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‘The curious case of Sir Gilbert Grace’: police, corruption and provincial loyalties in 1950s Karachi

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Corruption peh hamara bhi haq hey
(‘Corruption is also our right’)¹

Karachi with its population now estimated at over 21 million² - by far the largest city in Pakistan – in many ways represents a microcosm of the country as a whole since virtually all of Pakistan’s so-called ‘ethnic’ groups and power brokers have come to be represented there in the years since 1947. Accordingly, civil unrest in Karachi is regarded as an accurate indicator of the strength of the centrifugal tendencies existing inside multi-ethnic Pakistan: its experience provides a stark account of the politics of ‘ethnic’ identity that pervade Pakistani political life, and ‘ethnic nationalisms’ have figured prominently in the rhetoric emanating from the city. As one commentator recently put it, ‘All is never really well in Karachi’.³

Karachi’s current woes, however, can be linked directly to the legacies of the way in which Pakistan came into existence. In a nutshell, the demographic upheavals triggered by Partition meant that the province of Sindh more generally and Karachi in particular received huge numbers of migrants from what had become the Union of India in the wake of August 1947. As far as West Pakistan was concerned, compared

¹ Comment made by Sardar Abdul Qayyum Jatoi, PPP Federal Minister for Defence Production, who resigned in September 2010 after telling journalists that the Pakistani army was provided with funds to defend the country, rather than to become involved in political assassinations. What is interesting - in relation to this topic under discussion here - is his remark about the place of corruption in Pakistani society, for at the same news conference, Jatoi suggested that the benefits of corruption should be equally available to all: in his words, “All groups — Sindhi, Pakhtun, Baloch, Seraiki and Punjabi - should get an equal share in corruption”. See <http://tribune.com.pk/story/54478/minister-summoned-for-anti-army-judiciary-remarks/> (accessed 10 April 2012).

² Results in April 2012 of Pakistan’s latest census initial tabulations showed that city had become home to over 21 million people, at a density of nearly 6,000 people per square kilometer (15,500 per square mile). See <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-13637-Sindh-population-surges-by-81.5-pc,-households-by-83.9-pc#> (accessed 10 April 2012).

³ See Arif Rafiq, ‘Politics, Karachi style’ http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/01/22/politics_karachi_style (accessed 10 April 2012).

with the Punjab, where communal violence at the time of Partition was much more intense and where the number of refugees moving in both directions was far greater, the experience of Sindh (and Karachi) may initially have seemed considerably less traumatic. But what was significant in the longer run was that - unlike the Punjab where most of the incomers were themselves Punjabis albeit from further east - in Sindh the vast majority of refugees had little if any prior connection with this part of the subcontinent. And in the following decades, little effective integration took place between the various communities drawn to Karachi, a situation further complicated by the internal migration of Punjabis and Pashtuns seeking employment further south. Sindhis, who even before independence were sensitive to the presence of outsiders in 'their' province, experienced increasing marginalisation from sources of power, and increasingly associated Urdu-speaking refugees – or *muhajirs* – as well as other migrant communities with the priorities and plans of the country's Punjabi-dominated federal authorities. By the end of 1970s, around 50 per cent of the inhabitants of Karachi were Urdu-speakers, with a further 13 per cent speaking Punjabi. Only 7 per cent spoke Sindhi (many of the city's pre-Partition inhabitants had spoken Kuchchi, a language claimed as a dialect by both Gujarati and Sindhi). By 1981 Urdu-speakers accounted for 61 per cent of Karachi's population. In many ways, Karachi's 'ethnic' coordinates today represent a direct consequence of Partition's long term impact on the city, something that very quickly after 1947 came to be reflected in the way that the city operated and functioned.

This article thus draws on archival records and contemporary newspaper reports to explore the early challenges posed by these changing demographic realities in Karachi in the decade following independence. More specifically, it focuses on problems connected with policing the city, and the intense rivalry that developed between the Karachi Police and the Pakistan Special Police Establishment (set up in 1948), which eventually resulted in the ousting from his post of the expatriate British Inspector-General of Police, Sir Gilbert Grace, in 1956 amid mutual accusations of malpractice and corruption. While the vast majority of Karachi's non-Muslim police officers had left for India by the beginning of the 1950s, a power struggle emerged between 'refugee' officers on the one hand and those from elsewhere in what had become West Pakistan on the other. In effect, this competition between the various police establishments located within the city mirrored the wider manoeuvring for power and influence that was taking place as Pakistan's new institutional structures

sought to accommodate the different sets of what were referred to as ‘provincial’ interests brought together since 1947, and the accompanying fluidity in the ranks of the government services was often blamed for what many perceived to be a rise in corrupt practices in Karachi at this time. The backdrop to these rivalries also forms part of the bigger story of the political competition that was destabilising Pakistani politics more broadly in the late 1950s.

Policing Sindh and Karachi

Anyone seeking a potted introduction to the history of the police in the part of Pakistan where the city of Karachi is located inevitably turns first to the *Gazetteer* compiled by a former British official, H.T. Sorley, in the late 1950s. While the Police Act of 1861 is regarded the principal legal instrument designed primarily keep imperial India’s subjects under check,⁴ Sindh’s police force, as outlined here, owed its colonial origins to the decision made by Sir Charles Napier after the British annexation of 1843 to establish a force numbering some 2,400 armed police under military officers, apparently quite independent of the civilian establishment. It was modelled on an existing colonial institution – the Royal Irish Constabulary⁵ – and was commanded by an officer entitled ‘Captain [later Commandant] of Police’ under whom three Lieutenants (later Captains) of Police in turn controlled the three district forces of Karachi, Hyderabad and Shikarpur. In 1865, immediate control of the police was devolved to the Commissioner-in-Sind, and district forces were placed under the command of Superintendants. Eventually in 1905, the Commissioner’s supervision of practical day-to-day matters was transferred to a Deputy Inspector-General of Police for Sind, whose overall jurisdiction included Karachi.⁶

⁴ International Crisis Group, *Reforming Pakistan’s Police*, Asia Report N° 157 July 2008, p. i. Available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/157_reforming_pakistan_s_police.pdf (accessed 10 April 2012).

⁵ In modified form, this Irish model was then applied elsewhere in British India over the following twenty years. See D. Arnold, ‘The Police and Colonial Control in South India’, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 4, No. 12 (July 1976), pp. 3-16.

⁶ H.T. Sorley (comp.), *The Gazetteer of West Pakistan: The Former Province of Sind (including Khairpur State)* (Lahore: Board of Revenue, West Pakistan, 1968), pp. 707-708. Sorley was a former ICS officer who had served as Collector or Deputy Commissioner of Hyderabad, Nawabshah (Sanghar included) Tharparkar and Jacobabad districts and who went to be a member of the Pakistan Central Board of Revenue in the early 1950s. He was commissioned to produce this volume during the One Unit period - 1955-1969 - when the provinces making up West Pakistan were temporarily abolished.

But, while the colonial era in Sindh was later often regarded a time of effective crime control, pre-1947 annual police reports and memoirs of individual officers indicate that the situation was not nearly as satisfactory as later imagined: ‘despite all the efforts of the colonial government, Karachi, in the latter half of the nineteenth century was not a safe place’.⁷ In fact, the first half of the twentieth century has been recognised instead as a period of great difficulty from a police point of view, ‘including as it did two world wars ... the long period of depression and low prices in the twenties and thirties, and from the thirties onwards the great increase in the amount of political agitation and communal tension often resulting in serious outbreaks of disorder [...] Occasional riots of serious dimensions occurred, for example at Karachi and Sukkur and the Hur Rebellion of 1942, and a great increase in police work was entailed by the Arms Act and Motor Vehicles Act’.⁸

Throughout these early decades, senior officers complained about the persistent failure of the government to provide sufficient police for duties, which had been made heavier as a result of post-(First World)war retrenchment and later on, among other factors, the great growth in population due to the Sukkur Barrage project, the inadequacy of police accommodation, and the increasing difficulty of securing the cooperation of the public especially after 1936 when, with the separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency, day-to-day responsibility for government passed into the hands of local ministers, and local *zamindars* accordingly seemed less inclined to assist the police.⁹ Economic controls introduced during the Second World War added to the responsibilities of the police and further tested their discipline and integrity. As a debate in the Sind Legislative Assembly in 1944 highlighted, the official impression on the eve of independence was that

the policeman’s lot is not a happy one. His pay is not commensurate with his labours. [Indeed] a constable cannot live as a decent man with a paltry sum of Rs 37 per month, plus a small war allowance. The Police Department is the notoriously worst paid department under the Government of India.¹⁰

⁷ A.H.K. Gorchani, *The Sindh Police: brief history and developments, 1947-1997* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 28.

⁸ Sorley, *Gazetteer*, p. 710.

⁹ Sorley, *Gazetteer*, p. 710-711.

¹⁰ *Official Report of the Sind Legislative Assembly*, vol. XX, no. 3 (Karachi, 1945), pp. 31-33.

It was against this backdrop that independence took place, with considerable knock-on effects as far as the effective policing of Sindh, and the city of Karachi in particular, was concerned. The confusion of Partition, which triggered enormous demographic upheaval and led to hundreds of thousands of people both leaving and entering the province during and after August 1947, challenged local police resources, not least in relation to the public integrity of the force: as Sorley himself later commented, 'it is feared that there has been some decline in the morale and honesty of the forces responsible for law and order, on account of the many temptations to which they have been subjected in the unsettled conditions that have prevailed for the last ten years'.¹¹ Corruption, which had been acknowledged as a growing problem throughout British India during the war years when illegal activities surrounding supply, controls and rationing had intensified and provided increased opportunities for illicit gain, did not disappear after August 1947, but became a particularly sensitive issue, particularly when it involved those working on behalf of the new state.¹² Expectations that the new authorities would somehow address the problem successfully were high.¹³

The first attempt at reform took place in February 1948 when a bill for the establishment of a police force in Karachi was put forward. Its aim was 'to transform the police in Karachi from an instrument to keep citizens on a tight leash into a public-friendly agency staffed by professionals tasked with preventing and detecting crime and enforcing the law with justice and impartiality'.¹⁴ However, the move was in large part a response to weaknesses in the existing arrangements that had been

¹¹ Sorley, *Gazetteer*, p. 716.

¹² W. Gould, T. Sherman and S. Ansari, 'The flux of the matter: loyalty, corruption and the everyday state in the post-partition government services of India and Pakistan', *Past and Present* (forthcoming, 2013).

¹³ For a study that explores this issue from the point of view of the United Provinces both before and after independence, see W. Gould, *Bureaucracy, Community and Influence in India: society and the state, 1930s-1960s* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), esp. Chapter 5. For an overview of the place of corruption in early Pakistan, see I. Chattha, 'Competitions for Resources: Partition's Evacuee Property and the Sustenance of Corruption in Pakistan', *Modern Asian Studies*, *FirstView* 2012: pp 1-30, <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=8551698> (accessed 7 May 2012).

¹⁴ M.S. Suddle, 'Looking Back, Moving Forward: a brief history of ideas and events relevant to Pakistan's police system', p. 42, in *Report from the ADB Symposium on Challenges in Implementing Access to Justice Reforms* (Asian Development Bank, 2005), available at <http://www.adb.org/documents/reports/law-policy-reform/chap4.pdf> (accessed 10 April 2012).

exposed by a fairly rare outbreak of communal violence at the start of the year.¹⁵ As the Chief Minister of Sindh at the time, M.A. Khuhro, pointed out, the police force as it was then constituted had proved itself unable to cope with the enormous influx of people into the city, and, accordingly, he proposed the appointment of a Commissioner of Police for Karachi, along existing Bombay lines:

Sir, the Bill is a long one, but most of it is already in operation in Bombay and other cities. Karachi has very much developed and many more people have come in. The population has considerably increased and the police force in the present conditions will not be able to cope up with the situation. Therefore, like Bombay, we are going to appoint Commissioner of Police for the city of Karachi and give him powers which are identical to those which are given to Police Commissioner of Bombay. This is the main idea behind it. The powers that he will enjoy are in respect of curfews, processions, public meetings, permission of these, regulating arms and licences. I think it is high time that Karachi city should have a Bill like this. There should be a regular Police Commissioner for this city.¹⁶

The proposed police commissioner, however, would have no control over the city's judges, who would remain under the authority of Karachi's District Magistrate. But while the bill was duly passed by the Sind Legislative Assembly, a combination of powerful vested interests (that allegedly prevented it from being presented to the ailing Governor General [Jinnah] for his authentication) and the change in Karachi's status (when it became a federally-administered area later in 1948) meant that the proposal never came into effect. According to Suddle,

The Assembly passed the Bill on 7th February 1948 and an authenticated copy signed by the Speaker and bearing the forwarding note of the Governor of Sind was duly forwarded to the Governor General's office. Surprisingly, the Legal Advisor to the Governor General made certain 'minor corrections' on the authenticated copy of the Bill, and returned it to the office of Governor Sind for resubmission. Why he did so is not clear from the record, but it appears that the politics of police reform did not let the Bill return to the Governor General, who because of his fast deteriorating health

¹⁵ This was triggered by an attack on Sikhs passing through Karachi on 6 January 1948, carried out by refugees from India in apparent revenge for attacks on Muslims there. See S. Ansari, *Life After Partition: migration, community and strife in Sindh, 1947-1962* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 56-57.

¹⁶ For more details of the debate from which this quote is taken, see *Sind Legislative Assembly Debates*, 7 February 1948, vol. III, no. 4 (Karachi, 1948), pp. 49-51.

was increasingly unable to attend to official matters. (He died on 11 September 1948).¹⁷

One of the interesting points that arose from the 1948 Sind Legislative Assembly debate, and something that became a recurring theme in discussions about the working of the police in Karachi in the years that followed, were apparent problems associated with the personnel involved. Veteran Assembly member and longstanding representative of the city's interests, H.M. Gazdar, for instance, pointed out how 'unfortunate' it was that 'the police force in Karachi is not of the right type and most probably the new recruits who have come from areas which have suffered [migrants from India] are not quite suitable for Karachi'. While the authorities had been trying to get the numbers increased, it was proving very difficult to train new policemen 'overnight'. As Gazdar admitted,

I do not like this police ... The best administration is that in every Department of Government there should not be one class or section dominating. It is always good for administration that we should have a mixture. We should have in the Police of Karachi Sindhis, Makranis, outsiders of various provinces, all a mixture. Then alone we can be sure of proper administration in the city.¹⁸

Meanwhile, with increased concerns about the problem of corruption after partition, moves were made at both federal and provincial level to address the problem. In 1947 a new Prevention of Corruption Act was passed, making the issue a special crime. Its own investigating and prosecuting arm was subsequently created in 1948 when the federally-controlled Special Police Establishment, which had been set up in 1942 during the Second World War to investigate rampant corruption in government departments was now (courtesy Ordinance VIII of 1948) renamed as Pakistan Special Police Establishment (PSPE):

[T]he rationale for the institution of this body [the Special Police Establishment], which focussed specifically on government servant misconduct and corruption in all its forms, was the peculiar circumstances of the war. The outbreak of the war had brought about a vast increase in government activity especially in connection with government contracts, stores and railway transport, and had also

¹⁷ See M.S. Suddle, 'Reforming Pakistan Police: an overview', p. 99, available at http://www.unafei.or.jp/english/pdf/PDF_rms/no60/ch05.pdf (accessed 10 April 2012).

¹⁸ *Sind Legislative Assembly Debates*, 10 February 1948, vol. III, no. 6 (Karachi, 1948), pp. 8, 14.

brought in its train numerous opportunities for “illegal gratification”.¹⁹

With the passage of time, the PSPE, in addition to investigating charges of bribery and corruption against central government employees, was also given the power to look into cases relating to the 1923 Official Secret Act, the 1947 Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1947, the 1952 Passport Offenses Act, and the 1959 Customs Act.

But the anti-corruption measures that were set in place during the first decade after independence were not without their faults. According to its later critics, an inherent flaw of the 1947 Anti-Corruption Act was that

special permission [had to] be obtained from the departmental head of the concerned department/organisation to pursue a case and investigators had to inform the departmental head of the initiation of investigations. This made prosecutions difficult as the investigators had to go through dubious bureaucratic procedures as well as causing unnecessary delays that provided time for offenders to take countermeasures that would undermine the investigation. [Hence, although] the law was utilised successfully to prosecute offenders involved in minor cases, it effectively put the serious offenders and departmental graft beyond the effective ambit of the special police (that itself [sank] to one of the most corrupt institutions in Pakistan).²⁰

Meanwhile the provincial authorities in Sindh also established their own provincial Anti-Corruption Department in June 1948. Supported by his force of anti-corruption police officers, wide powers were given to the province’s Anti-Corruption Commissioner in what was intended to bring about a thorough ‘clean-up’ of the Sindh administration. These powers included suspending any officer belonging to any department on the charge of corruption, as well as ordering departmental inquiries when and where necessary. The Sindh authorities were supposed to consult with their Commissioner when making appointments and confirming or promoting officers:

¹⁹ See Gould, *Bureaucracy, Community and Influence in India*, p. 111.

²⁰ M. Khan, N.A. Shah Kakakhel and M.J. Dubnick, ‘Prosecuting Corruption: the case of Pakistan’ (paper presented at the 2004 Ethnic Forum, American Society for Public Administration) pp. 5-6. The law declared criminal misconduct (defined as the ‘obtaining of any gratification as a motive or reward for doing or forbearing to do any official Act’) as an offence punishable with seven years rigorous imprisonment. In addition, the law also made a crime of accepting anything valuable from a person having business related to an official’s functions or the official abuse of his position for the purpose of obtaining anything of value . See <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY/UNPAN019113.pdf> (accessed 10 April 2012).

‘The fate of the corrupt is doomed’, observed one Sind Secretariat official, who warned (rather over-optimistically perhaps) that anyone with a skeleton in their cupboard would be brought to book for their old habits.²¹ But by August 1949, while more than two hundred cases of bribery and corruption had been registered against provincial officials, only seventeen people had actually been convicted though other cases were still pending in the courts and several hundred officials had been suspended as a result of the provincial anti-corruption drive, including an Inspector-General of Prisons (who was later discharged from service) among their ranks.²² In October the Sindh Chief Minister issued orders to all the district authorities to apply the Safety Act against corrupt officials, with district collectors instructed to prepare lists of those officials whose standard of living appeared to be higher than their salary.²³ Later, in June 1953, a similar anti-corruption drive was made at the federal level, when the ‘Civil Service (Prevention of Corruption) Rules’ were published. Now any government servant who was proved, or ‘reasonably believed’ to be corrupt, could be dismissed or compulsorily retired. Under these Rules, a person could be ‘reasonably believed’ to be corrupt if he had a reputation for being corrupt, if he, his dependents or his associates through him, were in possession of pecuniary resources disproportionate to his known income, or if he had assumed a standard of living above his means. The development was generally welcomed by press and public alike, though with some scepticism about how far it would be possible to implement the Rules. As the pro-refugee newspaper *Dawn*, published from Karachi, put it, ‘The “living-within-means” look which has suddenly become visible in some “quarters” is certainly not the result of any “austerity drive”’.²⁴

Police rivalries in Karachi

Crime more generally (from murder to cycle theft - the latter a big problem in post-partition Karachi according to contemporary newspaper reports), and how it was addressed, was an issue that generated much public discussion – and disquiet – in the early years following Pakistan’s creation. Hence, what was perceived by the public as

²¹ *Dawn*, 30 May 1948.

²² *Dawn*, 11 August 1949.

²³ *Dawn*, 27 October 1950.

²⁴ Cited in Pakistan Fortnightly Summary, Part II, 26 May-8 June 1953, DO 35/5284, United Kingdom National Archives (henceforth UKNA).

a tendency towards complacency in some official quarters, despite rising crime figures in the city, became the subject of especial criticism. By the beginning of January 1951, the authorities could not afford to ignore the problem any longer and the Pakistan Ministry of the Interior accordingly deputed two ‘up-country’ officials to recommend changes. Gilbert Grace, Inspector-General of NWFP,²⁵ and the Chief Commissioner for Lahore, Akhtar Hussain, were given just five weeks to produce a blue-print for improving the federal capital’s police administration. The stated object was to expand the metropolitan police force and make it more effective in its efforts to preserve law and order in the city. As one newspaper report put it,

Busy in heaps of files and police manuals Mr Grace, who has five weeks at his disposal, said that though the problems confronting a huge city like Karachi were ‘foreign’ to him, he was confident of tackling it successfully. The Inspector General is examining the various forms of administration existing elsewhere and is finding out the best one suited for the conditions in Karachi.²⁶

The immediate outcome of their investigation, however, was not clear-cut. Its major finding that corruption was rife within the force can have come as little surprise to either Karachi’s inhabitants or the authorities themselves. Grace himself was then appointed Inspector-General of Police for the city in August 1951, and once in this position launched his own highly personal campaign to eradicate corruption among both officers and the rank and file. One of the matters of concern that he identified after taking up his post was a feature that he regarded as peculiar to Karachi – that various government officials in ministries and particularly in the Ministry of the Interior and in the Chief Commissioner’s Secretariat were communicating directly with police stations and seemingly interfering in case work, either on account of personal interests or from what he regarded as corrupt motives. Grace at once issued an order to police stations forbidding this interference and directing that all such cases

²⁵ Sir (Oliver) Gilbert Grace, C.I.E., O.B.E., born Tring, Hertfordshire, 1896; educated at Berkhamstead School; Commissioned 2nd Lieutenant, 4th (Territorial) Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment (Green Howards), 7.6.1915; Promoted Lieutenant, 1.6.1916; Staff Captain and Brigade Major, 189th Infantry Brigade; served in the 3rd Afghan War, 1919, and was Mentioned in Despatches; Entered Indian Police, 1920; Commandant, North West Frontier Constabulary, 1937-47; present in the Ahmedzai Salient operations, and was Mentioned in Despatches, 1940; Inspector-General of Police, North West Frontier Province, Pakistan, 1947-51; Inspector-General of Police, Karachi, Pakistan, 1951-56; knighted by Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace, 20.10.1953 (*London Gazette* 1.6.1953). Sir Gilbert Grace died on 23.1.1968. See <http://www.spink.com/auctions/pdf/7022.pdf>, p. 17 (accessed 10 April 2012).

²⁶ *Dawn*, 6 January 1951.

should be reported directly to him, as well as through the usual channels. He also found that subordinates in the Ministry were receiving a range of complaints (many of them anonymous) addressed to the Minister (who was supposedly quite unaware of them) and then sending them on as from the Government of Pakistan for immediate action and report. Grace's own refusal to report on such matters as were in the competence of himself or of his subordinates to deal with, stopped a lot of what he regarded as 'this mischief, nepotism and income', and so was disliked by those issuing the orders.²⁷

What went down even worse was his decision in 1952 to dismiss a number of those police officers whom he had identified as corrupt. This move was made all the more controversial by the fact that it seemed, in some eyes, to target police officers who had migrated from India at or after Partition. Back in 1948 when Karachi was separated from Sindh, and became Pakistan's Federal Capital, some 3,500 displaced officers and men were enlisted to augment the city's forces. In the upper ranks (inspector and sub-inspector), they represented around 75 per cent of the total strength. However, since the records of these new enlistments were apparently not available from India, a number of so-called 'imposters' were suspected as having crept in. As Grace himself later explained,

Most of these officers were destitute, having been stripped of their possessions before entering Pakistan. They were accompanied not only by their wives and families, but destitute parents, brothers, sisters and their families also had to be supported, and there was a resultant temptation to resort to corrupt practices to augment their meagre pay.²⁸

Accordingly, in May 1952, Grace dismissed with 'ignominy' 27 subordinate officers in front of a parade of the whole city Force on the grounds of corruption – they were charged with taking weekly payments from a drugs pedlar in return for him selling *charas*²⁹ openly in one of Karachi's main markets. Then in December 1952, upon receiving reports from Superintendants of Police, a further 20 inspectors and sub-inspectors were suspended on the grounds of their 'incorrigible corruption and degraded standards of work'.³⁰ The majority of these men were again former

²⁷ 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', pp. 3-5, DO 35/8934, UKNA.

²⁸ 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', p. 3.

²⁹ Cigarettes combining hashish with tobacco leaves.

³⁰ 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', p. 3.

refugees, chiefly from what had been the United Provinces (UP) in India. Their dismissal was carried out by a simple order of discharge without any formal proceedings, as Grace had apparently been advised by the Ministry of Law that, because they were on temporary one-year contracts, 'show cause' notices did not need to be given.³¹

What Grace failed to appreciate, despite his familiarity with the day-to-day realities of life in Pakistan, was the extent to which many of these dismissed police officers had the advantage of friends in so-called high places – influential contacts in various ministries and amongst refugee politicians – and consequently his actions came under immediate fire for being 'anti-refugee' and biased in favour of men from the Punjab and NWFP.³² Nearly all of the magistrates and most of the Pakistan Special Police Establishment, maintained by the federal government to enquire into corruption in the Central Services, hailed from the UP, while the Karachi Police and CID had, in the view of their supporters, reportedly been 'kept free of provincialism' but all the same contained a high preponderance of men from the Punjab and NWFP. Grace's defenders, in response to accusations levelled against him, argued that he did not promote his favourites unfairly or overstock his force with men from other parts of Pakistan. On the contrary, in their view, he had done no more than attempt roughly to balance by 'impartial' means what they regarded as the excessive recruitment of 'U.P.-wallahs' that dated back to supposed efforts by former Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan to build up an electoral college for himself in Karachi.³³ Appeals against the officers' dismissals went first to the Chief Court, and then, thanks to the co-operation of a Deputy Registrar deemed by some contemporaries (though not proven) to be in the pay of the dismissed officers, found their way to an allegedly sympathetic judge who quashed the order. But on appeal to a full bench, this judgement was reversed, and Grace's actions upheld.

As these developments confirm, Karachi in the 1950s was a veritable 'nest of provincial intrigue'. Thereafter, the conflict between Grace and refugee interests present in the Karachi force itself became still more complex and embittered. In October 1954, when Grace's own three-year contract had been due to expire, he was

³¹ 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', p. 4.

³² 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', p. 4.

³³ UK High Commission, Karachi, to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 22 August 1956, DO 35/5407, UKNA.

asked by the Pakistan Government (he was close to President Iskander Mirza from his NWFP service days³⁴) to stay on for a further two years in order to complete his scheme to put the police in Karachi on a sounder footing. Some 15 inspectors and sub-inspectors, whom he regarded as a similar liability to the others who had been dismissed earlier, then combined forces with those already discharged and prepared a lengthy petition that was highly critical, if not defamatory, of Grace and other senior officers. Their aim, it would seem, was to turn key politicians and government officials against the Inspector-General, and so prevent the extension of his duty. Grace at the time was on leave in the UK, but in his absence the Karachi CID (still staffed mostly by personnel from the Punjab and NWFP) traced not just the authors of the application but apparently also the actual typewriter and typist involved in producing the petition papers.

In addition, CID officers made use of the Security Act to arrest a petty criminal – MA – who had earlier been declared a ‘Disorderly Person’ and expelled for one year from Karachi by the city’s Chief Commissioner on CID evidence. MA now retaliated with a full statement regarding what he alleged had been a police conspiracy together with the various rendezvous used by the officers concerned, but following a *habeas corpus* petition by his wife he was released on the grounds that, as a Security prisoner, he should not have remained in police custody but instead should have been committed to jail. Not surprisingly, once released, and back with the suspended and discharged officers, MA in turn launched what Grace’s supporters regarded as a set of vexatious petitions that included charges of torture and murder levelled against the Deputy Superintendent in charge of the Karachi CID at the time, and an accusation against another CID Inspector that he had committed an “unnatural offence” on MA some months earlier. In Grace’s opinion, both colleagues were victims of vindictive action instigated by UP officers. The CID Deputy Superintendent (a Punjabi), Grace pointed out, could claim over 20 years of distinguished service, including his appointment as Inspector-General for Anti-Corruption by the pre-1947 Government of India in connection with war contracts. The accusation against the other officer was similarly “fantastic”: in Grace’s words,

³⁴ Both Grace and Mirza had received an OBE in January 1945, Grace for his work as Commandant in Frontier Constabulary, and Mirza as Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar, North-West Frontier Province. See <http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/36866/supplements/7/page.pdf> (accessed 10 April 2012).

MA is a repulsive looking pimp, aged 45. The Inspector is a married man with two wives and ten children in residence, and with no homosexual tendencies [...] the complaint was blatantly false and intended only as harassment.³⁵

The immediate outcome was the dismissal from service of those 15 officers who had backed MA. They then in turn appealed to the Karachi Bench of the West Pakistan Court, whose two members – the Chief Justice and the afore-mentioned sympathetic judge – after two days of hearings in December 1955 agreed to disagree, the former upholding the order of discharge, the latter holding the opposite view. The case was then referred to yet another Bench with different judges, the case heard in February-March 1956, and the judgement again postponed. It was not until August 1956 that judgement was finally pronounced in favour of the appellants, some of whom were then re-employed by the PSPE, underlining the divisions and dynamics at work in the city's police forces.³⁶

In the meantime, the intra-police 'feuding' had continued apace. In January 1956, Grace's deputy, Masood Mahmood (another Punjabi), successfully investigated a serious theft from the Naval Establishment, resulting in the public disgrace of two senior naval officers, who had both migrated to Pakistan from the UP. Then in June, a magistrate with UP origins was likewise arrested on charges of embezzlement from his Court. In response, local magistrates *en masse* then formed a 'Union' with the City Magistrate as president, apparently 'declaring war' on the Karachi Police. Grace's opponents now seemingly comprised the UP 'clique' in the police and the magistracy. In his absence (Grace was 'up-country' at the time), Mahmood wrote to the District Magistrate accusing his colleagues of collectively obstructing the work of the police. Shortly afterwards Mahmood was removed from office. That same night (7 July) Grace was recalled to Karachi.³⁷

At this stage, the Inspector-General's opponents produced two trump cards, which put pressure on Grace but also clearly underlined the provincial tensions operating at different levels within city life. The first was the case of a police suspect – one Noor Muhammad Memon – who, according to the official account, had committed suicide by jumping from the top (third) floor of the police headquarters on

³⁵ 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', p. 7.

³⁶ 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', p. 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

the night of 30 June/1 July.³⁸ The body, with the assistance of the magistrates' 'Union', was taken by Noor's mother on 2 July in procession to the house of acting Prime Minister, I.I. Chundrigar, and allegations of death by police torture were made.³⁹ In the ensuing enquiry, the District Magistrate forbade the presence of any police officer in his court, and finally it was the PSPE (that is, the Federal rather than City police) that was authorised to undertake the investigation. This, in the view of the PSPE's critics, triggered a virtual reign of terror aimed at those members of the Karachi Police who remained loyal to Grace: 'the whole [of the Force] became demoralised. Official work almost came to a standstill. In police stations the main topic of conversation daily was "Who has been arrested today?" "Whose turn is it tonight?"'.⁴⁰ Officers and men were picked up at all hours of the day and night, and eventually on 24 July nine police officers were formally arrested on charges of murder, causing grievous bodily hurt to extort confession, wrongful confinement, and suppression of evidence. Within a couple of days the Ministry of the Interior had published a much wider notification to the effect that the PSPE had been authorised to investigate all charges received from the public against the Karachi Police.⁴¹

Grace himself confessed to being amazed at the turn that events had taken. Setting the PSPE against the Karachi Police, it seemed, had started a feud whose repercussions, he predicted, would be felt for many years to come. Another piece of 'criminal folly', he argued, was the sharp cleavage between refugee elements and West Pakistanis (those hailing from the Punjab and NWFP) produced by the way in which particular officers had been selected from the Karachi Police to assist the PSPE: 'This offended against all the principles I stood for, as I have never tolerated provincialism in the Force and its introduction was fatal to esprit de corps and morale'.⁴² Grace himself received orders from the Chief Commissioner to remove or suspend key personnel. In the final event, however, one of the Superintendants of Police whom Grace had earlier removed on charges of corruption and malpractice

³⁸ UK High Commission, Karachi, to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 13 August 1954, D) 35/5407, UKNA.

³⁹ The public reaction to the circumstances involved in the death of Noor Muhammad Memon, an ice-cream seller, petty hoodlum and refugee, underlined the general hardening of community distinctions taking place in Karachi during this period. See Ansari, *Life After Partition*, p. 165.

⁴⁰ 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', p. 28.

⁴¹ UK High Commission, Karachi, to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 13 August 1954, DO 35/5407, UKNA

⁴² 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', p. 28

was not just reinstated but made head of the CID, while the group of officers whom he had discharged in 1952 were similarly reprieved though now posted to the CID rather than returning to the Karachi Police. The aim of these manoeuvres, he believed, were clearly intended to make his position so untenable that he would have no alternative but to resign.

The second trump card, about which the city's newspapers made great play, was an allegation that the Karachi CID was illegally tapping the telephones of ministers. On 9 July a party that included the acting Minister of the Interior Nurul Haq Chaudhry, the City Magistrate and M.A. Zuberi, the well-known *Dawn* journalist,⁴³ raided the CID offices and demanded a list of those telephones being tapped. On 13 July, while Grace was meeting President Iskander Mirza to discuss his position, his own office was personally searched by the Chief Commissioner who reportedly removed monitoring apparatus and a number of top secret files. Despite subsequent meetings between Grace and the Prime Minister, Chaudhry Mohammed Ali (now back from a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in London, and performing Hajj), with the latter telling Grace to stand firm and that steps would be taken to remedy matters, the situation only worsened from Grace's point of view as the Prime Minister himself came under increased criticism from the many of the same disgruntled pro-refugee sources. Following a leak from the Ministry of the Interior on 8 August that the Government had now called off the investigation by the PSPE and instead entrusted the conduct of the inquiry to Grace himself, there was a huge outcry in the city. The next day, a public meeting was called by anti-Grace elements in the Karachi force, complaining at his role. Within 24 hours, three policemen were picked up by the PSPE and allegedly threatened with arrest unless they implicated the Inspector-General. There were also rumours of a planned disturbance at the forthcoming Independence Day celebrations, at which the Prime Minister would be insulted and Grace's impeachment demanded.⁴⁴ For Grace's supporters, these moves were orchestrated to 'hamstring the activities of the Karachi Police and [they] led

⁴³ *Dawn* was a leading English-language newspaper (established by Jinnah in Delhi before independence) produced in Karachi that projected itself as a 'national' publication while closely identifying with the 'refugee cause' – it was closely associated with the Muslim League during this period.

⁴⁴ In what was regarded as one of the longest leading articles ever published by the newspaper, *Dawn* attacked Grace, claiming that any government that retained him in its employ for 24 hours after this judgement would be answerable to God and man. 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', p. 31.

directly to the ultimatum to the Prime Minister which decided him to sacrifice Grace'.⁴⁵

This combination of pressures proved to be the breaking point. The Prime Minister evidently decided that his government could no longer support Grace, whether or not the latter enjoyed the confidence of the President.⁴⁶ Grace was told that the Government no longer wanted to impose upon him the 'mental torture' that he had been suffering over the previous two weeks and he should ask for indefinite leave.⁴⁷ It was made clear to him that the Government felt that unless he went, its own position would be very seriously compromised. The Civil Surgeon duly certified that Grace was suffering from a nervous breakdown, and he was given permission by the Chief Commissioner to proceed to the UK. Even so, on 14 August an Independence Day procession of about 2,000 people went to the Prime Minister's house, calling for Grace's arrest,⁴⁸ and delaying tactics were adopted to prevent him from obtaining the necessary Income Tax Clearance Certificate without which he could not leave Pakistan – according to a subsequent statement by Grace, Income Tax staff had stated plainly that they were not going to provide this certificate because he was to be brought to trial and so should not be allowed to leave the country.⁴⁹ Only the personal intervention of the Finance Minister, Syed Amjad Ali, meant that the certificate was obtained just before the relevant office closed on 16 August for the Muharram holidays. Grace eventually departed for the UK some five days later to the sound of a police pipe band playing 'For he's a jolly good fellow' at Karachi airport.⁵⁰ In the meantime, on 8 August

⁴⁵ UK High Commission, Karachi, to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 22 August 1956, DO 35/5407, UKNA.

⁴⁶ Iskander Mirza's assessment of Grace was that he 'was a bad judge of men and had made mistakes. But he had done great things for the Karachi police force'. 'Pakistan political situation', 17 August 1956, DO 35/5407, UKNA.

⁴⁷ UK High Commission, Karachi, to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 17 August 1956, DO 35/5407, UKNA.

⁴⁸ *The Times* (London), 16 August 1956.

⁴⁹ Apparently, on the night of this demonstration, a special police guard was sent to his hotel in case the crowd should turn violent against him. UK High Commission, Karachi, to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 17 August 1956, DO 35/5407, UKNA

⁵⁰ It would appear that Grace's successor as Inspector-General of Police of the city (who was also appointed head of the Special Police) arranged for Grace to be given a proper send-off when he left Karachi – at the airport the police pipe band played 'For he's jolly good fellow' continually for more than twenty minutes. UK High Commission, Karachi, to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 22 August 1956, DO 35/5407, UKNA. Interestingly, Grace's departure coincided with the resignation of Sir Thomas Ellis who had produced a report on corruption among government servants in March 1956 and in the

a Full Bench of the West Pakistan High Court sitting in Karachi allowed the writ petition of five officers of the Karachi police, quashed the order of their dismissal by IG, Sir Oliver Gilbert Grace in July last, and ordered their reinstatement in the posts from which they were dismissed.⁵¹

Competing for political advantage

This story of intrigue within the police establishment in 1950s Karachi highlights the extent to which loyalties and rivalries operated within the post-Partition services in Pakistan, and how far they fused with accusations and counter-accusations of bias and corruption. Undoubtedly there was intense competition between different sets of interests that seemed to be directly linked to so-called ‘provincial’ identities. Karachi’s police establishment – in its various ‘local’ guises – replicated these closely. Refugee representation – and that of those from the UP in particular – in the administration of the federal capital of Karachi was undeniable: by the mid-1950s, the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and Assistant Secretaries in the Ministry of the Interior, among others, all shared a UP background. But while Grace identified UP migrants as the main challenge to his authority, it would seem that the reality was actually more complicated. Attacks on the Karachi Police in 1956 were regarded by contemporaries as part of a bigger ‘conspiracy’ then taking place to unseat the Prime Minister, himself from Jalandhar in East Punjab, being mounted by a combination of refugee (UP) but also East Pakistani (that is, Bengali) interests, and which eventually bore fruit when Chaudhry’s government collapsed and he resigned in September the same year.

Indeed, it is the Bengali dimension that interestingly complicates the whole scenario, as closer inspection of available records also reveals attempts at this time to

process of investigating charges against the Karachi Custodian of Evacuee Property that was being blocked by influential people within the Ministry of Refugees and Rehabilitation. See UK High Commission, Karachi, to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 18 August 1956, DO 35/5407, UKNA. British officials accordingly drew the conclusion that it was no longer advisable for foreigners to occupy executive positions in Pakistan. UK High Commission, Karachi, to Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 22 August 1956, DO 35/5407, UKNA.

⁵¹ An impassioned leader published in *Dawn* on 9 August was headed ‘In the name of justice’, and ended by claiming that ‘any Government which retains Sir Gilbert Grace for even twenty-four hours will stand eternally disgraced in the eyes of man and condemned in the eyes of God’.

increase the number of Bengalis employed in the police in Karachi alongside the apparent efforts on the part of UP refugees to protect and enhance their position vis-à-vis other so-called 'provincial' interests. It had been a feature of the final National Assembly session of the Chaudhry Muhammad Ali premiership (that is, before events involving Grace and the Karachi Police came to a head in the summer of 1956) that question hour was taken up in large part by requests for information regarding the number of appointments held by East Pakistanis and how many by others in posts controlled by the Federal Government. In agreeing to the new constitutional arrangements (Pakistan's first constitution was introduced in March 1956), which included parity in the National Assembly despite their marked superiority due to population size, many East Pakistanis maintained that this should also entail parity in terms of appointments between East and West in central Government posts. Under these circumstances, it is noteworthy that an East Pakistani had been appointed as soon as a Sessions judgeship was created in Karachi, while a new Bengali District Magistrate had also just been posted to the city, and other recent appointments to senior police posts there had similarly been filled from East Pakistan. In January 1956, the then (Bengali) Minister for Labour, Nurul Haq Chaudhry (the same person who later in July would lead the surprise raid on the CID offices and let it be known that a telephone tapping system had been discovered), had strongly urged Grace to give what the latter termed 'due representation' in the lower ranks of the Karachi Police to East Pakistanis in particular. By May 1957, a growing proportion of the higher appointments in the Karachi police (Inspector-General, Head of CID and Divisions) were held by Bengalis, with many superior Punjabi officers having been transferred to other posts.

More generally, however, Chaudhry Muhammad Ali's growing distance from his own sources of political support, namely the Muslim League in coalition with the United Front, combined with challenges being mounted by Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardi's Awami League and the newly-formed Republican Party headed by Dr Khan Sahib, meant that his position as Prime Minister, despite continued backing from President Iskander Mirza,⁵² had deteriorated badly by the summer of 1956. His

⁵² According to one British report, even as late as August Iskander renewed his pledge to Chaudhry Muhammad Ali that "we should sink or swim together", but also told him "that doesn't mean you should make no attempt to save yourself from sinking". He would continue

government's failure to solve recent political crises in both East and West Pakistan further compounded the challenges that he now faced. Dogged by ill health and inconvenienced by foreign trips, he proved himself to be manifestly unsuccessful at coping with the fact that, as events between May and August that year underlined, his coalition government's composition (which had come into power the previous year, and to which Pakistan owed the One Unit Act and its new Constitution) no longer reflected the true division of political support in the country.⁵³ Rumours that he was intending to leave the Muslim League in order to form a new party of his own proved hard to quash.⁵⁴ Under these circumstances, dissatisfied Muslim Leaguers relished the opportunity provided by the police-related disturbances in Karachi to undermine the Prime Minister's fading authority. Likewise, there was no love lost between him and a growing proportion of politicians from East Pakistan where the proroguing of the Provincial Assembly in mid-August that year provided further grist to their mill when it came to problems with how political power in Pakistan was being shared and managed.⁵⁵ Hence, in this jostling for political advantage, an alleged alliance between UP and Bengali politicians, equally keen to protect their particular interests, was blamed for (or credited with) exploiting every possible opportunity to embarrass the Prime Minister as well as the President, and, if possible, engineer their collective downfall. With a growing proportion of his former supporters now lining up against him, Chaudhry Muhammad Ali's position was eventually rendered unsustainable. Before resigning in September, however, he did remove from their posts the Interior Secretary and his Deputy, Karachi's Chief Commissioner and District Magistrate, and many others deemed responsible for the plot against the Karachi Police, but these actions – from his point of view and that of Grace also - came too late.

There was an inevitable postscript to the events of 1956. In 1957 charges that Grace had caused false statements to be made and had wrongfully detained certain people were brought against him in Karachi's City Court, a move that might have

to support the Prime Minister, weak though he might be, because he was the best man available. See 'Pakistan Political Situation', 17 August 1956, DO 35 5407, UKNA.

⁵³ As far as the West Pakistan element in the National Assembly was concerned, the Muslim League, which had held at least 28 of the 38 West Pakistan seats, declined in strength to 13 or 14. At the same time, the Republican Party had built itself up from nothing to a strength of 21 or 22 seats, while the United Front, which held 22 out of the 39 East Pakistan seats, could no longer count on even this bare majority. 'Pakistan: internal political situation', 2 August 1956, DO 35/5407, UKNA.

⁵⁴ *The Times*, 17 August 1956.

⁵⁵ Pakistan Fortnightly Summary, Part II, 17-30 August 1956, DO 35/5285, UKNA.

resulted in him being summoned back to Pakistan to stand trial.⁵⁶ That this never transpired was much to the former Inspector-General's relief. Meanwhile, those accused in the Noor Muhammad Memon murder case were eventually acquitted by the Sessions Judge, Tharparkar District, on August 1957, his judgement declaring that the prosecution had failed miserably to frame the case against the accused. The matter, however, was not allowed to rest there: *Dawn*, for one, announced that an appeal against the decision would be filed before the West Pakistan High Court, Karachi Bench, and the legal saga continued for some further time before finally running out of steam.⁵⁷

Conclusion

This tale of conspiracy and possible (or perhaps likely) dishonesty within the ranks of the police and the wider administration in Karachi highlights how far the circumstances of the post-partition years encouraged an environment to emerge in which malpractice if not corruption could thrive within an institution such as the police, riven as it was by provincial rivalries. Equally, it tells us something about the nature of the interface between the everyday representatives of the new state and lives of the ordinary citizens who had made the city of Karachi their home, demonstrating just how important personal connections were for protecting or enhancing people's interests in the context of Pakistan's early years. Either way, what the tangled events described above underline is the intricate web of interests that were competing for advantage – political, personal or otherwise – in the years following independence and partition, and in which an individual's background and connections represented a crucial part of the equation.⁵⁸ Karachi had become a melting pot thanks to the demographic consequences of partition. But while the state's new citizens may have become Pakistanis at independence, their pre-1947 loyalties tended not to be shed, or jettisoned, in the process. If anything, the spoils now on offer in a new state

⁵⁶ 'Grace, Iqbal Shah and others challaned: accused charged with many criminal acts', *Dawn*, 25 July 1957. This case involved the treatment of a refugee woman Akhtari Begum arrested as part of a round-up of prostitutes and their pimps made significant by the involvement of some highly-placed politicians and officials, and taken up by the pro-refugee newspaper *Dawn* as a cause celebre.

⁵⁷ R.W.D. Fowler, United Kingdom High Commission Karachi, to Sir G. Grace, London, 26 August 1957, DO 35/8932, UKNA.

⁵⁸ 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', p. 1..

reinforced existing connections as different groups actively jostled for access to and control over new sources of power and influence. The city, flooded as it was with migrants both from India and from other parts of Pakistan, all in search of a secure footing in unfamiliar surroundings, witnessed high levels of competition for scarce resources – a scramble which, as this particular case study has demonstrated, could involve police officers and government servants (and politicians) belonging to the same pre-1947 backgrounds working together to enhance their (individual and collective) interests. As Sir Gilbert Grace found out to his own cost, Pakistanis – whether migrants from UP, Bengalis or ‘up-country’ Punjabis – had quickly worked out that what mattered in 1950s Karachi was where you came from and who you knew, for in practice this appeared the only effective way of getting things done, whether in terms of sorting out problems or making the most of available opportunities.

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However, despite the refusal of leave to appeal to the Supreme Court, a hearing there did take eventually place, producing a judgement, on 1 June 1956, that the original order of discharge was null and void precisely because those all-important 'show cause' notices had not been given.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ 'For the Information of the President of Pakistan only', p. 5.