

INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN LYARI: THE ROLE OF STATE INSTITUTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES AND CRIMINAL GANGS

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Abstract

While research on political violence often focuses on its outcome, there is little attention to the process of political violence. Filling the knowledge gap, the present research applies the theory of instrumentalism to understand political violence as a means to achieve certain political ends. The research is a qualitative case study on Lyari, which was a comparatively peaceful neighborhood in Karachi but transformed into a violent no-go area during 2000s. The paper describes the process of instrumentalization of political violence in Lyari with the objective of outlining the relationship of three key actors – political parties, state authorities, and criminal gangs – using violence for their respective interests. The paper explains how the convergence of their interests influenced the intensity of political violence and converted it into an ethnic conflict. Hence, it expands the literature on political violence by outlining the complexities of the real world where multiple political actors simultaneously use violence to achieve varied objectives that sometimes compliment and sometimes clashes with each other, resulting in further extension of violence.

Keywords: Political Violence; Instrumentalism; ethnic conflict; Lyari; Gang war

Introduction

Political violence, like many other concepts in social sciences, lacks any universal definition. Scholars contest over the nature and degree of violence and its political connotation. Some define it in a negative sense, focusing more on violence. For them, terrorism, tyranny and rebellion are different forms of political violence.¹ For others, political violence is more political and, in this sense, a positive phenomenon where violence serve as a tool used by political actors to run a movement, or to bring change through conflict and conquest between different political stakeholders.² An often overlooked category of scholars, however, go beyond this debate over the positivity and negativity of the outcome of political violence and, instead, focus on the process,

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¹ Harry Eckstein, "Theoretical Approaches to Explaining Collective Political Violence", in Ted Robert Gurr, ed. Handbook of Political Conflict: Theory and Research, (New York: The Free Press,) 1980, pp. 136-137; Dipak K. Gupta, *Understanding Terrorism and Political Violence: The Life Cycle of Birth, Growth, Transformation, and Demise* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 64-100.

² Della Porta, Donatella, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the States: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 2-10; Nieburg, Harold Leonard. "The Threat of Violence and Social Change." *American Political Science Review* 56, no. 4 (1962): pp. 865-873.

examining the means and motivations as well as factors supporting and hindering it.³ The present research falls into third category, where it attempts to understand the process of political violence examining it from the angle of instrumentalism.

Instrumentalism is a political philosophy that defines ideas like political violence with respect to “their uses for their beneficiaries, rather than by their accurate representation of truth or reality.”⁴ Hence, under this view, society often defines certain norms about the “desirability of political violence” based on whether it is an “instrument of political competition” or a “response to political oppression.”⁵ In addition, for instrumentalists, political violence is not an emotional and instant response but rather a rationale strategy made after cost and benefit analysis of how violence can be effective in reaching out a desirable goal.⁶ Applying this view of political violence as a rationale strategy used by some political actors, called as elites by instrumentalists, the present research describes the process of instrumentalization of political violence in Lyari – a sub-urban centre in the main metropolitan city of Pakistan.

Lyari presents an important case to the study of political violence for it has been a hub of target killing, extortion, political clashes, ethnic or sectarian conflicts, street crime, and criminal gang wars for over two decades. Hence, the nature of violence in this area is not unidirectional and homogenous. The “elite” involved in this political violence is also difficult to be defined. There is interplay of the roles of political parties, law enforcement agencies and criminal gangs. The present study highlights these different roles. Hence, it expands the literature on political violence by outlining the complexities of the real world where multiple political actors simultaneously use violence to achieve varied objectives that sometimes compliment and sometimes clashes with each other, resulting in further extension of violence.

Instrumentalization of Political Violence

The core claim made by the instrumentalists is that every theory or concept is an instrument to achieve certain goals.⁷ Hence, according to instrumentalists, humans structure the world around themselves and interpret the observation to satisfy certain needs and to serve certain interests. Therefore, the use of a concept, rather the concept, is the center of attention for instrumentalists.

Applying the theory of instrumentalism on political violence, the central idea is the use of “violence” as an instrument to serve certain political ends. Hence, the main question that defines the debate around instrumentalization of political violence is the relationship between politics and violence. Questions that need to be responded here include: Is violence an option or intrinsic element of politics? Is the objective of politics to end

³ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 155-183; Hugh Davis and Ted Robert Gurr, *Violence in America* (Signet, New York, 1969), pp. 5-17.

⁴ Leoussi, S. Athena (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, (London: Transaction Publishers, 2001), p.148.

⁵ Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, p. 194.

⁶ Arendt, Hannah, ‘On Violence’ (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, London, 1970) p. 36.

⁷ P. Kayle Stanford. “Instrumentalism: Global Local and Scientific” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Science*, ed. Paul Humphreys (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.319.

violence or to manage it? Is violence rationale or can it be rationale in some cases? Can violence be justified if the objective is to bring a just political order?

In the liberal tradition of Hobbes and Locke, violence was an outcome of anarchy and, hence, the only acceptable form of violence is the one used by the state against possible threat of individual violence.⁸Contemporary liberals like Habermas and Rawls also viewed violence as an irrational and non-political phenomenon.⁹Realists, in contrast, view violence as an intrinsic element of the political process and a continuation of politics by other means. A unique explanation comes from Carl Schmitt who defines politics through enemy-friend relationships and views violence as intrinsic element of politics. Therefore, according to him “the more extreme any concrete antagonism is, the closer it will bring us to reaching the political.”¹⁰

Charles Tilly puts forward another interesting view through his theory of contentious politics.¹¹Viewing riots and social movements as “contentious form of collective action”, Tilly believes that the rationality or justifiability of collective actions varies over time, as one act of violence may be deemed irrational and illegitimate at one point of history and becomes legitimate at some other.¹²

Hannah Arendt comes up with a distinctive view of violence and its relationship with the politics. Violence, according to Arendt, is neither non-political nor synonymous to political. It is an adversary of politics, as violence does not rely on plurality or freedom, elements that defines political domain for Arendt. The distinguishing feature of violence, according to Arendt, is its instrumental character, as it serves to achieve an end and is not an end in itself, the way politics is. Hence, “it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues.”¹³In contrast to liberals, Arendt does not regard the violence to be irrational. According to Arendt,

Violence, being instrumental by nature, is rational to the extent that it is effective in reaching the end that must justify it. And since when we act we never know with any certainty the eventual consequences of what we are doing, violence can remain rational only if it pursues short-term goals.

However, Arendt’s view is limited by her understanding of the justifiability of violence only through an end. She did not consider the systematic use of violence and its organization by state actors as valid, as she distinguishes between legitimacy and justification. However, observation shows that violence has served as a political instrument for the non-state actors as much as for the state authorities. In fact, as noted by Martin Shaw, “States are practitioners of slaughter per excellence.”¹⁴ In this manner Tilly and Scmitt stands at one extreme of the continuum about their view of violence as

⁸ Gülbano Altunok, *Critique of Violence: A Study of the Relation between Politics and Violence in Some Modern Political Theories*. Ph.D. diss., (İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, 2012), p.30.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.26.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (San Diego: Harcourt and Brace & Company, 1970), p.51

¹⁴ Martin Shaw, *War and Genocide* (London: Polity Press, 2003), p.58.

necessary element of politics and Arendt at the other extreme about her total disregard to the use of violence in the domain of politics.

Paul R. Brass provides a more balanced and practical view through his works on the political violence in India. Unlike Tilly and Schmitt, Brass views violence as “a primary source of existence” not for the entire political order but for some specific political groups.¹⁵ He believes that unlike non-political violence, political riots as an organized form of violence is “undertaken mostly by “specialists,” who are ready to be called out on such occasions, who profit from it, and whose activities profit others who may or may not be actually paying for the violence carried out.”¹⁶ He views the act of violence as an extension of communal competition over state resources where political elite use the communal symbols to build a political identity around the act of violence. Hence, he observes,

When examined at the actual originating sites of ethnic and communal violence, it is often the case that the precipitating incidents arise out of situations that are either not inherently ethnic/communal in nature or are ambiguous in character, that their transformation into caste or communal incidents depends-upon the attitudes toward them taken by local politicians and local representatives of state authority, and that their ultimate elevation into grand communal confrontations, depends upon their further reinterpretation by the press and extra local politicians and authorities.

Hence, the communal dissimilarity might not be the source of violence. It is the use of that violence by communal leadership, or elite, that transforms an incident into an act of political violence.

Unlike Arendt, Brass understands the complicated link between state legitimacy and violence where former can both strengthen and draw strength from the latter. While he agrees with Arendt that the instigators of violence often describe it as illegitimate in its nature, he further notes how the discourse used by political actors to describe violence can help legitimize it as a “routine politics.”¹⁷ Brass’s theoretical work on instrumentalization of violence discusses “the critical role of the relationships established between elites and the state, particularly the roles of collaborators with and opponents of state authority and state intrusion into regions inhabited by distinctive ethnic groups.”¹⁸ He understands that violence, even without any involvement of state institutions, can be used by state to mobilize public and to “to create a composite nationalism and a strong, united state.”¹⁹

Political violence, hence, is a tool used by state and non-state actors, including political parties and local leadership, for varied objectives. Researchers studying political violence in Pakistan have often ignored this instrumentalization of violence by political elite. A

¹⁵ Paul R. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Washington DC: University of Washington Press, 2005), p.6.

¹⁶ Paul R. Brass, *Theft of an Idol* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p.9.

¹⁷ Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence*, p.258.

¹⁸ Parul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, p.14.

¹⁹ Brass, *Op.cit.*, p.11.

vast majority of literature focusses on the role of religion in igniting violence²⁰ while some others have focused on social and economic factors.²¹ One exceptions is a recent work by Niloufer Siddiqui who explored the use of violence by political parties.²² However, no empirical study has explored the partnerships formed between multiple actors to instrumentalize violence. The current paper applies the theory of instrumentalism to understand the gang wars and waves of ethnic violence in Lyari, focusing on three key political actors: political parties, local criminal gangs, and state authorities. It hypothesizes that the political violence in Lyari is a product of interplay of instrumental politics of these three actors.

Political Violence in Lyari: 2000-2013

Lyari is one of the oldest residential areas of Karachi – the main urban center of Pakistan. Located close to the port and wholesale market, the people working in the port and fishermen were mostly the first to reside in this area. Most of them migrated from rural areas of Sindh and Balochistan and settled in this locality with their families. As the coastal belt runs mostly in Balochistan, most of the settlers in this area were Baloch. Shortly, other communities like Kutchis, Memons, Panjabis, Gujaratis, Zikris and Pushtuns also started living here. Lyari, hence, became an ethnically diverse area with most residents belonging to lower socioeconomic strata.²³

Despite its ethnic diversity, Lyari was a peaceful area known for its sportsman, academics and artists. It was also the main center of political movements run by parties, usually against the dictatorial regimes. Most of these political movements were also non-violent. Under presidents Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq, the area remained the center of political protests and rallies. By the end of the Ayub Khan's era, the criminal gangs started establishing in Lyari but the violence was of low-scale hand-to-hand combat. The political parties and state institutions had no direct involvement in the Lyari Gang war of 1960s and 1970s, as the main clash was on the control of local drug market. Hence, the violence was purely criminal and could not be termed as political violence.

The intensity of the gang war started rising during the Afghan Soviet War, popularly known as Afghan Jihad. Afghan Jihad not only brought access to modern weapons, called as Kalashnikov Culture, but also a culture of narcotics as the drug business expanded from local grown Hashish to exported Marijuana.²⁴The expanded drug business led to further

²⁰ Fair, C. Christine, Neil Malhotra, and Jacob N. Shapiro. "Faith or Doctrine? Religion and Support for Political Violence in Pakistan." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (2012): 688-720; Rahman, Tariq. "The Potential for Violence in Pakistan?" in *Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching Terror?* ed Jamal Malik (London: Routledge: 2007), 15-25.

²¹ Blair, Graeme, C. Christine Fair, Neil Malhotra, and Jacob N. Shapiro. "Poverty and Support for Militant Politics: Evidence from Pakistan." *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 1 (2013): 30-48;

²² Niloufer Aamina Siddiqui, *Under the Gun: Political Parties and Violence in Pakistan* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. Yale University).

²³ Nida Kirmani, "Life in a 'No-Go-Area': Experiences of Marginalisation and Fear in Lyari," in *Cityscapes of Violence in Karachi: Public and Counter publics* (edited by Nicola Khan, Karachi: OUP, 2017), p.104.

²⁴ Zulfiqar Ali, "Violence in Karachi: Is It Political, Ethnic or Religious Conflict?" *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* 4, no. 3 (2012), p.82.

competition and intensification of gang war, now with involvement of political parties and state institutions.

Despite the intensification of the criminal and political violence, there was no ethnic clash in Lyari and different ethnic groups were living peacefully with each other. As government started a military operation in Karachi, to target 72 'big fish' that latter turned against Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM) in the 1990s. Consequently Muhajir dominated areas in Karachi became the main center of political violence while Lyari remained relatively peaceful. The Muhajirs fleeing from violent areas of Karachi found a safe hiding place in Lyari where the local Baloch community supported them against the state forces.

However, as General Pervez Musharraf came into power in October 1999, MQM started inciting Kachis against the Baloch community. While the number of homicides in the area remained low and the violence did not erupt immediately, for the first time in the history of Lyari, the political mobilization was along ethnic lines. By 2008, as Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) came in power, the MQM vs. PPP conflict started intensifying both gang war and ethnic conflicts. Human Rights Commission marked 2010 as the deadliest year for Lyari as the Pashtun-Muhajir conflict in the city also reached Lyari. Soon, the area became an epicenter of Baloch-Muhajir and Pashtun-Muhajir ethnic conflict. It gradually gained a name as a No-Go Area, known for drug dealing, gang wars and ethnic violence. Throughout the early 2000s, the region was a symbol of ethnic and criminal violence in Karachi and, hence, it is critical to understand the forces that brought this change.

Instrumentalization of Violence by Political Parties

During the first dictatorial period in Pakistan, Lyari was the hub of progressive movements against military dictatorship of Ayub Khan. Being a working class neighborhood, the left-wing politics was extremely popular here and National Awami Party (NAP) was active in mobilizing public against Ayub Khan. By the late 1960s, when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto joined the political movement against Ayub Khan, the public in Lyari naturally backed him. Throughout the 1970s, Lyari served as a political base for PPP and while Bhutto could not succeed in providing the promised *Roti, Kapra aur Makan* (Food, Clothing and Shelter), he started a few urban development schemes in the area.²⁵ However, after 1977, as Zia-ul-Haq overthrew PPP government and imposed martial law, the area became the main site of anti-authoritarian struggle. Lyari observed various violent protests against Zia government throughout the 1980s, many of which turned into armed conflicts between the law enforcement agencies and PPP's student and youth wings. Movement of Restoration of Democracy (MRD) against Zia-ul-Haq received notable support from Lyari and when Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan after a long exile, she frequently visited Lyari for political rallying. The relationship of PPP with Lyari was so strong that Banazir Bhutto chose Lyari's Kikri Ground for her marriage ceremony in December 1987.

In 1984, the city of Karachi saw a major political shift with rise of a new party founded on Muhajir nationalism called Muhajir Qaumi Movement (Later Muttahida Qaumi

²⁵ Sarwat Viqar, "Constructing Lyari: Place, Governance, and Identity in a Karachi Neighbourhood." *South Asian History and Culture* 5, no. 3 (2014), p.371.

Movement, MQM). Some political analysts are of the opinion that the military establishment created MQM to counter the growing popularity of PPP in Sindh. While MQM was able to strengthen its position in the city, Lyari continued supporting PPP. As Benazir Bhutto came to power in 1988, after the death of Zia-ul-Haq, Lyari became one of the few constituencies where MQM could not win a seat. Initially, as MQM became a coalition partner with PPP, the city remained peaceful. However, as it left the coalition and secretly started building links with the establishment-supported IJI, ethnic violence erupted in the city. Yet, Lyari remained out of the influence of the Sindhi versus Muhajir ethnic conflict in Karachi during 1990s and many even left the violent areas of Karachi to be settled in comparatively secured colonies of Lyari.

Political violence in Lyari is analogous with the rise of MQM during the Musharraf period. As Musharraf came in power in 1999, he needed support of political parties to hold on to the power. This ended the state oppression against MQM and it became the political partner of the Musharraf regime. As MQM started receiving more support from the federal government, it started expanding its control in Karachi. Lyari, known for being a stronghold of PPP and the epicenter of anti-establishment movements, posed a threat to this MQM-Musharraf partnership. To gain control over the region, MQM started political mobilization of the Kutchi community using Muhajir ethnic card. It also started marginalizing the Baloch and Pashtun communities in the city, through discrimination in public sector employment and developmental funds. Most projects started in Lyari during that time were planned with a defined agenda of strengthening Kutchi against the dominant Baloch and Pashtun communities.

Interestingly, while main leadership of PPP was in exile, the local party leaders remained popular in the region during Musharraf government and were able to win seats in the 2002 elections. Yet they adopted a policy of reconciliation due to their weak position in the parliament and did not do much beyond the lip service to protect the local residents of Lyari from the artificially created ethnic conflict. To balance this weak position, they started using the criminal gangs in Lyari to challenge the authority of MQM government. The criminal gang of Rehman Baloch became an implicit criminal wing of PPP while MQM started supporting Arshad Pappu. Consequently, the PPP-MQM conflict translated in the region as a criminal gang war between Rehman Baloch and Arshad Pappu and later an ethnic conflict between Kachis and Balochs.

The party politics took another shape in 2008 elections, as PPP won the elections in both Sindh and formed federal government. MQM held its seats in Karachi but was in no position to challenge the authority of PPP without stronger local support. Since Kachis live in a defined locality at the periphery of Lyari, MQM needed political leaders from Central Lyari to establish a more robust control in the area. They started approaching the PPP leadership with offers of important party positions. PPP was passing through a transitional period at that time because of the killing of Benazir.

Nabeel Gabool, a popular political leader of PPP in Lyari during Benazir's governments in 1990s, had recently developed some differences with the Zardari-led PPP leadership over the constituency ticket. Grabbing the opportunity, he decided to quit PPP and join MQM in 2013. Soon he transformed his personal clashes with Home Minister Dr. Zulfiqar

Mirza, who was a friend of Zardari, to a political clash. He strongly criticized Mirza for patronizing criminal gangs in his constituency. In turn, PPP portrayed Gabool as a traitor and as opportunist and blamed him for using violence as a means to create political cleavage in Lyari.

In 2000s, political parties regularly portrayed themselves as victims and the opposing political party as the instigator of the violence, citing the number of their workers and supporters killed. However, most of these claims were baseless, as in most cases, persons losing their lives in the target killings had no affiliations with any political party. Political parties made these claims based on the ethnicity of the person killed so all Pashtuns killed in the area were termed as supporters of ANP and all Kutchi killed in the area were reported as supporters of MQM.²⁶ Sadly, political parties also propagated these killings as an attack on their prestige, making revenge obligatory. Again, for these revenge killings, the criminal wings of political parties looked for soft targets of the opposing ethnic group. A laborer riding a public bus or a student walking home from university became the next victim while the actual instigator of the political violence remained safe in their hideouts.²⁷

Instrumentalization of Violence by Criminal Gangs

During late 1950s, perhaps due to the growing socio-economic divide in the city and the resulting clash over resources, the criminal gangs started establishing their network in the area. The first criminal reported to have established a gang was Nabi Baksh alias Kala Nag. He was a smuggler and a drug and wine dealer. He had the backing of local business owners, who benefitted from his smuggled goods. The people involved in petty crimes joined him as he started using violence to establish control in Lyari. In 1964, Sardar Haji Dad Muhammad Baloch alias Dadal formed an opposing criminal gang with his brother Sher Muhammad Baloch alias Sheru to challenge the power of Kala Nag and his men. Thus started the first gang war in the area. However, the intensity of the violence was much lower at that time, mostly hand-to-hand combat with melee weapons.

The death of Kala Nag in a police encounter established the hegemony of Dadal and Sheru in the area for a temporary period. Soon, another criminal gang emerged headed by the son of Kala Nag, Allah Baksh (known as Kala Nag II) and another gangster and former footballer Muhammad Iqbal alias, Babu Dakait. Jointly they brushed aside Dadal and Sheru gang. This, however, did not end the gang war because soon they had a new opponent – friend of Dadal, Lal Muhammad, alias Haji Lalu. This second wave of gang war between Babu and Lalu gangs was more complex, with growing ties of PPP with the gangs as PPP workers fleeing from police custody during Zia-ul-Haq government escaped in the hideouts of either of two criminal gangs, based on their familial ties.²⁸ It was also deadlier due to the growing access of modern weapons, as an aftermath of Afghan War.

²⁶ Aamir Latif, "Pakistan's Black Marketers Cheer Reopening of NATO Supply Lines." *The Christian Sciences Monitor*, 20 August 2012 <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2012/0820/Pakistan-s-black-marketers-cheer-reopening-of-NATO-supply-lines>. Accessed on 14 December 2020.

²⁷ Ismail Dilawar, "It's Not Just Gangsters that are Dying in Lyari," *Pakistan Today*, 28th December 2013, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2013/12/28/its-not-just-gangsters-that-are-dying-in-lyari/>. Accessed on 14 December 2020.

²⁸ Nadeem Farooq Paracha, "The Good, the Bad and the Lyari," *Dawn*, 28 March 2012.

The criminal economy in the region also became compound and highly profitable during that time as these local gangs joined transnational and global criminal networks.

In 1990s, the next generation of the gangsters joined their fathers' drug and extortion business. Rehman Baloch, alias Rehman Dakait joined the Haji Lalu gang to take revenge for his father's murder by Babu Dakait. By mid-1990s, he was successful in establishing himself as the main leader of gang and was quite popular among public for caring for them, as Pakistan's economy suffers under corrupt governments of PPP and PML(N). Lalu's own son, Arshad Pappu, however, was preparing to take the reign of his father's gang. The two young gangsters developed animosity over distribution of ransom money and separated from each other. The growing clashes between Rehman Dakait and Arshad Pappu started a new wave of gang war in Layri by late 1990s. This time the gang war was politicized too as Rehman was backed by PPP while Arshad Pappu got his support from MQM.

As Musharraf came into power, the third wave of Lyari gang war was in full bloom. As Musharraf supported MQM, Arshad Pappu had support of state forces against Rehman. Rehman, however, was very popular among people of Lyari. He was the one to come with the idea of establishing People's Aman Committee (PAC) – a civil organization run by Rahman's man for dual purpose of charity distribute among people of Lyari and to white the black money earned through extortion and kidnapping. PPP patronized PAC and provided full support to Rehman group to counter MQM-supported Arshad Pappu. While Arshad Pappu got arrested in 2006, he continued running his gang from inside the jail. Many even believed that the Karachi police arrested Arshad Pappu, on order of MQM-led city government, to keep him safe from any assassination attempt from Rehman group.

By 2008, Rehman became too strong a force to handle and PPP leadership feared his growing popularity among Lyariites. Meanwhile Uzair Jan, whose father was murdered by Arshad Pappu, a decade back, joined Rehman group to take revenge for his father after he failed to get justice through courts. When Rehman was killed by police forces in 2009, while PPP was in power, Uzair became the main leader of Rehman's group and the violence reached its peak as gangs of Uzair Jan and Arshad Pappu battled to enforce their authority in Lyari.

Mostly, political parties used these criminals for security purpose or for intimidating public to win elections. For instance, Rehman Daikat's gang provided security to the welcome rally of Benazir Bhutto on October 18, 2007, as she landed in Karachi airport and was heading towards Bilawal House. Of the 180 people died in attack on that rally, most were thugs of Rahman's gang as later reports revealed he had formed a team of more than 500 youngsters from Lyari with the name Janisaran-e-Benazir (mostly criminals of his gang) to protect Benazir's fleet. After the blast, he who was who drove Benazir to Bilawal House under his security.²⁹

²⁹ "Picture of Benazir with Lyari Gangster Rehman Dakait" *PPP Exposed* [Blog], 16 July 2011, <http://pppexposed.blogspot.com/2011/07/picture-of-benazir-with-lyari-gangster.html> Accessed on 30 December 2020.

However, some reports also showed that these criminals were helping the political leaders in corrupt practices. For instance, in his confessional statement before magistrate, Uzair Jan, admitted that he assisted Owis Muzzaffer alias Muzzaffar Tappi, to intimidate sugar mill owners to sell 14 sugar mills at very low price to Asif Ali Zardari, co-chairman of PPP. He also helped and harassed people living around the Bilawal house to sell their properties to Zardari at lower than market price, so that the house boundary could be extended.³⁰

As PPP's popularity gradually declined in Lyari and criminals became powerful enough to get a better bargain for their support to PPP, Uzair nominated members of his gang for contesting elections on PPP ticket for local body elections and general elections too.³¹ Not surprisingly, these elected members took the oath of loyalty to Uzair, not PPP, in a public meeting in Lyari, indicating the growing political power of criminal gangs. In such circumstances, it became increasingly difficult to separate criminal violence from political violence as same hands initiated both.

Instrumentalization of Violence by State Authorities

State institutions use violence in two forms: first is direct as police use violence to deter public and to exert the authority and power of state and second is indirect as these institutions support criminal elements in society to target opposing criminal groups. In addition to repression and patronizing criminal violence, state marginalization of certain localities or social groups also led to an increase in violence. While repression and marginalization are a common phenomenon observed in several studies on political violence, the patronizing of criminals is a less-reported form of state violence.

Lyari suffered from state marginalization even before the creation of Pakistan. The colonial regime supported the merchants and traders but paid little attention to the working class living in Lyari.³² Most development projects were targeted to the old city residing the upper class while the area had limited basic facilities. This biased state policy based on class division continued after the creation of Pakistan, as Karachi became the federal capital city and political and bureaucratic elites started settling there. While federal government introduced new development projects in the central city, Lyari in one periphery of the city remained largely untenured.

In 1950s, the state tried to remove the old settlement in Lyari and construct a modern colony on it. However, due to strong resistance from local settlers, the Ayub Khan government shelved the plans. Some development projects were introduced during the PPP government in 1970s but after 1976, no government introduced any urban planning scheme to this area. While Benazir frequently visited Lyari, during her government she was more focused on foreign affairs and in dealing with the strong political opposition and paid little attention to the people who voted for her. Meanwhile, the influx of migrants

³⁰ Government of Sindh, "Joint Interrogation Team Report Against Uzair Jan Baloch," https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/uploads/digital_news/2020-07-06/sindh-makes-jit-reports-on-uzair-baloch-baldia-town-factory-public-1594056587-3783.pdf. Accessed on 30th December 2020.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Viqar, *Constructing Lyari*, 371.

from Sindh, Balochistan, and later NWFP (now KPK) continued. With the growing rates of inflation and unemployment and unregularized urbanization led to major contestations around competition for resources. The disenfranchised youth of Lyari joined criminal and mafia gangs as they provide access to both power and wealth.³³

Meanwhile, the law enforcement agencies, particularly police continued use of violence for both constitutional and unconstitutional objectives. A survey research on corruption by police in slums areas of Karachi reported that 90.9 percent of the respondent ranked police as a number one corrupt state institution.³⁴ Since 1980s, police became increasingly involved in extra judicial killings through fake police encounters.³⁵ The captured criminals from the gangs were killed on spot instead of producing before the court, to protect the identity of political elite patronizing these criminals.

State authorities also made strategic alliances with criminal groups for various reasons such as monetary gains or use them as strategic partner to curb others criminals. First such alliance was observed in 1962, when Ayub Khan was facing strong opposition from labor and student unions. To gain legitimacy for his military rule, Ayub Khan designed a pseudo-political party called the Conventional Muslim League (CML) – composed mostly of pro-military opportunists from all political parties. As CML plans to hold a public rally in Polo Ground Karachi, the establishment feared that students of National Student Federation (NSF) and workers of progressive labor unions might disrupt the rally. To avoid such situation, Haroon family – a powerful business family of Karachi having ties with the military establishment – commissioned Dadal and Sheru of Lyari to protect the rally.³⁶ As Lyari was the major support center of the anti-Ayub progressive movements, the criminal gangs intimidated the local population from holding any protest against CML activities in the city.

In 2000s, when political violence reached at its peak in Lyari, law-enforcement agencies lost control of the area and increasingly used one criminal group to counter the other. For instance, in 2010 Sindh Police and Sindh Rangers launched a joint operation against criminal mafias of the city and raided different settlements to capture a gangster known in the city as Kalu Current. In one such raid in Dalmia, the security forces used some members of rival criminal groups for pointing out the hideouts of targeted criminal gang. The state-criminal relations was exposed next day, when footage of these criminals, dressed in Sindh Rangers' uniform, appeared on national television.³⁷

On the other hand, poor police structuring and traditional policing methods weakened that institution and made it difficult for them to control criminal mafias having access to

³³ Oskar Verkaik, *Migrants and Militants: Fun and Urban Violence in Pakistan* (New Delhi: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp.60-65.

³⁴ Roohi Ahmed and Qazi Masood Ahmed, "Petty Corruption in the Police Department: A Case Study of Slum Areas of Karachi." *Developing Country Studies* 2, no. 6 (2012): pp.78-86.

³⁵ Zoha Waseem, "Encounter Killing as a Method of Policing Karachi," Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), 26 February 2019, <https://shoc.rusi.org/informer/encounter-killings-method-policing-karachi>

³⁶ Laurent Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.7.

³⁷ Arshad Qazi, "Dalmia Operation against Drug Mafia" *YouTube*, 20August 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVeIBAZp0tQ>. Accessed on 30 December 2020.

sophisticated weapons. Moreover, the absence of a transparent and merit-based system in police appointments and promotions, both criminal gangs and political parties use their powers to influence appointments, transfer and promotions in police. The politicization of police in Karachi increased after 2008, as PPP's provincial government repealed Police Order 2002, so that it can authorize appointments on higher positions.³⁸ In his confessional statement before Joint Investigation Team, Uzair Jan Baluch revealed that he sent a list of police officers to the political authorities to be posted in Lyari's police stations (See table 1). In exchange, these police officers not only turned their face away from any criminal activity conducted by members of Uzair's gang but also used the state machinery to facilitate their criminal activities.

Names of police officers recommended by Uzair Jan Baloch³⁹
Police Officers linked with criminals

S.No.	Name and Rank of Police officers
(1)	Inspector Imtiaz Niazi as SHO Baghdadi in 2010
(2)	Inspector Babar Hameed as SHO PS Chakiwara in 2011
(3)	SIP Sana Ullah as SHO PS Chakiwara in 2011
(4)	SIP Malik Ayub as SHO PS Super Maret in 2011
(5)	SIP Abid Tanoli as SHO PS Kalri/ Kalakot in 2012
(6)	Inspector Javed Baloch as SHO PS Chakiwara in 2012
(7)	Inspector Chand Khan Niazi as SHO PS Kalri in 2012
(8)	PC Baqar

The Interplay

Political parties, criminal gangs and state authorities are all instrumentalizing violence in Lyari for different objectives and they have also built partnerships with each other in this business of instrumentalization. The questions remains that how did violence in Lyari become endemic in 2000s and not in any other point in history. What factors led to the intensification of violence and the addition of ethnic element in it during that period? To understand that, the study looks at the relationship between the three key actors.

As observed during the historical analysis of political violence in Lyari, each of the three key actors provided support to the other two. The political parties used criminal gangs for political mobilization and state authorities used one gang to control other. Similarly, criminal gangs needed support of police forces to securely run their business without being caught while they needed support of political parties to gain access to resources and enhance their power base. By same token, political parties appoint their supporters in state institutions in order to use that state machinery for their own political objectives, while

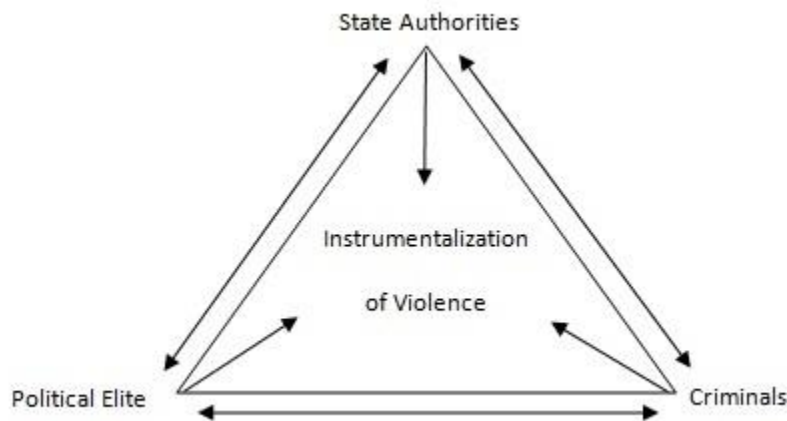
³⁸ Asma Sana, Curbing the Menace of Violence in Lyari, *ISSRA Papers 4*, no. 2 (2012), 40.

³⁹ Joint Interrogation Team Report against Uzair Ali alias Sardar Uzair Jan s/o Faiz Muhammad (Late) constituted by Government of Sindh vide Home Department, Govt. of Sindh Order No. SO (LE-1)HD/3-17/2015 Dated 15-02-2016.

members of these institutions side with different political parties for job security, promotions and for ensuring that government would take no action against their misuse of power.

Hence, it is a symbiotic relationship where both are getting certain benefits from other. For instance, when Asif Ali Zardari took help of Uzair Baluch for buying the 14 sugar mills at very low price, Uzair asked to close criminal cases against him in return.⁴⁰ For that, Zardari, being then President of the country, must have misused his authority or might have used his political appointees in Karachi police to do the job. Not surprisingly, the police officers involved in removing Uzair's name from the criminal cases, had their own personal interests involved. This interplay of instrumentalization of political violence by three actors is shown in figure 1. As can be seen the three actors are using each other, creating violence for their own interests, the convergence of interests led to further intensification of violence.

Figure 1
Interplay of Political Actors for Instrumentalization of Violence



Upon examining the historical transition of political violence in Lyari, it appears that while this interplay is continuous for most part of history, in 2000s the violence became endemic and intense due to the convergence of political interests of criminal gangs, political parties and state institutions. During that decade, MQM power grew in the city and the party increasingly politicized the local state institutions for the political objectives. It also developed links with Arshad Pappu gang, which sought support of MQM and city police to secure himself from rival gang of Rehman Dakait (and later Uzair). On the other hand, as PPP came to power in 2008, it used its federal and provincial authority over state institutions and its ties with Uzair Baloch to counter MQM's growing power. As political

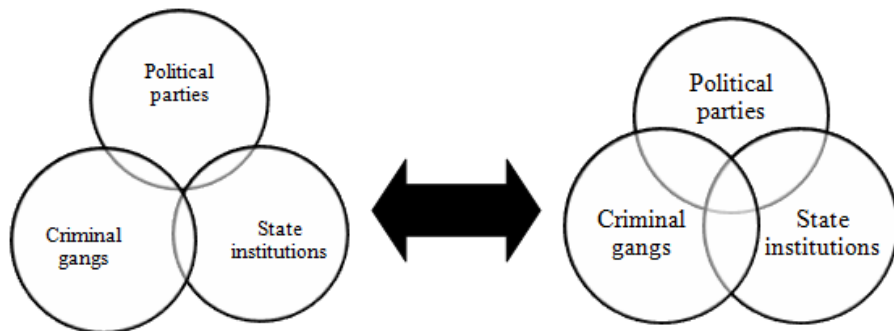
⁴⁰ Uzair Jan Baluch recorded his statement before the magistrate, under the section of 164 of Pakistan Penal Code during his trial.

clash between PPP and MQM, gang war between Rehman Dakaith and Arshad Pappu, and the inter-institutional power competition between local, provincial and federal institution converged at one point, the instrumentalization of political violence by all three actors overlapped, resulting in intensification of violence.

Figure 2 diagrammatically presents this shift in the instrumentalization of violence by three political actors. Before 2000, while the three actors had links and were involved in using violence for their gains, no such convergence of interests could be observed. Similarly, after 2013 elections, as the power of the criminal gangs grew beyond the control of political parties and state institutions, they realized that the level of public crime has offset the benefits they were gaining from patronizing these criminal gangs. More importantly, as PPP lost its government in the center and its popularity in Lyari declined, MQM also lost its grip over Karachi city due to the operation of rangers and fragmentation in party. Hence, the two political parties using violence in Lyari for their political gains could not afford to side with the criminals.

In figure 2, the Venn diagram on the left shows a situation when the political violence remains a daily element of the political process as identified by Paul R. Brass, when these political actors instrumentalize political violence and presents violence as an unavoidable element of political process. The Venn diagram on the right shows a situation when convergence of interests of political, criminal and state elites results in developing of a junction of instrumentalization of violence. In such a situation, the political violence crosses the threshold and became a political problem. The double arrow between the two Venn diagrams indicates that the two situations gives birth to each other resulting in waves of stability and instability.

Figure 2
Transition in Instrumentalization of Political Violence



Pakistan remains in constant danger of intensification of political violence because such politico-criminal or state-criminal relations are very common in Pakistan. According to a report published by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in 2013,

Police are hand in glove with criminals, and mafias operate under government and police patronage.....Political groups are armed and criminal elements are

used to spread violence.....Certain forces with vested interests may be involved in instigating clashes and exploiting political violence to sustain divisions and promote instability in Karachi and elsewhere in Pakistan..⁴¹

While the partnership between political actors for using violence for a joined interest has been recognized in studies on police violence, rarely a scholar has outlined its relevance to an ethnic conflict.⁴² The closest to the present study is another ethnographic research conducted on gangsters of Bangladesh where partnership of these gangsters with the political parties and state institutions was pointed out.⁴³ The study found that the decline in violence was the outcome of transition in “violence specialists” from gangsters to political factors. The case of Lyari presents a different explanation where all “violence specialists” remains active but transition occurs in the structure of instrumentalization of violence. The present research also explains how ethnic conflict erupt when one of these actors uses ethnic card to mobilize a particular ethnic group against other and use the other two actors to strengthen that ethnic divide.

Conclusion

While Paul R. Brass wrote detailed works on the instrumentalization of political violence by the elite class, the elite was often treated as a singular group. The present study, using case study of Lyari, shows the presence of multiple elite groups in one society who all instrumentalize violence for their own interests. While police, political parties and criminals use violence separately, the act of violence remains a normal activity that runs at the backdrop of political activity in a region. However, as their interests converged in one point, the junction results in the intensification of violence to a level where it becomes a political problem. As a result, the political actors and state institutions often try and end their partnership with the criminal gangs in order to restore the “normal” situation where each actor continue the use of violence at the individual level.

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⁴¹ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, *Karachi Unholy Alliances for Mayhem: Report of an HRCP Fact Finding Mission* (Islamabad: HRCP, 2010).

⁴² Anna C. Korteweg and Gökçe Yurdakul. *Religion, Culture and the Politicization of Honour-Related Violence: A Critical Analysis of Media and Policy Debates in Western Europe and North America*. (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2010), p.7.

⁴³ David Jackman, “The Decline of Gangsters and Politicization of Violence in Urban Bangladesh.” *Development and Change* 50, no. 5 (2019).

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