

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind

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Afghan Taliban: Pursuing the Emarat Agenda

Afghan Taliban group is the result of civil war among different groups in Afghanistan. The civil wars in 1990s were apparently centered on the ethnic and religious discourses. What looks amazing about the main cause of these wars is the personal interest of Afghan political leaders in 1990s.

However, this trend looks as a constant political pattern among the Afghan political leaders including the Taliban; Taliban claim that they fight against the Afghan government because it is the US puppet. At the same time they claim they fight to liberate Afghanistan from the invasion of the US troops. As their political office is in Qatari capital Doha and their leadership Shora is in Quetta of Pakistan, and they get agendas for any political and military actions from out of country, how they claim they are an independent group? At the same time, there are US military bases in all Gulf countries. All the Gulf countries and Pakistan receive military and financial supports from the US, then why it is good for these countries, but it is bad for Afghanistan?

In fact, the politics is a paradoxical game in Afghanistan; for many Afghan leaders the base of whether something is good or bad, is not the national interest, but the personal gain. The leaders of the golf countries or Pakistan favor their national interests to their personal interests. As a result, when they make a political decision, they assess it from different angles and dimensions. For example, in terms of the military presence of a country, they will apply a rational choice model. Based on this model there is nothing good or bad; but there are positive and negative impacts. If the military presence of a powerful country can ensure their security, create military balance between their countries and neighboring countries, provide a base for economic development and sustaining it, they will decide to give a military base to the concerned super power.

However, most of Afghan political leaders including the Taliban are not independent. These groups and their leaders are a means for proxy wars. Groups like the Afghan Taliban have been created to fulfill the Agendas of other countries; that's why Minister for Parliamentary Affairs of Pakistan said victory of Afghan Taliban against the Kabul Administration in the peace talks was as the victory of Pakistan. The draft peace agreement between the US and the Taliban gave strategic leverage to Taliban against the Afghan government, though the Afghan government was sidelined from the process. The Taliban only looked to satisfy what Pakistan wanted from them and the political system that could ensure this demand was the Islamic Emarat and not the Islamic Republic system. Because in the Islamic Emarat Taliban could marginalize other ethnic and religious groups and give them no voice in the government. In the Emarat system people do not have religious rights, ethnic rights, human rights, basic rights and freedom of opinion and press. In the Emarat system, there will be no democratic constitution to consider all the Afghan citizens, men and women, as equal citizens of the country.

Peace with the Taliban as a proxy group which pushes for Agendas of other countries is a challenging process for both Afghan government and the US. The best peace strategy with the Taliban is suppressing them harshly to the extent that they feel insecure both in Afghanistan and in their safe havens out of the country. Only in such a context they will really submit to set on the negotiations table and accept inclusion of other groups in the power.



Star of 'Buddha Collapsed out of Shame' is Forgotten

By: Hujjatullah Zia

Nikbakht Frahmand, who starred the film "Buddha Collapsed out of Shame" directed by Hana Makhmalbaf in 2007, is seeking to continue her role in terms of culture and art, however, she encounters challenges and there is no organ to support her to reach her ambitions.

The movie, Nikbakht starred in Bamyan province, begins and ends with the shocking 2001 newsreel image of the Taliban blowing up the gigantic statues of the Buddha in Bamyan and in between presents a day in the life of a girl living in the impoverished village still littered with the rubble from the explosion.

In the film, Nikbakht, known as Bakhtay in Foladi Valley in Bamyan, seeks to go to school, but she is waylaid by a gang of boys playing the role of the Taliban militants. They terrorize Bakhtay, rip pages from her book, seize her irreligious lipsticks, put a paper bag over her head and pretend to bury her alive. This game reflects the ideology of the Taliban, who violated women's rights to education and closed girls' schools. Bakhtay weeps painfully when the gang stop her from going to school. "Was the cry real?", I asked Nikbakht, in a personal interview in Bamyan. "Since it was a very emotional scene, I really cried," she answered. Nikbakht neither watched a movie nor trained as an actress before playing the role in the film. She had been simply guided minutes before playing the scene. She presented in the movie with her own local dress. Although the movie got highly popular and won a number of prizes, Nikbakht was forgotten. She was simply paid Afghani 250 (around \$ 3) per day while playing the scene, but none of the prizes. All the praises and privileges went to Iranian director Hana Makhmalbaf, with home Nikbakht lost contact.

Nikbakht has five brothers, who go to school, but no sister and her middle-aged father works in a farm. She lives in a simple mud-built house in Bamyan province. She studies her first year in archeology department in Bamyan University. Despite all economic and cultural challenges, Nikbakht is directing and producing short movies and documentaries to play her role in art and culture. "I face many challenges and people do not view a girl, engaged in cinema or film, positively. They are very traditional. But I have to campaign in cultural activities and arts," said Nikbakht. She is not happy with the government since neither a governmental organ nor any non-governmental organization supports her. However, she seems very determined and hopeful and her active role in art is inspiring for other Bamyan girls. "What is your dream come true?" I asked. "I would like to continue my education in the current department, but I am highly interested in art and will continue my activity in this regard, too," she replied.



She is happy for having the support of her family with her. She said, with a smile, that her father supports her to get education and continue her artistic role.

Leaving her home, I went to visit the statues of Bamyan Buddha, where Nikbakht played the scene. The two 6th-century monumental statues of Gautama Buddha carved into the side of a cliff in Bamyan were dynamited and destroyed in March 2001 by the Taliban, after their leadership declared that they were idols.

Despite carrying great cultural significance, the two statues are now the reminiscent of Taliban's cruel acts and radical ideology.

Overall, the film "Buddha Collapsed out of Shame" reflects the Taliban's destructive role towards cultural relics and their restrictive role regarding women's education. Although Nikbakht played the best possible role in the movie, she had been fully forgotten.

Nikbakht's great artistic talent is easily noticed in the movie she starred. She cherishes lofty ambitions with strong determination and struggle. The government has to support the country's talents, especially those like Nikbakht who struggles to reflect the life of women despite cultural restrictions.

If young talents are not encouraged, they are likely to lose their morale. The government has to provide best education opportunities for them and support them economically.

Meanwhile, we are lucky to have a large number of hard-working and ambitious people despite all the challenges. Those who remain hopeful amid a surge in disappointment will generate hope and optimism for others. With this in mind, the government should not underestimate their constructive role in the society and do not turn its back on them.

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Who Benefits from False Climate Solutions?

By: Karin Nansen

In a recent special report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) argues that addressing climate change will require fundamental changes to the way we manage forests and farmland. The data are new, but the underlying conclusion isn't: for over a decade, scientists, environmentalists, and civil-society organizations have been warning that our prevailing – and deeply unjust – model of production and consumption lies at the root of the climate crisis. Protecting the planet on which our survival depends will require nothing short than system change

The world – and the developed countries, in particular – has built an economic system focused on capital accumulation, which privileges corporate profits over the wellbeing of people and the environment, entrenching injustice and rewarding its perpetrators. This process has been unfolding for centuries, but has accelerated in recent decades, as a select few have acquired an ever-larger share of total wealth and political influence. Today, just 100 corporations produce 71% of greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions. The wealthiest 10% of people are responsible for around 50% of GHG emissions, while the poorest 50% produce 10% of emissions.

Unwilling to stand up to those who are destroying our planet, political leaders have latched onto technological solutions, including geoengineering approaches that promise to suck already-emitted carbon out of the atmosphere. Even the IPCC included assumptions about such technologies in many of its modeled pathways for keeping global temperatures from rising more than 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels.

But geoengineering technologies are unproven, unsafe, and unrealistic. Consider bio-energy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS), the leading proposed path to "net-negative" emissions. BECCS entails growing certain crops as biomass, burning the plant material for energy, capturing the CO2 emitted during combustion, and storing it underground.

That sounds promising until one recognizes that growing biomass on the necessary scale would require an estimated three billion hectares – twice the Earth's currently cultivated land. Any attempt to implement BECCS would thus be impossible without mass deforestation and soil degradation in the tropical belt of the Southern Hemisphere, where most fast-growing biomass is produced. Land grabs are virtually guaranteed. Moreover, as agricultural land was transformed to produce biomass, food prices could rise, fueling hunger and malnutrition. And the destruction of vital ecosystems would eliminate the livelihoods of local communities and indigenous peoples.

Hyping BECCS and other misleading promises – such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) initiatives and carbon-trading schemes – is expedient for rich countries, corporations, and elites, because the technology charade enables them to continue profiting from the climate crisis they have created. But, by distracting from real imperatives, it allows the crisis to deepen and disproportionately affect those who have contributed the least.

It is time for those who caused the climate crisis to take responsibility for addressing it. To this end, developed-country governments must take the lead in drastically cutting emissions at source by pursuing a comprehensive transformation of their energy, transport, food and economic systems.

Essential steps include ending investment in fossil fuels; transforming our energy systems towards community and public renewable energy systems; abandoning destructive practices like industrial agriculture and logging; community management of biodiversity and water resources; and reorganizing urban life to support sustainability. Neoliberal trade and investment agreements that prioritize the interests of business over environmental sustainability and human rights must be reversed to allow for these solutions.

At the same time, developed-country governments must provide large-scale public financing to support the much-needed transformation in the developing world. To succeed, the transition must be just and ensure the rights of workers, peasants, women, migrants, and indigenous peoples. Here, public and community ownership is crucial.

Social movements in the Global South are already providing models of this approach. For example, La Via Campesina – an international movement comprising peasants, smallholder farmers, agricultural workers, rural women and youth, indigenous people, and others – has shown how peasant agriculture and agroecology can cool the planet, feed its inhabitants, nurture its soil, support its forests, safeguard seed diversity, and protect water basins.

Moreover, community forest management helps to safeguard the forests, protecting the livelihoods of those who depend on them and preserving biodiversity. (As it stands, only 8% of the world's forests are in the hands of communities.)

With strong political will and the right policies, we can systemically tackle climate change and related crises, including biodiversity loss, water scarcity, hunger, and rising inequality. If, however, we keep indulging the fantasy that some "silver bullet" solution will rescue us, progress will be impossible.

Karin Nansen is the chair of Friends of the Earth International.

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