Taliban and tribal system

-Since 1994 from establishing Taliban-

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A. Introduction

In July 2007, a Korean Christian missionary team consisting of 23 people was kidnapped by the Taliban. Three years later 2 Koreans’ working for a national construction company were also captured by armed terrorists in Afghanistan. These events greatly shocked Koreans and made them realize that events in a faraway land can impact upon them, as Korea’s relationship as a faithful American ally brings with it not just protection but also threats. Indeed, these events inspire the writing of this paper as questions were raised about the Taliban? Who are they, who are they really fighting, and why did these terrorist acts occur? Therefore, this paper will discuss the main and fundamental causes of the struggle between the Taliban and the Kabul based central government of Afghanistan in order to address these aforementioned issues.

1. Map and Brief Description of Afghanistan

![Map of Afghanistan](image)

Afghanistan is located in central-west Asia and neighbours Pakistan, China, Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. It is landlocked and 2/3rds of its territory is mountainous. Its capital and administrative center is Kabul.\(^1\) Afghanistan flourished for almost 1000 years as a center of the

\(^1\) "Afghanistan survey" by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
Silk-road, strategically placed in the middle of the Eurasian continent. As well, both Eastern and Western cultures melted exquisitely in this land enriching its civilization and culture.²

Moreover, it is rich in natural resources such as natural gas, petroleum, coal, gold, silver, beryllium, uranium, copper, chromite, talc, burite, sulfur, lead, zinc, iron ore and salt. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union found large amounts of coal, petroleum and natural gas in Afghan territories. In March 2006, the Geological Survey of USA and mining industry department of Afghanistan announced that natural resources in the northern part of Afghanistan are much greater than initially thought. The main source of livelihood is agriculture, particularly cash crops including the illegal planting of poppy for the opium trade. Because of frequent civil wars, infrastructure and soil for cropping were almost totally destroyed with the exception of poppy due to the ease of its cultivation and guarantee of quick income. It is estimated that some 12.6% (2.9 million out of approximately 30 million) people of Afghanistan are engaged in poppy plantation. Afghanistan produced 92% of the world’s total heroin production in 2006, and some 90% of illegal drugs in Europe comes from Afghanistan. The cultivator pays about 10% and export convoy pays about 15-18% as their tax to provincial warlords.³

The population is made up several tribes. These include the Pashtuns (38 ~ 44%), Tazik (25%), Hazara (10 ~ 19%) and Uzbek (6 ~ 8%) among others. Some 99% of are Muslims (Sunni 84%, Shia 15%). Afghanistan gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1919 and was ruled by the Amanullah dynasty until they were overthrown in a coup by Daud in 1973. The Soviet Union supported this coup, and communism gradually began to gain dominance. Political instability ensued resulting in a civil war in 1978. The Soviet Union invaded in December 1979 in order to protect the Soviet-friendly government in Kabul.⁴ These events stimulated traditional Afghan

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² «True or false of Taliban» by Chang Mo, Choi (http://www.nanum.com/site/16852)
³ «Afghanistan survey» by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
⁴ «Afghanistan survey» by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
society and at the same time, provoked a call among some sections of Muslim society to engage in a religious war (Jihad) against the invasion and their collaborators. Many Jihadis from the Arab world, and not just Afghanistan volunteered to participate in this war against the Soviet Union. Moreover, several countries supported Afghanistan including the USA, Iran, Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia. The USA in particular, provided financial aid and weapons to the Jihadis (or more generally to the Mujahideen) in order to block the expansion of communism in the Cold War period. Partially thanks to these external help, the Soviet Union left Afghanistan in 1989 and the mujahedeen defeated the Najibullah regime. Although there were many civil wars among tribes since then, they have been retaining the presidential system. Current president is Hamid Karzai who is elected on October 9th, 2004.

2. Brief history of the conflict since 1994

Afghanistan had a policy of neutrality and non-alignment line until the Soviet invasion of 1979, after which it aligned itself with the Communist bloc. Its relationships with liberal parties, Muslim and non-aligned countries were reduced or cut off. The Soviet forces withdrew in 1989 but the civil war continued. The Taliban was established in 1994, took power in 1996 and then ruled large parts of Afghanistan for 5 years despite non-recognition by the international community with the exception of some countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. The Taliban regime attempted to gain recognition of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the UN () but failed, and even the UAE and Saudi Arabia cut off diplomatic relations post the September 11 2001 incidents. The Taliban regime was defeated in October 2001 by the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force), and a new government was established with renewal diplomatic relations. This new regime began to participate in international arena aggressively based on neighborly relations.

However, the remaining Taliban forces resisted the new regime. They declared through statements and interviews in the beginning of 2004 that they will take all actions to impede forthcoming elections.
Taliban forces pressed Afghans to boycott the elections stating continually that they will take revenge on those who participate in the elections. With this announcement, the Taliban and other armed terrorists groups undertook attacks on the Afghan government, foreign organizations, NGOs and election staff. These acts of terror brought numerous casualties and created social unrest. Although rockets were launched on election-day, there was no serious attack from the Taliban to halt the election. The Taliban’s attempt to delegitimize the elections failed, though they maintained their resistance activities. Despite both counter terrorism and construction activities conducted by the ISAF and allied forces under the leadership of NATO and the USA, the already unstable political and security situation has deteriorated further. According to a UN official report (November 2006), deaths are estimated approximately 3,700. This rate was more than four times greater than that in 2005, which was considered as the worst since ousted Taliban in 2001. The Taliban has regrouped and its attacks have increased, and there are even expanding their influence in southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan bordering Pakistan while the Afghan central government is unable to significantly curtail their actions.5

4. Research question and hypothesis

This section posits four research questions as follows:

- Who are the Taliban?
- What is its purpose?
- What is the main cause of this conflict between the central government and the Taliban?
- What are the other reasons of this conflict?

The hypothesis, or framework used to address these questions is that the tribal system prevalent in Afghanistan has a negative influence on the conflict insofar as it makes it difficult to create a centralized authority in Kabul and also makes it difficult to defeat the Taliban. Traditionally, Afghanistan consisted of several tribes and tribal interests have become an obstacle to central

5 "Afghanistan survey" by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
authority. Therefore, the remainder of this paper will explore the relations between the influence of the tribal system and the causes of Afghan conflict in greater detail.

B. The conflict parties and issues

Traditional Afghan society is isolated and scattered due to geographical reasons (e.g. rugged mountains and desert). Each tribe has strong independent tendencies and strictly maintain their traditions and conventions. They emphasize individualism which is centered on family and tribe not for one’s self instead collectivism. This tendency generally appears in Arab society, it is natural thing in Afghanistan which has 99% Muslim of whole population.

1. Conflict parties: central government versus the Taliban

- Central Government

In June 2002, the Afghan transitional government was established in a meeting of the Loga Jirga, and hamid Karzai was elected as president. President Karzai appointed 4 vice-presidents and 26 cabinet members to start his transitional administrative. The cabinet was made up using a ratio to accommodate each tribe. This transitional government enacted a new constitution and elections, and continued until a regular government was initiated. They chose Pashto and Dari as the national languages.\(^6\)

President Hamid Karzai is a Pashtun from Kandahar. Pashtuns form the largest tribe in Afghanistan, and is estimated to form 42% of the populations. Kandahar in the south is a strategic city and important to the Pastun-majority Taliban. To control all the tribes, he appointed General Masood’s brother as first vice-president. General Masood was a Tajik, former leader of the Northern Alliance and considered a national hero. Indeed, the second vice-president, Khalili was appointed from the

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\(^6\)『Afghanistan survey』by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
Hazara tribe.\(^7\)

According to the constitution, the cabinet should consist of a third of members of the national assembly, a third appointed by the president, and a further third should come from district councils. As well, there is a quota system for women, where 27% of cabinet seats are assigned to them. However, three female politicians gained considerable support from the people themselves without this quota system. This may be due to the fact that the people have been disillusioned with the reality of Afghan society and civil wars, and expect to female politicians who have a clean image and no relations with armed terrorist groups to be a driving force for social change.\(^8\)

- **Taliban**

The Taliban is an Islamist militia group established in 1994. They held power from September 1996 and ruled large parts of Afghanistan including the capital Kabul for 5 years. However, after the events of September 11 and the US declaration of ‘the war against terrorism’ the Taliban was overthrown after a brief war with the ISAF.\(^9\)

The Taliban have been illustrated as both anti-nationalist and Pashtun nationalist, and most Taliban leaders are adherents of the tenets of Islamic fundamentalism. The Taliban's exceedingly strict and anti-modern ideology has been described as an "innovative form of sharia that mixed with Pashtun tribal codes,” or Pashtunwali, with radical Deobandi interpretations of Islam. Also contributing to the mix is the jihadism and pan-Islamism of Osama bin Laden. Their ideology originated from the Islamism of the anti-Soviet mujahideen rulers, traditionalists, or radical Islamists inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood. The Taliban movement is mostly made up of members belonging to the Pashtun tribe and they follow the social and cultural custom of Pashtunwali. The chief leader of the Taliban movement is Mullah Mohammed Omar. The Taliban enforced one of the strictest interpretations of

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\(^7\)『Afghanistan survey』 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007

\(^8\)『Afghanistan survey』 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007

\(^9\)『The Taliban and Afghanistan』, August 2007, Danaka Sakai
Sharia law ever seen in the Muslim world. Many Muslim scholars criticized their Islam fundamentalism, especially their treatment of women. Under the Taliban, women were forced to wear the burqa in public, education was only allowed till the age of 8, and even then the only permitted education was learning the Qur’an. As women were barred from seeing male doctors despite serious illnesses, they often went untreated. The Taliban allies include the sections of the Pakistani army as well as Arab and Central Asian militants. They have received helpful training, supplies, and arms from sections of the Pakistani government and Al-Qaeda. The close relationship between Taliban and Al-Qaeda is well known and documented.  

The Taliban controls the some areas in Afghanistan and some parts of northwest Pakistan. US officials contend that one of their headquarters is in or near Quetta, Pakistan. The Taliban engages in terrorism against both Afghanistan civilians and government. They were responsible for 76% of the civilian casualties in Afghanistan in 2009, according to a report by the United Nations. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIGRC) considers Taliban terrorism against Afghan civilian to be a war crime. Some religious leaders opine that these sorts of attacks are in opposition to Islamic ethics and values. According to the New York Times, the Taliban killed civilians more than twice as frequently as they kill Afghan general forces or ISAF forces.

Their first main military activity occurred in 1994, when they marched northward from Maiwand and captured Kandahar and the surrounding provinces, losing only a few men. In the same year, the Taliban took control of 12 out of 34 provinces. This heavily armed group often captured territory without resistance. . Ahmad Shah Massoud, leader of forces of the Islamic State's Secretary of Defense and called "The Afghan who won the cold war" by The Wall Street Journal suggested to the Taliban that it join the political process of Afghanistan, namely in democratic elections. He wanted the Taliban to be an ally for a future Afghan government but they rejected his overtures. The Taliban's early victories of 1994 produced many casualties but brought forth stronger military support from

10 'The Taliban and Afghanistan', August 2007, Danaka Sakai
Pakistan.

Indeed, the continued support from tribe and other groups in Pakistan, and the drug trade also played an important part in Taliban’s taking of power in 1996. As the Taliban's power grew, almost all decisions were made by Mullah Omar without consulting the jirga and other parties. Under the Taliban regime, all cultural and recreational activities, such as television, movies, singing, dancing, computers, music so on, were forbidden. The imposition on women was harsher, and they were banned from employment, education, sports and so forth. After being overthrown by the ISAF in 2004, the Taliban insurgents remained active in northern Afghanistan.11

2. Conflict issues: struggle for hegemony within tribal conflicts and asymmetric power among tribes

-Pashtuns versus Non-Pashtuns

The ethnic factor is the most significant cause of discord in Afghanistan. The conflict between the central government and the Taliban originates from this tribal system. The Afghan central government tries to integrate all tribes into a state but this is not an easy process because this tribal system is deeply rooted. Each tribe have their own interests and attitudes toward political issues. Within this background, the Pashtuns still support the Taliban and its activities are expanding based on this tribe’s countenance. Therefore, the ethnic conflict issue in Afghanistan has an important meaning. The Afghan ethnic conflict can roughly be described as Pashtuns versus non-Pashtuns. In the 18th century, Ahmad Shaga built a pashtun-oriented Afghan dynasty but non-Pashtunes comprising mainly of Hazaras, Tadjiks and Uzbeks rose up against this dynasty claiming that they were deprived of their rights. Non-Pashtuns objected using the word ‘Afghan,’ which is synonymous with Pashtuns. Nationally, this ethnical sense of alienation was to be a huge barrier to building a state in Afghanistan. Furthermore, ethnic conflicts diminished social links by discouraging intermarriage social-economy interactions. Moreover, there also exists internecine tribal conflict. The

11 ‘The Taliban and Afghanistan’, August 2007, Danaka Sakai
representative example are those between the Ghilzai and Durrani, which are the most competitive and strongest rivals within the Pashtun tribe.\textsuperscript{12}

The Pashtun is not only the predominant tribe of Afghanistan but has also ruled significant tranches of Afghan territory for about 200 years. Pashtun culture traditionally emphasizes bravery, energy and belligerence. They are also extremely protective of their own culture and claim to be the ‘pure blood of Afghan’. There are an estimated 13 million Pashtuns in Afghanistan. Many Pashtuns are also found in the neighbouring Pakistani territories, and like their Afghani brethren, are known for supporting the Taliban. Pashtuns generally maintain an extended family system, run a patriarchal society and descent is more important than ideological factor, therefore, loyalty, cooperation, and personal volunteering are valued highly. In Pashtun society, individuals should strictly follow the Pashtunwali, which is a sort of customary law. The main points of Pashtunwali are Badal (revenge), Melmastia (hospitality) and Nanawati (protection). Among them, Badal is the most essential duty and family revenge can be expanded to not only village but also tribal concerns. The only form of governance in Pashtun society is the Jirga. It is meeting for tribal chiefs and has long been instituted as customary law. Important decisions such as matters of war or peace are discussed here.\textsuperscript{13}

There has long been conflict between central powers which want to build a nation and provincial powers which prefer to preserve tribal society. All Afghan tribes are opposed to the powers that try to build a central government by disbanding the tribal system. Due to this, attempts to centralize powers have failed. In fact, tribes within the system have even seized central power. The authority of central power run in the polar opposite with that of the strength of the tribal system. When a strong leader appears, ethnic conflict is reduced, comparatively speaking, but when central authority weakens, tribal revolts begin anew.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Afghanistan survey} by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Afghanistan survey} by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Afghanistan survey} by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
3. Different perceptions of the causes and nature of the conflict among the conflict parties

As previously mentioned, the tribal factor is the major cause of Afghan conflicts. Broadening this, the general causes of ethnic conflict are; ethnic security dilemma, status concerns, hegemonic ambitions, and the aspirations of elites or their competition. The ethnic security concern occurs under the absence of, or weak government. If one group tries to provide security for itself, other groups naturally begin arming to protect themselves from perceived threats by other groups. This is analogous to anarchy from a realist perspective. The ethnic status also has a huge influence on strife. A realized or perceived unbalanced and unfair social status between groups within the same society (horizontal inequality) creates divisions and disunity, possibly leading to conflict. Hegemonic ambitions are also often a motivation of ethnic conflict. A group with such ambitions will want to extend their sovereignty over others and rule over them. They believe that have a legitimacy to govern other groups and attempt to create a national identity mirroring their own identity. In many cases, this leads to opposition from other minor groups. The aspiration of elites is focused on individual leaders; leaders who often use ethnic concerns to gain power.\(^{15}\) In Afghan conflicts, both status concerns and hegemonic ambitions are combined, complicating matters further. Sovereignty and hegemony concerns are also quite sensitive issues among Afghan tribes, and because of it, Afghan central government is very weak, which favors the Taliban.

To the Afghan central government, tribal differences and Islamic fundamentalism are two significant concerns. These two factors are closely related to each other as the Taliban gets its support from a specific tribe, the Pashtuns. The Afghan central government is supported by the international community, particularly by the USA and the Taliban contends that this government follows Western precepts rather than Islamic jurisprudence. The Taliban’s purpose is to establish a pure Islamic republic based on Islam fundamentalism. However, when they did usurp power in 1996, they severely persecuted the Hazara tribe and civilians casualties rapidly increased, even though the Hazaras are

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\(^{15}\) “Causes of Ethnic Conflict”, Daniel L. Byman
fellow Muslims, as are practically all Afghans. This current confrontation between the central government and the Taliban is a microcosm of the antagonism between the West and Islamic fundamentalism or extremism that is usually framed at the global level.

4. The other causes of the Afghan conflict

A conflict doesn’t usually occur due to only one factor. Causes of conflicts are unique and we must always consider both political and cultural contexts. Poverty, international and internal political factors, natural resources, drugs and arms trade and security are pointed out as common causes of conflicts. Suganami (1996: 62) classified three options that are considered essential for conflict onset; the capability of human beings to kill off their species, the sufficient predominance of the belief among societies that armed leaning circumstances are possible to against another, and the lack of an effective anti-war device within the international system. The one thing he ignored was the existence of weapons.16

In the Afghan case, the causes of conflict include the opium trade, Pakistan’s support of the Taliban, poverty, Islam fundamentalism, and relationships with armed terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda. These complicated factors mixed with the ethnic issue makes it difficult to find a solution. In particular, the Taliban has learnt to maximize its revenue stream from the Afghan poppy crop and are using the opium industry to fuel its revival.17 Many Afghans are addicted to opium and falling into poverty. According to Choi Chang Mo, Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the KonKuk University of Korea, there are, to put it bluntly, only two jobs in Afghanistan, refugees or mercenaries. The average annual income of Afghans range between $400 to $500 in reality (official statistics suggest a higher figure of $800), meaning that the average Afghani lives on little more than $1 a day. The official salary of the average Afghani police officer is $1 a day while the Taliban pays $5 a day. To the average Afghani struggling to eat three meals a day, choosing between the Taliban

16 Contemporary Conflict resolution, 2005, Oliver Ramsbotham & Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall
17 WT Editorial from Saegaeilbo
or the government is an issue of subsistence survival, and is not a political or ideological issue. It can help to explain how families can have members that belong to both the police and the Taliban. Choi asserts that the people are standing on the edge of a precipice in desperate Afghanistan. His view posits a credible explanation of how civilians participate in terrorism and cooperate with armed groups. The Al-Qaeda connection also cannot be ignored with respect to the Taliban, especially given the marriage of one of bin Laden's sons and Omar's daughter. Given the importance of marriage in both tribal Afghani and Arab societies, this marriage should weld together even stronger the connection between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

C. The context: global, regional and state-level factors

1. At the state level: attempt by the central government to manage the Taliban and ethnic conflicts

Whilst the afghan government would prefer a non-violent end to the conflict, this has not proved possible. Since Afghan President’s Karzai appointment in 2002, the Afghan central government has struggled to defeat the remaining insurgents. The central government has incrementally increased the capacity of the Afghan National Army (ANA), which stood at 134,000 troops in July 2010. The current goal is to have 171,600 by October 2011. The ANA also coordinates with the ISAF. This organization has established a new Special Operation Forces. The newly established Afghan Special Operations Command (ANASOC) deployed a division headquarters at Camp Moorehead in the Wardak region. It will command two different types of units, the existing ANA Commandos and a newly formed unit, the ANA Special Forces (ANASF). The two units have diverse programs to improve and reinforce the Afghan national forces such as team training, leadership training, and literacy training. The head of the Afghan army recognizes the importance of literacy and indicated that about 86% of ANA recruits are uneducated. This is a significant barrier in the progress of constituting a competent army. Naturally, an illiterate soldier cannot read a map, a training manual, or the serial number of his rifle. Also serious is that specialized fields cannot be taught to an illiterate person, such as medicine, logistics, and communications. They also have a plan to establish twelve

"Branch Schools" to achieve self-sufficiency in the fields of Artillery, Human Resources, Signals, Infantry, Engineering, Legal, Military Police, Logistics, Religious and Cultural affairs, Intelligence, Finance.  

Thus, the Afghan central government has concentrated more on military intervention against the Taliban for security instead of negotiating or entering peace talks. The reconstruction of economic and infrastructure are executed largely by international aid as a next stage after military intervention stabilizes the security situation on the ground.

2. At the regional level: Support of Pakistan and Iran
Pakistan and Afghanistan have a tense relationship. After the Taliban got power, there was some opposition in Pakistan regarding recognizing the Taliban government because of its attack on human rights and overly strict interpretation of Islam. Nevertheless, the Pakistani government recognized the Taliban regime and kept friendly relations with them. However, post September 11, Pakistan closed its border with Afghanistan and supported the war against the Taliban waged by the USA. The Karzai regime remains suspicious of Pakistani intentions, and the bilateral relationship is delicate due to these historical factors. In spite of that, both Afghanistan and Pakistan have recognized that they have to collaborate to achieve the tactical national objectives, and are trying to engage in all fields including politics, economy, and infrastructure construction. Afghanistan needs Pakistan’s cooperation to destroy the Taliban hiding in border areas, and increasing economic activities such as trade and transport given the fact that Afghanistan is landlocked. Pakistan also needs to enhance trade with central Asia through Afghanistan. In addition, many Afghan refugees are in Peshawar and Quetta, and the Pakistani government wants to increase its influence in Afghanistan.

On 27 September 2006, at the USA-Pakistan-Afghanistan summit, the three countries agreed on

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20 “Afghanistan survey” by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
holding a joint regional tribal Jirga to ease tensions but the discord between Afghanistan and Pakistan regarding the Taliban has continued. The Afghan central government claims that Pakistan is secretly supporting the Taliban. However, Pakistan refutes this and points to the deployment of its army in the border region at the cost of hundreds of dead soldiers. Pakistan also notes that the Afghan government has, as yet, failed to furnish any evidence to support its assertion.  21

Iran, on the other hand, has historically been an enemy of the Taliban. In early August 1998, after attacking the city of Mazar, Taliban forces killed several thousand civilians, 10 Iranian diplomats and intelligence officers in the Iranian consulate. Alleged radio intercepts indicate Mullah Omar personally approved the killings. The relationship Afghanistan and Iran was exacerbated, Iran supported armed Shia Muslim groups financially and militarily during under Soviet Union’s ruling, civil wars, and Taliban regime to build Islam revolution as Iranian style. 22

3. At the global level: the will and support of the USA and international forces

The relationship between Afghanistan and the USA is focused on aid for Afghan economic construction and development through financial and technical support from the establishment of diplomatic relation between Afghanistan and USA in 1934 to the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1979. The USA offered $500 million dollars between 1950-1979, and in 1962 dispatched the Peace Corps for 17 years. During Soviet occupation, the USA supported the Afghan resistance as a bulwark against Communist expansion. Moreover, it persistently provided financial support to not only Afghan civilians but also refugees in Pakistan. In total, the USA offered $5 billion of financial and military aid to rebels during Soviet occupation. American interest in Afghanistan dissipated significantly during their period of civil wars and the establishment of the Taliban regime. However, when the ‘war against terrorism’ began, the USA overthrew the Taliban regime. Approximately 18,000 US soldiers are based in Afghanistan to destroy Taliban and Al-Qaeda forces in southern

21 ‹Afghanistan survey› by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
22 ‹Afghanistan survey› by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
and eastern areas bordering Pakistan. With it, the USA also provides assistance for Afghan’s political stability, economic reconstruction, government management, and has more influence on the Afghan government compared to any other country. It has provided $900 million every year since 2002, besides an additional pledge to provide $2.2 billion in 2004 at the Berlin conference. Also at the London international conference in 2006, The USA newly promised $1.1 billion dollars. The Afghan government recognizes that the USA’s support and cooperation is necessary for peace and stability and so has as a strategic objective reinforced its diplomatic relations with the USA.\textsuperscript{23}

The ISAF are also allied forces. Established in December 2001 by the UN Security Council resolution 1386, it draws its ranks from NATO member-states of 37, 21000 soldiers were dispatched to Afghanistan in 2006. The jurisdiction areas of ISAF were expanded to include the entire country in the same year.\textsuperscript{24} Other assistance forces include the UN and International NGOs. Generally, these organizations are charged with humanitarian operations and multinational assistances. These UN’s affiliated organizations and INGOs have played a pivotal role in building Afghan stability with military involvement.

\textbf{D. Current circumstances}

US President Obama has repeatedly stated that American troops in Afghanistan will begin withdrawing in July 2011. Following it, both Karzai and Obama predicted, in their meeting at the White House that there will be tensions in a problematical and complex environment following the drawing –down of troops. In particular, Obama warned, “there's going to be some hard fighting over the next few months, Taliban and other extremist forces are tough”. However, he also emphasized “long-term partnership” and continually said "our job is to be a good friend and to be frank with President Karzai."\textsuperscript{25} In reality, international military casualties continue unabated. For example,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} "Afghanistan survey\textsubscript{J}" by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
\item \textsuperscript{24} "Afghanistan survey\textsubscript{J}" by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of South Korea, January 2007
\item \textsuperscript{25} "Obama: U.S. can start withdrawing troops from Afghanistan in July 2011", AFGHANISTAN, CNN Politics / May 12, 2010 by the CNN Wire Staff
\end{itemize}
the total number of UK military deaths since 2001 has reached 370.\textsuperscript{26} Moreover, concerns of growing attacks by parts of local security forces against Western forces are increasing among commanders of international troops in Afghanistan. Insurgents have infiltrated the ANA and police and attacks continue. As well, continuing civilian casualties caused by international troops are generating widespread anger in Afghanistan. For example, recently 14 civilians were killed by an airstrike in the southern province of Helmand. It seems that these incidents were one of the causes of Afghan soldiers or policemen turning their weapons against Western troops.\textsuperscript{27} Likewise, the still unstable and complex situation is ongoing and is not expected to improve after the USA forces withdraw from Afghanistan.

However, attempts to talk and make peace with the Taliban have begun and are continuing. Representatives of Haqqani, who are Taliban fighters in Khost, east Afghanistan visited Kabul to talk. Indeed, officers from the Afghan government have shown their willingness to accept and reintegrate insurgents into Afghan society if they agree to lay down their weapons and re-enter civilian society. However, these matters are quite controversial in Afghan society. Although talks are significantly advanced and supported by the UN and Western countries, many Afghans are still concerned. Monisa, a 24-year-old female NGO worker in Kabul said, "If there is a dealing with the Taliban and people like him (Qalamuddin) come back to power it will all go back to being like before and we will lose all our freedoms."\textsuperscript{28} It seems that there needs to be a more serious discussions about peace talks with the Taliban within Afghan society.

E. Other perspectives

One Korean specialist in Middle Eastern studies questions American and other countries’

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} “Royal Marine shot dead in Afghanistan”, guardian.co.uk, Sunday 5 June 2011 14.53 BST
\item \textsuperscript{27} “Taliban behind surge in attacks on western troops and advisers”, Jason Burke in Kabul, guardian.co.uk, Tuesday 31 May 2011 20.35 BST
\item \textsuperscript{28} “Making peace with the Taliban? UN pressed to lift Afghan sanctions”, Jason Burke in Kabul, guardian.co.uk, Thursday 2 June 2011 20.24 BST
\end{itemize}
motivations and interests in Afghanistan. Part of the answer is that Afghanistan is a pathway to the plentiful resources produced by neighboring countries. The US wants to place Afghanistan under its sphere of influence, especially with respect to energy security so as to move oil and gas directly, bypassing both Russia and China. UNOCAL, a major American oil company plans to build pipes through Afghanistan. Current President Karzai was once exiled to the USA and worked at this company as an adviser when the Taliban were in power. The Afghan central government is well known for corruption and irregular behavior. The Taliban takes advantage of this and insists that such matters can be dealt with by returning to a pure Islam republic.

Some scholars’ attitude toward Taliban is very sympathetic. They see those who join the Taliban as being poor and who see the Taliban as a vehicle for economic survival. They continually say that the ‘Taliban are poor people’. Their claiming is partially correct but they should not overlook and ignore the Taliban regime’s war crimes and involvement with terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda. Their atrocities, harsh policies, and crimes against civilians must be dealt with, peace talking should be executive latter of it. Besides, the confluence of Islam fundamentalists and extremism plays a central role in equating Islam with terrorism. The Taliban is using Islamic ideology to achieve their political goals. The remained Taliban forces want to hold a power again.

However, the Taliban has shown some interest in peace talks with the central government and international forces. According to the Guardian, Britain and America are pressing for UN sanctions against 18 former senior members of the Taliban to be lifted. It says also this long war will come to end with a political arrangement that gives the Taliban some role in government. It seems positive but the newspaper maintains a skeptical perspective on peace talks with the Taliban in general.

29 http://www.nanum.com/site/16852, in lecture by Choi, Chang Mo, October 2007
30 “Talking to the Taliban: Less than meets the eye”, Editorial / The Guardian, Friday 3 June 2011
A basic element and initial step in the negotiation process is understanding what the opponent wants. Addressing this matter then follows. So, what does the Taliban want? The key points are intervention, conciliation, compromise, and whether they can make it or not. Will peace talk between central government and Taliban be accomplished? However, many experts have skeptical and cynical views about it, as it mentioned above, and I have a same idea with them. Return to the column of the Guardian, it expressed as one sentence compressively, “If real negotiations took place, they would allow Barack Obama and David Cameron to claim that a peace process exists”.  

F. Conclusion

Present-day Afghanistan looks like a land full of pain and ruins but it was once a area of great civilization and culture. Afghanistan was a center of the Silk Road, amelting pot of Eastern and Western cultures. However, just as it is an intersection for peaceful co-existence, it is also a battleground for many competing interests due to its strategic location. Afghanistan has continually confronted invasions due to its geography, even now they are surrounded by the nuclear powers that are Russia, China, India, Iran (potentially), and Pakistan.  

The Afghan conflict is constituted of complicated factors but the most significant is ethnic/tribal. The tribal system stymies attempts by the central government to integrate the nation. Thise ethnic conflict generates more separation and weakens the central government. Besides, this factor (of who takes power) is a huge concern and sensitive issue among Afghan tribes. The major tribe, the Pashtuns supports the Taliban and is one of the main reasons that it still remains a potent force today. However, dealing with ethnic concerns is not an easy task. Afghan ethnic differences arose a long time in the past and are deeply rooted in religion and cultural background. They create their own societies, life-styles and political and social matters.

31 “Talking to the Taliban: Less than meets the eye”, Editorial / The Guardian, Friday 3 June 2011
32 http://www.nanum.com/site/16852, in lecture by Choi, Chang Mo, October 2007
To halt conflict, political approaches such as negotiation are useful. Therefore, peace talks with the Taliban is quite essential. However, first the negotiating must be based on understanding what the opponent wants. Without this understanding, negotiations will prove fruitless. This requires realizing the fundamental cause of conflict. Generally these causes are due to social and cultural structures and Afghanistan is not an exception. Without an examination of social and cultural structures, political approaches will fail, or at least be less effective than decision maker’s expectations.