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'Without water, there is no life': negotiating everyday risks and gendered insecurities in Karachi's informal settlements

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3 **‘Without water, there is no life’: negotiating everyday risks and gendered insecurities in**
4 **Karachi’s informal settlements**
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10 **Abstract**

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12 This article provides new insights into the politics of water provisioning in Karachi’s informal
13 settlements, where water shortages and contaminations have pushed ordinary citizens to live on
14 the knife edge of water scarcity. We turn our attention to the everyday practices that involve
15 gendered insecurities of water in Karachi, which has been Pakistan’s security laboratory for
16 decades. We explore four shifting security logics that strongly contribute to the crisis of water
17 provisioning at the neighborhood level and highlight an emergent landscape of ‘securitized water’.
18 Gender maps the antagonisms between these security logics, so we discuss the impacts on ordinary
19 women and men as they experience chronic water shortages. In Karachi, a patriarchal stereotype
20 of the militant or terrorist-controlled water supply is wielded with the aim of upholding statist
21 national security concerns that undermine women’s and men’s daily security in water provisioning
22 whereby everyday issues of risk and insecurity appear politically inconsequential. We contend that
23 risk has a very gendered nature and it is women that experience it both in the home and outside.
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36 **Keywords**

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38 Gender, Infrastructure, Politics, Poverty, Exclusion, Social Justice, Security, Water
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Introduction

Everything was not the same before. There was buffalo farming everywhere, and our houses and roads were *katcha* (informal). We strived hard to make better lives. There was no electricity or water. The water shortage persists even today. Nowadays we buy water from private tankers. Despite having government lines for past six years, water supply is scarce. Without water, there is no life. We get water first then food, as water is most important. I keep an eye on the kids, so they don't waste water while bathing. Even if government water comes every 15 days for one hour, we still manage. But government water is unavailable during electricity breakdowns. We can't pump or store water. Sometimes I stay awake all night collecting water from the line because supply is sporadic. (Shaista, 53-years-old, Ghaziabad, Orangi Town, Karachi).

This article provides new insights into the politics of water provisioning in Pakistan's urban informal settlements, where water shortages, contaminations, and dry taps for hours combined with climate change related heat waves, have pushed ordinary citizens to live on the knife edge of water scarcity. We turn attention to the everyday – gendered, negotiations and insecurities of water infrastructures in the globally visible landscape of Karachi, which has been Pakistan's security laboratory for decades. Our inquiry into gender and urban violence in Karachi led us to explore the shifting securitization logics that strongly contribute to the crisis of neighborhood-level water provisioning. Our findings illuminate the interlocking of four security logics affecting everyday negotiations with water infrastructures: (1) a 'right to water' logic promoted by the judiciary; (2) a human security logic to save lives from environmental risks promoted by NGOs; (3) a national security 'securitized water' logic to contain terrorists/mafias who allegedly control water valves, hydrants and tankers; and (4) an entrenched, everyday patriarchal logic that constrains women's mobilities. Gender maps the antagonisms between these security logics, so we elucidate – through empirical insights - how these security logics are gendered, creating and compounding risks and insecurities for the everyday woman and man. Such gendered risks and insecurities are embodied and visceral manifestations of urban life. Our research applies a feminist lens to capture what securitization logics exist and how they impact access to water that must be 'secured' in Karachi. This relates more broadly to South

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3 Asian megacities where the realities of water provisioning are complex. A key question
4 underlies our discussion: given the daily disruptions in water in Karachi's informal settlements,
5 how is risk negotiated and mitigated inside and outside the home, where water politics is
6 constituted by social relationships, like those around gender?
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10 Experiences like Shaista's are not unique in Karachi, nor the broader urban landscapes of
11 South Asia. This led us to bring into conversation three strands of literature for theorizing water
12 security in urban South Asia: on water infrastructures in South Asia (Anand, 2017; Graham et
13 al., 2013; Bjorkmann, 2014); on national securitization as a mode of governance in a post-9-11
14 world (Enloe, 2013; Goldstein, 2010; Amar, 2009; De Goede, 2008); and, given that gender
15 forms the central organizing structure for these processes and related impacts, on feminist
16 political economy (FPE) work that interrogates masculinist visions of water provisioning
17 (Mollett and Faria, 2012; Ahlers and Zwarteen 2009; Davidson and Stratford 2007; Sultana
18 2009; Truelove 2011; Zwarteven 2008). Pakistan's contemporary security politics provides a
19 compelling object of study to understand the gendered insecurities of urban water
20 infrastructures that are conditioned by securitization logics. This is salient given Pakistan has
21 made a drastic leap from protracted military rule to democratic governance. Yet, there is
22 ambiguity about what an ideal future looks like. Does Pakistan uphold its democratic
23 ascendance as an advocate of 'human security' by championing universal water access? Or
24 does it re-define and scale back 'human security' through a national security lens of risk
25 management - by focusing on a discourse of 'terrorism' that enhances the power of paramilitary
26 forces to define the limits of water provisioning in cities?
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39 "Terrorism is a way bigger issue than the water crisis – if someone suggested
40 otherwise, they would be thrown out of the assembly" – Governor of Sindh, 21
41 November 2017 at the 3rd International Water Conference held in Karachi
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46 "Why there is a shortage of water in Karachi... and how come water tankers are
47 not affected by it? ... have some fear of the Almighty, how can poor purchase two
48 tankers in a month? ... Tankers will be shut down at any cost.... Fulfil your
49 obligations or quit. We will deal with the tanker mafia". Chief Justice of
50 Pakistan, Mian Saqib Nisar addressing the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board
51 in a hearing on 14 January 2018
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3 The above interventions from judicial and senior government representatives underscore
4 that within the story of risk perception, while the state uses the language of universal water
5 access, in practice it deviates from a human security approach. It privileges the threat of non-
6 state armed groups over that posed to millions of residents: persistent water shortages in
7 Karachi, where low-income residents are disproportionately affected. This materializes through
8 the state's monopolization of the 'risk' discourse in relation to the politics of water
9 provisioning. To this end, the masculinized tropes of 'terrorist', 'militant' and 'mafia' are a key
10 instrument of state power. In this risk imagination, human security is at stake in Karachi's
11 informal settlements; women are at particular risk of harm when searching for water. We embed
12 our argument in a wider socio-cultural context where a masculinized notion of security prevails
13 in relation to the moral and sexual regulation of women by kin-networks and community, a
14 common feature in patriarchal societies (Toor 2014; Shaheed 2010). Karachi's history of
15 violence and securitization informs the high stakes of these securitization logics and leaves open
16 the ultimate outcome of struggles for water.
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19 We start this paper by describing the methods and the rationale for focusing on certain
20 locations in Karachi. In the second section, we sketch a history of Karachi's water provisioning
21 and long history of political-economic violence and securitization, in which water is enmeshed.
22 Next, we locate the article in the theoretical literature on risk and security from geography,
23 urban studies, political science and anthropology and align this with FPE work. In the fourth,
24 we explore, through our ethnographic style, repeated qualitative interviews, the everyday
25 negotiations with water infrastructures as they reveal gendered embodiments of risk and
26 insecurity in the public and private spheres. Relatedly, we underscore that in the Pakistani
27 context, the operations of the public sphere and the home are often blurred. Certain scholars
28 (Datta 2012) illustrate how experiences of precarity in the public sphere leads men and women
29 to redefine the moral boundaries of the home and the outside, a particularly relevant point to our
30 findings concerning women's experiences of water shortages. Finally, we ask how Karachi's
31 experience with water scarcity has implications for cities more generally.
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51 **Methods**

52 We draw on data generated from our 3-year research project from 2013 to 2016, where we
53 investigated the material and discursive drivers of gender roles and their relevance to configuring
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3 violent geographies among 7 working class neighborhoods in Karachi (Anwar, et al., 2016). We
4 undertook 1750 household questionnaire surveys, 30 in-depth qualitative interviews, media
5 monitoring in major newspapers and online media, and key informant interviews. We also used
6 participant photography (with 8 residents), where we encouraged them to take pictures and share
7 stories about their lives along the themes of ‘fears, comforts, irritants, sadness and happiness’;
8 some of which is presented here. The primary research was led by the authors who managed 5
9 research assistants (RAs) who engaged with neighborhoods on an almost daily basis and weekly
10 observation and reflection sessions were held with the RAs to discuss their findings as well as
11 their positionalities. The authors selected this approach, aware of their positionality as academics
12 and ‘outsiders’, and worked with RAs who represented a range of similar socio-economic and
13 ethnic backgrounds to the studied neighborhoods (for a detailed discussion on this, see Anwar
14 and Viqar, 2017).

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24 According to the 2017 Census, Karachi’s population is 16 million. We studied
25 neighborhoods in three districts: Orangi Town in Karachi West; Bin Qasim Town in Malir; and
26 Jamshed Town in Karachi Central (Figure 1). In selecting the districts, the objective was to
27 capture Karachi’s ongoing expansion due to migration, urban sprawl and political-administrative
28 readjustments, and to locate the social geography of water supply. This produced a nuanced
29 understanding of how uneven water supply is in relation to the city’s expanding periphery, where
30 informal settlements are experiencing extreme disruption.
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38 **[Insert Figure 1 here]**
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41 **Situating Karachi’s Water Provisioning**

42 Karachi’s social geography is intimately tied with its water provisioning and inequality is
43 inseparable from the city’s fluvial contours. The population needs 1000 million gallons of
44 water, daily, but supply is around half. Increased private speculation, hoarding and monopoly
45 over water rights by a so-called ‘water mafia’ together with the impact of droughts, degraded
46 infrastructure, and an intransigent water utility – the Karachi Water & Sewage Board (KWSB) -
47 have led to city-wide water scarcity and contamination, with disproportionate effects on
48 informal settlements. Karachi is marked by a division between an urban center and an
49 expansive periphery that has grown extensively throughout the second half of the twentieth
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3 century (Anwar, 2014). While Karachi's increasingly vertical urban core is hardly the epitome
4 of uninterrupted water supply, its horizontal periphery, marked by the expansion of dense,
5 single-story settlements, is afflicted by chronic water shortages.
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8 Karachi's decrepit water infrastructure contributes to water scarcity for poor and rich
9 populations, but to differing degrees. Experiences are further differentiated by uneven
10 geographies of water provisioning within informal settlements. For instance, in Orangi Town
11 (Karachi West), residents experience water supply in markedly different ways compared with
12 Jamshed Town (Karachi Central), thus producing uneven outcomes, especially for the poor. For
13 residents in the working-class neighborhood Ghaziabad, Orangi, erratic water supply ranges
14 from no supply at all, to broken supply with water coming once or twice in a fortnight for 30-60
15 minutes. Umar, a 42-year man from Ghaziabad laments:
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24 "Is this not psychological violence? A man comes home from work after a long
25 day of hardship and then he finds there is no water in his house. Even his family
26 has spent the whole day at home, worrying about water"
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30 Water scarcity is caused by a lack of supply on the KWSB's end or illegal extraction of
31 water before it reaches households. Certain authors (Ahmed and Sohail, 2003) note that since its
32 establishment in 1983, KWSB's water provisioning has remained inadequate, mainly due to
33 increasing distances of informal settlements from the mains and ineffective pumping
34 procedures. Climate change is also transforming provisioning arrangements. Variable and
35 reduced precipitation, longer droughts, depleting water reservoirs and an aging, insufficient
36 piped network have triggered particularly precarious supply. The main piped supply for Orangi
37 Town, the Hub Dam, experienced near zero water level from 1995 to 2003 due to a drought.
38 Moreover, in 2015, an unprecedented five-day heat wave, with daily temperatures of 45 °C in
39 Karachi, killed over 2000 people - mostly poor and elderly. The combination of a 'heat island
40 effect' and water scarcity apparently exacerbated the impacts (GOP, 2015). NGOs and federal
41 agencies have since assisted Karachi's local government to mitigate risk and promote 'human
42 security' through capacity-building programs, but this is interpreted by our respondents as
43 insignificant in the backdrop of insufficient government investment into water provisioning.
44 Nadra, from Mansor Nagar, Orangi Town raised this as a priority issue,
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3 “Masses do not even get water. We pay the tanker for water and we also pay a
4 monthly 200 PKR bill to the KWSB. Women have also protested for water. The
5 day the protest was held, water supply was resumed for half an hour and then it
6 stopped. How much can we fight? Men stay silent because of the fear that they
7 might get killed.”
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11 The KWSB serves approximately 90% of Karachi’s population through pipelines or
12 tankers. The remaining 10% depend on groundwater. With a deepening budget deficit (Maher
13 and Ilyas, 2015), and only 30% of the city paying water bills, the KWSB’s financial hollowing
14 out mirrors its deteriorating technical capacity whereby faulty cables, broken generators,
15 decaying pipes, pumps and propellers signal an incapacitated utility. It is little surprise that the
16 poorest service is experienced in peripheral settlements. In Orangi, residents complain that they
17 have always faced poor, but worsening water supply; nonetheless many felt pressured to pay
18 KWSB bills. While the private water tanker service was meant to be a ‘troubleshooting tool’
19 for the KWSB, it is now perceived to literally rule the network.
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29 *Securitizing ‘illegal’ water and gendered lives*

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31 Our interviews and observations led us to consider how water was being securitized, the shifting
32 logics of that security, and what theoretical work might inform our analysis of these processes.
33 Whether designated legal or illegal, water is brokered by the state. Karachi’s so-called ‘tanker-
34 hydrant mafia’ or ‘water mafia’ comprises a constellation of actors that straddle the state/non-
35 state divide. Evidently, tanker operators (Figure 2) create artificial crises in alliance with KWSB
36 officials, to expand their business potential. A male respondent from Orangi took the below
37 photograph of an ‘illegal pump’ station and noted: “This is an artificially created water
38 shortage; there is no real shortage of water, just an active mafia.”
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46 **[Figure 2 here]**
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50 It would be straightforward to comprehend this dynamic in terms of an absent state and
51 an extant ‘water mafia’; an explanation that easily slides into the common trope of ‘state
52 failure’. Such a reading elides the securitization logics that condition access to water in Karachi.
53 Informed by Foucault’s ([1979] 1990) use of the term, we take ‘logics’ of security as a notion of
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3 discursive power that circulates and reconfigures state governance, with risk as a political
4 rationality that governs according to predictive calculations of future harm.

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6 This discursive power can be understood through KWSB-sanctioned water brokers as a
7 dominant provisioning pathway, which signals the messy entanglements of water-brokers and
8 state officials; drawing both into subversive forms of political agency and contingencies based
9 on quiet negotiations (Anwar, 2014; Fuller & Benei, 2012). With the ‘water-tanker-hydrant
10 mafia’s’ reach expanding, the KWSB is now primarily a bulk supplier, which has led to the
11 increased presence of local strongman or water-brokers in informal settlements, backed by
12 regionally powerful - and often violent - political parties such as the Muttahida Qaumi
13 Movement (MQM). In the form of union councilors and valve men, local leaders, middlemen or
14 strongmen (note the gender dynamic), these figures play an important role in the financing of
15 new water supply schemes and timing water deliveries through private tankers. The valve men
16 are perceived as manipulative, predatory, opportunistic figures who take advantage of the
17 community’s goodwill; as gaming the system and acting deviously and illegally, while the
18 vulnerable, especially women, children and those with disabilities, are considered passive
19 victims of this corrupt masculine force. These actors constitute an essential albeit fraught
20 conduit for the flow and control of water in Karachi.

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22 A feminist informed interrogation of the security state locates these actors within
23 gendered and militarized practices that shape water provisioning in Karachi’s informal
24 settlements. Such settlements are often seen as threats to political stability; as *risks to* the city
25 but, as we show, contain large concentrations of men and women living *at risk*. This feminist
26 lens allows us to remain mindful of the gendered politics of security; the realities of which
27 support a statist brand of patriarchal security. In Karachi, a patriarchal stereotype of the militant
28 or terrorist-controlled water supply is wielded with the aim of upholding statist national security
29 concerns that undermine women’s and men’s daily security in water provisioning whereby
30 everyday issues of risk and violence appear politically inconsequential.

31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 *Water, Terrorism and Security in Karachi*

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52 Certain scholars (Goldstein 2010; Masco 2010; Lutz 2014; Pain 2014) describe the 21st
53 century as an age of multiple, overlapping crises involving conflict, human insecurity, climate
54 change, capital, law and institutions; an age in which everyday violence has been normalized in
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3 relation to the ‘war on terror’. Masco pinpoints the Cold War era as shaping a specific security
4 concept: nuclear fear elevated to the core instrument of state power. This vision of national
5 security – which Enloe astutely calls masculinized and statist - rivals the human security notion
6 of danger associated with environmental risk, scarcity, even disaster. Ultimately, the image of
7 the armed ‘terrorist’ trumps global warming as a threat to human existence. The concept
8 ‘human security’ is also historically contingent: starting with the Cold War end, it emerged
9 from the human development paradigm by bringing the human rights agenda into development
10 discourse (Gupta 2015).
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17 Pakistan’s security discourse since Independence in 1947, has been defined largely in
18 terms of a sovereignty obsessed state with the power to shape citizens’ fates, and a security
19 agenda that goes back to the inscription of war between India and Pakistan (Jalal, 1990).
20 Prominent are the actions and agendas of military generals and an administrative machinery
21 during Marshal Ayub Khan’s military rule (1958-1969) when Karachi’s slums were cleared to
22 resettle the urban poor (Daechsel, 2011). Sovereignty, territorial integrity and ‘national
23 security’ shaped Pakistan’s nuclearization. Since 9/11, national security concerns have
24 dovetailed with the complex dynamics of the ‘war on terror’, complicating urban governance,
25 especially related to Karachi’s water provisioning. As the conceptual power of ‘war’ overrides
26 all concerns, nuclear threat organizes politics and experience with powerful effects on security
27 culture. Hence, we live in an age where the cultural landscape of security is dominated by risk
28 and premediation, a process in which the future has already been mediated by every possible
29 aspect of war. Security premediation denotes “the discursive economies through which terrorist
30 futures are imagined” (De Goede 2008:158).
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41 The state’s response for managing Karachi’s water crisis has unfolded via three
42 interlocking logics: First, the Supreme Court’s discourse of water as a basic citizenship ‘right’
43 (Dawn, 2018), where failure of provision creates human security risks to the health and
44 prosperity of Karachi’s residents; Second - and much more powerful - a ‘securitized water’
45 logic to contain terrorists/mafias who allegedly control valves, hydrants and tankers. A third
46 logic perpetuated through NGO projects is the ‘human right’ to water - a concept that has been
47 collapsed into state-led or sanctioned projects that avoid dealing with the systemic causes of
48 water scarcity. Despite commitment from environmental NGOs, journalists and donors, the
49 state’s response to systemic issues, like failing to adapt to climate change, has been piecemeal at
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3 best (Herald, 2015; Lead, 2016; CDKN, 2015). Climate change has become a convenient
4 narrative for urban water scarcity - especially in working-class and informal settlements - as it
5 masks endemic problems of weak municipal water governance and accountability, and
6 significant impacts of corporate activities on Karachi's groundwater resources, especially sand
7 mining and extraction by mineral water companies.
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11 The presence of informal water brokers in Karachi has activated state anxieties about
12 security as they are seen to operate 'outside' of the state apparatus and collude with terrorists.
13 This is framed by the state - sometimes - as a 'human security' issue: risking individual citizens'
14 abilities to access their basic needs. Literature in political ecology and critical security studies
15 finds that when governments pursue human security through natural resource-related
16 infrastructures, their underlying aims are "imbued with statist logics" (Fagan, 2017). In
17 Pakistan, government narratives on water supply for human security arise in dialogues with
18 multi-lateral donors and civil society, but practically the logic underpinning the state's response
19 appears much more grounded in national security concerns. Noteworthy are media and
20 'security' experts who envision possible terrorist futures. In Karachi security premediation
21 fosters a landscape of securitized water as the state endeavors to eradicate water mafias,
22 criminals and terrorists who allegedly control water supply.
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32 De Goede emphasizes that, unlike risk, premediation is about enabling action now by
33 drawing on an imaginable future. This is precisely how judicial action concerning the
34 eradication of 'water mafias' to enable the 'right to water' works in Karachi, by emphasizing a
35 call to action in the present. Besides, judicial action intersects with and amplifies the national
36 security logic of securitized water as it provides succor to the masculinized, elite Ranger's
37 efforts to eradicate mafias and terrorists. Since 2015, Supreme Court-backed paramilitary
38 operations have shut down alleged 'illegal' hydrants in peripheral settlements like Orangi Town
39 and attempted to 'break' the 'water mafia' (Dawn 2017). Regarding the city's periphery, the
40 media reports the water mafia are 'militants', a greater threat because billions of rupees earned
41 from illegal water are being channeled into terrorist activities in Karachi (Tribune, 2015a).
42 While the city-wide paramilitary operation was initiated in 2013 to bring down violence,
43 particularly in connection with terrorism and criminal activities that also involve the MQM, by
44 extending the operation's remit to water, the state's discourse has blurred the boundary between
45 'water mafia' and 'militant'.
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3 As we deliberate the relationship between security, risk, gender and water provisioning,
4 we take cue from Amar's (2009) and Enloe's (2013) gendered conception of state governance
5 that critique the state's power to rescue and police; notably of patriarchal security states like
6 Pakistan, which not only sit on an authoritarian-democratic spectrum but have been at the
7 frontline of the 'war on terror'. Pakistan has been the United States' main ally since the war on
8 Al Qaeda and other terrorist outfits in 2001. With time, Pakistan's role has become more
9 important due to threats in Afghanistan that have expanded into Pakistan (Siddiq, 2011). As
10 militancy threats peaked in the later 2000s, even under the civilian dispensation, the military
11 assumed control of the national plan to address terrorism, largely without civilian oversight
12 (Rumi, 2015). Military operations were launched in Pakistan's northern regions, bordering
13 Afghanistan, and in Karachi where informal settlements have been a source of constant media
14 speculation. The anxieties of an exodus of terrorists and/or Taliban invading the peripheral belts
15 has kept alive a sensation of fear (Anwar 2014).

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17 While the paramilitary operation brought down levels of non-state violence and crime in
18 Karachi (Ur-Rehman, 2015), the remit of state violence has expanded. As the discourse of
19 terrorist-militant dovetails with water mafia, the specter of threat is amplified. A senior KWSB
20 official notes that the paramilitary Rangers are the only force that can, "abolish these water
21 hydrants and underground network of water pipelines for the city's peace." (Tribune 2015b).
22 Ironically, more people in Karachi have died of water contamination and scarcity (human
23 security issues) than terrorism. The Supreme Court's own militant rhetoric of shutting down
24 illegal hydrants "at any cost" (Tribune 2018) to ensure the "right to water" for citizens, because
25 the "water crisis issue in Pakistan is turning into a bomb" (Samaa 2018) and the "court will
26 solve the problem" (Tribune, 2018), has boosted the Rangers to unilaterally eliminate water
27 supply threats.

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29 This shifting security logic has had distressing effects on socio-economically and
30 environmentally vulnerable populations in geographies where KWSB supply is absent. In the
31 periphery, the legally authorized closure of illegal hydrants has exacerbated uncertainty and
32 constraints on household water rationing and increased the price of private tankers. Federal and
33 provincial authorities, even the media, see this as beneficial to rooting out corruption and
34 improving security, but within targeted informal settlements, there has been intensified
35 exclusion and embodied hardships despite the curtailment of crime and violence. We elaborate

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3 later, illustrating through our findings how: in their search for water, ordinary men's and
4 women's lives are put at risk, even as provisioning is securitized to mitigate risk associated with
5 'illegal' or terrorist-controlled water. The experiential dimensions of risk manifest in the
6 frustrations, grievances and anxieties over the search, distribution and use of potable water, as
7 these involve residents' gender expectations related to local cultures and livelihood strategies.
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11 The third security logic – the 'human right' to water – although affirmed by Pakistan with
12 the United Nations, has been applied predominantly by civil society through small-scale water
13 projects and advocacy. For example, WaterAid Pakistan held a 'Dialogue on Prioritising WASH
14 in Political Parties Manifestos 2018'. Perhaps as a result, the Pakistan's People's Party did
15 include water as a human right in its manifesto. Nonetheless, their practical politics demonstrate
16 a securitized water logic. During the opening winter session of the National Assembly in 2018,
17 a debate on water shortages between PPP and other parties circled around the water tanker
18 'mafia' and the 'civil war' over water in Karachi (Wasim, 2018). Further, NGO projects cannot
19 operate in isolation from political actors and the 'water mafia'. Permissions and patronage are
20 necessary to be able to operate. This was tragically demonstrated by the 2013 assassination of
21 Orangi Pilot Project Director, Perveen Rahman. It has been alleged through investigations and
22 media reports that her killing was to shut-down her mapping of water and land grabs in Orangi
23 Town (Syed Ali, 2017).
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36 *Water, Security and Urban Risk*

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38 Scholars (Anand, 2017; Graham et al., 2013; Bjorkman, 2014) writing on water
39 infrastructures in South Asia, note the everyday disruptions involved in negotiating water
40 shortages underpinned by the increasing volatility and unpredictability of pipes in cities like
41 Mumbai. Akin to Mumbai and New Delhi, Karachi's residents obtain water either by claiming
42 rights through procedural channels, or through informal and illegal processes — theft,
43 corruption, or political negotiation. Bjorkman, underlines that an unhelpful fantasy is that
44 *someone* is in control of water access - whether an organization like the KWSB, the Rangers,
45 terrorists or the water mafia. The realities of water infrastructures in South Asian megacities,
46 she emphasizes, are more complex, multi-faceted and increasingly opaque.
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53 A feminist analytical lens is critical to understanding the complexities of urban lives and
54 governance (Butcher and Maclean, 2018). For our analysis, it elucidates how water
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3 infrastructures are deployed and securitized by the state, and how women and men experience
4 and negotiate water (in)security in Karachi. FPE emphasizes the relationships men and women
5 have with water in a specific political economic context, which leads to different material
6 outcomes (Davidson and Stratford 2007; Cleaver 1998). As we show, at the household,
7 community and state levels, decisions around how to deal with water supply are made by men
8 and informed by patriarchal visions of managing risk. As emphasized by Enloe (2013), using
9 the example of policing: different forms of masculinities can be inculcated within a specific
10 context - which may compete for resources and power but simultaneously reinforce masculinity
11 as a governing principle. This 'game of masculinities' places women at the bottom of the
12 hierarchy, thus most exposed to risk.
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20 Certain scholars highlight the gendered embodiment of water scarcities and
21 contaminations, leading to psychological and physical suffering for working-class women
22 (Sultana 2009). Others call for an intersectional FPE, demonstrating how gender overlaps with
23 other social identity markers to impact relative positions of power for different women and men
24 viz-a-viz water (Mollet and Faria 2013). We bring an intersectional lens to our analysis,
25 considering the overlaps of gender, ethnicity and age; illustrating that overlapping systems of
26 discrimination are critical constructors of everyday experiences of risk and (in)security.
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32 Bringing paramilitary Rangers into the broader schema of managing water supply in
33 Karachi exemplifies an instance of security premeditation in a 9/11 context, where the control of
34 an uncertain water future is sought by the judiciary, the media and the security state. Poignantly,
35 premediation has become a human security disaster, disrupting ordinary citizens' daily lives and
36 feeding feelings of insecurity in a landscape where histories of violence persist, and where
37 informal water provisioning systems – now destroyed - have long been relied upon. Despite the
38 state's efforts to designate terrorism as the ultimate existential threat, there has been increasing
39 scientific evidence of the effects of climate change on water shortages. Pakistan is predicted to
40 become a water scarce country, with declining per capita water availability and overall
41 environmental insecurity (Mustafa et al., 2013).
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50 Hidden within these numbers are acute security issues that the Pakistani state has faced –
51 from debilitating floods, heat waves, storms, to sectarian violence and the killing fields of post-
52 9/11 suicide bombers. In Karachi, these security issues have coalesced with other concerns,
53 from extrajudicial killings to criminal violence and extortion whereby the 'writ of the state' is
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3 routinely undermined. Hence, in Karachi, histories of violence and military interventions have
4 produced an enduring fear culture. In Karachi's informal settlements, risk management is part of
5 a broader shift in how futures are imagined, especially in relation to water as it intersects with
6 the imperatives of state security (Amar 2009; Masco 2010; Enloe 2013).
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10 As the logics of securitized water, the judicial right to water and human rights intersect,
11 effects on ground are devastating. In June 2015, just after the five-day heat wave, Nusrat, a 25-
12 year-old housewife from Ghaziabad, angrily described how her household's dependence on
13 private water tankers had been disrupted due to the Ranger's operations:
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17 My children can't bathe, I can't cook or clean, can't wash clothes; our lives have
18 come to a standstill! You can't imagine our anger. The line has no water and we
19 can't find a tanker. We have depended on water tankers supplied by the water
20 mafia. But now there are hardly any tankers. Ever since the Rangers operations
21 started, the water supply has worsened.
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26 A heatwave returned in 2018, but with a lesser death toll of 65. Since 2015, NGOs and
27 federal agencies have been assisting local governments in heatwave management plans, to
28 mitigate risk. Implementation so far appears to have focused on citizen capacity building to
29 navigate heatstroke risk- rather than ensuring more equitable delivery of water and electricity.
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33 *Gendered Insecurities, Everyday Risks*

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35 According to Siraj Bhai, who runs an NGO – Technical Training Resource Center
36 (TTRC) - in Ghaziabad, Orangi, the Rangers “cracked down against illegal hydrants to demolish
37 the ‘water mafia’. But this strategy has created a new set of problems. Public water supply
38 doesn't work. How can ordinary people get water now?” In endeavoring to securitize Karachi's
39 water from ‘terrorists’ and ‘mafias’, the paramilitary operation disrupted longstanding
40 neighborhood water practices. The stories of our female respondents exemplify the increasing
41 anxieties, struggles and risks involved in managing everyday life around securitized water.
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47 Nusrat elaborated:
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49 Nowadays if tankers deliver water, we ask, where is the water coming from? We
50 know the hydrants are shut. A woman who lives a few lanes away from my
51 house, her youngest child got sick; severe gastrointestinal sickness after a water
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3 tanker delivery. Later she learnt it was waste-water from an ice factory. She had
4 to pay expensive medical bills and seek help from neighbors, borrow money.
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8 The loss of her normal routine forced Nusrat to mitigate risk as she struggled to locate
9 water. With TTRC's help, she formed a savings group to construct a borehole in the
10 neighborhood lane. The group now has 33 women who took an interest-free loan from TTRC to
11 build it. But this risk management strategy was hardly a boon. When the first borehole was
12 constructed at 125 feet, the water came up bitter. The next at 82 feet brought water fit only for
13 washing clothes and mopping. Through conversations with respondents, we learned that women
14 have mobilized to contest local officials about water services through protests at local
15 government offices. When we asked Shaista if she or female family members had participated,
16 she hesitated. Her gestures emphasized that she considered protests a risk to women's safety. Her
17 explanation resembled similar elucidations from mothers, fathers and brothers in all
18 neighborhoods:
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27 Everyone is not the same; all households bear sons and daughters. Where will the
28 daughters go? I have a daughter and a daughter-in-law; if I participate in a public water
29 protest, I can't leave them alone in the house because it is not safe. In any case, my
30 husband and sons won't allow us to go outside for such reasons. Such actions would
31 undermine our daughters' reputations. What would our neighbors say? Young women
32 can't be seen outside wandering alone.
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38 Shaista's response demonstrates the enduring process of risk calculation over women's
39 security inside and outside the home, where inscriptions of patriarchy permeate the moral and
40 sexual regulation of women (Toor 2014; Shaheed 2010). Interestingly, such a calculation did not
41 pertain to her daughters' 'human security': when we probed the cause for concern, Shaista
42 explained that given the unregulated nature of public space, the major cause of anxiety was the
43 threat against maintaining proper sexual conduct; young women's' presence in public might lead
44 to transgressive social behavior, like pre-marital relations. The risk is around violating social
45 norms of appropriate inter-gender relations in the public space - especially women's 'purity'. But
46 anxieties around risk and danger concerning water also involve men. Risk conditions the
47 relations between residents and designated water-brokers or 'valve men', especially male
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3 into the private by displacing responsibility onto women. It is precisely the issue of deviation
4 from socially prescribed norms around ‘female’ and ‘male’ roles and mobilities that the nexus
5 between water provisioning and everyday risk emerges. When women deviate from the private
6 sphere, in taking on water procurement, the interplay with patriarchal cultural norms around
7 female mobility and ‘purity’, can put them at risk. Hareem, 18, from a neighborhood in District
8 Malir, narrates:
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13 We don’t have water and need money for this. My husband gave me *my* mobile
14 phone and asked me to give it to my friend Gul Bahar [so she can sell it for
15 water]. I gave the phone to Gul Bahar, but she kept it with her for four hours.
16 My husband got angry why it was taking her so long (he slapped me twice). Gul
17 Bahar returned the phone without selling it. My husband is jobless. We don’t
18 have a single drop of water in the tank. I can only borrow a tiny quantity of
19 water from my parent’s household. If I take extra, my Father will break my leg.
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26 Constant fear and risk calculation in accessing water also exemplifies how gender
27 expectations blur the assumed boundaries between the public sphere and the home. Many
28 women and men described the impacts of water scarcity as *zehni tashhadud* (psychological
29 burden), not only because of the lack of support in a crisis, but how it challenges gendered roles
30 and expectations. Our respondents told us that domestic violence between men and women
31 increased during water scarce times, and they often articulated it as an outcome of *zehni*
32 *tashhadud*.
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42 *Risking loyalties*

43 Analogous to cities like Mumbai and Delhi, the involvement of political parties in
44 Karachi’s water supply constantly embroils residents in power struggles to control the streets and
45 neighborhoods to ensure vote banks (Anand, 2017; Graham et al., 2013; Bjorkman, 2014).
46 Social and political power structures are fundamentally reproduced and used through water, thus
47 enmeshing men and women in multiple forms of risk. There is clear awareness that water is a
48 political issue. Jamshed, 32, from Raees Amrohi, Orangi, recounted: “There is no water issue. It
49 is all artificial; just created for money-making... Whenever Pakistan People’s Party is in power,
50 *ghunda gardi* (criminal activity) is at its peak.” However, it is generally known that Orangi is
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3 under the overall patronage of the MQM. The expression of support or opposition for local
4 political actors should be understood as a discourse more than anything else. Discourses of
5 blame, corruption, responsibility, are deployed strategically to ensure residents' survival in a
6 climate fraught with risk and shifting security logics, where compromised loyalties can have fatal
7 consequences. Expressing loyalties also provides opportunities to negotiate water access.
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11 As demonstrated in the valve man case, the forceful interplay between groups is enforced
12 and played out through masculinized notions of policing public spaces (Enloe 2013). This creates
13 further opportunity to police women's mobilities, as men see it within their remit to ensure
14 women behave properly and are 'secure' in public. This becomes the most hindering experience
15 in women's lives, preventing them from accessing education, social life, even clean water
16 without facing physical and verbal threats. While FPE work recognizes that water supply
17 schemes often misunderstand restricted female mobilities (Sultana, 2009); there is a gap in
18 investigating how changing urban female mobilities for water supply are shaped by perceptions
19 of risk, and importantly 'intersectionality'. In these working-class neighborhoods, only women
20 of a certain age (deemed too old for sexual relations) can navigate the streets for water; most
21 other women are left at home to deal with the 'undrinkable', 'smelly', 'dirty', water that comes
22 sporadically through the pipes or tankers. This is distinct from middle class or elite women who
23 can take a car or send drivers. Gender discrimination, intersecting with class discrimination leads
24 to a compounded form of risk and (in)security; it is not the working-class men that must drink,
25 cook and bathe in this water throughout the day, as they are free to roam outside.
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39 *Mitigating risks, gambling futures*

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41 Respondents repeatedly described living in 'unsanitary' or 'filthy' conditions at home as
42 *zehni tashhadud*. Following certain FPE authors' (Truelove, 2011; Sultana, 2009) findings,
43 women literally embody the disadvantages and inequalities of water scarcity. This was
44 demonstrated across neighborhoods, but in Mansoor Nagar, on the outer boundary of Orangi
45 Town, there is a more intensified landscape of insecurity. The hills flanking the settlement
46 provide cover for illicit activities and opportunities for surveillance, whether by the (male
47 dominated) Rangers, police, criminals or political groups. Consequently, people living in this
48 locality, especially women, express a greater sense of danger. The location ensures that basic
49 services like water and sewerage find their way there last, or never. This is convenient for the
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3 state narrative that expanding informal settlements and illegal ground water tapping are the
4 problem behind inadequate supply to certain localities, rather than the actual ‘cherry-picking’ of
5 wealthier neighborhoods for supply.
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8 Cherry-picking materialises through the exclusion of minority community neighborhoods
9 who are not deemed citizens by the state, and hence unworthy of services. For example, Hassan,
10 his wife Nadra and his mother live in a house located at the end of a steep road that goes up one
11 of Mansoor Nagar’s hills. Despite living in Karachi since 1974, and residing in a well-furnished,
12 newly constructed two-room house, they remain at risk by their exclusion. A state of contingency
13 has permeated all their attempts to gain access to citizenship rights and mitigate risks – the two
14 most important are access to identity cards and infrastructure, both of which are denied by the
15 state. Due to their economic and citizenship status, they are also subject to extortion attempts by
16 police and local criminals.
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24 But most of all, it is water scarcity that comes up again and again. Efforts to locate water
25 embroil the family in constant battles with councilors, politicians, valve men and private tanker
26 operators. These interactions result in hope and disillusionment. After many promises from
27 politicians, Hasan and Nadra subsequently started investing their capital and taking out loans on
28 other things, like house improvements and making payments on their land. But they found
29 themselves in trouble when none of the promises came through and, instead, were left with a
30 huge debt. Efforts to access water become part of the overall calculation of risk and what
31 essentially becomes a process of gambling with their future.
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39 **Conclusion**

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41 In this article, our discussion on water security has served as a proxy for security more broadly.
42 We have endeavored to show that survival in Karachi’s informal settlements in the periphery is
43 not just a struggle to locate water, but a condition of daily calculation of risk and tradeoffs viz-a-
44 viz gendered insecurities. The search for water combines with experiences of everyday life that
45 are conditioned by four interlocking security logics enforced by the state and non-state actors and
46 affecting all facets of urban life. The search for water begins as a calculated risk and often
47 transpires into an urgent need, which puts people in danger in different ways according to the
48 imperatives of security. Importantly, risk has a very gendered nature, and it is women that
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3 experience it both in the home – by embodying water scarcity and absorbing male frustrations –
4 and outside – by risking their public reputation and physical security.
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7 On the other hand, it is men that face public sphere risks where they are expected to
8 procure water in often violent political-economic contexts. Living in risky zones conditions their
9 expectations of the future; everything is incomplete and can quickly become violent. In the
10 Pakistani state's response to define whom is worthy of protection from violence and risk, and
11 whom is not, it is the low-income, informal settlements that tend to suffer. In the state's attempts
12 to both regularize basic services, and deal with urban 'security', it again tends to be these
13 residents that suffer, again in gendered ways. Importantly, regardless of neighborhood or gender,
14 the issue of water scarcity is repeatedly emphasized as a driver of both psychological and
15 physical dangers. Hence, the intertwined nature of water scarcity, gender and security in urban
16 Pakistan.
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24 The pressure of living in an environment with water scarcity not only impedes upon
25 peoples' abilities to live a secure life, but also to maintain a sustainable livelihood. These
26 dynamics call into question the subordination of citizenship rights to the political rationality of
27 'state security' in the context of Pakistan's protracted security predicament in the new
28 millennium. How do we understand 'security' in an environment where people's vulnerability
29 can be manipulated and traded for political advantage, and where household or individual assets
30 are never enough to change anything? Where there are constant alerts for possible threats? We
31 contend that external readings of the nexus between water, security and gender in Pakistan's
32 cities – and in other cities of the Global South - lack this much needed understanding of the
33 contextual realities and fail to ask these kinds of key questions. We believe such questions are of
34 overriding importance not only for understanding the major transformations underway, but also
35 the related implications for urban citizenship and democracy in 21st century Pakistan and in
36 South Asia.
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46 The tools for surmounting water scarcity are diametrically opposed to those informing
47 war on the 'militant' or terrorist or mafia. A response to water scarcity and ecological crisis
48 requires a new kind of political cooperation, an innovative technological change and a shared
49 vision of ecological sustainability combined with a willingness to substitute ordinary citizens'
50 concerns for national interests. Rather than sustaining securitized water, engaging water scarcity
51 requires a new form of local and national governance in Pakistan. Fundamentally, the
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3 imbrications of securitization and water governance are so profound as to block thought and
4 action, allowing the security implications of water scarcity to elude the security state. In
5 Pakistan, security remains embedded within a narrow concept of threat and national advantage,
6 which are legacies of the Cold War and postcolonial nation building. But the lessons of water
7 scarcity in urban Pakistan are that more profound changes are at hand, and that securing water
8 requires nothing less than a post-national vision of the Pakistani state.
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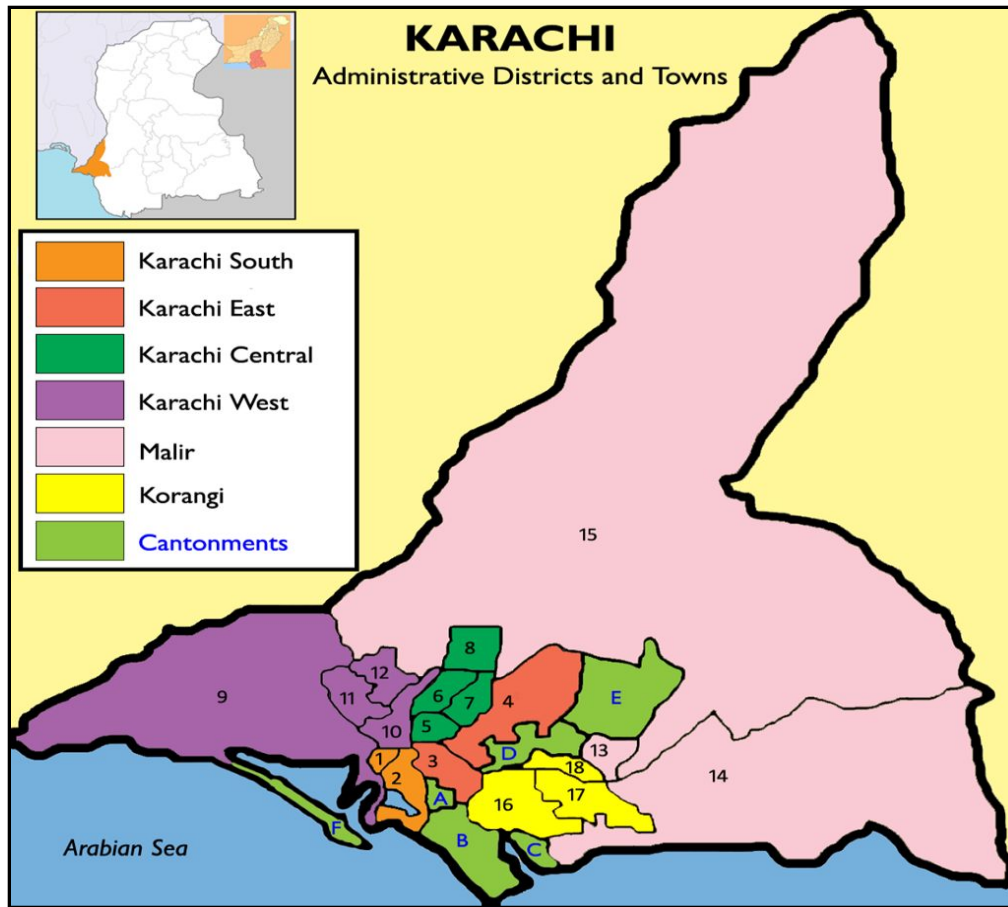


Figure 1

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Figure 2

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Figure 3