

The Pashtun Household: A Cultural Space for Political TrainingDr. Aziz Ullah Kakar¹, Samina Batool Shah²

Original Article

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to analyze the role of the Pashtun household (kor) in the evolution of political authority. The Pashtun household serves as the principal context in which senior members of a family transmit the concept of leadership to their descendants. This study focuses on the interconnection between two primary themes: the upbringing of male family members in Pashtun society to fulfil political roles, and the criteria employed by the people to evaluate the concept of political leadership. There is a contention that the Pashtun home offers a conducive atmosphere for males to acquire the necessary skills and readiness to assume the position of a political leader. Once an individual acquires the necessary skills and knowledge to assume a leadership role, he must adhere to the specific requirements established within their local context in order to become a political leader. The data collection for the present study was carried out in Tehsil Killa Saif Ullah, located in the province of Balochistan. The demographic composition of this area primarily consists of people belonging to the Kakar tribe, a Pashtun ethnic group, with the majority of its inhabitants adhering to the Sunni sect of Islam.

Keywords: Household, Culture, Habitus, Pushtuns, Politics

Introduction

Despite the advancements in contemporary science and technology and the extensive growth of state institutions in recent decades, the Pashtun belt, situated on both sides of the border, has remained relatively inflexible to the influences of modernism and secularism. The causes of this fiasco may be attributed to the state's inability to modernize the region and various economic and political crises. However, the predominant factors contributing to the present instability and unrest in the area are the lasting effects of two significant events: the Afghan Jihad in the 1980s and the War on Terror following the events of September 11th. According to Khan, Wazir, and Khan (2019), both wars have had enduring impacts on the social structure of the Pashtuns, as their involvement in the conflicts has directly influenced the people and the region.

Before the Afghan Jihad, the Pashtun society exhibited a state of relative tranquility. Tribal ties served as a mechanism for regulating social interactions, promoting peace and fostering an environment of tolerance. Secularism exerted influence on political affairs. However, in response to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, the capitalist bloc led by the United States and its allies strategically allocated substantial financial resources and military equipment to the border regions to counter Soviet communism in Afghanistan. In the meanwhile, the madrassa network underwent significant expansion. Majority of the madrassa students underwent a process of radicalization and received training to engage in combat activities in Afghanistan. The significance of religion, in particular, assumed an unquestionably crucial role. By employing religion as a prominent tool, two

significant objectives were effectively accomplished: the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan and the subsequent prevention of secular and contemporary influences from permeating Pashtun society.

Consequently, following the Russian soldiers' withdrawal after their defeat in Afghanistan, the Pashtun region was uncertain. More political arrangements were needed to establish societal normalization and facilitate the restructuring of the economy and culture. Likewise, Akbar S. Ahmed asserts that the Pashtuns saw significant adverse effects due to this battle, with several aspects of their society, including leadership, women, and even children, being profoundly impacted. There is an emergence of new voices, and the emergence of new values is being observed. According to the author (1986: 166), the societal landscape of Afghanistan has undergone irreversible changes.

Following the event of September 11, the Pashtun belt once again became the focus of attention. On this occasion, the United States and its allies modified their approach to eliminate the presence of radicalism and militancy, which they had previously supported. All tasks remain unfinished. The Taliban once regarded as freedom fighters have now been labeled terrorists. In summary, those who first advocated for radicalism afterward transitioned into its adversaries. In the context of the counterterrorism efforts, extremist groups and their adversaries directed their attention to Pashtun regions within Pakistan as a strategic battleground for their confrontations. The local economy and political landscape saw significant impacts, leading to the emergence of novel social strata and leadership structures. As a reaction, extensive military campaigns were initiated to eradicate militancy and terrorism. In this situation, a significant influx of migrants occurred, leading to mass migration. The population was dispersed in various regions of the country. State institutions did not support them, but national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) tried to assist the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

The impact of the Afghan conflict and the conflict on Terror extended beyond Pashtun politics and economy. On the contrary, these actions resulted in the detrimental unraveling of the diverse elements of their cultural fabric. Long-standing traditions were abandoned. Within the Pashtun community, the utilization of mosques (Al-Krenawi, 2016; Mughal, 2015) and guest houses, commonly referred to as *Hujra* (Rehman, Ahmed, & Khan, 2021), held significant place in the regulation of their cultural and political affairs. Regrettably, the current conflicts have significantly disrupted these two cultural domains. Throughout history, mosques have often served as catalysts for mobilizing the populace against imperial powers. However, in contemporary times, their influence in shaping the political landscape of communities has diminished. The erosion of religious scholars' role as orators has been particularly pronounced.

Similarly, the Pashtun guest house *Hujra* experienced significant disruption. According to Barth's study (1959), within the Swati Pashtun community, the *Hujra*, predominantly controlled by men, served as a platform for individuals to engage in political decision-making processes concerning their public and political affairs. Individuals would convene for extended periods to engage in discussions about everyday matters. One of the notable figures in the region was the local Khan, whose role held significant prominence. Furthermore, the cultural diversities among Pashtuns have proven to be an important source of conflict when manipulated to the detriment of individuals and society.

The Pashtun code of conduct, known as *Pukhtunwali* (Ahmed, 2006), places significant emphasis on the value of hospitality. According to this code, Pashtuns are expected to provide shelter to those in need (Centlivres, 1988). In certain regions of the Pashtun territories, terrorist

organizations established a presence within local communities by exploiting the guise of hospitality. Consequently, the local population began to withdraw their support in large numbers. This phenomenon is prominently evident in the recently consolidated regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where the local tribesmen extended hospitality to the Arab fighters upon their repatriation from Afghanistan. They established residence in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas and entered matrimonial unions with indigenous households. Simultaneously, the recently arrived inhabitants commenced proclaiming Jihad against the Western world. These regions were commonly utilized as bases for disseminating hate and engaging in acts of terrorism. In response, the Western powers failed to distinguish between those acting as hosts and guests during counterterrorism operations, instead categorizing all parties involved as terrorists. Consequently, utilizing hospitality in such a manner deterred individuals from engaging with it.

The emergence of new social classes following the conclusion of the Afghan war and the War on Terror has resulted in a transformation of the internal dynamics within Pashtun society and a shift in the criteria used for selecting new leadership. The Afghan conflict and the counterterrorism campaign have effectively created opportunities for a select few while disproportionately burdening the majority. The impact of these was not limited to the general population; a special few individuals could gain significant fortune and wield considerable power. The previous leadership began to be substituted by individuals who, in various ways, acquired "cultural" and "economic" resources during these conflicts. Historically, leadership standards were commonly linked to individual attributes. He was required to possess the highest level of seniority among his fellow tribesmen. Significantly, property possession and economic influence played pivotal roles in determining leaders. Considerations of wealth and power predominantly determined the selection of tribal chiefs and politically prominent religious clergy. Principally, the process of selecting a leader involved the collective decision-making of the people. However, in contemporary times, the prominence of collective decision-making has diminished. Establishing stronger relationships with state authorities and possession of 'economic' wealth is widely regarded as the most suitable and locally recognized standard for leadership.

The anthropological discourse around Pashtuns has endeavored to elucidate the importance of "extended families" and "lineages" in shaping cultural and political domains. In his work, Lindholm (1982) employs the terminology of 'segmentary lineage system' and 'acephalous' to describe the social structure of the Pashtuns residing in the region of Swat. According to his perspective, this structure brought together various groups and individuals based on their lineage, tracing back to a shared male progenitor. According to Lindholm (1982: 56), individuals who possess a common ancestor are bound by the tie of blood to protect each other from external threats or individuals who are more distantly related. Presently, there has been a significant transformation. The rapid increase in urbanization and migration, driven by military operations following the War on Terror, has disrupted the traditional structure of extended families. The familial system of the Pashtun community remains compact, although there has been a drop in the associated obligations and responsibilities related to kinship.

The Pashtun society has a very patriarchal structure, wherein significant importance is placed on men's leadership roles within the realms of family, lineage, and the tribe. Women are entirely excluded from the domain of leadership. The allocation of tasks within the household based on gender roles is intricately linked to the sexual division of labor. The justification for the importance of men over women is as follows. In this context, it is customary for men to assume the responsibility of inheriting the family's name, honor, and land.

Meanwhile, as women are sometimes married outside the family, therefore, they are not afforded an active position inside the household. The concepts mentioned above are deeply ingrained inside the Pashtun household. Both males and females get training within the domestic sphere to facilitate internalizing their designated societal responsibilities. Hence, this study endeavors to address the subsequent two questions. What is the role of a Pashtun household in making men superior to women? How does an individual's local perception contribute to their ability to assume a leadership position? The findings indicate that the Pashtuns predominantly reinforce the sexual division of labor within households by treating children, establishing male dominance over females. At the outset, a disparity exists in treating male and female individuals. Consequently, males are given priority over females.

Research Methodology

This essay constitutes a segment of my doctoral dissertation. The primary objective of my dissertation was to reexamine the diverse elements of the Pashtun culture that have been subject to varying degrees of scholarship. Extensive research has been conducted by anthropologists on various aspects of culture. While their contributions have been substantial, it is important to acknowledge the presence of certain objections that warrant careful examination. Several ethnographers have faced criticism for focusing their studies on specific issues. Examples of these ethnographers are Caroe (1958), Mackeson (1900), and Warburton (1900).

Similarly, academics such as Barth (1959), Lindholm (1996), and Barfield (2016) have also been subject to scrutiny for their restricted research focus. The previous category of writers, who were colonial officers, strategically portrayed the Pashtuns in specific manners and employed a highly selective approach to evaluating the population, all to advance their political objectives. The second cohort of writers, who confined their research to exclusive domains, approached their writings about the Pashtuns from a perspective characterized by opulence and grandeur. Their intimate ties to specific local lords distorted perceptions of Pashtuns.

Significantly, the anthropological examination has encountered minimal instances of Pashtuns residing within Balochistan. The absence of an anthropological perspective may be attributed to two factors: First, this specific region has consistently served strategic goals, and ethnographers have not prioritized its examination and documentation. Finally, Balochistan has historically been geographically far from both colonial and post-colonial centers. Hence, I intended to illuminate the cultural and political landscape of the region. To accomplish this objective, we consulted many sources. We have glossed over anthropological research about the Pashtun communities in Afghanistan and Swat, as documented by Barfield (2016) and Barth (1959, 1970), respectively. Upon extensive review of the available literature, our research focus was piqued by the kinship structure prevalent in the studied region. We endeavored to address inquiries about how kinship governs interpersonal relationships and influences political decision-making and networking. The comprehensive analysis of these operational principles was attainable with the prior engagement in fieldwork. Despite encountering numerous obstacles, we tried to conduct research and document the personal lives of the Pashtuns. While it is widely acknowledged that Pashtuns are reluctant to allow unfamiliar individuals into their private domain, I ventured into their community to discuss specific matters with older women. Gaining access to elderly ladies was comparatively more accessible than engaging with younger girls. I adhered to the prevailing social norms and cultural values to gather data from a Pashtun household. Initially, I was a member of the same geographical region which made it easier for access.

Theoretical Background

Stephen M. Lyon (2021) provides an illustrative instance of parental supervision in Pakistan within his scholarly work namely *kinship and politics in Pakistan*. On one occasion, he went a fast-food restaurant in Islamabad. He was accompanied by his friends as well as their children. Outside the restaurant, an incident occurred wherein one of his friends' offspring was subjected to physical violence by a peer of similar age within the recreational area. Given the observer's status as a foreigner, he tactfully asked the child's father how the child's mother, had she been present, could have reacted to such a display of aggression. In response, he indicated that she would have instructed her child to retaliate. The author's illustration does not extend to encompass the broader context of Pakistani parenting practices; instead, it primarily elucidates the prevailing patterns of aggressiveness throughout the culture as a whole. Drawing inspiration from this illustration, it is commonly observed that Pakistani parents in general and particularly the Pashtuns, tend to advise their children to seek retribution when subjected to physical harm.

Sherry Lindholm (1982) has extensively theorized the significant importance of Pashtun households in the initial development and education of both males and females in her influential study on the Pukhtuns of Swat. In her work, the Pashtun household serves as a site of conflict wherein male and female members engage in an ongoing contest for authority, control, and supremacy. The argument made by the author pertains to the diverse power dynamics observed inside a Pashtun household. So, a Pashtun family can be considered an integral component of the 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1997), wherein children's attitudes are shaped by their personal experiences and internalization during their initial socialization process. Traditionally, the concepts of "public," "politics," and "power" have been predominantly associated with men, implying that only men are permitted to engage in activities outside of private spaces, participate in public affairs, and assume influential roles in the political sphere. The Pashtun society has a higher degree of patriarchy than other societies, disguised by certain traits. Considering this, it is essential to recognize that the manner in which Pashtuns treat children within their households is intricately linked to the wider political landscape.

In contrast to the socially ascribed gender role of males, women are commonly linked with attributes such as physical vulnerability, confinement to domestic spaces, and perceived biological inferiority. The prevailing perspective especially among the male population residing in rural areas, as observed during my fieldwork, is that women possess a comparatively lower level of physical strength. Women are unable to rival men in any domain of life. The central assertion is based on the existence of biological distinctions between males and females. Therefore, it is customary for women to be advised to confine themselves within the confines of the private sphere, typically a walled residence. They are highly isolated from public gaze. Only a restricted number of immediate family members are permitted to access those exclusive premises.

Similarly, women are unequivocally regarded as being subordinate to men. Based on the consensus among the interviewees, it is widely believed that women cannot lead a political party. Politics, in their perspective, encompassed activities like attending rallies, participating in protests, and potentially facing arrest. Consequently, women may be apprehended and sent to a law enforcement facility or subjected to the use of batons by authorities. The imposition of penalties on women's involvement in politics may endanger the concept of honor. As previously indicated, the prevailing beliefs towards women and their perceived deficiency in possessing leadership attributes are intrinsically linked to the manner in which Pashtun men and women are socialized within their familial environments. According to Pierre Bourdieu (2005: 148), "a comprehensive understanding

of interpersonal interactions, events, or social phenomena cannot be achieved solely by examining verbal communication or observable occurrences. The examination of social places in which interactions, transactions, and events took place was deemed vital". In addition to several social arenas facilitating interpersonal connections, and negotiations, the family represents a significant domain where power dynamics manifest themselves. Prior experiences influence perceptions. The experiences that children face during their youth have a substantial impact on their behavior in subsequent years. For instance, if a woman's role is fully reduced to that of an inferior agent, this will undoubtedly affect how she perceives her role.

The prominence of a masculine political character in Pashtun politics is perpetuated through the differential treatment of children. The actions undertaken by Pashtun men might be characterized as deliberate and driven by political motivations, resulting in the advancement of their own interests to the detriment of women. To enhance our comprehension, I reference Pierre Bourdieu's assertion that 'conducting a social field analysis entails situating the subject of inquiry within its distinct historical, local, national/international, and relational framework and scrutinizing the origins of prior knowledge concerning the matter being investigated'. This involves examining the individuals responsible for generating such knowledge and discerning the interests served through these practices. In the context of family and society, children are assigned specific roles during their childhood, encompassing their understanding and awareness of their responsibilities and position within the social structures. From a cultural perspective, it is seen that men are assigned the responsibility of exhibiting leadership qualities, while women are socialized to adopt a subordinate and obedient role towards men.

Physical Structure of a Pashtun Kor (household)

In the area where I conducted my field research, the inhabitants lived in rural settlements known as villages. Every village is inhabited exclusively by individuals who belong to a particular lineage and tribe. Due to shared heritage and ancestry, all lineage members are expected to reside within a single village. In other words, when the number of individuals within a lineage grows, there is a corresponding increase in the number of households. Or, as the population of extended families continues to grow, there is a corresponding increase in the prevalence of nuclear families. The fragmentation of extended families into smaller units known as nuclear families has resulted in reconfiguring the obligations and responsibilities within kinship networks. The phenomenon described can be characterized as the dissolution of a central unit formerly reinforced by shared living arrangements but fragmented due to the rise of nuclear family structures.

In rural areas, it is customary for dwellings to be constructed using mud-based materials. The ability of mud buildings to effectively regulate temperature is attributed to the extreme weather conditions experienced throughout winter and summer. The dwelling is encompassed by a quadrilateral structure consisting of four vertical surfaces, each serving as a barrier, with a solitary aperture designated for ingress and egress. The dwelling comprises multiple chambers accompanied by unenclosed verandas. Upon entering the premises, a designated guest room is deliberately situated at a distance, with the purpose of safeguarding visitors' privacy and ensuring the solitude of female occupants. A series of rooms have been constructed within the confines of the boundary walls to serve as residential spaces. Unmarried couples below 14 typically reside with their parents for a specified duration. Once individuals reach maturity, they can either be accommodated in the existing rooms or create their own independent dwelling. The allocation of the maximum number of rooms is prioritized for those whose children constitute the numerical majority.

From a cultural and political standpoint, the significance of a father or grandfather's room is primarily greater. It is expected that all family members, regardless of their age and gender, will gather together for meals, both at lunchtime and dinnertime. Given its political significance in managing public affairs, the *Hujra* holds similar importance as a space for senior members to exchange cultural ideas. Indeed, this podium fosters an environment that signifies the integration and cohesion among its members. Intentional abstention from entering this space has the potential to result in the revocation of an individual's familial affiliation. Drawing upon Bourdieu's conceptual framework, it may be argued that this particular room functions as a cultural "sub-field" wherein the children residing in the household develop their earliest awareness and understanding of their societal duties. All aspects of both the public and private spheres are subjected to scrutiny. Every individual within the family unit must openly communicate their everyday experiences in the presence of all family members. In this process, children actively listen to their elders, thereby internalizing and incorporating this behavior into their habitus.

Kor Household: A Political Training

According to Lindholm (1996: 18), a cultural preference exists among the Pashtuns for the birth of male offspring over girls. The termination of a pregnancy can be closely observed on the day it occurs. When the gender of the infant is revealed to be male, the parents experience a heightened level of excitement. The arrival of a male child is commemorated with the dissemination of confections and the ritualistic sacrifice of animals, symbolizing gratitude towards Allah Almighty. On the contrary, if the infant is female, the level of preoccupation intensifies. How individuals display their happiness upon the birth of a male child in tribal societies is universally seen as quite favorable.

Similarly, following the arrival of a male child, the local inhabitants are strongly encouraged and esteemed for partaking in festivities at the residence. The individuals in question present gifts to the recently delivered infant. As a reciprocal gesture, the hosts provide their guests tea, confections, and a handkerchief filled with dried fruits. However, following the arrival of a female child, societal norms dictate a lack of enthusiasm towards celebratory visits. During this particular event, it is seen that only elderly ladies engage in inquiring about the patient's well-being. One of the initial indications of differential treatment experienced by children within a household is the observed disparities in the birth rites conducted for boys and girls. The discrepancy in treatment sets the stage for establishing a sexual division of labor. Likewise, the concept of difference is consistently applied within domestic settings. Per prevailing cultural norms and values, male offspring are typically accorded greater societal worth than their female counterparts, particularly regarding the inheritance of familial assets, property, and the perpetuation of the family name.

In contrast, the privileges in question are not accessible to girls. They get training to fulfill their obligations towards their in-laws with utmost obedience. The subjugation of women is articulated in a frequently used proverb, which asserts that "*Zanana da bal da*" (a woman is the property of someone else). In the quotation mentioned above, the girl is instructed and trained on how to serve the children and maintain harmonious relations with the in-laws.

During the process of primary socialization, there exists a discernible divergence in the training methods employed for boys and girls. Parents and elders actively promote the usage of colloquial language among them. The rationale underlying using idiomatic expressions is to demonstrate and uphold masculinity. In certain instances, when male offspring employ everyday language in the company of visitors, parental figures exhibit minimal reprimand towards their behavior. In disagreements involving children within the local community, parents show limited

efforts in discouraging their children from adopting an inferior stance compared to their peers. In particular, when boys engage in conflicts with their peers, parents tend to refrain from instructing their sons to apologize, as this action is perceived as a sign of vulnerability.

In contrast, there is a lack of encouragement for girls to engage in conflicts beyond the confines of their domestic environment. If such a situation arises, it becomes imperative for the brothers to assume the ultimate responsibility of safeguarding. To clarify, protecting is with the brother rather than the sister. It is acceptable to save a family member from an external peril within this context. However, the act of providing unilateral protection by brothers in such circumstances can inadvertently establish a hierarchical position, granting them superiority over their sisters. This implies that the girls should rely on their brothers for social safeguarding. The situation is exacerbated when a household's offspring conflict with their paternal cousins. In this context, the integrity of the entire family is called into question. Within this familial dispute amongst cousins, it is evident that each parent exhibits a limited level of acceptance towards their respective offspring, with the expectation that they will assume a subordinate role to their cousins.

In most cases documented during fieldwork, it was seen that minor confrontations among youngsters who are cousins often escalate into acts of aggressiveness and, in some instances, result in fatalities. Similar disputes may arise among the female offspring of brothers or cousins; however, such confrontations rarely escalate to lethality or extreme severity. In instances of conflict among male individuals, the female becomes the target of harm. Individuals often direct derogatory remarks towards someone's sister or mother in everyday vocabulary. There is no discernible impact of any derogatory language on individuals of the male gender.

The purposeful nature of providing exceptional care to boys as opposed to girls is consistently evident. During primary socialization, it is common for boys to receive intentional instruction on the need to safeguard their family's honor. In the context of familial leadership and financial inheritance, male individuals, rather than their female counterparts, are traditionally expected to assume these roles. The individuals in question exhibit a sense of superiority towards females. Likewise, the young women are consistently encouraged to make arrangements to prepare lunch and dinner for the entire household. Their primary responsibility is to carry out domestic tasks within the household. To pursue religious education, the services of a cleric affiliated with the nearby mosque have been engaged to provide instruction to youngsters within the confines of their residence. Once individuals reach a specific age threshold, it is customary for males to depart from their households to pursue religious and secular education.

Conversely, females are typically prohibited from attending religious schools beyond age 10. Daily conflicts arise between siblings. In minor conflicts, parents can exhibit a bias towards their boys while supporting their girls. This form of discrimination is intricately linked to the compassion and empathy daughters want from their parents. Within the broader framework of women's rights, the Pashtuns consistently establish a connection between the opposite gender and the roles of mother, daughter, or sister. Similarly, boys are consistently not subjected to the same treatment. This implies that individuals do not typically link a male child with the roles of brother or son concerning their entitlements. It is apparent that the absence of a woman's autonomy is conspicuous.

Local Perception of Leadership

The objective of this part is not to provide an exhaustive overview of the extensive array of academics pertaining to leadership, encompassing many levels, aspects, and theories of

leadership. For example, the selection of an individual to assume leadership of a nation is determined by the electoral process, wherein they must secure a majority of votes. This power is acquired through active engagement in political activities and election process. However, the primary objective of this study will be to provide an analysis of the indigenous interpretation of leadership within the local context. In this context, leadership does not pertain to occupying a formal position within contemporary governmental institutions. Rather, it refers to an individual with specific attributes that enable them to address and manage tribal issues and concerns. In the local context, this particular role is called "*masar*," meaning "elder." The ascension of an elder to a leadership position can be attributed to factors such as seniority, wealth, experience, and the possession of cultural capital. As previously indicated, the existing standard for leadership has transformed due to the emergence of newly formed social classes.

At the local level, the Jomezai family has been regarded as politically important for almost a century. Its ancestors served as mediators in intertribal disputes and governed the region's significant political decisions. In 1947, Nawab Muhammad Khan Jomezai, a prominent figure in the area, played an important role in integrating the Pashtun belt of Balochistan into the territory of Pakistan. He made a concerted effort to exert consensual influence over the tribal headmen in the region and subsequently reached a decision with their collective assent. Tehsil Killa Saif Ullah can be categorized into two distinct power factions: the Jomezai family and the religious clergy, which exhibit a mutually exclusive relationship. Following the emergence of political parties in the Tehsil, religious clerics became actively involved in the political sphere. Since the 1970s elections, they have achieved successive electoral victories and assumed the role of public representatives. The primary attribution for introducing anti-status quo politics in the region is largely ascribed to their efforts in undermining the longstanding power of tribal leaders. Religious clerics have assumed official roles in a significant departure from historical precedent, challenging the traditionally influential tribal chiefs inside the Tehsil. It is noteworthy that despite lacking income or other conventional means of power, the religious clergy were able to get votes in the 1970s elections due to prevailing political circumstances. Furthermore, within the local community context, individuals commonly delineate political leadership in a subsequent fashion.

Seniority: seniority is a fundamental attribute within a given domain that situates an individual within the established social hierarchy. Age is a determining element in this context. As one advances in age, their level of experience tends to increase. In the context of extended families, the position of a senior leader consistently has a key role. He assumes the role of determining the political orientation of the household. During the electoral period, all family members are expected to align their political preferences with those of the head of the home. His role plays a crucial part in the allocation of resources among the members of the family. In the region, the most prominent individuals are likely characterized by age factor. The prevailing consensus among opinion holders is that an elderly member of a family possesses a profound comprehension of tribal affairs, hence enabling them to navigate and resolve tribe problems effectively.

The prominence of elderly individuals is notable inside tribal councils called *Jirgas*. The input and consultation of tribe leaders are consistently sought to resolve tribal conflicts. From a cultural standpoint, it is widely acknowledged that symbols such as a white beard, turban, and age are unequivocally seen as representations of respect. In instances of conflicts, elderly individuals are consistently escorted to engage in discussions regarding reconciliation. I had the opportunity to attend a tribal Jirga, during which the perpetrator's relatives sought refuge at the residence of the

deceased individual. The gathering consisted of many individuals, surpassing a count of five thousand, encompassing tribal leaders and religious clergy. Among all, the influence of elderly individuals was particularly significant. They were mainly responsible for facilitating communication and negotiation between the two families.

Patronage: the concept of patronage has been extensively explored in anthropology and political science literature, with scholars such as Schott (1972), Akhtar (2018), and others contributing to the understanding of the intervening role played by patron-client relationships in political dynamics. Within the framework of the Pakistani political system, it has become well-acknowledged among those belonging to the lowest socioeconomic strata to seek out influential figures as patrons in order to get political advantages (Akhtar, 2021). This widely adopted method's primary objective is focused on gaining access to positions of power rather than addressing common political concerns. The basic goals associated with patronage encompass both idealistic and materialistic aspects. Ideally, individuals perceive severe political crises through a highly personal lens. To effectively mitigate significant shocks, it is necessary to secure the support of influential individuals such as legislators, tribal chiefs, and holders of state authority. Clients anticipate that patrons will allocate specific resources using unjust methods regarding material advantages. The inequitable allocation of governmental resources in this manner results in the deprivation of the majority. The anticipated material interests encompass various forms of preferential treatment, employment opportunities disregarding meritocracy, contractual agreements and financial considerations, and favor acquisition within the *Thana Kachehri* system.

The dominance of patron-client relationships mostly characterizes the prevailing political dynamics in the area under study. The emergence of patronage within the political sphere can be observed as a consequence of political parties gradually deviating from their original ideological underpinnings. After assuming public offices, political parties gradually abandoned their ideological principles and instead embraced a culture of patronage, with their leaders prioritizing political advantages. It is noteworthy because patronage diminishes the essential instruments required for effective leadership. For instance, regardless of an individual's age, they can assume the role of a client patron at any given time. The attainment of vital patronage does not necessitate age or physical prowess. In the given context, individuals with a strong inclination towards patronage may assume a leadership role. Presently, a limited number of societal segments remain unaffected by the pervasive influence of patronage. The majority of individuals involved in politics, regardless of their level of education, strive to establish connections with influential individuals to get employment opportunities in a highly competitive job market or to fulfill other materialistic goals due to the limited availability of resources. While "patronage" can be characterized as an inappropriate allocation of public resources, denying the prevailing inclination towards this practice is difficult.

Tribal back: The notion of tribal background predominantly shapes the social dynamics within the studied region. The more family members' one possesses, the higher the likelihood of qualifying for leadership positions. Individuals are interconnected through either familial ties or matrimonial unions. In tribal conflicts, the influence of blood affiliations tends to be more pronounced than that of marital connections. Without a blood relationship, an individual cannot claim support from maternal uncles.

Consequently, leading individuals must rely on their blood relatives for assistance. The significance of masculine authority is commonly recognized within familial and individual contexts. Hence, an individual who receives support from their familial connections possesses the capacity to assume a leadership role to varying degrees. While an individual's qualifications for leadership

based on seniority may be exceptional, they must garner support from numerous individuals within the tribe. The concept of masculine strength is often seen as crucial for survival. Most men can possess extensive tracts of land spanning hundreds of acres. This can confer an additional degree of authority to the family. In conflicts with paternal cousins or those outside one's lineage, possessing masculine power can undeniably assist an individual. One of the key factors that headmen of families can readily employ to garner political support is the practice of vote banking. Before elections, politicians engage in campaign activities in remote regions to secure votes. The primary emphasis lies in guiding individuals who possess masculine authority. They exchange their numerical advantage for patronage and other benefits.

Conclusion

The Pashtun household serves as a significant cultural and political entity in forming and advancing political leadership. Children are initially instructed to be aware of cultural norms and values in cultural development. Similarly, the Pashtun household can be regarded as a social context where labor allocation based on gender occurs. The assignment of gender roles is undertaken to restrict men to the realm of public activities while confining women to the domain of private affairs. The emotions and cognitive understanding of assigned responsibilities are ingrained through perpetuating social distinctions during primary socialization. This implies differential treatment and distinct expectations for boys compared to girls. The individuals become aware of and internalize the sexual division of labor due to the disparity in treatment. In addition to influencing the cultural development of children, the Pashtun family holds significant political influence in deciding the status and roles of individuals within the community.

In contrast, the females are instructed to remain within the premises to cater to the needs of the male individuals. Subsequently, the men aspire to complete eligibility for political affairs participation. Later, it becomes ingrained into their habitus, wherein they are socialized to engage in political activism. The cultural norms and ideals of the Pashtuns are readily apparent in their political activities. There needs to be more female leadership inside any political party. The individuals in question need leadership abilities within their domestic environment.

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