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Karachi, the mega city and the commercial hub of Pakistan has become one of the most dangerous cities of the world in past few decades. This paper uses Lyari, a violent neighbourhood in Karachi, as a case study to find the underlying causes of conflict. The paper builds the argument that political management of crime has created spaces for the criminals to extend their criminal networks. Through connections with state officials and civic leaders, they appropriate state power and social capital that make their ongoing criminal activities possible. I present a genealogical analysis of politico-criminal relationships in Lyari and then examine the interactions of the criminals with the society through qualitative field research. The article also demonstrates how such criminals develop parallel governance systems that transcend state authority, use violence to impose order and work with civic leaders to establish their legitimacy. It is observed that these 'sub-national conflicts' have not only restrained the authority of the government, but have also curtailed accountability mechanisms that rein in political management of crime.

The population of Karachi in 1729 was 250, today it is estimated to be more than 20 Million, ranking as the seventh most populous city in the world. From its humble beginnings as a fishing village, the city has grown to become the financial hub of Pakistan. Sadly, Karachi has also become known as one of the world's most corrupt and dangerous mega-cities, with endemic problems of governance, poverty and organized criminal gangs operating with links to locally influential political parties. Many areas in Karachi, are extremely conflicted and have been termed as 'no-go' areas. The major

flashpoints of violence in Karachi have been Lyari, Orangi, Qasba Colony, Pak Colony, Kati Pahari, Sohrab Goth, Banaras etc.¹ How did this happen, and what, if anything, can be done to fix this broken city? Through this paper I attempt to answer this question using Lyari, one of the most violent areas of the city, as a case study.

Karachi was once a small village of fishermen, surrounded by mud ramparts. It was linked to the outside world through two doors: the Arabian Sea was the door of salted water (Kharadar), and the Lyari river was the door of sweet water (Mithadar) (Gayer, 2007). Today, administratively these areas fall in the Saddar Town and Lyari town. The Lyari town lies between the Lyari river and Saddar Town and it is the oldest part of city, which is why its residents proudly term it as the 'Mother of Karachi'.

Lyari, however, has been the most violent and disturbed area of the city for more than 30 years. The area holds significance because it is one of the oldest areas of the city and lies in close proximity to the Port. It is also close to one of Karachi's oldest trade points, The Jodia Bazar. Lyari has been a very important electoral constituency for the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) since the 1970s. However, this ill-fated area has remained a bloody neighbourhood, with high levels of poverty, conflicts and politically induced violence. It is also one of the most densely populated areas in the city, and the population is ethnically mixed from all over Pakistan. The majority of them are the descendants of working class settlers hailing from Makran, Kalat and Lasbela, and settled in the area in the 18th century. A number of black African slaves arrived in the area in the 19th century and merged with the Balochs. Together these groups are popularly termed as Sheedis or Makranis. The second largest ethnic group is the Kutchis who immigrated to the area in the late 19th century, from Gujrat in India. They belong to the trader class of Memons and were mainly attracted by Lyari's proximity to the port, and availability of cheap labor. In addition to that, Lyari houses many Sindhis who are descendants of Sindhi fishermen who arrived here in 19th century. Pashtun, and some Muhajirs, whose families migrated after partition, are also part of the ethnic mix.

As a result of the intermittent influx of people, the area developed in a haphazard way, forming unplanned settlements. In time, the settlements grew into a small fishing village and came to be known as Kolachi-jo-Goth, or the village of Kolachee. The fortified settlement of Karachi (or Kolachi as it was then called) was built in 1729, on the left bank of Lyari river and on the eastern edge of the natural harbour (Hasan, Oct 2006). Lyari developed as a working-class suburb by the end of the 18th century. The Baloch families worked as port labour, gravediggers, and in the tanneries and salt works. When Karachi expanded in the 19th century, they worked as building-site labour, becoming skilled in stone masonry and carpentry. Partition changed Karachi. From a city of 450,000 in 1947, it grew to a city of 1.137 million in 1951. Most of the migrants settled in properties in the old town and its suburbs, which had been vacated by the Hindus and the Sikhs.

¹ <http://www.dawn.com/news/1040495> The image shows the eight most violent flashpoints in Karachi. Note that Lyari has had the highest death toll in the period between Jan 1 to Aug 31 2013

Thus, a number of informal Mohajir (immigrant) settlements developed adjacent to the Baloch Goths. The population of Lyari grew from 81,768 in 1941, to 360,000 in 1956, making it a densely populated locality (Zaidi, Dec 1997). The presence of the nearby port and the important markets, Lea Market and Khadda Market, attracted many Memon traders. In 1970s and 80s, these wholesale markets expanded rapidly adding, Jodia Bazar, Dhan Mandi (Grain Market), Cloth Market and Paper Market. Lyari became an important source of land and labour. Some metal industries and garbage recycling factories were also established in Lyari. This expansion of industrial and wholesale activity, along with its transport and warehousing-related needs, has caused massive congestion and environmental degradation. Densities in some of the neighbourhoods are as high as 8,000 persons per hectare (Hasan, Oct 2006). It is estimated that over 1.6 million people live there. Most of Lyari's inhabitants are working class, providing labour to the port, as well as in the other parts of the city. Few run public transport in the surrounding areas. Some are still working as fishermen, while many find it difficult to find employment. Most women work as house maids in the rest of the city, including areas of Jamshed Town, DHA and Gulshan-e-Iqbal.

Many residents have lived in the area for more than four decades and despite being a disorganized and densely populated urban slum the people here have high levels of social cohesion and political awareness. However ethnic diversity and political dependence have greatly incapacitated their willingness for reforms and maintenance of social order. Despite high levels of social capital, Lyari is a dangerous neighbourhood and a sanctuary for criminals. In the discussion that follows I argue that management of conflict by the political parties creates spaces for the criminals to extend their criminal networks. Through connections with state officials and civic leaders, they appropriate state power and social capital that make their ongoing criminal activities possible. I build this argument through a genealogical analysis of politico-criminal relationships in Lyari. I then examine the interactions of the criminals with the society through qualitative field research. The article also demonstrates how such criminals develop parallel governance systems that transcend state authority, use violence to impose order and work with civic leaders to establish their legitimacy.

Political Management of Crime

The people of Lyari have always been politically aware and active. The first wave of activism was seen in 1930s, when the first official labour union, the Karachi Port Workers' Union was formed. This union was dominated by the Makrani/Baloch workers of Lyari. (Asdar Ali, 2005). Since then, Lyari has been a hotbed of oppositional, and even radical, activism. In the 1960s, under Ayub's military government, the Greater Karachi Resettlement Plan was instituted. Under this plan, a vast majority of settlements were designed around the city's periphery, along with the industries for which they were to provide a cheap pool of labour. The residents of Lyari became aware of this plan to raze

their locality and to shift them away from the city. They launched a campaign to save their neighbourhood and succeeded in drawing the attention of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was at that time a civilian minister in Ayub Khan's military regime. Bhutto lobbied within the government for the regularization of the existing settlement. He rallied supporters at a public meeting in Lyari in 1963, where he announced that lease documents will be issued to the residents. Subsequently, Lyari became a support base for Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party, which contested the country's first general elections held in 1970. The PPP formed a government in 1972, and the inaugural meeting of its provincial cabinet was held in 1972, at a public park in Lyari. In one of his early actions, Bhutto instructed municipal authorities to issue land titles to Lyari residents (Anwar, 2014). Since then, Lyari has been an unbending vote bank for PPP. During Zia's martial law, Lyari held centre stage in forging the MRD (Movement for Restoration of Democracy). Bhutto continued to encourage the support of the Lyari leaders by his anti-industrialist rhetoric and many of the workers suffered jail sentences for protesting against Zia's martial law, and to bring back democratic rule in the country. Thus, while remaining on the forefront of every successive labour movement in Karachi, Lyari became a fertile ground for the display of patronage politics. After Bhutto's death Benazir remained closely attached to the people of Lyari. Her wedding reception was held in the famous Kakri ground in Lyari which attracted a huge crowd of PPP supporters. She even opted to give birth to her son Bilawal in Lyari. The people of Lyari voted overwhelmingly for her in 1988, and then for her husband Zardari, in 1990.

Criminal activities began in the area during the 1960s, initially as smuggling business. The activities later expanded to drug trade and two major gangs emerged which confronted each other for the control of drug trafficking and other criminal activities. Thus began Lyari's 'gang war'. The criminals continued to provide muscle power to the rich and powerful, thus maintaining close links with elites. Their relations with the rich and powerful, enabled them to pervade the power circles (Gayer, 2014).

The 1980s saw intensifications in illicit activities. The proximity to the port facilitated the growth of this criminal economy. Zia's support of the US sponsored Afghan War led to increased infiltration of firearms and drugs in Lyari because these shipments transited through port. The arrival of Afghan refugees added to the volatile demographic situation, as these refugees brought with them a 'drug and arms mafia'. Kalashnikovs, heroine and gambling dens became common. The gangs fought violently for the control of drug trafficking, making lives of the residents miserable. This era saw an increase in turbulent situations and the miseries of the people. Their drug money enabled the gangsters to buy huge weapon consignments. They bribed the police, expanding their clout and gradually eroding the state's authority. The criminal activities later expanded to extortion and abduction, and as a result, the rest of the city also suffered from this menace.

The late 1980s also saw a major political shift, with the emergence of the Muhajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), a militant ethnic party, championing the cause of partition migrants (Mohajirs), which came to dominate electoral politics in the city. MQM

appealed to the majority Urdu-speaking community in Karachi, and slowly became a highly represented political party in the city. This was particularly detrimental to Lyari's Baloch community, which remained loyal to PPP leadership and found itself in direct ethnic confrontation with the majority Mohajirs of the city. The rise of MQM was not without consequences as MQM's workers viewed street clashes and armed confrontations as a necessary part of their struggle, and politics came to be dominated by ethnicity and violence (Haq, 1995). Constituting armed wings thus became the norm for all major political parties in Karachi. The gangsters of Lyari became recruits of the PPP's own militant wing. MQM had a strong foothold in the old city, due to the presence of Mohajir vote bank many of whom were Memons and Katchis. Even in Lyari, some areas like Agra Taj Colony and Bihar Colony, Mohajirs retained a significant presence. In order to prevent MQM from expanding its activities in Lyari, the criminal gangs supporting PPP were deliberately empowered. This alliance between the PPP and gangsters continued and Rehman gained prominence. Rehman was a drug peddler and had committed several murders, including his own mother's (Imtiaz, 2010). Rehman's gang smuggled drugs and arms, ran extortion business, and his gang was also notorious as hired-guns. They would receive their payments, eliminate their target, and flee from Karachi to Hub. Rehman had contacts within the police and was able to escape from custody twice. Since 1993, over 200 FIRs (First Investigation Report) were registered against him (The News, 2009). His delinquencies were ignored, and sometimes even supported by the PPP as a matter of political expediency. Rehman maintained a close relationship with Asif Zardari during the latter's imprisonment and was responsible for providing security for PPP politicians as well as of Benazir's residence, the Bilawal House, in Karachi (Imtiaz, 2010).

The war between the gangs continued. A gangster named Arshad Pappu was now in confrontation with Rehman. The conflict between the two escalated throughout the 2000s, and MQM is believed to have supported Arshad Pappu, thereby inducing a proxy war between MQM and the PPP. However, Rehman's influence continued to grow, and through his support, PPP's Nabeel Gabol, a prominent Baloch Sardar (Sardar is a term used for Tribal Lords) won National Assembly seats from Lyari in 2002. However, Nabeel Gabol could not make inroads into Lyari's neighborhoods and showed no genuine interest in improving Lyari's conditions. There was not a single decent hospital in Lyari, schools were in shambles and residents of Lyari remained victims of riots and instability. The inefficiency of PPP leadership in heeding the problems of Lyari created a power vacuum that was filled by Rehman, who assumed the title of Sardar Rehman Baloch. He started welfare activities in his newfound role as a reformer, social worker and local leader. His popularity as a benefactor of Lyari brought him great support as well as power. His growing ambitions became evident when he attempted to nominate his own candidates in the non-party elections of Local Government in 2001 (Khan, 2009). This alarmed the PPP leadership, but they continued to co-opt him for electoral prospects. In 2006, Arshad Pappu was arrested and Ghaffar Zikri took control, however by this time

their presence was greatly limited. In 2007, Rehman was instrumental in escorting Benazir Bhutto away from the explosion site to the safety of Bilawal House.

In 2008, PPP was again able to get Lyari's seat, owing to support from Rehman. The opposing Zikri group, greatly subjugated by Rehman's expanding dominance, agreed to a truce, leading to the formation of PAC: Peoples Aman Committee. Using the platform of PAC, Rehman continued his efforts to improve the area, and worked to legitimize his powers. However, these aspirations were soon put to rest when Rehman was killed in an encounter with police, in 2009. It is believed that his death was a case of extra-judicial killing, as his rise was threatening political parties (Dawn, 2009). His death made him a hero, as he was a sole benefactor of Lyari residents who were greatly saddened and enraged at his killing.

Uziar Baloch, who was an associate of Rehman's, took the reins of PAC and assumed the role of Lyari's godfather. Drawing from Rehman's popularity, he gained both prominence and command. His connections with politicians remained strong and he wielded tremendous influence over appointments in law enforcement agencies. The gang rivalries continued, and Arshad Pappu continued to battle with Uzair's gang. The PAC also remained in conflict with KRC (Katchi Rabta Committee), which was formed in 2009 by the Kutchi minority. It is believed that both KRC and Arshad Pappu's gang were being supported by MQM (Ali, 2014). PAC increased its criminal activities through extortion and drug trafficking, which were largely controlled by its military commander, Noor Mohammad, alias Baba Ladla. The rise of Taleban in the city during that period resulted in increased proliferation of arms. Bullets and guns were replaced by explosives and hand grenades, making the conflicts between the gangs deadlier for bystanders and residents. The growing unrest in Balochistan also led to an increase in criminal activities in Lyari, as it was always suspected that some of Rehman's associates had sympathized with Baloch separatists. In fact, it was also believed that Rehman financed the Baloch nationalist groups and the City President of the Baloch National Party (BNP), Zahid Baloch, was a close friend of Dakait's (Khan, 2009).

Consequently, PAC was banned in 2011, however it remained fully involved in its criminal activities. Increases in drug trafficking, kidnapping, robberies, extortions were all reflective of a weakening governmental structure that could no longer maintain public order. The Human Rights Commission in Pakistan noted that 121 people were killed in Lyari in 2012 and as a result of gang wars (HRCP, 2013) and number which rose to 349 in 2013 (Dawn, 2013).

Uzair's relations with PPP saw a decline in that era. Nabeel Gabol had completely lost his influence in Lyari and the PPP government was also wary of the way Uzair was strengthening his personal credentials and challenging its electoral dominance in Lyari. On March 2, 2012 Uzair Baloch organized Cultural Day at Lyari's Dubai Cowk and instead of PPP flags or Benazir Bhutto's portraits, Uzair Baloch's own portraits decked the venue. The event was attended by a senior leader of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN), which signalled that Uzair was looking to dispense with PPP patronage

and join PMLN. Zulfiqar Mirza, a PPP minister, continued to back Uzair as he too had disagreements with PPP leadership.

The rising clout of Uzair was alarming for both PPP and MQM. PPP was in a coalition partnership with MQM, in Sindh government and this time it was in the interest of both to rein in Uzair. In 2012, when the elections were drawing near, PPP government launched an operation in Lyari. It is interesting to note that the Rangers who have long been stationed in the area completely refrained from the action. The most plausible explanation of this is that they were sceptical about its motives (Kaleem, June 18, 2012). It was believed that this one-week operation was one-sided, and instead of cleansing Lyari of all criminals, it was only aimed at PAC fighters. However, the operation was a complete failure and not a single gangster was hurt, killed or arrested. This turn of events led PPP to lose its popularity in Lyari.

Later, the PPP leadership formed a committee to initiate dialogue with PAC, and Uzair was able to nominate his close aides as party candidates for the May, 2013 elections. PPP was virtually at the mercy of PAC and although Lyari seats were won for PPP, the relationship between the two remained bitter. In April 2013, just a month before elections, Arshad Pappu and his brother were brutally assassinated by the members of PAC. This execution was publicly announced through the loud speakers of local mosques and the dead bodies were paraded through the areas of Lyari, after which they were chopped into pieces, before being set alight (Dawn, 2013). The anti-terrorism court issued arrest warrants for Uzair and his accomplices, including the Member National Assembly Shahjahan Baloch. In the following months, these court orders and the subsequent raids conducted by the police on Uzair's house failed to produce any result.

Despite his sour relationships with the PPP leadership and orders for his prosecution, Uzair remained powerful. The May 2013 elections showed a major political shift in Karachi, with Imran Khan's political party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) appearing as the second most popular party in Karachi, replacing PPP (Tunio, 2013). Even on election day, Lyari's Baloch and Sindhi youth were divided between PPP and PTI camps. Most of them wore shirts and caps inscribed with the portrait of PTI chief Imran Khan and were shouting slogans to bring "change". This became even more evident in the attendance of processions held by both parties in 2014 (Mandhro, 2014). PTI *Jalsa* (procession) was actively attended by Lyari youth, but PPP *Jalsa*, led by Bilawal Bhutto, drew very few people from Lyari. Despite the fact that Bilawal himself went to Lyari to pledge support, those who attended PPP *Jalsa* were punished by Uzair's men.

The war between the gangs took a new turn when Baba Ladla, who had been Uzair's militant commander, split and joined his former foe Ghaffar Zikri. It significantly weakened Uzair's forces and a large part of Lyari fell under the control of Baba Ladla. By the end of 2013 Uzair fled to Europe - a move that made him lose his support in Lyari. Lyariites feel abandoned and consider this an act of cowardice. In late 2014 he was arrested by Interpol in Dubai while crossing the border on an Iranian passport. None of

his supporters in Lyari reacted to the arrest and most of his gang has been wiped out by the rangers and Baba Ladla (Mandhro, 2014).

In the rest of the city the dominant party MQM has continued to operate militant wings which are involved in extortion, target-killings and arson attacks. The culture of 'body-bags' and intimidation has left the city of 20 million paralyzed. The party leader Altaf Hussain from his home in London has been threatening death to anyone who dares to question his dominion (Guardian, 2013). This political engineering of crime in the city has torn the social fabric of the city and residents live under a constant state of threat.

It is quite evident that Uzair's dominance was highly dependent upon the support from his political patrons. Following his uneasy relationship with PPP, he has seen resistances that compelled him to escape and ultimately led to his arrest. In 2013 the PMLN formed government in the centre which greatly served to abate PPP's influence. Moreover, PPP has seen a sharp decline in its support base in Karachi and has been greatly limited to rural Sindh, effectively side-lined in politics in the federal government. PMLN started a clean-up operation in September 2013 and since then many gangsters in Lyaris have been killed. Baba Ladla and Ghaffar Zikri the two main gang leaders are on the run and rangers have been quite successful in restoring peace in Lyari. However, the power vacuum and lack of social order poses threat to the fragile situation.

Criminal Governance

The above mentioned trajectory of violence and politics in Lyari elucidates how local gangs have developed clientelist interactions with politicians, and set up complex and flexible networks within the society that enables them to engage in criminal activities. In Lyari, these criminal networks have emerged with political alliances, as well as the failure of state actors in establishing the rule of law. Expanding illegal trade has placed sufficient power and resources in the hands of the criminals to allow them to influence political actors by gaining support from local population and vice versa. They have established a parallel state in Pakistan's largest and most important city. This section explores the interactions of criminals with other actors in society which have enabled them to establish a surrogate control system within the neighbourhood.

Lyari's rich history, love of music and rich culture once made it a lively neighbourhood. In evenings the residents gathered in small street side hotels and cafes to have evening discussions about politics, current affairs, sports etc, while having tea. Despite being a heterogeneous society, home to many different ethnicities, the residents displayed considerable empathy and social cohesion. Many small street schools operated in the area, dotting alleys, garbage dumps etc. (Yusuf, 2012). However, the escalation of violence and conflicts in the 1990s significantly altered this social landscape.

In the decade of 1980, several factors led to an increase in marginalization, social isolation, economic deprivation and aggression. Firstly, the increase in population, industrial and port activities led to the a rapid, disorganized construction of residential

apartments. This resulted in massive congestion, lack of sanitation and sewerage facilities, and environmental degradation. As a result, Lyari developed into an unplanned urban slum, inhabited mostly by the working class, with little share in the overall expansion of Karachi's economy and infrastructure. Secondly, the increased muscle power of MQM led to social marginalization of the Baloch community of Lyari, as a consequence of their support for the rival party PPP. Political confrontations between MQM and PPP made Lyari a battleground which was used to showcase their contentions. This resulted in proliferation of arms, a flourishing drug trade, and a negligence of the resultant deterioration of social justice. Thirdly, PPP leadership remained oblivious to the developing needs of the people, and Lyari remained a vote bank which caught the party's attention only during elections. This resulted in a rise of poverty, persistent decline in health and education facilities, and alarming increases in the crime rate.

The kingpins of the gangs remained tightly integrated into the formal political processes, altering the balance of legitimacy and power. The absence of a legitimate power base, led to a vacuum which allowed the gangsters to expand their influence and efforts to sustain their criminal activities. Their endorsement from leading politicians blurred the boundaries between right and wrong, and provided them with an opportunity to permeate law enforcement agencies, especially the police. The powers from these sources, the wealth from illegal activities, and possession of lethal weapons allowed them to establish a de facto system of governance. In this scenario, the role of the state and its authority was contested and weakened with the reproduction of state-like governance systems.

The sustainability of crime and the power it yields poses challenges. The environment in which the offenders operate is relatively uncertain, because their activities are illegal. The uncertainty of attitudes of law enforcement agencies, hostility from rivals, absence of rules and mechanisms, and mistrust in economic transactions are all factors that compel the criminals to develop social relations (Arias, 2006). These social relations provide solutions for problems of cooperation and mitigate the problem of distrust. Criminal leaders of Lyari developed these relations both in the society and politics. These networks provided the criminal organizations a link into the city's political and social hierarchies, built and maintained the support of local populations, and created an urban space that undermines and transforms the rule of law. This was achieved through co-option, intimidation, and gaining political foothold through public service.

Impoverished and dangerous neighbourhoods like Lyari usually have high degrees of social integration and a low level of informal social control, making it easier for the gang leaders to gain popular support through welfare activities (Dietz, 2004). However, despite the services, criminal gangs do not always enjoy public support. In fact, in most cases, compliance was achieved through intimidation or threats. During my visits to the neighbourhood one of the residents showed me several small tobacconist's shops on street corners. Not only do they sell drugs, but also serve as spies for the gang groups,

keeping a check on who enters the area. My companion noted that they do not really have a choice because if they are not complacent, the punishment is death.

Using the money from criminal proceedings, Rehman engaged in philanthropy and directed his resources for the social uplift of the area. He gained immense respect and popularity. Rehman eventually became the Godfather of Lyari who had political backing, control of criminal economy, and public recognition. The devolution plan of 2001, which was aimed at strengthening local democracy, was also pivotal in his political mobilization. The act greatly empowered the local government for the delivery of public services like infrastructure, education, health, sanitation etc., and thus provided a lucrative platform for gaining popular support from the people. This was the first time Rehman developed differences with PPP leadership over the selection of candidates. Emboldened by his stronghold in the social fabric, his dependency on other resources had gradually declined. By this time the opposing gang was also significantly weaker, and therefore with an aim to bring peace and prosperity to Lyari, he laid the foundation of The PAC, in 2008. Although the overt aim of the committee was to provide a legitimate political platform for Rehman, his alliance with PPP made the PAC a militant wing primarily aimed to confront the violence from MQM, and retain the control of criminal networks, including extortion, drug trade, etc.

Using the platform of PAC, Rehman instituted an alternate governance system. His associates supervised specific localities, where they were in charge of criminal activities, and also acted as de facto administrators of justice. The gang leaders were able to build support through dispute resolution and crime control. They were able to enforce order more effectively because they imposed penalties that were more severe. As noted by one of my interviewees;

People of PAC had set up committees. If your mobile was snatched or there was a robbery in your house, you could go to them and claim justice. They would hunt down the criminals and punish them. The punishments varied depending on severity of crime. For smaller crimes like mobile snatching they would shoot the offender in the flesh of the leg²

They also participated in philanthropy and public services which enabled them to establish a narrative of reciprocity and respect. This was evident in the decreased use of drugs as Rehman banned public selling and use of narcotics; my one of my interviewees noted;

When Rehman had control of PAC, prevalence of drug use was reduced. Nobody was allowed to use drugs in public. They had made a 'saqi khana' (a tavern) for drug-users, but most youth avoided it because it was considered humiliating and unmanly.³

² Interview in Lyari January 15, 2015

³ Interview in Lyari January 15, 2015

After Rehman's death in 2009, Uzair Baloch took the reins of PAC, and building upon Rehman's support base, he established himself as the political patron of Lyari. He continued the practice of conflict management and held Jirgahs which included prominent leaders of the locality. Employing his political resources, he established the first university and a public hospital in the area. Uzair also ran effective public relations campaigns. One can see his images, along with Rehman's, on posters hung around the streets as well as their news highlights from local newspapers. Janbaz, Mahaz and Daily Special are the prominent daily Urdu newspapers that publish the stories of gang combat, with bizarre connotations. They include pictures of killed criminals, political statements, and make striking headlines assuring the gangsters always remain in the news. In a politically mobilized society like Lyari, such tactics keep the gangsters' presence felt in the locality, even if they are not physically present anymore.

Uzair also gathered the social activists of Lyari and instituted an NGO in Lyari, called the Lyari Resource Centre (LRC), which supervised the development programs. LRC was another effort to integrate gang leaders into the social network and establish legitimacy by incorporating some prominent clan elders and civil society leaders. LRC initiated several projects which included girls' education, reclamation of public parks, developing football and boxing clubs, and the overall maintenance of the neighbourhood. It must be noted here that the funding for LRC projects not only came from private sources, but also from the federal government, as it oversaw the projects that were a part of the Lyari Development Package (Viqar, 2014). Such interactions with the state created the inner dialectic of networks that crossed criminal-state-society frontiers. The outsourcing of services by the government to extra-legal entities and state reliance on gangsters to provide basic services, undermines the social order. It erodes state authority and inadvertently facilitates organized criminal activity. The networks enable the criminals to build contacts with other groups operating in and out of the locality, making any efforts to control the prevalence of criminal actions even more difficult. This is particularly evident in case of Lyari.

These gangsters make impressive success stories for the young and marginalized. Consider the example of Baba Ladla. He was a donkey cart driver and extremely poor. By taking up a career in crime, he climbed the ladders of success, and now he is rich, powerful and intimidating. Baba Ladla is also one of the most brutal murderers among criminals, notorious for his barbaric methods⁴. The kind of social learning these characters generate leads to making violence and crime a lucrative path. The young tend to romanticize the lives of the gangsters and imitate the manner in which the gangsters wear their hats and the posture they adopt while riding motorbikes⁵. The families have low levels of functional authority over children, who, once exposed to delinquent traditions, succumb to felonious behaviour. Also important to note here is that getting a

⁴ Interview in Lyari January 20, 2015

⁵ Interview in Lyari January 23, 2015

membership into a gang is viewed as a safe haven to the young living in a gang infested community. Therefore, a situation where gang leaders are both condemned for their illicit activities and idolized for their perceived success, notions of legality and illegality are often interwoven. In such a cultural climate, gang membership becomes a satisfying alternative to unsatisfactory legitimate conventions.

This immediate social environment creates a pull, which results in greater vulnerability for criminal careers. Kleeman and Poot use the term 'social opportunity structure' to explain this phenomenon. Social ties provide access to profitable criminal opportunities which explains the involvement in organized crime (Kleeman and Poot 2008). One interesting observation that validates the concept of social opportunity is sports. Leisure activities and side-lines act as catalysts for contacts between parties from different social worlds. Football and boxing are the two sports that are extremely popular in Lyari, so much so that a young boy who is not a good footballer has to face humiliation. Most of the notorious criminals have been popular sportsmen in Lyari. They have joined criminal gangs because of unemployment. The sports departments are the first to bear the brunt of downsizing in public organizations and have left many able sportsmen of Lyari jobless. The interactions from sports help develop contacts between the 'crime world' and the 'licit world' and provide opportunities of gang membership. Hence, people without any appreciable criminal history and legally employed people switch careers and enter the world of organized crime.

Ethnicity has also played a major role in the spread of crime. Lyari is home to many Balochs which are underrepresented in other areas of Karachi. The gang members are also predominantly Balochs. They have an ethno-lingual bond with Balochistan province. The dynamics of Balochistan have been instrumental in influencing anti-state sentiments in Lyari. The insurgency in the province and the rise of separatist movements has caused huge unrest. Since 2005, Baloch insurgents have persistently launched attacks on security forces, state institutions, gas installations, and non-Balochs living in the province. Balochistan Liberation Front and Baluchistan Student Organization have been on the forefront of the current insurgency. There is a palpable presence of these two organizations in Lyari. When the grip of law enforcement tightens, the criminals of Lyari gangs find safe hiding places in Balochistan. Conversely the insurgents from Balochistan find refuge in Lyari. I met few activists who had come to Lyari with an overt mission of welfare work. These were the educated urban youth mainly from Baloch Student Organization, and they expressed and professed anti-state sentiments.

Many political workers believe Lyari was being punished for its activism against the military rule of General Zia⁶. Today, people of Lyari seem divided in their sentiments for the military when some openly condemn role of rangers and forces in the region, and other hold reverence in their mention of the '*Pak Foj*' (Pakistan Army). However, it would not be erroneous to state that Lyari has become a safe haven for terrorist and criminal

⁶ Interview in Lyari February 2, 2015

factions who confront each other either for ideological or for avaricious concerns, with all this going on under the nose of the ruling regimes.

The drug trade in Balochistan is also a major concern, as much of it permeates the Lyari criminal settings. According to the UNODC's 2012 report, \$27 to \$30 billion worth of drugs are smuggled from Afghanistan, via Pakistan. Balochistan is a transit point in the international drug trade route. Narcotics are brought from Helmand, a Baloch-dominated province in Afghanistan, to Balochistan, and are transported to Iran, Turkey and Europe (UNODC, 2012). A large portion of this illicit trade is operated from Lyari. This ethnic homogeneity of criminal associations has caused Lyari to fall deeply into the web of felonies.

Law enforcement has always been an insurmountable task in Lyari, as Rehman was successful in infiltrating the police force, owing to his political networks. Police agencies had learnt to co-exist with the mafia. Some were appointed by Rehman and therefore owed their allegiance to him, while others were benefactors in crime through bribes. Those who didn't fall under the above categories were silenced by political actors. These factors led to strengthening the political clout of PAC, at the cost of state institutions. This has resulted in huge mistrust of security agencies. A particular incident was noted on 29 January, 2015, when a group of miscreants looted 15 shops in Lyari's Gharib Shah market. A Ranger post was right next to the market. People rallied and surrounded the Rangers' station post condemning their failure to take any action, while the lootings were publicly carried out. Later in the month of March the shopkeepers' association of Lyari, LTI (Lyari Tajir Ittehad) protested outside of the Sindh Assembly complaining against law enforcement inefficiency to protect them from threats and extortions from Lyari-based gangs. There is mistrust for Rangers and Police alike (Express, 2015).

Since 2012, international donor agencies have allocated large amount of funds for Lyari. These funds enabled many organizations to begin social action projects. Some indigenous small NGOs like the ARM Child, Youth Welfare and Pakistan Youth Alliance collaborated with an organization Karachi Youth Initiative and launched programs that aimed to reduce the impact of conflict on the youngsters of the area. Lyari Youth Cafe was one of the initiatives under this program. The cafe is housed in the Shuhuda Hall which was built by the former PPP Member of National Assembly, Nabeel Gabol, in 2011. The young boys and girls are gathered in the cafe in the evening, and capacity development workshops, mentoring sessions, and discussions are held over tea. The cafe has been very successful in keeping many vulnerable young boys from crime and given them a path to a successful life⁷. A similar program was initiated by Pakistan Youth Alliance which aimed at developing counter narratives to extremist ideology. They conducted peace-building workshops in the area during which the youth were encouraged to develop localized solutions for combating violence. The funds have also been useful in developing literacy, education, and capacity building. Sabina Khatri, a

⁷ Interview with Sohail Rahi of Lyari Youth Cafe, February 6, 2015

social activist working with the Kiran Foundation, has been running a small school for children under the age of 10 in Lyari. Recently she, together with the Akhuwat Foundation, has adopted a school in Lyari, under the Sindh Government's adopt-a-school program. The funding for reclamation and development for the school was provided by the Karachi Youth Initiative. She remarked that when they started functioning the school had more teachers than students. All the teachers were on the government's payroll and highly inefficient. From bringing the dropped out children back to school to coaching the teachers, Sabina has been doing a remarkable job. She noted;

Teachers have given us a real hard time. They are used to getting paid for nothing and therefore our interventions are annoying them. The Adopt-a-School program does not give hiring and firing powers to the adopter. Therefore, working with the a frail system that is highly rusted and corrupted due to lack of accountability has been a daunting task.⁸

These discussions reminded me of my earlier interviews when I was told that under the fear of Uzair Baloch, the teachers had become more efficient, punctual and the quality of education had greatly improved.

The failure of governance lies at the core of all these problems. Weak accountability mechanisms, corruption, nepotism have made spaces for the gang leaders to perform and deliver. Moreover, these small isolated efforts of protecting Lyari's youth from crime seem to have relatively low effect on violence and rather have been co-opted by the gang members. The result is that resources intended for social assistance actually end up creating a support base for the gangsters in the area. Poorly thought out and managed social programs, and NGO actions can actually contribute to, and become a part of criminal networks. Non compliance by these social organizations also results in them being perceived as the opposing forces, hence many activists, for the sake of their commitment, agree to work without threatening the hegemony of the kingpins. The civic leaders in Lyari were fully aware that none of their efforts will reach fruition if they held a confrontational stance against the gang leaders. In fact, one activist noted;

When Uzair bhai (brother) was here, it was much easier. All we had to do was to inform him of our activities and his boys would not bother us. Now, it is getting worse. We do not know where to go and there are always threats looming around."⁹

They hope that their persistent efforts will eventually create social order, which will in due course wipe out criminals from the neighbourhood.

Since the beginning of the military operation in 2013, the efforts to cleanse Lyari have been two-fold. Law enforcement agencies have been persistently wiping out

⁸ Interview with Sabina Khatri in Lyari, 21 February 2015

⁹ Interview with Ali Abbas Zaidi of Pakistan Youth Alliance, 06 February 2015

criminals, and the funds directed towards social programs have been striving to impose order in a torn society. The results are slow but promising, however there is a clear absence of any political ownership of Lyari. There is of course no dearth of contenders for Lyari's seats in the assemblies, but there is no real leader who is willing to heed to the miseries of the people. Many residents now look up to PTI for support however the prevalence of the violent party MQM in the city poses serious challenges for any other party aiming to enter Karachi's politics. The strife between the political parties for control of resources, personal interests of the politicians and use of violent tactics for malicious ambitions has shoved Karachi in a deep trench of chaos and misery.

Conclusion

At the outset, two realities are in order: Karachi, the financial and commercial hub of the country, has turned into a battlefield for criminal gangs and armed group enjoying overt and covert support of mainstream political parties; 'state' has shown ineffectual and feckless response to protect the life and property of the citizens. The ethno-political violence has torn apart the social fabric of the city of lights and the inhabitants live in an atmosphere of constant fear and uncertainty. In 2011, chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry after receiving several complains regarding law and order conditions in the city took a suo-moto case. The ruling stated:

there are criminals who have succeeded in making their ways in political parties notwithstanding whether they are components or non-components of government, and are getting political and financial support allegedly from such parties, therefore, the political parties should denounce their affiliation with them in the interest of the country and democratic set up and they should not allow them to use their names as militant outfits of the political parties. Failure to do so may entail consequences of a penal nature against the party or person responsible, whether in office or not' (Supreme Court of Pakistan, 2011).

Four years have passed since this verdict and there has been no improvement in the situation of Karachi. Turf wars and ethnic violence between armed political movements have escalated in the last few years. These 'sub-national conflicts' have not only restrained the authority of the government, but have also curtailed accountability mechanisms that rein in political management of crime. Since 2013, unremitting operations and raids have been conducted by the paramilitary forces and the police, a more recent one that caused immense remonstrations was the raid on the head quarters of MQM. Several convicted criminals and a copious amount of lethal weaponry was recovered in that raid (Dawn, 2015).

However, past experiences show that such actions produce only short-term results (for example, operation in 1992). It is imperative that these efforts are combined with serious reforms within the political parties enabling them to produce leaders who are genuinely willing to bring Karachi back to its former glory. The civil society must also

play its role by launching programs that are focused towards citizen-empowerment, peace-building and ethnic harmony. But, until that happens Lyari specifically and Karachi in general will continue to tell stories of grief and terror. 🙄

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