

Afghanistan in Ruins: ‘Small’ Western Propaganda Lies, Huge Impact

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Ask anyone on the streets of Kabul about the revolutions that in recent years transformed huge parts of Latin America, and the chances are you'll encounter a blank stare. Perhaps mentioning Cuba could evoke at least some recognition, but definitely not Venezuela, Ecuador or Bolivia. I know because I tried on several occasions, and I failed.

Ask in the marvelous historic city of Herat, with its huge minarets and Italian military contingent, about Western imperialism, or about NATO and its murderous campaigns all over the world, and chances are that your question won't even be understood.

“Chances are that those Afghan people who can speak English or other Western languages, are now actually working for the Westerners; either for their military, or for their ‘defense’ contractors... or for the embassies, the United Nations, or perhaps some NGO”, explained an Asian reporter who is based in Afghanistan for more than two decades. “These people are not going to rock the boat, dwelling on crimes committed by the West, here and all over the world.”

That appears to be the case.

After more than 15 years of brutal Western occupation, Afghanistan appears to be thoroughly ruined. Not only in terms of its infrastructure and standards of living, and not only when it comes to all basic indicators like life expectancy (15th lowest in the world, according to the WHO, 2015) or education: all those things I expected.

But perhaps even more significantly, the country is destroyed morally and intellectually.

The only resistance the West is facing here, comes from extremist groups and movements such as the Taliban and *Daesh* (ISIS). All intellectual and artistic struggles against the occupation have been destroyed, contained, bought, or frightened into near absolute silence.

In fact, the occupation' is not even called 'occupation', anymore. Pragmatic, opportunistic definitions are increasingly taking over those once mainstream narratives. As I was informed by a wealthy family on an outing in the Panjshir Valley:

“We are fully dependent on the presence of NATO troops in our country. Only foreigners are offering us well-paid and stable jobs. If they leave, we'd have to follow them; to emigrate to the United States or Europe.”

This is far from the once proud and brave Afghanistan, which managed to defeat British invaders, after that delivering a mortal blow to the Soviet Union.

While in the country, I tried to investigate and to analyze; how on earth did Afghanistan end up on its knees? What force, what strategy was applied to break what appeared to be shatterproof?

It was clear that the West has managed to unleash and to uphold a very complex and tremendously successful indoctrination campaign, enslaving the nation by applying various 'weapons', which it has used in all corners of the world.

One of those 'weapons' is, of course, 'education'. For instance the American University of Kabul is literally regurgitating thousands of young sons and daughters of the elites, who are set on staying, after the proper dose of indoctrination and colorful diplomas, permanently loyal to the West. The nation's curriculum, I was told, has been defined during long meetings at the US Embassy and at the offices of the World Bank.

There is virtually an absolute control of information and media. As in all countries occupied by the West, as well as in all client states, the so-called social media plays a vital role, setting tendencies and directing discussion patterns.

There is rigorous grooming of oppressive local governments, military and police, the institutions that are then always ready to suppress any open criticism of the Western occupation, or even the word 'occupation' itself.

Then, naturally, as in all neo-colonies, there is that deadly interdependency between the elites and the West.

An academic Prof Jawid Amin from the Academy of Social Sciences of Afghanistan explained to me, bitterly, during our short encounter in Kabul:

"We don't have anyone openly critical of the US or the West here, because it is simply not allowed by the government. I personally don't like the Americans, but I can't tell you anything else... Even I work for the government. My brother and sister, as well as other relatives, are living in the United States. About critical arts: nothing could be exhibited here without permission from the government and since Karzai, the government is controlled by the West..."

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To discredit the former Soviet Union as well as the present-day Russia, and to smear China by all available indoctrination means, is one of the main goals of the Western propagandists and their local lackeys.

It is because, if unchecked, both China and Russia could steal the hearts and minds of the local people.

China's impressive plan for virtually all Central Asian countries, called OBOR ("One Belt One Road"), was never allowed to be fully presented for discussion to the local population. It is particularly absurd, even grotesque, considering that China considers Afghanistan to be an extremely important potential partner in the region.

The OBOR puts great accent on supporting local cultures, on true independence of the countries of Central Asia and beyond, and on the massive development of infrastructure, from telecommunication super highways, to real highways, railroads and airports, as well as 'social infrastructure', which would include schools, hospitals, public housing and sport facilities.

Implementing OBOR would create millions of new jobs for the local people, something crucial in a country like Afghanistan, where even in the capital Kabul (according to many calculations) the unemployment rate has reached about 50%, and over 80% in many provincial capitals and the countryside.

For the West, smearing China is essential. It has been building huge hospital wings, instead of watchtowers, which means it has been providing the wrong example to Afghan people, raising wrong expectations.

The best example of the toxic anti-Chinese propaganda has been MesAynak. This ancient archaeological site contains many priceless cultural treasures, some over 5.000 years old.

It is also located in the area of arguably the greatest copper deposits in the region.

Several years ago, a Chinese state-owned company (MCC) signed a MOU with the Afghan government. The company paid for the mining rights, but until now has not extracted one single kilogram of copper, despite pressure from the Afghan Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, which has been pushing for an immediate start to the excavation work. Why? Because the Chinese government gave orders to MCC to wait, so the archaeological treasures could be safely excavated and preserved for the sake of Afghanistan and the world.

I was explained by various international experts based in Kabul, that the Chinese President Xi Jinping declared at the Preliminary Session of the UN General Conference in New York, in November 2016, that his idea of OBOR is in fact a New Silk Road, and that it is based on the economic cooperation and on the promotion of the cultural preservation in the countries of the former Silk Road. Again, Afghanistan is clearly one of the most significant countries.

The Afghan Ministry of Mines and Petroleum has for years been locked in a dispute with the hopelessly inept and disorganized (according to several of my sources who prefer to remain anonymous) Ministry of Information and Culture.

Corruption also appears to be a serious issue.

Until now, MCC has absolutely not done anything, except for some preliminary geological surveys conducted in 2008 and 2009. The company is losing a substantial amount of money, annually, but the orders from Beijing are clear: first the preservation of cultural treasures, and only then, economic interests.

A similar approach would of course be unthinkable from any Western mining company, many of which are murdering and displacing the local population, in such places as Papua or South America. That is why the professional propaganda has to be applied, and all good intentions dragged through dirt. This sort of ideological warfare is actually one of the mightiest weapons of Western imperialism, implemented in virtually all corners of the globe.

In March 2017, the Head of the Culture Unit of UNESCO, Mr. Masanori Nagaoka, told me clearly and frankly:

“The Chinese company (MCC) has not yet commenced any copper exploitation activity at the site ... It is because they respect the Afghan government’s wish to preserve the cultural artifacts of MesAynak.”

UNESCO is now deeply involved in the process of saving all the valuable finds of the site.

I was shown several up to date photographs, proving that no work has yet begun, and that at MesAynak, absolutely no damage has been done to the cultural heritage of Afghanistan.

However, the more evidence there is proving that nothing sinister has happened, the more toxic the eruption of propaganda against China and its presence in Afghanistan, virtually all coming from Western and West-sponsored outlets. Entire ‘documentary films’ have been produced and broadcast, recounting the non-existent ‘crimes’ which have been, or ‘could soon be’, committed by China against Afghan culture.

The most notorious is a documentary film by Brent E. Huffman, which was broadcast, among others, by *Al-Jazeera*. To quote from its own site, the film is addressing

“A race against time to save a 5,000-year-old archaeological site in Afghanistan threatened by a Chinese state-owned copper mine.”

Ms. Hiromi Yasui, a Kyodo News reporter who is based in Afghanistan since 1993, confirmed what I already heard from several independent sources:

“At MesAynak, there is no digging whatsoever... The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum wants work to commence soon. Therefore, there is a clash between them and the Ministry of Information and Culture. Lots of money disappeared, too... there is corruption... Regarding China, whenever there is a slightest chance that it could be doing something wrong, an anti-Chinese propaganda gets immediately activated.”

Now several legendary Chinese institutions of learning, including Renmin University and Northwest University in Xi’an, are getting involved, trying to help with the preservation of the site. This news is, however, hardly ever heard in Afghanistan and abroad.

“The propaganda against China or Soviet Union now Russia, is of course nothing new”, explained a renowned Afghan intellectual, Dr. Omara Khan Masoudi, who used to be, among many other things, the former head of the National Museum:

“During the Cold War, the propaganda was truly extreme. Even such publications like ‘Le Monde’; they were writing that some of our greatest treasures were looted and siphoned to Moscow... We knew it was a lie, because we had hidden the treasures ourselves, in the premises of the Presidential Palace, and in the Ministries. And what was our answer to the Western propaganda? We created a small, one-day exhibition of our Afghan treasures, just 50-60 of the most important pieces, displayed for 2-3 hours, demonstrating that they are all still on the territory of our country”.

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While other countries are trying to build and preserve, the United States and the west could hardly show any coherent strategy for how to help the country they have been persistently ruining for decades and centuries. Despite the huge sums of money spent, almost nothing tangible was constructed here since 2001. That is, if the monstrous air force bases like the one at Bagram do not particularly impress you, or those bizarrely tall concrete walls that could be seen everywhere, or the endless surveillance cameras, towers and drones, as well as the military centers at every corner, stuffed with grotesquely overpaid foreign 'contractors'.

Andrew J. Bacevich wrote for the New York Times on 14 March 2017, trying to define (in the "Opinion" column) the chaos and perplexity of the 'longest American war':

"Despite appropriating over three-quarters of a trillion dollars on Afghanistan since 2001, Afghan security forces continue to be plagued by the problem of inflated rolls, with local commanders pocketing American-supplied funds to pay for nonexistent soldiers..."

"Large-scale corruption persists, with Afghanistan third from the bottom in international rankings... Adjusted for inflation, American spending to reconstruct Afghanistan now exceeds the total expended to rebuild all of Western Europe under the Marshall Plan; yet to have any hope of surviving, the Afghan government will for the foreseeable future remain almost completely dependent on outside support."

"And things are getting worse. Although the United States has invested \$70 billion in rebuilding Afghan security forces, only 63 percent of the country's districts are under government control, with significant territory lost to the Taliban over the past year. Though the United States has spent \$8.5 billion to battle narcotics in Afghanistan, opium production there has reached an all-time high."

After this, Andrew J. Bacevich makes a dramatic conclusion:

"For this, over the past 15 years, nearly 2,400 American soldiers have died, and 20,000 more have been wounded."

Oh, that bad, terrible Afghanistan - money guzzling, ungrateful and corrupt monster-state!

Of course anyone who has recently visited the country, and who is in possession of at least some ability of thinking objectively, must be rolling on the floor, dying from laughter, after consuming such reports.

Where is 'over a three-quarters of a trillion dollars' visible 'on the ground'? Ask the internally displaced people who are pouring into Kabul from all corners of the country, escaping misery, joblessness and fighting. They have nothing; absolutely nothing!

Let's do some simple math: three quarters of a trillion is 750 billion. Dollars. Afghanistan has almost 32 million inhabitants (estimate, 2014). Divide 750 billion by 32 million and you get 23,437 dollars and 50 cents, per capita per 15 years. Even a tiny Afghan family of two adults and two children could then count on \$93,750! Which would be \$6,250 per basic tiny family

unit per year, for 15 consecutive years. Lucky, lucky country, Afghanistan!

Just a reminder, that with those mountains of money, since 2001, the United States didn't build a single mile of a railroad, no large public hospital or a public housing block.

So where did the money go? Could it be possible that the West itself has wasted it on its greatest addiction - a perpetual conflict and chaos? Could it be that the Afghan people are simply being used, even sacrificed—that their nation is sinking into deeper and deeper poverty, their culture changing or disappearing altogether, their hope for recovery and better life now almost gone -just so that this tremendous 'recycling action' of three-quarters of a trillion dollars could go on and on?

The Afghanistan war, 'the longest in the US history', is yet another 'secret war' of the Empire. Everyone knows that it exists, but no one seems to understand what it is all about.

In the meantime, 2,400 American 'boys and girls' have already died. If anything, this seems to be the only preoccupation in the West.

I'm wondering how many Afghans died? How many millions have been forced to become refugees, how many millions are now internally displaced? Do they matter; do they count? Nobody seems to talk about them. How many lives were lost, really; how many were broken, thoroughly ruined?

In the meantime, many Western reports and documentary films are more preoccupied with such issues as a Chinese mining company and the worries that 'one day it may actually start digging'.

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