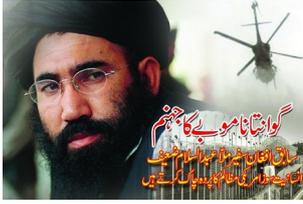


Why the Taliban will regain power

Written by Eric Walberg Эрик Вальберг/ Уолберг □□□□□ □□□□□□

Thursday, 18 July 2019 12:30



We are fed a load of tripe about the Taliban in the western press. They are portrayed as crude, illiterate, opium traffickers and murders. They are quite the opposite. They are, in the first place, a legend, which began in the 1980s when a movement to resist the lawlessness left by the collapse of the secular regime was formed by brave, uncorrupt ‘talibs’ like Abdul Salam Zaeef, one of the founders of the Taliban, coined by the BBC in 1994.

The ‘students’ were the educated branch of the native Afghan mujahideen in the 1980s, though there was never any interest or need for western style formal parties. Good, educated Muslim leaders were respected and consulted by all. Sectarian politics is alien to Muslim society, seen as divisive and even authoritarian, as proven time and again by majority-rule pseudo-democracies, as developed to meet the needs of regulating modern-day imperialism from the 19th century on.

Freedom fighters

Afghan society at a tribal-village level has traditionally operated on sharia law and consensus. When something needed to be done (i.e., a governance issue), people in the village worked out how to accomplish it and got on with it, albeit within limitations of tribal customs.

Technologically-driven capitalism doesn’t recognize this truly ‘democratic’ rule. So, apart from a handful of settler colonies, three centuries of colonialism were a spectacular failure. And the settler colonies? The natives were mostly exterminated, and ‘democracy’ of poor (mostly British) settlers gelled, with generous financial help from the mother country. Culminating in the

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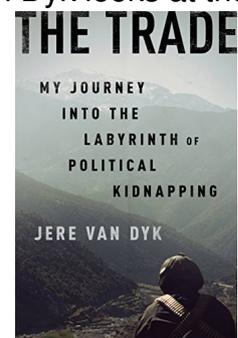
absurdity, if not outright fascism, of US politics today, a settler colony gone berserk.

As Trump ponders how to extract the last of the troops from (hopefully) the last US colonial adventure, what to do with Reagan's "freedom fighters" is a dilemma.

Reagan embraced the mujahideen in the heady 1980s, when the Cold War was at its peak, and the Islamic forces briefly were in sync with US imperialist objectives. As Ibrahim Haqqani* told US journalist Jere Van Dyk, explaining why the once revered Taliban suddenly became the enemy, and have been murdered nonstop for almost two decades, "We haven't changed, only the US has changed."

Not strictly true, as Van Dyk points out in *The Trade: My journey into the labyrinth of political kidnapping* (2017). 'You have suicide bombers and kidnappings as a racket.' To which Haqqani could argue, 'Yemenis have kidnapped people for centuries and kamikaze fighters are as old as warfare itself. We adopted them as tactics out of necessity.' When all you have is your life to give, you give it. And kidnapping is certainly better than murder.

In *The Trade: My journey into the labyrinth of political kidnapping* (2017), Van Dyk looks at the kidnappings



by Islamists (including his own) in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. While kidnappings by Iraqi insurgents from 2004 on, and ISIS from 2014, have resulted in dozens of deaths of hostages, only a few dozen foreign hostages have been taken in Afghanistan, resulting in only a handful of deaths. Van Dyk points out that the Haqqani network, kidnapping-central, has not killed any foreign hostages. Kidnapping is called 'the Trade', and is to produce revenue and to get the release of Taliban prisoners. The risk is more of botched rescue missions and the pretense of

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'no negotiations with terrorists'.

The Taliban are more like the North American natives, who were mowed down by racist, greedy settlers. Those Americans like Van Dyk who admire these 'freedom fighters', even after his own harrowing two months as a hostage, are also rediscovering the real North American 'freedom fighters': not the storybook colonial militiamen fighting the nasty Brits, but the natives who resisted the invaders, those very colonists, and the abolitionist colonials, who fought against slavery.

If we add in the many Muslim immigrants to North America, we have the making of a cultural shift against the whole colonial narrative. No wonder Trump tried to ban all Muslims, and hounds and tortures Muslims at home and abroad. He senses the beginning of the end of the colonial confidence trick, and lashes out blindly.

The real plot line is not 'we come to Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, wherever, to liberate natives from tyranny,' but 'we invade for geopolitical reasons to oppose those who resist US hegemony.' And the fallout is the hordes of economic refugees trying to get a piece of the pie, now waiting impatiently at the colonial doorway to their stolen wealth.

Westerners who can join the dots will look for ways to help the underdog, the 'good guys'. Some of these efforts are misguided (joining ISIS), but some, like Van Dyk's, struggle to make sense of the new narrative, and even accept what the media depicts as 'terrorism' as legitimate forms of struggle, given the way the cards are stacked to favour the 'bad guys'.



So we have John Lindh, who joined up with the Taliban in 2000 and was caught in the invaders' crosshairs in 2001. His crime? Liking the Taliban, trying to help them build an Islamic society in

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the face of US hostility. Finally out of prison after 17 years, as pro-Taliban as ever.

Then there's Bowe Bergdahl, who seems to have joined the army with the unconscious motive of defecting to the Taliban, bringing the invaders' killing to a halt, and risking his life as a hostage to help give them a helping hand. It worked. He liberated 5 Taliban leaders from Guantanamo, and exposed the madness of the occupation, as documented in [his biography](#), which is a litany of military cruelty, cynicism, infighting between the Pentagon, the CIA and FBI, and incredible waste. His 4 years of captivity kept the army et al busy looking for him, arguably making life under occupation more bearable for Afghans and even for US soldiers, who didn't have to press the agenda of terror so forcefully.

There are other [unsung western heroes](#) of resistance to the US wars in the Muslim world, some of whom convert to Islam, just as some of the colonists in North America 'went native', embracing the native way of life, rejecting their appointed role as invader-colonizer.

The fact that the Afghans have continued to resist the invaders, despite the overwhelming military force opposing them, is an inspiration, not only to the other resistance forces in the West and the Muslim world, but to wealthy Gulf Arabs, who continue to finance the Taliban (and who despise their own Saudi overlords). A Taliban official told Van Dyk: Arabs respect us because we gave up everything to protect bin Laden and fight for our country. We have never given in and we are an inspiration to them.

Even as Obama hurriedly spirited the 5 Taliban officials out of Guantanamo to ensure the safe return of Bergdahl

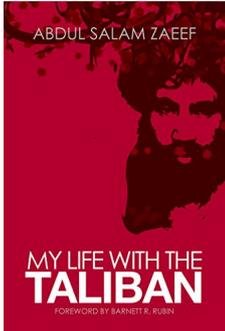


in 2016, he boasted of assassinating (by drone) Mullah Akhtar Mansour, leader of Taliban. Hold on. By initiating direct negotiations with the Taliban and making the prisoner exchange, doesn't that mean you're officially recognizing the Taliban and the Afghan Emirate? Is assassinating their leader a good way to instill confidence?

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Founding an Islamic state

Abdul Salam Zaeef, who last served as ambassador to Pakistan (i.e., Afghanistan's public face), lived through the Soviet and US invasions, capture by his Pakistani 'brothers', and Guantanamo hell. He came back to Afghanistan in 2006, but chose to live in Kabul in obscurity, insisting he was no longer interested in politics, and politely declining giving any advice to US occupiers or Afghan officials. They wouldn't leave him in peace, and, fearing for his life, he fled to the United Arab Emirates in 2012.

But if things move quickly, he and others like him will be able to step in and finally allow Afghanistan to heal. In any case, we can thank Zaeef for his courage both as a 'good' Taliban and as a chronicler. We are allowed inside the Taliban experience and can appreciate it for its basic sense of justice, divine justice.

In *My Life with the Taliban* (2010), Zaeef recounts his adventures as a mujahid. So many seemingly miraculous close-calls with bombs, snipers, ambushes, runaway tractors, duplicitous Pakistani officials ... He is a methodical thinker and his story rings true. Taliban history is colourful enough without resorting to exaggeration.

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They are the stuff of legend, like the Vietnamese a half century ago. They are the only uncorrupt force Afghanistan has left after 40 years of US meddling. Why don't we know this? Because the Taliban are not following (and never have) the American agenda. Iran gets the same treatment. You can call yourself an Islamic state -- as long as you follow US instructions (Saudi Arabia, Pakistan). In any case, our cynical culture would laugh at the simple 'straight path' narrative and worldview of Zaeef.



The last real Afghan leader before the Taliban's Mullah Omar was Mohammad Najibullah, a sincere communist. He was educated as a doctor in Moscow and knew and respected Soviet (and progressive western) culture. And his lurking mujahideen enemy, waiting to pounce, knew and respected that, grudgingly. He could easily have left along with the Soviet troops in 1989, or later in 1992 when it was clear that without the Soviet Union, he was doomed. But he chose to stay, to die with honour. He was no wallflower.

On the contrary, he took the initiative and negotiated "cash-for-compliance", self-government to local tribal leaders, financing them to work not against him, but with him. In western political jargon, a coalition government. Essentially, an alliance between the urban intelligentsia and the rural farmers.

No talk of land reforms or anti-niqab/birqa stuff. Just basic, uncorrupt law and order. For a while, it was a success. (Ask almost any Afghan who is old enough what the least-bad time was, and they will say 'after the Russian troops left when Najibullah was the leader.')

A truce with the insurgent mujahideen remnants. Many fighters were tired of endless war and were happy to get on with life.

The pressure from the US-Pakistan-backed anti-communist crusade finally forced Najibullah to

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cede power in 1992, and he was eventually assassinated in 1996. Communism was dead, but the collapse of order meant a collapse not only of the economy but of morality, as looting, extortion, sexual license and rape took over. Having successfully destroyed Afghanistan, the American 'allies' lost interest.

What happened next reads like a modern day hijrah. Zaeef and friends Abdul Qudus and Neda Mohammad decided to form a kind of citizens militia to resist the protection racket in their village. They appealed to others, distancing themselves from the decadent, chaotic post-communist nightmare.

Soon they had their own checkpoint and scared the village's bandits away. Volunteers joined and began to unite with others as Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) brought about their peaceful return to Mecca (629–630), involving no plunder, and granting amnesty to their enemies.

What happened in 1994-6 was a repeat of that 7th century religious-political moment, redeeming a society out of violence and chaos, no less astounding in its speed of transformation, and resulting -- in an instant -- in the rule of peace (sharia).

The Taliban had given beauty to the region just as a flower can brighten even the most barren desert. Soon dozens of volunteers came to join us, and only a few days after the movement started it had over four hundred members. Many businessmen and traders began to donate money.

Suddenly thrust into western-style political power, the Taliban had neither the experience nor even the interest in state-building. They forged on, declared Afghanistan to be an emirate and used a literal application of sharia according to the Hanafi school.

After close to two decades of war, millions of lives lost, their public executions, stonings, etc

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shocked the West. But their successes in bringing peace, disarming the population, ending opium production were ignored. They faced sanctions from outside and opposition from the Dari ethnicity in the north and the Hazara. They struggled to suppress these rebellions. They were never implicated in bin Laden's terrorism, but their efforts to reach an accommodation with the US were ignored, and the US used 9/11 as a pretext to invade.

Lessons

So the most obvious lesson is that Afghans will continue to look to the Taliban as the only honest force in Afghanistan, promising peace and sharia law. Mirwais Yasini, head of Hezb-i-Islami Khalis, now parliament's first deputy speaker, told Van Dyk: I am positive they will return. I know the blood of our people. We need to bring civilizations closer together.

Zaeef hints at past mistakes and the actual program of the Taliban today. While the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhist cliff statues was "within the letter of the Islamic law", he says it was "unnecessary". As a loyal Taliban, he will not denounce his then-leader and friend, Mullah Omar, but he had no part of this decision.

Zaeef admires Ismail Khan, the Hazara warlord and sworn enemy of the Taliban, as the only warlord who used revenues to help his people. But he insists

In Afghanistan each ethnic group may only prosper if there is unity. No one can protect their national honour with selfishness ... Afghans need to unite. Not let themselves and their children serve the Americans, killing other Afghans and being killed themselves.

Lesson two: Pakistan is the 'gray eminence' at work in Afghanistan. The Taliban are walking a minefield between Pakistan and the US with its puppet government in Kabul.

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Pakistan is obsessed with India. During the 1980s, Pakistan used the jihad groups to wipe out Indian influence in Afghanistan. They were happy with the Taliban and with bin Laden. The stars of the Twin Towers bombings in 1993 and 2001 were Pakistanis Ramzi Yusef and Ahmed Omar Sheikh, and there are lots of [fingerprints](#) , including harbouring bin Laden for a decade after 9/11.

So while Pakistan publicly announced that it was siding with the US-led coalition in Afghanistan, in reality it is keeping the Taliban alive, gambling on the eventual collapse of the Karzai-Ghani government, and its ability to control Afghanistan as their patron.

Their only betrayal was the 2010 capture of Taliban's top military commander, Mullah Baradar. But many believe Baradar's removal from the scene suited elements in the Pakistani establishment, as he had been acting outside Pakistan's control, holding secret peace talks with the Afghan government, and drifting closer to India.

The Taliban are not fools, and in power, will not follow Pakistan's intrigues. The spectre of [Pashtunistan](#) will never go away. And just in case Trump thinks his faux peace talks are paying off, a [suicide attack](#) in early May 2019 in Pul-e-Khumri blew up the police station and killed 13 when talks produced nothing. And Kandahar police stations have been under constant attack since April 2019.

How sharia law will be practiced will be debated. In public statements, the Taliban have renounced support for al-Qaeda, and accepted girls' education. The only way the West can help is through reconstruction under control of the uncorrupt Taliban.

Making peace with the Taliban

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The US must give up its insistence on trying to push its own blanket electoral agenda on the Afghans. To not



only respect Islam, but welcome it. “The [Taliban was now a part of our family](#) ,” said Bowe Bergdahl’s mother

Jani, as she waited stoically for news of her son. And she was just stating a fact and dealing with it, not rejecting or despising it.

Those embracing or at least admiring Islam in the West have seen through the moral swamp that they are growing up in. Lindh’s parents’ divorce was a turning point, his father announced he was gay, pushing John to look for a moral anchor in Islam. Our PC ‘cultural Marxism’ has [produced a flat, dead world](#)

. Lindh and Bergdahl’s quests are a tonic, not something to belittle or, worse, punish.

The victory in Afghanistan will be when the US acknowledges its colonial sins, not only in Afghanistan, but around the world, and most importantly, at home, where the remnants of the real Americans, the natives, must be acknowledged, and their wisdom of loving and working in harmony to honour nature integrated into what remains of Turtle Island.

XXX

*Brother of Jalaluddin Haqqani, the Taliban’s senior military leader in Afghanistan. He approached the NATO forces in 2002 at the behest of Jalaluddin Haqqani and Abdul Jalil with an offer of peace, but was instead arrested and tortured. Upon his release, Ibrahim Haqqani was appointed a governor by Hamid Karzai.