



# Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History

*George Crile*

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From an award-winning 60 Minutes reporter comes the extraordinary story of the largest and most successful CIA operation in history—the arming of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan. After the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, pressure mounted for the Americans to support the Afghan resistance. Charlie Wilson, a maverick congressman from East Texas who sat on the powerful House Defense Appropriations Committee, persuaded his colleagues to allocate \$10 million to fund the CIA's effort to arm the Mujahideen. Charlie Wilson's War tells the story of what became the largest covert operation in history; funding eventually grew to over \$1 billion a year. The book includes an incredible cast of characters: Charlie, the charismatic, hard-partying congressman who raised eyebrows when traveling to Pakistan with unusual companions -- one his personal belly dancer, another an ex-beauty queen -- but was passionate about supporting the Afghans and brilliant at getting deals done. Gust Avrakotos, a working-class Greek among Ivy Leaguers at the CIA who set up the team that ran the largest operation in the history of the CIA. President Zia of Pakistan, who became great friends with Charlie and used his leverage to get huge aid dollars as well as keep the West looking away as he built the first Muslim bomb. Moving from the back rooms of the Capitol, to secret chambers at Langley, to arms-dealers conventions, to the Khyber Pass, Charlie Wilson's War is brilliantly reported -- one of the most detailed and compulsively readable accounts of the inside workings of the CIA ever written, with a cast of characters and a plot out of Le Carre or Clancy. This book is a remarkable account of the last battle of the Cold War, a battle that helped weaken the Soviet Union and led to its collapse and, of course, paved the way to the rise of the Taliban, with consequences that we are dealing with today.

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