

Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords (Book Review)

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Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords

RASHID, A. (2001).

Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords, Pan MacMillan.



AMIT KUMAR**

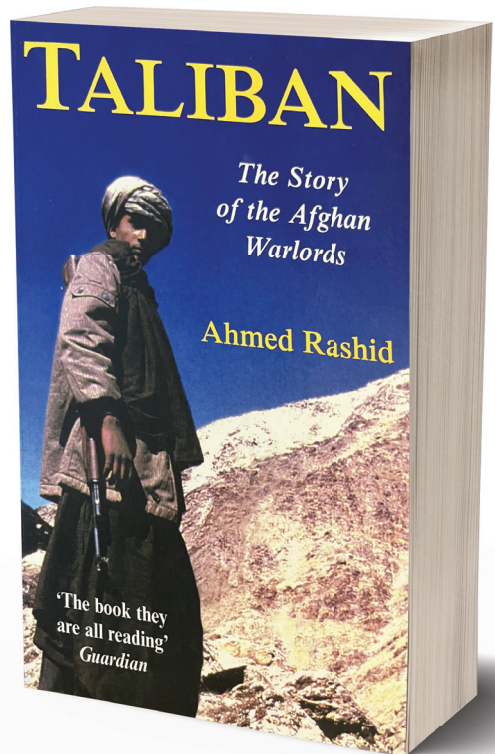
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TALIBAN: THE STORY OF THE AFGHAN Warlords is a comprehensive examination of the rise of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and the impact it has had on the country and the region. The book, written by Ahmed Rashid, offers a thorough explanation of the historical, political, and cultural causes that contributed to the development of the Taliban and the events that occurred after its ascent to power. The book acquired recog-

inition after the 9/11 attacks. The significance of this book may be appreciated from a Guardian article that claims Tony Blair's plans for Afghanistan after the Taliban were greatly inspired by it. Alastair Campbell, Downing Street Director of Communications and Strategy, and Anji Hunter, Personal Assistant to the Prime Minister, were also counselled to read before planning an expedition in Afghanistan.



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Although the book was first published in 2001, it offers valuable insights into the origins and ideologies of the Taliban. By examining the group's roots, the book helps readers grasp the factors that have sustained the Taliban's influence and resilience over the years, even beyond the initial publication date. It explores the complex relationships between Afghan warlords, regional powers, and international actors. This context is crucial for understanding the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and its implications.

Rashid's ability to link the emergence of the Taliban to the larger context of the region and the world is one of Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlord's strong points.

The importance of reviewing books like "Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords" lies in its ability to contribute to public discourse and awareness. Reviews evaluate the book's content, helping potential readers determine its value and relevance. Additionally, reviews facilitate conversations and debates around the issues the book addresses, allowing for a deeper understanding of the Taliban since its inception.

The Taliban were first identified in the book's introduction as a small group of re-

ligious students in the southern region of Kandahar. Rashid recounts how the Taliban were first viewed as a good force that would provide stability to a nation that had been destroyed by years of civil strife. Nevertheless, as the Taliban grew in strength, it became evident that their goals were far more sinister and that their tyrannical regime posed a threat not just to Afghanistan but also to the stability of the whole region. Rashid's vivid account of the events is seen by how meticulously he discusses each significant province that the Taliban captured, starting with the consolidation of Kandahar and moving on to the takeover of Herat in 1995, then Kabul in 1996, Mazar-e-Sharif in 1997, and finally Bamiyan in 1998-99.

Rashid's ability to link the emergence of the Taliban to the larger context of the region and the world is one of Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlord's strong points. He demonstrates how the continuous conflict in the Middle East had an impact on the Taliban's beliefs and strategies, and how the assistance it gained from nearby nations like Pakistan helped it gain power. The theology of Islam practised by the Taliban has been greatly influenced by Pakistan. Although the Taliban practice an extreme version of Islam, Pashtun tribal values are clearly present. The integration of Afghan refugees into Jamiat-e Ulema-i Islam-run madrassas in Pakistan gives this blending of Islamic principles and Pashtun tribal beliefs a distinctive twist.

As a result, neither the modern Deobandi Sheikhs nor the practical customs of everyday Afghan rural life support the Islam of the Taliban. This clarifies how the Taliban could carry out actions that now would be unimaginable, such as beating women in the streets and stoning them to death for adultery, among other things. Rashid does not hold back in bringing up the numerous crimes against humanity done by the Taliban government, such as the pervasive repression of women's rights, rape, kidnapping, and disappearance of children. He continues by explaining how, while heroin temporarily supports the Taliban's economy, it eventually kills its own citizens and causes drug addiction in the Afghan culture.

Rashid also offers a thorough account of the role that the international community, especially the United States and its allies, played in the formation of the Taliban and the subsequent events. Rashid describes the Taliban's military and political structure as being exceedingly mysterious and enigmatic. The decision-making process, in his opinion, is highly covert. He also talks about how the Taliban's little knowledge of foreign affairs and commerce made it impossible for them to reach agreements with significant oil companies like UNOCAL and Delta Oil. The likelihood of building oil and gas pipelines was further diminished by the lack of a united military organization for improved security infrastructure.

Rashid's examination of the connections between the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and other global extremist organizations is one of the book's most remarkable features. He demonstrates how the Taliban's strong associations with these organizations have made it a target for the interna-

tional community and how its ongoing support for these organizations has rendered it a danger to world security. He also makes it abundantly evident that the Taliban is not a singular organization and that its leaders and participants are a heterogeneous bunch with a range of reasons and viewpoints.

With the United States withdrawing its boots from Afghan Soil and Taliban capturing back Kabul in August 2021, this book is crucial for comparing the present events surrounding the Taliban and its strategy for coping with its legitimacy issue with that of its initial ascent and conquest of Kabul in September 1996. With Afghanistan completing one big circle, today it stands where it stood 20 years back. However, this time evidently they seem to be different than earlier in many aspects of Afghan management. This book brings life to the events surrounding Taliban. Afghanistan has now come full circle, standing where it did 20 years ago. Nonetheless, it appears that this time they have changed significantly from previously in many elements of administering a government. The events surrounding Taliban are brought to life in this novel.

Rashid writes with clarity, succinctness, and interest, and his analysis is perceptive and thought-provoking. The book offers a thorough description of the circumstances surrounding the Taliban's ascent to power, their brief administration of Afghan affairs, and the influence they have had on the region, making it an invaluable resource to gain a deeper understanding of this complex and challenging issue. This book is a must-read for anybody interested in this significant problem, whether they are students, professionals, or just general readers. 🌸