

The Empire Is Not Done Torturing Afghanistan

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Once upon a time, in a galaxy not far away, the [Empire of Chaos](#) launched the so-called “War on Terror” against an impoverished cemetery of empires at the crossroads of Central and South Asia.

In the name of national security, the land of the Afghans was bombed until the Pentagon ran out of targets, as their chief Donald Rumsfeld, addicted to “known unknowns,” complained at the time.

Operation ‘Enduring Captivity’

Civilian targets, also known as “collateral damage,” was the norm for years. Multitudes had to flee to neighboring nations to find shelter, while tens of thousands were incarcerated for unknown reasons, some even dispatched to an illegal imperial gulag on a tropical island in the Caribbean.

War crimes were duly perpetrated – some of them denounced by an organization led by a sterling journalist who was subsequently subjected to years of [psychological torture](#) by the same Empire, obsessed with extraditing him into its own prison dystopia.

All the time, the smug, civilized ‘international community’ – shorthand for the collective west – was virtually deaf, dumb and blind. Afghanistan was occupied by over 40 nations – while repeatedly bombed and droned by the Empire, which suffered no condemnation for its aggression; no package after package of sanctions; no confiscation of hundreds of billions of dollars; no punishment at all.

The first casualty of war

At the peak of its unipolar moment, the Empire could [experiment](#) with anything in Afghanistan because impunity was the norm. Two examples spring to mind: Kandahar, Panjwayi district, March 2012: an imperial soldier kills 16 civilians and then burns their bodies. While in Kunduz, April 2018: a graduation ceremony receives a Hellfire missile

greeting, with over 30 civilians killed.

The final act of the imperial “non-aggression” against Afghanistan was a drone strike in Kabul that did not hit “multiple suicide bombers” but instead eviscerated [a family of 10](#), including several children. The “imminent threat” in question, identified as an “ISIS facilitator” by US intelligence, was actually an aid worker returning to meet his family. The ‘international community’ duly spewed imperial propaganda for days until serious questions started to be asked.

Questions also keep emerging on the conditions surrounding the Pentagon training of Afghan pilots [to fly the Brazilian-built A-29 Super Tucano](#) between 2016 and 2020, which completed over 2,000 missions providing support for imperial strikes. During training at Moody Air Force base in the US, more than half of the Afghan pilots actually went AWOL, and afterward, most were quite uneasy with the pile up of civilian ‘collateral damage.’ Of course the Pentagon has kept no record of Afghan victims.

What was extolled instead by the US Air Force is how the Super Tucanos dropped laser bombs on ‘enemy targets:’ Taliban fighters who “like to hide in towns and places” where civilians live. Miraculously, it was claimed that the “precision” strikes never “hurt the local people.”

That’s not exactly what an Afghan refugee in Britain, sent away by his family when he was only 13, [revealed over a month ago](#), talking about his village in Tagab: “All the time there was fighting over there. The village belongs to the Taliban (...) My family is still there, I do not know if they are alive or died. I don’t have any contact with them.”

Drone diplomacy

One of the first foreign policy decisions of the Obama administration in early 2009 was to turbo-charge a drone war over Afghanistan and the tribal areas in Pakistan. Years later, a few intelligence analysts from other NATO nations started to vent off the record, about CIA impunity: drone strikes would get a green light even if killing scores of civilians was a near certainty – as it happened not only in ‘AfPak’ but also across other war theaters in West Asia and North Africa.

Nevertheless, imperial logic is ironclad. The Taliban were by definition “terra-rists” – in trademark Bush drawl. By extension, villages in Afghan deserts and mountains were aiding and abetting “terra-rists,” so eventual drone victims would never raise a ‘human rights’ issue.

When Afghans – or Palestinians – become collateral damage, that’s irrelevant. When they become war refugees, they are a threat. Yet Ukrainian civilian deaths are meticulously recorded and when they become refugees, they are treated as heroes.

A massive ‘data-driven defeat’

As former British diplomat Alastair Crooke has [remarked](#), Afghanistan was the definitive showcase for [technical managerialism](#), the test bed for “every single innovation in technocratic project management” encompassing Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and military sociology embedded in ‘Human Terrain Teams’ – this experiment helped spawn Empire’s ‘rules-based international order.’

But then, the US-backed puppet regime in Kabul collapsed not with a bang, but a whimper: a spectacular [“data-driven defeat.”](#)

Hell hath no fury like Empire scorned. As if all the bombing, droning, years of occupation and serial collateral damage was not misery enough, a resentful Washington topped its performance by effectively stealing \$7 billion from the Afghan central bank: that is, funds that belong to roughly 40 million battered Afghan citizens.

Now, exiled Afghans are getting together trying to prevent relatives from 9/11 victims in the US to seize \$3.5 billion of these funds to pay off debts allegedly owed by the Taliban – who have absolutely nothing to do with 9/11.

Unlawful does not even begin to qualify the confiscation of assets from an impoverished nation afflicted by a currency in free fall, high inflation and a terrifying humanitarian crisis, whose only ‘crime’ was to defeat the imperial occupation on the battleground fair and square. By any standards, would that persist, the qualification of international war crime applies. And collateral damage, in this case, will mean the termination of any “credibility” still enjoyed by the “indispensable nation.”

The full amount of foreign reserves should be unequivocally returned to the Afghan Central Bank. Yet everyone knows that’s not going to happen. At best, a limited monthly installment will be released, barely enough to stabilize prices and allow average Afghans to buy essentials such as bread, cooking oil, sugar and fuel.

The west’s own ‘Silk Road’ was dead on arrival

No one remembers today that the US State Department came up with its own New Silk Road idea in July 2011, formally announced by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in a speech in India. Washington’s aim, at least in theory, was to re-link Afghanistan with Central/South Asia, yet privileging security over the economy.

The spin was to “turn enemies into friends and aid into trade.” The reality, however, was to prevent Kabul from falling into the Russia/China sphere of influence – represented by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) – after the tentative withdrawal of US troops in 2014 (the Empire ended up formally being expelled only in 2021).

The American Silk Road would eventually allow the go-ahead for projects such as the TAPI natural gas pipeline, the CASA-1000 electricity line, the Sheberghan thermal power facility and a national fiber optic ring in the telecom sector.

There was much talk about “development of human resources;” building infrastructure – railways, roads, dams, economic zones, resource corridors; promotion of good governance; building the capacity of “local stakeholders.”

A zombie of an empire

In the end, the Americans did less than nothing. The Chinese, playing the long game, will be leading Afghanistan’s resurgence, after patiently waiting for the Empire to be expelled.

Afghanistan for its part will be welcomed into the real New Silk Roads: the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), complete with financing by the Silk Road Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and interconnecting with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

(CPEC), the Central Asian BRI corridor, and eventually the Russian-led Eurasia Economic Union (EAEU) and the Iran-India-Russia-led International North South Transportation Corridor (INSTC).

Now compare and contrast with imperial minions NATO, whose “new” [strategic concept](#) boils down to expanded warmongering against the Global South, and beyond – including the outer galaxies. At least we know that should NATO ever be tempted back into Afghanistan, then another ritual, excruciating humiliation awaits.

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