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| Sommario/riassunto      | The Afghan crisis has grabbed the attention of the entire world, and   |

underlined the desperate need in the West for a better understanding of the region and its challenges in the face of increasingly militant interpretations of Islam. Carved up and fought over by the British and Tsarist Russia in the nineteenth century, and under Soviet domination for much of the twentieth, the lonely passes, deserts and peoples of the five Central Asian republics have remained shrouded in obscurity. Even Afghanistan, the site of almost constant conflict since the Soviet invasion of 1978, is little known beyond the media images of the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban movement. Martin McCauley draws on his vast knowledge of the region and its history to provide a clear and highly readable account of Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, from their medieval pasts to the unpredictable present. Illuminating languages and landscapes, cultures and society, he examines the rise of militant Islam and its impact on the region, the push and pull of global economics and politics, and possibilities for stability in an inherently unstable part of the world.

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