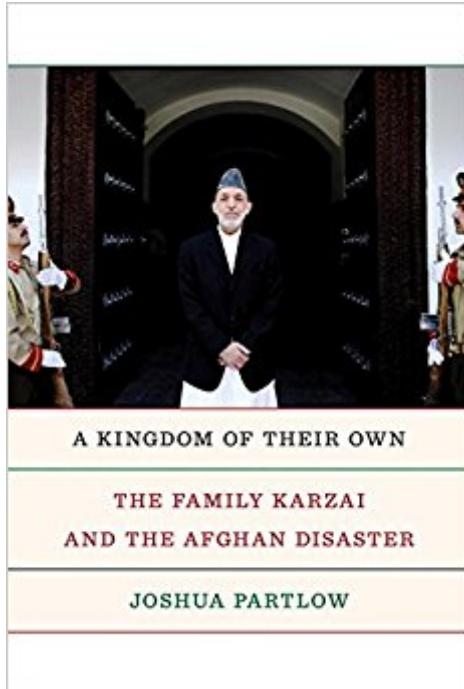


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A Kingdom Of Their Own: The Family Karzai And The Afghan Disaster



Synopsis

The key to understanding the calamitous Afghan war is the complex, ultimately failed relationship between the powerful, duplicitous Karzai family and the United States, brilliantly portrayed here by the former Kabul bureau chief for The Washington Post. The United States went to Afghanistan on a simple mission: avenge the September 11 attacks and drive the Taliban from power. This took less than two months. Over the course of the next decade, the ensuing fight for power and money "supplied to one of the poorest nations on earth, in ever-greater amounts" left the region even more dangerous than before the first troops arrived. At the center of this story is the Karzai family. President Hamid Karzai and his brothers began the war as symbols of a new Afghanistan: moderate, educated, fluent in the cultures of East and West, and the antithesis of the brutish and backward Taliban regime. The siblings, from a prominent political family close to Afghanistan's former king, had been thrust into exile by the Soviet war. While Hamid Karzai lived in Pakistan and worked with the resistance, others moved to the United States, finding work as waiters and managers before opening their own restaurants. After September 11, the brothers returned home to help rebuild Afghanistan and reshape their homeland with ambitious plans. Today, with the country in shambles, they are in open conflict with one another and their Western allies. Joshua Partlow's clear-eyed analysis reveals the mistakes, squandered hopes, and wasted chances behind the scenes of a would-be political dynasty. Nothing illustrates the arc of the war and America's relationship with Afghanistan "from optimism to despair, friendship to enmity" as neatly as the story of the Karzai family itself, told here in its entirety for the first time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Joshua Partlow has done an incredible job detailing the relationship between Afghan president Hamid Karzai and his relationship with the United States during the heat of the Afghan war early this century. Karzai was not the first choice for the United States as new leader of the country, but Taliban forces had killed two other choices with far more warlording experience: Abdul Haq and Ahmad Shah Masoud. As Partlow then shows, Karzai had been chosen and trained by the CIA because of his pro-western sentiments, his understanding of western government, and the fact that he was willing to work and help the United States win the war against the Taliban. But placing Karzai as president, in an election that he won by default when his opponent dropped out, the Bush administration had no idea that Karzai was not just one man, but an entire family that ended up with shady dealings across the fledgling country. His brothers Mahmoud and Quyum, both who had spent time in the Baltimore area, used their brother as a stepping stone to return to Afghanistan to help rebuild the country and get rich. Mahmoud had planned to build a community in Kandahar, and that returning Afghan refugees would be living and working there. Money was exchanged and it was only afterwards that the US discovered that Mahmoud's finances were not in order. And this was just the start. Partlow uncovers other stories of forgeries, embezzlements, and corruption in all facets of Afghan life that directly affected our war effort there. A man we propped up at first in late 2000 became our biggest headache ten years later.

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