Human Security and Conflict Dynamics: A Case Study of Mega-development Projects in Sindh

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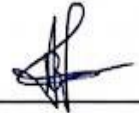
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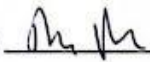
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This thesis is dedicated to all those people who always cling to hope and relentlessly strive to uphold justice.

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Abstract

The development and growth in contemporary times is steered by mega-development projects across the world. However, it needs to be seen if mega-development projects undermine human security conditions in particular societies or regions and, hence, lead to conflict-oriented social interactions. This study relates human security discourse to mega-development projects in Sindh and goes on to explore the conflict-development nexus in the province. Keeping the qualitative nature of the study in mind, field visits to District Ghotki and Karachi in Sindh Province were conducted in February 2023. The visits allowed the gathering of data through in-depth interviews, focused group discussions, and community engagement. The findings revealed an indigenous understanding of human security along with a comprehensive picture of the conflict dynamics in the province. It also came to light that mega-development projects are having detrimental effects on the human security landscape and, consequently, enhancing conflictual tendencies amongst the population. Moreover, the role of government and civil society is below par, as far as mega-development-induced human security issues and the contentious conflict-development nexus are concerned.

Keywords: Mega-development projects, human security, conflict, civil society, development

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Chapter I: Introduction

Human security is an emerging conceptual and policy trend in security studies. It is a central tenet and fundamental feature of non-traditional security which offers an alternative approach to security that has traditionally revolved around a state-centric and defense-oriented lens. In essence, human security defies the earlier understanding of security and adopts broader aspects of security, putting humans at the core and taking humans as the referent object (Booth, 1991). Furthermore, conflict is a recurring phenomenon in societies across the globe. It exhibits varying dynamics, evolving characteristics and complex manifestations that are replete in conflict-ridden societies around the world. There is a need to explore as well as evaluate the human security landscape and conflict dynamics in different societies while looking at the factors or entities that influence and affect them. Hence, mega-development projects are one area of interest that could be correlated with human security and conflictual realities in particular societies or regions. Development in these times is steered by large-scale development projects or mega-development projects across different sectors such as infrastructure, production, extraction and consumption. However, it needs to be assessed if mega-development projects are having adverse implications on human security conditions and conflict dynamics. The correlation between mega-development projects and human security along with the conflict-development nexus needs to be looked at through scholarly attempts.

This research situates the human security and conflict discourse in Sindh province – with a primary focus on District Ghotki and Karachi – which is a highly underdeveloped and socioeconomically challenged province of Pakistan. Moreover, the study makes a scholarly endeavor to evaluate how mega-development projects are influencing and affecting the human security landscape and conflict dynamics in those areas. The study primarily looks at the oil and gas and the real estate sectors in Ghotki and Karachi respectively. Moreover, three elements of human security have been studied with regard to exploring the correlation between human security and mega-development projects in Sindh i.e., economic security, environmental security and community security. It is imperative to point out that the oil and gas sector in Ghotki and the real estate sector in Karachi along with the aforementioned three elements of human security determine the scope of this research which has been defined as an outcome of prior discussion with local communities. Moreover, the absence of an organized armed conflict in Sindh makes it necessary for the

study to place primary focus on non-violent conflict in the designated areas, while paying scholarly heed to the sporadic instances of violence as well. Helvey (2004) defines non-violent conflict as "the specific means of action within the technique of non-violent action" including non-violent protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and non-violent intervention. Below mentioned are the research questions which guide the scholarly quest of this study:

i) What are the contextual realities of human security and conflict dynamics in Ghotki and Karachi?

ii) How are mega-development projects leading to the deterioration of human security in Ghotki and Karachi?

iii) Is the deterioration of human security caused by mega-development projects leading to various forms of conflict in Ghotki and Karachi?

iv) What is the role of government and civil society with regard to mega-development projects' influence on human security and conflict-development nexus vis-á-vis Ghotki and Karachi?

To place the discussion in perspective, the paper has been structured as follows. An adequate volume of literature has been studied and reviewed with regard to human security and conflict dynamics. In addition, scholarly works on mega-development projects and their relationship with human security and conflict have also been explored. It is followed by the methodology section which articulated the research design, data collection techniques, sampling strategy and criteria of respondents. It is followed by the research and discussion portion which arranges the results in themes, with every theme containing relevant findings as well as discussion and analysis. In this section, the contextual understanding of human security as well as the contextual dynamics of the conflict have been adequately presented. Subsequently, this section also covers the correlation between mega-development projects and human security along with the conflict-development nexus in the designated areas. Lastly, the section presents the role of government and civil society with regard to the multidimensional effects of mega-development on human security and the conflict-development nexus in those areas.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Human Security

The idea of security has traditionally maintained a state-centric and militarized complexion. Since the end of the Cold War, the concept of security has undergone a

broadening, deepening and extension in its scope (Jones, 1999). The 1994 Human Development Report issued by UN Development Programme (UNDP) formally introduced the term "human security." The report challenges the traditional understanding of security by lamenting that the concept of security "has for too long been interpreted narrowly…forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives (UNDP, 1994, p. 22). The report further states, "the world can never be at peace unless people have security in their daily lives" (UNDP, 1994, p. 1). Seven elements of human security outlined by the 1994 Human Development Report are 'food security, health security, economic security, personal security, environmental security, community security and political security'. The definition put forth by the UNDP mentions freedom from fear and freedom from want as two essential components of human security. Moreover, the notion of human security also entails the empowerment of individuals and communities so that they could fend for themselves (UNDP, 1994). Despite being quoted frequently, this definition has been viewed with skepticism by various scholars. For instance, Paris (2001) points out that the vague and expansive nature of this definition results in a lack of precision and definitional elasticity, causing impediments to both research and policy with regard to human security. In order to attain human security objectives, the Canadian and Norwegian governments have proactively led the way by taking an initiative called "human security network." The network offers an avenue for states, international organizations, NGOs and academia to collaborate and deliberate with regard to the advancement of human security (Paris, 2001).

With the transition to non-traditional security, people-centric and individual perspectives are gaining currency across the world. Through its resolution 66/290, UN General Assembly (UNGA) came up with a common understanding of human security in September 2012 (UNGA, 2012). The resolution recognized the interlinkages between peace, development and human rights, stressing governments' responsibility to ensure gains in human security. Apart from that, the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) has undertaken over 200 projects across the world since its inception in 1999. Moreover, a Human Security Unit was structured in 2004 under the aegis of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). The unit has since been entrusted with the authority to manage and administer UNTFHS. Furthermore, analysts affiliated with the World Health Organisation (WHO) have come up with five domains of human security: income, health, education, political freedom and democracy. They have spelt out indicators for each domain that have widely been adopted by UN

agencies and World Bank (King & Murray, 2001). However, countries have interpreted human security differently as illustrated by the governments of Canada and Japan. The Canadian government says:

> Human security means freedom from pervasive threats to
> people's rights, safety or lives. Canada's agenda focuses on
> increasing people's safety from the threat of violence. This
> approach complements both existing efforts focussed on
> ensuring national security, as well as international efforts to
> protect human rights and promote human development
> (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 2002).

Adopting a broader approach, Japan's understanding of human security somewhat resonates with that of UNDP:

> Japan emphasizes "Human Security" from the perspective of
> strengthening efforts to cope with threats to human lives,
> livelihoods and dignity as poverty, environmental degradation,
> illicit drugs, transnational organized crime, infectious diseases
> such as HIV/AIDS, the outflow of refugees and anti-personnel
> land mines, and has taken various initiatives in this context
> (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2000).

Conflict Dynamics

In order to fully grasp the various facets of conflict, it is paramount to comprehend the state of peace in its entirety. Along with being a historical ideal, peace is something whose meaning is in flux (Webel & Galtung, 2007). As per Charles Webel, "Peace is both a means of personal and collective ethical transformation and an aspiration to cleanse the planet of human-inflicted destruction" (Webel & Galtung, 2007, p. 7). Johan Galtung extends the meaning of peace by differentiating between negative peace and positive peace. With the former being a mere absence of violence, positive peace is a state of social justice characterized by the absence of structural violence (Galtung, 1969). With regard to conflict, it is pertinent to take into consideration various factors such as the evolving relationship between adversaries, the factors fueling the animosity and the transformative nature of the conflict. Coser views conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources, in which the aims of the conflict groups are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals." (Oberschall, 1978, p. 291). In

essence, a conflictual social interaction is a hostile display of goal incompatibilities and a bid to control each other's choices, leading to the generation of resentment and hostile attitude against each other (Jeong, 2008). The term conflict has applications ranging from quarrels within families and workplaces to violent face-offs among states.

It is imperative to discuss various factors, facets and dynamics associated with conflicts. It is in the post-Cold era that intra-state and violent conflicts became more pervasive (Duke, 1994). It is in this era that various NGOs and international organizations have come to acquire an increasing role in conflict-ridden societies. It is often the case that scholars and peacemakers endure significant hardships in terms of grasping the degree and intensity of the armed conflict. The widely regarded Uppsala dataset puts forth a three-part distinction to classify armed conflicts according to the level of fatalities. Conflicts ensuing 100 battle-related deaths are called war and Intermediated Armed Conflicts are characterized by "at least 25 battle-related deaths per year and an accumulated total of at least 1000 deaths" (Ginty, 2006). In addition, minor conflicts are signified by at least 25 battle-related deaths per year and less than 1000 deaths throughout the course of the conflict. However, such quantitative measures offer a narrow view when it comes to evaluating an armed conflict (Ginty, 2006). Apart from that, conflictual situations have both realistic and unrealistic genesis. Realistic conflicts are caused by past events or occurrences that eventually lead to the incompatibility of goals. Unrealistic conflicts, however, are a result of misperception or confusion, being pushed majorly for conflict participation rather than any goals (Jacoby, 2007). Such conflicts also tend to involve the features of zero-sum and variable-sum outcomes. The former is characteristic of conflictual circumstances wherein the total benefits of all actors add up to zero. On the contrary, the latter signified that one actor must lose in a conflict in order for the other to win. Another dilemma found in the scholarly discussion on conflict is that too much emphasis is placed on direct violence and its quantitative elements. Other important factors such as structural discrimination, political tension and inter-group verbal exchange also constitute core elements of various conflicts (Ginty, 2006). The conflict has also been viewed by scholars through the structural lens, offering greater insight into the genesis and dynamics of the conflictual phenomenon. It was Johan Galtung who first articulated the notion of structural violence in 1969. Johan Galtung distinguishes between direct violence and structural violence by stating that structural violence is embedded in the prevailing structure of society (Galtung, 1969). A significant portion of the population is deprived of opportunities and equal access to resources, education and health. However, static societies only pay attention to direct violence and

deem structural violence as a natural phenomenon (Galtung, 1969). Galtung terms the absence of structural violence as social justice or positive peace i.e., egalitarian distribution of power and resources.

Scholars have also paid heed to the non-violent nature of the conflict, stressing the idea that some conflicts do not always have violent characteristics. Sharp (1973) has identified 198 methods of nonviolent action – illustrated with actual cases - such as economic boycotts, protests, labour strikes, nonviolent intervention, and political and social noncooperation. These methods serve multifaceted purposes of delegitimizing the opponent, mobilizing the public to defy or advocate certain policies and eliminating or diminishing the adversaries' source of power. Mohandas Gandhi's anti-colonial struggle against the British Empire contributed immensely to the credibility and efficacy of nonviolent movements. The non-violent campaigns could also adopt other non-coercive means such as persuasion and promised benefits. For example, in their struggle against apartheid in South Africa, Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) reassured the whites that their rights would be protected and respected after the end of apartheid (Kriesberg, 2008). Moreover, scholars have affirmed that nonviolent efforts tend to be a more effective and successful means of struggle across the world (Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994; Karatnycky & Ackerman, 2004; Schock, 2005). A quantitative study by Stephan & Chenoweth (2008) analyzed aggregate data on major violent and nonviolent campaigns from 1900 to 2006, revealing that nonviolent movements attained desired goals 53% of the time compared with 26% of those by violent movements. As illustrated by the study, the reasons for this success are twofold. First, the commitment to nonviolent means substantially raises the domestic and international legitimacy of the group, entailing greater participation in the movement. Second, the government's violent crackdown against nonviolent campaigns usually backfires as opposed to the one against violent actors. Moreover, the non-violent conflict may transform into a violent one and vice versa. The escalation is viewed as a shift from non-violent to violent interaction whereas de-escalation is deemed as diminishing levels of violence or the transformation of violent conflict into a non-violent one.

Mega-development Projects

Mega-development projects refer to the development schemes that entail a rapid transformation of landscapes, requiring coordinated application of state power and capital. They generally involve the usage of sophisticated technologies and heavy equipment

usually imported from the Global North and require a flow of international capital (Strassmann & Wells, 1988). The mega-development projects could be analytically categorized into four types (Gellert & Lynch, 2003): (i) infrastructure (e.g., railroads, ports, urban water and sewer system); (ii) production (e.g., export processing zones, industrial tree plantations, and manufacturing parks); (iii) extraction (e.g., minerals, oil and gas); (iv) consumption (e.g., malls, theme parks, tourist installations and real estate developments). The projects could be state-owned/state-led, privately-owned/privately managed or may involve a framework of public-private partnership. The idea of epistemic communities is relevant to a discourse on mega-development projects. Epistemic communities consist of a wide array of actors who undertake and establish these projects, with some of them even opposing them (Gellert & Lynch, 2003). The ideological culture of epistemic communities – characterized by public good, progress, rationality and racial biases – determines their values to a large extent. The prominent actors in epistemic communities are lending institutions at the international and national level, the construction industry, consultants, state bureaucracy and civil society groups (Gellert & Lynch, 2003). The developed countries undertook massive mega-projects for the reconstruction of cities devastated by the Second World War and obsolescence. These schemes entailed a new urban environment characteristic of large buildings and expressways, attracting investments for further development (Orueta & Fainstein, 2008). However, the projects faced criticism on the basis of various ideological standpoints. The left-leaning segments denounced these schemes by labelling them as a dawn of authoritarianism (Scott, 1998), resulting in colossal displacements, destruction of communities and unfair distribution of benefits (Lebas et al., 1978; Fainstein, 1986; Gans, 1994; Logan et al., 2007). Critics on the right, however, termed it as a way for the state to unduly intervene in the market and unjustifiably usurp private property. It is pertinent to note that the neoliberal state establishes a necessary framework (political, economic, legal) in order to promote decentralized governance and market-led development (Wilson, 2004).

Projects undertaken across developed and developing countries offer a greater insight into the complexities that are involved in the planning and implementation of mega-projects. For instance, the Atlantic Yards project in New York was proposed by an external developer (Orueta & Fainstein, 2008, p. 763). However, its divisive nature with regard to race and class gave rise to many controversies. The state authorities in the US were reluctant to go ahead with the projects without the firm commitment of developers. Unlike in New York, the central government takes primary responsibility for the planning of the

development schemes as indicated in the Thames Gateway project in London. As opposed to Atlantic Yards, the government issued requests for proposals to which developers responded and selected through the process of competitive bidding. In addition, significant measures were taken to mitigate the risk of gentrification. On the same lines as in London, the government takes the leading role with regard to city planning in Amsterdam. One of the distinct features of these initiatives in Amsterdam is that local authority is granted greater power vis-á-vis development schemes (Orueta & Fainstein, 2008, p. 763). On the other hand, there ought to be an adequate exploration of mega-development projects in developing countries. Mega construction projects require high design knowledge, capable human resource, sound technical skills, managerial capabilities and immense capital (Frick, 2008; Flyvbjerg et al., 2003). However, developing countries are deficient in all these factors, leading to various challenges with regard to the design and implementation of these projects. Othman & Ahmed (2013) analyzed 36% mega construction projects in developing countries and concluded that these projects suffer from four challenges: (i) engineering challenges, (ii) human development challenges, (iii) managerial and political challenges and (iv) sustainability challenges. The mega-projects sometimes reel from what is termed a performance paradox even in developed countries. Some projects entail poor performance with regard to cost overruns and lower revenues than the financial projections. For instance, the Channel Tunnel connecting England and France had a construction cost of $5.9 billion incurring 80 percent higher cost overruns and earning revenues less than half of the projected figures (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003). Denver's $5 billion international airport opened in 1995, enduring a cost overrun of 200 percent whereas the passenger traffic was only half of the earlier projections (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003). Nevertheless, mega-development projects also align with community needs and local ownership, resonating with the idea of community-inclusive development. The redevelopment of the Old Port of Montreal, various residential and commercial development schemes spurred by the Olympic games in Vancouver and the development of Staples Centre in Los Angeles are the cases in point. These projects - carried out while respecting the needs of the local populace and involving civil society as a major stakeholder in project planning - ultimately led to the socio-economic uplift of local communities (Bornstein, 2010).

Mega-development Projects and Human Security

It is widely known that development projects or corporations bring positive outcomes for socioeconomic progress. However, certain practices by corporate entities

across the world have brought adverse consequences as far as human security is concerned. If placed within the context of human security, development projects have had detrimental effects on human rights. Clapham & Jerbi (2000) categorize corporate complicity in human rights abuses into three distinct concepts: direct corporate complicity, indirect or beneficial corporate complicity and silent corporate complicity. The first category signifies the direct and intentional involvement of a corporation in violation of human rights and "a corporation that knowingly assists a state in violating the customary international law principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could be viewed as directly complicit in such a violation" (Clapham & Jerbi, 2000, p. 342). The second category makes a corporate entity indirectly complicit in a human rights violation committed by the state or other actor if the company indirectly benefits from the violation. The third category raises expectations on corporations to raise human rights concerns before relevant authorities, making them silently complicit if they remain silent on human rights abuses committed by the state or any other actor. There have been investigative studies regarding the contribution of corporate entities to human rights abuses across the world. A study by Ullah et al. (2021) traces the period 2002-2017 and reveals that multinational corporations (MNCs), originating mostly from developed countries, are culpable in a total of 273 human rights violations in developing countries. These violations range from poor working conditions, land grabbing, harassment and abuse against female workers, racial discrimination, and underpaying workers, with the underpay related to economic security and racial discrimination resonant with community security. MNCs operating in developing countries put pressure on the contractors on the lower end of supply chains, causing financial crunch for workers as witnessed in Bangladesh and Honduras (Anner & Hossain, 2014). In essence, such practices by MNCs exacerbate inequality in Global South to a substantial extent. Corporations have also been found to be immensely causing environmental degradation – which lies under the domain of human security – across the world. A study conducted by Carbon Disclosure Project (2017) unveiled that 100 fossil fuel-producing companies are responsible for 71% of global greenhouse gas emissions since 1988.

Unocal Corporation – a US-based oil and gas company – entered into a joint venture in 1992 with France-based Total, S.A. and the Burmese military junta's Myanmar Ministry for Oil and Gas Enterprises (MOGE) for Yadana natural gas pipeline project in Burma (Cheverie, 2002). The project aimed to extract the gas from the natural gas field off the coast of Burma and transport it to Thailand via pipeline. In 1996, Burmese peasants brought charges of forced labour, rape and murder by the Burmese military on behalf of Unocal - an

American oil company operating in Burma. In the following year, a US district court in California ruled in Doe vs. Unocal that Unocal executives could be held liable for the abetment of human rights abuses in Burma (Cheverie, 2002). Furthermore, international oil companies led by Texaco have been extracting oil from Amazon since 1972. It is especially in Ecuador that the oil industry has resorted to mass deforestation of millions of acres of forest, with around 4.3 million gallons of toxic waste having been dumped by oil companies in the Ecuadorian rainforest (San Sebastian & Cordoba, 1999). With overt disregard for environmental safeguards, the oil industry has contaminated the entire environment including air, rivers and streams. In essence, the oil extraction has created public health catastrophe in the surrounding villages and caused cancerous tumors (San Sebastian & Cordoba, 1999). Moreover, it was witnessed in Burma, Ecuador and Chad-Cameroon that the corporate executives along with their government partners resorted to forced displacements of indigenous people. The resettlement did not result in an adequate provision of basic services to the displaced people (Massarani et al., 2007). Apart from that, there is a higher likelihood of human security concerns and human rights violations caused by extractive industry projects if three risk factors are involved in the development process (Sweet, 2013). First, the project brings a large number of outside male workers. Since the male workers do not have any roots in the locality and neither an understanding of local culture, they are more likely to resort to violent crimes. Second, the project is carried out in a rural location. Rural locations are more susceptible to negative consequences of development than urban ones. Third, a significant number of marginalized or vulnerable population groups live in the area. They will be a convenient and obvious target by the outside male workers. All these risk factors pose a significant threat to the human security of the indigenous female population in the circumpolar region of the USA (Sweet, 2013). In response to a large number of allegations of corporate abuses in multiple development sectors, the UN laid the foundation of the United Nations Global Compact in 2005 (UN Global Compact, n.d.). It is a business framework which calls on corporations to uphold international human rights standards and directs them to refrain from being complicit in any sort of human rights abuses.

Mega-development Projects and Conflict

There exists a relationship between development and conflict, with a wide array of perceptions and interlinkages exploring this relationship. Scholars have long argued that the low indicators of economic development can be a correlating factor leading to conflict

(Collier & Hoeffler, 1998; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Hegre & Sambanis, 2006). However, the surge in development may also be one of the correlating factors or causes of the conflict. In terms of both human and material resources, Niger Delta is one of the most enriched deltas on the planet. However, the fraught relationship between conflict and development has been quite visible in the region. The multinational corporations extracting oil in the delta have caused inequalities, environmental degradation, destruction of flour and fauna, deprivation and abject poverty (Omofonmwan & Odia, 2009). These indicators resonate with the economic security, environmental security and community security. By using capital-intensive technologies, the companies reward a few with high-paying jobs while most others reel under unemployment. These development problems are the root of social disorder and inter-ethnic conflict in the region (Omofonmwan & Odia, 2009) – an issue associated with community security. Apart from that, there have been many instances of protests and local agitation since 1990 against mega-development projects across Latin America (Arsel et al., 2016; Bebbington et al., 2008). Since 1990, natural resource extraction has been the prominent feature of development projects in Latin America (Silva et al., 2018). The local communities have expressed concerns regarding the adverse impacts of these projects across socioeconomic, environmental and cultural fronts. Given the nature of resistance and conflict, the national and international rights groups and anti-globalization movements have joined hands with the local resistance in Latin America (Silva et al., 2018). Pellegrini and Arsel (2018) categorize the anti-oil industry conflict in Ecuador as "green," "brown," and "mixed." The green conflict encompasses social mobilizations that compel the oil sector to conform to environmental safeguards, make the operations environmentally friendly and respect indigenous rights. The brown conflict reflects those movements that call for fair distribution of oil revenues and the increase in local employment. Lastly, the mixed agitations are where these both sorts of conflict coincide, raising both environmental and economic demands. Moreover, Dube and Vargas (2013) developed a correlation between commodity price shocks and conflict tendencies in Colombia. They concluded that a decrease in coffee prices reduced wages, leading to more violence in coffee-cultivating areas. On the contrary, the increase in oil prices increased the violent incidents in oil regions owing mainly to the oil shocks inducing rapacity effect.

There have been scholarly attempts to grasp the complex relationship between development and conflict in Africa. Berman et al. (2017) quantitatively analyzed the 1997-2010 period to disclose evidence that mineral extraction is significantly increasing the likelihood of armed conflict in Africa: a steep surge in mineral prices led to a 14% to 24%

increase in violence across African countries during the observed time period. The reasons are that mineral extraction entails rebellion feasibility, favours weak state, enhances the potential for rent-seeking and flares up grievances (Berman et al., 2017). As opposed to this study's sole focus on mineral extraction, Sonno (2020) looked at all industries in Africa. He revealed that exploitative sectors, such as forestry, raise the conflict probability to a considerable extent. However, the sectors focusing on the development of human capital, such as education and health, decrease the same probability. In addition, the conflict probability is amplified if the exploitative industries are operating in ethnically disturbed areas (Sonno, 2020). Several conflicts in. African states such as those in Angola, Sudan, Liberia, DRC and Sierra Leone have been characterized as resource wars given that they involve a violent scramble by various groups to control natural resources. It has been widely discussed that greed for natural resources, instead of grievances, are the primary drivers of conflict, with vested financial interests sustaining and prolonging the conflicts in Africa (Collier & Hoeffler, 1998; Collier, 1999). In the case of Nigeria, youth has become highly active in militant groups as well as community leadership (Ikelegbe, 2005). They resort to both violent and nonviolent means to extract benefits from oil companies that they view as unfairly exploiting their indigenous resources. The disruption and vandalism of oil facilities and operations is frequent since 1997 which is perpetrated by youth militants belonging to diverse ethnic groups (Ikelegbe, 2005).

Sindh – An Overview

Tracing its historical roots to Indus Valley Civilization and deriving its name from the Indus River, Sindh is the third-largest province of Pakistan by size and second-largest in terms of population. It is bordered by Punjab Province to the north, Balochistan Province to the east and Arabian Sea to the south. Apart from being abundant in natural resources and agricultural terrain, the province boasts two seaports and a diverse cultural heritage. Being a large support base of the Muslim League in the pre-partition era, it was the first province which opted to accede to Pakistan on 26th June 1947 (Riffat et al., 2016). Consisting of 29 districts, Sindh has a total population of approximately 47.9 million and extends to an area of around 140,914 sq km (Population Welfare Department, n.d.). The rural population is nearly 22.9 million whereas the urban population is 24.9 million. The socioeconomic outlook of Sindh does not offer a promising picture. Sindh is a highly neglected and socioeconomically regressive province in Pakistan. Approximately 66% of households in rural Sindh are going through enormous deficiencies in terms of material

resources, personal safety, education, healthcare, living standards and sociopolitical participation (Hameed & Qaiser, 2019). The 2021 Human Development Report reveals that Sindh has the second-lowest rural HDI value of 0.485, with the gap between rural and urban HDI of the province being the highest in the country (Pasha, 2021).

There is scattered literature which offers some insight into the conflict dynamics of Sindh, laying bare the fact that Sindh has its share of multifaceted rifts and social discords. The province is increasingly threatened by tribal feuds, violent extremism, crime, and nationalist and separatist movements (Yusuf & Hasan, 2015). Separatist groups are quite active but they lack the capability and capacity to challenge the state. In addition, crime is rampant in rural Sindh which goes unchecked with the patronage of political parties. The feudal system, socioeconomic decadence and extreme urban-rural divide have exacerbated the conflict dynamics in Sindh (Yusuf & Hasan, 2015). Apart from that, there is a wide range of mega-development and industrial sectors operating in the province. As per the Sindh Bureau of Statistics, Planning and Development, 67% of large-scale manufacturing (LSM) establishments/factories are situated in Karachi city and the remaining 33% are located in other districts of Sindh (Sindh Monthly Survey of Industrial Production & Employment (MIPE) December 2021). The Bureau has documented 22 LSM sectors in Sindh, having a total of 537 factories. The LSM sectors in the province are characteristic of oil and gas, fertilizer, cement, textile, pharmaceuticals, steel, automobile and agro-based industries among others.

Ghotki and Karachi at a Glance

Ghotki and Karachi are the primary focus as well as field visit sites of this study. Ghotki district lies in the Northeastern part of Sindh and borders Punjab province. It was a part of the Sukkur district before being declared a separate district in 1993. It consists of five tehsils which refer to administrative subdivisions of a district. The five tehsils are Mirpur Mathelo, Daharki, Ghotki, Ubaro and Khangarh. According to the Census 2017, the district stretches to an area of 6,083 sq km, having a population density of 271.04 sq km (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). It has a population of 1,648,708 which is around 3.4% of Sindh's total population of about 47.9 million. The population consists of 850,272 males and 798,271 females, making it 51.6% males and 48.4% females respectively. In addition, 78.1% population resides in rural areas and the remaining 21.9% lives in urban areas (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2017). Karachi is the largest city in Pakistan in terms of both population and area, along with being the capital of Sindh province. It was also the first

capital of the country in the period 1947-1959. Often termed the commercial and financial hub of the country, Karachi boasts of a coastline touching the Arabian Sea, two seaports and relatively developed infrastructure. Karachi is a division which consists of six districts i.e., Central, South, West, East, Malir and Korangi. Census 2017 reports Karachi's population to be 16.1 million, consisting of 8.4 million males and 7.6 million females; that is 52.2% males and 47.2% females (Population Welfare Department, n.d.). It stretches to a total area of approximately 2,672 sq km with a population density of 119,932 sq km.

Conceptual Framework

This research is guided by a twofold conceptual framework consisting of human security and conflict-development nexus. With regard to human security, the research follows the definition stipulated in UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report along with the one put forth by Robert Bedeski. The report mentions, "Human security can be said to have two main aspects. It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life—whether in homes, in jobs or in communities" (UNDP, 1994, p. 23). In addition, the report identifies seven elements of human security i.e., economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. As per Robert Bedeski, human security includes, "the totality of knowledge, technology, institutions and activities that protect, defend and preserve the biological existence of human life; and the processes which protect and perfect collective peace and prosperity to enhance human freedom." Apart from that, conflict-development nexus is the second conceptual framework of this research. Regarding the conflict-development nexus, the research follows the appraoch of John McCauley. He maintains that development approaches that do little to compensate the marginalized groups create resource contestation along identity lines, thereby, increasing the likelihood of conflict. On the contrary, development approaches that transcend social identities and involve robust civic participation usually lead to an atmosphere of peace (McCauley, 2013). Furthermore, Stewart (2008) enlightens that horizontal inequality – unequal access to resources to an identity group across political, economic and social sectors – is a leading cause of conflict. Development may widen such horizontal inequalities, hence exacerbating social discord. Murshed (Murshed, 2002) conducted case study research in Sri Lanka and Nepal which directly substantiate Stewart's findings. Conflict-development nexus has been taken as a conceptual framework considering that the research is concerned with the nature of mega-

development projects and their implications on the conflict dynamics in the Sindh province of Pakistan. In essence, the conceptual boundaries of the conflict-development nexus would be applied and contextualized in the case of Sindh.

Chapter III: Methodology

This research is driven by qualitative methodology employing both primary and secondary sources of data, with the study design being exploratory research. Feld visits to District Ghotki and Karachi in Sindh province were conducted in February 2023. A total of 14 days will be spent, with 7 days in each location. The period of 14 days was adequate because the purpose was not to explore the entirety of Sindh, but to qualitatively examine the mentioned sites only. Furthermore, the relative ease of mobility and community engagement in these areas along with prior cooperation extended to the researchers from the local community made it possible for us to complete the data collection in 14 days. The formal sources of primary data are in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The informal sources are the researcher's observations and insights derived from community engagement. The secondary sources are but are not limited to journal articles, reports, newspapers and reports of civil society organizations. During the data collection phase, I covered the oil and gas industry in Ghotki and the real estate sector in Karachi. A total of 4 FGDs were conducted, with 2 FGDs in each location. Being cross-sectional in nature, each FGD consisted of 6 individuals representing diverse strata of society. The respondents of the FGDs were purposively sampled as per the criteria mentioned below. The time span of each FGD was approximately one hour. Moreover, 4 interviews were conducted in each location, making it a total of 8 interviews. In each location, two interviewees represented the relevant mega-development industry and the other two represented the civil society activists. A purposive sampling technique was employed to approach the interviewees.

The participants of FGDs were literate individuals of the area who have adequate knowledge about the political and socioeconomic conditions of their locality along with a substantial know-how of the operations of mega-development sectors. They represented diverse strata of society such as workers, peasants, journalists, lawyers, professionals, civil society activists, students and scholars. Specific criteria for FGD participants are: (i) minimum 12 years of education (ii) ability to use the internet and social media (iii) minimum 25 years of age. A minimum of 12 years of education was set as a criterion while keeping

in mind that many individuals belonging to these areas do not possess degrees or higher education but are still quite knowledgeable and vibrant in their locality. Hence, their participation in FGDs was not ruled out. With regard to 2nd criterion, social media is home to new avenues of knowledge and emerging trends of social activism these days. Therefore, the participants of FGDs must have the ability to use the internet and social media. Lastly, a minimum of 25 years of age was set as a criterion to ensure that the participants must be mature while having basic exposure in their field or sector. Apart from that, the respondents of the interviews were white-collar professionals associated with the industries and civil society leaders who have both theoretical and practical exposure in the areas of human security, conflict dynamics and mega-development projects.

Chapter IV: Results and Discussion

The findings of the research have been articulated comprehensively below and, simultaneously, subjected to thematic analysis. The results clearly reflect that there is no analytical coherence in Sindh as far as the definition and understanding of human security are concerned. Being a fluid concept, it does offer an insight into the contextual realities of human security and the issues of major concern for the people. The understanding of the concept and various dimensions is better and enriched in Karachi than that in Ghotki. Moreover, the conflict dynamics in Sindh have ethno-national, ethno-political, religious and cultural undertones. These aspects of conflict have an evolutionary trajectory and interlinkages with other aspects as well. The findings also reveal that mega-development projects have significantly undermined the human security landscape of the locality, causing multifaceted threats to economic security, environmental security and community security. In addition, the conflict-development nexus in the province is riddled with various complications and irritants. The mega-development projects have been found to be contributing substantially to the surge in conflict-oriented thinking and overtures in those areas. The role of government and civil society with regard to human security and conflict-development nexus is below par, failing to meet the expectations and aspirations of the local communities.

Understanding Human Security in Sindh

As I travelled from Northern to Southern Sindh, my first-hand observation of the province offered a grim and dismal picture. It is especially in interior Sindh that barren and decimated agricultural terrains are found as far as eyes could see, with the aftereffects of last year's floods still visible. The infrastructure is highly substandard, pollution widespread and sewerage lines are dysfunctional in almost every city. Infrastructural development characterized by underpasses, flyovers, and residential and commercial buildings are only visible in a few parts of the cities whereas the majority of the areas in almost every city are underdeveloped and highly neglected. The devastation brought about by last year's floods undermined almost every aspect of life in the province. As per Sindh's Provincial Disaster Management Authority (2023), the floods affected 12 million population in Sindh, leaving 843 people dead, 8,422 injured and 82,000 displaced. A total of 737,000 houses were fully destroyed, 437,000 livestock were lost and the crop area of 3.78 million hectares was left damaged. I came to know that the victims and affected areas have not been fully rehabilitated. Rarely did I witness government efforts for recovery and rehabilitation in that regard. The degree and magnitude of substandard lifestyle and underdevelopment that I witnessed point to the notion that Sindh province has not received adequate attention with regard to human security in both policy and research. In this context, it is highly imperative to know what the local respondents think of human security and how they approach the notion conceptually.

It came to the fore that the respondents in Ghotki had little knowledge about the depth, evolution and significance of human security. Nevertheless, the respondents in Karachi had a fairly better understanding in that regard. This intellectual disparity between the two regions may be due to the fact that, unlike Karachi, Ghotki is mainly a rural district with a lower literacy rate and an absolute dearth of higher education facilities. The interaction with locals, as well as some highly educated individuals in Ghotki, unveiled an unsettling reality. They have little understanding of their own rights and duties as citizens of the country, let alone a basic knowledge of the diverse conceptual arrays of human security. One of the scholars in Ghotki asserted, "The scholarly discussion around non-traditional security and human security is rhetorically for the common people but the people are not even educated and sensitised regarding what the concept even means." He expressed exasperation while deploring that even if he tried to impart a basic understanding of human security to the people, they would not grasp it considering that they neither have the requisite

education nor the economic liberty required to reflect over these intellectual concepts. Considering that civil society is an integral segment of society with the objective and will to contribute to human security, its views were also sought in that regard. Adding to the same grievances, one of the civil society activists in Ghotki lamented:

> The concept of human security is only concentrated and discussed in the seminars and conferences of a few big cities such as Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. We at the peripheries, for whom the term has been coined, are not even informed of its basics. There should be curriculum changes as well as seminars in underdeveloped areas to better impart an intellectual understanding of emerging concepts.

It was quite often that the locals as well as experts and civil society activists in Ghotki confused human security with human development and human rights. They simply referred to human development indicators, constitutional rights or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) while articulating different facets of human security. In most of the interviews and FGDs, I had to define human security beforehand so that the discussion could go ahead in a proper manner. Nevertheless, some of the respondents attempted to conceptualize human security as they deemed fit. A civil society activist in Ghotki maintained that "human security in Sindh is nothing but the emancipation of people from the feudal clutches. The feudal order deprives people of their economic wellbeing, dignity and inter-caste harmony." People of Ghotki were often found to be relating human security to feudalism. The same activist argued, "It is natural for people to relate to the challenges of human security to the issues associated with feudalism in this part of the province given that feudalism is highly entrenched in northern and interior Sindh." Furthermore, Pakistan has endured its colonial past and the colonial legacy is still visible across the body politic. This premise raises the exigency of relating human security to the colonial legacy of the country. One of the students in Ghotki argues that "the colonial legacy of the country has left behind a long trail of human insecurity. The colonial laws and institutional structures breed and proliferate threats to human security." It is quite rare to come across Pakistani scholarly literature which attempts to relate human security to the colonial legacy of the country. However, such a connection reechoes existing studies across the world that underscore the nexus of human security and colonial history (Krishna 2015; Richmond 2010; Shani 2017). Moreover, St. Marie et al. (2008) traced the colonial roots of human

security and went on to argue that colonial residues might be affecting human security today in former colonies.

Apart from that, respondents in Karachi showcased relatively better conceptual grip and intellectual clarity over the notion of human security. It may be owing to the fact that Karachi is a hub of intellectual activity characterized by higher education institutions, intellectual sessions conducted by national as well as international organizations and relatively educated as well as vibrant segments of civil society. One of the scholars in Karachi stated, "Human security is a landmark development in the realm of security studies. It takes security discourse away from a strategic obsession with sovereignty, geopolitics and defense, bringing it closer to the needs and aspirations of common people." This take vividly indicates that human security puts people as referent object in security discourse, hence challenging the traditional way of looking at security threats through the state-centric lens. Not only scholars but common people and activists in Karachi also had a fairly enriched grasp of the notion of human security. One of the civil society activists in Karachi highlighted, "Being the cornerstone of non-traditional security, human security calls for a security approach that responds to the rights and basic needs of people irrespective of their background, ethnicity, caste, creed and religion." He stressed that development practitioners need to have a sufficient understanding of concepts related to security studies as there is a rapidly evolving intersection between development studies and security studies at these times.

Moreover, the indigenous perspectives in Karachi also reverberated relative inequalities amongst different groups in the province. In one of the FGDs in Karachi, the majority of the people stressed that human insecurity in Sindh is deeply entrenched in relative inequalities amongst different groups, especially the ever-expanding urban and rural divide in the province. One of the FGD participants argued:

> The rising levels of inequality in Sindh province is a major human security concern. The issue worsens when a few groups are more deprived than others. For instance, the rural population in Sindh is highly hardworking and honest in their livelihood. Despite their commitment and honesty, they are more deprived and neglected as compared to the urban population. This ultimately puts pressure on urban areas as well, considering that urbanization puts immense pressure on urban centers which are already reeling from limited resources.

This discussion on relative inequality amongst different groups or relative deprivation echoes the acclaimed work of Frances Stewart (2005; 2008) on horizontal inequalities. It stands to reason that inequality and injustice are timeless social evils that, if embedded into the social structure, are destined to undermine any gains in human progress and prosperity. Moving on, securitization of both theory and practice is said to be an obstacle in the way of human security. One of the scholars asserted, "Securitization is so deep-rooted in our country that our research is driven by traditional security-centric ontology. The institutions as well as different non-governmental forums are also not immune from the overarching grip of securitization." He maintained that unless this intricate web of securitization is catered for, human security can only be a theoretical exercise but not a tangible reality in Sindh and in the country at large. Furthermore, some respondents adhered to decoloniality and indigeneity in terms of approaching human security discourse. The participants of an FGD in Karachi asserted that human security is a Western construct, with scholars as well as policymakers blindly importing the term from the Western discourse. They raised the need for an indigenous and grounded understanding of human security which resonates with the local culture, history and larger social dynamics.

It is hard to look at the entirety of human security vis-á-vis mega-development projects in Sindh which is one of the central objectives of this study. For the purpose of this research, I emphasized three elements of human security: economic security, environmental security and community security. It would be in a later section that the mega-development projects and human security would be correlated, with the correlation looking specifically at these three elements. Before that, it is imperative to pay heed to the localized understanding and approach of respondents in Ghotki and Karachi regarding these elements of human security. It came to the fore that economic security is characteristic of such thematic notions as inflation, job insecurity, financial uncertainty, declining agricultural productivity and the near absence of social security provisions. Environmental security, moreover, is more resonant with pollution of water and soil, disruptive climatic changes, natural disasters and deforestation. Community security in Ghotki and Karachi is related to inter-caste rifts, ethnic discord, indigenous rights and identity crisis. These are the localized thematic areas that offer insight into the indigenous perspectives regarding the three aspects of human security.

Understanding Conflict Dynamics in Sindh

Conflict is a recurring and highly frequent phenomenon across the world, leaving its multidimensional effects on almost every aspect of life in conflict-ridden societies. Sindh province is not devoid of its share of conflicts having peculiar characteristics. It needs to be noted that there is no organized armed conflict in Sindh in which two warring parties are engaged in a violent conflagration resulting in mass casualties or destruction of property. With the exception of sporadic instances of violence, conflict in the province is largely characterized by non-violent nature having ethno-nationalist, ethno-political, religious and cultural undertones. According to a civil society activist based in Karachi:

> Sindh province is often neglected by scholars and mainstream media because the absence of armed conflict does not require an urgent national security response as in Balochistan. However, the conflictual realities in Sindh are worthy of scholarly attention as well as media coverage because they are taking a toll on human welfare and social cohesion.

He lamented that one of the reasons behind the prolonged decadence of Sindh and its economy is the long array of conflicts which have integrated deeply into the social life of the province. Ethnic, ethno-nationalist and ethno-political discords in Sindh are dominant manifestations of conflict in the province, having both organized and disorganized voices underpinning it. One of the civil society activists in Ghotki stated, "Multiethnic societies are always prone to ethnic differences and violent strife. Their social fabric is not ethno-linguistically uniform to get them on the same page regarding different issues." This notion contradicts Cohen (1976) who argued that ethnic distinctiveness is a reality in almost all societies and there are many multi-ethnic societies living peacefully for decades. The ethnic conflict in Sindh is mainly a discord between the Sindh majority and other minorities, notably Punjabis, Muhajirs and Pashtuns. Although there are sporadic instances of tussle with other ethnicities as well, they are not as noticeable.

Ethnic conflict in the province has a long history with various versions of its inception. One of the scholars based in Karachi traced ethnic conflict to the mismanagement and policy ambiguity of the ruling elite during the creation of Pakistan in 1947. He stated, "The early leadership tried to consolidate power, engender political instability and disregard provincial autonomy. The prolonged delay in constitution-making created a policy ambiguity vis-á-vis center-province relationship." Apart from that, another respondent from

civil society in Ghotki argued that ethnic conflict formally started with the beginning of "Jiye Sindh Tehreek" – an ethno-nationalist movement founded by G.M. Syed in 1972. Being a staunch supporter of the Two Nation Theory and the Pakistan Movement, Syed turned against the state on the premise that it neglected the autonomy and rights of Sindhis (Chandio, 2009). He openly advocated and campaigned for the idea of "Sindhu Desh" – an independent state of Sindh. The Tehreek disintegrated after the demise of Syed, though almost all sections revere him as their ideological figurehead. There are currently a large number of ethno-nationalist and ethno-political movements which derive their inspiration from G.M. Syed such as Jiye Sindh Mahaz, Jiye Sindh Qaumi Mahaz, Jiye Sindh Muttahida Mahaz and Sindh Taraqqi-Pasand Party. The ideological and operational centers of ethno-nationalism movements in Sindh are the Southern and Southwestern areas of Sindh, namely Karachi, Hyderabad and Jamshoro. In order to build their narrative, people associated with these movements cite the chronic deprivation of the Sindhi populace and the politico-economic dominance of other ethnicities. One of the scholars succinctly summed up the features of these movements as "a haphazard cluster of nationalism, separatism and socialism." Throughout our interaction with activists associated with nationalist movements, they termed non-Sindhi settlers as "invaders" and "aliens." One of the major incidents of violence attributed to Sindhi nationalists is the bus massacre of 28th May 2012 in which gunmen opened fire at the passengers, killing seven people and leaving six injured. In another episode of violence in 2023, police opened fire on a procession of Sindhi nationalists who had gathered to celebrate the birthday of G.M. Syed. They were seen to be openly chanting slogans of Sindhu Desh and freedom from Pakistan.

Apart from that, the Sindhi-Muhajir tussle has been a prominent feature of the political and social life of Sindh in general and Karachi in particular. Muhajir ethnicity has been citing chronic neglect and discrimination in terms of political, economic and sociocultural domains in Sindh (Khan et al., 2019). Altaf Hussain laid the foundation of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) – a political party representing Muhajirs with a stronghold in Karachi and Hyderabad. Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has been dominating the political landscape of Sindh province since the end of the Zia era. By taking up nationalist features at politically expedient times, PPP has significantly undermined the support base of nationalist movements in Sindh; it has been able to appeal to the ethnic sentiments of the masses (Chandio, 2009). In essence, PPP and MQM have contributed enormously to the ethno-political dimension of the conflict in Sindh. The ethno-political conflict in Sindh is characterized by the usual confrontation between the provincial

government and federation as well as the discord amongst intra-provincial ethno-political parties. One of the activists in Karachi pointed out that, "Provinces have become financially, administratively and politically authoritative after the passage of the 18th Amendment. Sindh government uses Sindh ethnicity card to adopt confrontational attitude towards the federal government and derive maximum concessions out of it." Furthermore, MQM and PPP have been vying for control over Karachi. A scholar in Karachi highlighted, "these parties instigate hatred and inter-ethnic discord between Sindhis and Muhajirs to provoke the masses and, hence, gain political benefit out of the situation." It has been observed that these parties sometimes resort to violence, causing disruption and mayhem in social life in Karachi. For instance, violent clashes erupted amongst rival political parties in Karachi on May 12, 2007, leading to the death of over 40 people. It was reported that the activists associated with PPP, MQM, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party and Jamaat-e-Islami were the main perpetrators in these clashes (Gazdar, 2008).

The conflictual realities in Sindh are also indicative of religious and sectarian discord among people. In the routine days, Muslims and non-Muslims get along well in personal as well as professional interactions. There is a large population of Hindus in Ghotki which dominates the commercial and business activities in the district. The bigotry and fanaticism against non-Muslims are not widespread. However, a trigger or religiously sensitive occasions often flares up violent or non-violent religious conflict. Riots broke out in Ghotki in 2019 after a student accused his Hindu teacher of blasphemy. Hindu temples, shops and schools were vandalized, leaving the law and order situation highly volatile (BBC News, 2019). The non-Muslims in Ghotki also express regular grievances regarding forced conversion and subsequent marriage of Hindu girls to Muslim men (Khattak, 2021). There is a history that explains how religious extremism and bigotry evolved in the country. A scholar in Ghotki highlighted:

> The roots of extremism and bigotry in Sindh as well as the country at large date back to the policies of the Zia era during the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s. The radicalization of the masses and their subsequent utility as proxies in the war left long-lasting implications for the country. The war ended but it was the beginning of extremism, intolerance and bigotry across the country.

In addition, Karachi occasionally reels from incidents of violent extremism and terrorism. Security experts are of the view that a new generation of tech-savvy religious militants is

settling in urban centers, especially Karachi and Lahore (Basit, 2018). Respondents revealed that some of the militant groups, having transnational connections, carried out a series of targeted killings in Karachi in recent years.

Cultural conflict in Sindh is mainly a manifestation of caste-based strife among the people. This sort of conflict has been raging on for decades, with many factors being attributed to its proliferation. One of the journalists in Ghotki asserted, "Caste-based conflict in Sindh has taken thousands of lives over the decades. The key drivers of this conflict are a lack of education and employment opportunities. Nonetheless, the most prominent contributing factor is feudalism." The respondents argue that caste-based hatred and polarization are mainly triggered and perpetrated by feudal lords to cement control over the population and enhance their electoral prospects by perpetuating inter-caste disharmony. Caste-based discord is prevalent in northern and interior Sindh where feudalism is deeply entrenched. No matter what tribe or caste the people belong to, they find their caste as most pure and superior. Any threat or harm against a single individual of their caste is deemed a threat to the whole caste. One of the activists in Ghotki highlighted, "If a member of one caste kills or harms the member of another caste, the people belonging to the latter will retaliate with higher and intense magnitude, leading to a vicious cycle of revenge and death." The caste-based conflicts are eventually settled by the Jirga system which further consolidates the power of feudal lords while the local courts turn a blind eye to the Jirga culture. The structural realities of Sindh also deserve due attention in this regard. One of the scholars in Karachi argued:

> The politico-economic structure of Sindh is signified by an unholy nexus of feudalism and capitalism, leaving farmers and the common public at the mercy of industrialists and large landholders. It is surprising to see that there is no class-based insurrection in Sindh. However, the feudal-capitalist structure does give ideological justification to ethno-nationalist parties in the province.

In sum, the conflict dynamics in Sindh are a cluster of rifts and discords along ethno-nationalist, ethno-political, religious and cultural lines. There is no organized and armed violent conflict in Sindh as in Balochistan. However, occasional instances of violence and clashes are recorded across the province. Taking Sindh as a context, this research also substantiates the findings of (Khan et al., 2019) that identity conflict in Pakistan is mainly

caused by horizontal inequalities and instrumentalization of identity by the ruling elite. The table mentioned below offers a cursory outlook of conflict dynamics in Sindh province.

Table 1.

Region	Nature of Conflict
Northern Sindh	Extremism/Violent Extremism Caste-based/Tribal Ethnic
Interior Sindh	Extremism/Violent Extremism Caste-based/Tribal Ethnic
Southern Sindh	Ethno-Nationalism/Ethno-Politics Violent Extremism/Terrorism

Mega-development Projects in Ghotki and Karachi – An Overview

One of the primary objectives of the research was to explore the correlation between mega-development projects and human security, comprehending how the former is influencing the latter. As stated earlier, the scope of this study is limited to the oil and gas sector in Ghotki and the real estate sector in Karachi. To be precise, the study looked at the operational dynamics of Mari Petroleum Company Limited (MPCL) and Oil and Gas Company Limited (OGDCL) in Ghotki along with Bahria Town in Karachi. MPCL operates across the country in terms of exploring and supplying oil and gas reserves. It operates Mari Gas Field which is the largest gas field in the country in terms of remaining reserves located in Daharki city of District Ghotki (MPCL, n.d.-a). With the commencement of production dating back to 1967, MPCL currently operates a total of 152 gas wells in Mari Gas Field. In the year 2021-2022 alone, the company extracted a gas volume of 272,459 MMscf (MPCL, n.d.-b). In addition, OGDCL is an oil and gas exploration and production company operating across the country. It discovered Qadirpur Gas Field in District Ghotki in 1990. The total number of gas wells being operated by the company in the Qadirpur Gas Field is 71, with the daily average gas production in the field being 171.1 MMscf (Pakistan Petroleum Limited, n.d.). Bahria Town Karachi is a large-scale housing project located along the M-9 motorway northeast of Karachi. It offers residential as well as commercial infrastructure along with parks, entertainment and public utility facilities. The project began

in 2014 and has now expanded to an area of approximately 46,000 acres. Starting with Malir District in Karachi, the project has extended to Jamshoro City.

Mega-development Projects and Human Security in Sindh

It is generally believed that development is imperative for the growth and socioeconomic uplift in any society. In essence, it offers new avenues to make headways in human security and sustainable development. However, the mega-development projects in Pakistan are often mired by conspiracies of varying kinds and degrees. The oil and gas sector in Ghotki helmed by MPCL and OGDCL has been extracting reserves for decades. This study qualitatively evaluates the effects of these extractive industries on three elements of human security i.e., economic security, environmental security and community security. It is worth mentioning that MPCL and OGDCL have been rendering corporate social responsibility (CSR) services in Ghotki across the thematic areas of education, healthcare and climate action. In Daharki, MPCL established Noor-e-Sehar Special Education School for children with disabilities and Mari Model High School for the local community. A total of 800 children are enrolled in both schools. It has also built and financed Asthma Clinic in Daharki and a few mother and child care centers. It is also planting thousands of trees at Miyawaki Forest Planation at Mari Field. In addition, OGDCL has established a few surgical/awareness eye camps in Ghotki. One of the officials associated with MPCL stated, "We believe in inclusive development and fulfilling all the CSR obligations. Our CSR framework is a testament to our respect for human security of the locality." Throughout our interaction with locals, they seemed discontent and infuriated regarding the operations of these corporations. One of the civil society activists in Ghotki stated:

> The CSR mantra looks good on paper but we know it is merely a façade and the reality is entirely opposite on the ground. The companies are taking way more than they are giving to the locality. They are ruthlessly extractive in their operations, having little regard for the welfare of the location population and environmental preservation.

The majority of the respondents had a consensus in putting forth the notion that the oil and gas sector has been having detrimental effects on the human security landscape of Ghotki, affirming the notion that development may not necessarily fulfil the human security aspirations of the people.

It was revealed throughout the course of data collection that these companies are undermining economic security by discouraging local employment, disregarding merit in the award of local contracts, spoiling the fertility of agricultural lands and resorting to force to acquire the wells on cheap rates. Respondents of an FGD in Ghotki concurred with the notion that these companies overwhelmingly prefer non-locals, especially non-Sindhis, in the recruitment to higher as well as mid-level jobs while the locals are only given lower stature jobs such as cleaning, sweeping and hardcore labour work. In addition, the locals also highlighted that the contracts for the supply of goods and services at the local level are only awarded to the privileged segment and those who are already connected with the local elite. They lamented that the whole process of bidding is rigged which violates the principles of merit, transparency and fairness. Furthermore, studies across the world have pointed towards the fact that oil and gas exploration and production are linked with the contamination of soil and water as well as the reduction in soil fertility (Alam et al., 2010; Pichtel, 2016; Denney, 2005). The reduction in soil fertility is directly proportional to the decline in productivity of land, leading to lower yield of crops. These studies directly resonate with the concerns of locals and farmers that the lands surrounding gas wells have been losing their fertility. In essence, this troublesome phenomenon directly affects the economic security of farmers as well as all those who are dependent on agriculture. Needless to say, the majority of the district is predominantly dependent on agriculture. It has also been reported by civil society activists as well as the locals that if the company discovers reserves under the land of an individual who is reluctant to lease the land to the company for exploration, the companies resort to heavy-handed measures through the police to force the lease agreement on that individual. Even if the person is willing to offer his land, he does not have the bargaining power to negotiate a fair lease price for himself. The offered price is often meagre as compared to the reserves the company extracts. In sum, respondents have come up with these unjust and inappropriate corporate practices that, according to them, are significantly deteriorating the economic security of the people in Ghotki.

Moving on, environmental security is also a cause of concern amongst the residents of Ghotki as far as the operations of the oil and gas sector are concerned. I came across significant contamination of groundwater during the field visits around the areas of Mari Gas Field. The water of Daharki city is nearly undrinkable, with locals complaining of many waterborne diseases proliferating in the city. The majority of the respondents in the area attributed this environmental catastrophe to the malpractices of industries in the city, mainly the oil and gas sector. They alleged that the companies do not comply with environmental

safeguards and dump chemical waste as well as unprocessed reserves into the soil and groundwater. A study conducted in the Sanghar district of Sindh also found adverse impacts on the environment and groundwater due to the contamination caused by the oil and gas sector (Hisam & Soomro, 2022). Hussain Qaiser et al., (2019) found the heavy contamination of soil and water owing to the operations of the oil and gas sector in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province of Pakistan. Nonetheless, there is an absolute dearth of studies measuring or evaluating the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of the oil and gas sector in Pakistan, more so in Sindh province. Furthermore, the implications of the oil and gas sector on community security in Ghotki cannot be ruled out. One of the journalists in Ghotki noted that "These corporations promote inter-ethnic strife amongst Sindhis and Punjabis by creating and sustaining an impression that they are more favourable to Punjabis in recruitment as well as other professional dealings." Throughout the interaction with locals, a deep-seated sense of alienation and indignation was visible against what they deemed as the ethnically biased operational disposition of these corporations. Nonetheless, I could not find any substantial and direct linkage between these corporations and other aspects of community security in Ghotki such as inter-caste strife and disregard of local culture.

The second mega-development sector central to this research is real estate, namely Bahria Town Karachi (BTK). The proponents of this project – people associated with the project -- view it as an emblem of urban development which offers countless opportunities for growth, human development and state-of-the-art architecture. On the other hand, the dissidents censure this project and find it culpable in various malpractices and illegalities such as the illegal occupation of land, displacement of locals, destruction of indigenous culture and heritage, and environmental degradation. The project undermines the economic security of the area by securing illegal allotments, refusing to offer compensations to the displaced, empowering the elite and driving unproductive economic activity. The Supreme Court of Pakistan ruled in 2018 that Malir Development Authority (MDA) had illegally allotted land to BTK developers (Bhatti, 2020). The court went on to accept the offer of Rs. 460 billion in 2019 from the developers in exchange for legalizing 16,896 acres of land allotted by MDA. The members of Sindh Indigenous Rights Alliance – an indigenous rights group created in 2015 for anti-BTK activism – view these developments as having negative implications for the economic security of the people. One of the members of the Alliance stated:

This is just a case of 16,896 acres of land. The project has accumulated more than 40,000 acres of land. In collusion with the government, the land is acquired at highly cheap rates which could have been utilized for better and more efficient commercial activities. It should also be noted that Rs. 460 billion is not going to be spent on the public in any way. It is going to be divided between the judiciary and provincial government without paying any heed to transparency and inclusivity. If viewed closely, these are negative economic implications for the people of Karachi.

The members of the Alliance also highlighted that only 10% of displaced people have been compensated by BTK developers. The rest have just been forcefully displaced and evicted from their homes, leaving them to the eventual fate of homelessness and uncertainty. The implications on economic security have also been discussed with regard to elite dynamics. Sindh Action Committee – an alliance of prominent nationalist parties – has been highly vocal and vibrant against the BTK project. Respondents associated with the Committee are of the view that BTK only caters to the country's elite and serves their luxurious lifestyle. They asserted that this empowerment of the elite is coming at the cost of deprivation of locals and indigenous communities. One of the members of the Committee pointed out, "Projects like BTK make sure that the wealth keeps getting concentrated and accumulated in a few hands which will eventually lead to the economic insecurity of the large segment of the population."

The economic security of Karachi and the country at large is being further hampered by the rise of unproductive economic activity helmed by the projects like BTK. It has been studied internationally that real estate is an unproductive sector of the economy which chokes economic growth and creates issues for sustainable development (Morrone et al., 2023; Karadag & İzgi, 2022). One of the scholars based in Karachi was of the view that the capital invested in unproductive mega-projects such as BTK could have been utilized in productive sectors such as industry, innovation and technology. He termed the commercial and financial upsurge of unproductive activity of real estate and housing societies as an economic security concern. Apart from that, the project has been having detrimental effects on environmental security as well. There is no precise data on the number of trees subjected to deforestation and the area of fertile land taken over by the BTK developers. However, the members of the Sindh Indigenous Rights Alliance are of the view that thousands of acres of fertile land have been taken over and thousands of trees have been erased from the

ground. To some extent, the media has also covered the environmental degradation and sustainability issues caused by the upsurge of real-estate speculation and housing societies across the country (Profit by Pakistan Today, 2021; Business Recorder, 2022). Lastly, Sindh Indigenous Rights Alliance, Sindh Action Committee, as well as locals, have been quite vibrant about raising concerns that directly resonate with community security. The members of the Alliance are of the view that the people who have been uprooted from their ancestral homes where they have been living for more than 500 years. They find the project developers responsible for violating all the indigenous rights and heritage. They lament that the ancient archaeological sites having engravings from Buddha's period have been erased. Moreover, Sindh Action Committee members call out BTK developers for undermining community security by widening inter-ethnic discord in the city and Sindh at large. They assert that the project favors non-Sindhi settlers and investors whom they already find responsible for exploiting the resources and wealth of Sindh. Nonetheless, the BTK officials do not seem to concur with their assertions. One of the officials working in BTK argued, "It happens almost in every project that for some construction to happen, a reasonable degree of destruction is done. In return, we are offering modern residential luxury, an ecologically balanced environment and peaceful living within BTK."

Mega-development Projects and Conflict in Sindh

The relationship between development and conflict is highly intricate, having various dimensions involved. It is imperative to evaluate how mega-development projects are influencing conflict dynamics in Sindh, especially in Ghotki and Karachi. In essence, a scholarly effort has been made in this section to comprehend and explore the conflict-development nexus in the designated regions of the province. The indigenous perspectives coming out of Ghotki and Karachi are reflective of the notion that the conflict-development nexus therein is troublesome and contentious. It has also been noted that the intermediary factor that is undermining the conflict-development nexus in both regions is a continuous violation and disregard for human security. The development in Ghotki steered by the oil and gas sector is fueling conflictual tendencies in the form of demonstrations, protests and an increasing sense of alienation as well as discontent. However, the conflict-development nexus in Ghotki has not yet exhibited violent characteristics. One of the civil society activists in Ghotki maintained:

The extractive operations of the oil and gas sector have created a deep sense of alienation and indignation amongst locals. These sectors are only extracting our resources and undermining human security without offering adequate benefits to the locality. Resultantly, people often come out to protest and raise their voices against corporate injustice.

Being largely peaceful, protests and demonstrations are held almost every year but they are not large-scale in magnitude and impact. These protests are mainly led by civil society and consist of almost all segments of society such as farmers, students, laborers, journalists and lawyers. Local respondents are of the view that it is not feasible for people to regularly come out and freely express their grievances because these corporations are on good terms with the local feudal lords and bureaucracy. They feel that they would face the wrath of feudal lords and bureaucrats if they came out and staged regular sit-ins or protests against these corporations.

The majority of the respondents concurred with the notion that threats to economic security, environmental security and community security caused by the oil and gas sector are the key drivers of conflict. To be precise, locals are getting increasingly exasperated with the ethnic bias exhibited by companies in their recruitment process and their lack of socioeconomic services offered to the area. However, the perspectives coming out of these corporations paint a different picture. According to one of the officials associated with MPCL:

Our industry is bringing much-needed development and infrastructure to the least developed areas. We admit that the locals are not given jobs in higher management. The reason is not some ethnic bias but the lack of technical and administrative skills among them. In addition, the protests and activism targeted against us are totally baseless and engineered for vested interests.

The locals vehemently rejected these assertions and maintained that there are many educated and skilled young people in the district who are qualified for recruitment but the corporations do not even offer them a chance in the early screening phase of the recruitment. One of the local community leaders said, "Our children go to far-flung areas, and even abroad, in pursuit of job opportunities. It is mainly because the corporations while taking away our own resources, have shut the doors of employment on our children." Environmental degradation, especially in terms of declining soil fertility and contamination

of water, are also the key irritants with regard to the conflict-development nexus in Ghotki. The locals as well as civil society activists showcased a lack of understanding regarding the rules and technical aspects that corporations have to follow to minimize the industrial impact on the environment. However, they were confident in their assertion that it is the primary duty of corporations to protect the environment at all costs. One of the locals argued, "We treat our land as our mother and this nature around us is divine for us. We would not stand by and watch while someone or some entity hurts our mother and disrespects the divine provisions." In essence, the conflict-development nexus in Ghotki showcases a phenomenon where the oil and gas sector is leading to conflictual tendencies in the district due to what locals termed the sector's perpetual threats to human security. It deserves to be mentioned that non-violence may not always characterize the conflict dynamics in Ghotki. Many of the respondents strongly expressed a prophecy that if the oil and gas sector keeps sticking to its exclusionary, extractive and anti-environmental practices, people might resort to violence against the people as well as property associated with these corporations. One of the locals said, "We are peace-loving people and we know the value of development. But if this kind of development is here to stay for long, then our peace has its limits."

The conflict-development nexus also needs to be situated in Karachi with regard to the development of Bahria Town Karachi. There was insignificant and unnoticeable activism against the project when it started in 2014. However, the activism took on the shape of a proper non-violent conflict within a few years when it came to the fore that large swathes of land were being taken over by BTK along with a large number of people being forcefully displaced from their ancestral homes. The respondents echoed the notion that the emerging conflictual inclinations were occurring due to the threats caused by BTK to the human security of indigenous people as well as the people of Karachi at large. The civil society of Karachi staged various protests against the project and demanded greater transparency, fairness and respect for indigenous rights, along with an end to illegalities. The Sindh Indigenous Rights Alliance became a leading voice of indigenous communities in its fight for indigenous rights being threatened by the project. The Alliance members reported that there were occasional and minor instances of violent struggle between BKT authorities and indigenous communities while they were being evicted from their homes. Up till 2021, the conflict-development nexus with regard to BTK was troublesome and contentious but rarely exhibited any sign of noticeable violence. On June 6, 2021, various nationalist groups led by the Sindh Action Committee, members of the Sindh Indigenous

Rights Alliance, civil society activists across Karachi as well as locals converged on the main gate of Bahria Town Karachi and staged a massive protest. They demanded an end to what they termed as the illegal occupation of land and displacement of indigenous communities. The protest turned into chaotic unrest when police reached the site and started baton charge and fired teargas to disperse the crowd. Many people were injured and many others were arrested. It was during those hours that a few people entered Bahria Town, setting fire to the main gate, vehicles and some buildings. Respondents associated with Sindh Action Committee informed that thousands of people were booked in the following days and around 30 FIRs were launched on terrorism charges. According to an activist present at the protest site:

> It was a peaceful protest as per our constitutional right where we demanded an end to illegalities and the protection of indigenous rights. However, some miscreants were injected into the peaceful protest to damage and set fire to BTK's property. The police brutality that followed did not make any distinction between miscreants and innocent civilians. Many of our fellow activists were hounded for months.

The violence indeed occurred that day but it was condemned by all parties which participated in the protest. The violent tendencies have intensified due to the attitude of the government. The respondents associated with the Sindh Action Committee argued, "It is the primary responsibility of the government to remain impartial and make conflict resolution its top policy priority. On the contrary, the provincial government is working at the will and pleasure of BTK developers." The protests and anti-BTK activism also extended to the virtual domain and social media platforms. For many days following June 6, #SayNoToBahriaTown trended on social media platforms, with people raising their voices for indigenous communities and calling out the government's one-sided attitude throughout the process. One of the officials associated with the BTK stated, "The project is a hallmark of modern urban development in Sindh. People who censure this project and, especially, those who caused unrest and arson in BTK on June 6 are enemies of development." Since June 6, no episode of violence related to BTK has been reported but the activism against the project is still raging on. The development trajectory of BTK and the events of June 6 have provided an impetus to ethno-nationalist conflict in Sindh. I came across the individuals associated with nationalist groups as well as the common people of Karachi who kept asserting that the Sindhis and locals no longer have any say in what goes

on in Karachi. They alleged that BTK and such mega-development projects are being undertaken to appease and empower the dominant non-Sindhi ethnicities. These are arguments that ethno-nationalist groups would adopt, intensify and propagate to increase the people's tilt towards nationalism, separatism and the idea of Sindhu Desh. One of the scholars based in Karachi said:

> The idea of ethno-nationalism and separatism thrives on the ethnically driven narrative. If the events like June 6 are allowed to happen more often in the future, ethno-nationalist groups would be able to mobilize masses in greater numbers across Sindh and enhance their ideological and physical footprint.

People are still fighting for justice in whatever way they deem fit. One of the lawyers associated with the Alliance informed us that he is pursuing the cases of indigenous communities against the BTK in courts and will keep doing so. However, he expressed discontent with the legal system and how it poses hurdles in the way of justice. He went on to say, "The purpose of the legal system is to uphold the rule of law and not let the powerful infringe upon the rights of weaker segments of society. The colonial legal structure has rendered justice expensive and delayed which disproportionately benefits the rich and powerful." In the past few years, there has been rising interest amongst scholars and policymakers to involve common people in the security discourse and explore the contours of non-traditional security. However, the situation on the ground does not offer a promising picture with regard to the gains in human security and non-traditional security. One of the scholars based in Karachi said:

> Human security is directly linked to the conflict dynamics of society. Unfortunately, this conceptual framework has only become an intellectual luxury in the form of seminars and big-budget programmes. Our institutional structure is not ready to implement this framework in a true sense and, hence, establish peace and justice in the country.

In short, the conflict-development nexus in Karachi is reflective of the reality that BTK led to and is still leading to conflict due to the threats that it caused to the human security of the locals.

The Role of Government and Civil Society in Sindh

The government's primary duty is to protect the rights of the people because it is the common people's welfare that it derives its legitimacy from. Moreover, civil society acts as an intermediary between the state and the public in order to exercise accountability on the state and raise public issues before power corridors. It is imperative to evaluate the role of government and civil society with regard to mega-development-induced human security issues as well as the conflict-development nexus in Sindh, with a particular focus on Ghotki and Karachi. The political class of Ghotki predominantly consists of feudal lords who do not have a promising track record with regard to working for the welfare of their constituents and responding to the needs and aspirations of their electorate. The reality is indicative of the fact that the political class as well as bureaucracy seems to be hand in glove with the corporate entities in Ghotki. One of the journalists in Ghotki stated:

> Both the local politicians and bureaucracy are on good terms with the overlords of the oil and gas sector in Ghotki. They do not exercise any accountability on the operations of the sector. Nor do they entertain public concerns regarding emerging human security issues. The government is the elected representative of the people but it keeps acting as the representative of corporate bosses.

The civil society actors informed us that whenever the corporations come across the reluctance or resistance of people in leasing out their land for gas exploration and production, they use police force as well as harassment by feudal lords to force lease agreements on those people. In 2021, the MPCL deposited Rs. 3 billion to the provincial government for community development projects in Ghotki. However, the government did not involve civil society or community leaders regarding consultations for how those funds would be spent in the district as per democratic norms. Most of the respondents across civil society and local communities asserted that they have not witnessed any community development carried out through those funds. One of the locals observed, "This amount would be devoured by the provincial government along with the local politicians and bureaucrats of the district. These funds –under the guise of community development -- are meant to keep the authorities subservient to corporate bosses." The activists and locals pointed towards an emerging trend termed an industrial-politico-bureaucratic nexus in Ghotki. They believe that corporations, politicians and bureaucrats enrich and empower

each other at the cost of people's welfare and human security. This is the reason why politicians and institutions turn a blind eye to corporate excesses and leave the masses at the mercy of corporate irresponsibility.

Apart from that, civil society in Ghotki is a haphazard group of journalists, professionals and students whose activism for the sake of human security and conflict resolution is below par. One of the journalists in Ghotki highlighted, "Although civil society has been involved in activism and protests against these corporations, the former is only concerned about their own marketing and image projections. The human security concerns and welfare of the people is a secondary concern for them." By extension, this study affirms the findings of Hussain et al. (2014) and Ali et al., (2021) who revealed that the humanitarian agenda is a secondary focus for activists in Sindh. Most of the locals also deplored that prominent civil society actors are well-connected with these corporations and help to sustain the corporations' image and operational activities. These findings are consistent with a study conducted in the Sanghar district of Sindh which reveals that the oil and gas sector in Sanghar makes "alliances with powerful political, social and spiritual leaders. This helps them with the protection of their interests and run business smoothly" (Hisam & Soomro, 2022). Another factor afflicting the strength and efficiency of civil society in Ghotki is that there are no properly organized and structured groups with an ideological grounding and well-defined objectives. It is only a cluster of people belonging to different walks of life and meeting occasionally at press clubs to voice their concerns. There are a few NGOs but their scope is quite limited and they are only concerned about increasing the number of donors. One of the young activists in Ghotki observed, "Civil society is a product of the locality and context that it belongs to. Being the representative of a highly deprived and socioeconomically challenged region, the civil society of Ghotki suffers from financial, ideological, organizational and political constraints." In essence, the government and civil society in Ghotki are not living up to the people's expectations, rather they seem to be complicit in the mounting threats to human security caused by the oil and gas sector.

Moving on, the role of government and civil society in Karachi also deserves scholarly attention with regard to the human security issues caused by mega-development projects and the conflict-development nexus at play. Members of the Sindh Action Committee repeatedly asserted that BTK developers are highly connected with the country's elite. One of the scholars in Karachi maintained, "The illegal allotment of 16,896 acres of land to BTK by Malir Development Authority is a testament to the fact that provincial

government, as well as bureaucracy, is complicit with BTK in committing illegalities." The allotments would not have been possible without the disproportionate influence that BTK developers exercise over various institutions. It is believed that Supreme Court rectified these wrongs by ruling against the illegal allotments and penalizing BTK by demanding Rs. 460 billion as compensation. However, these events are not as simple as they seem. One of the lawyers pursuing cases against BTK in Karachi argued:

> The Supreme Court directly took up the BTK case so that, after
> the ruling, the public would not have any higher judicial avenue
> in their pursuit of justice. The case should have been taken up by
> lower courts first. In a way, the Supreme Court saved BTK from
> further legal troubles.

The members of the Sindh Indigenous Rights Alliance also lamented that the authorities and politicians just acted as silent bystanders when people were being forcefully evicted from their homes to pave the way for BTK development. In some cases, locals informed, the BTK took the help of police to displace and harass indigenous people. Locals informed that they have given up the option of going to the police because they have no hope left after witnessing what they termed as the partial, one-sided and atrocious face of the police department.

When the clashes broke out on 6 June 2021, police descended on the protestors with baton charge and tear gas, arresting many of them during the unrest. One of the activists present at the protest site that day said, "The police brutality and terrorism cases against the peaceful protestors are a testament to the fact that BTK developers have reduced police to their own private security in order to silence and subdue the voices against injustice and inhumanity." The provincial government could have done much more but its indecision and one-sided approach projected it as a party in the conflict. A scholar in Karachi said:

> The government as well as bureaucratic authorities could have
> established informal platforms or dialogue channels to reach out
> to the locals and displaced communities. They could have at least
> heard their grievances to give out the impression that there was
> indeed something called "government" to resolve the dispute.
> They could have organized public gatherings and invited both the
> BTK developers and civil society to bridge the differences.
> Unfortunately, nothing of that sort happened.

Apart from that, the civil society in Karachi is led by NGOs, nationalist groups, lawyers and professional bodies. It is more vibrant and vocal as compared to that in the rest of the province but not as efficient and strong to bring about a significant change. Civil society has engaged in activism against BTK on various platforms for years, but its efforts have not resulted in reforming the development trajectory of BTK. Keeping that aside, civil society has not even been able to secure justice for displaced communities. One of the activists in Karachi maintained, "Keeping the failures of civil society aside, the displaced communities have indeed been able to have a helping hand and support from civil society which might not have been possible in any other region of the province."

Another reason behind the inefficiency of civil society is a tug of war and a long array of contentions amongst different civil society groups. A respondent associated with Sindh Action Committee highlighted that "various nationalist groups in the Committee are not ideologically on the same page. Some of them are linked to vested interests, having different versions of how far the activism should go. Such differences have rendered the Committee as almost a non-existent platform." Apart from that, the organizational structure of civil society in Karachi is problematic as well. There is an absence of a well-defined hierarchy, a proper system of internal accountability and a well-structured module of training in civil society organizations. Kaldor (2003) also stresses the need for procedural accountability as internal management of civil society which "depends on the social composition of the group, forms of funding and the type of organization." In essence, the government and civil society in Ghotki and Karachi have failed to prevent or address the human security issues caused by mega-development projects. In addition, they have not been able to put the conflict-development nexus on a positive and promising trajectory in those regions. The responses of the locals and affected people are indicative of immense discontent and indignation towards the inefficient and, sometimes, partial role played by the government and civil society in that regard.

Conclusion

This study comprehensively looks at interlinkages between the thematic areas of human security, conflict dynamics and mega-development projects in Sindh while paying primary attention to District Ghotki and Karachi. The indigenous and localized perspectives of human security arising out of Sindh are fluid, multifaceted and quite stretched. The understanding of evolution, depth and significance of human security in Karachi is better and more mature as compared to Ghotki. Furthermore, the conflict dynamics in Sindh are

characteristic of ethno-nationalist, ethno-political, religious and cultural rifts and discords. Nonetheless, the conflict in the province is largely no-violent with a vivid absence of organized armed struggle. Most importantly, it came to the fore that the oil and gas sector in Ghotki and the real estate sector in Karachi are having dire and adverse effects on the economic security, environmental security and community security of the locality. The local communities find their human security condition being threatened by these mega-development projects. In addition, the conflict-development nexus in Sindh is fraught with various impediments and irritants. The nexus is primarily defined by a prevalent scenario in which mega-development projects are leading to a surge in conflictual tendencies amongst the local population. It is integral to note that the intermediary factor in the conflict-development nexus is human security: threats to human security caused by mega-development projects have led to and exacerbated conflictual inclinations. The locals also reported a sense of discontentment and disapproval regarding the role played by the government and civil society to protect human security and rectify the wrongs which are spoiling the conflict-development nexus in Ghotki and Karachi. Lastly, it is highly important to highlight that there is a need for more qualitative as well as quantitative research to evaluate the role of mega-development projects in terms of human security and to further comprehend the contours of the conflict-development nexus in different parts of Pakistan.

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