



Sustainable Development Policy Institute

Working Paper Series no: W-73

**Violence and the Centrality of Home:
Women's experience of insecurity in
the Karachi conflict**

Saba Gul Khattak

01 April 2002



**Violence and the Centrality of Home:
Women's experience of insecurity in the
Karachi conflict**

Saba Gul Khattak

Working Paper Series # 73
2002

All rights reserved. No part of this paper may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or information storage and retrieval system, without prior written permission of the publisher.

A publication of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

The opinions expressed in the papers are solely those of the authors, and publishing them does not in any way constitute an endorsement of the opinion by the SDPI.

Sustainable Development Policy Institute is an independent, non-profit think-tank founded for doing research on sustainable development.



© 2002 by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute

Mailing Address: PO Box 2342, Islamabad, Pakistan.
Telephone ++ (92-51) 2278134, 2278136, 2277146, 2270674-76
Fax ++(92-51) 2278135, URL: www.sdpi.org

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Introduction	1
About this paper and methodology	3
Setting the Context	5
Women, home and insecurity in Karachi	9
Conclusion	16
References.....	18

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute is an independent, non-profit, non-government policy research institute, meant to provide expert advice to the government (at all levels), public interest and political organizations, and the mass media. It is administered by an independent Board of Governors.

Board of Governors:

Dr Amir Muhammad
Chairman of the Board

Mr. Javed Jabbar
President, MNJ Communications Pvt. Ltd

Mr. Irtiza Husain
Director, Pakistan Petroleum Ltd

Ms Khawar Mumtaz
Coordinator, Shirkat Gah

Mr. Shamsul Mulk
Minister For Irrigation, NWFP

Dr Abdul Aleem Chaudhry
Director, Punjab Wildlife Research Centre

Mr. Mohammad Rafiq
Head of Programme IUCN, Pakistan

Dr Zeba A. Sathar
Deputy Country Representative, Population Council

Mr. Malik Muhammad Saeed Khan
Member, Planning Commission

Dr Pervez Hoodbhoy
Professor, Quaid-e-Azam University

Mr Karamat Ali
Director, PILER

Dr Shahrukh Rafi Khan
Executive Director, SDPI

Under the Working Paper Series, the SDPI publishes research papers written either by the regular staff of the Institute or affiliated researchers. These papers present preliminary research findings either directly related to sustainable development or connected with governance, policy-making and other social science issues which affect sustainable and just development. These tentative findings are meant to stimulate discussion and critical comment.

Violence and the Centrality of Home: Women's experience of insecurity in the Karachi conflict

Saba Gul Khattak

Abstract

This paper privileges women's view of security and looks at the centrality of home both to women's lives and to conflict situations. We argue that home is the site of individual and collective identities and, as such, a primary but unacknowledged target during conflict. The home thus becomes a source of security and insecurity in its structural and associational contexts. Drawing upon Mohajir women's experiences and perceptions in the Karachi conflict context, this paper argues for alternative ways of conceptualizing security based upon women's multiple and conflicting realities. It makes a case for displacing the security connected with home (a microcosm for the state) to a new politics that neither denigrates nor glorifies the home and in so doing produces conditions that transform human lives.

Introduction

The connections between home and violence are often analyzed and understood in the context of domestic violence. For many women, the sanctuary of home is also often the site of violence where they are physically attacked by family members (usually their husbands but the role can extend to other male family members including women). Such analyses form the subject matter of sociology, anthropology and women's studies. Disciplinary boundaries become an obstacle when one wants to look at international relations and security studies as these subjects do not take into account micro level analyses that are centered around experience of individuals, especially women's. In general, the latter subjects look at persons as populations and people rather than differentiated human beings in terms of their gender and life experiences. Hence we need bridges across disciplinary boundaries if we are to understand and conduct women centered research.

As our research indicates, the construction of gender renders women's and men's experience of violence and therefore lives very different from one another. While men are usually engaged with the public sphere, in the present context with political activity or its suppression, women are often the ones who suffer the consequences of these moves or counter moves. A larger politics, whereby the state as well as political parties negotiate at the community level and upwards, controls the parameters for action among and between men. This paper looks at the consequences of the politics of violence upon women's lives.

How do women fare during times of violence? What are their concerns and how do they talk about their security or insecurity? One of the major themes that emerge from our interviews with women who have suffered violence in a direct manner in Karachi revolves around their sense of security embedded in their concept of home. The loss of home as well as the breakdown of the arrangements through which society assures and maintains the 'sanctity' of home in terms of ensuring privacy, makes women insecure. As soon as violence enters their home, their insecurity begins. The making

and leaving of home, therefore, occupy a central place in women's lives. Incursions into that space are debilitating and constitute a metaphor for chaos.

Home represents more than its formal definition is able to muster, i.e., the four walls or the roof that provide a shelter. Home also entails a sense of belonging, a sense of identity, a sense of security, a sense of grounding and a sense of rootedness. All these associations with home are experienced in both a narrow and broad sense; narrow in the sense of being restricted to the structure of a house and an individual, and broad in the sense of a community, a place or country, and a broader or deeper sense of being—of a collective identity immersed in a culture, a time, a history and a civilization.¹ Concomitantly, the home is also a metaphor for the state in that it serves to include and exclude, to privilege those who live within against those who are outside. It provides the former with security and refuge and looks with suspicion at those who try to intrude. There are rules for those allowed in and those who are to stay out. The attack and conquest of a country is usually referred to as the rape of that country. The allusion to sexual violation also alludes to the collapse of the security of the country whereby the men were not able to defend its honor, more or less like the inability to defend the honor of their women living inside the greater home—the country. The meanings of home and country are thus deeply intertwined. They can be viewed in other contexts also, e.g., the binary division of policy into domestic and foreign policies; the concept of the government as the patriarch/father who is to protect the citizens; the allegory of the nation with the family.

This paper analyzes women's experience of violence in the contexts of their homes. Although it summarizes the Karachi conflict, it is not primarily concerned with the causes of the conflict or who the culprits and perpetrators might be. It is principally an investigation into how such violence affects women and is concerned with pushing the boundaries of the mainstream definition of security to include the security inside the home—not simply protection from an outside enemy state.² Thus armed conflict inside the state in the form of civil war or riots or other forms of collective violence constitute situations of insecurity whereby the role of the state and its security agencies becomes problematic. The fact that the police force is repeatedly identified as a source of insecurity (while reflecting a potential bias in selecting respondents) also reflects the role of the state and its similarity with the home whereby the family exercises oppression. Furthermore, I wish to push the boundaries of feminist interpretations of security studies and readings of international relations.

This paper thus not only takes issue with conventional security studies but also feminist positions that disallow new interpretations from emerging due to agreement on certain “fundamental truths” that form the basis of feminist epistemology.³ It thus frames women's security in entirely different terms that reject both types of mainstream positions at the two ends of the spectrum, the conventional

1 I have discussed the different associations of home at length in my paper entitled, “Violence and Home: Afghan women's experience of displacement” SDPI working paper series # 73.

2 Some conventional security analysts assert that the inclusion of domestic violence and other types of violence against women in the ambit of security studies serves to dilate the purposes and concerns of security studies. They assert that other disciplines are best placed to address these issues and staunchly resist the inclusion of rape or other concerns such as economic and environmental rights as possible subjects of security studies.

3 One is aware that feminists take nuanced stands on these issues, however, because the violence inside the home is seldom addressed and in fact, mostly brushed under the carpet to prevent it from gaining validity, feminists concentrate on the negative aspects of the home rather than the positive meanings which are upheld and circulated by patriarchy anyway. While it is correct that feminists are acutely cognizant of the fact that the home is a place of nurture and that its positive aspects keep women from rebelling, it is in the context of explaining why this unjust institution is able to continue rather than with a view to exploring and strengthening further the positive aspects. In that sense, my stand goes beyond these debates in that it wishes to free itself of the reaction to patriarchy by being straitjacketed into a particular position.

security studies metaphor for understanding and the conventional feminist studies wisdom for reading women. Especially, we challenge the latter's claim to know and to speak for women. In order to be able to speak for women, I assert that we need to consciously allow the most affected women to speak themselves and to interpret their words rather than put their words into our preconceived categories and proceed comfortably to draw our conclusions. While this is not a new position to take, in the context of the cross roads between security and feminism, this is a challenge as I argue for privileging the home (inimical to many feminists due to its association with being the first site of oppression) as its security is deeply tied to women's psyche and links it with the security of the state, both in the context of the state as a provider of security and the state as an entity that needs to be secured.

Does this position amount to arguing in favor of a slightly different hue of the status quo?⁴ i.e., whereby the state may continue to be at the center and women's lives continue to be run around the home if home is to be the locus of their identity and security. If we are to move beyond the construct of the state and the oppression that unquestionably resides within the home just as it does within the state, then we must argue for a new politics that surmounts the state and the home. Until that is made into a reality, we have to go by the definitions and needs articulated by women. This is the only way in which we can capture the different meanings linked with home and assert that mainstream politics is incapable of allowing the realization/acualization of the security ideal associated with home, and therefore argue for alternatives that are able to ensure this security both in the context of the home and the state. This is thus different to arguing for the status quo in that I do not wish to privilege the home or the state but wish to transport the need for security that is focused upon the home and the state to another reality which will not need the crutches of the home and the state as they are intrinsically inadequate for the provision of this security. The constructs from which we seek security are in fact the constructs that hamper our security and are simultaneously the sources of our insecurity.

About this paper and methodology

Having outlined the main theoretical issues, this paper briefly outlines a background to the Karachi conflict to provide a context to the issues that emerge from women's point of view. This is important as women's voices are embedded within the larger social historical context. The section on the Karachi conflict also demonstrates the needs of an authoritarian state as it uses various identities and plays out one identity against another in a complex backdrop dating back to the 1947 partition with cross connections with the Afghan war (1979-present). The creation and/or acute sensitization to and consciousness of ethnic identities in Karachi led to a protracted conflict which often does not make sense even to those who are involved in it, both as perpetrators and victims. The context and role of the state is therefore critical for developing an understanding of the conflict and the shaping of women's experience.

This paper attempts to explain some of the issues that do not find articulation and validation in public space and discourses. The third section, i.e., the section on women's voices highlights the multiple themes connected with home and security in the Karachi context. We conducted fifty-five in-depth

4 I am grateful to Lubna Chaudhry, Research Fellow at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute for helping me think through the theory and for helping me with articulating my position in words.

interviews with women who had been either directly or indirectly affected by the violence.⁵ While we outlined some themes that we wanted to investigate, we made the interview process fairly flexible so that the respondent had the option of speaking on the issues they chose or provided them sufficient space to address issues of their own choice. This was not only in sync with our own position of being qualitative feminist researchers who not only needed to be empathetic to the issues of our respondents and privilege their voices, but also not set the agenda or insist upon what direction an interview should take.

Several themes emerge from the interviews along with an equal number of qualifications such as the time (historical political juncture) at which the women were interviewed, their age and responsibilities within the family context as well as their own and the male family members' political leanings, affiliations or loyalties. Almost all the women lived in poor or lower middle class localities and were themselves poor or barely scraping through. The interviews thus underscore the class context of the Karachi conflict which has been more or less restricted to its low-income areas.

In the process, we also underscore the deep interlinkage between home and women's psyche and identity. This section, then, attempts to make sense of women's experience of conflict—a phenomenon that is inflicted upon them by outside forces, (the state, political/religious parties as well as criminal mafias) and that has in different instances and to varying degrees changed their self-perception as well as their world view. In many cases, it has led to crystallizing identities that were deeply buried in the closet of history while in others it has served to enhance the fluidity and questioning of different identities and the privileges that accrue to them. The themes that emerge from the interviews relate to the death (often violent) of male family member/s, the loss of home or displacement due to insecurity emanating from the political conditions prevailing in the community, the increased economic burden that women have to shoulder, a corrupt system whereby the police, the police stations, jails and courts, in short, the systems of law enforcement and of justice are viewed as partisan.

We conclude that in order to talk about women centered perspectives, we need to, firstly be cognizant of the fact that we are unlikely to find methodical systematically argued discourses emanating from women's voices as they are themselves a part of a larger political, economic, historical framework that bounds them to masculinist ways of seeing and speaking. Thus there is a lot to "unlearn" before any new articulation can take place. Secondly, we need to be sensitive so we can see, hear and decipher in between the words and lines. This means that we need to shed our guises and our lessons (the tools of our trade) to be able to read and interpret a language that has itself been kept dormant and unknown and that barely makes sense or is barely audible and understandable to those who speak it. To attempt to chart out the intricacies of these different languages that women speak but that no one understands and that has not been given any recognition, validity or authenticity is to begin to unfurl a new knowledge that needs to be felt as well as understood. We thus must also validate what we write with our passion just as we must validate our passion and feeling with what we write.

In more "concrete" terms, we conclude that women's voices need to be privileged and that their needs, which spring from their material, time-bound realities, must be recognized and understood as integral to the provision of a multifaceted security—a security in which both the state and the home

5 These interviews constitute part of an SDPI archive on "Women, security and conflict in South Asia." The interviews were conducted over a 10 month period between June 1999 and March 2000. This paper depends upon some of these interviews to underscore the importance of home in women's lives.

play an equally central part until the time that they can be transcended in favor of another, more positive reality in which both the home and the state are irrelevant to the provision of security.

Setting the context

Karachi is a multi-ethnic city with a population estimated at over 12 million. According to the 1998 census data, Karachi's population stood at 9,802,134 persons. However, Sindh's political parties contest this figure as being understated. There is consensus that Karachi's population is over 12 million (Hasan 1999, 40). According to the 1982 census it was estimated that there are 54 percent Urdu-speaking/Mohajirs, 14 percent Punjabis, 9 percent Pathans, 6 percent Sindhis, 4 percent Baluchi and 12 percent others who belong to various ethnicities including Bengalis/Biharis and Burmese (Parveen and Ali 1996, 140). There have been some further changes in Karachi's ethnic constitution since 1982. A reading of the 1998 census indicates that Mohajirs constitute 49.9 percent, Punjabis are 13.8 percent, Pathans are 10.7 percent, Balochis are 4.4 percent, Saraiki speaking people are 2.07 percent while 13.43 percent people fall in the category of "other" in Karachi.

Known also as mini-Pakistan because of its complex social and political backdrop, Karachi continues to serve as the political hub for both the Left and the extreme Right with a politically active population. Since the mid-1980s, this complex backdrop has contributed to a high intensity of violence in Karachi. According to media reports, an average of 630 violent deaths (95 per cent male) per year were recorded in the city during the ten-year period starting 1990 (Hisam, 2000, 23).

The overarching theme of the Karachi violence is that of ethnicity. In this broader context, the Karachi conflict has undergone many changes. Initially, Karachi experienced ethnic violence, which was politically motivated by the state and, predictably, was followed by state-sponsored violence to "clean-up" Karachi. This was accompanied by a rise in militancy and the criminalization of politics as different political parties vied for power and attempted to undercut one another's power and hold over different localities.⁶ While there were sparks of sectarian conflict, it is only recently that the sectarian aspect has become dominant. Not surprisingly, the conflict has been more or less restricted to the low-income areas of Karachi, which have been the hub of fighting, carnage and curfews. In addition, the people living in these areas suffer from a number of problems, including poverty, ethnic tensions, discrimination and at times intimidation at the hands of the police while political parties of all ilk try to gain influence for the vote. Korangi and Orangi have suffered the worst forms of politically motivated ethnic violence and are now undergoing religious/sectarian violence. In fact, the first incidence of violence erupted in and around Orangi on 15 April 1985. The immediate cause was the death of a *Mohajir* girl, Bushra Zaidi, who was crushed to death due to the negligence of a Pathan wagon driver. This led to Pathan Mohajir riots that reified the enmity between the two communities and a year later led to carnage in Orangi when the locality was cut off from the rest of Karachi for three days and there were ethnically motivated killings. We describe some of these incidents later in the paper. Violence continues to haunt these communities to date, affecting them in a very direct and damaging manner so that aside from physical destruction, the psychological scars of violence persist.

6 Some of these activities included kidnapping for ransom, lifting cars, imposing "bhatta" or the collection of money from residents of different localities ostensibly for ensuring their security from agents of the collectors as well as other rivals including the police and rangers. This money was used to fund party workers.

How did it all begin?⁷ The 1947 partition of India led to a vast influx of refugees who settled in the heart of Karachi and later on shifted to some of the new settlements and colonies that were constructed for them at the government's behest.⁸ According to Arif Hasan (1999, 24) at the time of partition, "the population of Karachi ... was 450,000, of which 61.2 percent was Sindhi-speaking, 6.3 percent was Urdu/Hindi speaking; 51 percent was Hindu and 42 percent was Muslim. By 1951 all this had changed and Karachi's population had increased to 1.137 million because of the influx of 600,000 refugees from India. In 1951 the Sindhi-speaking population was 8.6 percent, the Urdu-speaking population was 50 percent; the Muslim population was 96 percent and the Hindu population was 2 percent." These drastic demographic changes continued to undergo further change as other ethnicities entered Karachi in search of livelihoods.

As Karachi was Pakistan's capital until 1964 as well as its Industrial center, many of the new migrants were industrial and construction workers who settled near the industrial estates and in satellite towns at some distance from the city. Furthermore, the migrant workers were brought into Karachi with a conscious government policy. Pathan migrant workers came in the 1950s and 1960s during Ayub Khan's regime to work in the industries and construction sites of Karachi because they were perceived to be capable of doing physically strenuous work. They were also given the transport business as part of state patronage. In the 1960s Punjabi workers also found their way into Karachi. Balochi workers had also been present in Karachi due to its proximity with their province. Sindhis, who were in a majority in the past, became a minority in their own provincial capital (Hasan 1999, 27-28).

Arif Hasan (ibid) points to the manner in which Karachi settlement plans were conceptualized and implemented as a major contributory cause of Karachi's present day violence. The plans resulted in concentrations of the poor along ethnic lines in Karachi's low-income areas. He provides the history of city planning in Karachi, which was carried out first by a Swedish firm and later by a Greek planner. The latter resulted in a number of squatter settlements as inner city refugee and squatter settlements were bulldozed and the poorer sections of the population (mostly Mohajir) pushed out of the city.⁹ Due to a variety of reasons, land developers (Mohajir majority with strong connections in the bureaucracy) settled these people along dry drainage channels to the north and northeast of the city (north Karachi, Landhi and Korangi). These settlement schemes caused Karachi's endemic transport problems as the poor population came to live far away from the city center. Many of these people had to travel daily to the city center or across the city to the industrial areas or to the port and harbor for work. Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier

7 For an excellent account and analyses of the ethnic roots of the Karachi conflict, see Nermeen Shaikh's 'Migrant Nation: Ethnicity and Ethnic Violence Among the Mohajirs of Karachi' Unpublished M. Phil. Dissertation, Cambridge University, 1997. Other research that analyzes the conflict in its initial phases are articles by Akmal Hussain and Fareeda Shaheed in Veena Das (ed) *Mirrors of Violence*, Delhi and London: Oxford University Press 1990

8 The term *Muhajir* literally means immigrants [(see Nermeen Shaikh (ibid) and Rubina Saigol (forthcoming, SDPI working paper series) for a comprehensive discussion of what the name entails)]. The bulk of this community immigrated at the time of the partition of the sub-continent in 1947, though the immigration continued as families united and others moved. This community was a minority at the time of partition, but the most educated and advanced and shouldered the bulk of the administrative burden of the city, province and country via key positions in the civil service. As the other ethnic groups claimed their share of positions, the *Mohajirs* felt sidelined and the spectacular rapid emergence of the MQM in the 1980s gave expression to this feeling of exclusion. Given their large numbers in Karachi, the party was immensely successful during the first elections fielding MQM candidates, but later split and the violent internecine in fighting is one cause of Karachi's current instability.

9 At present, we find higher concentrations of Mohajirs in District East and Central (60.75 percent and 73.57 percent respectively), Pathans in District West and South (24.55 and 7.95 per cent), Punjabis in District South and East (18.84 and 14.72 per cent), Sindhis in District South and West (11.37 and 6 per cent) and Balochis in District South (9.77 per cent).

on, Pathan workers were brought in to construct the housing schemes and ended settling in these areas.¹⁰ Furthermore, as Karachi developed and expanded, its transport problems became worse, impacting commuters as well as owners and drivers of public transport negatively and creating tensions between the Pathan owners and drivers and the commuters (mostly non-Pathans with a majority of Mohajirs).¹¹

The apparent reason for Karachi's conflict was embedded in its dysfunctional transport system and competition for scarce resources. The latter results from the complications of fast urbanization and other development dilemmas that accompany a weak economy and the flight of capital. However, the larger cause of Karachi's conflict lay in Karachi's relationship with the rest of Pakistan and Pakistani politics. The larger context shows that authoritarian regimes (whether military or with democratic trappings) in Pakistan have needed to gain control through coercion. Ziaul Haq desperately needed to offset Z.A. Bhutto's PPP (especially in Bhuttos' home base of the province of Sindh) after executing him. The execution led to a widespread perception in Sindh that a son of the soil had been victimized at the hands of a Punjabi clique in the military and bureaucracy. Meanwhile, Mohajirs who had been a majority in Karachi and who initially held key positions in the civil service, felt that they had been sidelined in Pakistani politics. Zia, himself a Punjabi immigrant from India, capitalized on this and helped prop up the MQM (Mohajir Qaumi Mahaz – Mohajir National Front) from a student organization (APMSO, All Pakistan Mohajir Students Organization) into a political party. The meteoric rise of the MQM had more to do with Zia's need for survival than MQM leader Altaf Hussain's street power. However, the fact remains that Altaf Hussain drew the bulk of party members and workers from the lower middle class.¹² Many of the areas where there were Mohajir concentrations thus suffered tremendously when there were ethnic clashes and when the state targeted the MQM and when there was an internal split in the MQM resulting in excessively bloody politics.

After the restoration of democracy in Pakistan in 1989, Karachi's conflict underwent various permutations, depending upon who ruled the center and who ruled Sindh. Thus, at the risk of making sweeping generalizations, when Benazir's PPP was in power the first time (1988-90) it was with the help of a coalition with the MQM in Karachi. The two parties while cooperating with one another also had underlying tensions over the actual control of Karachi and the province of Sindh. Their coalition ended in 1990 although the MQM enjoyed control of Karachi till 1992. Both tried to use patronage to win support. During the second Benazir government (1993-96), the Mohajirs generally felt persecuted for having supported the Nawaz government against the PPP and also felt that other ethnicities were promoted at their cost. However, they forgot that when the MQM was in power in Karachi (1988-92), like the PPP, it also used a combination of patronage and violence to implement its policies and gain greater control over Karachi. In 1992, the MQM was split into two (many assert that the split was engineered by the government through its agencies to check the power of Altaf Hussain) when the more militant branch split from the MQM and called itself *Haqiqi* and *Haq Parast*. The MQM also revised its name, now wanting to have pretensions of a national entity, claiming that it did not believe in restricting itself to ethnic politics. It thus decided that MQM now stood for Mutahida Qaumi Movement (United National Movement).

As Karachi's politics and conflict shaped one another, the predominantly ethnic character of the Karachi conflict evolved into religious sectarianism. Starting off with Pathan/Mohajir hostilities, the different ethnicities came together against the Mohajirs in the 1980s. Aggressive Pathan behavior can also be

10 Today Karachi is demographically the biggest Pathan city in the world. However, the cultural capital in Pakistan remains Peshawar.

11 Nermeen Shaikh (Cambridge 1997) points out the negative psychological impact of Karachi's perennial traffic congestion and pollution as having acquired serious proportions.

12 The Mohajir elite preferred to identify themselves as Pakistani rather than Mohajirs.

attributed to their involvement in the drug and gun running business that was thriving at the time due to the Afghan war 1980 onwards. This fueled militancy by glorifying the Pathans as brave warriors¹³ and by upholding *jihad* (holy war) and thus helping with the growth of *madrassas* (religious schools), conservative Islamic parties and intolerance within religious sects.¹⁴ All this, as we see later, caused Karachi's sectarian violence as well as made the issue of guns and money central to political control of different localities.¹⁵ One poignant description (Hussain 1990, 185) of an incident of violence in 1986 that proved to be a turning point in Karachi's conflict ridden history reads as follows:

The violence that erupted in Karachi during December 1986, both in scale and sheer brutality, was unprecedented since the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. What we saw were bands of men armed with Kalashnikov rifles charging into the homes of people belonging to other communities, with whom they had lived for a generation, killing men, women and children without mercy, burning and looting, until entire housing localities were left in charred ruins. There were counter-attacks against the homes of the invaders, and the battles engulfed the streets of Karachi. For two days there was random killing on the roads by armed marauders on fast motorbikes and cars, machine-gunning innocent bystanders.

Hussain (ibid, 187) also provides another description in which one cannot help noticing that the targeting of the enemy was carried out through the destruction of their homes:

...several hundred Pathans armed with Kalashnikovs charged down the hills overlooking the Mohajir residential areas of Qasba, Aligarh and Sector I-D... Under cover of a hail of machinegun fire the invaders, using kerosene tanks, set the houses of Qasba and Sector I-D afire... The police and army failed to intervene for five hours, during which the carnage continued unabated. By 4:30 pm hundreds of homes were burnt to the ground.

-
- 13 The myth of the proud and honorable Pathan warrior was buttressed by British colonial anthropologists who categorized the Pathans as Aryans belonging to India's martial races. Later, Americans also played on this theme to help their campaign against the USSR in Afghanistan only to demolish it later in 2001 when they conducted massive bombing of Afghanistan followed by ground operations. Coincidentally, the *Jihadis* (holy warriors) that the CIA had helped create also became the target of US ire in 2001.
 - 14 Rehan Ansari in his Internet article entitled, "Pak army always committed to war with India", December 20, 2001 in Chalomumbai.com) describes the influence of such parties aptly: "Early this year in Qasbah Colony, Karachi, I saw a poster that proclaimed, 'Shahadat Conference'. Its central image was of a masked man holding a machine gun, the background red, as in the afterglow of an explosion. Along the margins of the poster were photographs of martyrs, all the faces were young, some ridiculously so. The poster ...was placed on the outside wall of a house that served as a school. I was standing in a narrow lane of houses when I saw this poster. The lane was on a hill. As I looked further up the lane, over the rooftops following the phone lines, towards the hillside, I saw a sign that commanded the community - it said 'Jaish-e-Muhammad'." Ansari says that the sign is a metaphor for the influence that the Jaish (a conservative religious party) wields in Qasba Colony. Similar situations are witnessed around most of Karachi's low-income conflict torn areas.
 - 15 This first began in Sohrab Goth, a Karachi squatter settlement, populated by poor Pathans and Afghans. Sohrab Goth became notorious as a storage facility and distribution point for heroin that was also transferred abroad. The locality had tunnels in which drugs and weapons were stored and in 1986 the government conducted operation clean up to rid the area of the guns and drugs as well as the people living there as the land had been acquired by big land developers of Karachi (Akmal Hussain 1990, 186). When the army bulldozed their homes, there was massive retaliation against the Mohajir residents of Orangi as the Mohajir developers with their connections in the bureaucracy were perceived to have wreaked this dishonor upon the Pathans. Hand-bills distributed at the time claimed that there was a Muhajir conspiracy to evict Pathans from Karachi (Hussain 1990, 187).

In the days that followed, the violence spread all over Karachi. The homes of Biharis in Orangi came under attack by Pathans. In retaliation, non-Pathan mobs went on a rampage, killing and burning people and property on the streets of Karachi.

We will return to a description of the same event in the next section to understand a personal eyewitness account. However, the above quotes demonstrate the level and complexity of violence in Karachi. Against this complex background, the majority of the people living in the areas identified as violent have suffered tremendously. While people of all ethnicities have been involved in the conflict at one time or another, one finds that Mohajirs have suffered the most because they have been involved in the conflict through all its permutations. Mohajir women, more than anyone else, have had to face the repercussions of the changing contours of the conflict. The next section is based upon women's voices as they suffered through the different phases of the conflict, which has been a mix of party politics and competition for scarce resources. This is further complicated by fast urbanization and other development dilemmas that accompany a weak economy and the flight of capital. While one is cognizant of the fact that the larger issue of development and political economy are deeply tied to the changing nature of the Pakistani state¹⁶ and the imperatives of international capital, one must also point out the masculine character of the state.¹⁷ While there are sufficient writings about the changes in the nature of the Pakistani state, not enough has been written about the suppression of women's voices due to the inherent masculinity that is embedded in the character of the state. No one has delved into the effects of the complicated Karachi conflict upon women.

Women, home and insecurity in Karachi

This section is based upon women's voices as they suffered through different phases of the conflict. The preceding description of the larger and changing faces of the conflict provide a context to these women's voices. We concentrate upon their experience of the conflict in the context of their homes as the home is the most immediate context in which women (and often men) have witnessed the violence. These issues relating to the different hues of the theme of home are discussed below.

We look at home in the context of a concrete place and space that provides refuge to people and in turn people's identities are deeply tied up with their homes. Overall, these different themes can be put into two broad categories—the first more closely connected with the actual structure of the home: the house; and the second more closely tied with the association that women or the world outside develop with the home. There is a blurring of boundaries because of the way women associate with home both in terms of a house and a larger context of identity (individual as well as collective) and spaces of happiness or enclosures of pain and suffering. Hence, one has no intention of creating a set of dichotomies such as making a distinction between matter and spirit, form and substance or the material and the non-material. Certainly, the overlaps between the structural and associational forms disallow neat divisions. This section begins with the memory of a woman who remembers the genesis of the conflict as it touched her life. This description is a more moving continuation of the previous account in which Akmal Hussain describes the riots in Karachi.

16 See the writings of Hamza Alavi and Hassan Gardezi for an understanding of the changes in the nature of the Pakistani state.

17 Mumtaz and Shaheed's *Pakistani women: One step forward, two steps back?* (1989) is an exception to this kind of writing and is the only book so far that attempts to analyze and document the relationship of the state to women and vice versa. There are other edited accounts that look at multiple issues but they are sporadic publications usually based upon conference proceedings.

Q. When did all this start?

ZBQ. It was 1986 when trenches were made all around everywhere.

Q. Did it start then or even before that, do you remember?

ZBQ. Yes, it was before that when the Pathans surrounded us from all quarters, pulled out the Sui gas meters and put them on fire. It was in fact a massive bloodshed, human organs like heart, arms etc were scattered all around; houses and families were destroyed altogether.

(ZBQ, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001)

For ZBQ, the destruction of houses and families come together as the vivid description demonstrates, along with the fact that a particular community was targeted through the destruction of a particular locality where they lived. While houses have been targeted, this has not always been the case. Often, stray bullets caused as much havoc as ones targeted at someone. In context of violence in their community prevailing in 1993 and 1994, one respondent talks about the fear that people experienced because there was indiscriminate firing from both sides:

“No one knew from where the gunshots would come. You see my house is on a height and its plaster was dislodged by bullets coming from outside...It often happened that someone was killed by firing while walking through his yard, such were the conditions, and we didn't know from where the next shot would be fired.” (GF SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001)

While GF talks about the firing that took place and where people could not identify the sources of the bullets (whether it was from the Pathans, or the Mohajirs) the context of violence has been varied. It has not been restricted to ethnic communities. It was also about political associations as the interview with NP (SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001) demonstrates. Describing her family's plight due to her husband's involvement with the MQM she says, “The biggest loss was that all our furniture was wrecked and ruined. We were left homeless.” She goes on to describe how this happened:

My husband had gone from the house, people came and told us that there was going to be a raid here and the rangers were about to come. That was the very time my mother-in-law took all the daughters-in-law and took some essential clothing and left everything else as it was and went to my sister-in-law's house...in Qasba Colony from Orangi. We walked to Qasba. After three four days we got to know that there has been a fire and in that fire all the furniture has been burnt and all the jewelry has been taken...After one week we got to know that the windows, doors and roof (of the house) were all missing even the water and electricity wiring was missing...The house is absolutely abandoned now and people throw garbage in it.

She explains that this state of affairs was possible because they were forbidden to go there:

My husband's phone came, he said that you people should not go toward the house as there are Haqiqi people hanging out over there. Five or six months later we saw it after that we took a house on rent... And till now we live in a rented house

Several themes emerge in this part of the interview as NP not only equates the loss of furniture with the loss of home but also clearly links it with political phenomenon. The complete destruction of home—from furniture to wiring and the symbolic removal of the roof and the turning of the home into a garbage

dump are moving though she states it all in a matter of fact fashion. Just as the fact that they now have to live in rented houses is difficult to accept, the transformation of their house into a garbage dump is a phenomenon difficult to come to terms with for NP.

There is a sense of desperation that women feel with regard to the security that a home provides. This is because the boundary that the home draws in terms of its doors and ability to keep outsiders out is extremely important. Thus the structure of the house is closely connected with its functions. Expressing her fear that someone might enter her hut and sexually molest or rape her daughters, RB says she is scared because “there is no door to our hut, neither at the rooms nor outside. With a lot of difficulty by hanging sheets we have done so, that’s how the situation is.” (RB, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001)

This need for security also drives RB further on in the interview to hint that she will forgive her son’s murderers if they compensate her for the death of her son by giving her some money. “I want them to meet me, all I will say is ...Just do one thing for me...because of you I am ruined, my husband died, my son was martyred. I am homeless” (RB, *ibid*)

In contrast, the story of acquiring a house is about more than the acquisition of a refuge—a roof. The story of building this structure signifies much than a house. It feeds into identity politics, a theme to which we will return later in the paper. Here, the important point is to see the connection between establishing a sense of belonging and knowing a locality or city based on the history of building the structure of a house there. In the following example, AY is also tracing her view of the history of discrimination (and unintentionally expressing her sense of entitlement) through her description of such a history:

We were given land in this village. A few people were given places in New Karachi, few in Landhi, few in Malir. Like this they sent out the Mohajirs. After the death of Liaqat Ali, no facilities were provided...They had only given us land in the village. We had to build a house here. It was all jungle. Now it is populated.
(AY 1 SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001)

In a similar vein, another woman, Lubna, continues:

When we came to Karachi...we got a house in the village. Our children were born in the village. They lived and grew up here. In those days the conditions of our home were very good. (Lubna, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001)

While the house-home serves as an identity marker as well as an instrument for the construction of history, its sale in the context of conflict is associated with economic insecurity and chaos. RB describes the plight of a woman who sold her house to obtain her son’s release:

Where I live there is a woman...It has been four years since they have caught her son. So she, she even sold her hut, she was left homeless.

And she stops me, tells me ‘don’t go and don’t identify the killers or else you will suffer. Look at me, how much money have I wasted but till this date I have not been successful...’ She stops me. Yes. And says you will suffer. (RB, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001)

FB (Lubna) also describes how she eventually succeeded in obtaining the release of her three sons from the police at the cost of losing all her material possessions including her house. Due to her pecuniary condition, they had not paid the rent for 10 months at the time of the interview in April 2000. Thus, for women, the threat of homelessness adds to their economic insecurity. Similarly, AY states that, “We stayed away for two years. Then we came back home, I mean its condition had deteriorated. A few things had been stolen, some had broken...” (AY 1, *ibid*). To AY then, it was unsafe to continue to live in the same house in the immediate aftermath of the death of her husband and son.

Similarly, GF and her children had to shift to her sister's house as a result of the indiscriminate firing whereby stray bullets could kill anyone. She said that the plaster of her house had come off due to such firing. Due to this level of violence, the area was often cordoned off through the imposition of curfews that prevented her husband from accessing work. Thus, in addition to the daily rain of stray bullets, GF and her family faced economic hardships directly resulting from the violence (GF, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001) in their locality.

The violent conflict in Karachi also generated other types of crisis whereby people were too insecure to leave their home—the refuge of the father. According to ZBQ, “Then the boy was murdered and my girls left their studies out of fear. They feel so frightened that they don't step out of the four walls of our house, even though I ask them to go out but...” (ZBQ, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001). Education and schooling especially for girls is an oft-cited casualty of the on-going conflict as parents prefer to keep their daughters in-doors. Mothers also often talk about the negative effects of the death of a son or father upon the minds of other children, especially boys. They often express their anxiety about the impact of the loss upon the family. The depression that family members go through individually and collectively comes together in the women's descriptions of their homes which are viewed as happy or sad places depending upon their experience with the violence and their own emotional state of being. According to ZBQ:

If the people were good, then perhaps there would be nothing wrong in the country. But you see, how many boys have been killed and how many houses (ghar) and families (gharanay) have been ruined. There are such houses even where five or six people have been killed (ZBQ, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001)

The differences between house, home and family come together for ZBQ as she conflates home with family and its well-being. This is also reflected in her use of language. Interestingly, the Urdu word *ghar* (home/house) and *gharana* (family) are from the same root. *Gharana* indicates more than family—it means a shared lineage or heritage and legacy. Thus blood ties, usually present, are not necessary in the extended context of its usage. The word conjures up schools of thought, for instance, in the context of music and dance, and automatically contains in its usage a certain respect and dignity, whether in the context of family or lineage. It is thus an important category when analyzing women's perceptions. In the present context it also denotes the destruction of a particular culture and ethos. The inter linkage between the concept of *ghar* and *gharana* leads to the association that a house or home is destroyed if its members die or suffer along with the eradication of a particular way of life and way of being.

While ZBQ uses the word *gharana*, the more commonly used word for family is “*khandaan*”.¹⁸ For women then home as a concept becomes empty without relatives, or if the family is negatively affected. This does not

18 The word *khandaan* also derives from *khana*. The usage of the term *gharana* may have to do with the fact that ZBQ's Urdu is more sophisticated and literary than that commonly used in Pakistan. Such usage gives some of the Mohajirs a sense of being distinctive and superior. This then translates into a sense of cultural and civilizational superiority.

mean that men are insulated from such changes, especially if these are negative but only to point out that since women are mostly restricted to the house/home, and associate its well-being with their *kismet* and destiny, they are more deeply affected. For men, on the one hand there is no outlet to publicly express grief (though they often do so) and on the other hand, they are not restricted to the home the way women are. Hence, men get their “breaks” from the home—the scene of despondence and tragic loss, whereas, women have to live within it on a more prolonged basis. Thus, for women the association of well-being with the family is far more important and critical than it is for men.

The home in terms of a particular structure is full of associations—happy memories or sad happenings. It was so closely associated with her dead children’s presence that FB had to leave one particular house because it was unbearable to live there:

Q. You left Qasbah after the children’s death?

FB. Yes, then we came here. There (we) could not comfort our hearts because my younger son, after seeing two brothers die, had become mentally ill. For some time my condition was also very bad—that place used to haunt me. When my husband saw this situation he said leave this house. He also said maybe if we leave the house, your and the child’s mind will become better.

Q. Is your heart settled here?

FB. Now I do not get the feel of the children in this house...here also we miss them but it is not like it was in that house. (FB, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001.)

Just like a particular house and memory come together for FB, there are other different types of associations with a house/home that are encountered in the context of violence and conflict. A theme that repeats itself constantly revolves around police raids upon people’s homes. These could happen at anytime of the day or night and women fear the raids not only because of the rude intrusion by the police but also because of the social stigma that these visits create. In the following interview, AY (SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001) explains the reason for changing her house after her son was killed.

AY. After his martyrdom I mean for four five years I had to face a lot of problems, tyranny. We even left our home.

Q. What was the reason?

AY. The reason was that the police vehicle used to come daily. I was scared because we are poor people. Where from will we bring so much money, what if they again subject my children or me to cruelty.

Q. So did something like this ever happen that the police came to your house?

AY. They broke the doors of our house and beat the children and beat them outside too.

Later in the interview she continues:

...They broke the doors. They broke the doors and entered the house at 2:30 in the night. And once they came in daytime. At 5 o'clock in the evening.

The breaking of the doors not only denotes physical violence but also the forcible crossing of symbolic boundaries. The following interview with KB underscores the same theme whereby the police break open her house, use their power and might against her and her children. They are able to do so because her house has been marked as one whose inhabitants are sympathetic to a particular political party.

At 9'O clock at night, the police came in two mobile cars with boys sitting in them. They were not from this region. Policemen broke the door and lock of our home. They got in and dragged me, pulling me by my hair they kept saying that you talk against us? I ran up to the top of my roof and cried for help. Policemen fired their guns and said that no one is allowed to come out. Two men came to help me but they returned them. The policemen woke my children who were sleeping and started whipping them. They dragged me from my hair, bare-headed and bare-feet, they took me out to the third *mohalla...*" (KB, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001)

KB goes on to narrate that her son-in-law used to taunt her daughter about the police raids and the rude behavior toward her. The same point is also highlighted by Lubna who talks about the social stigma attached to her family because her son was killed by the state agencies due to suspicion of being an MQM worker. "I have three girls and all of them are young. Proposals do come but when they come to know that they are Imran's sisters, they go away. Then nobody returns. We are very upset because of this." (Lubna (1), SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001). Similarly, ZBQ (ibid) said that after one son was killed by the Rangers because they said he was a terrorist and another was jailed on similar charges after police raids on their house, it was difficult to find matches for her daughters as "if there is a match for our daughters, the neighbors discourage them. They say that we are not good people; one of our sons has been killed and the other detained. They really don't consider us to be good people." ZBQ's house is then identified with a political party, with police raids and as such ZBQ and her family are tainted in the eyes of her neighbors. While the disapproval revolves around her family's political affiliations, they are identifiable due to their house.

The themes of structure and association come together in a different manner in the following quotation where relatives do not want similar raids and hence avoid providing sanctuary to those whose houses have been the scene of multiple raids. Other people also do not want to associate with a family whose house has been repeatedly raided due to the family's political associations. According to Lubna, "Our house was raided so many times that it got difficult for us to stay in this house. Then we ran here and there. To whichever relative we went, they would throw us out...They thought we had something to do with the [political] parties." (Lubna (1), SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001). Thus, the traditional sources of support do not provide any backing or refuge during times of crisis, leaving many women with no options to turn to.

The police often visit the houses of people they suspect to find out their whereabouts. Again, the association of a marked man with his house is exploited by the police to obtain information. This affects women in the house very negatively as the police is not only threatening, women often do not know how to deal with this public sector institution. According to NP,

The police used to worry us because they could not find him and insist that we give them N's address. There were a lot of raids at our house... They [the police] used to be discourteous and used to abuse... They used to come at different timings in the night 2:30 in the morning, 10'O clock, and 4'O clock in the day. They just came in, they did not care for a time. (NP, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001)

The random police raids made women nervous. Most of them underscore the fact that the police would show up at any odd hour of the night. This made many leave their homes repeatedly, resulting in substantial internal displacement within the city of Karachi. An extreme example is that of FB below:

In five years we have changed 15 or 16 houses. (We) did not have money for the rent. The house owners created a racket, sometimes their women created a racket for money. In one or two places even our things were left in the house. Because of not having money for the rent the landlord kept the things... (FB, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001)

ZBQ also narrates a similar experience: “When the police conduct raids more frequently, we have to go to some other place in a rented house. When there is some peace again, we come back.” There is a constant yearning for peace; more concretely, they wish to live in a place where there would be no incursions from the police or the rangers or political parties.

HK says she would like to move to a place;

where there is peace, in Rizvia, what other place could it be?

Q. Accidents happen there too?

They do happen there also but they are not so colossal.

(HK, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001)

Many women blame the government of the time for the violence and insecurity that have entered their lives, while some blame their family for this situation. One woman says that her children blame her for leaving India and coming to Karachi. “They say that you made a mistake. Our lives are ruined because of you. We are not from here and neither are we from there. Where should we go? This is what they say” (Lubna, SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001). Thus leaving the original home, the home country is viewed as the root of all problems by Lubna’s children.

The creation of insecurity has been a requirement of the state (read: authoritarian regimes) in Pakistan that has needed to pit people against people. Of course, this process has not taken place along a preconceived blueprint; it has taken turns and twists that were probably not predicted or expected. Overall, however, one can assert that while popular myth and conventional knowledge ascribe the role of security to the state, it is in fact, due to the nature and character of the state in its present form that the state is the source of insecurity. And in that process, it makes the deepest incursions into people’s homes through its different agencies such as the police, the army, the rangers or political party representatives. This is why the saying “to be at home” is important to understand especially in the context of women who are forced to change this place or lose this place due to outside conditions that are beyond their control.

In the case of Mohajir women, the repeated invasions of their homes also result in an insecurity related to identity politics. To them, their right to be in Karachi or the province of Sindh suddenly appears to be at stake. Having left their original home, they assert their sense of rootedness and entitlement as well as betrayal through their story of migration and acquisition of a house. As discussed earlier, their stories usually tell us how the place where they live/lived was a village or a jungle and how they built their home there. Such histories/stories help to establish their claim to the land in the name of the sacrifice they gave through their move to Pakistan and simultaneously establish them as having a history related to that land. By mentioning the fact that the place had no one and they developed it by building their houses, they use memory to assert that the city has developed and expanded due to their presence and hard work. They thus have a stake in the city/land.¹⁹ Just as there is a desperate need on the part of Mohajir women to have

¹⁹ This is because Sindhis who claim Karachi as belonging to them since it is located in the province of Sindh contest and resent the presence and dominance of Mohajirs in Karachi. They make their arguments based on being sons of the soil—on their sense of belonging and the denial of a similar sense belonging to the Mohajirs.

a history related to Karachi, simultaneously, the Pakistani state and elite have obliterated Karachi's pre-1947 past when Karachi had a Hindu majority population and its culture reflected multiple religions and cultural approaches and attempted to replace it with one that only takes into account the present as seen through the last fifty years. Thus the identity politics of Mohajir women at one level becomes complicit with the larger project of the state that wants to homogenize Islam in Pakistan's present, past and future by denying its own history and inventing a parallel one. In a sense the dilemmas of the Pakistani state and Mohajir community are similar to the extent that the former denies its Hindu past and seeks to create its own history and identity based upon Islam while the Mohajirs also try to do the same by emphasizing their sacrifice for the sake of Pakistan and Islam and try to create a history out of the last fifty years.

Of course, the identity politics that plays itself out on the canvas of the home, local community or state are complex and keep taking unexpected turns and twists as different identities are privileged and juxtaposed against one another at different times (e.g., ethnic versus religious/sectarian identities). However, in all contexts, the home continues to have as central a role as the state, if not more. For women then, the importance of the home becomes understandable in the context of violence. This is why Lubna says that she wants peace and tranquility at home and in Karachi in order to be able to live a peaceful everyday existence without fear of loss and death:

Women want to live in tranquility, so there can be peace at home. So that a person can eat his bread with peace at his home. This life and death of everyday is no good. It's not only Imran who has died, all the boys who died in Karachi are Imrans. All of them are like my son. (Lubna (1), SDPI archive on women conflict and security, 2001).

When Lubna equates the death of her son with the death of all the sons who died in Karachi, she is really stating her desire for peace as a mother. The collapsing of different ethnic and political identities into one is executed because she wants to live peacefully and links her own desire with that of other women and their need to keep their family intact.

Conclusion

We set out to investigate/look at three major issues: first, we were primarily concerned with looking at women's view of security; second, we looked at the theme of home to understand the importance of home in women's lives and its centrality in conflict situations; and third, in specific concrete terms we took the example of the Karachi conflict to understand the issues and to assert that a women centered perspective needs to be able to feel their myriad conflicting and ambivalent realities and pains and be able to theorize from that stand point rather than pre-givens. The Karachi example helps to demonstrate all these assertions and strengthens the argument for newer ways of writing and researching.

I assert that unlike the assumptions of state-centric security studies, women's security revolves around the home and that this is deeply affected by war, conflict or violence. Secondly, unlike many feminist positions, we maintain that home is central to women's identity and that we must not be straitjacketed by theoretical positions. Unlike the feminist position that emphasizes that the home is the first site of oppression, we emphasize that women's identity and sense of security is intricately connected with the home, just like many citizens' sense of security is primarily connected with the security of the state. This is somewhat different to the liberal feminist position whereby they attempt to privilege conventional thinking within a welfarist approach. My position is to assert that we need to 'let go' of our pre-conceived notions and listen to and privilege women's voices and based upon that provide a new construction of

security that neither denigrates the home, nor glorifies it. If we take such a position, we would be able to formulate more women friendly and inclusive discourses that attempt to mitigate the negative effects of violence. Furthermore, and importantly, this kind of analysis potentially opens up new ways of looking at the state and the home and can propose alternative ways of conceptualizing security.

The violent Karachi conflict that has raged in that city for a decade and a half has taken its toll on many fronts. While its political and economic implications have been discussed, its gendered implications for women have not been highlighted enough. The purpose of the present paper is not to present a detailed account of what led to what and who did what to whom, in short, to identify victims and perpetrators, but to present an account of the violent conflict in order to be able to understand its effects upon women and in turn to understand women's specific criteria for security. We concentrate upon the plight of Mohajir women because they have been consistently affected by the conflict in all its permutations. However, this is not to imply that women of other political and ethnic communities have not been similarly affected.

Since homes and communities have been targeted, women have suffered in diverse ways. This paper focuses on the different variations of the theme of home. The section on women's voices highlights some of the different ways in which the conflict has touched women and impacted their lives. The home is both a place of security and insecurity. This is why women and families seek to escape home after finding another home. There is a fundamental conflict in that it is the home that is made insecure by others and it is the same space that women seek to recreate in another locality in order to achieve security. Basically, as the home is targeted, achieving security, therefore, by changing the place of residence does not address the issue of the fundamental insecurity that has been created through different types of violations and incursions into the home space.

Why does the home occupy central stage for women's sense of security? This paper looks at home in multiple contexts, ranging from structural issues related to the house to issues of association with the home. Not only is the formal structure of the house important as its doors and windows serve to draw boundaries between insiders and outsiders, hence giving protection to those who stay in it. This becomes especially important to women whose huts lack doors and windows and who rely on old sacks and other discarded material to make curtains in order to have a sense of boundary and privacy. Women are plagued by the fear of intruders in such cases. The house also provides a sense of security not only to those who own one but also to those who prefer to stay inside and not going out into the open (public space) for fear of violence even though this has affected women's access to education and mobility. The story of acquiring or building a house not only serves to make women economically secure, it also serves to give them a sense of grounding, politically and historically. The structure of a house also serves to be an identity marker, whether in the context of police raids that bring social stigma or being targeted by the enemy. For many the loss of home, i.e., leaving and/or selling the home are also serious repercussions of the violence due to which they suffer. For many women the destruction of their home is not only about its physical destruction but also that of the family and their future both in personal and collective contexts. This forced loss of home, also connected with economic insecurity and denoting chaos, accentuates the need to have or acquire a home, to be able to afford it in order to ensure the security that comes with it. While many women have changed their place of residence in that they have moved from one locality to another (one that is perceived to be peaceful, or devoid of violence or where they do not get a feel of the dead child or children) they generally refuse to leave the city of Karachi. Constant internal displacement or movement of people within the city from one settlement to another in search of peace, results from their refusal to move to Punjab or back to India. Such identity politics has implications for their lives.

It is not enough to point out the different ways in which the home is central for women's sense of security. Having recognized that this is so, we now need to conceptualize ways of displacing the security associated with the home to another plain where instead of conceptualizing alternative homes, we are able to move to a politics and space that does not require the targeting, destruction or acquisition of home. In such a politics, the home is reduced to its functional value, which is to provide a space for people to live in. More importantly, we need to re-conceptualize security whereby starting from the personal to the collective, every facet of one's life is transformed into one in which one can develop one's creative abilities to their fullest without fear of violence, loss or death.

References

- Ansari, Rehan, (2001) "Pak army always committed to war with India" in Chalomumbai.com
- Hasan, Arif, (1999) *Understanding Karachi. Planning and reform for the future*, Karachi: City Press
- Hisam, Zeenat, (2000) "Karachi 2000" in *The News on Sunday*
- Hussain, Akmal (1990) "The Karachi Riots of December 1986: The Crisis of State and Civil Society in Pakistan", in Veena Das' (ed) *Mirrors of Violence*, New Delhi and London: Oxford University Press.
- Khattak, Saba Gul, (2002) Home as place and home as space: Afghan women's experience of displacement, SDPI working paper series # 72.
- Mumtaz, Khawar and Fareeda Shaheed (1987) *Women or Pakistan. Two steps forward, one step back?* London and New Jersey: Zeb Books
- Saigol, Rubina (2002) "The Partitions of Self: Mohajir women's sense of identity and nationhood" forthcoming, SDPI working paper series.
- Saleem, Ahmed (2001) unpublished chronology of Karachi and Sindh's political events 1947-2001.
- Shaikh, Nermeen (1997) *Migrant Nation: Ethnicity and Ethnic Violence Among the Mohajirs of Karachi*, Unpublished M.Phil. dissertation, Cambridge University.
- Shaheed, Fareeda (1990) "The Pathan-Muhajir Conflicts, 1985-6: A National Perspective" in Veena Das, ed., *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- SDPI (2001), SDPI Archive on Women, conflict and security

SDPI is an independent non-profit research Institute
on Sustainable development

Mailing Address: PO Box 2342, Islamabad Pakistan

Street Address: 3rd Floor, Taimoor Chamber, 10-D West,
Fazal-ul-Haq Road, Blue Area, Islamabad.

Telephone: +(92-51) 2277146
2278134 2278136 2270674-6

Fax: +(92-51) 2278135

URL: www.sdpi.org e-mail: main@sdpi.org