Cultural Intelligence for Military Operations

Pashtuns in Afghanistan

Summary of Key Issues

- With a population of over ten million people, the Pashtun ethnic group is the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan.

- The Pashtun ethnic group, like all ethnic groups in Afghanistan, consists of numerous tribes that center around common genealogies and geographic areas. These tribes, however, do not necessarily constitute unique ethnic identities. The two major Pashtun tribes include the Durrani (3.3 million), and the Ghilzai (4.4 million).

- The Pashtuns are mainly Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school, although there are some Shia Pashtuns in eastern Afghanistan. Most Pashtuns see their Sunni Islamic identity as something that distinguishes them from the Iranian Persians, who are Shia Muslims. The Hazaras are also Shia Muslims, and have frequently been the subject of religious-based discrimination and attack in Afghanistan.

- The Pashtuns have dominated Afghan politics since the founding of the modern Afghan state in the 18th century, through the establishment of the Taliban government in 1996. Historically, the most politically influential tribes within the Pashtun ethnic group are the Durrani and Ghilzai. After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan between 1989-1992, the continuation of the civil war between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance was largely a contest for control of Afghanistan between the majority Pashtuns and the other large ethnic groups, including the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazara.

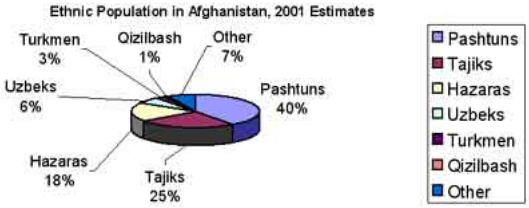
- The Pashtun tribes are organized in a non-hierarchical fashion. This tends to cause a diffusion of power, but also makes political organization extremely difficult. The tribal form of political participation is the *Loya Jirga,* or "Great Council," which makes decisions by consensus and is a form of democratic participation. Political legitimacy is derived from the decisions of the *Loya Jirga*.

- The Pashtuns have a tribal ethic code, known as the *Pushtunwali*. The *Pushtunwali* is a series of normative rules about revenge, hospitality, and ethics. The *Pushtunwali* is often in contradiction to the Islamic code of law, the *Shariah*.

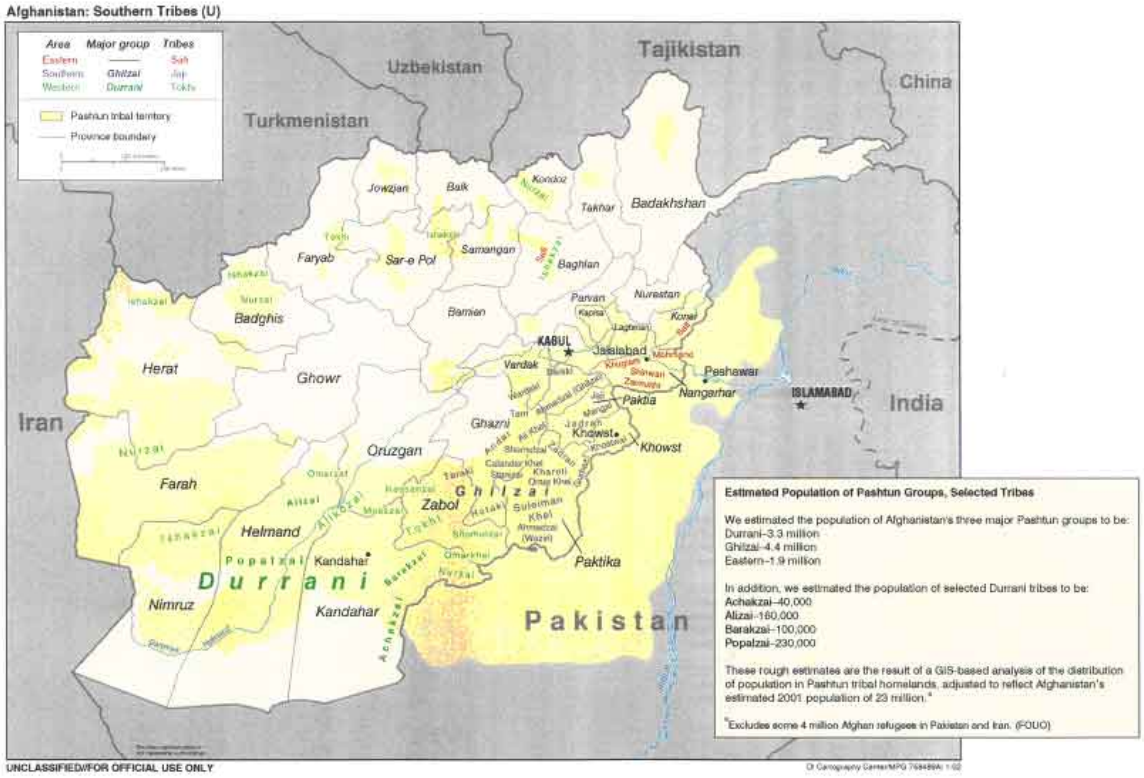
- The Pashtun ethnic group spans the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and has traditionally been a source of great tension between the two countries. There are even more Pashtuns in Pakistan, than in Afghanistan. The "Pashtun Problem" has historically been a key political issue for Afghanistan, as the Afghan leadership is faced with internal Pashtun pressures to either separate from Afghanistan to join the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan, or to annex part of the North-West Frontier Province to Afghanistan. The Pashtuns within Pakistan are politically marginalized by the dominant Punjabis. Pakistan supported the Taliban regime partly due to the fact that the Taliban worked to ameliorate these tensions.

Pashtun Ethnic Group

With 10.1 million Pashtuns in Afghanistan, the Pashtun (or Pushtun, Pakhtun, or Pathan) ethnic group constitutes the largest and, historically, most politically powerful ethnic group in Afghanistan.



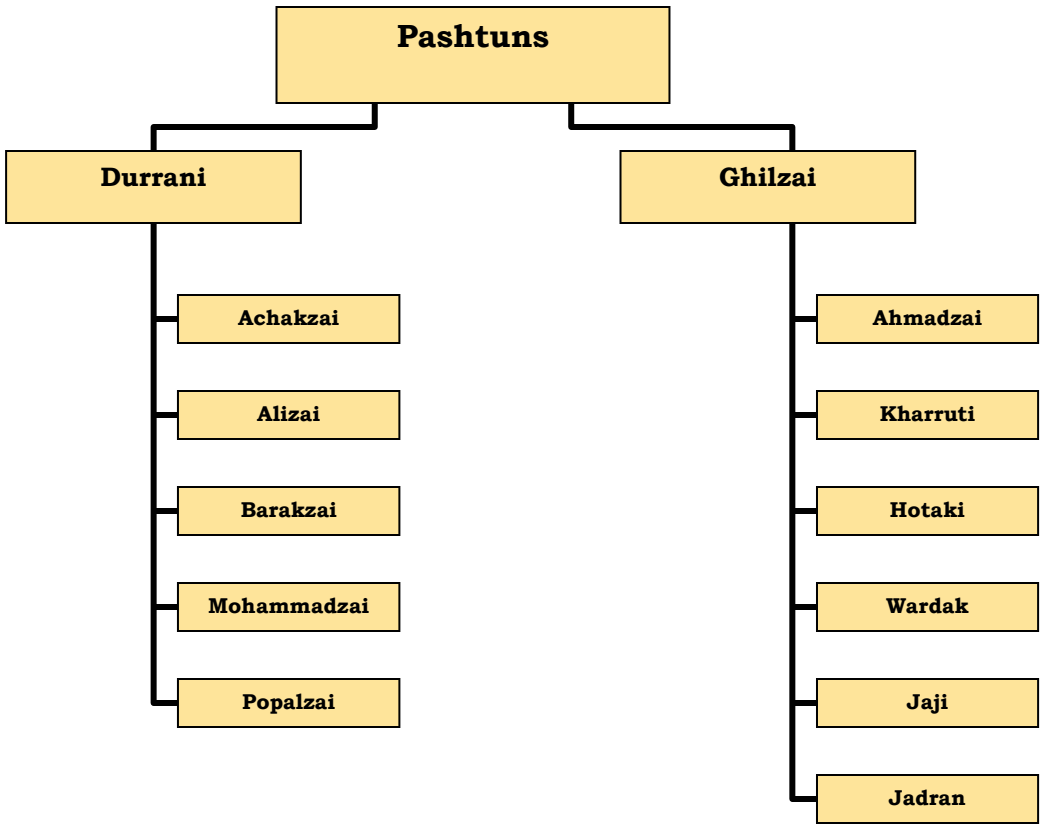
The Pashtun ethnic group is also one of the largest, most cohesive ethnic group of tribes in the world.



The Pashtuns have a long reputation for being a group of fierce, aggressive tribes. They were known to the Indian British Empire as the "Hill Tribes," and are memorialized in the works of Kipling as persistent, passionate resisters of the influences of British civilization and the British Empire.

The Pashtuns are largely located in the south and east of Afghanistan. There are pockets of Pashtuns located around the country, but these are mostly the result of forced migration. The Pashtun ethnic group spans the border with Pakistan, where there are an additional 14 million Pashtuns, mainly in Pakistan's North-West Province.

The Pashtun ethnic group is composed of many subunits, the most numerous being the Durrani (before the 18th century this tribe was also known as the Abdali, a name that occasionally resurfaces today), and the Ghilzai. The Durrani tribes are located primarily in the south of Afghanistan, stretching from the Iranian border to the Kandahar region in the southeast of Afghanistan along the Pakistani border. Within the Durrani Pashtun tribes there are several subtribes, including the Achakzai, Alizai, Barakzai, Mohammadzai, and Popalzai. The Ghilzai tribes are concentrated along the Pakistani border, running north from the Kandahar region towards Kabul and Jalalabad. Several subtribes within the Ghilzai Pashtun tribe include the Ahmadzai, Kharruti, Hotaki, Wardak, Jaji, Jadran (or Zadran).



Other smaller Pashtun tribes include the Tani, the Mangal (all of which are around Paktya Province), the Khugiani and Safi (around Jalalabad), Mohmand, Afridi, Khatak, Orakzai, Waziri, Mahsud, Chamkani, and Shinwari.

In Pakistan, there are the Eastern Pashtun tribes, which include the Yusufzai and Afridi subtribes and branches of the Orakzai and Mohmand subtribes.

Ethnic Description

Physical Appearance

The Pashtuns tend to be fairly light-skinned, with a variety of eye colors, and high cheek bones. Most men have beards, per the requirements of Islam. Some old men dye their beards red with the natural dye henna.

Cultural History

The Pashtun myth about the ethno-cultural origins of the Pashtun ethnic group is, somewhat surprisingly connected with an ancient migration out of Israel. In the 16th century manuscript about Afghana, the grandson of King Saul, Pashtun tribes trace themselves to the ten lost tribes of Israel, who allegedly ended up in Ghor (western Hazarajat) after their captivity in Babylon. Pashtun believe that they came from Afghana's descendants, and then adopted the role of defenders of Islam under Prophet Muhammad.

Pashtun tribal divisions are traced to the three sons of Afghana: Abdalis descendants of Sharkbun, Yusufzai descended from Kharshbun, Ghilzai descendants through the female line from Zohak. In Iranian mythology, Zohak is a merciless creature of evil. Because of this, and because the Ghilzai are believed to have descended through a female line rather than through the male line, the Durrani Pashtuns tend to view the Ghilzai as slightly inferior and not worthy to be leaders of Afghanistan.

Centers of Authority

Description

Pashtuns tribes are led by a group of tribal leaders. The tribe is not organized around a single chief and the levels of authority possessed by a tribal leader varies from tribe to tribe. Heads of nomadic tribal groups, for instance, act principally as spokesmen, but have no right to make decisions binding on others. In some tribal leadership groups, the tribal leaders will specialize in certain areas. For example, one tribal leader will be primarily responsible for water issues, while another tribal leader will be primarily responsible for food issues.

Pashtun tribal leaders rise to their leadership positions primarily through personal charisma, patronage, and leadership abilities rather than by being the first born son. Muslim law does not generally recognize special hereditary rights of the first born son.

Pashtun tribal organization ideally features egalitarianism and democratic decision-making through a tribal meeting called the *Loya Jirga,* or "Great Council," at which individual members have the right to express themselves freely, and where decisions are made by consensus. Tribal leaders will generally not make a decision that will be resisted by the population of the tribe. In some cases where the opinions of the tribal population may be unclear or mixed, tribal leaders also seek to have a major decision sanctioned by the *Ulema* (religious Islamic scholars) for additional support.

In practices, of course, the *Loya Jirga* does not operate in such a pure democratic fashion, but the ideals of democratic decision-making are important to the Pashtuns and the institution of the *Loya Jirga* is key to political legitimacy in Afghanistan among the Pashtuns. When the Soviets realized that there would not be a substantial Marxist uprising in Afghanistan, they turned to other methods, including an adoption of the *Loya Jirga* as a tool for gaining approval for Marxist leaders.

History

Establishing and maintaining centers of authority that are recognized by all Pashtun tribes has been a large problem in the history of the Pashtun tribes. Part of this problem may be due to the Pashtun's code of behavior, the *Pushtunwali.* The *Pushtunwali* does not lay out clear rules about leadership. This allows for intense competition within the Pashtun tribes whenever there is a succession issue. Consequently, rivalries within and between tribal segments, and between tribes and subtribes, have always existed and have severely detracted from the stability of Afghanistan. These internal rivalries within the Pashtun ethnic group have earned the Pashtuns their reputation as an unruly and warlike people. Nonetheless, when outside forces threaten, the Pashtuns are equally known for their ability to quickly forge pragmatic, tight alliances among themselves, and with other ethnic groups to resist a common enemy.

Rule of Law

Pashtun culture rests on *Pushtunwali*, a legal and moral code that determines social order and responsibilities and is fundamentally based on the rejection, condemnation, and punishment of behavior that is unfair. The *Pushtunwali* is largely unwritten and is represented in song, proverb, metaphor, and parable. The primary law of the *Pushtunwali* is *badal* or revenge. The law of revenge determines individual and corporate responsibility to respond to aggression. Revenge can be carried out regardless of time, space, and cost. Traditionally, revenge must be carried out by a male member of the family that suffered the loss. If a man kills another man in revenge for a death in his own family, he is not guilty of murder. If revenge is not taken, the social standing of the family that suffered the loss will decline within the tribe.

During the rule of the Taliban, a form of *Pushtunwali* revenge killing was sanctioned and carried out by the Taliban, although Taliban leaders often described this as an administration of Islamic law. Once the aggrieved family had caught the accused, this person would be held by the Taliban before a public forum. The Taliban would ask the aggrieved family to pardon the accused in exchange for "blood money"; when the family refused, the Taliban would allow a male citizen of the family to carry out the execution.

He is not a Pashtun who does not give a blow for a pinch.

-Ahmed, 1975:57

In addition to the law of revenge, the *Pushtunwali* contains a set of values pertaining to honor (*namuz*), bravery (*tureh*), solidarity and mutual support (*nang*), defense of property (*ghayrat*), steadfastness (*sabat*), righteousness (*imamdari*), persistence (*isteqamat*), the right to refuge from war or persecution (*nanawati*), the duty of hospitality (*malmastia*), and shame (*haya*).

Pashtunwali is comprised of the sum of the total values and social norms which determine the way of life peculiar to the Pashtuns. It is the all-embracing regulator for the preservation and conservation of the society and for the behavior patterns of the individual. It is an emic concept which includes everything which a Pashtun should or should not do. It is thus a means of ethnic identification and differentiation in relations to other ethnic groups...[Pashtunwali] can be seen above all as the values forced on the individual if he is to be a respected member of society and to enjoy its acceptance.

-Willi Steul, 1981:308
Quoted in Performance of Emotion Among Paxtun Women
Benedict Grima

The defense of *namuz*, even unto death, is obligatory for every Pashtun. There is no "turning of the other cheek." The provision of hospitality (*malmastia*) is required, even if it forces a family into economic ruin. Refuge (*nanawati*) must be granted to anyone who requests it. Once refuge is granted, the refugee becomes a dependent of the head of the household in which he has sought refuge. This can be economically and politically very costly for the household. However, the refugee then acquires an unconditional obligation of loyalty to serve and defend that household, and can become a serf of that family. By offering refuge, wealthy families can become large landlords or even local warlords.

During the Afghan communist movement before the Soviet invasion, much of the Pashtun resistance to the largely detribalized urbanized leadership of the Afghan communist party, the DRA, stemmed from the perception that in attempting to nationalize land and wealth, as well as regulate marriage practices, the DRA was unlawfully violating the codes of the *Pushtunwali*.

The *Shariah*, or Islamic Code of Law, also forms an important part of the Pashtun code of behavior. The Pashtuns are predominantly Sunni. There are four schools of Islamic law within the Sunni tradition. The Pashtuns are mostly part of the Hanafi *Shariah* school of law.

The Hanafi *Shariah* requires many of the same religious practices as the other schools of law: prayer five times a day (*munz*), fasting during Ramadan (*rojay*), a pilgrimage to Mecca if economic circumstances allow (*haj*), a donation of 2.5% of income to the poor (*zakat*), and the duty to uphold and defend Islam through struggle (*jihad*). Religious leaders (the *Ulema*) issue formal legal opinions (*fatwas*) based on *Shariah* law concerning major contemporary social, political, and ethical issues. The Hanafi tradition is important to the *fatwas*, as they are, at least in theory, based on legal principles that vary between the different schools of law. In practice, however, the substance of Afghan *fatwas* has been heavily influenced by the *Pushtunwali* and other Afghan tribal customs.

Parts of the *Pushtunwali* are in opposition to the *Shariah*, such as on women's roles, on property, and on interest bearing loans. *Pushtunwali*, not the Islamic *Sharia*, formed the dominant legal code not only among the Pashtuns, but among most of the population of Afghanistan, up until the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman (1880-1901). Although Ahmad Shah Durrani established *Shariah* courts, they did not have much legal power for over a century. Sporadic *fatwas* were issued and occasional *jihads* were called not so much to advance Islamic ideology as to gain domestic political support for particular leaders or political agendas. The differences between the *Pushtunwali* and the *Shariah* do not trouble the Pashtuns. Pashtuns tend to view their identity as both Pashtun and Muslim by nature and do not feel compelled to reconcile differences between the two codes of behavior. To adhere to the *Pushtanwali* and to the *Shariah* is to be a Pashtun. If one disobeys either or both of these codes of behavior, this detracts from one's identity as a Pashtun.

The power of civic rule, the traditional notion of "rule of law," is less clear among the Pashtuns. Pashtuns tend to obey civic law only if they believe that the civic law has been implemented and is being enforced by a legitimate government. The legitimacy of a government depends on the extent to which Pashtuns control the government, the extent to which the government recognizes the authority of both the *Pushtunwali* and the *Shariah*, and the extent to which governmental, legislative, and enforcement decisions are sanctioned by the *Loya Jirga*, the Grand Council, or *Ulema*, the religious leaders and scholars.

Role of State vs. Role of Ethnic Group

Among Pashtuns, the Afghan state and the Pashtun ethnic nation often become blurred. Pashtuns have dominated the Afghan state for centuries, with various Pashtun tribes—usually Ghilzai or Durrani--providing its central leadership since the 18th century. The Durrani Pashtun, however, generally have an inferior view of the Ghilzai Pashtun.

In 1709 Mir Wais, the leader of the Hotaki tribe of the Ghilzai Pashtuns, led a revolt that ended Iranian rule over Afghanistan, and in 1747 Ahmad Khan of the Abdali Pashtuns of Kandahar established the Durrani Empire. Ahmad Khan assumed the title of Durr-i-Durran (Pearl of Pearls), and was henceforth known as Ahmad Shah Durrani, and his tribe, the Pashtun Abdali tribe, as the Durrani. Ahmad Shah is revered by many Pashtuns as *Ahmad Shah Baba,* or "Father of Afghanistan." When his successors lost the support of the tribes

after Ahmad Shah's death in 1772, control passed to the Mohammadzai lineage within the Barakzai tribe of the Durrani Pashtun group.

Mohammadzai dominance of Afghanistan continued nearly uninterrupted from 1826 to 1978. The former Afghan King Zahir Shah is a Durrani Pashtun from the Mohammadzai subgroup. Then power shifted back to the Ghilzai, who dominated the leadership of the secular (communist) Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) after 1978, although most officials in the DRA were essentially detribalized and urbanized. Even Najibullah, the leader the Soviets installed in Kabul in 1986, was a Ghilzai Pashtun from the large Ahmadzai tribe.

Najibullah was in turn replaced in 1992 by the Islamic State of Afghanistan, established by the *Mujahideen* whose leaders were also mostly from the Ghilzai Pashtun tribe, and a variety of eastern Pashtun tribes, although the President from 1992-1996 was a Tajik. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of *Hezb-i-Islami*, one of the most radical and most powerful *Mujahideen* groups, and one of the largest recipients of US military assistance during the Afghan-Soviet war, is from theBaghlan Province in northeast Afghanistan, but is from the Kharruti tribe, a part of the Ghilzai tribe that was uprooted from the Ghazni region early in the century.

The Pashtun Taliban took over Kandahar in October 1994 and established a new government in Kabul in 1996, continuing Pashtun tribal domination of Afghanistan, and the blurring of ethnic groups and the nation state as sources of authority for the Pashtun people.

In the post-Taliban period, President Karzai was appointed leader of the Interim Administration of Afghanistan at the international Bonn Conference. Karzai is from the Populzai Pashtun tribe in the Kandahar region. Many Afghan leaders have been from the Populzai tribe.

Pashtuns have sought to regain influence in Karzai's Interim Administration. Many Pashtun tribal leaders have crititicized Karzai for allowing heavy representation of the Northern Alliance in the Interim Government. Karzai's Defense Minister, General Fahim, is a Tajik from Panshir who took over the Northern Alliance in 2001 after the assassination of Massood. Karzai's Deputy Defense Minister is General Dostum, an Uzbek. Karzai's government has been the subject of attacks by some Pashtun groups, who see Karzai as caving into the interests of other ethnic groups. There are indications that Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the notorious Pashtun *Mujahideen* commander from the Afghan-Soviet war, may be behind some of these attacks.

Karzai's government has little real political control outside the capital city of Kabul. Local Pashtun tribal leaders have significant independent authority over much of the south and east of Afghanistan. The Tajik and Uzbek tribal leaders and Northern Alliance commanders continue to exercise much of the real power in the north of Afghanistan. The central mountainous region of Hazarjat, the northeast regions of Nuristan, and the Wakhan valley are neither under the control of the central Afghan government, nor of local commanders.

Cultural Attitudes

Self

The Pashtuns, like most of Afghanistani ethnic groups, do not have a concept of the self that is similar to Western notions of the individual self. Rather, the self is viewed in a communal context, in relationship to other local institutions, like the family, clan, village, tribe, ethnic group, and nation.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Pashtun cultural attitudes towards the "self" revolves around the Pashtun's view of honor and revenge, as described in the unwritten Pashtun code of behavior, the *Pushtunwali*. Every individual is bound to uphold his sense of honor and to wreak revenge when that honor has been harmed. This obligation of honor and revenge, although incumbent upon the individual, is derived, however, from the individual's collective identity as part of the Pashtun ethnic group. Insofar as an individual fails to uphold these obligations, he will be scorned and, perhaps, ostracized from the collective group.

Pashtun culture discourages individual acts outside of social institutions. Pashtun culture strives to close any gap between the self and the collective group. Generally, Pashtuns strongly discourage individuals from expressing feelings in a public setting. For example, when there is a display of strong untempered emotion, others will quickly move to quiet the person and bring the person into a collective expression of that emotion. According to the Pashtuns, grief should not be expressed through individual crying, but by preparation of a wake meal. Anger should not be expressed through individual temper, but through exacting the socially prescribed revenge.

Part of the closing of the gap between self and group stems from a desire to both preserve cultural institutions and the strength of the community, as well as the desire to control and regulate behavior that could otherwise disrupt the community. In the absence of strong civil government and the rule of law, such regulating institutions are important in maintaining some sense of order, although it may be very different than the sort of order that is known to the westerner.

Part of the closing of the gap between self and group also stems from a desire to protect the individual. In a country that knows no strong state or rule of law, other people cannot be trusted with the sort of intimate information that an individual might communicate if that individual does not abide by culturally prescribed forms of action.

Group/Tribe/Clan

Tribal identity derives from genealogies consisting of descendants of a common male ancestor whose name often provides the name of the group. An entire tribe may descend from a man ten or more generations in the past. Internal divisions consist of the descendants of intermediate descendants of the original founder. These smaller segments of a tribe are composed of three or four generations and often live within a single residence and serve as the basis for strong personal loyalties.

Although it is preferred that a man marry one of his father's brother's daughters, this is not always practical. Pashtun marriages are often based on political, economic and social alliances that exist outside of strict descent lines. Typically, it is men from dominant groups who will seek to marry with females outside their own ethnic group.

Among the Pashtuns, tribal institutions are strongest within the Ghilzai tribes.

Modern Nation State

Pashtuns dominate the modern Afghan nation state and frequently confuse the Afghan state with the Pashtun ethnic nation. For many Pashtun leaders, the Afghan state is merely an extension or modern iteration of the Pashtun nation. Therefore, Pashtuns believe they must and that they rightfully should dominate any Afghan government.

Some exceptions to this include the nomadic Pashtuns of the Sheikhanzai tribe in western Afghanistan. This rural group of Pashtuns has historically been hostile to any Afghan nation state, no matter which government was in control. Any government is viewed by the Shekhanzai as an external influence on the tribes's domestic affairs.

> The very name Pashtun spells honour and glory. Lacking that honour, what is the Afghan story?
>
> -Khushhal Khan Khatak, 17th century Pashtun poet and warrior

The 1990s has witnessed continued Pashtun control in Afghanistan through the Taliban government. However, the extent of Pashtun Taliban control over northern Afghanistan has been quite weak during this period. With the end of the Soviet Union and the independence of the countries of Central Asia, the Afghan Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Kazakhs have received external support and encouragement to seek greater autonomy from the Pashtuns within Afghanistan. It is unlikely that these minorities will relinquish their new autonomy, nor that the Pashtuns will resign themselves to a more pluralistic state. Hence, it would appear that Pashtun cultural attitudes of the modern nation state promise to make civil tension, if not conflict, an on-going fixture of the political life of Afghanistan.

Conflict Resolution

Revenge may be taken on any member of an offending tribe, although liability is usually greater for those most closely related to the accused. The essentially decentralized independent communities within tribal subsections conduct both internal and external affairs according to the tribal code of conduct, *Pushtunwali.*

Both internal as well as intergroup conflicts are most often rooted in matters of personal and group honour, personal enmities, family dissensions concerning brides and property, struggles for material possession, access to resources, territorial integrity and extensions of power, rather than in intrinsic attitudes of ethnic discrimination.

Hazaras

The Pashtuns view the Hazaras as agents of Iranian culture and influence in Afghanistan. The Pashtuns have persecuted the Hazaras for many years. During the rule of the Taliban, the Pashtuns conducted massacres against the Hazaras.

A small group of Pashtuns called Kuchis are nomadic and travel by camel with their flocks of sheep and goats between Pakistan and Afghanistan's central highlands. The Kuchis have been romanticized by Western journalists, and received much favorable press when the Taliban encouraged them to return to Afghanistan after sitting out the war years in Pakistan. The policies of past Pashtun-dominated administrations in Kabul had favored the Kuchis over the ethnic Hazaras, with the result that the Kuchis had become landlords and moneylenders for the Hazaras. Thus the Kuchis' return -- and their immediate demands for back payment of loans and rent -- was simply another method by which the Pashtun-supremacist Taliban made life miserable for the Hazaras. Significantly, too, when a multi-year drought brought famine conditions to much of Afghanistan in recent years, the Taliban made a big show of using helicopters to rescue the Kuchis and their animals, while at the same time they blockaded relief supplies from reaching the Hazara areas.

> The Soviet Empire had just invaded the country. I was working at the CBS New Magazine *60 Minutes*...We quickly determined that the story was, indeed, worth a *60 Minutes* effort...We decided to mount an expedition to see the war firsthand and record it for television....
>
> We had followed a band of Afghan rebels for several days. One night we sought shelter in a cave, sitting down to one of the few cooked meals we would eat on our journey. Around the campfire, the Mujahidin...told me of their intentions in this war. The Afghans would be delighted to receive American assistance, they said, although at the same time they cautioned that our assistance would buy us only a barrier to Soviet expansion and nothing more—not friendship, perhaps not even cooperation from the Afghans themselves.
>
> But the Mujahidin insisted, with or without American assistance, the Afghans would rid their country of the Soviet invaders. No matter whether any other country came to their aid. No matter how many Afghans were killed in the struggle. No matter how long it took. They would fight, and keep on fighting.
>
> -Dan Rather,
> Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid,
> 1998:xi

United States

The Pashtuns in Afghanistan do not have strong attitudes towards the United States. They appreciate the US military assistance that was channeled to the Pashtun-dominated Mujahideen resistance movement through the Pakistani ISI during the Soviet-Afghan war from 1979-1989. Many wished that this American assistance had been given to Afghanistan more secretively. Some of the fundamentalist Afghan leaders from this war believe that the US's high profile assistance made the Mujahideen look like an American stooge fighting the Soviets, rather than a nationalist and Islamic group defending a homeland.

This US military assistance did not buy any long term allegiances. The Soviet-Afghan war did not make Pashtuns into American allies. Nor can the current US-led war effort to liberate Afghanistan be expected to generate long-term support for the United States among the Pashtuns.

Unlike in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, however, there is less widespread, deep-seated hatred of the United States. The Pashtuns view the United States as another imperial power that can be useful in consolidating power in Afghanistan, and that can be played off other international and domestic adversaries.

The Pashtuns will view the United States as a temporary friend as long as the United States is viewed by the majority of the Pashtuns as continuing to support Pashtun interests in

Afghanistan, and as long as the United States and the United States military continue to provide financial and material support to the Pashtuns.

Pashtun attitudes towards the United States could change suddenly. If the United States is viewed by the majority of Pashtuns as supporting a long-term government that minimizes Pashtun interests, or if the United States is believed to have failed to deliver on a promise of assistance to the Pashtuns, the United States and United States personnel could quickly find themselves on unfriendly terms with the Pashtuns.

Neighboring States: Pakistan

Pashtun relations with Pakistan are dominated by cultural attitudes about the greater Pashtun ethnic community, and what has become known as the "Pashtun Problem." The Pashtun tribes were formally split into two states, Afghanistan and Pakistan, under Abdur Rahman by the "Durand Line," a 1200 mile boundary devised by British Indian Foreign Secretary Sir Mortimer Durand towards the end of British rule in India. This division of the Pashtuns placed even more Pashtuns in Pakistan than in Afghanistan.

Ever since the establishment of the Durand Line, the "Pashtun Problem" has historically been a key domestic political issue for Afghanistan. Afghan leadership is perennially faced with internal Pashtun pressures to either separate from Afghanistan to join the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan, or to annex part of the North-West Frontier Province to Afghanistan. Some radical Pashtun Afghan nationalists have advocated "restoring" old Afghan lands up to the Indus river and south to include Baluchistan and the port of Karachi. These extreme claims have understandably been the source of significant concern in Pakistan. The Pashtuns within Pakistan are politically marginalized by the dominant Punjabis, and are viewed by many Afghan Pashtuns as oppressed by the Pakistani state. The Pakistani Pashtuns are mostly organized under the Awami National Party.

These pressures by Pashtuns in Afghanistan to form some sort of closer ties with Pashtuns in Pakistan has been a source of great tension between the two countries. An Afghan refusal to recognized the Durand line after the independence and partition of British India into Pakistan and India led to a Pakistani petroleum boycott against Afghanistan, an act that contributed to Afghanistan's growing links with the Soviet Union.

During the rule of Prime Minister Daoud (1953-63) under King Mohammad Zahir Shah, the Afghanistan government formed a more aggressive policy towards Afghanistan on the Pashtun issue. Pakistan reacted very negatively, which contributed to Daoud's ouster. King Mohammad Zahir Shah worked during the remainder of his reign to smooth relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, when Daoud returned to power in Afghanistan through a coup that he launched against King Mohammad Zahir Shah in 1973, Daoud returned to more hardline policies on the Pashtun issues and again exacerbated relations with Pakistan.

After the disintegration of political control in Afghanistan in the mid-1970s and the Soviet invasion in 1979, Pakistan believed it was severely threatened by the possible resurgence of the "Pashtun Problem" at a time when there was no central governmental control in Kabul that could be trusted to reign in separatist tendencies, should the Pashtun demands

mushroom into a larger political movement. The Pakistanis used their role as the conduit for US assistance to the Afghan *Mujahideen* to support factions in Afghanistan that were friendly to Pakistan's interests in controlling transnational Pashtun identity and upholding the Durand Line. Pakistan supported the Taliban regime mainly due to the fact that the Taliban worked to ameliorate these tensions and pledged to suppress transnational Pashtun ethnic sentiments.

Pakistan remains concerned today about the nature of the "Interim Government" in Afghanistan, and wants to ensure that this government and the eventual permanent government remain friendly to Pakistan interests on the Pashtun issue. The "Durrand Line" was established by a treaty that formally expired in 1993. The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is, therefore, a *de facto* border. The absence of a *de jure* border between the countries makes Pakistan all the more anxious to see friendly leaders in Kabul.

Pashtun cultural attitudes towards Pakistan are also shaped by the role Pakistan played in the Soviet-Afghan war, and in the chaotic years following the war up until the Pashtun-dominated and Pakistan-friendly Taliban regime took control of Kabul in 1996. From 1979-1989, the Pakistani ISI funneled billions of dollars of Pakistani, US, and Saudi assistance to the *Mujahideen* fighting the Soviet army inside Afghanistan. Pashtuns view Pakistan as directing this assistance towards groups favored by Pakistan. While Pakistan generally favored Pashtuns, Pakistan gave a greater focus to the Ghilzai Pashtun tribes in the east of Afghanistan, to the perceived detriment of the Durrani Pashtuns in the south of the country.

Neighboring States: Iran

Pashtuns view Iran as a large regional actor that generally opposes Pashtun interests, but with which the Pashtuns have to work carefully, due to its proximity, size, and strength. Pashtuns believe that Iran is historically intent on strengthening Hazara, and to some extent Tajik, influence in Afghanistan to the detriment of the Pashtuns. In 1998, when it looked as though the Pashtun-dominated Taliban would gain control of all Afghan territory, Iran threatened to invade Afghanistan.

> We can't afford the luxury of this high talk. We are just a poor people trying to remake our lives," Karzai said. "We just want to have good relations with our neighbors and great relations with America. America helped us free ourselves so we value that relationship and we also want to be friendly with our neighbors.
>
> -President of the Interim Afghan Government on Iran and President Bush's labelling of Iran as part of the "Axis of Evil"
>
> From "Afghans May Seek Help in Warlord Feuds " Sat Feb 23, 3:34 PM ET KATHY GANNON, Associated Press Writer

Pashtun cultural attitudes towards Iran are colored by the imperial history of Iran in Afghanistan. Iran has controlled part or all of Afghanistan, then known as Batrica, since the early Iranian Achaemenid empire led by Darius the Great. From 300 AD to 600 A.D., Afghanistan was repeatedly invaded by the Sassanian Iranian dynasty, although Iranian control began to diminish between 600-1000 A.D. as Arab invaders established Sunni Islam in Afghanistan, and then later as the Sunni-based Ghaznavid Empire, the first Afghan empire took root in Afghanistan. After being heavily dominated by the Mongol Empires (1220-1506 A.D.) and the Mughal Empire of India (1500-1700), Afghanistan fell back under Iranian influence from 1700 onwards.

Pashtun tribes played the Iranian empire off the Mughal and Uzbek empires during this period, effectively making Iranian control over Afghanistan much weaker than it otherwise would have been.

The modern state of Afghanistan was born out of Pashtun resistance to the Iranian Empire and Pashtun Afghans continue to define their state in opposition to the Iranian state. To some extent, while Pakistan, with its large Pashtun population, threatens the identity of the Sunni Pashtun-dominated Afghan state, Iran, with its imperial history, non-Pashtun population, and Shia Islam, provides a counter balance to Pakistani influence, which strengthens in a negative way the identity of the Afghan state.

Regional Powers: Russia

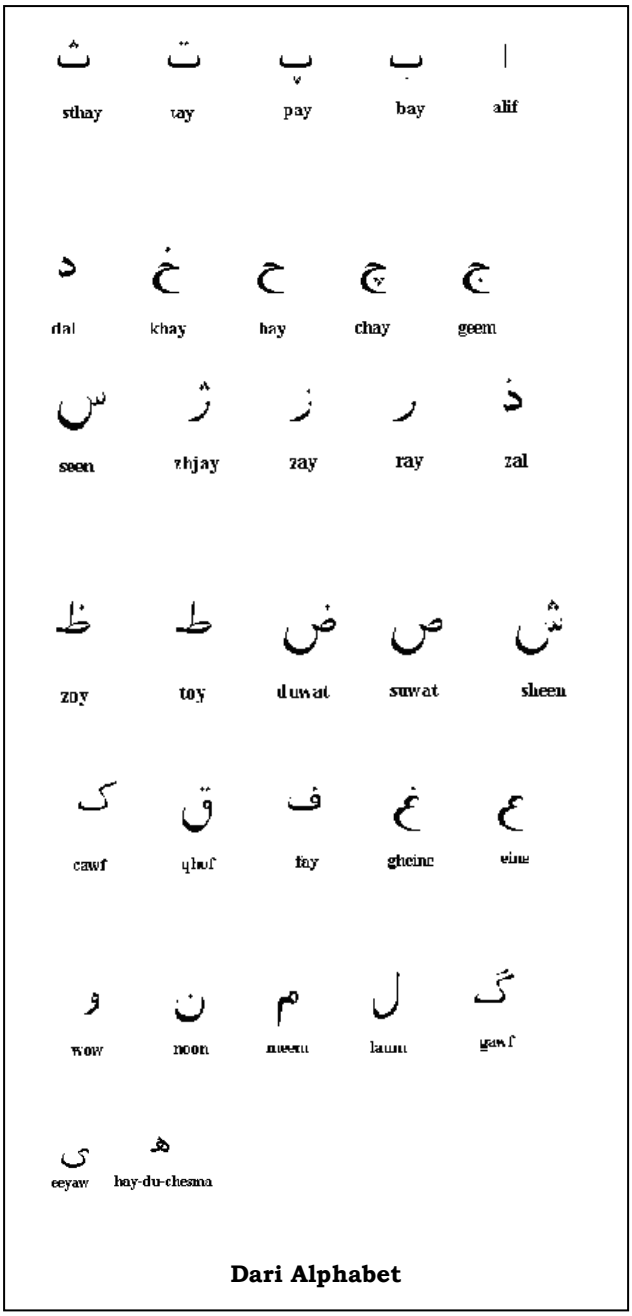
Pashtuns' cultural attitudes toward Russia are heavily shaped by Russia's role in the "Great Game" of the 19th century, when Imperial Russia and Imperial Great Britain were in a contest for control of Central Asia. The Russians were seeking to gain strategic access to the Indian Ocean and to extend the boundaries of Russian civilization onto the Central Asian steppes, while the British were seeking to create a protective buffer between its Indian colony and Russia. Pashtuns viewed both the Russians and the British as undesirable external actors seeking to gain influence over Afghanistan.

When the Russians (then Soviets) returned to Afghanistan during the invasion of 1979, Pashtuns viewed them, again, as imperial invaders seeking to gain influence over the domestic affairs of Afghanistan. The Pashtun *Mujahideen's* willingness to use US and Pakistani military assistance to fight the Russians (Soviets) had little to do with Cold War objectives, and much to do with ethnic cultural attitudes of the Pashtun towards imperial power.

Language

History

The Pashtuns speak several mutually intelligible dialects of Pashtu. Many also speak Dari, the Afghan form of Farsi, especially in the area of Kabul. Both Pashtu and Dari belong to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. This Iranian branch also includes Persian Farsi, Baluchi, Kurdish, and Ossetic. Pashtu uses a modified version of the Arabic alphabet. Since the 1964 constitution Afghanistan has formally had two official languages: both Pashtu and Dari, although Pashtu is generally not known among non-Pashtun tribes, with the exception of the Baluchis, who also speak Pashtu. The mandate of two official languages has irritated many of the non-Pashtun groups in Afghanistan, as Dari is viewed as the inter-ethnic language and the whole population of Afghanistan speak Dari.



Dari Alphabet

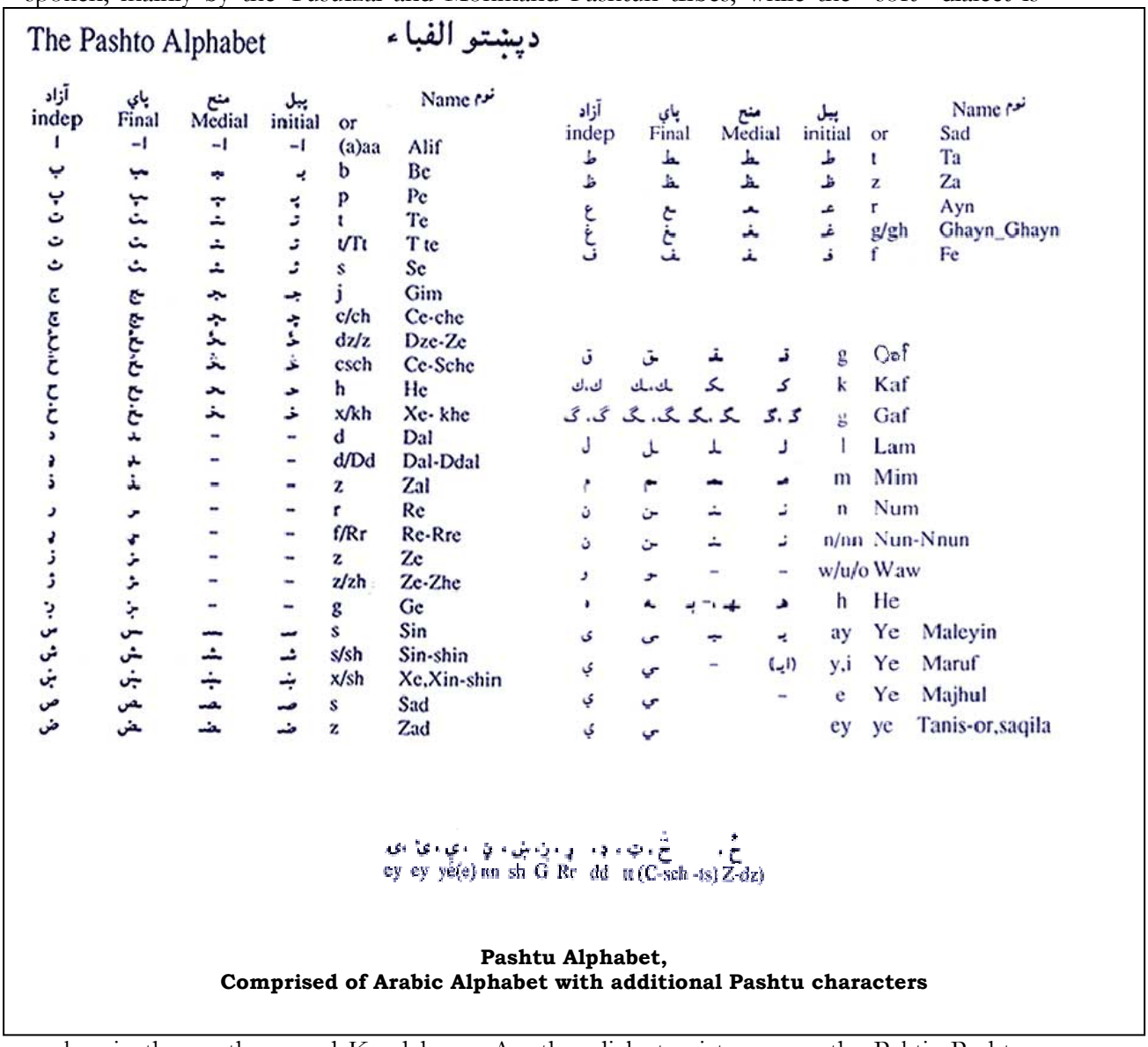
Influence on Culture

> You do not speak Pashtu; you do Pashtu.
>
> -Pashtun Proverb
> Quoted in The Performance of Emotion Among Pashtun Women

The language of Pashtu not only heavily influences Pashtun culture, but is often equated with culture or the *pushtunwali* code of behavior. In speaking, Pashtuns will often use *Pashtu* (the language), *gherat* (honor), and *sharm* (shame/modesty) interchangeably. Pashtun parents will discipline their children by saying "Don't you know Pashtu?" (*Pashtu ne pezhane?*), referring to behavior, not just language.

Dialects

Pashtu dialects vary by region in Afghanistan. In western Afghanistan, Pashtu is more influenced by contemporary Persian Farsi, and in eastern Afghanistan Pashtun is influenced by Indian languages. In the northern-most Pashtun areas, the "hard" dialect of Pashtu is spoken, mainly by the Yusufzai and Mohmand Pashtun tribes, while the "soft" dialect is



Pashtu Alphabet,
Comprised of Arabic Alphabet with additional Pashtu characters

spoken in the south around Kandahar. Another dialect exists among the Paktia Pashtun tribes, which is somewhere between the "hard" and "soft" dialects of Pashtu. Afghan Pashtu dialects are generally mutually intelligible.

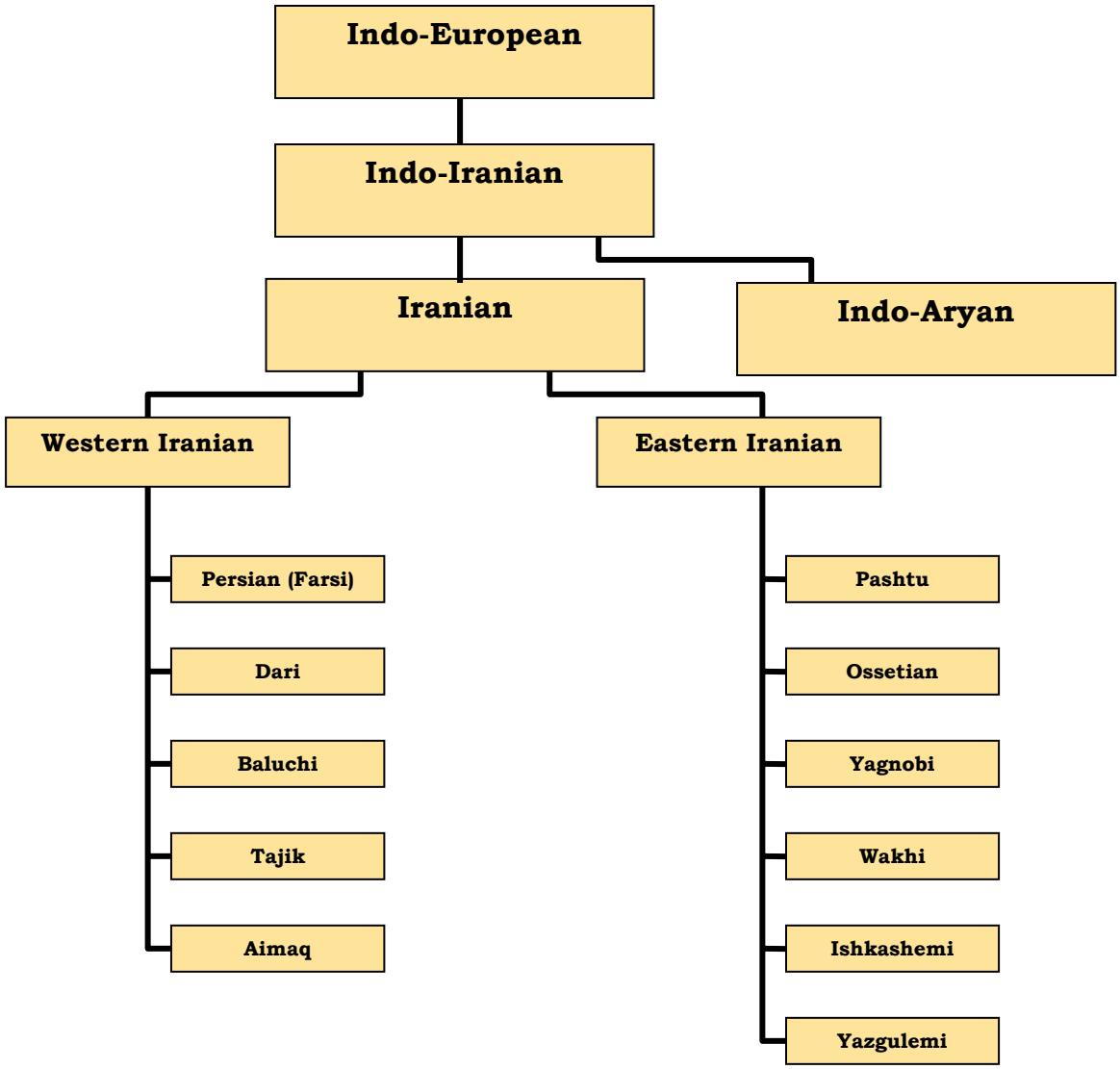


Diagram of Iranian Languages

Religion

Pashtuns are Muslims. The level of religious observation varies, but most will profess a strong adherence to the Islamic faith.

Kabul Mosque

While Islam requires that Muslims pray five times a day in the direction of Mecca, attend Friday prayers at a Mosque, refrain from eating pork, and, if possible, make a pilgrimage to Mecca, the Pashtuns of Afghanistan may or may not observe all of these religious practices.

Unlike the Saudis, religious devotion among the Pashtuns can take on a different form. Pashtuns express their religious devotion through their *Pushtunwali* code of behavior and through their commitment to defend their country and their people. Pashtuns view a holy warrior fighting *Jihad* against the enemies of Afghanistan as just as religious and holy as the person who routinely prays five times a day.

Sunni and Shia

Pashtun are generally Hanafi Sunni Muslims, but some are Shia. The two major Shia communities in Afghanistan are the *Ithna Ashariya* or *Twelvers*, also called *Imami*, and the *Ismaili*, sometimes called the *Seveners*.

Blue Mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif

Legend says Caliph Ali, leader, of the Shia division of Islam, was killed and is buried here. Both Shias and the Sunnis come to this mosque in large numbers as pilgrims, especially at the spring equinox, March 21, the Muslim New Year.

The split between Sunni and Shia Islam began to occur immediately after Prophet Mohammad's death, with the followers of Abu Bakr, one of Mohammad's early disciples, forming the Sunni branch and the followers of Ali, the Prophet's cousin and husband of his daughter Fatima, forming the Shia branch.

The historical divide of Islam into Sunni and Shia branches was originally caused more by political disputes over successors, than by doctrinal differences. Over time, the differences between Sunni and Shia Islam has gradually assumed theological overtones. Shia Muslims attach great value to the intercession of saints and clerical hierarchy, while Sunnis do not have a clerical hierarchy.

Today, 85% of the Muslim world is Sunni, while only 15% is Shia. The invasion of Afghanistan by Sunni Arab invaders and the establishment of the Sunni-based Ghaznavid

Empire in Afghanistan around 1000 A.D. checked the spread of the Shia Islam of the Iranian Empire into Central and South Asia.

In Afghanistan, Shia political activism in the 1980s-90s, mostly by the Hazara ethnic group, has increased the prominence of the Shia-Sunni issue within domestic politics. A Sunni backlash led by the Pashtuns ensued. It is difficult to disaggregate the issues of ethnic identity and religious affiliation in the violence between predominantly Sunni Pashtuns and the Shia Hazaras. Sunni Pashtun leaders have at times claimed that the Shia Hazaras were not "true" Muslims, and therefore could be persecuted. In addition, the Sunni Pashtuns view the Shia Hazaras as remnants of Persian influence in and Iranian domination over Afghanistan. In this sense, the Shia branch of Islam is sometimes described by Pashtuns as inimical to the identity of the Afghan state, which was founded in opposition to the Iranian Empire.

Schools of Islamic Law or Shariah

Both Sunni and Shia Islam have four major *Shariah*, or schools of theological law. In Afghanistan, the dominant school of the Sunni Muslims is the Hanafi. The Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence was founded by Abu Hanifa, one of the earliest Muslim scholar-interpreters to seek new ways of applying Islamic tenets to everyday life. He died in Iraq in AD 767. Abu Hanifa's interpretation of Muslim law was extremely tolerant of differences within Muslim communities. He also separated belief from practice, elevating belief over practice.

Hanafi Sunni Religious Requirements Among the Pashtuns

The Hanafi Sunni *Shariah* school of Islamic law requires prayer five times a day (*munz*), fasting during Ramadan (*rojay*), a pilgrimage to Mecca if economic circumstances allow (*haj*), a donation of 2.5% of income to the poor (*zakat*), and the duty to uphold and defend Islam through struggle (*Jihad*). Religious leaders (the *Ulema*) issue formal legal opinions (*fatwas*) based on *Shariah* law concerning major contemporary social, political, and ethical issues.

After conducting the *haj*, the pilgrim gains a new, enhanced social and religious status among the Pashtuns.

Jihad Among the Pashtuns

Islam requires that Muslims pray five times a day. During combat, Muslims do not have to observe this requirement if they are fighting what they perceive to be a "Holy War" or *Jihad*. Unlike the traditional concept of *Jihad* in Saudi Arabia and much of the Arab world, the Afghans have a more expansive view of *Jihad* as a defense of the homeland and the tribe.

Pashtuns tend to discuss historical examples of Afghan *Jihad* not as a threat to launch new religious wars, but as a testament of their individual loyalty to the Pashtun group.

Pashtun Religious Symbolism

The fig tree is known as the "fruit of heaven," as it is believed to have Prophet Mohammed when he was a child. The branches of the fig tree are used to construct the central beam of a Mosque, however fig wood is never burned by Pashtuns.

Ithna Asharia Shia

The *Ithna Asharia Shia* or *Imami* or *Twelvers* recognize twelve successive *Imams* or religious leaders, beginning with Ali and ending in AD 874 with the disappearance of the twelfth, who will return as a messianic figure at the end of the world. The *Ithna Asharia Shia* consider the *Ismailis* to be heretical Shias.

Ismaili

The *Ismaili Shia* are also known as *Seveners* because in the eighth century their leaders rejected the heir designated by the sixth *Imam*, Jafar al Sadiq (who died in 765 A.D.), whom the Imami accepted. The new group instead chose to recognize Jafar's eldest son, Ismail, as the seventh *Imam*. Ismaili beliefs are complex and syncretic, combining elements from the philosophies of Plotinus, Pythagoras, Aristotle, gnosticism, and the Manichaeans, as well as components of Judaism, Christianity, and Eastern religions.

Ismailis are found primarily in and near the eastern Hazarajat, in the Baghlan area north of the Hindu Kush, among the mountain Tajik of Badakhshan, and amongst the Wakhi in the Wakhan Corridor. The *pir* or leader of Afghan *Ismailis* comes from the Sayyid family of Kayan, located near Doshi, a small town at the northern foot of the Salang Pass, in western Baghlan Province. During the Soviet-Afghan War this family acquired considerable political power.

Sufi Brotherhoods

Among the Pashtuns there are also some followers of Sufism, especially within the *Qadiriya tariqat* or Brotherhood. These *Qadiriya* Pashtun *sufis* are primarily located around Wardak, Paktya and Ningrahar, including many Ghilzai nomadic groups. Sufism began in the 12th century and is a monastic tradition that seeks personal communion with God through mystic moments of union brought about by various methods, including meditation, recitation of sacred phrases, breathing exercises, dancing, hymn singing, music, and physical gyrations.

Buddhism

Buddhism is not practiced in Afghanistan today, but forms part of Afghanistan's ancient identity. While contemporary Afghanistan was still ruled by the Iranian Seleucid dynasty it was attacked and partially conquered by the Mauryan Empire of India. Heavily influenced by the Mauryan Empire, Afghanistan was introduced to Buddhism by governors, merchants, and traders under Mauryan rule around approximately 353 B.C. After a hundred years of

Mauryan influence, Afghanistan was overrun in 250 B.C. by the Kushans, a nomadic people speaking Indo-European languages. The Kushans established a powerful, thriving empire in Afghanistan that lasted 400 years, and is sometimes viewed as a "Golden Age" for Afghanistan. The Kushan Empire encouraged the practice and spread of Buddhism, and during this period Buddhism became a major religion in Afghanistan. At its height, the Kushan Empire stretched to the mouth of the Indus on the Arabian Sea, to Tibet to the east, and to the center of the Iranian Plateau to the west. Although Buddhism is contrary to Afghanistan's almost homogeneous Islamic identity today, the Buddhist identity in Afghanistan is associated with the culture, power, and economic success of the Kushan Empire of Afghanistan.

The Taliban's destruction of the great Buddhist statues at Bamian in western central Afghanistan was ostensibly motivated by a desire to "rid the country of foreign non-Islamic religious influence and identity." However, it is quite likely that the cause of this destruction of a cultural monument was less religious animus than both a desire to draw world attention to Afghanistan and its plight, and a desire by the Pashtun-dominated Taliban government of Afghanistan to persecute the Hazara minority population who live in this region by depriving them of an important symbol. Although the Hazaras are Shia Muslims related to Persians, the Hazaras had come to view the Buddha statues as a cultural icon that they had appropriated as their own. The destruction of these Buddha statues has become a rallying point for Hazara political resistance against what the Hazaras believe is a larger Pashtun conspiracy against the Hazara people.

Customs

Greetings

Handshakes can be used to greet Afghan males, although it is more common to bow or embrace. Males often kiss twice when they meet, or walk down the road hand in hand or arm in arm, but this is a sign of friendship, not homosexuality. Verbal greetings are often delivered with the right hand over the heart. A common Pashtu greeting is "*Khubus ti?*" ("How are you?").

Greeting Afghan Males

Men do not physically touch women in greetings, although they may indirectly greet her in a verbal fashion. Women greet each other with a kiss or embrace.

Gestures

To beckon someone, one motions downward with the palm of the hand facing the ground. To request divine assistance, one holds both hands in front of the chest, palms upward. Afghans typically sit with legs crossed, but pointing the soles of the feet towards someone is impolite. Using the left hand for passing items is also impolite.

Sense of Time

The Afghan has a very different sense of time than the Westerner. Afghans are frequently late for meetings. Often, the length of time a task will take is of no importance to the Afghan. The Afghan is primarily concerned with seeing that the task gets accomplished. In this regard, the Afghan can be infinitely patient.

Negotiations

Negotiations are a common feature of Afghan cultural life. They are conducted constantly, even in the middle of conflict. Westerners often perceive that Afghan negotiations make things go unnecessarily slowly.

In conducting business negotiations in Afghanistan, it is necessary to visit with the vendor or business person and drink tea, and, when offered, eat fruits and nuts. Purchases can often take a substantial amount of time.

Social Visits and Hospitality

When visiting other families, men and women will sit in separate rooms. Guests are expected to have at least three cups of tea and perhaps something to eat. If guests eat with a host, a few loud belches are considered polite at the end of the meal, and a sign that the meal was well-enjoyed. Any business discussions occur after refreshments. Guests do not bring gifts.

Hospitality is not only a Pashtun custom, but also a part of the *pashtunwali* code of behavior (*melmastya*). Pashtun traditions require that hosts provide lavish hospitality, often beyond their means, to guests, even those they have just met. Receiving a guest reflects favorably on the host and creates a relationship of dependence between the guest and host.

> Hospitality must be offered to anyone who steps onto one's property, and it can even be imposed upon those who don't ask for it. When I was herding with some girls in the mountains, a woman whose land we happened to be on and who realized by shouts that I was a stranger, ran two miles across the hills from her house with a glass of lemonade for me, so that it would not be said that she had given me nothing when I was a guest on her land.
>
> -Benedict Grima, 1992:4

Games

Afghans enjoy wrestling and soccer is a popular national sport, although only men may play. Cricket has migrated into Afghanistan from Pakistan.

A memory game involves breaking the chicken wish-bone (*chenq*). It does not matter which piece one gets, however, whenever one of the players hands the other player an object, he must immediately reply "I remember" (*Mara yad ast).* When one player forgets, the winner says "Memory for me, forgetfulness for you" and the loser usually has to provide the winner with a feast.

Buzkashi, a precusor of polo, is an Afghan game played on horseback, where riders seek to grab a headless calf and swing it onto their saddle and ride with the calf carcass around a track to score a goal.

Pashtuns perform the *attan*, a dance in the open air that is the Pashtun's national ethnic dance, which has also become a part of Afghan cultural life.

Three, Five, and Seven are believed to be good Islamic numbers.

Silver fish pendants are symbols of fertility. These are usually given by the groom's family to the bride prior to a wedding.

Hunters place horns and antlers on the graves of the dead, perhaps a pre-Islamic practice.

- Don't click the scissors, it brings about a fight.
- If you draw lines on the ground you will be in debt.
- If you shake the bunch of keys it might bring about a fight.
- If you sit on the threshold, your father will be in debt.

-Pashtun Superstitions

Lifestyle

Role of Family

Marriages are important in Afghanistan, as they are the foundation not only for the relationship between husband and wife and children, but for much political and economic activity, as well as the principal means by which status is expressed and validated. The Pashtun Afghan family prefers to marry its children to first cousins, in order to keep the family unit tightly bound together. The Pashtun Afghan family is patriarchal, with the oldest male retaining almost all authority. Pashtun families pass the right of inheritance through the line of the oldest male. When a husband and wife marry, the wife goes to live with the husband in the home of his extended family. Polygamy (multiple wives) is permitted, but is no longer so widely practiced. It is vital for couples to have children. When multiple wives are taken, it is usually to take in a young widow who needs protection or to have children when the first wife is believed to be barren, without the social stigma of divorce. When there are multiple wives in a household, each wife typically would have her own room and her own belongings.

The family is a place of socialization, where children receive much of their education, especially after the destruction of the public educational system over the last twenty years.

Role of Women

There is a wide range of standards set for accepted female behavior, as well as differences in male attitudes toward correct treatment of women. Generally, however, throughout Afghanistan and throughout Afghan history, women have had limited public roles. Contradictions arise between traditional customary, tribal practices, many of which impinge on the rights of women and are alien to the spirit of Islam. Islamic teachings on gender are, however, also subject to diverse interpretation among reformists, Islamists and ultraconservatives.

During the Taliban government, the most conservative tribal and religious views of women prevailed. The Taliban was largely led by rural Pashtuns from strongly patriarchal backgrounds. Females were segregated from males at puberty, a Pashtun social convention called *purdah*, which lasts throughout life. *Purdah* requires that the female have no contact with non-family males.

Many times in Afghan history governments have attempted to open up a broader role for women in public life. Under pressure from the international community, the Afghan Interim government has included women in its cabinet. Gender issues, however, have always been explosive politically. Some parts of the Afghanistan population view gender reform as a method by which outside actors seek to exercise power over Afghanistan.

Gender reform was central to the contentious issues which brought about the fall of King Amanullah in 1929. In 1959, the government of Prime Minister Daoud Khan supported the voluntary removal of the veil, and the end of seclusion for women. The 1964 Constitution

automatically enfranchised women and guaranteed them the right to education and freedom to work.

For thirty years after 1959 growing numbers of women, most from urban backgrounds, functioned in the public arena, with no loss of honor to themselves or to their families. Nevertheless, family pressures, traditional attitudes and religious opposition continued to impose constraints which limited the degree to which women could find self-expression and control their lives.

Except in Kabul where women under the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) were encouraged to assume more assertive public roles,. Conservative *Mujahideen* leaders during war adopted traditional views of women and began to restrict their public roles. As noted, these attitudes greatly intensified under the Taliban since 1996.

Role of Men

Pashtun men are generally providers for the family, however, in rural areas there is a greater division of labor between man and woman over household affairs. Men generally work with the animals, while women do the weaving and cooking. Women also work extensively in the small agricultural plots tended by the family for their own consumption.

This division of labor is out of necessity due to the magnitude of labor involved in rural farming or the nomadic existence, but has inculcated a different form of husband-wife dynamics than is often present in urban areas. This higher level of interdependence between man and woman in rural areas, and the dynamics that this interdependence causes can be contrary to common popular notions of the cosmopolitan identity of urban dwellers versus the rustic, parochial and patriarchical identities of rural dwellers.

Pashtun men are bound by the *Pashtunwali* to uphold their honor and the honor of the family. Men are proud of their fierce, martial reputation.

Dating and Marriage

Dating is an unknown institution in Afghanistan. Pre-marital or extra-marital sex can be punishable by death. Marriages are arranged or negotiated, mainly by the female family members. It is preferred to find a mate from among one's first cousins, or if this is not feasible, to seek to choose a mate that would maintain tribal solidarity.

Before the marriage, the groom's family pays the bride's family a "brideprice," usually in property or livestock. A bride's status is related to how much the groom's family will pay. For this reason, there are many older men married to very young women, as men sometimes cannot afford to pay the "brideprice" until they have worked for many years. The bride also gives the groom a dowry (*khawkul*), usually household items that she and her mother have been making for years.

After negotiations have been conducted, several older women from the groom's family travel to the bride's family for the commitment to marriage (*labs-griftan*). This event consists

of the bride's family giving sweets, tea, a sugarloaf (*qand*), and an embroidered handkerchief to the groom's family.

The actual engagement (*khwalish-khwari:* "taking of the sweets") occurs sometime later. At the engagement, the groom's family breaks the sugarloaf over the bride's head. If it breaks into many pieces, this is a good sign that the couple will be happy. Part of the loaf is then saved for desserts to be served at the wedding (*wadeh*).

September is the favored time for weddings. Typically, weddings take place over three days. On the first day, the bride's family goes to visit with the groom's family. On the second day, the groom, on a decorated horse, leads a procession of his family, accompanied by musicians and dancers. During this procession, it is common to fire rifles into the air. On the third day a feast is held at the groom's house and finally the bride is taken back to the groom's house on horseback at the front of the procession. The feast is followed by a religious ceremony where the mullah holds a Quran over the heads of the couple, while guest throw sugared almonds and walnuts at the groom. A male relative then paints the groom's little finger with henna and ties a piece of embroidered cloth to the finger. The bride's father then performs the *kamarbandi*, where seven veils are placed over the bride, symbolizing marital happiness, family prosperity, individual purity, and collective security. Four objects, saffron, sugar, cloves, and a coin, are tied to the corners of the seventh veil. These are taken off and the veil is knotted around the bride's waist, releasing her to the groom. In rural areas and in older times, if the bride was not a virgin, she could be killed and replaced by her sister. Two days after the wedding, the bride and groom are usually visited by family and friends, and given gifts.

Afghan Children Playing

Role of Children

Afghan children are mainly socialized by the family, the place where they spend most of the their time, and the environment in which they will receive much of their education.

Afghan male children play in public spaces from an early age. Afghan female children, however, are not generally allowed to play in public spaces, although they are not separated from nonfamily males and put into seclusion (*purdah*) until puberty.

Death

Death is marked by a massive meal, a *kherat*, that is open to the entire village. These meals are very expensive to provide and can economically ruin a family, but it is necessary to provide them in order to maintain social standing in the community.

Clothing

Nearly all Afghans wear a *perahan tunban*, a knee-length shirt worn over baggy trousers that are pulled tight with a drawstring. Young unmarried Pashtun nomad girls wear long black cotton shirts (*kamis*) and red pants, while married women wear the *kamis* with blue pants.

Afghan Children Wearing *Perahan Tunban* and Caps

During the winter, Afghans wear a sheepskin coat (*pustin*), a short-sleeved white raw wool vest (*kusay*), or a long cloak draped over the shoulders (*paysawal*).

Ethnic clothing is used by all Afghan ethnic groups to build pride and a sense of social superiority, particularly in mixed ethnic zones. The most striking differences are noted in dress, particularly in headgear.

Headgear

Afghans wear caps or turbans. Caps are round, conical or peaked, each with material and decoration that makes it a distinctive indicators between and within many ethnic groups. Young boys usually wear caps until they are circumcised, at which time they wear turbans. Turbans (*lungi*) are characteristic of the Pashtun. Pashtuns wear their turbans with one end hanging loose down over the shoulder. Turbans are used for many purposes. Turbans are used to store snacks or small objects and to cover the face during sand storms. Turban cloth can be unwound to lift objects or play games.

Afghan Child with Turban

Pakol hats are common among all ethnic groups in Afghanistan. They can be rolled down over the ears and sides of the face for warmth.

Chadiri/Burka

When women go in public, at least under the Taliban, they always wore the *Chadiri*, a head-to-toe covering. The *Chadiri* is not unique to the Taliban era and will likely survive the end of the Taliban. However, after the end of the Taliban rule in late 2001, some women have elected to not cover their heads entirely while in public.

Afghan Woman Wearing *Chadiri*

Post-Taliban Afghan Woman Wearing *Chadiri*, with Some Uncovered Heads

Tawiz

Many people, especially children, wear an amulet to protect them against evil.

Footwear

Flat sandals are common footwear, although Pashtuns and Afghans will also wear sneakers or boots. Open-toed and open-heeled leather or straw sandals are common, often with a rubber tire sole. Boots include a high leather boot (*maksis*), or a calf-high boot with a soft sole (*chamus).*

Pakol Hat

Diet

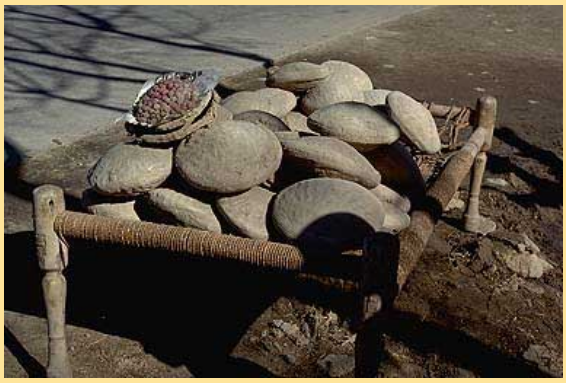
Rural Afghans usually eat only breakfast and dinner, but some have a light lunch. Rural Afghans generally eat on a mat on the floor out of a communal dish. All Afghans eat large amounts of bread (*nan*) made into flat loaves. To eat, one uses the fingers of the right hands or a piece of *nan*. One never uses the left hand to serve oneself.

Open Air Food Market in Kabul

Meat forms a large part of the Pashtun diet, with the exception of pork, which most Afghan Muslims believe is an unclean meat. Muslims cannot any meat, however, unless the throat is cut before the animal dies. Often meat is boiled, seasoned, and served mixed into rice dish. This dish is called *pilau* and is generally the main dish served at a meal. *Pilau* can also be used to refer to food in general.

Open Air Food Market in Kabul

The main *pilau* include a plain rice dish with mutton or chicken in the center (*chilaw*), a rice dish with raisins, shredded carrots, almonds, and pistachios (*Qabli*), rice with spinach (*Sabzi* or *zamarud*), rice with peas (*mashong*), rice with eggs (*reshta*), rice with eggplant (*bonjan-i-sia*), rice with orange peels (*naranj*), rice with dried meat (*landi*), and rice with head and feet of sheep, a speciality usually served to honored guests, including the eyeballs (*kala-pacheh*).



At harvest, grape bunches are enclosed in a discus-shaped crust of mud, straw, and manure, which is baked until the crust hardens. In winter and spring remarkably fresh grapes are available by breaking the crust. This traditonal product is known as *congenas*.

A mixture of pickled vegetables (*torshi*) is normally served with the *pilau*.

Other popular meat dishes include *kabobs* of beef or lamb roasted over charcoal, and *kuftah-kabob*. *Kabobs* are meat on a skewer, possibly seasoned with crushed grape seeds, paprika, and black pepper, and are usually served with a salad of chopped onions and tomatoes. *Kuftah-kabob* is a roast meatball with onion in it.

Side dishes are usually vegetables in tomato sauces, including spinach (*sabzi* or *palak*), potatoes (*kachalu*), peas (*mashong*), eggplant (*bonjan-i-sia*), carrots (*zardak*), turnips (*shalgham*), and squash (*kadu*). Yogurt (*mast*) is also sometimes served as a side dish or mixed into the rice. Other milk products served include cottage cheese (*panir-chakah*), sour milk (*dugh*), dried cheese balls (*qrut*)Meals may include a winter soup (*shorwa*) or a summer soup (*badrang*).

Butchery in Kabul

A thick dessert (*faludah*) is made with milk and wheat flour, boiled and served with rice syrup. Other desserts include puddings (*firni*) and fruits. Some men may smoke tobacco in a pipe (*chelem*) after a meal. Some also may smoke marijuana (*chars*) or opium (*teryak*).

Chori, a combination of cooked flour, oil, and raw sugar, is distributed to the poor during the month of Prophet Mohammad's death.

Cultural Economy

The Pashtun are basically farmers or nomadic herdsmen, although they usually have additional trade practices and several groups are renowned for specialized occupations. The monarchy and many government bureaucrats were Durrani Pashtun, the Ahmadzai Ghilzai are consulted for their legal abilities, the Andar Ghilzai specialize in constructing and repairing the *karez,* underground irrigation systems, and the Shinwari of Paktia monopolize the lumber trade.

Spring Planting in Afghanistan

Most Pashtun farmers own their own land, although the average plot is small and there are relatively few landowners with large estates. In all areas water is a scarce commodity and must be carefully managed. Because of the scarcity of water, only 10-12% of the surface of Afghanistan is cultivated. Ingenious indigenous irrigation techniques are used throughout the country, including hand-dug underground water channel systems called *karez.* These carry water for many miles from the base of mountains to fields on the plains. Vertical holes are dug ever 20-30 meters, with tunnels dug out to connect them. The vertical holes are covered to prevent evaporation loss, but used to access the water system to maintain the tunnels. Frequently, these tunnels will collapse and be re-built on a different course. One will frequently see multiple sunken channels on the ground surface connecting the vertical holes.

Evidence of Rebuilt Karez

Wooden Plow

Afghan agriculture continues to use ancient methods, such as the ox-drawn wooden plow.

In addition to forestry and traditional crops of corn, wheat, and barley, the Pashtun farmers have grown large quantities of opium, although the Taliban cracked down on opium production in the last years of its rule.

Many farmers also practice an additional trade in the afternoons or evenings, such as carpentry, masonary, or butchery.

Opium Crop

There are approximately 1.5 million herdsmen in Afghanistan, 80% of whom are Durrani and Ghilzai Pashtun and most of whom are semi-nomadic. These herdsmen make annual migrations with large flocks of sheep and goats from lowland winter settlements, where they sow and reap crops and live in housing of a fairly permanent nature and were portions of the tribe maintain a permanent residence, to highland summer pastures located above 1,000 meters and sometimes as high as 3,500 meters. Here they occupy fixed grazing grounds which they do not own, but on which they have traditional grazing rights, sometimes for a fee. Other nomadic groups practice various types of trading.

Cobbler in Kabul

The herds are composed largely of sheep, including a valuable breed called *karakul* or Persian Lamb, a major export. Only 10-40% of the herds are goats because the market price for sheep is usually twice that of goats.

Blacksmith Shop in Kabul

Each nomadic family has approximately 100 animals, but typically 4-6 households will join together to form herd units of optimal size consistent with the labor capacities of individual families and conditions of the pastures. Each herd unit is tended by a shepherd, who is paid a share of the animals born under his care.

Families move along lower routes more suitable for the heavily laden camels, horses and donkeys carrying household goods, women, children and the elderly. For some, the migration may be only a matter of a few kilometers; others move up to 500 kilometers away from their winter headquarters. Many nomadic Pashtuns had migratory routes that crossed over into the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. However, in 1961 Pakistan closed the "Durand Line" between Pakistan and Afghanistan to nomadic herdsmen, severing these migratory patterns. This still

Cultivated Poplar Tree Farm

causes considerable tension within Afghanistan, as many Pashtuns believe they are blocked from using their rightful grazing grounds in Pakistan.

Camp sites seldom include more than 100 single household dwellings; often no more than five. These portable dwellings are of distinct shapes, including several variants of the classic rectangular black goat's hair tent.

The nomads maintain relationships with both agriculturalists and merchants to whom they sell pastoral products, mainly live animals, wool, skins and dairy products, in exchange for agricultural produce. Poorer nomadic families may serve farmers as seasonal labor during harvest periods, while richer nomads who extend credit may acquire land from farmers who, unable to pay their debts, become their tenants. Nomads also act as disseminators of local news.

Nomads Travelling with Camels

Transport Camels

The general conflict of the Soviet-Afghan war, exacerbated by the indiscriminate dropping of mines from helicopters onto pastures, has reduced some of the normal nomadic migrations in Afghanistan. Some nomadic groups acquired significant political power during the war, however, due to their roles in the guerilla resistance and in the transportation of arms. Since the war, the reduction in migration has caused political tensions within Afghanistan over land settlement rights, as the nomads, newly empowered by their role during the war and in search of a more settled way of life, began to occupy land held by other settled tribes. Since coming to

Young Afghan Shepherd

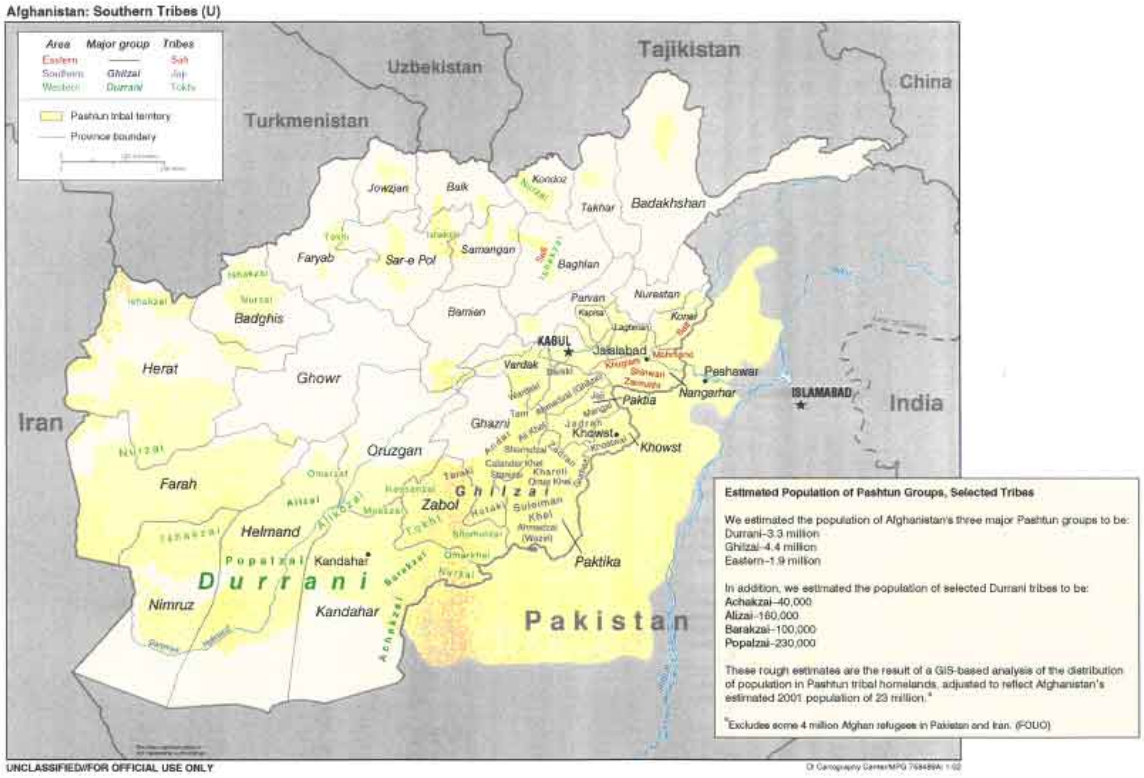
power in 1996, the Pashtun-dominated Taliban were obliged to sanction the nomad occupations because of their superior strength.

Cultural Geography

The Pashtun ethnic group is primarily located in southern Afghanistan and spans the border with Pakistan, where there are an additional 14 million Pashtuns, mainly in the North-West Province. In Pakistan, there are the Eastern Pashtun tribes, which include the Yusufzai and Afridi subtribes, and branches of the Orakzai and Mohmand subtribes.

The Pashtuns in Afghanistan are concentrated primarily in a large crescent-shaped belt following the Afghan-Pakistani border on the east, southward from Nuristan, across the south, and northward along the Iranian border almost to Herat.

The Afghan Pashtun ethnic group is composed of many subunits, the most numerous being the Durrani and the Ghilzai. The Durrani tribes are located primarily in the south of Afghanistan, stretching from the Iranian border to the Kandahar region in the southeast of Afghanistan along the Pakistani border. The Ghilzai tribes are concentrated along the Pakistani border, running north from the Kandahar region towards Kabul and Jalalabad.



Within the Durrani Pashtun tribes there are several subtribes, including the Achakzai, Alizai, Barakzai, Mohammadzai, and Popalzai.

Several subtribes within the Ghilzai Pashtun tribe include the Ahmadzai, Kharruti, Hotaki, Wardak, Jaji, Jadran (or Zadran). Other smaller Pashtun tribes include the Tani, the Mangal, the Khugiani and Safi (around Jalalabad), Mohmand, Afridi, Khatak, Orakzai, Waziri, Mahsud, Chamkani, and Shinwari.

In the eastern province of Paktia, which juts out into Pakistan, there is a concentration of Pashtuns from the Zadran, Mangal, Ahmadzai, and Tani tribes. This region is politically very fragmented as no Pashtun tribe is clearly dominant.

The Zadran tribe is the largest tribe in Paktia. They were strong supporters of the *Mujahideen* movement during the Soviet-Afghan war. They have a history of cooperation with the Ahmadzai and Jaji tribes. Prominent Zadran tribal leaders include Pacha Khan Zadran, Jalaluddin Haqqani, Haji Abdol Rahman, and Gul Abdin Zadran.

The Mangals reside in northern Paktia and the Kurram river valley. They have a history of rivalry with the Chakmani, Turki, and Jaji tribes.

The Ahmadzai tribe is part of the Ghilzai tribe and a traditionally nomadic people. Subtribes of the Ahmadzai include the Utmanzai and Mahsud. The Former President of Afghanistan Najibullah was an Ahmadzai.

The Tani tribe live in and around the Tani district of southwestern Khowst province, an area surrounded by Zadran tribes.

The Jaji tribe is located primarily in northern Paktia between Lowgar Province and the Pakistani city of Parachinar. The subtribes of the Jaji include the Ada Khel, the Petla, the Ahmad Khel, the Bayan Khel, the Lehwani, the Ali Khel, the Jamu Khel, the Husain Khel, and the Karaia Ahmad Khel.

The Chamkani tribe is a small group living in the Chamkani district in northern Paktia. They also belong to the Ghilzai group and have subtribes including the Mada Khel, the Kamzai, the Babu Khel, the Darman Khel, the Sulaiman Khel, the Baghiar, and the Hisarak.

The many divisions within the Ghilzai Pashtun tribes in the Paktia region became relevant to US military operations during the December 2001 US-led attack on the Tora Bora cave complex. The Tora Bora cave complex was built by the *Mujahideen* in the 1980s during the Soviet-Afghan war with US financial assistance and used by Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda fighters, and the Taliban. After the US military operation in Afghanistan took control of Jalalabad, bin Laden, his Al Qaeda troops and loyal Taliban troops retreated to Tora Bora. The US enlisted local help among the Ghilzai Pashtuns to attack Tora Bora, including Maulvi Younus Khalis, Hazret Ali, and Haji Zaman Ghamsharik. Khalis is a patriarchal leader of the Jalalabad area and senior member of the Eastern Shura, a self-proclaimed government in the region. In the 1980s, he was a key ally to the US. Khalis later started a relationship with Osama bin Laden, hosting the Al Qaeda leader when he returned to Afghanistan from Sudan in May 1996. Ali is a warlord operating under Khalis, but with strong ties to the central Karzai government. Ali appeared to fear Khalis' strong local patriarchal influence among the Ghilzai subtribes in Paktia. Ghamsharik, a member of the Khugiani subtribe of the Ghilzai Pashtuns, returned from exile in France to join the US military operation against Tora Bora. The divisions within the Ghilzai Pashtun tribes in this region contributed to shifting loyalties between these commanders, Al Qaeda, the central government, and the local population.

The Wazir tribe lives primarily in the lower Khowst Valley in Khowst Province. The Wazir tribe includes a grouping of clans such as the Khattak, Mahsud, and Kakar.

Enclaves of Pashtun also live scattered among other ethnic groups throughout the nation. These Pashtun enclaves represent some voluntary migration in search of economic opportunity, but are primarily the results of forced migration designed to ethnically homogenize the Afghan nation, to colonize the northern reaches of the nation with Pashtun strongholds, or to punish political opposition. In the late 19th century thousands of Amir Abdur Rahman's Pashtun opponents were forced into the north of Afghanistan. Between 1947-1949 thousands more Pashtuns were forcibly relocated in the north following revolts among the Safi Pashtun in eastern Afghanistan.

Culture and Warfare

Jihad

Jihad is an Islamic concept for "Holy Struggle." This concept has not always referred only to armed struggle. *Jihad* can include nonviolent struggle against sin, oppression, or injustice. However, in Afghanistan *Jihad* has been consistently linked to armed struggle.

To a Muslim, it is a duty and an honor to fight in a *Jihad* against non-Islamic people in order to defend the Islamic faith. The concept of *Jihad* is that of a defensive war. *Jihad* is not a justification to launch a war. According to the Koran, if an Islamic warrior dies while fighting in *Jihad*, he becomes a *Shaheed* (martyr). A *Shaheed* is instantly forgiven all his sins and goes directly to paradise. A *Shaheed* is buried in his clothes as he has fallen, without washing and without a coffin. When fighting during the Soviet Afghan war, the *Mujahideen* commanders would not announce casualties, but would say "Allah be praised, we had a number of *Shaheed*!"

If a Muslim fights in a *Jihad* and survives, he is known as a *Ghazi*. A *Ghazi* is accorded great respect and is known as a holy man, even holier than those who prayer regularly and observe other Muslim traditions.

Throughout the history of Afghanistan Islamic leaders have periodically launched *Jihad* holy wars against foreign powers. Most of these *Jihads* were, however, more designed to achieve a domestic political objective than to vindicate a religious belief or defend Islam. Often the term *Jihad* is linked in the Pashtun's mind with a war to defend the Afghanistan homeland from foreign invaders. From the formation of the Afghan state in 1747 through much of the 19th century, *Jihad* was used in this way, promoting holy war against the British empire. Sometimes *Jihad* has been used by Afghan leaders to consolidate domestic power; Abur Rahman used *Jihad* in this way, calling for holy war against tribal and local leaders who were resisting his attempts to form a centralized government of Afghanistan.

One possible exception is the Afghan *Jihad* against the Nuristanis. The Nuristanis belonged to a Hindu-based religion, *Kalash*, and were only forcibly converted to Islam during their incorporation into Afghanistan in 1893. Afghanistan launched repeated attacks on Nuristan, also called "Kafirstan," or "Land of the Infidels," over the centuries in order to make this area Islamic.

During the Soviet-Afghan war 1979-89 the *Mujahideen* declared that their struggle against the Soviets was a *Jihad*. The *Mujahideen* professed to believe that they were waging a holy war against the Soviet invaders. To some *Mujahideen* commanders, the fact that the Soviets were atheists made the holy war even more important. To other *Mujahideen* commanders, the motivation to fight this war was less theological, than national.

Mujahideen and the Afghan Warrior

Pashtun cultural influence on warfare is epitomized by the Afghan *Mujahideen*, a movement which the Pashtuns dominated.

Mujahideen means "Soldiers of God." A member of the *Mujahideen* is a *Mujahid*. The battle cry of the *Mujahideen* is "Allah o Akbar" (God is Great).

During the Soviet war, the *Mujahideen* was a heavily decentralized group. Much of Afghan military history reflects similiar decentralized groups fighting under different commanders and political leaders. The *Mujahideen* consisted of seven different political leaders: Gul Badin Hekmatyar, Khalis, Rabbani, Sayaf, Molvi Nabi, Pir Gailani, and Hazrat Mujaddadi. Each political leader had his own independent military commander fighting inside of Afghanistan. Each military commander typically controlled operations within a specified geographical area.

Mujahideen units typically consisted of related members from the same village. This further contributed to the decentralized nature of the *Mujahideen*.

During the Soviet war, the *Mujahid* was typically a volunteer fighter, who would fight part time and then return to civilian life to tend to his household and crops. The ability of the Afghan fighter to quickly blend back into civilian life both strengthens the Afghan forces, which do not have to maintain complicated logistical support systems, and weakens opposing forces, as it makes it much more difficult to concentrate and isolate Afghan units.

The Afghan warrior values physical fitness, resilience, and courage. Afghan males are raised from childhood to handle weapons and frequently will carry around their weapons, even in peacetime.

Afghans have historically lacked unit training and discipline.

Approaches to Warfighting

Afghan guerilla tactics draw heavily from experience fighting conventional military forces, such as the British in the 1800s and the Soviet Union during the 1980s. Afghans are adept at waging irregular warfare. Their country's rough terrain and harsh conditions have made such tactics necessary. Afghan cultural traits, such as decentralized clan-based loyalties and Afghan cultural values, such as valor and physical fitness, make Afghans ideally suited for guerilla warfare.

The Afghans believe warfare is a contest of endurance. Afghan *Mujahideen* value displays of courage while leading an assault more than holding terrain or capturing objectives. The purpose of warfare is to obtain glory and recognition for your tribal clan. Western measures of military victory are secondary.

During the US-led war in Afghanistan, US troops attempted to let Afghan troops play roles in which they would have visibility, and in which they could claim responsibility for success.

This often worked to their disadvantage. During one raid on a safehouse, US forces breached the perimeter and allowed the Afghan troops to come forward, toss in grenades, and rush into the building, laying down a wall of fire. Eager to claim responsibility for taking down the house, the Afghan troops ran to the breached wall, threw in their grenades, and rushed forward, firing their guns before the grenades exploded. As a result, there were serious injuries among the Afghan troops.

During the Soviet war in Afghanistan, Pakistani advisors attempted to get the *Mujahideen* to attack the Soviet oil pipeline along the Salang Highway to the Bagram Air Base. It was an above ground pipeline and an obvious strategic target. Nevertheless, the *Mujahideen* did not want to attack it because this sort of sabotage attack would involve no opportunity for glory, no combat.

The decentralized structure of Afghan forces have historically empowered Afghans in guerilla campaigns, but weakened them when larger operations were required. During the Soviet war, the division of the *Mujahideen* into seven groups precluded any effective joint operations. This diminished the ability of the *Mujahideen* to launch large offensive assaults. Each group had some heavy equipment, but not enough to be effective individually.

Ambush

The most used and effective Afghan *Mujahideen* tactic is the ambush. The use of the ambush is deeply rooted in Afghan warrior culture, and has been used for hundreds of years against invading forces. Afghan *Mujahideen* ambushes are limited to small groups, rarely exceeding 50 men. Fighters choose advantageous terrain, surprise the enemy, quickly inflict casualties, steal supplies, and retreat. Afghan *Mujahideen* will rarely attempt to hold ground. Their goal is to inflict continuous damage, and prolong the conflict until the enemy loses its will.

The restrictive terrain and limited lines of communication favors Afghan *Mujahideen* ambush tactics. Valleys, ravines, and gorges are useful ambush sites. The Afghan *Mujahideen* conducts surveillance to learn enemy security patterns, convoy procedures, and force disposition. Automatic weapons, light machine-guns, landmines, and Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) are used for short, concentrated periods on enemy convoys and patrols. When fighting the Soviets, the RPG became the chosen weapon for attacking personnel, light armor, and helicopters.

Raids

Raids are conducted against fixed positions to inflict damage and weaken enemy resolve. Raids are larger operations conducted by 50-100 fighters broken into three or four subgroups. In Afghan culture, honor is gained by leading the attack. Providing security or reserve forces is an insult to a unit's honor. Often, despite battle plans, multiple subgroups will attempt to lead an assault against the main objective. The Afghans were slow in learning the value of security and support elements when fighting the Soviets.

Similar to ambush tactics, raids are rarely conducted to seize terrain. Instead, the intent is to keep the enemy off balance by attacking areas believed secure. The *Mujahideen* avoids

extensive engagement, which negate surprise. The Afghans prefer to retreat before the enemy employs artillery, airpower, or reserve forces. Stand-off attacks are common; the *Mujahideen* advances to the maximum weapons range, launches a short, intense attack, and then retreats.

Defense

Afghan tribal culture values offensive operations. As a result, *Mujahideen* tactics do not stress defensive operations. The *Mujahideen* best defense is to avoid enemy contact, unless launching an ambush or raid.

The Soviets relied heavily on artillery and airpower in an attempt to exploit this vulnerability, and weaken Afghan forces. Afghan fighters, however, will not maintain a defensive front when confronted with overwhelming conventional military force. Instead, the Afghan *Mujahideen* would disengage and retreat from Soviet forces into difficult terrain and underground facilities.

When the Soviets would launch an offensive operation on a *Mujahideen* facility, they would often fail to capture *Mujahideen* fighters, instead decimating civilian populations in villages where the fighters were known to live. In November 1983 Soviet forces moved against *Mujahideen* forces in the Istalef, Farza, and Shakadar valleys. These *Mujahideen* forces had used their positions in these valleys to launch raids on convoys driving on the Salang Highway, the strategic land corridor between Kabul and the Soviet Union. The Soviets sent a slow-moving column of tanks and armoured personnel carriers (APCs) from the 108th Motorized Rifle Division (MRD), with helicopter gunship support, up the highway to the valley entrances. By this time, the *Mujahideen* in these valleys were well aware of what was about to take place and they withdrew from the valleys into the surrounding highlands to the west. The next day the operation commenced with Soviet bombers from the Bagram airfield. When the land forces from the MRD arrived in the valley villages, they found only dead civilians and destroyed buildings.

The Soviets achieved more success in their operations against the *Mujahideen* when they learned to pursue and surround *Mujahideen* forces and prevent escape, a tactic also used by the United States against Taliban and *al Qaeda* forces.

At the same time, however, the guerilla warfighting tactics of the Afghan and the ability of the Afghan to utilize terrain to escape from a geographic area and blend back into civilian population places limits on how much strategic utility can be derived from this tactic of surrounding Afghan forces and attacking these concentrated pockets of forces.

Afghan warfighting tactics appear to have continued to evolve in this area, as *al Qaeda* and Taliban forces learned how to appear to be concentrated in a geographic area, drawing sustained US attacks, while at the same time moving to disperse fighters out of this area to conduct operations elsewhere.

While the Taliban and *al Qaeda* forces have not demonstrated any significant improvements in defensive operations, they continue to learn to use evasive tactics to counter the tactics that have been developed to exploit their defensive vulnerabilities. The Afghan fighter can

be expected to continue to use evasive tactics, rather than improving defensive operations. In addition to cultural factors that stress offensive tactics, the Afghan commander has extremely limited weapon systems and weak command and control, making successful defensive operations against vastly superior forces an impossibility.

Indirect Fires

Mortar and rocket attacks are a common tactic of the Afghan *Mujahideen*. During the 1980s, the *Mujahideen* would routinely attack Soviet garrisons with mortars and unguided rockets. The tactics were similar to the infantry ambush. Firing locations were mapped out during daytime reconnaissance. Under the cover of night, the *Mujahideen* would approach the target and quickly launch the attack from pre-designated locations, rapidly retreating before the Soviets conducted counter battery fire.

Artillery captured during an ambush is divided between clans. This prevents the *Mujahideen* from maximizing the combined effect of the captured artillery.

Mine Warfare

The Soviets employed millions of mines to reduce the capability of the Afghan *Mujahideen*. As a result of their Soviet experience, the *Mujahideen* has become adept at mine warfare. Both sides used mines against lines of communication, smuggling routes, supply bases, ambush sites, and garrison. The Soviets laid massive defensive minefields around garrison locations to prevent *Mujahideen* assaults.

Command and Control

Command and control is the greatest strength and greatest weakness of the Afghan *Mujahideen*. The Afghan *Mujahideen* have a decentralized command and control system, mirroring the country's tribe/clan composition. The strength of the individual commander holds units together. Standard operations involve small detachments with limited outside support. The Soviets were never able to destroy strategic command and control nodes, because they did not exist. True control exists at the tribal level.

The disadvantage of the decentralized command structure used by the *Mujahideen* is its inability to conduct large-scale extended operations. Controlling hundreds of clans is difficult when local leaders make the final decision on whether to participate. *Mujahideen* leadership style is well suited for ambushes, but performs poorly when launching or defending against a large-scale attack.

Armor

Armor played a limited role in Afghan *Mujahideen* tactics. Many groups possess armor, but they are mainly war trophies, or are employed in inter-tribal warfare. When conducting guerilla warfare, the *Mujahideen* abandoned its armor and emphasized light infantry operations. When armor is used, it is mainly as direct fire artillery in defensive positions. The Afghan *Mujahideen* did not have the capability to conduct combined arms operations.

Logistics

The terrain of Afghanistan makes logistic operations difficult. During the Soviet war, most supplies were transported via pack animal from Pakistan using small mountain roads or footpaths. The *Mujahideen* avoided using known lines of communication during wartime. The Soviets relied on known lines of communication to re-supply forward deployed forces. The limited number of roads simplified ambush planning for the *Mujahideen*.

The Afghan *Mujahideen* had a network of supply bases throughout Afghanistan. These bases are camouflaged and located far off major lines of communication. During the 1980s, the Soviets were only able to interdict a third of all supplies destined for the *Mujahideen*.

Urban vs Rural Culture

Urban and rural culture and demography varies to some extent in Afghanistan, however there is only one truly urban region in the country, the capital city of Kabul and its surrounding areas. The other Afghan cities of Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad, Ghazni, Gardes, Kunduz, and Baghlan, are fairly similar in culture and demography to the surrounding areas in which they are located.

Destroyed Building in Kabul

The urban demography around Kabul tends to be more ethnically diverse than the rest of the country and the during the latter days of the reign of King Mohammad Zahir Shah in the late 1960s and early 1970s the culture of this urban area became slightly more cosmopolitan, with industrialization, higher levels of education, wider political participation, and a greater role for women in public life. This microcosm of cosmopolitan culture in the heart of Afghanistan caused the population of Kabul to grow out of touch with the indigenous cultures of Afghanistan. This largely de-tribalized culture in Kabul caused residents of this city to retain only nominal identification with their respective ethnic groups of origin.

Qala, with US Serviceman in Foreground

The nature of Kabul's demographics and cultural identity has been transformed, however, by over twenty years of violence. Kabul has been vastly reduced in size. Much of the cosmopolitan, de-tribalized population from the 1970s has fled abroad.

The segment of that cosmopolitan population that remained in Kabul has been re-sensitized to issues of ethnic identity, due to the polarizing effects of the war, where security depended upon allegiance to a particular ethnic group. Much of the current population of Kabul, however, is from internally displaced persons migrating from unrest in the rural areas in search of international assistance. This population shares none of the cultural attributes of the cosmopolitan Kabul of the early 1970s.

Top view of Qala

Despite the higher level of ethnic diversity and integration in Kabul, the Pashtuns continue to dominate the city, although the main language is the inter-ethnic language of Dari, not the tribal language of Pashtun.

Rural Habitations

Rural Pashtun houses consist mainly of *qalas,* or fortified extended-family dwellings made of bricks with rooms facing inwards towards a courtyard. The back walls of the rooms form part of the fortified outer wall of the complex. Heating is generally supplied by braziers fueled with charcoal, although larger stoves or *Kang* are found in eastern Afghanistan. The *Kang* is a raised platform for eating and sleeping, under which smoke and heat circulate from a central fire. *Qalas* have large storage facilities for fuel and food, which is gathered and stored for long periods of time. Larger *qalas* may even include a mosque, fruit orchard, stables, or bath.

Aerial View of Afghan Village

Villages consist of several *qalas* in the same general vicinity. Often the villages are surrounded by orchards, vineyards, and grain fields. Circular watchtowers are built within these fields to guard the crops and to warn of advancing raiders.

Villages are usually located on alluvial plains, at the base of mountains.

Migrant Pashtun live in black goat skin tents or woven huts known as *yurt.* The sides of the tent can be rolled up to permit a breeze to flow through the tent. The *yurt* has a lattice work wooden frame, covered with reed matting

Influence of Diaspora

The majority of the Afghan Diaspora lives in Iran and Pakistan (4 million). This Diaspora is largely living in refugee camps and exceptionally poor. The remaining Afghan Diaspora living elsewhere in the world, the "international Diaspora," is substantially better off. Many of them have integrated into other communities and professional life.

Throughout the war the influence of the international Diaspora has been evident, with constant streams of cash remittances to families left within Afghanistan. These remittances and general support from the Diaspora for Afghans in Afghanistan tends to occur not only along ethnic and tribal lines, but along family lines. These cash remittances have kept poor families alive for years. The tendency for Diaspora support to flow to tribes and families has, however, diminished the political impact of this support on Afghanistan's international standing. There has been no coherent agenda advanced by the Diaspora for Afghanistan through the war, the peace process, and post-war reconstruction.

Holidays

Religious holidays in Afghanistan are celebrated according to the lunar calendar, and other holidays such as Independence Day, and New Year's Day are celebrated based on the solar calendar. During many holidays, Afghans usually visit friends and families, prepare lavish meals, and attend special prayers.

Generally, Pashtuns commemorate events because of sorrow (*gham*) or celebration (*xadi*), but they do not mix the two, nor can the two follow one another closely in time. Pashtuns say that a family cannot celebrate happiness in the same year that they experience a major sorrow. When there is a conflict between sorrow and happiness, the commemoration of sorrow takes precedence over the celebration of happiness.

Secular Holidays

The Victory of the Muslim Nation is April 28, Remembrance Day for the Martyrs and Disabled is May 4, and Independence Day (*Jeshen*) is August 19. Independence Day marks the end of the Third Anglo-Afghan war, and the grant of independence from Britain. Although Afghanistan was never a formal British colony, Afghanistan's foreign policy was governed by Britain.

New Year (*Nowroze*), is the first day of spring. The Taliban repressed celebration of New Year, although it has reappeared in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

Islamic Holidays

The ninth month of the Muslim calendar is Ramadan (in Arabic), a period of obligatory fasting that commemorates the Prophet Mohammad's receipt of God's revelation, the Quran. Because the lunar calendar is eleven days shorter than the solar calendar, Ramadan revolves through the seasons over the years. Fasting is an act of self-discipline that leads to piety and expresses submission and commitment to God. During this period, Muslims cannot eat from sunrise until sundown.

Id al Fitr, a three-day feast and holiday, ends the month of Ramadan and is the occasion for new clothes and much visiting between family members. Many start out the festival by wearing new clothes, and going to prayer at the mosque. Afterwards, people visit or entertain their friends and families. Children usually receive gifts or money called "Eidi."

Ramadan is followed by the beginning of the *haj* pilgrimage season during the twelfth month of the lunar calendar. At least once in their lifetime both men and women should, if economically able, make the *haj* to the holy city of Mecca. The beginning of the *haj* is marked by the holiday of *sawab*. The *sawab* is a day for seeing off pilgrims who are leaving on the *haj*. On the *sawab*, hostilities are frequently suspended to allow people to cross factional lines to see off friends and relatives. As pilgrims embark on the *haj*, they are usually driven to their points of departure in highly decorated vehicles.

Id al Adha, the feast of sacrifice, marks the end of the *haj* month. This holiday occurs on the tenth day of the twelfth month of the Islamic (Hijra) calendar. The day commemorates the Prophet Abraham's devotion to God. According to Muslim tradition, Abraham was willing to slay his son Ismael as a sacrifice. Ismael was never killed, however, as Allah provided a lamb for the sacrifice. Muslims who performed the *Haj* sacrifice a lamb, and the meat is given out to the poor.

Pashtu Dates of Significance

Pashtu names of the week have some significance for Pashtuns. *Pinzama* (Tuesday) is dedicated to the Sunni Saint, Hazrat Gilani of Baghdad, *Shoro* (Wednesday) is believed to be the day on which *Allah* or God created the world, and *Ziarat* (Thursday) and *Juma* (Friday) are recognized as the two holy days of the week when Muslims should go to congregational prayers. Thursday is considered auspicious for laying the foundation of a new building or for cultivation, however Friday is not. Friday is meant exclusively for prayers.

Pashtu names for the months are associated with Islamic history. *Moharram* or *Asan* is the month named for the two martyred grandsons of the Prophet Muhammad, Hassan and Hussain. *Rabi-ul-awal* is the month in which the Prophet died. *Roya* is the month of *Ramadan*, when the Quran was revealed to the Prophet. No marriages or celebrations can occur during this month. *Warokay Akhtar* is the month for celebrating the end of *Ramadan*, and *Akhtar* and *Lowy Akhtar* are the months for celebrating happiness (*khushali*). The month of *Lowey Akhtar* derives from the day when Abraham was ordered to sacrifice his son Ismail (Isaac).