

Countering Terrorism through Pashtunwali/ Pashtu

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Abstract:

Terrorism has been regarded as sin in all civilizations of the world, like other civilizations Pashtuns are also against terror and terrorist activities yet it's being observed that in most of terrorist acts Pashtuns got involved. This article will highlight what wrong has been done with this nation which made them like injured loin whose presence may affect around him. This article mainly focuses on codes of Pashtunwali through which terrorism can be curbed in Pashtun society. This article is significant in the sense that it will highlight peaceful solution of problem through Pashtunwali rather than countering it through use of force which failed to gave a desired results since 9/11 event.

Introduction:

“The United States Department of Defense defines terrorism as “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.”(1) Similarly terrorism can also be defined as violent attack against the noncombatant innocent civilians. Interestingly, “terrorism is not new and even though it has been used since the early times of recorded history,” (2) however after 9/11 event the term terrorism became prominent in global politics. The United States of America along with its allies followed various counter terrorism options but they failed to crush the terrorism in Pashtun dominated regions of Afghanistan and somehow in Pakistan. In changing regional and global politics the international actors must change the strategies to counter terrorism; one

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of valid & practical solution of terrorism can be dealing it through Pashtunwali and not through bullet or use of force option in Pashtun dominated areas. Thus terror and extremism therefore in Pashtun dominated areas can be countered through local means in which Pashtunwali can play tremendous role.

Understanding Pashtunwali:

Pakhtunwali or Pashtu or Pokhto are the name of living ethical codes & set of moral codes which are in unwritten form that transferred from one generation to other and became a traditional lifestyle that the Pashtun people follow. “The Pashtunwali is one of the larger “quasi-legal & Social systems in the world in terms of the number of people subject to it, and it may be the largest such system of any stateless society. “(3) It is the core of social behavior of Pashtuns which is never away from their minds. “Pashtunwali embodies all the principles of a self-sufficient social group. It also embodies social principles that ensure a society’s progress through competition; and survival through co-operation. The elements of conflict and co-operation are evenly balanced in the make-up of Pashtunwali.”(4).

Principles of Pashtunwali which can facilitate in countering Terrorism:

Faith: “Believe in God -known as "Allah" in Arabic and "Khudai” in Pashto. Merely believe in God isn’t required but believe in oneness of God is also required. The notion of believing & trusting in the one creator generally comports to Islamic monotheism and tawheed.” This became the base of Pahtunwali in post-Islamic era, by this notion one can easily understand that this nation can’t bow their heads before any authority, institution or force other than God. Thus any measure in regard of forcing Pashtun for their subjugation before any other power than God will result in their reaction, so non interference with their faith will keep them peaceful.

Equality: “Every man is equal within the tribe. It is this concept which has necessitated the development of a Jirga system, whereby decision making takes place with the participation of all members of the society or tribes.

Every man wants a say in his future and he will fight for his right to have his opinions heard. All people must therefore deal with each other, with the proper civility or respect and no one can try to impose their will on to another.” (5) An unequal treatment is always taken as insult by pashtuns, for them even those leaders or governments are not acceptable where equality & respect is missing for them, so another peaceful option in discouraging revolts, terror& bloodsheds in Pashtun’s society is assuring equality in their societies particularly between leaders and masses.

Justice and forgiveness - If one intentionally wrongs another, the victim has the right, even an obligation, to avenge this injustice in equal proportion. If one has intentionally wronged you, and you did not seek justice nor did the wrongdoer ask you for his/her forgiveness, then a debt, is owed to you by him/her, which can only be fulfilled once justice has been provided to recompense the wrong done.(6) Keeping this principle in front one thing clearly indicates that steps like drone strikes won’t abolish terror in Pashtun society rather if innocents are being killed then their family members will take guns to avenge the injustice, however they won’t resist if any one being trialed after being proved guilty through courts or even jirga’s.

Jirga: “The institution of the jirga is the most important element of Pashtun culture and it has played an influential role over Pashtun society for centuries. The jirga system, with its deep roots in Pashtun culture, which is the product of Pashtun tribal society, operates according to the inclusive code of conduct of Pashtunwali, which the indigenous Pashtun people from Afghanistan and Pakistan follow.”(7) Interestingly, “in Pashtuns Jirgas every man is equal. It is this concept which has necessitated the development amongst Pashtuns of a Jirga system, whereby decision making takes place with the participation of all members of the Pashtun society. Every man wants a say in his future and he’ll fight for his right to have his opinions heard. All people must therefore

deal with each other, with the proper civility or respect and no one may impose their will on to another.”(8)

Pashtuns have a rich history and culture and peace can't be bring in their societies through unfamiliar, dictated systems or imposed legal systems, however through Jirga system old and young generation sit together and they work for problems resolutions and conflict resolutions. Thus even terrorism and terrorist can be countered through Jirga systems in Pashtun societies, the same objective can be achieved through peaceful means rather than violent and use of force options.

Melmastia” (hospitality): “It is a key component of Pashtunwali. “Melma” means a guest. However, hospitality is not to be interpreted in the manner a Westerner would interpret it. It means offering hospitality to a guest; transcending race, religion and economic status. It also means once under the roof of the host, a guest should neither be harmed nor surrendered to an enemy. This will be regardless of the relationship between the guest and the host enjoyed previously, so even the enemy who comes seeking refuge, must be granted it and defended against his pursuers.”(9). However this doesn't means that Pashtuns will give asylum to criminal and terrorists and they won't hand over such kind of people to governments etc, but before any such act the refuge seekers must have been proved guilty through Jirga or courts only then they may hand over such kind of individuals otherwise they will rather die for protecting his guest instead of handing over him to others..

Family – Families have been regarded as important segment in Pashtun society. The family is taken as responsibility and duty with respect for wives, daughters, elders, parents, sons, and husbands. The Pashtuns will live & die for their families. Assuring respect, equality, security will keep Pashtuns in peace otherwise they may stand in different way.

Fight evil – “Evil is at constant war with good. Evil must be fought and good must prevail over evil. It is a Pashtun's duty to fight evil when he/she comes face to face with it.”(10) Particularly in post Islamic period, the Islamic religious teachings also became important element in this regard in Pashtun society where it is believed that one shall try to counter evil through physical actions, expressions and through feelings/thinking in heart & mind.

Honesty and Promise – “A pashtun is known for keeping their promises and being honest at all situations and times. A true Pashtun will never break their promise.”(11) Once they make promise they will die for fulfilling it and they will assist the one whom they promised at greatest extent possible. However they may compromise their promise for collective good or honor but compromising before evils they will prefer to die rather than sacrificing honesty and promise.

Land: Pashtuns love their land and they may go to any extent to defend their frontiers and land, e.g. Afghans never surrendered before any foreign aggressors when they came to invade Afghanistan. The Pashtuns regards their land and country as their mother and they may compromise to any extent when question of its honor and defence comes. So in order to keep Pashtuns calm it's better not to mess-up with their land or territory.

Protecting Pashtun culture: “It is obligatory for a Pashtun to protect Pashtun culture from dilution and disintegration. Pashtunwali advises that in order to successfully accomplish this, a Pashtun must retain the Pashto language since Pashto is the prime source of Pashtun culture and its understanding is therefore essential. Not being able to speak Pashto to Pashtun society often translates to the inability to understand the Pashtun culture, values, history and community.”(12) Interestingly, Pashtunwali does not offer the map to control Pashtun tribes but it serves like a magic where it helps to understand the Pashtun culture, and within its framework can help

in formulating a strategy for engaging with the tribes located anywhere in the world to promote values under Pashtun culture and protect it at maximum level. Any attempt of changing Pashtun culture is seen as cultural imperialism and tolerating it has no room in their society.

Additional codes of Pashtunwali which can help in countering terrorism:

Terrorism can automatically be countered by assuring following additional features of Pashtunwali;

Brotherhood

Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds

Freedom and independence

Compassion and cooperation

Unity

Taking care of neighbors regardless of race, color, religions etc.

Hospitality

Non-interference

Competition for achieving the heights of good and abstaining evils.

Avoiding blame games.

Respect for Humanism.

Conclusion:

After understanding Pashtunwali one may want to ask that if Pashtuns have such rich culture where everything revolve around peace and majority of it follow Islam which by itself means peace then why this nation is at war for many decades, the answer is simple the more anyone interfere with Pashtunwali codes the more violent Pashtuns will become. This nation has psyche they can jump in hell when they are being taken with honor while they may disregard going to paradise when use of force is there & honor is missing around them.

There is notion that poison kills poison, likewise Pashtuns can be in peace when they are dealt with peace, they will honor any when they see honor from them, they will show love when they received the same, they will become brutal when they are treated likewise, they will be in war when any one is in war against them, they will become terrorists when they are treated in same way, so if International community's want to curb terrorism in Pashtun societies they must deal Pashtuns in peaceful way it will led towards peace otherwise violent, brutal means against them may lead towards more violence and terror . Once the international actors convey the message of live and let us live to the Pashtuns, the positive outcome will be visible in short span of time.

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