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PASHTUN SOCIAL STRUCTURE: CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS AND SEGMENTARY LINEAGE ORGANIZATION
Understanding and Working Within Pashtun Society

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The Pashtun are an ethnic group that straddles the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and are the largest group in Afghanistan. Historically, when Afghanistan has been united, it has been under Pashtun rule. Pashtun rulers of Afghanistan have come from the Durrani Pashtun, who are a western Pashtun group. The Durrani learned governance from serving under Turko-Mongolian dynasties. These dynasties tried to rule only the most populous, productive areas, leaving marginal areas ungoverned.

Pashtun social structure is what anthropologists term a segmentary lineage system. In such a system, there is a hierarchy of social groupings starting at the local level, then proceeding upward through various levels to an entire ethnic group. These relationships are based on kinship and shared culture. At any given level (local, regional, ethnic group), social segments operate only in opposition to equivalent segments (local kinship group vs. local kinship group, regional group vs. regional group, etc.). Leadership is situational rather than institutionalized. Both leadership and segmentary organization end when conflict ends. The cultural ideal is egalitarianism.

Pashtun society is atomized in the sense that it is based on the most basic element, the individual (especially the individual man). Each man considers himself independent and self-sufficient, and simultaneously in competition with all others Pashtun men. This belief in self-sufficiency, and the perpetual competition, make it difficult for Pashtun to unite for cooperative projects, or even to engage in economic exchange. The ideal economic exchange among the Pashtun is reciprocal and balanced. The Pashtun consider all non-Pashtun to be inferior. A Pashtun man may engage in economic relations with non-Pashtun without losing honor, but also considers it acceptable to cheat non-Pashtun. On the other hand, because of competition within Pashtun society, Pashtun men look to establish friendships with outsiders.

The social structure determines how the Pashtun understand the actions of outsiders, and limits their capacity for responding to external intervention. Members of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should understand and consider this social structure when dealing with the

Pashtun. Segmentary lineage organization presents outsiders with both opportunities and challenges. It is highly important to understand this in such areas as (a) economic development), (b) Taliban force composition, (c) negotiation, and (d) the establishment of friendships and alliances. The report discusses these topics in some detail. The Pashtun on the one hand, and Western interveners on the other, are likely to have fundamentally different understandings in these areas.

Pashtun conceptions of time are not fully understood. This is an important element of economic development, so it is vital to understand how the Pashtun view it.

INTRODUCTION

The Pashtun are a major ethnic group on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, as well as being the dominant ethnic group within Afghanistan itself. Although the majority of Pashtun actually reside within Pakistan, Afghanistan itself has long been equated with the Pashtun. Pashtun are the largest demographic group within Afghanistan, comprising about 40 percent of the population. "Afghan" was therefore long synonymous with "Pashtun," although many more ethnic groups live within modern Afghanistan. Since the mid eighteenth century, Afghanistan's national leaders have been drawn from the Pashtun (Barfield 2010).

The Pashtun are known by various names (e.g., Pakhtun, Pukhtun, Pukhtanah, Pathans), which are either regional variants or names assigned by outsiders. Pukhtanah is the Indian variant of the name, while Pathans is a British derivation. There are two main variants of their language: Pakhtu or Pukhto, spoken in the northeast, and Pashtu to the southwest (Caroe 1965; Barfield 2010).

The term "Pashtun" is used in this report as a convenience, because it appears commonly in media reports. As used here, it should be considered to include any of the variant names. There has, however, been significant ethnographic work in the Swat Valley of Pakistan, where the local self-name is Pukhtun. That term is used when the discussion is specifically about the people of Swat.

The Pashtun are highly concerned with origin, descent, and

genealogies (Caroe 1965). "People's primarily loyalty," notes Barfield, "is, respectively, to their own kin, village, tribe, or ethnic group, generally glossed as *qawm*" (2010: 18). This fact influences their perceptions of, and approaches to, many aspects of society, politics, economy, and relations with outsiders. The hierarchy of identity and loyalty was expressed by a Pashtun politician in the 1970s: "I have been a Pakistani for thirty years, a Muslim for fourteen hundred years, and a Pashtun for five thousand years" (Barfield 2010: 20). Kinship and ethnic relations have always been more important than abstract concepts based on ideologies. This imposes intrinsic divisions on the Pashtun, and makes it difficult for them to unite. The classic way to overcome local barriers is to unite against an infidel invader, as they are doing now.

Pashtun society is based on a type of kinship structure that anthropologists term a segmentary lineage system. Segmentary lineage systems are widespread throughout the Middle East and East Africa. Segmentary lineage organization structures Pashtun society, as well as political and economic relations among the Pashtun and between the Pashtun and outsiders. The segmentary system also structures competition among the Pashtun, and between the Pashtun and outsiders. It is necessary to understand how segmentary lineage organization operates among the Pashtun to design plans of intervention, whether involving economic development or otherwise. Much of this report details how segmentary lineage organizations operate in general, and specifically among the Pashtun.

HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

Afghanistan has been united under native (Pashtun) rulers only from the mid eighteenth century. From the mid tenth through the mid eighteenth century, every dynasty that ruled in the region was either of Turko-Mongolian origin, or relied on a military that was dominated by Turko-Mongolian peoples. When Afghanistan was united under Pashtun rule, the form of government was based on Turko-Mongolian structures of government rather than tribal traditions (Barfield 2010).

Turko-Mongolian governments attempted to rule only the most populous and productive lands (irrigated valleys), leaving marginal regions and nomadic peoples without direct rule. Barfield (2010) refers

to this as a "swiss cheese" approach to territorial rule. The lack of full governmental control today of such areas as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan is a continuation of that approach. Such areas have never been governed because they were not worth governing. The tax yield was too low and the challenges of governing such areas too high (Barfield 2010).

When it has been unified (i.e., since the mid eighteenth century), Afghanistan has always been ruled by a class of professional rulers drawn from elite Pashtun descent groups. These have never had to rely on popular support. The only significant challenges to this system have come from fighters organized into segmentary descent groups, who have historically come from marginal regions. Although originally egalitarian, ruling Pashtun groups, when successful, would employ a traditional hierarchical system of governance. For this reason, there have always been tensions between egalitarian Pashtun tribes and national leaders drawn from them. A continual structural weakness of Afghan governments is that, without popular support, they have always needed outside aid to function (Barfield 2010).

Afghanistan was unified under Pashtun rule in 1747 by Ahmad Shah Durrani from the Durrani (see below for major Pashtun groups). His dynasty ruled the country from 1747 to 1978, when Daud, the cousin of the last Durrani king (Zahir Shah), was overthrown by a Communist coup (Zahir Shah himself had been overthrown in 1973). Today's problems originate in that event, and Afghanistan has been in more-or-less continuous upheaval since then. Even today, leaders tend to be drawn from the Durrani Pashtun, of which Hamid Karzai is a member (Barfield 2010).

The Taliban are largely Pashtun. They see all other ethnic groups as enemies, and conversely. Once it became clear that the Taliban would lose in 2001, every region of the country turned against them, including the Pashtun south. This was characteristic of Afghan history. Relations of alliance and enmity have always shifted, based on circumstances and opportunity. "[O]pportunism," writes Barfield, "could always be counted on to undermine any other 'ism' (Islamism, nationalism, socialism, etc.)..." (2010: 253).

SEGMENTARY LINEAGE SYSTEMS

The bases of segmentary lineage organization are as follows: Firstly, society is organized in a hierarchy of groupings based on kinship and cultural relatedness. At the lowest level of the hierarchy, the basic grouping consists of closely related people who live in proximity. This is the base-level segment. These people in turn are related more remotely to people of other segments who live at some greater distance away. When these groups unify, they comprise a segment at a higher level.

Segments can unify at higher and higher levels, up to the level of a tribe, an ethnic group, or a language group. (Evans-Pritchard 1940; Sahlins 1961). For example, the basic, local segment might consist of what anthropologists term a *lineage*, which is a *localized* descent group tracing descent in one line (e.g., grandfather→father→sons). Several lineages may make up a *clan*, which is a *non-localized* unilineal descent group (e.g., the descendants of grandfather's brothers, living in separate locations). At still higher levels, clans might be organized into tribes (in some anthropological literature, a tribe is a larger and more segmented social grouping that lacks institutionalized leadership and is bound together by horizontal ties), and tribes into an ethnic group. Lineages, clans, tribes, and ethnic groups comprise segments at higher levels of inclusiveness, but lower degrees of relatedness.

Secondly, in segmentary lineage societies, higher levels of organization exist *only in opposition*. That is, members of a lineage undertake concerted action only when they are opposing members of another lineage. The opposing lineages will reside near each other, but not together. The members of several closely related lineages may unite at the level of the clan when they are in conflict with the members of lineages that comprise another clan. In this case, the conflict is clan vs. clan, and the clans *function* because of the conflict. In the absence of the conflict, the clans do not function as organizations. The same principle applies to still higher-level segments, such as tribes and ethnic groups. The hierarchical segments function only in opposition, and only in opposition is the structure of the society evident. Once a conflict has ended, the segments return to a condition of disunity, and the hierarchical structure disappears. Segments exist only in complementary opposition.

Thirdly, because hierarchical organization exists only during conflict, segmentary lineage societies lack institutionalized leadership. These societies do, of course, have individuals who are charismatic and

ambitious, and who may assume a leadership role temporarily. Yet following such leaders is always voluntary, and their authority, such as it is, wanes as the conflict ends. Such leaders generally cannot compel individuals beyond the segments that temporarily they lead. This point, as discussed later, has important implications for negotiation with the Taliban. The exception to this point is that some religious leaders may have influence that is more enduring, and that extends beyond individual segments. This is characteristic of segmentary lineage systems in general, and it is true of the Pashtun.

PASHTUN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Pashtun society is organized on principles of descent and genealogy. Lindholm describes Pukhtun social structure of the Swat Valley, Pakistan, as an "acephalous patrilineal segmentary system" (1982: xxiv). Translated into ordinary terminology, this means that the Pukhtun historically lacked institutionalized hierarchy and leadership ("acephalous" = "without a head"). Descent and inheritance are through the male line, a fact that determines lines of conflict and cooperation. At different organizational levels, the society is divided into segments that are ordinarily in opposition to each other (e.g., brother against brother), but which may unite against other, distant segments (e.g., tribe against tribe, the Pashtun against everyone else) (Lindholm 1982, 1996).

Genealogies among the Pashtun have two functions. The first is to define a segmentary hierarchy of groups and subgroups. The second is to define a time sequence in a written historical chronicle, to give a relative chronology for migration and conquest. This history gives an absolute standard and cannot be altered. The relationship of chronicles and traditional genealogies is maintained by careful oral tradition (Barth 1959), serving to legitimize contemporary society.

As in every society, Pashtun social structure is legitimized by ideological constructs that give a moral foundation and make the social system appear natural, inevitable, and immutable. The social structure, genealogies, morality, political action, and economic life are all governed by the same set of rules. The fundamental principles are: (A) *Tarburwali*, a system of institutionalized competition among close male relatives. And (B) an intense spirit of democracy in the tribal charter (i.e., acephalous organization). The spirit of democracy is enshrined in the

code of *Pashtunwali*. Pashtunwali (the way of the Pashtun) is a code of conduct based on honor and personal autonomy. Its principles are honor and bravery; hospitality; revenge for any perceived injustice; protecting one's women, gold, and land; and admission of wrongdoing (Ahmed 1980; Lindholm 1982).

All men are in principle equal, and the function of Pashtunwali is to make this continue to be so. Women are not equal to men. Rather, male honor and family honor derive from a code of conduct governing women. Women will not normally interact with unrelated males, even if they live within the same household. Notwithstanding the spirit of democracy, Ahmed indicates that the central issues of Pashtun society revolve around the pursuit of power, status, and honor within the tribal genealogical framework. Within this pursuit, a man's goal is political domination at a certain lineage (segment) level, not economic gain. Hospitality is central to the value system, and generosity is a way to win followers. In Pashtun society, there is strong cultural pressure for truthfulness. As described below, all Pashtun men are in principle economically equal. This principle has important implications for outside intervention (Ahmed 1980; Lindholm 1982).

Members of a segment are ideally descended from a common male ancestor. At the highest level, all Pashtun are in principle descended from a common ancestor, Qais, who lived in the seventh century A.D. That ancestry, the speaking of Pashto, and adherence to the code of conduct, *Pashtunwali*, define a person as Pashtun. The smallest unit of organization is the lineage, a minimal unilineal descent group (e.g., grandfather, father, son). Pashtun lineages are known by the suffix -*zai*, meaning "sons of." A group of lineage will be united at a higher genealogical level into a clan, known by the term *khel*. Descent groups can exist at different levels of inclusion, such as a region, a village, or subdivisions within a village. At the broadest level, all Pashtun are members of one of four maximal descent groups, all of which originated in biological or adoptive descendants of Qais. These are:

1. Durrani, located in the south and southwest of Afghanistan, and adjacent parts of Pakistan.

2. Ghilzai, located in the east of Afghanistan.

3. Gurghusht, located at the southwest edge of the core Pashtun region, and also in the east.

4. Karlanri, located astride the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in the
east. The bulk of them are in the Northwest Frontier Province of
Pakistan.

The Pashtun (technically Pukhtun) of the Swat Valley of Pakistan are
all descended from a common ancestor, Yusuf. Territory, like kinship, is
organized in a hierarchy of subdivisions, and territorial distance
corresponds in general to genealogical distance. That is, people who are
more closely related tend to live near each other, and conversely (Barth
1959; Lindholm 1982; Barfield 2010).

Political and economic relations are structured through
genealogical distance. Lineages within a village are normally in
opposition to each other, but may unite in opposition to those more
distant genealogically and geographically. In Swat, Pakistan, for example,
lineages may unite to repel invasion. The inhabitants of the Dir Valley,
which runs parallel to Swat, are cousins of the people of Swat. Both are
descended from the common ancestor, Yusuf. The people of Swat may
unite against those of Dir, or both may unite against others. Unification
thus occurs in opposition, which is characteristic of segmentary systems.
There is an Arab saying that sums up relationships of hierarchical unity
and opposition:

> I against my brother, my brother and I against our [patrilineal]
> cousin, my brother, my [patrilineal] cousin and I against the
> world (Lindholm 1982: xxvii).

"Violence," notes Sahlins, "becomes more honorable in proportion to
segmentary distance" (1961: 332).

In segmentary systems, lineages are recognized, but are only
relative social entities. They appear as an entity only in opposition. "The
lineage segment," notes Sahlins (1961: 333), "cannot stand alone but can
only stand 'against.'" Violence is the most important formative element
of Middle Eastern segmentary lineage societies. Men are obliged by ties
of blood to defend against outsiders or more distant relatives. Such
coalitions can theoretically number up to thousands or even millions, if
all Pashtun are united. At the highest level, Pashtun consider themselves
superior to all other people (Lindholm 1982), and Pashtun may (in
principle) unite against the world.

In the Swat Valley of Pakistan, there is a holy lineage that serves

situationally as a kind of administration or organizer. Lineages, which would normally be in opposition to each other, can unite around a holy man of this lineage on the basis of his immediate connection to Allah. This temporary unification is the basis for military action by Swatis. This system is long-established, dating from perhaps 1515. In the past, great war leaders were able to unite men of different lineages (Lindholm 1982).

Within Swat, the most acrimonious relations are between individuals, not groups. The basic premise of society is struggle against patrilineal relatives (relatives in the male line) and neighbors. Men struggle against their closest patrilateral relatives (i.e., relatives on the father's side) in perpetual competition. This struggle is typically over land held by their common grandfather. By killing a patrilateral relative, a man can gain title to the murdered man's land and possessions. A patrilateral parallel cousin (i.e., a cousin descended from the same patrilineal grandfather) is known as a *tarbur*, and a relationship of enmity is *tarburwali* (Lindholm 1982, 1996).

There is also struggle within families. All relationships contain elements of hostility, contempt, or both. A married woman continues to revere her natal patrilineage, and to partake of its history. Men fear betrayal by their wives, and treachery from their own brothers and sons. Men and women (i.e., husbands and wives) are in a continuous struggle for power. Women seek to retain the honor of their natal (birth) lineage, while men seek to subdue and humiliate them. Nevertheless, maternal relatives are also recognized as important. Men whose mothers were sisters are expected to be allies. Husbands and wives often strike each other. The most powerful bond is between brothers and sisters (Lindholm 1982).

Violence at various levels in the hierarchy is differentiated along several lines. These include the need for revenge, the virulence of the conflict, and the availability of mediating bodies and leaders. In Swat, and perhaps unique to Swat, as genealogical scale increases (that is, as relatives become more distant) there is a decreasing obligation to assist in obtaining revenge for wrongs (Lindholm 1982).

Beyond *tarburwali* (i.e., opposition between patrilateral parallel cousins, descended from the same grandfather), violence penetrates other aspects of Swati social relations. There is implicit hostility with in-

laws. Fathers, sons, and brothers all have tense relations. Brothers are rivals for the father's land. They squabble among themselves, and with the father, for a share. Since close patrilineal relatives must unite against outsiders, this squabbling does not normally lead to fighting. Still, sons have been known to kill their fathers, and vice-versa (Lindholm 1982). Mothers and sons are considered to be allied against fathers (Lindholm 1996).

Ownership of land is paramount, for subsistence, for power, and even for identity and membership. In Swat, a man without land is not considered to be a Pukhtun. One is not supposed to sell land, which is considered equivalent to selling one's Pukhtun identity. A man who does so is without honor (Lindholm 1982).

Villages are divided into neighborhoods (*paloo*), which are in turn divided into wards (*tɚl*). These are in turn cross-cut by a dualistic party structure, the *dɚla*. Villages unite for warfare against distant villages. In Swat, there is rarely any uniting above the lineage level (Lindholm 1982).

Among the Pashtun, overt acts, such as assault, murder, or theft, demand a collective response. So also do threats to a group's honor or reputation. The *Pashtunwali* code is based on the need to maintain honor and reputation. In battle, a Pashtun will lose honor if he retreats alone. Therefore individual Pashtun will not retreat from a battle. A group, however, will retreat collectively if victory appears impossible. This causes no loss of honor.

The weaknesses of segmentary organization among the Pashtun are that (a) groups tend to be of small size; (b) because of the cultural predisposition toward equality, it is very difficult for a would-be leader to consolidate power; and (c) leaders have no power to command, but must rely on persuasion. For these reasons, religious leaders are often more successful than tribal ones in uniting large groups. Religious leaders are seen as outside the tribal system as well as having divine authority. This is one reason for the success of the Taliban (Barfield 2010).

Notwithstanding kinship, urban Pashtun often have more in common with their neighbors of other groups than they do with their rural Pashtun relatives. Money is more important than kinship. There is a clash of values between urban and rural Pashtun, just as there

commonly is between urban and rural people worldwide. This, rather than Islam *per se*, was the basis for the harsh rules imposed by the Taliban, who come from a rural background (Barfield 2010).

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE ON EXCHANGE

"Pukhtun...believe that individuals stand alone, independent of the world....[T]he entire complex of structure and exchange is a unity; it is a relational world in which the people of Swat live and attempt to make some understandable order for their lives (Lindholm 1982: 114)."

Economic behavior is embedded within, and strongly influenced by, village social structure and the kinship system. Pashtun society may be described as atomized–reduced to the most basic element, the individual. In the Pashtun conception of the ideal society, there would be no reciprocity or exchange. Each man is aloof and independent. Men are expected to present themselves as completely self-reliant. A man struggles against all others for survival and personal honor. Men would cooperate only under external threat. Cooperative schemes, when they are attempted, tend to collapse into suspicion and mutual accusation (Lindholm 1982, 1996).

Notwithstanding the cultural ideal of self-sufficiency, economic exchanges do occur. They are, however, awkward at best and often bound to fail. Barter is the favored mode of exchange. Exchanges are meant to be balanced. The ideal exchange is between equals, and results in the exact and immediate return of what was given, or its equivalent. At a wedding, for example, women will bring cloth for the bride. The amount of cloth is kept track of and, in time, repaid exactly or with something of equal value. Failure to do so causes a loss of prestige. Loss of prestige undercuts the ideal that all men are independent and equal. Thus the economic system is a logical expression of the operation of the social system. Gifts may, though, be given to outsiders. One who gives without an expectation of return is said to be "loved by Allah." Conversely, one who receives without giving is "disliked by Allah" (Lindholm 1982).

Although the ideal is equal exchange, men always try to get a better deal from exchanges involving non-relatives. A good exchange is

cause for pride and bragging. The recipient of a bad deal may try to renege on the deal, or pass the faulty item on to someone else. These exchanges tend to be one-time only. Mistrust prevents the development of long-term barter, as does the attempt to gain an unfair advantage (Lindholm 1982).

Loans may be taken from outsiders, sometimes through the mediation of a female relative. Loans have a moral connotation: Both parties are "loved by Allah"–the debtor when he repays the loan. To ask for a loan, though, implies that one is not self-sufficient. One asks, therefore, through an intermediary. Credit comes from non-Pukhtun inferiors, such as shopkeepers, banks, and government agencies. Owing a debt to another Pukhtun implies inferiority. Such debts do occur, and are repaid as though they were an exchange between equals. Debts to non-Pukhtun have no place in the system of honor. According to the logic of the social system, such debts need not be repaid (Lindholm 1982).

Pukhtun strive to avoid creating a relationship of dependence between equals. Their attitude toward exchange makes partnerships impossible. Men are jealous of the success of others. Despite the ethic of equality, men are motivated to raise themselves above others through acquisition and hoarding. They will hoard money and status goods. These are used to excite admiration and envy. "Each man," notes Lindholm, " struggles to conquer and rise in the shallow hierarchies the system allows" (1982: 218). Wealthy men will violate Islam by charging high interest rates for loans. Theft is common, and is considered acceptable–so long, of course, as it does not involve one's own possessions (Lindholm 1982).

Cross-sex relations within a lineage are the most affectionate and giving relationships within the society. A Pukhtun man in financial trouble will go first to his elder sister, for both advice and financial help. The sister has been taught that the patrilineal lineage is all important, and that its strength resides in her brothers. The sister will assist financially, even selling her wedding jewelry do to do. Brothers in turn will give presents to their sisters, take them in if necessary, and sponsor and protect their children (Lindholm 1982).

Most exchange is either within the lineage, or with other close relatives. These exchanges are emotionally charged. Exchange with outsiders is less important. Pukhtun are preoccupied to avoid relations

of dependence on their equals, while trying to render their equals dependent on them. This, as noted, makes partnerships impossible, and barter non-repeatable. Men are ashamed to ask for loans, and will use an intermediary to do so. Pukhtun prefer to take loans from non-Pukhtun. It is honorable to take from non-Pukhtun. Outside the family, relations of exchange have two aspects. These are (a) relations with those who are inferior, and are therefore either forced to receive charity, or to give payment (which the Pukhtun view as tribute); and (b) relations with equals, in which case each seeks to place the other under obligation while maintaining a pretense of one's own self-sufficiency. The monetary economy has transformed this system somewhat, but the underlying values persist. A Pukhtun, for example, is reluctant to accept another Pukhtun as his employer. The system leads to a strong distaste for mediating figures, except in the case of a loan when the exchange partners are equal. The ideal Pukhtun man takes from his inferiors and then redistributes to them through charity. At the same time, he competes with his equals and tries to dominate them. Pukhtun despise mediation that implies inequality (Lindholm 1982).

Economic change has come to the Pashtun. It is embedded within, and sometimes clashes with, the traditional cosmology and social structure. The Pashtun have traditionally had master-servant or patron-client relations. Now regular employment is confused with these. Wage earning is considered lower in status than overseeing a farm, and the Pukhtun even believe that "grain purchased with wages will last only half as long as grain raised in one's own fields" (Lindholm 1982: 115). Pashtun are unwilling to work for other Pashtun because of the rivalries endemic in their social system. To work for another Pashtun is to admit inferiority. For the Pukhtun of Swat Valley, it is acceptable to work for other Pakistanis such as Punjabis and Kashmiris because, although a man demeans himself by working for them, they are considered inferior to begin with. It is difficult to start a business, because one must wheedle and be obsequious to gain customers. Men will join in partnerships, but due to mistrust these are rarely successful (Lindholm 1982).

The Swat Pukhtun have experienced the transition to a market system, and this sometimes clashes with traditional values. The Pukhtun believe in reciprocity between equals, while inferiors (non-Pukhtun) may suffer appropriation of their goods and/or money. Among

themselves, Pukhtun may give their wares without payment (knowing that reciprocity and honor demand repayment at some time). Professional Pukhtun, such as doctors and lawyers, may give their services to other Pukhtun without charge. Money actually becomes a problem in such a transaction, for taking a fee implies that one is a servant. Thus normal market exchange conflicts with Pukhtun notions of the equality, independence, and self-sufficiency of all men. On the other hand, payment given by an inferior (i.e., a non-Pukhtun) ratifies Pukhtun feelings of superiority (Lindholm 1982).

REGIONAL VARIATION AND CAPACITY FOR COORDINATED ACTION

There are two cultural traditions of hierarchy and governance among the Pashtun that have given rise to two kinds of political organization, and to the structure of today's conflict. The egalitarian type of organization dominated among the eastern Pashtun of Afghanistan and the adjacent parts of Pakistan. It has been described above. These peoples reject the legitimacy of hereditary authority. Leaders among such peoples are merely first among equals, and can be effective only when there is a consensus to support the actions they propose. The British found that trying to bribe such leaders created a distinction between leaders and others, and thus stimulated outrage by violating the egalitarian ethic (Lindholm 1982; Barfield 2010).

The alternative is a hierarchical type of organization modeled on the Turko-Mongolian dynasties that ruled Pakistan until the mid eighteenth century. This type of organization is based on ranked lineages, clans, and tribes. Leadership is hereditary and held within specific descent groups. This tradition involved much larger groupings, up to as many as a million people under a single leader. The Durrani Pashtun had served as military auxiliaries to Turko-Mongolian dynasties based in Iran, and from them learned governmental structure and military organization, as well as this hierarchical type of organization. The Durrani (western) Pashtun are thus more complexly organized than are the Ghilzai (eastern) groups. They are capable of organizing into larger social groupings, of raising large military forces, and of establishing lasting governments (Barfield 2010).

Ruling dynasties originating from egalitarian tribes tended to be short-lived, but required fewer resources. Dynasties based in hierarchical societies created lasting governments, but required higher

levels of resources. Therefore the egalitarian type has been found in places with a limited revenue base, and the hierarchical type in wealthier areas. When incorporated into regional empires, the egalitarian societies revert to independence during periods of state collapse. Today as in the past, government influence is strongest in cities and irrigated valleys, and weaker in tribal areas (Barfield 2010).

This distinction in regional organization is the basis of long-running feuds between the western Durrani Pashtun and the eastern Ghilzai Pashtun. The Ghilzai typically resist hierarchical rule, and once overthrew the Persian Safavids. But they were then unable to build an empire of their own. A generation later (mid eighteenth century) the hierarchical Durrani established such an empire by adopting structural features of the Turkish Afsharid Empire, in which they had served as soldiers. They established an Afghan state that was ruled by Durranis for 230 years. Indeed, the Afghan state still tends to be ruled by Durranis, with the Ghilzai in opposition. While the Durranis knew how to create and run a state, their tribal charter was still ruled by the egalitarian ethos. Rival lineages vied for power, succeeding each other at regular intervals. Durrani rule was overthrown by the Ghilzai, parading as communists, in 1978. Today, Durrani rule in the person of Hamid Karzai is still opposed by the Ghilzai. Since 1978, the main Afghan military figures have been eastern Pashtun, mainly Ghilzais. Najibullah, the last ruler emplaced by the Soviets, was a Ghilzai. In the presidential election of 2009, Karzai's main Pashtun opponents had eastern roots. Mullah Omar is a Ghilzai Pashtun. The Ghilzai traditionally rebel, but it is the Durrani who regularly reconstitute and rule the state. One weakness of the Taliban is that they are trying to overthrow the state from a region, the south, from which historically it has not been overthrown (Barfield 2010).

INTERVENTION   For every type of intervention in Pashtun society, it is important to understand how that intervention will be perceived by the Pashtun themselves. Members of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) see development projects, for example, as (a) an expression of generosity; (b) intended to benefit all residents of a locality; (c) beneficial if promoting a local

economy and/or promoting overall good will; and (d) with payoffs measured by criteria such as return on investment, kilometers of road paved, numbers of children in a new school, decline in violence, and increase in cooperation. Pashtun, in contrast, may place greater weight on the extent to which a development project benefits specific segments during construction, rather than solely upon completion. Pashtun will perceive a project in terms of such things as (a) which segments benefit, during and after construction; (b) competition among individuals and segments; (c) the individual pursuit of power, status, and honor (*tarburwali*); (d) *Pashtunwali* (especially the need to avenge any perceived injustice); and (e) whether the project will undermine the theoretical equality of all Pashtun men. Thus ISAF forces and NGOs on the one hand, and local Pashtun on the other, may perceive projects in very different ways. What is more, each side may not realize that the other perceives a project differently. This situation clearly has the potential to exacerbate conflict, rather than ameliorate it. Projects undertaken with benign intent may actually generate resentment. In all cases, it is worthwhile to understand local and regional social structure *before* intervening.

This section discusses several types of intervention, focusing on how the social system will influence Pashtun perceptions, and cause intervention to succeed or fail.

Economic Development

In implementing development projects in Pashtun areas, there are several considerations to keep in mind, as follows:

1. Because of the Pashtun belief that each Pashtun man is independent and equal to all other Pashtun men, partnerships and cooperative projects are difficult to create and sustain.

2. To accept payment from another Pashtun implies that one is a servant. This undercuts the ideal of egalitarian self-sufficiency. To avoid this problem, payments to Pashtun workers should come through non-Pashtun (who are considered inferior) rather than through a Pashtun intermediary.

3. Development projects that benefit one group or segment to the exclusion of others may generate conflict within local Pashtun groups, or between Pashtun and Western interveners. Since (a) Pashtun men strive to rise at the expense of others, and (b) segments unite in opposition, favoring one man or segment generates resentment among others. This

is a matter at the core of how a segmentary lineage system works. Resentment and conflict may arise if (a) one man benefits to the exclusion of others; (b) one lineage benefits to the exclusion of others; (c) one clan benefits to the exclusion of others; (d) one village benefits to the exclusion of others; and so forth. Development projects will proceed most smoothly if segments at all levels benefit as equally as possible–whether or not this is considered economical in Western reasoning. Of course, this requires that one first understand the local social structure, mapped down to the level of the individual.

On the other hand, if ISAF wants to disrupt the solidarity of local insurgent forces, one way to do so is to offer economic favors to one segment (individual, lineage, clan, or village) to the exclusion of others.

In general, genealogical distance (closeness of relationship) corresponds to geographical distance. That is, those who are most closely related tend to live in proximity, and conversely. In many instances, though, this pattern will have been disrupted by the destruction of villages since the Soviet invasion.

4. Cooperative projects among Pashtun tend to collapse into suspicion and mutual accusation. This is because (a) each man is expected to present himself as self-sufficient and equal to all other Pashtun men, yet (b) men struggle against all others for survival, advancement, and personal honor. For these reasons, cooperative projects have a better likelihood of enduring if directed by a non-Pashtun on an ongoing basis.

5. Economic exchanges among Pashtun are ideally balanced. Unbalanced exchanges put certain Pashtun in a position of inferiority. It is very difficult for a Pashtun man to accept a loan from another. A Pashtun may, however, accept a loan from a non-Pashtun with no loss of honor. This is because non-Pashtun are inferior. Pashtun may give gifts to, and receive gifts from, outsiders. Pashtun will try to get the better of outsiders in an exchange. This behavior should be expected. Pashtun believe that debts to non-Pashtun need not be repaid. Pashtun may view payments from outsiders as tribute, and will try to place exchange partners in a position of dependency. Pashtun have a strong distaste for mediation.

6. Westerners and Pashtun are likely to have very different perceptions of economic development and exchange. Where Westerners will evaluate a development project by its purpose, its outcome, and its

benefit/cost ratio, Pashtun will be substantially concerned with how a project meshes with their social system. They may be as concerned with process as with outcome, and may have different perceptions of the purpose of a project. Pashtun concerns will include the following: (A) Does the project undermine traditional lines of authority? (B) Does it upset the relationship of men and women? (C) Does it undermine in any way the Pashtun sense of honor? (D) Does it undercut the projected image of self-sufficiency? (E) Does the project place some Pashtun in the position of having to accept payments from other Pashtun, thereby implying inferiority? (F) Does the project favor some social segments over others? (G) Does the project reinforce or undercut Pashtun feelings of superiority over non-Pashtun?

For example, Westerners view the emergence or re-establishment of local markets as a positive development (Flynn, Pottinger, and Batchelor 2010: 13). From the perspectives of security and economic development, this may be so. Yet local Pashtun may see markets differently. To Pashtun, participating in a market conflicts with traditional notions of the equality, independence, and self-sufficiency of all Pashtun men. To receive from another Pashtun places one in a position of dependency. To accept payment from another Pashtun implies that one is a servant. One may, on the other hand, engage in market exchanges with non-Pashtun, since they are inferior. In the latter instance, though, the Pashtun may try to deceive his exchange partner. Markets operated by non-Pashtun merchants may generate less anxiety within Pashtun society, but more conflict within the marketplace itself.

Taliban Force Composition

In situations of conflict, segmentary lineage systems have both strengths and weaknesses. These qualities derive from the structure of segmentary systems.

The strength of segmentary lineage systems is the ability to unite in opposition. Sahlins (1961) suggests that segmentary opposition is the very essence of such societies. The uniting of segments is always situational: Brother may confront brother, lineage against lineage, the Pashtun against the world. Unification at higher segmentary levels often occurs under a religious leader. Quite large numbers of fighters may be raised in this way.

Segmentation is also the weakness of these systems. Segments may

unite only for the duration of a conflict, breaking up when the conflict is finished–or even sooner. The cultural rivalry among Pashtun men, and their continual efforts to promote themselves at the expense of others, means that military groupings are always prone to breaking up. This is consistent with the general Pashtun problem of maintaining cooperative projects.

It should be possible to weaken the effectiveness of Taliban forces by exploiting segmentary oppositions and the matter of jealousy. This would require knowledge of the segments (lineages, clans) making up Taliban forces in an area. With such knowledge, jealousies could be created or exacerbated by preferring one segment over others in local development projects. These jealousies would deepen the centrifugal tendency that is inherent in such forces. As in other matters, it is essential to know the local social structure in detail.

Negotiation

The prospects for a negotiated settlement to the Afghan conflict depend very much on the nature of Pashtun social structure. This social structure affects negotiation in at least three areas.

Firstly, an ISAF negotiator must understand precisely whom his/her opposing negotiator represents. Given (a) the segmentary nature of Pashtun society, and (b) the deep-seated belief that each Pashtun man is independent and self-reliant, a Pashtun's claim to represent *anyone* should be scrutinized closely. This is especially the case among the eastern Pashtun.

Secondly, ISAF negotiators should establish precisely whom a Pashtun negotiator can commit to a settlement. This is the flip side of the first point. A Pashtun negotiator may be able to commit only his own segment to a settlement. A segment in this case could be a maximal descent group (e.g., Durrani), a clan (*khel*), or a lineage (suffix *-zai*). Each such segment will, in principle, correspond to an area of territory. It is unlikely than any secular negotiator can commit all Pashtun to a settlement. A religious leader, though, may be able to commit large numbers of Pashtun if he is widely revered.

Thirdly, there is regional variation in the ability of Pashtun groups to reach a settlement, and to enforce it among themselves. Pashtun, as described here, are ideally independent and self-sufficient. Although they unite in opposition, the atomistic nature of Pashtun

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society means that a universal settlement will be hard to achieve and implement. As described by Barfield (2010), though, there is regional variation in Pashtun capacity for coordinated political action. Among eastern Pashtun such as the Ghilzai, for example, society is acephalous (no institutionalized leadership) and each man is theoretically independent. A settlement intended to bind, for example, all Ghilzai would be difficult to enforce universally. Challenges to Afghan governments have traditionally come from such peoples, and it is these people who have overthrown past Afghan governments.

The southern Durrani Pashtun, though, have a different history. Durrani served in Turko-Mongolian dynasties and learned governance from them. Much Durrani land is, moreover, agriculturally productive and densely settled. This makes Durrani territories and population easier to administer. The Durrani have a more complex political organization than do Pashtun in more marginal areas. This suggests that it may be more feasible to negotiate and implement a political settlement with the Durrani than with other Pashtun groups.

Yet even among the Durrani, the "swiss cheese" phenomenon described by Barfield (2010) should be anticipated. Turko-Mongolian governments attempted to rule only the most populous and productive lands (river valleys). Marginal lands and nomadic peoples were left alone, being not worth the effort to govern. ISAF negotiators may find that a settlement could be enforceable in a similar swiss-cheese territorial distribution. That is, a settlement may be enforceable in the more densely settled areas but not in more marginal territories. Pashtun in the latter areas may continue to fight, and may need to be negotiated with individually. These factors apply to negotiating with Pashtun in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Friendship/Alliance

It is obviously important for ISAF and NGO members to establish as much rapport as possible with Pashtun. In this area, Pashtun social structure may be used to assist pacification and development efforts.

The best work on friendships in Pashtun society was done by Lindholm (1982, 1996), among the Pukhtun of Swat Valley, Pakistan. As Lindholm has described, every Pukhtun man (at least in Swat) is in competition with every other Pukhtun man. The most acrimonious relations are between individuals, not groups. While all Pukhtun men are

in principle equal, each strives to advance his own interests at the expense of others. Moreover, the closer the relationship in the kinship system, the more intense the competition. The sharpest conflict is between brothers. They typically struggle over who gets the land owned by their grandfather. This produces the relationship known as *tarburwali*. Even within families, all relationships contain elements of hostility. Sons have been known to kill their fathers, and conversely.

Because of *tarburwali* and the extremely atomized and antagonistic nature of relationships within Pukhtun society, Pukhtun men seek friendships with outsiders (Lindholm 1982). Although the primary work on this phenomenon has been among the Swat Pukhtun, *tarburwali* is widespread among the Pashtun. The inclination to form friendships with outsiders should provide openings for ISAF and NGO personnel to establish amicable relationships and even alliances.

The drawback to this opportunity is that, as with any friendship, such connections take time and effort to cultivate. Moreover, such friendships are only between individuals. Given the atomistic nature of Pashtun society, friendships will not usually convey wider influence. Friendships with the right individuals, though, would still be useful.

COMMENTS ON INTERTEMPORAL REASONING

It is important to understand cultural variation in intertemporal reasoning. Conceptions of time influence economic reasoning including, for example, risk assessment, discounting, and expectations of return on investment. Thus, development projects initiated by ISAF or NGO personnel could succeed or fail based on whether Western and Pashtun partners in a project are able to understand each other's systems of economic and temporal reasoning, and thus to agree on goals for the project.

The Pashtun calculate the passage of time long-term through the genealogical system (Barth 1959). Time is calculated as genealogical distance, and thus as spatial distance. Through the segmentary lineage system, time, kinship, and territory are related.

Western concepts of time and money do not translate in any simple fashion into Pashtun reasoning. In the Western conception, time is linear and independent. It is a yardstick against which other phenomena are measured. Things that are salient at one time may

decay–become less salient–later in time (e.g., social obligations, or the value of a sum of money). The existing literature does not relate explicitly how the Pashtun view these matters, but the literature does allow the formulation of the following hypothesis:

> *Among the Pashtun, time is not independent, but is related to (varies in relation to) kinship, territory, conflict, and reciprocity.*

Testing this hypothesis would probably require further fieldwork.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Pashtun social structure influences much of the behavior of Pashtun individuals. This includes how they perceive, and interact with, representatives of Western institutions. In situations of culture contact, it is common for both parties to assume that their own mode of reasoning and perceiving are universal. When it becomes apparent that this is not so, the next assumption is that the other party can be taught to reason and perceive "correctly."

In fact, modes of reasoning and perceiving are always, to varying degrees, culturally idiosyncratic. Westerners representing ISAF and NGOs, as well as the Pashtun, have proceeded through precisely the assumptions stated above. The results have been mutual incomprehension, leading to frustration and increased hostility. Yet Pashtun thoughts, perceptions, and behavior are entirely logical given the cultural context and social structure in which they originate. Perception is reality, and Pashtun perceptions are the reality that Western interveners must address. Western personnel working in Afghanistan should accept the responsibility to understand how Pashtun think, and why they act. The success of the mission depends on this.

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The Pashtun are an ethnic group that straddles the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and are the largest group in Afghanistan. Pashtun social structure is what anthropologists term a segmentary lineage system. In such a system, there is a hierarchy of social groupings starting at the local level, then proceeding upward through various levels to an entire ethnic group. These relationships are based on kinship and shared culture. Segmentary lineage organization presents outsiders with both opportunities and challenges. It is highly important to understand this in such areas as economic development, Taliban force composition, negotiation, and the establishment of friendships and alliances. The report discusses these topics in some detail. The Pashtun on the one hand, and Western interveners on the other, are likely to have fundamentally different understandings in these and other areas, including conceptualization of time and events.

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