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Reagan Fancher

The Holy Warrior

Osama Bin Laden and His Jihadi Journey in the Soviet-Afghan War. Second Edition.



by Reagan Fancher

2nd Edition

THE HOLY WARRIOR

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SERIES IN WORLD HISTORY

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About the author

Since his late teenage years, **Reagan Fancher** has studied and been fascinated by Osama bin Laden's historical impact and earned his B.A. and M.A. degrees in History at the University of Louisiana at Monroe and his Ph.D. at the University of North Texas. Fancher's previous publications include several book reviews of scholarly works on Afghanistan and other international topics of historical interest for 'Army History' magazine and 'H-Net'. Over the course of his studies, Fancher continued exploring bin Laden's impact on history, accessing numerous biographies, memoirs, and archival documents providing valuable insights into the al-Qaeda leader's wartime exploits fighting the Soviets. Fancher's previous awards include the Outstanding Graduate Student Award presented to him by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America for outstanding research in spring 2017, the Nation's Heritage Scholarship for 2020-2021, and the History Faculty Endowment Scholarship for 2022-2023. His passion is teaching the World History survey course that covers the sixteenth century to the present. Focused on Fancher's primary area of research and interest in history, 'The Holy Warrior: Osama Bin Laden and His Jihadi Journey in the Soviet-Afghan War', is his first book, which he successfully completed while simultaneously researching a separate and unrelated topic for his doctoral dissertation.

Summary

Fought between 1979 and 1989, the Soviet-Afghan War provided vital combat experience for Osama bin Laden and his senior lieutenants in al-Qaeda, allowing them to hone their newly acquired skills in guerrilla warfare to later support Islamist insurgencies worldwide. Yet the ruthless al-Qaeda chief's success depended on the Soviet leadership's reluctant prolonging of its military occupation out of fear of leaving Afghanistan in hostile hands. As relative latecomers to the ferocious Afghan frontlines, the inexperienced Arab fighters benefitted militarily from the combat training unwittingly provided by their Soviet foes. After skillfully obtaining this command and battle experience by working within the wartime atmosphere, bin Laden channeled al-Qaeda's efforts in a global jihadi campaign targeting a second superpower and its allies.

While allegations of U.S. support for the Arab jihadis have contributed to a popular image of bin Laden and al-Qaeda as C.I.A. creations, the historical facts appear to demonstrate that the combat opportunities provided by the Soviet occupation forces played a far larger role in transforming them into seasoned guerrilla fighters. In this second edition, Reagan Fancher updates and expands his monograph in an Afterword elaborating on the contemporary U.S.-U.K. perceptions of bin Laden's wartime actions and their results as he applied his battle-honed guerrilla tactics, judo skills, and recruitment capabilities in tactically helping Yemen's anti-communist Salafi guerrillas to emerge victoriously in their country's 1994 Civil War before concluding with an assessment of the founding al-Qaeda leader's impact on history. It offers an opportunity for today's decision-makers to learn from history and avoid creating new generations of Osama bin Ladens.

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