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**Re-emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan:  
Implications for Culture of Pakistan**

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**Abstract:**

Pakistani society has been very religiously tolerant, but the spread of Taliban's ideology has posed many serious challenges to Pakistan's religious tolerance, society, and diverse cultures. This article examines the impact of the Taliban's strict and self-conceived Islamic laws on the diverse cultures of Pakistan. This article briefly describes the Punjabi, Pashtun, Sindhi and Balochi cultures in Pakistan to illustrate the impact of the Taliban's extremist religious attitudes on these cultures. Most of the regions of present-day Pakistan, especially Punjab, are a good example of mutual tolerance despite the fact that this area has observed differing cultures, beliefs and views since many centuries. With a few exceptions, this region has always been receptive to new ideas and progressive. Along with progressive ideas, attitudes towards religious communities and Sufism in Pakistan have always been respectful. The import of Taliban ideology from Afghanistan into Pakistan has had negative effects on religious, economic, social attitudes and culture. This article examines how the Taliban have threatened Pakistani society and culture, especially since their reemergence in Afghanistan after US withdrawal.

**Keywords:** Pakistan, Afghanistan, Taliban, Sufism, Islamic values, culture, religious tolerance

**INTRODUCTION**

The resurgence of the Taliban has precipitated a profound sociopolitical paradigm shift, dismantling the trajectory of moderation in Afghanistan and replacing it with a rigid theological orthodoxy. However, this transformation was not an isolated geopolitical event; scholarly discourse and media reports increasingly highlight the complicity of the Pakistani state in this process. This strategic calibration has resulted in severe "blowback," manifesting as a "Cultural Spillover Effect"—a phenomenon where the dominant traits of one society permeate another through media,

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migration, and ideological porosity. Historically, the cultural fabric of Pakistan, rooted in the ancient Indus Valley Civilization (Mohenjo-Daro), was characterized by agrarian pacifism and a syncretic Sufi ethos, evidenced by archaeological findings favoring tools of industry over instruments of warfare.

The permeation of Taliban-centric narratives has eroded this indigenous moderation, fostering an environment of religious intolerance, mob violence, and the contraction of civil liberties, particularly freedom of expression. While existing literature extensively surveys the security ramifications of the Taliban's return or restricts its socio-cultural analysis to the Pashtun belt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), it largely neglects the broader contagion effect on Pakistan's national cultural identity.

This research aims to bridge this critical gap by examining how the "Cultural Spillover Effect" has facilitated the transmission of radical conservatism from Afghanistan to the broader Pakistani society, challenging its historical foundations of tolerance. Qualitative and quantitative mix method of research used in this study. To systematically address this inquiry, this study poses the following research question; how did the "cultural spillover effect" facilitate the transmission of the Taliban's theological orthodoxy into Pakistan?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan has generated a significant body of scholarship; however, the prevailing academic discourse remains heavily anchored in security studies, geopolitical realism, and ethnocentric analyses of the borderlands. A review of recent literature (2021–2024) reveals the dominant theme of culture nexus.

Hassan and Jalil (2024) argued that Although Pakistan's cooperation with "Taliban 2.0" is motivated by a realist need to protect its western border, they observe that this strategy has made security issues worse rather than better. In this approach, "culture" is frequently viewed as a supporting factor that is subservient to counterterrorism. Bibi and Muzaffar (2023) elaborated that there are chances for "cultural exchanges" and infrastructure development even though terrorism is still a constant threat. However, rather than looking at how the Taliban's extreme culture affects Pakistani society, their theory primarily sees culture as a diplomatic tool for soft power.

Schetter (2022) emphasizes understanding the Taliban necessitates delving into "Pashtun tribal culture" and the customs of the border regions between Balochistan and KP. Kotokey and Borthakur (2021) traced the ideological development of the Taliban, highlighting how refugee groups and tribal ancestry shaped particular tales and clothing (cultural symbols). Although this study offers insightful anthropological information, they frequently confine the cultural influence to border areas, unintentionally ignoring the ways in which these narratives permeate in Pakistan.

Malik et. al. (2023) underlined how the Taliban's policies attack national and cultural symbols by introducing the idea of "epistemic ide" (the elimination of knowledge). Importantly, they point out that the Taliban were "nurtured in Pakistani madrassas," implying that extreme culture alternates between the two countries. Khan and Bakar (2023) articulated the Taliban's organisational, cultural, and political-religious changes over time. They characterised this as a "misguided jihadi culture" that deviates from traditional Islamic doctrine.

Akram et. al. (2024) pointed out that the Taliban 2.0 is seen by many in Pakistan as a "purely Islamic group" engaged in combat with adversaries of Islam. This view fosters the "demonstration effect," in which extreme narratives within Pakistan are validated by the Taliban's seeming success.

Even while research on the Taliban's comeback has proliferated, the body of current literature is still mostly limited to security paradigms and geopolitical realism. Although there are some socio-cultural evaluations, their reach is nearly limited to the Pashtun belt of KP due to a considerable geographic limitation. Instead of treating the Taliban movement as a national ideological challenge, this localisation unintentionally presents it as a minor tribal problem.

As a result, there is a crucial gap in knowledge about the larger "Cultural Spillover Effect" on Pakistani society at large. The way that the Taliban's narrative of victory is spreading throughout the nation's cities and non-Pashtun areas, undermining the state's historical foundations of Sufi moderation and syncretism, is largely ignored by current scholarship. In order to remedy this mistake, this study examines how trans-border influences are changing Pakistan's collective national identity outside of the immediate war zones by focusing on the spread of radical conservatism rather than border security.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Both qualitative and quantitative (mixed) research methodologies were employed. The researcher looked through the library's collection of literature on the subject. To discover the answers to enquiries about the research issue, published research articles from various journals and websites were searched. The study's key sources were interviews with relevant professionals, diplomats, and journalists. This thesis also makes use of secondary tools. BS, MS/MPhil, and PhD students from several Pakistani universities were surveyed by the researcher.

## **GENESIS OF PAKISTANI CULTURE: THE ANCIENT MOHENJO-DARO – HARAPPA CIVILIZATION**

The land on which Pakistan is located has been the center of one of the oldest civilizations in human history. The remains of Harappa in the Punjab province of Pakistan and Mohenjo-Daro in province Sindh have revealed that this region was developed in the ancient times and was the center of higher educational institutions of its time. The remains of Buddhist civilization in the city of Taxila in the Punjab province are also evidence that this region was very rich in terms of science, literature, fine arts and culture (Jun 2022, 32-9).

Professor Gino Flood claims that the Indus Valley Civilization was not influenced by any other civilization, but rather evolved into a developed society through the evolution of a purely local culture (Shaheen 2018, 46). The people here neither built grand monuments nor buried their dead in expensive golden tombs. There is no mention of emperors or bloody wars in the history of the Indus Valley Civilization. The people here believe in life after death but using resources for the betterment of the lives was their priority (quoted in (Shaheen 2018, 57).

The governance system in the Indus Civilization was very good. The identification of food reserves at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa indicates that the Indus Valley was not only self- sufficient in producing its own food but also stored surplus food. Strong, durable and beautiful buildings in the cities and beautifully designed cotton clothes were major testaments to the prosperity. The use of copper and cotton indicates the presence of a stable industry in the Indus Valley. For the

convenience of the citizens, there was a system of standards, weights and measures of goods, as well as the formulation and implementation of municipal laws (Dani & Thapar 1996, 275-6).

Even India is also a reflection of religious tolerance even till the first decade of 21st century. It is a common practice among followers of Hindu and Sikh religions in India to pay homage to Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti at his shrine. Hindu superstars of the Bollywood film industry like Amitabh Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan, Priyanka Chopra, Vidya Balan, Bobby Jasoos, Katrina Kaif and Himesh Reshammiya also paid homage to Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti by visiting his shrine and offering flowers and prayers (Sharma, 2014). However due to continuous victory of BJP in India and subsequently due to its extremist policy towards other religion, the religious tolerance seems to be vanished from India.

### **SUFI CULTURE IN PAKISTANI SOCIETY**

If we look at the present era, then since the partition of the subcontinent, the cultural colors in all parts of Pakistan are very deep, rich, charming and beautiful. A prominent and dominant aspect of the culture of Pakistan is Sufism, which until recently was even above religious practices in some cases. Sufi figures and the shrines of Sufis were revered by followers of all religions. Even Sikh pilgrims from Pakistan and India, along with their holy religious sites, used to visit the shrines of famous Muslim Sufis Hazrat Mian Mir and Hazrat Usman Hajveri, also known as Data Sahib, in Lahore (Shamil, 2016). Historical references also claim that Maharaja Ranjit Singh's beloved Begum Maharani Jind Kaur constructed and expanded the shrine of Hazrat Data Sahib, and also established a library here (Khalid, 2017)

Sufi poets from the Pakistani province of Punjab, Bullhey Shah, Waris Shah, Hazrat Baba Farid alias Ganj Shakar, Hazrat Sultan Bahu, Khawaja Ghulam Farid, Mian Muhammad Bakhsh and the founder of the Sikh religion, Baba Guru Nanak, made the thousands of years old civilization and folk wisdom of Punjab based on human respect as the subject of their poetry (Wheeler 1950, 7). The Sufi poetry of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai and Sachal Sarmast from the Pakistani province of Sindh are also popular in other provinces and the source of peace and love in society (Parekh, 2012). The Sufi verses of Syed Muhammad Azeem Barkhiya are an asset of Urdu literature.

Sufism was popular and common regardless of religion and nationality. Even in the united Punjab and its adjoining areas before the partition of the subcontinent, Sufism was viewed with devotion and respect in the society. Even today, the shrines of Muslim Sufis Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti, Hazrat Amir Khusrow, Hazrat Sabir Kaliyari and Baba Tajuddin from Nagpur are visited by Muslims as well as the followers of Hindu and Sikh religion in large numbers. In 2011, the President of India, Pratibha Devi Patil, visited the shrine of Khawaja Shams Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer ("Indian president visits," 2011). She came to pray for the promotion of religious brotherhood and peace in the country. The ruler of Shakar Dara, one of the princely states in India before partition of subcontinent, Raja Raghu Rai had reserved a portion in his palace for a renowned Muslim Sufi Saint Baba Tajuddin Nagpuri (Azeemi 1985, 170). The most influential Hindu leaders in the politics of the subcontinent, along with Maulana Muhammad Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali, had also come to meet the Muslim Sufi Baba Tajuddin (Azeemi 1985, 101).

The Golden Temple of Amritsar is the centre of devotion for Sikhs around the world, but very few people know that the fifth Guru of Sikhism, Guru Arjan Dev, had the foundation stone of the Golden

Temple laid by the Muslim Sufi figure of Lahore, Hazrat Mian Mir. Guru Arjan Dev considered Hazrat Mian Mir his spiritual friend (Singh 1994, VII). In short, the region of present-day Pakistan has been a culturally very strong place for centuries, as well as a beautiful blend of religious tolerance.

The poetry of the great Pashto poets Rehman Baba, Jam Darak and Baloch poet Jam Darak is also worth mentioning. The folk tales of Heer Ranjha, Sassi Pannu and Omar Marvi are also an important part of the culture here. Pashto folklore and Baloch folk tales like Yusuf Khan and Sher Bano and Gedi Kisa still captivate the hearts of the youth. Ghalib's romantic poetry is not only part of the Urdu literature curriculum but is also famous across Pakistan. The revolutionary and romantic poetry of Allama Iqbal, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, Munir Niazi, Habib Jalib, Ahmed Faraz and Parveen Shakir is also popular across the country (Hayat & Nazir, 2020).

The majority of Pakistani Muslims are following Hanafi jurisprudence, and the Barelvi sect is prominent in Hanafi jurisprudence (Khan A. U., 2011, 1). The majority of the people are believing on Sufism and special festivals are organized on the occasion of the death anniversary of these Sufis, especially Punjabi culture is incomplete without it. Pakistani society, along with its varied language and cultures, also has many common values. The people here are fond of literature and knowledge, and have a great taste in poetry, music, film and drama. The attraction towards dance to express emotions is also a common value of this culture. All these historical and contemporary references show that the cultural background and history of Pakistani society is very broad. The majority of the people in Pakistan are liberal having open minds and hearts, they do not like narrow-mindedness and extremism.

### **Rise of Jihadi Culture and Pakistan's Society**

In the early eighties, Pakistani society, which had a rich culture of religious tolerance, faced an incident in the shape of so-called jihadi culture that later gave birth to a class that was the strongest opponent of cultural activities of joyous expression, and believed in extremism and violence. After the Soviet invasion over Afghanistan, Pakistan felt threatened by Russia at its door step, with the help of the United States, which was planning to contain communism, was dragged into the Afghan war. The Muslim youth from all over the world was gathered and threw them into the war of Afghan jihad in the name of Islam to save an Islamic state from godless Communism.

The Islamic madrassas established throughout Pakistan during this period actually proved to be as recruiting centers for the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. However, these educational institutions produced Taliban later on (European Asylum Support Office, 2022, 10). In fact, the next generation of Afghan fighters became the Taliban in the late 20th century. Pakistan provided them support and the Taliban turned into the rulers of Afghanistan. As a result, Pakistani social order was significantly influenced by their ideology, especially in the provinces of Pakistan, KP and Balochistan. These ideas were born in Pakistan by militant groups like the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which are essentially the ideological offspring of the Afghan Taliban (Sayed & Hamming, 2021). Because Pakistani society as a whole disapproves of this radicalism, it has continued to oppose it.

Since the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, Pakistan's diverse culture has been under serious threat. The Taliban's hard-line ideology, which they call Islam, is known for its hostility to

different cultures. During their first term in power from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban destroyed various cultural landmarks and sites. During this time, the ancient Buddha statues in Bamiyan, which were carved out of the mountains, were destroyed with explosives (Ahir 2001, 5). These statues were a magnificent part of the world's cultural heritage and could have become a major tourist attraction (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2003).

The Taliban looted and destroyed the National Museum of Afghanistan, established in Kabul in 1921. Pre-Taliban Mujahideen factions were also involved in the looting. The National Museum of Afghanistan housed about 200,000 antiques at the time of the Soviet invasion, of which 70 percent were either looted or destroyed (Stein 2015, 189). In the 2005-2015 decade, the authorities at Heathrow Airport London, the world's busiest, seized 15,000 antiques weighing 3-4 tons. These antiques had been smuggled to the UK from Afghanistan (Stein 2015, 188).

Most cultural activities of expression of joy are prohibited by Taliban. In fact, any vibrant and rich cultural way of expressing joy, including music, poetry or dance, is not compatible with the ideology of the Taliban. In the past, TTP has attacked the Sufi shrines and banned barber shops (Islam & Akbar 2016, 58). The re-establishment of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan after the US withdrawal has put Pakistan's cultural heritage in grave danger also, on the same pattern.

### **Threats to the Sufi Culture**

There are many references in history that no matter how much difference there is between people of different religions in Pakistan, respect for Sufism and its shrines has always been maintained and it has a cultural norm more than faith. On the other hand, in the beliefs of the Afghan Taliban, there is no place for Sufism, whether religious or cultural, but it is considered as heresy, i.e. a sin (Misra 2002, 581).

Correspondingly, TTP also shares the Taliban's ideology. Militant elements with the same mindset twice bombed the shrine of Hazrat Usman Ali Hajveri, also known as Data Sahib, a highly respected Sufi saint for Muslims in the subcontinent. Several Sufi shrines, including the shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi in Karachi and Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan, were targeted in terrorist attacks (Akbar et al., 2023, 164). TTP targeted many Sufi shrines in various parts of Pakistan, in their terrorist attacks (Chandran 2018, 67).

The importance of Sufis and their shrines in South Asia is more cultural than religious. There are so many Muslim Sufi shrines in India like Hazrat Khawaja Bakhtiar Kaki, Hazrat Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti, Hazrat Sabir Kaliyari, and Baba Tajuddin Nagpuri, where Muslims, as well as followers of Hindu and Sikh religion, go in search of spiritual peace. The sanctity of these tombs has always been maintained for centuries, but according to the Taliban ideology, visiting the shrines is as heresy. Hence, the TTP has targeted several Sufi shrines in Pakistan with bombings, while closing some shrines to the public (Yusuf 2012; Bukhari, 2019). The list of Pakistani shrines that the Taliban's radical ideology has targeted is provided below.

#### **Tombs in Pakistan Attacked/ Disgraced by TTP**

No	Sufi Tombs	City/Province
1	Data Sb, Hazrat Usman bin Ali Hajveri (attacked twice)	Lahore, Punjab
2	Hazrat Abdullah Shah Gazi (attacked twice)	Karachi, Sindh
3	Hazrat Baba Farid Gang Shakar	Pakpattan, Punjab

4	Hazrat Sakhi Sarwar	DG Khan, Punjab
5	Rehman Baba	Peshawar, KP
6	Abdul Shakoor Malang Baba	Peshawar, PK
7	Hazrat Umer Baba	Chamkani, Peshawar, KP
8	Bahadur Baba	Nowshera, KP
9	Hazrat Pir Baba (Closed by TTP)	Swat, KP
10	Hazrat Mian Mir	Lahore, Punjab
11	Shah Abdul Latif BhitaiBhit Shah,	Sindh
12	Haji Sahib Tarangzai (Closed by TTP)	Mohmand, KP
13	Hazrat Abu Saeed	Peshawar, KP

(Source: Islam & Akbar 2016, 64)

Although this description of attacks on shrines dates back to before 2021. The situation has improved a lot in Pakistan due to various operations against terrorism. Now, there are no more attacks on shrines but, the Taliban's approach has not changed. Such as banning women from leaving the house without wearing a hijab, banning girls from going to school, and preventing women from attending universities. Women are also banned from going to playgrounds and gyms for exercise, while women's beauty salons in the country have also been forcibly closed. We discussed this topic in more detail next in this study ("Taliban create bonfire," 2023).

### Threat to Arts

Literature, poetry, music, dance and the arts are important elements of Pakistani culture. Pakistani Punjab and Sindh in particular are a region where many festivals, including the seasonal festivals of Baisakhi and Saavan Bhaado-n, have been a part of the culture for centuries. Punjab's culture also seems to be intertwined with its economy, as seen in the Baisakhi fairs and other fairs held to mark the wheat harvest. The Taliban consider these festivals un-Islamic and immoral. The Taliban's hardline worldview is known for its hatred of music, dance, arts and other cultural activities, which they consider it against the teaching of Islam, so they imposed ban on such activities (Malik et al. 2023, 62).

In July 2023, the Taliban burned hundreds of dollars' worth of musical instruments in Herat province, Afghanistan, because they consider music immoral and a source of riots in society. Women cannot leave the house without wearing a hijab, while girls are still banned from attending school and women's universities are banned. The Taliban government has also banned women from playgrounds and gyms, and women's beauty salons have been forcibly closed across the country ("Taliban create bonfire," 2023). This trend continues to this day.

The people of Pakistan feel that the return of the Taliban administration in Afghanistan could lead to the growth of extremism in Pakistan rather than religious tolerance, according to the researcher's poll data. This survey was completed by more than 500 people including students of different educational institutes from all throughout the nation. Here are some details about the nationality, education, province of residence, and gender of the survey participants.

- Nationality: In this survey all the participants are Pakistani citizens belonged to different parts of the country and some are working out of country.
- Gender: All the participants of the survey show their gender; 60.6% are males, and 39.4% are females.

- Age Groups: In this survey 68.4% of the participants are in the age of 21 to 30 years, 13.1% are from 31 to 40 years, 12.8% are from 41 to 50 years and 5.7% are in the age of 50 years plus. This review shows that people of all ages participated in this survey.
- Education: In this survey, 44.2% of participants are undergraduates, 15.2% are graduates, 19% are masters, 15.3% are Mphil degree holders, and 6.3% are PhDs. It shows the diversity of participants in terms of education.
- Provincial Bifurcation: Participants in this survey respond from Punjab (60.6%), followed by KP (29%), Balochistan (3.88%), Sindh (3.70%), Gilgit-Baltistan (1.11%), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (1.11%), and 0.55% are from outside Pakistan.

A clear majority of 56.4% believe that the return of the Taliban to Afghanistan will increase religious extremism in Pakistan, while 22.3% do not think so. However, 11.3% have no knowledge of the situation. The result shows the fear of Pakistani majority about this threat.

The Taliban after regaining power in Afghanistan, following their previous policy, has banned music, dance, drama, film or theatre and fine arts in the country. Since August 2021, many artists, actors, singers, musicians, dancers and transgenders migrated from Afghanistan to Pakistan or other countries to save their lives. The majority of such people migrated to Pakistan from Afghanistan in the wake of the re-emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan. They believe that there is no place for them in their own homeland anymore. Returning to their homeland means embracing death for them (Sethi 2023, 13).

Nasir Dawar, a senior journalist from Peshawar, told the researcher in an interview:

“Today, Pakistan is not as vulnerable to terrorist attacks as it was in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the TTP is not as strong in the former tribal areas of KP as it was before. The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) is very active in Punjab province with the support of intelligence agencies. Security agencies in KP and Balochistan are struggling with the militants. The TTP is no longer effective enough to openly issue orders to the people of the former tribal areas, but its presence cannot be denied. The people are afraid of its open presence in different areas of KP. They can hit our culture and other walks of life” (Nasir Dawar, personal communication, Apr. 25, 2024).

When it comes to social attitudes, culture seems to be stronger than religion (Ibrahim 2023, 28). Both the Afghan Taliban and their ideological offspring, the TTP, view Islam through the lens of their own extremist interpretation which resulted a new belief which is the combination of Islamic rituals and Pashtun traditions. Both groups are ethnically Pashtun and consider their own customs and traditions to be Islamic. However, many of their orders and ideologies are not compatible with Pashtun culture. Music and dance have been a part of Pashtun culture for centuries. The melodious melodies of the rabab are the hallmark of Pashtun culture in music. Attan and Khattak dances are an integral part of every happy event in Pashtun society (Pamir et al., 2023, 745). However, there is no room for music or dance in areas under Taliban control as they self-proclaimed that it is not allowed in Islam (Ng, 2023).

### **Threat to Political Culture**

In the modern age of nation-states, there is also a clear contradiction between Pashtun culture and the constitutional state. Jirga is very important in Pashtun culture and mutual differences or

disputes are taken to the jirga (Pamir et al., 2023). On the other hand, the modern state implements the laws that come into existence through its representative institutions or parliament. However, the Pashtun jirga culture does not consider it necessary to follow these modern parliamentary or state laws. The worrying fact is that even government officials and ministers in the Pakistan talk about jirgas. If the elected representatives of the people leave the parliamentary forum and hold jirgas, one can imagine what the governance would be like. Another major recent example is the crisis in Kurram District (formerly a tribal agency). Despite several Jirgas, it took so long to solve this crisis. The question is, why in today's modern era, political matters within a constitutional state are discussed in Jirgas instead of parliament? What is its legal status? The answer is either nothing or vague. Even in the past, Taliban's spokesperson in Swat, Muslim Khan did not only criticize the Pakistan's constitution but also declared it unacceptable to TTP by calling it un-Islamic (Islam & Akbar 2016, 58).

It has often been seen that this most important question is not raised even by renowned journalists and analysts, but the Jirga is presented in the media by glamorizing it. On the other hand, if we look at the culture of Punjab, the alternative tradition of Jirga is the Panchayat, but the mainstream media especially international media always highlight the darker side of Panchayat like in rape cases such as Mukhtar Mai case (Blétry, 2015).

The TTP has opposed the merger of the former tribal areas of KP province with KP province as per the decision of the Parliament and has demanded that this decision be withdrawn. However, the government has not accepted this demand (Baghwan, 2021). This shows that they want to implement their own system contrary to the decision of parliament, constitution of Pakistan and political culture.

Every Pashtun claims that women have a very honorable position in Pashtun society. Whether she is a daughter, sister, wife or mother, she is given respect and honor in the society (Alam 2012, 316) On the contrary, in the past it is alleged that the TTP brutally assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The TTP leader Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud claimed in his book that the TTP assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (Khan T., 2018). The TTP also openly attacked Malala Yousafzai due to her open criticism on the Taliban's education policy, but fortunately she survived (United Nations, 2017).

After the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, the morale of the TTP has increased manifold. No one expects that the TTP to change its behaviour against women on the analogy of the Afghan Taliban. If the TTP had recognized the respect for women according to Pashtun culture, it would not have attacked girls' schools in the former tribal areas of KP. Attacks on girls' schools are continuing after the Taliban came back to power in Afghanistan (Mehsud, 2024).

Another aspect of this issue is the importance of the tribe in Pashtun society. In Pashtun society, expelling an individual or family from the tribe is more painful than murder. The order of tribal chief is of recognized importance among Pashtun tribes. The order of the chief is final for resolving any dispute within the tribe or dispute with other tribes. The TTP has also affected this culture badly.

The tribal chief has been replaced by militant commanders, which has also affected this cultural aspect of Pashtun society. Reportedly, the Taliban killed more than 1,200 tribal chiefs or elders

(Islam & Akbar 2016, 59). Thus, the Afghan Taliban and the TTP have proven to be the most destructive to the culture of the Pashtun tribes. The most important and essential pillar of tribal culture is a tribal chief on which the edifice of tribal society and culture stood. The Taliban killed or forced out tribal chiefs and established a parallel governance system (Rana 2008, 9). According to Nasir Dawar, a senior journalist from South Waziristan living in Peshawar, there are serious concerns among the public that this practice will be repeated once again, as evidence of the TTP's presence has been found in the former tribal areas, including Dera Ismail Khan (Dawar, 2024).

Mushtaq Yousafzai from Peshawar has been working as a journalist for a long time and holds a responsible position in an English newspaper. While in an interview, he told:

everyone knows that we Pakhtuns are friends of friends. In our culture, friendships and enmities are not hidden but open. But on the other hand, the case of the Afghan Taliban is not like this. It is not known, maybe there is a problem in their DNA. They received all kinds of cooperation from Pakistan when needed, but when they re-established their government in Afghanistan, they did not consider Pakistan's interests at all. This is against the Pakhtun culture (Mushtaq Yousafzai, personal communication, Apr. 25, 2024).

Aneela Shaheen is a fearless and courageous journalist from Peshawar. She has many stories to her credit about terrorism in Pakistan. In her interview with Researcher, she said that "after the Taliban's re-establishment in Afghanistan, a certain kind of extremism is gaining strength again in the province. This extremism is far from the original culture of Pakistanis in general and Pashtuns in particular. We should think seriously about this" (Aneela Shaheen, personal communication, Apr. 25, 2024).

Farzana Ali is the bureau chief of Aaj TV in Peshawar and has been a journalist for over two decades. She said in his interview with the researcher that; according to a survey conducted shortly after August 2021, 58 percent of the people of KP view the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan positively." She added that after the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, she went to cover an explosion in a suburb of Peshawar and was threatened. A person told her that she was a dirty woman. He blamed her of their miseries saying, "it is because of you that these attacks are happening on us, on mosques and on Muslims." She added that there were definitely difficulties, but women were respected as is generally customary in Pashtun culture. Before that, there was no such culture among the people about journalists (Farzana Ali, personal communication, Apr. 25, 2024).

## **CONCLUSION**

Historically, Pakistani society has been an example of tolerance despite being a collection of different cultures. Even today, the majority of the people of Pakistan respect mutual brotherhood and show tolerance. An ordinary Pakistani and the majority of intellectuals agree that the survival of a society is possible only by following the principle of peaceful coexistence. But the Taliban regime in Afghanistan has greatly affected the cultures of Pakistani society, especially the Pashtun and Baloch cultures in the areas near the Pak-Afghan border. Instead of tolerance, extremist ideologies have badly affected the people, especially the youth. This extremism incites violence instead of dialogue in the event of mutual disagreement, which is extremely dangerous for the society.

Punjab province is home to almost half of the population of Pakistan and the colours of Punjabi culture and religious and social tolerance are very deep in this province. The majority of followers of different faiths and religions are still connected to each other in friendly relations through mutual interaction. The arrival of Sikh followers from India to Pakistan on the occasion of various festivals and their enthusiastic welcome in Pakistani Punjab is clear evidence of this. Apart from Punjab, the majority of Muslims as well as non-Muslim citizens throughout the country are very close to Sufism and in a way it is a part of their daily lives. But the extremist ideologies of the Taliban have also affected Punjabi culture.

### **Recommendations**

Pakistan is an important state and a key stakeholder in the region, a country with a strong military equipped with nuclear power. By taking the right direction, this country with a population of over 240 million, the majority of whom are young people, cannot afford extremist ideologies or violence. For stability in Pakistan and the region, it is necessary to take the following necessary steps to protect against the extremist ideologies that are threat to culture of Pakistan;

The educational curriculum in Pakistan, especially the curriculum of madrassas, ought to be cleansed of dissenting, controversial and extremist ideologies.

Students of educational institutions, including madrassas, may be ensured proficiency in various skills along with modern and contemporary sciences that will provide them with honorable employment.

Misinterpretation of Islam needs to be dealt with effective way by promoting the religious tolerance and peace by religious scholars and religious platforms such as mosques.

The justice system may be speedy, easy, transparent and timely so that the unrest does not spread among the people and they do not become tools of extremist and violent forces.

The government may celebrate and sponsor cultural festivals in the country to save and promote the heritage and culture of different regions of Pakistan.

Religious harmony, culture and peace may be promoted on government level as well as on the level of civil society organizations.

Pakistan embassies may arrange cultural events for the cultural promotion and the events to present the true picture of Islam abroad.

Elements supporting extremist ideas and violence supposed to be severely crushed.

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