

ETHNIC DILEMMA IN BADAKHSHAN REGION: IMPLICATIONS ON PAMIRI ETHNIC GROUP IN PAKISTAN

*Muhammad Asim
Yasmin Roofi
Dr Shuja Ahmed Mahesar*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the ethnic dilemma in the Pamir region, or Badakh Mountains of the Badakhshan region, that became the reason for the call of independence of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region from Tajikistan. This paper also examines the socio-political linkages among the various Pamiri groups in Badakhshan Region. Likewise, the impact of a declaration of independence by Gorno-Badakhshann region on Pamiri ethnic groups in other geographically linked countries, especially in Gilgit-Baltistan is also highlighted in this study.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Pamir Region, Burushaski, Gorno Badakhshan, Gilgit Baltistan

INTRODUCTION

The socio-linguistic and political history of Badakhshan region was counted as a separate discipline in the academia of regional studies since annexation of the region by USSR in 1920. Though the distinct socio-lingual and political attributes of this region were being claimed since then but these claims were converted into ethno-national movement after declaration of independence by Gorno-Badakhshan region from post-Soviet Republic of Tajikistan in 1992 (Davlatshoev, 2006:77). This declaration left an impact on other parts of Badakhshan region in surroundings; Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan, Gilgit and Diamer divisions in Gilgit-Baltistan, Autonomous Region and Chitral district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, and, Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County in Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China, generally called Badakh Mountain Range, Pamiri Region or Badakhshan Region (Davlatshoev, 2006:77-80, Minahan, 2014:215-216). Though the local government of Gorno-Badakhshan took its call for independence back in 1997 but the people of this region are continuously demanding constitutional autonomy over their politico-economic affairs. They had made demands of independence in the past and still would like to claim maximum autonomy against the Sunni-Wahabi majority, given that they subscribe to Ismaili-Shia beliefs. The people of the resource rich province

Badakhshan of Afghanistan are also living under evident threats of Taliban and ISIS who are both against their Ismaili-Shia beliefs while this province is also considered to be the most destitute area of the world like Gorno-Badakhshan owing to the political and economic marginalization of Pamiri people (Hashmi, 2017). Moreover, post-1970 status of former Chitral State, Post-1974 statuses of the former States of Hunza and Nagar, and, remaining Gilgit-Baltistan including divisions of Gilgit and Diamer are also seeking pure constitutional rights over politico-economic affairs under the federation while, Ismaili-Shia thoughts have same threats from Sunni-Deobandi and Sunni-Wahabi groups here as in other regions of Badakhshan. The continuation of this dilemma in any of the four parts of the region would easily disturb the national economy and law and order situation of the respective country while the CPEC project could also suffer in case of any predicted insurgency in Pakistani-held Badakhshan region or around (Ali, 2017).

The Badakhshan region has a diverse society. Major ethnic groups in the region are Pamiris and Tajiks while Uzbeks, Pashtuns and Kurgyzs are in minority (Bliss, 2006:77). Major transportation in this region is through Pamir Highway (from Dushanbe, Tajikistan to Osh, Kyrgyzstan) and the Great Silk Road (crossed several mountains in Pamir Mountain range).

A majority of people confuse to explore the meaning of “Badakhshan” as “Badakh Mountains”. In fact, this is a Chinese name of this region whereas Persian speaking historians called it the Pamir Mountain Range which actually forms a junction with Karakoram, Hindu Kush and Himayalas ranges. Although, there are several names of this mountain range in different languages, the word “Pamir” is derived from the classical Chinese language (Dupree, 2014:04-05). The languages in this region are called Pamir languages which are considered as a part or sub-group of Eastern Iranian languages (Southeastern Iranian Family Tree, 2016). These languages emerged in the 4th century BC. First Eastern Iranian language was called Avestan language that emerged in Eastern Iran during that time. While, during 21st century, Pashto is considered as the largest Eastern Iranian language that has approximately 50 million speakers around Indus River in Pakistan and the Hindu Kush Mountain range in Afghanistan (Southeastern Iranian Family Tree, 2016). The connecting area for Eastern Iranian languages is contemporary North and West parts of Pakistan, Western Xinjiang of China, Northeastern part of Afghanistan and the Southeastern part of Tajikistan. However, Indo-

Aryan languages applied a major external influence on these languages also (Wurm, 1996:942-943).

Although, different dialects of Pashto along with the Pamir languages are part of Eastern Iranian languages, however, usually ethnologists count Shughni, Yazgulyam, Sarikoli, Yidgha, Munji, Ishkamimi, Sanglechi and Wakhi dialectics as Pamir languages. On the other hand, several western scholars like Robert Shaw referred to these languages as the Ghalchah languages (Rouse, 1878:175). Robert Shaw considers Wakhi and Sarikoli dialects as a branch of Ghalchah languages. Similarly, a Russian scholar Ivan Ivanovich Zarubin relates them to the Soviet dialect of Iranian languages (Bergne, 1998:143). Especially, this dialect is used for Pamir languages by Crimean professor Zarubin and another French professor Robert Gauthiot (specialist in Iranian Studies). In fact, both conducted a joint ethnographic and linguistic research project related to Pamir Mountains in 1914. For this purpose, they visited this region also. He continued his research over the coming decades on this region including Central Asia. Finally, he concluded that all the Pamir languages are basically the Soviet dialect of Iranian languages (Kuz'mina, 2013:1-3, Bergne, 1998:143).

Shughni, Vanji, Yazgulyam, Khufi, Oroshor, Bartangi, Rushani and Sarikoli are the sub-dialectics of Shughni-Yazgulami dialect in Pamir languages which have almost 75,000 speakers in Afghanistan, 20,000 in Xinjiang region of China, 4,000 along with Yazgulyam River in Tajikistan. Similarly, Munji and Yidgha are very close sub-dialectics of Munji-Yidgha dialect in Pamir languages which have almost 6,000 speakers in Gilgit and Diamer Division in Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region of Pakistan and 2,500 speakers in Mamalgha and Munjan Valleys in northeast of Afghanistan. At the same time, Ishkashmi, Zebaki and Sanglechi are considered to be sub-dialectics of Sanglechi-Iskashimi dialect of Pamir languages in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. These dialectics are not presented in written form till now but, people are familiar with them. On the other hand, there are more than 58,000 speakers of Wakhi dialectic of Pamir languages in the Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan, Goro-Badakhshan Autonomous Province of Tajikistan, Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County in Xinjiang Autonomous region of China and Diamer Division of Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region of Pakistan. Some Wakhi speaking families are found also in Russia and Turkey (Kuz'mina, 2013:4, Pavlenko, 2008:228, Afghanistan in 2012, 2012:181-182).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Minahan (2014) presents basic awareness about Pamir region while, Bliss (2006) explains ethnic diversities in Tajikistan and Afghanistan including Pamir Mountain Range. At the same time, Dupree (2014) describes the history of the word “Pamir”. Similarly, Wurm (1996) emphasizes on impacts of Eastern Iranian Languages in Pamir Mountain Range and says that the Pamir languages are the part of sub-group of Eastern Iranian Languages while, Kuzmina (2013) presents some other researches about the origin of Pamir Languages and focuses upon western and Russian viewpoints in this regard. Whereas, Pavlenko (2008) claims that Pamir ethnic group is settled in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and China.

Bertrand (2010) provides political history of Badakhshan region at the time of independence since 1657 to 1873, and, Afghan and Chinese occupations on some parts of this region in different times. Similarly, Russian occupation of Gorno-Badakhshan region in 1924 and establishment of Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic in 1929 is described by Abdullaev (2010). At the same time, Tousley (2012) presents issues regarding Tajik civil war after Soviet Disintegration, and announcement and withdrawal of Gorno-Badakhshan’s independence and Tajik military attacks on Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region in 2012. On the other hand, Emadi’s (2005) work is about Badakhshan region in Afghanistan which is now its 34th province after 1963.

Akiner (2008) traces back the reasons of Badakhshan independence movement since Russian occupation of Gorno-Badakhshan, while, Everett-Heath (2003) argues that independence movement in Pamir Mountain region of Afghanistan and Pakistan is not strong due to low population rate. Similarly, Roy (2000) presents the facts and figures of Pamiri ethnic group in Pakistan. On the other hand, Shahrani (2002) finds impacts of Badakhshan Independence Movement on Pamiri ethnic group in Pakistan through Wakhan corridor while Mastibekov (May 16, 2014) and Brown (2008) tries to discover the way of unity among Pamir ethnic group in Pamir Mountain Region through Ismaili Imamate and Agha Khan Development Network. Similarly, Poor (2014) describes conspiracy of Agha Khan State in the Gilgit-Baltistan Region of Pakistan and a weak connection of Wakhi speaking people with other Pamir ethnic groups in Afghanistan, China and Tajikistan.

MODERN HISTORY OF BADAKHSHAN REGION

Historically Badakhshan region had politically an independent status or subservient under Afghanistan and its rulers were called “Mir”,

“Shah” or “Ameer” (Abazov, 2006:10). Usually, “Mirs” were from Uzbek ethnic group but sometimes this post was snatched by other ethnic communities due to any internal conflict or war as the rulers were Uzbeks from 1657 to 1873 (Abazov, 2006:10). This post was abolished in 1873 when Mir of Badakhshan became prisoner of Afghan Government and all the powers and authority were shifted to the Governor of Badakhshan. But, this occupation did not cover full region of Badakhshan (Abazov, 2006:10) as there were several self-governing rulers. This region is now called “Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region” within Tajikistan. Russian, Chinese and Afghan governments several times claimed that the region of Badakhshan and Pamir Mountains was a part of their country. Even, Qing Ruler of China sent its troops to take control over this region but his army just occupied Tashkurgan now a principal town in Xinjiang province of China. Chinese Government is still claiming that this is its territorial part even it signed an agreement with Tajik Government in 2002 regarding re-settlement of borders (Bertrand, 2010:258, Abazov, 2006:10).

In 1890, there were the series of agreements among Chinese, Russian and Afghan governments regarding division of Badakhshan but Gorno-Badakhshan was occupied by USSR in 1920 and declared its part in 1924. In 1929 Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic organized Gorno-Badakhshan as its autonomous province. At that time, Russia also merged some areas of this region into Gharm Oblast within Tajik SSR. In 1955, Gharm Oblast was dissolved and this region again merged into Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region and 13 districts came under Tajikistan’s central rule (also called Districts of Republican Subordination) (Abdullaev, 2010:332-333, Davlatshoev, 2006:54-55).

In 1992, when Tajikistan suffered from civil war after the disintegration of USSR, the Gorno-Badakhshan’s local government announced its independence from the Republic of Tajikistan. This announcement became a reason of targeting local Pamiri ethnic community by Tajik national army and other rival groups. In result, local government of this region called back its announcement of independence and now, it is an autonomous region within Republic of Tajikistan (Davlatshoev, 2006:55-56, Abdullaev, 2010:333). Similarly, in 2012, after Tajik general’s murder, this region again experienced Tajik military attacks on the followers of Tolib Ayombekov a former warlord in Gorno-Badakhshan (Tousley, 2012:138).

On the other hand, Afghan occupied region of Badakhshan merged with the districts of Qataghan in 1890 and Afghan Government appointed

two governors under the Northern Bureau of Afghan government; one for the newly established province of Qataghan-Badakhshan and second for Badakhshan District. In 1963, Qataghan-Badakhshan Province was abolished and established four new provinces, in which, Badakhshan was one of the 34th provinces in Afghanistan. Its borders are linked with China, Gorno-badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan and Pakistan (Emadi, 2005:7, Davlatshoev, 2006:57-58).

The Pakistan-held Badakhshan region had four parts in 1947. Princely states of Chitral, Hunza and Nagar had autonomy within British India but, the remaining region had acquired de-facto sovereignty from British rule since 1935, declared itself as “Islamic Republic of Gilgit” (Brown, 2017). All the three states and Gilgit joined Pakistan unconditionally. However, State of Chitral was amalgamated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (former NWFP) in 1970 under Legal Frame Work Order issued by President Yahya Khan while, the merger of Hunza and Nagar in each other in 1974 formed a district Hunza-nagar which was further merged into Gilgit-Baltistan (former Northern Areas). This region got the status of de-facto province of Pakistan in 2010 whereas; the legislative assembly of Gilgit-Baltistan passed a resolution and demanded that this region should be declared as fifth province (Brown, 2017).

BADAKHSHAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

Badakhshan independence Movement drives its history from the pre Soviet era. The wave of raising slogans for independence started from the Soviet rule (Davlatshoev, 2006:54-55) when Gorno-Badakhshan was declared an autonomous province and remaining area of Tajikistan was declared as Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a part of Uzbekistan. Later, in 1929, USSR declared contemporary region of Tajikistan as a Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic and Gorno-Badakhshan was attached with it as an autonomous province. In 1955, when Gharm Oblast/ province were merged in Tajikistan, its territory was divided into Gorno-Badakhshan and 13 districts under Republican Subordinate provinces (Akiner, 2008:8, Davlatshoev, 2006:54-55). After Tajik declaration of independence in September 1991, Gorno-Badakhshan declared its independence from the Republic of Tajikistan. Declaration of independence was supported by Iran and Burhanuddin Rabbani of Jamat-e-Islami Party of Afghanistan. However this declaration became a cause of killing of several Pamiris by Tajik military forces and other rival groups and finally Gorno-Badakhshan took its declaration of independence back in June 1997 after signing “Moscow Protocol” and “General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord

in Tajikistan” (Davlatshoev, 2006:55-60). But, this civil war generated huge impacts on Pamiri people not only in Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan, Gilgit and Diamer Divisions in Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region and Chitral District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of Pakistan and Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County in Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China (Akiner, 2008:9-10). Tension was raised again after the murder of Abdullo Nazarov, head of Tajik Intelligence Agency appointed in Gorno Badkhshan in 2012 (Tousley, 2012, P.138). Tajik Government accused the followers of former warlord Tolib Ayombekov and started an operation against them which was ended with disarming of all the militant groups in Gorno-Badakhshan. This operation forced more Pamiri population of Gorno-Badakhshan to get independence from Republic of Tajikistan (Tousley, 2012:138).

On the other hand, Laal-e-Badakhshan Party of Afghanistan demanded United Badakhshan in 1993; covering Afghan Province of Badakhshan, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan, Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region and Chitral District of Pakistan, and, Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County of Xinjiang in China (Gringo, 2017). This Party was founded in 1991 for the demand of autonomy of Gorno-Badakhshan. However, after expanding its roots towards Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan, some of its Afghan Pamiri leaders demanded unification of entire Badakhshan region as an independent state in 1993 but by the time, Gorno-Badakhshan had declared its independence (Gringo, 2017). Though, the demand has no strong backing in Afghanistan as the total Pamiri speaking population of Afghan Badakhshan Province is only 4 percent of the total population (Afghanistan in 2012, 2012:181-182). While, Pamiri speaking community is 22.4% of total Tajik population which lives in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region. Therefore the scholars claim that region is experiencing well-intentioned linguistic based ethno-national separatism (Everett-Heath, 2003:264).

Similarly, UNPO (Unrepresented Nations and People’s Organization is an international pro-democracy organization formed in Hague on February 11, 1991) has registered Gilgit-Baltistan in the list of Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization on September 20, 2008 (Gilgit-Baltistan, 2017). Gilgit-Baltistan is represented at the forum of UNPO by the Gilgit-Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA). It is actually an umbrella organization which is also representing other socio-political groups in Gilgit-Baltistan like Balawaristan National Front, Gilgit Baltistan United Movement, Karakoram National Movement, the Gilgit

Baltistan Laddakh Democratic Movement, and, the Bolor Research Forum. These groups though committed to non-violent methods are claiming independence from Pakistan on the base of their separate political history and distinct socio-lingual identity (Gilgit-Baltistan, 2017).

PAMIRI ETHNIC GROUP IN PAKISTAN

More than one million Pamiris live in Gilgit and Diamer Divisions of Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region (formerly called Northern Areas) and Chitral District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (The estimated population is around 1.8 million (Gilgit-Baltistan, 2017). Pamiri ethnic group is related with Tajiks by few ethnologists but majority of them declared this argument as a reason of negligence. They consider Pamiri languages as part of Eastern Iranian Language which has several dialectics like Wakhi, Munji, Yidgha and Saikuli (Gilgit-Baltistan, 2017, Census Report of 1998). The region is strategically important as it is linked 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. Its economic significance cannot be ignored as it is at main route of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. This corridor is crossing through Gilgit and Diamer Divisions in Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region of Pakistan. While, contemporary share of Gilgit and Diamer divisions in the national economy is 10%. Its share in total exports is \$0.102 billion while, share in generating total revenue is \$0.155 billion (Economy of Pakistan, 2016). Similarly, the share of Chitral District in national economy is \$0.352 Billion while, its share in total exports is \$0.1467 billion and share in generating total revenue is \$0.1584 billion (Economy of Pakistan, 2016). The following table shows the expected economic worth of this region.

**ESTIMATED ECONOMIC WORTH OF GILGIT AND DIAMER DIVISIONS
OF GILGIT-BALTISTAN AUTONOMOUS REGION AND CHITRAL
DISTRICT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA**

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
Gilgit and Diamer Divisions of Gilgit-Baltistan	10%	\$3.00 bn out of \$30 bn	\$4.1668 bn out of \$41.668 bn	\$4.5 bn out of \$45 bn	\$5.7 bn out of \$57 bn	\$2.310 bn out of \$23.10 bn
District Chitral in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province	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
Total	10.352%	\$3.1056 bn	\$4.3135 bn	\$4.6584 bn	\$5.9006 bn	\$2.3913 bn

Source: Statistics of Pakistan, 2016, Economy of Pakistan, 2016. Expected results are found through statistical measurements by the authors.

Apparently, total share of Pamiri-populated region in the national economy is just 10.352% but because of Chinese investment in the respective region, not only GDP of Pakistan is expected to be boosted up to 15% (\$274 bn) but will ultimately enhance the economic worth of this region (Costs and Benefits of CPEC, 2017). Different projects from \$45 bn to \$70 bn have been proposed by the bilateral agreement between China and Pakistan (How Will CPEC Boost Pakistan Economy, 2017). Such projects and industrial plans statistically predict increased share of this region up to \$46.584 bn in the total exports of Pakistan where expected share of Gilgit and Diamer divisions would be around \$45 bn and Chitral district would have \$1.584 bn. Likewise, such developments would facilitate total revenue generation up to \$69.876 bn from this region (expected share of Gilgit and Diamer and Chitral divisions is claimed \$67.5 bn and \$2.376 bn respectively). At the same time, the region would assist in growing foreign reserves of Pakistan up to \$35.8695 bn where participation of Gilgit and Diamer divisions would increase its share from \$2.310 bn to \$34.65 bn and the contribution of Chitral district would intensify its share from \$0.0813 bn to \$1.2195 bn (Costs and Benefits of CPEC, 2017).

Though the region is strategically and economically very significant but it is diverse socially and ethnically at the same time. Balti is a language of 35 percent people while 32 per cent speak Shina language. Another major language of the region is Burushaski spoken by 22 percent of the population. Five per cent people speak Wakhi language and 6 per

cent are languages like Punjabi, Kashmiri, Pashto and Khowar (The Wakhi speaking people are settled 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 neither Indo-European nor Eastern Iranian. Similarly, Wakhi in Ishkoman valley now speak Shina language which is also considered as Indo-Iranian dialectic of Indo-European languages). Similarly sectarian diversity is also evident in the region. The majority population of the region is Muslim divided in different sects of Islam: Ismaili-Shia, Twelver-Shia, Sunni-Brelvi, Sunni-Deobandi, Sunni-Wahabi, Sufia-Imamia, Noorbakshia sects (Census Report of 1998).

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).

BADAKHSHAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT AND PAMIRI ETHNIC GROUP IN PAKISTAN

Pamiri ethnic community despite being scattered in four geographical territories of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, China and Pakistan share certain geographic, Socio-cultural and religious bonds. Three branch lines of historical Silk Route (Xinjiang - Gorno-Badakhshan, Xinjiang-Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan, and, Xinjiang - Gilgit-Baltistan) (Route of Silk Road, 2017) provide geographic link among these people of different regions and Wakhan Corridor, also known as pamiri corridor is a very narrow strip of Afghanistan geographically linked with Tajikistan, China and Pakistan is a historical trade route between South, East and Central Asian states. Pamiri people are also geographically linked through this route (Abideen, 2013:2). This corridor was created as a result of an agreement among 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 Pamiri people in Tajikistan, Pakistan and Xinjiang Region of China (Shahrani, 2002:55-86).

Another common ground is the religious association as all Pamiri belong to Ismaili sect of Shia Islam and follow the directions of Prince Shah Karim Al-Hussaini who is their 49th Imam and 4th Agha Khan. He is the grandson of Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Agha Khan III who was first president of All India Muslim League (Daftary, 2011:27).

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. And offices and centers of these agencies are established on different locations in Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan and Afghan Province of Badakhshan, which are developing the sense of socio-sectarian unity among them (Mastibekov, May 16, 2014:11-19, Brown, 2008:309-311).

Though majority of the population in Pakistan, despite their sectarian differences, consider Ismaili Muslims as peace loving and development-minded but there are certain suspicion and fears raised by several Sunni religious leaders in Pakistan regarding these development agencies and their allegation is that these projects are paving the way of an independent Agha Khan State in the entire Badakhshan region. The Gilgit-Baltistan region has witnessed intense sectarian fighting during the Zia regime when hundreds of people were killed during riots in 1983 and 1988. Similarly, more than sixty people at Karakorum highway near Chillas were murdered when militants killed the Shia people of Gilgit city and its surroundings. On January 8, 2015, after murder of Ismaili leader; Zia-ud-Din, riots started in this region which lasted with the curfew in Gilgit and Skardu city (Maitra, 2015). At least 15 people died during these riots. After few days, two more Ismaili social workers for Agha Khan Development Network were killed in Chitral. Police arrested two Sunni militants during investigations and claimed that they belonged to Taliban and Al-Qaida (Maitra, 2015). Though the killing of more than 55 Ismaili people in Safura Gate incident in Karachi is considered an effort to sabotage Pak-China Economic Corridor project (Abideen, 2016:2) but it has also triggered disturbance among Ismaili and Sunni community not only in Karachi but in Gilgit-Baltistan.

While keeping in view the factors mentioned above it seems that any sectarian violence not only can deteriorate the law and order situation

in the region but it also can raise the separatist sentiments among Ismaili population especially in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral region. It might be possible that slogans of independence will not be related with the Pamiri ethnic community or United Badakhshan movement. However any expected call of independence in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomus Region of Tajikistan may widely affect Pamiri ethnic population in Northern parts of Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

Pamiri ethnic community despite being scattered in different countries shares certain sectarian, cultural and ethnic similarities. Badakhshan Region during 1992 to 1997 has shown signs of separatism. Though the call of independence has been withdrawn, however, the different slogans for unification of the areas of the Pamiri people are still in the air. The claim of Pamiri ethno-nationalists is based upon their shared ethno-cultural or sectarian identity. It is evident from the above discussion that the reasons of the separatists' movements may be different in different areas of the Pamir range but there may be chances that these elements can trigger a potential ethnic conflict in future. Any sectarian conflict can deteriorate the law and order situation. Similarly, serious differences among Tajik central government and Gorno-Badakhshan's local government can also sow the seeds of separatism in the region. As Gilgit and Diamer Divisions in Gilgit-Baltistan region is the primary hub of CPEC, Pakistan can never bear any sectarian or ethnic violence in the respective region. It is time for policy makers to bring parties on board and satisfy the regional demands of political and fiscal autonomy to accommodate interests of all different ethnic communities.

REFERENCES

- Abazov, R. (2006). *Tajikistan*. New York: Marshall Cavendish.
- Abdullaev, K. (2010). *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press.
- Abideen, A. (2013). *Wakhan Corridor*. Gilgit: Daily Gilgit-Baltistan.
- Abideen, A. (2016). *Saneha Safura Gate aur CPEC*. Gilgit: Daily Gilgit-Baltistan.
- Afghanistan in 2012. (2012). *A Survey of Afghan People*. Kabul, Afghanistan: The Asia Foundation.
- Akiner, S. (2008). *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*. New York: Routledge.

- Ali, Z. (2017, January 22). 'Almost' Pakistan: Gilgit-Baltistan in a constitutional limbo. Retrieved from Daily DAWN: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1198967>
- Bergne, P. (1998). *The Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Bertrand, J. (2010). *Multination States in Asia: Accommodation or Resistance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bliss, F. (2006). *Social and Economic Change in the Pamirs (Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan)*. London: Routledge.
- Brown, L. (2008). *Pakistan and the Karakoram Highway*. London: Lonely Planet.
- Brown, W. A. (2017, January 22). Gilgit-Baltistan's liberation. Retrieved from Pakistan Defence: <http://defence.pk/threads/gilgit-baltistans-liberation.375789/>
- Costs and Benefits of CPEC. (2017, March 07). Retrieved from For Pakistan: <http://forpakistan.org/costs-and-benefits-of-cpec/>
- Daftary, F. (2011). *Historical Dictionary of the Ismailis*. New York: Scarecrow Press.
- Davlatshoev, S. (2006). *The Formation and Consolidation of Pamiri Ethnic Identity in Tajikistan: Dissertation*. Middle East Technical University of Turkey: School of Social Sciences.
- Dupree, L. (New Jersey). *Afghanistan*. 2014: Princeton University Press.
- Emadi, H. (2005). *Culture and Customs of Afghanistan*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Everett-Heath, T. (2003). *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*. New York: Routledge.
- GB-Bulletin. (2017, January 19). Gilgit-Baltistan: Financing of Wahabi & Salafi Militants Across the Globe. Retrieved from Gilgit Baltistan Bulletin:
- Gilgit-Baltistan. (2017, January 19). Retrieved from Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization: <http://unpo.org/members/8727>
- Gringo, E. (2017, January 29). Roots of the Conflict. Retrieved from Wayback Machine Internet Archive: <https://web.archive.org/web/20091023215821/http://geocities.com/Paris/9305/sheproot.html>
- Hashmi, R. (2017, January 22). ISIS, Taliban United Behind Attack on ANA in Badakhshan. Retrieved from Rawa News: <http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2015/04/13/isis-taliban-united-behind-attack-on-ana-in-badakhshan.html>
- How Will CPEC Boost Pakistan Economy? (2017, March 07). Retrieved from Deloitte: www2.deloitte.com/content/.../pak-china-eco-corridor-deloittepk-noexp.pdf

- Hunzai, I. (2017, January 19). Conflict Dynamics in Gilgit-Baltistan. Retrieved from United States Institute of Peace: <http://www.usip.org/publications/conflict-dynamics-in-gilgit-baltistan>
- Kuz'mina, E. E. (2013). The Origin of the Indo-Iranians. Berlin: BRILL.
- Maitra, R. (n.d.). New target for Pakistan's militants. Retrieved April 10, 2015, from Asia Times Online: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/GA19Df06.html
- Mastibekov, O. (May 16, 2014). Leadership and Authority in Central Asia: The Ismaili Community in Tajikistan. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Minahan, J. B. (2014). Ethnic Groups of North, East, and Central Asia: An Encyclopedia. California: ABC-CLIO.
- Pavlenko, A. (2008). Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries. Dushanbe: Multilingual Matters.
- Poor, D. M. (2014). Authority Without Territory: The Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili Imamate. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Reviewed, K. W. (2017, January 19). Daily Dawn. Karachi: Nawa-i-Waqt Publishers. Retrieved from Daily Dawn: <http://www.dawn.com/news/174580>
- Rouse, G. (1878). Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Volume 47, 47, 175. Retrieved October 29, 2016, from https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=zboIAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA38&dq=Ghalcha&lr=&as_brr=1&ei=LZToS9znI47qzASqtbXnCQ&cd=12&redir_esc=y&hl=en#v=onepage&q=Ghalcha&f=false
- Route of Silk Road. (2017, January 19). Retrieved from China Travel Guide: <https://www.travelchinaguide.com/silk-road/route.htm>
- Roy, O. (2000). The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations. London: I.B.Tauris.
- Shahrani, M. N. (2002). The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan: adaptation to closed frontiers and war. Washington: University of Washington Press.
- Southeastern Iranian Family Tree. (2016, October 29). Retrieved from Ethnologue: Languages of the World: http://www.ethnologue.com/show_family.asp?subid=12-16
- Statistics of Pakistan. (2016). Islamabad: Statistics Department of the Government of Pakistan.
- Tousley, S. W. (2012). Afghan Sources of the Tajikistan Civil War. Kabul: BiblioBazaar.
- Wurm, S. A. (1996). Atlas of Languages of Intercultural Communication in the Pacific, Asia and the Americas. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.