

Ahmed Rashid, of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and the *Independent* of London, criticized Pakistan's Afghan "Pushtun-driven" policy, and ridiculed the Taliban as "without any ideological center, at a zero level of Islamic intellectual tradition, lacking any concept of a state or an economy, and victorious only through money, fear, and fragile alliances." He said the only trade routes the Taliban had opened up, were routes from the "trucker/trader" economy, of truckers going from Pakistan through Taliban-held territory, into seven other states, illegally. He also confirmed that drug cultivation and trafficking are flourishing under Taliban control. Finally, he asserted that Afghanistan has already been de facto partitioned as a result, with many governments having opened up consulates in Taliban-controlled Herat, and with the UN's having established zonal offices.

The most effective discrediting of Taliban came from the horse's mouth. As if by chance, a member of Taliban, Abdul Wahab, showed up at the seminar, and was invited to answer questions. When asked how Taliban could pretend to be a unifying force, when it has no idea of how to organize a state, and knows nothing about economy except drug running; and how it could justify its offensive, knowing that this is breaking up the state and destabilizing all the CAR, he said that Afghanistan was still at war, and that it had to be "settled" first; once that had been done, Taliban would "call in the experts" to lay out policy. He said, repeating a line presented by others, that Taliban was "transitional" and would be replaced by something else, unidentified.

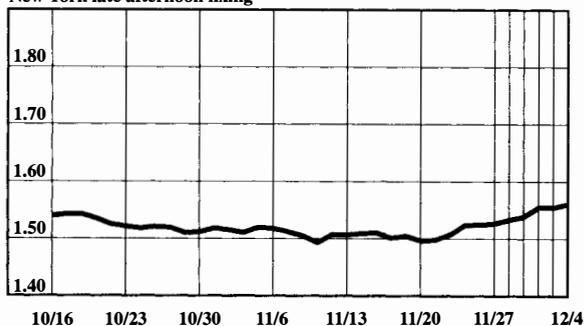
Even Lt. Gen. Kamal Matinuddin (ret.) of Pakistan, who spoke positively on "The Taliban Phenomenon in Afghanistan: Genesis, Prospects and Impact on the Region," found it necessary to list the "pros" and "cons" to Pakistan's supporting or not supporting Taliban. Among the "pros" was that "they, along with Abdul Rashid Dostum, presently control the western route to Central Asia, which Pakistan is desperately trying to open"; that they are ethnically Pushtun; that they are strongest on the border with Pakistan; and, that they control 20 of the 32 provinces, and thus are "the largest claimant to the throne" there. In his "cons," he mentioned shifting alliances within Afghanistan, tensions created in Pakistan-Iran relations, and the danger that the Taliban extremism could spill over into Pakistan with destabilizing effects. He concluded, "It will be wise for Pakistan to try and establish normal relations with all major Afghan factions and work along with the United Nations for a broad-based government in Afghanistan. Putting all eggs in one basket has not been a sound policy."

A sound policy for Pakistan would be to concentrate its efforts on bringing into being the southern route of the Eurasian land-bridge, through Kunming, Mytkyina, New Delhi, Lahore, Sukkur, and thence through Iran to Europe. Authoritative representatives of Pakistan's and India's military establishment, have spoken out in favor of building this route, which would open up the promise of genuine infrastructure and economic development.

Currency Rates

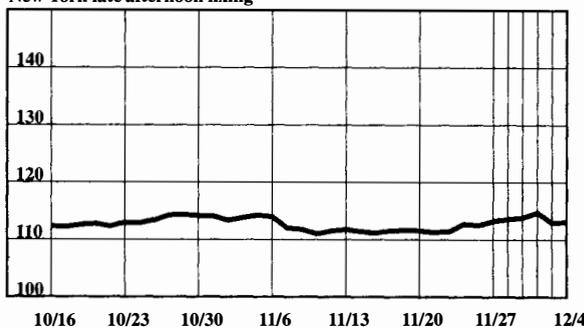
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



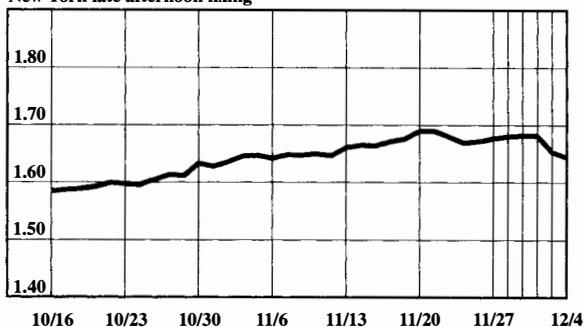
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

