Research Paper

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government[*]

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Abstract

After the fall of the republic in Afghanistan and the raising of the Taliban flag on the presidential palace, many thought that Afghanistan would GO back in time and return to the years before 2001. There WERE serious concerns about endangering the rights of women, the rights of ethnic-religious minorities, as well as the reappearance of foreign terrorist groups, especially Al-Qaeda, in Afghanistan. Considering these elements, many researchers question whether the Taliban has changed its principles, and whether or not the world is facing neo-Talibans. This study aimed to analyze the intellectual tradition of the Taliban with the framework of Laclau and Mouffe's theory, along with discourse methodology. The research examines the central signifiers of the Taliban discourse and their effect on the right of women, ethnic-religious, and foreign terrorist groups. The results indicate that the intellectual tradition of the Taliban is influenced by the powerful Pashtun culture of the governorate, which follows the three principles of honor, superiority, and hospitality, and affects the right of women, ethnic-religious, and foreign terrorist groups, along with the teachings of the Deobandy school.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Minorities, Pashtunwali, Peace Talks, Taliban, Women's Rights

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1. Introduction

Afghans refer to the period of civil wars as the period, during which a group of students, led by a religious teacher named Mullah Omar, engaged a in battle between political parties. This battle caused insecurity and many parts of Afghanistan came under their control in a short time. Until 1996, more than 90% of the territory of Afghanistan was under the rule of the Taliban. At first, the people of Afghanistan praised the Taliban for bringing peace and security to the areas under their control, but then, they were hated because of their social and religious policies, especially in the cities. The religious attitude of the Taliban was a crude combination of Salafi and Pashtunwali Islam. The religious interpretations of the Taliban were often individual and unconventional, and mostly remained in the same local customs in the garb of religion (Barfield, 2010, p. 408).

Taliban rules and practices were more acceptable in rural Afghanistan than in urban areas, as urban people received new training and were inconsistent with the traditional rural and conservative Taliban culture (Borhani, 1398 [2019 A.D.]). The Taliban view about the indicators, including the acceptance of womenṡ rights and the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, and support and non-support for foreign terrorist groups has been influenced by a discourse structure including tradition of the Pashtunwali tribe and radical Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. It is worth noting that the traditional discourse of the Pashtunwali tribe is superior to that of the radical Islam for Taliban. The radical Hanafi school of Sunni Islam plays a legitimizing and accelerating role in the Talibanṡ approach.

Women and ethnic and religious minorities suffered extremely bad conditions during the Taliban era (Ekhlasi, 2019). During their

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban
Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

373

rule in Kabul City, women were not allowed to leave their homes without their related men's permission, many women's public baths were closed, and girls were deprived of the right to study. Hazara ethnic minorities also view the rule of Taliban similar to that of Abdul Rahman because of various forms of discrimination perpetrated by the Taliban, and they view the rule of Taliban in Kabul as a black page in Afghaṅs history. The Sikh and Hindu religious minorities also do not have good memories from this period, as many of their religious centers were closed. During this period, Afghanistan became a safe haven for international terrorists, using Afghanistan as a safe haven for educational and sabotage activities against other countries. The Taliban's approach to the existing indicators continued after the collapse of the Islamic Emirate. In places controlled by this group, women did not even have a minimum set of rights; the Taliban did not fully comply with many issues, such as girls' right to education. The Taliban's support for al-Qaeda and other foreign terrorist groups is also evident, as the ties between the Taliban and al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups have not been cut since 2001, when the Islamic Emirate collapsed.

The authors of this study were present in Kabul on the day of the fall of the government on August 15, 2021, and saw Taliban soldiers patrolling the streets of Kabul. Therefore, the question that this study attempts to answer is the following: what are the central signifiers of the Taliban's discourse and what effects do these signifiers have on the rights of women, ethnic-religious minorities, and foreign terrorist groups? Based on the results, the intellectual tradition of the Taliban has three principles, including honor, supremacy, and hospitality, which affect the rights of women, ethnic-religious minorities, and foreign terrorist groups.

1. 1. Research Background

Sajjadpour and Salimifar (1399 [2020 A.D.]) analyzed the typological origins of the Taliban discourse and their intellectual concepts and illustrated that Taliban are not of the same nature in terms of discourse; the intellectual ideas of this group are rooted in the historical discourses of Afghanistan. These discourse roots can be divided into social and religious categories, which have commonalities and differences. The discourse of the Taliban was derived from the elaboration of previous discourse signs that remained or remained floating during the unique history and events of Afghanistan's geography. The sign of the emirate is one of the most important signs in the Taliban's image in the religious section. The authors consider the role of social roots in the discourse of the Taliban to be rather colorful and state that the Taliban consider themselves an Afghan Pashtun before they consider themselves an Emirate. For this reason, the Taliban integrate Sharia and Pashtunwali laws.

Fahmi Huwaidi (1400 [2020 A.D.], p. 89) stated that most of the Taliban leaders have a superficial understanding of Islam and the basics of Islam and their knowledge is does not exceed the material taught to them in Deobandi schools. Based on this study, the Taliban are heavily influenced by the rural culture in southern Afghanistan, where they started their insurgency. The intellectual ideas of the Taliban are influenced by Sufism, Salafism, and rural culture, which is referred to as Pashtunwali.

Kriti M. Shah (2017) investigated the relationship between Pashtuns in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The customs existing in the Pashtun tribes were considered an important factor in their social relations. The important principle of not tolerating the presence of an aggressor, which is an important principle in the tradition of the

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban
Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

375

Pashtun governor, was introduced as an important factor in the stability of the Taliban against the American forces. Among the Pashtun tribes in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Pashtun Wali tradition replaced the state laws and was considered as the constitution of the Pashtun tribes. The study considered the Pashtun tradition as an important factor in the behavior of the Taliban.

Raja G. Hussain (2008) assessed the side factors in the Taliban insurgency and found the principle of revenge very important in the culture of the Pashtuns of southern Afghanistan and the federal areas of Pakistan. This illustrates the way in which the Pashtun culture of the governor has influenced the Taliban insurgency and the fight against the United States. The presence of foreign forces such as the United Kingdom and then the Soviet Union, and finally the United States was discussed and it was stated that the principle of revenge or revenge in Pashtun culture and the Pashtun culture as a whole were among the important incentives in the fight against foreign forces.

Zahedi (2021) re-identified the Taliban and concluded that the Taliban emerged from the Jihadi groups of the 1990s, and the majority of Taliban members are Pashtuns. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the culture of the Pashtun-inhabited areas, which is the birthplace of the Taliban. Pashtun culture is a rather powerful culture, which has survived generation to generation until the present day. This culture is based on 9 principles: Malmetsia, which means hospitality, Pot, which means maintaining honor and dignity, Khigareh, which means working for collective welfare and free from self-worship and selfishness, Nang, which means honor and loyalty, Jirga, which means council, Tore, which means courage and emphasis on brave qualities, and Nanvati, which means to shelter. These principles are therefore, according to

Zahedi (2021) essential in the ruling principles of the Taliban, especially since they do not have any conflicts with Islamic law.

Mir Ali and Mohseni (2018) argued that the Pashtun ethnic structure is significantly important in the formation of the Taliban group and the continuation of this group after 2001, along with the factors and values in Islamic movements. Due to the fact that the Taliban has its roots in the culture and society of the Afghan Pashtun tribes, their views and motivations reflect, to a large extent, the cultural patterns and values of the Pashtun social environment. Supremacy, the myth of nervousness, and Pashtun principles are among the important components of Pashtunism, which have influenced the Taliban and its creation process. The culture and ethnic-tribal characteristics of the Pashtun community have played an effective role in the emergence and formation of the Taliban extremist group. The characteristics of the ethnic-tribal culture were influential in the formation of the Taliban's mentality and special intellectual system, which became known as "Talibanism", and provided strong motivations for the emergence and formation of the Taliban. For them, characteristics such as violence, intolerance, nervousness, and resistance to the transformation that the Taliban movement displayed in practice are the biological cultural patterns of the tribal world. In addition, ethnic-tribal culture, especially the "Pakhtane disgrace" can also be considered as an important cause in the emergence of the Taliban. The principles of shame and honor in Pashtun culture, range from one's own family to the entire Pashtun society. An attack on honor in a tribal society leads to the most violent reactions that may last for centuries.

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

377

1. 2. Laclau and Mouffeṡ Discourse Theory

The roots of discourse date back to the 14th century, and are derived from the French word "*discours*" and Latin word "*discursus*", meaning dialogue (Macdonell, 1991, p. 32). For providing a simple definition of discourse, it must be said that it is a special way of talking about the world and understanding it (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 179). There are various views and perspectives on the theory of discourse analysis, among which Laclau-Mouffe's Discourse Theory is superior to the others.

Laclau and Mouffe used various concepts to explain their theory. In order to understand and consequently apply their theory correctly, it is first important to understand the following concepts (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001), which are connected to each other like chains, and understanding each of the concepts in this theory leads to better comprehend the other concepts (Soltani, 1383 [2004 A.D.]). In addition, some of the main concepts in this theory include several important sub concepts.

The nodal point is one of the main concepts in Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory. Each discourse performs its ideas and concepts by employing certain symbols and signs. These signs are fixed cross-sectionally around a nodal point. The nodal point is the central core of any discourse system, whose gravitational force absorbs and organizes other symbols. In general, it should be said that the nodal point is like the tent pillar, which, if removed, will cause the tent to collapse (Walton & Boon, 2014). In Laclau and Mouffe's theory, the empty signifier and concepts are floating symbols, to which other discourses try to give meaning (Critchley & Marchart, 2005, p. 35). The empty signifier is referred to as a non-fixed float and different political groups compete with each

other to attribute the desired model to themselves (Jacobs, 2018; MacKillop, 2018, p. 190).

Another important element in Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory is articulation. Articulation is considered as any action that establishes a relationship between components in such a way that the component identity changes in the process of articulation (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). In other words, any action that makes a connection between the scattered elements within a discourse in such a way that the identity of these elements is changed or modified, is called as articulation (Haghighat, 1387 [2008 A.D.], p. 535). Considering these matters, it should be said that the elements that may be incomprehensible, have a new conceptual connection when placed next to each other and acquire a new identity; the connection of these incomprehensible elements becomes meaningful through articulation (Howarth, Norval & Stavrakakis, 2000).

Laclau and Mouffe argued that discourses are formed in conflict with each other, such as good and evil, black and white, friend and foe, for example, day can only be understood in conflict with night, that is, the identity of day is in conflict with that of night (Torfing, 1999). Laclau stated that if otherness always threatens the existence of a discourse and exposes the existing discourse to collapse, then all discourses can be said to have a possible and temporary nature and are never established (Laclau, 1996, pp. 27-28).

1. 3. Methodology

The article uses discourse analysis as its main method to investigate the Taliban's performance in the mentioned fields. Discourse analysis is a practical method for investigating social phenomena and relations, which has attracted the attention of researchers in

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

379

recent decades. Discourse analysis is not a single approach, but a set of interdisciplinary approaches that can be used in various types of studies explore different social realms. Discourse can be introduced as a way of talking about the world and understanding it as one of its aspects (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 179).

Discourse theory was basically born in linguistics, and has gone through different developmental stages (Shirbagi & Abdullahzadeh, 1399 [2020 A.D.]). Discourse study approaches are divided into four categories, including structuralist, role-oriented, critical, and cognitive. Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach that emphasizes the theoretical foundations of linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, communication and cognitive sciences to reveal the relationships and feelings hidden in words and texts or the applied meaning of the text (Amirpour & Rozatian, 1397 [2018 A. D.]).

1. 4. Pashtunwali

Pashtuns are a large ethnic group scattered throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghan Pashtuns make up about 40% of the country's population (Barfield, 2010, p. 49). Pashtuns, like many societies in the world have principles to which many members of their group adhere, and although there are values in every society, but these values have remained strong and stable among the Pashtuns for more than 5,000 years. Miakhel (2009) believes that the Pashtunwali is the inherited way of life of the Pashtuns and is a kind of code of conduct among them, especially in rural areas. In general, Pashtunwali is a series of principles about the life of Pashtuns that are very important to them because Pashtunwali is essential for the identity and the survival of the Pashtuns (Kakar,

2004). Pashtunwali principles determine the way in which tribes interact with each other. The prevailing values in the Pashtunwali discourse are similar to lifestyle guidelines that are to be observed by every Pashtun (Strickland, 2007, p. 7). In other words, the Pashtunwali is considered an unwritten constitution for the Pashtuns (Ginsburg, 2011).

As stated, the Pashtunwali consists of principles shaping the Pashtunwali tradition, including the principles of female honor, courage, respect or pride, revenge, and hospitality (Griffiths, 2001, p. 66). The key concept in the Pashtunwali tradition is the concept of Nang (honor). Nang means honor, and here it means that anyone who violates the Pashtunwali principles and laws has tarnished the nature of his people, and that person is called as dishonored, which is the worst insult to a Pashtun.

Although Islamic Shari'a exists as a law among the Pashtun people, in judicial cases, latent values govern the Pashtunwali tradition. In the Pashtunwali tradition, whoever feels that prevailing values in this tradition have been violated by a person, has a right to punish the wrongdoer (Papoli Yazdi, 1372 [1994 A.D.], p. 86). Given these definitions, it should be noted that the Pashtunwali is an unwritten constitution (Ginsburg, 2011) governing the Pashtun community, and its tribes and determining path of the Pashtuns as a navigator. Values prevailing the Pashtunwali tradition determine the people' identity. Pashtuns are proud of these values. In Pashtunś popular culture, if a person violates the Pashtunwali's rules, he is no longer considered a Pashtun and loses support of the Pashtun community (Roy, 1985, p. 52).

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

381

2. The Discourse of the Taliban

The Taliban, as a political and military group, have traditional and tribal origins. On the other hand, as disciples of the Deobandi religious school, the Taliban are influenced by the teachings and interpretation that the Deobandi school has offered to them about Islam for a long time.

Kandahar City, one of southern cities of Afghanistan, a symbol of Pashtun domination in Afghanistan, the main origin of the Taliban and the unofficial capital of this group during the Islamic Emirate, has been strongly influenced by the Pashtunwali tradition (Emami, 1999, p. 60). Pashtunwali constituts the nodal point of the Taliban discourse. Moving towards the border strip between Afghanistan and Pakistan, especially the Durand Line, the dominance of the Pashtunwali tradition can be seen among the Pashtuns of the two countries. The power and dominance of this discourse is such that it determines the type of social relations. Thus, the Taliban, as a group that began its first uprising in a village in Kandahar City in 1996, has been clearly influenced by the guiding values of the Pashtunwali tradition. The Pashtunwali tradition has parameters influencing the rights of women, ethnic minorities, and the issue of supporting foreign terrorist groups; the values embedded in this tradition pose an important challenge to any democratic system. However, some of the values in the Pashtun governor's culture are such that there may be very subtle similarities between these values and the values in a democracy, including the egalitarian system in Pashtun society or the traditional institution of the Loya Jirga, which can be identified as a symbol of parliament in democratic systems. This traditional institution forms two parliaments of the commons and the public (Mujahid, 2002, p. 18)

The principle of honor, forming the central symbol of the Taliban discourse is one of the most important principles in the Pashtunwali tradition, which is more important than the other principles in this tradition. The essence of the principle of female honor in the Pashtunwali tradition is such that it is in complete contradiction with the rights of women in a democratic system. For example, the principle of female honor restricts the presence of women in society, and if a Pashtun woman is present in society or talks to unrelated men, the nature of honor is damaged for the Pashtun spouse and the stigma of being dishonored is on his forehead. In addition, in the Pashtunwali tradition, women are inferior to men in terms of social status and are deprived of the right to possess heritage in the family (Marsden, 2002, p. 128). However, as mentioned earlier, the Taliban's intellectual structure is influenced by the Pashtun governor's Pashtun culture and Deobandi school interpretations. There are, however, certain contradictions in the Pashtun culture of the governor and the Deobandi school, which have created a kind of challenge. For example, in the Pashtun governor's culture, flogging women in public is considered a hideous action. Still, the Taliban violated this vital principle in the governor's Pashtun culture by establishing field courts and prosecuting women. On the other hand, relying on Islamic principles and values, the Taliban repealed the blood feud law, which had long roots among Pashtuns during the Islamic Emirate.

The traditional law is such that the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) considers it a customary obligation in Pashtun areas that violate women's rights. They marry one of the sons of the plaintiff tribe, and thus, the dispute between the two tribes ends. According to the Norwegian Immigration Service

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

383

(NRC), girls (in Pashtun areas) may be traded for debt, murder, and other crimes (Wiik, 2017, p. 12)
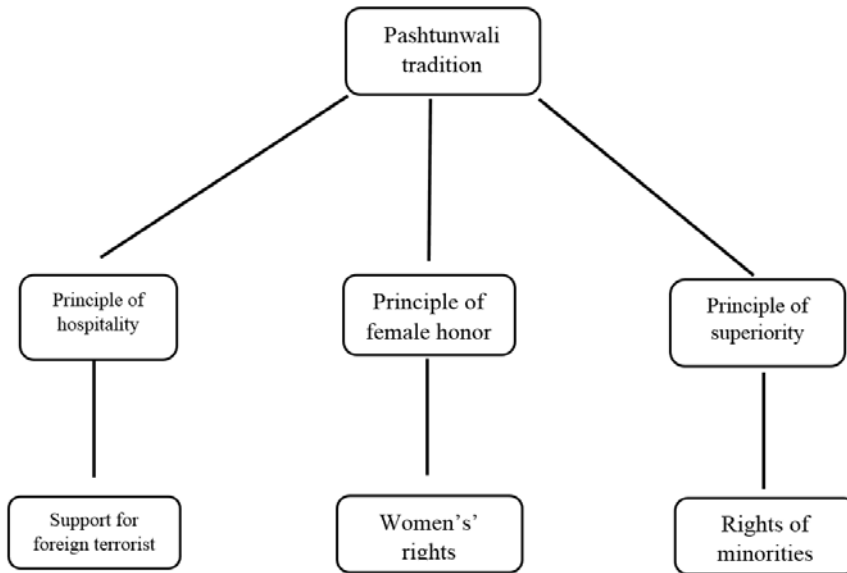
Sometimes, existing values are pitted against each other. The school is from Islam and is also influenced by the Pashtun culture of the governor. However, during the Islamic Emirate, the Taliban considered this cultural law contrary to Islamic values and declared it abrogated.

The first serious uprising against the socialist regime in Kabul City took place in 1978, when young government officials traveled to southern provinces in order to try to force girls and women to go to school (Beemam, 2001). Another important principle in the Pashtunwali tradition, which has been very important in the Taliban discourse, is the principle of supremacy. In fact, the sense of superiority is an important feature of the Pashtunwali tradition. According to Sayed Askar Mousavi, Pashtuns believe that the principle of racial superiority is a gift given to them by God to have political, economic, and social structures (Mousavi, 1998, p. 27). The third principle in the Pashtunwali tradition that has influenced the Taliban discourse is the principle of hospitality. This principle is one of the popular patterns of behavior among the Pashtun people of southern Afghanistan, which is also part of the honor values of the Pashtun people. In the Pashtunwali tradition, taking guests out is considered an example of humiliation for the host; it is even a matter of financial difficulties. The most important implication of the tradition of hospitality is that it obliges the host to ensure the security of his guest (Atran, 2010, p. 350).

The three principles mentioned in the Pashtun governor's culture and the Deobandi school's interpretations of Islam shape the Taliban's discourse. The principle of female honor, which has an

important place in the Taliban discourse and is the central symbol of this discourse, is in conflict with concepts of democracy, human rights, and women's rights. The principle of the superiority in Taliban discourse creates superiority in Taliban policies over other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Finally, the principle of hospitality in the Taliban discourse has led to support for foreign terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda and other groups present in the Taliban territory. Of course, Deobandi's perceptions of Islam play an essential role in directing the Taliban's discourse, as many Taliban leaders, especially Mullah Omar and three members out of the six-member Taliban council, graduated from religious schools in Pakistan based on radical school of Sunni Islam (Rashid, 2002, p. 98).

However, in general, radical Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, as a catalyst, has an accelerating role in the Taliban discourse, and plays, in a way, a legitimizing role in the Taliban discourse. Some aspects of the Pashtunwali tradition, such as the rights of women and the rights of other Muslims might contradict Islamic interpretations; however for the Pashtuns of southern Afghanistan, there is no contradiction between the principles governing the Pashtunwali tradition and Islamic law. Although, religious scholars see contradictions between the Pashtunwali customs and Islamic law, they believe that the Taliban's cortical perceptions are more in line with principles of the Pashtunwali tradition than with the Qur'an (Johnson, 1382 [2003 A. D.], p. 58), even though there is no contradiction between the customs prevailing Pashtunwali discourse and Islamic law in the minds of most Pashtuns in southern Afghanistan (Kakar, 2004).

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

385

Figure 1. Important Principles in Pashtunwali Tradition and their Effect on the Taliban. Source: Authors

2. 1. The Period of the Islamic Emirate from 1994 to 2001

With the uprising of the disciples of a religious teacher named Mullah Omar in one of villages of Kandahar City, and the acquisition of vast resources of advanced weapons in the border area of Spin Boldak, as well as complete conquest of Kandahar City, the Taliban announced their existence, and quickly expanded their territory. In a short time, they were able to rule over 90% of Afghanistan's territory. The security situation in Afghanistan from the fall of Dr. Najibullah's government to the rise of the Taliban was very similar to that of Hobbes, a war against all. In the beginning, the Taliban became very popular among the people for securing cities and roads, but they lost their legitimacy after the group introduced its traditional form of discourse. Because, the

Taliban imposed strict extremist laws on ordinary people, in a way that these laws were intolerable for the people of Afghanistan, especially those living in cities. As mentioned earlier, the Taliban discourse has been rooted in the Pashtun tribal tradition of southern Afghanistan, and radical Hanafi school of Sunni Islam has also played an important role in accelerating this discourse. In the following section, women's rights, the rights of ethnic minorities, and support for foreign terrorist groups during the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan will be investigated.

Before examining the era of the Islamic Emirate, it is necessary to examine these three indicators, that is women's rights, the rights of ethnic minorities, and support for foreign terrorist groups, before the rise of the Taliban, which corresponds to the time of the ruling of the Mujahideen. During the Mujahideen's ruling, girls had the right to education. For example, in Herat in 1994, the number of girls' school students was 21,663, and in rural areas of Herat city, in 1940 girls were studying, and a significant number of female teachers were working in schools. In Kabul, as one of Afghanistan's metropolises, women and ethnic minorities enjoyed adequate freedom (Marsden, 2002, p. 65).

2. 1. 1. Women

Women's rights and the way women are viewed have a special place in the Pashtunwali tradition. As mentioned, in the Pashtunwali tradition, we are faced with an important symbol called as female honor. This symbol is so important that if one of the Pashtun people violates the values defined in the symbol of female honor, others will call him dishonored, which is a significantly damaging and serious insult for a Pashtun. The Taliban, who had emerged from heart of the Pashtunwali tradition,

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban
Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

387

imposed the strictest laws on half of society regarding women's issue. In their first orders, the Taliban urged women not to appear in public, and only in emergencies did they have the right to leave the house with one of their related relatives. Women were banned from working outside the house, and girls' schools and women's baths were closed (Dupree, 2000, p. 209). In 1998, the Taliban severely restricted women's access to public hospitals. This not only negatively influenced health of women in this country, but also led to an increase in rates of infant mortality. According to statistics provided in 2001, 165 out of every 1,000 children under 1 year of age died due to this ban (US Department of State, 2001). In the field of education, girls were deprived of the right to education during this period. In 1997, the Taliban legally banned girls from attending school, and in 1998, they revised the law on girls' education. According to the new law, girls had the right to study up to 9 years of age and were barred from going to school after that age.

Mullah Omar, the then-leader of the Taliban, in face of international pressure on women's right to study in educational institutions considered the implementation of this policy as blasphemy and regarded it as a way to promote corruption and prostitution in society; according to him, the Taliban should never allow women to study or work in governmental and non-governmental centers (Esmatollahi et al., 1999, p. 133). It is noteworthy to mention that in the village where Mullah Omar had grown up, not a single girl went to school (Rashid, 2002, p. 49). The Ministry of Enjoining the Good and Forbidding the Evil was in charge of enforcing the Taliban's strict laws against women. In total, out of 33 decrees issued by the Ministry of Enjoining the Good and Forbidding the Evil, 14 decrees were related to women

and 17 ones were related to men and women. Vahid Mojdeh, who has been active in the political structure of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate, in his book, *Five Years of Taliban Rule* stated that: In the Taliban's intellectual world, women have no right to enter and the educated women are considered as dangerous creatures (Mojdeh, 1384 [2005 A.D.], p. 34).

2. 1. 2. Minority Rights

With the formation of the Islamic Emirate, religious minorities, such as Sikhs and Hazaras experienced special conditions, and were always discriminated on the grounds that they were not Pashtuns or were non-Sunni Muslims. For example, Sikh religious temples were closed in Kabul City, and a number of Hazara mosques were also closed. The reason for this kind approach by the Taliban may be seen in the principle of self-righteousness in the Pashtunwali traditions of southern Afghanistan, as well as in the discourse of radical Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. The output of this self-righteousness of the Taliban was countless crimes and massacres, most of which afflicted non-Pashtuns (Qaraguzlu, 1380 [2001 A.D.], pp. 63, 66).

Although, the Taliban claimed that the group had no ethnic affiliation, and that Islam alone was the measure of individuals, their approach to non-Pashtuns illustrated their sense of superiority, rooted in their ethnic beliefs. For example, in the time of the rule of Taliban, members of the Kandahar Council, who issued the main rulings of the government, were all Pashtuns (Barnett, 1998). Another reason for superiority of the Taliban can be sought in the political structure of Islamic Emirate. During this period, the main pillars of the government were in the hands of the Pashtun people, for example, non-Pashtuns were largely deprived of the Supreme

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban
Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

389

Council of the Islamic Emirate, five of six members of the Supreme Council were Pashtuns, only one member, named Molavi Ghiyasuddin, was a Tajik from Badakhshan, and only two non-Pashtuns were members of the Council of Ministers (Rashid, 2002, p. 222).

Another example regarding the Taliban's ethnic approach was their political appointments. During the Islamic Emirate, most military commanders, governors, and mayors were elected among the Pashtuns, for example, in the three cities of Kabul, Herat, and Balkh, where the majority spoke Persian and the minority spoke Pashto, their military commanders were chosen mainly from the Pashtuns (Rashid, 2002, p. 225). In general, the core of the Taliban group ruling the Islamic Emirate belonged to the Pashtun tribes of southern Afghanistan. Due to the fact that Pashtuns have traditionally been in power since the eighteenth century, the Taliban considered themselves as heirs of power and the Pashtuns as eligible people for governance (Ahmadi, 1377 [1998 A.D.]).

2. 1. 3. Support for Foreign Terrorist Groups

From the formation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan until its collapse, during 1996 - 2001, Afghanistan had become a safe haven for foreign terrorists, such as Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri and other extremist Islamist forces. The existence of the principle of hospitality in the powerful Pashtunwali tradition, the existence of hospitality and radical interpretations of Pakistani schools by Islam have legitimized the presence of foreign terrorist groups in Afghanistan (Karimi Hajikhademi, 1395 [2016 A. D.], p.151). Overall, the principle of hospitality and the existing interpretations of Islam in the Deobandi school have been

influential in the emergence of Islamic extremist individuals and groups and have made Afghanistan a safe haven for ideological activities as well as the training of thousands of Arab non-Arab fighters. The well-known phenomenon of "Arab Afghanistan" was the result of the gathering of extremist radicals from the entire Islamic world and receiving military and religious training in Afghanistan (Al Afghani, 1997).

In 1998, the Taliban rejected a request by Saudi Arabia and the United States for the extradition of Osama bin Laden. Even though Saudi Arabia offered to acknowledge the group, the Taliban did not accept the request of Saudi Arabia and the United States, and only agreed to deter Osama from anti-Saudi and anti-American activities (Al Afghani, 1997). In this regard, Mullah Omar, the leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, in an interview with a reporter from the Islamic Emirate magazine explained that the surrender of Osama bin Laden to the United States would be in complete contradiction with Islam and traditional culture of the Afghan people because Osama is our guest (Mojdeh, 1384 [2005 A.D.], p. 186); Mullah Omar did not therefore show interest in surrendering bin Laden and used the Pashtunwali's hospitality as an excuse (Barfield, 2010, p. 418). Of course, it can be said that this is the appearance of the story, and there are other issues in the hidden layers, for example, after the end of the US-Taliban dispute over Osama bin Laden, he sent several hundred Toyota cars to help the Taliban in Afghanistan. (Mojdeh, 1384 [2005 A.D.], p. 56)

2. 2. Republic Era

Many scholars believe that the new political system that emerged in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban did not correspond to the historical and cultural realities of Afghanistan. Professor Barfield,

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

391

professor of anthropology at the University of California, USA, believes that the Bonn talks ignored many historical, cultural, and political realities of Afghan society and the results of the Bonn negotiations turned into a vicious circle and re-established a centralized system in Afghanistan's multicultural society, which needs a decentralized system. Another drawback of the Bonn talks, which led to the re-emergence of the Taliban in the coming years, was the withdrawal of power from Pashtun control (Barfield, 2010, p. 224). Although Hamid Karzai, a man on a Pashtun motorcycle, became president, most of the ministries were held by other ethnic groups, especially the Tajiks (Dam, 2014, p. 78).

After collapse of the Islamic Emirate in 2001, political system of the Republic of Afghanistan was formed in the country with support of international community and Western countries, and new political structure ignited many hopes for bright future of Afghanistan. New political system was generally different from the previous political structure in Afghanistan. Women enjoyed unprecedented rights in Afghanistan, ethnic and religious minorities were able to participate in political structure, and even ran for presidency. Although, young democracy in Afghanistan has many shortcomings, it is commendable in its kind compared to the Talibanś era. All of these happened with support of international community, especially the Western countries. The Taliban were able to reorganize shortly after collapse of the Islamic Emirate, and have gradually regained parts of their former territory over the past 20 years. In this section, the Taliban's performance is investigated since 2001 in the three indicators mentioned in this study: women's rights, minority rights, and support for foreign terrorist groups in areas under their control.

2. 2. 1. Women's Rights

Today, Afghan women can serve as governors, mayors, police chiefs, and even ministers. In 2003, less than 10% of girls enrolled in primary school, but statistics have shown that today about 33% of girls go to school, and life expectancy among women has risen from 56 years of age in 2001 to 66 years of age in 2017 (The World Bank, 2018). It is believed that these achievements are an acceptable development in the traditional society of Afghanistan and considering the past conditions of this country; this shifts in women's situation have happened under the protection of the new government structure in Afghanistan as well as the international community. However, this is not the same for all Afghan women, as women's rights have been repeatedly violated in areas where the Taliban have ruled for 20 years, a reminder of the Talibans̀ era. Today, about 40% of Afghanistan is under Talibans̀ control. Many girls' schools have been closed in Taliban-controlled areas, and girls have been deprived of the right to study; the few girls' schools that had remained open were closed by force through attacking by the Taliban. (Afghanistan Human Rights Watch, 2017). In addition, women in Taliban –controlled areas are not allowed to work in various occupations like those in government-controlled areas.

In the recent years, despite pressure from civil society activists and human rights organizations, as well as a shift in the Afghan people's attitude towards girls' education, the Taliban have allowed girls to go to school until 12 years of age only in some areas under their control. The classes are held if teaching is done by a female teacher and teaching courses are approved by the Taliban (United States Institute of Peace (USIP), 2020). As mentioned, the Taliban have only allowed girls' schools to be established in certain areas under their control, whereas girls in other areas, such as Helmand

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

393

Province are still deprived of education. According to the United Nations, Helmand Province is one of the provinces where the Taliban have extensive influence. In some parts of the province, there are no primary girls' schools, let alone middle or high schools (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

It should also be noted that in Taliban-controlled areas, boys can also go to school until the twelfth grade. Teaching some subjects, such as learning English is prohibited in these areas (USIP, 2020). According to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission in 2016, 41% of all violence against women, such as murder of women and domestic torture took place in southern Afghanistan alone and no prosecution was considered because the Taliban hold the main power in these areas. (Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, 2016). In a survey conducted in 2015 in 15 provinces regarding whether the situation of women has been improved after peace with the Taliban, 60% of respondents believed that the situation of women has worsened after the government's peace with the Taliban (Karimi & Ebrahimi, 1394 [2015 A.D.]). Overall, the Taliban's approach to women's rights in the ruling areas has not changed much, and the same tribal view rooted in the Pashtunwali tradition still stands.

2. 2. 2. Minority Rights

Ethnic and religious minorities in Afghanistan were severely discriminated during the Talibanṡ era, but in the post-Taliban regime, they enjoyed equal political rights with other ethnic groups in Afghanistan within the democratic system. For example, the Sikhs of Afghanistan have seats in the National Assembly and enjoy appropriate constitutional rights. Today, the Hazaras, whose

basic rights were blatantly violated during the Taliban's era, have political power and the ability to form political parties, as well as being representative in the National Assembly, and even vice president. These issues are rather promising for the next generation of Afghanistan. As mentioned, the Taliban control 40% of Afghanistan's territory and have influence in other areas. However, in areas where the population is made up of the Hazara ethnic group, the Taliban have no control and can only carry out offensive attacks on these areas. The attack on Yakawlang City in 2000 and the massacre of more than 350 people in the province, and the group's offensive attacks, which have increased in the recent years are a clear example of the Taliban's hostility towards ethnic and religious minorities.

Today, the Taliban openly violate human rights, even in areas under their control. According to the United Nations, in Taliban-controlled areas, the basic rights of local people are clearly violated; there is no free flow of information, and local people have no right to object to Taliban officials (UN, 2020). According to a 2019 Asian Foundation survey, Hindu and Sikh minorities living in major cities are worried about the issue of feeling safe, and 96.8% of Afghanistan's Sikhs and Hindus do not feel safe and secure, 68% of them being afraid of the Taliban and its actions against them (Asian Foundation, 8, 9, 2019). The fear of these two religions stems from experience of the Islamic Emirate and actions of this group in the last 20 years against them, such as suicide attacks on their religious temples. Of course, although the Taliban do not admit that the attacks on Hindu and Sikh temples were carried out by this group, evidence shows they were indeed carried out by the Taliban. In general, it should be said that the Taliban suppress individual rights, such as political participation, the right to education, etc. (Nyadera & Bincof, 2019).

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

395

2. 2. 3. Support for Foreign Terrorist Groups

The Taliban not cut ties with the International Terrorist Network; they have in fact increased their reach since 2001. The most important terrorist network with which the Taliban has had extensive ties since its inception is al-Qaeda. Although, the group's military power has waned since the assassination of the former al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, the group still poses a serious threat to the United States, the Western and Middle Eastern countries. Due to traditional and Islamic values described earlier, the Taliban kept in touch with al-Qaeda leaders. General Mackenzie, commander of US Central Command declared that Ayman al-Zawahiri was present in southern Afghanistan (McKenzie, 2020). Another symbol of links between the Taliban and al-Qaeda was that the son of Osama Bin Laden, the founder of al-Qaeda, was present in the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan before he was killed (UNDOCS, 2019). While the United States was negotiating with the Taliban in Qatar, a number of journalists reported that al-Qaeda leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri had been present in talks with a number of senior Taliban leaders to ensure that the Taliban continue to support the group and It seemed that the results of these negotiations have been successful (United Nations, 2020). Taliban leaders have not always given a clear answer in interviews with news agencies about their ties with foreign terrorist groups. In this case, it can be concluded that there is no clear prospect of Taliban's losing contact with foreign terrorist groups, especially al-Qaeda.

2. 3. Taliban Approach since the Revival of the Islamic Emirate

When Mullah Abdul Ghani's brother signed a peace agreement

with the United States in Doha, it was hard to imagine that Kabul would fall to the Taliban in just a few months. A Taliban spokesman said that coalition forces on Afghan soil and Taliban attacks on cities indicated that they were only seeking to revive the Islamic Emirate, a government based on Islamic rules that took control of Afghanistan more than 20 years ago before the US troops entered Afghanistan. Now, with the revival of the Islamic Emirate by the Taliban, what has become once again important is Taliban's approach to important concepts such as women's rights, the rights of minorities and foreign terrorist groups. Will they behave the same way as in the past, or as the Taliban spokesman said, History has become a lesson for them, and their view of the past has changed. Therefore, in this section, we will discuss the Taliban's approach to the three indicators (women's rights, minority rights, foreign terrorist groups) since the occupation of Kabul and the establishment of the Islamic Emirate.

2. 3. 1. Minority Rights

On September 7, 2021, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid announced that the Taliban, led by Mullah Hassan Akhundzadeh, had formed his cabinet and announced the names of those elected to important officials positions in the country. According to the Mujahideen, the following titles were given to various Taliban officials: Taliban leader Mullah Hassan Akhundzadeh as Prime Minister, Mullah Ghani, brother of First Deputy Prime Minister, Mullah Abdul Salam Hanafi as Second Deputy Prime Minister, Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqub Mujahid as Acting Minister of Defense, Mullah Sirajuddin Haqqani as Acting Minister of Interior, and Amir Khan Mottaqi as head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Among the announced names, what attracts attention is that except

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban
Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

397

for Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the second deputy, and the Uzbek and Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, the head of the Ministry of Finance, and Qari Fasihuddin, the Tajiks are all Pashtuns. In fact, these three people have been appointed to these positions due to their many years of cooperation with the Taliban over the years. The Taliban group, which initially promised to form a comprehensive government of all ethnic groups, revealed, with the announcement of the leaders of the Islamic Emirate, that the Taliban has one again ignored other ethnic groups, like for example ethnic groups such as the Hazaras, which, unlike the Shiite Taliban, have no place in the cabinet. Other ethnic groups, such as Uzbeks and Tajiks, have a minimal presence in the cabinet, with only three of the two ethnic groups in each cabinet. In other words, as mentioned in the previous sections, according to one of the Pashtun principles, the governor still considers the Pashtun tribes as the superior people.

This pursuit of supremacy does not allow them to attribute important executive positions to people who are not Pashtun. Thus, although the Taliban initially promised to form an inclusive government of all ethnic groups, in practice, they acted exactly like the formation of the Islamic Emirate in the first period, and more than 80% of the cabinet of the Islamic Emirate was composed of Pashtuns. It can be concluded that this behavior of the Taliban is rooted in the principle of the supremacy of the Pashtunwali culture. From the point of view of the Deobandi school, it does not allow the Taliban as disciples of this school, to consider Shiites as neutral people outside the system's structure. This claim can be made clearer by quoting Al-Mizan's book: *The Movement of the Taliban*, in which the author claims that they are not among the Muslims and are in fact infidels who have created innovations in the religion

(Mujahid, 1381 [2002 A.D.], p. 145). The Taliban have killed several Hazaras, Amnesty International said in its 2021 report.

2. 3. 2. Women's Rights

With the rise of the Taliban, the group declared that women in our society could enjoy fundamental rights such as education. Still, there were discrepancies between what the Taliban said and what they did. Students, especially girls, are skeptical about their future. Separating women from men in universities and not allowing girls to attend high school already confirms that the Taliban has not much changed in their beliefs and principles. For example, regarding women's participation in sports, such as cricket, Ahmadullah Wasiq, deputy head of the Taliban Cultural Commission, argues, "I do not think women should be allowed to play cricket because women do not have to play cricket. In cricket, they may…face conditions where their faces and bodies are not covered. Islam does not allow women to be seen like this" (SBS, 2021).

On the other hand, while the Taliban spokesman said that the world should not worry about women's rights, as they would be allowed to work within the framework of Islam, in its report to Human Rights Watch, the Taliban law has halted the work of women relief and exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, including the need for a male family member to accompany females while working, which makes their work difficult or sometimes impossible (Human Rights Watch, 2021)

In general, women do not have many rights in the Islamic Emirate. Even when the cabinet of the Islamic Emirate was announced, there was no place for women, and the Ministry of Women, which was one of the key ministries in the government of

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

399

the Islamic Emirate, was removed. In Kabul, their rights were violated by the force of arms (BBC, 2021a), showing that women have little place in the minds of the leaders of the Islamic Emirate. The Taliban's restrictions on women are rooted in the Pashtunwali tradition, the principle of honor, and the interpretations of women in the Deobandi school. Even Zalmai Khalilzad, the former US ambassador to Afghanistan for peace, said that the Taliban's treatment of women was rooted more in the Pashtunwali culture. In this view, they consider the best way to protect the honor of women and girls, keeping them away from all public gatherings. Hence, they do not like their deprivation of work, sports, or even women going out without a mahram to go shopping (a man who can accompany women according to the rules of Islam), and for that, they punish women who break the law.

2. 3. 3. Support for Foreign Terrorist Groups

Afghanistan has been a haven for foreign terrorists for more than 40 years. Many groups, including Al Qaeda, have entered Afghanistan and spread their activities from Afghanistan to other countries. The issue (the presence of terrorist groups) was the focus of the Doha talks between the US and the Taliban. Accordingly, the United States called on the Taliban to withdraw from Afghanistan so that Afghanistan would not be considered a terrorist country, which sheltered terrorist groups such as the ISIS or the Al Qaeda (*BBC*, 2021b). Many researchers have cited different causes for terrorism in Afghanistan. Yet, to this point, no one could send in the perfect solution, which is not strange. The very principle of hospitality has effectively attracted terrorist groups to Afghanistan. Waiting for the Taliban to retain their links to the al-Qaeda network is to return to Afghanistan (*IndiaToday*, 2021).

3. Conclusion

The authors of this article were present in Kabul on August 15, 2021 and witnessed the fall of the government and the patrolling of Taliban soldiers in the streets of Kabul. Some analysts had predicted that the Afghan government would fall, but the sudden fall of the government shocked not only the people of Afghanistan, but those of the entire world. Since the re-establishment of the Taliban in Kabul, many analysts and activists of civil society and western countries have formed serious concerns regarding changes in Taliban's attitude towards issues such as the right of women and ethnic-religious, as well as the hospitality towards foreign terrorist groups, resulting in changes in Taliban's intellectual differences from those in the past. In this study, the Taliban's approach to the right of women, ethnic-religious groups, and foreign terrorist groups were evaluated in the three different periods of the Islamic Emirate period, the Republic period, and the re-emergence of the Taliban, using the Laclau and Mouffe's framework and discourse analysis method. The central signs of Taliban discourse and their impact on the right of women, ethnic-religious groups, and foreign terrorist groups were investigated. The result was that the discourse of the Taliban was influenced by the powerful Pashtun tradition and the influence of the values of the Deobandi school. This discourse had three principles, honor, supremacy, and hospitality, which have an impact on the right of women, as well as that of the various ethnic-religious, and foreign terrorist groups.

There is not much change in the above-mentioned indicators from the period of the Islamic Empire to this day, since the Taliban have a strong discourse structure rooted in the Pashtun culture of the governor, as well as the Deobandi school. In fact, the Deobandi school's interpretation of Islam legitimizes the Taliban, the kind of discourse the Taliban pursue is in stark contrast to human rights

The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban
Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

401

values. Therefore, we should not expect the Taliban to accept the values of democracy, respect the rights of women and ethnic minorities, and not support terrorist groups, because Taliban's discourse is reluctant to accept these values. Finally, even if one supposes that the Taliban, in their speeches, respect the rights of women and ethnic minorities, in reality, Taliban's intellectual foundation and beliefs are very strong and in the long run, the Taliban discourse will dominate the policy of the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan.

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403

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405

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407

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The Role of Pashtunwali Ethnic Tradition in the Historical Articulation of the Taliban
Discourse in Negotiations with the Afghan Government

409

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