

Sunday, June 29, 2008

## Ahmed Rashid's New Book, Descent into Chaos

Ahmed Rashid, the Pakistani author of Taliban (the largest selling university press book since the invention of movable type) has published a [new book](#), taking up the story of Afghanistan, its region, and the U.S. where he left off. [Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia](#) is, as far as I know, the first attempt at a comprehensive account of international policy toward Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia since 9/11, and as such is utterly indispensable. (I should note that Ahmed says some nice things about me in the acknowledgments and cites me a few times.)

The book came out in the U.S. on June 3, and Ahmed spent most of the next three weeks touring the U.S. to promote it. For whatever reason, Ahmed's publicist could not manage to get him on Jon Stewart, Steven Colbert, or Oprah, but he did put in appearances on [Charlie Rose](#) (video below) and [CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer](#).

Ahmed has since gone on to Canada and the U.K., where his book was reviewed by both the [Sunday Times](#) and the [Times of London](#). He was profiled by the New York Times' Jane Perlez for the [International Herald Tribune](#), but as far as I can see this interview never appeared in print on this side of the Atlantic. I find it strange that this first ever comprehensive account of the Bush administration's failure in Afghanistan and the complicity with the Taliban of Pakistan's military regime, written by the author of a former New York Times #1 best-seller, did not receive a single major review in the U.S. The Obama campaign really should mine it -- the book has plenty of evidence to support -- and extend -- the Democratic candidate's criticisms of the Bush administration's failure to focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan. But most of all, anyone even remotely concerned with this region should buy and read it, and then recommend it to any friends and relatives who think they are not concerned with it.

Posted by Barnett R. Rubin