

**Strengthening Local Governance for Sustainable Peace and Conflict Resolution in Balochistan**

**Mairaj Khalid**

[Mairajkhalidbaloch883@gmail.com](mailto:Mairajkhalidbaloch883@gmail.com)

MPhil Scholar, Department of Social work, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan

**Muhammad Yousuf**

Lecturer, Social work University of Balochistan Quetta, Pakistan

**Corresponding Author: Mairaj Khalid** [Mairajkhalidbaloch883@gmail.com](mailto:Mairajkhalidbaloch883@gmail.com)

**Received:** 09-02-2026

**Revised:** 24-02-2026

**Accepted:** 10-03-2026

**Published:** 25-03-2026

**ABSTRACT**

*Local governance system is widely regarded as a catalyst for strengthening democratic participation and enhancing political stability particularly in marginalized regions and conflict-prone regions. Local governance is considered as a critical mechanism for conflict resolution peace-building and political stability throughout the world. This research study examines the role of local governance in promoting peace and political stability in Balochistan. Historically the province has faced challenges i.e. limited and poor service delivery, political exclusion and marginalization, weak institutional capacity and recurring conflicts, making the effectiveness of strong local governance institutions, basic democracy and grassroots participation and decision making a prominent area of investigation. This research study adopts a mixed method approach combining quantitative data through questionnaire and qualitative interviews, observation and in-hand data from government officials, community representatives and common educated citizens belonging different areas and backgrounds. This research study evaluates the extent to which local government institutions can contribute to people political participation at grassroots level, conflict mitigation, trust building and improved service delivery. It further explores the relationship between perceptions of state legitimacy, community engagement and decentralization. Findings of this research indicate that a strong and effective local governance system is necessary for community engagement and peace-building in Balochistan. It plays a significant role in strengthening public trust in state institutions, reducing grievances of people and promoting participatory decision making and exclusive and participatory development. However this research study also identifies major constraints including irregular local government elections, inadequate resource allocation, weak institutional capacity and limited fiscal economy. Such prominent challenges significantly restrict the potential of local governments to function as effective catalysts for peace and political stability. From this research study it can be infer that strengthening local governance through fiscal decentralization, institutional reforms,, capacity building and sustainable political commitment is essential for long-term peace and political stability in Balochistan. This research study also proposes reforms and policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of grassroots government system as a too; for conflict resolution, democratic consolidation and community engagement.*

**Keywords:** Local governance, political stability, peace-building, grassroots participation, Balochistan

**INTRODUCTION**

In any country, region or society governance at the local level serves as the cornerstone of democratic system and the fundamental channel through which citizens in a region engage with the broader system of state and contribute their vital role for the social wellbeing, political stability, economic sustainability and overall societal unity and organization and contribute fully to social uplifting and national development. The people in the grassroots level experience the legitimacy, effectiveness, inclusivity and participation in governance in their routines. The societies which are characterized by multiple forms of diversities such as ethnic, linguistic ,religious , and other forms of diversities , complex

political and social dynamics with innumerable resources, local governance system occupies even greater prominence and significance.

An effective, efficient and autonomous system of local government may contribute to peace, political stability and social harmony in numerous ways. First it enhances political participation and inclusion by providing space to local people participate and contribute fully in decision-making processes empowerment of people and societal progress, that directly impact their lives. Second it brings improvements in social services and social protection of people and ensures basic needs of life such as education, food water, sanitation, healthcare and infrastructure - services that are critical for human dignity and life security. (World Bank, 2019)

Third, it stimulates legitimacy, transparency, a just system of accountability reducing corruption and mismanagement and developing trust and dependency of people on the institutions of the state. Fourth, such an effective system produces spaces for conflict management and resolution and grievances of local people may be addressed and resolved before it takes into shape of social unrest and broader conflict and social disharmony.

A vacuum of an efficient governance at grassroots level such as a sense of absence of governance in far-flung towns and villages not only undermined the legitimacy of the government but also fostered the sense of deprivation, mistrust and exclusion. In Conflict-stricken areas worldwide, from sub-Saharan regions of Africa to the regions of South Asia, reforms in local bodies systems have been acknowledged as vital and prominent components of political stability and peace-building process. Such measures provide political and economic empowerment to local communities, decentralize power and authority and enhance social harmony and cohesion among masses

Since the establishment of Pakistan, province of Balochistan has been politically alienated and marginalized, central structure of governance has often silenced or unheard the local political voices, while tribal or se-tribal dynamics have further caused complications in administrative hierarchy. Successive regimes with intervals tried to introduce local bodies reforms, particularly in the era of Ayub Khan (Basic Democracies), Zia-ul-haq (Local Government Ordinance 1979) and Pervez Musharraf (Devolution Plan of 2001), but these initiatives were often top to bottom in structure and design, aimed more at sustaining maximum central authority than providing empowerment local people with true essence. The system of governance in Pakistan and especially in the province of Balochistan has been undermined by imbalance of power structure and inequality of power corridors, inadequate devolution of power and authority, centralized structure of power dynamics and weak political institutions to local governments.

Balochistan, which is situated at the fringe of Pakistan, both on the basis of political as well as geographical landscape has long been struggling with issues of political and social marginalization, underdevelopment and distribution of power and resources. The province despite being endowed with innumerable natural resources such as oil, gas, minerals and geographical landscape, yet continues to suffer from more socioeconomic challenges and disparities, weak and ill-functioning social and political institutions and a persistent feeling of alienation and sense of deprivation among its population, as compared to other regions and provinces of Pakistan. In such a scenario, a pragmatic and effective local government mechanism holds the worth and potentiality, not to become only a system for social services and safety, but also a pathway towards peace, political stabilization, social harmony and organization and inclusive and participatory development as well.

Balochistan, being the largest province of the country in terms of area, yet the least populated, has historically been a region of controversies, troubles and contradictions. It possesses immense and worthy mineral resources, cultural diversity and a strategically significant geographical area on one hand, it is also marked by widespread poverty, starvation, underdevelopment, illiteracy, unemployment, political discontent, poor law and order and several other such problems, on the other hand.

Although, local government systems were imposed and existed in Balochistan with intervals, they have always been intervened and disrupted by incomplete and low level of implementation practically,

authoritarian interference, political instability and discontinuation of democratically elected governments at federal level.

As a consequence of these circumstances, the local bodies have long been struggling to achieve validation, political autonomy and their legitimacy as well, which has limited their capacity to sort out the contemporary issues and challenges or address the complaints and grievances of the masses or provide them effective social services and protect their fundamental human right, inherent in the constitution. The interrelationship between law and order conditions in a region, system of governance, political sustainability, social organization and harmony are well defined in social sciences, development studies and peace-related literature. Anywhere, there existing system of governance in general and local governance in particular is incompetent, incapacitated and weak, participatory approach and mechanisms of inclusiveness are non-existent , the social security and protection nets and welfare policies do not exist, the accountability system is absent or compromised ,regions , societies and political systems are more prone to instability , controversy, fragility , unrest and chaos.

In Contrast , a competent , adequate and effective governance system characterized by equality , equity , participation , legitimacy , responsiveness , autonomy and transparency contribute to political stability social harmony, nation-building and sustainable peace and progress. (UNDP, 2016)

For Balochistan, a region, which is surrounded by distrust and misunderstanding between the state and the people and the percepts of deprivation, marginalization , alienation and exploitation ,an effective and autonomous local government could play a significant and transformative role by bridging the gap between the state and its citizens.

The purpose of this research study is to understand the significance of an effective, efficient and autonomous local government within the broader dynamics of peace and conflict de-escalation discourse in Balochistan.

Most of the existing studies on Balochistan have emphasized on the discourse of unjust distribution of wealth and resources, political insurgency in general, distribution of power and federal provincial dichotomy. (Harrison, 1981) (wirsing, 2008)Undoubtedly, these are critical and significant aspects, less focus has been given on the significance and worth of an effective mechanism of local governance as a peace-building and conflict managing tool. This research study therefore tries to explore assertion and relevance that an effective and efficient system of local bodies can be a catalyst for improving the relations of state and its people in Balochistan, mitigating conflict producing elements, drivers of chaos, unrest and social disorganization and laying the foundational work for sustainable peace and political stability in the province.

.In Balochistan, the systems of local governance have been facing additional obstructions such as inadequate capacities of administration, lack of finances and financial authority, political obstacles, resistance from tribal elites and challenges of law and order created by insurgency.

For a region like Balochistan, where grievances of people often originate from a sense of economic deprivation, percepts of political alienation and unjust and inequitable distribution of resources, strengthening the system of local bodies may help to address the fundamental reasons and drivers of conflict and instability. Therefore this research study is conducted in order to discover the link between local governance and peace and stability.

### **Research Problem**

Being the least populated province and the largest province of Pakistan in terms of area, Balochistan has long been characterized by socio-economic challenges, political instability, recurring waves of conflicts and insurgencies. Despite of possessing innumerable natural resources, the province has continued to experience bad-governance and financial deficits, political exclusion and marginalization of indigenous local population, and quite limited participation of local communities in the process of decision making.

The bad-governance , centralized power structure and, political institutions and absence of a solid accountability system at the local context have impeded the delivery of necessary social and life sustainability services, which has widened the gap between the local population and the state. Such political and governance challenges have always contributed to conflict, political alienation and anarchy and unrest by fueling the agitations, and grievances of the local people. An efficient, well-established and politically autonomous system of local governance is widely acknowledged as a tool for promoting social harmony and cohesion, enhancing public services, and fostering political stabilization. However, in the perspectives of Balochistan, the system of local governance has remained mainly inefficient and ineffective due to hierarchical and structural weaknesses political interventions and lack of economic sufficiency and fiscal autonomy. Lack of a transparent, participatory and autonomous local governance model has undermined the trust of people on local political institutions, leaving people disengaged and alienated from political and electoral processes.

Furthermore, absence of co-operation and coordination between local and provincial officials and authorities often leads to little or no implementation of policies and plans, escalating social disharmony and political tensions and impeding development processes. Many research studies have found links and co-relations between peace-building in conflict stricken regions and strong local governance mechanisms. However, yet , there is very limited empirical studies which focus specifically on the ways how a strong ,autonomous and ,efficient local governance system serves as a pathway to peace and political stability in Balochistan.The existing literature in this regard mainly focuses on security-related approaches to mitigate conflict and tensions, while the potential of governance strengthening ,institutional reforms and communities engagement remain undiscovered.

This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the contribution and role of an autonomous and effective local body system in decreasing social tensions, political unrest and promoting peoples participation and enhancing stability in Balochistsan. This study aims to provide insights into how inclusive decision making process, decentralized government and administrative structures and strong mechanisms of trial and accountability, by investigating opportunities and threats related with local governance system.

### **Objectives of the study**

Following are the objectives of this research study:

1. To analyze the historical development and current status of local governance in Balochistan.
2. To investigate the correlation between effective local governance and peace and political stability in Balochistan.
3. To identify the obstacles and challenges hindering effective local governance in Balochistan.
4. To examine institutional reforms and policy options that could reinforce local governance as a peace-building instrument.

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

In the modern democratic societies and systems, local governance has come out to be one of the most significant element. Scholars around world widely recognize the significance, worth, potential and prominence of effective and efficient local government structure. They argue that an effective and well-capacitated local government fosters participation and inclusiveness, enhances social protection, safety nets and service delivery, strengthen the political system and validate its legitimacy. Local bodies system create opportunities for local communities to voice their grievances and concerns and influence the process of decision making by ensuring ,inclusiveness and participation of people of local communities ,responsiveness and accountability. Evidence suggest that local bodies function smoothly, pragmatically and transparently they mitigate and reduce the concerns and grievances that fuel instability and unrest.

Local government system not only meet the immediate needs of people but also provide space for collective problem solving and decision-making in the perspective of a history of exclusion, deprivation, marginalization, diversity and inequality.

### **What is Local Governance, an analysis**

The local government system of an area or town by elected representatives of people who live there and is responsible for providing services. (Oxford English Distionary, n.d)

Local governance is any system which constitute a subdivision of a higher level of administrative or political unit, for instance nation or a state. This type of government generally functions within the functions or powers assigned to them by higher authorities. The institutional structures may vary between countries or the country-specific terminologies differ. (wikepedia, n.d)

The concept of local governance is broader than local government. Generally government refers to the formal organization of public authorities which are liable and responsible for administration and management of society. On the other hand local governance concerns to a situation of multiple inter-relationships.In which distinct actors in private public sectors and in civil society engage at local , national and global level and function distinct roles. (UN women, 2021)

### **Forms of Local Government system**

The forms of local government include district or county government, Metropolitan Corporation, Panchayats, Union Council, Neighborhood Council, Municipal government in urban areas such as, city councils, mayors, district chairman etc.

In the Council-Manager form of local government ,the council is city government body ,elected by people ,,consists of five to nine members and includes a mayor.The council provides administrative and managerial directions. The size of council is smaller as compared to mayor-council system. The manger is responsible for routine administrative operations of city and the council provides legislative directions. (ILG, 2019)

On the other hand the mayor-council system of local government is most closely similar to American federal system with a separately elected executive and an elected legislature. The mayor is the head of the city or county, and his or her authority may vary from full-scale authority of day to day functions to only ceremonial functions. The executive's duties and powers include , administration and preparation of budgets hiring of employees and heads of department and veto power over acts of legislative body. (Institute of Local Government, 2019)

### **Models of Local Government**

Countries around the world use different models of local government system based on their culture, political history and nature of society.

**Devolution Model:** in such a system local bodies possess strong autonomy and maximum power. They hold powers, responsibilities and finances independently guaranteed by the law of the land.

**Deconcentration Model:** In this approach a local government system is necessarily an extension of central authority at local level.

**Delegation Model:** The semi-empowered local administration are delegated with certain powers by central government. They work as their political agent with limited authority.

**Dual Government Model:** In this model there is fixed and determined distribution of powers between central provincial and local representatives.

**Integrated Model:** In this type of governance local officials may serve both national and local roles and responsibilities. Such a system emphasizes coordination and integration. (Research Gate, 2020)

According to F.W Riggs , models of development administration which is also applicable for local government include agraria model which is dominant and applied in agricultural societies , transition model which is applicable in societies that are in a transitional stage from agriculture to industrial society and industria mode which may be applicable in well-established industrial societies. (Riggs, 1964)

### **Functions of Local Government**

An effective local government system may serve following functions

The basic functions include provision of clean water , sanitation , waste management, lighting the streets, construction of street roads and footpaths , registration of marriages , births and deaths, verification of domiciles , certificates etc.

Local government also serve for trade and economic uplifting of local communities, agriculture and rural development schemes, parks, managing housing societies, parks.

The local authorities also serve welfare functions such as such as poverty alleviation and social services for vulnerable segments of local society.

Local authorities also assist to maintain law and order by pointing out criminal and anti-social elements. In this context they may assist police and law-enforcement agencies. (Mushamba, 2010)

### **Historical Evolution of Local Government System in Balochistan**

#### **Pre-Independence Era (Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century)**

In this period local government system of Robert Sandeman, The British colonial Officer was prevailing. He introduced indirect rule of tribal chiefs locally known as sardars. The Political agents and Assistant Political agents in coordination with local sardars operated the affairs of coordination. The local chiefs also operated internal tribal affairs. (Ashraf, 2022)

### **Post-Independence Period (From 1947 to 1958)**

Balochistan which was a region under chief commissioner and comprised of several princely states, continued under a central administrative structure after establishment of Pakistan. In this era there were no formal well-structured local government institutions. The sardars, the deputy commissioner along with public co-operation and participation carried out administrative tasks. (Ashraf, 2022)

### **The Basic Democracy system of General Ayub Khan:**

The Basic Democracies Ordinance was introduced in 1959 by General Ayub Khan; regime. These basic democracies were aimed to form the Electoral College for the election of president. At Union, tehsil and district level councils were established. Due to tribal interference and weak infrastructure, the pragmatic implementation of this system was hard and challenging. (Saira Iqbal, 2022)

### **The Period of Bhutto in 1970s**

After the abolition of one-unit Balochistan became a full-pledged province in 1970. Political government tried to introduce local council system. In 1972, The Balochistan local government ordinance laid groundwork for elected district councils and municipal committees. However, later centralization, unrest and political instability limited powers and autonomy of this system.

### **The Devolution Plan of General Parvez Musharraf 2000s**

The Balochistan local government ordinance 2001, which was part of General Parvez Musharraf's devolution plan is considered a landmark which abolished the executive powers of DCs and replaced by democratically elected Nazims at union tehsil and district level. These councils were empowered for development budgets and social services. (Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment DTCE, OPS wing ,NRB , 2005)

### **Post 18<sup>th</sup> amendment period**

The provinces were empowered to formulate their own local government systems and laws, consequently, Balochistan local government act 2010 was passed. Later on it was replaced by Balochistan local government act 2013. However they were not fully empowered and provincial government held all financial and administrative control with it. (Accountability Lab, n.d)

### **Global perspectives on Local Governance and peace and Stability**

#### **The Role of local government in Sustaining Peace (By International Peace Institute IPI)**

The International Peace Institute (IPI) in the light of joint resolution adopted by General Assembly (GA) and Security Council (SC) , maintains that sustaining peace should be acknowledges as a process and a goal to build a collective vision of society. In particular they also recognize good governance as an integral part to the sustainable peace and development.

More ever, International Peace Institute suggests that 2030 agenda of sustainable development recognizes the inclusiveness, safe cities resilient and sustainable but also fear that elite capture of power and resources may hinder development and stability which in turn may provoke conflict and unrest.

IPI refer to the widespread protests in South Africa and fear the failure to fulfill the needs of people that may undermine order and peace. (Trithart, 2018) International Peace Institute Suggests for giving people space and voice, effective and efficient management of local resources, and nurturing political will and determination for sustainable peace.

**Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI's) Perspective on Establishing Sustainable Peace and Stability**

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) suggests following recommendations for inclusive peace and development processes.

The inclusion of youth in the process of Peace and Development: SIPRI suggests that donors should reform structures of funding to facilitate youth inclusion and allow for flexibility to provide technical and financial support to youth peace-makers. SIPRI also emphasize on providing young generations with positive platforms to avoid violent and destructive environment.

Transitional Justice for National Reconciliation:

SIPRI suggests that the initiatives of reconciliation and participatory transitional justice must focus on prevailing inequalities that stimulate unrest and perpetuate conflict. This process must balance and recognize group and individual interests at distinct levels.

The Engagement of Women from Local to Global Level:

SIPRI suggests that inclusion of women from diverse backgrounds validate the credibility of national initiatives for peace-building. Such efforts should be taken to engage women in peace-building and development processes and create opportunities of inclusion for them from local through national and global level. (SIPRI, 2021)

**Decentralization as a policy to end ethnic conflict in Nigeria**

Adaobi Tricia, s aticle published in BBC Series of articles , Letter from Africa , discusses the ethnic conflict in Nigeria and its Possible solutions.

This piece of discussion calls for calls for broad distribution of power and decentralization and restructuring of government system to end deprivation and ethnic conflicts. Because Nigerians believe that they are not benefitting enough from their national resources, and they view federal system as overcentralized. There is a growing political discourse about granting more regional autonomies. (Tracia, 2017)

Based on a series of movements and ethnic agitations for greater autonomy , many policymakers and scholars think the prevailing structure of system of federal government is incompetent and a more decentralized structure in which local authorities are more empowered and possess more autonomy to manage their affairs and resources may only be a pathway to strengthen interethnic relations and end ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. (Ugorji, 2017)

**Facts on Local Government in Nordic Countries**

The system of local governance in Nordic countries ( Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden) is characterized by strong similarity to welfare state, as the key provider of welfare services and people participation. Central role in welfare state, political legitimacy , peoples participation, general powers, high decentralization and autonomy are prominent features in local governance system in Nordic countries. (Research gate, 2023)

**Local Governance in fragile and conflict Affected settings (UNDP)**

According to UNDP The nature of conflict and frfragility is increasingly protracted and complex., with indirect or short term policies focused on security proving counterproductive and at times ineffective. There is also a growing acknowledgement and recognition that multi-dimensional approaches for peace

building are more helpful to restore a robust social contract between the society and the state and different political groups. Which can be proved as an essential foundation for sustainable development and durable peace. (UNDP, 2016)

According to the UNDP document , there is a realization globally at the policy level that inclusive local governance system and responsive local governments and local development arrangements are building blocks of peace and state legitimacy in terms of weakness of the system of even absence of the plain system or legitimate authority. (UNDP, 2016)

The risks and challenges associated with the local governance mechanisms in the immediate aftermath of conflict or in perspectives of systematic fragility , protracted conflict or high criminal rate and violence remain immense. The guide on local government system in conflict-prone and fragile settings, building a resilient foundation for development and peace is UNDPs comprehensive effort to respond to such program needs. (UNDP, 2016)

### **Policy Documents Related to local Government**

#### **SDGs related to Local Governance**

SDG 16 promote justice, peace and political institutions. The targets of SDG 16 include developing transparent institutions, effective accountability system, ensuring participatory and inclusive decision-making. SDG 11 focuses on sustainable cities and communities , planning and management, which is directly linked with effective local governance.

SDG 17 emphasize on partnership between government ,private sector and civil society Local government is key element in this process.

#### **Pakistan vision 2025**

The Pillar 1 of Pakistan vision 2025, putting people first , developing Human and Social Capital , requires string local institutions.

The pillar 2 achieving sustained , indigenous and inclusive growth focuses on inclusive growth which is achievable if local governance ensure equal opportunities.

Pillar 3 institutional reforms and democratic governance is directly linked to local governance. Making governance transparent, accountable, inclusive and participatory, encourage peoples engagement at local level.

Pillar 4 focuses on efficient management of food, water ,sanitation , municipal infrastructure .An effective local government only can manage food supply, solid waste , clean drinking water etc. (Ministry of Planning and Development Pakistan, 2014)

#### **Constitutional provisions on Local Government**

Article 7 of the constitution of the constitution of Pakistan defines state the federal provincial and local authorities.

Article 32, focuses on promotion of local government institutions and encouraging the representation of peasants , workers and women.

Article 140(A) added by 18<sup>th</sup> amendment (2010) encourages decentralization and establishment of strong local government systems by provinces. (18th Amendment , 2010) Article 37 says that state shall

ensure decentralized administration to facilitate the convenience and requirements of people. (Pakistan Constitution , 1973)

## **GLOBAL EVIDENCES OF CONTRIBUTION OF EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE-BUILDING**

### **The Belfast agreement Ireland**

The Belfast agreement which is also called Good Friday agreement was signed in 1998, which underpins the peace process in Northern Ireland, its institutions and its constitutional settlements. (The Belfast , Good Friday Agreement Ireland, 1998)

The Belfast agreement was adopted in 1998 after three decades of dispute known as the troubles. The agreement created a new arrangement for power sharing which included Assembly and executive and was based on series of fundamental principles which included the parity of esteem of both communities, the birthright of people of northern Ireland and their identification to be identified Irish, British or both, and to hold both Irish and British citizenship. (The Belfast , Good Friday Agreement Ireland, 1998)

The principal of consent underpinning Northern Ireland's constitutional status and make new reforms. This agreement resulted in establishing three tiers of political structures respectively covering North-South relations , East-west relations and Northern Ireland governance. (The Belfast , Good Friday Agreement Ireland, 1998)

In this agreement the key elements considered included ethnic diversity , regions and territories. The political; decentralization and making strong decentralized institutions were key focus of agreement. (The Belfast , Good Friday Agreement Ireland, 1998)

The agreement also established a series of significant rights for the people of Northern Ireland region, including on citizenship and identity and made commitments on prisoners , policing , and decommissioning. (The Belfast , Good Friday Agreement Ireland, 1998)

The catholic and protestant sectarian violence also known as (The Troubles ) (OWP Peace, 2025).

The conflict in Northern Irish region originated from the colonization of Ireland from the British.. Discrimination and division of Irish by British on one hand and the introduction of new immigrants on the other hand fuelled conflict. (OWP Peace, 2025)

The role of local government , the power sharing councils were formed. The local councils encouraged projects based on cross-community, reduced mistrust and shared decision making. The local institutions helped in turning the violent conflicts into political cooperation and reconciliation. (OWP Peace, 2025).

### **Decentralization in Indonesia : Looking for one nation**

In Indonesia Aceh insurgency GAM vs government , the local government after the Helsinki Peace initiative (Tjiptoherijanto, 2018) , played a vital role . Strong decentralization reforms gave autonomy to the Aceh province.

The practice of decentralization in Indonesia is a prominent case not because of its land size comprising of islands and its economic and political importance but also because Indonesia has made remarkable achievements and progress in introducing a strong decentralized system of governance in the country (Tjiptoherijanto, 2018)

This decentralized system of government has devolved authority, responsibility and resources from the central government to local governments administrative sectors, except for foreign policy , monetary and fiscal matters, justice and religious affairs and defence and security. (Tjiptoherijanto, 2018)

Today, the country is comprised of 34 provinces that contain municipalities and districts.

Municipalities in urban areas and district in rural areas, both are the same level of government. The province and local governments are considered sub-national governments. (Tjiptoherijanto, 2018)

Indonesia,s Decentralisation Policy :Inityial experiences and emerging problems:

After over 30 years , under a highly strong centralized authority , Indonesia decided to initiate and adopt a policy of decentralization which became effective on 1, January 2001. (smeru, 2001)

Law No 22, 1999 on Local Government devolved the central government powers and responsibilities to local governments in all governmental administrative structures.except for defence, security, fiscal matters, justice and religious affairs. This law in essence is unusual as it almost ceded all responsibilities and powers to local governments without limitations and conditions. (smeru, 2001)

The main objectives of this decentralization in Indonesia was to promote better delivery government services and and raising of the level of accountability. (smeru, 2001)Assuming that local governance is more familiar with the needs and requirements of their respective communities as compared to central government , it is expected, local authorities can be able to create more suitable policies for people.These policies should be based on good governance ,democracy and spirit of transparency. (smeru, 2001)

However these results are still hard to be obtained in the regions because almost all local interest groups and political parties remain poorly organized and weak, Because they have been completely left out of the decision making for almost three decades There is also a dire need for strong civil society in Indonesia to realize true democracy. (smeru, 2001)

## **METHODOLOGY**

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used. Quantitative investigation helped to capture peoples viewpoints and percepts pertaining to peace and political stability, accountability and peoples participation. The FGDs and qualitative interviews provided insights on challenges and obstacles on good governance and peace building measures.such an approach ensured a comprehensive analysis aligned with sustainable development goal 16, peace justice and strong institutions.

This study was focused only across Balochistan (Quetta , Turbat , Gwader, Khuzdar districts) in order to directly obtain an insight from the citizens and other stakeholders living in conflict stricken areas. On the other and Quetta which is the political and administrative capital of the province and possesses a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and diverse population and cultural diversity, history of governance issues and center of decision making of the province, may also added data and contributed to validation of results.

The population of this research study was comprised of all stakeholders connected to local governance more or less. It included the representatives of the local government such as councilors, UC members officials of municipal corporations, UC chairman etc. Apart from this government officers of relevant departments such as social welfare , local government ,police , public health engineering , education ,health etc. community members , social and human rights activists , journalists , ,common citizens, youth ,women ,traders , workers also participated in the process.

A random sampling technique was used to choose participants from (district Quetta, Turbat, Gwader and Khuzdar) which include common citizens from distinct socioeconomic backgrounds, officials of local government, members of union councils, representatives of NGOs etc. Such a sampling technique ensured the participation of substantial respondents who may provided in depth and authentic insights and analysis into the question of research. Size of sample was 150 respondents for an accurate and balanced representation of province. Sampling technique was purposive sampling for members of UCs, leaders of NGOs and government officials while for common citizens technique stratified random sampling technique was used.

For primary data collection questionnaires, FGDs, semi-structured interviews were used. To get insights from common citizens pertaining to accountability, services, participation, life standard, structure questionnaires were used. Semi-structured interview was used to get information from officials, civil servants, UC members local government representatives etc. For secondary data Previously conducted research papers, reports from UNDP, World Bank, Planning and Development department, social plans and, social welfare policies in Pakistan, various national and global policy documents, Academic research papers pertaining to local government, political empowerment, decentralization conflict management and resolution and documents related to unrest and conflict in Balochistan.

The findings of the research were analyzed while using different statistical tools such as SPSS, excel. Different descriptive tools such as averages, means, percentages, frequencies, index, used to summarize data where ever required. Inferential statistics such as correlation research also used to look into links between variables and nexus between role of effective local governance in peace-building and political stability and SDGs. The critical observation and analysis from interviews provided qualitative data to support the quantitative data of research, such a technique involved evaluation, categorization, coding of qualitative data to decode common themes and viewpoints on SDGs in local governance. This data was presented with direct quotes highlighting significant aspects of research study, findings were presented in a narrative way. Consent and rights of individuals were protected throughout this process.

### **Local Governance in Balochistan a catalyst for peace and political stability in Balochistan**

It was observed that participation is increased in local government elections as compared to general federal elections. The reason behind this is, the people trust on local and grassroots representative as compared to higher tiers. Such increased participation in political process automatically defuel insurgency, political frustration and exclusion. Thus it can be a pathway to peace building and political stability.

### **Enhancing capacity and ensuring legitimacy and sustainability of local governance in case of Balochistan**

Although local government system exist or existed throughout history in the province legitimacy of the system, accuracy of local bodies elections, low capacity of local institutions, and inconsistency of local bodies have been major challenges required focus of attention. By ensuring just and transparent elections and political consistency and sustainability as well as enhancing financial capability and authoritarian capacity may make the local institutions viable to initiate peace building measures.

### **Community engagement and representation of marginalized groups**

It was observed that, although local government system exist in some form in the province. But community at grassroots level is not engaged in a way it is required. The local members or the executive heads of the local councils do not have financial capacity and authoritarian power in interfere in local disputes or engage with community at local level. While it was also observed that within the limited resources and capacity local representatives could better communicate and with citizens as compared to higher tiers.

It was also observed that though there are reserved representation seats in local councils for females, youth or peasants or farmers, but the implementation has been challenging. The proper representation of marginalized groups can better address local issues.

### **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

The strong and effective local governance system around the globe has proved to be a catalyst for conflict resolution, political reconciliation and peace building. In the case of South Africa during apartheid conflict, introducing strong local systems played vital role in political reconciliation and peace-building. In Ireland during the “troubles”; the Good Friday agreement, ensured political rights of ethnicities to promote peace and stability. In Indonesia a complete reshuffle ensured development and participation of backward regions and especially in Aceh province of Indonesia.

Such measures can be taken in Balochistan for greater political participation of citizens and engagement of community. Political alienation or exclusion literally fuel clashes, frustration and uncertainty. From this research study, it can be inferred that political participation and inclusion itself is a catalyst for reducing conflicts. The people trust has reduced on higher authorities, therefore in turn the political participation and engagement has also reduced. But as it is seen in local bodies elections and local political process, the citizens especially the showed more interest and excitement in participating political process and elections as well. Now it is the need of hour to further cash this excitement of youth to participate in peaceful political process by ensuring just and transparent local bodies elections, enhancing the capacity of local institutions in Balochistan, providing greater fiscal autonomy and powers and increasing the technical and financial shares of backward areas.

Although local institutions are more trusted and engaged with community at local level, but the lack of funds, financial authority, political autonomy are major obstacles in combating the challenges and problems. By ensuring their capacity and authority, local governance system in Balochistan not only can play a vital role for uplifting community but also can take peace-building and conflict resolution measures.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This research study was aimed to analyze correlation between an effective local government system and peace and political stability and to identify flaws, defects and obstacles in the local government system in Balochistan and to examine and formulate institutional reforms and policy options that could reinforce local governance as a peace-building instrument. Therefore following recommendations and necessary measures are proposed in this regard.

1. It is necessary to restore and strengthen genuine local government autonomy in Balochistan. The regular constitutionally mandated local bodies elections should be held and prevent unnecessary dissolution of local bodies councils, political consistency and continuity at grassroots level builds trust and reduces feelings of marginalization and political alienation.
2. There is also a need for fiscal decentralization or sharing financial powers and authority with local government system. Allocate a fixed and justified constitutional share of provincial revenue to local councils and bodies through a transparent provincial commission (PFC).
3. There is a need for introducing strong Mayor/ District government model. A powerful and politically autonomous mayor/District government model should be adopted with financial and executive authority instead of weak administrative local bodies. An autonomous and empowered leadership improves service delivery and accountability.
4. It is also dire requirement of capacity building of local government officials. In this regard it is necessary to launch continuous training programs for elected representatives district administrators and

municipal staff. Participatory decision-making and planning, financial management, peace-building and conflict resolution should be focus areas for this purpose.

5. There is also a need for establishing a transparent provincial financial commission (PFC). The PFC formula should be based on area size, poverty level, development and backwardness index, population and security situation.

6. It is required to introduce participatory budgeting in order to allow citizens to directly decide and launch local development priorities through participatory budgeting meetings and sessions.

7. It is necessary to institutionalize community participation mechanisms. For this purpose establish mandatory citizen participation forums at local councils level such as neighborhood committees ,

village councils , public hearings (khuli katcheri).

8. It is required to strengthen local dispute resolution systems by establishing local peace and mediation committees comprised of civil society, youth leaders, women representatives and tribal elders. Such committees can address tribal conflicts, community tensions or land disputes etc.

9. It is also need of the hour to integrate traditional tribal structures with formal or modern governance system. A hybrid government model can be introduced in this regard which formally engages Jirga system and tribal elders within framework of local governance while ensuring compliance with rule of law and human rights.

10. Initiatives should be taken to ensure participation of marginalized groups and stakeholders. For this purpose youth quota seats, farmers, labourers, small businessmen, students, and women quotas should be ensured.

11. Direct Coordination and communication between local government and security institutions should be strengthened . District peace coordination forums should be established involving police, civil administration and local government representatives. This ensures that the security policies are aligned with community needs which reduces mistrust between state and the citizens.

12. It is also necessary to improve service delivery in conflict-affected areas. For this purpose prioritize local governments in healthcare, education, water supply, sanitation, and local employment or micro investment schemes.

13. Local economic development programs should be introduced. Such initiatives should be led by local bodies including , vocational training centers, livelihood projects, small business support and public-private partnerships.

14. Local government accountability and monitoring system should be established. For this purpose create independent local accountability bodies to monitor financial expenditures. Development projects and public service delivery.

15. A trilateral coordination and control system including local , provincial and federal government representatives should be established. Which can monitor and recommend development schemes, peace initiative measures and local conditions in coordination and agreement.

## **CONCLUSION**

The effective and well-functioning local government systems around the world not only been a hurdle in the way of political conflicts but also contributed to peaceful solutions of the conflicts. Different local government systems such as mayor-council, municipal committees etc, deliver well for the social,

political and economic uplift of society. Effective service delivery not only is an obstacle for unrest and stability but a pillar for nation-building and prosperity.

On the other hand weak government institutions in general and local government institutions in particular have always triggered and fueled political conflicts and instability, social dis-organization and chaos and general unrest.

Global perspectives of local governance is a system in which the service delivery, political participation, participatory development and democratic norms are ensured in an effective way. Different international organizations such as United Nations (UN) and International peace institute (IPI) emphasize on establishing strong and effective local bodies systems for economic development, political stability and conflict resolution.

In the perspective of Pakistan, local bodies systems existed since its existence , but service delivery , genuine representation of masses, political participation of masses, and effectiveness of local systems has been major challenges. On the other hand lack inconsistency and unsustainability of local bodies systems were also major problems. Which adversely affected the reliability and accuracy of local government systems in the country throughout its history.

This research study found that, lack of an effective local governance system in Balochistan triggered political conflict, chaos, social unrest and political instability in the province. Although local government systems exist or existed in the province but their effectiveness and authenticity was a key issue. The local government systems in province face the problems which include lack of funds, lack of political power and authority, weak institutions, and political interference from central government or tribal elite. On the other hand inconsistency of local institutions , unauthenticity of local bodies elections and exclusion of marginalized groups are key areas to focus on for introducing reforms.

According to research findings although a large majority 55% respondents believe that local governance can play a very effective role for maintaining peace, 59% believe that effective local governance can contribute to political stability, 68% believe that political awareness increased due to local governance and 45% believe that strong local government in coordination with central authority can better address conflict and law and order in Balochistan.

But in contrast ,at the same time , a large majority 76% are of the view that corruption is widespread in local institutions, 50% respondents lack even the awareness of local government system, 52 % don't have knowledge about functions of local institutions and a large majority 73% believe that lack of funds is a major problem of local government institutions.

In the light of above mentioned findings , thus it can be inferred that although local government institutions play a key role in maintaining peace and political stability. But as far as Balochistan is concerned , There are some major flaws which exist in overall local government systems and local institutions of the province.

Therefore, it is need of the hour that some solid measures to be taken for improvement and better functioning of the local government institutions. Then it not only can play an effective role in service delivery, political participation, economic development and maintaining law and order but can also be a catalyst for resolution of broader conflicts, political polarization and instability.

Consequently, this research study has arrived to propose following suggestions and recommendations for bringing necessary reforms in local government system in Balochistan in order to strengthen it and ensure its accuracy, then it can play a key role in maintaining peace and stability in as well as contribute to conflict resolution, social harmony and political stability.

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