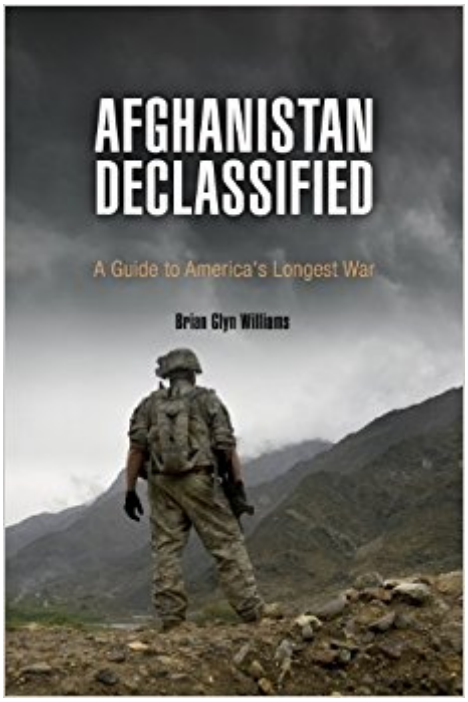
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Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide To America's Longest War



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Synopsis

Nearly 100,000 U.S. soldiers were deployed to Afghanistan at the height of the campaign, fighting the longest war in the nation’s history. But what do Americans know about the land where this conflict is taking place? Many have come to have a grasp of the people, history, and geography of Iraq, but Afghanistan remains a mystery.Originally published by the U.S. Army to provide an overview of the country’s terrain, ethnic groups, and history for American troops and now updated and expanded for the general public, Afghanistan Declassified fills in these gaps. Historian Brian Glyn Williams, who has traveled to Afghanistan frequently over the past decade, provides essential background to the war, tracing the rise, fall, and reemergence of the Taliban. Special sections deal with topics such as the CIA’s Predator drone campaign in the Pakistani tribal zones, the spread of suicide bombing from Iraq to the Afghan theater of operations, and comparisons between the Soviet and U.S. experiences in Afghanistan.To Williams, a historian of Central Asia, Afghanistan is not merely a theater in the war on terror. It is a primeval, exciting, and beautiful land; not only a place of danger and turmoil but also one of hospitable villagers and stunning landscapes, of great cultural diversity and richness. Williams brings the country to life through his own travel experiencesÃ¢â ¬â •from living with Northern Alliance Uzbek warlords to working on a major NATO base. National heroes are introduced, Afghanistan’s varied ethnic groups are explored, key battlesÃ¢â ¬â •both ancient and currentÃ¢â ¬â •are retold, and this land that many see as only a frightening setting for prolonged war emerges in three dimensions.

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Customer Reviews

"Afghanistan Declassified is a superb guide to understanding America’s longest war. A detailed study of that battle-scarred country’s history and tribes, it helps us understand how, like the Soviets, the U.S. has become ensnared in this dysfunctional society."Ã¢â ¬â •Richard A. Clarke, former U.S. chief counter-terrorism advisor and author of Against All Enemies"A useful, well-written, and well-researched primer on Afghanistan."Ã¢â ¬â •Peter Bergen, author of The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict Between America and Al Qaeda"[Afghanistan Declassified’s] style, depth, and anecdotes make it a substantially better read than many other surveys of the country. . . . For what it sets out to do, it succeeds very well."Ã¢â ¬â •Ronald Neumann, former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan"Williams’s work adds personal experience and his deep knowledge of the culture and history of the country as he travels it, describing historical sites, a colorful, friendly people, and their sometimes friendly leaders."Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers Weekly

Brian Glyn Williams is Professor of Islamic History at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth.

If you read only one book on Afghanistan this year, this book is the one to read. Insightful and unbiased, the author has no political agenda except to help the reader understand the Afghan people and the reasons for America’s continued involvement in what has become Afghanistan’s ongoing civil war. It answers the question "Why?" behind such events as our alliance with Pakistan and our continued support for Karzai’s corrupt government. It also makes the significant point that the dynamics of the northern section of the country (consisting of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and other minorities) are very different from the southern Pashtun provinces, and it would be a mistake to assume there is a "one size fits all" solution to ending the war. Although the reader is presented with some unpleasant facts, the author is optimistic that a peaceful solution is possible.

An excellent guide and first hand account of how we became intertwined with Afghanistan. Williams presents a brief, but concise history before presenting his own experiences and interviews with those who helped shape a nation almost perpetually invaded by its neighbors.

Extremely detailed and a good history overview of Afghanistan. Unsure of how most of the book is without sources however..

Fantastic book written from years of experience and travel ; what more could you want. I had the pleasure to take a few of professor Brian Williams classes and cannot a comparative teacher at his

level of knowledge with teaching ability.

I approached this book with a bit hesitation expecting a dense jumble of facts, figures, political quagmire & a long drawn out yawn. Except for the latter it is indeed what I expected but so well written that the stories are engaging, the facts memorable & revealing, the figures fascinating & the quagmire just that. I am a likely target for this book as the good Dr explains in his intro. I have had the only basic knowledge & news-fed ideas of Afghanistan & the war, but after reading Dr William's book I have a much greater appreciation for the immense complexities of the Muslim tribal influences, the geographical constraints & the enormous task of creating a balanced, stable & modern civilization in a region that has historically been a giant clusterF.I'd encourage anyone with even the idlest of passing interest in Afghanistan & its stormy present & past to pick this book up without hesitation.

This is the most cutting edge book available on the war in Afghanistan, bar none. It provides the first overviews, anywhere, of the course of the US/NATO operations from 2001's Operation Enduring Freedom to the Obama troop surge and the summer of 2011. The author's perspective is truly unique. While there are all sorts of pundits on Afghanistan who don't have "boots on the ground" experience, Williams has the credentials. He has lived with members of the Northern Alliance warlord opposition to the Taliban, worked for US troops in Afghanistan and the CIA, traveled in the Pashtun tribal lands that spawned the Taliban, and even been in the Pashtun lands in neighboring Pakistan. He has taken risks to write this book. The book is also packed with history, politics, warfare and his own first hand experiences. One of the previous reviewers suggested reading Ahmed Rashid's Taliban. Good idea if you want a book written in 1998 when Clinton was president! As for Ghost Wars it only goes up to 9/11! This book continues the story found in those books and brings the reader all the way up to the death of Bin Laden in 2011. It is destined to be a classic and is incredibly well written. If you buy just one book on the Afghan conflict this book is the one to read. It is full of accounts of the war that simply aren't available anywhere else. If more people read Afghanistan Declassified there would be less uninformed talk on the war, it is a must read.

The title is misleading. The first 124 of 239 pages (first three chapters) deal with the ethnic makeup of the country, the geography, and how Afghanistan developed into a country. Nothing classified there. The book only provides three maps. It was confusing reading so much about the geography, the different provinces, and the ethnic makeup only having three black and white maps to refer to.

The following chapter gives a very brief history of major events in Afghanistan including the Soviet invasion, the Afghan civil war and the rise of the Taliban. This is where the book begins to mention the US and information that was at one time classified but released 20 years ago. This chapter covers nearly 30 years of Afghan history along with US, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan involvement in less than 50 pages. If you are looking to read this period of Afghan history in detail refer toÃ Â Ghost Wars:Ã Â by Steve Coll. If you are looking to read into detail about the Taliban check outÃ Â TalibanÃ Â by Ahmed Rashid. The final chapter covers the U.S. War in Afghanistan. If you are looking to read more in detail on this check outÃ Â The Longest WarÃ Â by Peter L. Bergen because this book leaves a lot of details out. Point being, this book lacked many important historical details that happened thoughout the 1970s into 2011 that led to why the U.S. is currently bogged down in Afghanistan.I began questioning the legitimacy of the author's book when I read on page 102 Mullah Omar wearing the cloak of the Prophet Muhammad being "donned for the first time in recorded history." This is untrue. It has been recorded in history as being worn before, for example, by Kind Dost Muhammad Khan in 1834. That fact can be found inÃ Â In the Graveyard of EmpiresÃ Â by Seth G. Jones. Even Rashid mentions in his book that the cloak was out of its tomb 60 years prior to Mullah Omar wearing it. There is a part in the book were he mentions US troops not being involved enough throughout the local Afghan villages in the countryside. Please refer toÃ Â The Wrong WarÃ Â by Bing West to dispute this statement. There is also no notes section or bibliography in this book. The book constantly repeats information thoughout it as if it was copied and pasted. There are also spelling and punctuation errors that found throughout it.

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