Globethics Repository

Pakistan

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

Item Type	Book
Authors	Rashid, Abbas;Shaheed, Farida
Publisher	UNRISD
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-11-05 02:45:19
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/179492



The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) is an autonomous agency engaging in multi-disciplinary research on the social dimensions of contemporary problems affecting development. Its work is guided by the conviction that, for effective development policies to be formulated, an understanding of the social and political context is crucial. The Institute attempts to provide governments, development agencies, grassroots organizations and scholars with a better understanding of how development policies and processes of economic, social and environmental change affect different social groups. Working through an extensive network of national research centres, UNRISD aims to promote original research and strengthen research capacity in developing countries.

Current research programmes include: Business Responsibility for Sustainable Development; Emerging Mass Tourism in the South; Gender, Poverty and Well-Being; Globalization and Citizenship; Grassroots Initiatives and Knowledge Networks for Land Reform in Developing Countries; New Information and Communication Technologies; Public Sector Reform and Crisis-Ridden States; Technical Co-operation and Women's Lives: Integrating Gender into Development Policy; and Volunteer Action and Local Democracy: A Partnership for a Better Urban Future. Recent research programmes have included: Crisis, Adjustment and Social Change; Culture and Development; Environment, Sustainable Development and Social Change; Ethnic Conflict and Development; Participation and Changes in Property Relations in Communist and Post-Communist Societies; Political Violence and Social Movements; Social Policy, Institutional Reform and Globalization; Socio-Economic and Political Consequences of the International Trade in Illicit Drugs; and the War-torn Societies Project. UNRISD research projects focused on the 1995 World Summit for Social Development included: Economic Restructuring and Social Policy; Ethnic Diversity and Public Policies; Rethinking Social Development in the 1990s; and Social Integration at the Grassroots: The Urban Dimension.

A list of the Institute's free and priced publications can be obtained by contacting the Reference Centre, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Palais des Nations,1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland; Tel (41 22) 917 3020; Fax (41 22) 917 0650; Telex 41.29.62 UNO CH; e-mail: info@unrisd.org; World Wide Web Site: http://www.unrisd.org

Copyright © United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. Short extracts from this publication may be reproduced unaltered without authorization on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, contact UNRISD.

The designations employed in UNRISD publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNRISD concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by UNRISD of the opinions expressed in them.

Pakistan: Ethno-Politics and Contending Elites

Discussion Paper No. 45, June 1993
Abbas Rashid and Farida Shaheed

Contents

PREFACE 2
ACRONYMS 3

I. INTRODUCTION 3

L. SHAPING OF IDENTITIES 3
2. NATION STATES AND "STATE NATIONS" 4
3. COMMUNITY AND NATIONHOOD 5
4. MODERNIZATION AND ELITE COMPETITION 6

II. FROM ETHNIES TO ETHNICITY 7

1. PAKISTAN'S ETHNIC GROUPS 7
2. THE POLITICS OF ETHNICITY 9

III. SINDH: MOHAJIRS, SINDHIS AND THE CENTRE 12

1. SINDH: THE ROOTS OF DISCONTENT 12
2. OPPRESSION THROUGH CENTRALISM AND "CONTROLLED" DEMOCRACY 15
3. BHUTTO: REDUCING THE SINDH-CENTRE IMBALANCES 17
4. ZIA: AGGRAVATING THE IMBALANCES 19

IV. THE ANATOMY OF VIOLENCE AND ORGANIZED ETHNICITY 21

1. CHRONOLOGY OF THE RIOTS: 1985-1990 21
2. THE ANATOMY OF VIOLENCE 24
3. ORGANIZED ETHNICITY 25

V. CONCLUSION: TOWARDS MANAGEMENT OR RESOLUTION 32

Preface

In 1989, UNRISD launched a major research project on Ethnic Conflict and Development. Since then 14 case studies have been carried out in countries experiencing ethnic conflicts in different regions of the world. The research has sought to examine:

- the conditions under which ethnic conflicts arise and sustain themselves;
- the roles of economic, cultural, social and political factors in shaping ethnic consciousness and claims;
- the effects of development processes, state policies and international politics on the dynamics of ethnic conflicts;
- the interests and goals of ethnic movements, and what kinds of strategies and ideologies they pursue;
- the reasons why some ethnic conflicts become violent while others are regulated within existing political and constitutional structures; and
- the mechanisms which can de developed to prevent, contain or resolve such conflicts.

This paper forms part of the authors' larger study on ethnic conflict and development in Pakistan. After a brief discussion of the formation of ethnic consciousness in the context of contemporary post-colonial states, the authors describe the key features of the ethnic situation in Pakistan. The bulk of the paper is taken up with an analysis of the evolution of ethnic tensions and violence in the province of Sindh. The dynamics of these conflicts are studies within the larger context of national politics and development policies and patterns. There is also a discussion of the role played by regional ethnic associations and institutions such as the state, the political parties, the bureaucracy, the judiciary and the army in the unfolding of ethnic conflicts in Sindh.

Although Islam provided a unifying element in Pakistan, the ethnic diversity of the country proved to be a source of dissension and conflicts. The suthors attribute this largely to failures of national leadership to share power and to pursue equitable development policies. The initial disparities in resources and development among different ethnic groups were exacerbated by concentration of power at the centre and discriminatory economic policies. The failure to share power and abide by the electoral process resulted in a dismemberment of the country with the creation of Bangladesh as a separate state.

The province of Sindh has been convulsed by ethnic conflicts since the early years of independence. The immediate source of its problems was the mass migration of refugees from India at the time of the partition of the sub-continent. These refugees, known as *mohajirs*, came in the subsequent years to constitute a significant proportion of the population of Sindh and to form a majority in some urban areas, especially Karachi. In view of their better education and skills, they took the place of the departing Hindu middle class professionals and business groups. Through their alliance with the ruling Punjabi elite in Islamabad, the *mohajirs* were able to obtain preferential access to resources dispensed by the state. This set the stage for their conflict with the nascent Sindhi middle class which felt deprived and discriminated against in its native lands. The conflict was further sharpened by the arrival of migrants from the Frontier Province. A portion of the massive arms destined for Afghan refugees found its way into the streets of Karachi. This, together with drug smuggling gangs operating in the country, provided a fertile terrain for a series of violent conflicts from the mid-1980s among different ethnic groups in Sindh.

The authors argue that successive federal governments sought to manipulate ethnic differences to promote their own narrow interests. Likewise, key institutions such as the army, the political parties and the bureaucracy failed to provide mechanisms for mediation and conflict resolution. While there have been periods when ethnic tensions have been dormant, no serious attempt has been made to deal with the root causes of the problem.

Abbas Rashid, a political scientist, and Farida Shaheed, a sociologist, live and work in Pakistan. The project on Ethnic Conflict and Development is co-ordinated by Rodolfo Stavenhagen.

June 1993

Dharam Ghai
Director

Acronyms

APMSO	All Pakistan Mohajir Student Organization
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agent
COAS	The Chief of Army Staff
FATA	Federally Administrative Tribal Area
GNP	Gross National Product
IJI	Islami Jamhoori Ittehad
JSSF	Jiye Sindh Students Federation
JSTP	Jiye Sindh Taraqi Pasand
MNA	Member of National Assembly
MPA	Member of Province Assembly
MQM	Mohajir Quami Movement
MRD	Movement for the Restoration of Democracy
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
OPP	Orangi Pilot Project
PNA	Pakistan National Alliance
PPI	Punjabi Pakhtun Ittehad
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PSF	People's Student Federation
R	Rupee
U.P.	Uttar Pradesh
UWF	United Workers Front

I. Introduction

1. Shaping of Identities

All individuals contain within themselves a multitude of markers that define their identity, such as gender, age, religion, profession, class, kinship and family, as well as nationality and/or "ethnicity". These various aspects normally coalesce into a cohesive whole; while all identity factors coexist, not all have equal weight or importance at all times. Individuals therefore possess a plurality of potential "we's", so that when individuals come together as distinct groups the basis of their collective identity is selected from amongst a variety of possible markers, real or imagined. While a few are immutable, such as gender and race, the majority provide a greater scope for negotiation.

Individuals may belong to several groups at any point in time, but normally only one "community" defines their political identity. Hence, the question is why a certain identity assumes primacy at a particular point in time or in a given situation. In political terms, we would hold that "identities are chosen; that is, out of an infinite range of possible cultural identities that one is selected as the political identity which is believed offers the greatest scope of political success".[1]

[1] David Taylor and Malcolm Yapp (eds.), **Political Identity in South Asia**, Curzon Press, London, 1979, p. x.

We would add that while the chosen "community" identity defines and demarcates a particular group, by the same token it performs the equally significant function of differentiating one particular group from others. In the political arena, this translates into expanding political space and gaining political power through the use of "otherization" as a conscious policy. It is in consequence of such a policy that the Muslims of India demanded and acquired a separate state: Pakistan. At the same time, it is important to recognize that while certain parameters may objectively create a social group - an ethnic group - this does not automatically translate into a politically active identity.

When looking at the question of the politics of ethnicity and development, the issue is not whether certain ethnic communities exist or not but why ethnic identities have been selected as the basis of politics, how those identities have been shaped, and to what purpose. Unlike nationalist movements, ethnic groups do not seek self-determination but operate within the parameters of the state (although ethnic assertion can evolve into a nationalist movement). Thus the state is a focus for competing ethnic groups, each striving for a greater share of the pie. It can also be an agent in the creation of ethnic consciousness, such as when a powerful ethnic group strives to dominate others or to perpetuate such dominance through state politics. The appeal of ethnically defined political groups lies in their ability to replicate "in the public and adult world, the functions performed in the private and childhood environment by the family", thus satisfying the motivational aspect of both "the search for emotional security, [and] on rational grounds of utility in the search for access to desired resources". It can also be dictated by "the circumstances of people's lives which limit [any] real choice in their group affiliation".[2]

2. Nation States and "State Nations"

In the modern era the term "state" normally refers to nation states, i.e., peoples who, believing themselves to be nations, have delimited a territorial space within which the nation is to be formalized. The earliest evolution of such states was in Europe; in the rest of the world the nation state phenomenon blossomed in the early twentieth century, accelerating after the Second World War with colonized areas rapidly gaining political sovereignty or independence. The political organization of the world into independent nation states has become a pillar of the modern world to the point that any attempt to question state borders has been viewed as modern-day heresy by the international community, which insists that all internal disputes be resolved within existing territorial demarcations. In fact, however, most nation states are multi-national states.

An important presumption of the nation state is that the state has a direct relationship with its citizens. No intermediary mediating institutions are considered legitimate except those erected by the state itself. Thus many aspects of an individual's life are to be administered through the state's instruments or institutions, i.e., the bureaucracy, the judiciary, etc., while the only legitimate forms of opposition or protest and demands are limited to the political process. In return for giving up autonomy (self-gerency), citizens expect to receive a number of benefits such as physical, social and economic security. In turn, the functioning of this social contract depends on the legitimacy of those who assume state power and the degree to which they carry out their part of the social contract.

However, the theory of nation states has made little or no differentiation between nations that have evolved into states and those rapidly created states that may or may not have been nations. The majority of ex-colonial states are to be found in this latter category, characterized by their status of states in search of a nation - which are referred to here as "state nations". As such, they have yet to achieve a universal sense of nationhood that encompasses a history of

[2] David Brown, "Ethnic Revival: Perspectives on State and Society", **Third World Quarterly**, II(4), October 1989, p. 6.

commonality and an identity matrix that appeals to a majority of the citizens of the state nation.

These state nations face the challenge of transforming into nation states, a process in which they are hampered by the legacies of their erstwhile colonizer such as:

- colonial structures and bureaucratic instruments of control and power;
- uneven economic development as a conscious policy;
- policies of preference and discrimination vis-à-vis different ethnic groups.

All of this militates against the evolution of a nation state that embraces the various parts of the state nation.

Post-colonial states frequently distinguish themselves by a crisis in the state's legitimacy vis-à-vis its citizens. This is accentuated when those who assume state power almost exclusively represent the interests of selected portions of the population to which they belong rather than the interests of the state's citizens as a whole. Under such circumstances the state no longer remains credible - the identity of the state is largely reduced to the identity of those who dominate the structures of power.

> "In country after country, a single ethnic group [took] control over the state and used its powers to exercise control over others ... In retrospect there has been far less 'nation building' than many analysts had expected or hoped for, for the process of state building has rendered many ethnic groups devoid of power or influence."[3]

When state power rests with a selected group of the state's citizens, a preferred option is for a centralist state. This was clearly the case in Pakistan, where maximizing the interests of the state was interpreted by those in power as best achieved through maximized centralization.

3. Community and Nationhood

Deutsch made the distinction between community and society as two different concepts:

> "Community is that group of people who can communicate easily with one another. Society comprises all those people who are mobilized from the traditional society into the modern industrial society, thereby entering into close economic, political and social contacts with others ... If the growth of the community keeps pace with that of society the nation is smoothly enlarged; if, however, the rate of expansion of the numbers of those mobilized exceeds that of those who are able to communicate with one another, a crisis will occur and the state will fall apart or undergo some major change."[4]

In most post-colonial states the assumption that, after political independence, the adoption of democratic institutions would mediate existing contradictions in society along a vertical as well as a horizontal axis has proven largely erroneous. More often than not the institutions, classes and groups strengthened in line with the colonial imperative simply usurped the democratic high ground to legitimize the perpetuation of their power and influence. In states across much of the Third World democracy was bent out of shape to suit the interests of the military, the bureaucracy, feudals and other powerful interest groups: it was either "basic", or "guided" or otherwise appropriately prefixed to deny its central function of articulating the will of the people through elections, not to mention key processes such as accountability. Among other things, this also meant that a genuine system of political accommodation could not be put into place. Very often, society was not transformed into a community.

---

[3] Myron Weiner quoted in David Brown, op. cit., p. 10.

[4] Deutsch quoted in Malcolm Yapp, "Language, Religion and Political Identity: A General Framework" in David Taylor and Malcolm Yapp (eds.), op. cit., p.12.

The expectation - central to the vision of most newly liberated states - of a more equitable order, including a better life for the great majority, was rapidly demolished. The process of location within a national identity framework was undermined as the individual citizen's encounter with the state remained the same as it had been under colonial rule. This created a fundamental crisis of legitimacy for the state, the alienation of the "nation" from it and the inevitable recourse by "citizens" to narrower, more proximate contexts of identity.

4. Modernization and Elite Competition

States have the option of adopting development policies that are either functional or territorial. While the latter promotes the development of all the state's areas, the former focuses on developing certain aspects in each area - which may be done to the detriment of others. A policy of functional development in the context of raised expectations of a better life and a democratic order, by implication equitable, informing the modern nation state ideal has serious consequences in which the "fairness" of policies and measures becomes critical to judging the performance of the state.

In many states, including Pakistan, the model of modernization adopted was one that approximated, in the political sphere, the building of a centralized state by the ruling élite. All resources were "national" and hence it was the prerogative of the state to dispose of these as it saw fit in the "best interest of the nation". Given the functional model of development, this often meant that large sections of the population were marginalized as the state concentrated on developing economic sectors that it perceived as being important. Where this process was accompanied at least by a degree of accommodation between the dominant and subordinate élites, the political consequences were less severe. Where the marginalization of sections of the population has coincided with groups identifiable in terms of territory, religion, race, ethnicity, etc., the polarization has had even more serious political implications in terms of integration.

Local élites have often encouraged the modernization process to be seen in such terms in any case, as they seek to mobilize their constituencies in pursuit of privileges or redressing grievances. The symbols chosen and manipulated by these élites almost always emphasize particular markers of identity at the expense of others, depending on the circumstances.

> "The game of symbol selection and symbol manipulation ... is clearly one that requires considerable skill and that is not always played successfully. Elites are indeed limited and constrained by the cultures of the groups they hope to represent. ...The great dilemma constantly faced by political élites who manipulate symbols of identity among peoples with rich cultures is that political mobilization of the community against its rivals requires unity and solidarity, which in turn requires that sets of symbols be made as congruent as possible. However, since most cultures are internally diverse, the search for additional symbols of unity often leads to internal discord rather than to the desired solidarity and cohesion."[5]

For Third World countries, economic development has almost inevitably been seen as a crucial aspect of nation building - justifiably so, given the massive problem of poverty and deprivation endemic to these societies. However, in the first instance nation building comes to depend on the political enterprise of holding together diverse peoples who - despite differences of culture, historical memory, religion, race, and level of development - share a sense of common belonging and the vision of a common future. Many countries, like Pakistan, have yet to become what Benedict Anderson speaks of as 'the imagined community' which, as he puts it, is conceived of as a deep horizontal comradeship that cuts across

[5] Paul R. Brass, "Elite Groups" in David Taylor and Malcolm Yapp (eds.), op. cit., p. 67.

boundaries and social groups and penetrates, with varying degrees of consciousness, a great variety of social terrains.[6]

II. From Ethnies to Ethnicity

1. Pakistan's Ethnic Groups

Pakistan came into existence in 1947 and, according to the first census in 1951, had a population of approximately 76 million. The country was divided into two wings, East and West Pakistan, separated by 1,500 kilometres of (hostile) Indian territory. Following civil war, East Pakistan became the independent state of Bangladesh in 1971. West Pakistan (now the state of Pakistan) then accounted for 85.1 per cent of the total land area of 947,000 square kilometres, but represented only 44.5 per cent of the population.[7] Furthermore, unlike the ethnically uniform eastern half of the country (98.4 per cent of which was Bengali), West Pakistan was composed of five major ethnic groups: the Punjabis, Pushto-speaking inhabitants of the North West Frontier Province (including areas later demarcated as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas or FATA), Sindhis, Baluch, and an important minority of Urdu-speaking people, who had largely migrated from northern India at, and immediately following, independence.[8] The 1951 and 1961 censuses identified the following ethnic groups in Pakistan.

Table I:

Table I: Major Ethnic Groups in Pakistan
(as percentage of total population)

Ethnic group	**1951**	**1961**
Bengali	40.6	50.0
Punjabi	20.8	26.2
Pushto	5.0	6.8
Sindhi	3.9	5.0
Urdu	2.5	3.3
Baluch	1.0	1.0
Other	-	2.0

Source: Gankovsky, op. cit.

During the immediate post-independence period, massive migration took place across the borders of Pakistan and India. The influx of people into Pakistan, however, continued well into the second decade of its existence. By mid-1963, Pakistan had received an influx of almost 10 million people from across the border, representing approximately 11 per cent of the total population. This immigration was, however, lopsided. Of the estimated 7.2 million people who migrated to Pakistan by 1951, 6.5 million settled in West Pakistan compared with only 0.7 million in East Pakistan.[9] Within West Pakistan too, provinces were unevenly affected, both in terms of numbers and impact. Hardly any immigrants arrived in either the North West Frontier Province or Baluchistan whereas by 1951 more than a quarter of those residing in Punjab (26.1 per cent), and virtually every second person in Punjab's two major cities of Lahore and Multan, (49 per cent and 43 per cent respectively) was a refugee or recent

[6] Hamza Alavi, "Nationhood and Communal Violence in Pakistan", undated mimeo, Lahore (with authors), p. 14. Alavi is referring to Benedict Anderson's theory in **Imagined Communities**, Verso, London, 1983, p.16.
[7] Y.V. Gankovsky, **The Peoples of Pakistan: An Ethnic History**, People's Publishing House, Lahore, no date.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Khalid bin Sayeed, **Pakistan: The Formative Phase, 1857-1948**, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1968, p. 61.

migrant.[10] Despite this, the most dramatic upheaval was not experienced by Punjab but by Sindh, for migration radically transformed the ethnic map of Sindh while leaving that of Punjab virtually untouched.

In 1961, close to 95 per cent of Punjab's population was Punjabi. Similarly, the native tongue of 98.4 per cent of East Pakistanis was Bengali, and 90 per cent of those residing in the North West Frontier Province (including the tribal areas) spoke Pushto. Major linguistic divisions thus only existed in Baluchistan and Sindh. In Baluchistan, due to a gradual historical process, 30 per cent of those in the administrative districts of Quetta and Loralai were Pushto-speaking. Sindh, on the other hand, had the unfortunate distinction of being the only province in which, between 1941 and 1951, the population who spoke the local mother tongue, Sindhi, actually dropped by 5.3 per cent at the same time that its total population increased by 11.9 per cent.[11] During this time the inhabitants of Sindh whose mother tongue was not Sindhi increased dramatically: the Urdu-speaking population rose from 32,000 to 479,000 (1,396 per cent), Punjabis increased from 61,000 to 152,000 (149 per cent), Baluchis from 235,000 to 448,300 (91 per cent) and Gujratis from 66,000 to 98,000 (49 per cent). By 1961, 51.7 per cent of the people in Southern Sindh, including Karachi, reported Urdu to be their native tongue. This was largely due to the congregation in Karachi of refugees from northern India. In contrast, 77.5 per cent and 82.3 per cent respectively of those living in the Hyderabad and the Khairpur districts of Sindh continued to report Sindhi as their mother tongue.[12] Hence, as a result of migration, the Urdu-speaking population, marginal in the areas comprising Pakistan prior to independence, rose to a significant 6.9 per cent of the western wing's population in 1961. However, their influence in state affairs far exceeded what their numbers might suggest.

The 1981 census results showed that 56 per cent of Pakistan's 84.3 million residents lived in Punjab, 22 per cent in Sindh, 15.6 per cent in the North West Frontier Province (including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas) and 5.1 per cent in Baluchistan. Responses to the question on "language usually spoken at home", reflected in Table 2, indicated that Punjab was the most linguistically integrated province. While only a minority of the population of Baluchistan reportedly spoke Baluchi, in fact the Brohi population has wholly integrated with the Baluch culture.[13] Consequently the real problem was in the province of Sindh: Sindhi was in danger of becoming a language spoken by a minority. The second most important linguistic group in Sindh was the Urdu-speaking community representing 23 per cent of the population.

The 1991 Census has twice been postponed after being initiated, precisely because the question on mother tongue apparently led to irreconcilable figures in the preliminary investigations. In effect, the exercise has been undermined by the efforts of Sindh's two main ethnic groups, the Sindhis and the *mohajirs*[14] to inflate their respective numbers.

---

[10] Ayesha Jalal, **The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence**, Vanguard, Lahore, 1991, pp. 146-147.

[11] Gankovsky, op. cit., p. 8.

[12] See Gankovsky, op. cit., and Yuri V. Gankovsky and L.R. Gordon-Polanskaya, **A History of Pakistan (1947-1958)**, People's Publishing House, Lahore, (no date).

[13] See Gankovsky, op. cit. and Gankovsky and Gordon-Polanskaya, op. cit. For a discussion of this integration see Aijaz Ahmed "The National Question in Baluchistan" in Akbar Zaidi (ed.), **Regional Imbalances and the National Question in Pakistan**, Vanguard, Lahore, 1992, pp. 193-225. Selig Harrison's article, "Ethnicity and the Political Stalemate in Pakistan" in the same volume does not refer to the Brohis.

[14] *Mohajir*, literally meaning refugee, was commonly used by the indigenous populations of Pakistan to denote the regionally and, at times, culturally, diverse refugees from northern India who settled in Pakistan. Since the emergence of the ethnically defined militant party, the Mohajir Quami Movement in 1984, the term is now being employed for self-definition by *mohajirs* in Sindh

Table 2:										
Percentage Distribution of Households by Language Usually Spoken and Region/Province (1981 Census)										
Region/ Province	Total	Language								
		Urdu	Punjabi	Pushto	Sindhi	Baluchi	Brohi	Hindko	Saraiki	Others
Pakistan	100.00	7.60	48.17	13.15	11.77	3.02	1.21	2.43	9.84	2.81
Islamabad	100.00	11.23	81.72	4.16	0.18	0.16	0.01	0.60	0.10	1.83
Punjab	100.00	4.27	78.68	0.76	0.08	0.57	0.01	0.04	14.90	0.70
Sindh	100.00	22.64	7.69	3.06	52.40	4.51	1.08	0.35	2.29	5.97
Baluchistan	100.00	1.37	2.24	25.07	8.29	36.31	20.68	0.13	3.08	2.82
NWFP	100.00	0.83	1.10	68.30	0.05	0.04	0.01	18.13	3.95	7.59
FATA	100.00	0.01	0.10	99.70	0.05	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.90

Source: Population Census Organization, **Statistical Pocket Book of Pakistan**, 1988

Table 3:									
West Pakistan, 1951 and 1961 **Persons Speaking Main Languages and Speakers of Languages as Percentage of Total Population**									
Languages	Number of Speakers 1961			Speakers as percent of Total Population 1961			Speakers as percent of Total Population 1951		
	Total	Mother Tongue	As Additional Language	Total Speakers	Mother Tongue	Additional Language	Total Speakers	Mother Tongue	Additional Language
Bengali	55,808	45,681	10,127	0.14	0.12	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.02
Punjabi	26,651,964	26,186,586	465,378	67.57	66.39	1.18	69.06	67.05	2.00
Pushto	3,526,944	3,339,856	187,088	8.94	8.47	0.47	9.12	8.18	0.94
Sindhi	5,583,680	4,963,996	619,684	14.16	12.59	1.57	13.99	12.85	1.14
Urdu	5,859,718	2,987,826	2,871,892	14.86	7.58	7.28	15.89	7.04	8.86
Baluchi	1,141,651	982,512	159,139	2.89	2.49	0.40	3.46	3.04	0.43
Brauhi	452,612	365,557	87,055	1.15	0.93	0.22	0.13	-	-
Persian	314,097	26,378	287,719	0.80	0.07	0.73	0.61	0.05	0.56
Arabic	192,820	3,334	189,486	0.49	0.01	0.48	0.06	0.03	0.06
English	835,884	17,531	818,353	2.12	0.04	2.07	2.66	0.03	2.63

Source: Government of Pakistan, Population Census of Pakistan, 1961

2. The Politics of Ethnicity

The politics of ethnicity in Pakistan first took the form of sub-nationalism, though subsequently localized ethnic conflict became a dominant feature.[15] Ethnic boundaries have been defined and re-defined as circumstances have changed,[16] demonstrating that there is nothing primordial in the identity of the ethnic groups in conflict even though some markers of identity may be more resilient than others. Initially, in their struggle for a separate homeland, the Indian Muslims chose to subjugate other aspects of their identity deriving from territory, language, culture, etc., in favour of their religion, such that Muslims from Uttar Pradesh as well as from Bengal articulated their demand for Pakistan not as culturally distinct groups but as Muslims. Once Pakistan came into being, however, the competition between

[15] For instance, Bengali sub-nationalism as opposed to the Sindhi-Mohajir or Pakhtun-Afghan or Pakhtun-Baluch conflicts.

[16] Hamza Alavi, "Politics of Ethnicity in Pakistan", **Pakistan Progressive**, 9(1), Summer 1987, pp. 4-25.

different regional élites very rapidly assumed the form of conscious ethnic differentiation that foreshadowed the processes of development and the emergence of ethnic conflicts.

A number of imbalances attended the creation of Pakistan. As in other post-colonial societies, the institutions of the state, i.e., the army and bureaucracy, were over-developed in comparison to civil society. Along with differences of language and culture, not to mention unequal levels of interest in the very concept of Pakistan, the regions forming Pakistan were also characterized by uneven development. Moreover, the élite that assumed power in the new Pakistan was dominated by two ethnic groups (*mohajirs* and Punjabis) who, even together, did not constitute a majority of the population. This domination came to be seen by the other regional groups in ethno-national terms. Another factor that contributed greatly to aggravating ethnic imbalances was the large-scale migration of populations when the Indian peninsula was formally partitioned to form the states of India and Pakistan.

Despite these imbalances, it should still have been possible for the ruling élite, conscious of its enlightened self-interest, to follow less exclusive and more encompassing policies at the level of culture, economic development and the exercise of political power in order to favour a more integrated polity. On the contrary, the style and substance of policies adopted led to widespread disaffection and alienation amongst those people - élites included - who were denied a share in power and resources at the provincial level and were under-represented in the central élite. What followed the initial imbalances unfortunately reads like a catalogue of policies deliberately contrived to undermine national integration and weaken those structures that could best have guarded against the fracturing and fragmentation of civil society.

Within a fortnight of Pakistan's creation in August 1947, the central government, under M.A. Jinnah - whose status as the founder of the new state was unchallenged and who became its first governor general - had toppled the provincial government in the North West Frontier Province. The dismissal followed a confrontation between the provincial ministry and Jinnah over the status of the Province following a referendum (in July 1947) to determine whether the Province would remain a part of India or become a part of Pakistan. The Pakhtuns, by an overwhelming majority, voted in favour of joining Pakistan. When the chief minister (who contested the validity of the referendum)[17] was asked to take a new oath of office, he supposedly refused and was subsequently dismissed.[18] Seven months later, in another show of force from the centre, the chief minister of Sindh, M.H. Khuro, who had opposed the governor general on the separation of Karachi from the province, was dismissed on charges of corruption and poor administration.[19]

During Jinnah's lifetime, such measures represented or reflected the tension between the centre and the provinces. However, he was not perceived to be acting on behalf of any ethnic group since he was widely believed to have Pakistan's interests at heart. His title, Quaid-e-Azam (Great Leader), reflected the esteem in which he was held and the extent to which his contribution to the founding of the new state far outweighed that of any other individual. But following his death in September 1948, such measures served as precedents for the powerful central élite, which enjoyed very little credibility particularly among the less privileged ethnic groups. In January 1949, for example, in a move that superseded the Punjab provincial government, the provincial legislative assembly was dissolved and the governor took over the administration.[20] Such moves were used by the centre to bolster its own position at the expense of less privileged ethnic groups and provincial élites.

---

[17] The option of an independent Pakhtunistan demanded by Pakhtun nationalists just prior to the vote had not been included in the referendum.

[18] Khalid bin Sayeed, op. cit., p. 246.

[19] Keith Callard, **Pakistan: A Political Study**, Allen and Unwin, London, 1957, p. 27.

[20] When Jinnah was governor general, Section 92a was introduced to the Government of India Act of 1935 as a means of facilitating direct rule by the centre. Pakistan was governed by this Act - as

Since the ethnically uniform eastern wing (East Bengal, later renamed East Pakistan) of the country constituted more than half of the country's total population, the first serious reaction against the centre's refusal to integrate the regional élites into the structure of power came from there. This became a major stumbling block in the framing of a constitution and the democratic process. Before Pakistan's first constitution in 1956, and in response to the central government's insistence that Urdu would be the only official language of the country, language riots broke out in the eastern wing in 1952. Not least for this reason, the Muslim League, a party that so far had claimed an all-Pakistan character by virtue of having "delivered" Pakistan under Jinnah's leadership, was demolished at the polls in East Pakistan in the 1954 provincial elections. The scheduled national elections were superseded by Ayub Khan's martial law in 1958. When national elections finally took place in 1970, they ended with the dismemberment of the country.[21]

This process of dominance/subordination between the Punjabi élite and other regional/ethnic élites, which had slowed down when Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (from Sindh) was the country's chief executive between 1971-1977, greatly intensified after General Zia's coup d'état. During the period after the coup d'état, in the words of Gramsci,

> "the government operated as a 'party'. It set itself over and above the parties not so as to harmonize their interests and activities within the permanent framework of the life and interests of the nation and state, but so as to disintegrate them, to detach them from the broad masses and obtain 'a force of non-party men linked to the government by paternalistic ties of a Bonapartist-Caesarist type."[22]

Furthermore, it is clear that, from the time of Pakistan's creation (perhaps because Islam had been successfully employed as a marker of political identity in the context of the Pakistan project), that there was virtually complete incomprehension amongst the country's leaders of the fact that Pakistan was coming into existence as an ethnically diverse or multi-cultural, if religiously fairly homogeneous, state. The central élite continued with the vice-regal system inherited from the British colonialists for whom India was a unit to be administered for the most efficient extraction of surplus, and who obviously geared their system to this end. For instance, the system evolved by the British put no premium on bringing together people from different provinces or diverse ethnic groups. If anything, the ability of the British to manipulate and control, with the minimum use of force, rested on keeping the groups as far removed from each other as possible.[23] A nation state on the other hand, as Pakistan was striving to become, should have had as its primary objective the integration of the existing social structures of its components into the political and economic mainstream. This did not take place. There was no effort to encourage, in ethnic or provincial terms, a broad-based government (or co-cultural leadership) and the economic landscape was characterized by nothing so much as uneven development.

Not only were the regional élites unequally represented in the central élite, the socio-economic structures of the component regions and groups were different. Of all these regions, Punjab had been the most integrated into the British colonial structures. Despite its essential feudal character, it was more urbanized, had an elaborate irrigation system and some

---

amended by the India Independence Act 1947 - until 1956 when the Constituent Assembly framed the first constitution.

[21] Omar Noman, **Pakistan: A Political and Economic History Since 1947**, Kegan Paul International, London, 1990, p. 11.

[22] Antonio Gramsci, **Selections from the Prison Notebooks**, (edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith), International Publishers, New York, 1971, p. 224.

[23] At no point did British troops on Indian soil exceed 40,000, a surprisingly small number for the area with a population of over 400 million. See Geoffrey Moorhouse, **India Britannica**, Paladin-Granada Publishing Co., 1983, p. 75.

industrial activity, apart from being over-represented in the army and bureaucracy. East Pakistan was culturally developed, politically more advanced, had higher educational levels, and, of course, constituted the majority. Thus the claim for a share in state power by the Bengali middle class leadership in East Pakistan was well articulated from the start and had considerable popular support. As a result of the frustration of these aspirations, the politicization of Bengali ethnic consciousness led to a bloody confrontation between the central Punjabi élite and the Bengali counter-élite, resulting in an independent Bangladesh.

The North West Frontier Province was largely tribal in character with a low level of urbanization. As in the case of the Bengalis in East Pakistan, the Pakhtuns of the North West Frontier Province started with a strong sense of ethnic consciousness under the popular leadership of Ghaffar Khan. This soon took the form of a sub-nationalism in opposition to the state of Pakistan which was seen as an instrument of Punjabi domination. Starting in the early 1960s, the situation changed with the integration, gradually and effectively, of the Frontier population into the state structure and the market economy.[24] The nationalist demand for "Pakhtunistan", i.e., an autonomous state comprising Pakhtuns on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, finally collapsed with the war in Afghanistan and the arrival of nearly 2 million Afghan refugees (out of a total of 3 million who came to Pakistan) in the Frontier region.[25]

Baluchistan remains the least developed of the provinces where, for the most part, a rigid, hierarchical tribal system has continued to dominate. It is the most diverse province in cultural and linguistic terms and the Baluch's sense of ethnic identity has more to do with external factors than internal cohesion. They have consistently resisted all attempts at encroachment upon their independent status, whether by the British or later the Pakistan government. Throughout the period since independence, they have had an uncomfortable relationship with the central government: relations were poorest in 1973 when they engaged three divisions of the Pakistan armed forces in a bitter and intense armed struggle. Contrary to the expectations of the Baluch leadership, the Soviet Union did not intervene in support of the Baluchistan separatist movement. Until the 1970s, the fact that Baluchistan's north was ethnically Pakhtun whereas the south was almost entirely Baluch was not perceived in conflictual terms by either community. With Baluchistan becoming a province in 1970, however, tensions became more discernible. The influx of a large number of Afghan refugees (during the war in that country) of Pakhtun origin created an abrupt and potentially disruptive imbalance in the numerical strength of the two communities. The tension between them reached a high point in 1991, culminating in violent intra-provincial clashes.

III. Sindh: Mohajirs, Sindhis and the Centre

1. Sindh: The Roots of Discontent

In Sindh, the two main features at independence were, first, the presence of an oppressive feudal system and, secondly, the sudden vacuum created by the departure of the Hindus who had formed the bulk of the middle class, effectively leaving the province without an indigenous educated middle class. This vacuum was filled, almost entirely, by the Urdu-

[24] Shahid Kardar, **Polarization in the Regions: The Roots of Discontent**, p. 11 of English language mimeograph. (Urdu version published as **Ehlaqqa'i Tazadat: Be-Itminani Key Buniyaddi Asbaab**, Progressive Publishers, Lahore, 1988.)

[25] The fact that Afghans were competing for limited resources in the Province put considerable stress on their relationship with the local population. The massive international economic and military aid flowing in for the Afghans dissipated whatever little popular support there was for the traditional Pakhtunistan concept.

speaking "salariat"[26] who emigrated from northern India to settle in Sindh's urban centres. The impact of large-scale immigration in Sindh was thus far more disruptive than the impact of the phenomenon elsewhere.

While 70 per cent of the refugees from India actually settled in Punjab, and only 20 per cent settled in Sindh, the latter was much more decisively affected because of this 20 per cent, over two-thirds settled in the urban areas, Karachi and Hyderabad.[27] The net result was a radical alteration of the ethnic landscape of Sindh. In 1947, 95 per cent of the population was Sindhi;[28] by 1951, according to the population census, 50 per cent of the urban population in Sindh was made up of those whose mother tongue was Urdu; this proportion reached 80 per cent in Karachi and 66 per cent in Hyderabad.[29] These migrants also took over the property of the Hindus who had fled to India, further alienating the Sindhis. A substantial proportion of lands mortgaged to Hindu money lenders did not revert back to their original (Sindhi) owners despite a proposal to this effect in the Sindh Assembly. Instead, almost 40 per cent of these 2 million acres went to Urdu-speaking migrant refugees or *mohajirs* from India.[30]

Although the *mohajirs* came to Sindh from five different regions, they had enough in common culturally and ideologically to enable the development of a sense of common identity.[31] The *mohajirs* were better educated than other communities of West Pakistan and better integrated into the civil and military bureaucracies (disproportionately so in the former) than the otherwise well-educated Bengalis. In fact, the major catalyst for Muslim nationalism in India was the loss of the privileged position enjoyed by the Muslims of the United Provinces (subsequently Uttar Pradesh) of northern India, whose share of government jobs fell from about 64 per cent in 1857 to about 35 per cent in the early twentieth century.[32] This led, obviously, to considerable dissatisfaction and resentment in the community and especially among its élite - which throughout the colonial period had preserved both its financial and political superiority over the other Muslims in India - and provided the impetus for the élite's attempts to obtain reformulation of the political framework in a way that would enable its members to regain some of the lost advantage. This explains in part why the élite of Uttar Pradesh played key roles in demands such as that for separate electorates for the Indian Muslims; a distinct, though not necessarily independent, Muslim political entity comprising north India; and of course eventually, the demand for Pakistan - a sovereign Muslim nation state. By proposing a political framework based on a distinct identity for Muslims in India, the Uttar Pradesh élite hoped to define a constituency that it felt naturally entitled to lead on the basis of historical and cultural factors. For the élite of this community then, Pakistan can be seen to have represented the culmination of such efforts.[33]

The *mohajirs* came into a situation in Sindh that was unlike that faced by refugees and migrants in Punjab, at two levels. The majority of those who had migrated to West Punjab (Pakistan) had moved from East Punjab (India). As such there was no problem at the level of culture or language and hence, integration. Even the refugees, or *mohajirs,* who came from

---

[26] The term refers to "those who have received an education that equips them for employment in the state apparatus, at various levels, as scribes and functionaries". Hamza Alavi, op. cit., p. 5.
[27] Shahid Kardar, op. cit., p. 5.
[28] Senator Abdul Majid Kayi, dissociating himself from the Report of the Special Committee submitted to the Senate on this issue gave these figures as quoted in the daily **Dawn**, 14 December 1989.
[29] Shahid Kardar, op. cit., p. 5.
[30] Shahid Kardar, op. cit., p. 6.
[31] Feroz Ahmad, "The Rise of Muhajir Separatism in Pakistan", **Pakistan Progressive**, 10(2-3), Summer/Fall 1989, pp. 8-13.
[32] Hamza Alavi, op. cit., p. 6.
[33]For more details see Anil Seal, **The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Late 19th Century**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 298-340.

Uttar Pradesh to Punjab had less difficulty integrating, for two reasons: first, they were few in number and dispersed in numerous cities; and second, they were much more readily accepted by the Punjabi upper and middle classes. In any case, the Punjabi élite did not see Urdu as a threat to its cultural or linguistic identity, not least because Urdu was less alien to Punjab, compared to the other provinces, and a considerable amount of intellectual activity in Urdu in some of the major urban centres of Punjab pre-dated the partition of India.

In Sindh, however, the situation was very different. The massive influx of the *mohajirs* into Karachi, to the virtual exclusion of other areas, created a ghetto-like situation. Furthermore, the potential for integration was undermined by the lack of an indigenous Sindhi middle class, and the Urdu-speaking *mohajir* élite was perceived as having a cultural and ideological arrogance that further aggravated the issue**.** It believed its own language to be far superior to the regional languages spoken in the areas that now constituted Pakistan. It also put forward the theory that the adoption of a single language, Urdu, would guarantee national integration. In doing so, of course, the élite managed to put all those whose mother tongue was Urdu at a net advantage in terms of education, jobs, etc. Finally, because of the critical role of the *mohajirs* in the creation of Pakistan, this élite also saw itself as the standard bearer of the Pakistan "idea".

The Punjabi and the *mohajir* élites, by virtue of their domination of the structures of state power, became partners in the governance of the state. Neither, in terms of their narrow interests, could afford to deal with the arithmetic of democracy which favoured the Bengali élite. In what became a zero sum game, the calculus of power put the central élite in an unavoidable contest with the regional or counter élites of Bengal, the North West Frontier Province and Sindh. Subsequently, Baluchistan too threw up its counter élite. At first the main contest was between the Punjabi élite (pre-eminent by virtue of its dominance of the army) and the *mohajirs* (who held key positions in the bureaucracy), on the one hand, and the Bengali élite, representing the majority of the population, on the other.

The predisposition of the *mohajirs* to view themselves as natural rulers of Pakistan, their lack of contact with a corresponding Sindhi urban middle class, and their partnership with the Punjabi ruling élite, all meant that their political and cultural perspective was centre-oriented with an almost complete absence of identification with the culture and concerns of the people of the province in which they found themselves. The initially accommodating Sindhis saw their province and resources literally taken over by others, first *mohajirs* and second the Punjabi élite, and found themselves in a constant battle with the centre and with the centre's representatives in the province. The centre's partisan policies further aggravated existing imbalances. For example, industry was almost entirely located in Karachi, which rather rapidly developed into a non-Sindhi city. Barring Karachi, practically no representation was given to Sindh in the upper echelons of the army and the bureaucracy. The outcome of such policies coincided with the scramble for scarce resources at the local level - such as education, employment and basic amenities - to produce the present conflict in which the *mohajirs* are fighting to maintain their privileged position and the Sindhis, experiencing the phenomenon of an emerging middle class, are laying a vociferous claim to what they consider to be their due.

The central élite, in competition with regional élites, saw in language and religion the effective instruments not only for countering Sindhi demands, but also the means by which to deny their distinct cultural identity. In supporting Urdu as a national standard while de-emphasizing its own mother tongue, the Punjabi élite also sought to bolster its claim of being eminently suited to the task of governance beyond the confines of its own province. Unity in uniformity was the operational phrase. All were Muslims and Urdu was to be the only official language, notwithstanding the fact that the Bengalis, constituting the majority, possessed a homogeneous culture and a well developed language. Urdu and Islam were, in fact, woven

into one, and by implication a non-accommodative, ultimate framework of identity. Replying to a member of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly who had tabled an amendment permitting the use of Bengali in the Assembly in addition to Urdu and English (as early as February 1948), Liaqat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister, said: "Pakistan is a Muslim state and it must have as its lingua franca the language of the Muslim nation ... it is necessary for a nation to have one language and that language can only be Urdu and no other language".[34] As Callard has pointed out, "some of the advocates of the superior merits of Urdu managed to convey the impression that the defence of Bengali was both "un-Islamic" and opposed to the interests of national unity".[35]

In West Pakistan, too, there was resentment against the forcible introduction of Urdu and an almost complete disregard for the status of the mother tongues. According to the census of 1951 there were approximately 317,000 persons in Sindh who could read and write Sindhi, which is to say that there were considerably more literate Sindhis than Pakhtuns, Punjabis or Baluch.[36] The Sindhis were again alienated when, as early as July 1948, the Governor General of Pakistan ordered the separation from Sindh of Karachi (and the surrounding district), the seat of its provincial government, turning Karachi into a separate federal area under the jurisdiction of the central government. This also meant a considerable financial loss for Sindh, since "through the acquisition of Karachi by the centre Sindh was deprived of its most highly productive area from the point of view of its revenue yielding capacity..."[37]

Such policies meant that the privileged classes in Bengal and Sindh, as well as those in other areas, could sideline the contradictions at the local level and point to the threat from the Punjab-dominated centre as the primary issue, with the result that significant sections of the left came to see the "national" struggle as the class struggle. And, as in the case of Sindh, the feudals could consolidate their hold while posing as the champions of people's rights vis-à-vis a centre that came to be seen as an instrument of domination and exploitation.

2. Oppression through Centralism and "Controlled" Democracy

Even though, in the first decade after independence, there was a democratic form of government in the country, it was clear that the central élite sought to maximize its privilege and power regardless of democratic norms and the rights of the "outsiders". This approach found its most dramatic expression in the so-called "one-unit" formula, by virtue of which, under an order issued on 5 October 1955 by the acting Governor General of Pakistan, the unified province of West Pakistan came into being on 14 October. Under the establishment of West Pakistan Bill, the following were integrated into the new province: "the former provinces of Sindh, Punjab and North West Frontier Province; the city of Karachi; the former states of Baluchistan, Bhawalpur, and Khairpur; the former Frontier States and Baluchistan States Union; and the former Frontier Province Tribal Areas".[38] Even though the decision was rationalized on an administrative basis, the underlying reason had to do with giving East and West Pakistan equal representation in the Constituent Assembly and in the National Assembly, despite the fact that the newly-defined West Pakistan would have a population of 34 million whereas East Pakistan would have 44 million.

In the interest of "balancing" the two wings of the country, East Pakistan was deprived of the full weight of its voting strength in the constitution of 1956, which naturally created resentment. Despite persistent criticism of the one-unit system in East Pakistan and the adversely affected areas of West Pakistan, both parity of representation between East and

[34] Keith Callard, op. cit., p. 182.
[35] Ibid., p. 181.
[36] Yuri V. Gankovsky and L.R. Gordon-Polanskaya, op. cit., p. 154.
[37] S.M. Akhtar, quoted in Yuri V. Gankovsky and L.R. Gordon-Polanskaya, op. cit., p. 156.
[38] "Pakistan: from 1947 to the Creation of Bangladesh", **Keesing's Research Report No. 9**; Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1973, p. 64.

West Pakistan in the National Assembly and the one-unit system were retained in the new constitution of March 1962.[39] Of course, among other things, the arrangement whereby Lahore (Punjab's capital) became the capital for the province of West Pakistan made it even more difficult for those belonging to areas other than Punjab to gain access to the seat of provincial power and seek redress for their grievances.

After more than a decade of manipulating democratic processes, the central élite did away with even the pretence of democracy. General Ayub's ascent to power through a military coup d'état in late 1958 represented the culmination of the military's ascendancy to a position of paramount political force in Pakistan, a process which had begun in the mid-1950s as a corollary of Pakistan's growing military alliance with the United States.[40] Under this system, first of martial law and then of controlled democracy, regional élites were even more comprehensively blocked from participating in governance and the sharing of power. Politicians were subjected to arbitrary bans and arrests under laws unilaterally devised and promulgated. And, once again, unlike the provinces of Punjab and the North West Frontier Province - which had substantial representation in the bureaucracy and the army and continued therefore to have access, formal or otherwise, to decision making levels and levers of power - areas such as Baluchistan and rural Sindh - with practically no representation in either - were even more comprehensively cut off.

During the Ayub period (1958-1968) the basic objective of the centre's development strategy was to achieve a high rate of GNP growth within the framework of private enterprise supported by government subsidies, tax concessions and import controls. Investment targets were expected to be achieved on the basis of the doctrine of "functional inequality" - the theory that the concentration of wealth in an unequal distribution actually promotes investment and productivity.[41] This, obviously, was a policy tailor-made for aggravating the phenomenon of uneven development across regions that was already a central feature of Pakistan's economic landscape before Ayub took power.

In Sindh, the urban-rural divide in terms of development widened, with Karachi receiving, almost exclusively, infrastructural support as well as new investment in industry and the manufacturing sectors, and rural Sindh being almost entirely ignored. In rural Sindh another major source of grievance emerged with the controversial allotments, to military and civil bureaucrats, of land brought under cultivation by the Sukkur, Guddu and Ghulam Mohammad barrages. The abstraction of a centre dominated by Punjabis was now literally brought home to the Sindhis in the form of Punjabi landholders who were occupying a substantial portion of the most choice lands in Sindh. Out of 1.48 million acres of land made cultivable by the Ghulam Muhammad Barrage, 0.87 million acres were allocated to defence personnel, tribesmen of Quetta and the Frontier, and settlers from East Pakistan. Of the 0.64 million acres of the Guddu Barrage land, 0.32 million acres were allocated to defence personnel, civil bureaucrats and families displaced by the construction of the new capital, Islamabad (in Punjab), and the Tarbela and Mangla dams (in Punjab and the North West Frontier Province). Of the 0.28 million acres of Sukkur Barrage land, 0.13 million acres were given to army personnel.[42] In most instances "defence personnel" were synonymous with Punjabis.

Under General Yahya Khan the contradiction between the central élite and the Bengali élite peaked when, despite obtaining the majority of the seats in the 1970 general elections - the first since Pakistan's independence - the Awami League, which drew its support entirely from East Pakistan, was blocked from forming the central government. The result was widespread

[39] Ibid, pp. 79-80.
[40] Feroz Ahmad, op. cit., p. 22.
[41] Akmal Hussain, "The Dynamics of Power: Military, Bureaucracy and the People", paper presented at the seminar, **Internal Conflicts in South Asia** (Colombo, April 24-26), p. 2.
[42] Shahid Kardar, op. cit., p. 6.

agitation and violence in East Pakistan, met by massive repression by the Punjabi-dominated central government in the form of indiscriminate army action. The violence escalated to such an extent that Indian forces were involved, and the ultimate effect of the conflict was the bifurcation of the country and the emergence of Bangladesh in late 1971. The party which gained the most seats in the House in West Pakistan in these elections was the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by a charismatic leader from Sindh, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. This is ironic, however, for even as this juncture represented the end point of one set of ethnic contradictions, as the Bengalis, finally, went their own way, it also marked the softening of another set of contradictions between the central élite and the regional élite of rural Sindh.

3. Bhutto: Reducing the Sindh-Centre Imbalances

While Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had been part of the state apparatus and served in key administrative positions under Ayub, and had certainly not contested the elections on an ethnic platform, it is significant that, at this point, he delinked himself from the state apparatus as well as its policies, and as far as the central élite was concerned joined the electoral fray as an "outsider". That he was able to mobilize such massive electoral support in West Pakistan came as a complete surprise to all concerned, not least the central élite. Anyone in a position to mobilize people in such large numbers would, in any case, have been a source of concern to an establishment dominated by the military and civil bureaucracy. It was an additional source of alarm that Bhutto happened to be from Sindh. (Much farther down the road, the antagonistic approach of "the establishment" to Benazir Bhutto, who showed herself entirely willing to work on its terms, illustrates how deeply felt such concerns were and remain to this day.)

Even before Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto took power, the *mohajirs* were in a state of shock on two counts: with the break up of the one unit under Yahya Khan, Karachi had been returned to Sindh. Second, there was before them the fate of the Biharis in Bangladesh.[43] One of the lessons that they learned was that the centre was not always an adequate guarantee for their welfare or even survival.

The Bhutto régime sought to address some of Sindh's grievances, notably with reference to government jobs and the language issue. More Sindhis were inducted into lower- and middle-level government jobs, and the government tried to enforce urban-rural quotas vis-à-vis Sindh's share in federal jobs and regional quotas in the provincial services. Bhutto made no parallel effort to induct Sindhis into the military bureaucracy, however, the share of *mohajirs* in government services declined as a result, while at the same time they were pushed back in the upper echelons of bureaucracy as a consequence of increasing Punjabi domination at this level. Moreover, the administrative reforms enacted by Bhutto weakened the influence of the entire bureaucracy, allowing even greater domination by the military. In other areas the *mohajirs* probably gained, as in the field of education where nationalization of private schools, opening of new educational institutions and better salaries for teachers benefited the *mohajirs* more than any other group because of their strong presence in this sector. So while there may not have been a major reversal of the trend in social mobility, the higher number of educated unemployed among the *mohajirs* meant growing frustration among their youth.

The so-called "language controversy" was a watershed in terms of the alienation of *mohajirs* from the Bhutto régime. The status of their mother tongue had been a primary concern of the Sindhis all along. The Sindh Assembly in July 1972 passed a bill to promote Sindhi in the province, providing for little that would appear to have been radical or extreme. It required

[43] Biharis here refers to those people, originally from the Indian state of Bihar, who migrated to East Pakistan in 1947. Opposed to the idea of Bangladesh, Biharis were considered fifth columnists by the Bengalis during the civil war. Thousands fled to West Pakistan during or immediately after the civil war. The remaining 250,000 million wish to migrate to Pakistan, which they consider their country.

Sindhi to be taught as a second language to students for whom Sindhi was not the medium of instruction and made it essential for provincial government officials to learn the language in a specified period. (More than a hundred years ago, British colonizers had enforced a similar policy.) The bill made it clear that the status of Urdu would in no way be compromised and that the policy would be implemented "without prejudice" to the "national language" (Urdu).[44]

The *mohajirs*, however, took strong exception to the bill and responded with rioting, attacking Sindhis and attempting to bring down the government. "The violence of this agitation", noted one observer, "was fully matched by the obscenity of its rhetoric". Feroz Ahmad points out that Shaukat Siddiqi, a leading Urdu novelist, told him that as an Urdu-speaking person he was deeply ashamed by the anti-Sindhi behaviour of even some of his colleagues. He goes on to say that "it was not an uncommon scene in the *mohajir* homes in Karachi to see parents shouting at their children to 'turn off that *bakvaas* (nonsense/rubbish)' if they continued to watch the television after a Sindhi programme had started."[45]

On the economic front, Bhutto initiated the policy of nationalization. In January 1972, when 10 categories of basic industries spread across 31 industrial units were taken over, they were largely confined to the capital and intermediary goods sector. At this stage the policy mainly affected the top "22 families" and it was seen not so much as a threat to private enterprise as an attempt to curb the growth of large monopoly capital.[46] However, in 1976 when nationalization was extended to flour-milling, cotton-ginning and rice-husking mills - affecting for the most part the small entrepreneur - there was widespread resentment within the middle class as well.[47] In large measure this laid the ground work for the widespread urban middle class anti-Bhutto movement of 1977.

While the PPP won an overall majority in the 1977 elections, in the cities of Sindh it lost all its seats in the non-Sindhi areas to the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), a coalition made up of nine opposition parties united on a single platform against the PPP. The Jamaat-e-Islami, which had a strong *mohajir* representation, played a leading role in the movement. The PNA campaign in urban Sindh took a decidedly anti-Sindhi slant. The 1977 elections and the PNA agitation which followed accentuated the division of Sindhis and *mohajirs* into two hostile camps.

Bhutto's removal (and subsequently his hanging) and the seizure of power by General Zia-ul-Haq in July 1977 meant, under the circumstances, two completely different things to the Sindhis and the *mohajirs.* To the former, it suggested that their access to state power and hence their ability to have grievances redressed had been comprehensively subverted. Even the rules of the game had been changed to physically eliminate, in a protracted and public exercise involving the institutions of the state and civil society (in a process that did little to enhance their credibility), a democratically elected prime minister who happened to be a Sindhi. In Pakistan it was the first time that a head of state or government had been dealt with in this fashion.

---

[44] Feroz Ahmad, op. cit., pp. 31-32.
[45] Ibid, footnotes 27 and 28, pp. 50-51.
[46] During the Ayub era, 22 family groups had been identified as dominating, with state assistance and patronage, the areas of industry and commerce. The term "22 families" became popular after a 1968 speech by the Chief Economist of the Planning Commission, Mahbub-ul-Haq, in which he asserted that 87 per cent of the banking and insurance and 66 per cent of the industrial assets were owned by 22 families. See Rashid Amjad, "Industrial Concentration and Economic Power", in Hassan Gardezi and Jamil Rashid, **Pakistan: The Unstable State**, Vanguard, Lahore, 1983, p. 184.
[47] Omar Norman, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

4. Zia: Aggravating the Imbalances

For the *mohajirs,* General Zia's military régime meant a radical shift of the balance in their favour, as it did away with Bhutto at the centre as well as the PPP government provincial level in Sindh. They could relate to Zia's lower middle class background, his schooling in Delhi, and his emphasis on Islamization. Furthermore, the induction of two Jamaat-e-Islami ministers who happened to be *mohajirs* was well received by the community.

The long period of Martial Law under the Zia régime aggravated the imbalance between state and civil society and served to undermine the latter. The high level of dependency on the United States during this period was also instrumental in pushing Pakistan into becoming a "frontline state" in America's role in the Afghan war, and this caused further havoc in civil society. While Pakistan served as a conduit for US arms meant for Afghan guerrillas, a large number of these found their way into the illegal arms market in Pakistan. Furthermore, the heroin trade grew apace, giving rise to powerful mafia-type syndicates.[48] Pakistan's major urban centres were, therefore, subject to the disruptive potential of such syndicates as well as the violence of the "kalashnikov culture" of mostly unlicensed arms. Powerful interests involved in, or close to, the drug business also found their way into representative political institutions.

On assuming power, General Zia rapidly moved to consolidate his hold by allying himself with powerful and influential groups in society. Significantly, one of the first measures of the new régime was to render inoperative the proposed agricultural income tax that the Bhutto government had virtually succeeded in putting into place, giving a clear signal to the powerful feudal lobby that "their interests were safe" with his government.[49] This pattern of accommodation was in evidence throughout Zia's tenure. The 1985 "partyless" elections, for instance, removing the element of party affiliation and organization from the election process considerably bolstered the centrality of the local feudal influentials. At one stroke, Zia showed himself to be a guarantor of their interests while at the same time undermining their ability to challenge him as a unified lobby or class linked within the framework of political parties.[50] Zia also proceeded to reassure the industrialist lobby by selective denationalization of industrial units. His appeal to the middle and lower middle class lay in his espousal of an "Islamization" programme for society. As a result of policies such as denationalization, the kind of urban working class opposition to the Zia régime that could have been expected was not in evidence, not only because of martial law oppression but also because large scale migration of skilled and semi-skilled workers to the Middle East acted as a "safety valve". Still, what in other circumstances would have been seen as yet another attempt by the Punjabi élite/army to assert itself at the expense of the other provinces was restrained by a number of factors.

First, Bhutto's unjustified dismissal of the provincial government in Baluchistan in 1973, which had also led to the resignation of the provincial government in the North West Frontier Province, effectively neutralized any potential opposition to the Zia régime in these two provinces. Urban Sindh, dominated by *mohajirs,* welcomed Zia's takeover of power. More generally, Bhutto's autocratic style, especially towards the end of his rule, disaffected a substantial number of those who had once been his major supporters. Thus the only true bastion of opposition once Zia came to power was among the rural Sindh population, who had

---

[48] Akmal Hussain, op. cit., p. 6.

[49] This was done by repealing the Finance (Supplementary) Act of 1977. See **Pakistan Legal Decisions**, 29, Lahore, pp. 118-125.

[50] Out of a total of 238 seats in the National Assembly, two-thirds were held by landlords and tribal leaders. Norman, op. cit., p. 127.

seen Bhutto as someone who "cared for and loved us poor Sindhis".[51] The dismissal of his government by Zia would have been shock enough to this part of the population, but his "judicial execution" at the hands of the Punjabi general, and, many believed, Punjabi judges, had a devastating and lasting impact on the Sindhi psyche.[52] At a broader level too, after his removal from power and subsequent hanging, Bhutto acquired the aura of a martyr for the people's cause.

When Zia assumed power he faced an opposition that was in considerable disarray. As such, with the help of the army and selective support from civil society, Zia was able to contain popular disaffection against his régime without too much trouble. This was true also of the multi-party Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). However, in rural Sindh, the MRD was found running parallel to and even merging with a much more intense and unrelenting struggle against the centre - by a broad front of peasants, students, middle class professionals, etc. - that the state had not bargained for.

In many ways the combined efforts of various political parties in 1983 within the MRD coalition marks a turning point. The general lack of support for the movement in urban Sindh contrasted sharply with the intensity of both the movement and the army repression in rural Sindh, and served effectively to define as well as reinforce the division in the province. To the Sindhis it indicated two things: first, the total lack of urban Sindh's identification with rural Sindhi sentiments and aspirations, and, second, it brought home the importance of urban support in any attempt to confront the central élite. For the *mohajirs*, unable to identify with the movement, the strength of the Sindhi movement and the definite presence of Sindhi nationalist sentiments intensified a perceived need to organize themselves to defend their core interests as a separate entity.

The movement was largely spontaneous and beyond the control of the traditional Sindhi leadership: the *waderas* (feudals), had to join in to preserve their standing. It was apparently at this point that Zia was convinced that his policy of co-opting Sindhi feudals, or even wooing Sindhi nationalists, in order to outflank the PPP and Benazir Bhutto (who, as the head of the PPP, became the centre point of opposition to Zia after her return from exile in April 1986) was not working. There was a general perception that, around this time, the government began in earnest to explore the possibilities of organizing an urban political force designed to counter-balance the PPP's leverage (derived from a strong popular base in rural Sindh) so as to neutralize Benazir Bhutto's so-called "Sindh card". For instance, the **Herald** reported:

> "There have been deliberate attempts to divide the people of Sindh on an ethnic and sectarian basis. The mushroom growth of *mohajir* organizations and the government's undercover support for Jiye Sindh elements are widely regarded as part of a plan to subvert the democratic movement in the country."[53]

The Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) emerged on the scene in 1984. There were reports, subsequently confirmed but denied by both parties, of inital contacts between the MQM leader Altaf Hussain and the nationalist Sindhi leader, G.M. Syed.

Under Zia, the share of the *mohajirs* in the civil bureaucracy was further reduced, and the Pakhtuns reaffirmed their position as junior partners of the Punjabis in the military and civil bureaucracies. Army rule meant an intensification of the trend of Punjabi domination, given

[51] Interview of a poor Sindhi woman living in Karachi during a regional study project carried out for the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (Colombo). See **Women, Religion and Social Change**, Shirkat Gah, Lahore, 1989.

[52] Bhutto's case was heard by seven members of the Supreme Court. The verdict of death was pronounced by a narrow margin of one - all four judges in favour being Punjabis, while the three remaining non-Punjabi judges all cast dissenting votes.

[53] Zahid Hussain, "Sindh: The Untold Story", **The Herald**, November 1986, pp. 41-54, p. 48.

the composition of the army. However, the *mohajirs* were in no position to take on the Punjabi ruling élite to reclaim their former, relatively privileged, position at the centre. Rather than make a fight of it at the national level, they withdrew, as it were, to urban Sindh for the defence of what they saw as their core interests. First, there was a brief concord between *mohajirs* and Sindhi nationalists directed against the Punjabis. Then came the conflict between the *mohajirs* and the Pakhtuns. The Sindhi-*mohajir* dimension remained muted.

By the mid-1980s, Karachi was a powder keg waiting to explode. The Pakhtuns played a major role in an arms and drugs mafia in the city which had evolved from Pakistan's active involvement in the Afghan war, as a result of their domination of the transport sector. Furthermore, in part due to the high level of in-migration of Punjabis and Pakhtuns to Karachi, the city had become even more unmanageable with power failures, water shortages, uncollected garbage, etc.

Finally, the 1985 "partyless" elections, boycotted by almost all the main political parties, propelled the situation to the explosion point. Held in order to paint a civilian facade while leaving power in the hands of the military, these elections were fought throughout the country on the basis of divisive appeals to ethnic, sectarian and *biraderi* (kinship) groups, since party affiliations could not be invoked.

The fuse was ignited in 1985. A spontaneous bout of rioting was sparked off by a fatal traffic accident in Karachi, and the event was "manipulated" into the first of what would become a series of incidents of ethnic violence.[54] The following years saw a spate of violence involving the *mohajirs*, Pakhtuns, Punjabis, Sindhis, and the arms and drugs mafia. Initially between 1986 and 1987, the killings:

> "which pitted *mohajirs* against Pakhtuns and then Punjabis, masked the real crisis in Sindh. Two powerful forces had been growing in isolation from each other during the 70s and 80s - the urban, mostly *mohajir*, middle class and the newly emerging Sindhi middle class. They were on a collision course long before they actually took aim at each other, but the absence of a political voice on either side gave no warning of their impending conflict."[55]

IV. The Anatomy of Violence and Organized Ethnicity

1. Chronology of the Riots: 1985-1990

1985

Karachi was marked by numerous riots in 1985, beginning on l4 April with a fatal traffic accident caused by a private transport wagon. Bushra Zaidi became the fifteenth student from Sir Syed College to be a victim of reckless driving in front of the college. In one sense, it was a manifestation of the anarchic pattern of urbanization that the city had seen over many years. The police reaction to a spontaneous protest by women students sparked off clashes between both men and women students, largely *mohajir*, and the transporters, identified as Pakhtuns. The reaction of the police was interpreted as a reflection of their role in the Punjabi-dominated state apparatus.

The second phase of violent confrontation followed once each side perceived its own ethnic group as its constituency. The transporters were able to portray the incident, at least within their own community, as unprovoked aggression against the Pakhtuns. The *mohajirs*

[54] While local residents alleged that it had been engineered by the arms and drugs mafia, it is equally likely that Pakhtun transporters feeling the heat, decided to defend themselves by making it out to be an attack on the entire community.

[55] Amineh Azam Ali, "Sindh: A Point of No Return", **The Herald**, July 1990, p. 61.

interpreted it as a measure of the indifference of the state and the contempt with which it held *mohajir* lives.

By 18 April, the ethnic interpretations of the conflict had gained prominence in Orangi, a squatter settlement of 800,000 people in Karachi of which approximately 25 per cent of the population was Pakhtun and another 25 per cent was *mohajir*.

The transporters, on strike, successfully paralyzed the city and demanded compensation for their wagons that had been burnt during the riots. A curfew was imposed in many parts of the city, but youths continued to challenge the police and cause disruption through erecting barricades, burning tyres and vehicles, and looting. The strike, news blackout by the administration and the curfew helped to isolate the communities by minimizing interaction.

By 22 April when this round of riots was brought under control, 41 Pakhtuns and 12 Biharis had died and hundreds of others had been wounded in Orangi. More riots, and armed clashes between rioters and police, followed in May. The announcement by the administration on 29 May that all rioters arrested would be imprisoned sparked off further confrontation between the public and the police.

On 12 July, a social worker was killed by police in Lyari, an area of Karachi, and there were subsequent charges of a drugs mafia linked to transporters (both alleged to be almost entirely Pakhtun) and the police. The mafia was accused of deliberately provoking ethnic confrontations in order to divert attention from the lucrative drug trade.

In 1985, conflicts also broke out between student groups in rural Sindh. The Jiye Sindh Students Federation (JSSF) clashed with the People's Students Federation, the Democratic Students Federation and JSSF-Progressive. The army was ultimately called in to restore order.

1986

August 1986 saw an escalation of ethnic and political violence. On 8 August, the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) held its first major rally in Karachi. In subsequent months, *mohajir*-Pakhtun clashes occurred, with both sides backed by ethnically defined political organizations, i.e. the Pakhtun Muteheda Mahaz (United Pakhtun Front) and the MQM. On 14 August, the second round of MRD agitation demanding an end to martial law took place in the interior of Sindh. In Karachi, Lyari was also the site of confrontations. Most of urban Sindh, as well as much of the rest of the country, was quiet.

On 22 October, an accident at an unmanned railway crossing in Karachi resulted in several deaths. This ignited spontaneous agitation and acts of violence against property in Landhi and Korangi the next day as the public protested the government's carelessness in allowing the situation. Some elements - allegedly organized in gangs - specifically targeted Pakhtun shops and businesses while the police looked on; the anti-government demonstration thus evolved into a *mohajir*-Pakhtun confrontation. On 23 October, Pakhtuns retaliated by attacking a lower middle class Bihari locality.

Against this backdrop, on 31 October MQM activists organized their second major rally to Hyderabad via Sohrab Goth, a Pakhtun stronghold. During the ensuing clashes, four to six MQM activists died. When MQM members returned to Karachi in the evening, Altaf Hussain, the movement's leader, and many others were arrested, igniting one of the worst instances of ethnically directed violence in which *mohajirs* were targeted in Orangi and Pakhtuns in Liaqatabad. This was the first time that Hyderabad was linked to the violent events in Karachi. Incidents continued for a week, at the end of which damages and losses in Karachi were said to have reached Rs. 1 billion (roughly US$ 55.5 million).

The situation remained explosive and further riots occurred when bombs mysteriously exploded in the *mohajir* stronghold of Liaqatabad. Violence directed against property and the police continued to spread to other areas of Karachi as well.

Riots continued in November and December as MQM activists agitated for the release of Altaf Hussain. On 10 December, the population of Hyderabad responded to a call by MQM to strike, leading to clashes with the police.

In what can be seen as a spectacular display of mismanagement, the government began "operation clean-up" on 12 December, which consisted in evacuating Pakhtuns living in Sohrab Goth, ostensibly to clean up caches of narcotics and arms. While little of either was found, the net result was the worst ethnic violence yet seen. By 13 December, "operation clean-up" had expanded to surrounding areas where Pakhtuns had gone on strike to protest the events. A pamphlet claiming that this was the first step to evict all Pakhtuns from Karachi, was circulated shortly thereafter.

On 14 December, a military-style "operation" carried out in Orangi led to the massacre of 40 non-Pakhtuns. The attack, directed from a mosque, avoided all Pakhtun houses and shops and did not retreat at the arrival of police (who refused to intervene) or at curfew. The arrival of the army at 4:30 signalled the retreat.

In rural Sindh, campus violence continued as well. In April, two students died in a clash between the People's Student Federation (PSF) and the JSSF at Chandka Medical College. In May, when the Sindh President of PSF, Iqbal Hisbani, was killed by the police, his death was blamed on the Jiye Sindh Students Federation. Other clashes between two JSSF factions led to additional deaths. Hundreds of JSSF students were arrested, 50 of whom went on a hunger strike.

Also in 1986, the PPP initiated the "Doves of Peace" committees, actually composed of militants, in order to counter physical violence. By May, the anti-dacoits operation of the government, carried out by the army, ensured army presence in many areas, including Moro, the site of intensive MRD activity in 1983.

1987

In 1987 in Karachi, a Punjabi-Pakhtun union, the Punjabi Pakhtun Ittehad (PPI) was formed. Several times during the year, clashes broke out between the PPI and MQM. In reaction to the December 1986 massacre in Orangi, Karachi, there were confrontations between *mohajirs* and Sindhis in Hyderabad in 1987.

1988

In 1988, the worst clashes since the MQM took power in local elections in Karachi and Hyderabad erupted between police and Pakhtun demonstrators in Karachi, in Sohrab Goth, and evolved into a Pakhtun-*mohajir* conflict. In the latter part of the year, the first serious violence between Sindhis and *mohajirs* erupted in Hyderabad. An attempt on the life of Hyderabad's hard-line MQM mayor, Sheikh Aftab, resulted in rioting by the JSSF and MQM students which left 37 dead. Trouble continued to spread to interior cities, like Larkana and Tando Jam, while violence further intensified in Hyderabad where one massacre led to the deaths of over 220 people. As most of the victims were *mohajirs*, the large *mohajir* communities in urban Sindh blamed Sindhi extremists for the killings. Only nine hours after the Hyderabad killings, revenge killings in Karachi claimed at least 58 lives.

1989

In April 1989 - in Hyderabad - what started as essentially student trouble, in which Urdu-speaking and Punjabi students were beaten up by unknown assailants presumed to be Sindhi

extremists, led to wider clashes in which several Sindhis were killed. Clashes also occurred in the interior city of Nawabshah between *mohajirs* and Sindhis.

1990

Following the death, in July 1989, of three PSF leaders at Karachi University (allegedly at the hands of the All Pakistan Mohajir Student Organization (APMSO)), the two PPP-affiliated youth groups (PSF and the People's Youth Organization) had been constrained not to retaliate by the PPP federal government which wanted to preserve its alliance with the MQM at the centre. When the MQM unilaterally broke the accord in December, this restraining factor was removed.

1990 thus began with high tensions in Karachi, with increasingly violent acts being perpetrated by the two political rivals in a battle for control of the city. The first day of February witnessed a mad race of kidnapping with the PPP and MQM abducting members of the other group. A total of 200 members from both groups were abducted. Many were inhumanely tortured. The death toll - including deaths caused by police action - rose to 60, and dozens remained missing. On 4-5 February, the attempts of the administration to bring both sides to the negotiating table failed. Finally, the army stepped in to mediate and on 9 February, 27 of those kidnapped were exchanged and immediately admitted for hospital treatment. In March 1990, the exchange of hostages between the PSF and the APMSO (the MQM student wing), personally overseen by the Karachi Corps Commander, illustrated not only the tactics to which the militant youth of both sides had resorted, but also the army's role as mediator. Not only were the political forces unable to come to grips with the situation themselves, but no institution or individual other than an army commander had the legitimacy or power to push through such an arrangement.

Only two months later, at Pucca Qila in Hyderabad, a police force, comprising the "Eagle Squad" and other reserves from Sindh's interior, opened fire on two demonstrations. Over 100 people, including twelve women, died and another 250 were injured. The police alleged that they had been fired upon first by MQM activists among the demonstrators. Police and administration incompetence nevertheless seemed to be a key factor in the tragedy. Riots in Orangi also led to the deaths of 20 persons.

2. The Anatomy of Violence

In Karachi itself, which had virtually no Sindhi presence, the clashes were initially between *mohajirs* and Pakhtuns, and later Punjabis. While in many cases the violence was spontaneous, it was often not spontaneously ethnic. In the first major incident, the Bushra Zaidi case of 1985, violence initially took the form of protest against the rising death toll that was resulting from increasingly reckless driving. It was only days later that the incident was given an ethnic twist when the Pakhtuns as a community, who generally owned private transport wagons and controlled much of the city's transport, were made out to be the villains of the piece. This established an often repeated pattern of spontaneous eruptions of violent protest quickly turning, or being converted into, ethnic confrontation.

More often than not, the administration's contribution was, consciously or otherwise, to aggravate the situation. In some instances it used force indiscriminately, thereby galvanizing each respective community behind its more extreme elements. (A prime example of this was Pucca Qila in May 1990: the majority of the 100 people who died were killed by police firing.) The same phenomenon, of extremists taking charge, could also be observed when violence against members of a particular community provoked "revenge killings".

One result of the Sindhi-*mohajir* violence of 1986 in Hyderabad - where the majority of the population was *mohajir* but there was also a strong Sindhi presence - was the formation of

ethnic enclaves. However, between the "main contenders", i.e., the *mohajirs* in Karachi and the Sindhis in the rest of the province, the characteristic feature was not direct violence so much as heightened antagonism in what was increasingly perceived by both sides as a zero-sum game for control of resources and means of livelihood. A significant dimension of the violence to which these two communities are still subjected is that which is perpetrated from within. The battles between ethnically based political organizations for recognition as the sole representatives of their respective communities mean that members - especially student members - of a particular ethnic group belonging to "other" organizations or parties are at times severely beaten up, inhumanely tortured and even killed. This happened, for instance, to the PPP's *mohajir* members in Karachi at the hands of the MQM and, though less often, to its Sindhi members in rural Sindh at the hands of the extremist nationalists.

Another form of violence perceived in ethnic terms is that of "dacoities", the phenomenon of armed robbery and kidnapping for ransom that has become characteristic of Sindh. Dacoits in Sindh are hardly a new phenomenon and have long been a part of the feudal setting. The brutal manner in which the 1983 MRD movement was put down in Sindh's rural areas, however, resulted in a qualitative increase in their ranks as young men fleeing from villages to escape army repression joined them to survive. While most of these dacoits, though not all, are Sindhis and frequently use the jungles in interior Sindh as their sanctuary, they make little distinction among ethnic groups in going about their business.

In some cases, then, violence is ethnically identifiable, as in the case of dacoits, but is not ethnically directed. It may eventually become ethnic but it is not spontaneously so. And where it is ethnically directed, it can be directed indiscriminately at members of another community or of the same community. Amidst all this, as a manifestation of the polarization among the communities as well as aggravating it, are the ethnically based organizations which, while articulating the demands of their respective communities and making use of legal as well as democratic instrumentalities, are also simultaneously plugged into a system of violence, extortion and terrorism that drastically undermines civil society. However, the situation and impact of ethnically defined organizations in rural and urban Sindh is very different.

3. Organized Ethnicity

In rural Sindh, the popularity of the national, rather than nationalist, PPP has remained a key factor in mitigating and channelling ethnic consciousness in ways that have effectively kept the struggle for Sindhi rights from becoming a popular movement for separation, notwithstanding the extreme rhetoric of, for instance, G.M. Syed - a veteran politician and well-off landlord as well as the spiritual leader of the Jiye Sindh Tehrik ("Long Live Sindh Movement"). While Syed has often publicly stated his preference for the breakup of Pakistan, the great majority of Sindhis cannot be categorized as separatists. There are various strands to Sindhi nationalist groups, the most important of which is the Jiye Sindh Tehrik - a kind of umbrella organization for a number of somewhat autonomous nationalist fronts that include members of the professional middle class and students as well as the peasantry. The Jiye Sindh Mahaz is formally the main wing with the intellectual leadership, but in a sense the more important organ is the Jiye Sindh Students Federation. There are separate organizations for women, labour and children and all of these are directly responsible to the Jiye Sindh Supreme Council where every front is represented by two members.

Rasul Baksh Palejo, leader of the Awami Tehrik that played a major role in the 1983 rural uprising in Sindh, has since come to have a more limited influence. However the Sindhi Shagird Tehrik, led by him, has a following among students, and the affiliated Sindhiani Tehrik, led by his sisters, is a significant presence among rural Sindhi women. Less significant are the Sindh National Front led by Mumtaz Bhutto, and the Sindh-Baluch-Pakhtun Federation of Abdul Hafeez Pirzada, as well as a host of other small groups, such as

the Sindh National Alliance and the Sindhi Ittehad (Unity), that have so far not succeeded in coming together despite efforts to do so. Given the membership of certain leaders in both the Jiye Sindh and other groups, and considerable autonomy of the various fronts, it can be said that the Jiye Sindh is more "a movement" than "a party".

On the other hand, the PPP, despite losing some ground nationally in recent years, remains the dominant political force in Sindh and is perceived by Jiye Sindh and others as a major obstacle to their own immediate advancement. According to a Sindhi nationalist leader who was an important minister under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the PPP - both in and out of power - has been able to stem the tide of Sindhi nationalism. In power, they have been able to belie the nationalist assertion that Sindhis are being marginalized. Out of power, they have assumed the role of victim, gaining popular sympathy and hence "stealing" the Sindhi nationalist vote. Many Sindhis, in fact, do not see any contradiction between supporting the militant tactics of some of the groups affiliated with the Jiye Sindh while giving their votes to the PPP.

Efforts to bring together the plethora of political as well as cultural organizations in rural Sindh have yet to bear fruit. Among those who have made an effort in this direction are Jam Saqi and Rasul Bux Palejo, the latter seeking to unite only *bhumiputra* ("sons of the soil") Sindhis, while the former seeks a broader alliance, not limited to ethnic identification, for the rights of Sindh. Efforts like the Sindh National Alliance, from a very broad political spectrum, have not had significant results. While the developments in urban Sindh appear to have had a profound impact on rural Sindhi consciousness, and antagonism and bitterness has reached unprecedented levels, this has not as yet led to a true Sindhi nationalist ideology for anything approaching a majority of Sindhis. One of the key indicators of this is the continuing popularity in rural Sindh of the PPP, which remains unequivocally a political party committed to the federation while drawing its support from all four provinces.

All this is not to say that those espousing a Sindhi nationalist line are not gaining strength. Undeniably the Jiye Sindh Tehrik, which symbolizes such aspirations, is more of a force today than it ever was despite mounting pressures from within. While G.M. Syed continues as head of the movement, the younger, more militant set is gravitating towards the Jiye Sindh Tehrik Progressive faction led by Qadir Magsi, who is alleged by the establishment to have links with India and is allegedly responsible for organizing a number of killings of *mohajirs*, including the 1988 Hyderabad massacre. Regardless of the validity of the charge, there is little doubt as to the nature of the antagonism that exists on both sides of the ethnic divide.[56] The Sindhis widely perceive the centre, as synonymous with the Punjabis, to be a major part of the problem. The power of *mohajirs* in Sindh is believed to be derived ultimately from their Punjabi allies at the centre.[57]

In urban Sindh, especially Karachi, the situation was very different until the army operation against the MQM begun June 1992. The MQM, with its student wing the APMSO, virtually dominated the city, both in terms of street power as well as by virtue of its strong presence in institutions of civil society such as the Provincial Assembly, the Metropolitan Council, educational institutions, the courts, etc. The MQM's lower middle class leadership commanded loyalty across virtually all sections of the *mohajir* community, including women.

[56] In the course of interviewing a broad spectrum of Sindhi middle class intelligentsia, it emerged that many regarded the extremist politics of the Jiye Sindh Taraqi Pasand (JSTP) and other such groups as juvenile and harmful to the Sindhi cause. However, another view held by many was that the JSTP was a necessary evil in that the group was capable of the kind of violence necessary to meet the "*mohajir* phenomenon" due to which they were being slowly pushed out of their own (i.e., Sindh) cities.

[57] According to a prominent leader of the Jiye Sindh Taraqi Pasand, "The historical role of people of Sindh is to fight against the Punjab", Dodo Mehri quoted in "The Sindh Card", **The Herald**, September 1990, p. 59.

Entire families, rather than individuals, were usually members of the organization, making it into an extremely powerful social force.

Since its formation, unemployed *mohajir* youth and students have formed the backbone of the movement, holding executive and leadership positions, while financing has come partly from its large middle class membership and partly from the city's industrial and trading élite which has not, as a matter of course, had membership ties with the organization. The financial contributions of some of the middle class members have been made possible only by virtue of illegal activity. The MQM is a very tightly organized, hierarchical movement with a charismatic leader surrounded by a small *coterie* of advisers. In public, Altaf Hussain is projected as a cult figure ("pir" or religious divine, "quaid" or leader) who demands absolute loyalty. Within the organization, even the MQM members of the National Assembly, including ministers, have not really been regarded as figures of authority and power in their own right.

From the top down, the key levels of authority in the MQM are the Markaz (centre) and the Zones, followed by Sectors. The primary level is the Unit. These organizational levels are independent of any control by elected representatives, no matter how high the public office they hold, and the Zonal Incharge controls the Minister of National Assembly (MNA) or Minister of Province Assembly (MPA) of his area. The organization allegedly has an armed wing as well, with several thousand personnel.

The procedures for membership are extremely strict. "Oath membership" is open only to *mohajirs* loyal to the organization that have been recommended by the Unit. A potential member has to have performed tasks (legal or illegal) specified by the organization as a "volunteer" and "activist". Before being inducted, a candidate is observed by a group of members not known to him. The totalitarian aspect of the organization is revealed by the extent to which it regulates various spheres of the community's existence and activity. For example, in an MQM controlled neighbourhood, it is rare for one *mohajir* to register a case against another *mohajir* in the police station. Similarly, family feuds, financial assistance and, at times, even marriages are negotiated and/or sanctioned at the level of the Unit or the Sector.

All of this, however, including the violent aspects of the MQM, have been viewed favourably by the constituency which sees itself as besieged, on what it regards as "home territory", by the Pakhtuns, Punjabis and, at a slightly different level - though most seriously - by the Sindhis. The general deterioration of civil institutions and the increase in lawlessness as well as the lack of credibility of the state and its inability to intervene meaningfully in their situation, have contributed to creating a perceived environment of extreme vulnerability among *mohajirs*. In the MQM, many of them have found a sense of security. But massive popular support for the MQM has not derived only from security considerations. Aside from its coercive tactics and blatantly ethnic orientation, in many ways the MQM can be seen as a politically "correct" organization. The austere lifestyle of its middle class leadership stands out in sharp contrast to the ostentatiousness and waste that characterize the lifestyle of not only the feudal leadership of rural Sindh, including that of the PPP and various nationalist groups, but that of the political élite in much of the rest of the country as well. In elections which saw MNAs and MPAs cross party lines in return for monetary or other compensations, the MQM representatives were among the rare exceptions who refused such activity. Of course, anyone contemplating such a move would have risked serious reprisal by the movement.

The MQM has intervened successfully in problems resulting from bureaucratic red-tape, including the question of housing, has been able to ascribe its failure to do more for the welfare of its constituents to the antagonism of the Sindhi provincial government or the Punjabi-dominated centre. Ironically, many aspects of the MQM, such as the class basis of its

leadership and the discipline of its executives, have brought it a degree of admiration in other parts of the country, despite the general lack of sympathy outside urban Sindh for some of its demands. For example, the MQM has demanded that the *mohajirs* be declared a fifth nationality and, by implication, that Karachi or a larger portion of urban Sindh be recognized as the fifth province.

Nevertheless, critics of the MQM point to the somewhat mysterious, if not sinister, origins of the organization and its spectacular leap to prominence precisely at the time when Zia found his "Sindh policy" in ruins. According to Altaf Hussain himself, he joined the army at the time of the 1971 war and subsequently applied, unsuccessfully, for a regular commission in the army. He then formed the APMSO, which achieved no particular prominence at the time. By 1979, relations between Altaf Hussain and the Zia régime had deteriorated to the point where the former was jailed "on charges of stoning, arson, illegal assembly and taking down the Pakistan flag and replacing it with a black flag".[58] Subsequently, Altaf Hussain left the country for some time and virtually disappeared from prominence. In the immediate aftermath of the 1983 MRD movement in Sindh, he was allegedly recruited by the Zia régime through the Inter-Services Intelligence cell operating in Karachi to rally the large number of Urdu-speaking *mohajirs* of urban Sindh as a counterweight to the mobilized masses of rural Sindh. What had been perceived by the Zia régime as a politically destabilizing factor and a serious impediment to its own consolidation was dealt with by the effective but dangerous ploy of reinforcing rural Sindhis in their confrontation with the urban Sindh. Furthermore, in 1985 - as a sop to the Sindhi establishment - a relatively unknown Sindhi politician, Mohammed Khan Junejo, was handpicked by Zia to occupy the office of prime minister while he himself retained power as president and chief of the army.

In spite of the debate on the origins of the MQM and the extent of manipulation of the movement by the state and its agencies, the popularity to which it could lay claim among large sections of the *mohajir* population in Sindh is clearly indicated by its performance in elections at the local, provincial and national levels. It is instructive to note that the MQM made significant strides soon after Benazir Bhutto's return to the country in April 1986. Coinciding with the launching of what became known as the second MRD movement in August that, much as before was limited to rural Sindh, the MQM held its first massive public meeting in Nishtar Park in Karachi. Following this show of strength, the MQM was involved in more that one act of violence in the closing quarter of the year, involving Pakhtuns in Karachi and Sindhis in Hyderabad.

To avoid alienating any section of their multi-class constituency, both Jiye Sindh and the MQM have tended to remain relatively vague when it comes to elaborating a socio-economic programme. The basic political programme of the Jiye Sindh Mahaz revolves around the goal of secession from Pakistan, gravitating at times towards conditional acceptance of provincial autonomy. While it rejects the notion of a fifth nationality, a conditional acceptance of *mohajirs* as Sindhis is also indicated. The MQM focuses on the *mohajirs* as a group - their grievances and demands - rather than spell out a programmatic agenda, claiming to adhere to, in the words of Altaf Hussain, a philosophy of "practicality and realism". The MQM has virtually overturned the traditional identification of the *mohajirs* with the Islamist lobby, making it clear that the *mohajirs* neither claim nor bear any special responsibility for Pakistan or the upholding of the Islamic ideal. In part, this stance has been necessary to maximize the distance between itself and the Jamaat-e-Islami which commanded extensive loyalty among the *mohajirs* of urban Sindh before the rise of the MQM phenomenon. In an interview in December 1986 the chairman of the MQM, Azeem Ahmad Tariq, said clearly "We want to establish our identity as a separate nationality". The party has subsequently moved away from

[58] "Personality Interview" (of Altaf Hussain), **The Herald**, September 1987, pp. 129-134.

this demand, at least formally. It has publicly insisted, for instance, that the provincial quotas for government jobs be enforced in the context of urban and rural Sindh.

The sudden death of Zia-ul-Haq on 18 August 1988, along with much of the army's high command, created a political vacuum in Pakistan. In December, the PPP formed the government at the centre, in Sindh, and in the North West Frontier Province. Many saw this as an opportunity for the PPP and the MQM to jointly work towards a solution for Sindh's complex and manifold problems. Initially, the two sides did collaborate, on the basis of a common accord. The MQM supported Benazir Bhutto at the federal level while the PPP government in Sindh inducted MQM ministers. Co-operation, however, did not achieve much and did not last long, and at the best of times seemed to be a half-hearted effort on the part of both. In August 1990, within a few months of the parting of ways, the government of Benazir Bhutto was summarily dismissed by President Ghulam Ishaq and the national assembly as well as the provincial assemblies were dissolved. In the subsequent elections, the PPP was unable to form the government at the centre and also in any of the four provinces, including Sindh. Instead, a multi-party coalition, the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), or Islamic Democratic Alliance, assumed power under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Nawaz Sharif had previously served as chief minister in Punjab during the latter part of Zia's rule, and retained this provincial office, despite the best efforts of Benazir Bhutto, under her government at the centre. His retention of office and subsequent elevation clearly reflected the continuity of policies that Zia had instituted during his tenure.

In its accords, first with the PPP and subsequently with the IJI, the MQM made similar demands. A number of these concerned problems of rationalizing the urban setting, with emphasis on such areas as the mass transport system and federal funding of educational institutions. Another set of demands, however, seemed to reflect the MQM's concern with the demographic realities in Sindh and the potential for changing the balance in its favour. The key demand in this regard was the repatriation of approximately 250,000 Biharis who had been stranded in Bangladesh when it became an independent country. The issue reflected the dilemma of what, at one level, was a very human issue, and at another, had politically explosive implications in terms of the ethnic balance in Sindh. Similarly, the MQM demand for the opening of the Khokrapar border route between Pakistan and India, which would have facilitated travel by friends and relatives of members of the *mohajir* community (many of whom the Sindhis feared would have no desire to go back and would thus augment the ranks of the *mohajirs*) could have been interpreted as a threat to the already precarious position of Sindhis in their own province. The gulf separating the two sides was evident from the pronouncements of their respective leaders. For instance, according to MQM's Azeem Tariq, "Anybody who is a Muslim has the right to Pakistani nationality". In contrast, Makhdoom Khaliq-uz-Zaman, an influential politician and scion of a leading Sindhi family, said: "In the first place, more than 15 lacs [1.5 million] Biharis, Bengalis, Afghans, Sri Lankans, Burmese and others who have illegally settled in Sindh need to be repatriated to their homelands, instead of bringing more outsiders to Sindh".[59] However, by late 1992, the Pakistan government was actively preparing to settle the first Bihari families from Bangladesh in specially constructed residential quarters in the Punjab.

Yet another MQM demand in this same vein had to do with the use of criteria on language and parents' place of birth to be employed in the 1991 Census. The demand was significant because such data could be used to argue that the in-migration to Karachi from other provinces had to be stopped or even reversed in order to offer available jobs first to *mohajirs*. The accord between the IJI and the MQM achieved in November 1989 did ensure inclusion of

[59] Maisoon Hussein quoted in, "Living on Hope", **The Herald,** January 1990, pp. 47-56.

the latter's representatives on the census monitoring committees in Sindh's districts. However, the census issue ultimately became so controversial that the exercise was brought to a halt on the orders of the president. Even this basic exercise, critical to planning and development in any modern state, could not be carried out smoothly in the ethnically charged environment.

Jobs were also a high priority issue for the MQM. The MQM-IJI accord stated that strict and fair implementation of the existing quota system for government jobs on both the federal and provincial levels should be ensured, pending full revision of the system. While this had also been specified in the PPP-MQM accord, the new agreement went on to declare that the existing quota system in Sindh was unjust, biased and discriminatory. At the same time, the agreement specified that quotas for *mohajirs* should be fixed at the federal and provincial levels, as opposed to the existing urban/rural classification.[60]

The revision of quotas proposed by the MQM would have given the *mohajirs* a share of positions according to their population proportion.[61] This was a reversal of their earlier demand that quotas should be abolished in favour of meritocracy. Presumably, the demand for a quota revision concerning *mohajirs* in federal level jobs related only to the Urdu-speaking community living in Sindh. The 1981 census put the proportion of Urdu-speaking households in Sindh at 22.6 per cent,[62] which would have entitled them to a 4 per cent quota in the federal government and about 20 per cent representation in the Sindh provincial institutions. Clearly, such demands reflected the concerns and aspirations of wide sections of the *mohajir* community. At the time of writing, jobs in the federal government are given out on the basis of the following formula: 10 per cent on pure merit; 50 per cent for the Punjab; 7.6 per cent for urban Sindh (including Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur); 11.4 per cent for rural Sindh; 11.5 per cent for the North West Frontier Province; 3.5 per cent for Baluchistan; 4 per cent for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas; and 2 per cent for Azad Kashmir and Jammu.[63] It is significant to note in this regard that urban Sindh has the highest percentage of college graduates nation-wide while rural Sindh has some of the worst educational facilities; and that despite significant differences of living and educational standards, no such urban/rural division exists for the Punjab quota.

Recently, some cracks have appeared in the MQM's hitherto monolithic facade. There has been growing disagreement over what has been publicly portrayed as the question of the MQM shedding its ethnic credentials and orientation and adopting a nationwide orientation as the Muttahida Qaumi Mahaz (United National Movement). In fact, it appears that the militant wing of the party has increasingly been asserting itself.

The attitude of the state towards the MQM is also instructive. Zia's military régime allegedly played a key part in getting the MQM off the ground as a counter-weight to the PPP in Sindh. In the space of a few years, the MQM had become a virtual parallel government in urban Sindh, terrorizing dissidents and opponents and sounding an increasingly aggressive note. The role of the MQM was viewed by the army and others as having grown too important too quickly. As a consequence of the increasing concern with landlessness in Sindh, particularly rural Sindh, an army operation in the province was considered a necessary step. In urban Sindh its target became the MQM. During the army operation against the MQM - apparently not entirely approved of by the incumbent government not least because it was a political ally - in the second half of 1992, the military leadership was accused of murder, rape and other serious crimes. Clear signals went out to the effect that the Haqiqi faction (as opposed to the

[60] The quota system was supposed to expire in 1983 but had been extended by another ten years.
[61] Hamza Alavi, "Nationhood and the Nationalities in Pakistan" in Donnan Hastings and Pnina Werbner (eds.), **Economy and Culture in Pakistan**, Macmillan, London, 1991, p. 177.
[62] "A Shiny New Accord?", **The Herald**, November 1989, pp. 50-51.
[63] The question asked in the Census referred to language "spoken at home" and not mother tongue, so the figure is probably inflated.

Altaf Hussain group) was now regarded as the acceptable one. Resignations by the MQM members in the assemblies were not accepted for months in some cases, and they were pressured to join the Haqiqi faction. Meanwhile, yet another faction emerged under the name of Amn-pasand (peace-loving). Azim Tariq, the Chairman of the MQM, seems to have been accepted by the establishment in place of Altaf Hussain - formerly the all-powerful leader and cult figure - who was pressured to signal his dissociation from the organization. In the course of the operation against the MQM, the army and the police conducted extensive raids in pursuit of MQM leaders and militants. However, reports of arbitrary arrests, illegal confinement, beatings, coercion, etc., have resulted in a feeling of alienation and despair among the members of the *mohajir* community - including those who had little sympathy for Altaf Hussain. The door remains open for factional conflict and violence at some future date.

The state and its agencies have played a significant role in all of this. The ethnic composition of state agencies, combined with often inept handling of volatile situations, has served to aggravate matters. The police force, for instance, is dominated by Punjabis, and its attitude and behaviour towards the local population has evoked protest in urban as well as rural Sindh. Indirectly, the situation has also helped to strengthen the position of the extremists on both sides. For example, in the Pucca Qila incident of 1990 the police virtually laid siege to what it considered an ammunition stock for the MQM of Hyderabad. During the siege, forcible entry into homes by the police resulted in public protest and a number of people, including women, were killed by police gunfire. Subsequently, the army intervened and brought matters under control; virtually no weapons were found when it conducted a search.

However, the other version of the same incident provides a completely different picture. It is premised on the contention that Pucca Qila was indeed an ammunition dump and that women were deliberately brought out by the MQM to serve as a shield while militants fired the first shots from behind. In any case, the operation was seriously flawed to the extent that the police fell into the MQM's trap and caused the PPP government one of the major embarrassments of its tenure. Beyond this, however, the Pucca Qila incident illustrates the virtually autonomous role played by the army in Sindh. Its intervention without the invitation of the provincial government in Sindh or the federal government, had no constitutional sanction. Furthermore, it refused the police request that it be allowed to conduct the search for arms along with the military. Subsequently, the army turned down the request of Benazir Bhutto's government for assistance in restoring law and order in Sindh. The chief of army staff insisted that the army would carry out such operations only under section 245 of the constitution which, among other things, allows for the suspension of the writ jurisdiction of the high court in the areas of army operation. When the army was refused such a blank cheque, the chief of army staff commented that the army was not interested in "chasing shadows". After the government of Benazir Bhutto was dismissed by the president, such powers were neither asked for nor granted by the care-taker government, or the subsequent government of Nawaz Sharif. Coming as it did after the army's role in Sindh in 1983 and the rumoured link with the formation of the MQM in 1984, not to mention its high profile in Sindh, the Pucca Qila incident served to reinforce the general perception that the army was an even more active player in Sindh than in the rest of the country.

A vivid illustration of the army's central role, though in another context, is provided by its mediation between the PPP and the MQM in Karachi. After the MQM-IJI accord in November 1989, the MQM organized a massive public meeting on behalf of the IJI in Karachi. Within days of the meeting, at the end of January 1990, the MQM claimed to have uncovered a plot by PPP activists to assassinate Altaf Hussain. The activists were caught and badly beaten up by the MQM, setting off a string of revenge kidnappings by both sides. On 7 February, the MQM called for a strike to press for the release of its members, and a number of people were killed on that day both by police firing and, it seems, by efforts to enforce the strike. Subsequently, the MQM agreed to negotiate the release of hostages with PPP

representatives, but only on condition that the army mediate the exchange. The corps commander in Karachi arranged for the negotiations, which were presided over by a major general (commander Sindh force); on 11 February, 27 hostages were exchanged by the two sides.[64]

The army, however, was probably not the best-placed institution to play the role of arbiter. For a start, its middle and upper level officers were increasingly from the middle class, which meant that this important group had more in common with the *mohajirs* and was relatively sensitive to their concerns. On the other hand, they saw the Sindhi feudal as an oppressive waster, and the impoverished Sindhi *hari* (peasant) as indolent, much as they once did the Bengali peasant. The Sindhi-Punjabi conflict in interior Sindh[65], which stemmed partly from the allotment of choice barrage land to members of the civil and military bureaucracies (mostly Punjabis), fed this myth, as did the antagonism that many in the army seemed to have for the Sindhi feudal and nationalist leadership, treating even the mainstream Bhuttos as "outsiders". Another myth that was created by certain vested interests around the Sindhis and which was geared to appeal to the army (again reminiscent of the Bengalis in the former East Pakistan) was that of being "soft" on India and hence a kind of fifth column. Some in the right-wing establishment would go so far as to suggest that in case of a war with India, while the Sindhis could not really be trusted, the *mohajirs* would serve as a second line of defence. Furthermore, the Sindhi emphasis on the mystic Sufi tradition of Islam rather than the more doctrinaire variety that characterizes both the *mohajir* and the middle class more generally helped dilute the Sindhi's identity as Muslims in the army's eyes and hence cleared the ground, psychologically, for a hard line approach that serves to further alienate broad sections of civil society.

V. Conclusion: Towards Management or Resolution

In all of this, it is important to remind ourselves of the failure of the political forces to play an effective role. The PPP's performance, for instance, not withstanding constraints upon it, has been disappointing. It has within its ranks a substantial number of Sindhis as well as *mohajirs*, something that is not true of any other party in Pakistan. However, it has essentially relied on out-manoeuvring the MQM rather than on building bridges between the two communities. Misjudging the MQM's strength, the PPP has not seriously attempted to establish its credibility amongst Karachi's *mohajir* community, which should have been possible without denting its core constituency in rural Sindh. For instance, it failed to make a concerted effort to address one of the MQM's primary demands as well as a matter of deep concern for Karachi's population, i.e., the resolution of Karachi's massive transport problems. The PPP was on the right track in providing generous incentives for industry to be set up in the North West Frontier Province, with the ultimate goal being to stem the Pakhtun migration to Karachi and thus lessening the pressure on already inadequate resources there, and even, at some future date, encouraging a reverse flow, as one way of diffusing the situation. However, it was perhaps a case of doing too little in a situation requiring bold and multifaceted initiatives. As it turned out, some of the key incentives provided to the Gadoon Amazai industrial zone in the North West Frontier Province were subsequently withdrawn by the IJI government.

---

[64] See Abbas Nasir, "Sindh: A Government At Last ?" , **The Herald**, March 1990, and the dailies **Dawn**, **The Muslim** and **Nation** 1-14, February 1990.

[65] Barring Hyderabad and Sukkur, a significant proportion of the non-local population in the interior of Sindh is comprised mostly of relatively better off Punjabis whose ethnic affiliation with the centre has been a major underlying factor for the considerable tension that exists between the two communities. There was a minor exodus of small Punjabi landholders settled in interior Sindh under the government of Benazir Bhutto (1988-1990), partly as a result of insecurity but also due, allegedly, to propaganda by the PPP's rivals at the centre, i.e., the IJI and, at the level of the province, the MQM.

Fundamentally, instead of taking up the challenge, the political parties have tended to adjust to the growing ethnic divide. The PPP, for instance, simply decided not to field any *mohajir* candidates in Karachi in the 1990 elections.

In much the same way, trade unions too seem to be conforming increasingly to the ethnic divisions. In Karachi's largest industrial concern, the Pakistan Steel Mills, for instance, the United Workers Front (UWF), the collective bargaining agent backed by the MQM, is almost an adjunct of the latter. Since its formation, the UWF has steadily eroded the support of other, more politically defined, labour organizations. The MQM has also used its position in government to recruit its members and sympathizers to the Mills, literally in the thousands. This type of activity is more in evidence in other public sector institutions as well where political expediency overrides requirements of efficiency and over-staffing, or padding, is the norm. In the Steel Mills, for instance, whereas the required labour force is approximately 10,000, according to the new chairman of the Mills, General Sabeeh Qamar-uz-Zaman, the actual number of people on the payroll is 30,000.[66]

On a more positive note, the role of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), a unique development programme based on a participatory approach, reveals how ethnic conflicts and clashes have been contained. Asia's largest squatter settlement, Organgi encompasses approximately one million people, with representation of practically all communities in Pakistan. Riots have been controlled in part by a concerted effort to redress the grievances of the victims in concrete ways, such as the immediate rebuilding of their homes, regardless of their ethnic identity.

Under the circumstances, the role of the state as a mediator has become crucial for the issue now cannot be resolved purely at the local or provincial level - though the latter must be accorded precedence - given the bitter and hostile environment in Sindh. Unfortunately, institutions of the state (such as the army) that continue to play a significant role in the affairs of Sindh may be able to manipulate the players or enforce a certain kind of stability, but it is beyond their ability to remove the underlying strains and causal factors. On the other hand, the credibility of institutions of civil society that could play an important role is also being eroded at a rapid rate. The judiciary, for example, is seen as being increasingly subject to the executive's influence.[67] In terms of political institutions, the eighth amendment to the constitution[68], brought in by Zia-ul-Haq in 1985 as a pre-condition to returning to a democratic process, and the Shariat Act of 1991, encroach upon the Assembly's legislative powers. It is generally believed that some of the members of the national and provincial assemblies are either themselves involved in the drugs business or are financed by the drugs mafia. In Sindh, the political style and tactics - including heavy handed treatment of political opponents - of the chief minister Jam Sadiq Ali, has not helped matters at all.

For its part, the official press has, by and large, played a partisan role and, if anything, has aggravated the situation by virtue of a definite slant in its reporting. It has emphasized ethnic groupings and violent incidents while cases of co-operation and providing of sanctuary have gone unreported. On the other hand, the independent press, albeit limited has been attacked by exclusivist ethnic and sectarian organizations, and has had to contend with physical intimidation and assault on personnel as well as premises, while it has received little support from the state which has sought to contain it. The state has exerted pressure, for instance, by

---

[66] "Pakistan Steel on Verge of Bankruptcy", **Viewpoint**, 12 March, 1992, pp. 12-13.

[67] For instance, in the much publicized Unar case, the former prime minister's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, who is accused of being an accomplice in a case of kidnapping and extortion, has been denied bail, while the main accused has been set free on bail on health grounds.

[68] The Eighth Amendment to the 1973 Constitution in amending Article 270-A gives protection to "all President's Orders, Ordinances, Martial Law Regulations, Martial Law Orders...and all other laws made between the 5th day of July 1977 and the date on which this article comes into force...shall not be called into question in any court on any ground whatsoever".

limiting government notices and advertisements, an important source of revenue for many publications. It has also indirectly encouraged violence against individual journalists or organizations, by not taking any prohibitive action in this regard. Far from apprehending those responsible, the Jam Sadiq government often appeared to be a party to the proceedings.

As part of the centre-backed effort to put together a grand anti-PPP coalition of forces in Sindh, Jam Sadiq, the chief minister, took on board the MQM allies in government. The Jam group-MQM alliance in Sindh was viewed by many in the establishment with considerable optimism - as indicative of a growing rapprochement between the Sindhis and *mohajirs*. Unfortunately, such optimism was misplaced since the primary purpose of the alliance was to block the PPP whose members have been subjected to all kinds of repressive and terror tactics under the Jam administration, reminiscent of the worst days under General Zia-ul-Haq. Jam Sadiq, an avid player in the context of Sindh's feudal politics, with the backing of the centre, put together a coalition made up of disparate components motivated only by their common desire to destroy the PPP as the major political force in Sindh.[69] As such it is unlikely to represent a major step forward in the context of bridging what, in terms of the reality on the ground, represents a widening gulf between the *mohajir* and Sindhi communities.

All of which is to say that, barring major rethinking and initiative, Sindh, and by implication the rest of the country, is entirely on course for a major disaster. As it is, under the new Punjabi civilian leadership of Nawaz Sharif, the centre's effort to dislodge the PPP as the major force in Sindh by, on the one hand, promoting the Jam Sadiq group and the breakaway faction of the PPP, and on the other, signing an agreement with the MQM, has led to an uneasy moratorium on ethnic (though not other forms of) violence, providing a surface impression that ethnic violence in Pakistan is under control. However this surface calm could be very misleading as no serious attempt is being made to tackle the underlying causes of the conflict. It would take very little for the violence to erupt again, aggravating the divide and making resolution that much more difficult.

Resolution/management also requires that the regional or sub-regional élites, while presenting their demands, recognize the very real limitations to the resources available at both the national and provincial levels. Management requires that the main actors, at least in civil society, negotiate seriously for a resolution instead of putting forward extreme demands such as the position of being a fifth nationality by the MQM or that of secession of the part of the Jiye Sindh Mahaz. For such a "bargaining" technique seems to have a logic of its own, eroding, with each new instance, the possibility of negotiation or compromise, not least because important sectors of the constituency may get convinced that there is no other option.

Finally, the state needs to allow the institutions of civil society to create an environment in which "alternatives" can be elaborated. And this, at least in part, depends on whether the central élite continues to place a premium on the maximization of its own power and privilege to the exclusion of other equally, if not more, valid claims, or recognizes the nature of the crisis with which it is confronted and makes a serious attempt to come to grips with it. If the centre is inclined to make a beginning, what is urgently needed at the broad political level is clear recognition of the Sindhi's right, by no means exclusive, but certainly pre-eminent, over the resources of their own province. And, equally, there is a need to genuinely address the task of building bridges between them and the other communities that live and work in Sindh. A representative and empowered provincial government could be the first step in this direction. Presently the MQM is in disarray. Altaf Hussain, in the wake of the state's decisive move against the MQM monolith, has been forced out of the political arena. As its three factions fight for the soul of the *mohajir* community, the MQM Chairman and head of one of

[69] One indication of the close ties between the centre and Jam Sadiq's administration is the fact that President Ghulam Ishaq's son-in-law, Irfanullah Marwat, was inducted in the Sindh administration as advisor on home affairs.

the factions, Azeem Tariq, has been endorsed by Altaf Hussain. Hussain has thereby left the door open for his own re-entry into the organization at some future date under more opportune circumstances. State policy at this juncture could encourage accommodation between communities in Sindh or, alternatively, could lead to further intense factional violence in the years to come.