

# Karachi's Violence: Duality and Negotiation<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This paper offers a series of perspectives on political conflict in Karachi based on the analysis of historical data, projections and scenarios. There are many divergent views about the root causes of violence in Karachi as well as possible ways of ending or reducing the violence. This paper attempts to weave a number of pertinent issues – political party rivalry, ethnicity, and duality – into a single narrative about dangers and possibilities in Karachi. It makes extensive use of publicly available secondary data on violence, voting patterns, ethnic demography, development outcomes, and economic opportunity.<sup>2</sup> None of the data analysis provided here is entirely new to seasoned observers of Pakistan, Sindh and Karachi. What might be different here is the peculiar way in which these various elements are made to fit into a bigger story.

In a nutshell, the story I wish to tell revolves around emergent trends and future scenarios of politics in Karachi, Sindh and Pakistan, in that order. But the political story is shaped here by ethnic demography, class and developmental inequalities, and future economic opportunity. I will begin with the premise that much though not all violence in Karachi is somehow linked to relations between the city's main political parties. However, this is not as bad as it might appear. I will reiterate using available data on voting behaviour that ethnicity remains a marker of political preference to a great degree, and has done so for a long period of time. Political parties have stable support bases among ethnic groups and localities, and this too is not as bad as it might appear.

Secondary data is presented to highlight changing trends and likely scenarios with respect to ethnic demography. These data suggest that Karachi political parties have reason to eye future demographic patterns as threats as well as opportunities, but that threat perceptions need not be as frightening as they may appear at first glance. The city will also continue to provide opportunities to political entrepreneurs because of inequalities based on class and development outcomes across the city's population and communities. Models of urban development that are based on mega projects may not be the only way forward for parties to expand and diversify their support bases.

Karachi has historically been the locus of opportunity for the rest of the country, but its position within Sindh sharpens the economic dualism between urban and rural areas, agriculture and industry, and the two major ethnic groups of Sindh. The city can be an

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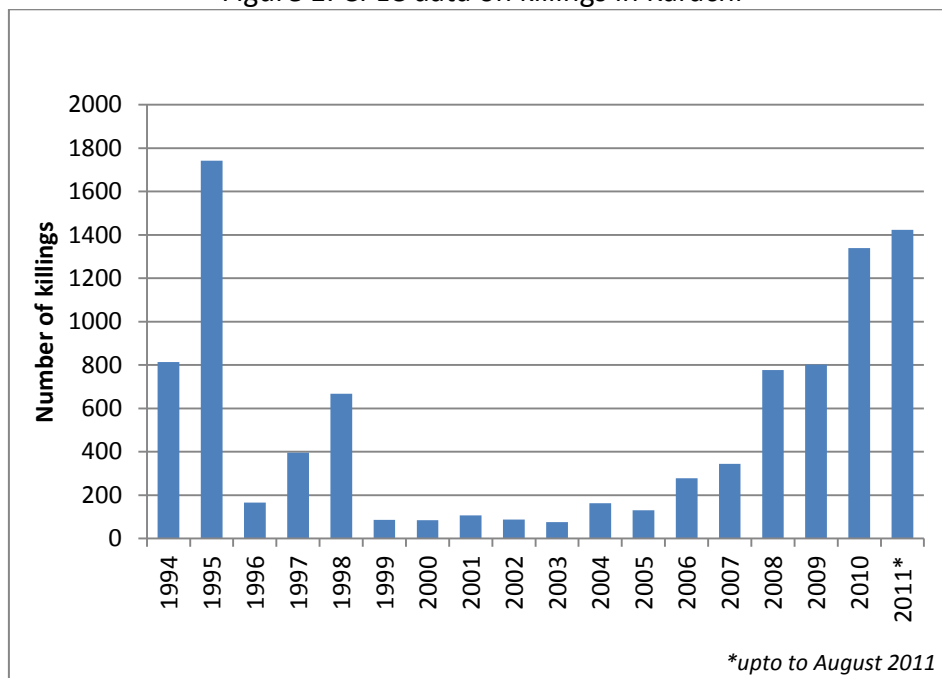
<sup>2</sup> Population data from various Population Censuses carried out by Government of Pakistan and election data from Dawn Election Data compiled through Election Commission of Pakistan sources

instrument for the development of the rest of Sindh, but also a channel through which Sindh’s resources can be exploited while excluding its population from significant benefits. While the future economic scenario for Sindh looks bright on paper, it also demands great foresight on the part of the political and civil society of the province.

### Political violence escalates

According to data compiled by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), over 1,100 people were killed in Karachi during the first six months of 2011, of whom 490 fell victim to political conflict.<sup>3</sup> The Citizen’s Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) which is a semi-official body that works with the police force, reported that there had been 1,423 killings in Karachi between January and August 2011, compared with 1,339 such killings in all of 2010 (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> The 2010 figure itself represented a ten-fold increase over a five-year period, with steep rises in every year in between.

Figure 1: CPLC data on killings in Karachi



Source: CPLC compilation based on open sources

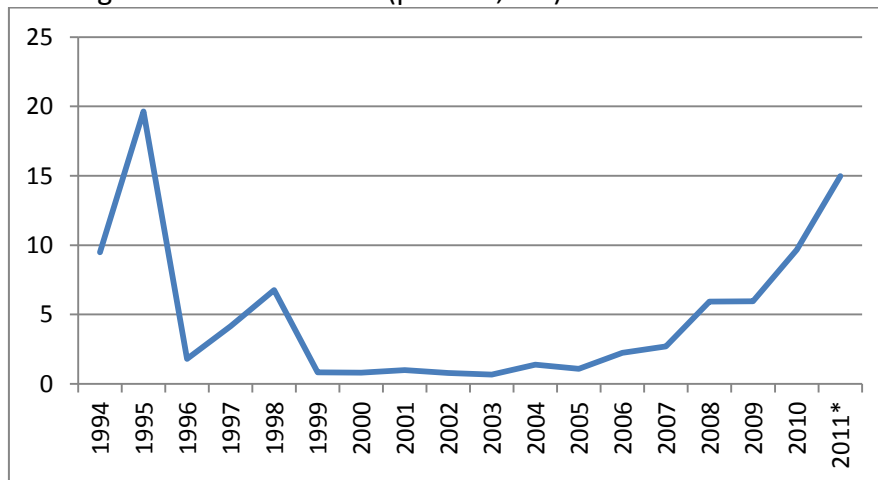
Although CPLC data, based on public sources, do not separately identify politically-motivated killings, it is widely understood that there is close correlation between political and general violence in the city. The Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, which also relies on public sources, and reports casualties due to various forms of political violence across the country, found that ethno-political violence in Karachi claimed 636 lives in 2010, compared

<sup>3</sup> The Express Tribune, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011. ‘HRCP report indicates rise in killings this year’ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/203309/hrcp-report-indicates-rise-in-killings-this-year/> [online], accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2011

<sup>4</sup> Citizens Police Liaison Committee (CPLC), 2011. ‘Development of crime patterns’, <http://www.cplc.org.pk/content.php?page=26> [online], accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2011.

with 600 lives lost in the Balochistan uprising and 2,300 deaths due to the jihadist insurgency.<sup>5</sup> On current trends, Karachi’s political violence is likely to have become comparable, in terms of lives lost, with the war with the Taliban and related jihadists in the north of Pakistan.

Figure 2: Homicide rate (per 100,000) based on CPLC data



Source: Author’s calculations based on CPLC data and population trends

The period since the end of June has been particularly unstable. That was when the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) which is the largest political party of the city walked out of the coalition government in the Sindh province in which it had partnered with the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and the Awami National Party (ANP), the other two parties with significant political support in Karachi. Over 100 people were killed through targeted assassinations and politically-motivated ethnic killings in early July, mostly in the western quarters of the city. The situation calmed down briefly before flaring up again in mid-August, this time with much of the violence being centred in the city’s south.

There have been targeted assassinations of local leaders or supporters of various parties. The killing of a party functionary is quickly followed up by the aggrieved group naming a rival political party as the perpetrator. This often leads to a strike call by the aggrieved group which is enforced by its armed supporters often resulting in the killing of random individuals belonging to the ethnic support base of the rival party. There have also been increasing cases of abduction, torture and murder of people suspected of being rival political supporters or of simply belonging to a rival ethnic group. This is reminiscent of the 1990s when trussed up bodies bearing torture marks turned up in gunny bags, sometimes with pieces of paper bearing gruesome messages of vendetta. Besides killings of political and ethnic rivals, extortion has become particularly vicious with several cases of grenade attacks on non-compliant business premises. Ominously, casualties have recently included a number of Sindh police personnel killed or wounded while intervening in armed clashes between rival groups.

<sup>5</sup> Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), 2011. ‘Pakistan Security Report 2010’

At moments of heightened conflict between parties the implied ethnic associations are used by armed party cadres to deliver messages to one another. Although none of the parties openly admit to ethnic violence, most observers agree that political disputes often do take an ethnic colour with attacks on ordinary citizens belonging to particular ethnic groups being used to settle scores.

### **Ethnic demography and city politics**

Karachi is not only Pakistan’s largest city it is also its most diverse in terms of its ethnic demography. In the last census carried out in 1998 under half of its residents reported their mother tongue as Urdu. They are mostly partition migrants from northern India and their descendants, who may also refer to themselves as Mohajir. Sindhi and Balochi speakers, who were the overwhelming majority in 1947, accounted for 7 and 4 per cent respectively in 1998. Punjabi-Seraiki speakers counted in as the second largest linguistic group at 17 per cent, while 11 per cent reported their mother tongue as Pushto. Over 12 per cent of the population had ‘other’ mother tongues including Kachhi and Gujarati-speakers many of whom are also descendants of partition migrants, but not always self-classified as Mohajir.

There are ethnic patterns in Karachi’s geography (Table 1). Language data in the 1998 census which are reported on the basis of the former districts of Karachi division show that District Central, and to a certain extent District East were predominantly Urdu-speaking while other districts were more or less ethnically heterogeneous.

Table 1: Distribution of population by reported mother tongue – Karachi and former districts in 1998

	Karachi	Central	West	East	South	Malir
Urdu	49	74	40	61	26	16
Punjabi/Seraiki	16	11	15	17	21	20
Pushto	11	5	25	6	8	21
Sindhi	7	2	6	4	11	25
Balochi	4	1	5	2	10	9
Other	12	9	10	11	25	10

Source: Population Census 1998

The political preferences of the city’s ethnic groups were distinguishable as early as the 1970s, when most partition migrants held out for Islamist parties while Sindhis, Baloch and other pre-1947 communities opted for the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). In the mid-1980s the city’s politics became overtly ethnicised with the emergence of the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) which claimed that the partition migrants and their descendants formed a distinct ethnic group. The PPP retained its support in its traditional voting base, and religious parties were virtually eliminated as serious contenders in the city. Since the mid-2000s a new entrant has been the Pashtun nationalist Awami National Party (ANP) which has made inroads into Karachi’s Pushto-speaking communities. Although the MQM changed its name from Mohajir to Muttahida to reflect its formal disavowal of ethnic nationalism, it remains strongly associated with Urdu-speakers. While the PPP has a more ethnically diverse support base it is widely assumed that Baloch and Sindhi populations of particular localities are ‘their people’.

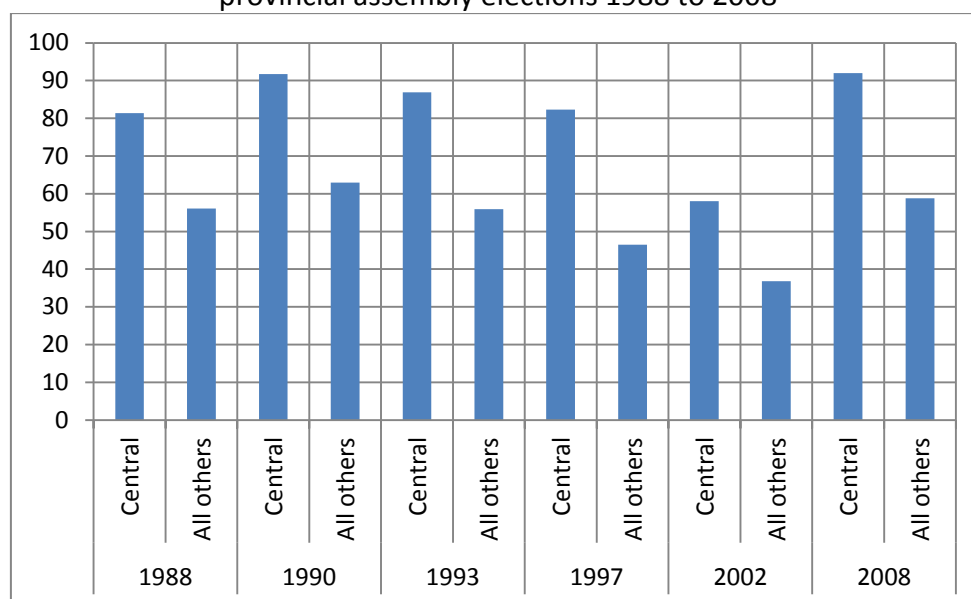
Voting data from successive elections reveal a number of durable patterns that appear to hold despite various qualifications expressed by election analysts on the transparency of any particular contest. The MQM is, obviously, the largest party in terms of vote share, and even at its lowest level in 2002 it managed to gain sufficient votes to win three-quarters of national and provincial assembly seats in the city. At the same time, the PPP is shown to have an enduring presence in the city which seems to have recovered steadily from its low point in 1997. The PPP's vote share is not always reflected in its share of seats won in Karachi, but its presence in the city can act as a vital political bridge between rural and urban areas of Sindh. Although the ANP has made great progress recently, by winning two provincial seats, its vote share up to now has been tiny. In fact, even in the 2008 elections it barely registered an increase over its vote share of 1988 – the difference was the party's strategic focus on winnable constituencies. The ANP may well emerge as a more significant vote-taker in future elections. The religious parties and the Muslim League (combined) have a generally weak presence in terms of vote shares, but they cannot be written off, given their performances, respectively, in 2002 and 1997.

Table 2: Party vote share in Karachi - provincial assembly elections

	MQM	PPP	PML	ANP	MMA/JUI
1988	63	20	6	2	0
1990	71	16	7	2	0
1993	65	19	4	1	0
1997	56	10	22	1	0
2002	42	13	4	1	26
2008	68	22	4	2	1

Source: Author's calculations based on Dawn Election Data, compiled from Election Commission of Pakistan sources

Figure 3: MQM vote share (per cent) in District Central and elsewhere in Karachi – provincial assembly elections 1988 to 2008



Source: Author's calculations based on Dawn Election Data, compiled from Election Commission of Pakistan sources

The ethnic and locality based patterns of politics within the city are visible from the relative vote shares of the largest party MQM in the predominantly Urdu-speaking District Central constituencies and other areas of Karachi (Figure 3). Although the MQM was clearly a major vote taker across the city, its vote share in District Central remained nearly 60 per cent even in 2002 when its overall vote share was down to 42 per cent. In fact, it enjoyed a virtual monopoly in District Central constituencies throughout. It was really in areas outside District Central that the party had to contend with strong competition from other parties.

In terms of electoral politics, it might be argued that the MQM 'over-performed' in District Central – it could afford to lose many votes and yet hold on to all seats there. Although we do not have precise data on the vote banks of other parties, it is likely that they too rely on ethnic and locality-based pockets of support, and possibly even monopoly. In terms of electoral politics over-performing in a particular vote pocket might correspond with under-performing elsewhere. For a party with a strong ethnic association it might pay to soften its ethnic image in order to pick up votes outside its core area, particularly if it can afford to lose some votes in the core area. The idea that parties in Karachi might be 'over-performing' in their 'own areas' will be important in making sense of future political scenarios in the city.

### **Demographic trends and scenarios**

Karachi's demographic trends and scenarios excite much speculation and give rise to various claims, counter-claims, fears and suspicions. We often hear wide-ranging the unsupported claims about the actual size of the population with figures as high as 20 million being cited sometimes in order to lend urgency to appeals that city's problems are already unmanageable. In fact, the source of most demographic data is the population census, and the last one was held in 1998. The census is a controversial event in many places and at the best of times, and there is likelihood that the on-going census will be closely questioned by various critics. With these qualifications, it is still possible to say something grounded about Karachi's population trends.

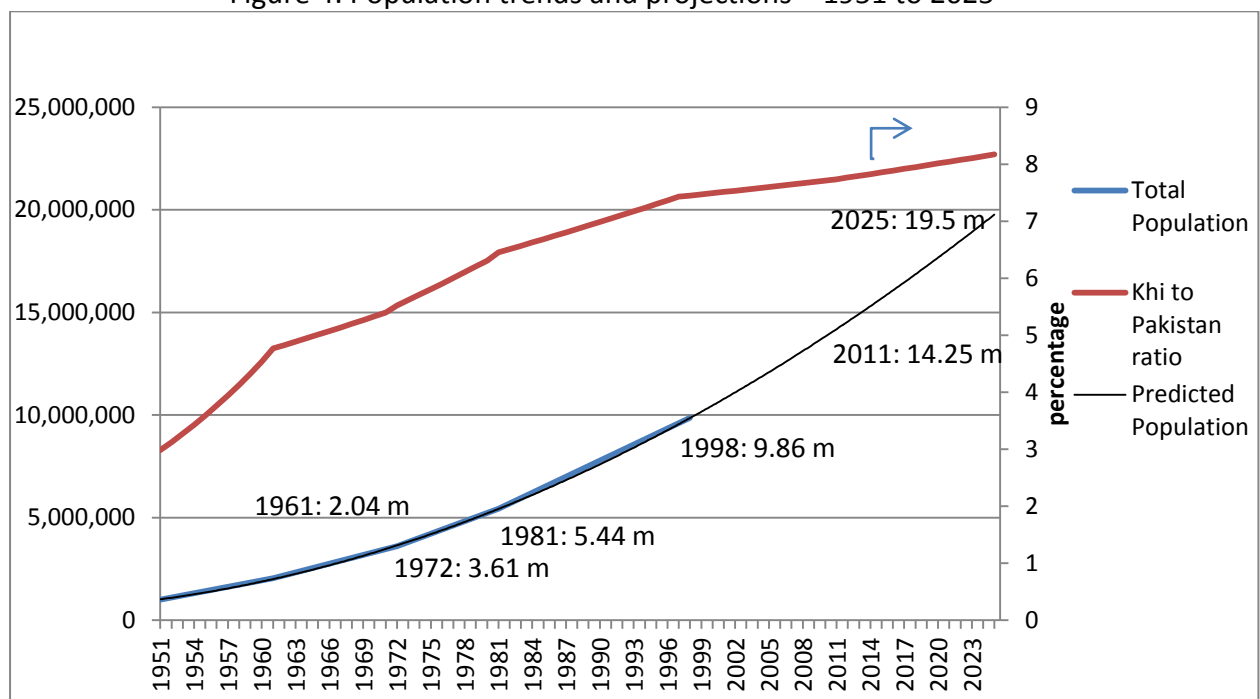
The 1998 census found Karachi to have a population of 9.86 million. It had risen at an average annual rate of 3.6 per cent from 5.44 million in 1981, which was the year of the previous census. The rate of growth had declined steadily between every census since 1951, which means that although Karachi was growing rapidly throughout this period, it was steadily growing less fast. Of course, in terms of absolute numbers more people were added to the city's population, but they progressively represented a smaller proportion of the incumbent residents. Karachi's rate of growth was significantly higher than that of Pakistan as a whole, as migrants from across the country came here. But there was a slowing down in this process too, as the gap between the growth rates of the city and the country narrowed.

Projecting onwards these trends in growth rates, Karachi's population is estimated at around 14.25 million in 2011 (Figure 4). By 2025 we can expect the city to have just below

20 million people. Under most growth scenarios, Karachi will plateau out at around 8.5 per cent of the national population over the next few decades.

The city’s ethnic demography has also been undergoing significant changes, and it is a reasonable expectation that these changes will also happen less slowly in the coming decades. Using the change in the ethnic composition between 1981 and 1998 as a guideline Figure 5 projects the language composition of the city in 2011 and 2025. Urdu speakers lost their majority status in the city between the last two rounds of the census in 1981 and 1998. Given that migration from non-Urdu speaking communities elsewhere in Pakistan is an important contributor to Karachi’s growth, this is understandable. Those speaking Pushto and Sindhi increased as a proportion of the population. For the purposes of this analysis Punjabi and Seraiki speakers are combined together because earlier rounds of the census failed to make adequate distinction between them. This group too registered an increase, mostly due to an increase in Seraiki speakers.

Figure 4: Population trends and projections – 1951 to 2025

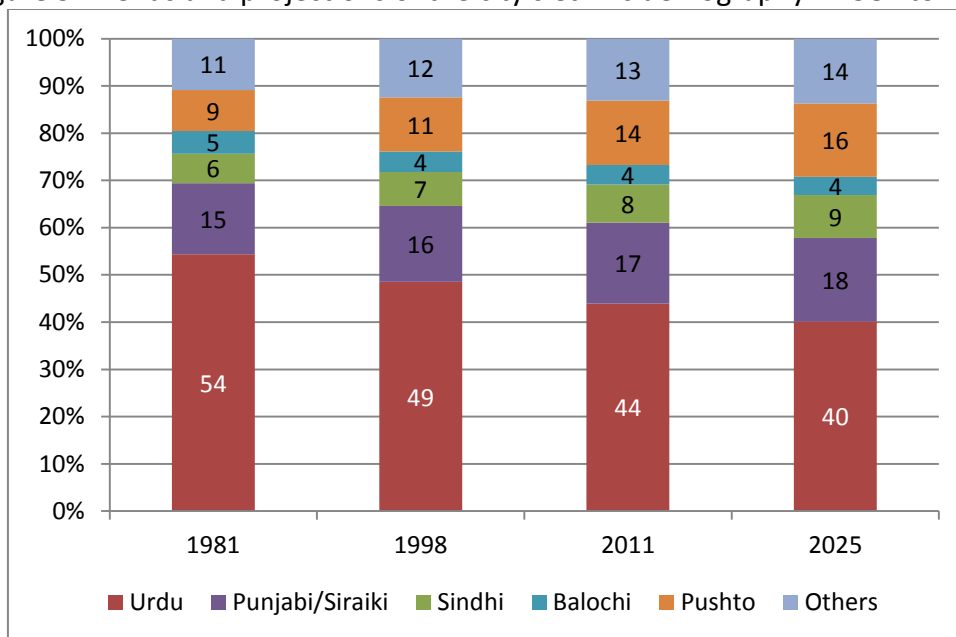


Source: Author’s projections using population census data

Projecting these trends onwards, it is estimated that Urdu speakers constitute around 44 per cent of the city’s population in 2011. Punjabi/Seraiki speakers are the next largest group, followed by Pushto speakers. Looking further ahead, the Urdu speakers will remain the largest plurality, and even though their proportion will have declined to 40 per cent, they would still be twice as numerous as any other single language group. The catch-all category ‘others’ which includes various ethnic groups will also remain substantial. The ethnic distribution of the population is unlikely to change very dramatically beyond 2025, as growth rates decline across the country, other urban centres emerge, and Karachi’s share of Pakistan’s population plateaus out.

As Karachi becomes more ethnically heterogeneous, it will naturally favour cross-ethnic political coalitions either between or within parties. It will become increasingly unrealistic for any one party to dominate the city on the basis of ethnic affiliation alone. Some might interpret this outlook as an unwelcome one for the MQM. Given the history of the party, and its success in gaining virtual monopoly in predominantly Urdu-speaking constituencies, there may well be some substance to fears of changes in the city’s ethnic demography. But the same problem could well affect other parties such as the ANP and the PPP if they are too exclusively associated with particular ethnic vote banks. At the same time, there are opportunities for political parties to soften their ethnic affiliation and appeal to more diverse ethnic and locality-based pockets of support.

Figure 5: Trends and projections of the city’s ethnic demography – 1981 to 2025



Source: Author’s projections using population census data

### Localities, class and development interventions

Karachi is, obviously enough, not just about ethnicity. There are many more sources of social, economic, cultural and political diversity and plurality. Around half if not more of Karachi’s population lives in localities that started life as unplanned settlements, and the poorer among the successive waves of migrants as well as those who claim to be indigenous have found sustenance in these localities. Unplanned settlements, and the slow process of regularisation associated with these, are often cited as sources of heightened political and ethnic conflict in the city.

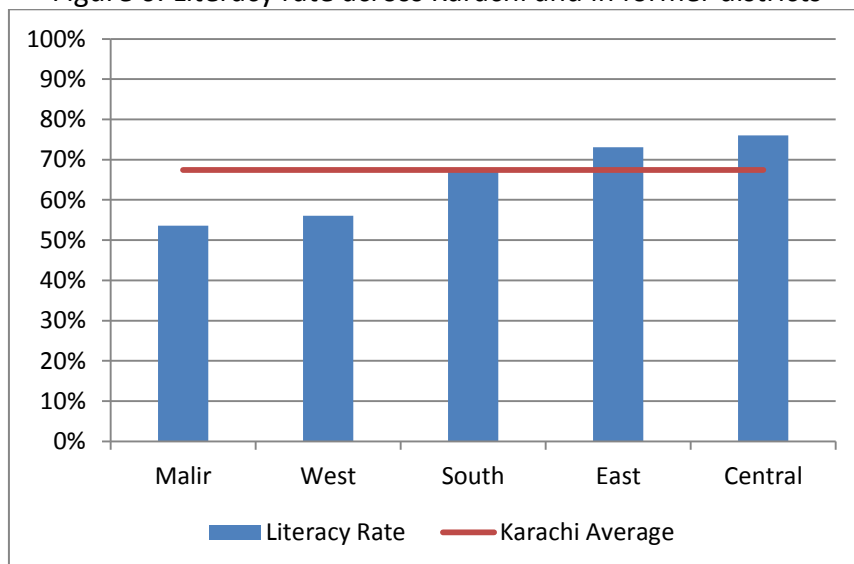
Inequality between localities in terms of income, wealth, education, and infrastructure is a hallmark of any major city and Karachi is no exception. Data from the 1998 population census is used to illustrate the nature of socio-economic heterogeneity in Karachi at a given moment in time. The census provides data at the ‘charge circle’ level. This is not an administrative unit, but merely a territorial unit used by the census organisation. There were 1,286 charge circles in Karachi for which we have information on population, literacy



and basic infrastructure. A charge circle allows us to go much below the Union Council which is the lowest level of political representative under SLGO 2001. There were 180 Union Councils in the 18 towns of Karachi, and therefore an average of around 7 charge circles in each Union Council.

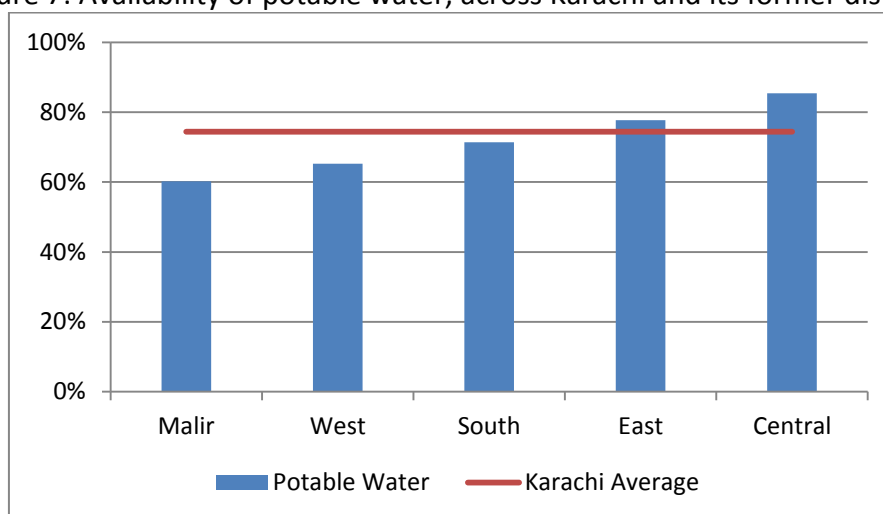
Things have obviously changed since 1998. Many of the charge circles that had low literacy rates, or low levels of service provision have become more developed. But the snapshot that the census presents is still useful because it tells us something about the geography of inequality. Even if many charge circles of 1998 have changed the fact remains that further population clusters have been added to the city thus creating new pockets of class-based inequality, sometimes organised along ethnic lines. These new pockets of relative deprivation are what allow the city to function, as it consumes the labour offered by their residents. They also offer potential for development and opportunities for political entrepreneurs to respond to people’s needs.

Figure 6: Literacy rate across Karachi and in former districts



Source: Population census 1998

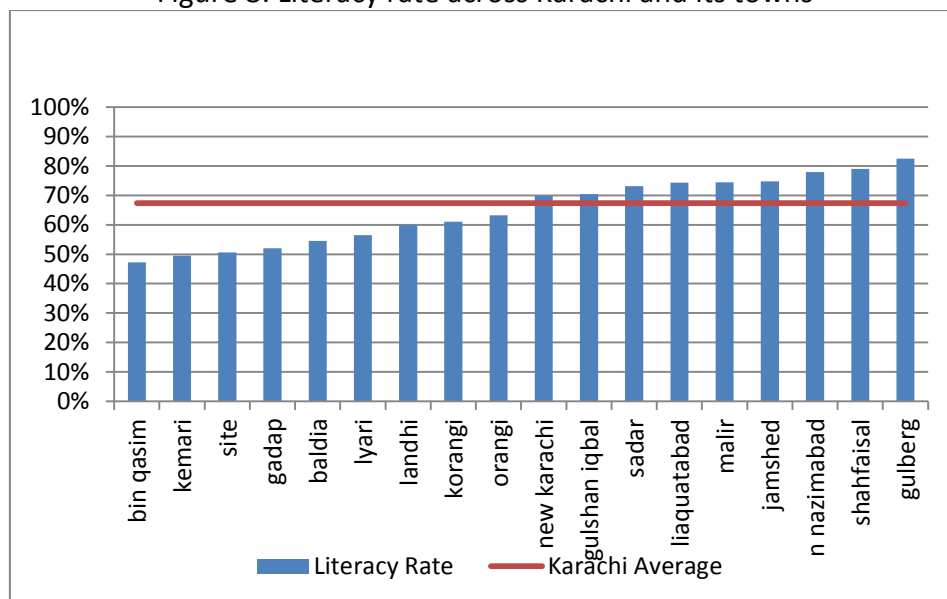
Figure 7: Availability of potable water, across Karachi and its former districts



Source: Population census 1998

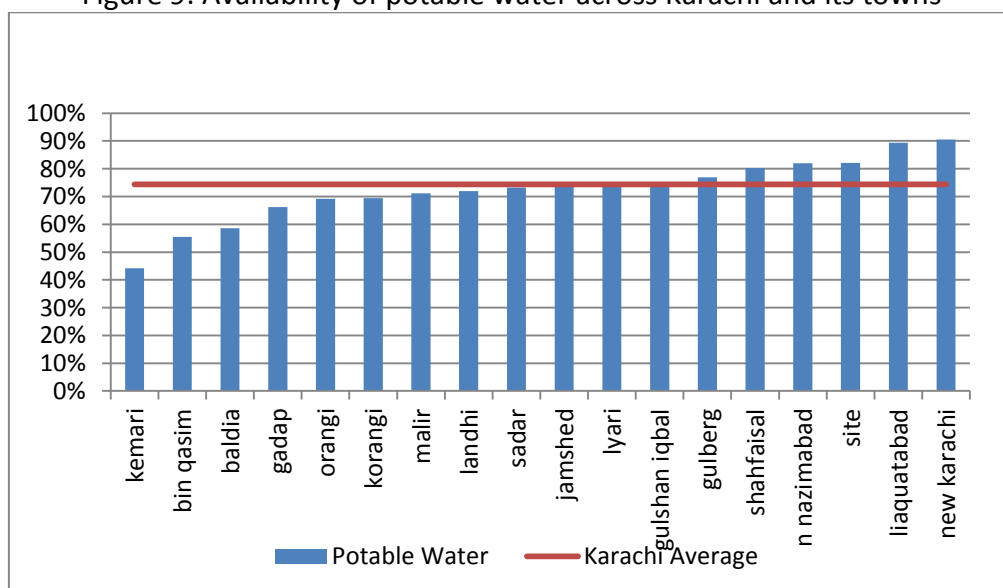
Karachi had a relatively high overall literacy rate compared to Sindh and Pakistan taken as a whole. There was considerable variation within Karachi though, with District Central at over 75 per cent and Malir at just above 50 per cent (Figure 6). Similarly, while around 75 per cent of the households across the city had access to potable water in 1998, the proportion was around 85 per cent in District Central and 60 per cent in Malir (Figure 7). The variation across the city was starker still when we look at towns rather than the former districts. Gulberg town had a literacy rate of over 80 per cent while at the bottom, Bin Qasim, was well below 50 per cent (Figure 8). The towns that were the best and worst served were different when it came to potable water, but the inter-town contrasts were equally striking. In Liaqatabad and New Karachi around 90 per cent of homes had potable water, while in Kaemari the proportion was just above 40 per cent (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Literacy rate across Karachi and its towns



Source: Population Census 1998

Figure 9: Availability of potable water across Karachi and its towns

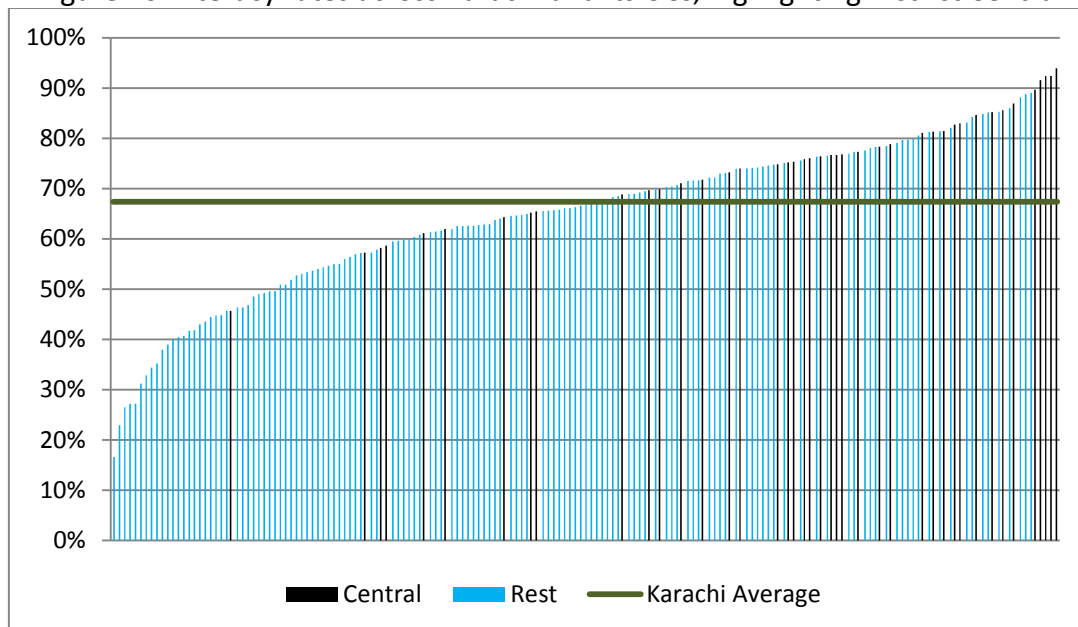


Source: Population Census 1998

These differences, which can be broadly taken as measures of socio-economic heterogeneity, may have diverse causes. It is possible that the literacy rates are lower in communities where a large proportion of the population is made up of relatively recent rural-urban migrants, and that over time there is a natural process of catching up. Similarly, in newer localities of migrants it may take longer to provide the infrastructure necessary for supplying potable water. There are also those who would argue that that these forms of inequalities and dualities are integral to the hierarchies and power relations ingrained in models of urban planning prevalent in Pakistan. There may also be valid complaints of discrimination against particular localities at different moments in time. The fact of heterogeneity suggests, however, that there will be room for political mobilisation around issues of regularisation and public service provisioning. In some cases this mobilisation might correspond with ethnicity, but in most cases it will correspond with class.

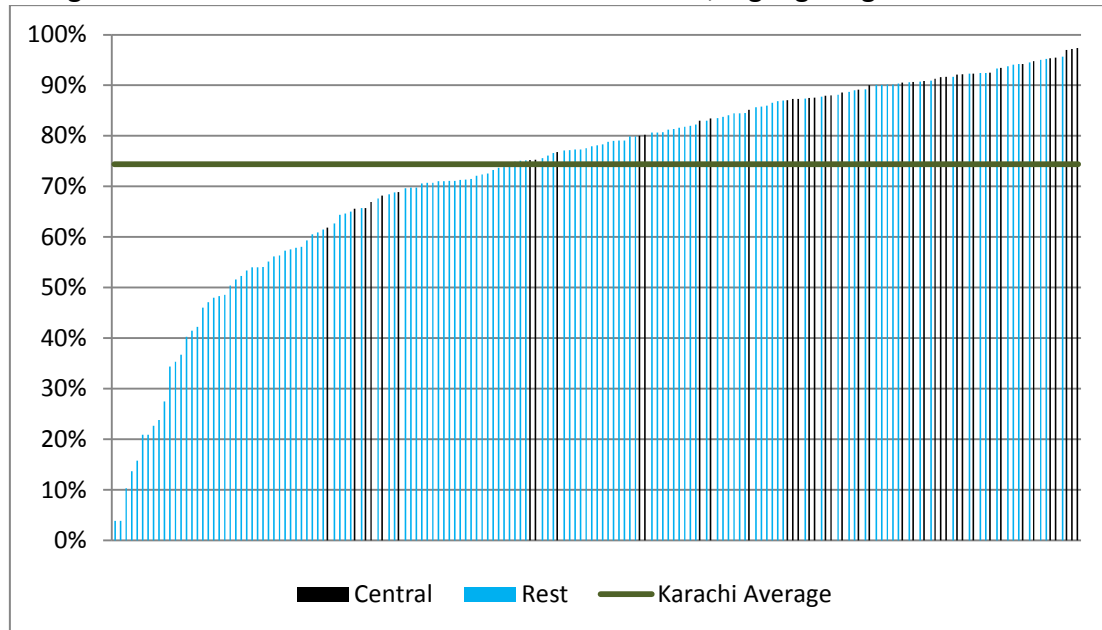
Socio-economic heterogeneity becomes starker still when we move to lower levels of territorial aggregation. Figures 10 and 11 respectively illustrate Union Councils by literacy rates and availability of potable water, while highlighting those Union Councils that are within the former District Central. The UC-wise illustration shows that there are entire UCs in Karachi where the literacy rate was below 20 per cent, and where less than 20 per cent of homes had access to potable water. What is striking, moreover, is that localities with different levels of development – or potential sources of mobilisation – need not be at opposite ends of the city. While most UCs within the former District Central were with high rates of literacy and potable water, even within that district there were many whose levels of development were similar to the least developed towns.

Figure 10: Literacy rates across Karachi and its UCs, highlighting District Central



Source: Population Census 1998

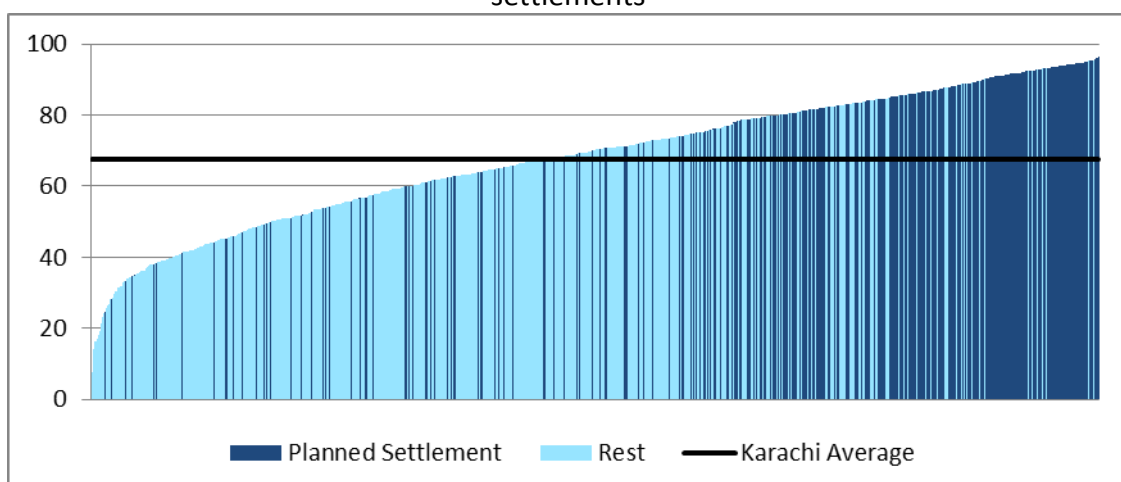
Figure 11: Potable water across Karachi and its UCs, highlighting District Central



Source: Population Census 1998

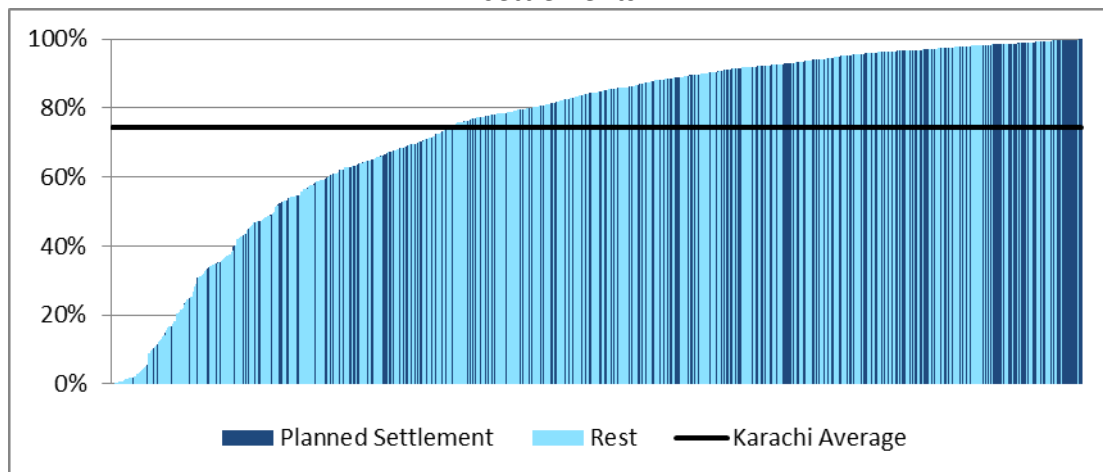
The charge circle is the lowest territorial unit for which census data were available. The average charge circle of Karachi had around 11,000 residents in 2011. Figures 12 and 13 respectively show literacy and potable water availability respectively for the charge circles, highlighting those charge circles which appear to be made up entirely of planned settlements. These figures show, interestingly, that while planned settlements were clustered around high levels of literacy, there was more variability with respect to potable water, with many supposedly planned settlements faring badly in 1998.

Figure 12: Literacy rates across Karachi and its charge circles, highlighting planned settlements



Source: Population Census 1998

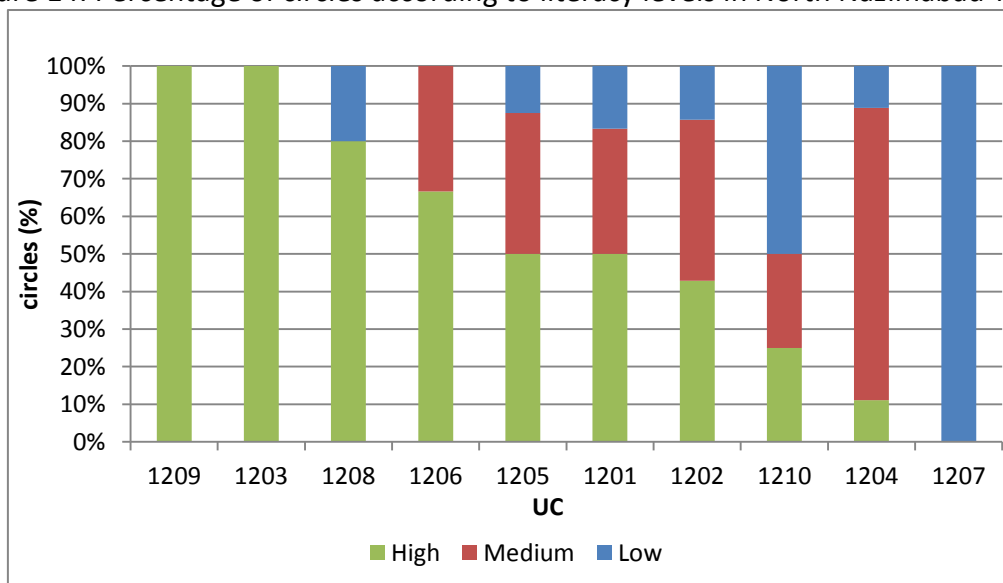
Figure 13: Potable water across Karachi and its charge circles, highlighting planned settlements



Source: Population Census 1998

While the more developed charge circles and union councils tended to be clustered together geographically, there was a great deal of heterogeneity within localities. Taking North Nazimabad Town for illustrative purposes, Figure 14 shows that all circles in two of its UCs had high (90-plus) literacy rates, while in one UC all circles had literacy rates in the low (0-60) band. Even within individual UCs there could be much variation. There were UCs in North Nazimabad in which individual charge circles had high (90+), medium (61-90) and low (0-60) literacy rates. This case is merely illustrative of the fact that there are localities with diverse levels of development in Karachi - across districts and towns, within towns, and even within UCs. The potential for rival political mobilisation, therefore, was ever present not only along the lines of ethnicity, but also along the lines of class, regularisation and infrastructure provision.

Figure 14: Percentage of circles according to literacy levels in North Nazimabad Town



Source: Population Census 1998

## Diversifying constituencies

Karachi's political parties have various options before them. At the local level their supporters and activists, many of them armed, are involved in turf wars which often escalate into ethnic violence. In many instances the politics of Karachi's heterogeneous localities encourages parties to become involved in enforcement activities which can easily morph into extortion rackets. Models of party organisation which involve some coexistence of 'political' and 'militant' wings have been successful, at least with respect to local control in Karachi. But as the events of the last three years have shown, such models can lead to such a level of violence and instability that the very existence of parties and their links with their constituents can be put at stake.

The MQM presents an important but not unique case in this regard. During the Musharraf period, particularly between 2005 and 2008, the party not only controlled municipal functions, but also began to exercise *de facto* authority over state-owned land around the city which formally comes under the jurisdiction of the provincial government. It had come out of the shadows following a period of state repression and human rights abuses. At this time the MQM began to refashion its public image from Mohajir militancy into the delivery of the mega-city dream. The party was successful in gaining some level of international acceptance as a voice of liberal secularism particularly after 9/11, and was able to build upon its own past struggles against Islamist parties in Karachi while doing so. On urban issues it became a proponent of visible large-scale projects such as flyovers and express roads. However, migration into the city was continued to be read by the MQM through the prism of Mohajir fears of losing ethnic predominance over the city. Most poor migrants from rural areas settle in irregular settlements inside the city, or in newly emerging unplanned localities on its outskirts. The mega-city vision came into conflict with these very communities who were put under pressure to make way for large projects.

In short, the MQM was unable to make a transition to non-ethnic politics at a time when it enjoyed virtually unchallenged authority in the city and beyond. Its attempts at turning political advantage into hegemonic control provoked a backlash which opened the door for the PPP and the ANP to win or win back supporters in the poorer irregular settlements populated by the pre-1947 communities or migrants from other parts of Pakistan. Most of the non-Mohajir areas, particularly the densely populated and rapidly growing irregular settlements became visible centres of resistance to the party.

Although the MQM is the largest party of Karachi, and has its own distinctive form of organisation, its experiment with diversifying its political constituency holds lessons for everyone. The reliance on the mega-city dream in the context of Karachi alienated potential supporters among those who might have been open to mobilisation along demands for regularisation and local level consolidation. But there is nothing unique about the fascination of MQM with the mega-city dream. It is a dream that is being sold across the world, and was in particularly strong form during the global property market boom of the mid-2000s. The lesson from Karachi is that no party can afford to turn its back on the city's uneven socio-economic development, as there will always be constituencies to mobilise among the large number of localities that are bound to lag behind. Moreover, as

demographic trends suggest, parties that are focused on electoral politics will consciously need to dilute their ethnic affiliations.

### **The bigger picture**

Despite their bitter rivalries in Karachi, there were sound reasons for the PPP (and its ANP allies) to enter political partnership with the MQM in Sindh after the 2008 elections which saw off General Musharraf's military government. Although the PPP enjoyed a simple majority in the Sindh assembly it needed a broader coalition in the centre where it had a plurality. The PPP leadership was also aware that MQM retained the capacity to disrupt security in Karachi, thus making Sindh virtually ungovernable. The MQM, for its part, stood isolated in national politics due to its close alliance with General Musharraf, and welcomed the opportunity of coming back in from the cold and also retaining some power. Perhaps most importantly, PPP, ANP and MQM shared their opposition to Islamist nationalism, particularly its jihadist variety. These parties were most likely encouraged to work together by foreign powers such as the United States and Britain which had played a key role in negotiating the transition from military to civilian government.

The accord between these parties was clearly unstable given that according to CPLC data killings doubled in Karachi in the year of transition in 2008. The fact that violence continued to increase while these parties remained partners in government suggests at least a tacit understanding that not all local level violence would be controlled. Many observers believe that local party cadres, particularly armed ones, have developed major economic stakes in extortion rackets and other sources of rent that come from controlling territory. As argued above, there is certainly scope for local level enforcement and mobilisation, that the city's uneven development engenders. If local anxieties and insecurities have come in the way of broader political cooperation, it is a costly price for the city to pay indeed.

Accord between Karachi's political parties, particularly the MQM and the PPP, but also the ANP, can underpin the rollback of undemocratic forces in Pakistan. The fact that these parties are able to control violence in the city is both an indictment but also a possibility. Pakistan's politics are divided along many lines, and on the main national issues of division – foreign policy, attitude towards Islamist extremism, provincial autonomy – the parties with representation in Karachi have similar views.

### **Economic future**

The economic stakes too are much larger than anything that local extortion rackets and turf battles can yield. Sindh is has historically been a key engine of growth in Pakistan. Although much of the growth has been built upon the agricultural economy it is Karachi with its port and infrastructure which has been the main locus of wealth creation. This is well understood by ordinary people as well as the elites of Pakistan. Karachi's pre-eminent economic position within the national economy, however, has often been at the detriment of the rest of Sindh which is among the poorest regions of the country. Much of the political articulation in the rest of Sindh is with respect the exploitation of the rural and agrarian economy by urban-based elites with strong footholds in the state apparatus. The organisational paraphernalia of the modern economy (or capitalism) in the form of large

corporations, the financial sector and mass media are seen as being controlled by the cities, often in opposition to the interests of the rural poor and elites alike. While Sindh taken as a whole is richer, in terms of per capita income, than Pakistan, the main advantage resides in Karachi (Table 3). Karachi's 'national' income per capita was estimated at \$1,483 in 2006-2007, some 80 per cent higher than that of the rest of Sindh.

Duality has been part and parcel of the economic development models which Pakistan and many developing countries have adapted in accordance with their own local conditions. The duality we observe between regions, within provinces and inside the city, also becomes a focal point for political mobilisation. Pakistan economic future depends on the exploitation of its strategic location and its natural resources. The last few decades have seen the discovery of and exploitation of resources such as petroleum.

Table 3: 'National' incomes of Pakistan, Sindh and Karachi under various scenarios

	Actual		With Thar coal	
	Total (\$ million)	Per capita (\$)	Total (\$ million)	Per capita (\$)
Pakistan	145,638	921	195,638	1,237
Sindh	40,633	1,070	90,633	2,388
Karachi	21,118	1,483	21,118	1,483
Rest of Sindh	19,516	823	69,516	2,930

Source: Author's calculations based on Economic Survey, Sindh government data on Thar coal resources, and World Bank estimates of Sindh's provincial GDP

Sindh will remain an important engine of economic growth in Pakistan in the future, not only due to Karachi, but also increasingly because of major discoveries of natural resources there. Simply the development of Thar coal would have added at least \$50 billion to the national economy in 2006-2007. This would have meant an increase in Pakistan's per capita national income by 34 per cent (Table 3).<sup>6</sup> In terms of provincial and regional per capita 'national' incomes, Thar coal would have made Sindh nearly twice as wealthy as Pakistan taken as a whole, and within Sindh, made the rest of Sindh twice as wealthy as Karachi. Thar coal is the most important, but by no means the only natural resource that holds promise of future economic growth.

Such scenario building is clearly incomplete in the absence of a more detailed discussion of the politics of resource development. But it is merely suggestive of the economic possibilities, and the types of issues that will need to be resolved politically, particularly in light of the political and constitutional tendency in Pakistan towards greater provincial autonomy and resource ownership.

<sup>6</sup> Calculations based on data from: Ministry of Finance, 2007. 'Economic Survey of Pakistan 2006 – 2007'; Thar Coal and Energy Board, Government of Sindh, 2008. 'Thar Coal field Sindh, Pakistan: Facts and Figures'; The World Bank, 2009. 'Project Appraisal Document on a proposed credit to the Government of Pakistan for a Thar Coal and Power Technical Assistance Project', Report No 4800-PK; and unpublished World Bank sources.



For economic growth in Pakistan to benefit from Sindh's resources there will need to be agreements among diverse political constituencies. In the absence of such agreements there is potential for grave conflict which can paralyse the development of these resources. Karachi, which has historically been seen as a tool for the economic exploitation of the rest of Sindh will now have to play the role of an instrument for the harmonious and mutually beneficial development of the entire province and the country. Political negotiation for peace in Karachi can form the basis for wider agreements between political constituencies for the realisation of great economic rewards.

## **Conclusion**

This paper started from the premise that Karachi's violence is at least partly linked to the temper of accord between the main political parties that represent the city. Ethnicity and political preferences have been entwined for a long time, and at moments of conflict it sometimes become difficult to distinguish between ethnic and political violence. While parties in Karachi – notably MQM, PPP and ANP - vary in terms of their support bases and forms of organisation, no party enjoys a monopoly in terms of popularity. Parties are also not immune to the charge of maintaining links with armed groups, or preying upon ethnic difference.

Karachi contains a great deal of geographic heterogeneity, not only along lines of ethnicity but also in terms of class and development. There are clusters where particular ethnic groups enjoy a majority but also parts of the city with highly mixed populations. Pockets of class and development inequality are obvious not only across the city but within districts, towns and union councils. These various dimensions of differences are quite often sources of political mobilisation, at least at the local level. Dualities and inequalities within the city also generate a logic of local enforcement and 'turf' control.

The demographic outlook for Karachi favours the building of cross-ethnic political coalitions within or across parties. This is because the city's ethnic composition is likely to become even more heterogeneous than it is at the present. Even at the present moment, parties in Karachi tend to 'over-perform' in their core areas and under-perform in other areas. If parties were to lessen the value they attached to 'controlling' territory, they might be able to improve their overall performance through diversifying their support bases.

Class and development inequalities between localities are likely to remain significant - even as some localities catch up other new ones that lag behind will emerge. There will always be scope in Karachi to base political mobilisation on these within-city disparities, often using the vehicle of ethnicity. Political strategies that over-commit to conspicuous mega-projects are likely to come into conflict with the poorer segments of the city, who live in unplanned settlements, with insecure tenure, and with poor access to public infrastructure.

There is a strong political basis for accord between the main parties that represent Karachi. These parties have a history of bitterness towards one another, but also happen to be on the same page with regard to some of the key political issues dividing Pakistan viz foreign policy, attitude towards jihadist extremism, and provincial autonomy. Most significantly, future economic scenarios for Pakistan rely greatly on the economic exploitation of natural

resources, particularly those of Sindh. For economic development to benefit Sindh, there has to be accord between the main parties of the provinces, its ethnic groups, and its rural and urban areas. Political and civil society of Sindh taken as a whole, and the parties with support in Karachi have special responsibility to play a constructive role in reducing inequalities in Sindh and within Karachi, and laying the foundations of a prosperous Karachi, Sindh and Pakistan.