

IFP DEMOCRATISATION AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE CLUSTER
COUNTRY CASE STUDY: PAKISTAN

MEDIA AND GOVERNANCE IN PAKISTAN:

A controversial yet essential relationship

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ACRONYMS

APNS	All Pakistan Newspapers Society
APP	Associated Press of Pakistan
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BLA	Baluchistan Liberation Army
BMDT	Baloch Musallah Difah Tanzeem
BNR&R	Bureau of National Research and Reconstruction
CCE	Centre for Civic Education Pakistan
CPNE	Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors
CRU	Conflict Research Unit
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
IMS	International Media Support
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISPR	Inter Services Public Relations
JI	Jamat-e-Islami
LFOs	Legal Framework Orders
NPT	National Press Trust
NRO	National Reconciliation Ordinance
NTM	Network Television Marketing
PATA	Provincially Administered Tribal Areas
PBA	Pakistan Broadcasters Association
PBC	Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation
PCOs	Provisional Constitutional Orders
PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
PFUJ	Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists
PIPS	Pak Institute for Peace Studies
PKR	Pakistani Rupees
PML	Pakistan Muslim League
PNEC	Pakistan Newspapers Editors Conference
PPL	Progressive Papers Limited
PPO	Press and Publication Ordinance
PPP	Pakistan Peoples Party
PTV	Pakistan Television Corporation
RAMBO	Regulatory Authority for Media Broadcast Organisations
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
SAFMA	South Asian Free Media Association
SCBA	Supreme Court Bar Association
SSR	Security sector reform
STN	Shalimar Recording & Broadcasting Company
TTP	Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan
VOA	Voice of America

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The historical evolution of the media in Pakistan underlines an interesting state of affairs, whereby all the original owners of print media were individuals with a background in journalism and often with a defined political/nationalist agenda. However, since the electronic media liberalisation of 2002, the situation has changed, with many media owners operating purely according to commercial interests and with no professional attachment to journalism.
- The intervention of the military in the media industry has been significant. Since the first military ruler in the country, Ayub Khan, took political power in a coup in 1958, the government has bought the political alliance of many of the most prominent journalists. This practice, which occurs across the board, with all the major news outlets affected, continues today.
- Probably one of the most relevant pieces of military legislation affecting the media has been the establishment and formalisation of a media regulatory authority. The Regulatory Authority for Media Broadcast Organisations (RAMBO), the predecessor of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), was established in 2000, and one of the four components of its mandate was to 'facilitate the devolution of responsibility and power to grassroots by improving the access to mass media at the local and community level'.¹ This was apparently in response to specific clauses in the country's constitution about decentralising broadcasting,² and it was probably also linked to the devolution process initiated by Musharraf in 2001.
- In spite of what was stated by the Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting,³ according to most of the people interviewed, 'Pakistan's mushrooming media' is not yet manifestly 'journeying towards maturity'. It actually suffers from an over-accelerated growth and its connected physiological pains. Rather than the perspective of within-reach maturity, what seems to emerge is a landscape filled with opportunistic and sensationalist journalism. Unrelenting growth, stimulated by commercial and political interests, seems to have marginalised the need to guarantee professional news reporting. Moreover, in this media wasteland, obscure powers have found a vast array of naive and for-sale journalists ready to produce or reproduce stories according to the dictates of their customers.
- "Freedom of the press" is, without a doubt, a popular, yet disputed slogan in Pakistan. While there seems to be general agreement that the issue has never been studied or understood properly, the question of whether there has ever been or presently is press freedom in Pakistan is probably beyond the point. Press freedom cannot be measured by the quantity of its outlets. Although there have always been journalists who have interpreted their mission in a purely professional manner, motivated by the need to report in an honest and unbiased way about a range of events in the country, the fact that Pakistani media has associated itself, from its inception, with the independence movement has heavily influenced its development ever since. What began as an ideological alliance between the first news editors and the political leaders of a country subsequently turned into a "promiscuous" relationship, where ideological convictions were replaced by power calculations. The media became embedded in the same system of political competition that led the country along the path of democratic emptiness. The nascent category of editor-owners understood at

1 International Media Support (IMS) (2009). *Between radicalisation and democratisation in an unfolding conflict: Media in Pakistan*. Denmark: IMS. p.18.

2 Article 159, Chapter 3, Part V (dealing with the relations between the federation and the provinces) mentions the possibility of the Provincial Government being entrusted with broadcasting and telecasting functions, though in principle these functions are limited essentially to the construction and financial management of transmitters and receiving apparatuses.

3 See Q. Z. Kaira. 'From information "warfare" to "welfare"', *Daily Times*, 19th January 2010.

once the huge benefits that could be accrued by actively participating in the political power struggles that were taking place at all levels of the country's administration. The principle of press freedom seemingly became irrelevant along the way. To a certain extent, it even became an obstacle to the individual plans and ambitions of many of these actors. Control and repressive measures against a competing newspaper could open the way to undisputed market dominance and commercial success. The situation in Pakistan today is probably not very different to the one just described. Although with the last elected civilian government there has been a (temporary?) halt to restrictive measures against the press, some of the media groups, their owners, editors, anchormen and even individual local journalists are probably still playing the same game by the same rules. That is, by providing covert support to a specific patron – military or civilian – there is the underlying assumption and expectation that the favour will be somehow reciprocated, whether in the form of commercial benefits (i.e. advertisements), regulatory concessions (i.e. licences to open new TV channels or other businesses unrelated to the media), or simply through personal endowments. Anybody trying to analyse the level of freedom of the media in Pakistan is faced with the almost impossible task of discerning whether a particular position taken in a newspaper or TV talk show has been determined by this hidden network of informal alliances and patronage systems or is the genuine result of intellectual and media independence.

- Throughout the years, the Pakistani government has had at its disposal and has consistently implemented a mix of measures to curb media freedom in the country. Those measures include: press laws (i.e. legislative measures); takeover of publishing houses or single media outlets (see example of Progressive Papers Limited (PPL); creation of own media groups (e.g. the National Press Trust (NPT)); direct control of news agencies (such as the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP)); distribution of newsprint quota; introduction of a press advice system and censorship; allocation of government advertisements; awards of cash prizes to selected writers and journalists (e.g. through the Writers' Guild); allocation of government positions to selected members of the press; dispensation of monetary and other benefits to influential journalists and opinion makers. The composition of the mix and the relative weight of each component has varied over the years, but its overall effectiveness does not seem to have decreased.
- In the Pakistani media, a majority of the outlets have, at least until very recently, endorsed and supported very conservative positions in society and it has often openly sided with the religious agenda of the Islamic militants. As outsiders, the ability to come to grips with this reality requires an open understanding and acceptance of the way that such an agenda has been structurally built in the same society since the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. General and dictator Zia ul-Haq was the chief creator of such a strategy, but, nowadays, as widely recognised, he could not have achieved the level of military penetration and success through the Taliban movement without the intense support of the US. A complex and pervasive propaganda apparatus was set up to promote this insurgency strategy and it should not be a surprise if the media, along the way, ended up internalising the main components of this propaganda strategy. An obvious consequence of these facts is that it is utterly naive to expect a complete shift in position from the media in a relatively short time span. The message that is being propagated at the moment – warning that no distinction should be made between Taliban fighting in Afghanistan or in Pakistan, and that all of them should be equally and decisively opposed – cannot be expected to be absorbed and acted upon from one day to the other. Besides the fact that regressive forces in society have meanwhile put up sophisticated means to counter such a propaganda offensive, ordinary people need time to adapt to the shift and embrace it in a conscious way. Much more is needed in terms of opening up the discussion with the broad public in a genuine way, and in highlighting the real terms of the ongoing conflict. The events that triggered the Swat offensive in April 2009 and a general increase in indiscriminate (suicide) bombings across the country may be just the beginnings of a potentially powerful change process in Pakistani society. And the media should be there to play a positive role.

INTRODUCTION

This research project is the result of consultations between the authors and the Delegation of the European Commission to Pakistan. During those consultations, a specific interest emerged on the part of the Delegation for an in-depth analysis of the media and its position within the overall governance system in Pakistan. Questions were raised, for instance, about the kind of power that the media holds in Pakistan, both in relation to the state and to other non-state actors.

The reach and quality of mass media has grown significantly in Pakistan in the past seven years. The number of print and particularly broadcast media outlets has increased substantially. There are dozens of newspapers, ranging from the large English- and Urdu-language dailies and weeklies, to the small local-language papers. The number of television channels grew from two or three state-run stations in 2000 to over 50 privately owned channels in 2008. About 20 channels exclusively broadcast news, with only two of them in English (Dawn and Express). There are about five religious channels, which produce programmes related to Islam, but which also deal with social issues. While Musharraf's regime allowed the media greater latitude of expression than previous Pakistani governments had, certain aspects of the governance system were off limits (particularly the political and economic role of the armed forces, and the internal conflict in Baluchistan and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Moreover, as the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) Ordinance of June 2007 demonstrated,⁴ the media's autonomy is far from institutionalised. The government uses a range of legal and constitutional powers to curb press freedom. The shutting down of private TV news channels accompanied the declaration of a state of emergency in late 2007, and the law on blasphemy has been used against journalists.

As a confirmation of the peculiar differences existing among the four provinces, it is interesting to note that the wave of media liberalisation that swept across the country apparently hit a wall in Baluchistan. According to a Quetta-based journalist, as late as September 2008, there was not a single TV channel in the province owned by a Baluchi.⁵

Nevertheless, Pakistan's print media is among the most outspoken in South Asia. Furthermore, the Internet Service Providers Association of Pakistan estimated in March 2007 that there were between three and five million internet users. The radio has also witnessed an impressive growth since PEMRA granted radio stations the permission to operate in 2002. By 2008 there were more than 100 radio stations, including those being operated by religious extremists in FATA and NWFP,⁶ and FM radios have been acknowledged as having a far-reaching impact at the local level.

Under President Zardari, the media gained in freedom of expression, but it has also been accused of sensationalism and of being conservative and militaristic. In addition, a religiously radical position emerged in the media throughout 2008 and 2009, allegedly caused by pressure on the media from radical groups, but most likely also by an overt campaign aimed at unsettling the government. Only with the shocking takeover of governance power by the Taliban in seven districts of the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) in April 2009, and the subsequent military offensive in the Swat Valley, was there a significant turnaround in the media's orientation towards domestic radicalism.

4 This ordinance was promulgated by President Musharraf and it provided the PEMRA with the powers to seal any building where it believed illegal transmissions were aired and to cancel the licence of any TV channel involved in the same sort of illegal activities.

5 There were, however, some daily newspapers which were owned by Baluchis and were published in Urdu, such as *Asaap* (Quetta), *Tawar* (Mastung) and *Azadi* (Quetta).

6 North-West Frontier Province, now known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The growth of the media in Pakistani society can be regarded as irreversible, and it will be crucial to monitor whether it becomes a channel for objective or partisan reporting.

While the simultaneous presence within Pakistani society of a very active and widespread radical (*jihadi*) media, which forms an entirely separate reality and field of study, needs to be acknowledged, this research project has chosen to focus exclusively on the so-called *mainstream* news media, which is not overtly promoting militant sectarianism. The choice has been motivated by several reasons: the necessity to maintain the scope of the research within manageable limits; the importance of not replicating existing work on the subject; and above all the assumption that it is primarily at the interface between mainstream news media and society that wide-ranging governance-related issues are being touched upon and influenced.

In general, this research project is based on the increasing awareness among policymakers and scholars of the crucial role of the media in processes of democratisation. However, as is the case with political institutions, the media does not by definition contribute positively to the development of responsive governance and substantive democracy. Its eventual role is determined by its qualities and the political environment in which it operates. The media in Pakistan is no exception to this rule. For instance, as already discussed, its recent reporting has often been regarded as too opinionated and sensationalist, and commercial pressures, among others, on news coverage have encouraged an overemphasis on the trivial and popular at the expense of serious and sustained attention to the complex issues affecting governance in that country. In addition, Pakistan represents a powerful example of the problems concerning the relationship between media and government, which tend to affect transitional democracies, where the expectations and norms that guide this relationship are still disputed among the actors involved in the public communication of politics. In this respect, it is also interesting to explore the media's role in creating awareness and in acting as a watchdog with regard to disputed governance-related issues such as corruption, violence and terrorism, and the rule of law.

MEDIA IN PAKISTAN: A GLANCE AT THE PAST

The establishment of media outlets in Pakistan was a response to a broad nationalistic project, where some of the most renowned figures in the movement for a politically independent Pakistan were also very close to, and sometimes part of, the ownership structure of the first national newspapers.

The concept of a non-aligned media was therefore completely missing in the pre-independence period. After independence, the nationalist project continued and it was gradually permeated by Islamic ideology as well.

Today it is mainly corporate and business interests that drive the existing media groups. Some owners of these groups use them as a protective cover for their other business interests. These owners are no longer media people themselves. One case in point is the Century Publications group, which publishes the Urdu *Daily Express*, whose owner, Mr Lakhani, also heads the American fast-food chain McDonalds in Pakistan.

Another peculiar characteristic of the media landscape in Pakistan, unsurprisingly, is the close relationship that has historically existed between the military and the media houses. Former dictator Zia ul-Haq, for example, is reported to have once reminded Mr Majeed Nizami – younger brother of Hameed Nizami, one of the founding fathers of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS)⁷ and the original owner of the Nawa-i-Waqt group of publications – that he had no right to complain about lack of freedom, since the military had provided a lot of benefits to his businesses. In general terms, it is important to note that all the media laws in Pakistan have been promulgated by military regimes. That is, they have not been debated in the national parliament.

Nevertheless, the media can be considered as the only platform for a long time that has offered the people an opportunity to have their voice heard. Other key state institutions, such as the judiciary, were, in fact, under the tight control of the military regimes, for instance through the issuance of Provisional Constitutional Orders (PCOs)⁸ and Legal Framework Orders (LFOs).⁹

Military rulers' close attention to news media, and to the power of propaganda in general, became immediately clear when their first representative took control of the country. One of the first measures taken by General Ayub Khan, after the declaration of martial law in 1958, was the establishment of the Bureau of National Research and Reconstruction (BNR&R), which later became the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Following an approach to the media that still seems to exist, the BNR&R embarked on a campaign of hiring 'journalists who were well known and willing to lend their names to commentaries that were published in national newspapers in support of government policies'.¹⁰

7 A premier body of newspaper publishers, which was established in 1950.

8 A PCO is an extra-constitutional order that suspends either wholly or partially the constitution of Pakistan. It provides a temporary constitution while the actual constitution is held in abeyance or suspension. In the history of Pakistan, whenever a PCO has been declared, the higher judiciary has been required to take an oath on the PCO. One of the typical clauses of a PCO is that no court will pass judgement against a PCO. Since the start of the presidency of General Yahya Khan (1969), there have been four PCOs in Pakistan. All of them were issued by military leaders. The last one dates back to November 2007, when General Pervez Musharraf declared emergency rule while waiting for the Supreme Court's ruling on whether he was eligible to run for re-election.

9 An LFO is a presidential decree issued primarily over the organisation of elections. Since independence, there have been two such LFOs. Both of them happened under military rule. The last one was issued by General Musharraf in August 2002. It granted him sweeping new powers, including the right to dismiss an elected parliament. Those amendments to the 1973 constitution of Pakistan were initially rejected by the Supreme Court, but in December 2003 parts of the LFO were incorporated into the constitution through a 17th amendment.

10 S. Nawaz (2008). *Crossed swords: Pakistan, its army, and the wars within*. Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press. p.173. Zamir Niazi, however, terms the BNR&R the Bureau of National Research and Reference, and he adds that it was placed under the Ministry of Information. (Z. Niazi (1986). *The press in chains*. Karachi: Royal Book Company. p.111.)

In certain cases, when news media did not comply with the directives imparted by the military administration, they were simply taken over, as happened to publishing house Progressive Papers Limited (PPL) and to the newspapers that it owned: *The Pakistan Times*, *Imroze* and the weekly *Lailo Nahar*. Because of suspicions that their editors had socialist leanings, in 1959 the government of Ayub Khan, under the cover of the Pakistan Security Act,¹¹ moved to change the management of these newspapers in order to prevent them from publishing material that could allegedly 'endanger the defence, external affairs or security of Pakistan'.¹² In 1964 the takeover of PPL was eventually completed by transforming it into the National Press Trust (NPT). Journalists working for this new media group, which, along the way, acquired nine other newspapers, proved their value as staunch supporters of military action through successive military regimes. In fact, when General Yahya Khan took over from his predecessor in 1969, they welcomed the appearance of martial law and its related emergency actions. The very close relationship linking the NPT to the country's establishment was also underlined by its financial situation. In 1983 the newspapers belonging to the NPT were thought to consume 'at least half, if not more, of the Government advertising budget drawn from the public exchequer'.¹³

Furthermore, the history of the NPT provides yet another confirmation of how feeble the principle of media freedom is when confronted with political and economic interests. While the NPT was indeed the creation of a military ruler, and in spite of the fact that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had previously committed itself to its dissolution, when a civilian government came to power in 1972, it simply prolonged the tradition of taking over control of the NPT. Under the false premise that the newspapers belonging to it had to be retained and returned to the collective domain, through them, the new political masters launched a shameless 'campaign of slander and character assassination against those who dared to criticise any action of Bhutto or his henchmen'.¹⁴ Ironically, the story repeated itself with the 1977 military coup of General Zia ul-Haq. The same newspapers simply continued their mission as mouthpieces of the ruler of the day and in a seemingly effortless shift, probably born out of habit and survival instinct, they turned against Bhutto and his party.

'In 1960, the military government also introduced a draconian Press and Publication Ordinance that was renewed periodically by both military and civilian regimes to exert control over the news media, holding not only editors and publishers, but also printers and distributors liable for punishment if they printed anything counter to the government's views'.¹⁵

The same misfortunes that are still evident today began to affect the media landscape in Pakistan in the brief democratic interlude that followed partition and that was concluded by the rise to power of General Ayub Khan. During that decade, it is possible to trace the abandonment of the original ideological basis on which the Pakistani media had been created in favour of a drift towards political opportunism and harsh competition for the capture of the establishment's attention and favours. That period also saw the emergence of a new kind of journalism that was driven by factors other than coherence to political and professional principles.

A 1954 report of the Press Commission is explicit in its judgement of the state of the media at that time in Pakistan:

'A national press is the mirror of national politics. The politics of the country, therefore, do have a bearing on the country's Press. [...] it can be said that a country gets the kind of press it deserves. If the politics of a country is dirty, the country's Press cannot remain immune from it. [...] the country will continue to have a bad Press as long as its politics are unhealthy'.¹⁶

The processes of nationalisation of the independent newspapers during the Ayub era, and the gradual Islamisation of the media during successive military regimes, were instrumental in allowing the infiltration of right-wing

11 It appears that, just two days before the government moved in to take over the ownership of the PPL group, an amendment had been introduced to the Pakistan Security Act, through a presidential ordinance. The amendment provided the acting government with the precise power to 'change the management of newspapers – INSTEAD OF BANNING THEM OUTRIGHT – which, in the opinion of the Government, published or contained matters likely to endanger the defence, external affairs or security of Pakistan'. (Z. Niazi (1986). Op. cit. p.82.)

12 S. Nawaz (2008). Op. cit. p.174.

13 M. Barna. *Viewpoint*, 24th November 1983.

14 Z. Niazi (1986). Op. cit. p.91.

15 S. Nawaz (2008). Op. cit. p.174.

16 Report of the Press Commission (1954). Government of Pakistan publication, Karachi. p.181.

ideologies into mainstream journalism, while left-wing influences gradually weakened.¹⁷ Eventually, the Pakistani media became more conservative, and politically aligned and assertive. It is in this respect that the political left currently talks about change and dissent, which have been increasingly missing from the Pakistani media.¹⁸

17 Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) (2010). *Understanding the militants' media in Pakistan: Outreach and impact*. Islamabad, Pakistan: PIPS. p.12.

18 A. Siddiq. 'Politics of media', *Dawn*, Islamabad, 2nd January 2009.

MEDIA GROUPS

As briefly mentioned at the beginning of this report, the three main media groups that are still active to date have their origins in the Muslim independence movement of British India and were closely associated to some of its most prominent political figures. However, as the politics of the newly-born Pakistan turned into a harsh competition for power, those same media groups chose to carve their own space for survival by taking sides in the ongoing struggle.

In order to obtain a better understanding of the ways and the reasons why these groups operate today as they do, it is important to have at least a glimpse at their origin and early evolution.

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF MEDIA GROUPS IN PAKISTAN

Print and Electronic Media Outputs	Jang Group	Dawn Group	Nawa-i-Waqt Group	Express Group	Daily Times Group
Dailies (Newspapers)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily Jang (Urdu) 2. Daily Awam¹⁹ (Urdu) 3. Daily Awaz²⁰ (Urdu) 4. The News (English) 5. Daily Waqt²¹ (Urdu) 6. Pakistan Times²² (English) 7. Daily News (English evening) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily Dawn (English) 2. Star (English language evening) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily Nawa-i-Waqt (Urdu) 2. The Nation (English) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily Express (Urdu) 2. Express Tribune (English) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daily Aaj Kal (Urdu) 2. Daily Times (English)
Weeklies (Magazines)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Akhbar-e-Jehan (Urdu) 8. Mag Weekly (English) [Fashion magazine] 9. The News on Sunday (English) 10. Jang Sunday Magazine (Urdu) 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Nida-i-Millat (Urdu) [Sunday magazine] 4. Weekly Family (Urdu) 5. Sunday Plus (English) 6. Weekly Money Plus (English) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Express Sunday Magazine (Urdu) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Friday Times (English) 4. Weekly WikKid (English) [For kids] 5. Daily Times Sunday (English) 6. Aaj Kal Sunday Magazine (Urdu)
Monthlies (Magazines)		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Herald²³ (English) 4. Aurora (marketing and advertising based bi-monthly magazine) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Monthly Phool (Urdu) [For children] 		
TV Channels	Geo Television Network includes 4 channels: Geo News (Urdu) Geo Entertainment (Urdu) Aag TV (Bilingual English and Urdu) [Music channel] Geo Super (Urdu) [Sports channel]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dawn News (English) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Waqt TV (Urdu) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Express News (Urdu) 2. Express 24/7 (English) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business Plus (English) [Current affairs and business news] 2. WikKid (Bilingual English and Urdu) [For kids]

19 Published only from Karachi.

20 Published only from Lahore.

21 Jang Group bought this newspaper in 2008 or 2009. Previously it was owned by PML-Q leader Aleem Khan. The declaration of the newspaper is still in the name of Mr Omer Farooq Mannan, one of the cousins of Aleem Khan. Jang Group is trying to transfer ownership of declaration, but it is being delayed due to some debts of the previous owners.

22 The newspaper was once a leading English newspaper. Having acquired it, the Jang Group has been printing just a few copies to sustain the declaration; technically, they call it a “dummy” newspaper.

23 Published only from Karachi.

JANG GROUP OF NEWSPAPERS

Commonly known as the Jang Group, it was established in 1942²⁴ in Delhi by Mir Khalil-ur-Rehman. After independence it was moved to Karachi. It is currently the largest media group in the country, comprising a range of Urdu and English publications and four TV channels (see Table 1). The Group's flagship publication is the Urdu-language newspaper *Daily Jang*, which is printed from six stations across the country. 'The group also publishes arguably the second largest English newspaper *The News*'.²⁵

Generally speaking, the group is reputed to have 'a moderate conservative perspective'.²⁶ Its English publications tend to be more critical of current political affairs and players, while the Urdu publications are milder in their approach. Until the early 1950s *Daily Jang* was considered an independent newspaper, but since then it has gradually succumbed to political pressures and temptations.²⁷ Leading journalist and author Zahid Hussain positions the Jang Group at right of centre,²⁸ whereas leading professor of journalism Dr Mehdi Hasan, argues that it does not have any specific policy objective in the long term.²⁹

Lately, the group has become entangled in an acrimonious battle with the government, and in particular with President Zardari. According to unverified accounts, the origin of this public slander campaign can be linked to a court case involving massive tax arrears,³⁰ in which the Jang Group has been involved by the current administration. Others prefer to interpret the matter through a political perspective. The Jang Group is said to be very close to the lawyers' movement and, what is probably more relevant, to the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) party of Nawaz Sharif, a political opponent of Zardari and his PPP.

PAKISTAN HERALD PUBLICATIONS

Normally known as Dawn Group of Newspapers, the company was founded in 1941 by Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Its flagship publication, the daily *Dawn*, was first published in 1947 from an already independent Pakistan. From there it expanded into a series of publications (see Table 1), all of which use English exclusively. The group has also been one of the first media houses in Pakistan to venture into electronic media, including cable TV and the internet. The TV channel Dawn News was established in 2007 and, like their main newspaper, is regularly followed by representatives of the international community and by 'policy and decision-makers in the public and private sectors'.³¹

The Dawn publications are probably those that have tried to interpret and follow more consistently the original vision of the man who is considered the founding father of the nation. Their main trademark, in fact, is a secular and tolerant approach to some of the most burning issues in Pakistan's society. Because of this broadly perceived *super partes* approach, the group enjoys widespread respect as a credible, independent and neutral player.

Even the *Dawn*, however, has not always been immune from the same sort of "diseases" that have affected media in Pakistan. That is, its stand on social issues has not always been progressive, and occasionally it has been ambiguous in its relationship to the power holders of the moment. For example, the chief editor and owner of *Dawn*, just prior to the imposition of the 1963 Press and Publication Ordinance (PPO), prohibited all the editorial staff from joining professional trade unions or organisations. A written statement was requested from each new staff member confirming his or her agreement to abide by this directive. On other occasions, editorials showering all kinds of plaudits on high government officials, such as the Information Secretary, appeared on its pages, thereby joining the adulatory chorus of the rest of the national press.

24 This is according to the Jang Group itself, as stated in the following article posted on their website: M. Aziz. 'Mir Khalil-ur-Rahman: A legend in Pakistani journalism'. Available at <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/spedition/mkr/2010/article1.html>.

25 CCE (2005). Op. cit. p.21.

26 IMS (2009). Op. cit. p.20.

27 Interview, Hussain Naqi, veteran journalist and National Coordinator of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Lahore, 25th January 2010.

28 Interview, Zahid Hussain, senior journalist associated with English monthly *Newsline*, Islamabad, 20th January 2010.

29 Interview, Dr Mehdi Hasan, Dean of School of Media and Communication, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, 26th January 2010.

30 Unofficial estimates vary between PKR 800 million and 1.68 billion. For more information, see <http://www.dawn.com/wps/wcm/connect/dawn-content-library/dawn/the-newspaper/national/tv-channels-owe-rs2.73bn-gst-550>.

31 See *Dawn's* website at <http://www.dawn.com/fixd/group/publicat.htm>.

NAWA-I-WAQT GROUP OF PUBLICATIONS

Established in 1940 by Hameed Nizami, one of the founding fathers of Pakistani journalism, *Nawa-i-Waqt* started its operations in Lahore. The first publication to be launched was the fortnightly journal *Nawa-i-Waqt*. In the few years following independence, *Nawa-i-Waqt* came to represent the most conservative tendencies within Pakistan's society, embracing the nationalist ideological discourse on which the country was being built. In an article that appeared in 1977, *Nawa-i-Waqt* was defined as the 'self-appointed custodian of the ideology of Pakistan', and, in the first five years of existence of the country, it 'had hunted and pursued a remorseless campaign against all liberal trends and progressive forces in national life'.³²

The same broad definition of the group's mandate can still be considered accurate today, as testified to by the various statements gathered in the authors' interviews. Javed Siddique, editor of daily *Nawa-i-Waqt* in Islamabad, refers, in this regard, to three policy, or editorial, aims of his newspaper: first, to consolidate and promote the ideology of Pakistan, which is based on Islam and the 'two nations' theory; second, to promote the idea of Pakistan as an Islamic, democratic and welfare state; and third, to be sympathetic to Islamic 'causes' including Palestine and Kashmir. The newspaper supports reconciliation with India, but 'not at the cost of Kashmir'. It does not support the 'so-called war against terrorism', Pakistan's support of it, or American presence in the region. 'The [Taliban] militants do not regard *Nawa-i-Waqt* as a hostile newspaper'.³³

Being an advocate of Pakistani, or Islamic, ideology, the group has been supportive of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) – the founding party of Pakistan – and of right-wing political discourse from the very beginning. Gradually, it also came under the influence of the Punjab establishment, yet it has been critical of military regimes in Pakistan.³⁴

32 Z. Siddiqi. *The Herald*, August 1977.

33 Interview, Javed Siddique, editor of daily *Nawa-i-Waqt*, Islamabad, 20th January 2010.

34 Interview, Hussain Naqi, Lahore, 25th January 2010.

COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

Another important issue to be taken into consideration pertains to the alleged motives for media owners to enter the media business in the first place. As already mentioned in this report, the oldest media groups in Pakistan originated in close affiliation with the Muslim political movement for independence. For those media pioneers, the claim that they were operating outside a profit-making system, with the only aim of serving the newly-born country (according to their own political convictions), could be regarded as relatively close to the truth, but the situation changed substantially as the years went by, and as new actors entered the media arena with radically different political and economic objectives. Having grasped the persuading power of the media, those operators started to put profit and political power at the top of their agendas. And, even in those cases where the media outlet in question was producing negative financial results, its impact in economic terms on other businesses owned by the same proprietor could more than adequately compensate for these losses, for instance, as a vehicle for advertisements, or as a publicity platform for government representatives and politicians, who in turn would return the favour in the form of commercial concessions. Leading media activist Mazhar Abbas believes that most of the television channels in Pakistan are not financially viable, but they keep operating because their owners use them to provide a protective cover to their other business ventures, to evade taxes or to exhibit a 'power' status.³⁵ Others argue that the media in Pakistan has become one of the power holders, along with the bourgeoisie and the army, and that it is taking the common people 'for a ride' in the name of democracy. On the contrary, 'democracy and a free media are sacrificed at the altar of the free-market economy which is the linchpin of capitalism'.³⁶

Firstly, it is indeed the marketing managers of the media groups who decide on the space and coverage of issues. Secondly, the owners exercise a tremendous influence on space and coverage of the news reports, on administrative matters, and on the editorial policy, which is drafted in accordance with their political and commercial interests. Thirdly, this category of the media owners has meanwhile managed to target and take over the representative institution of the professional editors. By doing so, the previous division between editorial and administrative policies, which provided some space for unbiased journalism, has ceased to exist.³⁷ The outcome of the increased importance of these commercial factors can be seen in the disproportionately high number of advertisements and of news and analysis concerning politics in both print and electronic media. What is left is negligible space for coverage of social issues, which, along with human rights issues, are not on the agenda of most of the Pakistani media.³⁸

With regard to the issue of commercial interests and their influence in the Pakistani media landscape, advertisements certainly play an important role. Within that landscape, the state occupies an important position, with a 25 percent stake in the advertisement budgets of the regional press. Thus, regional newspapers have at times faced pressures from this "advertising monopoly", which has a budget of about US\$20 million per annum. The consequence of this phenomenon is that the government uses this mammoth advertising budget to impose conditions on the regional newspapers' publication policies.³⁹

35 Interviews, former secretary-general of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) and deputy news director for ARY One World TV, Islamabad, 23rd January 2010.

36 F. Jan. 'The case for a citizens' media', *Daily Dawn*, Islamabad, 13th July 2009.

37 The All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), an organisation of the owners, and the Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE) overlap. Presently, most of the owners are also the editors of their respective print media outlets, providing them with a double representative function in both press bodies.

38 Interview, Hussain Naqi, Lahore, 25th January 2010.

39 R. Kalansooriya (2010). 'An external view of the vernacular press in Pakistan', *A PIPS Research Journal of Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1.

PRINT MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties in the past have tried to establish daily newspapers that could function as their communication organs to the masses, for example, in 1970 the PPP launched the daily *Masawat*. Established in the wake of the political campaign leading to the 1970 general elections, today the newspaper can be considered a “dummy” newspaper, due to its very limited circulation.⁴⁰ The daily *Jassarat* of Jamat-e-Islami (JI) is another remnant of that period. The JI, a religious political party, owns a large media group which includes a daily newspaper (*Jassarat*), and several weeklies and monthlies; the weeklies *Asia*, *Friday Special* and *Takbeer*, all in Urdu, are among the more prominent ones. Apart from JI's official publications, some individuals who are or have been affiliated with the party, or inspired by its religious and political ideology, run other media groups. Examples include Ummat Group of Publications, based in Karachi, and Insaaf Group of Publications, based in Lahore.⁴¹ Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (Fazlur Rehman group), another mainstream political party, has a monthly Urdu-language magazine, *Al-Jamiah*, published from Rawalpindi.

OUTREACH OF PRINT MEDIA

A curious characteristic of the print media landscape in Pakistan is provided by the relatively abundant offering of expensive English newspapers, compared with the low literacy rates in the country. Although since the last population census of 1998 there has been a significant improvement in countrywide literacy rates,⁴² as of 2007–08, official figures from the Pakistani Federal Bureau of Statistics put those rates at 56 percent.⁴³ Abysmal adult literacy rates are also one of the key factors determining the low placing of Pakistan on the 2007 Human Development Index, where Pakistan was ranked 141 out of 182 countries.⁴⁴

Among the national English-language newspapers, ‘the DAWN is the most widely circulated ... It has a week-day circulation of over 138,000 and a total readership base in excess of 759,000’.⁴⁵

A report by International Media Support (IMS) indicates that in 1997 the total number of daily, monthly and minor publications in Pakistan was 4,455, but by 2003 only 945 remained. During the same period, however, the circulation of print media publications increased to a daily distribution of 6.2 million.⁴⁶

A MATTER OF LANGUAGES

Print media in Pakistan is divided linguistically into three major categories: Urdu, English and other local/regional languages. The English media targets the urban and the elite readership, and has great leverage among opinion makers, politicians, the business community and the wealthy sections of society, but it has limited circulation

40 It basically exists for the sake of itself, and probably to capture some state resources, but it is completely irrelevant in terms of outreach and distribution.

41 PIPS (2010). Op. cit. p.12 and 98.

42 According to that census, literacy rates were at about 44 percent. For more information, see <http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pcor/statistics/statistics.html>.

43 For a more complete overview, see the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey 2007–08. Available at http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/fbs/statistics/pslm2007_08/pslm2007_08.html.

44 UNDP (2009). *Human Development Report 2009 - Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development*. p.173. Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2009/>.

45 According to data provided by the Dawn itself. For more information, see <http://www.dawn.com/fixes/group/publicat.htm>.

46 IMS (2009). Op. cit. p.20.

when compared with Urdu and other print media.⁴⁷ The publication centres of the English newspapers are confined mainly to five publishing stations: Rawalpindi/Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta. The Urdu newspapers, on the other hand, are published from several stations – in almost every district headquarters – across the country.⁴⁸

There are also clear differences between the English- and Urdu-language media in the quality of the subject matter, the use of politically sensitive terminology, the analytical frameworks used and the communication perspectives. These differences are more visible in print media, where only a few original investigative reports appear in the Urdu media as compared to English print media. Urdu newspapers rely on their monitoring desks, which lift, or follow, the news and reports from electronic media. English-language media is generally considered more professional, accurate, liberal and democratic.

The language-related distinctions observed in the print media generally apply to the other media as well. For instance, English TV news channels such as Dawn News and Express are broadly regarded as more professional and less sensationalist in their style of reporting, although the viewers' share that they achieve is very limited. Recent estimates put that figure between 1.5 and 2 percent.⁴⁹

PRESS ORGANISATIONS

Due to factional rivalries that emerged among the various media groups soon after partition, two parallel organisations of editors were eventually established: the Pakistan Newspapers Editors Conference (PNEC) and the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE).

47 PIPS (2010). Op. cit. p.12.

48 Ibid.

49 Interview, Wussatullah Khan, BBC Urdu Service representative, Islamabad, 20th January 2010.

PAKISTAN TELEVISION CORPORATION (PTV) AND ITS MONOPOLY OF TERRESTRIAL TV

Despite the wide-ranging process of electronic media liberalisation that was initiated in 2002, to date PTV has maintained its (near)⁵⁰ monopolistic position in the provision of terrestrial services. While cable and satellite channels were allowed entrance into the new media market, the Pakistani government was careful in keeping a tight control on the television programmes being offered through terrestrial beams. Apparently, PTV, and, through it, the federal government, did not want to miss out on the huge reservoir of viewers represented by the rural areas of Pakistan, where modern technologies were still a distant dream, especially in economic terms. According to data released in 2009 by Gilani & Gallup Pakistan, in that year there were an estimated 52 million TV viewers in the rural areas of Pakistan, out of a total of 86 million countrywide. The same survey pointed to the dramatic rise in TV audiences from 2004, when the total number of viewers in the country was estimated at 63 million. The biggest increase in viewers happened in the rural areas, which was attributed to the rapid process of electrification that had taken place in those areas during the previous five years.⁵¹

Another key reason for state authorities to try to maintain a position of monopoly in terrestrial television was their confidence that, in times of need, cable connections and satellite transmissions could be easily shut down, as was proven in the November 2007 emergency situation.

More generally, to give an idea of the significance of PTV's monopoly in terrestrial transmissions, in terms of its exclusive access to a considerable viewership, it is important to note that, out of the estimated 86 million viewers in the country in 2009, 48 million were classified as terrestrial viewers.⁵²

The close connection between the Pakistani state and the country's dominant TV network is a natural consequence of the fact that PTV is a public limited company entirely owned and controlled by the federal government. Due to its statutory configuration, it is the government that determines its editorial and administrative policies. The government, for instance, appoints PTV's Board of Directors. The Board, in turn, elects a chairman and a managing director, who are eventually responsible for the implementation of the corporation's policies.

The first transmissions of PTV started on 26th November 1964, with a small pilot TV station established in Lahore. 'Later, television centres were established in Karachi and Rawalpindi/Islamabad in 1967 and in Peshawar and Quetta in 1974'.⁵³

Today, PTV offers six different channels to its viewers. In addition to being the only channels in the country available through terrestrial beams, some of them can also be watched through satellite transmissions. The six channels are:

1. PTV Home – the flagship channel of the corporation, it broadcasts entertainment programmes. It allegedly covers 89 percent of the population;
2. PTV News – news and current affairs channel, it allegedly covers 78 percent of the population;
3. PTV National – a regional programming channel, it provides programmes in regional languages to promote the culture of the country's four provinces;

50 See below reported case of ATV.

51 Gilani & Gallup Pakistan. 'Cyberletter Media', June 2009.

52 Ibid.

53 CCE (2005). Op. cit. p.8.

4. PTV Bolan – Baluchi-language channel, it transmits from Quetta;
5. AJK TV – a Kashmiri channel, it provides different programmes for local viewers, including Kashmiri news. It transmits from Muzaffarabad, in Azad Jammu and Kashmir; and
6. PTV Global – provides entertainment and the latest news to Pakistanis working abroad. Because of the specific target audience, it only broadcasts through satellite.

PTV is adamant that 'it has always been motivated and guided by the cardinal principles of educating viewers about the values that are vitally important in building a united, integrated and disciplined society in the light of Islamic injunctions'.⁵⁴ In that respect, the creation of a national television broadcaster represented yet another powerful instrument in the hands of the military rulers in their quest to build a national identity. With the accession to power of General Zia ul-Haq in 1977, the nationalistic discourse became further imbued with Islamic ideology, which was duly reflected in the programming of PTV.

In 1989 Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto tried to break PTV's monopoly of terrestrial TV by establishing the People's Television Network. This channel was later renamed Shalimar Recording & Broadcasting Company (STN), and in 1990 it sold some of its broadcasting time to private company the Network Television Marketing (NTM). NTM further developed as an entertainment channel and it acquired popularity mainly for its dramas and music shows. In the late 1990s, however, it was brought down allegedly by inner strife and charges of corruption. In 2005 this terrestrial television network was finally (re)launched as ATV. Probably due to its link to NTM, today ATV claims to be 'Pakistan's first and largest privately operated terrestrial television network, with the second largest national viewers' base',⁵⁵ covering over 50 percent of the population. It primarily broadcasts entertainment and news, competing in rural areas with the similar offering provided by the various PTV channels.

Benazir Bhutto's belief in the need to promote media liberalisation in Pakistan was also confirmed during her second stint as prime minister by the establishment of Pakistan's first FM radio channel: FM 100. FM 100 was founded in 1995, but it was immediately handed over to her cronies. Currently, it has a broadcast range covering all of Pakistan. In addition, in her last political manifesto during the campaign leading to the January 2008 general elections, she advocated that each political party should have its own television channel.

Apparently, Nawaz Sharif also wanted to create a Punjabi television channel at the end of the 1990s, but the military coup of General Musharraf prevented him from realising this plan.

Concerning more recent events in the country, PTV takes particular pride in the fact that, from the very beginning of Musharraf's new course vis-à-vis the Taliban, it clearly distanced itself from the dangerous line followed by the private TV channels, which often sympathised with the militants and their causes. Taking the same political stance, when asked about the controversial subject of the US covert use of drones on Pakistani territory, Mr Syed Javed Ali, director of PTV News, declared that he believed in the existence of an understanding between the Pakistani and the US military on the use of this technology. He stated that the nature of the terrain affected by these attacks made the use of drones very effective and therefore attractive. At the same time, however, he expressed serious concerns about the loss of civilian lives during these actions, and he advocated a transfer of the technology to the Pakistani military, primarily in order to reduce the civilian casualties.⁵⁶

54 See statement of programmes on PTV official website <http://ptv.com.pk/aboutus-intro.asp>.

55 See ATV's website at <http://www.atv.com.pk/>.

56 Interview, Syed Javed Ali, director of PTV News, Islamabad, 19th January 2010.

THE RADIO

PAKISTAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION (PBC)

As observed in the case of television, the state maintained a position of monopoly in the radio sector until the 2002 liberalisation of the media and PEMRA's emergence as a broadcasting licences-awarding authority. Since then, there has been a steady growth in FM radio stations across the country. According to figures from 2009, there are presently 40 FM radio stations operating in Pakistan. After an initial surge in new radio stations, however, PEMRA's increasing tariffs for new licences has significantly reduced the pace of applications being submitted. Another visible consequence of this surge in prices has been a gradual control of the radio market by those actors with sufficient financial and political power, that is, 'industrialists, large media groups, feudal lords or politicians'.⁵⁷

In spite of the above liberalisation in the sector, the state-owned PBC still maintains a dominant position, especially with regard to its reach in rural areas. According to the PBC's own figures, its 69 medium (33), short wave (7) and FM (29) stations cover approximately 80 percent of Pakistan's territory, or 96.5 percent of the population, and it has a regular audience of 95.5 million listeners.⁵⁸

Its dominant presence in rural areas is obviously linked to the low technological threshold represented by radio in general, when compared to more expensive, sophisticated and electricity-dependent communication systems such as internet or television. In addition, the PBC has successfully attempted to establish a foothold in those areas by localising its broadcasting activities. It suffices to say that, in addition to the Urdu language, the PBC also broadcasts in 20 regional languages from 33 different cities.

Beside its traditional and exclusive field of operations, namely medium and short wave transmissions, Radio Pakistan has become increasingly active in expanding its broadcasting to FM radio waves as well. Its first FM transmission dates back to 1998, but since 2002 it has been adding many more FM channels to its services, keenly aware of the fact that FM listenership comprises about 40 percent of the total radio listenership in the country, and also increasingly conscious of the need to reach those listeners at the periphery of the country – such as in the FATA – who could easily fall under the spell of local militants using FM stations for propaganda purposes.⁵⁹

“EXTERNAL” COMPETITORS

The medium and short wave realm, however, has not always been the PBC's undisputed and undisturbed broadcasting domain. The largest media organisation in the world, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), can rightly claim a presence in what used to be British India, which predates the establishment of the PBC. BBC operations started in the colonial territory in the 1940s, mainly as a counter-propaganda media outlet to the German Nazis. The programmes at that time were broadcast in the Hindustani language for the local population. It was only with the 1947 partition that the PBC came into being. Two years later, the BBC followed the political developments by establishing an Urdu-language broadcast for Pakistan, and in 1966 it formalised this new service by creating the BBC Urdu Service.

57 IMS (2009). Op. cit. p.22.

58 For more information, see <http://www.radio.gov.pk/aboutus.htm> and http://www.radio.gov.pk/new/site/images/psc_st.jpg.

59 As it has been indeed the case with the Taliban leader in the Swat Valley, Maulana Fazlullah, also known as Radio Mullah.

By the late 1990s the BBC Urdu Service had become the dominant radio news service in Pakistan. In 1998 it was said to reach 20 million daily listeners across both Pakistan and India. In 2009 that number had dwindled to 13 million. This decline has been largely attributed to the media liberalisation process that was launched in both countries and to the subsequent emergence of strongly competitive new mass communication media. In addition, the BBC started to encounter increasing problems with short wave frequencies in Pakistan, due to competing transmissions from Radio China. In an attempt to counter the growing competition, in 2001 the BBC Urdu Service launched its own website, where it also put its radio transmissions. Further, it also decided to step into FM radio broadcasting in order to gain better control of the reach of the local transmissions. The FM radio experience worked well until 2007, when a new Pakistani law prohibited foreign broadcasts from within the country. At that point the BBC created BBC Pakistan and it also started to rebroadcast its programmes through local FM stations. The BBC is currently considering the launching of a BBC Urdu TV channel that would initially broadcast programmes for two to six hours a day.⁶⁰

Despite the complex and challenging legal and political environment in which the BBC has had to operate from the very beginning, its fame as an independent broadcaster has earned it a great deal of respect and a significant listenership among the Pakistani population. Interestingly, this appears to be particularly true in the politically unstable tribal areas. According to a Waziri researcher, '60 to 70 percent of the people living in FATA listen to and rely on BBC news broadcasts'.⁶¹ The recent launching of programmes in Pashto has further strengthened the BBC's position in these areas. Before the start of the latest military operations, the BBC was believed to have an almost complete coverage of FATA. The channel can count on three local correspondents based in Peshawar and on coverage originating from the NWFP's districts of Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan. The geographical embeddedness of BBC correspondents has earned them widespread credibility among the local population and often, in addition, special access to militants operating in those areas.

The remainder of the local population is believed to listen to a series of new radio channels that have been set up with the support of the international community, and above all of the US (via USAID). These FM radios include:

- Radio Deewa – affiliated to the Voice of America (VOA);
- Radio Mashaal ("Torch" in Pashto) – launched in January 2010 by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), it broadcasts in local Pashto dialects with the objective of offering 'an alternative to the growing number of Islamic extremist radio stations in the region';⁶²
- Radio Azadi – established in 1985 by RFE/RL, it is presently 'the leading media outlet in Afghanistan, reaching 50% of the Afghan population across the country',⁶³ and also some of the border areas in Pakistan. For the 2010 fiscal year, there has been a request to the US Congress to provide additional funding to this station in order to expand broadcasts to Pashto speakers in northwest Pakistan; and
- Radio Dilbar – part of a project supported by the British government, it aims to increase the capacity of FM radio stations in NWFP by training their staff in developing citizen-based programming.

The purpose of the international community in these areas is clear: to use these radios to reach out to the local communities with a mixture of entertainment, current affairs and religious programmes, in order to pursue a peacebuilding agenda and eventually to fill the gap left by the so-called Taliban radios that were operating in some of the FATA agencies and other settled areas⁶⁴ (mainly in the Khyber agency and in the Swat Valley, with the already mentioned Radio Mullah) prior to the April 2009 military offensive. These new local radios have characterised themselves by the careful use of terminology referring to the militants,⁶⁵ and by their educational efforts towards a "true" understanding of Islam.

60 Most of the information provided in this section has been collected during an interview with Wussatullah Khan, BBC Urdu Service representative, Islamabad, 20th January 2010.

61 Interview, Mansur Khan Mahsud, FATA Research Center, Islamabad, 21st January 2010.

62 'RFE/RL launches radio station in Pakistan's Pashtun Heartland', *RFE/RL*, 14th January 2010. Available at <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/SNAA-7ZS2S7?OpenDocument>.

63 For more information, see <http://www.rferl.org/info/Afghanistan/181.html>.

64 According to Mansur Khan Mahsud, the Taliban did not need radio channels in other FATA agencies because these were *de facto* already under their control. These radios broadcast by using simple technology, whose outreach was necessarily limited. The average range was estimated to be no more than 50 to 60km. When the military offensive got off the ground in the Swat Valley, the transmission capabilities were immediately neutralised and at the beginning of 2010 no Taliban radios were signalled by Mansur Khan Mahsud either in that valley or in the FATA.

65 Terms such as "terrorists" or "fundamentalists" are carefully avoided.

THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Pakistan's media-related legislation dates back to the British colonial era.⁶⁶ As such, it was characterised by an inherent tendency to restrain, rather than promote, freedom of expression. Subsequent civilian and military governments did not feel sufficient incentives to reverse this approach in a radical way, and they preferred to maintain a certain degree of continuity in order to protect their own class privilege.

In 1954 an attempt was made to deal with the 12 press laws that had been issued since 1860. A Press Commission was then established by the central government with the explicit objective to look at those laws and decide whether there was any need for specific amendments or rather consolidations. The conclusions of its work, however, were quite innocuous. When they were released four years later, they highlighted the patriotic character of the press and its sensitive relations to issues of the security and integrity of the country.

Nevertheless, it was primarily under military rule that this legislation was further tightened and expanded at the same time. For instance, in 1960 General Ayub Khan introduced a PPO, which eventually 'borrowed a great deal from the repealed laws of the British era'.⁶⁷ After the lifting of martial law in June 1962, this ordinance was replaced in 1963 by a new regulation, which in practice guaranteed continuity of legislation and further strengthened the government's control over the media. For instance, a major amendment to the original ordinance 'contained provisions for the appointment of a commission for "inquiring into the affairs" of any printing press or newspaper'.⁶⁸ But even before the original PPO had been issued, a considerable corpus of laws had already been introduced in the Pakistan Penal Code, all of them prescribing punishments for communication activities that were deemed harmful to the stability of the country.

It was only in 1988 that the 1963 PPO was finally repealed and replaced by a new, more media-friendly, legislation.⁶⁹ This 1988 ordinance has been generally credited with the creation of a legal environment conducive to the expansion of print publication. In 2002 General Musharraf put an end to this more permissive legislation by introducing a new series of restrictive laws in the period leading to the October elections. Those ordinances included:

- The Freedom of Information Ordinance – while it acknowledges citizens' right to information, procedural flaws in its formulation and implementation, and restrictions in those public records subject to disclosure, severely limit the possibility of achieving its declared objective. For instance, the ordinance was 'gazetted ... a fortnight after a new national assembly had been elected' and before it had even had the chance to meet. As such, it could be regarded as 'extra-constitutional legislation'.⁷⁰ This ordinance promulgated in late 2002 remains unenforced. There have been growing demands by the members of the press to amend the ordinance and pass a legislation that obliges the government to provide access to all forms of information, except those which are specifically restricted.
- The Press Council Ordinance – introduced by the government 'to maintain the professional standards of all journalists, to help maintain the independence of the media and to monitor and review national developments' that could have an impact on the free flow of information, the ordinance 'includes a complaints mechanism, allowing members of the public to submit to the Council complaints regarding the Ethical Code of Practice'.⁷¹

66 Think, among others, of the 1923 'Official Secrets Act'.

67 CCE (2005). Op. cit. p.15.

68 Z. Niazi (1986). Op. cit. p.99.

69 The Printing Presses and Publications Ordinance.

70 South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) (2008). *Media freedom, laws and security: Roundtable conference*. Islamabad, Pakistan. p.8.

71 CCE (2005). Op. cit. p.16.

The ordinance has not been implemented to date, mainly due to media and civil society's concerns about state control over the press.

- The Defamation Ordinance – 'supposed to protect people's reputation from unfair attack... , in practice it has become a cruel tool to hinder free speech and protect powerful people from scrutiny'. The ordinance is said to ignore 'the standards set for freedom of expression... , slapping a legal straitjacket on the press'.⁷²
- The Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance – it requires all publications and news agencies to register with local or provincial authorities. Failure to do so may lead to monetary and jail punishments. In order to enhance the "controlling" effect of the ordinance, the military government also required the publishing entity to register an individual employee who could be held responsible for the contents of the material published.

THE PAKISTAN ELECTRONIC MEDIA REGULATORY AUTHORITY (PEMRA)

Among these laws there was also an ordinance, formally approved by the federal cabinet in January 2002, which aimed to create an autonomous regulatory authority for an independent electronic media. Established two years earlier as the Regulatory Authority for Media Broadcast Organisations (RAMBO), this authority was eventually renamed the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA).

In this respect, it is interesting to note that one of the four components of the mandate of RAMBO, and subsequently of PEMRA as well, was to 'facilitate the devolution of responsibility and power to grassroots by improving the access to mass media at the local and community level'.⁷³ This was apparently in response to specific clauses in the country's constitution about decentralising broadcasting,⁷⁴ and it was probably also linked to the devolution process initiated by Musharraf in 2001.

Originally, PEMRA was placed under the direct control of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, but later this institutional structure was changed amid great concern from media representatives that the authority could become yet another instrument in the hands of the government to safeguard the dominant position of its state broadcaster PTV. This institutional arrangement, however, could not prevent PEMRA from becoming, according to many media practitioners in Pakistan, merely a 'license issuing office that has implemented regulatory barriers for broadcasters'.⁷⁵ This institutional role has put PEMRA in a position of power in terms of controlling access to the electronic media market in the country, and at the same time exposing it to the ever-present dangers of extortion and corruption.

In 2005, probably concerned by the exponential growth of cable TV channels and the evident problems in keeping all of them under a tight control, the Musharraf administration decided to introduce a first amendment to the PEMRA Ordinance. Amid rising civil unrest, mainly spearheaded by the lawyers' movement, the situation repeated itself in 2007, when the government introduced a decree amending the PEMRA Ordinance. This second amendment in practice prohibited 'printing or broadcasting of anything which defamed or brought into ridicule the head of state, or members of the armed forces, or executive, legislative or judicial organs of the state'.⁷⁶ In addition, the amendment incorporated a draconian list of new "crimes" and it tasked PEMRA 'with drafting a tough new "voluntary" Code of Conduct that would supersede at least three other similar Codes'.⁷⁷ A third amendment enacted on 3rd November 2007 'notified at least seven new violations that were not part of the version of the law that existed before the state of emergency',⁷⁸ and it carried enhanced punishments and penalties. These revisions were broadly perceived as a further tightening of the existing legislation and are currently the object of heated debate among the public and politicians alike.

72 SAFMA (2008). Op. cit. p.67.

73 IMS (2009). Op. cit. p.18.

74 Article 159, Chapter 3, Part V (dealing with the relations between the federation and the provinces) mentions indeed the possibility for the Provincial Government to be entrusted with broadcasting and telecasting functions, though in principle these functions are limited essentially to the construction and financial management of transmitters and receiving apparatuses.

75 IMS (2009). Op. cit. p.18.

76 A. Rehmat (2008). *Murder and mayhem: The worst year ever for Pakistani media* (Annual State of Pakistan Media Report 2007–08). Islamabad: Intermedia. p.5. Available at <http://www.internews.org.pk/mediareports/2007-08%20-%20State%20of%20Media%20in%20Pakistan%20-%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

77 A. Rehmat (2008). Op. cit. p.9.

78 Ibid.

Another aspect of PEMRA that has drawn strong criticisms from the media community is related to its governance structure. In spite of the fact that the current government has brought some changes in the composition of the 12-member committee overseeing PEMRA's operations, 'media activists are still not comfortable with [it] ... where they highlight the need of a greater representation from the media itself'.⁷⁹ According to Zafarullah Khan, PEMRA 'is still controlled by federal bureaucracy'.⁸⁰

A MEDIA LIBERALISATION DRIVE

In spite of the introduction of more restrictive measures a few years after its inception, the establishment of PEMRA had originally been conceived as a means to facilitate the operations of private TV channels. Musharraf had apparently decided, through PEMRA, to launch a wide liberalisation drive of the electronic media sector that in a few years would completely revolutionise the Pakistani media landscape. The state's monopoly on electronic media was removed, allowing for a mushrooming of private operators. In 2000 there were three state-run channels in Pakistan, while by 2008 there were over 50 privately owned channels.⁸¹

Most analysts agree that the main trigger behind this daring initiative by President Musharraf was the perception that Pakistan, besides confronting its fierce enemy India in military terms, was also engaged in a media war with it, and that it was losing this war. By the late 1990s Pakistan was open territory for the many Hindi channels that had become available across the border through satellite technology. The terrestrial broadcasting proposed by the state-owned PTV was no match for the more innovative programmes originating in India. There was a widespread feeling of a cultural threat coming into being, but also of an opportunity to counter the "enemy's" propaganda concerning current affairs, which was being missed. For these reasons, the first steps towards the establishment of PEMRA had already been taken in 1997, with 'the promulgation of an ordinance ... to set up a regulator for the electronic media'.⁸² The Kargil War, which took place in 1999, further accelerated this process. During that conflict, 'millions of Pakistanis tuned in to Indian satellite television for live coverage of the war',⁸³ since state-owned TV and radio were being particularly secretive in their reporting of military setbacks.

Consequently, the top echelons of the military thought that the time had come to start a counter-propaganda process, in the belief that they still could easily control and harness the media landscape, in spite of the expected proliferation of channels. As already mentioned, that calculation proved to be mistaken, especially as those same mushrooming TV channels played an important role in the process of judicial and democratic transformation that eventually led to the fall of Musharraf.

Other analysts prefer to separate the electronic media liberalisation drive from a pure counter-propaganda discourse. They rather emphasise the pre-existent liberalisation of the telecommunication market as the back door that was inadvertently opened by the Pakistani state, and through which media operators subsequently managed to unhinge the state monopoly on the sector. The market forces unleashed by globalisation, technological innovations in the field of media, a boom in electronic communication technology and people's increased awareness and access to information through mobile phones and internet had all worked as catalysts in the process of electronic media liberalisation.⁸⁴ To understand the impact of this process, it is relevant to note that, when a ban was put on electronic media following the imposition of the state of emergency on 3rd November 2007, people were still able to communicate freely through mobile phone, SMS and internet. Live telecasts of some television channels were still available on the web, providing viewers with an alternative to cable-TV distribution networks.⁸⁵

79 IMS (2009). Op. cit. p.18.

80 Interview, Zafarullah Khan, media analyst, Islamabad, 19th January 2010.

81 In the fiscal year 2008–09, according to the *Economic Survey of Pakistan*, released by the Ministry of Finance, ten new licences were issued to establish satellite TV channels, bringing the total amount of conferred licences since the establishment of PEMRA to 71. For more information, see chapter 14 of the survey, entitled 'Transport and communication', p.16. Available at <http://www.finance.gov.pk/admin/images/survey/chapters/14-Transport09.pdf>.

82 CCE (2005). Op. cit. p.19.

83 Z. Khan and B. Joseph (2008). 'Pakistan after Musharraf: The media take center stage', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 19, No. 4, p.32.

84 Interview, Prof. Javed Kasuri and Dr Zafar, Department of Mass Communication at International Islamic University, Islamabad, 22nd January 2010.

85 Interview, Zahid Hussain, Islamabad, 20th January 2010.

Some media activists argue that the print media had already started to become more liberal and vibrant after the removal of the PPO in the late 1980s. Newspapers became more critical of the rulers' corruption, and this assertive approach is considered key to the dismissal of successive democratic governments between 1988 and 1993. Alternative discourses were available on the various media with regard to Pakistan's nuclear explosions in 1998 and to the Kargil War. At the same time, credit also needs to go to the journalist community's long struggle for media freedom and liberalisation.⁸⁶

CODE OF CONDUCT/ETHICS

The first Code of Ethics in Pakistan was approved by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) as early as 1949.

The ongoing debates regarding such a code are closely related to the inclusion in the 2002 Press Council Ordinance of an 'Ethical Code of Practice'. Through that 17-point document, the military government tried to formulate unilaterally a "behavioural" framework for the press. Most of the final recipients of that code, the journalists themselves, never felt much interest in such a 'uniform response to public issues and concerns'.⁸⁷ Instead, from the very beginning, they lamented the lack of comprehensiveness of the process and the underlying assumption that in a democratic polity it was deemed possible to neutralise all 'the shades of political opinion in society'.⁸⁸ All the various media bodies and associations had, in fact, been excluded from the formulation process and, eventually, all the responsibilities to 'revise, update, enforce and implement the Ethical Code of Practice'⁸⁹ were entrusted to the expressly established Press Council.

The PFUJ has essentially maintained its original positions, which considered self-correction and self-discipline as more important than any piece of media-related legislation, and which upheld that 'there is no need for special Press laws and the ordinary laws of the land should be considered sufficient to punish those who could be proved to have abused the freedom of the Press'.⁹⁰

The current PPP government has recently hinted at its intention to get involved in this matter. If it does eventually act upon these statements of intention, 'it could be the first piece of media-related legislation being promulgated by a civilian government'.⁹¹

There are many compelling arguments which call for some sort of systemic and workable way to ensure a mature and responsible media for Pakistan. First, there is the widely perceived need to somehow control the strong notion among media and journalists that they are 'independent, powerful and can report and do whatever they think is right'. Secondly, the media in Pakistan is not placed within a democratic institutional framework. Media groups are not environments inclined to shared decision-making and self-regulatory processes. Individuals and influential families, often locked in tenacious competition among themselves, hold sway in the media landscape and, through ownership structures that span other sectors of the economy, have further consolidated their 'monopolistic control'.⁹² Thirdly, a handful of allegedly popular anchor persons in newly emerged electronic media do not hide their strong political convictions, and in their public performances are often regarded as lacking professional responsibility and ethics. Fourthly, Pakistani media tends to overplay its role and assert its power beyond reasonably acceptable limits. Fifthly, the media seems to be struggling with the fundamental question of its compatibility with the existing state institutions, particularly in the absence of proper legislation – although there are multiple viewpoints about the desirability and relevance of media laws – and strong democratic institutions.

As mentioned above, the PFUJ and its associated unions are not in favour of state-sponsored regulations and media laws. They rather support the media's self-regulation. But media analysts and journalists have divided

86 Interview, Mazhar Abbas, former secretary-general of the PFUJ, and deputy news director for ARY One World TV, Islamabad, 23rd January 2010.

87 SAFMA (2004). *Amending media laws*. SAFMA National Conference-II, 2nd January 2004, Rawalpindi, Pakistan. p.70.

88 Ibid.

89 Press Council of Pakistan Ordinance 2002, 8. Functions of the Council (iv).

90 PFUJ Constitution, 1954; in Z. Niazi (1986). *Op. cit.* p.94.

91 Interview, Zafarullah Khan, Islamabad, 19th January 2010.

92 Interview, Prof. Javed Kasuri and Dr Zafar, Islamabad, 22nd January 2010.

opinions. Those who support media legislation argue that it is highly unlikely that all the key stakeholders – that is the state, the media owners and the journalists – would agree on the nature and typology of the media's self-evolved code of ethics. The proponents of this argument also assert that it is particularly the journalists and their bodies who advocate self-regulation of the media, in contrast with the relevant concerns felt on the matter by the media owners, the military establishment and the government. They also suspect that the implementation of such a self-regulatory mechanism will be too fragile for a powerful media to abide by.

Those who resent the media laws argue that the government should not control the media and that curbs on the media, such as blackouts and withdrawal of advertisements, are not the solution. They contend that, if the media does not follow some basic ethical lines in its reporting and it publishes or airs false stories, legal measures should be adopted to correct these malpractices. The advocates of this more liberal position further assert that, eventually, the government can still decide to strengthen existing defamatory laws if it considers them insufficient. On the other hand, they are also convinced that the media itself will have to make a conscious decision to stick stringently to a universal code of ethics,⁹³ along the lines of the "Pointers on Coverage of Terrorism Related Events" agreed in October 2009 by 16 leading TV channels.

Media analyst Mazhar Abbas says that a group of journalists once proposed the establishment of a media complaints commission, which was 'to be headed by a supreme court judge and with the minority participation of media actors'. According to him, the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA)⁹⁴ 'did not respond to this proposal because of the media owners' contractual and salary problems with the journalists'.⁹⁵ Leading professor of journalism Dr Mehdi Hasan, believes that there should be a line of objectivity and self-assessment for the media and the journalists, but laments that 'all the governments tried to evolve a code of ethics only in collaboration with the media owners, instead of cooperating also with the journalists'.⁹⁶ This fact strengthens the arguments of some of the media analysts that the government wants to use that code of ethics as 'a coercive tool',⁹⁷ whereas the media owners are interested in them 'to broker favourable deals on other issues with their employees'.⁹⁸

93 A. Rehmat. 'Fear no evil', *The News on Sunday*, 1st November 2009.

94 A body representing all the owners in the media industry.

95 Interview, Mazhar Abbas, Islamabad, 23rd January 2010.

96 Interview, Dr Mehdi Hasan, Lahore, 26th January 2010.

97 A. Rehmat (2008). *Op. cit.* p.6.

98 Interview, *The News* representative, Lahore, 25th January 2010.

MEDIA FREEDOM

THE MEDIA AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE POWER HOLDERS

Pakistani media has always been very careful in not attacking the military. On the other hand, it has often been given a free hand to demonise politicians and the government, as is currently still the case, for instance with regard to the Jang Group and its relentless campaign against the Zardari administration.

Where the establishment has not been able to completely subjugate the media, or at least to keep its most vocal critics under control, through a patronage-like and benefits-based system, it has always been able to resort to an alternative, very effective method: repression.

CHRONICLES OF REPRESSION

The first recorded attack on the freedom of the press took place in 1948, with the proscription of three periodicals belonging to PPL, by the Muslim League government of Punjab. Another provincial government, that of Sindh, followed suit in 1949, by forbidding the circulation of *Dawn*, due to its violent attacks on the ministry. Other cases of harassment of the press, still under the post-independence civilian government, included the 1952 arrest, under the Public Safety Act, of the editor, one of the owners and the printer of the Dhaka daily *Pakistan Observer*. The main reason for that act of repression was the publication of an editorial which had been very critical of the prime minister. In the same year, the Official Secrets Act, a repressive legacy from the colonial past, was invoked by the government to muzzle the press on a constitutional process that had gone astray. The reaction of the press was immediate and united, with the *Nawa-i-Waqt* calling the measure 'a wrong order, grossly unwarranted'.⁹⁹ 'A study of official reports shows that during the first seven years (1947–1953) of Pakistan, in the Punjab alone, 31 newspapers were banned'.¹⁰⁰

Nationalist ideology was also often used as a compelling argument to harass those publications that were not keeping in line with the main dictates of the power holders. Patriotism, or the knowledge of what was best for the Pakistani nation, was presented as the exclusive monopoly of the governing class and its bureaucracy. Only they knew how to properly give meaning to this concept that was so important to the existence of the country, especially in the early years after partition. Therefore, when the weekly publication the *New Orient* proclaimed in 1949 to stand for 'a strong, progressive, sovereign and democratic Pakistan where man-made inequalities will be eliminated' and it demanded 'a popular democratic constitution'¹⁰¹ upholding fundamental human rights, it was forced to close after the publication of only a few issues.

The existence of a set of issues that had to be considered as "untouchable", since they pertained to the very foundations of the country, was further confirmed by other cases of media suppression. The most emblematic of these took place in the first few years of Pakistan's existence. It served as a warning for future generations of journalists about the dangers involved in trespassing on the invisible boundaries of news reporting. Political analyst Zafarullah Khan mentioned this same event as the first case of military restrictive intervention towards the media,¹⁰² but from the different sources consulted it is difficult to arrive at this conclusion, because it concerned a period under civilian government and the main action was actually undertaken by fellow newspaper editors.

99 *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 25th November 1952.

100 Report of the Court Inquiry (Munir Report), Lahore, 1954. p.109.

101 *New Orient*, Karachi, March 1949.

102 Interview, Zafarullah Khan, Islamabad, 19th January 2010.

The case in question is that of the six-month closure of *The Civil & Military Gazette*, the oldest and 'once the most powerful daily in the undivided Punjab and the hinterland of Delhi area'.¹⁰³ The controversy started with the publication of a report, in April 1949, 'suggesting that a compromise formula on the basis of partitioning the State of Jammu and Kashmir was under discussion between India and Pakistan, and an agreement might be reached soon'.¹⁰⁴ The mere mention of such an eventuality in a territorial dispute that barely two years before had unleashed the first of three wars between India and Pakistan for the control of Kashmir was immediately labelled an act of treason against the Pakistani state. At least that is the wording that was used in an editorial jointly published by 16 dailies from across the political spectrum, condemning the article and demanding that the authorities take legal action against the newspaper. The newspaper, where Rudyard Kipling had once worked,¹⁰⁵ was banned for six months and it never recovered from the stigma attached to it and its nefarious consequences. Eventually, in 1964, just a few years before completing its first century of operations,¹⁰⁶ it was closed.

SELF-CENSORSHIP

Despite all the aforementioned attacks on press freedom that took place in the 11 years of civilian administration following Pakistan's independence, the situation radically worsened with the October 1958 military coup led by General Ayub Khan and the resulting promulgation of martial law. The absolute prohibition of any criticism of the regime by the press became a constant feature of all the military regimes that followed. Pre-censorship was structurally introduced as well as a press advice system, the main purposes of which were to induce the media to refrain from publishing anything hostile about the military regime, rather than the regime having to intervene afterwards with more repressive and harsher measures.

The "press advice system" was actually another legacy of colonial rule. It centred on the creation of Press Advisory Boards (later called also Committees or Councils), with a mixed membership of both editors and government officials. Those Boards were expected to provide sufficient guarantees to the government that the press would abstain from publishing any material that would go against government policies, or that could endanger the security or integrity of the country. The system was suppressed on various occasions, but it was promptly revived when control over the role of the media had to be tightened, or when the same media could be used as an extra means for (war) propaganda.¹⁰⁷ Its main feature, however, changed over time, as the advisory councils were made redundant by the promulgation of press advice directly from the Information Ministry or the army to newspapers and news agencies. Eventually, the press laws and the institutionalisation of "the advice system" 'left no room for objective and investigative reporting'.¹⁰⁸ Journalists became the mere messengers of government, a situation that, according to many analysts and members of the media, still exists today.

The option of a government-led takeover of dissenting media outlets was not confined to publishing houses or newspapers, as already seen in the case of the PPL group. National news agencies also experienced this effective method of censorship. In 1949 the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) was created. Despite its initial ambition to become the country's main source of independent news, it soon became entrapped in the scheme of things that determined most of the national media's behaviour. In other words, APP reduced itself to the role of launching pad for all sorts of news, handouts and speeches fed by the establishment. As this domesticated performance apparently did not completely satisfy the political masters of the moment, in 1961 the Ayub regime proceeded with a formal takeover. The reason given for this intervention was the need to save APP from a financial collapse. Its financial position did, in fact, improve after the takeover, but at the same time the news agency found itself further removed from its core mission, that is, the 'supply of unbiased and reliable news to the newspapers and agencies in Pakistan and abroad'.¹⁰⁹ Especially in those times when national newspapers could hardly deploy their own networks of reporters across the country and the access to international news agencies was still limited due to technological constraints, the importance and impact of APP was enormous. But its evident manipulation of the news created an environment of distrust that, as still witnessed today, pushed part of the population (at least those literate in English) to rely more on the foreign press than on the domestic, and the manifest attempts to cover up events, such as the loss of East Pakistan in 1971, occasionally provoked

103 Z. Niazi (1986). Op. cit. p.72.

104 Ibid. p.69.

105 From 1882 to 1887.

106 It had been originally established in Lahore in 1870.

107 The last was the case in the 1965 war between Pakistan and India.

108 Z. Niazi (1986). Op. cit. p.123.

109 As stated in Section 4 of the 15th June 1961 takeover ordinance.

angry reactions among the population against newsmen and newspapers in general. Subsequently, under the civilian government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, APP was used to silence, marginalise and sometimes even attack the political opposition. In that respect, the media in Pakistan today has to cope with a pervasive lack of credibility.

THE POWER OF ADVERTISEMENT

Another means by which authorities in Pakistan have been effective in controlling the media is the discriminatory use that they have made of advertising contracts. Advertisements have always been used 'as a lever and financial pressure against the "erring" newspapers', as many of them, from time to time, 'faced the wrath of the Government in the form of partial or total stoppage of advertisements'.¹¹⁰ A key player in this field has been, once again, the Pakistani army. Due to its extensive presence in the country's economy, spanning across all the main sectors, from agriculture to manufacturing and services, and to its massive financial resources, estimated at about €15 billion,¹¹¹ it can be safely assumed that its advertising power is equally pervasive and financially weighty.

THE ARMY'S PERVASIVE INFLUENCE

Advertising, however, is just one of the many instruments at the army's disposal with which to control and influence the behaviour of the country's media. More repressive measures are obviously readily at hand (as already discussed), as well as other, more surreptitious ones. The buying of alliances and favours (further elaborated in the following section) is one, as is the power to induce the media to internalise the army's propaganda. One of the most striking examples of this internalisation of propaganda is provided by the widespread and unshakable (at least until the April 2009 Swat offensive – see later in the report for more details) support that the media has given to the Taliban movement since its anti-Soviet inception under general Zia ul-Haq. This long-term process of indoctrination has been one of the main reasons that prevented a sudden shift in public opinion about the role and perception of the Taliban, despite the new course advocated by President Musharraf in the aftermath of the events of 11th September. The "unconscious" absorption of a certain rhetoric, which mainly defined the Taliban as freedom fighters for the Kashmir cause and as staunch advocates of a puritan form of Islam, revealed itself to be more resistant to removal than originally expected by the country's leaders. In addition, the situation in this regard has been further complicated by the alleged support that some elements within the army have been providing to the Taliban, even after the public announcement that the Pakistani state was to take all the necessary steps to distance itself from any links to the country's Taliban.

The far-reaching effects of this kind of internalisation of the army's discourse by the national media were recently confirmed by the debate that took place in the country after the long-announced Kerry-Lugar bill¹¹² was finally passed in the US Congress at the end of September 2009. As noted by media analyst Zafarullah Khan¹¹³ following that event, all the media reacted in unison and endorsed the harsh critiques that were expressed by the Pakistani military towards the legislation. According to Mr Khan, it was no coincidence that the national media would take over the Inter Services Public Relations' (ISPR) argument characterising the Kerry-Lugar bill as an attempt by the US 'to compromise Pakistan's sovereignty, impinge on Pakistan's national security interests, [and] micromanage any aspect of Pakistani military or civilian operations'.¹¹⁴ The media was simply responding to the military's propaganda and instinctively showing its considerable level of assimilation of the same.

THE MEDIA AND THE ISPR

A more direct interaction between the media and the military began to emerge after the end of Zia ul-Haq's regime, as regular briefings were given by the ISPR – the media wing of the military – to journalists. The ISPR used to share with journalists some occasional reports, which carried very limited information. After 9/11, the role of the ISPR increased many-fold, particularly with reference to news about the troops' deployment in conflict zones, military operations against the militants and the role of the Pakistani army in the global War on Terror. Throughout this period, however, the interaction between the military and the journalists remained constrained by two major factors: firstly, the military's need for secrecy and, secondly, how this need affected the media's

110 Z. Niazi (1986). Op. cit. p.111.

111 For more details on the matter, see M. Mezzera and S. Aftab (2009). *Pakistan state-society analysis*, Initiative for Peacebuilding. Available at http://www.initiativeforpeacebuilding.com/pdf/Pakistan_State_Society_Analysis.pdf.

112 More formally known as the 'S. 3263: Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2008', which was originally proposed to the 110th Congress by Senator Joseph Biden.

113 Interview, Zafarullah Khan, Islamabad, 19th January 2010.

114 A. Iqbal. 'US note dilutes some conditions in Kerry-Lugar bill', *Dawn*, 14th October 2009.

capacity to understand what was going on within the conflict zones.¹¹⁵ Currently, some analysts believe that the liberalisation of the electronic media launched under Musharraf has widened the scope of the media discourse and debate. Many long-existing taboos concerning the sensitivity of military-related information have been gradually broken. Pakistani media has now started to talk about defence policy and intelligence agencies in a way that could not even be imagined in the past.¹¹⁶

THE MEDIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE PPP

The aforementioned process of increasing conservatism, which has engulfed the Pakistani media since the first military regime, is reflected, among others, by the history of the media's responses to the PPP, one of the two largest political parties in Pakistan, characterised by secular, left-wing leanings. Leading professor of journalism Dr Mehdi Hasan argues that Pakistan's military establishment and media have been opposing and campaigning against the PPP since the party's establishment. An anti-PPP media campaign was initially launched during the Ayub regime. Later in 1970, on the eve of the general elections, all Pakistani newspapers, except two, were campaigning against the PPP. From 1972 to 1977 traditional right-wing media continued this campaign, or media trial, except some newspapers which were under the government-controlled NPT. During the Zia ul-Haq regime, not only did the media maintain its harsh approach to the PPP, but also those journalists having democratic, liberal and secular inclinations were often subjected to self-exile, floggings, arrests and trials in military courts. Both of Benazir Bhutto's governments had to face similar media responses from most, if not all, of the media groups.¹¹⁷ This kind of systematic "media trial" is not visible to any comparable degree for any of the right-wing political parties, which have generally enjoyed broad media support.

THE MEDIA AND RELIGIOUS MILITANCY

In combination with its support for the military establishment and the right-wing political discourse, the media has become, advertently or inadvertently, supportive of the extremist and militant tendencies in the country. The media was not far behind in the anti-Ahmadiyya disturbances in Punjab in 1953 which made it clear that it was more than willing to "play ball" with the undemocratic forces.¹¹⁸ Since then, a part of Pakistan's mainstream media has been manifesting an approach that is very close to the militants' media. The media barons of Pakistan cannot be excluded from the responsibility for creating and promoting an extreme religious or ideological view in the country.¹¹⁹ More recent developments – such as the mushrooming growth of the media, especially of electronic media, and the accompanying crescendo of media liberalisation – have been regarded by some analysts as showing a dubious coincidence, not only chronologically but also in terms of a possible structured political framework, with the advent of religious militancy.

The current wave of violence by radical extremists and other terrorists has, however, exposed the media's shortcomings on many levels. Mainstream media, for instance, has failed to inform the people about the realities accompanying the rise of extremism in Pakistan, and has been a source of great confusion. The media has mostly chosen not to use its tremendous outreach to counter extremist tendencies and propaganda. It has done so either to appease extremists or because it subscribes to the same extremist ideology. Until recently, most newspapers and TV channels seemed almost at pains not to dwell on the context of the emergence of the Taliban and other extremist elements. Media experts argue that newspapers and TV channels in Pakistan did not, and perhaps still do not, perceive the Taliban as a threat to the country or its people. Only one year ago – before the launch of the military operation in Swat, which will be discussed later in the report – countless newspaper reports and TV talk shows were opposing military action, or justifying the illegal and unconstitutional demands of the Taliban, at a moment when they had effectively ended the writ of the state in the Malakand division and were attacking security forces personnel, public representatives and common citizens.¹²⁰

115 As elaborated by Ejaz Haider, a leading journalist associated with SAMAA TV, at an event held on 16th September 2008 at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, US. Summarised text and video recording of the programme are available at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/ondemand/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.play&mediaid=BE27523E-C0A8-77AC-511504F19B3C19C3>.

116 Interview, Zahid Hussain, Islamabad, 20th January 2010.

117 Interview, Dr Mehdi Hasan, Lahore, 26th January 2010.

118 W. Masood (2010). 'Militant media in Pakistan: Political etymology and professional craft', *A PIPS Research Journal of Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1.

119 'Assessing the reporting, approach and impact of militants' print media in Pakistan', *PIPS Newsletter*, 23rd November 2009. Available at <http://www.san-pips.com/index.php?action=events&id=58>.

120 N. U. Din (2010). 'Mainstream media's response to radical extremism', *A PIPS Research Journal of Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1.

INFILTRATION BY CORRUPTION

Media freedom has been subject to multiple pressures and threats since partition and the inception of an independent Pakistan. As also elaborated in the Executive Summary of this report, press freedom was inherently limited by the original mission of the pre-independence media, which had been established, among other reasons, as a means to support the policies of the All India Muslim League. The media's politicised agenda had triggered a wide array of repressive legislation and other controlling measures by the colonial administrators.

Once Pakistan came into being, the political value of such a repressive legislation was understood and further pursued by wide sections of the military and civilian establishment that were struggling for power in the country. The media became part of that power struggle and, at all levels of its operational capacity, from the editor-owners to the locally based news reporters, it became susceptible to informal alliances with the various power brokers. In that respect, media repression was not always perceived as a negative phenomenon, since the closure or takeover of a competing newspaper would open new commercial opportunities for those media outlets which had instead chosen to side with the winning party.

In order to make this system of alliances as widespread and as structured as possible, government agencies, especially since the first military regime of Ayub Khan, began to actively recruit individual journalists across a diverse range of media groups and outlets. Public funds were often misused and diverted towards these purposes. Ad hoc institutions were established, such as the "Writers' Guild" in 1964, which were meant to corrupt and buy the loyalties of selected writers through the award of cash prizes. But, once again, this practice was not a prerogative of the military regimes. It was probably "institutionalised" by them, but the first seeds had already been planted and had sprouted on that substrate of political intrigue and feudal-like patronage that had emerged soon after partition. For instance, four vernacular papers which were subsidised by the League government, allegedly as part of an anti-illiteracy drive, became mere instruments of the same government's anti-Ahmadiyya campaign. That campaign led ultimately to the 1953 anti-Ahmadiyya riots and to the first martial law in the country. 'During the Bhutto regime, this practice continued on a wider scale than his predecessor's era'¹²¹ (i.e. during the military dictatorship of Yahya Khan). That the situation had already deteriorated by 1972 is proven by the appeal that the PFUJ made to the government 'to publish the names of all those journalists who were receiving money from the secret funds administered by the Central and Provincial Governments during the dictatorial regimes'.¹²² A direct system of corruption was therefore introduced, which, as indicated during the field work for this report, seems to be still very much alive and effective. For instance, a Lahore-based journalist working for one of the main television channels in the country, during an interview given to the authors of this report, referred to a "balance sheet" of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) which he had allegedly seen and on which the names of well-known fellow journalists and anchor persons were listed, together with the annual compensations they were meant to receive from the military intelligence agency.

All the infringements and interferences by the country's establishment described in the report have left profound scars. Conformism in news reporting has become the norm, and it is only since the liberalisation of the electronic media that some enthusiasm for media independence seems to have resurfaced. However, it still remains to be seen whether the current ostentation of political independence is real, or whether it is rather a new, more sophisticated, strategy of following a script that has been determined outside the newsrooms and that does not necessarily respond to the principle of impartiality in news reporting.

¹²¹ Z. Niazi (1986). *Op. cit.* p.47.

¹²² *Ibid.*

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN TWO RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

THE SWAT OFFENSIVE

According to media analyst Zafarullah Khan, the April 2009 Swat offensive became 'the first war ever in Pakistan's history where the army enjoyed complete support from the country's Parliament'.¹²³ Even the four previous conflicts with India had not managed to muster such a comprehensive level of political support. However, this exceptional level of political unity behind a military operation seems destined to remain a unique event, as demonstrated by the resurfacing of political tinkering on the occasion of the more recent offensive in South Waziristan.¹²⁴ Compared to the process that preceded the Swat offensive – where President Zardari decided to try to build political consensus around the initiative by also involving those parties that were not represented in parliament – the parliamentary process that led to the South Waziristan offensive was rather a "mutilated" one. Some of the opposition parties were left out of this process, dangerously exposing the state's flanks to their delegitimising.

The media's behaviour mirrored completely the different directions of the two political debates. While, in the case of the Swat offensive, the media formed a united front in favour of intervention, with the South Waziristan offensive, opinions became more divided. It is obviously quite difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether the media's positions on the two issues can be regarded more as a cause or an effect of the actual events that took place. However, what is certain is that, while the Taliban problem in the Swat Valley was generally recognised as an internal threat that needed to be confronted, the South Waziristan offensive was frequently questioned as a proxy military action undertaken to dissipate US pressures.

Despite these legitimate doubts in assessing the real contribution of the media to a radical shift of positions of public opinion toward the so-called Pakistani Taliban, it is a fact that, around the events that led to the Swat offensive, Pakistan's society witnessed a radical change of discourse among all the various national media outlets. On that occasion, the Pakistani media opted for a united stand against the excesses shown by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan's (TTP) members in the seven districts of the FATA, where they had *de facto* taken over administrative responsibilities from the provincial and local authorities.

It is beyond doubt that the state contributed with all its available means to this paradigm shift. Besides widespread allegations that the circulation of a short video showing the flogging of a young girl by TTP members¹²⁵ (which triggered an outburst of public outrage across the country) was due to the operation of Pakistani intelligence services,¹²⁶ the federal government embarked on an effective campaign of "information warfare". As the Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting himself declared, 'with the onset of military action in Swat and Malakand last year, we launched a range of initiatives that included: daily media briefings, establishment of Crisis Communications Centres, live PTV transmissions for IDPs, large TV screens in IDP camps, an official website, a public service message campaign across nearly 50 TV channels, 30 radio stations and 200 national and regional

¹²³ Interview, Zafarullah Khan, Islamabad, 19th January 2010.

¹²⁴ The three-pronged attack against Taliban strongholds in this FATA agency was launched in mid-October 2009.

¹²⁵ See D. Walsh. 'Video of girl's flogging as Taliban hand out justice', *Guardian*, 2nd April 2009. Available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/02/taliban-pakistan-justice-women-flogging>.

¹²⁶ These allegations included a statement by Muslim Khan, the then spokesman of the Taliban in the Swat Valley, that the video had been recorded eight to nine months before the signing of the February 2009 peace deal with the provincial government. Apparently, the allegation continued, some elements within the state had been waiting for the right moment to issue the shocking video.

publications, field engagement of university students, trade unions, bar councils and intellectuals, etc, to raise awareness and garner societal support for our national cause'.¹²⁷ Through PEMRA, the government also issued 64 notifications prohibiting any media coverage of an equal number of organisations that had been banned because of their alleged links to the Taliban or to other terrorist groups. In addition, in order to win the propaganda war, the government had understood the importance of neutralising the effective networks of FM radio stations that the militants had established in those areas. With the support of the publicity arm of Pakistan's military, the ISPR, it first launched Radio Swat in February 2009, and about two months later it followed that initiative through with the launching of a military offensive. Eventually, the disruptive power of the military action cleared the areas of the presence of those militant FM radio stations, and the once almost legendary "Radio Mullah", alias Mullah Fazlullah, was pushed back into silence.¹²⁸ Several months later the same debilitating effects on the Taliban's capacity to control local airwaves were reported during the military offensive in South Waziristan, as witnessed by Mansur Khan Mahsud, an analyst from that FATA agency.¹²⁹

Overall, the Swat offensive represented a milestone in the government's understanding of the profound influence of media on local and national political events. In fact, from then on, it moved steadily ahead in trying to articulate an alternative political and ideological discourse to the one proposed by the Taliban, and it saw in a strong partnership with the media the most effective way to achieve this new strategy.

Many questions, however, still remain unanswered concerning the media's response to militancy, religious extremists and terrorism, and to its role and capacity in reporting and analysing the various conflicts afflicting the country. Furthermore, questions also exist with regard to the media's relationship with the political and military establishments, as noted in a previous section of this report. As media experts argue, the Swat episode does not offer clear evidence of a structural shift in the media's positions towards religious extremism. Leading professor of journalism Dr Mehdi Hasan, for instance, mentions the case of the 17-day-long siege of the Red Mosque in July 2007, when most of the national media took an anti-militants position, but eventually ended up taking a more sympathetic stance. Dr Hasan believed that this was due to two structural flaws in the Pakistani media: that is, the media in the country is 'by design sympathetic to militants/extremists and by default not well versed with its role during a conflict situation'.¹³⁰

THE LAWYERS' MOVEMENT

Observers tend to agree on the assumption that the important achievements of the lawyers' movement can be explained, to a great extent, by the close relationship that the movement developed with the national media. The main factor behind this success story of civil disobedience, which ultimately contributed to the removal of a military dictator, has been unquestionably the high degree of visibility that the movement enjoyed by means of the wide and unfettered coverage offered by the country's media throughout most of its evolution.¹³¹ Simply by offering coverage of the lawyers' actions and protest, the media became part of the process of political and judicial reform that started to take place in Pakistan in March 2007. In addition, some of the media outlets, such as the various GEO TV channels belonging to the Jang Group, sided openly with the movement. Others, however, such as SAMAA TV, preferred to adopt a more impartial position and limited themselves to reporting the events, without providing the viewers with opinions.¹³²

When the lawyers' movement took off, following the 9th March 2007 sacking of Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, the media landscape in Pakistan had already been profoundly marked by the electronic media liberalisation drive that had been launched in 2002. In the space of a few years, there had been a multiplication of FM radio, satellite television and local cable TV operators, which offered a much wider sounding

127 Q. Z. Kaira. 'From information "warfare" to "welfare"', *Daily Times*, 19th January 2010. Available at http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2010\01\19\story_19-1-2010_pg3_5.

128 For more information, see P. Reeves, 'Pakistan's military wins Swat Valley radio war', NPR, 31st Augst 2009. Available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=112397752>.

129 Interview, Mansur Khan Mahsud, Islamabad, 21st January 2010.

130 Interview, Dr Mehdi Hasan, Lahore, 26th January 2010.

131 At least until November 2007, when then President Musharraf decided to declare emergency rule in the country, thereby, among other measures, proceeding with the closure of most of the TV.

132 Interview, SAMAA TV representative, Islamabad, 19th January 2010.

board to political and social phenomena, such as the one where the lawyers' movement played such a central role. This effective sounding board eventually saw the process to restore democracy and judicial independence all the way through until the 18th February 2008 elections. At that defining moment, one could conclude that the lawyers' movement and its travelling companion, the media, had reached the end of an intensive and exciting journey through Pakistan's political misfortunes. In fact, after the elections, the two slowly but steadily fell apart, as structural fissures started to appear in their relationship and within the media front. An increasing number of media players began to look at the movement as a composite kaleidoscope of actors fighting for power, while others remained committed to its original reforming mission. Eventually, the simple fact that differences in opinion started to surface in the media discourse was enough to partly demolish the previously held aura of ethical unassailability that the movement had enjoyed.

Furthermore, the leaders of the lawyers' movement – particularly those who had played a great role in mobilising the media and the public opinion – became hesitant at the prospect of being part of any effort aimed at sabotaging the democratically elected government. They rather preferred to give the government enough time to resolve the issue. But some television channels were displaying the same old spirit by launching a campaign against Zardari and his government for not fulfilling their promises of restoration of the Chief Justice. In the period leading to and following the Supreme Court's verdict on the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), some TV talk shows and media analyses seemed to encourage the judiciary and the lawyers' community to play a more political role. But the majority of the programmes and broadcasts were more balanced in their reporting and analyses. Analysts believe this role of the media in what they call the second phase of the lawyers' movement was more cautious, individualistic and in accordance with their own interests.

Other political analysts believe that the battle fought against Musharraf 'reflected divisions within the establishment over a man who had to go because he had become too costly for the state'.¹³³ The media, perhaps, was aware of it, and encouraged by these divisions it decided to side with the lawyers' movement against Musharraf; in comparison, the Pakistani media 'had remained relatively soft with Musharraf before 2007'.¹³⁴

Another fundamental factor which compelled the media to be part of the lawyers' movement was public pressure. Media owners and journalists were forced to cover the lawyers' movement because the people wanted to see it; journalists played a vital role and even more so when compared with 'the owners' initial reluctance'.¹³⁵ Some analysts opine that the 'political defence team' of Iftikhar M. Chaudhry mobilised the public opinion purposely. The media went with it and became the only voice. Munir Malik, as the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president, emphasised that the responsibility of the barristers was to sensitise the court to political questions, and the court would be sensitised when public opinion was mobilised.¹³⁶ Prominent members of the bar appeared on television and in print to argue against Musharraf's move. When the media provided live coverage of protests and the Chief Justice's rallies, Musharraf's approval ratings started to collapse. On 4th June 2007 the president issued a second amendment to the PEMRA Ordinance, further constraining the media. The amendment placed significant restrictions on television channels, banning live coverage of rallies by the lawyers' movement. However, the journalists along with the lawyers came out on the streets, forcing the prime minister to withdraw the ordinance after a few days.¹³⁷

According to some analysts, the interactions emerging between the media and the lawyers' movement at the height of the latter's protests already testify to the power to act as an instrument of change being developed by the media. The Pakistani media gained an unparalleled confidence and a sense of power after the success of the lawyers' movement. The long-term implications of this newly acquired status can be both positive and negative for Pakistan's politics and democracy, and for the media itself, depending on how the main media houses will decide to position themselves in the country's ongoing political debates.

133 A. Siddiq. 'Politics of media', *Dawn*, Islamabad, 2nd January 2009.

134 Interview, *Dawn* TV representative, Islamabad, 20th January 2010.

135 Interview, Taufeeq Asif, president of Rawalpindi Bar Association, Islamabad, 22nd January 2010.

136 S. A. Ghias (2010). 'Miscarriage of Chief Justice: Judicial power and the legal complex in Pakistan under Musharraf', *Law & Social Inquiry*, Vol. 35, No. 4. Available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1163642>.

137 *Ibid.*

CHALLENGES

MEDIA'S LACK OF MATURITY AND PROFESSIONALISM

Many of the interviewees indicated the media's lack of maturity and professionalism as one of the biggest obstacles to objective and truly independent journalism. Some also referred to the nearly total absence of social issues from the national news as a sign of qualitative journalism. They pointed to the fact that ordinary people were hardly making any news in today's Pakistan. On the contrary, most of the media outlets would either operate as an adjunct mouthpiece of the establishment, or they would go for a highly controversial scoop, no matter if it were based on scant or non-existent evidence, or if it could become a potential trigger of political and social unrest. As media analyst Zafarullah Khan aptly described, Pakistan is currently faced with a strongly 'event-driven media'.¹³⁸

While journalists and their bodies have been struggling hard to win media liberties and rights, they have not sufficiently focused on improving their professionalism and the quality of journalism. The number of journalists in Pakistan shot up from an estimated 2,000 in 2002 to over 10,000 in 2010. Concurrently, their average age dropped from 43 to 27 years. Little qualitative effort was made to improve these new journalists' professional capacities, and organisations such as press clubs and universities did little for their professional grooming.¹³⁹ This is largely due to the slow development of professional journalism training systems in the country, which have not been able to match the rapid growth of the media industry. Until 2007, there were only 12 journalism schools or departments in universities in the whole of Pakistan. The media boom demanded a marked expansion in the education system, and as a consequence of that demand the number of media schools has increased to 32. Peshawar University, for instance, nowadays boasts a media department that has been developed according to state-of-the-art standards and with international support.¹⁴⁰ Some media support organisations, such as the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA), run media schools which provide refresher and short-term training courses to journalists. The PFUJ also arranges such occasional training for journalists on safety, technical and reporting issues. But outreach and the outcome of all these initiatives remain very limited and out of step with the fast pace of media expansion.

Farook Khan, project director at Islamabad Media University, a project of the government's Information Ministry, believes it is imperative to assess and fill the gaps in professional journalism in Pakistan, particularly after the liberalisation of media. With this aim in mind, he has tried to consult with university students, faculty members, journalists and the media owners to look into what kind of initiatives could be taken at the state level. As a result, they launched the "Media University Project" which provides one- to four-week training courses to district-level correspondents/stringers, and aim to transform this project into a full-fledged media university in the future.¹⁴¹ Independent analysts, however, look at this project with an eye of suspicion, afraid that it could inject political bias into the journalists.¹⁴²

Others assert that most of the institutes teach obsolete and outdated curricula that are not compatible with applied journalism. On the other hand, many journalists do not necessarily need a relevant academic background to perform their profession in Pakistan. Learning is mostly acquired by doing, or from seniors. Media houses, in

138 Interview, Zafarullah Khan, Islamabad, 19th January 2010.

139 S. I. Ashraf. 'Genie out of the bottle', *Dawn*, Islamabad, 16th March 2010.

140 R. Kalansooriya (2010). *Op. cit.*

141 Interview, Farook Khan, project director at Islamabad Media University, Islamabad, 23rd January 2010.

142 Interview, Mustansar Javed, general secretary SAFMA Pakistan, Islamabad, 22nd January 2010.

turn, do not seem interested in changing their traditional approach to journalism as a profession. They still think that internships provide a sufficient basis to develop capable reporters. And at the same time they often abide by the old recruitment system where personal contacts are preferred above skills and professional integrity. That is, of course, hardly surprising, given the fact that, ultimately, 'their only interest is to sell and not to educate'.¹⁴³

Following the media liberalisation, the mushrooming TV channels started to recruit heavily from print journalism. That process not only impacted on the professional composition of the print media, but it also provided the electronic media with journalists who were not trained in electronic journalism. It has changed the structure and functioning of the print media, where more than 80 percent of the journalists presently have less than three years' experience.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, those working in electronic media 'lack realisation of the impact of video and audio material on the public. Their news editors are not acting as gatekeepers either, as often it is not the news channels that are paying for the work of these reporters. The TV journalists, in fact, seem to have taken over the tradition of the print media, where their main sources of income are dependent on reporting friendly to the local power brokers'.¹⁴⁵ Nonetheless, both the print and electronic media depend heavily on local correspondents – volunteer and non-salaried representatives of media groups at district and town level – who generally have minimal or irrelevant education, and lack any professional training to professionally report the news.

AN INCLINATION FOR SENSATIONALISM

Due to their inadequate academic and professional expertise, most Pakistani journalists are not trained to understand, investigate and analyse the complex issues related to politics, conflict and extremism. Instead, personal biases and sensationalism dominate their stories.

Sensationalism is, in fact, one of the fundamental ills affecting Pakistan's news reporting. The Urdu media relies greatly on sensationalism – a narrative devoid of investigation, crammed with personal biases and based on controversies. One reason for this specific characteristic of Urdu media is that there are psychological and socio-cultural sensitivities associated with Urdu audiences, concerning, for example, matters such as sex, tradition and religion, which strongly determine their preferences and the way they tend to interpret events. The Urdu media has to take into account such sensitivities and concerns affecting a large portion of the population.¹⁴⁶ In the electronic media landscape, this trend of sensationalism can also be explained by the pressing need to be the first to deliver breaking news, thereby getting better ratings and winning popularity.

SECURITY THREATS

Pakistani media and journalists operate in an environment which puts them face-to-face with diverse and frequent internal and external threats and constraints. Those factors have a profound impact on the accuracy of the reporting. Business pressures and curbs on journalists restrict their investigative and reporting capacity through media groups' internal censorship. External threats to media representatives come from both state and non-state actors trying to limit others' points of view. These threats are not virtual but real. More than 45 journalists have been killed in Pakistan in the last 10 years, without proper investigations or actions being undertaken to pursue the culprits.¹⁴⁷ A report by Intermedia¹⁴⁸ reveals that during just one year (from 3rd May 2008 to 3rd May 2009) 15 journalists were killed in Pakistan,¹⁴⁹ 61 were injured and 35 were abducted or arrested. There were 104 incidents of intimidation and 11 attacks on media property. During this period, the report says, Punjab was the most dangerous place to practise journalism, with 81 of the 247 cases of violations against the media. Media activist Mazhar Abbas is of the view that it is more difficult to deal with non-state actors. State agencies, he argues, in principle have to operate within a legal framework and the government can be held accountable if laws or human rights are allegedly violated.¹⁵⁰

143 Interview, Mayed Ali, *The News* chief reporter, Lahore, 25th January 2010.

144 R. Kalansooriya (2010). Op. cit.

145 Interview, Dr Mehdi Hasan, Lahore, 26th January 2010.

146 Interview, Wussatullah Khan, Islamabad, 20th January 2010.

147 Interview, Mazhar Abbas, Islamabad, 23rd January 2010.

148 See A. Rehmat (2008). Op. cit.

149 As a result of suicide bombings, security forces' operations or attacks by militants.

150 Interview, Mazhar Abbas, Islamabad, 23rd January 2010.

The same foreman of ARY TV also emphasised the complete lack of any training in personal-safety measures for media representatives working for national businesses. He enumerated a series of deadly occurrences where media people had approached the scene of a terrorist attack without the necessary precautions, subsequently falling victim to the delayed explosion of improvised devices. This abysmal state of affairs is in stark contrast with the sort of preparation and protection that staff working for foreign (mainly western) media outlets normally enjoy. Not only is basic safety equipment, such as bulletproof vests and helmets, provided by their employers, but in the tragic occurrence of personal threats or kidnapping, foreign media groups, and especially the major ones, have demonstrated the willingness to exert all possible pressure on state institutions to do everything in their capacity to bring the event to a positive end. A case in point is BBC Urdu correspondent Wussatullah Khan, who during an interview with the authors referred to the case of one of their correspondents from South Waziristan whose younger brother had been killed in suspicious circumstances. Because of growing security concerns about this correspondent, the BBC decided to pull him out of the area and post him to Dera Ismail Khan. These safety precautions, unfortunately, did not prove to be sufficient. During a visit to Islamabad, he was kidnapped for about eight hours. Only direct contacts between BBC directors in the UK and the military's top lawyers in Pakistan made a quick release possible.¹⁵¹

However, even within the foreign media landscape there are some black spots. Mazhar Abbas pointed specifically to the position of the so-called "stringers",¹⁵² who, according to him, were not offered any benefits from their foreign employers, such as special insurance packages for the dangerous work they were involved in.

As already mentioned, the risks are particularly high for those journalists operating in the border areas with Afghanistan.¹⁵³ They have to continuously perform a very complicated balancing act in order not to create enemies on either side of the internal conflict. Mazhar Abbas mentioned the case of a few journalists who had been briefly detained by the Taliban to verify whether they were real journalists or government spies. According to him, militants have established an effective monitoring system, which also keeps track of reports being filed by foreign journalists or their stringers. This close monitoring allows them to subsequently exert pressure on the media representatives, and stringers are particularly exposed to those pressures and threats.

On the other hand, the state, and especially the military apparatus, does not passively witness those pressures being exerted by their enemies. In an effort to counter them, it unfortunately often ends up replicating them. Journalists operating in those areas are strongly discouraged from publishing viewpoints other than those of the military.

The result of these complex pressures and threats, which are often directed at family members as well, is that many journalists eventually choose to either leave the profession or to be transferred to a safer duty station within the country or even abroad.

As well as in the troubled frontier areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, journalists also face similar security threats from both state and non-state actors in the other restive province of Baluchistan. The convergence of various tension lines that run across a separatist movement, the resulting military repression and the presence of Taliban elements have created an extremely dangerous environment for those that dare to express or report views that are perceived as favourable to any of the groups involved in the power struggle in the province. According to Mazhar Abbas, Baluchistan has recorded the only case of the killing of a journalist in Pakistan where responsibility has been openly claimed by the perpetrators. The Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA), a Baluchi nationalist secessionist organisation, vindicated the assassination of senior journalist Chishti Mujahid in Quetta, on 9th February 2008, on the ground that the headlines of his articles had been deemed as damaging to the cause of the militant movement.¹⁵⁴ That violence directed towards journalists in Baluchistan can come from all different sources, however, is proven by the recent killing of Faiz Mohammad Khan Sasoli, correspondent for *Aaj Kal* and *Independent News of Pakistan*. While no group claimed responsibility for the killing that took place in Khuzdar District on 27th June 2010, the PFUJ reported that Faiz had survived two attacks in the previous 12 months and had received threats from the militant Baloch Musallah Difah Tanzeem (BMDT).¹⁵⁵ Gunmen from this

151 Interview, Wussatullah Khan, Islamabad, 20th January 2010.

152 Newspaper correspondents retained on a part-time basis to report on events in particular places.

153 In 2009 most of the targeted journalists were operating in the NWFP (currently known as the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

154 For more information, see 'Insecurity confronts Balochistan journalists', *SANA*, 9th November 2009. Available at <http://www.sananews.com.pk/english/2009/11/09/insecurity-confronts-balochistan-journalists/>.

155 Literally meaning the Baloch Armed Defence Group.

group had also visited the press club in Khuzdar several times during 2010 and had 'threatened to kill journalists who continue to cover the activities of the provinces pro-independence parties'.¹⁵⁶

FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS AND JOB INSECURITY

With the exception of a handful of popular anchor persons and opinion makers, most Pakistani journalists face bleak professional prospects in terms of salary and contractual conditions. They do not have permanent jobs, but work on a contract basis,¹⁵⁷ and 85 percent of them do not have contracts at all and can be fired at any time by media owners. Correspondents are honorary stringers who normally work without salaries, and are not provided with identity cards by the media groups they work for.¹⁵⁸ The meagre salaries and incentives do not provide space for investigative journalism, as there are no separate funds available to journalists for research and investigation purposes.¹⁵⁹

There are even reports that media groups have been implementing contractual arrangements with local journalists along the business example of the franchising formula. Mazhar Abbas, for instance, reported a case brought to his attention, where a media group was asking aspiring journalists for PKR 5,000 (€50) for the concession to open a local branch.

As already mentioned in the report, the basic assumption underpinning this peculiar state of affairs, which suits perfectly most of the media owners, is that it is up to the individual journalist to look for alternative sources of income in a creative way. The actual implication of this assumption is that journalists are encouraged to use the power of media to solicit or accept all sorts of favours being offered by state institutions and local power brokers always keen to enjoy favourable publicity in the news. The irregular contractual and business situation in which they find themselves, therefore, generates space for external agents such as the intelligence agencies, to infiltrate the media and, among other things, monitor the activities of "non-aligned" journalists.¹⁶⁰

One way to release most of the journalists from their financial constraints could be the implementation of the 7th Wage Board Award, as strongly advocated by the PFUJ. Approved in 2001, this award has never been implemented, allegedly due to the resistance of the owners of the newspapers. The Wage Board has therefore been inactive ever since, not performing the function for which it had been created in 1954, namely the fixing of the rates of wages for journalists in the country. In that year, in fact, the government formed a commission to look after the working conditions and the wages that were being paid to the journalists. The commission advised the government to constitute a wage board, with the responsibility of deciding the pay of newspapers' employees. The decisions of the board, which was to be constituted again after each five years, were defined as binding for all newspaper owners.

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

A final challenge to the future of the media in Pakistan can definitely be identified in the abysmal state of the educational system in the country. Despite the fact that the rapid expansion of the electronic media, and mainly of the television, has strongly popularised news services and radically increased their level of penetration among the public, the quality of the information propagated by most of these electronic media is not such that it can stimulate self-reflection and a balanced opinion on the country's political affairs. There is a general agreement that quality journalism can mainly be found within the press. However, in a country where 44 percent of the adult population is illiterate and where only around ten percent of children complete secondary education,¹⁶¹ the impact of print media is still well behind its full potential. Improving educational access for all sections of the

156 'Reporter killed in Quetta, journalist injured in kidnap attempt in Tribal Areas', *Reporters Without Borders*, 16th April 2010. Available at <http://en.rsf.org/reporter-killed-in-quetta-16-04-2010,37038.html>.

157 Particularly those operating in conflict areas.

158 Interview, Mazhar Abbas, Islamabad, 23rd January 2010.

159 S. Sial (2009). 'Human rights reporting in Pakistani media', *A PIPS Research Journal of Conflict and Peace Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1.

160 Interview, Mazhar Abbas, Islamabad, 23rd January 2010.

161 For more details on key social indicators in Pakistan, see 'Pakistan social and living standards measurement survey (PSLM) 2007-08', *Federal Bureau of Statistics*, June 2009. Available at http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/fbs/statistics/pslm2007_08/report_pslm07_08.pdf.

population may eventually also help to establish a more balanced relationship between a national TV viewership that is currently estimated at around 86 million,¹⁶² and a daily circulation of newspapers that hardly reaches three million.¹⁶³ The growing gap between the two media is also confirmed by the strong reduction in the number of magazines and newspapers circulating in the country. According to figures provided by the director of the Centre for Media and Communication Studies at the International Islamic University, between 2000 and 2009 there had been a reduction of 40 percent, with no effort from the government to protect the print media.¹⁶⁴

The shortcomings of the educational sector are also felt at its higher levels. Despite the great expansion of media departments and curricula that has accompanied the liberalisation of the sector, most of these initiatives have been broadly regarded as disconnected from the media industry. Universities tend to focus on general subjects and do not devote enough attention to the development of technical skills. The academic institutions, in turn, blame the media groups for their 'lack of a strategic approach' towards the students.¹⁶⁵ In fact, there seems to be a trend among the many graduates of journalism studies to abandon any prospect of an insecure career in the media, and rather to 'decide to go into advertising, government, or public relations'.¹⁶⁶

162 For more information, see Gilani & Gallup Pakistan. 'Cyberletter Media', June 2009.

163 95 percent of which is in Urdu, according to Dr Mehdi Hasan, Dean of School of Media and Communication, Beaconhouse National University (Lahore, 25th January 2010).

164 Interview, Javed Mahmood Kasuri, Director of the Centre for Media and Communication Studies at the International Islamic University, Islamabad, 22nd January 2010.

165 Ibid.

166 Interview, Dr Mehdi Hasan, Lahore, 25th January 2010.

CONCLUSIONS

THE MILITARY AND MEDIA LEGISLATION

When considering the potential role of the media as an agent of reform within Pakistan's governance system, it should be noted that all the legislation affecting the media in Pakistan, both in progressive and regressive terms, has been introduced under military rule. Media laws, in other words, have never enjoyed the democratic privilege of a debate in the national parliament. The military has thus been the institution within the Pakistani state which, more than any other state institution, has understood the significant influence that the media could have on a wide range of governance-related aspects.

Besides the obvious concern about the media's potentially anti-establishment function as a watchdog and whistleblower of malpractices within the state, the military also appreciated the possibility of turning the media's informative and opinion-making power to its advantage. Therefore, while for most of the history of Pakistan as an independent nation military regimes have structurally attempted to restrict media freedom through a whole set of ordinances, under the presidency of General Musharraf legislation was introduced that brought substantial liberalisation to the electronic media market. Whereas the true reasons for such a peculiar incentive have been the subject of dispute, it remains a fact that it radically changed the market and contributed to the proliferation of media outlets. Unfortunately, the power system in place proved to be resistant to the emergence of some dissenting voices, and eventually it neutralised them and ensured that a uniform non-critical position towards the military would be the norm within the Pakistani media.

And as an extra warranty that the media would not start operating completely independently of the dictates of the military, extrajudicial means and tactics – such as the infiltration of intelligence agents within media conglomerates, or the informal buying of journalists' services – were introduced.

A FREE AND PLURAL MEDIA?

The proliferation of media outlets in Pakistan, especially since the launch of a media liberalisation drive by Musharraf at the beginning of the new millennium, is often mentioned as irrefutable proof of the existence of a free and plural media in the country. The Pakistan case, however, provides evidence to the contrary, namely that there cannot be a directly proportional relation between the number of media outlets and the degree of press freedom in a given country, without taking into consideration the nature and the complexity of the socio-economic and political system in which the media of that country has to operate.

The previous sections in this report have offered a bird's-eye view on the multitude of facets that characterise this system. Based on this overview, the media appears constantly under threat in Pakistan. The existing menace does not originate only in the realm of traditional security concerns, with state and non-state actors physically intimidating and killing journalists and media workers. There is a whole spectrum of factors that severely limit media freedom in this South Asian country. These include, among others, the peculiar contractual situation of many journalists, which forces them to raise their income independently from a regular salary. The carefully described level of infiltration of hidden state elements within the media organisations. The commercial interests of the media owners and their frequent connections with the state and the political machinery. The pervasive power and influence of the military. The weight of state propaganda when it comes to dealing with neighbouring India. The influence of religious extremism, which penetrates all levels of the media houses. The presence of a

constant state of internal conflict, which limits and sometimes outright bans the reach of the media. The chronic political instability of the country, which has often justified media repression as a way to guarantee stability.

In light of all these, and many more factors, it should come as no surprise that Pakistan was ranked 159th out of 175 countries in the 2009 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.¹⁶⁷

URDU AND ENGLISH MEDIA

Although the English-language media of Pakistan catches the attention of the international community and undoubtedly caters to the power elites of the country, it should not be forgotten that the real media battle is fought on the turf of the Urdu-language channels and publications. It is there, in fact, that conservative, anti-western and Islamic positions are being energetically proposed to the population. Whenever dealing with the media in Pakistan, therefore, this fundamental difference in audiences and messages should not be forgotten.

TV VS. PRESS

The impressive growth experienced in Pakistan by satellite and cable TV since the liberalisation of the electronic media market has completely upset the whole media landscape in the country. Print media has been steadily losing readership to a whole range of electronic media. News and current affairs have entered the houses of the majority of Pakistanis, although the format has been increasingly leaning towards oversimplification and sensationalism. Electronic media has enormously amplified the impact of its message, as its outreach has grown to new heights in comparison to the traditional outreach of the press. Unfortunately, this impressive growth has not been accompanied by a proportional increase in professionalism among the media representatives. On the contrary, a flattening of professional capacities and norms seems to have taken place. Modern commercial interests have overtaken the original political motivations that had contributed to the establishment of the first media groups.

PERSONAL-SAFETY CONCERNS

Amid a great variety of concerns relating to the situation of journalists and other media workers in Pakistan, those relating to their personal safety are definitely the most urgent ones. For years, Pakistan has been the country with the most journalists killed in the line of duty. Their work in conflict areas especially has proven to be extremely dangerous and subject to enormous pressures from both state and non-state actors. But journalists have also been killed, assailed or threatened because they have not complied with the local power brokers and their political agendas, or because they have been asking the wrong questions.

Another factor that has further exposed them to the vagaries of an extremely violent environment, has been the almost complete lack of any training on how to operate as safely as possible in conflict areas or situations of violence. Even the provision of basic personal-protection equipment has been completely absent so far.

¹⁶⁷ Reporters Without Borders compiles the index every year on the basis of questionnaires that are completed by hundreds of journalists and media experts around the world. The 2009 index is available at <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2009,1001.html>.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has been carried out with the conscious decision to focus “only” on mainstream print and electronic news media. On many occasions, during the course of it, the fundamental reasons for such a choice have been questioned. Some of the key enquiries looked for acceptable reasons for leaving out of consideration important aspects of the media landscape in Pakistan, such as radical media or the whole unexplored galaxy of the internet and other mobile communication means. As already explained in the research proposal, the scale of the assignment and the nature of the key questions at the origin of the research were such that clear limits to its scope had to be set. Given such preconditions, it was obvious to the authors that they should concentrate on the main news media outlets in the country in terms of outreach and influence, when dealing with current affairs and political developments. Nevertheless, while they stand by their decision that the subject of radical media deserved to be treated in a separate way, and by actors that could do justice to it – mainly due to their capacity to penetrate it and analyse it either from within or from very close – the potential importance of the internet and all the associated derivations should not be completely ignored.

Figures from 2005 put the national computer ownership average at four percent, and internet usage even lower, at three percent.¹⁶⁸ Little is known, however, about its current degree of penetration and the main profiles of its users within Pakistani society. These considerations, relating to a country that has been making big strides in the telecommunications field in recent years, should place the internet high on a priority scale of media-related issues. And that is even more so if one can imagine the kind of impact that social media can have as triggers of popular mobilisation. Recent cases such as Iran and Egypt only emphasise the potential of such social interface platforms as conduits of reform and social change. In light of these considerations, it would be particularly interesting and useful to devote a specific research assignment to the degree of penetration, usage and the main reasons for Pakistani citizens to access and interact on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. Furthermore, it would be extremely interesting to investigate whether, in the case of Pakistan, social media have already been used to concentrate grievances around a specific objective, what those objectives were, the level of mobilisation and eventually the sort of impact obtained.

Recent events concerning social networking websites seem to indicate the potential for regressive mobilisation. Religious orthodoxy has been the main reason behind social action targeting websites that were posting material considered blasphemous. The most notorious case is probably that of the Danish cartoons, which in 2006 ended up on a few blog websites. Those websites were subsequently blocked for at least two months. In May 2010, ‘the Lahore High Court ordered access to Facebook be blocked in Pakistan. The move came after a petition was filed in the court by a forum of Islamic lawyers protesting a Facebook page called “Everybody Draw Mohammad Day”’.¹⁶⁹ There are, however, other examples where restrictive action against specific websites has been motivated by political considerations, rather than religious ones. In 2007 the Pakistani government tried to block Facebook because of the use that thousands of students had made of the website to campaign for the restoration of Pakistan’s judiciary and to organise protests against the imposition of emergency rule by then President Musharraf.

Another media that certainly deserves more attention in Pakistan, especially in conflict zones, is the radio. International development agencies have started to support the establishment and operations, in recent months, of local FM radios with educational and basic counter-insurgency programmes. It would be important to monitor these developments, and at the same time it would also be relevant to analyse the existing community

¹⁶⁸ CCE (2005). *Op. cit.* p.14.

¹⁶⁹ S. Intiaz. ‘Why Pakistan’s Facebook ban doesn’t make sense’, *Foreign Policy*, 19th May 2010.

radios. The interviews conducted during the research seem to suggest that the community radio stations are rapidly expanding in Pakistan. Being interactive, participatory and easily accessible, also due to the use of local languages, community radio has diverse advantages over other media, and offers options to those whose voices and presentations are either marginalised or misrepresented in mainstream media.

From a more general perspective, it is clear that education holds the key to the development of a professional media and of well-informed public opinion. As observed earlier in the report, there cannot be any attempt to fundamentally reform the country's media without a parallel intervention on the educational system. To begin with, literacy must be made universal so that access to information is not limited to the elite. Furthermore, assessments of the country's learning standards could be promoted, together with education reform programmes. With particular reference to the conflict areas, education and skills training need to be improved to offer valid alternatives to the local youth.

With regard to the peculiar distinction between Urdu- and English-language media, the international community should improve its understanding of Urdu media, in order to engage with it and possibly soften its position on a range of issues. Urdu media should also be considered as a potential channel to reach out to the majority of the population, instead of simply relying on the trusted and familiar English media.

And, finally, it is obvious that in Pakistan there cannot be widespread professional journalism if the basic canons of personal security are not guaranteed. Personal-safety training for journalists and media workers is one way of proceeding towards this objective. The free flow of information is dependent on their sense of security and on their capacity to deal with and resist threats and coercion by state and non-state actors. The implementation of a series of safety mechanisms – such as monitoring and documentation of violations, capacity-building in risk awareness and safety preparedness, and advocacy and lobbying activities – could also be contemplated as a way to strengthen the sense of security of journalists and media workers.

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