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Date _____

Afghan Migration After the Soviet Invasion

Read the text below.

On December 25, 1979, the 40th Army of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) arrived at Afghanistan's Kabul Airport. Soviet leaders said the government of Afghanistan invited them to assist in a crisis. Most world leaders recognized the massive troop movement as an invasion.

Afghanistan had recently undergone a communist revolution. The left-leaning government was supported by the Soviet Union, while the rebel mujahideen militias were supported by the United States. The Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan lasted from 1979 until 1988.

Internal conflict and the Soviet invasion started waves of migration. Most Afghans fled to the neighboring nations of Pakistan and Iran. The invasion also caused massive internal migration within the country's own borders.

Afghans left their homeland in four waves of migration.

First Wave

The first wave occurred during the 1979 Soviet invasion. Some refugees left Afghanistan for their own safety. Conflict between Afghan soldiers, Soviet soldiers, and the mujahideen created an unstable environment in which to work or raise a family.

Others left in response to a call for *hijra*. *Hijra* is an Arabic word meaning "flight" or "migration." A spiritual call for *hijra* required an Afghan to leave his or her country because it had been taken over by people who were not followers of Islam. (Nearly all Afghans are followers of Islam.) The new government of Afghanistan and its Soviet supporters separated church and state.

Many Afghans moved to different parts of the country to escape conscription. Conscription is being forced to enlist in the military. Thousands of people moved from rural areas to urban areas. (In cities, young men could more easily avoid conscription.) During the first wave of migration, the population of Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, increased from about 600,000 to more than 2 million.

At the peak of the first wave, about 6 million Afghans were forced to migrate. About 3.5 million went to Pakistan, 2 million fled to Iran, and the rest went to other countries.

Second Wave

The second wave of Afghan migration started when the Soviet military withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. This time, Afghans who supported the Soviet Union were forced to leave. Some government officials, including the deposed president, immigrated to Russia. Many others settled in India.

At the same time, refugees who had fled the Soviet invasion returned home. About 2 to 3 million people returned to Afghanistan after the Soviets left.



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Afghan Migration After the Soviet Invasion, continued

A civil war that erupted after the Soviet withdrawal created new refugees. At the end of the second wave, 5 million Afghans left the country and another 800,000 moved somewhere else within its borders.

Third Wave

The third wave started with the end of the civil war and the takeover of the Taliban in 1994. The Taliban is an extremely conservative Islamic group. Many members of the Taliban are former mujahideen rebels who fought against the Soviets.

The Taliban based their government on a restricted reading of sharia, or Islamic law. They outlawed many forms of food and music, persecuted non-Islamic religions, and restricted women's rights.

Women, the educated, religious minorities, and political moderates fled Taliban persecution. Many refugees fled to the United States, Canada, Australia, and other Western nations that offered stable democracies and a broad range of human rights.

Fourth Wave

The fourth wave started after the fall of the Taliban in 2002. The Northern Alliance, a group of Afghan rebels supported by the United States and other Western nations, forced the Taliban out of power. The U.S. and allied countries worked with the Northern Alliance to bomb Taliban-controlled areas in Afghanistan.

Many Afghans, including former Taliban leaders, tried to flee to Pakistan and Iran. However, those borders were officially closed to new Afghan refugees. Many recent Afghan refugees have fled across their northern border to Turkmenistan.

The end of Taliban rule brought many civic leaders back to Afghanistan. Refugees who fled political repression returned to high-ranking political and business positions in the new government. The president of Afghanistan as of 2012, Hamid Karzai, returned from Pakistan during this time.

Most migrants in this fourth wave are internal, however. For the first time since 1979, internal migration has flowed away from cities and into rural areas. This migration has occurred for several reasons: to escape bombings from U.S. and NATO forces, which focus on urban areas; to avoid conscription by Taliban forces; and to flee to camps for internal refugees.

About 6 million people have migrated out of Afghanistan since 1979, settling in South and Central Asia, Europe, and the U.S.

Afghans make up the largest refugee population in the world. One in four of Afghanistan's 26 million citizens is or has been a refugee at some point in their life.

Sources

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