

# **Anatomy of Ethnic Militancy: Case of Karachi, Pakistan**

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# Anatomy of Ethnic Militancy: Case of Karachi, Pakistan

Kaiser Bengali and Mahpara Sadaqat

## Abstract

*This paper attempts to identify the roots of ethnic militancy in Karachi. It hypothesizes that militancy in Karachi is not rooted in the sense of economic deprivation, as in the case of erstwhile East Pakistan, but in the sense of political deprivation. The paper presents secondary data on economic disparities between East and West Pakistan to show that economic factors predominated the rise of insurgency in East Pakistan. It then presents an array of socioeconomic and housing data from primary sources to show that Mohajirs are better placed relative to other communities. However, data is also presented to show the decline of Mohajir representation in the political, financial and business spheres, which is stated to be the principal cause of disaffection and potential insurgency.*

The political history of the world has witnessed the rise and decline of great movements. From nationalism in the 19th century to anti-colonialism and class struggle in the 20th century and to the more recent collapse of the socialist order, the world today is passing through a phase of ethnic nationalism. Yugoslavia is a case of ethnic nationalism tearing apart a nation state. However, other countries around the globe are not immune from ethnic related stress in varying degrees. These include Canada in the Americas, Spain in Europe, Rwanda and Burundi in Africa and Sri Lanka in Asia. Ethnic nationalism is not new to Pakistan either. Since independence in 1947, ethnic and regional political forces had posed muted opposition to the state polity. Towards the close of the nineteen sixties, however, nascent Bengali ethnic nationalism came to the fore and presented the first serious and organized challenge to the integrity of the state. The result was the secession of the province of East Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971.

The rise of Bengali ethnic nationalism and its manifestation in anti-Pakistan overtones was predicated in the deep sense of economic and political injustice and the perception of economic neglect and deprivation among the majority ethnic population of the eastern province. East Pakistan was under-developed relative to West Pakistan on almost every count. The province lagged behind in macro as well as household level economic and social variables and the disparity appeared to grow over time. Bengali political representations in key institutions of the state and in decision making at the federal level was nominal and within their own province effectively limited.

A decade and a half after the secession of East Pakistan, the state has faced another serious and organized challenge from what has come to be called Mohajir ethnic nationalism. Mohajir ethno-nationalism almost burst on the scene with the formation of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) in 1985 with its power base in urban areas of Sindh province. The decade since has seen urban Sindh plunge into violence and bloodshed. It has become a saga of terrorism perpetrated by those without uniforms as well as by those in uniform.

All along there have been charges and counter charges. The MQM has cried itself hoarse over charges of injustice and persecution against the Mohajirs, while successive governments have accused the MQM of engaging in terrorism and launched a series of carrot and stick measures to combat Mohajir militancy. The first Nawaz Sharif government (1990-93) formed a coalition in Sindh comprising Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) renegades and MQM members of the provincial assembly, but launched a military operation against the latter in 1992. The succeeding PPP government of Benazir Bhutto (1993-96) described the situation in Karachi as a mini-insurgency and, apart

from continuing the military operation initiated by the preceding regime, launched a multimillion rupee economic development package for Karachi. The second Nawaz Sharif government (1996-99) again brought the MQM into a coalition in the provincial government, but dismissed it after accusing the MQM of involvement in assassination of prominent citizens and other terrorist activities. In addition, anti-terrorist and military courts were also set up to deal with the situation.

Ironically, however, a dispassionate assessment of the causative factors of Mohajir militancy is lacking. Not surprisingly, the MQM has over the last decade failed to articulate Mohajir grievances or formulate a cogent set of demands. This is evident from the randomly shifting kaleidoscope of MQM rhetoric and demands. There is little in common between the set of demands presented by the MQM to the PPP in 1988, to the IJI in 1990 and again to the PPP at various rounds of negotiations since 1993. On the part of the government, it has succeeded in clearing MQM cadres off the streets. However, whether the military or economic thrusts have dented or are likely to dent Mohajir militancy is questionable.

This paper attempts to analyze the underlying causes of Mohajir militancy. It presents the case that Mohajirs are an economically privileged community, which is now being denied political privileges. It hypothesizes that, unlike the case of Bengali ethnic nationalism, Mohajir ethnic militancy is not primarily rooted in the sense of economic neglect and deprivation; rather, Mohajir grievances are rooted primarily in the sense of political deprivation.

## **Growth of Ethnic Identity**

The process of the development of ethnicity and ethnonationalism has been the subject of intensive research in the last quarter of a century [Inayatullah (2000); Richmond (1987); Horowitz (1985); Abner (1981); Rothschild (1981); Taylor (1979); Esman (1977); Lijphart, 1977]. An essential element of enquiry has been to define ethnicity and to identify its attributes.

Defining ethnicity is not an easy task, given its amorphous nature. However, some effort has been made to this end. Ethnicity is stated to have both objective and subjective attributes. Among objective attributes are common race, language, religion, and social, cultural or historical institutions. Among subjective attributes are a shared belief among the members of an ethnic group of having a common -- real or fictitious -- ancestry or heritage from which they derive a common social label, a sense of common solidarity, common interests, or shared sense of grievance or persecution.

Two elements of ethnicity are important. One, ethnicity or ethnic identities are not static, immutable or permanent. They change in different circumstances and over time. Two, ethnicity is an emotional as well as an instrumental phenomenon. It is instrumental in the sense that it can be used for realizing material interests, i.e., to overcome barriers to access to employment, education, land, capital, etc.

Ethnic awareness is said to develop as a result of factors both internal and external to the ethnic group. Internal factors include racial, linguistic, and/or religious distinctiveness or memories of past political struggles or independent existence. External factors include physical or social isolation, emergence of ethnic awareness in other ethnic groups, imbalance in status hierarchy and material conditions of different ethnic groups, and nature of the state and its relationship to different ethnic groups.

Imbalances tend to nurture feelings of supremacy in the advantaged groups and of resentment and frustration among the disadvantaged groups. Where the state regulates the allocation of resources and distribution of patronage to various groups in society, there ensues a struggle for the control of the state apparatus. In a democratic dispensation, mechanisms exist for the demands of various groups, howsoever disadvantaged, to be

voiced and addressed. In an undemocratic order, a structure of domination and subordination exists and those in the latter situation tend to invent some of the common ethnic attributes and carve out a constituency to launch or sustain their struggle for acquiring access to state power and patronage.

## Growth of Bengali Ethnicity

Bengali ethnicity was endowed with objective as well as subjective attributes. Bengalis were differentiated by internal factors, e.g., racial and linguistic characteristics, and by external factors, e.g., physical separation and imbalance in status hierarchy and material conditions. Religion and a joint struggle for an independent homeland constituted the common internal and external factors, respectively, which could have served to dilute the sense of ethnic distinctiveness. However, the undemocratic nature of the state and its unequal relations with different ethnic groups led to the dominance of the attributes representing differences over the attributes representing commonality.

As stated earlier, the rise of Bengali ethnic nationalism was predicated in the perception of economic deprivation among the Bengalis. East Pakistan was under-developed relative to West Pakistan on almost every count. The province lagged behind in macro as well as household level social and economic variables and the disparity appeared to grow over time. An analysis of relative data shows the following disparities for the late 1960's between East and West Pakistan [Ahmed, 1999].

Table 1 shows the growing disparities in the education sector. Between 1947 and 1967, the number of primary to university level educational institutions declined by one percent in East Pakistan and increased by 245 percent in West Pakistan. Over the same period enrolment increased by 118 percent in East Pakistan and 395 percent in West Pakistan. The decline in the number of educational institutions has occurred only at the primary level, while there has been growth in all other levels; however, the growth is significantly lower than in West Pakistan. For example, while primary level enrolment in East Pakistan increased by more than one hundred percent, it grew in West Pakistan by nearly four hundred percent. And, while university level enrolment in East Pakistan grew by 400 percent, it increased in West Pakistan by 1328 percent.

Table 1 Profile of Educational Disparities

Education Level	East Pakistan			West Pakistan		
	1947	1967	Percentage Change	1947	1967	Percentage Change
<b>Primary Level</b>						
Institutions	29,633	28,225	-4.75	8,413	33,271	295.47
Students	2,020,000	4,310,000	113.37	550,000	2,740,000	398.18
<b>Secondary Level</b>						
Institutions	3,481	4,390	26.11	2,598	4,563	75.64
Students	53,000	107,000	101.89	51,000	153,000	200.00
<b>General College</b>						
Institutions	50	173	246.00	40	239	497.50
Students	19,000	138,000	626.32	13,000	142,000	992.31
<b>General University</b>						
Institutions	1	2	100.00	2	4	100.00
Students	1,600	8,000	400.00	700	10,000	1328.57
<b>Total</b>						
Institutions	33165	32790	-1.1	11053	38077	245.50
Students	2093600	4563000	117.9	614700	3045,000	395.40

Table 2 shows the disparities in the economic sphere. In terms of population distribution, East Pakistan accounted for 54 percent but only upto 20 percent of civil service jobs and 10 percent of military jobs. It accounted for about one-third of Five-Year Plan development expenditure allocations and 20-30 percent of foreign aid allocations. The province accounted for 50-70 percent of export earnings, but only 25-30 percent of import expenditures; implying that East Pakistan's export earnings financed West Pakistan's import needs.

Table 2: Profile of Economic Disparities (%)

	East Pakistan	West Pakistan
Population (1970)	54	46
Civil service jobs	16-20	80-84
Military Jobs	10	90
Allocation of Plan Expenditure		
1 <sup>st</sup> Plan (1955 - 1960)	32	68
2 <sup>nd</sup> Plan (1960 - 1965)	32	68
3 <sup>rd</sup> Plan (1965 - 1970)	36	64
Foreign aid allocation	20-30	70-80
Import expenditures	25 - 30	70 – 75
Export earnings	50-70	30-50
Share of GDP		
1949-50	53	47
1954-55	50	50
1959-60	48	52
1964-65	45	55
1968-69	43	57
Per capita income		
1964-65	Rs.286	Rs.419
1968-69	Rs.292	Rs.473
Growth in per capita income (1965-69)	2	13
Population of income spent on food by industrial workers (1955-56)	69.75	60-63

Source: Pakistan Statistical Yearbooks and Pakistan Economic Survey for the various years: Government of East Pakistan (1963), Papanek (1967), A.R. Khan (1970), Interim Reports (May 1970), and Forum (27 February 1971).

The results were stark. It is estimated that, between 1948 and 1969, an amount equivalent to US \$ 6,500 was transferred from East to West Pakistan. While GDP growth over 1949-69 was 57 percent in East Pakistan, it was 135 percent in West Pakistan. East Pakistan had a higher GDP share of 53 percent compared to West Pakistan's 47 percent in 1949-50; two decades later in 1968-69, West Pakistan's GDP share was higher at 57 percent compared to East Pakistan's 43 percent. Consequently, per capita income over 1965-69 grew by 2 percent in East Pakistan and 13 percent in West Pakistan. The difference in nominal per capita income between East and West Pakistan increased from 32 percent in 1959-60 to 62 percent in 1968-69. In real terms, per capita income in 1968-69 in East Pakistan were about half that of West Pakistan. Even the poor in East Pakistan were poorer than their counterparts in West Pakistan, as is shown by the fact that the proportion of income spent on food by industrial workers in 1955-56 was 69-75 percent in East Pakistan compared to 60-63 percent in West Pakistan.

## Growth of Mohajir Ethnicity

**Historical background:** The partition of the South Asian sub-continent into the states of Pakistan and India on a communal basis saw large-scale migration of Hindus from Pakistan to India and of Muslims from India to Pakistan. In Pakistan, migrants came from all parts of India, speaking a variety of languages. However, the two largest groups came from the eastern Punjab and the United Province in India. By and large, the former settled in western Punjab and the latter in the cities and towns of Sindh. The former assimilated with the local population on account of the similarity of language and culture. The latter, the bulk of whom were Urdu-speaking, failed to assimilate with the local population on account of the differences in language and culture and by the spatial segregation caused by the de facto urban-rural divide between the migrants and the local population.

The United Province was the power centre of British India. As such, the corridors of power in New Delhi, institutions like Aligarh University and the streets of Allahabad, Lucknow, Bombay and Calcutta became the front lines for the battle for Pakistan. Consequently, the front line leadership of the Pakistan Movement also emerged from the United Province. The province also provided the largest contingent of Muslim civil servants in the British Indian civil services. This contingent of political and bureaucratic leadership migrated almost en masse to Pakistan and formed the backbone of the political leadership and the civil services of the new state. The major Muslim business houses in Bombay and Calcutta also migrated to Pakistan and acquired a commanding position in the commercial, financial and industrial sectors of the new country's economy. However, the Muslim contingent of the British Indian army consisted mostly of recruits from Punjab and with their migration, the armed forces of the new state came to be dominated by Punjab.

The migrant political leadership of Pakistan faced a serious political problem, as none of them possessed an electoral constituency in the new state they had so ardently helped to found. They resolved the problem by forwarding the concept of a homogenous Pakistani nationalism based on common religious faith. "Pakistan Ideology" and "Islamic Ideology" were rendered analogous. The long drawn out crisis in constitution making ensured that elections could not be held and enabled the migrant political leadership to continue in power without an electoral test.

The challenge to migrant political and bureaucratic dominance from local power elites began to emerge almost immediately. The first blow to migrant political power came with the assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1950. The political instability that followed enabled the Punjabi dominated army to manoeuvre itself into the political process and culminated in the appointment of the General Ayub Khan as Defence Minister in 1955. The army formally seized power in a military coup in 1958.

In just over a decade of the emergence of Pakistan, the migrant leadership had lost political control. Their bureaucratic control was also eroding away. As migrant civil servants retired, they were replaced largely by Punjabi entrants. The challenge to business leadership soon followed. For example, migrant business leadership had controlled the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) throughout the 1950's, but lost it for the first time in the 1960 elections following the 1958 coup. Migrant control of the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) also declined in the 1960's.

Three successive events over 1969 and 1971 broke migrant control of the state apparatus. The break-up of One-Unit and the restoration of the provinces in 1969 and the secession of East Pakistan in 1971 took away the homogenizing concept of the single Pakistani-Islamic identity. The first general elections of 1970, held on the basis of 'one person one vote' established the migrants as a minority within the national as well as the provincial political structure.

The migrants' first response to their declining power and privileges came with the so-called Urdu riots in 1972 in response to the language bill introduced in the Sindh Assembly to restore Sindhi language to its original place. The second attempt came with the migrants' full-scale participation in the PNA's anti-government movement in 1977, resulting in the military coup and dismissal of representative government the same year. Hopes of a restoration of their position of pre-eminence soon faded and the search for a political platform was added to the search for a political identity.

**Mohajir identity formation:** A host of factors determining the development of an ethnic identity has been discussed above. One of them is shared grievances or sense of deprivation or persecution, which sets in motion a search for a common platform from which shared grievances can be aired. In the thirties and forties, religion provided the common platform for sub-continental Muslims of diverse ethnicity, language and culture to unite for articulating their demands. In the late sixties, language provided the common platform for the Bengalis of erstwhile East Pakistan.

The break-up of One Unit in 1969 restored the provinces and provided political identity to Punjabis, Pakhtoons, Sindhis and Balochis. Close to 10 million residents of Sindh, concentrated largely in Karachi and other urban centres of the province, found that they had on hand a crisis of political identity. Bereft of the single homogenizing Pakistani national identity, they found themselves to be residents of Sindh but were not Sindhis. They were variously called Urdu-speaking, New Sindhis, etc. They also felt that their political and economic privileges had been consistently eroded over time. The search for a common platform began. Religion or language could not serve as rallying points as they did not provide the exclusivity necessary for identity formation. Territorial identification was also ruled out, given that they were scattered across the province.

Common ground was found in the fact that they or their parents or grandparents had migrated from various parts of erstwhile British India as a by-product of partition of the sub-continent and creation of Pakistan. Given the environment of an identity vacuum, this common heritage rapidly acquired the status of a common denominator for the emergence of a political identity. The term 'Mohajir' thus represents a political identity arising out of a historical process over the last half a century.

## The Sindhi-Mohajir Equation

The ethnic strife in Karachi needs to be seen within the context of the ethnic situation in the province of Sindh. Over the last half a century, Sindh's demographic landscape has undergone drastic changes. In 1947, Sindh had an overwhelmingly Sindhi speaking population. Today, Sindhis comprises 50 percent at best, with Mohajirs constituting about one third and Punjabis and Pukhtoons making up most of the rest. The Sindhi-Mohajir equation lies at the core of ethnic peace in Sindh, including Karachi. This equation has given birth to two crises: the crisis of identity and the crisis of opportunities.

The crisis of identity emerges from the changes in the demographic composition in the province. The Mohajirs are in search of an identity, while the Sindhis are afraid of losing their identity as they see themselves being turned into a minority in their own ancient land. That effective political power lies with the Punjabi dominated federally controlled agencies has resulted in a triangular battle.

The crisis of opportunities emerges from the fact that initially the Mohajirs inhabited the cities and the Sindhis confined themselves to the villages. The result was that the spheres of economic activity were separated and there existed little competition for urban employment or educational opportunities. This scenario began to

change over the last quarter of a century. The impetus for change was provided largely by the restoration of provinces and the emergence of representative government for the first time during 1971-1977. As the feudal order in the rural areas of Sindh weakened under the weight of a democratic dispensation and a Sindhi urban middle class began to emerge, Mohajirs began to face competition from Sindhis for urban jobs and educational opportunities. At the same time, the Punjabi-Pukhtun factor implied that the Mohajirs had to share an already shrinking pie with the newly emerging Sindhi middle class. Thus, the intensification of the conflict.

While discussing the factors behind Mohajir militancy, it is necessary not to ignore the fact that Sindhi political and economic interests have suffered enormously over the last half a century. This, first, began with the en masse arrival of the Mohajirs and, later, with the take over of the state apparatus by the Punjab. It is unfortunate that, with the loud clamour of Mohajir militancy, the Sindhi case has suffered by default.

### Economic Dimensions of Ethnic Militancy

As stated earlier, it is hypothesized here that Mohajir militancy is not primarily rooted in economic factors. Data for 1959, shown in Table 3, indicates that Mohajirs enjoyed the highest share of incomes, pucca housing, water and electricity connection, in-house bath or latrine, and school enrolment and the lowest share of unemployment and residence in katcha houses. Results of a 1986 survey of 6261 households in Karachi, presented in Table 4, show that the relatively favourable socioeconomic status of Mohajirs vis-à-vis other ethnic groups had not changed substantially a quarter of a century later.

Table 3: Indicators by Ethnicity in Karachi: 1959

	Sindhis	Upcountry Migrants	Mohajirs
Median Personal Income of Males (Rs. Per Month)	89	90	104
Unemployed (%)	3.8	3.1	3.0
Living in <i>Pucca</i> Houses (%)	30	37	50
Living in <i>Jhuggis</i> (%)	46	39	32
Having neither Water nor Electricity in Home (%)	79	73	69
Having neither Bath nor Latrine (%)	59	57	27
School-Age Children Enrolled in School (%)	22	22	40

Source: Hussain, Imtiazuddin, Et Al., Social Characteristics Of The People Of Karachi, Karachi: Pakistan Institute Of Development Economics, 1965.

The survey covered planned (pakki abadis) as well as unplanned areas (katchi abadis) in the city and elicited information on a wide range of housing and socioeconomic variables. No direct questions relating to ethnicity were asked; however, a question on language spoken at home was asked. For the purpose of this study, the language variable is used a proxy for ethnicity. Five ethnic classifications have been constructed along provincial lines, except for Sindh: Mohajir, Punjabi, Pukhtun, Sindhi and Balochi. Mohajirs include those speaking Urdu and Gujrati, Pukhtuns include those speaking Pushtu and Hindko, Sindhi includes those speaking Sindhi and Kacchi. Analysis of the data with respect to housing conditions, access to utilities, income, literacy and employment confirms that Mohajirs are better off relative to other ethnic groups in Karachi in all respects, except employment. Sindhis and Balochis are worse off in almost all respects.

Table 4: Socio Economic Indicators by Ethnicity in Karachi: 1986

Variable	Mohajir	Punjabi	Pakhtoon	Sindhi	Balochi
<b>Population Share: %</b>	60	15	9	8	6
<b>Residence type: %</b>					
Planned Area	68.4	47.7	31.4	29.9	25.0
Unplanned Area	31.6	52.3	68.6	70.1	75.0
Pucca House	56.3	36.4	17.3	26.7	38.5
Semi-Pucca	42.0	61.2	81.8	65.1	58.6
Katcha House	1.7	2.4	0.9	8.2	2.9
<b>Housing density:</b>					
No. of Rooms/Household	3.0	2.6	2.2	2.3	2.6
No. of Persons/Room	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.6	2.9
Area Person (sq. ft.)	24.8	25.1	18.5	22.0	16.1
<b>Access to utilities: %</b>					
Piped Water	77.6	55.3	47.0	43.4	55.2
Electricity	88.9	81.0	81.9	74.2	85.3
Piped gas	69.1	40.5	25.3	36.4	39.1
<b>Literacy rate: %</b>	67.6	58.0	40.7	34.4	35.3
<b>Self Employment: %</b>	29.8	26.5	25.9	39.6	18.4
<b>Unemployment: %</b>	10.8	9.0	10.5	6.2	15.8

Source: Applied Economics Research Centre, Socioeconomic Survey, 1986

Mohajirs comprise almost 60 percent of the population of Karachi, followed by Punjabis (15 percent), Pukhtuns (9 percent), Sindhis (8 percent) and Balochis (6 percent). It may be mentioned here that most of the Balochis in Karachi are third generation migrants and politically identify themselves with Sindhis. Others, comprising foreigners and illegal immigrants, constitute 2 percent of the population.

Perusal of ethnicity wise residence in type of area shows that over two thirds of Mohajirs live in planned areas, while over half of Punjabis, over two thirds of Pukhtuns and Sindhis and three fourths of Balochis live in unplanned areas or what are known as katchi abadis. Perusal of ethnicity wise residence in type of house shows that over half of Mohajirs live in pucca houses<sup>1</sup> and less than two percent live in katcha houses. As regards other ethnic groups, the majority of households live in semi-pucca houses. The distribution ranges from 59 percent in the case of Balochis to 82 percent in the case of Pukhtuns. The highest number of Sindhis (8 percent) live in katcha houses.

Analysis of housing indicators show that, on average, Mohajirs have 3.0 rooms per household, followed by 2.6 rooms per household in the case of Punjabis and Balochis and 2.3 and 2.2 rooms per household in the case of Sindhis and Pukhtuns, respectively. Mohajirs have the lowest density per room (2.0), followed closely by Punjabis (2.1). The highest room density is found among Balochis (2.9). In terms of floor space per person, defined as total plot area divided by the total household size, Punjabi households rank the highest (25.1 sq. ft.), followed closely by Mohajirs (24.8 sq. ft.). The lowest floor space per person is found among Balochis (16.1 sq. ft.). Housing utility data shows that access rates to piped water, electricity and piped gas stands at 78, 89 and 69 percent, respectively, for Mohajirs, followed by access rates of 55, 81 and 41 percent, respectively, in the case of Punjabi households. The lowest rates of access are found for Sindhi households at 43, 74 and 36 percent.

1 Pucca, semi-pucca and katcha houses are defined as follows: Pucca houses are those with brick walls and concrete roof; semi-pucca houses are those with brick walls and non-concrete (tiled, asbestos, tin, etc.) roof; katcha houses are defined as those with thatched, wood, card-board, asbestos, tin, etc., walls and roof.

Mohajirs also command a lead in literacy (68 percent), followed by Punjabis (58 percent), Pukhtuns (41 percent), Balochis (35 percent) and Sindhis (34 percent). On the other hand, unemployment rates among Mohajirs are second highest (10.8 percent) after the Balochis (15.8 percent). Seen in the light of the high literacy as well as unemployment rates, it can be inferred that Mohajirs are confronted with the problem of educated unemployment on a greater scale than other ethnic groups.

The unemployment rate among Pukhtuns is more or less the same as that of the Mohajirs, while that among Punjabis is not significantly lower. The high unemployment rate among Balochis can be attributed to the preference for salaried employment as indicated by the low self-employment rate (18 percent). Conversely, the low unemployment rate among Sindhis is due to the fact that the incidence of self-employment is as high as 40 percent. The unemployment rate among Mohajirs would also have been higher were it not for the relatively higher (30 percent) self-employment rate therein.

Income is a direct measure of economic welfare. However, household survey data generally suffer from under-reporting of incomes at lower and higher spectrums of income. The former inadvertently fail to account for incomes received in kind and the latter fail to report other incomes from dividends, rents, etc. As such, expenditure is generally considered to be a relatively superior measure of income and is used here as such (see Table 5). A perusal of the expenditure distribution shows that the lowest number (14 percent) of Mohajir households fall in the lowest bracket (less than Rs 2500 per month) followed by Punjabis (18 percent), followed by about one-fifth of Pukhtun, Sindhi and Balochi households. At the upper end (over Rs 20,000 per month), the highest number of Mohajir households (2.1 percent) fall in the highest bracket, followed by Punjabis (1.5 percent) and Sindhis (1.2 percent). Less than half percent of Pukhtuns and Balochis fall in the highest bracket.

Table 5: Monthly Expenditure Distribution by Ethnicity (%)

Ethnic Group	0 - 2500	2501 - 5000	5001 - 10000	10000 - 15000	15001 - 20000	20001 & above
Mohajir	14.0	36.2	34.1	10.5	3.1	2.1
Punjabi	18.4	46.7	25.3	6.4	1.7	1.5
Pukhtun	22.3	46.5	25.0	5.0	0.8	0.4
Sindhi	21.0	39.6	30.6	6.4	1.2	1.2
Balochi	20.1	44.8	29.9	4.3	0.6	0.3
Total	16.7	39.6	32.2	8.6	2.3	1.5

Source: Applied Economic Research Centre, Socioeconomic Survey, 1986.

Note: Monthly income is in 1986 prices.

## Socio-Political Impact of Unemployment

It is notable that, relative to the Mohajirs, unemployment is higher among Balochis, more or less same among Pukhtuns and only slightly lower among Punjabis. Yet, unemployment has failed to radicalize either the Balochis, the Pukhtuns or the Punjabis, but has become a major factor in Mohajir insurgency. The answer to this conundrum may be found in the structure of Mohajir society. Unlike Sindhis, Balochis, Pukhtuns or Punjabis, Mohajir society is characterized largely by nuclear families and is totally urban with no rural links. By contrast, other ethnic groups are characterized largely by the joint family system, which extends back into the ancestral village. This is indicated somewhat by the 1981 and 1998 Population Censuses, as presented in Table 6. It can be seen that the 1998 average household size in urban Sindh is 5.3 against 6.8 in urban Pakistan. The smaller household size is largely on account of the prevalence of nuclear families among Mohajirs. Moreover, nuclearization of families in urban Sindh appears to be a relatively recent post-1980 phenomenon; as indicated by the rapid decline of average

household size from 7.0 in 1981 to 5.3 in 1998. The change coincides with the crystalization of Mohajir ethnic identity.

Table 6: Average Household Size Rural and Urban by Province

Administrative Area	Average Household Size											
	1961			1972			1981			1998		
	Overall	Urban	Rural	Overall	Urban	Rural	Overall	Urban	Rural	Overall	Urban	Rural
Pakistan	6.4	6.3	6.5	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.7	6.6	7.0	6.6	6.8	6.5
Punjab	5.4	5.8	5.3	6.5	6.9	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.9	6.8	6.7	6.9
Sindh	6.2	6.30	6.1	6.2	6.1	6.2	7.0	7.0	7.0	5.8	5.3	6.5
NWFP	8.4	6.8	8.7	6.1	6.1	6.0	6.9	6.8	7.2	7.6	7.7	7.2
Balochistan	6.0	5.5	6.1	6.3	6.3	6.3	7.4	7.3	7.6	6.4	6.2	7.4
FATA	-	-	-	-	-	-	8.3	8.3	-	8.7	8.8	8.4
Islamabad	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.7	6.0	5.7	5.8	6.3	5.6

Source: Population Census 1961, 1972, 1981, 1998

A joint family system permits the sharing of consumable resources even by those who are unemployed. There exists an escape valve, which enables the family of an unemployed bread earner to fall back upon the joint family or rural economic and social support system. This escape valve is not available to an exclusively urban nuclear family, where the unemployment of the bread earner leads to a situation of abject desperation. And if there are young educated sons in the family who are unable to provide for day to day needs in support of their ageing parents or for the marriage of their sister(s), it is considered a matter of personal failure and shame - ingredients for despondency and anger.

As stated earlier, Mohajirs are faced with the phenomenon of educated unemployment to a greater degree and the educated unemployed have been known to be more politically volatile the world over. As such, the combination of high literacy and high unemployment, without the traditional safety net that a joint family or a rural support base offers, can be attributed to the rise of Mohajir disaffection and militancy. Moreover, the fact that the Mohajir employment situation is not commensurate with their current income, housing and educational conditions is perhaps indicative of the possibility of a decline in living standards in the future. This apprehension too constitutes one of the factors in Mohajir insurgency.

## Political Dimensions of Ethnic Militancy

The Mohajirs began to emerge as a political force in the mid-seventies with the formation of the All Pakistan Mohajir Students Organization and entered the national stage with the formation of the Mohajir Qaumi Mahaz about a decade later in 1985. Over the decade since, the MQM's fortunes have ebbed and flowed. There is one constant, however. In all the elections since 1985, it has proved itself to be the overwhelming voice of the Mohajirs.

It is hypothesized, herewith, that the most important factor in Mohajir insurgency is the sense of "political redundancy". Given the present constitutional and electoral system in the country, the Mohajir electorate is in a position to command less than 10 percent of National Assembly seats. In a situation where a virtual two party system has emerged, smaller parties have lost the leverage they could have commanded in a hung parliament. Effectively, parliamentarians belonging to smaller parties, like the MQM, can only make eloquent speeches. The Mohajirs' position in the Provincial Assembly is equally redundant. With less than 30 percent of seats, they are not even in a position to withhold quorum. The MQM has mostly boycotted the Sindh Assembly sessions, but that has

not prevented the Assembly from conducting its sessions and passing legislation. If the MQM do decide to attend the Assembly sessions, the best they can do is make eloquent speeches.

The Mohajirs are not even able to exercise their writ in the cities where they dwell. Ironically, even the holding of local bodies elections will not enable the urban population to exercise effective control over their local resources or their management. Karachi is the economic engine of the country, contributing about 20 percent of national gross domestic product [Bengali, 1988], 40 percent of federal tax revenues and 80 percent of provincial tax revenues. However, Mohajirs have little say in how and in whose interest these revenues will be spent.

Land and housing in Karachi is controlled by the Karachi Development Authority (KDA), a provincial government organization. However, large tracts of land in Karachi are under the jurisdiction of cantonments, railways, etc., and, as such, federally controlled. Water is controlled by the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB), which again is a provincially controlled organization. Transport and police are provincial subjects and electricity, gas and telephones are federally administered.

There are other lucrative sources of under-the-counter income for those in charge of the city. There are four major sectors, land, water, transport and police, which generate millions of rupees in illegal gratification. A sample survey<sup>2</sup> in the Saddar area of Karachi showed that hawkers pay about Rs 300,000 per day in bribes to the various authorities. The total 'catch' from land, water, construction, transport, drugs, prostitution, etc., rackets is estimated to exceed Rs 3 billion per year. Those in charge are generally non-Mohajirs, while the millions are generated largely from Mohajir pockets. The Mohajirs are no longer prepared to tolerate the institutionalized corruption, which has torn the social fabric of Karachi. They are no longer prepared to accept the position of the docile goose that lays the golden egg for those in power at national and provincial levels. And they are no longer averse to challenging the overt and covert transfers of income at their expense.

It can be seen that Mohajirs are not in a position to exercise any leverage at either the federal, provincial or local level. There also appears to be a lagged correlation between the decline in political power and economic power. It is not mere coincidence, perhaps, that Mohajir control of the presidency of commercial banks has declined from 100 percent in the 1950's to 16 percent in the 1990's, that of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) -- the premier business association of the country -- has declined from 100 percent in the 1950's to zero in the 1990's, and that of APTMA -- the premier trade body of the largest manufacturing sector of the country -- has also reduced to zero in the 1990's (see Table 7). Given this state of "political redundancy" at all levels and the seemingly irreversible loss of economic leverage, the Mohajirs apparently perceive they do not have any stake in the system. It is a perception, which is a potent recipe for disaffection, militancy and insurgency.

Table 7: Time Profile of Control of Presidency of Key Trade Bodies and Banks by Ethnicity (%)

Decade	Commercial Banks		FPCCI		APTMA	
	Mohajir	Non-Mohajir	Mohajir	Non-Mohajir	Mohajir	Non-Mohajir
1950's	100.0	Zero	100.0	Zero	50.0	50.0
1960's	87.5	12.5	20.0	80.0	30.0	70.0
1970's	44.0	66.0	37.5	62.5	22.5	77.5
1980's	20.0	80.0	20.5	80.5	20.0	80.0
1990's	16.0	84.0	Zero	100.0	Zero	100.0

Source: • Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry  
 • All Pakistan Textile Mills Association  
 • Commercial Banks (National Bank of Pakistan, Habib Bank Ltd., Allied Bank Ltd., Muslim Commercial Bank Ltd, United Bank Ltd.)

2 Author=s own survey carried out in 1989.

## Resolution of Ethnic Militancy

The crux of the problem is that the country is facing a constitutional crisis. The 1973 Constitution was framed in the aftermath of the rupture of Islamabad-Dacca relations and the secession of East Pakistan. Considerable attention was, therefore, accorded to Centre-province and inter-provincial relations. The Constitution provided for a federal list, a concurrent list, a Council of Common Interest, a National Finance Commission, etc., and the then government also created a Ministry of Provincial Coordination. However, it was then assumed, perhaps rightly so at the time, that the provinces were internally politically homogenous. Provisions for intra-provincial relations are, therefore, conspicuously missing from the Constitution. Two decades down the road, more than half of which was spent under the trauma of military rule, the assumption is no longer valid. Sindh has two clearly defined political entities: Sindhis and Mohajirs. Incidentally, other provinces are in the same boat. Punjab is beset with the Seraiki identity and the nascent Potohari identity, NWFP has to reckon with the Hazarwal identity, and Balochistan has to deal with the Baloch-Pukhtoon divide.

Clearly, constitutional reform is urgently in order. And central to the reforms is a process of decentralization of the state and devolution of political and economic power to the provinces and further on to local entities. The theoretical basis of the reforms can be provided by the principle of subsidiarity, where local government constitutes the basic unit of government and functions that overlap local boundaries are transferred to the next higher level of government.

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