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SOURCES OF SKARDU ECONOMY AND SECTOR OF ECONOMY IMPACT BY RISE OF SECTARIANISM IN SKARDU**Asif Abbas**MPhil Scholar National Institute of Pakistan Studies Quaid-i-Azam
University Islamabad**ABSTRACT**

This paper presents various perspectives from stakeholders who have tied their interests to specific fields to understand their viewpoints and arguments. It highlights the economic indicators and the region's significance. The geographical location of Skardu presents challenges to the local market economy. This is a significant hurdle for local economic challenges and the difficulty of upholding limited resources for local economic progress and development. Therefore, the Skardu economy primarily depends on multiple sources of income generation, contributing to increasing the region's income generation and rapidly building the region's importance. This factor cannot be ignored for its business purposes in the local market economy. The tourism sector plays a crucial role in developing the local market economy and uplifting the lives of ordinary people. On the rise of sectarianism conflict these market economy remains unprogressive. It does not facilitate the flow of capital for the entire society and to expanded local businesses, making it problematic to the region and the world. People are hesitated investing in different fields of the tourism sector, which underscores the significance of the region and the local economy.

Keywords: Skardu, Sectarianism, Economy, Tourism, Local Market

Introduction

After reviewing the literature published on domains of sectarianism in Gilgit Baltistan, various arguments in this scholarship mostly touch on perspectives by discussing the dimension of violence. This writing has ignored elaborating on socioeconomic and socio-developmental angles. The concept of the local market has remained untouched by the prospects of the academic writing sphere. By keeping it isolated from the sphere of debate and covering the prospects of the local market economy in Gilgit Baltistan, the present study will cover these angles that still need to be clarified from previous literature on the scope of these aspects

Sectarian conflict in Giglit Baltistan builds hurdles in developing the local market economy. The unresolved issue leads to a barrier to the local market economies, with devastating and irreparable impacts on the local market economy.

The present study is about the source of the local market economy of Skardu and impacted on these sources with the rise of sectarianism .Before the present study, many studies had been conducted to discuss violence and

conflict, merely focusing on factors and consequences. All of these accounts have ignored the content of the local market economy and the hurdles in the area. The current study investigates the disruptions in the local market economy caused by sectarianism. This study will significantly contribute to the existing literature, providing a fresh perspective on sectarianism's impacts on the Skardu market.

Introduction of Skardu

Skardu is called heaven on Earth. The land of Skardu in Gilgit Baltistan is in Pakistan's mountain range. The capital city of the Baltistan region lies in the Karakorum ranges, having an altitude of 2438 meters, figured out at 8000 feet above sea level. The landscape of Skardu is renowned for its beautiful landscape, popular tourist destination, and scenic beauty, attracting mountaineers and trekkers to the mountains, glaciers, and lakes. The mighty mountain surrounds most of the area and is a source of water resources for Pakistan. The presence of the Indus River is a strategic vein and lifeline for Pakistan, further highlighting the region's importance.

Sectarian Conflict in Gilgit Baltistan

Sectarian violence and strife are different forms of communal violence, which is utilized as a medium for sectarianism, between the different sects of one particular ideology or religion lived in a nation or community of society. The aspects of religious separation play a due role in the escalation of sectarian violence (Hunzai, 2013). Sectarianism in the Gilgit Baltistan region of a disputed part of the State of Jammu and Kashmir is generating a sense of among the masses to have a series of discontent which also leads the region to come under influence leads devastating effect. Policy based on the agenda of Islamization of General Zia Ul-Haq in this landscape provides a medium to having a settlement of an outsider in the area of the region, incorporating direct problems for local envious masses. Besides the settlement of the external community, the policy of Islamization, Afghan intervention, and the Islamic Revolution in Iran in the 1970s marked a cumulative effect on rapidly increased sectarian turmoil, leading to the resulting massive level of violation of Human rights in the region (Shehzad, 2003).

. After the mentioned events the series of violence could not be stopped, and the policy shift introduced by the regime Musharraf focused on the agenda of enlightened moderation, aimed at the restoration of democracy in Islamabad, created nothing amazing to be proven happened as so far people were having no such means of satisfactory for these means adopted. But the fact was that the monster has remained raised at the peak of threatening rate. IN the understanding historically, the diversified community of Gilgit Baltistan lived together in a relatively means of harmony attitude. . (Chandrasekhar, 2015) People of the region value their ethics tribal identities social ties over sectarian affiliations. G-B has the

majority of the Shia community in the accounted figure of 1.8 million populace. . (Feyyaz, 2011).

Pakistan, having a Sunni majority, managed sectarian violence in the landscapes of the region from the times of Zia Ul Haq, with the introduction of Sunni Deobandi Islam in the Gilgit Baltistan. The year 1975 marked a clash of sectarian violence, creating problems for the procession of Shia in Muharram in Gilgit town, firing from a Sunni mosque. On this development, violence begins to spread too many other areas of the region. Another clash took place in 1988, having a dispute on the issue of the moon during the fasting month of Ramzan to the start of Eid. This issue marked a huge tense situation in the whole Giglit because the sighting of the moon was being celebrated by Shia segments as Eid, while Sunni friction was fasting on that day. (Lambah, 2016). Based on these tense situations conflict between Shia and Sunni remained to till today. Accounts deal this issue elaborated that various houses, and properties were being destroyed and some reports mentioned that even livestock were not spared by this violence. Another outbreak of violence happened in the year of 2003 -04. When another medium textbooks controversy begins to spread the sectarianism conflict in the whole region. (Ahmed, 1998). This was begun by the Shia quarters living in Giglit blamed it has the Sunni curriculum being taught in the schools of Giglit Baltistan. Even now the sensitive federal made a series of negotiations with the top leadership of the Shia and ensure the resolution of the issue. With every passing day, the issue remained unclear and broke a new series of breakouts of sectarian violence by the assassination of top Shia religious leader, Agha Zia ud –din –Rizvi in 2005. (Zaman, 1998). This tragic event marked the mountain in the shadow of dark clouds of fear and horrific situation. It becomes a series of widespread clashes marking a month's curfew and the loss of hundreds of individuals' lives and the threat of people's lives. (Knudsen, 2002). IN the year 2009 again the monster of sectarian violence came out of its bottle. On 29 April, 2009. Deputy Speaker of the Gilgit Baltistan, Northern Areas Legislative Assembly. Syed Asad Zaidi becomes the victim of this sectarianism conflict. He was assassinated in Giglit in Kashrote which is claimed to be a Sunni-dominated area again become to having raised sectarian violence in the whole region. The development of the Karkoram Highway was marked as a helping hand for launching battleground for generating sectriaiaian strife. (Stöber, 2005) . The route is considered to be the most dangerous road to be traveling due to having tragic memories where Shia innocent citizens were being killed based on sectarianism affiliations. The story does not end here several other times the route becomes medium to having killed people of the region. IN 2012 it is quoted those 18 innocent pilgrims resident of Gilgit Baltistan were being killed brutally while they were returning from Iran. These buses were traveling

from Rawalpindi to Gilgit and the tragedy took place in the Harban Nullah lies its location in the Kohistan District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Killings of people on this route always remained routine, thousands of people lost their lives, and unaccounted figures have become injured in these sectarian clashes. (Express Tribune, 2012).

Sectarianism in Gilgit Baltistan

Sectarianism is a pervasive issue across Pakistan. Gilgit Baltistan has not remained immune to this enduring challenge. This pressing concern profoundly impacts everyone in the region. It has instilled a deep sense of worry about the future. The issue has fostered chronic intolerance among those living in the same area. It has solidified the divisions among sects, each with the most adherents and their understanding.

The Skardu land holds the beauty of diversified communities and ethnicities in its landscape. The presence of this different composition explains that diversity represents the cluster of culture, heritage, and values attracting the communities to attract and understand each other's aspects of life, apart from the diversity, which is a source of attraction and also draws lines of difference with each other.

This diversification factor creates challenges and keeps space uniform in its sphere. Based on this difference between uniformity and collectiveness, the issue of sectarianism is enforcing extremely threatening conditions for the survival of the market, economy, and development.

In Skardu Baltistan, the specter of sectarianism has proven to be a state of unrest in every sector of life, not escape by forcing irreparable damages. It has pushed disturbances into every walk of daily affairs threatening the survival of regular activities and influencing their operationalization.

Sectarianism in Skardu has also hugely impacted the local market economy sector, devastatingly leading the local market to dominate this spectrum of impact and influence. With every series of escalating periods of sectarianism, the local market suffers greatly. Due to the sectarian violence, business activity remained shut down by a clash between the two major Muslim sects.

This period is tragic because it promotes a sense of threat, intolerance among business associated segments, and differences among the common masses. Because of this violent nature, the local markets suffer growth. The region's economy is highly problematic as it has less scope for financial sources.

Skardu Baltistan's geographical location is challenging because it depends on connectivity in one mass transit corridor. The whole local market economy of the region depends on external sources, which maintain a route of economy to keep boasting connectivity with the rest of the world. During sectarianism, this source becomes the mode of disconnection by having a symbol of threat and horror. People even hesitated to travel to this

corridor, as memories of tragic genocide episodes have appeared at different times in the past. Terrorist attacks in the past and uncertainty in the present are pulling out the local market economy to flourish and operate smoothly. The spike waves of sectarianism have profoundly influenced the local market economy. The spreading of sectarianism has not remained commonplace, but it has led the whole region and disturbed every segment of society as a result of massive violence. Due to the sectarian conflict, Skardu's economy has suffered greatly and is still having challenges from this massive violence at any time. Closing trading routes across the country has brought new challenges for damaging trade and transportation, highlighting the collateral damage for the region's market-based economy, leading to hurdles for the market economy based on the decline in progress. In all this activity, the market economy has suffered much disaster because of the long-term closure of businesses. There is no mechanism to accelerate business and the local market economy with a properly organized structure affected by sectarianism.

Because of the limited scope of alternative sectors, people primarily rely on the business sector for survival, emphasizing the need for a united front. This issue introduces the grounds for building new problems for sectarian affiliation, making the customer shopkeeper relationship the worst way of understanding. It is causing irreparable damage to the local market in the battle of ideas about polluting the local market-based economy.

Skardu as Tourism capital

Apart from this significance, the region is also a tourism capital. Numerous local and international tourists visit this region because of its massive beauty. Contributing and supporting various segments living in the region as sources of income. Last but not least, the city of Skardu also plays a pivotal role as the center of business activity in the Baltistan region for trade and transportation in the surrounding area. The Skardu economy is mostly directly associated with the sectors of tourism, agriculture, minerals, and other resources that facilitate the local market economy.

The economy of Skardu plays an essential role in the region's development. Without the development of the Skardu economy, no section of society can develop properly and smoothly. So, the economy relies on Skardu's economic progress. Being far away from the rest of the country and situated in a mountain corridor, it leads to limited sources of economic platforms for success and development.

Despite these challenges, some sources are helping the region and market economy flourish and accelerate. These sources are helping to maintain the primary sources of income generation and uplift the common masses' standard of living and survival. Significant sources of economic activity in Skardu are which will be addressed below which having essential role in the common people life and sources of significance of region. Some of these sources are as following.

Tourism is a significant source of income in Skardu.

God has gifted the region of Skardu with unlimited beauty and pleasant weather, making it prominent in the world and a source of attraction. Meadows and landscapes are sources of peace and are required for better health. For that purpose, the inflow of people via this region is of potential and significance. This sector has a role in boosting the local market economy and its importance. Tourism is the primary source of income generation for the local market economy in Skardu.

Apart from this, there has also been a boom in extracting income; it is an excellent source of employment. The local market has a cordial relationship with the development of the tourism sector. This sector has made the region significant, and the local market is flourishing and keeping out of the vacuum to progress, supporting employment for various groups affiliated with this field.

Tourism has made the region more valuable for local and international investors who have invested capital in this region, leading to new businesses and local market business expansion to a high level of progress. That helps the local market economy with increasing local economy market forces. The tourism-based economy sector requires considerable investment in a few years. Due to the rise of this industry, many international and local markets are keen to be part of the tourism process of business activity. Billions of rupees are invested in the name of five-star hotels, motels, and new tourist places. That is evidence of how this sector has made the revised changes in the region of Skardu. Development in the area further emphasizes the importance of the region.

That helps the local market economy accelerate development and achievement of local business facilitation by having sources of employment and capital flow responding to question one of the respondents was of the view. The view is that tourism is significant for the local market economy. Before the development of this industry, it faced challenges because it needed an alternative platform for attaining income. The sector of tourism also has to get the vastly impacted by the hike of sectarianisms in Skardu by having the refused of the people visiting to the region.

The Agriculture role in the Skardu's local Market Economy.

Geographically, Skardu is enclosed in the middle of two mountain ranges: Kakuram and the Himalayas. Mountains surround a significant part of the region. Despite all these concerns, agriculture is among the primary sources of economic activity in Skardu. A large number of people are associated with the profession of agriculture, after the tourism sector in the region, as a source of income generation.

The agriculture sector has helped the local masses develop their living standard and strengthened the local market economy. The principal food crops are wheat, potatoes, vegetables, and dry fruits. These principal food crops are famous for their taste and can enter the international market,

helping to circulate capital among local market forces. These crops are exported to the world market, which is essential to the region's economy for business people and local farmers associated with this profession. Creating a multiplicative effect for all living in the area responding to one respondent was of the view.

“He argued that agriculture is a lifeline because of limited government employment sources and industry. Various segments of people of region largely depend on agriculture as a source of survival of life, helping in the betterment life standards by have significant income sources. The role of agriculture is pivotal and essential for the local market economy because it has a numerous business scope and having the scheme. This helps in circulates the system of market economy activity by having essential revenue medium in the region ,However ,with the rise of sectarianisms the process get stucked to having proceeded for betterment of the agriculture ,goods remained unprogressive because of the shutting down of the agriculture sector .

Trade and commerce

The above factors and indicators are essential to the region's economic growth. The segments of trade and commerce mechanisms play crucial roles in boosting the local market economy. Skardu also holds significance for the regional economy from the perspective of trade and commerce. The geographical location gives the advantage of having a connection and nexus among the remote areas of regional connectivity. The region is connected to the rest of the world through land connectivity and Skardu air routes. Economic activity related to trade and commerce is processed through the trading route, which extends to the whole region. The region of Baltistan's trade and commerce activity is entirely dependent on Skardu. The movement of massive transportation services of goods, demand, and supply chain is centralized through the linkage of Skardu. That allows the easy movement of local products throughout the world. That explains the untapped potential of the Skardu economy for the whole region. That is reshaping people's lives by having an exchange of goods and being able to circulate the capital among market forces.

“The opinion of people affiliated with the purpose of trade and commerce was of the view. Skardu's economy is essential from the collective perspective of local businesses and the whole region. Being a remote region, much of the local business depends entirely on the Skardu economy to expand and build progress in local market forces. That is addressing the significance of regional trade and commerce. Sectarianism made the stopped of the demand and supply process by having cutting off process and managed of destroying of the circulation of market forces.

Fruits and DRY Fruits export

The region of Skardu is well renowned for fruit and dry fruit production products. This production has altered the local market economy because of the vast expansion of dry fruits. That encourages large segments and helps various quarters. It helps contribute a considerable amount of income

generation by having access across the world and helps the farmers get proper rates. That attracts the local market economy and opens new market forces into this sector. The production of fruits such as cherries, apples, and pears has made it to the world through export. That is a significant asset for the local market. Becoming a source of income generation also opens the way for introducing the new market. It has made a massive segment to having a peasant and environment-friendly business. That consumes the circulation of the market and the significance of regions across the globe, *“Highlighting, arguments of one shopkeeper having a dry fruits shop based in Skardu. He believes that dry fruits are one of the most critical segments of the business economy. That has enhanced the region's reputation and helped it gain income, allowing people to live a sound and progressive life. On the basis of the rise sectarianism, this segment get to have the nulled of development and progress and making process to void.*

Natural and mineral resources

Natural and mineral resources are essential to increasing their significant importance in the region. The land of Skardu holds enormous potential for mineral deposits, a fact that should inspire optimism among economic analysts, policymakers, investors, and local business owners. These resources rapidly increase their significance by introducing sources of income and prosperity for regions of backwardness.

Minerals' presence is becoming the source of local and international attraction to invest in this field and expand the local market economy's progress and development. The mineral resources in the region are booming for various segments in Skardu. This sector has opened new avenues for the local market economy and sought new corridors to connect the international market with local markets, the local community, and the masses associated with these professionals to increase income generation and raise the standard of living. Before this development of minerals, people's socioeconomic lives were in deep crisis, as there was no suitable development method mechanism and indicator for progress. Because of this, minerals are exported to the international market to generate surplus income collectively. One respondent associated with the minerals based economy expressed that the minerals sector has changed the lives of many segments. Addressing challenges faced by the local community opened the way for many people to raise their living standards to new levels. Minerals have good sources of revenue generation and can be significant in the region for new investors and government for new opportunities of importance. With the development of this industry, people had property in their lives.

Local Industry of Skardu of culture, heritage

The culture and heritage industry of Skardu has enormous potential for extraction of revenues for region. The sector of local Industry is also

contributing the local market economy of Skardu .Segments associated with this profession is having skilled work especially promoting the local heritage, handcraft and local culture to worldwide .Which is showing the arts and traditional method of region becomes means attraction of world attention .That ,is displaying the local rich which is passing from generation .Local Industry step has provided the source of employment ,as well as the medium for generating income for various people living in the region .According to one of professionals associated was of the view , .
The local industry is contributing to the local market economy massive surplus of capital .It is also a force of attraction for worldwide and having scope to invest .This industry is providing employment for thousands of families which have no other sources for employment .It is also a representation of our culture for entire world, and having the definition of our arts and hand skilled. On the basis of having the hike of sectarianism gets this sector made for having no series of progress and development.

The Sector of the hotel industry is a new emerging source of income

The hotel industry is a pivotal source of income for the region. This section of the hotel industry is feeding my segments of society a virtual and essential role in maintaining their standard of living. This industry has helped the local market economy reach new heights of success and has facilitated more development in the region. Numerous section of society is having their investments in the set up their business for hotel industry .That is contributing local market huge and massive capital to flow in this region. During the two decades this business has promoted the local people to having the shift of traditional mode of business style .Which is having the rise of international and local investments in this region. On the basis of sectarianism, the hike of having series problematic concerns as having no alternative mechanism for income generation and for the collection of income generation for whole segments associated with this sector .

Visits of foreign tourists for trekking activity

Skardu's economy largely depends on foreign visitors to the region. Their visits aid the market economy, leading to the opening of new hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, and other businesses related to trekking. These businesses have brought massive changes to the local economy. The section on foreign trekkers is vital to the local economy, attracting international trekkers to Skardu. The region's enormous, beautiful landscapes, peaceful environment, and fantastic tourist spots are significant attractions for these trekkers. The influx of these trekkers worldwide profoundly impacts the region's economy and significance. This influx of foreign visits is helping generate income, opening new avenues for large segments to have income advantages. The foreigners' income contributes to the local market economy's development and progress.

According to the local guide associated with the professionals, this tracking was interesting. Foreign visitors are the most significant assets for a local market economy to flourish. These foreigners benefit the economy through the inflow of capital and also help build the local community through different methods of development and building the mechanisms of life standards. However with the hike of sectarianism, this sector gets problematic for associated people by having lacking of revenue collection and income generation.

Conclusion

Sectarian conflict in Gilgit-Baltistan, including the city of Skardu, has significantly impacted the local economy. Skardu, a Shia-majority area, has experienced disruptions in trade and social harmony due to the long-standing Sunni-Shia divide, exacerbated by national and international factors. This violence has led to mistrust between communities, reduced cooperation in business, and has occasionally closed down markets and hindered tourism. Skardu, known for its tourism and strategic location, has seen economic activity suffer during periods of heightened conflict. Sectarian divisions also affect hiring practices and access to resources, with religious affiliations influencing political and economic opportunities. The whole sector of economy remained under series of uncertainty and unprogressive because of having deeply influenced by the hike in sectarianisms in Skardu.

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