

INTERNAL & EXTERNAL DYNAMICS OF GILGIT-BALTISTAN: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR CHINA PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

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Abstract:

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is presently a subject of geopolitical and regional security discourse. Gilgit-Baltistan is at a crossroads of the CPEC project due to its strategic importance. However, this region has received global attention due to an international territorial dispute over Kashmir with India, undeclared constitutional status, and sectarian conflicts that plunged this region into a conflict zone. To examine the ambiguity of the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan and the presence of infrastructural changes in the region, the researchers adopted the Process Tracking method which proposes a hypothesized causal mechanism and pays attention to changes that have taken place over time. This study finds out how the sectarian, religious, and nationalist dynamics of Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir as a strategic constraint of the government of Pakistan for the legal status of Gilgit-Baltistan? It also discusses growing Chinese interest, particularly the CPEC, and Indian coercive response to this project, accentuate the Pakistani government to deal with the Gilgit-Baltistan constitutional complaints. The study concludes that constitutional status effects the region's ability to participate in and benefit from CPEC.

Key Words: CPEC, constitutional status, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pulwama, sectarianism, geopolitics.

INTRODUCTION

Gilgit-Baltistan is at a crossroads of the CPEC project due to its strategic location. Gilgit-Baltistan is considered as Northern Gwadar of Pakistan, located between the border of Indian Kashmir to the southeast, Xinjiang province of China to the east and northeast, and the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan to the north and connecting Pakistan with another province through the west of Khayber Pakhtunkhwa. After China, Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) announcement in 2015, GB, and its constitutional status received more attention in local and global media. Such transformation and concerns are required to review through another important aspect, i.e., hydro-potential of the region, China's long-term presence in this region, especially the CPEC project and Gilgit Baltistan as the disputed territory between India and Pakistan due to Kashmir conflict (Zhiqin Shi, 2016). Although its constitutional status remained the least discussed topic for many decades, now central to one of the most ambitious projects in the world. The government of Pakistan has introduced many institutional and constitutional reforms to address this issue but people of GB demand more political and administrative autonomy. These strategic considerations pushing Pakistani authorities to take serious constitutional reforms to embellish the CPEC with authenticity and validity and avoid any endorsement from China due to its disputed nature claimed by India. (Afzal, 2017).

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CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS OF GILGIT-BALTISTAN

This section provides a brief historical overview of its disputed nature, uncertain constitutional status, and government response to this issue. GB's modern history can be traced back to the 19th century. In 1846, after many wars and much bloodshed, GB was incorporated in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir by the Dogras. Its accession to Pakistan after a popular uprising and a bloody struggle by the locals against the repressive Dogra rule by liberating the area and acceding to Pakistan in the hope of becoming Pakistanis (Haque-ul, 2012, pp.65-7). This was not entirely the case, Gilgit's fortunes became intertwined with Kashmir dispute. This accession of GB for administrative control helped the Pakistani government win a large majority for the referendum that had to be carried out by the United Nations in 1948. As a result, Kashmir would officially be part of Pakistan (Hassnain, 1921; Madhok, 1952). Over the past decades, the proposed referendum remained an unfulfilled dream due to a lack of flexibility in foreign policy and the rigid approach of the two occupant countries (Madhok, 1952).

On April 28, 1949, officials of the Pakistan government met with Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government to link the Karachi Agreement (Rasul, 2004; Sökefeld, 2015). Under this accord, it was agreed that the affairs of the Gilgit-Baltistan region would now be run by the government of Pakistan through a federal ministry which is known as Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas (KANA). No leader from GB was included in this agreement (Dad, 2016-14) Rasul, 2004 pp.77-9). On November 1st, 1947 interim government was set up by the revolutionary council when Gilgit-Agency joined Pakistan and since the 16th of November, a political agent from the government of Pakistan started leading the interim government. Until 1950, GB was part of North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and FCR was imposed but later it was taken under the direct control of the federal government as part of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs. (Imtiaz-Ul-Haque, 2012 pp.84-8).

To address the constitutional and political demands of GB people, Northern Areas Council (NAC) was created in 1974. In 1974, Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), and Jagirdari system were abolished during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's tenure and the region was renamed as Northern Area under a separate administrative unit. The post of an advisor of the Northern Area was equal to a cabinet minister and Ganche and Ghizer two new districts were created (Mahmud, 2008, pp.27-3). In 1994, Benazir Bhutto Federal Cabinet approved a new reform package of Legal Framework Order 1994 which reformed judicial and Northern Area of "Rules of Business" procedure, established Chief Secretary and civil secretariat and district session Judge of GB was an eligible member of Chief Court (Mahmud, 2008, pp.27-3). On 28 May 1999, the Supreme Court of Pakistan decreed "That the People of Northern Areas are citizens of Pakistan for all intents and purposes and like other citizens have the right to invoke any of the Fundamental Rights as enshrined in the Constitution" (Zain, 2010, p.18). Following the decision of the Supreme Court in May 1999, LFO of 1994 was amended by empowering the Northern Areas Legislative Council (NALC) to legislate on 49 subjects. (Mahmud, 2008, p.30). On October 23, 2007, the amended Legal Framework order 1999 which updated the power of Legislative Council as Legislative Assembly and the Minister of Kashmir Affairs was made the Chairman of the Legislative Assembly which can pass the yearly budget of GB (Ahmad, 2015; Imtiaz-Ul-Haque, 2012).

After the enactment of Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order (GBESGO,) Islamabad in 2009 renamed the region from Northern Areas into Gilgit-Baltistan and now this region is looking like a quasi-formal Pakistani province (Haque-ul, 2012). This legal framework provided for the establishment of a new Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) headed by Chief Minister but it is powerless and it only has limited jurisdiction over few departments. The most powerful institution is the Gilgit-Baltistan Council, which is headed by the Prime Minister and controls all executive and legislative functions (Afzal, 2017). The current setup in GB is better than the previous one but it's not enough because this ordinance doesn't have a constitutional cover. (Afzal, 2015).

The Federal Ministry of Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan calls the shots in the region and has absolute authority over Gilgit-Baltistan (Afzal, 2015; Harrison, 2010). For example, the formation of new laws usually discusses with this ministry rather than local GB representatives. This has created a sense of deprivation among the people of the region because the elected representative has no power for important political or economic decisions. They are the legitimate citizens of Pakistan and important financial matters like the National Finance Commission (NFC), trade, and decision making could be possible with their intentions (Afzal, 2015). GB is administered by the bureaucrats and police officers from outside the region. Therefore, they are not sensitive to the needs and wants of the local people. Before the 1990s, popular demands of GB just focused on civil rights but today demand has been rising for an absolute enclosure for the fifth province of Pakistan because they don't have representation in the Federal legislature of Pakistan i.e. National Assembly and Senate (Akhunzada Taqi 2015). The basic question arises, why this region was unable to receive her due constitutional and political rights. Following discussion about sectarian, political, nationalist, and geopolitical factors intricate the reason of the divided society of GB.

PROCESS TRACING METHOD AND BUZAN SECURITY ANALYSIS

In the last few decades, Process Tracing (PT) has accomplished increasing appreciation and widespread use by social scientists. Andrew Bennett observed that process tracing involves reviewing analytical pieces of information in a case that help propose alternative hypotheses and pay attention to changes that have taken place over time (Bennett, 2010, p.8). While scholars generally agree that Process Tracing (PT) can be defined by its ambition to trace causal mechanisms (Beach, 2011, p.2). There are three kinds of PT: explaining outcomes, theory-building, and theory-testing (Beach, 2011, p.2). Explaining outcome PT constructed a necessary explanation of a historical outcome like the US decided to go to war. Theory-building PT has the desire to build a theoretical explanation from empirical evidence of specific circumstance. Theory testing process tracing deduces a theory from the existing literature and then tests whether there is evidence that a hypothesized causal mechanism is actually present in a given literature (Beach, 2011, pp.3-4). The causal mechanism set up some hypothesis which explains the phenomenon and process-tracing research probes the theoretical causal mechanisms linking causes and outcomes together (Beach, 2017,p.4). The causal mechanism provides a framework and notices the interaction of diverse actors and how they exercise power and the nature of the region influences actors' decision and attitude (Bennett, 2010, pp. 8-9). The core of creating a mechanism-based claim is that we shift the

analytical focus from causes and outcomes to the hypothesized causal process in-between them (Beach, 2017,p.4).

Process Tracing helps identify a specific causal process for a particular phenomenon as well as its underlying causal mechanism and clarifying how such logic operates. For better clarity and understanding, we use a hypothesized causal mechanism. This mechanism usually works through the formulation of a hypothesis and notice the changes. These changes lead towards new conditions which lead towards the ' fundamental change' (Beach, 2017, pp.5-7). This change provides new guidance for a causal story (Beach, 2017,p.8). The complexity of the causal story and uncover these changes, a hypothesized causal mechanism is used, which means that hypotheses are formulated as a mechanism for tracking processes and changes. The benefit of a hypothesized causal mechanism is that it can provide a link to the theoretical framework for understanding the evolving situational case study.

For this purpose, the first hypothesis stated that "*Sectarian, religious and nationalist dynamics of Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir as a strategic constraint of the government of Pakistan for the legal status of Gilgit-Baltistan*". Sectarian and religious affiliations divided the GB society to attain its political and constitutional goals. The political discourse of nationalist and sectarian politics exerted great influence over the debate on the identity of Gilgit-Baltistan and its connection to Kashmir. As a result, from 1947 to 2009, the government of Pakistan, remain reluctant to engage this region for marginal constitutional reforms (Aziz Dad p.24).

The second hypothesis proposes that "*Growing Chinese interest, particularly the CPEC, and Indian coercive response to this project, accentuate the Pakistani government to deal with the Gilgit-Baltistan constitutional complaints.*" CPEC brought many economic opportunities that will be helpful to address the economic grievances of the region. The Uri and Pulwama attack in the Kashmir region caused extremely tense relations between India and Pakistan and a shift in the regional security environment. CPEC project provided a strong understanding to explain the political dynamics of GB region. The political status of GB and its geopolitical significance for CPEC provided a sufficient and necessary condition to examine and determine the link between them by constructing the causal story. Detail impact analysis of CPEC in the GB region is beyond the scope of this article. This proposition is examined through the analysis of newspapers, online data, as well as secondary data.

For a comprehensive analysis of these premises, Barry Buzan security analysis help to link security with political, economic, identity factor for a vibrant causal story for PT. According to this analysis, "Security is taken to be about the pursuit of freedom from threat and the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change (Buzan, 1991, pp.432-3). This constructivist approach allows a breakdown of every aspect that contributes or affects security based on three levels, individual, states, and the international system (Buzan, 2008, p.21). In n his article New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century Buzan analyses the five sectors, including Political, Military, and Economic, Societal, and Environmental sectors. These concepts cannot adequately address the issue of security separately but all are woven together in a strong web of linkage (Buzan, 1991, pp.434-6). For example, military threats can affect all component of the states and it is a very basic duty of the state to protect its

citizens, on the other hand, political security usually deal the national sovereignty, territorial integrity, competition among ideologies or legitimacy of states and impact of foreign alternatives (Buzan, 2008, p.120). Economic security as Buzan points out, is the normal condition of actors in a market economy is one of risk, aggressive competition, and uncertainty. Buzan pointed out Military and political security are dependent on economic security due do budget constraints and limits (Stone, 2009, p.6). It is difficult to separate societal security from the political sector, it's about identity, ideology, ethnicity, and culture. It is also deeply connected with political and even military security (Stone, 2009, p.6). This paper highlight these issues when discussing Kashmir issue, sectarianism and nationalist dynamics of Gilgit-Baltistan. Environmental security encircled ecological threats like earthquakes and hurricanes (Stone, 2009, p.7).

For regional security related to CPEC and Indian security threat, Buzan's states, "security is a relational phenomenon because security is relational, one cannot understand the national security of any given state without understanding the international pattern of security interdependence in which it is embedded" (Buzan, 2008, p.187). For this purpose, this study employs the Regional Security Complex Theory suggested by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). South Asia Regional Security Complex (RSC) provides a broader picture to examine the interaction of these states. According to this model "the construction of an existential threat to a valued referent object legitimizing the imposition of exceptional political rules" (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 491). Essential elements of RSC used in the analysis of this article includes threat, referent objects, audience, and actors. The first component, people see threats as phenomena that affect their shared identity (Buzan et al., 1998, p.23). The identity crisis also affecting politics, social issues including the economic, political, and social fabric of society. Sectarianism and connecting Kashmir identity with GB is perceived as a threat to the identity of local people. That's why the demand of provincial status provide security of their identity and empower them for decision making for their region. The second component is referent objects, includes those that "are portrayed as being threatened and who have a legitimate claim to survival" (Buzan et al., 1998, p.29). According to Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde, for a state, the focus is on the survival of its sovereignty while society is primarily concerned with its identity (Buzan et al., 1998, p.21).

The legal status of Gilgit-Baltistan, the political identity of GB, the security of the region, and the CPEC project remains under discussion as referent objects. Economic security is also an important aspect connected with the legal status of the GB region. In the third component, the audience is the target of securitization. The issue is securitized when relevant audiences accept it as a threat. The public must agree with the claims of the securitization actors for a successful securitization to take place (Buzan et al., 1998). The public of the GB region, political and religious leaders consider a suitable audience for this case study. Lastly, actors who securitize issue by declaring something actually threatened" (Buzan et al., 1988, p.3). When a securitizing actor uses a rhetoric of existential threat and thereby takes an issue out of what under those conditions is normal politics". In this case study, the Government of Pakistan primarily responsible for providing a legal cover and constitutional reform for the region of Gilgit-Baltistan and handle the Indian threat for regional security. National and domestic leadership of the region are also important actors for the attainment of a political goal.

RELIGIOUS AND SECTARIAN DYNAMICS OF GB

Before the dissolution of princely states, the political structure of GB was based on kingship generally follow secular policies and inter-ethnic and sectarian marriages were a normal custom regardless of any religious affiliations. Some analysts see the efforts to link the region with the Kashmir issue by Kashmiri political parties as a covert attempt to turn the Shias into a minority. The Shia community believed themselves as the main patron in the region and tries to derive its sincerity for the rule as leader of the Gilgit-Baltistan Freedom Movement (Dad, 2016). Construction of Babusar and Karakoram Highway (KKH) in 1949 and 1978 respectively provided an opportunity to other Sunni dominant community to migrate, frequent travel in this region. It facilitated fast and easy travel for the mountainous communities of GB and exposed them to exogenous ideas, lifestyles, cultures, and forms of religion in South Asia (Hunzai, 2013a). A combination of new Islamisation and the emergence of religious-political forces in GB has shifted the basis of secular culture to religious and sectarian society (Dad, 2016, p.17).

Sunni leadership of GB welcomed the Islamisation process of Gen Ziaul Haq's that it could protect their interests from the majoritarian Shia community (Hunzai, 2013b; Mishra, 2019). In addition to local and national factors, international dimensions also contributed to sectarianism in Gilgit-Baltistan. Iranian revolution 1980s, Soviet-Afghan War, Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988, and Ideological battle between Saudi-Arabia and Iran widened the sectarian and radical Islam in Pakistani society and it has a great impact on Gilgit-Baltistan (Bansal, 2008; Rizwan & Nasiruddin, 2018). It made the Ulema have become important actors in articulating identities, religious discourse, and administrative arrangements in economic and political affairs in determining the position of their respective sectarian groups towards Kashmir (Dad, 2016; Rizwan & Nasiruddin, 2018). The final straw on the fragile back of Shia-Sunni relations came in May 1988 when a dispute over the sighting of moon and Eidul Fitr celebration. It resulted in violent sectarian clashes in Gilgit Town, later it spread across Diamer, Kohistan and Nagar Valley and killed 150 to 200 people (Shekhawat, 2011, p.14). In 2005, Gilgit city became prominently divided along sectarian lines after the assassination of Shia intellectual and leader Syed Agha Ziauddin Rizvi in January the same year (Dad, 2017).

After 1988, Gilgit witnessed intermittent sectarian differences. It has severely impacted the economy, social fabric, politics, education, and the people's mindset. In 1990, Government High School No1 witnessed a clash between students of two religious' groups. Gradually, sectarianism spread to other educational institutions as well. The brief closure of the Karakoram International University (KIU) in 2012 over the issue of commemorating religious days (Dad, 2017). In 2012, Gilgit-Baltistan witnessed the killing of passengers along the KKH, and these victims killed on their religious affiliation after identification (Hunzai, 2013b). In June 2013, militant killed 11 foreigner climbers in the Himalayas of Gilgit-Baltistan (Walsh, 2013). These sectarians' attacks on Sunni, Shia, Ismaili and other communities has fractured the pluralist, open and peaceful society and terrorist attack on foreigners and tourist also indicate the volatility of security situation of Gilgit-Baltistan for mega projects in future.

The question of GB's relation to Kashmir is underpinned by sectarian politics. In the 1980s, the region witnessed the emergence of religious parties on the political landscape of Gilgit-Baltistan.

These parties include Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (JUI-F), Jamat-e-Islami, Sipah Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), and Tehreek-Nafaz-e- Fiqah-Jafria (TNFJ). Thus, local religious elements benefited from forging linkages with parties and in some cases Jihadi groups based outside the region. In 1988, Northern Areas Council Election was politicized and manipulated sectarianism for political purposes and religious parties become more prominent spokesmen of economic, political, social, and religious grievances (Dad, 2016, p, 19).

Dad Aziz stated that “In case of Kashmire, a section of Sunni religious parties favor the annexation of Gilgit-Baltistan with Kashmire and consider its identity as an integral part of Kashmir. He stated:

Reaching to plan in August 2015 by the Pakistani government to give Gilgit-Baltistan provincial status, Att ullah Sahab of Jamiat-Ulme-Islam, Gilgit-Baltistan vehemently opposed it by declaring the region as part of Kashmir. On the other hand, Ithna Ashri Shias, Noorbakhis and Ismaillis oppose the inclusion of the area with Kashmir and favor provincial status. Even in the proposed province, Qazi Nisar of Tanzeem Ahle-Jammat (ASWJ) demanded the redrawing of boundaries by annexing Chitral and Kohistan of Kyber Puktunkhwa (KPK) province in Gilgit-Baltistan. These two areas have a Sunni Majority and no Shia population with the exception of 35 % Ismailis in Chitral. This would turn Gilgit-Baltistan into a Sunni majority province”(Dad, 2016,p.20Sectarian politics plays a significant role in articulation of identities in relation to Kashmir which further divided the society for attain a collective political goal and sectarianism remained an important factor when we discuss the political dynamics of G B .

NATIONALIST AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF GB

Nationalist movements and political parties in the post-independence period are products of unclear status of Gilgit-Baltistan and demanded for political autonomy, separation of Gilgit-Baltistan from disputed Kashmir region on the basis of culture, language, ethnicity and history. Nationalist local parties have started to emerge in the late 1960s and support the idea of separate constitutional arrangement for the region. The first nationalist group emerged in the late 1960s was the Gilgit-Baltistan Ladakh Jamhori Mahaz. This party was formed by Wazir Mehdi, Mohammad Ali and Wazir Ashraf from Gilgit, Baltistan and Ladakh and trying to connecting the existing boundaries with India. On the other hand, Tanzeem-e-Milat demanded the end of Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) and sought equal political status for the region in the political system of Pakistan. (Dad, 2016)

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto government dissolved different princely states in the region, abolish the FCR in 1974, introduce new political and administrative system and opened Karakorum Hight Way (KKH). Bhutto convinced the political leadership of Tanzeem-e-Milat and Jamhori Mahaz to join Pakistan People Party (PPP). Later local people figure out, national party like (PPP) and central government have more political will and constitutional power to address their issues (Dad, 2016). Later in 1984, The Karakorum National Movement (KNM) was established and rejected all the treaties and agreements including Amritsar and Karachi agreement. The leadership of KNM claimed Gilgit-Baltistan is a cultural, linguistic, ethnically and historically separate entity from Kashmir and the

leadership of Azad Jammu and Kashmir as part of central government that tries to keep its constitutional status in limbo for a strategic reason (Dad, 2016).

Another well-established nationalist party is the Balawaristan National Front (BNF) established in 1994 aiming for complete autonomy of the GB region from Pakistan and India and ensure a separate identity from Kashmir. BNF rejects the Pakistani state's position on Kashmir and Kashmiri claims over Gilgit Baltistan as part of disputed Kashmir (Bodla, 2014). Later, the party was divided into two groups. First group BNF (N) of Nawaj Naji aspires for maximum political autonomy and separate identity of GB from Kashmir through democratic means. Naji was elected twice for Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA) from Ghizer district (Bodla, 2014). Second group BNF (H) of Hamid Khan boycotted elections and has been living in exile since 1998 due to their radical claims of separatism and denial of the political significance of GBLA as a legislative body (Dad, 2016).

Gilgit Baltistan's 2009 Election was conducted under Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance order 2009 sign by President Asif Ali Zardari. (Sering, 2010) Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was the leading political party of the unicameral Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly received 20 seats out of 33, where Pakistan Muslim League PML (N), Muttahida Qaumi Movement and Jamiat Ulema Islam were dominant national parties (Haque-ul, 2012). In 2011, BNF (N) received one seat from Ghizer district when a by-election was conducted in 2011. In GB election 2015, PML (N) has emerged as the largest party who won 14 seats out of 24 seats, where six seats reserved for women and 3 seats for technocrats. On the other hand, PPP was on the losing side just received only one seat and Pakistan Tehreek -e-Insaf (PTI) get one, religious parties like Tehreek-e-Islami and Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) received two seats (KHAN, 2015). So far nationalist parties could not fulfill their political agendas to garner popular support in Gilgit-Baltistan's. Except BNF (N), no nationalist political parties received popular political support from GB as compared to mainstream political parties in GB because these parties favor the status quo of the region, state narrative of Kashmir dispute, and gradual constitutional reforms in the GB region.

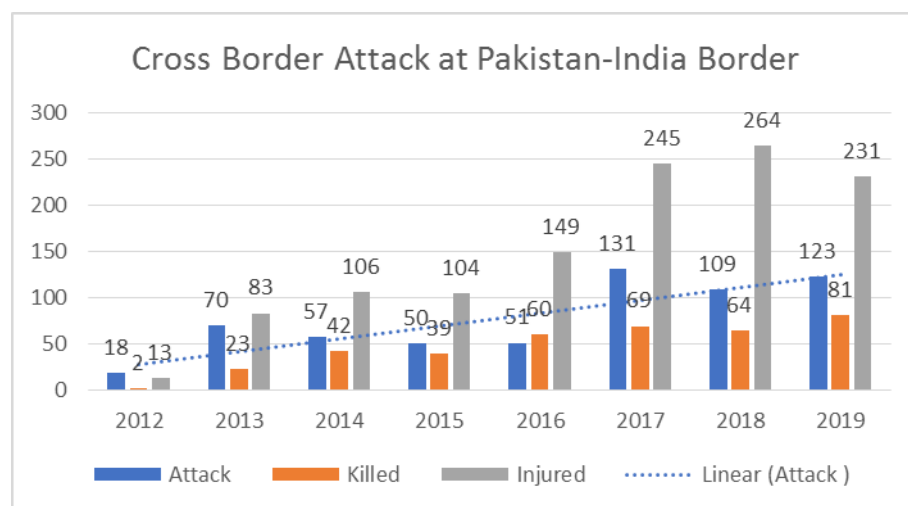
INDIAN FACTOR, GEOPOLITICS AND CPEC SECURITY ISSUES IN GILGIT-BALTISTAN

India, China, and Pakistan are a common neighbor in the South Asian region but India is one of few nations in Asia that has not agreed to Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Pak-India relations have been hostile since independence and fought three border-wars. Kashmir had been the main territorial conflict between these nuclear power and hostility also build on both countries' desire to be identified as an important geopolitical player of South Asia (Paul 2013, p. 239). GB is considered a soft target due to its undecided constitutional status and disputed territory between India & Pakistan. According to the Indian perspective, CPEC is affecting the Indian security discourse of sovereignty and help Pakistan position in the Kashmir conflict. As Jaishankar's speech at Raisina Dialogues in 2016, "The CPEC passes through a Piece of Land, which we call Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which is a territory that belongs to India and is illegally occupied by Pakistan" (Landberg, 2019, p. 45). Indian's way of securitizing the CPEC as infrastructure, connectivity, and cooperation as territorial control and threat (Landberg, 2019, p.45).

In this context, it is worrying for New Delhi, that Islamabad is mulling upgrading the constitutional status of GB and is absorbing the area as the fifth province of Pakistan. Indian Governments shows

their reservation on Bhasha Dam, Governance ordinance 2009, GB election 2009, election 2015, GB ordinance 2018, and upcoming elections 2020 (Tribune, 2020). In the geopolitical context, Indian ardent distaste for CPEC and BRI is due to two other reasons. Firstly, if CPEC works, Pakistan would become a stronger and more stable regional and economic actor which boost Pakistan relations with Afghanistan, Central Asian, Russia, Iran and Western Asia. Secondly, CPEC's success would bolster China's position as the regional hegemon, forcing China to superpower status with infrastructure developing projects and economic model where India was not able to offer such huge mega-projects like BRI. (Ranjan, 2015) Unfortunately, the Indian stance on BRI and CPEC provided an impression that India is unable to understand the fluidity and contemporary regional environment of Central and South Asia which are based on economic growth, stability, and regional cooperation. But unlikely, Indian governments had continued to grumble and lodge protests which may delay or obstruct the construction of the corridor, but cannot ultimately stop it.

These hostile and coercive diplomatic gestures from Indian governments have seen as a reaction against the BRI and CPEC. Narendra Modi Prime Minister (PM) also threatened Pakistan with global Isolation after the September 2016 Uri attack a militant attack on a military base of Indian occupied "Kashmir near the Line of Control (LoC). As a reaction, India pull out her name from the 19th SAARC conference hosted by Pakistan in November 2016 and reviewed the Indus Waters Treaty by adopting an aggressive strategy to raise pressure on Pakistan (2016; Dawn, 2016a; Tribune, 2016a, 2016b). Christophe Jaffrelot stated that Ceasefire Violations CFVs reflects the quality of bilateral relations between India and Pakistan due to its domestic and geopolitical factors (Jaffrelot, 2018). Since 2013, Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) were perpetrated Ceasefire Violations (CVs) at Line of Control (LoC) and Working Boundary and carried out cross-border attacks inside Pakistani territory mostly Kotli, Bhimber, Poonch, Tawalakot and Haveli district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and different village along the Sialkot Working boundary. The following graph indicates the growing intense situation at the Pakistan-Indian border after 2012.



Source: Author Compilation from the Pakistan Institute of Peace Study Report (2013-2018)

(<https://www.pakpips.com/>)

It is believed that a growing number of violations since 2013 threatens to push Pakistan and India back to the dangerous posturing of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The inter-services Public Relations office (ISPR) counted 1,140 violations in 2017, compared to 382 in 2016. It is the highest CFVs in 2017 any other year since 2003 which causing the death of civilian and military persons near the LoC and Working Boundary (Jaffrelot, 2018). India asserts terrorist infiltration from Pakistan is the primary cause for CFVs. On contrary to the Indian perspective, Islamabad believes that it's not terrorist infiltration of the cross border but Indian response towards the Kashmir freedom movement. Pathankot and Uri attacks in 2016 are retaliation of the assassination of Kashmiri freedom fighter Burhan Wani and the atrocity of Indian forces (BBC, 2016). Pulwama bombing in Indian Held Kashmir (IHK) on 14th February 2019 has obsessively received global attention and turned into national hysteria in India. On 26th February 2019, the Balakot airstrike by India and counter strike by Pakistani Airforce brought the two countries to the brink of war (Feyyaz, 2019). Uri and Pulwama attacks have security implications for Pakistan and CPEC project because CPEC started from Gilgit-Baltistan perilously close to the IHK. Indian leadership declared Pulwama as an act of terrorism and blamed Pakistani terrorist organization Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) head Masood Azhar. In Pakistan, Uri and Pulwama termed an act rebellion or revolt against oppression, and repression of Indian Army against people of IHK which further clampdown on civil liberties through torture, disappearance, banning of pro-independence political parties (Feyyaz, 2019).

The new government led by Imran Khan called "Pulwama Attack" an act of diversionary attention to cover up governance failures of BJP, and declared any militant group using Pakistani soil was an "enemy" of the country (Economic Times, 2019). Stability in the Kashmir region where GB is an important part of CPEC and BRI is eternally on edge. Any militant organization creates such trouble for \$62 billion investment in Pakistan could be a possible threat. From a regional perspective, China is interested in pacifying a region and (Feyyaz, 2019) has very serious concerns over cross border attacks and ceasefire violations where Chinese businessmen, engineers, and workers are developing projects like Neelum-Jhelum hydropower plant, and building roads, and telecommunication networks. China always admired and affirmed its complete confidence in Pakistan's capacity to handle security threats (Feyyaz, 2019, p.73)). On the contrary sharing hostility and reservation against CPEC, India has a better option to reconsider her grumping and lodge protests towards territorial issues regarding GB and Kashmir. These tactics may deferral or barricade the construction for a limited time but cannot ultimately stop it.

STABILITY OF CPEC PROJECTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL CURE.

Gilgit-Baltistan determines an essential part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multimillion-dollar development project which is heralded as a 'game-changer' for Pakistan and the whole region. But GB has had limited access to the decision-making process and potential investment. Due to lack of representation in the Senate, the National Assembly and decision-making body of CPEC which is known as Council of Common Interests. GB is excluded from the Working Group, special steering committee and the working group headed by Pakistani Prime Minister. So, GB's voice and opinion mostly unheard (Howe, 2019, p.7). Hunzai stated that "The legislative body like Gilgit-Baltistan Council mostly control by federal institutions have a special power to make

laws concerning any matter in the Council legislative List. This Council Legislative List includes every subject-matter that CPEC touches including Highways, railways, 'mineral oil natural gas', electricity, water storage, tourism, minerals, and banking" (Howe, 2019,pp.7-8). The revenue generated through the CPEC project crossing the GB region addressing through Legislative Council.

Nationalist, political, and sectarian forces received social support from the local community towards CPEC projects and putting pressure on the federal government for determining the constitutional status and due share regarding CPEC. A conference titled "where is GB in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project organized by Pakistan People's Party with the collaboration of religious and nationalist parties. They demanded that before executing the project the constitutional status of the region should be settled. They share their reservation of previous mega-projects like Basha Dam and Karakorum Highway without consultation of local leadership. Currently, in the CPEC project again this region has been sidelined in the economic benefits of the project. (Dawn, 2016b). In 2017, Chief Minister of GB was not invited at Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation when all Chief Minister of four provinces joined Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on his visit to China (Howe, 2019,p.8). Access to social and electronic media, people of GB address their grievances and resentment against Pakistani authority and which can easily observe and demand has been rising for an absolute enclosure for the fifth province which provides due representation in National Assembly and Senate (Akhunzada Taqi 2015).

There is a universal concept that no taxation without representation and people of GB pay tax to the Pakistani state and abide by all its laws but they don't have any representation. Local wisdom dictates that when it is a choice of the central government to consider GB is a formal part of the country and impose taxes and exploited GB's resources. When people demanded socio-political and economic rights and the government declared GB as a disputed territory (Akhunzada Taqi 2015). This has far-reaching consequences for the people of the region. This unclear legal status has resulted in slow economic development, bread grievances of equal sharing of royalties, review generations, and create misunderstanding between central government and GB political institutions. Growing concerns that Federal governments earn huge amounts in revenue from GB annually from transit, trade, hydro-electro water resources, trophy hunting, eco-tourism, mineral resources and directed and indirect federal taxes, the significant majority of these earning are not allocated for the development of the region (Howe, 2019 ,pp-6-8). The biggest source of electricity generation in Gilgit-Baltistan is hydel power, the region has potential to generate maximum electricity but GB electricity shortfall has become a routine across the region facing 16 to 20 hours of load shedding which affects business and tourism industry (Nagri, 2018b).

Chinese miners are working in Hunza-Nagar district for tunnel building and mineral exploration. This region is rich in uranium and certain minerals used in space technology. At Astore and Shigar districts, Chinese extract high-quality copper, uranium, and gold. The government should engage the local minors with Chinese experts to learn modern mining equipment, safety standards and expertise of mining engineering and revenue generated from mining and mineral trade should be an investment for the socio-economic development of GB (Bhattacharjee, 2019). Although Diamer-Bhasha and Bunji estimated cost is \$50 billion have the potential of generating approximately 40,000 MW of hydroelectricity located Diamer District of GB and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

(Bhattacharjee, 2019). It also addresses the problem of agriculture irrigation, and ensure energy security issues and extend the lifespan and efficiency of Trabela Dam and brought new job 16,000 employments in the region (Tribune, 2020). It will be beneficial for all but people of Gilgit-Baltistan share some reservations related to these megaprojects because land allocated for the construction of the Bhasha Dam has been transferred to the Federation of Pakistan. Some issues of land acquisition, displacement of people, inter-provincial border conflict, access to resources, and unprecedented delays owing to numerous logistical hurdles. There is also a misunderstanding of the royalty of these mega projects for the autonomous region where the constitution guided that the only province has the right to receive the royalty of megaprojects (Bhattacharjee, 2019). Although both the Bhasha Dam and the CPEC were indicated as boons for Pakistan and as a consequence for Gilgit-Baltistan as well, the fear is that these mega-development projects might not bring the benefits which are expected, especially if it's constitutional status remains uncertain.

The path towards procrastination would be tantamount to playing into the hands of the elements determined to hurt Pakistan by targeting the CPEC and mega-development projects. The nationalist, political, linguistic & ethnic groups seem reluctant for constitutional rights and compel governments. On August 11, 2015, the GB Legislative Assembly passed a resolution that this region should be granted the status of a constitutional province to meet the long-standing demand of the people and to remove the indirect control of the federation (Afzal, 2017). Both resolutions call for the designation of the region as a province of Pakistan. The assembly has demanded the representation of the people of GB in the National Assembly, the Senate, and all other national institutions where decisions taken affect their daily lives. These resolutions were proposed as interim arrangements until the final decision of plebiscite in accordance with the Resolutions of the UNSC and the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (Gillani, 2011). It also fulfilled the directions & judgment of the Supreme Court of Pakistan made on 28th May (1999 SCMR 1379) to ensure a governing and judicial system in GB guaranteed under the constitution (Association, 2013; Gillani, 2011,p.7).

Amendment in Article 258, GB can be the fifth province of Pakistan (Gillani, 2011). An additional Article 257-A be inserted in the Constitution by giving the GB a special status as Provisional Unit having powers to legislate all subjects except Defense, Foreign Affairs, Communication, Finance & Currency being the Federal Subjects on the patron of Indian Occupied J&K given under Article 370 of Indian Constitution and empowering for constitutional reforms (Gillani,2011,pp.7-11). For representation in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, national assembly and senate, amendments are required in Articles, 175, 57, 41, 59. For economic and financial improvements to the GB, they proposed "the revenue-generating subjects of Hydropower, Minerals, and Forest & Tourism be inserted in the Legislative List of GB Legislative" (Gillani, 2011, pp.7-11).

The GB Empowerment & Self-Governance under SRO NO 786 (1) 2009 is the true reflection of government imitative for strengthening and empowerment the GB for constitutional rights. Religious, nationalist, and political leadership efforts compel the government of Pakistan to offer Gilgit-Baltistan Order-2018 which promises more political, judicial, administrative, and financial power to GB which replaced GB Empowerment and Self-Governance order of 2009. The previous order only promised only 17 basic rights which were limited only to GB but 2018 order GB citizen

could demand his rights at every corner of Pakistan and access to all apex courts of the country (Nagri, 2018a). All federal taxes had been suspended, GB council exercised more power including passing legislation on tourism, hydropower and mineral sectors, and name of Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly replaced with Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly and appointment of judges of GB Supreme Appellate Court and a high court would be formed by the five-member committee to depoliticize the appointments. Empowerment of Gilgit-Baltistan through legal frameworks such as the 2009 Order, 2018 order, and suitable changes in the constitution of Pakistan for building confidence among leaders and people of GB. The Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister also attended the Joint Cooperation Committee meeting at the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reform in Islamabad last year where the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan stated that “we all are united for the completion of this important project in letter and spirit as it provides an agenda for a developed and economically stable Pakistan (Howe, 2019,p.8).

Recent studies conducted to review the impact of CPEC on Gilgit-Baltistan as a threat or opportunity for small and micro-entrepreneurs and tourist industry. The empirical evidence from Gilgit Baltistan suggested that the CPEC creates more opportunities for tourism and its relatable medium and large firms (Baig, Qasim, Xuemei, & Alam, 2020). It also provides clear evidence that CPEC plays a mediating role in good governance in promoting the Gilgit-Baltistan tourist industry (Baig & Zehra, 2020). Tourism, mining industry, and infrastructure projects indicated the prospects of the region are evident to address the financial and economic problems of the region. The development projects like CPEC will help GB to expand its interaction with neighboring countries and establish cultural, economic, and trade connections. The constitutional status of GB clearly defines the people about their rights against mega-development projects, protection of their lands, equal opportunities for employment, resources, and political rights. Constitutional reforms for political rights will lessen the fear of exploitation and convey a sense of trust as an equal stakeholder and decision-maker for the stability of megaprojects.

CONCLUSION

This research study has also illustrated that regional security complex exists in the region; various actors including sectarian, religious, nationalist, and political leadership played an important part which leads towards the region a divided society and brought identity crisis in the region. Issues of political, economic, societal, and military security exist in the GB region and brought new dimensions after institutional and infrastructural changes in the GB region. Kashmir conflict and changing security dynamics regarding CPEC pushing Pakistani authority to pay more attention to the political empowerment of the region. The government of Pakistan on the other hand also played an important role in terms of constitutional reforms and address the grievances of the people. Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative assembly received more political and constitutional autonomy and engage in decision making of an important issue of the region. No doubt, Gilgit-Baltistan’s uncertain status is one of the major challenges to the successful implementation of the Corridor. The strategic location of Gilgit-Baltistan is at the crossroads of the CPEC. The nationalist, political, and religious leaders of the region, unfortunately, haven’t received that political support which challenges the status quo and state narrative of the Kashmir region of central government due to their narrow political, religious, and sectarian short-term objectives. This study shows that religious, sectarian,

and political forces also consider CPEC as an opportunity for their political and social space and received attention from the local masses. Increasing concerns from the Chinese government about the controversial nature of the Kashmir issue and Indian border security threats hamper regional cooperation and slow the pace of CPEC projects. The Indian government is hesitant towards Chinese presence in the Gilgit-Baltistan region and lost an opportunity as a participant of development projects. The CPEC offers Pakistani government an opportunity to redirect its foreign policy towards India and to give Pakistan a new feeling of self-confidence in business, politics, and foreign policy. It also required credibility, capabilities, and good governance to build people's trust in these development projects and remove their confusion and misunderstanding by involving them in decisions making to improve the economic status of their region.

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