

Reassessing Afghanistan

Afghanistan, By the Numbers

250,000 - Afghanistan's total area, in square miles (647,500 sq km). That makes Afghanistan larger than France, Spain, and even Ukraine, and only slightly smaller than Texas.

33,000,000 - Afghanistan's total population. That's more people than live in Iraq, and almost as many as live in Canada or California.

3,000,000 - Estimated population of Kabul, Afghanistan's capital and largest city. Devastation wrought by decades of war make accurate counts difficult. Still, the city is rebuilding and its population is growing.

80 - Percentage of the population that is Sunni Muslim. Nearly everyone else is a Shi'ite Muslim.

42 - Percentage of the population who are ethnic Pashtuns. There are also Tajiks (27 percent), Hazaras (9 percent), Uzbeks (9 percent), Aimaks (4 percent), Turkmen (3 percent), Balochs (2 percent), and others (4 percent). And that's not to mention the myriad subgroups.

2.4 million - Number of people in Afghanistan who are "involved in opium cultivation," according to the UN. Afghanistan produces the vast majority of the world's illegal opium supply, and opium sales account for some 10 percent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product.

#1 reason Afghan farmers give for growing opium - poverty. Afghanistan's standard of living is among the world's lowest. Then again, 9 out of 10 Afghan farmers refuse to grow opium. The #1 reason they give for not doing it? It's against Islam.