Module 1: The Origins of US Interventions in Afghanistan (2001)

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Keywords

Disciplines
American Politics | Gender and Sexuality | History | International Relations | United States History

Publisher
University of Pennsylvania

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Note to Educators

The Teaching Beyond September 11th curriculum project seeks to capture the events of the two decades (2001-2021) following 9/11 as a means for youth to understand the post-9/11 global order. Developed by a team of educators from the University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with international scholars, practitioners, and community activist leaders, each stand-alone module is grounded in at least one of six identified themes and is anchored in an event in a particular year following 9/11. The curriculum does not need to be taught sequentially. Lessons within a module may be taught sequentially or individually unless specified.

The curriculum is ideal for advanced high school and early college students. Educators are encouraged to adapt lessons to meet the needs of their classroom and student academic level. The curriculum framework at the end of this document highlights guiding questions for students to grapple with and enduring understandings that we wish for students to glean from these lessons.

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Module 1: The Origins of US Interventions in Afghanistan

Primary Theme: Foreign Policy
Secondary Theme: Democracy and Rights
Years in focus: 2001, pre-2001
Grades: 11 and 12 and freshman college

Module Context
On the 11th of September 2001, 19 hijackers flew two airplanes into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York, one airplane into the Pentagon in Virginia, and a fourth into a field in Pennsylvania. A total of 2,996 people were killed, including the hijackers.

The US accused Saudi national Osama Bin Laden, living in Afghanistan at the time, of being the mastermind behind the attacks. In response, on October 7, 2001, George W. Bush ordered unsuccessful airstrikes targeting Bin Laden in Afghanistan. Soon after, on October 19th, Bush authorized the US led ground invasion of Afghanistan, the first military action of the “War on Terror”. The original mission of the “War on Terror” was to defend the United States against future attacks from al Qaeda and affiliated organizations. It is worth noting that none of the hijackers were from Afghanistan; 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi citizens.

Since the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, the “War on Terror” has expanded to include the 2003 invasion of Iraq and other wars and counter terrorism operations in more than 80 countries.*

In early August 2021, after a 20-year war that cost over 240,000 lives (including 7000 US troops) and 2.3 trillion dollars*, the US-backed Afghan government ceded power and the Taliban regained full control of the country. On August 31, 2021, the United States formally ended its military operations in Afghanistan, two months shy of the 20th anniversary of the first American combat troops entering the country.

Module Goal
Although most Americans believe US involvement in Afghanistan began in 2001, US intervention in Afghanistan began decades before. Students will be able to critically examine the motivations for war and the long-term implications of US foreign policy. Students will be able to use their independent learning to engage in discussions about war and peace with a focus on the war in Afghanistan.

* Costs of War Project, Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs, Brown University: https://watson.brown.edu/costofwar/
Module Overview
This module provides students with an understanding of the 40+ year history of US involvement in Afghanistan. Students will understand that a primary motivation for interventions in other countries (and indeed continuing wars) are economic, social, and political incentives.

Over the course of four (stand-alone) 50-minute periods students will use videos, texts, and images to engage in discussion and understand the ways in which the fate of Afghanistan has long been largely decided by outsiders at the ultimate expense of multiple generations of Afghan people. Students will explore and construct counter narratives to common tropes about Afghanistan (that its women must be saved, that its men are oppressive, and that it perpetrated 9/11). Through a survey of history spanning imperial rivalries, post-World War II geopolitical struggles over ideological, political, and commercial influence, and the War on Terror, students will begin to understand the ways Afghanistan has been on the receiving end of “benevolent” violence in the name “civilizing” and “emancipating” Afghan people.

To provide additional context, the modules are organized somewhat temporally and stretch back to the early 1900s when other nations were involved in Afghanistan. Thus, the module begins with the Great Game, moves into the Soviet Era (which is when the US began its interventions in Afghanistan through a proxy war), and then into the 2000s, when the US officially declared war on Afghanistan.

Lesson 1 - The Great Game and Beyond
This lesson illustrates that foreign involvement in Afghanistan includes a long history of powers exerting their influence through various means for the primary purpose of achieving their own goals. By introducing past British and Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, this lesson allows students to consider the geostrategic motivations of the 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan. Students will be able to describe and differentiate between soft and hard power and consider the role of both in three examples/contexts: (1) The Great Game, (2) The US/Soviet Cold War, and (3) The War on Terror.

Lesson 2 - History of US involvement in Afghanistan
Students will gain an understanding of the broader history of US involvement in Afghanistan with a particular focus on the Cold War era and its implications for social and political trends today. Students will consider the factors that motivated the US to intervene in Afghanistan in the 1970s and 1980s during the era of Soviet influence and consider the ways in which US foreign policy re-shaped the political and educational landscape of Afghanistan.

Lesson 3 - Selling the Afghan War by ‘Saving’ Afghan Women
Students will understand that the 2001 war in Afghanistan was sold domestically to the American public and globally to the world, in part, through the dominant but problematic narrative of saving Afghan women.

Lesson 4 - A Just War? The Justifications and Motivations Behind the US’ Longest War
Students will understand and deconstruct the “just war” theory/Geneva accords and missed opportunities for peace in Afghanistan.
Curriculum Connections
Module 3: The 2nd Persian Gulf War
Module 7: Understanding Islamophobia
Module 8: Islamophobia and the Oval Office
Module 18: Muslim Women and Representation
Module 20: Public opinion over the last 20 years

Module 1: The Origins of US Interventions in Afghanistan
Lesson 1. The Great Game and Beyond

Overview, Background Resources and Materials Needed

This lesson illustrates that foreign involvement in Afghanistan includes a long history of powers exerting their influence through various means for the primary purpose of achieving their own goals. By introducing past British and Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, this lesson allows students to consider the geostrategic motivations of the 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan. Students will be able to describe and differentiate between soft and hard power and consider the role of both in three examples/contexts: (1) The Great Game, (2) The US Soviet Cold War, and (3) The War on Terror.

Background reading for educators before Lesson 1

It would be beneficial for educators to review the following resources. These resources may also be used as a supplementary reading list for students in higher level courses:

1. **Soft Power Index** - [https://softpower30.com/](https://softpower30.com/)

In addition, educators may find the following books useful. Educators teaching higher level classes may wish to assign chapters from these books to their students.


4. Tamim Ansary (2012). *Games without Rules: The Often-Interrupted History of Afghanistan*, New York: Public Affairs. *Ch. 4 (Between the Lion and the Bear); Ch. 22 (Cold War End Game); Ch. 27 (America Enters the Picture)*

Key Terms in Lesson 1

- **Hard Power**: The ability of one state (or other actor) to influence another through the use of threats or rewards, typically involving military power in international relations. This form of power is often coercive.

- **Soft Power**: The ability of one state (or other actor) to shape the preferences of others through appeal and persuasion rather than coercion in international relations. This form of power is often co-optive.

- **Great Game**: The term used to describe political and diplomatic confrontations during most of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century between the British Empire and the Russian Empire, over Afghanistan and neighboring territories in Central and South Asia. The term has been criticized for centering geopolitical interests at the expense of the suffering of the Afghan people.

- **Cold War**: The term used to describe geopolitical tension and hostility characterized by an arms race, proxy wars, and a struggle for world dominance between the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies after World War II until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. During the
Cold War, both the US and the Soviet Union attempted to gain footholds in Afghanistan through various means, most notably the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that lasted from 1979-1989.

- **War on Terror**: The War on Terror (WoT) is the term that refers to an international military campaign launched by the United States government following the September 11 attacks. It is also known as the Global War on Terrorism (GWot) and the U.S. War on Terror. The origins of the term come from a speech given by President George W. Bush a few days after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

- **Mujahideen**: Afghan resistance fighters during the Soviet War were called mujahideen (translates to ‘one who struggles’). It is important to avoid generalizing about the mujahideen. The vast majority of Afghans who joined the resistance desired to free their country from communist rule. These were ordinary men, from farmers to teachers, who opposed Soviet influence (especially policies that opposed religion and Afghan traditions).

- **Islamic sects**: Sunnism and Shiaism are two major sects in Islam (just as there are sects in Christianity, e.g. Catholics and Protestants).

- **Sectarianism**: typically used to describe the ways in which members of different denominations within a faith display bigotry and prejudice toward each other.

- **Sunni & Shia Muslims**: The majority of the world’s Muslims (85-90%) are Sunni. The second largest group of Muslims, the Shia, constitute about 10% of Muslims around the world and are concentrated in Iran, Iraq and Azerbaijan. There are also substantial Shia communities in other nations. Although Shias and Sunnis share many similarities, many internal geopolitical conflicts in the Muslim world are characterized by Shia/Sunni sectarianism.

**Materials Needed for Lesson 1**

1. Lesson 1 Slide deck
2. Lesson 1, Handout 1: Before 9/11: An Abbreviated Timeline of Major Events Concerning Afghanistan (1 per student)
3. Lesson 1, Handout 2: Excerpt from Games without Rules: The Often-Interrupted History of Afghanistan (1 per student)
4. Lesson 1, Handout 3: Soft Power Summary (1 per student)
5. Lesson 1, Handout 4: Afghanistan: Artifacts From Three Time Periods (1 per student)
6. Students will need their laptops/tablets for research
Lesson 1. The Great Game and Beyond

Learning Plan

Pre-Class Preparation / Homework – 1 hour
The day before the lesson, distribute the following two hand-outs for students to read prior to class. They should also be expected to answer the questions following the Games without Rules excerpt. See supplementary materials, Lesson 1, Handouts 1 and 2:

1. Before 9/11: An Abbreviated Timeline of Major Events Concerning Afghanistan
2. Excerpt from Games without Rules: The Often-Interrupted History of Afghanistan by Tamim Ansary (plus questions)

Opening – 10 minutes
Explain to students that in today’s class, they will be learning about soft and hard power in foreign policy and international relations.

Ask students to take out a piece of paper and number it one through seven.

[Lesson 1, Slide Deck, Slide 2]. Project slide with seven statements (noted below). Inform students that they need to decide which of these are hard or soft power. You may read them out one by one or ask for student volunteers. After reading each statement, remind students to label the description as either an example of “soft power” or “hard power” on the list they have created.

Students may ask what the difference is between the two terms; inform them that you will provide a definition and background concerning the two terms after they have categorized the statements. Encourage them to infer what the terms mean based on their understanding of the words “soft” and “hard.”

Educator note: The answers are provided in bold – please do not read those out until you are ready to share the responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Answer key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carrying out air strikes with the purpose of dropping bombs on known targets.</td>
<td>Hard power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposing an arms embargo including the prohibition of receiving military weapons, training, and advice.</td>
<td>Hard power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring that educational institutions welcome foreign students to study in their degree programs.</td>
<td>Soft Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invading through the use of military force.</td>
<td>Hard power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising economic pressure such as limiting foreign investment in a country’s industries.</td>
<td>Hard power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating technological innovations that contribute to the greater good.</td>
<td>Hard OR Soft Power*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing humanitarian aid such as food and health care.</td>
<td>Soft Power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For statement 6, students might explain that some innovations are initially designed for use by militaries and that the term “greater good” is subjective, which could mean that nations also use innovations coercively (like Global

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Positioning System or GPS, which was designed by the US military and used in military operations\(^2\), in which case hard power is an appropriate response. Otherwise, it could be an example of soft power--consider the global popularity of Apple, an American technology company headquartered in California, for example.

After students have had some time to read the statements, inform students that they will collectively share their answers with the group using hand signals.

**Ask students to form a victory sign with their fingers if they answered “soft power” and a fist if they answered “hard power.”** (see slide title for images)

Read each statement again, reminding students of the number for each statement. Then pause and invite students to share their answers collectively using the hand signals.

After students respond to each statement using the designated hand signals, invite one or two students to share why they categorized the description as either “soft power” or “hard power.”

**Key concepts overview – 10 minutes**

Prompt students to create their own definitions for “soft power” and “hard power” including key words and phrases that they would associate with the two terms.

[Lesson 1, Handout 3: Soft Power] **Distribute the handout on Soft Power** and explain that the term was coined by Joseph Nye, a scholar who once chaired the National Security Council Group on Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Instruct students to highlight evidence that aligns with the words and phrases they associated for both “soft power” and “hard power” prior to receiving the handout. Ask students whether the explanation/definition on the handout aligns with their conceptualizations of soft and hard power.

Explain to students that while Nye coined the term, “soft power” in the 1980s, foreign powers have long used both hard power and soft power to advance their agendas and obtain favorable outcomes in order to strengthen their spheres of influence at home and globally.

**Let students know that you will be using these concepts to understand the United States’ involvement in Afghanistan.** Remind students that the United States invaded Afghanistan following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. However, Afghanistan has a long history of foreign interference within its borders.

Explain that the goal of this session is to connect the latest chapter of 21st century involvement in Afghanistan to events starting in the 19th century. Specifically, let students know that they will explore three different periods of foreign involvement in Afghanistan, starting with the Great Game, then the Cold War, and finally the Global War on Terror.

Direct students to the pre-reading materials for additional context. Specifically, encourage them to refer to the timeline handout and to think about their responses to the Ansary reading.

Inform students that for each period, they will receive “artifacts” in the form of maps, images, quotes, and excerpts. Encourage students to use the following checklist to manage their time:

During the class session, they will complete these steps for each of the three periods of foreign involvement:

1. Analyze the artifacts, searching for connections between them and jotting down what you notice about how foreign countries exert soft power and hard power
2. Answer the three corresponding questions that follow the artifacts

Application – 20 minutes
Inform students they will be working in pairs to complete steps 1 & 2 for The Cold War period and the War on Terror.

Model steps 1 & 2 using the artifacts featured in the corresponding handout for the first period: The Great Game. Before exploring the artifacts, remind students that Afghanistan has a long history prior to the Great Game, too, but for the purpose of the lesson, students will begin with the Great Game.

Think out loud for students, for example, say:

“First, I’m going to look at all these artifacts; there are a couple cartoons, maps, there’s some text as well. Already, I notice Russia is one of the countries involved here. For example, the bear in the first artifact represents Russia and the lion represents Britain. I also see red coats in artifact 1G... it seems that in many of these artifacts Afghanistan is described as caught in the middle.”

In addition to modeling, invite students to share any patterns they notice or connections they would like to share in response to the artifacts corresponding to the Great Game period. Throughout the lesson, encourage students to refer to the timeline assigned to them as pre-reading for further context.

Then answer the first two prompts that follow on the handout:

1. Identify the foreign powers involved in Afghanistan during the Great Game period. Explain what motivated their interest in Afghanistan.
2. Provide examples of how these foreign countries exerted their soft power or hard power over Afghanistan to fulfill their own agenda.

Clarify for students that the third question prompts them to jot down ideas that will help them complete the 250-word response assigned for homework.

After modeling steps 1 & 2 using the Great Game artifacts, invite students to begin working in pairs to complete the same steps for The Cold War period and the War on Terror.
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Debrief – 10 minutes
Bring students back together and ask the following to debrief/reflection questions. Encourage students to not only draw on the work they’ve done in class but also the Ansary reading they did for homework:

1. How have foreign countries exerted both hard power and soft power over Afghanistan?
2. How might these displays of power resonate differently for outsiders looking into Afghanistan versus Afghans looking out?

Extension Activities or Homework

Option 1:
Synthesize the information from the artifact analysis activity to write a 250-word response to the following prompt:

In the last two centuries, foreign powers have attempted to invade, occupy, conquer or control Afghanistan in some capacity. What do these attempts by the British, the Russians, and the Americans, have in common? What are the major patterns that emerge?

Responses should highlight at least one of the points below:

- Foreign countries have meddled in Afghanistan using both hard power and soft power to achieve their goals, upending the lives of Afghans for centuries.
- Foreign militaries have invested extensively in operations in Afghanistan leading to periods of unrest that are ultimately followed by retreat or withdrawal.
- Afghanistan is recognized for its geopolitical and geostrategic importance, which has led to foreign powers using it as means to an end to advance their own agendas and strengthen their spheres of influence with little concern for the Afghan people.

Remind students that their responses should be supported by evidence provided during the session. However, they are welcome to conduct additional research and integrate outside sources, too.

Option 2:
Search for at least one additional artifact online that shows displays of soft or hard power in Afghanistan for each period of time: (1) The Great Game, (2) The US Soviet Cold War, and (3) The War on Terror.

Invite students to post links to the artifacts in a shared space that is accessible by everyone else (e.g., a discussion board or padlet).

All students are responsible for:
- Posting their three links to artifacts (articles, maps, excerpts, images, quotes, etc.)
- Commenting on at least one other artifact posted by a classmate
- Answering the following questions: What is the goal or purpose of this example of power? How might it affect the lives of Afghan people? (Comments should be at least 100 words in length.)
Lesson 1. The Great Game and Beyond

Student Handouts and Supplementary Teaching Materials

1. Lesson 1 Slide deck preview (3 slides) [to be downloaded as a separate file]
2. Lesson 1, Handout 1 (6 pages): Before 9/11: An Abbreviated Timeline of Major Events Concerning Afghanistan (1 per student)
3. Lesson 1, Handout 2 (2 pages): Excerpt from Games without Rules: The Often-Interrupted History of Afghanistan (1 per student)
4. Lesson 1, Handout 3 (1 page): Soft Power Summary (1 per student)
5. Lesson 1, Handout 4 (9 pages): Afghanistan: Artifacts from Three Time Periods (1 per student)
# Lesson 1: The Great Game and Beyond

## Definition of Hard and Soft Power

**Hard Power**
- Carrying out air strikes with the purpose of dropping bombs on known targets.
- Imposing an arms embargo including the prohibition of receiving military weapons, training, and advice.
- Ensuring that educational institutions welcome foreign students to study in their degree programs.
- Invading through the use of military force.
- Exercising economic pressure such as limiting foreign investment in a country's industries.
- Creating technological innovations that contribute to the greater good.
- Providing humanitarian aid such as food and health care.

**Soft Power**
- Influence generated through cultural, intellectual, and social measures.
- Alliances and partnerships that enhance a nation's standing and reputation.
- The spread of ideas, values, and norms that reflect a country's ideology and beliefs.

## Artifact Analysis: The Great Game (example)

Source: Nye, J. (n.d.). *Soft Power and Higher Education.***

Notice the different types of artifacts provided. Examine what they are showing or symbolizing.

As you examine these artifacts, consider the following:
1. Identify the foreign powers involved in Afghanistan during that period in question. Note what motives and interests they had in Afghanistan.
2. Why are some examples of *Soft Power* foreign countries exerted their influence? Did they possess both *Hard Power* and *Soft Power* in Afghanistan to fulfill their own agenda?

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Before 9/11: An Abbreviated Timeline of Major Events Concerning Afghanistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1721</td>
<td>Russia is established as an empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ivan the Terrible becomes the first tsar of Russia in 1547 following the Mongol invasion. The Romanov dynasty begins their reign and in 1721, Russia becomes a world power.¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1747</td>
<td>Ahmad Shah Baba establishes Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ahmad Shah Baba (meaning “King Ahmad the Father”) also known as Ahmad Shah Durrani is seen as the founder of Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Baba reigns over what is known as modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan.²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1776</td>
<td>United States is established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Declaration of Independence formally severs ties between the 13 American Colonies and Great Britain. This leads to the conflict with Great Britain becoming a full-fledged War of Independence.³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1757</td>
<td>The British East India Company seized control of Bengal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The seizure of Bengal is the first of a number of forced annexations in the Indian subcontinent. Once in control of Bengal, the British East India Company installs a governor, begins collecting taxes and customs, and uses the victory to drive other European countries out of the subcontinent.⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838 - 1842</td>
<td>First Anglo-Afghan War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Britain grows concerned about Russian expansion and feels that Dōst Moḥammad Khan, Afghanistan’s ruler, is hostile to British interests. The British attempt to annex Afghanistan.⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>The British Crown exerts colonial rule over India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Gov’t of India Act is passed by parliament, officially transferring control over India from the East India Company to Britain. This marks the beginning of direct British rule over India, lasting until 1947.⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878 - 1880</td>
<td>Second Anglo-Afghan War</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|        | Lord Lytton, the governor-general of India, grows concerned by what he sees as Russia’s expanding influence in Afghanistan. The perceived slight of Afghanistan’s ruler permitting entry to a Russian envoy while denying entry to a British one launches the Second Anglo-Afghan War.⁷

¹ [www.history.com/topics/russia/russia-timeline](https://www.history.com/topics/russia/russia-timeline)
² [Games without rules - Ansary](https://history.state.gov/milestones/1776-1783/declaration)
⁴ [https://www.britannica.com/event/Anglo-Afghan-Wars](https://www.britannica.com/event/Anglo-Afghan-Wars)
⁵ [https://www.britannica.com/event/Anglo-Afghan-Wars](https://www.britannica.com/event/Anglo-Afghan-Wars)
⁶ [https://britannica.com/event/British-raj](https://britannica.com/event/British-raj)
⁷ [https://www.britannica.com/event/Anglo-Afghan-Wars](https://www.britannica.com/event/Anglo-Afghan-Wars)
### 1917
**Russian empire dissolves**

Bolsheviks overthrow the provisional government of Alexander Kerensky. This is the catalyst for a civil war, which ultimately ends with the success of the communist Red Army and the end of Russian imperial rule.\(^8\)

### 1919 - 1921
**Third Anglo-Afghan War**

Afghanistan invades British India and defeats the British in the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Afghanistan becomes an independent nation.\(^9\)

### 1919
**Amanullah Khan becomes King of Afghanistan**

Amanullah Khan begins his reign with a focus on socioeconomic reform and modernization. He is eventually forced to abdicate and flee the country when critics take up arms against him in 1928-1929.\(^10\)

### 1922
**Formation of The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)**

In the wake of the civil war, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Transcaucasus are formally joined as The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Vladimir Lenin was the first head of the USSR, followed by Joseph Stalin after Lenin’s death in 1924.\(^11\)

### 1924 - 1936
**Formation of: Uzbek SSR (Soviet Socialist Republic), Kazakh SSR, Tajik SSR, Kyrgyz SSR, and Turkmen SSR**

The establishment of these republics expands the constituent republics of the USSR--three of them share borders with Afghanistan.\(^12\)

### 1928 - 1929
**Habibullah Kalakani becomes King followed by Mohammad Nadir**

Civil war breaks out and Habibullah Kalakani, also known as Bacheh Saqqaw (“child of a water-carrier”), declares himself king while Amanullah Khan abdicates his throne. Habibullah's reign is short-lived and followed by Mohammad Nadir Shah who becomes king in 1929.\(^13\)

### 1933
**Zahir Shah becomes King of Afghanistan**

Zahir Shah rules for 40 years. This is a time of relative stability for Afghanistan.\(^14\)

### 1947
**India and Pakistan are established as independent nations**

After 300 years, British rule of the Indian subcontinent ends. The subcontinent is partitioned into two

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\(^8\) [https://www.history.com/topics/russia/russian-revolution](https://www.history.com/topics/russia/russian-revolution)

\(^9\) [https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan)

\(^10\) [https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan)

\(^11\) [https://www.history.com/topics/russia/vladimir-lenin#section_3](https://www.history.com/topics/russia/vladimir-lenin#section_3)

\(^12\) [https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union](https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union)

\(^13\) [https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bacheh-Saqqaw](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bacheh-Saqqaw)

\(^14\) [https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan)
countries: India and Pakistan.  

1947  |  Cold War begins  
US President Harry S. Truman addresses Congress calling for the containment of communism. Known as the Truman Doctrine, this becomes the basis for US Cold War policy. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is created in 1949 as a way for countries such as the US, Canada, and some Western European Nations to provide security for each other against the Soviet Union.  

1953  |  Mohammed Daoud Khan is appointed Prime Minister of Afghanistan  
Mohammed Daoud Khan, a pro-Soviet general, seeks economic and military assistance from the USSR.  

1973  |  The People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) comes to power  
With support from the PDPA, Khan stages a coup, abolishes the monarchy, and assumes the presidency. The Republic of Afghanistan is established, with notably strong ties to the Soviet Union, though Daoud Khan’s formal policy is “bi-tarafi” meaning without sides.  

1978  |  USSR and Afghanistan sign 20-year “treaty of friendship”  
Daoud Khan is formally overthrown in what’s known as the Saur Revolution and a Marxist-Leninist government assumes control. Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev and Afghan Prime Minister Noor Mohammed Taraki sign the “treaty of friendship,” which promises that the countries will provide each other with economic, military, and technical aid.  

1979  |  Soviet-Afghan War  
Tarkhi is overthrown by members of the Afghan Communist party dissatisfied with his leadership. Tarkhi’s death leads the USSR invading Afghanistan in an attempt to prop up the weakened communist government. There is widespread opposition to the Soviets and the prime minister they install. The Soviets adopt a “scorched earth” policy including routine torture, civilian massacres, and incarceration without trial of political prisoners in an attempt to demoralize the resistance. The Mujahideen, Afghan guerilla fighters, resist against the Soviets.  

1979-1989  |  The Mujahideen receive support to fight the Soviets  
Using Pakistan as an intermediary, the US, Saudi Arabia, Britain, and China supply various factions of the Mujahideen with covert aid and arms, including US-made stinger missiles.  

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16 https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/nato  
17 https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan  
18 https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1978/12/06/soviets-sign-treaty-with-afghanistan/20bf658b-a229-44e7-a08b-70e926d488c0/  
20 https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan  
21 https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB57/essay.html
The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also funds an education project, which includes developing and printing textbooks that teach first-graders Pashto, one of Afghanistan’s official languages. The primers use anti-Soviet propaganda and references to guns, infidels, and violence to teach Afghan children the alphabet.\(^{22}\)

1988 | Osama bin Laden forms al Qaeda
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Al Qaeda is formed by Saudi national Osama bin Laden and other “Arab Afghans” with the goal of defeating the Soviets and establishing a state based on Islam. The US, as one of the remaining superpowers involved in the region, is seen as an impediment to this goal.\(^{23}\)

During the Soviet invasion, foreign fighters called “Arab Afghans” or Arab Mujahideen poured into Afghanistan to support anti-Soviet resistance.\(^{24}\)

1989 | The USSR withdraws from Afghanistan
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The US, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union sign peace accords in Geneva. The accords guarantee Afghan independence and the withdrawal of 100,000 Soviet troops. However, since the Afghan government is still run by a Soviet-backed communist president, Najibullah, the Mujahideen turn their focus there.\(^{25}\)

1991 | End of the Cold War and fall of the USSR
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Following successful revolutions in various Soviet Socialist Republics and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Soviet Union collapses, marking the end of the Cold War.\(^{26}\)

1992 | The People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan dissolves
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The Soviet withdrawal in 1989 eventually leads to the forced removal of Afghan President Najibullah and the dissolution of the pro-Soviet PDPA.\(^{27}\)

1992 - 1996 | Afghan Civil War
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After the US and Soviet Union retreat, Afghanistan falls into a civil war. Rival mujahideen factions previously funded by foreign powers to defeat the Soviets now fight each other for control over the country.\(^{28}\)

1994 - 2001 | The Taliban rise to power
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The Taliban, a paramilitary and political group born out of Islamic seminary schools (madrassas) in southeastern Afghanistan during the Afghan civil war, rise to power. The group establishes the Islamic

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\(^{22}\) https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/12/06/368452888/q-a-j-is-for-jihad?t=1631195123420

\(^{23}\) https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan


\(^{25}\) https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan


\(^{27}\) https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mohammad-Najibullah

\(^{28}\) https://www.vox.com/world/22634008/us-troops-afghanistan-cold-war-bush-bin-laden
Emirate of Afghanistan characterized by an extremely narrow interpretation of Islamic law. The Taliban capture Kabul in 1996 and govern the country until 2001. For many rural Afghans, Taliban control from 1996-2001 was a period of relative peace and security, though the group’s time in power was also characterized by a narrow interpretation of Sharia, Islamic jurisprudence, which was exploited by members of the group to justify human rights violations and the persecution of minority ethnic and religious groups.

1996 - 2001 Ahmad Shah Massoud forms the United Front

After leading a resistance movement against the Soviet occupation between 1979 and 1989, Ahmad Shah Massoud, a powerful and influential Afghan politician, military commander, and mujahideen leader from Panjshir province in Northern Afghanistan, creates and leads the United Front, an anti-Taliban resistance movement from 1996-2001. The United Front controls roughly 30% of Afghanistan’s population in northern provinces from the Taliban’s conquest of Kabul in September 1996 until November 2001. The United Front was renamed the “Northern Alliance” and became allied with the US led intervention in 2001.

2000 Clinton Attempts to Expel Osama Bin Laden from Afghanistan

President Bill Clinton and his advisers renew diplomatic efforts to expel Bin Laden from Afghanistan and work with the Taliban’s opponents, including Massoud, to collect intelligence to attack Bin Laden directly, but without success. The CIA also produces a plan to improve intelligence collection on al Qaeda featuring the use of drones, including an unmanned airplane with a video camera, known as the Predator.

2001 Ahmad Shah Massoud is Assassinated

On September 9, 2001, Massoud is assassinated by two Arab suicide attackers (allegedly belonging to al Qaeda) posing as journalists, who detonated a bomb hidden in a video camera while interviewing Massoud.

2001 George W. Bush announces a global “War on Terror”

In a speech addressing Congress and the nation on September 20, 2001 – days after the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush announces a global “War on Terror”. The US demands that the Taliban hand over Osama bin Laden, who is believed to be hiding in Afghanistan.

2001 The US and allied forces invade Afghanistan

Airstrikes by the United States and Great Britain are launched in Afghanistan at Taliban and al Qaeda training camps and targets. The war continues for 20 years until August 31, 2021.

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29 https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/asia-jan-june11-timeline-afghanistan
30 https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/09/13/the-other-afghan-women

Module 1: The Origins of US Interventions in Afghanistan

Lesson 1. The Great Game and Beyond

Handout 1: Timeline (6 pages)
Teaching Beyond September 11th

References for Timeline


Module 1: The Origins of US Interventions in Afghanistan
Lesson 1. The Great Game and Beyond
Handout 1: Timeline (6 pages)
Games without Rules: The Often-Interrupted History of Afghanistan
By Tamim Ansary

“...The story from the outside looking in [to Afghanistan] contrasts with the story from the inside looking out [from Afghanistan]. From the inside, the various foreign powers and their intentions seem pretty much the same. Out in the countryside, where the fighting is hot right now, the insurgents make scant distinction between the Americans, the Russians, and the British.

From the outside perspective, it is Afghanistan that seems never changing, Afghanistan that presents ever the same challenge, the same terrain of rugged mountains, burning deserts, and endless steppes, the same warlike people who are always thought to be religious, xenophobic, and “tribal”—the very word conjuring up images of turbans, beards, robes, scimitars, and horses, as if membership in a tribe precludes wearing a three-piece suit or playing in a heavy metal band.

Actually, Afghans have a story of their own, the story of a zigzag journey toward some end point despite regular interruptions by foreign interventions. And what is this Afghan story apart from its many interruptions?

There is a game called buzkashi that is played only in Afghanistan and the Central Asian steppes. It involves men on horseback competing to snatch a goat carcass off the ground and carry it to each of two designated posts while the other players, riding “alongside at full gallop, fight to wrest the goat carcass away. The men play as individuals, each for his own glory. There are no teams. There is no set number of players. The distance between the posts is arbitrary. The field of play has no boundaries or chalk marks. No referee rides alongside to whistle plays dead and none is needed, for there are no fouls. The game is governed and regulated by its own traditions, by the social context and its customs, and by the implicit understandings among the players. If you need the protection of an official rule book, you shouldn’t be playing.

Two hundred years ago, buzkashi offered an apt metaphor for Afghan society. The major theme of the country’s history since then has been a contention about whether and how to impose rules on the buzkashi of Afghan society. Over these same centuries, however, Afghan territory has also provided the

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35 Refers to a short, curved blade.

Module 1: The Origins of US Interventions in Afghanistan
Lesson 1. The Great Game and Beyond
Handout 2: Games with Rules Excerpt (3 pages)
field of play for another game entirely, what British author Rudyard Kipling disingenuously called “the Great Game,” which involves world superpowers tussling for strategic position. Like all jockeying among sovereign nations, this too is a game without rules and it is not about Afghanistan per se; the stakes are global. Afghanistan is involved only because it happens to be situated on the line of scrimmage.

Inevitably, when two unrelated games are in progress on the same field, the players crash into each other and the action gets intertwined. This has been happening in Afghanistan since the early days of the nineteenth century. Each game affects and complicates the other, but if you don’t realize there are two different games going on, the action is apt to seem inexplicable.

The great power interventions in Afghanistan truly make a compelling story, to be sure; but the intervened-upon have a story of their own as well, which keeps unfolding between interventions as well as during. In this story the interventions are not the main event but interruptions of the main event. And if the foreign interventions tend to follow the same course, it’s partly because they keep interrupting the same story, a story that never quite gets resolved before the next intervention disrupts the progress made.

This is not to rehash the old “graveyard of empires” lament, the conventional wisdom that great-power interventions in Afghanistan are doomed to fail because this place is impossible to conquer. The tough terrain and the fractious people do present a special challenge to would-be conquerors, and yet Afghanistan has in fact been conquered many times. The Aryans did it three or four thousand years ago, which is why this area was originally called Ariana. The Persians conquered this country in ancient times, which is why Persian (a.k.a. Farsi, a.k.a. Dari) is the lingua franca of Afghanistan, spoken at least as a second language by 90 percent of the people. The Greeks conquered it, which is why Hellenic kingdoms flourished here for two centuries and green-eyed blonds still sometimes pop up in pockets of the country. Even Buddhists conquered this territory, which is why the unique art style known as Greco-Buddhist originated and flourished only here.

The Arabs conquered Afghanistan, which is why 99 percent of Afghans are now Muslims. The Turks conquered Afghanistan, again and again. The Mongols swept across this land, and it didn’t prove to be the graveyard of their empire—quite the opposite: they made this land a graveyard for countless Afghans. In the fifteenth century, a Turko-Mongol conqueror took over Kabul just before driving on into India to found the Moghul Empire. Afghanistan is not really impossible to conquer. It’s just that all the successful conquerors are now called “Afghans.”
Reflection Questions
Games without Rules: The Often-Interrupted History of Afghanistan

Name: _____________________________________ Date: ________________ Class: _____________

1. Ansary identifies two perspectives telling the story of Afghanistan—one that is from the outside looking in and another that is from the inside looking out. How do these two perspectives differ?

2. Why does Ansary use *buzkashi* as a metaphor for the Afghan story? How effective is this metaphor?

3. Why does Ansary make a point of alluding to successful conquests of Afghanistan? What does it suggest about Afghanistan’s history?

4. How does this excerpt align with or challenge your understanding of Afghanistan?
Soft Power

Power comes in many different forms and the distribution of power resources in the information age varies across different issues. Power is relative, which is why it is so directly tied to context. For example, on one hand, the United States has unmatched global military might and reach. However, on the other hand, when it comes to global economic issues, the United States must work with the European Union, Japan, China, and others to negotiate outcomes. On the global stage, power is widely distributed and chaotically organized among state and nonstate actors.

Traditionally, political leaders have leveraged hard power to obtain favorable outcomes. Hard power comes in the form of military assets and classic military solutions. However, soft power assets are also often required. Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. Nations can strengthen their sphere of influence when other nations admire its values, emulate its example, aspire to its level of prosperity--and want to follow it. Soft power, in this case, involves setting an agenda that attracts others in world politics rather than forces them to change by threatening military force or economic sanctions. This soft power--getting others to want the outcomes you want--co-opts people rather than coerces them.

Both hard and soft power are related because they can both be used to achieve a purpose by affecting the behaviors of others. Command power--the ability to change what others do--can rest on coercion or force. Co-optive power--the ability to shape what others want--can rest on the attractiveness of one’s culture and values or on the ability to manipulate the agenda of political choices.

Three Sources of Soft Power
2. A country’s culture, in places where it is attractive to others;
3. A country’s political values, when it lives up to them at home and abroad; and
4. A country’s policies, when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority

The definition of Soft Power was coined by Joseph Nye, former dean of Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and Deputy to the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, who was also the National Security Council Group on Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Afghanistan: Artifacts from Three Time Periods
Example 1: The Great Game

Artifact 1A: Great Game Cartoon - 1878
The Afghan Emir, Sher Ali Khan, with his “friends” Russia and Great Britain.

Artifact 1B: Excerpt from *Taliban* by Ahmed Rashid (2010)
In the late nineteenth century, the British in India and czarist Russia fought an undeclared war of competition and influence to contain each other in Central Asia and Afghanistan. ‘Turkestan, Afghanistan, Transcaspia, Persia - to many these words breathe only a sense of utter remoteness, or a memory of strange vicissitudes and of moribund romance. To me, I confess they are pieces on a chessboard upon which is being played out a game for the domination of the world,’ wrote Lord Curzon, before he became the Viceroy of India in 1898. These were expanding empires - the British pushing across India into Afghanistan and the Tsar’s armies conquering Central Asia.

The centre of gravity for both powers was Afghanistan. The British feared that a Russian thrust on Herat from the Turkmen region could threaten British Baluchistan, while Moscow gold could turn Kabul’s rulers against the British. The Russians feared that the British would undermine them in Central Asia by supporting revolts by the Muslim tribes and the rules of Bukhara and Kokand. As it is today, the real battle was over communication links as both empires indulged in massive railway projects. The Russians built railway lines across Central Asia to their borders with Afghanistan, Persia, and China, while the British built railway lines across India to their border with Afghanistan.

Artifact 1C: Spheres of Influence Surrounding Afghanistan

Module 1: The Origins of US Interventions in Afghanistan
Lesson 1. The Great Game and Beyond
Handout 4: Artifacts (9 pages)
Conolly argued that there were only two possible routes which a Russian army, large enough to stand any chance of success, could take. Put simply, the first involved seizing Khiva, followed by Balkh, and then crossing the Hindu Kush, as Alexander the Great had done, to Kabul. From there the army would march via Jalalabad and the Khyber Pass to Peshawar, and finally cross the Indus at Attock...

The second feasible route open to the Russian generals involved seizing Herat, and using it as a staging point where troops could be massed. From there they would march via Kandahar and Quetta to the Bolan Pass, the way he himself had entered India. Herat could be reached either overland through a compliant Persia, or by crossing the Caspian to Astrabad. Once Herat was in Russian hands, or had been annexed by a friendly Persia, then an army ‘might be garrisoned there for years, with every necessity immediately within its reach’. Its very presence there might be sufficient to unsettle the native population of India, thus smoothing the way for an invasion.
Example 1: The Great Game

1. Identify the foreign powers involved in Afghanistan during the Great Game period. Explain what motivated their interest in Afghanistan.

2. Provide examples of how these foreign countries exerted their soft power or hard power over Afghanistan to fulfill their own agenda.

3. Jot down notes that might help you answer the prompt: In the last two centuries, foreign powers have attempted to invade, occupy, conquer or control Afghanistan in some capacity. What do these attempts by the British, the Russians, and the Americans, have in common? What are the major patterns that emerge?
Example 2: The Cold War

Artifact 2A: Excerpt from “The history of Afghanistan, from the Cold War to 9/11”
Interview between Vox Senior Reporter Emily Stewart and Ali A. Olomi, a historian of the Middle East and Islam at Penn State Abington.

And where does the military relationship start? The 1970s?

Yes. In the ’70s, the United States is at first quite hesitant to support any type of military expansion.

Daoud Khan starts to ally himself more and more with the Soviet Union. He tries to establish a friendly relationship. He has a very famous phrase that he uses: “I feel happiest when I light my American cigarette with Soviet matches.” That really speaks to his attempt to leverage his really weird, uncomfortable Cold War relationship. But his allying with the Soviet Union makes the United States very, very nervous.

Things get even worse in 1978, when Daoud Khan is formally overthrown in what’s known as the Saur Revolution and a Marxist-Leninist government is established, the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Here, the United States starts to slowly funnel money toward some resistance groups. It doesn’t have a unified policy. It’s not like, okay, we need to start a resistance movement to overthrow this communist government. It has a little bit of a muddled approach.

There were some in the [US] government, like former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was very interested in getting involved. There were other military leaders that thought if we get involved, that’s going to force the Soviet Union to get involved. And so they have a bit of a mixed bag approach. But they do start to agitate quite early on in 1978, and in 1979, they are funneling money to Pakistan’s intelligence services, who are then funneling it into the hands of the resistance. That does eventually induce a Soviet invasion.

Artifact 2B: Jane Williams teaching at Rabia-e Balkhi Girls High Schools in Kabul around 1960.

Williams was in Kabul as part of a U.S. government-sponsored program run by Columbia University’s Teachers College.

Artifact 2C: Soviet soldiers begin to change their position while fighting the Mujahideen - 1988
### Artifact 2D: The Helmand Valley Project in Afghanistan, Draft Report - 1983

Southwest Afghanistan, where the Helmand Valley is located, had been part of the traditional British-Russian rivalry in what was known in the 19th century as "the great game." To avoid a resurgence of "the great game," the Afghans chose to contract with the private U.S. company of Morrison-Knudsen for the development of the Helmand Valley. Nevertheless, the proximity of the Russians to northern Afghanistan allowed them to continue to exercise a traditional and considerable influence in that part of the country. In the late 1940s, the Afghans considered Morrison-Knudsen to be a U.S. presence in southern Afghanistan, even though it was a private company employed by the Afghans directly. Thus, even before any U.S. Government involvement, American prestige was tied up in the Valley, a fact which became more and more important as the Cold War intensified. As it became clear in the 1950s that Morrison-Knudsen's development work in the Valley would only scratch the surface of what was needed, U.S. Government involvement became inevitable to protect a perceived previous commitment of American prestige.

Between 1960 and 1970, the Helmand Valley "project" became the cornerstone of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, consuming $80 million of the approximately $125 million provided during that period. On the project level, the U.S. goal was to assist the Afghans in an integrated effort to settle farmers on the land made arable by developing the irrigation system. The underlying political goal was to protect U.S. prestige in order to counterbalance the Russian influence in Afghanistan.

### Artifact 2E: Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin and Afghan Prime Minister Taraki - 1979

**Taraki:** I ask that you extend assistance.

**Kosygin:** We must hold consultations on this issue. Do you not have connections with Iran's progressives? Can't you tell them that it is currently the United States that is your and their chief enemy? The Iranians are very hostile toward the United States and evidently this can be put to use as propaganda. What foreign policy activities or statements would you like to see coming from us? Do you have any ideas on this question, propaganda-wise?

**Taraki:** Propaganda help must be combined with practical assistance. I suggest that you place Afghan markings on your tanks and aircraft and no one will be any the wiser. Your troops should advance from the direction of Kushka and from the direction of Kabul. In our view, no one will be any the wiser. They will think these are Government troops.


**When Duke Ellington Played Kabul.** Ellington remembered "riding round all night long" after the concert, listening to Afghan music in cafes. "They have their own thing going on there, and it's good," he told BBC chat show host Michael Parkinson in 1973.

The Kabul concert was part of a longer tour sponsored by the US State Department - jazz diplomacy playing out against the backdrop of the Cold War.

As early as 1953 the American jazz giant Dave Brubeck had himself played Kabul. His visit, he said, had inspired his hit Nomad on the album Impressions of Eurasia. Ellington's tour took in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Iran and Lebanon, where, according to Ellington, "those cats were swinging". The band had reached Turkey on 22 November 1963 when the shocking news came that President John F Kennedy had been assassinated.
Example 2: The Cold War

1. Identify the foreign powers involved in Afghanistan during the Cold War period. Explain what motivated their interest in Afghanistan.

2. Provide examples of how these foreign countries exerted their soft power or hard power over Afghanistan to fulfill their own agenda.

3. Jot down notes that might help you answer the prompt: In the last two centuries, foreign powers have attempted to invade, occupy, conquer, or control Afghanistan in some capacity. What do these attempts by the British, the Russians, and the Americans, have in common? What are the major patterns that emerge?
Afghanistan: Artifacts From Three Time Periods
Example 3: The War on Terror

Artifact 3A: The status of US funds appropriated for reconstruction in Afghanistan (June 30, 2021)

Artifact 3B: George W. Bush’s Address to the joint session of the 107th Congress - September 20, 2001

Americans are asking: How will we fight and win this war? We will direct every resource at our command — every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war — to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network.

This war will not be like the war against Iraq a decade ago, with a decisive liberation of territory and a swift conclusion. It will not look like the air war above Kosovo two years ago, where no ground troops were used and not a single American was lost in combat. Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success. We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest. And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.

Artifact 3C: TV Network’s Conformity in Coverage of the War by Ann Telnaes

“Telnaes's cartoon criticizes television network coverage during the war in Iraq. ‘All the major television media outlets—Fox, CNN, ABC, NBC, CBS—didn't do a lot of questioning about why we were really going to war,’ she says. ‘They are now, some of them, but they should have done it before the fact. They have a responsibility to the American public. If you’re a sheep, you just follow the herd without thinking.’”

Module 1: The Origins of US Interventions in Afghanistan
Lesson 1. The Great Game and Beyond
Handout 4: Artifacts (9 pages)
According to Afghan producers who spoke off the record, American government officials from the Department of Defense and the State Department, which have a large presence in Kabul, have asked them to refrain from broadcasting “civ cas,” the shorthand used by the international community for civilian casualties. The logic is that civilian casualties will be used as propaganda by the “insurgents,” namely the Taliban and ISIS, to turn public opinion against the international military and even nonmilitary presence.

If, on the other hand, suicide bombings are shown too readily, then they can turn people against the Taliban and toward the US-led international military operations. Several American officials involved in diplomacy and communication in Afghanistan also spoke off the record to express similar sentiments. They also claimed to have intelligence that the Taliban have production facilities where they produce compilation DVDs of civilian casualties for home viewing and then distribute them to generate more followers. Of course, the real geopolitics of Afghanistan is more complex than any insurgent/American polarity. Yet this is how those who control media representations imagine televisual violence affects the masses.
Example 3: The War on Terror

1. Identify the foreign powers involved in Afghanistan during the Global War on Terror. Explain what motivated their interest in Afghanistan.

2. Provide examples of how both soft power or hard power was exerted over Afghanistan to fulfill an agenda.

3. Jot down notes that might help you answer the prompt: In the last two centuries, foreign powers have attempted to invade, occupy, conquer, or control Afghanistan in some capacity. What do these attempts by the British, the Russians, and the Americans, have in common? What are the major patterns that emerge?
Lesson 3. Selling the Afghan War by ‘Saving’ Afghan Women

Overview, Background Resources and Materials Needed

Students will understand that the 2001 war in Afghanistan was sold domestically to the American public and globally to the world, in part, through the dominant but problematic narrative of saving Afghan women.

Background reading for educators before Lesson 3
It would be beneficial for the educators to review the following background readings. These can also be assigned as readings for higher-level students:


Additional examples of “save Afghan women” discourse from 2001:


Key Terms in Lesson 3

- **Generalized language:** Broad statements that might be partially true, but not entirely true. Therefore applying generalizations to a group of people can be misleading because it does not capture complex realities and lived experiences.

- **Us/Them language:** The binary division of people into two groups: one that is similar, familiar, ideologically aligned, and therefore welcomed (“us”) and one that is foreign, peculiar, ideologically different, and therefore threatening (“them”).

- **Conflated language:** Statements that combine two or more sets of information or ideas suggesting that they are connected, but they are actually being mixed up or confused and require separation.
Teaching Beyond September 11th

- **Veil:** A piece of material that is intended to cover some part of the head or face. Veiling has a long history in societies around the world and the practice has been prominent in different forms in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

- **Hijab:** In Islam, the hijab is a cloth head covering worn by some Muslim women as a symbol of their faith and practice.

- **Chadaree:** An outer garment, often referred to as “burqa” in the west, that covers the full body including the face historically worn by rural Afghan women when in public. The most common color is a light blue, but different colors are also worn by women in different regions of the country. Before the Taliban took power in 1996, the chadaree was rarely worn in cities in Afghanistan, especially Kabul. While they were in power, the Taliban required the wearing of a chadaree in public.

Materials Needed for Lesson 3

1. Lesson 3 Slide deck
2. Lesson 3, Handout 1: Laura Bush Speech Transcript (1 per student)
3. Lesson 3, Handout 2: Graphic Organizer for Laura Bush’s Speech (1 per student)
4. Lesson 3, Handout 3: Lila Abu Lughod Interview (Asia Society) (1 per student)
5. Lesson 3, Handout 4: Question Matrix (1 per student)
6. Lesson 3, Handout 5: Core Academic Conversational Skills (optional, 1 per student)
7. Extension Activities:
   - [When Women Cannot Choose](#) (assign electronically)
   - Handout 6: Opinion Article Analysis: “When Women Cannot Choose” by Mona Eltahawy (1 per student)
   - [The Other Afghan Women](#) (assign electronically)
   - Handout 7: Feature Article Analysis: “The Other Afghan Women” by Anand Gopal (1 per student)
Lesson 3. Selling the Afghan War

Learning Plan

Opening – 10 minutes
(Lesson 3 Slide deck, Slide 2). Display the photos below and ask the class how they would describe the photos. Prompt students to compare and contrast the photos—identifying similarities and differences. Then ask them to caption the photos and describe the scene as if they were being displayed in a gallery.

Ask students to share their thoughts and captions.

Anticipated student responses:

Similarities/differences:
- All photos depict women.
- Photos 1 and 5 are black and white, indicating they are from a long time ago.
- Photos 1, 2, 5, and 7 show women in westernized attire.
- Photos 4 and 6 show women covered up.
- The style of clothing is different in photos.
- Photos 5 and 7 are the only photos where no women have their hair covered.
- Photos 1 and 4 seem to be in cities (based on bus and shop).
- Only photos 2 and 7 are inside, the rest of the photos are taken outside.

Descriptions of photos:
1. Photo 1: Afghan women catching a public bus in Kabul, Afghanistan's capital and largest city, in the 1950s.
2. Photo 2: An Afghan community midwife in Badakhshan (a rural northeastern province) taken in 2010.
5. Photo 5: Afghan women in the social circles of King Amanullah Khan taken in 1927.
6. Photo 6: Afghan women and girls taken in 1975; the women are wearing different color chadarees while the two girls are not.
7. Photo 7: Homaira Begum, King Zahir Shah’s wife, at the Whitehouse in 1963

Points to emphasize to students:
- Afghan women are not a monolith and there is/always has been incredible diversity among them, including in their style of dress.
- Class and geography are evident in these photos.
Teaching Beyond September 11th

- Photo 5 and 7 are photos of royals or friends of royals from the 20s and 60s, their style of dress is more western influenced.
- Photo 1 is of women in Kabul, upper or upper middle class as evidenced by attire.
- Photo 6 shows the chadaree in different colors and also that women have long worn it (i.e., long before the Taliban). The photo is from 1975.
- Photo 4 shows women in the chadaree shopping for gold in a medium sized city, demonstrating women sometimes do wear the garment in urban areas and do so more recently. The photo is from 2009.
- Photo 2 shows a woman midwife (also implying she has technical expertise/training) in a rural province without a traditional veil, in 2010.

Listen for and correct any leading or sensationalist language that could be interpreted as “othering” the subjects in the photos.

Before moving on, inform students that all the photos depict Afghan women. Then ask whether they are surprised that they are all Afghan women. For students who admit that they are surprised, ask them to elaborate.

Key concepts overview – 10 minutes

Inform students that one approach to legitimizing the Global War on Terror was to perpetuate the narrative that Afghan women needed to be saved. Explain to students that on November 16th, first lady Laura Bush gave the weekly presidential radio address to the nation. It was the first time in US history that a First Lady used the president’s weekly radio broadcast to address the nation. In this speech, first lady Laura said, “The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women.”

Prepare students to read a transcript of Laura Bush’s radio address.

(Lesson 3 Slide deck, Slide 3). Prior to reading the transcript ask students to come up with the definitions of the following terms that will be used to analyze the Laura Bush speech.

2. Generalized language: Broad statements that might be partially true, but not entirely true. Therefore, applying generalizations to a group of people can be misleading because it does not capture complex realities and lived experiences.

3. Us/Them language: The binary division of people into two groups: one that is similar, familiar, ideologically aligned, and therefore welcomed (“us”) and one that is foreign, peculiar, ideologically different, and therefore threatening (“them”).

4. Conflated language: Statements that combine two or more sets of information or ideas suggesting that they are connected, but they are actually being mixed up or confused and require separation.

[Lesson 3 Slide deck, Slide 4]. Optional: Before having students read the transcript, play the recording so they can listen to it.
Teaching Beyond September 11th

[Lesson 3, Handout 1 & 2]. **Hand out a copy of the transcript of Laura Bush’s radio address** and the accompanying Graphic Organizer.

Ask students to review the transcript and underline phrases that fit into any of the following categories on the Graphic Organizer: *generalized language, us/them language, conflated language.*

Once students have underlined relevant phrases and language, ask them to jot down one piece of evidence for each category in the first column labeled, Evidence from the Transcript. Then ask students how the arrangement of the words and phrases might achieve a particular effect or provoke a specific reaction from listeners in the second column labeled, Rhetorical Effect.

**Anticipated Student Responses:**

Throughout the address, Laura Bush also uses the words ‘Taliban,’ ‘al Qaeda,’ and ‘terrorists’ interchangeably, which further creates confusion and ambiguity. It also implies that Afghanistan is where the ‘terrorists’ are located, though what remains true is that there are ‘terrorists’ the world over.

**Generalized Language**
- **Evidence from the Transcript:** “… I’m delivering this week’s radio address to kick off a world-wide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children by the al Qaeda terrorist network and the regime it supports in Afghanistan, the Taliban.”
- **Rhetorical Effect:** The sentence implies that invading Afghanistan was a universally accepted decision and effort. While it is true that NATO allies supported the War on Terror, stating that ‘world-wide’ efforts were in place is misleading. However, in using the term ‘world-wide,’ Laura Bush attempts to persuade the audience that this decision was unanimous and uncontroversial.

**Us Versus Them Language**
- **Evidence from the Transcript:** “Civilized people throughout the world are speaking out in horror... in Afghanistan, we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us.”
- **Rhetorical Effect:** Laura Bush suggests that if people don’t speak out in horror, then they must be uncivilized. As a result, she creates a dichotomy between the US, which she insists is ‘civilized’ and ‘the terrorists’ who she claims wants to impose their ‘world’ on everyone else. In using this language, she also suggests that ‘the terrorists’ are alien or from a different planet, further persuading her audience that the decision to invade Afghanistan is to root out people unlike Americans. What this statement fails to acknowledge is collateral damage and the uncivilized nature of war itself.

**Conflated Language**
- **Evidence from the Transcript:** “Long before the current war began, the Taliban and its terrorist allies were making the lives of children and women in Afghanistan miserable. Seventy percent of the Afghan people are malnourished.”
- **Rhetorical Effect:** Laura Bush begins by describing the brutality perpetrated by the Taliban against children and women. Then she highlights the malnourishment of the Afghan people. These are two different points that she conflates. In doing so, it seems that she is implying that
The Taliban are to be blamed for malnourishment when, in reality, there are several other factors that could contribute to the malnourishment of nearly a third of a country’s population.

Application – 20 minutes
(Lesson 3, Handout 3). Distribute a copy of the interview with Professor Lila Abu-Lughod: Do Afghan Women need saving?

Ask students to work individually or in pairs and underline phrases that challenge the language and ideas presented by Laura Bush in her radio address.

(Lesson 3 Slide deck, Slide 5). Following the readings, ask students to prepare for a class discussion centered on the following questions:

1. Why is it problematic to frame the US’ involvement in Afghanistan in terms of saving Afghan/Muslim women?
2. How effective is it to frame the Global War on Terror as a mission to support Afghan women? Who might find this messaging appealing?
3. Why shouldn’t wearing a veil be associated with a lack of agency?

Anticipated student responses

● Approaching the US’ involvement in Afghanistan in terms of saving women is problematic because it simplifies complicated issues. Professor Abu Lughod explains, “... the desire to know about ‘women and Islam’ was leading people away from the very issues one needed to examine in order to understand what had happened... Those issues include the history of Afghanistan-with Soviet, U.S., Pakistani, and Saudi involvements; the dynamics of movements in the Middle East; the politics and economics of American support for repressive governments.”

● The idea of saving Afghan women reinforces the idea that Westerners are superior. From Abu-Lughod’s interview “When you save someone, you are saving them from something. You are also saving them to something. What violences are entailed in this transformation? And what presumptions are being made about the superiority of what you are saving them to?” She goes on to question why people did not rush to ask about women elsewhere. If we were to use similar rhetoric to discuss the experiences of women in the United States, we would realize very quickly how racist and classist it is to frame US involvement in Afghanistan in terms of saving Afghan/Muslim women.

● It suggests that the US has a plan/prescription that will lead to “saving” Afghan/Muslim women. However, this ignores the possibility that Afghan women have their own ideas and conceptualizations for how they want to live their lives. For example, Abu Lughod writes, “...We need to... work hard to respect and recognize difference-as products of different histories, as expressions of different circumstances, as manifestations of differently structured desires... consider that there might be different ideas about justice and that different women might want, or choose, different futures from what we envision as best.”

● It is very effective because the war is set up to make the American public feel like they are saving other people who need to be saved. It feels morally righteous.

● It is effective because it creates a divide between (us) the US, who will do the work of ‘saving’, and (them) the terrorists, who are a threat to Afghan women, as established in Laura Bush’s radio
address. This framing could appeal to people who otherwise might not support military interventions.

- A veil/hijab shouldn’t be associated with a lack of agency because that assumes women themselves aren’t making choices about whether or not they wear the hijab or how they choose to wear it. It’s easy to see different women wearing the hijab in different ways based on their style or where they are, showing they are making choices. Second, women who wear veils/hijabs tell us it is their choice and we should believe them.

Let students know that while these questions will start off the discussion, they should also develop their own questions to keep the conversation going. Encourage students to create at least two higher order thinking questions related to the topic and pose them to the group during the discussion.

[Lesson 3, Handout 4]. Distribute the question matrix for students to create their own questions and ensure that the questions they develop will elicit discussion.

As an example, present the following question to the class, ‘What has been done to support Afghan women?’ and invite students to use the question matrix to transform it into a higher order-thinking question that will elicit more conversation. Responses might include:

1. How could we improve the ways in which we support women in Afghanistan?
2. Why might Afghan women oppose the idea that they ‘need saving’?

[Lesson 3, Handout 5]. Optional: Distribute the Core Academic Conversation Skills handout to students who need additional support participating in classroom discussions. Encourage students to use the handout to participate in the discussion in addition to or in lieu of the Question Matrix.

Debrief – 10 minutes

In closing, ask students to reflect on the following questions:

1. How does drawing attention to Afghan women help “sell” the Global War on Terror to the American Public?
2. In what ways is framing the war in these terms hypocritical?

Anticipated student answers

- According to Professor Abu Lughod the notion of “saving” Afghan women had a very strong appeal that justified American intervention in Afghanistan at the start of the War on Terror and reduced criticism of intervention from American and European feminists.

- According to Professor Abu Lughod, framing the war in these terms is hypocritical because if applied in the US, the racist and classist foundations on which they are built would be obvious. Professor Abu Lughod writes, “the smug and patronizing assumptions of this missionary rhetoric would be obvious if used at home, because we’ve become more politicized about problems of race and class. What would happen if white middle class women today said they needed to save those poor African-American women from the oppression of their men?” When a group adopts the rhetoric of saviorship, they reinforce a sense of superiority and focus their attention elsewhere and on another group without critically evaluating their own shortcomings. Abdu Lughod writes, “It is easy to see
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through the hypocritical “feminism” of a Republican administration.” Indeed, Republican administrations have historically restricted American women’s right to bodily autonomy.

Extension Activities or Homework

The following activities are recommended, especially if students have completed Lesson 2. Both of these activities help build on students’ media literacy skills. Note that students are not informed if the piece is straight news, feature, or an opinion piece.

Option 1:
Have students read the following opinion article:


After students have read the article, have them analyze the article and answer the questions on the handout: Article Analysis: “When Women Cannot Choose” by Mona Eltahawy.

Option 2:
Have students read the following feature article:


After students have read the article, have them analyze the article and answer the questions on the handout: Article Analysis: “The Other Afghan Women” by Anand Gopal
Lesson 3. Selling the Afghan War by ‘Saving’ Afghan Women

Student Handouts and Supplementary Teaching Materials

1. Lesson 3 Slide Deck Preview (7 slides) [Please download separate slide deck file]
   • Note: Educators may elect to print out the slide and pass that around rather than projecting it on screen.
2. Lesson 3, Handout 1: Laura Bush Speech Transcript
3. Lesson 3, Handout 2: Graphic Organizer for Laura Bush’s Speech
4. Lesson 3, Handout 3: Interview with Lila Abu Lughod
5. Lesson 3, Handout 4: Question Matrix
6. Lesson 3, Handout 5: Core Conversation Skills (optional handout)
7. Lesson 3, Handout 6 & 7 (optional): Article Analysis
   a. Opinion article analysis handout: Article Analysis: “When Women Cannot Choose” by Mona Eltahawy
   b. Feature article analysis handout: Article Analysis: “The Other Afghan Women” by Anand Gopal
Selling the Afghan War
Module 1, Lesson 3

Generalized language: Broad statements that might be partially true, but not entirely true. Therefore applying generalizations to a group of people can be misleading because it does not capture complex realities and lived experiences.

Us/Them language: The binary division of people into two groups: one that is similar, familiar, ideologically aligned, and therefore welcomed ("us") and one that is foreign, peculiar, ideologically different, and therefore threatening ("them").

Conflated language: Statements that combine two or more sets of information or ideas suggesting that they are connected, but they are actually being mixed up or confused and require separation.

Discussion Questions

Why is it problematic to frame the U.S.'s involvement in Afghanistan in terms of saving Afghan women?

How effective is it to frame the Global War on Terror as a mission to support Afghan women? Who might find this messaging appealing?

Why shouldn't wearing a veil be associated with a lack of agency?

How does drawing attention to Afghan women help "sell" the Global War on Terror to the American Public?

In what ways is framing the war in these terms hypocritical?

Laura Bush
Radio Address

November 17, 2001

Debrief Questions

Module 1: The Origins of US Interventions in Afghanistan
Lesson 3. Selling the Afghan War by ‘Saving’ Afghan Women
Why is it problematic to frame the U.S.’s involvement in Afghanistan in terms of saving Afghan/Muslim women?

How effective is it to frame the Global War on Terror as a mission to support Afghan women? Who might find this messaging appealing?

Why shouldn’t wearing a veil be associated with a lack of agency?
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Transcript of President’s Weekly Radio Address delivered by First-Lady, Laura Bush
November 17, 2001

Good morning. I'm Laura Bush, and I'm delivering this week's radio address to kick off a world-wide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children by the al-Qaida terrorist network and the regime it supports in Afghanistan, the Taliban. That regime is now in retreat across much of the country, and the people of Afghanistan - especially women - are rejoicing. Afghan women know, through hard experience, what the rest of the world is discovering: The brutal oppression of women is a central goal of the terrorists. Long before the current war began, the Taliban and its terrorist allies were making the lives of children and women in Afghanistan miserable. Seventy percent of the Afghan people are malnourished. One in every four children won't live past the age of five because health care is not available. Women have been denied access to doctors when they're sick. Life under the Taliban is so hard and repressive, even small displays of joy are outlawed - children aren't allowed to fly kites; their mothers face beatings for laughing out loud. Women cannot work outside the home, or even leave their homes by themselves.

The severe repression and brutality against women in Afghanistan is not a matter of legitimate religious practice. Muslims around the world have condemned the brutal degradation of women and children by the Taliban regime. The poverty, poor health, and illiteracy that the terrorists and the Taliban have imposed on women in Afghanistan do not conform with the treatment of women in most of the Islamic world, where women make important contributions in their societies. Only the terrorists and the Taliban forbid education to women. Only the terrorists and the Taliban threaten to pull out women's fingernails for wearing nail polish. The plight of women and children in Afghanistan is a matter of deliberate human cruelty, carried out by those who seek to intimidate and control.

Civilized people throughout the world are speaking out in horror - not only because our hearts break for the women and children in Afghanistan, but also because in Afghanistan, we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us.

All of us have an obligation to speak out. We may come from different backgrounds and faiths - but parents the world over love our children. We respect our mothers, our sisters and daughters. Fighting brutality against women and children is not the expression of a specific culture; it is the acceptance of our common humanity - a commitment shared by people of good will on every continent. Because of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan, women are no longer imprisoned in their homes. They can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment. Yet the terrorists who helped rule that country now plot and plan in many countries. And they must be stopped. The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women.

In America, next week brings Thanksgiving. After the events of the last few months, we'll be holding our families even closer. And we will be especially thankful for all the blessings of American life. I hope Americans will join our family in working to ensure that dignity and opportunity will be secured for all the women and children of Afghanistan.

Have a wonderful holiday, and thank you for listening.


Module 1: The Origins of US Interventions in Afghanistan
Lesson 3. Selling the Afghan War by ‘Saving’ Afghan Women
Handout 1: Laure Bush Speech Transcript
### Analysis of Laura Bush’s Radio Address

**Directions:** After reading the transcript of Laura Bush’s radio address, record words and phrases that exemplify **generalized**, **us versus them**, and **conflated language**. Then consider why this language was selected for the address by describing the rhetorical effect that the words and phrases evoke. One purpose of a rhetorical effect is to elicit a certain response from an audience. Consider the response Laura Bush might have intended to elicit from the American public.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generalized Language</th>
<th>Evidence from the Transcript</th>
<th>Rhetorical Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broad statements that might be partially true, but not entirely true. Therefore, applying generalizations to a group of people can be misleading because it does not capture complex realities and lived experiences.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Us Versus Them Language</th>
<th>Evidence from the Transcript</th>
<th>Rhetorical Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The binary division of people into two groups: one that is similar, familiar, ideologically aligned, and therefore welcomed (“us”) and one that is foreign, peculiar, ideologically different, and therefore threatening (“them”).</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflated Language</th>
<th>Evidence from the Transcript</th>
<th>Rhetorical Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statements that combine two or more sets of information or ideas suggesting that they are connected, but they are actually being mixed up or confused and require separation.</td>
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</table>
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**Question Matrix**

Directions: Using the question matrix, create at least two higher-order thinking question related to the topic of the discussion. The bottom right quadrant represents questions that will elicit more discussion.

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Write two higher order questions here:


Module 1: The Origins of US Interventions in Afghanistan
Lesson 3. Selling the Afghan War by ‘Saving’ Afghan Women
Handout 3: Question Matrix
## Core Conversation Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elaborate and Clarify</th>
<th>Frames for Prompting the Skill</th>
<th>Frames for Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you elaborate on...?</td>
<td>In other words...</td>
<td>It is important because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you mean by...?</td>
<td>I think it means that...</td>
<td>I believe that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you tell me more about...?</td>
<td>How so...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you hearing?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your take on what I said?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does that make sense to you?</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Ideas with Examples</th>
<th>Frames for Prompting the Skill</th>
<th>Frames for Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you give an example of that?</td>
<td>For example,...</td>
<td>In the text it said that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like what?</td>
<td>According to...</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Why do you say that?</td>
<td>An example from life is...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why is that a good example?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paraphrase</th>
<th>Frames for Prompting the Skill</th>
<th>Frames for Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do we know so far?</td>
<td>So, you’re saying that...</td>
<td>In other words...</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are you hearing?</td>
<td>Essentially, you think that...</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is your take on what I said?</td>
<td>It sounds like you are saying...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does that make sense to you?</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Build On and/or Challenge a Partner’s Idea</th>
<th>Frames for Prompting the Skill</th>
<th>Frames for Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree?</td>
<td>I would add that...</td>
<td>Another way to look at this could be...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are other ideas?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yet I also wonder if...</td>
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<tr>
<td>What might be other points of view?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Synthesize Conversation Points</th>
<th>Frames for Prompting the Skill</th>
<th>Frames for Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can we bring this all together?</td>
<td>We can say that...</td>
<td>The main theme/point seems to be...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What key idea can we take away?</td>
<td>The evidence seems to suggest...</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can we agree upon?</td>
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In this interview with *AsiaSource*, Professor Abu-Lughod discusses women and Islam in the wake of the American war in Afghanistan.

Following the events of September 11th, the American public sphere has been saturated with discussions of what is unique about "Muslim" societies. To what extent is the character of Muslim societies determined by Islam? How can we begin to think about these societies, and what distinguishes them from our own?

Many aspects of societies around the world cannot be understood without reference to the history and influences of the major religions in terms of which people live their lives. This is just as true for people living in the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia and other Muslim regions as it is for those living in Europe and the United States, where Christianity has historically dominated. The point to stress is that despite this, it is just as unhelpful to reduce the complex politics, social dynamics, and diversity of lives in the U.S. to Christianity as it is to reduce these things to Islam in other regions. We should ask not how Muslim societies are distinguished from "our own" but how intertwined they are, historically and in the present, economically, politically, and culturally.

Muslim women have of course figured prominently in this public discussion. You have suggested recently that "understanding Muslim women" will not serve to explain anything. Could you elaborate on this claim?

Many of us have noticed that suddenly, after 9/11 and the American response of war in Afghanistan, the hunger for information about Muslim women seems insatiable. My own experience of this was in the form of an avalanche of invitations to appear on news programs and at universities and colleges. On the one hand I was pleased that my expertise was appreciated and that so many people wanted to know more about a subject I had spent twenty years studying. On the other hand, I was suspicious because it seemed that this desire to know about "women and Islam" was leading people away from the very issues one needed to examine in order to understand what had happened.

Those issues include the history of Afghanistan—with Soviet, U.S., Pakistani, and Saudi involvements; the dynamics of Islamist movements in the Middle East; the politics and economics of American support for repressive governments. Plastering neat cultural icons like "the Muslim woman" over messier historical
and political narratives doesn't get you anywhere. What does this substitution accomplish? Why, one has to ask, didn't people rush to ask about Guatemalan women, Vietnamese women (or Buddhist women), Palestinian women, or Bosnian women when trying to understand those conflicts? The problem gets framed as one about another culture or religion, and the blame for the problems in the world placed on Muslim men, now neatly branded as patriarchal.

The British in India and the French in Algeria both enlisted the support of women for their colonial projects (i.e., part of the colonial enterprise was ostensibly to "save" native women). Do you think the current rhetoric about women in Afghanistan suffers from the same problem? Is there something about the colonial/neo-colonial context that lends itself to this kind of representation (which would explain why such rhetoric cannot be employed for, say, African American women in this country)?

Yes, I ask myself about the very strong appeal of this notion of "saving" Afghan women, a notion that justifies American intervention (according to First Lady Laura Bush's November radio address) and that dampens criticism of intervention by American and European feminists. It is easy to see through the hypocritical "feminism" of a Republican administration. More troubling for me are the attitudes of those who do genuinely care about women's status. The problem, of course, with ideas of "saving" other women is that they depend on and reinforce a sense of superiority by westerners.

When you save someone, you are saving them from something. You are also saving them to something. What violences are entailed in this transformation? And what presumptions are being made about the superiority of what you are saving them to? This is the arrogance that feminists need to question. The reason I brought up African American women, or working class women in the U.S., was that the smug and patronizing assumptions of this missionary rhetoric would be obvious if used at home, because we've become more politicized about problems of race and class. What would happen if white middle class women today said they needed to save those poor African-American women from the oppression of their men?

You mentioned that the veil or burqa has been spoken of and defended by Muslim women as "portable seclusion" and that veiling should not be associated with lack of agency. Can you explain why this is the case?

It was the anthropologist Hanna Papanek, working in Pakistan, who twenty years ago coined this term of "portable seclusion." I like the phrase because it makes me see burqas as symbolic "mobile homes" that free women to move about in public and among strange men in societies where women's respectability, and protection, depend on their association with families and the homes which are the center of family lives.

The point about women's veiling is of course too complicated to lay out here. But there were three reasons why I said it could not so simply be associated with lack of agency. First, "veiling" is not one thing across different parts of the Muslim world, or even among different social groups within particular regions. The variety is extraordinary, going from headscarves unselfconsciously worn by young women in rural areas to the fuller forms of the very modern "Islamic dress" now being adopted by university women in the most elite of fields including medicine and engineering. Second, many of the women around the Muslim world who wear these different forms of cover describe this as a choice. We need to
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take their views seriously, even if not at face value. Beyond that, however, we need to ask some hard questions about what we actually mean when we use words like "agency" and "choice" when talking about human beings, always social beings always living in particular societies with culturally variable meanings of personhood. Do we not all work within social codes? What does the expression we often use here "the tyranny of fashion" suggest about agency in dress codes?

You argued that the interesting political and ethical question that the burqa raises has to do with how to deal with difference. You ask if it is possible for us to think of Afghan women being free in ways different from our own conception of freedom, i.e., can we only free Afghan women to be like us?

Yes, I think we need to recognize that even after "liberation" from the Taliban, Afghan women (and one can't presume any uniformity of views even within this category), might want different things than we (Westerners, of course also a diverse category) might want for them. What do we do about that? I don't think we need simply be cultural relativists, advocating respect for whatever goes on elsewhere and explaining it as "just their culture." I've already talked about the problem of "cultural" explanations in my criticism of the focus on the category of "Muslim women." And it should be recalled that Afghan or other Muslims' "cultures" are just as much part of history and an interconnected world as ours are. What I think we need to do is to work hard to respect and recognize difference-as products of different histories, as expressions of different circumstances, as manifestations of differently structured desires. We might still argue for justice for women, but consider that there might be different ideas about justice and that different women might want, or choose, different futures from what we envision as best. Among the most difficult things for American feminists to accept is that these futures might involve women in developing within a different religious tradition, or traditions that don't have as their primary ideal something called "freedom."

Reports that came out of the Bonn peace conference in late November revealed that there were even differences among the few Afghan women feminists and activists present. Some, like the representative of RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, refused to be conciliatory to any notion of Muslim governance. But others looked to Iran as a country in which they could see women making significant gains within an Islamic framework-in part through an Islamically oriented feminist movement that is challenging injustices and reinterpreting the religious tradition. The situation in Iran is itself the subject of great debate within feminist circles, especially among Iranian feminists in the West. It is not clear whether and in what ways women have made gains and whether the great increases in literacy, decreases in birthrates, presence of women in the professions and government, and a feminist flourishing in cultural fields like writing and filmmaking are because of or despite the establishment of a so-called Islamic Republic. The concept of an Islamic feminism itself is also the subject of heated debate. Is it an oxymoron, or does it refer to a viable movement forged by women who want another way? Still, the representatives at the Bonn peace conference thought it was more realistic to look to the Iranian model than to a secular Western one if they wanted to have any appeal to local women and to have a chance of transforming women's lives and gender relations from within.

The last point I would want to make about "difference" is that even if we have strong convictions about what might be the best path for Afghani [sic] women, wouldn't we do better to keep our sights trained on what we can do, sitting here in this part of the world? We might do better to think how to make the world a more just place rather than trying to "save" women in other cultures. Of course we can ask ourselves how to support those within different communities who want to, and are working toward
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making women's lives better—here the concept can be that of alliances. But we can also ask ourselves, living in this privileged and powerful part of the world, what our own responsibilities are for the situations in which others have found themselves. We don't stand outside the world, looking over at those poor benighted people elsewhere. How might we make the world a place where certain kinds of forces and values can have an appeal? How might we help create the peace necessary for discussions, debates, and transformations to occur? We need to ask what kinds of world conditions could we contribute to making such that popular desires won't be determined by an overwhelming sense of helplessness in the face of forms of global injustice. Or where those who can point to rich powers swaggering around the world can sway people to their hatreds. Those seem like more productive lines of thought and action. Let's leave the 19th century missionary work of saving Muslim women behind, where it belongs.
Article Analysis:  
“When Women Cannot Choose” by Mona Eltahawy

Lesson Adapted from Facing History’s New Article Analysis:  https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/news-article-analysis

Procedure
First, read the article When Women Cannot Choose.

After reading, review the characteristics of the three major types of news articles below:

1. **Straight News Article:** Straight news articles provide basic information to readers (the who, what, where, when, why, and how) on current events. They typically follow an inverted pyramid structure, with information presented in descending order of importance.

2. **Feature Article:** Feature articles cover a topic or person in greater depth than straight news articles. They also offer writers more freedom to use storytelling techniques or literary devices, and they are often accompanied by visual aids such as photographs, illustrations, or some other type of graphic.

3. **Opinion Article:** Unlike the other two genres, which strive to be objective, opinion articles allow the writer to take a stance on a particular issue or debate. They are often written by someone outside the field of journalism but nonetheless expert on the topic (e.g., a lawyer writing about criminal justice reform).

Answer the following guiding questions:

1. What type of news article is this (straight news article, feature article, or opinion article)? What features of the article (purpose, writing style, use of evidence, format, etc.) help you identify it?

2. Who is the author of the article? What makes the author a credible voice on the topic, and how might their position affect their conclusions?

3. What are the central arguments of the article? Do you agree or disagree with them?

4. Are there any weaknesses in the author’s argument/style of argumentation? (This could include, but are not limited to, insufficient evidence, exaggerated claims, or excessive appeals to emotion.)

5. What do you feel after reading this article?

6. What are two questions this article raises for you?
Article Analysis:
“The Other Afghan Women” by Anand Gopal

Lesson Adapted from: https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/news-article-analysis

Procedure
First, read or listen to the article The Other Afghan Women.
After reading, review the characteristics of the three major types of news articles below:

1. **Straight News Article**: Straight news articles provide basic information to readers (the who, what, where, when, why, and how) on current events. They typically follow an inverted pyramid structure, with information presented in descending order of importance.

2. **Feature Article**: Feature articles cover a topic or person in greater depth than straight news articles. They also offer writers more freedom to use storytelling techniques or literary devices, and they are often accompanied by visual aids such as photographs, illustrations, or some other type of graphic.

3. **Opinion Article**: Unlike the other two genres, which strive to be objective, opinion articles allow the writer to take a stance on a particular issue or debate. They are often written by someone outside the field of journalism but nonetheless expert on the topic (e.g., a lawyer writing about criminal justice reform).

Answer the following guiding question:

1. What type of news article is this (straight news article, feature article, or opinion article)? What features of the article (purpose, writing style, use of evidence, format, etc.) help you identify it?

2. What is the scene or setting of the article? What details does author use to describe the scene/setting?

3. What details and/or literary or storytelling devices does the author use to convey the setting, storyline, or broader themes of the article?

4. What do you feel after reading this article?

5. What are two questions this article raises for you?
Appendix to Module 1: Origins of U.S. Involvement in Afghanistan

Curriculum Framework

Goal
Students will be able to critically examine the motivations for war and the long-term implications of US foreign policy. Students will be able to use their independent learning to engage in discussions about war and peace with a focus on the war in Afghanistan.

Essential questions
1. How do economic, social, and political incentives motivate interventions in other countries, both military and non-military?
2. How has foreign interference shaped Afghanistan’s history?
3. In what ways has US foreign policy impacted the political and educational landscape of Afghanistan?
4. How were narratives about Afghan women used to legitimize US actions in the War on Terror?

Understandings
Students will understand that...
1. The fate of Afghanistan has long been largely decided by outsiders at the ultimate expense of multiple generations of Afghan people.
2. Afghanistan has, throughout much of its history, been on the receiving end of “benevolent” violence in the name “civilizing” and “emancipating” Afghan people.
3. The dominant narratives used to sell the 2001 war in Afghanistan – both domestically and globally – were further examples of this “benevolent” violence.
4. The US war in Afghanistan connects to previous conflicts involving the British and the Soviets.
5. The US was in a constant state of war between 2001 and 2021.
6. One approach to legitimizing the Global War on Terror was to perpetuate the narrative that Afghan women needed to be saved and the hypocrisy of such a narrative.
7. Different kinds of news articles have different purposes and therefore must be read and understood differently (e.g. news vs. opinion).

Knowledge
Students will know...
1. Afghanistan has long been recognized for its geopolitical and geostrategic importance.
2. US involvement in Afghanistan did not begin in 2001, and, in fact, stretches back four decades.
3. The history of three periods of foreign intervention in Afghanistan: (1) The Great Game, (2) The US Soviet Cold War, and (3) The War on Terror.
4. The UNO textbooks used education and religion to promote violence, thereby creating normative support for war among some Afghans.
5. Wearing a veil should not be associated with a lack of agency.
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6. The difference between soft and hard power and how they are used in foreign policy.

Skills
Students will be able to...
1. Interrogate the common justifications put forth by major public figures for the US invasion of Afghanistan.
2. Assess the impact of a century of foreign involvement in Afghanistan.
3. Describe and differentiate between soft and hard power and consider the role of both in the history of foreign involvement in Afghanistan.
4. Identify instances of generalized language, us/them language, and conflated language.
5. Differentiate between straight-news, feature articles, and opinion pieces, thus building their critical media analysis skills.
6. Analyze how such language was used to perpetuate narratives about Afghanistan and its people.
7. Create higher order-thinking questions in order to elicit class discussion.

Summary of Performance Tasks (Assessment)
1. Soft Power/Hard Power Analysis (Lesson 1): Students will read seven statements that can be described as examples of soft power or hard power. Then, as the teacher reads out each statement, students will form a victory sign with their fingers if they answered “soft power” and a fist if they answered “hard power.”
2. Artifact Analysis (Lesson 1): Students will receive “artifacts” in the form of maps, images, quotes, and excerpts that explore three different periods of foreign involvement in Afghanistan, starting with the Great Game, then the Cold War, and finally the Global War on Terror. For each of the three periods, students will analyze the artifacts, search for connections between them, and write down what they notice about how foreign countries exert soft power and hard power. They will then answer the three corresponding questions that follow the artifacts.
3. Photo Gallery of Afghan Women (Lesson 3): Students will view a series of photos of Afghan women and compare and contrast them, identifying similarities and differences. Then, students will caption the photos and describe the scene as if they were being displayed in a gallery.
4. Analysis of Laura Bush’s radio address (Lesson 3): Students will review the transcript and underline phrases that fit into any of the following categories: generalized language, us/them language, conflated language. Then, students will read the interview with Professor Lila Abu-Lughod: Do Afghan Women need saving? Either individually or in pairs, students will underline phrases that challenge the language and ideas presented by Laura Bush in her radio address.
5. Develop complex questions using the Question Matrix (Lesson 3): Following a group discussion based on the previous activity, students will create at least two higher-order thinking questions related to the topic of the discussion.
6. Analyze News Articles (Extension lessons): Students will be able to differentiate between straight news, feature articles, and opinion pieces by reading an article, identifying the type of article, and then answering questions about it to build their media literacy skills.
7. Debriefs and whole-class discussions: In each lesson, students will apply key concepts in groups or individually, then return to the whole class space to articulate their findings and takeaways.
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Common Core Standards

History/Social Studies 11th and 12th Grade

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3
Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5
Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6
Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7
Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8
Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

About the Contributors

(Lessons 1 and 3)
Madina Wahab is an Afghan-American from Queens, New York who has been actively involved in the education space as a teacher, teacher-trainer, and curriculum developer. She is currently a Curriculum Development Associate at Girl Up, United Nations Foundation, where she creates educational resources for youth advocates working to advance gender equality globally. She holds a B.A. in English Literature and a M.A. in TESOL from CUNY's Hunter College as well as a M.S.Ed. in International Educational Development from the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education.

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