

# Afghanistan

## *Ethnicity in Afghanistan*

### *Group selection*

The following groups are politically relevant in Afghanistan at some point in time since 1946: **Baloch, Brahui, Aimaq, Hazara, Nuristani, Pamir Tajiks, Pashai, Pashtuns, Qizalbash, Tajiks, Turkmen, Uzbeks.**

### *Power relations*

#### *1946-1978*

Except of the main ethnic groups of the Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek, others have not been represented and considered as independent and distinct ethnic groups involved in decision making. Although the Turkmens have been selected as a distinct ethnic group, they have often been counted as members of the Uzbek community. All ethnic groups are sub-divisions of the main four ethnic groups. For instance, the Hazara-Berberi, Hazara-Deh-i-Zainat and Taimanis are considered Hazara. Aimaqs, a collection of Persian-speaking semi-nomadic tribes, are considered Tajik in government census. During this period the Pashtuns dominated the politics and economics of the country.

Other ethnic minorities were discriminated against and were hardly allowed to participate in decision making. For example, Char Aimaq, a sub-tribe of the Aimaq, were displaced, split, and united again by various governments. Zaher Shah (1933-73) introduced certain political reforms. He promulgated a liberal constitution (1964), providing for a two-chamber legislature to which the king appointed one-third of the deputies. The people elected another third, and the remainder was selected indirectly by provincial assemblies. However, the democratizing overtone of these reforms were a facade covering relentless legitimization of Pashtunizing the Afghan polity and life. During this period the Pashtun dominated government continued to pursue policies based on ethnic elimination and discrimination. The leaders of other ethnic groups were largely eliminated from politics often through imprisonment, execution or exile.

Moreover, other ethnic groups, particularly the Hazara had to pay heavier taxes to the government, while the Pashtun could annex the lands and receive privileged treatment. During this period Pashtuns began to finance the publication of fictitious historical literature and documents to substantiate the superiority and historicity of the

Pashtu language and culture. For instance, the publication of *Puta Khazana* (The Hidden Treasure) in 1960 by a pro-establishment scholar, Abdul Hay Habibi, is a reflection of this policy. Habibi claims that in 1763 King Hussain Shah Hotaki ordered Muhammad Horak to compile a profile of Pashtun heroes and examples of their literary works. *Puta Khazana* chronicles the life story of Pashtun heroes and their literary works dated a hundred years after the death of Prophet Muhammad. These policies promulgated the Pashtunization of every aspect of non-Pashtun ethnic communities. During the reign of Daud Khan (1973-78), the Pashtun question (the unification of all Pashtuns, inside and outside Afghanistan; almost more than half of the Pashtuns live in Pakistan) became the dominant issue. Although Zahir Shah's "experiment in democracy" produced few lasting reforms, it permitted the growth of unofficial political parties on both the left and right. These included the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) with close ideological ties to the Soviet Union. In 1967, the PDPA split into two major rival factions: the Khalq (Masses) faction headed by Nur Muhammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin and supported by elements within the military, and the Parcham (Banner) faction led by Babrak Karmal. The split reflected ethnic, class, and ideological divisions within the Afghan society.

For relevant literature for the time between 1946-1978, see Dupree (1) and Schetter (2).

<sup>1</sup> [Dupree, 2002]

<sup>2</sup> [Schetter, 2003]

### *1979-1992*

During this period the PDPA came to power. The Pashtun maintained hegemony over domestic politics in Afghanistan, the Tajik were considered a junior partner to the Pashtun as they were active in the political process and government institutions. Karmal, who became president in 1980, was a Tajik, as were many of his cabinet members. Only one cabinet minister was Hazara. To establish political stability and support for his government, Karmal enlisted the support of ethnic minorities, women and youth. These initiatives began to tip the ethnic balance of power. Karmal changed the make up of the government by bringing in more ethnic minorities into the armed forces and bureaucracy at the cabinet level. During this period the Kabul government increasingly turned to and depended on non-Pashtun minorities - as did the foreign supporter of the Mujahidin. For example, increasing numbers of Hazara and Uzbeks, previously the most oppressed and dispossessed minorities in Afghanistan, were included in the army. The government even established ethnic-based institution and military divisions, such as the Shurai Mili Hazara (Hazara national council) and Division 53, a strong Uzbek army unit led by General Dostom who later grew into a powerful Uzbek leader. Division 80, dominated by the Hazara was led by Siad Mansour Nadri who secured the main road to Kabul from the North. These leaders became central players in the war (Ji-

had) against the Soviets and some of them still occupy key positions in the Karzai government.

During this period the distribution of elite positions in the government changed in favour of non-Pashtun ethnic minorities and new players emerged in Afghan politics, heralding significant shifts in the ethnic balance of power. Even small minorities like the Char Aimaq played a role in the Jihad against the Soviets. Soviet and popular displeasure with the Karmal regime led to its demise in May 1986. Karmal was replaced by Muhammad Najibullah, a Pashtun who had established a reputation for brutal efficiency during his tenure as the former chief of the Afghan secret police (KHAD). As President, Najibullah was largely ineffective and highly dependent on Soviet support. Undercut by deep-seated divisions within the PDPA, his efforts to broaden the support base of the government proved futile.

For relevant literature for the time between 1979-1992, see works by Roy (<sup>3</sup>; <sup>4</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> [Roy, 1995]

<sup>4</sup> [Roy, 1990]

### *1993-1996*

The Pashtun domination of the Afghan polity eventually came to an end in April 1992 when a coalition of Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek overthrew Najibullah's regime. From 1992 to 1996 the Tajik Burhanuddin Rabbani led the central government. An important ally of his was the then mayor of Kabul was Fazel Aimaq, an ethnic Aimaq. However, ethnic and power rivalries fragmented the officially ruling alliance, marking Afghanistan's further descent into warlordism and ethnic conflict.

In terms of military and political power, Afghanistan was divided into separate local power bases. The struggle over influence and resources between the various politico-ethnic factions culminated in the capital Kabul. Forces led by Ahmad Shah Massud, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Rashid Dostom and Abdul Ali Mazari all contributed to the destruction of Kabul. The Uzbek Dostom controlled most of the Northern part of the country, such as the crucial cities of Mazar, Faryab, Jozjan, Samangan, and partially Baghlan and Kunduz. The forces loyal to the Tajik Ahmad Shah Massud, controlled Parwan, Takhar, Kapisa, Badakhshan and parts of Kunduz. Hezb-e Wahdat controlled the central provinces of Bamiyan, Uruzgan, parts of Ghor, most of Ghazni and Wardak. It also had substantial military presence in the North. In the West, the Tajik commander, Ismail Khan controlled Herat, Farah and parts of Ghor while Pashtun parties, mainly the Hizb-e Islami of Gulbudin Heykmatyar, controlled Southern provinces and some areas surrounding

After the government of Najibullah collapsed in 1992, there was no one dominant power in Afghanistan. General Dostom, who controlled most of the Northern provinces, was independent of the Kabul government and for all practical purposes the North enjoyed de facto autonomy. In the west, Ismail Khan was an ally of Rabbani's, but was not subordinate to Kabul either. The Hazarajat had

de facto autonomy since mid 1980s. Nor did Kabul had authority over the Pashtun populated provinces in the South and East.

An authoritative account of the time of the civil war is Rubin (5).

<sup>5</sup> [Rubin, 2002]

### *1997-2001*

The Taliban seized Kabul in September 1996; installing a radical Islamist regime recognized in 1997 only by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Fazel Aimaq lost his position as the mayor of Kabul and the non-Pashtun opposition coalition retaining strongholds in Northeastern Afghanistan established the United Front, later known as the Northern Alliance, under the command of Ahmad Shah Massud. During this period the Pashtun domination was restored and a brutal and systematic elimination and massacre of other ethnic minorities, particularly of the Hazara took place. The leader of Hezb-e Wahdat, Abdul Ali Mazari was brutally executed. When Taliban captured the city of Mazar-e Sharif for the second time they carried out a systematic summary execution of mostly Hazara and some Uzbeks. These ethnic atrocities are widely reported by human right organizations worldwide. The Tajik resistance was restricted to the Panjshir Valley and some pockets of Hazarajat highlands.

Griffin (6) provides an informative account of this period.

<sup>6</sup> [Griffin, 2002]

### *2002-2005*

Since the end of 2001 a “democratic” government was established and a new constitution recognizing the rights of all ethnic and religious minorities was introduced. Hamid Karzai was sworn in as president in December 2001. These democratic changes embodied at least the recognition of power sharing among ethnic groups. For example, Faizal Aimaq assumed the mayorship of Kabul again, though only for a short time. However, ethnic domination and interest have prevailed over the national interest of the country. Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun became president again. The Tajik controlled key cabinet positions at the Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs and Defense, until 2005 when the Pashtun recaptured these positions. Hazara and Uzbeks hold only five cabinet positions out of more than 25 with little influence on decision making. Uzbeks have only one ministry. The composition of ministries reflects the ethnicity of the minister and most of the department budget and resources will be allocated to those regions ethnically affiliated with the top leadership of the ministry.

A very good study from this period is Glatzer (7).

<sup>7</sup> [Glatzer, 2003]

*2006-2017*

In general, the powerful have consolidated power and the weak are ever more marginalized; thus the Pashtun, while fractured into pro-government and insurgents, remain senior partners in the government. Karzai, a Popalzai Pashtun, managed to stay in power in an October 2009 election fraught with irregularities, remaining the Pashtuns strongest agent in the Afghan power struggle. In some parts of the country, he tightened his patronage and friendship networks for an even firmer grip on power; in other parts, he is facing stiff resistance from the Taliban and other Pashtun rivals.

The Tajik remain senior partners. They are strongly positioned in Afghanistan power centers, despite Abdullah Abdullah leaving the foreign ministry and Younous Qanouni's runoff with Abdul Sayaff for the parliament speakership. The first vice president, Marshall Mohammad Fahim, is a Tajik, was the minister of interior Bismillah Khan Mohammadi (until 2012). Many Tajik strongmen possess considerable amounts of weapons.

The Hazara are elevated from junior partner to senior partner in order to reflect their new status. The second vice president is Karim Khalili, an experienced and strong Hazara leader. The Hazara can also rely on a "homeland", the Hazarajat that is securely under their control.

Uzbeks have also been raised from junior partner to senior partner status. Their leader, General Dostum is one of the most powerful actors in Afghanistan. He is currently Chief of Staff for the Commander-in-Chief of the Afghan National Army. The Uzbeks have a very strong influence in the North of Afghanistan, including in the two important cities of Mazar-i-Sharif and Kunduz.

Efforts of the international community to develop peripheral regions had only minimal impact with regard to improving these regions and their people's access to power. Baluch, Nuristani, Pamir Tajiks, Aimagh and Qizalbash remain irrelevant. However, there is no evidence supporting Brahui, Pashai and Turkmen regional autonomy. Consequentially Brahui and Pashai become irrelevant and Turkmen powerless.

Although the 2014 elections were challenged by many, we have not found a shift in power relations to have occurred. Although neither Karim Khalili, an ethnic Hazara, nor Mohammad Fahim, an ethnic Tajik, continue to hold their position as a Vice President of Afghanistan, their successors, Sarwar Danish and Abdul Rashid Dostum, are ethnic Hazara and ethnic Uzbek respectively. Despite their senior status, the United States Department of State writes that the Hazara ethnic minority is experiencing social discrimination<sup>(8)</sup>. This seems to be limited<sup>(9)</sup>, despite various incidents involving the Hazara ethnic minority<sup>(10)</sup>.

The International Crisis Group's reports<sup>(11; 12)</sup> sum up many of the important recent developments.

<sup>8</sup> [US Dept of State, 2014-16]

<sup>9</sup> [Human Rights Watch, 2016]

<sup>10</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2014-16]

<sup>11</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2013]

<sup>12</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2012]

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[US Dept of State, 2014-16] US Department of State. (2014-2016).  
Afghanistan.



## *Political status of ethnic groups in Afghanistan*

*From 1946 until 1978*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Pashtuns	0.41	DOMINANT
Tajiks	0.25	IRRELEVANT
Hazara	0.11	DISCRIMINATED
Uzbeks	0.08	IRRELEVANT
Baloch	0.02	IRRELEVANT
Aimaq	0.019	IRRELEVANT
Turkmen	0.015	IRRELEVANT
Qizalbash	0.007	DISCRIMINATED
Nuristani	0.007	IRRELEVANT
Pashai	0.005	IRRELEVANT
Pamir Tajiks	0.002	IRRELEVANT
Brahui	0.001	IRRELEVANT



Figure 1: Political status of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1946-1978.

*From 1979 until 1992*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Pashtuns	0.41	SENIOR PARTNER
Tajiks	0.25	JUNIOR PARTNER
Hazara	0.11	JUNIOR PARTNER
Uzbeks	0.08	POWERLESS
Baloch	0.02	IRRELEVANT
Aimaq	0.019	IRRELEVANT
Turkmen	0.015	POWERLESS
Qizalbash	0.007	IRRELEVANT
Nuristani	0.007	POWERLESS
Pashai	0.005	IRRELEVANT
Pamir Tajiks	0.002	IRRELEVANT
Brahui	0.001	IRRELEVANT



Figure 2: Political status of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1979-1992.

*From 1993 until 1996*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Pashtuns	0.41	JUNIOR PARTNER
Tajiks	0.25	SENIOR PARTNER
Uzbeks	0.113	JUNIOR PARTNER
Hazara	0.11	POWERLESS
Turkmen	0.033	IRRELEVANT
Aimaq	0.019	JUNIOR PARTNER
Qizalbash	0.01	IRRELEVANT
Pashai	0.007	IRRELEVANT
Nuristani	0.007	IRRELEVANT
Pamir Tajiks	0.005	IRRELEVANT
Baloch	0.002	IRRELEVANT
Brahui	0.001	IRRELEVANT

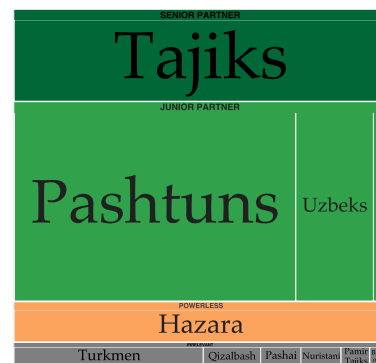


Figure 3: Political status of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1993-1996.

*From 1997 until 2001*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Pashtuns	0.41	MONOPOLY
Tajiks	0.25	DISCRIMINATED
Hazara	0.11	DISCRIMINATED
Uzbeks	0.08	DISCRIMINATED
Baloch	0.02	IRRELEVANT
Aimaq	0.019	IRRELEVANT
Turkmen	0.015	DISCRIMINATED
Qizalbash	0.007	DISCRIMINATED
Nuristani	0.007	DISCRIMINATED
Pashai	0.005	IRRELEVANT
Pamir Tajiks	0.002	IRRELEVANT
Brahui	0.001	IRRELEVANT

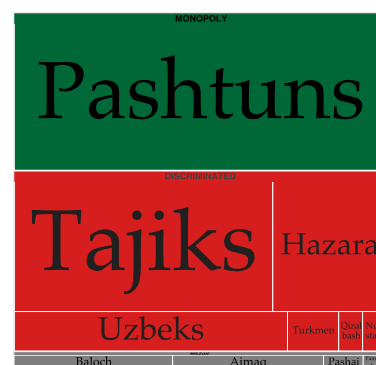


Figure 4: Political status of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1997-2001.

*From 2002 until 2005*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Pashtuns	0.41	SENIOR PARTNER
Tajiks	0.25	SENIOR PARTNER
Hazara	0.11	JUNIOR PARTNER
Uzbeks	0.08	JUNIOR PARTNER
Baloch	0.02	IRRELEVANT
Aimaq	0.019	IRRELEVANT
Turkmen	0.015	POWERLESS
Qizalbash	0.007	IRRELEVANT
Nuristani	0.007	IRRELEVANT
Pashai	0.005	IRRELEVANT
Pamir Tajiks	0.002	IRRELEVANT
Brahui	0.001	IRRELEVANT



Figure 5: Political status of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 2002-2005.

*From 2006 until 2017*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Pashtuns	0.41	SENIOR PARTNER
Tajiks	0.25	SENIOR PARTNER
Hazara	0.11	SENIOR PARTNER
Uzbeks	0.08	SENIOR PARTNER
Baloch	0.02	IRRELEVANT
Aimaq	0.019	IRRELEVANT
Turkmen	0.015	POWERLESS
Qizalbash	0.007	IRRELEVANT
Nuristani	0.007	IRRELEVANT
Pashai	0.005	IRRELEVANT
Pamir Tajiks	0.002	IRRELEVANT
Brahui	0.001	IRRELEVANT

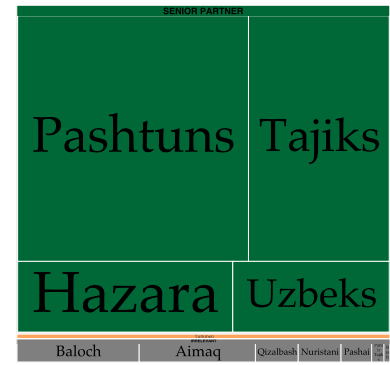


Figure 6: Political status of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 2006-2017.

## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Afghanistan*

*From 1946 until 1978*

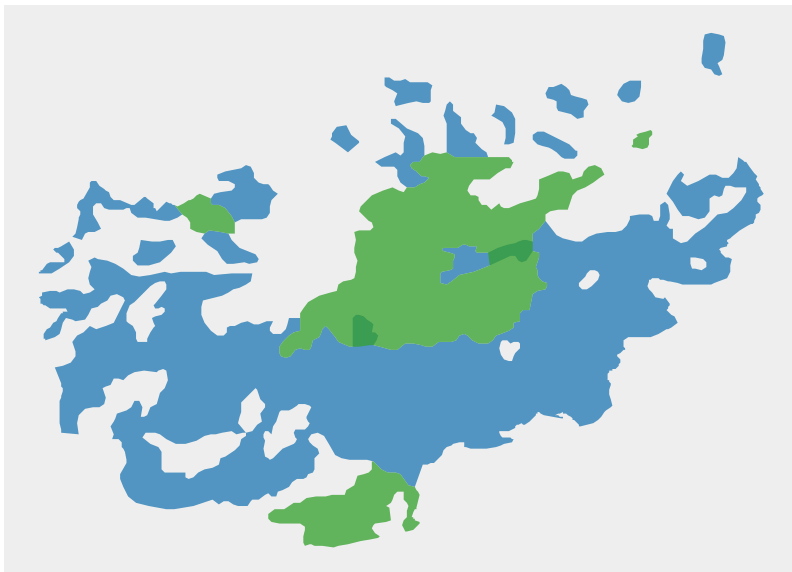


Figure 7: Map of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1946-1978.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■ Pashtuns	275 562	Regionally based
■ Hazara	103 262	Regionally based
■ Qizalbash		Urban

Table 1: List of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1946-1978.

*From 1979 until 1992*

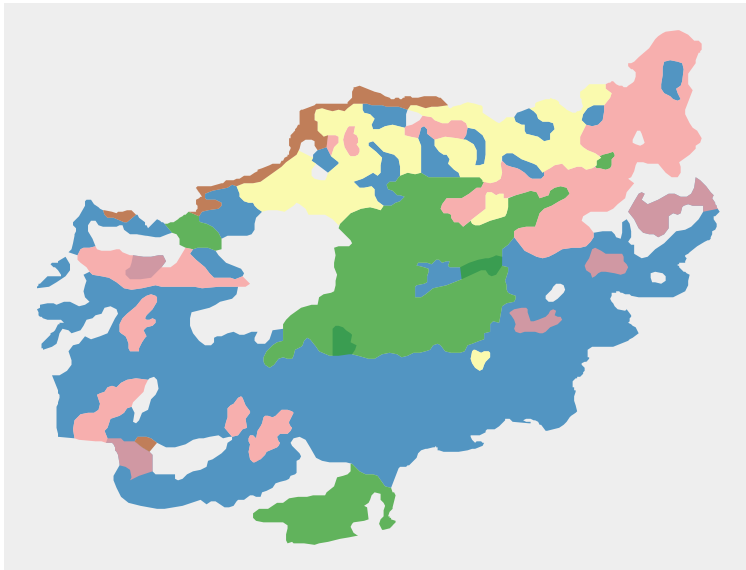


Figure 8: Map of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1979-1992.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■ Pashtuns	275 562	Regionally based
■ Hazara	103 262	Regionally based
■ Tajiks	86 857	Regionally based
■ Uzbeks	50 493	Regionally based
■ Turkmen	10 007	Regionally based
■ Nuristani	5764	Regionally based

Table 2: List of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1979-1992.

*From 1993 until 1996*

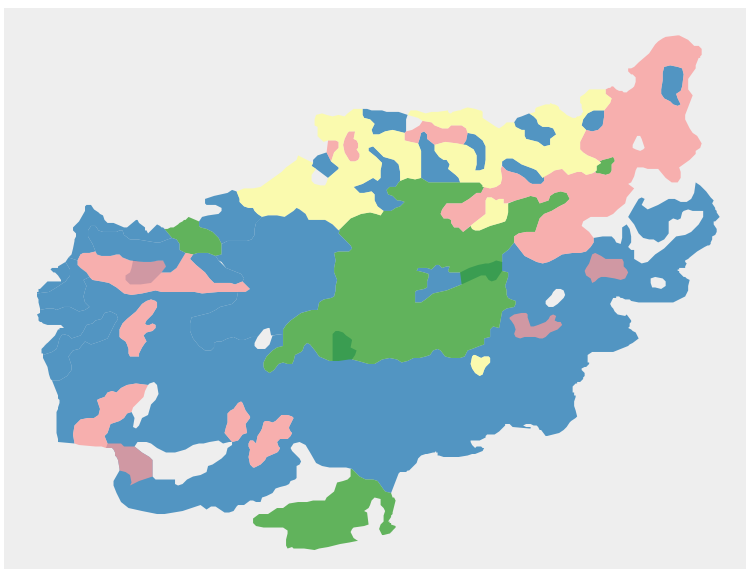


Figure 9: Map of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1993-1996.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Pashtuns	275 562	Regionally based
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Hazara	103 262	Regionally based
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Tajiks	86 857	Regionally based
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Uzbeks	50 493	Regionally based
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Aimaq	49 394	Regionally based

Table 3: List of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1993-1996.

*From 1997 until 2001*

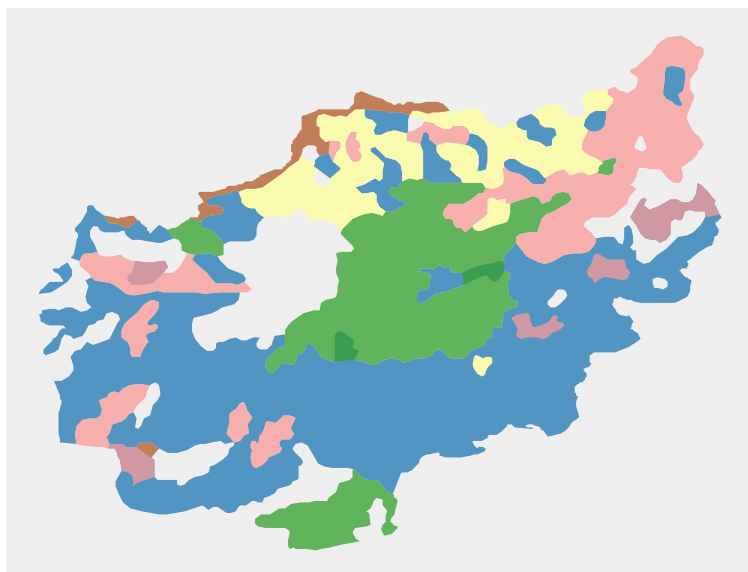


Figure 10: Map of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1997-2001.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Pashtuns	275 562	Regionally based
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Hazara	103 262	Regionally based
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Tajiks	86 857	Regionally based
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Uzbeks	50 493	Regionally based
<span style="color: brown;">■</span> Turkmen	10 007	Regionally based
<span style="color: pink;">■</span> Nuristani	5 764	Regionally based
Qizalbash		Urban

Table 4: List of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 1997-2001.

*From 2002 until 2017*

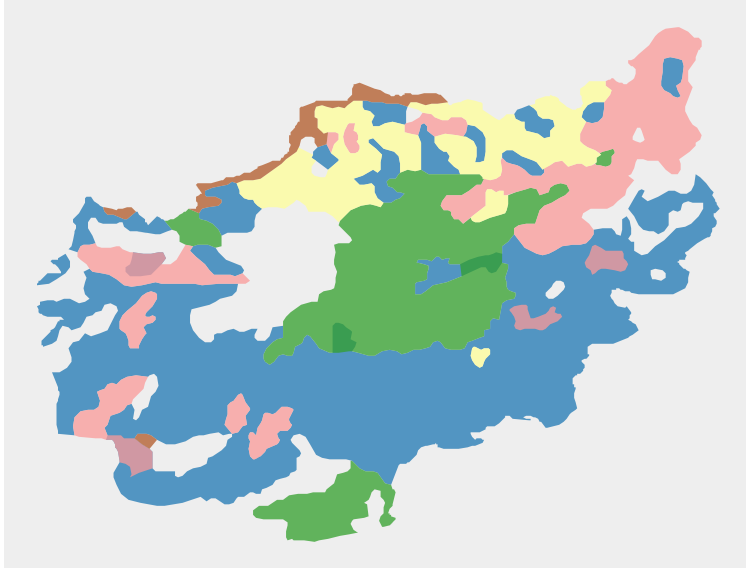


Figure 11: Map of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 2002-2017.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Pashtuns	275 562	Regionally based
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Hazara	103 262	Regionally based
<span style="color: red;">■</span> Tajiks	86 857	Regionally based
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Uzbeks	50 493	Regionally based
<span style="color: brown;">■</span> Turkmen	10 007	Regionally based

Table 5: List of ethnic groups in Afghanistan during 2002-2017.

## *Conflicts in Afghanistan*

*Starting on 1975-12-30*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Afghanistan	Jam'iiyyat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan	Tajiks	1975-12-30	No	Yes	Yes
Government of Afghanistan	Jam'iiyyat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan	Pashtuns	1975-12-30	No	Yes	Yes
Government of Afghanistan	Jam'iiyyat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan	Uzbeks	1975-12-30	No	Yes	Yes
Government of Afghanistan	PDPA	Pashtuns	1978-04-26	No	Yes, from EGIP	
Government of Afghanistan	Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan	Pashtuns	1980-03-30	No	Yes	Yes
Government of Afghanistan	Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami-yi Afghanistan	Hazara	1980-12-30	No	Yes	
Government of Afghanistan	Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan - Khalis faction	Pashtuns	1980-12-30	No	Yes	Yes
Government of Afghanistan	Jabha-yi Nijat-i Milli-yi Afghanistan	Tajiks	1980-12-30	No	Yes, from EGIP	
Government of Afghanistan	Mahaz-i Milli-yi Islami-yi Afghanistan	Pashtuns	1980-12-30	No	Yes	Yes
Government of Afghanistan	Ittihad-i Islami Bara-yi Azadi-yi Afghanistan	Pashtuns	1981-07-15	No	Yes, from EGIP	
Government of Afghanistan	Harakat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan	Pashtuns	1984-12-30	No	Yes, from EGIP	
Government of Afghanistan	Hizb-i Wahdat	Hazara	1989-07-11	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Afghanistan	Military faction (forces of Shah-nawaz Tanay)		1990-03-05			
Government of Afghanistan	Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami	Uzbeks	1993-03-07	No	Yes	
Government of Afghanistan	Taleban	Pashtuns	1995-02-17	Presumed	Yes	Yes
Government of Afghanistan	UIFSA	Hazara	1996-10-10	Presumed	Yes	Yes
Government of Afghanistan	UIFSA	Uzbeks	1996-10-10	Presumed	Yes	Yes
Government of Afghanistan	UIFSA	Tajiks	1996-10-10	Presumed	Yes	Yes
Government of Afghanistan	UIFSA	Pashtuns	1996-10-10	No	Yes, from EGIP	No



*Starting on 1979-12-26*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Afghanistan	Government of Russia (Soviet Union)		1979-12-26			

*Starting on 2001-10-06*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Afghanistan	Government of United Kingdom		2001-10-06			
Government of Afghanistan	Government of United States of America		2001-10-06			

*Starting on 2015-02-08*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Afghanistan	IS		2015-02-08			