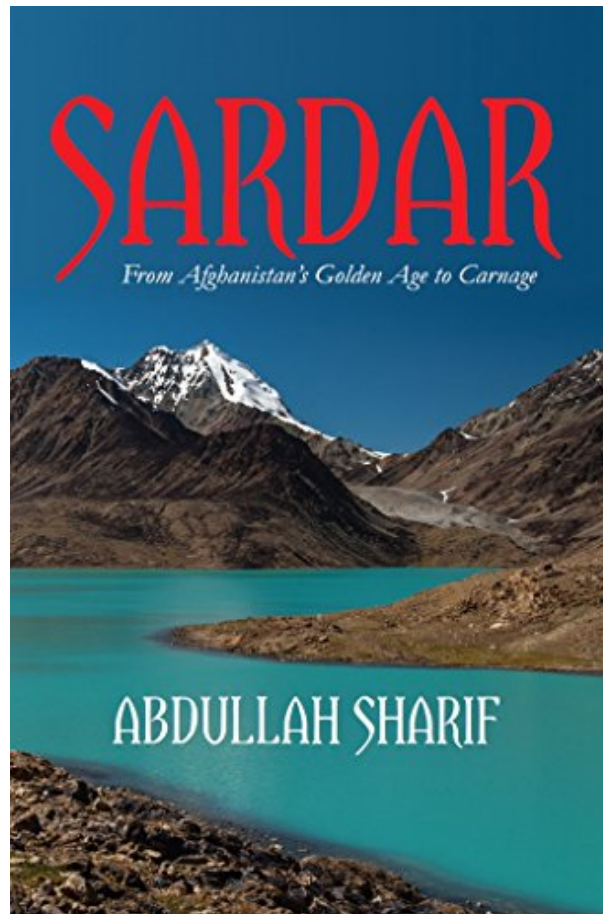
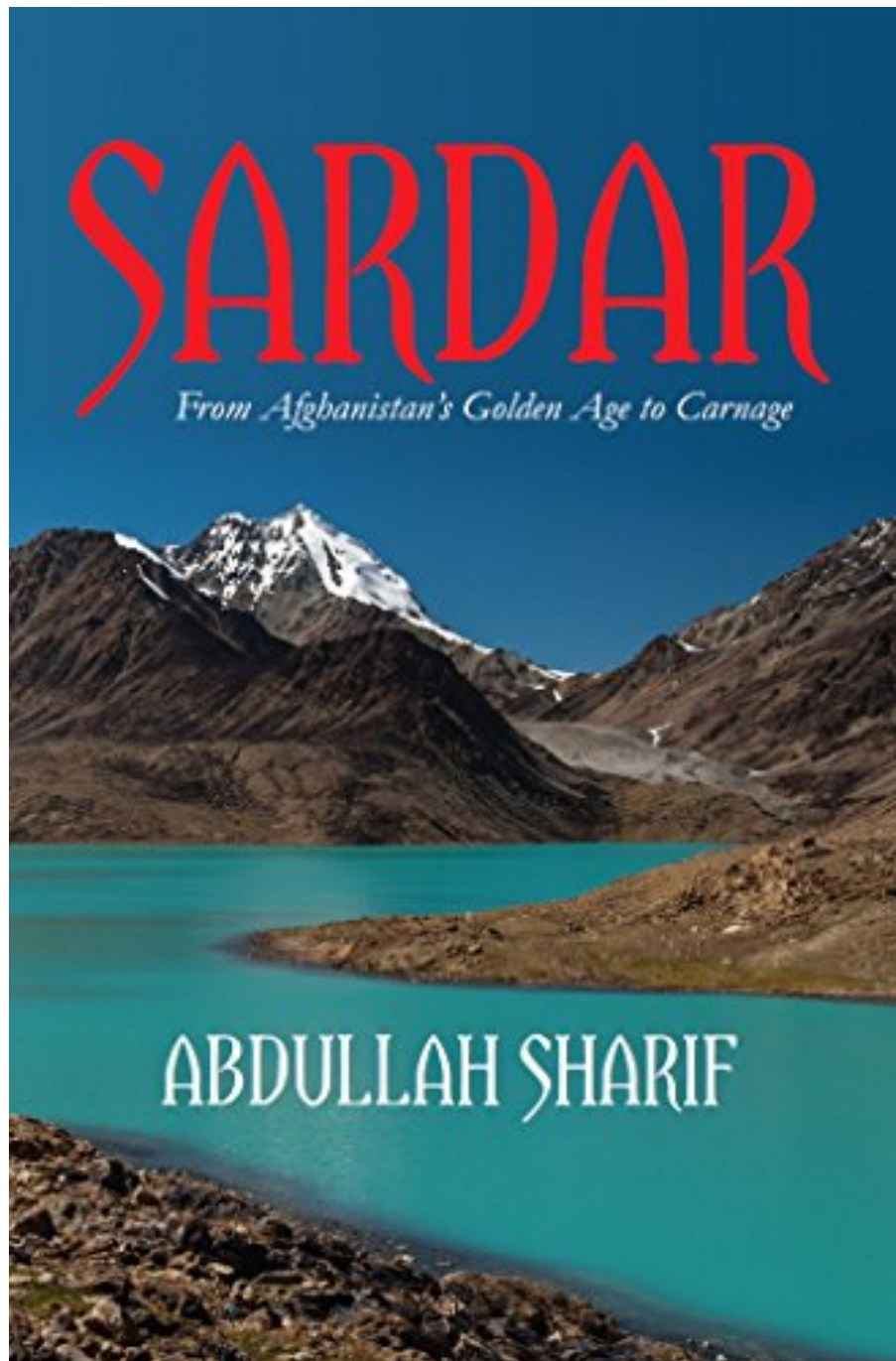


SARDAR: FROM AFGHANISTAN'S GOLDEN AGE TO CARNAGE BY ABDULLAH SHARIF



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From Kirkus Reviews

A memoir of a man who grew up in Afghanistan, left for 30 years, and returned to help after the country was ravaged by war.

Debut author Sharif departed Afghanistan in 1976 for an education abroad, and didn't come back until three decades had passed. After the U.S. invasion of the country following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Sharif joined a special State Department program to become a diplomat, which in turn led him back to Kabul. However, he found Afghanistan all but unrecognizable, torn asunder by war, tribal conflict and a Taliban hellbent on thwarting the establishment of a stable democracy. The book is a series of letters he wrote to family and friends while on assignment in Afghanistan between 2009 and 2011. The epistles are bittersweet, enlivened by the author's joy at finally returning to the place of his birth, but also darkened by his realizations that the object of his fond remembrances was now plagued by strife. In one particularly poignant passage, Sharif recounts meeting a barber who turned out to be the grandson of the barber who cut the author's hair when he was a young child. Interspersed among such personal recollections are meditations on the principal sources of Afghanistan's troubles, and what strategies could conceivably bring relief. He also provides a running commentary on other subjects, such as the core principles of "Pomegranate Diplomacy," Muslim dietary restrictions, and important but elusive cultural terms and practices. Along the way, Sharif often writes elegiacally about his country: "It is certainly a tall order and a pipe dream on my part to want to restore the current society to some semblance of Afghanistan's forgotten Golden Era." The book closes with an epilogue in which the author reflects on the death of his father and, by extension, the decline of his homeland.

An emotionally arresting, thoughtful account about the soul of Afghanistan.

About the Author

Abdullah Sharif spent three decades consulting as an aviation engineer in North America and Europe. Since 2009, he has served as a US diplomat in Afghanistan. His first deployment, from 2009–2011, was for the Department of State, with a second, from 2012–2013, under the auspices of the Department of Defense working on peace and reintegration.

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In 1976 Abdullah Sharif departed Afghanistan first for France and then the United States, leaving behind a viable nation state. Thirty-five years later he returned as a US diplomat. The country he remembered was gone, lost to the ravages of a Russian invasion, the harsh rule of the Taliban, and ongoing clashes between insurgents and US-led forces.

As an Afghan-American, Sharif's thoughts are deeply revealing. Sardar presents his insights through nineteen missives written over the course of the first of two civilian deployments with the Departments of State and Defense.

With a bird's eye view of US reconstruction efforts, he deconstructs setbacks and mistakes made during the peace process, and offers suggestions on how to better address such problems.

A compelling read for anyone interested in US involvement in Afghanistan, Sardar reveals what it takes to carry out daily duties deployed in a foreign country where differing ideologies, language, religion, and social norms provide fertile ground for misunderstandings, conflict, and distrust.

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bittersweet, enlivened by the author's joy at finally returning to the place of his birth, but also darkened by his realizations that the object of his fond remembrances was now plagued by strife. In one particularly poignant passage, Sharif recounts meeting a barber who turned out to be the grandson of the barber who cut the author's hair when he was a young child. Interspersed among such personal recollections are meditations on the principal sources of Afghanistan's troubles, and what strategies could conceivably bring relief. He also provides a running commentary on other subjects, such as the core principles of "Pomegranate Diplomacy," Muslim dietary restrictions, and important but elusive cultural terms and practices. Along the way, Sharif often writes elegiacally about his country: "It is certainly a tall order and a pipe dream on my part to want to restore the current society to some semblance of Afghanistan's forgotten Golden Era." The book closes with an epilogue in which the author reflects on the death of his father and, by extension, the decline of his homeland.

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Most helpful customer reviews

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

What an important and well written book

By Thal Mueller

Abdul Sharif's book has made a deep and lasting impression on me. It finally gave me an understanding of the struggle modern day Afghanistan has to go through and how it got into the situation it is in at the moment. Mr. Sharif, who worked as a political advisor, also describes his position and the many tasks and difficulties he had to face while dealing with local warlords and American/Afghan government officials. The book also shows us the importance of Mr. Sharif's work in Afghanistan and how he contributed to improving communication between Afghans and Westerners and making government work more efficient and precise.

We are presented with quite a bit of acronyms and "military speak" but it never becomes dull or boring, all these terms are being well explained and at no point the book starts to sound like a Tom Clancy novel, where one has to look up every second word to understand what's going on.

Abdul Sharif has the great gift of being a fantastic writer, his book is moving and most entertaining. I can recommend this book to any one who is interested in the current state of Afghanistan and who wants to try to understand the country and its rich and ancient culture and heritage. It should be a must read for anyone who does government work in Afghanistan, as Abdul Sharif makes us familiar with many customs of the Afghan people and the Pashtun tribes in particular. Having been born and raised in Afghanistan but living in the US for many years now, he has a unique insight into both cultures, a trait most important in diplomacy, I

imagine.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A Must Read For Anyone Wanting To Better Understand Afghanistan Culture: Insightful To Say The Least
By Chuck Slaght

This is an incredible book a MUST read for anyone going in theater (Islamic nations). The insight of Abdul and the critiquing of actual events is super and a great read. The format is reader friendly and entraps the reader. His bantering back and forth using personal experience and superb cultural discernment from his youth is wonderful. This is a great resource for every State Department or Department of Defense employee, senior military members as well as rank and file members, foreign dignitaries and operatives, business persons, and Congressional leaders preparing to visit Afghanistan (or any Muslim nation for that matter). His perception of how outsiders look and act towards the people is insightful. I am looking forward to the next volume in hopes of even further understanding the full cultural aspects of Middle Eastern culture and our clumsiness in interacting PROPERLY with peoples of different backgrounds. Abdul's style is wonderfully post-modernistic and builds curiosity so I am excited about this next volume coming soon. This book has my STRONGEST RECOMMENDATION!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A different point of view on Kandahar and the Afghan Campaign
By Richard O. Miles

A unique account of what it was actually like to work with diplomats on both sides. This is written in a journal like reflection that gives an up close account of what an Afghan American experienced when he went back to help the diplomatic political process. If you are a student of this campaign, then you should add this brief account to your background knowledge. I was most struck by how little the US relied on this talented individual. I served alongside the author for most of this time period and I can attest that his account is accurate. He is very polite in describing the frustration that many talented people felt trying to help the new Afghan government and ISAF itself. Rip Miles, USMC AFPAK Hand 2010-2011 Cohort 1

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