Feyẓābād | Ancient City, Ruins, Silk Road

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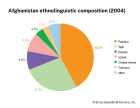
Afghanistan Images







Languages of Afghanistan

The people of Afghanistan form a complex mosaic of ethnic and linguistic groups. Pashto and Persian (Dari), both Indo-European languages, are the official languages of the country. More than two-fifths of the population speak Pashto, the language of the Pashtuns, while about half speak some dialect of Persian. While the Afghan dialect of Persian is generally termed “Dari,” a number of dialects are spoken among the Tajik, Ḥazāra, Chahar Aimak, and Kizilbash peoples, including dialects that are more closely akin to the Persian spoken in Iran (Farsi) or the Persian spoken in Tajikistan (Tajik). The Dari and Tajik dialects contain a number of Turkish and Mongolian words, and the transition from one dialect into another across the country is often imperceptible. Bilingualism is fairly common, and the correlation of language to ethnic group is not always exact. Some non-Pashtuns, for instance, speak Pashto, while a larger number of Pashtuns, particularly in urban areas, have adopted the use of one of the dialects of Persian.

Other Indo-European languages, spoken by smaller groups, include Western Dardic (Nuristani or Kafiri), Balochi, and a number of Indic and Pamiri languages spoken principally in isolated valleys in the northeast. Turkic languages are spoken by the Uzbek and Turkmen peoples, the most recent settlers, who are related to peoples from the steppes of Central Asia. The Turkic languages are closely related; within Afghanistan they include Uzbek, Turkmen, and Kyrgyz, the last spoken by a small group in the extreme northeast. Afghanistan has very small ethnic groups of Dravidian speakers. Dravidian languages are spoken by the Brahuis, residing in the extreme south.

The present population of Afghanistan contains a number of elements, which, in the course of history and as a result of large-scale migration and conquests, have been superimposed on one another. Dravidians, Indo-Aryans, Greeks, Scythians, Arabs, Turks, and Mongols have at different times inhabited the country and influenced its culture and ethnography. Intermixture of the two principal linguistic groups is evident in such peoples as the Ḥazāra and Chahar Aimak, who speak Indo-European languages but have physical and cultural traits usually associated with the Turkic and Mongol peoples of Central Asia.

Religion

Virtually all the people of Afghanistan are Muslims, of whom some fourth-fifths are Sunnis of the Ḥanafī branch. The others, particularly the Ḥazāra and Kizilbash, follow either Twelver or Ismāīlī Shii Islam. Sufism has been historically influential in Afghanistan, though in the 21st century fewer than one-tenth of Afghans belong to a Sufi order. The Nuristani are descendants of a large ethnic group, the Kafir, who were forcibly converted to Islam in 1895; the name of their region was then changed from Kāfiristān (“Land of the Infidels”) to Nūrestān (“Land of Light”). There are also a few thousand Hindus and Sikhs.

Mazār-e Sharīf, Afghanistan: Blue Mosque The Blue Mosque at Mazār-e Sharīf, Afghanistan.

Settlement patterns

Urban settlement

Only about one-fourth of the population is urban. Most urban settlements have grown along the road that runs from Kabul southwestward to Kandahār, then northwest to Herāt, northeast to Mazār-e Sharīf, and southeast back to Kabul. The rural population of farmers and nomads is distributed unevenly over the rest of the country, mainly concentrated along the rivers. The most heavily populated part of the country is between the cities of Kabul and Chārīkār. Other concentrations of people can be found east of the city of Kabul near Jalālābād, in the Herāt oasis and the valley of the Harīrūd in the northwest, and in the valley of the Qondūz River in the northeast. The high mountains of the central part of the country and the deserts in the south and southwest are sparsely populated or uninhabited.

The major cities of Afghanistan are Kabul, Kandahār, Herāt, Baghlān, Jalālābād, Kondoz, Chārīkār, and Mazār-e Sharīf. Kabul is the administrative capital of the country, located south of the Hindu Kush at the crossroads of the trade routes between the Indian subcontinent and Central Asia and between the Middle East and East Asia. It is built on both sides of the Kābul River and is the main centre of economic and cultural activity. Kandahār, second to Kabul in population, is located on the Asian Highway in the south-central part of the country, between Kabul and Herāt. Kandahār became the first capital of modern Afghanistan in 1747 under Aḥmad Shah Durrānī.

Rural settlement

Sedentary farmers usually live in small villages, most of them scattered near irrigated land in the valleys of major rivers. These villages, as a rule, are built in the form of small forts. Each fort-village contains several mud houses inhabited by closely connected families who form a defensive community.

Geography & Travel Historical Places

The semisedentary farmers, who breed livestock and raise a few crops, live in the high alpine valleys. Since cultivable land there is scarce, they live in scattered isolated hamlets. Each household owns a few head of livestock, which are moved in summer to the highland pastures. The people usually divide themselves into two groups in summer: one group remains in the hamlet to tend the crops, while the other accompanies the livestock to the highlands.

The nomads are mainly Pashtun herders; there are also several thousand Balochi and Kyrgyz nomads. They move in groups (tribes or clans) from summer to winter pasturages, living in tents and, while on the move, packing their belongings on the backs of camels, donkeys, and cattle. Between one-sixth and one-fifth of the total population have in the past been classified as nomadic. Since 1977, however, some nomads have been settled in the plains north of the Hindu Kush or in the area of the Helmand Valley (irrigation) Project. More significant, the long period of civil conflict has disrupted the migratory pattern of nomads, and, as a result, their numbers have declined sharply.

Demographic trends

The establishment of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in 1978, the Soviet invasion of the country the following year, and the continuing conflict following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 severely disrupted the country's population patterns. Civil war and the destruction of towns and villages caused mass movements of people in two major directions—emigration, mainly to Pakistan and Iran, or internal resettlement to the relative safety of Kabul. The population of Kabul is estimated to have doubled in size. Kabul has grown to encompass almost half the urban population of the country. Afghanistan's population is mainly rural; nearly half the population is under 15 years of age. Life expectancy is about 51 years for men and 54 years for women.

Decades of war and its fallout have devastated the stability of the population. During the late 1980s some 6 million people—probably one-third of the Afghan population at the time—were refugees, especially due to the Afghan War. Some 3.5 million were living in Pakistan, and perhaps another 2 million were in Iran. Although many were repatriated during the 1990s, the numbers of those internally and externally displaced rose again after 2000 as a result of continued civil strife, economic hardship, an extended and severe drought, the Afghanistan War, and the security transition following the 2014 withdrawal of foreign troops. By 2016 there were more than 2.5 million refugees registered abroad, and more than 1 million people were internally displaced.

Economy

Rīgestān
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Overview

When Afghanistan began its planned development of its economy with Soviet assistance in the mid-1950s, it lacked not only the necessary social organization and institutions for modern economic activities but also the managerial and technical skills. The country was at a much lower stage of economic development than most of its neighbours. Between 1956 and 1979, however, the country's economic growth was guided by several five-year and seven-year plans and was aided by extensive foreign assistance. This aid, primarily from the Soviet Union and the United States, accounted for more than four-fifths of government investment and development expenditures during that period. Roads, dams, power plants, and factories were constructed, irrigation projects carried out, and education broadened. When foreign assistance declined in the 1970s, the sale of natural gas to the Soviet Union, albeit at a bargain price, more than compensated in financing budget expenditures.

The Soviet legacy

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the subsequent civil war severely disrupted the country's economic development. Agricultural production declined, food shortages were reported, and industrial output stagnated—with the exception of natural gas production and some other industries considered essential by the Soviet Union. The private sector during the Soviet period encompassed primarily agriculture and livestock breeding. There formerly had been a mixed pattern of small, medium, and large landholdings, but this system underwent drastic change, particularly after 1978. The bulk of the trade and transport as well as most manufacturing was in the hands of private entrepreneurs until the late 1970s, when these sectors of the economy were nationalized. Public enterprise was confined to foreign trade, mining, and some industries.

A balanced budget was achieved with revenue derived principally from the sale of natural gas and from foreign loans and grants. Expenditures were mainly for government ministries, the developmental budget, and interest on foreign debt. The socialist government was committed to developing a mixed, guided economy. In practice, however, the effectiveness of this policy was limited by a paucity of government resources, a cumbersome bureaucracy, and a shortage in technical personnel.

Economic collapse

However low the Afghan economy had sunk during the period of communist rule, it was to decline even more under subsequent mujahideen and Taliban governments. After more than two decades of war, and in the face of the Taliban's harsh social policies, few educated Afghans with even rudimentary technical skills remained in the country. In effect, any remains of a modern economy—at least a formal, legal one—largely collapsed during

the 1990s. Public and private investment in productive enterprises was rare. Foreign aid

ncies and groups, governmental and nongovernmental, provided what few services e available, but these met only basic humanitarian needs.

What's the Difference Between a Psychopath and a Sociopath? And How Do Both Differ from Nagdissists?

During the 1990s economic activity flourished mostly in illicit enterprises, such as growing opium poppies for heroin production and smuggling goods. The taxing of Afghan-Pakistani trade contributed much revenue to the Taliban's war chest. As the Taliban's prime source

ncome, it overshadowed the taxing of opium trafficking. But that part of trade—ompassing a massive smuggling of duty-free goods—had crippled local industry and revenue collections and created temporary food shortages, inflation, and increased corruption in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. Poppy cultivation was the major source of income for farmers, but they shared little in its full profits. However, the drug

Periods of American Literature

nomy did provide essential revenues that enabled the Taliban to pursue its war effort. he late 1990s Afghanistan had become the world's largest producer of opium and was thought to be the main source of heroin exported to Europe, North America, and elsewhere. Although the Taliban successfully banned the growing of opium poppies in 2000, drug trafficking continued due to large reserves of opium warehoused in the country. duction returned after the fall of the Taliban in 2001 and reached record levels in 2017. he revival of the opium trade enriched both corrupt government officials and the Taliban insurgency, which was believed to collect tens of millions of dollars a year from the industry.

12 Greek Gods and Goddesses

The Top COVID-19 Vaccine Myths Spreading Online

st of the population continues to be engaged in agriculture, though the destruction sed by war has been a force for urbanization by driving many from the countryside. Many Afghans brought up in refugee camps lack the farming skills they need to survive, and the country's agricultural sector is in great need of restoration, particularly its destroyed and degraded irrigation system. The road system is similarly damaged, and

Longhair Cat Breeds

nestic energy sources need to be developed for both export income and domestic use.

Why Is Labor Day Celebrated in September?

Agriculture and forestry

Agriculture and animal husbandry, mainly consisting of subsistence farming and pastoral

nadism, are, in more normal times, the most important elements of the gross domestic duct (GDP), accounting for nearly half of its total value. Afghanistan is essentially a pastoral country. Only about one-eighth of the total land area is arable, and only about half of the arable acreage is cultivated annually. Much of the arable area consists of fallow cultivated land or steppes and mountains that serve as pastureland. Since much of the land is arid or semiarid, about half of the cultivated land is irrigated. Traditionally, as much as 85 percent of the population drew its livelihood from a rural economy, mostly as farmers.

First Day of Fall

Geography & Travel Physical Geography of Land Plains & Plateaus

The greater profits found in the illegal market for drugs and the smuggling trade have cut heavily into traditional agriculture and food production. Afghanistan now has to import much of its foodstuffs from Pakistan. Prior to the period when poppy growing became widespread, most cultivated land was planted with cereals, with wheat as the chief crop. Other food grains customarily planted were corn (maize), rice, and barley. Cotton was also important, both for a domestic textile industry—when such an industry existed—and for export. Fruits and nuts have also been important export items.

Animal husbandry produces meat and dairy products for local consumption; skins, especially those of the famous karakul, and wool (both for export and for domestic carpet weaving) are also important products. Livestock includes sheep, cattle, goats, donkeys, horses, camels, buffalo, and mules. About two-thirds of the annual milk production is from cows, the rest from sheep and goats. In addition to the country's many other difficulties, a drought in 2000 killed off some four-fifths of the livestock in southern Afghanistan and crippled the remaining food production.

Forests cover about 3 percent of the total land area and are found mainly in the eastern part of the country and on the southern slopes of the Hindu Kush. Woodlands in the east consist mainly of conifers, providing timber for the building industry as well as some wild nuts for export. Other trees, especially oaks, are used as fuel. North of the Hindu Kush are pistachio trees, the nuts of which are a traditional export. Deforestation has become a major problem, as much of the country's timber has been harvested for fuel—because of shortages brought on by 20 years of warfare—and for illegal export.

Resources and power

Extensive surveys have revealed the existence of a number of minerals of economic importance. One significant discovery was the country's natural gas deposits, with large reserves near Sheberghān near the Turkmenistan border, about 75 miles (120 km) west of Mazār-e Sharīf. The Khvājeh Gūgerdak and Yatīm Tāq fields were major producers, with storage and refining facilities. Until the 1990s, pipelines delivered natural gas to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and to a thermal power plant and chemical fertilizer plant in Mazār-e Sharīf. Petroleum resources, on the other hand, have proved to be insignificant. Many coal deposits have been found in the northern slopes of the Hindu Kush. Major coal fields are at Maḑan-e Karkar and Eshposhteh, between Kabul and Mazār-e Sharīf, and Qalʿeh-ye Sarkārī, southwest of Mazār-e Sharīf. In general, however, Afghanistan's energy resources, including its large reserves of natural gas, remain untapped, and fuel shortages are chronic.

Afghanistan has been known for some time to bear other minerals as well: high-grade iron ore has been discovered at Ḥājjī Gak, northwest of Kabul; copper has been mined at Ăynak, near Kabul; and uranium has been identified in the mountains near Khvājah Rawāsh, east of Kabul. Other known deposits include those of copper, lead, and zinc near

Kondoz; beryllium in Khāṣ Konaṛ; chrome ore in the Lowgar River valley near Herāt; and the semiprecious stone lapis lazuli in Badakhshān, in addition to deposits of rock salt, beryl, barite, fluorspar, bauxite, lithium, tantalum, gold, silver, asbestos, mica, and sulfur. Taxation of mined and traded lapis lazuli and emeralds helped finance anti-Taliban forces during the civil war.

The development of Central Asian natural gas and oil resources has sparked international interest in Afghanistan as a route for pipelines to markets in South Asia and beyond. A planned pipeline, whose construction in Afghanistan began in 2018, would carry gas and, later, oil from Turkmenistan over some 1,100 miles (1,750 km), mostly through Afghanistan, to Multan in Pakistan for transshipment. The pipeline could become a major source of income for Afghanistan and also offer a source of training and employment to Afghans.

Afghanistan is potentially rich in hydroelectric resources. However, the seasonal flow of the country's many streams and waterfalls—torrential in spring, when the snow melts in the mountains, but negligible in summer—necessitates the costly construction of dams and reservoirs in remote areas. The country's negligible demand for electricity renders such projects unprofitable except near large cities or industrial centres. The potential of hydroelectricity has been tapped substantially only in the Kabul-Jalālābād region.

Manufacturing

In peaceful times, manufacturing is based mainly on agricultural and pastoral raw materials. Most important is the cotton textile industry. The country also produces rayon and acetate fibres. Other manufactured products are cement, sugar, vegetable oil, furniture, soap, shoes, and woolen textiles. A nitrogenous fertilizer plant, based on natural gas, has been constructed in Mazār-e Sharīf, and phosphate fertilizers are also produced. A cement factory continues to operate in Pol-e Khomrī. In addition, a number of traditional handicrafts are practiced in Afghanistan, including carpet weaving, which in times past accounted for a fair proportion of the country's export earnings.

Finance of Afghanistan

The largest bank in the country, the Bank of Afghanistan, became the centre of the formal banking system. It formerly played an important role in determining and implementing the country's financial policies. Traditionally, private money traders provide nearly all the services of a commercial bank. The currency, the afghani, underwent rampant inflation beginning in the 1990s, and as a result precious metals and gems became a common form of currency for large transactions. A sanction imposed in 1999 by the United Nations (UN) against the Taliban government froze government accounts abroad and closed the few branches of Afghan banks outside the country. Despite these measures, the Taliban

and their al-Qaeda supporters (al-Qaeda is an Islamic extremist group that found refuge under the Taliban) removed large quantities of bullion and currency from Afghanistan during the U.S. military campaign of 2001, virtually bankrupting the country.

Origin and first regime
The Afghan Civil War and rise to power
Withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and the Taliban's return to power
References & Edit History Quick Facts & Related Topics

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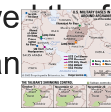
    

Trade

For Students

Total annual imports have customarily exceeded exports. Prior to the fall of Afghanistan's communist regime, roughly two-thirds of exports went to the former Soviet republics to the north. The Soviet state was also the leading source of imports. The principal export, natural gas, flowed mostly to the Soviet Union until pipelines were closed. Traditional exports are dried fruits, nuts, carpets, wool, and karakul pelts, and imports include vehicles, petroleum products, sugar, textiles, processed animal and vegetable oils, and tea. Since the mid-1990s Pakistan and Iran have served as the major suppliers of consumer goods. Other major trade partners include India, China, and the United Arab Emirates.


Taliban summary

Services

Read Next

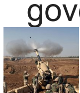
Until the collapse of the communist regime in 1992, the service sector—including public administration, military spending, and retail sales—accounted for less than one-fourth of GDP. Although there have been no official statistics since then, government spending fell sharply over the decade, and, like other segments of the economy, retail sales suffered from the country's general economic malaise. Purchasing power in the post-Taliban period began to recover with the revival of government programs that were funded mainly by international donors.


Eid al-Fitr

Labour and taxation


What Is the Most Widely Practiced Religion in the World?

The bulk of the population in the rural areas consists of small farmers exploiting their tiny plots of land. The majority of the city and town dwellers are artisans, small traders, or government employees. The industrial labour force, always small, is now hardly visible, and labour unions have failed to develop. Traditional loyalties to families and tribes are stronger than those to workers' organizations.


Timeline of the 2000s

The Afghan government has traditionally received much of its revenue from foreign aid—particularly during the Soviet era—and as a consequence the Afghan people have generally been lightly taxed. Taxation during the mujahideen and Taliban period often took the form of levies placed on the illicit cross-border trade between Pakistan and other countries, on cultivating opium poppies and manufacturing heroin, and on extracting and


Celebrating Ramadan

orting semiprecious stones. Following the defeat of the Taliban in 2001, the interim ernment and subsequent administrations relied largely on foreign aid and subsidies from donor nations.

Transportation and telecommunications

Being a landlocked country, Afghanistan depends primarily on transit facilities from its neighbours for its international trade. It lacks railways, has few navigable rivers, and relies on roads as the mainstay of its transport system. These factors drive up transportation costs and also add to the difficulty of integrating the transport system of the country with those of its neighbours. Nevertheless, in the 1960s major efforts were directed toward rading the highway system and connecting the main trading centres of the country with another, as well as with the railheads or road networks of neighbouring countries.

The road network of Afghanistan connects railheads in Gushgy, Turkmenistan, and Termiz, Uzbekistan, with those at Chaman and Peshawar, Pakistan, respectively, and provides for ct overland transit between the countries to the north and the Indo-Pakistani continent. The most important Afghan highways are those connecting Kabul with Shīr Khan, on the northern border, and with Peshawar. Other paved roads link Kandahār, Herāt, and Mazār-e Sharīf with Kabul and with frontier towns of Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. During the civil war, however, the road system was erely damaged from the fighting and from disrepair. Its rehabilitation has become a h priority in any program of national reconstruction.

Despite the rapid development of motor transport, camels and donkeys are still commonly used as draft animals. In the countryside many people have not abandoned their rished horses, which are an important source of prestige.

Almost all provincial centres have at least a seasonally operable airport. There are international airports at Kabul and Kandahār. Afghanistan, however, has limited air service and only one airline, the national carrier, Ariana Afghan Airlines. UN restrictions imposed in 1999 and again in 2001, aimed at punishing the Taliban government for its alleged support nternational terrorism, limited international routes for Ariana and prohibited other airlines from scheduling flights into the country. Some international flights to Kabul have resumed since the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

Afghanistan's communications infrastructure is one of the least developed in the world. ephone service is sparse, with only one main telephone line per thousand persons. Cellular telephone and Internet use increased rapidly in the first decade of the 21st century. Radio receivers are fairly pervasive, with roughly one radio receiver per 10 people. Afghans who have access to shortwave radio listen to local channels and to rnational broadcasts, including the Voice of America's Dari and Pashto programs and BBC Pashto Service. Access to television has increased since the fall of the Taliban in

2001 Labor Day Celebrations in Afghanistan

broadcasts by local television stations can now be viewed throughout the country. Many Afghans have satellite dishes and are able to receive foreign broadcasts.

Government and society

Politics, Law & Government Law, Crime & Punishment Crime & Anti-Crime

Constitutional framework

Until the mid 20th century, Afghanistan was ruled by the absolute power of the king. Two constitutions were promulgated, in 1923 and 1931, both affirming the power of the monarchy. The constitution of 1964, however, provided for a constitutional monarchy based on the separation of executive, legislative, and judicial authorities. A military coup in 1973 overthrew the monarchy, abolished the constitution of 1964, and established the Republic of Afghanistan. The Grand Assembly (Loya Jirga) adopted a new constitution in February 1977, but it was abrogated in 1978 when another coup established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, governed by the Afghan Revolutionary Council. Political turmoil continued, marked by a third coup in September 1979, a massive invasion of troops from the Soviet Union, and the installation of a socialist government in December 1979. Another new constitution—promulgated in 1987 and revised in 1990—changed the name of the country back to the Republic of Afghanistan, reaffirmed its nonaligned status, strengthened the post of president, and permitted other parties to participate in government. The communist regime, which had managed to hold power after the Soviet forces departed early in 1989, fell in 1992, and a coalition of victorious mujahideen parties formed a government (recognized by the UN) and named the country the Islamic State of Afghanistan. The new government was driven from the capital in 1996 by a movement based in Kandahār and calling itself the Taliban. The Taliban leaders promptly changed the name of the country to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Espousing the supremacy of Islamic law, the Taliban did not promulgate a new constitution. In December 2001 the Taliban was toppled by a coalition of Afghan parties supported by the United States. In January 2004 a new constitution was ratified, providing for a directly elected president with two vice presidents. It also provides for a bicameral National Assembly with a directly elected lower house and an upper house comprising appointees from local and provincial councils as well as presidential appointees. The constitution establishes Islam as the state religion and prohibits laws that contradict the tenets of Islam. It also includes provisions guaranteeing gender equality and the rights of religious minorities.

Many Afghans continue to believe that “the highest manifestation of the will of the people of Afghanistan” is vested in the institution of the Loya Jirga. As a specially convened national assembly, it has traditionally held the power to amend and interpret the constitution, declare war, and adopt decisions on the most critical national issues. Loya Jirgas have played an important role in Afghan politics since the fall of the Taliban, convening in 2002 to establish a transitional government and in 2003 to ratify a new

constitution. Because the Loya Jirga is closely associated with the rule of monarchy, it is revered most by those Afghans, especially in the dominant Pashtun community, who seek a more ethnically representative government than was initially installed following the Taliban's overthrow.

Political process

Those government institutions established during the reign of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (1880–1901) laid the groundwork for the modern Afghan state. They gave primacy to a strong military, centralized government from Kabul, and signaled the primacy of the Pashtun as the country's ruling group.

Local government

In practice, however, Afghan governments have never succeeded in extending their rule very deeply at the local level. This reality has meant that local influentials and power brokers would not challenge the state, and the state, in turn, would refrain from trying to interfere with them. Whatever the regime in power, a high degree of autonomy has allowed local areas to pursue economic activities and to follow tribal and localized law and customs. To administer the government's few extractive and allocative powers, the country was divided administratively into provinces, each headed by a centrally appointed governor. The provinces were further subdivided into districts and subdistricts headed by appointed officials.

Informal institutions and justice

Governments have also worked through largely informal consultative bodies at the local level, such as community councils (*shūrā*s) and tribal assemblies (*jirga*s), many of which have continued to function regardless of changes in national politics. In the absence of an effective central government, Afghan communities have their own social norms, but none so elaborate as Pashtun tribal law, known as *Pashtunwali*. With the advent of the Taliban, Islamic courts and an Islamic administration of justice through interpretation of the law by clergy (*ʿulamāʾ*) assumed greater prominence. These changes have widely replaced the authority once exercised by traditional local leaders, or khans.

Weak central government

Afghanistan has relied far more on foreign subsidies and export taxes than on internal taxes to finance its limited scope of activities. As in other rentier states, the authorities were better able to distribute resources than to collect them. It was unnecessary for national government institutions to be very effective, since there was little policy to implement. If called upon to enforce a more active government, the existing institutions were bound to invite challenge and be prone to collapse. The most far-reaching and

Also spelled
Faizābād

See all related content

Feyzābād, town, northeastern Afghanistan. It lies along the Kowkcheh River at 4,000 feet (1,200 m) above sea level. Feyzābād was destroyed by Morād Beg of Qondūz in 1821 and its inhabitants removed to Qondūz, but, after Badakhshan was annexed by ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān, ruler of Afghanistan (1880–1901), the town recovered some of its former importance. In 1955 it was leveled by an earthquake. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Afghan guerrillas seized the town. After intermittent fighting, a Soviet military command was based in Feyzābād until the late 1980s. The town has rice and flour mills. Pop. (2006 est.) 27,200.

ultimately disastrous attempt to expand the penetration of the Kabul government occurred during the early years of communist rule that began in 1978 and eventually led to civil war and chaos.

Security

Following the collapse of the communist regime in 1992, government security apparatuses quickly dissolved. Individual mujahideen factions—formerly funded by foreign interests wishing to overthrow the regime—maintained their own militias and skirmished over control of the capital city and the countryside. Central government control extended little farther than Kabul itself, and law and order broke down almost entirely. The Taliban's emergence can be traced largely to the absence of security and to the exhaustion of the population from years of civil war. Under Taliban rule—which after 1998 covered all but a ds were secure and personal safety improved for most evotees also kept close watch for any signs of ments on perceived offenders. In fighting that the Taliban and a coalition of mujahideen factions nic cleansing and war atrocities were perpetrated by

-Taliban period has been threatened by many factors. quantities of unexploded ordnance continue to litter warlords expelled by the Taliban and the emergence e civil war has fragmented authority across the sizable militias that they can use to compete over oups of Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters have remained The presence of international peacekeeping forces ted in their number and scope of operation, has onflict and enhanced the authority of the central

See all related content →

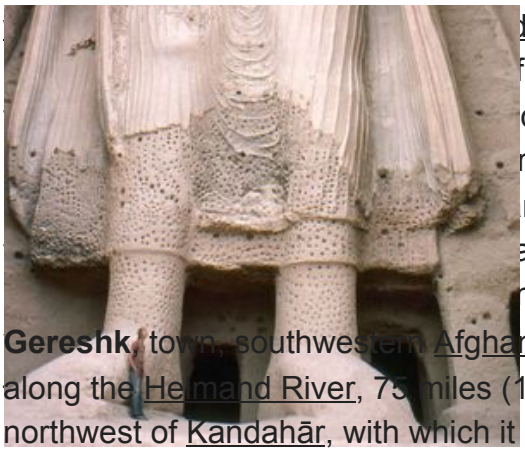
Also spelled: Bāmīān or Bāmyān

Bamiyan, town located in central Afghanistan. It lies about 80 miles (130 km) northwest of Kabul, the country's capital, in the Bamiyan valley, at an elevation of 8,495 feet (2,590 meters).

Bāmiyān, Afghanistan: Buddha statue Larger of the two Buddha statues in Bāmiyān, Afghanistan, photograph from 1977. Both statues were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001.

Health and welfare

Based on the levels of infant mortality and life expectancy, Afghanistan has one of the least-developed health care systems in the world. The absence of potable water in most parts of the country is responsible for the widespread incidence of waterborne diseases. ulation, mostly in urban areas, had access to safe number have access to health care. Medical training hat is available is provided principally by international Services offered by the government are minimal. The is concentrated in Kabul, and many rural areas do not upon their arrival to power, the Taliban prohibited



Gereshk, town, southwestern Afghanistan. It lies along the Helmand River, 75 miles (120 km) west-northwest of Kandahār, with which it is linked by road. Gereshk is the center of a rich agricultural area; the Kajakī dam upriver diverts water to the Boghra canal, on which the town was originally built around a fort on the right bank of the river and was later rebuilt on the left bank. During the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–42), the fort, now in ruins, was held by the British; it was returned in 1879. Gereshk houses an engineering school (1957) and a hospital. About 20 miles (32 km) south of the town, at the confluence of the Helmand and Arghandāb rivers, is the ruined city of Qalʿeh-ye Bost (Bust). Pop. (1988 est.) 6,000.

Bamiyan, Afghanistan: Buddha statue
Detail of one of two Buddha statues at Bamiyan, Afghanistan; photograph from 1977. Both statues were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001.

Bamiyan, Afghanistan: destroyed Buddha statue
Taliban soldiers at the base of the mountain alcove where the tallest of the two Buddha statues in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, stood before being destroyed in 2001.

Kabul: Ministry of Public Health
Ministry of Public Health worker administering water-purifying tablets in Kabul, 2005.

Housing of Afghanistan

Afghanistan's climatic and ethnic diversity has contributed to a wide variety of traditional ... country's large rural population. Nomadic and ... ly relied on yurts in the north—these are generally ... peoples—and tents in the south. The latter are ... . In the northern and western parts of the country, ...en have consisted of fortified villages of stone and ...ses"), whereas in the northern and eastern mountain ...gs were customary among the Nuristani.

...ings were located within modest-sized walled cities, ...c layout. It was only in the 20th century that urban ...y walls and to take on characteristics associated with ...s, paved roads, and city services. Urban life ...e of the communist regime, and a number of cities ...structures during the 1990s and early 21st century. ...tricity, water, sewage disposal—remained intact. ...e fled the countryside, seeking shelter from the civil ...housed and, lacking a central government, were forced to rely on private means for shelter. Rebuilding the country's housing stock has been one of the major tasks in national reconstruction.

Education

Education is free at all levels, and elementary education is officially compulsory wherever it is provided by the state. Nonetheless, even in the best of years, less than one-fourth of all Afghan children have attended school. Although there are primary schools throughout the country, there are secondary schools only in the provincial and some district centres. Under the Taliban, opportunities for schooling declined, and instruction was devoted

Bamiyan is first mentioned in 5th-century-ce Chinese sources and was visited by the Chinese Buddhist monks and travelers Faxian (c. 400 ce) and Xuanzang (630); it was by that time a center of commerce and of Buddhism. Two enormous figures of the Buddha were created there in the 4th and 5th centuries, the larger was 175 feet (53 meters) high,

mostly to Qurʾānic studies. Public education for girls virtually disappeared in the late 1990s and less than half of the male population was estimated to be literate, and probably no more than one in seven women.

Higher education has been limited to two institutions: Kabul University, founded in 1946 by the incorporation of a number of faculties, the oldest of which is the faculty of medicine, established in 1932, and the University of Nangarhār, established in Jalālābād in 1963. The civil war interfered with their operation, especially during the 1990s and again during the U.S. military campaign in 2001.

Cultural life

Afghanistan has a rich cultural heritage covering more than 5,000 years and absorbing elements from many cultures, especially those of Iran (Persia) and India. Even elements of Greek culture can be traced to the Hellenistic Age. This blend of cultures flourished at many points in Afghan history, notably under the reign of the Mughal emperors, when Kabul and Herāt emerged as important centres of art and learning. Largely because of almost complete isolation from the outside world, however, little in art, literature, or architecture was produced between the 18th and early 20th centuries. Because most Afghans live outside the cities, their tribal kinship is the basis of social life and determines the patriarchal character of the community.

Afghans are also identified by their *qawm*, a term that can refer to affinity with almost any kind of social group. It essentially divides "us" from "them" and helps to distinguish members of one large ethnic or tribal group, or one clan or village, from another. Particular responsibilities and advantages go with membership, and the stability of social and political institutions may vary with their *qawm* composition.

and the smaller was 120 feet (about 40 meters). The statues were carved from the living rock and were then finished with fine plaster and painted. When Xuanzang saw the figures, they were also decorated with gold and fine jewels. The two Buddha figures, together with numerous ancient man-made caves in the cliffs north of the town, made Bamiyan a major Afghan archaeological site. However, in early 2001 the country's then-ruling Taliban regime had the statues destroyed, despite worldwide pleas to save them. During the subsequent search for a colossal reclining Buddha—also reported by Xuanzang and thought to be some 980 feet (300 meters) long—in 2008 an additional Buddha was discovered nearby. The 3rd-century statue, which was badly damaged, represented the Buddha in a sleeping position and measured 62 feet (19 meters) in length.

The caves at Bamiyan are of various forms, and the interiors of many bear traces of fine murals that link them with contemporary caves in Xinjiang, China; some of these paintings were also destroyed sometime before 2001. Analysis of the murals revealed the use of oil-based paints, making the 7th-century murals some of the earliest examples of oil painting in the world. The area and archaeological remains were designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2003.

The modern town lies below the caves. It was ruled in the 7th century by princes, probably Hephthalite, but was subject to the Western Turks. The rulers first accepted Islam in the 8th century. The Saffarid ruler Yaʿqūb ibn Layth captured Bamiyan in 871; after changing hands several times, it was destroyed and its inhabitants exterminated in 1221 by the Mongol invader Genghis Khan. Since that time it has never regained its former glory. In 1840 Bamiyan was the scene of fighting in the First Anglo-Afghan War. Pop. (2006 est.) 10,400.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica This article was most recently revised and updated by Amy Tikkanen.

Daily life and social customs

Religion has long played a paramount role in the daily life and social customs of Afghanistan. Even under the mujahideen leaders, Afghanistan appeared to be on a course of Islamization: the sale of alcohol was banned, and women were pressured to cover their heads in public and adopt traditional Muslim dress. But far more stringent practices were imposed as the Taliban enforced its Islamic code in areas under its control. These measures included banning television sets and most other forms of entertainment. Men who failed to grow beards and leave them untrimmed were fined and jailed—full beardedness being perceived by extremists as the mark of a Muslim—and little mercy was shown to convicted criminals. These and other policies were not widely popular, and the Taliban was subject to reproach at home and abroad for its inability to build a national administrative structure. But, in the absence of viable alternatives, most Afghans appeared to accept Taliban dictates for the more orderly society it brought.

Daily life for Afghan women has changed radically. In the 1960s the wearing of a veil became voluntary, and women found employment in offices and shops; some women also received a university education. The situation changed after 1992, however, and particularly following the Taliban's capture of Kabul in 1996. Authorities closed down girls' schools and forced women to give up employment in nearly all occupations. Strong penalties were applied against women who were not fully covered in the streets or who were found in the company of males unrelated to them.

Today, in the post-Taliban era, daily life for most Afghans revolves around the exigencies of rebuilding a war-ravaged state. With increasing stability has come a greater and steadier food supply, but, in general, poor nutrition among Afghans has remained a serious cause of concern, especially in light of the neglect and destruction wrought upon the agricultural system during the war and the extended drought since the late 1990s. The staple of the Afghan diet is bread (*nān*), most commonly flat and oblong in shape and typically eaten when freshly removed from an earthen oven. Traditional cuisine consists of a variety of roast meats or meat pies (*sanbūseh*), stewed vegetables, rice pilaf, and a thick noodle soup (*āsh*) accompanied by fresh fruit and an assortment of yogurt-based sauces. The wide absence of clean drinking water and of adequate sanitation has ensured continuation of a high mortality rate, especially among young children. Outside the large cities, electricity is reserved for the privileged few.

Kabul: outdoor theatre A crowd watches a play at an outdoor theatre in Kabul.

On the brighter side of daily life, the ban enforced by the Taliban on most forms of entertainment has been lifted, and the social atmosphere has become more relaxed. Afghans are again enjoying activities from kite flying to football, and photography is no longer prohibited. Though facilities are minimal, schools have been reopened—including those for girls—and women are once again entering the workforce. However, urban women have continued to wear the chador (or *chadri*, in Afghanistan), the full body covering mandated by the Taliban. This has been true even of those women of the middle class (most in Kabul) who had shed that garment during the communist era. Some men have shaved or trimmed their beards, but, aside from disregarding the style of turban associated with the Taliban, most have continued to dress traditionally—generally in the loose, baggy trousers typical of many parts of South and Central Asia, over which are worn a long overshirt and a heavy vest.

The arts and cultural institutions

In music and dance, a revival of traditional folksinging has gone hand in hand with the imitation of modern Western and Indian music. Afghan music is different from Western music in many ways, particularly in its scales, note intervals, pitch, and rhythm, but it is closer to Western than to Asian music. Afghans celebrate their religious or national feast days, and particularly weddings, by public dancing. The performance of the *attan* dance in the open air has long been a feature of Afghan life. It became the national dance of the Pashtun and then of the entire country. Under the Taliban regime, however, all performances of music and dance—and even listening to or watching the same—were forbidden as un-Islamic.

Afghanistan's literary heritage is among the richest in Central Asia and is heir to a number of ethnic and linguistic traditions. Herāt, in particular, was a noted centre of Persian literary and scholarly pursuit; the Arabic-language author al-Hamadhānī settled there in the 10th century, as did the famous Persian-language poet Jāmī 500 years later. The theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī settled in Herāt in the 12th century, and in the following century the city of Balkh, once a great centre of learning, was the birthplace of the renowned poet Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (although the latter left the region at a young age). The great Afghan chieftain and poet Khushḥāl Khan Khaṭak founded Pashto literature in the 17th century.

Bamiyan, Afghanistan Empty niche where one of two colossal Buddhas stood prior to their destruction by the Taliban in Bamiyan, Afghanistan.

Archaeological research carried out since 1922 has uncovered many fine works of art of the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods. A revival of the traditional arts and an interest in new forms of expression have given a new dynamism to artistic creation. Of the new painters, some draw direct inspiration from the Herāt school of the 15th-century Timurid period; others are influenced by Western styles. Between the early 1950s and mid-1970s the government encouraged the restoration and redecoration of some of the old monuments of architectural value. However, the world-renowned ancient statues of Buddha in the caves of Bamiyan in central Afghanistan were destroyed in 2001 after the Taliban condemned them as idolatrous. The destruction was denounced worldwide.

The School of Fine Arts was established in Kabul in the 1930s. In architecture the traditional Timurid techniques are preserved, particularly in the design of the exterior walls of mosques or tombs. Handicrafts include the world-renowned Afghan carpets and copper utensils. Afghanistan's cultural institutions suffered greatly during the period of civil war, particularly under the successive mujahideen and Taliban regimes; most are now either defunct or in abeyance. In February 2002, however, the National Gallery of Art reopened its doors after having managed to hide many of the treasures under its care during the Taliban rule.

Sports and recreation

Afghanistan's traditional sports are individualistic and generally martial—even the childhood pastime of kite flying takes on a competitive edge, as youths often engage in contests to sever the kite strings of competitors. Wrestling, for individual and group honour, is universal, and shooting, both for game and for sport, is widespread. The sturdy and agile Afghan hound, popular in the West for its beauty, originally was bred for speed, agility, and hunting ability. The foremost sport in terms of popularity is indisputably the game of *buzkashī*. Often termed the Afghan national pastime, this rugged contest pits horsemen—sometimes in teams but often as individuals—against one another in a challenge to secure the headless carcass of a goat or calf (weighing about 50–100 pounds [20–40 kg]) and carry it to a goal while simultaneously fending off competitors.

Western-style team sports never gained widespread popularity in Afghanistan, but the country made its first Olympic appearance in the 1936 Summer Games. It has since fielded teams only intermittently. Afghanistan has never sent athletes to the Winter Games.

Media and publishing

Traditionally, the regimes that have ruled Afghanistan have had little tolerance for a free press. This was especially true under the Taliban. Since the Taliban's demise, the local press has exploded with new publications. Dozens of new papers and magazines have appeared, about one-third government-controlled and most weeklies. High production costs and a shortage of printing facilities has left the country with only one regularly appearing daily newspaper, a state-owned publication, *Arman*. The country's low rate of literacy has limited the number of readers, but the long-standing practice of reading newspapers aloud in public places has greatly expanded the number of Afghans who have access to the printed word. Censorship has not been widely practiced by the interim government.

Marvin G. Weinbaum

History

Variations of the word Afghan may be as old as a 3rd-century-ce Sāsānian reference to "Abgan." The earliest Muslim reference to the Afghans probably dates to 982, but tribes related to the modern Afghans have lived in the region for many generations. For millennia the land now called Afghanistan has been the meeting place of four cultural and ecological areas: the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and East Asia.

Prehistory

Paleolithic (Old Stone Age) peoples probably roamed Afghanistan as early as 100,000 years ago. The earliest definite evidence of human occupation was found in the cave of Darra-i-Kur in Badakhshān, where a transitional Neanderthal skull fragment in association with Mousterian-type tools was discovered; the remains are of the Middle Paleolithic Period, dating to about 30,000 years ago. Caves near Āq Kupruk yielded evidence of an early Neolithic (New Stone Age) culture (c. 9000–6000 bce) based on domesticated animals. Archaeological research since World War II has revealed Bronze Age sites, dating both before and after the Indus civilization of the 3rd to the 2nd millennium bce. There was trade with Bronze Age Mesopotamia and Egypt, and the main export from the Afghan area was lapis lazuli from the mines of Badakhshān. In addition, a site with definite links to the Indus civilization has been excavated at Shortughai near the Amu Darya, northeast of Kondoz.

Historical beginnings (to the 7th century ce)

The Achaemenids and the Greeks

In the 6th century bce the Achaemenian ruler Cyrus II (the Great) established his authority over the area. Darius I (the Great) consolidated Achaemenian rule of the region through the provinces, or satrapies, of Aria (in the region of modern Herāt), Bactria (Balkh), Sattagydia (modern Ghaznī to the Indus River), Arachosia (Kandahār), and Drangiana (Sīstān).

Alexander the Great overthrew the Achaemenids and conquered most of the Afghan satrapies before he left for India in 327 bce. Ruins of an outpost Greek city founded about 325 bce were discovered at Ay Khānom, at the confluence of the Amu Darya and Kowkcheh River. Excavations there produced inscriptions and transcriptions of Delphic precepts written in a script influenced by cursive Greek. Greek decorative elements dominate the architecture, including an immense administrative centre, a theatre, and a gymnasium. A nomadic raid about 130 bce ended the Greek era at Ay Khānom.

After Alexander’s death in 323 bce, the eastern satrapies passed to the Seleucid dynasty, which ruled from Babylon. About 304 bce the territory south of the Hindu Kush was ceded to the Mauryan dynasty of northern India. Bilingual rock inscriptions in Greek and Aramaic (the official language of the Achaemenids) found at Kandahār and Laghmān (in eastern Afghanistan) date from the reign of Ashoka (c. 265–238 bce or c. 273–232 bce), the Mauryan dynasty’s most renowned emperor. Diodotus, a local Greco-Bactrian governor, declared the Afghan plain of the Amu Darya independent about 250 bce. Greco-Bactrian conquerors moved south about 180 bce and established their rule at Kabul and in the Punjab. The Parthians of eastern Iran also broke away from the Seleucids, establishing control over Sīstān and Kandahār in the south.

The Kushāns

About 135 bce a loose confederation of five Central Asian nomadic tribes known as the Yuezhi wrested Bactria from the Bactrian Greeks. These tribes united under the banner of the Kushān (Kuṣāṇa), one of the five tribes, and conquered the Afghan area. The zenith of Kushān power was reached in the 2nd century ce under King Kaniska (c. 78–144 ce), whose empire stretched from Mathura in north-central India beyond Bactria as far as the frontiers of China in Central Asia.

The Kushāns were patrons of the arts and of religion. A major branch of the Silk Road—which carried luxury goods and facilitated the exchange of ideas between Rome, India, and China—passed through Afghanistan, where a transshipment centre existed at Balkh. Indian pilgrims traveling the Silk Road introduced Buddhism to China during the early centuries ce, and Buddhist Gandhāra art flourished during this period. The world's largest Buddha figures (175 feet [53 metres] and 120 feet [about 40 metres] tall) were carved into a cliff at Bamiyan in the central mountains of Afghanistan during the 4th and 5th centuries ce; the statues were destroyed in 2001 by the country's ruling Taliban. Further evidence of the trade and cultural achievement of the period has been recovered at the Kushān summer capital of Bagrām, north of Kabul, including painted glass from Alexandria; plaster matrices, bronzes, porphyries, and alabasters from Rome; carved ivories from India; and lacquers from China. A massive Kushān city at Delbarjin, north of Balkh, and a major gold hoard of superb artistry near Sheberghān, west of Balkh, also have been excavated.

The Sāsānids and Hephthalites

The Kushān empire did not long survive Kaniṣka, though for centuries Kushān princes continued to rule in various provinces. Persian Sāsānids established control over parts of Afghanistan, including Bagrām, in 241 ce. In 400 a new wave of Central Asian nomads under the Hephthalites took control, only to be defeated in 565 by a coalition of Sāsānids and Western Turks. From the 5th through the 7th century many Chinese Buddhist pilgrims continued to travel through Afghanistan. The pilgrim Xüanzang wrote an important account of his travels, and several of the religious centres he visited, including Hadda, Ghazna (Ghaznī), Kondoz, Bamiyan, Shotorak, and Bagrām, have been excavated.

The 7th–18th centuries

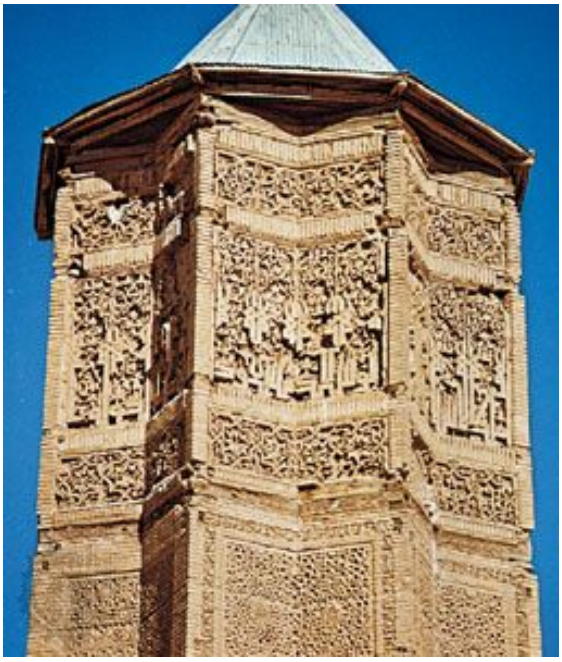
Under the Hephthalites and Sāsānids, many of the Afghan princedoms were influenced by Hinduism. The Hindu kings of the Shāhī family were concentrated in the Kabul and Ghaznī areas. Excavated sites of the period include a major Hindu Shāhī temple north of Kabul and a chapel in Ghaznī that contains both Buddhist and Hindu statuary, indicating that there was a mingling of these two religions.

The first Muslim dynasties

Islamic armies defeated the Sāsānids in 642 at the Battle of Nahāvand (near modern Hamadān, Iran) and advanced into the Afghan area, but they were unable to hold the territory; cities submitted, only to rise in revolt, and the hastily converted returned to their old beliefs once the armies had passed. The 9th and 10th centuries witnessed the rise of numerous local Islamic dynasties. One of the earliest was the Ṭāhirids of Khorāsān, whose kingdom included Balkh and Herāt; they established virtual independence from the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate in 820. The Ṭāhirids were succeeded in 867–869 by a native dynasty from Sīstān, the Ṣaffārids. Local princes in the north soon became feudatories of the powerful Sāmānids, who ruled from Bukhara. From 872 to 999 Bukhara, Samarkand, and Balkh enjoyed a golden age under Sāmānid rule.

Louis Dupree Nancy Hatch Dupree

In the middle of the 10th century a former Turkish slave named Alptigin seized Ghazna. He was succeeded by another former slave, Subüktigin, who extended the conquests to Kabul and the Indus. His son was the great Maḥmūd of Ghazna, who came to the throne in 998. Maḥmūd conquered the Punjab and Multan and carried his raids into the heart of India. The hitherto obscure town of Ghazna became a splendid city, as did the second capital at Bust (Lashkar Gāh).



Ghaznī, Afghanistan: victory tower of Masūd III Detail of the victory tower of Masūd III, constructed in 1099–1115; in Ghaznī (formerly Ghazna), Afghanistan.

Maḥmūd’s descendants continued to rule over a gradually diminishing empire until 1150, when ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Ḥusayn of Ghūr, a mountain-locked region in central Afghanistan, sacked Ghazna and drove the last Ghaznavid into India. ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn’s nephew, Muizz al-Dīn Muḥammad, known as Muḥammad of Ghūr, first invaded India in 1175. After his death in 1206, his general, Quṭb al-Dīn Aybak, became the sultan of Delhi.

Shortly after Muḥammad of Ghūr’s death, the Ghurīd empire fell apart, and Afghanistan was occupied by Sultan ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad, the Khwārezm-Shah. The territories of the Khwārezm-Shah dynasty extended from Chinese Turkistan in the east to the borders of Iraq in the west.

Frank Raymond Allchin

The Mongol invasion

Genghis Khan invaded the eastern part of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn's empire in 1219. Avoiding a battle, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn retreated to a small island in the Caspian Sea, where he died in 1220. Soon after ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn's death, his energetic son Jalāl al-Dīn Mingburnu rallied the Afghan highlanders at Parwan (modern Jabal os Sarāj), near Kabul, and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Mongols under Kutikonian. Genghis Khan, who was then at Herāt, hastened to avenge the defeat and laid siege to Bamiyan. There Ṃutugen, the khan's grandson, was killed, an event so infuriating to Genghis Khan that when he captured the citadel he ordered that no living being be spared. Bamiyan was utterly destroyed. Advancing on Ghazna, Genghis won a great victory over Jalāl al-Dīn, who then fell back toward the Indus (1221), where he made a final but unsuccessful stand.

Later dynasties

After Genghis Khan's death in 1227, his vast empire fell to pieces. In Afghanistan some local chiefs succeeded in establishing independent principalities, and others acknowledged Mongol princes as suzerains. This state of affairs continued until the end of the 14th century, when Timur (Tamerlane) conquered a large part of the country.

Timur's successors, the Timurids (1405–1507), were great patrons of learning and the arts who enriched their capital city of Herāt with fine buildings. Under their rule Afghanistan enjoyed peace and prosperity.

Early in the 16th century the Turkic Uzbeks rose to power in Central Asia under Muḥammad Shaybānī, who took Herāt in 1507. In late 1510 the Ṣafavid shah Ismāʿīl I besieged Shaybānī in Merv and killed him. Bābur, a descendant of Genghis Khan and Timur, had made Kabul the capital of an independent principality in 1504. He captured Kandahār in 1522, and in 1526 he marched on Delhi. He defeated Ibrāhīm, the last of the Lodī Afghan kings of India, and established the Mughal Empire, which lasted until the middle of the 19th century and included all of eastern Afghanistan south of the Hindu Kush. The capital was at Agra. Nine years after his death in 1530, the body of Bābur was taken to Kabul for burial.

During the next 200 years Afghanistan was parceled between the Mughals of India and the Ṣafavids of Persia—the former holding Kabul north to the southern foothills of the Hindu Kush and the latter, Herāt and Farāh. Kandahār was in dispute for many years.

Last Afghan empire

Overthrow of foreign rule

Periodic attempts were made to gain independence. In 1709 Mīr Vays Khan, a leader of the Hotaki Ghilzay tribe, led a successful rising against Gorgīn Khan, the Persian governor of Kandahār.

The Hotakis

Mīr Vays Khan governed Kandahār until his death in 1715. In 1716 the Abdālīs (Durrānī) of Herāt, encouraged by his example, took up arms against the Persians and under their leader, Asad Allāh Khan, succeeded in liberating their province. Maḥmūd, Mīr Vays's young son and successor, was not content with holding Kandahār, and in 1722 he led some 20,000 men against Eṣfahān; the Ṣafavid government surrendered after a six-month siege.

Maḥmūd died in 1725 and was succeeded by Ashraf, who had to contend with Russian pressure from the north and Ottoman Turk advances from the west. Shah Ashraf halted both the Russian and Turkish onslaughts, but a brigand chief, Nādr Qolī Beg, defeated the Afghans at Dāmghān in October 1729 and drove them from Persia. During the retreat Ashraf was murdered, probably on orders from his cousin, who was then holding Kandahār.

Nādir Shah

Nādr Qolī Beg took Herāt in 1732 after a desperate siege. Nādr was impressed by the courage of the Herātis and recruited many of them to serve in his army. He had himself elected shah of Persia, with the name Nādir Shah, in 1736.

In 1738, after a year's siege, the city of Kandahār fell to Nādir Shah's army of 80,000 men. Nādir Shah seized Ghazna and Kabul and occupied the Mughal capital at Delhi in 1739. His booty included the Koh-i-noor diamond and the Peacock Throne. He was assassinated at Fatḥābād, Iran, in 1747, which led to the disintegration of his empire and the rise of the last great Afghan empire.

The Durrānī dynasty

The commander of Nādir Shah's 4,000-man Afghan bodyguard was Aḥmad Khan Abdālī, who returned to Kandahār and was elected shah by a tribal council. He adopted the title Durr-i Durrān ("Pearl of Pearls"). Supported by most tribal leaders, Aḥmad Shah Durrānī extended Afghan control from Meshed to Kashmir and Delhi, from the Amu Darya to the Arabian Sea. The Durrānī was the second greatest Muslim empire in the second half of the 18th century, surpassed in size only by the Ottoman.

Aḥmad Shah died in 1772 and was succeeded by his son, Tīmūr Shah, who received but nominal homage from the tribal chieftains. Much of his reign was spent in quelling their rebellions. Because of this opposition, Tīmūr shifted his capital from Kandahār to Kabul in 1776.

Zamān Shah (1793–1800)

After the death of Tīmūr in 1793, his fifth son, Zamān, seized the throne with the help of Sardār Pāyenda Khan, a chief of the Bārakzay. Zamān then turned to India with the object of repeating the exploits of Aḥmad Shah. This alarmed the British, who induced Fatḥ ʿAlī Shah of Persia to bring pressure on the Afghan king and divert his attention from India. The shah went a step further by helping Maḥmūd, governor of Herāt and a brother of Zamān, with men and money and encouraging him to advance on Kandahār. Maḥmūd, assisted by his vizier, Fatḥ Khan Bārakzay, eldest son of Sardār Pāyenda Khan, and by Fatḥ ʿAlī Shah, took Kandahār and advanced on Kabul. Zamān, in India, hurried back to Afghanistan. There he was handed over to Maḥmūd, blinded, and imprisoned (1800). The Durrānī empire had begun to disintegrate after 1798, when Zamān Shah appointed a Sikh, Ranjit Singh, as governor of Lahore.

Shah Maḥmūd (1800–03; 1809–18)

Shah Maḥmūd left affairs of state to Fatḥ Khan. Some of the chiefs who had grievances against the king or his ministers joined forces and invited Zamān's brother Shah Shojāʿ (1803–09; 1839–42) to Kabul. The intrigue was successful. Shah Shojāʿoccupied the capital, and Maḥmūd sued for peace.

The new king, Shah Shojāʿ, ascended the throne in 1803. The chiefs had become powerful and unruly, and the outlying provinces were asserting their independence. The Sikhs of the Punjab were encroaching on Afghan territories from the east, while the Persians were threatening from the west.

Napoleon I, then at the zenith of his power in Europe, proposed to Alexander I of Russia a combined invasion of India. A British mission, headed by Mountstuart Elphinstone, met Shah Shojāʿat Peshawar to discuss mutual defense against this threat, which never developed. In a treaty of friendship concluded June 7, 1809, the shah promised to oppose the passage of foreign troops through his dominions. Shortly after the mission left Peshawar, news was received that Kabul had been occupied by the forces of Maḥmūd and Fatḥ Khan. The troops of Shah Shojāʿwere routed, and the shah withdrew from Afghanistan and found asylum with the British at Ludhiāna, India, in 1815.

The rise of the Bārakzay

The Bārakzay were now dominant. This situation incited the jealousy of Kāmrān, Maḥmūd's eldest son, who seized and blinded Fatḥ Khan. Later Shah Maḥmūd had him cut to pieces.

Dōst Moḥammad (1826–39; 1843–63)

Advancing from Kashmir in 1818, Dōst Moḥammad, younger brother of Fatḥ Khan, took Peshawar and Kabul and drove Shah Maḥmūd and Kāmrān from all their possessions except Herāt, where they maintained a precarious footing for a few years. Balkh was seized by the ruler of Bukhara; the trans-Indus Afghan districts were occupied by the Sikhs; and the outlying provinces of Sind and Baluchistan assumed independence. Ghazna, Kabul, and Jalālābād fell to Dōst Moḥammad.

Dōst Moḥammad established the Bārakzay (or Moḥammadzay) dynasty. His position secure after he assumed the title of emir in 1826 at Kabul, he decided to recover Peshawar from the Sikhs. Declaring a jihad, or Islamic holy war, in 1836, he advanced on Peshawar. The Sikh leader Ranjit Singh, however, sowed dissension in Dōst Moḥammad's camp, the invading army melted away, and Peshawar was lost to the Afghans.

In November 1837 Moḥammad Shah of Persia laid siege to Herāt, which the British saw as the key to India. The Russians supported the Persians. The British, fearful that Persia was falling completely under Russian influence, entered into alliances with the rulers of Herāt, Kabul, and Kandahār. A British mission to Kabul under Captain (later Sir) Alexander Burnes in 1837 was welcomed by Dōst Moḥammad, who hoped the British would help him recover Peshawar. Burnes could not give him the required assurances; and when a Russian agent appeared in Kabul, the British left for India.

With the failure of Burnes's mission, the governor-general of India, Lord Auckland, ordered an invasion of Afghanistan, with the object of restoring Shah Shojāʿ to the throne. In April 1839, after suffering great privations, the British army entered Kandahār; Shojāʿ was then crowned shah. Ghazna was captured in the following July, and in August Shah Shojāʿ was installed at Kabul. The Afghans, however, would tolerate neither a foreign occupation nor a king imposed on them by a foreign power, and insurrections broke out. Dōst Moḥammad—who had escaped first to Balkh, then to Bukhara, where he was arrested—escaped from prison and returned to Afghanistan to lead his partisans against the British. In a battle at Parwan on November 2, 1840, Dōst Moḥammad had the upper hand, but the next day he surrendered to the British in Kabul. He was deported to India with the greater part of his family.

Outbreaks continued throughout the country, and the British eventually found their position untenable. Terms for their withdrawal were discussed with Akbar Khan, Dōst Moḥammad's son, but Sir William Hay Macnaghten, the British political agent, was killed during a parley with the Afghans. On January 6, 1842, some 4,500 British and Indian troops, with 12,000 camp followers, marched out of Kabul. Bands of Afghans swarmed around them, and the retreat ended in a bloodbath. Shah Shojāʿ was killed after the British left Kabul.

Though in the summer of that same year British forces reoccupied Kabul, the new governor-general, Lord Ellenborough, decided on the evacuation of Afghanistan. In 1843 Dōst Moḥammad returned to Kabul. During the next 20 years he consolidated his rule by

occupying Kandahār (1855), Balkh and the northern Khanates (1859), and Herāt (1863), the last less than a month before his death in June.

Shīr Ạlī (1863–66; 1868–79)

Shīr Ạlī Khan, Dōst Moḥammad's third son, then became emir, but his two elder brothers took the throne from him in May 1866. Shīr Ạlī regained his throne in September 1868. Shīr Ạlī's reception of a Russian mission at Kabul and his refusal to receive a British one, on British terms, led directly to the war of 1878–80. Shīr Ạlī, leaving his son, Yaʿqūb Khan, as his regent in Kabul, sought help from the Russians, but they advised him to make peace. Shīr Ạlī died in Mazār-e Sharīf in 1879.

Yaʿqūb Khan (1879)

The Treaty of Gandamak (Gandomak; May 26, 1879) recognized Yaʿqūb Khan as emir, and he subsequently agreed to receive a permanent British embassy at Kabul. In addition, he agreed to conduct his foreign relations with other states in accordance "with the wishes and advice" of the British government. This British triumph, however, was short-lived. On September 3, 1879, the British envoy and his escort were murdered in Kabul. British forces were again dispatched, and before the end of October they occupied Kabul. Yaʿqūb abdicated and was given exile in India, where he died in 1923.

Mohammad Ali Louis Dupree Nancy Hatch Dupree

Modern Afghanistan

Ạbd al-Raḥmān Khan (1880–1901)

The British finally withdrew from Kandahār in April 1881. In 1880 Ạbd al-Raḥmān Khan, a cousin of Shīr Ạlī, had returned from exile in Central Asia and proclaimed himself emir of Kabul. During the reign of Ạbd al-Raḥmān, the boundaries of modern Afghanistan were drawn by the British and the Russians. The Durand Line of 1893 divided zones of responsibility for the maintenance of law and order between British India and the kingdom of Afghanistan; it was never intended as a de jure international boundary. Afghanistan, therefore, although never dominated by a European imperial government, became a buffer between tsarist Russia and British India.

Persia, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan, c. 1902 Map of Persia (Iran), Afghanistan, and Baluchistan, from the 10th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, published in 1902.

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān exerted his influence, if not actual control, over the various ethnolinguistic groups inside Afghanistan, fighting some 20 small wars to convince them that a strong central government existed in Kabul. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was so successful that, at his death, his designated successor and eldest son, Ḥabībullāh Khan, succeeded to the throne as Ḥabībullāh I without the usual fratricidal fighting. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān can be considered the founder of modern Afghanistan.

Ḥabībullāh Khan (1901–19)

The introduction of modern European technology begun by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was furthered by Ḥabībullāh. Western ideals and styles penetrated the Afghan royal court and upper classes. An Afghan nationalist, Maḥmūd Beg Ṭarzī, published (1911–18) the periodical *Serāj al-Akbār* ("Torch of the News"), which had political influence far beyond the boundaries of Afghanistan.

Ḥabībullāh Khan visited British India in 1907 as a guest of the viceroy of India, Gilbert Elliot, 4th earl of Minto. Impressed with British power, Ḥabībullāh resisted pressures from Ṭarzī, Amānullāh (Ḥabībullāh's third son, who had married Soraya, a daughter of Ṭarzī), and others to enter World War I on the side of the Central Powers. The peace ending World War I brought death to Ḥabībullāh—he was murdered on February 20, 1919, by persons associated with the anti-British movement—and Amānullāh seized power.

Amānullāh (1919–29)

Amānullāh launched the inconclusive Third Anglo-Afghan War in May 1919. The monthlong war gained the Afghans the conduct of their own foreign affairs. The Treaty of Rawalpindi was signed on August 8, 1919, and amended in 1921. Before signing the final document with the British, the Afghans concluded a treaty of friendship with the new Bolshevik regime in the Soviet Union. Afghanistan thereby became one of the first states 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.

Amānullāh Khan of Afghanistan

Amānullāh changed his title from emir to *pādshāh* ("king") in 1923 and inaugurated a decade of reforms—including implementing constitutional and

administrative changes, allowing women to remove their veils, and establishing coeducational schools—that offended conservative religious and tribal leaders.

Civil war broke out in November 1928, and a Tajik folk hero called Bacheh Saqqāw (Bacheh-ye Saqqā; “Child of a Water Carrier”) occupied Kabul. Amānullāh abdicated in January 1929 in favour of his elder brother, Inayatullāh, but Bacheh Saqqāw proclaimed himself Ḥabībullāh Ghāzī (or Ḥabībullāh II), emir of Afghanistan. Amānullāh failed to retrieve his throne and went into exile in Italy. He died in 1960 in Zürich, Switzerland.

Amānullāh Khan of Afghanistan Amānullāh Khan in traditional Afghan attire.

Moḥammad Nāder Shah (1929–33)

Ḥabībullāh II was driven from the throne by Moḥammad Nāder Khan and his brothers, distant cousins of Amānullāh. On October 10, 1929, Ḥabībullāh II was executed along with 17 of his followers. A tribal assembly elected Nāder Khan as shah, and the opposition was bloodily persecuted.

Nāder Shah produced a new constitution in 1931 that was modeled on Amānullāh’s constitution of 1923 but was more conservatively oriented to appease Islamic religious leaders. The national economy developed in the 1930s under the leadership of several entrepreneurs who began small-scale industrial projects. Nāder Shah was assassinated on November 8, 1933, and the 19-year-old crown prince, Zahir, succeeded his father.

Mohammad Zahir Shah (1933–73)

The first 20 years of Mohammad Zahir Shah’s reign were characterized by cautious policies of national consolidation, an expansion of foreign relations, and internal development using Afghan funds alone. World War II brought about a slowdown in

development processes, but Afghanistan maintained its traditional neutrality. The "Pashtunistan" problem regarding the political status of those Pashtun living on the British (Pakistani) side of the Durand Line developed after the independence of Pakistan in 1947.

Shah Mahmud, prime minister from 1946 to 1953, sanctioned free elections and a relatively free press, and the so-called "liberal parliament" functioned from 1949 to 1952. Conservatives in government, however, encouraged by religious leaders, supported the seizure of power in 1953 by Lieutenant General Mohammad Daud Khan, brother-in-law and first cousin of the king.

Prime Minister Daud Khan (1953–63) took a stronger line on Pashtunistan, and, to the surprise of many, turned to the Soviet Union for economic and military assistance. The Soviets ultimately became Afghanistan's major aid-and-trade partner. The Afghans refused to take sides in the Cold War, and Afghanistan became an "economic Korea," testing the Western (particularly U.S.) will and capability to compete with the Soviet bloc in a nonaligned country. Daud Khan successfully introduced several far-reaching educational and social reforms, such as allowing women to wear the veil voluntarily and abolishing purdah (the practice of secluding women from public view), which theoretically increased the labour force by about half. The regime remained politically repressive, however, and tolerated no direct opposition.

The Pashtunistan issue precipitated Daud Khan's downfall. In retaliation for Afghan agitation, Pakistan closed the border with Afghanistan in August 1961. Its prolonged closure led Afghanistan to depend increasingly on the Soviet Union for trade and in-transit facilities. To reverse the trend, Daud Khan resigned in March 1963, and the border was reopened in May. The Pashtunistan problem still existed, however.

Zahir Shah and his advisers instituted an experiment in constitutional monarchy. In 1964 a Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) approved a new constitution, under which the House of the People was to have 216 elected members and the House of the Elders was to have 84 members, one-third elected by the people, one-third appointed by the king, and one-third elected indirectly by new provincial assemblies.

Elections for both houses of the legislature were held in 1965 and 1969. Several unofficial parties ran candidates with platforms ranging from fundamentalist Islam to the extreme left. One such group was the Marxist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), the major leftist organization in the country. Founded in 1965, the party soon split into two factions, known as the People's (Khalq) and Banner (Parcham) parties. Another was a conservative religious organization known as the Islamic Society (Jamiyyat-e Eslāmī), which was founded by a number of religiously minded individuals, including members of the University of Kabul faculty of religion, in 1971. The Islamists were highly influenced by the militant ideology of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and were ardently opposed to the power of leftist and secular elements in Afghanistan.

National politics became increasingly polarized, a situation reflected in the appointment by the king of five successive prime ministers between September 1965 and December 1972. The king refused to promulgate several key acts, thereby effectively blocking the institutionalization of the political processes guaranteed in the constitution. Struggles for power developed between the legislative and the executive branches, and an independent Supreme Court, as called for in the 1964 constitution, was never appointed.

Mohammad Daud Khan sensed the stagnation of the constitutional processes and seized power on July 17, 1973, in a virtually bloodless coup. Leftist military officers and civil servants of the Banner Party assisted in the overthrow, and a number of militant Islamists were forced to flee the country. Daud Khan abolished the constitution of 1964 and established the Republic of Afghanistan, with himself as chairman of the Central Committee of the Republic and prime minister.

Afghanistan since 1973

The Republic of Afghanistan (1973–78)

During Daud Khan's second tenure as prime minister, he attempted to introduce socioeconomic reforms, to write a new constitution, and to effect a gradual movement away from the socialist ideals his regime initially espoused. Afghanistan broadened and intensified its relationships with other Muslim countries, trying to move away from its dependency on the Soviet Union and the United States. In addition, Daud Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the prime minister of Pakistan, reached tentative agreement on a solution to the Pashtunistan problem.

Daud Khan received approval in 1977 of his new constitution from a Loya Jirga, which wrote in several new articles and amended others. In March 1977 Daud Khan, then president of Afghanistan, appointed a new cabinet composed of sycophants, friends, sons of friends, and even collateral members of the royal family. The two PDPA organizations, the People's and Banner parties, then reunited against Daud Khan after a 10-year separation. There followed a series of political assassinations, massive anti-government demonstrations, and arrests of major leftist leaders. Before his arrest, Hafizullah Amin, a U.S.-educated People's Party leader, contacted party members in the armed forces and devised a makeshift but successful coup. Daud Khan and most of his family were killed, and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan was born on April 27, 1978.

Civil war, communist phase (1978–92)

Nur Mohammad Taraki was elected president of the Revolutionary Council, prime minister of the country, and secretary-general of the combined PDPA. Babrak Karmal, a Banner leader, and Hafizullah Amin were elected deputy prime ministers. The leaders of the new

government insisted that they were not controlled by the Soviet Union and proclaimed their policies to be based on Afghan nationalism, Islamic principles, socioeconomic justice, nonalignment in foreign affairs, and respect for all agreements and treaties signed by previous Afghan governments.

Unity between the People's and Banner factions rapidly faded as the People's Party emerged dominant, particularly because its major base of power was in the military. Karmal and other selected Banner leaders were sent abroad as ambassadors, and there were systematic purges of any Banner members or others who might oppose the regime.

The Taraki regime announced its programs, which included eliminating usury, ensuring equal rights for women, instituting land reforms, and making administrative decrees in classic Marxist-Leninist rhetoric. The people in the countryside, familiar with Marxist broadcasts from Soviet Central Asia, assumed that the People's Party was communist and pro-Soviet. The reform programs—which threatened to undermine basic Afghan cultural patterns—and political repression antagonized large segments of the population, but major violent responses did not occur until the uprising in Nūrestān late in the summer of 1978. Other revolts, largely uncoordinated, spread throughout all of Afghanistan's provinces, and periodic explosions rocked Kabul and other major cities. On February 14, 1979, U.S. Ambassador Adolph Dubs was killed, and the elimination of U.S. assistance to Afghanistan was guaranteed.

Hafizullah Amin became prime minister on March 28, although Taraki retained his posts as president of the Revolutionary Council and secretary general of the PDPA. The expanding revolts in the countryside, however, continued, and the Afghan army collapsed. The Amin regime asked for and received more Soviet military aid.

Taraki was overthrown in mid September and, under orders from Amin, was killed three weeks later. In a plot hatched in Moscow, Amin was to have been removed, largely in the belief that he bore major responsibility for sparking the rebellion. But Amin learned of the plan and preempted his would-be assassins. Amin then tried to broaden his internal base of support and again to interest Pakistan and the United States in Afghan security. Despite his efforts, on the night of December 24, 1979, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Amin and many of his followers were killed on December 27.

Babrak Karmal returned to Afghanistan from the Soviet Union and became prime minister, president of the Revolutionary Council, and secretary-general of the PDPA. Opposition to the Soviets and Karmal spread rapidly, urban demonstrations and violence increased, and resistance escalated in all regions. By early 1980 several regional groups, collectively known as mujahideen (from Arabic *mujāhidūn*, "those who engage in jihad"), had united inside Afghanistan, or across the border in Peshawar, Pakistan, to resist the Soviet invaders and the Soviet-backed Afghan army. Pakistan, along with the United States, China, and several European and Arab states—most notably Saudi Arabia—were soon

providing small amounts of financial and military aid to the mujahideen. As this assistance grew, the Pakistani military's Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate (ISI) assumed primary responsibility for funneling the money and weapons to Afghan resistance groups. Pakistani authorities were determined to exercise tight control over all such groups, and upwards of 40 separate resistance and refugee organizations coalesced, under Pakistani influence, around seven resistance parties. These parties, in turn, came together into two rival alliances, one dominated by traditional Islamic conservatives and the other by Islamic radicals. In 1985, under pressure from Pakistan and outside supporters, as well as from guerrilla commanders inside Afghanistan, these two alliances set aside their differences and formed a single coalition represented by a Supreme Council, which was responsible for making major decisions. Pakistan's exclusion of secular groups from any role in the struggle fit the ideological temper of the military regime of General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq—which played heavily on Islamic symbols for legitimacy—but also suited Pakistan's determination that no aid would go to Afghan nationalists who might harbour long-standing territorial designs on Pakistan.

Recruits to the mujahideen came in large numbers from young Afghan men living in refugee camps in Pakistan. They were joined throughout the 1980s by thousands of volunteers from across the Muslim world, especially from Arab countries. (A young Saudi Arabian, Osama bin Laden, was among them, and, while he saw little military action, his personal wealth enabled him to fund high-profile mujahideen activities and gain a widely favourable reputation among his colleagues.) The bulk of the fighting was undertaken by small units that crossed into Afghanistan from Pakistan and engaged mostly in brief hit-and-run operations. One of the most persistent and often most effective militant groups, however, was under the command of Ahmad Shah Massoud, who instead fought the Soviets from a redoubt in the Panjanshīr River valley (commonly Panjshēr valley) northeast of Kabul. Massoud was among those commanders affiliated with the Islamic Society (one of the most influential mujahideen groups), then headed by an Azhar-trained scholar, Burhanuddin Rabbani. Among the other Peshawar-based parties were Abd al-Rasul Sayyaf's militant Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan (Ettiḥād-e Eslāmī Barā-ye Āzād-e Afghānistān), which derived its support largely from foreign Islamic groups, and three parties headed by traditional religious leaders, including the most pragmatic of the mujahideen parties, the National Islamic Front (Maḥāz-e Mellī-ye Eslāmī), led by Ahmad Gailani. But the party receiving the most material support from the ISI was the extremist and virulently anti-American Islamic Party (Ḥezb-e Eslāmī; one of two parties by that name) loyal to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Separate from the Peshawar front of Sunnite parties was an ethnic Shīite resistance group among the Ḥazāra, which received strong support from Iran.

Other than the Afghan fighters themselves, few had faith that the mujahideen could prevail in a military conflict with the Soviet Union. The movement's Western sponsors viewed resistance operations as an opportunity to keep the Soviet army bogged down and to

bleed Moscow economically. However, the mujahideen remained convinced that they ultimately would liberate their country from the foreign invaders. After years of bedevilment by the Soviet military's use of helicopter gunships and jet bombers, the mujahideen's prospects improved greatly toward the end of 1986 when they began to receive more and better weapons from the outside world—particularly from the United States, the United Kingdom, and China—via Pakistan, the most important of these being shoulder-fired ground-to-air missiles. The Soviet and Afghan air forces then began to suffer considerable casualties.

In May 1986 Najibullah, former head of the secret police, replaced Karmal as secretary-general of the PDPA, and in November Karmal was relieved of all his government and party posts. Friction among the Banner and People's parties continued. A national reconciliation campaign approved by the Politburo in September, which included a unilateral six-month cease-fire to begin in January 1987, met with little response inside Afghanistan and was rejected by resistance leaders in Pakistan.

In November 1987 a new constitution changed the name of the country back to the Republic of Afghanistan and allowed other political parties to participate in the government. Najibullah was elected to the newly strengthened post of president. Despite renewals of the official cease-fire, Afghan resistance to the Soviet presence continued, and the effects of the war were felt in neighbouring countries: Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran numbered more than five million. Morale in the Afghan military was low. Draftees deserted at the earliest opportunity, and the Afghan military dropped from its 1978 strength of 105,000 troops to about 20,000–30,000 by 1987. The Soviets attempted new tactics, but the resistance always devised countertactics.

During the 1980s, talks between the foreign ministers of Afghanistan and Pakistan were held in Geneva under UN auspices, the primary stumbling blocks being the timetable for the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the cessation of arms supplies to the mujahideen. Peace accords were finally signed in April 1988. Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev subsequently carried out an earlier promise to begin withdrawing Soviet troops in May of that year; troops began leaving as scheduled, and the last Soviet soldier left Afghanistan in February 1989. The civil war continued, however, despite predictions of an early collapse of the Najibullah government following the withdrawal of the Soviets. The mujahideen formed an interim government in Pakistan, steadfastly resisting Najibullah's reconciliation efforts, and disunity among the mujahideen parties contributed to their inability to dislodge the communist government.

Louis Dupree Nancy Hatch Dupree Marvin G. Weinbaum

Civil war, mujahideen-Taliban phase (1992–2001)

Najibullah was finally ousted from power in April 1992, soon after the breakup of the Soviet Union (which had continued to provide military and economic assistance to the Kabul government). A coalition built mainly of the mujahideen parties that had fought the communists set up a fragile interim government, but general peace and stability remained a distant hope. As rival militias vied for influence, interethnic tensions flared, and the economy lay in ruins.

Under an arrangement to provide for the rotation of the executive office between different factions, the presidency passed after two months from interim president Sebghatullah Mujaddedi to Burhanuddin Rabbani. Rabbani, however, refused to relinquish power to his successor after the expiration of his two-year term in office. Over the next three years, rocket attacks by opposition forces—primarily those of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of the Islamic Party—caused severe damage to large sections of the capital. Delivery of food from international aid organizations and the UN became indispensable.

Outside of Kabul, law and order broke down across much of the country, and Afghanistan became, in effect, a country ruled by militia leaders and warlords who exacted road taxes and transit fees from trucks engaged in cross-border trading and promoted extortion in most other areas of normal life. Kidnappings, whether for sadism or profit, were not uncommon, and the people generally fell into a state of despair.

Partly in response to this situation, the Taliban (Persian: “Students”) emerged in the fall of 1994. The movement’s spiritual and political leader was a former mujahideen fighter, Mullah Mohammad Omar, who was best known for his displays of piety and participation in the fight against the Soviet occupation. Drawing its recruits from *madrasah* (religious school) students in Pakistan and the southern province of Kandahār, the Taliban gained international attention when it was able to defeat those groups preying on the transit trade and when it succeeded in ridding Kandahār of its predatory and corrupt governors. The Taliban’s eventual success in extending its territorial control is largely attributable to the war-weariness of the Afghan people. In a short time others joined the students, including fighters formerly associated with the communists and a number of mujahideen defectors—many of whom were induced to switch sides by generous payments funded by the government of Saudi Arabia, then a major Taliban supporter.

The Taliban also won the early backing of senior Pakistani officials—including members of Pakistan’s ISI—who, along with companies involved in cross-border trading, were anxious to secure a road route through Afghanistan to markets in Central Asia. These same officials felt that the development of lucrative gas and oil pipelines from Central Asian fields to a Pakistani terminus would also be realized sooner were the Taliban to wrest full control of the country from other factions. Importantly, Taliban rule promised for Pakistan a pliant, friendly regime in Kabul, which contrasted with previous Afghan governments that often deflected Pakistani influence in Afghanistan’s domestic affairs through political

overtures to India, Pakistan's archrival. Despite the Taliban's mostly Pashtun membership, the absence from their agenda of the familiar irredentist Pashtun claims against Pashtun regions of Pakistan—the Pashtunistan issue—made the Taliban a seemingly safe choice.

However, the Taliban's initial appeal counted heavily on uniting those Pashtuns deeply resentful of the Rabbani government, which was dominated by ethnic Tajiks. Not until the Taliban ventured into areas of the country populated largely by non-Pashtuns could its wider popular acceptance be tested. Minority-dominated Herāt, Afghanistan's third largest city, fell to Taliban fighters in September 1995, and a year later the Taliban captured multiethnic Kabul, setting to flight both anti-government troops and those of Rabbani. The northern city of Mazār-e Sharīf, populated by many ethnic Uzbeks, fell in August 1998. By 2001 the Taliban's power extended over more than nine-tenths of the country, and in most areas under its control the militia succeeded in disarming the local inhabitants. A loose coalition of mujahideen militias known as the Northern Alliance maintained control of a small section of northern Afghanistan. Fighters for the Northern Alliance, particularly those under the command of Ahmad Shah Massoud, remained the only major obstacle to a final Taliban victory.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates gave formal recognition to the Taliban government after the fall of Kabul, but the movement was denied Afghanistan's seat at the UN and came under vigorous international criticism for its extreme views—with regard to women in particular—and its human rights record. Refusal by the Taliban to extradite Osama bin Laden, an Islamic extremist accused by the United States of planning violent acts and organizing a global terrorist network, led to UN sanctions against the regime in November 1999 and again in January 2001. The Taliban was also accused of harbouring and training militants—many of whom were holdovers from the war against the Soviets—planning insurgencies in the Central Asian republics and China. Iran objected to the treatment of the Shīite Muslim population and to the Taliban's alleged association with groups that smuggled narcotics across the Iranian frontier. Pakistani authorities, although concerned about the possible ramifications of Islamic radicalism on their own

Osama bin Laden Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden as depicted in a government exhibit for the *U.S.* v. *Moussaoui* trial, 2006.

society, continued to assist the Taliban economically and were given varying degrees of credit for aiding the Taliban in its military successes.

Fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance continued, and the international community made little headway toward inducing the combatants to observe a cease-fire or in convincing the Taliban to share power in a broadly representative national government. Though foreign humanitarian assistance to the Afghans continued, large-scale reconstruction was not addressed. Just as the commitment of international agencies and donors was uncertain, the capacity of Taliban leaders to manage a rebuilding effort remained questionable. The transition from a heavily criminalized domestic and regional economy—based on smuggling weapons and narcotics and the uncontrolled exploitation of Afghanistan's natural resources—remained indispe and for a sustainable peace.

Afghanistan War: anti-Taliban fighters Anti-Taliban fighters observing U.S. bombing of the cave sanctuaries of the al-Qaeda terrorist organization in the Tora Bora mountains of Afghanistan on December 16, 2001.

Abdul Ghani Baradar Abdul Ghani Baradar, senior member of the Taliban, following peace talks with officials of the Afghan central government in Moscow, Russia, on May 30, 2019.

Struggle for democracy

U.S.-led invasion and toppling of the T

Conditions continued to deteriorate in late 2001. Blame for the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and a simultaneous attack on the Pentagon near Washington, D.C., on September 11 quickly centred on members of a Muslim extremist group, al-Qaeda, based in Afghanistan and headed by bin Laden. (See September 11 attacks.) The Taliban refused repeated U.S. demands to extradite bin Laden and his associates and to dismantle terrorist training facilities in Afghanistan. Within weeks of the attacks, the United States and Britain launched an intensive bombing campaign against the Taliban and provided significant logistical support to Northern Alliance forces in an attempt to force the regime to yield to its demands. Devastated by the U.S. bombardment, Taliban forces folded within days of a well-coordinated ground offensive launched in mid-November by Northern Alliance troops and U.S. special forces. On December 7 the Taliban surrendered Kandahār, the militia's base of power and the last city under its control. At nearly the same time, representatives of several anti-Taliban groups met in Bonn, Germany, and, with the help of the international community, named an interim administration, which was installed two weeks later. This administration held power until June 2002 when a Loya Jirga was convened that selected a transitional government to

Abdul Ghani Baradar
Taliban leader

Also known as: Mullah Baradar Akhund

Written and fact-checked by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

Article History

Quick Facts

Also called:

Abdul Ghani Baradar, in full Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund

Marvin G. Weinbaum

See all related content →

Abdul Ghani Baradar (born c. 1968?, Yatīmak, Uruzgān province, Afghanistan) is an Islamic militant and a founding member of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, he grew increasingly central to the group's operation, and by 2009 he was often characterized in the press as the movement's de facto leader. After the 2021 takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban, he became deputy prime minister (2021–) of its transitional government.

Early involvement in the Taliban resurgence

Baradar began his military career as a guerrilla fighter in the Afghan War (1978–92), where he fought in a unit of the mujahideen that also included Mohammad Omar and others who would later become founding members of the Taliban. As the war died down, members of the unit found opportunity in religious education (*see* madrasah) in Maywand district (near the city of Kandahār). But postwar Afghanistan was far from peaceful as the new Afghan government struggled to assert control outside of Kabul. Extortion, kidnapping, and assault all became commonplace as militias and warlords overran much of the country. Along with dozens of others involved in the local madrasahs, Omar, Baradar, and other members of their former unit took up arms against a local warlord in 1994 and began to pacify the area. As the band mobilized support and expanded beyond Maywand, it became known as the Taliban (Pashto: Tālebān ["Students"]) because of its association with madrasah students. From the start of the movement, Baradar was one of its most prominent and successful guerrilla commanders.

Quickly gaining control over most of Afghanistan, the Taliban seized Kabul in 1996 and overthrew the government. The Taliban set up a council of ministers to govern civil affairs, and Baradar held a number of junior posts, including deputy minister of defense and deputy chief of army staff. Following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, Baradar led the Taliban resistance in northern Afghanistan. He was reportedly captured in November by the Northern Alliance, a group of Afghan militias opposed to the Taliban, but released after a brief period. He eventually joined other senior members of the Taliban, who had fled to the area around Quetta, Pakistan.

Leadership in the Taliban resurgence

Baradar took a central role in coordinating between factions and organizing an insurgency during this time. While Omar remained secluded and inaccessible, Baradar held audiences with both Taliban leaders and common Pashtun civilians and even communicated with the

[illegible] the so-called Quetta Shura. [illegible] and was named Omar's deputy.

The presidential election was held on August 20, 2009, and was followed by weeks of political turmoil. In September, a preliminary count awarded Karzai almost 55 percent of the vote [illegible] Karzai's main challenger, former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah. With more than 2,000 complaints of fraud [illegible] Hamid Karzai. In February, however, Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) arrested Baradar in the city of Karachi. [illegible] Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) [illegible] 2018 [illegible] United States. The ECC concluded that the fraudulent activity was pervasive enough to invalidate votes from more than 200 polling stations. As a result of the ruling, almost one-third of Karzai's votes were invalidated, and his proportion of the vote slipp[ed] [illegible] majority he had claimed and low enough to warrant [illegible] Karzai initially resisted the call for a runoff, on Octob[er] [illegible] of polling between himself and Abdullah, which was [illegible] thereafter, however, Abdullah withdrew from the rac[e] [illegible] country's best interest. The runoff election was canc[eled] [illegible] inaugurated as president for a second term.

In January 2019 the Taliban announced that Baradar would join its negotiating team in Doha, Qatar, which had been discussing a peace agreement with the United States for several months. A deal was reached in February 2020 in which the United States agreed to withdraw from Afghanistan on the condition that the Taliban refrain from attacking U.S. forces and prevent Afghanistan from being used to threaten the security of the United States. It was arranged that Afghan [illegible] negotiations with the Afghan government [illegible] In May 2021 [illegible]

U.S.-Taliban peace process The U.S. delegation led by Secretary of State Michael Pompeo (centre left) meeting with the Taliban delegation led by Abdul Ghani Baradar in Doha, Qatar, on September 12, 2020.

Opium produced [illegible] within a few years of the ouster of the Taliban government [illegible] produced more than nine-tenths of the world's opium [illegible] to curtail production was the fact that many segments of the population [illegible] the Taliban and supporters of the central government, profited from [illegible] Indeed, the Taliban derived a substantial income from the industry, using the proceeds to fund their insurgency.

Seleucid empire

[illegible] the Taliban launched an offensive that overwhelmed Afghan [illegible] By mid-August it had captured Kabul and most of the country. When a transitional government was announced in September, Baradar was named deputy prime minister.

NATO troop surge and continued stalemate

Written and fact-checked by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica This article was most recently revised and updated by [illegible]

Insurgent attacks increased in 2009. By the middle of the year, U.S. commanders had become convinced that troop levels in Afghanistan were too low to implement and [illegible] strategy, which called for international forces to focus on protecting the population and securing areas for reconstruction projects, rather than simply killing large numbers of insurgents. After some debate within the Obama administration, Obama announced in December 2009 that the U.S. would temporarily increase the number of troops in Afghanistan by 30,000. This increase in troop strength would be tied to an accelerated timetable for the training of Afghan security forces and the transfer of security responsibilities from NATO to the Afghan government.

The number of NATO troops in Afghanistan peaked in 2010 at nearly 150,000. The increase in troops delivered mixed results; although NATO troops were able to sweep the Taliban out of areas that it had previously controlled, militants continued to launch

devastating surprise attacks against military, government, and civilian targets. Two factors
s territorial gains were the
nd NATO among Afghans and
eastern border in Pakistan.

unlikely, and public support
mbers agreed in November
emate between international
ore willing to explore
n. However, diplomatic
was intermittent and failed to
f security responsibilities to
nificant reduction in the

Seleucid empire

See all media

Meanwhile, the situation of the Afghan central government remained precarious. Afghans' confidence in governing institutions was low, in large part because of rampant corruption at the local, provincial, and national levels. Parliamentary elections in 2010 were marred by low turnout in areas where Taliban threats kept voters away from the polls, while last-minute changes to electoral law and new allegations of vote rigging further damaged the credibility of the electoral process.

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The Ashraf Ghani presidency, NATO withdrawal, and pursuit of peace

In 2014 Afghanistan held a presidential election to pick a successor to Karzai, who was constitutionally barred from seeking another term in office. As was widely expected, the start of the presidential campaign in February was met with an upsurge of insurgent violence, but the first round of voting was held on schedule in April. A runoff between the two leading candidates, Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani, followed in June. A preliminary count placed Ghani ahead, but Abdullah demanded a recount, charging that as many as two million of the ballots for Ghani were fraudulent. With both candidates claiming victory, a period of deadlock followed. In July, under pressure from the United States, both sides agreed in principle to accept the results of an internationally supervised audit of the vote and to form a national unity government in which the winner would take the position of president and the losing side would nominate someone to occupy a newly created office with powers similar to those of a prime minister. The situation, however, remained delicate; disagreements between the two sides threatened to derail the process before a final agreement could be reached.

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On September 21 Ghani and Abdullah signed an agreement under which Ghani would become president and Abdullah or a nominee from his party would take the new, prime minister-like position of chief executive officer. Abdullah ultimately took the post. The

Seleucid empire, (312–64 bce), an ancient empire that at its greatest extent stretched from Thrace in Europe to the border of India. It was carved out of the remains of Alexander the Great's Macedonian empire by its founder, Seleucus I Nicator. (*See also* Hellenistic Age.)

Date: 312 BCE - 64

Seleucus, one of Alexander's leading generals, became satrap (governor) of Babylonia in 321, two years after the death of Alexander. In the prolonged power struggle between the former generals of Alexander for control of the disintegrating empire, Seleucus sided with Ptolemy I of Egypt against Antigonus I, Alexander's successor on the Macedonian throne, who had forced Seleucus out of Babylonia. In 312 Seleucus defeated Demetrius at Gaza using troops supplied by Ptolemy, and with a smaller force he seized Babylonia that same year, thereby founding the Seleucid kingdom, or empire. By 305, having consolidated his power over the kingdom, he began gradually to extend his domain eastward to the Indus River and westward to Syria and Anatolia, where he decisively defeated Antigonus at Ipsus in 301. In 281 he annexed the Thracian Chersonesus. That same year, he was assassinated by Ptolemy Ceraunus, the disgruntled son of Ptolemy I.

history of Mesopotamia: The Seleucid period

Seleucus was succeeded by his eldest son, Antiochus I Soter, who reigned until 261 and was followed by Antiochus II (reigned 261–246), Seleucus II (246–225), Seleucus III (225–223), and Antiochus III the Great (223–187) [illegible]

The Seleucid empire was a major centre of Hellenis[illegible] preeminence of Greek customs and manners over t[illegible]

Written and fact-checked by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

The Seleucid empire began losing control over large territories in the 3rd century bce. An inexorable decline followed the first defeat of the Seleucids by the Romans in 190. By that time the Aegean Greek cities had thrown off the Seleucid yoke. Cappadocia and Attalid Pergamum had achieved independence, and other territories had been lost to the Celts and to Pontus and Bythnia. By the middle of the 3rd century, Parthia, Bactria, and Sogdiana had gained their independence; the conquest of Coele Syria (Lebanon) and Palestine by Antiochus III (200) [illegible]

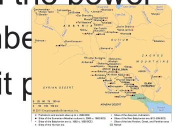
[illegible] constitutionally, its authority derived from the power of the president to delegate some presidential duties to other government membe[illegible] Loya Jirga would have to amend the constitution to formalize the post or grant it p[illegible] independent of the president.

[illegible] against the Taliban and other insurgents. The surge [illegible]

As the 2018 parliamentary elections approached [illegible]

[illegible] despite the many challenges to the election and its outcome, a good case remained for its legitimacy: turnout was high at an estimated 4 million voters (out of 8.8 million registered), and preliminary results for the elections in Kabul were released in mid-January. Still, the election commission was dismissed for its handling of the elections, and its members were replaced by commissioners selected by the upcoming presidential election candidates. Final election results were released in May 2019.

[illegible] Afghanistan, a move interpreted by many as signaling the United States' seriousness in reaching a peace deal and ending the war. Afghanistan's central government had not been



Rigestan

desert, Afghanistan

Written and fact-checked by The Editors of Encyclop[illegible]

Article History

Also spelled:

Registan

See all related con[illegible]

Rigestan, (Persian: "country of sand"), arid plateau [illegible] Rigestan is, for the greater part, a sandy desert with [illegible] sand. The sand ridges and dunes, reaching heights [illegible] 30 m), alternate with windblown sand-covered plane[illegible] in some parts into barren gravel and clay. In the loca[illegible] the *chol* ("desert"). Some gypsum is mined at Galeh Chad, and Baluchi and Pashtun nomads, herders of sheep, goats, and camels, use portions of the Rigestan near the Helmand and Arghandab rivers as winter pasture.

Amānullāh Khan [illegible] Western attire. The king's efforts to institute Western reforms and foreign customs contributed to his overthrow.

Amānullāh Khan

ruler of Afghanistan

Written and fact-checked by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

Last Updated: Aug 26, 2024 • Article History

Quick Facts

Born:

June 1, 1892, Paghmān, Afghanistan

Died:

April 25, 1960, Zürich, Switzerland (aged 67)

House / Dynasty:

Bārakzay dynasty

Amānullāh Khan

Born: June 1, 1892, Paghmān, Afghanistan

Died: April 25, 1960, Zürich, Switzerland

ruler of Afghanistan (1919–29) who led the country to independence from British influence.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica This article was most recently revised and updated by Adam Augustyn.

Favored son of the Afghan ruler Habībullāh Khan, Amānullāh took possession of the throne immediately after his father's assassination in 1919, at a time when Great Britain exercised an important influence on Afghan affairs. In his coronation address Amānullāh declared total independence from Great Britain. This led to war with the British (see Anglo-Afghan Wars), but fighting was confined to a series of skirmishes between an ineffective Afghan army and a British Indian army exhausted from the heavy demands of World War I (1914–18). A peace treaty recognizing the independence of Afghanistan was signed at Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan) on August 8, 1919.

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Afghanistan: Amānullāh (1919–29)

Although a charming and forceful ... patriot and reformer, Amānullāh was also impulsive and tactless and tended to surround himself with poor advisers. Shortly after ascending the throne, he pushed for a series of Western-style reforms, including an education program and road-building projects, but was opposed by reactionaries. In 1928 he returned from a trip to Europe with plans for legislative reform and emancipation of women—proposals that caused his popular support to drop and enraged the mullahs ... Bacha-e Saqqā, "Child of a Water Carrier" ... ruler. Amānullāh attempted to ... do so. He abdicated in January ...

... continued into 2019, and U.S. troop levels were sustained during the negotiations.

Because of ... the presidential election originally set for April was pushed back twice. The election was finally held on September 28, but ... lack of trust in the electoral process ... turnout was significantly lower than in previous presidential elections. Shortly after the election, top contenders Ghani and Abdullah both declared that they had received the majority of votes. The official vote tally, released in early 2020, showed that Ghani had received more than 50 percent of the vote, while Abdullah had received less than 40 percent, which Abdullah initially contested before agreeing to a new power-sharing deal in May.

Days after the results of the election were released, the United States and the Taliban announced that they had reached an agreement: the United States would withdraw its troops over 14 months on the condition that the Taliban would pursue peace negotiations with the Afghan government and prevent al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL; also called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria [ISIS]) from operating within Afghanistan. The deal was signed on February 29, 2020, after a weeklong reduction of ... August the Afghan government agreed to a prisoner swap with the Taliban, fulfilling a key precondition, promised in February's U.S.-Taliban deal, for ... a chaotic situation during ... that showed little progress. ... of its troops in May 2021 after ... rapid gains amid the withdrawal ... and their lack of ... ent a crippling blow. By mid- ... including Kabul.

Taliban

Also known as: Taleban, Ṭālebān

... Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Taliban

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Recent News

Taliban, ultraconservative political and religious faction that emerged in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s following the withdrawal of Soviet troops, the collapse of Afghanistan's communist regime, and the subsequent breakdown in civil order. It began as a small force of Afghan religious students and scholars seeking to confront crime and corruption; the faction owes its name, Taliban (Pashto: Ṭālebān, "Students"), to this initial membership.

Origin and first regime

The Taliban emerged in the aftermath of the Afghan War (1978–92). Afghanistan's new government failed to establish civil order outside of Kabul, and much of the country was subject to frequent extortion and assault from local militias and warlords. Facing mass displacement during the war, many Afghans found solidarity in the religious rhetoric of the mujahideen resistance and opportunity in schools of Islamic sciences (called madrasahs) in southern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan. In 1994 a group of former fighters, associated with a madrasah in a village of Kandahār province, successfully subdued a local warlord and began pacifying nearby areas. The faction, which enjoyed popular support with its promise of security and its religious fervour, quickly grew into the movement now known as the Taliban. By late 1996 the Taliban had seized the capital, Kabul, and gained effective control over some two-thirds of the country.

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Afghanistan: Civil war, mujahideen-Taliban phase (1992–2001)

The Taliban faced significant resistance, especially after it asserted its own interpretation of law and order. It combined a strict religious ideology—a mixture of Deobandi traditionalism and Wahhābī puritanism—with a conservative Pashtun social code (Pashtunwali) to create a brutally repressive regime. Its policies included the near-total exclusion of women from public life (including employment and education), the systematic destruction of non-Islamic artistic relics (as occurred in the town of Bamiyan), and the implementation of harsh criminal punishments. Resistance was particularly pronounced among non-Pashtun ethnic groups—namely, the Tajik, the Uzbek, and the Hazara—in the north, west, and central parts of the country, who saw the power of the predominantly Pashtun Taliban as a continuation of the traditional Pashtun hegemony of the country. By 2001 the Taliban controlled all but a small section of northern Afghanistan, and only Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates ever recognized the regime.

The Afghanistan War and removal from power

Apart from the Taliban's unsettling disregard for human rights, many countries were concerned about the Taliban allowing refuge to Osama bin Laden, who had helped organize a network of foreign-born Muslim fighters during the Afghan War. That network, al-Qaeda, had evolved into a network of Islamist militants who sought a violent struggle to free the Islamic world from non-Muslim influence and had orchestrated several attacks against the United States. Even after bin Laden and al-Qaeda were found responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and on the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C., that had occurred on September 11, 2001, the Taliban refused to extradite bin Laden. The United States and its allies began bombarding Afghanistan in October and supported the efforts of the Northern Alliance, a group of anti-Taliban factions in Afghanistan that had been resisting the Taliban's takeover of the country. In early December the Northern Alliance succeeded in toppling the Taliban regime.

Although driven from power and fractured, the Taliban survived, and many of its core members remained at large throughout the Afghanistan War (2001–14). In 2005 the Taliban began enjoying a resurgence, showing indications of greater coordination and resilience among its fighters. Its founder and leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, remained in hiding with infrequent contact, but senior commanders such as Mullah Dadullah and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar were increasingly centralizing the group's command structure. It adopted new tactics modeled on those being used by insurgents in the Iraq War, including the use of suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices. Recruitment was prolific, drawing on thousands of Afghans disenchanted by widespread corruption in the new Afghan government and resentment toward the casualties and destruction that accompanied the ongoing U.S. and NATO military operations. In 2009, as fighting grew to unprecedented levels, newly elected U.S. Pres. Barack Obama ordered a surge in the U.S. troop presence in the war.

In July 2015 the Afghan government discovered that Omar had died in 2013 in a hospital in Pakistan. His deputy Mullah Akhtar Mansour briefly served as his successor until he was killed in a U.S. air strike in Pakistan in May 2016. Hibatullah Akhundzada took leadership later that month; like his predecessors, he remained relatively secluded and appeared to play a minimal role in directing military operations. The militant wing of the Taliban became increasingly dominated by the Haqqani network, whose leader, Sirajuddin, served as deputy leader of the Taliban.

Meanwhile, the Taliban's continued resilience and the inability of Afghanistan's central government to exert control throughout the country prompted the central government to seek reconciliation with the Taliban. Officials under Pres. Hamid Karzai had met informally with Taliban leaders, most notably Baradar, and the first formal meeting was held under Pres. Ashraf Ghani. The Taliban continued to see the central government as fundamentally illegitimate, however, and insisted on talks with the foreign power that had installed it: the United States.

Withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and the Taliban's return to power

The Taliban and the United States began meeting in 2018, with the help of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates, the only countries to have a diplomatic relationship with both parties. The discussions focused on the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, although the United States also sought to reconcile the Taliban and the central government. Discussions were eventually held with the central government in 2019, which led in July to an agreement on general principles for future negotiations, but the Taliban's representatives remained focused on first reaching a deal with the United States. They reportedly came to an agreement in principle in September, but discussions were disrupted after an attack by the Taliban killed a U.S. service member.

U.S.-Taliban peace process The U.S. delegation led by Secretary of State Michael Pompeo (centre left) meeting with the Taliban delegation led by Abdul Ghani Baradar in Doha, Qatar, on September 12, 2020.

A deal with the United States was signed in late February 2020. In exchange for a full withdrawal of U.S. troops over a 14-month period, the Taliban agreed to end its attacks on U.S. forces and prevent al-Qaeda, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL; also called the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria [ISIS]), and their affiliates from operating in Afghanistan. The deal also included an agreement to begin talks with the central government within 10 days, but negotiations were delayed until September because of the central government's reluctance to carry out a prisoner swap promised to the Taliban by the United States. Little progress was made during the negotiations, which lasted into 2021. Nevertheless, in April the United States reiterated its commitment to complete its withdrawal, although the deadline for withdrawal was delayed from May to September.

As its confrontations with U.S. forces came to an end and the completion of the U.S. withdrawal drew near, an emboldened Taliban rapidly took control of dozens of districts in May–June and closed in on several provincial capitals. The group appeared to lack the manpower and firepower to hold its gains against the larger and better-equipped armed

Caliphate
Islamic history
Written by Asma Afsaruddin
Fact-checked by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica
Last Updated: Aug 2, 2024 • Article History

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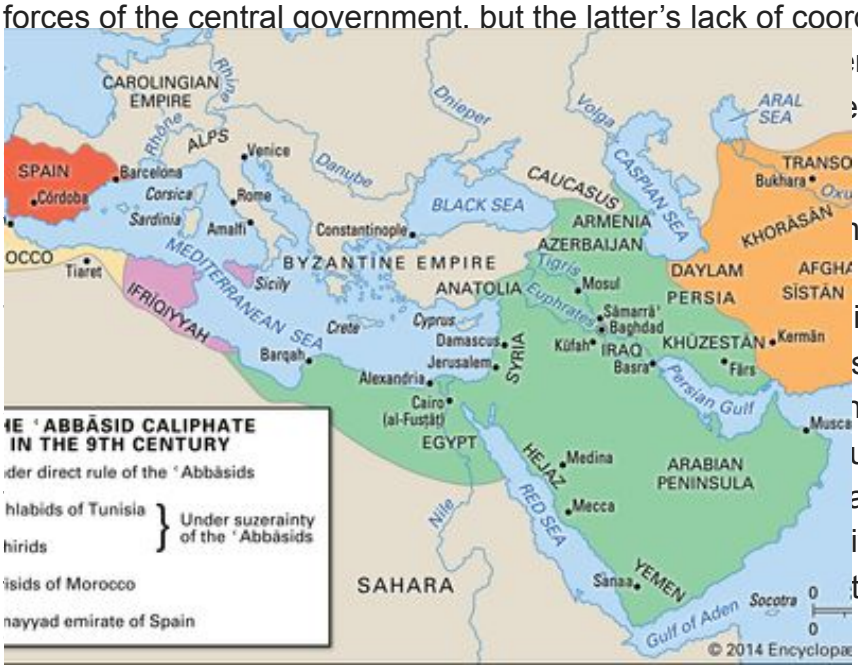

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica
Abbasid caliphate in the 9th century
This article was most recently revised and updated by Adam Zeidan.

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Caliphate, the political-religious state comprising the Muslim community and the lands and peoples under its dominion in the centuries following the death (632 ce) of the Prophet Muhammad. Ruled by a caliph (Arabic *khalīfah,* "successor"), who held temporal and sometimes a degree of spiritual authority, the empire of the Caliphate grew rapidly through conquest during its first two centuries to include most of Southwest Asia, North Africa, and Spain. Dynastic struggles later brought about the Caliphate's decline, and it ceased to exist as a functioning political institution with the Mongol destruction of Baghdad in 1258.

This article covers the history of the original caliphal state based in Arabia, the Levant, and Mesopotamia in the 7th–13th century. *See* caliph for a general discussion of the titular position that heads a caliphate; *see also* Fāṭimid dynasty and Caliphate of Córdoba for other historical examples of caliphates.

Leadership after Muhammad

The urgent need for a successor to Muhammad as political leader of the Muslim community was met by a group of Muslim elders in Medina who designated Abū Bakr, the Prophet's father-in-law, as caliph. According to the majority of Muslims, the Prophet himself had left no instructions for the selection of a leader after him, although a small minority—the precursors of the group later known as the Shiʿah—advocated for ʿAlī's claim to the Caliphate. It would be anachronistic to assume that this early group supported ʿAlī because he was a cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. Rather, the early literature indicates that the legitimate caliph was expected to have been an early convert to Islam

(precedence in converting to Islam was termed *sābiqah* in Arabic) and to possess a constellation of moral excellences (*faḍāʾil* in Arabic), such as truthfulness, generosity, courage, and, above all, knowledge. The caliph's authority was largely epistemic—that is to say, based on his superior knowledge of both religious and worldly affairs.

Later, during the Umayyad period (661–750), there was a growing emphasis on kinship to the Prophet as a criterion of legitimate leadership, likely because the Umayyads wished to thereby compensate for their lack of *sābiqah*, having accepted Islam late during the Prophet's lifetime. In response, supporters of the claim to leadership of ʿAlī and his descendents emphasized their lineal descent from the Prophet's family as a marker of their legitimacy. By the 10th century the orthodox Sunni majority had also come to acknowledge kinship as a factor by understanding legitimate leadership to inhere in descent from the Quraysh, Muhammad's natal tribe, to which the first four caliphs also belonged.

Although the reigns of the first four caliphs—Abū Bakr, Umar I, Uthmān, and ʿAlī—were marred by political upheaval, civil war, and assassination, the era was remembered by later generations of Muslims as a golden age of Islam, and the four caliphs were collectively known as the "rightly guided caliphs" because of their close personal associations with Muhammad. The rightly guided caliphs largely established the administrative and judicial organization of the Muslim community and directed the conquest of new lands. In the 630s Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Iraq were conquered, Egypt was taken from Byzantine control in 645, and frequent raids were launched into North Africa, Armenia, and Persia.

The Umayyads

The assassination of Uthmān and the troubled caliphate of ʿAlī that followed sparked the first sectarian split in the Muslim community. By 661 ʿAlī's rival Muāwiyah I, a fellow member of Uthmān's Umayyad clan, had wrested away the caliphate, and his rule established the Umayyad dynasty, which lasted until 750. Despite the largely successful reign of Muāwiyah, tribal and sectarian disputes erupted after his death. The majority of Muslims regarded the Umayyads as nominally Muslim at best, given their worldly and opulent lifestyles. They were also unpopular on account of their having established dynastic rule by force. Their reign is contemptuously referred to in later sources as mere "kingship" (*mulk*)—in contrast to the caliphate, which was supposed to be based on the superior personal merits of the ruler and established through a process of consultation with the people. In a conscious effort to confer legitimacy on themselves and to acquire a religious aura, the Umayyads chose the title *khalīfat allāh*, "the deputy of God," in contradistinction to the first two caliphs in particular, who are said to have deliberately shunned such a self-aggrandizing title.

Subscribe

There were three Umayyad rulers between 680 and 685, and only by nearly 20 years of military campaigning did the next one, ʿAbd al-Malik, succeed in reestablishing the authority of the Umayyad capital of Damascus. ʿAbd al-Malik is also remembered for building the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Under his son al-Walīd (705–715), Muslim forces took permanent possession of North Africa, converted the native Berbers to Islam, and overran most of the Iberian Peninsula as the Visigothic kingdom there collapsed. Progress was also made in the east with settlement in the Indus River valley. Umayyad power had never been firmly seated, however, and the Caliphate disintegrated rapidly after the long reign of Hishām (724–743). A serious rebellion broke out against the Umayyads in 747, and in 750 the last Umayyad caliph, Marwān II, was defeated in the Battle of the Great Zab by the followers of the Abbasid family.

The Abbasid caliphate

The Abbasids, descendants of an uncle of Muhammad, owed the success of their revolt in large part to their appeal to various pietistic, extremist, or merely disgruntled groups and in particular to the aid of the Shiʿah, who held that the Caliphate belonged by right to the descendants of ʿAlī. That the Abbasids disappointed the expectations of the Shiʿah by taking the Caliphate for themselves left the Shiʿah to evolve into a sect, permanently hostile to the Sunni majority, that would periodically threaten the established government by revolt. The first Abbasid caliph, al-Saffāḥ (749–754), ordered the elimination of the entire Umayyad clan; the only Umayyad of note who escaped was ʿAbd al-Raḥman, who made his way to Spain and established an Umayyad dynasty that lasted until 1031.

Abbasid caliphate in the 9th century The Abbasid caliphate in the 9th century.

The period 786–861, especially the caliphates of Hārūn (786–809) and al-Maʾmūn (813–833), is accounted the height of Abbasid rule. The eastward orientation of the dynasty was demonstrated by al-Manṣūr's removal of the capital to Baghdad in 762–763 and by the later caliphs' policy of marrying non-Arabs and recruiting Turks, Slavs, and other non-Arabs as palace guards. Under al-Maʾmūn, the intellectual and artistic heritage of Iran (Persia) was cultivated, and Persian administrators assumed important posts in the Caliphate's administration. After 861, anarchy and rebellion shook the empire. Tunisia and eastern Iran came under the control of hereditary governors who made token

acknowledgment of Baghdad's suzerainty. Other provinces became less-reliable sources of revenue. The Shiʿah and similar groups, including the Qarmaṭians in Syria and the Fāṭimids in North Africa, challenged Abbasid rule on religious as well as political grounds.

Influences of the Islamic golden age on Western development Learn about the various scientific and cultural achievements of the Islamic world in the 8th–12th century, including the construction of the mosque in Córdoba, Spain.

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Competing claims

Abbasid power ended in 945, when the Būyids, a family of rough tribesmen from northwestern Iran, took Baghdad under their rule. They retained the Abbasid caliphs as figureheads. The Samanid dynasty that arose in Khorāsān and Transoxania and the Ghaznavids in Central Asia and the Ganges River basin similarly acknowledged the Abbasid caliphs as spiritual leaders of Sunni Islam. On the other hand, the Fāṭimids proclaimed a new caliphate in 920 in their capital of Al-Mahdiyyah in Tunisia and castigated the Abbasids as usurpers; the Umayyad ruler in Spain, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān III, adopted the title of caliph in 928 in opposition to both the Abbasids and the Fāṭimids. Nominal Abbasid authority was restored to Egypt by Saladin in 1171. By that time the Abbasids had begun to regain some semblance of their former power, as the Seljuq dynasty of sultans in Baghdad, which had replaced the Būyids in 1055, itself began to decay. The caliph al-Nāṣir (1180–1225) achieved a certain success in dealing diplomatically with various threats from the east, but al-Mustaʿṣim (1242–58) had no such success and was murdered in the Mongol sack of Baghdad that ended the Abbasid line in that city. A scion of the family was invited a few years later to establish a puppet caliphate in Cairo that lasted until 1517, but it exercised no power whatsoever. From the 13th century onward a variety of rulers outside Cairo also included caliph among their titles, although their claims to universal leadership of the Muslim community seem to have been more notional than real.

The caliphate in the modern era

The concept of the caliphate took on new significance in the 18th century as an instrument of statecraft in the declining Ottoman Empire. Facing the erosion of their military and political power and territorial losses inflicted in a series of wars with European rivals, the Ottoman sultans, who had occasionally styled themselves as caliphs since the 14th century, began to stress their claim to leadership of the Islamic community. This served

both as means of retaining some degree of influence over Muslim populations in formerly Ottoman lands and as means of bolstering Ottoman legitimacy within the empire. The caliphate was abolished in 1924, following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the Turkish Republic.

In the 20th century the reestablishment of the caliphate, although occasionally invoked by Islamists as a symbol of global Islamic unity, was of no practical interest for mainstream Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. It did, however, figure prominently in the rhetoric of violent extremist groups such as al-Qaeda. In June 2014 an insurgent group known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL; also known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria [ISIS] and the Islamic State [IS]), which had taken control of areas of eastern Syria and western Iraq, declared the establishment of a caliphate with the group's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as caliph. Outside extremist circles, the group's claim was widely rejected.

Asma Afsaruddin