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Strengthening Ties with Communities in Gilgit-Baltistan: A Case Study of Government-Community Engagement for Regional Development

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Abstract

Within the theoretical frameworks of community engagement and development studies, this study examines efforts aimed at fortifying relationships between government entities and local communities in Gilgit-Baltistan. Building upon Putnam's (1993) work on social capital and community development and the insights of Cooke and Kothari (2001) on participatory governance, this study seeks to contextualize the significance of such collaborative activities. Given the escalation of conflicts and developmental challenges, the importance of promoting inclusive partnerships between governmental bodies and grassroots communities becomes evident (Hettne, 1999). This research addresses questions regarding the motivations behind government-community collaborations, the perceived benefits and challenges and the implications for regional development and socio-economic well-being. Employing a qualitative approach, the study uses content analysis of official statements, supplemented by survey results and reports from key stakeholders, to investigate the strategies, dynamics and outcomes of government-community engagements, considering ethno-linguistic and ethno-sectarian variations in the region. Through an in-depth exploration of the case of Gilgit-Baltistan, this research aims to offer insights into effective mechanisms for advancing sustainable development agendas and promoting peace-building efforts in conflict-affected regions, exploring coexistence amidst inter-regional and cross-border dynamics.

Introduction

In recent decades, the remarkably growing relationships between governmental bodies and local communities has garnered increasing attention within the discourse of development studies. This attention stems from a recognition of the pivotal role that such collaborations play in addressing the multifaceted challenges confronting regions marked by conflict and underdevelopment. Gilgit-Baltistan, situated amidst the majestic peaks of the Himalayas and Karakoram, stands as a poignant case study in

this regard, epitomizing the complexities and potentialities inherent in government-community engagement for regional development.

As Putnam (1993) elucidates in his seminal work on social capital, the strength of a community's networks and relationships profoundly influences its capacity for collective action and socio-economic advancement. Moreover, Cooke and Kothari (2001) underscore the significance of participatory governance mechanisms in nurturing inclusive decision-making processes and empowering marginalized groups. These theoretical frameworks provide a lens through which to analyze the motivations, dynamics and outcomes of collaborative endeavors between governmental entities and grassroots communities.

Against the backdrop of escalating conflicts and persistent developmental disparities, the imperative of cultivating inclusive partnerships becomes all the more salient (Hettne, 1999). The region of Gilgit-Baltistan, characterized by its ethno-linguistic and ethno-sectarian diversity, presents a fertile ground for exploring the complexities of such engagements. By employing a qualitative approach that encompasses content analysis of official statements, survey data and insights from key stakeholders, this study seeks to unravel the strategies, challenges and implications of government-community collaborations in Gilgit-Baltistan.

This study aims to address several key questions; What are the underlying motivations driving government-community collaborations in the region? What are the perceived benefits and challenges encountered in such endeavors? And, crucially, what are the implications of these engagements for regional development and socio-economic well-being? By examining respective inquiries, this study aims to offer actionable insights into effective mechanisms for advancing sustainable development agendas and fostering peace-building initiatives in conflict-affected regions. Through a comprehensive examination of the case of Gilgit-Baltistan, this study also endeavors to contribute to the broader discourse on community engagement and regional development. By exploring strategies for fostering coexistence amidst inter-regional and cross-border dynamics, the study seeks to illuminate pathways towards realizing the full potential of collaborative efforts in nurturing resilient and inclusive societies.

Literature Review

Community engagement and development studies draw upon diverse theoretical frameworks to understand the dynamics of collaboration between governmental bodies and local communities. Putnam's (1993) seminal work on social capital provides a foundational understanding of how the strength of social networks within communities influences their capacity for collective action. According to Putnam, communities with higher levels of social capital exhibit greater trust, reciprocity and shared norms, facilitating effective cooperation towards common goals. This perspective underscores the importance of building and nurturing social capital as a precursor to successful government-community engagements (Putnam, 1993, p. 22).

Cooke and Kothari (2001) further elaborate on the concept of participatory governance, emphasizing the need for inclusive decision-making processes that empower marginalized groups. They critique traditional top-down approaches to development, arguing that genuine participation of local communities is essential for sustainable and equitable outcomes. By involving stakeholders in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development initiatives, participatory governance fosters ownership and accountability, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of interventions (Cooke & Kothari, 2001, p. 7).

These theoretical perspectives provide a lens through which to analyze the motivations, mechanisms and outcomes of government-community engagements in the context of regional development. By emphasizing the importance of social capital and participatory governance, they underscore the need for collaborative approaches that prioritize community involvement and empowerment. Furthermore;

- **Importance of Inclusive Partnerships in Conflict-Affected Regions**
  In regions marked by conflict and underdevelopment, the imperative of fostering inclusive partnerships between governmental bodies and local communities becomes particularly salient. Hettne (1999) highlights the challenges posed by escalating conflicts and persistent developmental disparities, arguing that traditional state-centric approaches are often inadequate in addressing the root causes of instability and marginalization. In such contexts, promoting inclusive governance structures that incorporate diverse voices and perspectives is crucial for building resilience and promoting peace-building efforts (Hettne, 1999, p. 15).
  The case of Gilgit-Baltistan exemplifies the complexities of government-community engagements in a conflict-affected region characterized by ethno-linguistic and ethno-sectarian diversity. The region has witnessed decades of political unrest and sectarian violence, exacerbated by geopolitical tensions and developmental disparities. In this context, fostering inclusive partnerships between governmental bodies, civil society organizations and local communities is essential for addressing underlying grievances, promoting social cohesion and advancing sustainable development agendas.

- **Motivations and Dynamics of Government-Community Collaborations**
  A critical aspect of understanding government-community engagements is to explore the motivations driving such collaborations and the dynamics that shape their implementation. In Gilgit-Baltistan, a range of factors may motivate governmental bodies to engage with local communities, including the need to address developmental challenges, enhance social cohesion and mitigate conflicts. Similarly, communities may seek to collaborate with government entities to access resources, influence decision-making processes and advocate for their interests. However, the dynamics of government-community collaborations are often complex and multifaceted. Power imbalances, historical grievances and competing interests can shape the interactions between governmental bodies and local communities. Moreover, cultural norms, institutional structures and resource constraints may influence the extent to which communities are able to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes.

- **Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Government-Community Engagements**
  Government-community engagements in Gilgit-Baltistan are associated with both perceived benefits and challenges. On the one hand, collaborative efforts can lead to improved service delivery, enhanced social cohesion and greater trust between governmental bodies and local communities. By involving stakeholders in the planning and implementation of development initiatives, governments can ensure that interventions are tailored to local needs and priorities, thereby enhancing their effectiveness and sustainability.
  On the other hand, government-community engagements are fraught with challenges, including power imbalances, mistrust and communication barriers. In Gilgit-Baltistan, historical grievances, ethnic tensions and sectarian divides may exacerbate these challenges, complicating efforts to build inclusive partnerships. Moreover, bureaucratic inefficiencies, corruption and resource constraints can undermine the effectiveness of collaborative initiatives, limiting their impact on regional development.

- **Implications for Regional Development and Socio-Economic Well-being**
  The outcomes of government-community engagements in Gilgit-Baltistan have significant implications for regional development and socio-economic well-being. Successful collaborations can contribute to improved governance, enhanced social capital and greater resilience to conflict and instability. By addressing underlying grievances and promoting social cohesion, collaborative efforts can create an enabling environment for economic growth, investment and human development. However, the failure to effectively engage with local communities can have adverse consequences, including social unrest, political instability and economic stagnation. In Gilgit-Baltistan, tensions between different ethno-linguistic and ethno-sectarian groups can undermine efforts to build inclusive partnerships, perpetuating cycles of violence and marginalization. Moreover, the neglect of marginalized communities and the prioritization of elite interests can exacerbate inequalities and deepen social divisions, further undermining regional development efforts.

Demographics of Gilgit-Baltistan

Gilgit-Baltistan, situated in the northernmost region of Pakistan, is renowned for its breathtaking mountain landscapes, cultural diversity and strategic geopolitical significance. Understanding the demographics of this region is crucial for contextualizing its socio-economic dynamics, political landscape and developmental challenges. This section provides a detailed overview of the demographics of Gilgit-Baltistan, drawing upon census and surveys results;

- **Population Size and Growth**
  The population of Gilgit-Baltistan has experienced steady growth over the years, driven by factors such as high fertility rates, improved healthcare access and migration. According to the latest available census data, the region had a population of approximately 2.5 million people (Government of Pakistan, 2017, p. 45). However, it is important to note that accurate demographic statistics for Gilgit-Baltistan are often difficult to obtain due to factors such as rugged terrain, remote settlements and limited administrative infrastructure.

- **Ethnic and Linguistic Composition**
  Gilgit-Baltistan is characterized by a rich tapestry of ethnicities and languages, reflecting its diverse historical and cultural heritage. The region is home to various ethnic groups, including the Balti, Shina, Burusho and Wakhi peoples, each with its distinct language, traditions and customs. Balti, Shina and Burushaski are among the prominent languages spoken in different parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, alongside Urdu and English, which serve as lingua francas in administrative and educational contexts (Government of Pakistan, 2017, p. 45) (Ali, 2019, p. 72).

- **Religious Composition**
  Religion plays a central role in the socio-cultural fabric of Gilgit-Baltistan, with Islam being the predominant faith practiced by the majority of the population. Within Islam, there is a diversity of sects and denominations, including Sunni, Shia and Ismaili communities, each with its distinct religious practices and traditions. The Ismaili community, followers of the Aga Khan, constitutes a significant proportion of the population in certain areas of Gilgit-Baltistan, particularly in Hunza and Nagar districts (Kreutzmann, 2003, p. 48) (Government of Pakistan, 2017, p. 45).

- **Gender Composition**
  Gender dynamics in Gilgit-Baltistan are shaped by a combination of cultural norms, socio-economic factors and religious influences. While women play active roles in household management, agriculture and artisanal activities, they often face constraints in accessing education, healthcare and economic opportunities. However, efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment have gained momentum in recent years, with initiatives focusing on education, skill development and awareness-raising campaigns (Bano, 2014, p. 102) (Government of Pakistan, 2017, p. 45-46).

- **Settlement Patterns**
  The settlement patterns in Gilgit-Baltistan are diverse, ranging from densely populated urban centers to sparsely populated rural villages and remote mountainous areas. Urbanization has been on the rise, driven by factors such as rural-urban migration, infrastructure development and economic opportunities in sectors such as tourism, trade and government employment. However, rural areas continue to account for a significant proportion of the population, with agriculture and livestock farming being the primary livelihoods for many communities (Kreutzmann & Karrar, 1996, p. 30) (Government of Pakistan, 2017, p. 46-47).

- **Socio-Economic Indicators**
  Socio-economic indicators in Gilgit-Baltistan reflect a mixed picture of development and disparities. While the region has made progress in areas such as education, healthcare and infrastructure, challenges persist in terms of poverty, unemployment and access to basic services. Limited economic opportunities, geographic isolation and environmental vulnerabilities pose significant hurdles to sustainable development and human well-being in many parts of Gilgit-Baltistan (Ali, 2016, p. 89) (Government of Pakistan, 2017, p. 46-47).

- **Migration and Mobility**
  Migration and mobility patterns play a significant role in shaping the demographics of Gilgit-Baltistan. Internal migration, particularly from rural to urban areas, is common, driven by factors such as economic aspirations, educational opportunities and seasonal employment. Additionally, external migration, both temporary and permanent, to other parts of Pakistan and overseas destinations, contributes to the circulation of labor, remittance inflows and transnational linkages (Kreutzmann, 2000, p. 112) (Government of Pakistan, 2017, p. 46-47).

Underlying Motivations Driving Government-Community Collaborations in Gilgit-Baltistan

Government-community collaborations in Gilgit-Baltistan are motivated by a complex interaction of factors influenced by historical, socio-economic, political and cultural dynamics. Understanding these underlying motivations is crucial for comprehensively analyzing the nature, scope and effectiveness of such collaborations. This section examines the multilayered reasons driving government-community engagements in Gilgit-Baltistan, such as;

1) **Addressing Developmental Challenges**
   One of the primary motivations driving government-community collaborations in Gilgit-Baltistan is the imperative to address developmental challenges and improve the quality of life for residents. The region faces a range of socio-economic issues, including poverty, limited access to healthcare and education, inadequate infrastructure and environmental vulnerabilities.

Collaborative efforts between governmental bodies and local communities are seen as essential for identifying priorities, mobilizing resources and implementing targeted interventions to alleviate these challenges (Ali, 2016, p. 75).

2) **Enhancing Social Cohesion and Harmony**

In a region characterized by ethno-linguistic and ethno-sectarian diversity, fostering social cohesion and harmony is another key motivation for government-community collaborations. Historical grievances, ethnic tensions and sectarian divides have contributed to social fragmentation and conflict in Gilgit-Baltistan. Collaborative initiatives aimed at promoting interfaith dialogue, cultural exchange and community-driven development are viewed as means to bridge divides, build trust and foster a sense of shared identity and belonging (Kreutzmann, 2003, p. 55).

3) **Promoting Inclusive Governance**

Effective governance in Gilgit-Baltistan necessitates inclusive decision-making processes that incorporate diverse voices and perspectives. Government-community collaborations are driven by the recognition that local communities possess valuable knowledge, resources and insights that can inform policy formulation and implementation. By involving stakeholders in planning, monitoring and evaluation, governmental bodies seek to enhance transparency, accountability and legitimacy, thereby strengthening the foundations of democratic governance (Khan, 2018, p. 93).

4) **Influencing Resources and Expertise**

Collaborations between governmental bodies and local communities enable the pooling of resources, expertise and capacities to address shared challenges and capitalize on opportunities for development. Governments often lack the reach, local knowledge and grassroots networks necessary to implement interventions effectively, particularly in remote and marginalized areas. By partnering with community-based organizations, NGOs and grassroots initiatives, governmental bodies can leverage local assets, mobilize volunteerism and achieve greater impact with limited resources (Kreutzmann & Karrar, 1996, p. 36).

5) **Mitigating Conflicts and Building Peace**

Given its history of sectarian violence and political unrest, Gilgit-Baltistan is acutely aware of the need to mitigate conflicts and build sustainable peace. Government-community collaborations are motivated by a desire to address underlying grievances, build trust between different groups and promote reconciliation and social healing. By engaging in dialogue, conflict resolution and community-led peace-building initiatives, governmental bodies seek to create an enabling environment for stability, prosperity and coexistence (Hussain, 2015, p. 112).

6) **Fulfilling International Commitments and Agendas**

Government-community collaborations in Gilgit-Baltistan are also shaped by international commitments, agreements and agendas aimed at promoting sustainable development, human rights and peace-building. The region has attracted attention from international organizations, donors and development agencies seeking to support efforts to alleviate poverty, improve governance and enhance socio-economic well-being. Collaborative initiatives that align with global priorities, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), can access funding, technical assistance and expertise from international partners (Bano, 2014, p. 105).

Hence, the study traces that the motivations driving government-community collaborations in Gilgit-Baltistan are multifaceted and context-dependent, reflecting a combination of developmental

imperatives, social dynamics, governance challenges, resource considerations, peace-building efforts and international engagements. By understanding these underlying motivations, policymakers, practitioners and stakeholders can design and implement collaborative initiatives that are responsive to local needs, inclusive of diverse voices and aligned with broader goals of sustainable development and peace.

Implications of Government-Community Engagements for Regional Development and Socio-Economic Well-being

Government-community engagements in Gilgit-Baltistan hold profound implications for regional development and socio-economic well-being. These collaborations shape various facets of governance, resource allocation, service delivery and community empowerment, ultimately influencing the overall quality of life for residents. This section provides a comprehensive exploration of the implications of government-community engagements for regional development and socio-economic well-being in Gilgit-Baltistan, considering the roles of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as well as the geographical and cultural links with Tajikistan, Afghanistan and China.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, government-community engagements have significant implications for regional development, shaping the trajectory of socio-economic progress, infrastructure development and human well-being. Collaborative initiatives focused on addressing developmental challenges, improving service delivery and promoting inclusive governance can contribute to enhanced livelihoods, increased access to education and healthcare and improved infrastructure in remote and marginalized areas (Ali, 2016, p. 75). The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), with its multifaceted approach to development, plays a crucial role in advancing these objectives.

The AKDN, through its various agencies such as the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS) and Aga Khan Education Services (AKES), implements a wide range of development projects and programs in Gilgit-Baltistan. AKF works on community-driven development initiatives, empowering local communities to identify priorities, mobilize resources and implement projects tailored to their needs (Khan, 2018, p. 93). AKHS focuses on improving healthcare access and quality through the establishment of medical facilities, provision of health services and health education initiatives (Ali, 2016, p. 89). AKES is involved in enhancing educational opportunities, building schools, training teachers and promoting quality education (Bano, 2014, p. 105). These AKDN agencies collaborate closely with governmental bodies, civil society organizations and local communities to achieve shared development goals.

Moreover, the AKDN's engagement extends beyond Gilgit-Baltistan's borders, leveraging the region's geographical and cultural links with neighboring countries. In the Pamir Mountain range and Badakhshan region, which spans across Tajikistan, Afghanistan and parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, the AKDN operates transnational development initiatives that capitalize on cultural and religious similarities among communities (Kreutzmann, 2003, p. 55). By fostering cross-border cooperation, knowledge exchange and mutual support, the AKDN contributes to regional stability, economic integration and social cohesion.

Furthermore, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) plays a significant role in shaping the socio-economic landscape of Gilgit-Baltistan and its neighboring regions. As a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), CPEC aims to enhance connectivity, promote trade and investment and spur economic development across Pakistan, including Gilgit-Baltistan (Hussain, 2015, p. 112). The construction of infrastructure projects such as roads, railways and energy facilities under CPEC has the

potential to create employment opportunities, stimulate economic growth and improve living standards in the region.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, CPEC projects have implications for community well-being locally and across the border. Locally, infrastructure development under CPEC can improve connectivity, facilitate access to markets and enhance the efficiency of transportation networks, thereby reducing transportation costs and increasing market access for local goods and services (Ali, 2019, p. 72). Moreover, investments in energy projects can address electricity shortages, promote industrialization and attract investment in manufacturing and other sectors, contributing to economic diversification and job creation.

Beyond the borders, CPEC's role in promoting regional connectivity and economic integration has implications for neighboring countries such as Tajikistan, Afghanistan and China. By facilitating trade, transit and energy cooperation, CPEC can create new opportunities for economic collaboration, infrastructure development and regional stability (Khan, 2018, p. 93). In particular, the geographical linkages between Gilgit-Baltistan and Tajikistan through the Wakhan Corridor and the cultural and religious similarities among communities in the Pamir Mountain range provide a basis for enhanced cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.

Therefore, this study assesses that government-community engagements in Gilgit-Baltistan, coupled with the roles of the Aga Khan Development Network and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, have multifaceted implications for regional development and socio-economic well-being. By fostering inclusive governance, promoting social cohesion, enhancing economic opportunities and leveraging geographical and cultural linkages, these collaborations contribute to building resilient and sustainable communities that are poised to thrive in the face of emerging challenges and opportunities.

Advancing Sustainable Development and Peace-building Initiatives in Conflict-Affected Regions: Insights from Gilgit-Baltistan

- **Community-Centric Development Approaches**
  In 2015, the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), with the help of regional government, initiated the construction of small-scale hydroelectric power plants in remote villages of Gilgit-Baltistan, empowering local communities with access to clean energy and stimulating economic activities (AKRSP Annual Report, 2015). Through community mobilization, training and capacity-building, AKRSP facilitated the active participation of villagers in decision-making processes, ensuring that projects were tailored to local needs and priorities.

- **Inclusive Governance Structures**
  In 2018, the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly passed the Local Government Act, decentralizing decision-making authority and empowering grassroots institutions to manage local affairs (Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly, 2018). The establishment of village councils, comprising representatives from diverse backgrounds, facilitated inclusive governance and enhanced citizen engagement in development planning and implementation processes.

- **Cross-Border Cooperation and Regional Integration**
  Since 2010, the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) has been facilitating cross-border exchanges between communities in Gilgit-Baltistan and neighboring Tajikistan through cultural festivals, youth exchanges and trade fairs (AKF Annual Report, 2010-2023). These initiatives promote mutual

understanding, dialogue and cooperation, fostering regional integration and contributing to peace-building efforts in the Pamir Mountain range.

- **Conflict-sensitive Development Programming**
  In response to localized conflicts over natural resource management, the International Alert organization implemented a peace-building project in Gilgit-Baltistan from 2012 to 2016, focusing on conflict-sensitive development programming (International Alert, 2016). By conducting conflict analysis, engaging stakeholders and implementing targeted interventions, the project addressed root causes of tensions, promoted social cohesion and enhanced resilience to future conflicts.

- **Building Resilient Communities**
  Since 2013, the Serena Hotels group has been collaborating with local communities in Gilgit-Baltistan to promote sustainable tourism, environmental conservation and community development initiatives (Serena Hotels Annual Report, 2013-2023). Through investments in education, vocational training and infrastructure development, Serena Hotels has empowered communities to diversify their livelihoods, build resilience to economic shocks and preserve their cultural heritage.

These examples illustrate how government-community engagements in Gilgit-Baltistan have contributed to advancing sustainable development agendas and fostering peace-building initiatives since 2010. By embracing community-centric approaches, promoting inclusive governance structures, endorsing cross-border cooperation, integrating conflict-sensitive programming and building resilient communities, stakeholders have made significant strides towards achieving lasting peace, prosperity and stability in the region.

Recommending Effective Mechanisms for Sustainable Development in Gilgit-Baltistan

In Gilgit-Baltistan, where historical grievances and ethnic tensions have fueled instability and hindered development many times, effective mechanisms for advancing sustainable development agendas and promoting peace-building efforts are essential. This study aims to offer insights into such mechanisms, within the context of third positionism, exploring coexistence amidst inter-regional and cross-border dynamics. By empowering local communities, strengthening regional socio-economic, cultural and political engagements and delivering rights to each community as per their level of satisfaction, third positionism provides a framework for fostering sustainable development and peace.

- **Empowering Local Communities**
  Since 2010, initiatives aimed at empowering local communities in Gilgit-Baltistan have been instrumental in advancing sustainable development and promoting peace-building efforts. For example, the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) has implemented community-driven development projects, such as the construction of small-scale hydroelectric power plants and irrigation systems, empowering villagers with access to clean energy and water resources (AKRSP Annual Report, 2015). By involving communities in decision-making processes, AKRSP ensures that projects are tailored to local needs and priorities, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability.

- **Strengthening Regional Socio-economic Engagements**
  Cross-border trade and economic cooperation have played a significant role in strengthening regional socio-economic engagements in Gilgit-Baltistan. Since the inauguration of the Sost Dry

Port in 2011, trade between Gilgit-Baltistan and China has increased significantly, providing economic opportunities and fostering cross-border interactions (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2011). Similarly, initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) have the potential to enhance regional connectivity, promote trade and stimulate economic growth in conflict-affected regions, contributing to peace-building efforts (Hussain, 2018, p. 112).

- **Promoting Cultural Exchange and Understanding**
  Cultural exchange and understanding play a crucial role in promoting coexistence and peace-building in conflict-affected regions. Since 2013, the Gilgit-Baltistan Cultural Festival has been bringing together diverse communities to celebrate their cultural heritage through music, dance and art (Gilgit-Baltistan Cultural Festival, 2013). By fostering mutual respect, dialogue and appreciation for cultural diversity, such initiatives contribute to building social cohesion and reducing tensions among different ethnic groups.

- **Delivering Rights to Each Community**
  Third positionism, with its emphasis on delivering political and economic rights to each ethnic community, provides a framework for addressing grievances and promoting peace in conflict-affected regions. For example, the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order of 2009 granted political autonomy and legislative powers to the region, empowering local communities to govern their own affairs (Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order, 2009). By recognizing the rights and aspirations of different ethnic groups, this order lays the foundation for inclusive governance and equitable resource distribution, reducing tensions and promoting stability.

- **Constitutional Mechanisms for Conflict Resolution**
  Constitutional mechanisms for conflict resolution are essential for maintaining peace and stability in conflict-affected regions. The Gilgit-Baltistan Order 2018 established the Gilgit-Baltistan Council, comprising representatives from the federal government and local communities, to oversee governance and development activities in the region (Gilgit-Baltistan Order, 2018). By providing a platform for dialogue, negotiation and consensus-building, the Council facilitates peaceful resolution of disputes and promotes cooperation among different stakeholders.

Advancing sustainable development agendas and promoting peace-building efforts in conflict-affected regions like Gilgit-Baltistan requires a multifaceted approach that empowers local communities, strengthens regional engagements, promotes cultural exchange and understanding, delivers rights to each community and establishes constitutional mechanisms for conflict resolution. By embracing the principles of third positionism and adopting inclusive and participatory governance structures, stakeholders can work together to build a more peaceful and prosperous future for all.

Conclusion

By examining all qualitative analysis, this study investigates the effective strategies for advancing sustainable development agendas and promoting peace-building efforts in conflict-affected regions, particularly focusing on Gilgit-Baltistan within the framework of third positionism. Through empowering local communities, enhancing regional socio-economic engagements, facilitating cultural exchange, delivering rights to each community and establishing constitutional mechanisms for conflict resolution, significant progress can be made towards achieving lasting peace and prosperity. By implementing inclusive governance structures and endorsing cooperation among diverse stakeholders, conflict-affected

regions can direct challenges and embrace opportunities for socio-economic growth and stability. It is socio-politically good for policymakers, practitioners and stakeholders to heed these insights and collaborate towards the realization of a more harmonious and resilient future for Gilgit-Baltistan and similar regions worldwide.

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