

ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND COLLECTIVE ACTIONS IN GILGIT-BALTISTAN

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***Abstract:** Given the disputed nature of Gilgit-Baltistan for last 6 decades, there seems to be a mounting concern of local people about the constitutional and political orphanage; but there is an absence of common political struggle from the people of the region. This paper seeks to analyze the contemporary debate surrounding the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan. It tries to understand the role played by ethnic diversity in the collective actions in the region. The division of populace along ethnic lines in Gilgit-Baltistan has often been a stumbling block which has prevented the people from initiating an organized and common political struggle for a peaceful solution of its constitutional status. It argues that the sociological fragmentation of populace along ethnic lines in Gilgit-Baltistan is the underlying cause which has prevented an organized collective action and thus the region has remained politically inactive and its constitutional identity lingers on. The paper has also assessed the impacts of ethnic diversity on the collective performance of public sector whose output has dwindled in the wake of growing ethnic discord.*

Keywords: Ethnic diversity, collective actions, constitutional status, public sector, fragmentation.

Introduction

Nation building can be referred to as the diminishing phenomena of local or ethnic loyalties and at the same time increasing allegiance to a broad cohort of communities commonly

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described as nation. The third world countries, especially the post-colonial states are constantly posing this dilemma and are unable to integrate their fractionalized communities in to one nation. They have yet to go through the process of nation building, which is in nascent phase, and could surely crumble if democratic process is not allowed to flourish. Ethnic diversity or pluralism occurs when two or more ethnic communities are present in the same political space.¹ Political space normally refers to the area under the jurisdiction of the same political authority – in modern times, a territorial state with an effective government.

There is a fair chance of conflict among two or more ethnic communities sharing the same space considering the fact that they are to come in contact regarding matters of everyday life. This conflict is bound to escalate if there is no democratic and transparent process to evaluate and exterminate the emerging conflicts among factions of divergent interests. It is equally necessary that the feedback process mainly emanating from the public must also be evaluated, and the political system should respond in positive manner, leaving no room for the conflict to escalate.

The relationship between ethnic diversity and collective actions can be seen in case of Gilgit-Baltistan that is ethnically diverse and has been facing continuous discord among different factions of populace. The ethnically diverse populace of the region has found it difficult to reconcile with each other and the burning issues like constitutional identity and political status of Gilgit-Baltistan has therefore received a lukewarm attention. When we talk about Constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan, it means the full incorporation of the region to the federation of Pakistan with full provincial status having its own assembly governed by the local representatives of the region. Moreover, the provincial status also demands representation in both the houses of Parliament. Gilgit-Baltistan enjoys no such status and does not have its representation in the National Assembly and the Senate of Pakistan.

¹ Milton J. Esman, *Introduction to Ethnic Conflict* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 3.

The region has been subjected to ad-hoc mechanisms of governance since its independence, and therefore, the development has remained minimal and masses disenchanted from it. To the worst of crisis there is not any heed from the people of Gilgit-Baltistan towards this constitutional orphanage. The purpose of this study is to find out the reasons of inaction which has ensued regarding the status of region. It tries to analyze how far the phenomena of ethnic diversity has prevented the masses to act as one unit, since there has been recurrent episodes of ethnic discord which has put the issue to the back-burner.

Secondary sources have been consulted for the research and have been analyzed by employing different theories of ethnicity and collective action.

The study carried out by Paul Collier, Patrick Honohan, and Karl Ove Moene is a helpful source to understand how implications of ethnic diversity can be damaging for developing countries where there is no stable political system. They have argued that fractionalized societies have worst public sector performance because of the fact that they don't have common agendas with respect to the larger public good.²

This study is helpful in the sense it can be applied to the case study of Gilgit-Baltistan where the public sector performance is dwindling owing to the divergent interests of different groups. It has also been argued that ethnically differentiated societies would find cooperation difficult and victimization of minorities easily.³ This relation can best be extended to societies where there is no viable political system which could respond to the escalating needs of different factions. Thus it goes without saying that in such a society conflict becomes inevitable and people start to think on ethnic lines rather than for a larger collective and political interest.

Models of collective action have been taken from a study conducted by Pamela E. Oliver. The study has elaborated the

² Paul Collier, Patrick Honohan, and Karl Ove Moene, "Implications of Ethnic Diversity," *Economic Policy* 16, no. 32 (April 2001): 127–66, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3601036>.

³ Ibid.

“Rational Choice” and “Individual Choice” models, which have a direct bearing on the study of ethnic diversity and collective action process. These models cannot only be helpful in assessing the relationship of individual with his/her ethnic group; rather they can be a good source to evaluate the pitfalls created by individual choices upon the collective action process.

A field research in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan by Martin Sokefeld, entitled “Migration and Society in Gilgit-Baltistan,” shows the changing dynamics of ethnic groups in the regions. The research elaborated how the immigrants from different areas of Pakistan pose a constant threat to the integrity of an already fractionalized society. The opening up of the roads to mountain communities in the form of Karakoram highway has resulted in large migration from different parts of Pakistan, most notably Kahsmir, which has resulted in the demographic shift of the region.

This demographic shift has now reached at alarming level and continues to escalate thus giving a new dimension to the ethnic conflicts in the region. Over the years since late 1980s, due to Zia’s Islamization policies the sectarian conflict in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan escalated steadily and continues to disrupt normal life of the citizens. It has also prevented the Sunni minority of region to oppose any political set-up for the region which will convert them to a fair minority in the province just like Iran. This fear has prevented the communities to come at same page regarding the status of constitutional rights in the region, and thus we see no further struggle or movement for the rights of Gilgit-Baltistan.

The population of the Gilgit-Baltistan can roughly be divided into eight ethnic groups. These constitute a major chunk of population, but small ethnic groups also reside in the region. The following eight ethnic groups constitute the region: Baltis, Yashkunsm, Ladakhis, Turks, Kashmiris, Pathans, Moghals, and Sheens. Gilgit has four districts (Astore, Diamer, Ghizer, and Gilgit) while Baltistan have two (Ghanche and Skardu).

Ethnicity and Ethnic Diversity: Gripping the basic Concepts

It is important to grip the concept of ‘ethnicity’ before proceeding to its theories. It seems to be a straight-forward concept

initially but it can be highly slippery and presents pitfalls to understand its meaning. The term ethnicity can be comprehended by identifying some of the variable which gives meaning to it. These variables can be common ancestry, kinship, a feeling of amity and belongingness, and shared values and traditions. It is a matter of identification or a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group. The proponents of modernism and many Marxist critiques believe that ethnicity will eventually die out in the face of growing interconnectedness among the people of world. Their arguments primarily base on the assumption that the closeness of communities in the social space leads to more integration of the people and the differences eventually fade out. Assimilationists and advocates of the 'melting pot' paradigm have envisaged a withering of ethnic identification as a result of ethnic assimilation and amalgamation.⁴

Quite contrarily to the aforementioned school of thoughts, which predicted the dying away of ethnic differences, it should be noted that ethnicity in the modern world still remains one of the powerful cultural factors and has been a basis of so many conflicts around the world. In 1994, Professor Gurr counted no fewer than 50 currently active ethnic-based conflicts, of which 13 had resulted in 100,000 or more fatalities.⁵ These figures show that ethnic association still holds a great deal of importance among its members, and the phenomenon of violence for the preservation of ethnicity is still all around, and modernism and globalization have not been able to give a decisive blow to ethnicity. The Muslim and Hindu skirmishes in Gujarat, war of Tamil Tigers with the Sri Lankan government, the Chechan struggle against Russian domination, and the ethnic cleansing of Tutsi by Hutus in Rwanda are all the examples of ethnic conflicts around the world.

In order to answer the basic questions of what is ethnicity, how it is recognized, what are its essential features, and what are its basis, scholars have presented different theories. Two among these

⁴ Philip Q. Yang, *Ethnic Studies: Issues and Approaches* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 40–41.

⁵ Ted Robert Gurr, "Peoples Against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World System," *International Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (September 1994): 347–77.

theories are “Primordialism” and “Constructionism”. These two theories have developed a framework around which the concept of ethnicity can be understood and the answers of the aforementioned questions can be delineated.

It is oft-repeated statement about ethnicity that it remains fixed and can't be changed whatsoever. This declaration about ethnicity is the cornerstone of Primordialist school of thought. The Primordialist school emphasizes on the historical origin and the ascribed identity of ethnic members. This ascribed identity is inherited from the ancestors. Smith contends that nations and ethnic identification have been in place at least since the emergence of the first civilizations.⁶ This line of argument follows the example that a Chinese would look like Chinese because his ancestors look like the same and that the generation has received the same physical characteristics. It is very pertinent to note down that ethnic boundaries which determine the membership of its individuals are essentially fixed. This follows the example that a Chinese can't become a Greek. Therefore we can argue that ethnicity is static and unchangeable under any circumstances. Ethnicity is a very deeply rooted, primal bond to one's ancestral bloodline.⁷ Genetic research on human origins suggests that all human beings in the world today originate from a founding population of a few thousand individuals in East Africa.⁸ The study consolidates the evolutionary point of view in the making of ethnicity and has been a remarkable tool of analysis to elaborate the concepts of ethnicity within evolutionary framework. The evolutionary framework of ethnic concept can also be understood in the process of ethnic conflicts. The genocides are carried out in order to virtually exterminate the ethnic groups. While the efforts of Nazi Germany to expedite the reproductivity of German population was carried on the notion that it will eventually succeed in creating a purified race of Germans all around Europe.

⁶ A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 49.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ S. Oppenheimer, *Out of Eden: The Peopling of the World* (London: Robinson Publications, 2004), 67.

We shall now take into account the frequently quoted view of ethnicity that has emerged in the modern academia, called the “constructionist/constructivist view of ethnicity.” It is important to note that this view points to many factors which have shaped the modern-nation state system. The social constructionist view takes its fundamental argument from the rise of civilizations – a period that saw social transformation from a hunter-gatherer society to an organized community, where people aligned themselves on class bases. When the means of transportation and subsistence grew, certain groups began to disperse from the tribal clan attachment in exploration of surrounding areas. These splintered groups were then incorporated by the emerging class of people who started to hold sway over the lives of different communities. In China, the state gradually incorporated surrounding ethnic groups into the dominant Han culture.⁹ These nomadic factions then became the integral part of what can be described as the unanimous identity projecting itself as ethnicity. The historical account of modern nations like France, Germany, and Spain and their rise as the nation can also be attributed to the fact that the statehood experience in these countries has a general homogenizing influence on the culture and ethnic identity.¹⁰ Out of these constructive variations across the world, the constructivist school believes that ethnic identities emerged. The states have not only been an active element in homogenizing populations, rather they have actively adopted policies to sometimes assimilate and sometimes exterminate the respective ethnic identities. Tilly has found that rulers frequently try to homogenize their populations.¹¹ The struggle for this assimilation at the cost of others can be attributed to the fact that homogenized populations can take a more passionate and prudent approach to the external aggression. As long as the populace is divided along different

⁹ I. Morris, *Why the West Rules for Now* (New York: Straus & Ferrar, 2010), 349.

¹⁰ E. Fletcher and M. Iyigun, “Culture, Clashes, and Peace,” *IZA Discussion Paper*, no. 4116 (2009), 24.

¹¹ C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States: AD 990–1992* (London: Blackwell, 1992), 139.

loyalties, the problem of aggression from outside can result in the complete defeat of a particular country.

Collective Action and its conceptual framework

We start by the definition of H. M. Blalock, “We take collective action to be the concerted activity of a group of individuals to pursue public goods.”¹² Simply collective action is the ability of the members of any group to align themselves for a concerted activity which is inspired by a common interest or a common agenda. Its modus operandi can vary from time to time given the circumstances, as it may come through, voting, lobbying, activism, advocacy, or by certain violent or non-violent actions.

The structural theory of collective action is perhaps the most common and often quoted theory to explain the occurrences of collective action. It is based on the occupational lines and argues that when members of certain group occupy distinctive position in any form of structure and when they become aware of their common plight, the collective action thus becomes inevitable and they align themselves for the attainment of common interests.

The structural theory of collective action is unable to grasp the role of individual which is in fact the basic building block of any collective action. The dynamics of individual, his/her role in the group, and his/her interests and pursuits are the common variables which should be kept in mind before assessing the viability of any collective action. Therefore Rational Choice Theory has been put forwarded which is entirely focused upon the role of individual in any collective action. It argues that individuals are driven by so many variables before they contemplate any common struggle. They may have their own interests, tastes, aspirations, attachments, and emotional and material interests that define their objectives and goals. Since it becomes impossible to realize all goals and objectives at one time, the individuals will automatically seek the ways to ensure maximum benefit out of any collective action. The individual will only participate in any collective action when s/he sees the

¹² H. M. Blalock, *Towards a Theory of Minority-Group Relations* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1967), 267.

maximization of benefits which must surpass the costs.¹³ It is pertinent to mention here that the process of collective action is not so spontaneous. It develops in the face of gradual timing and bursts in obvious manner. There may be the events which can act as the catalysts but the overall process takes time.

Before Mancur Olson's theory of collective action, it was widely held belief that individuals with common interest would form association to achieve a desired goal or objective, and that this collective action is highly favorable since the participation of many people would multiply the efforts.

Olson argued that Individuals act out of self-interested motives. Their reason for participation in any collective action stems from the self-interest and that they seek to maximize it with whatever costs. It is also important to bear in mind that individuals will always make rational choices for their interests, particularly when economic stakes are involved. An individual participating in a collective action will try his/her best to reap the benefits without the self-efforts; rather he/she will capitalize on the efforts of this fellow people.

Mancur Olson suggests that rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interest.¹⁴ It can summarily be said that if all the members in a group are rational and inspired by self-interested motives they will still not participate in the collective action process, since a separate incentive is lacking. Moreover there is also this dilemma that larger the group will be the proportional acquisition of collective goods will be minimal to the individuals; and the inverse relationship can be found out to small groups. That is, a small group which is in pursuit of gaining the public goods will find it easy to attain its objectives since the proportional share of each member will be large enough to attract the rational, self-interested individuals.

¹³ Michael Hechter, Debra Friedman, and Malka Appelbaum, "A Theory of Ethnic Collective Action," *International Migration Review* 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1982): 412–34, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2545105>.

¹⁴ Mancur Olson, *The logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1971), 2.

It should also be noted that members of the large group will not act voluntarily or in advance in pursuit of their goals unless there is no coercion or force used from the above or a selective incentive for them is not proposed. Otherwise the members of the group will remain dormant and do not respond to the calls of collective action.

We now turn our attention towards a theory of ethnic collective action which will later be applied to the case study of Gilgit-Baltistan. The structural theory of ethnic collective action assumes that whenever the members of any ethnic group occupy distinctive positions in any organization or a society, they gradually come to know about their plight. They see the mechanisms by which the systems work and they find it easy to point out the relative discriminations which are discharged to their members. This position gives a realization to the members of ethnic group and as soon as they realize, collective action ensues.¹⁵ If we extend the same line of argument to the case study of Gilgit-Baltistan, we come to interesting results. Since Gilgit-Baltistan enjoys the highest literacy rate among the four provinces of Pakistan, its residents have not yet become consciousness of their constitutional and political rights. They enter into what can be termed as the organization of the larger state but they don't become aware of the common plight which is associated with the non-provision of constitutional rights. The irony is that only the nationalists who are not literate in the crude sense of the word tend to raise their voices for the rights of Gilgit-Baltistan. The literate people who are either writers or something else have not the slightest intention in making the common masses consciousness of their rights and responsibilities rather they end up dizzying the simple things.

There is another notion that with the introduction of rapid industrialization in the region economic salvation can be brought up, which will ultimately lead the people to stay away from the demands of constitutional rights and status. An example of this phenomena can be found in the Middle Eastern countries where there are entrenched monarchies, and the people do not raise a single voice

¹⁵ Hechter, Friedman, and Appelbaum, "Ethnic Collective Action," 412-34.

for the blatant disregard of Human rights. The reason is that the common population of these countries is economically well-off and they are least concerned with the economic matters of their country. The same case can be extended to Gilgit-Baltistan where people are self-sufficient with apparently no need of agitation of any sort. Therefore the struggle for constitutional status is shadowed for too long.

A recent example can be quoted from the huge demonstration for one week in which more than 50,000 people from all the ethnic origins of Gilgit and Baltistan staged a sit-in in response to the revocation of subsidy of wheat by federal government. All the ethnic identities forgot their difference and came under a banner of a public party known as Awami Action Committee (AAC). It organized the people of GB from all communities into one knot and demanded for the restoration of wheat subsidy. The rationale behind such a massive rise up just for a petty demand of wheat subsidy explains a lot. First it is important to understand that whenever the regimes try to snatch the piece of cake from the mouth of its population they always rise up and respond to the call of agitation, rising above any sort of ethnic and sectarian lines. This gives the idea that as long as the basic necessities of people are not challenged they remain dormant and gave a scant attention to the secondary issues which have no direct bearing on the individuals.

Fractionalized Demography: Ethnic Diversity in Gilgit-Baltistan

It would be pertinent to begin a sociological study of Gilgit-Baltistan and to find out the ethnic dynamics of the region. The estimated population of Gilgit-Baltistan is around 1.2 million, who have lived in harmony until recently. The population consists of four main sects of Islam. The composition is as follow: Shiite (39 percent), Sunni (27 percent), Ismaili (18 percent), and Noorbakshi (16 percent) – and at least twenty-four other ethnic and linguistic groups.¹⁶

¹⁶ Hermann Kreutzmann, “The Karakoram Landscape and the Recent History of the Northern Areas,” in *Karakoram: Hidden Treasures in*

The region of Gilgit-Baltistan is historically referred as Dardistan; a word whose etymology stills lingers for explanation. Some scholars believe it to be derived from the Persian word “Dard” which means pain, but an effective explanation is still awaited. There are also entirely different versions about the name of Dardistan as well. The subdivisions of Dardistan are Chilas, Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar, Punial, and Yasin. Historically, these principalities maintained and developed an autonomous status as small kingdoms with each preserving its own unique culture and traditions. Adjacent to Dardistan is the Baltistan region whose subdivisions are Kharmang, Khapulu, Shigar, Skardu, and Rondu.¹⁷ The Baltistan region also has slight difference of culture and traditions but the difference is not as sharp as that found in Gilgit. The reason being that Balti race is considered to be the descendants of same origin. The total area of the region is 12,355 square miles. The terrain is mostly mountainous with high and low altitude plateaus. The climate is mostly dry with a considerable degree of summer heat, but the nights are mostly cool and fresh.

A clear cut variation of language, sect, and ethnicity can be discerned in the province of Gilgit-Baltistan with each district maintaining their own unique identity and cultural traditions. Shina language is the lingua franca of the region and spoken and understood by all districts with varying dialects. Each district has its own dialect with significant majority ascribing to it. For instance, the Ghizar District, which belongs to Brusho tribe, has significant Ismaili population – roughly 87%. It has three major dialects which are Shina, Khowar, and Brushaski.¹⁸ Gilgit and Hunza are relatively heterogeneous populations with Imamia Shia Asna Ishriya as the major chunk of total populace roughly constituting 54% of the total. Gilgit and Hunza incorporate three major identities Brusho, Sheen, and Yashkun. They speak Shina, Brushaski, and Wakhi languages.

the Northern Areas of Pakistan, ed. Stefano Bianca (Turin: Allemandi, 2007), 45.

¹⁷ G. L. Kaul, *Kashmir through Ages* (Srinagar: Chronicle Publishing House, 1967), 93.

¹⁸ Saadullah Ameer, *Shumali Illaqa Jat: Eik Nazar* (Gilgit: Nadir Printers, 2002), 211.

The Ahl e Sunnat wal Jammat is a dominant majority in the district of Diamer and Astore with more than 90% of total population of both districts. They speak Shina as the major language.¹⁹ The Skardu District constitutes 87% of the total Imamia Shia population with the fraction of Nur Bakshi minority. They primarily belong to Mon, Brokpa, and Hor identities. The major language which is spoken in this region is Balti language.²⁰

It is however pertinent to mention that due to the opening of diverse routes to Gilgit-Baltistan and the opening of mountain regions to the global market different other identities also came to Gilgit as immigrants and settled in the area. Slight fractions of Kahsmiris, Gujjars, Kohistanis, Pashtuns, Hazaras, and Punjabis can be found in different districts of the region. This multi-ethnic co-existence is a rare example of diversity, but we will be taking into account its underlying repercussions on the phenomena of collective actions in Gilgit-Baltistan, that how this diversity of ethnic groups is preventing a common political struggle for the attainment of constitutional rights.

The unique feature of Gilgit-Baltistan is in fact its diverse population. It has almost two million inhabitants with a very diverse socio-cultural background. As argued earlier that the autonomous nature small kingdoms in early centuries have contributed to the rise of entirely different ways and patterns of life in each principality, thus giving the region an entirely unique status among the rest of provinces in Pakistan. Two types of autonomous regions however need to be distinguished: Autonomous principalities and Republics.

The autonomous principalities covered the areas of northern side along the Indus River with a Chief ruling over them. An example of this type of state was Hunza whose chief was known as *Mir* or *Tham* maintaining a decisive say over local affairs. It retained a relatively independent status until integrated to the administrative

¹⁹ Wahid Beig Hilali, *Hikayat-e-Baltistan* (Skardu: Baltistan Book Depot, 1995).

²⁰ Ibid.

structure of Pakistan in 1974.²¹ Four different ethnicities used to reside in this principality and the *Mir* or *Tham* was solely responsible for their safety and matters related to daily state of affairs. These four different ethnicities were Shina speakers, Brusho, Wakhi, and Dom. The social group evolved after the interaction of these four ethnicities was called “Hunzkutz”.²²

It is interesting to note that the demographic composition of Gilgit-Baltistan is the mixture of different immigrants coming from all the neighborhoods surrounding it. Turks, Kashmiris, Pathans, and Mongols have made their way to Gilgit-Baltistan for trade or exploration. These trading communities then settled in the region and resided permanently. The interaction of these diverse communities has never led to the emergence of a common pattern of life and tradition; rather each ethnic group retained their sensibilities and never evolved a common pattern of life. The lack of common traditions and patterns of each principality can be attributed to the fact that the autonomous princely states have maintained a kind of fortress among the social interaction of common people in past; and besides the communication and transport roads being very difficult at best did prevent the common people from getting in touch with each other, and therefore, different patterns of life in each principality can be distinguished until now and people still practice the same old traditions.

The inter district harmony is ripped apart by sectarian conflict which has emerged recently. Shias and Sunnis are often at loggerheads with each other in different districts and bloody clashes have followed. The violent clashes have sown the seeds of distrust and discord among the different sects of region, and they are involved in killing of each other off and on.

The sectarian fights in the Gilgit-Baltistan have also to do with the larger politics of the region where the two bastions of different faiths (i.e., Iran and Saudi Arabia) are constantly trying to

²¹ Herman Kruetzmann, “The Karakoram Highway: The Impact of Road Construction on Mountain Societies,” *Modern Asian Studies* 25, no. 4 (October 1991): 711–36, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/312750>.

²² *Ibid.*

hunt each other down. After the revolution in Iran in 1979 the fear of transport of revolution led the Pakistani rulers to take preventive measures which culminated in a rigorous process of Islamization in Pakistan. What happened subsequently took a gradual shape but proved to be counter-productive for Pakistan. The one sided Islamization policy eroded the trust of Shia community from the sitting regime and protests and violent clashes followed with the regime. Gilgit-Baltistan was no exception in this regard. Moreover, the Karakoram highway when completed, it posed a greater threat to the region, since it became open to all type of drug-dealers, terrorist, illegal weapons, and intolerant attitudes.²³

Orientation of Different Sects:

Shias: The Shia community in Gilgit-Baltistan has been a target of sectarian and target killing from 1980s onward. Their difference with successive regimes stem from the anti-Shia laws, anti-shia education syllabi, and the persecution of religious and political leaders. Shia community has been actively engaged for the independent movement of Gilgit-Baltistan. They believe that Gilgit-Baltistan is their homeland and it was liberated by their forefathers. Yet they complain that they are treated as an inferior and second-class community in Pakistan. They also complain about the ulterior demographic shift in the region and blame the government for altering their numerical strength in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Sunnis: The Sunni community of the region has almost ironically the same complains. They believe that they are also the victims of sectarian killing and the conflict and have been marginalized by the rival communities. They also uphold that they have nothing to do with the banned militant organizations who are involved in the killing of Shia community. The Sunni community blames the government for failing to protect the communities of Gilgit-Baltistan, and they report that its backlash is faced by them. The Sunni community also has the constant grievance of being marginalized by their rival Shia sect. They argue that development

²³ Izhar Hunzai, "Conflict Dynamics in Gilgi-Baltistan," *United States Institute of Peace*, Special Report no. 321, 56, www.usip.org.

funds are channeled to the Shia majority areas and Sunnis are also excluded from major and key posts in government and private sectors.

Ismailies: The Ismailies community has been a neutral entity in the region, but it adopts a friendly approach towards the rest of sects. Ismailies constitute third largest community in Gilgit-Baltistan after Shias and Sunnis. The Ismaili community is in fact the most secular and remains focused on development, education, and infrastructure building. The Ismaili community is involved in the building of schools, development projects, research centers, and other steps for socio-economic uplift of the region. Since being liberal in their outlook the Ismaili community has come under skepticism for getting and accepting funds from western donor agencies and are sometimes accused of working on their agenda.

Conclusion

Two different perspectives of ethnicity including the “evolutionary” and “constructivist” view. These two perspectives laid down the foundations of our initial attempt and we moved to the next variable in our title which is “collective action”. The application of these two variables as the case study of Gilgit-Baltistan was main objective of this research. The fact of matter being that too many groups and ethnic identities have prevented a phenomenon of collective action has been described from the perspective of Gilgit-Baltistan, where each ethnic identity has different and somewhat divergent interests from the rest of community.

The competition among different ethnicities for power leads to a perpetual pulling and hauling among the competing factions, and states with diverse ethnic background find it very difficult to ensure an objective struggle for its stated national interests. This can fully be comprehended as the larger picture in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. The research was aimed at finding out those factors which are responsible for preventing a larger collective action in Gilgit-Baltistan. Squeezing this phenomenon to the marginalized communities within a state, a direct relation was found out between the two variables i.e. ethnic diversity and collective actions.

Collective action is an organized effort by any group of individuals to achieve what they perceive to be of paramount necessity and whose acquisition is bound to enhance their status among other competing factions. An inverse relationship can be discerned among the variables of ethnic diversity and collective action. Studies suggest that greater the ethnic diversity smaller is the chance of any collective action. The same model of inverse relationship has been applied to the case study of Gilgit-Baltistan where there is virtually an absence of collective political action for the constitutional rights. This absence of common political agenda was found out due to the ethnic diversity of region where each ethnic faction has their own stakes involved in the issue. The proponents of status-quo are those who are reaping benefits out of it, while the dissidents call for the solution of issue because they are in the marginal position. This interest based approach of the ethnic factions to the issue of Gilgit-Baltistan has thus prevented a collective political action and thus we are witnessing a continuous limbo in the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan. Given the fact that there are no formal political institutions in Gilgit-Baltistan which could overcome the ethnic discord and could stop it from escalating into a full-scale conflict, it is found out that the absence of fundamental political institutions has further aggravated the competition between rival ethnic groups.

The review of ethnic diversity of Gilgit-Baltistan has also taken to account the inability of diverse communities to form association among themselves. The reason of it once again was found out to be the diverse political interest of each ethnic group. The diverse ethnic communities of Gilgit-Baltistan with diverse interests and goals are unable to come at the same page which resultantly ensues in collective inaction.