

# **Social class and its interplay with other social factors in Swat Taliban movement: An anthropological inquiry**

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## **Abstract**

The crisis that emerged in Swat, Pakistan in 2007 is the critical area of analysis in the current article. The Swat crisis has been observed by different scholars, journalists, and academics in their research, both foreigners and local. However, the basic understanding of the issue remained ahead of the actual socio-cultural context of the area. The form of militant groups of Swat and other Pukhtun areas are somehow diverse. Its study needs the socio-cultural, economic and political context in relation to the region. The primary concern of this current research is to observe the claim of class factor, which some writers viewed as the holistic cause of militancy in Swat. They evaluated the entire situation within the framework of Marxist philosophy. However, on the contrary, the facts do not support this viewpoint. The Taliban in Swat never motivated people on the basis of Marxist progressive philosophy, but instigated them according to the gamut of their interpretations of religion as well as including Pukhtun cultural practice of retaliation.

**KEYWORDS:** social class factor, terrorism, indigenous cultural patterns, revenge

## **Introduction**

Traditionally, the Pukhtun social set up has evolved to become egalitarian in structure and nature. This is also evident from the socio-political and economic structure of the Pukhtun code of life called *Pukhtu* or *Pukhtunwali* that guides their behaviour towards the practice of the rules of egalitarianism (Liebl 2007). Leadership among Pukhtun society can be quite dynamic and cannot be characterised by a single acknowledged hierarchical or hereditary leader. The criteria for leadership among Pukhtun society would be strictly on personal charisma, and it will also provide alternative leadership in times of crisis. Overall, Pukhtun society has a system of segmentary lineage in which everyone traces their genealogy from one single ancestor within the affiliated boundaries of a clan. The strong lineage system of segmentation and equality of ideology did not allow for the evolution of a central organisation or the development of complex hierarchies in their society (Lindholm 1979).

With time, like other societies, Pukhtun social organisation has also practised a slight shift while countering and interacting with other societies, which was because of

various causes, including the intermingling or migration, the shift from traditional mode of the economy to cash economy, and especially the impacts of globalisation on their socio-economic patterns of behaviour. In particular, the Middle East migration encouraged remittances to the home country. All these factors transformed local architecture and consumption patterns: the possessors of new wealth challenged established social hierarchies for degrees of status and leadership. Gender relations were increasingly adjusted or upset as women left behind by migrating husbands often took charge of family affairs and finances. Irregular and illegal migration proliferated, even as old power structures attempted to monopolise access to the new opportunities (Nichols 2008).

Regarding the structure and dynamics of the Pukhtun social setup, whether it has the characteristics of class hierarchy or is feudalistic in nature or still falls under the principles of egalitarianism is a prevalent debate. The viable solution to this question would be in terms of exclusively general and specific research; the details of all the Pukhtun-populated districts and Federally Administered Tribal Agencies bordering Afghanistan should be included. However, the focus area of this research is Swat, and the aim is to understand the internal dynamics of Swat society that aggravated the recent Taliban crisis in the entire district. The social class factor is the primary focus in this article, because some writers have proclaimed that the eruption of the Taliban in Swat was unilaterally due to the cause of social class: the struggle between the under-privileged or landless and landholders of the district, between the haves and have not.

The implication of this concept on the Swat Taliban movement emanated from some writers during the crisis. It means that socially unprivileged segment or people of the same lower status become united in the guise of the Taliban; against the powerful landowner segment of the population with the aim of “bringing their own axe” and seizing what is legitimately theirs from the existing semi-feudal exploitative system. The same ideology has been applied by Sartaj Khan, Khadim Hussain, Riaz Ahmad, Jane Perlez, and Pir Zubair Shah on the Swat crisis, who proclaimed it the retaliatory action of the lower stratum of the society against the land-owning class of Swat (Sultan-i-Rome 2015). Sartaj Khan labelled the Swat crisis as the manifestation of centuries-old exploitation in the society and elaborated the Swat crisis in the context of Marxist class struggle (Khan 2008). Sartaj Khan’s writing proclaimed that the principle of continuous exploitation has resulted in the materialization of Swat crises. This claim has nothing to do with the overall scenario of militancy in Swat. The Swat Taliban phenomenon has multiple external and internal factors which are discussed in the following pages.

The Swat crisis emerged in 2007 under the visible guise of religion to ensure strict conformity to religious principles in the valley. During 2007 to 2010, the Taliban insurgents in the scenic valley of Swat destroyed physical infrastructure, declared all law-enforcement agencies to be infidels and proxies of the West, and provoked intense fear among the common public through their local radio broadcasts to adhere with their retrogressive ideology. They openly challenged the writ of the Pakistani state under the leadership of Mullah Fazlullah and demanded an Islamic system instead of the existing corrupt politico-legal administration in the district.

## Swat in historical glimpse

Up to the merger of Swat State into Pakistan in 1969, the social dynamics of Swat were different in the context of political administration. Swat was independent in its internal affairs. The ruler of Swat (*wali*) was the sole authority to run the machinery of the state. The mode of the society though changed through the adoption of multiple progressive steps to weaken the traditional pattern of tribalism, but by and large the state was officially named as *Mumlikat-i-Khudadad-i-Yusufzai Swat wa Mutaliqaat* (The Yusufzai state of Swat) (Sultan-i-Rome 2008). During the state era, the religious clergy – *mullahs*<sup>1</sup> along with other artisan classes in Swat were socially, economically, and politically dependent on landholding gentry of the population. Therefore, their role remained quite limited in the socio-political affairs of the society while the traditional balance between the drawing room (*hujrah*)<sup>2</sup> and the mosque (*jumaat*) was intact and coordinated: all the daily affairs were guided by the traditional code (*Pukhtu* or *Pukhtunwali*) that clearly defines the jurisdiction of both institutions. During the Swat ruler's period, the affairs were conducted through customs and traditions known as *riwaj* that were inculcated in the state's civil and criminal procedure along with the religious code. This tribal Yusufzai state of Swat was highly effective and efficient because it was patronised according to the people's psyche and behaviour. According to Zia-u-Din Yusufzai (2010), the processes of interdependence are healthier for the construction and boosting of the social cohesion and collective responsibility in society. The Swat state markedly represented and reflected their policies according to the prevailing customs and traditions along with Islamic principles as well as the autocratic behaviour of the ruler to subjugate people against his orders. It had also encouraged the principles of ownership instead of strangeness. Soon after the merger of Swat State into Pakistan, the new government introduced new alien procedures of delayed justice and bad governance that disheartened and dragged the people into disarray (Khan 2011). Since the merger of Swat state in 1969, the Pakistani system also inherited a new form of radical Islamic interpretation that was later patronised by the then martial law government of General Zia-ul-Haq. Zia's reign militarised and radicalised the Pukhtun belt in the shape of "Kalashnikov culture" and the mushrooming of Madrassa networks throughout Khyber Pukhtunkhwa and Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (Khan 2011).

Historically, district Swat was predominantly possessed by the Akozai branch of the Yusufzai tribe. According to the traditional land distribution system (*wesh*) of periodic land distribution devised by Shiekh Mali<sup>3</sup> (Afghan Network 2011) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, landholders were declared as landowners (*dautaryan*) and religiously sanctified people

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<sup>1</sup> There are two types of mullahs in Swat. Some of them practice imamat and the others do not but are called mulan. The status of both has been remained different. See also Fredrik Barth's Political Leadership among Swat Pathans.

<sup>2</sup> Hujrah is not mere a drawing room or a guest house but it has a multi-dimensional role in the socio-political and tribal affairs of the Pukhtun society.

<sup>3</sup> Shiekh Mali was a 17<sup>th</sup> century tribal leader among the Yusufzai Pashtuns, and he devised a method of periodic land distribution system among the whole tribe, which was termed "Wesh".

(*serimars*)<sup>4</sup> (Sultan-i-Rome 2008). He who held land as a landowner purely belonged to the clan or *khel* of the Pukhtun patrilineal descent. After the settlement of Yusufzai tribe in Swat, Sheikh Malli distributed the land among the conqueror Yusufzai clans. This form of land distribution was temporary in nature: it is also called periodic re-allotment of land (*Garzindah Wesh*) (Sultan-i-Rome 2008). Subsequently, Sheikh Malli also granted a piece of land to the religiously sanctified people and it was declared as *serai*,<sup>5</sup> not *dauter* (Sultan-i-Rome 2008). Traditionally, it is also called oral or verbal distribution of land (*Khula Wesh*) (Hakimzai 2011).

The landless people in Swat were termed *kasabgars*, meaning the occupational or artisan class. They were assigned duties of service according to their professions. In this tribal social structure, these people provided services to their owners (*navaks*) and, in return, they received remunerations in kind at the time of harvests. The employers in this context fixed their share of the respective landless class in the society. These social imbalances were not so harsh and close as Barth elaborated in the “free choice and contract” principles (1959). One was not bound to his owner forever. He had the choice to join another owner according to his wish. The patron-client relations of the Pukhtuns and landless people created cleavages but not to an extent to enable resisting the existing norms of society. The prevailing concepts of Pukhtun and non-Pukhtun in Swat definitely guide the whole pattern of social behaviour and are based on circumstantial truth, but the system also supported and served them both in economic and political terms. The service and remuneration principles encouraged the process of dependency among the groups in the agrarian setup of Swat. The situation had been under control during the era of Swat state. However, it fell into disarray when the new setup came in to being in the shape of the Pakistani system. The existing social structures tended towards fragmentation when the massive migration was encouraged by the then government of Zulfakar Ali Bhutto for earning remittances in the oil-producing Gulf States. The new financial bonanza challenged the traditional practices and encouraged the process of financial independence. Certain alternative economic vistas opened, both in terms of overseas employment and internal migration in Karachi, Pakistan. These migrations resulted in economic independence and paved the way for the upward mobility of the less privileged class in Swat. This new emerging lower middle-class slowly and gradually challenged the traditional social structure in Swat. However, they had no actual say in the system and in local village politics. The landless or poor people at the time of Barth’s work have been changed due to some internal and external influences of migration and green revolution. The majority of the lower middle-class people in Swat earned significant amounts of money and invested in land purchases, especially in the highland Gujar community (Khan 2009). The shift in the socio-economic status of the people formed a new lower middle class in society and, to some extent, also discouraged the traditional patterns of leadership.

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<sup>4</sup> Serimars are those who possess piece of land granted by the 17th century tribal Yusufzai leader Sheikh Malli to the religiously sanctified people i.e. the descendants of the holy prophet (Sayyeds), descendants of the holy saints like Akhun Darweza (Miagaan), and descendants of the traditional Islamic scholars (Mullahs) etc.

<sup>5</sup> Serai is a kind of land associated with religious people. The serai was granted by Shiekh Malli in 17th century to the religious people for performing their religious services and duties.

Swat experienced the Kisan Movement at the time of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's premiership. More important perhaps was a new emphasis on tenants' rights and an end to forced labour. This demand challenged the heart of the traditional system and the absolute rights of the landed aristocracy over their dependents. The effects of these rules reached to the highland areas, where the Gujars were scattered in isolated homesteads, far from their valley-dwelling overlords who claimed the land as their own. Some battles were fought, claiming many Pukhtun's lives (Lindholm 1979). The Kisan Movement provided the base for the Gujar Movement in Swat and Malakand for the securing of Gujar interests. As a result of the Kisan Movement, the Gujars captured the hilly areas of Swat (Khan 2009). It is important to note the Gujars of the Barikot and Matta Tehsils area were mainly spearheading the KisanTahrik (Peasant Movement of the 1970s): a movement that has class war credentials and was backed and supported by the Mazdur Kisan Party (Sultan-i-Rome 2015). They seized the land of the landlords (*khans*) mostly in upper Swat valley. There emerged three groups of claimants to the occupied land: the royal family, the Gujars and the landlords. Historically, these lands belonged to the latter, but according to the rules of the state, the ruler manipulated the acquisition of these lands. He forced certain Yusufzai Pukhtun members to sell their land to the royal family. When the state was merged into Pakistan, the ruler and his family could not maintain these far-flung lands, and the Gujars who were settled on these lands as tenants- subsequently occupied them. However, at the same time, the Pukhtuns who had lost these lands reasserted their claims, and similarly, the rulers of Swat also did not relinquish their claims. In this way, three kinds of claimants emerged, who took their cases to the civil courts of Pakistan (Khan R. 2011). Secondly, the government of Pakistan extended Regulation No.122, and Regulation No. 123 for the royal families of Dir, Swat, and Chitral state to inquire about the actual land demarcation of the royal families of these respective states. Again in 1972, Martial Law Regulation No. 115 was promulgated to give choices to the royal families of these princely states to opt land for themselves. For the royal family of Swat, the then Pakistani government provided choice up to 24,000 units of land, and the rest would be in the ownership of the local tenants. However, unfortunately, this issue remains pending and unresolved. The litigation process continues between the royal family and local tenants. A massive gulf of misunderstanding exists between these two parties (Khan S. 2014).

Traditions and customs also have essential roles related to land in Swat. Land ownership is largely associated with descent and ethnic affiliation. Traditionally there are three critical aspects for claiming the land ownership through descent group affiliation in Swat. If a person is ethnically Afghan and has blood relation with the Yusufzai sub-tribe, clan, his claim to the land will never be rejected by the concern revenue department because they are the actual historical landowners. Secondly, the Sayyads or Miangaan's claim to the land will never be rejected by the revenue department, because they are the traditional owners of serai land. This type of land was allocated to the Sayyads, Miangaans, for performing their religious duties. Thirdly, *Quraish*<sup>6</sup> or mullahs should never be questioned for claiming a particular serai land, because they are also the historical and traditional owners of the land. Irrespective of these three claimants, if a fourth person claims a particular land would be questioned by the

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<sup>6</sup> Quraish is a synonym of mullahs who are the descendants of the traditional religious scholars in Swat.

concerned revenue department, he is bound to prove his ownership through legal certificates, stamped papers, and any other legal document (Khan S. 2014).

During the reign of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the landless of the Peshawar valley especially Charsadda (Hashtnagar) and Malakand were mobilised against the landholding aristocracy of the Pukhtun by the then Pakistan People's Party and secular left forces. However, in contrast, General Zia-ul-Haq introduced the Islamisation campaign in the wake of martial law in 1977 to repress all these progressive measures in Pakistan. According to Asim Sajjad Akhtar, quoting Ahmed (1986), the parallel state sponsorship of religio-political movements changed the dynamics of politics in Swat, Malakand, and other Pukhtun areas (Akhtar 2010). While it was the Pakistan People's Party along with smaller far-left groups, i.e. the Mazdur Kisan Party, that originally rode the wave of social transformation to create an association with the oppressed, Pakistan People Party adopted this populism during the 1970s and brought it into the political mainstream. The same formula has been applied by the Tehrik-i-Nifaaaz-i-Sharia'h Muhammadi (TNSM) under the leadership of Sufi Muhammad in the late 1980s. He exploited the public frustration with the oppressive state apparatus and used the idiom and slogans of Islam (Akhtar 2010). The TNSM provided a basis for the poor and downtrodden people to crush and de-legitimise the role of the political representative class of Swat. The open display of arms in mosques and public places encouraged the lower stratum of the society, and it also became the source of political power to impose personal will on the people. Old cases of land dispute remained unsettled since the time of the state merger until the era of the Taliban. Some people joined the Taliban only to regain and recapture their land and to have revenge against their opponents. The rest of the people were at the mercy of the Taliban. Local Islamic/Sharia'h courts were established everywhere in Swat during Taliban time to decide civil cases (Shuja-U-Din 2011).

The division of Swat society was characterised under the roles of traditional khans and malaks, but the landed aristocracy here is meagre. The khans and malaks are the traditional owners of the tribal authority, but it has become hereditary in spirit and content in Swat. The khans and malaks still dominate the arena of politics and nobility in Swat are relating to land and genealogy. Within the clan, the small landowners or the weak families of the particular clan was also covertly against the powerful figures of their own clan members due to the jealousy of the superior clan. The strong factor of agnatic rivalry (*tarburwali*) had also sown hatred and jealousy among the strong and weak families of the *khel*. The strong families of khans created divisions between the landless and landed elites of the Pukhtun descent since long and the former exploited the opportunity to take revenge from the strong segment of the society. Some writers are of the opinion that their main target was the land-owning local elites (khans) many of whom were killed and whose property was destroyed (Ashraf 2012). However, it did not mean that they killed and targeted all segments of the dominant echelons of the society.

## **Taliban story of Swat**

The in-depth understanding of Swat society requires some thoughtful and specific analysis because some writers have incorrectly perceived it in the context of militancy. Much literature has been produced on this issue, but many writers have made overly simplistic

assumptions based solely on theoretical knowledge. Certain writers like Sultan-i-Rome (2008) perceived the Swat crisis as the reaction against the prevalent corrupt system; while Sartaj Khan (2009) labelled it the pure manifestation of social class struggle. However, for the more in-depth understanding of Swat crises, it is imperative to rely on historical and anthropological analysis of the valley.

During the heyday of Talibanisation in Swat, the landless Taliban burnt and captured the crops and gardens of some khans in Swat to avenge their oppressors<sup>7</sup> (Khan, Khan, & Khan 2011). They attacked multiple influential people in different villages of Swat for personal revenge. In Matta Tahsil, Gujars and other landless groups started agitation against the previous injustices of the landed Pukhtuns, but their leaders predominantly belonged to the sub-sections of the Yusufzai tribe (Hakimzai 2011). In the Taliban movement of Swat, the strong commanders belonged to the politically and economically weak families of the clan. This troika of weak united against the semi-feudal system and either justified their slogan by declaring them to be anti-poor and anti-Islamic agents of the West. The weaker strata among Pukhtuns joined the Taliban movement, accessing arms and ammunition along with monthly stipends, while the khans and malaks supported them mutely, remaining as silent spectators, neither joining the Taliban nor supporting government explicitly. The small sections in Taliban in Matta and Jura village attempted to re-confiscate the lost captured land that was owned by the so-called powerful khans and malaks from the other clan members before the Swat crisis. The families of certain khans were accused by certain weak Pukhtun factions of seizing their collective land. These people become part of the Taliban to decide their cases of land and re-allotment of their communal property to them. Their motivation was not purely the collective cause of socialist perspective but by the customary law of retaliation. According to Khurshid Kaka Ji :

... a person came to one of the influential Khan's *hujrah* much before the incident of Taliban time that I need a house or rough muddy hut for living. The Khan gave him his cattle shed for residence. After some time the person's wife bore child and at the time of Taliban movement that child insulted the concerned Khan for the previous injustices which he committed against his parents' (Yusufzai 2010).

The story denotes personal feelings of revenge that guide the Pukhtun mentality for the attainment of lost honour. The ethical code of Pasthun people (*Pukhtunwali*) is the product of a tribal code that is solely based on incoherence instead of a coherent systematic manner. As David Edwards points out:

Pukhtun moral incoherence is the product of the conjunction of three opposite, contradictory, and incompatible moral systems of codes that are ultra-individualistic code of honor (*nang*), universalistic moral system of Islam, and the code of the monarchy (Shahrani 2002).

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<sup>7</sup> Shujaat Ali Khan crops and land was burnt and reclaimed by the Taliban in Shangwatai village. Muhammad Sher Khan house and Hujrah was burnt by the Taliban in village KozShawar. Abdul Kabir Khan of village KozShawar property was also damaged by the Taliban. Shakir Ullah, Interview with the author, KozShawar, 30 May 2011.

Class difference and social stratification exist almost everywhere in every society. A similar situation also exists in Swat, but its main driving force was the principle of retaliation. However, labelling the Swat crisis as the pure manifestation of the class factor cannot be justified. It was neither a Marxist class struggle nor was there any Marxist manifesto to bring about a communist revolution; it was unconsciously the revengeful feelings against that particular aristocracy.

Retaliation is the prime duty of any Pukhtun to equalise his status in society. They never forget the treatment of injustice and personal insult in any circumstances. In situations like these, they try to seek the opportunity to take revenge from the opponent or enemy for the wrong committed. These characteristics of the Pukhtuns are basically guided by their traditional ethical code, not class. The connotation of class has an entirely different context from the concept of the Pukhtun mindset. The feelings of unconscious class war have not been proliferated at a general level but are simply misunderstood by certain circles in Pakistan. In the upper Swat area of Dureshkhela and Jura villages, the people were instigated against the powerful khans, and they took violent action only as a way of settling scores. During the movement, these poor people sought the opportunity to gain wealth and power, and they were paid initially for their services, but they were motivated to seek revenge on their opponents (Khan M. Z. 2011).

Addressing the class question, Sartaj Khan explains that Swat was fully absorbed into Pakistan in 1969 and subjected to the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) regulations. The old Council of tribes (*Jarga*) of the clans that had endorsed previous rulers was replaced by the corrupt taking sides system (*dallah* or *para-jamba*), in which leaders supported adherents by any means, concentrated on petty issues, and ignored the common good (Khan S. 2009). Actually, the concept of taking sides was established much earlier and further patronised by the Bacha Sahib rule in 1917, as Fredrik Barth mentioned in his famous work on Swat (Barth 1959). After the merger, Swat came under the sway of political parties, and the concept of taking sides was greatly weakened (Sharar 2011).

This is also a complementary truth that negates the class concept in Swat Talibanisation. The top leadership of the Taliban just exploited the lower-class people in terms of instigating them against the innocent people of Swat. Generally, Swat has no strong roots of feudalistic nature; however, historically two families possessed great socio-political and economic stature, i.e., Afzal Khan Lala's family, and the family of Khan Bahadur in terms of land and political authority (Hakimzai K.-u.-H. 2011). These families had strong historical roots since the time of state formation and led the two rival factions (*dallah*) during the time of Wali. Throughout Swat, no large landlords are found except small khans and elders at the village level. Every village clan has elders and malaks who attained the title voluntarily from the other clan members. If Swat society was so closely divided on patron-client relations and harshly alienated on the basis of the class struggle concept, then why did the people in local elections elect also a common-family man as the head of Swat administrative region (*tahsil*)? Secondly, the people elected a certain district head, coming from the common family instead of a khan's son in the local elections in 2001. More recently, the people of Swat elected many common candidates as Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) in the general elections of 2013.



To some extent, it was a psychological class war but not an economically organised conscious class war against the upper class (Hakimzai 2011). During the Taliban movement, they extensively ill-treated the traditional professional class, like barbers, and other poor people. The Taliban banned all barber shops to prevent the shaving of beards. They also demanded that audio and video shops, owned by poor small businessmen, sell only Islamic CDs and Cassettes. These acts badly affected the professions of poor barbers and other shops that were associated with the lower stratum of society (Ulasyar 2011). It was not a class war but an intrigue against the local indigenous cultural ways of the people. The Taliban also tortured and lashed local musicians and singers along with inflicting a ban on women from moving freely from their homes. In Swat Taliban, the class war concept was only an illusion and desperation: 2% of the people that they killed were khans and 98% poor and middle-class people. Traditional values of culture provided peace and harmony in Swat, but the local cultural way was disturbed by certain unfavourable forces, due to which the local charm and social order were lost (Ulasyar 2011).

Before and during the state era, it was crystal clear who was khan and who was not, and who was political, socially, and economically well and who was not. However, after the state merger in 1969, the pattern of governance was not according to the temperament of the people. The former state customary law was continued until 1974, following which the government of Pakistan sent packages of laws and regulations to the Swat (Advocate 2011). The introduction of Pakistani civil laws, with the complete bifurcation of local customs and traditions, coupled with a lack of investment in education and infrastructure, has created long-standing anti-government sentiments among the poor and downtrodden population. With the extension of PATA regulations in the area, it further created more confusion for people as they came under a number of different ruling systems (Bhatti 2009). It was the most corrupt and prolonged system of litigation for the majority of people.

Furthermore, the general Zia-ul-Haq's regime patronised religion that mixed traditional code of the Pukhtuns with Islam (Sharar 2011). This new scenario created a religious middle-class leadership in Swat, which later was manifested in the form of the militant *Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Law* (TNSM)<sup>8</sup>. The existing system of the PATA regulation was unable to deliver speedy justice, so in the 1990s a conflicting situation occurred, and Sufi Muhammad cashed in on the opportunity and soon demanded the Sharia'h system. He capitalised on opposition to the corrupt political system to enhance his support among traders and some tribal leaders. In these circumstances, the traditional leadership was strong enough to deal with the situation. In the end, Swat was pushed in the vortex of militancy and religious extremism in 1994.

As far as the TNSM movement is concerned, its official stand is that Islam authorises no tax to be levied on the Muslims save the payment of the tax on savings (*zakat*) and the tax on harvest (*ushar*) for the poor. Who then will be the direct taxpayers if taxes are levied: the poor or the rich? That was why, besides the other alleged quarters, not

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<sup>8</sup> Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi is a Pakistani militant group whose objective is to enforce Sharia law in the country. The rebel group took over much of Swat in 2007. It was founded by Sufi Muhammad in 1992, and was banned by President Pervez Musharraf on January 12, 2002.

only financial but moral support came to the movement from the privileged class, the bourgeoisie and the financially well-off people (Sultan-i-Rome 2015). The TNSM movement was initially joined by the local influential and large landholders of the area for their own vested interests, and they, together with common men, extensively propagated and encouraged the activities of the TNSM in Swat.

The same is also true for the Taliban movement in Swat because its continuation was joined by the poor as mercenaries, but their leadership command was predominantly exercised by the landowning class. These people were, thus, not motivated purely on the basis of class, but for the attainment of power and authority to join the Taliban front.

Again Sartaj Khan says that 'the year Swat merged with Pakistan was also a year of the mass peasant upheaval in the country. The landless occupied the land they cultivated. Thanks to this movement, Gujars, mostly peasants, acquired up to 42% of land in some villages (2009). The figure presented by Sartaj Khan is based on exaggeration because the Gujars in Swat mostly lives in hills and far inaccessible lands of the forests. During that movement, they captured very little and meagre land, not to the extent of 42%. The forest landowners in Swat are not Gujars alone but here includes the provincial government of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Miangaan of Swat and Pukhtun clans also have the share in the production of the forest. The provincial government of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa gave royalty to the Gujars, Miangaans and Pukhtuns up to 40% and 20% at a minimum (Sharar 2011).

After 1985, the tourism industry played an essential role in the economy of Swat. Continuous peace and harmony promoted tourism, which also resulted in the growth of a very robust hotel industry. From the original two hotels, the number swelled to a staggering 100 to 300 (Khan H. Z. 2011). After all, this peaceful process was disturbed by the TNSM movement in 1994. It massively damaged the whole economic and social system of Swat, especially tourism. The hotel industry in Swat from 2007 to 2009 lost 7.5 million rupees, rendering 15,000 people and 25,000 suppliers to hotels jobless (Khan H. Z. 2011).

The Taliban phenomena in Swat previously in the form of TNSM and currently in the form of *Taliban Movement of Pakistan Swat* were pushed forward by some influential political figures and implicit terror groups. The local khans and landlords in the area willingly or unwillingly supported the movement for gaining self-interest or with the fear syndrome. This is the big question mark for all the outside and inside analysts of Swat to offer their opinion and judge the situation according to the actual circumstances. The Taliban in Swat recruited many unemployed youths and initially offered stipends for their services. They ruthlessly destroyed many schools, which were the remnants of the ex-ruler of Swat, and pushed the society back toward darkness. If this was the class war; why did they destroy the schools of the poor people?

The class context of Swat was propagated out of proportion during the crisis in Swat, but it is only one factor that does not uncover the whole scenario. The people were not organised under the sloganeering of pure Marxist philosophy but to a large extent by the religion. They wanted to impose the pure form of Shari'a in the society and to restore mechanisms for speedy justice. Barth and Akbar S. Ahmed stated that a considerable population of Swat belongs to the professional class of the landless. This is not true; the majority of people in Swat are of Pukhtun Yusufzai descent, especially in rural settings.

Every village has certain family of barber, weaver, potter, carpenter, blacksmith oil producer and farmer. They all contribute to the society, and they are rewarded according to their profession. The traditional code of the society has been changed now due to the globalisation process and Islamic radicalism. Concurrently, Pukhtun society is exposed to two extreme influences: one is the religio-political blend of radical and imported form of retrogressive interpretation of religion that profusely eroded Pukhtun cultural values and pattern of behaviour and replaced it with the alien values of pan-Islamist movements. It is mainly because of the Cold War influences that encouraged political Islamist forces to operate in the Pukhtun areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan with the strong support of the USA, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. This sponsored version of political Islam has enormously dogmatized/radicalised the lower stratum of the Pukhtun surroundings and way of life (Yousafzai 2011).

Since the formation of Pakistan, functional inequality persists in the state system along with the social organisation of the overall society. The existing social structure remains intact in the form of a feudalistic society and has not experienced radical change (Ahmad 2006). One cannot generalise the issue of militancy in a unilateral way of justifying it as the single cause of Talibanisation in Swat. As the Secretary of State of the United States, George Shultz once declared, terrorism to be a form of political violence and enormous threat to Western civilisation. The scourge of its widespread expansion is also the potential threat to the whole world. The anarchy and chaotic situation in Swat have been emerged not of retaliation from the feudal and Pukhtun landholding class but an obsessive revenge from the established system of injustice. The corrupt system of bureaucracy and bureaucratisation complicated the entire situation. No chance of social change in Pakistan will occur unless the bureaucracy itself is reformed (Ahmad 2006). Eqbal Ahmad (2001) has stated that 'history unfortunately recognizes and accords visibility to power and not to weakness. Therefore, visibility has been accorded to dominant groups.' Power and authority determines the personalities, not the intellect and human dignity in the memories of humans. The same has been adopted by the militants in Swat to gain power with the legalised label of religion to determine their worth and visibility in the society. They were not mobilised under Marxism but struggled for the attainment of absolute power.

## **Conclusion**

Some writers have explained the issue of Swat Talibanisation in terms of a purely Marxist class struggle between the landed aristocracy and the landless; but it is not based on such argument because, firstly, after the merger of the Swat state into Pakistan in 1969, Swat came under the sway of political parties and the concept of the taking sides system weakened to a large extent. The traditional agrarian mode of the economy was shifted to a cash economy, which opened new vistas for the people of Swat. The Gujars and other landless people acquired money from abroad and purchased valuable land for agriculture and other uses.

Secondly, the Swat Taliban extensively ill-treated the traditional professional class, like barbers, and other poor people. This hugely influenced the livelihood of the poor vendors. In the Swat crisis, the class struggle concept is just an illusion, because only 2% of the people killed were khans and 98% were poor and middle-class people. In the

light of this evidence, we can conclude that Swat Taliban movement was not caused by this single factor but by multiple other factors.

Thirdly, the Taliban movement in Swat was justified under the sacred guise of religion. It was the most critical source of mobilisation in Swat in the time of crisis. Religion has provided a strong base for the permeation of the Taliban in society. In short, religious spirit and zeal were exploited by the authorities and ignited flames of violence in the entire valley.

Fourthly, numerous people avenged their old enmities under the guise of religious militancy. The principles of retaliation and the perpetual concept of agnatic rivalry equalises and frequently sustains the structure of egalitarianism. The same argument has also been propounded by Christine Noelle by saying that agnatic rivalry reconfirms their social cohesion against the outsiders under the trait of shameful conduct (*nang*). However, this also limits the amount of wealth and power acquired by the tribesmen within the society. They consider wealth to be less important than the importance of honour. The actual root cause of the continuation of agnatic rivalry in Pukhtuns is perpetuated on the basis of disputes over land, and competition for power and status. These situations multiply the feelings of tough competitions among the social fabric of Pukhtuns. In particular, the close agnatic kin are the primary competitors for the acquisition of power, and status that are attached to the land. As Akbar S. Ahmed (1986) states, 'this perpetual competition for wealth gives rise to the institution of agnatic rivalry which shapes both tribal structure and character among Pukhtuns. It is also a push factor giving rise to extensive out-migration from Pukhtun areas' (1986) All these factors are elementary characteristics of Swat Taliban movement. No single factor explains the crisis in detail.

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## Povzetek

Kriza v pokrajini Swat v Pakistanu leta 2007 je kritično področje analize v tem članku. Swatsko krizo so v svojih raziskavah obravnavali različni znanstveniki, novinarji in akademiki, tako tuji kot lokalni, vendar pa se je osnovno razumevanje tega vprašanja izoblikovalo pred dejanskim družbeno-kulturnim kontekstom tega območja. Oblika militantnih skupin Swata in drugih območij Pukhtuna je nekako raznolika. Njena študija bi morala upoštevati družbeno-kulturni, gospodarski in politični kontekst te regije. Osnovni vidik pričujočega raziskovanja je analiza trditve o razrednem dejavniku, ki so ga nekateri avtorji obravnavali kot osnovni vzrok militantnosti v Swatu. Celotno situacijo so namreč analizirali v okviru marksistične filozofije, dejstva pa ne podpirajo tega stališča. Talibani v Swatu niso nikoli motivirali ljudi na podlagi marksistične progresivne filozofije, ampak so jih spodbujali v skladu z razponom njihovih interpretacij religije in tudi s Pukhtunsko kulturno prakso maščevanja.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** družbeni dejavniki, terorizem, avtohtoni kulturni vzorci, maščevanje

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