
Internal Conflicts and External Pressures: The Taliban on the Brink of Collapse

The Taliban's oppressive and fragile apparatus has never been more fragmented and embroiled in a multifaceted crisis. Their consistent denial of internal divisions is no longer concealable. The escape of Abbas Stanikzai, supported by the Ministers of Interior and Defense, along with the departure of other Taliban leaders to Arab countries, internal conflicts, purges, and the dissatisfaction of local commanders all reflect the intensifying internal contradictions within the group.

Simultaneously, with the three-month suspension of U.S. aid ordered by Donald Trump, Afghanistan's already devastated economy has plunged into unprecedented chaos and disintegration. Currency fluctuations and rising prices of essential goods have delivered a severe shock to the market, pushing the masses deeper into poverty and destitution. As the Taliban's internal conflicts escalate alongside external pressures and the suspension of U.S. aid, the fragile foundation of the so-called Islamic Emirate is more unstable than ever. In many offices, the Taliban have reduced employee salaries and, in some cases, are unable to pay them at all. The buying and selling of dollars and the prevention of the Afghani's devaluation are being controlled through force. Public resentment and hatred toward the Taliban are rapidly growing across broad segments of society. At the same time, military attacks by ISIS-Khorasan and, to some extent, the "Resistance Front" and the "Freedom Front" against Taliban forces have intensified. International isolation, sanctions, economic crisis, internal divisions, increasing military opposition, and, most importantly, widespread public dissatisfaction and anger have all paved the way for the Taliban's weakening and potential collapse.

Intensification of Internal Conflicts and the Crisis of Ideological-Political Legitimacy

The ideological-political crisis of the Taliban Emirate is growing deeper and more widespread by the day. Not only do the majority of the Afghan people now harbor deep hatred and resentment toward the Taliban and their ideology, but this outdated ideology no longer serves as an effective or unifying force within the group as it once did. The harsh and outspoken

remarks of Abbas Stanikzai against the Taliban leader are just the tip of the iceberg, revealing the group's internal divisions rooted in this ideological-political crisis.

Over the past three years, several Taliban leaders have expressed dissatisfaction with the Amir's monopolization of power and the closure of girls' schools. It now appears that an opposition faction, including Mullah Baradar, Sirajuddin Haqqani, Mullah Yaqoob, and Abbas Stanikzai, has emerged. Members of this circle have repeatedly traveled to Arab countries like the UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia without coordinating with Mullah Haibatullah. During these trips, they have met not only with Arab officials but also with intelligence and political representatives from Western countries, including the United States. Reportedly, while Abbas Stanikzai and Sirajuddin Haqqani have yet to return to Afghanistan, Abdul Hakim Shara'i, the Taliban's Minister of Justice, has also traveled to the UAE, complaining of widespread corruption and insubordination among his subordinates. Some of these disaffected Taliban figures are in contact with the group's political opposition. They seek to end the Taliban's global isolation and alleviate economic pressures through international relations. In their view, as long as absolute power remains concentrated in the hands of the Amir, political reform and change are impossible, and the Emirate is on a downward trajectory toward destruction.

However, in the closed Islamic ideological system of the Taliban, obedience to the Amir is obligatory, and any criticism or defiance of his orders is considered rebellion and betrayal. This dynamic has enabled the Amir to sideline his critics and limit their authority. Mullah Haibatullah has effectively marginalized the traditional leadership council established during the eras of Mullah Omar and Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, creating a circle of loyal clerics around him in Kandahar. Currently, there is no mechanism in place to limit the Amir's authority. Discontented Taliban leaders have thus far failed to take any concrete steps to curtail the Amir's powers, just as Haibatullah has yet to achieve absolute control over the group. Not only did his order for Abbas Stanikzai's arrest go unheeded, but senior Taliban officials in the Ministries of Interior, Defense, and Security reportedly facilitated Stanikzai's escape from Afghanistan. Furthermore, the appointment of Mullah Abdul Kabir, the deputy prime minister for political affairs, as Minister of Borders and Tribes has yet to be implemented after more than a month. These acts of defiance against the Amir's directives have prompted him to take more severe measures, raising the risk of internal Taliban clashes. Recently, "Omari" forces have taken control of key locations in Kabul, including the airport and several police districts, to monitor the movements of Taliban officials and commanders. Through these deployments, the Taliban leader aims to entrust crucial political and military positions to his loyalists and consolidate his absolute power in the manner of Mullah Omar.

Nevertheless, the reality is that today's circumstances differ significantly from those during Mullah Omar's time three decades ago. Not only have the conditions of the Afghan people changed dramatically, but the Taliban group under Haibatullah's command also differs from its earlier iteration. Although the Amir's authority has expanded compared to three years ago, this has been accompanied by increased global isolation, intensified internal discord, and mounting public discontent. Consequently, the lifespan of the Emirate is approaching its end.

The growing financial and moral corruption among Taliban leaders and officials has eroded the ideological motivation and fighting spirit of the group's rank-and-file soldiers, weakening its social base. The Taliban's pervasive ethnic chauvinism and monopolization of power have marginalized many Uzbek and Tajik members of the group. These members increasingly observe how the supposed principles of Islamic brotherhood and Sharia take a backseat to Pashtun nationalism and Durrani tribalism. According to Abdul Hakim Shara'i, the Taliban's Minister of Justice, tribalism, self-interest, wealth accumulation, bribery, theft, and abuse of state resources and authority have replaced the spirit of jihad and Sharia. This widespread corruption is eating away at the Emirate from within, steadily hollowing it out. Various forms of discontent, mistrust, and resentment within the Taliban are crystallizing and becoming increasingly visible. Like other reactionary and oppressive regimes in Afghanistan's past, the Taliban are not immune to internal collapse.

With Donald Trump's rise to power and the intensification of global pressure and internal Taliban divisions, the political and military opposition to the Taliban has become more active. At the Vienna conference, leaders of both the Freedom Front and the Resistance Front, along with other Taliban opponents, participated. Regional imperialist and reactionary countries have also held meetings with jihadist figures and officials of the former Afghan regime on several occasions. Meanwhile, military attacks against the Taliban, particularly by ISIS, have escalated.

Over the past three and a half years, the Taliban's implementation of Sharia has manifested in some of the most inhumane and reactionary behaviors, characterized by brutal assaults on people's lives, property, and freedoms. Women, intellectuals, and oppressed ethnic minorities have been entirely excluded from Afghanistan's social and political spheres. The country's regression over the past three years has been terrifying, and the poverty, hunger, displacement, and repression endured by the Afghan people are crushingly severe.

The US Aid Cutoff and External Pressures

over the past three years, alongside the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East and the intensification of conflicts among the world's imperialist powers, have played a significant role in the survival and continuity of the Taliban Emirate. However, with Trump's return to the White House, in addition to the cessation of so-called U.S. humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and the increased pressure to reclaim military equipment from the Taliban, these pressures have intensified. Waltz, Trump's national security adviser, stated that the U.S. must keep its foot on the neck of terrorist groups and continue this war in Kabul and Damascus; otherwise, this war will reach the cities of Kansas. Marco Rubio, the U.S. Secretary of State, has openly called for cooperation with the Taliban's opposition. The statements of Rubio and Waltz reflect America's determination under Trump to either reclaim or destroy military equipment left in Afghanistan. It is said that Trump's primary motivation for retrieving these weapons is the fear of them falling into the hands of global jihadist groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda, which could use them against the U.S. However, the reality is that the presence of American weapons in Afghanistan evokes a sense of humiliation stemming from the imperialists' defeat. Trump seeks to compensate for this feeling of humiliation and damage to American

imperial pride by recovering or destroying these weapons.

During the First Anglo-Afghan War (1839–1842), after the heavy defeat of British forces in 1842 and their retreat from Kabul, Britain attacked Afghanistan again with a large army. After recapturing Kabul, they resorted to massacring defenseless people and set parts of the city, including Kabul's market, on fire. These brutal acts were an attempt to avenge the humiliating defeat of the British occupying forces in Afghanistan.

Moreover, Trump and American imperialists aim to force the Taliban into submission and prevent them from aligning more closely with the imperialist powers of China and Russia. Should Trump fail in this objective, he may resort to economic pressure and support for the Taliban's opposition to weaken the group. Unlike Biden, Trump pays no attention to the potential collapse of institutions, famine, and the resulting rise of extremism in Afghanistan. Over the past three years, despite international pressure, Biden sought to prevent the collapse of institutions in Afghanistan and the country's descent into chaos, which is why he continued humanitarian aid.

The Taliban's relations with Pakistan have deteriorated, and the level of mistrust between them continues to grow. Contrary to the Pakistani government's expectations, the Taliban have not only refused to cooperate in curbing the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) but have also refrained from recognizing the Durand Line, similar to the former Afghan Republic regime. Furthermore, the Taliban have established friendly relations with India. Military clashes along the shared border between the two countries have significantly increased over the past three years, and the Pakistani military has intensified pressure on the Taliban. Restrictions on goods transit and the expulsion of Afghan refugees are among Pakistan's primary tools of pressure against the Taliban. Over the past year, Pakistani intelligence officials have engaged in talks with the Taliban's opposition. The Islamic conference held in Islamabad demonstrated Pakistan's intent to challenge the ideological and religious legitimacy of the Taliban's rule and expand the opposition against them. The Pakistani military's efforts to curb the rise of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party are also linked to their tensions with the Taliban Emirate, as PTI maintains closer ties with the Taliban compared to the Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Muslim League.

The imperialist power of China has gained more opportunities to expand its influence in Afghanistan following the U.S. withdrawal. However, China remains deeply concerned about the expansion of groups like the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), ISIS, and Al-Qaeda operating within Afghanistan's borders. The Taliban have yet to alleviate these Chinese concerns. Similarly, Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran are worried about the activities of Islamist groups in Afghanistan. As a result, the economic relations and cooperation of these countries with Taliban-controlled Afghanistan have not reached a level that could mitigate the impact of U.S. sanctions on the Taliban. As Trump increases pressure on the Taliban, these countries also seek greater concessions from the group.

Efforts by imperialist powers to normalize the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan have failed. The U.S. and its European allies had hoped for cooperation from the Taliban similar to what Ahmed Jarrah's regime has done in Syria. However, this did not happen, and Afghanistan has now become a security threat to the region and the world. Over the past three years, the

Taliban have not only failed to make any concessions on reopening girls' schools and forming an inclusive government, but they have also become an even more prominent hub for training and nurturing regional and global extremist groups compared to their first regime. Should tensions in the Middle East and Ukraine ease, Trump's pressure on the Taliban will increase, making it harder for the Taliban to exploit the internal conflicts of imperialist powers for their survival. The growing inclination of American imperialism to collaborate with Pakistan in supporting the Taliban's opposition could potentially pave the way for civil war and further weaken the Taliban Emirate in the future.

Various reactionary elements from the former Afghan Republic, including both notorious former jihadist figures and Western-affiliated liberals and collaborators, have become active following Trump's return to power and the cutoff of aid, alongside the growing internal discord within the Taliban. These individuals seek to regain the support of their imperialist patrons and reaffirm their loyalty. In recent months, representatives from the U.S. and European imperialist countries have met with these figures in Turkey, and reports have emerged of meetings between Pakistani intelligence and Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps with them in Ankara. However, these discredited and tested figures did nothing for Afghanistan's impoverished and underdeveloped population during the twenty years of the puppet republic's rule aside from plundering state resources and building lavish palaces while serving foreign masters. The Afghan people know these corrupt and subservient figures well and will no longer trust them.

Time is short; seize the moment.

With the intensification of internal conflicts, global pressures, and growing public dissatisfaction against the Taliban, the future and survival of this group face serious challenges. Although the threat of internal strife and external pressures—like those posed by Trump—have sounded alarm bells for the Taliban, in the long run, it is the people of Afghanistan who must bring an end to the disgraceful reign of the Taliban Emirate.

Meanwhile, the reactionary forces who fled during the Republic era have begun to stir. Communist and progressive forces must seize this opportunity to unite and strengthen their revolutionary spirit. We must not allow the reactionary jihadist movements and the liberal factions aligned with American and Western imperialism to once again deceive the masses. Every communist, every revolutionary, and every person who still believes in human freedom and fights for a society free from exploitation and oppression must distance themselves from disorganization and lethargy and take effective steps toward organization and action. Moreover, we must avoid falling into the trap of the petty bourgeoisie's confusion and disbelief.

Dogmatism and sectarianism have rendered a significant portion of communists inactive, while revisionism has driven many revolutionaries away from the class struggle and into the ranks of the enemies of the people. Today, true communists face a tougher test than ever before. The moral and psychological deterioration under the Taliban's oppressive rule has shattered the spirit of many intellectuals and the younger generation. One of the most painful aspects of Afghanistan's societal decline is the collapse of revolutionary and honorable elements into apathy, numbness, and the embrace of liberal agendas.

Communists must recognize that both under the Taliban's dark repression and during the twenty years of imperialist occupation, the spread of liberal and revisionist ideas, combined with the communists' lack of seriousness and decisiveness, led to the weakening and sidelining of a large part of the revolutionary forces.

Comrades! The world and Afghanistan are on the brink of great transformations. These changes bring both significant dangers and opportunities for revolution and the communist struggle. However, the dissatisfaction of the masses alone will not lead to liberation from exploitation, oppression, and class society. The role of vanguard parties in opening the way and guiding the people toward revolution is decisive. As Mao once said: "For these reasons, only the proletariat and the Communist Party can lead the peasants, the urban petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie, overcome the narrow-mindedness of the peasants and petty bourgeoisie, curb the destructive tendencies of the unemployed masses, and overcome the vacillations and inconsistency of the bourgeoisie, thus pushing the revolution and war toward victory."

Therefore, it is the duty of the vanguard party and all revolutionaries, workers, and the oppressed to stand firmly and decisively against opportunism, passivity, and deviation and to keep the banner of class struggle aloft. The future of the revolution depends on the unity and vigilance of the vanguard party and the committed revolutionary individuals.

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