

Advanced Placement Literature: Summer Reading 2019

Greetings and welcome to the wonderful world of AP Literature. I look forward to an exciting year of reading and discussion with all of you. In order to prepare for the Fall, please read the following novel: *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini.

Read through and complete the study guide provided. The information and insight offered will be important for the test/essay and discussions we have. Expect some kind of assessment by the 2nd week of class...so READ thoroughly over the summer and come prepared. I suggest using post its as you read to mark up favorite quotes, meaningful moments etc. We do have class discussions (for points) so you want to prepare yourself by marking parts of the text that spark analysis for you.

*** My email address is tamara.schoen@browardschools.com. I will actually be scoring the AP exams at the beginning of the summer, but I check my email frequently. Feel free to email me with any questions or just to 'chat'. I look forward to getting to know all of you. One final note....START TO APPLY TO COLLEGE THIS SUMMER. Try to be finished by Sept. 1st. If you would like help on your essays, email them to me. DON'T WAIT. Competition is steep...apply early. ☺**

Biography

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1965. His father was a diplomat with the Afghan Foreign Ministry and his mother taught Farsi and History at a large high school in Kabul. In 1976, the Afghan Foreign Ministry relocated the Hosseini family to Paris. They were ready to return to Kabul in 1980, but by then Afghanistan had already witnessed a bloody communist coup and the invasion of the Soviet army. The Hosseinis sought and were granted political asylum in the United States. In September of 1980, Hosseini's family moved to San Jose, California. Hosseini graduated from high school in 1984 and enrolled at Santa Clara University where he earned a bachelor's degree in Biology in 1988. The following year, he entered the University of California-San Diego's School of Medicine, where he earned a Medical Degree in 1993. He completed his residency at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles. Hosseini was a practicing internist between 1996 and 2004.



While in medical practice, Hosseini began writing his first novel, *The Kite Runner*, in March of 2001. In 2003, *The Kite Runner*, was published and has since become an international bestseller, published in 48 countries. In 2006 he was named a goodwill envoy to UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency. His second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was published in May of 2007. Currently, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is published in 25 countries. He lives in northern California.



STUDY GUIDE

1. The novel begins 'I became what I am today at the age of twelve'. To what is Amir referring? Is his assertion entirely true? What other factors have helped form his character? How would you describe Amir?
2. Amir had never thought of Hassan as his friend, despite the evident bond between them, just as Baba did not think of Ali as his friend (page 10). What parallels can be drawn between Amir and Hassan's relationship, and Baba and Ali's? How would you describe the relationship between the two boys? What makes them so different in the way they behave with each other? What is it that makes Amir inflict small cruelties on Hassan? Had you already guessed at the true relationship between them? If so, at what point and why?
3. It is Amir's dearest wish to please his father. To what extent does he succeed in doing so and at what cost? What kind of man is Baba? How would you describe his relationship with Amir, and with Hassan? How does that relationship change, and what prompts those changes?
4. Khaled Hosseini vividly describes Afghanistan, both the privileged world of Amir's childhood and the stricken country under the Taliban. How did his descriptions differ from ideas that you may already have had about Afghanistan? What cultural differences become evident in the American passages of the novel? How easy do the Afghans find it to settle in the US?
5. After Soraya tells Amir about her past, she says 'I'm so lucky to have found you. You're so different from every Afghan guy I've met' (page 157). What do you think of the reasons that Amir puts forward for this? Could there be others? How do Afghan women fare in America? Are they any better off than they were in Afghanistan before the Taliban seized power?

6. On the drive to Kabul Farid says to Amir 'You've always been a tourist here, you just didn't know it.' (page 204) What is Farid implying? What do you think of his implication? Amir feels that he is 'home again' but how well does he know or understand his country?
 7. How does Hosseini succeed in bringing the horror of the Taliban to life? Why did he choose the role for Assef that he did?
 8. 'There is a way to be good again' promises Rahim Khan, a phrase which resonates throughout the novel. Does this prove to be the case for Amir? How important is Rahim Khan to him
 9. After reading Amir's story Rahim Khan writes to him: 'the most impressive thing about your story is that it has irony.' (page 28). It is surely an irony that Hassan, whose ignorance Amir pillories, points out that there was no need for the man to kill his wife to weep tears, he could simply have smelled an onion. How important is irony in the book? Were there other instances that particularly struck you?
 10. How significant is the tale of Rostam and Sohrab? What does it mean to Hassan, and to Amir?
 11. How important is religion in the book? What attitudes do the main characters have to it? How do they compare to the popular Western idea of Islam?
 12. What is the significance of kites in the book? What do you think they symbolize? Who is the eponymous kite runner?
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[Following Amir – A trip to Afghanistan in which life imitates art](#)

8/10/2003

by Khaled Hosseini
San Francisco Chronicle
Sunday, August 10, 2003

Amir will be the first to tell you that he is neither the noblest nor the bravest of men. But three years ago, he did something both noble and brave:

He went back to Afghanistan, then ruled by the Taliban, to settle an old score. He went back after a 20-year absence to atone for a sin he had committed as a boy. He went back to rescue a child he had never met, and to rescue himself from damnation. The journey almost cost him his life. The thing is, I was the one who sent him. It was easy. After all, I created Amir; he is the protagonist of my novel, [The Kite Runner](#).

Then, in March 2003, with the novel proofread and in production, I found myself tracing my protagonist's footsteps, sitting in the window seat of an Ariana Airlines Boeing 727 headed toward Kabul. Like Amir, I had been gone a long time, almost 27 years, in fact; I was an 11-year-old, thin-framed seventh-grader when I left Afghanistan. I was going back now as a 38-year-old physician residing in Northern California, a writer, a husband and father of two. I gazed out the window, waiting for the plane to break through the clouds, waiting for Kabul to appear below me. When it did, a few lines from [The Kite Runner](#) came to me, and Amir's thoughts

suddenly became my own: The kinship I felt suddenly for the old land surprised me. I thought I had forgotten about this land. But I hadn't. Maybe Afghanistan hadn't forgotten me either. The old adage in writing is you write about what you've experienced. I was going to experience what I had already written about.

Given this unusual circumstance, my two-week stay in Kabul took on a decidedly surreal quality, because every day I saw places and things I had already seen with my mind's eye, with Amir's eyes. For instance, walking through the crowded streets of Kabul for the first time, I was buoyed, like Amir, with a sense of coming home to an old friend. But also like Amir, I felt a bit like a tourist in my own country. We'd both been away a long time; neither one of us had fought in the wars, neither one of us had bled with the Afghan people. I had written about Amir's guilt. Now I tasted it.

Soon, the line between Amir's memories and my own began to blur. Amir had lived out my memories on the pages of The Kite Runner, and now I found myself living out his. When I was driven through the once beautiful, now war-ravaged Jadeh-maywand Avenue, past collapsed buildings, piles of rubble and bullet-pocked, roofless walls where beggars took shelter, I remembered my father buying me rosewater ice cream there one day in the early 1970s. And I remembered that Amir and his loving servant, Hassan, used to buy their kites on this same street, from a blind old man named Saifo. I sat on the crumbling steps of Cinema Park where my brother and I used to watch free undubbed Russian films in the winter and where Amir and Hassan had seen their favorite Western, "The Magnificent Seven," no fewer than 13 times. I passed with Amir by smoke-filled, tiny kabob houses where our fathers used to take us, where sweaty men still sat cross-legged behind charcoal grills and feverishly fanned skewers of sizzling chopan kabob. Together we gazed up at the sky over the gardens of the 16th century emperor Babur and spotted a kite floating over the city. I thought of a sunny winter day in 1975, the day of Hassan and Amir's kite-fighting tournament. That was the fateful day when 12-year-old Amir made a choice and betrayed his adoring friend Hassan, a day that would haunt him for the rest of his life; his choice would draw him back to Afghanistan and the Taliban as a grown man seeking redemption. And as I sat on a bench at Ghazi Stadium and watched the New Year's Day parade with thousands of Afghans, I thought of my father and I watching a game of buzkashi there in 1973, but also of Amir, who had witnessed the Taliban stone a pair of adulterers in this same stadium, at the south end goalpost, in fact, where now a group of young men in traditional garments were dancing the atan in a circle.

But perhaps nowhere did fiction and life collide more dizzily than when I found my father's old house in Wazir Akbar Khan, the house where I grew up, just as Amir rediscovered his Baba's old house in that same neighborhood. It took me three days of searching - I had no address and the neighborhood had changed drastically - but I kept looking until I spotted the familiar arch over the gates.

I got to walk through my old house; the Panjshiri soldiers who lived there were gracious enough to grant me this nostalgic tour. I found that, like on Amir's childhood house, the paint on mine had faded, the grass had withered, the trees were gone, and the walls were crumbling. Like Amir, I was struck by how much smaller the house was in reality than the version that had for so long lived in my memories. And - I swear to this - when I stepped through the front gates, I saw a Rorschach blot-shaped oil stain on the driveway, just as Amir had on his father's driveway. As I said my goodbyes and thanks to the soldiers, I realized something else: The emotional impact of finding my father's house would have been even more intense if I hadn't written The Kite Runner. After all, I had already been through this. I had stood beside Amir at the gates of his father's house - now overtaken by murderous Taliban soldiers - and felt his loss. I'd watched him set his hands on the rusty wrought-iron bars, and together we'd gazed at the sagging roof and crumbling front steps. Having written that scene took some of the edge off my own experience. Call it art stealing life's thunder.

Khaled Hosseini is a physician in the Bay Area and the author of the novel "The Kite Runner," a San Francisco Chronicle best-seller.

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Kite Runner Vocabulary

1. Allah-u-akbar= God is great- God is the Greatest
2. naan= bread
3. bazaar= market place, often where people would go shopping
4. mullah= a religious leader of the Muslim community
5. namaz= the traditional five time a day prayer for Muslims
6. zakat= at the end of each year a Muslim is mandated to give charity according to the amount of money he made that year
7. hadj= a Muslim's journey to Mecca where that person walks around the house of God (Kaba)
8. jan= my dear
9. agha= sir; Mr.
10. mast= drunk- to be high
11. Sunni and Shi'a= the two different types of Muslims
12. Inshallah= with God's will, hopefully
13. Mashallah= a word that a person says after they have given a compliment to keep bad eye away from the person who is receiving the compliment.
14. Bas= enough
15. Kunis= this word is a profanity referring to the butts of the two boys
16. mard= man
17. watan= country, homeland
18. quwat= the power
19. kasseef= dirty
20. salaam alaykum= Peace be upon you
21. Tashakor= thanks
22. qurma= a type of stew typical of the middle eastern culture, it has meat either mutton or beef
23. mareez= being ill; unwell physically
24. tandoor= a type of oven in the ground where the people would make the bread
25. sultan= king
26. chi= tea
27. raka'ts= it means rounds; this is usually used when talking about prayer
28. ayats= a prayer from the Koran
29. Bismillah= in the name of God
30. Ya Mowlah on rubab= " a mullah on rubab"
31. rubab= an instrument of pass time similar to a guitar but different
32. wah= Good (used for appreciation)
33. Shorawi= Russia
34. khanum= lady; madam
35. balay= a formal and respectful way of saying "yes"
36. baba= dad
37. padar= father
38. ahmaq= idiot
39. khoda hafez= good bye
40. lochak= a nasty insult meaning someone is clingy
41. mohtaram= honorable
42. alef- beh= alphabet
43. bachem= my child
44. komak= help
45. khastegari= a word meaning that the man or the father of the suitor will go to ask the father of the women for her hand in marriage
46. ihtiram= respect
47. noor= light
48. awroussi= wedding
49. pari= angel
50. hijab= dressing conservatively; the head covering

51. dogh= a traditional drink with yogurt and walnuts and water
52. samovar= a typical kettle system that the middle eastern people use to brew their tea
53. isfand= a type of seed that the people cook over the stove to get rid of bad eye
54. mehmanis= parties
55. dozd= thief
56. yateem= an orphan child
57. lotfan= a formal and respectful way to say "please"
58. rawsti= honesty
59. masjid= mosque
60. aush= soup
61. morgh= chicken
62. sawl-e-nau mubabrak= "Happy New Year"
63. nawasa=grandchild
64. nah-kam=unsuccessful
65. kamyab=successful
66. sholen-goshti=chick peas and mutton
67. shorwa=gravy
68. yar=friend
69. Shari'a=Islamic law
70. shalwar-kameezes= dress of those in the Middle East and South Asia
71. pakovas=made with grain flour, fried
72. samosas=made with all purpose flour, can be stuffed with vegetables, fried
73. biryani=tasty dish made with rice and mutton
74. shahbas=good job
75. Bismillah=In the name of Allah
76. kofta=meatballs
77. azan=call to prayer
78. rupia=money
79. Roussi=Russian
80. chatti=small
81. Zendagi Migzara=life goes on
82. khoshtee=handsome
83. ghamkhori=self pity
84. zendagi=life
85. tanhali=solo
86. mord=dead
87. sabagh=lesson
88. qaom=family
89. Mujahedin=religious fighters
90. Diniyat=subject concerning religion
91. Ghazal=poetry praising women
92. intiram=respect
93. maghbool=famous
94. Alahoo=mentioning Allah
95. nihari=gravy made from beef and spices
96. Bakhshesh= forgiveness

Compiled by **Neda Kalhor, Class of 2006**
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The Kite Maker

Thursday, Feb. 22, 2007 By ARYN BAKER

As anyone who has read the best-selling novel The Kite Runner knows, springtime in Kabul is heralded by flocks of dipping, looping and diving kites. But these aren't the kites of lazy weekend picnics. They are finely tuned flying machines sensitive to the slightest tug of a master's hand. The Afghan penchant for competition and (though few will admit it) gambling means that almost anything offers opportunity for a fight and a punt, from dogs to cocks, quail, sheep, boiled eggs and, yes, even kites. The object of this cruel ballet is to slice your opponents' string with yours, sending the vanquished tissue-paper jewel spiraling to the streets below. Packs of boys too poor to buy their own kites race for the downed warcraft so that they too can enter the fray. They are the kite runners.

In a country where most success stories are haunted by failure--more than 1.6 million girls are getting an education, but hundreds of schools have been torched by insurgents--about the only thing going right these days is the kitemaking industry. One of the more capricious moves of the Taliban regime, along with the banning of music and the requirement that all men grow beards, was a total prohibition of kite flying. In the first heady days after the fall of the Taliban in December 2001, men shaved, music blasted on car stereos and kites took to the air. For Noor Agha, Kabul's best kite maker, business has been soaring ever since.

Not that you would know it looking at his house. Agha lives in a graveyard. Land is at such a premium in Kabul these days that the dead compete with the living for space. A massive influx of refugees returning from exile following the Taliban's retreat has forced the near deserted neighborhoods fringing an old cemetery to squeeze between its graves. Agha's factory is his living room, where he has put his two wives and 11 children to work, cutting, shaping and gluing the intricate tissue-paper mosaics that make his kites stand out for their beauty and superior handling. The secret is in the glue, he says, holding up a pot of evil-smelling green paste. "No one knows my recipe for making a glue that stays perfectly flat when it dries, without rippling the tissue paper," he says. Business is so good these days that Agha has had to teach his wives how to make kites. He proudly calls one of them "the second best kite maker in Kabul," although he insists that she will never be as good as he is. "I have 45 years' experience. She'll never be able to catch up." His 6-year-old daughter may have a better chance. Already she is making her own kites to sell to neighborhood children at one afghani (2¢) apiece.

Agha has been feverishly at work producing hundreds of kites for use in China on the set of the highly anticipated adaptation of Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner. Agha says he treats every kite he is making for the movie as a work of art, marking each with his name and signature scorpion image. Even though few of the kites will be used in competition, he incorporates in their manufacture the techniques he has honed through years of flying and fighting--using precision to curve the bamboo frame, creating invisible joints and employing a method for impregnating cotton twine with ground glass, the better to cut down competitors.

The glass technique is something the fourth-generation kite maker learned from his father. For kite fighters it was the equivalent of graduating from bow and arrow to gunpowder. But increasingly there is a risk that the fighting

kites are becoming too effective. For a while, those made with Pakistani nylon fishing line were all but impervious to attack. Then canny arms dealers started importing flexible, razor-sharp wire from China. The escalating threat of mutually assured destruction, according to Agha, widely recognized as the best kite fighter around, has taken the artistry out of the game. "Now it's like children fighting," he complains. "No skill, no technique." So Agha leaves the hilltops of Kabul to a younger generation, who will find new ways to win. These days he heads north on Fridays--kite day--to the Shomali Plains, where he gathers with other old-school flyers in intense matches in which the victor is the last kite flying. In most cases it's Agha's. "Making kites is my job," he says. "Fighting them is my disease."

Some more information on kite running:

"Hope is knowing that people, like kites, are made to be lifted up."

- Afghanistan Relief Organization

Kite-running (Gudiparan Bazi) has been a favorite pastime in Afghanistan for the last 100 years, but there are few on the streets of Kabul that can forget the terror of living under the Taliban regime for so many years. Under Taliban rule, if you were caught with a kite, many times you would be beaten and the spool would be destroyed. However, since the fall of the Taliban regime, kite-running has again resurfaced tenfold.

Kite-running is a two-person affair, with one person called the "charka gir" and the other called the "gudiparan baz." The charka gir is in charge of the holding the wooden kite spool, around which the wire, or "tar" is wound. The second person, called the "gudiparan baz" actually is in control of the movement of the kite in the air. Kite flyers stand on tops of buildings, fighting with kites from all over the city. The object is to strike down the kite of your opponent with the string of your kite, after which you will be called the winner. The strings are often made with razor wire which gives the sharpness to cut down other kites. After an opponent's kite is set free, it flutters away into the wind where it is usually picked up by the local children, who fly it the next day as their own.

Kites are made of either extremely fragile tissue paper, or heavier more durable mylar fabric. They come in many colors, shapes, and sizes. Kites range in price depending on the size and materials used to make the kite. For a small, simple, child sized kite, the price starts at just a few cents. For large, elaborate, colorful kites, many with dangling adornments, the price can cost as much as [2 to 100] Afghani, or \$2 US.

(Quoted from "Kites for Kabul: Flying for Freedom". Available online at

<http://www.kitelife.com/archives/issue45/kabul45/index.htm>)

what is kite running?

The land Hazarajat

The habitat of Hazara nation is usually known as the Hararajat, this is the land, which used to be known as Paropamizan or Paropamisus. Besides its common name, Hazarajat. It has also been referred to as Hazaristan and Barbaristan.

The historical background of Hazarajat is almost nonexistent. However, the passing of the lands surrounding this mountainous region from one ruler to another gives us an idea about the history of the Hararajat. About six

centuries before Christ, the land of most of the modern-day Afghanistan was captured by Persian Emperor, Darius I. Bactria, the present of day of Balkh became the capital of the kingdom. After the three centuries of Persian rule, the Greeks under their king, Alexander the Great, once again overran this land. The Greeks were about to establish a dependant mini-Greek kingdom of Bactria with its capital of Balkh. The Greek lettered petrographies found in different parts of Hazarajat leads us to believe that it was part of the Greek kingdom.

The most of the present day Hazarajat came under the medieval kingdom of Zabulistan which according to LeStrange, include the whole of the great mountainous district of the upper waters of the Helmand and the Qandahar (i.e. Arghandab) rivers, to the Arabs this land was also known as Zabulistan, a term of vague affliction. Discoveries of Professor Bivar in the Jaghuri and Uruzgan district of southern Hazarajat leave no doubt that Hazarajat was indeed in the heart of Zabulistan, a kingdom ruled by the Mihiraluka dynasty around 500 A.D.

Before the introduction of Islam in the present day Afghanistan, the land was ruled by small dynasties. While Kabul was governed by Hindu Shahi, the regions of Qandahar, Ghor and Zamindawar were ruled by Buddhist Kushans, Hazarajat was believed to be governed by the king named Babar Shah, whose capital's ruin at Chel Burj still exists in the Yak Aoland region of northwestern Hazarajat. These Kushan kingdoms were destroyed by the ruler of Saffarid dynasty, who ruled the region during 861-910 A.D. though it is a common belief among the Hazaras that Babar Shah was defeated by their spiritual leader Ali there is of course no truth in such belief as Ali never came to this land. The Hindu Shahi king of Kabul was defeated by the Arabs under the command of Arab governor of Sistan, but he and his family continued to rule Kabul as the vassals of the Umayyid Caliphs from 661-750.

The HAZARAJAT BOUNDARIES

Hazarajat never had true and specific borders, but whenever the Hazaras came in contact with the dwelling of non-Hazara tribes, i.e., at the ethnic gray line, those places were considered to be the boundaries of Hazarajat. According to the recently published maps of Afghanistan by Humlum, Dullin, Dupree, Ferdinand, and especially maps published by the War Office, United States Army, Washington, MC. The Hazarajat lies roughly between 600 and 680 East-West and 330 and 350 North-south covering about 15,000 square miles, it stretches from the east about a distance of 50 miles west of Kabul. I.e., in the region of Unai Kotal-Maidan, the west nears the Chakcharan in Ghorat. Although Koh-e Baba is considered the northern limit of Hazarajat, the border stretches farther north, in the region of Dara-e Yousuf, Yak Aolang, and east of Bamiyan. To the south, Hazarajat's boundaries stretch down to the foothills of Ghazni, Muqor and just north of Qandahar. Thus Hazarajat of today includes the western extremity of the Hindu Kush girdle of mountain valleys immediately bordering to the southwest, north, and northeast, on the original Tajik areas. Besides the Hazarajat proper, small groups of Hazaras also live in Badakhshan, Mazar-e Sharif, Afghan Turkistan, Qataghan and most of the urban areas, especially Kabul, Ghazni, Herat, etc. outside Afghanistan large number of Hazaras live in Pakistan and Iran, which will be discussed in separate chapter.

COMMUNICATION AND MOUNTAIN PASSES

Because of the rocky nature of Hazarajat, communication between its valleys is extremely difficult. People have to travel a long distance through the narrow passes just to visit a village a few miles away. This mountainous character of the land has not only isolated the Hazaras from their non-Hazara neighbors, but also kept them away from each other.

Hazarajat

"The area known as Hazarajat comprises Bamiyan province and parts of adjacent provinces. The exact boundaries are open to debate, but for the purpose of this study are taken to be those of the old Shura area. This comprises the districts of Shebar, Bamiyan, Panjao, Waras, Yakawlang (Bamiyan province); Balkhab (Jowzjan); Dar-e-Souf (Samanghan); Lal o Sari Jangal (Ghor); Dai Kundi, Sharistan (Uruzgan); Malistan, Jaghori, Nawor (Ghazni); Behsud I and Behsud II (Wardak). Although it would be possible to argue for a historically larger

concept of Hazarajat, all of these districts would be generally recognized as being part of Hazarajat and so this definition fits with agencies' operational realities. The area so defined also includes all of the poorest Hazara districts.

The Climate

Hazarajat, being a high elevated mountainous region, is dominated by a cold and long winters, its climate is mostly alpine tundra, and has been described as extremely cold and dry. While the winters are long and dominated by heavy snowfall and snow storm, the summers, on the other hand are short and hot. The winter starts by the end of September; the first now falls in October; and from December on heavy snow falls and lies on the ground for the next four or five months. Wherever meteorological stations were built, scanty information about rainfall is available these weather stations are located in Bamian, Lal, Moqur, Nawar and Panjab showing the annual rainfalls of 1.92, 7.06, 5.5, 5.4 and 9.0 inches, respectively. During summer months, most of the Hazarajat weather is dry with clear blue skies, little or no rain falls during the summer months and days are comfortable warm and nights are briskly cool.

Timeline of Afghan History

1919–1929 King Amanullah introduces reforms meant to modernize Afghanistan. Conservative religious groups revolt against the government.

Jan. 14, 1929 Amanullah abdicates.

Oct. 17, 1929 Nadir Shah, former general and minister of war, becomes king.

Nov. 8, 1933 Nadir Shah assassinated. His son, Zahir Shah, succeeds to the throne.

Sept. 6, 1953 King Zahir Shah asks his cousin, Muhammad Daoud Kahn, to become Prime Minister.

Mar. 10, 1963 Prime Minister Daoud resigns.

July 1973 Former Prime Minister Daoud deposes King Zahir Shah and proclaims Afghanistan a republic. Daoud is proclaimed president.

1978 Daoud executed by members of the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a party founded on Marxism.

Dec. 21, 1979 The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan, partly to support the Marxists.

1980 The United States and other countries begin sending arms to Afghan resistance groups fighting the Soviets.

1981 Five Afghan resistance groups form an alliance known as mujahedin.

1981–1989 The mujahedin battle the Soviet troops stationed in Afghanistan.

May 1988 Soviet troops begin to withdraw from Afghanistan, finishing in Feb. 1989.

1989–1992 The mujahedin fight the Afghan government led by PDPA member Najibullah.

1992 Najibullah resigns. The mujahedin elect Rabbani president.

1992–1996 With the Communists gone, suppressed ethnic rivalries resurface, leading to civil war.

1994 The Taliban, made up largely of Pashtuns, begin to gather followers in southern Afghanistan.

Sept. 27, 1996 The Taliban take Kabul.

1997 Led by Ahmad Massoud, non-Pashtun ethnic groups of Afghanistan unite as the Northern Alliance to fight the Taliban.

July 1998 The Taliban attack Mazar-i-Sharif, killing about 6,000 Hazaras.

1998–2001 The Taliban fight the Northern Alliance.

Sept. 11, 2001 Supported by the Taliban, Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda attack the United States.

Oct. 7, 2001 The United States begins bombing Afghanistan after the Taliban refuse to hand over Osama bin Laden.

2002–2006 International coalition forces fight remnants of the Taliban. Afghans work to create a constitution and hold free democratic elections.

Dec. 7, 2004 Hamid Karzai becomes the first democratically elected president in Afghanistan's history.

Characters

Ali (AH-lee)

Hassan's father; servant to Baba and Amir.

Amir (AH-meer)

Main character and narrator of *The Kite Runner*.

Assef (AH-sef)

Childhood tormentor of Amir and Hassan.

Baba (baw-baw)

Amir's father.

General Taheri (TAH-hair-REE)

Soraya's father.

Hassan (HA-sahn)

Servant and friend to Amir.

Khala Jamila (ha-lah jah-MEE-la)

Soraya's mother.

Rahim Khan (RAW-heem HON)

Baba's friend and business partner; mentor to Amir.

Sohrab (so-RAWB)

Hassan's son.

Soraya (so-raw-YAH)

Amir's wife.

Translations

agha: Great lord, nobleman, commander. Signifies respect.

jan: A word of endearment.

Khan: Used like "mister" when placed after the name of a person.

namoos: Reputation, fame, renown, esteem, honor; dignity.

nang: Honor, reputation, estimation.

sahib: A friend; courtesy title like "sir."

Power

Notice how material circumstances (class, gender, nationality, age) contribute to—perhaps even determine—access to power. Track shifts of power that occur in the novel—for Baba, Amir, Hassan, Soraya, Assef.

In what ways does Hassan have power over Amir, though Amir's position is one of wealth and privilege?

At a key point in the story, Hassan refuses to defend himself. Can his decision be seen as an exercise of power? To what extent is his choice culturally determined? How does being an American reader shape your reaction to his choice?

Identity and self-determination

Amir says, "That Hassan would grow up illiterate like Ali and most Hazaras had been decided the minute he had been born" (28). In what ways are our lives scripted for us? How does Amir make choices that violate the "script" he's been given by his ethnicity, class, and/or gender?

Friendship

When Hassan says, "Amir agha and I are friends," Assef laughs and calls him a "pathetic fool" (72).

Can people of unequal class and status ever be true friends? Does Amir ever become a true friend to Hassan and if so, when and how?

Guilt

The Kite Runner can be read as a journey from guilt to redemption. Think about the nature of the various "sins" Amir commits in regards to Hassan. Of what is Amir guilty? (Avoid the easy answers here.)

The immigrant experience and the American dream

Amir says, "Baba loved the idea of America. It was living in America that gave him an ulcer" (125).

What elements of the American dream does the novel challenge? How does seeing America through Baba and Amir's eyes change your own ideas about the United States?

Redemption

After his brutal fight with Assef, Amir says, "My body was broken . . . but I felt healed. Healed at last" (289). Explain that in both psychological and spiritual terms.

At age 12 Amir assumes a burden of guilt that haunts him throughout his life. What enables him to be free of guilt at last? Consider the passage on p. 359 that begins, "I wondered if that was how forgiveness budded..." •

Afghanistan and Texas

	Afghanistan	Texas
<i>Size:</i>	647,500 sq km	691,030 sq km
<i>Population:</i>	31,056,997	22,270,165
<i>Life expectancy:</i>	Total: 43.3 years	Total: 77.2 years
<i>Infant mortality rate:</i>	160.23 deaths/1,000 live births	6.6 deaths/1,000 live births
<i>Ethnic groups:</i>	Pashtun 42%; Tajik 27%; Hazara 9%; Uzbek 9%; Aimak 4%; Turkmen 3%; Baloch 2%	white 72%; Hispanic 14.5%; black 11%; Asian 3%
<i>Languages:</i>	Afghan Persian or Dari 50%; Pashtu 35%; Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) 11%; much bilingualism	English only 66%; Spanish 29%; Asian and Pacific Islander 2%
<i>Literacy (age 15+ can read and write):</i>	Total population: 36% 51%	Total U.S. population: 99%
<i>Male:</i>	21%	99%
<i>Female:</i>		99%
<i>Telephones:</i>	0.1 telephone lines per 10 people	6.6 telephone lines per 10 people
<i>Television broadcast stations:</i>	At least 10 for entire country	31 in the Dallas-Fort Worth area alone
<i>Airports:</i>	46 (paved and unpaved runways)	392 (public airports only)
<i>Paved roadways:</i>	Total: 5,114.5 miles	Total: 79,000 miles of farm-to-market, ranch-to-market, state, U.S. and interstate highways

THE POETRY OF THE PEOPLE

“Who Makes These Changes”

Jalaluddin Rumi

Who makes these changes?
 I shoot an arrow right.
 It lands left.
 I ride after a deer and find myself
 chased by a hog.
 I plot to get what I want
 and end up in prison.
 I dig pits to trap others
 and fall in.
 I should be suspicious
 of what I want.

”Sometimes I Forget Completely”

Jalaluddin Rumi

Sometimes I forget completely
 what companionship is.
 Unconscious and insane, I spill sad
 energy everywhere. My story
 gets told in various ways: a romance,
 a dirty joke, a war, a vacancy.
 Divide up my forgetfulness to any number,
 it will go around.
 These dark suggestions that I follow,
 are they a part of some plan?
 Friends, be careful. Don't come near me
 out of curiosity, or sympathy.

”Love of a Nation”

Ahmad Shah Durrani

By blood, we are immersed in love of you.
 The youth lose their heads for your sake.
 I come to you and my heart finds rest.
 Away from you, grief clings to my heart like a snake.
 I forget the throne of Delhi
 when I remember the mountain tops of my Afghan land.
 If I must choose between the world and you,
 I shall not hesitate to claim your barren deserts as my own.

"Bitter Fruit Falling Upon the Earth"
Khalilullah Khalili

I am the bitter fruit falling upon the earth.
 Thus in the clutches of time I remain.
 O spring of liberty! Your grace, what else it could be
 But to render this bitter fruit sweet?
 The greatest wealth of this world is the company of friends,
 The agony of death:
 Separation from them,
 But since they are all together, the friends,
 Resting deep in the heart of the dust,
 What difference does it make
 Whether alive or dead.
 Out of pain and sorrow destiny has molded me.
 What, Alas, has been my joy from the cup of life?
 Like a candle burning in the blowing wind,
 I tremble, I burn, ... I die.

"Blood" by Naomi SHihab Nye

"A true Arab knows how to catch a fly in his hands,"
 my father would say. And he'd prove it,
 cupping the buzzer instantly
 while the host with the swatter stared.
 In the spring our palms peeled like snakes.
 True Arabs believed watermelon could heal fifty ways.
 I changed these to fit the occasion.
 Years before, a girl knocked,
 wanted to see the Arab.
 I said we didn't have one.
 After that, my father told me who he was,
 "Shihab"—"shooting star"—
 a good name, borrowed from the sky.
 Once I said, "When we die, we give it back?"
 He said that's what a true Arab would say.
 Today the headlines clot in my blood.
 A little Palestinian dangles a toy truck on the front page.
 Homeless fig, this tragedy with a terrible root
 is too big for us. What flag can we wave?
 I wave the flag of stone and seed,
 table mat stitched in blue.
 I call my father, we talk around the news.
 It is too much for him
 neither of his two languages can reach it.
 I drive into the country to find sheep, cows,
 to plead with the air:
 Who calls anyone *civilized*?
 Where can the crying heart graze?
 What does a true Arab do now?



By Sheema Kalbasi

"The poet, writes in four languages and wrote her first poem at the age of eight. Her works have been translated and published in various anthologies, literary journals, and online magazines. Her poems "For Women of Afghanistan" and "Mama in the War" have attracted critical attention. She has traveled frequently, having resided in a variety of countries since a very young age. Today she lives in the United States of America."

For Women of Afghanistan

As I walk in the streets of Kabul,
 behind the painted windows,
 there are broken hearts, broken women.
 If they don't have any male family to accompany them,
 they die of hunger while begging for bread,
 the once teachers, doctors, professors
 are today nothing but walking hungry houses.
 Not even tasting the moon,
 they carry their bodies around, in the covered coffin veils.
 They are the stones in the back of the line ...
 their voices not allowed to come out of their dried mouths.
 Butterflies flying by, have no color in Afghani women's eyes
 for they can't see nothing but blood shaded streets
 from behind the colored windows,
 and can't smell no bakery's bread
 for their sons bodies exposing, cover any other smell,
 and their ears can't hear nothing
 for they hear only their hungry bellies
 crying their owners unheard voices
 with each sound of shooting and terror.
 Remedy for the bitter silenced Amnesty,
 the bloodshed of Afghani woman's life
 on the-no-limitation-of-sentences-demanding help
 as the voices break away not coming out but pressing hard
 in the tragic endings of their lives.

Dear RAWA,



Thomas Fortenberry here, author of the poem "revolutionary" on your website. I was deeply saddened by the recent loss of such a beautiful spirit in Nadia Anjuman, the young Afghan poet. The world, but especially Afghanistan, cannot afford to lose its poetry. This tragedy does, however, bring back into stark focus the ever-present dangers of living while female in a repressive patriarchy, with its characteristic abuses, repressions, and general lack of freedom.

I wrote this poem in her honor and thought I would share it with you. I am, as always, doing everything in my power to help promote equality, freedom, and prosperity for the women of Afghanistan. We should all do our part to keep the songs of Nadia -- her gift of poetry -- alive.

Bless you all, Thomas Fortenberry
Nov.18, 2005

Hawkgirl

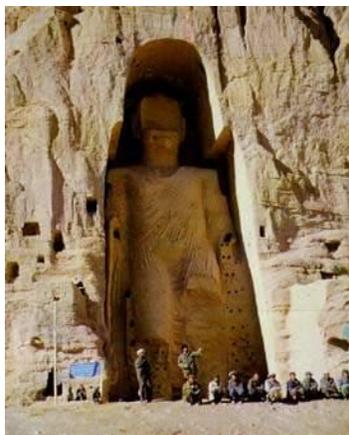
In memory of the Afghan poet Nadia Anjuman

A captured, wild, dark-haired bird,
she restrained the hawk inside
because she liked to kiss
the calloused knuckles of history
falling like rain
upon the rapture
of her upturned face.
Ever the hunter, she chose
her perch, waited, and stared
beyond the immediate
loss, pain, indifference, hatred,
rising like a titan before her
the silhouette of patriarchy
always eclipsed the sun
but never blocked out the full view
of the deepening, cloudless azure sky
or the magnitude of the ever-embracing horizon
which welcomes her return to flight
in the glory of freedom.

LOOK BELOW FOR PICTURES OF AFGHANISTAN!!!!

Congested Kabul





THIS WORLD HERITAGE SITE OF THE BUDDHA WAS DESTROYED BY THE TALIBAN



WINTER IN AFGHANISTAN





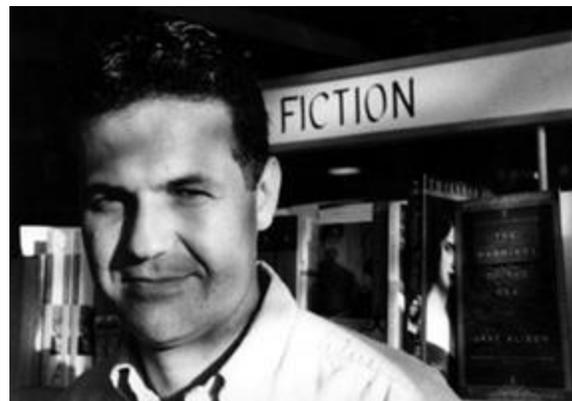
KABUL IN WINTER





THIS IS A DEPARTMENT STORE IN KABUL

Dialogue with By Farhad Azad
Khaled Hosseini June 2004



Khaled Hosseini
May 1, 2004, Corte Madera, California
Photo by Farhad Azad

Khaled Hosseini enjoys telling stories. In his debut novel *The Kite Runner*, he narrates a deeply reflective tale. Hosseini's work provides an indigenous look

into an Afghan experience, which some critiques have considered as a more realistic account of Afghans and Afghanistan than any work produced by even the best journalists. We spoke with Hosseini about his novel, perspectives and forthcoming work.

Farhad Azad: What do you think your novel has provided in representing Afghanistan to the Western readers?

Khaled Hosseini: I think --and hope-- that the novel has provided Western readers with a fresh perspective. Too often, stories about Afghanistan center around the various wars, the opium trade, the war on terrorism. Preciously little is said about the Afghan people themselves, their culture, their traditions, how they lived in their country and how they manage abroad as exiles. I hope *The Kite Runner* gives the Western reader some insight into and a sense of the identity of Afghan people that they may not get from mainstream news media. Fiction is a wonderful medium to convey such things. And I hope that the book helps humanize the Afghan people and put a personal face to what has happened there. I get many letters and e-mails from readers who say how much more compassion they feel for Afghanistan and Afghans after reading this book -- some even offering to help or donate money. We forget sometimes that fiction can be a powerful medium that way.

FA: What is the general and specific reactions of the Western and Afghan readers to your work?

KH: My Western readers have had a very positive reaction to *The Kite Runner*. Because the themes of friendship, betrayal, guilt, redemption, the uneasy love between fathers and sons are universal themes and not specifically Afghan, the book has been able to reach across cultural, racial, religious, and gender gaps to resonate with readers of varying backgrounds.

The reaction from my Afghan readers has also been overwhelmingly positive. I get regular letters and e-mails from fellow Afghans who have enjoyed the book, seen their own lives, experiences, and memories played out on the pages. So I have been thrilled with the response from my own community.

Some, however, have called the book divisive and objected to some of the issues raised in the book, namely; racism, discrimination, ethnic inequality etc. Those are sensitive issues in the Afghan world, but they are also important ones, and I certainly do not believe they should be taboo. The role of fiction is to talk about difficult subjects, precisely about things that make us cringe or make us uncomfortable, or things that generate debate and perhaps some understanding. I think talking plainly about issues that have hounded Afghanistan for a long time is a healthy and a necessity, particularly at this crucial time.

FA: Why do you think these taboo topics such as "racism, discrimination, ethnic inequality" in the Afghan society should be exposed and discussed in the Afghan Diaspora? Why do you think such topics are avoided and not discussed by the general Afghan Diaspora? And how do you think the Afghan Diaspora can better discuss these topics?

KH: Fiction is often like a mirror. It reflects what is beautiful and noble in us, but also at time what is less than flattering, things that make us wince and not

want to look anymore. Issues like discrimination and persecution, racism, etc. are such things. The rifts between our different people in Afghanistan have existed for a long time and continue to exist today, no matter the politically correct official party line. Because these issues of ethnic differences and problems between the different groups continue to hound our society and threaten to undermine our progress toward a better tomorrow, I think --possibly naively-- these issues are best dealt with face on. I don't see how we can move forward from our past; how we can overcome our differences, if we refuse to even acknowledge the past and the differences.

FA: The Afghanistan of the 1960s - 1970s has been described as the "Golden Years" by the majority of the older generation of Afghans in the Diaspora. You vividly describe this period through the eyes of the novel's main character Amir, which is also a period of history that has not really been disclosed by Western writers. Yet your approach is also critical of the bitter, unjust realities of that era, contradictory to the one-sided impressions of the older Afghan generation. What is your response?

KH: My intention was to write about Afghanistan in a balanced fashion. I also remember the 1960's and particularly the early to mid 1970's as a Golden Era of sorts. I, like many Afghans, look back on those years with fondness and remembrance. I have tried to portray that era lovingly through the eyes of Amir. However, that society was not perfect. There were inequities and inequalities that got lost in the glow of remembrance. We should also remember that there was racism, discrimination, rampant nepotism, and social barriers that were all but impossible to cross from, at times, entire classes of people. One example that I highlight in my book is the mistreatment of the Hazara people, who were all but banned from the higher appointments of society and forced to play a second-class citizen role. A critical eye toward that era is, I believe, as important as a loving eye, because there are lessons to be learned from our own past.

FA: The first two sections of the novel cover 1970s Afghanistan and 1980s Northern California, which you have personally experienced. How did you write so clearly the accounts of life under 1990s Taliban Afghanistan?

KH: I primarily relied on the accounts of Afghans who had lived in Afghanistan in that era. Over the years, at Afghan gatherings, parties, melahs [picnics], I had spoken to various Afghans who had lived in Taliban-ruled Kabul. When I sat down to write the final third of *The Kite Runner*, I found I had unintentionally accumulated over the years a wealth of anecdotes, telling details, stories, and accounts about Kabul in those days. So I did not have to do much research at all. Of course, I also relied on media reports through Afghan online magazines, TV, radio, etc. But most of it was from Afghan eyewitness accounts.

FA: You had mentioned that the character Hassan was the original protagonist of the novel. Why did you change it to Amir?

Amir is so much more conflicted than Hassan. He is such a troubled character, so flawed. He is often a contradiction. He wants to be a good person and is horrified at his own moral shortcomings even as he can't stop himself. In other words, he is a better protagonist for a novel -maybe I should say more dynamic-- than Hassan, who is so firmly rooted in goodness and integrity. There was a lot more room for character development with Amir than Hassan.

FA: What specific aspects of the Afghan Diaspora are represented in Amir's character?

KH: Nostalgia and longing for the homeland. The preservation of culture and language: Amir marries an Afghan woman and stays an active member of the Afghan community in the East Bay; the hard-working immigrant value system; and some sense of survivor's guilt, which I think many of us, particularly in sunny California, have felt at one time or another.

FA: Some critics have stated that the ending of your novel is "too clean" and have attributed this to perhaps you trying to "make sense" of the many years of turbulence in Afghanistan by providing closure with the ending. What is your reaction?

KH: I think it is largely a matter of taste. What strikes one person as "too neat" makes a resounding impact with another reader and registers as a welcomed sense of closure. I did not want to end my book with chaos and hopelessness. *The Kite Runner* ends on a hopeful --if melancholic-- note. Which is how I also feel about the future of Afghanistan --guarded optimism. To some extent, as a writer, you do try to make sense of the turbulence and chaos, and with the words at your disposal you have the option and power to do so. The question is whether you do it with integrity and honesty and whether you stay true to your characters and their dilemmas. I believe I have. Or I tried, at least. As always, the reader is the judge.

FA: Will your next work also take a historic journey to Afghanistan's recent past?

KH: The writing process has always been full of surprises for me. The story takes unexpected twists and turns and that, to me, is one of the joys of writing. Which is to say I rarely can describe with much detail what I am working on. I begin writing and see where the story takes me. That said, the novel I have been working on is also set in Afghanistan and deals with its recent history. It has a female protagonist and deals more with women's issues than *The Kite Runner* did. Beyond that, I'll be able to tell you more in 12-18 months.

FA: What classical and contemporary Afghan literature were you influenced by?

KH: The writing of *The Kite Runner* was not influenced by any Afghan literature per se, though I have admired the works of writers such as Mr. Akram Osman. I read quite a bit of fiction in English, and I would say that my style and approach to writing is rooted in a western style of writing prose. That said, Afghanistan is full of great storytellers, and I was raised around people who were very adept at capturing an audience's attention with their storytelling skills. I have been told that there is an old fashioned sense of story telling in *The Kite Runner*. I would agree. It's what I like to read, and what I like to write.

FA: How important is it to tell a story of a people from an indigenous perspective rather than from an outsider's point of view?

KH: I think your specific background, your upbringing, your intimacy with the culture, customs, language and ways of your homeland gives you an angle that a

writer who is not indigenous to your country may lack. It gives you a unique perspective, an angle. That is not to say that an outsider cannot write as well about your culture. I am thinking of Andre Dubus III and the wonderful job he did bringing to life Colonel Behrani in *House of Sand and Fog*. But usually, being indigenous allows you a little authenticity and if you write with honesty and integrity, then it may show on the pages.

FA: You always say that you want to tell stories. What drives you do this?

KH: I don't quite know where the drive to tell a story comes from, for me or anyone else. Nor do I really know where the stories themselves come from. What I can say that for me, as I suspect for many other writers, a story grips me and demands to be told. The drive to tell a story becomes a compulsion. So there is little choice left. You either tell the story or go around absent-minded and in a half-daze. Stephen King once said that if you have a story to tell and the skill to tell it, and you don't, then you are a monkey. The point is stories, good stories at least, demand to be written.

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF AFGHANISTAN

BY MIR HEKMATULLAH SADAT, PH.D.

Afghanistan's main ethnic composition includes the Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Baluchi, and Turkoman people. The Afghan nation is a very heterogeneous population, comprising at least 22 languages, of which Dari and Pashto are officially recognized in the constitution. Practically everyone in Afghanistan is Muslim representing both Sunni and Shia Muslims. The majority of Hazaras and Qzilibash are Shia, while the majority of Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, Turkoman, and Baluchi people are Sunni. Until recent times, other religions were also represented in Afghanistan. In Kabul and in a few other urban cities, exclusive communities of Hindus, Sikhs, and Jews coexisted within the Muslim population. Like similar societies, Afghan traditions have been preserved because of the prevailing influence of religious customs and tribal culture. In Afghanistan, the Pashtuns are the last ethnic group still having an operational tribal system, known as Pashtunwali (Code of the Pashtuns). However, the Pashtuns are divided into hundreds of tribes and clans. Nonetheless, all Afghan ethnic groups have been able to preserve their kinship, village, and regional ties. The country has inherited a rich linguistic and cultural heritage dating back thousands of years. Afghanistan is a mountainous, arid and landlocked country often called the 'heart of Asia', sharing borders with Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and China. Not only has the geographic location of Afghanistan been important strategically, but it was also a highway for trade, raids, and military marches.

Afghanistan emerged as a nation-state in the 18th century after centuries of invasions and conquests. begins in 1973, when the army overthrew the monarchy led by Zahir Shah. He was forced into exile in Italy by his cousin and son-in law, Daoud Khan, who declared himself president of the republic. Daoud Khan spoke about ending corruption and being true to the revolution but it became apparent the regime change was only a transfer of power. Resistance against the new regime formed immediately by Islamic guerrilla rebels. By 1975, the regime began purging from the government all officials with socialist or Marxist ties. After a series of socialist leader assassinations, Daoud Khan was overthrown by the same military that brought him to power. The coup brought to power two factions of a socialist organization in what would be described as the April Revolution. From April 1978

until December

1979, the Khalq (Masses) faction led by Nur Muhammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin forced socialist reforms which incited the tribal and religious institutions to revolt. Various resistance groups united along one front called the mujahidin (holy strugglers) and declared a jihad (holy struggle) against the Afghan state.

Fearing the fall of the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. Returned from exile was Babrak Karmal, head of the Parcham (Banner) faction, who quickly announced general amnesty for political prisoners which included prominent mujahidin leaders and invited moderates to cooperate in the reconciliation. However, Karmal's measures were damaged by the brutal military operations of the Red Army and misuse of power by certain Afghan bureaucrats. In addition, the billions of covert military aid provided by the United States, Saudi Arabia and other countries to the mujahidin escalated the war and reduced any chances for an Afghan reconciliation. In 1986, Dr. Muhammad Najibullah, head of the notorious secret service, replaced Karmal. After a decade, the Soviet army withdrew, leaving the state split among many ethnic factions. In 1992, the mujahidin takeover of the state ignited into a civil war between mujahidin warlords, and later between the warlords and the Taliban. In the 1990s the Taliban assumed control and introduced strict adherence to Islamic law. Between 1992 and 2001, Afghanistan became the site for the worst battles, ethnic genocide, pillage, famine, and misery since Genghis Khan had swept through the region centuries earlier.

The terrorist group, Al Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden, had also built training camps in Afghanistan. While most of the world condemned the Taliban, they were officially recognized by three countries: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

After September 11, 2001, the Taliban refused to hand over Bin Laden, leading to a U.S. led coalition military campaign. By November, 2001, the Taliban lost control of Kabul. A new government, the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan was established in December 2001. Assisted by the international community, the Afghan state is trying to rebuild the war-torn nation, as well as establish economic and political stability. Despite its efforts, the Afghan government faces the same obstacles as faced by the government during the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. While President Hamid Karzai and prominent members of his cabinet and the elected parliament call for reconciliation and ceasefires with the Taliban; internal discord in the government, misuse of donor aid, bribery and corruption of state officials, the drug trade, promotion of warlords, the inability to control the untamed military campaigns of foreign troops such as collateral damage, the inability to understand the culture and customs of Afghans, and support for the Taliban resistance across the border in Pakistan has stymied any hopes for democratization and peaceful reform.