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# **Afghanistan: The Impact of Social and Demographic Instability on the Communist Regime**

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**A Research Paper**

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September 1983*

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# **Afghanistan: The Impact of Social and Demographic Instability on the Communist Regime**

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**A Research Paper**

This paper was prepared by  Office  
of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. It was  
coordinated with the Directorate of Operations.

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directed to the Chief, South Asia Division, NESA,

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**Afghanistan:  
The Impact of Social  
and Demographic Instability  
on the Communist Regime**

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**Key Judgments**

*Information available  
as of 1 July 1983  
was used in this report.*

The loss of about 3.5 million people in a country with a prewar population of about 15 million alters the outlook for Afghanistan's future growth and its ethnic and demographic composition. Although the breakdown in Afghan society will impede regime efforts to gain full control or restructure the country on Communist lines, it will not threaten the Soviets' willingness or ability to stay the course.

A war-devastated countryside devoid of a normal work force, overcrowded cities, significant population growth, a changed ethnic mix, and few educated people will make the restoration of economic activity, government authority, public services, and social stability—even to the normally low prewar level—difficult, slow, and costly:

- The loss of about 3 million mainly agrarian and pastoral people as refugees to Pakistan and hundreds of thousands to Iran, coupled with the large rural flight to the cities, impairs food production and creates resource strains and population control problems in the cities.
- The effect of the refugee flight on the resistance has been less than it has been on the government. Those who remain behind produce enough food to support the resistance fighters, and there are still enough men available to replace insurgent casualties. As the war drags on and the refugees begin to regard their stay in Pakistan or Iran as permanent, however, there will be less incentive for family members to remain behind to defend their farms and homes.
- Rapid population growth continues in spite of the war and internal chaos. The country's population of approximately 14 million could double in slightly less than 30 years. Even if the fighting ends, it will be difficult for any Afghan government to provide basic necessities and security to this fast growing population.
- The return of refugees if the war were to end would cause a further decline in already seriously deteriorated social conditions and require a massive relocation effort.

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- Changes in the country's ethnic balance caused by the disproportionate loss of Pashtuns among the refugees will have little political significance in the short run. In the longer term, however, traditional Pashtun political dominance may be reduced.
- It would take at least a generation for the government to overcome the loss of much of the educated elite and the devastation of the school system by the war even in the unlikely event that the regime can win public acceptance of government policies. In the more likely case that the population continues to resist government policies and the creation of a fully Communist-indoctrinated leadership cadre, social and economic turbulence will continue. The Communist regime will be unable to solidify its hold on power and will continue to rely heavily on the expertise of Soviet advisers.



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**Afghanistan:  
The Impact of Social  
and Demographic Instability  
on the Communist Regime** [Redacted]

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**Implications of Abrupt  
Demographic Change**

We believe the change in the size and demographic composition of Afghanistan's population as a result of the flight of nearly 3.5 million refugees since the Communist coup in April 1978 signals continuing instability. The unsettled conditions arising from this upheaval will drastically reduce the pace of social and economic change sought by the Communist regime.

[Redacted]

- The Census Bureau assumes that the refugee population in Pakistan is growing at a rate a little higher than the projected rate for Afghanistan. Birth rates are at about the same level, but death rates will drop as health care, adequate food supplies, and relative security are assured in Pakistan. Under these assumptions, by 1985 there will be about 3.5 million refugees in Pakistan. Without any further addition of refugees, their numbers will grow through natural increase to slightly more than 5.5 million by 2000 (see figure 3).

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Although population data for Afghanistan are considered unreliable by both Afghan and US demographers, we have modeled a likely scenario for Afghanistan's demographic future. A US Census Bureau projection shows the precipitous decline in the normally fast growing population (2.6 percent per year prior to the Marxist takeover) caused by a refugee exodus to Pakistan estimated at nearly 3 million people (refugees to Iran were not considered). According to this projection, which assumes that the refugee flight will end by 1985, Afghanistan's population will not return to its estimated 1978 level (15.3 million) until the end of the decade (see figure 2).

[Redacted]

If political conditions changed enough in the next few years to permit most of the refugees to return, we believe that social dislocation would be almost as great as when they left. Successful resettlement in a wartorn countryside, including initial provision of food and shelter and some reconstruction, would require an enormous effort. In our view, if the Communists remained in power, they would have to concentrate on coping with the immediate needs of several million people added to an already destitute population rather than on building Communist institutions. A non-Communist government, in addition to the returning refugees, would have to cope with sharpened ethnic and political rivalries as newly risen resistance leaders, traditional tribal leaders, and the government vied for the loyalties of the population.

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In order to assess possible future effects of the abrupt population loss, we constructed a hypothetical model of population growth to the year 2000 with and without refugee flight from Afghanistan. Comparison of the two models indicates that the refugee loss will grow into a population loss of nearly 4 million by 1990 and 5.2 million by the turn of the century.

We believe that the refugee loss has major implications for the resistance as well as Afghanistan's ethnic balance, agricultural labor pool, and the quality of its leadership cadre.

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- The Census Bureau estimates a 1983 population of 14.3 million; with no refugee loss the population would be 17.4 million.
- The Census Bureau projects population in 2000 to be about 21.7 million. If no refugees had left Afghanistan, the population would be about 26.9 million.

**Effect on the Resistance**  
In our view, the flight of refugees may benefit the resistance in the short run. Although the decimation of the rural labor force reduces food production, it also reduces the number of mouths to feed. In many

Figure 1  
Afghanistan



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areas the insurgents probably can grow enough food in order to survive. A reduced population also relieves the insurgents of some of the burden of defending civilians from Soviet attack and reduces strains on the limited ability of the resistance to carry out functions formerly performed by the Afghan Government.

location are so strong that many will continue to fight for their ancestral homes indefinitely. We believe it more likely that, as families come to regard their stay in Pakistan, Iran, or Kabul as permanent, the incentive for the men in the family to continue fighting in Afghanistan to defend their homes and farms will diminish.

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In the longer run, however, we believe the refugee flight may reduce the incentive to resist. Some Western social scientists argue that Afghan ties to a

**Table 1**  
**Demographic and Education Estimates**  
**for Afghanistan and Neighboring Countries**

	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Iran
<b>Population estimates 1983</b>			
Population	14,300,000	96,800,000	41,800,000
Population growth rate, 1983-84 (percent)	2.1	2.8	3.0
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	48	44	42
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	23	15	12
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	182	125	112
Life expectancy at birth (years)	41	53	56
Percentage under 15 years old	44	43	46
Urban population	2,900,000	28,000,000	22,000,000
Percentage urban	21	29	53
<b>Education estimates</b>			
Literacy, 1977 (percent)	12	24	50
Number enrolled in school as percentage of age group, 1979			
Primary (6 to 11)	22	56	100
Secondary (12 to 17)	7	16	44
Higher education (20 to 24)	1	2	5

**A Changing Ethnic Balance**

We believe that the loss of a disproportionate number of Pashtuns in the refugee flight to Pakistan will have little short-term effect on the traditional Pashtun political, economic, and cultural dominance in Afghanistan. In the longer term, however, we believe it will influence the distribution of political power among the country's ethnic groups. [redacted]

On the basis of reporting from US and UN officials in Pakistan, we estimate that about three-fourths of the Afghan refugees (2.6 million) are Pashtuns. Although the Pashtun share in the population remaining in Afghanistan has fallen from an estimated 50 percent to around 40 percent, they remain the single largest tribal grouping. We estimate that the Tajik share, despite a sizable exodus from the western provinces, has increased to about 28 percent, compared with an estimated 25 percent before the refugee flight. We

believe that few Hazaras have fled central Afghanistan and that their percentage of the total population has grown from 10 percent to about 12 percent. In the north, the combined Turkmen and Uzbek populations increased from 9 percent to about 11 percent. The percentages of other tribes have remained about the same, although some minor ethnic groups—such as the Kirghiz of the Vakhn (Wakhan Corridor)—have almost entirely left the country. [redacted]

[redacted] Pashtuns still control several of the most important resistance organizations. [redacted]

[redacted] Pashtun bands have been among the most successful in

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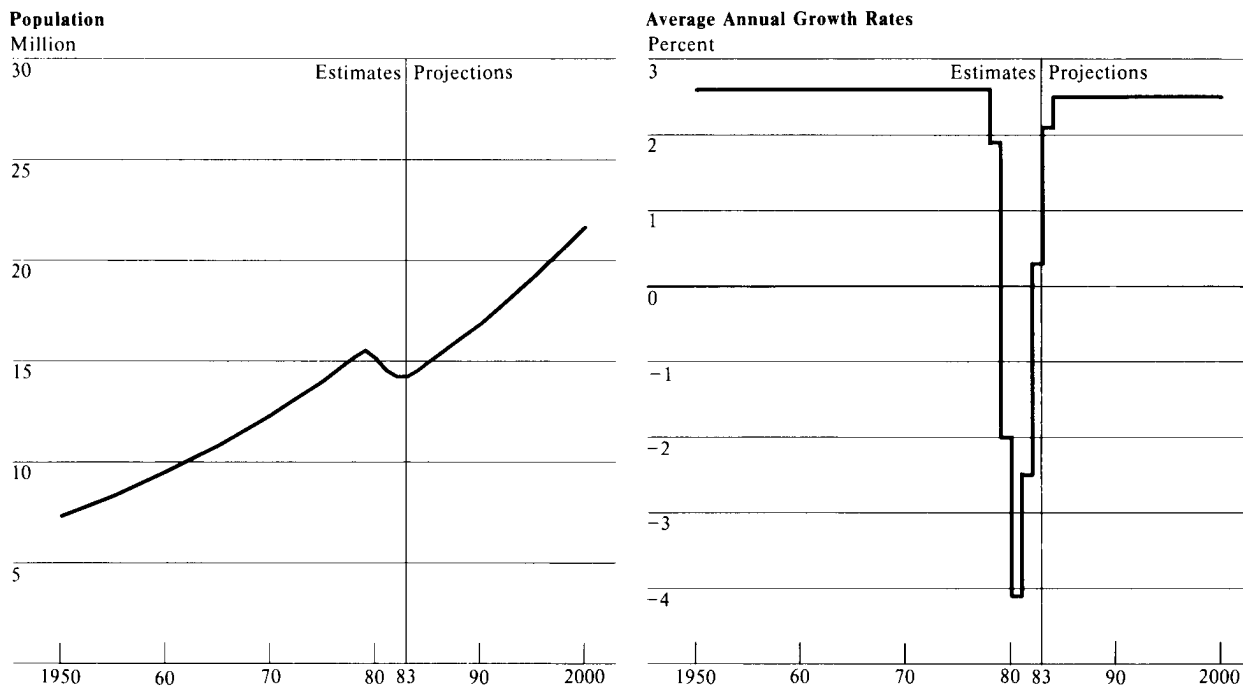
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Figure 2  
Afghanistan: Population Growth, 1950-2000



[Redacted]

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attacking Soviet and regime convoys and isolated posts and in preventing the Communists from controlling their areas. Other ethnic groups, however, are increasingly active. Tajiks have played a more prominent role in the resistance than in past Afghan struggles. The leader of the Jamiat-i-Islami, one of the most important fundamentalist groups, is a Tajik. In the Tajik-inhabited Panjsher Valley, the Jamiat has established one of the more effective local insurgent "governments." The Hazaras, traditionally at the bottom of Afghanistan's social hierarchy, operate the most fully developed local government, the United Council of Islamic Revolution, in central Afghanistan. [Redacted]

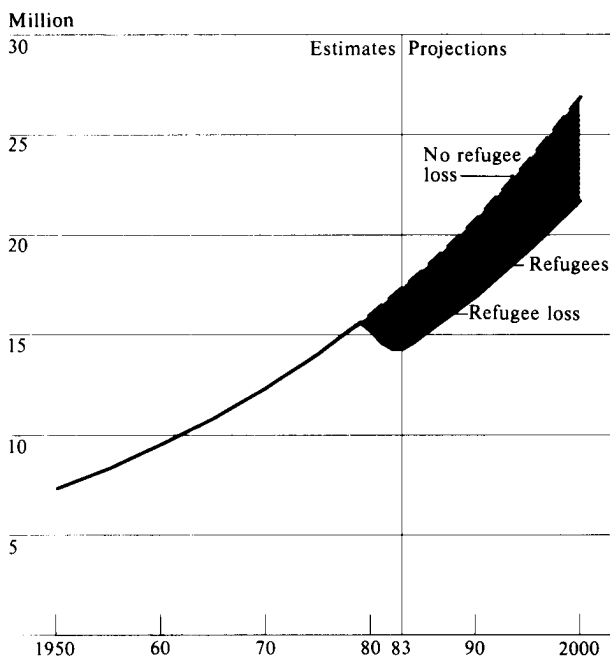
In the short run, we expect language and sectarian differences, mutual distrust, and physical isolation reinforced by the rugged terrain and severe climate to prevent the smaller tribes from breaking the Pashtun stranglehold on power. US Embassy reporting indicates that Pashtuns still dominate the Afghan Government. Most senior Communist officials are Pashtuns, although a handful of prominent individuals—including Prime Minister Keshtmand, a Hazara—come from other groups. [Redacted]

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**Figure 3  
Afghanistan: Population Growth Projections  
With and Without Refugee Loss, 1950-2000**



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In the longer run, we believe that a redistribution of political power among Afghanistan's ethnic groups will occur. In the case of an insurgent victory, the Pashtuns probably would be pressed to make political accommodations in recognition of the role of other tribes in the resistance and of their increased numerical strength. [redacted]

[redacted] the Soviets are attempting to weaken Pashtun power especially by bolstering their chief rivals, the Tajiks, and encouraging tribal rivalries. The US Embassy in Kabul reports that Prime Minister Keshtmand is widely believed to be building a political group based on hostility toward the Pashtuns. [redacted]

**Loss of Rural Workers**

We believe that the loss of at least one-third of the agricultural labor force, according to our estimate, will contribute to severe dislocations in the agricultural sector as the war drags on. Afghan agriculture, aside from the few state farms that are showpieces of the regime and targets of the insurgents, is largely unmechanized and dependent on large inputs of manual labor. [redacted]

We believe, [redacted] there has not yet been a sharp decline in food production in most of the country. A few areas have been affected by both fighting and depopulation, and in others, the insurgents have had to stop fighting to bring in the harvest. The most serious food shortages—those requiring food imports from the USSR—have been in the cities and are due to the disruption of the transportation and marketing networks, not to a major decline in production. [redacted]

Over the longer term, however, we expect such a large loss of rural workers to increasingly threaten the agricultural sector through neglect of the infrastructure. While there may be enough workers—including the insurgents—to sow and harvest crops, [redacted] not enough workers are available for routine maintenance of vineyards, orchards, and irrigation networks. [redacted] inadequate manpower is even more of a factor in the failure to repair war damage. During the summer of 1982, for example, Soviet operations caused extensive damage to orchards and vineyards in the Panjsher, Paghman, and Shomali areas. We believe that continued neglect of the infrastructure in these key cultivated areas will eventually lead to significant declines in production, perhaps within the next several years. [redacted]

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**Figure 4**  
**Ethnic Groups in Afghanistan**



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**Brain Drain Strips Leadership Cadre**

We expect the loss of most of the prewar educated elite to retard the development of a new leadership cadre. Although there has been no actual count, international refugee officials report that most of the approximately 400,000 Afghans in the first refugee flows after the 1978 coup were members of the elite—teachers, doctors, diplomats, army officers, civil servants, religious figures—who found themselves unacceptable to the Communist Party, saw members of

their professions imprisoned or killed, and consequently fled for their lives. Their expertise has not been replaced, and, given the disruption in an educational system already woefully inadequate and the slow training of recruits for civilian and military administrative posts, we believe that the government will continue to rely heavily on Soviet advisers for many years.

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**Table 2**  
**Afghanistan:**  
**Major Ethnic Groups, 1983**

Group	Approximate Percentage of Total Population	Location	Language and Religion	Cultural Characteristics
Pashtun	About 40	Concentrated in south and southeast but widely settled throughout country	Pashtu dialects Hanafi Sunni	Sedentary agriculturalists or nomads; highly developed tribal organization with two main confederations—Durani and Ghilzais—to which most tribes belong; believe they are the core community and that the country belongs more to them than any other group.
Tajik	About 28	North and northeast and Kabul region	Dari Mainly Hanafi Sunni; some Ismaili Shia in isolated northern settlements; Imami Shia near Herat	Mainly sedentary agriculturalists; town dwellers are shopkeepers or administrators, or, in Kabul, servants, drivers, or in transportation businesses; not tribally organized; usually refer to themselves by the name of the valley or region in which they live—such as Panjsheri in the Panjsher Valley; so-called Mountain Tajik live in northern regions.
Hazara	About 12	Area known as the Hazarajat—the center of the country in the mountainous highlands of the upper Helmand Valley west of Kabul	Hazargi (Dari dialect) Some are Imami Shia; some Ismaili Shia; a few are Sunni	Sedentary agriculturalists with some herding and hunting in Hazarajat; many in cities where majority do menial labor, although a few in commercial enterprises and have entered middle class; tribally organized; generally impoverished and isolated in mountains; in cities they are poor and at bottom of ethnic pecking order because of their Mongol features and adherence to Shiism.
Uzbek	About 10	North	Uzbeki and Turkic dialects Hanafi Sunni	Mainly sedentary agriculturalists with a minority seminomadic or nomadic; some in northern towns where they are merchants and artisans; tribal organization largely disappeared among settled groups but still survives among nomads.
Aimak	About 6	Northwest	Dari dialects with many Turkic words Hanafi Sunni	Usually seminomadic; tribally organized (Afghan tribes sometimes referred to as Chahar Aimak); related tribesmen on Iranian side of border called Barbari or Berberi.
Turkmen	About 1	North	Turkic dialects Hanafi Sunni	Chiefly nomadic, occasional agriculturalists, traditionally horsemen, they engage in caravan trade; brought karakul sheep (Persian lamb) and rug industry to Afghanistan in 1920s during Basmachi revolts in Central Asia against Bolshevik armies; tribally organized, they have maintained Turkic language, literature, and way of life.
Baluch	Less than 1	West and southwest	Baluchi Hanafi Sunni	Mainly nomadic, they have little contact with other Afghans; tribally organized, but have little internal unity.
Nuristani	Less than 1	East	Kafiri dialects Hanafi Sunni	Mainly semisedentary agriculturalists, many own enough livestock to derive substantial income from the sale of animal products; not tribal, they refer to themselves by the name of the valley or region in which they live; forcibly converted to Islam in late 19th century.

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Even if, as we expect, the regime gives a high priority to overhauling the educational system, we believe that an educational revolution will succeed only in indoctrinating a small cadre of party members over the next few years. We believe that the regime and its Soviet backers, even if they were to gain control of most of the country, would have to work for at least a generation to achieve their long-term aim—the indoctrination of young Afghans with Communist values.

[redacted]

[redacted]

the thrust of the regime plan is to secularize the system by eliminating the traditional religious and nationalist content and introducing a Soviet-style system under direct Soviet guidance.

[redacted]

- Hours spent on religious studies have been reduced, and political subjects are taught in their place; national history has been replaced with international studies; and ballet and gymnastics are emphasized to appeal to the children.
- Soviet textbooks and teacher training materials are being translated into Pashtu, Dari, Uzbek, Baluchi, and Turkic; Russian language instruction has been substituted for Western language instruction.
- Study of Arabic and Islamic history has been replaced by political, social, and economic subjects in the colleges.
- Study abroad is offered only in the USSR and Eastern Europe.
- The adult literacy campaign has shifted focus from combating illiteracy to indoctrination in Communist ideas.

There are a number of factors that work against implementation of a Communist-oriented educational program:

- An extremely limited base of educated people, even before the flight of much of the educated class. The Afghan Demographic Survey of 1972-73 reported only 115,000 Afghans who had at least 12 years of

formal education, less than 1 percent of the population. The World Bank estimated that in 1977 only 12 percent of the people were literate—19 percent of all males and 3 percent of all females—and that less than one-fourth of eligible children attended primary school.

- Shortage of schools, teachers, and administrators. [redacted] most rural schools are destroyed or closed, urban schools are not well attended, and many teachers and administrators have fled the country. In most of rural Afghanistan, what survives of the education system is administered by the resistance, not the government.
- Resistance of the population. [redacted] many parents perceive the new schools as anti-Islamic institutions, refuse to send their children, emphasize Islamic principles and Koranic teachings at home, or flee the country.

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**Population and Government Control**

Our analysis of government control of Afghanistan's population, based on reports of military operations and population movement in a few areas of the country, indicates that, out of a total population of about 14 million, only about 5.6 million, 40 percent of the total, lives in government-held areas. This is a substantial decline since 1980 when we estimated that about 7.6 million people, 51 percent of the total of 15 million, lived in government-controlled areas.

- While the government has retained control of the urban population with little change since 1980, it has suffered a 45-percent decrease in the number of rural Afghans under its control, more than offsetting the flight of refugees to government-controlled cities.

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**CIA Estimates of Rural Population Loss**

*We estimate that the total rural population in Afghanistan declined by about 18 percent between 1979 and the beginning of 1983. This loss has been unevenly distributed, with the greatest losses in the provinces bordering Pakistan and Iran:*

- *The combined rural population of about 4 million in eight eastern provinces declined by about one-half.*
- *In the two western provinces of Herat and Farah, rural populations of about 1 million declined by approximately 40 percent.*
- *Rural areas of Kabul Province declined by about 40 percent, the refugees most likely fleeing to Kabul city.*
- *Rural populations in the other 15 provinces increased about 9 percent.* [redacted]

*There is considerable margin for error in our estimates, but we do not believe it is so great that we are wrong about the trend and relative magnitude in the rural to urban change or in the estimated depopulation of some provinces. We have reasonable but conflicting data on the number of refugees who fled to Pakistan; fragmentary reporting on the flight of refugees to Iran and Kabul; and we know only in general terms where any of the refugees came from. In order to construct our estimates, we made the following assumptions:*

- *There are about 3 million refugees in Pakistan. Close to 90 percent are rural tribesmen, most of them from the rural Pashtun areas of eight eastern provinces bordering Pakistan: Ghazni, Paktika, Paktia, Nangarhar, Konarha, Badakhshan, Qandahar, and Zabol.*
- *Refugees in Iran number about 500,000, mostly from Herat and Farah Provinces bordering on Iran.*
- *About 700,000 rural migrants are in Kabul, nearly 200,000 in other major cities. Migrants originate in the countryside surrounding cities.* [redacted]

- The government's loss of many relatively populous rural areas—including densely settled portions of Herat, Balkh, Helmand, and Qandahar Provinces—caused a decline in both the population and the percentage of population under government control through the end of 1981. Despite further territorial losses since then, the percentage of population in government-controlled areas has remained roughly the same. [redacted]

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Barring a dramatic turn in the war, we expect no major change in the 60-to-40 split between insurgent and regime control of the countryside that has prevailed for the past two years. [redacted]

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We believe that insurgent strengths will stymie major government offensives:

- [redacted] even when government or Soviet security forces are in an area in overwhelming numbers, they have been unable through force, subversion, or monetary inducements to weaken the population's dislike of the Karmal regime and its Soviet patrons.

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- [redacted] rural support for the insurgency continues at a high level, although some war weariness is starting to appear. The US Embassy reports that the majority of villagers continue to supply the insurgents with food, shelter, and recruits. [redacted]

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Insurgent organizational weaknesses, however, are likely to prevent an increase in the proportion of the population under their control. Flight from the countryside, especially of the even minimally educated, has hurt their ability to strengthen and sustain their rural bases. [redacted]

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[redacted] even though one area [redacted] had been liberated, there was no one capable of administering the area or organizing provision of basic services for the local population, already badly weakened from the strain of years of fighting. The

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**Table 3**  
**Afghanistan: Estimated Rural and Urban Provincial**  
**Population Change, 1979-83**

Province	1979 Census			Estimated 1983		
	Total Population	Rural Population (thousands)	Urban Population	Total Population	Rural Population (thousands)	Urban Population
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,555.6</b>	<b>13,578.9</b>	<b>1,976.7</b>	<b>13,979.6</b>	<b>11,193.7</b>	<b>2,785.9</b>
Estimated population change from internal refugee flight						
Kabul	2,221.7	1,302.6	919.1	2,565.6	754.5	1,811.1
Estimated population loss from international refugee flight						
Eight eastern provinces						
Ghazni	770.7	740.3	30.4	443.9	424.4	19.5
Paktia	292.3	290.9	1.4	81.4	79.9	1.5
Paktika	593.0	581.5	11.4	249.3	236.8	12.5
Nangarhar	889.1	832.2	56.4	573.5	543.4	30.1
Konarha	298.1	296.0	2.1	87.8	85.5	2.3
Badakhshan	593.3	583.1	10.1	249.7	238.6	11.1
Qandahar	676.0	497.6	178.4	328.4	211.3	117.1
Zabol	213.8	207.8	5.9	96.8	90.3	6.5
Two western provinces						
Herat	916.7	752.7	164.0	580.3	451.5	128.9
Farah	279.6	260.8	18.8	173.3	161.4	12.0
Estimated population gain from natural increase						
Parvan	900.2	875.1	25.1	985.3	957.8	27.5
Bamian	320.0	312.7	7.4	350.3	342.2	8.1
Laghman	370.4	366.4	4.0	405.4	401.0	4.4
Takhar	619.5	573.3	46.2	678.0	627.5	50.6
Baghlan	588.6	513.5	75.1	644.3	562.0	82.2
Konduz	662.0	554.8	107.2	724.6	607.3	117.3
Samangan	324.8	291.8	33.0	355.5	319.4	36.1
Balkh	678.5	555.9	122.6	742.6	608.5	134.1
Jowzjan	701.5	646.7	54.9	767.8	707.8	60.1
Faryab	694.5	609.6	55.0	760.1	700.0	60.1
Badghis	278.4	273.1	5.3	304.8	298.9	5.8
Nimruz	123.5	117.0	6.5	135.2	128.1	7.1
Helmand	617.0	590.3	26.6	675.3	646.1	29.2
Oruzgan	529.4	522.5	6.9	579.4	571.9	7.5
Ghowr	402.8	399.9	3.0	440.9	437.7	3.3

insurgents themselves feel acutely the lack of educated personnel, according to some journalists' accounts. Most of the insurgents are peasants with little or no schooling; journalists estimate that only 2 to 5 percent are literate. The journalists assert that organization

and communication between members of an insurgent group as well as between the insurgents and the local population are poor under such circumstances and lead to failure of many military operations.

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**Effect of the War on the Cities**

We believe that urban turmoil caused by massive refugee influx into some cities and refugee flight from others will compound the problems facing the Communist regime in bringing the Afghan population under its effective control. The major cities have assumed an importance to the Soviets and to the Karmal regime as military, economic, transportation, and communication centers that far surpasses their importance prior to the 1978 coup. Only Kabul had previous national significance in this rural-oriented nation. [redacted]

We have less than reliable data for urban areas. We do not believe that the 1979 census, the only official data source, actually enumerated any city, with the possible exception of Kabul, but only updated results of precensus surveys that were made in 1977 and 1978. Our estimates considered these data in conjunction with journalists' reports, US Embassy reporting from Kabul, and our knowledge of the demographic impact of wartime conditions on other refugee movements, notably in Kampuchea and Vietnam. [redacted]

Based on our calculations, we have reached the following conclusions about urban population change:

- Afghanistan's urban population increased by about 40 percent between 1979 and 1983, from some 2 million (13 percent of the total population) to about 2.8 million (20 percent of the total population).
- Kabul has been the recipient of the largest number of refugees. Its population has doubled from 913,000, reported in the 1979 census, to an estimated 1.8 million in 1983.
- Some urban areas have lost population, notably the small cities and villages near Pakistan and Iran.

— We estimate that Qandahar City decreased in size from about 178,000, reported in the 1979 census, to about 117,000. We surmise that the heavy bombardment of residential neighborhoods by government forces in early 1982 provoked a large refugee flight to Pakistan. We also expect that lack of electricity and other services, shutdown of industry, expensive food

and other basic commodities, and intensive military recruitment drives have contributed to an exodus of refugees from the city.

- We believe that the city of Herat, close to the Iran border, has declined from 140,000 reported in the 1979 census to an estimated 110,000 in 1983. [redacted]

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**Wartime Kabul**

**Tides of Refugees**

US Embassy officials and Western journalists describe "tides" of refugees who have noticeably crowded Kabul and reduced the already low standard of living. We estimate that about 80 percent of Kabul's growth since 1979 is due to the entry of about 700,000 rural people seeking sanctuary from the fighting in the countryside.<sup>1</sup> [redacted]

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[redacted] US Embassy officials, and an Afghan Government report, suggest that the flood of refugees into Kabul is straining the capacity of the city to accommodate them:

- [redacted] Numerous traditional adobe single-family dwellings were constructed throughout Kabul in both existing and newly developed housing areas.
- [redacted] several apartment complexes were started during this time period. We estimate that, when completed, these complexes will more than double the number present in 1979. We believe, however, that many of the apartments will house Soviet advisers and high-ranking Afghans, not refugees.

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<sup>1</sup> Our estimate of the magnitude of the refugee flow is based on 1979 census data and the reports of Western journalists and Embassy officials. Afghan demographers reported in their analysis of the 1979 census that 60 percent of the estimated yearly growth of Kabul (6.3 percent) was due to in-migration. We estimate that an additional four times as many fled each year to Kabul between 1979 and 1983 as a result of the war. This assumption yielded a growth rate of 18.6 percent, an unusually high urban rate, but one we consider reasonable in describing the war situation. [redacted]

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**Table 4**  
**Afghanistan: Cities Over 25,000 People**

City	Province	1979 Census Population (thousands)	CIA 1983 Estimates (thousands)
Kabul	Kabol	913	1,803
Qandahar	Qandahar	178	117
Herat	Herat	140	110
Mazar-e Sharif	Balkh	103	Increase
Jalalabad	Nangarhar	53	Decrease
Konduz	Konduz	53	Increase
Baghlan	Baghlan	39	Increase
Maymanah	Faryab	38	Increase
Pol-e Khomri	Baghlan	31	Increase
Ghazni	Ghazni	30	Decrease
Kholm	Samangan	28	Increase
Khanabad	Konduz	26	Increase

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

- The US Embassy reports a sharp rise in food, fuel, and other essential commodity prices, with inflation estimated to be continuing at a very high rate. Journalists relate an astronomical rise in housing costs; a house renting for \$30 a year in 1980 cost \$250 in 1982. [Redacted]

**Grudging Acceptance for the Regime**

Despite the difficult living conditions and a pervasive sympathy for the resistance within the city, Embassy officials and Western journalists report that most Kabulis grudgingly accept the lower living standards and daily repressions. They shelter the mujahideen, but most do not actively join in overt opposition except for outbursts of violence over local incidents. We believe that people see no viable alternative other than submission to the overwhelming military forces surrounding them, that they are unwilling to enthusiastically support the regime, but that they are also unwilling to risk brutal suppression by rising against it as they did in February 1980. [Redacted]

This passive acceptance was reflected this year when Kabulis failed to actively commemorate the anniversary of the 1980 uprising or to demonstrate against the celebration of the fifth anniversary of the 28 April 1978 coup. Even though insurgent activity in the city was high at the time of the uprising anniversary, US Embassy observers reported that most residents failed to respond to leaflets distributed by resistance members that requested them to close bazaars and stay home from work. While insurgents disrupted the power supply and assassinated government officials, tight security prevented disruption of the festivities surrounding the 1978 coup anniversary. [Redacted]

**Outlook**

We believe that demographic and social problems in Afghanistan have become so pervasive and destabilizing that the goal of national control will remain elusive, and the country will slide deeper into anarchy. Even if the level of resistance were reduced enough to give the Communists effective control of most of the country, we believe that the turbulence in Afghan life is so severe that the reconstruction of a normally functioning society with even the usually low prewar levels of economic activity, government authority, public services, and social stability is unlikely for decades. [Redacted]

We believe it unlikely that there will be another large refugee movement to Pakistan or Iran on the order of the 1979-81 flow of more than 2 million persons to Pakistan. Nor, unless there is a dramatic change in the military fortunes of government or insurgent forces or a settlement of the war, do we expect a return of many refugees from Pakistan or Iran. We believe it more likely that there will be a continuing trickle of refugees into both Pakistan and Iran and a continuing flight of refugees into the cities. [Redacted]

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We believe that the loss of much of the country's educated elite will continue to retard the regime's development plans and that the regime will continue to rely on the expertise of Soviet advisers for many years. Despite the many drawbacks to rebuilding the society on a Communist model—the low literacy rate of the population, the meager educational base on which to build, and the resistance of the population—we believe that the Soviets understand the problems and are prepared to persevere.

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