

Name: _____

Date: _____

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a poor, mountainous, landlocked nation in Central Asia. Many armies have invaded Afghanistan, but no army has ever been able to survive the rugged land or dominate the fierce, proud Afghan people for a significant period.

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. More than 100,000 Soviet troops used sophisticated weapons and brutal repression to control the cities and transportation routes, but the Soviet army was no match for the mujahedeen, the Afghan warriors who used their knowledge of the land to inflict damage on the Soviet forces. The Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 and would soon cease to be a world power.

The war was a tremendous drain on Afghanistan, and about a third of the population fled. The Soviet legacy in Afghanistan would be thousands of land mines. The small explosives were designed to control the mujahedeen, but today the weapons continue to destroy many lives as the Afghan people search for firewood or tend to their animals.

The withdrawal of Soviet troops led to a civil war in Afghanistan. A civil war is a war within a nation. Several competing interests fought for control of Afghanistan after the Soviets withdrew their troops. A group of Islamic militants known as the Taliban became popular with many Afghan people. Taliban is an Arabic word that means "students." Many Afghan people initially supported the Taliban. The Afghan people hoped that returning to the traditional customs of their ancient land would erase the unhappiness of the civil war.



A woman wearing a burqua

Afghanistan is a traditional nation, where many women wear burquas. A burqua is a cloak that covers all but your hands and feet. A small crocheted area allows one to see, but covers their body in modesty. In the last fifty years, many women have stopped wearing burquas, and have gone against the traditional customs of Afghanistan by being educated or taking jobs outside the home.

Once the Taliban took power in most of Afghanistan, they began a violent rule. The Taliban outlawed television, radio, even kite-flying; under rule of the Taliban, Afghan women seen in public without their burqua faced severe beatings or death.

When the United States was attacked on September 11, 2001, the American government traced the incident to Osama bin Laden, who had taken refuge in Afghanistan. The Americans demanded that the Taliban turn over bin Laden and other suspected terrorists, but the Taliban refused. The United States led a multinational bomb attack in 2002 that forced the Taliban from power in Afghanistan.

The Afghan people held national elections in 2004 and chose Hamid Karzai as President of a democratic government. A democracy is a type of government where people citizens choose their leaders. Women were allowed to vote and run for office for the first time in the nation's history. Afghanistan continues to face many challenges. The nation is very poor and does not have a good road or railroad system to transport goods. The Taliban and Al Qaeda remain threats in the nation.

Answer in Complete Sentences

*1. Why do you think Afghanistan has never been controlled by outside forces for a significant amount of time?

*2. Who are the mujahedeen? How were the mujahedeen able to force the Soviets to withdraw from Afghanistan?

*A higher order learning question. Any reasonable answer will be accepted.

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Fill in the Blanks

The A_____ people have been i_____v_____d_____ many times, but no a_____ has ever managed to d_____ Afghanistan for a significant period. The S_____ U_____ supported their 1979 i_____ with more than 100,000 *s_____l_____i_____r_____, but they were no match for the m_____, who used their k_____ of the A_____ terrain to force the S_____ to w_____ from Afghanistan in 19_____.

A c_____ war followed the w_____ of Soviet forces from A_____. A civil war is a w_____ within a n_____. Many Afghan people supported the T_____, a group of f_____ Islamic militants. They hoped the T_____’s focus on *t_____ values would e_____ the u_____ of the civil war, but few Afghan people were prepared for the *f_____c_____t_____ of the Taliban. The Taliban outlawed t_____ and radio. Women seen in p_____ without a b_____ faced severe b_____ or d_____. When the United States was a_____ on September 11, 2001, the American government traced the a_____ to O_____ b_____ L_____, who had taken r_____ in A_____g_____a_____i_____t_____n. When the T_____ refused to turn over bin Laden and other s_____ terrorists, the Americans led a m_____ bomb a_____ that removed the T_____ from p_____. Afghanistan now has a d_____m_____c_____a_____ic government hed by Hamad K_____, but the new democracy faces many challenges due to *p_____v_____r_____, the inability to t_____a_____s_____o_____t many goods, and the presence of *t_____r_____o_____i_____t groups.

Answer in Complete Sentences

*3. What were the consequences of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan?

5. Who are the Taliban? Why did the Taliban find support among many Afghan people during the civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan?

*6. Why is Afghanistan now considered a democracy?

*A higher order learning question. Any reasonable answer will be accepted.