

Ghosts of Afghanistan: The Haunted Battleground

Jonathan Steele



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A masterful blend of graphic reporting, illuminating interviews, and insightful analysis. *Ghosts of Afghanistan* is the first account of Afghanistan's turbulent recent history by an independent eyewitness.

Jonathan Steele, an award-winning journalist and commentator, has covered the country since his first visit there as a reporter in 1981. He tracked the Soviet occupation and the communist regime of Najibullah, which held the Western-backed resistance at bay for three years after the Soviets left. He covered the arrival of the Taliban to power in Kabul in 1996, and their retreat from Kandahar under the weight of U.S. bombing in 2001. Most recently Steele has reported from the epicenter of the Taliban resurgence in Helmand.

Ghosts of Afghanistan turns a spotlight on the numerous myths about Afghanistan that have bedeviled foreign policy-makers and driven them to repeat earlier mistakes. Steele has conducted numerous interviews with ordinary Afghans, two of the country's Communist presidents, senior Soviet occupation officials, as well as Taliban leaders, Western diplomats, NATO advisers, and United Nations negotiators.

Comparing the challenges facing the Obama Administration as it seeks to find an exit strategy with those the Kremlin faced in the 1980s, Steele cautions that military victory will elude the West just as it eluded the Kremlin. Showing how and why Soviet efforts to negotiate an end to the war came to nothing, he explains how negotiations today could put a stop to the tragedies of civil war and foreign intervention that have afflicted Afghanistan for three decades.

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