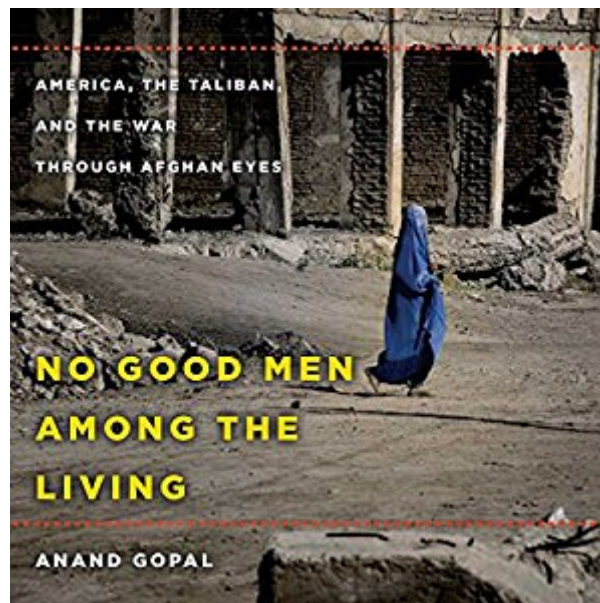




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# No Good Men Among The Living: America, The Taliban, And The War Through Afghan Eyes



## Synopsis

In a breathtaking chronicle, acclaimed journalist Anand Gopal traces in vivid detail the lives of three Afghans caught in America's war on terror. He follows a Taliban commander who rises from scrawny teenager to leading insurgent, a U.S.-backed warlord who uses the American military to gain personal wealth and power, and a village housewife trapped between the two sides who discovers the devastating cost of neutrality. Through their dramatic stories, Gopal shows that the Afghan war, so often regarded as a hopeless quagmire, could in fact have gone very differently. Top Taliban leaders actually tried to surrender within months of the U.S. invasion, renouncing all political activity and submitting to the new government. Effectively the Taliban ceased to exist--yet the Americans were unwilling to accept such a turnaround. Instead, driven by false intelligence from their allies and an unyielding mandate to fight terrorism, American forces continued to press the conflict, resurrecting the insurgency that persists to this day. With its intimate accounts of life in war-torn Afghanistan, Gopal's thoroughly original reporting lays bare the workings of America's longest war and the truth behind its prolonged agony. A heartbreaking story of mistakes and misdeeds, *No Good Men Among the Living* challenges our usual perceptions of the Afghan conflict, its victims, and its supposed winners.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an excellent analysis of the situation in Afghanistan as it devolved from the end of Soviet occupation to the first years of American occupation. Gopal presents an acute political analysis

through several Afghans' stories, including Mullah Cable, who joined the Taliban, got disgusted, quit, tried to live with peace under the Americans, and ended up going back to fighting; Heela, an educated woman from Kabul who ended up in her husband's rural village where social norms require her to stay indoors for seven years, and eventually found her way back to the capital and a job with the government; a political prisoner of the Taliban who, when he gains his freedom under Karzai, becomes a warlord as bad as anything the Taliban ever created, but supported by American aid dollars. As people's lives are upended again and again by misrule and the miseries of war one thing becomes utterly clear: the Afghans did NOT bring this on themselves, but are the losers in another dreadful chapter of the Great Game at the crossroads of empire.

This is such an important book even now, in 2017. The author's investigative journalism and story telling is unparalleled. Even those who've followed the facts about the war in Afghanistan are guaranteed to learn things they did not know. Great detailed reporting!

Few books have had such a gut-wrenching impact on me. After over 10 years of not understanding what happened and is happening in Afghanistan, after 10 years of supporting US troops in action without really understanding who they were fighting or what they were fighting for, after 10 years of trying to comprehend how the war in Afghanistan fit into the overall war on terror, this book in only a couple hundred pages lays out who, what, where, when and how from the perspective of the Afghanistani people themselves. It is like someone finally focused the projector in a movie theatre. Read this book. But make sure you have tissues at hand. It will tear your heart out because it shows not only no good men but no simple answers.

Wow. I certainly knew that the situation in Afghanistan was dire, but it's eye-opening to see just how dire. And it's also eye-opening to see just how much the United States has contributed to that. It's not that the US went in with the intention of making life there miserable, and it's not that many Afghans themselves aren't also at fault, but it is stunning just how much those that the US put in charge of things seemed to lack any basic knowledge of how the country worked and how the people would react to various ideas. This book describes life in the country from it's pre-Russian invasion days through the present by both reporting its history, and by following the stories of 3 very different citizens; a pro-US warlord, a member of the Taliban, and a housewife. Their experiences can alternate between harrowing and shocking, but remain pretty universally distressing. It's hard not to get angry throughout this book as the amount of human cruelty and stupidity on display can

become too much to handle. And in the end, it does live up to its title, as it ably demonstrates that there is no one involved without some blame to bear. REVIEW ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON GOODREADS.

I have little to add to what the five-star reviewers have already said. It seems that this another example of people reverting to their baser instincts when the rule of law is either non-existent or ineffective. People of all types--be they primitive tribes or advanced members of society--have an urge toward cruelty. This urge toward cruelty is seen in a limited example at: [www. prisonexp. org](http://www.prisonexp.org). When "the law" reinforces that urge--as it does in war--the urge toward cruelty has no check. Anand Gopal's *No Good Men Among the Living* gives us a superb but another small example of the urge toward cruelty. There are also those unnumbered billions, as Horace reminds us, who have died "unmourned" because "they lack their sacred poet." There is law, which, when it operates appropriately, can keep the urge largely in check. But law is an ineffective check against those who society has granted the power to torture and kill, even when to torture is illegal because, in the United States, we have a mostly supine federal appellate judiciary, which eschews the power to enforce our Constitution and our laws. As Swift observed, the law is a web that ensnares small flies but lets the hornets through.

A unique, compelling, moving, beautifully written book of the war from the Afghan point-of-view. It is unlike anything I have read before, absolutely gripping. Finished it in three sittings, difficult to put down, reads like a thriller, makes you gasp. It's a reading experience not easily forgotten. The intimate true stories of these select Afghans are simply astounding and reveal so much about how badly the US handled the war, how they could easily have prevented the Taliban's return with more insight and cultural understanding and fewer blundering assassinations of their own allies. If the country descends into hell after this year, it will be worth remembering the brutal warlords that now litter the country have been American-made. This is a must read for anyone interested in contemporary Afghanistan and how wars go belly up.

Highly recommend Mr. Gopal's extensive work that provides unusual insight and understanding into a hugely complicated socio-political structure. You can find sympathy in nearly every faction as the author reveals twists and turns of misguided assaults against bearers of peaceful coexistence; devolving to a system of thuggery and survival. Most striking is the author's account of his travels and introductions with such wide ranging representatives of these varying factions often leaving one

to wonder about his safety while covering these stories which makes the book particularly poignant as he represents all sides of the equation with an even hand providing us all much to think about. Heartily recommend this read for all.

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