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## **The Role of Muttahida Qaumi Movement in Sindhi-Muhajir Controversy in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

The partition of Indian sub-continent in 1947 was a historic event surrounded by many controversies and issues. Some of those ended up with the passage of time while others were kept alive and orchestrated. Besides numerous problems for the newly born state of Pakistan, one such controversy was about the Muhajirs (immigrants) who were settled in Karachi. The paper analyses the factors that brought the relation between the native Sindhis and Muhajirs to such an impasse which resulted in the growth of conspiracy theories, division among Sindhis; subsequently to the demand of Muhajir Suba (Province); target killings, extortion; and eventually to military clean-up operation in Karachi. The paper also throws light on the twin simmering problems of native Sindhis and Muhajirs. Besides, the paper attempts to answer the question as to why the immigrants could not merge in the native Sindhis despite living together for so long and why the native Sindhis remained backward and deprived. Finally, the paper aims at bringing to limelight the role of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). The relation between Muhajirs and native Sindhis has not been smooth since the former's settlement in Karachi. However, relations between the nationalists and Muhajirs aggravated more during undemocratic regimes.

**Keywords:** Partition, Nationalism, Ethnicity, Controversy, Muhajirs, Sindhis, MQM.

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### **1. Introduction**

After the creation of Pakistan, millions of Muslims migrated from India to Pakistan in 1947 bringing a lot of miseries for the newly created state. The relatively permanent movement of people across territorial boundaries is referred to as an in-migration and an out-migration, or immigration and emigration when the boundaries crossed are international borders (Gonzalez & Chapel, n.d). Migration of Indian Muslims to Pakistan was a tragic event. Sindhis were reluctant to share their motherland with Muhajirs, while Muhajirs were striving to strengthen their foothold in the Sindh province. Thus, a psychological and physiological war started between the Sindhis and Muhajirs. Sindhi-Muhajir controversy gave impetus to the cause of Sindhi nationalism while the Muhajir issue was used for power grabbing and exploitation by its leadership. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) was used as a pressure group in Sindh and its leadership was instrumental in radicalising its workers. With the passage of time, MQM which was created to safeguard rights of the Muhajirs turned into a Mafia risking peace of the province. Similarly, the native Sindhis were

marginalised, and their socio-economic and political rights were compromised. After the flop drama of Jinnah Pur, the clear division between the Sindhis and Muhajirs resulted in the demand of Muhajir province by the later. Political blame game and the worst law and order situation compelled the government to empower the Rangers in Karachi for a decisive clean-up operation being started to restore peace.

## 2. Background

Muslim muhajirs migrated from India to Pakistan were spread out in three provinces i.e. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh. They were given homes, lands, and jobs of those who had migrated to India. Based on this principle immigrants were no more Muhajirs on both sides. All over the country except Karachi (Sindh), there was no tussle between the local people and immigrants. The Muhajirs of Karachi defied merging in the native Sindhi due to socio-cultural, political, and linguistic differences. There was no issue of Muhajirs in Punjab or elsewhere as the immigrants and the native Punjabis were having same language and culture with slight difference. But in Sindh province, the situation was different. A mixture of immigrants having different culture, history and social norms settled among those having a different lifestyle and history. The Sindhi-Muhajir controversy started with the division of the Indian sub-continent into two new states of Pakistan and India in 1947. Though migration had taken place in Bengal and Punjab as well but the Muhajirs who had migrated from Delhi, Lucknow, Bhopal, and Hyderabad Deccan were settled in Karachi and outnumbered the locals. The immigrant poured into Karachi in such a substantial number that the native Sindhis turned into a minority. All facilities like education, jobs etc. were available to Muhajirs for development on priority basis (Mumtaz, 1990).

On the other hand, there were small states of Waderas, Nawabs, Sardars and Jagirdars in Sindh who intentionally kept their people ignorant and illiterate for dependence. The undemocratic regimes exploited the issue of Muhajirs for their own designs without considering its repercussions. A new ethnic group emerged in Karachi in the form of Muhajir ethnicity. In the words of Muhammad Waseem, "Muhajir nationalism represents a paradox in the context of ethnic conflict." He further elaborates and explains the dynamics of Muhajir nationalism. Unlike Bengali, Sindhi, Pashtoon and Baloch nationalism which represented relatively well-defined historical communities identified with respective geographical units, the Muhajir ethnicity is still passing through its birth pangs" (Waseem, 1996). Muhajirs are soft spoken, civilised, and thorough gentle people. The criminality injected by the undemocratic regimes in a group of Muhajirs and created a golem (Hardt, 2004). Thus, rift between the Sindhis and Muhajirs developed and seeds of hatred and confrontation were sown on Sindh Darthy. Fearing to lose their identity, the Sindhi leader GM Syed argued, "historically, the states which had been collected together and formed into a Pakistan were each a separate homeland for a separate nation" (Syed, 1974).

Historically and culturally the Muhajirs and Sindhis consist of variety of people. But the whole of Pakistan is multi-cultured, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic (Nuri, 2012). There is not such an issue of the same intensity elsewhere in Pakistan like the one we have in Sindh. The reason is that neither the Muhajirs were ready to merge in the native Sindhis nor the later encouraged them to do so. The native Sindhi were concerned about their rights and demographic status in their own province. While the Muhajirs were opposing the different quotas in jobs, school and colleges granted to the Sindhis by the government. Ultimately the Sindhis became aliens and minority in their own province. Their rights were either hijacked by the MQM or exploited by

the nationalists or other political parties. The chaos and violence in Karachi further strengthened the nationalist's stance about the Muhajirs and vice versa. The Sindhi leader was thus presenting the case of Sindhi before the court. "Among our many misfortunes is the fact that some of our compatriots hate independence and love enslavement. Now, representing the spirit of Sindh, I repudiate those elements. If I do not do so, I shall be considered to have violated the sanctity of the spirit of independence of Sindh" (Amnesty International, 1996). As politically and socially Muhajirs were more vigilant and aware than the local Sindhis, they started to organise Muhajirs at various levels. A party was formed in the name of Muhajir Qaumi Movement. "All Pakistan Muhajir Students Organisation (APMSO) was founded by Altaf Husain that subsequently gave birth to the Muhajir Qaumi Movement in 1984. Later in 1997, the word Muhajir was replaced by Muttahida. This development was alarming for the native people and nationalists of Sindh (Daily Dawn, 2013, April 2).

### **3. Research Methodology**

This research is historical in nature and based on qualitative and ethnographic methods. Being a qualitative technique, an attempt is made to search meanings of and explanation for the past events to interpret the facts and elaborate their causes and effect in the present scenario. Sindhis and Muhajirs are the largest ethnic communities living in Sindh province. This paper analyses the events that led to the Sindhi-Muhajir dispute. In the backdrop of struggle for the rights of the indigenous people, the nationalist viewpoint is also interpreted to develop the present concept and conclusion. The purpose is to gain a clear understanding of the Sindhi-Muhajir row in the Sindh province. This research paper includes review of written materials, but some primary and secondary sources are also used to augment the argument. Literature including articles, editorials, statements, and reports about the use of violence and lawlessness in the Sindh province especially in Karachi are incorporated in the paper.

Besides indigenous Sindhis, a substantial number of Pashtuns living in Karachi have serious differences with the Muhajirs. At times, Pashtuns have been the worst victim of the violence of the MQM. The paper tries to investigate the root cause of unrest, disturbance, and anarchy in Karachi. Some key informants and their names are not mentioned in the paper owing to backlash of political party's terrorist wings. Conducting research on such a burning issue where nationalist sentiments and sense of deprivation involves simultaneously, situation demand cautiousness and impartiality of the researcher. Therefore, available sources and materials on the issue are used with limitation. Interviews of Sindhis, muhajirs and Pashtuns are not directly presented in the paper. Instead jest of the interviews are included in the findings. As the focus of the paper is Sindhi-Muhajir controversy, therefore the study is confined to its scope. However, some key issues being considered as the harvest of Sindhi-Muhajir controversy are included in the paper.

### **4. Discussion and Findings**

#### **4.1. Sindhi-Muhajir Controversy: Factors and Repercussions**

The harvest of Sindhi-Muhajir controversy which persists as ever even though celebrating Sindhi Ajrak and Sindhi Topi Day together for the last few years. But the gulf between Muhajirs and Sindhis increased even after taking such symbolic and cosmetic steps to create solidarity and harmony among the people of Sindh. The Sindhi-Muhajir controversy has divided the Sindh into rural and urban. The urban Sindh is dominated by Muhajirs both

politically and demographically while the rural Sindh is represented by the Sindh nationalists or mainly the PPP. The unparalleled development in the rural and urban Sindh has severely affected the social fabric there. The loyalties of Sindhis have been exploited in the name of muhajirs and Sindhis but their problems have never been addressed seriously. The nationalists have always poor or no representation in the Sindh assembly. They along with other political parties have their stakes in Sindh and they have been cashing on Sindhi-Muhajir controversy while the people of Sindh have been lagging far behind in their march towards progress and development (Ahmar, 1996).

Like the rest of nationalists group in Pakistan, the Sindhi nationalists are also sensitive about their land, traditions, and culture. Muhajirs posed a serious threat to their existence and attachment to their Sindhi Darchy. Any resistance shown by newcomers (immigrant) to dominate the native Sindhis strengthened their distinct and separate entity. Their rivalry literally divided Sindh into Muhajir and Sindhi camp. Expressing his apprehension about those fallen a prey to Muhajirs trap, the Sindhi nationalist leader GM Syed said, "there are people in this land who are under the influence of migrant feudalistic from India, and are proudly touting subjugation as the panacea for Sindhi's problems" (Sangi, 2017, May 21). According to Sindhi nationalist leader G. M. Syed, the Sindhi-Muhajir division has been threatening the integrity of Pakistan (Syed, 1974; Syed, 1993). To ensure Muhajirs' rights and invoke in them the spirit to fight for their rights, Altaf Husain, the founding leader of MQM has been quoted as saying to his party workers, "sell out your VCRs and buy weapon" (Jabeen, 2009). Thus, Militancy and terrorism was introduced in Karachi to subdue rival groups by force. This mind-set and controversy caused serious ethnic violence in Karachi. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) has been widely accused of human rights abuses since its foundation two decades ago. It claims to represent Muhajirs; the Urdu-speaking Muslims who fled to Pakistan from India after the 1947 partition (Gosh, 2001).

The issue has been kept alive for personal gains by all the stakeholders. There are political motives behind this controversy and the peace and development of Sindh is dependent upon the settlement of this longer standing issue. The Sindhi-Muhajir controversy has served the Muhajirs representatives and the Sindhi Nationalists as well as the political parties of Sindh. The masses have been facing worst law and order situation in Sindh. Target killing, extortion, kidnapping and forced shutter down strikes have made their lives miserable. Fear and violence have engulfed Karachi, the heart of Sindh. The Sindhi-Muhajir controversy has been mainly responsible for the mess in Karachi and those benefitting from this controversy strive to maintain the status-quo in Karachi. The Sindhi-Muhajir controversy has serious repercussions for the people of Sindh. They are mostly suffering from inferiority complexes. The rulers and the ruled in Sindh present a horrible picture of haves and have nots. The elite class is busy in making money while the poor people of Sindh are deprived of basic amenities like drinking water, food, health facilities and shelter. The land mafia, housing societies, building authorities and water boards etc. have made billions of rupees by grabbing lands and properties of the native Sindhis. The Sindhi-Muhajir division has been used as a double-edged sword and stabbed in Sindh's belly (Hasan, 2015).

It is an open secret now that those responsible for the mess in Karachi have their stakes there which they don't want to be compromised. For their personal interests, they have compromised and sacrificed the peace and prosperity of Sindh. Fanning the Sindhi-Muhajir controversy, they cleverly established their political stature and made the Sindhi people hostages in Muhajir or Sindhi cage, creating enmity and hostility in Sindh. This controversy and division are richly

cashed by the Muhajirs' representative political party, the MQM. Presently it is the second largest party in Sindh and the fourth largest party at the national level. It has some representation in Gilgit Baltistan Legislative Assembly and Azad Kashmir. Due to its tactical stance and political stand regarding Muhajirs, it could not win a single seat out of Sindh despite massive campaign to hold some ground in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, or Baluchistan. It is interesting to separate a regional party or ethnic group from a mainstream, national level political party. Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf (PTI) is younger than the MQM. Yet it has grabbed national and provincial assembly seats almost throughout Pakistan. However, the MQM failed to do so because the Muhajir card is effective in Karachi only. It seems as if the MQM is intentionally restricting itself to Karachi just to maintain its monopoly there. Once, Altaf Hussain allegedly called NATO forces to the rescue of his party workers in Karachi. "Altaf talked of Greater Balochistan, Greater Sindh, Greater Pakhtunistan, Greater Punjab.... at cost of Pakistan .... this is echo of infamous "Bernard Lewis Plan" to carve up Middle East and Muslim World (Amnesty International, 1996)".

The Sindhis have been sandwiched between MQM and PPP. Both parties claim to work for the rights of the people of Sindh. However, ground realities do not back their claims. In reality both have been responsible for bifurcation of dwellers of Sindh into Muhajirs and Sindhis. Ironically instead of serving the masses, they have indulged in evil practices. In the name of personal security, different political parties in Sindh have allowed criminal elements in their ranks and those elements have become golems (war monsters), killing the Karachiites indiscriminately (Hardt, 2004). They are seen in the streets of Karachi in the form of target killers, kidnappers, and suicide bombers. Karachi the provincial capital of Sindh has become the hub of organised and white-collar crime. The mini-Pakistan is not only plunged in worst law and order situation but also became the epicentre of sponsoring extremism and terrorism in the rest of the country. Being the economic hub of Pakistan, Karachi is pouring black money for the criminals who promote and perpetrate violence and terror in Sindh and across Pakistan. Unlike ideological war in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the controversy in Karachi is more economic than ideological or political. Corruption has almost eroded the Sindh bureaucracy from top to the bottom. In rural Sindh, they are unable to free themselves from the clutches of Waderas, Nawabs, Sardars and Landlords. In either case, the people of Sindh pay the price. The dividend goes to MQM, PPP and the nationalist leaders. While ignoring the real concerns and socio-economic problem of the masses, they are always engaged in political point scoring and character assassination of rival groups. Both the nationalist parties and MQM are hegemonic and due to their rigid attitude, violence terror and extremism have hostage the economic hub of Pakistan (Zaidi, 1991).

#### **4.2. Muhajir Province**

The disunity and confrontation among the political parties resulted in the growth of separatist and extremist tendencies in Sindh Province. The demand for Muhajir Suba is literally the demand for the division of Sindh. A member of MQM in Sindh Assembly demanded creation of Muhajir province on the floor of the house. The Urdu speaking people of Sindh are subjected to discrimination; therefore, we demand a separate province. Any division based on language or Muhajir identity is unacceptable to the people of Sindh. PPP said that the division of Sindh is out of question. The nationalist parties were more furious than PPP and warned government of bloodshed (The Nation, 2014, October 25). First, they were marginalised by awarding their land to Muhajirs and the unending influx of Muhajirs turned the Sindhis into a minority in their own province. Apart from Muhajirs of India, people from all over Pakistan are continuously

coming to Karachi in search of jobs and settle there. This practice has changed the demographic position of different nationalist and ethnic groups in Karachi. Now those Muhajirs are bent on to divide their mother land. The Sindhi nationalists and other political parties including PPP, PTI, ANP and JI are not in favour of any Muhajir Suba (province). They have strong reservations and concern about this issue. The idea of division of Sindh on ethnic basis especially separating Karachi from Sindh is a perilous design against the integrity of Pakistan (Ahmar, 2013).

In the past, some serious charges were levelled against MQM of breaking Pakistan which later were denied by the state authorities. During Operation Clean-up, MQM was accused of being anti-Pakistan and of planning a separatist break-away state 'Jinnahpur'. However, later some senior army officers, Brigadier (R) Imtiaz and General (R) Naseer Akhtar, confessed that Jinnahpur was "nothing but a drama" against MQM for the military operation and there was no map of Jinnah Pur (The Nation, 2009, August 24). Denial by the ISPR also proved helpful about bailing out Jinnahpur conspiracy. In Pakistan on October 19, 1992 newspapers carried an ISPR press release, conveying Army's denial of the knowledge of the Jinnahpur plan (Jabeen, 2009, August 24). But unfortunately, the MQM leader and its members are demanding the division of Sindh and creation of Muhajir Suba not covertly rather overtly. MQM argues that division of Sindh on administrative grounds will help in improving law and order situation and performance of the state institutions. Karachi is mini-Pakistan and gives shelter to millions of people from all over Pakistan. Karachi is also an international city and citizens of India, Bangladesh, Philippine; Indonesia, Thailand, Africa, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan are living there in substantial number. Being the port city, Karachi is the hold a key place in Sindh province and is the economic lifeline of Pakistan. The presence and activities of these multifarious elements have their impact on the socio-economic and political lives of the people of Karachi (Memon, 2016, November 27).

Every political party wants to have its representation in Karachi. Once it was a stronghold of JI. Now MQM is the leading political party in Karachi. PTI is gaining popularity in Karachi and challenges MQMs monopoly in Karachi. PPP is passing through a critical phase of transition and losing ground in Sindh. ANP has always given MQM a tough time in each election. It has its vote bank in Karachi as quite a sizable number of Pashtuns live in Karachi. There have been ethnic clashes between the Pakhtoons and Muhajirs on regular basis. In this context, both are the rival groups in Karachi. There were also serious allegations of torture and abuse of Pakhtoons against the MQM. Military operation was launched to curb the terrorist activities of the outlaws and militants in the past as well. Rest of the so-called nationalist parties and some fictions of Muslim League are in disarray and do not pose any threat to MQM. On the political scene of Karachi, a wind of change has just started to blow gently, and the hard liners are reluctant to give any space to the moderate forces like PTI, PML (N), etc. The change will certainly help a great deal in diminishing the Sindhi-Muhajir row in Sindh. The entry and emergence of PTI and other moderate political forces in Karachi will be helpful for MQM in the long run. The presence of other political parties will force out the MQM from Karachi. As long as the MQM monopolise Karachi, it will be unable to come out of Karachi and organise itself in other Provinces of Pakistan also in rural Sindh where too its position is weak dominating only urban Sindh (Hashmi, 2015).

Sindhi-Muhajir controversy is a sensitive issue which should be handled and addressed amicably. It is said that Karachi and its people have been hijacked by MQM and should end the siege of Karachi. Actually, there was no alternative for the people of Karachi, and it was

heavily monopolised and dominated by MQM. Due to its economic and strategic significance, all the stakeholders are playing their cards carefully. The issue is more economical than political. It has been kept alive to achieve both these aims on the pre-text of Sindhi-Muhajir controversy. Throughout the coalition government of PPP and MQM in Sindh from 2008-2013, no steps were taken to remove the Sindhi-Muhajir differences. Nothing has been done to bring the rural Sindh at par with the urban area of the province. During their tenure, both parties did not give any heed to the solidarity of Sindh. Especially, both the PPP and MQM have been seen engaged to achieve their political aims. Exploiting and black mailing one another to prolong their stay in the power corridor. They have been seen regularly compromising the rights and prosperity of the Sindhis. Their marriage has always been a knot of inconvenience for both PPP and MQM as both are interested to maintain their respective stances of Muhajirs and Sindhis. Their stance might be helping their cause, but it is not certainly helping the people of Sindh. In urban Sindh, they are victim of violence in the form of target killing, extortion and kidnapping (Ali, 2014, April 23).

Karachi once known as the city of lights has become one of the most dangerous cities of the world. From mobile phone's snatching to bank robbery and from abduction, extortion, target killing to suicide bombing, Karachi has become the centre of crime for Pakistan. While in rural Sindh, they are dependent upon the will of their Sardars, Nawabs, Waderas or Jagirdars. The whole of Sindh province seems to be in restrictions and chains. This is what a division on ethnic or racial basis do to a society. Crime in its sophisticated form is committed in the streets of Karachi day and night. A major factor responsible for the unrest in Karachi is the presence of the criminals and all sorts of modern weapons. These criminals have jeopardised the peace efforts in Sindh. They work for different political figures and mafias in Karachi who provide them cover and protection to avoid any action against them. The brutal fire incident in Baldia Town was thus reported after thorough investigations by the Rangers. "The suspect told the investigators that after the extortion demand one of the factory owners had met the sector in-charge of Baldia Town, Asghar Baig, and informed him about it (Siddiqui, 2015)". Giving further details the suspect informed the rangers about those involved in the incident. He said, "the sector in-charge and his brother, Majid, had taken the factory owner to MQM's headquarters Nine-Zero and brought the matter to the knowledge of in-charge of Karachi Tanzeemi Committee (KTC) Hammad Siddiqui and Farooq Saleem" (Siddiqui, 2015, February 7). However, the politicians and other mafias patronise these criminals and use them in unlawful activities.

#### **4.3. Military Operation by Rangers**

The state has realised to establish peace in Karachi at any cost. The resolve to bring back peace in Karachi faced resistance from different corners. It is a nightmare for corrupt politicians, land grabbers and criminals. Rangers in Sindh have been assigned the task to restore peace in Karachi without any fear or favour. The MQM first retaliated by condemning the rangers' action against its party workers but gradually went back foot while sensing the intentions of the federal government and intensity of the operation. Zero tolerance policy has been employed in Karachi operation and the state authorities does not allow any concession to those involved in terrorist activities and corruption. The Ranger's clean-up operation has been, no doubt, against the criminals and corrupt elements. It is not against any particular party or one group. It has provided MQM and all other players to go through the process of purification by excluding criminals and militants from their ranks. Crime and politics cannot go side by side in a democracy. The deteriorated law and order based on the Sindhi-Muhajir division has

served the purpose to keep the Government of Pakistan busy in resolving the Karachi issue for bring peace (The News International, 2016, March 20).

The enemies of Pakistan support the Muhajirs just to hurt Pakistan by creating panic and disunity in Karachi. The Sindhi-Muhajir division has provided an excellent opportunity to the enemies of Pakistan and they have been successful to a large extent to create rift between the rival stakeholders in Karachi. The worst law and order situation and mismanagement in the Sindh government have forced the state apparatus to retaliate by launching yet another clean-up operation in Karachi. The Rangers operation has been welcomed by all except MQM and PPP. While in self-exile for almost 23 years, MQM leader Altaf Husain started an orchestrated propaganda against Pakistan Rangers and the armed forces. The government was forced to ban Altaf Husain's poisonous speeches from the UK. Earlier in the face of deteriorated law and order situation and mismanagement in Sindh, the MQM has repeatedly demanded for military operation in Karachi. Most of the alleged militants and criminals captured during crackdowns in Karachi have been found to be working under MQM's umbrella. MQM failed to wash the mid-1990s stigma of involvement in political violence. "In the mid-1990s, the MQM-A was heavily involved in the widespread political violence that wracked Pakistan's southern Sindh province, particularly Karachi, the port city that is the country's commercial capital" (Amnesty International, 1996).

They are facing the same charges today as the MQM leader and members used propaganda campaign against the Sindh rangers to divert people's attention and get their sympathy. They not only condemned the action of rangers but also level false allegations against them. It is said that a number of wanted killers and criminals were arrested from Nine Zero (MQM's head quarter ) and in protest the MQM, on the order of their leader Altaf Husain threatened to tender their resignations from National Assembly, Senate and Provincial Assembly of Sindh. Karachi has been literally under Ranger's control. The political set up and administrative units surrendered their powers to the rangers. The MQM wanted to force the Federal government to stop Rangers' operation in Karachi. In their response the rangers and armed forces declared that the Rangers operation will continue till its logical end. Surprisingly, the PPP provincial government in Sindh has parted ways with the MQM but both the parties have similar concerns about Rangers operation in Karachi. Both the MQM and PPP have voiced against the high handedness and unlimited jurisdiction of the rangers (The News, 2016, March 20).

In contrast, the rest of the political parties, judiciary, media, academia, civil society and especially the Karachiites have welcomed the Rangers in Karachi and back their presence. The peace and life activities have been resumed in Karachi and the crime ratio in Karachi has drastically dropped. The criminals and their handlers have been arrested and taken into ranger's custody for 90 days on judicial remand. Regardless of their position, designation and stature, Rangers in Karachi are chasing the criminals, and corrupt bureaucrats and politicians. Unlike their past strategies, the MQM failed to mobilise their workers and supporters to stage any protest against the activities of Rangers. A proxy war started between MQM and Rangers on media as well. MQM condemned the raids and crackdown operations conducted by Rangers without taking even the Sindh Government into confidence. Talking to media, Farooq Sattar blamed the Rangers for the extra judicial killing and the forced disappearances of MQM workers. According to Farooq Sattar, "Issue of 150 missing persons have been raised at every forum. The workers were killed extra judicially" (Tunio & Gishkori, 2015, August 12). The DG Rangers responded it by saying, "the operation will continue till the last terrorist is eliminated" (The News, 2016, March 20).

#### 4.4. The Role of MQM

MQM has a record of involvement in terrorist activities. MQM-A's militants fought government forces, the break-away MQM factions, and militants from other ethnic-based movements. In the mid-1990s, the US State Department, Amnesty International, and others accused the MQM-A and a rival faction of summary killings, torture, and other abuses. However, the MQM-A routinely denied involvement in violence (Human Rights Watch, 2017). The situation has not changed much as the MQM somehow failed to become a national level party. The Supreme Court of Pakistan in its verdict disclosed that the political parties in Sindh have their militant wings including MQM. DG Rangers, Major General Rizwan Akhtar said if Karachi was ever to become peaceful again, militant wings of political parties needed to be abolished (The Express Tribune, 2013, August 29). The perpetual violence and killings in Karachi are denting Pakistan severely and the Sindhi-Muhajir controversy is used as a tool to destabilise Pakistan. The involvement of foreign hands in Karachi is another destabilising and worrying factor for Pakistan. They hatch different conspiracies against Pakistan but due to diplomatic constraints, Pakistan has been avoiding fixing charges on its neighbours. The Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and the rangers have gathered undeniable facts and witnesses and the Government of Pakistan on many occasions, at different forums have asked at least the Indian Government to put a halt to its hostile and anti-Pakistan activities in Karachi. British journalist Owen Bannett Jones also stood by his BBC report that claimed the Muttahida Qaumi Movement was receiving Indian funding (Azfar-ul-Ashfaq, 2015, June 25).

MQM is under the grip of a number of charges and accusations. Its position is severely damaged both at national and international level. OB Jones said that his report was correct, as it was based on facts but he had no idea as to what would exactly be the situation in a court of law if the story was presented in a trial (Azfar-ul-Ashfaq, 2015, June 25). The space is fast decreasing for them to breathe and survive politically. Money laundering, extortion, target killing and receiving funds from a neighbouring country are not to help their cause. The MQM must foil the foreign agenda as it is dragged somehow to be under the influence of India. The dubious role of MQM is creating doubts in the minds and hearts of the people. The overwhelming support of the people to the Rangers' operation in Karachi is a clear indicator of their love for peace in Karachi. The outcry made by the MQM is ignored by the people. The public opinion is changing about the role of MQM in Karachi and public opinion cannot belie. The positive role of MQM is of great significance. As the LEAs are chasing the militant wings of all political parties, some groups including MQM are spreading and levelling accusations against the Rangers. In response, the rangers' spokesperson clarified the misperception about the on-going operation in Karachi. This operation is badly denting MQM's interests in Karachi, but the national interest and writ of the state is far more significant than the interests of a regional party (Siddiqui, 2015, February 7).

MQM being representative of middle-class downtrodden people has at its credit bringing the middle class in the power corridor. The loyalties of these representatives have been mostly surrendered to an exile leader. MQM, though mostly being part of the Sindh government always acted and over-reacted like a pressure group. The hide and seek policy have been the characteristics of the MQM. A party which was established to empower the Muhajirs and safeguards their rights against the Sindhi Waderas, Nawabs and Sardars, could not sustain their position and itself became a symbol and pillar of status quo. Their leader has been said to be involved in millions of pounds of money laundering. They are facing money laundering charges as millions of pounds have been recovered from Altaf Husain's compound in UK. In

June 2014, “the Metropolitan Police raided the London home of its leader, Altaf Hussain, on suspicion of money-laundering. Mr Hussain has lived in the UK since 1991” (Jabeen, 2014, June 3). Besides that, due to his provocative and misleading speeches, he has been audibly banned in Pakistan. Resignations of the MQM members from National and provincial assemblies and senate were decided. However, time is ripe enough for MQM to detach criminals and militants from their ranks and work for the betterment of the people of Sindh irrespective of ethnic or racial differences (Tunio & Gishkori, 2015).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been concluded from the above discussion and findings that the Muhajirs are not at all Muhajirs in Karachi by any definition. They have become equal citizens of Pakistan and their status in Sindh should be accepted as of the native Sindhis. The Sindhi-Muhajir controversy has been created just to achieve personal goals and political aims. MQM does not fall in the domain of Muhajir, Immigrant or Migrant. Any attempt to call the Urdu speaking people of Karachi as Muhajirs will be a contextual and factual mistake. Time and space decide the status of migrants. Any division based on a dead concept is illogical and illegitimate. All immigrants once migrate and settle somewhere else, do not remain Muhajirs for ever. The same rule applies to those who migrated to Pakistan without any discrimination. Following are key recommendations of the study:

- a) The situation in Karachi demands across the board clean-up operation without any favour. The peace of Karachi can only be restored if it is freed from the clutches of criminals and militants.
- b) The state apparatus should not be misused in any situation. The LEAs should display zero tolerance and make it a benchmark for the restoration of peace in Karachi.
- c) Terrorists and militant organisations should be banned. All necessary steps should be taken to stop extortions, kidnapping and target killing in Karachi. No one should be allowed to take Karachi a hostage.
- d) No party or organisation should be allowed to gather funds in the form charities etc.
- e) As the MQM has been in successive governments it should show a moral courage and set a notable example to remove the impression of Muhajir. All Karachiites and Sindhis should be considered and treated as brothers.
- f) The MQM should come out with clear answers to its alleged association with India. The charge of training by the Indian organisations to its workers is heinous and serious accusation. MQM should convince the government of Pakistan and the people of Sindh not verbally but by its actions.
- g) All the stakeholders including PPP, MQM and other nationalist parties in Sindh should play a positive role to diminish the extremist and the separatist tendencies in Sindh province.
- h) MQM and PPP should work for strengthening of the state institutions. Public institutions in Sindh are at the brim of destruction. Corruption has eroded the overall institutions in Sindh. Economic terrorism is causing a great mess in the affairs of Karachi. Concrete steps should be taken to discourage corruption.
- i) The LEAs in Sindh should create an atmosphere of trust and coordination to overcome the menace of terrorism and criminal activities in Karachi.
- j) The operation of Rangers in Karachi should not be stopped due to any political compromise. This is “now or never” situation for the people of Pakistan and Karachi, and their interests should not be sacrificed at any cost. Let the peace prevail in Sindh.

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