

AFGHĀNISTĀN

Capital: Kábul

Population: 10–12m. (1988)

GNP per capita: US\$250 (1985)

Jamhuria Afghanistan

HISTORY. A military *coup* on 17 July 1973 overthrew the monarchy of King Záhir Sháh. The *coup* was led by the King's cousin and brother-in-law Mohammad Daoud who declared a Republic. King Záhir abdicated on 24 Aug. 1973. President Daoud was killed in a military *coup* in April 1978 which led to the establishment of a pro-Soviet government of the People's Democratic Party of Afghānistān (PDPA).

AREA AND POPULATION. Afghānistān is bounded north by the USSR, east and south by Pakistan and west by Iran.

The area is 251,773 sq. miles (652,090 sq. km). Population, according to the (1979) census, is 15,551,358, of which some 2.5m. are nomadic tribes. Estimate (1988) 10–12m. Approximately 3m. Afghans have sought refuge in Pakistan, over 1m. in Iran and several hundred thousand have been killed since 1979. Infant mortality rates are as high as 200 per 1,000 live births in some areas. The population of Kábul is over 2m. There are no current reliable population figures for other cities and major towns.

Census (1979), Kábul 913,164; Kandahár, 178,409; Herát, 140,323; Mazár-i-Sharif, 103,372; Jalálábád, 53,915; Kunduz, 53,251; Baghlan, 39,228; Maimana, 38,251; Pul-i-Khumri, 31,101; Ghazni, 30,425; Charikar, 22,424; Shiberghan, 18,955; Gardez, 9,550; Faizabad, 9,098; Qala-i-nau, 5,340; Uiback, 4,938; Meterlam, 3,987; Cheghcherán, 2,974.

The main ethnic group are the Pathans. Other ethnic groups include the Tajiks, the Hazaras, the Turkomans and the Uzbeks.

CLIMATE. The climate is arid, with a big annual range of temperature and very little rain, apart from the period Jan. to April. Winters are very cold, with considerable snowfall, which may last the year round on mountain summits. Kábul. Jan. 27°F (–2.8°C), July 76°F (24.4°C). Annual rainfall 13" (338 mm).

CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT. In Dec. 1979 Soviet troops invaded Afghānistān and Hafizullah Amin was deposed and replaced by Babrak Karmal. The pretext for the airlift of combat troops to Kábul was the Treaty of Friendship signed in Dec. 1978 between USSR and Afghānistān. In May 1986 Karmal was replaced as General Secretary of the PDPA by Dr Sayid Mohammed Najibullah who was elected President in Sept. 1987 at a special session of the Revolutionary Council. In early 1988 there were some 115,000 Soviet troops in Afghānistān but under the Geneva accords signed in April 1988 all USSR troops were withdrawn by 15 Feb. 1989.

A new Constitution was approved in Nov. 1987. The PDPA remains the leading political force in the country. It is governed by a Central Committee (112 full members and 63 alternate members), which elects a Political Bureau, currently of 14 full, and 4 alternate, members to decide policy. At that time, the name of the country was changed from the Democratic Republic of Afghānistān to the Republic of Afghānistān.

A State of Emergency was declared on 19 Feb. 1989 and a Military Council headed by President Najibullah was announced. On 20 Feb. the Prime Minister Dr Mohammed Hasan Sharq resigned when the 20-man Supreme Military Council for the Defence of the Homeland took over full control of economic, political and military policy.

On 23 Feb. 1989 Afghán rebels, meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan, elected Sibghatullah Mojaddidi as President of an interim government in exile.

National flag: Three equal horizontal stripes of red, black and green, with the national arms in the canton.

The official languages are Pushtu and Dari (Persian).

Local Government: There are 31 provinces each administered by an appointed governor.

DEFENCE. Conscription is currently for a period of 2 years, followed soon after by another period of 2 years for non-graduates.

Army. The Army is organized in 3 armoured and 12 infantry divisions, 1 mechanized infantry brigade, 1 artillery brigade, 2 mountain infantry and 1 commando brigades. Equipment includes 50 T-34, 300 T-54/-55 and 100 T-62 battle tanks. Strength was (1989) about 50,000, but most units of the Army, effectively under Soviet control, are well below strength, largely as a result of desertions.

Air Force. The Air Force, which is Russian-equipped, has about 180 combat aircraft and 5,000 officers and men. Nominal strength comprises 3 squadrons of Su-7 and Su-20 attack aircraft, 3 squadrons of MiG-21 interceptors (about 40 aircraft), 3 squadrons of MiG-17s and 3 squadrons of MiG-23s, a helicopter attack force of at least 30 Mi-24s, a transport wing with 6-8 An-12s, 12 twin-turboprop An-26s, about 10 piston-engined An-2s, 50 Mi-8 and 10 Mi-4 helicopters and 2 turboprop Il-18s, and Yak-18, Aero L-39 and MiG-15UTI trainers. The main fighter station is Bagram, with facilities for the largest jet transports and bombers. There is a fighter-bomber station at Shindand, a training station at Mazár-i-Sharif and an air academy at Sherpur. Large numbers of SA-2 and SA-3 surface-to-air missiles are operational in Afghánistán. The Soviet Union is withdrawing its aviation units operated in Afghánistán but is leaving aircraft behind for the national Air Force.

Police and Militia. In addition to the Army and Air Force there are a number of paramilitary units, including a 50,000-strong gendarmerie, secret police and 'Defence of the Revolution' forces.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Membership. Afghánistán is a member of UN and of the Colombo Plan.

ECONOMY

Planning. A 5-year plan was adopted in 1986 to cover period 1986-1991. Emphasis is on reconstruction of agriculture and irrigation systems as well as exploitation of natural gas resources.

Budget. In 1983-84 the budget envisaged expenditure of Af\$. 49,941m. and revenue of Af\$. 34,120m.

Currency. The monetary system is on the silver standard. The unit is the *afgháni*, weighing 10 grammes of silver 0.900 fine, which is subdivided into 100 *puls*. Rates of exchange are fixed (1989) Af\$. 99.25 = £1; Af\$. 57.67 = US\$1; unofficial rates are: Af\$. 345 = £1; Af\$. 225 = US\$1.

Banking. The Afghán State Bank (*Da Afghánistán Bank*) is the largest of the 3 main banks and also undertakes the functions of a central bank, holding the exclusive right of note issue. Total assets of the 3 main banks were: Da Afghánistán Bânk (1981), Af\$. 22,839m.; Pashtany Tejaraty Bânk (1981), Af\$. 6,997m.; Bânk-i-Milli (1981), Af\$. 3,087m.

Weights and Measures. Weights and measures used in Kâbul are: Weights: 1 *khurd* = 0.244 lb.; 1 *pao* = 0.974 lb.; 1 *charak* = 3.896 lb.; 1 *sere* = 16 lb.; 1 *kharwâr* = 1,280 lb. or 16 maunds of 80 lb. each. Long measure: 1 yard or *gaz* = 40 in. The metric system is in increasingly common use. Square measures: 1 *jarib* = 60 × 60

kábuli yd or $\frac{1}{2}$ acre; 1 *kulbá* = 40 jaribs (area in which 2½ kharwárs of seed can be sown); 1 jarib yd = 29 in. Local weights and measures are in use in the provinces.

ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Electricity. Hydro-electric plants have been constructed at Sarobi, Nangarhár, Naghlu, Mahipár, Pul-i-Khumri and Kandahár. Production (1986) 1,390m. kwh. Supply 220 volts; 50 Hz.

Natural gas. Production (1985) 2,400m. cu. metres. Natural gas is found in northern Afghánistán around Shiberghan and Sar-i-Pol; over 2,000m. cu. metres, about 95% of production, is piped to the USSR annually.

Minerals. Mineral resources are scattered and little developed. Coal is mined at Karkar in Pul-i-Khumri, Ishpushta near Doshi, north of Kábul and Dar-i-Suf south of Mazár (total production, 1983–84, 145,300 tonnes). Rich, but as yet unexploited, deposits of iron ore exist in the Hajigak hills about 100 miles west of Kábul; beryllium has been found in the Kunar valley and barite in Bamian province. Other deposits include gold; silver (now unexploited, in the Panjshir valley); lapis lazuli (in the Panjshir valley and Badakhshán); asbestos; mica; sulphur (near Maimana); chrome (in the Logar valley and near Herát); and copper (in the north).

Agriculture. Although the greater part of Afghánistán is more or less mountainous and a good deal of the country is too dry and rocky for successful cultivation, there are many fertile plains and valleys, which, with the assistance of irrigation from small rivers or wells, yield very satisfactory crops of fruit, vegetables and cereals. It is estimated that there are 14m. hectares of cultivable land in the country, of which only 6% of the total land was being cultivated in 1982–83 (5.34m. hectares of this being irrigated land). Before 1979 Afghánistán was virtually self-supporting in foodstuffs but in 1988 it was estimated that 33% of the land had been destroyed by war.

The castor-oil plant, madder and the asafætida plant abound.

Fruit forms a staple food (with bread) of many people throughout the year, both in the fresh and preserved state, and in the latter condition is exported in great quantities. The fat-tailed sheep furnish the principal meat diet, and the grease of the tail is a substitute for butter. Wool and skins provide material for warm apparel and one of the more important articles of export. Persian lambskins (*Karakuls*) are one of the chief exports.

Production, 1988, in 1,000 tonnes: Wheat, 2,035; barley, 274; maize, 587; rice, 343.

Livestock (1988): Cattle, 2.7m.; horses, donkeys and mules (1986), 1.69m.; sheep, 19m.; goats (1986), 3m.; chickens, 5.9m.

INDUSTRY AND TRADE

Industry. At Kábul there are factories for the manufacture of cotton and woollen textiles, leather, boots, marble-ware, furniture, glass, bicycles, prefabricated houses and plastics. A large machine shop has been constructed and equipped by the USSR, with a capability of manufacturing motor spares. There is a wool factory and there are several cotton-ginning plants; a small cotton factory at Jabal-us-Seráj and a larger one at Pul-i-Khumri; a cotton-seed oil extraction plant at Lashkargah; a cotton textile factory at Gulbahar, and a cotton plant at Balkh.

An ordnance factory manufactures arms and ammunition, boots and clothing, etc. for the Army. There is a beet sugar plant at Baghlan (equipped with Soviet machinery) and a fruit-canning factory in Kandahár.

Industries include cement, coalmining, cotton textiles, small vehicle assembly plants, fruit canning, carpet making, leather tanning, footwear manufacture, sugar manufacture, preparation of hides and skins, and building. Most of these are relatively small and, with the exception of hides and skins, carpets and fruits, do not meet domestic requirements.

Commerce. Trade is supervised by the Government through the Ministries of Commerce and Finance and the Da Afghánistán Bánk. The Association of Afghán

Chambers of Commerce works in close liaison with the Ministry of Commerce. The Government monopoly controls the import of petrol and oil, sugar, cigarettes and tobacco, motor vehicles and consignment goods from bilateral trading countries. The principal surface routes for imports to Afghánistán are *via* the Soviet rail system and the border posts at Torghundi and Hairatan; and from Karachi *via* the border post at Torkham.

In the year ended March 1985 Afghán imports totalled US\$964.7m. and exports US\$670.5m. Main export commodities were karakul skins (US\$13.5m.), raw cotton (US\$12.5m.), dried fruit and nuts (US\$141m.), fresh fruit (US\$53.3m.) and natural gas (US\$302.4m.). Main items imported were petroleum products (US\$164m.), textiles (US\$122.5m.). Over 50% of trade is with the USSR.

Total trade between Afghánistán and UK (in £1,000 sterling, British Department of Trade returns):

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Imports to UK	20,776	52,061	11,913	11,289	11,501
Exports and re-exports from UK	11,892	13,882	11,444	10,735	12,109

Tourism. Owing to internal political instability there has been negligible tourism since 1979.

COMMUNICATIONS

Roads. There were in 1978 over 2,812 km of asphalted road and 15,940 km of other roads. The Americans asphalted the Kandahár-Chaman and Kábul-Torkham roads. The Russians constructed a road and tunnel through the Salang pass (over 11,000 ft) which was opened in Sept. 1964 and cut 120 miles off the old road from Kábul to the north; they continued this road to Kunduz and Sherkhan Bandar (Qizil Qala) on the Oxus. In addition, the Americans in 1966 completed the road between Kábul and Kandahár and the Russians constructed a concrete road between Kandahár and Herát. In 1968 the Americans completed an asphalt road from Herát to the Iranian frontier at Islam Qala. With Soviet assistance a metalled road from Pul-i-Khumri to Mazár-i-Sharif was completed in 1969 and Mazár-i-Sharif to Shiberghán in 1971. A Soviet-built road and rail bridge across the Oxus (Amu Darya) River was opened in May 1982. There are about 90,000 cars and commercial vehicles registered in Kábul. All roads, particularly outside the towns, are in a very poor state of repair as a result of the war.

Railways. There are no railways in the country, but the Oxus bridge opened in 1982, brought Soviet Railways' track into the country. A 200 km line of 1,520 mm gauge has been authorized from Termez to Pul-i-Khumri.

Aviation. On 29 June 1956 Afghánistán signed an agreement with the USA for the development of civil aviation, including the construction of the international airport at Kandahár, comprising a loan of \$5m. and a grant of \$9.56m. Kábul airport has been expanded with Russian assistance. New runways at Kábul and Kandahár airports have been completed. Provincial all-weather airports have been constructed at Herát, Kunduz, Jalálábád and Mazár-i-Sharif.

Bakhtar Afghan Airlines (the domestic national airline) began operations on 8 Feb. 1968 and regularly serves the main internal airfields, which, from 1985 was merged with Ariana Afghan Airlines (the national airline) operating regular services to New Delhi, Prague, Tashkent and Moscow.

Shipping. There are practically no navigable rivers in Afghánistán, and timber is the only article of commerce conveyed by water, floated down the Kunar and Kábul rivers from Chitral on rafts. A port has been built at Qizil Qala on the Oxus; barge traffic is increasing on the Oxus. Three river ports on the Amu Darya have been built at Sherkhan Bandar, Tashguzar and Hairatan, linked by road to Kábul.

Post and Broadcasting. Telephones, installed in most of the large towns, numbered 31,200 in 1978. There is telegraphic communication between all the larger towns and with other parts of the world. Kábul Radio broadcasts in Pushtu, Persian, Urdu, English, French, Russian and German. The first TV colour transmissions in Kábul began in mid-1978. An agreement was signed in 1981 under which the

USSR undertook to assist with the development of communications. In 1978 there were 823,000 radio receivers and in 1982 12,000 television receivers.

Newspapers. In 1983 there were 3 daily newspapers with a circulation of 67,000.

JUSTICE, RELIGION, EDUCATION AND WELFARE

Justice. A Supreme Court was established in June 1978. If no provision exists in the Constitution or in the general laws of the State, the courts follow the Hanafi jurisprudence of Islamic law.

Religion. The predominant religion is Islam, mostly of the Sunni sect, though there is a minority of Shiah Moslems.

Education. There are elementary schools throughout the country, but secondary schools exist only in Kábul and provincial capitals. Both elementary and secondary education are free. In 1982 there were 1.1 m. pupils (35,364 teachers) in primary education and 124,000 pupils (6,170 teachers) in secondary education. There are 3 teacher-training institutions in Kábul and 11 elsewhere; UNESCO is supporting an expansion programme. Technical, art, commercial and medical schools exist for higher education. Kábul University was founded in 1932 and has 9 faculties (medicine, science, agriculture, engineering, law and political science, letters, economics, theology, pharmacology). The University of Nangarhar in Jalálábád was founded in 1963. A Polytechnic in Kábul was completed in 1968. In 1982 there were 13,115 students in higher education, 4,427 in teacher-training schools and 1,230 in technical schools.

Health. In 1982 there were 1,215 doctors and 6,875 hospital beds. Two-thirds of the doctors and half the beds were in Kábul.

DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES

Of Afghánistán in Great Britain (31 Prince's Gate, London, SW7 1QQ)

Chargé d'Affaires: Ahmad Sarwar.

Of Great Britain in Afghánistán (Karte Parwan, Kábul)

Chargé d'Affaires: I. W. Mackley, CMG.

Of Afghánistán in the USA (2341 Wyoming Ave., NW, Washington, D.C., 20008)

Chargé d'Affaires: Alishah Masood.

Of the USA in Afghánistán (Wazir Akbar Khan Mina, Kábul)

Chargé d'Affaires: J. D. Glassman.

Of Afghánistán to the United Nations

Ambassador: Shah Mohd Dost.

Further Reading

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