
**Radicalization as a Result of *Pakhtuns*' Resistance in the Wake of War
against Terror**

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Abstract

This study is focused on the reinforcing factors of radicalization in *Pakhtun* society particularly in the wake of the current counter-terrorism strategies. It has been generally believed that poverty, illiteracy, the lack of democratic institutions and religious ideologies are reinforcing radicalization in *Pakhtun* society. It is argued in this article that *Pakhtuns*' resistance against the existing counter-terrorism strategies of USA and Pakistan also further fuels its process in this belt. We argue that the excessive use of force of coalition forces against terrorism in *Pakhtun* tribal society does not recourse to the prevalent cultural values. Resultantly, the current counter terrorism strategies not only have become ineffective, but have resulted in more radical trends among the *Pakhtuns* of the tribal areas of Pakistan.

Keywords: Terrorism, *Pakhtunwali*, *Pakhtuns* Resistance, Radicalization

Introduction

The terrorist attacked on September 11, 2001 resulted in a forceful response from the United States that led to a global 'War against Terror'. The United States and its allies adopted a unilateral policy of using excessive force to fight terrorism generally at global level and particularly in Afghanistan (Tan, 2009). Owing to the complex nature of the present-day terrorism, the existing counter-terrorism strategies¹ of the international community appear to have not been working properly to eradicate terrorism mainly because these strategies do not address the root causes of terrorism in the different parts of the world. The existing counter-terrorism doctrines are perceived to have failed

¹ Counter-terrorism strategy refers to the action and methods of a country that are intended to stop the activities of the people and groups who use violence to achieve political aims.

to eradicate the menace of terrorism; instead, the crackdown has been intensifying the problem of radicalization.

After 9/11, the United States and its allies attacked Afghanistan to eradicate terrorism. However, after more than fourteen years of fighting; they have been unable to ensure a desirable result that guarantees peace. The Taliban still presents themselves as a strong force not only in Afghanistan, but they have also extended their influence in the tribal belt of Pakistan. The US invasion and the resultant dismantling of the *Taliban* regime² in Afghanistan forced most of the terrorists shift to the adjacent Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan in search of safe haven (Johson & Mason, 2008; Mishali & Tellis, 2008). The government of Pakistan, as an ally in the global War against Terror, initiated military operations to curb terrorism in this region. The achievements made so far out of these military operations have been marginal in the terms of evolving and developing a local-based response to combat terrorism on permanent and viable basis (Khan, 2011). Such operations which are primarily based on using force or kinetic approach³ have failed to create a system wherein the local people could defuse the problem of terrorism by creating and utilizing anti-terrorist social networks through recourse to culture. These anti-terrorist operations of the state, while attempting to curb terrorists' activities, proved damaging to the traditional social chemistry and social fabric of the region. In other words, it caused disruption to the existing social organization of *Pakhtuns* society⁴ (Ahmad, 2010). Meanwhile, the global campaign against terrorism is facing a tough resistance within *Pakhtuns* society. Despite the hectic efforts of Pakistan and the United States, nothing is safe from the onslaught of terrorism, especially in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*. Therefore, the existing counter-terrorism strategies in the *Pakhtun* region need

²The Taliban are Islamic movement following a strict interpretation of *Sharia* who took over Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal.

³ Kinetic approach involves aggressive and offensive measures to eliminate terrorism.

⁴ In this study, *Pakhtuns* society refers to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan and *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa* the province of Pakistan. *Pakhtun* society is considered the largest tribal society of the world.

a major paradigm shift, one that addresses *Pakhtuns'* cultural sensitivities in order to tame *Pakhtun* resistance. As will be argued in the coming pages, the kinetic counter-terrorism approach in itself is a major factor putting the indigenous population on the way to radicalization.

Radicalization has emerged a new phenomenon in academic circle after 9/11. It is considered a complex behavioural issue caused by various socio-cultural factors. It is a situation where a groups or sometime society as a whole resort to violence in pursuit of certain political objectives (Rechared, 2010). In other words, radicalization is the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas that could lead to act of terrorism (Silber and Bhatt, 2007). It is immensely important to understand the underlying causes of radicalization. There is an increasing attention put on the need to understand the underlying grievances culminating into radicalization and the manner in which it has set the stage for future terrorism. This study is specifically focus on *Pakhtuns'* resistance in the front of coalition force and its radicalizing effects on *Pakhtun* society.

The article will provide necessary food for thoughts to the counter-terrorism experts to come up with new strategies based on more realistic grounds to effectively eradicate terrorism and militancy from this region. The study incorporates sociological knowledge in security issues and utilizes cultural paradigm to abate the susceptibility of *Pakhtuns* towards radicalization which exacerbates the problem of terrorism in this region. The study will help policymakers and other stakeholders to come up with new programs and seriously think about the problem of radicalization in the *Pakhtuns* society.

In the remainder of the article, we will first review the various factors which are believed to be causing and/or reinforcing radicalization in different parts of the world. This will be followed by a description of *Pakhtuns'* cultural values, or *Pakhtunwali*, which we believe has the necessary elements for promoting violence as well as peace. These cultural values or features will be further discussed to show how the current counter-terrorism strategies have

failed to build upon the social capital of *Pakhtunwali* and how this negligence on the part of state has resulted in even further radicalization of the Pakhtuns.

Reinforcing Factors of Radicalization

What lead to radicalization among people and groups has been a much debatable issue. It is a multi-faceted issue and any one factor alone may not fully explain the process of radicalization. In other words, radicalization is a product of many mutually reinforcing factors (McCauley and Mosalenko, 2008). Moreover, radicalization is a dynamic process that varies across individuals groups and locations. It may be driven by personal concerns and grievances at the local level or may be the result of international events. Despite the diversity of its causes, a number of scholars have argued that the most frequent and general factors which reinforce radicalization include poverty, globalization, political repression, identity crises, religion and political disputes of the Muslim world (Topnor, 2009; Assaad, 2011; Bjorgo, 2005; Berman, 2009 and Karatnychy, 2002; Krueger and Melekova 2004; Robb, 2007; Silber and Bhatt, 2007; Wiktorowicz, 2004). These common and general factors of radicalization have been explained in the following section.

It is argued that radicalization is more frequently found in developing societies (Ndikumana& Kisangani, 2005). It is believed that developing societies provide ‘enabling environment’ in the shape of socio-cultural and structural inequalities and sense of deprivation which precipitate and sustain the process of radicalization in developing countries. As a result of structural inequalities, it is observed that poor people are more susceptible to radicalization (Richardson, 2006). In other words, the people who are relatively deprived are more inclined towards radical means as compared to economically sound people (Bjorgo, 2005; Topnar, 2009; Andreas, 2011).

Globalization has brought abrupt changes within traditional societies. Most of the traditional societies and poor countries people are unable to adjust with these abrupt changes which have been occurred after the advent of globalization. This social unrest in the developing countries is considered one

of the causal factors of radicalization. Moreover, it is commonly observed that terrorism and radicalization might be found in countries which are in the mid- range of development (Ahmad, 2005; Andreas, 2011; Robert, Lieber and Ruth, 2002).

Local and international political situations and policies can also produce the sperms of radical views among the people (Reich, 2010). More often than not, in response to internal conflicts, the states are employing repressive tactics, which in turn decrease public support for the governments. The repressive tactics of the government provide more spaces to radicalization. In essence, the repressive government responses towards conflicts set a tune for radicalization.

Furthermore, identity crises within different ethnic groups are also considered the causal factor of radicalization (Chihu, 2005). The amalgamation of different ethnic groups as a result of globalization has increased the identity crises problem in the different parts of the world. Particularly, the identity crises are frequently found amongst the immigrants of Western countries. It is argued that the immigrant community cannot properly accommodate themselves with the liberal-democratic doctrines and the individual liberty of the West. Resultantly, most of the immigrants fall into identity crises which sometimes reinforce radicalization particularly in Europe. Especially, the mal-adjusted immigrants from Muslim countries or converted from other religions to Islam is comparatively more susceptible to it.

Directly or indirectly, religion is also a considered as causal factor of radicalization. It is argued that religious ideologies provide narratives through which anger is expressed against the government institutions after the emergence of conflicts (Bueno & Mesquita, 2005). Religion mostly has been exploited by different non-states actors for the political interests to provoke violence and radicalization. Such kind of exploitation can be seen in the different parts of the world. Non-state actors, sometime even state authorities, exploit religion and promote radicalization for their political interests.

Moreover, radicalization is more frequently found in Muslim countries mainly because of the existence particularly of political and regional disputes such as Kashmir, Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine (Mazer, 2008). The unwelcomed intervention of the West in Muslim majority countries infuriates the course of radical action against the non-Muslim states in the different parts of the world (Lieberman and Eisenberger, 2006).

However, the above mentioned factors do not cover all of the dimensions of radicalization, as it is happening in the Pakhtun belt of Pakistan where the United States and Pakistan are currently engaged in the war against terror. For instance, radicalization has been increasing in *Pakhtun* belt after the war against terror. In order to provide an alternative explanation for Pakhtuns' resistance, we will first outline some of the basic values of Pakhtun culture which we believe play a role in the continuing resistance of Pakhtun towards the coalition forces and promote radicalization in the region.

Pakhtuns' Cultural Values

The Pakhtuns or Pakhtuns are an ethnic group of nearly 40 million people spread across the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakhtuns are the second most numerous ethnic group of Pakistan (15%), mostly settled in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (Sanauddin, 2015). Some scholars such as Spain (1963) have called them 'the world's largest tribal society' because of their large number and their genealogical history which link all Pakhtuns to one common ancestor (Glatzer, 1998).

Several anthropologists have argued that the most important aspect of Pakhtun identity construction and maintenance is *Pakhtunwali*, the Pakhtun's ideal code of conduct (Barth, 1959; Ahmed, 1976; Glatzer, 1998; Lindholm, 1982). In Pashto language, "the ideal Pakhtun values, traditions, and rules of behaviour are summarised under the word "Pakhtunwali" (Sanauddin, 2015). According to the code of *Pakhtunwali*, Pakhtuns are ideally trusted and expected to act honourably, which has lead anthropologists to define

Pakhtunwali as “the way of the Pakhtuns” (Spain, 1962:25), “the code of honour” (Ahmed,1980), and “an ethnic identity-marker of Pashtun” (Gankovsky, 1973).

Pakhtunwali consists of some important codes of behaviour which are binding upon all the Pakhtuns. Some of these elements includes *Jirga* (assembly of the elders for the settlement of dispute), *Badal* (obligation to take revenge), *Nanawate* (to beg apology), *Nang* (standing for bravery and the honour), *Tigah* (standing for ceasefire among the rivals parties) and *Mailmastia* (hospitality) (Mason, 2009). The overall social and political spheres of *Pakhtuns*’ life are guided by this code (Rosen, 2011). Therefore, *Pakhtunwali* plays important role in Pakhtuns socio-political affairs. This code demands their followers to protect and preserve these cultural values and social fabrics at all cost.

Among the elements of *Pakhtunwali* such as revenge cannot be tolerated according to the spirit of *Pakhtuns* culture. Revenge must be taken for the restoration of honour in *Pakhtun* society. This is Pashto proverb that “Honor, *nang*, ate up the mountains and taxes, *qalang*, ate up the plains” (Ahmed 1975: 47). Honour refers to the great importance of revenge related to honour and shame as well as to the prevalence of blood feuds among tribal society. Feuds often arise on the basis of *Zer*, *Zameen* and *Zan*. They fight for decades against each other to take revenge from each other. Revenge is considered the integral part of their culture particularly of *Pakhtunwali* (*Pakhtun* code of conduct)

Further, *Pakhtunwali* guides interaction among clans, tribes and families in accordance with commonly held norms and regulates all aspects of individual social and political life (James, 1963). It establishes general principals who are culturally defined what to do with other fellow *Pakhtun* or the member of other communities. In essence, it establishes strong principals what to do and what not to do in a particular instance to define the legitimacy and illegitimacy of particular action. Therefore, it is considered a measuring rod to gauge socially approved and disapproved behaviours. It provides a

strong ethical code to ensure solidarity in the tribal society. The society gives punishment if someone deviates from this code of conduct. Therefore, it is considered the strong mechanism of social control.

Moreover, *Jirga* is considered the integral part of *Pakhtun* culture. *Jirga* is culturally developed social institution of *Pakhtun* society to resolve social, economic and political disputes. *Pakhtuns* are egalitarian by nature; therefore, everyone can participate in *Jirga* according to the spirit of *Pakhtun* cultural (Rudyard, 2009). Further, it is informal mechanism of conflict resolution, when any problem arises among the kin groups or among the tribes it can be resolved through *Jirga* institution in which all members sit in a circle to avoid any type of discrimination. In councils (*Jirga*), where most –but not all– of the mentioned issues are debated openly and conflicts possibly settled unanimously or arranged by informal lobbying. The decision taken by this institution cannot be violated. A person who deviates from *Jirga* decision then society gives punishment to them.

Moreover, *Pakhtun's* social life, politics, psyche and war can be described in the light of *Pakhtunwali* (Johson & Mason, 2008). It can set principles for each and everything especially, when conflict arises within their clans and tribes or with foreign invaders. In essence, there are important tenets of *Pakhtunwali*, which must be protected and followed by fellow *Pakhtun* in case of invasion. In this case, *Pakhtunwali* protect their culture from the influence of alien forces. If someone threatens their group identity, they act collective to protect it. It becomes collective responsibility for *Pakhtun*.

Pakhtun preferred normative structure rather than organizational structure. They resist the authority of the formal organization particularly when state organization is against the tribal norms they resist it. In this article, the existing state institutions also adopt policies which are against the tribal norms in the war against terror. For example, the existing kinetic approach not only provokes *Pakhtuns'* resistance but also damage the social-cultural fabrics of *Pakhtun* society. Resultantly, the damage caused to the cultural values and social fabrics of *Pakhtuns* due to the military operations provokes *Pakhtuns'* resistance and strengthens radicalization within the *Pakhtuns'* society. The new

trend of radicalization has been increasing after the emergence of war against terror in Pakhtun belt. The terrorist organizations on the global level have been increasing after emergence of war against terror.

***Pakhtuns* Resistance against the Kinetic Approaches**

The counter-terrorism strategies of the coalition forces against terrorism have been focused on *Pakhtun* society particularly on the tribal belt along Pak-Afghan border to defeat terrorists in this region (Amir, 2005). During the war against terror, *Pakhtuns'* cultural values and social organization have got attention of the academicians and scholars to give proper response to terrorism (Barfield, 2011). It is believed that *Pakhtuns'* cultural values attracted terrorist organizations like Takhrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Al-Qaeda and provide sanctuaries to them (Sabina, 2011; Abbas, 2009). Therefore, *Pakhtun* society and particularly, the Federally Administered Tribal Area of Pakistan (FATA) are considered a safe haven of the terrorist organizations (Burki, 2002). Resultantly, *Pakhtun* tribal society is considered a threat for local and also for the global peace. Moreover, the presence of terrorist outfits in the tribal belt has significant influence on the security of Pakistan.

In response to terrorism in the tribal belt, Pakistan as a major ally in the war against terror initiated military operations to curb its root on indigenous level. Initially, Pakistan was hesitant to start military operations on its soil against the terrorist organizations because these organisations did not pose a threat inside Pakistan. It is argued that Pakistan's army is trained only for conventional warfare against their neighbour country, especially India (Seth and Fair, 2010). Nevertheless, Pakistan counter-terrorism strategies reveals that it lacks a tangible strategies and so far has relied on ad hoc and incident to incident based approaches based on both military and non-military operations to fight the war against terrorism. Pakistan counter-terrorism strategies failed to understand the tribal dynamics which are necessary for an effective counter-terrorism strategy (Fair, 2009). The political, military and ideological forces of Pakistan have failed to come on the same page in order to adopt a clear stance

against terrorism in country. This is evident in the shape of some fundamental weaknesses in the counter-terrorism paradigm of Pakistan. Pakistan failed to build national consensus on the ownership of the war against terror; to create balance in civil and military relation; and to identify the exact enemy. It is argued that the existing security paradigm which is based on the excessive use of force provides cognitive and social infrastructure to terrorism particularly in the hotbeds of terrorism. Moreover, only the use of force does not work to dismantle the strong network of Taliban and other terrorists' organizations in the tribal belt (Mehsud, 2009).

Without proper homework, military operations were initiated in spite of certain reservations. Some of the famous operations include "Operation Kalosha 11, 2004", "Operation SherDil, 2008, 2008-2009", "Operation Rah-e-Nijat, 2009-2010", "Operation Rah-e-Haq, 2007" (Pakistan Security Report 2010). Despite these military operations, terrorist incidents have increased rather than decreased. Similarly, throughout the military operations, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has emerged as a strong terrorist organization. It is said that the growing strength of Taliban has compelled Pakistan to sign a number of truces with them. This also reflects the failure of Pakistan military against the Taliban. Meanwhile, the incidence of terrorism has increased gradually (Pakistan Security Report, 2009).

Therefore, the question arises that why the existing counter-terrorism paradigms do not properly working particularly in the tribal built? Along with other fundamental weakness in the existing counter-terrorism strategies, one of the major weaknesses is the failure of Pakistan to understand the application of *Pakhtunwali* (the cultural code of *Pakhtuns*) in the war against terror. *Pakhtunwali* not only guides *Pakhtuns* social interactions but it also sets principle for the use of power during war or conflict. For example, *Pakhtunwali* does not allow combatants to harm women and children during a conflict. They do not harm the property and home of the innocent people according to the tribal norms. The institution of *Jirga* ensures that those who violate these principles are punished according to the norms of *Pakhtunwali*.

Therefore, *Pakhtuns* resist all those state policies which are against the tenants of *Pakhtunwali*. *Pakhtun* resistance can be analyzed in the light of their cultural code. They must protect collectively their own cultural values according the spirit of *Pakhtunwali*. It is considered a social obligation for *Pakhtun* to protect cultural values, social organizations and their fellow *Pakhtun* against the alien forces. It is argued that *Pakhtun* behaviour cannot be altered by use of violence. They typically resist changes which impose on them by other forces. *Pakhtuns* highly valued their own independence. They have preserved their way of life for centuries; despite the efforts of some powerful countries for centuries. *Pakhtuns* conduct their lives according to *Pakhtunwali*. Independence is the historical norms of *Pakhtunwali*. Moreover, the presence of the past norms makes it difficult to alter or changes in behaviour (Swindler, 1979). Therefore, a group should resist a change that is being imposed on it against its will. Hence, independence is considered the historical norms of *Pakhtun* then the efforts of states by utilizing force to change the existing values and norms can generate resistance. It is argued in this article that the existing strategies create resistance due to its failure to understand *Pakhtuns* cultural values.

We argue that the existing strategies need to be changed to win the War against Terror in the tribal belt of Pakistan according to the spirit of *Pakhtun* culture. To sum up, the basic factor behind the failure of the current counter terrorism strategies is misunderstanding of *Pakhtuns* cultural values. Above all, it is still considered a lingering challenge for the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) to frame integrated counter-terrorism approaches in the light of the prevalent socio-cultural reality. The existing strategies are not relevant to *Pakhtun* cultural values and it bounce back in the shape of radicalization. In the following lines its radicalizing impact are explained in detail.

Radicalization as a result of *Pakhtuns*' resistance

As mentioned above, radicalization is considered a complex behavioural issue. Along with other factors of it *Pakhtun* resistance against the

coalition forces is also considered one the reinforcing factor of radicalization. The current counter-terrorism kinetic approaches set a tune for tribal resistance. The use of forces against terrorism without tribal consensus generates resistance against the existing counter-terrorism strategies. The current counter-terrorism strategies of Pakistan do not properly working to eradicate terrorism. These strategies and particularly in the kinetic approaches have some majors flaws. Among them the current approaches are not framed according to the spirit of *Pakhtunwali*.

Furthermore, the existing kinetic approaches of counter-terrorism harm the tribal values and people. Moreover, as a result of indiscriminate shilling a lot of local people have killed which in turn provokes *Pakhtuns* anger. *Pakhtun* revenge also considered one of the major factors which instigated *Pakhtuns* resistance. Likewise, the coalition forces have failed to understand the *Pakhtun* culture as their predecessor, the British. The reason behind the failure of coalition force might have been the misunderstanding of *Pakhtuns* resistance. Moreover, the current activities of the coalition forces have damaged the social chemistry and the traits of *Pakhtunwali* and it has also flared up violence i.e. suicide bombing and human slaughtering. Suicide bombing and human slaughtering has not been considered of *Pakhtun* ideal culture. We argued that these violent traits emerged as a result of *Pakhtuns*' resistance.

Pakhtunwali give emphasis on the protection of *Pakhtun* cultural values. If state imposes policies against their will then these policies can be resisted. However, the current kinetic approaches do not recourse to *Pakhtun* culture. Therefore, it infuriates *Pakhtun* revenge as a result of collateral damage in the war against terror. *Pakhtuns* homes are destroyed and they left their native places and their family member killed in the military operations. Therefore, the current kinetic approaches instigate *Pakhtun* resistance. In turn, *Pakhtuns* resistance provokes radicalization. It is argued in this article that most of the people in *Pakhtun* society joint the terrorist organizations for the sake of revenge rather than ideologically motivated.

Conclusion

Radicalization has different dimension because it is a complex behavioural issue. Various socio-economic and political factor fuels its process on the global level. It is argued in this article that flawed policies against terrorism further exacerbate the problem of radicalization in areas where the coalition forces are fighting war against terror. Most of the counter-terrorism strategies do not recourse to the prevalent cultural values of the Pakhtuns, especially in FATA. The counter-terrorism terrorism strategies of Pakistan have failed due to misunderstanding of Pakhtun cultural values. Resultantly, Pakhtun resists the counter-terrorism efforts of Pakistan. Pakhtun resistance to the coalition forces bounce back in the shape of radicalization.

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