TALIBAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF AL-QAEDA

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Introduction

This article seeks to highlight the multiple ethnic symbols of the Taliban leadership employed to mobilize the Afghan Pashtuns from 1994 till they captured of 95 per cent of the country in year 2000. In 1994, the Taliban leadership mobilized madrassa students to end the continual civil war and to punish the warlords who had committed atrocities against the Afghan population. However, after the capture of Kandahar, they employed the Pashtun village identity to activate their kin-group solidarity. The Taliban did this because they knew that most of the Pashtuns lived in the rural areas of southern and eastern Afghanistan where traditional village Islam was practiced.

Conversely, subsequent to taking over the Pashtun ethnic space and with Osama bin Laden they enter into Afghanistan, the Taliban religious ideology was further radicalized due to Al-Qaeda influence. Al-Qaeda religious ideology injected the sentiment of anti US, anti west ideology and between the members of the Taliban militia and rest of the Afghan population. Therefore, the Taliban started considering anybody not on their belief as infidels.

The author stance is that the politico-religious orientation of Afghan Pashtuns, transformed in the 1990s in the madrassas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, caused them to become religious-nationalists rather than Pashtun nationalists. This is a transformation which helps us to understand that, within an ethnic group, religion can be a defining marker.

The article will analyse whether the rise of the Afghan Taliban in 1994 was a reassertion of the Pashtuns for power in Afghanistan. Can the Taliban be described as Pashtun nationalists? If not, then how could they capture the Afghan Pashtun region so easily? What was the cause of group feeling among them and why was there negligible factional feuding in their ranks and leadership? Besides that, this author also intends investigating Osama bin Laden role in the transformation of the beliefs of the Taliban.

Theorizing the issue

Theoretically, ethnicity is divided into two groups, i.e., Primordialism and Social Constructivism. Primordialism refers to a conception of ethnicity that stresses the objective, enduring, and fundamental character of group identities. The primordial attachments of a group, such as language, race, blood, kinship, religion, territory, and custom, are viewed as basic and psychologically overpowering. Therefore, primordialism considers ethnicity as fixed, given, and unchangeable. However, primordialism is not a single category; Joireman divides it into socio-biological, cultural, and linguistic subtexts.
On the other hand, constructivism advocates that individual and collective identities are not historically given, but are in fact highly adaptive and flexible, fluid, and often conflictual. It is principally a convenient source that individuals and groups deploy opportunistically to promote their fundamental security and economic interests. The individuals can influence their own or the identities of others, because they either feel a heightened need for cultural identification or seek to pursue specific political mobilization agendas, and they may even discard this identification when alternative affiliations promise better returns.  

This research is an effort to understand the transformation of a benign sentiment of ethnicity into ethnic-nationalism by power-seeking groups to gain and retain power. Ethnic nationalism here signifies the type of nationalism through which the ethnic elites rationalize their strategies and manipulate the communal sentiments of their followers for initiation and continuance of conflict. The article argues that the elite manipulation of ethnicity can make a society identity-conscious. The same ethnic consciousness leads to the creation of warring groups and triggering of conflict. In simple language, as Joireman argues, nationalism is an ethnic group with a political agenda. 

The Taliban: An Analysis

The lack of credible information about the Afghan conflict post-1992 has led many scholars to suppose that the rise of the Taliban was basically the reassertion of the Pashtuns for power. In my estimation, the Taliban may be biologically Pashtuns; yet their group feeling was not based on their kin-group ethnicity. “Sinno argues in this context that, Initially, the Taliban integrated highly-trained former members of the communist Kahlqi faction in their troops for their military capabilities. This faction was Pashtun nationalist. But the Taliban discarded them by 1998, when they realized that the Khalqis had ethnically politicized their men.”

In previous researches, the authors took the Taliban as another Pashtun nationalist militia, such as Hezb-e-Islami Hekmatyar, trying to snatch power from the Tajik regime so as to enforce the Pashtun right to rule. According to Christia, scholars reached this conclusion due to the poor battle performance of Hezb-e-Islami Hekmatyar during the Afghan civil war 1992-1994. However, Tomsen, while doubting Christia argument, contends that seeing as the Pashtuns had ruled Afghanistan from 1747 till the demise of Najibullah regime in 1992 (except for the nine-month rule of Bacha-e-Saqqao from January to October 1929), power in the hands of Burhanuddin Rabbani (a Tajik) was an insult to the Pashtuns. Consequently, as Ahmadi argues, “The rise of the Taliban gave hope to the Pashtuns that they would get their glory back from the non-Pashtuns.

But if the Taliban were Pashtun nationalists, then what was the underlying principle of asabia among them? One argues that the group feeling among the Taliban was because of the similarity of their institutional background. Apart from this, suppose one takes the Taliban as Pashtun nationalists, then one asks: were the Taliban held together by socio-biological motivation? As Van den Berghe argues:

An animal can duplicate its genes directly through its own reproduction, or indirectly through the reproduction of relatives with which it shares specific proportions of genes. Animals, therefore, can be expected to behave cooperatively, and thereby enhance each other fitness to the extent that they are genetically related.

If this is the case, then why did the Taliban fight against Hekmatyar or any of the Pashtuns who resisted them, when all Pashtuns believe that they are related? To be more precise, Mullah Omar
the leader of the Taliban is a Hotak\textsuperscript{19} Ghilzai\textsuperscript{20} Pashtun, and Hekmatyar is a Kharoti\textsuperscript{21} Ghilzai. As indicated by Haroon Rashid, "both the Kharotis and Hotaks have originated from the same source named Turan."\textsuperscript{22}

Despite the fact, that the Pashtuns claim of having originated from a single source is a myth\textsuperscript{23} yet, if we take it to be true, it still does not confirm that there could not be any intra-Pashtun conflict. Gary R. Johnson argues that:

The evolution produces proximate mechanisms to serve ultimate (distal) ends, and since these proximate mechanisms evolve on the basis of statistically normal conditions, genetically identical organisms in a sexually reproducing species will not know that their interests are identical. Their behaviour-generating mechanisms evolved under conditions in which virtually every other nonspecific was at least a partial genetic competitor. For this reason, even monozygotic twins will come into conflict despite their genetic identity. Consequently, we may assert that conflicts of interest exist among all members of a sexually reproducing species. This would certainly include those who are bonded together in ethnic groups. Shared ethnicity, therefore, is no guarantee of cooperation and amity.\textsuperscript{24}

Margaret Mead, while being in agreement with Johnson, contends that in human beings, war is an invention, not a biological necessity.\textsuperscript{25} consequently; one deduces that it is the situation, the interests, and the availability of opportunity to the elites and individuals which decides that either enmity or amity will dominate their actions. All the same, if one takes the Taliban as a culturally-bound group, as Geertz contends that, every individual is born into a particular culture that structures its beliefs and identity. People view their own cultural background as primordial,\textsuperscript{26} then how could the Taliban form a strong bond with the East Turkistan Islamic Party (currently the East Turkistan Islamic Movement or ETIM) or the Uzbek militant group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU),\textsuperscript{27} while these non-Pashtun groups have no cultural or linguistic similarities?

In the same background, Ahmed Rashid argues that in the year 2000, more than one-third of the 15,000 strong Taliban force that captured Taloqan was made up of non-Afghans.\textsuperscript{28} The above-mentioned alliances also refute the argument of the ethno-linguists, such as Laponce, that, same language speakers cooperate with each other due to the affinity link.\textsuperscript{29}

Putting these analyses in perspective, one argues that the Taliban were an interest group which made use of multiple ethnic symbols to influence the popular sentiment of ethnic nationalism to mobilize the Pashtuns of rural Afghanistan. But the question remains that why the Taliban mobilized the rural Pashtuns and not the urban. The answer lies in the structure of Afghan society, where the Pashtuns are primarily based in rural and not urban centers. Murshed asserts that the Taliban used the village identity\textsuperscript{30} to mobilize the rural Pashtuns. Similarly, the Taliban spokesman Maulawi Rafiullah Muazin\textsuperscript{31} once stated to western reporters in an interview that:

"Our culture has been greatly changed over the past 40 or 50 years, particularly in Kabul. In the villages the culture has not changed much of the Taliban are trying to purify our culture. We are trying to re-establish a purist Islamic culture and tradition."\textsuperscript{32}

Edwards comments that, "While identifying the purist culture and tradition with the Islam of the village, the Taliban were indirectly condemning the Islamist parties since most of the party leaders were the product of Kabul University or had worked for state-sponsored institutions. They
were also putting themselves at par with the people whose support they had to enlist if their movement was going to be successful."

On the other hand, one enquires how the Taliban who emerged in the refugee camps of Pakistan and in the madrassas of Southern Afghanistan could claim to bring back the village culture of Afghanistan, about which they were ignorant. Roy reacts to this reservation by arguing that Afghanistan had a vibrant network of rural madrassas, which were not dependent on urban support. The Taliban did not come, after all, from nowhere. There were hundreds of small madrassas located in the countryside, mainly in the southern Pashtun belt (from Ghazni to Kandahar) and in the north-west. Teachers and students at these madrassas were not accepted in the State Faculty of Theology, founded in 1951, whose students came from approved religious schools in the provincial towns. During the wars, these madrassas turned into military bases, kept their own hierarchies, and usually joined the Harkat-e-Enqilab, the conservative party of rural mullahs and traditional ulema.

Nojumi is in agreement with Roy assertion that the Taliban movement was rooted deeply in the remote rural settings of southern and, to a certain extent, eastern Afghanistan, where many locals, such as village clerics, held rigid perspectives on urbanite culture. The author extends the argument further by claiming that the Taliban’s political ideology was also rooted vaguely in the traditional Deobandi school of Sunni Hanafi Islam.

The leadership of the Taliban were students of Pakistani Deobandi madrassas. Rashid Ahmed claims that in 1999, at least eight Taliban cabinet ministers in Kabul were graduates of Maulana Sami ul Haq’s Dar-ul-Ulum Haqqania, and dozens of other graduates from the same institute served as Taliban governors in the provinces, as military commanders, judges, and bureaucrats. Similarly, Durroso contended that, most of the ulema at the level of leadership had emerged from the madrassas of the North-West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa [KPK] and Balochistan. The Dar ul-Ulum Haqqaniya Madrassa at Akora Khattak in KPK is an example. From this madrassa came Haji Ahmad Jan, Minister of Mines; Maulvi Qalamuddin, head of the religious police; and Maulvi Arefullah Aref, deputy Minister of Finance. One of the few former commanders to become a leader of the movement, Haqqani from Hezb-e- Islami (Khalis), spent several years at the Madrassa Dar ul-Ulum Haqqaniya, first as a student and then as a teacher. Therefore, the Taliban contention that they were trying to resurrect the pure village culture and tradition was merely based on an agenda to provoke the nationalist sentiments of laymen.

In fact, their similar social backgrounds generated cohesion among their ranks. Osman Tariq reasons that basically, the Taliban religious motivation was a driving force in fighting and maintaining their unity. In this connection, Rubin argues that during the years of war, the Afghan rural ulema, especially in the traditionalist south, continued to teach or study in either their rural madrassas, away from the centers of war, or in kindred institutions in Pakistan, largely linked to the conservative Deobandi movement. Thousands of Pashtun refugee boys received the only education available in these schools, funded by Pakistani and Saudi donors.

Madrassa education altered the ethnic markers of the Pashtun students. While in their kin group ethnic space, the Taliban and rest of the population were Pashtuns, yet their ethnic symbols did not remain the same. The Taliban became religious nationalists, whereas, the rest of the population in the Pashtun areas “southern and eastern Afghanistan” were mostly Pashtuns nationals. This is a transformation which helps us to understand that, within an ethnic group, religion can be a decisive symbol. As Ibn-e-Khaldun argues that such collective feeling binds all members of a social group together when they face the outside world. The sudden gain of social power by these madrassa
students made them power hungry especially when the Taliban started implementing their Shariah through the Ministry of Amar Bil Maroof and Nahi Anil Munkar. 41

This brings the author in conformity with the argument of Brass that, an Individuals interpret ethnicity which suits their own agenda, and which has very little to do with groups antipathies; however, elites interpret the communal agenda in an ethnic frame, thereby merely leaving the people to pursue their own agenda under the banner of ethnic conflict. 42

One interprets the above-cited theorization in the perspective of the conflict between the Taliban and other ethnic group’s post-1994. The Taliban leadership and their fighters who fought for the Taliban dominance had different agendas. In this context, Akbar claims that the ideology of Taliban leadership was different from that of the Pashtuns in Afghanistan. The Pashtuns under the Taliban mostly fought a war for reasons related to nationality, whereas, the Taliban leaders fought for their religious ideology. 43 Conversely, Nasreen Ghufran, while partially disagreeing with the above contention, argues that until the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996, they expressed no desire to rule the country. The problems with the Taliban began when they started acting as the ruling elite. Indeed, the war had transformed the Taliban from a movement into a ruling government. Their main priorities were now to bring peace, while at the same time staying in power to implement their vision of an Islamic state. 44

Rais sheds light on another possibility. The author contends that the Taliban wanted to create an entirely new state according to their interpretation of Islam, which has become ingrained in Pashtun Islamic practices. In doing so, they focused on the centralization of the political order, which they tried to implement through a dreaded security machine. 45 Esposito disputes that the Wahhabi influence on the Taliban ideology was on the whole cultivated and reinforced through madrassas and seminaries, mostly set up in Pakistan after the Soviet- Afghan War. 46 Predominantly, the seminaries set up in Pakistan during the Soviet-Afghan war were based on the Deobandi interpretation of Islam. 47

Tarzi, while agreeing with Esposito about the Taliban beliefs, argues that initially the Taliban gained a large degree of popular support by bringing law and order to the Pashtun heartland. But as they cemented their relationship with the pan-Islamist Al-Qaeda leadership, the nature of their regime shifted to a theocratic autocracy, based on terror, with a more pan-Islamist focus. In retrospect, it is clear that Al-Qaeda was not interested in Afghanistan as an end, but needed the country as a base for its global jihadist plans. 48 But one believes that, Militant sectarianism did not arise originally from madrassas in Pakistan, more exactly, sectarianism found fertile soil in the communities especially in the Afghan refugees who joined the madrassas. 49

The Belief of the Taliban

As Rais, Esposito, and Tarzi argue, that the beliefs of the Taliban were based on Wahhabism. What is Wahhabism, and was it the religion of the Taliban? Bas argues that the Wahhabi teachings are often referred to as fanatical discourse and Wahhabism itself has been termed the most retrograde expression of Islam and one of the most radical Islamic movements. 50

Whereas, Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (the founder of the Wahhabi school of thought), as revealed in his written works, was a well-trained and widely-travelled scholar and jurist, as well as a prolific writer. The scope of his scholarship stands in marked contrast to a few legal rulings (fatwa) issued by Osama bin Laden. More importantly, his insistence on adherence to Quranic values, such...
as: 1) the maximum preservation of human life, even in the midst of jihad as holy war; 2) tolerance for other religions; 3) support for a balance of rights between men and women, resulting in a very different worldview from that of contemporary militant extremists. The absence of the militantism, extremism, and literalism typically associated with Wahhabism raises serious questions whether an extremist like Osama bin Laden was truly representative of Wahhabi beliefs. 

Fawaz doubts Bas argument, of presenting Osama as a person of an extremist mindset since his childhood. The author contends that, until mid-1995, bin Laden was on record as saying that he opposed the killing of innocent non-combatants, including Americans. But while in Sudan, his inner circle consisted almost entirely of Egyptian extremists, who fed him extremist theological and ideological ideas which changed his worldview. The author argues that at this point, the marriage of ideas between Egyptian Qutbian radicalism and the ultra-conservative Saudi variety gave birth to Al-Qaeda. Indeed, Sudan was an incubator for this union, subsequently consummated in Afghanistan. Saleem Shahzad also confirms Gerges claim that, when he met Osama bin Laden in 1997, he was flanked by three members of the Egyptian camp: the Somali Abu Obaida, and the Egyptians Abu Hafs and Saiful Adil (all part of Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri's team). It is suspected that they had instilled their extremist ideas in him.

One supposes that while initially the Taliban religious ideology was based on the Deobandi school of thought, as Osama entered the scene in 1996, he started influencing their faith. According to Bas, bin Laden declaration of permanent global jihad against unbelievers was not Wahhabi in origin. Its roots lie in the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya, and Sayyid Qutb, rather than in the teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Although al-Wahhab has occasionally been cited by Osama, but the writings of Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), and Sayyid Qutb (1903-1966) figure far more prominently in bin Laden worldview and ideology. Like Ibn Taymiyya and Sayyid Qutb, bin Laden was strongly influenced by a context of turbulence. Indeed, Osama cited Ibn Taymiyyah, along with al-Wahhab, to justify the kind of indiscriminate resort to commit violence which he terms jihad. In his sermon published on 16 February 2003, bin Laden argued:

The most important religious duty after belief itself is to ward off and fight the enemy aggressor. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: to drive off the enemy aggressor who destroys both religion and the world there is no religious duty more important than this, apart from belief itself.

Bonney believes that besides Osama, the modern Islamists and jihadis also draw their primary inspiration from Ibn Taymiyya. Living in Syria at a time when Shamanist Mongols had conquered the core of the Islamic world, Ibn Taymiyya issued religious rulings which decreed that Muslims could not live in a nation ruled by infidels. A more complicated situation was presented by the Mongol rulers, who claimed to be Muslims, yet, continued to use their native system of laws, the Yassa (a secret code of law introduced by Genghis Khan) to make judgments. According to Saleem Shahzad, the newly-converted Tartar rulers enforced two different laws. Personal laws, like those pertaining to marriages, were interpreted under Islam, but public laws concerning the economy, politics, and the judiciary were interpreted under their traditional Yassa code. This instigated Taymiyyah to declare Jihad against the Mongols, given their preference for human-made laws (the traditional Yassa code) rather than Islamic law or Sharia, and thus lived in a state of Jahiliyya, or pre-Islamic pagan ignorance. He also declared Shites heretics and advocated action against them. His decree of takfeer went all the way through to the era of Syed Qutb to the ideology of Al-Qaeda. Since Al-Qaeda's interest was in Taymiyyah's ideology of resistance, they used his work to support their arguments.
Nonetheless, Qutb gave jihadist thought a fresh understanding of the Islamic term ignorance (Jahiliyya); an essentialist vision of the world and his views on jihad. Qutb declared that all Muslims not following Islamic law were unbelievers who could be fought and killed. He argued that jihad could thus be directed at both unbelievers as well as at any Muslims who refused to recognize the absolute Lordship of God. With this re-imagining of jihad, Qutb became an advocate of violence against the apostate leaders of Islamic countries, a theme that would reappear in later jihadist discourse and action, as well as a supporter of eternal jihad against all who rejected the call to his vision of true Islam.59

The Taliban and Other Ethnic Groups

It is noteworthy that the behavior of the Taliban towards minorities, especially the Hazara, was very conciliatory when they captured Uruzgan in January 1995.60 Even in October 1994, Mullah Ulah Ehsan had guaranteed the Hazaras of Ghazni that the Taliban would not encroach on their areas and would respect Shia jurisprudence.61 However, after the death of the leader of the Hazara, Abdul Ali Mazari, in Kabul in 1996 by the hands of the Taliban and the Hazara soured; yet, in the Taliban-controlled areas of the country, they had stopped armed robberies against the Shia Hazara.62 Nevertheless, the massacre of the Shias at the hands of the Taliban at Mazar-e-Sharif in 1998 was a different phenomenon which needs to be carefully analysed.

Before analysing the massacre of Shia Hazara at Mazar and later in different parts of the country, it is necessary that one should be acquainted with some of the atrocities carried out by the Taliban against the other groups.

Robert Johnson reports that in 1998, in three days of killing at Mazar-e-Sharif, the Taliban and their Arab allies (led by Mullah Abdul Manan Niazi) slaughtered hundreds of city dwellers (Hazaras, Uzbeks, and Tajiks). Equally furious was the Taliban assault on Bamiyan in 1998, massacring the inhabitants. At Yakaolong in the Hazarajat, some three hundred Hazaras were killed, when people were herded into mosques and rockets were fired at them. The Taliban regarded the Hazaras as sectarian and ethnic enemies of such low status as to render them apostates or kafirs.63

Carrol also gives an account of a team from the United Nations which travelled to a remote Afghan province on 7 April 2002 to investigate three mass graves, allegedly containing victims of one of the last Taliban bloodbaths. Pits with what appeared to be bodies of the Hazara slaughtered in November 2001 in a campaign of ethnic cleansing were found in Bamiyan. The representatives of the Hazara community in Bamiyan believe that the graves contained bodies of members of their community, killed approximately one month before the fall of the Taliban.64

Though the conflict between the Hazara and the Taliban can be termed as sectarian or revenge of the massacre of the Taliban at Mazar-e-Sharif in May 1997, the Taliban also did not have cordial relations with the Uzbeks of the north, who were also Hanafi Sunnis like them. Murshed reports that in May 1997, while the Taliban leaders, Mullah Razaq and Ghous, were locked in argument with Malik Pehlawan65 the time of midday prayers approached. Ayaz Wazir, the Pakistani Counsel General was present there for mediation between the parties. Wazir narrates that there was so much hatred between the Uzbeks and the Taliban that, while being Sunni Muslims, both the groups offered midday prayers separately, which was against the teachings of Islam.66 This behavior shows that, besides the Shia Hazara, the Taliban would also treat anybody from another group as an infidel.
Considering the above facts, one may conceive an impression that since the Taliban were Pashtuns, and the Pashtuns did not enjoy good relations with the other ethnic groups in Afghanistan, therefore the Taliban harboured hatred for all minorities. But after having gone through Afghan ethnic history, one comes to a totally different conclusion.

Afghan history shows that there was no ancient hatred between the Pashtun and the non-Pashtun, especially between the Pashtuns and the Hazaras. However, the love-hate relationship between them fluctuated according to the policies of the Pashtun rulers before 1992. The relations between the Hazara and the Pashtuns were strained during Amir Abdul Rehman reign (1880-1901); nevertheless, the Hazara supported Amir Amanullah Khan (1919-1929, Amir Abdul Rehman grandson), against the revolt of Habibullah Kalkani (a Tajik) in 1929. Likewise, during his decade of democracy, King Zahir Shah appointed a Tajik, Dr Muhammad Yusuf as his first Prime Minister, and Abdul Sattar Sirat, an Uzbek, as his Deputy Prime Minister. Equally, Abdur Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek, was the head of the most active Uzbek militia during the rule of a Pashtun head of state, i.e., Dr Najibullah. Similarly, Sultan Ali Keshtmand, a Hazara, became first Vice President of Afghanistan in 1990 during Najibullah government.

Keeping the above in perspective, it can be argued that it was Al-Qaeda which transformed the belief of Taliban into hatred for anybody who did not follow their beliefs. The author finds that the Taliban did not commit any brutality against the non-Pashtuns before May 1998. But the question remains, how and why did Al-Qaeda influence the Taliban?

Unlike the Taliban, who mobilized the laymen rural Pashtuns, Al-Qaeda used the top-down method of taming the leadership of the Taliban to achieve its objective of using Afghanistan as a base for its pan-Islamic agenda. Shahzad argues that Al-Qaeda’s target audience was not the commoners but the cadre of society that already practiced Islam. Al-Qaeda worked to convince these Islamists of the heresy of contemporary beliefs and systems and the prevalent foreign policies in the Muslim world. Indeed, Osama cemented his relationship with the highest level of the Taliban leadership. When he was invited by President Burhan ud Din Rabbani to Afghanistan in 1996, he camped near Jalalabad, but later he became a guest of the Taliban, when he was invited by Mullah Omar. Omar moved Osama from Jalalabad to Kandahar by informing him that, there was a danger for him to be kidnapped at Jalalabad. Initially, the relations between Osama and Omar were tense due to Osama habit of pronouncing fatwas and giving interviews to journalists. However, Osama was successful in cultivating Omar, after he gave military and financial support to the Taliban. Later, their bond became more solid when members of both the families married.

Besides financial support, Al-Qaeda also provided the Taliban its Arab fighters against the Northern Alliance. The inclusion of Arabs changed the dynamics of the conflict between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban, which made Mullah Mohammed Omar personally indebted to bin Laden. This was the time for Al-Qaeda to take advantage of the situation and it did take over effective charge of the entire defence policies of the Taliban. These included running their training camps and formulating strategies to fight against the Northern Alliance. As a result, Al-Qaeda gained immediate access to the camps of the Chechen, Pakistani, Uzbek, and even Chinese liberation movements. In the process, Al-Qaeda changed the nature of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, and turned it into a national security state, creating war hysteria throughout the country. This involved actions like blowing up the Bamiyan Buddhas and other activities that isolated the Taliban from the world community.
**Conclusion**

This article confirms two hypotheses of social constructivism: first, that ethnicity is fluid and is a ploy which the elites use to rally the support of the people to attain their personal political objectives. The individuals who become a tool in the hands of the elites in this connection are also not innocent. By becoming members of the warring militias of these ethnic elites, they also fulfill their own agenda of gaining social status. Secondly, in a group, the leadership and the individual may have different agendas to follow.

Initially, the Taliban militia comprised of madrassa students, but, with the passage of time, when the Taliban leadership needed more manpower, they mobilized the rural Pashtuns by employing village Islam. The use of such a method was not new in Afghan society. It is a fact that Pashtun society is egalitarian in nature, therefore a charismatic leader or a power-seeking group can only unite them by using either of two methods: 1) religion; 2) an enemy. The Taliban leadership made use of both the techniques to benefit from the support of the rural Pashtuns. Nonetheless, their conduct led a few authors to mistakenly believe that the Taliban were Pashtun nationalists, but the Taliban act of discarding the nationalist Khaliqis in 1998 repudiates such a notion.

Indeed, madrassa education had transformed the Pashtun students (the Taliban) and their leadership into religious nationalists. But not all members of the Taliban militias waged war for religious reasons; rather, the rural Pashtuns who joined them after the initial success of the movement fought for national reasons.

The religious inclination of the Taliban proved to be fruitful for Al-Qaeda to advance its agenda of pan-Islamism. The successful cultivation of the Taliban leadership by Al-Qaeda gave it the opportunity of spreading its belief in jihad, after Mullah Omar permitted them to take over the training of the jihadis. This helped Al-Qaeda to ensure that its ideology permeated through to the Afghans and the militants of other countries. The redefinition of belief by Al-Qaeda divided the country on the basis of faith, rather than that of ethnicity.
End Note

1 The elites supporting a war evoke symbols of national greatness and demonize the enemy. These symbols are so potent that they have both cognitive and emotional effects. Stuart J. Kaufman, Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.29.


3 Murshed argues that the religious philosophy of the Taliban was village Islam which was heavily influenced by Pashtunwali and had little to do with the actual teachings of Islam. S. Iftikhar Murshed, Afghanistan: The Taliban Years (London: Bannet & Bloom, 2006), p.278.

4 This ideology was basically that of Syed Qutub, later picked up by Zawahiri’s Al-jihad, an Egyptian radical group; then it became the dogma of Al-Qaeda to be implanted in Muslims of every nationality. Khan argues that after Osama had built good relations with the Taliban, they took control of training camps in Afghanistan where they had started training and injecting recruits (which included Chechens, Uzbeks of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Tajiks, Arabs, Kashmiris, Pakistanis, and Pashtuns) with their religious ideology. This had turned Afghanistan into an ungoverned space, conducive to jihadist militancy and extremism. Riaz Mohammad Khan, Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism, and Resistance to Modernity (Washington DC: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.80.


7 Ibid., p.21, 24, 27.


12 The Tajik Amir of Afghanistan (18 January-October 1929), who snatched throne from Amir Amanullah. Habibullah Kalkani, was also known as Bacha-i-Saqqao (son of a water carrier), because of the occupation of his father, Aminullah, a Tajik from the village of Kalakan in the Koh Daman


14 Homayun Ahmadi, Afghanistan: Background and Possible Solutions (Pittsburgh: Red Lead Press, 2009), p.27.


18 The head of the Taliban militia.

19 A main division of the Ghilzai tribe located in the Khashrud and Tarnak Valleys. Ibid., p.204.

20 A major Pashtu-speaking tribe, inhabiting an area roughly bounded by Qalat in the south, the Gul Kuh Range in the west, the Sulaiman Range in the east, and the Kabul River in the north. The Ghilzai call themselves Ghaljai (pl. Ghalji) and count themselves the descendants of Ghalzoe, son of Shah Husain, said to have been a Tajik or Turk, and of Bibi Mato, who descended from Shaikh Baitan (the second son of Qais, progenitor of Pashtun nationality). Ibid., pp.169-170.

21 Kharotis claim to be an offshoot of the Tokhi division of the Ghalzai tribe, but the latter repudiate the claim. Kharotis inhabit the area situated to the east of Katawaz in the spurs of the Sulaiman range. Brigadier Haroon Rashid, History of the Pathans, Volume 3, (Islamabad: Pan Graphics, 2008), pp.226-227.

22 Ibid., p.226.


30 Murshed, op.cit., p.278.


32 Ibid., p.294.


35 Neamatollah Nojumi, The Rise and Fall of the Taliban in Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi (ed.), op.cit., p.106.

36 Ahmed Rashid, op.cit., p.90.


39 Rubin makes an important oversight about the role of the United States in influencing the minds of these madrassa students through the provision of books taught in these institutions. In the early 1980s, the USA provided textbooks to the schools and madrassas in Pakistan and Afghanistan under an USAID grant to the University of Nebraska-Omaha. The books contained anti-Soviet passages and the children were taught to count with illustrations showing tanks, missiles and land mines. The idea was to create warriors and an Afghan society which suited US interests. Though the aid grant dried

40 Abd Ar Rahman bin Muhammed ibn Khaldun, quoted in Thomas Barfield, op.cit., p.58.

41 Maulvi Qalamuddin was head of the Amar Bil Maroof Wa Nahi An al-Munkar, or the Department of the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. Ahmed Rashid, op.cit., p.105.


47 Deobandism is a Muslim religious revivalist movement that developed in India in response to the perceived threat to Islam from British colonialism. The name derives from Deoband, a town in India, where the first Deobandi Islamic seminary was founded. Like the Wahhabis, the Deobandis consider certain Sufi-related practices, such as seeking the intercession of saints, to be ‘an innovation’ and thus, non-Islamic. Also, like the Wahhabis, they give precedence to the jurisprudence of earlier Islamic scholars over later ones. Barry Rubin (ed.), Guide to Islamist Movements, (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2010), p.173.


51 Ibid., pp.4-5.


54 Bas, op.cit., p.266.


57 Ibid.

58 Shahzad, op.cit., pp.147-148.

59 Mary R. Habeck, Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist ideology and War on Terror (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp.34-37.


62 Jaffrelot, op.cit., p.166.


65 Abdul Malik Pehlawan, the largely autonomous lieutenant of Abdul Rashid Dostum, blamed his patron for the death of his brother and defected to the Taliban on 19 May 1997. However, during the capture of Mazar-e Sharif, when the Taliban tried to disarm the locals and Malik’s forces, his men revolted; resultantly, four thousand Taliban soldiers were killed. Sinno, Organization at War in Afghanistan and Beyond, op.cit., p.229.


67 Afghanistan was ruled by the Pashtuns from 1747 till 1992.

68 Adamec, op.cit., p.191.

69 Tomsen, op.cit., p.97.

70 Ibid., pp.245-246.
71 Shahzad, op.cit., p.135.


74 Shahzad, op.cit., pp.xvii-xviii.