

Chapter 1 : The Afghan Campaign Summary and Analysis (like SparkNotes) | Free Book Notes

The Afghan Campaign is a historical novel by the American writer Steven Pressfield. It was first published in by the Broadway division of Random House.

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Excerpts- Chapter One I am the third and last son of my family to come out to Afghanistan. My older brothers went out as cavalrymen. I signed with the infantry. My father was killed in Afghanistan, or more precisely he expired of sepsis in a military hospital in Susia, in the province of Areia, which lies on the western border of the country. My father was not a mounted warrior or a foot soldier but a combat engineer of the siege train--what the troops call a "bucket man" because miners and sappers dig their trenches and raise their earthworks with wicker baskets. His name was the same as mine, Matthias. He was an authentic hero. My brothers are too. Once, when I was sixteen, my father sent home an army warrant worth a quarter talent of gold. We bought a second farm with it, with two barns and a year-round creek, and had enough left over to fence the place in stone. My mother, further, was violently opposed to any step that would take me away from the land. But, like it or not, you are my bulwark and the bulwark of this farm. Your father is gone. We shall never see your brothers again. Lust for glory will be their finish; they will leave great names and nothing more. In the Macedonian army, enlistments are measured not by years but by cycles, or "bumps. Minimum enlistment is two bumps, one to be trained and one to serve, but a man must commit for a third cycle, a total of four and a half years, if and when he is called overseas. It worked this way: A recruit entered service with a regiment of the Occupation Army. This was the force left behind by Alexander to hold down Greece and the tribal north. Sometimes entire regiments were called up; other times individuals, either those in specific military specialties such as intelligence or siege engineering, or simply infantrymen with seniority whose lucky number came up. All this was moot for a youth of my district, Apollonia. Apollonia has no infantry regiment. The region is cavalry country. He lives in Los Angeles.

Chapter 2 : The Afghan Campaign by Steven Pressfield | eBay

The Afghan Campaign is written from the point of view of a new soldier. During the war against the Persians Matthias joins the Maced This is about a soldier in the time of Alexander the Great of Macedon, around BC.

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Chapter 3 : The Afghan Campaign - Wikipedia

The Afghan Campaign is yet another gripping historical novel. Although set in ancient times, Pressfield's narration of the Macedonians' efforts reveals remarkable parallels to later efforts by the Romans, British, Soviets, and Americans in an intense, fun, and thought-provoking read.

The Build-Up to Conflict The cause of this, the second, Afghanistan campaign had little to do with the Afghans themselves but everything to do with the Great power rivalry of the British and the Russians. It represented the swing of the pendulum between the two main competing theories regarding the best way that the British should have safeguarded their Indian empire. On the one hand, some decision makers, thought that the British should be content with the natural defences provided by the Himalayas, an impenetrable desert and the Indian Ocean. After all, it had served the Indian well for thousands of years previously, and it had the added advantage of being the least expensive and complicated of the options. The Forward thinkers, on the other hand, were convinced that if the British did not assert their claims and influence over the central Asian kingdoms then they would find themselves displaced by the Russians, who were pursuing their own forward policy at this time with the annexation of Tashkent, Samarkand and Khiva. The closer the Russians came to British India the more weight was attached to the claims of this school of diplomatic thought. Of course, there were the added problems of the fierce warrior tribes who were currently living in the harsh climate and terrains between the two powers and who had severely bloodied British military prestige some forty years earlier. Over time, these competing theories became polarised between the two main political parties represented in Britain. The Liberal party, under Gladstone, was generally content to leave things as they were, being more interested in business and economics than in the expense of empire. The Conservative party, however, were finding new ways of enticing the newly enfranchised working class men in supporting the party that was traditionally identified as being the party of the landed gentry. Fighting small wars to further the glory of the British Empire was his method of harnessing this patriotism for his own parties benefit. In 1874, the Conservatives won the general election. Lord Salisbury was appointed to the Indian Office and soon after he replaced the Viceroy of India, Lord Northbrook, with one who was committed to a more aggressive forward policy, Lord Lytton. Added to this was rising tension in Europe over Russian designs on the Ottoman Empire. The stage was being set The Trigger The stick that Salisbury was to use to beat the Afghans with was over their refusal to allow a British agent to be permanently posted in Afghanistan. The problem was that Salisbury wanted the benefits of British diplomatic representation in Afghanistan without providing any carrots or sweeteners to the Amir to carry out this policy. It was obvious to all concerned that any such British agent would effectively have meant the loss of independence for Afghanistan, as it did with so many other kingdoms and countries throughout that part of the world. Why should the Amir have agreed to any such proposal when the British were offering nothing in return. Unfortunately for the Afghans, a diplomatic blunder on their part gave the British Forward policy planners all the ammunition they needed to launch a campaign against them. In 1878, after having rejected repeated requests by the British for a diplomatic mission to be despatched to Afghanistan, the Amir received a Russian delegation headed by General Stolietov. This seemingly uneven treatment by the Amir confirmed the Forward planners worst fears. An attempt to send one last British delegation with an escort of over men was made in writing to the Amir. It was also coupled with demands that would effectively have meant the loss of independence for the khanate. Also, the fact that the request was made as the Sher Ali had begun mourning the death of his favourite son did nothing to increase his goodwill towards the British request. He replied that any such British delegation would be met with force. Trying to force the issue, the mission was despatched by the British anyway. Predictably, when it arrived at Ali Masjid the Afghan governor there said that he had received no orders that he should allow it to pass. As far as the British were concerned Sher Ali had just failed their last test of loyalty for him. Now, there was only one course of action left to be taken. The First Phase of the Campaign Mindful of the disaster that befell the expedition during the First Afghan War, the Indian government prepared for this campaign in a much more diligent manner. The plan was to have three columns move simultaneously into the three main avenues of

approach into Afghanistan. Samuel Browne the most Northernly of the three forces. This was led by Maj-Gen. Frederick Sleigh Roberts and was assembled at the town of Thal. These were to clear and hold the Kurram Valley series of passes that also provided passage into Kabul and Afghanistan. The third and arguably the field force with the most difficult and daunting task ahead of it was the Kandahar Field Force under Lt-Gen. It was the job of this column to clear the much more arduous and treacherous terrain of the Bolan pass and the valleys up to and including the city of Kandahar. As the course of events transpired, the Peshawar and Kurram Field Forces were very much within tactical and strategic contact with one another and indeed eventually met up with one another. The Kandahar Field Force, though, was virtually cut off from the rest of the campaign and had to support itself autonomously for virtually the entire course of the campaign. Gurkhas at Peiwar Kotal It was the largest of the three Field Forces that came into action the soonest as the Peshawar Field Force came to the imposing fort of Ali Masjid that overlooked the narrow Khyber Pass at one of its narrowest points. As the position lay near the border of British India, the positions of the Afghans had already been thoroughly reconnoitered before the declaration of hostilities and Samuel Browne had made his plans accordingly. The battle is recounted in further detail here. The effect of the battle was to leave the Northern approach to Kabul virtually wide open. Browne moved his forces forward to Dakka where they rested and regrouped for three weeks, safe in the knowledge that they had all but achieved their original objective. Roberts had already successfully advanced into the valley and had taken Kurram Fort where opposition had been anticipated but not forthcoming. Locals said that some 1, soldiers and artillery had pulled out of the fort. He therefore pushed on hoping to catch the force unprepared, only to find them in a far better tactical position than he would have hoped to have found them in. Subsequently, the British force advanced to Ali Khel and prepared decent living quarters before the full force of a Himalayan winter could be brought to bear on them. Supply Problems The third of the columns, the Kandahar Field Force, did not face the same kind of large scale resistance as the other two columns did, but suffered from a potentially far more paralysing problem for the force; supply. The other two columns also encountered difficulties finding enough hardy animals to keep themselves with the requisite amount of stores for thousands of men and their support systems to remain operational. But, the Kandahar Field Force found that the animals that it had found were dying in their hundreds and thousands in the difficult terrain and with the worsening weather conditions. Added to this, was the fact that the local tribes were quite happy to prey on any group of carts that did not look sufficiently well defended. This added further to the man and animal power drain. Despite these problems, Stewart did manage to advance as far as Kandahar. Although the further he advanced, the more strain was put on the supply situation. It was clear that the various tribes were already splitting into various factions, for or against Sher Ali, the British or for a new Amir altogether. Sher Ali himself cut a rather tragic figure during these events. He was still deep in grief over the loss of his favourite son some seven weeks earlier. In the end, he did feel compelled to turn towards the very people that the British had accused him of dealing with all along; the Russians. He left Kabul to appeal personally to the Russian Emperor. Unfortunately for him, diplomatic events in Europe had taken a turn that meant that the Russians no longer desired to be so antagonistic towards the British. The Emperor therefore gave instructions that he was not now willing to meet with Sher Ali. Sher Ali had made his last throw of the dice and lost. Completely shattered by events around him, the Amir refused all food, water and medical aid. He died at the age of This turn of events seemed quite fortuitous for the British as they were now able to back and make demands on the new Amir Yakub Khan. In fact, the demands that they now made were far more onerous than the ones that they had asked of Sher Ali. In addition to the British envoys to be stationed in Afghanistan, there were now demands that the Khyber pass and Kurram valley to remain under British control. Whilst this made tactical sense to the British on the ground, these additional demands were already undermining the position of Yakub Khan amongst his own people. Loss of foreign affairs, or British envoys were quite esoteric to most Afghans, losing a large slab of their country was not! However, for the time being the diplomatic solution seemed to have vindicated the policy of the Forward Planners. There had been a considerable financial burden to the Indian government, but essentially their strategic aims had been more than satiated. Now, life could return to normal. The British forces were only too pleased to pull out of Afghanistan to avoid the horrendous summer temperatures and to avoid the constant attacks on isolated supply and relief

columns. And, Cavagnari was duly despatched to Kabul with a small escort of Corps of Guides to take up his new diplomatic position. Surveying Residency Remains The disaffection of many Afghans for the terms and conditions of the British peace seemed to have been lost on Cavagnari and even on Yakub Khan himself. At first, things seemed to go well enough. But in August, six Afghan regiments arrived in Kabul from Herat. This was supposed to be a routine relieving of forces. However, it was soon obvious that these regiments were not in the best state of affairs. Discipline in the ranks was virtually non-existent and was made considerably worse by the fact that they had not been paid for some time. Their disdain for the Amir and the British envoys was made highly evident. One riot by them was only dispersed with a payment of some of their arrears. On September 3rd, the regiments rioted again, this time they marched towards the British residency to demand their back pay. Scuffles and some attempted looting outside the residency led to several shots by the British escort. Unfortunately, these shots were enough to ignite the delicate situation into a full blown fight with the residency as the battlefield. Suffice it to say that the events here were enough to scupper plans for a peaceful withdrawal by the British. The war had not finished after all and the retreating British forces were quickly about-faced and marched back into Afghanistan. The Return of the British That the British were returning to reek some sort of revenge over the murder of Cavagnari and his escort was never in dispute. What was less certain was what the British were going to do with Yakub Khan. The fact that he did not seem to have been implicated in the murders at all was of no importance. It was now patently clear that he did not possess the necessary power or force of personality to rule over his fractious country. The fact that it was the British demands that had fatally weakened him was not dwelt upon by the Indian government in Simla. They just needed to find some sort of replacement or have their entire plans for Indian security swept away before them. For the time being, as these points were being debated, the first of the British forces were already swinging into action under the stewardship of Roberts. The timing of this second campaign did not seem propitious. The troops were about to enter their second uncomfortable winter in the Himalayas. Roberts felt that it was essential that the British troops make some kind of blow against the Afghans before the snows made campaigning impossible.

Chapter 4 : The Afghan Campaign by Steven Pressfield | calendrierdelascience.com

The Afghan Campaign is a must read for students of warfare and of Alexander the Great, and should be required reading for every politician and DOD/Pentagon planner who sends soldiers off to war. Read more.

I do not know if it was just a bad book or a good story badly written. It is a historical fiction and I am unfamiliar with the author though from a GR check he does seem to be an accomplished professional. As an accomplished author I am at a loss to explain the apparent sloppiness of this book. For a historical fiction to meet my approval the story must mesh with the historical events depicted. In this book the history concerns the invasion of Afghanistan by Alexander the Great. This book was rather strange. The story is about a young Greek infantry recruit named Matthias. If you are going to write historical fiction then you must get your history straight or you lose the real history readers. This author lost me. He describes Afghan warriors as "braves" and their women as "squaws". Terms used traditionally to describe Native American warriors and their women. He calls native women "dames", a 20th century expression. And what is most laughable is that he has these soldiers sending and receiving mail from Greece to Afghanistan. This is BCE. It is unlikely that any of these soldiers were able to read or write so sending them mail is idiotic. How could this author make such mistakes? Again, he is an accomplished professional and the story is well written even though the detail is grossly in error. The erroneous material spans cultures, times, peoples. Could there have been something else at play here? Could this book have been meant as some sort of allegory or parable on the futility of war especially war in this part of the world? God knows Afghanistan seems to be an area frozen in time that defies any attempt at modern intrusion from any source regardless of intent. Well such a message would be one worth pondering but the fact remains that the author did a clumsy job of imparting it. If he had something important to say then he could have done it better than this.

Chapter 5 : Afghanistan Campaign Medal > Air Force's Personnel Center > Display

Conventional wisdom during the time I was working on The Afghan Campaign was that the U.S. and its allies were up against "Islamism" or "Islamic extremism" in Afghanistan. To me, the facts of Alexander's campaign proved this false.

One searches in vain for honor. To his everlasting credit, Lee refused and ordered his men to lay down their weapons and rejoin their former countrymen in the United States of America. In all likelihood, the result would have been no better in 19th century America than it was for Alexander two millennia earlier. One of the lessons of history appears to be that if a people are determined not to be occupied by a foreign power, then nothing short of genocide will guarantee their submission. In order to stave off genocide, no tactic is too brutal, and brutality is something the Afghans were very good at. Just to cite one example, near the end of the campaign several Macedonian captives end up nailed to boards, doused in turpentine and set alight not to make them talk so much as for sport and as a warning to others. Rapes, beheadings, disembowelments, and mass murders of captive women and children became standard tactics – by both sides. When Alexander invaded what is now Afghanistan in B. Draw the opposing army into battle, defeat it, and incorporate the conquered state more-or-less intact, and often with most of the existing power structure, into the Macedonian realm. Unfortunately, even in defeat, the tribes did not submit to Macedonian rule, and the attacks on outposts and supply trains continued unabated. Advancing Macedonian columns gave way to search-and-destroy sweeps and finally to a scorched earth policy where no outrage was off limits. Despite all his maneuvers and provocations, Alexander could never force the Afghans into a decisive battle, and after the victories he does win, his opponents slip away into the vast Asian hinterlands and reform. This he can accomplish politically, and he does by striking a deal with a local warlord to serve as his representative, marrying his daughter, declaring victory, and leaving. You are probably thinking at this point that Pressfield has written an anti-war treatise in the form of a novel. Fortunately, *The Afghan Campaign* emerges as a novel, and a very good one, and not a polemic. At the end, far from swearing off war, Alexander licks his wounds and sets off on the invasion of India. Because we know how the actual events will end, an historical novel has to stand or fall on character development. We participate in his first killing, his first encounter with mass murder, an ambush by the great Afghan rebel, Spitamenes, and the interminable marching and camp life in-between. We develop into battle-hardened and counterinsurgency-hardened NCOs. We lose friends, leaders, and relatives. We are shocked when Afghan allies that we drank with the night before try to murder us in the morning. We come to understand why it is not only allowed but required that an Afghan male will try to kill someone who rescues his sister. Although a novel has to be a novel – to develop characters we care about and tell an interesting story around them – we can learn something about human nature from a good one. People seem as addicted to independence today as they ever were and as willing to fight and die for it. If we can get them to form up into state-sponsored armies and agree to abide by the results of decisive battles, then our present military structure may be just what we need. If not – no state, or no army or no agreement to quit if they lose – then things could get very nasty. As they did in Vietnam, and in Algeria, and would have after had Lee not surrendered his army and agreed that the rebellion was over.

Chapter 6 : Afghanistan Campaign Medal | Military Wiki | FANDOM powered by Wikia

The Afghanistan Campaign Medal (ACM) is awarded to military personnel for serving active duty in the borders of Afghanistan for a period of 30 consecutive days or 60 non-consecutive days. This award is retroactive to October 24th,

Chapter 7 : The Afghan Campaign by Steven Pressfield

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Chapter 8 : Review of The Afghan Campaign, by Chet Richards

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The Afghanistan Campaign Medal (ACM) is a military award of the United States military which was created by Executive Order of President George W. Bush on November 29, , and became available for general distribution in June