

Ethnic Issues in the Press of Karachi

Ethnic Issues in the Press of Karachi:

Spoilers of Harmony

By

Imtiaz Ahmad

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



Ethnic Issues in the Press of Karachi: Spoilers of Harmony

Edited by Imtiaz Ahmad

This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2023 by Imtiaz Ahmad

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-3129-5

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-3129-1

To my late grandmother

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	ix
Preface	x
Foreword by Mazhar Abbas	xiii
Introduction by Prof. Dr Riaz Ahmed Shaikh	xix
Abbreviations	xxiv
Chapter One.....	1
Attempts at Assimilation	
Chapter Two	9
Identity Upheavals in Nation-States	
Chapter Three	30
Bumpy Integration: From Quest to Reality	
Chapter Four.....	45
In Defiance of Harmony	
Chapter Five	65
Pakhtuns: From Aversion to Mergence	
Chapter Six	93
Migrants Take on Migrants	
Chapter Seven.....	114
Ethnic Hues of Press	
Chapter Eight.....	136
The Press under Ethnicity Frame	

Chapter Nine..... 156
Past and Future Intertwined in Changed Milieu

Two Times, Two Tales: A Comparative Analysis..... 206

Seeking Solutions in Shifting Sands..... 243

Bibliography 246

Index..... 256

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Codes for News and Opinion Content

Tables 2 to 13 (a): Placement of News and Opinion Content

Tables 14 to 14 (i): Comparison Between First and Second Period:
Category First

Tables 15 to 15 (p): Comparison Between First and Second Period:
Category Second

PREFACE

The pulse of Karachi's chaos touched me to varying degrees. The main consternation I faced during my time in the Sindh metropolis was my life as a migrant, uprooted from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's embrace. The estrangement from the city gnawed at me; after all, I had woven my story into its very streets for twenty prime years. Yet, it wasn't a personal inability to intertwine that left me adrift but the clashes among ethnic factions that painted me a foreigner amidst the very passages I'd come to call my own.

An unsettling feeling entrenched itself in me while being at the varsity, workplaces, roads, buses, restaurants, and cafes, which I managed to bear. But the uncertainty the city's ethnic frenzy had induced and the ensuing hatred engulfing the town could not leave me unscathed, making me almost an abhorrer. Living and reliving bloodshed and ethnic clashes and witnessing violent strikes took an inexorable toll on my psyche. This compelled me to contribute in whatever capacity I could muster, all for the sake of nurturing peace within the very fabric of the city.

As a *Dawn* journalist and a PhD enrollee at Karachi University, I faced a significant choice. The path ahead urged me to write about Karachi's warring communities. Rooted in my study of media sciences, it felt natural to interweave their issues with the press coverage they received. The abhorrer within me began to dissipate as I was struck by a myriad of ideas, particularly the historical struggles of diverse linguistic groups, proving wrong the maxim 'what starts in hatred always ends in regret'. I began to empathize with the repressed ethnic and migrant groups in Sindh and Pakistan. Among them, Afghan refugees, who have been an integral part of the country's socio-political landscape for the past 40 years, have recently faced the state's wrath and negative media attention due to their forced repatriation to a war-weary Afghanistan, now under Taliban control. The newfound knowledge reshaped my odium into a drive for doing something meaningful—an endeavor that would shed light on oppressed ethnicities as well as migrant groups and their portrayal within the pages of newspapers.

Meanwhile, I proved wrong those chauvinists, irrespective of their religion and language, who conceive of migrants as a burden on the city, for this migrant's work, I believe, will contribute to the city's peace. Completing the research work was an indomitable task considering the textual analysis of four national dailies, which became cumbersome amid the poor record-keeping. However, with the help of certain fine souls, I have finally overcome all hurdles. Indeed, at the top of the list is my supervisor Prof Dr Tahir Masood, to whom I owe my gratitude for always being available for my help.

Also, my gratitude goes to my mentor, teacher and friend Dr Tausif Ahmad Khan, for his help during the research and for constantly prodding me to publish it. The same holds true for my invaluable friend, Dr Irfan Aziz, whose unwavering support and guidance were instrumental throughout the intricate phases of the research and publishing process. I am also indebted to faculty members at the Department of International Relations, University of Karachi, Dr Farhan Siddiqi and Mr. Fahimuddin, for providing literature regarding ethnicity. I thank the assistant librarian Mr. Syed Azhar Ali at Dawn Library and his colleague Mr. Muhammad Ibrahim. Also, I feel indebted to Mr. Abdul Rehman, who helped me get books from Dr Mahmud Husain Library, Karachi University, whose librarian, Malahat Kaleem, had asked her staff to help me.

One of the arduous tasks during the research was data collection and its interpretation after applying mathematical formulas. While my friend Umaid Wasim's guidance in mathematical formulas relieved me, another friend, Sanaullah, proved handy with all the calculations. As the reader proceeds, they will find historical facts, statements, mathematical calculations and interviews with Karachi's prominent journalists and authors, amongst other details. With the help of my teachers and friends, I edited and re-edited the work before fact-checking and cross-checking all historical facts/statements and calculations. Still, the errors that are found herein are mine alone.

My family merits a special note of thanks, with my late grandmother Shahi Laal deserving special mention. I dedicate my research to my illiterate but visionary grandmother, who urged my father to put me into school in the remote Swat valley. The contributions on the part of my parents to my education are also unmatched. I am indebted to my illiterate mother for her keen interest in my studies and my father for his emotional and financial support.

My younger brother, Riaz Ahmad, has also contributed to my research by sending me books from London. My third brother, Ayaz Ahmad, based in Swat, supported me by keeping me motivated. Also, my youngest brother, Dr Ejaz Ahmad, contributed his share by helping me with daily house chores in Karachi.

I am deeply thankful to Mr. Mazhar Abbas, a prominent Pakistani journalist, and Prof Dr Riaz Ahmed Shaikh, Dean of Social Sciences at SZABIST University, Karachi. Dr Riaz is known for his left-leaning academic credentials and active participation in forums advocating for the rights of downtrodden classes and the people of small provinces of Pakistan. Mr. Mazhar Abbas, based in the multi-ethnic Karachi, has had a distinguished career in journalism, with associations in Pakistan's top newspapers, as well as prestigious roles in the country's electronic media channels.

I express my gratitude to both for their invaluable contributions. Mr. Mazhar Abbas wrote the Foreword, and Dr Riaz Ahmed Shaikh wrote the Introduction for *Ethnic Issues in the Press of Karachi: Spoilers of Harmony*. Additionally, I express my gratitude to Prof. Dr Arab Naz, the distinguished Dean of Social Sciences at the University of Malakand, whose assistance played a pivotal role in every step of the publication process. His introduction of me to Cambridge Scholars Publishing, the publishers who have breathed life into this book, is a testament to his unwavering support and confidence in me.

FOREWORD

Pakistan's four federating units—Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab—possess distinct histories and cultures. Additionally, a plethora of linguistic minorities exist within these provinces, creating a kaleidoscope of identity groups in the Land of the Pure. Governing such a diversity requires a power-sharing formula which the ruling elites failed to provide until the implementation of the 1973 democratically-approved constitution. It wouldn't be inaccurate to suggest the nation lost its direction soon after it gained independence in 1947. The ruling elites, primarily comprising ethnic Punjabi and Urdu-speaking Mohajir civil servants who had undergone training in the Indian Civil Services (ICS), started promoting narrow state nationalism. This exclusivism, introduced by Punjabi and Urdu-speaking elites, led to the declaration of the Urdu language as Pakistan's national language, provoking opposition from other identities.

After the imposition of the first Martial Law, the civil bureaucracy, which included the 1949 batch of 24 civil servants, half of whom were Bengali officers selected through the Pakistan Civil Service examination, lost its hold on power, marking the entry of military bureaucracy into power politics. Then came the issue of relocating the federal capital from Karachi to Islamabad which was the first step of power relocation to a new city located on the borders of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. On the occasion, the Urdu-speaking Mohajir bureaucrats sided with the powerful Punjabi elites who wanted the capital to be relocated to a new city, Islamabad. The Bengali bureaucracy resisted the same as it favored the twin cities of Karachi and Dhaka as the two power centers.

West Pakistan leadership's decision to dissolve the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly after Bengali left wing and nationalist parties swept the polls and the Muslim League suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the 'Jagtu Front' in 1954 was the turning point in Bengali ethnic nationalism on which author Imtiaz Ahmad has shed light while rightly pointing towards identity issues and their complexities in a multi-ethnic state like Pakistan. Bengali ethnic feelings, starting in the early 1950s after the Muslim League was defeated, went from bad to worse in the subsequent two decades. The political turmoil witnessed the end of '16

Points' when Awami League supremo Sheikh Mujibur Rahman presented 'Six Points', finally leading to the country's dismemberment. Had democracy been allowed to take its roots in accordance with the will of the people, we might not have witnessed the Liberation War in East Pakistan.

Karachi's Mohajir-Pakhtun conflict first made headlines after Field Marshal Ayub Khan's presidential election, where Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah's sister Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah, backed by Mohajirs and Bengalis, stood against the military man. This marked the beginning of a shift in political power from Mohajirs to ethnic Pakhtuns. Many believe the firing in Karachi after Ayub's victory marked the first major ethnic clash between the two migrant groups. The Urdu-speaking refugees also felt squeezed with the resurgence of the Sindhi middle-class and its entry into power politics after 1972. The migrants from Hindustan were pushed further when Bhutto's government sacked nearly 1400 civil servants, many of whom were Urdu-speakers.

The feeling amongst Mohajirs that they were no longer stakeholders in the country's power structure intensified after the passage of the Sindhi Language Bill which led to the rise of Mohajir ethnic nationalism and targeted the ethnic majority of Sindhis, who were already engaged in fighting the centrist state through their own ethnic nationalism. The birth of violent Mohajir ethnic politics epitomized by the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), coupled with the already simmering Sindhi ethnic nationalism, changed Sindh's political discourse while creating a rural-urban divide in the land of Sufis. Although the MQM, in its initial years, formed an understanding with Sindhi nationalist leader G. M. Syed while targeting the powerful Punjabi elite and Karachi's Pakhtun migrants, resulting in the 1986 Sohrab Goth firing, the refugee party's violent clash at Hyder Bux Jatoi Chowk in Hyderabad in 1987 proved that Urdu-speaking refugees remained embroiled with everyone in the Sindh capital.

The Bushra Zaidi case in April 1985 occurred after Urdu-speaking Mohajirs and ethnic Sindhis joined hands amid an understanding between then MQM Chief Altaf Hussain and Sindhi nationalist leader G. M. Syed. Many believe the same didn't go well within certain quarters leading to political tensions within a year. The year 1986 saw Sindh Chief Minister Syed Ghous Ali Shah launch an operation against drugs and arms smuggling at Sohrab Goth which was stopped by higher-ups within days, followed by firing at the MQM procession. The same year witnessed the Qasba-Aligarah massacre, leading to the non-stop ethnic violence amongst migrant Pakhtuns and Urdu-speaking Mohajirs. Later on, Awami National

Party (ANP) leadership, led by Khan Abdul Wali Khan, visited the MQM Headquarters Nine Zero, where a peace agreement was signed between the leadership of the warring communities.

In his distinctive book, *Ethnic Issues in the Press of Karachi: Spoilers of Harmony*, author Imtiaz Ahmad attempts to trace the role of the national press during the most turbulent period in Pakistan's history. Dr. Mehdi Hasan, in his earlier well-researched work on the role of West Pakistan's press during the East Pakistan crisis, criticized the press for its failure to present a factual picture of happenings in Bengal. Imtiaz has now undertaken this challenging work, which I find unique. While much has been written on Pakistani identity politics and Karachi's political landscape, few have delved into the conflict from the media perspective to question whether the Karachi press did justice to ethnic reporting. I congratulate Imtiaz Ahmad on his excellent contribution to this complex exploration.

As for the press' role in upholding democratic values, it has never been allowed to do so since independence. The ruling elite adopted colonial laws such as the Press (Emergency Powers) Act of 1931, the Press Code of 1860, and the State (Protection against Disaffection) Act of 1922. The most significant blow to the independent press in Pakistan occurred when Ayub Khan promulgated the Press and Publication Ordinance in 1960, asserting control over Mian Iftikharuddin's Progressive Papers Limited.

During the 1970s and 1980s, journalists and media outlets in K-Town endured one of their most challenging periods, often targeted for addressing ethnic issues. Prominent newspapers, like the Urdu *Daily Jang*, faced armed attacks from ethnic exclusivists, notably the Altaf Hussain-led MQM. Press releases from this militant party were to be presented as news stories, without any editing, by the journalists. It was an era of terror for journalists in Karachi, a time when 'death' dominated headlines across the leading English, Urdu, and Sindhi newspapers in the city.

During the mid-80s and 1990s, both Urdu and English broadsheets in the Sindh capital were subjected to the strong-armed tactics of the MQM, leading to several remarkable incidents. One such event was the boycott of the *Daily Jang* in 1987. It began when the Urdu *Daily Jang* published a two-column photograph of the wedding of the newly-elected MQM Mayor, Dr. Farooq Sattar, on its front page, although the MQM demanded a larger, four-column photograph. This move by ethnic exclusivists aimed to assert control over one of the largest-circulated Urdu dailies, leading to

a week-long boycott announced against all publications of the Jang Group. Consequently, MQM supporters resorted to burning thousands of copies, and hawkers were instructed to cease distributing the Urdu *Daily Jang*. Instead of opting for a more restrained approach, such as urging their supporters not to read the *Daily Jang*, the militant party chose violent means. Surprisingly, rather than condemning the violence against the Urdu broadsheet, the paper's rivals in the market capitalized on the situation by increasing their printing orders.

Several of my colleagues became victims and witnesses to distressing incidents, including the boycott of the *Daily Jang* in 1987, and the killing of three journalists in 1989. The same era witnessed the killing of my colleague from Jang Manzar Imkhani outside his house. This was followed by the brutal killing of Mohammad Saluddin, proprietor of *Takbeer*, a pro-Jamaat-e-Islami weekly, and the subsequent high-profile murder of Geo TV Network's young reporter, Wali Khan Babar. Shockingly, all these cases remain unsolved to this day. Notably, in Wali Babar's case, seven other individuals connected to the case were also killed. What is more, pro-MQM newspapers also came under attack. Its classic example is that of Karachi-based popular Urdu evening newspaper *Qaumi Akhbar*, which was forcibly shut down by the MQM for 15 days after it published a supplement on the murder of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Najeeb Ahmad.

My own experience as a reporter, journalist, and someone who was also at the forefront of unions working for Karachi journalists differs somewhat from the author's. I'm uncertain whether Pakhtun, Mohajir, Sindhi, and Punjabi journalists working in the ethnically-battered city adopted the stance of their respective linguistic groups during ethnic turmoil. I believe that Karachi journalists under the umbrella of the Karachi Union of Journalists (KUJ), the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), and the Karachi Press Club stood united whenever they were attacked or targeted.

In 1981, I joined a Karachi-based evening newspaper/tabloid, namely *The Star*, owned by the Dawn Group of Newspapers. Newspapers like *The Star* had their own readership and value in the city circles despite limited circulation. But, sadly, the trends in these papers changed from juicy stuff like photographs of leading models in the 1970s to the photograph of mutilated bodies in the 1980s, which shows how the colossal ethnic violence gripped the mega city of nearly 30 million over the years. It was a poignant moment when the author asked me to write the foreword for

Ethnic Issues in the Press of Karachi: Spoilers of Harmony, as it stirred memories of the unsettling events I experienced over the past troublesome four decades. But I must proudly confess that journalists, by and large, remained united even in those difficult periods marked by attacks on them and their workplaces. Nonetheless, some media houses like Jang and Dawn had certainly tried to make use of ‘market advantages’.

During my journalistic career in Karachi (and Hyderabad), I have witnessed both the bright and dark sides of the city. I transitioned in time from ‘lights to darkness,’ from ‘life to death’, from a culture of cinema and clubs to the worst kinds of ethnic and sectarian violence. These situations present their own dangerous dimensions for journalists, irrespective of the language they speak and write in. It was pleasing to see the author has not only looked into how newspapers have reported ethnic issues but has also shed ample light on the stance newspapers took regarding ethnic issues in their editorials, columns, and even letters to the editor section.

Author Imtiaz Ahmad has undertaken a content analysis of four national dailies with distinct natures and policies. His in-depth study culminated in the unique work *Ethnic Issues in the Press of Karachi: Spoilers of Harmony*. The broadsheets he chose for examination include the prominent English daily *Dawn*, two national-level Urdu dailies, *Jang* and *Nawa-e-Waqt*, along with the right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami’s official news organ, *Jassarat*. While the selection is comprehensive, the study could have been further enriched by including a leading Sindhi language newspaper such as *Kawish* or *Ibrat*. Perhaps, the book’s next edition may include at least two leading Sindhi language newspapers and electronic media channels, considering the Sindhi newspapers/electronic media emerged as the most vocal platforms in highlighting nationalist issues post-MRD.

Comparative content analysis between the aftermath of Bushra Zaidi’s 1985 killing and the subsequent two years, alongside the coverage pattern of Karachi’s tragic May 12 incidents in 2007 and the ensuing two years, revealed numerous insights, considering the extensive range of codes the author analyzed. Yet, one representative code in the ‘Two-nation Theory’ suggests *Dawn*’s coverage of ethnic issues has improved considering its low percentage points of state nationalism-driven news pieces. It’s also quite interesting to see how Urdu journalism has evolved in the strife-ridden Sindh capital. State nationalism-driven news items carried by Urdu newspapers dropped in the second period (late 2000s). However, the

decline in the state-centric narrative in Urdu newspapers does not necessarily reflect a new found advocacy for Karachi or Pakistan's ethnic minorities. I agree with the perception that "these Urdu dailies, with their historical roots and composition, are expected to echo nationalist rhetoric in times of ethnic tension."

The role of the press, I believe, should align with the public interest which demands of the press institutions and journalists to be professional and objective while covering identity issues in societies like Karachi, where ethnic tensions can erupt into colossal violence anytime. Journalists should not become part of the news or part of the problem, but perhaps part of the solution as they have a responsibility on their shoulders. In the end, I would say it's a must read for the young generation who may not be fully aware of the changing political dynamics of Pakistan and complexities of ethnic issues in multi-ethnic societies like Karachi. I once again congratulate Imtiaz Ahmad for his excellent work and hope this book would contribute to the existing literature on the political landscape and ethnic complexities of Sindh and Pakistan.

—Mazhar Abbas

Columnist, Analyst at the *Geo Television Network, Jang*
and *The News International*

INTRODUCTION

The two centuries of British colonization (1757-1947) significantly impacted the socio-political, cultural and economic life of the Indian subcontinent. The British arrived in India on a 'civilizing mission,' introducing various changes to consolidate their colonial rule and cultivate a class of loyalists to suppress staunch revolutionary opposition. They transformed what Marx referred to as the 'Asiatic mode of production' into 'permanent land-holding,' in 1793, leading to the rise of feudal lords in the Indian subcontinent.

The same class remained loyal to the colonial masters, suppressing revolts like the 1857 War of Independence and numerous other peasants' uprisings. Secondly, the British replaced the indigenous form of industrial setups with new agrarian practices, shifting from local crops to cash crops and raw materials intended for industries in colonial Britain. A vivid example is the negative impact on textile industries in Bengal and Gujarat amongst other Indian regions.

The British needed a literate class for colonial infrastructure and the modern state. They replaced Madrasahs and Patshalas with formal schooling apart from doing away with informal Qazi courts and other judicial arrangements by introducing formal judicial systems. To maintain law and order, it introduced the criminal justice system and policing based on the Irish model.

The Indian society was predominantly agrarian, woven together by castes and Biraderis. Nonetheless, it simultaneously exhibited communal harmony and an inclusive lifestyle; even intermarriages were common, with several Mughal princes and kings having Hindu mothers. However, the reforms introduced during the British era had their implications. The modern education system created an urban middle class aspiring to government jobs.

This created a sense of competition and identity based on religion, caste and ethnicity. For example, Muslims, who constituted just 14 per cent of the UP population, controlled 64 per cent of all jobs before the British era. However, this imbalance soon shifted in favor of the majority, creating

insecurity amongst Indian Muslims in minority provinces. Later on, these Muslims—referred to as the 'Salariat class' by eminent Marxist scholar Hamza Alavi—became the torchbearers of a separate Muslim homeland.

Initially, Muslim elites in the minority provinces demanded quotas and representation in government jobs, later extending these demands to political arrangements, which ultimately led to their call for a separate country, not least after experiencing the 1937 Congress' rule. Lastly, the June 3rd plan became the last nail in the coffin of any hopes regarding a united India.

Before partition, the basis of the conflict remained religion, with Muslim League leadership promoting the two-nation theory while disregarding other identities. However, the new country witnessed new conflicts surfaced amid new realities. The Muslim majority provinces where Pakistan was established have a history spanning thousands of years, with distinct cultures and languages. For instance, the Sindhi language has a written and spoken history of more than five centuries, while the Bengali language has a history of more than eight centuries; with Rabindranath Tagore being a recipient of the first Nobel Prize in Literature in the United India in 1913.

Similarly, Pashto, Balochi and Punjabi languages amongst others had a long history of enriching literary translation. Muslim League leadership while rejecting these facts decided to introduce the Urdu language as the only national language which created the first conflict between the present-day Pakistan and Bengali leadership, ultimately resulting in the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. On the other hand, the sense of deprivation in political, cultural and economic spheres has continued uninterrupted in the rest of Pakistan.

The late 1940s saw mass migration on both sides of the border due to partition disturbances. By a conservative estimate, 12 million people moved from both sides. In Pakistani Punjab, Sikhs and Hindus faced extermination, while the Muslim population largely left Indian Punjab for West Punjab. On the other hand, the entire uprooted population from UP, CP and Bihar found a new destination in Sindh's urban centers like Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, and Mirpurkhas amongst other cities.

This drastically changed the demographic structure of urban Sindh like Karachi—a Sindhi-speaking city before the partition—which witnessed the transplantation of UP culture. At the same time, refugee junta's painful

decision to separate Karachi from Sindh not only made indigenous Sindhis, whose land has faced a constant migration influx, feel alienated but also sowed the seeds of Sindhi ethnic nationalism.

The early 1960s saw military dictator Ayub Khan launching industrialization for which the Sindh capital remained an obvious choice. The second wave of migration, mainly of Pakhtuns and Hindko-speaking labourers from NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), to the Sindh capital occurred during this time, leading to the establishment of a new working class comprising the aforementioned ethnic groups who settled in Karachi. The change in demography created insecurity amongst Urdu-speaking Indian Muslim migrants who had a constant influx into Sindh from 1947 onwards, despite the fact that both Pakistan and India had decided to keep 1951 as the cut-off date for defining citizenship.

The post-partition era saw the Indian Muslim refugees advocate religion as the only binding force while opposing any local identity. But, later on, in the 1970s, refugees' stance changed, demanding their own separate Mohajir identity. Insisting on being considered Pakistan's fifth nationality, the Indian settlers became embroiled in extreme ethnic violence in Sindh urban centers, particularly Karachi and Hyderabad.

The first incident, arising from a road accident in Karachi's Nazimabad area, later escalated into the most severe ethnic clashes between Urdu-speaking Mohajirs and Pakhtuns in Sindh capital. In the wake of these conflicts, people from both linguistic groups who had lived in mixed neighborhoods started shifting to areas where their community had a majority, resulting in the creation of new strong pockets of ethnicity.

The ethnic fissures further widened, impacting this time the Sindhi-Mohajir relationship, which soured in the late 1980s; as September 1988 saw Hyderabad observe an indiscriminate firing incident which resulted in the deaths of more than 250 people. In reaction, a bus carrying Sindhi-speaking laborers was targeted, resulting in the deaths of at least 45 people in Korangi's Ibrahim Hydri area which further divided the population on the basis of language.

Understanding the crucial role of media in identity conflict is imperative as the province of Sindh still grapples with this painful division. With a history that has become increasingly significant in the modern era, the media/press plays a vital part in shaping identities in the diverse Sindh province. The British introduced print media in India for their colonial

purposes, but it became divided along religious lines, representing various religious communities such as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and others.

The press started highlighting the demands of their respective communities, seeking greater concessions, quota and representation. The same trend continued after partition, as the immigrant Indian Muslim refugees brought their advanced press to Sindh, while the indigenous Sindhi media continued to represent the interests of indigenous peoples.

The first general election held in 1970 provided Sindhi politician Zulfikar Ali Bhutto with an opportunity to become the prime minister. He formed a government in Sindh, while Urdu-speaking migrants mostly voted for religious parties like Jamat-e-Islami and Jamiat Ulama-e-Pakistan. The PPP government tried to address the grievances of the Sindhi-speaking vote bank by introducing the Sindhi Language Teaching Bill and reforming the skewed quota system.

These steps of the provincial government were violently challenged by the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs, resulting in the worst kind of language riots in July 1972. The print media of both linguistic groups projected these conflicts in a prejudiced manner while favouring their respective ethnic groups and portraying their community as a victim.

Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad's publication, titled *Ethnic Issues in the Press of Karachi: Spoilers of Harmony*, constitutes a pivotal contribution to the field of Pakistan's identity politics. This work specifically centers on the portrayal of ethnic issues in Sindh by the media, and its relevance cannot be overstated.

Previously, several Marxist scholars such as Prof. Hamza Alavi and Dr. Feroze Ahmed, along with Dr. Adeel Khan, have explored the issue of identity in Sindh. However, their emphasis was mainly on political and economic aspects, with little or no consideration given to the role of media in their studies. In the course of furthering their research, Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad has incorporated the role of media into this discourse by using an array of modern methodological tools in gathering necessary data.

The author conducted a systematic study of ethnic coverage in Karachi's national newspapers, comparing the mid and late 1980s with the late 2000s. This analysis included four national dailies: *Jang*, *Dawn*, *NawaiWaqf*, and *Jasarat*. The study used a form of textual analysis that combined qualitative and quantitative research methods. It examined the aftermath of Bushra Zaidi's killing in 1985 and the following two years,

comparing it with the coverage pattern of Karachi's tragic May 12 incidents in 2007 and the subsequent two years.

This book will assuredly establish a precedent in examining the role of media in addressing identity conflict in Pakistan, a country that has struggled to address the root causes of alienation amongst its ethnic and religious minorities. In an era marked by increasing media jingoism, the dominance of certain ethnic groups in the Pakistani press, and the shrinking spaces for dissenting ethnic minorities, Dr. Imtiaz' work will undoubtedly help us comprehend the gravity of the situation and seek rational solutions to the ethnic question and its press coverage in Pakistan.

The work illuminates the pressing real-world conflicts, emphasizing that, in practice, the ruling elites often avoid addressing these issues directly, and invoke religion and patriotism, a strategy that has historically proven ineffective in resolving ethnic conflicts and is unlikely to succeed in the future. By offering valuable insights for policymakers, scholars, and all those concerned with fostering harmony and inclusivity in Pakistan, this book holds the potential to lead to positive improvements and solutions.

—Prof. Dr Riaz Ahmed Shaikh,
Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education, SZABIST
University, Karachi, Pakistan

ABBREVIATIONS

ANP: Awami National Party

ANC: African National Congress

AINC: All India National Congress

AIML: All India Muslim League

AJK: Azad Jammu and Kashmir

AMP: Asiatic Mode of Production

APNS: All Pakistan Newspapers Society

APMSO: All Pakistan Mohajir Students Organisation

APNEC: All Pakistan Newspapers Employees Confederation

CPNE: Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors

HEC: Higher Education Commission

HRCP: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

KDA: Karachi Development Authority

KMP: Karachi Master Plan

MQM: Muttahida Qaumi Movement

MQM: Mohajir Qaumi Movement

ML: Muslim League

MRD: Movement for Restoration of Democracy

NFC: National Finance Commission

NWFP: North West Frontier Province

NAP: National Awami Party

NCSWP: National Commission on the Status of Women in Pakistan

PTI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

PNA: Pakistan Natonal Allaince

PBC: Pakistan Bar Council

PFUJ: Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists

PPP: Pakistan People's Party

PPPP: Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians

PML: Pakistan Muslim League

PML-N: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz

PML-Q: Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-i-Azam

PPF: Pakistan Press Federation

ST: Sunni Tehreek

Ji: Jamat-e-Islami

JUI-F: Jamaat-e-Ulamai Islam-Fazal

IJT: Islami Jamiat-e-Tulba

IJI: Islmi Jamhuri Ittehad

IDPs: Internally Displaced Persons

CHAPTER ONE

ATTEMPTS AT ASSIMILATION

“... I told him we have the four most difficult provinces in the subcontinent. Always historically, they have been free people. If you see the history of the subcontinent, see the North West Frontier Province. It has always fought for individuality.... Balochistan also had its pride....; Punjab as well had its separate history and entity. So also Sindh.”¹

Discriminative Dimensions

The Constitution stays as a device through which the state identifies itself and shows its face. The Pakistani state shows its face via two instruments—the Urdu language and Islam—to forge a collective identity. The mantle of national language was bestowed upon Urdu by the state across all three constitutions. Here, the state’s discrimination rears its ugly head, forcing the non-Urdu speakers to wage struggles to ‘beautify the state’s face’.

The second tool through which the state seeks to show its face is Islam, creating problems for religious minorities. The structure of the Constitution is discriminative, giving preference to one religion and ignoring others.

The 1973 Constitution remained unhelpful in addressing ethnic imbalances the country has faced for a long time. Due to this anomaly, the smaller units feel alienated. Except for Punjab, other provinces have been struggling for their rights.

Due to the state’s discriminative nature, Balochistan and Sindh faced similar problems asserting their identities. At the same time, the case with Pakhtuns hardly remained different.

¹ Rabbani, Mian R. “Life After Loss: the Constitution of 1973.” In *A Biography of Pakistani Federalism—Unity in Diversity*, 104. Islamabad: Leo Books, 2012.

Sindh reflects the lack of a power-sharing deal between the state and provinces and the rift between groups within, making it an ethnic flashpoint.² The province fights for its rights against the centrist policies at the federal level and, at the provincial level, with numerous types of migrants.³

The passage of the 18th Amendment helps provinces secure their due rights. Still, the centre did everything from depriving the units of their due economic share and promoting the Urdu language at the cost of native languages to erasing their histories to keep the four provinces united in the name of Pakistanism.

The official history is written on an ideological basis, ignoring all modern techniques of explaining the past, causing a rift amongst the units, the centre, and provinces.⁴ The ethnically-structured state has gone full blast in promoting the national history creating heroes and villains of its own arbitrary choice. As Adeel Khan mentions,⁵ following the ‘morality mechanism’, history has been written to develop meaningless unanimity.

The focus of the current study is Sindh’s fight on external and internal fronts, its struggle to gain provincial autonomy on the one hand, and on the other, its dealing with the multitude of migrants, including Urdu-speaking Mohajirs, who challenge the province’s sovereignty. With Karachi burning in ethnic flames, the press can’t look the other way. The study aims to see whether Karachi’s ethnic issues coverage has improved

² Ilyas, Shahid. “Federalism and Religion in Pakistan.” Daily Times (Lahore), September 26, 2012. The 18th Amendment is being appreciated in terms of giving units more rights, but Islamabad still wields more powers giving credence to the concept of ‘quasi-federal state’ as discussed by Daily Times columnists Shahid Ilyas.

³ Ayaz, Babar. “The dynamics of Muhajirs’ politics.” Daily Times. Last modified September 13, 2011. More details about the Indian Muslim refugees will be discussed in coming chapters, but Babar Ayaz’ three consecutive columns under the title ‘The dynamics of Mohajirs’ Politics’ gives another angle to understanding the refugee issue after Partition with the columnist claiming that most of the Indian migrants were ‘economic refugees’ who migrated to the newly-created state for economic opportunities.

⁴ Ali, Mubarak. “Writing History.” In *What History Tells Us?*, 10-12. Tarikh Publications, 2012.

⁵ Khan, Adeel. *Politics of Identity: Ethnic Nationalism and State in Pakistan*, Sage Publications, 2005.

by comparing the coverage pattern of the Urdu- and English-language national dailies.

This author chose two periods to determine whether Karachi's ethnic issues coverage has improved. Firstly, the study examines the 1985 scenario following the infamous Bushra Zaidi road accident. Secondly, as we see whether there is any difference between ethnic reporting in Karachi then and the present-day coverage of ethnic issues, May 12, 2007, when the city saw extreme hooliganism and bloodshed, was chosen.

Past's Path

It is hard to see Sindh in isolation from the rest of the state arena, an amalgamation of various ethnicities at both federal and provincial levels where identity politics revolve around ethnic lines. However, historians have rarely written about the past in the above context in the ethnically-structured state, which seeks to record history through a 'morality mechanism' and ideology.

Emphasising religion, the state historians fail to clarify how the Turkish occupiers (AD1206), Afghan invaders (AD1451-AD1489) and later on, the Mughals fought each other to defend their rule in India. Providing a glimpse of the early subcontinent history, Dr Mubarak Ali explains how the earlier Muslim dynasties in Hindustan operated through exclusive ethnic identities.

The Turks ruled exclusively since 1206AD, with Afghans never trusting non-Afghans and instead inviting fellow Afghans from the mountains. Afghans and Hindu rulers of India jointly fought the Mughals in the Battle of Kanwah in 1527 AD. The latter also gave top posts to Muslims of foreign origin.

Until this stage of Indian Muslim history, identity politics evolved along ethnic lines, with the locally-converted Muslims always being neglected. However, with Emperor Akbar's advent, identity politics changed as it now grew along class lines parallel to ethnic ones, though still not religious lines. Akbar did not run government affairs exclusively through Muslims of foreign origin. He took two steps to broaden the ruling aristocracy. Firstly, the emperor eliminated all signs and symbols differentiating Hindus and Muslims to integrate them. Secondly, he included the upper-class Hindu Rajputs in the ruling aristocracy.

Emperor Akbar succeeded only partially, with the upper-class Rajputs intermingling with the ruling Muslim aristocracy. However, lower-class Muslims and Hindus remained unable to connect with the ruling elite, which further augments the argument that ethnic and class lines were at play.⁶ Even during the reign of Aurangzeb, Hindus remained part of the administration, and the emperor could not rule India on purely religious lines.⁷

The emergence of the East India Company and battles in Plassey in 1757 AD and Buxar in 1764 AD weakened the Mughals. They had to surrender the seat of power in Delhi in 1803 AD, giving rise to the emergence of the Urdu language that was by now adopted, instead of Persian, by Muslim elites. Besides, the locally-converted Muslims started claiming their rights.

After the defeat of the Mughals, the Indian Muslims took the first step towards forming an identity (on religious lines) by starting to recite the name of the Ottoman Caliph in Khutbas. Secondly, the Ulema began projecting themselves as representatives of Muslims in India, besides being contemptuous of the Mughals.

Meanwhile, Sayyid Ahmed's Jihad (AD1831) and Shariatullah's Faraizi movements got engaged with the Christian missionary and Hindu revivalist exercises. Islamic revivalism put the stamp of religion on the Muslim struggle launched primarily to attain political gains.⁸ Both ordinary people and elites among Muslims recognised the authority of the Ulema as they sought Fatwas from them on three issues: if Muslims should learn the English language. Two, whether they should serve the East India Company; and whether they should regard India as 'Dar-ul-Islam' (under which they could live peacefully) or as Dar-ul-Harab (which imposes upon them an obligation to rebel).

However, Muslims—squeezed on both internal (threatened by Hindu revivalists) and external (challenged by the British) fronts—were bound to face more suffering as Sayyid Ahmed's Jihad was defeated by the British. At the same time, Shariatullah's Faraize movement failed to mobilise the Muslim masses.

⁶ Ali, Mubarak. "Consciousness of Muslim Identity in South Asia Before 1947," In *Pakistan in Search of Identity*, 1-4. University of Karachi, Pakistan Study Centre, 2009.

⁷ Ali, Mubarak. *Pakistan in Search of Identity*, 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6 onwards.