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**Afghanistan - IV**

**Lead: After a period of relative quiet in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Afghanistan re-emerged as an international flashpoint in the twilight of the Soviet Union and as fertile ground for a re-invigorated Islamic fundamentalism.**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts**

**Content: Afghanistan marks 1919 as its year of independence. Exhausted by World War II, the British stopped interfering in Afghan affairs and until the 1970s the region was disengaged from international**

**affairs, forty of those years under a single ruler, Mohammad Zahir Shah. In 1973 he was deposed by a cousin and former prime minister, Mohammad Daoud, who in turn was overthrown in a Communist coup in 1978.**

**Communism, the ultimate secular system, was offensive to many traditional Islamic Afghans and, in a fashion consistent with centuries of resistance to outside forces, they tossed up an indigenous insurgency. The Soviets became nervous very about threats to its southern Republics because of their large Muslim populations and fears of Western interference, and in a reprise vaguely similar to the “great game” of**

**the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and ignoring the tragic failure of British attempts to control Afghanistan, invaded in 1979. Their equally futile attempts to tamp down the so-called “mujahedeen” war, into which the West not very secretly poured millions of dollars of support and equipment placing it in the hands of fighters such as Osama Be Laden, ended in disaster after a decade and like so many invaders before them, the Soviets were forced to withdraw.**

**Afghanistan was devastated by the Soviet invasion and a chaotic civil war continued to roil the country for most of the 1990s. These events were complicated by the usual internecine tribal conflict, and even more so by**

**the emergence of the Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic movement that rose in reaction to the constant conflict, corruption and threats to religious purity. The Taliban and their allies were, in turn, driven into the southern and western mountains in 2001 after the Al-Qaeda attacks on the U.S. mainland which probably originated in the region.**

**Afghanistan represents perhaps the most complicated arena in which Islam confronts the dynamics of the modern world. If it is to emerge as a valued player internationally, exploit its newly discovered natural resources, and bring prosperity to its people, it will require significant change, something that for**

**generations has not been easy for this rich, rugged, and troubled nation.**

**Research by Nancy Waldo, at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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