

The Political Influence of The Taliban 1.0 Government in The Pashtun Regions of Pakistan

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Abstract: This article examines Afghanistan-Pakistan relations within the broader context of issues such as the Durand Line dispute, center-periphery dynamics, and religio-political mobilization. The study argues that the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 had significant political consequences beyond the country's borders, particularly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Waziristan, Bajaur, Mohmand, Kurram, Khyber, and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Taliban's Islamic Emirate model bolstered religious legitimacy, spurred the political mobilization of ulema and madrasa networks, and weakened the authority of traditional tribal elders in several Pashtun areas. The article employs historical, systemic, comparative, institutional, and content analysis methods to assess the interplay between Taliban ideology, Pakistan's policy on Afghanistan, weak state institutions, Pashtun identity, and cross-border political networks. Furthermore, it is highlighted that the political influence of "Taliban 1.0" manifested as a long-term factor in the politics of Pakistan's Pashtun-inhabited borderlands.

Keywords: Taliban 1.0, Pashtun territories, FATA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Durand Line, Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, religious legitimacy, political mobilization, madrasa networks, tribal governance, center-periphery relations, Pashtun identity, borderland politics, religious-political movements, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, regional security.

Introduction: Today, examining the political influence of the Taliban 1.0 government on the Pashtun regions of Pakistan is of critical importance for the political analysis of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, the Durand Line problem, center-periphery relations in the FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regions, Pashtun identity, and religious-political mobilization processes. The establishment of Taliban rule in Kabul in 1996 extended beyond Afghanistan's internal political processes, significantly impacting the political consciousness, religious legitimacy, and local governance systems in the Pashtun areas of northwestern Pakistan. The research of William Maley, Ahmed Rashid, and Hassan Abbas provides in-depth coverage of the Taliban movement's formation, ideological foundations, territorial strongholds, and political influence in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border space [1].

The religious-political model that formed during the

Taliban 1.0 government's rule is manifested in its integral connection with the historical governance crisis in Pakistan's Pashtun regions, the tribal structure, madrasa networks, and the legacy of the Afghan jihad. Jan-Peter Hartung interprets the Pashtun border space as a crucial historical, religious, and ethnic factor that explains the Taliban phenomenon [2]. This approach allows for the study of the Taliban 1.0 government's influence on Pakistan's Pashtun regions in connection with cross-border kinship ties, religious mobilization, and political conflicts surrounding the Durand Line.

FATA's long-standing semi-autonomous governance system, its incomplete integration into the common constitutional-legal space, and the restrictions placed on the activities of political parties created favorable conditions for the activation of religious-political groups. Analyses by USIP and MERIP assess the weakening position of traditional tribal leaders in the

FATA, Waziristan, Bajaur, Mohmand, and Khyber regions, and the entry of local mullahs and madrasa networks into the political arena, as significant manifestations of Taliban influence [3].

Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan was also a key factor in this process. In the research of Human Rights Watch and Aidan Parkes, Islamabad's relations with political-military forces in Afghanistan are explained in the context of its rivalry with India, border security, and the concept of "strategic depth" [12,13]. In this respect, the influence of the Taliban 1.0 government on Pakistan's Pashtun regions is evaluated as a complex political process that formed at the intersection of the local religious-political environment, weak state governance, and regional geopolitical calculations. This article focuses on scientifically analyzing the impact of the Taliban 1.0 government on the formation of political consciousness, religious legitimacy, local power structures, attitudes toward the central state, and Pashtun identity in the Pashtun regions of Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing academic literature on the political influence of the Taliban 1.0 government on the Pashtun regions of Pakistan has developed along several main lines of inquiry. The research of William Maley, Ahmed Rashid, and Hassan Abbas extensively covers the emergence of the Taliban movement, its ideological foundations, its experience in power in Afghanistan, and its connections to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border regions [1,8,9]. These authors interpret the Taliban phenomenon as a product of the state crisis in Afghanistan, civil war, religious education networks, external patronage, and the regional security environment. Rashid, in particular, demonstrates the Taliban's dependence on Pakistani madrasas, Deobandi traditions, and the Pashtun religious-political milieu, thereby creating a vital theoretical framework for explaining its influence on the political consciousness in Pakistan's Pashtun regions.

The issue of the Pashtun borderlands is explored in greater depth in the studies of Jan-Peter Hartung and Diego Abenante [2,5]. Hartung analyzes the Taliban within the context of the historical, religious, and ethnic border space that connects Afghanistan and Pakistan. Abenante, on the other hand, examines the issues of Pashtun identity, the Durand Line, and cross-border political mobilization as a structural element of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. These approaches allow for an analysis of the Taliban 1.0 government's influence on Pakistan's Pashtun regions not merely as a security problem, but as a complex political process linked to ethnic affinity, religious solidarity, tribal structures, and border politics.

Pakistan's Afghanistan policy and the concept of "strategic depth" hold a special place in the analyses of Aidan Parkes and Human Rights Watch [12, 13]. These sources explain Pakistan's relations with the Taliban within the framework of its rivalry with India, border security, support for politically aligned forces in Afghanistan, and a strategy to maintain regional influence. This approach indicates the necessity of studying the Taliban 1.0 government's influence on Pakistan's Pashtun regions in connection not only with local religious radicalization but also with state strategy, security policy, and regional geopolitical calculations.

Governance issues in the FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regions feature prominently in the analyses of I. Ali, Graham Usher, and the GSDRC [10,11,14]. These studies analyze FATA's long-term exclusion from the constitutional-political system, the weakness of the local judicial system, shifts in the status of tribal elites, restrictions on the activities of political parties, and the entry of religious figures into the political arena. Such conditions created a favorable environment for the religio-political model formed during the Taliban 1.0 period to be adopted in the Pashtun regions of Pakistan and to influence local political processes.

Research by the USIP on the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan phenomenon is crucial for understanding the long-term consequences of the Taliban 1.0 era. Amira Jadoon and her co-authors analyze the formation of the TTP in connection with the Afghan Taliban, al-Qaeda, militant groups in the FATA region, and local religio-political networks [16]. These studies show that the influence of the Taliban 1.0 government on Pakistan's Pashtun regions did not end with the 1996-2001 period but created an ideological and organizational foundation for the TTP and other militant-political structures in the subsequent period.

METHODS

This study utilizes historical, systematic, comparative, institutional, and content analysis methods. The historical method is employed to study the emergence of the Taliban movement, its rule in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, and its influence on Pakistan's Pashtun-inhabited border regions, such as FATA, Waziristan, Bajaur, Mohmand, Kurram, Khyber, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The systematic method helps to examine the "Taliban 1.0" government within the broader political and security environment between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It focuses on the Durand Line issue, Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan, tribal governance, religious-political mobilization, and center-periphery relations.

The comparative method is applied to compare the Taliban's model of religio-political legitimacy in Afghanistan with its impact on political processes in the Pashtun-inhabited areas of Pakistan. The institutional method examines the role of tribal leaders, religious scholars, the madrasa network, jirga practices, and weak state institutions in shaping local political dynamics. The content analysis method is used to analyze political literature, monographs, scholarly articles, official documents, and reports from research centers such as USIP, Human Rights Watch, and MERIP. Furthermore, a SWOT analysis is used to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with the political influence of the "Taliban 1.0" government on the Pashtun regions of Pakistan.

DISCUSSION

The political influence of the Taliban 1.0 government on Pakistan's Pashtun territories is a complex process intrinsically linked to Afghanistan's internal political crisis, Pakistan's security strategy, historical conflicts surrounding the Durand Line, institutional voids in the FATA regions, and Pashtun religio-political identity. The Taliban's establishment of power in Kabul in 1996 introduced a new model of religiously-legitimized governance to the Afghan political arena. This model significantly influenced forms of political imagination, religious mobilization, and attitudes toward local authority in the Pashtun areas of northwestern Pakistan, particularly in tribal regions such as FATA, Waziristan, Bajaur, Mohmand, Kurram, and Khyber. Ahmed Rashid interprets the Taliban movement as a religio-political phenomenon connecting the security environments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia; according to his analysis, the rise of the Taliban was closely tied to Pakistani madrasas, Deobandi traditions, the legacy of the Afghan jihad, and the rivalry of regional powers [8].

The influence of the Taliban 1.0 government on Pakistan's Pashtun regions was primarily observed through the cross-border transfer of its model of religious legitimacy. The experience of governance in Afghanistan, manifested as an "Islamic Emirate" served as a symbolic political model for religious figures, madrasa networks, and militant groups in the Pashtun regions of Pakistan. This process amplified ideas of a Sharia-based order, religious dominance, strict social control harmonized with tribal customs, and a deep-seated distrust of secular state institutions. Jan-Peter Hartung explains the Taliban phenomenon through the Pashtun borderlands that connect Afghanistan and Pakistan [2]. In his approach, the Taliban movement is interpreted as a long-term process associated with historical memory, Pashtun ethnic solidarity, traditions of religious education, and the geopolitical

characteristics of the border regions.

The historical and political status of Pakistan's Pashtun territories was particularly significant in the intensification of the Taliban's influence. For a long time, FATA was constituted as a semi-autonomous and tribally-governed territory that remained outside Pakistan's general constitutional and judicial framework. USIP analyses note that after 2002, FATA became one of the centers of militancy and insurgency, and the integration of this territory into Pakistan's main political and legal sphere was seen as a crucial task for the country's internal stability and regional security [11]. Such institutional marginalization created favorable conditions for the religio-political ideas formed during the Taliban 1.0 era to permeate local society.

In FATA and its adjacent areas, the balance of power between the traditional tribal elite and religious figures also shifted. Maliks, the jirga system, and state-appointed political agents had long been the main pillars of local governance. After the Taliban 1.0 era, religious scholars (ulama), madrasa graduates, and militant groups began to play a more active role in the political arena. Graham Usher notes that the FATA agencies were connected to the Pashtun tribes in Afghanistan via a mountainous border, and that in North and South Waziristan, the Pakistani Taliban rose to the level of de facto political leadership [12]. This situation shows that the Taliban's influence had moved beyond the scope of a security problem and had penetrated local systems of political authority and social control.

Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan was one of the main factors that strengthened the Taliban 1.0 government's influence in Pashtun territories. Islamabad viewed Afghanistan as a western security zone that would limit Indian influence. Aidan Parkes analyzes Pakistan's "strategic dept" concept in connection with its colonial-era border security mindset, its rivalry with India, and the Islamization policies of the Zia-ul-Haq era. A Human Rights Watch report explains that Pakistan's political, diplomatic, and material support for the Taliban movement was driven by the rivalry of regional powers within the context of the Afghan civil war [13]. In this respect, the influence of Taliban 1.0 was formed at the intersection of local social processes and the strategic calculations of the Pakistani state.

The Durand Line issue is central to explaining the political influence of the Taliban 1.0 government on Pakistan's Pashtun areas. This border is a historical-political line that divided the Pashtun tribes between the two states and remains a source of long-standing

mistrust in Afghanistan-Pakistan relations [6]. The fact that Pashtuns live in the territories of both states, along with the cross-border nature of kinship networks, trade routes, religious education centers, and tribal ties, facilitated the penetration of Taliban ideas into Pakistani territories. A CSEP analysis describes Pashtuns as a major ethnic community in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, stretching from the Hindu Kush to the Indus River; in the 1980s, Pakistan's Pashtun regions served as a critical base for its policy of supporting the Afghan mujahideen, who were backed by the US and Saudi Arabia [14].

The political influence of the Taliban 1.0 government intensified religio-political mobilization in the Pashtun regions of Pakistan. The network of madrasas played a distinct role in this process. Religious educational institutions, refugee camps, and militant networks that formed during the Afghan jihad created a socio-institutional foundation for Taliban ideology in the 1990s. Hassan Abbas attributes the Taliban's post-2001 resurgence to the persistence of social networks, the roots of religious extremism, and weak state governance in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas. This point is important for understanding the long-term consequences of the Taliban 1.0 government in Pakistan's Pashtun areas, as post-2001 militant activity developed by relying on the ideological and organizational infrastructure that had been established in the 1990s [9].

Another aspect of this process is evident in the exacerbation of center-periphery relations. In some areas of FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the central state's weak institutional presence, distrust in the judicial system, corruption, economic underdevelopment, and limited political representation created a favorable environment for religio-political groups. The GSDRC's analysis of the Swat Valley links the causes of the local conflict to problems in the judicial system, ineffective governance, the influence of religious-political groups, and social discontent. The Swat experience shows that the process of Talibanization was not formed solely as a result of external ideological pressure but was intensified by an internal crisis of governance [15].

Mian Abid Shah's PhD dissertation on FATA's political reforms, local elites, and power relations analyzes the reforms in this region as a process of everyday politics, local patronage, elite competition, and the redistribution of power resources. The dissertation interprets the FATA reforms as a political attempt to limit militant influence and alter the balance of power [4]. This approach makes it possible to connect the religious-political influence that emerged during the Taliban 1.0 era not only to it being an ideological

phenomenon but also to local power structures, elite strategies, and the state's policies towards the periphery.

Research by Uzbek scholars on Afghanistan also enriches this topic from an academic standpoint. A.A. Khaydarov, analyzing the relationship between the Muslim clergy and state authority in Afghanistan, demonstrates that conflicts between Islamic institutions, religious elites, and political power are a critical component of Afghan political processes [17]. His conclusions are of theoretical significance in explaining how the Taliban 1.0 government's model of rule, which relied on religious legitimacy, was received in the Pashtun regions of Pakistan and how it influenced the standing of local ulama.

Suhrob Buronov's article, which analyzes the internal and external factors related to the origin of the Taliban, shows that Afghanistan's internal crisis, external patronage, the religious-ideological environment, and regional political interests played a significant role in the formation of this movement. This approach avoids limiting the influence of the Taliban 1.0 government on Pakistan's Pashtun areas to a single cause and allows it to be assessed as a multi-faceted political process [18]. Buronov's conclusions are important for analyzing the Taliban's influence in the Pashtun areas of Pakistan, as they highlight the link between Afghanistan's internal political instability, Pakistan's strategic calculations, religious networks, and the cross-border Pashtun factor.

A study by G. Yuldasheva dedicated to the issue of cooperation between Pakistan and Uzbekistan against the backdrop of political changes in Afghanistan also indicates the need for a broader analysis of the Afghanistan-Pakistan axis from the perspective of regional security and economic connectivity [19]. This approach helps to view the subject of Taliban 1.0 not just within the confines of Afghan and Pakistani domestic politics, but in connection with Central Asian security, transnational threats, and regional transport and communication projects.

RESULTS

Research findings indicate that the influence of Taliban 1.0 manifested in three primary areas. The first area relates to ideological influence, where Taliban rule was perceived as a source of political legitimacy for religious figures, madrasa networks, and militant groups in Pakistan's Pashtun regions. The second area is explained by institutional influence. The long-term exclusion of FATA from Pakistan's broader constitutional and political framework, the weakness of the judicial system, restrictions on political party activities, and the limited presence of the central state

created a favorable environment for religious-political forces. The third area pertains to geopolitical influence, with Pakistan's Afghanistan policy, its "strategic depth" concept, its rivalry with India, and the Durand Line issue linking the Taliban's influence to the wider regional security system.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the political influence of the Taliban 1.0 government on the Pashtun regions of Pakistan reveals that the Taliban's rule from 1996 to 2001 was not confined to Afghanistan's internal political processes. It manifested as a transnational political phenomenon that profoundly impacted political consciousness, religious legitimacy, local governance, and attitudes toward the central state in Pakistan's northwestern Pashtun regions. The Taliban's establishment of power in Afghanistan as an "Islamic Emirate" served as a symbolic model for religious-political groups in the regions of FATA, Waziristan, Bajaur, Mohmand, Kurram, Khyber, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This model promoted a political order based on Sharia law, reliance on religious authority, the strengthening of local social control, and a growing distrust of state institutions.

Pashtun identity and cross-border ties are of particular importance in understanding the impact of the Taliban 1.0 government on Pakistan's Pashtun areas. Although the Durand Line divided Pashtun tribes between the territories of two states, kinship, trade, religious education, tribal traditions, and cultural proximity preserved a unified socio-political environment in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border space. Consequently, the religious-political model that emerged in Afghanistan during the Taliban 1.0 era rapidly penetrated Pakistan's Pashtun regions and influenced local political processes.

Furthermore, the Taliban 1.0 era laid a critical ideological and organizational foundation for the subsequent formation of the Pakistani Taliban phenomenon. Although Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan was formed as a separate entity in 2007, its political and ideological roots were inextricably linked to the legacy of religious networks, militant groups, the madrasa system, and the Afghan jihad that had emerged in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas during the 1990s. In this respect, the influence of the Taliban 1.0 government is not assessed as a short-term political process; it is interpreted as a factor that had a long-term impact on Pakistan's domestic security policy, FATA reforms, the integration process with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and center-periphery relations.

In conclusion, the political influence of the Taliban 1.0 government on the Pashtun regions of Pakistan was a complex process at the intersection of religious

radicalization, ethnic affinity, tribal governance, weak state institutions, and geopolitical strategies. This influence reshaped local power structures, the status of religious figures, the issue of political representation, and attitudes toward state legitimacy in Pakistan's Pashtun regions. This situation demonstrates that military measures alone are insufficient to ensure stability in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas; it necessitates political integration, legal reforms, strengthening local governance, economic development, and improving the religious and educational environment.

On this basis, the Taliban 1.0 experience holds significant theoretical and practical importance for studying the political processes in Pakistan's Pashtun regions. It highlights the need for a combined analysis of transnational ethnic identity, religious-political mobilization, and state-building issues in peripheral regions. For future research, it is advisable to conduct a comparative analysis of the Taliban 1.0 era's impact on Pakistan's domestic policy with the merger of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the activities of the TTP, Pashtun nationalist movements, and the new Taliban administration in Afghanistan. This approach will contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of security, state legitimacy, and transnational political influence in South Asia.

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