

# Chapter 4

## Afghanistan and Pakistan after Sept. 11 Terrorist Attacks

### 4.1 *Pakistani Government's Policies*

On September 11, 2001, the United States came under the unprecedented simultaneous terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. The U.S. administration strongly demanded the Taliban regime anew to hand over Osama bin Ladin, the "prime suspect" of the attacks.

President Gen. Musharraf's military regime of Pakistan voiced its willingness to cooperate with the United States a day after the terrorist attacks. For Pakistan, it was a tough choice between the Taliban and the United States. In reality, however, Pakistan had no real choice due to its very high dependence on the United States.

On October 7, U.S. and British forces finally launched air raids against military facilities of the Taliban, who continued to refuse to hand over Osama bin Ladin. On October 17, U.S. military planes made a sortie from a Pakistani air force base in Jacobabad, Sind, to attack Kandahar, the Taliban's stronghold in Afghanistan. The Pakistani government had repeated it would "not allow U.S. warplanes to fly from its territory to make air attacks". But on that day, the sortie from Pakistan was confirmed for the first time.

Pakistan's Pres. Gen. Musharraf on October 7 asked the United States and Britain to make their military actions last only for a short period of time. A prolonged fighting, he feared, would increase the likelihood of Pakistan's internal situation deteriorating amid the entanglement of ethnic, religious and other problems.

However, the most noteworthy was the reshuffle of the top echelons of the Pakistani military. On October 6, a day before the launching of the attacks on the Taliban by American and British forces, Pres. Musharraf extended his own tenure as Chief of the Army indefinitely. On the following day, or the day of the start of air raids on the Taliban, Deputy Chief of the Army Lt.Gen. Usmani and ISI Director General Lt.Gen. Mahmood were virtually dismissed from their respective posts.<sup>23</sup> The two men, both said to be close to Islamic radicals, reportedly were critical of the military leadership's policy toward religious

organizations.

Their being relieved of the duties can be considered as "de facto dismissals" because of the following circumstances. In the Pakistani military, it is a customary practice that an officer steps down even before his retirement age if someone in his junior is appointed to a higher post directly above him. Apparently aware of the practice, Pres. Gen. Musharraf on October 6 promoted Lt. Gen. M. Aziz Khan, commander of the Fourth Army Corps to the rank of full general and subsequently as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee. Though being the highest in the Army's official hierarchy, the person in the post does not have officers and men under his direct command. In other words, Gen. Aziz was deprived of his officers and men (estimated to total 12,000 to 20,000) he had had under him as the army corps commander. The general was also thought to be close to Islamic fundamentalist radicals.

In short, the three big-shot military officers considered to be close to Islamic fundamentalist radicals were virtually purged. The dismissals represented Pres. Gen. Musharraf's preemptive action because the three officers could become a major threat in terms of keeping the military under control or maintaining the state-system's stability in case of uprisings by pro-Taliban masses.

### 4.2 *Merits and Demerits of the Taliban*

Afghanistan's Taliban are being watched with wary eyes all over the world as described above because of their stance on human rights, segregation of women, reign of terror, terrorism and so on. However, for once it might be necessary to look at things from the viewpoint of the Taliban.

It cannot be denied that the Afghan society is generally in a premodern state. One year before the "Saur Revolution" of 1978, the country had an average national literacy rate of only 10%, with almost all rural residents illiterate.

In rural areas pre-feudalistic systems remained with strict community regulations. The invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet troops, which came one year

after the socialist revolution of April 1978, threw the entire country into chaos, with the "state" crumbling to virtual nonexistence. In particular, former anti-communist "holy warriors," who formed a government after the total Soviet withdrawal in 1989, turned themselves into groups of bandits to raise funds for fighting the civil war or formed regional military cliques. They were no longer "holy warriors" waging a "holy war."

Then came the Taliban ("religious students"), who disbanded the military cliques, executed robbers and burned down poppy fields, substantially restoring peace and security to Afghanistan that had been in total disarray. The Taliban were actually welcomed, loved and respected by the Afghan people who were utterly worn out by the prolonged civil war. Unless it is clearly recognized anew that the Taliban had never come on the stage as "terrorists," one cannot expect to find objective and cool-headed ways to discuss Afghanistan, terrorism, state, Islam and so on.

Further, though Afghanistan is ethnically dominated by the Pashtuns, those Pashtuns have about 60 tribes within themselves in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the rivalry among tribes and clans can be called almost traditional. Particularly, the coalition of Durrani tribes that used to produce royal families and the coalition of Gilzai tribes that played second fiddle have been hostile to each other historically.

Most of the Taliban are said to be from the coalition of Durrani tribes. But Mullah Muhammad Omar, who commands absolute dedication of the Taliban as their supreme leader, hails from a poor farming family in the Hotak Tribe that belongs to the coalition of Gilzai tribes.<sup>24</sup> Up until now at least, Omar has managed to unite the two tribal coalitions or keep them in solidarity at least within the Taliban organization. This can be given credit to as a constructive achievement in Afghanistan, given the historical rivalry among the tribes. It also gives us reasons to examine the ideology that provides the foundation for that super-tribal unity or solidarity.

But the Taliban, as time went by, created various problems and finally, their leader mullah Omar came to be treated as the coprincipal of the terrorist attacks in the Untied States by sheltering the "prime suspect," Osama bin Ladin.

Some argue that the Taliban's sheltering of Osama stems from the customary practice of "good

hospitality to guests", a key element in the Pashtun's value system<sup>25</sup>. This argument cannot necessarily be totally denied. But it cannot be denied either that the economic assistance offered by Osama bin Ladin, whose assets are said to be "worth \$300 million"<sup>26</sup>, played a major part. What can be found in the background include Afghanistan's extreme poverty, armed conflicts among ethnic groups, tribes and clans that date back to ancient times, and various other problems. Needless to say, these factors in no way justify support for terrorism. But they have to be addressed and eliminated if terrorism is to be eradicated.

The Taliban are made up mostly of sons of Afghan refugees who fled to Pakistan. Of them, most of those under 20 were born in refugee camps in Pakistan. They have no experience of playing merrily around oases or in other natural settings. Education they received is mostly religious education at madorassahs in refugee camps. It should be understood that religious education at madorassahs and prayers at mosques offer peace of mind to them, and to their parents.

However, the Taliban ruled by reign of terror in order to sustain their organization in the fight for national unification of Afghanistan. The reign of terror deprived not only women but also the general public of entertainment and human rights, and that situation spawned the socio-pathological phenomenon that led to terrorism, including massacres of people of different ethnicity. The Taliban also chose to keep smuggling mafias loose in order to collect transit taxes from them to fund the civil war. They also reversed their course midway and allowed poppy growing. These actions created the extremely dangerous situation in Afghanistan.

How long can the Taliban combine and rule the nation by terror, hatred and force? Another point that should not be forgotten is that Afghanistan's neighboring countries as well as other foreign countries have been using the Afghan people and the country's political situation for the sake of their "national interests."

### 4.3 Post-Taliban Afghanistan

In 1994, the civil war decidedly intensified and Afghanistan lost any semblance of a state. After U.S. and British forces began air raids against Taliban military facilities on October 7, 2001, people started

talking about how to shape an administration after the Taliban regime was gone.

Under consideration seems to be an ethnicity-based federal system and the United States, Britain and Russia are planning to have the "Northern Alliance," which controls the northeastern part of Afghanistan, and which consists mostly of non-Pashtuns, assume the reins of the new administration.

However, the Northern Alliance consists of bitter enemies placed in the same boat by fate. Letting them assume the leadership of the new government, it is feared, would not fail to invite yet another civil war unless there is a sincere worldwide cooperation for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. For one thing, the Pashtuns in general, whether they are pro- or anti-Taliban, will not accept any new administration that fails to give due heed to the Pashtuns, the biggest ethnic group that accounts for 38% of the Afghan population. Given Afghanistan's political history, the best way to govern the post-Taliban Afghanistan seems to be to let the United Nations take the reins with the aid of international peacekeeping forces.

However, even the federal system of ethnic groups for a new Afghanistan is unlikely to prevent ethnic conflicts in the country. For various ethnic groups in Afghanistan have not necessarily established their ethnicity. Tribes and clans who live around omnipresent oases and in basins form their own small worlds. Even people in the same tribes have not developed a sufficient level of "we" consciousness. People of numerous communities have a history of living apart and forming their own independent community units (autonomous areas under regional warlords or landlords), sometimes fighting and sometimes tolerating one another. In order to restore peace in Afghanistan, efforts should be directed at building a political system that corresponds to the unique political climate regulated by history and harsh geographical conditions.

Because of the above-mentioned geographical and social conditions, Afghanistan had parallel power structures and administrative systems for the central government and rural villages. But Afghanistan's landlord system appears to have crumbled to a certain extent after many big landowners fled the country during the civil war. The author believes that the Taliban were able to extend central government authority to rural areas

relatively easily because of the collapse of the regional power and administrative structure once dominated by big landlords and religious leaders.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4.4 Post-Taliban Pakistan

Pakistan wants to avoid following the footsteps of the neighboring Afghanistan by all means. Pres. Musharraf is being forced to walk the dangerous tightrope in order to defend the state and maintain Pakistan's national interests.

What Pakistan gains in exchange for cooperation with the United States is enormous for the distressed national economy. Economic and military assistance by the United States and other countries had been suspended as part of sanctions against Pakistan's nuclear testing in 1998 and the military coup in 1999. At present, however, the United States and other major industrial countries as well as international organizations have resumed (or are about to resume) a variety of assistance to Pakistan.

It can be said that the Musharraf military regime's use of cooperation with the United States as a diplomatic card is helping bring stability to the domestic political situation.

But President Musharraf's decision carries dangerous risks on the other side of the same coin. One risk is that the deterioration of ties with Afghanistan might complicate ethnic problems within Pakistan. Another risk has to do with signs that the Kashmir dispute<sup>28</sup> is worsening again, possibly partly because of the suspension of the process of improving relations with India. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell visited Pakistan on October 15, and met Pres. Musharraf the following day to discuss, among other things, a new administration in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime is gone. Pakistan is resisting the idea of giving a governing role to the "Northern Alliance," its foe. The United States, finding it absolutely necessary to keep Pakistan from being destabilized, is expected to try to have moderate Taliban politicians join the new government.

(Hiroki FUKAMACHI)

**Notes:**

23. In fact, of the generals dismissed, at least Lt.Gen. Usmani appears to be a Pashtun.
24. See Ahmed Rashid, op. cit. (*Taliban*, Kodansha).
25. The value system is called "Pashtunwali."
26. Op. cit. Ahmed Rashid, "Bin Ladin and Taliban: 'Endless

War", *Gendai*, November 2001, p.33.

27. This point needs to be thoroughly examined. Given the current conditions in Afghanistan, it is next to impossible.
28. See FUKAMACHI's article, "India-Pakistan Summit Talks - Illusionary Joint Declaration", (written in Japanese) *Ajiken World Trends*, no. 73, October 2001, pp. 26-29.