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The flow of History of governance in Gilgit Baltistan

Introduction

Gilgit Baltistan, a historically distinct political entity, also known as the Northern Areas of Pakistan (the whole area which now called Gilgit Baltistan is named as Northern Areas) is an autonomous and self-governed part of Pakistan. Geographically, it lies between longitude 73.9° and latitude 35.35° . It covers an area of 72,496 square kilometers and has a population of 1.3 million (Dani, 1989; Shad, 2014). As shown in the map (Kreutmann, 2008) Gilgit Baltistan shares its borders with China in the northeast, Azad Kashmir in the southwest, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the west and Afghanistan's Wakhan corridor to the north. Similarly, it provides the meeting point for the world's four famous mountain ranges; Himalayas, Karakoram, Pamir and Hindukush (Shad, 2014).

Gilgit Baltistan is a sparsely populated high-mountain area in the north of Pakistan. It is formed by the amalgamation of the Gilgit agency, Baltistan region and the hill states of Hunza and Nagar. The city of Gilgit has remained the capital of the area since early pre-colonial times. Presently, Gilgit Baltistan is divided into two divisions; Gilgit and Baltistan, under these two divisions there are nine districts, as shown in the table.

Since the partition of the sub-continent, the Northern Areas is considered to be a disputed territory of the former princely state of Kashmir. Gilgit Baltistan has a very interesting, unique, versatile and multicultural history. It has remained a wonderful place to the world powers for

their political, military and economic interests in history. History states that it has partially and sometime completely remained under the Sikh, Dogra and British rules which will be discussed briefly in the second half of this paper (Dani, 1989).

Martin Sökefeld wrote in his journal, *From Colonialism to Post Colonialism*,

When was ‘the postcolonial’? . . . Arguably, decolonization begins before independence with freedom struggles against colonial hegemony and domination. And, it certainly continues after colonization has formally ended, as much time is needed to free social institutions and discourses from often subtle kinds of determination by the colonizing power? If that can ever be achieved. There is no simple dichotomy of the colonial and the postcolonial. Problems of periodization proliferate, if "postcolonial" is taken to label a global process of transition (Sökefeld, 2005).

Sökefeld further wrote that “the story of the Northern Areas of Pakistan, is an example of the complexity of this problem” (Sökefeld, 2005).

This research paper will try to survey and analyze the history of Northern Areas from the prehistoric time to colonial time and finally to the contemporary time. It will focus more on the modern history, with discussion of little glimpses into the historical evolution, medieval and pre-colonial history. It will also explore colonial history and it will end with some highlights about the present time. The rationale behind choosing this as a research topic is to reflect back to the historical consequences of Gilgit Baltistan, to understand the present and future values of the area.

Historical evolution of the Northern Areas:

Archaeological evidence, at present, is not sufficient to give a complete account of the pre-historic human inhabitation in this region. A detailed study of the region's rock carvings denotes that the chronological history of the area, from Stone Age through Bronze Age to historical times, is similar to the civilizational evolution of Central Asia and Europe. Over the centuries, the region has fallen under the Durrani Empire of Afghanistan and experienced Muslim rule under Mughal Empire. The Sikhs also ruled the region. The Dogra's administered the region as part of the princely state of Kashmir under the authority of British Crown (Dani, 1989; Shad, 2014; Zain, 2010,). The area remained under the British Crown until 1947.

Pre-colonial history:

There were different monarchies and many princely states in the Northern Areas. There were also different modes of domination. Different kingdoms, different civilizations, different tribes and different dynasties ruled the area since early times. The notable one being the Dardic people, Alexander's descendants, Megalith Builders, Huns etc. (Dani, 1989).

Gilgit was the capital of almost all the kingdoms, civilizations, tribes and dynasties, which ruled there. Geographically, it lies in the center of Northern Areas. In the pre-colonial era the rulers of the neighboring valleys were in competition to capture Gilgit, such as Yasin (Suleiman Shah and Gohar Aman), Punial (Azad Khan), and Nagar (Tahir Shah). In 1842, for the first time, Kashmiri troops under the dynasty of Maharaja Hari Singh entered Gilgit. At that time, Gilgit was under the rule of the Raja Gohar Aman (a ruler of Yasin). In 1846, with the death of Raja Gohar Aman, the Kashmiris dominated Northern areas (Sökefeld, 2005). This gave a pathway for the British colonialization. With the defeat of Maharaja Hari Singh and following

treaty of Amritsar (1846), the British Gave the control to Dogra Ghulab Singh, who became the ruler of Kashmir and Gilgit.

Colonial history:

There were two major powers in the area during the colonial period, the Kashmiri Dogras and British. Colonel Biddulph was the British agent to the Northern Areas. He established Gilgit Agency in 1877, which made Gilgit a political unit of subcontinent. After few years he also established for the first time the British Agency in Gilgit, in collaboration with the Kashmiri administration, in 1879-81 (Sökefeld, 2005).

The Dogra's domination in Gilgit was a matter of force, so the British established their position in Gilgit by very different means. They never conquered Gilgit, instead they dominated the area indirectly (Sökefeld, 2005). This difference in the nature of both Dogra's and British toward the natives created difficulties in the relationship between the Dogra rulers and British. Which forced British political agent, Algernon Durand, to build direct relations independent of Dogra's. Durand, for the first time in British rule, created a military body commanded by a British officer. He also made good relations with the native rulers. Within a short period of time, Durand became famous for his dignity, he was considered as a good administrator, which gave him priority over the Dogra rulers in front of natives.

By 1891, Durand tried to convert the indirect British domination into direct colonial rule. However, the Mir (king) of Hunza Valley, Mir Safdar Ali Khan, was determinant not to accept the British rule. By this time there was the conflict going on in the other part of Asia specifically in Central Asia, between the Russian Empire and British Empire. History remember it as 'The Great Game' (Aberkane, 2011). Taking this as opportunity, Mir Safdar Ali khan opened Hunza

Valley to Russian force in order to save his kingdom from British colonialization. The British military, under the colonial Government of India, attacked the people of Hunza-Nagar, at the fort of *Nilt* in Nagar. The British succeeded and the resistance to colonial rule was diminished (Sökefeld, 2005). This was the first time that the British had used violence in Gilgit Baltistan.

In 1882, Durand raised a local military body named The Gilgit Scouts. With native participation this military body expanded quickly. It was transformed into the permanent military body. The colonialization of British is remembered as the story of progress. At the same time the Dogra's were struggling to keep their positions. The rivalry of this dual control, it might not be wrong if I call that the 'dual colonialism,' was becoming more intense. This rivalry was solved to large extent, when the British leased the Gilgit from the Dogra Maharaja in 1935 for Rs.75, 000 (Sökefeld, 2005).

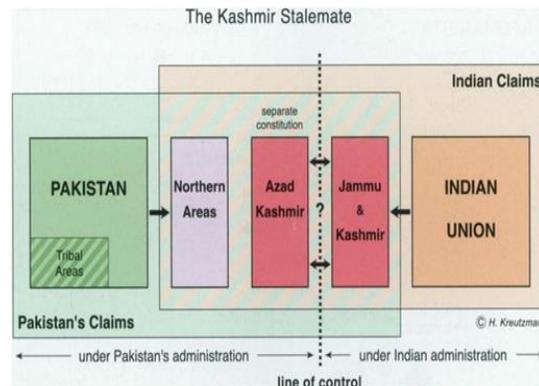
Post-Colonialism:

The end of World War II and the Independence movement in India were the reasons for the end of colonialism. The British left Gilgit Baltistan on 16th July, 1947, and gave the control to the Dogras. At that time the Subcontinent was to be divided between Muslim majority areas that would become Pakistan and Hindu majority areas of modern India, but there was dispute in the princely state of Kashmir. Kashmir, a Muslim majority area, could not go with Pakistan because the ruler of Kashmir wanted to go with India. In the tensions of this dispute, the people of Gilgit Baltistan started their own struggle for independence from the Dogras. The "Independent Republic of Gilgit" was established on November 1, 1947, preparing the way for the unanimously accepted accession to Pakistan (Kreutmann, 2008; Sokefeld 2005).

After joining Pakistan:

It has been more than half a century since the Northern Areas have come under the flag of Pakistan, but until now it is neither represented in Pakistan's National Assembly nor in its Senate.

It was deprived of its civil rights and has suffered all forms of discrimination, i.e. political, social, economic etc. The figure above represents the



Kashmir and Northern Areas and the story of the dispute (Kreutzmann, 2008).

The natives of Northern Areas devoted themselves to attract the political, social and economic attention from government of Pakistan. Their voice was heard for the first time by Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who visited the area in 1972. He introduced some administrative reforms in Northern Areas, including the abolishment of the traditional elite (kingdoms) from the area. During the military dictatorship of Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) the administrative structure was modified. In time of, Benazir Bhutto's first term of office (1988-1990), plans to grant provincial status to the Northern Areas became more concrete. To silence this voice, the government planned to introduce a similar model for the Northern Areas to that in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (Kreutzmann, 2008; Shad, 2014).

Federally Administrated Northern Areas (FANA):

The Northern Areas were ruled by the Executive from Islamabad through the Federal Ministry for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas (KANMA). It was administered by the Government of Pakistan under the Northern Areas Council Legal Framework Order of 1994 and

for this reasons it is referred as FANA, under the Prime Minister Moeen Qureshi (Kreutzmann, 2008).

According to an article in DAWN (30th may, 2005), in May, 2005, General Pervez Musharraf visited Gilgit and declared the constitutional package for the Northern Areas. The Northern Areas Legislative Council has been given the status of a legislative assembly with powers to debate and pass its budget.

Gilgit Baltistan:

By 2009, the people of Northern Areas were demanding reforms. They were demanding full provincial status. According to DAWN (29 September, 2009), Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gillani visited and clearly refused to give provincial status to Gilgit Baltistan. In the same year President Asif Ali Zardari announced the autonomy package for Gilgit Baltistan. He signed the Gilgit Empowerment and Self-Government Order. In light of this, the Northern Areas of Pakistan were officially given the name of ‘Gilgit Baltistan’, and some administrative and political reforms were made. The symbolic self-rule was given to Gilgit Baltistan by appointing the Governor, Chief Minister with the cabinet of Ministers. In December 2009, the Pakistan People’s Party was elected as the Government of Gilgit Baltistan, but control was again under the federal government. It has not been given full provincial autonomy and does not have constitutional representation in National assembly and senate.

Contemporary time:

The first democratic government of Gilgit Baltistan has completed its tenure and now the interim government has taken the rule over control. The interim government was selected by the federal government and Prime Minister against the will of the natives of Gilgit Baltistan. The

elections are supposed to be conducted in the month of June 2015. The people of Gilgit Baltistan demands constitutional representation in the national assembly and the senate.

Conclusion:

By reflecting back on history, we can understand and know how history has flowed from the early times and how the different forms of governances has ruled at different time periods. Although the governance of Gilgit Baltistan has improved from the early times, the basic right of constitutional representation in the National Assembly and Senate is still not fulfilled. This gives rise to the question of its status of national identity as Pakistanis. As a result, there are misconceptions developing in the minds of common people regarding their nationality, as they feel deprived of their constitutional rights.

Today's generations want the rapid change, and the people of Gilgit Baltistan are demanding the complete provincial autonomy with the representation in the National Assembly and Senate. How and when Gilgit Baltistan will gets its demands is still a burning issue. Under these circumstance, there is a need to reflect upon the history, not only for understanding the historical transformations, but also to plan a better future ahead.

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