

CONSTITUTIONALIZATION, ETHNIC NATIONALISM AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF REGIONS; A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF IRANIAN AZERBAIJAN REGION AND GORNO-BADAKHSHAN AUTONOMOUS REGION OF TAJIKISTAN UNDER BRI + CPEC SCENARIO

Tariq Saeed

PhD Scholar at School of Economics and Management, ChangAn University (XiAn, China)
tariqsaeed55@yahoo.com

Professor Dong Qian Li

Research Supervisor, School of Economics and Management, ChangAn University (XiAn, China)

Dr. Muhammad Asim

Theoretical & Empirical Assistance Provider, Department of Political Science at Government Associate College Dhoke Syedan, Rawalpindi Cantonment

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer

Theoretical & Empirical Assistance Provider, Department of International Relations, Informatics Group of Colleges, Arifwala

Abstract

Iranian Azerbaijan Region and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan are existed at that geographical location where uncountable interests of major powers exist including China. Although, Iranian and Tajik constitutions provide equal rights to all the segments of society without any discrimination but, their authoritarian structure force ethnic communities like Iranian Azerbaijanis and Tajik Pamiris to resist against violation of their fundamental human rights. Similarly, Iranian Azerbaijani ethno-national separatists claim their sole right over historical trade route between Europe and Asia along with other trade routes towards Eurasian Caucasian countries. While, Pamir highway and the branches of historical Silk Road (including China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) are claimed by Pamiris which link Central Asia with Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and Russia. Any effort or movement to disintegrate Iranian Azerbaijan Region or Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region from their countries can be a great shock for socio-economic infrastructure that will destabilize them more. This study not only discusses historical, cultural, linguistic, and religious similarities of both regions but also analyze their political economy for either Iran, Tajikistan or major powers including China during 2022. Similarly, impacts of Post-Soviet Russian policies (sometimes refers as Putinism or Neo-Sovietism) on both regions is also examined in this study. Moreover, due to Persian linguistic background, differences of Iran and Tajikistan with Arab World is being illustrated in the last.

Keywords: Constitutionalization, Ethno-National Separatism, Neo-Sovietism, Ismaili Shia Islam, Javakheti, Nakhchivan

Introduction

Iranian Azerbaijan Region and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan; both are considered as a collective subject within the academic circles of “Regional Political Economy” due to many reasons. The first and foremost cause is that, both regions are geographically existed at first and the last ends of historical Silk Road. As this road has several branches for inter-continental or intra-continental trade, its origin is Badakhshan region while, its expansion deals different regimes in Central and Western Asia. Through contemporary Iranian Azerbaijan region, this road connects West Asia, Eurasia and Europe with South, East and Southeast Asia. Moreover, current territory of Iranian Azerbaijan Region (consisted upon Ardabil province, East Azerbaijan province, West Azerbaijan province and Zanjan province) has although experienced sovereign status during formation of Persian Armenia (428-646), but establishment of Ismaili Shia State (also called Alamute State) in Northwestern Iran during 1090 to 1256 triggered Ismaili

ethno-national separatism in other region where Ismailis were in majority. In 1256, when this state was surrendered by Mongol Empire, hundreds of Ismaili Shia families settled in the Badakhshan region via Silk Road. Since then, they have developed strong ethnic roots in the entire Badakhshan region; currently consisted upon Chitral district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Diamir and Gilgit divisions in Gilgit-Baltistan within Pakistan, Afghan province of Badakhshan, Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan (Ahmed, 1998, p. 170) (Barot, 1996, pp. 109-111).

This study presents not only past, recent and predicting stages of ethno-national separatisms in both regions but also describes enhancing geopolitical and economic importance after expanding or reconstructing Silk Road via Pak-China Economic Corridor, Tajik-Iranian Agreement or China-Iran 25-years Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Similarly, this study discusses Iranian and Tajik claims about constitutional accommodations for ethnic minorities, along with Azerbaijanis and Pamiris' accuses against Iranian and Tajik central authorities for constitutional violations. As ethno-national separatisms in both regions have potential to trigger ethno-national movements in neighboring states or regions (such as, Kurd separatism in Western Iran, Eastern Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan Autonomous Region, Armenian Separatism in Northeast Turkey, Uyghur Separatism in Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China, and, Pamiris' sense for unification of Badakhshan Region), study investigates how Iran and Tajikistan are tackling described elements during 21st century.

Literature review

By analyzing the work of Asim and Roofi (2019), study looks at how Iranian Azerbaijan has been strategically important for not only Iran but SCO, SAARC and ECO nations for regional connectivity. Likewise, works of Zaheer and Asim (2019 & 2021) highlights the impacts of China-Iran regional connectivity on Pakistan, Afghanistan and CARs that further assists the study to understand how China has been concerned for tackling ethnic dilemmas at strategic locations of Silk Road restoration plan under Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Moreover, PhD thesis of Asim (2020) enlightens Vladimir Putin's strategies (also called Putinism or Neo-Sovietism¹) towards Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China Iran and Pakistan including CARs. At the same time, PhD thesis of Zaheer (2021) facilitates this study to interrogate;

- How China-Iran 25-years Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is countering ethnic dilemmas in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan and Iranian Azerbaijan Region, and,
- How Persian linguistic culture of Iran and Tajikistan is making a reason of distancing from Arab states (especially GCC states).

Saeed, Qian Li, Asim and Zaheer (2021) examines impacts of BRI + CPEC projects on complex social economies at all the proposed or planned routes of regional connectivity within Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and China whereas; Asim and Roofi (2017) have also evaluates

¹ Post-Soviet policies of Vladimir Putin as exhibited in Georgia and Ukraine are also considered as Putin's efforts for restoration of Soviet Union, sometimes refers as Neo-Sovietism or Putinism. The foremost example of this strategy is to recognize Luhansk (sometimes called Lugansk) and Donetsk as sovereign republics by Russia (Asim D. M., 2022).

impacts of Pamiri ethnic nationalism or Ismaili ethno-national separatism (if exist) on regional connectivity under CPEC.

Essay

The term “Constitutionalization” derives from the word “Constitution”. It means to make, sanction, incorporate or add any subject into the constitution. This term is also used for making a new constitution or amending existing constitution also (The Free Dictionary, 2015). While, Mitja Zagar, Boris Jesih and Romana Bester (1999) relate this term with making a new constitution or political regulations (Brezigar, 2007, p. 06). It is an old process as history of civilization. Although, ancient tribal people were followed power structure and a powerful person in the tribe was considered to be their king or ruler, but, after establishment of cities and emergence of the concept of “nation”, such ruler itself thought about institutionalization and distribution of power for better governance. For this purpose, it surrendered or shifted some of its personal authorities to the self-designed institutions for securing and strengthening its power structure. Initially, this shifting or surrendering of power was unwritten, but an age of renaissance introduced several political philosophers who criticized such practice of rulers; called monarchs, and highlighted the need of identifying basic principles governance under proper constitutional design; must be in written form. Henry Neville, John Locke, Algernon Sidney and James Tyrrel were some of the political philosophers behind this criticism while, James Harrington, John Milton, Samuel Rutherford and Thomas Hobbes were still defending absolute rights of monarchs (Mahlberg, 2014, p. 54) (Scott, 2004, p. 24).

Since then, several political philosophers presented different ideas for constitutionalization related to the design of government within the existing styles such as democracies, monarchies or aristocracies. Montesquieu described the concept of “Separation of Power” in this regard. The core purpose of presenting such ideas for constitutionalization was to satisfy different ethnic communities within the country which were demanding for their socio-political rights or appropriate shares in the government (Gordon, 2005, p. 13). According to Orestes Brownson, the process of constitutionalization has three stages for satisfying its inhabitants including ethnic communities. First stage is to impose natural laws. Second stage is to structure social norms and values as law of society. And, third stage is to design constitution of the government that basic aim is to institutionalize natural and social laws through public conventions and rules of procedures. According to him, a state becomes society through well-designed constitution that accommodates its different segments. Unsatisfying or unaccommodating provisions become a cause of emerging the concept of “internal colonialism” according to Michael Hector that further strengthens the wave of ethnic-nationalism (Herrera, 1999, pp. 01-02) (Stokes, 2008, p. 05).

Ethnic nationalism is such a concept of nationalism which identifies through shared or common faith, language, culture or territory. Herodotus was the first who defined “what is ethnicity” with describing characteristics of ethnicity like same blood, equal language, coequal life, likewise customs and similar culture. An ethnic group must not be unambiguous but can be identified clearly. Although, the term “ethnic nationalism” refers to the demand by any segment of the society for self-determination but the style of self-determination is varied in different circumstances. Sometimes, this demand is related to appropriate share in the government, local administrative bodies or autonomous region within the state and sometimes relates with the separate sovereign state (Grosby, 2007, p. 115). As Anthony D. Smith illustrates this concept as “Non-Western” and against the territorial based nationalism, John Stuart Mill and Earnest Renan

link this concept with “civic nationalism”.it means active participation of the citizens and development of representative democracy (Smith, 1991, p. 11). Jean Jacques Rousseau (1762) called it as “General Will”. According to some scholars, this concept was the product of colonial territories of India, United States, Mexico, Canada and Brazil where the construction of ethnic nationalism was difficult than the emergence of this concept. Similarly, Scottish National Party of Scotland in United Kingdom which is demanding for independence of Scotland declares itself as civic nationalist party (Pally, 2016, p. 50) (Swenson, 2000, p. 180).

On the other hand, Muslim scholar Ibn-e-Khaldun presented the concept of “Assabiyah” in his famous book “Muqaddimah”. According to him, each dynasty or civilization has the roots of its downfall within it, and, these seeds are social solidarity, group consciousness and shared purpose. He also relates it with “clanism” and “tribalism”. This is a cycle which reshapes time to time with emerging new social groups, nations, political units, dynasties or civilizations. Even this theory became popular but modern social scientists associate an emergence of ethnic nationalism with the political economy of region where that specific ethnic group exists (Mahdi, 2015, pp. 02-03). According to Hugh Griffith (2007), failure of ethnic conflict resolution interventions in 1990s suggested the new research approaches for finding reasons of emerging ethnic nationalism with violent or criminal activities. It is politico-economic structure that remains boost ethnic nationalism in any region of the country. Sometimes, this structure gets international support like South Sudanese ethnic nationalism in Sudan and Bengali ethnic nationalism in East Pakistan, and, sometimes it observes as domestic construct like Chechen ethnic nationalism in Russia (Sorensen, 2009, p. 177).

It is universal principle that every area, region or country has some variety of geopolitical and economic importance. When an ethnic group starts to consider itself as a nation, it defends its right of self-determination with arguing about assumed or pre-existing economical activities/opportunities/structure in the region where they live. In fact, this is a time of starting rivalry among state-centric and ethnic-centric nationalisms. Central government of any state never allows any ethnic national movement to give open hand but to resist against it. Similarly, any ethnic nationalist movement in a state tries to defend its unambiguous status with the right of self-determination. At that time, democratic norms and values facilitate both the sides to negotiate bilaterally and resolve their issues with reconciliation like Quebec in Canada and Scotland in United Kingdom (Pratte, 2012, p. 83). Any kind of failure in reconciliation among ethnic nationalists and the central government is due to two factors; foreign involvement or/and dictatorial attitude of the central government. In case of South Sudan and East Timor, both of the factors were involved while, Chechen ethnic nationalists criticize Russian dictatorial policies. At the same time, Georgian (Armenian and Turkish neighboring country, not the state of United States) central government condemns Russian support of ethnic nationalist movements in its South Ossetia Province and autonomous region of Abkhazia (Keating, 2013, pp. 02-10).

By examining study Iran and Tajikistan, it is clearly observed that ethno-nationalist movements in Iranian Azerbaijan region and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region have same rising dimensions as theoretically mentioned above. Similarities and commonalities among both the regions are given as follows;

- Both regions are the part of ancient Persian Civilization during Median Empire (678 BC-549 BC), Achaemenid Empire (550 BC-330 BC), Samanid Empire (819-999) and Timurid Dynasty (1370-1507). Iranian culture, literature, religions, norms and traditions

were promoted in territories under occupation of these empires. In contemporary ages, these occupied territories can be highlighted as Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Albania and Bulgaria in the west, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arab and United Arab Emirates in the south and southwest, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in the northeast, and, south and central Asian countries including Xinjiang (China) in the east of Iran (Curtis, 2005, pp. 09-11).

Basically, the word “Iran” means “land of the Aryans”. This word firstly used during Sassanid Empire for highlighting Iranian people or Iranian lands on ethnic bases in other occupied territories outside the contemporary Iranian territory. So, occupations facilitated Iranian people to practice their culture, norms and traditions in the occupied territories with their unique Iranian identity. Being an elite ruling class also, their practices were copied or followed by the local communities of these territories. In result, like several other countries and regions even during 21st century, Iranian Azerbaijan Region and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan have also been inspired by Persian or Iranian norms, values, culture, literature, religious thoughts and traditions (Daniel, 2012, p. xiii).

- Tajik language (also called Tajik Persian or Tajiki) is southwestern Iranian language. Although, some linguists relate it closely to the Persian and Dari languages but, several Tajik intellectuals like Sadriddin Ayni (1878-1954) tried to prove it as separate from Persian language which was proved as political effort by Perry (1996). Now, it has been recognized as autonomous West-Iranian language. Similarly, Pamir languages in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan have been recognized as Eastern Iranian Languages. Pashto is its biggest dialectic while, Shughni-Yazgulami, Munji-Yidgha, Sanglechi-Ishkashimi and Wakhi are its branches that widely speak in Badakhshan Region (Pamir Mountain Range) of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and China. On the other hand, Azerbaijani Language which widely spoken in the Republic of Azerbaijan, Dagestan (a subject of Russian Federation) and Iranian Azerbaijan Region. Genealogically, it belongs to Turkic group of languages but it has strong historical roots with Persian language. During its first age, most of the vocabulary was loaned by Persian and Arabic languages but, in modern times, as this language has been inspired by Russian Language in independent Azerbaijan, it has been very much inspired by Persian Language in Iranian Azerbaijan Region (called South Azerbaijan also). Therefore, vocabulary, literary language, phonetics and somewhat grammar are almost changed in the Republic of Azerbaijan and Iranian Azerbaijan region during 21st century (Roy, 2000, p. 75).

By analyzing such developments within Tajik and Pamiri linguistic spheres in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan and within Azerbaijani linguistic circles of Iranian Azerbaijan Region during 21st century, it is clearly assessed that languages in both regions have been inspired or linked by Persian Language.

- Although, both regions were governed under different kingdoms, empires or dynasties in different times but the common phase among both is to experience Russian or Soviet communist regime. Similarly, both practiced short lived sovereignty in different times. Therefore, seeds of separate identity were grown many times in diverse shapes here in between 20th and 21th century (Asim M, 2020).

Historically, contemporary eastern part of Georgia, Armenia, Republic of Dagestan (a Russian federated subject) and Azerbaijan including Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (a landlocked exclave of Azerbaijan) were the part of Iran since last three centuries. After last Russo-Persian War, a treaty of Turkmenchay was signed among Imperial Russia and Iran² in 1828. Through this agreement, Aras River was declared as boundary among contemporary Iran and Imperial Russia. Imposition of this treaty also caused division of Azerbaijan region among Iran and Imperial Russia. In December 1917, after collapse of Russian Empire, firstly, the government of Transcaucasia was created that further claimed to establish Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic on February 24, 1918. This short lived country contained contemporary territories of Northeastern Turkey, Georgia, Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan. In the meanwhile, this newly independent republic got conflicts with Ottoman Empire and went into direct war. In result after occupation of Erzurum and Kars. In result, Georgia announced its independence on May 26, 1918. This development further urged Azerbaijan and Armenia to declare independences of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and the Democratic republic of Armenia. This was actually an end of Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic. All these successions were not bearable for Moscow. So, firstly, Soviet Russia tried to stop international community regarding not to establishing foreign relations with Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, and, then it occupied Baku with the help of new Turkish Government of Kemal Ataturk on April 28, 1920. Moscow's further move was towards Iran. Soviet Army took control over Iranian province of Gilan on May 1920 and claimed to be establishment of "Soviet Republic of Gilan", widely known as "Soviet Socialist republic of Iran". This republic officially came to an end on September 1921 after signing Russo-Persian Treaty of Friendship (Asim M, 2020).

Situation was changed during Second World War when Britain and USSR captured northwest Iran for strategic purpose in 1941. Although, their plan was to leave this region within six months, but, in 1945, Soviets under Joseph Stalin were started to support and promote Azerbaijani ethnic nationalism along with Kurd ethnic nationalism by providing aid and assistance. In September 1945, Azerbaijan Democratic Party under leadership of Jafar Peshavari announced Azerbaijan Peoples Government in Iranian Azerbaijan Region (along with some part of Gilan Province). Although, a political party named "Society for the Revival of Kurdistan" headed by Qazi Muhammad was already de facto ruling over some parts of contemporary West Azerbaijan and Kurdistan provinces of Iran at that time, but announcement of establishing Azerbaijan peoples Government in Iranian Azerbaijan Region stimulated him to officially announce "Kurdish Republic of Mahabad" on January 22, 1946 (Asim M, 2020).

Due to international pressure over USSR and negotiations on June 13, 1946 between Iranian central government and delegation of Azerbaijan Peoples Government in Tehran, Iranian Army re-entered into Tabriz that ended Azerbaijan Peoples Government. At the same time, Iranian troops entered and secured Mahabad on December 15, 1946 that collapsed Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. Since now, these territories are governed as

² Iran was forced to sign this treaty because of Russian general was threatened to occupy Tehran within five days (Asim, Roofi, & Bokhari, 2019).

Iranian provinces of West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, East Azerbaijan, Zanjan, Qazvin, Ardabil and Gilan, while, seeds of separatism are still existed in this region which show at different domestic occasions like football matches. Similarly, since 1995, a Baku-based group called “Sothern Azerbaijan National Awakening Movement” is working for unification of Azerbaijan Region along the both sides of Aras River as before 1828. Its founder Mahmudali Chehregani was firstly the member of another group called SANLM which was established in 1995 for securing the rights of Azeri minority in Iran. Soon, he realized that this group is not functioning properly for securing the rights of Iranian Azerbaijanis and there is a fundamental need for reunification of Azerbaijan Region. So, he established this new group (Atabaki, 2000, pp. 179-192). In February 2007, this group got success to become a member of Unrepresented Nations and People Organization (UNPO) for claiming independence of South Azerbaijan Region from Iran (Caspersen, 2012, pp. 01-08) (Asim M, 2020).

Similarly, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region was governed by several semi-self-governess, empires and dynasties including Persian empires of Median (678 BC-549 BC), Achaemenid (550 BC-330 BC) and Samanid Empire (819-999), and, Emirate of Bukhara (1785-1920). Russia, Afghanistan and China signed several agreements upon claiming Badakhshan region (contemporary Pamir Mountain Range, covering Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, Badakhshan Province of Afghanistan including Wakhan Corridor and some parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and Gilgit-Baltistan Autonomous Region of Pakistan and Xinjiang Autonomous Province of China) that divided this region. Now, current territory of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region is internationally recognized as autonomous part of Tajikistan. Peoples Republic of China accepted Tajik claim over this territory in 2002 through an agreement but, “Republic of China” (Taiwan) is still claiming over this territory along with rest of China. Russia occupied this territory in 1920. In 1924, Russia declared this region as its autonomous oblast (province) but in 1929, when Russia established Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, it declared Gorno-Badakhshan as its autonomous oblast. At that time, Russia also merged some areas of this region into Gharm Oblast within Tajik SSR (Asim M, 2020).

In 1955, Gharm Oblast was dissolved, and, previous areas of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast again merged into it. In 1992, soon after one year of getting independence from USSR; when Tajikistan suffered from civil war, the Gorno-Badakhshan’s local government announced its independence from the Republic of Tajikistan. This announcement became a reason of targeting local Pamir ethnic communities by Tajik national army and other state-centric rival groups. In result, local government of this region called back its announcement of independence in 1997 and now, it is remained an autonomous region within the Republic of Tajikistan but having strong silent sentiments of separatism under leadership of several political parties and militant organizations like “Laal-e-Badakhshan” (Bliss, 2006, pp. 49-89) (Asim D. M., 2018).

- Both regions have majority of Muslim population. In Iranian Azerbaijan Region, majority is following Twelver Shia Islam while, followers of Sunni (Hanafi and Shafai) Islam are lived in Hashatjin and villages of Bileh Savar County of Ardabil Province and cities of Khoy, Salmas and Urmia in West Azerbaijan Province. According to 2014 estimate,

Sunni Muslims have population near about 200,000 in this region that shows their minority as compare with followers of Twelver Shia Islam. On the other hand, Majority of population in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous region of Tajikistan is following Ismaili Shia Islam. On concept of Imamate, followers of Twelve Shia Islam and Ismaili Shia Islam; both have same believe until the seventh Imamate of Jafar Al-Sadiq. While, the title of “Agha Khan” is given to the 46th Ismaili Imam Hasan Ali Shah (1800-1881) by the Persian King Fath Ali Shah Qajar. He was second Qajar Shah of Persia since June 17, 1797 to October 23, 1834. Although, he was Twelver Shia but inspired by Ismaili thoughts. Therefore, he awarded this title to 46th Ismaili Imam (Asim D. M., 2018).

On the other hand, Farhad Daftary argued that the word “Agha Khan” was not a title but a pet name that was given by Persian King to Hasan Ali Shah due to three reasons; he was young man, governor of Qom and got married with his daughter. Fath Ali Shah Qajar was actually Twelver Shia Muslim. Besides any criticism, followers of Ismaili Shia Islam are now called “Agha Khani” and their Imams are called “Agha Khan” since then (Momen, 2015, pp. 189-200).

To analyze same religio-sectarian historical origin in both regions, it is concluded that religio-sectarian culture, customs, norms, philosophies and practices are almost matched.

- Constitutions of both countries claim to provide fundamental human rights to all of their citizens. Article 03, 10, 19 to 43, 46 and 47 of the Iranian Constitution deals with the fundamental human rights of its all the citizens without any discrimination (Constitution of Iran, 1982). Similarly, article 05, 14, 27 to 30, 40 and 42 of Tajik Constitution provides ultimate privileges to all its citizens equally (Constitution of Tajikistan, 1994).
- As both the countries have ethnic diversities, constitutions of both countries outline some rights along with defined limits for ethnic identities, especially ethno-nationalist identities. Article 9 and 15 of Iranian Constitution, and, article 06 and 08 of Tajik Constitution describe such constitutional provisions in this regard (Constitution of Iran, 1982) (Constitution of Tajikistan, 1994).

During 2008 to 2012, different surveys and assessments in both countries approximately calculated that linguistically, 66 percent speak Persian, 18 percent speak Azeri and different Turk languages, 10 percent speak Kurd, two percent speak Arabic, two percent speak Balochi and one percent speaks other languages like Armenian and Georgian in Iran (Asim & Roofi, 2017). Similarly, there are 77.6 percent Tajik (a variety of Persian language) speaking population in Tajikistan. Other 22.4 percent speak Pamiri languages (part of Eastern Iranian languages) in which ratio of Shughni speaking is 65 percent, Rushani speaking is 13 percent, Wakhi speaking is 12 percent, Bartangi speaking is five percent, Yazgulyami speaking is three percent, Khufi speaking is 1.5 percent and Ishkashmi speaking is 0.8 percent. Russian language is used for socio-economic (especially business) communication while, thousands of immigrants are also Pashtuns and Arabs (Asim & Roofi, 2017).

- Ethno-nationalists of both the regions argue that political system of their country have authoritarian or semi-authoritarian orientations. Articles 05 and 107 to 112 highlight the powers and functions of the post of Supreme Leader in Iran. According to several ethno-nationalists along with pro-western scholars, the post of supreme leader reflects theocratic and authoritative state structure of Iran which can never tolerate with anti-

revolutionary or anti-twelve ideologies like followers of Hanafi (Sunni) Islam. On the other hand, state-centric nationalists highlight article 09 and 111 of the Iranian Constitution. Article 09 expresses equality of all the Muslim sects including followers of Hanafi Islam in Iran while, article 111 creates checks on the post of supreme leader. Likewise, article 48 presents provincial equality regarding availing economic opportunities and articles 100 to 106 deal with local government system (called councils of towns, tehsils, districts and provinces) in Iran (Pesaran, 2011, p. 41). Similarly, Pamiri ethno-nationalists in Tajikistan focus upon the articles of 69, 70, 72 and 78 as authoritarian powers of the Tajik president. At the same time, state-centric nationalists emphasize on articles 76 to 80 which deals with the local government system and articles 81 to 83 which point out the autonomous status of Gorno-Badakhshan region (Gonenc, 2002, p. 204).

- Political economy of both regions is almost same. As, Iranian Azerbaijan Region is an historical trade route among South and Central Asian, Middle Eastern, European and Eurasian Caucasus countries, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan is an historical trade route among South, Central, East, Southeast Asian regions and Russia. If, affordable international trade routes will be analyzed for any country, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region will be proved as shortest affordable trade route for the countries as follows;

- 1) For Pakistan towards Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyztan, Kazakhstan and Russia
- 2) For China towards Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and
- 3) For Afghanistan towards Kyrgyzstan
- 4) For Kyrgyzstan towards Pakistan (Bliss, 2006, P.243) (Small, 2015, P.01-08).

Similarly, Iranian Azerbaijan Region (contemporary consisting of four provinces) is a short affordable trade route for the countries as follows;

- 1) For Pakistan towards Turkey and other Europe countries
- 2) For Turkey towards South Asia
- 3) For the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia towards Arab countries
- 4) For Iraq and Kuwait towards Eurasian Caucasus countries (Maloney, 2012, p. 105).

As Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region is economically backward but full of natural resources while economy of the people usually depends upon daily cash income, Iranian Azerbaijan Region is industrially very advanced. To read the theories and concepts of Alberto Abadie (2004), it is generally found that poverty and lack of political freedom become a reason of militant or separatist activities (Abadie, 2015). Usually, state-centric elements in every country consider such activities as terrorism or militancy, but, activists call it as a movement for getting their fundamental rights, like Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan (Grover, 2002, p. 362). In further explanations, most of the economists define that a highly industrialized region can also suffered from terrorism, militancy or separatist activities if revenue generated through that specific region will not be utilized as per the ratio of its economic growth and potential, like Iranian Azerbaijan and Iranian Kurd Region. On the other hand, Azerbaijan-Israel strong bilateral relations for security and co-operation against Iran are not only countering Iranian policy regarding putting pressure on Baku to leave supporting Azeri sense of

unification, but also strengthen ethno-national separatism in Iranian Azerbaijan Region; either in sense of unification with the Republic of Azerbaijan or getting an independent status (Byman, 2001, p. 79).

Similarly, several economists predict about the newly economically and politically developed states in case of getting independence by both the regions. Not only regional or continental trade but these countries will be able to control or support other ethno-national separatist movements around them. And, such trend will not only reduce or undermine the political worth of Iran and Tajikistan but other countries around them will also be affected (Grover, 2002, p. 362) (Byman, 2001, p. 79).

- Both regions have equivalent nature of geopolitical importance for international powers. As several state-centric scholars in Iran argue that United States and its allies want to strengthen Kurdish separatism in Iraqi Kurdistan. By supporting Kurdish militia “Peshmergha” with military aid against so-called Islamic State (ISIS), United States is indirectly triggering Kurds ethnic communities in Syria and Iran. And, this trend would negatively affect Iranian integration by triggering Azerbaijani ethno-national separatism. Likewise, US silent consent during Obama regime for Nagorno-Karabakh as a de facto state was also stimulating Iranian Azerbaijanis to be sovereign under the flag of “South Azerbaijan”. At the same time, Armenian Revolutionary Federation’s (a political party, operating in Armenia) claim over Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (a landlocked exclave of the Republic of Azerbaijan) as a part of “United Armenia” was also producing separate thoughts in Azerbaijani and Kurd populated regions of Iran (Lorentz, 2010, pp. 40-41). However, reoccupation of Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan (with the help of Pakistan, Russia, Turkey and Israel) have changed the political scenario in 2020, and now, separatist dilemmas have been very much downed (Zaheer D. M., 2021) (Poghosyan, 2022).
- Similarly, state-centric scholars in Tajikistan contend to defend their opinion against United States and Russia. They claim that both powers are trying to emerge a new puppet state in between Central-South Asia regarding securing their interests in the region. Therefore, international media is projecting domestic socio-political differences among Tajik central government and Gorno-Badakhshan’s local government as Pamiri ethnic movement for independence (Jonson, 2006, p. 42) (Asim & Roofi, 2017).
- As Iran and Tajikistan declare Iranian Azerbaijan Region and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region as their sole territory respectively, still several Azerbaijani ethno-nationalists count Iranian Azerbaijan as the part of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Similarly, many state-centric nationalists in Xinjiang (China) consider Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous region as the sole territorial part of the Peoples Republic of China (Asim M., 2020).
- Both countries; Iran and Tajikistan does not tolerate about any effort to initiate independence movement by ethno-nationalists in these regions and use force in case of constitutional violations by them. Article 78 of Iranian Constitution and Articles 06, 07, 43, 46 and 47 of the Tajik Constitution are defining such unacceptable policy of both countries in this regard (Constitution of Iran, 1982) (Constitution of Tajikistan, 1994).
- To observe Russian policies under Vladimir Putin towards supporting ethno-national movements and claims of independence in former Soviet territories during 21st century,

different scholars of regional studies argue that Iranian Azerbaijan Region including Gilan Province of Iran and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous region of Tajikistan can be the next attempts of Russia for getting space in South-Central Asian and Euro-Asian trade routes. Before this, Russian strategy for supporting ethno-national separatisms in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Sevastopol, Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk and Transnistria was the first stage of Neo-Soviet policy under Putin regime. On the other hand, several scholars of Russian studies exhibit Iran-Russia and Tajikistan-Russia cordial relations since 1991 as the counter argument against Neo-Sovietism; refuse to accept any kind of Russian tendency towards Iranian Azerbaijan Region or Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan but to maintain strong bilateral relations with the central governments of both countries. Similarly, they deny about any “Neo-Soviet” strategy under Putin regime but declare a pro-west sponsored propaganda (Asim D. M., 2022).

- Even Pamir ethnic community of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region is directly and highly inspired by the Persian civilization but it has no major ideological conflict with Arabs as Iranians have since centuries. Historical Arab-Iranian conflicts are not only affecting politics of Middle East but also deteriorating secular transportation in Gulf Sea (Zaheer D. M., 2021). Iran-Iraq War 1980-88, Iranian occupation of two Emirati claimed islands, economic rivalry among Fujairah, Khor Fakkan and Muscat sea ports with Chabahar sea port, and, religio-political uprisings in Bahrain and Yemen are its major examples during 21st century. Besides all this, it is interested aspect of political economy that a vast number of Iranian community have been settled in Arabian emerging markets in Gulf Region like United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Doha, Oman, Kuwait, Iraq and Bahrain. Although, Tajikistan has also diplomatic relations with these Arabian emerging markets but the presence of Pamir ethnic community is rare here due to unavailability of sufficient economic resources for movement within or outside the country (Zaheer D. M., 2021).

On the other hand, Iranian business community along with enhancing their social relations with Emirati citizens are becoming a reason of forcing Iran and United Arab Emirates to avoid from direct military conflict but to resolve their problems through negotiations. Same is the case with Qatar and Oman while, Saudi Arab and Bahrain a very different attitude in this regard. Due to huge ideological, religious and political differences with Iran, they can funded ethno-national separatist movement in Iranian Azerbaijan Region, same like providing financial and militarily support to so-called Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq regarding countering Iranian influence in both Arab countries during 21st century. It can also be the defensive (or offensive) policy of Saudi Arab and its allies to counter Iranian involvement in Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq and Syria (Zaheer M. A., 2018).

Conclusion

In the light of all similarities, differences and conflicts evaluated above, it is concluded that both regions have equal significance in international political system. Although, any kind of disturbance in respective region would destabilize regional connectivity under BRI and CPEC but certain factors are playing a vital role in countering ethno-national separatisms at the route of historical Silk Road or other BRI projects, such as;

- Russian wish to join CPEC,

- China-Iran regional connectivity via all the three branches of Silk Road; Kashgar-Dushanbe, Ashgabat-Mashhad, Kasghar-Kabul-Herat-Mashhad and Kashgar-Gilgit-Gwadar),
- Chinese, Russian and Iranian aid to new Taliban regime in Afghanistan since August 15, 2021,
- Russian monopolistic role in Eastern Europe against United States, NATO and EU when Ukraine was trying to be the part of NATO countries,
- Open support of Chechen Muslims (along with Syrian, Chinese and Belarussian governments) for Putin's initiatives towards Donetsk and Luhansk, and,
- CARs detracting from North-South Transport Corridor and ready to joining CPEC (Zaheer M. A., 2018) (Asim D. M., 2022).

In this situation, every participating country have been engaged with each other for economic needs. And, such engagements not only affect complex social economies to be united under constitutional framework regarding getting financial benefits but stay strong in terms of mutual defense. However, it never means that no one ethnic community has to leave its justified political or economic rights. As per the basic principles within the work "Greed versus Grievances", it has been observed as a fundamental principle in every state and society that "no one community would raise against territorial integration or statehood until it's socio-political and economic rights will not be violated". Therefore, any regional or international predicted threat is worthless unless communities in any region enjoy their fundamental rights (Saeed & Asim, 2022).

Same is the case with Tajik Pamiris and Iranian Azerbaijanis. Tajik-Iranian Agreement (2002) for linking historical Silk Road from Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region to Iranian roads would never allow any separatist ideology in both regions (Laqueur, 2015, pp. 01-19). As Iranian soil will connect Tajik market with Turkey, Iraq including Iraqi Kurdistan, Kuwait and Europe; Tajik soil would also connect Iranian market with China and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, this connectivity will positively affect lifestyle of local people, and their economic development will urge them to be structurally functionalist under the constitutional framework of their states (rather than to follow any kind of separatism) (Saeed & Asim, 2022).

References

- (2015, June 12). Retrieved from The Free Dictionary: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/constitutionalization>
- Abadie, A. (2015, April 11). *Poverty, Political Freedom, and the Roots of Terrorism*. Retrieved from The National Bureau of Economic Research: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w10859>
- Ahmed, I. (1998). *State, Nation and Ethnicity in Contemporary South Asia*. London: A&C Black.
- Asim, D. M. (2018). Correlation between Socio-Economic Development and Peace Building in Pak-Afghan Region; A Case Study of Pamiri Ethnic Community around Durand Line. *8th Conference on Pak-Afghan Regional Connectivity*. Baragali Summer Campus of University of Peshawar: Hennis Seidel Foundation (Islamabad).
- Asim, D. M. (2022, February 22). *Azerbaijan could be Russia's next target after Georgia and Ukraine: Dr. Asim Ejaz Sheikh*. Retrieved from Pak-Iran Intellectuals Forum: <https://pakiranintellectualsforum.wordpress.com/2022/02/22/azerbaijan-could-be-russias-next-target-after-georgia-and-ukraine-dr-asim-ejaz-sheikh/>
- Asim, D. M., Roofi, Y., & Bokhari, M. (2019). Ethnic Dilemma in Iranian Azerbaijan during Post-Soviet Era: Impacts on Multilateral Trade under ECO. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)*, 239-252.
- Asim, M. (2020, July 23). *Political Economy of Ethno-National Movements in the Post-Soviet Eurasian Region and Its Impact on Iranian Azerbaijan Region*. Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan: Department of Political Science in the Islamia University of Bahawalpur.
- Asim, M., & Roofi, Y. (2017). Ethnic Dilemma in Badakhshan Region: Implications on Pamiri Ethnic Group in Pakistan. *Grassroots*, 331-344.
- Asim, M., & Zaheer, A. (2020). *Modern Intra-Balochistan Conflict And Its Different Interpretations: A Critical Analysis Under CPEC Scenario*. Lahore: Journal of Indian Studies.
- Atabaki, T. (2000). *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and the Struggle for Power in Iran*. London and New York: I.B.Tauris.

- Barot, R. (1996). *Contemporary Sociological Debates on Race and Ethnicity*. Virginia: Edwin Mellen Press Limited.
- Bliss, F. (2006). *Social and Economic Change in the Pamirs (Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan)*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Brezigar, S. (2007). *Razprave in Gradivo; Treatises and Documents*. Ljubljana: Institute for Ethnic Studies in Slovenian Research Agency.
- Byman, D. (2001). *Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era*. Berlin: Rand Corporation.
- Caspersen, N. (2012). *Unrecognized States in the International System*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Chubin, S. (2014). *Iran-Saudi Arabia Relations and Regional Order*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Constitution of Iran*. (1982). Tehran: Government of Iran.
- Constitution of Tajikistan*. (1994). Dushanbe: Government of Tajikistan.
- Curtis, J. (2005). *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia*. California: University of California Press.
- Daniel, E. L. (2012). *The History of Iran*. California: Greenwood Publishing.
- Gonenc, L. (2002). *Prospects for Constitutionalism in Post-Communist Countries*. Ankara: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Gordon, S. (2005). *Montesquieu: The French Philosopher who Shaped Modern Government*. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group.
- Grosby, S. E. (2007). *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Grover, V. (2002). *Encyclopaedia of International Terrorism: Terrorism in world countries*. London: Deep & Deep Publications.
- Herrera, R. A. (1999). *Orestes Brownson: Sign of Contradiction*. Michigan: Intercollegiate Studies Institute.
- Iran Demographics Profile 2014*. (2015, August 20). Retrieved from Index Mundi:
http://www.indexmundi.com/iran/demographics_profile.html
- Jonson, L. (2006). *Tajikistan in the New Central Asia: Geopolitics, Great Power Rivalry and Radical Islam*. London and New York: I.B.Tauris.
- Keating, M. (2013). *The Political Economy of Regionalism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Laqueur, W. (2015). *Putinism: Russia and Its Future with the West*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Lorentz, J. H. (2010). *The A to Z of Iran*. Toronto: Scarecrow Press.
- Mahdi, M. (2015). *Ibn Khaldin's Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture*. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Mahlberg, D. G. (2014). *Perspectives on English Revolutionary Republicanism*. Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- Maloney, S. (2012). *Iran's Political Economy since the Revolution*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Momen, M. (2015). *Shi' Islam: A Beginner's Guide*. Trivandrum: Oneworld Publications.
- Pally, M. (2016). *Commonwealth and Covenant: Economics, Politics, and Theologies of Relationality*. Michigan and Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
- Pesaran, E. (2011). *Iran's Struggle for Economic Independence: Reform and Counter-Reform in the Post-Revolutionary Era*. London and New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Poghosyan, B. (2022, January 11). *Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and Armenia-Azerbaijan Relations in 2022*. Retrieved from Neo Geopolitics Research Network: <https://www.newgeopolitics.org/2022/01/13/nagorno-karabakh-conflict-and-armenia-azerbaijan-relations-in-2022/>
- Pratte, A. (2012). *Reconquering Canada: Quebec Federalists Speak Up for Change*. British Columbia: D & M Publishers.
- Ravenhill, J. (2014). *Global Political Economy*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Roy, O. (2000). *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*. London and New York: I.B.Tauris.
- Saeed, T., & Asim, M. (2022). Regional Economic Significance of Chabahar-Gwadar Memorandum of Understanding 2016; Impacts on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. *International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences* (pp. 01-19). Bahawalpur: Department of Pakistan Studies at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur.
- Scott, J. (2004). *Commonwealth Principles: Republican Writing of the English Revolution*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Small, A. (2015). *The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, A. D. (1991). *National Identity*. Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press.
- Sorensen, J. S. (2009). *State Collapse and Reconstruction in the Periphery: Political Economy, Ethnicity and Development in Yugoslavia, Serbia and Kosovo*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Stokes, C. (2008). *Race and Human Rights*. London: MSU Press.
- Swenson, J. (2000). *On Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Tajikistan Demographics Profile 2014*. (2015, August 20). Retrieved from Index Mundi:
http://www.indexmundi.com/tajikistan/demographics_profile.html
- Zaheer, D. M. (2021, March 21). China-Iran Strategic Relations; Implications on Geopolitics of Persian Gulf. Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan: Department of Political Science in the Islamia University of Bahawalpur.
- Zaheer, M. A. (2018). Pakistan and Russia are Forging New Era of Relationship. *The Diplomatic Insight*, 30-32.