

The Class Nature of the War Between Afghanistan and Pakistan

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“From a theoretical perspective, it was completely mistaken, yet it was continually forgotten that every war is the continuation of politics by other means.”⁽¹⁾

In class societies, war is an inevitable phenomenon. No war can be devoid of a class dimension. To understand what type of war it is—whether a revolutionary and liberatory war or a counter-revolutionary and colonial one—it is necessary to examine the social position of the factions involved in the conflict. One must determine the class basis of each side and the policies they pursue. The economy and politics of the warring factions before the war must be analyzed. It is essential to identify which causes and factors enabled a particular policy to advance through war. In short, to establish the genuine social and class character of any war, the objective position of the classes involved must be dissected and analyzed. For this purpose, one should not rely on a few isolated examples or unrelated information, but rather examine a body of evidence concerning the fundamental economic life of the warring parties and the global conditions surrounding them.

Lenin stated: “In my view, the most important question that is usually overlooked in the matter of war—and about which many fruitless debates occur—is: what is the class nature of the war? Why did this war begin, which classes initiated it, and what historical and economic conditions produced it?”⁽²⁾

A war aimed at transforming the economic system, achieving political freedom, and seizing state power on behalf of the working class is a revolutionary and progressive war. However, if a war is waged to suppress progressive class struggles in order to preserve and reinforce the existing position of a class that has become reactionary in terms of historical development, such a war can only be regarded as reactionary—even if the main fighting forces are drawn from the working masses. Therefore:

“We must be able to explain to the masses that the indicator of the social and political character of the war is not the ‘good intentions’ of individuals, groups, or even the masses of people, but the class position that directs politics. It is the politics of this class that the war continues.”⁽³⁾

In class societies, war is possible not only between antagonistic classes within a society but also between different factions of the ruling class. The roots and causes of such wars must first be sought in the economic conditions of time and place for the factions of the class engaged in the conflict, examining their economic and consequently political privileges. On the global level, this is evident in wars between imperialist blocs, where conflicts occur to increase exploitation and extraction from a country dependent on imperialist capitalism, supported and intervened in by factions of the ruling and reactionary classes of that country.

Now we are witnessing such a war in Afghanistan. The current conflict in Afghanistan, initiated by the overt aggression of the reactionary regime of Pakistan and fought between two reactionary factions (Pakistan and the Taliban) aligned with imperialism, brings nothing but disastrous consequences for the working masses of both countries. This war is, therefore, reactionary. To properly understand the real nature of this conflict, it is necessary to examine the conditions of both countries over the past several decades. Of course, a comprehensive analysis cannot be included in this article, so we must briefly outline the situation.

Since Nikolai Bulganin and Nikita Khrushchev traveled to Afghanistan in 1955 and succeeded in drawing Daoud Khan toward social-imperialism, the competition and struggle between Western imperialism and Russian social-imperialism intensified, and the issue of the Durand Line between Pakistan and Afghanistan became increasingly acute. From that time onward, the tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan escalated. American imperialism came to support Pakistan and backed it to the extent that it became armed with nuclear weapons, while Afghanistan remained in a state of economic stagnation.

Through Daoud Khan, social-imperialism was able to establish connections with Nur Mohammad Taraki and Babrak Karmal, and through these individuals, it formed its own dependent faction, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). This party was established after Daoud Khan's premiership, in December 1964.

Social-imperialism succeeded in taking control of the majority of Afghanistan's trade, prompting Western imperialism to seek the creation of its own dependent mercenary force. The "Ikhwan al-Muslimin" faction, under the name "Muslim Youth," was established in Afghanistan with the support of American imperialism and its Western allies. By creating this dependent faction, the United States positioned itself in direct competition with Russian social-imperialism.

On June 19, 1972, during clashes between the Ikhwan al-Muslimin and the New Democratic movement, Syed al-Sukhandan was killed by the hands of the impure Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and a number of Ikhwan members, including Hekmatyar and Burhanuddin Rabbani, fled to Pakistan.

In 1973, social-imperialism brought Daoud Khan to power through a coup, and the revisionist faction, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), seized government positions from ministries to provinces and districts. American imperialism did not remain idle; once, through MaiwandWal, it attempted a coup that was suppressed halfway. A second attempt occurred in 1975, when, with the support of the Pakistani state, the Ikhwan forces based in Pakistan were armed and sent into Afghanistan. This uprising was brutally suppressed by Daoud Khan. The surviving Ikhwan members fled back to Pakistan and remained inactive there until 1978. Nevertheless, the relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan became even more strained than before.

With the Saur coup of 1978 (7th of Sawr, 1357), these relations deteriorated completely. The 7th Sawr coup, orchestrated by the treacherous revisionist factions of the Khalq and Parcham parties with the direct support of Soviet generals, was the outcome of the contradictions and competition between the two wings of Western imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism, along with their dependent factions. The Soviet social-imperialist state went a step further than its Western counterpart, turning Afghanistan into a de facto colony. After the 7th Sawr coup, all economic, military, and cultural affairs came under the authority and control of Soviet social-imperialism, and it could not have been otherwise.

From the very beginning of the coup, the imperialists and their dependent factions revealed their stance, engaged in diplomatic activities, and secretly prepared militarily. They operated both within Afghanistan and in neighboring and other regional countries, expressing their opposition to Soviet expansionism in Afghanistan through diplomatic channels and the press. This was precisely the expression of Western imperialists' sensitivity in defending their interests in the region and competing with Soviet social-imperialism, which intensified the contradictions in the area. Each side sought to install a government of its preference in Afghanistan to claim the seat of power and, ostensibly, to establish "security and stability," while relying on the support of allied countries both regionally and globally.

After the 7th Sawr coup, a segment of the landlords and comprador bourgeoisie, aligned with Soviet social-imperialism, rose up to defend their interests in Afghanistan and engage in conflict against the rival faction. They received support from Western imperialism and formed reactionary religious bands, exploiting the dominant ideology in society to oppose the puppet government.

On the very night of the 7th of Saur 1357, U.S. imperialism dispatched Sibghatullah Mujaddidi—who had been residing in Medina—to Pakistan, assigning him the task of unifying all anti-regime forces and intensifying propaganda and agitation against the Afghanistan state.

Sibghatullah Mujaddidi succeeded in rallying the reactionary forces opposed to the Afghanistan government under the banner of *Jamiat al-Ulama*. On 24 Hoot 1357 (15 March 1979), these counter-revolutionary elements launched an uprising in the city of Herat. Although they managed to seize control of parts of the city and the military division stationed there, the prison, the police command headquarters, and the central congregational mosque remained in the hands of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan.

Within a few days, with the arrival of fresh state forces, the uprising was decisively crushed. In the course of these events, around 24,000 people lost their lives. The remaining insurgents fled across the border to Pakistan. Once there, their fragile alliance quickly disintegrated, fragmenting into numerous rival factions and parties.

In the aftermath, the interference of Pakistan—under the patronage of U.S. imperialism and its allies—expanded further. The Pakistani state brought the so-called jihadist parties fully under its supervision and control. Even in contacts and negotiations with Soviet social-imperialism, the Pakistani regime acted as the representative and spokesman of these reactionary jihadist organizations.

Subsequently, Pakistan's interventions, supported by American imperialism and its allies, expanded. Pakistan brought the jihadist parties fully under its control and even represented these parties in meetings with Soviet social-imperialist officials. After the withdrawal of Soviet military forces on February 15, 1990 (26 Dalw 1368 in the Persian calendar), Pakistani military forces, together with the jihadist parties, launched attacks in eastern Afghanistan against the puppet government. Although they initially seized parts of Jalalabad, they were decisively defeated and forced to retreat back to Pakistan.

Following the eventual victory of the mujahideen, Pakistan sought to exercise full control over Afghanistan and expected the jihadist parties to follow its directives. However, this ambition did not materialize, and gradually tensions between the Afghanistan government and Pakistan intensified. Pakistan, with support from American imperialism, sent Afghanistan students who had studied in Pakistani religious schools under the leadership of Mullah Omar into Afghanistan. The Taliban, under Pakistan's guidance, were able to seize control of Afghanistan. During this period—the first Taliban regime—Pakistan exercised complete dominance over the Taliban, who were also supported by American imperialism and its allies.

When Soviet social-imperialism collapsed, George Bush proclaimed the “century-long rule” of his government over the world. At this time, U.S. imperialism not only extended its influence into Eastern Europe and intervened in the former sphere of the Soviet Union, but also sought to redraw the map of the Middle East. To this end, it used the Twin Towers and Osama bin Laden as pretexts to launch a military invasion of Afghanistan and occupy the country. Subsequently, it invaded Iraq, dismantled Libya, and then attacked Syria.

The Taliban fled once again to Pakistan. After twenty years of occupation, U.S. imperialism realized that without some scheme or deception, they would be forced to withdraw from Afghanistan in disgrace.

Thus, it was decided to return the government to the Taliban. At that time, Pakistan could not participate in the talks as a representative of the Taliban; instead, the Taliban themselves attended. After several rounds of negotiations and a secret deal between the U.S. government and the Taliban, the parties were ready to sign the "Peace Agreement." Finally, this agreement was signed on 10th of Hut 1398 (29 February 2020). At the Doha meeting, the Taliban silently accepted the "Security Agreement," the "Strategic Agreement," and the joint declaration that had been made between the U.S. Department of Defense and the government of the Islamic Republic.

In the ‘peace agreement between the Taliban and the United States,’ it was explicitly stated that the Americans retained the right to monitor the implementation of the agreement in the areas under Taliban control. Through this arrangement, U.S. imperialism consented to hand over the Afghanistan state—together with the presence of its military forces—to the Taliban. Although the form of the state changed, its essence remained the same: a colonial–semi-feudal order.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has allowed the majority of fundamentalist forces and organizations, including the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (T.T.P.), to operate within Afghanistan. U.S. imperialism and its allies have been well aware of this situation. At this time, under the leadership of Imran Khan, the government of Pakistan established friendly relations with Afghanistan and attempted, through mediation by the Afghan Taliban, to enter negotiations with the T.T.P. However, a military coup in Pakistan removed this opportunity, bringing Nawaz Sharif to power.

The Pakistani government assumed that, since the Taliban were their protégés, they would act according to their instructions. However, this assumption backfired. The Taliban, relying on U.S. imperialism, were unwilling to forfeit the “easy money” and did not comply with Pakistan’s directives. Gradually, relations between the Taliban and Pakistan deteriorated. Pakistan has been intervening in Afghanistan affairs since 1975 (1354 in the Persian calendar) and still seeks to maintain the Taliban as obedient as in the first regime. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, as a puppet regime of U.S. imperialism, no longer wishes to follow Pakistan’s orders.

When Pakistan’s demands were rejected by the Taliban, the Pakistani government used the T.T.P. as a pretext to launch military attacks on Afghanistan, bombing certain areas.

Pakistani aircraft patrol the skies of Afghanistan with the permission of U.S. imperialism. Without such authorization from the United States, they would not be able to bomb even a single point in Afghanistan, for the country’s airspace remains under the domination of American imperialism.

In the present conflict, U.S. imperialism has no intention whatsoever of overthrowing the Taliban. Rather, its objective has been to intensify tensions across the region. These tensions have created favorable conditions for U.S. imperialism to prepare the ground for aggression against Iran.

In response to the aerial attacks carried out by the state of Pakistan, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan launched a broad offensive, attacking Pakistani military outposts from several Afghanistan provinces. Following these assaults by the Taliban on Pakistani military positions, armed conflict erupted between the Pakistani state and the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate, a confrontation that continues up to the present.

The government of Pakistan, in order to deceive the oppressed masses of its own country, claims that it is fighting against “terrorism,” while in fact it has historically nurtured terrorist groups within its own borders. Pakistan is the only state in the world that has claimed to manifest itself in the name of Islam. It can never separate itself from this identity, for if it did, it would cease to be

Pakistan. Today, religious schools across the country, which promote nothing but fundamentalism, have proliferated. Jihadist parties have been nurtured within Pakistan, and likewise, the Taliban. Tens and hundreds of thousands of students in Pakistan's religious schools are actively trained in fundamentalism. Today, Pakistan is reaping what it has sown throughout its history.

On the other hand, the Taliban attempt to mislead the working masses, assuring them that they fight for "national defense," for freedom, religion, and culture, and to liberate the people from the oppression of the Pakistani government. Yet in practice, they enforce the most severe forms of oppression and exploitation upon the masses and are enemies of the revolutionary movement of workers and peasants.

The Taliban are well aware that women in the country are subjected to extreme oppression and are deprived of all rights. They have, in fact, implemented gender apartheid. This war is financially and militarily reinforced by imperialist powers, serving imperialist interests, and is intended to consolidate imperialist power and protect the interests of each imperialist faction and their local allies.

The Taliban seek to maintain the decayed relations within the country, using the oldest and most colonial ideologies and cultural traditions to confuse the consciousness of Afghanistan's working masses, keeping them away from progressive and revolutionary ideology, and thus guide and advance the ongoing war initiated by two treacherous and reactionary states.

The armies of the two countries, composed largely of the impoverished and oppressed masses who have been placed under arms, are fighting in the service of two reactionary states. For the sinister and treacherous ambitions of these ruling circles, they are driven to kill one another, despite the fact that this war offers them neither class nor national benefit.

Yet the reactionaries and criminals, taking advantage of the economic backwardness—and the resulting cultural and political backwardness—of the masses, conceal the real contradiction between the reactionary states of Pakistan and Afghanistan. One side deceives the people in the name of 'defending the homeland,' while the other invokes the pretext of 'combating terrorism.' In this way, they mislead the masses and sacrifice the interests of the people in order to advance their own sinister aims.

The reactionaries, with deceptive and populist slogans and through their leadership in the ongoing war, seek to portray their own conflict as a struggle for "national defense" and "the fight against terrorism." In such circumstances, the principal contradiction in Pakistan—namely, the contradiction between the proletariat and other working masses on one side and the ruling class on the other—is deliberately obscured. Similarly, the principal contradiction in Afghanistan—between the peoples of Afghanistan on one side and the Taliban and their imperialist backers on the other—is also suppressed.

This war is reactionary and devastating, bringing nothing but destruction, poverty, and destitution to the working masses of both countries. It offers no promise for the future of women or the rest of the oppressed populations of Afghanistan and Pakistan and has caused widespread devastation and displacement across both nations.

Both governments are equally reactionary, cruel, and predatory, showing no restraint in the conduct of the war. Yet, to deceive the masses and divert attention from the only genuinely national and liberatory struggle—that is, the revolutionary war of the people against both imperialism and the feudal-comprador bourgeoisie of both countries—they resort to false rhetoric about patriotism, defense of religion and homeland, and the fight against terrorism. Each side attempts to present its reactionary war as just, principled, and sacred, assuring the masses that their objective is not to seize power for a specific class but to liberate the people from the clutches of evil.

Regardless of the ultimate outcome of this war, in practice, both sides devote all their efforts to supporting the establishment of reactionary, fundamentalist regimes in their respective countries and to suppressing the revolutionary movement.

If we look at Afghanistan over the past five decades, it becomes clear that no fundamental change has occurred in the country's economic base or relations of production during this period. The semi-feudal mode of production remains the dominant form in society, while the capitalist mode of production continues to be non-dominant. Afghanistan has thus maintained its semi-feudal and colonial character. There have been no fundamental changes in land ownership structures or in the social hierarchy of villages; the peasants continue to face land-related problems, and the contradiction between collective labor and private ownership remains the principal contradiction of our society. The solution to this contradiction can only be achieved through a new democratic revolution, a land reform revolution, and the seizure of land by the peasants themselves.

We believe that the peasants are never opposed to acquiring land; rather, they have always sought to possess a plot of their own. However, social transformations and changes in property relations cannot be imposed by decrees or commands—they arise organically from the movement of society and the development of productive forces. Revolutionaries play a crucial role in conveying revolutionary ideas to the masses and in paving the difficult path of revolution. They must persistently and diligently explain to the working masses that the current war is not a struggle for their liberation, but rather a conflict between two reactionary states that bears no relation to the interests of the masses.

The working masses can only secure their class interests by taking up arms under the leadership of the proletariat and its vanguard party, and through a people's war, defeating the reactionary Taliban regime and its imperialist backers.

It is the duty of us, and of all revolutionary forces in both countries, to clearly understand the character of the present war, to expose its true nature before the masses, and to strive to transform

the current reactionary war into a revolutionary civil war. At the same time, we must take steps toward the preparation, organization, and leadership required for a national and liberating war.

In the epoch of imperialism, only the proletariat and its vanguard party can remain consistently resolute and revolutionary to the very end. The peasants, and the rural population in general, cannot by themselves withstand the ruling classes and their imperialist backers or carry the revolution forward. Organizational fragmentation and class divisions among the rural masses have historically been among the principal causes of their defeats. The repeated failures of peasant movements demonstrate that the absence of a clear program, tactical unity, shared class interests, and firm organizational ties among the people of the countryside has played a decisive role in these setbacks.

The revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have shown that peasants can achieve victory in civil wars only when they enter the struggle as allies and auxiliary forces of the progressive class—the working class—and when they fight under its leadership. Likewise, the revolutionary wars of the twentieth century that culminated in victory once again confirmed the correctness of the teachings of Marxism–Leninism–Maoism: that the peasantry can secure its class interests only under the leadership of the revolutionary proletariat. The alliance of these two classes constitutes one of the fundamental conditions for the final victory of workers and peasants, and its consolidation plays a decisive role in the ultimate liberation of the toiling masses from the grip of the exploiting classes.

The task of revolutionaries and Maoists, therefore, is to grasp the reality of the present war and to expose its class character, as well as the intrigues and crimes of the two reactionary states—the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan—which they have unleashed against the peoples of these two countries. They must propagate and promote the revolutionary and emancipatory path among the masses. The objective of this struggle is to transform the existing reactionary war into a national and revolutionary war of the peoples against imperialism and the reactionary ruling classes, and to place it in the service of the liberation of the masses.

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