

LAND



Pic. 1: map

FACTS

<b>Surface:</b>	652 000 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Capital:</b>	Kabul
<b>Form of government:</b>	Islamic republic
<b>Inhabitants:</b>	30 mio
<b>Population Density:</b>	44/km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Average Income:</b>	60\$/month
<b>Life Expectancy:</b>	43.1 (F)/42.71 (M)
<b>Illiteracy rate:</b>	36%
<b>Language:</b>	Afghan Persian or Dari (official) 50%, Pashtu (official) 35% and other languages
<b>Religion:</b>	Sunni Muslim 80%, Shi'a Muslim 19%

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is a central-asia multi-ethnic landlocked country with a diversity of landscapes. Devastated during 25 years

of war and civil-war, Afghanistan is actually at a state of reconstruction and defining a national identity. Additionally to destructions of the war, Afghanistan suffers the vast contamination of mines all over the country.

HISTORY

Afghanistan did not exist as a nation before **1747**, when the pashtu-leader **Ahmed Shah Durrani** united rivalling ethnical tribes. But still then the nation consisted of many different, partly nomadic tribes and groupes, who did not stick to certain borders. Already in the 6th century B.C. the area of nowaday Afghanistan was conquered by the Persians; in the 4th entury B.C. Alexander the Great partly conquered the area and influenced the culture by founding cities and settlements on his way to india,



Pic. 2: Russian and British „Friends“

Pic. 3: remains from the war

later followed by Persian, Arabic and Mongolian conquerors. In the 12th century A.C. Genghis Khan invades the area of the now Afghan tribes, plundering and burning down whole cities, leaving fertile watered landscapes to everlasting deserts. At the end of the 19th century, Britain and Russia try to install their influence and power in Afghanistan (The „Great Game“). With the withdrawal of the British of this area and Russia, now passed into the sovjet union with wide areas annexed far down south to the northern borders of the river amurdaya putting more and more pressure on the country which had its climax in the invasion of Afghanistan by the Russians in 1979, a new global player appears in the mid of the 20th century: the USA.

With the aim to give the Russians a „Sovjet Vietnam“ the USA supported the mudshaheddin resistance forces with the supply of money and weappons, among others: Osama Bin Laden.

The Russians did not succeed in gaining control over the country and withdrew in 1989, leaving the country to civil war and chaos.

**Authors:** Morten Loës, Christoph Knüppel **Date:** January 2006

The Tribal leaders of Afghanistan and the so called „warlords“, who before faught united against the Russian invaders now start to fight each other in the race of the power over Afghanistan. During this civil war, which lasted for more than ten years, and devastated the whole country, the Taliban, best prepared and trained in pakistani refudgee-camps became greatest power almost all over Afghanistan, but many suffered under their strict and puritanical laws, especially women.

After the terrorist attacs on the world trade towers in New York, the regime wasn't bearable anymore for the united nations, and was overthrown by an international alliance in 2002. An iterim government under the leadership of Hamid Karzai was installed. On the 18th of september 2005 the first free parliament-elections where held after a period of over a quarter of a century. Karzai was elected as president in 2004.

POLITICAL SITUATION



Pic. 4: Tadjik women dressing in the Burkha

CONTINENT: Asia > LAND: Afghanistan

Since the acceptance of the constitution in 2004, Afghanistan has a presidential government-system, with a president at the head of the executive. The president is elected directly from the people for a period of five years. His term of office is limited to 10 years. A candidate for the president's has to be at least 40 years old, a muslim and be an afghan citizen. The president as well commands the troupes.

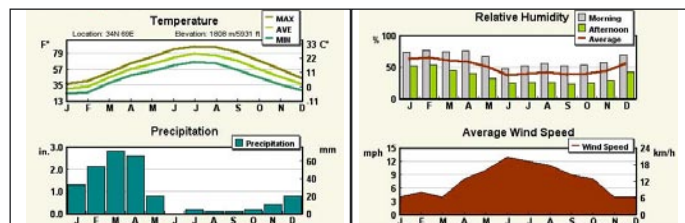
Still Afghnaistan is „assisted“ by foreign troupes, which are run under the command of the ISAF (international security assistance forces), who also support Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT).

RELIGION

99% of the Afghan people are moslems, 80% of which are sunnites and 19% shiá s. The sufism is widespread over Afghanistan and forms the ancient and traditional orientation of Afghanistan's islam, which is now partly undergoing a change to religious radicalism by foreign influences (especiallay restrictions during the sovjet invasion). In former times, the area of Afghanistan has always been a melting pot of cultures and religions (eg, the buddha-statues of bamjan, the remains of greek dwellings...).

CLIMATE

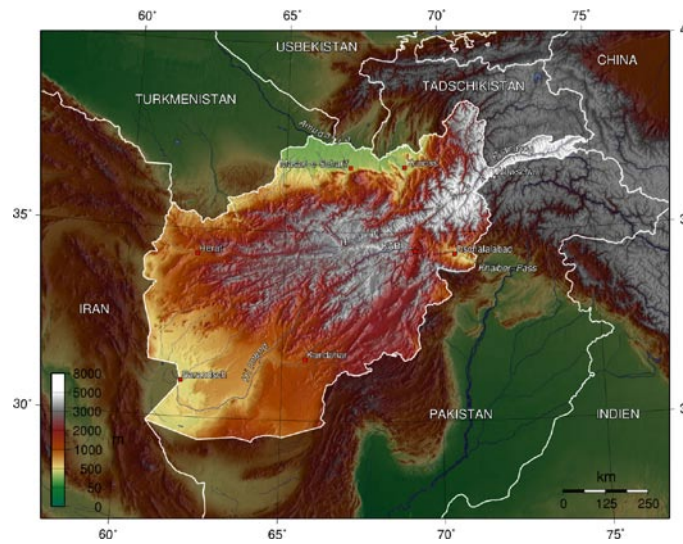
The landlocked country is situated right in the middle of an inboard dry bay. the climatic conditions are altered intensively by the surface-structure of the landscape. Typical continental climatic changes influencing day to nighttime temperature changes as well as seasonal changes are found all over the country. Afghanistan suffers temperatures as high as 53°C to -50°C. Precipitation is usual at wintertimes brought in small amounts by western winds. The summers are dry and hot. Sandstorms and droughts are not unusual during the summer months. Only in the utmost southeast, the monsoon brings some heavier rainfall.



Pic. 5: climate in Kabul

Pic. 6: climate in Kabul

TOPOGRAPHY



Pic. 7: The Topography of Afghanistan

Mostly mountainous areas and elevated plains, less than 10% of Afghanistan's surface are at an altitude less than 600m. The extensions of the Himalayan, the Hindu Kush dominates the greatest part of the country with peaks up to 7.500m. Lowland is only found north of the mountains at the borders of the river Amurdaya, which forms the border to the northern neighbours. The south of Afghanistan is dominated by the Rigestan desert.

VEGETATION



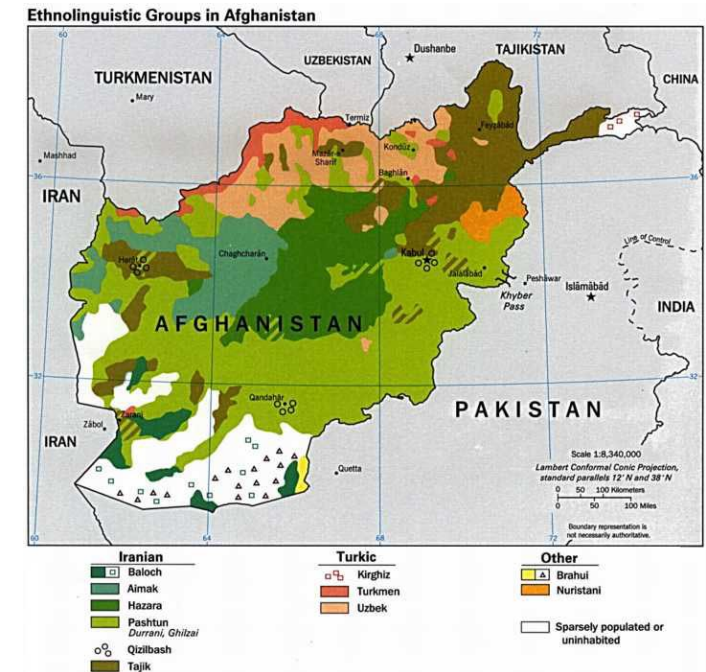
Pic. 8: grapes raised for food

Pic. 9: countryside north of Kabul

Due to the climatic conditions, few plants and animals are able to survive in Afghanistan. Some woodland can be found in the area of nuristan in the northeast, trees used for construction are mostly planted poplars and willows. Agriculture is used for

subsistence, but in former times there have been cotton exports. Grapes are raised as food not for vinification. But many fruits and plants could be grown in the watered areas along rivers, eg, melons, pomegranates and more. One sad fact: Afghanistan has the world highest production of opium.

SOCIETY



Pic. 10: ethnical grups in Afghanistan

78 % of Afghanistan's population live in the countryside. Bigger cities are Kabul (with it's suburbs 4,9 million), Kandahar (339.200), Mazar-e-Sharif (239.800) Herat (166.600), Dshalalabad (158.800) and Kunduz (118.000). Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic nation with a bunch of minorities. Nevertheless the Pashtoos consider themselves being the nation-forming people, due to historical reasons. Though there has never been a census there is an estimated number of 28.5 million inhabitants of Afghanistan in 2004.

There is a wide variety of ethnic groups througout Afghanistan. The greatest group forms the pasthu people with some 40% of the whole population. Under the Pashtu regnancy, the Afghan nation was founded.

CONTINENT: Asia > LAND: **Afghanistan**

The Tadjik make up a 30% of the population and are of Persian origin. The third biggest ethnical group are the Hazara, whose origin is uncertain. They make up about 10-20% of the population.

During the ten years of the Russian invasion from 1979 to 1989 and after the beginning of the civil war in 1992, there have been about 2 million victims and a similar number of invalid. Another 6 million became refugees to Pakistan or Iran. Many of those came back but had to flee again during the bombings and fightings 2001. hundreds of thousands became refugees within their own country. Under the taliban regime, women had hardly any rights, which changed under the interim government, but still women suffer a lack of equality in Afghanistan.

There is an estimated amount of 20 different languages spoken and more than 200 dialects, but dari, the afghan form of persian, is the official language among pashtu. Dari is spoken by the majority of the afghan people even by people, who do not consider it being their mothertongue.

With 71.3% among adults the illiteracy rate is incredible high. Invasion, civil war and the uncivilized agressions of the taliban regime against high culture left whole generations without access to education, which is now a big problem for a reconstruction of Afghanistan.

### Images:

Pic.-Nr.1: wikipedia, source: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/de/a/ab/Afghanistan\\_pol\\_2002.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/de/a/ab/Afghanistan_pol_2002.jpg); Pic.-Nr.2: wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Great\\_Game\\_cartoon\\_from\\_1878.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Great_Game_cartoon_from_1878.jpg), Source; Pic.-Nr.3,4,8: M.Loës, own; Pic.-Nr.5: southtravels, <http://www.southtravels.com/asia/Afghanistan/weather.html>; Pic.-Nr.6: southtravels, <http://www.southtravels.com/asia/Afghanistan/weather.html> ; Pic.-Nr.7: wikipedia, [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/de/1/1f/Afghan\\_topo.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/de/1/1f/Afghan_topo.jpg); Pic.-Nr.10: wikipedia, [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bild:588px-Ethnolinguistic\\_Groups\\_Afghanistan.gif](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bild:588px-Ethnolinguistic_Groups_Afghanistan.gif)

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