

## **Pakhtun Cultural Values, Terrorism and the Contextual Meaning of Violence**

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### **Abstract**

Although violence may be a part of the Pakhtun culture but it is not causally related to terrorism. In fact the socially controlled and limited-in-scope violence in the Pakhtun society has no causal relationship with the Taliban-form of terrorism whose ideology transcends national boundaries. Recruitment to and activities of the Taliban clearly indicate that neither is culturally driven.

### **Key words**

Violence, Terrorism, Pakhtun Cultural Values

### **Introduction**

The issue of exploring the causal relationship between terrorism and the Pakhtun cultural values is a complex phenomenon. Two things are important to understand the question in hand: First, to locate the violence, if any, in the cultural values of the Pakhtuns and, second, to carefully analyze the prevailing terrorism in the Pakhtun society. By highlighting the direct and symbolic violence in the Pakhtun culture and by clearly delineating the distinguishing features of the current terrorism in the Pakhtun society it will be possible to see whether there is any relationship between the two. It is important first, however, to generally distinguish terrorism from other forms of violence and to see whether there is any relationship between violence and terrorism. This is both simple and difficult. It is simple because in majority of the situations people know whether an event is an act of terrorism or not. Although, the means employed may be the same but it is the ends which distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence (Schinkel, 2010).

Terrorism is inherently motivated by political objectives (Abrahms, 2008). Other forms of violence may or may not involve political motives (Schinkel, 2010). On the other hand the often differing and competing definitions of terrorism makes the task of distinguishing terrorism from the ordinary forms of violence all the more difficult. Terms like “narco-terrorism” (illegal production, movement, and use of narcotics which badly affects humans), “environmental terrorism”, and “cyber-terrorism” indicates how loosely the word is applied to different situations (Guelke, 2010). Further, the fact that more civilians have been killed in political violence as against terrorism, especially in Central American countries over the last few decades, indicates that the line between terrorism and other forms of violence is delicate, and often even blurred (Guelke, 2010). More importantly, it is not the question only of distinguishing terrorism from other forms of violence but it is the

fact to know whether violence prevailing in a particular culture, society or a group of people can be related to terrorism in the same society, culture or group of people. Theories of terrorism, especially psychoanalytic and psychocultural hypotheses indicate that it can be (Ross, 1986). For example harsh socialization, especially the rearing of a child in a violent and unfriendly environment warrants deviant behavior in adulthood (Crenshaw, 2000). As grown up in a harsh environment and prone to violence such individuals provide easy recruits to the terrorists, as against other normal human beings. A related theory which identifies somewhat the same causes of terrorism is the frustration-aggression hypotheses (Ferracuti, 1982). While coupled with psychoanalytic theory the frustration-aggression hypotheses connects early child physical punishment with displacement of personality and aggressive behavior in adulthood, another paradigm, the social learning theory, explain the connection in terms of modeling, imitation, and reinforcement (Guelke, 2010). Although, these theories explain a general violent disposition, not terrorism specifically, however, it can be indirectly related to terrorism. For example there is no denying the fact that terrorism involves an extra normal use of violence, albeit for different objectives.

The above mentioned theories are vital as causal factors for a comprehensive study of terrorism; however, the psychological theories can not be accepted as explanation of terrorism. Terrorists are normal human beings. The questions of a pathological mind or early socialization as causal factor play little, if any, role in explaining terrorism and terrorists. Terrorists come from all backgrounds (Borun, 2004; Wienburg, 2006). The bulk of the modern day terrorists come from middle and upper middle class with a sound economic background and often even having a university degree (Turk, 2004). Moreover, early socialization of some of the modern day terrorists, indulging in acts of terror against the industrialized western states, has taken place in the same societies.

However, the case of terrorists in the Pakhtun society is different from the ones discussed in the above paragraph. As apart from the leadership, the rank and file of the terrorists in the Pakhtun society come from modest economic background, often having little or no education (Gul, 2009). The fact which is being stressed here is that early child rearing conditions or culture for that matter have no direct connection with the process of becoming a terrorist. Taliban or terrorists in the Pakhtun society may be using some of the Pakhtun cultural values to further their objectives, but at the same time they are targeting other elements of *Pakhtunwali* which questions their Pakhtunness. Therefore, Taliban can not be considered as a product of the Pakhtun culture but a counter-culture force.

This paper explores Pakhtun cultural values, their national character, and the phenomenon of violence in the Pakhtun society. The study also analyzes the

current terrorism in the Pakhtun society to know whether there is any relationship between terrorism and the Pakhtun cultural values. The second section analyzes violence and terrorism in general. In particular, it distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence. The third section delineates Pakhtun cultural values. It especially evaluates those elements of the Pakhtun culture which are directly or indirectly related to violence. The fourth section explores the relationship, if any, between the contemporary terrorism in the Pakhtun society and some of the elements of Pakhtun culture that are related to violence. The last section draws some conclusions from the study.

## **1. Violence and Terrorism**

Both violence and terrorism lack clear definitions because of various reasons. First of all, the problem common to all social science concepts is that researchers have a tendency to take things for granted. Owing to the popular nature of many terms, scholars leave much for the readers and assume that they know what is being explained (Schinkel, 2010). Both violence and terrorism suffer from this problem. Furthermore, in violence other than terrorism social scientists usually focus too little on the event itself. Opposite is the case with terrorism, however, where the actual event of terrorism, in what is actually a political process, receives much more attention (Schinkel, 2010). Then there are some other difficulties peculiar to each. For example, violence bears non-recognizable character. It is hard to recognize whether a particular situation or event is violent or not. For example, it is very difficult to know whether only physical assault is to be considered violence or whether abusive language and the threat of violence also contain violence (Schinkel, 2010). Another difficulty in explaining violence is that because of culture relativism an act considered violent in a particular society may be accepted quite a normal behavior in another society (Ember, Ember & Peregrine, 2006). Terrorism also suffers from such difficulties. One of the glaring difficulties in the definition of terrorism is the loose nature of the term. It is ironical that on the one hand because of the lack of agreement on a common definition, it is difficult to know what actually constitutes terrorism. On the other hand the term is used to cover a diverse range of events. As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, terms like narco-terrorism, environmental terrorism, cyber-terrorism, and economic terrorism indicate how carelessly the word is applied to different situations (Guelke, 2010). However, the lack of agreement on a common definition in case of violence and terrorism does not mean there are no definitions. In fact

there are numerous definitions for both. For the purpose of this study it is important to define these terms so that a background can be set for a distinction between the two.

The word violence is derived from the Latin noun *violentia* which means vehemence. The verb to which *violentia* relates is *violare*, meaning to dishonor, to outrage or to treat with violence. It has become an independent word in Anglo-French somewhere around fourteenth century (Schinkel, 2010). Violence is defined by Spierenburg as “.....all forms of intentional encroachment upon the physical integrity of the body” (2005: p. 1). Spierenburg does not include in this definition encroachment on the body for medical reasons or unintentional harm to the body, for example that caused by a traffic accident. He also rightly rejects notions like psychological or structural violence which according to him is an excuse for ideological purposes. Although, it is a restricted definition but it is not narrowed. As according to the author it includes such minor encroachment upon the physical integrity of the body which may appear too trivial for a court to prosecute. On the other hand Riches define violence as, “Contestably rendering physical hurt” (1986: 11-12). The word “contestably” indicates that the writer does not consider only the shedding of blood as violence. Rather it is an expansive definition which may include not only psychological and structural aspects of violence but also cover contestable events on which there is a dispute between the victims and the perpetrators about the legality of violence. The notions of legality and illegality comes into play because although violence is a condemnatory word, which itself indicates that the action is illegal, nevertheless, there are situations in which people agree that violent action is justified. For example tyrannicide has long been legitimized in many parts of the world. It has been recognized by many political philosophies that in extraordinary circumstances the violent overthrow of the existing political system is justified (Guelke, 2010). This study prefers the latter definition over the former. Pakhtun culture is portrayed in the literature as having a violent disposition and this study is concerned mainly with violence structured in culture, therefore, this definition best fits in the scheme of the study. Since the notion of violence in the Pakhtun culture is contestable, as discussed earlier, therefore, this definition is preferred.

One of the important things while discussing violence is that it should be distinguished from force. This is another factor where the questions of legitimacy and illegitimacy have a role to play. In fact violence is usually attributed to the society or to the individual in the private capacity, while force

is ascribed to the agent of state. Since state is considered as the only repository of the legitimate use of violence, therefore, the use of force by its agents is accepted as legal (Guelke, 2010). Since the development of the modern nation state and the criminalization of various acts by the state, the use of force in the private capacity has largely been declared as illegitimate and therefore, considered as violent (Spierenburg, 2005). However, transgression or the excessive use of force by state institutions may also be considered as violence.

Terrorism on the other hand can not only be used against the state but for the service of state as well (Crenshaw, 1981). For the purpose of this study, it is suffice here to outline some of the themes common to its different definitions. This will indicate that politics is involved not only in the objectives of terrorism but also in its definition (Schinkel, 2010). As a result there has been no agreement on a common definition of terrorism even after numerous international efforts to do so (Bjorgo, 2005). It can also be gauged from the fact that more civilians have been killed in political violence in Central America over the last few decades than in terrorism in the same period (Guelke, 2010).

There are some elements which are common to most, if not all, definitions of terrorism. They include, for example the use of violence, civilians or non-combatants as targets, political objectives of the perpetrators, clandestine nature of the act, and the element of fear involved (Hoffman, 2006). However, some of the controversial elements found in most definitions make the process of defining terrorism all the more difficult. They include, among others, for example, that the nature of terrorism is international and that it is mainly directed against the liberal democracies of the west. This element is wholly responsible why thousands of civilians killed in other forms of political violence in countries other than the west have not been included in the victims of terrorism (Guelke, 2010). Another element common to most definitions is that terrorism is the killing of few to influence many. If we accept the indirect nature of terrorism, the purpose of which is to influence the larger population through targeting a few, then what to do with the thousands killed in direct forms of violence? Furthermore, some of the other issues including the ideological usage of the term, rooted in a specific liberal western concept, and the problem of making no distinction between a terrorist and a freedom-fighter also dilute the effort for reaching a conclusion (Wienburg, 2006). These and some other issues prove that it is not an easy task to differentiate terrorism from other forms of violence since the boundaries between the two may look delicate on closer analyses. Nevertheless, an effort is made below to distinguish terrorism from ordinary forms of violence.

## 1.1 Distinguishing Terrorism from other Forms of Violence

A good approach to differentiate terrorism from other forms of violence is to delineate salient features of the two. Although, both involve an element of harm to the person or the property of human being, it is generally easy to distinguish terrorism from other forms of violence. Probably the most important feature of terrorism is its relations to politics. Terrorism is always motivated by political objectives (Abrahms, 2008). Even the religiously or ideologically motivated terrorists want to bring political changes in the target society. The element of harm, which is shared by other forms of violence as well, is another feature of terrorism.

Whatever its ultimate objective, the immediate effect of terrorism can be seen in the shape of harm inflicted on the individual, property, or institutions of the state. Another important feature of terrorism is the indirect nature of the act. As Schinkel has rightly said that “terrorism is inextricably bound to the reaction to terrorism that makes it a political process instead of a singular event” (2010: p. 136). In fact the element of indirectness is doubly present in the process of terrorism. The immediate targets of the attack are either target of opportunity (unarmed civilians) or randomly selected (such as high profile political assassinations). The terrorist randomly kill few to influence the larger population who, in the terrorists' scheme of things may in turn influence the state to take the desired action (Schinkel, 2010). This leads one to another feature of terrorism, the element of fear. Almost all acts of terrorism aim at generating fear in the larger population. By selecting a random target, for example, the terrorists aim at intimidating the people psychologically and want to generate an expected but unpredictable fear in their mind. This is an effective tool of coercion as fear and panic among the general population can easily destabilize the existing political system which is the ultimate goal of almost all terrorist campaigns. Still another distinguishing feature of terrorism is the covert or clandestine nature of the terrorist activity. Terrorists do not act in the open. In majority of the situations it is difficult to establish the charges against any one unless the terrorist group or individual himself claims the responsibility for an act of terrorism. An act of terrorism may be expected but it is always unpredictable. Last but not the least, its reliance on excessive use of violence and its disregard for any norms and values, make terrorism the most condemned activity.

Apart from the element of harm, present both in violence and terrorism, the former bears entirely different features. First of all, although violence

itself is a value-loaded word, indicating illegitimate or unwanted use of force, however, as discussed earlier, there are situations where people agree that the use of violence is not only legitimate but also desirable. This is usually not the case with terrorism. A minor act of terrorism, even one involving no human loss is condemned in the strongest of words. In other words ordinary form of violence may sometimes escape public indignation, but terrorism is entirely unacceptable. Secondly, violence may or may not involve political objectives. Even in politically motivated acts of violence the process does not exceed beyond the actual target. For example in the process of political assassinations or tyrannicides the immediate target is usually the actual target. Terrorism on the other hand “is a political process that is always a part of a larger political process” (Schinkel, 2010: p. 136). Thirdly, violence is directly communicated between the victim and the perpetrator, there is no carrier in between the two like that in terrorism. One of the hallmarks of almost all terrorist campaigns is its indirect nature, as previously discussed. This is done for the obvious reason that terrorists can not face the superior force of the state head on, therefore, they coerce the latter indirectly. On the other hand the discrepancy in the potential force of the contending parties in ordinary form of violence is normally lesser than in the case of terrorism as it usually takes place between individuals or groups of individuals. Although, there are situations where individuals and state are involved in violence other than terrorism but that are exceptions. Some writers even question why these are not included in the general category of terrorism (Guelke, 2010). Fourthly, in the process of violence the gap between the ends sought and the means adopted to pursue the desired ends is always minimum. Violence is usually directed to achieve certain specific goals. On the other hand the gap between the goals sought and the means adopted in the process of terrorism is so huge that the event fails to achieve the desired objectives. This is because the actual event receive such condemnation that people ignore to think about the terrorists' cause (Schinkel, 2010).

After differentiating terrorism from violence and after establishing that there is no causal relationship between violence and terrorism it is now relatively easy to discuss the Pakhtun cultural values and the contextual meaning of violence in the Pakhtun society.

## **2. Violence in the Pakhtun Culture**

A comprehensive understanding of violence in the Pakhtun culture should take into consideration three different but not necessarily mutually exclusive

factors: first, the nature of the frontier itself. This is important because *Pakhtunwali* (the Pakhtun code of life) evolved in the frontier over a period of thousands of years as a result of the contacts of different civilizations (Banergee, 2000). Second, the nature of the Pakhtun society, which is based upon a segmentary lineage system (Barth, 1959), is also important. The third factor which should be taken into consideration is the British mechanism for dealing with the frontier and the Pakhtuns. They will be discussed later, here it is important to discuss some of the features of *Pakhtunwali*, especially to find out their possible relationship with violence.

## 2.1 Honor

Honor (*Nang* or *Namus* in Pakhto) is one of the most important elements of *Pakhtunwali*. In fact it is such a vital component of the Pakhtun culture that some writers have called *Pakhtunwali* as the Pakhtun code of honor (Barth, 1969). This is a restricted definition of *Pakhtunwali*, which imply that all the other elements of *Pakhtunwali* revolve around the concept of honor. Although, *Pakhtunwali* should be called the Pakhtun code of life, which covers everything from the cradle to the grave, and not the code of honor which limits its scope, it is true, however, that honor occupies a central place in the Pakhtuns' life (Guest, 2010). It stands for bravery, courage, and valor of the Pakhtun. The concept of honor is closely related to women and land in the Pakhtun society (Banergee, 2000), therefore, honor, as in other societies, is responsible for much of the violence in the Pakhtun society. To be a true Pakhtun, one must protect one's women, land and property. Those who can not protect their women, including children, and property from others, are subject to *Paighor* (Taunting) and are, therefore, not worthy of calling Pakhtuns in the eyes of others. Hence this extended definition of honor, one not limited to the physical body, is mainly responsible for much of the bloodshed in the Pakhtun society.

The opposite of honor is *Tore* (Disgrace), which is an element in the extended definition of *Pakhtunwali*. *Tore* occurs when a man or woman is found guilty of extra-marital sex or elopement. This brings *Tore* not only to the concerned persons but to the whole family, therefore, the accused are liable to be killed. The matter often does not end here. Honor-killing sometimes leads to prolonged and violent enmities between the two families (Barth, 1969). Second to woman in importance is land. The holding of land makes one Pakhtun. In fact, those who do not have land are not called Pakhtuns (Ahmed, 1976). They are called *Kasabgar* (Artisan), since they do not have land they rely on different professions such as,

carpenter, cobbler, and blacksmith, for subsistence. Therefore, the holding of land and the protection of one's property is closely related to the concept of honor (Dupree, 1973). Most of the feuds and vendettas in the Pakhtun society, including those spreading over many generations, result mainly from the dispute over land. Honor, in turn, is closely related to the concept of *Badal*.

## 2.2 *Badal* (Revenge)

Honor may indirectly spur violence, *Badal*, on the other hand is directly responsible for violence. In most of the popular literature about the Pakhtuns, *Badal* takes precedent over all other elements of *Pakhtunwali* (Dupree, 1973). The purpose of listing honor before *Badal* in this discussion is to emphasize the point that it is honor, in most cases, which compels a Pakhtun to take revenge. Thus *Badal* follows from honor. Honor demands, for example, that an injury caused or an insult meted out to a person, or his kin for that matter, must be paid in the same coin (Dupree, 1973). Just like in the case of honor, those who can not fulfill the obligation of *Pakhtunwali* by taking revenge, lose their prestige in the eyes of fellow Pakhtuns and render themselves liable to *Paighor* (Taunting) (Spain, 1962). Since a Pakhtun will prefer to desert his home and his village rather than tolerate *Paighore*, therefore, he prefers to fix the issue as soon as possible. But this does not mean that time will heal the wound caused by an insult or an injury. According to a famous Pakhto quote *Badal*, even if it is taken after a 100 years, is not delayed. This ensures the resurrection of hostilities even after long periods of peace. *Badal* is also responsible for the prolonged vendettas in the Pakhtun society, because often an unending vicious cycle of taking revenge starts between the two opposing parties. An extended concept of *Badal* is followed in the Pakhtun society, just like the concept of honor. Thus, not only conflict is often carried to the succeeding generations but it is also considered appropriate to take revenge from the perpetrator's sons, brothers, or nephews. This leads one to another feature of *Pakhtunwali*, vendetta.

## 2.3 Vendetta (*Fatna*)

Vendetta or *Fatna* (Fitna in Arabic, meaning unrest or violence) or *Gundi* (Enmity or factionalism) refers to the prolonged and violent hostilities between the two families, clans, or tribes. The use of violence in vendetta is as much symbolic as it is direct. Since vendettas continue for a long period of time, therefore, it has its rules, according to which, women and

children are exempted, crops and cattle are to be protected, and shooting is to be carried out in the night (Razi Rahman, personal communication, April 22, 2012). There may be different causes of *Gundi*. It may be caused by an obligation of *Badal*, a dispute over land, or a question of woman (*Tore*). Although, *Badal* may be a cause of *Gundi*, as discussed earlier, it is not necessarily the only cause. More importantly, *Gundi* when started has its own dynamics, irrespective of means and ends. Honor would demand, for example, to carry the *Fatna* to its logical ends. It does not necessarily mean to settle the dispute, the mere sustenance of the hostilities through a show of force and non acceptance of the defeat may do the job. Since it requires a great deal of patience, perseverance and, above all, money and resources (weapons and ammunition) to continue the vendetta, therefore, it would bring disgrace or *Paighor* to a person unable to carry on the *Fatna*. A young tribal from Mohmand Agency was referring to this fact when he told a story to this scholar about a vendetta.

He said the family of his maternal uncle had a prolong enmity with another family in the village. He also participated on the side of his uncle, under the obligation of *Parajamba* (Taking sides), he said. Although, his uncle had exhausted the ammunition but he did not want to accept defeat by ending the fire on his part. Therefore, he planted two poles of wood vertically in the ground and tied a strip of thick rubber to it. Young boys of the family would collect stones in the day to be thrown at the enemy's house with the help of this manual device (Razi Rehman, personal communication, April 22, 2012). Although, killing and wounding is not always the aim of vendetta, it does not mean, however, that it always causes no harm to human life. *Fatna* may degenerate into such violent conflict which may kill dozens of people on both sides. *Fatna* may also occur between close cousins sometimes.

#### **2.4. *Tarburwali* (Agnatic Rivalry) or *Syali* (Competition)**

*Tarburwali* is a state of mind in which each person in the Pakhtun society considers his first cousin as his competitor in all walks of life (Spain, 1962; Barth, 1969; Ahmed, 1976). *Tarbur* literally refers to cousin while *Syal*, from which *Syali* is derived, means competitor. Thus, a person may be one's *Tarbur* but not *Syal*, because *Syali* is done with one who is equal in status. It is considered inappropriate to do *Syali* with those cousins who are weaker either in terms of man-power or in terms of financial reasons.

One of the dangerous things about *Tarburwali* is that it is not always a healthy competition. Dispute may arise often on trivial matter, as one does not allow even a small benefit to his opponent. Majority of the feuds in the Pakhtun society occur between close or distant cousins (Dupree, 1973). In some cases feuds may lead to vendetta or *Fatna* between the cousins. Moreover, *Paighor* or taunting is mainly associated with cousins. It is the taunting of the cousin that the Pakhtun can not tolerate and compels him to take action as demanded by *Pakhtunwali*. A person may leave his home and village and migrate to some other locality if he can not fulfill the demands of *Pakhtunwali*, for example taking revenge, but he will not tolerate taunting and accusations of his close, as well as, distant cousins.

Apart from the above features of *Pakhtunwali* which are closely related to violence, another factor which has been responsible for much of the blood shed in the Pakhtun society is the easy availability of some of the modern weapons in the region. Weapons of all kinds like, AK-47, M16, RPG (Rocket Propelled Grande), and even small canons are easy available in the Pakhtun region, especially in FATA. Apart from the imported weapons, locally produced weapons are in abundance. One can not deny the fact that all this could not have been possible without the Pakhtun's love of firearms (Khan, 1947). Ghani Khan has rightly observed that "Pakhtun loves his old wife and his new rifle" (1948: p. 1), meaning that both women and weapons, closely related to the concept of honor, have a central role in the Pakhtun's life. Historically in most of the FATA region, people would consider gun as an ornament for men. Hence, it was rare to find a man without hanging a gun to his shoulder, before the emergence of Taliban in the region, who gave themselves the exclusive right to carry and use weapons. Still one can not find a home without a Kalashnikov even in the urban areas of the Pakhtun society (Khan, 2007). So whatever be the cause of the conflict between the two individuals or families, the large numbers and easy availability of weapons is always the immediate cause (Johansen, 1997).

Much of the above mentioned features originate from the segmentary structure of the Pakhtun society. The latter, as identified by Barth, (1959) is based upon the segmentary lineage system. According to this system the population is divided into families, sections, lineages, sub-clans, clans, and tribes. Membership in the group is defined by descent from a common male ancestor. Thus a section or clan will trace common ancestry back

through a dozen generations. The system is strengthened by patrilineal parallel-cousin marriages. In case of a conflict, therefore, first cousins or descendants of the same grandfather will fight each other. But they would join together in a conflict with distant cousins. However, both will unite to fight members of another lineage, and this is how it goes on up to the level of tribe. From this, stems the theory of segmentary opposition (Barth, 1959), or *Parajamba* (taking sides in a conflict), as it is called in Pakhto. The concept of *Tarburwali*, which is considered as the cause of most of the strife in the Pakhtun society, is also a product of the segmentary structure of the Pakhtun society. Moreover, honor is also defined against a background of a competitive relationship with close or distant cousins, as it is an escape from the *Paighor* of a cousin which compels a person to uphold a strong concept of honor.

It is important to emphasize here that, *Pakhtunwali* provides a complete code of life, and not only a code of honor. Some writers are so obsessed with the idea of *Nang* or honor who limit *Pakhtunwali* to the concept of honor only. Akbar S. Ahmed (1976), for example, limits Pakhtun society to two categories, one characterized by *Nang* (honor), and the other by *Qalang* (tax). *Nang* category referred to the hill tribes where the concept of honor was strong. The latter referred to the people living in the settled areas where a government taxation system was in vogue. Barth (1981) also stresses the concept of honor when he observes that 'doing Pakhto' is more important for a Pakhtun than 'speaking Pakhto'. However, *Pakhtunwali* is more than that. Its ability to remain intact over the years is because of its flexibility and dynamism. Had it been limited to a handful of negative features, like the above mentioned ones, it would not have been possible for *Pakhtunwali* to absorb the vicissitudes of time.

Pakhtun culture has evolved over thousands of years and as a result of the contacts of diverse civilizations in the great Gandhara valley. Therefore, it should be contextualized in the phenomenal developments that have taken place in this region. Any approach ignoring these facts would tantamount to grossly misunderstanding the concept of *Pakhtunwali*. It is important, therefore, to conceptualize *Pakhtunwali* in the nature and context of the frontier which served as a cradle of different civilizations. Toynbee identified two kinds of frontiers. "*Culs-de-sac* are regions on the fringe....that have received successive influences from the centre but have not been able to pass them further afield" (cited in Banerjee,

2000:24). On the other hand, Toynbee continued, “roundabouts are the regions on which routes converge from all quarters of the compass and from which routes radiate to all quarters of the compass again” (cited in Banerjee, 2000:24). Certainly, the Pakhtun region best fits in the latter category, as it connects, South, Central, and West Asia with the West. As region of roundabout, it received more than its share of the foreign invasions, including those of, the Persians, Greeks, Kushans, Huns, and Mughals (Banerjee, 2000). Thus *Pakhtunwali* emerged, transformed and was perfected in the frontier region, as a result of the contact of diverse civilizations, to serve as the national character of a people who themselves bear the imprints of the extraordinary developments that have taken place in the region.

It is unfortunate, however, that the contemporary understanding of the Pakhtun culture is largely influenced by outside interference. Much of the violence that has become part of the Pakhtun culture for the last three centuries has largely due to the machination of the imperial powers. Johansen, for example argues,

One should not forget that the violence expressed by people in this society, against both foreign invaders and others within their tribal system, was at least in part a product of being victimized by the violence of external invaders over many years. (1997: p. 57)

Such were the designs of the out side powers, especially the British, that the ideal Pakhtun culture has been transformed over the centuries. This started with their understanding and handling of the frontier itself. Their strategy of dealing with the frontier vacillated between a closed border and an open border policy. They certainly considered the frontier as '*Culs-de-sac*' or the fringe. The name given to the area (North West Frontier Province or NWFP) was indicative of the fact that they treated the area as geographical marginality, as identified by Banerjee, (2000). Their main imperial concern in the frontier region was how to maintain a minimum calm in the region, and that too by avoiding direct contact with the people, and to stop any Soviet southward expansion. Therefore, for this policy to succeed, they devised their own mechanism.

The most important step in this direction was the process of permanent land holdings. Historically, and as a principle of egalitarianism, there was no concept of permanent land holding in the Pakhtun society. Instead,

tribal land would be redistributed under a mechanism called *wesh* (Distribution). Land holding period ranged from five to thirty years, after which it would be reapportioned according to the needs of the lineage or section (Ahmed, 1976). The frequent exchanges of land ensured equal access to the best land. Further, due to the absence of permanent land holding class there were no relations of superior and subordination.

However, this situation was gradually disturbed by the out side powers. From the eighteenth century, first the Mughals and then the Afghan state increasingly extended the writ of the central government by introducing a system of land revenues. This disrupted the traditional social and economic system of the Pakhtun society, because under the system those who were responsible for revenue collection were favored by giving them special rights in land holding (Banerjee, 2000). The British, however, completely altered the system by giving legal rights of permanent land holding to the favored class. Thus they created a class of big *Khans*. This strategy was in line with the principle of indirect rule through which they wanted to control the independent minded people using the local influential *Khans*. Thus, two classes emerged: those few who held substantial amount of land and, that landless class who worked as peasants on the property of the *Khans*. This transformed the principles of *Pakhtunwali*, for example the concept of honor, *Tarburwali*, and *Parajamba*, as well. For example, peasants from the same lineage or sub-clan would often fight each other for their own respective *Khans* (Banerjee, 2000).

Another important factor which changed the traditional mechanism of dispute resolution was the treatment of *jirgah* system by the British. Traditional *jirgah* system was mainly geared towards limiting conflicts rather than locating blame. Its members were elected and decisions were consensual. The British, however, wanted to use the *jirgah* as a means of indirect rule, therefore, they entrusted it with additional powers. *Jirgah*, under the new system was to be appointed by the official of the government, its decisions were binding, there was to be no right of appeal, and fines were to be paid to the government and not to the victim. Transparency of the system was lost and government often appointed its own favored *Khans* as members of the official *jirgah*. This gave an opportunity to the big *Khans* to use *jirgahs* against their enemies which increased the nature and intensity of the hostilities as more and more

peasants would be dragged to the conflicts on the side of *Khans*. By the start of the twentieth century, therefore, the two changes brought about by the British, the replacement of *wesh* or land distribution system with permanent land holding and the new role given to *jirgah*, were mainly responsible for the increasing levels of violence in the Pakhtun society (Banerjee, 2000).

Be it the role of the central state, the influence of the out side powers, or the effects of the natural environment, there is no denying the fact that inter-personal, inter-family, and inter-tribal violence has been a feature of the Pakhtun society. Now that this fact has been established, it is imperative to explore the causal relationship between violence and terrorism in the Pakhtun society.

### **3. Causal Relationship Between Violence and Terrorism in the Pakhtun Society?**

It has already been proved in the second section of this study that violence and terrorism are different phenomena. By distinguishing ordinary form of violence from terrorism, it has been proved that there are little, if any, commonalities between the two. However, the question which is being explored is to know whether the prevalent violence in the Pakhtun society may have provided a breeding ground for the contemporary terrorism in the Pakhtun region or not. Is Talibanization a product of the Pakhtun culture? Therefore, this section not only highlights the rationale behind violence in the Pakhtun society but it also discusses the recruitment and activities of the terrorists in the Pakhtun region to know whether the Pakhtun cultural values are responsible for terrorism or not.

#### **3.1 Taliban Recruitment: The Role of Culture**

It is a common wisdom that initial induction to the Taliban is largely motivated by religious aspirations, it has nothing to do with culture or Pakhtun nationalism. This has been especially the case with Afghan Taliban. The latter were largely students of the religious seminaries in Pakistan. They were mainly motivated by the young charismatic religious leader, Mullah Muhammad Umer from Qandahar, who wanted to bring an end to the factional fighting between different warlords, transform the existing political and social system and impose *Shariah* throughout the country (Rashid, 2000). Initially a small number of Pakhtun nationalists joined the Taliban, to fulfill their own agenda, but they quickly abandoned them by realizing that the Taliban were a dangerous upcoming force. The nationalists soon realized that although, majority of the Taliban were

Pakhtuns, they were a threat to the cause of Pakhtun nationalism as they relied heavily on transnational religious forces. This was proved in the later years by the Taliban's close intimacy with Al Qaeda (Gul, 2009). Same is the case with the Pakistani Taliban. The emergence of Taliban in the Pakhtun region, although a different phenomenon, has largely been inspired by the Taliban rule in Afghanistan (Rashid, 2008). By and large, the leadership of the Taliban in the Pakhtun region is motivated by religious aspirations. With a few exceptions, leaders of the Taliban in the Pakhtun region have either *madrassa* background or were already involved in jihadist activities before initiating their campaign in the Pakhtun region (Abbas, 2005). Both Abdullah and Baitullah Mahsud, for example, were fighting alongside the Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan before they were captured in 2001 and sent to Guantanamo jail by the American forces. On their subsequent release from the jail in 2004 they started a campaign of terror in the Tribal areas of Pakistan, starting from South Waziristan Agency (Gul, 2009).

Abdul Wali, head of the *Tehrik-e-Taliban* in Mohmand Agency, has a jihadist background. He had fought not only in the Indian-held Kashmir but also in Afghanistan against the US-NATO forces before becoming a part of the *Tehrik-e-Taliban* Pakistan. (Yousufzai, 2009). Likewise, Molvi Faqir Muhammad, head of the *Tehrik-e-Taliban* Pakistan in Bajaur Agency, has a similar background. He is a former *mujahideen* leader who had fought against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s (Cookman, 2009 & Wadhams). On the other hand Sufi Muhammad, head of the *Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi* (TNSM) and Maulvi Fazlullah, head of the Swat chapter of the *Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan*, were product of *madrassas*. Thus, the socialization of the bulk of the leadership of Taliban in the Pakhtun region has not taken place in the ideal Pakhtun cultural values; rather they reflect a militant jihadist outlook.

Apart from the leadership, the rank and file of the Taliban may join the terrorist organizations for various reasons. One of the obvious reasons advanced by various scholars, including Ahmed Rashid, (2008) and Imtiaz Gul, (2009), is the financial benefit that affiliation with group may accrue. It is believed that handsome amount of money is paid to the Taliban foot-soldiers. It is not surprising in an area characterized by abject poverty, limited and mostly illicit economic activities- the production and trafficking of drugs and the manufacturing and free movement of weapons- and huge unemployment, as compared to the rest of the country. Another reason for joining the Taliban may be the search for identity. As identified by research on terrorism, socially isolated or marginalized

people may join the terrorist organization in search of identity (Crenshaw, 1981). This holds true for the tribal areas of Pakistan where, limited or no state facilities, meager economic opportunities, and death and destruction in the neighboring Afghanistan for the last three decades and in FATA after 9/11, have disrupted the social fabric of the society and made the people, especially the youngsters marginalized. Hence, in such environment of hopelessness, the terrorist organizations provide ample opportunities to the youth to prove their worth. However, one of the most important reasons for joining the terrorist organizations, and one which is closely related to the theme of this section, is vengeance. The restoration of honor or the desire for revenge may compel those who were initially not sympathetic towards the cause of Taliban to join them. This may happen when one's loved ones are killed by the security forces without any reason or when someone's sense of honor has been badly damaged, e.g. the maltreatment of women who are closely related to the concept of honor. The killing of innocent people as a result of intentional or indiscriminate firing or shelling and drone attacks may leave no other option with the surviving members of the victim family to resort to revenge in the shape of joining the Taliban, especially for carrying a suicide attack. Analysts agree that there are numerous cases in the Pakhtun society where the surviving member or members of the victim family have indulged in terrorist activities for the ultimate aim of taking revenge. For example, there was a drone attack in 2006 on a *madrassa* in the Chengai area of Bajaur Agency, killing 80 persons. The Pakistan military took the responsibility of the attack. Therefore, the subsequent Dargai attack on the Pakistan military's recruitment centre, the Punjab regiment centre, was carried out by a person whose brother was killed in the *madrassa* attack said, Mushtaq Yousufzai. In another instance, he continued, "a person's parents were killed in a drone attack in North Waziristan, he went to the militants, received training and subsequently became a suicide bomber, attacking a military check post 3 km east of Miranshah" (personal communication, February 2, 2012).

Thus, honor and revenge, two of the important elements of the Pakhtuns' social life, provided ground for joining the militants. However, it should be noted that honor and *Badal* in these cases are not the causes of joining the militants rather they are the effects of the counter-insurgency campaign. Therefore, the campaign against terrorism, instead of stemming the rot, has further radicalized the Pakhtun society.

Another element of the Pakhtun culture, *Melmastya* (Hospitality) or *Panah* (Assylum) is also said to be causally related to terrorism in the Pakhtun region, although, not in the process of recruitment to the Taliban but in giving them safe havens. One of the hallmarks of the people of the Pakhtun region, and this include non-Pakhtuns as well, is the tradition of hospitality (Guest, 2010). Pakhtuns take pride in feeding, protecting, and giving abode to the guests, without any charges, so long as they wish to remain. The related tradition of *Panah* (Giving asylum) is also strictly followed in the Pakhtun society. *Panah* is not denied even to the enemy when he is in need (Gauhar, 2010). In line with this tradition the Taliban government in Afghanistan gave *Panah* to Osama bin Laden and refused to handover him, even under immense pressure from the United States of America. There is no denying the fact that Pakhtuns in the tribal areas of Pakistan, too, have given sanctuaries to hundreds of international jihadists after the US and coalition forces launched 'Operation Enduring Freedom' against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001. Foreign jihadists may have capitalized to a certain extent on the tradition of *Melmastya* to acquire a safe haven among the Pakhtuns. However, analysts believe that most of the foreign militants in the Pakhtun region are paying guests. Tribals who have given shelter to Uzbek, Al Qaeda, or other foreign militants receive handsome amount of money from them (Gul, 2009). Therefore, this means that they have not been given shelter under the obligation of *Pakhtunwali*; rather they are receiving financial benefits from them. Receiving money from guests is not only against the tradition of *Melmastya* but it is in violation of all the norms of *Pakhtunwali*. Nevertheless, Mushtaq Yousufzai rightly observes that,

Pakhtuns' love of weapons, their inclination towards religion, their poverty, lack of education, nature of the people and of the area, some of the cultural values, and the political and administrative system in region, all provided an opportunity to the militants on which they fully capitalized. However, it was actually the absence of the state institutions which was mainly responsible for the emergence of Taliban. The state's failure to provide social and other facilities to the people provided an opportunity to the Taliban to appeal to the sentiments of the people. (personal communication, February 2, 2012).

### **3.2 Taliban Activities: The Role of Culture**

Since the emergence of Taliban in the region 2004 a campaign of terror of unprecedented nature has done irreparable damage to the Pakhtun society. Apart from loss to human life and property, which has been discussed

earlier, the activities of the Taliban have disrupted the social fabric of the society (Gul, 2009). This is because they have consciously targeted some of the strong pillars of the Pakhtun culture. Bomb blasts in *jirgahs* and in mosques, the slaughter of human beings, and punishing women in the public are all activities which distinguish Taliban from all other fighters in the Pakhtun history (Taj, 2009). For example, 40 tribesmen, including prominent tribal elders, were killed and 50 other wounded in a suicide attack in a *jirgah* in the semi-tribal area of Darra Adam khel, on March 2, 2008 (Khattak, 2008). In another act of inhuman behavior, the Taliban publicly flogged a teenage girl in April 2009, in Swat. They alleged that she came out of her home with a man who was not her husband (Walsh, 2009). Moreover, the Taliban during their parallel administration in the tribal areas and Swat, have transformed some of the strongly held traditions of the people. In their quest for providing swift justice the Taliban overlooked the traditional mechanisms of dispute resolution, such as *jirgah*, *nanwaty*, and *lashkar*. Moreover, the presence of Taliban has transformed the notions of honor, *Badal*, *Tarburwali*, and *Parajamba*. This has been done by applying the Taliban form of *Shariah* rules and by ignoring the dispute resolution mechanism contained in *Pakhtunwali*. It has already brought chaos to the region, however, this will have far reaching implications for the region in the long run, especially when the Taliban are no more there. This may resurrect the old enmities because people may want to settle the issues according to the demands of *Pakhtunwali*.

All the above mentioned activities of Taliban strongly contradict the Pakhtun cultural values. For example the sanctity of *jirgah* is taken for granted in the Pakhtun society. *Jirgah* is normally composed of the grey-beard men who are well respected in the community (Gauhar, 2010). Therefore, it is considered against the precepts of *Pakhtunwali* not to respect the *jirgah*. Such is the sanctity of *jirgah* that even the strongest of enemies sit face to face in *jirgah*, in otherwise continuous fighting, and do not say a word to each other. Most importantly, *jirgah* is respected because in the absence of state institutions and a system of self-help it is the only mechanism for dispute resolution. Therefore, the Taliban's bomb blasts and attacks on *jirgah* strongly question their credential of being Pakhtuns.

Another issue which distinguishes Taliban from other Pakhtuns in the region is the way they kill humans. Pakhtuns have their own way of fighting, including the killing of a person when it is required. Their conduct of war has even compelled their enemies to call the Pakhtuns a worthy enemy (Guest, 2010). Taliban, on the other hand, have crossed

every limit in their treatment of the so called criminals. They have slaughtered people on numerous occasions, and that too in front of large numbers of people. Thus, they have violated not only the basic human rights but their treatment of the criminals strongly contradicts the Pakhtuns cultural values. Pakhtuns never slaughter human beings. Dr. Razia Sultana, Chairperson Department of History at the Qaed-e-Azam University, who herself is an ethnic Pakhtun, rightly observes: “Pakhtuns do not slaughter, we just use bullet to kill. We do not use knife”, (personal communication, December 8, 2011). People in FATA, in particular, observe the rules of conduct, especially in dealing with enemies. Treachery, deceit, or any other immoral act in dealing with one's enemy is considered against the concept of honor, and a person who commits such acts is considered coward. Haider Mohmand, a tribal from Mohmand Agency clarified this,

The slaughtering of people is a Central Asian tradition. Nowhere in the Pakhtun history can one find precedent of such acts of inhuman conduct. In our area, if you have killed a person of my family and I have to take revenge, I will wait for the appropriate occasion. I will follow all the rules of *Pakhtunwali* in pursuit of taking my *Badal*. For example, I will not kill you on my own soil. Further, I will not attack you if you are accompanied by a woman or children. When I find an occasion where all the above conditions are fulfilled, I will kill you. I will make sure then that your body does not lie on the road or other inappropriate place. In the end, I will inform your family that I have taken my revenge. (personal communication, April 10, 2011).

Women and children are especially exempted from all sorts of hostilities in the Pakhtun culture. Even in prolonged vendettas in which men are targeted if found outside, women and children are free to move. The Taliban, however, spare none. They have not only punished women publicly but have also used children as suicide bombers. Therefore, there can be no comparison between the violence in the Pakhtun culture and that committed by the Taliban. The following points will further clarify the issue.

- I Violence may be a part of the Pakhtun culture but it is important to understand that there is no 'culture of violence'. Violence does not exist ritualistically and in organized form. In fact violence is as condemned in the Pakhtun society as it is in other societies. Those who transgress the limits, for example by killing a person, are dealt with severely. They are quickly brought to justice by a *jirgah*. If

do not abide by the *jirgah* decision, they will be expelled from the area and their property will be confiscated. In some areas, for example, in Utmankhel area of Mohmand Agency, three generations of the accused are not allowed to return to their area. Further, if honor demands on the one hand to take revenge, on the other, it requires of a Pakhtun to abide by the other rules of *Pakhtunwali*. Those who do not respect the traditions of *jirgah*, *teega*, and *nanawaty* (all the three help in ending hostilities), for example, are not considered honorable and, therefore, not worthy of calling themselves Pakhtuns. On the other hand, it seems, violence for the militants is an end in itself. For example, it is not clear what do they want but they have killed hundreds of people, both security forces personnel and civilians, particularly in Mohmand Agency. For example in pursuit of their objectives, the Taliban have killed more than 600 tribal *maliks* in FATA since 2004 (Mushtaq Yousufzai, personal communication, February 2, 2012). In other areas where their demands are somewhat clear, for example in North Waziristan Agency where they want an end to the security forces operation against the militants, there is a huge gap between the means and the ends.

- ii) Another important point is that since the socialization of the leadership of the terrorists has not taken place in the ideal Pakhtun culture, therefore, they can not be considered as a product of the latter. In fact majority of the people in FATA do not equate themselves with the militants, rather, they are considered as potential 'Other'. In reality, Taliban are considered as counter-culture force, who may be using some of the features of *Pakhtunwali*, but who, in actual sense are destroying the ideal Pakhtun culture by targeting its other values.
- iii) A related point to the socialization of the terrorists is that the latter is not comprised of only the Pakhtuns. The Taliban are joined by other militants with diverse ethnic backgrounds and different objectives. The Taliban are, for example, joined by militants from the Punjab and Kashmir. Then there are other non-Taliban foreign jihadist elements like Al Qaeda and Uzbek militants operating in the Pakhtun region. Therefore, there is no question of searching a causal relationship between them and the Pakhtun cultural values.

## Conclusion

The discussion in this study demonstrates that, although, violence may be a part of the Pakhtun culture, it is never causally related to terrorism in the Pakhtun society. Rather, one can safely say that the Taliban form of terrorism has badly affected the ideal Pakhtun culture. Negative social change in the shape of Talibanization has transformed some of the glorious traditions of Pakhtun culture to such an extent that it has caused further radicalization of the already radicalized Pakhtun society. This is evident in the shape of people joining the terrorist organizations for the sole purpose of retribution from the security forces. The parallel administration established by the Taliban has almost paralyzed the official dispute mechanism system which was centered on *maliks*. The latter have been replaced by the Taliban and people are compelled, though reluctantly, in FATA, especially in North Waziristan Agency to take their disputes to the Taliban (Gul, 2009). It is true that the concepts of honor and *Badal* may have helped the cause of terrorists, but that too is part of the process of militancy. Because it is indiscriminate firing and shelling by the security forces which results into the killings of innocent people, called collateral damage. Members of the victims' families may see no other option but to join the terrorists.

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