

Militancy and Pashtun Culture: Challenges and Developments in Pashtun Society in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Wasai¹, Jawad Ullah² & Abida Bano*³

1. Taxila Institute of Ancient Civilisations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
2. Department of International Relations, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Pakistan.
3. Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, Pakistan.

Received: June 07, 2019

Published Online: September 28, 2020

Abstract

The invasion of Afghanistan by the former USSR in 1979 led to violent conflict in the country with severe implications for all neighbouring countries along with Pakistan. Within Pakistan, the most affected people are the Pashtuns bordering Afghanistan. The armed conflict, which started after the USSR invasion, continues to this day. Among other aspects, this conflict has severely affected the social and cultural values of Pashtun society. Due to the continued militancy and extremism in the region, the historical Pashtun social institutions and norms like Jirga, Melmastia (hospitality), and Badal (revenge) has undergone drastic changes alongside profound effects Pashtu literature. This paper attempts to answer the question as to what changes did occur in Pashtun socio-cultural institutions and literature because of continuous militancy during the last several decades. For this research, the researchers used qualitative research methods and used both primary and secondary data. The primary data includes original works of writers and individual in-depth interviews with experts, while secondary data entails a systematic review of the scholarly published data. The study found that the ongoing militancy has severely affected the social fabric of the Pashtun society. It has changed Pashtun social institutions like Jirga, Melmastia, revenge, and literature significantly.

Keywords: Pashtun Social Institutions, Impact of Militancy, Pashtun Culture, War on Terror, Social Structure.

1. Introduction

The militancy (militant refers to someone who is in combat or war to pursue their political cause)¹ in the Pashtun region started in the aftermath of the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 continues to haunt the region to this date. More specifically, the Pashtun population dwelling in the borderland is the worst victims of the ongoing militancy and radicalism. Thousands of people have been killed so far, and the bloodshed continues. Following the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan, the Pashtun areas,² mainly those adjacent to the Pak-Afghan border, turned into a militancy hub. *Mujahedeen* from across the world who had got training and arms to fight against the Soviet forces and its allies in Afghanistan headed to the area. Thus, the Pashtun region attracted global attention during this period as it was being used for housing and training of fighters against the communist USSR. In the aftermath of the withdrawal of communist forces from Afghanistan and the collapse of the USSR, the power

vacuum resulted in a civil war between various Afghan armed factions struggling to get hold of the government. Taliban succeeded in taking control of most parts of Afghanistan (roughly three-quarters) in 1996, but the power struggle never stopped.

Moreover, the World Trade Centre's attack in 2001 and the subsequent US-led attack on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan brought the area into the limelight again because Osama bin Laden (allegedly responsible for 9/11 attacks) had sought refuge in Afghanistan at the time. The new fight was termed as "The US War on Terror."³ The War on Terror and reaction to this war from militant groups changed the border region socially, politically, and economically. The struggle for power and continuous insurgency in Afghanistan are the biggest hurdles in establishing peace in the region.

It has been established that armed conflicts leave severe impacts on society's socio-cultural, economic, and political aspects (Moser & Clark, 2001; Watkin, 2004; Haer, 2019). Like any other conflict in the world, the armed conflict in the Pashtun region has also resulted in dire repercussions for the region's people. The perpetual militancy and insurgency have killed thousands of people in the Pashtun belt and severely impacted the region's economy, politics, society, and culture. This paper critically examines the Pashtun culture's disruptions because of militancy and the subsequent changes in Pashtun social structure, especially after 1979.

The rise of political Islam destabilized the traditional power structure in many Islamic countries and led to the emergence of armed groups engaged in illegal economic and political activities. Similarly, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and its associates across the border made substantial efforts to introduce a way of life informed by a particular interpretation of Islam, which seriously affected the traditional Pashtun values and social institutions such as *Jirga*, *Hujrah*, *Masharwali* (leadership) among others. This wave of militancy also resulted in a profound impact upon Pashtun literature as the earlier topics of love, patriotism, and honor, to some extent, were replaced by words like a drone, bomb, suicide bomber, jet fighter, Taliban. Thus, this study asks the central question, "how and why have militancy negatively affected the Pashtun values, social institutions, and literature?"

While writing this paper, the authors have in mind some exciting objectives aligned with the research question. The primary objective of this research is to measure the impacts of militancy on Pashtun's socio-cultural life. For this purpose, a multifaceted inquiry was conducted to ascertain the changes taking place in the socio-cultural institutions of *Jirga*, *Melmastia*,⁴ *Badal* (revenge), language and literature, music, and other socio-cultural values. The study's purpose is to highlight the significant impacts of the ongoing militancy on Pashtuns' socio-cultural institutions, values, and literature. Based on extensive literature review and individual interviews with experts and local people, the researchers argue that the militancy has severely affected Pashtun social institutions, values, and literature to a more considerable extent. It is important to note that the study investigates the socio-political impacts of militancy and extremism on the Pashtun society of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

2. Research Methodology

The study uses a qualitative approach to answer the research question of how and why militancy affected Pashtun's social institutions, norms, and Pashtu literature negatively? The researchers engage the triangulation approach and use in-depth individual interviews, focused group discussions, content analysis of the selected poems and prose pieces, and personal

observation to collect and analyse the data. The study uses primary and secondary data sources to build and support main arguments, which state that militancy in the region has severely affected the prevailing social institutions and norms of Pashtun society. Moreover, it has changed the Pashtun literature in a way that symbolizes violence and extremism. A total of 30 in-depth individual interviews were conducted with experts and local people, including Maliks, religious figures, academics, literary figures, and journalists that make the study's main primary data component. The researchers also conducted three focused group discussions with students at different educational institutions to incorporate youth's perspective on the issue at fore.

Moreover, the focus group discussions' purpose was to get a deeper understanding of the subject matter and make the study diverse and represent all the significant sections of the population. The study sample has been selected through the convenience sampling method (non-probability sampling), which is appropriate for the volatile Pashtun context. A content analysis of the selected poetry and prose of well-known writers also contributes to the study. Lastly, a personal observation also helped to support the evidence collected through multiple research methods. The researchers also consulted scholarly books and articles published in different research journals, newspaper articles to substantiate the primary data.

3. Militancy and Pashtun Culture: Impact on Language, Literature and Poetry

3.1. Elements of Violence in Pashtun Language and Literature

The literature is an essential component of any culture. Like other cultures across the world, Pashtun culture is also rich as far as the role of literature is concerned. Writers and poets are considered the most watchful and alert individuals to any transformation in the social fabric. The same is also applicable to Pashtun writers and poets. Pashtun literature has a long history and has played a significant role in perpetuating Pashtun values and keeping them alive for centuries. However, the continued militancy in the region has affected the topics of poetry tremendously. The poets who used to spend hours talking about the marvels of their beloved's beauty were now forced to look away and speak about blood, bombs, and insane violence at their doorstep. Renowned Pashtun poet Muntazir Bhattani, while explaining this phenomenon, observes that poets aptly express their community's sufferings. He further adds that "it is the moral responsibility of a genuine poet and writer to represent the thoughts and feelings of their community (Pashtun poetry collection, 2016)."

Following the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror, which adversely affected Pashtun land, Pashtun literature has experienced substantial changes. During the last few decades, Pashtun literary figures have profusely written on various shapes of terrorism that have wreaked havoc on the daily life of Pashtuns and inflicted severe damages to their cultural, social, and political set up (Pashtun poets versify militancy, 2012). According to Bhattani, Pashtun fiction, poetry, and prose have experienced a tremendous change during the last three decades owing to the war-like situation in the entire region, especially in the Pashtun belt (Pashtun poetry collection, 2016).

The violence, explosions, suicide attacks, drone strikes, and aerial bombardment on Pashtun areas compelled Pashtun writers to give up on evergreen topics like the beauty of nature, love, romance, silky hair, and rosy cheeks of the beloved. Instead, they focused their poetry on issues like severed limbs, broken families, displaced persons, and war-torn infrastructures like Mosques, Hujras, and schools (FRC, 2012). Pashtun literary figures devoted so much time and

energy to this new reality of Pashtuns' life that only in the first seven months of 2011, more than 100 poetry collections of various poets were published (Buneri, 2012).

The Pashtu works published during the last few years, on the one hand, denounce and condemn violence while, on the other hand, raise demand for peace and stability of the Pashtun land. According to Rehmat Shah Sail, a contemporary Pashtu poet, poets get inspired by the happenings in their settings, and the occurrences are absorbed in their imaginations. That is why Pashtu poets write about violence in one way or another (Habib & Chitrali, 2016). Similarly, Darwesh Durrani, a well-known Pashtu poet, and teacher of literature, says that it is not the poets' choice to write about war and violence. Instead, they are compelled to do so by the incidents around them (FRC, 2014). It seems that this natural tilt of poets towards their surroundings that we notice frequently references violence in Pashtu poetry.

Ali Akbar Sayal, another well-known and one of the most outspoken among contemporary Pashtu poets, had envisaged the unfolding events even in 2000 when he brought out his work, '*Pa Jung De Oor Olagee*' (May the war go to Hell). Other important collections of Sayal include '*Daa Parharoonah Ba Gandal Ghawaree*' (The wounds need to be stitched), '*Ukhkay Ukhkay Musketub*' (The Teary Smile), '*Zamung Pah Kalee Ke Shar Mah Jurrawai*' (Do not create chaos in our village), '*Pah Guldaru De Warawal Orronah*' (Raining bombs on floral valleys) ("Pashtu poets versify militancy," 2012). In these collections, Sayal grieves the destruction and loss of human life in his land and wants the violence stopped. In one of his poems titled '*Akhtar*' (Eid), he writes, O day of Joy, take with thy message of peace and tranquillity; to the orphans whose fathers were massacred (FRC, 2012). The poet has kept a keen eye on the national and international scenario, undergoing rapid and devastating changes. Through these writings, the poet has tried to scrutinize issues surrounding the Pashtun community. He also suggests ways that will lead to peace and stability. In a poem titled '*Da Pakhtunkhwa Sail*' (A visit to Pakhtunkhwa), Sayal tells the readers that beautiful places like Swat, Dir, Malakand, Chitral, and Buner, being the abodes of the followers of Buddha, had never been familiar with savagery, extremism, and terrorism.

Israr Atal, another famous poet, in his collection '*Ziarray Mazeegaray Pha Pkhawar Ke Dey*' revolved around Peshawar – the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and remained Pashtuns' cultural centre for centuries. In one of his poems in this collection titled '*Khudaya Daa Ba Sah Kegee*' (O God! what will happen now), Atal states that Peshawar used to be the city of flowers; one can only see and smell explosions and bloodshed on its streets today. Similarly, Khan Mohammad Tanha's work '*Da Baarudo Pah Loogo Ke*' (In the smoke of explosives) is another bold venture of an emerging poet in which he has shed light on the severe implications of militancy. In one stanza, he writes that it is unfortunate that our people destroyed our Hujras and mosques and disfigured the peaceful image of our culture (Pashtu poets versify militancy, 2012).

Furthermore, '*Nah*' (No) is a famous work of Amjad Shahzad in which he out rightly rejects militancy and terrorism. He has zero tolerance for militancy and considers it as something alien to the Pashtun culture. In one poem titled 'Tragedy,' the poet writes that "Here people live in the shadows of hatred, why do you care for dawn, Amjad may be killed for telling the truth" ("Pashtu poets versify militancy," 2012). In a similar vein of thinking, Bakht Sher Aseer is another Pashtu poet who has written about the current mess prevailing in Pashtun land. In his work '*Baghi Fikruna*' (Rebellious thoughts), Aseer laments Pashtuns' vulnerability and paints a bleak future of his people, full of distress, frustration, and sorrow. In one of his poems, he

says that Islam is misused for personal gains and that innocent people are being killed in religion. Salim-ur-Rehman Salim is another literary figure who has highlighted the ongoing sufferings of Pashtuns. He says in one of his Ghazals; my beloved Allah knows what I pray for; I do not pray to get heaven and blessings; I want my homeland endowed with happiness and joys, where there are peace, ease, and relaxation (FRC, 2012).

According to Khattak (2012), a prominent poet, writer, researcher, the incident of 9/11 has also benefited Pashtu literature. He argues that Pashtu became rich by adopting new words related to modern technology. The Pashtu language's significance was realized globally, which resulted in several Pashtu language institutions in Europe and America. The West started research on Pashtuns and translated several Pashtu works into other languages, mainly English. Hundreds of Pashtu books were published with financial support from America (FRC, 2012).

3.2. *Jihadi Tarana (Jihadi Anthem) and Glorifying the War*

If, on the one hand, we have poets who long for peace and denounce warfare and militancy, some poets glorify 'Jihad' and compose poems, known as *Jihadi Tarana*, to support those fighting in the name of Islamic Holy War, on the other hand. In these Jihadi Taranis, the poets usually instigate people to get ready for waging 'Jihad.' The people are asked that it is a war between Islam and infidelity to support the Islamic cause (FRC, 2012). According to the experts, these Jihadi anthems were used to recruit more people by alluring them to Eden's gardens. The impact of these anthems was humongous among the rural Pashtuns.

3.3. *War on Terror and Pashtu Folklore Poetry*

In addition to above examples of poetry depicting the Pashtun society's sufferings and longing for peace, the impact of militancy can also be noticed in Pashtu folklore. In the wake of ongoing militancy, several concepts, terms, and phrases that were unknown to the ordinary people earlier have made their way to their ears through Pashtu folklore poetry. Terms like a suicide bomber, drones, war, terrorism, suicide blast, suicide jacket, terrorist, B-52, missile, and search operations are now commonly used in Pashtu language and folklore poetry (Khalil, personal communication, March 18, 2019). Words like these are now also used in *Tappa*, an old folklore tradition in the Pashtu language. The following examples will further explain the point:

Stragay day drone na kamay na di: Warta Talib Talib kedam eera ye krhama.

Your eyes are not less destructive than drones: I behaved like the Taliban and perished.

Za laka B-52 yo ghar bal dar pasay garzama: Ta shway Osama Ashna heis pata de na lagi.

Like a B-52 plane, I search one mountain after another. O my beloved, you, like Osama, have entirely disappeared.

It may be noted that the use of words related to war and weapons in Pashtu folklore poetry is not a new phenomenon. Many couplets (*tappas*) mention such words regarding the beloved's eyes, the separation between lovers, and the indifference of the beloved. The following few examples will hopefully substantiate our point.

Da stargo jang de wartha teeng sha: Kaga waga banhan pa zrh wishtal kaweena

It is a war of eyes (looks); so, be tough. The curled eyelashes target the heart (Khan & Nusrat, 2020).

Pa tor topak may wala yara: Dasay kho ma waya chay na de pejaanama

Do kill me with black gun o beloved. Nevertheless, please do not say that you do not know me.

Da tor topak wishtali jorh shawl: Da speenay khawlay wishtali weenay toya weena

Those who are injured by gunshots have recovered. However, those wounded by the lovely face of the beloved still bleed.

In the following paragraphs, some of the significant socio-political impacts of militancy on Pashtun society and the concept and practice of Pashtunwali have been analysed thematically. Pashtunwali, the literal meaning of the way of the Pashtuns, is a set of cultural codes, customs, norms, and values that regulate the Pashtun society and Pashtuns' way of life (Yousaf, 2019). Pashtunwali is the foundation of Pashtun society, and the Pashtuns practice it with religious zeal. It shapes a community's behaviour from the cradle to the grave (Khayyam et al., 2018). Though the world has witnessed significant change due to globalization, Pashtunwali is still given importance by the Pashtuns (Yousaf, 2019).

3.4. The Emergence of Music as a Tool of Resistance

Like other aspects of Pashtun cultural life, music also faced the wrath of the Taliban. They targeted musicians and music shops in the Pashtun region. Dozens of music shops came under attack from militants. In Charsadda⁵ alone, more than twenty shops were destroyed by militants till June 2007 (Haider, 2007). In November 2013, the Taliban torched more than one dozen shops in one week in the Swabi district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and North Waziristan (Babar, 2013). Militants not only targeted music shops, but they also waged war against musicians. For example, in December 2008, famous Pashtun singer Sardar Yousafzai was attacked by militants while traveling in his car in Malakand. He escaped the attack, but his harmonium player, Anwar Gul, died in the said attack (Buneri, 2013). Senior Pashtun singer Gulzar Alam also came under attack while Musharraf Bangash, another famous singer, was kidnapped (Babar, 2013). Most of the participants agreed that music had been one of the critical features of a peaceful Pashtun society. People used to arrange a music program in their Hujrahs, which will be open to all and sundry free of cost. However, the reign of terror by insurgents dented this practice, and many were shunned to continue the practice in the rural context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

It is interesting to note that the militants' attacks on music and musicians have brought unexpected fruits and motivated many young people to use music to symbolize resistance against extremism and militancy. These onslaughts on music and musicians led to a new form of Pashtun music, which has been called 'the Music of Resistance.' Many young singers emerged to reject the Taliban's worldview. In Pashtun society, traditionally, men and women from artist families used to adopt music as a profession. The situation has drastically changed as well-off, socially stable, and educated families wearing western dresses join this field. Being aware of the socio-political realities, these newly emerging singers compose their songs that harmonize traditions with modern times' demands. They promote the Pashtun narrative against militant discourse in the region. Thus, they are playing a pivotal role in regaining Pashtun cultural identity as peaceful and non-violent. The experts on Pashtun literature stated that the modern version of Pashtu music is the embodiment of peace and hope and represents Pashtuns' sufferings in a powerful and inspiring way. The emerging singers and performers participate in concerts in Europe, America, the Middle East, and Asia, which results in a revival of cultural consciousness among Pashtuns across the world. Buneri (2013) argues that Pashtu music and poetry have emerged as a resistance tool against the Taliban mindset.

4. Militancy and Pashtun Culture: Impact on Pashtunwali

4.1. Impact of Militancy on Jirga and Traditional Leadership

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent resistance by different militant groups supported and financed by international actors, including the United States, led to the emergence of a new leadership type in the Pashtun society, which replaced the traditional *Khan*,⁶ *Malik*,⁷ and *Speengiri*⁸ (respected white-bearded elders). The historical, social institution of Jirga did not go away but was led by a different set of people instead of traditional community leaders. Religious clerics and clergy became the new leaders of Pashtun society and administered and adjudicated the affairs accordingly. This new kind of leadership mainly came from Ulema (religious scholars and clerics) and military commanders (Qumandáns), both propagating Jihad (Barnett, 1995). As per the study respondents, the new version of leadership is competing with the traditional ways of leadership. However, the practice of traditional *Masharwali* is not extinct but poorly affected.

Furthermore, the commanders of resistance groups showed much-needed leadership abilities than the *Khans*, thus replaced them in guiding and leading the social relations in society. In the prevailing circumstances, access to arms, food, financial resources, and foreign militaries and organizations, primarily from Iran and Pakistan, became a precondition for leadership (Rezehak, 2016). As many traditional leaders failed to meet these requirements, they migrated to neighbouring countries and left their role to the newly emerging leadership (Kraml, 2012). The leaders had to physically lead the fighters (march with and accompany them in attacking the enemy). Hence, the physically strong and courageous leaders had the advantage, which enhanced their respect and glory in the fighters' eyes. The need to cover long distances on foot under challenging circumstances further strengthened the new leaders' position at the traditional ones' expense (Glatzer, 1998). The traditional tribal chiefs who preferred to shift to Pakistan after the USSR invasion tried to resuscitate the Pashtun-based Afghan national identity and resistance traditions, such as the Loya Jirga. However, the Afghan Islamists and the non-Pashtun groups successfully opposed this idea (Barnett, 1995).

The shift from traditional leadership to a new leadership type also occurred in Pashtun dominated areas of Pakistan after 9/11. The traditional Jirga was attacked in at least two ways. On the one hand, traditional Jirga gatherings came under attack from militants who believed that traditional Jirga was un-Islamic. For example, more than a hundred people were killed when a tribal Jirga at Ekka Ghund Bazaar, Mohmand Agency, came under attack from the Taliban on July 9, 2010 ("Suicide attacks in Mohmand kill 104," 2010). Similarly, four people lost their lives when a Jirga was attacked in the Mawra area in lower Orakzai Agency on November 3, 2013 ("Four killed as Jirga attacked," 2013). In Darra Adam Khel, forty tribesmen, including prominent elders, were killed when a suicide bomber targeted a Jirga on March 2, 2008 (Shakoor, 2013). These attacks aimed to discourage people from resorting to Jirga to resolve their issues and debase this key social institution's historical status in Pashtun culture. Instead, the leadership of Mullah and religious clerics has been established at the expense of traditional Jirga.

According to most respondents, militants replaced traditional elders as members of Jirga. The reign of terror, which these militants spread, compelled ordinary people to accept them as their new leaders. Thus, Jirga started functioning under militants' control. Even if some elders from the older portion still worked on Jirga, they were not free from the Taliban's influence. Unlike

in the past, Jirga lost its charm and reputation under the Taliban. People started to use these Taliban-led Jirga against each other. Thus, people who were well connected with the Taliban were better placed to decide their choice from these Jirgas. The militants' deliberate attacks have marred the credibility and egalitarianism of local Jirga in the Pashtun belt. Thus, Jirga's reputation as a neutral and impartial judicial body was severely tainted due to the Taliban's misuse of this centuries-old traditional body (Haji. S, Personal Communication, April 5, 2015).

4.2. Impact of Militancy on Melmastia (Hospitality)

Melmastia (hospitality) is a towering pillar of Pashtunwali. *Melmastia* means showing hospitality and deep respect to all visitors from outside without any expectation of remuneration or favour. Before discussing the impact of militancy on Melmastia, it is imperative to briefly discuss the difference of opinions among scholars about this concept's meaning. The concept of Melmastia has undergone tremendous changes due to the misrepresentation and misuse of the norm by militants. During a focused group discussion, the participants stated that seeking shelter by strangers with villagers was not a severe issue in the past. However, now people are reluctant to accept unknown persons as guests. The stay of foreign militants in ex-FATA brought a bad name to this norm and alerted people against providing shelter to unknown and unfamiliar people. The ex-FATA people have suffered due to the militancy and militants who initially took refuge with the local people but later acted to pursue their political agenda in the region. The state went after tribal people who had quartered and entertained militants under hospitality notions, while there have been cases of locals' killings by militants for providing shelter to 'spies' of government and NATO. This situation put the tribesmen between the devil and the deep sea. The respondent noted that the norm of Melmastia has changed since the misuse of the norm in Pashtun areas. People are more cautious and reluctant to trust strangers; thus, Melmastia is restricted to close friends and family in most Pashtun region parts.

The literature also extensively talks about the norm of Melmastia and its different notions among different people. According to Fair (2014), the culture of Melmastia, which she defines as unconditional hospitality, among the Pashtuns of ex-FATA, facilitated the militants to come from different regions and create safe havens there. Similarly, Rakisits (2008) claims that Pashtuns, under the concept of Melmastia, provide shelter to anyone who seeks it, irrespective of whether he is a criminal, friend, or enemy, provide militants space to settle down in ex-FATA. Ahmad Rashid (2014) writes that it was the concept that compelled tribesmen to fight against the government instead of handing over Arabs and other foreign fighters. On the contrary, Taj (2011) rejects these interpretations of the scholars mentioned above and believes Melmastia is conditional and peculiar. She argues that Melmastia is neither unconditional nor given to everyone who asks for it. If one involved in a blood feud asks for refuge as a guest, he is bound to surrender his weapons to his host and pledges never to target his enemy while enjoying Melmastia. The host can also impose additional conditions, keeping in view the prevailing circumstances. Failure on the part of the guest to fulfill the conditions can lead to the immediate withdrawal of the refuge under Melmastia. According to Taj, Bin Laden and Zawahiri's profiles do not fit the in the notions of Melmastia as they overpowered the locals and mercilessly killed those who opposed them (2011). After discussing the matter with FATA people, I conclude that Melmastia might have played some role in providing safe havens to militants, but the state's consent, whether tacit or explicit, also cannot be ignored while explaining the causes of militancy in ex-FATA.

Irrespective of whether the tribal people themselves provided refuge to militants or it was the state's policy, the sufferings of the innocent people of ex-FATA brought a significant change in the concept of hospitality. At present, people are not ready to provide shelter to unknown people. Everyone avoids being host to unknown and suspicious persons. Unlike past, Pashtuns feel reluctant while giving away food and any other facilities to those who stay at the mosques. It is a deviation from the past practice wherein all those staying at mosques would be treated as the whole community's guests. The village/family elders would offer food and stay to anyone staying at the mosque, but now this is not the case. Their elders instruct even young people to avoid unfamiliar persons.⁹

A related social norm with hospitality is Hujra.¹⁰ It is a centuries-old custom among Pashtuns to have a physical space by the house or in a locality to entertain those male visitors who are not related. Hujrah has played an essential role in the socialization of young men in Pashtun society. It used to be a central place in the village where men would express themselves freely. The reign of terror that engulfed the Pashtun society ruined this critical social institution. For the last many years, Hujra has been fallen out of favor. People feel insecure about expressing themselves in Hujras as doing so may put them in trouble. Uncertainty has reached such a point that a phrase has been coined stating that '*da dewaloono hum ghawgoona aw zhabay shawe di*' (now walls also have ears and tongues). It means that one can be punished for his views expressed in private conversations (Haji, 2015). The militancy has played havoc on Jirga, Melmastia, and Hujrah by scaring away people from them.

4.3. The Concept of Badal (Revenge) and Militant Discourse

Badal is another crucial component of Pashtunwali. Though it is usually understood in the context of revenge for a wrong done to someone, it also has its positive aspects. In favourable terms, it means reciprocity. Pashtuns feel proud and honoured to return the favour. In terms of revenge, it means harming the one who hurt one's honour. Revenge from one's opponents is considered a must for keeping self-honour. As far as taking revenge is concerned, there is no fixed timeframe for it. However, people never delay taking revenge on those who have harmed their honour in any way (Khan, 2016).

With the growing number of militants, the folks who had a badal on someone would join the militants and use their group force to avenge their honour. According to the research participants, hundreds of people have been killed by militants on one pretext or another. Many people exploited their association with Taliban or other militant groups to inflict losses, both human and material, on their opponents or rivals. They used the Taliban's platform for victimizing people on lame excuses (Haji, 2015). The study participants stated that instead of going for revenge, most of those who have been wronged are patiently waiting for the militancy wave to pass and then resort to revenge. The victims do not want to provoke Taliban/militants by taking revenge from those associated with them. Many people have been wronged, and those who did wrong to them are roaming around with impunity. Those wronged do not want to enrage the militants fearing they might inflict severer and further losses on them. It is customary to avenge honour at the first available chance; if one delays it, he faces social ridicule (*peghor*) that is considered worse than death in Pashtunwali. Thus, waiting for the appropriate time rather than resorting to badal at once reflects a change in Pashtun behaviour. Also, the social norm of badal has been misused and abused by many in association with the region's militants and insurgents. Hence, it is difficult to distinguish between badal and oppression of the weaker in some cases.

4.4. Trampling of Centuries-old Unwritten Values (Targeting Mosques, Funeral Prayers, Jirgas, Slaughtering of Humans and Punishing Women in Public)

The emergence of the militancy in the post 9/11 period also severely affected some of the conventions and traditions, which Pashtuns have been following for centuries. Bomb blasts in Jirgas, mosques and funeral prayers, slaughtering of human beings, and punishing women in public spaces are alien to Pashtun social values. Unfortunately, these violations of centuries-old socio-cultural values did take place in recent times due to militancy. For example, on February 29, 2008, at least 38 people lost their lives in Mingora when a suicide bomber blew himself up during the funeral prayer of a police officer who had earlier been shot dead in Lakki Marwat, one of the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Carnage at slain officer's funeral, 2008). Similarly, in March 2011, more than three dozen people were killed in Adezai, Peshawar, in a suicide blast at the funeral prayer of an anti-Taliban militia chief (Anti-Taliban militia targeted, 2011).

In Pashtun society, the sanctity of Jirga has been historically established. It typically consists of older male individuals who command immense respect (for age, social status, integrity). Therefore, Jirga has always been held in high regard, and its word is as good as law in Pashtun culture. Ignoring and disregarding Jirga's verdict has its costs, such as social ridicule, ostracism, shaming, and social boycott, among others. Jirga's paramountcy can be viewed from the fact that even blood enemies sit face-to-face in Jirga, refraining from resorting to violence or attacking each other. Keeping in view Jirga's inviolability within Pashtun society, one can safely say that the Taliban's attacks on Jirgas were not only against Pashtunwali, but they were attacks on Pashtun cultural values (Shakoor, 2013).

The study participants stated that the militants in the Pashtun region, though believed to be fighting a holy war against infidels, even did not spare mosques declared as sanctuaries and viewed as sacred as the house of Allah in Islamic teachings. Thus, it is hard to believe that militants hold on to an ideology that utterly denounces the sacrilege of mosques. In Pashtun culture, mosques have been respected and taken care of by the community members voluntarily. Those who would stay at the mosques would be treated as guests of the whole community. However, the repeated attacks on mosques scared away many, and its social value is seriously affected by militancy. In September 2016, a suicide bomber targeted a Friday congregation in Payee area of Mohmand Agency in which at least 25 worshipers were killed. A Taliban splinter group known as Jamatul Ahrar claimed responsibility for the attack (Momand & Jibrán, 2016). There have been many attacks on mosques in which hundreds of people have been killed.

Furthermore, women in Pashtun society have always enjoyed great respect and honor. Protection of women against punishment and mistreatment in public has been one of the core values among Pashtuns. In Pashtun society, women's spaces are exclusive and kept out of reach from unrelated male members. However, the Taliban violated this norm when they flogged a teenage girl in Swat in 2009. The Taliban alleged that the victim girl left her home with a male who was not her husband (Shakoor, 2013). Thus, in the name of their preferred version of Islam, the Taliban damaged a core Pashtun value. Nevertheless, people strongly reacted to this incident as they thought it was an attack on their fundamental socio-cultural values - Pashtunwali. A strong reaction against women's public humiliation by the Taliban in Swat attempted to repair the damage militants have caused to Pashtun culture.

Pashtun's conduct to wage war or take revenge is guided by certain clearly defined principles that even their enemies were compelled to acknowledge. Deceit, treachery, or any other unethical behaviour while dealing with enemies is considered against the concept of honour, and the one who does so is considered a coward. In Pashtun society, if someone must take revenge, he must wait for an appropriate occasion. The revenge is not to be taken on one's soil; neither will they attack their enemy if he is in the company of women and children (Haji, 2015). Taliban violated these norms as they even targeted women and children in the markets and educational institutions.

5. Conclusion

The Pashtun society in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, erstwhile FATA and Balochistan has been under attack by militancy and terrorism for last more than three decades now. This militancy has deeply affected important aspects like politics, economy, and socio-cultural life of Pashtun society. In other words, the entire social fabric of Pashtun society has been torn apart. The centuries-old Pashtun socio-cultural institutions like Jirga, Melmastia, Badal, and Hujra have undergone visible changes under the influence of perpetual militancy in the region. Moreover, the Pashtu language and literature have also been affected by it. Unfortunately, these social institutions' transformation was not smooth and gradual; instead, it was abrupt and a gross violation of the historical socio-cultural values. The change was so unpredictable and quick that many people think it pushed the new generation far away from their forefathers' fundamental values. However, some unexpected results of militancy entail the emerging Pashtu music and musicians actively contributing to the resurgence of peaceful and effective socio-cultural values and institutions of Pashtun society.

References

- Babar, M. (2013, November 13). Pashtun Music Bazaars Still Being Targeted. *Radio Free Europe*.
https://www.rferl.org/a/pashtun_music_bazaars_still_targeted_islamists/24389584.html
- Buneri, S. (2012, January 19). Pakistan: Poetry Fights Back. *Boston Review*.
<https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/pakistan-poetry-fights-back>
- Buneri, S. (2013). Taliban Militancy: Replacing a culture of peace. *TIGAH: A Journal of Peace and Development*, III, 63-80. <http://frc.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/4.pdf>
- Dawn. (2008, March 1). Carnage at slain officer's funeral: DSP killed in Lakki Marwat blast; 38 die in Mingora suicide attack. <https://www.dawn.com/news/291713>
- Dawn. (2016, April 1). Pashto poetry collection is termed the voice of people. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1249277>
- Dawn. (2012, February 25). Pashto poets versify militancy. <https://www.dawn.com/news/698312>
- Dawn. (2010, July 10). Suicide attacks in Mohmand kill 104: Peace Jirga main target. <https://www.dawn.com/news/858504>
- Express Tribune. (2011, March 10). Anti-Taliban militia targeted: 37 more funerals. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/129976/blast-in-adezai-near-peshawar/>
- Fair, C. C. (2014, May 28). Drones, Spies, Terrorists, and Second Class Citizenship in Pakistan. *Small Wars and Insurgencies*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09592318.2014.894061?needAccess=true>

- FATA Research Centre. (2012). Extremism & Radicalization in FATA: Impacts on Culture. http://frc.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Culture_Seminar_Report.pdf
- FATA Research Centre. (2014). Impact of War and Terror on Pashto Literature and Art. <http://frc.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Research-Report-5-final-dated-March-21-20141.pdf>
- Glatzer, B. (1998). Being Pashtun – Being Muslim: Concepts of person and war in Afghanistan. In Glatzer B. (Ed.), *Essays on South Asian Society: Culture and politics* 83-94. Das Arabische Buch. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/being-pashtun-being-muslim%3a-concepts-of-person-and-glatzer/c53e380a134917a257013caa7d7cddb4a1cd6572?p2df>
- Habib, H. & Chitrali, J. A. (2016). The Effects of War on Terror on Pakhtun Nationalistic Identity in Pakhtu Poetry. *Pakistan Journal Peace & Conflict Studies*, 1(1),1-14.
- Haer, R. (2019). Children and armed conflict: looking at the future and learning from the past. *Third World Quarterly*, 40(1), 74-91.
- Haider, Z. (2007, June 13). Pakistan "Taliban" bombs shops in morality bid. *Reuters*. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/pakistan-talibanisation/pakistan-taliban-bombs-shops-in-morality-bid-idUKNOA34792920070613>
- Khan, S., & Nusrat, A. (2020). Cognitive semantic study of Pashto folklore, the Landay. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, 14(2), 61-80.
- Khayyam, U., Ullah, E. I., & Shah, S. (2018). Socio-cultural dynamics and their relation with the participatory development in the Pashtun tribal society of Pakistan. *TRAMES: A Journal of the Humanities & Social Sciences*, 22, 173-184.
- Momand, S., & Ahmad, J. (2016, September 16). Suicide bomber kills at least 25 in Pakistani mosque. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-attack/suicide-bomber-kills-at-least-25-in-pakistani-mosque-idUSKCN11M141>
- Moser, C. O., & Clark, F. (2001). *Victims, Perpetrators Or Actors?: Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rakisits, C. (2008, April 25). Pakistan Tribal Areas: A Critical No Man's Land. *Webster University*. Geneva. http://www.geopolitical-assessments.com/Pakistan_s_Tribal_Areas.pdf
- Rashid, A. (2014, April). The Taliban: Transformation from Pashtun Nationalism to Religious Nationalism. Pakistan Institute of International Affairs. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/44988688.pdf>
- Roland, R. M. (2012). Changes in Pashtun Tribal Structure since 1978: The Influence of War Foreign Militaries and Militant Political Islam. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis). The University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria.
- Rubin, B. R. (1995). *The fragmentation of Afghanistan: State formation and collapse in the international system*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Rzehak, L. (2011). Doing Pashto: Pashtunwali as the Ideal of Honourable Behaviour and Tribal Life among the Pashtuns. *Afghan Analyst Network, Thematic Report*. <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/20110321LR-Pashtunwali-FINAL.pdf>
- Shakoor, A. (2013). Pakhtun Cultural Values, Terrorism, and the Contextual Meaning of Violence. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, 5(2), 61-86. <http://www.pjcriminology.com/publications/pakhtun-cultural-values-terrorism-and-the-contextual-meaning-of-violence/>
- Taj, F. (2011). *Taliban and Anti-Taliban*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- The News. (2013, November 4). Four were killed as Jirga attacked in Orakzai. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/amp/464827>

- Yousaf, F. (2019). Pakistan's "Tribal" Pashtuns, Their "Violent" Representation, and the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement. *SAGE Open*, 9 (1), 1-10.
- Watkin, K. (2004). Controlling the Use of Force: A Role for Human Rights Norms in Contemporary Armed Conflict. *The American Journal of International Law*, 98(1), 1-34. doi:10.2307/3139252

Notes:

¹ Mariam Webster Dictionary defined.

² In this paper, Pashtun areas, Pashtun region, and Pashtun belt have been used interchangeably that refer to the adjacent areas and society (predominantly Pashtun) around the international border between Pakistan and Afghanistan (Durand line).

³ Emphasis added.

⁴ All the non-English words are italicized only once when used for the first time in this document.

⁵ One of no districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that is 18 miles away from Peshawar – the provincial capital of KP.

⁶ Khan refers to caste as well as social status in Pashtun society. Khans usually lead the social relations and command respect and obedience among the community members.

⁷ Maliks refer to those who run the social affairs of the society.

⁸ White bearded is the literal meaning. In the present context, the term refers to the older male members of Pashtun society who are respected for their experience and integrity, therefore accepted as leaders of the community.

⁹ Personal interview with a local elder on November 25, 2016).

¹⁰ A space where male guests and visitors are quartered and entertained in Pashtun society. Hujrah is a male exclusive space where all male visitors who are not related are housed.