

STARFISH, SPIDERS, AND THE JELLYFISH: PASHTUN CULTURAL FACTORS LIMITING WARLORD DEVELOPMENT

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Starfish, Spiders, and the Jellyfish: Pashtun Cultural Factors Limiting Warlord Development

Like the jellyfish, the absence of a backbone to be broken was the greatest defense of the tribes against the waves of state power which beat upon them.

M. A. Yapp

Over the past seven years, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the fact that “warlords” existed in Afghanistan and care had to be taken by the United States Government and Coalition forces to ensure that aid and assistance to indigenous armed groups didn’t result in the creation of a new generation of “warlords.” This was a significant part of the analysis that led to the United Nations’ Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Program (DDR) that resulted in a large-scale militia demobilization and arms recovery effort.¹

Two significant problems are present as analysts and political leaders attempt to come to grips with the concept of “warlord” in an Afghanistan context. First, “warlords” are local leaders of sufficient armed men to become a “keeper of the balance of power” and someone who can change the results of a conflict simply by abruptly changing sides. Abdul Rashid Dostum is a warlord and his 40,000 armed Uzbeks were a force to be reckoned with by either side in Afghanistan’s warfare. Ahmad Shah Masood was a Tajik warlord. In the presence of large numbers of American and Coalition forces, any newly emerging “warlords” with huge armed militias are unlikely to form under any circumstance as sufficient military power is available to prevent this from happening. Those leaders able to rally militia forces of their own are more likely to become a local irritant than a threat to be prevented. Realistically, the intense effort to prevent the emergence of “warlords” in post-2001 Afghanistan generally has been the most fruitless of Fool’s Errands that has served primarily to delay the short term mobilization of local forces to deny the entry, transit, and safe haven of Taliban forces in rural areas.

Among the Pashtuns there are cultural and societal constraints that prevent the emergence of powerful secular leaders capable of attracting large numbers of supporters. In reality, it is the “mullah class” among Pashtuns, the occupiers of the territory where most of the conflict is occurring in Afghanistan, who have become the “warlords.” Mullahs, not the secular maliks, are the local leaders who are able to rally sufficient armed followers to become a regional power and they do this through powerful oratory that convinces unsophisticated tribesmen that they are faced with external threats to both tribe and Islam in a manner that no secular tribal leader could manage. It was not an accident of terminology that led the Taliban to refer to all of their leadership personalities at any level as “mullahs.” Without a doubt, some local secular Pashtun leaders in Afghanistan have large numbers of armed followers, but there are very few, if any, who could rise to the level achieved by non-Pashtun leaders like Dostum and Ahmad Shah Masood, true warlords by any definition. But neither of these men were Pashtuns. Jalaluddin Haqqani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar are Pashtun warlords and both use Islam as a rallying point for their followers. Obviously, the emergence of new Pashtun “warlords” might be prevented by avoiding the arming and training of groups led by mullahs.

1. See “From Guns to Hoes”, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/event/2003/2/0218-3.html> accessed 02 January 2009 and http://undp.org.af/News/2006/2006_07_01_DDR.htm accessed 02 January 2008. The DDR final report from which successful activities with Taliban combatants are not addressed.

Second, there was a general misunderstanding of the nature of Afghanistan's conflicts as well-intentioned diplomats planned to dismantle the armed groups. The "disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration" of combatants into a civil society is an excellent *concept* and when applied to unstable regions prior to the outbreak of actual hostilities, a DDR program may actually prevent conflict. Unfortunately, the lack of trust that led to imminent hostilities between any two groups makes voluntary *disarmament* difficult to achieve under any circumstances and is virtually impossible in locations like Afghanistan where warfare has been underway for three decades within a mixture of rival ethnic groups where one ethnic group has a "code" that requires revenge. In theory, disarmament is followed by the demobilization of warring groups and they are subsequently reintegrated into a civil society where social and economic development is underway.

Unfortunately, this misguided effort not only failed to accomplish its stated goals in Afghanistan, it also had unintended consequences, some of which continue to bedevil stability efforts today. Two major failures occurred with the DDR program:

-- The DDR Program disarmed only government's militias that generally opposed the Taliban and the other insurgents who retained their arms, and probably were never seriously considered for "demobilization" efforts. For example, several thousand members of the Second Afghan Militia Force were "DDR'ed" in what is now "RC SOUTH" and initially were replaced by only two companies of Afghan National Army troops. Not surprisingly, Taliban maneuver elements were able to move freely in rural areas as the available defenders were only able to defend larger settled areas. The reduced available manpower was – and remains – a significant factor in the Taliban's mobility.

-- The "reintegration" of many demobilized militia members was not accomplished successfully through comprehensive vocational programs and "bridge stipends" intended to fund demobilized soldiers until employment could be arranged. In some cases, these unemployed men were more likely to move into criminal activities or the Taliban forces for financial reasons than remain unemployed after losing salaries from their militia positions.

Currently, there are numerous officials and analysts searching for a potentially successful method to create a second "Awakening Movement" that was successful in reversing the tribal instability in Iraq's al-Anbar province. While there are several real obstacles to efforts to implement this strategy in Afghanistan, a very major negative factor remains western fears that any attempts to mobilize Afghan tribes would result in the creation of yet another generation of "warlords." For the most part, this is a misguided concern and a careful analysis of basic Afghan tribal dynamics reveals the error.²

Afghanistan is populated with many different ethnic groups of which only one has a firmly entrenched tribal culture that has an impact on its governance style. These are the Pashtun tribes. The Uzbeks, Hazaras, Ismailis, Turkmen, Baluch, and Brahui ethnic and religious groups also have a tribal composition, but their form of tribal management is "top-down" rather than "bottom-up"³ as is seen in all of the various Pashtun tribes. It is within those "top-down" ethnic groups that warlords have been a common occurrence.

2. The important factors became increasingly clear following discussions with Ori Brafman, co-author of *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*, on 25 September 2008.

3. This is the critical portion of the discussion with Ori Brafman. Prior to discussing this factor, the significance of the two different forms of tribal control, while obvious, was not viewed as being crucial to understanding some of the tribal political outcomes, such as the acceptance of war lords as leaders.

Examples:

-- Abdul Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek ethnic group's leader, formed a communist militia composed of over 40,000 combatants. Uzbek tendencies to accept a leader for the entire ethnic group was a key factor in the creation of Dostum's "warlordism."

-- Sayed Mansur Naderi, an Ismaili Hazara leader, became their leader and had over 13,000 men under his command.

-- Karim Khalili and Mohammad Mohaqeq led large numbers of Hazara fighters.

-- Ismail Khan was a commander of a large Tajik Force in western Afghanistan.

-- Ahmad Shah Masood was a Tajik commander in the Panjshir Valley.

In these cases, their ethnic groups generally accepted a "top-down" form of tribal governance that would not be accepted in Pashtun tribal culture. While there were individual cases of Pashtun "warlords" emerging during the extended Afghanistan conflict, these men were leaders of "revolutionary" political parties having a multiple tribal composition. These leaders are best viewed as "revolutionary" because they seek to impose an entirely new form of government on Afghanistan, based on Sharia, or Islamic law – also a top-down aberration among Pashtuns. For example:

-- Burhanuddin Rabbani led the Jamiat-i Islami, a political party composed primarily of Tajiks, but also had significant Durrani Pashtun tribal membership from the Alikozai and Alizai tribes from southern Afghanistan. Members of the Popalzai tribe's subtribes located in Oruzgan province were also affiliated with Jamiat.

-- Gulbuddin Hekmatyar led Hezb-i Islami, another revolutionary political party, has a multi-tribal composition. [Covert Pakistani support makes this party relatively unique.]

-- Mohammad Nabi Mohammadedi led a large, widely dispersed political party with tribal membership from many different Pashtun tribes. His "Harakat" party included many members of the current Taliban leadership and smaller groups, such as Sher Mohammad Akhundzada's Alizai subtribe, the Hassanzai. Sher Mohammad is a relatively minor tribal leader from Helmand Province frequently referred to as a "warlord," but whose religious family's primary focus was on controlling the lucrative opium trade in that region.

-- Jalaluddin Haqqani led a large Pashtun mujahedin group with multiple tribal membership. [As with Hekmatyar, covert Pakistani support for this group makes it relatively unique.]

In the cases of these “revolutionary political movements,” a formal leadership hierarchy developed with the key communicator of each group appearing to be a “warlord.” While Hekmatyar, Nabi⁴, and Haqqani are Pashtuns, they have functioned outside of the traditional tribal structure where a continuous process of competition for tribal leadership has resulted in “bottom-up” governance of each tribe. The degree that this competition occurs among tribal leadership personalities in different tribes reveals the general independence within each tribe. For example:

-- The Barakzai Pashtun tribe is the largest of Afghanistan’s tribes and their leading subtribe, the Mohammadzai, has provided Afghanistan’s monarchs during the recent past. Because of the prominence, and traditional dominance, of this leading subtribe, there seems to be little competition among the other subtribes for tribal dominance and there are few, if any, Barakzai leaders to be found within the Taliban Movement.

-- At the other extreme are the Mahsud Pashtuns, a tribe in which every tribesman views himself as his own malik, or tribal leader, and their fierce independence made them very difficult adversaries for both the British and the Pakistanis. The general absence of a leading, controlling and powerful subtribe permits each of the subtribes and clans to compete constantly for tribal leadership and is a significant factor in the unrest seen in South Waziristan.

The remaining Pashtun tribes lie between these two extremes, but maintain tribal leadership systems based on “elders,” some of whom will have formal positions as “maliks,” rather than an “all powerful chieftain” – a backbone to be broken as a tribe is defeated through the loss of its leader. These elders generally make tribal decisions through consensus arrived at tribal councils, or jirgas, that deliberate on tribal actions that range from assembling work parties for tribal public works projects to calling for the formation of a lashkar, or war party. It is during violent extreme situations that the tribe will turn from its traditional subtribal hierarchy, dominated by its Khan Khel, or leading subtribe, and turn to a temporary leadership from lower ranking subtribes, a selection process that is based on individual or family competence, during conflict. Following the end of the emergency, tribal elders ensure that the control of the tribe generally and gradually reverts to the leading families of the Khan Khel. It is through this traditional system that war leaders are temporarily placed in charge of the tribe’s military capability while retaining a method of returning control to traditional tribal leaders rather than experience continuing military control from a “tribal usurper.” Good examples exist:

-- The Durrani Barakzai’s Khan Khel, the Mohammadzai, were led by the king, Zahir Shah, who was relatively useless in planning and leading combat operations – as was his extended family. During the anti-Soviet jihad, Haji Latif, a competent leader from the Barakzai’s Sherzai subtribe, was accepted as war leader. Following his assassination, Gul Agha Sherzai, his son, moved into the leadership position in a tribal system in which a son normally inherits the mantle of leadership possessed by his father, something he may lose if he fails as a leader.

-- The Durrani Popalzai tribe’s Khan Khel, the Saddozai, failed to advance a competent family for leadership during the anti-Soviet period. Instead, they placed tribal leadership in the hands of Abdul Ahad Karzai, a member of a key family in the Shamizai subtribe. Following Abdul Ahad’s assassination in 1999, his son, Hamid Karzai, inherited his father’s mantle and can be expected to retain this tribal leadership position for the remainder of Afghanistan’s conflict. Normally, the eldest son would have been selected to bear this tribal responsibility, but this son was living in the United States and was generally unavailable to serve as tribal leader.

4. Nabi is deceased.

Importantly, both of these powerful Pashtun tribal leaders were opposed to the Taliban and allied themselves with the United States following the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. But as powerful as both were within their tribes, both Karzai and Sherzai were unable to raise large tribal forces to attack the Taliban's capital, Kandahar, and had to rely upon smaller tribal forces supported by United States Special Forces teams and airpower to conduct successful operations. The elders of both tribes were probably not prepared to ally themselves with the United States and neither tribal leader could compel them to do so.

There is another example of a Pashtun tribal militia that is significant since this is probably the case of the only Pashtun tribal leader emerging as an actual "warlord." Ismatullah Muslim, a Durrani Achakzai tribesman, had served as an officer in the Afghan army, became a mujahedin, and later switched sides to support the communists. His Achakzai militia made him a feared, powerful leader in the south and he was a "warlord" in the truest sense of the word, but there was a major difference. His tribe, the Achakzai, is arguably the most generally agnostic of the Pashtuns and are essentially more socialist in outlook than fundamentalist. Because of this, Ismatullah was able to assemble a brigade of capable fighters who were more financially motivated than by ideology. He was only able to field a single brigade, far fewer than could have been assembled by a tribal lashkar that could have been called for by elders.

But with Afghanistan, the only constant factor remains "exceptions" to general rules. In many cases, the exceptions are misunderstood because of a lack of understanding of the ethnic groups and tribes involved. Three notable, examples of potential exceptions can bring this analysis into question, but there are complex reasons for the emergence of individual leaders who are frequently labeled "warlords" and understanding them will assist in comprehending the other numerous exceptions that doubtless will be discovered by skilled analysts.

First, there is the case of Hazrat Ali, a militia commander found in the north central portion of the Afghanistan border region with Pakistan. Hazrat Ali is a key leader of the Pashai ethnic group, a small minority that is more closely related to the region's earliest inhabitants, the Kalash and Nuristanis, than the Pashtuns. While little is known about the Pashai's form of rule, the fact that Hazrat Ali led their militia suggests a "top-down" arrangement. These people were closely allied with Ahmad Shah Masood's Tajiks and opposed the Pashtun-dominated Taliban.

A second exception involves the role of Pacha Khan Zadran, a Pashtun leader from southeast Afghanistan. The reasons for his emergence as a tribal leader, complete with militia, are complex and may be more related to "brigandism" than Pashtun nationalism, a factor that motivated many Taliban Pashtun leaders. While his militia force was relatively small, approximately 3000 fighters, their significance was magnified by their location in the vicinity of the crucial highway into Khowst, and while he was a significant "irritant," Pacha Khan never attracted the numbers of followers that would have allowed him to become a regional "keeper of the balance of power" as occurred with Dostam, Ismail Khan, and Ahmad Shah Masood. One reason for his inability to rally large numbers of Zadran tribesmen to his militia probably involved the presence of Jalaluddin Haqqani, a fellow Zadran, and other tribal elders who retained control of their tribal supporters instead of following Pacha Khan as a tribal leader. An additional factor involves the traditional lack of government control of southeastern Afghanistan that resulted from the region's tribal support for Nadir Shah during the fighting to remove Afghanistan's first Tajik leader, Habibullah. These tribes and their constituent subtribes are generally far more independently minded than the other Pashtun tribes located deeper within Afghanistan.

The third exception involves the large, chaotic Mahsud tribe in South Waziristan where Baitullah Mahsud appears to have gained a prominent leadership position. In this case, the egalitarian nature of the Mahsuds has probably prevented the emergence of powerful tribal khans and maliks, as seen within the Barakzai tribe, and the presence of an external threat to the tribe – and by extension, to Islam – from what the Mahsuds may believe to be a multiple threat composed of Americans, Afghans, and Pakistanis has allowed the opportunistic, self-ordained Baitullah to gain control. In this example, the newly religious Baitullah is following the example set by the “Akhundzada” family in Afghanistan’s Helmand province as they also displaced traditional khan and malik control over the tribe. His “top-down” control will probably be tolerated only for the period of the perceived external threat and the instability it has created.

Noticeable differences in the region based on new analysis

Afghanistan’s regions in which “top-down” governance is commonly accepted are generally peaceful and lack significant Taliban activity. This is one of the reasons that northern and western Afghanistan – historically – had been relatively calm and somewhat free from Taliban attacks. Regions controlled by Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras are generally peaceful, except at the fringes of their ethnic areas that adjoin Pashtun regions. Baluch and Brahui regions are usually quiet, except for areas in which conflict occurs over the control of the narcotics industry and non-Pashtun ethnic groups ally themselves with the Taliban to gain security for their narcotics activities. Insurgent operations also develop where these regions contain “Pashtun enclaves” or border Pashtun areas of control. In many cases, the “top-down” management of these ethnic groups allows for a hierarchy to be identified and drawn toward the national government because of their “centripetal” tendencies that take them in the direction of centralized governmental control.

Pashtuns have just the opposite societal tendencies and tribal “centrifugal” tendencies generally outweigh any centripetal thoughts of any of their key leadership personalities seeking to ally themselves with the national government. Because of their “bottom-up” tribal governance system, cohesion among the Pashtuns generally seems to appear at the subtribal level and below. Both cohesion and family alliances that control tribal political processes often seem to come into conflict at the subtribe level and it is not unusual for two subtribes of the same tribal system to go to war with one another – within and under the overall tribe umbrella. For example, the aggressive Durrani Alizai tribe’s largest subtribes, the Khalozai – its Khan Khel – and the Hassanzai subtribe have fought one another for years with large numbers of casualties being suffered by both sides. The old animosities were sufficiently powerful to place the Khalozai within the Jamiat-i Islami as the Hassanzai joined forces with Nabi’s Harakat during the decade of fighting against a powerful enemy that was an equal threat to both, the Soviet Union. Two Achakzai Durrani subtribes are in a near constant state of feud in Baluchistan. Cohesion, in general, generally begins at the subtribe level and is frequently the result of animosities toward an external threat to the subtribe, all too often another subtribe of their shared tribe.

It is this constant competition among Pashtun tribal subtribes that seems to prevent the emergence of a single, powerful warlord within the tribe as was seen within Afghanistan’s other ethnic groups, such as Dostun’s Uzbeks and Ismail Khan’s Tajiks. The other major factor that inhibits the development of powerful Pashtun tribal leaders is the role played by tribal elders. Elders have enormous power that is expressed through tribal jirgas, of which the tribal “chieftain” is actually a member, a “first among equals” in an essentially democratic setting where decisions are reached through consensus. Pashtuns learned centuries ago that the appearance of a clear “winner” and a definite “loser” in their deliberations leads to violence and they developed negotiation strategies to seek consensus decisions in which no individual lost or won. Under this system, leaders

normally serve at the pleasure of the jirga's consensus view that they are successful leaders. If a leader is not performing adequately, he can be replaced by another senior elder within the jirga. A good example of this is currently underway within the Durrani Confederation's Alikozai tribe following the death of Mullah Naqib. While Naqib's young son inherited his father's status within the tribe, significant efforts were – and are – underway from key leaders of other subtribes to displace him. This is a continuing factor within each tribe's subtribes and is generally a major factor in preventing the emergence of a single, powerful Pashtun tribal leader, a “warlord.”

Pashtun jirga decisions are binding and are enforced by tribal militia forces that can be small and function as tribal police, or large and operate as a war party that enforces the jirga's will upon neighboring villages or tribes. But the role of the elders is sufficiently powerful, generally, to ensure that no one leader emerges to take dictatorial control over the entire tribe's militia forces – to become a “warlord.”

A review of Open Source articles related to the Salarzai tribe's jirga decision to form a large lashkar to clear their portion of Bajaur Agency of extremists and foreign fighters is instructive. While the elders composing the Salarzai jirgas are listed in newspaper articles along with other tribes that are apparently following the example set by the Salarzai, the members of the jirga making the decision to go to war are identified as maliks, the elders, and there is no mention of an “all powerful chief.” Generally, mullahs are not a significant part of this process.

Finally, the “bottom-up” form of governance among Pashtuns reduces the role of mullahs in the management of tribes. When they are able to gain control of the tribal governing process, this is accomplished at the expense of the tribe's elders, the land-owning khans and those among them who have assumed leadership roles as maliks. Mullahs are traditionally relied upon to assist with the implementation of decisions that emerge from the jirga process. Opportunistic mullahs, such as the “Akhundzada” family in Helmand province that displaced the traditional khans and maliks, govern in a “top-down” approach in what is essentially an “untribal” form of control. Additionally, mullahs rely upon Islam's sharia, or Islamic law, to maintain their control and this undercuts “Pashtunwali,” or the traditional rules that govern a tribe's behavior. Because of this “tension,” tribal control by the mullah class is generally accepted only during periods of very extreme threats that appear to be damaging Islam, itself. For this reason, once mullahs gain control, they tend to keep fomenting additional intertribal turbulence or create additional external threats. They know that mullahs cannot rule during times of peace; maliks gain control under peaceful circumstances. For this reason, tribal dynamics usually maintain the internal strength of the maliks within tribes to ensure that a powerful warlord, either a powerful malik as in the cases of Dostum and Ismail Khan, or a powerful mullah, as in the case of Jalaluddin Haqqani, continues to run against the natural grain of Pashtun tribal political structure.

The Question of Forming Tribal Militias

First, the genesis of the Taliban and its internal composition must be clearly defined and the ethnic roots of the current conflict must be understood. The Taliban Movement is best viewed as an expression of Pashtun nationalism, especially during the period after the Taliban entered Afghanistan and its Pakistani sponsors lost control to indigenous Afghan Pashtuns. Many of these new Taliban were primarily from the Durrani Confederation that had been denied any leadership role in the anti-Soviet jihad by the Pakistanis who were absolutely opposed to the Durrani due to their unwavering support for the creation of “Pashtunistan” that would include a broad section of Pakistan's territory. These Durrani Pashtuns joined with Mullah Mohammad Omar and members of the Ghilzai Pashtun Confederation, most of them with shared combat experience gained in

Mohammad Nabi's Harakat organization, to assume control of the entire Taliban movement that was initially formed of Pakistani Pashtuns, many of whom were from refugee camps.

In addition to their frustration at the Pakistanis over being denied any role whatsoever in the anti-Soviet "Seven Party Alliance," these southern Pashtuns were also threatened by Tajik temporary dominance within the "Alliance." Having Tajik leader Burhanuddin Rabbani selected as the leader of Afghanistan was as much anathema to them in 1992 as it was in 1919 when the Tajiks gained control of Afghanistan during the chaos following the removal of King Amanullah for his attempts at modernizing the country. That particular Tajik, Habibullah Kalakani, gained control of Afghanistan until the Pashtuns could organize themselves and within nine months the "Tajik usurper" had been executed along with his key lieutenants. The animosity toward the other ethnic groups was the primary catalyst that unified many of the Pashtun tribes into the Taliban Movement. Notable in their absence from the Taliban Movement, especially following the hijacking of the movement by the clerics, were the "royal" tribes. Both the Barakzai and the Popalzai Durrani Pashtuns had provided monarchs to rule the generally ungovernable tribes from Kabul and most of the leaders of these tribes excluded themselves from Taliban and mullah control by remaining as refugees in the vicinity of Quetta, Pakistan. Some of the resentment toward the Taliban probably involved the mullah's tendency to apply "top-down" controls on traditionally "bottom-up" Pashtun tribes. This resentment would have been most acutely felt by the two large, proud "royal" Pashtun tribes that had governed the unruly Afghans for over two centuries.

Because of these competing factors, two opposing groups of Pashtuns quickly coalesced into the conflict seen today. This is the basic analysis of the current Afghan insurgency: a civil war is occurring between two groups of Pashtuns competing for power and control of Afghanistan, if not the state of Pashtunistan they eventually hope to create. It is a rare occasion to find a non-Pashtun in the Taliban Movement and when this has occurred there were specific reasons for it to occur, such as a narcotics connection between the Taliban and Baluch or Brahui tribesmen seeking protection for their illegal activities. Few, if any, Uzbeks, Hazara, and Tajiks occupy any leadership positions within the Taliban Movement and there are probably few members of these ethnic groups in the Taliban rank and file. Generally, it is very safe to assume that the many of the Pashtuns within the Taliban come from low-ranking subtribes that are seeking to improve their social and financial status at the expense of the more prestigious Khan Khels of their own tribes. In some cases, such as the Kakar Pashtun tribes, they probably are seeking to reunify and reclaim lost status. For these reasons, these "opportunistic" Pashtuns willingly accept "top-down" dominance of the mullahs and some external control of their operations by foreign fighters and Pakistanis in return for eventually gaining control over Afghanistan.

On the other side of the Pashtun conflict equation are those tribes that seek to return to the form of government control they experienced prior to the 1973 coup that overthrew Zahir Shah. These are the "traditionalists" who oppose the opportunists and the "revolutionary" mullahs seeking to impose the ultimate in "top-down" control, a rigid government based on Islamic law, sharia. These tribes, most of which are allied with the United States, the Coalition, and the current government of Afghanistan can be expected to resist any "top-down" controls that they have rigidly and continuously resisted throughout their history. They are not likely to develop leaders who will become "warlords." This is more likely to result from their enemies within the Taliban Movement, the mullah class, who are seeking to impose "top-down" controls through a very rigid application of Islamic law – undercutting traditional Pashtunwali.

Curiously, the United States' goal in Afghanistan involves the creation of a "top-down" form of government that would be acceptable to the non-Pashtun ethnic groups, but would continue to be violently opposed by most of the nation's Pashtun majority. But this is not the basic issue needing resolution in this paper.

The western forces deployed into Afghanistan are capable of taking and clearing any enemy objective at any location in the country. The need to "hold" any cleared terrain remains as crucial now as it did during the Soviet period and is equally elusive. There will be only one strategy that will be effective – in spite of fears of "warlord creation – and this requires the creation of tribally-based militias that are developed for individual specific purposes and are individually demobilized as soon as they are no longer required. Historically, Pashtuns create the following forms of militias for specific tasks and could be encouraged to do so in the future:

-- Tsalweshtai, or a guard force, normally composed of forty men, are composed of members of various subsections of the tribe and appointed by the tribe for some special purpose, such as protecting an isolated valley from raiding gangs.

-- Arbakai are generally identified as the tribal police force. This institution is seen more commonly in Afghanistan's Paktia province and these appointed men supervise the implementation of the tribal *jirga's* decisions.

-- A chagha is a group of fighters raised spontaneously within a specific village when faced by a bandit raid, robbery, livestock rustling, and similar offenses against the villagers. "Chagha" is also the word for the drum that this used to inform the people of the need to come to the location of the drumbeat, fully armed, and prepared to drive off the offenders.

-- A chalweshtai is a larger force than the tsalweshtai and is raised by the tribe from young men who volunteer from each family to implement tribal decisions that may involve warfare, *jihad*, or even self-help projects that may be needed.

-- A lashkar is a body of tribesmen that normally gathers in response to deal with a large-scale problem. The use of the term is flexible when size is concerned and can be applied to a dozen men going to attack a nearby village as a result of a family feud and it is also used for the fifty thousand-man force that supported the Pakistani military in the war in Kashmir in 1947-48.

In all cases, these emergency response forces are under the control of the tribal elders at the local level, not an individual who could emerge to become a "warlord" as occurs naturally within Afghanistan's non-Pashtun ethnic groups. Clear case studies of this Pashtun phenomenon can be developed by reviewing the tribal responses to extremists and foreign fighters in Pakistan's Bajaur, Buner, and Swat regions where both large and small groups of traditional "militia" forces are successfully imposing *jirga* decisions – in the short term.

Another critical factor related to the utilization of any form of Pashtun militia involves their short term nature. Individual Pashtuns, a warrior society, want to engage in the fighting rather than serve in combat support functions. As such, a lashkar is a short term creation in which each man is responsible for feeding and supplying himself. Lacking a centralized command structure, the fighters are just as likely to walk away as they are to remain with the lashkar. They also lack ammunition and crew-served weapons possessed by trained, experienced and heavily armed

insurgent forces. Unless a lashkar is closely supported by regular armed forces units that can resupply them – and rescue them when they come under attack – they will generally collapse under any sustained attack by insurgent forces.

Maintaining local control over indigenous irregular forces is also crucial to any success. Any militia element closely associated with American or Coalition forces will become the target of sustained propaganda campaigns by the insurgents that will seek to portray them as collaborators with invading forces seeking to occupy Muslim lands. For this reason, any militia force should be small, self-sustaining through subsidies provided to provincial governors for use by village elders. American and Coalition forces should be readily available to respond to attacks on militia forces, but should avoid open contact with them to reduce the likelihood of Taliban propaganda being developed against these programs.

The key to militia creation and successful utilization lies in a clearly stated demobilization plan. Militia elements should be small and created for specific tasks, as is traditional within Pashtun tribes. Control should be managed through the village's elders, if the militia element is to be charged with defending a village. Militias must be utilized only within their own tribal territories. If deployed into the tribal areas of other tribes, conflict will result.

A positive control beyond the power of tribal elders can be the assurance of both vocational training and employment following successful duty within a militia. Each individual's "biometrics" can be recorded and matched to the serial number of issued weapons and when the weapon is returned during the demobilization process, these individuals can be sent to a district or provincial vocational school⁵. Job placement assistance could also be a part of the demobilization program.

This was the primary point of failure for the UN's DDR Program. They successfully managed the disarmament and demobilization process, but they failed to provide the vocational schools that would have permitted unemployed militiamen to reintegrate into society through employment. Many had other options.

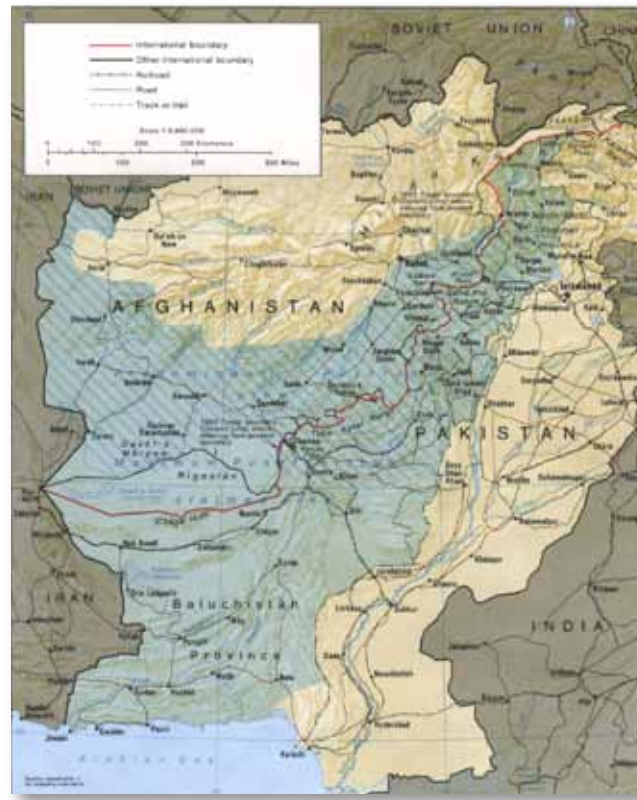
There are other differences between the operational scenes found in al-Anbar province and within the Pashtun "crescent" found in Afghanistan and Pakistan and this has an impact on any planning to create any "Awakening Movement" among the Pashtuns. In the case of al-Anbar's tribes, the existence of "overarching" tribal confederations such as the Shammar Confederation presented opportunities to meet with highly influential leaders having both influence and some degrees of political control within their affiliated tribes. This level of centralization is not found in Pashtun tribes where the two large tribal confederations have no unifying personalities functioning at the "confederation level." In the case of the dominant Durrani Confederation, their two branches, the Zirak and Panjpai, clearly lack cohesion and the Panjpai tribes generally have better leadership representation within the Taliban Movement than in the Government of Afghanistan. Essentially, there are no similar tribal aggregations found among the northern Pashtuns, a factor that makes them even more unruly than their southern cousins.

In spite of these significant differences that impact on militia formation, local armed groups can be encouraged to operate within their own tribal areas where they can deny access to insurgents while serving as "trip wire" forces to alert Afghan National Army and Coalition reaction

5. There is a model vocational school in the vicinity of Asadabad that can be used as an example. In this school, local employers are surveyed for specific needs and training programs are specifically tailored to match employment opportunities. As a result, nearly all graduates are successfully placed into jobs.

forces to the presence of attacking insurgents. Militias created or encouraged within the Pashtun zone – where the conflict is occurring – can be managed successfully without the creation of warlords. Pashtun “bottom-up” governance makes the emergence of powerful tribal leaders unlikely as long as the militia elements remain small and under the control of tribal elders as they traditionally have been. Warlords tend to emerge from militias formed within the other ethnic groups of Afghanistan, but armed civilians are not needed within those ethnic groups since the Taliban are active primarily only within the Pashtun areas.

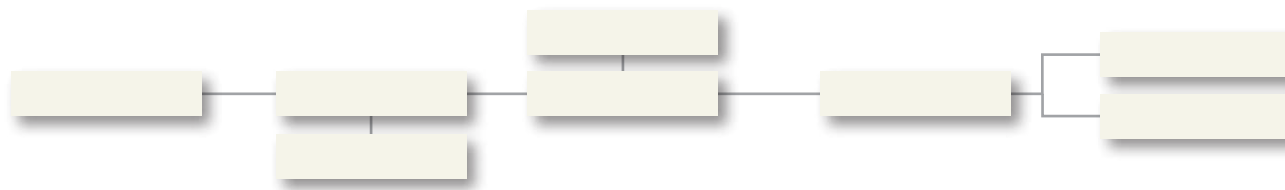
Pashtun tribal dynamics tending to rely upon the leadership of councils of elders instead of a strongman are actually more stable than the “top down” form of leadership and cannot be disrupted by the loss of a single man. M. A. Yapp saw the lack of a “backbone” to be broken as a great defense for the tribes when under attack. If he was correct, the groups having “mullah leadership,” a form of backbone, are in far more danger of being defeated than the potential Pashtun militia organizations answering to jirgas composed of elders. Decapitation operations, reconciliation negotiations, and the use of respected elders to induce defections from the Taliban leadership have a place in operations intended to attack the insurgent’s “backbone” as small militia forces under tribal elders’ control hold areas cleared of insurgents.



TRIBAL ANALYSIS CENTER

Traditional anthropological research conducted among tribes inhabiting remote areas where insurgents and criminals operate has become increasingly difficult to implement. Studies carried out among people living in small-scale societies now are nearly impossible due to the physical dangers associated with the civil and religious unrest found in those areas. Swat, for example, has become so dangerous that Frederick Barth's studies only could be repeated at the risk of the investigator's life. Similar research is not feasible among Burma's Rohingya tribes located on both sides of the border with Bangladesh, as well as with the Pashtuns in Afghanistan's interior and within Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, where even Pakistan's army enters with reluctance.

Given the difficulties of conducting direct fieldwork in conflictive areas, the Tribal Analysis Center utilizes an indirect approach. Using multidisciplinary research, we seek to collect and analyze data obtained from a wide variety of sources, both current and historical. In the absence of new ethnographic fieldwork to update our base of knowledge, the Tribal Analysis Center compiles and summarizes existing research and documents on tribal societies, combining this material with contemporary press reports and articles. We assume that much can be gleaned from well-informed observers who are not anthropologists, ranging from journalists and travelers to government officials.



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