**US War in Afghanistan Background**

* Intervention in Afghan civil war after 9/11 attacks



* Goals were to dismantle *Al-Qaeda:* an Islamic terrorist organization, and to remove the *Taliban:* an Islamic fundamentalist regime,from power



Soviet/Afghan War

* Soviet version of the Vietnam War
* Soviets had superior weaponry, but no home field advantage
* War fought from 1978-1992 between the *Mujahidin:* anti-Communist Muslims and Afghan/Soviet forces



* Soviets wanted a Communist gov’t in Afghanistan
* US responded by supporting Muslim rebels
* Soviets widely controlled the cities, while the rebels controlled the mountainous countryside
* Soviet presence angered many Afghans and led them to support the Mujahidin



* The war was a stalemate, thus Soviet forces withdrew
* This led to a divided nation, setting the stage for the Taliban to seize power

Impact on Afghanistan

* 5 million became refugees in other nations
* Much of the land was destroyed



* Soviets left hundreds of thousands landmines behind
* Al-Qaeda was able to operate in Afghanistan
* Mujahidin leaders were unable to unite the various groups within Afghanistan
* Different areas were controlled by various warlords



* This led to a divided nation, setting the stage for the Taliban to seize power

The Taliban

* Taliban means “students”



* Ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 with support from Pakistan
* Believed in strict interpretation of Islamic law
* Known for being incredibly brutal to women
* Women were forced out of school and faced death if educated
* Responsible for countless deaths due to ethnic cleansing



* US supported the Taliban prior to 1996, as they were anti-Iranian