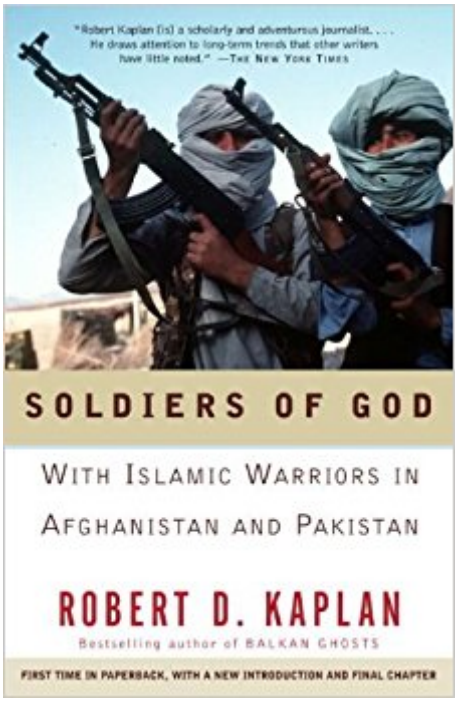
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Soldiers Of God: With Islamic Warriors In Afghanistan And Pakistan



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Synopsis

First time in paperback, with a new Introduction and final chapter World affairs expert and intrepid travel journalist Robert D. Kaplan braved the dangers of war-ravaged Afghanistan in the 1980s, living among the mujahidinÃ¢â ¬â •the Ã¢â ¬Å“soldiers of godÃ¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •whose unwavering devotion to Islam fueled their mission to oust the formidable Soviet invaders. In Soldiers of God we follow KaplanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s extraordinary journey and learn how the thwarted Soviet invasion gave rise to the ruthless Taliban and the defining international conflagration of the twenty-first century.Kaplan returns a decade later and brings to life a lawless frontier. What he reveals is astonishing: teeming refugee camps on the deeply contentious Pakistan-Afghanistan border; a war front that combines primitive fighters with the most technologically advanced weapons known to man; rigorous Islamic indoctrination academies; a land of minefields plagued by drought, fierce tribalism, insurmountable ethnic and religious divisions, an abysmal literacy rate, and legions of war orphans who seek stability in military brotherhood. Traveling alongside Islamic guerrilla fighters, sharing their food, observing their piety in the face of deprivation, and witnessing their determination, Kaplan offers a unique opportunity to increase our understanding of a people and a country that are at the center of world events.

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“Robert Kaplan [is] a scholarly and adventurous journalist. . . . He draws attention to long-term trends that other writers have little noted.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The New York Times

Ã¢â ¬Å“Soldiers of God is a thoughtful, insightful, highly readable book. Battlefield smart, rock solid.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Dan RatherÃ¢â ¬Å“Affecting and informative. . . . [Kaplan] answer[s] a number of important political questions.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The New YorkerÃ¢â ¬Å“[A] first-rate account. . . . [KaplanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s] combination of firsthand war experience inside Afghanistan and extensive reporting . . . makes him sensitive to distinctions that often escaped even devoted promoters of the muj[ahidin].Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Wall Street Journal

The bestselling author of Balkan Ghosts’ blistering portrait of war-ravaged Afghanistan and its devoted Islamic guerilla fighters—from the mujahidin who defeated the Soviet invaders in the 1980s to today’s Taliban militants. First time in paperback. VINTAGE DEPARTURES.

The text was a pleasure to read, introducing a perspective to an account that I am very unfamiliar with, and have since been inspired to pursue further.Mr. Kaplan writes in an easily-readable format very appropriate for a journalist and correspondent. Many of the lines and information provided are delivered in a punchy manner that appropriately shocks and incenses when desired. I was able to casually read the book but not necessarily put it down, enjoying digesting the text. Not a criticism but more a personal frustration, I found myself infinitely eager to discover more texts such as this one, possibly viewing the same persons that Kaplan interviewed and traveled with at greater depth and in different perspectives.I purchased this book based on the Marine Commandants reading list in addition to a slew of others off , and thus far every book has been thought-provoking and captivating.

Robert Kaplan is a unique travel writer and journalist, voyaging to rough and godforsaken places most people know vaguely or not at all to get the stories many journalists miss. His writing is not "mere" journalism but contains history, politics and ethnography, in a neat synthesis. Mr.Kaplan’s deep reading, sharp eye, and willingness to travel to remote (and sometimes hellish) locales makes for engaging and enjoying travelogues, such as this one, "Soldiers of God," his firsthand account of the Afghani resistance during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.During the 1980s Mr.Kaplan spent much time in Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan with the mujahedeen, the Afghani Islamic guerrilla rebels who gave the Soviets such a hell of a fight. This book includes the background for the war, modern Afghani history, Afghani history during British imperial times, and even some legends. Also included is extended analysis of the main ethnic group in the resistance, the "Pathans" or "Pashtoons." They are a fierce and fearsome bunch, relentless, tribalist, entirely

male-centric, whose members went on to form the Taliban. Mr.Kaplan spends much time with them and gets to know them fairly well.The history and ethnography was new to me and interesting but my favorite parts of the book were the author's visits inside occupied Afghanistan with the mujahedeen. The sense of danger is palpable, from the ever present fear of land mines, Soviet gunships and tanks, to extreme hunger, heat and cold, and sickness. Mr.Kaplan is both brave and reckless, but determined to get this story out to the world (in his opinion this conflict was mostly ignored by the global media). Besides the accounts of these excursions what most grabbed my attention were his interviews with and descriptions of the guerrilla leaders and fighters. Kaplan is a skilled interviewer and human observer, and as a reader I really got a sense of who these fighting men were (the author encounters almost no woman in the resistance). The young and fiercely independent Abdul Haq, 29, so full of fury and determination, is a figure who will stay with me for a while to come.This a great book, multifaceted: travel narrative, journalism piece, political analysis, history, ethnography. Read this book to learn about a harrowing and brutal conflict, to know about a people and a place that is of no small importance to the world. Without this war it is unlikely that a group like the Taliban would have come to exist. A powerful and engaging read, highly recommended.

In terms of lives lost and people seeking refuge, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and resulting conflict with the mujahadeen is one of the biggest wars of recent times, but also one of the least understood. Robert Kaplan was a journalist covering the conflict, based mainly in Peshawar, but often sneaking across the border into Afghanistan under the guidance of mujahadeen fighters. Kaplan knew personally many of the mujahadeen commanders and he is candid in his portrayal of his interviews in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.More importantly, 'Soldiers of God' is a great insight into the tribal culture and mentality of the rugged mountain people. When you learn of their endurance and persistence in the face of massive obstacles, it seems little wonder that the behemoth US war machine is having so much trouble subduing the Taliban. The resourcefulness and mental fortitude of the Afghan people is amazing.If only all journalists could report with such competence and objectivity.

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