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Whither Afghanistan?

The question “Whither Afghanistan?” has been raised by intellectuals, a number of political parties and people, and some believe that the developments in Afghanistan are so complex that “even Americans themselves are perplexed.” They are convinced that the US and its NATO allies have failed in Afghanistan and are looking for the way out of the “trap.” But the truth is, those who draw such conclusions have themselves failed miserably to understand the true nature of the US-led imperialist occupiers. Such “analysts” believe that the growing frustration of the people means the failure of the US occupation and its allies in Afghanistan. They forget about the principle fact that no occupation force is about “winning the hearts and minds” of the people in an occupied country. It is only under a revolutionary government committed to equality and serving the masses that people can be won over, not under a puppet regime that serves the interests of the oppressive minority comprised of the big landlords and compradors and their foreign masters.

Upon becoming the US president, Barack Obama unveiled his “humanist” policies and “criticized” George Bush for his policies. Some political simpletons were misled and followed the western intelligence operatives to propagate that the US would focus on serving the humanity. When Obama declared that Afghanistan would make the centerpiece of his foreign policy, and in particular after Obama spoke of the “exit strategy,” “people’s sufferings,” many expected a miracle will happen and that things will eventually be alright and the bloodshed and war would be over in Afghanistan. Obama was brought into the White House in order to address

the particular needs of that period of time and to deceive the world after George Bush, but in reality he followed the line drawn by the capitalist strategists since the collapse of the Soviet Union to protect the US imperialist interests in Asia. He also proved to have been a guardian of the US companies' interests.

The reason that Obama announced that Iraq would no longer be at the focus of the US foreign policy did not imply that the US companies have learned to behave and that their appetite for oil has been satiated, but just because the US ruler of Iraq Paul Bremer had already made sure that the gains and profits of the US oil companies would be protected. He sold the 15 billion barrels of Iraqi oilfields to five US companies that could explore up to six million barrel of oil daily for the coming 25 years. That is why the bloody mission of 172,000 US troops in Iraq began to end and under the new Obama strategy, 30,000 of them had to be redeployed into Afghanistan. Nonetheless, Obama never spoke of complete withdrawal of US troops from Iraq since the US intends to have major military presence in Iraq and maintain its tight grip on the Middle East in addition to 736 other US bases spread across the world.

The US occupation forces invaded Afghanistan as part of a well-calculated strategy, and are engaged in consolidating the long-term US military position in Afghanistan.

Like all the other 736 military bases that the US has built around the world, Afghanistan was occupied so that the US imperialist interests and dominance could be ensured. Military bases in Afghanistan are more significant for the US interests than most of the US military bases. Just by knowing the vital significance of military bases for the US and how these bases are utilized for the interests of US companies, one can realize the reality of the occupation of Afghanistan by the US. As history has shown, no occupation force would withdraw from any occupied lands voluntarily unless it is expelled. The Vietnam War is one such example. Right now, Afghanistan plays way more decisive role for the US interests.

Afghanistan works as a connecting point between US bases in Dhahran in the Middle East to Okinawa, and Diego Garcia in the Far East. Maintaining this connecting line is in reality protecting US interests on the rich continent of Asia where the US companies have dominated the markets, raw material, straits and the cheap labor power, and rule this great continent.

Afghanistan is surrounded by nuclear-armed Asian countries like Russia, China, India and Pakistan and is located next to two major oil rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia. The US has set eyes on these two regions where it also has a considerable foothold. By having strong military presence in Afghanistan, it wants to further strengthen its power and address any threats posed to its power and interests, and penetrate into the Central Asian and Caucasus oil region, and threaten Iran.

The US spent billions of dollars on rivalry with the Soviet Union and eventually crushed the latter one. While capitalist ideologues naively declared the “end of history,” now the US faces not only Russia but also China that have emerged as great imperialist powers. Since imperialist powers compete with each other to plunder the masses of the world, the US is greatly concerned about the reemergence of Russia and emergence of China as great military and economic powers. By strong military presence in Afghanistan, the US can counter the two countries that have made alliance in the form of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Keeping China and Russia at bay is vital for the US and its interests in Asia.

With the 9/11’s pretext the US invaded Afghanistan and stationed troops in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Though the Uzbek government later expelled US troops when it suspected the US involvement in Andijan riots in May 2005. The US also stationed aircraft carrier in the Indian Ocean and has so far forced Japan to supply fuel for the entire US war in Afghanistan. It also stationed drones at Shamsi airbase in Baluchistan province, Pakistan.

Over 400 billion dollars go to the imperialist coffers from the opium produced in Afghanistan and the revenue is equally divided between the US and British imperialists. Also, the untapped mineral riches in Afghanistan are estimated to be worth 500,000 billion dollars. These facts show that in addition to military significance, Afghanistan is also economically significant in the eyes of the US. The US is already involved in excavating the largest gold mine of Afghanistan in Badakhshan province while Britain has usurped the uranium mine in Helmand province.

Though the US invaded Afghanistan with the pretext of war on terror, it is now trying to use Islamist fundamentalists to destabilize its Asian rivals. The US also takes advantage of its ties with the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI to weaken and get rid of its Asian rivals by unleashing the fundamentalist genie.

Given its location and geography, Afghanistan is an ideal place in the eyes of the occupiers and arms manufacturing companies to test their weapons. The demand has been on the rise for all weapons that are used and tested in Afghanistan. The occupiers have tested over 6500 types of weapons in Afghanistan and introduce new weapons on a daily basis to fight the Taliban. The US military has had massive spending in Afghanistan and the war has so far cost one trillion dollar. The annual cost of each US soldier deployed in Afghanistan stands at one million dollar and supplying a gallon of fuel to the troops costs up to 400 dollar. By February 2010, the US had lost 1,000 troops in Afghanistan and 4,443 in Iraq. The US does not spend this huge amount and suffer the heavy casualties to kill Taliban and Al Qaida member but to remain in Afghanistan and protect its long-term goals.

In order to remain in Afghanistan for the many years to come, the US has to take certain measures towards which the US works non-stop.

1. Strategic Agreement: The US has so far tried several times to reach strategic agreement with its client government in Afghanistan. The agreement was once signed by Hamid Karzai and was followed by another signature by the Foreign Minister, Dadfar Spanta. After the agreement was signed, some US officials expressed their views that the US may remain in Afghanistan for 90 years. Such strategic agreements have been instrumental in US policy to maintain military presence in over 80 countries. Afghans still remember how the British occupied Afghanistan after the Gandumak Treaty was signed in 1879 and the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979 after the treaty was signed with its puppet government to “defend the southern borders.”
2. Military bases: As the number of US troops stationed in Afghanistan will rise to 127,000 in the coming weeks and more advanced weapons would be brought in, the US needs major permanent bases in Afghanistan. The bases would be built in areas in line with the US strategy in Asia. Currently, the US military expands its bases at Bagram airbase, Kandahar airport, Shindand airbase, Shorab base along the Kandahar-Herat highway, Khost and Jalalabad bases. Moreover, the US embassy in Kabul is rapidly expanding and the building next to the embassy that once belonged to the ministry of public health was bought a few months ago. Rumors are that the embassy will also buy the residential areas surrounding the embassy. The US military is building dozens of huge fuel tankers near Kandahar airport.

As soon as Obama took over office, 500 US military engineers were deployed in Afghanistan to design and construct the bases. Bagram Airbase serves as the hub for US military operations and no signs suggest the US troops would pull out in the foreseeable future. Besides American troops, the British are also building massive military bases in Helmand province. The British consulate in Helmand province is larger than its embassy in Kabul, and British intelligence operatives directly fly in and out of the province. The new US and British policy of increasing the power of provincial governors to bypass the central government in Kabul is in line with protecting the interests of the occupiers. The unlimited power of the governor in Helmand province is one example. One has to wait and see what share the US as the most powerful occupation force would give to German, Italian, French, Danish, and Dutch occupiers who are consolidating their positions in Balkh, Herat, Kapisa, Faryab and Urozgan provinces respectively.

3. Class base: US and other imperialists support primarily the private sector in order to strengthen the power of compradors. Once this class is strengthened to the point that its rulers can run the country politically, economically, culturally and militarily, the occupation forces would

confine their presence only to monitoring the activities of this class and would focus on their regional goals. Big landlords are the other class that works closely with the compradors to defend the imperialist interests. Currently, the US counts on the compradors while the British count on big landlords. This has been the bone of contention between the two imperialists. Major NGOs directors, technocrats that have repatriated from the west, most leaders of the defunct People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) that have now turned their back even on their revisionist ideology are close to the compradors while former Jihadi "leaders" and commanders, and Taliban commanders share the beliefs of big landlords. However, both the compradors and the big landlords make the powerbase of the imperialists. The British intend to use more of middle landlords while the US as the major power not only count on the compradors but also the big landlords and particularly the criminal landlords that have recently gained power. Jihadi party leaders and most of the bloodthirsty warlords are among this type of the big landlords. They make the pillars of the US occupation and would never be brought to justice for the crimes they have committed unless they become a spent force.

4. Afghan Government: In most countries that have been occupied by the US and where permanent military bases are built, state-building has taken longer time and only puppet governments are installed. Such states have apparently all the three branches of the state and claim to be representing the people and defending the national interests, but always have to obey the occupiers in the decisions regarding domestic issues or foreign affairs, economic agreements and military treaties, and the interests of the occupiers have to be given priority. Such things are happening in Afghanistan now, and this process will take some time till the government is strengthened and security improves.
5. Army and Police: the US imperialism seeks to create a relatively strong but obedient army that can defend the puppet government and crush the masses opposition to the government. However, creating such an army is not an easy job for the US because it has to have all the army officers under its own command. But the process has begun and all the appointments and the structure of the army and the ministry of defense are decided by the US army in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the US does not want to strengthen the army overnight and to the point that it is not under the US control. The puppet government military does not have its own air force yet. Americans would fully strengthen the military when all its officers are trustworthy in the eyes of the US military.
6. Intelligence: Americans mostly rely on the intelligence activities and gathering and CIA and FBI are active in Afghanistan. 65,000 Afghans work for the intelligence service.

In addition to aforementioned means, American also use sother means to ensure their long term military presence in Afghanistan. Such slogans as democracy, pluralism, gender equity, free press, freedom of speech, elections, rule of law, free market economy, human rights and others through civil society and political parties, human rights commission and UNAMA are some of the most effective means for the US interests.

7. Pretext of Occupation: As history has shown, imperialist powers have always used pretext to occupy other countries. The Soviet Union used the pretext of “threats from the southern border” to invade Afghanistan in 1979. The US attacked Iraq in 1991 to “defend” Kuwait and the dangers of the non-existent WMDs in 2003 to invade and occupy Iraq. Pretexts such as 9/11 and the Taliban and Al Qaida were used for the invasion of Afghanistan, while only few doubt the US involvement in the attacks of 9/11.

Americans supported the arrival of Arab fighters in Pakistan to fight against the Soviet army between 1982 and 1992. Dissident Arab fighters gathered around Bin Laden, and Al Qaida was formed. Bin Laden ostensibly became anti-American and anti-Saudi after US troops were stationed in Saudi Arabia to defend it after Iraq invaded Kuwait. Al Qaida was only meant to allow the US to build extensive network of bases. The organization began its attacks against the US interests in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and was put on the blacklist of the US and Saudi Arabia. All this happened a few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and at a time when the US desperately needed an imaginary enemy in order to keep its war machinery running. An enemy that could be easily manipulated and also that was capable of killing in cold blood to terrorize. Al Qaida was the right choice. It is “present” all over the world and the US can attack any country in search of it.

The US also used its client state of Pakistan to further its own interests as US troops were stationed in the region. The US has the most advanced intelligence gathering capabilities and enjoys the support of Pakistan’s ISI. CIA’s biggest station is in Islamabad and can easily detect and control Taliban and Al Qaida leaders.

As soon as a military attack was finalized against Waziristan tribal area in Pakistan, serving as the most important Al Qaida sanctuary, 25,000 out of 26,000 Al Qaida fighters fled the area within weeks and arrived in Yemen through the sea. The US has for years has the intentions to have military presence in Yemen in order to monitor Saudi Arabia on one hand and the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and Suez Canal on the other. Yemeni government failed to destroy the Al Qaida base near Sana’a even after carrying out five raids, and now the US drones target those areas. The Yemeni government has also implicitly asked the US to deploy troops. As the Al Qaida headed to the Middle East, now Lashkar-e Tayiba has replaced it in the region so that Al Qaida can fully focus on the Middle East.

This invisible enemy has given the US the opportunity to build military bases in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and station an aircraft carrier in the Indian Ocean after 9/11.

US troops take Taliban fighters in the helicopters to northern provinces of Kunduz, Baghlan and Faryab to spread the war in the north too. This is something confirmed by the governors in the north and Karzai. Also, containers of ammunition are dropped in the areas controlled by the Taliban fighters. One such incident was extensively reported in the media, in Qalat, provincial capital of Zabul. Officers from the Afghan army have revealed that their soldiers have seized weapons and logistic supplies from Taliban fighters similar to that the government soldiers get from the US. It shows that both the US and British militaries in Afghanistan arm Afghan soldiers and Taliban fighters equally in order to prolong the war.

The US needed time to establish a lasting foothold in Afghanistan and an “enemy” that could gradually pave the ground for such occupation while nobody could object to it. The notorious Al Qaida organization paved the ground for US military bases in Asia and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Today, the Taliban are indispensable for the US to build military bases in Afghanistan and the US occupation is indispensable for the Taliban to justify their medieval agenda.

When the British, US, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan created the Taliban in the mid-90s and Al Qaida joined it so quickly as if a miracle was happening, none of its leaders were known to people even at a district level. But these little known commanders captured over 90 percent of the Afghanistan soil in less than two years. It means that the Taliban were only the façade and fought proxy war. Only seven out of 19 of the Taliban leaders are still with the Taliban while the rest have either been killed or have surrendered to the government. While the Taliban can automatically continue such a protracted war that is also expanding in terms of area despite all the losses they have suffered, the questions to be asked are how were the Taliban funded and armed and how and where did they get their logistical supplies from? Who gives sanctuaries to the Taliban leaders? How are the suicide bombers brainwashed and trained? How are the Taliban leadership and military commands regrouped? How does the Quetta Shura operate? How are the combat areas determined and how the communication between the leadership, commander and fighter maintained? These and many more questions need to be answered. But those who are familiar with the imperialist ruses know that behind the Taliban are sophisticated and notorious British, US and Pakistani intelligence organizations that can guide such wars to protect the interests of all those involved in it.

Some may say that Pakistan plays double game as a US ally in the war on terror by supporting the Taliban, but this is only looking things at the surface.

Pakistan wants Afghanistan to recognize Durand Line as the border and remain a market for Pakistani products while Pakistan can also make money out of prolonged war in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the US, too, wants the tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan not to be eased, and Pakistan continue to support the Taliban and the war goes on so that the US can reach its goals. Here, the US and Pakistani interests converge, but even if that was not the case, Pakistan as a client state cannot stand up to the US. Pakistan can get the advanced F-16 fighter jets, laser-guided bombs and even nuclear arms only when it stands beside the US. Pakistan has remained defender of the US interests in the region against the Soviets and was one side of the US triangle for the defense of the Indian Ocean. After the fall of the Shah in Iran, the CIA station was moved to Islamabad. No major changes can take place in Pakistan without the US and British approvals. All Pakistani military officers are educated and trained in the US or Britain. 27 percent of foreign investment in Pakistan belongs to the US, 25 percent to the British.

Therefore, the ISI control over the Taliban means the US control over the Taliban. The US paid Pakistan 394 million dollar for the arrest of Mullah Baradar, a senior Taliban leader who was in favor of talks with the Karzai government, and the British and Saudi governments. The US still needs time to uproot the Taliban or bring them to the negotiating table. And eventually it will be the US and Pakistan that would work out the peace talks the way their interests suit.

Before the 30,000-strong troop surge, the US launched a massive military operation involving 15,000 troops in mid-February 2010 in Marjah, a small area in the south of Nad Ali district in Helmand province. It was meant to convince the world that a much bigger US military power is needed to defeat the Taliban. While around the same time, 1,500 US troops could clear Logar province, a major insurgency center, of the Taliban and HIA fighters within two months.

All these prove that there is no confusion in the US about the occupation of Afghanistan and everything is implemented according to the devised US strategy. Afghanistan is a significant component in the US strategy in Asia. Otherwise the defeat of such a reactionary force as the Taliban that has no popular support is the easiest thing for the US to do.

This is the task of revolutionary forces to build the vanguard party and wage people's war in the rural areas in order to expel the occupiers.

Down with imperialism!
Forward to Socialism!

Afghanistan Revolutionary Organization
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