



The Ethnic Composition Of Uzbeks And Tajiks In The Territory Of Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the ethnic composition of Uzbeks and Tajiks in the territory of Afghanistan, their history, geographical location, clans, and national characteristics. The study provides information on Afghanistan's multiethnic composition, population growth, major ethnic groups, and their areas of residence. In addition, the integration of Uzbeks and Tajiks with the local population, their cultural and interlingual interactions, customs, and national characteristics are highlighted.

В статье анализируется этнический состав узбеков и таджиков на территории Афганистана, их история, географическое положение, родовые и национальные особенности. В исследовании приведены сведения о полиэтническом составе Афганистана, росте численности населения, основных этнических группах и их местах проживания. Также освещается интеграция узбеков и таджиков с местным населением, их культурное и межъязыковое взаимодействие, обычаи и национальные особенности.

Keywords:

Afghanistan, Uzbeks, Tajiks, ethnic composition, nations, demography northern provinces.

Афганистан, узбеки, таджики, этнический состав, народы, демография, северные провинции.

Introduction.

Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, with its population comprising more than twenty ethnic groups. Among them are Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmens, and other ethnic communities. This multi-ethnic structure has a significant impact on Afghanistan's historical, cultural, and political life. In particular, Uzbeks and Tajiks living in the northern provinces play an important role in the country's economic, cultural, and political processes. Their ethnic composition, clans, integration with the local population, and cultural interactions provide a deeper understanding of the country's polyethnic structure. This article systematically

analyzes these topics and highlights the historical and contemporary characteristics of Uzbek and Tajik ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

The ethnic composition of Uzbeks and Tajiks in Afghanistan has been shaped by numerous historical and cultural processes. They primarily reside in the northern and northwestern provinces—Balkh, Faryab, Jowzjan, Kunduz, and Takhar. The proportion of these ethnic groups in the population varies from region to region; in some provinces, they form the main ethnic layer, while in others, they maintain close contact with the local settled population, leading to processes of demographic mixing.

Results and discussion.

The intermingling of Uzbeks and Tajiks with the local population has historically been influenced by various socio-political factors. This process developed through trade, marriage, agriculture, and other daily activities, leading to the emergence of new regional cultural characteristics. In this way, while preserving their ethnic distinctiveness, these groups engaged in a range of cultural, linguistic, and economic interactions with the local population.

As a polyethnic state, Afghanistan is home to more than twenty ethnic groups. The major ethnicities include Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmens, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Karakalpaks, Hazaras, Chahar-Aimaks, Nuristanis, Balochs, Pashais, Arabs, Hindus, and others. The large ethnic Pashtun units belong to the Durrani and Ghilzai confederations. In Afghanistan, Turkic-speaking peoples are also referred to as “Turkic” or “Turkic-descended.” Through socio-historical development, the Uzbek ethnic group in northern Afghanistan played an important role in the formation and development of a distinct national identity. Therefore, today, all clans and sub-ethnic groups within the Uzbek nation can be found in this region. In the Qataghan region, the majority of Uzbeks belong to the Qataghan, Laqai, Qongirot, Qarluq, and Dorman tribes. Although some of the populations of Andarab and Khanjân consider themselves of Turkic origin, they are also partly of Persian descent.

In 1920, the population of Afghanistan was approximately 4.5–5 million. Exact data for this period are not available, as regular censuses in Afghanistan began much later. Population estimates are based on retrospective demographic calculations and the records of foreign observers and missions. By 1940, Afghanistan’s population was roughly 7–8 million. As in earlier periods, these figures are approximate, since nationwide censuses were not conducted in Afghanistan until the mid-20th century. These calculations are based on demographic research, UN statistics, and retrospective estimates [1].

By 1990, Afghanistan’s population reached around 11.6 million. Compared to previous decades, this slower growth was

primarily due to long-term conflict (including the Soviet intervention from 1979–1989), mass migration and refugee flows to neighboring countries—especially Pakistan and Iran—economic crises, and high mortality rates. These figures are based on retrospective estimates from international organizations, including the UN and the World Bank [1].

By 2000, Afghanistan’s population was approximately 21–22 million, with minor variations depending on the source. For example, according to World Bank data, the population in 2000 was estimated at 21.64 million [1]. By 2010, it had reached approximately 28.2 million [1]. According to UN Population Fund calculations, Afghanistan’s population in 2021 was 39.8 million [2]. The Central Intelligence Agency estimated it at 37,466,414 [3].

By 2025, Afghanistan’s population is projected to reach 43,250,330, with a total area of 652,864 km². Afghanistan’s population belongs to numerous ethnic groups and speaks many languages—reflecting the country’s position at the crossroads of trade routes and invasion paths connecting Central, South, and West Asia. The largest ethnic groups include Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Nuristanis, Chahar-Aimaks, Turkmens, Balochs, and others.

3. Ethnic Composition:

- 3.1 Pashtuns
- 3.2 Tajiks
- 3.3 Hazaras
- 3.4 Uzbeks
- 3.5 Chahar-Aimaks
- 3.6 Turkmens
- 3.7 Pashais
- 3.8 Nuristanis
- 3.9 Pamiri peoples
- 3.10 Balochs
- 3.11 Bragui
- 3.12 Parachi
- 3.13 Gujars
- 3.14 Kyrgyz
- 3.15 Afshars and Qizilbash [4]

Afghanistan is among the countries with rapidly growing populations. A large part of the population lives in rural areas and strictly adheres to traditions and customs. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country, with its population

composed of various ethnic groups. Below are the main ethnic groups and their approximate proportions:

Ethnic Group	Approximate Share of Population
Pashtuns	40–42%
Tajiks	25–27%
Hazaras	9–10%
Uzbeks	9–10%
Turkmens	2–3%
Aimaks	1–2%
Balochs	Around 1%
Nuristanis, Pashais, and others	1–2% [4]

Languages specific to ethnic groups:

- Pashtuns — speak Pashto.
- Tajiks — speak Dari (Persian).
- Hazaras — primarily speak Dari, but adhere to the Shi’a sect.
- Uzbeks — speak Uzbek.
- Turkmens — speak Turkmen.

Geographical distribution:

- Pashtuns — mainly in southern and eastern regions.
- Tajiks — in northern and central provinces.
- Hazaras — central Afghanistan (Hazarajat region).
- Uzbeks and Turkmens — in the north, near the borders with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan [4].

Afghanistan is home to more than ten ethnic groups. The main ones are as follows:

Ethnic Group	Approximate Share of Population	Brief Description
Pashtuns	40–42%	The largest ethnic group; historically dominant in political rule.
Tajiks	27–30%	Persian-speaking, mainly in northern and central provinces.
Hazaras	10–15%	Adhere to Shi’a Islam; mainly in central regions (Hazarajat).
Uzbeks	8–10%	Fully Turkic people, mainly in northern provinces.
Turkmens	2–3%	One of the Turkic peoples, living near the Turkmenistan border.
Balochs	1–2%	Ethnic group living in the southeast.
Nuristanis, Aimaks, Pashtuns, and others [5:24]	1%	Small groups but culturally significant.

The official languages of Afghanistan are Pashto and Dari (Persian), with Dari serving as the country’s administrative and commercial

language. Tajiks, Hazaras, and Aimaks primarily speak Dari. Afghan Uzbeks mainly speak Uzbek, while Turkmens speak Turkmen. Afghanistan is

a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, and its ethnic diversity plays an important role in its political and social life. The balance between ethnic groups is crucial for stability and cooperation in the country. Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Turkmens primarily reside in the northern and northeastern regions of Afghanistan. These areas, bordering Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan during the Soviet era, are ethnically inhabited by both Turkic and Iranian peoples. The main settlement areas for each ethnic group are listed below [6:45].

Approximately 8–10% of Afghanistan's population are Uzbeks, the majority of whom are Sunni Muslims. Main settlement areas:

- Balkh province (Mazari-Sharif) — the primary center for Uzbeks.
- Jowzjan province — Shibirghan city, where Uzbeks form the majority.
- Faryab province — living alongside Turkmens.
- Sar-e Pol province and Kunduz province — mixed with Tajiks and Pashtuns.

Uzbeks play an important role in Afghanistan's economic and military-political processes. One of the most prominent Afghan Uzbek leaders is Abdul Rashid Dostum [1].

Tajiks make up 27–30% of the population, speak Dari, and are mainly Sunni Muslims. Main settlement areas:

- Badakhshan province — almost entirely Tajik.
- Takhar and Kunduz provinces — mixed with Uzbeks and Pashtuns.
- Panjshir province — a well-known autonomous region.
- Kabul city — hosts a large Tajik diaspora.
- Parwan, Kapisa, Herat, and Samangan provinces — also have significant Tajik communities [7:37].

Tajiks play an important role in the country's cultural and scientific elite. Among them were prominent political leaders and fighters, such as Ahmad Shah Massoud.

Turkmens constitute approximately 2–3% of the total population, speak Turkmen, and are mainly Sunni Muslims. Main settlement areas:

- Faryab province — living alongside Uzbeks.

- Jowzjan province.
- Northern border areas of Balkh province.
- Northeastern part of Herat province.

Turkmens are primarily engaged in animal husbandry and handicrafts. Although smaller in number, they are culturally rich and have preserved their traditions.

Uzbek Clans in Afghanistan. Afghan Uzbeks primarily reside in the northern provinces, such as Balkh, Kunduz, Jowzjan, Faryab, Takhar, and Samangan. They are genealogically linked to Uzbeks from Uzbekistan. Some of the main Uzbek clans in Afghanistan include:

- Qongirot
- Kipchak
- Naiman
- Mangit
- Kochat
- Karluk
- Bayat
- Yuz
- Qangli
- Barlas

Kurma (Quroma) — in some sources also referred to as Quroma Uzbeks — are historically descended from Mavarannahr and have preserved their customs [8:179].

Tajik Clans in Afghanistan. Tajiks mainly live in Panjshir, Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz, Kabul, Parwan, Kapisa, and Herat provinces. They are an Iranian-speaking people, also referred to as "Farsihow." Although clan structures among Afghan Tajiks are not highly developed, some local clan groups exist. The Safi are mostly found in Nuristan and Kunar regions. The Panjshiri Tajiks are known as the Pariyon. Shughnis and Wakhis are Tajik groups living in Badakhshan. Herati Tajiks are native urban Tajiks, often referring to themselves as "Farsihoi Hirotiy" [9].

Conclusion

The ethnic composition of Uzbeks and Tajiks in Afghanistan has been shaped by numerous historical, cultural, and socio-political processes. Research indicates that these ethnic groups primarily reside in the northern and northwestern provinces, and their territorial distribution, interaction with the

local population, and processes of cultural integration contribute to the preservation and development of their national characteristics.

Uzbeks and Tajiks play an important role in Afghanistan's economic, cultural, and political life. In the northern regions, the Uzbek and Tajik populations are closely linked to their respective clans, maintaining their customs, language, and cultural traditions. At the same time, Afghanistan's polyethnic nature and the interactions among various ethnic groups are crucial for the country's political stability and social integration.

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