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Afghanistan

Abandoned and Betrayed

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Yet again, puritan barbarism has landed Kabul. Yet again, the bigger barbarism, the US imperialism, paved the way for the junior partner, the Taliban. However, instead of examining Kabul's ignominious fall, let's begin by flagging dangerously brave resistance to the Taliban occupation.

The first act of resistance, a day after Kabul fell, was embarrassingly miniscule in size but massively electrifying in influence. On 17 August five young women protested outside of the Presidential Palace, abandoned a day before by Ashraf Ghani. In the video footage that immediately went viral, one can watch them flashing placards in the face of the Taliban. They are chanting: "We exist. We are half Afghanistan. Don't conceal us. Don't harm us. Support us." Armed with guns, the Taliban were rude and abusive. However, as media crew arrived on the scene, they become nervous. [\[1\]](#)

Next day, a few dozen youth gathered in Jalalabad, to hoist Afghan flag atop a monument. The flag, like the national anthem, has been banned by the Taliban. The Taliban responded by firing at the gathering. Death toll: 3.

Day 3 of occupation: 19 August is celebrated as Yum-e-Istaklal (national day) to mark the anniversary of Afghan campaign to drive out the Brits in 1919. Ever since, every ruler has observed this day, except the Taliban (1997-2001). They banned it.

Holding Afghan flag, symbolizing defiance of Taliban since 16 August, thousands of youth poured on streets across the country on national day. In Kabul, 200-strong rally included 7 women. Crystal Bayat (24), with Afghan flag scarfed around her head, spearheaded the rally. "Every Talib was saying only 20 days you guys are free. So I just wanted to use this 20 days and raise my voice," she later stated in a video message. Media-savvy Taliban have shown relative restraint in Kabul. But in provinces, it is another story. Hence, Asadabad buried 16 youth massacred by the Taliban on national day.

"But haven't they changed?"

Briefly: NO. The global efforts to re-brand these fanatics is a two-pronged strategy. One: western governments are trying to justify, for domestic audiences, their lavish betrayal of the Afghans. Two: The make up being applied to produce good-looking Taliban for TV screens will help legitimize the forthcoming betrayal i.e. the recognition of Taliban regime. The cunning Taliban, for now, are also complicit in their re-packaging to remain valid and receive the western aid.

Beyond these image-building theatrics, reality is ugly. Afghans know. Hence, they are thronging the Kabul airport where Taliban humiliate and beat them.

In fact, the Taliban have been committing war crimes in the run-up to Kabul's capture. For instance, on 16 June 22 Afghan commandos were slaughtered in Dawlatabad after they had surrendered (footage available).

Reuters journalist, Danish Siddiquee (from India) was hunted down and assassinated after he had taken refuge in a mosque in Spin Boldik. The UN office in Herat was attacked, leaving the guard dead. Likewise, Sohail Pardis was

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beheaded mere because he had worked in the past as an interpreter for the US troops. This despite the Taliban promise that nobody would be targeted for having worked as interpreter. On August 3, Human Rights Watch regretted that the Taliban were committing war crimes by summarily executing detained soldiers as well as civilians for their alleged ties to the Afghan government.

An Afghan activist, summed up the re-branding debate on his Facebook. "Taliban have only horns [guns], they have no head [ideas]," he says. If they give up their horns (barbarity), they will be dissolved.

In fact, it is not the Taliban but the Afghans (women, in particular) have changed beyond the Taliban's recognition. Another group incapable of recognizing the unchanging character of Taliban is the troupe of self-styled "anti-imperialists" detecting decoloniality in the fall of Kabul.

Life no doubt was bad under the US occupation. Taliban suicide missions further compounded the misery bombed onto Afghan villages by the US war jets. The latter claimed more civilian lives. However, under the Taliban it will go from bad to worse. Once consolidated, Taliban will start deploying their horns more ruthlessly. Ayatollahs always speak sweetly in their inaugural speeches. Imperialism and Islamic fundamentalism happily symbiose (Saudia et al). Only when the latter disobey (Iran, al Qaida), the former reprimands. Real anti-imperialism/decoloniality will be to save Afghan lives, build global solidarity for Afghan resistance, help refugee outflows from the country and, most importantly: don't abandon Afghanistan yet again.

28 August 2021

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[1] See "[Negotiations in Mexico between the Venezuelan government and the right-wing opposition](#)".