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The Clothes Have No Emperor!
Reflections on the crisis of violence in Lyari Town, Pakistan.

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as if down a deep tunnel of clothes and chores,
your brightness quells itself, quenches itself, strips itself down
turning, again, to being a naked hand.

— **Pablo Neruda**

Introduction

Based on three years of non-contiguous ethnographic research, this paper seeks to decenter the dominant discourse of criminality and gang-violence which has become wedded to Lyari Town, Karachi, Pakistan. It seeks to unmask ‘urban violence’ in Lyari as a bid by certain political classes to make a claim on the city. I do this here, by piecing together the recent history of Lyari from a variety of sources, both ethnographic and archival, across multiple classes and ethnicities to act as the ‘fragment’ (see Pandey 1992; Chatterjee 1993) which belies the absolute authenticity of prevalent public discourses. I argue that the tenure of ‘the crisis of urban/gang violence’ in Lyari is actually a mask for the story of the career of certain forces or classes that putatively represent ‘law and order’. It is the unfolding of their ongoing colonization of a city these forces have hitherto been unable to fully colonize—at least not as blatantly as they have in ‘the national periphery’ such as, for instance, Baluchistan. From our position of repose in the year 2015, this project of political subjection of Karachi, is all but accomplished insofar as any political project achieves completion.

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Before we begin our narrative we must keep a few questions in the fore of our mind. What is this story about? Is it about the genesis of the gangs of Lyari? Is it about the intersecting of fun and violence, marginality and identity that anthropologist Oskar Verkaaik's (2004) ethnography of Karachi claims? Or as Nichola Khan (2010) claims, is this another instance of a violent and pathological problem of masculinity amongst young men who are, or perceive themselves, as being marginalized? Or is it about an 'ordered disorder' that Laurent Gayer (2014) has recently shown to haunt Karachi? This study builds upon the insights and analyses of scholars who have sought to interrogate the state of affairs in Karachi but also deviates in important ways from the questions scholars have usually asked of Karachi by exploring the one aspect on which much of this scholarship has, for various and understandable reasons, hitherto been silent. For the partiality of our narratives may hold the possibility that the very element that escapes the analysis is the one that makes or breaks any analysis.

* * *

In October of 2011, the Supreme Court passed a judgement, having taken *suo moto* notice of the 'violence' in Karachi, that the political parties in Karachi dissociate themselves from their militant wings. The language of the Supreme Court's ruling makes the point even clearer:

"... as per material brought before the Court, there are criminals who have succeeded in making their ways in political parties notwithstanding whether they are components or non-components of government, and are getting political and financial support allegedly from such parties, therefore, the political parties should denounce their affiliation with them in the interest of the country and democratic set up and they should not allow them to use their names as militant outfits of the political parties. Failure to do so may entail consequences of a penal nature against the party or person responsible, whether in office or not..."¹

Let us dwell a bit on the language of the Supreme Court ruling. The Court is sitting in judgement on the "the criminals who have succeeded" in penetrating "components of government", and claims to be working on "material brought before the Court". This is precisely the kind of paradoxical logic that the statist discourses of crisis are riddled with. For whom, and how does this crisis erupt? It is as if, in that bloody Ramadan of 2011, the red wine of violence

¹ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/karachi.htm>

overflowed the cup to create a point of aberration, a crisis. A limit had been reached. “*This is just too much!*” the court appears to say as if this—the gory economy of hacked up bodies in gunny sacks—just appeared before its eyes abstracted into the documentary material that was brought into the court. This articulation may signal two points of significance to our arguments.

Firstly, in this instance the Court assumes the garb of an objective “state” acting in ‘the interest of the country and the democratic setup’. This democratic setup, of course, was formally ‘won’ through the popular struggle of civil society contra the army or the mysterious black hole of ‘establishment’. It is fragile, it must be protected from those within the democratic sequence who would seek to undermine its autonomy and not only from the restless Pakistani military. Secondly, the court signals the possibility of actions and bounds the realm of all conceivable action. If the political parties, especially the one in the government does not dissociate itself from the ‘criminals, ‘consequences of a penal nature’ would be incurred. Who enforces the writ of the court? It so happens that in the years leading up from 2011, as well as at the time of the edict, as at the time of the edict—it is the paramilitary Rangers. However, let’s defer the entry of our main antagonists further still.

The absurdity is poignant enough to merit reiteration. To be sure, the Court as State, wants to save the ‘democratic’ state from the specter of military rule, by telling the democratically elected parties to abstain from received forms of popular politics, that ostensibly got them elected in the first place, and if they do not, the state (Courts) would have to invite the army, that has already penetrated the field, to set things right for them. It is indeed not enough to mark the absurdity, but to look beyond what this absurdity masks—the recapitulation of the military as order as well as disorder.

Now around the same time I had begun conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Lyari where my informants at this time were narrating experiences which throw the Supreme Court’s paradoxical statement into relief. For instance two of my informants’—let’s call them Adam and Hawa—whose workplace was situated in the same narrow lane that the PAC gang-boss Uzair Jan Baloch lived in. My informants worked in healthcare, and thus upon an evening, despite curfew being imposed by the Rangers, happened to leave their workplace after a tiring 36hour work shift on their motorbike. Adam was driving the motorbike and Hawa, his co-worker, was in the backseat.

They had just set out that they ran into a roadblock—erected by the gang personnel (whom the Lyariites refer to as ‘*lalas*’ or “uncles” in sardonic contempt). The *lala* were convinced that none but those who spy on their ‘positions’ for the Rangers would dare to be out post sundown during a curfew. The accusation might have meant death for Adam and he still felt goose bumps as he described that encounter to me. However, incidentally, Adam is a resident of the Nayabad neighborhood and no stranger to the gangs. It just so happened that one of his father’s brother’s sons used to be affiliated with this particular gang. It just so happened that one of the *lala* knew his cousin. Finally after a few angry looks and grumbling, Adam and Hawa were allowed to proceed from the checkpoint, with the promise that Adam was performing his ‘brotherly duty’ to escort Hawa home to safety.

Less than a mile on down road, they were stuck in the Rangers’ flytrap. Roadblock, big men with guns, and horrible attitudes—only this time with military uniforms. The Rangers were convinced that no one who did not have the confidence of being immune to the gangs through some illicit affiliation with them would be foolhardy enough to be abroad on a tense evening like that. Adam and Hawa, these masters of deduction surmised, must be gang affiliates. This Ranger cordon was peculiar in that there was a regular police van stationed alongside the Ranger roadblock. Rudely dragged off of his motorbike, and about to be arrested by the notorious Rangers—from whose shackles, rarely does a Lyariite return unbroken...if at all—Adam decided to desperately call out in appeal to a regular ‘black-shirt’ policeman he recognized. Turns out, Adam’s dad had another brother, whose son used to be in the local police. Adam was lucky, the policeman recognized him as a ‘brother’ to a former man of the force and this reference bought them their escape. Adam and Hawa made it out, relatively unharmed—still counting themselves luckier than most young Lyariites.

* * *

In this pivotal August of 2011, the paramilitary Pakistan Rangers were busy conducting a military operation in Lyari while the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP)’s home minister Zulfikar Mirza was threatening resignation over the treatment of its “people”. The processes of political subjection in Lyari at our present conjuncture have a lot to do with the often and publicly proclaimed endeavors of Mr. Mirza. In the twilight of the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf—before the PPP was returned to power in the movement for democracy in 2007—

Mr. Mirza was tasked by the party to come up with a strategy to conserve and ‘activate’ the Lyari vote bank for the party which had lost relevance during the Musharraf era. In this time, the old clientelist relations between the political classes in Lyari and the party had become rusty, while the political culture of the city had been irrecoverably shifted to ‘MQM-style’ politics (c.f. Gayer 2005).

For Mirza, this task was accomplished through a settlement with Abdur-Rahman Baloch aka Rahman Dakait. Rahman Dakait was purportedly given the task to promulgate a new kind of order for Lyari—he would be allowed a monopoly over extorting money (*bhatta*) from local businesses in Lyari Town and to exercise the means he and his organization had developed to wrestle turf from other parties eliciting extortion money—namely the MQM’s militant wing. Furthermore, he would also be allowed to consolidate his interests in the drug trafficking, smuggling, and stolen cars and motorbikes resale businesses that he had already established. In turn, Rahman’s outfit would supply the ‘street strength’ or ‘street presence’ to the PPP against that of the MQM and the Pashtun nationalist ANP. Lyari, after all was majority Baluch-Sindhi, and the PPP—though a strong federalist party ‘of the people’—in the province of Sindh, and especially in Karachi represented the interests of those ethnic communities. So, it appears Mr. Mirza’s idea was that since the MQM claimed to represent the Muhajir (40% of Karachi’s 22+ million population) and the ANP represented the Pashtuns, the PPP will consolidate the Baluchi and Sindhi dominant ‘enclaves’ of the city.²

As a corollary to this settlement, to which it appears that the head of PPP and the eventual president of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari was privy and party—Rahman Dakait achieved a serious upgrade. Formerly a precocious, even pre-eminent gang-boss from Lyari, he became the head of the nascent organization called the People’s Aman Committee (PAC). Rahman Dakait sought a return to becoming Rahman Baloch, a son of Lyari, taking charge of the affairs, demands and aspirations of his beleaguered home town by day—while building a major crime syndicate by night. Hitherto we have been calling or imagining Rahman’s outfit as a unitary formation—a gang. Now it has a moniker to go with, a re-branding, a different claim—People’s Aman Committee. Aman meaning peace, the claim was at odds with many of the functions of the

² Lyari was the only such city district not located in the periphery of the city. In fact, it is lucratively ensconced between the industrial SITE area and Karachi’s financial hub, I.I. Chundrigar Rd.

formation, and thus a set of practices had to be invented to go along with the new brand. The formation, well before it became PAC, had been a project of power consolidation for Rahman and a tenuous one at that. It had arisen from the bones of countless other ‘gangs’ of Lyari. Its lineage, according to many of its members is varied—some taking it back to Dadal’s ‘gang’ in the 1980’s, others back to the great ‘dakait’ Kadu Makrani. Its membership was fluid and contingent upon Rahman’s ability to keep members and sub-groups engaged and paid. With the enhancement of the formation, and its rebranding, the outfit had to become more than petty criminals—they had to become Baluch Sardars, leaders and heroes.

Something didn’t stick. Something didn’t quite work in the arrangement that Mr. Mirza had orchestrated. In 2008 the PPP won a famous victory in the national elections as Musharraf’s regime was ousted by a popular movement for the restoration of democracy and civilian rule was re-established. The PPP also formed a government in the province of Sindh—albeit in fragile alliance with the MQM ‘who always rule Karachi’, as an informant puts it. Lyari, of course, voted for PPP in overwhelming numbers—it was after all a matter of loyalty. The People’s Aman Committee in the meanwhile had begun campaigning for access to clean water and other citizens’ rights on behalf of Lyari and its residents.

They donated sewing-machines to the widows of Lyari, promoted the age-old tradition of holding street-side schools in Lyari. The PAC sought out its Baloch brethren in another working-class and ailing and resource-deprived part of Karachi, Landhi. It faced armed resistance from the MQM as it ‘liberated’ these zones of the city from the tyranny of the Muhajir nationalists. The storied and bustling bazaars at Lea Market, *Banarsi Bazaar* and *Joria Bazaar*, whose wholesale-market traders had for ages been harassed by MQM affiliate street thugs were now rendered free to offer ‘donations’ to the PAC. In many ways though, the PAC, in embarking upon an expansion of its political and criminal roles, had overreached. In 2009, Rahman Dakait was declared a wanted man, and in August he was killed in a confrontation with the Sindh Police while they arranged for his arrest at the orders of the Sindh home minister Mr. Mirza. The PAC was taken over by the upstart Uzair Jan Baloch.

Initially it appeared that the PAC would be disbanded, and indeed there was the bid by the PPP, which had reached a settlement with the MQM in the provincial assembly, for the PAC to disband—the number of ‘gang-related’ deaths in Lyari and adjacent localities had increased

manifold including the ‘target-killings’ or assassinations of political and business opponents. In all this tension between the defunct PAC and the forces of law and order, including sporadic but numerous Ranger-led ‘operations’; the PAC continued to represent itself as something akin to a Lyari-based charitable fund. In fact, less than two years after the eradication of Rahman Dakait, the PPP government placed a ban on the PAC under the counter-terrorism act in October 2011. The ushering in of the ban seemed to have been made inevitable by the events of the bloody summer of 2011—when more than a thousand people were killed during Ramadan—and in the aftermath of which our story began. The issue lay in the fact that if Rahman’s hold over a unified formation identifiable as a gang was a balancing act, Uzair’s ascension to power and the establishment of his putative ‘hold’ on Lyari was an even more tenuous matter.

To return to the main thread of our story, however, why was Zulfiqar Mirza, a rich sugar-mill owner, celebrated and die-hard supporter of the PPP who was instrumental in the setting up of Lyari’s parapolitical setup, so angry at the government’s treatment of its ‘ardent workers’ in Lyari? In June 2011, Mirza was relieved of his duties as the home minister and, ironically, given the portfolios of Prison Systems and Public Works. In the aftermath of the blood-works of the previous month, Mirza lashed out against the federal Minister of the Interior Rahman Malik, calling him the ‘single biggest threat to Pakistan’s future’. Mirza was a member of the executive committee of the party, and the senior vice-president of the Sindh division of the party. He resigned from both posts as well as his seat in the provincial assembly towards the end of August 2011, holding a copy of the Holy Quran on his head and vowing never to betray the party ‘til the day he died. Claiming to know and having proof as to who it was that perpetrated the “violence in this city” he implicated Malik, his fellow party member, within that group. On live television, Mirza declaimed: “I want to tell the president, the prime minister, the army chief and the [head of Pakistan’s intelligence agency]. I am going away, praying that it’s never too late to speak the truth.”³

It appears that Uzair Jan Baloch’s ascension into power had become a thorn in the side of the PPP government. His ascension was of course not a given thing, and Rahman Dakait’s death saw the splintering of multiple underbosses vying for some kind of a piece of the void Dakait had left behind. It could be argued Uzair and his ally Zafar Baloch, who were close to Dakait,

³ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/241132/sindh-senior-minister-zulfiqar-mirza-resigns/>

realized that while the ‘establishment’ or the PPP government did not see a use for them in Lyari presently, did not mean that they never would. In fact, a former informant from within Uzair’s outfit reflected on this by stating that it was precisely because the Uzair group did not have a monopoly over violence—like Rahman did—that their relationship with the entrenched political classes in the city was strained and shaky. The task before them was this: in order to take over from where Rahman left off, meant keeping the establishment in abeyance while achieving the monopoly over the informal and illicit economy in Lyari.

However, what added further complexity to the dynamics was that the preeminent threat from MQM to the gangs of Lyari was still a real threat that had to be thwarted. The PPP government had to find some form of rapprochement with the MQM in order to form a provincial government in Sindh; and while it had been a tenuous and reluctant handshake, my informants are convinced that Rahman’s police encounter was a byproduct of the recognition of MQM’s hold over Karachi by the ruling party. Moreover, while in the years immediately prior to the 2008 elections it was the ANP’s Pashtun armed factions who were most successful in challenging the MQM in places like Sher Shah and Rabia City, an alliance between the gangs of Lyari and the ANP could not be achieved simply because, according to one informant they were like apples and oranges. Their particular aims and domains of operation did not overlap. Other informants seem to imply that there was a meeting arranged by the ‘Americans’ between representatives of the PPP government, the ANP leadership and the MQM *rabita* committee. Because American arms and supplies passed through Karachi and were transported in the trucks subcontracted from the Pakistan Army and the ‘ANP’s Pashtun trucker network’ it was in their interest to broker a peace in Karachi between the three factions so that this supply line remained uninterrupted. No one invited our notorious gangsters of Lyari, it seems.

In any case, by the beginning of 2011 the ‘gang war’ was already underway in Lyari between rival factions with names such as Ustad Taju, Jhengu Makrani, Faisal Pathan, Shiraz Comrade, Ali Zigri, Wasiullah Lakho, Basit Maut emerging as significant players in the game. Three major loci of power emerged at this time around which these other reputed names and their own merry bands coalesced: Uzair Baloch’s People’s Peace Committee (PAC) with which we are familiar already, Noor “Baba Ladla” Mohammad’s outfit and Arshad Pappu’s gang. But

so long as Lyariites killed Lyariites they were only of nuisance value—they were hardly a ‘crisis’ worthy of address.

However Lyari is home to much of the labor force that operated the docks located in the adjacent township of Keamari, and those who worked in the adjacent industrial zone of S.I.T.E. It is also located adjacent to Karachi’s finance hub, I.I. Chundrigar Road, in its financial district of Saddar. Lyarians are, in fact, well-represented as workers at the ports, markets, factories, as day-laborers, and at the Keamari harbor. Most of these workers earned daily wages, and it was becoming often a matter of life and death for many Lyarians to reach their workplaces and stay afloat in an economy that was designed to be inimical to the urban poor. The fishing harbor, in fact, was directly affected by Lyari’s precarity as hundreds of workers required to load and unload the fresh but heavy stock of fish are primarily supplied by Lyarians. Much the same can be said for many of the factories in the SITE zone.

In the context of these increasingly exacerbated economic factors, in January two police officers were killed at a Muharram procession. In April, a bomb exploded in the *Ghaas* Market killed at least two score, there were daily reports of tortured bodies in pieces tied up in a potato sack and left on the street sides as messages. By bloody summer of 2011, more people had been killed in instances of ‘urban violence’ in Karachi than the laborious endeavors of the Taliban in the north.⁴ These well-meaning and hapless generals who had laid low in two seconds of guilt and ignominy brought about by their errant son Musharraf’s ouster, at this point raised their heads smelling prey. The events in Lyari certainly precipitated a hiss or two from Major General Aijaz Chaudhry who observed that, "the problem in Karachi is very serious, rather more serious than that of South Waziristan," and "[t]here is polarization to an unprecedented level on the political, ethnic, and/or religious divides." In Chaudhry's view, "The problem can only be solved through application of special means as well as requesting political leadership to eliminate militancy from their wings. The political face of the city has been taken hostage by militant groups of political parties. Political parties are penetrated by the criminals under the garb of political groups who use party flags. The militants and criminals are taking refuge in the lap of

⁴ Who, during this time were slowly and efficiently, block-by-block taking over the peripheral townships of Mangho Pir, Katti Pahari and eventually Orangi Town—one of the largest slum-towns in South Asia. The Taliban were—are—quiet and efficient, slowly eradicating the existent Pashtun *dalaals*, and taking over important chunks of the city before anyone knew what was up.

political and ethnic parties which use the flags of these parties to commit illegal activities with impunity."⁵

We will return to the role of the Pakistan Rangers in Lyari later on in this paper. Suffice it to note for now, that at this point in most public narratives they enter the picture claiming to be *the* solution or the *only* instrument of control and order, at the inauguration of the crisis. This is what statist discourses often maintain. Instead, the Rangers' interests in Karachi—which have only recently come to the fore in public discourse—have been systematic and long-term. Well before the time when Lyari began its career as the site of a crisis. That, arguably, began in 2011.

The holy month of Ramadan in the summer of 2011, leading up to Mirza's diatribe against his own party, was one of the bloodiest for Karachi. While the US was urging the Pakistani government to deal with its slight Taliban infestation, 'things' were bad enough in Lyari for Prime Minister Gilani to describe Karachi's 'situation' as the country's 'greatest challenge'. A senior police officer went on to proclaim that this was a battle beyond the police, between "maniacs" with "no moral values". The multiple vectors of (depends on who's telling the story) violence sometimes took an ethnic color—Baluchi gangs who wanted "their slice" of the city while the preeminent street power of MQM thugs didn't "want to share the cake". The economy of road-side potato sacks filled with dead bodies grew experienced a boom, and videos of torture sessions emerged on Facebook and YouTube. Some corpses turned up with notes pinned to them saying: "Do you want war or peace?" and "Have you had enough or do you want more?"⁶

At other times, it was garbed in the language of political violence. According to a report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), 1400 people were killed in instances of 'political, sectarian, or ethnic' violence in 2011 most of which were politically motivated "target killings".⁷ Indeed, in the crisis of allegiances that Mr. Mirza so publicly and vociferously articulated in the aftermath of 'the violence' was an instantiation of this discourse. For Mirza, the party had abandoned its most ardent political workers, in turning on the 'gangs of Lyari' and resolving the 'violence' through the deployment of the Rangers in a 'military operation', and had

⁵ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/karachi.htm>

⁶ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/aug/28/karachi-gang-wars-intervention>

⁷ <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204621.pdf>

clearly sided with the MQM. The most specific of Mirza's contentions was that six MQM affiliate 'thugs' had been instrumental in the murder of a reputed television reporter. He maintained that the 'law' only worked against the hapless Baluchi and Sindhi 'workers' who had decided to stake a claim to 'the city' having been abandoned by the party, the government and the establishment. On the other hand, he had—as the newly appointed minister of the carceral system in Sindh—transferred many MQM thugs who orchestrated violence in the city from their cozy cells on death row⁸. He claimed that the MQM's electoral hold on the city was dependent upon a veritable army of about 15000 men involved in death-works and that it did not have the popular mandate of the people of Karachi.

The bizarre logic of Mirza's open proclamation of his involvement on behalf of the PPP to recruit the Lyari gangs was this: he was doing what he was accusing the MQM to have done, as a means of exposing what MQM *had* done. Moreover, elements in the government and the PPP, of which Mirza only named Rahman Malik, were working in collusion with MQM to maintain their ruse of electoral power. To cap off the gamut of hackneyed tropes at hand in discussing the nature of political violence in Karachi, Mirza finally added that MQM and Rahman Malik were in on a 'secret American plot' to thus break up Pakistan and he "can't stand anyone who talks about splitting th[e] country".⁹ As one of my key informants mused, 'what a drama! Of course all of this might be true, but who says these things on live TV!' Clearly, to a wide array of commentators, Mirza's break-in-the-act was perceived as a performance akin to the "I'm mad as hell" speech given by the character Howard Beale in *Network*. It defied the 'rules of the game'.

The hole that constitutes the W(hole)

"Whether the revolutionary crowd is represented as 'Ia canaille' or 'swinish multitude' by Taine and Burke; as 'Victorious Anarchy' by Carlyle; or as 'Le peuple' or 'tout Paris' by Michelet and Aulard—it has been treated by one and all as a disembodied abstraction..." — Rude (1959)

⁸ Pakistan has had, until 2015 a moratorium on death penalty which was only lifted after the horrific attack by the Taliban on a military run school in Peshawar earlier this year that saw scores of children being killed.

⁹ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/241132/sindh-senior-minister-zulfikar-mirza-resigns/>

This paper is as much about a retelling of Lyari's recent history from a different perspective as it is about identifying how a life-world gets to be identified as a 'crisis'—i.e., in this instance, when an intensification of the problem of violence in Lyari becomes a problem *in general*. I relay an account of what the construction of this crisis entails—and what it silences to shed light on what makes into the story of Lyari, and what gets left out. Again tied to this story is of course a “whodunit”: who gets to define a crisis and in what ways. The Rangers—i.e. the military—is central to this narrative even if it enters public discourse as an instrument of social course correction, a part of the solution, or as purveyors of objective righteous violence. This violence is not ‘the violence of Lyari’—it is usually not violence at all. It is an ‘operation’, ‘it is clean-up’ [c.f. Taussig (2003) “*limpiezas*”]. Violence is a Lyari problem, but what does this violence entail? I argue that at certain moments in Lyari's history certain aspects of people's activities—which are within the standard deviation of a commonplace set of strategies obtained from the material conditions produced within a specific economy-- are ‘politicized’ and presented as a crisis in order to mask other processes of political subjugation.

During Musharraf's dictatorship (1999-2007) the MQM effected its own resurgence from political peripheries culminating in a firm grip on the city government in Karachi. The mayoral tenure of the much-celebrated Mustafa Kamal (2005-2010) was an ‘about-turn’ in MQM's tactics of appropriating power in Karachi. No more was the party overtly wedded to its Muhajir nationalist narrative—although the infrastructure of militant ‘units’ that sustained the ‘democratic’ control of the party over the city, while diminished in their audacity, still thrived. Instead, Kamal's government promulgated a new narrative of ‘stability’ and ‘development’ for the Karachi—to turn it into a ‘world-class’ city by courting investments from multinationals as well as utilizing its import to the federal government to procure developmental funds from Islamabad. That this newfound commitment to the most caricatured form of neoliberal urban governance coincided with the financial bubble of the mid-2000s subsidized through the American anti-terror capital influx and the emergence of ‘middle-class’ consumerist desires should not be surprising.

Neither should the fact that the emerging political classes in Lyari—Rahman Baloch, his PAC, and their dalliances with pro-PPP party politics—were left out of this vision of urban development. What appears to be an ethnic conflict dressed in the contentious language of

autochthony and marginalization is in many ways a bid to partake in this emergent political economy of neoliberal development. Thus the assertion of Baluch identity on the part of Lyari's upstart political classes—classified from without as 'gangs'—cannot be coded simply as the political assertion of a marginalized group's 'right to the city'. Instead it was a claim by a 'marginal' emergent political class that was laying claim to be the instruments of political and economic subjection of an ethnically diverse Lyari. It was a claim towards representation not dissimilar from the erstwhile MQM strategy, or from any political formation that takes the 'might is right to rule' route. Nonetheless, it was a claim that was periodically denied or coopted by the entrenched political classes operating on the level of the city i.e. the MQM and PPP.

What is important to realize here is that it would be too simple to characterize the gangs of Lyari as criminals—for that determination would situate our analysis from the viewpoint of the entrenched political classes and their public discourse (i.e. Statist, the Archive)—the upstart, criminal, violent gangs of Lyari had to be eradicated. We might be tempted to still hold on to this partial truth—for indeed violence and the logic of legally (illicit criminality of the gangs vs. the licit 'politics' of the PPP or MQM or the 'security forces) and customarily (Baluch vs. Muhajir ethnicity) determined difference is, in a limited respect, internally coherent. This is the narrative of the political classes.

We might also—though this view is less common owing to the spectacularly obscene number of deaths owed to 'gang' bloodworks—be tempted to recognize the 'eruption' of gang violence as a form of an assertion of a subaltern group's 'right to the city'. Indeed some of the terms of discourse may lend themselves to such an interpretation. Laurent Gayer's ethnographically rich account of Karachi's present conjuncture relays an aspect of this discourse (Gayer 2014: 124-127). In an interview with the author, Zafar Baloch, the late right-hand man of Uzair Baloch, expresses resentment at how the MQM has developed its constituencies "in a big way". While Lyari remains impoverished. As Gayer rightly observes, what this statement betrays is not a concern with 'ethnic' rivalry. One must also add, as is obvious, that these are also not 'criminal' concerns. This is instead indicative of a bid to 'control' (using Gayer's terms) the local state in Karachi. In fact, to take Gayer's observation to its logical conclusion—it expresses the bid of a nascent *political* class to be the *state*. As Gayer calls them 'bandits who would be

kings’—but are constantly denied, as Lyariites have been for over a century, a seat at the negotiating tables.

However, it must be recognized that there can be no romance about the gangs and their “tryst with destiny” either. The PAC and other gangs pose no emancipatory horizon from the mode of oppression and extraction in Lyari but make a bid to wrest power over these extractive processes in Lyari. It is a move from a formal subsumption of productive forces in Lyari into ‘real’ subsumption into a specific mode of articulation of political power within an economy of ‘violence’. A colonization of political imagination by the same model of political praxis inaugurated by the MQM and furthered by the PPP in Lyari, provided the blueprints for the gangs. Violence, in this respect, is the necessary residue of all cynical politics.

Which is not to elide but rather to underscore that politically marginalized groups—such as those in working class neighborhoods such as Lyari, as well as Malir, Landhi and so on—suffer severe socio-economic inequalities under successive extractive arrangements in the city. Lyari has, throughout its history, experienced the brunt of such processes of accumulation and extraction. The ethnicization of political discourses in Karachi, coinciding with the consolidation of industrial production during the economic sanctions beginning in the mid-nineties, the perduring vampiricism of SAPs and the putative ‘flight of capital’ (or to be accurate, a rearticulation of accumulation) in the post-9/11 Pakistan hit Karachi’s minorities badly. Downsizing in the industrial sector, closure of factories, relocations of production sites away from Karachi, affected Baluch wage-laborers disproportionately in many successive economic restructuring in Pakistan, even before its intensification in the ‘neoliberal’ regimes of the recent past. Baluch government employees lost jobs in the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) (most significantly) as well as other governmental departments even as the Muhajir—at least those who were close to the emergent political classes affiliated with the MQM—did not. The anticipation of investment in Karachi during the Kamal years were ultimately too optimistic for all involved, and the bursting of the financial bubble of Musharraf era predated his own ignominious felling.

Thus neither is the gang economy in Lyari a product of resistive anti-hegemonic class formation for it fails to ‘represent’ an undifferentiated voice of the marginalized classes in the political peripheries of the city; nor is it, what the entrenched political classes and those who peddle their discourses a straightforward problem of criminality, for it is deeply rooted in the

political processes operative in the city. A more historically informed and analytically sophisticated way of apprehending the gangs might be to look at it not as a causal/functional product of synchronic political formations but additionally, also as a product of successive contestations over the political subjugation of productive forces in the city diachronically. Indeed, there is a sense in which emergence of the gangs of Lyari can be traced back to diverse forms of formal subsumption of military labor from the Makran coast of Baluchistan going back well into the nineteenth century.

Baloch labor—and especially military labor, as some argue (c.f. Lutfi 2015)—had already been in heavy circulation across the Indian Ocean world in the era prior to the arrival of the British colonial forces at the doorsteps of the Makran coast in the mid-19th century. Fabled heroes such as Chakar Rind and Kadu Makrani, military laborer or mercenaries, have a symbolic economy ranging from the coasts of Zanzibar to Gujrat. Their multivalent legacies paint them as Baloch heroes, anti-imperialists, mercenaries and ‘dacoits’—often all of these concurrently. Much of this military labor was ‘seasonal’ or contractual as when employed in other parts of what is now India, while more permanent settlements were made in the Gulf States.¹⁰ This meant that what came to be the British colonial city of Karachi, of which Lyari is one of the oldest parts, already saw much traffic of the Makrani ‘mercenaries’. In time, as we shall shortly see, these ‘dacoits’ will find political articulation in Lyari as the primary working class locality in nascent Karachi.

The first wave of Makrani Baluch settlers arrived in Karachi during the disintegration of both the Mughal as well as Iranian imperial formations, as the proto-Balochi-Sindhi polities of the Kalhoros and later the Talpurs were on the ascendancy. It appears that around this time Lyari was called ‘Dirbu’, eventually being absorbed into a fishing settlement of multiple ‘goths’ collectively known as Kolachi-jo-Ghothe. Informants are keen to assert that even at this time these fishing communities were composed of what would ethnically be classified as *Baloch* fisher-folk. The Talpurs, it appears, followed the practice of their neighboring princely polities, to post Baloch ‘mercenaries’ at their Manora Island sea fort, a short few miles off the coast.

¹⁰ For a detailed historical sociology of Baloch Military labor extending from the 18th century to the Arab Spring and after, refer to the doctoral dissertation research of Ameer Lutfi, Department of Cultural Anthropology, Duke University.

When the marauding British marched a murderous blitz through Sindh under Charlie Napier's forces, the mercenaries were rendered redundant.

The British garrisoned in the emergent city of Karachi deciding to build a deep water harbor in a locality adjacent to present-day Lyari and connect it through the railway to Punjab and the rest of Sindh. The labor requirements for this massive urbanization project subsumed labor from the Baloch goths near the port and the old river-bed of the river Lyari near the port, became the main locus for the informal housing of these migrants. The projects also attracted waves of migrants, this time from the Iranian part of the Makran coast as well as Makranis of African origins—*Shidis*—migrating from the Omani held portions of the same. These two groups constitute the largest portion of the current Baloch population of Lyari and trans-Lyari parts of Karachi. The conflation of an undifferentiated 'Baloch' identity for Lyari's cosmopolitan population is a central part of the discourses put in play by contemporary political classes. Shidi 'culture' is fetishized, Baloch politics are projected in aggregate.

This fetish is interesting in how much economy it holds in both liberal activist and journalistic discourses as well as the discourse of the political classes. In all instances, it appears as a lament. One informant calls it the 'beautiful backside of Lyari's ugly mug'. Such accounts aim to posit an underlying 'essence' to the 'rich culture' of Lyari. Indeed, in these accounts, Lyari becomes the 'old city' repository of Karachi's cosmopolitanism, bonhomie and vivaciousness. That this is articulated vis-à-vis the 'othering' of black bodies even in Karachi is testament to how much cultural reification and politically motivated forgetting has gone into this construction. The 'locality' is often described as 'always' having a large Afro-Makrani population. The word Makrani, in Karachi, in fact is less of a geographic marker as it is an identifier of a perceived 'Afro'-original phenotype.

For instance, a celebrated columnist in one of Pakistan's premier English language newspaper, writes with a tone of awe and fascination of how "linguistically 'they' speak variations of Balochi and Sindhi and (in Karachi) they are also known to have created a "distinct dialect of Urdu referred to as Makrani in which Urdu words are mixed with Balochi and Sindhi expressions and even popular English terms...used mostly in a tongue-in-cheek way".¹¹ The

¹¹ Dawn, NFP, *The good the bad and the Lyari*, March 28th 2012

‘African flavor’ of Lyari coincides with its ‘culture’ of working-class solidarity, secularism, Sufism, spirituality and distinctly syncretic “Afro-Baluch” aesthetics. Just a few short years ago, some of my English-language journalist informant recalls, the neighborhood was much “like it had always been”: the historical district of a sprawling metropolis.

A zone of conservation for Karachi’s “ethics of welcoming all who seek her”, it was a “close-knit community that displayed cosmopolitan values and ideals.” Some informants point to the 19th century colonial buildings, and not-so-distant memories of Portuguese-Goanese street dancers and East African witch-dance rituals. Others emphasize how Lyari was a “haven of ethnic harmony in the violent ethnic tumult that marked the rest of Karachi”. Often this “stability and harmony” of the past is attributed to Lyari’s strong tradition of labor unionism and a vibrant culture of organized popular politics. Most of my informants—every one of whom passed through the government school infrastructure—maintain that the educational infrastructure of Lyari consisted of ‘homegrown’ street schools. The number of times “Lyari’s favorite sports” of football and boxing are mentioned—almost as if evincing the humanity of these ‘other’—in public discourse is itself astounding. Underwriting the insistence of ‘this culture’ is the ‘street’ and ‘working-class’ and ‘popular’ nature of it. The idea might be unconscious but bleeds through the picture nakedly—Lyari’s working classes, and Lyari as a ‘working class’ zone, so long as continue to remain just that become culture. As soon as the dominant classes from or of Lyari begin to assert their own projects of political subjection, all hell breaks loose. Contemporary conditions in Lyari bear few, if any, obvious traces of the harmonious history described by informants.

The Clothes Have No Emperor

When our story begins with Mr. Mirza in the summer of 2011 more than a thousand had been killed in Karachi and that same Sunday when Mr. Mirza made his crazed television speech, the 28th of August, the Rangers entered Lyari in an attempt to ‘end this crisis of gang violence’. Even at this point, many elements within the PPP made it clear that the deployment of the army could eventually topple its flailing 3-year old government and Pakistan’s latest, America supported experiment with ‘democracy’. While the paramilitary Rangers were ostensibly supposed to be under civilian control, all involved knew that that was never going to be the case. On entering

Lyari, the Rangers, then as now, “uncovered” torture chambers and arms caches during frequent raids in Lyari. A dank basement was shown to journalists with handcuffs and padlocks attached, while it was also impressed upon them that entry into Lyari was a hard fought battle—that two earlier attempts to liberate Lyari had failed. The gangs were once more presented at these show-and-tells as being at once ethnically differentiated, politically affiliated and economically motivated. The Rangers were once more presented as a hard-working diligent force working to restore law and order.¹

And yet, what ensued was not a concerted operation against the gangs—400 people still died in ‘gang violence’ the first three months of 2012—but a process of consolidation by the Rangers. To illustrate the case in point one need only to look at a recent expose by Aamir Majeed which shows how the Sindh Rangers are unlawfully running a construction business in the city to “meet their expenses”. Taking over Karachi University grounds in the heart of the city, they opened a company called the “Karachi Block Works” (KBW), which prepares and sells construction material in the open market and provides services for building and demolition. They are, according to other informants in the city, actively speculating on valuable undeveloped land in the city—illegally taking over public parks and privately owned empty plots. In the instance Majeed investigates, they intercepted the main drinking water pipeline of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board in the area to abet in the industrial manufacture of ‘high quality’ bricks; which has meant no drinking water for residential zones in the vicinity. All of this, done in the name of ‘meeting law enforcement expenses’, is despite the specially earmarked three million dollars allocated to the paramilitary forces which they claim they haven’t seen yet.¹²

We turn now to another tragedy of a different sort. Even as the ‘gang war’ in Lyari was approaching its bloodiest month to date, on 13th of June 2011 the slow and arduous death of 22-year old young man named Sarfraz Shah was captured on a mobile phone camera at a public park in Karachi. Somebody appears to be dragging the young man, who is pleading and crying towards the solemn uniformed figures of some Sindh Rangers. The young man is pushed back towards the ground and shot twice, arm’s length away from the Ranger who wielded the gun. He is shot in the arm and in the thigh. The young man goes to the ground—but isn’t dead yet. He is writhing in agony and pleading to be taken to a hospital, as blood starts soaking up his clothes.

¹² Aamir Majeed, “Rangers cementing hold in Karachi”

As the video proceeds, he loses the energy to beg for his life, and goes still while the Rangers are just standing there watching their victim die.

Sarfraz Shah's family claimed that he had been out on a walk and was completely innocent of the accusation made by the Rangers that he was trying to rob someone. Even the Rangers admit that the young man was unarmed and the killing unprovoked. As the incident was caught on camera and made its perverse rounds on national news channels, it came to the notice of both Chief Justice Iftikhar A. Chaudhry's Supreme Court as well as the Sindh government. The head of the Sindh Rangers, Fayaz Leghari was fired from his position and the murderer, Shahid Zafar, was tried and sentenced to death.

In much of the news media, the primary discourse narrated the 'exceptional' brutality of the murder, the deranged equanimity with which Zafar had perpetrated this heinous act, the 'responsibility' of those in charge of the Rangers to vet out 'the crazies' within its ranks. Of course Fayaz Leghari, fired from command of the Rangers, nonetheless, was soon in charge of the Federal Investigations Agency (FIA), and shortly thereafter returned as the chief of Sind police. Neither did most people who engaged in the short-lived political debate after the incident, connect this incident to the multiple disappearances and extrajudicial murders perpetrated by the paramilitary forces. Fewer still connected this incident to the everyday extrajudicial murder, torture, occupation and terrorizing of the Baluch people by the military and its proxies in Baluchistan.

By this time, the Rangers were already, at this time, at play in Lyari, disappearing, torturing and killing young men who were allegedly, and often after-the-fact, declared members of the Lyari gang economy. Within the public debate no one questioned the very presence of a paramilitary force at a public park in the heart of a relatively posh neighborhood in Pakistan's biggest metropolis. The Rangers were armed with G3 battle rifles—using the same weapon to end Sarfraz Shah. Their presence as instruments of 'security' was taken for granted even as they prove themselves to be agents of something quite different.

Those who support a military operation in Lyari potentially support turning every young Lyariite into a Sarfraz Shah—but this time with indemnity. Indeed, many of my informants make no distinctions between the gangs and the Rangers within their everyday experiences with 'men with guns'. The story of 'Adam and Hawa' (above) is case in point. The connection between the political parties at play in Karachi and gang activity is clear and now appears a part of public

discourse, but few comment on the symbiotic relationship between the production of Lyarians as ‘gangs’ with the continued presence of the Rangers in the city.

Of course, the mandate of legality that justify the Rangers’ presence in Karachi and the ‘military operation’ they are spear-heading in Karachi stems from the context of ‘anti-terrorism’ policies and laws enacted in post-9/11 Pakistan. The paramilitary forces are under a constant imperative to ‘produce results’ which means the indiscriminate statisticalization and devaluation of Lyariite lives. The number of ‘gangsters’ killed in Karachi by the armed forces staggers the imagination and counts upwards of a thousand in this past year and a half. A key, early informant of mine—a respected writer of Afro-Baluch descent—who was keen to show me, in our initial engagements, ‘the positive side’ of Lyari dropped out of my research for some of the most tragic reasons I have yet to encounter in my time researching Lyari. The gentleman’s son and nephew, one summer night, were abducted by the forces ‘for questioning’ regarding their alleged affiliation with ‘the gangs’.

The two teenagers spent more than a week in custody during which time their family members were not allowed to see them and no legal tender was brought to bear upon their detention. During that time, my informant would desperately go around pleading in bureaucratic channels and political patrons for the release of his son and nephew. The last time I spoke to this informant was when I called to inquire after his kin, his son had been returned to him tortured and mentally unstable. His nephew, it is unclear how, returned dead. Another informant, who is a mutual friend, a few weeks later informed me that my informant’s daughter—it appears betrothed to the late nephew—had ‘died of a broken heart’. One wonders what index of ‘urban’ violence claims this death in its columns, and what mimicry of humanity justifies it as collateral damage in the war of ‘law’ against its others.

Other informants, nurses and young school-teachers—men in their early twenties—tell stories of their encounters with the ‘authorities’—to escape with a bribe, having been roughed up, or asked to produce ‘original ID cards’ for identification, is to count oneself lucky. One of my key informants, let’s call him Akbar, is a man in his thirties affiliated with a gang which was supposed to be working as a proxy for the MQM in Lyari. According to Akbar, who was at a lower level in the loose hierarchy internal to the gangs, at the ‘street’ level they knew protocols of dealing with matters *internal* to Lyarians—by which he meant alliances and enmities between

the ‘gangs’. Often, these alliances were childhood friendships, the enmities were grudges of adolescence preceding participation in the gang economy.

Akbar, for instance, at a time when his outfit was at ‘war’ with the ‘boys’ of Ustad Taju, narrates the story—almost in a jocular manner—of how one of Taju’s soldiers had a hit out on him, yet still wanted to attend a recently slain cousin’s funeral. Having no other recourse, this dangerous gangster, dressed up in a burqa and attended his cousin’s funeral. “But his wailing was too manly, and he was found out!” said Akbar. At the time Akbar was narrating this story, another woman informant of mine interjected by saying, *“Yes! It was so surprising. Initially, we were so angry because all we saw was [the men] dragging a woman in burqa across the street! It was surprising because our men are honorable, they do not touch women like this. Not in our area...”*

In all this time spent with Akbar and his friends it was very difficult to find brutal criminals—only brutalized humans. These ethnographic experiences—lives, memories, stories, conversations—lead one to ask the question of who benefits by the production of these individuals and groups, takes a certain subset of their actions, assigns motives to them, and passes them off as criminals. Men such as Akbar are yet affiliated with ‘the gangs’; the heroin addicts in Marroro graveyard, most of whom live in the North-western Lyari neighborhoods of Agra Taj and Hingorabad, also often find themselves picked up by the forces of law and order and enter first-information reports as gangsters and terrorists. Other informants tell me that the same graveyard from which the heroin addicts are picked up, remains a primary location for hiding weapon caches for ‘the gangs’ without much inquiry from the forces of law and order. Why do the forces enforce certain kinds of police action while eschewing others? If the introduction of the Rangers is premised on the fact that they, unlike the local police, are not a part of the so-called politics-criminality nexus in Lyari, then how was it that for the past four years they appeared uninterested in objectively efficacious operations in Lyari?

Over the summer of 2013, one could find a Ranger corps at every entrance into Lyari while the two highways (Lyari Expressway and Mauripur Road) had even healthier outfits guarding them: one could not say for certain whether keeping the peace meant keeping violence out or keeping Lyariites ‘in’. In the past four years, at different moments of ‘exceptional unrest’ (even by Lyari standards) the Rangers have been continually ‘deployed’ in Lyari to carry out armed operations against the gangs. One of my journalist informants recalls:

“You know they just went in there blind, they are not of the area and they don’t know the streets and the blind alleys. So as fearless as they were reported to be they had no idea what they were doing. They’d stay on the outskirts of the area and fell into a pattern of containment. So even if there was an ‘operation’ going on in Lyari it was mostly a show battle. The gangs would fire in the air, the rangers would fire in the air. Here or there some unfortunate people would die. A few days of silence and the ‘operation’ declared successful...and then business as usual on the third day.”

While earlier the Rangers were seen to be above the maladies of corruption, inefficiency, partisanship and ethno-communalism that chronically maligned the police; by summer 2013, it had become common discourse on the streets that they had caught that bug too. One of my informants even made a distinction between different ‘companies’ within the Rangers. He said that a specific company of the Sindh Rangers, by the virtue of extended exposure to the ways of the police, had begun following the same activities as the police itself:

“I mean even if you’re an upstanding and non-partisan jawaan and you are on the beat and every day you see the bastard policeman on the same beat getting a load of money from a kid on a motorcycle, just for standing there and doing nothing, After a while you’ll be thinking, what kind of a dumb fuck am I to put my life on the line while the policeman fattens his purse and his self.”

That is why, he said (and this part is true) that in the fall of 2012 the Sachal Company was withdrawn from Lyari and the ASG Company was installed because *‘those guys don’t fuck around.’* And yet, the nature of the operations conducted since then has not changed at all, according to my journalist friend, even as different modalities of expectations are created in response to the police and the rangers even now. While the calls by local political parties for the ‘army to come to Lyari and ‘clean up’ the city once and for all’ are not a general sentiment on the streets and by the tea stands of Lyari (either because of the paranoia that is prevalent there because of gang ‘informers’ or because many families have a young son who’s gone the

gangsters' way) there is an expectation from the Rangers to 'uphold law and order' in a way that the police is not expected to.

For instance, during the evacuation of the Behar Colony during the 3-day gun battle in the area at the end of June 2013; people who'd left their houses came back to find their homes ransacked and their properties stolen. Many of them, however, refused to report to the police. Not just because they did not expect the police to do anything, but also '*lene ke dene par jayenge*' (no gain, just pain) because the police is expected to just ask for bribes and really is in no position to do anything about anything. The Rangers however provoke a different sort of a sentiment. One of my informants recalls his severe disappointment in the Rangers at one point when:

"I was being robbed by a gangwaar, when I stopped my motorbike at a traffic signal on Mauripur Road. I was stupid, I'd other things on my mind and had forgotten not to obey the light there. But as I was getting robbed at gunpoint a group of Rangers were standing on the other side of the road just looking at me. I felt so helpless, and these bastards were just standing there as this kid was waving a gun at me. Nothing will ever improve here if those that are supposed to protect us act like this..."

So the question is, how does one explain this dissonance of sentiment regarding the Rangers in Lyari? At once corrupted and Non-partisan, at once expected to 'act like a State' and implicated in the local networks of power. Both inside and out, *exceptional*. The period following the putative ouster of the military from power has seen an intensification of their presence in Karachi—both as a coercive instrument and as an economic and political *party* to Karachi's politics. Their presence and visibility in Karachi is now being deemed a more entrenched political move by the informed and observant. Under the leadership of Major-General Bilal Akbar, the Rangers have unleashed a 'mega' operation that has rendered the MQM, the gangs of Lyari and 'religious extremists and militants' within the same category—those subject to 'cleanup' in the city.

While the narrative of political and economic ties between 'criminal' elements and political parties were common knowledge on the street—as well as in the 'exceptional', deranged exposes such as that of Zulfikar Mirza's, it is still interesting how the authorities have still managed to

recently ‘uncover’ the same fact. Presented as an investigative accomplishment of ‘specialized’ law enforcement in the city, we are told in press conferences that ‘billions of rupees’ of political money are sourced to extortion, land-grabbing, and corruption rackets. As if the forces of law and order themselves were not party to this (c.f. Siddiq 2007, as well as the KBW instance recounted above), magnanimous proclamations of incredulity are made by their representatives ‘revealing’ that ‘organized networks’ including ‘criminal gangs of Lyari’ and politicians are involved in licit and illicit business ventures together.¹³

However, it does not simply serve to show that the Rangers, who percolate in public discourse as instruments rather than agents of political machinations—as a class of individuals claiming to be ‘of the state’ and thus ‘fixing’ society. This is not simply about setting the record straight, but to understand how Lyari is amongst a string of crises that certain powerful political classes have to constantly produce in order to materialize or maintain their claim on material resources of the city. To perpetuate this project, one need not, as is clear, simply have a monopoly over the coercive apparatuses—the parties, the gangs, and the militants all possess such efficacy. The process of political subjection—because it involves claims making before the fact of subjection is accomplished—must necessarily accompany a project of ‘moral regulation’ and ‘affect management’.

Moral regulation (c.f. Corrigan 1981) is the production and reproduction of rituals, rules and laws governing social relations such that the political class which effects the regulation appears as an objective arbiter of society while at the same time, its interests appear as the general interest of society. Affect management is a part of moral regulation, since it effaces or embellishes a whole range of affective ties between disparate social groups and individuals to produce a claim such that the dominant classes appear to act upon and represent the ‘dominant attitude’ of a people. An obvious example of this is Islamophobia in Euro-America, where a small section of ‘Islamists’ are referenced and posited as representing all Muslims: their political ambitions, their desires, and their ‘nature’.

In order for these processes to unfold however, a problem needs to be posited—i.e. crisis—one that these dominant political classes—in our case, the army, and its paramilitary proxies—claim to be the only ones capable and willing to solve. Lyari, this paper has argued, is one such

¹³ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/902211/powerful-patrons-crime-economy-nurtures-sindh-top-dignitaries/>

crisis. Thus, the project of unarchiving—i.e. showing this discourse to be a partial representation of reality and asynchronous with material lives of Lyari's peoples—becomes crucial. To “unarchive” the public discourse and the hole within it, is to destroy the faulty logic that reproduce the Rangers as disinterested ‘state’ instruments. It also frees us to reconstitute and realize the repressed material problems facing megapolitan urban spaces such as Karachi, Rio de Janeiro and Lagos beyond the discourses of the dominant political classes.

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