

Tribal war looms in Afghanistan, threatens bloodshed in Pakistan

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The power play between two Afghan strongmen, Ahmed Shah Massoud and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, has stalled any progress in bringing peace to Afghanistan, and the continuing conflict in Kabul has now raised the specter of bloody conflicts between ethnic Pakhtoon and Baloch tribes in the bordering province of Baluchistan, in neighboring Pakistan.

With the Tadzhik Mujahideen leader Burhanuddin Rabbani, head of the Afghan Jamaat-e-Islami, ready to take over from President Sibghatullah Mujaddidi in Kabul in a few weeks, Tadzhik-Uzbek control over the country, in defiance of the majority Pakhtoons, has been further expedited. The intransigent Pakhtoon leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, head of the Hezb-e-Islami, is threatening to attack Kabul if the Uzbek militia continues to keep its control over the capital. Hekmatyar has also threatened to cut off the vital food supply line connecting Kabul with Pakistan.

'Outsiders' interfere

Hekmatyar was the blue-eyed boy of a faction of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency; he was financed by Saudi Arabia, and backed by Pakistan. However, in the most recent period, he was cut out from power-sharing in the Afghan settlement. The faction that came into power in Kabul was backed by the Iranians, and liked by the United States because they are "moderate." Pakistan, under pressure from Washington, lent its support to the new government in Kabul.

Hekmatyar, who has broad support among the Pakhtoon tribes that constitute the ethnic majority in Afghanistan, felt sidelined by the external forces—the United States, Iran, Moscow, and Saudi Arabia—that brought about the U.N.-backed settlement. Accordingly, Hekmatyar has raised the Pakhtoon flag to denounce the Tadzhik-Uzbek alliance which has taken power in Kabul with the help of the "outsiders."

The Tadzhik leadership in Kabul, marshaled by Ahmed Shah Massoud (now defense minister) with the help of the Uzbek general Rashid Dostum, realizes that keeping Hekmatyar out of the process to establish a stable government will be futile if not outright dangerous. It is due to this concern, perhaps, that Rabbani has asked Hekmatyar to name the prime minister, the position which has been kept vacant so far.

There are reports that Hekmatyar has responded to this proposal by sending a new set of demands for working with

the Jehad Council set up in Kabul. Although details of this new set of proposals have not been made public, some observers claim that Hekmatyar has asked Pakhtoon Mujahideen field commander and current Minister of Justice Jalaluddin Haqqani to act as a buffer between Dostum's militia and Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami fighters.

The formation of the Afghan cabinet recently also shows President Mujaddidi's continuing attempt to avoid the Pakhtoon wrath and weaken Hekmatyar's pro-Pakhtoon position. Such noted Pakhtoon individuals as field commander Abdul Haq, Jalaluddin Maqqani, Gen. Amin Wardak, and Saliman Gillani have been accommodated in the new cabinet. However, Hekmatyar has dismissed all this as a mere gimmick, since President Mujaddidi will cease to be President in a few weeks.

At the same time, Hekmatyar's concern about the take-over of Kabul by the Tadzhik-Uzbek minorities in connivance with the United Nations has struck a chord with the Pakhtoons. Hekmatyar is in control of some vital pockets along the Jalalabad-Kabul highway where well-armed Hezb-e-Islamis are waiting for the signal to start a fresh campaign of ambushes. A Peshawar-based Afghan leader has indicated that Hekmatyar possesses a number of SCUD missiles. By shelling Kabul recently, Hekmatyar has also sent a message that he would not spare Kabul if his demands are ignored.

Massoud's problems

Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Tadzhik field commander, has also gotten himself into a bind while seizing power from Najibullah. Massoud is now aligned with both Gen. Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek leader who previously worked as Najibullah's hatchet man against the Afghan Mujahideen, and with Babrak Karmal, the former Afghan President and head of the Parchami faction within the Watan Party. Although the new government in Kabul has banned the Communist Party and announced that it would try all those who had helped the Soviet invaders, it is yet to be seen whether Karmal, who came to Afghanistan atop a Soviet tank, will be brought to trial.

Even if the new government succeeds in severing Massoud's association with Karmal, making Massoud more acceptable to the Mujahideen leaders, it is a different story with Gen. Rashid Dostum. Bolstered by 40,000 wily and well-

trained Uzbek militia who are known for committing arson and looting and cruel acts, Gen. Rashid Dostum today controls the most important locations in Kabul. Dostum turned down the Jihad Council's decision that the capital city's security should be in the hands of a joint military council representing all of the 51 Mujahideen groups.

Pakistan's problem

Pakistan, as well as Afghanistan, is in a delicate situation. Burdened with 5 million refugees, who have spent 13 years in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province and the northern part of Baluchistan, the Pakistan government would like them to go home. At the same time, the Pakistanis are aware that if a satisfactory power-sharing formula is not found, the disgruntled Pakhtoons, led by Hekmatyar, might stir up the old movement for the formation of a "Greater Pakhtoonistan" which would involve most of Pakistan's western territory.

A quick reconciliation between Hekmatyar and Massoud should be ardently wished for in Pakistan. If Islamabad chooses to ignore Hekmatyar's complaints, it will have difficulties in ignoring the fall-out of its Afghan policy that surfaced in Baluchistan recently.

In Quetta, the capital city of Baluchistan where the settling of more than 1 million Afghan refugees has changed

the demography of the northern part of the province, the rivalry between Pathans (Pakhtoons) and Baloch tribes has intensified in recent days. Baloch organizations have supported Islamabad's role in installing a non-Pakhtoon administration in Kabul. Such support, observers note, comes from the deep-seated paranoia within the Baloch tribes that the Pathans are going to swamp them with their numbers and dominate Baluchistan.

The tension gave way to bloodletting in the second week of May when Pakhtoon organizations demanded that the Baluchistan government revoke its decision to add 12 new wards to the Quetta municipal corporation from surrounding areas. Charging the government with gerrymandering to help Quetta become Baloch-controlled, the Pakhtoons rioted.

The latest clash between the Baloch and Pathans in Quetta is the fourth of its kind in the last three years. Once, an obscure clash between some transporters in Quetta had quickly spread into full-fledged racial and ethnic rioting. On two other occasions, rioting between these two communities occurred. One time it erupted over the shifting of a professional college from the southern city of Khuzdar to Quetta. On that occasion, the Baloch organizations protested against the shift, voicing concern that the Pakhtoons want to deprive the Baloch-majority areas of quality education.

LaRouche associates are on trial in France

On May 14, the 12th Chamber of the Paris Court began proceedings against four French political leaders associated with Lyndon LaRouche—Jacques Cheminade, Christine Bierre, François Bierre, and — on charges of "theft."

Every element presented to the Paris court smacked of the judicial railroad used against LaRouche and his associates in the United States. The atmospherics in and around the trial have also been heavily saturated with slanders that the three defendants are "anti-Semitic" or "neo-fascist"—slanders traceable to the drug mafia's cat's paw, the Anti-Defamation League.

The subject of the proceeding is a criminal complaint of "fraud" filed by the children of a strong political supporter of the now-defunct European Labor Party (POE) in France, after the supporter died in October 1986. A court-appointed medical expert presented an opinion on whether or not their mother showed visible signs of Alzheimer's disease throughout the course of her relationship with the defendants.

Already in the earliest phases of the police investigation, the French political police, the Renseignements Généraux, sought to pollute the judicial environment. In the course of the magistrate's investigation, the plaintiffs placed into the record numerous clippings from American newspapers, reporting the January 1989 sentencing of LaRouche to 15 years in federal prison.

Despite the prejudicial intent, the first magistrate rejected the complaint. But the French government immediately appealed the decision, and the Paris Court of Appeals ordered a second investigation, largely based on the medical expert's report. In February 1992, the four defendants were indicted and charged with the reduced crime of "theft."

The most damning evidence of who and what is behind the proceedings was demonstrated in efforts of the children's attorney to present LaRouche's conviction and sentence before the 12th Chamber, a court which usually deals only with minor criminal infractions. Throughout the proceeding, the attorney repeatedly tried to bait the defendants, using the words "thieves" and "swindlers."

Most outrageous, by French standards, was the venomous prejudice against the defendants expressed by the officer of the Prosecutor General's office. In questioning the defendants, this officer repeatedly implied they had stolen the children's inheritance.