



RESEARCH PAPER

Political implications of unplanned urbanization in Pakistan: A Case of Punjab

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the political ramifications of unplanned urbanization in Punjab. The driving forces behind urbanization are primarily migration, stemming from war, social insecurity, and economic demands. The uncontrolled expansion of major cities like Karachi and Lahore poses a significant challenge for the government to address. Lahore, known as the literary center of Pakistan, has experienced an unprecedented population surge in recent years. This is largely due to diminishing employment opportunities and a deteriorating law and order situation in Karachi. Individuals from various regions of the country migrate to Lahore, pursuing diverse goals such as economic, educational, and social prospects. Furthermore, urbanization has bolstered the electoral support of certain political parties in urban areas, giving rise to assertive urban-based political actors. This article employs a qualitative approach, drawing and analyzing data from secondary resources. The anticipated outcome of this study underscores the necessity for Pakistan to overhaul its urban planning policies

Keywords: Development Policy, Political Violence, Population, Unplanned Migration, Urbanization

Introduction

The question of the political and security implications of unplanned urbanization in Lahore is pivotal one, peculiarly considering the urbanization in Pakistan is on rise. Increased migration has led to demographic heterogeneity in big cities, and it is also expected that almost 50% of the population of Pakistan will be urbanized by 2030, up from one-third currently. While migration is mainly driven by the pursuit of better basic amenities and new livelihood opportunities, the 'War on Terrorism' has also caused a surge in migration in the last decade.

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), urbanization as the natural population increase in urban areas, and it is projected that the world's urban inhabitants will rise to 2.5 billion by 2050. Currently, more than half of the South Asian population is urbanized and expected to increase by 250 million in 2030 (UNDP, 2019). The majority of the urban population is residing in areas with larger industrial hubs where the political centers are aligned. A statistical analysis shows that around 37.17 % of the total Pakistan's population used to live in urban areas and cities in 2020. This frequency of internal migration is much higher than an international migration that is recorded about 750 million and 250 million, respectively (World Bank, 2019). Urbanization is closely linked to economic growth, with cities generating more than 80% of the global GDP (Philips, 1964). Urbanization is closely linked to economic growth, with cities generating more than 80% of global GDP (Artaza, 2019).

In Pakistan, the mega cities generate 55% of the GDP, and the country has the highest rate of urbanization in South Asia. By 2025, half of the Pakistan's population will be residing in cities according to an estimate of the UN Population Division (Michael, 2020). Additionally, Pakistan, from its ten major cities generates more than 95% of federal tax revenue. Karachi is a megapolis 12-15% of Pakistan's GDP which contributes 55% to the revenue of the country. The census of 2017 shows that 76 million people who lived in cities in 2017 as compared to 43 million who lived in urban areas, came back in 1998 (Dawn, 2021). The poverty levels in urban areas are generally low due to revenue generation activities. But in developing countries urbanization patterns are not directly proportional to economic growth and development (Mazhar, 2012).

In Pakistan, however, unplanned urbanization can lead to socio-political implications, as the pressure on cities can result in slums, environmental issues, inequality, and poverty. Cities in Pakistan are already facing grave challenges such as housing, transportation, education, employment, healthcare, water, and sanitation, which contribute to the unsustainability of urban areas.

Hassan (2021) opines that the rise in urbanization also reinforces electoral scenarios for urban-based political parties, including hard-liner actors, presenting a risk for security issues and political violence. The research gaps this paper aims to fill are the political and security-related implications of unplanned migration in Lahore. The majority of cities in Pakistan lack a Central Business District, and continuous migration has changed the ethnic contours of society, contributing to the socio-political implications of urbanization. Policymakers need to revamp urban policy to address the challenges of unplanned urbanization in Lahore and other cities in Pakistan.

Literature Review

An urbanization of Pakistan, described by World Bank as messy and hidden, hindering the human resource potential and contributing less to economic development. This is due to governments being unable to deliver adequate services and create employment opportunities. Urbanization is most prominent in the province of Punjab, with cities like Karachi and Lahore facing significant migration pressures. Lahore, the capital city of the Punjab province, is an industrial magnet that attracts people from various walks of life (Ahmed & Ishrat, 2020). According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, PBS (2017), the city's population has increased from 6.3 to 11.26 million over the last 20 years, with migrants making up 1.64 percent of Lahore's population (Siddiqi, 2004). Lahore contributes \$40 billion to the GDP growth rate after Karachi and is considered the city of gardens due to its historical and commercial significance (Michael, 2009). Despite the slow annual growth rate between 1901 and 1921, Lahore's population has been steadily increasing. After the independence of Pakistan, the growth rate surged from 2.38% to 4.32 percent during 1951-1961 and 1961-1972, respectively, resulting in an increase in population from 52.65 to 67.36 percent (Randhawa, 2017).

In 1951, Lahore had a population of 1.13 million, with a 75.73 percent share of urban dwellers, which rose to 8.83 million with an 87 percent urban share in 2010. The number of people living in urban areas in Lahore increased from 1.13 million in 1951 to 7.72 million in 2010. Lahore is consistently growing, expanding and providing incentives to the rural population, with the urban growth continuing to increase at a slower rate according to the 1981-1998 census, but becoming faster in the new decade (Zaman, 2012).

Elahi (2010) argued Migration has been the main driver of urbanization in Lahore, with many refugees preferring to settle in the already developed provinces of Punjab and Sindh. Migratory patterns swelled again in 1965 and 1971, and during the Soviet-Afghan war, Afghan people preferred to move towards Pakistan, creating scattered settlements in the urban areas of Pakistan, including Lahore. The city, like all urban centers of Pakistan, has

a floating population of Afghan migrants, legal and illegal residents, and refugees, contributing to the population growth of all megacities in the country.

Pakistan has been a destination for Afghan refugees for several decades, with waves of refugees settling in the country at different times. The first wave of migration occurred in 1978 after a military coup was carried out by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 brought further instability to the region, leading to more Afghan refugees settling in Pakistan. The second phase of migration occurred from 1986 to 1989 after the Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan. The third wave of migration occurred after the Taliban took power in Afghanistan in 1996, leading to the displacement of nearly two million refugees. The last wave of migration occurred after the war on terrorism in 2001, displacing many Afghans from their homes. Despite efforts to return displaced Afghans to their homeland, there are still millions of registered and unregistered Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Lahore, the cultural hub of Pakistan, is currently home to diverse Afghan communities, including Pushtoons and Hazaras (Rebecca, 2012).

The continuous urbanization in Pakistan is fueled by war, insecurity, and economic necessity, with military operations forcing citizens to migrate into cities. However, ethnic and sectarian demographic changes have also incited violence, leading to further instability in the region (Hamid, 2009). According to Burki (2011), the population of Lahore is expected to exceed 10 million by 2025, with Karachi's population estimated to reach 19 million. Lahore is at the threshold of a major demographic transition, and the ongoing presence of Afghan refugees adds to the complexity of the city's demographics. The Pakistani government has made efforts to support Afghan refugees, but more needs to be done to address the challenges and ensure the well-being of both refugees and citizens.

Theoretical Foundation of Urban Violence

Urban violence is a form of violence that occurred in urban spaces but there is no agreed-upon definition of this phenomenon (Muggah, 2019). Violence is a structural concept that correlates with the concept of urbanization (Springer & Le Billon, 2016). Lourenco (2012) argues that it has two important aspects, sociological and cultural. Sociologically it focuses on social institutions and the violence emanates from here. Sociologically, urban violence focuses on social institutions, while culturally, it originates from the assimilation of different cultures.

Flacks et al. (2014) argue that urban violence is a complex web of experiences and is not limited to physical violence alone. However, Lourenco (2012) believes that urban violence has legalist and positivist aspects and is a form of deviant behavior that leads to criminal acts. Another perspective defines urban violence as including psychological damage and material deprivation (Harroff-Tavel, 2012). Misse & Grillo (2014) have given urban violence a dimension where crime is committed when it becomes the object of media.

Moser (2004) describes urban violence as having structural and institutional dimensions that include political, social, and economic aspects. Different forms of urban violence include lynching of criminals, physical and psychological abuse, kidnapping, target killing, mass protests, and guerrilla conflict. Moser & Mcllwane (2014) contend that to understand urban violence deeply, there is a need to explore the symbiotic relationship between different forms of urban violence.

Urban violence has also been explained in terms of individual and group-based dimensions. Social scientists have identified alienation, deviance, deprivation, and marginality as the main drivers of urban violence (Feagin and Hahn, 1973; N, 1985). Lupsha (1965) argues that the process of urbanization brings changes in the socio-economic structures of urban areas, such as population pressure, unemployment, low-income levels, and poor living facilities. These changes can lead to aggressive and violent behaviors.

Urbanization is a modern phenomenon that can be traced back to the advent of industrialization. Urbanization and industrialization both are the drivers of social and structural violence. Rapid urban growth has the capacity to create an unstable socio-economic environment that leads to violent contentions and confrontations among individuals and groups. For example, competition for scarce resources like social, economic, and political power can lead to urban violence (Cole & Gramajo, 2009; Goldstone, 2002).

According to above literature reviews, it can be said that urban violence is a complex phenomenon that has multiple dimensions, ranging from sociological and cultural aspects to legal and positivist dimensions. It can take different forms, including physical and psychological abuse, kidnapping, target killing, and guerrilla conflict. The drivers of urban violence are socio-economic changes brought about by urbanization, industrialization, and competition for scarce resources. Understanding the nature of urban violence and its drivers is crucial for developing effective policies to prevent and reduce it.

Political and Security based Implications of Urbanization in Lahore

The urbanization of Lahore has significant implications for the political and security landscape of the city. Migration plays a critical role in the heterogeneous growth of cities, which consists of individual and collective choices. In urban areas, there are different political parties at the national, regional, and local levels, and every political party has its electoral strength made up of people from different statuses and classes. Pakistan's voting behavior is primarily based on ancestry, lineage, caste, creed, and sect. This phenomenon is mostly true for rural areas, but it also has equal importance in urban areas. Political activities in Pakistan are less inclined towards voting booths and more inclined towards diverse activities that involve violence.

The inter-provincial and intra-provincial reflux of migrants creates contentious issues in Lahore. Rural-urban interactions contribute to local discontent, fueling established grievances, sharpening group boundaries, and collective violence. Consequently, there has been an increase in violence levels in Lahore. Many people move from rural to urban areas because they believe that urban areas have better healthcare, education, and other basic facilities. However, according to the Mercer Quality of Index 2016, Lahore and Karachi ranked 199 and 202, respectively, out of 230 cities. Another issue in Lahore is the increase in population, which is expected to reach 300 million by 2030 and 450 million by 2050 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics).

Diverse and varied societies have different perceptions, which give rise to political violence. In Pakistani society, political violence takes various forms, including riots, terrorism, guerrilla warfare, target killings, and kidnappings. Historically (Mesquita, Fair, Jordon, Rais & Shapiro, 2015).

Blank, Clary & Brian describes Historically, Lahore has remained in the grip of Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N). However, during the presidency of Pervez Musharraf, a new political party, Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q), came into being which altered the political behaviors of urban people. Last coalition based provincial government lead by Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) had drawn much of its power from the urban elite, middle class, and lower class (Michael, 2013). The increase in the population in Lahore has created greater clout for urban-based political parties along with giving birth to hard-liner political parties, including Islamist parties that are actively involved in other activities ranging from riots to demonstrations. The largest Islamic party, Jamat-i-Islami (JI), has moderate electoral success in Lahore. Solely, Lahore JI has a membership of 2.6 million people (Blank, Clary & Brian). Also, JI has its student political wing in Universities, especially in the University of Punjab. There is another Lahore based political party under the leadership of Dr Muhammad Tahirul Qadri, Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT), established in May 1989. In 1990, some of the candidates of PAT contested general elections and Qadri was elected as the member of the National Assembly (Dawn, 2017). Another political actor that surfaced in 2017, is

Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), the political wing of Allama Khadim Hussain Rizvi-led Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah Pakistan (Dawn, 2017). The party has contested elections in 2018 from every province. They have a strong influence in Punjab, particularly, in Lahore. Outside the territory of electoral politics, hard-liners, such as Jamaat-ud-Dawa, have thousands of members that are residents of Lahore.

Heightened political unrest is the consequence of unplanned urbanization in Lahore. Rapid population growth intensifies competition between political parties. (Sarwar & Iqbal, 2010). Competition over land, votes, and sources of influence are very common, and these political parties have incited violence to achieve certain political goals. For example, in 2017, Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) initiated a riot and demonstration in Lahore on the issue of belief in the finality of Prophethood and took this to Islamabad. The sit-in lasted for 20 days and the government accepted their demands thus the party stand victorious (Dawn, 2017).

Similarly, violence erupted between security forces and demonstrators when members of TLP killed two policemen. TLP had mobilized a huge number of people to demand the release of their party leader, Saad Rizvi (Aljazeera, 2021). In 2013, Qadri, the leader of PAT, launched a self-proclaimed movement to clean up the political landscape and vowed to turn the sit-in into Pakistan's Tahrir Square. The sit-in continued for more than a week (Khan & Mullen, 2013). Another horrific incident occurred in Lahore, which was a clear case of power politics. The government of PML-N, using state resources, threatened PAT, resulting in what is now known as the "Model Town Massacre". A violent clash erupted between the Punjab Police and PAT on June 17, 2014, resulting in the killing of protesters in gunfire. The standoff lasted for 11 hours outside the office of Minhaj-ul-Quran in Model Town, Lahore (Sattar, 2017).

The following table shows the individual and group-based crime rates in Lahore in 2016 and According to the 2018 Crime and Safety Report on Lahore by Pakistan, political violence was prevalent in the city in 2017. In November and December, several groups such as Dafa-e-Pakistan Council, Thaffaz Kashmir, Khatam-e-Nabawat, and Jammāt Ud Dawa protested against Pakistani government regarding potential changes to the law on the finality of Prophethood. Additionally, military forces have conducted operations in educational institutions in Lahore to detect networks of students linked with terrorist organizations in the University of Punjab, Allama Iqbal Medical College, and Lahore University for Management Sciences. In April 2017, an incident of violence took place between students of the University of Punjab and a student belonging to the student political wing of JI. Furthermore, in June 2017, there were threats from Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) of possible attacks on Christian churches.

The table below depicts individual and group-based crime rates in Lahore in 2016 and 2017, as reported by the Capitol City Police, Lahore 2017 (Capitol City Police, Lahore).

Table 1
Data of Violent Crimes in Punjab in 2016 and 2017

Violent Crimes	2016	2017
Murder	440	443
Rape	60	101
Gang Rape	5	30
Assault	935	1049
Attempted Murder	700	573
Kidnapping/Abduction	1054	3231
Burglary	7556	4014
Robbery	4410	2751
Dacoity	96	59
Vehicle Theft	6881	4889
Motor Bike Snatching	528	357
Car Snatching	47	13
Motor Bike Theft	5930	4027

These are crime rates in Lahore in 2016 and 2017, as reported by the Capitol City Police. Despite the COVID-19 lockdown, criminal activity has surged in Lahore, with 63,324 cases registered in the first five months of 2022, including 148 deaths. Robbery, vehicle theft, attempted murder, kidnapping, harassment, and possession of illegal weapons are among the reported crimes. According to Chaudhary (2021), Lahore has seen a 57 percent increase in crime, with 200,000 registered cases. He attributes this to migration, inflation, and joblessness. Data shows that 427 people were killed, 9 were kidnapped for ransom, 30 killed on resistance, 108 decoities, and 3,360 robberies. These incidents demonstrate the consequences of unplanned urbanization, which can lead to political and security-based implications

Status of the Concept of Safe Cities

Pakistan has been grappling with the issue of terrorism, resulting in dire consequences for urban areas. To address this, the government of Punjab launched the Safe Cities project in 2016, aimed at modernizing the policing system in Lahore to create a safe and conducive environment for public service delivery in a growing metropolis (Raza, 2021). This model is based on using modern technology, infrastructure, and personnel to acquire security and safety, coordinating different mechanisms for smart policing (Magal, 2015). The project's key characteristics include inclusiveness, pro-action, adaptability, sustainability, participatory governance, transparency, and security. While it has made substantial progress in preventing crime and increasing urban security, it has failed to reduce serious crimes such as murders and gender-based violence (Raza, 2021)

The Lahore Safe City project and the Punjab Safe City Authority (PSCA) have faced criticism for not fulfilling their responsibilities adequately. Violence against women and vehicle theft have increased in Lahore, and the process for obtaining information and footage from the PSCA is quite bureaucratic. Dolphin Police has been more effective than the Safe City project in controlling crime rates, and citizens have faced mental torture in the e-challan process (Munawar, 2019). There is a need to address these shortcomings and develop meaningful performance metrics for the project.

Conclusion

In conclusion, addressing the issue of unplanned urbanization and its associated security implications is crucial for Pakistan's sustainable development. The Safe Cities project in Lahore is a step in the right direction, but there is a need to address its shortcomings and develop meaningful performance metrics. Institutionalizing urban policy, involving all tiers of government, developing a strong local governance system, and investing in infrastructural development are key steps towards sustainable urban development in Pakistan

Recommendations

To tackle the issue of unplanned urbanization and its associated security implications, Pakistan needs to institutionalize its urban policy and involve all three tiers of government in its pursuit. A strong local governance system is necessary, and decentralization of power can help ensure timely decision-making. Financially autonomous city governments are crucial for economic growth, provision of public services for all, and public service innovation. Capacity building at law-based agencies is required to curb urban violence, and the concept of safe cities must be introduced in all metropolitan areas. Policymaking, implementation, and evaluation need to be effective and efficient, and participation of all stakeholders, including women, is necessary. Finally, there is a need to restrict urbanization in areas with immense population pressures and invest in infrastructural development.

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