

er) and Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullodjanov, are firmly determined to carry out socio-economic reforms. They are adopting political measures, and at the same time consolidating central power, setting up a regular army and putting an end to the civil war. They are also taking vigorous steps to rehabilitate the national economy. At the meetings of the leaders of the Community of Independent States, held in Tashkent and Minsk in January 1993, the Russian Federation and the Central Asian republics pledged all-round support to them. Large supplies of food products, building materials, and consumer goods are being sent to Tajikistan. After some vacillation, a decision was also made to prolong the temporary stay in Tajikistan of the 201st motorized rifle division of the Russian Army, which has done much to curb the development of the civil war in Tajikistan.

However, the situation in the Pamirs and, especially, on the Tajik-Afghan border in the Pyandzh area, is still very tense. Although the authorities in Dushanbe have been informed about the preparations for Operation Retribution, and all necessary steps are being taken not only to localize but also to deal an excruciating blow at the Islamist fighters' units, in the spring of 1993, Tajikistan remains one of the most dangerous points of instability and Islamic fundamentalist activity—an arc of sorts, stretching from the Adriatic through Iraq, the Caucasus, Iran, Afghanistan, the Pamirs, and the Hindu Kush to the Himalayas.

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New Afghan accord may widen Central Asia war

by Dean Andromidas

Afghani mujahideen guerrilla leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has been named prime minister of a new Afghan government in an agreement brokered by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United States. Since the overthrow of the Soviet-backed government last year, Hekmatyar, bankrolled by both the CIA and Saudi Arabia, has conducted a bloody conflict against the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani, that has left Kabul in a shambles and thousands of civilian casualties.

Observers fear that the new agreement could throw the current Central Asian arc of crisis into new convulsions, especially when seen in the context of regional developments in the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and especially Tajikistan, which is currently in a civil war. The fact that the populations of these countries are all ethnically represented in neighboring Afghanistan has served to interconnect Afghanistan, and potentially the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent, with developments in these countries.

According to various reports, Hekmatyar's well-armed and well-financed forces have been training and otherwise abetting insurgents inside the former Soviet republic of Tajikistan, as part of a strategy to set Tajiks against Tajiks and thereby weaken the relative influence, within Afghanistan, of ethnic Tajiks. Both Afghan Defense Minister Shah Ahmed Massoud and President Rabbani, Hekmatyar's leading opponents, are ethnic Tajiks, while Hekmatyar himself is a Pushtun, the ethnic group that has traditionally dominated Afghanistan.

For its part, Moscow is prepared to react to this by stepping up its brutal intervention within Tajikistan on behalf of the existing government, which is essentially the same species of regime as existed in the communist era. Russian troops have abandoned their "peacekeeping" role and are actively fighting in Tajikistan.

How the deal was brokered

Hekmatyar's ascendancy was the result of a deal negotiated by Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who invited both President Rabbani and Hekmatyar to Islamabad. Sharif was also helped by Prince Turki bin Faisal of Saudi Arabia and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Allauddin Broujerdi, who were also on hand in Lahore. According to mujahideen

sources, Saudi Arabia and the United States, the principal financial backers of the Hekmatyar factions, pressured the Rabbani government to bring Hekmatyar into the government. These same sources further report that the United States refused to deal with the Rabbani government unless they "broadened" it to include Hekmatyar. In addition, in a period of a month before the signing of the deal, two governors of Afghan provinces, believed to oppose Hekmatyar, were assassinated.

In Islamabad, after six days of negotiations (or rather armtwisting), an agreement was reached whereby Hekmatyar would become prime minister and Rabbani would remain as President for another 18 months. Nonetheless, it is feared that the agreement might have a very short lifespan and lead to an early collapse and renewal of the fratricidal fighting.

Hekmatyar's arch-rival, Defense Minister Ahmed Shah Massoud, at a press conference in Kabul on March 10, also said he accepted the peace agreement, but did not hesitate to warn that if Hekmatyar attempted to remove him from the defense ministry, he would be forced to take a section of the army with him, according to Indian press reports.

Because Massoud is an ethnic Tajik, he has also expressed considerable concern with the growing involvement of Russian troops in the civil war in Tajikistan.

Uzbeki militia leader omitted

Omitted from the accord has been Gen. Rashid Dostum, leader of the well-armed Uzbeki militia. However, the agreement has been tentatively endorsed by General Momin, commander of the former communist militia forces in Kabul who is allied with Dostum. It was Dostum and his much-feared militia that actually kept the Soviet-backed Najibullah regime in power once Russian troops withdrew, and it was his joining forces with Massoud which led to its collapse. But Dostum continues to be as mercenary as he was when he was supporting the Russians, and he has withdrawn to his native Uzbeki region in the northeastern part of the country. He enjoys good contacts with the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, which could also serve to draw Afghanistan into the unstable affairs of that country. He has forged independent links with Turkey to which he made an unofficial visit only a few months ago.

After the accord was signed in Pakistan, Rabbani and Hekmatyar proceeded to Saudi Arabia and Iran. In Mecca on March 12, both Pakistan's prime minister and Saudi King Fahd signed as guarantors the peace accord, at the request of President Rabbani, according to wire reports. Rabbani further reported that "King Fahd told us Saudi Arabia plans to rebuild Afghanistan which was destroyed by the war."

In Teheran, Rabbani and Hekmatyar held talks with Iranian President Rafsanjani. The Iranian news agency IRNA quoted Rafsanjani as urging Islamic countries to join Iran in sending peacekeeping forces to monitor the cease-fire in Kabul. "Mr. Rafsanjani said Iran was ready to send

peacekeeping forces to Afghanistan to preserve peace there. He was also confident that other Islamic countries would contribute peacekeeping forces." Meanwhile, IRNA said that Rafsanjani "voiced satisfaction" during talks with all three leaders about the accord.

Cauldron of war

Nevertheless, the danger is posed by Hekmatyar and the potential of using his new position to further destabilize the region. This can be seen in the ambiguous role he played in opposing the Rabbani government over the last 11 months. Awash with millions of dollars from Saudi Arabia, the CIA, and the drug trade, he has been acquiring heavy weapons, such as multiple rocket launchers which he has used to pound away at Kabul over the past months. He has also factionalized the government coalition by forming a secret alliance with Dostum and splitting away the Shiite party, Hizb-i-Wahdat Islami, to the consternation of Iran, the principal sponsor of the latter.

Since last summer, Hekmatyar is also reported to have begun supporting Islamicist fighters in neighboring Tajikistan, with the intent of expanding the conflict into Central Asia, particularly Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran. According to one report, several hundred men have been trained by Hekmatyar in camps near the northern Afghani town of Imam Sahib. These operations are conducted by his local commanders who have been entering Tajikistan to recruit fighters, bring them to Imam Sahib for training, and then send them back with shipments of weapons.

Mujahideen sources confirmed that if Hekmatyar is allowed to consolidate his position, he would move to expand Afghanistan's involvement in Tajikistan and other Central Asian nations. Such an engagement would be in the service of outside powers and not in the interests of Afghanistan or the Tajiks fighting a Russian-sponsored regime. "You have to understand, Hekmatyar has worked for everyone, first Iran, then Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. He has received millions," one source noted.

The fact is that Hekmatyar has received the lion's share of the over \$500 million channeled to the mujahideen during the struggle against the Soviet Red Army. Nonetheless, these sources report that during that struggle, Hekmatyar avoided fighting the Red Army and spent most of his efforts fighting his factional enemies among the other mujahideen groups. "We have copies of directives to his commanders telling them to report to the Russians the locations of other groups as a way of eliminating his enemies."

Born in a Pushtun enclave in the northern Tajik region, Hekmatyar started his political career by joining the Communist Party as an engineering student at Kabul University. Upon joining the Islamicist movement, he began building up his own faction. This rather enigmatic background has reinforced fears concerning where his real loyalties might lie.