Karachi: The Administrative Black Hole of Pakistan

Dr. Manzoor Ali isran, szabist, karahi
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• Karachi is a mega city of the world, with a population of more than 20 million.
• According to the Foreign Policy magazine, from 2000 to 2010, Karachi's population grew more than 80 percent.

• It is the hub of economic activity and constitutes the jugular vein of Pakistan.

• It contributes more than 20 percent to GDP and more than 70 percent to national exchequer.

• It is a pulsating commercial hub and home to banks and corporations, shipping and transport, entertainment and arts.

• In addition to being a technological center and informational float, it is a port city where from most of exports and imports are carried out from there.
Being an important strategic city, it also serves as a route for transit trade for landlocked Afghanistan besides working as supply line for US and NATO troops stationed in Afghanistan.

So, Karachi has both global and local economic and strategic dimensions of high proportion to be developed into the global trade center but this has not happened and today it has been turned into a black hole of administration.

As a result, it has been turned into the boiling cauldron of underdevelopment, unemployment, lawlessness, violence, extremism, terrorism, killings, kidnapping for ransom, bank robberies, muggings and torture and mafia wars and extortion, all these unsavory happenings making the life of inhabitants of Karachi what Hobbes called ‘nasty, brutish, solitary and shortish’.
Hobbes said these words when Europe was passing through the dark ages. Today Karachi too is passing through the same dark ages where all are against all and fighting pitched battles to grab power and resources.

Hobbes said:
"In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and consequently, not culture of the earth, no navigation, nor the use of commodities that may be imported by sea, no commodious building, no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force, no knowledge of the face of the earth, no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short"
• Due to this anarchic situation, Karachi suffers heavy economic loses more than Rs2.5 billion daily if it is closed due to strike and such strikes are frequent.

• About 70% of the mill and factory workers who live in the restless areas of the city were not able to go to work.

• Reason: the collapse of the city administration

• Impact: Capital flying out of the city, business moving and youth feeling frustrated and shifting to overseas.
• The failure of the administration is attributed to the reluctance and psyche of rulers to build democratic and developmental institutions to serve people without any discrimination.

• And the reflection of this attitude is seen in Karachi as well where administration is more politicized on an ethnic basis

• According to Laurent Gayer, the seeds of ethnic politics were sown when the Government of Pakistan, dominated by bureaucracy that migrated from India in the wake of partition, decided to turn Karachi into a federally administered area

• Dictators promoted ethno-religious politics
• Main argument the paper is that politics shapes institutions and if politics is liberal, open, the institution too will be inclusive and liberal ensuring freedom of the people.

• This enable people to unleash their creative destruction to the benefit of people and society as whole.
• If politics is coercive, divisive and extractive, then there will be a reflection of that extraction and appropriation on the part of institutions. Instead of serving the people, they control people by denying them freedom to produce what Schumpeter called ‘creative destruction’.
• But here in Karachi that creative destruction has been suppressed and people are denied of their participation in the system

• The paper, therefore, is built on the argument that effective and inclusive administration is necessary in the efficient and active management of a society like Karachi which is essentially multicultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual
• It needs effective and responsive governance to maintain the societal and cultural harmony. It needs impersonal administration populated by bureaucracy that must be free from class, ethnic, sectarian consciousness and serve the people selflessly, allowing them to participate in the affairs of the society on the basis of equality, without discrimination so that no one has feeling of being excluded and marginalized.

• This kind of management promotes unity, cohesiveness and cultural affinity amongst the various ethnic groups.
• Politicization of the administration started during Zia

• According to Arif Hassan, during 1978-88, the city institutions fell apart due to army rule and the absence of transparency and accountability.

• According to Mr. Hassan, “the decade also saw the rise of Mohajir Quami Movement and its conflict with the establishment on the one hand and Sindhi nationalism on the other.

• Military regime of Zia embarked on the project of Islamisation of the society and it was introduced in Karachi too, which resulted in the closing down of Karachi’s active night life, racecourses, bars, billiard rooms and a number of cinemas. All this had adverse effects on Karachi’s cultural and intellectual life
• Musharraf followed the footprints of his predecessor and promoted ethnic politics.

• Karachi in Malthusian trap

• According to Foreign Policy Magazine, Karachi is growing faster than New York and Shenzen

• The mammoth population increase is outstripping the scare resource and the administration of the city has failed to manage those issues arising out of population increase. The slums are growing but without basic amenities of life such as health, education, sanitation and infrastructure.
• Criminalization of Politics

• According to a report submitted by Ranger and Police in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, there are over 110,000 absconders in Sindh out of which 33,665 are in Karachi. Moreover, there are pending cases of 1,486 absconders in the anti-terrorism court.

• The violence in Karachi is multifaceted and different types of violence such as ethno-political, militant, sectarian and criminal have engulfed the city and have claimed more than 7000 lives since 2008.
• As data collected by different sources suggest that of all those 11,990 civilian that lost their lives due to bomb, suicide and other fatal attack in the country during the last eight year, Karachi’s share is nearly 50 percent. From 2003 through 2011, nearly 5549 people were eaten up by different violence in the city, involving target killings and sectarianism
• Keeping in view the violent nature of the city, Karachi has been declared the ‘most dangerous megacity' in the world by the US magazine ‘Foreign Policy’, September 2013.

• While comparing the homicide data of Karachi with Mumbai, the magazine presents the data that puts Karachi ahead of Mumbai in criminal and smuggling activities.

• According to the magazine, “Karachi is far and away the world's most dangerous megacity, with a homicide rate of 12.3 per 100,000 residents, some 25 percent higher than any other major city.

• In 2011, 202 murders occurred in Mumbai, India. Karachi had 1,723 -- and more than 2,000 in 2012.
• The reason for the failure of administration is the increasing politicization of the administration and further there is no strategic management at the top. It is the strategic management that glues institutions together and creates alignment amongst relevant institutions.

• The lack of this cooperation and coordination can be judged from the recent statement of Karachi police Chief Mr. Shahid Hayat who complained that the criminals and terrorists being caught by police are not punished by the Judiciary.
• **Karachi: Form Metropolitanism to Tribalism**

• Karachi, known as *Kalachi jo gothe*, emerged as a fishing town in 1729.

• But it was turned into garrison town when Charles Napier reached the shores of Karachi in 1843 and used it as military outpost for landing troops for their military campaigns to secure Afghanistan in order to prevent Russian from reaching warm water.

• The Karachi port finally emerged as strategic asset for the British, linking Sindh’s hinterland and Punjab with Persian Gulf and China for conducting trade.
• Karachi first witnessed modernization when it was linked with its hinterland and Punjab through railway as a means of transportation of cotton to India. Being a conduit of trade, it benefitted a great deal from the American cotton crisis in 1860 and in 1870 McLeod Road became the hub of commercial and financial activities, housing a big number of European firms and Banks.

• So, keeping in view the economic viability and Karachi emerging as a pulsating trading center in the region, political movement was launched by politicians for the separation of Sindh from Bombay and finally Sindh got separate status as a province in 1935 and as a result, all the government offices and trade organization were shifted to Karachi. At the time of creation of Pakistan, Karachi was made the capital of Pakistan but later on the capital was shifted to Rawalpindi.
Karachi as global city

While highlighting the importance of global cities, Professor Saskia Sassen of Columbia University, the leading urban theorist of the global world, argues in her book ‘Global City’ (2001) “Cities are major nodes in the interconnected systems of information and money, and the wealth that they capture is intimately related to the specialized businesses that facilitate those flows -- financial institutions, consulting firms, accounting firms, law firms, and media organizations. ..... these flows are no longer tightly bound to national boundaries and systems of regulation; so the dynamics of the global city are dramatically different than those of the great cities of the nineteenth century
• There is no doubt that Karachi has the dynamics of Sassen’s ‘global city’ but those dynamics have been lost due to the failure of the city administration to create and maintain social order that is favorable for business and investment. Sadly, the Karachi is losing its metropolitan character and becoming more of the tribal society, which is characterized by increasing violence among different tribes.

• However, if Karachi wants to benefit from the gains that globalization brings to cities then Sindh and federal governments have to improve its governance and curb the spate of violence, crime and terrorist activities by giving autonomy to the cities’ law enforcement agencies.
• Governance

  • Governance being the main challenge for all stakeholders, there is a need to redefine governance and rebuild institutions. Governance is the expression of institutions as to how they want to approach the problems and how they want to resolve those issues. According to Halfani, “Governance provides the intuitional framework within which the civic public realm is managed.

  • The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines Governance as:

    • “The exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation’s affair. It is the complex mechanisms, process, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests exercise and their rights and obligations and mediate their difference.”
• But to Stoker (1998), the essence of governance is the trust between and within government and non-government forces but today this trust is being blown to politics based on ethnicity and governance is being scuttled.

• Hyden identifies four properties of the governance:
  • Trust (between the various groups in society about the nature and purposes of political action, including the ability to cooperate across basic divisions in society);
  • Authority
  • Reciprocity (the quality of social interaction among members of a political community, including the formation and operation of associations);
  • Accountability (the effectiveness of the processes by which the governed can hold the governors accountable, without which trust and reciprocity cannot be sustained)
UN-Habitat (2001b; Leftwich, 2000; World Bank, 1997; DFID, 1997), in its Global Campaign for Urban Governance, identifies a number of norms and principles:

- Participation;
- Decentralization;
- Equity;
- Inclusion;
- Accountability;
- Responsiveness to civil society;
- Efficiency of service delivery;
- Sustainability;
- Security.
• The study of Porrio, takes us further to understand the dynamics of urban governance as it is all about the relationship among all stakeholders.

• She identifies two key questions:

  • What is the nature of the relationships among the stakeholders at certain political and economic conjunctures?

  • What are the forms of negotiation that strengthen or weaken the position of stakeholders in urban governance
Actors and Intuitions in Urban Governance
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A concept map illustrating:

- Actors/interests
- Context, constraints, sources of power/legitimacy
- Relationships and decision-making processes
- Outcomes
To improve the governance and to take Karachi out of the administrative black hole, the following steps are necessary:

There is a need to improve urban governance by having a participatory governance model with small Government and BIG society with “g” governance to liberate the city from the old and outdated governance system which has become more irrelevant and anarchic. It is top down and does not involve all the stakeholders; nor inspires confidence by ensuring autonomy of all the actors involved in it.
• There is a need to adopt the Wilsonian model of administration, separating politics from administration.

• Administration needs to be depoliticized and appointments and transfers be made on merit.
• There is a need of decriminalizing politics and dismantling of all the militant wings of all the political parties. If any political parties aids and abets any militant wing and is found involved in the subversive activities of kidnapping, torture and kidnapping, those political parties should be banned.

• The city administration should be completely free from the interference and influence of political parties and must focus on providing services in critical areas such as safety security to the citizens, providing quality education, healthcare and other necessities of life that are considered essential for making life productive and useful.

• Address the issue of increasing population and build at least one lac houses per year in the city for people who are coming to the city in search of jobs.
• Regularize slums and they be provided with all the utilities of life such as education, health, sanitation and infrastructure.

• Government need to adopt a holistic approach and pay adequate attention to the development of the rural sector of the economy in order to stop the flow of people into cities as they are already facing resource constraints. If this flow is not stopped then there is possibility of civil war over the distribution of scarce resources of the city.

• Attempts be made to shift manufacturing to other cities and Karachi must focus on the service sector. This way other cities will also develop and promote more jobs and improve the living standards of the people.
• Conclusion

• Karachi has all the wherewithal’s to be the global city serving as front end face of Pakistan Economy and accelerating the economies of other cities within Pakistan but unfortunately our ruler have not properly utilized the economic and strategic potential of Karachi.

• But due to ethnification of politics, weak and politicized administration and poor governance, this city is drifting towards tribalism where the communities have been divided and living barricaded life. The crime is rampant and outlaws are on rampage to loot and plunder the city with impunity.
• They feel no fear of being punished as city administration has totally broken down, with dangerous consequences.

• However, for the peace and progress of Karachi, it is therefore imperative that the focus be made on building institutions, separating politics from administration and enhancing their capacity to provide people with essential services like health, education, sanitation, water and safety and security to the life and limb of people and decentralize power to grassroots level.

• Therefore, there is a need of small government and big society so that it can manage its affairs for the betterment of the people of Karachi.
Thanks