

# **The relationship between Extortion & Politics: A content analysis of reported extortion articles published in newspapers from 2011 – 2014**

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## **Abstract**

*The act of crime is considered to be one of the most widely accepted trepidations among every society. However, it is necessary to mention that these societies around the world have carried out pertinent countermeasures to ensure mental, physical and financial security and safety of their citizens. Unfortunately, in Pakistan the act of crime especially in the economic capital “Karachi” is pervasive and entrenched. This paper examines one of the most widespread type of crime in Karachi which is "extortion" and its linked with politics by collecting different reported cases of extortion in the electronic newspapers from 2011 to 2013. This paper will try to bring forth the basic understanding*

*of extortion as an organized crime with the help of relevant theories and will also provide evidence which supports the relationship between extortion and political affiliation of arrested criminals. Further, it will explore the different aspects of extortion in the city and provide vital statistics regarding the ongoing situation.*

**Keywords:** Organized Crime, Political Affiliation, Extortion

### **Introduction**

The genesis of “*Extortion*” in Pakistan has no traces. It is an unsolved mystery who is to be blamed for its widespread and rampant growth in the city of Karachi. Unfortunately, it has now become a much more profitable business and now has multiple franchises in all the areas of the city. The business community is the most desired target of these extortionists and the situation is worsening remorselessly (Ali, 2014). The genesis of extortion is a myth which has yet to be answered by the authorities. The irony is, the Government of Pakistan has laws which are obsolete and outdated. However, the crime is up to date, and the criminals make the most of out of this situation, because the political system is crippled and still in the process of recovering. The political system in Pakistan has always been in peril and disturbance. Again, who is to be blamed is still a matter of debate, the liberals' say that it is the conservatives' who always support conservative ideology which puts the state into a situation; where clerics promote radicalization, which leads to terrorism and then democracy is pushed away by dictators for the sake of security of the only Islamic Nuclear State. Where, on the other hand, conservatives tell another story, in which they say; it is the western agenda and their agents, the

liberals who support the secular ideology, and are a threat to the land of pure (Raza, 2014).

The politics of Pakistan has been somewhat primitive in nature. This primitive nature of the political system lacks essential components such as accountability which then creates a situation where the political elites use their power as they want to fulfill their vested interest. The lack of accountability promotes corruption and then leads to organizational dysfunction. As this whole working mechanism of statecraft is brought under the corrupt political elite which then struggles to stay in power, opens up the window of opportunity for criminals. Extortion is one of the types of organized crime which has been used by many criminal and terrorist organizations worldwide. In the developed world, extortion is a serious crime and is tackled with great responsibility and they have made considerable achievements in the process of eradicating it. But to root out extortion; is something which law enforcement agencies are still looking towards. The fact is that much has been done in developed nations that has created a difficult situation for criminals and extortionists to promote their business of fear and plunder, but on the contrary in developing countries such as Pakistan, this unlawful business of extortion has flourished in the recent decade and has gone up to new levels. Many operations have been carried out against criminals and extortionist in the economic capital “Karachi” where most of the incidents are also reported. Unfortunately, these operations were not able to bring an end to this menace, and the extortion rackets have progressed due to many different reasons in which political affiliations of criminals and extortionists is one of the debated topics. In this paper, these factors which are responsible for growth and progress of extortion are explained.

Cloward and Ohlin in 1960 proposed the theory of differential opportunity. The differential opportunity theory implies that the due to socioeconomic stratification, a part of society is relegated which causes "strain". *The strain is intense in environments that have traditionally spawned organized crime.* According to

differential opportunity, working-class juveniles will choose one or another type of subcultural (gang) adjustment to their relegated situation depending on the availability of illegitimate opportunity structures in the neighborhood. They view that the pressure for joining delinquent subculture as originating from dis-achieving them through legitimate channels. They also described three types of juvenile subcultures: criminal, conflict and retreats. The criminal sub-culture can be found in slum areas in which hierarchy of available criminal opportunities exists, Such as theft, extortion and property offenses as the mean of success. These disorganized areas are characterized by a conflict subculture (Hagan, 2010)

For instance: If we analyze the situation of Lyari Town, in the context of the "differential opportunity theory" it would be easy for us to understand in spite of being the stronghold of one of the most relevant and popular political party in Pakistan, the people of Lyari are relegated in such a way that they have no quality elementary schools, no reasonable healthcare benefits, not even clean drinking water, and most importantly they have no legitimate legal business and employment opportunities, except to engage illegitimate opportunities which is clearly a sign of socioeconomic stratification. There are no basic health care facilities, no recreational venues, and no appropriate education institutes.

Mazhar Abbas, a prominent journalist and program host writes:

*"It is true that today, the people of Lyari have become strangers in their own localities, at the hands of their own people with no one to address either their grievances to or protect their lives, property, schools, colleges, and their business. It has become a no-go area, especially after sunset" (Abbas, 2013).*

## Overview of Current Situation

Politics in Pakistan has always been a topic of debate because it lacks essential elements which help and contribute in the overall development of the social fabric of society. Instead of the accountability and development of social institutions, the political institution itself has failed to administer the safety and security of the citizens. Analyzing the current situation, it is clear that the political parties are not just political parties but they are also the guardians of "Organized Crime".

In sociology "*Organized Crime*" is defined as a means to upward mobility for those who have struggling financial conditions (Schaefer, 2012 ). One of the types of organized crime is "Extortion". According to *Pakistan Penal Code Act* of (1860), extortion is defined:

*Whoever intentionally puts any person in fear of any injury to that person, or to any other, and thereby dishonestly induces the person so put in fear to deliver to any person any property or valuable security or anything signed or sealed which may be converted into a valuable security, commits "extortion".*

The growth of extortion can be said is due to deteriorating situation of law and order across the country. Not only local criminals are involved in extortion but also the terrorist organizations. The reason of success for extortion as the most desired way of generating money for criminals' and terrorist organizations is because of poor law and order condition throughout the country. Unfortunately, when we compare the overall cases reported in the country to the number of cases reported in the economic capital Karachi, it becomes clear for any lay person to understand that the menace of extortion is basically an urban problem in Pakistan. It

significantly prevails in the economically growing cities than in any other city or village or tribal area. The multi-ethnic city of Karachi is the capital of Sindh with an estimated population of twenty-three million. It is the center of wholesale market, imports, and responsible for the forty-eight percent of direct tax paid all over Pakistan. Karachi was also ranked number one city in 2007 by World Bank among the most business friendly cities in Pakistan (Dawn, 2007).

But unfortunately, the law and order situation in Karachi has deteriorated through time. The poor law and order condition is due to many incompetent and careless decisions of the Sindh Government.

One of the most damaging decisions was to appoint bureaucrats on political affiliation. This resulted in immense corruption in government institutions such as judiciary, police and town administrations. In the past six years, Sindh is the most affected province by these political appointments and promotions. Massive recruitment, irregular induction, unwanted appointments, and promotions were granted on the political basis (Anjum, 2014). The corruption furthermore led to institutional incompetence, which makes it easy for criminals and terrorists to accomplish their vile motives. The extortion mafia in Pakistan has reached new heights. It has made itself so powerful that even police and judiciary seems helpless. The extortion has roots inside the corrupt political system but the evidence to show this reality as fact is still a struggling job for many.

Pakistan has been in a constant security threat since it became an ally in the war against terrorism. Many countries have accused Pakistan, of being a place of sanctuary for the terrorists. It has been also said to be a breeding ground for the *Taliban*. On the other hand, Pakistan has faced ethnic violence since the 1980's. The economic capital Karachi has been the center for ethnocentrism. Each ethnicity is struggling to gain power over the other by promoting ethnic division. The matter of fact is, the ethnic politics has been quite successful in Pakistan. The city of Karachi is also

the center of attraction for different political parties as it is multi ethnic. Instead of providing service to the people these political parties use *ethnocentrism* as a tool to gain support and where they fail to do so, then they use force and violence. Karachi is the economic hub where organized crime, militant wings of political parties and terrorists intersect (Saleem, 2015 ).

### **Mechanism of Extortion**

The mechanism of extortion is a question of much interest. For a layman, it can be understood by simply knowing that the extortionist points the gun on his victims and asks for extortion money, but the process is much more complex. The extortionists precisely choose their targets that are able to pay a huge amount of money for their protection or for the protection of their businesses. There are three different categories in which money is extorted from different types of targets.

The first category is of small business owners, for instance, automobiles scrap/spare parts dealers, mobile repairing shops, grocery shops etc. Second is vegetable and fruit vendors, pan shop, Qing-Qi rickshaw owners and street food business owners. The third category is of professionals and large-scale business owners, for example, Doctors, car importers, factory owners etc. The categorization is defined to elaborate that the extortionist demands money by analyzing its targets business. For example, Qing-Qi is a type of rickshaw which is very much common nowadays on the roads of Karachi. It is a cheap way to travel around the city. The Qing-Qi charges ten rupees for a short distance from one point to another from one passenger. It has a capacity of eight people. The Qing-Qi rickshaws have burdened the city of Karachi by their huge population on roads creating traffic problems because many of the drivers are underage. Talking to a chin-chi driver that how they manage to evade police while chin-chis are banned and illegal, he disclosed that that he pays hundred rupees per day to a political worker who then takes care of police and other hurdles. The chin-chi rickshaws only travel in small distances like two kilometers

within the limits of specific area. They do not travel to another town. Every area or town has its own number of chin-chis. The number of chin-chi rickshaws on the streets of Karachi is approximately twenty thousand (Khattak, 2012). This is one of the many ways how the extortion mafia is operating throughout the city. Political parties, especially in Karachi, have long denied their involvement in extortion, but throughout time many incidents and reports have clearly stated that political involvement is an essential component of extortion.

Karachi is composed of 18 different towns' which are populated with different ethnicities. These different towns have different political structure. The vote bank of political parties in Karachi is based on ethnic preference. The Sindhi and Baloch population support a different political party, while Urdu Speaking population support a different political party. Pashtuns have a different preference as well as Punjabis'. Almost every town of Karachi has its stakes in extortion. In Every town, there is a mafia that is responsible for the collection of extortion. Throughout the year, these extortionists collect extortion on different occasions and festivals. "If you are a trader, wholesaler or retailer, you do not need to worry how much you have to pay in Zakat and Fitra. After considering your annual sales carefully, the mafia will itself decide your rate. The more you earn, the more you have to pay. These people have complete data of businesses' supply chain, annual sales etc. When they are done with compiling your complete information, they come to you with 'slips' and you have to pay what they demand," All Karachi Tajir Ittehad chairman Atiq Mir (Zaheer, 2011).

This mafia breeds criminals and extortionists by political backings. This process is complex and mainly focused on young, and unemployed teenagers. These teenagers are mostly found in the slum areas and impoverished districts of City. They are first brought into the drug circle in which they become addicted and once they are addicted and unemployed, they join political parties for the sake of jobs in government departments which are mostly fake promises. Then this mafia uses them as scoundrels to dominate certain areas of interest and in return they are paid in the

form of drugs and other incentives such as bribe and liquor. These details were disclosed by an ex-police officer (Officer, 2015). These teenagers are the main assets of every mafia found in the city. Because they are young, they desire power and mostly are uneducated and mainly belonging to impoverished areas of the city. These teenagers are used as target killers, extortionists and for many other illegal activities. In a detailed verdict of Suo-Moto case for "Karachi Violence" the Director General Rangers stated, that extortion money is a normal practice and criminals are collecting extortion, which, every day, runs into at least ten million rupees and it is being charged from an ordinary shopkeeper, push-cart peddler up to the top businessman by criminals who have got the backing of the political parties who are the stakeholders. In this behalf, Special Branch of the Police Department had filed a report. Confidentiality of the same has not been claimed.

In this report, a list of extortion collectors is available, a perusal whereof indicates that extortion is being collected invariably by the persons who claim their association with ANP, MQM, PPP, Jamat-e-Islami, Sunni Tehrik, etc. It is an admitted fact that street crime like snatching cell phones, purses, etc. from the citizens is rampant in the city and there cannot be two opinions that the citizens, by and large, are suffering filled with fear and confusion. They are so frightened that none of them comes forward even to lodge the report, rather they prefer to pay extortion or unhesitatingly agree to hand over their valuables during the commission of street crimes. The whole city seems to be in the grip of fear (Suo Moto Case, 2011). This way, when political parties involve criminals, they have to financially support them and this financial support is brought from extorting money from different pushcart peddlers, shopkeepers, traders, businessmen and other professionals. The extortionist maintains fear among their targets by various methods. They have complete profiles of their targets, for instance, bank accounts, property, and other financial details.

**Research Methodology:**

The research methodology used in this research, to identify the potential factors which contribute for the promotion of extortion in the city of Karachi. As it is known the policing in Pakistan needs to be reinvigorated. This is because there is a consistent negligence in crime reporting. Much of the crime goes unreported and no relevant or official data is available in academic research and other analysis. In other words, the data needs to be collected through back door channels. There is no centralized authority which could maintain such data which can be used for the purpose of research and investigation. Therefore, keeping the entire pros and cons in mind the research technique is bricolage.

This type of research technique does not carry a particular way of collecting data. In Bricolage, the bricoleur (*the person who engages in Bricolage*) uses diverse range of options available for the collection of data. This research is basically a “*Content Analysis*”. The unit of analysis is online published newspapers and the sample is taken from all the online news published on the internet from 2011 to 2013. The research technique used is “*Bricolage*”.

A recording sheet is maintained in which all the data is recorded. The data is collected form online sources such *Dawn, Geo, Express Tribune, Pakistan Criminal Records, The News*. All the news reports published within the designated reference period (2011 – 2014) in relation to extortion has been recorded in a recording sheet. From the particular published reports certain data is mined or extracted for the specific variables which have been mention in the Table number 1. The remaining tables from 2 to 6 are specifically used for the purpose of “*Data Presentation*”.

**Table 1: Variables and Operational Definitions.**

Variable(s)	Type of Variable	Operational Definitions
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Involved in Killing	Binary (1 for "Yes", 0 for "No")	The arrested extortionist reported to be involved in a homicide. If reported then "Yes". If not then "Not reported"
Conviction	Binary (1 for "Yes", 0 for "No")	Conviction is used for the extortionists that are convicted by the court. If conviction or judgment is reported then "Yes" if not Then "Not Reported"
Political Affiliation	Binary (1 for "Yes", 0 for "No")	The political affiliation is used to denote extortionists who are reported to be political activists.
Gang War Affiliation	Binary (1 for "Yes", 0 for "No")	The gang war affiliation is used to denote extortionists who are also part of On-going LYARI-Gang-War.
Date	Interval	Reported Date of Arrest.
Number of Arrest	Interval	Exact number of arrests made by the law enforcement agencies
Political Affiliated Arrest Count	Interval	The politically affiliated arrest count denotes the number of political arrests made for each reported arrest.
Gang War Arrest Count	Interval	This variable denotes the arrested number of extortionist's involved in gang-war per case count.

**Table 2: Involved in Killing.**

This table represents the percentage of arrested criminals involved in killing as well as extortion.

<b>Involved in Killing</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>No</b>	2	1.1	1.1	1.1
<b>N.R*</b>	88	47.1	47.1	48.1
<b>Yes</b>	97	51.9	51.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	187	100.0	100.0	

*\*N.R= Not Reported*

**Table 3: Conviction.**

This table represents the percentage of reported conviction of criminals in online newspapers.

<b>Conviction</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>N.R*</b>	180	96.3	96.3	96.3
<b>Yes</b>	7	3.7	3.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	187	100.0	100.0	

*\*N.R= Not Reported*

**Table 4: Politically Affiliated Arrest**

This table represents the number of arrested with reported and unreported political affiliations.

<b>Political Affiliation</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>No</b>	1	.5	.5	.5
<b>N.R*</b>	164	87.7	87.7	88.2

<b>Yes</b>	22	11.8	11.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	187	100.0	100.0	

*\*N.R= Not Reported*

**Table 5: Arrest made by Police or Paramilitary Forces**

Most of the operations' and raids against extortionists are conducted by Police. However, rangers have arrested more politically affiliated extortionist as compared to police which can be seen in more detailed data.

<b>Arrest by Police or Rangers</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>J.O*</b>	1	.5	.5	.5
<b>Police</b>	164	87.7	87.7	88.2
<b>Rangers</b>	22	11.8	11.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	187	100.0	100.0	

*\*J.O= Joint Operation*

**Table 6: Gang war affiliated.**

Most of the arrested extortionists are not gang war affiliated. However, the percentage of gang war criminals involved in extortion is considerable.

<b>Gang War Affiliation</b>				
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>No</b>	80	42.8	42.8	42.8
<b>N.R*</b>	60	32.1	32.1	74.9
<b>Yes</b>	47	25.1	25.1	100.0
<b>Total</b>	187	100.0	100.0	

*\*N.R= Not Reported*

## **Conclusion**

As mentioned, earlier this study examines the causes of extortion and its relationship with militant wings of political organizations. After an in-depth analysis of the data and detailed literature review, it can be said that there is a relationship between extortion and militant wings of the political parties. Because the existing data might have less reported cases which have political affiliation mentioned, but the unreported affiliation can still create a major difference if soon or later a review the data can reveal the affiliations which are unreported. The political rivalry among the major political parties in the Karachi is not a secret to any Pakistani. However, this rivalry or disturbance in politics has caused not only economic loss but the loss of precious lives as well which is much of a concern. Extortion has made its roots concrete in the political system especially in Karachi. It is axiomatic and explicit for anyone living Karachi to understand that it is now mandatory to share a proportionate amount of wealth or money with this extortionist due to political militancy. The Fitra payments and animal hides are also some other type of extortion which very old and very common in Karachi because it has been collected by various political and religious parties accordingly throughout every year. This study is a preliminary scientific explanation of the phenomena which ongoing and is thriving day by day. It is also necessary to mention that it important to understand that this issue or problem can never be resolved by raids and selective operations. Because the monolithic hierarchal structures of organized crime themselves have changed and smaller equally ruthless organize crime groups have become apparent forming confederations of associations based on ethnic linguistic affinity (Dean, Gottschalk, & Fahsing, 2010).

The solution to the issue extortion lies in strong prosecution service with a criminal conviction rate of 90% which would then lead to definitive punishments. The government should introduce a working and effective witness protection program so that people can testify without the condition of fear or threat which would contribute in the prosecution and investigation phase of any case. Another important pillar of any CJS system is an investigation which is done by police. Here we have an incompetent, untrained, and politicized police which

is a major stakeholder in organized crime. Almost every Karachiite knows that if the police stopped them for snap checking or any other verification, they would charge a negligible amount of bribe. Most of the cases are not reported because the police have no interest in the affairs of the citizens. On the contrary, the police leadership in Pakistan has been a serious failure, especially in the first decade of the twenty-first century. This was the most crucial decade for the police after the police reforms were introduced in 2002 and when the tragic events after 9/11 brought them a war much beyond their imagination and capacity (Fasihuddin, 2014).

The policing system in Pakistan needs to be invigorated. Because the data reveals that there is an observable difference in the performance of Police and para-military forces. The para-military forces perform better when compared to police. Because of many factors; among which is being depoliticized institution among politicized institutions. One of the most important solutions to extortion is an end to socioeconomic stratification in the society which can be done only political will and consensus among the political parties. The relegated part of society will always engage in illegitimate opportunities and will form organized crime hierarchies which will then acquire political support from the relegated people and this would be difficult to deal with which is very much relevant in the current case. The data also revealed that a considerable amount of extortionist is also involved in targeted killings. This is an alarming situation, which signifies that a life of a person is of no value when it comes to extortion. A victim or his relative or family member can easily be a target of extortionist if extortion or protection money is not paid. The extortion cases have sparked consistently from thirty-six to one hundred and thirty-six from 2011 to 2012. And from one hundred thirty-six to one hundred fifty-eight from 2012 to 2013 which clear that despite the fact that there is a continuous operation against these criminals there is no substantial reduction in reported cases of extortion.

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