

## **An Analysis of Various Factors having Direct or Indirect Impacts on Pashtun Nationalism**

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### **Abstract**

*Every society of the world is stereotype due to the various groups that exist inside the country. Same is the case with Pakistan which consists of various sub-national groups, among them one is the Pashtun ethnic group (society) which always tilted towards religion. Stereotype societies have sometimes the germs of truth but in partial. The main issue is that the importance of the survival of a specific peculiarity connected with a community is voluntarily forgotten in favour of legends mimicry. The scholars admit the presence of religious intolerance among the Pashtun community but the scholars also challenge that although the Pashtun have been hugging religion since fourteen hundred years but has never been overpowered by extremism that exists to this day. It also proves that the main objectives of religious extremism and militancy were to curtail the culture and freedom of its traditions. There are serious grievances of Pashtun community regarding the state policy for this region. The Pashtun populated areas are always used for strategic depth policy.*

**Keywords:** Taliban, Extremism, Pashtun nationalism, Afghan War

### **Introduction**

It is a common perception that Pashtun is born religious extremist. The attitudes and behaviors did not link various ethnic groups with extremism and if it happens then all members of an ethnic group must act in the same way. Pashtun are ever violent by birth, they have close religious affinity that force them to become violent. It is unfair to blame the entire community on account of some of the inherent traits, but they are few in number. The whole community does not need to be blamed for the acts of a few people. The nuisance of extremism was not initiated by the Pashtuns, but they were either compelled by the circumstances or the involvement of a foreign hand. No one denies the importance of proxy war in this region, but the imposition of this war on the Pashtun land was ambiguous and suspicious (Baba Khel, 2016). The Pashtuns are peace-loving and hospitable by culture and tradition. Though, most of the Pashtun living in the mountains area made them strong and rude but they never chose violence until someone compelled them to become violent. It is also an un-denying fact that Pashtuns are genetically rude and violent to some extent on account of various factors.

There are various groups in Pakistan That blame only the Pashtun for their violent nature on account of their close proximity with religion to the utter exclusion of Sind his for their Sufism, the Punjabis for sectarianism and Balochis for their sub-nationalisms.

Majority of banned religious and militant organizations in Pakistan, ranging from *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi*, *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan*, *Sipah-e-Muhammad* and *Tehreek-e-FiqahJafferia* to *Lashkar-e-Tayyaba* originated from Punjab. Even in Pakistan, the Taliban are speaking different languages such as Punjabi, Kashmiri, and Seraiki etc. Similarly, the secular Baloch, particularly the Brahui speaking people, with the banned *Lashkar-e-Janghvi* and *Sipah-e-Sahaba* in Baluchistan Inculcates the prejudiced idea he wrong idea that a particular behavior is responsible for creating dissention and ethnicity (Report, 2011).

The past of every society helps and guide the research scholar present and future. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a Pashtun populated area of Pakistan, especially the tribal belt of the border has always remained under the frequent support of the religious fanaticism from the Afghan and Mughal rulers to the ignored by the British and inherited by Pakistan. The Mughal tried to suppress the Pashtun

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residents in this area for maintaining the peace. Though the tribesmen have still high ego esteem for the religious scholars the Mughals sponsorship of saint (Sufis) was meant to keep the Pashtuns calm in the marginal region. Using the Mughal tactics, Ahmad Shah Abdali and Dost Muhammad militarized the tribesmen in the name of *Jihad* and the whole tribe clergy against the Sikh in 1835.

To understand whether religious extremism the scholar search to find relevant answer to this question. Thousands of Pashtun nationalists were killed in Pakistan and Afghanistan by various agencies and extremist groups (Afridi, 2015). The decline and silence of Pashtun nationalism cannot be ignored nationalism for the time being under the clouds of fear and threats, various Pashtun migrated and remained silent but the dawn of Pashtun nationalism will be dominant over religious extremism and terrorism. The emergence and growth of Pashtun nationalism is more than was expected by the extremist suppression ideas. It does not mean that Pashtun nationalism was dug out from the hearts of the people, but was temporarily suppressed due to fear and threat of life and families (Hussian, 2018).

To judge whether Pashtun nationalism was suppressed or not was added by Professor Dr. Nasrullah Jan Wazir said, "We cannot ignore the reality that keeps declined when the Taliban writ was established in various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They destroyed the cultural identity, art, and music as a part of the nationalist attachment. The Pashtun faced huge troubles and were deprived of entertainments in their wedding and other festivals/functions. It was the Dark Age in the history of Pashtun. On one side they were killed and on other, their nationalism was suppressed and injected by their heinous ideas and mentalities. Taliban were rejected and would never be tolerated in future. Everyone wants to save his/her life and family, but it doesn't mean that the nationalists left their ideology. So far as Pashtun nationalism is concerned, it is older than the Islamic civilization and religion" (Wazir, 2018).

### **Factors that Impacted Pashtun Nationalism**

#### **Role of British Administration**

In the beginning, the secular and socialist Pashtun nationalism was destroyed by the British administration that paved the way for the future polices of Pakistan. Pashtun nationalism was historically liberal and founded on the bases of progressive ideas of Emir Aman Ullah, Samad Khan, Bacha Khan, DR Najeebullah, Noor Muhammad Tarakai, Afzal Khan Lala and other Pashtun nationalist leaders. As Arqam puts here that "the Taliban did not represent the Pashtuns and we can see it only in the shape of vicious Talibanized extremist and militant identities having no hospitality and regard for children, women, and families. The culture of the Taliban was the killing of innocent people, abduction, and kidnapping of children and women, entering into houses, attacking Mosques, Imam Bargahs and Funeral processions. The researcher cannot consider it Pashtuns values and culture. Due to these extremist agendas and their promotion, Islam and Pashtunwali have badly stuck due to militants Taliban and the state agency of Pakistan" (Shaw and Spencer, 2003).

Some myths and legends opine that Pashtun nationalists were liberal in the region while the extremist Taliban were conservative and extremists. In the twenty-first century, Bacha Khan is known as Frontier Gandhi due to his non-violence, belief in peace and, tolerance promoted liberal and progressive reforms instead of extremist ideas. He preferred peace and non-violence instead of militant and extremist's ideology. He prompted the reforms about Education, culture, sanitation and other developments for humanity, and that is the reason that he is remembered as a social reformer than a political leader. The emergence of extremists after the Soviet attack on Afghanistan 1979, the scenario changed and promoted religious extremists instead of the peaceful nationalists. The agenda of the internal and external forces were to defeat the Soviet Union by these extremists (the so-called Jihadist). They never thought about the consequences still faced by the Pashtuns. The agenda of the extremist militants was terrifying for music, art and deprived the Pashtuns of their traditional dance and culture inherited from their forefathers. The militant and religious extremists declared it as anti-sharia and against the codes of Islam and forcefully imposed their conservative and extremist ideas. The Pashtun were not ready to accept their agenda but due to fear they For the sake of expediency they complied with their agenda by showing silence. The Pashtun cultural values and Tribal codes were disembowelled by the Wahhabi sort of puritanical religion. In reality, the developed and multi-colored history and culture of the Pashtuns were atrophied by the religious Extremists by declaring nominal peace and stability under their rule (Henley, 2014).

### **Pakistan's State Policies**

After the establishment of Pakistan, the policy towards the Pashtun nationalist was improper and harsh. The state-sponsored and used the Pashtun of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in one form or another. The intelligence agencies used the Pashtun to inspire and remind them of the ego of their forefathers to capture Kashmir from the Indian occupation. The Pashtun, in a large number, attacked Kashmir and extricated it from the clutches of the Indian forces. The same nationalist slogan was used in the war of 1965 and 1971 against India. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was considered harmful for the future of Pakistan. The same tactics were used by the intelligence agencies how to utilize Pashtun people against Soviet Union. Pakistan, as an ally of the US started a slogan against communism through the local paid Pashtun mullah and religious clergy against Soviet attack in Afghanistan (Taj, 2012).

During this time they used the religious sentiment through the local paid Pashtun *Mullahs* and religious clerics. They completely ignored the Pashtun nationalists, because the Pashtun nationalist leaders repeatedly warned the Pashtun that it was nothing but the interests of the two big powers, in which Pashtun Would be used as tool to grind their own axe. But the state and its agencies succeeded in its motives. The withdrawal of the Soviet Union left nothing for the Pashtun except terrorism and extremism.

After Toppling down Zulfikar Ali Bhutto;s regime in 1977, Zia's Islamization process promoted sectarian violence and developed the militant and extremist culture in Pakistan. Zia introduced a new of Islamization to prolong his rule. His Islamic reforms strengthened religious groups and the injection of Islamic jurisprudence in Federal Shariat Courts created imbalance in the whole society of Pakistan. The government paid Mullahs, who had their vested interest Availed the opportunity by taking huge amount. Zia needed such mullahs who could convince the illiterate and the so-called religious extremists in his favour (Edwards, 2002).

After the Soviet withdrawal, the nomenclature was changed. But after the 9/11 attack, they were dubbed as a terrorist. The US, in collaboration with the allied forces attacked Afghanistan wherein logistic support and air bases were provided by Pakistan. The Pakistan started military operations in various parts of the tribal areas and the adjacent areas. The Pashtun Nationalism was once again targeted by these extremists and terrorists who considered them leftist and the supporter of the US. Thousands of Pashtun nationalists were killed and wounded by the extremist forces. The political activities of the Pashtun nationalists were suppressed to ban through extremism. (Dunn, 1997).

There were pro-Pakistan and anti-Pakistan Taliban groups. They received huge funds from the coalition partners for their war on terror. There are various examples that the army and its intelligence agencies killed hundreds of anti-Taliban leadership and its workers. Pakistan became the mother of evil and extremist activities where the killing of people became routine work. Terrorism, extremism, fundamentalism, Talibanization and other extremist groups with different names were established in the country. The Talib was not stronger but was made stronger by the state institution for war policy in the region. They killed various Malaks, leaders and those who raised their voice against them. In the post-APS attack on December 16, 2014, the notion of good and bad Taliban were done away with. They were dealt with an iron hand by the state machinery (Singh, 2007).

### **The Afghan War**

The Pashtun nationalism is the slogan of Kabul while not recognizing the Durand line as an international border. The Afghan war proved to be cancer for the peace and prosperity of Pashtuns. The Afghan war against Soviet Union and the war on terror made the Pashtun society psychologically depressed and their growth affected due to the use of various Ammunitions. According to an estimate, every fifth woman of the Pashtun tribal belt is psyche patient because the maximum numbers people were killed in this decade's long war (Rana, 2013)

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan created fears and anxiety among Pakistan that they would be the next target. The government of Pakistan and its intelligence agencies believed that after a stable position in Afghanistan, Moscow would try to expand its rule beyond the border of Afghanistan. It was also apprehended that the Soviet Union would use Afghanistan as a base to destabilize Pakistan to reach warm water in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan had no other option except to support the resistance movement that emerged during the Soviets Union interventions. General Zia, with the

support of the USA decided in 1979 to support the Afghan Mujahedeen on every field and the intelligence agencies of Pakistan started a guerrilla war against the Soviet Union army. Pakistan trained these Mujahedeen in Pakistan By providing modern ammunition and tactics of warfare to defeat Soviet Union on every cost. The United States of America also Supported Pakistan to take revenge of Vietnam from Soviets Union where she was badly defeated (Report, 2011).

These never-ending wars, militancy, Islamic extremism, and human sufferers are only Pashtuns, though they are in majority in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the northern part of Pakistan and Afghanistan. During the 1980s, the Pashtun generation paid a high price of their lives and families that was imposed on them. Initially, during the Cold War conflicts between the two super power, former the Soviet Union and the USA turned this territory into a war zone, and later on, the fight between the Islamists and West made them impoverished, displaced and stranded. They were confused which country to side with and which one to go against. Though they hated wars and Always in search of peace or in search of peace time and again. They were forcefully pushed towards fighting and conflicts (Daily News, 2018).

Zia's Islamization process further weakened the stance of Pashtun nationalism. Due to his Islamization policy, he became very popular in Pashtun populated areas and was called *Mard-e-Momin*. The main objective of his Islamization policies was to prolong his rule and to defeat the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The insertion of Islamic studies and Arabic into the curriculum increased the religious thoughts in the Society. The government further cultivated its Islamic inclinations, and a large number of mosques and madrassas were established instead of schools, colleges, and universities (Arif, 1995).

These steps not only curtailed the Pashtun nationalism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but also affected them mentally. On both sides of the borders, Pashtuns were affected whether they participated in this war or remained silent. They were used as fuel in this war against the Soviet Union. Since the Soviet Union invasion in Afghanistan, Pashtuns are struggling not only against religious extremism but also trying to protect their cultural values and identities. The situation became worst when the Pashtun community had only two choices: they were whether to remain silent or join hands with the extremist. Majority of the Pashtun community remained peaceful during the Afghan war and they followed the philosophy of Non-violent movement or non-violence policy of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Majority of the people from either peaceful or practicing religious extremism affected psychologically or physically due to this militancy and extremism (Baba Khel, 2014).

### **Religious Factor**

Religion remains a dominant element in general in Pakistan and in particular in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The religious feelings and religious stakeholders have played a vital role in military and political affairs in Pashtun populated land for more than a century. Particularly, during the external invasion or occupation, the slogan of *Jihad* (holy war) and the role of religious clerics remained powerful and important. The trend of Jihad on Pashtun land is not new. During the seventeenth century, it was used against Sikhs and later on against the British Empire. Whenever the religious clerics called the loyal and peace-loving Pashtun Whenever they made a call for jihad, they never rejected their offer. The Pashtun community has deep interaction with religion and they will never allow anyone to disrupt their religion. Religion and nationalism always remained side by side in Pashtun culture. They (Pashtuns) tried to adopt both, but wars and extremism badly affected Pashtun nationalism (Hyman, 2002).

Religion has played a vital role in suppressing the Pashtun nationalism, though religion is not harmful in itself, its followers misused it. Religion has a deep impact on the Pashtuns since long and normally they got their identity through religion. The Pashtun were inspired and encouraged in 1948 against India in occupied Kashmir, in the wars of 1965 and 1971 against India on religious grounds. The era of Gen Zia, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the post-9/11 episode made the Province of NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) provided bases for safe haven that caught the attention of the entire world. The Mujahedeen (extremists) were once trained and prepared against Soviet Union, then against the USA. In the post-September 2001 attacks. They were categorized into two groups i.e. good and bad Taliban. (Talbot, 2005).

### **Extremists as Pashtun Nationalists.**

Some scholars and writers are of the opinion that the Taliban (religious extremist) represent and express the Pashtun nationalism. Robert D. Kaplan calculated it briefly, claiming in the retaliation of Topography 'the Taliban established simply the latest manifestation of Pashtun nationalism. It is easy to understand why this view has gained value (Kaplan, 2008). Another critical journalist Michael J. Totten points out while mentioning the ostensible ethnic module underlying Talibanization. Virtually, all the land that may be under the control of the Taliban or influenced by them is Pashtuns. The religious extremist (Taliban) are also looking and express their views as Pashtun nationalist. Their stance is that they represent the illiberal movement of Islam that was presented in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Presenting the shining ideology, the religious extremist succeeded to gain the support of common masses in Pashtun populated areas and the ethnic factor was tough and difficult. They gained great support while using the banner of Islam for the sake of Pashtunistan across both sides of the Pak-Afghan border. The religious extremist as well the verdant Pashtun were attracted by the Islamic slogans and they actively took part in the war against the Soviet Union (Saigol, 2012).

There is a group among media and Scholars who tried to interlink the religious extremist Taliban with Pashtun Nationalism. This section of the society see and read only one side of the history and mislead the people through their one-sided and partial study that religious extremists are Pashtun nationalists. Looking at the current picture on the basis of ground reality and history one can understand and argue that the religious extremists on both sides of the border in Pakistan and Afghanistan are the mere production of the Pakistani state that can be used for proxy war in Afghanistan and other parts of the region. They were also useful to suppress and disturb the nationalist forces among the Pashtun as well as to destroy the Pashtun culture, values, and identities on both sides of the Durand line. This all is the part of the Pakistan's foreign policy to achieve their objectives controlled by the military establishment (Taj, 2010).

### **Sectarian Cause**

Sectarian diversity is upheld as another Pashtun value that has been violated by the Extremists. Most Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims while a significant minority is comprise the Shi'ite sect. For centuries the two sects lived in Peaceful coexistence until the Taliban, with their homogenized vision of Muslims and Islam, chose to impose their Wahhabi-Deobandi brand of religion on all others. Inter-marriages among Sunnis and Shi'ite Muslims were accepted as part of Pashtun communities. Sunni Pashtuns participated in *Ashura* ceremonies and helped in their arrangements. Many Sunni Pashtuns believed that it was a sign of good omen to attend Shi'ite ceremonies like the Ashura as one's hopes and wishes would be fulfilled. The extremist forces, however, consider Shi'ite Muslims as Kafirs (infidels) liable to murder. The extremist, particularly singled out the Shi'ite soldiers of the Pakistan Army for beheading when they were captured.

However, it is also true that for a large number of Pashtuns, the Shia-Sunni problem did not exist; instead, what one witnessed was tribal rivalries which came to be cloaked in sectarian garb 'in the heat of the moment' was the Saudis and Iranians to leave the Pashtun to their own devices and were the government of Pakistan willing to fulfil its constitutional obligations and repel the ideological intervention of these two countries, it is possible to argue that the Pashtunwali code would suffice to resolve the sectarian tensions – as indeed it has for long (Ali, Nasir & Ullah, 2015).

Afghan war not only deteriorated the Pashtun culture and values of Afghanistan but also adversely affected Pashtuns living in Pakistan. The Wahabi and Shiites proxy wars fuelled religious extremism in Pashtun society too. Some of the Islamist parties in Pakistan are also responsible for mainstreaming religious nationalism laced with extremism. Both the interior and foreign policies of Pakistan provide ample space for extremism. The books and syllabus, the teaching faculty hired for certain objectives transformed the Pashtun society. Pashtuns always rejected and opposed sectarian violence during history, the Sunni and Shia lived like brothers in the region. But unfortunately, during the last three- Decades, sectarian violence was injected in the Pashtun areas (Dara Adam Khel, Kurram, Kohat, Dera Ismail Khan etc) with the emergence of religious extremism. This brings severe hatred and clashes between Sunni and Shia, where hundreds of innocent people became a victim of religious extremism (Naseer, 2018).

### **Destruction of Jirga**

The Jirga was a part of Pashtun nationalism. The Jirga was a council of elders in the Pashtun society and people strictly followed its decisions. The first attempt of the extremist was to suppress and target the members of *Jirga*. This institution evolved from the very beginning in Pashtun history and has a credible reputation in the society. The extremist and its supporters recognized that if the Jirga opposed their manifesto then they would not be able to launch and achieve their aims. The Jirga opposed the vicious manifestoes of religious extremist as they understood that it was the experience as was used during the Soviet Union. Thus various Jirgas were attacked by Suicide bombers and its members were killed. The militant makes an organized policy against Jirga and they started attacking Jirgas. In 2010, a Jirga that was held in Mohmand District was attacked by a suicide bomber in which 104 tribesmen were killed. The elder (*Mashar*) of Jirga is respected as a symbol of unity and peace in the family. The Mashar of the family has a strong chain of command that Strengthen collectivism and is a good gesture of Pashtun society. Though the extremists wanted to impose their imported Shura from the Arab. Jirga, still the weakening of Jirga means weakening of Pashtun nationalism (Adamec, 2011).

### **Destruction of the code of Pashtunwali**

The Taliban are accused of violating another set of Pashtun values that have been held dear for centuries. These are family values that are defined and articulated within the Code of Pashtunwali. Disregarding age-old traditions, the extremists' omnipotence in cultural matters cuts at the very core of family values of the Pashtun. For example, a woman's appearance and mobility in the public sphere were matters that were adjudicated by the family, which alone had the right and privilege in these matters. With the emergence of the Taliban, however, the control over women's clothing and movement has passed out of the hands of families – although male kin – to unrelated men, who physically coerce women to wear the *Burqa* or determine their movement in the public arena. There are examples from various cities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where Taliban have forbidden women from going to shopping or stepping out of their homes. They have kidnapped and killed various women and blamed them that they were working for NGOs, which is much against the religion Islam. Some were blamed with prostitution, but the main cause was to frighten women going to schools and colleges (Hawkins, 2009).

*Hujra* (common room for guest) was a traditional code of Pashtunwali and was affected during the rise of religious extremism. Hujra was considered an alternate dispute resolution mechanism in Pashtun areas. But the barbarian extremist also weakened and declined it. They mostly attacked and kidnapped people from hujras which created fears among the Pashtun people. There was a concept of *Lashkar* in the Pashtun Society that was also a code of Pashtunwali. The responsibility of Lashkar was to protect their community from external threats. Lashkar mostly consisted of brave and worriers of that area (Babakhel, 2018). Besides these, there are other codes of Pashtunwali that have been destroyed and suppressed by the extremists. i.e Dhol, Attan, folk songs, etc.

### **Ban on Women and Education**

Women's education is a part of the strengthening of every society. No nation of the world can become stronger until their women are educated and developed. The Pashtun leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar said: "If you want to know how civilized a culture is, look at how they treat its women" ([https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Khan\\_Abdul\\_Ghaffar\\_Khan](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Khan_Abdul_Ghaffar_Khan)).

After the emergence of the Taliban, the extremists targeted women. They threatened females who wished to get education. They spread the message in various areas that without the veil (hijab) no female will be allowed outside to their schools and colleges. After September 11, 2001, in Malak and Mullana Sufi Muhammad announced that anyone is allowed to take in Nikah any female who is working with NGO's. The militants attacked girls' schools and colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Thousands of girls' schools and colleges were destroyed with bomb blasts (Khan and Naz, 2012).

Female education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is very low as compared to other provinces and the reason is that the continued militancy in the region. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, most of the females were not allowed to get education. They were frightened and their schools were destroyed. Besides Kohistan, Dir, Swat and Tribal Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the proper areas of Peshawar and Charsadda female education were threatened and considered against the teaching of Islam. Although female education ratio was already low in the Pashtun belt but it came to its lowest ebb with the emergence of militancy

In a nutshell, various other factors impacted Pashtun nationalism are:

1. Lack of Education.
2. Lack of Pashtun Leadership.
3. Negative Role of Media.
4. Economic Factors.
5. Modernization and Competition for Resources.
6. Demographic factor.
7. Destruction of Pashtu Music and Literature and External Factors etc. all these factors have impacted the Pashtun nationalism in one shape or another.

### Conclusion

All the above-mentioned factors have played negative role in declined and destruction of Pashtun nationalism. But one thing is clear that after passing through such hard and planned strategies made against nationalism, the revival of Pashtun nationalism emerged with more power and strength. The Pashtun nationalists and nationalism increased and people from other communities supported their demands. The current wave of Pashtun nationalism is a link against Past policies and attitude of the government. The revival of Pashtun nationalism is a blessing in disguise for the Pashtun community. The unity of Pashtun is the need of the time for their genuine demands and rights given by the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973.

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