**A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan**

**BY**[**ADMIN**](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/author/admin/)*May 4, 2011 at 12:00 PM EDT*

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan/



*Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan*

**RELATED LINKS**

* [The Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/asia/july-dec06/soviet_10-10.html)
* [Al-Qaida in Afghanistan](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/asia/afghanistan/alqaida.html)

The land that is now Afghanistan has a long history of domination by foreign conquerors and strife among internally warring factions. At the gateway between Asia and Europe, this land was conquered by Darius I of Babylonia circa 500 B.C., and Alexander the Great of Macedonia in 329 B.C., among others.

Mahmud of Ghazni, an 11th century conqueror who created an empire from Iran to India, is considered the greatest of Afghanistan’s conquerors.

Genghis Khan took over the territory in the 13th century, but it wasn’t until the 1700s that the area was united as a single country. By 1870, after the area had been invaded by various Arab conquerors, Islam had taken root.

During the 19th century, Britain, looking to protect its Indian empire from Russia, attempted to annex Afghanistan, resulting in a series of British-Afghan Wars (1838-42, 1878-80, 1919-21).

**1921**

The British, beleaguered in the wake of World War I, are defeated in the Third British-Afghan War (1919-21), and Afghanistan becomes an independent nation. Concerned that Afghanistan has fallen behind the rest of the world, Amir Amanullah Khan begins a rigorous campaign of socioeconomic reform.

**1926**

Amanullah declares Afghanistan a monarchy, rather than an emirate, and proclaims himself king. He launches a series of modernization plans and attempts to limit the power of the Loya Jirga, the National Council. Critics, frustrated by Amanullah’s policies, take up arms in 1928 and by 1929, the king abdicates and leaves the country.

**1933**

Zahir Shah becomes king. The new king brings a semblance of stability to the country and he rules for the next 40 years.

**1934**

The United States formally recognizes Afghanistan.

**1947**

Britain withdraws from India, creating the predominantly Hindu but secular state of India and the Islamic state of Pakistan. The nation of Pakistan includes a long, largely uncontrollable, border with Afghanistan.

**1953**

The pro-Soviet Gen. Mohammed Daoud Khan, cousin of the king, becomes prime minister and looks to the communist nation for economic and military assistance. He also introduces a number of social reforms including allowing women a more public presence.

**1956**

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev agrees to help Afghanistan, and the two countries become close allies.

**1957**

As part of Daoud’s reforms, women are allowed to attend university and enter the workforce.

**1965**

The Afghan Communist Party secretly forms. The group’s principal leaders are Babrak Karmal and Nur Mohammad Taraki.

**1973**

Khan overthrows the last king, Mohammed Zahir Shah, in a military coup. Khan’s regime, the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan, comes to power. Khan abolishes the monarchy and names himself president. The Republic of Afghanistan is established with firm ties to the USSR.

**1975-1977**

Khan proposes a new constitution that grants women rights and works to modernize the largely communist state. He also cracks down on opponents, forcing many suspected of not supporting Khan out of the government.

**1978**

Khan is killed in a communist coup. Nur Mohammad Taraki, one of the founding members of the Afghan Communist Party, takes control of the country as president, and Babrak Karmal is named deputy prime minister. They proclaim independence from Soviet influence, and declare their policies to be based on Islamic principles, Afghan nationalism and socioeconomic justice. Taraki signs a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union. But a rivalry between Taraki and Hafizullah Amin, another influential communist leader, leads to fighting between the two sides.

At the same time, conservative Islamic and ethnic leaders who objected to social changes introduced by Khan begin an armed revolt in the countryside. In June, the guerrilla movement Mujahadeen is created to battle the Soviet-backed government.

**1979**

American Ambassador Adolph Dubs is killed. The United States cuts off assistance to Afghanistan. A power struggle between Taraki and Deputy Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin begins. Taraki is killed on Sept. 14 in a confrontation with Amin supporters.

The USSR invades Afghanistan on Dec. 24 to bolster the faltering communist regime. On Dec. 27, Amin and many of his followers are executed. Deputy Prime Minister Babrak Karmal becomes prime minister. Widespread opposition to Karmal and the Soviets spawns violent public demonstrations.

By early 1980, the Mujahadeen rebels have united against Soviet invaders and the USSR-backed Afghan Army.

**1982**

Some 2.8 million Afghans have fled from the war to Pakistan, and another 1.5 million have fled to Iran. Afghan guerrillas gain control of rural areas, and Soviet troops hold urban areas.

**1984**

Although he claims to have traveled to Afghanistan immediately after the Soviet invasion, Saudi Islamist Osama bin Laden makes his first documented trip to Afghanistan to aid anti-Soviet fighters.

The United Nations investigates reported human rights violations in Afghanistan.

**1986**

The Mujahadeen are receiving arms from the United States, Britain and China via Pakistan.

**1988**

In September, Osama bin Laden and 15 other Islamists form the group al-Qaida, or “the base”, to continue their jihad, or holy war, against the Soviets and other who they say oppose their goal of a pure nation governed by Islam. With their belief that the Soviet’s faltering war in Afghanistan was directly attributable to their fighting, they claim victory in their first battle, but also begin to shift their focus to America, saying the remaining superpower is the main obstacle to the establishment of a state based on Islam.

**1989**

The U.S., Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union sign peace accords in Geneva guaranteeing Afghan independence and the withdrawal of 100,000 Soviet troops. Following Soviet withdrawal, the Mujahadeen continue their resistance against the Soviet-backed regime of communist president Dr. Mohammad Najibullah, who had been elected president of the puppet Soviet state in 1986. Afghan guerrillas name Sibhatullah Mojadidi as head of their exiled government.

**1992**

The Mujahadeen and other rebel groups, with the aid of turncoat government troops, storm the capital, Kabul, and oust Najibullah from power. Ahmad Shah Masood, legendary guerrilla leader, leads the troops into the capital. The United Nations offers protection to Najibullah. The Mujahadeen, a group already beginning to fracture as warlords fight over the future of Afghanistan, form a largely Islamic state with professor Burhannudin Rabbani as president.

**1995**

Newly formed Islamic militia, the Taliban, rises to power on promises of peace. Most Afghans, exhausted by years of drought, famine and war, approve of the Taliban for upholding traditional Islamic values. The Taliban outlaw cultivation of poppies for the opium trade, crack down on crime, and curtail the education and employment of women. Women are required to be fully veiled and are not allowed outside alone. Islamic law is enforced via public executions and amputations. The United States refuses to recognize the authority of the Taliban.

**1995-1999**

Continuing drought devastates farmers and makes many rural areas uninhabitable. More than 1 million Afghans flee to neighboring Pakistan, where they languish in squalid refugee camps.

**1997**

The Taliban publicly executes Najibullah.

Ethnic groups in the north, under Masood’s Northern Alliance, and the south, aided in part by Hamid Karzai, continue to battle the Taliban for control of the country.

**1998**

Following al-Qaida’s bombings of two American embassies in Africa, President Clinton orders cruise missile attacks against bin Laden’s training camps in Afghanistan. The attacks miss the Saudi and other leaders of the terrorist group.

**2000**

By now considered an international terrorist, bin Laden is widely believed to be hiding in Afghanistan, where he is cultivating thousands of followers in terrorist training camps. The United States demands that bin Laden be extradited to stand trial for the embassy bombings. The Taliban decline to extradite him. The United Nations punishes Afghanistan with sanctions restricting trade and economic development.

**March 2001**

Ignoring international protests, the Taliban carry out their threat to destroy Buddhist statues in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, saying they are an affront to Islam.

**Sept. 4, 2001**

A month after arresting them, the Taliban put eight international aid workers on trial for spreading Christianity. Under Taliban rule, proselytizing is punishable by death. The group is held in various Afghan prisons for months and finally released Nov. 15.

**Sept. 9, 2001**

Masood, still head of the Northern Alliance and the nation’s top insurgent, is killed by assassins posing as journalists.

**Sept. 11, 2001**

Hijackers commandeer four commercial airplanes and crash them into the World Trade Center Towers in New York, the Pentagon outside Washington, D.C., and a Pennsylvania field, killing thousands. Days later, U.S. officials say bin Laden, the Saudi exile believed to be hiding in Afghanistan, is the prime suspect in the attack.

**Oct. 7, 2001**

Following unanswered demands that the Taliban turn over bin Laden, U.S. and British forces launch airstrikes against targets in Afghanistan. American warplanes start to bomb Taliban targets and bases reportedly belonging to the al-Qaida network. The Taliban proclaim they are ready for jihad.

**Nov. 13, 2001**

After weeks of intense fighting with Taliban troops, the Northern Alliance enters Kabul. The retreating Taliban flee southward toward Kandahar.

**Dec. 7, 2001**

Taliban fighters abandon their final stronghold in Kandahar as the militia group’s hold on Afghanistan continues to disintegrate. Two days later, Taliban leaders surrender the group’s final Afghan territory, the province of Zabul. The move leads the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press to declare “the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan has totally ended.”

**Dec. 22, 2001**

Hamid Karzai, a royalist and ethnic Pashtun, is sworn in as the leader of the interim government in Afghanistan. Karzai entered Afghanistan after living in exile for years in neighboring Pakistan. At the U.N.-sponsored conference to determine an interim government, Karzai already has the support of the United States and by the end of the conference is elected leader of the six-month government.

**2002**

In June, the Loya Jirga, or grand council, elects U.S.-backed Hamid Karzai as interim leader. Karzai chooses the members of his government who will serve until 2004, when the government is required to organize elections.

**2003**

Amid increased violence, NATO takes over security in Kabul in August. The effort is the security organization’s first-ever commitment outside of Europe.

**January 2004**

The Loya Jirga adopts a new constitution following input from nearly 500,000 Afghans, some of whom participate in public meetings in villages. The new constitution calls for a president and two vice presidents, but the office of prime minister is removed at the last minute. The official languages, according to the constitution, are Pashto and Dari. Also, the new constitution calls for equality for women.

**October 2004**

Presidential elections are held. More than 10.5 million Afghans register to vote and choose among 18 presidential candidates, including interim leader Karzai. Karzai is elected with 55 percent of the vote.

**2005**

The nation holds its first parliamentary elections in more than 30 years. The peaceful vote leads to the parliament’s first meeting in December.

**2006**

Amid continuing fighting between Taliban and al-Qaida fighters and the Afghan government forces, NATO expands its peacekeeping operation to the southern portion of the country. After the forces take over from American-led troops, Taliban fighters launch a bloody wave of suicide attacks and raids against the international troops.

**2007**

The Afghan government and NATO confirm that Taliban commander Mullah Dadullah was killed during a U.S.-led operation in southern Afghanistan.

**2008**

The international community pledges more than $15 billion in aid to Afghanistan at a donors’ conference in Paris, while Afghan President Hamid Karzai promises to fight corruption in the government.

**2009**

President Barack Obama names Richard Holbrooke as a special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mr. Obama announces a new strategy for the Afghanistan war that would dispatch more military and civilian trainers to the country, in addition to the 17,000 more combat troops he previously ordered. The strategy also includes assistance to Pakistan in its fight against militants.

**2010**

President Barack Obama accepts Gen. Stanley McChrystal’s resignation as the top commander in Afghanistan, over critical comments he made in a Rolling Stone article, and nominates Gen. David Petraeus, head of U.S. Central Command, as his replacement.

**2011**

U.S. forces overtake a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, and kill al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. For more coverage of this and other international news, visit our [**World page**](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/topic/world/).