I am Akbar Agha: Memories of the Afghan Jihad and the Taliban

Author: Sayyed Mohammad Akbar Agha
Foreword author: Anand Gopal
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Following in the tradition of Mullah Zaeef’s My Life With the Taliban, Akbar Agha’s memoir tells a story of war, friendship and political intrigue. Starting in 1980s Kandahar, the difficulties and successes of the mujahedeen come through clearly as Akbar Agha struggles to administer a group of fighters. He details the different groups fighting in Kandahar, their cooperation and the scale of the Soviet Union’s efforts to crush them. Not directly a participant in the Taliban government that ruled post-1994, Akbar Agha offers a sometimes-critical account of the administration built by many of his former fighters. After the fall of the Islamic Emirate in 2001, Akbar Agha was involved in the Jaish ul-Muslimeen opposition group and for the first time he has revealed his account of what happened in the kidnapping of UN aid workers. I Am Akbar Agha ends with an analysis of the problems afflicting Afghanistan and outlines a vision for the political future of the country post-elections and post-2015. Anand Gopal has written an introduction to the book.

“Mandatory reading” -- Graeme Smith, Senior Analyst for Afghanistan
Assassinations are a near-daily occurrence in Afghanistan. Whether by rogue Afghan security forces or by lone individuals roaming the cities and districts, the threat of a target killing is very real. Kandahar Assassins offers an unparalleled view of this phenomenon from the perspective of the assassins. Published in 1986 in Pashto and a perennial classic in Kandahar’s bookstores, Kandahar Assassins tells the story of two well-known assassins who operated in the southern city during the 1980s war. The stories of 'Lame Ghazi' and Commander Ghaffari involve ambitious raids and plots carried out within the Afghan-controlled city. This book offers a corrective to the idea that assassination is a new phenomenon in Afghanistan. Mohammad Tahir Aziz Gumnam was a doctor working in Pakistan at the time, allowing him access to a variety of figures within the Afghan mujahedeen. Originally from Kandahar, Gumnam offers insight as an Afghan who was close to both the events and the people he describes. Judging from this book, the style and manner of assassinations in southern Afghanistan doesn’t appear to have changed much. Kandahar Assassins, therefore, offers a unique perspective on the world of these target killers and how they carry out their operations. It is an essential read for any soldier serving in Afghanistan as well as those seeking to understand the history behind the current conflict. Dr David Kilcullen wrote the introduction to this English translation of the book.

"a Thousand-and-One Nights of the Afghan jihad... a detailed and lyrical account of the war that he and his contemporaries fought against in Kandahar during the 1980s" - Dr David Kilcullen (from his introduction), counterinsurgency expert and author

An Undesirable Element: An Afghan Memoir
This is the incredible story of a relentless educator named Sharif Fayez, born in 1946 in Herat, Afghanistan, who bore witness to the Communist invasion of 1979, the Iranian revolution of 1979, and who authored a groundbreaking PhD dissertation that forever linked the best American poetry to Afghanistan by proving that Walt Whitman had read and been inspired by Rumi. It is the story of how Sharif pursues education above all else and becomes a professor at Kabul University only to flee illegally to Iran when the Soviets invade, where he becomes caught in the violent Islamic revolution as a professor at Mashad University. Surviving the Afghan and Iranian governments’ ruthless campaign to silence academics and their students, as well as the Iran-Iraq War, he becomes a prominent voice of resistance against the Taliban and extremism in the 1990s, writing hundreds of articles, and ultimately returns to Afghanistan as a signatory to the 2001 Bonn Conference and as the Minister of Higher Education. He completely overhauls the Afghan education system, restores co-education to the country and establishes six new universities. He is almost single-handedly responsible for the incredible strides the Afghan education system has made since 2002.

"An Undesirable Element is a fascinating tour through the tumultuous years that helped create modern Afghanistan. Fayez survived Soviet Afghanistan and revolutionary Iran, only to find himself watching from exile as his country devoured itself. Improbably, he returns after 2001 to help resurrect Afghanistan’s devastated higher education system, giving an insider account of the challenges of building education in a land dominated by warlords and fundamentalism. The result is a poignant reminder of how much Afghanistan has endured, and the flicker of hope that remains despite it all."

-- Anand Gopal, author of No Good Men Among The Living

"A compelling read, An Undesirable Element recounts an Afghanistan many have forgotten. It serves as a rallying cry to once again imagine all that country might be. It’s a tale as extraordinary as the land from which it comes."

-- Elliot Ackerman, author of Green On Blue

"An Undesirable Element moves fast as flames and offers a luminous account of the last half-century of Afghan conflicts and redevelopment. Trevithick’s oral history of Sharif Fayez’s story is a trove: from a kiss on the head by the Afghan former King Zahir Shah, Fayez’s life intersected with the future leaders and quiet supporters of his country—both heroic and tyrannical—from Columbia University to a Post-revolutionary University in Mashad, Iran. Fayez is a modest but robust storyteller whose eventual position as Afghanistan’s First Minister of Education after the Taliban is only one of the strange twists and turns his story offers. His deft handling in the rebuilding of Afghanistan should be read
In the last year of the Taliban's government in Afghanistan, visitors to Mullah Omar's office in Kandahar received a parting gift. As they left, the movement's supreme leader asked them to take a slim volume from a pile beside the door. He told them that if they wanted to know how the Taliban were meant to behave, they should read the book. The books which Mullah Omar handed out were Pashto and Farsi translation of *Eta’t Amir*, or 'Obedience to the Leader'. Mufti Rasheed published the original in Urdu after having toured Taliban-run Afghanistan. Mullah Omar's endorsement indicates that he believed that Rasheed had captured the essence of the Taliban Movement. Michael Semple and Yameema Mitha have translated this important primary source and added a commentary and appraisal.

“In war, and especially guerrilla war, the best organised party is likely to win. While numbers of fighters and weapons count, organisation determines whether the leader can use them. This book is the guide the Afghan Taliban used to organise themselves differently from other Afghan groups. Anyone who wants to defeat them or negotiate with them should understand the organisational principles that guide..."
Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) says the Taliban's positive response to Russia-led multilateral peace talks, has proved that the armed group's fight in. However, a former member of the Taliban, Sayed Akbar Agha said that the peace meetings in Saudi Arabia and Indonesia had nothing to offer for the Taliban, adding that such unilateral meetings could not bring peace. Some Afghan ulema criticized the Taliban's move to attend Russia-led Talks. “The Taliban did not participate in Islamic countries’ [peace meetings] and said okay to Moscow meeting. Russia and Pakistan are exploiting the Taliban against the United States,” said a religious scholar Mawlavi Basir Haqqani.