

Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan

Commentary for April 17, 2009 — Comparisons and Relationships

The nature of the modern nations of Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan can be understood somewhat better by noting some comparisons between the countries of this important area. The areas comprising Syria and Iraq decrease in size going from Iran west. Afghanistan to the east is 1/2 the size of Iran.

The Euphrates River, currently within Iraq, along with the Tigris River formed the homeland for the riverine civilizations of ancient Ur, Assyria, and Babylon. In the future the Euphrates River will become very important to everyone in the world (Revelation 9:14–21, 16:12–14). Iran today comprises most of the original ancient land of Persia. The state of Afghanistan directly influences this important area of the world, and will do so even more in the future.¹



Conflict Relationships

While conflict in Iraq seems to be winding down, conflict in Afghanistan is increasing. Civil conflict in Iran is possible due to bad governance and mishandling of the economy by the Islamic fundamentalist rulers of Iran. The United States and allied countries have troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan, in other words on either side of Iran. The United States Navy dominates all sea approaches to Iran from the south potentially cutting off all sea-borne trade.

Afghanistan, the site of major conflict as I write this, is larger than Iraq by almost one third, and its territory is filled with mountainous terrain with some of the world's tallest mountains. Iraq is relatively flat by comparison. Afghanistan also has a larger population than Iraq. The population of Iran is greater than Iraq and Afghanistan combined, although interestingly Iran's population is mostly in the north.

1. See Dr. Martin's article "[Afghanistan \(Gog and Magog\)](#)" and in "[Iran in Focus](#)" and particularly Dr. Martin's "[Iran in Prophecy](#)." Both of Dr. Martin's articles have *Byte Show* accompanying programs. See also Dr. Martin's "[The Damascus Phase of End-Time Prophecy](#)." and "[Prophetic Geography and the Time of the End](#)."

Note the physical relationship of these three countries to Israel and Palestine of the Bible. Iran dominates the land mass area in the Near East. Going west from Iran, note that Iraq, Syria, and then Lebanon and Israel combined are noticeably and significantly smaller than Iran. The population ratios also reflect the same relationship: Iran the largest, then Iraq, Syria, then Israel and Lebanon with comparatively tiny populations.

Iran dominates the area in terms of population. Note the population differences between Iraq and Afghanistan. The population of Iran is double that of Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, the population of Iran is greater than Iraq and Afghanistan combined. Note the literacy rates of the various countries, how high it is in Syria, Iran and Iraq, and how low it is in Afghanistan, particularly for females. Read and take note of the interesting details and relationships:

Table 1: Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan Comparisons [important facts in blue]^a

	Syria	Iraq	Iran	Afghanistan
Area	185,180 sq km	437,072 sq km	1,648,000 sq km	647,500 sq km
Population	20 million	29 million	66+ million	33+ million
Languages	Arabic ; Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian; some French, English	Arabic , Kurdish, Turkoman (a Turkish dialect), Assyrian (Neo-Aramaic), Armenian	Persian and Persian dialects 58% , Turkic dialects 26%, Kurdish 9%	Afghan Persian or Dari 50% , Pashto 35%, Turkic languages (Uzbek & Turkmen) 11%
Religion	Sunni Muslim 74% , other Muslim 16%, Christian 10%	Sunni Muslim 32%-37% , Shia Muslim 60%-65%	Sunni Muslim 9% Shia Muslim 89%	Sunni Muslim 80% Shia Muslim 19%
Ethnic Groups	Arab 90.3% , other 9.7%	Arab 75%-80% , Kurdish 15%-20%	Persian 51% , Azeri 24%, Gilaki/Mazandarani 8%, Kurd 7%, Arab 3%	Pashtun 42% , Tajik 27%, Hazara 9%, Uzbek 9%
Literacy	total: 79.6% male: 86% female: 73.6%	total: 74.1% male: 84.1% female: 64.2%	total: 77% male: 83.5% female: 70.4%	total: 28.1% male: 43.1% female: 12.6%

a. Source: [CIA World Factbook](#), retrieved April 2009, updated regularly.

At present the eyes of the world are focused on Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan. Soon the focus will proceed even more west to Syria, Lebanon, the future Palestinian state, and increasingly upon Israel itself, Jerusalem in particular, and most specifically the true site of the Temple within Jerusalem. The importance of international geography will increase as we approach the time of Christ's return. Relationships and interplay between the relative size of countries, their populations, languages, religion, ethnic groups, and literacy rates within countries — each of these factors have their importance and will play a role in future biblical events. Borders will begin to change to the final status.

The ability to communicate with the world, settling of religious disputes, ethnic peace, and the ability to read the Bible in various languages all will take place before Christ's return. The stage is being set for major changes in these important countries. The players are approaching the stage. Soon the star players of the performance will come on the world stage. Pray that soon we will be able to identify individuals indicated in the Bible as soon as possible so we can understand where they fit in the plot.

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