

The Forty-Year War in Afghanistan: A Chronicle Foretold

Tariq Ali

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In his latest political science book, Tariq Ali explains and condemns foreign interference in the Middle East, from the Russian occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, to its American occupation, which began in 2001.

Ali reveals that Afghanistan has often been subjected to aggression from foreign powers. This has led to serious hardships and the loss of life in its land, as well as to political backlash there and abroad. Ali traces US interests in Afghanistan to the Soviet intervention in the late 1970s and says that Russian, American, and NATO meddling combined to lead to the empowerment of the Taliban, the destabilization of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and decades of suffering for innocent civilians throughout the region.

Essay by essay, Ali deconstructs common justifications for what he calls the unjustifiable, self-serving actions of imperialist nations. These arguments have not changed much over time, he says; neither have the mistakes made by each successive generation that plunged into yet additional, unwinnable Afghan wars.

The book includes essays from as far back as 1980, starting with a prescient warning about Russia's then-recent actions, to as recently as 2021, including an assessment of what the future may hold for the region. These are real-time examinations of the events as they unfolded in Afghanistan over the past four decades. Ali has argued against each occupation from its beginning; the result is an embittered, haunting refrain.

Though recent events may make the book seem timely, the text itself asserts that war in Afghanistan is an evergreen topic. Its analyses of how the current situation in Afghanistan began, and why it unfolded the way it did, are passionate and in-depth.

The Forty-Year War in Afghanistan is a scholarly collection concerned with the causes and effects of US and Russian imperialism in Afghanistan.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (November / December 2021)

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