

OFFICIAL NAME: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

CAPITAL: Kabul

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Parliamentary Islamic State

(AREA: 647,497 Sq Km (251,773 Sq Mi

ESTIMATED 2010 POPULATION: 28,926,000

Direct Link to Political MapDirect Link to Physical MapLOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Afghanistan is a landlocked country in South West Asia. It is bound by Pakistan to the east and south, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan to the northwest, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the north and China to the northeast. The country is divided from southeast to northwest by the Hindu Kush and Pamir Mountain Ranges and is divided into three geographical regions. (1.) The central highlands which account for 64% of the land area and are part of the Himalayan Ranges. The Hindu Kush ridge rises above 6,400 metres (21,000 feet). (2.) The fertile northern plains with elevations of up to 600 metres (2,000 feet). (3.) The southwestern plateau which accounts for 25% of the land area and is an arid region vegetated mostly by scrub with an average elevation of about 900 metres (3,000 feet). The principal rivers are the Kabul and Amu-Darya which rises in the Hindu Kush and flows northwestward. Major Cities (pop. est.); Kabul 2,800,000, Kandahar 324,000, Herat 255,000, Mazar-e Sharif 188,000 (2004). Land Use; forested 2%, pastures 46%, .(agricultural-cultivated 12%, other 39% (2000

CLIMATE: Afghanistan has a continental dry climate with large differences between day and night temperatures as well as quick seasonal transitions. Summer temperatures in the plains can reach 46 degrees Celsius (115 degrees Fahrenheit) while in the higher plateaux winter temperatures can fall to -26 degrees Celsius (-15 degrees Fahrenheit). The "Winds of 120 Days" which occur between June to September can have velocities of up to 180 kmph (108 mph) and the rainy season is from October to April, although rainfall is very irregular. Average temperature ranges in Kabul are from -8 to 2 degrees Celsius (18 to 36 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 16 to 33 degrees Celsius (61 to 91 degrees Fahrenheit) in July

PEOPLE: The principal ethnic majority are the Pushtuns also known as Pukhtuns and Pathan who account for around 49% of the population and are divided into two sub-tribes (1.) the Durranis and (2.) the Ghilzais. The principal ethnic minority are the Tajikis who account for almost 18% of the population. Other smaller ethnic minorities include the Hazara Mongols (Hazars) who account for 9%, Aimaks, Uzbekis, Turkmens, Nuristanis and Qisilbashes.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Population; 23,867,000 (2005) Density; 37 persons per sq km (96 persons per sq mi) (2004). Urban-Rural; 22.4% urban, 77.6% rural (2003). Sex Distribution; 51.2% male, 48.8% female (1004). Life Expectancy at Birth; 42.3 years male, 42.7 years female (2004). Age Breakdown; 45% under 15, 27% 15 to 29, 16% 30 to 44, 8% 45 to 59, 3.5% 60 to 74, 0.5% 75 and over (2004). Birth Rate; 47.3 per 1,000 (2004). Death Rate; 21.1 per 1,000 (2004). Increase Rate; 26.2 per 1,000 (2004). Infant Mortality Rate; 166.0 per 1,000 live .(births (2004

RELIGIONS: The official religion is Islam with approximately 89% of the population Sunni Muslims while 9% are Shiite Muslims and 1% belong to the other Islamic sects. Other religious minorities include small .amounts of Hindus, Sikhs and Parsis

LANGUAGES: The official languages are Dari (Afghan Persian) and Pashto. A little English, French and German is also spoken while English and French are taught in schools as secondary languages. In the north .Turkmen and Uzbeki are also widely spoken

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 88.5%, some primary 6.8%, complete primary 0.3%, some secondary 1.2%, higher 3.2% (1980). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over .(29% (2003

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: In 1953 Mohammed Daoud Khan became Prime Minister, following which he established close military, economic and political ties with the USSR. In 1964 provisions were made for the establishment of a constitutional monarchy after Prime Minister Daoud resigned. In 1973 while King Zahir Shah was receiving medical treatment in Italy a military coup led by Daoud overthrew the government, established a republic and abolished the monarchy. On Apr. 27, 1978 pro-Soviet leftists took power in a bloody coup known as the "Great Saur Revolution" which resulted in the death of President Daoud and an economic and military treaty with the USSR. In Dec. 1979, the USSR began a massive military airlift into Kabul and the three month old regime of Hafizullah Amin ended with a Soviet backed coup on Dec. 27, 1979. Pres. Amin was replaced by Babrak Karmal, a greater pro-Soviet faction leader. For the next 9 years the Soviet troops fanned out over Afghanistan fighting the Muslim "Holy Warriors" or Mujaheddin in a long, protracted guerrilla war. In Nov. 1987 Dr. Najibullah was elected President. On Apr. 14, 1988 a UN-mediated agreement was signed which provided for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the creation of a neutral Afghan state and the repatriation of millions of Afghan refugees. The US and USSR pledged to serve as guarantors of the agreement, however, Afghan rebels rejected the pact and vowed to continue fighting while the Soviets remained in Afghanistan. On Feb. 15, 1989 the Soviets completed their troop withdrawal as fighting between the Afghan rebels and government forces escalated for control of the government. In Mar. 1990 there was an unsuccessful coup attempt led by Afghan military forces and in Sept. 1991 the US and USSR declared that they would halt arms supplies from Jan. 1992 with the purpose of achieving a permanent cease-fire. In Apr. 1992 Afghan rebels with the assistance of General Abdul Rashid Dostam, leader of the government's secret police, seized control of Kabul ousting President Najibullah's regime. On June 28, 1992 caretaker President Sibgatullah Mojadedi surrendered power to Burhanuddin Rabbani who headed a 10-member Supreme Leadership Council of guerrilla leaders. In June 1992 fighting escalated between rival Shiite and Sunni Muslim factions around Kabul with some 100 people killed and 1,000 injured in four days of conflict. On Dec. 30, 1992 some 1,335 delegates from around the country formed

a National Council which met in Kabul and elected Rabbani to a two-year term as president. The majority of the rebels boycotted the council meeting and shelled the city from their hill strongholds while voting was in progress. In Jan. 1993 the national assembly of tribal and religious leaders reaffirmed Rabbani's presidency, approved the creation of new armed forces and a parliament, and set out a strict Islamic path for the country. In Mar. 1993 Gulbuddin Hekmatyar leader of the Hezb-i-Islami was designated Prime Minister with a 22-member cabinet divided amongst the 10 major rebel groups being formed on May 20 despite continuing fighting. On June 17, 1993 Hekmatyar was formally sworn in and on Sept. 27, 1993 after four days of negotiations an interim constitution had been approved with planned elections announced for .1994

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Afghani (Af) divided into 100 .Puls

ECONOMY: Gross Domestic Product; USD \$7,000,000,000,000 (2003). Public Debt; USD \$5,319,000,000 (2000). Imports; USD \$2,101,000,000 (2004). Exports; USD \$144,000,000 (2004). Tourism Receipts; USD \$1,000,000 (1998). Balance of Trade; USD\$ -1,957,000,000 (2004). Economically Active Population; 5,557,000 or 29.4% of total population .((1994). Unemployed; 30% (2004

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are the China, .Pakistan, India, Japan and Russia

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Barley, Coal, Copper, Cotton, Fruit, Goats, Iron, Maize, Natural Gas, Nuts, Rice, Sheep, Sugar, Vegetables, .Wheat

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Bicycles, Carpets, Cement, Food Processing, Footwear, Fur and Leather Products, Furniture, Plastics, .Textiles

MAIN EXPORTS: Carpets, Cotton, Fruit, Karakul Skins and Wool, .Natural Gas, Nuts

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 25 km (15.3 mi) (2001). Roads; length 20,720 km (12,875 mi) (2001). Vehicles; cars 176,700 (2004), trucks and buses 116,278 (2004). Merchant Marine; vessels nil. Air Transport; passenger-km 143,000,000 (88,856,000 passenger-mi) (2000), .(cargo ton-km 21,000,000 (13,048,000 short ton-mi) (2000

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total circulation of 129,000 (2000). Radio; receivers 2,950,000 (2000). Television; receivers 362,000 (2000). Telephones; units 36,700 (2003). Cell/Mobile; subscribers .(135,000 (2003). Internet; users 700 (2003

MILITARY: 13,000 (2004) total active duty personnel with 100% army, 0.0% navy and 0.0% air force while military expenditure accounts for 9% (2003) of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)