

## **Geopolitics, identity, and discourse analysis of conflict in Pakistan's tribal areas**

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### **Abstract**

In the post 9/11, the discursive construction of identity through discourses has become a norm in international politics in justifying foreign policies. What makes us believe is the interpretation given by dominant discourse through text, speeches, or media. Discourses not only construct a narrative on the national and international front but also rationalize certain policies and make other unthinkable. This is how it happened in Pakistan's tribal areas<sup>1</sup>. The Pashtun social and cultural identity is misrepresented through mainstream discourse as a cause of the conflict both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Drawing on Lene Hansen post-structuralist discourse theory, this paper questions Pakistan's mainstream discourse and evaluates how and why Pashtun social identity is discursively co-constituted in post 9/11? The paper argues that the discursive construction of Pashtun's identity not only rationalizes geopolitics but also justifies the ongoing conflict in the tribal areas. The paper further argues that the prolonged conflict in the region should be understood as a regional power struggle for serving their geostrategic objective.

**Keywords:** Post-structuralist discourse, Conflict, Identity, Taliban, Foreign policy.

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1. Recently merged into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and known as "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa tribal districts". But still in academic literature, the region is referring as "tribal areas".

## **1. Introduction**

The US attack on Afghanistan led to hard-core militants<sup>1</sup> entered the tribal areas of Pakistan through porous borders, due to the downfall of the Afghanistan Taliban's regime. With the help of local supporters who had developed close relations during the Afghan Jihad against the Russians in the 1980s<sup>2</sup>, foreign militants were guided to safe places. Soon in 2002-03, tribal areas became the refuge of thousands of Al-Qaida and members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Once they consolidated their foothold in the region, the militants started a cross-border insurgency by attacking the US led coalition forces in Afghanistan. Pakistan's policy of denial could not sustain due to unsurmountable pressure from Washington and the international community to take action against the militants' safe havens in the region. Pakistan had to do a U-turn on its policy of support to the Taliban movement due to extreme pressure and the threat of 'with us or against us' from the United States. Consequently, when Pakistan's security forces were deployed in the tribal areas along the Afghan border, the conflict escalated.

Both the militants and the state of Pakistan have their own perception and justification as to how the conflict erupted in the region. Pakistan's official point of view is presented through a dominant perspective to what I refer as 'mainstream discourse'. Mainstream discourse explains the chaos in the Pakistan tribal areas, against the backdrop of socio-religious connections between the co-ethnic Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan. They argue that the conflict in the tribal areas is a religio-ethnic struggle of the Pashtun population across the Durand line against the foreign troops in Afghanistan. Due to far-off from an academic approach, mainstream discourse is what leads to the international community's general perceptions of the conflict. The mainstream discourse serves as a persuasive function that tries to convince others on policy-related issues, thereby, presenting Pashtun cultural and social identity as a justification and validation of the conflict. In reality, this discourse is based on geopolitical dimensions of the region even

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1. In this paper the word 'militants' refers to foreign terrorists including local Taliban.

2. Afghan jihad refers to the Soviet Union attack on Afghanistan in 1979 and the US and her allies' reaction by using Islamic militants to contain soviet expansionism during cold war.

though the significant volatility of the region in recent times amid the ongoing conflict must be investigated scientifically.

This paper critically evaluates the mainstream discourse; whether the conflict has its roots in the cultural and social identity of the tribal society, or it is a strategic misrepresentation of identity to serve the state's foreign policy. Within the international relations theoretical perspectives, this research study constructs arguments using a post-structuralist discourse theory of Hansen (2013) to deconstruct the narrative of mainstream discourse. This paper will not only contribute to the post-structuralist literature in international relations but will also highlight how identity is co-constituted through discourse for achieving certain foreign policy objectives and to make it justifiable and others unthinkable (*ibid*). The paper reveals that despite the apparent stereotype of the Pashtuns, scientific facts seem to speak against the mainstream discourse. The differentiation between the original Pashtun identity and the strategical misrepresentation as the cause of the conflict has become difficult for a distant viewer and even for the indigenous new generation. There is a need to deconstruct the dominant discourse and re-theorize the basic and factual concepts of the literature; otherwise, the current distorted misinterpretation will become permanent and a potentially vicious circle of further misconceptions.

## **2.Methodology**

Drawing on Lene Hansen post-structuralist discourse theory, this paper question Pakistan mainstream discourse and evaluate how and why Pashtun social identity is discursively co-constituted in post 9/11?

## **3.Theoretical framework**

### **3.1. Post-structuralist discourse**

The notion of discourse has become a focus of debate in contemporary critical social sciences. The term discourse refers to communication practices which have a capacity of meaning-making resources to systematically construct knowledge, re-produced, reinforced within a specific social context and, thereby, shape the various form of identity (Torfing, 2005). Discourses are “socially constituted” (De Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak, 1999: 9), which offers an alternative reality serving conflicting

power interests. Certain people or groups in society construct knowledge and formulate ideas which in turn make things justifiable and legitimate and in certain conditions became unquestionable truths. Such discourses are “produced and transmitted under control, dominant if not limited, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media)” (Foucault, 1980: 131).

Discourse enables one to write, listen and set rules eloquently by which listeners or readers construct a meaningful understanding of the phenomenon which shapes the various form of knowledge and identity. The power of the discourse is dependent on the strength of the words or text on the behaviour and experience of the individual or group in a particular country or society (Hayward, 2008). It is, therefore, most obvious that languages or text used by the representatives of the government or state have an enormous effect in shaping political practices to constitute dominant discourse and re-produce identity for achieving certain goals. To Foucault, discourses appear as a gravitational field in which humankind is somehow entrapped (Foucault, 1980).

Post-structuralist takes identity as multiple, diverse, dynamic, varied, shifting, subject to change, and contradictory. It is regarded to be socially organized, reorganized, constructed, co-constructed, and continually reconstructed through language and discourse. Hansen argues that policies are social where policymakers institutionalize identity as a source of legitimization in the wider public sphere for the pursuance of specific policy (Hansen, 2013: 1). Constructions of identity can take on different degrees of ‘otherness’ based on geographical locations and tribes (ibid: 6). In certain situations, foreign policies need to ascribe meaning to the situation and to construct the objects within it, and in doing so, they articulate and draw upon specific identities of regions, peoples, and institutions.

Hansen argues that identity is always given through reference to something it is not. To speak of the ‘American,’ ‘European,’ ‘barbaric’ or ‘underdeveloped’ is to constitute another identity or set of identities as non-American, non-European, civilized or developed (ibid). Foreign policy is, therefore, vested on the notion that decision-makers have the choice to present certain identities in their representation of specific policies. This is what Campbell explains in his book ‘United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity’ that danger is not an objective condition (Campbell,

1992) rather it is the interpretation of the states that make it a threat. The interpretation of danger with words like self, other, internal, and foreign put the identity of people at risk.

The in-group and out-group distinction influence the perception, behaviour, and social practices leading to peace, conflict, and even genocide. These patronized ways of thinking sometimes align with the narrow self-interested privileged group of the society who play an essential role in shaping the pattern of thought in public. In Nazi Germany, we see how propaganda was stabbed against Jews minorities and made justifiable barbarities through discourse. At the beginning of the communist revolution in Russia, Stalin developed a discourse by saying that the revolution was to free the world from the clutches of imperial powers. Moreover, in the post 9/11, United States has developed a discourse of “America in danger,” thereby, justifying the war against terrorism in Afghanistan and later in Iraq. A similar case has been presented by Hansen in her book ‘security in practice: ‘Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War’ where the Balkan identity was constructed in the negative term during the policy of inaction.

Hegemonic discourse serves as nexus between crises and social structure and has the capacity in the construction of an identity, which develops a narrative acceptable both in foreign policy as well as in the context of society (Nabers, 2009). It is precisely this process of the establishment of a hegemonic discourse in response to the crisis and accompanying discursive practices, which will be the focus of the following discussion in the paper.

#### **4. A Brief history of Pakistan’s tribal areas**

Historically, tribal areas of Pakistan have been, and they continue to be, both an enigma and a dilemma (Wazir, 2011). The region remained a gateway for invaders rather than an integrated part of any sultanate or kingdom of India, Persia and later on Afghanistan (A. Khan, 2005). For centuries, the area has been used as a crossroad by dynasties such as the Aryans, Mughals, Persians, Turks, and Durranis. The area remained a swinging pendulum between the subsequent power - welders in the broader context of the sub-continent (Ullah, 2014). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was used as a buffer zone between Russia and Great Britain. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century tribal areas became the hub of Islamic militancy during the ideological clash between Communism and Capitalism in the Cold war. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it became an

epicenter of the global war on terrorism. The subsequent wars in the region followed by the rise of the Taliban have caused unprecedented damage to the peaceful society of yester years in terms of death and destruction.

Tribal areas form the western border of Pakistan and consist of seven 'political agencies'<sup>1</sup>: Bajur, Khyber, Kuram, Mohmand, North Waziristan, Aurakzai and South Waziristan. In addition, there are six smaller pockets, called 'frontier regions' (FRs) in the districts of Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Peshawar and Tank (P&DD, 2009). The tribal areas are now home to approximately five million populations and covers of 27,500 square kilometers largely mountainous region with few patches of cultivable land.

The creation of 'tribal agencies' can be found in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century struggle between Britain and Russia known as 'The Great Game'. The Pashtun borderland was used by the British as a buffer zone between the buffer-state Afghanistan and the British government of India. The ultimate goal of the British Government of India was to counter Russia's expansionist designs and to control the trans-frontier tribes to secure the life and property of the settle frontier districts (S. Khan, 2010). Initially, a number of policies and plans were formulated by the British Government of India, such as masterly inactivity, stationary policy, closed border policy and forward policy, but all proved ineffective. Gradually, the British realized that a "modified forward policy, based on the concept of peaceful penetration, a gradual extension of control over the tribes was more appropriate to their needs" (S. Khan, 2010: 65).

Following the second Anglo-Afghan War from 1878-80, under the treaty of Gandamak, the British Government of India (GOI) extended its influence to Michini, Khyber Pass and the adjacent tribes (Beattie, 2013; Sammon, 2008; Spain, 1972). Nevertheless, the confusion was resolved and the fate of the region was decided through demarcation of the Durand Line in 1893, through which the area was designated to be a buffer zone to a buffer state of Afghanistan. Yet the historical process of political socialization of the tribal people remained separate from mainland India due to imperial state policies. The anomalous administrative structure executed through the region never allowed it to become an integral part of British India or Afghanistan (Ullah, 2014). The British realized that turning the Durand line

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1. After merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the agencies are now called districts.

into an international or political boundary is impossible; therefore, it was considered as an administrative ‘sphere of influence’ between British India and Afghanistan.

The British promulgated a separate set of laws for the acephalous self-governing Pashtun tribes popularly known as ‘Frontier Crimes Regulation’ (FCR). After a close and thorough analysis of tribal culture and traditions, the British learned that any law inimical to the Pashtun way of life would not be acceptable. As a result, unique and separate laws were first implemented as “Punjab Frontier Crimes Regulation” in 1887, which was further modified in 1899 and finally on 24th April 1901 renamed to “Frontier Crimes Regulation” (Nichols, 2014). It essentially attempted to codify local customs of the area which would allow the local Jirga’s and Khasaadars<sup>1</sup> to enforce government writ in the area (Caroe, 1958). Maliks were raised by the British to enhance their control on the tribal region and divided them into five classes according to “measure and influence” (Sammon, 2008). Under FCR, a British appointed political agent held judicial, financial and executive power. After British departure in 1947, Pakistan retained the same status and laws until May 2018, when National Assembly passed a bill that abolished the notorious Frontier Crime Regulations and merged the tribal areas into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa known as “Khyber Pakhtunkhwa merged tribal districts”.

### **5. Tribal structure and Pashtun identity**

According to Glatzer, Pashtuns are the largest tribal society in the world (Glatzer, 2002). The edifice of the tribal society is based on the kinship system which provides the strongest social bonds to sustain social order and to regulate socio-economic life (Moore, 2009). Glatzer argues, that kinship is social segments based on the genealogical concept of social structure inherited from common ancestor further divided into tribes and sub-tribes, clans and sub-clans down to the local lineages and families (Glatzer, 2002: 3). Mishali-Ram argues that there are about 350 tribes<sup>2</sup> (Mishali-Ram, 2011:

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1. Khasaadars were recruited by the British in the later years of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a tribal police service under the control of a British political agent.

2. Exact number of tribes is unknown, as Glatzer quote Makhzan-e Afghani compiled in India by Ni’matullah in the early 17th century lists thousands of Pashtun tribes (Glatzer, 2002: 3).

266). However, the following tribes are residing in Pakistan tribal areas. In Khyber district: Afridi (Adam Khel, Akakhel, Kamarkhel, Kamberkhel, Kukikhel, Malik Dinkhel, Sipah, Zakhakhel), Shinwari (Ali Sherkhel), Mullagori (Ahmadkhel, Ismail Khel) and Shilmani (Shamsherkhel, Haleemzai, Kam Shilmani). In Kurram: Turi, Bangash, Sayed, Zaimusht, Mangal, Muqbil, Ali Sherzai, Massuzai, and Para Chamkani. In Bajaur: Salarzai branch of the Tarkalanri tribe (Ibrahim Khel, Bram Khel (Khan Khel) and Safi. In Mohmand: Musakhel, Tarakzai, Safi, Utmankheil, and Haleemzai. In Orakzai: Aurakzai and Daulatzai. In South Waziristan: Mehsud, Wazir, Burki and Dottani/ Suleiman Khel. In North Waziristan: Dawar, Wazir, Saidgi and Gurbaz (Sarfraz., 2010: 63). In Frontier Regions: Bhattani, Ahmadzai, Uthmanzai, Shiranis, Ustrana, zarghunkhel, Akhorwal, Shirakai, Tor Chappar, Bostikhel, Jawaki, Hasan Khel, Ashukhel, Pasani, Janakor, Tatta, Waraspun, and Dhana (ibid).

The class structure of the tribal society comprises of lineages mainly divided into three classes: The Pashtuns, occupational and Akhundun. Each Pashtun tribe and subtribe is headed by Maliks who enjoy decision making authority in the Pashtun tribal society. The Maliks were given allowances and monthly stipends by the government, and in return they were made responsible for security of British interests and the protection of important routes (Beattie, 2013; Howell, 1979). In fact the Maliks were the “British protégés” (Ullah, 2014: 32) in the areas. Maliki succession is decided by hereditary rights: A Malik is replaced by his eldest son. The Pashtuns comprise of various tribes also called ‘qawm’ in their language, ‘Pashtu’. At village level, Pashtuns are then divided into sub-tribes known as khel. The “occupational class” (barbers, musicians) is always considered as the lower class in Pashtun society. These groups are mostly migrated from other areas, although follow Pashtunwali and live peacefully for centuries, but never obtain their rightful place in Pashtun society (Dawar, 2015). According to Ahmad, these occupational groups are excluded from the normative behaviour expected of Pashtuns (Ahmad, 1980). The third class is “Akhundun” which comprises of ‘Pirun and syedun’<sup>1</sup>. These are mostly spiritual families and are involved in writing “*Taweez*” (an amulet or talisman) or doing “*dam*” (purification) for spiritual healing and protecting

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1. They are Sunni by sect, but Syed is also a respectable class in Shia sect.



from evil eyes. Akhundun are mostly good people with humble profile and they enjoy due respect in the Pashtun society due to their hereditary spiritual nobility.

Pashtuns across Afghanistan and Pakistan share a common socio-cultural identity known as 'Pashtunwali' (Ahmad, 1980; Caroe, 1958; Kakar, 2007). Pashtunwali is an informal unwritten law that guides the cultural practices formed by primary normative rules that are strictly followed by the Pashtun tribal groups (Ahmad, 1980). Pashtunwali is the sum of collective expectation (Johnson & Mason, 2008) and collective wisdom (Barth, 1981) that does not stem from one authority, but has been developed over a long period of history and accepted as a socio-cultural entity. For Pashtuns, Pashtunwali is "so essential to the identity of the Pashtun that there is no distinction between practicing Pashtunwali and being a Pashtun" (Kakar, 2007: 2). The main tenants of Pashtunwali include Melmastia(hospitality), Jirga (council of elders), Hujra (common guest house or community centre), Badal(revenge), Ghairat (honour, chivalry), Tarboorwali(agnatic rivalry), purdah and Namooos(gender boundaries) (Dawar, 2015).

The principles of the Pashtunwali slightly differ from region to region based on their local tradition and norms called 'Rewaj'. In a tribal society, Rewaj governs the lives and conduct of people. Rewaj is considered to be mandatory, that is why a famous Pashtu saying "day kali wuwza, day narkha Na" means: leave the village if you are not satisfied but abide by its prevalent customary law 'Rewaj'. J.W. Spain argues that it is nearly impossible to find a Pashtun child - male or female - who is not aware of the elements of Pashtunwali (Spain, 1972). The one who follows the maxims of Pashtunwali is considered respectable and enjoys high esteem in society.

## **6. Discussion**

### **6.1. Mainstream discourse on the conflict in tribal areas**

Pakistan mainstream discourse in the post 9/11 established a hegemonic discourse explaining and justifying the conflict in the region. Politicians, official spokespersons, and journalists have routinely referred to the conflict in tribal areas, as Pashtun led, thereby, constructing a narrative justifying the conflict both at the national level and international level. In media and academia, tribal people are routinely presented as inherently conflictual calling them primitive and extremist. These texts and words have a capacity of meaning-making resources to construct social reality within a specific

social context (De Cillia et al., 1999; Foucault, 1980; Nabers, 2009). The dichotomous civilizational approach portrays tribal people as barbaric and war-loving which not only justify the conflict in the region but violence against them as well.

Mainstream discourse refers to the conflict in tribal areas as inter/intra-tribal conflict and tribal mobilization to fight foreign invading powers to protect their co-ethnic and fellow Pashtun tribesman (Cheema, 2008; Qazi, 2011). Cheema writes after the Taliban regime was ousted from power in 2001, remnants of militants forces found a haven in tribal areas, where co-ethnic Pashtun tribesmen warmly welcomed these forces under the code of Pashtunwali (Cheema, 2008). Representing the conflict with Pashtun socio-cultural identity, they argue that the people of the tribal area provided refuge to militants under the code of tribal norms, in broader view militancy stem from Pashtunwali (Cheema, 2008; Qazi, 2011). Even, some of the international distant analysts for example (Mishali-Ram, 2011) also define the conflict in socio-religious terms.

Furthermore, mainstream academia portrays the conflict as a socio-religious movement of Pashtuns. For example, Amir Rana writes, the Taliban's success in the tribal region is mainly for two reasons: support Pashtun ethnicity and religious ethos [...] chauvinism' (Rana, 2009: 13). Referring to the previous Jihadis campaigns in tribal areas, they quote Haji Turangzai, Faqir of Ipi to justify their arguments and tribal people's attachment with religion. Taking conflict in a socio-cultural and religious context, Qazi argues that Pashtuns have a strong association with religion [...] both Pashtunwali and Islam, sync perfectly in Pashtun society (Qazi, 2011). Scholars like Ahmed assert that there is no disjunction between Pashtun and Muslim identity; actually "Islam is another name for Pukhtun society" (Ahmad, 1984: 311).

The reasons for non-successful military operations were linked to the tribe's support for the militants. In order to establish their narrative, short-length film video was aired at undisclosed location where they captured a man veiled in tribal female clothing, who is searched very ruthlessly and then make him dance. Pamphlets were distributed requesting the general population to report any suspicious person or activity. The terrorists were specified as Pashtuns and Afghans (Shah, 2017). This racial Pashtun profiling through texts, speeches, articles, etc. have a profound influence in

the public sphere, which not only develops a narrative but also justifying conflict and violence against the Pashtun population. Hansen argues that texts fall into the main genres of policy documents, journalism, and academic writing, which sometimes construct discursive identity to encounter criticism and make others unthinkable (Hansen, 2013).

## **6.2. Deconstructing socio-religious myth of the mainstream discourse**

### **6.2.1. Islam and Pashtunwali**

Historical evidence and ground realities speak against mainstream discourse arguments of similarities between Islam and Pashtunwali. In the Pashtun tribal belt, Pashtunwali is interwoven in every sphere of life and has been practiced in the region for centuries. History reveals that prominent aspects of Pashtunwali are grounded in a centuries-old Pashtun tradition that is deeply rooted in pre-Islamic past and is older than Islam by thousand years (Taj, 2011). Abdul Wali khan, prominent Pashtun nationalist leader, replied in response to a question: “I am 5000 years Pashtun, 1400 years Muslim and 60 years old Pakistani. Where do you think my identity lies?”

Most of the western writers and researchers believe in sharp contradiction and see a significant conflict between Islam and Pashtunwali (Barth, 1981; Bartlotti, 2000; Dupree, 1980; Edwards, 1996; Spain, 1985). J.W. Spain writes that: “even though it has perpetuated the blood feud, [Pashtunwali] provides for what is probably the maximum amount of law and order [...] Pashtuns accept no law but their own” (Spain, 1985: 68). Louis Dupree argues that in Pashtunwali, “most beliefs are related to localized, pre-Muslim customs” (Dupree, 1980: 104). A famous Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth reflects that Pashtuns are Muslims by name, they do not have to do anything special to be that (Barth, 1981).

Islam and Sharia's law represent a moral code while Pashtunwali represents a code of honour, but in case of conflict, Pashtunwali has precedence (Haring, 2010). Pashtuns are strong believers of Islam, pray five times a day, but always prefer Pashtunwali when the matter is related to honour. For instance, Badal or revenge is related to honour which is different from Islam. In Pashtunwali, any member of the opponent family or clan can be targeted to take revenge while Islam only permits the killing ‘Qisas’ of the actual offending person. In Pashtun society, it is a custom that Pashtun targets the breadwinner of the opposite family. In certain conditions

morality completely fails before the norms of Pashtun society. The aim is not only to take revenge but to inflict economic casualty on the enemy as well. Moreover, Islam is a religion of forgiveness, but in the Pashtun tribal belt, there is no room for forgiveness of an intentional murder which has to be revenged at all cost.

Examples of predominance of Pashtunwali and Rewaj in comparison to Islam can be found in many norms of Pashtun culture and behaviour. 'Jirga' which is the central pillar of Pashtunwali and the only conflict resolution mechanism in the region, bases their decision on the local norms and values rather than on Sharia. Elders reach decisions in accordance with accepted local traditions and values that are deeply ingrained in the collective conscience of the village/tribe and in the minds of its individual members. Issues related to Women, property, natural resources and domestic issues are solved through local customary law. In reality, Maliks or elders have little knowledge about Islam. After returning from Hajj, someone asked an elderly man in the village, "Did you understand their language"? He replied, "I didn't understand any words except Azan that was in Pashto".

In the tribal model of power legitimacy, the ultimate source of authority is Allah and the prophet, but the tribal mediated this divine authority to the ruler through the institution of Jirga. Pashtun rulers have been selected and legitimized their rule through Pashtunwali; for instance, in 1747, the power of the Pashtun leader Ahmad Shah Durrani was legitimized through Jirga (Olesen, 1995). In the above model, Pashtun leaders were able to exercise their actions and decisions through the institution of Jirga. Deviation from Jirga decisions results in loss of authority over the tribe (Kakar, 2007).

Under Islamic law, women share the right of property inheritance with their male relatives. However, in Pashtunwali, only males have the right to own property. There is famous Pashtun proverb "Pashtuns accept half of the Quran". For instance, tribal Pashtuns don't follow 'Surah Nissa' which orders equal status to women in terms of inheritance and rights to development and empowerment. While conducting research on gendering the legal and customary practices in ownership and access to land in Swat, a local imam(clergy) replied, "Pashtuns do not want to listen to sermons related to women rights specifically [...] the Imam agreed with the general narrative that customs are stronger than religion" (Khalid, Nyborg, & Khattak, 2015: 55). A person was reciting 'Surah Nissa' in Hujra with

Pushto translations when an elderly man interrupted and said: “it’s not our Quran, it must be yours”.

In Pashtun tribal belt, religious figures have repeatedly mobilized people against foreign occupation. For example, in 1893, Hadda Mullah provoked the tribal people against the British army (Haroon, 2007). Followed by Hadda Mullah, his successors Haji Turangzai, Mullah Babara, Mullah Chaknawar used the same slogan of jihad against the British in the tribal areas, where the local population was refrained from any contact with the British government and issue a verdict that whoever works with the British government becomes the enemy of God and his Prophet (ibid; Qadir, 2016). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during the Second World War, Faqir of Ipi, a prominent religious leader from North Waziristan, declared Jihad against the British. The Lashkar's of Faqir of Ipi ambushed the British army and inflicted heavy casualties. However, a close and thorough analysis suggests that these movements were indigenous resistance of the tribal people against the British and were more nationalistic and reformist in approach and mandate. Contrary to the present day militancy and extremism, religious figures in the past did not get any support from outside. Even though religious figures led movements, but Pashtunwali was strictly followed, and all the important decisions were taken based on Jirga. Their objectives were confined to a specific region rather than propagating the concept of Pan Islamism. These religious movements though purely Islamic in nature, had no effect on the basic structure of Pashtunwali. Their success was dependent on the support of local elders [...] the local clergy/mullah held the leadership of the movement until the end of resistance. Once the battle was over, influential ‘Khans and Maliks’ of the area occupied the driving seat to lead the tribes. Syed Shaheed Bareilvi, a religious figure, with a substantial following in the Tribal areas, failed to establish a puritanical Islamic order with a centralized authority; he and his followers were resisted and ultimately ousted from the region. Altaf Qadir argues that two factors were responsible for Syed Shaheed failure: firstly, he was alien to the Pashtun culture and second he disregarded the socio-economic and political set of tribal people (Qadir, 2016: 26). Tribal mullah or clerics do not have any authority; they sit outside the Jirga and pray for a favourable outcome at the end. A mullah’s role in the society was as a subordinate to local Maliks. They were neither

political aspirant, nor were they allowed to have a say in the political matters that are entirely the privilege of the influential Pashtun elders.

The objectives of those movements were not to enforce Sharia. Although, some of the religious figures such as Haji Turangzai did raise his voice for sharia in Mohmand tribal area, but his reformist movement was in consonance with Pashtunwali (Qadir, 2016). His movement didn't harm any non-Muslim factions, in reality, he refrained tribal people to avoid kidnapping non-Muslims such as Hindus (ibid). Contrary to previous religious struggles, the present-day militant groups are greatly influenced by transnational ideologies alien to the Pashtun culture. The militants want to impose strict Islamic ideology through the use of force. Thousands of local "Maliks" were killed and pamphlets were distributed in local languages stating that any contact with the government of Pakistan was prohibited. Taliban defied all those cultural norms and values inimical to Wahhabi ideology<sup>1</sup> and presented Pashtunwali as a conservative code of conduct (Dawar, 2019). Taliban completely banned visiting shrines and called it un-Islamic. These shrines not only provided spiritual guidance but were also a source of peace and tranquillity. Nonetheless, the militants disrupted century-old traditions and pillars of Pashtunwali, such as Jirga which in the past played an important role in conflict resolution and maintaining peace in society. Taliban understood that dismantling the century-old conflict resolution mechanism would strengthen their power in the region. The disruption ultimately led to the creation of a vacuum, which was later filled by the Taliban led 'Shura' (ibid).

Similarly, culture of Hujra as a social club, honour killings, Tarboorwali (agnostic rivalry), Paighur (taunt), weeding ceremonies through traditional dances 'attanr' and even Purdah<sup>2</sup> are all other essential elements of Pashtunwali that are entirely different from Islam. In reality, Pashtunwali is a secular way of life utterly inimical to Islam. However, due to the non-availability of local research on the aforementioned secular aspects of

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1 . Wahhabis are confrontationists who advocate war against non-Muslims and other Islamic sects, defined by them as others.

2. Joint family system is common practice in Pashtun tribal society where all members of the clan: father, sons, cousins, nephews etc. live together. They are all living together without Purdah. However, in Islam, women living in-laws are bound to do Purdah completely.

Pashtunwali, it is often portrayed as conservative religious features and provocateurs of conflict in the region.

### **6.2.2. Taliban, refuge and Pashtunwali**

Mainstream official discourse argues that militants were provided refuge under the code *Melmastia* (hospitality) to their fellow Pashtuns of Afghanistan and foreign militants. Moreover, mainstream analysts also argue that the people of tribal areas found a profitable business where the Arabs provided large sums of money for renting a house. For instance, Shuja Nawaz writes in his paper: “*Fata the Most Dangerous Place*”, says that due to un-employment local tribal entrepreneurs discovered lucrative business of harbouring foreign militants (Nawaz & de Borchgrave, 2009). However, ground realities, on the other hand, reveal that under Pashtunwali offering *Melmastia* (hospitality), to a guest is not unconditional but the guest must be abiding by the rules of the host family (Taj, 2011). It is the custom of the tribal belt that hosts provide shelter and protection where the guest will live according to the terms and conditions of the host. Guests are not allowed to be involved in any violent activities. Furthermore, a guest must be subordinated to the rule of the host family. Any breach of rule or violation of the terms and conditions on the part of the guest can lead to the expulsion of the guest from the tribe.

Militants once consolidated strong foothold in the region; now they had to go on their way. Foreign militants captured permanent places in the densely populated areas. In case of any opposition, they threatened the family with dire consequences. Militants forced people to offer them shelter, occupied the empty houses, *Hujras* (communal guesthouse) of the people and lived there for months and even years. They forcibly collected money from the local community and demanded on the income of the person. Consequently, most of the families migrated to the other parts of Pakistan.

The local community did not provide refuge because of Pashtunwali, but it is due to militant’s coercive policies that made the local population hostages (Ghufran, 2009; Siddique, 2014; Taj, 2011). Militants killed thousands of people on allegations of spying for America with no evidence’. Indeed, they succeeded in creating a reign of terror in the region where the local population became weak before the power of the militants (Ghufran, 2009; Rashid, 2009). Thus, unlike presented in the mainstream discourse, hospitality was not freely given but coerced through intimidation and

violence. With no access to the region, the element of Pashtunwali such as hospitality is often misunderstood with projection as a negative feature of Pashtun identity (Ker, 2011). In the post 9/11, an attempt has been made to correlate the Pashtun identity with conflict to prolong the conflict in the region.

### **6.3. Geopolitical interests in the region**

#### **6.3.1. Countering Pashtun nationalism**

The racial profiling through dominant discourse has been established not on the basis of value-based factual truth but on perception-based discursive constructions. The fact is vivid by explaining Hansen's perspective of why discourses are discursively constructed in international relations. Mainstream official discourse tries to depict the real cause of the conflict by twisting the geopolitical realities of the region. In reality, conflict in the region should be understood in terms of regional struggle mainly between India and Pakistan for securing strategic interests in the region. Since the Afghan Jihad, Pakistan is faced with a difficult and complex situation of countering Pashtun nationalism and Indian supremacy in Afghanistan through proxy warriors.

The Afghan Jihad in the 1980s and rise of the Taliban marked the most successful point of Islamabad's policy of countering Pashtun nationalism (Siddique, 2014). Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan pose severe threats to the national integration of Pakistan since the separation of Bangladesh in 1971 (Ghufran, 2009; Rubin & Siddique, 2006). Pakistani support for the Taliban is shaped by Afghan irredentist claim over the territory of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, tribal areas and some parts of Baluchistan. Afghanistan is the only country that opposed Pakistan's membership in the United Nations. Since the formation of Pakistan, the Afghan government claims the Pashtun territory across the Durand line and advocated the annulment of the agreement once the British left.

The Afghan president, Daud Khan intensified the policy of Greater Pashtunistan in the 1960s who raised voice on a national and international forum. Afghanistan increased pressure on Pakistan by naming schools situated on the Pak-afghan border to Pashtunistan madrassahs and renamed the major square in Kabul "Pashtunistan Square" (Johnson & Mason, 2008: 69). The voice of Daud Khan was supported by the left-wing political party,



the Awami National Party, (ANP) in NWFP (present Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). This posed serious threats to the already damaged national integration of Pakistan due to the loss of Bangladesh.

Both Afghan Jihad and the rise of the Taliban provided an opportunity for Pakistan to be exploited for strategic interests. Pakistan relied on the mullahs of the tribal belt to pursue its strategic interest policy. The objective of Pakistan was, to dump the issue of Pashtunistan once and forever. To win the support of the Taliban, the Pakistan finance ministry allocated US\$ 6 million in salaries to Taliban administration in Kabul. Pakistan set up a telecommunication network in Kandahar and Kabul so that they could contact one another and their families in Pakistan (Rashid, 2001). Pakistan aimed that the Taliban would recognize the Durand line agreement which was signed between the Amir Abdur Rahman of Afghanistan and the British government of India in 1893. To get the Durand Line recognized, the Pakistani Interior Minister, Nasir Ullah Babar, travelled to Kandahar several times to convince Mullah Omar to accept the Durand Line as the boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan but in vain (ibid). No government, even the Taliban, the closest of any Afghan government had ever been to Pakistan, accepted the legality of the Durand Line.

The Afghan Jihad, followed by the Taliban's rise, could not solve the Durand line issue but provided substantial opportunity to weaken the Pashtun nationalism. The decades of the '80s and '90s gave birth to Pashtun Islamism. Pakistan utilized the religious card to strengthen her identity (Haqqani, 2005). Islamist parties were sponsored and supported by the state in order to ideologically strengthen the roots of the country. Pakistan supported the concept of Ummah (Islamic Nation) backed by Islamic parties (Aziz, 2007). The Islamic parties were encouraged by the state to run their un-registered madrassahs in Pakistan without interference. The Islamist parties openly and categorically opposed Pashtun nationalism. Over the years, Pashtun Islamism transformed into a formidable political force that challenged Pashtun nationalism (Siddique, 2014). According to Barnett Robin "to defend Pakistan from ethnic fragmentation, Pakistan's governments have tried to neutralize Pashtun and Baluch nationalism, in part by supporting Islamist parties among the Pashtuns" (Robin, 2007).

Consequently, the Pakistan left-wing party, advocating the policy of Greater Pashtunistan, moderated their demands and replaced the greater

Pashtunistan with Pakhtunkhwa, denoting a combination of tribal areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Indeed, the policies of Islamization weaken the Pashtun nationalism, but as time progresses, Pan-Islamism of Al-Qaida challenged the state of Pakistan which bounce back in the shape of militancy. However, the paradigmatic shift in the past few years, where the mujahidin turned into terrorists and committed unending atrocities in the Pashtun border-land once again sparked a desire for Greater Pashtunistan.

### **6.3.2. Countering Indian influence**

Indo-Pak rivalry has deeply influenced the politics of Afghanistan since 1947. Both countries are involved in a zero-sum game minimizing their role at the expense of one another. The main goal of India is to support anti-Pakistan elements in Afghanistan and peruse the policy of “strategic encirclement”. Pakistan’s objective is to counteract Indian influence and secure a pro-Pakistani government in Afghanistan. Most of the analysts believe that a fear of Indian dominance in Afghanistan is the driving force behind the Pakistan military covert war of supporting tribal areas insurgency. The Pakistani government categorically blames India for supporting the separatist movement in Baluchistan and aids anti-Pakistan elements in tribal areas. The opening of Indian consulates on the Pakistan border in Jalalabad and Qandahar, in particular, became an area of contention between the two countries. In the post 9/11 period, Pakistan is continuously accusing India of supporting anti-Pakistan Taliban, especially Tehrik Taliban Pakistan in tribal areas.

On the other hand, India blames Pakistan for supporting Jihadi groups in Kashmir and providing training in the border region of Afghanistan (Kronstadt & Katzman, 2008). The recent Pulwama attack on Indian soldiers put both countries in a direct confrontation. India has established an arsenal of economic, diplomatic and military apparatuses in its pursuit of a more coordinated strategy in the region. Both countries are testing sub-continent rivalries in Afghanistan. In this covert war, Pakistan is heavily relying on Islamist jihadist proxies as tools of its Afghan foreign policy. According to Barnett Robin, “Pakistan's state has always approached the

various wars in and around Afghanistan as a function of its main institutional and national security interests: first and foremost, balancing India, a country which has not fully accepted Pakistan's existence as yet" (Robin, 2007). Owing to the fear of a possible war between India and Pakistan, Islamabad requires to secure the western border and in case of need to utilize against India (Khalilzad & Byman, 2000: 68).

India aspires to create a rift between Pakistan and Afghanistan by highlighting the controversial issue of Pashtunistan. Pakistan has raised concern over the presence of India in Afghanistan on many forums. In the past decade, Pakistan has categorically explained on international forums that Pakistan's national security doctrine requires countering New Delhi's expanding military capability and regional influence in Afghanistan. Moreover, Pakistan also looks for the pro-Pakistani government in Kabul to provide a safe corridor to rich Central Asian states. Pakistani Taliban policy can be understood as a potential rival to Indian supremacy in the region and a method of influence in Afghanistan once the US left the region.

### **7. Conclusion**

Identity in post-structuralist discourse analysis is at the ontological and epistemological centre as it is discursively and relationally constituted. The particular constructions of identity legitimize and underpin policies; the broader ethical and political ambition is to demonstrate how these constructions justify certain policies and other unthinkable. This is how we experienced in the tribal areas.

The paper analysed how and why Pashtun socio-cultural identity is discursively co-constituted through dominant discourse in the post 9/11. The incident of 9/11 and the consequent declaration of war against terrorism changed the discourse of international politics. Pashtun tribal social and cultural identity are discursively constructed through profiling and continuously subjected to mockery presenting them like a barbarian, war-loving people hence and presenting the Taliban led resistance in Afghanistan as Pashtun led protecting co-ethnic brothers across the border. During Afghan Jihad and in the post 9/11, the Pakistani government relied heavily on the scarcely literate mullah of the villages, which gave them

immense political power. Covering the post-structuralist perspective of international relations, the findings reveal that the conflict in the region has not been caused by ethno-religious connections across the Durand line; in reality, it is the result of Pakistan's struggle to secure her interests in the region. Pakistan uses the Pashtun social identity to justify her foreign policy interests and makes other unthinkable.

Representing the conflict as a Pashtun indigenous struggle against foreign occupation in Afghanistan helps Pakistan to justify her foreign policy. However, it is also an instrument to mobilize more local population to join the militants and sustain the conflict. Pakistan's deliberate tilt in favour of the local religious elites and violent non-state actors woven around strategic foreign policy objectives has left behind far-reaching adverse consequences on the Pashtun identity. The Pashtun's culture and internal dynamics will remain subject to abnormal and unnatural changes until and unless these violent non-state actors and local religious entities remain as an extended arm of Pakistan's Afghan policy.

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