

MEDIA COVERAGE
National Dialogue Series Roundtable (Session-I)

“Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Concerns, Reservations and Aspirations: Mainstreaming GB”
8 March 2019

NATIONAL
ONLINE NEWSPAPERS

THE EXPRESS
TRIBUNE

1.
G-B should get internal autonomy, say experts

By News Desk

Published: March 5, 2019



PHOTO: AFP

Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) should be provided with internal autonomy, this way its identity would not be kept in a perpetual limbo.

This was one of the recommendations put forward by speakers during the second part of Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI)'s National Dialogue Series roundtable on 'Gilgit-Baltistan Concerns, Reservations and Aspirations: Mainstreaming GB.'

The speakers went on to recommend that power-sharing could be an effective strategy in GB since it relies on a parliamentary system made up of governing coalitions that function through cooperative mechanisms like negotiation and compromise.

Disputed territories: Call for true autonomy, equal rights for G-B, AJK

The series was moderated by former federal law minister and Research Society of International Law (RSIL) President Ahmer Bilal Soofi. Speaking about ‘Mainstreaming Gilgit-Baltistan: Socio-Cultural Perceptions’ Gilgit-based social scientist and columnist Aziz Ali Dad, highlighted the liminal state of G-B and argued that to remain meaningful and relevant, it is indispensable for any political arrangement to invest power in the people. He said that disconnect between power and the people has generated anger, which can provide a fertile ground for upheavals.

Published in The Express Tribune, March 5th, 2019.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1923129/1-g-b-get-internal-autonomy-say-experts/>

NEWS AGENCIES



Speakers call for internal autonomy for Gilgit-Baltistan

DNA News | March 4, 2019



ISLAMABAD, MAR 04 (DNA) – Speakers on Monday called for providing internal autonomy to Gilgit-Baltistan instead of keeping its identity in perpetual limbo adding governing coalitions may be formed that function through cooperative mechanisms like negotiation and compromise.

These recommendations were put forward by speakers during the second part of the IPRI National Dialogue Series roundtable on ‘Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Concerns, Reservations and Aspirations: Mainstreaming GB’ moderated by former Federal Law Minister and President of Research Society of International Law (RSIL) Ahmer Bilal Soofi.

The Dialogue Series has been initiated by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI).

Speaking about ‘Mainstreaming Gilgit-Baltistan: Socio-Cultural Perceptions’ Aziz Ali Dad, Gilgit-based social scientist and columnist, argued that to remain meaningful and relevant, it is indispensable for any political arrangement to bring people towards the ‘zone of being’ by investing power in them. ‘By bringing people of GB within the ambit of the Constitution can create this zone of being.’

Ahmer Bilal Soofi was of the view that while there have been attempts in the past to govern the GB region with a sense of independence like other provinces of the country, none has so far worked. He outlined that ‘there can be a legal instrument crafted through which it can be given a provincial status, notwithstanding Pakistan’s international position on Kashmir.’

Dr Raja Qaiser from the Quaid-i-Azam University discussed the ‘Political, Social and Economic Rights of the People of Gilgit-Baltistan’ and how power can be shared in this territory from a theoretical lens. He discussed three academic perspectives – consociationalism, centripetalism and power-sharing. ‘In case of consociationalism democracies are developed on the basis of reconciling societal fragmentation along ethnic and religious lines, whereby no one group has clear majority, therefore, segmental autonomy is given to all. Mutual veto power is accorded in proportional representation to all of them under the Federation. However, it is not applicable to GB’, he stressed. Dr Qaiser also pointed that centripetalism cannot be recommended as a governance strategy in GB either since it has serious weaknesses such as promoting instability and exacerbating divisions.

Earlier, welcoming the speakers and participants to the National Dialogue Series, Acting President of IPRI, Brig (R) Mehboob Qadir shared that owing to its geographical contiguity to South Asian as well as Central Asian states, Gilgit-Baltistan carries immense significance for the successful materialisation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). ‘However, question marks over the constitutional future of Gilgit-Baltistan remain a problem towards this end. To exacerbate the situation, reforms introduced so far have not been able to allay the genuine concerns of the people of GB. The most recent constitutional reform being the GB Order 2018, merely touches the demand of greater participation of the people’, he lamented. He hoped that the National Dialogue Series on this subject will provide answers to pertinent questions like an inclusive political framework that can extend constitutional cover to a special region like GB; and any legal impediment to its politico-constitutional integration with Pakistan.=DNA

< <http://www.dnanews.com.pk/gilgit-baltistan-ipri/>>



‘Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Concerns, Reservations and Aspirations: Mainstreaming GB’

Sabah News 4 مارچ 2019



Islamabad, 04 March (SABAH):

- Provide internal autonomy to Gilgit-Baltistan instead of keeping its identity in perpetual limbo.
- Power-sharing may work in Gilgit-Baltistan since it relies on a parliamentary system made up of governing coalitions that function through cooperative mechanisms like negotiation and compromise.

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mileage. As a result, the long overdue question of the status of the region remains in perpetual limbo.

On the issue of ‘Constitutional Processes and GB Order 2018: Issues and Challenges’, Mr Ahmer Bilal Soofi was of the view that while there have been attempts in the past to govern the GB region with a sense of independence like other provinces of the country, none has so far worked. He outlined that ‘there can be a legal instrument crafted through which it can be given a provincial status, notwithstanding Pakistan’s international position on Kashmir.’ Dr Raja Qaiser from the Quaid-i-Azam University discussed the ‘Political, Social and Economic Rights of the People of Gilgit-Baltistan’ and how power can be shared in this territory from a theoretical lens. He discussed three academic perspectives –consociationalism, centripetalism and power-sharing. ‘In case of consociationalism democracies are developed on the basis of reconciling societal fragmentation along ethnic and religious lines, whereby no one group has clear majority, therefore, segmental autonomy is given to all. Mutual veto power is accorded in proportional representation to all of them under the Federation. However, it is not applicable to GB’, he stressed. Dr Qaiser also pointed that centripetalism cannot be recommended as a governance strategy in GB either since it has serious weaknesses such as promoting instability and exacerbating divisions. He recommended power-sharing mechanisms which call for ‘diverse groups having the right to executive-level input, that is, ones ability to impact outcomes is proportional to one’s electoral strength, may work in the region’ According to the speaker, power-sharing may work in Gilgit-Baltistan since it relies on governing coalitions that work through cooperative mechanisms like negotiation and compromise.

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<<http://www.sabahnews.net/english/?p=3019>>

ONLINE

1.

CENTRELINE

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March 4, 2019 Pakistan

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< <http://www.centreline.com.pk/speakers-call-internal-autonomy-gilgit-baltistan/> >

HAMARINEWS

2.

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4th March 2019 admin 0 Comments autonomy, call, for, Gilgit, internal, Speakers

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< <http://www.khabrain.cf/2019/03/speakers-call-for-internal-autonomy-for-gilgit-baltistan>>

3. *The Punch*

Call for mainstreaming FATA districts, GB

 TP · 1 week ago



mainstreaming
FATA

By Muhammad Zahir

Islamabad (TP) March 1:

Speakers have said that the biggest issue in mainstreaming Khyber Pakhtunkhwa tribal districts (KPTD) into the national/political architecture is the implementation on the ground. They said that rebuilding of damaged infrastructure needs to be completed on priority basis.

Awareness among policy-makers regarding local sensitivities and culture are need of the hour, as well as exhaustive consultations with the local population.

Majority of FATA inhabitants are dependent on farming, therefore, channelizing water for agriculture in the form of small dams, is needed.

More than cross-border trade, strict border management over the short- to medium term is more pressing in order to deny cross-border movement of terrorists as the ongoing period of consolidation in FATA, does not warrant any new phenomena of terrorist incursions from Afghanistan. After strict border management mechanism is fully operational, the available trade corridors through Khyber and Wana may be optimally utilized for trade diversification.

The Western route of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), joining Gwadar-Quetta-Zhob-OlKhan-Peshawar-Islamabad is ideal for integrating FATA areas. Therefore, FATA should be integrated into this project for speedy development.

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) must cater to the development needs of FATA and planned in a way to benefit this region through special incentives.

These were a few of the recommendations put forward by speakers during the first part of the IPRI National Dialogue Series roundtable on "Mainstreaming of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTD), formerly FATA, into National/Political Architecture: Challenges and Solutions" organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), here in Islamabad.

Delivering his keynote address to diplomats, bureaucrats, students and journalists, former Governor Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan Owais Ahmed Ghani provided a detailed overview of the FATA region from the international national and local dimensions. He said that the international dimension has remained dominated by the geopolitical interests of competing nation-states turning the Hindukush into a geopolitical faultline. 'US-China competition for dominance in 21st Century is the latest phase of the Great Game with Pakistan forced to play the same game by the same rules. Policies and actions of the US, the world's biggest hegemon, will decide the future course of South Asia geopolitics', he said. Ghani remarked that the unstated US objectives are to 'keep the region in chaos and acquire permanent bases on the pretext of terrorism; destabilize/weaken/de-nuclearise Pakistan (on USSR pattern)'. He predicted that due to such a US policy, 'Fifth generation/hybrid war under the US-India axis against Pakistan will continue; and FATA, GB and Balochistan regions will be main targets of subversion by hostile external powers & their agencies.' He lamented that such policies have had and will continue to have deep impacts on Pakistan, particularly in the tribal regions with societal polarization between Westernised liberal-secularists and religious-conservative elements; the rise of Shia-Sunni sectarian militancy spill over into Pakistan of warlord-ism, Jihadi Tanzeems, terrorism, and the rise of mafia-like gangs'. He pointed out that while national cohesion has improved and tribal populations progressively integrated into Pakistani society with significant economic interests throughout the country, 'there remain significant administrative systems anomalies and so-called Special Areas need urgent attention.' He recommended that instead of doing things in haste, an incremental step-by-step approach is needed which consists of continuous & extensive consultation with FATA residents. He

called for implementing improved administrative & judicial systems to eliminate their current shortcomings; close coordination between administrative, political & military set-up; and detailed homework on administration & judicial systems, as well as targeting easier areas for reforms first, followed by difficult ones.

In the session 'Mainstreaming of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tribal Districts (KPTD), formerly FATA, into National/Political Architecture: Challenges and Solutions' moderated by Ambassador (R) Inamul Haq, Dr Sohail Shehzad, Professor, Khyber Law College, University of Peshawar discussed 'Tribalism and Rewaj and Proposed Rule of Law Reforms in KPTD: Challenges in Transforming Traditional Institutions into Formal Justice Institutions.' He said given the practice of Rewaj over decades, the tribal areas are not attuned to formal state structures, especially legal systems of justice. 'Implementing formal legal systems will be a challenge for the state. The transition will also be critical, especially in terms of past decisions taken under Rewaj vis-a-vis women's rights, land rights and inheritance etc. that will need to be respected and upheld.

Dr Waseem shaque, Assistant Professor from the National Defence University pointed out that security and development are complementary and both have to be pursued concurrently. He was of the view that the internal and external security environments of FATA are very important and need to be stabilized at all cost before any meaningful socio-economic undertakings. He recommended that comprehensive security architecture has to be evolved by merging loose security components of Levies, Khasadars and Frontier Constabulary, which are efficient; but need to be converted into a formidable policing force, by regroupings and reorganization- capitalizing upon their strengths and capacity building. Similarly, a separate package for capacity building of Frontier Corps is needed, if mainstreaming has to become a reality within the envisaged timeframe of five years.'

Dr Ishaque also stressed that while remaining within the bounds of tribal culture, comprehensive land reforms must be undertaken with the complete concurrence of locals. Special allocation in the National Finance Commission for FATA development should also be made, and allied countries approached for enhanced developmental activities in sectors like health, education and infrastructure development. 'Just as the entire nation was united in rooting out the menace of terrorism on war footings, in a similar fashion, the whole government and whole-of-nation approach are required for fulfilling FATA's developmental needs', he concluded.

Mohammad Amir Rana, Director of the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS), shared the perceptions of the people of FATA about the proposed reforms, merger, military operations and rehabilitation programs in their areas. He said that while the majority of the local population is in favor of the merger with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, there is growing resentment among many people about the pace of the rehabilitation and reconstruction activities; a large number of security checkpoints, complete Internet blackout, and the high cost of new infrastructure constructed etc. He was of the view that the government should have started the process of mainstreaming by focusing on the 'softer' issues first which deal with the day-to-day affairs of the people, rather than opting for the 'hard' security and judicial restructuring first.

Dr Syed Adnan Ali Shah Bukhari, Consultant at IPRI discussed 'Security Sector Reforms in KPTDs: Internal & External Security Challenges'. His presentation looked at the law enforcement agencies and the various security institutions in former FATA; proposed Security Sector Reforms (SSR) in KPTDs; internal challenges & external threats; national and regional initiatives to overcome external challenges. He highlighted that internally, the terror threat remains high in spite of the military operations. He also pointed out the lack of development funds and bureaucratic bottlenecks in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process. Regarding the external environment, he was of the view that Afghanistan remains a major source of concern for Pakistan's tribal belt due to terrorist sanctuaries, hostile agencies, illegal migration, and criminal syndicates. 'KPTDs are "soft underbelly" of Pakistan, and there is a need for expeditious implementation of SSR to avoid a conflict trap. For this, it is important to create awareness about the benefits of SSR among KPTD's inhabitants,' he concluded.

Earlier, welcoming the speakers, Acting President IPRI Brig. (R) Mehboob Qadir outlined the vision behind IPRI's National Dialogue Series, an initiative spread over two years to dilate upon matters of national importance and intended to come up with broad contours of a national narrative. He said that though FATA had largely remained peaceful since the inception of Pakistan in 1947, the ingredients of a less ungoverned space were inherently present in the shape of colonial-era administrative, constitutional, political and socioeconomic makeup of the region. 'This coupled with external influences, most notably the chaos and anarchy in Afghanistan, had the evil effect of converting FATA into a "no-go" area for the Pakistani state and act as a source of instability for Pakistan and the region. Therefore, it was decided by the government a few years ago to introduce wide-ranging reforms in the realm of constitutional, administrative, political, socio-economic and security, to ensure sustainability of state intervention, and remove the causes of violence and anarchy bedeviling the FATA region. A major step in this regard was taken in May 2018, when the government merged FATA with the adjoining Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and announced the extension of state institutions into the newly-merged KPTDs.' This is proving to be easier said than done because FATA faces replacement of existing archaic institutions with modern state institutions.'

The session on FATA concluded that while the ongoing military operations have dislodged Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan in most parts of FATA, bringing relative peace to the region, however, there is a concern, that the militants could stage a comeback/once the military leaves the region. In this backdrop and despite all odds, the people of FATA have demonstrated utmost nationalism, by denying space and supporting the security forces in rooting out the terrorists at a very heavy cost. They all deserve the nation's appreciation, unstinted support and continuous efforts in rehabilitation activities.

< <https://thepunch.com.pk/?p=2062> >

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1.

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Javed Ali Bhatti

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