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### **Pamiri Ethnic Nationalism in Tajikistan: A Rising Threat against Future of Gilgit-Baltistan and Pak-China Economic Corridor (CPEC)**

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#### ABSTRACT

The Pamiri ethnic nationalism in Post-Soviet Tajikistan has led short-lived sovereign status in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region since 1992 to 1997 that has now been transmitted in the remaining parts of entire Badakhshan Region / Pamir Mountain Range; covering Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan, Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County of Tajikistan, and, Chitral District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region of Pakistan. As Pak-China Economic Corridor is crossing through Gilgit-Baltistan, anti-Pakistan elements can not only trigger Pamiri ethnic nationalism on the base of former historical sovereignty, separate linguistic identity or unique sectarian beliefs. This study discusses the ways of Pamiri ethnic community in the entire Badakhshan Region that has little been inspiring from the ethno-national separatism in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan. Similarly, anti-Pakistan and anti-CPEC elements are also analyzed in this study that are trying to disturb socio-political and religious environment of Gilgit-Baltistan to disrupt CPEC. Future assessments of the region after completing CPEC, historical background and economic worth of the Gilgit-Baltistan, and, developmental opportunities for Afghanistan and Tajikistan are also observed in this study.

**Keywords:** Moscow Protocol, Wakhi, Ismaili, Sofia Imamia Noorbakshia, Deobandi, BLA.

#### INTRODUCTION

Post-Soviet Tajikistan is experiencing three ethno-national movements that are affecting mainstream politics of Central and South Asia. These movements are independence movement of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan, Movement for United Badakhshan, and, the Movement for Agha Khan State. All the movements are leading by some Pamiri ethno-nationalists who are inhabitants of Pamir Mountain Range (called entire Badakhshan Region), generally follow Ismaili-Shia Islam. However, Independence Movement for Gorno-Badakhshan has been crushed by the Tajik military but seeds of separate identity are still existed in the region that are affecting remaining parts of entire Badakhshan Region. Afghanistan based political party; Laal-e-Badakhshan is also demanding for United Badakhshan while, there are several conspiracies exist in

Pakistan about Movement for Agha Khan State by Agha Khan Development Network in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral District. As Pak-China Economic Corridor is also crossing through this region, the significance of Gilgit-Baltistan has also been increased for the economic development of not only Pakistan and but entire region including China, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Russia because of shortest trade route towards other regions of the world. This study analyses how Pamiri ethnic nationalism can disturb peace and stability in Gilgit-Baltistan and how anti-Pakistan elements can create artificial ground against Pakistan and CPEC on linguistic or sectarian bases. Similarly, developmental opportunities for Afghanistan, Tajikistan and China through CPEC are also discussed in this study that would positively affect economic growth in Pakistan.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Soucek (2000) describes brief history of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan while, Tousley (2012) and Levent (2002) discuss demographics of this region along with constitutional provisions given to the ethnic communities within the Post-Soviet Tajikistan. They also illustrate the consequences of Tajik Civil War that occurred after announcement for the independence by the local government of the region.

Bliss (2010) defines political economy of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region and highlights the geopolitical and economic worth of Pamir Mountain Range. Similarly, the official statistics given by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Tajik Government, Afghan Government, Pakistani Government and Chinese Government describes the shares of the regions under entire Badakhshan region in the national economies of respective countries that are being claimed by the ethno-national separatists.

Mozaffari (2016) and Shoemaker (2014) present that economic facts about Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region while, Warikoo (2004) states the Movement for United Badakhshan; initiated by Laal-e-Badakhshan political party. Likewise, Small (2015) expresses the impacts of this movement on Pakistan-China Economic Corridor in case of having political strength.

On the other hand, Malik (2010) articulates different conspiracies about Agha Khan State and presents the chances of its occurrence in reality. Similarly, Cherry (2016) discusses the economic worth of the region within Central and South Asia where Ismaili-Shia Muslims are settled.

## ESSAY

Demography of Tajikistan is consisted upon 77.6 percent Tajik and 22.4 percent speak Pamiri ethnic communities. As Pamiri ethnic community lives in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan, they speak different Pamir languages, among which, ratio of Shughni speaking is 65 percent, Rushani speaking is 13 percent, Wakhi speaking is 12 percent, Bartangi speaking is five percent, Yazgulyami speaking is three percent, Khufi speaking is 1.5 percent and Ishkashmi speaking is 0.8 percent. Although, article 06 and 08 of Tajik Constitution describe

constitutional provisions for equality among all the ethnic communities but, Pamiri ethno-nationalists focus upon the articles of 69, 70, 72 and 78 as authoritarian powers of the Tajik president. Similarly, they also highlight articles 06, 07, 43, 46 and 47 of Tajik Constitution for exposing unacceptable policy of Tajik central government against freedom of expression and political rights of ethnic communities. At other side, state-centric nationalists emphasize on articles 76 to 80 which deals with the local government system and articles 81 to 83 which point out the autonomous status of Gorno-Badakhshan region (Tousley, 2012: 02-03; Levent, 2002: 204; Tajik Constitution Including Amendments, 2016).

In May 1992, civil War began in Tajikistan when majority of religious militant groups<sup>1</sup> rose up against the results of presidential election of 1991. As newly elected President of Tajikistan; Rahmon Nabiyeu was also the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, he composed his power in August 31, 1991. On October 06, 1991, he resigned from the post on public pressure for contesting upcoming presidential election. He won this election on December 02, 1991 and became first elected president of Tajikistan after its independence. His victory was challenged by Leninabad and Kulyab region based religious groups along with liberal democratic reformists. Both fought together while, local government of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region declared its independence at the same time. To end this civil unrest, Rahmon Nabiyeu resigned from presidency on September 07, 1992. At that time; Speaker of the Supreme Soviet; Akbarsho Iskandarov became acting president but resigned in very next month in an effort to resolve political chaos in the country. Emomali Rahmon; the speaker of Parliament at that time, became then the new President of Tajikistan. On the other hand, religious militant groups and liberal reformists organized under the banner of United Tajik Opposition<sup>2</sup> (UTO) in 1993. Approximately fifty thousand to one lac casualties were counted during this civil war till the June 1997 (Tousley, 2012: 03-04; Levent, 2002: 205)

On June 27, 1997, "General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan" and the "Moscow Protocol" were signed by President Emomali Rahmon and United Tajik Opposition leader;

<sup>1</sup> These groups were based on Leninabad and Kulyab regions and they were usually followers of Wahabi sect in Islam (Tousley, 2012, P.06).

<sup>2</sup> This alliance consisted upon Islamic Renaissance Party, Rastokhez, Democratic Party of Tajikistan, and Lali Badakhshan (Tousley, 2012, P.06).

Sayid Abdulloh Nuri along with Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General; Gerd Merrem in Moscow that resulted end of civil war and call back Gorno-Badakhshan's independence announcement (Tousley, 2012: 05-06; Levent, 2002: 206).

This region again saw a series of clashes in 2012 after the murder of Head of the Tajik Intelligence Agency's branch of Gorno-Badakhshan; Major General Abdullo Nazarov. Central Government of Tajikistan accused former war lord Tolib Ayombekov<sup>3</sup> and its loyal militants for this murder. Although, he denied but Tajik military initiated military operation against him and his loyal militants on July 24, 2012. According to western media, this fighting was the worst in this history of Tajikistan since the civil war of 1992-97. It was continued until the surrender of all the militant groups due to favor of "concession" given by the President Emomali Rakhmon (Tousley, 2012: 06-07).

History defines that Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan is an historical trade route among South, Central, East, Southeast Asian regions and Russia. According to political economists, if, affordable international trade routes will be analyzed for any country, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region will be proved as shortest affordable trade route for the countries as follows;

- For Pakistan towards Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Russia
- For China towards Tajikistan and Uzbekistan
- For Afghanistan towards Kyrgyzstan, and,
- For Kyrgyzstan towards Pakistan and Iran (Bliss, 2010: 02-03).

Economically, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region is backward but full of natural resources while, economy of the people usually depends upon daily cash income. At the same time, several political economists predict about the newly economically and politically developed state in case of getting independence of this regions. Not only regional or continental trade but this country will be able to control or support other ethno-nationalist separatist movements around its territory. And, such trend will not only reduce or undermine the political worth of Tajikistan but other countries around it will also be affected (Bliss, 2010: 04-05).

On the other hand, state-centric scholars in Tajikistan contend to defend their opinion against United States and

Russia. They claim that both powers are trying to emerge a new puppet state in between Central-South Asia regarding securing their interests in the region. Therefore, international media is projecting domestic socio-political differences among Tajik central government and Gorno-Badakhshan's local government as Pamiri ethnic movement for independence (Bliss, 2010: 05-06).

### **PAMIRI ETHNIC GROUP IN PAKISTAN**

Some ethnologists relate Pamiri ethnic group with Tajiks, but majority declared this argument as a reason of negligence. Pamiri languages are basically the part of Eastern Iranian Language which has several dialectics like Wakhi, Munji, Yidgha and Saikuli. In Pakistan, more than one million Pamiris live in Gilgit-Baltistan (formerly called Northern Areas) and Chitral District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Geographically, this region links with the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan towards north, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan towards west, Xinjiang autonomous region of China towards east, Azad Kashmir towards south and Indian held Kashmir towards southeast. This region established as a self-governing unit of Pakistan in 1970 with the amalgamation of Baltistan region, Gilgit Agency and the two former princely states of Hunza and Nagar. At that time, this region was called Northern Areas. In 2010, after 18<sup>th</sup> amendment in the Constitution of 1973, this administrative unit was renamed as "Gilgit-Baltistan". According to the census of 1998, estimated population of Gilgit-Baltistan was 870,347 while, as per survey in 2013, it was estimated near over 2 million. This region consists upon several diverse religious sects, ethnic and linguistic groups. Although, Urdu is a bridge language in this region but according to census of 1998, 35 percent people speak Balti language, 32 percent people speak Shina language, 22 percent people speak Burushaski language, 5 percent people speak Wakhi language and other 6 per cent speak different languages like Punjabi, Kashmiri, Pashto and Khowar. Similarly, majority of population is Muslim here which is following Shia-Twelve, Sunni-Brelvi, Sunni-Deobandi, Sufia-Imamia Noorbakshia and Ismaili-Shia sects (18<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution of 1973; Census Report of 1998).

About Wakhi, there is difference in opinion of ethnologist. Some consider it as an Indo-European language while

for tobacco smuggling (Tousley, 2012, P.06).

<sup>3</sup> A warlord during Tajik Civil War 1992-97, also accused

majority consider it as a dialect of Eastern Iranian languages like Pamiri languages. These people live in Hunza, Gojal, Ishkoman, Yasin and Gupis valleys in Northern Gilgit-Baltistan and Yarkhun valley in District Chitral of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Several Wakhi people in Hunza valley now speak Burushaski language which is not Indo-European neither Eastern Iranian language. Similarly, several Wakhi people in Ishkoman valley now speak Shina language which is also considered as Indo-Iranian dialectic of Indo-European languages. At the same time, several Wakhi people in Yasin and Chitral valleys now speak Khowar language which is also an Indo-Iranian dialectic of Indo-European languages. People speaking Yidgha dialectic of Pamiri languages are also lived in Chitral valley (Roy, 2000: 65-66).

### **WAYS OF ASSOCIATION AMONG PAMIRIS**

As Pamiri people divide into four geographical territories of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, China and Pakistan but they are very much associated with each other. There are three types of association among them.

- Socio-cultural association through Wakhan Corridor,
- Religious association because of following Ismaili sect of Shia Islam, and,
- Geographically association through three branch lines of historical Silk Route (Xinjiang - Gorno-Badakhshan, Xinjiang - Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan, and, Xinjiang - Gilgit-Baltistan). (Roofi & Asim, 2017).

Wakhan Corridor is also called Pamiri Corridor or Pamir Corridor, covered by Pamir Mountain Range. This is a very narrow strip of Afghanistan which is geographically linked with Tajikistan, China and Pakistan. This is a trade route between South, East and Central Asian states. Pamiri people are also geographically linked through this route. This corridor was created after agreement among Imperial Russia and Britain in 1873 and Durand Line Agreement among Afghanistan and British India in 1893. The local population of this area is almost 12,000 which are called Afghan Pamiris. Most of them have strong ethnic affiliations with other Pamiri people in Tajikistan, Pakistan and Xinjiang Region of China (Shahrani, 2002: 55-86).

Similarly, majority of Pamiri people are belonged to Ismaili Sect of Shia Islam and follow the directions of Prince Shah Karim Al-Hussaini who is their 49<sup>th</sup> Imam and 4<sup>th</sup> Agha Khan (the grandson of Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Agha Khan III who was first president of All India Muslim League). With the collaboration of Wakhi-Tajik

Culture Association (WCA), Agha Khan Cultural Services Pakistan promoting culture, poetry and music of Wakhi language in this region. Agha Khan Cultural Services Pakistan is a part of Agha Khan Trust for Culture which is working in developing countries of Asia and Africa regarding revitalizing Muslim culture and society. Similarly, Agha Khan Trust for Culture is further part of Agha Khan Development Network (AKDN) which is a group of private development agencies regarding improving better living conditions in Central and South Asia, Middle East and African region. These agencies are working in the fields of education, culture, health, rural development and economic development and institution building. All these agencies are directly controlled and funded by Agha Khan IV. So, in Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan and Afghan Province of Badakhshan, offices and centers of these agencies are established on different locations which are developing the sense of socio-sectarian unity among them (Mastibekov, 2014; 11-19; Brown, 2008; 309-311).

### **GEOPOLITICAL LINKAGE BETWEEN PAMIRI ETHNIC NATIONALISM AND PAK-CHINA ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)**

As Pamiris are mostly lived in Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region of Pakistan, Pak-China Economic Corridor links China and Pakistan through that respective region. Historically, there are difference in history about this region. Some Kashmiri and Pro-Indian historians claim that Gilgit-Baltistan is also a part of Kashmir while, Pro-Pakistani historians and writers argue that people of Kashmir had started movement against Dogra Raaj in 1935 where Mujahideen defeated Dogra Raaj army in the Gilgit and Skardu valleys; established nominal de-facto "Islamic Republic of Gilgit" that existed till the partition of India and Pakistan. While, Hunza and Nagar were princely states that never remained the part of Kashmir (Zaheer & Asim, 2021). In 1947, State of Hunza and State of Nagar joined Pakistan along with the de-facto Islamic Republic of Gilgit. However, former Prime Minister Zulfaqar Ali Bhutto merged both states; Hunza and Nagar into each other in 1974, formed one district Hunza-Nagar and merged it into the Northern Areas (History of Gilgit-Baltistan, 2016; AFP, 2016; Kretowicz, 2016).

Despite the territory of former de-facto Islamic Republic of Gilgit, the territory of the former states of Hunza and Nagar are the basic geographical link between the

Pakistan and China. Therefore, Pro-Pakistani geopolitical scientists including Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly reject all the Indian criticisms about CPEC and legal status of Gilgit-Baltistan within the Pakistan (History of Gilgit-Baltistan, 2016; AFP, 2016; Kretowicz, 2016).

Now, anti-Pakistan elements have no other option but to trigger Pamiri ethnic nationalism in the region that is also being practiced in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan since decades. Similarly, Laal-e-Badakhshan; a political party is also demanding for establishment of the United Badakhshan covering entire Badakhshan Region / Pamir Mountain Range. However, Movement for independence of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan has been crushed by the Tajik military but, the sense of ethno-national separatism has been transmitted in entire Badakhshan Region including Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region and Chitral District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. This time, Pamiri ethnic group is not claiming separate land on the base of previous historical sovereign status but seeking its unique image on the base of language and sect. As Ismaili sect of Shia Islam is being practiced in the entire Badakhshan Region / Pamir Mountain Range along with different dialectics of Pamiri languages, there are two types of ethno-national separatisms existed also in the Pamiri ethnic community of Pakistan (Poor, 2014: 169-172; Mastibekov, 2014: 20; Brown, 2008: 312). These are;

- Agha Khan State on the base of practicing Ismaili sect of Shia Islam, and,
- United Badakhshan on the base of separate historical and linguistic identity.

However, both movements are not playing a major role in creating any ethnic conflict in the region except Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan but, any foreign aid can trigger both or any movement among them that would highly affect Pak-China Economic Corridor that links Pakistan and China through this region. So, we have to analyze both movements as follows;

#### **MOVEMENT FOR AGHA KHAN STATE**

As local government of Gorno-Badakhshan took open stand for independence politically, several Sunni religious leaders in Pakistan argue that all these development agencies under Agha Khan Development Network are indirectly working for waving the way of getting an independent Agha Khan State. However,

majority of the population in Pakistan despite their sectarian differences considers Ismaili Muslims as peace loving and development-minded. Similarly, Government of Pakistan considers Agha Khan State Issue is not more than a conspiracy. In fact, there are just 5 percent Wakhi speaking, 6% Khovar speaking and 22% Burushaski speaking people of the total population in Gilgit-Baltistan region who are following Ismaili sect of Islam as well as belong to Pamiri languages speaking community. Therefore, independence movement in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan is not widely affecting Pamiri ethnic population in Northern areas of Pakistan (Poor, 2014: 169-172; Mastibekov, 2014: 20; Brown, 2008: 312).

On the other hand, according to the report of United States Institute of Peace, Gilgit-Baltistan region is going towards intense sectarian conflict among Shia's and Sunni's. According to this report published on January 22, 2013, tension among both the sectarian groups started during the Zia regime when hundreds of Shia and Sunni killed by each other during riots in 1983 and 1988. Similarly, a planned murder of more than sixty people at Karakorum highway near Chillas happened when some militant stopped public transport and killed Shia people belong to Gilgit city and its surroundings. Since then, Chillas is considered to be dangerous area for travelling. A military convoy protects public transport for crossing this area (Maitra, 2015).

To analyze demographics of Chillas, it is observed that majority of this area is following Sunni-Deoband School of Thought; having an ideology of "Jehad against other sects within the Islam". They consider all the other sects like Shias, Sofia Imamia Noorbakshia or Ismailis as non-Muslims or "Kafir". In this situation, conflict can be intensified more if government does not take any necessary action. This report concludes with the suggestion of strengthening governing system and providing equal socio-economic opportunities to overcome this conflict. Otherwise, in Sunni majority state of Pakistan, diverse society of Gilgit-Baltistan can rethink about its future affiliations (Maitra, 2015).

During Pervez Musharraf regime, when Pakistan initiated its efforts to remove socio-religious militancy, Ismailis felt pure satisfaction. But this satisfaction was not for a long time. On January 08, 2015, after murder of Ismaili leader; Zia-ud-Din, riots started in this region which lasted with the curfew in Gilgit and Skardu city. At least 15 people died during these riots. After some days, two

more Ismaili social workers for Agha Khan Development Network killed in Chitral. During investigation, police arrested two Sunni militants who belonged to Taliban and Al-Qaida. This time, issue of foreign funding against Ismailis raised. Both the militants accepted to receive aid from Saudi Arab through Jamat-e-Islami and its student's wing; Islami Jamiat Talba (IJT). Another issue during this regime was raised regarding insertion of students affiliated to Jamat-e-Islami and Islami Jamiat Talba into army during Zia regime. This part of army played an important role in Afghanistan during Soviet Invasion and in formation of Taliban Government. In directly, this part of army became a reason of generating militant attitude in Pakistan during Afghan Jihad which is now creating problems for Pakistan also (Maitra, 2015).

For this purpose, Musharraf initiated another step to remove sectarian or militant elements from educational curriculum. Before he started his efforts to get help from Agha Khan Educational Board, Jamat-e-Islami along with other religious parties from the platform of Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal announced to start agitation against this step. Qazi Hussain Ahmed argued that Musharraf wants to make secular Pakistan with the help of Agha Khan Educational Board. At that time, Musharraf Government denied any effort regarding secularization but argued to regulate religious education which was promoted with the help of Saudi Arab and American funding during Zia regime but still became fix after Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. As 49<sup>th</sup> Imam of Ismailis; Prince Karim Agha Khan got schooling from Harvard, considers noble in European community and having western ideology, USAID provided huge funding to Agha Khan Educational Board to provide secular education in Gilgit-Baltistan and other regions of Pakistan. In fact, Musharraf wanted to experience such system of education in entire country to eliminated militant tendency but religious political parties and sectarian groups opposed his plan and called it an effort of establishing Agha Khan State. On December 03, 2004, an association of Sunni teachers; Tanzeem-e-Asatza warned Musharraf Government regarding stopping affiliations of schools and colleges to Agha Khan Educational Board. Otherwise, they will march towards Islamabad. Similarly, Islami Jamiat talba opposed Musharraf plan to start O'level and A'level with the help of Agha Khan Educational Board in entire country for competing international standards of secondary and higher secondary education (Maitra, 2015).

Although, Musharraf regime was very co-operative for

Ismailis, and he initiated several projects in Gilgit-Baltistan including inauguration of Pak-China Economic Corridor and re-construction of Silk Road from Gilgit to Khunjerab but insurgency against Ismailis with the help of Saudi funding traced during his era. And, he could not find its permanent solution. In such situation, if situation will be deteriorated more, may be slogans of independence will not only be related with the Pamiri ethnic community or United Badakhshan movement, but can also be relate with the Ismailis or especially Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral Region.

#### **MOVEMENT FOR UNITED BADAKHSHAN**

Laal-e-Badakhshan is an opposition political party in Tajikistan and Afghanistan, established on March 04, 1991. Political leadership of Pamiri people at that time was the founder of this party which formed for the determination of defending the rights of Pamiris and encouraging initially the autonomy of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province, and, then the movement for "United Badakhshan" (consisted upon the areas of Afghan Province of Badakhshan, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan, Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County of Xinjiang Province in People's Republic of China, and, Chitral District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region of Pakistan) as claimed by its political rivals. In first presidential elections of Tajikistan after taking independence from Soviet Union, this party supported Davlat Khudonazarov as a candidate from opposition. Similarly, it also supported opposition during Tajik Civil war 1992-97. In 1993, it joined the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) officially. It was also participated in Inter-Party Peace Talks during 1994-97 while, it left UTO in 1999 (Warikoo, 2004: 149-150).

Although, Movement for United Badakhshan is still unknown for international community instead of some Pamiri ethno-national separatist local inhabitants of this region but in future, if this region would be an independent country, it will be actual trade hub among south, central, east and west Asia. Contemporary CPEC Project among Pakistan and China will also be part of this region while, agreement for revival of historical Silk Route among Tajikistan and Iran via Afghanistan will also be affected in case of any insurgency in this region (Small, 2015: 299).

**STATISTICAL FACTS ABOUT CHITRAL DISTRICT AND GILGIT-BALTISTAN AUTONOMOUS REGION OF PAKISTAN**

As Chitral District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region are the part of Badakhshan Region / Pamir Mountain Range, the given statistics

shows the economic worth of respective regions in case of any insurgency, civil war or separation on the base of Gorno-Badakhshan Independence Movement, United Badakhshan Independence Movement, Agha Khan State, or Sunni-Deobandi rivalry against Shia-Twelvers and Ismaili-Shias in Chitral District and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Table 1. Economic Worth of Chitral District and Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region of Pakistan.

Claiming Region	Share in National Economy	Share in Total Exports	Consumption in Total Imports	Share in Total Revenue and Tax Collection	Expenditures and Investment by Central Government	Expected Decrement in Foreign Reserves in Case of Separation	Country's Ease of Doing Business Index
Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region of Pakistan	1.5%	\$0.45 bn out of \$30 bn	\$0.625 bn out of \$41.668 bn	\$0.675 bn out of \$45 bn	\$0.855 bn out of \$57 bn	\$0.3465 bn out of \$23.10 bn	138
District Chitral in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan	0.352%	\$0.1056 bn out of \$30 bn	\$0.1467 bn out of \$41.668 bn	\$0.1584 bn out of \$45 bn	\$0.2006 bn out of \$57 bn	\$0.0813 bn out of \$23.10 bn	138
In Case of Insurgency / Civil War or Separation of These Regions	Expected Decrement in Total Exports of Pakistan	Expected Decrement in Total Imports of Pakistan	Expected Decrement in Total Revenue and Tax Collection of Pakistan	Expected Decrement in Expenditures of the Federal Government of Pakistan	Expected Decrement in Foreign Reserves of Pakistan	Expected Decrement of Pakistan in Ease of Doing Business Index	
	\$0.5556 bn	\$0.7717 bn	\$0.8334 bn	\$1.0556 bn	\$0.4278 bn	139	

Source: (Roofi & Asim, 2017; Asim, 2020).

**FUTURE ASSESSMENTS**

Several political economists analyze that economy of Pakistan can be grown up to billions of dollars per year in case of completing Pak-China Economic Corridor. Similarly, ethno-national separatism in Xinjiang by the Uyghur Muslims would easily be countered through initiated trans-regional economic activities in the region via CPEC. Different analysts argue that Chinese economy would grow up to 100 trillion dollars in case of establishing CPEC's links with Tajikistan, Russia, Afghanistan and Iran (Dad, 2016; Sardar, 2016; Hasan, 2016).

On the other hand, some political economists discuss Iranian and Arab enmity for CPEC. As per general perception among them, Iran has a fear of almost closing Chabahar Port and Bandar Abbas Port because of longest

trade route for Central Asia and Eurasian Region than the Gwadar Port. Likewise, Oman and United Arab Emirates have an anxiety for discouraging their ports of Muscat, Dubai, Sharjah, Fujairah, Ras-al-Khaima, Abu Dhabi, Ajman and Umm-al-Quwain as compare to Gwadar Port. During Musharraf regime, numerous reports were published in the international media about funding of Sheikh Muhammad (ruler of Dubai) to Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) in the Balochistan against Gwadar Port. Similarly, Iran-India relations have been exposed during 2016 when Pakistan Army captured Indian spy from interior Balochistan who was running anti-Pakistan network from Chabahar (Zaheer & Asim, 2021). At the same time, India-Afghanistan-Iran nexus against CPEC have also been exposed against Pakistan-China relations. However, analysts argue that it will be great mistake of

the Afghan Government to choose a long trade route of Chabahar Port instead of shortest route of Gwadar Port (Li, Saeed, Asim, & Zaheer, 2021). Moreover, Afghan Government can also generate heavy revenue by the transportation charges or taxes collected from Tajik or Russian transport in case of developing linkage Tajikistan and Russia to CPEC via Wakhan Corridor (Dad, 2016; Sardar, 2016; Hasan, 2016).

Another assessment is presented by some political economists that Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region would also be developed a lot in case of establishing CPEC's link with Tajikistan. Like Chinese Government about Xinjiang, Tajik Government must also focus on inaugurating economic projects in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region for becoming a part of CPEC. It will not only eliminate ethno-national separatism but also counter religious militancy in the region like Xinjiang (Dad, 2016; Sardar, 2016; Hasan, 2016).

The last and foremost issue against CPEC is the question about status of Gilgit-Baltistan within the Federation of Pakistan. Pro-Pakistani political economists are continuously suggesting Pakistani government to announce Gilgit-Baltistan as the fifth province of Pakistan because of geographically, socio-politically and historically differences with the territory called 'Jammu and Kashmir' (Zaheer & Asim, 2021). As per their viewpoint, Government of Pakistan must declare that the State of Hunza, State of Nagar and the de-facto Islamic Republic of Gilgit were free to choose their future in 1947. Hence, they choose to be the part of Pakistan. According to them, Chinese Government has also advised Pakistani Government to declare Gilgit-Baltistan as its fifth province for securing CPEC from Pro-Indian international criticism. Otherwise, anti-Indian elements can encourage lobbying in the International Court of Justice against CPEC as they trailed such attitude during China-Philippines conflict over occupation of some islands that is a vital trade route for China towards Latin America (Dad, 2016; Sardar, 2016; Hasan, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

As A.D Smith defines nations with similar cultural background and symbolic practices, Pamiri ethnic group has its own culture that prevails within Pamir Mountain region since centuries. Such uniqueness has also urged them to experience sovereign during 1657 to 1873. However, modern history divides them into four countries; China, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan,

where Pamiri ethnic group has its own autonomous region in Tajikistan since Russian occupation in 1924. In 1991, when Soviet states were declaring their selves as sovereign countries, autonomous structure of Gorno-Badakhshan also stimulated Pamiri population to imagine their selves as separate nation rather than to be called 'Tajiks' or 'Tajikistanis'. Therefore, their announcement for independence became a reason of civil war in Tajikistan during 1992 to 1997 (Roofi & Asim, 2017).

Although, Gorno-Badakhshan local government called back its independence declaration in 1997, but this civil war left huge impacts on Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral District in Pakistan very much. Analysts argue that separate linguistic and sectarian identity of Pamiris in respective region can trigger them to be separated from Pakistan in case of ethnic rivalry or foreign aid, that would further damage CPEC project (as a backbone for the future economy of Pakistan, China and entire region including Tajikistan) (Li, Saeed, Asim, & Zaheer, 2021). Therefore, neither Pakistan or China, nor Tajikistan will tolerate any kind of linguistic or sectarian based disturbance in the region because of their joint interests in the Pak-China Economic Corridor. Tajikistan has also shown its intention to join CPEC through Wakhan Corridor in Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan that clearly points out that CPEC project is also beneficial for Afghan economy. Thus, it has been investigated and examined that no one political party or country is capable to trigger or back already existing Pamiri ethnic nationalism in entire Badakhshan region unless 'strategic regional interests of major power'.

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