



IENE 6



Contemporary large migration waves into Europe: Enabling health workers to provide psychological support to migrants and refugees and develop strategies for dealing with their own emotional needs

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Bitesized Learning Tool No 4: Ethnohistory of Afganistan

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Bitesized Learning Tool No 4: Ethnohistory of Afganistan



The Ethnohistory of Afghanistan

Learning Objectives

To raise awareness and knowledge about factors which influence the culture and refugeedom of the Afgan people whom healthcare workers and volunteers may provide services to.

Geography

- Afghanistan is a mountainous country located within Southern and Central Asia
- It is bordered by Pakistan in the south and east; Iran in the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan in the north; and China in the far north-east.
- Kabul is the capital of Afghanistan and the largest city in the country
- Rainfall is very scarce, only really affecting the northern highlands
- There is mostly low plateau with deserts, rangelands and a fertile plain in the south-east
- Afghanistan is endowed with a wealth of natural resources including natural gas, petroleum, coal, marble, gold, copper, sulphur, lead, zinc, iron ore, salt, precious and semi-precious stones and more rare earth elements.
- Its main exports are natural gases and dried fruit

Population

- The population of Afghanistan was estimated at 29.2 million in 2017.
- Of this, 15 million are males and 14.2 million females.
- About 22% of them are urbanite and the remaining 78% live in rural areas.[
- An additional 3 million or so Afghans are temporarily housed in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran, most of whom were born and raised in those two countries.
- This makes the total Afghan population at around 33,332,025, and its current growth rate is 2.34%

Ethnic groups

- Pashtun 42%, Tajik 27%, Uzbek 9%, Aimaq 4%

Languages

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- Pashto and Dari (official), Uzbek, Turkmen, Baluchi, Pashai, Nuristani

Religions

- Islam is practised by 99.7% of its population
- 90% follow Sunni Islam and the remaining are Shia
- There are also small minorities of Sikhs and Hindus

Civilisation and history

The following information has been taken from The New Internationalist's online page <https://newint.org/features/2008/11/01/afghanistan-history> and Wikipedia at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan>

Excavations of prehistoric sites suggest that humans were living in what is now Afghanistan at least 50,000 years ago, and that farming communities in the area were among the earliest in the world.

It has been home to various peoples through the ages, among them the ancient Iranian peoples who established the dominant role of Indo-Iranian languages in the region. At multiple points, the land has been incorporated within large regional empires, among them the Achaemenid Empire, the Macedonian Empire, the Indian Maurya Empire, and the Islamic Empire.

Due to its location, Afghanistan has been a hub of diverse cultures, prompting one historian to dub it the 'roundabout of the ancient world'. Those who settled included the Persians, under Darius the Great (522-486 BCE); and the Greeks, led by Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE). Many present-day towns are built on Greek foundations. A Buddhist civilization flourished from the late first century CE, its kings reigning in Bamiyan until the end of the 10th century. An Arab raid on Kandahar in 699-700 brought Islam, strengthened as the Turks gained power in Iran, Afghanistan and India. The Mongolian Genghis Khan invaded in the 13th century. For the next few hundred years Afghanistan was fought over by various Indian and Persian empires.

The political history of the modern state of Afghanistan began with the Hotak and Durrani dynasties in the 18th century when a group of Pashtun tribes under Durrani (aka Ahmad Shah Abdali) defeated the Moghuls and the Persians and consolidated its own large but unstable empire. In the late 19th century, Afghanistan became a buffer state in the "Great Game" between British India and the Russian Empire. During the 20th century various armed conflicts and political instability involving the Soviet Union and USA, persisted with catastrophic results which left millions of people dead or displaced. In 1989 the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan.

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Current Politics and Economy

The BBC reports the following key dates in the recent Afganistan's history.

1979 - Soviet Army invades and props up communist government. More than a million people die in the ensuing war.

1989 - Last Soviet troops leave. US- and Pakistan-backed mujahideen push to overthrow Soviet-installed Afghan ruler Najibullah triggers devastating civil war.

1996 - Taliban seize control of Kabul and impose hard-line version of Islam.

2001 - US intervenes militarily following September 11 attacks on the United States. Taliban are ousted from Kabul and Hamid Karzai becomes head of an interim power-sharing government.

2002 - Nato assumes responsibility for maintaining security in Afghanistan.

2004 - Loya Jirga adopts new constitution which provides for strong presidency. Hamid Karzai is elected president.

2014 - Ashraf Ghani elected president. NATO formally ends its combat mission in Afghanistan, handing over to Afghan forces, who face a growing insurgency.

- There are currently 1 million registered refugees and 1.5 million unregistered living in Pakistan.
- A similar number live in Iran.
- 1 million civilians are internally displaced.
- The current elected president of Afghanistan is Ashraf Ghani

ACTIVITY: QUIZ

1. According to historical evidence for how many years have humans been living in the region which Afganistan is located?
2. What is the main language of Afganistan?
3. What is the main religion of Afganistan?

Answers at the end of the tool.

Reflections: use this space to write down your reflections about the topic of this learning tool

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References and useful resources

<https://newint.org/features/2008/11/01/afghanistan-history>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12011352>

Answers to Quiz: 1 = 50,000 years, 2= Pashto/Dari (official), 3= Islam

