

U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

On August 31, 2021, the last American soldier left Kabul airport on time, after almost 20 years of military occupation. It was the deadline of the truce granted by the Taliban for the US to completely withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. The militaristic US Democratic government was following in the footsteps of the previous Republican government, in yet another demonstration that, regardless of the intentions of individuals, it is the material reality that imposes itself.

What was the aim of the US occupation of Afghanistan in 2001?

"The fight against terrorism, fed by the gringos themselves, has the objective of hindering Asia, and especially China, from becoming the driving center of world finances, after having conquered industrial production. (...) The first Gulf War helped the US to solve the crisis of 1990, with the second Gulf War and with the war in Afghanistan, with the pretext of the attack on the twin towers, it solved the serious crisis that began in 2001, maintaining the occupation troops in Afghanistan and Pakistan, something it had not done in the first war. (...) From 1995 to the present year of 2015 to the historical capitalist countries must be added China and the total Asian surface that with its impetuous development definitively displaced the center of world capitalism from America to Asia, from the USA to China. (...) The old imperialisms and above all the USA can only make use of a third world war to try to remain on the throne. America alone cannot fight this war, taking into account the great difference in relation to the Chinese economy and the difficulty of finding allies". (El Comunista no. 56, November 2015).

*"Moreover, the Anglo-Americans do not like the Chinese-Indian attempts to integrate the destabilizing Pakistan into their business area, since Pakistan is also re-arming the Afghans in their war against the Western occupation in such a strategic territory as Afghanistan. Strategic to lay the roads, the commercial routes (highways, railways, gas pipelines, oil pipelines, power lines...) between China-India-Pakistan with Iran-Arabia-Iraq-Syria-Turkey. Between the Russian Central Asian Republics with India-Pakistan and with the entire Middle East. (...) **This has been the ultimate aim of the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq: to encircle and isolate China in order to try to channel, subdue or destroy the colossal development of the productive forces and of Chinese and Asian capitalism.**"* (El Comunista no. 46, May 2007).

With the occupation of Afghanistan, the US was attempting to block China's expansion in Asia and repeat the move with which it had been able to reverse its loss of weight in the international economy in the early 1990s, particularly at the expense of Japan, with the first Iraq war:

*"Since 1993-1994 there has been no more talk of the bankruptcy of the US banks and savings banks. The war and post-war of Iraq allowed them to unload the weight and effects of the financial crisis on Japan, the European Union, Asia, Latin America and Africa. **The Yankee army and the TERROR that it instills in its competitors are an economic agent,***

***a tax collector, of the first magnitude**".* (El Comunista no. 46, May 2007).

The need to repeat the move was more than enough reason to organize the self-attacks on the Twin Towers on September 11th. However, **in this second attempt the situation was no longer the same as it had been ten years earlier, neither for the world nor for the US itself.** The impossibility of unloading the costs of the war on the other imperialisms, together with the failed attempt to take control of PDVSA through the "managers' lockout" of 2002-2003 and Saddam Hussein's decision to export his oil in euros, imposed the next step: the invasion of Iraq. With it, the US also sought to push up oil prices in order to become, through the costly *fracking* industry, the first net exporter of oil in the world a few years later.

The reality is that all these interventions have not succeeded in containing the development of the Asian productive forces, nor in unloading the costs of the war on the other imperialisms. In addition, with the policy of raising the price of oil, the US has resuscitated Russian imperialism (gas producer) from bankruptcy and has strengthened its competitors.

How have the power relations between the different imperialisms changed?

In the magazine "El Comunista" no. 43 (2004) we said: *"What will be the attitude, the strategy of the USA towards China-Asia? Will it follow the British strategy towards the USA during the 20th century of gradually ceding dominance? Or, on the contrary, will the military clash of the two powers be prepared and come in the near and medium future?"* (El Comunista no. 43, May 2004).

*"The advance of China in the material facts of production is what determines the withdrawal of the United States, which, with each passing day, deepens its retreat from its former position of world primacy and is in a worse position to face an open war against China or against the world. At the same time, the losing contender has to try to survive by all means, even by means that end up hurting it, as it has been pushed to do with tariffs or could be forced to do with an unwinnable war. As we said in The Internationalist Proletarian no. 5: "It is not about its awareness of the facts, not even its subjective will, this would not be Marxism. It is about what acts the American bourgeoisie (or fractions of it) is forced to carry out, due to the effect of their material situation. And in the current situation of imperialism, **the US can only choose among loser moves.**"* (The Internationalist Proletarian no. 6, March 2021).

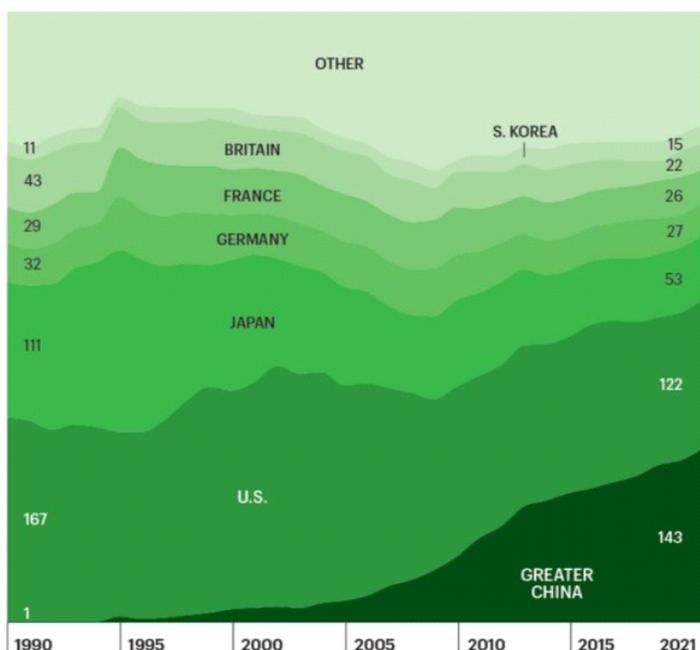
"What the American bourgeoisie cannot see is that the effects it sees with horror are not only or not so much the result of the policy of walled-in withdrawal. They are above all the result of the displacement of production towards Asia, of the tendential fall in the rate of profit in general and more markedly in the countries of older capitalism, of the material impossibility of continuing to impose their parasitic conditions on the rest of the bourgeoisies of the world. (...)

For this reason, another thing will be what the laws of the economy allow or impose American capitalism to do. This will be what determines whether it can effectively return to its previous

policy and partially recover the abandoned positions of influence, whether it will be forced to follow the current withdrawal dynamics or whether it can even reach a situation of collapse and internal implosion." (The Internationalist Proletarian no. 6, March 2021).

The development of Chinese capitalism in the field characteristic of the imperialist phase of capitalism, can be seen in its evolution within the 500 largest companies in the world by turnover collected by Fortune. China has displaced the US, shooting up its rise since 2008. Against China, the Western imperialisms have not been able to apply the same recipe that they applied to Japan from 1990 onwards.

BREAKDOWN OF FORTUNE GLOBAL 500 COMPANIES BY GEOGRAPHY



The same material development can be seen in the evolution of the first banks of the world. Dominated by Anglo-American imperialism in 1970, they were taken over by Japanese imperialism in 1990, but the positions were regained around 2010 by Anglo-American capital after having imposed on Japan the costs of the Gulf War, the quota system on its goods and having locked it into a crisis of overproduction within its borders. But in 2021, the first 4 banks are Chinese and their volumes of capital are each double those of their Anglo-American counterparts.

Rank	Bank	Country	Tier 1 in M \$
1	Sumitomo Bank	Japan	13.357
2	Dai-Ichi Kangyo Bank	Japan	12.322
3	Fuji Bank	Japan	11.855
4	Crédit Agricole	France	11.802
5	Sanwa Bank	Japan	11.186
6	Mitsubishi Bank	Japan	10.900
7	Barclays Bank	UK	10.715
8	National Westminster Bank	UK	9.761
9	Deutsche Bank	Germany	8.462
10	Industrial Bank of Japan	Japan	8.184

Rank	Bank	Country	Tier 1 in M \$
1	Bank of America	US	160.000
2	JPMorgan Chase	US	133.000
3	Citigroup	US	127.000
4	Royal Bank of Scotland	UK	123.000
5	HSBC	UK	122.000
6	Wells Fargo	US	94.000
7	ICBC	China	91.000
8	BNP Paribas	France	91.000
9	Santander	Spain	82.000
10	Barclays	UK	80.000

Rank	Previous rank	Bank	Country	Tier 1 in billion \$
1	1	ICBC	China	440
2	2	China Construction Bank	China	362
3	3	Agricultural Bank of China	China	336
4	4	Bank of China	China	305
5	5	JPMorgan Chase	US	235
6	6	Bank of America	US	200
7	8	Citigroup	US	167
8	9	HSBC Holdings	UK	160
9	7	Wells Fargo	US	158
10	10	Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group	Japan	144
11	11	Bank of Communications	China	132
12	12	Crédit Agricole	France	127
13	13	BNP Paribas	France	122
14	17	China Merchants Bank	China	106
15	22	Postal Savings Bank of China	China	103
16	14	Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group	Japan	101
17	15	Santander Bank	Spain	97
18	20	Shanghai Pudong Development Bank	China	96
19	21	Industrial Bank	China	94
20	16	Goldman Sachs	US	93

China has reached the first place in world trade, surpassing its competitors in total and net exports:

Country	2001	2008	2019	2020
China	266.098	1.430.693	2.498.569	2.590.600
USA	729.080	1.299.898	1.644.276	1.430.253
Germany	571.426	1.457.462	1.493.266	1.383.968

Source: UN Comtrade Database

Imports in millions of dollars				
Country	2001	2008	2019	2020
China	243.552	1.132.562	2.068.950	2.055.590
USA	1.140.900	2.164.834	2.567.492	2.405.381
Germany	486.022	1.192.581	1.239.897	1.171.915

Source: UN Comtrade Database

The primacy of Chinese imperialism in the production of steel, cement, aluminum, etc. can also be seen in the study published in *The Internationalist Proletarian* no. 6.

Conclusion: *"The development of productive forces in Asia has won the day over the U.S. in its attempts to encircle and isolate China through its military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq."* (*The Internationalist Proletarian* no. 7, July 2021).

Consequences of the US defeat in Afghanistan

It is obvious that the final objective that the US pursued with the invasion of Afghanistan (and Iraq) has not been achieved. Neither that of unloading the crisis on its competitors nor that of preventing the interconnection between the different parts of Asia. But with its military presence on the ground and the financing of all kinds of terrorist groups, it has managed to slow down China's penetration into Afghanistan and keep it on hold: *"For the time being the China Metallurgical Group Corporation formally holds the concession to exploit the large copper mine in Mes Aynak, a few dozen kilometers south of Kabul. But the enormous cost and insecurity have put the investment on hold"*. (*La Vanguardia*, 22-08-2021). But now the US has had to abandon with its tail between its legs the position from which it was carrying out its systematic sabotage in the area. **It is undoubtedly a full-fledged DEFEAT**, a defeat that, on the other hand, the development of the productive forces in Asia made inevitable.

Contrary to what the bourgeois press has published, it is important to see that Kabul is not Saigon, that Afghanistan is not Vietnam, that the Taliban are not the Viet Cong (which, by the way, did not give any truce to the US in its disbandment), and, above all, that the Afghan bourgeoisie is not the Vietnamese revolutionary bourgeoisie that militarily defeated the French army first, the American and South Vietnamese army later, and the Chinese and Cambodian army later, while the defeats of the British, Russians and now Americans in Afghanistan never had this bourgeois revolutionary content.

The defeat of the US in 1975 at the hands of the Vietnamese bourgeoisie meant the opening of the development of capitalism in Asia that the US has tried unsuccessfully to stop ever since. The defeat of the US in 2021 at the hands of the Afghan bourgeoisie, supported by Pakistan and China, is the demonstration of the closing of a cycle, that the development of the productive forces in Asia has already surpassed the possibilities of US resistance.

Another immediate consequence of the current defeat is a loss of US credibility in its role as bully of the world. A mastermind of the US bourgeoisie (M.R. Bloomberg) publishes an editorial in his newspaper that shows a certain desperation: *"After this tragedy, will the word of the US be credible again?* Or, in other words: *"The rest of the imperialisms will have to think long and hard before joining in a serious alliance with the most likely losing horse."* (*The Internationalist Proletarian* no. 7,

July 2021).

Does this mean that the US has disappeared as imperialism and stopped trying to play this role? Not at all. However, every day that goes by it is finding it more difficult to emerge victorious from a world inter-imperialist conflict, more difficult to get allies for it and more and more failed attempts to unleash it are accumulating. Obviously, this does not mean that it will not continue to try it, both in Central (and East) Asia and in the rest of the world. In view of this material difficulty, **the historical alternative facing the US, if it does not manage to trigger a third imperialist slaughter, is its internal implosion (similar to the one suffered by Russia in the 1990s), with or without civil war or internal dismemberment.**

"If Anglo-American imperialism finally fails in its attempts to provoke the war between India and China, the old bloc must reduce its power until it crumbles in a more or less long process, depending on the outbreak of the international financial and industrial crack, its intensity and the degree of generalization all over the globe. Either this progressive line of loss of decision-making power by the Anglo-Americans or they are obliged by economic determinism to wage war in defense of the American Model of Life, since when the great crisis of relative overproduction, of productive overcapacity, breaks out, the Western European Model of Life and even the Japanese Model of Life must also explode. [and today we would also say the Chinese one]." (*El Comunista* no. 47, May 2008).

This perspective is the culmination of a process we have been describing for years. Does this mean that if the US does not succeed in unleashing the war, capitalism will finally find peace? Wars are inevitable in capitalism as a consequence of the commercial war and its real content: the destruction of the accumulated productive overcapacity (see in this issue the article *"The crisis of overproduction leads to imperialist war"*). In the face of this, the only historical alternative is the INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST REVOLUTION!

The cost of military intervention

The basis of war is the productive economy: it is not military genius but productive muscle that determines the victor and the vanquished.

"The war in Afghanistan, at the beginning, did not require significant spending. It is in the last two years that the dead and the expenses have begun to multiply. Especially with the arrival of the pacifist warrior Barack Obama as US president, since he has extended the Afghan war to entire regions of Pakistan, with the aim of preventing or delaying the construction of gas and oil pipelines from Iran-Iraq-Emirates-Arabia to India-China-Korea, etc., passing through Afghanistan-Pakistan. The pipelines, gas pipelines, highways, railways, airports, lead to the establishment of networks, of a spider's web of economic, political and military interests and interdependencies between the great and medium powers of Central and East Asia and the Middle East, definitively breaking the West's control over the geostrategic area of Asia Minor for its oil and gas. (...) As the expense of the wars of occupation of Iraq (since 2003), of Afghanistan and of part of Pakistan is running almost all of it at the expense of the USA, this gigantic expense in the wars that bog down the occupant,

diverts immense amounts of money from the production, finances, infrastructures and services of the USA towards that endless bonfire of war". (El Comunista no. 50, September 2010).

The cost of the war in Afghanistan has reached \$2.2 trillion, with a huge number of lives burned:

"In this period, 800,000 US soldiers will have served in this war front, of whom, so far, 2,443 have died (...) There are another 20,666 wounded. And around 3,800 civilians hired by the Pentagon have died. (...) In these calculations we must include another 1,144 military personnel who died in the ranks of the allies - 51 countries participated in the war -, in addition to 113,000 Afghans, including military, police and civilians. To these must be added the deaths of 51,191 Islamic militiamen. The economic cost amounts to 2.2 billion dollars (...) This figure includes operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan and reconstruction costs, as well as the training of an army of 300,000 members, which has evaporated. The Sigar indicates that the exclusive expenditure on military actions rises to 837,000 million dollars". (La Vanguardia, 23-08-2021). To these dead must be added the numerous soldiers who die prematurely on their return due to suicide or as a consequence of the after-effects of their presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.

These costs have in turn represented a series of fabulous profits for the companies of the military sector, but they are too heavy a burden for an economy that is retreating: *"This partial withdrawal of soldiers from Afghanistan, Iraq and Germany highlights not so much or not only Trump's line of withdrawal but also the **inability of the US to keep its army deployed, receiving blows all over the place.**" (The Internationalist Proletarian no. 6, March 2021).*

Crumbling of the Afghan puppet state

To the perplexity of the US, the Taliban were able to regain control over practically the whole of Afghanistan in a matter of days.

The US plan was to withdraw leaving an army of 300,000 armed troops so that Afghanistan would bleed into an internal civil war that would prolong the blockade that they themselves could no longer maintain *in situ*, intervening indirectly to help maintain the chaos, as they did successfully in the Iraq-Iran war between 1980 and 1988. The US had the illusion of being able to withdraw from Afghanistan by keeping one foot inside through the Ghani government's army and its network of contacts, but practically the whole of this army has refused to serve for the umpteenth time as cannon fodder for the greater glory of American imperialism (unlike what Najibullah's government did when the Russians withdrew in 1989). Faced with the blitzkrieg offensive launched by the Taliban and initiated precisely in the territories of the former Northern Alliance (which the first Taliban government did not manage to control), several of the former warlords previously opposed to the Taliban made direct pacts with them (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar or Ismail Khan in Herat), others fled without fighting (Abdul Rashid Dostum in Mazar-i-Sharif) and only the son of Ahmad Shah Massud together with the second of Ashraf Ghani, Amrullah Saleh, have tried to organize a small armed opposition in the Panjshir valley, waiting for an international collaboration that has not arrived, collapsing quickly.

Events were precipitated at the beginning of August: *"At first,*

Taliban attacks last month (...) were repelled by Afghan special forces commandos. But on August 6, the Taliban took Zaranj, the dusty capital of the southwestern province of Nimroz, with little resistance. (...) Within two days, the Taliban controlled five of 34 provincial capitals, four of them in the north, historically a bastion of warlord resistance to Taliban rule. (...) The talks between Ghani and Dostum fell on deaf ears because of the surrender that same day of hundreds of Afghan soldiers in nearby Kunduz. By the time Ghani flew back to Kabul, the Taliban controlled nine of the country's 34 provincial capitals. (...) veteran warlord Mohammad Ismail Khan had resumed the fight against the old enemy. (...) But by Friday, the 70-year-old warlord had already laid down his arms and was posing for photos on a luxurious sofa with members of the same Islamist organization he fought as part of the northern alliance in the 1990s. (...) After negotiations in Qatar that same day [he refers to the following Sunday], an agreement was reached according to which the Taliban would not hinder the US evacuation at the airport, but would have access to the presidential palace. By 7 p.m., Afghans learned that Ghani had fled. Islamist militants stormed Kabul and seized abandoned police posts. (...) On Monday, Kabul woke up with the Taliban occupation". (Expansión, 20-08-2021).

The failure of the US plan goes so far that all its investment in stopping the Taliban has ended up in the hands of the Taliban themselves: *"Estimates by Reuters indicate that the federal administration spent \$28 billion on weapons alone from 2002 to 2017. The Pentagon estimates that the Taliban may have 2,000 armored vehicles and 40 aircraft still in operation. (...) Between 2003 and 2016, Afghanistan's official troops received 358,530 rifles, 64,000 machine guns, 25,327 grenades or 22,174 Humvees." (La Vanguardia, 05-09-2021). A WHOLE ARSENAL FOR FREE ON ACCOUNT OF UNCLE SAM!*

So lamented one of the US puppets, once on the run, in bewilderment: *"There were rumors that the instructions not to fight came from the top," explained Ajmal Ahmad, the Harvard-educated governor of the Afghan central bank, in a tweet on Monday after he went into exile. "It seems hard to believe, but it remains inexplicable that the Afghan National Security Forces abandoned their posts so quickly. It is beyond comprehension." (Expansión, 20-08-2021).*

Material basis for the speed of the Taliban advance

What happened in late July that caused the Taliban's seizure of power to fully accelerate? What turned initial resistance into an unresisted advance? What made warlords like Ismail Khan go from preparing for war to posing on a couch with the Taliban? Why did others flee?

On July 28th 2021, Taliban representative Abdul Ghani Baradar met (along with a delegation that included the religious council representative and publicity representative) with Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister. At this meeting, the Chinese minister noted that *"the Afghan Taliban is an important military and political force in Afghanistan and is expected to play an important role in the country's peace, reconciliation and reconstruction process."* (PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28-07-2021). **This statement signifies public and explicit support for the Taliban to take control of the country.** In return, the Taliban *"stands ready to work with other parties*

to establish a political framework in Afghanistan that is broadly-based, inclusive and accepted by the entire Afghan people and to protect human rights, especially the rights of women and children. The Afghan Taliban will never allow any force to use the Afghan territory to engage in acts detrimental to China [referring to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)]. (...) The Afghan Taliban will also make its own efforts toward fostering an enabling investment environment." Translated, the Taliban pledge to create a safe environment for Chinese investments in a capitalist environment and not to serve as a platform for US-funded groups to attack China, to forget the claim of Pashtunistan, all this, while maintaining a part of the more folkloric superstructure ensuring its intercompatibility with capitalist management.

What is the potential volume of this business?

"Anyway, Taliban spokesman Sohail Shahin has made an advance. And he did so on Chinese television. (...) "The world can come and explore our mines; this invitation is for all countries, and we are grateful to any country that helps us in these critical moments". It was quite an invitation to China, unnecessary at this point. **Afghanistan's soil has everything from precious stones to so-called rare earths for high-tech. And enormous reserves of lithium** (...)" (La Vanguardia, 21-08-2021). "Afghanistan is sitting on deposits [of minerals and rare earths] **estimated to be worth \$1 trillion or more, including what may be the world's largest lithium reserves** (...)" (Bloomberg, 24-08-2021).

With this business perspective, the Taliban have made some of their enemies capitulate, turning them into their future partners. We are the representatives in Afghanistan of this business with China: do you prefer that we continue killing each other or do we all rather exploit this business that can be juicier than opium and other current sources of financing?

In addition to that, "US troops crept out of Bagram airfield in the middle of the night on 1 July. As they left, they cut the electricity to the fortified military base they had been using for two decades (...) By the time the Afghan troops discovered that the Americans had left hours earlier, Bagram had already been sacked". (Expansión 20-08-2021). The feeling of the Afghan army of having been abandoned to their fate, like cattle at the slaughterhouse, could not be greater. This US-armed army has not only not fought, but an important part of it has been integrated with the Taliban: the Taliban soldiers who occupied the runway of the Kabul airport two months later did not wear turbans and long beards, but were dressed in regular military uniform.

The Taliban are committed to being a faithful reflection of the needs of capitalism in Afghanistan. In fact, they can play this role because they were already demonstrating in practice that their management corresponded better to the modern demands of capital than the inoperative management of the US puppet government.

Just as in the invasion of Iraq, the US bourgeoisie confuses its desires with material reality. In that invasion, the US bourgeoisie was unable to see that it was not enough to eliminate the individual Saddam Hussein because this individual was nothing more than the expression of the interests of a bourgeoisie that was prepared to fight to the end for every inch of land that the

US army wanted to conquer. In the present disbandment, the US has also failed to see that in Afghanistan it would be useless to put one or fifteen of its puppets at the head of the government because there is a bourgeois and petty bourgeois social body to which the material economic reality imposes another path.

An example of this bourgeois social body: "The Taliban are not professional people, but when we call them they come and with the previous government everything was trouble," says satisfied businessman Qari Gul Mohammed, who earns about a million dollars a year. He does not hesitate to say that, with them in power, he feels more secure. In addition to owning four companies that export nuts outside Afghanistan, this influential 50-year-old businessman has been one of the negotiators between the Taliban and the deposed authorities. He was part of a group of 12 notables, six from the economic sector and six from the religious sector, who moved behind the scenes from one side to the other". (El País, 26-09-2021).

From the study of Taliban finances in Nimroz province, it appears that "only 9 per cent (\$5.1 million) of Taliban finances came from drugs last year, while 80 per cent (\$40.9 million) came from taxes on the transit of legal goods (...) The road had more than 25 government checkpoints and many charged a fee. In contrast, the Taliban who patrol the roads have far fewer checkpoints and give a receipt, so that only a single payment is necessary. (...) In the last few years, the Taliban have widened their tax base from the oshr tax, a tithe of the harvest crops, and the zakat, a religious tax of 2.5% of the disposable income that is destined to the poorest." (Expansión, 18-08-2021).

The US puppet government charged several times the bribe or transit tax for the same merchandise, making goods transiting from Pakistan or India to Iran and vice versa more expensive, in line with the US function of blocking the development of the productive forces. On the other hand, the Taliban guarantee only one payment, demonstrating that they represent a more modern capitalist management. Moreover, they guarantee some assistance to the poorest part of the population as any capitalist state does, obtaining a certain sympathy from this sector of the population.

Finally, the systematic murder of civilians by the US explains the sympathy of sectors of the population with those who fight them.

These material factors explain the rapid Taliban advance and why, despite the fact that "the Afghan National Army has been in the hands of Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras" (La Vanguardia, 28-08-2021), this army has surrendered and dissolved like a sugar cube in water in the face of the mainly Pashtun Taliban.

US blockade attempts

The US has reacted by freezing accounts and the IMF's contribution to Afghanistan: "The International Monetary Fund said that the new government in Afghanistan is cut off from using fund reserve assets days before the nation was set to receive almost \$500 million. (...) The U.S. has frozen nearly \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank and stopped shipments of cash to the nation (...)" (Bloomberg, 18-08-2021).

With this action, the US does not succeed in slowing down its loss of control, but rather accelerates it, driving the Afghan

bourgeoisie completely into the arms of China and other powers. Despite this attempt at a blockade, in order not to be completely out of the game, the US has declared that it will make small contributions for humanitarian aid.

On 20-10-2021 representatives of China, Russia, Pakistan, India and Iran, as well as the other Central Asian states, met with the Taliban government in Moscow. The line set to the Taliban is: "moderate policies", "inclusive government", "not allowing terrorist organizations", etc. in exchange for funding ("economic assistance") and to promote a donor conference under the auspices of the UN.

In order to sabotage this unification of the Afghan bourgeoisie, the Islamic State of Khorasan has already carried out at least two attacks against the Hazara (Shiite) population, another at the funeral of the mother of the Taliban spokesman and has claimed responsibility for several attacks against Taliban patrols. The main objective of the countries convening the conference is that the groups financed by the USA (the Islamic State of Khorasan) are neutralized and Afghanistan is opened to their investments and the traffic of their goods. This easily explains why the US declined to participate in the conference, despite having been invited.

Chaos at Kabul airport

The last throes of the US presence were highly illustrative. While on the Taliban side they boasted of their control of the situation, at the airport managed by US soldiers there was patent chaos, people were crowding together, to the point that those who had managed to sneak in were thrown out of the planes that were taking off.

The US tried in vain to keep the crowds at bay, appealing for people not to go to the airport, but they were unable to contain the situation. The remedy was the now typical of Anglo-Saxon imperialism: *"Last Wednesday, the US Embassy in Afghanistan issued an advisory warning Americans to stay away from the airport because of "security threats" outside the gates. This warning was also issued by the Embassies of the United Kingdom and Australia."* (Expansión 27-08-2021). They even pointed out the group they were going to use: the Islamic State of Khorasan. And so it was, on Friday August 27th 2021 two bombs exploded at Kabul airport.

The Taliban dissociated themselves from the attacks and took the opportunity to show that the US army was incapable of preventing them: *"The Islamic Emirate strongly condemns the attack on civilians at the Kabul airport, which took place in an area where US forces are responsible for security."* (Expansión 27-08-2021).

This attack resolved another issue, it justified the decision to maintain the exit: *"The G7 failed last Monday to convince US President Joe Biden of the need to extend the evacuation beyond 31 August"*.

The US had good reason. The Taliban had stopped killing American soldiers and attacking their positions because the US had promised to leave by a deadline, but: *"Suhail Shaheen warned yesterday in declarations to the British channel Sky News that extending beyond the end of August the efforts of the allied countries to evacuate people from Afghanistan was a "red line" and would provoke "a reaction" "* (Expansión 24-08-2021).

The US wanted to make one last demonstration to the world that it had the situation under control. The US farewell was the murder of 10 civilians in Kabul on 29-08-2021 under the pretext of trying to prevent a second attack: *"A drone attack aimed at neutralizing an alleged car bomb killed ten civilians in Kabul on Sunday, half of them children"*. (El País, 31-08-2021). They pretend to make believe that they know in advance even the group that is going to carry out the attacks, but every time they "respond" they do nothing but kill civilians. There is a very simple explanation for this, they themselves organize the attacks.

The only actors are not China and the US

The US admission of its inability to maintain the occupation not only benefits the Afghan and Chinese bourgeoisie.

Pakistan, cradle and protector of the Afghan Taliban, is one of the clear beneficiaries of the new status quo: *"The Afghans have broken the shackles of slavery", declared the prime minister Pakistan Imran Khan"*. (La Vanguardia, 22-08-2021). Although tendentious, this statement is significant: *"Seven years ago, a former chief of the Pakistani secret services, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Hamid Gul, launched a provocative sentence (...): "When history is written, it will be said that the ISI defeated the Soviet Union in Afghanistan with the help of America. And then that the ISI, with the help of America, defeated America"*. (La Vanguardia, 22-08-2021).

Iran also welcomes the American flight, after the harassment to which it has subjected the American army in Iraq (where the American military presence is already residual and the end of the military presence is scheduled for this very 2021): *"Iran, the great Shiite power, has not recognized the Taliban (Sunni extremists). However, statements by its senior officials give clear signals of the Islamic Republic's approval of the newly restored Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The Iranian president (...) has welcomed "the shameful defeat of the US" in that country and declared that the new situation "must become a new opportunity to regain life, security and peace". (...) the Iranian Embassy is one of the few that is still active in Kabul"*. (El País 28-08-2021). Iranian imperialism will also try to play its cards inside Afghanistan: *"Iran has criticized the exclusion of the Hazaras (Shiites) (...), 30 of the 33 posts are occupied by Pashtuns"*. (La Vanguardia, 10-09-2021).

On the other hand, at the same time that Pakistani influence is increasing, Indian influence is decreasing, which is one of the countries that has seen the change of government in Afghanistan with concern, especially in relation to the continuity of the projects that Indian imperialism was planning to develop in Afghanistan: *"They are going to begin with an economic plan to make the country self-sustainable, exploiting mines and recovering the TAPI gas pipeline project, which would take gas from the deposits of Turkmenistan to India through Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is a pipeline that interests the Indians and annoys the Chinese, and it is undoubtedly a matter that the Taliban chief Abdul Ghani Baradar dealt with during his visit to China after passing through Turkmenistan"*. (La Vanguardia, 24-01-2021). It is no secret that from India, currently governed by Hindu nationalists, actions to sabotage China's expansion in Pakistan are being organized, as it is not improbable that this will be done in Afghanistan: *"Pakistan is once again on the winning side, but*

it is swallowing saliva. It has fenced off 90% of its border, with 575 turrets. Its foreign minister yesterday accused 'Afghan [pre-Taliban] and Indian intelligence' of the 'suicide attack' last month on a bus - near a Pakistani dam - in which nine Chinese engineers were killed". (La Vanguardia, 13-08-2021). *"In 2020 alone they carried out 120 attacks and last July there were 26."* (El País, 06-09-2021). Through these groups, whether they are Baloch independence fighters or the Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (the Pakistani branch of the Taliban, opposed to the government of Pakistan), the American and Indian imperialisms will try to sabotage the China-Pakistan interconnection.

In this sense, China is perfectly aware that the ETIM has used Afghanistan as a base for its previous US-sponsored attacks on China (historically there were even Uighurs among the Taliban). Anyway, with its departure, the US has lost much of its leverage while right now it is China that has something to offer to the Taliban and the Afghan bourgeoisie in general. On the other hand, China has the situation under control both in Xinjiang and in the rest of the country, in a much more overwhelming way than twenty years ago.

As for Russia, for the time being it is aligned with China in its interests regarding Afghanistan. However, it is also somewhat concerned about the spread of Islamist terrorism (that is, the destabilization and provocation promoted by the US in the area), which has led it to increase its military presence on Afghanistan's borders, as has China itself, whose military presence outside its borders is gradually making headway: *"Chinese and Tajik troops began anti-terrorist maneuvers three days ago on the outskirts of Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan, and pledged to work together to ensure regional security."* (La Vanguardia, 20-08-2021). *"One of the Kremlin's fears is that the arrival of refugees, in Russia or in its backyard, will be used by extremist elements. "We don't want fighters to come camouflaged as refugees", Vladimir Putin has recently said (...)"*. (La Vanguardia, 27-08-2021).

"In the talk with Putin on Wednesday, Xi reiterated China's position of non-interference and respecting Afghanistan's sovereignty and independence. For his part, the Russian leader told Xi that he shares China's positions and interests and is willing to work with Beijing to "prevent foreign forces from interfering and destroying" in Afghanistan. Xi urged all parties in Afghanistan to build an open and inclusive political framework, implement moderate and stable policies, and cut ties with all terrorist groups. (...) With an eye on the country's vast mineral wealth and on preventing terrorism from spreading across the border, the Chinese and Russian authorities have so far been benevolent towards the Taliban". (La Vanguardia, 26-08-2021).

As for Qatar, which has hosted the Taliban leadership in recent years and has been the venue for meetings between them and the Americans, it also has an imperialist interest in the area, for the moment in tune with Iran and evidently with its ally Turkey. It was precisely the Qatari airlines that were the first to resume commercial flights from Kabul airport, abandoned by the Americans. *"Qatar has participated, together with Turkey, in the repair and operation of the airfield that was left unusable after the departure of the US troops."* (El País 10-09-2021). *"Qatar and Turkey have offered to manage the airport, but the Taliban do not seem willing to leave security in the hands of a private company, as Ankara proposes."* (La Vanguardia, 10-09-2021).

As for the EU, the situation created in Afghanistan after the American exit has several consequences. On the one hand, it reaffirms in a whole sector of the European bourgeoisie the imperialist need to improve their joint military capacity. On the other hand, neither do they want to let the business opportunities that China is also pursuing in the area go to waste, and they are already preparing the possible landing of their investments through so-called "humanitarian aid": *"The Russians and the Chinese are already there, and we need a commitment if we really want to help on the ground," declared a high diplomat of the European Union (...)*. (Expansión, 09-09-2021). A few days later, *"The European Union pledged \$1 billion euros, or \$1.15 billion, in aid to Afghanistan and to neighboring countries."* (New York Times, 12-10-2021).

Finally, another issue that worries Europe (as well as Iran or Turkey, or even Russia) is the possible flood of refugees or migrants if the situation does not stabilize in the coming months. Pakistan and Iran currently host most of the Afghan refugees abroad (the majority being the several million internally displaced persons), but there is some risk that the situation could be used in a similar way to the millions of Syrian refugees thrown into Europe in 2015. To prepare for this possibility, all the "humanist" bourgeoisies involved are already building walls and militarizing their borders. See also, in this issue of the magazine, the article *"Immigration as a Weapon of War"*.

The tasks of the Afghan proletariat

To avoid getting lost in the marketing campaigns of one or the other, we must return to the fundamental statements, too often buried under the general noise of the dominant ideology. Let us solidly support ourselves on two basic pillars of the materialist conception of history:

"The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of human beings that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness." (Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, K. Marx, 1859).

"(...) In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production". (Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, K. Marx, 1859).

If anyone needs a simplification of these precise and profound theorems, for the case at hand: we will not explain the historical character and meaning of the Taliban movement by their declamations, turbans and beards, but we will explain the

real meaning of these declamations, turbans and beards by the analysis of the material basis, of the relations of production, of which they are the reflection and superstructure in a given period.

An illustrative comparison: the US and Europe put Khomeini's group in power in Iran, relying on the petty bourgeoisie of the bazaar, to derail the capitalist industrial modernization that the Shah of Persia was trying to introduce. This did not prevent the Islamic Republic from taking over from the Shah as an expression of the drive of the productive forces and has served for the development and shaping of the current capitalist power that Iran is. The Islamic superstructure has not bothered more than the Christian superstructure (Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant) to which the Western bourgeoisie hastened to return, after having taken only two and a half steps in its class domination.

The first Taliban government was not a return to feudalism, but it was an adequate expression of the need of US imperialism to block the productive forces in the region and the penetration of Russian imperialism in the region. The US had relied on the population in the rural areas, but this was not going to block productive forces that could not be blocked, to the extent that the Taliban no longer served the US.

The new Taliban government is the expression of the development of these productive forces that the US military occupation could not prevent. It is the appropriate expression at this moment of the development of the Afghan bourgeoisie, as the testimony of the bourgeois of Kandahar, the management of the roads and the collection of taxes, has confirmed above.

Afghanistan is a country fully integrated in the world market, a place of transit of goods and connection between the big countries of the area. Opium, amphetamines and mining products are exported all over the world and will be exported even more if the Chinese investment forecasts and those of the other imperialisms come true.

Moreover, the population in Afghanistan is migrating more and more to the cities, a completely capitalist tendency. Kabul now has almost 5 million people, and all Afghan cities have only grown in population, like the whole country, during the years of occupation.

The current Taliban are the expression of this material reality and it is what allows them to present themselves to the world as adequate managers of Afghan capitalism: *"The Taliban promised yesterday a "general amnesty" after the capture of Kabul and a*

state in which women will be able to work in the "framework of Islam". (...) "We don't want anyone to leave the country, this is their country, this is our common homeland, we have common values, common religion, common nation (...)". " (Expansión, 22-08-2021).

The characters of the Taliban movement are used by the western propaganda, as backward as they are, to demand respect for women's rights and human rights and to present itself as their guarantor. In capitalism there are no human beings, abstract men and women, there are exploiters and there are exploited. The living conditions of Afghan proletarian women have nothing to do with the living conditions of Afghan bourgeois women either. The Taliban are retrograde and reactionary, yes, just as reactionary as any political-military group supported by this or that imperialist group, just as those same imperialist groups, but **it is a reactionary nature in relation to the proletarian revolution, not a feudal return.**

In Afghanistan there is no struggle against feudalism to wage. In Afghanistan what is on the agenda is the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the overthrow of its managers (technocrats, Taliban, whoever), a struggle that the Afghan proletariat (in Afghanistan and in emigration) can only carry forward together with the rest of the world proletariat, organizing as a *class for itself* in the International Communist Party.

The Afghan and international proletariat will make its way, through the deserts that it will be necessary to cross, rejecting the drug of nationalism and religion (in this case, more than ever, the opium of the people) and any division on the basis of language or ethnicity, recovering Marxism as the weapon that will allow the working class, through the international communist revolution, to return to the international bourgeoisie all the workers' bloodshed and to put a definitive end to the crises, the wars and the atrocities of capitalism.

**OUT WITH THE IMPERIALIST ARMIES OF ALL
COUNTRIES!
AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR: INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNIST REVOLUTION!**