Combating Terrorism through Social Capital Building in Fata, Pakistan

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Abstract

Viability of Social capital is not only omniscient in success of development models, its absence/erosion blatantly effectsthe smooth running of society too especially in developing countries. Unfortunately, public institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general and Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) in particular are deficient in its functioning where the affairs of governance are carried on through few proxies i.e.,elites. This absence of social networks segregated local communities in the shape of mere conglomerations and the vast gaps are filled by external elements later on turned into terrorists.Consequently, the exodus elements/terrorists never allowed government to synergize institutions and local social groups through hitting functional institutions like police and army; try to counter every effort in the shape of Local Peace Committees (LPCs) to rebuild social capital.This paper argues that governance system in FATA- in practice, not on paper- is responsible for loosening horizontal intra/inter communities links and vertical connections of individuals with organizations/ state's institutions.

Key words:

Social capital, synergy view, institutions, terrorism.

Introduction

The term 'terrorism' has been widely used globally in the last couple of decades with general reference to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Simultaneously,*Pakhtun* culture and religion (Islam) are commonly criticized for nourishing such sentiments deemed to provoke terrorism. It is a fact that both these countries share the same culture and religion, and it is reported that culprits of 9/11 were trained in Afghanistan, yet the controversy of violent elements present in *Pakhtun* culture and Islam is still to be continued. How far

Pakhtun culture is responsible for promoting violent sentiments is discussed by many scholars (Shakoor, 2013; Gul, 2009; Taj, 2009; Abbas, 2005 and Rashaid, 2008) and all of them agree on a single point that terrorism has never been a dormant element of *Pakhtun's* philosophy of life.

A question arises that if terrorism is not inherent in *Pakhtun* culture than why terrorists succeeded in building safe havens for themselves in *Pakhtun's* belts of Pakistan under the nose of existing power structure? The answer may lie in the the centuries old system of governance in this area which might have ushered a chance of gaining ground for terrorists.Hence, this paper intends to investigate the emergence of terrorism and analyze its causes in order to combat it with viable strategy in FATA, Pakistan.

It is the foremost responsibility of a state to apprehend a strategic plan of development and provide basic facilities to all of its citizens. Yet, service provision to the whole population of a country has not been an easy task for states with low GDP and the situation aggravates further where institutions are affected by rampant corruption. Cities, among such areas, still succeed in getting some attention for procuring basic facilities but the rural areas looks a symbol of hopelessness. The dilemma becomes three fold when an area is indirectly governed by state actors like Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) in Pakistan. These areas have their own setup where a government's representatives manage all affairs through public agents in the shape of *maliks*[1] and literally, these areas are outside the jurisdiction of law enforcing agencies.This system of governance failed to envisage the intricacies of modern life and little attention was given to promote a modern sustainable model of development and ignored the importance of positive networks between individuals and state institutions.

Social relations, once considered a barrier to development (UN, 1945), has recaptured the attention of development practitioners and policy makers. World Bank development experts acknowledged the importance of social capital building for sustainable development especially in developing countries. Social capital is a multi-disciplinary concept and hence lacks a

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[1] Malik is the chief of a tribe in FATA who is responsible of settling all issues with other tribes and state's institutions.

common definition. However, here it is understood in the words of Woolcock and Narayan(2000), "Social capital refers to the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively".The scholars applied the concept in four major views delineating the relationship between social networking and sustainable economic development.

The Communitarian View

Proponents of communitarian view turn to local level organizations like associations, clubs and civic groups as a panacea to the prevalent disorder and disharmony created by rampant corruption, individualism and declining social norms caused by 'Great Disruption' since 1960 (Fukuyama, 1999). They consider Communities as homogenous bodies delivering to all its members. This view is criticized for ignoring negative aspects of social capital of certain networks like gangs and drug cartels etc. Rubio (1997) calls this type a 'perverse' social capital.

The Network View

Granovetter (1973), a pioneer of network view, circumscribed in his famous research article 'strength of the weak ties' both positive and negative aspects of strong 'intra' community ties. Horizontal bonding in a community helps its members in taking initiatives 'to get by' but, on the other hand, hinders embarking enterprises. So, a vertical 'inter' communities or 'bridging' is necessary for 'getting ahead'.

The Institutional View

The institutional view treats social capital as a dependent variable contrary to communitarian and network view. The later considers civic organizations of a community producing 'generalized trust' for the uplift of that community at micro level; whereas institutional view looks for formal institutions and state to provide conducive environment for development at macro level. These formal institutions are responsible to construe 'generalized trust' in communities and they, in turn, will benefit from government social capital. This is why corruption, frustrating bureaucratic delays, ethnic conflicts, constrained civil liberties and uncertainties to guard basic rights, obliterate efforts to materialize civic social capital and, hence, hinders sustainable development.

The Synergy View

This is a combination of network and institutional views on social capital. State efforts are to be complemented by community organizations. Supportive ties between private citizens and institutions in the concerned community enhance many folds the development process. Public officials from the targeted area are responsible for efficiency to civic groups, on the one hand, and to keep institutional goals intact, on the other. Evans (1992,1995,1996) called it 'complementarity' and 'embeddedness'. In developing countries, institutional weakness may be addressed by civic organization for retaliation.

Theoretical Model

Synergy view of social capital is selected as a theoretical model for the current study. Michael Woolcock (2000) advocated synergy model of social capital building for sustainable development in areas where institutions are pole apart from local communities and the communities have little access to organizations and power structure. Institutional performance coupled with social networks of a locality enhances the chances of sustainability in the development process. In Pakistan in general and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in particular, the institutions exist but its impact of delivering services is negligible. The absence of firm institutions provided lope holes for exodus elements to follow their selfish motives. These elements once established, never allowed governmental/non-governmental organizations for delivering services and targeted every effort of social capital building in the shape of local Peace Committees (LPCs).

Loosening of Synergy between Community and Institutions

It is a fact that Pakistan as a whole had been the target of insurgency and terrorism in general and FATA and KP in particular especially after 9/11. KP is linked to Afghanistan through FATA encircled by Pakhtun culture. Institutional performance of the state in FATA can be judged by the fact that the post of Assistant Political Agent (APA) fascinates many people and usually it requires strong ties with high ups or involve money. Once selected for the post, APA handles all the affairs of his area through *'Maliks'* or local elites entailing to divide the bounty among themselves. Such type of governance divides the common people and government's organizations poles apart.

The local *Pashtun* culture places these elites in respectable and controlling position. They perform a bridging role with other communities and state's institutions in maintaining peace, conflict resolution and provision for development projects (See fig. 1). The status of the *Maliks* is maintained through the codes of local culture i.e., *Pashtunwali*[2]. Although the system succeeded in catering peace and nourishing 'bonding' social capital in the shape of homogenous groups based upon strong intra group ties of kinship(see Granovettor, 1976; Woolcock and Narayan, 2000 and Lin,2005; for detail on 'bonding' and bridging social capital); yet it ignored the importance of 'weak ties' between institutions, organization and masses, necessary for developing prosperity.
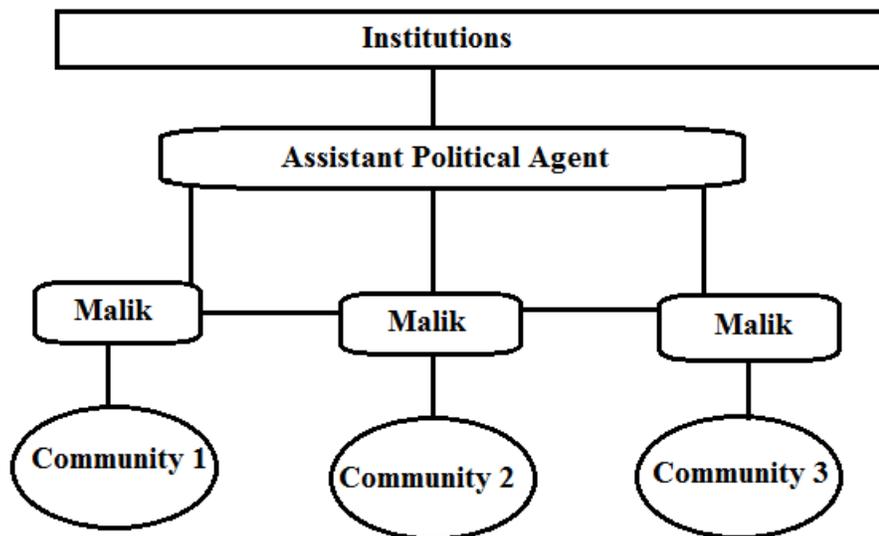

Fig 1

The absence of direct links between individuals and government's organization not only affected the poor performance of such organizations but also kept the people poorer. Because, the dysfunctional institutions gave little heed to development projects and only concentrated upon keeping the *maliks* happy.

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[2]*Pushtunwali* is the informal cultural code of life in *Pakhtun* areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, FATA, and Afghanistan.

As a result, the loose connection between state and masses ultimately invited the unwanted elements to capture the seen.

Hence, this system of governance crippled at the hands of terrorists. There are many explanations as to how the terrorists emerged in FATA. It is generally believed that terrorists (Taliban) appeared in the garb of religious leaders. However, others factors like financial benefits upon affiliation with the group (Rashaid, 2008; Gul, 2009), joining terrorists in search of identity (Crenshaw, 1981) and vengeance (Shakoor, 2013). Firstly, it is believed that *Talibans* paid handsome amount to recruits and those who extended support in their plans. It is not illogical to join terrorist group for the sake of money because most of the communities in FATA are characterized by poverty, unemployment, production/trafficking of drugs and manufacturing/free movement of weapons. Secondly, terrorist groups fascinated the youths in the absence of healthy pursuits for them in the areas and they joined it for utilizing their potentials. These youths trained in the name of promoting the religious cause vitalized further their pursuit.Many suicide bombers countered are reported to maintain that they were told by their leaders to target foreigners/infidels existing in national forces. Thirdly, Shakoor (2013) maintains that relatives of those people killed in drone attacks turned them to join *Talibans*[3] for taking vengeance by attacking state's institutions. Although, the scholar gives a few of examples to support his argument, yet it is not the whole truth.

Vengeance is a trait of *Pauhtuns*' culture and they always wait for a suitable time and chance to attack their enemies. At lower level of stratification in tribal areas, the depressed, weak and poor people found a chance in the shape of *Talibans* to take revenge from their old local enemies. In a visit to Swat, I personally heard many stories where such elements, i.e., the poor had joined the terrorist groups for recapturing their seized properties and killing their well off enemies. This was not possible for them in the existing system of governance and hence, they resorted to join militant groups for balancing their old record.

However, these loopholes prevailing in tribal communities gave an easy access and opportunity for exodus elements to manipulate it for their vested interest.

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[3]*Talibans*is an Islamic fundamentalist political movement in Afghanistanwhich later on permeated to adjacent areas of Pakistan.

The terrorists once established, concentrated on curtailing the network and institutional social capital of the locality. First, the vertical social networks between communities and state's institutions were paralyzed by hitting the *maliks* and heads of Local Peace Committees (LPCs). It is pertinent to note that government established LPCs in almost every area stricken with violence. The *masharans*-elites, of the tribes were appointed the heads of the committees with explicit aim of supporting government's efforts in combating terrorism through social capital building. The committees embarked upon utilizing institutional social capital of state's agencies by forging horizontal networks among communities and vertical networks between state institutions and communities. Such efforts have been successful in maintaining peace in few areas (Boege, 2007; Neyroud and Bakley, 2001; Adnan and Paklaya, 2006) and in eradicating violence (Ahmad, 2013).

Nonetheless, the terrorists once established, never allowed government's institutions to capitalize their efforts in mainstreaming the communities. Mostly, the security agencies had been the thorough targets of the terrorists and thousands of officials/officers are shot dead. The security forces are the only functional institution capable of delivering in the remote areas of the FATA. Hence, the terrorists focused upon curtailing energies of the forces and thus, minimize the impact of institutional social capital of the state in the areas. Furthermore, *Talibans* kidnapped and most of the time killed officials/officers of government's departments/international organizations in order to create atmosphere of distrust between state and the masses.

Similarly, the symbols of bridging links between communities and state, i.e.,*maliks*/elites, were systematically targeted by the *Talibans*.Shakoor (2013) terms the situation as culture distortion of Pashtuns at the hands of Taliban. The terrorists hit *Jirgas*[4] a few times in which hundreds of men died along with the *masharans*/elites. But I think the main target of the suicide bombers was those *maliks*/*masharans*/elites who were the symbol of synergy between state and communities. It was not attack on *Jirgas*, rather it was a strategy to isolate and compartmentalize the communitiesfurther.

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[4]Jirgais a traditional assembly of leaders that make decisions by consensus and according to the norms of Pashtun's culture.

Hence, it is the time to address the issue of terrorism and envisage indigenous solution to combat it. It was easy to fight the war against terrorism in Swat which was a settled area. The state's institutions got strength after operation and restarted their activities in order to promote cohesion, peace and development. However, to avert the reoccurrence of terrorism in FATA, the government must ponder over the ways it could bring positive changes in the service delivery system coupled with promoting strong links between communities and state's institutions. It wouldn't be possible for government to introduce democratic system of governance in FATA like settled areas; which will take time, yet it can initiate the process by involving individuals/communities directly in the development process. Instead of isolating the masses, it would be more effective to integrate them for joint ventures.

The course of social capital building could be vitalized by first improving the efficiency of state's institutions. It would, perhaps, espouse trust between them and individuals. And then it would be followed by introducing public regarding organizations like different committees for promotion of education, sports, health, security and development etc. involving the majority of local people. This synergy would help to streamline the neglected population, stigmatized with stubbornness, into mainstream communities.

Conclusion

The traditional institutions and cultural norms of Pashtun communities in FATA maintained peaceful coexistence among different tribes. Strong kinship ties sufficed for upholding cultural values in homogenous communities. However, the advent of globalization ensue strong institutions and more diverse stock of networks for prosper and secure future. In other words, to counter unwanted consequences, governments need to establish public institutions with systematic delivery mechanism for sustainable development in traditional societies and subsequently, facilitate access of individuals rather than few proxies i.e. *masharans*/*maliks*/elites to the institutions.

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