

Institutionalizing Patriarchy: Household, State, And Cultural Structures Under the Post-2021 Taliban Regime in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Since August 2021, the Taliban regime has introduced a series of decrees restricting women's education, employment, mobility, and public participation. While these measures are often described as ideological or religious, this paper argues that they represent a systematic institutionalization of patriarchy. Drawing on Sylvia Walby's structural theory of patriarchy, the article demonstrates how the Taliban consolidate gender domination across three interlocking domains: household patriarchy, state patriarchy, and cultural patriarchy. The regime strengthens male authority within families, codifies gender exclusion through bureaucratic enforcement, and legitimizes subordination through moral-religious discourse. By conceptualizing post-2021 governance as systemic patriarchal state formation, this study contributes to feminist sociological debates on authoritarianism, institutionalized inequality, and gendered citizenship.

Keywords: Patriarchy, State, Taliban, Afghanistan, Cultural, Household, Gender, Feminism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy is a structural system in which men collectively dominate women through institutionalized social relations (Walby 1990). It operates across interconnected domains such as the state, labour, family, sexuality, culture, and violence. Gender based violence functions as a core mechanism sustaining this gender role (Connell 1987; True 2012). Such violence regulates women's mobility, labour, sexuality, and political participation. When embedded in law and state power, gender violence becomes a strategy of governance rather than an exception. Afghanistan's contemporary gender order is rooted in decades of continuous conflict, foreign intervention, and political fragmentation since the late 1970s soviet occupation, civil war, Taliban rule (1996-2021), and Taliban 2.0, each reshaped gender relations. Women's status has repeatedly been used as a symbolic marker of regime legitimacy (Kandiyoti 2007; Abu-Lughod 2002). The first Taliban regime institutionalised severe restrictions on women's education, employment, dress, and mobility. These policies functioned not only religiously but as a mechanism of social and political control (Moghadam 2003). After 2001, constitutional reforms formally gave women's rights and access to public life. However, these gains were uneven, urban-centred, and heavily aid-dependent (Kandiyoti 2016). Decades of militarization strengthened hyper-masculinized forms of political authority. In conflict settings, gender control often intensifies as protection and guardianship narratives (Cockburn 2010; True 2012). In Afghanistan, regulating women's behaviour has been intertwined with sovereignty and power regulation.

Post-2021 Taliban Governance: From Norm to Institution

After returning to power in August 2021, the Taliban imposed sweeping restrictions on women's rights. Girls' secondary education was suspended, and women were banned from universities. Female civil servants were dismissed, and NGO employment was prohibited in many sectors. Strict dress codes and mobility restrictions were enforced nationwide. These measures extend beyond social conservatism into formal state policy. Exclusion has been codified through decrees and regulatory directives. Bureaucratic institutions oversee compliance and enforcement mechanisms. Economic policies have increased women's dependency by removing access to paid work. Moral religious discourse frames these controls as culturally and theologically legitimate. Together, these dynamics reflect the institutionalization of patriarchal governance rather than temporary regulation.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SYLVIA WALBY AND STRUCTURAL PATRIARCHY

Understanding the post-2021 Taliban governance as the institutionalization of patriarchy requires a framework that conceptualizes gender domination as structural rather than episodic. Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy provides such an approach. Her framework enables analysis of how gender hierarchy becomes embedded in governance, law, economic organization, and symbolic order.

Crucially, patriarchy is not reducible to prejudice, tradition, or isolated discrimination. It is sustained through institutionalized arrangements that systematically advantage men as a group. This structural orientation distinguishes her theory from accounts that treat gender inequality primarily as ideology. She identifies six interrelated patriarchal structures: household production, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality, and culture. Each constitutes a site where inequality is produced and reproduced. Household production concerns domestic labour and economic dependency; paid work addresses labour market exclusion and segregation; the state encompasses law and bureaucratic authority; male violence functions as coercive enforcement; sexuality regulates body autonomy; and culture legitimizes hierarchy through religion and symbolic norms.

Walby's distinction between private and public patriarchy further defines this analysis. Private patriarchy centres on individualized male authority within the household, where women's labour and mobility are directly controlled. Public patriarchy operates through collective and institutional mechanisms such as labour markets and state bureaucracies, shifting domination from personal authority to structural exclusion. Walby also challenges the assumption that the state is gender-neutral. Through legislation and administrative enforcement, state institutions actively shape access to rights, resources, and representation. Feminist political theorists similarly argue that regimes often deploy gender governance to consolidate authority (Connell 1987). Male violence, in this framework, is not incidental but constitutive: it regulates sexuality, mobility, and participation (True 2012).

Walby's structural model provides a powerful lens for analysing post 2021 Afghanistan because it shifts attention from isolated decrees to systemic organization. Rather than interpreting gender restrictions as discrete religious edicts, her framework directs analysis toward the interaction of the household, state, cultural, and coercive structures. First, household patriarchy is strengthened through state policy. Mobility restrictions requiring male guardianship, bans on women's employment in many sectors, and limits on independent income generation intensify women's economic dependency. These measures re-center male authority within the family and reduce women's bargaining power, reinforcing domestic hierarchy not as custom alone but as a policy outcome. Second, public patriarchy is institutionalized bureaucratically. Exclusion from secondary and higher education, dismissal from public office, and barriers to NGO

employment embed gender discrimination within administrative systems. Hierarchy is no longer informal; it is codified and routinized. State apparatus becomes the mechanism through which gender inequality is standardized and enforced. Third, cultural patriarchy legitimizes these measures. Official discourse frames women's visibility as morally dangerous and domestic confinement as protective. Through religious and ethical narratives, political exclusion is transformed into moral obligation. This symbolic framing is not incidental rhetoric but an ideological infrastructure that normalizes institutional discrimination. Fourth, coercive mechanisms ensure compliance. Moral policing, surveillance, and threats of punishment operationalize patriarchal norms. Violence, actual or anticipated, functions as regulatory infrastructure. The presence of enforcement mechanisms indicates that patriarchy is not sustained by consent alone but by organised coercive capacity.

The interaction of these domains suggests not a simple reversion to private patriarchy but a fusion of private and public forms. Household authority is strengthened through formal policy, while public institutions codify domestic male control. This configuration challenges modernization assumptions that institutional development weakens patriarchy. Instead, to demonstrate how authoritative governance can reorganize patriarchal structures into a coherent state project. Through Walby's framework, patriarchy in post-2021 Afghanistan can thus be conceptualised as institutional design.

3. HOUSEHOLD PATRIARCHY: RE-CENTERING MALE GUARDIANSHIP

While many societies have historically shifted from private to public forms of patriarchy, post-2021 Afghanistan reflects a deliberate re-centering of male guardianship reinforced through state power. Following their return in 2021, the Taliban implemented policies that structurally strengthened male control within families. Central among these was the enforcement of the mahram (male guardian) requirements. Women were prohibited from traveling long distances without a close male relative, with enforcement expanding in 2022 to broader domestic mobility restrictions. In practice, male relatives became institutionalised gatekeepers of the women's movement. The 2024 law on the propagation of virtue and prevention of vice further consolidated this system by granting the morality police authority to monitor dress codes, segregation norms, and guardianship compliance. Though framed as moral regulation, the law effectively channels women's public participation through male supervision and state surveillance. Economic restructuring has intensified this dynamic. The suspension of girls' secondary education (2022), the university ban, and restrictions on women's employment in NGOs and international agencies have sharply reduced women's income opportunities. Feminist political economy scholarship demonstrates that financial dependency diminishes bargaining power within households (Kandiyoti 2007; Moghadam 2003). In Afghanistan's current context, such dependency is not incidental but policy-produced. The dissolution of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, closure of shelters, and suspension of enforcement of the 2009 EVAW (Elimination of Violence against Women) law have removed legal recourse against domestic abuse. The recent penal code 2026 explicitly permits husbands to physically punish their wives and children, as long as the abuse/ beatings do not result in broken bones or open wounds.

4. STATE PATRIARCHY: BUREAUCRATIZING GENDER EXCLUSION

If household patriarchy re-centres male authority within the family, state patriarchy institutionalizes gender hierarchy through formal governance. In Walby's framework, the state is not neutral; it can consolidate patriarchal power through law and policy (Walby 1990). Post-2021 Afghanistan illustrates this consolidation in explicit form.

Previously, Afghan women had made significant educational strides, with female literacy rates rising from 17% in 2001 to nearly 30% by 2020 and women achieving unprecedented university participation by 2021 (Amnesty International 2022). Following August 2021, the Taliban issued decrees progressively excluding women from public life: suspending girls' secondary education (2022), banning women from universities (2022). Dismissing female employees and prohibiting women from working in NGOs and many international agencies (2022-2023) (Human Rights Watch 2023). These measures represent a systematic removal from the public sphere. Gender discrimination is transformed from a social norm into an administrative rule, an example of what Walby terms public patriarchy. Authoritarian regimes often consolidate power through administrative penetration of everyday life (Brownlee 2007), and in Afghanistan, gender regulation has become a visible marker of sovereignty. The enforcement of dress codes, gender segregation, and media restrictions signals state authority over moral order. Unlike private patriarchy, state patriarchy operates through scale and bureaucratic standardization: decrees are nationally disseminated, and compliance is monitored through checkpoints, inspections, and reporting mechanisms. This coordination transforms patriarchy from diffuse social practice into centralized governance logic. Walby (1990; 1997) argues that patriarchy becomes most entrenched when its structures reinforce one another. In post-2021 Afghanistan, education bans restrict women's access to paid work, increasing household dependency; guardianship requirements regulate mobility; moral policing enforces compliance; and the withdrawal of legal protections removes institutional recourse. Together, these interlocking mechanisms embed gender hierarchy within administrative design, formalizing patriarchy as a governing principle rather than a mere social norm.

5. CULTURAL PATRIARCHY: MORAL LEGITIMIZATION AND SYMBOLIC CONTROL

Cultural patriarchy legitimizes both moral discourse and symbolic control. Culture constitutes a distinct patriarchal structure because it produces normative systems that define gender hierarchy as natural, virtuous, or divinely mandated (Walby 1990). It constructs obedience as morality and subordination as protection. In post 2021 Afghanistan, the Taliban have institutionalised this form of patriarchy by regulating visibility, speech, movement, and representation, transforming gender inequality into moral obligations.

The May 2022 hijab decree explains this syndrome. Women were required to observe “proper hijab”, with full body covering identified as preferable, and male guardians (mahrams) held accountable for non-compliance. This policy extends beyond dress regulation. By assigning enforcement responsibility to male relatives, the decree embeds cultural conformity within kinship structures, reinforcing male guardianship while framing compliance as religious virtue. Educational bans further demonstrate moral reframing. When girls' secondary schools were closed (2022), and women were barred from universities (2022), officials justified the measures in religious-ethical terms, emphasizing the need for an “Islamic environment”. Exclusion was not described as a denial of rights but as a moral precaution. In Walby's terms, cultural patriarchy legitimizes structural inequality by redefining acceptable female aspiration (Walby 1990).

Media restrictions similarly institutionalize symbolic exclusion. Female presenters were required to cover their faces, and women's visibility in journalism and entertainment declined sharply. When women disappear from screens and platforms, their absence normalizes inequality with time. The 2024 law on the propagation of virtue and prevention of vice further formalized moral surveillance, expanding authority over dress, segregation, speech, and behaviour. Public space bans, restricting women from parks, gyms,

and recreational venues, extend this logic spatially. Their presence in the civic environment becomes morally suspect, reinforcing the notion that public space is exclusively male space.

Taliban discourse frequently frames these restrictions as resistance to Western influence, nationalizing patriarchy as cultural authenticity. Kandiyoti (2007) notes that women's status has long functioned as a symbolic terrain in Afghan political struggles.

6. BROADER SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

The institutionalization of patriarchy under post-2021 Taliban governance produces consequences that extend far beyond the lives of individual women. When gender hierarchy becomes embedded simultaneously within households, state institutions, and cultural norms, its effect reverberates throughout economic systems, public institutions, generational trajectories, and national development. Sylvia Walby's structural theory of patriarchy emphasizes that patriarchal institutions are interlocking and mutually reinforcing; therefore, exclusion in one domain generates a destabilizing effect across others (Walby 1990). The Afghan case demonstrates how gender repression operates not only as a mechanism of social control but also as a process of systemic de-development that reshapes the trajectory of an entire society.

Economic contraction and labour market collapse

One of the most immediate consequences of gender exclusion is economic contraction. Prior to the Taliban's return, women's participation in public sector employment, healthcare, education, media, and civil society organisations had gradually expanded, particularly in urban areas. Women worked as teachers, doctors, administrators, journalists, and humanitarian workers, contributing both to household income and the functioning of key social institutions. The removal of women, therefore, produced a dual crisis: reduced household earnings and weakened institutional capacity. Feminist political economy research demonstrates that limiting women's labour force participation diminishes national productivity, reduces economic growth, and intensifies poverty (Moghdam 2003; True 2012). Women's paid and unpaid labour forms a critical component of economic systems, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states. In Afghanistan, where the economy was already highly vulnerable due to decades of conflict, international sanctions, and heavy dependence on foreign aid, the systematic exclusion of women has further intensified economic instability. The Taliban's restrictions on women's employment in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are particularly consequential. Humanitarian programs often rely on female staff to reach women beneficiaries, especially in societies where cultural norms limit interactions between unrelated men and women. When women are barred from working in humanitarian organizations, aid delivery becomes severely constrained. Healthcare outreach, food distribution programs, educational services, and community development initiatives all rely on female personnel to access households and provide gender-sensitive services. The absence of female staff, therefore, disrupts humanitarian infrastructure and reduces the effectiveness of international assistance. At the household level, the prohibition of women's employment also increases economic dependency. Families that previously relied on dual incomes must now depend solely on male breadwinners. In a context of widespread unemployment and economic collapse, this concentration of financial responsibility heightens vulnerability. Households face increased poverty risks, reduced access to healthcare and education, and greater economic insecurity. Patriarchal policy thus produces not only gender inequality but also macroeconomic fragility.

Educational exclusion and generational inequality

The suspension of girls' secondary education and the prohibition of women from attending universities represent one of the most far-reaching structural transformations introduced after 2021. Education is not

merely a site of individual advancement; it shapes generational mobility, professional development, and civic participation. By interrupting girls' education beyond the primary level, the Taliban regime is producing a generation of young women whose economic opportunities and social mobility are severely restricted. This educational exclusion creates long-term generational inequality. A population of girls who are prevented from completing secondary or higher education will face limited employment prospects, reduced autonomy, and increased economic dependence. The consequences extend beyond the present moment; they will shape labour markets, family structures, and social hierarchies for decades. Walby's theoretical framework suggests that exclusion from paid work and state institutions reinforces patriarchal authority within the household (Walby 1990). Educational bans accelerate this process by eliminating professional pathways before they can even begin. Structural dependency becomes preemptively engineered through institutional policy. The erosion of women's participation in education also affects broader human capital development. Female teachers previously played a vital role in Afghanistan's education system, particularly in girls' schools. Their removal reduces teaching capacity and narrows the diversity of educational expertise within institutions. Furthermore, the absence of women in academic environments limits intellectual exchange and professional development for both male and female students. Gender exclusion, therefore, undermines the overall resilience and quality of the education system.

Public health and social services erosion

The exclusion of women from healthcare employment and training has direct consequences for public health. In many Afghan communities, cultural norms require female patients to be treated by female healthcare professionals. When women are restricted from studying medicine, nursing, or midwifery, or from working in hospitals and clinics, access to essential healthcare services declines significantly. This restriction generates cascading effects across the healthcare system. Maternal mortality risks increase when pregnant women cannot access qualified female medical professionals. Vaccination campaigns and community health outreach programs become less effective when female health workers are unavailable to engage with women and children. Reproductive healthcare services, including prenatal care and family planning education, become increasingly limited. Feminist scholarship has long argued that patriarchal systems frequently undervalue care work while simultaneously depending upon it (Walby 1990). In Afghanistan, the removal of women from professional care sectors exposes this contradiction. Healthcare systems depend heavily on female labour, yet patriarchal policies restrict women's participation. As a result, both formal healthcare institutions and informal community care networks become destabilized.

Psychological and social isolation

Beyond economic and institutional consequences, the institutionalization of patriarchy also produces significant psychological and social effects. The restriction of women to domestic spaces, combined with the loss of educational opportunities and exclusion from public life, contributes to widespread social isolation and emotional distress. Participation in education, employment, and civic life provides individuals with a sense of identity, purpose, and social connection. When these avenues are systematically removed, women experience diminished social agency and autonomy. Sociological research on gendered confinement suggests that enforced invisibility weakens collective organization and limits opportunities for social solidarity. The prohibition of women from gathering in public spaces, including parks, universities, and workplaces, further restricts opportunities for interaction and collective mobilization. This fragmentation of women's social networks has broader societal implications. Civil society organizations lose members and leadership, advocacy movements weaken, and public discourse becomes

increasingly restricted. Authoritarian governance is reinforced when women are removed as active participants in political and civic life.

International isolation and developmental stagnation

Gender exclusion has also contributed to Afghanistan's growing international isolation. Diplomatic recognition, development partnerships, and foreign aid are often linked to commitments to human rights and gender equality. The Taliban's restrictive gender policies have therefore constrained Afghanistan's engagement with international institutions and donor governments. This isolation compounds existing economic difficulties. Reduced access to development assistance, investment, and technical cooperation limits the country's ability to rebuild infrastructure and strengthen public institutions. From a sociological perspective, patriarchy becomes intertwined with state legitimacy. Governance systems built around exclusion reduce the channels through which states integrate into global political and economic networks.

Structural de-development

Taken together, these developments indicate a broader process of structural de-development. The institutionalization of patriarchy narrows economic capacity, weakens public services, fragments civil society, entrenches generational inequality, and limits international integration. These outcomes are not merely unintended side effects of policy decisions. Rather, they are structurally linked to the reorganization of gender relations within the Afghan state. When half the population is systematically excluded from education, employment, and political life, societal resilience inevitably declines. Walby's theory predicts that patriarchal systems stabilize themselves through reinforcement across multiple institutional domains. The Afghan case, however, also demonstrates that such stabilization may come at the cost of long-term institutional capacity and socio-economic sustainability.

7. CONCLUSION

This article has argued that post-2021 Taliban governance in Afghanistan represents not merely a return to conservative gender norms but a systematic institutionalization of patriarchy embedded within the structures of the state. Drawing on Sylvia Walby's structural theory of patriarchy, the analysis has demonstrated how gender domination operates across interconnected domains: household authority, state institutions, and cultural discourse, producing a consolidated patriarchal order integrated into governance itself (Walby 1990). Rather than functioning as isolated policies, Taliban gender regulations collectively form a structural system that organizes social relations, institutional power, and citizenship along gendered lines. The analysis shows that the Taliban's gender policies cannot be adequately understood as episodic repression or as isolated religious decrees. Instead, they represent a structural reorganization of gender relations in which multiple institutional domains reinforce one another. At the household level, patriarchal authority has been re-centered through the strengthening of male guardianship and the reassertion of women's economic dependency. Restrictions on women's employment and education reinforce the expectation that women remain under male protection within the domestic sphere. These measures not only limit women's autonomy but also reinforce male authority within family structures. At the level of the state, patriarchal control has been codified through bureaucratic exclusion. Women have been systematically removed from many areas of public life, including higher education, government employment, and civil society organizations. Administrative decrees regulate women's mobility, dress, and labour participation, transforming gender hierarchy into a formalized component of governance. In this context, the state functions not as a neutral regulator but as an active agent in enforcing patriarchal norms. Scholars examining gender policy under the Taliban emphasize that these institutional restrictions

operate collectively to marginalize women from public institutions and decision-making processes (Popalzay 2025; Ullah, Mustafa, and Rubab 2025). Cultural discourse further legitimizes these arrangements. Moral and religious narratives frame gender segregation and women's limited public presence as necessary for social order, religious virtue, and protection of family honour. Through sermons, official statements, and institutional regulations, the regime constructs women's subordination as a moral obligation rather than a political decision. In doing so, cultural patriarchy provides ideological justification for legal and bureaucratic restrictions. The interplay between moral discourse and administrative policy illustrates how cultural narratives function as a mechanism of governance rather than simply reflecting traditional beliefs (Najibi and McLachlan 2023). Taken together, these domains form a mutually reinforcing system of patriarchy. Household authority is strengthened through economic dependency; state policy institutionalizes exclusion; and cultural narratives legitimize both forms of control. Walby's framework emphasizes that patriarchal structures operate across interconnected institutional sites (Walby 1990). The Afghan case illustrates how these sites can converge simultaneously, producing a consolidated gender regime embedded in governance. The Afghan case also complicates linear modernization narratives that assume institutional development naturally weakens patriarchal power. In Walby's theoretical formulation, historical transformations often involve a shift from private patriarchy, centered in household authority, to public patriarchy, embedded within labour markets and state institutions. In many contexts, modernization displaces domestic forms of domination but reproduces gender inequality within public institutions.

Post-2021 Afghanistan, however, presents a different configuration. Rather than replacing private patriarchy with public forms, the Taliban regime has fused them. Public institutions do not displace domestic authority; instead, they codify and enforce it. Male guardianship within the family is reinforced through bureaucratic regulation, and women's economic dependency is institutionalized through labour restrictions. The boundary between private and public patriarchy, therefore, becomes blurred, creating a unified structure in which domestic authority and state power reinforce one another. This fusion suggests a broader theoretical insight. Authoritarian regimes may engage in processes of patriarchal state formation, where gender hierarchy becomes a foundational organizing principle of governance. In such systems, patriarchy is not merely a residual cultural tradition but a deliberate political strategy. Regulation of gender roles becomes intertwined with the consolidation of authority, the assertion of moral legitimacy, and the symbolic performance of sovereignty. The governance model implemented by the Taliban illustrates how bureaucratic consolidation and ideological discourse interact to stabilize such a system. Administrative decrees remove women from educational institutions and workplaces. Moral narratives frame these exclusions as religious obligations; enforcement mechanisms ensure compliance; and economic restructuring deepens household dependency. Each component reinforces the others. Through this process, gender hierarchy becomes self-reproducing across institutional domains, making it more difficult to challenge through isolated reforms.

The broader societal consequences of this system are substantial. Institutionalized patriarchy narrows the base of civic participation, erodes human capital, weakens economic resilience, and restructures citizenship along gendered lines. When women are excluded from education, employment, and public decision-making, the public sphere contracts. Opportunities for political participation diminish, civil society becomes less representative, and social development slows. Research on Afghanistan's gender policies highlights that restrictions on women's education and employment have already produced profound implications for social and economic development (Toran 2024; Basu 2024). In this context,

gender ceases to be merely a social category and becomes a central axis of political stratification. The organization of rights, opportunities, and public participation becomes structured around gender hierarchy. Such differentiation reshapes not only social relations but also the nature of the state itself.

This study contributes to feminist sociological debates in several important ways. First, it extends Walby's structural framework into the study of contemporary authoritarian governance. Much feminist scholarship has examined patriarchy within democratic or neoliberal contexts, focusing on labour market inequality, welfare regimes, or cultural norms. The Afghan case demonstrates that patriarchal structures can also be deliberately intensified through centralized state power. Second, the analysis challenges culturalist explanations that attribute gender inequality primarily to tradition or religion. While religious discourse plays an important legitimizing role, the evidence indicates that patriarchal arrangements are actively constructed through policy decisions, bureaucratic regulations, and enforcement mechanisms. Gender inequality, therefore, emerges not simply from cultural norms but from institutional design and political strategy. Third, the article situates gender governance within broader processes of state formation. Authoritarian consolidation is often analyzed in terms of media control, suppression of opposition, or expansion of security apparatuses. The Afghan case demonstrates that the regulation of women's bodies, mobility, education, and labour can also function as a visible marker of sovereign authority. Gender regulation becomes a mechanism through which the state asserts control over society and reinforces ideological legitimacy. Finally, the concept of patriarchal state formation offers a framework for comparative analysis. Although Afghanistan represents an extreme example, similar dynamics can appear in other contexts where governments deploy moral discourse to restrict reproductive rights, regulate family structures, or limit women's participation in public life. Studying these patterns comparatively may help scholars better understand how gender hierarchy can function as a political infrastructure within different governance systems. Understanding post-2021 Afghanistan through the lens of structural patriarchy, therefore, shifts the analytical focus from episodic repression to systemic governance. Gender exclusion is not peripheral to Taliban rule; it is constitutive of it. The regime's authority is enacted and symbolized through the regulation of women's education, employment, dress, mobility, and visibility. In this sense, patriarchy operates as institutionalized governance.

Walby's framework reminds us that patriarchy persists not because it is immutable but because it is institutionally organized (Walby 1990). The Afghan case demonstrates how authoritarian regimes can deliberately reorganize and consolidate these structures. Recognizing this process provides feminist sociology with a deeper understanding of Afghanistan's current trajectory and a stronger analytical lens for examining how gendered power shapes state formation under conditions of authoritarian rule.

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