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Ahmed Rashid: Taliban Study Guide

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AHMED RASHID: TALIBAN STUDY GUIDE, 2002-2008 Steven Alan Samson

PREFACE

Study Questions

1. What is the background of the author's personal involvement with Afghanistan?

INTRODUCTION: AFGHANISTAN'S HOLY WARRIORS

Study Questions

1. Note the origins and characteristics of the Taliban movement. How has Pashtun tribal law reshaped Islamic law? How did the politics of oil and gas shape the circumstances surrounding the rise of the Taliban? (1-7)
2. Summarize the historical context of the civilizational crosscurrents that have shaped the history of Afghanistan and Central Asia generally. What people groups have been intermingled over the centuries? Identify some of the competing empires, religions, and civilizations. Describe the role played by **Alexander the Great**, the **Silk Road**, the Arab invasion, **Genghis Khan** and his Mongol successors, **Tamerlane** (Taimur), the Lodhi Empire, **Babur** and the **Mogul Empire**, and the establishment of Afghanistan under **Mir Wais** and **Ahmad Shah Abdali** (Durrani). What is the **Loya Jirga**? (7-11)
3. What was the **Great Game**? What is the **Durand Line**? How was the Durrani monarchy overthrown? [The last Durrani king, who reigned from 1933 to 1973, was still a force in Afghan politics as of this writing, January 1, 2007]. What happened to his treacherous cousin, Daud, in 1978? What happened to his two successors, **Nur Mohammed Taraki** and **Hafizullah Amin**? (11-13)

Review

| | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>madrassas</i> | attributes of the Taliban | Sharia |
| <i>Pashtunwali</i> | Najibullah execution | Unocal vs. Bidas |
| Carlos Bulgheroni | backers of Northern Alliance | centrality of Afghanistan |
| geography of Afghanistan | ethnic groups | Central Asian steppe |
| Kochi nomadism | Silk Road (Silk Route) | Alexander the Great |
| Tamerlane (Taimur) | Babur | Mogul dynasty |
| Mir Wais | Loya Jirga | Ahmed Shah Abdali (Durrani) |
| the Great Game | Durand Line | Abdul Rehman (Iron Amir) |
| King Zahir Shah | Mohammed Daud | Babrak Karmal |
| Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto | Nur Mohammed Taraki | Hafizullah Amin |
| Mujaheddin | | |

PART 1: HISTORY OF THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT

CHAPTER ONE: KANDAHAR 1994: THE ORIGINS OF THE TALIBAN

Study Questions

1. If iron sharpens iron, what were the conditions that helped temper the Taliban leaders? What was leadership in the resistance around Kandahar based upon? Why were the Pashtuns weakened during the resistance to the Soviet invaders? As a result, Tajiks led by **Ahmad Shah Masud** and Uzbeks led by Gen. **Rashid Dostum** gained the upper hand and established a new government under **Burhanuddin Rabbani**. The Pashtuns Mullah Omar and **Gulbuddin Hikmetyar** were both associated with **Hizb-e-Islami**. (17-20)
2. What role did the Cloak of the Prophet play in the rise of the Taliban? How was the Soviet-backed **Najibullah** regime overthrown in 1992? What is the difference between a **talib** and a **mullah**? What is the background of **Mohammed Omar** and his character? What are his tin trunks for? (20-26)
3. Why did the Pakistani military back Hikmetyar? What role did **Benazir Bhutto** play? What did the Pakistani **transport** and smuggling **mafia** want? How did the Taliban get the commission? What measures were immediately instituted by the Taliban? (26-30)

Review

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Interservices Intelligence (ISI) | <i>ulema</i> | Islamists |
| Harakat vs. Hizb-e-Islami | Gulbuddin Hikmetyar | Taliban (<i>talib</i>) |
| mullah | Mohammed Omar | Fazlur Rehman |
| Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam | Benazir Bhutto | route to Central Asia |
| transport mafia | | |

CHAPTER TWO: HERAT 1995: GOD'S INVISIBLE SOLDIERS

Study Questions

1. Ahmed Rashid's description of the Taliban closely resembles Edward Banfield's lower-class individual: limited education, limited time horizon, male bonding, *etc.* What historical predecessors did the Taliban resemble? What turned the **Hazaras** against the Taliban when the Tajik commander, Ahmad Shah Masud (defense minister under Pres. Rabbani), attacked their stronghold in Kabul? Who is **Ismael Khan**? This Tajik warlord, former governor of Herat province, currently serves as Minister of Energy and Water in the Karzai government. (31-37)
2. Summarize the **history of Herat**. What religions, dynasties, and empires played a role in its history? Who was **Gowhar Shad** and what were some of her accomplishments? What were some of Ismael Khan's accomplishments? Why did he have to abandon Herat? (37-40)

Review

| | |
|---|------------------|
| social background and attributes of the Taliban | history of Herat |
| Gowhar Shad | Ismael Khan |
| | Hazaras |

CHAPTER THREE: KABUL 1996: COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL

Study Questions

1. What was the significance, both historical and contemporary, of the title Commander of the Faithful? Why were warlords summoned to Kabul early in 1996? When the ISI summoned warlords to a February meeting in Pakistan, what did the Taliban do? Why did various outside powers back Rabbani? Which two outside powers supported the Taliban? What did the United States try to accomplish? (41-46)
2. Which warlords eventually made peace with the Rabbani government? What was the Taliban response? Why did Masud retreat from Kabul? Why did **Najibullah** refuse to leave? What was his murder execution to accomplish? Identify some characteristics and policies of the new Taliban government. Describe the background, accomplishments, and weaknesses of **Masud**. Who joined the **anti-Taliban alliance**?

Review

Cloak of the Prophet
Taliban prohibitions

baiat
Ahmad Shah Masud

purpose of Najibullah execution
anti-Taliban alliance

CHAPTER FOUR: MAZAR-E-SHARIF 1997: MASSACRE IN THE NORTH

Study Questions

1. Describe the background and character of Gen. Rashid Dostum. Summarize the history and culture of Mazar-e-Sharif. What does Dostum's feud with Malik Pahlawan reveal about the character of both men? (55-66)

Review

Rashid Dostum
buzkushi

Mazar-e-Sharif
Malik Pahlawan

Balkh

CHAPTER FIVE: BAMİYAN 1998-99: THE NEVER-ENDING WAR

Study Questions

1. Summarize the history and culture of Bamīyan. How did the Hazaras come to play a key role in the anti-Taliban alliance? How did the EU and UN respond to difficulties with the Taliban? What did the Taliban do when they captured Mazar? What choices were given to the city's Shia? What happened at the Iranian consulate? What was the Iranian response to the fall of Bamīyan? How was the regional balance of power upset? What action was taken by the UN Security Council? (67-79)

Review

Hazarajat
genocide against Hazaras

Abdul Rehman
Tacitus quote

Taliban treatment of women
regional polarization, p. 77

PART 2: ISLAM AND THE TALIBAN

CHAPTER SIX: CHALLENGING ISLAM: THE NEW-STYLE FUNDAMENTALISM OF THE TALIBAN

Study Questions

1. What is the dominant religious sect in Afghanistan? Where is Shia Islam prevalent? Who and where are the Ismaelis? How was traditional merged with modern law? What is Sufism? Wahabbism? What was the educational background of the Islamic leaders? How did the radical Islamicist groups such as Ikhwan resemble the Afghan Marxists? What are its weaknesses? What does Olivier Roy mean by the failure of political Islam? (82-87)
2. How did the Taliban differ from these earlier radical Islamicist movements? The collapse of what three trends created the ideological vacuum the Taliban filled? What is **Deobandism** and what role was played by the JUI? What happened to it? (87-94)

Review

Qazis
old Ikhwan movements
ideological power vacuum
Deobandism

Tariqah
Hasan al-Banna
Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood)

Sufism
radical Islam political failure
model of radical Islam

CHAPTER SEVEN: SECRET SOCIETY: THE TALIBAN'S POLITICAL AND MILITARY ORGANIZATION

Review

Shura model: *jirga*
marginalization of professionals
lashkar
Taliban's work ethic
integration of Taliban political and military command

Zia ul-Haq
vacuum of leadership
patronage
Taliban attitude toward traditional leadership

Ismael Khan
Supreme Shura
Qazis

CHAPTER EIGHT: A VANISHED GENDER: WOMEN, CHILDREN AND THE TALIBAN

Study Questions

1. What regulations were issued in 1997 by the Department for the promotion of virtue and the Prevention of Vice? What was the Taliban justification for excluding women from school and work? What was the infant mortality rate? What were the UNICEF figures for school attendance? What psychological problems were evident? (105-09)
2. Whence came the Taliban leadership? How did they relate to women? Why were the Herati women the first to rebel against Taliban excesses? What were some of the other “blue laws”? (109-16)

Review

UNICEF survey of Kabul's children
Taliban as products of a war culture

infant mortality rate
medieval Herat

CHAPTER NINE: HIGH ON HEROIN: DRUGS AND THE TALIBAN ECONOMY

Review

tor

zakat

Taliban finances

CHAPTER TEN: GLOBAL JIHAD: THE ARAB-AFGHANS AND OSAMA BIN LADEN

Study Questions

1. How did Pakistan's Gen. Gul justify the radical Muslim training camps? What three measures did William Casey support in stepping up the war against the Soviet Union? How did Zbigniew Brzezinski regard the “blowback” (unintended consequences) of American intelligence operations? How did many Muslims regard the Soviet defeat? (128-31)
2. What role did Osama bin Laden play in the Afghan resistance against the Soviets? What were his subsequent activities? Why was there uncertainty in how many operations could be attributed to Bin Laden? What was Washington not prepared to admit? What psychological profile of Bin Laden has been drawn? Why were the Pakistanis and Saudis unresponsive to American appeals to do something? How was Bin Laden regarded in Afghanistan? How did he make himself useful to the Taliban? How did he become a liability? (131-40)

Review

William Casey's secret measures
characteristics of Osama bin Laden

Muslim view of Soviet fall

PART 3: THE NEW GREAT GAME

Saudi predicament

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN

Review

comparison of Pakistani and Iranian policies on Afghanistan
prerequisites for Central Asian pipelines