

Orientalizing Afghanistan: The case of Swedish TV (Svt 1)

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A while ago, I was watching news as usual on Swedish state TV (Svt 1). I am in general a huge fan of the Swedish television system (but this is a topic for another time). However, the news coverage on Svt is always so very problematic when it comes to Cuba and Venezuela [as a rule], the Middle East [not always] and Afghanistan [almost as a rule].

Today in 19:30 news [Rapport], Svt's Mid-Eastern correspondent Samir Abu Eid (often brilliantly covering Palestine) was reporting from north of Afghanistan. And on watching the report I felt like having more money so that I could break the screen of my TV set and buy a new one.

This is what he reported: interviewed a peasant in a village. Some footage of the village (a woman in burka, unpaved streets, half-naked children). Gathering of men (visibly organised for televised spectacle). And he narrates: ' Afghans have been living here for centuries. Religion is the most important influence on them. Maybe some small groups are protesting in Kabul but here in the countryside, most people are happy with the Taliban.' [Not verbatim].

The peasant featured in the report is quoted saying how everybody is so happy after all peace has been restored, trade is flourishing, etc. His friend reaffirms.

A digression: That he, with his Mid-Eastern background, was orientalizing Afghanistan shows that it is ideology not the skin colour that matters.

Anyway, I wonder if it occurred to our Svt correspondent that:

1. under the Taliban will a peasant dare criticise them?
2. did he try to find out if Afghans prioritise religion more than jobs, hospital and schools in the village, paved roads, etc. or they don't want any change and are content with the mosque and mullah?
3. did he try to find out: why the north of Afghanistan, where Swedish troops were deployed and Sweden was sending a billion crowns annually, remains this poor? where that money disappeared and who pocketed that money and why for 20 years Svt was not covering the north of Afghanistan? Not even Kabul.

Sorry for the longish post. But here are some of the consequences when the western media orientalises Afghanistan.

1. Since Afghans cannot change ever. Hence, US defeat is blamed on Afghan people.
2. Any notion of solidarity with Afghan resistance is delegitimized. After all, it is a minority that wants women rights, etc. A majority is for the Taliban.
3. Hell with Afghan refugees. They are a minoritywesternized minority.

My question to Samir Abu Eid: well, if your beloved Taliban are indeed popular why don't they hold elections and legitimize their popularity? And elections under the UN mandate. I am not talking about Iranian-style elections here.

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P.S.

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