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## City profile

## Lahore, Pakistan – Urbanization challenges and opportunities

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## ABSTRACT

Lahore is the second largest metropolitan area in Pakistan, and the capital city of Punjab province. The city hosts various historical monuments, buildings and gardens. A walled city during the Mughal era (1524–1752) and British colonial rule, the city has grown as a hub of commerce and trade in the region. The built-up area almost doubled from 1999 to 2011 and is expected to grow at a similar or even higher rate, hence increasing pressure on the city administration in terms of managing infrastructure and squatter settlements. Challenges such as lack of integrated urban development policies, unchecked urban growth, overlapping jurisdictions of land governing authorities and ineffective building control further aggravate the situation. Despite the recent positive developments (like the provision of improved commuting facilities through Metro and Orange Line transport systems, and restoration of the walled city), Lahore still needs dynamic and structured institutions with technical, legal and regulatory support for managing the ever-increasing population. Planners need to develop feasible, realistic and practical urban development plans to ensure integrated infrastructural and socioeconomic development in the city. Additionally, utilizing the underexploited potential of tourism and knowledge-driven businesses can help boost the economy and transform Lahore into a modern city.

## 1. Introduction

Lahore, known as the “cultural heart of Pakistan”, has a long history of more than 2000 years. The city had been ruled by the Mughal Empire, and later came under the British Regime in the Indian Sub-continent. After independence, Lahore city became part of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, near the eastern border shared with India. The city exhibits a number of architectural buildings, mosques, churches, temples, tombs, parks and gardens which make it an attractive tourist destination. The city has grown many-fold and now comprises the walled city, and the adjacent urban and sub-urban areas mostly to the south and southeast. It is now a bustling metropolis offering numerous commercial and trade opportunities; the city is becoming a hub for the technology sector in the country. The city's gross domestic product (GDP) by purchasing power parity (PPP) was estimated at \$40 billion in 2008, with GDP growth rate projected at 5.6% for 2008–25 (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2009). These developments, however, are instigating pressure on urban administrations for providing infrastructure facilities.

Pakistan is the 36th largest country in terms of area (around 881,913 sq. km), and is ranked as the sixth most populous country in the world (around 207.8 million people in 2017) (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017; The World Bank, 2017). Alongside population growth,

the country faces an issue of rapid and unplanned urbanization since its independence in 1947 (primarily due to migration) which has seen a hike in the past decades (during the wars of 1965 and 1971 when Indian Muslims migrated from India to Pakistan, and migration of Afghans which began in the 1990s (Haider & Badami, 2010; Kugelman, 2013; Mustafa & Sawas, 2013). Migration, insecurity and economic necessity remain the main drivers of urbanization in the country. The population distribution in the country itself is unique; the largest province in terms of area (Balochistan) holds the smallest proportion of people, while the second largest province Punjab is the most populous among all provinces (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Lahore, the capital city of Punjab is the second largest metropolis of the country in terms of population (around 11 million people) (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Fig. 1 shows the locations of provinces and major cities in Pakistan, along with population distribution at district level.

This paper focuses on unveiling the challenges faced by the city administrations in enforcing urban development projects, building control and commercialization. It aims to speculate on future urban growth patterns and spatial restructuring, for controlled and sustainable development, by providing useful insights to policy makers.

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