



Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi

By Steve Inskeep

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From the host of NPR's *Morning Edition*, a deeply reported portrait of Karachi, Pakistan, a city that illuminates the perils and possibilities of rapidly growing metropolises all around the world.

In recent decades, the world has seen an unprecedented shift of people from the countryside into cities. As Steve Inskeep so aptly puts it, we are now living in the age of the "instant city," when new megacities can emerge practically overnight, creating a host of unique pressures surrounding land use, energy, housing, and the environment. In his first book, the co-host of *Morning Edition* explores how this epic migration has transformed one of the world's most intriguing instant cities: Karachi, Pakistan.

Karachi has exploded from a colonial port town of 350,000 in 1941 to a sprawling metropolis of at least 13 million today. As the booming commercial center of Pakistan, Karachi is perhaps the largest city whose stability is a vital security concern of the United States, and yet it is a place that Americans have frequently misunderstood.

As Inskeep underscores, one of the great ironies of Karachi's history is that the decision to divide Pakistan and India along religious lines in 1947 only unleashed deeper divisions within the city-over religious sect, ethnic group, and political party. In *Instant City*, Inskeep investigates the 2009 bombing of a Shia religious procession that killed dozens of people and led to further acts of terrorism, including widespread arson at a popular market. As he discovers, the bombing is in many ways a microcosm of the numerous conflicts that divide Karachi, because people wondered if the perpetrators were motivated by religious fervor, political revenge, or simply a desire to make way for new real estate in the heart of the city. Despite the violence that frequently consumes Karachi, Inskeep finds remarkable signs of the city's tolerance, vitality, and thriving civil society-from a world-renowned ambulance service to a socially innovative project that helps residents of the vast squatter neighborhoods find their own solutions to sanitation, health care, and education.

Drawing on interviews with a broad cross section of Karachi residents, from ER doctors to architects to shopkeepers, Inskeep has created a vibrant and nuanced portrait of the forces competing to shape the future of one of the world's fastest

growing cities.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The opening reads like a sophisticated thriller... It's in the ordinary fates of the ordinary people that {Inskeep} finds the extraordinary spirit of Karachi... Not many politicians read books in Karachi, but if they were to read one, let it be Instant City." -- Mohammed Hanif ("A Case of Exploding Mangoes"), Publishers Weekly

"Steve Inskeep has written a magnificent, engrossing book... His voice reflects the best traditions of politically alert travel writing, endowed with calm wisdom and curious empathy." - Steve Coll, author of *Ghost Wars* and *The Bin Ladens*

"Instant City is one of the best books ever written about Pakistan, with everything a combination of travelogue and political commentary should have.... This book will challenge everything you thought you knew about Pakistan and the region. Stop watching the damn news! Read this book now." -- Anis Shivani, Huffington Post

"Inskeep tells the story of a single violent and volatile day in the teeming streets of Karachi, Pakistan. In doing so, he reveals what is now at stake not just for Pakistan, or Asia, but for the human species. This is thoughtful, important work." - David Simon, creator of HBO's *The Wire* and *Treme* and author of *Homicide* and *The Corner*

"Inskeep writes with dramatic flair. He introduces us to the city through a day in its life and, because this is Karachi, the day is a violent one.. The sequence of events reads like a movie script...For those exasperated and puzzled by Pakistan, "Instant City" is an excellent introduction." - Akbar S. Ahmed, Washington Post

"The same set of mesmerizing storytelling skills, journalistic integrity, and downright courage that Inskeep brings us daily on NPR makes for a gripping read." -- Martha Raddatz, ABC News senior foreign affairs correspondent

"Inskeep seemingly looked at everything and talked to everyone. He finds the promise of Karachi, 'the most powerful force in the instant city; the desire of millions of people to make their lives just a tiny bit better than they were.' Passionate and compassionate reporting on an extraordinary city." - Kirkus Reviews

"Inskeep takes us on a colorful journey through a sprawling, terrifying city... Impressively structure and briskly told, Instant City is the Friday Night Lights of terrorism." -- Thomas E. Ricks, author of *Fiasco* and *The Gamble*

"Informative, ambitious, chaotic, and sometimes glorious... Plunging into the immensity of Karachi and its mushrooming population, Inskeep finds individuals selflessly dedicated to improving life in their beleaguered city." - Rayyan Al-Shawwaf, Christian Science Monitor

"Inskeep has captured the vibrant, violent, pulsating rhythms of Karachi with a near native sensibility. His *cinema verite* prose brings you the sights and smells of this dystopian megalopolis on which the future of

Pakistan may be riding." - Shuja Nawaz, author of *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within*

About the Author

Steve Inskeep is a co-host of *Morning Edition*, the most widely heard radio news program in the United States. After the September 11 attacks, he covered the war in Afghanistan, the hunt for Al Qaeda suspects in Pakistan, and the war in Iraq. He won a National Headliner Award for investigating a military raid that went wrong in Afghanistan and the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award for a series on conflict in Nigeria. This is his first book.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Elizabeth Ashton:

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Don Morris:

The reason why? Because this Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will jolt you with the secret it inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who also write the book in such wonderful way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning thoroughly. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this nowadays or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of positive aspects than the other book possess such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking means. So , still want to postpone having that book? If I had been you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

Jack Bemis:

Reading can called thoughts hangout, why? Because while you are reading a book specially book entitled Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi your brain will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in every aspect that maybe unidentified for but surely can become your mind friends. Imaging every word written in a book then become one web form conclusion and explanation in which maybe you never get previous to. The Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi giving you yet another experience more than blown away the mind but also giving you useful information for your better life in this particular era. So now let us explain to you the relaxing pattern this is your body and mind are going to be pleased when you are finished examining it, like winning a game. Do you want to try this extraordinary spending spare time activity?

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