiks live in an area stretching from northern Afghanistan, across the border from Tajikistan, into the Hindu Kush. They often identify themselves by the particular valley they live in or near.

The Afghan Tajiks are light-skinned Caucasians with aquiline noses and black hair. They share the Caucasian looks of the Iranian peoples, as well as their language. Tajiks constitute an estimated one-quarter of the population of Afghanistan. Half of the Afghans who have fled to Pakistan since 1979 are Tajiks, and approximately 65% of Afghan refugees in the United States belong to this group.

The Tajiks are 99% Muslim. They are devout Muslims and strong in their faith. A proud, hard-working people, the Tajiks are known for their warmth and gracious hospitality, though recent events have made them more apprehensive toward outsiders.

A second Dari-speaking group, the *Hazaras*, are a Mongolian people thought to have arrived in Afghanistan in the 13th and 14th centuries. They have traditionally been nomads, moving their flocks of sheep, goats, and camels from pasture to pasture in the Pamir Knot and southward into the high pasturelands of the Hindu Kush. The Hazaras make up about 10% of the country's population.

A third group, the *Farsiwan* (also called Parsiwan or Parsiban), are farmers who live near the Iranian border, although some have moved east to the larger towns of Herat, Kandahar, and Ghazni. The Farsiwan, who number about half a million, are ethnically and linguistically indistinguishable from the Iranians across the border.

Other Dari-speaking ethnic groups in Afghanistan include the *Qizilbash*, well-educated urban Afghans descended from the military and administrative personnel left behind by one of the rulers who briefly conquered some of the Pashtun tribal areas in the 18th century. The *Aimaqs* are another Persian-central Asian group, as are the *Moghols* who are scattered through central and north Afghanistan.

■ Notes Continue

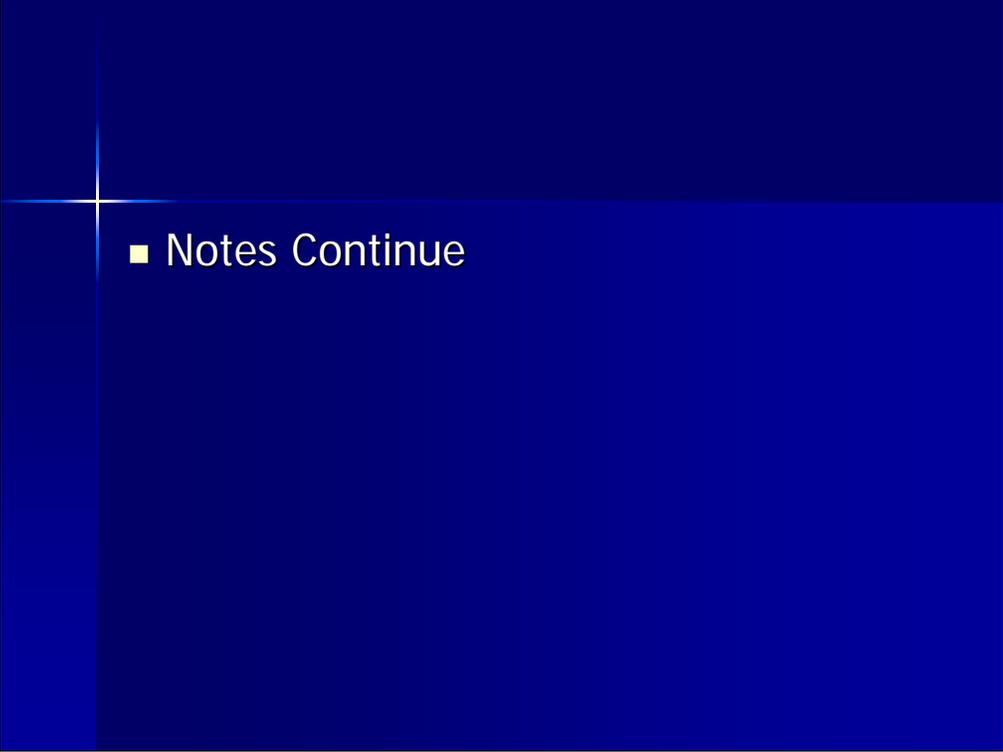
The Tajiks, often defined simply as “Persian-speaking Sunnis,” comprise at least twenty five percent of Afghanistan’s population. They were the earliest inhabitants of the land, dating back at least to the fourth to first centuries B.C. They are most numerous in the relatively densely-populated northern part of the country as well as in the cities of Kabul and Herat,

where they are sometimes referred to as Farsiwan (meaning simply “Persian speakers”). Like most Afghans, the Tajiks derive the bulk of their livelihood from agricultural pursuits. In urban areas they have become known for success in commerce and finance, and have also served as the backbone of the educated administrative elite. Tajik areas of Afghanistan contain most of the emerald and lapis lazuli mines, which have played a significant role in financing the resistance activities of the Tajiks against Kabul governments. Culturally the most advanced ethnic group in Afghanistan, the Tajiks lay claim to the rich tradition of Persian literature.

Twice in Afghanistan’s history, Tajiks held the top government post: under Amir Habibullah Kalakani in 1929 and under Burhanuddin Rabbani from 1992-1996. Since the 1980’s, Tajiks have become well known for having the most effective resistance organizations against both the Soviets and later the Taliban. Their best-known leaders dating from this period are Ismail Khan, currently the governor of Herat province, and the late Tajik General Ahmed Shah Masood (also known as ‘the Lion of the Panjshir’), a former defense minister in the Rabbani government.

Cultural Mindset: The Tajiks’ inclination toward resistance was perhaps best described by another British writer, Alexander Burnes, who wrote of the Tajiks living in the general vicinity of the Panjshir Valley: “It is a source of deep regret that this beautiful country should be inhabited by a race of men so turbulent and vindictive as the Tajiks have here proved themselves to be... their bloodfeuds are endless; a week never passes without strife or assassination.” Tajiks to this day will claim to have been unfairly portrayed by the British, whom they fault for a legacy of favoritism toward Pashtuns.

Language: Tajiks speak Afghan Persian, known as Dari, though with considerable colloquial variation among the often isolated valleys and mountain villages. Dari is a classical form of Persian and has been also influenced by Pashto. Dari differs from the Tajik language spoken in the former Soviet republic of Tajikistan, which is influenced by the Russian language and is written in the Cyrillic script. Dari (like Pashto) is written using the Arabic script. For Westerners, Dari tends to be much easier to learn than Pashto, having a less complicated case and gender system.



- Notes Continue

Religion: Tajiks are mainly Sunni Muslims, of the same Hanafi sect as the Pashtuns. While some Tajik leaders, such as Masood and Rabbani, were influenced by the more militant internationalist strain of Islam in recent years, the party they formed was more moderate than many of its Pashtun counterparts. Additionally, Tajiks tend to feel betrayed by the global fundamentalist Muslim community for the aid given to the Pashtun Taliban and its failure to criticize the atrocities committed by Arabs and Pakistanis against the Tajiks, especially in 1999.

People

- Ethnic Groups
- The Altaics
 - Path of Khan's Invasion
 - Arbitrary border
- Uzbeks are largest
 - Language closer to Turkish
 - Sunni
 - Not generally orthodox
- *Buzkashi*

The Altaic Groups

In the 13th century, Genghis Khan cut a great swath across central Asia, through what are now the countries across the Amu Darya River from Afghanistan (Kirghizstan, Tajikstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan) and westward into what is now Turkey. When Britain and Russia decided that the Amu Darya was to be the northern border between Afghanistan and Russia, the Kirghiz, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmens on the southern side of the river became Afghans. Except for the Tajiks, these peoples speak Altaic languages, which are very similar to Turkish and completely different from the Iranian languages.

The Uzbeks are the largest of the Altaic groups. About 1 million Uzbeks live as sedentary farmers in northern Afghanistan across the Amu Darya from Uzbekistan. Most Uzbeks are Sunni Muslims and have mingled many traditional beliefs with their Islamic practices. Although they are generally not orthodox Muslims, Islam is an integral part of their cultural identity. The Turkmens are a semi-nomadic people, and a few live in Afghanistan across the border from Turkmenistan. Finally, there are some Kirghiz living in the Pamir Knot, adjacent to Kirghizstan.

The Altaic peoples have contributed a great deal to Afghan culture. The Uzbeks are thought to have introduced the famous game of *buzkashi*, a kind of polo in which teams of horsemen try to capture the headless carcass of a calf or goat and carry it across a goal line. The Turkmens are known across the world as master rug weavers and brought the rug weaving industry into Afghanistan. They also introduced the qarakul sheep, whose pelts are highly valued and constitute a successful Afghan export.

People

- Other Ethnic Groups
 - Baluchis
 - Western AF
 - Speak Iranian lang
 - Nuristanis
 - Eastern AF
 - Descendents of Afghan Kafirs
 - Hindus
 - Indian Sub-Continent

Other Ethnic Groups

There are a number of other ethnic groups living in small pockets in Afghanistan. Some of these groups include:

- 1) the *Beluchis*, who speak an Iranian language and live in the southwestern part of the country as well as in adjoining areas of Pakistan.
- 2) the *Nuristanis* of east Afghanistan, a culturally and linguistically distinct people who are the descendents of the Afghan Kafirs (a group that resisted conversion to Islam until the 20th century).
- 3) the *Brahuis*, *Hindus*, and *Gujars*, who originated on the Indian subcontinent.

People

- The Family
 - Centered around the *kala*
 - Extended family
 - Separated into work groups
 - Extremely private
 - Social status is fixed
 - Marriage

In rural areas of Afghanistan, traditional life is centered on the *kala*, a walled compound within which live the landowner and his extended family. Family includes a man's parents, his wife (or wives, since Islam allows men up to four wives, though most male Afghans cannot afford more than one), young children, grown sons and their families, and unmarried female relatives. Wealthier families have facilities for guests in their kalas, and are equipped to shelter and entertain anyone who should drop by. Travelers are welcome for the news they bring and the opportunity for fresh conversation.

Even in the cities, to a certain extent, people live in extended family units. The women of the households form a single work group and care for and discipline the children. The senior active male member, typically the grandfather, controls all expenditures, and the grandmother oversees all domestic work assignments.

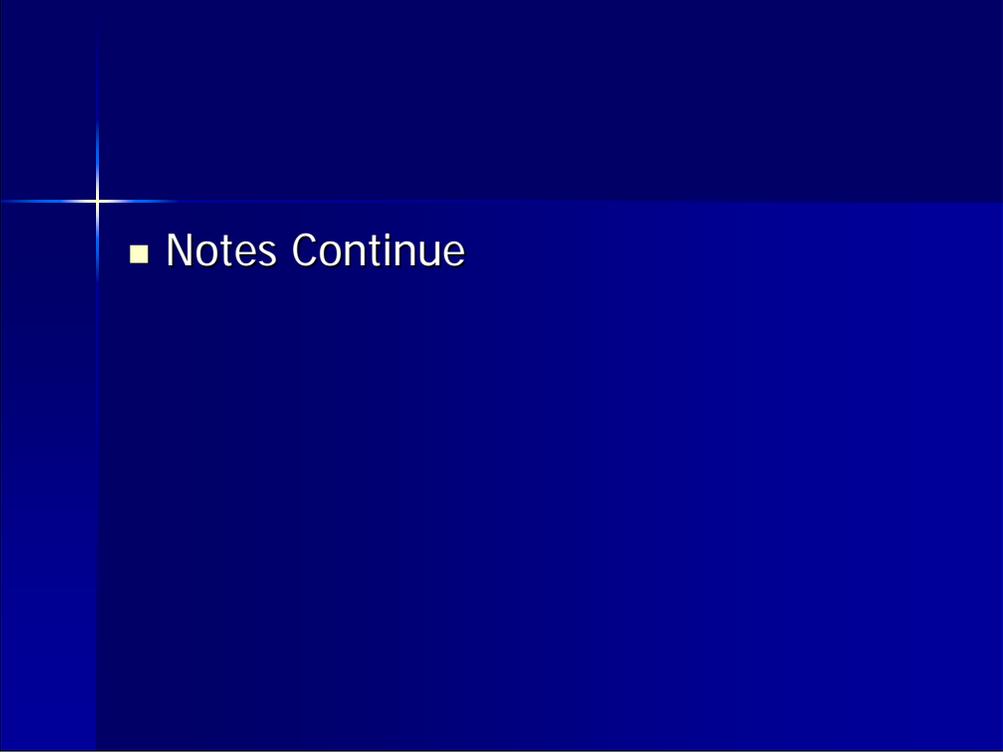
Adults work very hard but also do extensive visiting or entertaining during weekends and sometimes on weekday nights. Women with small children may remain at home, and they are also very busy with household responsibilities as well as entertaining relatives and friends. Hospitality, one of the most important Afghan values, requires elaborate food preparation and a very clean house.

An Afghan's family is sacrosanct and a matter of great privacy. Afghans see family matters as strictly private. People are generally reluctant to share personal and family issues with non-family members, including health care professionals. It is considered an act requiring revenge among conservatives for a man to express interest of any sort in another man's female relatives.

Afghans tend to socialize almost exclusively with extended family members. Extended family obligations, especially to parents and older siblings, often supersede other responsibilities, including allegiance to one's spouse, one's job, and certainly to one's own needs.

Afghan traditional views on what constitutes proper family relationships are often at odds with American values. For example, polygamy is permitted in Afghanistan, as long as the husband is able to support each wife equally.

In Afghanistan, families arrange marriages, although there is a great deal of variation in how much input the principals are allowed to have. In rural areas, the groom frequently does not see the bride until the two are engaged or even until they are married.



■ Notes Continue

The Extended Family

Afghan families and extended families have been political and social forces throughout Afghanistan's history. Loyalty to the family or tribe can be counted on. It forms the basis for many behaviors and actions that, to Westerners, might seem arbitrary or inappropriate. Nepotism, for example, (hiring a relative in business) would be viewed by an Afghan as a positive act. It is a way to ensure good work and honesty in an employee.

Within families, there is great respect for age, male or female, and admiration for motherhood. Having children is important, especially sons, with an average 5.6 children born per woman (year 2003). The family provides an essential support system for Afghan families in a country where government services have been inadequate or non-existent for decades. The socialization of children is also considered a family function given the deficiencies in schooling. Without family, many Afghan citizens and refugees who have fled to Pakistan would otherwise be totally destitute.

Despite the cohesiveness of the families, tension exists. There can be fierce competition over authority, inheritance, and individual aspirations do develop.

Extended family households may contain several generations including the male head of family, his wife, brothers, sons and their families, as well as cousins with their families. Unmarried or widowed women would also reside in the compound. However the family may reside geographically, they practice close economic cooperation and come together during any life-crisis.

The social position of one's extended family is viewed as a constant. While in Western society an individual can rise in society through education, attainment of wealth, or sometimes just sheer good looks, an individual's status in Afghan society is determined by that person's place within his or her extended family. That status is unchangeable. Individual behavior is very much constrained by the desire not to bring shame upon one's family.

Marriage is expected of everyone and children belong to their father's family. Women do not join their husband's family unless they are already in it. Marriage among first cousins is common. A family can be located in a particular area, or can have branches in several geographically distinct locations.

People

■ Society

- Tribal Affiliation is most important
- Patrilineal
- Increases unity against threats
- Prestige
 - Land/Livestock ownership
 - Religious leadership
 - Offspring
- Warrior-Poet Ideal

Societal Relationships. Tribal affiliation is still the most significant organizing principle in parts of rural Afghan society. Tribal units have a strong, patrilineal system of organization in which ancestry is traced through the male line. This patrilineal principle is also strongly supported by Islam. Leading families are recognized on the basis of land or livestock ownership, their reputation for religious leadership, or for having furnished men who exhibit the ideal Afghan personality type of the warrior-poet.

A key difference between Afghan and mainstream American cultures is that Afghan culture emphasizes the individual's dependence on the family. Some have characterized life within Afghan society as not belonging to any individual. Rather, all decisions involve family and tribe.

At the same time, Afghans are some of the most independent people in the world. They dislike those who tell them what to do, especially outsiders. One cause of the 1978-1979 uprising against Afghanistan's Marxist government, and ultimately the Soviet invasion, was due to attempts to interfere in domestic life.

Afghans operate at many different levels of group identification. It is common for equal societal units to compete directly with one another and yet unite as necessary when facing an outsider. This behavior begins at the level of competition between male first cousins and works its way up through lineages, sub tribes, tribes, and ethnic group rivalries. This pattern permits nearly all Afghans to unite, at least at times, against outside threats.

Among the Pashtun, an assembly of all the adult males (*loya jirga*), decides important matters by vote at the village level or at the local division of a Pashtun tribe. This pattern has also spread to many non-Pashtuns. Larger units function as assemblies of local leaders.

While Afghans appreciate American freedoms and opportunities, they reject many aspects of the American way of life. In particular, they are shocked by what they see as the lack of hospitality and proper courtesy toward guests. For example, in Afghanistan, for a child not to greet a guest would be a serious breach of manners.

People

■ Women

- Generally less educated than men
- Must marry within their faith
- Maintenance of reputation is key
- Faced many hardships under Taliban

Women in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, marriages are usually arranged, and women are generally less educated than men. They marry young, have many babies (preferably boys), do not work outside the home, and are usually restricted to socializing mainly with female relatives.

Until recently, urban educated women worked, and some chose their own husbands, although they were discouraged from socializing with unrelated men. Restrictions on women are recent, enforced by fundamentalist mujahideen groups and the Taliban. King Amanullah Khan whose reign was from 1919 to 1929 openly acknowledged that Islam did not require women to veil their hands, feet, or faces. Rather, he argued that Islam promoted equality between the sexes and encouraged respect between husband and wife.

For all Afghan women, however, maintaining a good reputation is a lifelong demand. Once a woman's reputation is tarnished, she is no longer respected. Divorced women feel the disapproval of the community. Unmarried women of any age are called "girls". In many cases, women who are not married by their early 20s are viewed as having something wrong with them and may be called *torshee* ('rotten,' 'expired').

Islam forbids women from marrying out of the faith, so very few Afghan women marry non-Afghans.

The topic of women's rights is a touchy one, especially in the aftermath of the Taliban. The vast majority of Afghan women consider themselves as part of their husbands' or fathers' households. Westerners who try to urge Afghan women to assert their rights are likely simply to confuse or frighten the women. Moreover, the men in the community will very likely take such urgings as an insult to their honor and will withdraw their cooperation.

As the new government moves forward, it will be important for Afghan men to become involved in the initiative to support rights for women. Islam can be a useful tool in this regard, as it asserts the rights of women and extols the value of education. The Afghan people may be unaware of these principles, but over time can come to learn an Islam that differs from what the Taliban practiced.

People

- Daily Life
 - Polygamy
 - Not Practical
 - Must provide for equally
 - Public vs Private Behavior
 - No Hetero PDAs
 - Women defer to men in public
 - Festivities
 - Family affairs
 - Gender segregation

The Household. Traditional Afghan homes are very private by American standards. Older individual houses are behind high walls, totally sheltered from passers-by. Even in urban areas, family privacy is maintained. Inside the home, there is usually a room, like a formal parlor, in which the men of the family can receive male visitors without violating the privacy of the family.

Polygamy

Polygamy is allowed in Islam with up to four wives permitted, but it has long been dying out. Today, most Muslims find the subject somewhat embarrassing, and most of the Muslim countries have laws outlawing polygamy from a secular perspective. In any event, it has always been a possibility available only to the wealthier members of society. Polygamy affords a man the ability to expand the number of families he can count on for support, and provides him with many children. The greatest hardship of polygamy is economic. Islamic law requires that each wife be treated absolutely equally.

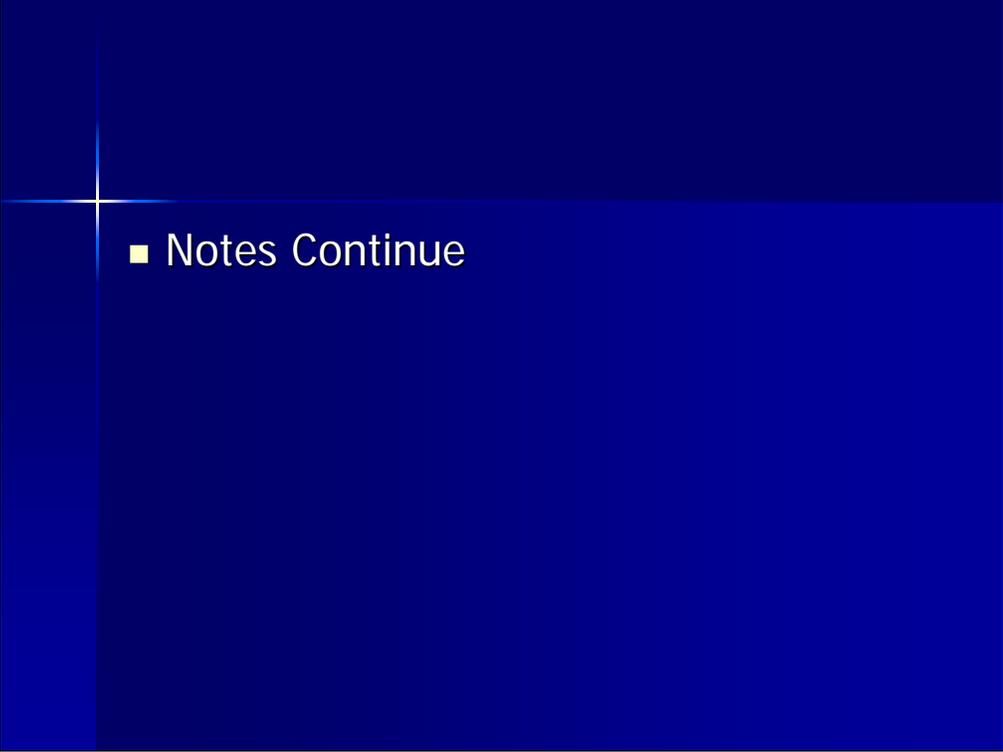
Public and Private Behavior

In Islamic society, there is a much greater difference between public and private behavior than in Western societies. It is an invasion of privacy, for example, for a man to ask another man how his wife is. Rather, one would ask instead how his family is in general, or how his children are. Muslim men and women do not express affection of any sort in public, including holding hands. Contrarily, affection is often publicly expressed among friends of the same sex, including hugs and repeated kisses. Afghan women are usually deferential to their fathers, brothers, or husbands in public.

Festivities

Afghan social occasions are predominantly family and extended family affairs. Picnics are important events on Fridays, the official government and religious holiday for Afghans. Many parties are for either male or female groups, and in rural areas of Afghanistan, if both sexes are invited, they will socialize separately.

The most festive holiday celebrated by Afghans, and Iranians, is *Nawroz*, the New Year celebration, which occurs on March 21, the vernal equinox. Literally meaning 'new day,' *Nawroz* is celebrated with picnics, similar to American cookouts. The festival has its roots in *Zoroastrianism*, a religion brought from Persia long before the rise of Islam. During the celebrations, lavish meals are prepared. Two dishes, *samanak* and *haft-mehwah* are specially cooked for the occasion. *Samanak* is a dessert made of wheat and sugar that can take two days to prepare. *Haft-mehwah* consists of seven fruits and nuts that symbolize the coming of spring.



- Notes Continue

As Muslims, Afghans celebrate Muslim holidays. The two most important holidays are *'Eid al Fitr* and *'Eid-al-Qurban*. *'Eid al Fitr* marks the end of Ramazan, the month of ritual fasting associated with the lunar calendar (See Religion Holidays).

Afghan weddings are social events that can go on for days. The wedding festivities typically start with a religious ceremony at which a mullah reads parts of the Qur'an, and the couple exchanges vows (known as the *Neka*). Only the bride and groom and a few close family members will attend this ceremony. The next part of the wedding is similar to a Western wedding reception in the United States.

The birth of a first child is the occasion for a daylong celebration, which is more elaborate if the child is a boy. Subsequent births receive less attention. The sixth night after a birth there is an open house celebration for friends, who bring small gifts. Boys are usually circumcised about the age of 7, after which they begin wearing turbans. The circumcision is the occasion for a feast, likely to involve wrestling contests and other demonstrations of manliness.

Although funerals are hardly festivities, commemorative meals may take place several times in the year following a death.

Culture

■ Overview

- Basic values transcend ethnic boundaries
- Important to distinguish cultural patterns from individual patterns
- They may not know American culture
- Respect is key

Overview. The vast majority of Afghans share basic beliefs and values that cross ethnic or social boundaries. While various ethnic groups within Afghanistan conform to their specific cultural patterns, it is very important for the Western observer to be able to identify cultural patterns and to distinguish them from individual behaviors.

To be effective in their missions, Americans entering Afghanistan must be careful to avoid social blunders, and must be sensitive to proper behavior and ways of doing things.

Many Afghans already know something about American customs, but many others do not. In either case, Americans should not assume that whatever they do will always be acceptable, or that their actions can always be explained away as the result of ignorance or cultural unawareness.

The most important way to avoid social blunders is to show respect for the dignity of the individual and his or her way of life. Being sensitive to proper behavior and gestures will help in understanding why Afghans act as they do. It will also assist Americans in working side-by-side with the Afghan people.

Knowing a few words in Dari or Pashto, such as the traditional greeting *Assalamu alaikum* (as-salam-u-alay-koom to mean "Peace be with you") or *Tashakor* (Tah-shah-koor) for "Thank you", would be appreciated.

Culture

- Dress
- Men
 - Long tunics
 - Baggy trousers
 - Turbans
- Women
 - *Hijab*
 - *Chador*
 - *Burkha*

Dress. Afghan women typically wear two-piece outfits consisting of loose trousers worn under a tunic with a high neck and long sleeves. The clothes are fitted loosely at the waist and extending below the knees, with the straight skirt slit up both sides for ease of movement. Many women complete the outfit with a long scarf called a *hijab* that covers the head when modesty is required, but is at other times gracefully draped across the shoulders. Some women wear a *chador*, a garment that completely covers the head, shoulders, and face except for the eyes.

The *burkha* (or *burqa*) that the Taliban required women to wear in public is a tent-like garment that covers the woman from head to foot. The part covering the head is tight, to keep in place a mesh panel, out of which the woman sees. The rest is voluminous, gathered in back in pleats that allow freedom of movement. The woman maneuvers the garment with her hands, so that the mesh panel stays in front of her eyes. When modesty is not needed, the whole front part of the burkha can be tossed over the head.

Afghan men also wear long tunics over baggy trousers and often wear vests over the tunics. Turbans, traditionally white but now of any color, are wound around the locally favored type of turban caps. Pashtuns and others who imitate them leave a couple of feet of turban cloth hanging down, while most of those in the rest of the country tuck the end in. Pashtun men customarily have their hair cut square at ear-lobe length. Other groups have their heads shaved about once a month.

In cold weather, men frequently wear a blanket over their shoulders. In winter, both men and women wear sweaters, jackets, and coats. Coats worn in rural areas are often brightly striped and quilted for warmth. Shirts, vests, and coats may be embroidered, particularly those for wear on special occasions.

Culture

- Greetings
 - A smile, nod, and greeting
 - Same sex kissing is common
 - Hand shakes
 - Soft and gentle
 - May place hand on heart
 - Wait for the individual to initiate
 - Small comfort zone when talking

Greetings. A smile, a nod, and a word of greeting are appropriate ways of greeting an Afghan in most situations. Embracing or kissing on both cheeks is also a common form of greeting between people of the same sex.

The handshake is also customary in Afghanistan when arriving and leaving. Handshakes between men are soft and gentle, not a test of strength. They are not firm, but neither are they weak. Some Afghans may place their right hands over their hearts after shaking hands. This gesture simply means that the handshake is from the heart. Should an Afghan make this gesture, it is appropriate and expected that the receiver reciprocate.

When uncertain as to how to greet an Afghan, it is prudent to wait until the other person extends his or her hand before making the same gesture. Whatever the situation, one should not attempt to initiate a handshake with a woman. Should a woman initiate a handshake, she will use only the tips of her fingers and will not touch palms.

Afghans typically stand closer to other people during conversation than most westerners do. When observing an American in conversation with an Afghan, it is common to see the American move away as the Afghan inches closer. This continual shifting may go unnoticed by the individuals, but can still lead to each feeling uncomfortable with the encounter.

Culture

■ Eating and Drinking

– Essentially Persian

- *Pilau*
- Kabobs
- *Chalows*
- *Aushak*
- *Tandoors*
- Dairy Products

– Tea

■ Smoking Cigarettes



Eating and Drinking. Afghan food is essentially a variety of Persian food, with influences from the non-Iranian ethnic groups. It centers on *pilau*, kabobs, *chalows*, and dumpling-like dishes introduced by the Altaic peoples from the north. A pilau is a rice dish in which the rice has been cooked with other ingredients, thus becoming colored and flavored by those ingredients. The rice is usually cooked with meat juices, but sometimes only vegetables are used.

The most famous Afghan pilau is likely *qabile pilau*. There are probably as many variations of this dish as there are villages in Afghanistan, but typically pieces of lamb are covered with a pilau that includes strips of carrots and currants. Another quintessential Afghan dish is *aushak*, scallion-filled dumplings with meat sauce and yogurt, sprinkled with mint.

An Afghan city or town is certain to have a kabob shop. Kabobs are the Afghan equivalent to fast food. Kabobs are made of lamb, mutton, or beef and can consist of chunks of meat skewered and roasted or ground beef formed around the skewer. A kabob shop will feature several kinds of kabobs, along with bread and possibly vegetables or salad. Muslim dietary rules prevent most Afghans from eating pork.

Afghan bread comes in slabs, or in round flat loaves (not to be confused with the now commonly sold Middle Eastern pita bread) that have been baked on the inner sides of large clay ovens called *tandoors*.

Because of cattle and sheep herding, dairy products are traditionally an important part of the diet. Cheese, buttermilk, and yogurt are widely used. Curd is also thoroughly drained and then dried in small hard balls for future use in cooking. Boiled curd is often eaten for breakfast. Fresh vegetables and fruit, when available, are also an important part of the diet. In rural Afghanistan, regular midday meals are not eaten, but people carry around nuts and dried fruit for energy throughout the day.

The usual beverage is tea, which constitutes one of Afghanistan's major imports. In general, black tea is used southeast of the Hindu Kush Mountains, while green tea is preferred in the northwestern part of the country. Although most Afghans, as Muslims, do not drink alcohol, some educated, urban Afghans do.

The majority of Afghan adults smoke. Both men and women consider smoking a part of adult behavior, although women are rarely seen smoking in public. If one wishes to smoke in the presence of Afghans, it is important to be prepared to offer a cigarette to everyone in the group. It is considered impolite not to offer. Conversely, it is not considered appropriate to ask an Afghan not to smoke.

Culture

■ Gestures, Mannerisms, & Taboos

- Thumbs-up and OK
- Feet
- Heads
- The Left Hand
- Shame
- Animals
- Profanity
- Others

Remember: Afghans are not Arabs!

Afghans are liberal with hand gestures and facial expressions during discussions. The sooner westerners can acquaint themselves with some of the gestures, mannerisms, and taboos of the region, the less likely negative social situations will arise.

Thumbs Up and OK

The thumbs-up gesture traditionally is an offensive Muslim insult. It is equivalent to using the middle finger in the western world. Some more media savvy Afghans may understand the western meaning of an upturned thumb and intend for the gesture to mean just that. Other Afghans may use the gesture in its traditional sense.

Feet and Heads

Big blunders can arise if Westerners are unaware of the significance of the head and the feet in a Muslim culture.

When in the presence of Muslims, be careful not to raise or cross your legs in such a way that the sole of the foot faces others in the room. Such an action is considered unclean and is perceived as one of the greatest of insults. It is important to be aware of how the bottoms of your feet are pointed whenever you are in a room with others. Never let the sole of your foot or shoe come in contact with an Afghan person.

Be aware that forcing a Muslim's head to touch the ground may make him an enemy. Muslims only touch their heads to the ground when praying.

Use of The Left Hand

In Afghanistan, and throughout the Muslim world, Afghans use the right hand exclusively for all public functions. These functions include shaking hands, eating, drinking, and passing something to another person. Using the left hand is an insult and, if done in the presence of many others, could bring shame to an Afghan.

In the Muslim world, the left hand serves a specific purpose – hygiene after using the toilet. Afghans will cleanse their hands immediately after. In fact, many consider the Western practice of using paper to be offensive, and question how paper can make one sufficiently clean. Some historians believe this may be the reason hand shaking is done with the right hand.

Shame and Afghan Culture

Bringing shame upon a Muslim can have dangerous, and sometimes deadly, consequences. It is important to understand actions that can shame a Muslim and to avoid those actions wherever possible. For example, correcting an Afghan in public can shame an Afghan, as can using the left-hand to hand something to an Afghan.

■ Notes Continue

To a traditional Afghan man, his household and family are very private matters, not to be discussed in casual conversation and not a matter for public concern. Inquiring as to the name or well being of an Afghan man's wife can bring shame to the man. Most of the customs having to do with women come from this attitude. The women in a man's family are part of his household, and his privacy and honor are violated if they are accosted or insulted by other men. Also, forceful entry into a household also carries with it indignity and a threat to the Afghan man's honor.

Shame, in this culture, is something to be avoided. But if it happens, the first response may be to hide it from view. If this is not possible, then the shame must be avenged. The Qur'an states that revenge is the only way to eliminate a shame.

Animals

Like other Muslims, most Afghans consider dogs unclean and will be very reluctant to touch one. Those Afghans who have anything to do with raising animals may have guard dogs for their flocks, but even so, are not accustomed to the notion of dogs in the house. An Afghan who has touched a dog will want to wash his or her hands, either immediately afterwards or most certainly before eating. Muslims do, however, like cats. Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was once said to have cut off the hem of his robe rather than disturb the cat sleeping on it.

Avoiding Profanity and Derogatory Terms

Wherever possible, avoidance of profanity in the presence of Afghans is recommended. Many Muslim people can be sensitive to bad language. Further, it is essential to avoid any references that Afghans may find derogatory. Also, remember that the Afghan people are not part of the Middle East, nor do they consider themselves Arabs. It is their shared Islamic religion which accounts for many of the similarities in culture between Afghanistan and other countries that are considered Arab.

Other Things to Avoid

While Afghans may engage in discussions relating to religion and politics, these subjects can be provocative. To avoid conflict, it would be best to avoid such topics.

Male westerners should not show any interest or affection toward Afghan women. Further, westerners should avoid photographing or staring at Afghan women. Public affection toward someone of the opposite sex, even a simple touching of the hands, should be avoided. Such behavior is considered unacceptable in Muslim societies.

When possible, avoid pointing a finger at objects or at a person to whom you wish to speak. A pointed finger sends the message that the person pointed to is no better than an animal.

Time in Afghanistan is not measured as strictly as time in Western countries. Rushing or aggressively hurrying an Afghan is not productive and usually a waste of energy.

At all times, it is important to be honest when interacting with the Afghan people. Try to avoid blunt refusals when asked to perform a favor for an Afghan. Such refusals are considered rude or impolite. A response that suggests that an effort will be made ("I'll see what I can do.") is usually more appropriate.

Culture

- Hospitality
 - A cherished tradition
 - Being unwelcome is disrespect
 - Will provide their best
 - Gender segregation
 - May perceive Americans as anti-social

In Afghanistan, as in the rest of the wider Islamic World, hospitality is a cherished tradition. An Afghan's good reputation is, in part, related to the generosity he shows towards visitors to his home. Being perceived as unwelcoming can be a serious affront to an Afghan's character.

Westerners who have lived in an Islamic country for any length of time have likely had many experiences of hospitality extended freely by their Muslim friends, without any expectation of return.

Even the poorest Afghan families who can hardly feed themselves go to any length to make a visitor feel welcome and valued. The best foods are offered in large quantities. The experience would be shared with much fellowship, laughter, and affection. If an Afghan acquaintance expresses a wish to entertain, or to invite an American to tea, the men will socialize with the men, and the women will socialize with the women. Separate-sex entertaining is the norm.

Muslims can become puzzled at American customs involving the necessity of invitations and giving notice before visiting another's home. An Afghan family in America might issue a general invitation, not realizing that they must pin down a specific time and place, leaving them to wonder why Americans are so unsociable.

Culture

■ Business

- Prefer to know someone before making commitment
 - Tea first
 - Multiple attendees
- Mood dictates pace
- Allow time for prayer

Do not expect to open conversation on an important topic immediately upon being introduced. Afghans follow a pattern of etiquette where there is first a cup of tea, and then some pleasant conversation - conversation in which little or no mention is made of business to be discussed. If you are in a meeting, do not be surprised if you find several people attending or simply gathering around.

Generally speaking, the Afghan people prefer to get to know the new person before entering into full conversation that may lead to commitments. This may very well take time - you will find the true pace of action to be that of doing things “slowly, slowly.” The passing of time indeed varies according to the mood of the moment.

Also, remember that time must often be allowed for prayer - five times a day for the devout Muslim - which may interrupt a scheduled course of action.

History

■ Overview

- Tie to geographic location
- The crossroads of Central, South, & West Asia
- Migration left a mix of ethnicities
- Evidence of inhabitants back to 50,000 BC

Overview. Afghanistan's history, its political development, foreign relations, and very existence as an independent state have largely been determined by its geographic location. Afghanistan is at the crossroads of Central, West, and South Asia.

Migrating groups have passed through the region over the centuries and have left behind a blend of ethnic and linguistic influences. Evidence of human habitation in Afghanistan dates back to 50,000 B.C. Artifacts indicate the people were small farmers and herdsman, as they are today, very probably grouped into tribes, with small local kingdoms rising and falling through the ages. Afghanistan has also seen its share of vast armies passing through and establishing temporary local control when necessary.

Urban civilization on the Iranian plateau, which includes most of Iran and Afghanistan, may have begun as early as 3000 to 2000 B.C. However, little is known about the area before the middle of the first millennium B.C., when its history began to be recorded during the Achaemenid Empire.

History

■ Early Conquests

- Darius the Great
(500 BC)
- Alexander the Great
(329 BC)
- Kushans (100 BC)
- Muslim Arabs
 - Less than 100 years
after death of
Mohammad
- Mongol Invasion
(1220 AD)

Early Conquests

The first of the conquerors who marched into Afghanistan was Darius the Great, who in 500 B.C. expanded the Achaemenid/Persian Empire as far east as the Kabul-Jalabad-Peshawar area. The Achaemenids were enlightened rulers who permitted some regional autonomy through the creation of 20 separate provinces throughout the empire. A 1,550-mile highway linked the provinces and, using relays of mounted couriers, the most remote areas of the empire could be reached in fifteen days.

Alexander the Great also marched through Afghanistan in 329 B.C., extending his own empire to the northernmost and easternmost parts. Alexander had to battle the local inhabitants for every bit of territory he gained.

The next major invasion into Afghanistan was in the 1st century B.C. The Kushans, a loose union of five central Asian nomadic tribes, took Afghanistan from the Greeks and held power over the area for several centuries. Around this time, the Western world established cultural and economic ties with China, and many of the routes of the Silk Road ultimately ran through the Afghan area. The Silk Road carried Buddhism northward from India. One of the greatest cultural achievements of the Kushans was the carving in the third and fourth centuries A.D. of the world's largest Buddha figures—one of them 175 feet tall, the other 125 feet—in the sandstone cliffs close to present-day Bamiyan. (It was those statues that the Taliban blew up in 2001, amid much publicity, on the premise that it is offensive to produce representations of the human form.)

Muslim Arabs first brought Islam to Afghanistan in the seventh century A.D. Within 100 years of the prophet Mohammed's death in 632, they had established a new Muslim empire that reached as far as Spain in the west and to central Asia and India in the east. Even the well-established Persians fell under the Muslim Arab influence, although the Arab Empire borrowed much from the Persians, in the same way that the Roman Empire was influenced by the conquered Greeks.

Various Empires

For the next several centuries, Afghanistan was under the power of one conqueror or another. Genghis Khan marched through Afghanistan in 1220, conquering (and destroying) as he went. After his death, some local Afghan chiefs established independent principalities, while others remained under Mongol rule. This situation continued until the end of the 14th century, when Tamerlane, a Turkmen Mongol, conquered a large part of the country as part of the empire he established and extended from India to the Mediterranean.

In the 6th century, Babur, a descendant of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, made Kabul the capital of an independent principality. He went on to capture Kandahar in 1522 and in 1526 established the Moghul Empire, which lasted until the middle of the 19th century. The Moghul Empire included all of eastern Afghanistan south of the Hindu Kush.

History



- The Beginnings
 - 18th Century
 - Pashtun tribes increased power
 - Durrani Empire
 - Rivalled the Ottomans
 - Begin modern-era of tribe v. tribe power struggle

Even while under the Moghul Empire, native Afghan Pashtun tribes were beginning to gain power and exercise influence over increasing areas of the country. In the 18th century, one of these tribal confederations, the Durrani, was granted authority over their homelands around present-day Kandahar. Their leader, Ahmad Shah Durrani, went on to form a Muslim empire in the late 18th century that was second in area only to the Turks' Ottoman Empire. After Ahmad Shah's death, the empire was beset by rebellions on the part of local tribal chiefs, causing Ahmad Shah's son Timur to move the capital from Kandahar to Kabul in 1776.

Ahmad Shah's grandson Zaman seized the throne after his father's death in 1793. Zaman was interested in reestablishing power in India, but the British, who were well established in India by this time, persuaded the Shah of Persia to divert Zaman's attention from India by threatening the western side of his empire. The Shah obliged and Zaman hurried back to Afghanistan in 1800 to defend his land. His own brother, who agreed to work with the Shah, defeated him.

This kind of struggle for power – tribe against tribe, family against family, brother against brother – characterizes the intertribal relationships among the Afghans, and continued as their territory became crucial to the interests of greater powers, most notably the czarist Russians in the north and the British in the south.

History

- Formation of a Nation
 - Abdurrahman Khan
 - Tried to build an empire between Russians, British, and Persians
 - Forced relocation of Pashtun enemies
 - Formed boundaries of modern AF

The area's heterogeneous groups were not bound into a single political entity until the reign of Ahmad Shah Durrani, who in 1747 founded the monarchy that ruled the country until 1973.

Around 1880, Abdurrahman Khan, a Durrani Pashtun and a fine soldier who had learned military strategy from a British mentor, declared himself Emir of Kabul. During the next 10 years, he engaged in a series of battles with tribal leaders, gaining control over area after area until he controlled almost all of modern Afghanistan.

Constrained by the competing dictates of powerful Russian and British empires to his north and south, as well as Persia, Abdurrahman concentrated on establishing a single kingdom. To do so, he had to break the power still held by local tribes. He accomplished this in part by forcing movements of enemy Pashtuns to non-Pashtun areas north of the Hindu Kush, where their descendants still live. Another of his strategies to divide the tribes was to establish provincial governorships with boundaries that did not coincide with tribal boundaries.

It was during Abdurrahman's reign that the modern boundaries of Afghanistan were established. In 1891, after much saber rattling, the Russians and the British, with Abdurrahman only as observer, agreed that the Amu Darya, once known as the Oxus River, would form the boundary between Russia and the Afghan territory. The fertile agricultural area between the river and the mountains remained in Afghan control.

In 1893, the Durand Line was drawn to establish the spheres of interest between Afghanistan and British India. The line was named for Sir Mortimer Durand, who used subtle threats to persuade Abdurrahman to agree to the boundary. The Durand Line was not originally intended as a physical boundary between Afghanistan and India, but it ultimately became just that and now forms the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

History

■ “Modernization”

- Neutral during WWI
- Afghan Independence recognized in 1919
- 1921 Treaty of friendship with Bolsheviks
- 40 years of moderate gov't and European influence
- Hostile existence w/ Pakistan
- “New Democracy”

Abdurrahman focused on consolidating his power within Afghanistan and creating the institutions of a modern nation-state. He died in 1901 and was succeeded without warfare, a first in Afghan history, by his son Habibullah. Habibullah kept Afghanistan neutral during World War I. Following his death in 1919, Habibullah's favored son and successor, Amanullah, declared his nation fully independent from the British. A brief, half-hearted battle between Britain and Afghanistan ended in a peace treaty that recognized Afghan independence in August 1919.

In 1921, the Afghans concluded a treaty of friendship with the new Bolshevik regime in the Soviet Union. Afghanistan became one of the first nations to recognize the Soviet government, and a special relationship evolved between the two governments that lasted until December 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan.

Amanullah was open to European influence, and pushed for educational reform and the emancipation of women. These proposals infuriated the Muslim religious leaders, and resulted in tribal revolts that led to the seizure of Kabul and Amanullah's abdication in 1929.

Over the next 40 years, a series of cautious and moderate governments under the Afghan monarchy brought political stability to the country, and allowed it to make substantial strides toward modernization and national unity. Always, however, there was substantial resistance to any attempts at social change from the conservative religious elements of the society. While the monarchy was always Pashtun, it was the non-Pashtun, Dari-speaking Afghans who provided the more liberal, Western-looking influences in the country.

In 1931, the government drew up a constitution, an amalgamation of Turkish, Iranian, and French constitutions overlaid with aspects of the Hanafi *shari'a* (set of laws) of Sunni Islam. The constitution established a *loya jirga* ('large meeting,' or, in modern terms, parliament), a term used today in discussions of future governments in Afghanistan. The constitution left power in the hands of the monarchy, gave judiciary power to religious leaders, and created an economic framework that allowed free enterprise. A national economy developed in the 1930s under the leadership of several entrepreneurs who began small-scale industrial projects.

World War II brought about a slowdown in the development process. During the war, Afghanistan maintained its traditional neutrality.

Shah Mahmud, prime minister from 1946 to 1953, and head of the Liberal Parliament, sanctioned free elections and a relatively free press. The country's conservatives and religious elements objected and supported the seizure of power in 1953 by Lieutenant General Mohammad Daoud Khan, who became prime minister for the next 10 years.

■ Notes Continue

In keeping with the agreement of 1921, Daoud Khan turned to the Soviet Union for economic and military assistance. The Soviets ultimately became Afghanistan's major aid and trade partner, but shared the stage with the United States. The competition between the superpowers in aid of nonaligned Afghanistan benefited Afghanistan's infrastructure: Its roads and hydroelectric dam systems were in turn funded and directed by the Soviets and Americans. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviets also aided Afghanistan in developing ports on the Afghan side of the Amu Darya, opposite railheads on the Soviet side. Goods to and from Afghanistan were transported across the river by steamers and barges pulled by tugboats.

Daoud Khan successfully introduced women into the labor force by allowing them to go unveiled if they wished and by abolishing the practice of secluding them from public view. When religious leaders protested, he challenged them to cite a single verse of the Qur'an specifically mandating veiling. When they continued to resist, he jailed them for a week.

Foreign relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been strained since Pakistan was formed in 1947. Much of the difficulty can be traced to the Durand Line, which divides a number of the eastern Afghan Pashtun tribes. The Pashtun are comprised of over 60 clans with 12.5 million residing in Afghanistan and the remaining 14 million in Pakistan.

Afghanistan and Pakistan severed relations on September 6, 1961 and traffic between the two countries came to a halt. By 1963, it became clear that neither Daoud Khan nor Ayub Khan, then ruler of Pakistan, would yield and to settle the issue one of them would have to be removed from power. Afghanistan's economy was suffering from the dispute and in March 1963, with the backing of the royal family, King Zahir Shah sought Daoud Khan's resignation on the basis that the country's economy was deteriorating as a result of his position regarding the Pashtun tribes in Pakistan. Daoud Khan resigned.

Two weeks after Daoud Khan's resignation, the king appointed a commission to draft a new constitution. In the spring of 1964, he ordered the convening of a loya jirga--a countrywide gathering. Although the assemblage of 452 persons was composed primarily of officials who would support the royal line, the loya jirga also included members elected from around the entire nation.

King Zahir's "New Democracy" promised much but delivered little. Daoud Khan seized power again in 1973 in a virtually bloodless coup. His comeback was seen as a welcome return to strongman rule. Leftist military officers assisted in the overthrow. Daoud Khan abolished the 1964 constitution and established the Republic of Afghanistan, with himself as chairman of the Central Committee of the Republic and prime minister. King Zahir Shah went into exile in Rome.

History



■ Soviet Occupation

- People's Democratic Party of AF in '78
 - Marxist Reforms spark rebellion in rural areas
- Soviets invade to prop up gov't
- Millions of Refugees
- *JIHAD!*
- Soviets withdraw '98
- Communists fall in '92
- Anarchy ensues

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan was formed in 1977, and seized control of the government in 1978 with Daoud Khan's assassination. Their Marxist reform programs sparked major rebellions in the countryside and Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in 1979 to prevent their Afghan clients from being overthrown. In the war that followed, groups of Afghan mujaheddin were able to mount a successful guerrilla resistance. Millions of Afghan civilians fled into Pakistan and Iran to escape the destructive Soviet military campaigns against the insurgency. The guerrillas kept control of most of the countryside, and the Soviet troops held the cities and those areas near local garrisons.

The United States supported the Afghan rebels, pouring supplies and weapons into the country via Pakistan. U.S.-made Stingers, hand-held anti-aircraft missiles, were a key factor in driving the Soviets out. Until the United States equipped the rebels with Stingers, they had been unable to counter air attacks.

The struggle against the Soviets, which was styled a *jihād*, or religious war, was fought by the *mujaheddin*, or freedom fighters. The mujaheddin was comprised mostly of Pashtuns. The struggle also attracted conservative Muslims to the Afghan cause. One of those was the Saudi Arab Osama bin Laden, who went to Afghanistan in 1979 to join the Afghan resistance. While in Afghanistan, bin Laden founded the Maktab al-Khidimat (MAK), which recruited fighters from around the world and imported equipment to aid the Afghan resistance against the Soviet army.

After years of futile effort, the Soviet Union withdrew its 100,000 troops from Afghanistan from May 1988 to February 1989. After the Soviets had left the country, the United States withdrew as well, leaving Afghanistan to its own devices. The civil war continued between the guerrilla soldiers and the government, which was still communist. In April 1992, several rebel factions succeeded in capturing Kabul, overthrowing the communist government, and establishing a provisional Islamic republic headed by the Tajik northerner Bernahuddin Rabbani. Rival rebel groups fought among themselves, however, and the civil war continued.

A period of anarchy ensued, during which the government was powerless, and the rival groups seized anything of value in the country to pay and supply the troops with which they jockeyed for power. The economy was in a shambles, and the situation became so bad in the cities that it was dangerous to venture out into the streets, particularly for women

History

■ Recent History

- Taliban
 - Developed in PK Madrassas during Jihad
- Captured Kabul '96
- Extreme *Sharia*
- Safe haven for Usama bin Laden

The Taliban developed in religious schools in Pakistan. (*Talib* is the Arabic/Persian/Pashto word for 'student'; *-an* is the Dari/Pashto masculine plural.) They were mostly young, poorly educated Pashtuns, many of whom lost their fathers and uncles in the struggle against the Soviets. They fought off rival mujaheddin and other warlords, and went on to take the city of Kandahar, beginning a successful campaign that ended with their capture of Kabul in September 1996. Their success was largely due to their ability to restore civil order after the chaos of the preceding war years.

The Taliban restored order by imposing extreme interpretations of Islamic law, with severe restrictions on the activities of women. Measures were enforced with public floggings and stoning. Their extreme measures alienated most of the world. Only Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia recognized the Taliban government, while the rest of the world continued to recognize the Rabbani government, although by then it controlled little of the country.

In 1996, the Taliban extended safe haven to Osama bin Laden, who had returned to Saudi Arabia from Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal to work in the family construction business. From Afghanistan, Bin Laden called for a jihad against the United States.

Al Qaeda, the terrorist organization led by bin Laden, has been identified as the organization behind terrorist acts against the United States, the most renowned being the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. The United States demanded the surrender of bin Laden for his part in 9/11, but the Taliban refused to give him up, claiming that Pashtunwali (specifically, their concept of hospitality and the responsibility of a host to protect a guest) did not allow them to. In the recent conflict, pro-American fighters decimated the Taliban's fighting force and their rule ended. A provisional government has been established, and the country is tentatively beginning, once again, to rebuild.

Economy

- Overview
 - Transition from Civil War to true market economy
 - Lengthy and detailed process

Overview. Afghanistan is in the midst of a major transition from a war-ravaged economy to one based on market principles. This process will take years to accomplish, and the short-term priorities of the interim government are focused on basic elements of governing, including security and services.

Economy

- Status
 - Just beginning to establish proper institutions
 - Focus on
 - Energy
 - Housing
 - Education
 - Agriculture
 - Exports
 - No baseline statistics exist

Status. While entrepreneurial Afghans continued to trade even throughout past and present upheaval, the country's commercial infrastructure is only just beginning to establish the institutions necessary for modern international business.

Efforts are underway to revive the economy, particularly in energy, housing, education, agriculture, and export-related industries. Reconstruction of these sectors will help to feed Afghanistan's population of 28.7 million people, create jobs, and attract foreign investment – all as ways to earn desperately needed hard currency.

While commerce is growing almost daily on Afghanistan's streets, it is mostly confined to store front and informal roadside trading. Afghanistan's need to completely renovate its infrastructure, presents opportunities for International firms. However, these opportunities are severely hampered in the short-term by the limited purchasing power of the Afghan population.

Reliable economic statistics on the Afghan economy do not exist. The gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated at \$3 billion, and GDP per capita at about \$115 per year.

Economy

- Agriculture
 - Key to economic growth
 - Majority of people earn living through farming
 - Only meets 30-40% of need
 - Was once the world's largest exporter of raisins
 - 50% of economy tied to cultivation of Opium

Agriculture. Revitalizing agriculture is key to the growth of the Afghan economy. Seventy percent of the Afghani people earn their livelihoods through agriculture, although domestic farming meets the food needs of only 30-40% of the country's population. This situation is in contrast to an Afghanistan that, at one time, was a net exporter of agricultural products and the world's largest exporter of raisins. Afghanistan was also a major producer of grapes, melons, and other fruit. Much of the decline can be traced to the 1970s and war with the Soviet Union.

There are some areas of Afghanistan that receive enough rain to dependably water crops and fill ditches, canals, and underground water systems. In these areas, notably north of the Hindu Kush and east of Kabul, excellent crops can be grown. However, only about 12% of the land is arable. Over the last four years, drought in Afghanistan destroyed agriculture even in these areas, partly accounting for the current desperate need for food. The land mounds that now litter the landscape also severely hamper efforts to reclaim farm fields.

Cultivation of opium is a long tradition in Afghanistan, and cannot be ignored in any review of the country's agricultural sector. Opium has constituted the country's largest cash crop and its most successful export. The Taliban banned cultivation of the product in 2000, but the ban was only temporary. Approximately 7% of Afghanistan's population cultivates opium, and roughly 50% of the country's GDP is tied to the cultivation and trafficking of the crop. If the interim government and international community cannot successfully confront this entrenched industry, there is a high risk that narcotic cartels and other forms of organized crime will threaten reconstruction and efforts to bring democracy to Afghanistan.

Finally, over 40% of the land in Afghanistan is high pastureland. Accordingly, the country has a tradition of nomadism in which herds of sheep, goats, and occasionally cattle are taken up to high mountain pastures for extended periods of time. Today, however, there remain few true nomads – people with no permanent residence who migrate with their flocks. The typical herdsman is usually a small farmer as well, with a permanent home and village from which he takes his flocks to summer pasturage, leaving family members behind to care for the crops. The skins of the highly valued qaraku sheep of northern Afghanistan are one of the country's most profitable products, and wool is also an export commodity.

Economy

- Energy
 - Lack of investment
 - Est 5 trillion ft³ natural gas, 100 mil barrels of oil
 - Just barely covers domestic demand
 - Importing from Central Asia -stans
 - North/South Pipeline plan

After decades of insufficient investment, Afghanistan is seeking public and private sector capital to rehabilitate and develop its energy sector. Based on Soviet-era estimates, Afghanistan holds about five trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 100 million barrels of oil reserves. All significant oil and gas exploration and development has occurred in northern Afghanistan. Afghanistan currently has three gas fields under production, with output levels just a fraction of northern Afghanistan's demand requirements.

Since the 1970s, various proposals have been made to build a domestic gas pipeline from northern Afghanistan to Kabul, where potential gas for power generation and industry could be linked. In addition, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) recently completed a feasibility study for a trans-Afghan gas pipeline to export resources to Pakistan and India. Private sector interest in this project remains limited partly because of the uncertainty about the ability to access Indian gas markets.

Afghanistan's power sector is in need of sizable investment, due to a combination of the direct effects of war, a lack of maintenance, and the theft of spare parts and equipment. Afghanistan has a total installed capacity of 420 megawatts (MW), most of which was built by Soviet, West German, and U.S. firms in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to generation problems, Afghanistan has severe transmission and distribution limitations. There is no national power grid, so most power generators use independently operated centers. Afghanistan is importing increasingly large volumes of electric power from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

Plans to string additional and higher-voltage transmission lines between these countries and Afghanistan - particularly from Uzbekistan to Kabul - eventually could lead to the creation of a regional power grid. The Ministry of Water and Power developed a list of 58 "priority" projects. The World Bank and other organizations also have provided funding to help Afghanistan develop a Master Plan for the electric power sector.

Economy

- Trade
 - Carpets best short-term hope
- Infrastructure
 - Only 15 miles RR
 - 2000 miles paved road
 - Major Int'l effort to repair national ring road
 - Kabul to Kandahar finished in Dec 03
- Communications
 - Lines dug up during war
 - Trying to go Wireless

Trade

The year 2003 marked a substantial expansion of official Afghan trading relations with its neighbors and others. The U.S., the European Union, Japan, and India all extended trade privileges to Afghanistan in 2003. While Afghanistan retains substantial trade links with Pakistan, political relations remain strained, thus depressing official trade flows. Trade with other neighbors, including Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China, is growing slowly. U.S.-Afghan bilateral trade has grown from \$17.7 million in 2001 to \$95.54 million in 2002, and \$47.43 million through September 2003. This figure can be expected to continue rising through 2004.

Afghan carpets are world famous for quality and craftsmanship and may represent Afghanistan's best short-term prospect for re-establishing trade relations in the global marketplace. Reviving the Afghan Carpet industry requires a number of important issues to be addressed in the short term, including, but not limited to, the securing of available and appropriate industrial space for carpet factory operations and the development of adequate means of transporting Afghan goods to overseas markets. Other light industries include leather and leather processing, precious and semi-precious stones, and marble.

Transportation

Transportation is a major obstacle to increased commerce in this landlocked country and is a major element of the reconstruction effort. Transportation is very difficult given the basic absence of road and rail infrastructure. At the beginning of the reconstruction efforts, there were only 15 miles of railroad and less than 2,000 miles of paved roads. Transportation in the rural areas is usually by foot.

The U.S.-Japan-Saudi Arabian effort to rebuild the Kabul-Kandahar-Herat portion of the national ring road has made substantial progress. On December 16, 2003, the Kabul to Kandahar portion of the road was completed and officially reopened. This 300-mile stretch of road connects the capital Kabul with the main southern city of Kandahar. Meanwhile, major highway construction is planned throughout the country. The Asian Development Bank is currently concluding plans for the construction of the northern portion of the ring road (from Herat to Pol-e Khomri), as well as for construction of a road linking Kandahar to the Afghan-Pakistani border. The World Bank project to link Kabul and Konduz, with an extension to the Afghan-Uzbek border, is also underway.

The European Union and Pakistan are building a road from Kabul to the border crossing with Pakistan. Iran is improving the existing, heavily traveled road between Herat and the Islam Qala border crossing. Finally, the most recent road project under consideration is an Indian-built road linking the town of Delaram (on the southern portion of the ring-road between Herat and Kandahar) with the Zaranj border crossing.

Emergency repairs to Kabul International Airport have allowed limited commercial flights to begin. However, much work remains to be done. The reopening of the Salang Tunnel in 2002 was a major step forward to open road links with northern Afghanistan and to improve road commerce. The Amu Darya (Oxus) River, which forms part of Afghanistan's border with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, has barge traffic. The reopening of the Termez-Hazarey Bridge in 2002 opened links to Uzbekistan.

Communications

During the 1980s and 1990s, the nation's phone lines were excavated by fighters digging trenches and often stripped for copper by scavengers. There are just 12,000 functioning telephones in Kabul, a city of nearly two million. The Ministry of Communications has moved aggressively to improve communications services throughout the country.

In September 2002, the Ministry of Communications issued a tender for a second wireless license. Prospects for communications have improved considerably by mid-2003. The first wireless service provider, an American firm called the Afghan Wireless Communications Company (AWCC), reached agreement with the Ministry of Commerce in early July 2003 for an extension of its service license, and plans a major upgrade and expansion of existing services. The second wireless service provider, Telecommunications Development Company of Afghanistan, operates under the name "Roshan" in Afghanistan. It commenced operations in Kabul in July 2003. Roshan plans to operate in several major provincial centers as well. In addition, both AWCC and Roshan anticipate greatly improved Internet service capacity.

Economy

- Banking & Currency
 - A cash-only country
 - Orgs must keep large amounts on hand
 - Central Bank
 - 3 commercial banks licensed since Fall 2003
 - The Afghani
 - Central Printing



Afghanistan's economy operates on a "cash-only" basis for most transactions and credit card transactions are not operable. Due to a very poor infrastructure, access to Afghanistan's banking facilities is extremely limited and unreliable. International bank transfers are not available and no ATM machines exist. Without adequate banking facilities, businesses and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) working in Afghanistan are required to keep large amounts of cash on hand, which leads to high security risks.

Under the Taliban, the government collected no data regarding consumer spending, maintained no economic statistics, and did no accounting. While the Central Bank established and managed monetary policy, without statistics, any policy could not be tested against real numbers. Until recently, Afghanistan's banking system was single-tiered with the Central Bank also assuming responsibilities of Commercial banking. In September 2003, Afghanistan took an important step in addressing the limitations of its banking system with the passage of two laws, the Central Banking Law and the Commercial Banking Law. These laws laid the groundwork for the Central Bank to set its priority focus on monetary policy, pricing stability, and oversight of the commercial markets. While public banking institutions will continue to exist, private ownership of commercial banks is now possible under the Commercial Banking Law.

Since September 2003, three commercial banks have been licensed, with others in the pipeline. The banks are Standard Chartered (UK), the First Microfinance Bank of Afghanistan (an Aga Kahn/IFC joint venture), and the National Bank of Pakistan. The six public banks that pre-date the current Afghani government are experiencing financial problems and the government is considering the future of these banks.

The Central Bank intends to move out of commercial banking operations by June 2004, as commercial banks begin operations around the country. The Central Bank can also provide transfers and other banking services in provinces throughout Afghanistan.

The official Afghan currency is the afghani, accepted in most parts of the country. It was first introduced into the country in 1989 with the withdrawal of the Soviet occupation and continued as the country's currency under the Taliban. However, some of the powerful tribal leaders and warlords, who refused to recognize the Taliban, ordered the printing of their own afghani money.

In late 2002 and early 2003, Afghanistan's Central Bank led a successful currency conversion to the new afghani. The new money was converted at a ratio of 1 to 1000 of the old afghani. Since the conversion, the afghani has remained remarkably stable. The conversion also improves the Central Bank's ability to formulate monetary policy and reduces the risks of counterfeiting. Today, street exchange rates are determined on an informal, daily basis, primarily between major money traders at the Kabul currency market. The afghani is freely convertible within Afghanistan. As of December, 2003, the exchange rate has remained in the range of 49 or 50 afghanis per U.S. dollar for several months.

Government

- Overview
- Entire Gov't structure needs to be built from scratch
- ½ Population in abject poverty
- Must have strong central leadership to survive

Overview. Afghanistan is beginning the slow process of rebuilding from over twenty years of conflict and disinvestments. The combination of the Soviet invasion, years of civil fighting, and the rule of the Taliban has devastated the country.

Approximately half of Afghanistan's population lives in absolute poverty. The key institutions of state, such as the central bank, treasury, civil service, and the judiciary need to be created or rebuilt. Fifty percent of the people are unemployed with nearly 70 percent are illiterate.

Most of the funding coming from the International community has been appropriated for humanitarian assistance programs. However, the long-term development of Afghanistan depends on a centralized leadership that will focus on building infrastructure, ensuring security for its people, and nurturing economic ties with foreign nations.

Government

- Governing Bodies
 - The Interim Gov't
 - Led by Hamid Karzai, President
 - 29-member cabinet
 - Constitutional *Loya Jirga*
 - Draft Constitution

Interim Government

Following the rout of the Taliban in 2001 to 2002 and the establishment of an interim government committed to a democratic system of government, major steps were taken to return Afghanistan from its international isolation. Through talks in Bonn sponsored by the United Nations, agreement was reached in December 2001 to establish a six-month interim government known as the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA). Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun from Kandahar province (southern Afghanistan), was elected as its Chairman.

The AIA held power until June 22, 2002, when the *Loya Jirga* (grand council) met to create a transitional authority, leading to a new constitution and a fully representative electoral process. Chairman Karzai was elected President of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (TISA), which also includes a 29-member cabinet. The transitional government represents a mix of diverse ethnicities and will serve until the June 2004 election. The TISA faces a monumental task of reconstruction, including strengthening the security situation country-wide, provision of basic human needs to the population, development of a functioning government, absorption of up to 3.5 million refugees returning from abroad, and reintegration of Afghanistan into the global marketplace.

Structure of Government

The Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (TISA), to serve until new elections are called in 2004, is headed by President Hamid Karzai. President Karzai leads a cabinet of four vice presidents and 29 ministers with various political, economic, social, and security portfolios. A future parliament or National Assembly is a topic of much discussion but was not clearly defined during the June 2002 Loya Jirga. There is a court system in Afghanistan. However it is only now beginning to regain its place in business and society.

On December 14, 2003, Afghan President Hamid Karzai opened debate on Afghanistan's draft constitution before the Loya Jirga. The new document is being presented as a "national document" according to President Karzai, and calls for a presidential system as opposed to a parliamentary system with a prime minister.

Constitutional Loya Jirga

The role of the CLJ is to adopt the constitution and to confer legitimacy on it. The CLJ will convene in October 2003, and will review and adopt the Constitution. Discussions are underway to determine the specific mechanisms and processes to be used for electing and selecting representatives of the CLJ as well as the mechanisms for conducting the CLJ. In line with traditions of Loya Jirgas, the CLJ will be a grand representative meeting made up of all sectors of Afghan society and will deliberate upon and adopt the new constitution.

To ensure their active participation in the deliberations, delegates will participate in a week-long orientation to inform them about the contents of the Draft Constitution and rules of procedures of the CLJ. The CLJ will provide a further opportunity to build consensus on vital national issues and on controversies which might arise during the public consultations after the publication of the Draft Constitution. The Secretariat will provide administrative support for the CLJ.

Government

- Health & Education
 - Grossly inadequate
 - Limited to Urban Centers
 - 1 in 4 children dies before age 5
 - Life Expectancy is 46 years

 - Public education is a new concept
 - Taught in Dari
 - Taliban banned secular education

Health

Prior to 1979 and the Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan, the health status of the Afghan people was among the worst in the world. The health infrastructure was grossly inadequate and mostly limited to urban centers. During the course of the war, the situation worsened. Fast-forward over twenty years later, and the health situation in the country has shown no improvement. One in every four Afghan children dies before the age of five, and adults face an average life expectancy of only 46 years.

Many children die of a variety of infectious and parasitic diseases, including acute diarrhea, respiratory infections, tuberculosis, diphtheria, poliomyelitis, malaria, measles, and malnutrition, in addition to disorders resulting from problems during their mothers' pregnancies and deliveries. Most of these causes of death (80% to 85%) could easily be prevented through proper health education and care, or cured at an affordable cost.

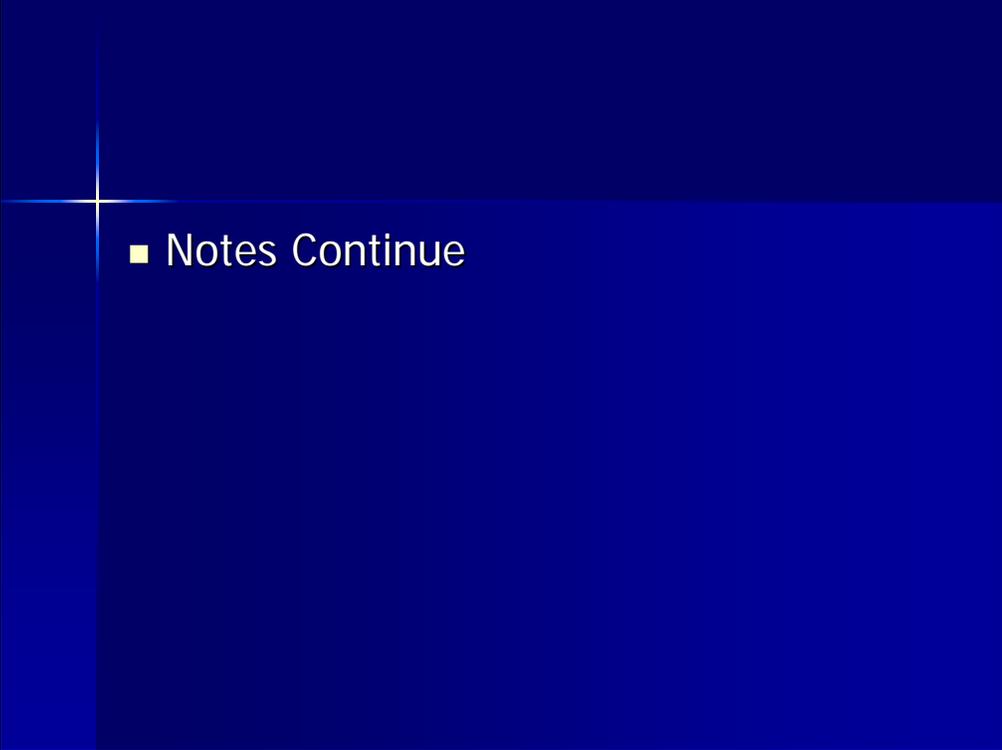
However, the availability of adequate health care is limited. Less than 15% of pregnant women have access to maternal and emergency obstetric care and only 38% of children under one year are fully immunized. These problems are aggravated by the fact many of the nation's physicians have fled the country, resulting in a patient/physician ratio of over 95,000-to-1. The majority of the people still rely on local healers such as traditional midwives, herbalists, and barbers who circumcise, let blood, pull teeth, and perform other procedures.

The Soviet-Afghanistan war and deteriorating economic, social, and physical conditions have impaired housing and environmental sanitation facilities in both the urban and rural areas. By the mid-1990s, it was estimated that 1.5 million men women and children were physically disabled by war injuries as well as debilitating infectious diseases. The number of disabled has increased regularly due to the estimated 10 million landmines and unexploded ordnance littered throughout the country.

Providing safe potable water sources and sanitation facilities is also a high priority since contaminated water sources are major causes of sickness and death.

The United States and a number of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) have been very focused on improving the health sector. Since the fall of the Taliban, USAID has worked to vaccinate 4.26 million children against measles and polio, likely preventing some 20,000 deaths. USAID has surveyed all health facilities and services, and it has supported plans to expand basic health services for 16.5 million women and children and to rebuild 550 rural health centers. USAID also provides basic health services to more than 2 million people in 21 provinces

Education



■ Notes Continue

Public education is a concept that arrived in Afghanistan very recently and never had a chance to take hold. It wasn't until 1969 that the government legislated free and compulsory education for children between the ages of 7 and 15, and the country had only 10 years to implement the legislation before the Soviet invasion. The actual provision of schools, teachers, and books lagged far behind the legislation. It is estimated that only one-third of school-age Afghan children ever attended school during the 1980s.

Before 1969, schools existed, but attendance was entirely at the discretion of the family. Some families thought schooling was important and made the necessary effort to get their children educated. In some cases, children were sent away to live with relatives if local schooling was not available. Other families provided religious training for their sons only. Such training usually consisted of rote memorization of the Koran in Arabic as taught by the local mullah. Still other families did not send their children to school at all.

However, it was still possible to get an education. Urban areas could provide secondary school education and there was a university in Kabul. Thus, a family who wished to have their children educated could provide their boys and girls with an extensive education, if they had the resources. Since all education above the primary level was in Dari, all educated Afghans are fluent in that language, regardless of their ethnic group.

The Soviets were interested in building up the education system and extending education into the rural areas, but their efforts were soundly rejected. After the Soviets withdrew, what was left of the education system completely fell apart during the civil war. Kabul University closed, and its faculty members were dispersed to Pakistan, Iran, or the West. Children were either taught at home, in the local mosque, or not at all.

Under the Taliban, secular education did not exist. Boys received religious education, but girls were forbidden education altogether. Parents who wanted their children educated had to arrange for private tutoring in informal groups at home.

There is uncertainty as to the true literacy rate in the country. Estimated rates countrywide are around 36% (51% male; 21% female). Urban, rural, and regional disparities existed. In rural areas the literate accounted for less than 10% of the population.

Training and Doctrine Command

Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, and Training



Certificate of Completion

This will certify that

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*has completed all elements of the Afghanistan Country Study as
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by my signature I certify that I reviewed the course material
and understand the content. Falsification of information on
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