



# REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM

Theoretical Review of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency



[www.thecommunists.net](http://www.thecommunists.net)

New Series Issue Nr.62

September 2021

## Afghanistan: Understanding & Misunderstanding the Taliban

Class Contradictions, Women's Oppression  
and Anti-Imperialist Resistance

by Michael Pröbsting

## English-Language Theoretical Review of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), New Series No.62, September 2021

### *Contents*

Introduction	p.3
Ignoring Differences in the Class Character of Countries	p.4
Have the Taliban been Agents of ...?	p.4
“Feudalist” Taliban?	p.5
Land Ownership and Class Relations in Afghanistan’s Agriculture	p.6
Did Afghan Women Benefit from the U.S. Occupation?	p.8
Excuse: The Increase in the Cultivation of Opium in Afghanistan after the Overthrow of the Taliban in 2001	p.10
Women’s Oppression: The Example of Child Marriage	p.12
The Systematic Rape of Women and Boys: The Warlords and their American Protectors	p.13
The Taliban: a Petty-Bourgeois Islamist-Nationalist Movement Rooted among the Rural Poor	p.14
Excuse: The Islamist-Nationalist Rhetoric of the Taliban in their own Words	p.15
A Popular Basis as a Result of Two Decades of Anti-Colonial Struggle	p.16
Afghanistan 2021: A Historic Defeat for Western Imperialism by a Popular Guerrilla Struggle	p.17
Conclusions	p.18
Footnotes	p.20

*Pictures on the cover: Taliban fighters at the Kabul Airport with military equipment conquered from the U.S. Army (September 2021)*

*Revolutionary Communism* is the monthly English-language journal published by the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT). The RCIT has sections and activists in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Pakistan, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Yemen, Israel / Occupied Palestine, Russia, Nigeria, Britain, Germany, and Austria.

**[www.thecommunists.net](http://www.thecommunists.net) - [rcit@thecommunists.net](mailto:rcit@thecommunists.net)  
Tel/SMS/WhatsApp/Telegram: +43-650-4068314**

# Afghanistan: Understanding (and Misunderstanding) the Taliban

## Class Contradictions, Women's Oppression and Anti-Imperialist Resistance

*A Pamphlet (with 5 Tables) by Michael Pröbsting, International Secretary of the RCIT, 9 September 2021*

### Introduction

The historic character of events can be seen in how they shape resp. reflect profound developments in world politics. The RCIT has pointed out since a number of years that U.S. imperialism – the long-time global hegemon – is in period of decay. This process provokes global instability, weakens regimes allied with the U.S., and opens the space for new Great Powers like China and Russia.<sup>1</sup> The fact that Washington lost against a popular guerilla movement in a much smaller and poorer country – despite 20 years of occupation, despite spending \$2.26 trillion and despite deploying a total of more than 775,000 troops since 2001<sup>2</sup> – reflects, and indeed symbolizes, such decline.

Such historic convulsions also highlight the political character of self-proclaimed socialist organizations. Do they understand the nature of the event and they underlying historic dynamics, can they resist the pressure of the bourgeois public opinion and the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, are they able to stand on the right side of the barricade?

A naïve person could think that something which is described by nearly every observer as the worst and most humiliating defeat of U.S. imperialism since the Vietnam War in 1975 could provoke nothing but rejoice among left-wing forces. However, as a matter of fact, the opposite is the case. Most so-called “socialist” organizations characterize the victory of the popular resistance after 20 years of guerilla struggle against the imperialist occupation not only as a disaster for the U.S. but also as a disaster for the Afghan people. In fact, many suggest that the Afghan people would have been better off under the imperialist occupation than under the domination of the Taliban!

All this reflects the vast extent of the opportunist adaption of large sectors of the so-called “left” to the public opinion of the ruling class. Hence, historic events like those in Afghanistan have the advantage that they not only reveal the dynamics of the global class struggle but also expose the nature of “socialist” organizations.

Usually, these “left-wing” organizations justify their hostility to the victory of the Taliban by referring to their reactionary policy against women as well as their Islamist fundamentalist outlook. Of course, the *Revolutionary Communist International Tendency* (RCIT) and its predecessor organization have been fully aware of the reactionary policy of the Taliban since their emergence in the mid-1990s. Hence, we have always differentiated between support for the Taliban's *military* struggle conducted by non-revolutionary forces against imperialist forces and intransigent opposition against their *political* program. In autumn 2001, shortly before the imperialists started their invasion against Afghanistan, we said: “*We have to be clear that in this war we want to see the imperialist coalition defeated, and*

*that means supporting all Afghan military resistance against imperialism, including Taliban resistance*”<sup>3</sup> “*In the event of imperialist attack, the LRCI stands clearly for the military victory of all Afghan forces that resist the US/UK offensive. That includes Taliban forces if they resist the imperialist offensive. This in no way implies political support for the deeply reactionary Taliban regime or for the terrorist policies pursued by Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda organisation.*”<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to those with weak hearts and minds, we have not changed our course and we stand by the Marxist principles of anti-imperialism as we did in 2001 and all the years after. The purpose of the pamphlet at hand is to deal with some of the most important arguments which have been brought forward against the Marxist approach on the anti-colonial struggle of the Afghan people. We are convinced that many of our well-intentioned critiques do not or do not sufficiently apply the Marxist method to the current events in Afghanistan. Neither do they approach the Taliban and the political and social developments in Afghanistan in general in a comprehensive way but rather tend to one-sidedness and distortion. Hence, we think that in order to correct mistakes and exaggerations, it is urgent to elaborate a dialectical and materialist analysis of a number of issues which are in the center of the polemics by our opponents.

Below we will elaborate on the Marxist approach to the class character of states, explaining the crucial difference between imperialist and semi-colonial countries. We will discuss the concrete class relations in Afghanistan's countryside and what this means for the class composition of the Taliban. We will deal with various aspects of women's oppression in this country and how this relates to the policy of the Taliban. We will discuss the difference between the Taliban and the occupiers in their policy towards opium production. Finally, we will discuss some aspects of the political orientation and the social basis of this movement as well as the historic dimension of the current defeat of the Western imperialists in Afghanistan.

As we focus on the discussion of these issues, we will not repeat in detail our analysis of the current events and the strategic and tactical consequences for revolutionaries. The RCIT has done so extensively in a number of statements and articles which we published in the past weeks and which should be read in addition to this pamphlet.<sup>5</sup>

## Ignoring Differences in the Class Character of Countries

A key political failure which nearly all socialist organizations have in common is their total ineptitude to analyze and to recognize the *class character* of the forces involved in the occupation of Afghanistan respectively the resistance against it. True, it is common practice among left-wing organizations to talk about “U.S. resp. Western imperialism”. In times of political correctness, even some mainstream journalists accept such terminology. However, usually all these people use the category of “imperialism” only in a liberal manner without its meaning in the Marxist theory.

The RCIT is a staunch defender of the Marxist concept of imperialism. Lenin, Trotsky and many other orthodox Marxists have explained that the world is divided between a small number of imperialist states and the majority of the world population who live in dependent – colonial or semi-colonial – countries.

“The programme of Social-Democracy (this is how the Marxists called themselves at that time, MP), as a counter-balance to this petty-bourgeois, opportunist utopia, must postulate the division of nations into oppressor and oppressed as basic, significant and inevitable under imperialism.”<sup>6</sup>

In another article Lenin repeats this idea which later became a fundamental pillar of the Communist International’s program: “Imperialism means the progressively mounting oppression of the nations of the world by a handful of Great Powers (...) That is why the focal point in the Social-Democratic programme must be that division of nations into oppressor and oppressed which forms the essence of imperialism, and is deceitfully evaded by the social-chauvinists and Kautsky. This division is not significant from the angle of bourgeois pacifism or the philistine Utopia of peaceful competition among independent nations under capitalism, but it is most significant from the angle of the revolutionary struggle against imperialism.”<sup>7</sup>

Hence, imperialism is a global system in which all nations – in one way or another – are interlinked with each other and in which a few imperialist states and their capitalist corporations dominate the world economy and world politics. These imperialist powers and monopolies dominate and super-exploit most of the world population living in (semi-)colonial states and nations. As we have analyzed modern imperialism in much details in two books and various pamphlets, we will not go into more detail at this place.<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, it is hardly necessary at this point to explain why we consider the U.S. as a rich, imperialist power and Afghanistan as a poor, capitalist semi-colony (in fact, it was rather a colony in the past two decades).

We are aware that a current of Marxist theoreticians support the theory of so-called “sub-imperialism”. While we reject this theory, as we have explained on several occasions,<sup>9</sup> it seems not necessary to us to deal with this concept at this place as there is not a single proponent of this theory who would claim that Afghanistan belongs to this category.

Hence, the war of the U.S. and other NATO states against Afghanistan in 2001 and the subsequent occupation of the country was a classic form of imperialist aggression against a poor country. For 20 years Afghanistan was transformed into a colony in which the U.S. and their Western allies dominated the country, created a subordi-

nated administration, and armed, trained and directed local auxiliary forces (misnamed “Afghan National Army”). Therefore the U.S./NATO forces represented the Western imperialist powers and their Afghan collaborators were colonial underlings – similar to local servants as they existed in the *British Empire*, the *Empire colonial français* and the German occupation of Europe in 1939-45.

In summary, the U.S. and European powers have a very *different class character* than Afghanistan. While the formers are *dominating* capitalist states, i.e. imperialist states, the latter is a *dependent* capitalist country, i.e. a (semi-)colonial state. Ignoring such a decisive difference in the class character between these two parties in this war is impermissible for everyone who considers him- or herself as Marxist!

Therefore, the resistance against the U.S./NATO occupation, the struggle to expel the Western masters from a poor (semi-)colonial country, had by its very nature an *anti-colonial, anti-imperialist character*. First and foremost, the guerrilla struggle – led by the Taliban – was objectively directed against the occupiers. Secondly, the main reason why many people supported this struggle was exactly because they all wanted to expel the imperialist invaders. And, thirdly, this anti-imperialist character has also been reflected in the Islamist-nationalist rhetoric of the Taliban as we will see below.

## Have the Taliban been Agents of ...?

Theoretically, one could argue against our assessment that the Taliban would have been proxies of another imperialist power (e.g. China or Russia). But this is obviously nonsense as the Taliban never had particularly close relations with these powers nor did they receive any meaningful material support for them. The relations with Russia have been – to put it mildly – handicapped by the Soviet invasion in the 1980s. And the relations with Beijing have also been not particularly close as it is reflected by the fact that the *East Turkestan Islamic Movement* – an armed Islamist guerilla organization of the Uyghurs in China, who face horrible oppression by the Stalinist-capitalist regime – has close relations with the Taliban since decades. Unsurprisingly, hardly any serious person claims that the Taliban would have been Chinese or Russian agents.

A number of Stalinists and likeminded people suggest that the Taliban would have been agents of U.S. imperialism. Obviously, this is a bizarre theory which make the QAnnon maniacs look like reasonable people! True, the Taliban had some connections with the U.S. in the late 1990s. But obviously, this turned into a hostile relationship in 2001 at latest. Otherwise, if the Taliban would have been loyal agents of U.S. imperialism, why should Washington have bombed, invaded and occupied the country?! And how do these gimps explain that the U.S. and NATO forces killed – according to the latest calculations of the U.S. Brown University – 85,731 guerilla fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan since October 2001 – of whom the majority has been affiliated with the Taliban?!<sup>10</sup>

Another objection of various Stalinists is that the Taliban had the support – or were even agents of the ISI, the Pakistan secret service. While there certainly exist(ed) some links, this is nevertheless a total senseless argument. First, Pakistan is a semi-colonial country, not an imperialist state. Hence, even if it would be true that the Taliban

had been proxies of Pakistan, that would not alter the class character of the war as it would be still a conflict between forces representing imperialist resp. semi-colonial countries. Secondly, Pakistan is a dependent capitalist country which had been a close ally to the U.S. for a long time. However, in the last decades, it has aligned itself increasingly with Chinese imperialism.<sup>11</sup> In any case, it is obvious that the Pakistani state apparatus first and foremost accommodated to the interests of Washington (and Beijing) but not to the interests of the Taliban!

Thirdly, and most importantly, it is evident that such support has been limited to providing shelter, giving money, some weapons etc. It never transformed into any serious military support. Otherwise, the Taliban would have had anti-aircraft guns or missiles (as it was the case with the Mujahideen fighting against the PDAP/Soviet forces in 1980s who got Stinger missiles from the CIA). In contrast, the Taliban had no modern weapons at all, they even had no uniforms and often no boots! Mr. and Mrs. Stalinist, think hard: how serious could the Pakistani ISI support for the Taliban have been?!

Finally, we shall add that of course, things can change in the future. For example, if Afghanistan gets fully integrated in China's *Belt & Road Initiative* and subordinates itself to the political and economic interests of Beijing, the Taliban might become a kind of agents of Chinese imperialism. But this is music of the future and such an assessment can only be derived from a concrete analysis.

## "Feudalist" Taliban?

Having established the class character of the Western imperialist countries resp. of Afghanistan, we need to deal now with the character of the forces involved in the war. In the case of the U.S. and NATO troops this is pretty simple. These are the official armed forces of the Western imperialist Great Powers. The administration in Kabul resp. their "army" were the collaborators of these colonial masters.

Which class forces do the Taliban represent? Usually, Stalinists and pseudo-Trotskyists don't give an answer to this question which, it seems to us, should not be of secondary nature for a Marxist! Our opponents yell: The Taliban are "medieval forces", "ultra-reactionary", "feudalist", etc. While these categories contain an element of truth, they don't help to comprehend such political phenomenon. Basically, these are rather useless stigmatizations resulting from classic imperialist school of orientalism which Edward Said once demolished so well but which are nevertheless still pretty popular among the middle-class liberals and their "left-wing" parrots.<sup>12</sup>

In order to approach the political nature of the Taliban, we need to look at their social base and the social economic structures where they exist. Many leftists claim that Afghanistan would be a kind of *feudal* country or that at least the countryside – where  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population live – would have such a *pre-capitalist* character. Such an assumption is usually – deliberately or not – made in order to justify support for (bourgeois) "modern" forces which could help to

# Books of the RCIT

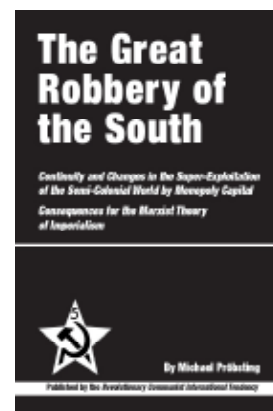
## Michael Pröbsting: The Great Robbery of the South Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism

The RCIT is proud to announce the publication of a book called *THE GREAT ROBBERY OF THE SOUTH*. The book's subtitle is: *Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital*. Consequences for the Marxist Theory of Imperialism. The book is in English-language. It has 15 chapters, 448 pages and includes 139 Tables and Figures. The author of the book is *Michael Pröbsting* who is the International Secretary of the RCIT.

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting analyses the super-exploitation and oppression of the semi-colonial world (often referred to as the "Third World") by the imperialist powers and monopolies. He shows that the relationship between the small minority of rich capitalist countries and the huge majority of mankind living in the semi-colonial world forms one of the most important elements of the imperialist world system we are living in. The Great Robbery of the South shows that the past decades have been a complete confirmation of the validity of Lenin's theory of imperialism and its programmatic conclusions. *The Great Robbery of the South* demonstrates the important changes in the relationship between the imperialist and the semi-colonial countries. Using comprehensive material (including 139 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that never before

has such a big share of the world capitalist value been produced in the South. Never before have the imperialist monopolies been so dependent on the super-exploitation of the semi-colonial world. Never before has migrant labor from the semi-colonial world played such a significant role for the capitalist value production in the imperialist countries. Never before has the huge majority of the world working class lived in the South – outside of the old imperialist metropolises.

In *The Great Robbery of the South* Michael Pröbsting argues that a correct understanding of the nature of imperialism as well as of the program of permanent revolution which includes the tactics of consistent anti-imperialism is essential for anyone who wants to change the world and bring about a socialist future. Order your copy NOW! \$20 / £13 / €15 plus p+p (21\$ for US and international, £9 for UK, €10 for Europe)



remove such pre-capitalist features. This is the reason why many liberals and “leftists” implicitly sympathize with the imperialist occupation. True, they are willingly to admit, the Americans pursue their capitalist interests. But objectively, so their argument goes, they could help to modernize “this medieval country”. Well, that did not really work, don’t you think so after 20 years of imperialist occupation?! After two decades of imperialist “modernization”, Afghanistan’s main “industry” is ... opium production! Finally, the “backward” peasants showed the world what they think about these Western benefactions and sent the high-tech armed Lords of Power and Money running!

### Land Ownership and Class Relations in Afghanistan’s Agriculture

In order to approach the class character of the social base of the Taliban movement, we need to analyze the economic relations in the rural areas where most Afghan people live. It is important to remove the myth that Afghanistan’s countryside would be dominated by feudal class relations. Land reforms in the late 1970s and early 1980s and decades of civil wars have not allowed the existence of social relations where big landowners control large junks of land with most peasants earning their living as sharecroppers or tenants on their land. In fact, most Afghan peasants are owners of a small piece of land. A researcher concludes: *“The prevalence of ownership has increased from about 60% of farmers in some reports from the 1960s and 1970s to more than 90% in 2003. Most tenants are also owners. From a situation once described as “few owners, many tenants”, a new situation has arisen with many owners and few tenants. Sharecropping (or in some cases money rent), as well as mortgaging, affects only a minority.”*<sup>13</sup>

A large and comprehensive study, which was published by the United Nation’s FAO in 2003, provides an in-depth look into Afghanistan’s agriculture. As this study was produced shortly after the U.S./NATO victory, it therefore reflected the social relations in the country *before* the two decades’ long period of Western occupation.<sup>14</sup>

The large majority of rural households in Afghanistan are farm households (83.7%). Households earning wages, but not farming and lacking any non-farm self-employment, were 11.3% of rural households. This figure indicates that there is a small layer of rural workers who do not possess any land.<sup>15</sup>

According to the FAO study, Afghanistan has about 1.28 million farms with arable land. Similar to other capitalist countries, land is distributed in a highly unequal manner where a small minority owns large junks of land while most farms are only small in size. One of the authors of the above-mentioned study summarizes the results as follows: *“Most of the farms in Afghanistan are in fact very small. Only a small fraction of farms (13.7%) have an area over 10 hectares of arable land, either irrigated or rain-fed, covering 44.5% of all arable land. About 73% of farms are below 5 hectares, controlling just 22.8% of the land. Even if large latifundia are not common in Afghanistan, there is a significant amount of land in the larger farm-size groups. The upper 4.9% of farms, with areas over 20 hectares, concentrate 39% of total arable land (30.4% of the irrigated and 46.4% of the rain fed), (...). Nearly one half of the farmers, with holdings below 2 hectares each, control only 7.5% of total arable land.”*<sup>16</sup>

Such a kind of unequal distribution of land has strong similarities with that in many other poor capitalist countries in Southern Asia and Sub-Sahara Africa as Table 1 and 2 show.

However, there are also countries in the region with a much more unequal land distribution. For example, in neighboring Pakistan the top 5% among the landowners possess 64% of total farmland while peasants with small farms – constituting about 65% of landowners – hold only 15% of such land. At the same time, more than half of rural households (50.8%) are landless.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast, most peasants in Afghanistan own their land. *“The most striking feature here is that 86.5% of farms, comprising 82.9% of arable land, are operated by their owners without any form of tenancy, neither letting land to others nor renting land from someone else.”*<sup>20</sup> In other words, 8-9 out of 10 peasants work their own land but neither lend land to others nor work for any landlord. *“Existing inequality does not stem from the prominence of a few very large estates, mostly wiped out by war and land reform, nor from a large proportion of landless families, but from the widespread prevalence of very small farms, able to provide but a fraction of a family’s food needs and little cash income, if any at all.”*<sup>21</sup>

This means that the idea of the existence of *feudal* class relations is simply a myth which bears no relation to the class reality in Afghanistan. The FAO study states: *“Another interesting point is that there are very few cases of labour payments to landlords, indicating that bonded labour or related forms of servitude are practically non-existent.”*<sup>22</sup>

This does not mean that tenancy would not exist in Afghanistan. However, it is not a widespread phenomenon. *“[O]wners who also take some land from others, represent [t] 10.3% of farms which comprise 11.6% of total arable land.”*<sup>23</sup> Most sharecroppers and tenants do not depend on such income exclusively. *“One particular feature of the survey data is the relative scarcity of tenants in general and pure tenants (without any land of their own) in particular. Only about 27,000 pure tenants (making 2.5% of all farmers) are represented in the sample (...). Their farms occupy about 97,000 Ha, i.e. about 1.5% of all arable land”*<sup>24</sup>

Most tenants are forced to earn an additional income as wage laborers. *“The prevalence of wages in farm households was high in all tenure categories, peaking among pure tenants (96% of whom had wage income) and with the lowest (but still high) value among farmer landlords (among which 54% earned wages). At the same time, 27.7% of farm households had some non-farm self-employment income, but this increased to 52.7% among pure tenants. Transfers (mostly remittances) were present in 22.3% of farm households, but in 59.3% of pure tenants.”*<sup>25</sup>

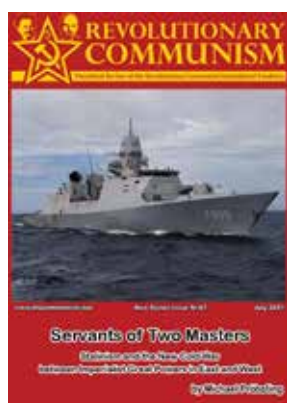
Such social relations are not necessarily relations between tenants and big landowners. *“Another significant feature is that 4.7% of arable land (i.e. above 300,000 Ha) is held by farmers under various tenancy arrangements but owned by non-farmers, i.e. by landlords who do not actually conduct agricultural production themselves. These non-farming landlords are not necessarily absent. Some may live in the same village but not farming because of being widows, elderly, infirm, or war-disabled, choosing instead to entrust their land to tenants. Among the absentee landlords, not all are members of a more powerful landed class: some may be just relatives or neighbours living abroad and having their land farmed by someone else in the meantime.”*<sup>26</sup>

**Table 1. Afghanistan: Percent Distribution of Farms and Arable Lands by Farm Size, 2002-03** <sup>17</sup>

<i>Farm size (Ha)</i>	<i>Farms</i>	<i>Arable land (Hectares)</i>
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Below 0.50 Ha	15.8%	0.9%
0.50-0.99 Ha	13.4%	1.8%
1.00-1.99 Ha	18.6%	4.8%
2.00-4.99 Ha	25.2%	15.2%
5.00-9.99 Ha	13.4%	17.7%
10.0-19.9 Ha	8.3%	20.6%
20.0-49.9 Ha	4.4%	23.9%
50.0-74.9 Ha	0.6%	7.1%
75.0-99.9 Ha	0.2%	2.7%
100+ Ha	0.2%	5.2%

**Table 2. Number and Area of Farms by Land Size Class in Southern Asia and Sub-Sahara Africa** <sup>18</sup>

	<i>&lt; 1 ha</i>	<i>1-2 ha</i>	<i>2-6 ha</i>	<i>6-10 ha</i>	<i>10-20 ha</i>	<i>20-60 ha</i>	<i>60-200 ha</i>
<i>Southern Asia</i>							
Share of Farms (%)	69.1	16.8	11.3	2.2	0.5	0.1	0.0
Share of Agriculture Land (%)	23.9	21.5	29.7	13.3	6.5	3.9	1.2
<i>Sub-Sahara Africa</i>							
Share of Farms (%)	52.0	21.8	18.9	4.3	3.2	0.4	0.3
Share of Agriculture Land (%)	11.5	16.2	29.4	17.8	9.0	4.6	10.5



**PUBLICATIONS OF THE RCIT**

**Servants of Two Masters**

*Stalinism and the New Cold War*

*between Imperialist Great Powers in East and West*

*by Michael Pröbsting*

*A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A4 Format*

**Introduction \* The New Inter-Imperialist Cold War \* A View on the Military Strength of the Great Powers \* The Main Point of both Statements: Siding with Chinese and Russian Imperialism \* Stalinist Fantasies Shredded in the Light of Reality: The Rise of Chinese Imperialism \* The KKE’s “criticism” and its fraternal bonds with the Chinese CP \* Beside the Servants of Assad the Butcher - Who Signed the KKE-initiated Joint Statement? \* The Xi Fan Club: Signatories of the CPUSA-initiated Joint Statement \* The Concept of Multilateralism and Peaceful Coexistence: A Reactionary Illusion \* “Socialism in One Country”: The Historical Roots of the Stalinist Concept of “Peaceful Coexistence” \* Serving Two Masters: The Eastern Imperialists as well as Sectors of the Domestic Bourgeoisie \* A Note on the tight-lipped “Trotskyists” (CWI, IMT, ISA) \* Conclusions \* Footnotes**

The large majority of Afghan peasant families live under very poor conditions on a small piece of land which they (formally or de facto) own but which does not provide sufficient income to secure a living. "[A] large majority of farmers have quite small farms. The typical or average farmer with less than 5 hectares of arable land controls 1.14 hectares of irrigated land and 0.5 hectares of rain-fed land, of which only a portion can be cultivated at any given time. This land area is not enough to feed a family of 11 people [the average size of a peasant household, Ed.], and this situation afflicts more than 730,000 farms, nearly 70% of all farms."<sup>27</sup> Only a small minority, about 16% of farm households, do not have any non-farm sources of income (wages, non-farm self-employment and transfers), and seem to be able to live presumably on the farm alone.<sup>28</sup>

Hence, these poor peasant families are forced to earn money either by selling products of their farming, lending money, receiving remittances from family members who migrated abroad, or, and most importantly, by getting a job as wage laborers. The above-mentioned FAO study reports: "In particular, 60.8% of all farmer households have some wage-labour income. Money needs are also addressed through informal financial relations: about one half of households had received some loan in the year preceding the survey, and a sizable number receive remittances. Money income is almost universal. Reported sources of income indicate 96% of farmers have some form of money income. The remaining minority of less than 4% almost surely has also some source of money that remained unreported. Since only about one half sell any farm products, and 96% have money revenue, most farmers have off-farm monetary incomes. Farmers selling specifically crop output are almost 23%. This includes sellers of wheat but also sellers of other crops who do not sell wheat. The difference comes from the modest cash crops grown by Afghan farmers, such as melons or some pulses. Farms with any form of revenue from sale of farm products amount to 56% of farms, including farms reporting sale of crops, sale of animals, or both, and other sales most of which are supposedly farm products such as eggs, hides or wool."<sup>29</sup>

Given the backward capitalist conditions in the countryside, most rural household members working for a wage were engaged in casual labor and "less than a fifth of them were on a regular salaried job."<sup>30</sup>

According to reports from peasants, about 1/5 receive remittances. However, as the authors of the FAO study explain, "The true percentage must be higher, since there is a tendency to hide this source of income. With millions of Afghans living abroad, and not only in neighbouring countries, remittances are a major source of income for many."<sup>31</sup>

Due to the poor living conditions, many peasants are forced to take on debts. The FAO study reports that "[n]early half the farmers took on some new debt in 2002, and about 60% were in debt by the time of the survey."<sup>32</sup> However, this does not automatically mean that these peasants are indebted to big landlords or financial capitalists. "The creditors, however, are in large proportion relatives of the debtors. About 41% of the debtors owe money only to relatives, making a total 60% owing money to relatives alone or in combination with other creditors. Another large category of creditor is "other village member" (21% of debtors, of which 9% alone, 9% along with relatives, and 3% in other combinations). This indicates that practically the vast majority of debtors owe money to a family member or another member of the same village."<sup>33</sup>

In summary, the mass of Afghan peasant families owns

a small piece of land which does not provide sufficient food to secure a living. Hence, family members are forced to earn an income as wage laborers (or by other forms of non-farm self-employment). Another form of income is that family members move abroad and work as migrants (usually as wage laborers) and send some money home.

Hence, we can say that most Afghan peasants have a combined or intermingled class existence with a mixture of semi-petty-bourgeois and semi-proletarian characteristics. They represent a large and impoverished plebeian layer. One of the authors of the FAO study makes an accurate observation, despite the fact that he approaches the issue not from a Marxist but from a bourgeois-sociologist point of view: "[F]arming is often coexisting with people in the household working as wage labourers, or having some non-farm self-employment, as two facets of the same peasant livelihood. There is no clear divide between the rural wage labour force and the rural peasant farmer population. A large majority (63%) of farmer households in the 2003 Winter Survey reported some monetary wage income during 2002. This indicates a deep penetration of labour market relations in the Afghan countryside."<sup>34</sup>

Hence, we repeat, Afghanistan's class relations in the countryside do not have primarily a feudal character but rather a backward, underdeveloped capitalist character.

### Did Afghan Women Benefit from the U.S. Occupation?

It is well-known that the oppression of women in Afghanistan is severe and has a long tradition. In fact, Western imperialists – and their liberal and "left-wing" parrots – refer to this fact as a justification of the two-decades long occupation of the country. Here, again, we have the imperialist-orientalist ideology of the "backward Afghans" resp. the "misogynic Afghan men" who require the violent enlightenment by their Western masters.<sup>35</sup>

However, for the imperialist powers, women's liberation was never an issue and only naïve fools can criticize them that they would have "betrayed" the Afghan women. No, the imperialists just acted in an imperialist way – what a surprise! Concerning the opportunist left, such naïve criticism only betrays a) their illusions as they seem to have been taken imperialist rhetoric seriously and b) their total lack of understanding of the social and economic roots of women's oppression.

Let us begin with referring to some figures of the United Nations. It regularly publishes the so-called *Human Development Report* which – from a bourgeois-sociologist point of view – provides an overview of global social development. This report includes, among others, a so-called "Gender Inequality Index", a "composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market."<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, the *Human Development Report* began to include Afghanistan only in its 2009 version, providing data for the year 2007. The latest issue of this report stems from last year and contains data for the year 2019. Hence, while we can not provide figures for the period before the U.S. occupation began, it is nevertheless possible to view the development of the situation of Afghan women in the course of 12 years of imperialist benefactions. According to the mentioned issues of the UNDP's *Human Develop-*



ment Report, Afghanistan ranked on place 154 (out of 155 listed countries) in 2007.<sup>37</sup> 12 years later, the country is listed on place 157 (out of 162 countries).<sup>38</sup>

So, even if we take the official figures of the United Nations, i.e. the very institution which officially sanctioned the imperialist invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in 2001, we can hardly see a progressive development of the situation for Afghan women compared with developments in other countries.

This is also the conclusion which has been reached by two female researchers who analyzed the situation of Afghan women on the basis of personal interviews as well as reports of two well-known organizations – the *Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan* and *Human Rights Watch*.

*“As the war (in 2001, Ed.) has officially ended, new forms of misogyny and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) have arisen. The ‘post-war’ context presents an institutional normalization of violence, favouring a culture of rape and impunity. New frames of SGBV appear as female genital cutting within marriage, self-immolation, forced prostitution, acid attacks, body part mutilations perpetrated by husbands, and increasing domestic violence partly due to the growing consumption of opium, but also to the presence of powerful warlords in government institutions.”*<sup>39</sup>

They also cite a study published in 2015 which estimates *“that nine out of ten Afghan women face physical, sexual or psychological violence.”*<sup>40</sup>

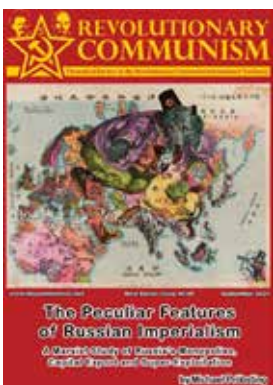
Not only did the imperialist occupation nothing to overcome the socio-economic conditions of poverty and backward development. It also promoted developments which aggravated the situation of women. Among these was the fact that the key allies of the U.S./NATO occupation forces were the leaders of the so-called *“Northern Alliance”*. These were the same war lords who were responsible for the horrific period of civil war in 1992-96 – one of the most devastating chapters of Afghanistan’s modern history. In that period, these warlords terrorized the country in general

and Kabul in particular. *“Kabul faced a severe food crisis in the winter of 1992–93, as Hezb-i- Islami imposed a blockade of shipments from the south and Pakistan. All in all, in the first year of mujahideen rule, some 30,000 civilians were killed in Kabul and 100,000 wounded, mostly by Hekmatyar’s rockets. By 1996, the total of civilian deaths in Kabul had probably reached 50,000.”*<sup>41</sup> According to some estimates, about 80,000 civilians lost their lives in this period in the whole country.

This was a particular horrific period for women. *“The Islamic government proclaimed by the mujahideen when they entered Kabul in 1992 began imposing restrictions on women. Women were required to cover their heads in public; worse still, they became tempting targets for those avenging ethnic and political attacks. Between 1992 and 1996, women in Kabul were especially vulnerable as the city was divided among the warlords. Many were kidnapped, raped, tortured, and forced into marriage by the rival factions. Thousands of war widows, often the sole breadwinners of their families, were terrified to leave their homes.”*<sup>42</sup>

Since these warlords were the key allies of U.S./NATO imperialism during their invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, they came back to power. *“Soon after the Taliban collapsed, the US-led coalition tried to establish a new government in Afghanistan based on their alliance with the Mujahideen. Thus, Mujahideen leaders had a major role in the Bonn Conference of December 2001, where the transitional government was formed. At that point, the US installed the warlords in power, pretending to achieve democracy. The crimes, atrocities and particularly violence against women that these groups committed during the civil war were simply ignored by NATO’s occupation forces. The Mujahideen received key positions in government, dominating the majority of seats in Parliament. These circumstances provided a golden opportunity for Afghan warlords to establish impunity for one another. Consequently, justice died for the Afghan people.”*<sup>43</sup>

An interesting reportage which has been published recently in the *New Yorker* and which is based on a series of interviews with rural women in the south of Afghanistan



## Publications of the RCIT

# The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism

A Study of Russia’s Monopolies, Capital Export and Super-Exploitation in the Light of Marxist Theory

By Michael Pröbsting, August 2021

**Introduction \* Another Denial of Russia’s Imperialist Character \* The Methodological Failure of our Critics \* Russia’s Economy: Dominated by Domestic, not Foreign, Monopolies \* Capital Export and the Problem of “Round-Tripping” Foreign Direct Investments \* “Phantom FDI”: No Russian Peculiarity but a Global Phenomenon \* Russia’s Leading Multinational Corporations and their Foreign Investments \* Imperialist Super-Exploitation via Capital Export \* Imperialist Super-Exploitation via Migration \* Conclusions \* Footnotes**

*A RCIT Pamphlet, 20 pages, A4 Format*

confirms that if life under the Taliban for rural women was bad, it became worse under the pro-NATO warlords! "When I asked Shakira and other women from the valley to reflect on Taliban rule, they were unwilling to judge the movement against some universal standard—only against what had come before. "They were softer," Pazaro, the woman who lived in a neighboring village, said. "They were dealing with us respectfully." The women described their lives under the Taliban as identical to their lives under Dado and the mujahideen—minus the strangers barging through the doors at night, the deadly checkpoints."<sup>44</sup>

So after 2001, the extreme version of the reactionary social policy of the Taliban – which banned or at least extremely restricted the access of women to education and the public in general – was officially no longer in place. However, this was replaced by handing over provinces to warlords and their underlings which resulted in widespread mistreatment, rape and killing of women. "In March 2005, Human Rights Watch, a U.S.-based advocacy group, charged that former warlords now ensconced as provincial governors and top police officials 'have been implicated in widespread rape of women and children, murder, illegal detention, forced displacement, human trafficking and forced marriage.'"<sup>45</sup>

The rule of these warlords – the local proxies of the U.S./NATO occupation forces – had also other consequences with devastating consequences for women. While the Taliban had implemented a (backward and patriarchal) centralized form of law and order, the rule of the NATO/warlord forces created a "lawless" situation with numerous local gangs and militias which used their possession of weapons for terrorizing the population in general and women and children in particular. "Reports and news by RAWA, Al-Jazeera English and the Afghan News Agency have shown an increasing normalization of sexual abuse in all spheres of society. Recently, child abuse has also become a part of 'everyday' news: 'Sexual abuse and rape of children have been rampant in Afghanistan, specifically in northern parts of the country' as the same news presented the case of a seriously wounded 3-year-old child sexually abused by a 14-year-old boy. Domestic violence has increased since the over-stated end of the Taliban regime: it is also related to those holding the weapons. A lot of women in safe houses mentioned that after they escaped from domestic violence, their family or in-laws sought the support of commanders with regards to their 'disrespect' of 'legitimated' forms of violence by tradition. Domestic violence seems to be higher in considered 'peaceful areas' where laws are imposed by former commanders and where 'the pressures of the nation's double digit unemployment rate are more easily felt' "<sup>46</sup>

Hence, Western liberals and their leftist parrots are completely wrong if they judge the situation of women by looking at Kabul only. For the mass of Afghan women, who are living in the countryside, life became worse under the NATO occupation. The interviews with Afghan women living in the South in the above-mentioned essay in the *New Yorker* confirm this: "In Sangin, whenever I brought up the question of gender, village women reacted with derision. "They are giving rights to Kabul women, and they are killing women here," Pazaro said. "Is this justice?" Marzia, from Pan Killay, told me, "This is not 'women's rights' when you are killing us, killing our brothers, killing our fathers." Khalida, from a nearby village, said, "The Americans did not bring us any rights. They just came, fought, killed, and left."<sup>47</sup>

This has been also confirmed by another study. "To for-

eign observers, a *curiosum* of the new Taliban government was the General Department for the Preservation of Virtue and the Elimination of Vice, which set stringent moral standards in daily life. A squad of over 30,000 was responsible for enforcing observance of religious service, dress code, and banning of entertainment such as television, music, or kite-flying. All women were obliged to wear burkas (head-to-toe garments) and were forbidden to appear in public unless when accompanied by a close male relative. The most controversial edict was the banning of girls from attending schools. The impact of the restrictions was felt most profoundly in urban areas where women had greater access to education and employment opportunities, in contrast to the countryside. Restrictions were enforced through public punishment, including beating of women in public. On the other hand, positive change was felt mostly in the area of security. Roads were cleared from criminal elements and travel became possible, even at night. A survey conducted in 1997 with 120 women in a refugee camp close to Jalalabad city showed that women felt much safer under the Taliban than under the previous regime. The administration of draconian justice through the establishment of Islamic courts passing judgment over crimes and private disputes considerably contributed to general security and order. Murderers were subjected to public executions and thieves to public amputations."<sup>48</sup>

### Excuse: The Increase in the Cultivation of Opium in Afghanistan after the Overthrow of the Taliban in 2001

This situation was worsened by another development which reflects, once more, that the NATO/warlord domination did not result in social progress for Afghanistan: the rapid rise of the production and consumption of opium. As it is widely known, the Taliban had banned and largely eradicated opium production in the years by the year 2000.

However, this policy was radically reversed with the overthrow of the Taliban and the beginning of the U.S. occupation. The new imperialist masters were interested in providing their local proxies with a profitable basis to increase their wealth. Hence, the local warlords used the opportunity to revive the evil business which the Taliban had eradicated. (By the way: it would not be surprising if scandals would become public about the involvement of American occupation forces in opium trade like it was the case in South-East Asia during the Vietnam War!)

The following Table 3 demonstrates this very clearly. After the Taliban banned opium production it rapidly declined and by 2001 – the last year of Taliban rule – it was largely eradicated as only 185 metric tons were produced. However, when the U.S. occupation began and the warlords took over the country, opium production dramatically increased. Within a single year, opium production increased by more than 18 times – according to the official figures of the United Nations! Since then, it increased even further. No doubt, the Western occupation was manna from heaven for opium producers and narcotraffickers!

The authors of a book about the history of Afghanistan note: "After 2001, opium production once more soared, from just 185 tons in 2001 (when production was depressed by a Taliban ban) to 2,700 tons the following year and to a near-record 4,200 tons in 2004, constituting a staggering 87 percent of world production."<sup>50</sup> In other words: the imperialist occupi-

**Table 3. Opium Production in Afghanistan, 1999-2020 (in Metric Tons)** <sup>49</sup>

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
<i>Metric</i>													
<i>Tons</i>	4,565	3,276	185	3,400	4,200	5,300	5,900	3,600	3,700	6,400	4,800	6,400	6,300

**Table 4. Child Marriage in selected Asian and African Countries, 2001** <sup>55</sup>

<i>Country</i>	<i>Married Adolescents, Percentage of 15-19 year-olds married</i>	
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>		
Dem. Rep. of Congo	5	74
Niger	4	70
Congo	12	56
Uganda	11	50
Mali	5	50
<i>Asia</i>		
Afghanistan	9	54
Bangladesh	5	51
Nepal	14	42

**Table 5. Top 20 Countries with the Highest Prevalence Rates of Child Marriage, 2020** <sup>56</sup>

<i>Country</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Niger	76%
Central African Republic	68%
Chad	67%
Bangladesh	59%
Mali	54%
Mozambique	53%
Burkina Faso	52%
South Sudan	52%
Guinea	47%
Somalia	45%
Nigeria	43%
Malawi	42%
Eritrea	41%
Ethiopia	40%
Madagascar	40%
Nepal	40%
Uganda	34%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	37%
Mauritania	37%
Sierra Leone	39%

*Legend: Percentage of women 20-24 years old who were first married or in union before they were 18 years old. Source: UNICEF global databases 2020, based on Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), and other national surveys.*

ers helped to make Afghanistan the powerhouse of global opium production! It is worth reminding that, according to the World Health Organization, about 500,000 people die each year because of drug use. More than 70% of these deaths are related to opioids!<sup>51</sup>

Such rise of opium production has massive consequences for women. As the number of male drug addicts dramatically rises, domestic violence against women has massively increased too. While concrete figures do not exist, researchers are in no doubt about this despicable development. *“Recently, violence against women has undergone changes as the occupation of Afghanistan permitted a fertile ground for the consumption of opium and inevitably provoked a radical change of militarized masculinities in search of other sources of power that are generally found with women’s bodies. Nowadays, the domestic scenario does not represent a secure place for women anymore as war politicized and militarized also the private sphere. The insecurities and misogynist practices that were built during the Taliban era have not disappeared. On the contrary, the injection of dollars to reconstruct the society, without a serious compromise with the denaturalization of corporeal and psychological violence, has rather fomented new forms of insecurities for Afghan women, signifying other forms of sexual violence.”*<sup>52</sup>

The Taliban did repeatedly draw attention to the fact that while they suppressed the production of the deadly poison, the imperialist occupiers made Afghanistan the center of global opium production. *“Before the US occupation, the Islamic Emirate was able to eradicate drug cultivation to zero, but now under the American occupation Afghanistan has shattered the world record for cultivation and export of the drugs.”*<sup>53</sup>

While the U.S. occupation allowed a glorious period for narco-traffickers, such golden age might be now over. According to the latest reports from the *Wall Street Journal* and other media, the Taliban have already started efforts to ban the cultivation of opium poppies immediately after taking power in August 2021.<sup>54</sup>

### Women’s Oppression: The Example of Child Marriage

Let us now deal briefly with another feature of women’s oppression: child marriage. Unfortunately, this cancer is widespread in Afghanistan since centuries. However, this has neither been caused by the Taliban nor has it anything to do with Islam. As a matter of fact, this is a widespread phenomenon in poor countries irrespective of the religion. In Table 4, we reproduce figure about the prevalence of child marriage in several Asian and African countries. They are taken from a UNICEF study published in 2001, i.e. the figures for Afghanistan refer to the time before the Western invasion when the Taliban were still in power.

In Table 5 we reproduce a more actual statistic which demonstrates again that proliferation of child marriage is not something which is a specific feature of Muslim countries, but which exists in poor countries irrespective of which religion dominate.

Needless to point out that Western powers do not attack or occupy any other of these countries as “women’s rights” have only been an ideological figleaf for the imperialist aggression against Afghanistan.

Anyway, we see that the barbaric practice of child marriage has been neither unique for Afghanistan nor for

Muslim countries. It exists also in countries with Christian or Hindi majorities. By this, we do not want to deny that social norms and customs play an important role in motivating parents to force their children – mainly their daughters – into early marriage. However, these customs themselves have social and economic causes.

It is worth pointing out that a recognition of the relation between such customs and social and economic causes is not limited to Marxists but is also accepted by a number of bourgeois sociologists. In one of its reports, UNICEF point out that in regions where poverty is acute, *“a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden”*.<sup>57</sup> Her marriage to an older man, i.e. someone who might have accumulated some wealth, could not only relieve the poor family from such burden but even get them a bride price. In addition, marriage in insecure and violent regions might serve as some sort of protection for a woman. Another UNICEF report on Afghanistan explains: *“Similar to Iraq, Syria and Niger, during instability families tend to marry off their daughters early for their protection from sexual exploitation, to maintain family honour and to make financial gains.”*<sup>58</sup>

Needless to point out the numerous disadvantages of child marriage for the victims and that it is a key task of a future socialist workers and peasant republic to provide the preconditions to overcome this barbaric tradition. But it is important to bear in mind that there exist concrete reasons for the decisions of parents of impoverished layers and that these have material, economic roots and are not simply a result of “lack of education” as many liberal intellectuals want to make us believe.

We shall conclude this chapter by discussing the issue if the proliferation of child marriage has been reduced during the two decades of U.S./NATO occupation. It is difficult to give an exact answer to this question as the validity of surveys in this period is doubtful. It is well-known that surveys and polls were often undertaken in a way that researchers made polls on the ground in Kabul mostly or only and spoke with people in the provinces via phone or Skype.<sup>59</sup> This includes also the latest UNICEF survey on child marriage in Afghanistan published in the year 2018.<sup>60</sup> Naturally, this resulted in a one-sided social selection disadvantaging the poor and rural masses – the vast majority of the Afghan population.

Hence, the claims by supporters of the imperialist occupation that the proliferation of child marriage has been reduced are highly doubtful. What can be said with certainty is that based on the figures published by the United Nations itself, there has been hardly any reduction. The above-mentioned latest UNICEF survey from the year 2018 reports. *“42% of households across the 5 surveyed provinces indicated that at least one member of their household had been married before the age of 18. This is slightly higher than the most recent survey data collected, but roughly in line with other data previously collected on the topic in the last few years. For example, the AMICS gives a rate of 46.3% for women aged 20-59 years who were married before turning 18, allowing for some margin of error and a variation created by different specific queries. Similar trends have been identified in the DHS 2015 (45% of women and 11% of men were married by the age of 18).”*<sup>61</sup>

If we compare these data with those provided in Table 4 we see that even the figures published by the UN itself do not indicate a significant reduction of the barbaric phenomenon of child marriage.

## The Systematic Rape of Women and Boys: The Warlords and their American Protectors

As already mentioned above, the comeback of the warlords at the end of 2001 also meant the beginning of a period where powerful men can abduct and rape women and girls.<sup>62</sup> However, we want to draw attention to another feature which is largely ignored in the media reports about Afghanistan. This is the despicable phenomenon called *bacha bazi* which roughly translates as “boy play”. This is the term used in Afghanistan for the widespread phenomenon of enslavement and sexual abuse of underage boys “by powerful or wealthy local figures and businessmen” – to quote a report of the U.S. military.<sup>63</sup> Often these boys are forced to dress up as girls and serve these men as sex slaves.

Here we do not talk about extraordinary iniquities done by “black sheep” but about a culture rampant among Afghan warlords, businessmen and commanders. A few years ago, an independent government watchdog in the U.S. published a report which covers the period of 2010 to 2016 and which lists 5,753 cases of what it describes as gross human rights abuses by Afghan forces. Many of those abuses involve the so-called *bacha bazi*. Needless to say, that this report covers without doubt only a trickle of such abuses.

Even the report by the US government watchdog sees itself forced to admit: “The full extent of child sexual assault

committed by Afghan security forces may never be known,’ the report from Sigar said. But two-thirds of the individuals and organisations interviewed for the recently declassified report said they were aware of ‘child sexual assault incidents or related exploitation by Afghan security forces’, the watchdog said.”<sup>64</sup>

However, the widespread rapist culture of the Afghan lackeys of U.S. imperialism is not the only outrageous issue. The other remarkable fact is that the U.S. army command was not only aware of this rape culture but explicitly instructed their soldiers to tolerate this culture! “American troops were told to ignore the rape and abuse of children by Afghan security forces they were partnered with, according to a report released Thursday by the Pentagon’s inspector general.”<sup>65</sup>

A journalist of the *New York Times* noted pointedly: “On 5,753 occasions from 2010 to 2016, the United States military asked to review Afghan military units to see if there were any instances of ‘gross human rights abuses.’ If there were, American law required military aid to be cut off to the offending unit. Not once did that happen.”<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, there were incidents where American soldiers spontaneously intervened. In such cases, the army command disciplined them or kicked them out of the army. “American soldiers who complained had their careers ruined by their superiors, who had encouraged them to ignore the practice.”<sup>67</sup>

There are two famous cases which have received wider attention by the media, and which demonstrate the policy of the U.S. occupation forces. One is Capt. Dan Quinn, a

# Books of the RCIT

## Michael Pröbsting: Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry

The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan.  
A Critique of the Left’s Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective

In *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* Michael Pröbsting analyses the accelerating rivalry between the imperialist Great Powers – the U.S., China, EU, Russia, and Japan. He shows that the diplomatic rows, sanctions, trade wars, and military tensions between these Great Powers are not accidental or caused by a mad man in the White House. They are rather rooted in the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist system. This rivalry is a key feature of the current historic period and could, ultimately, result in major wars between these Great Powers.

*Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* demonstrates the validity of the Marxist analysis of modern imperialism. Using comprehensive material (including 61 Tables and Figures), Michael Pröbsting elaborates that a correct understanding of the rise of China and Russia as new Great Powers is crucial for assessing the character of the current inter-imperialist rivalry.

In *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry* Michael Pröbsting critically discusses the analysis of modern imperialism by a number of left-wing parties (left social democrats, Stalinists, Trotskyists and others). He demon-

strates that most of these organizations fail to understand the nature of the Great Power rivalry and, consequently, are not able to take an internationalist and revolutionary stance.

The author elaborates the approach of leading Marxist figures like Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg to the problems of Great Power rivalry and imperialist aggression against oppressed peoples. He outlines a Marxist program for the current period which is essential for anyone who wants to change the world and bring about a socialist future.

The book contains an introduction and 29 chapters plus an appendix (412 pages) and includes 61 figures and tables. The author of the book is Michael Pröbsting who serves as the International Secretary of the RCIT.

### Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry

The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry  
between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan  
A Critique of the Left’s Analysis and  
an Outline of the Marxist Perspective

By Michael Pröbsting



Published by the Revolutionary Communist International of Workers

Special Forces officer at that time, who beat up an Afghan commander for keeping a boy chained to his bed as a sex slave. In response, he had been relieved of his command as a result! Another case is Sgt. First Class Charles Martland, a highly decorated Green Beret, who was forced out of the military after beating up an Afghan local police commander in Kunduz who was a notorious child rapist. He became incensed after the Afghan commander abducted the boy, raped him, then beat up the boy's mother when she tried to rescue him.<sup>68</sup>

Dan Quinn, who later left the military, draws a highly appropriate conclusion from his experience: *"The reason we were here is because we heard the terrible things the Taliban were doing to people, how they were taking away human rights... But we were putting people into power who would do things that were worse than the Taliban did — that was something village elders voiced to me."*<sup>69</sup>

It would be utterly wrong to assume that the appalling phenomena of raping women and *bacha bazi* are something typical for the "backward Afghan people". As a matter of fact, these are phenomena typical for people with guns and power, for the ruling elite – not for the ordinary people.

It is a matter of fact that the Taliban are well-known to be the only force (at least the only relevant force) which has always opposed this culture and tried to eradicate it. They praise themselves as being hard on rapist. *"In July 1994, according to Taliban legend, Omar and 30 of his students responded to the pleas of oppressed citizens near Kandahar and rescued two girls who had been kidnapped and raped by a guerrilla leader; he also intervened when two Kandahari warlords fought for the sexual favors of a young Kandahari boy."*<sup>70</sup>

While we do not know if this legend is true, fact is that the Taliban attacked and reduced the culture of *bacha bazi*. Even an academic U.S. law journal had to recognize this. *"Bacha bazi is not a new phenomenon. Its roots in Afghanistan can be tied to the late nineteenth century, although similar practices have been prevalent in Central Asia since at least the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The practice notably declined during the extremist rule of the Taliban, a group formed in the early 1990s by an Afghan faction of mujahideen, Islamic fighters who resisted the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979-89) with the backing of the U.S., Pakistan, China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. In the mid-1990s, the Taliban extremist group gained control of Kabul and, subsequently, the country, by forcibly hanging the former president. In 2001, a U.S.-led invasion toppled the Taliban regime, and bacha bazi returned."*<sup>71</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that such behavior of the Taliban over many years contributed to make them popular among the Afghan people. *"The bacha bazi problem is not just a question of our cultural values clashing with their cultural values. Most Afghans are appalled by this kind of behavior, and it's been a very effective recruiting tool for the Taliban because generally this is not behavior that the Taliban has ever tolerated."*<sup>72</sup>

To summarize: *Afghanistan under Western occupation was a paradise for rapist and narcotraffickers. Only ignorant fools can be surprised that nobody in the country was ready to defend this regime. Why are the liberal journalists and the opportunist left surprised that many Afghans view the victory of the Taliban as a lesser evil?!*

## The Taliban: a Petty-Bourgeois Islamist-Nationalist Movement Rooted among the Rural Poor

It is widely known that the Taliban have always been a movement with a social reactionary program with harmful consequences for women and other oppressed layers. Likewise, they never had an anti-capitalist agenda nor has the struggle against the imperialist system been part of their program.

However, this is not the whole story and any serious observer, let alone Marxists, must not be content with such correct but on-sided assessments. The reason for this is that any political movement, including the Taliban, must be judged not only by their ideological goals but also by their practical activities under the concrete circumstances under which they are forced to operate and to evolve. Hence, it is always necessary considering which classes put pressure on a given political movement, which classes are they fighting against, and which classes are they based on. A rounded analysis of a political movement can only be made if all these factors are taken into account. However, most left-wing organizations fail in this and arrive, consequently, at one-sided and wrong conclusions.

We have pointed out in past works the different goals and roles of various Islamist organizations, even different roles of one and the same organizations under different circumstance. In our *"Theses on Islamism"*, we wrote: *"An overview of the different shades of Islamist currents and organisations demonstrates, that any idea or a "global" or international unity of Islamists is a fiction – a mythologisation both, the imperialist and Islamist ideologues engage in for reactionary purposes. In reality, the different Islamist organizations do not only vary in their attitude to national liberation struggles, to regimes, being in government or opposition, using terrorist or constitutional means. They are also national organizations, resting of specific social classes (or sections of them). Therefore, it is the global and national class struggles, which push Islamist currents, organizations or movements in different directions, may lead an Islamist organization to become a merely Islamic one. The different shades of Islamist forces are not watertight or mutually exclusive categories. There are transitional and composite forms that can evolve from one type to another. Whilst some may be direct expressions of ruling classes and control a state apparatus on their behalf, others may base themselves on the desperate middle classes and petit-bourgeoisie. Some may even play a leading role in progressive struggles."*<sup>73</sup>

In a pamphlet on the Syrian Revolution, we noted: *"Naturally, there are many shades among Islamist forces. Some – like the Jamā'at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn (the Muslim Brotherhood) – try to combine Sharia law with capitalist democracy (for instance, the Mursi government in Egypt). Others want to create a reactionary Caliphate without democratic institutions. However, we have always insisted that Marxists have to judge Islamist movements by their current role in any given concrete struggle. And, as we have elaborated in our Theses on Islamism, history has shown that, given their betrayal of Stalinism and bourgeois nationalism, Islamist currents have managed many times to stand at the forefront of mass movements against dictatorships and for national liberation. To give just a few examples, we cite the cases of Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Yemen, etc."*<sup>74</sup>

The Taliban are an example of a political movement

which emerged in 1994 in opposition against the civil war waged by criminal local and tribal leaders. As they took power, they became the dominating party working to consolidate the power of the ruling class based on a backward capitalist society of a semi-colonial country. However, against their intentions, they clashed with the U.S. – the hegemonic Great Power at that time – and the whole imperialist West. Eventually, they were attacked and overthrown by NATO in autumn 2001. Hence, with one stroke they were transformed from a government party into a guerrilla movement operating in underground. As such, it could only survive by consolidating and expanding their roots among the rural masses. This was the only way to recruit new members, to get protection from the villagers against the occupation forces and their local proxies, and to launch an armed insurrection.

The very fact that they were a government party only for a short time of their existence and that they operated as a guerrilla movement fighting against imperialist occupation for the last two decades made sure that they had to base themselves among the rural poor masses.

In order to understand the specific nature of the Taliban it is crucial to recognize the following features. First, when they did emerge in 1994, they did differ from other Islamist forces by not relying on the tribal structure. While they were at the beginning (and for a longer period) mostly based on the Pashtuns – the largest ethnic group representing 40-50% of Afghanistan's population – they did not base themselves on tribal structures. This is a highly important fact which is usually ignored by most observers.

The Taliban's independence of the tribal structures had several consequences. First, it made it easier for them to unite people from different tribes and to pacify conflicts between tribes. In fact, they could advance in 1994-96 with relatively ease because they won popular support by calling the local militias to disarm and to unite under a unified state which is above the tribes. They could do so with some credibility as they were not associated with a specific tribe. A well-informed analyst pointed out this feature of the Taliban already in a study published in 2009. *"The Taliban are a revolutionary movement deeply opposed to the tribal structure in Afghanistan. They promote mullahs as the key political leaders in the society and state they seek to create."*<sup>75</sup>

The Taliban's policy also undermined the traditional domination by tribal leaders. A report about the first Taliban government 1996-2001 states: *"In the Taliban era, the Taliban's practice of inquiring about a local commander's legitimacy in the eyes of his constituency limited the arbitrary influence of the local commanders. At the same time, the enforcement of speedy justice for conflict cases that had been simmering for years without progress or solution prior to the Taliban's presence in the north-east robbed 'conventional' elders of their main (traditional) responsibilities and often made them appear redundant."*<sup>76</sup>

Of course, the Taliban advocated not a modern state as an alternative to the tribal structures but rather a centralized theocratic (capitalist) state based on mullahs as local leaders. Nevertheless, in the climate of the horrific civil war in 1992-96, this appeared to many people as a lesser evil. In this period, local militias erected checkpoints on all roads, demanded high taxed and terrorized the population at will. The Taliban offered a model which removed all this. Standing above tribal structures also allowed the Tali-

ban to intervene against the above-mentioned culture of rape by local warlords as mentioned above. As mentioned above, the arrival of the U.S./NATO occupation forces resulted in a reversal of this and a return of the system of tribal structures and local warlords. Of course, the imperialists at that time hoped that this would serve their interests and pacify the country. *"When the Taliban leaders were removed, tribal government was resumed in much of the country, especially the Pashtun areas: Some experts say this return to feudalism, where warlords gain power by exercising power – relying on weapons and pragmatism rather than ideologies or written laws – could endanger the fledgling government. But others argue that, at least at first, Afghanistan's best opportunity for peace is to tap into a traditional infrastructure that may be unstable – even brutal – but works."*<sup>77</sup>

### Excuse: The Islamist-Nationalist Rhetoric of the Taliban in their own Words

Furthermore, the main activity of the Taliban from 2001 until now has been the struggle against the U.S./NATO occupation. Hence, they led a struggle for national independence, and this has also played a key role in their public appearance. In their public statements, the Taliban emphasized that their goal was the expulsion of the foreign occupiers and the restoration of the country's independence. Naturally, all of this has been mixed with religion and appeals to Islam. To give just a few examples:

*"Join hands in brotherhood against Western colonialism, injustice, atrocities, brutality, corruption and the Western culture of nakedness; move forward like a solid-cemented wall in the direction of popular Islamic revolution"*<sup>78</sup>

*"But in the current jihad against the US and NATO, no country is ready to support the mujahedeen because they are all afraid of the US. It is also difficult for people to support the mujahedeen openly as they did during the jihad against the Soviets. The people are also under the pressure of oppressive imperialists. (...) In summary, for the achievement of the goals of jihad (the establishment of a true Islamic system) close understanding and cooperation between the mujahedeen and our people is necessary. Without the cooperation of our people, all our success and conquests will be temporary. At present, a powerful imperialist power has prepared plans to take over our country. For this purpose it has established military bases and signed a security treaty with the puppet regime. I believe that the colonialists will no more engage in active warfare against the mujahedeen. Instead, they will use their technological prowess and the forces of the puppet regime as a shield."*<sup>79</sup>

*"Peace can be more easily achieved in our beloved country than in any other country or region, because we Afghans have five shared values:*

- Afghanistan is an independent and sovereign state.
  - Afghans have not accepted foreign invasions and invaders throughout their history.
  - Afghans do not accept a life of subjugation nor stooge alien governments.
  - The majority of people living in Afghanistan are Muslims.
  - Afghans want an independent Islamic government.
- Keeping in mind the aforementioned points, the following three-point agenda for peace should be seriously considered:*
- All foreign troops should withdraw from our country.
  - All agreements which contradict our sovereignty, integrity and the Islamic identity of Afghanistan, including the security

agreements, should be declared null and void.

– *An Islamic government should be established and Islamic shari'a fully implemented.*"<sup>80</sup>

*"If we look into the history of imperialism, we will find that illegitimate pretexts have always been crafted for the justification of invasions. The incident of the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001 is a good example. Though the embassy of the Islamic Emirate in Islamabad immediately condemned this incident during a press conference following its happening and strongly denying any involvement of IEA in it, yet hardly an hour had passed before American officials started levelling accusations and used this incident as a pretext to invade our independent country. (...) The incident of the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001 is a good example. Though the embassy of the Islamic Emirate in Islamabad immediately condemned this incident during a press conference following its happening and strongly denying any involvement of IEA in it, yet hardly an hour had passed before American officials started levelling accusations and used this incident as a pretext to invade our independent country. (...) Independence and the establishment of an Islamic system are the legitimate rights of the Afghan Muslim nation."*<sup>81</sup>

### A Popular Basis as a Result of Two Decades of Anti-Colonial Struggle

Of course, there is a continuation of the Taliban in the 1990s and those of the period of the anti-occupation struggle after 2001. However, being determines consciousness and the conditions of two decades of guerilla struggle against the Western imperialist powers have shaped the consciousness of many activists, the rhetoric, the profile of this organization. A researcher noted: *"Although some parallel may be drawn with the pre-2001 Taliban of bidding on the most promising legitimacy community, the post-2001 Taliban reveals itself to be distinctive in many ways as epitomized by the term neo-Taliban or the new Taliban to underline the disruption with the previous Taliban."*<sup>82</sup>

In fact, the Taliban's key role in the anti-colonial struggle against the Western imperialists and their appeal to (Islamic) nationalism has been the main reason why they could increase their popular support. Even surveys conducted during the period of the occupation in governmental-controlled areas – where it was very dangerous to openly express sympathy for the Taliban – revealed high support for the resistance forces. *"In 2001, the Taliban started to call themselves the Mujahideen to claim the same legitimacy they used to enjoy during the anti-Soviet resistance. According to the survey of Asia Foundation of 2013, 35 percent of the local respondents sympathized with the insurgents, mostly because they would restore the Afghan cause. (Since the survey was conducted mostly in the government-controlled area, the real figures could be even higher.)"*<sup>83</sup>

All this meant that the Taliban could rely mostly on support among the rural petty-bourgeois and semi-proletarian masses. These layers were the main victims of the warlords, the culture of rape, the system of checkpoints where people were terrorized, the raids and bombings by the NATO forces etc. These layers had an interest to see the weakening of the tribal structures and the removal of (or at least discipline) the warlords. These layers wanted to see the end of the imperialist occupation. These layers were the basis from which the Taliban recruited tens of

thousands of fighters and among which they were "swimming like a fish".

Those who do not recognize the role of the Taliban as an anti-colonial, national resistance force fighting against imperialist occupation are incapable to explain the following: how could a guerilla movement of a few thousands at the beginning and several tens of thousands later, with primitive weapons, sandals and no uniforms defeat the combined forces of most powerful Western armies and their local proxies?! A Western military analyst draws attention to the extreme imbalance of the two camps: *"During 2009–13 the Taliban stood against a much larger force, with the US contribution to the coalition amounting at one point to over 100,000 men. With US funds, the Afghan security forces increased to over 300,000 men by 2014, and US allies contributed tens of thousands of additional combat troops. The Taliban's enemies, particularly the Americans, had immense superiority in terms of technology and firepower; airpower in particular inflicted heavy casualties on the Taliban. The Taliban mostly relied upon military technology from the 1950s, and had little or no anti-aircraft defences except heavy machine guns. During 2002–14 Taliban combat groups often took casualties averaging between 10–20 per cent yearly. By 2014, few of those who had entered the insurgency in the early years were still alive to tell the tale. Almost all still in the ranks, particularly in the elite mobile units, would have seen many of their comrades in arms blown to pieces. Whatever one might think of the Taliban and their cause, their resilience should not be in doubt."*<sup>84</sup>

How could the Taliban defeat such an overwhelming force if they would not have had popular support and if the imperialist enemy did not lack such support?!

A researcher who made many interviews with Afghans – male and female – in the province of Helmand in the rural South concluded that *"many Helmandis seemed to prefer Taliban rule—including the women I interviewed. (...) This scale of suffering was unknown in a bustling metropolis like Kabul, where citizens enjoyed relative security. But in countryside enclaves like Sangin the ceaseless killings of civilians led many Afghans to gravitate toward the Taliban. By 2010, many households in Ishaqzai villages had sons in the Taliban, most of whom had joined simply to protect themselves or to take revenge; the movement was more thoroughly integrated into Sangin life than it had been in the nineties. Now, when Shakira and her friends discussed the Taliban, they were discussing their own friends, neighbors, and loved ones. (...) Messaging by the U.S.-led coalition tended to portray the growing rebellion as a matter of extremists battling freedom, but nato documents I obtained conceded that Ishaqzais had "no good reason" to trust the coalition forces, having suffered "oppression at the hands of Dad Mohammad Khan," or Amir Dado. In Pan Killay, elders encouraged their sons to take up arms to protect the village, and some reached out to former Taliban members. Shakira wished that her husband would do something—help guard the village, or move them to Pakistan—but he demurred. In a nearby village, when U.S. forces raided the home of a beloved tribal elder, killing him and leaving his son with paraplegia, women shouted at their menfolk, "You people have big turbans on your heads, but what have you done? You can't even protect us. You call yourselves men?"*<sup>85</sup>

It is because of such popular support that the Taliban could control regions without the omnipresence of checkpoints and the daily terrorizing of people – in contrast to the NATO/warlords regime. *"The most striking difference*



between Taliban country and the world we'd left behind was the dearth of gunmen. In Afghanistan, I'd grown accustomed to kohl-eyed policemen in baggy trousers, militiamen in balaclavas, intelligence agents inspecting cars. Yet we rarely crossed a Taliban checkpoint, and when we did the fighters desultorily examined the car." <sup>86</sup>

The fact that the Taliban have their social basis among the rural poor masses has been also acknowledged by a number of analysts. "In the 1990s the Afghan Taliban were essentially a peasant army rather than an international terrorist organization. This is what they still are, though the upper echelons are composed of hard-core jihadists who desire no compromise with the Americans or the Kabul regime." <sup>87</sup>

Colonel Anil Athale, a well-known Indian military analyst, pointed out recently that many commentators confuse the opinion of the middle class in Kabul with the view of the majority of the Afghan people. "In case of Afghanistan falling to extremist Taliban the fear is being expressed that this will give rise to demand for a similar 'Sharia' based strict Islamic rule in Pakistan. One point that needs to be made in case of the Taliban in Afghanistan is their social composition. Most Taliban recruits and their support is from rural and impoverished sections of society. It is the mostly urban Middle Classes that are both fearful and opposed to Taliban." <sup>88</sup>

### **Afghanistan 2021: A Historic Defeat for Western Imperialism by a Popular Guerrilla Struggle**

The RCIT has repeatedly pointed out in its statements that the latest events in Afghanistan represents a historic defeat for the Western imperialists. We are aware that large sectors of the opportunist left deny this. But how else can one characterize the dramatic expulsion of the most powerful imperialist armies from one of the poorest countries in the world by the very same forces which the imperialists toppled 20 years ago and which they had merciless suppressed since then with all available high-tech weapons and money?!

It is clear that such a historic event must have global

consequences. Only the most ignorant people can deny that such a victory for a guerrilla insurgency must have encouraging effects on liberation struggles of oppressed peoples in other countries. Furthermore, it weakens the geopolitical position of U.S. imperialism in relation to its Great Power rivals – in particular China and Russia. In fact, the smarter among Western politicians and commentators are fully aware of the historic dimensions of their defeat.

Let us give just a few examples. The European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell Fontelles, described the defeat as a "a catastrophe for the Afghan people, for Western values and credibility and for the developing of international relations." <sup>89</sup>

A well-known American commentator wrote: "This is manifestly not Saigon," said United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken as helicopters snatched fleeing Americans from the embassy roof in Kabul. It's incomparably worse for America's world standing. Like the fellow in the Sam Cooke song, Blinken doesn't know much about history or geography. Unlike the man in the song, he doesn't know that one and one is two, by which I mean Russia and China. Richard Nixon opened diplomatic relations with China three years before the fall of South Vietnam, securing China's tacit agreement not to exploit the Communist victory by exporting the revolution to the rest of Southeast Asia. America's defeat in Vietnam, damaging as it was, had a limited impact in the region. Afghanistan, by contrast, will draw China and Russia into a dominant role in Central and Western Asia. The defeat of an American proxy regime by Taliban irregulars marks the first victory for a jihadist army against Western military forces since the annihilation of a British expeditionary force in Afghanistan in 1842. It will serve as a rallying point for jihadists in Russia, China, Central Asia and the Middle East." <sup>90</sup>

And another commentator wrote in the *New York Times* about the decline of the American Empire: "[O]ur failure in Afghanistan more closely resembles Roman failures that took place far from Rome itself — the defeats that Roman generals suffered in the Mesopotamian deserts or the German forests, when the empire's reach outstripped its grasp. (...) Seen from this perspective, the clearest American defeats of our imperial era, first



## *Publications of the RCIT*

# **World Perspectives 2021-22: Entering a Pre-Revolutionary Global Situation**

*Theses of the International Executive Committee of the RCIT, 22 August 2021*

**Introduction \* I. Great Depression, its Genesis and its Relevance for the COVID Counterrevolution \* II. Peculiar Features of the Crisis and Prospects of the Capitalist World Economy \* III. Acceleration of the Cold War between the Imperialist Great Powers \* IV. The COVID Counterrevolution Enters a New Phase \* V. A New Global Wave of Mass Struggles \* Entering a Pre-Revolutionary World Situation of Accelerating Polarization between Classes and States \* Footnotes**

*A RCIT Pamphlet, 28 pages, A4 Format*

in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and then in the Middle East and Central Asia after 9/11, have followed from the hubristic idea that we could make the world empire a simple extension of the outer empire, making NATO-style arrangements universal and applying the model of post-World War II Japan and Germany to South Vietnam or Iraq or the Hindu Kush. (...) That said, defeats on distant frontiers can also have consequences closer to the imperial core. The American imperium can't be toppled by the Taliban. But in our outer empire, in Western Europe and East Asia, perceived U.S. weakness could accelerate developments that genuinely do threaten the American system as it has existed since 1945 — from German-Russian entente to Japanese rearmament to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Inevitably those developments would affect the inner empire, too, where a sense of accelerating imperial decline would bleed into all our domestic arguments, widen our already yawning ideological divides, encourage the feeling of crackup and looming civil war.”<sup>91</sup>

Of course, we don't want to suggest that the Taliban have an anti-imperialist agenda. Events, concretely the imperialist invasion and occupation, pushed them into an anti-imperialist struggle. Likewise, to make an analogy, the petty-bourgeois nationalist movement of Fidel Castro initially also looked for friendly relations between Cuba and the U.S. However, the hostile actions of Washington after the revolution in 1959 pushed them into an anti-imperialist direction.<sup>92</sup>

Likewise, the relation of forces and the objective process might now push the new Taliban government to establish closer economic and political relations with Chinese and Russian imperialism.

The anti-imperialist content of the Taliban's victory lies neither in their program nor in their goals. It lies in the actions that they defeated and humiliated the largest imperialist power and their local proxies. This is a lesson which make all Western oppressor states trembling, which left the allies of the U.S. in fear, and which makes all oppressed people fighting for liberation more confident! These facts alone show that Afghanistan 2021 has been a historic defeat for the Western imperialists and a historic victory for the oppressed peoples!

## Conclusions

We conclude this pamphlet by summarizing the main ideas in form of a set of theses.

1. It is impossible to comprehend the character of the war between the U.S./NATO and the Taliban without recognizing the different class character of the countries involved. On one hand, there were the strongest Western imperialist powers, on the other hand a guerilla movement representing the popular masses of one of the poorest semi-colonial countries.

2. Therefore, the resistance against the U.S./NATO occupation, the struggle to expel the Western masters from Afghanistan, had by its very nature an *anti-colonial, anti-imperialist character*.

3. In the course of the 20-years long guerilla struggle, the Taliban were – neither objectively nor subjectively – agents of any imperialist power. They were in contact with the U.S. in the 1990s, but this obviously ended in 2001 if not already before. Neither were they agents of Russian or Chinese imperialism albeit the Taliban leadership have been looking for a “normalization” of its relations with these powers for simple reasons of economic survival. The Taliban have indeed contact and limited support from sectors of the Pakistani secret service. But this was never a significant feature of the resistance struggle and, besides this, Pakistan itself is a rather backward semi-colonial country.

4. It is utterly wrong to claim that the Taliban would represent the interests of feudal forces. This is not least the case because the class relations in Afghanistan's countryside – where the mass support of the Taliban is located – can not be characterized as feudal. While large landownership exists – like in all capitalist countries – most Afghan peasants have their own small piece of land and work not (or only to a limited degree) as tenants for big landowners. In addition, most small peasants are poor and are forced to earn an additional income as wage laborers (or by selling commodities at the market). It is this plebian class of semi-proletarian, semi-petty-bourgeois, poor peasants who form the social mass base of the Taliban.

5. Contrary to the propaganda of the Western me-



## Publications of the RCIT

# The Inter-Imperialist Cold War between the US and China

By Michael Pröbsting, March 2021

**Introduction \* A symbolic public row \* Two thieves as upholders of moral standards \* Escalating the conflict between China and Japan \* The Quad Summit \* Inter-Imperialist tensions in the Taiwan Strait \* Unavoidable continuation and acceleration of inter-imperialist rivalry \* Continuing doing business \* Towards escalation on the Korean Peninsula? \* “Fuck the EU” and Russia, again? \* Confirmation of the Marxist analysis \* Footnotes**

*A RCIT Pamphlet, 20 pages, A4 Format*

dia, neither the Afghan people in general nor the Afghan women in particular did gain from the U.S. occupation. The colonial masters brought back the notorious warlords who have been known for arbitrary killing, rape, and corruption. Add to this the endless series of deadly raids and bombings by the NATO forces. As a result, about a quarter of a million people were killed in 2001-2021. How on earth could this have been a gain for the Afghan people and its women?!

6. The reactionary character of the imperialist occupation is also evident if we look at specific features of women's and social oppression. An example for this is the continuing and widespread existence of child marriage. In case of rape of women and young boys (*bacha bazi*) we have rather seen a massive deterioration since the warlords were again put into power in 2001 by the Western imperialists. While the Taliban stand for a reactionary women and social policy, they always strictly opposed rape of women and young boys and tried to eradicate these evils. In fact, their opposition against the rape and *bacha bazi* was an important factor which made the Taliban popular.

7. Another example demonstrating the reactionary and not progressive character of the Western occupation is Afghanistan's opium production. While the Taliban strictly opposed and nearly eradicated this evil by 2001, the NATO/warlords regime made opium production its key economic resource. As a result, the cultivation of opium dramatically has increased in the last 20 years.

8. The Taliban are a petty-bourgeois Islamist-Nationalist movement which has waged a two decades-long armed insurrection against the Western imperialist powers. They advocate the establishment of an Islamic Emirate in an independent Afghanistan without foreign occupation. The struggle against imperialist occupation and for

the independence of their country has played a key part in the Taliban's propaganda as well as in their popular reception. The Taliban's role in the leadership of an anti-colonial national liberation struggle was decisive for gaining broad support among the popular masses.

9. The anti-imperialist struggle which the Taliban fought in the last 20 years was not a result of their strategy or program but was rather forced upon them by the aggression of the Western powers. Now, back in power, the Taliban leaders will try to reestablish political and economic relations with China, Russia and maybe also with Western Great Powers. How such relations will evolve depend on the development of the domestic contradictions as well as the policy of the respective Great Powers (respectively their own contradictions). However, if they stay in power they will act as a bourgeois force at the top of a capitalist semi-colonial country which enters, in one form or another, dependent relations with one or several imperialist Great Powers.

10. The expulsion of the Western occupation forces and their local proxies by a victorious guerilla struggle with massive popular support represents a historic defeat for Western imperialism and a historic victory for the oppressed peoples all over the world. It has left the old Great Powers humiliated and discredited. This is why all Western oppressor states are trembling, this is why the allies of the U.S. are left in fear, and this is why all oppressed people fighting for liberation have become more confident! These facts alone show that revolutionaries were right to side with the armed insurrection of the Afghan national resistance without lending political support to the Taliban. The recent events represent a defeat for the Western imperialists and a step forward in the global class struggle!

## **The Failure of the PTS/FT to Recognize China's Capitalism**

**\* An analysis of the capitalist character of China's State-Owned Enterprises and its political consequences**

**\* Eclectic empiricism and the failure of the PTS/FT to recognize the imperialist character of China**

*Two Essays by Michael Pröbsting (in English and Spanish language)*

**Order the pamphlets via our contact address: [rcit@thecommunists.net](mailto:rcit@thecommunists.net)**

## Footnotes

1 The RCIT has published numerous documents about the rise of China and Russia as imperialist Great Power. They are compiled at a special sub-page on the RCIT's website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>. Concerning China we refer in particular to our book by Michael Pröbsting: *Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry. The Factors behind the Accelerating Rivalry between the U.S., China, Russia, EU and Japan. A Critique of the Left's Analysis and an Outline of the Marxist Perspective*, RCIT Books, Vienna 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/anti-imperialism-in-the-age-of-great-power-rivalry/>. See also by the same author an essay published in the second edition of *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism* (edited by Immanuel Ness and Zak Cope), Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020, [https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-3-319-91206-6\\_179-1](https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-3-319-91206-6_179-1); China's transformation into an imperialist power. A study of the economic, political and military aspects of China as a Great Power (2012), in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 4, <http://www.thecommunists.net/publications/revcom-number-4>; How is it possible that some Marxists still Doubt that China has Become Capitalist? (A Critique of the PTS/FT), An analysis of the capitalist character of China's State-Owned Enterprises and its political consequences, 18 September 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/pts-ft-and-chinese-imperialism-2/>; Unable to See the Wood for the Trees (PTS/FT and China). Eclectic empiricism and the failure of the PTS/FT to recognize the imperialist character of China, 13 August 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/pts-ft-and-chinese-imperialism/>. See many more RCIT documents at a special sub-page on the RCIT's website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-russia-as-imperialist-powers/>.

On Russia see e.g. several pamphlets by Michael Pröbsting: *The Peculiar Features of Russian Imperialism. A Study of Russia's Monopolies, Capital Export and Super-Exploitation in the Light of Marxist Theory*, 10 August 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-peculiar-features-of-russian-imperialism/>; *Russia and China: Neither Capitalist nor Great Powers? A Reply to the PO/CRFI and their Revisionist Whitewashing of Chinese and Russian imperialism*, 28 November 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/russia-and-china-neither-capitalist-nor-great-powers-reply-to-po-crfi/>; *The Catastrophic Failure of the Theory of "Catastrophism". On the Marxist Theory of Capitalist Breakdown and its Misinterpretation by the Partido Obrero (Argentina) and its "Coordinating Committee for the Refoundation*

*of the Fourth International"*, 27 May 2018, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/the-catastrophic-failure-of-the-theory-of-catastrophism/>; *Lenin's Theory of Imperialism and the Rise of Russia as a Great Power. On the Understanding and Misunderstanding of Today's Inter-Imperialist Rivalry in the Light of Lenin's Theory of Imperialism. Another Reply to Our Critics Who Deny Russia's Imperialist Character*, August 2014, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialism-theory-and-russia/>; *Russia as a Great Imperialist Power. The formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and its Empire – A Reply to our Critics*, 18 March 2014, in: *Revolutionary Communism* No. 21, <http://www.thecommunists.net/theory/imperialist-russia/>.

2 See on this e.g. Ben King, Jeremy Singer-Vine: *The Afghan War, By The Numbers. What 20 years of fighting in Afghanistan cost – in dollars and in lives*, August 17, 2021, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/benking/the-afghan-war-by-the-numbers>

3 LRCI: Stop the Invasion of Afghanistan! 30/09/2001, [https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/afghanistan-invasion-2001/#anker\\_1](https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/afghanistan-invasion-2001/#anker_1). See also the compilation of our articles on the US/NATO Attack on Afghanistan 2001, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/afghanistan-invasion-2001/>

4 LRCI: Questions & Answers on the Afghan War, 30/09/2001, [https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/afghanistan-invasion-2001/#anker\\_2](https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/afghanistan-invasion-2001/#anker_2)

5 We have compiled the RCIT documents on the imperialist defeat in Afghanistan on a special sub-page on our website: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/collection-of-articles-on-us-defeat-in-afghanistan/>. In particular we refer readers to two key statements which have been translated into several languages: *Afghanistan: The Rats Are Fleeing! The fall of Kabul is a historic defeat for Western imperialism and a victory for the oppressed peoples!* 17 August 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/afghanistan-the-rats-are-fleeing/>; *Afghanistan: The Meaning of the Anti-Imperialist Victory and the Perspectives Ahead. Questions and Answers from a Marxist Point of View*, 24 August 2021, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/afghanistan-meaning-of-anti-imperialist-victory-and-perspectives-ahead/>

6 V. I. Lenin: *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (1916); in: LCW 22, p. 147

7 V. I. Lenin: *The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (1915); in: LCW 21, p. 409

8 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: *The Great Robbery of the South. Continuity and Changes in the Super-Exploitation of the Semi-Colonial World by Monopoly Capital. Consequences for*

# China: Restoration of Capitalism and Transformation into an Imperialist Power

**A study of the economic, political and military aspects of China as a Great Power**

*By Michael Pröbsting (International Secretary of the RCIT)*

Order the pamphlet via our contact address: [rcit@thecommunists.net](mailto:rcit@thecommunists.net)

the Marxist Theory of Imperialism, RCIT Books, Vienna 2013, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/greatrobbery-of-the-south/>; see also the above-mentioned book by Michael Pröbsting: Anti-Imperialism in the Age of Great Power Rivalry.

9 See e.g. Michael Pröbsting: Semi-Colonial Intermediate Powers and the Theory of Sub-Imperialism. A contribution to an ongoing debate amongst Marxists and a proposal to tackle a theoretical problem, 1 August 2019, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/semi-colonial-intermediate-powers-and-the-theory-of-sub-imperialism/>; by the same author: The China-India Conflict: Its Causes and Consequences. What are the background and the nature of the tensions between China and India in the Sikkim border region? What should be the tactical conclusions for Socialists and Activists of the Liberation Movements? 18 August 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/china-india-rivalry/>; RCIT: Turkey and the Growing Tensions in Eastern Mediterranean. Theses on the complex contradictions between imperialist and regional powers, the Arab Revolution and the consequential tactics of Marxists, 28 August 2020, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/africa-and-middle-east/turkey-and-the-growing-tensions-in-eastern-mediterranean/>.

10 Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University, August 2021, <https://watson.brown.edu/cost-sofwar/figures/2021/human-and-budgetary-costs-date-us-war-afghanistan-2001-2022>

11 See on this e.g. RCIT: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a Project of Chinese Imperialism for the Colonialization of Pakistan! 22.1.2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/asia/pakistan-cpec/>

12 See Edward W. Said: Orientalism, Vintage Books, New York 1979

13 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan in the Early Post-Taliban Era, in: African and Asian Studies 6 (2007), p. 48, DOI: 10.1163/156921007X180578

14 See on this e.g. Hector Maletta and Raphy Favre: Agriculture and Food Production in Post-War Afghanistan. A Report on the Winter Agricultural Survey 2002-2003, Kabul, August 2003, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

15 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan, p. 47

16 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan, pp. 26-28

17 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan, p. 28

18 Lowder, S.K., Sánchez, M.V. & Bertini, R. 2019. Farms,

family farms, farmland distribution and farm labour: What do we know today? FAO Agricultural Development Economics Working Paper 19-08. Rome, FAO, p. 50

19 Tariq Farooq: Small farmers, peasants, landless workers and agriculture in Pakistan, 9 March 2019, <http://www.eu-rope-solidaire.org/spip.php?article48071>

20 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan, p. 43

21 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan, pp. 29-30

22 Hector Maletta and Raphy Favre: Agriculture and Food Production in Post-War Afghanistan, p. 103

23 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan, p. 43

24 Hector Maletta and Raphy Favre: Agriculture and Food Production in Post-War Afghanistan, p. 26

25 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan, p. 45

26 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan, p. 43

27 Hector Maletta and Raphy Favre: Agriculture and Food Production in Post-War Afghanistan, pp. 22-23

28 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan, p. 47

29 Hector Maletta and Raphy Favre: Agriculture and Food Production in Post-War Afghanistan, p. 99

30 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan, p. 46

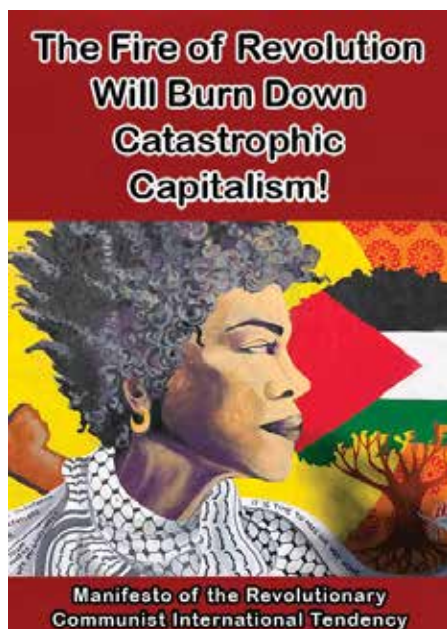
31 Hector Maletta and Raphy Favre: Agriculture and Food Production in Post-War Afghanistan, p. 100

32 Hector Maletta and Raphy Favre: Agriculture and Food Production in Post-War Afghanistan, p. 3

33 Hector Maletta and Raphy Favre: Agriculture and Food Production in Post-War Afghanistan, p. 102

34 Hector Maletta: Arable Land Tenure in Afghanistan, p. 43

35 I allow myself to add a personal observation: in the course of my political work in the past four decades, I have visited nearly three dozen countries, among them many semi-colonial countries on all continents. I have made the experience that in semi-colonial countries many middle-class intellectuals – usually living in the capital city – have a strong disdain for the “backward rural people”. Without being aware of it, they have assimilated many orientalist prejudices coming from the rich, imperialist countries (to which the intelligentsia in these countries



## *New Program of the RCIT*

# Manifesto for the Liberation Struggle

*Adopted at the III. World Congress of the RCIT in April 2021*

\* **Introductory Note**

\* **A New Era of Counterrevolutionary Offensive and Revolutionary Upheavals**

\* **The Capitalist State Monster Attacks Democracy!**

**Defeat Chauvinism and Bonapartism!**

\* **Great Power Rivalry and Imperialist Aggression in the South:**

**Turn the Guns against the Lords of Power and Money!**

\* **Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership: How to Organize and How to Fight?**

*A RCIT Pamphlet, 24 pages, A5 Format*

- often look with admiration). While I never visited Afghanistan itself, I have some experiences with intellectuals in the Southern Asian region. I have no doubt that the middle-class intellectuals in Kabul are no different. In fact, the notorious history of the Stalinist PDAP after it came to power via a coup in 1978 speaks a clear language! They even wanted to force Muslim men to cut their beards! It is not surprising that a significant sector of the small middle class in Kabul were collaborators of the imperialist occupiers!
- 36 UNDP: Human Development Report 2020. The next frontier. Human development and the Anthropocene, p. 364
- 37 UNDP: Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development, p. 184
- 38 UNDP: Human Development Report 2020, p. 363; see also Table 5: Gender Inequality Index, 2021, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>
- 39 Lida Ahmad and Priscyll Antcil Avoine: Misogyny in 'post-war' Afghanistan: the changing frames of sexual and gender-based violence, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 2016, p. 2, DOI: 10.1080/09589236.2016.1210002
- 40 Lida Ahmad and Priscyll Antcil Avoine: Misogyny in 'post-war' Afghanistan, p. 8
- 41 Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman: A Brief History of Afghanistan, Second Edition, Facts On File, An imprint of Infobase Publishing, New York 2010, p. 208
- 42 Ibid, pp. 248-249
- 43 Lida Ahmad and Priscyll Antcil Avoine: Misogyny in 'post-war' Afghanistan, p. 3
- 44 Anand Gopal: The Other Afghan Women. In the countryside, the endless killing of civilians turned women against the occupiers who claimed to be helping them, 6 September 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/09/13/the-other-afghan-women>
- 45 Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman: A Brief History of Afghanistan, p. 261
- 46 Lida Ahmad and Priscyll Antcil Avoine: Misogyny in 'post-war' Afghanistan, p. 10
- 47 Anand Gopal: The Other Afghan Women
- 48 Yoshinobu Nagamine: The Legitimization Strategy of the Taliban's Code of Conduct Through the One-Way Mirror, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2015, p. 15
- 49 The figures are taken from the following publications: World Drug Report 2021 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.21.XI.8), p. 69; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, World Drug Report 2014 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.14.XI.7), Annex I, p. vii; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, World Drug Report 2004, Volume 2: Statistics, p. 205.
- 50 Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman: A Brief History of Afghanistan, p. 264
- 51 WHO: Opioid overdose, 4 August 2021, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/opioid-overdose>
- 52 Lida Ahmad and Priscyll Antcil Avoine: Misogyny in 'post-war' Afghanistan, p. 8
- 53 Statement of the Islamic Emirate on the Fifteenth Anniversary of the American Invasion, Al-Emera (website), 6 October 2016, in: Alex Strick Van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn (Editors): *The Taliban Reader. War, Islam and Politics*, Oxford University Press, New York 2018 (Text No. 122)
- 54 Zamir Saar and Paula Bronstein: Taliban Move to Ban Opium Production in Afghanistan, *The Wall Street Journal*, 28 August 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/taliban-afghanistan-heroin-ban-opium-production-11630181316>
- 55 UNICEF: Early Marriage. Child Spouses, *Innocenti Digest*, No. 7 (March 2001), p. 4
- 56 Girls Not Brides: <https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/>
- 57 Ibid, p. 6
- 58 UNICEF: Child Marriage in Afghanistan. Changing the narrative, 2018, pp. 70-71
- 59 See on this e.g. Gilles Dorronsoro: *The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009, p. 12
- 60 See UNICEF: *Child Marriage in Afghanistan*, p. 56 and p. 58
- 61 See UNICEF: *Child Marriage in Afghanistan*, p. 56 and p. 21
- 62 I want to express my gratitude to comrade Mariano in Bolivia who drew my attention to the significance of this shameful phenomenon.
- 63 Kyle Rempfer: DoD IG: US troops were told to ignore child sex abuse by Afghan forces, 17 November 2017, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-army/2017/11/17/dod-ig-us-troops-were-told-to-ignore-child-sex-abuse-by-afghan-forces/>
- 64 Emma Graham-Harrison: US military fails to tackle sexual abuse of children by Afghan allies, report finds, *The Guardian*, 24 January 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/24/us-military-sexual-abuse-children-afghanistan-allies>
- 65 Kyle Rempfer: DoD IG: US troops were told to ignore child sex abuse by Afghan forces
- 66 Rod Nordland: Afghan Pedophiles Get Free Pass from U.S. Military, Report Says, *New York Times*, 23 January 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/23/world/asia/afghanistan-militaryabuse.html> [<https://perma.cc/29S5-ZQG3>].
- 67 Rod Nordland: Afghan Pedophiles Get Free Pass from U.S. Military
- 68 Rod Nordland: Afghan Pedophiles Get Free Pass from U.S. Military
- 69 Quoted in 'We heard them screaming': US troops told to ignore Afghan soldiers abusing boys – report, 21 September 2015, <https://www.rt.com/news/316062-afghan-soldiers-abuse-children/>
- 70 Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman: A Brief History of Afghanistan, p. 212; see also Steve Coll: *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, Penguin Books, New York 2004, pp. 282–83 and p. 292.
- 71 Annie Barry Bruton: *Bacha Bazi and Human Rights Violations in Afghanistan: Should the U.S. Military Have Done More to Protect Underage Boys?* In: *Kentucky Law Journal*, Volume 108 Issue 1 (2019), p. 181, <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/klj/vol108/iss1/6>
- 72 How The U.S. Military Ignored Child Sexual Abuse In Afghanistan For Years, 24 January 2018, <https://www.npr.org/2018/01/24/580433652/how-the-u-s-military-ignored-child-sexual-abuse-in-afghanistan-for-years?t=1630725447188>
- 73 Michael Pröbsting and Simon Hardy: *Theses on Islamism*, adopted by a congress of the League for the Fifth International in January 2011, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/theses-on-islamism/>
- 74 Michael Pröbsting: *Is the Syrian Revolution at its End? Is Third Camp Abstemionism Justified?* 5 April 2017, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/syrian-revolution-not-dead/>
- 75 Gilles Dorronsoro: *Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009, p. 9
- 76 Andreas Wilde and Katja Mielke: *Order, stability, and change in Afghanistan: from top-down to bottom-up state-making*, *Central Asian Survey*, 32:3 (2013), pp. 359-360, DOI: 10.1080/02634937.2013.843309
- 77 Richard Tapper: *Tribe and state in Iran and Afghanistan: an Update*, in: *Études rurales* 184 (Juillet - Décembre 2009), p. 43, DOI: 10.4000/etudesrurales.10461
- 78 Al-Emera (website): *Response of the Islamic Emirate to the Victory of the Popular Uprising in Egypt*, 14 February 2011, in: Alex Strick Van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn (Editors): *The Taliban Reader*, Text No. 82
- 79 Khalil Aziz: *A Number Of Important Factors For Jihad*,

16 November 2014, in: Alex Strick Van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn (Editors): *The Taliban Reader*, Text No. 102

80 Al-Emera (website): *The Afghan People Wants Peace, Their Enemy War*, 20 November 2014, in: Alex Strick Van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn (Editors): *The Taliban Reader*, Text No. 115

81 Al-Emera (website): *9/11. An Incident and a Pretext*, 19 September 2016, in: Alex Strick Van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn (Editors): *The Taliban Reader*, Text No. 120

82 Yoshinobu Nagamine: *The Legitimization Strategy of the Taliban's Code of Conduct Through the One-Way Mirror*, p. 25

83 Ibid, p. 24

84 Antonio Giustozzi: *The Taliban at War 2001–2018*, C. Hurst & Co., London 2019, pp. 1-2

85 Anand Gopal: *The Other Afghan Women*

86 Ibid

87 Ahmed Rashid: *Taliban. The Power of Militant Islam in Afghanistan and Beyond*, New Edition, I.B.Tauris & Co, London 2010, p. 236

88 Col Anil Athale: *Is Afghanistan the First Domino?*, 25 August 2021, *Indian Defence Review*, <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/is-afghanistan-the-first-domino/>

89 Helene Cooper, Lara Jakes, Michael D. Shear and Michael Crowley: *In Afghan Withdrawal, a Biden Doctrine Surfaces*, *New York Times*, Sept. 4, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/04/us/politics/biden-doctrine-afghanistan-foreign-policy.html>

90 Spengler: *Afghan debacle cedes Eurasia to the dragon and bear*, 6 September 2021, <https://asiatimes.com/2021/09/afghan-debacle-cedes-eurasia-to-the-dragon-and-bear/>

91 Ross Douthat: *The American Empire in Retreat*, *New York Times*, Sept. 4, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/04/opinion/afghanistan-withdrawal-america.html>

92 On the history of the Cuban revolution see e.g. Chapter I of our book by Michael Pröbsting: *Cuba's Revolution Sold Out? The Road from Revolution to the Restoration of Capitalism*, August 2013, RCIT Books, <https://www.thecommunists.net/theory/cuba-s-revolution-sold-out/>

# Books of the RCIT

## Michael Pröbsting: *The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution*

**What It Is and How to Fight It. A Marxist analysis and strategy for the revolutionary struggle**

In *The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution* Michael Pröbsting analyses the dramatic events in spring 2020 which have opened a new historic era. A triple crisis has shocked the world. The Third Depression has begun, characterized by a devastating economic slump of the capitalist world economy which is certainly no less dramatic than the crisis which started in 1929.

In addition, there is a wave of anti-democratic attacks of a scale which has not been seen in the imperialist countries since 1945. This has triggered a global turn towards Chauvinist State Bonapartism and the creation of a monstrous Leviathan-like state machinery.

And finally, the world faces COVID-19 – a pandemic which endangers many lives and which is exploited by the ruling classes in order to spread fear, to deflect attention from the capitalist causes of the economic crisis and to justify the turn towards chauvinist state bonapartism.

*The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution* also shows that large sectors of the reformist workers movement and the

so-called left fail to understand the meaning of this triple crisis. Similar to the situation in 1914 after the beginning of World War I we can observe a gigantic wave of opportunist capitulation by many self-proclaimed socialists as they support or at least do not denounce the global lockdown and the suppression of democratic rights which the ruling classes are imposing in the name of combat against the pandemic. *The COVID-19 Global Counterrevolution* offers a Marxist analysis of this historic crisis and elaborates a revolutionary perspective for the struggles ahead.

The book contains an introduction and 6 chapters plus an appendix (176 pages) and includes 5 figures and a diagram.

