

Will the Taliban fight; or will they join the process of reconciliation with the occupiers and the puppet regime?

Note: The following article [Will the Taliban fight; or will they join the process of reconciliation with the occupiers and the puppet regime?] was penned by comrade Zia and published in Sholajawid # 25, round 3, 2011, when the above question was first posed after the US imperialists announced its plan to withdraw by 2014 and the puppet regime increased its efforts to reconcile with the Taliban. Now that the US imperialists are set to complete their withdrawal before 11 September 2021 and have pinned all their hopes on the United Nations-led diplomatic efforts to establish peace between the puppet regime and the Taliban insurgency, this article is useful in understanding the situation as it is explaining the historical context of Taliban's emergence and the nature of the movement.

After twenty years of military engagement, the US has finally withdrawing all its combat forces from Afghanistan. However, a military withdrawal does not mean an end to American imperial engagement in Afghanistan. Both the US imperialists and their puppet regime in Kabul have called the withdrawal, "the start of a new chapter in their relationship."

Now an UN-led conference is planned to take place in Istanbul, Turkey to seal an agreement between the two by reorganizing the regime in Kabul to include the Taliban. So far, due to the Taliban's refusal to participate, the Istanbul conference has been postponed twice. Taliban are unhappy with the US decision to break a term of the US and Taliban agreement, signed in February 2020, according to which, all the US forces should have been withdrawn from Afghanistan by May 1st, 2021.

In return for a US promise to withdraw by May 1, the Taliban has promised to cut ties with al Qaida, begin negotiations with the puppet regime to end the two decades-long conflict, and guarantees that Afghanistan would not be used as a place to target American interests. In September 2020 direct negotiations started between the puppet regime and the Taliban in Doha. These talks have only led to intensified military efforts on both sides. However, since the February agreement between the US and the Taliban, no occupying forces have died in Afghanistan; Taliban not only ceased attacking the US targets, but there are media report that the Taliban have even protected the US led imperialist occupying forces from other insurgents groups during this time.

However, the war has intensified between the Taliban and the puppet regime across the country. So far, years of the diplomatic efforts have produced little. Instead, it has intensified the viciousness of war between the Taliban and the puppet regime. With every progress in diplomacy, both sides have increased violence to gain the upper hand on the battlefield in order to turn it into gains at the negotiating table.

Even now that serious efforts are underway to persuade the Taliban to attend the Istanbul conference and seek a political settlement, war is raging across the country. Both sides are inflicting huge casualties, including thousands of civilians and tens of thousands of families are being displaced as a result.

In the Moscow conference, on March 18, 2021, the US, China, and Russia issued a joint statement, declaring their opposition to the return of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, calling on the Taliban to end the war through negotiations. This shows a consensus between major powers who want the Taliban to enter a power-sharing arrangement with the regime in Kabul.

The US state department devised a political road map for peace which involves a transitional peace government that includes both sides. Although, the president of the puppet regime had initially opposed the idea of a transitional government, it seems the US has managed to bring him on board with their plan. The puppet regime, the US imperialists, and all its allies are emphasizing that the Taliban has no justification for continuing its war after the US and its allies have withdrawn from Afghanistan.

The situation is uncertain. The US imperialists, its allies and regional powers are seeking to end the Taliban insurgency through diplomatic efforts, which so far, proven to be effective in intensifying the violence.

Sholajwid # 20, round 4, (April 2019) stated:

[T]his is a proven historical truth in all wars, that the victory and defeat of different sides of the war are decided on the battlefield and not on the negotiating table...Therefore, first, the victor of the current war in Afghanistan must be determined on the battlefield. Then, this victory in war must be confirmed at the negotiating table where one side surrenders or is smashed by the victorious side, and peace is achieved.

So far, the war in Afghanistan does not have a clear victor. The loss of the US aerial support for the puppet regime would benefit the Taliban on the battlefield. The US and NATO withdrawal emboldens the Taliban to push ahead with war until a total victory. The US imperialists have pledged to continue to provide financial and military support to its puppet regime in Kabul. The regime is showing boldface and asserting that they would sustain dominance in the war. However, now their principal strategy is to persuade the Taliban to end their war through negotiation and enter a power-sharing arrangement with the puppet regime.

Although, this piece written ten years ago, its analysis remain relevant to understand the current situation.

Sholajawid, 10 May 2021

Will the Taliban fight; or will they join the process of reconciliation with the occupiers and the puppet regime?

Sholajawid # 25, round 3, 2011

Recently, the US Ambassador to Afghanistan announced that the Taliban will not attend the Bonn II conference. He said that they would have the right to enter the political process when they give up war, accept the puppet regime's constitution and sever their ties with al-Qaeda. Hamid Karzai, the head of the puppet regime had said earlier that the Taliban can only participate as part of the Afghan government's delegation, and if they attend the conference independently, Afghanistan (meaning the puppet regime) will not attend. The remarks of the US ambassador mean that the Taliban would not participate in the Bonn II conference either independently, or as part of the regime's delegation. Thus, it illustrates that neither the puppet regime's nor the US imperialists' efforts to "reconcile" with the Taliban have succeeded.

What is the problem? Why have the puppet regime's and its imperialist occupying masters' prolonged public and secret efforts to "reconcile with the Taliban" not succeeded so far? To answer this question, one must follow the issue from the time of the formation of the Taliban, and even before that.

To pave the way for a "dignified" withdrawal of the Soviet social-imperialist occupying forces from Afghanistan, the Geneva talks in 1988 were conducted between Pakistan and the Soviet's puppet regime in Kabul, in which the *Mujahideen* factions did not participate. This political insignificance of *Mujahideen* internationally was accompanied by two significant internal military-political failures: one, the failure of many years of military efforts to overthrow the regime after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan and second the vast desertion of *mujahideen* commanders to the soviet social-imperialist's puppet regime's [Najib's regime] "policy of national reconciliation."

In 1992 Najib regime's policy of compromise and collusion, based on the "policy of national reconciliation", seemed to be gaining ground and the resistance, which by then was completely under the leadership of Western-supported jihadists, seemed to be faltering.

But the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Warsaw pact, and the regimes in Eastern Europe were pushing Najib's regime and its central political force, the Patriotic Party (the renamed People's Democratic Party), towards fissure and breakdown. Despite the collapse of the Warsaw pact, if Gorbachev's regime had not collapsed and the Soviet Union had not disintegrated, it was possible for Najib's regime to remain in place and its "policy of national reconciliation" to finally work. However, with the fall of Gorbachev and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the death knell of Najib's regime rang loudly and was quickly realized.

The *mujahideen* Islamic state, since its inception in April 1992, was divided into two hostile and warring factions, between those affiliated with the Russian imperialists and its regional allies on the one hand, and those affiliated with the Western imperialists and their regional allies on the other. It was in the two years of warfare following Mujahideen's tragic rise to power in 1992, when the faction affiliated with the Russian imperialists and its regional allies were gradually gaining

ground and its nemesis, the coalition led by Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, was faltering, that the Taliban movement emerged in mid-1994. Taliban advanced rapidly in different parts of the country and was able to take control of Kabul from the Massoud and Rabanni led Islamic regime, and two years after its initial emergence it announced the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

The Taliban movement's emergence was internally motivated by the purification of the Islamic Movement from "immorality", the disunity of jihadi organizations, confronting the emerging Tajik dominance of the state, and gathering all the Pashtun reactionaries under one umbrella to restore the dominance of the Pashtun ruling classes. Externally, it arose through the support of the reactionary governments of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and the American and British imperialist. However, after the takeover of Kabul and the declaration of the Islamic Emirate by the Taliban, this internal and external unity was damaged, and the process of its collapse began. Factions within the Taliban supporting Zahir Shah (the ex-king), members of the PDPA, and Afghan Melatis began to distance themselves from the Taliban. The assassination of Hamid Karzai's father in Quetta, Pakistan by the Taliban further intensified this process.

While the Taliban movement since its inception had been supported by the governments of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the American and British imperialists, it also had the support of various religious fundamentalist, non-governmental and political groups in Pakistan and Arab countries, including religious military-political groups. After Osama's return to Afghanistan and the establishment of the Islamic Emirate by the Taliban in the country, the concentration of al-Qaeda and other foreign Islamist military-political groups in Afghanistan and their support for the Taliban Islamic Emirate expanded and deepened. They supported the Taliban's war efforts and also exercised significant influence in the country.

After al-Qaeda attacks on US targets in the Middle East and Tanzania, the rift between yesterday's benefactor and patron widened, which had previously begun to emerge as a result of Osama's opposition to US forces in Saudi Arabia. Al-Qaeda bases in eastern and southeastern Afghanistan, which were first established during the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet social imperialists with the help of American imperialists, were attacked by long-range American cruise missiles. The purpose of this attack was to kill Osama, but this goal was not achieved, and Osama survived; from then on, the American imperialists were looking for excuses to invade and occupy Afghanistan. It is clear today that even before the 9/11 attacks, the US imperialists were looking for excuses to invade and occupy Afghanistan. But that incident gave them a good excuse, and they quickly set out to invade and occupy the country and overthrow the Taliban Islamic Emirate. The US and British imperialist invaders and occupiers not only took the Northern Alliance under their wing but also supported Pashtun reactionary figures and groups dissatisfied with the Taliban's Islamic Emirate, doling out power within the puppet regime.

The whole history of Afghanistan is witness to the fact that our people have been constantly forced to fight against foreign invaders and occupiers and their native servants, using all possible ideological-political weapons and paying huge sacrifices. The last scene of this recurring historical scenario, the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan by the American imperialists and their allies, could not be anything other than its historical precedents. Various armed and unarmed opposition,

struggle, and resistance against the occupying forces and the puppet regime began, gradually but steadily and continuously expanded.

Contrary to the notion and mentality that pro-imperialist ideologues incite, the rise of opposition, struggle, and resistance against the occupiers and the puppet regime and its increasing depth and breadth is not the result of secondary "mistakes and shortcomings" of the occupiers and their puppets, but rather the inevitable result of the state of occupation and the rule of the puppet regime. In other words, the "mistakes and shortcomings" of the occupying imperialist powers and the puppet reactionary regime, which have aroused and continue to provoke opposition, struggle, and resistance, are inherent in them, and they are fundamentally incapable of getting rid of these "mistakes and shortcomings." Occupying forces and imperialists cannot stop behaving like occupying forces, not massacring the masses of the people, not trampling on their dignity, or not inciting their resentment against them. Nor can a puppet reactionary regime stop being an oppressor, an enemy of the masses, corrupt to the bone, in a word a living symbol of national betrayal, and not incite the deep national and class animosity of the masses against it.

But it was not inevitable that the Taliban, that is, the force that owed its initial birth and previous power to the support of the current aggressors and occupiers, to become the flag-bearer of the struggle and resistance to the occupation. But as a result of the extreme weakness of the communist and national-democratic revolutionary movement in Afghanistan, in the conditions of occupation and rule of the puppet regime, the militant masses, especially among the disaffected Pashtun masses, in the absence of revolutionary peoples armed struggle against the occupiers and the puppet regime, joined the ranks of the Taliban, strengthening and expanding the Taliban's war of resistance. Although ousted from power, the Taliban retained their leadership and, to a large extent, their weaponry. They were able to rise again and succeed in attracting outside support.

In the first years after the fall of the Taliban Islamic Emirate, a process called "peace and reconciliation with the Taliban" did not exist; the puppet regime and the imperialist occupiers were demanding the surrender of the Taliban, while their leaders were being hunted down and had rewards on their heads for being arrested or killed. But after the Taliban's war against the occupiers and the puppet regime expanded, the "peace and reconciliation process with the armed opposition" began. This process is a two-way process of repression and allurement, and its purpose, as the US ambassador to Afghanistan has said, is for the Taliban to give up the war, accept the constitution of the puppet regime, meaning accepting the political system installed by the imperialists in Afghanistan, cutting ties with al-Qaeda and abandoning anti-western pan-Islamism.

Acceptance of these conditions by the Taliban leadership means political suicide, which will lead to the political surrender of the Taliban, a surrender that could quickly lead to the collapse and disintegration of the Taliban movement. These conditions proposed by the American occupiers and the puppet regime are only verbally and ostensibly different from the unconditional surrender of the Taliban, but its content and purpose are the same. Let us evaluate these conditions:

A: The occupying forces overthrew the Taliban's Islamic Emirate and the Taliban reorganized and accepted huge casualties and regained some strength by raising the flag of Islamic resistance against them. In the presence of occupying forces, the Taliban leadership withdrawing from the war means denying their philosophy of existence and political suicide for the movement.

On the other hand, it is now clear that the US imperialist occupiers are intent on a long-term military presence and the establishment of strategic military bases in Afghanistan and have no intention of completely withdrawing their forces. They have spent hundreds of billions of dollars in the war in Afghanistan and lost thousands of lives. They are not willing to waste all their efforts by completely withdrawing their occupying forces from Afghanistan and allowing their puppet regime to collapse and let their strategic plans and hegemonic goals in the region to fail. The withdrawal of occupying forces from Afghanistan would mean an explicit acceptance of defeat in the war in Afghanistan by the American imperialists. So far, they have not found themselves in such an objective situation and are not willing to accept their defeat.

The domestic, regional, and global situation for the US government in the second decade of the early twenty first century is not the same as the domestic, regional, and global situation for the Soviet state in the last decades of the twentieth century. That is why neither an American "Glasnost" and "Perestroika" are at work, nor can Obama be considered an American Gorbachev.

B: The puppet regime (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan) is a regime that was formed after the overthrow of the Islamic Emirate of Taliban by the occupying American forces and their allies and has been protected by the occupiers for almost a decade. The acceptance of the regime by the Taliban means accepting the legitimacy of the overthrow of their Islamic Emirate and the acceptance of the legitimacy of the formation of this "Islamic Republic" by the occupiers, and this only can be considered political suicide for the Taliban.

The political vision of the Taliban does not allow them to accept the norms of the Islamic Republic ("Islamic democracy") and does not allow them to accept the puppet regime's constitution. They want the reconstruction of the ideological-political system copying early Islam, in the form of a traditional Afghan emirate, but the ideological-political basis of the puppet regime and its constitution is on eclecticism between Islamic values and liberalism and neoliberalism.

Therefore, the acceptance of the constitution of the puppet regime by the Taliban would mean a rejection of their own ideological and political line and acceptance of their ideological-political defeat. Such a situation, [meaning the ideological and political defeat of the Taliban] does not exist either objectively or subjectively.

In addition, Taliban commanders are not in the position of *jihadi* commanders at the time of the Najib regime's "policy of national reconciliation", they cannot join the Karzai regime's "national reconciliation policy" individually and at the same time maintain their commanding role among the Taliban. The military-political structure of the Taliban, despite the dispersal of its groups and ranks, ultimately concentrates in the person of the supreme leader *Amir al-Mu'minin* and any individual or group that severs itself from this "center of gravity" loses its role in the Taliban movement.

On the other hand, it is clear that the current puppet regime in Afghanistan, with all its problems and crises, is neither internally in the same position as Najib's regime, nor externally, meaning from the perspective of the condition of its foreign patrons. Therefore, it is not in danger of immediate collapse.

But at the same time, the Taliban are not in a state of collapse either. The political power of the Taliban was overthrown in 2001 by cruise missiles and B-52 bombings, and for another two or three years, the entire Taliban movement was thought to have been finished. But now Talibanism has become a widespread ideology in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and it seems that Islamic militant movements in Central Asia are also becoming Talibanized. The ten-year occupation of the US imperialists and its allies in Afghanistan after the overthrow of the Taliban Islamic Emirate and the occupation of the country has not only failed to eliminate the Taliban in Afghanistan but has also led to the ideological, political, and military spread of Talibanism throughout the region. Osama's death created a threat of capitulationism in the ranks of the Taliban, which now seems to have largely been averted.

In such a situation, the acceptance of a constitution that is frequently violated by the puppet regime itself would be a foolish act by the Taliban, the proposal of which by the American occupiers and the puppet regime as a condition is nothing more than nonsense.

C: After 9/11, US imperialists, as they rushed to invade Afghanistan, called on the Taliban Islamic Emirate to hand over Osama to them. The Taliban, led by Mullah Omar rejected it, and Mullah Omar himself declared, "Afghan hospitality does not allow us to surrender a devout Muslim to his non-Muslim enemies." At the same time, in response to the question that in that case the United States would invade Afghanistan and destroy the Islamic Emirate, he said: "If that is the will of God, we will accept it."

Of course, even if the Taliban handed Osama over to the American imperialists, that would not have deterred them from invading Afghanistan and overthrowing the Taliban's Islamic Emirate. The Americans knew Mullah Omar and his belief system and did not expect that the Taliban would surrender Osama to them. They only used this as an excuse to justify their invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.

However, in 2001, Mullah Omar accepted the risk of a US invasion of Afghanistan and the overthrow of the Islamic Emirate by not surrendering Osama to the US government, which would have cut ties between the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Since then, the ideological, political, and logistical ties between the Taliban and al-Qaeda have steadily increased and deepened. Especially now that Osama has been assassinated by the Americans and has risen to the position of a "great martyr" and a global symbol of "militant Islamism." They cannot sever their strong doctrinal and political commitment to militant Islamism unless they intend to commit doctrinal and political suicide.

There was another aspect to the Taliban's failure to hand Osama over to the US government in 2001. This "Islamic zeal and Afghan hospitality" of the Taliban not only risked earning the hostility of their former US and British imperialist patrons for maintaining ties with al-Qaeda and Osama, but it also sacrificed the official support of the governments of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

It is clear, of course, that Mullah Omar's "Islamic zeal and piety" in 2001 was not only a matter of Islamic belief and doctrinal values but also had strong objective reasons on the battlefield. At that time, several thousand foreign Muslim *Mujahideen* were fighting for the Taliban. These forces

were militarily significant and decisive on the battlefield. For the most part, these foreign militants were led by al-Qaeda. In other words, the war in Afghanistan was not only a Taliban war but also a pan-Islamist war in which foreign *Mujahideen* forces were a pivotal force.

Today, the foreign Muslim *Mujahideen* remain an important part of the Islamist resistance in Afghanistan. Many are Pakistani and belong to the Islamic Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other Pakistani Islamist groups. Militants belonging to Islamist groups in Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan) form another important part of these forces, which are more or less active in the north of the country. Russian Chechen and Chinese Uyghurs militants can also be added to the list.

Now, the number of al-Qaeda fighters of Arab origin have reduced in the ranks of Islamist resistance in Afghanistan. It is because al-Qaeda's war activities have spread to west Asian and African countries. Al-Qaeda is currently openly fighting in Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Algeria, as well as in Syria and Libya, and other Arab countries. In other words, militant pan-Islamism currently has two major areas of activity:

1. Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Kashmir, Tajikistan, former Soviet Turkestan, Chechnya, and Chinese Turkestan.
2. Arab countries of the Middle East, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa.

The main force in area number one is the Taliban (Afghan and Pakistani), while the main force in area number two is al-Qaeda, with other forces such as Al-Shabaab in Somalia linked to it. Thus, the confrontation of American imperialists' aggression and occupation with pan-Islamism in Afghanistan and Iraq has not weakened militant pan-Islamism but has strengthened and expanded it. Even now, after Osama's assassination, al-Qaeda is far stronger than in 2001, and the Taliban have no reason to sever ties with al-Qaeda. Talibanism is one leg of militant pan-Islamism, and without a link to the other leg, al-Qaeda, it is a meaningless notion. Severing its ties to al-Qaeda means the destruction of Talibanism.

The composition and the social basis of the Taliban is heterogeneous. The most important force within them is not doctrinal nor ideological Taliban militants. These forces are hostile to occupiers and the puppet regime, and their main motive in resistance is essentially based on four elements: animosity with the foreign aggressor, blood revenge, traditionalism, and tribal-ethnic dispersion. The leadership and cadre of the doctrinal and ideological Taliban are forced to take into consideration the national-traditional spirit of them in their daily statements and actions, and also in dealing with the process of compromise and collusion with occupying forces and their puppet regime. These mass bases of the Taliban, which are numerically stronger than the ideological and doctrinal Taliban, have moved under the banner of the Taliban for fighting and resisting the occupiers and the puppet regime. If there is a compromise between the Taliban and the occupiers and the regime, such people will come out from under the banner of the Taliban, and if they inevitably have to surrender, they will do so directly themselves, and will not surrender through the Taliban leadership. Therefore, the advance of the process of reconciliation and collusion that has been initiated by the occupiers and the puppet regime means that this mass base would move out from under the banner of the Taliban and move towards the regime. The efforts of the occupiers

and the regime to absorb the mass bases of the Taliban are the main focus of the process started by them. Therefore, the Taliban's acceptance of this process means the loss of their mass base, thereby limiting them to the circles of mullahs and students at religious schools. If they fall into such a situation, they will not be able to advance the war, nor will they be able to do non-war politics.

Another important issue is the existence of relatively strong factions of anti-Taliban warlords within the regime. These forces have been on the battlefield against the Taliban and played a major role in overthrowing the Taliban Islamic Emirate after the US imperialists and its allies invaded Afghanistan, serving as the ground forces of the imperialist invaders. These warlords are predominantly non-Pashtun, and they are hostile to the Taliban, a mainly Pashtun force. The Taliban are well aware that these forces are working hard to prevent even their surrendered leaders from taking important positions within the regime. That is why, when Rabbani was appointed chairman of the regime's High Peace Council, the Taliban explicitly interpreted the appointment as a clear anti-peace move and a clear declaration of a continuation of the war and marked Rabbani and other leaders of the High Peace Council as military targets.

Thus, the question in the title can be answered as follows: If the Taliban want to preserve its essence as Taliban, they will continue the war until they are defeated on the battlefield in a prolonged process of war or when they have emerged victorious; otherwise, they will join the process of "peace and reconciliation" proposed by the occupiers and the puppet regime, surrender and eventually collapse and disintegrate. There is no other halfway of compromise and collusion for them. It appears that the Taliban have chosen the first path and will continue the war.