

Afghanistan: A Brief Reading List
Compiled by Lee Dastur from Assorted Sources
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First, a disclaimer: when I blithely volunteered to help create a booklist for the Afghanistan project, I had no idea how daunting a task it would be. There is so very much to learn about this ancient and turbulent part of the world. Even though the Afghan Day has been postponed, I am hopeful that this list will help us gain a small level of understanding of our new neighbors.

Articles Online

Ancient Afghanistan was once a wealthy and exotic realm.

Stuart Thornton, "Silk Road Threads through History," *National Geographic*, July 24, 2019,
<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/article/silk-road-threads-through-history/>.

Afghanistan is a country made up of many and varied tribes.

"Ethnic Groups in Afghanistan," Wikipedia,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_groups_in_Afghanistan

Afghanistan has suffered for generation from "unending wars and revolutions," giving it the nickname of "The Graveyard of Empires."

"A Historical Timeline of Afghanistan," PBS NewsHour,
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan>

This YouTube video is from September 16, 2021. Since then, women have been ordered to be fully covered in public.

"Life Under Taliban Rule, One Month On," BBC News, YouTube,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbxZjNWEqaU>.

Here are some ways that we can help support girls' education.

"Four Ways to Support Girls' Access to Education in Afghanistan," Human Rights Watch, March 20, 2022,
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/03/20/four-ways-support-girls-access-education-afghanistan#>.

NPR presents "Books That Will Help You Understand Afghanistan."

A 2009 NPR interview with Tom Ricks, senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/120576400>,
Though this interview is dated, it still seems sadly pertinent and contains many recommendations for further reading.

Books

The Bookseller of Kabul, by Åsne Seierstad, translated by Ingrid Christophersen

This international bestseller, published 20 years ago, is described by the *Washington Post* as “an admirable, revealing portrait of daily life in a country that Washington claims to have liberated but does not begin to understand.”

Lifting the Chaderi: My Life as an Afghan Refugee, by Anisa Mahmoud Ulrich, edited by Lisa Drittenbas

After fleeing Afghanistan over a treacherous mountain pass, Anisa struggles to adapt to American life and overcome her cultural limitations and anxieties.

The Sewing Circles of Herat: A Personal Voyage through Afghanistan, by Christina Lamb
A British journalist describes how many common cope under extremely adverse circumstances.

The Kite Runner, by Khaled Hosseini

Set between the 1970s and 2001, when the political climate of the country changed dramatically, this is the sometimes-brutal story of the friendship between a wealthy boy in Kabul and the servant boy in his house.

My Life with the Taliban, by Abdul Salam Zaeef

The autobiography of a former senior member of the Taliban, who joined the organization as a youth in order to fight the Soviets. He eventually served time in Guantanamo.

Descent into Chaos, by Ahmed Rashid

Rashid, a journalist and correspondent for the Wall Street Journal, is the author of multiple books on Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia, including *Taliban*.

Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History, by Thomas Barfield

This book, which is part of the Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics project, “traces the historic struggles and the changing nature of political authority in this volatile region of the world, from the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth Century to the Taliban resurgence today.”