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## The Ideological Foundations of Tribes and Tribal System: A Case Study of Tribal Mechanism in Afghanistan

**Muhammad Hasnain**

Department of Political Science and International Relations (DPSIR), University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore, Pakistan  
Email: [muhammad.hasnain@umt.edu.pk](mailto:muhammad.hasnain@umt.edu.pk)

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the ideological foundations of tribes and tribal systems in Afghanistan, focusing on how these traditional structures shape social and political dynamics. It examines the historical roots and cultural values that underpin tribal mechanisms, analyzing their influence on governance, conflict resolution, and community cohesion. The research highlights how tribal identity and customary laws function as a parallel system to the formal state apparatus, often impacting political stability and development efforts. By investigating specific case studies within various Afghan tribes, the study reveals the complex interplay between tribal traditions and modern state institutions. It also considers the role of external factors, such as foreign intervention and modernization, in shaping and transforming tribal systems. This analysis provides insights into the resilience and adaptability of tribal mechanisms, offering a nuanced understanding of their role in contemporary Afghan society and their implications for policy-making and international relations.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, Tribe, Socio-Political Dynamics, Impact, Traditional Values

### Introduction

The researcher tries to explore the ideological and tribal roots that lead to the construction of the tribes and tribal groups. This current research work focuses on the ideological foundations that remain at the basis of the internal feature of tribes and they play the key role in the construction of their identity. In this regard, the researcher tries to explore the ideological foundations that make the deep rooted structure of political mechanism. In order to comprehend the ideological basis and tribal methodology of living and surviving the work has been allotted for the tribal groups and tribal ideology within Afghanistan. For this reason the tribal people need to be considered and taken into account for their role in contribution within the domestic political nature of the state. In this perspective, the researcher needs to explore the reasons that have been rooted in the construction of their identity through the tribal linkages. On one side, the construction of identity is necessary where the tribal origin is shaped through the historical patronage. And, on the other side, the distinction and difference of their identities have made a mix of tribal relationship with each other. The systematic approach is necessary to comprehend the internal bounds within them and the way they respond to the other

cultures when they come in interaction with them. The deep rooted tribal culture is having a great significance in the personal lives of all and sundry. Every individual has a deep association with their identity and they proudly announce their practices. This reflects the deep impact of their identity and the construction of such practices. In addition to that the most significant aspect is the influence of the tribes and tribal groups in the society as a whole and in the political process in particular. The later study will enunciate the fact that the tribes play key and influential role in the political structure of the state. Their hegemony and power through the enrichment of resources can come into effect for turning the table of politics in their favor. The societal binding within the community is a reflection of their prevailing tribal norms and culture. They are interlinked with each other through this state of deep internal bounding, which comes from the tribal traditions. This also suits them in nominating the potential candidate for the political process. All and sundry remain in favor of the most influential person within the tribal group. Moreover, the tribes and tribal groups have the different nature, in a way that the nature of political process and tribal norms sometimes come in conflict with each other. At the same time, some of the attributes are so closely linked that they fall in the same category and their joint effort and common goal work with effect as a political force to devise such policies that can be helpful for making combine effort for the political surpassing so much so that the joint effort makes the progress and prosperity in every venture. For this reason both of the actors and non-state actors need to come in contact with each other and work collectively for the glory and prosperity of the country. For the point in case, the effort done by Afghanistan during the 4 year government of Taliban regime is a crystal clear example where not only the mainstream political parties and tribal groups but also the extremist groups also join hand in hand to run the state of affairs. In this perspective, the role of tribes as well as the state actors cannot be ignored. The fact of the subject-matter is that state actors and non-state actors can work out collaborative if they are given equal opportunities in the realm of domestic and international affairs (Fearon, 1989).

### **Significance of the Study**

‘Tribe’ was often used in a rather derogatory manner for relatively small ethnic groups who lived as ‘underdeveloped’ (formerly called ‘primitive’ or even ‘savage’) minorities, far from the majorities’ cultural and social mainstream (Glatzer, 2002). The reason of taking Afghanistan for the study of tribal identities is also considered because of the versatile generation within the Afghan tribes. Diversified sort of tribal belongings are found in the Afghani territory. Nawabs, Maliks, Baloch and Khans are few of the most prominent tribal groups that can be found in the country. The significance of the study can be highlighted as the oldest form of tribal groups have their historical and hereditary linkages, which can be found in Afghanistan. In this way, through this research work, tribal identities and

## ***The Ideological Foundations of Tribes and Tribal System: A Case Study of Tribal Mechanism in Afghanistan***

their role in the society can easily be understood. From this research, the researcher tries to get the root cause of tribal associations and affinities. Some of the other aspect may be the part played by religion and the internal scheme of tribal ideologies also play key role in the form of Nang and Galang.

### **Tribal Groups and Ideological Foundations**

#### **Nawabs and Arbabs**

In order to conceptualize the deep-rooted ideological foundations, it is quintessential to explore the tribal groups found in the territory. For this, some of the tribes such as 'Nawab' and 'Arbabs' have settled in the country have an intermediary role (Brennan, July 1981). The tribal groups come into effect during the wartimes or fighting between various non-state actors. These tribal groups play their active participation to give platform for the opposing parties and groups to come on negotiation table for resolving the differences peacefully. They act as a mediator between the conflicting parties to reduce tension and sort out the solutions amicably. In this way, they become mediator or arbitrator for bringing possible output to the trifling matters between confronting groups.

#### **Khan's Tribal Linkages**

The leading ideological pillars are found in the tribes of khan (Abbas, October 20, 2006). These tribal groups have greater access to economic and financial resources. They are found in greater number as well. They are not only spread in the length and breadth of Afghanistan but also the tribal roots are traced everywhere in the world. The economic and financial stability gives the tribes an additional weightage for capturing more and more resources with what they already have. Tribal ideology on one side, the economic capabilities on the other side give it a dual aspect of influencing the other tribes and their say is given more weightage due to its increased economic role and strength (Thomas, 2019). One important aspect is that the rules and regulations are not written (Sugarman, 2011) anywhere but all of the people of the tribe practice those rules with great zeal and zest. They all know the codes such as Galan and Pashtun. They remain adherent to their tribes. Some of them are patrilineal in nature (Karrer, 2012), few are influential than others such as Khans with economic resources and capabilities is one of the most influential tribal group. They have their role in the decision making process of the politics of the state.

Another factor which needs due consideration is the element of making its linkage with the government functionaries. Khan tribe is opportunistic and optimistic in developing strong ties with the state machineries. The resource enrichment and sound economic footings further their magnificent role in tying the relationship between the tribe and government. This inter-connectedness gives a positive edge to the tribal group of khans because the linkage draws economic and

social benefits from the political mainstreaming entities. The clout and influence of the tribal leaders sway their power over the mainstream politics and domestic affairs of the state. In the same vein, the tribal leaders may easily get political edge from the linkages between the tribe and government (Staff, 2000). Similarly, they can collaborative make an effort to accomplish goals of their common-concern.

### **Tribal Engagements**

Tribal Engagement (Dorrnsoro, 2011) is the role of tribes played in the militia and extremist sort of activities. They are bound with cohesive forces (Ruttig, 2012), the internal and intrinsic motivations drive the people to opt military venture for attaining the political or military ends of the tribal groups. These expeditions not only motivate few people from the tribes and tribal groups but a huge number of people are motivated by the same factor. The militia forces come into existence because of the same cohesive forces. All the people within the tribe motivate the remaining ones to move ahead with the enthusiasm and energy to crush their opponents. That's why the single motivation from the internal factor can become enough to build a huge militia force to cope up with the external as well as internal forces. Afghanistan witnesses the same fact that the tribes and tribal groups are ready to take part in the military expeditions and military adventure because they are highly motivated by the cohesive forces that come from the intrinsic forces rather than extrinsic sort of motivations. Taliban have been supported by the same nature of intrinsic motivation with a camouflage of other traditional aspects. One of the leading reason of the same militia engagement is because of the confrontation of the traditional means with the modern means. Modernization demands change, to which the traditional fundamentalism and conservatism falls flat and have no effect at all. This conflict originates a lot of problem from simple way of living to the complex way of living within the form of a tribal community.

### **Religious Affinities and Tribal Interconnectivity**

The tribal binding is also inter-connectedness of the religious affinities and affiliations (Roy, 2002). Afghanistan being the religious state explores the characteristics through its strong adherence to the religious teachings. In this prospect, religion plays an important role to set the pattern for keeping the tribal people in close connection with each other. For this purpose, it is imperative to look into the dimensions of religious indoctrinations as well as its adamant teachings that play a key role in the strong binding of the tribal people and tribes. In this regard, the concept of Islamic Fundamentalism can be traced in two different dimensions. First of all, this concept enunciates about the fundamental concept of Islam, where the basic foundation is deep rooted in the true teachings of Islam. And, the second concept drives meaning from the concept of 'Jihad' the

### ***The Ideological Foundations of Tribes and Tribal System: A Case Study of Tribal Mechanism in Afghanistan***

holy war. It is aptly stated that the 'Holy War' within the religious indoctrination ought to fulfill the detrimental elements found in the concept of its real teachings.

#### **Ideological and Structural Differences**

The debate is that in the traditional form of governance mechanism the ideological basis and structural foundations stemmed from the same root of cultural and historical context. Now, with the contemporary development of the constitutional mechanism oriented in the form of western political structure (Chen, May, 2010), the ideological difference is evident from its approaches as the traditional tribal mechanism with its identical ideology remains adherent to the conservative policies which discourage any form of change in its ideology and affinities. Suffice is to say that the traditional ideological basis with no change policy is unable to elaborate the political structure in the developmental phase of Westphalia's mechanism (Teschke, 1999). The ideological incongruities with the political structure is evident from the cultural amalgamation at an international level. In the historical context, traditional and ideological proximities always backed up the political mechanism of that period. But, the rapid changes in the worldly affairs make it quite difficult for ideological basis of the tribes to rapidly cope up with the changing scenario and adopt those changes continuously.

#### **Nang and Galang**

The tribal groups have been segmented in two fragments, the first group is known as 'Nang'. They are more oriented towards the moral and ethical codes. The prime distinction is its following of the code namely, Pashtunwali (Alam, 2015). As per as the second kind is concerned they are 'Galang'. These tribal members are more tilted towards the hierarchical social structure. Diversified sort of tribal belongings are found in the Afghani territory. Nawabs, Maliks, Baloch and Khans are few of the most prominent tribal groups that can be found in the country. The significance of the study can be highlighted as the oldest form of tribal groups have their historical and hereditary linkages, which can be found in Afghanistan. In this way, through this research work, tribal identities and they role in the society can easily be understood. From this research, the researcher tries to get the root cause of tribal associations and affinities. Some of the other aspect may be the part played by religion and the internal scheme of tribal ideologies also play key role in the form of Nang and Galang.

#### **Stable Tribal Mechanism**

One of the most efficient characteristics of deep-rooted tribal ideology (Kaldor, 2005) comes from the static nature of the tribal society. The stability that is generated through the mindset, this mindset is brought to light from the consistent enforcement and re-enforcement of the particular ideology with the help of rules

and regulations that come with the consent of the ruled as well as the ruler. Like the ruled get speedy justice through the legitimate use of power. Therefore, the ruled remained adherent to the tribal ideology because the system is working properly with no sort of injustice and coercion. At the same time, the ruler is not an authoritarian head but a follower of the traditional tribal policies and constitutions. In the either case, rules and following of the rules give no harm to anyone, which encourages and enables the tribal structure to continue with the policies unchanged. In this way, constitution as well as the legitimate method of authority give space to the tribal society to prevail and last long.

### **Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations**

Pakistan intends to keep close relation with the neighboring countries and especially for Muslim countries Pakistan has adhered to the policy of building strong relations at all levels. In this case, Afghanistan is no exception at all. But, the hostile India with her belligerent and ardent offensive policies has always raised eyebrows for an inch of development by Pakistani side. This security dimension poses a security threat to Pakistan. At such an instant, the conspiracies orchestrated by India with here influential role in Afghanistan is open to all. Afghanistan is also exploiting the deteriorating situation through the development of strong ties with India. Though there are affinities regarding demography, society and religion between Pakistan and Afghanistan (Hassan, 2008), yet the indifference of Afghanistan to build up friendly relations with Pakistan is beyond description. With these different and deviant interests of both the states, the relations of both Pakistan and Afghanistan are having the lowest ebb relations since the inception of Pakistan in 1947. This cold relation is driven by the issues and conflicts of ideas such as recognition issue the greater Pakhtoonistan claim and the irredentist claim of Afghanistan over the region of NWFP now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). Another dimension of the shambling relation is extended because of the Durand line issue. The stated boundary line had been drawn in 1893 with the consent of the leader at that time. Later on, in 1905, 1919 and 1921 (Omran, 2009.) the predecessors approved about the Durand line in their respective tenures. With all these versatile prospects, Afghanistan has been caught in the web of dis-satisfaction with its relation with Pakistan. Whatever may be the prospects of relations across the borders, peace and security between them ensures guarantee in the establishment of regional peace and security within South Asia. From this research, the researcher tries to get the root cause of tribal associations and affinities. Some of the other aspect may be the part played by religion and the internal scheme of tribal ideologies also play key role in the form of Nang and Galang. Effectiveness, stability, Broad representativeness and fair and equitable distribution of asset are some of the dimensions needed to be understood as well.

*The Ideological Foundations of Tribes and Tribal System: A Case Study of  
Tribal Mechanism in Afghanistan*

**Ineffectiveness and Inefficiency of state Machinery**

The tribes and tribal ideology remain in every society will more or less influence. But, in the backdrop of less effective mechanism of state machinery, the tribal groups become increasingly influential and they may tend to bring forth radical changes in the policy and decision making process. The sorry state of affairs paves way to such actors for expanding its clout so much so that the state actors slowly get dependent upon those tribes for the ideological foundations. These tribal groups initially do not hamper the prospects of policy formulation; but, with the passage of time the decision making paradigm shifts in favor of these tribal groups. The tribal leaders come into the electoral process where the influence of the leader becomes the possible reason for getting affinities. The cultural, linguistic and ideological elements add more value to the tribal leaders to have a sway over the political process of the country. In this way, the entire state machinery comes under the fate of those tribal leaders. For the case in point, the example of Afghanistan is true depiction of the same situation. With more and more tribal groups and tribal ideologies the entire machinery works on the policies of the tribal leaders. The influential role and their statements cannot be over-ruled because the entire tribe firmly stands by the tribal leader till the last breadth. The tribal policies within the political mainstreaming are the evident example for the increased role of tribes in the political and domestic structure of the state. Here, it can be said that the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the state machinery (Kunduz, 2017) creates a political vacuum to the non-state actors, this is easily filled up by the influential leaders of the tribes. . For this reason both of the actors and non-state actors (Wagner, 2009) need to come in contact with each other and work collectively for the glory and prosperity of the country. For the point in case, the effort done by Afghanistan during the governmental years of Taliban regime (Lone, 2018) is a crystal clear example where not only the mainstream political parties and tribal groups but also the extremist groups also join hand in hand to run

the state of affairs. In this perspective, the role of tribes as well as the state actors cannot be ignored. The fact of the subject-matter is that state actors and non-state actors can work out collaborative if they are given equal opportunities in the realm of domestic and international affairs.

## **Conclusion**

Conclusively, the researcher has tried to build up a comprehensive role of tribes and tribal groups. Furthermore, the affiliations and affinities with various groups, the deep-rooted incongruities within the political or domestic structure (Katzman, 2015) in comparison with the tribal ideologies. Another key aspect is the societal factor that motivates and inspires the tribal leaders to become influential through the patronage system (Bearfield, January 2009). The tribes and tribal groups in Afghanistan have undoubtedly played a great part in making the current tribal mechanism with its old and traditional method of tribal ideology (Singh, June 2010). Similarly, this cannot be denied by anyone that the tribes with their ideological foundation stay adherent to their tribes and they can go to any extent for the moral values as ascribed in their tribal rules and regulations. One important aspect is that the rules and regulations are not written anywhere but all of the people of the tribe practice those rules with great zeal and zest. They all know the codes such as Galang and Pashtunwali. They remain adherent to their tribes. Some of them are patrilineal in nature, few are influential than others such as Khans with economic resources and capabilities is one of the most influential tribal group. They have their role in the decision making process of the politics of the state. Afghanis are so much so adherent to the tribal groups that they remain no stone untouched for the ethics and moral codes of their tribes. Tribes and tribal ideologies are also in conformity with the religious norms as all of the tribal groups and tribes are primarily Muslim. Therefore, they have the moral codes which are strictly following the parameters of religions.



***The Ideological Foundations of Tribes and Tribal System: A Case Study of Tribal Mechanism in Afghanistan***

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***Muhammad Hasnain***

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