

Urban Studies

<http://usj.sagepub.com/>

Informality and Political Violence in Karachi

Haris Gazdar and Hussain Bux Mallah
Urban Stud published online 30 May 2013
DOI: 10.1177/0042098013487778

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://usj.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/05/30/0042098013487778>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:

Urban Studies Journal Foundation

Additional services and information for *Urban Studies* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://usj.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://usj.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

>> [OnlineFirst Version of Record](#) - May 30, 2013

[What is This?](#)

Informality and Political Violence in Karachi

Haris Gazdar and Hussain Bux Mallah

[Paper first received, May 2011; in final form, November 2012]

Abstract

This paper proposes an understanding of political violence in a major metropolis through the lens of informality in urban planning and land use. Political conflict in Karachi has been examined largely from the lens of ethnic identity. Here it is shown, using census data, how urban planning was implicated in the evolution of the city's ethnic demography. Election results at the polling station level further confirm the importance of territory in Karachi's violent political divisions. The literature on informal economic governance, and its insights on non-state contract enforcement and dispute resolution, is used to interpret case studies of three unplanned neighbourhoods. Various migrant cohorts had distinct experiences regarding informal economic governance and the politics of regularisation. These differences gave rise to two alternate modes of informal economic governance, which not only sustained violent political divisions, but also denied coercive monopoly to formal institutions of the state.

1. Introduction

This paper proposes an understanding of political violence, or violence implicating political organisations, in a major metropolis through the lens of informality in urban planning and land use. Karachi provides sustenance to its 15 million residents through industry, trade, commerce, services and charity. It is also a violent city where organised criminal and political actions claimed over 1700 lives in 2011

(CPLC, 2012). Nearly 500 of the murder victims in 2011 were recognised activists from political parties,¹ paradoxically in a period when the main alleged protagonists have been in coalition governments. Karachi, which accounts for 8 per cent of the national population, was the site of 42 per cent of all reported assassinations in Pakistan between 1988 and 2010 (Shapiro *et al.*, 2012).

Haris Gazdar and **Hussain Bux Mallah** are in the Collective for Social Science Research, 173-I Block-2, PECHS, Karachi 75400, Pakistan. Email: haris@researchcollective.org and hussain@researchcollective.org.

Statistics do not fully convey many of the nuances of violence in Karachi. Human rights groups routinely include assassinations, torture by non-state actors, kidnappings for ransom, vigilante reprisals, bombings and suicide attacks in their reporting on Karachi (HRCP, 2010). Political parties operating in the city are accused of maintaining armed cadres who are trained in the use of lethal weapons (Supreme Court of Pakistan, 2011). Violence can flare up around particular events such as public meetings, elections and the enforcement of general strikes.²

Political violence is readily associated with ethnic conflict in Karachi, as the main parties with influence in the city have identifiable ethnic support bases. Links between interparty rivalry, ethnic group identity and crime are part of the standard narrative of Karachi's politics (Rashid and Shaheed, 1993; Haq, 1995; Waseem, 1996; Gayer, 2003; Esser, 2004; Verkaaik, 2004; Khan, 2007). By most accounts, the 1980s mark a turning point in city politics, when ethnic clashes attended the rise of the Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM) which claimed to represent the interests of Urdu-speaking partition migrants from India and their descendants.³ The MQM and other parties consolidated their respective support bases among the city's various ethnic groups and successfully challenged the institutional hegemony of state security forces over many parts of the city.

The prevalence of informality, particularly with respect to urban planning and land use, is another well-established aspect of compromised state capacity in Karachi (Hasan, 1999). The city offers an opportunity for examining the relationship between two conspicuous manifestations of state incapacity—in the realms of security and urban planning respectively. This opportunity has not been taken up to any significant degree with respect to Karachi, where the

examination of political violence has centred on ethnic conflict, while analyses of informality in urban planning and land use have been focused on the welfare implications of irregular and unplanned housing for the poor. Commentaries on violence which do refer to informality tend to link unplanned neighbourhoods with crime through causal routes of deprivation, lawlessness or both (see for example, Breman 2012).

While acknowledging the significance of ethnicity, this paper argues that informality is an additional and insightful vantage-point on political divisions and their violent manifestations in the city. The literature on private contract enforcement and dispute resolution, or informal economic governance, provides a cogent framework for interpreting the deployment of violence by non-state organisations (section 2)—in our case political parties with strong bases in particular communities. This paper brings together empirical material from three sets of sources (population census, polling station returns and qualitative case studies) to describe Karachi's ethnic and spatial divisions and to examine the interaction between informality and political violence. In section 3, we propose a classification of the city's population with respect to migration waves as a way of drawing a closer connection between the city's spatial growth and its ethnic demography. We use population census data for the first time to analyse the relative size, geographical distribution and migration histories of planned and unplanned neighbourhoods. In section 4, we use election results at the polling station level, also for the first time, to describe territorial political division in the city by geography, ethnicity and planning status, and to identify contrasting patterns of monopolistic control and relative openness across types of neighbourhood. In section 5, we use primary qualitative fieldwork carried out in communities across the city between

2003 and 2011, and particularly in the neighbourhoods of Lyari, Jacob Lines and Kausar Niazi Colony (KNC) to construct case studies of informal economic governance. We draw together our findings on migrant cohorts, their interactions with formal urban planning and informality, and territorial divisions between neighbourhoods, to offer a fresh perspective on political violence in Karachi.

2. Informality and Non-state Violence

The literature on urban informality is commonly associated with migration, poverty, marginality, weak infrastructure and insecurity, even as causation is subject to rich conceptual and empirical discussion (for example, AlSayyad, 2004). Whatever its provenance, however, the formal–informal dichotomy observed at any given location and moment will be necessarily related to processes on either side of legal and bureaucratic regulation (Kanbur, 2009). Even scholars of informality who see it not as a residual of planning but as integral to the state’s strategy of political management, acknowledge the centrality of regulation in defining informality (Roy, 2009).

The question of regulation and the debate between regulation and regularisation with respect to land use has often overlooked two related political economy dimensions to informality. First, while the welfare-oriented debate has focused on the relative merits of regulation versus *post hoc* regularisation (for example, Larson, 2002), there is little discussion about the organisational or political capacity of the state actually to embark on the former course. The second gap relates to lack of significant attention in the literature to the necessary prevalence of non-state contract enforcement within the domains of informality,

and the implications of this prevalence. Neo-liberal legalists such as de Soto (2000) are concerned about investments and transactions that do not happen due to the absence of clear title, but not about the institutional underpinnings of economic activity that actually does take place under informality.

We turn to a distinct strand of literature, that relating to the political economy of organised crime, to find more attentive treatment of the implications of non-state economic governance (Skaperdas, 2001; Bandiera, 2003; Kumar and Skaperdas, 2009). Economic transactions in activities and entities beyond the domain of formal law are possible only if parties have access to reliable mechanisms for contract enforcement and dispute resolution. Non-state enforcers may generate and appropriate rents by filling an institutional void, or actually instigating one through protection rackets. A key insight from this literature is that, while non-state enforcers will tend towards creating monopolies in the use of force over their domains, their rents are optimised through enabling rather than extinguishing economic activity.

A more general political economy framework for private enforcement and dispute resolution suggests a number of different ways in which non-state economic governance may occur (Dixit, 2009). While first-party and second-party enforcement may enable economic governance in limited settings, the scope for private third-party enforcement can exist under a wide range of informal conditions. Group identity may also be a significant factor. In certain situations where transactions occur within small groups with prior social capital, enforcement issues may be resolved through within-group collective action. To the extent that such collective action is managed co-operatively, there may be less economic rationale for non-state third-party enforcement (Dixit, 2009). This does not

rule out the existence of social violence for the maintenance of coherence and hierarchy within a group. Group identity may itself create spaces for informality if it constitutes a barrier against the enforcement of formal regulation. A group's perceptions about its (unjust) treatment by the mainstream, for example, may limit the legitimacy, acceptance and outreach of formal security and judicial institutions (Skaperdas, 2001).

Typologies of urban violence, while helpful for classification purposes, are often compounded with ascriptions of causality and motivation (Moser, 2004; Winton, 2004; Moser and McIlwaine, 2006). The distinction between political, economic and social violence may be clear enough from an analytical vantage-point, but is often meaningless for perpetrators and victims alike. There are multiple and contested views about the motivation or causality behind a particular act of violence. The informal economic governance perspective offers the possibility of analysing the drivers of what the introduction to this Special Issue terms 'civic conflict' (Beall *et al.*, 2013), while eschewing the need to establish motivation on the part of perpetrators.

Several implications of the informal economic governance perspective can help to interpret cases of urban violence. First, this perspective discards the assumption of omnipotence on the part of formal state organisations and institutions. Rather, it is premised on regulatory weakness. Secondly, it posits group-based collective action and non-state third-party enforcement as alternative solutions to issues in economic governance. Thirdly, it highlights the significance of territory and/or domain in a private enforcer's tendency towards establishing monopolistic control. Fourthly, it provides a possible explanation for the legitimacy and persistence of non-state violence through the acceptance of private enforcement as an economic service. As a

corollary, this perspective offers an explanation for restraint on the part of non-state enforcers in their 'taxation' of economic activity.

These insights have been deployed to understanding non-state violence in a number of urban settings. They have been helpful in examining the relationship between organised crime groups and political violence in Mumbai (Weinstein, 2008). Gupte (2008) explored the link between what he termed the 'infra-power' of non-state actors involved in contract enforcement, and dispute resolution to show that there was a premium attached to acquiring a reputation for the ability to inflict violence. Sobel and Osoba (2009) argued that, contrary to popular perception, the direction of causality may run from the prior prevalence of social violence to the formation of youth gangs which use force but also provide protection in already insecure neighbourhoods. These interpretations of the relationship between informality and non-state violence mark a shift from the linear assumption that informality implies the loss of state control and hence non-state violence (for example, Sanchez, 2006). This paper also aims to adopt a more nuanced perspective which seeks to establish the role of economic governance under conditions of informality, particularly in planning and land use, in shaping the city's violent ethnic politics.

3. Partition, Ethnicity, and Land Use

In this section, we examine ethnicity and migrant cohorts and their interaction with urban planning using data available from the most recent round of the population census in 1998. We propose a classification of the city's population based on migrant cohorts rather than ethnicity alone, and describe the spatial distribution of these cohorts across districts and planned and unplanned areas. We will argue, using these

Table 1. Reported mother tongue by district, 1998 (percentages)

		<i>All Karachi</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>Malir</i>
Partition migrants and descendants	Urdu	48.5	73.6	60.7	25.7	39.6	15.9
Mostly post-Partition	Punjabi/Seraiki	16.1	10.9	16.8	20.7	15.0	19.8
	Pushto	11.4	4.6	6.0	8.0	24.6	20.7
Mostly pre-Partition	Sindhi	7.2	1.6	3.8	11.4	6.0	25.1
	Balochi	4.3	0.8	1.6	9.8	5.3	8.5
	Other	12.4	8.6	11.0	24.6	9.5	10.1
Share of Karachi's population		100.0	23.1	27.9	17.7	21.4	10.0

Source: Authors' calculations based on GoP (1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d).

patterns, that migrant cohorts' interaction with planning and informality was not incidental, but may have contributed to the construction of ethnic identities.

The Partition of India in 1947 along religious lines was a defining moment for Karachi's ethnic demography (see Table 1). Partition-induced Muslim refugees and migrants from India, also known as Muhajirs, have constituted the largest language-group since the 1950s.⁴ Many, though not all, Partition migrants and their descendants in Karachi report their mother tongue as Urdu. Prior to the Partition, Sindhi, Balochi, Gujarati and Kachhi speaking communities were predominant and, although themselves descendants of earlier immigrants, claimed to be indigenous residents.⁵ Much of the Partition-related migration from India occurred within the first decade of independence. The main sources of post-Partition migration into Karachi were other parts of Pakistan, notably Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The immediate hinterland of the city—or ethnic Sindhi and Baloch areas—contributed relatively less to the city's demographic growth between the early 1950s and the 1980s.

The 1998 district boundaries happen to correspond well with the various phases of the city's growth. District South is the oldest urban area of Karachi and has a

relatively high proportion of pre-Partition communities. While Urdu-speakers or Partition migrants and their descendants made up nearly half the city's population, their main concentrations were in two districts, Central and East (Table 1). District West was an industrial suburb before the Partition and became an industrial zone providing planned low-cost housing aimed at Partition migrants in the early period. It began to receive post-Partition migrants, particularly from Pashto-speaking regions from the 1960s onwards. Malir retains rural features particularly in terms of land administration and, like District South, has a relatively balanced mix of pre-Partition, Partition and post-Partition communities.

Karachi at the time of the Partition inherited four forms of property ownership in land (Hasan and Raza, 2012). The first was formally leased urban localities under the jurisdiction of the Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC), which collected property taxes and provided amenities and infrastructure. Secondly, landed property in formally designated rural areas in the Karachi Division was administered not by the municipality but by the land revenue department of the provincial government. Thirdly, civilian residential and commercial properties in many zones were controlled by military cantonment authorities. Finally,

large segments of the urban population, particularly in the working-class quarter of Lyari (one of our case study sites), lived in settlements that paid land rent to the municipality, without enjoying property rights (Hafeez, 1973).

With the large net influx of Partition migrants from 1947 onwards, housing for displaced persons became the most acute issue not only for municipal authorities but for the national government whose capital was Karachi (Zamindar, 2007; Daechsel, 2011). The initial priority was the provision of shelter for newly arrived government employees who had been transferred to Pakistan. Meanwhile, poorer refugees lived in makeshift camps which emerged in public spaces in and around the city centre. Our case study site Jacob Lines was one such zone where both government employees and poorer Partition migrants found shelter (Weijs, 1975). It was under the control of the government works department which built makeshift residential quarters for migrant government employees. Open spaces around the quarters were promptly occupied by other migrants who put up tents and shacks.

By this time, administrative as well as political power in Karachi had shifted away from the municipality towards the national government (Hasan, 1999). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, there were repeated, and partly successful, attempts by authorities to demolish and evict the informal refugee settlements (for example, Daechsel, 2011). The evicted refugees were provided with residential plots far away from the city centre in Malir, Korangi, Khokhrapar (in present-day District East) and Orangi (in present-day District West). While many moved, others avoided eviction and yet others returned to Jacob Lines from their allotted areas.⁶

In 1952, a development authority was formed and land was provided by the national government on the outskirts of the

city for conversion from rural to urban use (Newcombe, 1960; Hasan, 1999). The Karachi Development Authority (KDA) continued to allot residential plots in schemes specifically designed for displaced Partition migrants. However, the main focus of its work turned to creating large housing schemes for the urban middle classes, mostly in areas in present-day Districts Central and East. Some, such as North Nazimabad in District Central, started in 1953, were to become sought-after residential areas by the 1970s. Although the element of implied subsidy was estimated at around three-quarters of market value, these schemes attracted middle- to upper-income applicants and not the poor, mostly from among Partition migrants (Dowall, 1991). In the 1960s, the military emerged as a land developer for the high-income segment of the housing market (Hasan and Raza, 2012) particularly in District South.

The early 1970s mark a turning point with respect to urban planning with a shift towards the recognition and regularisation of existing unplanned settlements, or areas with insecure title (Hasan, 1999). While planning after 1947 had remained preoccupied with government acquisition of peripheral land and its conversion into urban use, large segments of the city's population found themselves outside its purview. Unplanned pre-Partition neighbourhoods such as the working-class quarter of Lyari remained without effective infrastructure or formal security of tenure (Hafeez, 1973). The same was true of poorer makeshift refugee settlements such as unauthorised segments of Jacob Lines (Weijs, 1975), which survived without civic amenities and under constant threat of eviction.⁷ In addition, new unplanned settlements of post-Partition migrants had emerged along corridors earmarked for KDA schemes. Case study site Kausar Niazi Colony (KNC), for example, began to be settled by

migrants from northern Pakistan beside a natural storm drain abutting North Nazimabad.

Pakistan's first general elections in 1970 formed the backdrop to the shift in Karachi's urban planning. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto positioned itself as a left-of-centre platform representing the poor and promised the regularisation of unplanned settlements. Bhutto had a particular interest in Lyari where as minister he had held a public meeting in the early 1960s. Lyari residents, mostly pre-Partition migrants of Baloch, Sindhi and Kachhi origin, had become aware of a redevelopment plan involving mass eviction and resettlement. Residents formed civic organisations which lobbied against the eviction threat (Khan, 1975) and Bhutto's promise of secure tenure was a major contributory factor in his party's electoral victory there.⁸

When the PPP assumed office in 1972, it announced a regularisation policy for unplanned urban settlements, starting with Lyari. A new master-plan for Karachi was commissioned and one of its integral components was the Improvement and Regularisation Programme (Weijs, 1975; Hasan, 1999). This was the first plan since 1947 which explicitly incorporated the regularisation of existing unplanned settlements. Informants in Jacob Lines recall Bhutto's visit to the area and his speech promising property rights and infrastructure. They interpreted this as a signal that the settlement was now protected from eviction and that provision of public infrastructure was soon to follow. In KNC, there continued to be eviction attempts by KDA, while PPP ministers provided protection and support to the settlement's leading land agent.⁹

Although the PPP government was dislodged in 1977 in a military coup, and many of its policies overturned, the incoming regime led by General Zia saw value in

continuing with the populism of urban regularisation in Karachi. Regularisation was made part of the law in 1985 with the Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority (SKAA) which was empowered to award formal property rights to residents of pre-existing settlements. KNC was one among several hundred unplanned settlements, inhabited mostly by post-Partition migrants as well as some poorer Partition migrants, which were regularised through SKAA (Gazdar and Mallah, 2012).

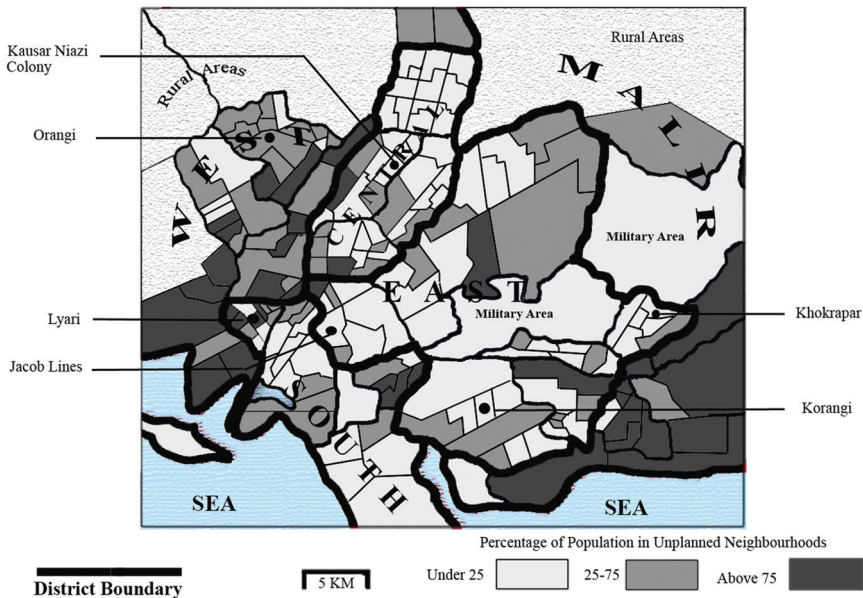
Existing estimates of the size of the unplanned sector in Karachi are based on satellite images (Bertaud, 1989) and these do not allow systematic comparison of individual neighbourhoods. As a first exercise of its type using population census data, we attempted to classify neighbourhoods corresponding with the city's 1385 census units by their planning status. Any area which was not regularised, or had been regularised since the change of policy with respect to regularisation in early 1970s, was classified as 'unplanned'. Neighbourhoods which were either planned or regularised prior to 1947, or whose planning was directly undertaken or pre-approved by formal state authority, were classified as 'planned'. There were many census units, moreover, which included both planned and unplanned areas, and these were classified as 'mixed'. Using official records (Dowall, 1991), surveys of irregular settlements (SKAA, 1994; OPP-RTI, 2002, 2006), our own fieldwork and expert advice, we were able to classify 99 per cent of the census units that constitute Karachi into planned, unplanned and mixed areas (see Table 2).

Less than half the population of Karachi in 1998 lived in census units made up of entirely planned areas, over a third were in entirely unplanned census units and around a fifth were in mixed units (Table 2). Districts Central and East were predominantly planned, but even here nearly a fifth of the population was in unplanned census

Table 2. Distribution of population by district and planning status (percentages)

	<i>All Karachi</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>Malir</i>
Planned	44.1	72.6	60.6	29.2	19.8	10.2
Unplanned	35.9	18.4	19.2	38.5	57.3	72.7
Mixed	19.1	8.8	19.6	31.8	20.0	17.1

Source: Authors' classification based on various sources and population census (GoP, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d, 2004).

**Figure 1.**

units. Districts West and Malir were mostly unplanned. In District South, which is the oldest urban area of Karachi, planned census units constituted under a third of the population and nearly two-fifths of the residents lived in unplanned areas (see Figure 1).

These district-wise results strongly corroborate micro-level evidence from case studies and sample surveys (for example, Bengali and Sadaqat, 2002) that, in the critical decades of the city's expansion, the interaction of various migrant cohorts with urban planning varied greatly. Partition migrant

communities, or Muhajirs, were concentrated in planned neighbourhoods while post-Partition and pre-Partition communities were more likely to be living in unplanned neighbourhoods which benefited from *post hoc* regularisation from the 1970s onwards. Our reclassification of the city's population from ethnic groups into migrant cohorts throws into relief the longer historical continuity in the interaction between migration and informal settlement, with Partition migrants standing out as an exceptional cohort which benefited from urban planning. To see what these patterns in the

ethnic geography of the city imply for its politics we turn, in the next section, to an analysis of election results.

4. Elections: Ethnicity and Territory

The MQM has won the largest share of the popular vote in all elections since the 1988 election when it mobilised Partition migrants or Muhajirs to its cause on an overtly ethnic basis. The diverse political preferences of Karachi's various communities, however, were already apparent before the rise of open ethnic mobilisation. In the general elections of 1970, the PPP won a landslide victory elsewhere in the country but managed to win only two out of Karachi's seven national assembly seats. It lost to two religious parties, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), which did particularly well among Partition migrants (in constituencies in Districts Central and East). The PPP won its seats in areas dominated by pre-Partition communities in Districts South and Malir (Mehdi, 2010). MQM's electoral success in the 1988 elections was almost exclusively at the expense of religious parties such as JI and JUP who were displaced from their strongholds among Partition migrants.

What does an electoral contest actually signify in Karachi where various combinations of ethnic, political, criminal and state violence have been current since the 1980s? We believe that the analysis of election results is a source of insight into the nature of electoral manipulation, but also the territorial division of the city. Using election results data from the 2008 general elections, we created a database of results for all 3471 polling stations in Karachi (ECP, 2012) and linked this with information from the census on the polling catchment area socio-economic conditions and its planning status. In 2008, the MQM won 17 out of 20 National Assembly seats, while the PPP

won three seats, aided by open or tacit support from other parties opposing MQM.¹⁰ There was a one-on-one contest in Karachi between these two parties on National Assembly seats.

Independent election monitors found validity in complaints of polling station capture in Karachi (for example, EU Election Observation Mission, 2008). A party which physically secured possession of a polling station was then able to eject agents of the rival party and bully election officials into allowing the stuffing of ballot papers. Using polling-station level data, we were able to classify individual polling stations, by their level of competition—the larger the vote-share of the winning party, the lower the level of competition. In approximately half the polling stations the winning party secured over 90 per cent of the vote. Moreover, there was close association between party domination and turnout rates, implying polling station capture.

While not all dominated high turnout polling stations were captured, it is safe to assume that the elections were fought through a combination of open competition and polling station capture. The capture of a polling station is premised on the organisational presence and support or acceptance that a party does enjoy in a particular locality. The distribution of polling stations between parties, therefore, can be used as a gauge of the ability of a party to assert its control over a locality through popular support or acquiescence, as well as the use of force.

The MQM benefited disproportionately from dominated polling stations—63 per cent of the polling stations it won were dominated. Yet it was not alone in benefiting from dominated polling stations—30 per cent of the polling stations won by the PPP were dominated. Polling station domination was also more acute in planned and mixed areas than unplanned ones. Only 44 per cent

Table 3. Share of polling stations won by district and planning status (percentages)

	<i>All</i>		<i>Planned and mixed</i>		<i>Unplanned</i>	
	<i>MQM</i>	<i>PPP</i>	<i>MQM</i>	<i>PPP</i>	<i>MQM</i>	<i>PPP</i>
Central	95.3	4.7	98.6	1.4	78.3	21.7
East	85.5	12.3	90.9	6.4	59.9	39.5
South	38.2	54.4	51.7	46.6	14.2	68.6
West	48.4	39.1	66.2	26.4	35.7	47.5
Malir	18.3	78.3	39.0	61.0	13.9	81.9
All Karachi	64.1	31.1	82.3	15.5	34.3	56.4

Source: Authors' calculations based on ECP (2012) and population census (GoP, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2000d, 2004).

of the polling stations in the former were competitive compared with 61 per cent in unplanned areas.

The MQM prevailed in Districts Central and East, where it had a virtual monopoly in the planned and mixed areas of these districts, but conceded some polling stations in unplanned areas (Table 3). In District West, where the MQM enjoyed a comfortable position overall, it won fewer polling stations than the PPP in unplanned areas. In South and Malir, where the PPP had an advantage overall, its margin was wider in the unplanned areas. If the city is seen from the vantage-point of planning status, there was a clear division in the 2008 elections. The planned and mixed area polling stations went overwhelmingly to the MQM and a majority of those in unplanned areas were won by the PPP.

MQM domination of planned areas may simply be due to the high concentration of its Muhajir ethnic support based in these neighbourhoods. Yet contrasting electoral outcomes by planning status cannot simply be put down to an incidental association of Partition migrants with planned areas. Attitudes towards unplanned settlements were not independent of ethnicity. Regulation rather than regularisation of unplanned settlements was a prominent

point in the MQM's founding charter of demands in the 1980s (Baig, 2008) because it saw these neighbourhoods as posing the threat of a growing non-Muhajir population of post-Partition migrants. The 2008 elections, moreover, came after a period when the party had been in government and had vigorously promoted large infrastructure projects leading to displacements from unplanned settlements (Gazdar and Mallah, 2012). Similarly, while part of the electoral influence of the PPP among pre-Partition and post-Partition residents of unplanned areas may be due to ethnic affinity, the party's pro-regularisation history may have been an additional factor.

Polling-station-level data show, therefore, that ethnicity was compounded with planning status in the political division of Karachi. The territorial dimension of political conflict also comes out clearly from the high degree of variation across polling stations—with the capture or domination of a polling station as an index of a political party's monopolistic control of a neighbourhood through consent and organisational competence, as well as violence. Assertion of monopolistic territorial control was highlighted as a salient feature of private third-party enforcement in the theoretical literature on organised crime (section

2). In Karachi, monopolistic control over territory, as evidenced by the high prevalence of 'dominated' polling stations, was part of political strategy and violence was a corollary in asserting and maintaining monopolistic control. The main sites of non-state monopolistic territorial control, however, were planned rather than unplanned areas. Unplanned areas were more plural and competitive political spaces than their planned neighbours. In the next section, we take a closer look at Karachi's political divisions by examining modes of informal economic governance and their implications for conflict and violence in three unplanned neighbourhoods.

5. Private Enforcement and Political Conflict

How were private enforcement problems solved in Karachi's large unplanned sector and how did those solutions relate to violent political conflict? To recall, the informal economic governance perspective suggests that economic transactions under conditions of informality can create demand for the private or non-state supply of enforcement services. Successful collective action, particularly among small groups with prior social connections, may obviate or soften the need for third-party private enforcement.

It is useful, therefore, to try and locate the demand and supply for private enforcement through the process of regularisation and beyond. Our case studies of Karachi neighbourhoods based on fieldwork across its various districts and ethnic and political boundaries focused on histories of enforcement, arbitration and conflict within particular communities.

The *jamadar* emerged as an important character in pre-Partition Lyari as a contractor who hired workers for industries that drew labour from the neighbourhood.

Lyari was a mosaic of smaller clusters based on occupation and place of origin. By the 1960s, many of the *jamadars*, themselves simply more experienced and trusted workers, had formed community-level organisations in their neighbourhoods on the basis of extended kinship groups. These organisations conducted dispute resolution and contract enforcement within and across extended kinship groups. Government resources for community development in the 1960s further encouraged the emergence of social welfare organisations. Kinship-based committees and social welfare organisations became focal points of resistance to the threat of eviction.

Political change and the regularisation of Lyari in the early 1970s undermined the position of *jamadars*. Radicalised by left-wing groups, some anti-eviction activists joined the PPP and denounced *jamadars* as agents of capitalist employers. With the PPP in government, party office-bearers became channels of access to public resources, further undermining employers' patronage routed through *jamadars*. Another group with close links to employers were men such as Dadal whose gangs were involved in smuggling and were also used by employers to control 'troublesome' workers. In the 1980s, some gangs had become known for trafficking drugs and weapons into the city. By the 2000s, they were being associated with enforcement and protection rackets. One group, led by Dadal's son Rehman, gained prominence and reached an understanding with the PPP during the 2008 elections. Rehman's well-armed group helped the PPP to secure many polling stations and face MQM fire-power not only in Lyari, where MQM won only two polling stations, but also elsewhere in District South. Rehman was killed in an alleged police encounter in 2009 and, by 2011, his group had turned its guns on the PPP itself.

Tensions between occupants of government quarters and informally settled segments of Partition migrants were conspicuous in the politics of Jacob Lines in the period leading up to the regularisation of the latter. Informal segments of Jacob Lines remained vulnerable to eviction threats and police harassment, often invoked by residents of government quarters. The grant of secure tenure in the 1970s was an outcome of external political events—there is no recollection of organised attempts by the residents for regularisation. With regularisation, tensions with the occupants of government quarters and ethnic resentment against the many non-Muhajirs among these relatively privileged residents began to be expressed more openly.

Until the early 1980s, local arbitration and dispute resolution had been handled by informal groups supported by a Muhajir notable, who also used his contacts with government officials to lobby for civic amenities. His death coincided with the start of organisational activity by Muhajir student activists who would go on to form the MQM. They took over the functions of existing local arbitration groups and encouraged Muhajir residents to bring any disputes to the 'Sector' office. A stated objective was that the Muhajirs needed to resolve issues 'internally' and that police and court intervention be mediated by the Sector. The Sector was linked vertically to higher tiers of the organisation and finally to the party headquarters.

MQM activists capitalised on lingering ethnic resentment of Muhajir residents of the unplanned segments of Jacob Lines against their more privileged neighbours in the government quarters, many of whom were ethnic Punjabi and Pakhtun government officials. Ethnic violence and evictions had already occurred elsewhere in the city. In the late 1980s, non-Muhajir residents of government quarters were violently evicted and the Sector took effective control of allotting these vacated properties to party

supporters. Jacob Lines became a flashpoint for clashes between the mainstream MQM and a rival faction in the 1990s, leading to scores of killings on both sides. In the 2008 elections, there were 10 polling stations in Jacob Lines, all of which yielded a vote share of over 90 per cent to the MQM and recorded high turnout rates.

The story of the KNC, which is mainly an unplanned settlement of post-Partition migrants, has elements of both Lyari and Jacob Lines. Here, regularisation was led by the very land agents who first established the colony, creating and enforcing private property rights. Although dominated initially by ethnic Pakhtun land agents, the colony developed into a multi-ethnic settlement with numerous extended kinship groups of migrants from across Pakistan. Some of these kinship groups articulated a collective identity or assumed new identities in the course of the mobilisation for secure tenure. Leaders emerged who could broker negotiations with land agents, municipal authorities and political parties. The initial coercive power of the Pakhtun land agents in providing contract enforcement had been replaced by community-based arbitration as well as reversion to SKAA-provided plot leases. The colony's history resembles that of pre-1970 Lyari, with the exception that the initial entrepreneurs were land developers rather than agents of external employers.

There is also some similarity with the early history of Jacob Lines, although with vastly different outcomes. KNC has remained in a constant state of tension with the neighbouring planned segments of North Nazimabad, populated mostly by MQM-supporting middle- to upper-class Partition migrants. There were violent incidents and local residents recall the murder of a young man from the colony leading to negotiations between colony leaders and the MQM Sector. This resulted in the erection of barriers between the planned and unplanned segments. KNC,

like other unplanned neighbourhoods of North Nazimabad, provided space for parties opposed to the MQM. In 2008, while the PPP won only 20 out of the 187 polling stations in this constituency as a whole, it won four out of the five polling stations in KNC.

Informality required the resolution of contract enforcement issues outside the formal legal domain. We see the resolution of these issues in diverse ways. Collective action based on prior kinship solidarity, but also the consolidation of kinship groups by new leaders, represented a relatively non-violent route to the creation and protection of private property under conditions of informality. Pashtun land agents in KNC acted as private enforcers, but needed to deploy their coercive advantage prudently in order to ensure that a property rights regime did get established in the colony. They also eventually transformed into property owners and estate agents as regularisation proceeded. As predicted by theory, such forms of collective action have been available at the local level for relatively small groups with close and overlapping social relations.

The Sector in Jacob Line and North Nazimabad, however, emerged as a non-state organisation which enforced contracts and undertook dispute resolution as part of a political strategy for constructing a larger solidarity group and for monopolistic territorial control. It brushed aside existing local kinship-based nodes of collective action in favour of a broader ethnic identity held together by a disciplined and hierarchically organised party. Interestingly, the Sector did not emerge from local resistance to planning, but rather as a protector of the beneficiaries of planning and regularisation from other potential claimants. It was closer in its organisational structure to an organ of the state than the local kinship-based solidarity groups in Lyari or KNC. Rival groups have attempted to mimic MQM's Sector model with varying degrees of success.

Violence and threats of violence were more conspicuous in the relations of unplanned settlements with planning authorities or their planned neighbours than in ensuring internal enforcement of property rights, even if enforcement sustained the legitimacy of non-state violence within their respective territories. The trajectories of violent political conflict, in our case studies, can be traced to divisions between planned and unplanned areas, and to mutual threat perceptions of ethnic groups. The emergence of the Sector as a non-state yet non-kinship-based institution for enforcement and arbitration was an important qualitative shift. It was prefaced by perceptions of the weakness of the formal system and, as predicted by theory, tended towards establishing monopolistic territorial control. Elsewhere, the lineage of politically ambitious enforcement and protection providers, such as Rehman's group in Lyari, could be traced more readily to organised crime than in the political economy of contract enforcement and regularisation in informal settlements.

The strength of the MQM in the planned areas of Karachi may be due to the focus of post-1947 urban planning on meeting the housing needs of Partition migrants, and hence a high concentration of Muhajirs in planned areas. Yet the urban experience of Partition migrants also contrasts with that of the poorer among the pre-Partition and post-Partition migrants. The former mostly bypassed the long processes of settlement, consolidation and regularisation which had led to collective action based on proximate kinship group solidarity among the pre-Partition and post-Partition migrants.¹¹ There were fewer barriers to the entry of a disciplined state-like organisation or the construction of an encompassing but exclusive urban ethnic identity. Organisational competence can, of course, be seen by non-supporters as a hegemonic threat (Ahmad, 2011). Unplanned settlements presented, by

contrast, seemingly chaotic multiple nodes of collective action and negotiation alongside greater political openness.

6. Conclusion

The case of Karachi shows that the relative weakness of state organisations in terms of their ability or willingness to plan the city, or to ensure a uniformly enforced system of property rights, led to divergent societal and political responses. The reliance on kinship-based solidarity allowed some migrant cohorts to sustain and then eventually to regularise unplanned settlements. The small size of each group facilitated internal collective action and relatively equitable social and political relations with other similar groups, leading to a form of urban civil society which was multiethnic and politically plural. Another effective response to the perceived weakness of the state was the Sector which was part of a hierarchical non-state organisation that mirrored state functions, particularly those relating to enforcement and dispute resolution. This happened quite largely in planned segments of the city and among a cohort of migrants whose urban experience had less call for small-group collective action premised on kinship-group solidarity.

If informality in land use and access to housing is to be understood as integral rather than incidental to urban planning, there are important insights to be gained from theories of informal economic governance. While this literature does not claim to explain the sources of state weakness, it does offer a framework for interpreting forms of non-state organisation and violence encountered in contemporary urban settings. In Karachi, unplanned settlements, mostly of Pre-Partition and Post-Partition communities, relied on small-group collective action based on kinship and affinity in order to develop property rights and

sustain economic transactions. Partition migrants who became beneficiaries of post-independence urban planning, however, bypassed the slower processes of small-group collective action which had produced plural and multiethnic urban spaces in unplanned areas. The construction of an encompassing Muhajir ethnic identity backed up by the coercive power of the Sector stood in contrast with the more fluid negotiation between political parties and kinship group leaders among Pre-Partition and Post-Partition communities. Non-state third-party enforcement, with in-built tendencies towards state-like territorial hegemony, emerged as a distinct yet predicted form of economic governance in planned areas inhabited by Partition migrants.

Political violence in the city is not only an outcome of a conflict between formal and informal sources of contract enforcement, but also between two distinct modes of informal economic governance. This latter conflict manifests itself in the division of political territory between parties which maintain resilient bases respectively, in planned and unplanned neighbourhoods. Strategic assertion of territorial control over neighbourhoods involves violence between armed members and supporters of political organisations at the local level, even if the bigger picture suggests a stalemate in which no one side can fully prevail over the other. There is a corresponding stalemate too with formal institutions of the state which periodically attempt to assert their authority but have not succeeded in establishing a monopoly over the use of force in face of resistance from the Sector as well as kinship-based solidarity groups.

Funding

Research conducted for this paper was supported by the Crisis States research programme, funded by DFID UK.

Notes

1. CPLC data given in Hashim (2012).
2. For detailed analysis of a particularly organised instance of city-wide armed combat between parties, see HRCP (2007).
3. The party officially discarded ethnic nationalism in 1997 and was renamed the Muttahida Quami Movement or united national movement.
4. We use the term Muhajir in this paper as an abbreviation for all Urdu-speaking post-partition migrants and their descendants, while acknowledging that many do not themselves ascribe to this label.
5. Kachhi speakers, who might be a substantial language-group in Karachi, have not been identified separately in the population census and are classified under 'others'.
6. Authors' fieldwork.
7. Authors' fieldwork.
8. Authors' fieldwork.
9. Authors' fieldwork.
10. A third major contender was the Pakhtun ethno-nationalist Awami National Party (ANP) which backed the PPP in the national assembly contest in return for PPP support in the provincial assembly. The party has come to be regarded as an important participant in Karachi's violent politics.
11. The distinctive nature of demand-making by Partition migrants' organisations in the 1950s had already invoked their special status as Muhajirs (Zamindar, 2007).

References

- Ahmad, T. (2011) Bystander tactics: life on turf in Karachi, *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, 2011(5) (<http://samaj.revues.org/3267>; accessed 12 September 2012).
- AlSayyad, N. (2004) Urban informality as a 'new' way of life, in: A. Roy and N. AlSayed (Eds) *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*, pp. 7–30. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Baig, N. (2008) *From mohallah to mainstream: the MQMs transformation from an ethnic to a catch-all party*. MA thesis, University of Victoria.
- Bandiera, O. (2003) Land reform, the market for protection and the origins of the Sicilian mafia: theory and evidence, *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, 19(1), pp. 218–244.
- Beall, J., Goodfellow, T. and Rodgers, D. (2013) Cities and conflict in fragile states in the developing world, *Urban Studies*. DOI: 10.1177/0042098013487775.
- Bengali, K. and Sadaqat, M. (2002) *Anatomy of ethnic militancy: the case of Karachi, Pakistan*. Working Paper No. 71, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad.
- Bertaud, M. A. (1989) *The use of satellite images for urban planning: a case study from Karachi, Pakistan*. Technical note, Environment Department, The World Bank, Washington, DC.
- Breman, J. (2012) The undercities of Karachi, *New Left Review*, 76, pp. 49–63.
- Chottani, H. A., Razzak, J. A. and Luby, S. P. (2002) Patterns of violence in Karachi, Pakistan, *Injury Prevention*, (8), pp. 57–59.
- CPLC (Citizens' Police Liaison Committee) (2012) *Year-wise killings* (www.cplc.org.pk/content.php?page=26; accessed 20 August 2012).
- Daechsel, M. (2011) Sovereignty, governmentality and development in Ayub's Pakistan: the case of Korangi Township, *Modern Asian Studies*, 45(1), pp. 131–157.
- Dixit, A. (2009) Governance institutions and economic activity, *American Economic Review*, 99(1), pp. 3–24.
- Dowall, D. E. (1991) The Karachi development authority: failing to get the prices right, *Land Economics*, 67(4), pp. 462–471.
- ECP (Election Commission of Pakistan) (2012) *2008 Election data* (www.ecp.gov.pk/GE2008.aspx; accessed 18 July 2012).
- Esser, D. (2004) The city as arena: hub and prey patterns of violence in Kabul and Karachi, *Environment and Urbanization*, 16(2), pp. 31–38.
- EU Election Observation Mission (2008) *Final Report—National and Provincial Assembly Elections, 18 February 2008*. European Union External Assistance (http://eeas.europa.eu/eucom/pdf/missions/eu_eom_pakistan_final_report.pdf; accessed 12 September 2012).

- Gayer, L. (2003) *A divided city: 'ethnic' and 'religious' conflicts in Karachi, Pakistan* (www.ceri-sciences-po.org; accessed 11 September 2012).
- Gazdar, H. and Mallah, H. B. (2012) The making of a 'colony' in Karachi and the politics of regularisation, *South Asian Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, 2012(5) (<http://samaj.revues.org/3248>; accessed 12 September 2012).
- Government of India (2009) *Crime in India*. National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs (<http://ncrb.nic.in/CII-2009-NEW/cii-2009/Table%203.1.pdf>; accessed 19 April 2011).
- Government of Pakistan (1999) *1998 district census report of Malir*. Population Census Organisation Statistics Division, Islamabad.
- Government of Pakistan (2000a) *1998 district census report of Karachi Central*. Population Census Organisation Statistics Division, Islamabad.
- Government of Pakistan (2000b) *1998 district census report of Karachi East*. Population Census Organisation Statistics division, Islamabad.
- Government of Pakistan (2000c) *1998 District census report of Karachi South*. Population Census Organisation Statistics Division, Islamabad.
- Government of Pakistan (2000d) *1998 district census report of Karachi West*. Population Census Organisation Statistics Division, Islamabad.
- Government of Pakistan (2004) *City report, Karachi population and housing census 1998*. Population Census Organisation Statistics Division, Islamabad.
- Gupte, J. (2008) *Infra-power and communal violence*. Paper presented at the *Symposium on Cities and Citizenship: Interrogating Urbanism in Contemporary South Asia*, University of California, Berkeley, CA, February.
- Hafeez, S. (1973) *The change agents in slum: a case study of Lyari, Karachi*. Joint Research Project for Slum Improvement and Urban Development Karachi, University of Karachi and Institute of Business Administration, Karachi.
- Haq, F. (1995) Rise of MQM in Pakistan: politics of ethnic mobilization, *Asian Survey*, 35(11), pp. 990–1004.
- Hasan, A. (1999) *Understanding Karachi: Planning and Reform for the Future*. Karachi: City Press.
- Hasan, A. (2002) The changing nature of the informal sector in Karachi as a result of global restructuring and liberalization, *Environment and Urbanization*, 14(1), pp. 69–78.
- Hasan, A. and Raza, H. (2012) *Karachi: the land issue*. NED University, Karachi, unpublished draft.
- Hashim, A. (2012) Interactive: Karachi's field, *Al-Jazeera* (www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2012/08/2012822102920951929.html; accessed 11 September 2012).
- HRCP (Human Rights Commission Pakistan) (2007) *A city under siege: carnage in Karachi*. HRCP, Lahore.
- HRCP (2010) *State of human rights*. HRCP, Lahore.
- Kanbur, R. (2009) Conceptualizing informality: regulation and enforcement, *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 52(1), pp. 33–42.
- Khan, M. (1975) *Report on socio-economic survey of Lyari*. Joint Research Project for Slum Improvement and Urban Development. University of Karachi and Institute of Business Administration, Karachi.
- Khan, N. (2007) Mobilization and political violence in the Mohajir community of Karachi, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(25), pp. 2435–2443.
- Kumar, V. D. and Skaperdas, S. (2009) Organized crime, in: N. Garoupa (Ed.) *Criminal Law and Economics*, pp. 257–271. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Larson, J. E. (2002) Informality, illegality and inequality, *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 2(1), pp. 137–182.
- Mehdi, T. (2010) *National Assembly elections in Pakistan: 1970–2008*. Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan/Karachi, and Free and Fair Election Network, Islamabad.
- Moser, C. (2004) Urban violence and insecurity: an introductory road map, *Environment & Urbanization*, 16(2), pp. 3–16.
- Moser, C. and McIlwaine, C. (2006) Latin American urban violence as a development concern: towards a framework for violence reduction, *World Development*, 34(1), pp. 89–112.
- Newcombe, V. Z. (1960) A town extension scheme: at Karachi, *The Town Planning Review*, 31(3), pp. 219–229.

- OPP–RTI (Orangi Pilot Project–Research and Training Institute) (2002) *Katchi Abadis of Karachi, documentation of sewerage, water supply lines, clinics, schools and thallas, vol. 1: the first hundred Katchi Abadis surveyed*. OPP–RTI, Karachi.
- OPP–RTI (2006) *Katchi Abadis of Karachi, documentation of sewerage, water supply lines, clinics, schools and thallas, vol. 2: the second batch of hundred Katchi Abadis surveyed*. OPP–RTI, Karachi.
- Rashid, A. and Shaheed, F. (1993) *Pakistan: ethno-politics and contending elites*. Discussion Paper No. 45, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva.
- Roy, A. (2009) Why India cannot plan its cities: informality, insurgence and the idiom of urbanization, *Planning Theory*, 8(1), pp. 76–87.
- Sanchez, R. M. (2006) Insecurity and violence as a new power relation in Latin America, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 606, pp. 178–195.
- Shapiro, J. N., Fair, C. and Rais, R. B. (2012) *Political violence in Pakistan 1988–2010: patterns and trends*. International Growth Centre, London.
- SKAA (Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority) (1994) *Yeh Bastian*. Newsletter of the Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority, Karachi.
- Skaperdas, S. (2001) The political economy of organized crime: providing protection when the state does not, *Economics of Governance*, 2(3), pp. 173–202.
- Sobel, R. S. and Osoba, B. (2009) Youth gangs as pseudo-governments: implications for violent crime, *Southern Economic Journal*, 74(4), pp. 996–1018.
- Soto, H. de (2000) *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*. New York: Basic Books.
- Supreme Court of Pakistan (2011) *Judgment, Suo Motu case no. 16 of 2011: Suo Motu action regarding law and order situation in Karachi*. 6 October (http://geo.tv/important_events/2011/SC_verdict_karachi/SMC16of2011_detailed_judgment.pdf; accessed 27 August 2012).
- Verkaaik, O. (2004) *Migrants and Militants: 'Fun' and Urban Violence in Pakistan*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Waseem, M. (1996) Ethnic conflict in Pakistan: the case of MQM, *Pakistan Development Review*, 35(4), pp. 617–629.
- Weijs, M. H. (1975) *Report: in depth study of Jacob Lines area*. Joint Research Project IV for Urban Development and Slum Improvement, Government of Pakistan, Karachi.
- Weinstein, L. (2008) Mumbai's mafias: globalization, organized crime and land development, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32(1), pp. 22–39.
- Winton, A. (2004) Urban violence: a guide to the literature, *Environment and Urbanization*, 16(2), pp. 165–184.
- Zamindar, V. F. (2007) *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories*. New York: Columbia University Press.