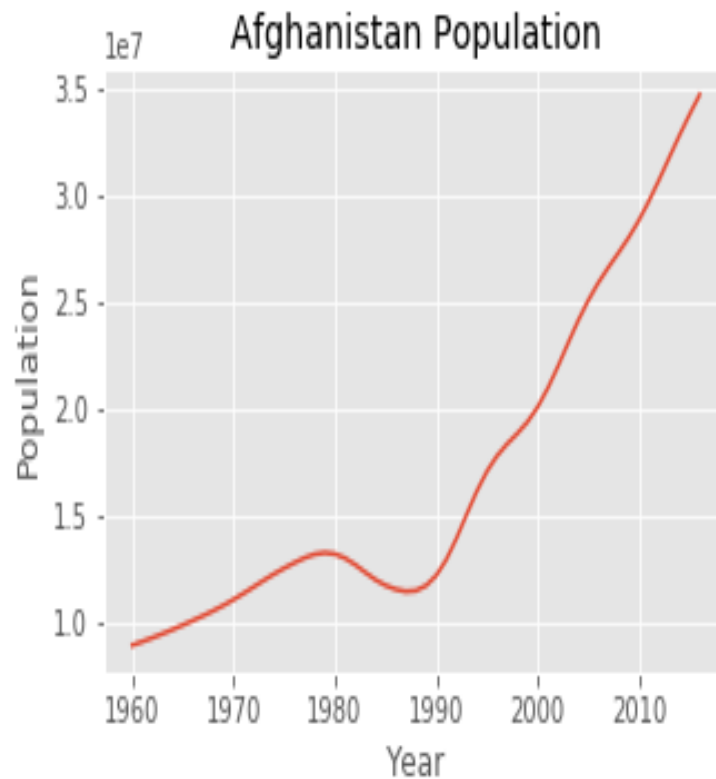


Afghanistan



Afghanistan ([listen](#)); Pashto/Dari: افغانستان, Pashto: Afġanistān [avġanisˈtān, ab-], Dari: Afġānestān [avġānesˈtān]), officially the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, is a landlocked country located within South Asia and Central Asia. Afghanistan is bordered by Pakistan in the south and east; Iran in the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan in the north; and in the far northeast, China. Its territory covers 652,000 square kilometers (252,000 sq mi) and much of it is covered by the Hindu Kush mountain range, which experience very cold winters. The north consists of fertile plains, whilst the south-west consists of deserts where temperatures can get very hot in summers. Kabul serves as the capital and its largest city. Human habitation in Afghanistan dates back to the Middle Paleolithic Era, and the country's strategic location along the Silk Road connected it to the cultures of the Middle East and other parts of Asia. The land has historically been home to various peoples and has witnessed numerous military campaigns, including those by Alexander the Great, Mauryas, Muslim Arabs, Mongols, British, Soviet, and since 2001 by the United States with NATO-allied countries. It has been called "unconquerable" and nicknamed the "graveyard of empires". The land also served as the source from which the Kushans, Hephthalites, Samanids, Saffarids, Ghaznavids, Ghorids, Khaljis, Mughals, Hotaks, Durrani, and others have risen to form major empires. The political history of the modern state of Afghanistan began with the Hotak and Durrani dynasties in the 18th century. In the late 19th century, Afghanistan became a buffer state in the "Great Game" between British India and the Russian Empire. Its border with British India, the Durand Line, was formed in 1893 but it is not recognized by the Afghan government and it has led to strained relations with Pakistan since the latter's independence in 1947. Following the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919 the country was free of foreign influence, eventually becoming a monarchy under King Amanullah, and later for 40 years under Zahir Shah. In the late 1970s, Afghanistan in a series of coups first became a socialist state and then a Soviet Union protectorate. This evoked the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s against rebels. By 1996 most of Afghanistan was captured by the fundamentalist Islamic group the Taliban, who ruled most of the country as a totalitarian regime for almost five years. The Taliban were forcibly removed by the

NATO-led coalition, and a new democratically-elected government political structure was formed. Afghanistan is a unitary presidential Islamic republic with a population of 35 million, mostly composed of ethnic Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks. It is a member of the United Nations, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the Group of 77, the Economic Cooperation Organization, and the Non-Aligned Movement. Afghanistan's economy is the world's 108th largest, with a GDP of \$64.08 billion; the country fares much worse in terms of per-capita GDP (PPP), ranking 167th out of 186 countries in a 2016 report from the International Monetary Fund. == Etymology == The name Afghānistān (Pashto: افغانستان) is believed to be as old as the ethnonym Afghan, which is documented in the 10th-century geography book *Hudud ul-'alam*. The root name "Afghan" was used historically in reference to a member of the ethnic Pashtuns, and the suffix "-stan" means "place of" in Persian. Therefore, Afghanistan translates to land of the Afghans or, more specifically in a historical sense, to land of the Pashtuns. However, the modern Constitution of Afghanistan states that "[t]he word Afghan shall apply to every citizen of Afghanistan." == History == Excavations of prehistoric sites by Louis Dupree and others suggest that humans were living in what is now Afghanistan at least 50,000 years ago, and that farming communities in the area were among the earliest in the world. An important site of early historical activities, many believe that Afghanistan compares to Egypt in terms of the historical value of its archaeological sites. The country sits at a unique nexus point where numerous civilizations have interacted and often fought. It has been home to various peoples through the ages, among them the ancient Iranian peoples who established the dominant role of Indo-Iranian languages in the region. At multiple points, the land has been incorporated within large regional empires, among them the Achaemenid Empire, the Macedonian Empire, the Indian Maurya Empire, and the Islamic Empire. Many empires and kingdoms have also risen to power in Afghanistan, such as the Greco-Bactrians, Kushans, Hephthalites, Kabul Shahis, Saffarids, Samanids, Ghaznavids, Ghurids, Khaljis, Kartids, Timurids, Mughals, and finally the Hotak and Durrani dynasties that marked the political origins of the modern state. === Pre-Islamic period === Archaeological exploration done in the 20th century suggests that the geographical area of Afghanistan has been closely connected by culture and trade with its neighbors to the east, west, and north. Artifacts typical of the Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze, and Iron ages have been found in Afghanistan. Urban civilization is believed to have begun as early as 3000 BCE, and the early city of Mundigak (near Kandahar in the south of the country) may have been a colony of the nearby Indus Valley Civilization. More recent findings established that the Indus Valley Civilisation stretched up towards modern-day Afghanistan, making the ancient civilisation today part of Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. In more detail, it extended from what today is northwest Pakistan to northwest India and northeast Afghanistan. An Indus Valley site has been found on the Oxus River at Shortugai in northern Afghanistan. There are several smaller IVC colonies to be found in Afghanistan as well. After 2000 BCE, successive waves of semi-nomadic people from Central Asia began moving south into Afghanistan; among them were many Indo-European-speaking Indo-Iranians. These tribes later migrated further into South Asia, Western Asia, and toward Europe via the area north of the Caspian Sea. The region at the time was referred to as Ariana. The religion Zoroastrianism is believed by some to have originated in what is now Afghanistan between 1800 and 800 BCE, as its founder Zoroaster is thought to have lived and died in Balkh. Ancient Eastern Iranian languages may have been spoken in the region around the time of the rise of Zoroastrianism. By the middle of the 6th century BCE, the Achaemenids overthrew the Medes and incorporated Arachosia, Aria, and Bactria within its eastern boundaries. An inscription on the tombstone of Darius I of Persia mentions the Kabul Valley in a list of the 29 countries that he had conquered. Alexander the Great and his Macedonian forces arrived to Afghanistan in 330 BCE after defeating Darius III of Persia a year earlier in the Battle of Gaugamela. Following Alexander's brief occupation, the successor state of the Seleucid Empire controlled the region until 305 BCE, when they gave much of it to the Maurya Empire as part of an alliance treaty. The Mauryans controlled the area south of the Hindu Kush until they were overthrown in about 185 BCE. Their decline began 60 years after Ashoka's rule ended, leading to the Hellenistic reconquest by the Greco-Bactrians. Much of it soon broke away from them and became part of the Indo-Greek Kingdom. They were defeated and expelled by the Indo-Scythians in the late 2nd century BCE. During the first century BCE, the Parthian Empire subjugated the region, but lost it to their Indo-Parthian vassals. In the mid-to-late first century CE the vast Kushan Empire, centered in Afghanistan, became great patrons of Buddhist culture, making Buddhism flourish throughout the region. The Kushans were overthrown by the Sassanids in the 3rd century CE, though the Indo-Sassanids continued to rule at least parts of the region. They were followed by the Kidarite who, in turn, were replaced by the Hephthalites. By the 6th century CE, the

successors to the Kushans and Hephthalites established a small dynasty called Kabul Shahi. Much of the northeastern and southern areas of the country remained dominated by Buddhist culture. === Islamization and Mongol invasion === Arab Muslims brought Islam to Herat and Zaranj in 642 CE and began spreading eastward; some of the native inhabitants they encountered accepted it while others revolted. The land was collectively recognized by the Arabs as al-Hind due to its cultural connection with Greater India. Before Islam was introduced, people of the region were mostly Buddhists and Zoroastrians, but there were also Surya and Nana worshipers, Jews, and others. The Zunbils and Kabul Shahi were first conquered in 870 CE by the Saffarid Muslims of Zaranj. Later, the Samanids extended their Islamic influence south of the Hindu Kush. It is reported that Muslims and non-Muslims still lived side by side in Kabul before the Ghaznavids rose to power in the 10th century. By the 11th century, Mahmud of Ghazni defeated the remaining Hindu rulers and effectively Islamized the wider region, with the exception of Kafiristan. Afghanistan became one of the main centers in the Muslim world during this Islamic Golden Age. The Ghaznavid dynasty was overthrown by the Ghurids, who expanded and advanced the already powerful Islamic empire. In 1219 AD, Genghis Khan and his Mongol army overran the region. His troops are said to have annihilated the Khorasanian cities of Herat and Balkh as well as Bamyan. The destruction caused by the Mongols forced many locals to return to an agrarian rural society. Mongol rule continued with the Ilkhanate in the northwest while the Khalji dynasty administered the Afghan tribal areas south of the Hindu Kush until the invasion of Timur, who established the Timurid Empire in 1370. In the early 16th century, Babur arrived from Fergana and captured Kabul from the Arghun dynasty. In 1526, he invaded Delhi in India to replace the Lodi dynasty with the Mughal Empire. Between the 16th and 18th century, the Khanate of Bukhara, Safavids, and Mughals ruled parts of the territory. Before the 19th century, the northwestern area of Afghanistan was referred to by the regional name Khorasan. Two of the four capitals of Khorasan (Herat and Balkh) are now located in Afghanistan, while the regions of Kandahar, Zabulistan, Ghazni, Kabulistan, and Afghanistan formed the frontier between Khorasan and Hindustan. === Hotak dynasty and Durrani Empire === In 1709, Mirwais Hotak, a local Ghilzai tribal leader, successfully rebelled against the Safavids. He defeated Gurgin Khan and made Afghanistan independent. Mirwais died of a natural cause in 1715 and was succeeded by his brother Abdul Aziz, who was soon killed by Mirwais' son Mahmud for treason. Mahmud led the Afghan army in 1722 to the Persian capital of Isfahan, captured the city after the Battle of Gulnabad and proclaimed himself King of Persia. The Afghan dynasty was ousted from Persia by Nader Shah after the 1729 Battle of Damghan. In 1738, Nader Shah and his forces captured Kandahar, the last Hotak stronghold, from Shah Hussain Hotak, at which point the incarcerated 16-year-old Ahmad Shah Durrani was freed and made the commander of an Afghan regiment. Soon after the Persian and Afghan forces invaded India. By 1747, the Afghans chose Durrani as their head of state. Durrani and his Afghan army conquered much of present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Khorasan and Kohistan provinces of Iran, and Delhi in India. He defeated the Indian Maratha Empire, and one of his biggest victories was the 1761 Battle of Panipat. In October 1772, Durrani died of a natural cause and was buried at a site now adjacent to the Shrine of the Cloak in Kandahar. He was succeeded by his son, Timur Shah, who transferred the capital of Afghanistan from Kandahar to Kabul in 1776. After Timur's death in 1793, the Durrani throne passed down to his son Zaman Shah, followed by Mahmud Shah, Shuja Shah and others. The Afghan Empire was under threat in the early 19th century by the Persians in the west and the Sikh Empire in the east. Fateh Khan, leader of the Barakzai tribe, had installed 21 of his brothers in positions of power throughout the empire. After his death, they rebelled and divided up the provinces of the empire between themselves. During this turbulent period, Afghanistan had many temporary rulers until Dost Mohammad Khan declared himself emir in 1826. The Punjab region was lost to Ranjit Singh, who invaded Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in 1834 captured the city of Peshawar. In 1837, during the Battle of Jamrud near the Khyber Pass, Akbar Khan and the Afghan army failed to capture the Jamrud fort from the Sikh Khalsa Army, but killed Sikh Commander Hari Singh Nalwa, thus ending the Afghan-Sikh Wars. By this time the British were advancing from the east and the first major conflict during "The Great Game" was initiated. === British influence and independent kingdom === In 1838, the British marched into Afghanistan and arrested Dost Mohammad, sent him into exile in India and replaced him with the previous ruler, Shah Shuja. Following an uprising, the 1842 retreat from Kabul of British-Indian forces and the annihilation of Elphinstone's army, and the Battle of Kabul that led to its recapture, the British placed Dost Mohammad Khan back into power and withdrew their military forces from Afghanistan. In 1878, the Second Anglo-Afghan War was fought over perceived Russian influence, Abdur Rahman Khan replaced Ayub Khan, and Britain gained control of Afghanistan's foreign relations as part of the

Treaty of Gandamak of 1879. In 1893, Mortimer Durand made Amir Abdur Rahman Khan sign a controversial agreement in which the ethnic Pashtun and Baloch territories were divided by the Durand Line. This was a standard divide and rule policy of the British and would lead to strained relations, especially with the later new state of Pakistan. Shia-dominated Hazarajat and pagan Kafiristan remained politically independent until being conquered by Abdur Rahman Khan in 1891-1896. After the Third Anglo-Afghan War and the signing of the Treaty of Rawalpindi on 19 August 1919, King Amanullah Khan declared Afghanistan a sovereign and fully independent state. He moved to end his country's traditional isolation by establishing diplomatic relations with the international community and, following a 1927–28 tour of Europe and Turkey, introduced several reforms intended to modernize his nation. A key force behind these reforms was Mahmud Tarzi, an ardent supporter of the education of women. He fought for Article 68 of Afghanistan's 1923 constitution, which made elementary education compulsory. The institution of slavery was abolished in 1923. Some of the reforms that were actually put in place, such as the abolition of the traditional burqa for women and the opening of a number of co-educational schools, quickly alienated many tribal and religious leaders. Faced with overwhelming armed opposition, Amanullah Khan was forced to abdicate in January 1929 after Kabul fell to rebel forces led by Habibullah Kalakani. Prince Mohammed Nadir Shah, Amanullah's cousin, in turn defeated and killed Kalakani in November 1929, and was declared King Nadir Shah. He abandoned the reforms of Amanullah Khan in favor of a more gradual approach to modernisation but was assassinated in 1933 by Abdul Khaliq, a fifteen-year-old Hazara student. Mohammed Zahir Shah, Nadir Shah's 19-year-old son, succeeded to the throne and reigned from 1933 to 1973. Until 1946, Zahir Shah ruled with the assistance of his uncle, who held the post of Prime Minister and continued the policies of Nadir Shah. Another of Zahir Shah's uncles, Shah Mahmud Khan, became Prime Minister in 1946 and began an experiment allowing greater political freedom, but reversed the policy when it went further than he expected. He was replaced in 1953 by Mohammed Daoud Khan, the king's cousin and brother-in-law. Daoud Khan sought a closer relationship with the Soviet Union and a more distant one towards Pakistan. The King built close relationships with the Axis powers in the 1930s - but Afghanistan remained neutral and was neither a participant in World War II nor aligned with either power bloc in the Cold War thereafter. However, it was a beneficiary of the latter rivalry as both the Soviet Union and the United States vied for influence by building Afghanistan's main highways, airports, and other vital infrastructure. On per capita basis, Afghanistan received more Soviet development aid than any other country. Afghanistan had therefore good relations with both Cold War enemies. In 1973, while King Zahir Shah was on an official overseas visit, Daoud Khan launched a bloodless coup and became the first President of Afghanistan, abolishing the monarchy. In the meantime, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto got neighboring Pakistan involved in Afghanistan. Some experts suggest that Bhutto paved the way for the April 1978 Saur Revolution. === PDPA coup d'état and Soviet war === In April 1978, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power in the Saur Revolution, a coup d'état against then-President Mohammed Daoud Khan. The PDPA declared the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, with its first President named as Nur Muhammad Taraki. Opposition to PDPA reforms, such as its land redistribution policy and modernization of (traditional Islamic) civil and marriage laws, led to unrest which aggravated to rebellion and revolt around October 1978, first in eastern Afghanistan (see Initiation of the insurgency in Afghanistan 1978). That uprising quickly expanded into a civil war waged by guerrilla mujahideen against regime forces countrywide. The Pakistani government provided these rebels with covert training centers, while the Soviet Union sent thousands of military advisers to support the PDPA regime. As early as mid-1979 (see CIA activities in Afghanistan), the United States were supporting Afghan mujahideen and foreign "Afghan Arab" fighters through Pakistan's ISI. Meanwhile, increasing friction between the competing factions of the PDPA — the dominant Khalq and the more moderate Parcham — resulted (in July–August 1979) in the dismissal of Parchami cabinet members and the arrest of Parchami military officers under the pretext of a Parchami coup. In September 1979, President Taraki was assassinated in a coup within the PDPA orchestrated by fellow Khalq member Hafizullah Amin, who assumed the presidency. The Soviet Union was displeased with Amin's government, and decided to intervene and invade the country on 27 December 1979, killing Amin that same day. A Soviet-organized regime, led by Parcham's Babrak Karmal but inclusive of both factions (Parcham and Khalq), filled the vacuum. Soviet troops in more substantial numbers were deployed to stabilize Afghanistan under Karmal, and as a result the Soviets were now directly involved in what had been a domestic war in Afghanistan (of mujahideen against PDPA government), which war from December 1979 until 1989 is therefore also known as the Soviet–Afghan War. The United States,

supporting the Afghan mujahideen and foreign "Afghan Arab" fighters since mid-1979 through Pakistan's ISI, and Saudi Arabia, from now on delivered for billions in cash and weapons, including two thousand FIM-92 Stinger surface-to-air missiles, to Pakistan as support for the anti-Soviet mujahideen. The PDPA prohibited usury, declared equality of the sexes, and introduced women to political life. During this war from 1979 until 1989, Soviet forces, their Afghan proxies and rebels killed between 562,000 and 2 million Afghans, and displaced about 6 million people who subsequently fled Afghanistan, mainly to Pakistan and Iran. Many countryside villages were bombed and some cities such as Herat and Kandahar were also damaged from air bombardment. Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province functioned as an organisational and networking base for the anti-Soviet Afghan resistance, with the province's influential Deobandi ulama playing a major supporting role in promoting the 'jihad'. Meanwhile, the central Afghan region of Hazarajat, which in this period was free of Soviet or PDPA government presence, experienced an internal civil war from 1980 to 1984. Faced with mounting international pressure and numerous casualties, the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, but continued to support Afghan President Mohammad Najibullah until 1992. === Proxy and civil war and Islamic jihad 1989–96 === Mujahideen (Islamic resistance) forces in October 1978 (see above) had started a guerrilla or civil war against the PDPA's government of Afghanistan. After the Soviet invasion, December 1979, replacing one PDPA President for another PDPA President, the mujahideen proclaimed to be battling the hostile PDPA "puppet regime". In 1987, Mohammad Najibullah had become Afghan President, and after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 he was still sponsored by the Soviet Union, and fought by the mujahideen. President Najibullah therefore tried to build support for his government by moving away from socialism to pan-Afghan nationalism, abolishing the one-party state, portraying his government as Islamic, and in 1990 removing all signs of communism. Nevertheless, Najibullah did not win any significant support. In March 1989, two mujahideen groups launched an attack on Jalalabad, instigated by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) who wanted to see a mujahideen Islamic government established in Afghanistan, but the attack failed after three months. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the ending of Russian support, President Najibullah was left without foreign aid. In March 1991, mujahideen forces attacked and conquered the city of Khost. In March 1992, President Najibullah agreed to step aside and make way for a mujahideen coalition government. Mujahideen leaders came together in Peshawar, Pakistan, to negotiate such a government, but mujahideen Hezbi Islami's leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, presumably supported by ISI, refused to meet other leaders. On 16 April 1992, four Afghani government Generals ousted President Najibullah. Little later, Hezbi Islami invaded Kabul. This ignited war in Kabul on 25 April with rivalling groups Jamiat and Junbish in which soon two more mujahideen groups mingled; all groups except Jamiat were supported by an Islamic foreign government (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Uzbekistan) or intelligence agency (Pakistan's ISI). In 1992–95, Kabul was heavily bombarded and considerably destroyed, by Hezbi Islami, Jamiat, Junbish, Hizb-i-Wahdat, and Ittihad; in that period, half a million Kabuli fled to Pakistan. In January–June 1994, 25,000 people died in Kabul due to fighting between an alliance of Dostum's (Junbish) with Hekmatyar's (Hezbi Islami) against Massoud's (Jamiat) forces. Also other cities turned into battleground. In 1993–95, (sub-)commanders of Jamiat, Junbish, Hezbi Islami and Hizb-i-Wahdat descended to rape, murder and extortion. The Taliban emerged in September 1994 as a movement and militia of Pashtun students (talib) from Islamic madrassas (schools) in Pakistan, pledged to rid Afghanistan of 'warlords and criminals', and soon had military support from Pakistan. In November 1994 the Taliban took control of Kandahar city after forcing local Pashtun leaders who had tolerated complete lawlessness. The Taliban in early 1995 attempted to capture Kabul but were repelled by forces under Massoud. Taliban, having grown stronger, in September 1996 attacked and occupied Kabul after Massoud and Hekmatyar had withdrawn their troops from Kabul. === Taliban Emirate and Northern Alliance === The Taliban late September 1996, in control of Kabul and most of Afghanistan, proclaimed their Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. They imposed a strict form of Sharia, similar to that found in Saudi Arabia. According to Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) in 1998, "no other regime in the world has methodically and violently forced half of its population into virtual house arrest, prohibiting them on pain of physical punishment from showing their faces, seeking medical care without a male escort, or attending school" The Taliban's brutal regime was comparable to those of Stalinist Russia or the Khmer Rouge rule of Cambodia. After the fall of Kabul to the Taliban, Massoud and Dostum formed the Northern Alliance. The Taliban defeated Dostum's forces during the Battles of Mazar-i-Sharif (1997–98). Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, Pervez Musharraf, began sending thousands of Pakistanis to help the Taliban defeat the Northern Alliance. From 1996 to 2001, the al-Qaeda network of Osama bin Laden and Ayman

al-Zawahiri was also operating inside Afghanistan. This and the fact that around one million Afghans were internally displaced made the United States worry. From 1990 to September 2001, around 400,000 Afghans died in the internal mini-wars. On 9 September 2001, Massoud was assassinated by two Arab suicide attackers in Panjshir province of Afghanistan. Two days later, the September 11 attacks were carried out in the United States. The US government suspected Osama bin Laden as the perpetrator of the attacks, and demanded that the Taliban hand him over. The Taliban offered to hand over Bin Laden to a third country for trial, but not directly to the US. Washington refused that offer. Instead, the US launched the October 2001 Operation Enduring Freedom. The majority of Afghans supported the American invasion of their country. During the initial invasion, US and UK forces bombed al-Qaeda training camps. The United States began working with the Northern Alliance to remove the Taliban from power. === Recent history (2002–present) === In December 2001, after the Taliban government was overthrown, the Afghan Interim Administration under Hamid Karzai was formed, in which process the Taliban were typecast as 'the bad guys' and left out. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was established by the UN Security Council to help assist the Karzai administration and provide basic security. Taliban forces meanwhile began regrouping inside Pakistan, while more coalition troops entered Afghanistan and began rebuilding the war-torn country. Shortly after their fall from power, the Taliban began an insurgency to regain control of Afghanistan. Over the next decade, ISAF and Afghan troops led many offensives against the Taliban, but failed to fully defeat them. Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world due to a lack of foreign investment, government corruption, and the Taliban insurgency. Meanwhile, the Afghan government was able to build some democratic structures, and the country changed its name to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Attempts were made, often with the support of foreign donor countries, to improve the country's economy, healthcare, education, transport, and agriculture. ISAF forces also began to train the Afghan National Security Forces. In the decade following 2002, over five million Afghans were repatriated, including some who were deported from Western countries. By 2009, a Taliban-led shadow government began to form in parts of the country. In 2010, President Karzai attempted to hold peace negotiations with the Taliban leaders, but the rebel group refused to attend until mid-2015 when the Taliban supreme leader finally decided to back the peace talks. After the May 2011 death of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, many prominent Afghan figures were assassinated. Afghanistan–Pakistan border skirmishes intensified and many large scale attacks by the Pakistan-based Haqqani Network also took place across Afghanistan. The United States blamed rogue elements within the Pakistani government for the increased attacks. The U.S. government spent tens of billions of dollars on development aid over 15 years and over a trillion dollars on military expenses during the same period. Following the 2014 presidential election President Karzai left power and Ashraf Ghani became President in September 2014. The United States' war in Afghanistan – by then the longest in its history – officially ended on 28 December 2014. However, thousands of US-led NATO troops have remained in the country to train and advise Afghan government forces. The 2001–present war has resulted in over 90,000 direct war-related deaths, which includes insurgents, Afghan civilians and government forces. Over 100,000 have been injured. == Geography == A landlocked mountainous country with plains in the north and southwest, Afghanistan is located within South Asia and Central Asia. It is part of the US-coined Greater Middle East Muslim world, which lies between latitudes 29° N and 39° N, and longitudes 60° E and 75° E. The country's highest point is Nushaq, at 7,492 m (24,580 ft) above sea level. It has a continental climate with harsh winters in the central highlands, the glaciated northeast (around Nuristan), and the Wakhan Corridor, where the average temperature in January is below −15 °C (5 °F), and hot summers in the low-lying areas of the Sistan Basin of the southwest, the Jalalabad basin in the east, and the Turkistan plains along the Amu River in the north, where temperatures average over 35 °C (95 °F) in July. Despite having numerous rivers and reservoirs, large parts of the country are dry. The endorheic Sistan Basin is one of the driest regions in the world. Aside from the usual rainfall, Afghanistan receives snow during the winter in the Hindu Kush and Pamir Mountains, and the melting snow in the spring season enters the rivers, lakes, and streams. However, two-thirds of the country's water flows into the neighboring countries of Iran, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan. The state needs more than US\$2 billion to rehabilitate its irrigation systems so that the water is properly managed. The northeastern Hindu Kush mountain range, in and around the Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan, is in a geologically active area where earthquakes may occur almost every year. They can be deadly and destructive sometimes, causing landslides in some parts or avalanches during the winter. The last strong earthquakes were in 1998, which killed about 6,000 people in Badakhshan near Tajikistan. This was followed by the 2002 Hindu Kush earthquakes in

which over 150 people were killed and over 1,000 injured. A 2010 earthquake left 11 Afghans dead, over 70 injured, and more than 2,000 houses destroyed. The country's natural resources include: coal, copper, iron ore, lithium, uranium, rare earth elements, chromite, gold, zinc, talc, barites, sulfur, lead, marble, precious and semi-precious stones, natural gas, and petroleum, among other things. In 2010, US and Afghan government officials estimated that untapped mineral deposits located in 2007 by the US Geological Survey are worth at least \$1 trillion. At 652,230 km² (251,830 sq mi), Afghanistan is the world's 41st largest country, slightly bigger than France and smaller than Burma, about the size of Texas in the United States. It borders Pakistan in the south and east; Iran in the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan in the north; and China in the far east. == Demographics == The population of Afghanistan was estimated at 29.2 million in 2017. Of this, 15 million are males and 14.2 million females. About 22% of them are urbanite and the remaining 78% live in rural areas. An additional 3 million or so Afghans are temporarily housed in neighboring Pakistan and Iran, most of whom were born and raised in those two countries. This makes the total Afghan population at around 33,332,025, and its current growth rate is 2.34%. This population is expected to reach 82 million by 2050 if current population trends continue. The only city with over a million residents is its capital, Kabul. Due to a lack of census there is no clear indication of what the largest cities in the country are, with various national and international estimates and without always acknowledging the differentiation of city municipalities and urban areas that go beyond city limits. After Kabul the other five large cities are Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kunduz and Jalalabad. Other major cities include Lashkar Gah, Taloqan, Khost, Sheberghan, and Ghazni. === Ethnic groups === Afghanistan's population is divided into several ethnolinguistic groups, which are listed in the chart below: === Languages === Pashto and Dari are the official languages of Afghanistan; bilingualism is very common. Dari, which is a variety of and mutually intelligible with Persian (and very often called 'Farsi' by some Afghans like in Iran) functions as the lingua franca in Kabul as well as in much of the northern and northwestern parts of the country. Pashto is the native tongue of the Pashtuns, although many of them are also fluent in Dari while some non-Pashtuns are fluent in Pashto. There are a number of smaller regional languages, they include Uzbek, Turkmen, Balochi, Pashayi, and Nuristani. Uzbek, Turkmen, Pashayi, Nuristani, Balochi and Pamiri declared third official in areas where the majority speaks them. A number of Afghans are also fluent in Urdu, English, and other foreign languages. === Religions === Over 99% of the Afghan population is Muslim. According to latest estimates, up to 90% practice Sunni Islam and the remaining 7–15% adhere to Shia Islam. Thousands of Afghan Sikhs and Hindus are also found in the major cities. There was a small Jewish community in Afghanistan who had emigrated to Israel and the United States by the end of the twentieth century; at least one Jew, Zablun Simintov, remained. There is also at least one known Christian, current First Lady of Afghanistan Rula Ghani, apart from Christian foreigners. == Governance == Afghanistan is an Islamic republic consisting of three branches, the executive, legislative, and judicial. The nation is led by President Ashraf Ghani with Abdul Rashid Dostum and Sarwar Danish as vice presidents. Abdullah Abdullah serves as the chief executive officer (CEO). The National Assembly is the legislature, a bicameral body having two chambers, the House of the People and the House of Elders. The Supreme Court is led by Chief Justice Said Yusuf Halem, the former Deputy Minister of Justice for Legal Affairs. According to Transparency International, Afghanistan remains in the top most corrupt countries list. A January 2010 report published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime revealed that bribery consumed an amount equal to 23% of the GDP of the nation. A number of government ministries are believed to be rife with corruption, and while then-President Karzai vowed to tackle the problem in 2009 by stating that "individuals who are involved in corruption will have no place in the government", top government officials were stealing and misusing hundreds of millions of dollars through the Kabul Bank. === Elections and parties === The 2004 Afghan presidential election was relatively peaceful, in which Hamid Karzai won in the first round with 55.4% of the votes. However, the 2009 presidential election was characterized by lack of security, low voter turnout, and widespread electoral fraud. The vote, along with elections for 420 provincial council seats, took place in August 2009, but remained unresolved during a lengthy period of vote counting and fraud investigation. Two months later, under international pressure, a second round run-off vote between Karzai and remaining challenger Abdullah was announced, but a few days later Abdullah announced that he would not participate in 7 November run-off because his demands for changes in the electoral commission had not been met. The next day, officials of the election commission cancelled the run-off and declared Hamid Karzai as President for another five-year term. In the 2005 parliamentary election, among the elected officials were former mujahideen, Islamic fundamentalists, warlords, communists, reformists, and several Taliban associates. In the same period,

Afghanistan reached to the 30th highest nation in terms of female representation in the National Assembly. The last parliamentary election was held in September 2010, but due to disputes and investigation of fraud, the swearing-in ceremony took place in late January 2011. The 2014 presidential election ended with Ashraf Ghani winning by 56.44% votes. === Administrative divisions ===

Afghanistan is administratively divided into 34 provinces (wilayats). Each province is the size of a U.S. county, having a governor and a capital. The country is further divided into nearly 400 provincial districts, each of which normally covers a city or a number of villages. Each district is represented by a district governor. The provincial governors are appointed by the President of Afghanistan and the district governors are selected by the provincial governors. The provincial governors are representatives of the central government in Kabul and are responsible for all administrative and formal issues within their provinces. There are also provincial councils that are elected through direct and general elections for a period of four years. The functions of provincial councils are to take part in provincial development planning and to participate in the monitoring and appraisal of other provincial governance institutions. According to article 140 of the constitution and the presidential decree on electoral law, mayors of cities should be elected through free and direct elections for a four-year term. However, due to huge election costs, mayoral and municipal elections have never been held. Instead, mayors have been appointed by the government. In the capital city of Kabul, the mayor is appointed by the President of Afghanistan. The following is a list of all the 34 provinces in alphabetical order: ===

Foreign relations and military === Afghanistan became a member of the United Nations in 1946. It enjoys cordial relations with a number of NATO and allied nations, particularly the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, and Turkey. In 2012, the United States and Afghanistan signed their Strategic Partnership Agreement in which Afghanistan became a major non-NATO ally. Afghanistan also has friendly diplomatic relations with neighboring China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, including with regional states such as Bangladesh, India, Japan, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Russia, South Korea, the UAE, and so forth. The Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to develop diplomatic relations with other countries around the world. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established in 2002 in order to help the country recover from the decades of war and neglect. Today, a number of NATO member states deploy about 20,000 troops in Afghanistan as part of the Resolute Support Mission. Its main purpose is to train the Afghan National Security Forces. The Afghan Armed Forces are under the Ministry of Defense, which includes the Afghan Air Force (AAF) and the Afghan National Army (ANA). The Afghan Defense University houses various educational establishments for the Afghan Armed Forces, including the National Military Academy of Afghanistan. === Law enforcement ===

The National Directorate of Security (NDS) is Afghanistan's domestic intelligence agency, which operates similar to that of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security or UK's Scotland Yard. The Afghan National Police (ANP) is under the Ministry of Interior Affairs and serves as a single law enforcement agency all across the country. The Afghan National Civil Order Police is the main branch of the ANP, which is divided into five Brigades, each commanded by a Brigadier General. These brigades are stationed in Kabul, Gardez, Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-i-Sharif. There is one Chief of Police in every province. All parts of Afghanistan are considered dangerous due to militant activities and terrorism-related incidents. Kidnapping for ransom and robberies are common in major cities. Every year hundreds of Afghan police are killed in the line of duty. The Afghan Border Police (ABP) is responsible for protecting the nation's airports and borders, especially the disputed Durand Line border, which is often used by terrorists and criminals for their illegal activities. Drugs from Afghanistan are smuggled to neighboring countries by various nationals but mostly by Afghans, Iranians, Pakistanis, Tajikistanis, Turkmenistanis and Uzbekistanis. The Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics is responsible for the monitoring and eradication of the illegal drug business. == Economy ==

Afghanistan's GDP is around \$64 billion with an exchange rate of \$18.4 billion, and its GDP per capita is \$2,000. Despite having \$1 trillion or more in mineral deposits, it remains as one of the least developed countries. The country imports over \$6 billion worth of goods but exports only \$658 million, mainly fruits and nuts. It has less than \$1.5 billion in external debt. Agricultural production is the backbone of Afghanistan's economy. The country is known for producing some of the finest pomegranates, grapes, apricots, melons, and several other fresh and dry fruits. It is also known as the world's largest producer of opium. Sources indicate that as much as 11% or more of the nation's economy is derived from the cultivation and sale of opium. While the nation's current account deficit is largely financed with donor money, only a small portion is provided directly to the government budget. The rest is provided to non-budgetary expenditure and donor-designated projects through the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

The Afghan Ministry of Finance is focusing on improved revenue collection and public sector expenditure discipline. For example, government revenues increased 31% to \$1.7 billion from March 2010 to March 2011. Da Afghanistan Bank serves as the central bank of the nation and the "Afghani" (AFN) is the national currency, with an exchange rate of about 60 Afghanis to 1 US dollar. A number of local and foreign banks operate in the country, including the Afghanistan International Bank, New Kabul Bank, Azizi Bank, Pashtany Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, and the First Micro Finance Bank. One of the main drivers for the current economic recovery is the return of over 5 million expatriates, who brought with them fresh energy, entrepreneurship and wealth-creating skills as well as much needed funds to start up businesses. Many Afghans are now involved in construction, which is one of the largest industries in the country. Some of the major national construction projects include the \$35 billion New Kabul City next to the capital, the Aino Mena project in Kandahar, and the Ghazi Amanullah Khan Town near Jalalabad. Similar development projects have also begun in Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, and other cities. An estimated 400,000 people enter the labor market each year. A number of small companies and factories began operating in different parts of the country, which not only provide revenues to the government but also create new jobs. Improvements to the business environment have resulted in more than \$1.5 billion in telecom investment and created more than 100,000 jobs since 2003. Afghan rugs are becoming popular again, allowing many carpet dealers around the country to hire more workers. Afghanistan is a member of WTO, SAARC, ECO, and OIC. It holds an observer status in SCO. Foreign Minister Zalmay Rassoul told the media in 2011 that his nation's "goal is to achieve an Afghan economy whose growth is based on trade, private enterprise and investment". Experts believe that this will revolutionize the economy of the region. In June 2012, India advocated for private investments in the resource rich country and the creation of a suitable environment therefor. Telecommunications company Roshan is the largest private employer in the country as of 2014. === Mining === Michael E. O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution estimated that if Afghanistan generates about \$10 billion per year from its mineral deposits, its gross national product would double and provide long-term funding for Afghan security forces and other critical needs. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) estimated in 2006 that northern Afghanistan has an average 2.9 billion (bn) barrels (bbl) of crude oil, 15.7 trillion cubic feet (440 bn m3) of natural gas, and 562 million bbl of natural gas liquids. In 2011, Afghanistan signed an oil exploration contract with China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) for the development of three oil fields along the Amu Darya river in the north. The country has significant amounts of lithium, copper, gold, coal, iron ore, and other minerals. The Khanashin carbonatite in Helmand Province contains 1,000,000 metric tons (1,100,000 short tons) of rare earth elements. In 2007, a 30-year lease was granted for the Aynak copper mine to the China Metallurgical Group for \$3 billion, making it the biggest foreign investment and private business venture in Afghanistan's history. The state-run Steel Authority of India won the mining rights to develop the huge Hajigak iron ore deposit in central Afghanistan. Government officials estimate that 30% of the country's untapped mineral deposits are worth at least \$1 trillion. One official asserted that "this will become the backbone of the Afghan economy" and a Pentagon memo stated that Afghanistan could become the "Saudi Arabia of lithium". In a 2011 news story, the CSM reported, "The United States and other Western nations that have borne the brunt of the cost of the Afghan war have been conspicuously absent from the bidding process on Afghanistan's mineral deposits, leaving it mostly to regional powers." == Transport == === Air === Air transport in Afghanistan is provided by the national carrier, Ariana Afghan Airlines (AAA), and by private companies such as Afghan Jet International, East Horizon Airlines, Kam Air, Pamir Airways, and Safi Airways. Airlines from a number of countries also provide flights in and out of the country. These include Air India, Emirates, Gulf Air, Iran Aseman Airlines, Pakistan International Airlines, and Turkish Airlines. The country has four international airports: Hamid Karzai International Airport (formerly Kabul International Airport), Kandahar International Airport, Herat International Airport, and Mazar-e Sharif International Airport. There are also around a dozen domestic airports with flights to Kabul and other major cities. === Rail === As of 2017, the country has three rail links, one a 75 km line from Mazar-i-Sharif to the Uzbekistan border; a 10 km long line from Toraghundi to the Turkmenistan border (where it continues as part of Turkmen Railways); and a short link from Aqina across the Turkmen border to Kerki, which is planned to be extended further across Afghanistan. These lines are used for freight only and there is no passenger service as of yet. A rail line between Khaf, Iran and Herat, western Afghanistan, intended for both freight and passengers, is under construction and due to open by 2018. About 125 km of the line will lie on the Afghan side. There are various proposals for the construction of additional rail lines in the country. === Roads === Traveling by bus in Afghanistan remains dangerous due to militant activities.

The buses are usually older model Mercedes-Benz and owned by private companies. Serious traffic accidents are common on Afghan roads and highways, particularly on the Kabul–Kandahar and the Kabul–Jalalabad Road. Newer automobiles have recently become more widely available after the rebuilding of roads and highways. They are imported from the United Arab Emirates through Pakistan and Iran. As of 2012, vehicles more than 10 years old are banned from being imported into the country. The development of the nation's road network is a major boost for the economy due to trade with neighboring countries. Postal services in Afghanistan are provided by the publicly owned Afghan Post and private companies such as FedEx, DHL, and others. == Health == According to the Human Development Index, Afghanistan is the 15th least developed country in the world. The average life expectancy is estimated to be around 60 years. The country's maternal mortality rate is 396 deaths/100,000 live births and its infant mortality rate is 66 to 112.8 deaths in every 1,000 live births. The Ministry of Public Health plans to cut the infant mortality rate to 400 for every 100,000 live births before 2020. The country has more than 3,000 midwives, with an additional 300 to 400 being trained each year. There are over 100 hospitals in Afghanistan, with the most advanced treatments being available in Kabul. The French Medical Institute for Children and Indira Gandhi Children's Hospital in Kabul are the leading children's hospitals in the country. Some of the other main hospitals in Kabul include the Jamhuriat Hospital and the under-construction Jinnah Hospital. In spite of all this, many Afghans travel to Pakistan and India for advanced treatment. It was reported in 2006 that nearly 60% of the Afghan population lives within a two-hour walk of the nearest health facility. Disability rate is also high in Afghanistan due to the decades of war. It was reported recently that about 80,000 people are missing limbs. Non-governmental charities such as Save the Children and Mahboba's Promise assist orphans in association with governmental structures. Demographic and Health Surveys is working with the Indian Institute of Health Management Research and others to conduct a survey in Afghanistan focusing on maternal death, among other things. == Education == Education in Afghanistan includes K–12 and higher education, which is overseen by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. There are over 16,000 schools in the country and roughly 9 million students. Of this, about 60% are males and 40% females. Over 174,000 students are enrolled in different universities around the country. About 21% of these are females. Former Education Minister Ghulam Farooq Wardak had stated that construction of 8,000 schools is required for the remaining children who are deprived of formal learning. The top universities in Afghanistan are the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) followed by Kabul University (KU), both of which are located in Kabul. The National Military Academy of Afghanistan, modeled after the United States Military Academy at West Point, is a four-year military development institution dedicated to graduating officers for the Afghan Armed Forces. The Afghan Defense University was constructed near Qargha in Kabul. Major universities outside of Kabul include Kandahar University in the south, Herat University in the northwest, Balkh University and Kunduz University in the north, Nangarhar University and Khost University in the east. The United States is building six faculties of education and five provincial teacher training colleges around the country, two large secondary schools in Kabul, and one school in Jalalabad. The literacy rate of the entire population is 38.2% (males 52% and females 24.2%). In 2010, the United States began establishing a number of Lincoln learning centers in Afghanistan. They are set up to serve as programming platforms offering English language classes, library facilities, programming venues, internet connectivity, and educational and other counseling services. A goal of the program is to reach at least 4,000 Afghan citizens per month per location. The Afghan National Security Forces are provided with mandatory literacy courses. In addition to this, Baghch-e-Simsim (based on the American Sesame Street) serves as a means to attract Afghan children into learning. == Culture == Afghanistan is mostly a tribal society with different regions of the country having its own subculture. Their history is traced back to at least the time of the Achaemenid Empire in 500 BCE. In the southern and eastern region, the people live according to the Pashtun culture by following Pashtunwali (Pashtun way). The Pashtuns (and Baloch) are largely connected to the culture of South Asia. The remaining Afghans are culturally Persian and Turkic. Some non-Pashtuns who live in proximity with Pashtuns have adopted Pashtunwali in a process called Pashtunization, while some Pashtuns have been Persianized. Those who have lived in Pakistan and Iran over the last 30 years have been further influenced by the cultures of those neighboring nations. Afghans are regarded with mingled apprehension and condescension, for their high regard for personal honor, for their tribe loyalty and for their readiness to use force to settle disputes. As tribal warfare and internecine feuding has been one of their chief occupations since time immemorial, this individualistic trait has made it difficult for foreigners to conquer them. One writer considers the tribal system to be the best way of organizing large groups of people in a country that is

geographically difficult, and in a society that, from a materialistic point of view, has an uncomplicated lifestyle. There are various Afghan tribes, and an estimated 2–3 million nomads. The nation has a complex history that has survived either in its current cultures or in the form of various languages and monuments. However, many of its historic monuments have been damaged in modern times. The two famous Buddhas of Bamiyan were destroyed by the Taliban, who regarded them as idolatrous. Despite that, archaeologists are still finding Buddhist relics in different parts of the country, some of them dating back to the 2nd century. This indicates that Buddhism was widespread in Afghanistan. Other historical places include the cities of Herat, Kandahar, Ghazni, Mazar-i-Sharif, and Zaranj. The Minaret of Jam in the Hari River valley is a UNESCO World Heritage site. A cloak reputedly worn by Islam's prophet Muhammad is kept inside the Shrine of the Cloak in Kandahar, a city founded by Alexander and the first capital of Afghanistan. The citadel of Alexander in the western city of Herat has been renovated in recent years and is a popular attraction for tourists. In the north of the country is the Shrine of Ali, believed by many to be the location where Ali was buried. The National Museum of Afghanistan is located in Kabul.

=== Media and entertainment === Afghanistan has around 150 radio stations and over 50 television stations, which includes the state-owned RTA TV and various private channels such as TOLO and Shamshad TV. The first Afghan newspaper was published in 1906 and there are hundreds of print outlets today. By the 1920s, Radio Kabul was broadcasting local radio services. Television programs began airing in the early 1970s. Voice of America, BBC, and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) broadcast in both of Afghanistan's official languages. Since 2002, press restrictions have been gradually relaxed and private media diversified. Freedom of expression and the press is promoted in the 2004 constitution and censorship is banned, although defaming individuals or producing material contrary to the principles of Islam is prohibited. The Afghan government cited the growth in the media sector as one of its achievements. In 2017, Reporters Without Borders ranked Afghanistan 120th in the Press Freedom Index out of 180 countries, a better rating than all its neighbors. According to Freedom of the Press as of 2015, Afghanistan is "partly free", whereas most countries in Asia are "not free". The city of Kabul has been home to many musicians who were masters of both traditional and modern Afghan music. Traditional music is especially popular during the Nowruz (New Year) and National Independence Day celebrations. Ahmad Zahir, Nashenas, Ustad Sarahang, Sarban, Ubaidullah Jan, Farhad Darya, and Naghma are some of the notable Afghan musicians, but there are many others. Afghans have long been accustomed to watching Indian Bollywood films and listening to its filmi songs. Many Bollywood film stars have roots in Afghanistan, including Salman Khan, Saif Ali Khan, Shah Rukh Khan (SRK), Aamir Khan, Feroz Khan, Kader Khan, Naseeruddin Shah, Zarine Khan, Celina Jaitley, and a number of others. Several Bollywood films have been shot inside Afghanistan, including Dharmatma, Khuda Gawah, Escape from Taliban, and Kabul Express.

=== Communication === Telecommunication services in Afghanistan are provided by Afghan Telecom, Afghan Wireless, Etisalat, MTN Group, and Roshan. The country uses its own space satellite called Afghansat 1, which provides services to millions of phone, internet and television subscribers. By 2001 following years of civil war, telecommunications was virtually a non-existent sector, but by 2016 it had grown to a \$2 billion industry, with 22 million mobile phone subscribers and 5 million internet users. The sector employs at least 120,000 people nationwide.

=== Cuisine === Afghanistan has a wide varying landscape allowing for many different crops. Afghan food is largely based upon cereals like wheat, maize, barley and rice, which are the nation's chief crops. Fresh and dried fruits is the most important part of Afghan diet. Afghanistan is well known for its fine fruits, especially pomegranates, grapes, and its extra-sweet jumbo-size melons.

=== Poetry === Classic Persian and Pashto poetry are a cherished part of Afghan culture. Thursdays are traditionally "poetry night" in the city of Herat when men, women and children gather and recite both ancient and modern poems. Poetry has always been one of the major educational pillars in the region, to the level that it has integrated itself into culture. Some notable poets include Rumi, Rabi'a Balkhi, Sanai, Jami, Khushal Khan Khattak, Rahman Baba, Khalilullah Khalili, and Parween Pazhwak.

=== Sports === Afghanistan's sports teams are increasingly celebrating titles at international events. Its basketball team won the first team sports title at the 2010 South Asian Games. Later that year, the country's cricket team followed as it won the 2009–10 ICC Intercontinental Cup. In 2012, the country's 3x3 basketball team won the gold medal at the 2012 Asian Beach Games. In 2013, Afghanistan's football team followed as it won the SAFF Championship. Cricket and association football are the most popular sports in the country. The Afghan national cricket team, which was formed in the last decade, participated in the 2009 ICC World Cup Qualifier, 2010 ICC World Cricket League Division One and the 2010 ICC World Twenty20. It won the ACC Twenty20 Cup in 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013. The team eventually made it to play in

the 2015 Cricket World Cup. The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) is the official governing body of the sport and is headquartered in Kabul. The Alokzay Kabul International Cricket Ground serves as the nation's main cricket stadium. There are a number of other stadiums throughout the country, including the Ghazi Amanullah Khan International Cricket Stadium near Jalalabad. Domestically, cricket is played between teams from different provinces. The Afghanistan national football team has been competing in international football since 1941. The national team plays its home games at the Ghazi Stadium in Kabul, while football in Afghanistan is governed by the Afghanistan Football Federation. The national team has never competed or qualified for the FIFA World Cup, but has recently won an international football trophy in 2013. The country also has a national team in the sport of futsal, a 5-a-side variation of football. Other popular sports in Afghanistan include basketball, volleyball, taekwondo, and bodybuilding. Buzkashi is a traditional sport, mainly among the northern Afghans. It is similar to polo, played by horsemen in two teams, each trying to grab and hold a goat carcass. The Afghan Hound (a type of running dog) originated in Afghanistan and was originally used in hunting. == See also == Bibliography of Afghanistan Index of Afghanistan-related articles Outline of Afghanistan == Notes == == References == == Further reading == Books Articles == External links == Office of the President "Afghanistan". The World Factbook. Central Intelligence Agency. Afghanistan web resources provided by GovPubs at the University of Colorado–Boulder Libraries Afghanistan at Curlie (based on DMOZ) Wikimedia Atlas of Afghanistan Research Guide to Afghanistan