

Afghans Turn On Reviled Occupiers

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Shock, incomprehension, fury. Americans are feeling these raw emotions as news keeps coming in of more attacks by Afghan government soldiers and officials on US and NATO troops. Six US troops were killed last week as a result of protests across Afghanistan following the burning of the Holy Quran by incredibly dim-witted [par for the course] American soldiers. "Aren't they supposed to be our allies? We are over there to save them! What outrageous ingratitude," ask angry, confused American occupiers.



Angry Britons asked the same questions in 1857 when "sepoys," individual mercenary soldiers of Britain's Imperial Indian Army, then entire units rebelled and began attacking British military garrisons and their families. British history calls it the "Indian Mutiny." Indians call it the "Great Rebellion" marking India's first striving for freedom from the British Raj and the Indian vassal princes who so dutifully served it.

Britons were outraged by the "perfidy" and "treachery" of their Indian sepoys who were assumed to be totally loyal because they were fighting for the king's shilling. Victorian Britain reeled from accounts of frightful massacres of Britons at places like Lucknow, Cawnpore, Delhi, and Calcutta's infamous "black hole."

As Karl Marx observed watching the ghastly events in India, western democracies cease practicing what they preach in their colonies. British forces in India, backed by loyal native units, mercilessly crushed the Indian rebels. Rebel ringleaders were tied to the mouths of cannon and blown to bits, or hanged en masse.

Today's Afghanistan recalls Imperial India. Forces of the US-installed Kabul government, numbering about 310,000 men, are composed of Tajiks and Uzbeks from the north, some Shia Hazaras, and a hodgepodge of rogue Pashtun and mercenary groups. Ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks served the Soviets when they occupied Afghanistan as well as the puppet Afghan Communist Party. Today, as then, Tajiks and Uzbeks form the core of government armed forces and secret police. They are the blood enemies of the majority Pashtun, who fill the ranks of Taliban and its allies in Afghanistan and neighbouring Pakistan.

But half the Afghan armed forces and police serve only to support their families. The Afghan economy under NATO's rule is now so bad that even in Kabul, thousands are starving or dying from

intense cold. Half of Afghans are unemployed and must seek work from the US-financed government.

But loyal they are not. While covering the 1980's jihad against Soviet occupation, I saw everywhere that soldiers and officials supposedly loyal to the Communist Najibullah regime in Kabul kept in constant touch with the anti-Soviet mujahidin and reported all Soviet and government troops movements well in advance. The same thing occurs today in Afghanistan. Taliban know about most NATO troops operations before they leave their fortified bases. Among Afghans, the strongest bonds of loyalty are family, clan and tribal connections. They cut across all politics and ideology.

Afghans are a proud, prickly people who, as I often saw, take offense all too easily. Pashtuns are infamous for never forgetting an offense, real or imagined, and biding their time to strike back. This is precisely what has been happening in Afghanistan, where arrogant, culturally ignorant US and NATO 'advisors' - who are really modern versions of the British Raj's "white officers leading native troops" -- offend and outrage the combustible Afghans. Those who believe 20-year old American soldiers from the Hillbilly Ozarks can win the hearts and minds of Pashtun tribesmen are fools.

Proud Pashtun Afghans can take just so much from detested foreign "infidels" and 'advisors' before exploding and exacting revenge. This also happened during the Soviet era. But some Soviet officers at least had more refined cultural sensibilities in dealing with Afghan. US-Afghan relations are not going to flowers when American troops call the Afghans "sand niggers" and "towel heads."

Many Afghans have just had enough of foreign occupiers. Americans lost the Afghan War the day they attacked fiercely independent Afghans. As the Imperial British used to say: *you can only rent Afghans for so long. One day they will turn and cut your throat.*

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