Brief Note on Violent Conflict in Sindh – Ethnic, Sectarian, Tribal and Party-Political

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1. The May 12 Events

The events of May 12 2007 have highlighted once again the violence that has been endemic to Sindh's politics over the past three decades. Over 40 people were killed in ambushes, armed clashes and execution-style killings across the city, on a day when the Chief Justice of Pakistan had planned to address a gathering of judges and lawyers at the Sindh High Court. Large parts of the city were blocked for traffic with freight containers and other vehicles commandeered the night before having been parked across roads, streets and bridges. State security agencies were mostly absent from the scene. Activists of political parties, notably the governing party Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), and opposition parties including Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Awami National Party (ANP), Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP), and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) were the main protagonists in the violent clashes.

There are many other aspects of the events of May 12 that need to be investigated and recorded. Three courts in the city – the Sindh High Court, the Malir District Court, and the City Courts – were surrounded by armed supporters of the MQM from the morning onwards. Journalists and television stations were targeted and attacked. The airport was virtually besieged with passengers, including the Chief Justice and his team, being unable to drive or even walk into the city. While several independent TV stations were broadcasting live images of the chaos "facts" were becoming increasing contested as the day wore on.

An independent investigation into the events will be a crucial starting point in moving ahead. In principle, it is difficult to see how the state and various individuals and organizations acting for it can absolve themselves of the primary responsibility for the May 12 events. This quite naturally means that the spotlight will fall on the federal government and its agencies, the various arms of the provincial and city governments, and the MQM. Questions will remain about the details of state responsibility and its apportionment, as well as the role of non-state and opposition actors in the violence. In the meanwhile it is possible to identify and analyse some of the longer term political and institutional issues in Sindh that were made salient on May 12. Two

themes stand out: (a) the role, ideology and organizational ethos of MQM; (b) ethnic conflict; and these are discussed in more detail.

1.1 The MQM Factor

The MQM which is the larger partner in the Sindh provincial government, and runs the City District Government of Karachi (CDGK) has often been characterized as an "ethnically-based mafia".[1] The party did, indeed, emerge from an ethnically-based student organization (All Pakistan Mohajir Students' Organization or APMSO) in the early 1980s in order to promote the interests of the Urdu-speaking migrants from India. MQM argued that these migrants or Mohajirs and their descendents constituted a distinct ethnic or sub-national community that was discriminated against in jobs and educational opportunities, and was vulnerable to harassment by other ethnic groups that had formed violent organizations in Karachi. In the mid-1980s MQM evolved quickly into a militant organization with a highly-motivated cadre trained in the use of lethal weapons. It won municipal polls under General Zia's military government in 1987, and then won a majority of the national and provincial assembly seats in Karachi in the general elections of 1988.

Despite electoral success the MQM was unable to shed its militant image, or indeed its militant ethos. The organizational structure was tightly controlled by the core leadership, and force was a common way of dealing with political rivals as well as internal dissenters. The party was widely thought to be associated with at least three types of violent activities: (i) campus violence between student cadres of various parties; (ii) ethnic clashes with various non-Mohajir ethnic groups; (iii) extortion rackets targeting individuals and businesses in Karachi.[2] State agencies first confronted the MQM in an aborted operation in 1990, then again in 1992, and then finally between 1993 and 1996. There were reports of widespread human rights abuses during these security operations.

It is noteworthy that despite intermittent security operations against the MQM the party was part of the ruling coalition in Sindh (with representation in national government) in 1988-89, 1990-1992, and 1997-98. In 1997 the party changed its name from Mohajir Quami Movement to Muttahida Quami Movement (that is, united national movement). It ostensibly abandoned its ethnic ideology and re-fashioned itself as a champion of the middle and lower classes in an otherwise "feudal-dominated" political system. The MQM remained under state pressure during the early part of the General Pervez Musharraf's military rule. It boycotted the 2001 local government elections on the grounds that it continued to face state persecution. The military regime fully rehabilitated the organisation in 2002 when it contested the national and provincial elections, and emerged as the senior partner in the Sindh provincial government. It currently holds the office of the provincial governor, occupies over half the ministerial slots in the provincial government, controls the CDGK, and has three ministers in the federal cabinet.

[1] See, for example, The Economist, 19th-25th May 2007, "Pakistan, on the edge".

[2] Supporters of MQM argue that the party used violence only for self-defence. This may, indeed, have been the case on many occasions. The fact that the party was at least associated with violent activities is not disputed.

The party claims to have abandoned its ethnic ideology in the favour of a more inclusive multi-ethnic class-based programme. It professes to be secular and liberal, and is vocal in its support for women's rights, and its opposition to religious fundamentalism.[3] It has not been able to shed its militant image, however, and it is widely believed to deploy strong-arm mafia-like means to silence its critics. On May 3, for example, MQM councillors in the City Council were caught on camera physically assaulting opposition councillors (including some women councillors) who had questioned the ruling of the chair on a procedural matter. The fact that violence was so readily used in a chamber where the MQM ought not to have felt threatened by the opposition (it holds over two-thirds of the seats) signalled that the organization had some way to go in internalising democratic norms. For some of MQM's detractors the events of May 12 confirmed the suspicion that there was something "inherently" violent and even "fascistic" about the party.[4]

1.2 Ethnic Conflict

While the violence on May 12 was political – in the sense that it was connected to a political tussle – it carried menacing undertones of ethnic conflict. There were several alleged instances of ethnically-targeted killings on the day and in its aftermath. Some of the parties have clear ethnic bases. Although the MQM is nominally no longer an ethnic organization, it is widely believed to be a largely Mohajir party. On the other side, Pakhtun nationalist parties were prominent among the opposition. Ethnicity appeared to play a role in the developments leading up to May 12, on the day itself, and in the aftermath.

The political "preparation" of both sides had strong hints of the ethnic factor from the outset. Although ostensibly a multi-ethnic party, the MQM's core support base remains in the Urdu-speaking Mohajir community in Sindh. The party's supporters frequently make reference to ethnic affinity as a key reason for the positive relationship between MQM and General Pervez Musharraf. This is, obviously, based on perceptions of solidarity rather than any concrete evidence of ethnic discrimination on the part of the president. In the run-up to the events of May 12 the idea that MQM ought to stand by a Mohajir president was reportedly used to persuade sceptical party supporters.

The ethnic factor was also implicitly reinforced in the way in which the MQM prepared for May 12. Road-blocks were raised around those localities where there are large concentrations of non-Mohajirs. This was not necessarily an ethnic policy. The

[3] MQM leaders take great pride in the fact that they have "rescued" the Urdu-speaking community from the stranglehold of religious and sectarian movements. Some of the original founding members of the organization had left the Islami Jamiat-e-Tulba (IJT) which is the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami. The IJT was known to be well-armed in the 1980s, and MQM's early campus skirmishes were mostly against the IJT.

[4] A former head of the ISI declared on a TV talk show that by 1990 the state security establishment had already formed the view that MQM was "more than simply a political party". He suggested that that understanding was still valid (General Asad Durrani on a show hosted by Ayaz Amir, ARYOneWorld TV, 19 May 2007). Similar views were expressed from the other end of the political spectrum at a meeting hosted by the Sindh Democratic Forum on 22 May in Karachi where politicians and intellectuals from various left-leaning called for a ban on the organization.

party rightly believed that its political opponents had a stronger presence in the non-Mohajir areas, and it was therefore necessary to prevent any movement from these localities. The effect, however, was to divide the city into routes and areas that were free of road-blocks and areas that were blockaded. This division happened to correspond, roughly, with ethnic boundaries within the city.[5]

The other side too had implicitly or explicitly used ethnicity in its mobilization against the MQM. A number of development initiatives of the CDGK are bound to create losers. These include residents of outlying villages and irregular settlements, those who have encroached upon public land, and economic stakeholders such as transporters. From 2002 onwards, and particularly after the election of MQM-dominated local governments in 2005 (in elections marred by violence and widely alleged to have been rigged), there have been steady complaints that non-Mohajir communities faced discrimination in the removal of encroachments, in the conversion of land use, and in the regulation of public transport. Pakhtuns in particular began organizing themselves in order to protect themselves from what they regarded as a "planned ethnic annihilation" from Karachi. Some of that mobilization was clearly evident on May 12.

The violence on May 12 made ethnic divisions more salient. Some of the victims were, indeed, unconcerned individuals who were targeted for their ethnicity. In the midst of the violence it was easy for the political veneer to drop and for people to refer to "Mohajirs" and "Pakhtuns" fighting, rather than say that the MQM and ANP/PMAP activists were fighting. At the level of national politics the May 12 events made the ethnic connection between the MQM and General Pervez Musharraf more salient. The ethnic barbs obviously stung, as the president made several public attempts to refute such insinuations.

There were hurried attempts in the aftermath of the violence, however, to allay the ethnic factor. The memory of the "bad old days" was invoked in order to pull back the protagonists from open ethnic conflict. All parties made painstaking public statements about the conflict being "political" rather than "ethnic". Ironically (and fortunately), the idea that Karachi was an ethnic tinderbox was an effective one in persuading all sides from further escalation. Ethnic tensions have nevertheless been heightened after May 12, and political and social issues in the city are more likely to be viewed through ethnic filters in near future.

2. Broader Perspectives

While the recent events in Karachi inject urgency into the analysis of conflict it is important to view them in a broader geographical and historical perspective. Violent conflict in Sindh is not restricted to Karachi or to urban centres where there might be ethnic tensions between ethnic groups and parties. Karachi accounted for around one-third of the total population of Sindh, and all urban areas taken together had just under

[5] This implicit division of the city into Mohajir and non-Mohajir localities was acknowledged by MQM spokepersons in the aftermath of May 12, when they put the blame of the violence on the latter localities.

half of the province's population in 1998.[6] Urban ethnic conflict is conspicuous because of Sindh's peculiar ethnic demography and the visibility of urban areas.

2.1 Sindhis and Mohajirs

The majority ethnic group of Sindh – the indigenous Sindhis – are a small minority in Karachi, and a large minority in the second city Hyderabad. Ethnic tensions between Sindhis and Mohajirs (who constitute the single largest ethnic group in urban Sindh) are sometimes interpreted in terms of a rural-urban divide. This same ethnic tension is also interpreted as a conflict between settler migrants and indigenous people. These two types of tensions – i.e. rural versus urban, and settler versus indigenous – are also present elsewhere in Pakistan. They might be considered to be particularly intractable in Sindh because three potential sources of tension – ethnicity, rural-urban divide, and settler-indigenous divide – appear to be compounded into one.

In fact, upon closer examination, it appears that there are relatively few (if conspicuous) points of direct social or economic conflict between ethnic Sindhis and Mohajirs. Moreover, the correspondence between the three potential sources of tension – ethnicity, rural-urban difference, and settler-indigenous rivalry – is less exact than it first appears.

Complementary rather than rival

The urban and rural economies of Sindh have operated in conditions of complementarity rather than rivalry. Industry and commerce have relied on supplies from rural areas, and agriculture has depended on urban markets. The economic relationship between rural Sindhis and urban non-Sindhis has largely been mediated through market institutions. Markets are not ethnically anonymous, in the sense that it is widely perceived that various ethnic and caste groups "control" different markets. In the markets that matter in the rural-urban relationship, however, there is no "one-to-one" ethnic face-off between market participants. While a particular market might be dominated by commission agents and merchants belonging to a particular ethnic group, such domination is generally localised and does not translate into economy-wide collusion. The groups that dominate markets also tend to be ethnically and religiously diverse: Punjabi settlers, Mohajirs, Sindhi Vanyas, Sindhi Sheikhs, and Pashtuns, depending on area and produce.

Not a rural issue

The Sindhi-Mohajir ethnic difference is no longer, by and large, an indigenous versus settler issue in the rural areas. Ethnic Sindhis believe that settler migrants were favoured in the allotment of state-owned irrigated land in many parts of the province at the expense of local peasants. The complaint, however, is largely against Punjabi settlers and not the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs who mostly abandoned any agricultural holdings that they had in favour of an urban life.

[6] Population Census 1998.

Access to public sector opportunities

Sindhi-Mohajir ethnic rivalry remains important in the allocation of public sector opportunities such as places in higher education institutions and government jobs. The "rural quota" in college places and jobs that was introduced in the 1970s in order to increase the opportunities available to ethnic Sindhis was resented by many Mohajirs. It was also taken up as a rallying issue by the MQM when it was explicitly an ethnic Mohajir party. The issue has lost some of its potential for mobilisation due to two wider economic changes. First, the quality of education in public colleges and universities has steadily declined and many more higher education places are on offer in the private sector. Second, the government's role as employer is on the decline.

Sharing of urban space

Sindhi-Mohajir ethnic rivalry does continue to have some economic basis in the sharing of urban spaces. The loss of Karachi (or the loss of their majority in Karachi) is seen by some ethnic Sindhis as a major source of political and economic weakness. To the extent that urban spaces are not ethnically-neutral, it does matter who is in control of a city. In Karachi, however, the ethnic Sindhis are a small minority, smaller numerically than Punjabis and Pakhtuns. Ethnic tension concerning the "sharing" of Karachi, therefore, is not primarily between Sindhis and Mohajirs. Rather, if such ethnic tension will indeed be important, the potential lines of conflict will be more complex than Sindhis versus Mohajirs. In the smaller cities of Sindh, notably Hyderabad, the Sindhi-Mohajir rivalry over the sharing of urban spaces is more conspicuous. In fact, during the late 1980s and 1990s there was a virtual ethnic segregation of Hyderabad between Sindhi and Mohajir neighbourhoods respectively.

Common concerns and rivalry

The two main ethnic groups in Sindh – ethnic Sindhis and Mohajirs – will continue to have points of tension and rivalry over resources. In addition to the familiar issues some new factors that might pose future challenges have emerged. Prominent among these is the acquisition of land for infrastructure and commercial development, and the conversion of land from agricultural to non-agriculture use. By and large, however, there are more points of potential social and economic cooperation between the two main ethnic groups than there are points of rivalry.

This leaves the question of political rivalry between the two main ethnic groups. It is believed by some that ethnic Sindhis and Mohajirs end up in rival political camps because of underlying ethnic divisions. Parties and coalitions have been careful, however, to ensure some level of ethnic balance and representation. Although the PPP is often regarded as a mostly-Sindhi party, it did enjoy support among sections of the Mohajir community and accommodated members of that community in government. MQM which started out as a Mohajir ethnic party has ostensibly opened itself to all ethnic groups and fields Sindhi and other non-Mohajir politicians. It has also entered alliances and coalitions with mostly-Sindhi parties.

2.2 Migration and ethnicity[7]

Ethnic-based mobilisation and violence in Sindh in general and Karachi in particular needs to be understood within the historical context of migration. At the time of independence Sindh was ethnically homogenous and religiously heterogenous. After independence and partition the province lost its religious heterogeneity as large numbers of Hindus were forced to leave for India. Muslim migrants from India took their places, particularly in the urban areas. Over the decades economic opportunities in Karachi attracted further migrants from other parts of Pakistan, and indeed other countries.

A combination of the sheer weight of migration, and the absence of political will in formulating a pro-active response, meant that the state adopted a *laissez-faire* posture towards city expansion. The early migrants from India were put up in make-shift camps, some on public land, and others on land offered by local landowners. Urban regulation was effectively put on hold. This pattern persisted, however, even after the initial migrants had been settled. Every new wave of migration led to the further expansion of irregular settlements (*katchi abadis*) and the systematic violation of regulations in existing localities. There was informalisation of most civic functions and amenities such as water supply, sewage, transport and even electricity provision. Most importantly, an entire land economy emerged where it became the norm for transactions in *qabza* or possession regardless of actual legal ownership.

While the informalisation of civic amenities lowered the costs of migration, and was celebrated by some as a more efficient solution to the problems of urbanisation than formal state provision, it had its own institutional implications. One was the emergence of various "mafias" – or local strongmen – who could enforce informal contracts under conditions of legal ambiguity. There was a steady legitimisation of private violence, and an effective withdrawal of the formal state system. State functionaries, in fact, were often the key agents around whom these "mafias" operated. Secondly, the absence of formal state systems reinforced ethnic and kinship based social networks for protection and the organization of collective action.

By the 1980s it was widely believed that the city had been turned over to a "transport mafia", a "water mafia", a "land mafia" and many other such "mafias". Many of these "mafias" were perceived to be held together by ethnic bonds. When the MQM first emerged on the scene with the project of mobilising Mohajirs on an ethnic basis, its slogans found quick resonance among people who felt that they could only be protected if they also had an ethnic organization of their own. Moreover, the idea that the ethnic organization should be militant and armed was seen as entirely legitimate in the conditions that already prevailed.

2.3 Violent conflict in rural Sindh

While public discussion of ethnic conflict in urban Sindh – and the potential for conflict between urban and rural Sindhis – is conspicuous, violent conflict in rural

[7] This sub-section draws upon Gazdar, Haris (2006), "Migration and Urban Governance", in Marcello Balbo (ed), International Migration and the City, (UN-Habitat and the IUAV University of Venice).

Sindh is often ignored in the national press. In fact rural violence – not simply crime but organized conflict between groups – has probably been as great a source of actual casualties as its urban counterpart. Virtual warfare between tribes and kinship groups, particularly in the districts of upper Sindh routinely claims dozens of lives. It is tempting to argue that long-running blood feuds are an unremarkable aspect of the traditional rural society. In fact, the scale and persistence of violence and lawlessness in rural Sindh underwent a qualitative shift in the 1980s, and has escalated even further in the most recent period.

Part of the explanation is "technical" – that is, the relatively easy availability of lethal weapons. There are also prominent political and institutional factors at play. In some ways the escalation of violent tribal conflict in rural Sindh has similar roots to the rise in urban violence. The steady withdrawal and weakening of the formal institutions of the state has increased the prominence and power of traditional leaders and kinship-based social networks. The assault on party-based politics further expands the power of the traditional leadership at the expense of other forms of mobilization. Some of the key players in the escalation of violent tribal conflict are precisely those leaders who are routinely sought by unrepresentative military governments as their civilian partners.

2.4 Religious fundamentalism and sectarian violence

Religious and sectarian violence in Sindh has been relatively less conspicuous than other parts of the country. Sectarian clashes between Shia and Sunni Muslims were limited to particular days and events and were handled effectively through civil and police action. In general the relations between the various religious and sectarian communities have been amicable. There are strong syncretic traditions among ethnic Sindhis and barring a few trouble-spots the Shia-Sunni violence was mostly confined to the ethnic Mohajir community. There were conscious efforts to block sectarian conflict in that community, and these efforts are prominent among the origin myths of the MQM.

In the 1990s, however, religious and sectarian conflict appeared in a very different form in urban Sindh. While there were very few instances of clashes between ordinary members of various sects, terrorist attacks on congregations and targeted assassinations became more common.

More alarmingly, there appear to have been common strands between sectarian terrorism and ethnic militancy. Although the MQM is clearly a non-religious and non-sectarian organization, there is evidence that in periods of persecution many of its militant cadre shifted to sectarian religious militant organizations for protection. One off-shoot of this easy transition of militant cadres is the current violent conflict between the MQM and the Sunni Tehrik which is clearly a denominational organization of Barelvi Sunnis. The Sunni Tehrik is thought to be made of up former MQM cadre that "turned" under pressure from state agencies.

2.5 Repression, state collapse and political terror

The disparate forms of violent conflict in Sindh have some common roots. The 1980s was a watershed period in the rise of militant ethnic politics as well as rural violence. Many political analysts do not regard this as a coincidence. The military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq was strongly resisted in Sindh, particularly in the rural areas that were partisans of the executed Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Mohajir-dominated urban areas had been opposed to Bhutto, but they too had gradually turned against General Zia's regime as they saw little representation of their interests. In fact, Zia was regarded by many Mohajirs as promoting Punjabi interests at their expense.

The early 1980s witnessed a mass political movement for democracy across Sindh including parts of Karachi. This movement was brutally suppressed by the military – demonstrators were frequently fired upon, thousands of people were detained and tortured, and there was a clampdown on all political activities. The civil administration virtually collapsed over much of the province. The repression led to the rise of ethnic nationalism among Sindhis who felt that they had no voice in Pakistan. In the meanwhile, many commentators believe that the Zia regime actively encourage ethnic militants among both Sindhis and Mohajirs in order to create diversions away from what had been, in essence, a movement for the restoration of democracy.

This same period also witnessed an erosion of the formal civil institutions of the state. In the rural areas of Sindh this happened under the pressure of protest. In urban areas, particularly Karachi, the 1980s simply saw a culmination of the preceding decades of neglect of urban governance. The state's civilian institutions not only lost their legitimacy under military rule, they had also lost coherence and capacity through decades of neglect.

In rural Sindh the suppression of the democratic movement led to a rise in banditry and ethnic nationalism. In fact, some bandits became nationalist icons for resisting armed organs of the state. In urban areas the MQM emerged from relatively obscurity to becoming the largest "super-mafia" with an ethnic ideology. The easy availability of weapons, partly due to the way in which Pakistan's military government managed the "Afghan jihad", and partly through more direct policies of the state agencies, led to the entrenchment of political and social violence.

In the period between 1988 and 1999 – that is, between the military regimes of General Zia-ul-Haq and General Musharraf respectively – there were various successful and unsuccessful attempts at managing violent conflict. In the urban areas conflict escalated as the MQM jostled for political power, and was used by opposition political actors as well as the state security agencies to undermine incumbent civil governments. State security agencies, however, got behind a coherent effort at restricting MQM's militancy in 1994-1996. After a period of intense violence and human rights abuses the MQM's military ability was significantly dented, and the party abandoned its narrow ethnic base. In rural Sindh there were successful operations against some of the most notorious gangs of bandits, and some conspicuous instances of legal accountability of errant state personnel helped to win over popular support for such operations. The result was a significant decline in outlaw activity by the late 1990s.

Although the post-1999 period was considerably different from the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, some structural similarities are notable. Like General Zia, the Musharraf regime regarded Sindh as a haven of political opposition. In order to emasculate the strong presence of opposition political parties (particularly the PPP) the regime relied on the MQM in Karachi and Hyderabad, and promoted disparate local notables and strongmen in all other districts. In many of these districts the local strongmen built up virtual fiefs through the abuse of the state machinery, and alarmingly, through the mobilisation of tribal networks. Although the Musharraf and Zia regimes had very different ideological proclivities at the national level their effects in Sindh were quite similar: encouragement of MQM militancy in the main cities, and the escalation of apparently non-political social violence in the rural areas.

3. Ways Forward

The reduction and prevention of violent conflict in Sindh requires action along four lines: (a) acceptance of the genuine democratic mandate of political parties with popular support bases; (b) rehabilitation of the legitimate civil authority of the formal institutions of the state including the judiciary, the police as well as the social service delivery infrastructure; (c) dismantling and decommissioning of militant organizations which have been set up and nurtured by state security agencies in successive periods; (d) deweaponisation of politics and society.

These four lines of action appear to be extremely vague, general and ambitious. There are, however, short to medium term measures by various actors that might help move things in positive or negative directions. Some of these short to medium term implications are spelled out below.

3.1 Accepting the democratic mandate

Accepting the democratic mandate at all levels of government – national, provincial and local – minimally requires allowing all political parties to participate freely in fair elections. In the context of Sindh is requires more than that. The pre-emption of any party, particularly those that are known to have solid electoral bases (such as the PPP but also the MQM) leads to distortions in the political system. The rise of ethnic nationalism, violent conflict, tribalism, and political terror in Sindh can be traced back directly to such efforts. There needs to be a complete acceptance in the higher echelons of the state that parties that regularly prove themselves at the ballot cannot be treated as being anti-national.

A problem here is the strong suspicion that some of the parties in Sindh, notably the MQM, might not themselves have internalised a democratic political ethos. Attempts by the party to acquire absolute monopoly over all political and social activities in its professed domain makes the task of democratization all the more complicated. Some level of cooperation between the PPP and the MQM – even if this is cooperation across benches – is essential for the prevention of violent conflict in Sindh. This appears to be a distant prospect in the wake of May 12. Efforts need to be made to persuade the parties, particularly the MQM, to accept the prospect of political partnership rather than clinging on to unrealisable hopes of totalitarian control. A

useful, though painful, starting point might be an independent inquiry into the events of May 12.

3.2 Rehabilitating legitimate civil authority

Accountable civil administration, working alongside an independent judiciary and a professional police force must successively replace the various ad hoc security agencies operating in Sindh. It ought to be a matter of concern that much of Sindh has been under continuous military oversight since 1977 when General Zia-ul-Haq overthrew the civil government. Even in the period of elected civil governments between 1988 and 1999 paramilitary Rangers (whose mandate is to guard the borders) were in continuous deployment in Karachi and Hyderabad in order to deal with ethnic violence. It is also striking that even during this period of turmoil instances of demilitarization (handing over security to civil authorities) met with greater success than military operations – in rural and urban areas alike.

3.3 Dismantling militant infrastructure

The frequent use by state agencies of militant organizations for political purposes needs to be frankly acknowledged and discontinued. The militant infrastructure created by state security agencies does not respect its prescribed political or even ideological boundaries. It has been seen that militant cadre of religious organizations have reconstituted themselves into ethnic-nationalists, and vice versa. It has also been folly to use one militant organization in order to curb the activities of another. State security agencies must stop promoting political terror of any hue.

The first step in this direction will be to strengthen those law enforcement and state security organizations that are under the direct control of civil administration. These are ultimately answerable to political accountability and judicial overview. Pakistan's international partners in the war against terrorism must not acquiesce to "any means necessary". Rather, there needs to be active promotion of the legal route to confronting militant violence of all types.

3.4 Deweaponisation

This is the most difficult line of action, and cannot be attempted outside of the context of action along the other three lines proposed above. A deweaponisation drive carried out in the absence of a political process is likely to fail.