[Template:Pp-semi-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi-indef" \o "Template:Pp-semi-indef) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) **Afghanistan** [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en) ([Pashto](/wiki/Pashto_language)/[Dari](/wiki/Dari_language): [Template:Nq](/wiki/Template:Nq), *Afġānistān*), officially the **Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**, is a [landlocked country](/wiki/Landlocked_country) located within [South Asia](/wiki/South_Asia) and [Central Asia](/wiki/Central_Asia).[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[2]](#cite_note-2) It has a population of approximately 32 million, making it the [42nd](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population) most populous country in the world. It is bordered by [Pakistan](/wiki/Pakistan) in the south and east; [Iran](/wiki/Iran) in the west; [Turkmenistan](/wiki/Turkmenistan), [Uzbekistan](/wiki/Uzbekistan), and [Tajikistan](/wiki/Tajikistan) in the north; and [China](/wiki/China) in the far northeast. Its territory covers [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), making it the [41st largest](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_area) country in the world.

Human habitation in Afghanistan dates back to the [Middle Paleolithic](/wiki/Middle_Paleolithic) Era, and the country's [strategic](/wiki/Geostrategy) location along the [Silk Road](/wiki/Silk_Road) connected it to the cultures of the Middle East and other parts of Asia. Through the ages the land has been home to various peoples and witnessed numerous military campaigns; notably by [Alexander the Great](/wiki/Alexander_the_Great), [Mauryas](/wiki/Maurya_Empire), [Muslim Arabs](/wiki/Islamic_conquest_of_Afghanistan), [Mongols](/wiki/Mongol_invasion_of_Khwarezmia_and_Eastern_Iran), [British](/wiki/First_Anglo-Afghan_War), [Soviet Russians](/wiki/Soviet_war_in_Afghanistan), and in the modern-era by [Western powers](/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_(2001–present)). The land also served as the source from which the [Kushans](/wiki/Kushan_Empire), [Hephthalites](/wiki/Hephthalite_Empire), [Samanids](/wiki/Samanid_Empire), [Saffarids](/wiki/Saffarid_Empire), [Ghaznavids](/wiki/Ghaznavids), [Ghorids](/wiki/Ghorids), [Khiljis](/wiki/Khilji_dynasty), [Mughals](/wiki/Mughal_Empire), [Hotaks](/wiki/Hotak_Empire), [Durranis](/wiki/Durrani_dynasty), and others have risen to form major empires.[[3]](#cite_note-3) The political history of the modern state of Afghanistan began with the Hotak and Durrani dynasties in the 18th century. In the late 19th century, Afghanistan became a [buffer state](/wiki/Buffer_state) in the "[Great Game](/wiki/The_Great_Game)" between [British India](/wiki/British_Raj) and the [Russian Empire](/wiki/Russian_Empire). Following the [Third Anglo-Afghan War](/wiki/Third_Anglo-Afghan_War) in 1919, [King Amanullah](/wiki/Amanullah_Khan) unsuccessfully attempted to modernize the country. It remained peaceful during [Zahir Shah's](/wiki/Mohammed_Zahir_Shah) forty years of monarchy. A series of coups in the 1970s was followed by a [series of civil wars](/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_(1978–present)) that devastated much of Afghanistan. This was followed by the recent $100 billion nationwide rebuilding process.[[4]](#cite_note-4)

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The name *Afghānistān* ([Pashto](/wiki/Pashto) |افغانستان) is believed to be as old as the [ethnonym](/wiki/Ethnonym) [*Afghan*](/wiki/Afghan_(ethnonym)), which is documented in the 10th-century [geography](/wiki/Geography) book [*Hudud ul-'alam*](/wiki/Hudud_ul-'alam). The [root](/wiki/Root_(linguistics)) name "[Afghan](/wiki/Afghan)" was used [historically](/wiki/History) in reference to a member of the ethnic [Pashtuns](/wiki/Pashtuns), and the [suffix](/wiki/Suffix) "[-stan](/wiki/-stan)" means "place of" in [Sanskrit](/wiki/Sanskrit). Therefore, Afghanistan translates to *land of the Afghans* or, more specifically in a historical sense, to *land of the Pashtuns*. However, the modern [Constitution of Afghanistan](/wiki/Constitution_of_Afghanistan) states that "[t]he word Afghan shall apply to every [citizen of Afghanistan](/wiki/Demographics_of_Afghanistan)."[[5]](#cite_note-5)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:History of Afghanistan](/wiki/Template:History_of_Afghanistan) [Excavations](/wiki/Excavation_(archaeology)) of prehistoric sites by [Louis Dupree](/wiki/Louis_Dupree_(professor)) and others suggest that humans were living in what is now Afghanistan at least 50,000 years ago, and that farming communities in the area were among the earliest in the world. An important site of early historical activities, many believe that Afghanistan compares to [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt) in terms of the historical value of its archaeological sites.[[6]](#cite_note-6)[[7]](#cite_note-7) The country sits at a unique nexus point where numerous civilizations have interacted and often fought. It has been home to various peoples through the ages, among them the [ancient Iranian peoples](/wiki/Ancient_Iranian_peoples) who established the dominant role of [Indo-Iranian languages](/wiki/Indo-Iranian_languages) in the region. At multiple points, the land has been incorporated within large regional empires, among them the [Achaemenid Empire](/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire), the [Macedonian Empire](/wiki/Alexander_the_Great), the [Indian Maurya Empire](/wiki/Maurya_Empire), and the [Islamic Empire](/wiki/Islamic_conquest_of_Afghanistan).[[8]](#cite_note-8) Many empires and kingdoms have also risen to power in Afghanistan, such as the [Greco-Bactrians](/wiki/Greco-Bactrian_Kingdom), [Kushans](/wiki/Kushan_Empire), [Hephthalites](/wiki/Hephthalites), [Kabul Shahis](/wiki/Kabul_Shahi), [Saffarids](/wiki/Saffarid_Dynasty), [Samanids](/wiki/Samanids), [Ghaznavids](/wiki/Ghaznavids), [Ghurids](/wiki/Ghurid_Dynasty), [Khiljis](/wiki/Khilji_dynasty), [Kartids](/wiki/Kartids), [Timurids](/wiki/Timurid_dynasty), [Mughals](/wiki/Mughal_Empire), and finally the [Hotak](/wiki/Hotak_dynasty) and [Durrani](/wiki/Durrani_dynasty) dynasties that marked the political origins of the modern state.[[9]](#cite_note-9)

### Pre-Islamic period[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|Bilingual (](/wiki/File:AsokaKandahar.jpg)[Greek](/wiki/Koine_Greek) and [Aramaic](/wiki/Aramaic)) [edict](/wiki/Edicts_of_Ashoka) by Emperor [Ashoka](/wiki/Ashoka) from the 3rd century BCE discovered in the southern city of [Kandahar](/wiki/Kandahar) [Archaeological](/wiki/Archaeology) exploration done in the 20th century suggests that the geographical area of Afghanistan has been closely connected by culture and trade with its neighbors to the east, west, and north. Artifacts typical of the [Paleolithic](/wiki/Paleolithic), [Mesolithic](/wiki/Mesolithic), [Neolithic](/wiki/Neolithic), [Bronze](/wiki/Bronze_Age), and [Iron ages](/wiki/Iron_age) have been found in Afghanistan. Urban civilization is believed to have begun as early as 3000 BCE, and the early city of [Mundigak](/wiki/Mundigak) (near [Kandahar](/wiki/Kandahar) in the south of the country) may have been a colony of the nearby [Indus Valley Civilization](/wiki/Indus_Valley_Civilization). More recent findings established that the Indus Valley Civilisation stretched up towards modern-day Afghanistan, making the ancient civilisation today part of Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. In more detail, it extended from what today is northwest Pakistan to northwest India and northeast Afghanistan. An Indus Valley site has been found on the [Oxus River](/wiki/Oxus_River) at [Shortugai](/wiki/Shortugai) in northern Afghanistan.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[[11]](#cite_note-11) There are several smaller IVC colonies to be found in Afghanistan as well. [upright||thumb|One of the](/wiki/File:BamyanBuddha_Smaller_1.jpg) [Buddhas of Bamiyan](/wiki/Buddhas_of_Bamiyan). [Buddhism](/wiki/Buddhism_in_Afghanistan) was widespread before the [Islamic conquest of Afghanistan](/wiki/Islamic_conquest_of_Afghanistan). After 2000 BCE, successive waves of semi-nomadic people from Central Asia began moving south into Afghanistan; among them were many [Indo-European-speaking](/wiki/Indo-European_languages) [Indo-Iranians](/wiki/Indo-Iranians). These tribes later migrated further into South Asia, Western Asia, and toward Europe via the area north of the [Caspian Sea](/wiki/Caspian_Sea). The region at the time was referred to as [Ariana](/wiki/Ariana).[[6]](#cite_note-6)[[12]](#cite_note-12)[[13]](#cite_note-13) The religion [Zoroastrianism](/wiki/Zoroastrianism) is believed by some to have originated in what is now Afghanistan between 1800 and 800 BCE, as its founder [Zoroaster](/wiki/Zoroaster) is thought to have lived and died in [Balkh](/wiki/Balkh). Ancient [Eastern Iranian languages](/wiki/Iranian_languages) may have been spoken in the region around the time of the rise of Zoroastrianism. By the middle of the 6th century BCE, the Achaemenids overthrew the [Medes](/wiki/Medes) and incorporated [Arachosia](/wiki/Arachosia), [Aria](/wiki/Aria_(satrapy)), and [Bactria](/wiki/Bactria) within its eastern boundaries. An [inscription](/wiki/Epigraphy) on the tombstone of [Darius I of Persia](/wiki/Darius_I_of_Persia) mentions the [Kabul Valley](/wiki/Kabulistan) in a list of the 29 countries that he had conquered.[[14]](#cite_note-14) [Alexander the Great](/wiki/Alexander_the_Great) and his Macedonian forces arrived to Afghanistan in 330 BCE after defeating [Darius III of Persia](/wiki/Darius_III_of_Persia) a year earlier in the [Battle of Gaugamela](/wiki/Battle_of_Gaugamela). Following Alexander's brief occupation, the successor state of the [Seleucid Empire](/wiki/Seleucid_Empire) controlled the region until 305 BCE, when they gave much of it to the [Maurya Empire](/wiki/Maurya_Empire) as part of an alliance treaty. The Mauryans controlled the area south of the [Hindu Kush](/wiki/Hindu_Kush) until they were overthrown in about 185 BCE. Their decline began 60 years after [Ashoka's](/wiki/Ashoka) rule ended, leading to the [Hellenistic](/wiki/Hellenistic_civilization) reconquest by the [Greco-Bactrians](/wiki/Greco-Bactrians). Much of it soon broke away from them and became part of the [Indo-Greek Kingdom](/wiki/Indo-Greek_Kingdom). They were defeated and expelled by the [Indo-Scythians](/wiki/Indo-Scythians) in the late 2nd century BCE.[[15]](#cite_note-15)[[16]](#cite_note-16) During the first century BCE, the [Parthian Empire](/wiki/Parthian_Empire) subjugated the region, but lost it to their [Indo-Parthian](/wiki/Indo-Parthian) vassals. In the mid-to-late first century CE the vast [Kushan Empire](/wiki/Kushan_Empire), centered in Afghanistan, became great patrons of Buddhist culture, making [Buddhism](/wiki/Buddhism) flourish throughout the region. The Kushans were overthrown by the [Sassanids](/wiki/Sassanid_Empire) in the 3rd century CE, though the [Indo-Sassanids](/wiki/Indo-Sassanids) continued to rule at least parts of the region. They were followed by the [Kidarite](/wiki/Kidarite) who, in turn, were replaced by the [Hephthalites](/wiki/Hephthalites). By the 6th century CE, the successors to the Kushans and Hepthalites established a small dynasty called [Kabul Shahi](/wiki/Kabul_Shahi). Much of the northeastern and southern areas of the country remained dominated by Buddhist culture.[[17]](#cite_note-17)

### Islamization and Mongol invasion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:Jama_Masjid_of_Herat_15_08.jpg) [Friday Mosque of Herat](/wiki/Friday_Mosque_of_Herat) is one of the oldest mosques in Afghanistan. (March 1962 photo) [Arab](/wiki/Arab) [Muslims](/wiki/Muslim) brought Islam to [Herat](/wiki/Herat) and [Zaranj](/wiki/Zaranj) in 642 CE and began spreading eastward; some of the native inhabitants they encountered accepted it while others revolted. The land was collectively recognized by the Arabs as al-Hind due to its cultural connection with [Greater India](/wiki/Greater_India). Before Islam was introduced, people of the region were mostly Buddhists and Zoroastrians, but there were also [Surya](/wiki/Surya) and [Nana](/wiki/Nana_(Afghan_goddess)) worshipers, [Jews](/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Afghanistan), and others. The [Zunbils](/wiki/Zunbils) and Kabul Shahi were first conquered in 870 CE by the [Saffarid](/wiki/Saffarid_Dynasty) Muslims of Zaranj. Later, the [Samanids](/wiki/Samanids) extended their Islamic influence south of the Hindu Kush. It is reported that Muslims and non-Muslims still lived side by side in Kabul before the [Ghaznavids](/wiki/Ghaznavids) rose to power in the 10th century.[[18]](#cite_note-18)[[19]](#cite_note-19)[[20]](#cite_note-20) By the 11th century, [Mahmud of Ghazni](/wiki/Mahmud_of_Ghazni) defeated the remaining Hindu rulers and effectively [Islamized](/wiki/Islamized) the wider region, with the exception of [Kafiristan](/wiki/Kafiristan). Afghanistan became one of the main centers in the [Muslim world](/wiki/Muslim_world) during this [Islamic Golden Age](/wiki/Islamic_Golden_Age). The Ghaznavid dynasty was overthrown by the [Ghurids](/wiki/Ghurid_Dynasty), who expanded and advanced the already powerful Islamic empire.

In 1219 AD, [Genghis Khan](/wiki/Genghis_Khan) and his [Mongol](/wiki/Mongol_Empire) army overran the region. His troops are said to have annihilated the Khorasanian cities of Herat and Balkh as well as [Bamyan](/wiki/Bamyan,_Afghanistan).[[21]](#cite_note-21) The destruction caused by the Mongols forced many locals to return to an agrarian rural society.[[22]](#cite_note-22) Mongol rule continued with the [Ilkhanate](/wiki/Ilkhanate) in the northwest while the [Khilji dynasty](/wiki/Khilji_dynasty) administered the Afghan tribal areas south of the Hindu Kush until the invasion of [Timur](/wiki/Timur), who established the [Timurid Empire](/wiki/Timurid_Empire) in 1370.

In the early 16th century, [Babur](/wiki/Babur) arrived from [Fergana](/wiki/Fergana) and captured Kabul from the [Arghun dynasty](/wiki/Arghun_dynasty). In 1526, he invaded [Delhi](/wiki/Delhi_Sultanate) in India to replace the [Lodi dynasty](/wiki/Lodi_dynasty) with the [Mughal Empire](/wiki/Mughal_Empire). Between the 16th and 18th century, the [Khanate of Bukhara](/wiki/Khanate_of_Bukhara), [Safavids](/wiki/Safavid_dynasty), and Mughals ruled parts of the territory. Before the 19th century, the northwestern area of Afghanistan was referred to by the regional name [Khorasan](/wiki/Greater_Khorasan). Two of the four capitals of Khorasan ([Herat](/wiki/Herat) and [Balkh](/wiki/Balkh)) are now located in Afghanistan, while the regions of [Kandahar](/wiki/Kandahar_Province), [Zabulistan](/wiki/Zabul_Province), Ghazni, Kabulistan, and [Afghanistan](/wiki/Name_of_Afghanistan) formed the [frontier](/wiki/Frontier) between Khorasan and [Hindustan](/wiki/Hindustan).[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[24]](#cite_note-24)[[25]](#cite_note-25)

### Hotak dynasty and Durrani Empire[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|150px|](/wiki/File:Portrait_miniature_of_Ahmad_Shah_Durrani.jpg)[Ahmad Shah Durrani](/wiki/Ahmad_Shah_Durrani), founder of the [last Afghan empire](/wiki/Durrani_Empire) and viewed as [*Father of the Nation*](/wiki/Father_of_the_Nation) In 1709, [Mirwais Hotak](/wiki/Mirwais_Hotak), a local [Ghilzai](/wiki/Ghilji) tribal leader, successfully rebelled against the Safavids. He defeated [Gurgin Khan](/wiki/George_XI_of_Kartli) and made Afghanistan independent.[[26]](#cite_note-26) Mirwais died of a natural cause in 1715 and was succeeded by his brother [Abdul Aziz](/wiki/Abdul_Aziz_Hotak), who was soon killed by Mirwais' son [Mahmud](/wiki/Mahmud_Hotak) for [treason](/wiki/Treason). Mahmud led the Afghan army in 1722 to the Persian capital of [Isfahan](/wiki/Isfahan), captured the city after the [Battle of Gulnabad](/wiki/Battle_of_Gulnabad) and proclaimed himself King of Persia.[[26]](#cite_note-26) The Afghan dynasty was ousted from Persia by [Nader Shah](/wiki/Nader_Shah) after the 1729 [Battle of Damghan](/wiki/Battle_of_Damghan_(1729)).

In 1738, Nader Shah and his [forces](/wiki/Afsharid_dynasty) captured Kandahar, the last Hotak stronghold, from Shah [Hussain Hotak](/wiki/Hussain_Hotak), at which point the incarcerated 16-year-old [Ahmad Shah Durrani](/wiki/Ahmad_Shah_Durrani) was freed and made the commander of an Afghan regiment. Soon after the Persian and Afghan forces [invaded India](/wiki/Nader_Shah's_invasion_of_India). By 1747, the Afghans chose Durrani as their [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state).[[27]](#cite_note-27) Durrani and his Afghan army conquered much of present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, the [Khorasan](/wiki/Khorasan_Province) and [Kohistan](/wiki/Quhistan) provinces of Iran, and Delhi in India.[[28]](#cite_note-28) He defeated the Indian [Maratha Empire](/wiki/Maratha_Empire), and one of his biggest victories was the [1761 Battle of Panipat](/wiki/Battle_of_Panipat_(1761)).

In October 1772, Durrani died of a natural cause and was buried at a site now adjacent to the [Shrine of the Cloak](/wiki/Shrine_of_the_Cloak) in Kandahar. He was succeeded by his son, [Timur Shah](/wiki/Timur_Shah_Durrani), who transferred the capital of Afghanistan from Kandahar to Kabul in 1776. After Timur's death in 1793, the Durrani throne passed down to his son [Zaman Shah](/wiki/Zaman_Shah_Durrani), followed by [Mahmud Shah](/wiki/Mahmud_Shah_Durrani), [Shuja Shah](/wiki/Shuja_Shah_Durrani) and others.[[29]](#cite_note-29) The Afghan Empire was under threat in the early 19th century by the [Persians](/wiki/Qajar_dynasty) in the west and the [British](/wiki/British_Raj)-backed [Sikhs](/wiki/Sikh_Empire) in the east. Fateh Khan, leader of the [Barakzai tribe](/wiki/Barakzai_dynasty), had installed 21 of his brothers in positions of power throughout the empire. After his death, they rebelled and divided up the provinces of the empire between themselves. During this turbulent period, Afghanistan had many temporary rulers until [Dost Mohammad Khan](/wiki/Dost_Mohammad_Khan) declared himself emir in 1826.[[30]](#cite_note-30) The [Punjab region](/wiki/Punjab_region) was lost to [Ranjit Singh](/wiki/Ranjit_Singh), who invaded [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa](/wiki/Khyber_Pakhtunkhwa) and in 1834 captured the city of [Peshawar](/wiki/Peshawar).[[31]](#cite_note-31) In 1837, during the [Battle of Jamrud](/wiki/Battle_of_Jamrud) near the [Khyber Pass](/wiki/Khyber_Pass), [Akbar Khan](/wiki/Wazir_Akbar_Khan) and the Afghan army killed Sikh Commander [Hari Singh Nalwa](/wiki/Hari_Singh_Nalwa). By this time the British were advancing from the east and the [first major conflict](/wiki/First_Anglo-Afghan_War) during the "Great Game" was initiated.[[32]](#cite_note-32)

### Western influence[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Kandahar-1881.jpg)[British](/wiki/British_Raj) and [allied forces](/wiki/Afghan_National_Army) at Kandahar after the 1880 [Battle of Kandahar](/wiki/Battle_of_Kandahar), during the [Second Anglo-Afghan War](/wiki/Second_Anglo-Afghan_War). The large defensive wall around the city was removed in the early 1930s by the order of [King Nadir](/wiki/Mohammed_Nadir_Shah). Following the [1842 defeat of the British-Indian forces](/wiki/1842_retreat_from_Kabul) and victory of the Afghans, the British established [diplomatic relations](/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Afghanistan) with the Afghan government and withdrew all forces from the country. They returned during the [Second Anglo-Afghan War](/wiki/Second_Anglo-Afghan_War) in the late 1870s for about two years to assist [Abdur Rahman Khan](/wiki/Abdur_Rahman_Khan) defeat [Ayub Khan](/wiki/Mohammad_Ayub_Khan_(Emir_of_Afghanistan)). The United Kingdom began to exercise a great deal of influence after this and even controlled the state's [foreign policy](/wiki/Foreign_policy). In 1893, [Mortimer Durand](/wiki/Mortimer_Durand) made Amir Abdur Rahman Khan sign a controversial agreement in which the ethnic [Pashtun](/wiki/Pashtun_people) and [Baloch](/wiki/Baloch_people) territories were divided by the [Durand Line](/wiki/Durand_Line). This was a standard [divide and rule](/wiki/Divide_and_rule) policy of the British and would lead to strained relations, especially with the later new state of Pakistan. [thumb|left|upright|](/wiki/File:Zahir_Shah_of_Afghanistan_in_1930s-cropped.jpg)[Zahir Shah](/wiki/Mohammed_Zahir_Shah), the last king of Afghanistan, who reigned from 1933 to 1973. After the [Third Anglo-Afghan War](/wiki/Third_Anglo-Afghan_War) and the signing of the [Treaty of Rawalpindi](/wiki/Anglo-Afghan_Treaty_of_1919) in 1919, King [Amanullah Khan](/wiki/Amānullāh_Khān) declared Afghanistan a [sovereign](/wiki/Sovereign_state) and fully [independent state](/wiki/Independence). He moved to end his country's traditional isolation by establishing diplomatic relations with the international community and, following a 1927–28 tour of Europe and [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey), introduced several reforms intended to modernize his nation. A key force behind these reforms was [Mahmud Tarzi](/wiki/Mahmud_Tarzi), an ardent supporter of the education of women. He fought for Article 68 of Afghanistan's 1923 [constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Afghanistan), which made elementary education compulsory. The institution of [slavery](/wiki/Slavery) was abolished in 1923.[[33]](#cite_note-33) Some of the reforms that were actually put in place, such as the abolition of the traditional [burqa](/wiki/Burqa) for women and the opening of a number of co-educational schools, quickly alienated many tribal and religious leaders. Faced with overwhelming armed opposition, Amanullah Khan was forced to abdicate in January 1929 after Kabul fell to rebel forces led by [Habibullah Kalakani](/wiki/Habibullah_Kalakani). Prince [Mohammed Nadir Shah](/wiki/Mohammed_Nadir_Shah), Amanullah's cousin, in turn defeated and killed Kalakani in November 1929, and was declared King Nadir Shah. He abandoned the reforms of Amanullah Khan in favor of a more gradual approach to modernisation but was assassinated in 1933 by [Abdul Khaliq](/wiki/Abdul_Khaliq_Hazara_(assassin)), a [Hazara](/wiki/Hazara_people) school student.

[Mohammed Zahir Shah](/wiki/Mohammed_Zahir_Shah), Nadir Shah's 19-year-old son, succeeded to the throne and reigned from 1933 to 1973. Until 1946, Zahir Shah ruled with the assistance of his uncle, who held the post of [Prime Minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Afghanistan) and continued the policies of Nadir Shah. Another of Zahir Shah's uncles, [Shah Mahmud Khan](/wiki/Shah_Mahmud_Khan), became Prime Minister in 1946 and began an experiment allowing greater political freedom, but reversed the policy when it went further than he expected. He was replaced in 1953 by [Mohammed Daoud Khan](/wiki/Mohammed_Daoud_Khan), the king's cousin and brother-in-law. Daoud Khan sought a closer relationship with the [Soviet Union](/wiki/Soviet_Union) and a more distant one towards Pakistan. Afghanistan remained neutral and was neither a participant in [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II) nor aligned with either power bloc in the [Cold War](/wiki/Cold_War). However, it was a beneficiary of the latter rivalry as both the Soviet Union and the United States vied for influence by building Afghanistan's main highways, airports, and other vital infrastructure. On per capita basis, Afghanistan received more Soviet [development aid](/wiki/Development_aid) than any other country. In 1973, while King Zahir Shah was on an official overseas visit, Daoud Khan launched a bloodless coup and became the first [President of Afghanistan](/wiki/President_of_Afghanistan). In the meantime, [Zulfikar Ali Bhutto](/wiki/Zulfikar_Ali_Bhutto) got neighboring Pakistan involved in Afghanistan. Some experts suggest that Bhutto paved the way for the April 1978 [Saur Revolution](/wiki/Saur_Revolution).[[34]](#cite_note-34)

### Marxist revolution and Soviet war[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Outside the](/wiki/File:Day_after_Saur_revolution_in_Kabul_(773).jpg) [Arg](/wiki/Arg_(Kabul)) [Presidential Palace](/wiki/Presidential_palace) in [Kabul](/wiki/Kabul), a day after the April 1978 [Marxist revolution](/wiki/Saur_Revolution) in which [President](/wiki/List_of_Presidents_of_Afghanistan) [Daoud Khan](/wiki/Mohammed_Daoud_Khan) was assassinated along with his entire family. In April 1978, the communist [People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan](/wiki/People's_Democratic_Party_of_Afghanistan) (PDPA) seized power in Afghanistan in the [Saur Revolution](/wiki/Saur_Revolution). Within months, opponents of the communist government launched an uprising in eastern Afghanistan that quickly expanded into a [civil war](/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_(1978–present)) waged by guerrilla [mujahideen](/wiki/Mujahideen) against government forces countrywide. The Pakistani government provided these rebels with covert training centers, while the Soviet Union sent thousands of military advisers to support the PDPA government.[[35]](#cite_note-35) Meanwhile, increasing friction between the competing factions of the PDPA — the dominant [Khalq](/wiki/Khalq) and the more moderate [Parcham](/wiki/Parcham) — resulted in the dismissal of Parchami cabinet members and the arrest of Parchami military officers under the pretext of a Parchami coup.

In September 1979, [Nur Muhammad Taraki](/wiki/Nur_Muhammad_Taraki) was assassinated in a coup within the PDPA orchestrated by fellow Khalq member [Hafizullah Amin](/wiki/Hafizullah_Amin), who assumed the presidency. Distrusted by the Soviets, Amin was assassinated by Soviet special forces in December 1979. A Soviet-organized government, led by Parcham's [Babrak Karmal](/wiki/Babrak_Karmal) but inclusive of both factions, filled the vacuum. Soviet troops were deployed to stabilize Afghanistan under Karmal in more substantial numbers, although the Soviet government did not expect to do most of the fighting in Afghanistan. As a result, however, the Soviets were now directly involved in what had been a domestic war in Afghanistan.[[36]](#cite_note-36) The PDPA prohibited [usury](/wiki/Usury), declared equality of the sexes,[[37]](#cite_note-37) and introduced women to political life.[[37]](#cite_note-37) The [United States](/wiki/Operation_Cyclone) had been supporting anti-Soviet Afghan [*mujahideen*](/wiki/Mujahideen) and foreign "[Afghan Arab](/wiki/Afghan_Arab)" fighters through Pakistan's [ISI](/wiki/Inter-Services_Intelligence) as early as mid-1979 (see [*CIA activities in Afghanistan*](/wiki/CIA_activities_in_Afghanistan)).[[38]](#cite_note-38) Billions in cash and weapons, which included over two thousand [FIM-92 Stinger](/wiki/FIM-92_Stinger) [surface-to-air missiles](/wiki/Surface-to-air_missiles), were provided by the United States and [Saudi Arabia](/wiki/Saudi_Arabia) to Pakistan.[[39]](#cite_note-39)[[40]](#cite_note-40) The [Soviet war in Afghanistan](/wiki/Soviet_war_in_Afghanistan) resulted in the deaths of over 1 million Afghans, mostly civilians,[[41]](#cite_note-41)[[42]](#cite_note-42)[[43]](#cite_note-43) and the creation of about 6[Template:Spacesmillion](/wiki/Template:Spaces) refugees who fled Afghanistan, mainly to [Pakistan](/wiki/Afghans_in_Pakistan) and [Iran](/wiki/Afghans_in_Iran).[[44]](#cite_note-44) Faced with mounting international pressure and numerous casualties, the Soviets withdrew in 1989 but continued to support Afghan President [Mohammad Najibullah](/wiki/Mohammad_Najibullah) until 1992.[[45]](#cite_note-45)

### Civil war[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) From 1989 until 1992, Najibullah's government tried to solve the ongoing civil war with economic and military aid, but without Soviet troops on the ground. Najibullah tried to build support for his government by portraying his government as [Islamic](/wiki/Islamism), and in the 1990 constitution the country officially became an [Islamic state](/wiki/Islamic_state_(government)) and all references of communism were removed. Nevertheless, Najibullah did not win any significant support, and with the [dissolution of the Soviet Union](/wiki/Dissolution_of_the_Soviet_Union) in December 1991, he was left without foreign aid. This, coupled with the internal collapse of his government, led to his ousting from power in April 1992. After the fall of Najibullah's government in 1992, the post-communist [Islamic State of Afghanistan](/wiki/Islamic_State_of_Afghanistan) was established by the [Peshawar Accord](/wiki/Peshawar_Accord), a peace and power-sharing agreement under which all the Afghan parties were united in April 1992, except for the Pakistani supported [Hezb-e Islami](/wiki/Hezb-e_Islami) of [Gulbuddin Hekmatyar](/wiki/Gulbuddin_Hekmatyar). Hekmatyar started a bombardment campaign against the capital city Kabul, which marked the beginning of a [new phase in the war](/wiki/Civil_war_in_Afghanistan_(1992–96)).[[46]](#cite_note-46) Saudi Arabia and Iran supported different Afghan militias[[47]](#cite_note-47)[[48]](#cite_note-48)[[49]](#cite_note-49) and instability quickly developed.[[50]](#cite_note-50) The conflict between the two militias soon escalated into a full-scale war. [thumb|A section of Kabul during the](/wiki/File:Kabul_during_civial_war_of_fundamentalists_1993-2.jpg) [civil war](/wiki/Civil_war_in_Afghanistan_(1992–1996)) in 1993

Due to the sudden initiation of the war, working government departments, police units, and a system of justice and accountability for the newly created Islamic State of Afghanistan did not have time to form. Atrocities were committed by individuals of the different armed factions while Kabul descended into lawlessness and chaos.[[48]](#cite_note-48)[[51]](#cite_note-51) Because of the chaos, some leaders increasingly had only nominal control over their (sub-)commanders.[[52]](#cite_note-52) For civilians there was little security from murder, rape, and extortion.[[52]](#cite_note-52) An estimated 25,000 people died during the most intense period of bombardment by Hekmatyar's Hezb-i Islami and the [Junbish-i Milli](/wiki/Junbish-i_Milli) forces of [Abdul Rashid Dostum](/wiki/Abdul_Rashid_Dostum), who had created an alliance with Hekmatyar in 1994.[[51]](#cite_note-51) Half a million people fled Afghanistan.[[52]](#cite_note-52) Southern and eastern Afghanistan were under the control of local commanders such as [Gul Agha Sherzai](/wiki/Gul_Agha_Sherzai) and others. In 1994, the [Taliban](/wiki/Taliban) (a movement originating from [Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam](/wiki/Jamiat_Ulema-e-Islam)-run religious schools for Afghan refugees in Pakistan) also developed in Afghanistan as a political-religious force.[[53]](#cite_note-53) The Taliban first took control of southern Afghanistan in 1994 and forced the surrender of dozens of local Pashtun leaders.[[52]](#cite_note-52) In late 1994, forces of [Ahmad Shah Massoud](/wiki/Ahmad_Shah_Massoud) held on to Kabul.[[54]](#cite_note-54) Rabbani's government took steps to reopen courts, restore law and order, and initiate a nationwide [political process](/wiki/Political_process) with the goal of national [consolidation](/wiki/Democratic_consolidation) and democratic elections. Massoud invited Taliban leaders to join the process but they refused.[[55]](#cite_note-55)

### Taliban Emirate and Northern Alliance[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Map of the situation in Afghanistan in late 1996;](/wiki/File:1996afghan_(1).png) [Massoud](/wiki/Ahmad_Shah_Massoud) (red), [Dostum](/wiki/Abdul_Rashid_Dostum) (green) and [Taliban](/wiki/Taliban) (yellow) territories. The Taliban's early victories in late 1994 were followed by a series of defeats that resulted in heavy losses. The Taliban attempted to capture Kabul in early 1995 but were repelled by forces under Massoud. In September 1996, as the Taliban, with military support from Pakistan[[56]](#cite_note-56) and financial support from Saudi Arabia, prepared for another major offensive, Massoud ordered a full retreat from Kabul.[[57]](#cite_note-57) The Taliban seized Kabul in the same month and established the [Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan](/wiki/Islamic_Emirate_of_Afghanistan). They imposed a strict form of [Sharia](/wiki/Sharia), similar to that found in Saudi Arabia. According to [Physicians for Human Rights](/wiki/Physicians_for_Human_Rights) (PHR), "no other regime in the world has methodically and violently forced half of its population into virtual house arrest, prohibiting them on pain of physical punishment from showing their faces, seeking medical care without a male escort, or attending school."[[58]](#cite_note-58) [After the fall of Kabul](/wiki/Battle_of_Kabul_(1992–96)) to the Taliban, Massoud and Dostum formed the [Northern Alliance](/wiki/Northern_Alliance). The Taliban defeated Dostum's forces during the [Battles of Mazar-i-Sharif (1997–98)](/wiki/Battles_of_Mazar-i-Sharif_(1997–98)). Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, [Pervez Musharraf](/wiki/Pervez_Musharraf), began sending thousands of Pakistanis to help the Taliban defeat the Northern Alliance.[[55]](#cite_note-55)[[56]](#cite_note-56)[[59]](#cite_note-59)[[60]](#cite_note-60)[[61]](#cite_note-61)[[62]](#cite_note-62) From 1996 to 2001, the [al-Qaeda](/wiki/Al-Qaeda) network of [Osama bin Laden](/wiki/Osama_bin_Laden) and [Ayman al-Zawahiri](/wiki/Ayman_al-Zawahiri) was also operating inside Afghanistan.[[63]](#cite_note-63) This and the fact that around one million Afghans were internally displaced made the United States worry.[[59]](#cite_note-59)[[64]](#cite_note-64) From 1990 to September 2001, around 400,000 Afghans died in the internal mini-wars.[[65]](#cite_note-65) On 9 September 2001, Massoud was assassinated by two Arab [suicide attackers](/wiki/Suicide_attack) in [Panjshir province](/wiki/Panjshir_province) of Afghanistan. Two days later, the [September 11 attacks](/wiki/September_11_attacks) were carried out in the United States. The US government suspected Osama bin Laden as the perpetrator of the attacks, and demanded that the Taliban hand him over.[[66]](#cite_note-66) After refusing to comply, the October 2001 [Operation Enduring Freedom](/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_(2001–present)) was launched. During the initial invasion, US and UK forces bombed al-Qaeda training camps. The United States began working with the Northern Alliance to remove the Taliban from power.[[67]](#cite_note-67)

### Recent history (2002–present)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|250px|Collage showing foreign armed force and US diplomat visits to Afghanistan](/wiki/File:Afghan_history_from_2008-2011.jpg) In December 2001, after the Taliban government was overthrown and the new [Afghan government](/wiki/Politics_of_Afghanistan) under [President](/wiki/List_of_Presidents_of_Afghanistan) [Hamid Karzai](/wiki/Hamid_Karzai) was formed, the [International Security Assistance Force](/wiki/International_Security_Assistance_Force) (ISAF) was established by the [UN Security Council](/wiki/UN_Security_Council) to help assist the [Karzai administration](/wiki/Presidency_of_Hamid_Karzai) and provide basic security.[[68]](#cite_note-68)[[69]](#cite_note-69) Taliban forces also began regrouping inside Pakistan, while more coalition troops entered Afghanistan and began rebuilding the war-torn country.[[70]](#cite_note-70)[[71]](#cite_note-71) Shortly after their fall from power, the Taliban began an [insurgency](/wiki/Taliban_insurgency) to regain control of Afghanistan. Over the next decade, ISAF and [Afghan troops](/wiki/Afghan_National_Army) led many offensives against the Taliban but failed to fully defeat them. Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world due to a lack of foreign investment, [government corruption](/wiki/Corruption_in_Afghanistan), and the Taliban insurgency.[[72]](#cite_note-72)[[73]](#cite_note-73) Meanwhile, the [Afghan government](/wiki/Politics_of_Afghanistan) was able to build some democratic structures, and the country changed its name to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Attempts were made, often with the support of foreign donor countries, to improve the country's economy, healthcare, education, transport, and agriculture. ISAF forces also began to train the [Afghan National Security Forces](/wiki/Afghan_National_Security_Forces). In the decade following 2002, over five million [Afghans](/wiki/Afghan_diaspora) were [repatriated](/wiki/Repatriation), including some who were forcefully [deported](/wiki/Deportation) from Western countries.[[74]](#cite_note-74)[[75]](#cite_note-75) By 2009, a Taliban-led shadow government began to form in parts of the country.[[76]](#cite_note-76) In 2010, President Karzai attempted to hold [peace negotiations](/wiki/Afghan_Peace_Jirga_2010) with the Taliban leaders, but the rebel group refused to attend until mid-2015 when the Taliban supreme leader finally decided to back the peace talks.[[77]](#cite_note-77) After the May 2011 [death of Osama bin Laden](/wiki/Death_of_Osama_bin_Laden) in Pakistan, many prominent Afghan figures were assassinated.[[78]](#cite_note-78) [Afghanistan–Pakistan border skirmishes](/wiki/Afghanistan–Pakistan_skirmishes) intensified and many large scale attacks by the Pakistan-based [Haqqani Network](/wiki/Haqqani_Network) also took place across Afghanistan. The United States blamed rogue elements within the Pakistani government for the increased attacks.[[79]](#cite_note-79)[[80]](#cite_note-80) Following the [2014 presidential election](/wiki/Afghan_presidential_election,_2014) President Karzai left power and [Ashraf Ghani](/wiki/Ashraf_Ghani) became President in September 2014.[[81]](#cite_note-81) The US war in Afghanistan (America's longest war) officially ended on December 28, 2014. However, thousands of US-led NATO troops have remained in the country to train and advise Afghan government forces.[[82]](#cite_note-82) The 2001–present war has resulted in over 90,000 direct war-related [deaths](/wiki/Civilian_casualties_in_the_war_in_Afghanistan_(2001–present)), which includes insurgents, Afghan civilians and government forces. Over 100,000 have been injured.[[83]](#cite_note-83)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Afghanistan map of](/wiki/File:Afghanistan_map_of_Köppen_climate_classification.svg) [Köppen climate classification](/wiki/Köppen_climate_classification). [thumb|Topography](/wiki/File:Afghanistan_physical_en.png) A [landlocked](/wiki/Landlocked) mountainous country with plains in the north and southwest, Afghanistan is located within South Asia[[2]](#cite_note-2)[[84]](#cite_note-84) and Central Asia.[[85]](#cite_note-85) It is part of the US-coined [Greater Middle East](/wiki/Greater_Middle_East) [Muslim world](/wiki/Muslim_world), which lies between [latitudes](/wiki/Latitude) [Template:Nowrap](/wiki/Template:Nowrap) and [Template:Nowrap](/wiki/Template:Nowrap), and [longitudes](/wiki/Longitude) [Template:Nowrap](/wiki/Template:Nowrap) and [Template:Nowrap](/wiki/Template:Nowrap). The country's highest point is [Noshaq](/wiki/Noshaq), at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) above sea level. It has a [continental climate](/wiki/Continental_climate) with harsh winters in the [central highlands](/wiki/Hazarajat), the glaciated northeast (around [Nuristan](/wiki/Nuristan)), and the [Wakhan Corridor](/wiki/Wakhan_Corridor), where the average temperature in January is below [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), and hot summers in the low-lying areas of the [Sistan Basin](/wiki/Sistan_Basin) of the southwest, the [Jalalabad](/wiki/Jalalabad) basin in the east, and the [Turkestan](/wiki/Afghan_Turkestan) plains along the [Amu River](/wiki/Amu_River) in the north, where temperatures average over [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in July. [thumb|left|270px|](/wiki/File:Geography_of_Afghanistan.jpg)[Landscapes of Afghanistan](/wiki/Geography_of_Afghanistan), from left to right: 1. [Band-e Amir National Park](/wiki/Band-e_Amir_National_Park); 2. [Salang Pass](/wiki/Salang_Pass) in [Parwan Province](/wiki/Parwan_Province); 3. [Korangal Valley](/wiki/Korangal_Valley) in [Kunar Province](/wiki/Kunar_Province); and 4. [Kajaki Dam](/wiki/Kajaki_Dam) in [Helmand Province](/wiki/Helmand_Province) Despite having numerous rivers and [reservoirs](/wiki/List_of_dams_and_reservoirs_in_Afghanistan), large parts of the country are dry. The [endorheic](/wiki/Endorheic_basin) Sistan Basin is one of the driest regions in the world.[[86]](#cite_note-86) Aside from the usual rainfall, Afghanistan receives snow during the winter in the [Hindu Kush](/wiki/Hindu_Kush) and [Pamir Mountains](/wiki/Pamir_Mountains), and the melting snow in the spring season enters the [rivers, lakes, and streams](/wiki/List_of_rivers_of_Afghanistan).[[87]](#cite_note-87)[[88]](#cite_note-88) However, two-thirds of the country's water flows into the neighboring countries of Iran, Pakistan, and Turkmenistan. The state needs more than [Template:US$](/wiki/Template:US$) to rehabilitate its irrigation systems so that the water is properly managed.[[89]](#cite_note-89) The northeastern Hindu Kush [mountain range](/wiki/Mountain_range), in and around the [Badakhshan Province](/wiki/Badakhshan_Province) of Afghanistan, is in a [geologically active](/wiki/Natural_environment#Geological_activity) area where earthquakes may occur almost every year.[[90]](#cite_note-90) They can be deadly and destructive sometimes, causing [landslides](/wiki/Landslide) in some parts or [avalanches](/wiki/2009_Afghan_avalanches) during the winter.[[91]](#cite_note-91) The last strong earthquakes were in [1998](/wiki/February_4,_1998_Afghanistan_earthquake), which killed about 6,000 people in Badakhshan near Tajikistan.[[92]](#cite_note-92) This was followed by the [2002 Hindu Kush earthquakes](/wiki/2002_Hindu_Kush_earthquakes) in which over 150 people were killed and over 1,000 injured. A [2010 earthquake](/wiki/2010_Afghanistan_earthquake) left 11 Afghans dead, over 70 injured, and more than 2,000 houses destroyed.

The country's natural resources include: [coal](/wiki/Coal), [copper](/wiki/Copper), [iron ore](/wiki/Iron_ore), [lithium](/wiki/Lithium), [uranium](/wiki/Uranium), [rare earth elements](/wiki/Rare_earth_element), [chromite](/wiki/Chromite), [gold](/wiki/Gold), [zinc](/wiki/Zinc), [talc](/wiki/Talc), [barites](/wiki/Barites), [sulfur](/wiki/Sulfur), [lead](/wiki/Lead), [marble](/wiki/Marble), precious and [semi-precious stones](/wiki/Semi-precious_stones), [natural gas](/wiki/Natural_gas), and [petroleum](/wiki/Petroleum), among other things.[[93]](#cite_note-93)[[94]](#cite_note-94) In 2010, US and Afghan government officials estimated that untapped mineral deposits located in 2007 by the [US Geological Survey](/wiki/United_States_Geological_Survey) are worth between [Template:Nowrap](/wiki/Template:Nowrap) and [Template:Nowrap](/wiki/Template:Nowrap).[[95]](#cite_note-95) At [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert),[[96]](#cite_note-96) Afghanistan is the world's [41st largest country](/wiki/List_of_countries_and_dependencies_by_area),[[97]](#cite_note-97) slightly bigger than France and smaller than Burma, about the size of Texas in the United States. It borders Pakistan in the south and east; Iran in the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan in the north; and China in the far east.

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), the population of Afghanistan is around 32,564,342,[[1]](#cite_note-1) which includes the roughly 2.7 million [Afghan refugees](/wiki/Afghan_diaspora) still living in [Pakistan](/wiki/Afghans_in_Pakistan) and [Iran](/wiki/Afghans_in_Iran). In 1979, the population was reported to be about 15.5 million.[[98]](#cite_note-98) The only city with over a million residents is its capital, Kabul. Other [large cities in the country](/wiki/List_of_cities_in_Afghanistan) are, in order of population size, [Kandahar](/wiki/Kandahar), [Herat](/wiki/Herat), [Mazar-i-Sharif](/wiki/Mazar-i-Sharif), [Jalalabad](/wiki/Jalalabad), [Lashkar Gah](/wiki/Lashkar_Gah), [Taloqan](/wiki/Taloqan), [Khost](/wiki/Khost), [Sheberghan](/wiki/Sheberghan), and [Ghazni](/wiki/Ghazni). Urban areas are experiencing rapid population growth following the return of over 5 million [expatriates](/wiki/Expatriate). According to the [Population Reference Bureau](/wiki/Population_Reference_Bureau), the Afghan population is estimated to increase to 82 million by 2050.[[99]](#cite_note-99)[Template:Largest cities of Afghanistan](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_Afghanistan)

### Ethnic groups[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|250px|](/wiki/File:US_Army_ethnolinguistic_map_of_Afghanistan_--_circa_2001-09.jpg)[Ethnolinguistic](/wiki/Ethnolinguistics) groups of Afghanistan Afghanistan is a multiethnic society, and its historical status as a crossroads has contributed significantly to its diverse ethnic makeup. The population of the country is divided into a wide variety of [ethnolinguistic](/wiki/Ethnolinguistics) groups. Because a systematic census has not been held in the nation in decades, exact figures about the size and composition of the various ethnic groups are unavailable. An approximate distribution of the ethnic groups is shown in the chart below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ethnic groups in Afghanistan | | |
| **Ethnic group** | [**Template:Small**](/wiki/Template:Small)[**[100]**](#cite_note-100) | [**Template:Small**](/wiki/Template:Small)[**[101]**](#cite_note-101)[**[102]**](#cite_note-102)[**[103]**](#cite_note-103)[**[104]**](#cite_note-104) |
| [Pashtun](/wiki/Pashtun_people) | align=center|42% | align=center|38–55% |
| [Tajik](/wiki/Tajik_people) | align=center|27% | align=center|26% (of this 1% are [Qizilbash](/wiki/Qizilbash)) |
| [Hazara](/wiki/Hazara_people) | align=center|8% | align=center|9–10% |
| [Uzbek](/wiki/Uzbeks) | align=center|9% | align=center|6–8% |
| [Aimaq](/wiki/Aimaq_people) | align=center|4% | align=center|500,000 to 800,000 |
| [Turkmen](/wiki/Turkmen_people) | align=center|3% | align=center|2.5% |
| [Baloch](/wiki/Baloch_people) | align=center|2% | align=center|100,000 |
| Others ([Pashayi](/wiki/Pashayi_people), [Nuristani](/wiki/Nuristani_people), [Arab](/wiki/History_of_Arabs_in_Afghanistan), [Brahui](/wiki/Brahui_people), [Pamiri](/wiki/Pamiri_people), [Gurjar](/wiki/Gurjar), etc.) | align=center|4% | align=center|6.9% |

[Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Bar box](/wiki/Template:Bar_box) [Pashto](/wiki/Pashto_language) and [Dari](/wiki/Dari_language) are the [official languages](/wiki/Official_language) of Afghanistan; [bilingualism](/wiki/Bilingualism) is very common.[[105]](#cite_note-105) Both are [Indo-European languages](/wiki/Indo-European_languages) from the [Iranian languages](/wiki/Iranian_languages) sub-family. Dari (Afghan Persian) has long been the [prestige language](/wiki/Prestige_(sociolinguistics)) and a [lingua franca](/wiki/Lingua_franca) for inter-ethnic communication. It is the native tongue of the Tajiks, Hazaras, Aimaks, and Kizilbash.[[106]](#cite_note-106) Pashto is the native tongue of the Pashtuns, although many Pashtuns often use Dari and some non-Pashtuns are fluent in Pashto.

Other languages, including [Uzbek](/wiki/Uzbek_language), [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic_language), [Turkmen](/wiki/Turkmen_language), [Balochi](/wiki/Balochi_language), [Pashayi](/wiki/Pashayi_language), and [Nuristani languages](/wiki/Nuristani_languages) ([Ashkunu](/wiki/Askunu_language), [Kamkata-viri](/wiki/Kamkata-viri_language), [Vasi-vari](/wiki/Vasi-vari_language), [Tregami](/wiki/Tregami_language), and [Kalasha-ala](/wiki/Kalasha-ala_language)), are the native tongues of minority groups across the country and have official status in the regions where they are widely spoken. Minor languages also include [Pamiri](/wiki/Pamir_languages) ([Shughni](/wiki/Shughni_language), [Munji](/wiki/Munji_language), [Ishkashimi](/wiki/Ishkashimi_language), and [Wakhi](/wiki/Wakhi_language)), [Brahui](/wiki/Brahui_language), [Hindko](/wiki/Hindko_language), and [Kyrgyz](/wiki/Kyrgyz_language). A small percentage of Afghans are also fluent in [Urdu](/wiki/Urdu), English, and other languages.

### Religions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Bar box](/wiki/Template:Bar_box) [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Over 99% of the Afghan population is Muslim; up to 90% are from the [Sunni](/wiki/Sunni) branch, 7–19% are [Shia](/wiki/Shia_Islam_in_Afghanistan).[[1]](#cite_note-1)[[15]](#cite_note-15)[[107]](#cite_note-107) Until the 1890s, the region around [Nuristan](/wiki/Nuristan_Province) was known as [Kafiristan](/wiki/Kafiristan) (land of the [kafirs](/wiki/Kafir) (unbelievers)) because of its non-Muslim inhabitants, the [Nuristanis](/wiki/Nuristani_people), an ethnically distinct people whose religious practices included [animism](/wiki/Animism), [polytheism](/wiki/Polytheism), and [shamanism](/wiki/Shamanism).[[108]](#cite_note-108) Thousands of Afghan [Sikhs](/wiki/Sikhism_in_Afghanistan) and [Hindus](/wiki/Hinduism_in_Afghanistan) are also found in the major cities.[[109]](#cite_note-109)[[110]](#cite_note-110) There was a small [Jewish community in Afghanistan](/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Afghanistan) who had emigrated to Israel and the United States by the end of the twentieth century; only one Jew, [Zablon Simintov](/wiki/Zablon_Simintov), remained by 2005.[[111]](#cite_note-111)

## Governance[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|The](/wiki/File:Afghan_parliament_in_2006.jpg) [National Assembly of Afghanistan](/wiki/National_Assembly_of_Afghanistan) in 2006

[thumb|Current military situation, as of 27 February 2016.](/wiki/File:Taliban_insurgency_in_Afghanistan_(2015–present).svg) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) [Template:Legend](/wiki/Template:Legend) Afghanistan is an [Islamic republic](/wiki/Islamic_republic) consisting of three branches, the executive, legislative, and judicial. The nation is led by President [Ashraf Ghani](/wiki/Ashraf_Ghani) with [Abdul Rashid Dostum](/wiki/Abdul_Rashid_Dostum) and [Sarwar Danish](/wiki/Sarwar_Danish) as vice presidents. [Abdullah Abdullah](/wiki/Abdullah_Abdullah) serves as the chief executive officer (CEO). The [National Assembly](/wiki/National_Assembly_of_Afghanistan) is the legislature, a [bicameral](/wiki/Bicameralism) body having two chambers, the [House of the People](/wiki/House_of_the_People_(Afghanistan)) and the [House of Elders](/wiki/House_of_Elders). The [Supreme Court](/wiki/Afghan_Supreme_Court) is led by [Chief Justice](/wiki/Chief_Justice_of_Afghanistan) [Said Yusuf Halem](/wiki/Said_Yusuf_Halem), the former Deputy Minister of Justice for Legal Affairs.[[112]](#cite_note-112)[[113]](#cite_note-113) A January 2010 report published by the [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](/wiki/United_Nations_Office_on_Drugs_and_Crime) revealed that bribery consumed an amount equal to 23% of the GDP of the nation.[[114]](#cite_note-114) A number of [government ministries](/wiki/Council_of_Ministers_(Afghanistan)) are believed to be rife with corruption, and while President Karzai vowed to tackle the problem in late 2009 by stating that "individuals who are involved in corruption will have no place in the government",[[115]](#cite_note-115) top government officials were stealing and misusing hundreds of millions of dollars through the [Kabul Bank](/wiki/Kabul_Bank). According to [Transparency International's](/wiki/Transparency_International) 2014 corruption perceptions index results, Afghanistan was ranked as the fourth most corrupt country in the world.[[116]](#cite_note-116)

### Elections and parties[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|From left to right:](/wiki/File:Secretary_Kerry_meets_Abdullah_and_Ghani_2014.jpg) [Abdullah Abdullah](/wiki/Abdullah_Abdullah), [John Kerry](/wiki/John_Kerry) and [Ashraf Ghani](/wiki/Ashraf_Ghani) during the [2014 presidential election](/wiki/Afghan_presidential_election,_2014)

The [2004 Afghan presidential election](/wiki/Afghan_presidential_election,_2004) was relatively peaceful, in which Hamid Karzai won in the first round with 55.4% of the votes. However, the [2009 presidential election](/wiki/Afghan_presidential_election,_2009) was characterized by lack of security, low voter turnout, and widespread electoral fraud.[[117]](#cite_note-117) The vote, along with elections for 420 [provincial council](/wiki/Provinces_of_Afghanistan) seats, took place in August 2009, but remained unresolved during a lengthy period of vote counting and fraud investigation.

Two months later, under international pressure, a second round run-off vote between Karzai and remaining challenger [Abdullah](/wiki/Abdullah_Abdullah) was announced, but a few days later Abdullah announced that he would not participate in the 7 November run-off because his demands for changes in the electoral commission had not been met. The next day, officials of the election commission cancelled the run-off and declared Hamid Karzai as President for another five-year term.[[117]](#cite_note-117) In the [2005 parliamentary election](/wiki/Afghan_parliamentary_election,_2005), among the elected officials were former mujahideen, [Islamic fundamentalists](/wiki/Islamic_fundamentalists), warlords, communists, [reformists](/wiki/Reformists), and several Taliban associates.[[118]](#cite_note-118) In the same period, Afghanistan reached to the 30th highest nation in terms of female representation in parliament.[[119]](#cite_note-119) The last [parliamentary election](/wiki/Afghan_parliamentary_election,_2010) was held in September 2010, but due to disputes and investigation of fraud, the swearing-in ceremony took place in late January 2011. The [2014 presidential election](/wiki/Afghan_presidential_election,_2014) ended with Ashraf Ghani winning by 56.44% votes.

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Afghanistan is administratively divided into 34 provinces ([*wilayats*](/wiki/Wilayah)), with each province having its own capital and a provincial administration. The provinces are further divided into about 398 smaller provincial districts, each of which normally covers a city or a number of villages. Each district is represented by a district governor.

The [provincial governors](/wiki/List_of_current_governors_of_Afghanistan) are appointed by the [President of Afghanistan](/wiki/President_of_Afghanistan) and the district governors are selected by the provincial governors. The provincial governors are representatives of the central government in Kabul and are responsible for all administrative and formal issues within their provinces. There are also provincial councils that are elected through direct and general elections for a period of four years.[[120]](#cite_note-120) The functions of provincial councils are to take part in provincial development planning and to participate in the monitoring and appraisal of other provincial governance institutions.

According to article 140 of the constitution and the presidential decree on electoral law, mayors of cities should be elected through free and direct elections for a four-year term. However, due to huge election costs, mayoral and municipal elections have never been held. Instead, mayors have been appointed by the government. In the capital city of Kabul, the mayor is appointed by the President of Afghanistan.

The following is a list of all the 34 provinces in alphabetical order:

[thumb|350px|Afghanistan is divided into](/wiki/File:Afghanistan_provinces_numbered.png) [34 provinces](/wiki/Provinces_of_Afghanistan), and every province is further divided into a [number of districts](/wiki/Districts_of_Afghanistan)

[Template:Col-begin](/wiki/Template:Col-begin)

1. [Badakhshan](/wiki/Badakhshan_Province)
2. [Badghis](/wiki/Badghis_Province)
3. [Baghlan](/wiki/Baghlan_Province)
4. [Balkh](/wiki/Balkh_Province)
5. [Bamyan](/wiki/Bamyan_Province)
6. [Daykundi](/wiki/Daykundi_Province)
7. [Farah](/wiki/Farah_Province)
8. [Faryab](/wiki/Faryab_Province)
9. [Ghazni](/wiki/Ghazni_Province)
10. [Ghor](/wiki/Ghor_Province)
11. [Helmand](/wiki/Helmand_Province)
12. [Herat](/wiki/Herat_Province)
13. [Jowzjan](/wiki/Jowzjan_Province)
14. [Kabul](/wiki/Kabul_Province)
15. [Kandahar](/wiki/Kandahar_Province)
16. [Kapisa](/wiki/Kapisa_Province)
17. [Khost](/wiki/Khost_Province)
18. [Kunar](/wiki/Kunar_Province)
19. [Kunduz](/wiki/Kunduz_Province)
20. [Laghman](/wiki/Laghman_Province)
21. [Logar](/wiki/Logar_Province)
22. [Nangarhar](/wiki/Nangarhar_Province)
23. [Nimruz](/wiki/Nimruz_Province)
24. [Nuristan](/wiki/Nuristan_Province)
25. [Oruzgan](/wiki/Oruzgan_Province)
26. [Paktia](/wiki/Paktia_Province)
27. [Paktika](/wiki/Paktika_Province)
28. [Panjshir](/wiki/Panjshir_Province)
29. [Parwan](/wiki/Parwan_Province)
30. [Samangan](/wiki/Samangan_Province)
31. [Sar-e Pol](/wiki/Sar-e_Pol_Province)
32. [Takhar](/wiki/Takhar_Province)
33. [Wardak](/wiki/Wardak_Province)
34. [Zabul](/wiki/Zabul_Province)

[Template:Col-end](/wiki/Template:Col-end)

### Foreign relations and military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Soldiers of the](/wiki/File:Afghan_soldiers.jpg) [Afghan National Army](/wiki/Afghan_National_Army), including the [ANA Commando Battalion](/wiki/ANA_Commando_Battalion) standing in the front The [Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs](/wiki/Ministry_of_Foreign_Affairs_(Afghanistan)) is in charge of maintaining the [foreign relations of Afghanistan](/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Afghanistan). The state has been a member of the United Nations since 1946. It enjoys strong economic relations with a number of [NATO](/wiki/NATO) and allied states, particularly the [United States](/wiki/Afghanistan–United_States_relations), [United Kingdom](/wiki/Afghanistan–United_Kingdom_relations), [Germany](/wiki/Afghanistan–Germany_relations) and [Turkey](/wiki/Afghanistan–Turkey_relations). In 2012, the United States designated Afghanistan as a [major non-NATO ally](/wiki/Major_non-NATO_ally) and created the [U.S.–Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement](/wiki/U.S.–Afghanistan_Strategic_Partnership_Agreement). Afghanistan also has friendly diplomatic relations with neighboring [Pakistan](/wiki/Afghanistan–Pakistan_relations), [Iran](/wiki/Afghanistan–Iran_relations), [Turkmenistan](/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Turkmenistan#Afghanistan), [Uzbekistan](/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Uzbekistan), [Tajikistan](/wiki/Afghanistan–Tajikistan_relations), and [China](/wiki/Afghanistan–China_relations), and with regional states such as [India](/wiki/Afghanistan–India_relations), [Bangladesh](/wiki/Afghanistan–Bangladesh_relations), [Nepal](/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Nepal), [Kazakhstan](/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_Kazakhstan), [Russia](/wiki/Afghanistan–Russia_relations), the [UAE](/wiki/Afghanistan–United_Arab_Emirates_relations), Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, [Japan](/wiki/Afghanistan–Japan_relations), and [South Korea](/wiki/Afghanistan–South_Korea_relations). It continues to develop diplomatic relations with other countries around the world.

[United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan](/wiki/United_Nations_Assistance_Mission_in_Afghanistan) (UNAMA) was established in 2002 under [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1401](/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council_Resolution_1401) in order to help the country recover from decades of war. Today, a number of NATO member states deploy about 38,000 troops in Afghanistan as part of the [International Security Assistance Force](/wiki/International_Security_Assistance_Force) (ISAF).[[121]](#cite_note-121) Its main purpose is to [train](/wiki/NATO_Training_Mission-Afghanistan) the [Afghan National Security Forces](/wiki/Afghan_National_Security_Forces) (ANSF). The [Afghan Armed Forces](/wiki/Afghan_Armed_Forces) are under the [Ministry of Defense](/wiki/Ministry_of_Defense_(Afghanistan)), which includes the [Afghan National Army](/wiki/Afghan_National_Army) (ANA) and the [Afghan Air Force](/wiki/Afghan_Air_Force) (AAF). The ANA is divided into 7 major [Corps](/wiki/Corps), with the [201st Selab ("Flood")](/wiki/201st_Corps_(Afghanistan)) in Kabul followed by the 203rd in Gardez, [205th Atul ("Hero")](/wiki/205th_Corps) in Kandahar, 207th in [Herat](/wiki/Herat), 209th in [Mazar-i-Sharif](/wiki/Mazar-i-Sharif), and the 215th in [Lashkar Gah](/wiki/Lashkar_Gah). The ANA also has a [commando brigade](/wiki/ANA_Commando_Brigade), which was established in 2007. The [Afghan Defense University](/wiki/Afghan_Defense_University) (ADU) houses various educational establishments for the Afghan Armed Forces, including the [National Military Academy of Afghanistan](/wiki/National_Military_Academy_of_Afghanistan).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Law enforcement[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|](/wiki/File:ANP_trucks_in_Kunar.jpg)[Afghan National Police](/wiki/Afghan_National_Police) (ANP) in [Kunar Province](/wiki/Kunar_Province) The [National Directorate of Security](/wiki/National_Directorate_of_Security) (NDS) is the nation's domestic [intelligence agency](/wiki/Intelligence_agency), which operates similar to that of the [United States Department of Homeland Security](/wiki/United_States_Department_of_Homeland_Security) (DHS) and has between 15,000 and 30,000 employees. The nation also has about 126,000 national police officers, with plans to recruit more so that the total number can reach 160,000.[[122]](#cite_note-122) The [Afghan National Police](/wiki/Afghan_National_Police) (ANP) is under the [Ministry of the Interior](/wiki/Ministry_of_the_Interior_(Afghanistan)) and serves as a single [law enforcement agency](/wiki/Law_enforcement_agency) all across the country. The [Afghan National Civil Order Police](/wiki/Afghan_National_Civil_Order_Police) is the main branch of the ANP, which is divided into five Brigades, each commanded by a Brigadier General. These brigades are stationed in Kabul, [Gardez](/wiki/Gardez), [Kandahar](/wiki/Kandahar), [Herat](/wiki/Herat), and [Mazar-i-Sharif](/wiki/Mazar-i-Sharif). Every province has an appointed provincial [Chief of Police](/wiki/Chief_of_Police) who is responsible for [law enforcement](/wiki/Law_enforcement_in_Afghanistan) throughout the province.

The police receive most of their training from Western forces under the [NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan](/wiki/NATO_Training_Mission-Afghanistan). According to a 2009 news report, a large proportion of police officers were illiterate and accused of demanding bribes.[[123]](#cite_note-123) Jack Kem, deputy to the commander of NATO Training Mission Afghanistan and Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan, stated that the literacy rate in the ANP would rise to over 50% by January 2012. What began as a voluntary literacy program became mandatory for basic police training in early 2011.[[122]](#cite_note-122) Approximately 17% of them tested positive for illegal drug use. In 2009, President Karzai created two anti-corruption units within the Interior Ministry.[[124]](#cite_note-124) Former Interior Minister [Hanif Atmar](/wiki/Hanif_Atmar) said that security officials from the US ([FBI](/wiki/FBI)), Britain ([Scotland Yard](/wiki/Scotland_Yard)), and the European Union will train prosecutors in the unit.

All parts of Afghanistan are considered dangerous due to militant activities. Hundreds of Afghan police are [killed](/wiki/List_of_Afghan_security_forces_fatality_reports_in_Afghanistan) in the line of duty each year. Kidnapping and robberies are also reported. The [Afghan Border Police](/wiki/Afghan_Border_Police) (ABP) are responsible for protecting the nation's airports and borders, especially the disputed [Durand Line](/wiki/Durand_Line) border, which is often used by members of criminal organizations and terrorists for their illegal activities. A report in 2011 suggested that up to 3 million people were involved in the illegal drug business in Afghanistan. Attacks on government employees may be ordered by powerful mafia groups who reside inside and outside the country. Drugs from Afghanistan are exported to neighboring countries and then to other countries. The [Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics](/wiki/Ministry_of_Counter_Narcotics_(Afghanistan)) is tasked to deal with these issues by bringing to justice major drug traffickers.[[125]](#cite_note-125)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Workers processing](/wiki/File:Afghan_pomegranate_processing.jpg) [pomegranates](/wiki/Pomegranate_production_in_Afghanistan) (*anaar*), which Afghanistan is famous for in Asia [thumb|Afghan women at a textile factory in Kabul](/wiki/File:Afghan_women_at_a_textile_factory_in_Kabul.jpg) Afghanistan is an impoverished [least developed country](/wiki/Least_developed_country), one of the world's poorest because of decades of war and lack of foreign investment. [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), the nation's GDP stands at about $60.58 billion with an exchange rate of $20.31 billion, and the [GDP per capita](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)_per_capita) is $1,900. The country's exports totaled $2.7 billion in 2012. Its unemployment rate was reported in 2008 at about 35%.[[1]](#cite_note-1) According to a 2009 report, about 42% of the population lives on less than $1 a day.[[126]](#cite_note-126) The nation has less than $1.5 billion in [external debt](/wiki/External_debt).[[1]](#cite_note-1) The Afghan economy has been growing at about 10% per year in the last decade, which is due to the infusion of over $50 billion in international aid and remittances from Afghan expats.[[1]](#cite_note-1) It is also due to improvements made to the [transportation system](/wiki/Transport_in_Afghanistan) and agricultural production, which is the backbone of the nation's economy.[[127]](#cite_note-127) The country is known for producing some of the finest [pomegranates](/wiki/Pomegranate_production_in_Afghanistan), grapes, apricots, melons, and several other fresh and dry fruits, including nuts.[[128]](#cite_note-128) Many sources indicate that as much as 11% or more of Afghanistan's economy is derived from the cultivation and sale of [opium](/wiki/Opium), and Afghanistan is widely considered the world's largest producer of opium despite Afghan government and international efforts to eradicate the crop.[[129]](#cite_note-129)