

Ethnic Politics of MQM from 1980s till Musharraf Regime

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Abstract

This article envisages the theoretical parameters of ethnicity. It seeks to examine the role of ethnic, linguistic and territorial diversity in shaping and directing the political process in Pakistan. The policies of the successive governments i.e. imposition of One-Unit, unfair distribution of resources and centralized state structure evoked ethnicity among the deprived ethnic communities. Moreover the influx of Mohajirs in the urban areas of Sindh exacerbated the ethnic consciousness among the local Sindhis. This article emphasizes the role and impact of MQM in the politics of Pakistan. Initially the Mohajir community (Urdu speaking) dominated the state structure but with the passage of time their privileged position declined due to the policies of the governments.

The phenomenon of ethnicity – a contextual analysis

Ethnicity implies the sense of belonging together as the cultural group in a given society. It is a complex combination of racial, cultural and historical characteristics by which people differentiate themselves from other groups. The term ethnicity may be defined as ‘the self-consciousness of a group of people united by shared experiences’ i.e. language, common religion, economic and political interests etc.

The word ‘ethnicity’ is derived from the Greek word ‘ethnos’ meaning a group having blood relations. In social sciences the term ‘ethnic’ was first coined by David Reisman in 1953. It was subsequently discussed by a number of social scientists like Harold Isaac, Max Weber, Nelson Kasfir, Denial Bell, Joseph Rothschild, Geertz etc.

N. Kasfir, describes:

Ethnicity involves certain condition, particular objective indicators associated with common ancestry, become the focus of subjective perception both by members within the unit and by non-members, through social solidarity created by a resurgence, or the fictive creation of traditional unity

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and so that in certain situations political participations will occur.¹

According to Nelson ethnicity implies some universal conditions like common heritage. It also gets strength from social and political mobilization. It has a significant impact upon the nature and direction of political change in the society. It also depends upon the solidarity of the ethnic group and the historical antecedents, which magnify the role of the particular ethnic group in the politics of the state.

Weiner observed that, 'Ethnicity as Hobsbawm notes, is a less demanding form of nationalism emphasizing common origin and descent, and shared characteristics based on language, race, religion, place of origin, culture, values of history, but not a state'.²

He has compared ethnicity with nationalism that ethnicity refers to the demands of a particular group within the state boundaries but nationalism leads towards secession.

Srivastava quotes the opinion of Brass, that ethnicity or ethnic identity involves:

- i) Subject self consciousness.
- ii) A claim to status and recognition either as a superior group or as an equal group.
- iii) Objective cultural markers such as kinship, descent, birth, endogamy and exogamy, religion or race, language, customs etc'.³

Brass explains ethnicity as a gradual process of self consciousness to strengthen the ethnic group and to articulate their demands.

Srivastava further quotes Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, which fixed four concurrent features of ethnicity:

- i) Belief in their unique identity;
- ii) Belief in their shared or common descent;
- iii) Belief in their cultural distinctiveness;
- iv) The fact that outsiders perceive and aggregate its members in these terms whether truly or not'.⁴

¹ N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p.35.

² M. Weiner, *Sons of the Soil Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p.60.

³ Madhumita Srivastava, *International Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict: A Case Study of Kashmir and Northern Ireland* (New Dehli: Bhavana Books and Prints, 1995), pp.30-40.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Bell in Glazer and Moynihan describes the concept of ethnicity 'I intend to relate ethnicity to major macro-social trends in the world today'.⁵

He explains the reasons of social change. As in the age of globalization more channels of communication have developed. The states are getting closer to each other due to rapid means of transportation. He highlights that these international developments have not only intensified the impacts of change but also contributed to the ethnic mobilization within the states.

Berghe encompassed the socio-biological dimension of ethnicity that common ancestors and kinship strengthen ethnic sentiments. Keyes himself argues that 'ethnicity is a form of kinship reckoning, it is one in which connections with forebears or with those whom one believes one shares descent are not traced along precisely genealogical lines'. It means that human beings get solidarity from their common descent. Keyes quotes De Vos that:

A major source of ethnic identity is found in the cultural traditions related to crises in the life cycle, such as coming of age, marriage, divorce, illness, or death. It is particularly in rites of passage that one finds highly emotional symbolic reinforcement of ethnic patterns.⁶

De Vos has described the psychological aspect of ethnicity. According to him, shared experiences of the ancestors also provide basis for ethnic identities.

In addition, Amin envisages the concept of 'asabiya' (feeling of solidarity) given by Ibn-i-Khaldun, based on common ancestry, common interests and common experiences of life. Groups with strong 'asabiya' dominate other groups through political power, religious propaganda and common economic interests.

Theories of ethnicity

There are various approaches to study the phenomenon of ethnicity which also explain the attributes of ethnic groups. They include:

Primordialism: Primordialists i.e. Geertz, Shils and Horowitz argue that kinship, racial similarities and blood ties among the members of a particular group solidify their group feelings. Sociobiologists like Berghe

⁵ D. Bell, *Ethnicity and Social Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p.40.

⁶ F. Keys Charles, *Ethnic Change* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1981), pp.4, 9.

also emphasizes that blood ties and common descent ensure the survivability of an ethnic group. Primordialists magnify the importance of cultural ties because common culture, values and practices bind the people together. According to them ethnic identities are inherited not deliberately chosen. These can not be changed.

Instrumentalism: This approach rejects the primordialist's views. Instrumentalists like Anthony Smith discusses that racial and ethnic identities are instrumental and ethnic groups use them for particular motives. It refers that some ethnic groups are inferior or superior to others. Instrumentalists view that ethnicity keeps on changing depending upon the political motives and interests of the individuals. Moreover they emphasize that sometimes ethnic identities become more significant but in some circumstances these are vanished. They particularly focus upon the objectives of the ethnic groups.⁷

Social constructivism: The proponents of social constructivism believe that ethnic identity is the combination of both ascriptive traits (birth place, tribe, clan etc.) and social inputs (subjective beliefs, religion, political interests etc.). Ethnic identities are not only natural but these are also socially constructed. In this connection Max Weber encompasses that people attain their ethnic identity from the society. The dynamics of ethnic groups are influenced by the societal conditions. Infact this approach emphasizes that ethnic identities of the people are based on innate characteristics and socio - economic factors in the society. However social constructivists are less concerned with the goals of the ethnic groups.

The above mentioned theories can be comprehended from the following Table.

Table 1

Approaches to Ethnicity

Approaches	Ethnic Identities
Primordialism	1) Ascriptive
	2) Unchangeable
Instrumentalism	1) Tools to specific objectives.
	2) Changeable

⁷ J. Hutchinson & A.D. Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Social Constructivism	1)	Descriptive / Ascriptive
	2)	Ethnic identities are based on social and political factors.

Ethnic politics of MQM from 1980s till Musharraf regime

The politics of identity in Sindh accentuated the ethnic polarization in the province. It increased the momentum of MQM activities in Sindh. The leadership of the MQM emerged as the champion of interests of the Mohajir community and pressed for their demands including the increase in civil services quota for Mohajirs. It gained popularity rapidly in youth of the middle class. MQM faced political upheavals since its inception. Initially, the main focus was the confrontation between indigenous Sindhi and Mohajirs but after the 1972 language riots, its leadership gradually softened their stance towards the local Sindhis. The emergence of PPI (Punjabi – Pukhtun Ittehad) in 1987 to protect the rights of the Punjabis and Pukhtuns in the province was mainly responsible for this change. Consequently, the MQM perceived the Punjabi and Pukhtun alliance as a major threat to domination of Mohajirs in the province. They began to criticize the Punjabi hegemony in government and private sectors. They highlighted the role of Mohajirs in all walks of life especially in the administrative and economic development of the country. To counter this rhetoric, the PPI glorified their contribution in the socio-economic progress of the Sindh.

The relations between Mohajirs and Pukhtuns got strained and turned violent after certain clashes between two communities. The Sohrab Goth Massacre (November-December 1986) was a significant development. The controversy started with an Army raid on heroin distribution centre (run by Pathans) in Sohrab Goth.⁸ During the raid some mohajir house - holds were also effected in the nearby Aligarh Colony but the action enraged them as they perceived the action a deliberate act of the establishment to target and implicate the Urdu speaking mohajir community. This incident intensified the mutual hatred and suspicion between the Mohajir and Pathan ethnic groups and, as a result, ethnic riots spread all over Hyderabad and Karachi. These ethnic riots provided an excuse to the military government to intervene and take control of the province. The heterogeneous society needs a broad-based democratic political system which could secure the interests of all the competing forces. Relations among diverse groups get strained due to political maneuvering and manipulation on the part of the state

⁸ A. Hassan, 'The Sohrab Goth Massacre', *Herald*, 18 February 1987, pp.74-9.

authorities. In Pakistan during mid-1980s the state policies seemed to exploit diverse interests; maneuvering them to its advantage. Resultantly, relations among ethnic groups became a cause of political instability.

The MQM and PPI continued to have clashes in the next two or three years. Landhi, Malir and Saudabad were the most affected areas. On 18 July 1987 two people were killed and ten others injured in Landhi Colony No. 6. The indiscriminate use of force by security agencies against people aggravated the situation. Police arrested many innocent people.⁹ However, a significant feature of the development was the mutually shared hatred on the part of the MQM and Jeay Sindh towards the Punjabi establishment. Although Sindhi nationalists were critical of Mohajir's demand for a separate identity and took it as inimical to harmony in the province, nevertheless, both communities had contemptuous feelings against Punjabis and Pathan alliance.

Moreover the Sindhi nationalists came closer to MQM in a bid to counter the influence of the PPP in the province. Although both had different motives behind this opposition but both had blessing of the military regime. Therefore, division among the political forces in Sindh helped the military regime to perpetuate its rule. The MRD movement against military rule was more vocal and had pronounced effects in Sindh as compared to other provinces. Nevertheless the lack of cooperation and coordination among various political parties in the province allowed the military rulers to manipulate their differences in the regime's interests. In this connection Chandio quotes Dr. Teesta Gosh Butt as saying:

Zia encouraged the rise of ethno-nationalist groups primarily because political parties were not allowed to function. In fact it has been suggested that Zia deliberately encouraged the ethnic and sectarian divisions to perpetuate his rule. It is a well known fact that Zia sponsored the creation of MQM solely with the objective of undermining his main political opponent, the PPP. The MQM came into being at the time when Sindh was in the midst of the movement for the restoration of democracy in 1984. Zia also courted G.M. Syed, the leader of Sindhi nationalist party Jeay Sindh Mahaz, the implacable enemy of the PPP.¹⁰

⁹ M. Ziauddin & Z. Hussain, 'Can Pakistan be South Korea – The War within', *Herald*, 18 August 1987, pp.50-70.

¹⁰ A. A. Chandio, 'An Analysis of Jeay Sindh Tahreek as an Ethno-nationalist Movement of Pakistan', *Pakistan Perspectives*, 14:1 (2009), p.104.

The political spectrum was in a way encouraging the Zia regime to follow the suppressive tactics for perpetuation of his rule and curb the democratic forces (political parties i.e. PPP and other parties under the banner of MRD). Although he had frequently reiterated his promise to hold elections but remained vague on details.¹¹ He also tried to mitigate the intensity of Sindh nationalism by extending quota for another ten years. This policy of divide and rule on the part of government created political instability and let the Mohajirs to strengthen their position in the politics of Sindh.

The holding of party less elections in early 1985, made ethnicity the main feature of politics in Pakistan. When democratic forces are curtailed by the ruling authorities ethnic consciousness becomes more vibrant and people increasingly identify themselves with their particular region or group. They start pursuing their vested interests and defying the process of national integration. Ethnicity then becomes a serious threat to national solidarity and create problems of social divisiveness. In the absence of organized political parties (symbol of democratic and electoral process) ethnic identities become more pronounced, and this was the case in the urban areas of Sindh (Karachi, Hyderabad). The Mohajirs became more organized and emerged as a dominant force in the political arena, defeating the candidates of Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), Jamiat-i-Ulmai Islam (JUI) and Jamiat-i-Ulmai Pakistan (JUP).

Local bodies elections 1987

The MQM strengthened its position in the wake of local bodies election in Sindh. Altaf Hussain, chairman of MQM, declared the 'Charter of Resolution', which included:

1. The right to vote in the province of Sindh be given only to the 'real Sindhis'.
2. Only the 'real Sindhis'* would be able to get business licenses.
3. The 'Stranded Pakistanis'** to be allowed to rehabilitate in Pakistan.
4. The charter also emphasized that the Government of Pakistan must not allow the non-Sindhis especially the Afghan refugees to purchase property in Sindh.
5. In order to curtail the domination of Pathans in transport it was stressed in the charter that the bus license must be issued only to literate drivers (Pathan drivers were mostly illiterate).

¹¹ W.I. Richter, 'Pakistan in 1984 – Digging In', *Asian Survey*, 25:2 (1985), pp.145-49.

* Indigenous Sindhis and Mohajirs.

** Urdu speaking Mohajir community (Biharis) living in Bangladesh.

6. It was stressed that the new census must be held in the province of Sindh to revise the quota system.
7. Outrages by the police against the Mohajir community must be stopped.

The result of 1987 local bodies election in Sindh dramatically changed the political scenario. MQM emerged as the majority political party in the urban areas of Sindh (Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur). Three out of four of the newly created zonal municipal corporations in Karachi were swept by MQM. Altaf Hussain stated that the electoral victory of MQM proved its strength. Moreover Dr. Farooq Sattar (first MQM Mayor of Karachi) talked of cooperation with other political forces. He was reported as saying: 'As a mayor of the country's largest city, I have an opportunity to see things more closely and to find ways to solve them. I will not discriminate against any group or section'.¹²

Therefore with the electoral triumph a major change occurred in the MQM's stance and their demand for a separate nationality status was replaced by sub-nationality status. Its leadership began to acknowledge the rights of other communities in the urban areas and talked about peaceful coexistence based on mutual cooperation and coordination. Its leadership stated that there was no discrimination between local Sindhis and Mohajirs as both shared common problems and issues regarding basic necessities and livelihood. These common problems and interests became common identity. Mohajirs were a part of Sindh and they did not want to divide the province. They just needed to be recognized as a distinct cultural identity. But on the other hand the response of other nationalist groups could not be ignored.

Abdul Hafeez Pirzada (Sindhi-Baluch-Pukhtun Front) rejected the term sub-nationality. He asserted that Mohajirs could be a separate linguistic group because two major languages were spoken in the province (Sindhi and Urdu). But the same situation was there in Punjab, Baluchistan (five languages were spoken) and NWFP. While PPP took this view that both Mohajirs and indigenous Sindhis (urban or rural) were all Sindhis and both the groups should have equitable share in resources and opportunities. Moreover the Punjabi settlers reacted in a restrained manner. Aslam and Hassan quoted Mumtaz Qureshi, General Secretary of the Sindh Punjab Abadgar Welfare Association, 'I hope the MQM realizes its immense responsibilities. The Urdu-speaking people

¹² Z. Hussain, 'As mayor, I will not discriminate against any group or section', *Herald*, February 1988, p.59.

have given them a mandate.... How they use this mandate is yet to be seen'.¹³

However the spirit of cooperation did not prevail long as soon after the November 1987 local bodies elections, clashes were reported especially between Islami Jamiat –i- Tulaba (IJT) and MQM. IJT felt threatened for the first time due to the emerging power and popularity of MQM. The situation led to violence in educational institutions as well as in the cities (mainly Karachi). In the post martial law period (during Junejo government) about twenty students were killed during clashes. Kidnappings of members of the rival groups and attacks upon each other became a routine matter in Karachi. The glaring example of Student's violence was witnessed at the Nadirshaw Edulji Dinshaw University (NED) in 1987 when some student groups refused to allow the new vice chancellor, Jamil Ahmad to enter the campus. Student groups asserted that they would accept him only when he would assure that he would not interfere with the practices including unfair means in the examination.

The Vice Chancellor of Karachi University during 1988, Dr. Manzoor-ud-din Ahmad expressed relief on government decision to establish exclusive police stations to control law and order situation at both the universities (Karachi University and NED University). Infact Sindh's educational institutions had over the years become polarized along ethnic lines. There had been violent clashes between Sindhi and Punjabi students and between Mohajirs and Sindhis. The Karachi University was ultimately handed over to Rangers to maintain law and order.¹⁴

Along with these developments in the province of Sindh, national politics of Pakistan took a new turn when President Zia dissolved the Junejo government in May 1988 (there were charges of corruption against the Prime Minister). Although the country did not face any significant political turmoil but measures taken by the President derailed the democratic process in the country once again. After Zia's death (due to air crash in August 1988) Ghulam Ishaq Khan (Chairman Senate) became President and conducted fresh elections in November 1988.

MQM - politics of coalition (1988 elections)

The period of late 1980s witnessed dramatic changes in the national and provincial politics especially in Sindh. These developments mainly

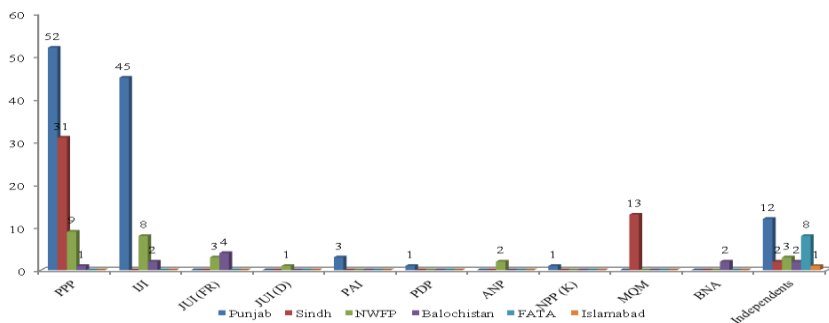
¹³ T. Aslam & A. Hassan, 'MQM the trial begins', *Herald*, February 1988, p.63.

¹⁴ Z. Abbas, 'I will not allow anyone to kill anyone', *ibid.*, October 1988, p.55.

involved Mohajirs and the local Sindhis. The Pacca Qila (situated in Hyderabad) incident (30 September 1988) was a great blow to Sindhi-Mohajir relations in Sindh. The incident took place in the backdrop of controversy generated on the issue of redecoration of Hyder Choke, named after renowned Sindhi poet Hyder Baksh Jatoi. In 1988 after its victory in 1987 local polls, the MQM decided to place large portraits of Pakistan Movement heroes which covered the traditional Sindhi style of decoration of the *choke*. It caused rage among Sindhi youth who tried to remove these portraits. Though, MQM leadership announced their intension of removing them, it did not satisfy the Sindhis; consequently, on 30 September 1988, people on the streets of Mohajir dominated area were attacked and sprayed bullets indiscriminately. Dozens of people mostly from the Mohajir community died as a result. In retaliation MQM supporters killed several Sindhis in Karachi. It generated hatred and bitterness among Mohajirs and Sindhis against each other, thus widening the gulf between them.¹⁵ Moreover the 'Charter of Resolution' declared by Altaf Hussain was also became a matter of conflict between the Mohajirs and local Sindhis. The demands for the recognition of Mohajirs as the fifth nationality along with Punjabi, Sindhi, Pushtun and Baloch nationalities and the repatriation of stranded Pakistanis (Biharis, living in Bangladesh) were not acceptable to the Sindhis. Consequently the Sindhi-Mohajir contradictions led the MQM to get aloof from the Sindhi nationalists and participate in the 1988 elections with focus on their separate identity with great zeal. Figures 1 and 2 show the results of 1988 national and provincial elections.

Figure 1

Pakistan: National Assembly Elections (16 November 1988), Results, Party Position

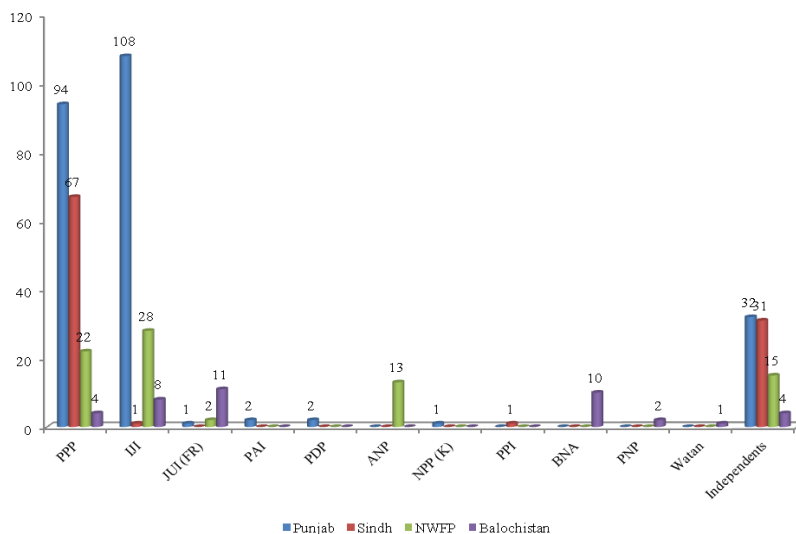


Source: www.ecp.gov.pk

¹⁵ O. Verkaaik, *Migrants and Militants Fun and Urban Violence in Pakistan* (New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2005).

Figure 2

Pakistan: Provincial Assembly Elections (19 November 1988), Results, Party Position.



Source: www.ecp.gov.pk

In the 1988 elections MQM got unheralded victory in the urban areas of Sindh and emerged as the country's third largest political party. The PPP won all seats in rural Sindh. At the national level PPP was the majority party and sought the support of coalition partners to form the government. Benazir tried to mediate the conflicts between MQM and the interior of Sindh.¹⁶ Although MQM decided to join hands with the PPP to form government however it kept pressure on the PPP by emphasizing its demands in the form of 'Charter of Resolution'. Consequently, PPP and MQM signed an agreement known as 'Karachi Declaration' which included:

- 1- Both the parties agreed to promote an atmosphere of peace and reconciliation with an objective to have an integrated Sindh.
- 2- The agreement emphasized that the principles of decentralization would be ensured to strengthen the democratic values and to redress each other's grievances. It was also held necessary for the economic growth of the country.

¹⁶ R.B. Rais, 'Pakistan in 1988 from command to conciliation politics', *Asian Survey*, 29:2 (1989), pp.199-206.

- 3- Both the parties stressed for elimination of the culture of oppression through political participation and rule of law.
- 4- Interests of the people living in Sindh whether Urdu - speaking or Sindhi would be safeguarded without any discrimination.
- 5- The transparency and accountability in the administration of the government was also emphasized upon. In this backdrop both MQM and PPP committed to wipe out all sorts of mafias to abolish the malpractices in the housing authorities.
- 6- The provision of public utilities to the people was a task, both parties committed to take on.
- 7- They also agreed to provide better transport facilities to the people.
- 8- Moreover regarding educational reforms issues like allocation of funds and merit policy were also considered.
- 9- The agreement also emphasized that the spread of illegal weapons would be controlled to ensure peace and harmony in the province.
- 10- It was considered to carry out national census in 1991 and to figure out new lists of voters according to new census.
- 11- In addition it was affirmed to form a committee to ponder upon the fair distribution of revenue and to restructure the local bodies.
- 12- Certain issues regarding the foreign policy of Pakistan like Afghan refugees, opening of Khokrapar border between India and Pakistan were also discussed. Both the parties guaranteed the implementation of the 'Karachi Declaration'.

Despite the democratic political developments (establishment of an elected democratic government) the issue of ethnicity remained a cardinal feature of Pakistan politics. The emergence and popularity of MQM also stimulated other ethnic groups i.e. Baluch Ittehad (representing Baloch community in Sindh), Sindhi Punjabi Ittehad (SPI). Moreover the Seraiki Quomi Mahaz also emerged in Punjab demanding a separate homeland for Seraiki people consisting of Multan, Bahawalpur, D.I. Khan and Jhang. Though these groups could not enter in the mainstream politics of Pakistan like MQM but still they intensified the issue of ethnicity.

After 1988 elections the coalition was formed between MQM and PPP but their alliance could not last long. After a few months, differences emerged between both the parties. MQM's main demand was to repatriate Biharis from Bangladesh but when the first flight of Biharis from Bangladesh was cancelled in January 1989 due to the protest by Sindhi National Alliance (SNA) and Punjabi Pukhtun Ittehad (PPI). It increased the rift between both the parties - MQM and PPP. MQM declared it as the violation of the Karachi Accord. In 1989 MQM

ministers also resigned in protest.¹⁷ Although the PPP leadership claimed to be more federalist to accommodate all ethnic groups but in Sindh the Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto wanted to secure her constituencies in interior Sindh. The supporters of PPP were against the repatriation of Biharis from Bangladesh in Sindh.

Moreover the events like the massacre in Hyderabad during the months of April and May 1989 also aggravated the situation. Gunmen on motorbikes said to be Sindhis fired at the people (mostly Mohajirs). There were approximately 250 casualties. In response, the Mohajirs protested in Hyderabad as well as Karachi. They killed people (mostly Sindhis), looted the shops and burnt the cars. These Mohajir Sindhi ethnic riots created a complex situation for the PPP government which could not afford to annoy any of the group in the province. In 1988 elections PPP won mainly with the support of Sindhi-speaking population. Therefore it did not want to lose its constituency in Sindh and adhered to protect their interests. After the Hyderabad incident the Sindhi nationalist groups i.e. Sindh National Alliance (SNA) held protest demonstrations in the interior of Sindh. In fact these riots created an alarming situation and widened the division in the province on ethnic basis.

The situation further deteriorated when PPP and Peoples Students Federation (PSF) leaders accused the MQM Sindh Assembly member, Murtaza Durrani, of patronizing the terrorist activities in the campus of Karachi University where three PSF boys were killed on 8 July 1989.¹⁸ The party workers started naming senior leaders of MQM. At this stage MQM's leader Altaf Hussain approached President Ghulam Ishaq Khan for intervention which aggravated the situation. Eventually Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto initiated a dialogue to settle the long standing issue. Her dialogue with Altaf Hussain continued for one week. The negotiations between both the coalition partners (PPP-MQM) resulted in another agreement—Memorandum of Understanding, but clashes between the workers of the MQM and PPP continued. The Larkana killings in which three members of a Mohajir family were killed also enflamed the situation. The Sindhi nationalist leaders like Hamida Khuhro (G.M Syed group) however, asserted that it was their duty to protect the people from ethnic riots. She described the killings in Hyderabad and Larkana as the job of conspirators. Similarly the

¹⁷ T.P. Jr. Wright, 'Centre-periphery relations and ethnic conflict in Pakistan, Sindhis, Mohajirs and Punjabis', *Comparative Politics*, 23:3 (1991), pp.299-312.

¹⁸ Z. Abbas, 'Discordant Notes', *Herald*, August 1989, pp.37-8.

statement by Syed Ghulam Shah (Jeay Sindh group) also contributed in normalizing the situation who payed rich tributes to the Urdu-speaking families.¹⁹

Moreover in 1989 a Federal Placement Bureau was established by the government to recruit the staff for public corporations and bureaucracy, without appearing before the Federal Public Service Commission. This bureau was staffed by the individuals who were the supporters of PPP. The Mohajir community perceived it as an attempt to appoint anti-Mohajir Sindhis to important positions. The appointment of G.M. Shah as Minister of Education during 1988-89 strengthened his perception. He was the editor of *Sindh Quarterly* and was known as anti-Mohajir. MQM demonstrated its resentment against PPP's policies by making a secret alliance with opposition Islami Jamhori Ittehad (IJI) and signed a 17 point agreement on 23rd October 1989. Some of the points are as follows:

1. Both the coalition partners agreed to promote the principles of rule of law and socio – economic justice to ensure unity, tranquility and development in the society.
2. They guaranteed the implementation of Islamic injunctions in the country.
3. The spirit of cooperation be extended to all administrative departments including bureaucracy in order to promote mutual respect and esteem.
4. It was also agreed to generate a sense of reconciliation and accommodation among all the nationalities in Pakistan to ensure the solidarity of the country.
5. The governmental affairs to be conducted through consensus among coalition partners.
6. Moreover the incidents of target killing and lawlessness in Karachi (great hub of economy) were matters of serious concern for all the parties.
7. It was agreed upon that the new census would be conducted and the quota system would be revised according to new statistics.
8. The arrangements would be made for the repatriation of 'stranded Pakistanis' in Bangladesh to Pakistan.
9. They considered improving the living condition of the people in 'kachi abadis' through employment opportunities and better housing facilities.
10. They agreed to launch development projects i.e. building of flyovers and subways etc.

¹⁹ Z. Abbas, 'Sindh: Falling apart', *ibid.*, May 1989, pp.27-31.

11. Allocation of funds for the educational institutions were to be reviewed to raise the standards of education.
12. It was agreed that the arms licenses would be issued only on the recommendation of the MNAs or MPAs of the respective areas. The coalition partners reiterated their conviction to implement the agreement in order to ensure the integrity of the country.

The MQM in collaboration with the IJI initiated a no-confidence move against Benazir government on 24 October 1989 and formally abrogated the PPP-MQM agreement. Although this motion failed but it was a serious blow to Benazir government. After the formal break up of alliance with the PPP, the MQM workers openly made protests and demonstrations against the government. Infact the gulf between MQM and PPP had widened so much that PPP perceived MQM as power hungry and opportunist party while the MQM viewed PPP as the Sindhi party, protecting the interests of only the local Sindhis. This situation also led MQM to extend its cooperation to Islami Jamhori Ittehad (IJI) leader, Nawaz Sharif. MQM declared support for Combined Opposition Party (COP) and held a combined public meeting in Karachi in February 1990. It provided an opportunity to MQM to rebuild the morale of its supporters who were demoralized after the end of alliance with the PPP and the failure of a no-confidence motion against Benazir Bhutto.

The law and order situation in Karachi once again got strained due to a bloody incident in February 1990. Armed students groups in Karachi and Hyderabad killed hundreds of people.²⁰ The federal government, in this backdrop, decided to change the chief minister of Sindh to restrain the deteriorating law and order situation. The change of chief minister was perceived as the admission of failure on the part of the government. Although till June 1990, fifteen thousand troops were deployed in Karachi to control law and order but the armed forces stressed on the imposition of 245 article of the constitution (which suspends human rights and make trials by military court). The federal government did not accept this option which created bitterness between the federal government and the army.²¹

On 27 May 1990 a demonstration led by Mohajir women and children was crushed by the police, killing 60 people. These clashes were followed by series of target killings. In the wake of these horrifying events MQM demanded army's intervention while the Sindhi nationalists stressed that the police should control the law and order situation. Series of violence led President Ghulam Ishaq Khan to dissolve the assemblies

²⁰ A. Hassan, 'Fear is the Key', *ibid.*, 21 February 1990, pp.51-2.

²¹ A. Nasir, 'Sindh a Government at last', *ibid.*, 21 March 1990, pp.35-7.

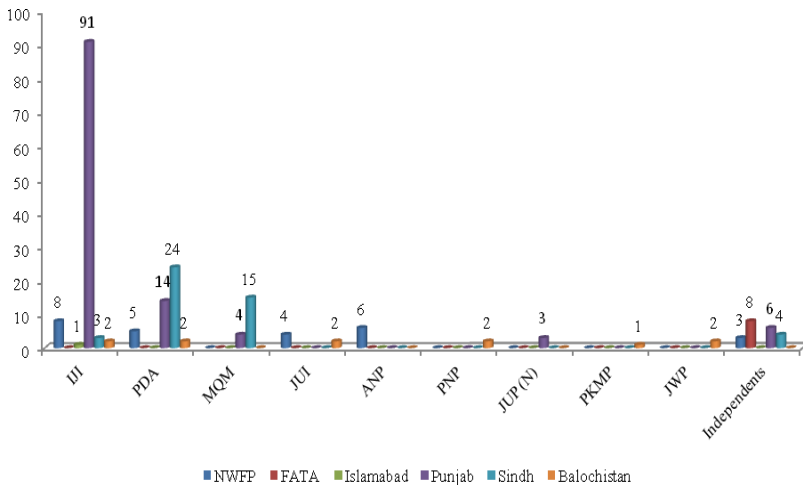
on 6 August 1990 under 58-2B (8th amendment in the 1973 constitution which gave powers to the president to dissolve the government) on the charges of corruption and poor law and order situation.

1990 elections and the MQM

National and provincial elections were held in October 1990 under an interim government led by Prime Minister Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi. The details of the election results are given below:

Figure 3

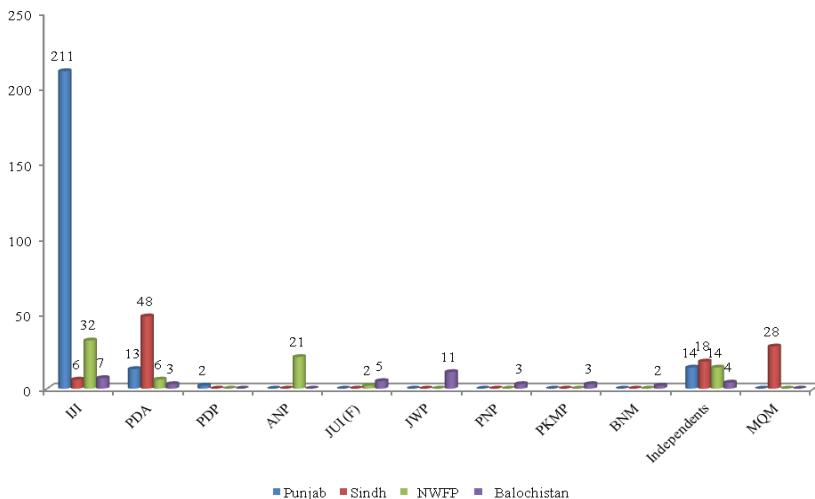
Pakistan: National Assembly Elections, 24 October 1990 Results Party Position



Source: www.ecp.gov.pk

Figure 4

Pakistan: Provincial Assembly Elections, 27 October 1990 Results Party Position



Source: www.ecp.gov.pk

Islami Jamhuri Ittehad (IJI) got about 60% seats in the National Assembly. After the elections the IJI and MQM established a coalition government at the federal as well as at the provincial level. The PPP could not make the government even in Sindh.

Jam Sadiq Ali (new Chief Minister of Sindh)* in collaboration with MQM tried to control the communal violence in Sindh through power sharing policies. MQM got eight ministries in the province. At this juncture, in an effort to replace the regional or ethnic character of the party with national outlook, the MQM leadership also decided to change the name of the party from Mohajir Quomi Movement to Muttahidda Quomi Movement. To attract people of other communities, the name, was finally changed in 1997. In this regard Altaf Hussain claimed that the new name of party would eliminate the ethnic division and promote unity in the province. Jam Sadiq Ali also assured to extend co-operation to MQM.

* Jam Sadiq Ali managed to cobble together a coalition government with Jatui, Pir Pagara, the Syed and the Makhdooms in interior Sindh and MQM in urban Sindh. But he faced numerous handicaps in dealing with the problems. He operated in his individual capacity without a party at grassroots.

In an interview with the *Herald* Jam Sadiq Ali said: 'This has been my belief from day one, that people who live in Sindh are Sindhis, no matter what language they speak. I must also tell you that I don't consider anyone Mohajir. They are Sindhis'.²² Although Altaf Hussain and Jam Sadiq Ali co-operated to maintain peace in the province but the intelligence agencies of Pakistan reported about the weaponization in Karachi (as a large number of arms licenses were issued during this period). The army held MQM leaders like Salim Shahzad (Senior Vice Chairman of MQM) responsible for being a de facto incharge of appointments and transfers in the Police Department. He was also instrumental in issuing arms licenses. Although intelligence agencies reported against some organizations like Al Zulfiqar (led by Z.A. Bhutto's son Murtaza Bhutto), Jeay Sindh Progressive and Punjabi Pukhtun Ittehad but the most serious criminal allegations were against MQM.

MQM was also criticized due to its militant posture. There was a general perception among people that MQM had deviated from its real objectives i.e. protection of due rights of mohajir community and preservation of the ideology of Pakistan. The party was allegedly got involved in terrorist activities. It was alleged that Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) killed hundreds and thousands of innocent people, professionals, non-professionals and navy functionaries. MQM's first action against its political rivals was the kidnapping of number of men from Pakistan Steel Mills in 1990. These people were taken to the torture cells in Landhi and Korangi. The MQM being the representative of mohajir community coming from India were accused of getting moral and material support from Indian government and organizations. It was also alleged that they received training from India for their militant activities.²³

In addition to it MQM was also condemned by the government for its anti-media activities and killings of journalists. *Herald* staffer and BBC correspondent, Zafar Abbas was assaulted at his home on 17 March 1991. MQM had also problems with Salah-ud-Din, the pro-Jamaat-Islami editor of the weekly *Takbeer* during 1991. He investigated the MQM's connection with the Indian intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and the supply of Indian funds to the party for destabilizing the economic hub of Pakistan (Karachi). To threaten him MQM activists also attacked his office. Afterwards he was assassinated on 4 December 1994, allegedly by MQM death squads.

²² Z. Abbas, 'I have never betrayed my party', *Herald*, September 1990, p.55.

²³ O. Verkaaik, *op.cit.*

MQM workers in Hyderabad and Karachi burnt hundreds of thousand copies of different dailies - *Jang*, *Dawn*, *The News*, monthly *Herald* and weakly *Takbeer* between 10 – 20 March 1991. Journalists throughout the country made protest demonstrations against MQM. Altaf Hussain defended the party workers by saying that *Dawn* and *Herald* was hatching conspiracies against MQM.²⁴ Moreover, during 1991-92 MQM was accused of various terrorist activities including the destruction of 20 banks, 95 shops, 102 houses, 35 forced strikes, and forced tax called *bhatta* (since 1988 MQM terrorists introduced a new method to collect monthly tax from each and every shop, house and industry). Military also held MQM responsible for violence in Karachi especially the abduction of Major Kaleem* and his colleagues in 1991 made MQM-military relations more precarious. So due to incidents of bomb blasts and the case of Major Kaleem case, Altaf Hussain was sentenced to 27 years imprisonment. Consequently, he left Pakistan for London in January 1992 for medical treatment and later on, turned his medical trip into self-exile.

Despite allegations against MQM, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif held meetings with Altaf Hussain in Karachi during 1991-92 to combat increasing chaos but with little success. During his visit to Karachi Nawaz Sharif asked an official of Citizen Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) why the law enforcement agencies had failed to maintain law and order situation in Sindh. The official replied: 'How can crime be controlled when car snatchers enjoy the blessings and patronage of powerful advisors in the government'. The situation in Sindh provided opportunity to other miscreants to exploit it. Even the government officials like the security advisor, Irfanullah Marwat, to Chief Minister Jam Sadiq Ali who was a former PPI leader and a son in law of Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the President of Pakistan, was also said to be involved in unlawful activities. He had been involved in kidnaps, car thefts, rapes and many cases of extortion. He appointed his own favorite, Samiullah Marwat, as the head of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and manipulated his powers to maximum advantage.²⁵

²⁴ I. Bakhtiar, 'The press under fire', *Herald*, April 1991, pp.22-5.

* Altaf Hussain was sentenced to twenty seven years imprisonment for master minding the kidnapping of an army officer. Moreover, during the military operation in 1992 the Pakistan Army alleged to recover the maps of Jinnahpur (separate homeland for Mohajir community) from the MQM offices in Karachi.

²⁵ I. H. Malik, *State and Civil Society in Pakistan: Politics of Authority, Ideology and Ethnicity* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1997).

After the death of Jam Sadiq Ali (4 March 1992) Syed Muzzafar Hussain Shah became the new Chief Minister of Sindh. He continued working with old Jam's coalition partners. The new Chief Minister also failed to control the law and order situation in the province. Criminal activities continued, various intelligence agencies (Pakistani CIA, FIA etc.) were also found involved in brutal activities to humiliate and coerce the civil society members. Individuals from press, human rights groups, and academia were the victims of their repression. Lawlessness in urban areas of Sindh and incidents of dacoity in interior Sindh, kidnapping for ransom in Karachi, car snatching led the army to remain involved in the civil administration. Between August 6 and 23, 106 persons were kidnapped, 24 persons were killed and over 100 villagers were attacked by the dacoits. Although the police claimed that it killed 15 dacoits and arrested 47 but still the law and order situation could not be controlled.²⁶ Eventually the army started 'Operation Clean Up' in June 1992 on the pretext of national security under Article 147* of the 1973 Constitution. *Dawn* reported Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as saying:

Owing to the rising incidence of terrorism, dacoities, attacks on trains and kidnapping the people of the province had suffered a lot and lawlessness had adversely affected economic progress of Sindh. He emphasized that Operation Clean Up would usher in an era of peace and prosperity for the people of Sindh.²⁷

Altaf Hussain termed this operation as 'un-democratic, immoral and unconstitutional'. The Opposition leader, Benazir Bhutto, opposed army operation in Sindh by stating, 'We need a political settlement, a political package which can restore the rights of Sindhis to have their own genuine representative government'.²⁸ Similarly government officials gave their apprehensions regarding army crackdown in Sindh. The Interior Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, said 'As far as the MQM is concerned, I have assured them myself that they need not worry as the crackdown is not against the MQM'.²⁹ However, the Federal Minister, Majeed Malik stated:

²⁶ M. Waseem, 'Ethnic Conflict in Pakistan: The Case of MQM', *The Pakistan Development Review*, 35:4 (1996), pp.617-29.

* With the prior permission of federal government the army exercises certain powers to take action against anti-social and criminal elements.

²⁷ *Dawn*, 9 June 1992, p.1.

²⁸ S. Sehba, 'PPP, MQM rejects army operation' *Dawn*, 27 May 1992, p.1.

²⁹ I. Haque, 'We have taken the right decision', *Herald*, June 1992, p.32.

We have decided to continue with this clean-up operation. If some people are annoyed about this crackdown, we cannot help that the Prime Minister told all concerned parties during his visit to Sindh that the action will be conducted even handedly and that nobody should expect any favors from us. If you want to establish, peace, you cannot side with any particular group or party.³⁰

On the other hand a dissident group MQM (Haqiqi), allegedly patronized by the army was established to counter Altaf Hussain. MQM (Haqiqi) included MQM's sacked members – Afaq Ahmad, Amir Khan, Badar Iqbal and others. Badar Iqbal (a former member of Mohajir Quomi Movement) expressed that the major conflict between us and Altaf Hussain was his policy to instigate the youth against the army to disintegrate the country.³¹

Although the Operation Clean Up was aimed to curb criminal elements from the province but the army could not achieve the real targets. The emergence of Haqiqi group escalated violence and deteriorated the law and order situation in the province. In Tando Bahawal (village near Jamshoro in the province of Sindh) incident, nine innocent villagers were killed by an army officer. It created resentment among the people of Sindh against the Army. Operation Clean Up also made Altaf Hussain popular in the urban areas of Sindh. Altaf Hussain alleged that the military operation was launched to target the MQM (Altaf Group). He also threatened to withdraw his party's support to the Nawaz government.

In societies where political institutions are fragile due to frequent military intervention, ethnic issues become so prominent that they defy the process of national integration. Same was the case with Pakistan during the governments of Benazir (1988-90) and Nawaz Sharif (1990-93), when army seemed the real power holder. The elected democratic governments were fragile and could not combat the ethnic forces in the province.

Apart from military operation, MQM had to face another challenge – the growing popularity of different religious groups. These groups included Barelvi organization (Dawat-e-Islami) formed during early 1990s to preach *Sunnah*, Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) lifestyle. Which was later transformed as Sunni Tehrik and the 'Tablighi Jamaat'

³⁰ *Ibid.* 'If some people are annoyed about this crackdown, we cannot help that', *Herald*, July 1992, p.31.

³¹ I. Bakhtiar, 'The use of force cannot wipe out a political party from the hearts of the people', *ibid.*, July 1992, p.39.

in (Deobandi school). These organizations attracted the people especially the youngsters at the grass root level. Consequently the people in urban Sindh especially the Mohajir youth got engaged in the religious activities i.e. *darse* Quran and religious celebrations etc. One of the most important facts of these organizations was that influential economic groups (i.e. Memon and others) started funding these organizations. In this way these organizations became a threat to MQM's vote bank and challenged its political power.

On all accounts MQM was facing a critical situation. It withdrew the support from the IJI government due to crackdown against its members. It weakened its already fragile position in the province. On the other hand several groups (i.e. MQM Haqiqi) emerged to counter MQM (Altaf) which escalated violence in the province of Sindh. Ethnic divisiveness and combativeness in the politics of Sindh continued during 1993-99. The activities of the MQM (Haqiqi) against the MQM (A) and the military operation in the urban areas of Sindh continued. Although the Chief Minister of Sindh, Muzzafar Hussain Shah, in his interview to the *Herald*, termed the operation even handed but it was perceived 'partial' by some sections of the society. The law and order situation in the interior of Sindh improved after one year of this operation. In district Dadu, not a single case of kidnapping was reported during this time.³²

On the other hand the military operation also complicated matters in the urban areas and did not produce the desired results. The local police was bound to follow the directions of the Army. Consequently, it remained subservient to the executive even after operation and did not act independently. It did not eliminate anti-state terrorist elements. Not a single culprit was sentenced by the courts. Innocent people were tortured. MQM leadership asserted that the Operation Clean-Up bolstered the non-democratic forces.

MQM (A) was affected the most in the wake of army operation. Hundreds of MQM workers were put behind bars. The Operation Clean Up had serious implications for them. The Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) of MQM (A) resigned in protest. They thought that the resignation of 28 MPAs would crash down the Muzzafar Shah's government. But it survived with the full support of the government. The MQM (A) lost a platform from where they could have made their grievances heard. The decision was a serious political mistake.

Moreover during the army operation conflict between Altaf Hussain and his close associate Azeem Tariq* got exposed. Azeem Tariq

³² A. Hassan, 'The unlikely saviours', *ibid.*, July 1993, pp.56-7.

* He was assassinated on 1 May 1993.

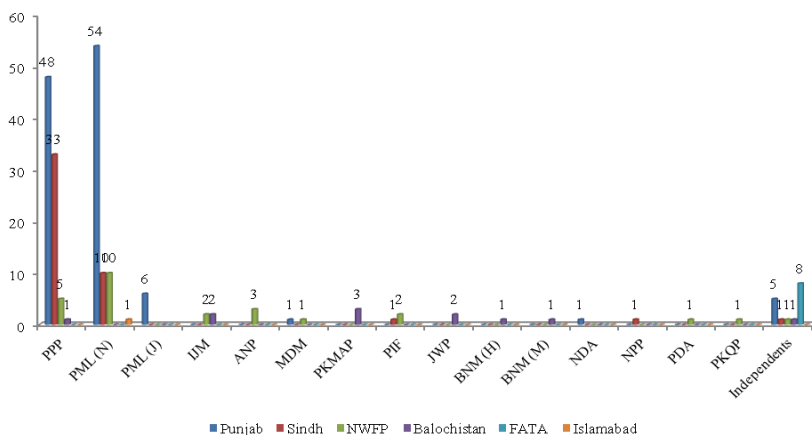
was a moderate and well respected leader in the party. It was suspected that he was in secret contact with army leadership and did not use it in the interests of the party. Altaf Hussain gradually detached himself from Azeem Tariq, declaring him as collaborating with intelligence agencies and the army. In addition to it MQM (A) also lost 1993 by-elections. Many significant MQM (A) leaders did not participate in the elections because of the fear of arrest. However, some dramatic changes occurred at the national level. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the President Ghulam Ishaq Khan developed serious differences on certain policy issues. It led to the removal of both from their respective posts. Army leadership played an important role in the removal of the government.

1993 elections and MQM

The new elections took place under the caretaker government led by Moen Qureshi who He was in Singapore at that time in October 1993 was chosen by military bureaucratic establishment because of his non-political credentials. Figures 5 and 6 highlight the party position in the 1993 elections. Before the elections, the Senator Ishtiaq Azhar, convener of the MQM coordination committee expressed-as reported *Dawn*, 'MQM was not being allowed to function freely and was being restrained from electioneering. MQM workers were being arrested, harassed and restrained from displaying any banner or poster'.³³

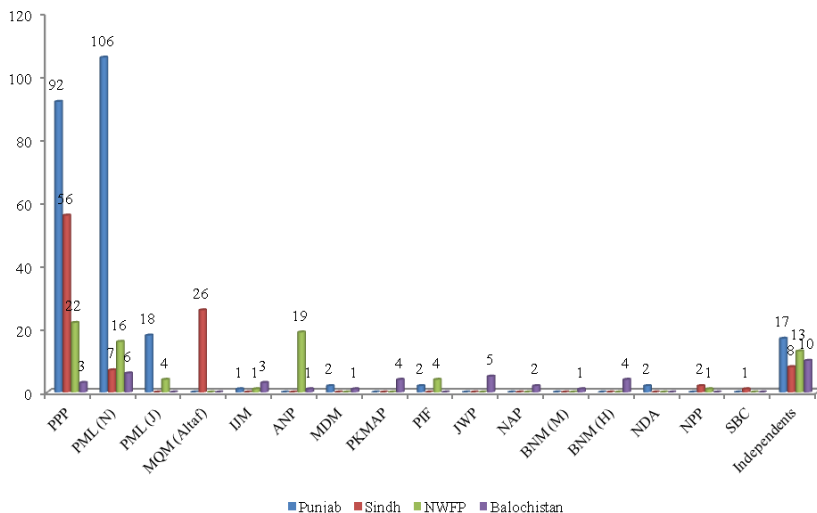
Figure 5

National Assembly 6 October 1993 Elections Results: Party Position



Source: www.ecp.gov.pk

³³ *Dawn*, 3 September 1993, p.1.

Figure 6**Provincial Assembly 9 October 1993 Election Results: Party Position**

Source: www.ecp.gov.pk

MQM (Altaf) boycotted the national elections, assuming that their boycott would affect the voter's turnout, but the objective results could not be achieved. Consequently, the party decided to contest the provincial elections and got 27 seats. MQM proved that in the urban areas of Sindh, it was still a popular party. MQM's re-entry in the provincial elections made PML (N) to make an agreement with it to have its support for its candidates in rural and vice versa in the urban areas. MQM's land slide victory in urban areas of the province reflected that army operation did not eliminate the support base of the party. The election results also made it clear that the Haqiqi faction of MQM had no significant support among the voters. After 1993 elections PPP formed a coalition government at the centre with the support of the Pakistan Muslim League (J), Independents and minorities. Benazir Bhutto became the Prime Minister for the second term on 19th October 1993 and Syed Abdullah Shah (PPP) became the Chief Minister of Sindh.

With the establishment of new government, MQM (A) presented a new list of demands to negotiate with the government regarding the poor law and order situation in the province. In the revised list MQM demanded the withdrawal of all criminal cases against its members and to stop the military operation in the urban areas of Sindh. But during the second term of Benazir's government the army remained employed in Sindh under Article 147 of the Constitution. The new government

adopted more aggressive approach to address the law and order situation in Sindh. Benazir's said in this connection: 'The government can function without MQM (A). It's not 1988, it's 1993. Urban and rural Sindh has to be co-opted.... It will bring the two communities closer'.³⁴ Regarding the military presence in Sindh she explained that there was a need to continue military operation to improve law and order situation in the province.

Although several rounds of talks were held between both the camps (MQM and PPP) but there were controversies over various issues like MQM strongly opposed the creation of Malir district as the fifth district in Karachi. MQM leader Dr. Farooq Sattar said in his interview to the *Herald*,

PPP government wants to secure a National Assembly seat in the future... no area in Sindh with a population as low as Malir district has been formed into a district. The smallest district is Thar, has a population of 450,000 people. But the population of a newly created district is not more than 400,000.³⁵

On the other hand the government took a stance that the real purpose of creating a new district was to increase the efficiency of the government in the interests of general public of Karachi. Development had been restricted only to certain specific areas, the new district was created to do equal justice to the people. However, the PPP government could not win political support of the Mohajirs. They continued to perceive PPP as the nationalist party of Sindhi speaking people. The heinous crimes remained unabated in the province. In this connection the incidents of target killing in Baldia Town (Baldia is an ethnically heterogeneous community in Karachi) during the month of March 1994 further escalated tensions in the city.³⁶ In this context government held MQM's Kamran Jaffri (MPA) responsible for the death of five law enforcement agencies, officials.

The MQM was asked to hand them over but the party denied its involvement in the incident. This incident also revived the Punjabi Pukhtun Ittehad (PPI). The leader of PPI, Malik Sarwar Awan, gave harsh statements against MQM. Malik Sarwar Awan was previously a police official. So it seemed that PPI was patronized by the official circles to counter MQM (A). Although it seemed that PPI was eliminated

³⁴ Z. Abbas and S. Rehman, 'I had to learn the hard way what government is about', *Herald*, November / December 1993, p.34b.

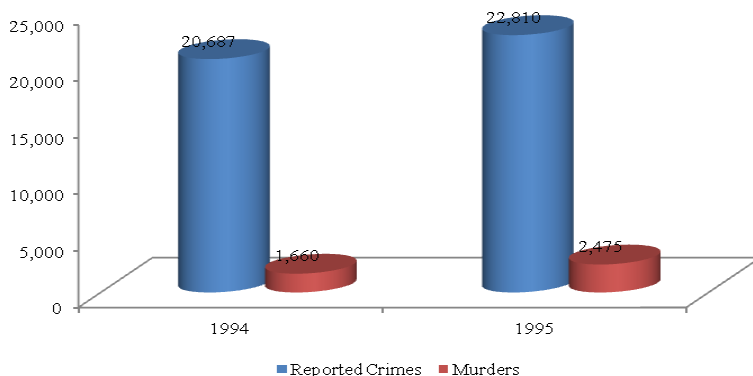
³⁵ I. Bakhtiar, 'This is a politically motivated move', *ibid.*, March 1994, p.67.

³⁶ I. Bakhtiar, 'Blood on the Streets', *ibid.*, April 1994, p.67-9.

during the 1992 Operation Clean Up but the ethnic tensions in Baldia Town reflected that it was not the case. The incident further intricated the law and order situation in Karachi. The police and the law enforcement agencies had to cope with the changing situation. Police was not fully equipped to fight urban terrorism. Although Sindh's interior including Hyderabad, settled down and returned to normalcy but the factional fighting and ethnic and sectarian violence continued in Karachi.

From 29 April to 5 May 1994 32 people were killed and 70 law enforcement agencies personnel were attacked. The sectarian violence also started in Karachi after the incident of the explosion in a coach on 23 July 1994. At least six Shias were killed and 24 injured in that explosion and 42 peoples were the victims of sectarian killings within a month.³⁷ The law and order situation could not be stabilized even in the presence of army. Target killings started again in Karachi. During the month of February 1995 more than 40 people were shot down in different attacks. Similarly 98 persons were killed in the first 14 days of March 1995.³⁸ The following Figure shows the ratio of crimes in Karachi during 1994-95.

Figure 7
Ratio of Crimes in Karachi during 1994-95



This series of killings in Karachi caused a wave of immigration from there. Moreover, the death of two American diplomats Durell and Landingham on 8 March 1995 by the terrorists badly affected the

³⁷ I. Haleem, 'Ethnic and sectarian violence and the propensity towards Praetorianism', *Third World Quarterly*, 24:3 (2003), pp.463-77.

³⁸ R.L. Porte, 'Pakistan in 1995, the continuing crises', *Asian Survey*, 24:2 (1996), pp.145-49.

international image of Pakistan. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto condemned the killing of two staff members of the U.S. Consulate in Karachi and expressed deep regret at the tragic incident and assured the U.S. President that the culprits would be arrested.³⁹

The disturbed law and order situation in the province of Sindh let the opposition parties to pressurize the government to take immediate measures to overcome the crises. However, the opposition leader Nawaz Sharif visited London, on 19 March 1995, to hold talks with Altaf Hussain. Both the leaders agreed upon certain measures to overcome Karachi crises inspite of the fact that Nawaz Sharif and Altaf Hussain both had bitter relations in the past. Altaf Hussain was sentenced to twenty seven years imprisonment during Nawaz government but now both the leaders entered into formal alliance and demanded that the government should address the crises on priority bases. Human rights violation must be stopped and the democratic political system based on popular participation without any discrimination must be established. Moreover, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) press release maintained that the meeting between opposition leader Nawaz Sharif and Army Chief General Abdul Waheed Kakar took place in General Head Quarter (GHQ) at the request of Nawaz Sharif. The meeting assumed greater significance because it took place at the time of heightened tension between the government and the opposition.⁴⁰

President Farooq Laghari also tried to mediate between MQM and the government. MQM delegation (including Shoaib Bukhari, Kazi Khalid and Tariq Javed) met with the President and expressed their grievances. The President, reportedly,⁴¹ assured them to look into their genuine demands and also urged them to cooperate with the government to improve the situation in the province. Here the pressure from the presidency and the army forced the government to find political solution to maintain law and order situation in the province. Although President Leghari was loyalist of PPP but he took an independent position on various issues especially violence and poor law and order situation in Karachi.

To initiate the process of negotiations, Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, appointed Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, N.D. Khan, as head of committee. The MQM leader, Altaf Hussain also formed a five members committee headed by a senior journalist Ajmal Dehlvi. Negotiations did not produce the desired results, the government

³⁹ *The Nation*, 9 March 1995.

⁴⁰ Z. Hussain, 'Dark trail to Washington' *Newsline*, March 1995, pp.53-6.

⁴¹ *The Nation*, 31 March 1995.

was not ready to accept MQM's 18 points charter of resolution, it continued to accuse MQM to be involved in terrorism. *The Nation* quoted Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's statement, 'MQM (Altaf) is not a political party rather a militant organization which believes in terrorism and violence. This organization is equipped with latest arms and ammunition like Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) etc which can even blow a building into pieces'.⁴² The MQM was also not ready to make compromise at the cost of their demands. The endless spate of violence in Karachi created an alarming situation for the PPP government. The confrontational politics also gave rise to provincialism and ethnic killings.

However, the deteriorating law and order situation brought the paramilitary forces back into the city. The interior ministry started another crackdown in Orangi, Korangi and Gulbahar (Karachi). The interior minister Naseerullah Baber (retired army general) warned the terrorists by saying that they would not be allowed to intimidate the state authorities.⁴³ A number of suspicious workers of the MQM were arrested by the law enforcement agencies and more than seventy MQM activists were killed. Members of police and rangers were also targeted by MQM.

Apart from it the MQM (Altaf) leaders kept on forcing the government to reform the local bodies system on the basis of decentralization of powers to the grassroots. Dr. Farooq Sattar, Deputy Convener MQM said in his interview that 'the issue of local self government has always been a contentious issue between the MQM and all the successive governments in Pakistan. We always support to establish local bodies to promote decentralized political system'. But the PPP government ruled out the holding of elections for at least three years. The dismissal of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), run by Mohajir elected representative at that time, and the amendments in the Sindh Local Government Ordinance (SLGO) further intensified the conflict between the government and the MQM. According to the new ordinance, District Municipal Corporations (DMCs) were set up to replace Zonal Municipal Committees in each of the City's five districts; DMCs were brought under the control of commissioner and the KMC under the Sindh Government. The KMC now comprised of ninety members elected from amongst the councilors of all five DMCs.

In this way each DMC had equal representation in the KMC irrespective of its population. Opposition parties especially the MQM (Altaf) opposed this system because equal representation of all DMCs in

⁴² *The Nation*, 7 August 1995.

⁴³ Z. Abbas, 'Benazir waterloo', *Herald*, June 1995, pp.27-30.

KMC meant disproportionate representation of all DMCs and the imbalance of power among different areas with respect to their population and ethnic affiliations. Moreover, the distribution of funds among DMCs was also left to the discretion of the government.

Apart from it, according to the new ordinance, the authority over the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) was also taken away from KMC.⁴⁴ KWSB used to be subsidized by the KMC but on the instructions of the Prime Minister KMC's subsidy was suspended. This left the KWSB with a budget deficit of over 1,000 million. Both sides MQM (A) and the PPP government publicly held each other responsible for these crises and it seemed that they would not agree to reconcile. Infact the political intolerance on both sides (PPP government and MQM) and ethnic and sectarian violence in Karachi derailed the administrative machinery of Pakistan. The death toll reached new heights. During (1995-1996) about 200 people, mostly MQM activists, were killed in police custody, mainly in extra 'judicial killings'. MQM activists like Naeem Sharri, Faheem Commando, Faheem Bhoora, Aslam Sabzwari, Wajid Ali, Farooq Dada, Rehan Kana, Abdul Rasheed, Amir Siddiqui, Aslam Iqbal and many others were extorted by police and law-enforcement agencies. Zohra Yusuf, Secretary General of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), mentioned that the cases of Aslam Sabzwari and Fahim Commando were blatant examples of 'extra judicial killings'. They died due to physical torture. She further condemned the practice of state authorities to kill the people without the due process of law.⁴⁵ The DIG, Karachi, Shoaib Suddle defended the government and highlighted that the MQM was making propaganda against the law enforcement agencies to discredit their achievements.⁴⁶

But the fact was that the government's strategy to suppress the MQM had crippling effects on the social, cultural and commercial life in Karachi. Calls for strikes by MQM, protest demonstrations and ethnic killings badly damaged the infrastructure of Karachi, the economic hub of the country. It was estimated that one day strike had caused 1.3 billion rupees loss to Pakistan's economy.⁴⁷ In the wake of these developments, President Farooq Leghari dismissed the Benazir government, on 5 November 1996, on charges of failure of the government to contain heinous crimes, terrorism, and corruption and to investigate extra-

⁴⁴ I. Bakhtiar, 'Hijacking Karachi', *Herald* (27 May 1996), pp.62-8.

⁴⁵ A. Zia, 'License to kill', *Newsline*, February 1996, pp.26-30.

⁴⁶ H. Mujtaba, 'Beyond the law? Lose cannon', *ibid.*, pp.34-40.

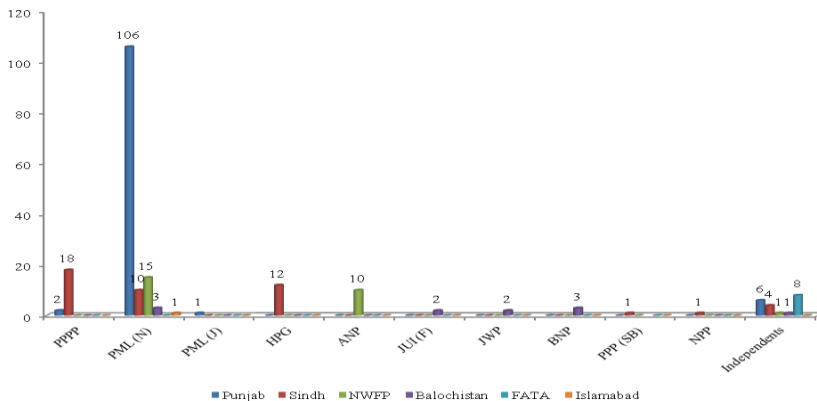
⁴⁷ M. Ahmer, 'Ethnicity and State power in Pakistan, the Karachi crises', *Asian Survey* 36 (October 1996), pp.10-35.

judicial killings, A fresh national and provincial elections were held on 6 February 1997. The following Figures 8 and 9 show the election result.

1997 Elections and the MQM

Figure 8

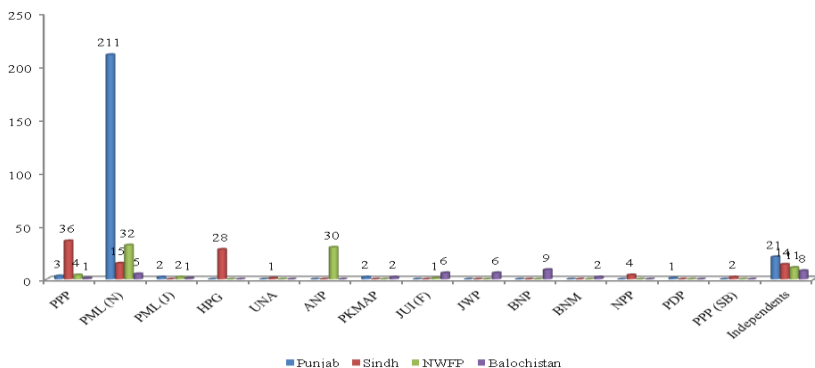
National Assembly 3 February 1997 Election Results: Party Position



Source: www.ecp.gov.pk

Figure 9

Provincial Assembly 3 February 1997 Election Results: Party Position



Source: www.ecp.gov.pk

In the elections the MQM (A) emerged as the second largest party in the Sindh province. It had strong reservations against PPP due to 1995-96 extra-judicial executions and harassment of its workers. Although the party had also been targeted during Nawaz Sharif's government (1990-1993) in the first military operation, they,

nevertheless, after intensive negotiations, entered into an alliance with each other both at the centre and in Sindh.

1. Both the parties agreed to release the political workers to create an environment of reconciliation.
2. They also committed to eliminate terrorist activities from the province.
3. They decided to establish a judicial commission to investigate extra-judicial killings and to compensate the affectees.
4. The agreement entailed to review the orders regarding the dismissal of officials.
5. Both the coalition partners considered that the PPP government took certain discriminatory steps towards the urban community like the formation of 'Malir Development Authority' and 'Lyari Development Authority'. So they agreed upon their reversal.

Following agreement, the Liaquat Jatoi from PML (N) was elected as the Chief Minister of Sindh. Being a part of the new coalition MQM (A) demanded that the government should pay Rs 3,00,000 as compensation to PPP's crack down to all the affected families of the MQM workers. Although Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, informed an MQM delegation that the government had formed a judicial commission to probe 'extra judicial killings' in Karachi and the commission would prepare its report within four months, MQM (A) had problems in getting the PML (N) implement all the clauses of the agreement. The general perception within the law enforcement agencies and other coalition partners was that MQM (Altaf) was an anti-state and militant organization, thus creating a trust deficit. The interior ministry of Pakistan also held that the MQM militants were receiving training from India.

The reorganization of the party was a major concern because during the 1992 military crackdown MQM (A) top political leadership went underground and the militant activists took over the party. So after the dissolution of the Benazir government, the political leadership of MQM (A) began to re-emerge. Most of the hard-liners* were expelled from the party. The party name was also changed from Mohajir Quomi Movement to Muttahida Quomi Mahaz in 1997 to banish its ethnic image.

Contrary to its earlier rigid posture, the party showed a good deal of flexibility and political maturity. It decided not to insist upon demanding the chief ministership of Sindh and even agreed to the

* The militants expelled from the party formed some other factions i.e. Goga Group or some became the contract killers.

appointment of a governor of the central government's choice.⁴⁸ This changed stance received wide applaud. General (Retd.) Mirza Aslam Baig said in this connection. '...the decision of the MQM leadership to enter into the mainstream of national politics from the narrower pool of 'Mohajir Identity' is insightful, clear-headed and sagacious. I can foresee positive results flowing from this bold and courageous move'.⁴⁹

Despite these political developments violence continued in Karachi, creating serious doubts about the credibility of the state authorities. During 1997 more than 50 people, including the members of MQM (A) and the PML (N) were killed in Karachi. Unidentified gunmen engaged in killings (both targeted and random) resulted in the deaths of several government officials. The MQM also organized protest demonstration and strikes in order to pressurize the government to implement the MQM – PML (N) accord (March 1997) and to check the secret agencies which were exploiting the situation. MQM senior minister, Sindh, Dr. Farooq Sattar was quoted as saying: 'There have been reports that the secret agencies have been involved in making and breaking governments. The other target is to destabilize the coalition government... we maintain that the secret agencies have once again been hatching conspiracies against us'.⁵⁰

More significantly the new Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 (this act gave new and increased powers to the police and law enforcement agencies) was another issue. This law provided full immunity to the law enforcement officers. The sub-section (II) gave police the power to arrest without warrant. So if an innocent person was killed then there would be no legal means of redress available to his family and dependents. Moreover, the creation of special courts under Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) also violated the spirit of the constitution's separation of powers among all the organs of the government.

The MQM (A) openly denounced this move, when the bill was introduced in the parliament, it abstained from voting.⁵¹ Another conflicting issue between the MQM (A) and government was about the holding of local bodies elections. Local Bodies in Sindh were suspended in 1992 during army operation. As a covering up exercise promises were

⁴⁸ Y. Samad, 'In and out of power but not down and out: Mohajir identity politics', in C. Jaffrelot (ed.), *Pakistan Nation, Nationalism and the State* (New Dehli: Lordson Publishers, 2005), pp.2-83.

⁴⁹ M.A. Beg, 'MQM decision sagacious', *Dawn*, 30 July 1997.

⁵⁰ I. Bakhtiar, 'When we say agencies we mean the federal intelligence agencies' *Herald*, July 1997, p.31.

⁵¹ I. Bakhtiar, 'Legal mine field', *ibid.*, September 1997, pp.32-4.

made on the part of the government. However, the federal government did give Rs 100 million in two installments (November 1997, March 1998) as compensation to the families affected by the military crackdown during 1993-96. In fact both the coalition partners, MQM (A) and PML (N) needed to explore the areas of mutual cooperation to stabilize the law and order situation in Karachi.

The MQM – PML (N) alliance remained subject to the fragile policies of the government. MQM (A) kept on claiming that the promises were not fulfilled by the government. The party leaders also complained that they were alienated by the local bureaucracy and not invited in the top-level meetings to discuss the law and order situation. In this connection the issue of the no-go areas remained a soaring point and increased tensions between the two parties. Sindh, senior minister, Dr. Farooq Sattar was quoted as saying, ‘No-go areas are those parts of district East in Karachi where so called dissidents of the MQM have been installed by the agencies.... Our entry is banned, and we cannot conduct any political activities there.’⁵² The MQM leadership asserted that all the hard liners expelled from MQM (A) were planted by the agencies in these no-go areas including Landhi, Korangi, Shah Faisal Colony, Malir and Lines Area.

In fact, Sindh continued to remain a problematic province. The murder of Hakeem Saeed (former Sindh Governor and a well renowned person) on 17 October 1998 widened the gulf between the two parties. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif openly accused MQM (A) of Hakeem Saeed’s murder. He imposed governor rule in Sindh on 30 October 1998 under Article ‘232 (2) (C)’ of the 1973 Constitution. The MQM coordination committee rejected the Prime Minister’s allegations and said that the Prime Minister was the ‘central character’ in the conspiracy to malign MQM. The governor rule continued till Musharraf’s martial law in October 1999.

Politics of MQM during Musharraf regime

General Musharraf set forth certain objectives before the people of Pakistan. He emphasized on economic reconstruction of the country and devolving powers to the grass roots level in order to empower people. He also emphasized inter-provincial harmony to fortify the federation of Pakistan. He shaved his commitment to more liberal policies to ensure freedom of press and electronic media. He introduced a new system of local self government consisting of the Union Council, the Tehsil

⁵² *Ibid.* If there was a solution to the East and West Pakistan crises, then there is a solution to this problem *Herald*, April 1998, p.33.

Council and the District Government. Separate District Coordination Officers (DCOs) were appointed for all the departments to carry on the affairs at the district level. Moreover the police was to remain under the authority of local elected representatives of people.

The opposition democratic forces in Pakistan denounced the Musharraf's rule and his policies. The PML (N) which came into power with unprecedented mandate in the 1997 general elections challenged the army coup in the courts of law. Initially Muttahida Quomi Movement (MQM) criticized the Musharraf's policy initiatives. The party had reservations regarding the new local bodies system. They maintained that the local bodies are the third tier of government and they should be under the control of the provincial government. The local bodies would have no legal base without the ratification of the provincial assembly. MQM boycotted the local bodies elections and its leaders condemned the 'delimitation rule' to set up the Union Councils. In Karachi there were 347 Union Councils during 1987 local bodies elections but now the number was reduced to 178. It was presumed as a deliberate act by the government to curtail the majority of MQM. However, the new local bodies were established after the first phase of elections in 2001.

Criticizing the mode of elections, MQM apprehended that the military government was holding these elections to legitimize its rule. The MQM leadership claimed that their struggle was to restore and perpetuate democratic rule in Pakistan. MQM coordination committee led by Dr. Imran Farooq was reported as saying 'we believe in a democratic and peaceful struggle...until we achieve our goals'.⁵³ In their struggle against the military rule MQM also came closer to the Sindhi nationalist forces. They raised voice for the issues like energy crises in Pakistan, decentralization in the political system through provincial autonomy and to ensure fair distribution of revenue. In this connection MQM and Jeaye Sindh Quomi Mahaz jointly observed strikes and sit-ins, protesting against load shedding and water shortage in the province.

The 9/11 (Al-Qaeda militants attack on US World Trade Centre and Pentagon, US military head quarter in 2001) incident changed the entire political scenario. It gave an opportunity to General Musharraf to get foreign support against domestic confrontation. He tried to perpetuate his rule through western support. He committed to provide all logistic support to the U.S in its war against terror. He also made deliberate efforts to promote liberal forces in the country to have the support base for his government. In these circumstances MQM leadership bolstered

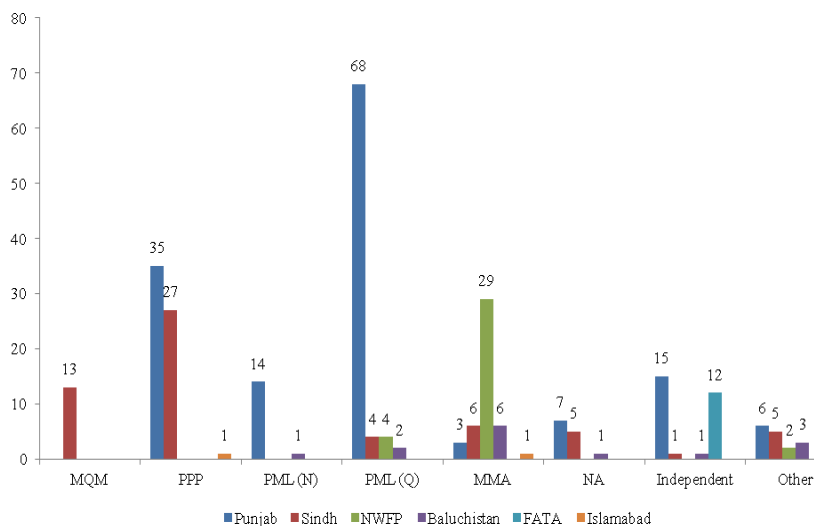
⁵³ *Ibid.* The main purpose behind the local body polls was to provide legal cover to an unconstitutional military government, *Herald*, June 2001, p.62.

Musharraf's rhetorics to come back to mainstream politics. The party became a big supporter of Musharraf's phenomenon of 'enlightened moderation' (the slogan raised by General Musharraf to foster liberalism in Pakistan to contain extremism) and condemned religious extremism.

General Musharraf like his predecessor, Zia-ul-Haq, also held referendum on 29 April 2002. MQM extended its full support to General Musharraf in this referendum. He got ninety five percent votes. He also formed his political party, Pakistan Muslim League (Q), to have a popular base in country's politics. Afterwards General Musharraf announced national and provincial elections in October 2002 to restore the 'parliamentary' democracy in Pakistan. The following Figures show the election results.

Figure 10

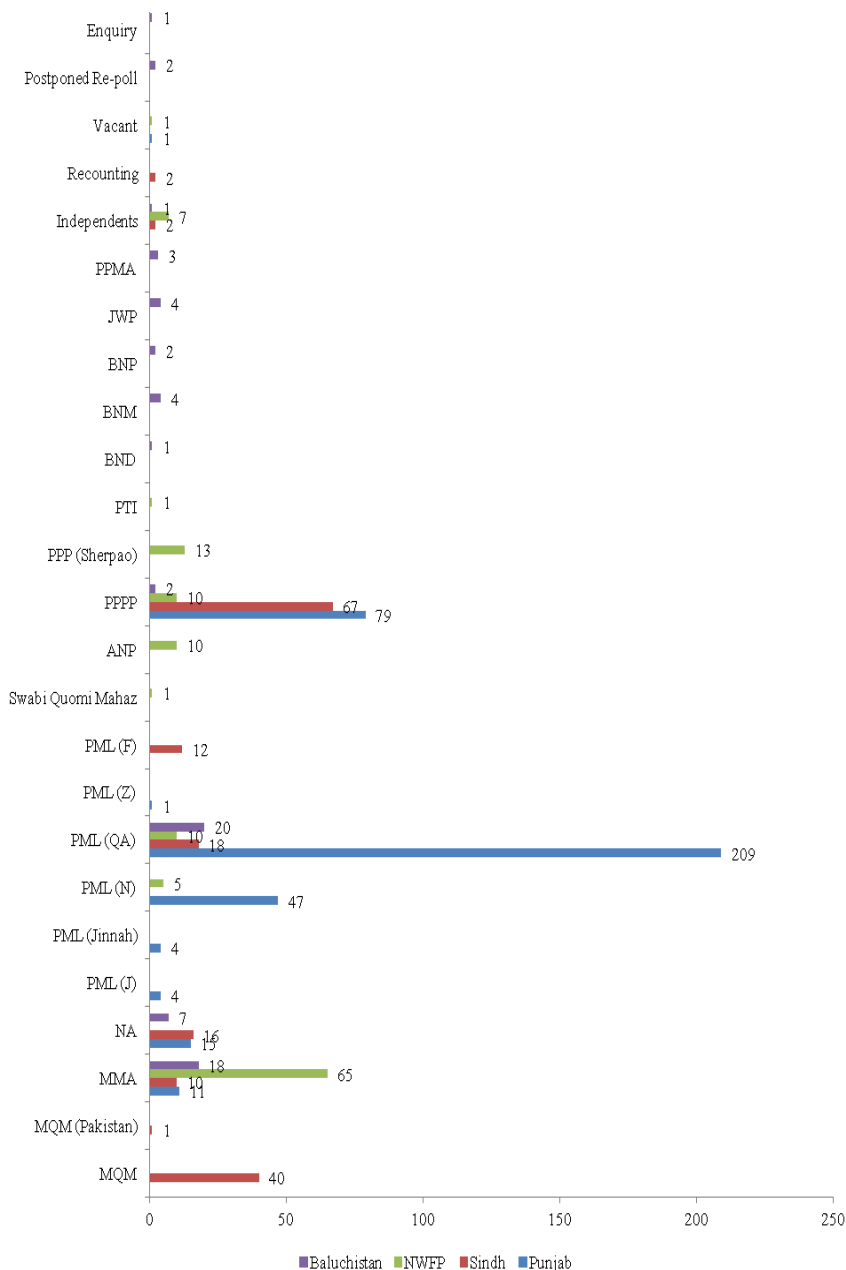
National Assembly 10 October 2002 Election Results: Party Position



Source:

<http://www2.ecp.gov.pk/vsite/complete/ALLResults.aspx?assemblyid=NA>

Figure 11
Provincial Assembly 10 October 2002 Election Results: Party Position



Source: <http://www.ecp.gov.pk/GE/2002/PartiesPositionPA.aspx>

In the October 2002 elections a grand alliance of religious parties under the name of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) emerged. They formed their government in Balochistan and NWFP. In Sindh MQM got an opportunity to share power. While PML (Q) established the government at the centre.⁵⁴ Party leadership pushed General Musharraf to restrict the activities of their dissident group, MQM Haqiqi. They castigated the Haqiqi group to be involved in the terrorist activities. Moreover, MQM was also the beneficiary of National Reconciliation Order (NRO).^{*} Many prominent leaders including Altaf Hussain, Dr. Farooq Sattar, Shoaib Bokhari, Baber Ghouri, Ishratul Ibad, Kunwar Khalid Yunus, Imran Farooq, Saleem Shahzad, and Waseem Akhtar benefited from NRO.

Although MQM was a part of the Musharraf's government but they criticized the government's policies regarding army operation in Balochistan. The party maintained that the government must consider the interests of the indigenous Baloch people. They also threatened the government to quit the coalition. It could have been a serious blow for Musharraf government if MQM had carried out its threat. This gave them another opportunity to come in the bargaining position with the government. The party demanded to increase their seats in the Senate.

⁵⁴ I. Talbot, 'Pakistan in 2002 democracy, terrorism and brinkmanship', *Asian Survey*, XLIII:1, 2003, pp.198-207.

^{*} National Reconciliation Order (NRO) was an ordinance issued by General Musharraf on 5 October 2007. Under this ordinance those politicians and bureaucrats were given an official pardon who were involved in corruption cases, murders or acts of terrorism from 1st January 1986 to 12th October 1999.