

Geography and History of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Region

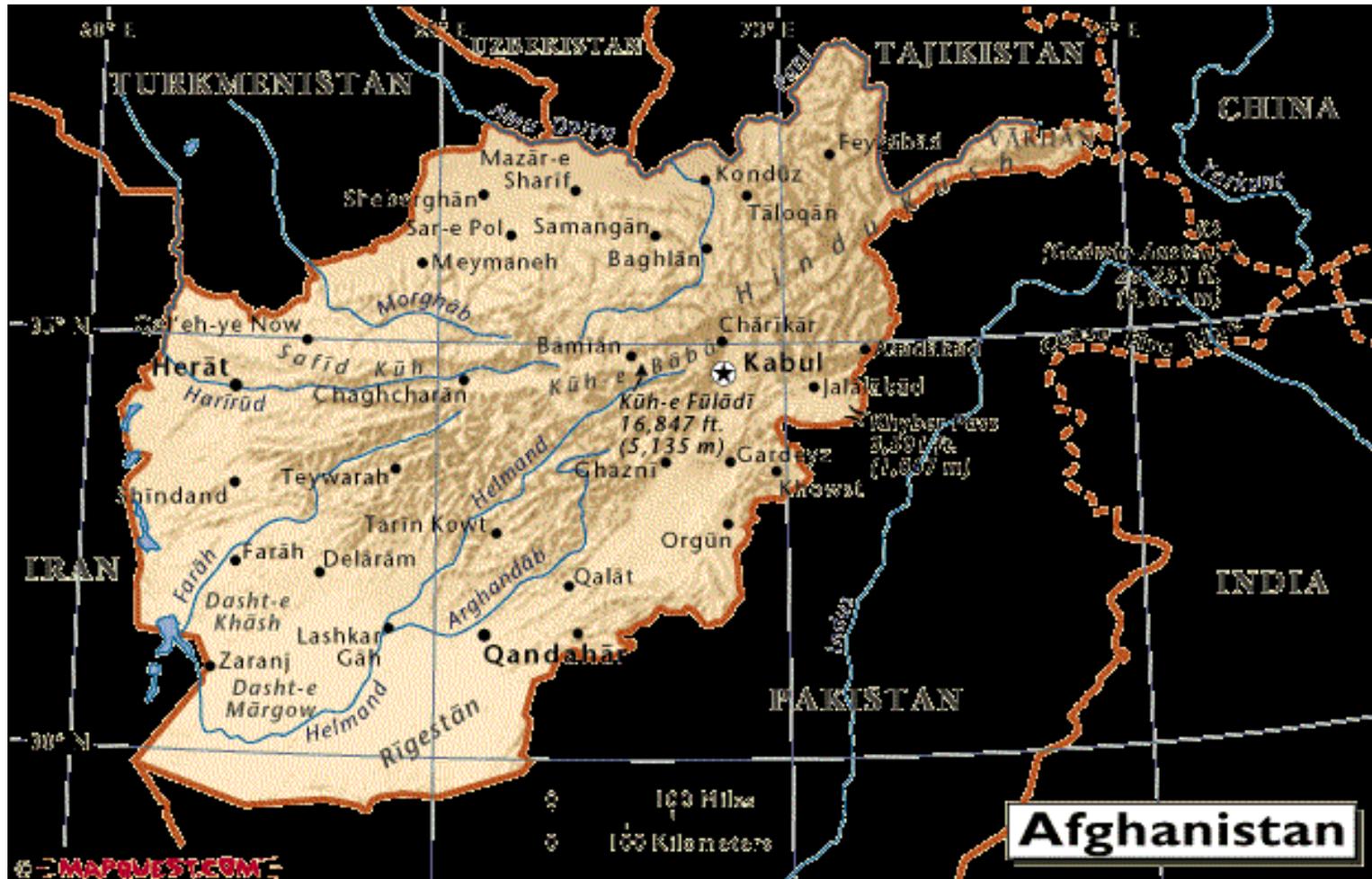
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Themes from Afghanistan's History

- History of foreign invasion
 - Contrary to popular perception, history of insurgency is relatively new
- Leadership
 - Leadership historically limited to elite class, but increasing competition over time
 - How do leaders gain legitimacy?
- Center-periphery relations in Afghanistan
- Afghanistan's relationship with Pakistan

Topographical Map (Also Neighbors)



Dominant Geographical Features

- Landlocked
- Mountains divide Afghanistan
- Four major river systems: Amu Darya, Helmand, Hari, and Kabul.
 - Blue lines do not mean year-round rivers. Many barely trickle outside of flood stages.
 - None reach the ocean.
- Strategic location: at the crossroads of major trade routes.
- What might you expect from such a country? Would it be powerful or weak?

Afghanistan's Mountains

- Set limits on agriculture through altitude and water available for irrigation
- Ecological diversity
 - Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (2010) :
“You can escape the freezing winter snows and winds of Kabul by taking only a three-hour drive east through the Silk Gorge to Jalalabad, where oranges are being harvested. You can escape the humid summer heat in marshy Kunduz, where temperatures often exceed forty degrees Celsius, by moving to the mountains of Badakhshan.”
- Other consequences
 - Mountain regions sparsely populated
 - Lack of drivable roads: villages cut off from the country by winter snow
 - Some villages, areas out of touch with Afghanistan
 - Mountains still growing: earthquakes

Hindu Kush Mountains

Most important mountain system; eastern peaks reach more than 7,000 meters.

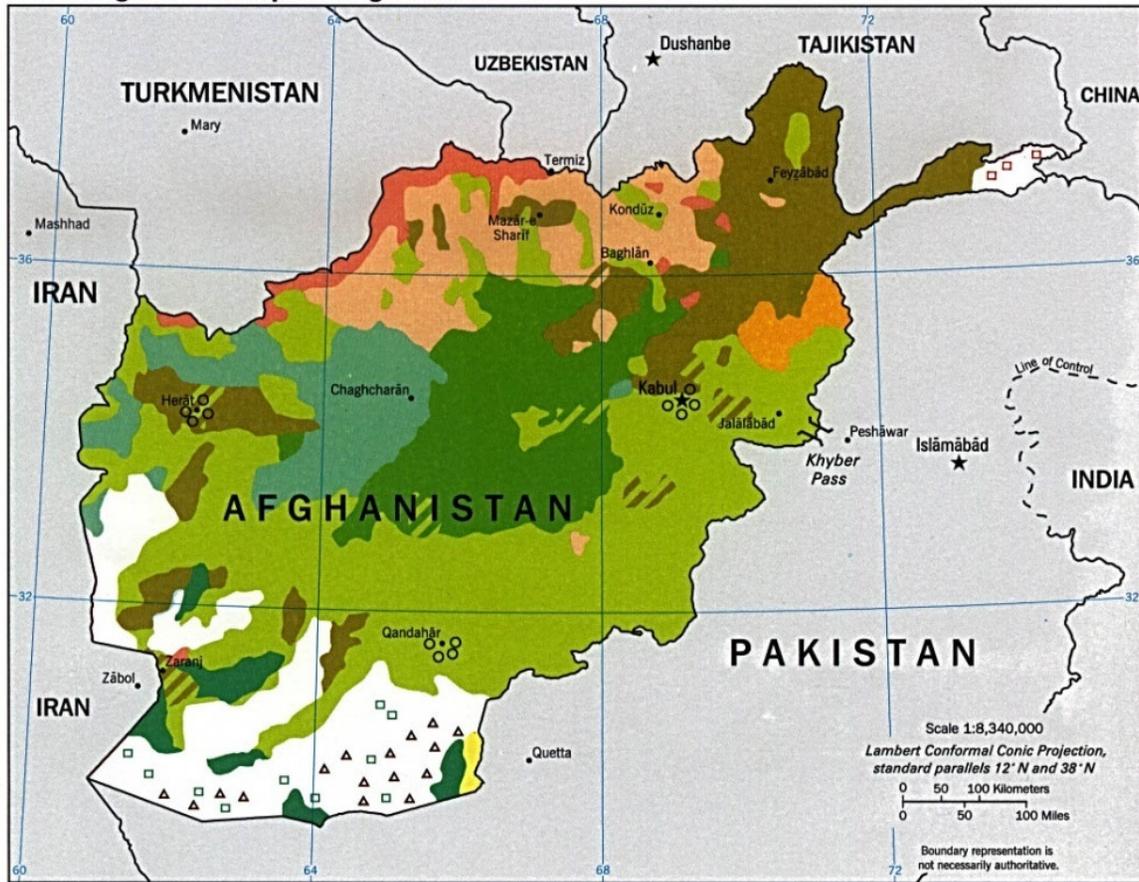
Stretches about 1,000 km laterally.

Strategically important for transit: Kotal-e Salang pass (~4,000 meters) links Kabul to northern Afghanistan. 1964 tunnel reduced travel time between Kabul and the north to a few hours; previously took 3 days.

Roads through Salang and Tang-e Gharu passes played key strategic roles during Afghan-Soviet war; hence have been in poor repair.



Ethnolinguistic Groups in Afghanistan



- Iranian**
- Baloch
 - Aimak
 - Hazara
 - Pashtun
Durrani, Ghilzai
 - Qizilbash
 - Tajik

- Turkic**
- Kirghiz
 - Turkmen
 - Uzbek

- Other**
- Brahui
 - Nuristani
 - Sparsely populated or uninhabited

Afghanistan and the Pashtuns

“Statistics in Afghanistan are validated more through repetition than by any data.”

- Historically, “Afghan” synonymous with “Pashtun”: some non-Pashtuns argue for “Afghani” or “Afghanistani.”
- Pashtun governments assert that Pashtuns are absolute majority; probably around 40%.
 - What was this statistic prior to the Durand line?
- Other major groups: Tajiks (~30%), Hazaras (~15%), Uzbeks and Turkmen (~10%).
- Smaller groups: Nuristanis and Pashai, Baluch, Arabs, Kirghiz, non-Muslims.

History of Foreign Invasion

- Afghanistan has experienced invasions for more than 2300 years.
- Reason: access to places like India, central Asia, control over trade routes.
- Myth: Afghanistan was never conquered.
- Myth: history of insurgency.
- Alexander's campaign: 320 BC.
 - Brutality; but left enduring legacy.



Foreign Invasions of Afghanistan

- Islamic conquest of Afghanistan began 652 AD.
 - Failed to convert mountain tribes: preserved Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Hindu presence.
- 1221 AD: Genghis Khan and Mongol army
 - “The WMD of his time.”
 - Depopulated territory, slaughtered civilians
 - *Ancient city of Balkh*: Before Genghis Khan it had 600,000 inhabitants, prosperous stop on the silk road.
 - After Genghis Khan...
- 1383: Tamerlane begins Afghan conquest.
 - Bloodshed so great that it inspired works like Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine the Great*.

Reviewing Afghanistan's Conquerors

- *Brutality* as a means of keeping order.
- *Little control over periphery*. Premodern rulers found that direct administration of marginal territory was not always necessary or desirable.
 - Trying to control the periphery could *trigger* insurgency. *Example*: Pashtun resistance to Babur's dynasty flared up with attempts to impose direct control.
 - But did you need to control it? Easier to buy off access to passes, or reach political accommodation.

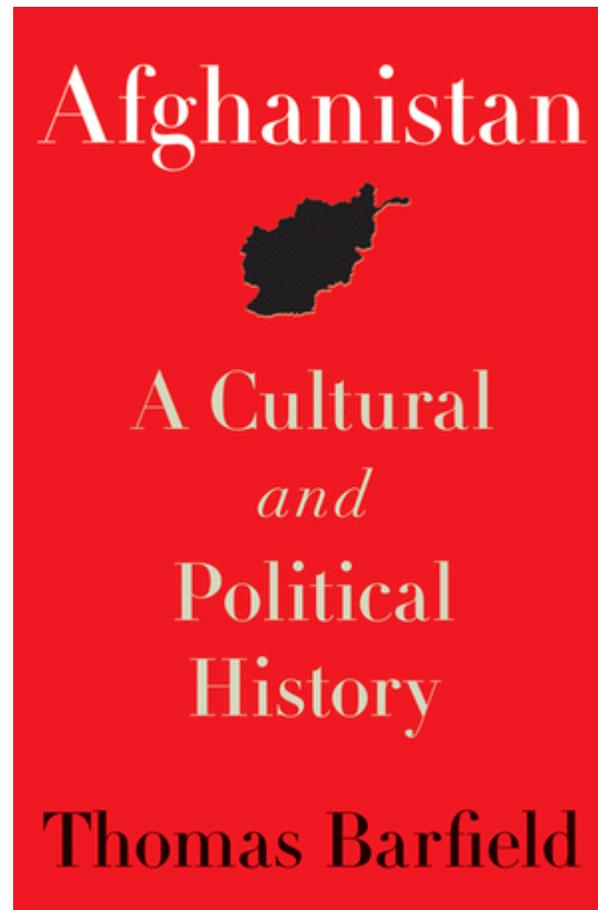
Reviewing Afghanistan's Conquerors

- Turko-Persian rulers saw conquest as having little to do with inhabitants.
 - Inhabitants seen as passive.
 - No concepts of patriotism, resistance, consent.
 - War main ingredient for political success.
- Rule legitimated through religious and economic institutions.
 - Analogue: corporate takeovers.
- Stability because few contestants for power: only certain men from ruling descent groups.



Expanding Political Participation

“The most fruitful way to approach these questions is by examining the changing notions of power and political legitimacy in Afghanistan over a long period to understand how participation in national politics came to encompass an ever-wider circle of people. When the political structure was least open to competition, rulers found it easiest to maintain their legitimacy and authority because threats came from only a limited number of contenders.”



Rise of the Durrani Empire

- Owes its creation to the Safavid, Afsharid empires.
- Safavid empire collapsed in 1722; Nadir Shah Afshar created powerful empire in Safavid model.
 - Assassinated in 1747.
- Ahmad Shah was a leader in Nadir's bodyguard, led cavalry. Returned to Kandahar; chosen by jirga to lead Abdali clan's military.
 - Power came from position as Afshar official commanding old regime's troops.
- Adopted title *Durr-i-Durran* (Pearl of Pearls), origin of Durrani name for clan.



Durrani Empire

During Ahmad Shah's reign (r.1747-1772), the Durrani Empire reached from Pakistan to Iran, and into Central Asia.





"SAVE ME FROM MY FRIENDS!"

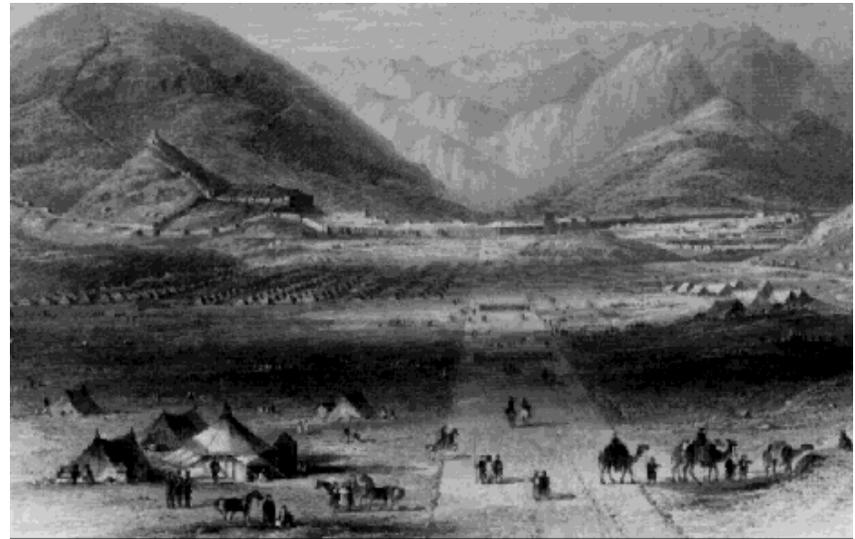
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The Great Game

- “Afghanistan is the cockpit of Asia.” —Lord Curzon
- London had to protect the jewel in its colonial crown, India. Afghanistan becomes a major buffer, as Russian forces entered a treaty with Napoleon.
 - Though France is eclipsed, the struggle continues between Britain and Russia.
- Afghanistan is the buffer caught in the Great Game. This is a case of geography determining history.

First Anglo-Afghan War

- Fought from 1839-1842; to balance Russian influence, Brits wanted to overthrow Dost Muhammad.
- He fled north, returned with Uzbek troops and liaised with already rebellious Tajiks; won a battle north of Kabul.
- What does he do next?



Rules of the Game

- Dost Muhammad surrendered.
- *Different conception of resistance.*
Barfield: “Dost Muhammad could not conceive of popular rebellions as anything more than nuisances to a foe who was overwhelmingly superior in arms.”
- *Rules of game:* Rulers play to preserve possibility of new game.
 - Fleeing to neighboring states or becoming feudatory for expanding empire
 - Tribal submission



Anglo-Afghan War Changes the Rules

- Resistance to British increased
 - Increase in commodity prices due to burden British troops placed on Afghan domestic economy
 - Believing war was won, Brits cut stipends to Ghilzai chiefs. In turn, the Ghilzais revolted.
 - *Ulema* complained that Brits were interfering with their administration of justice in the name of fighting corruption. (Corruption helped provide their income.)
- Revolts against British produced *religious justification, tribal participation*

End of the First Anglo-Afghan War

- British lose Kabul in January 1842, then re-occupy it in September before leaving country for good.
 - Surgeon Brydon
- Dost Muhammad regains power, rules for another 20 years.



When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains,
And the women come out to cut up what remains,
Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains
An' go to your Gawd like a soldier.

—*Kipling*, “The Young British Soldier”

Second Anglo-Afghan War

- Britain invades in 1878, quickly conquers Kabul.
- Message to Afghans from Gen. MacGregor: *“We wish one thing from you, and that is friendship, but whether we get this or not, we will have your obedience, you may chafe as much as you please, but we will be your masters.”*
- Direct foreign rule produces regional revolts by Ghilzai Pashtuns and Kohistani Tajiks, who attack Kabul in Dec. 1879.



Consequence of the Wars

- Though British beat back the attack on Kabul, continued resistance led them to seek Afghan ruler who will respect their interests after they leave.
 - July 1880: Abdur Rahman accepts the amirship on British terms.
- *Military strategy*: Afghans expelled British through use of rural militias; dynastic elite did not control their individual rebellions.
- Dynamics:
 - Defense of Islam further elevated as principle.
 - Afghan nationalism elevated as principle.
 - *Contradiction*. Encouraged armed resistance to foreign invaders, but elite refused to share power after war.

“The Iron Amir”

- Abdur Rahman Khan accepted amirship on British terms (1880).
- Harsh rule.
 - Forced adulterous man to eat his mistress
 - Personally beheaded cleric who issued fatwa condemning his “aid to infidels”
 - Put mullah to death who said Christians were brothers because “people of the book.” Why?
 - By own estimate, killed 100,000 Afghans



Centralization

- “Internal imperialism.”
- Decrease provincial power:
 - Discarded system of provincial autonomy, appointing governors he could remove rather than relatives.
 - Subdivided provinces into smaller units.
- Direct taxation on previously indirectly taxed (or untaxed) tribes, regions.
- Conquest of non-Sunni areas: Hazarajat (1891-93), Kafiristan (1895-96).
 - Kafiristan previously had pagan religious practice.
 - Explicit use of Islam to justify rule.

Abdur Rahman's Economic Legacy

- Concerned that economic, transport development create vulnerability to outside powers.
- *Barfield*: “Such a strategy was like eschewing the acquisition of wealth because it might attract thieves.”
- Foundation for long-term economic stagnation despite rich resource base.
 - Economy remained subsistence based, could not move or export agricultural surplus.

The Durand Line

- Product of the “Great Game”
- Abdur Rahman opposed relinquishing nominal sovereignty over Pashtun tribes, but was forced by economic embargo. Why?
- Created Nov. 12, 1893; ongoing source of tension with Pakistan.



Amanullah's Rule

- Amanullah launches Third Anglo-Afghan war, war of independence. Leads to Afghanistan's recognition as sovereign state by August 1919.
- *Oct. 1928*: proclaims himself "revolutionary ruler."
Reforms: requiring Western suits and hats in government precincts; prohibiting polygamy among officials; secularizing courts; abolishing veil.
- Resulting rebellions, also skyrocketing taxes.



Musahiban Period

- Jan. 1929: Amanullah abdicates after government troops begin defecting to the rebels.
- Amanullah briefly replaced by a Tajik, but Pashtuns rebelled.
- Muhammad Nadir Shah assassinated 1933; son Muhammad Zahir Shah replaces him.

Pakistan's Creation and Pashtunistan

- Pakistan emerged as independent state in Aug. 1947.
- Afghan government makes “Pashtunistan” demand
 - Pashto-speaking tribes in northwestern Pakistan should be able to “opt out” of Pakistan
 - Proposals vary; in early 1950s proposal put forward encompassing half of West Pakistan.



Early Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations

- Several skirmishes
 - *1949-50*: Afghan cross-border raids into NWFP using lashkars.
 - *1955*: Pakistani embassy in Kabul attacked; consulates in Kandahar and Jalalabad sacked.
 - *1960-1961*: Border clashes, raids. Afghan irregulars, army troops dressed as tribesmen reportedly penetrate Pakistani side of Durand Line.
- *September 1961*: Afghanistan and Pakistan sever relations.
- *1963-1973*: Détente. Economic consequences severe for both countries; shah of Iran undertakes mediation and they reach agreement normalizing relations.

Muhammad Zahir Shah

- Became king at 19; relatives ran government for several years.
- Zahir Shah took control in 1963, ushered in democratic reforms, including bicameral legislature and independent judiciary.



Daoud's Coup

- Country stalls
 - Economic, political instability; corruption
 - Zahir seen as out of touch
- Zahir flies to London to treat hemorrhaging in eye; then Italy for vacation.
- Muhammad Daoud Khan (former prime minister) executes coup on July 16, 1973.



Daoud and Pashtunistan

- Daoud was a vigorous advocate of Pashtunistan; almost immediately after seizing power he referred to dispute with Pakistan.
- Broadened demands: placed Baluchs beside Pashtuns as problems in Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship.
 - Supported Pashtun, Baluch nationalist groups: sanctuary, arms, ammunition.
 - Condemns Pakistan's treatment of ethnic minorities in international forums, speaks of "genocide and mass extermination" in UN.
- Rizwan Hussain: "The Afghan government's open support for Pashtun and Baluch nationalists posed the greatest threat to Pakistan's integrity since the secession of East Pakistan."

Pakistan Responds

- Pakistan's military ruthlessly suppresses insurgencies
- "Forward policy" in Afghanistan: assisting Islamist groups vs. secular Daoud regime
 - Strategic, not ideological
 - Reason: Islamists perceived as not backing Kabul in territorial dispute, seen as opposed to Afghan relations with India



The “Sawr Revolution”

- Apr. 27, 1978: Daoud assassinated in “Sawr revolution.”
- Violence between rival factions, including Islamist opponents of regime.
- Oct. 1978: Unveils new Afghan flag, replacing traditional design.
- 1979: Islamist insurgency.
- Soviet Union worried by Hafizullah Amin trying to craft more “balanced” foreign policy. Why?



Soviet Invasion

- USSR invades in Dec. 1979; Red Army sends 120,000 men.
- Decision made by small group in Politburo; general staff opposed.
- Brezhnev: “It’ll be over in three to four weeks.”
- U.S. saw this as an opportunity to give Soviets their own Vietnam.



Early Soviet Success

- Public rationales for invasion
 - Say they were invited; wanted to protect government from Islamist insurgency
 - Also the Brezhnev doctrine: will forcibly intervene to if countries are leaving the Soviet orbit
- Topple government, kill Hafizullah Amin (how does that jibe with “invitation”?)
- Babrak Karmal, an exiled Parcham (more urban faction), installed as president.
 - Unable to unite the Parchamis and Khalqis



The Mujahidin

- Afghan resistance groups split along ethnic and religious lines.
- U.S. (through CIA), Saudi Arabia, Pakistan (through ISI) support insurgent forces against Soviet invasion.
 - Largest U.S. covert aid program since Vietnam War, coordinated through ISI
 - U.S. support (around \$3 billion) matched dollar for dollar by the Saudis.
 - Weapons (stinger missiles), supplies, training
 - Other Saudi mechanisms: *lowering* oil prices. Why?

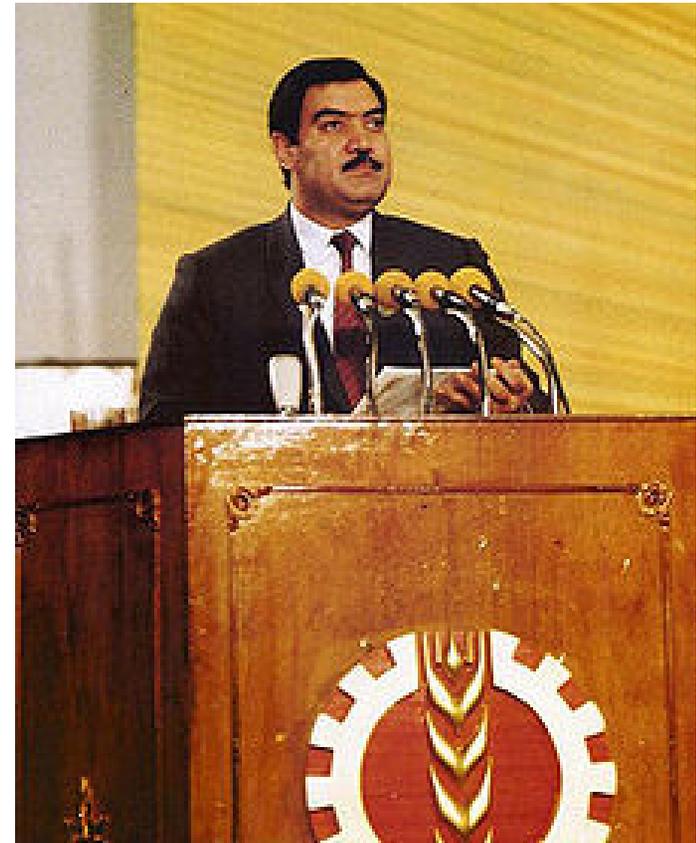


Impact of the Afghan-Soviet War

- Costly for Afghanistan: 1 million Afghans killed, 5 million left country, 3 million internally displaced.
- A new jihadi culture in Afghanistan/Pakistan
 - Education in refugee camps
 - Saudi funding of madrasas
- Pakistan's military and ISI
 - Demographic shift
 - Changes under Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq: religious curriculum and criteria for promotion
 - Connections forged through ISI support of mujahidin

Soviets Prepare to Withdraw

- Babrak Karmal government tried to increase legitimacy:
 - Released prisoners, declared allegiance to Islam, restored green stripe to Afghan flag, declared amnesty, appointed non-Party members to posts
 - Nonetheless, “vast gulf” (CIA) between Karmal regime and population
- 1985: Gorbachev tells Karmal Soviets will withdraw. Karmal “dumbfounded.”
- Replaced by Muhammad Najibullah, Nov. 1986.
- Najibullah attempts national reconciliation.



Potential Longevity of the Najibullah Regime

- Portrayed himself as devout Muslim, Afghan nationalist.
- After Soviet withdrawal, 20% of former mujahidin joined him; 40% agreed to ceasefire. Only 12% were “irreconcilables.”
- Followed proven strategy in Afghanistan, using aid from Soviets to create *patronage networks*.
 - Possibly sustainable.
 - Problem: Soviet Union collapsed.

Al Qaeda's Creation

- Al Qaeda founded in 1988 “to lift the word of God, to make His religion victorious.” Initially focused on the threat that communism posed to the *umma*.
- Iraqi invasion of Kuwait transformative.
 - Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz al Saud rebuffs bin Laden’s offer of an “Islamic army.”
 - Declaration of war against the U.S. in 1996.
- Bin Laden believed that he had destroyed the Soviet Union.
 - Was this correct?
 - What does that tell us about how he would fight the U.S.?



Civil War

- Najibullah “resigns” in 1992, Burhanuddin Rabbani becomes president.
- Only second time since Durrani dynasty that non-Pashtun was in power
 - 1929: Tajik seized power for several months; Rabbani also Tajik
- Religious governance
 - Rabbani studied at Darul-uloom-e-Sharia, Al-Azhar.
 - Restrictions on women.
- Immediate pandemonium
 - Gulbuddin Hekmatyar shells Kabul from the south: “We know that non-military people will be killed; if they are good Muslims, God will reward them as martyred and send them to heaven. If they are bad Muslims, God is punishing them.”
 - Hekmatyar was “prime minister,” shelling the city of “president” Rabbani.

Taliban

- Taliban means “students”
- Led by Mullah Omar
- Founding myths
- Seen by some as the solution to competing factions, criminality



Rise and Rule of the Taliban

- Benefited from ISI support
 - ISI officers deployed to Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad to provide assistance, advice
 - U.S. assessment: ISI “supplying the Taliban forces with munitions, fuel, and food”; training
- Why would the ISI support them?
- Never admitted to UN: only recognized by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, UAE
- Brutal rule
 - Strict, frequently nonsensical version of *sharia*
 - Treatment of women
 - Massacre of Hazaras, 1997
- By 1997, controlled around 90% of Afghanistan.

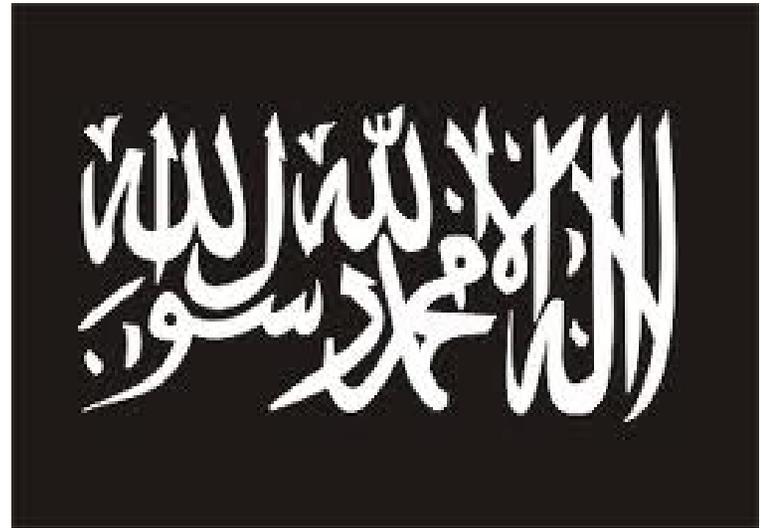
The “Northern Alliance”

- Ahmad Shah Massod, the “lion of Panjshir”
- Preferred term “United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan” or “Shura Nazar”
 - “Northern Alliance,” in Engineer Aref’s view, was created by the ISI “to highlight the point that Masood’s coalition was made up of northern, non-Pashtun tribal leaders”
- Supported by Iran, India, Russia



Al Qaeda

- Transnational jihadi group.
- Goal: political goals, re-establishment of caliphate.
- Spring 1991: Bin Laden left Saudi Arabia for Sudan.
- Terrorist plots from Sudan: 1992 bombing of hotels in Yemen used by soldiers en route to Somalia, indeterminate role in shooting down American helicopter in Mogadishu.
- Forced out by Sudanese regime.



The Taliban and al Qaeda

- Upon OBL's return to Afghanistan, Taliban harbored al-Qaeda.
- *Aug. 1998*: Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania
- *Sept. 1998*: Prince Turki al-Faisal tries to convince Mullah Omar to surrender OBL.
- *Oct. 2000*: Attack on U.S.S. *Cole* destroyer in Yemen.
- *Summer 2001*: CIA Director George Tenet says the U.S. intelligence system is "blinking red."
- How did the U.S. respond after each of these attacks? How should it have responded?
- Was the lack of an "off-the-shelf" plan to attack the Taliban a strategic blunder?

Assassination of Masood

- Two Arab “journalists” had been waiting in the Panjshir for weeks to interview Massood.
- “We want to know why Commander Masood said that Usama bin Laden was a murderer and should be sent from Afghanistan. And many more questions.”
- “Sir, what is the state of Islam in Afghanistan?”
- R.I.P., Sept. 9, 2001.



Diplomatic Lead-Up: Pakistan

- Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage threatens to bomb “back to Stone Age.”
- Musharraf agrees to U.S. demands.
 - Exceptions: No overflights of nuclear facilities, no attacks from Pakistani soil, no access to many ports, air bases.
 - Pakistan receives economic aid.
- How well would you expect Pakistan’s about-face to hold up?



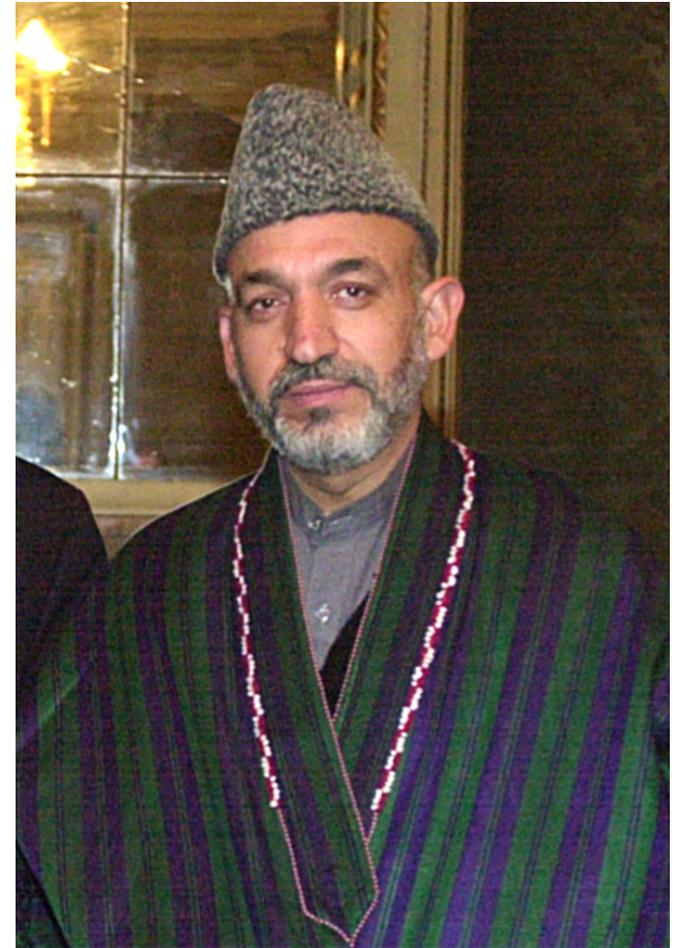
Early in the War

- Campaign was conducted (Peter Bergen's estimate) with massive airpower, tens of thousands of "Northern Alliance" forces, about 300 Special Forces soldiers, 110 CIA officers.
- Bombing campaign began Oct. 7.
- *Oct. 16*: U.S. forces link up with Abdul Rashid Dostum.
- Accuracy of airstrikes made Northern Alliance commanders think of them as "death rays."



The Bonn Process

- Northern Alliance and Pakistan could both agree on Hamid Karzai as leader.
- Nov. 27, 2001: Afghan factions gather in Bonn, Germany, to sign agreement establishing timetable for creation of new government.
- Iranian diplomat to Amb. James Dobbins: “It really doesn’t make any mention of elections or democracy. Don’t you think the Afghans should be pledging themselves to hold elections and build a democracy?”



Government Formation

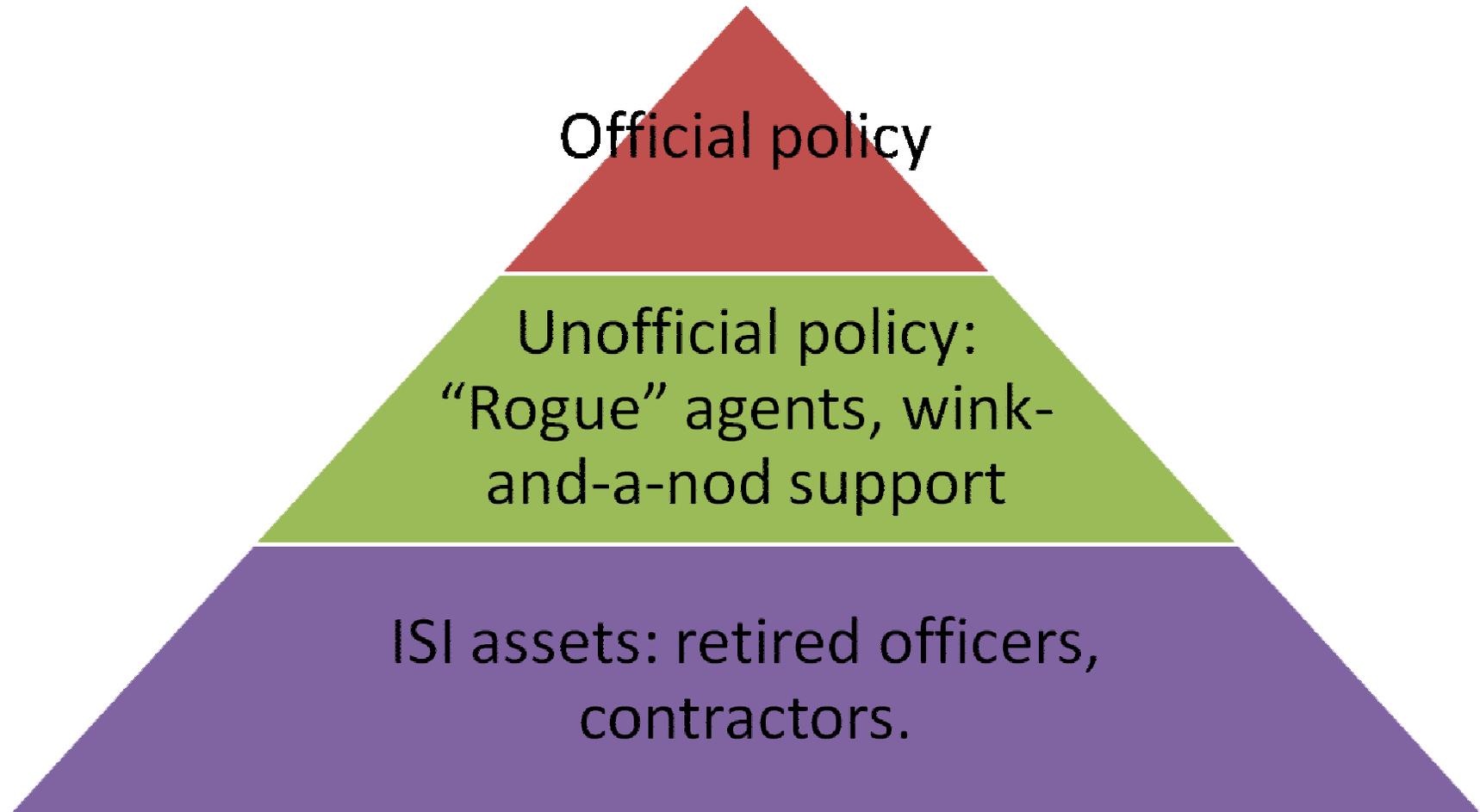
Thomas Barfield: “The best means of attaining legitimacy in post-2001 Afghanistan would have been to recognize that the government’s function was more important than its form: what it could do for the people who lived there. After a quarter century of war and social disruption, ordinary Afghans sought security, economic stability, and a chance to live normal lives. Ironically, this is what the traditional systems of elite dynastic rule historically provided over the centuries: security of life and property in exchange for obedience.”

Is he right?

The ISI and the Insurgency

- *Links to Afghan insurgency.*
 - 2010 report from Matt Waldman/LSE.
 - Financial support, orders.
 - Representation on Quetta *shura* (military command for Taliban operations in southern Afghanistan).
 - Ability to arrest Taliban commanders: arrest of Abdul Ghani Baradar, but release of Qayyum Zakir and Mullah Abdul Raouf Khadem.
- *Symmetry:* From Afghanistan supporting insurgencies in Pakistan using non-conventional means, Pakistan now does so in Afghanistan.
- *Roots of support:* strategic, ideological, personal relationships.

Conceptualizing ISI policy



Endgame Strategy

- Strategic communications difficulties: Obama's botched announcement of the U.S. drawdown.
- *Barno/Exum (CNAS)*:
 - July 2011-Dec. 2012: Shift to focused advisory and CT operations
 - Jan. 2013-July 2014: Move to residual force operations, with sustainable residual force presence of 25,000-35,000.
- *Wadhams et al. (CAP)*:
 - Facilitate internal peace talks by August 2011.
 - Reduce U.S. force presence while training Afghan national army and police.
 - No more than 15,000 troops by 2014. Pause for presidential election, with residual forces of 10,000 to 15,000.

Enduring U.S. Interests

- Al Qaeda and associated movements (safe havens).
- Stability in Pakistan (nuclear weapons).
- Taliban return to power (global jihadism, human rights).
- Other countries watching for portent of U.S. decline.

Source: Barno & Exum, *Responsible Transition*

Possible Obstacles to Success

- ANSF failure.
- Terrorist attack against the U.S., originating from Pakistan.
- Adversarial Pakistan (closing supply routes, refusal to share intelligence, remove authorization for drone strikes).
- Taliban resurgence.

Source: Barno & Exum, *Responsible Transition*